



PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT of the “Integrated Nutrient Pollution Control Project”

Terms of Reference

INPCP Sub-component 2.1:

Consultancy services for setting-up and running a Knowledge Transfer Network to promote good agricultural practice and reduce the risk of nitrate pollution in the West, North-West and Center Development Regions

1. Background information

Since 2007 Romania has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and a Grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to support implementation of the **Integrated Nutrient Pollution Control Project** (the INPCP) in selected localities vulnerable or potentially vulnerable to the pollution with nutrients.

The overall development objective of the INPCP is to support the Government of Romania to meet the EU Nitrates Directive requirements by (a) reducing nutrients discharges to water bodies, (b) promoting behavioral changes at the communal level, and (c) strengthening institutional and regulatory capacity. The long-term goal is to reduce the discharge of nutrients and other agricultural pollutants into the Danube River and Black Sea through integrated land and water management.

The initial phase of the INPCP closed on May 31, 2017, but the Ministry of Water and Forests (MWF) have received Additional Financing to finance the costs associated with the nationwide scaling-up of INPCP activities over another five years from 2017-2022. The Additional Financing will broadly maintain the objective and structure of the INPCP with slight modifications to reflect the realities of the current situation and lessons learned under INPCP so far.

One critical change since the INPCP was first launched in 2008 has been the decision of the Government of Romania (GoR) in 2013 to adopt the “whole territory” approach to implementation of the EU Nitrates Directive. This means that the provisions of the national *Action Program for the protection of water from pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources* no longer apply only to designated Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, but instead to the whole territory of Romania. In accordance with the GoR’s interpretation of this approach, the obligation to prepare and implement *Local Action Plans for water protection against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources* is now extended to all local authorities in Romania.

Furthermore, since 2015 all farmers applying for direct payments from European funds and from the national budget, as well as those seeking European funds through certain measures of the *2014-2020 National Rural Development Program (NRDP)*, must also comply with eco-conditionality (cross-compliance) norms. These norms include verifiable standards which are derived from the *Code of Good Agricultural Practices for the protection of water from pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources (CoGAP)*. Compliance with the *CoGAP* has been made a mandatory obligation for all farmers in Romania since 2015.

These changes in the regulatory framework pose major challenges for the Ministry of Water and Forests (MWF), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and Agency for Payment and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA). But above all, there remains a critical need to provide farming communities with the necessary knowledge and tools to not only comply with their

legal obligations, but to go beyond them and maximize the productivity and profitability of their farming activities through the optimal management of crop nutrients, especially nitrogen.

This need for knowledge is particularly important for the huge numbers of small-scale farms in Romania. Around 98 percent of all farms in Romania are smallholders with a Standard Output¹ of less than EUR 15,000 and an average size of 1.65 hectares. These smallholdings range from around 0.1 million small commercial farms selling 100 percent of their production to an estimated 2.5 million subsistence households consuming 100 percent of their own production².

The GOR considers that the IBRD's continued assistance to build national level capacity to address the challenges of implementing the EU Nitrates Directive is critical and will complement and facilitate the use of other resources. The *2014-2020 NRDP* and other Government funds are available to support some of the activities which would directly or indirectly contribute to the overall reduction of nitrates pollution. However, the established eligibility criteria under the *2014-2020 NRDP* excludes to a certain extent small-scale subsistence farmers, households and communes.

The Additional Financing will finance works, goods, services and operating costs and will comprise four components, which are largely the same as in the INPCP, with slight modifications: (i) Component 1: Investments in Local Communities to Reduce Nutrient Pollution; (ii) Component 2: Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building (which includes the sub-component 2.1. *Development of national knowledge and training providers, as well as support for on-farm demonstrations, to improve compliance, adoption and control of code of good agricultural practices to reduce nutrient pollution*); (iii) Component 3: Public Awareness and Information Support; (iv) Component 4: Project Management.

The proposed interventions will build on the successes and lessons learned from implementation of the INPCP in 2008-2017, as well as from similar projects in Europe and Central Asia and other regions. The Additional Financing for the Project has the closing date on March 31, 2022.

1.1 Introduction to sub-component 2.1

The INPCP has supported Romania in developing and approving a *Code of Good Agricultural Practices (CoGAP) for Water Protection against Pollution with Nitrates from Agricultural Sources*³. As explained above, since 2015 compliance with this CoGAP is mandatory in the whole territory of Romania for all farmers "who own or operate farms", as well as "local government authorities of communes, towns and municipalities on whose territory there are farms"⁴. Furthermore, reference to the CoGAP forms an important part of both the ecoconditionality (cross-compliance) and greening rules for those farmers receiving financial support for agriculture and rural development from European and national funds⁵.

