Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture, P.O. Box 21556, Kampala – Uganda, Plot 272, Block 15 Kibuga, Nsambya Estate at House A16, **Tel**: 256 414670400 / 0772463220, **Email**: acsa.ug@gmail.com /info@acsa-ug.org, **Website**: www.acsa-ug.org

CALL FOR PROPOSALS (CFP)

Study on the Economic Viability of Agroecological Organic Agriculture Systems in Uganda

1. Introduction

The **Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA)** hereby invites qualified individual consultants, research institutions, and multidisciplinary teams to submit proposals to undertake a comprehensive, nationally representative study on the economic viability of agroecological organic agriculture systems in Uganda.

This assignment is positioned within ACSA's broader strategic commitment to advancing sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems that respond to the pressing challenges facing Uganda's agriculture sector, including climate change, declining soil fertility, rising production costs, and persistent food and nutrition insecurity.

The proposed study aims to generate robust, empirical, and policy-relevant evidence on the performance of agroecological systems across different farm sizes and agroecological zones. It will go beyond conventional productivity analysis to critically examine the economic, ecological, and social dimensions of agroecology, including profitability, resilience, resource-use efficiency, and contributions to household food security.

In particular, the study seeks to:

- Provide comparative insights on the economic viability of agroecological systems among smallholder, medium-scale, and large-scale farmers
- Identify viable enterprise combinations and system synergies that enhance productivity and income
- Assess how agroecological practices contribute to sustainable livelihoods and reduced vulnerability
- Generate evidence to inform the integration of agroecology into national policy frameworks, development programming, and investment strategies

The findings of this study will be instrumental in guiding government agencies, development partners, private sector actors, and civil society organizations in making informed decisions on the promotion, scaling, and financing of agroecological approaches in Uganda.

Ultimately, this study is expected to contribute to the broader national and global discourse on sustainable agriculture by addressing a critical question: **Can agroecological organic agriculture systems provide economically viable and scalable solutions for achieving food security and resilient livelihoods?**

2. Background and Rationale

Agriculture remains the backbone of Uganda's socio-economic development, playing a critical role in employment, livelihoods, and national economic performance. According to the **Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS)**, the sector contributes approximately 24–26% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employs over 65–70% of the population, and supports the livelihoods of more than 80% of rural households. Beyond its economic contribution, agriculture is central to food and nutrition security, rural development, and poverty reduction, making it a strategic priority for Uganda's development agenda.

Despite its significance, Uganda's agricultural sector continues to face a range of persistent and emerging challenges that undermine productivity, sustainability, and resilience. These include widespread soil degradation and declining land productivity due to unsustainable farming practices, increasing climate variability characterized by erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and floods, as well as a growing dependence on costly external inputs such as synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Additionally, farmers face limited access to reliable and sustainable markets, weak value addition systems, and inadequate extension services. These constraints are further compounded by ongoing food and nutrition insecurity in several regions, particularly among smallholder farming households that are highly vulnerable to economic and climatic shocks.

In response to these challenges, agroecological organic agriculture has gained increasing attention as a viable and sustainable pathway for transforming food systems. Agroecology emphasizes the application of ecological principles to agricultural production, promoting biodiversity, enhancing soil health, and strengthening natural resource management. It supports low external input farming systems through nutrient recycling, organic soil fertility management, and integrated crop-livestock-tree systems, while also valuing farmer knowledge, innovation, and local seed systems. As such, agroecology presents a holistic approach that simultaneously addresses productivity, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

However, despite its growing recognition in policy and development discourse, there remains a significant gap in rigorous, context-specific evidence on the economic viability and scalability of agroecological systems in Uganda. In particular, limited data exists on how agroecological practices perform economically across different farm sizes, how their productivity and profitability compare with conventional farming systems, and the extent to which they contribute to household and national food security. Furthermore, there is insufficient understanding of optimal enterprise combinations, system synergies, and diversification strategies that maximize returns and resilience within agroecological systems. The role of complementary innovations, including renewable energy technologies and other nature-based solutions, in enhancing efficiency, reducing costs, and supporting value addition also remains underexplored.

It is within this context that this study is proposed. The study seeks to generate robust, empirical, and policy-relevant evidence to address these knowledge gaps and provide actionable insights for stakeholders. By systematically analyzing the economic, ecological, and food security dimensions of agroecological systems, the study will inform policy formulation, guide investment decisions, and support the design of programs aimed at scaling sustainable agriculture in Uganda. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to shaping a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food system capable of meeting the needs of a growing population while safeguarding natural resources for future generations.

