



Term of Reference

TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR CIRCULAR AGROFORESTRY CACAO MODELS

Project: CIRCULAR ECONOMY COCOA: “FROM BEAN TO BAR”

Budget line: 6.1.2.2 | Date: 05.08.2025

Helvetas is an independent development organization based in Switzerland, with affiliated organizations in Germany and the United States. Since 1994, Helvetas has been active in Vietnam, working across various sectors, including Agriculture, Biodiversity Conservation, Forestry, Eco-tourism, and Rural Economic Development.

1. BACKGROUND

Under the SWITCH-Asia program of the European Union, Helvetas is implementing the project “Circular Economy Cocoa: From Bean to Bar.” The project aims to develop circular economy solutions in cocoa and other agri-food sectors, leading to equitable economic growth decoupled from harmful environmental impacts. The project is being implemented over four years (2022-2026) in 6-7 key cacao-growing provinces in the Central Highlands and Mekong Delta regions of Vietnam.

As Vietnam shifts toward more sustainable and diversified agricultural models, cocoa stands out as a high-potential crop, particularly when integrated into agroforestry systems, for advancing both economic and ecological goals. Yet many cacao producers and cooperatives still lack access to tailored technical support to improve productivity, product quality, and environmental performance. This highlights a practical need for context-specific, circular economy-based technical solutions that can enhance agroforestry cacao models and demonstrate their benefits in real-world field conditions.

Helvetas, in collaboration with Marou Chocolate J.S.C., is seeking consultancy services to design, pilot and scale agroforestry-based cacao plantations that integrate circular and regenerative agricultural practices. Three plantation models located in different agroecological zones have been selected for technical support and innovation:

- Binh Dinh (established 2022): Integrating cacao, vanilla, and agarwood.
- Kien Giang (established 2024): Intercropping cacao with coconut and pineapple.
- Lam Dong (to be established 2025): Agroforestry with cacao, coffee, and forestry trees.

These pilots offer practical opportunities to test and refine circular economy solutions in cocoa farming - such as intercropping, biomass recycling, organic soil improvement, and input optimization – with the aim of improving land use efficiency, reducing input costs, and increasing farmers' income while minimizing waste and environmental impact. Successful agroforestry-based cacao models will be scaled into replicable, sustainable farming systems across multiple regions.

2. OBJECTIVES

Overall objective:

- To enhance the productive capacity, resilience, and sustainability of agroforestry cacao plantations by integrating circular economy principles and regenerative soil management tailored to specific agroecological contexts.

Specific objectives:

- To assess current conditions and constraints at the three selected plantations, and to propose context-specific solutions to optimize their agroforestry design and overall system performance.

- To provide hands-on technical support and coaching for the 3 farms throughout the implementation period, ensuring real-time problem-solving, capacity building, and adaptive management.
- To provide guidance and tools for long-term management and replication of the models.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

The consultant will work with three selected cacao plantations to:

- Assess the current agroforestry systems, identify key challenges, and propose context-specific improvements to enhance productivity, ecological performance, and circularity.
- Support the redesign and implementation of optimized agroforestry models that integrate regenerative and circular economy practices.
- Provide hands-on technical coaching during the implementation phase, including adaptive management and problem-solving.
- Develop practical guidance, user-friendly tools and key indicators for long-term operation, monitoring, and potential replication.

Note: The agroforestry system design and technical recommendations under this assignment should be guided by internationally recognized criteria such as the Key Technical Criteria for Cocoa Agroforestry developed by World Agroforestry (ICRAF). In addition, other relevant international frameworks and standards, including the FAO Agroforestry Guidelines (2018), Rainforest Alliance Cocoa Standard, and ISO 14001:2015 on environmental management, are expected to be referenced where appropriate to ensure scientific rigor, sustainability, and alignment with best practices.

4. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- University degrees in agriculture, agroforestry, soil science, or related fields
- Minimum 5 years of experience in agroforestry or sustainable agriculture
- Familiarity with circular economy and regenerative agriculture practices
- Knowledge of organic farming and soil health improvement methods
- Strong communication, training, and farmer coaching skills
- Experienced in working with farmers, cooperatives, or small-scale producers
- Ability to produce clear and concise technical reports in Vietnamese.

For consulting teams/firms: members should have complementary expertise in relevant areas.

5. TIMELINE AND DELIVERABLES

The consultancy period is 05 months, from August to December 2025.

Activities	Deliverables	Timeframe
Contracting		August, 2025
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field visits and assessment of current agroforestry practices at the 3 selected plantations ▪ Summary report on key issues, opportunities, and recommendations 	August-September, 2025
System Optimization & Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder-validated agroforestry designs and site-specific improvement plans, accompanied by practical guidelines for on-farm implementation 	September-October, 2025
Field Implementation & Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring and coaching sessions (online or offline) for 03 farms and Marou staff on the proposed improvements, with 2-3 sessions per farm suggested over a 3-month period 	October-December, 2025
Final Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final Reporting Presentation: PowerPoint slides in Vietnamese summarizing key findings, optimized agroforestry designs, results of monitoring and coaching activities, and recommendations for further implementation. 	December, 2025

Activities	Deliverables	Timeframe
Contract liquidation		End of December, 2025

6. APPLICATION AND DEADLINE

Applications should include:

- Technical Proposal: Team composition with CVs highlighting relevant experience and roles of each member; proposed approach and methodology, and detailed work plan.
- Financial Proposal: Detailed costs including number of working days, consulting rates for each team member, budget justification, field travel expenses, and any additional costs. Application of EU Cost Norms (2022) is recommended.

Interested candidates should send their Profiles, Technical and Financial Proposal to Helvetas Vietnam at diep.dinh@helvetas.org and helvetas.vietnam@helvetas.org by **August 18, 2025**.