In the view of (i) the important status of the CoGAP and (ii) the great diversity of farm types that must comply with the CoGAP in Romania, it is proposed under sub-component 2.1 to

¹ Standard Output is the average monetary value (EUR) of the agricultural output of an agricultural holding at farm-gate price. It is commonly used by the EU and national governments to define farm type

² All definitions are derived from Law No. 37/2015 on the classification of farms and agricultural holdings. The related data is from the Eurostat Farm Structural Survey 2013

³ Downloadable from: http://www.mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/2016-10-04_GP%20_04.12.2015_MMAP_%20COD.pdf

⁴ In accordance with Ordinul MMAP/MADR nr. 990/1809/2015

⁵ All relevant documents regarding ecoconditionality and the greening rules for 2017 are available here: <http://www.apia.org.ro/ro/materiale-de-informare/materiale-informare1484830750>

establish three permanent **Regional Knowledge Transfer Networks (KTNs)** through which farmers, advisers, relevant inspectors⁶ and local and regional authorities can go to see, learn and discuss practical demonstration of the good agricultural practices and successful interpretation and application of the *CoGAP* in the **specific context of the broad range of farms and socio-economic conditions that are characteristic of Romania.**

The geographical coverage of the three **Regional KTNs** will be as follows:

- KTN I:** North-East + South-East Development Regions
- KTN II:** South-Muntenia, Bucuresti-Ilfov and South-West Oltenia Development Regions
- KTN III:** West, North-West and Center Development Regions

1.2 Why Knowledge Transfer Networks?

Approaches to knowledge exchange, learning and innovation in European agriculture are evolving rapidly. The **traditional, top-down ‘linear model’ of knowledge transfer is increasingly outdated.** Knowledge no longer flows one-way from researchers, trainers and technical experts only. Direct, peer-to-peer learning between farmers and other key actors is increasingly important, whilst new forms of media and information technology also provide exciting new possibilities for working together and exchanging knowledge.

There are a **growing number of practical ‘knowledge transfer networks’** being used by farmers in many countries. A common feature of all these examples is the use of a ‘Discussion Group’ format to **create an interactive learning environment for farmers.** Farmer Discussion Groups are a well-established methodology used by agricultural advisors around the world. A **Farmer Discussion Group** is a group of farmers from a specific region or production sector who have a common interest in gaining knowledge or exchanging experience about a specific issue.

It is widely acknowledged that, compared to more classical training or advisory formats, there are many benefits associated with the interactive learning environment created by a Farmer Discussion Group:

- **Increasing contact between farmers** - Discussion Groups bring farmers together who might otherwise not have the opportunity to meet. They allow farmers from different backgrounds and with different experiences to interact, discuss and solve practical day-to-day problems in a friendly, open environment.
- **Effective learning through practical demonstration** - Discussion Groups are an excellent format for farmers to gain new skills and experience through practical demonstration. Groups are usually organized on a farm with new technologies etc., demonstrated in the specific context and working environment of that farm.
- **Facilitating peer-to-peer learning** - Discussion Groups create the opportunity for farmers to interact with and learn from each other. The skills and knowledge of all the farmers participating in the Group are “pooled”. Experiences can be compared and contrasted. Mistakes made, and lessons learned, by individual farmers can be shared.
- **Enabling innovation** - Discussion Groups encourage new ideas and innovation. People are more creative in groups! This process can be further enhanced by inviting other people, including advisers and researchers, to participate in the Group Discussions.
- **Dealing with complex issues** - Discussion Groups are very effective for dealing with complex issues faced by farmers. Different ideas, perspectives and experiences can be explored and appropriate responses to specific problems or opportunities can be identified together.

⁶ Relevant inspectors include the Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA), Financing Agency for Rural Investments (AFIR) and Environmental National Guard (GNM)

Farmer Discussion Groups are clearly not a classical training format. They are participatory and interactive. Information, knowledge and experience within the Group does not only flow one-way (e.g. from a trainer to trainees), it flows in multiple directions and dimensions. This is a process that needs to be **guided by individuals with well-developed facilitation skills in close interaction with the CoGAP Champion⁷ and all other participants.**

1.3 Additional guiding principles for the Knowledge Transfer Networks (KTNs)

In addition to the general principles of networking outlined above, the establishment and operation of each of the three **Regional KTNs** should take account of:

- The diversity of local agronomic, environmental, social and economic situations in Romania and the fact that **individual farmers face a broad variety of different practical challenges** in attempting to integrate the control of agricultural pollution into their day-to-day farming activities. Consideration of the different agro-climatic regions of Romania is particularly important.
- The **specific characteristics of water pollution with nutrients (especially nitrates)** found in the different regions of Romania and closely linked with the type of farming, including the on-going and urgent need in some regions to address the persistent problem of elevated nitrate concentrations in public and private wells used for drinking water.
- The role of *CoGAP in attaining the EU funds for agriculture (both direct payments and rural investments funds).*
- The **existing activities of the Integrated Nutrient Control Project (INPCP)**, including the on-going promotion of integrated systems for manure collection at communal and household level; training of farmers and other agricultural specialists in good agricultural practice; promotion of practical soil conservation and watercourse protection measures, and program of public awareness-raising activities.
- The need to be **complementary with the current structure of the agricultural advisory services**, including the recent re-organization (December 2016) of the Chambers of Agriculture (*Camera Agricolă*) and transfer of responsibilities for disseminating information on the CoGAP to the county-level Directorates⁸ (*Direcțiile Agricole Județene*) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR).
- The existent farmers` organizations which have developed a certain capacity to disseminate information among the farmers.
- The **relevance and capacity of the national / regional research units** under the Romanian Academy of Agricultural Sciences (ASAS), as well as those linked to the agricultural universities and other centers of research.
- The **obligation of local authorities throughout Romania** to establish and implement a 'Local action plan for nitrates' (*Plan local de acțiune pentru nitrati*) in accordance with the decision in 2013 to designate the whole territory of the country as vulnerable to nitrate pollution from agricultural sources.
- The **existence of various non-governmental and community-based organizations** (including EU-funded LEADER Local Action Groups) at local / regional level with demonstrable long-term commitment to promote sustainable and environmentally-friendly agriculture specific to the characteristics, traditions and needs of their localities and / or regions.

⁷It is considered a "CoGAP Champion" a farmer who can provide a practical demonstration at its farm on the successful implementation of the CoGAP

⁸ <http://www.madr.ro/directii-agricole-judetene.html>

- The full range of good agricultural practices associated with **both traditional farming methods and the modern technological advances** linked with the larger-scale / agro-industrial crop and livestock production enterprises operating in Romania.
- The need to change attitudes and think differently about farm animal manure. Manure is not a waste, manure is a resource, “manure is money”! The question is how can farmers be helped to best profit from good agricultural practice?
- The general need for a trusted intermediary between farmers of all types / sizes and the statutory bodies responsible for implementation and enforcement of the Nitrates Directive in Romania.
- The general observation that all farmers inevitably interpret the obligations of the CoGAP in the specific context of their own experience and circumstances. Consequently, a hierarchy of pollution control practices exists which ranges from “very bad practices” to “very good practices”. One of the core challenges of this assignment will be to encourage farmers to “move up” their own hierarchy by promoting the highest level of pollution control practice that they can reasonably be expected to adopt when working within their own regional / local context - whilst complying with all relevant obligations regarding the Nitrates Directive, eco-conditionality etc.

2. Objectives of the assignment for KTN III: West, Nord-West and Centre Development Regions

2.1 Geographical scope of the Regional Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN)

The third Regional Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN III) will incorporate the **West, Nord-West and Centre Development Regions** consisting of the 16 counties of Alba, Arad, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Brașov, Caraș-Severin, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Hunedoara, Maramureș, Mureș, Sălaj, Satu Mare, Sibiu and Timiș.

The total area to be covered by the Regional KTN is 100,629 km², including around 5.1 million hectares of utilized farmland and 1.1 million farmers. The great majority of these farmers are subsistence (65.5 percent) and semi-subsistence (27.0 percent) smallholdings, with significantly fewer small and medium-large commercial holdings (6.9 and 0.6 percent respectively).

2.2 General and specific objectives

The overall objective of this assignment is deeply embedded in the core principles of the INPCP and the need for **integrated solutions** to the complex challenge faced in Romania of reducing the risk of water pollution by nitrates from a **broad range of different agricultural sources**. The INPCP is an ambitious project and this assignment is expected to be equally ambitious.

The **general objective** of this assignment is to establish a permanent network facility to raise awareness, encourage adoption and improve compliance amongst all types of farmers in **West, North-West and Centre Development Regions** regarding the obligations of the *Code of Good Agricultural Practices for protecting water against pollution with nitrates (CoGAP)*.