3. Study Objectives

3.1 Overall Objective

The overall objective of this study is to **comprehensively assess the economic viability and contribution to food security of agroecological organic agriculture systems** across different farm scales and agroecological zones in Uganda. The study aims to generate rigorous, evidence-based insights into how agroecological systems perform in real-world farming contexts, and whether they offer a **sustainable, scalable, and economically sound pathway** for transforming Uganda's food systems.

3.2 Specific Objectives

To achieve the overall objective, the assignment will pursue the following interrelated specific objectives:

1. Assess Economic Viability

The study will undertake a detailed economic analysis of agroecological farming systems to determine their financial performance across different categories of farmers, including smallholder (0–2.5 acres), medium-scale (2–10 acres), and large-scale farms (above 10 acres). This will involve a systematic evaluation of production costs, revenues, and profitability levels associated with agroecological practices.

Key economic indicators to be analyzed will include gross margins, net farm income, return on investment (ROI), and labor productivity, with attention to variations across regions and farming systems. The analysis will also explore cost structures, input use efficiency, and the extent to which agroecology reduces dependency on external inputs while maintaining or improving economic returns.

2. Evaluate Food Security Outcomes

The study will assess the contribution of agroecological systems to household food security, adopting a multidimensional approach that captures food availability, access, utilization, and stability over time. It will examine how agroecological practices influence both subsistence production and market participation, and how these dynamics affect dietary quality and nutrition.

Standardized indicators such as the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) and the Food Consumption Score (FCS) will be applied to generate measurable and comparable insights. The study will also consider seasonal variations in food access and the resilience of agroecological systems in mitigating food insecurity during periods of climatic or economic stress.

3. Analyze Farming Systems and Enterprise Mix

Recognizing that agroecology is inherently systems-based, the study will analyze the composition and performance of integrated farming systems. This includes identifying optimal combinations of enterprises—such as crops, livestock, and agroforestry—that maximize productivity, income, and ecological sustainability.

The analysis will further examine diversification strategies and how they contribute to risk reduction, income stability, and resilience. Particular attention will be given to understanding system synergies, including nutrient cycling, biological pest control, and resource efficiency, which are central to agroecological performance.

4. Examine Agroecological Principles

The study will assess the extent to which farmers operationalize core agroecological principles within their farming systems. These include, but are not limited to, diversity, recycling, efficiency, resilience, and co-creation of knowledge.

The analysis will be aligned with internationally recognized frameworks such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 10 Elements of Agroecology and the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) principles. This will enable a structured evaluation of how agroecology is practiced on the ground and the degree to which adherence to these principles influences economic and food security outcomes.

5. Identify Enablers and Constraints

The study will identify and analyze the key factors that influence the adoption, performance, and scaling of agroecological systems. These will include:

- **Economic factors**, such as market access, price incentives, and cost structures
- **Institutional factors**, including policies, extension services, and certification systems
- **Ecological factors**, such as soil health, water availability, and climate conditions
- **Social factors**, including knowledge systems, gender dynamics, and labor availability

Understanding these enablers and constraints will provide critical insights into the conditions necessary for scaling agroecology in Uganda.

6. Assess Renewable Energy Integration

The study will evaluate the role of renewable energy technologies in enhancing the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of agroecological systems. This includes technologies such as solar-powered irrigation, biogas systems, and solar-based post-harvest handling and processing.

The analysis will examine how these technologies contribute to reducing production costs, improving energy access, enhancing value addition, and strengthening climate resilience. It will also explore practical and scalable models for integrating renewable energy into agroecological farming systems, particularly for smallholder farmers.

7. Address the Strategic Question

Finally, the study will synthesize findings to provide evidence-based insights into the broader strategic question:

"Can agroecology sustainably feed growing populations?"

This will involve a holistic assessment of agroecological systems' capacity to deliver sufficient food, economic returns, and environmental sustainability at scale. The analysis will consider trade-offs, opportunities for scaling, and implications for national food systems transformation.

4. Scope of the Assignment

4.1 Geographic Coverage

The study will be conducted across representative agroecological zones of Uganda, with deliberate stratification to capture the country's ecological, farming system, and socio-economic

diversity. The geographic scope will go beyond broad regional classifications to include specific sub-regions that reflect distinct production systems, cultural practices, and climate conditions.

The selected study areas will include, but not be limited to:

- **West Nile Sub-region** – characterized by mixed farming systems, tobacco, cassava, and emerging agroforestry practices under semi-arid conditions
- **Tooro Sub-region** – dominated by banana-based systems, coffee, and diversified smallholder production with increasing agroecological innovations
- **Ankole Sub-region** – known for livestock production (especially cattle), banana farming, and evolving crop-livestock integration systems
- **Bunyoro Sub-region** – characterized by mixed farming systems, including cereals, legumes, and root crops, with growing interest in sustainable land management
- **Lango Sub-region** – predominantly cereal-based systems (maize, sorghum) with increasing diversification into legumes and oilseeds
- **Elgon Sub-region** – highland farming systems with intensive cultivation of coffee, bananas, and horticulture under conditions of high population pressure and soil erosion risks
- **Busoga Sub-region** – characterized by sugarcane-dominated landscapes alongside food crops, with emerging agroecological interventions aimed at restoring food security and soil health
- **Central Uganda** – including banana-coffee systems, peri-urban agriculture, and market-oriented farming systems with high potential for value addition and innovation

This geographic coverage is intended to ensure that the study captures **variations in agroecological potential, market access, land use systems, and climate vulnerability**, thereby generating findings that are both **context-specific and nationally representative**.

The consultant will be expected to design a **robust sampling framework** that ensures:

- **Adequate regional representation**, reflecting Uganda's major agroecological and farming systems
- **Inclusion of diverse farming typologies**, including variations in farm size, production orientation (subsistence vs. commercial), and levels of agroecological adoption
- **Consideration of gender and youth dimensions**, ensuring that the perspectives and roles of women and young farmers in agroecological systems are adequately captured

Furthermore, the sampling approach should enable **comparative analysis across regions and farm categories**, while maintaining statistical validity and analytical depth. The consultant is encouraged to justify the selection of specific districts and communities within each sub-region based on relevance, representativeness, and feasibility.

4.2 Target Categories of Farmers

The study will undertake a **comparative analysis of agroecological systems across different farm scales**, recognizing that farm size significantly influences production decisions, resource use, labor dynamics, market orientation, and overall economic performance.

The target categories of farmers will include:

- **Smallholder farmers (0–2.5 acres):**
  These constitute the majority of farmers in Uganda and are typically characterized by subsistence-oriented production systems, limited access to capital, high reliance on family labor, and strong dependence on natural resource availability. The study will assess how agroecological practices influence productivity, income stability, and food security within this highly vulnerable yet critical group.
- **Medium-scale farmers (2–10 acres):**
  This category represents a transitional group with greater potential for commercialization and investment. These farmers often combine subsistence and market-oriented production and may have higher capacity to adopt innovations, including agroecological practices and renewable energy technologies. The study will examine how agroecology performs within this segment in terms of profitability, scalability, and resilience.
- **Large-scale farmers (above 10 acres):**
  These farmers are typically more commercially oriented, with relatively better access to land, capital, and markets. The study will explore the feasibility and economic performance of agroecological systems at scale, including opportunities for mechanization, value addition, and integration into formal markets.

Across all categories, the study will analyze differences in cost structures, productivity levels, risk exposure, labor use, and returns on investment, enabling a nuanced understanding of how agroecological systems perform under varying resource conditions and production objectives.

4.3 Definition of an Agroecological Farmer

For the purpose of this assignment, an agroecological farmer is defined as:

A farmer who intentionally applies at least three (3) or more recognized agroecological principles within their farming system in a consistent and integrated manner.

These principles may include, but are not limited to:

- Crop diversification, intercropping, and rotation
- Organic soil fertility management (e.g., composting, manure application, cover cropping)
- Nutrient recycling and circular resource use
- Integration of crops and livestock systems
- Agroforestry and tree-based farming practices
- Reduced or zero reliance on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides
- Use of indigenous knowledge, local seed systems, and farmer-led innovation

The consultant will be expected to refine, operationalize, and develop measurable indicators for this definition using internationally recognized frameworks such as the FAO's Elements of Agroecology or HLPE principles. This should include establishing clear criteria or scoring mechanisms to categorize farmers based on the level and intensity of agroecological practice adoption.

5. Methodology Requirements

The consultant is expected to propose a rigorous, multidisciplinary, and mixed-methods research design that ensures both analytical depth and statistical validity. The methodology should be capable of generating quantitative evidence, qualitative insights, and systems-level understanding of agroecological performance.

5.1 Quantitative Methods

The study will employ quantitative approaches to generate measurable and comparable data across farm categories and regions. These will include:

- **Structured household surveys** to capture socio-economic characteristics, production data, costs, yields, and income streams
- **Farm-level economic analysis** to quantify profitability, input-output relationships, and resource-use efficiency
- **Comparative analysis**, where feasible, between agroecological and non-agroecological systems to assess relative performance

The quantitative component should be designed to support **robust statistical analysis**, including disaggregation by gender, age, and farm size.

5.2 Qualitative Methods

To complement quantitative findings, the study will incorporate qualitative approaches to capture **contextual, behavioral, and institutional dimensions** of agroecological systems. These will include:

- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with policymakers, extension agents, researchers, and value chain actors
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with farmers to explore perceptions, experiences, and local knowledge systems
- Case studies of successful agroecological farms or initiatives to provide in-depth insights into best practices and innovation pathways

These methods will help explain **why and how agroecological systems perform**, beyond what quantitative data alone can reveal.

5.3 Analytical Approaches

The study will apply a range of analytical frameworks to ensure comprehensive evaluation, including:

- **Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA):** to assess financial viability and long-term returns
- **Value Chain Analysis:** to understand market linkages, value addition opportunities, and pricing dynamics
- **Systems Analysis:** to evaluate interactions between farm components (crops, livestock, trees, energy systems)
- **Resilience Analysis:** to assess the capacity of agroecological systems to withstand and recover from shocks such as climate variability and market fluctuations

The consultant is encouraged to integrate **innovative analytical tools** where appropriate.

5.4 Sampling Design

The consultant will develop a **statistically sound and clearly justified sampling strategy** that ensures:

- Representation across all targeted farm sizes and agroecological zones
- Inclusion of diverse farming systems and socio-economic contexts
- Adequate consideration of gender and youth participation in agriculture

The sampling framework should enable **comparative analysis and generalizable findings**, while remaining feasible within the study timeline and resources.

6. Expected Deliverables

The consultant/team will be expected to deliver the following outputs:

1. **Inception Report**
   A comprehensive report detailing the study design, methodology, sampling framework, data collection tools, and work plan.
2. **Data Collection Instruments**
   Well-structured and tested tools, including questionnaires, interview guides, and data capture templates.
3. **Draft Study Report**
   A detailed report presenting preliminary findings, analysis, and initial recommendations for stakeholder review.
4. **Final Study Report**
   A revised and high-quality report incorporating feedback, with clear conclusions and actionable recommendations.
5. **Policy Brief (2–4 pages)**
   A concise and accessible summary of key findings and policy implications targeted at decision-makers.
6. **Stakeholder Presentation (PowerPoint)**
   A professionally prepared presentation summarizing the study findings for dissemination to stakeholders.

7. Duration of Assignment

The assignment is expected to be completed within a period of **8weeks** from the date of contract signing **(from 15th April - 15th June, 2026).**

The consultant is expected to propose a realistic and detailed work plan outlining key phases of the assignment, including inception, data collection, analysis, validation, and reporting. Timely delivery of outputs and effective coordination with ACSA and relevant stakeholders will be critical to the success of the assignment.

ACSA seeks to engage a highly competent and experienced consultant or multidisciplinary team with demonstrated expertise in agricultural systems, economic analysis, and sustainable food systems. Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements:

- **Academic Qualifications:**
  An advanced degree (Master's level or higher) in Agricultural Economics, Agroecology, Development Studies, or a closely related field. Additional specialization in areas such as climate change, rural development, or food systems analysis will be considered an added advantage.
- **Professional Experience:**
  A minimum of 7–10 years of progressively responsible experience in:
    - Agricultural research and farming systems analysis
    - Economic evaluation of agricultural or rural development interventions
    - Designing and implementing field-based studies involving smallholder and commercial farming systems
- **Technical Expertise:**
  Demonstrated experience in:
    - Applying mixed-methods research approaches (quantitative and qualitative)
    - Conducting cost-benefit and value chain analyses
    - Working within Uganda's agricultural, policy, and institutional context
    - Assessing sustainable agriculture approaches, preferably agroecology or organic systems
- **Analytical and Communication Skills:**
    - Proven ability to produce high-quality analytical reports and policy-relevant outputs
    - Strong data analysis and interpretation skills
    - Excellent written and oral communication skills in English
    - Ability to synthesize complex findings into actionable recommendations
- Stakeholder Engagement:
  Experience in engaging diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, farmer organizations, civil society, and development partners, with the ability to facilitate inclusive and participatory processes.
- Team Composition (for firms or consortia):
  Multidisciplinary teams are encouraged and should demonstrate complementary expertise (e.g., agricultural economics, agroecology, social sciences, climate resilience, and data analysis).

9. Reporting and Coordination

The selected consultant/team will report directly to the Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA) Secretariat, which will provide overall technical oversight and coordination throughout the assignment.

The consultant will work closely with:

- ACSA Secretariat, for guidance, quality assurance, and coordination
- ACSA member organizations, for field-level linkages, mobilization, and contextual insights
- Key stakeholders, including:
    - Relevant government ministries and agencies
    - Research and academic institutions
    - Farmer organizations and community groups
    - Development partners and private sector actors

Regular communication and progress updates will be required, including scheduled review meetings at key milestones (e.g., inception, mid-term, draft report stage). The consultant will be expected to incorporate feedback in a timely and professional manner.

10. Ethical Considerations

The consultant must adhere to the highest standards of research ethics and professional integrity throughout the assignment. This includes:

- **Informed Consent:**
  Ensuring that all study participants are fully informed about the purpose of the research and voluntarily agree to participate.
- **Confidentiality and Data Protection:**
  Safeguarding all personal and institutional data collected during the study, and ensuring that information is used strictly for the intended research purposes.
- **Do No Harm Principle:**
  Ensuring that the research process does not negatively affect participants, communities, or stakeholders.
- **Gender and Social Inclusion:**
  Applying gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches to ensure equitable representation and consideration of women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- **Transparency and Accountability:**
  Maintaining honesty, accuracy, and objectivity in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

11. Proposal Submission Requirements

Interested consultants and firms are required to submit a comprehensive proposal package comprising the following components:

a) Technical Proposal

The technical proposal should clearly demonstrate the applicant's understanding and approach to the assignment, including:

- Interpretation and understanding of the Terms of Reference
- A detailed methodology, including data collection methods, analytical frameworks, and tools
- Proposed sampling design and justification
- A work plan and timeline with clear deliverables and milestones
- Description of the team composition and roles (if applicable)

b) Financial Proposal

The financial proposal should provide a detailed and transparent budget breakdown, including:

- Professional fees (by team member and level of effort)
- Fieldwork and data collection costs
- Travel and logistics
- Data processing and analysis
- Any other relevant costs

All costs should be presented in a clear and justified manner.

c) Supporting Documents

Applicants must include:

- Curriculum Vitae (CVs) of key personnel highlighting relevant experience
- Company or firm profile (for institutional applicants)
- Examples of similar assignments or publications demonstrating relevant expertise
- At least two references from previous clients (preferably for similar work)

12. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using a competitive and merit-based selection process, based on the following criteria:

- Technical Quality and Methodological Rigor:
  Clarity, feasibility, and robustness of the proposed approach
- Relevant Experience and Qualifications:
  Demonstrated expertise of the consultant/team in similar assignments

- Understanding of Agroecology and Food Systems:
  Depth of knowledge and contextual awareness
- Financial Competitiveness:
  Value for money and cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget
- Past Performance and References:
  Proven track record of delivering high-quality work

ACSA may use a weighted scoring system and reserves the right to invite shortlisted candidates for clarification or interviews.

13. Submission Details

- **Deadline for Submission:** 15TH April, 2026
- **Submission Method:** acsa.ug@gmail.com
- **Subject Line:** *Proposal – Agroecology Economic Viability Study*

All proposals must be submitted in electronic format (PDF) and received by the stated deadline. Late submissions may not be considered.

14. Additional Information

The Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA) reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal, wholly or in part, without obligation to provide reasons. Submission of a proposal does not constitute a commitment on the part of ACSA to award a contract or to cover any costs incurred in the preparation of the proposal.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted for further engagement.