It is intended that this general objective will be achieved via the **specific objectives**:

Specific Objective 1 To set-up and actively maintain a dedicated Knowledge Transfer Network within which farmers, trainers, relevant inspectors⁹ and local (including from

⁹ Relevant inspectors include APIA, AFIR and GNM

	communes, county Chambers of Agriculture, county structures of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment etc.) and regional authorities can learn about and observe practical demonstration of the successful interpretation and application of the <i>CoGAP</i> on an appropriate range of farms taking into account the overall structure and characteristics of agriculture in the two combined Development Regions;
Specific Objective 2	Based upon the facilities of the Knowledge Transfer Network, to design and organize four annual programs (2018-2021) of Farmer Discussion Groups where farmers are invited to interact with each other and with the other participants;
Specific Objective 3	To organize 3 regional workshops and, in cooperation with the other two KTNs, one joined national conference (organized alternatively during 2019 – 2021, by each KTN, in cooperation with the other 2 KTNs) with focus on main issues raised along Farmer Discussion Groups, challenges in implementation of the CoGAP and of the Local Action Plans, possible debates on updating/changing the CoGAP and/or Local Action Plans etc;
Specific Objective 4	To prepare a comprehensive portfolio of carefully tailored information and training materials for both a) supporting the seasonal programs of Farmer Discussion Groups run by the Knowledge Transfer Network, and; b) more widely disseminating “success stories”;
Specific Objective 5	To develop (and by the end of the project to operationalize) a viable ‘business model’ for the long-term sustainability of the Knowledge Transfer Network .

To implement these specific objectives, the assignment should be undertaken in two phases:

Phase 1 - Detailed design and development

Phase 2 - Implementation and dissemination

Each phase will include activities that contribute to each of the five Specific Objectives.

2.3 The target groups of the assignment

The Regional Knowledge Transfer Network should target:

- farmers “who own or operate farms, including physical persons, authorized physical persons and registered companies and cooperatives”
- and
- relevant advisers and relevant inspectors¹⁰ and local regional authorities.

The key for setting-up the Farmer Discussion Groups should be the diversity of the production sectors. The most in need farmers are the households’ owners with livestock, those registered with irregularities under SMR1 due to APIA controls, rural development support beneficiaries for setting-up young farmers and small farmers and agri-environment schemes beneficiaries. Should also be considered the farmers in the area of previous or current investments funded under the Integrated Nutrient Pollution Control Project (INPCP). Nevertheless, other categories of farmers may be included, as justified by the Consultant.

¹⁰ Relevant inspectors include the APIA, AFIR and GNM

Mixing the farmers with institution representatives should be considered, thus stimulating constructive interaction.

The first step in setting-up Farmer Discussion Groups is identifying the Farmer Champions, covering the relevant farming productions sectors and farm sizes in the area while ensuring a balanced territorial distribution for limiting the participants time for travelling and a balanced gender structure of the trainees.

2.4 Expected outputs and results to be achieved by the assignment

The following **outputs** are expected during implementation of the assignment. These outputs represent the main ‘functional’ elements of the Knowledge Transfer Network:

1. a regional network hub, including a permanently staffed **CoGAP Help Desk**;
 2. a carefully selected network of (mainly) on-farm demonstration facilities;
 3. a team of regional facilitators (on top of the proposed 2 key full - time local advisers, the Consultant may propose extra non-key experts with the role of facilitators);
 4. a comprehensive portfolio of carefully tailored information and training materials, and;
 5. a total of four consecutive (2018-2021) annual programs of Farmer Discussion Groups.
- These outputs are described / explained in more detail in Section 3 below.

It is expected that the following **results** will be generated from the above outputs:

- At least 120 Farmer Discussion Groups are organized and fully implemented;
- At least 1,850 farmers participate in the Farmer Discussion Groups;
- At least 360 advisers, inspectors and/or local authorities participate in Farmer Discussion Groups;
- At least 10 specific good agricultural practices are demonstrated, and;
- At least 30 “success stories” are collected and disseminated.

These results are described / explained in more detail in Section 3 below.

It is anticipated that the outputs and results above will in turn contribute to an overall increase in the number of farmers that:

- are more informed about different ways of interpreting and applying *CoGAP* according to the specific circumstances of their own farm;
- are more aware and sensitized to the water pollution caused by their farming activities and more open to new ways of thinking and problem solving to avoid the risk of water pollution with nitrates, and;
- have increased ability to make critical and informed decisions about improving the management of crop nutrients on their farm.

At the end of his assignment the Consultant will prepare a detailed assessment of all these results, will present the most efficient proved actions, as well as the ones that proved less efficient, and will make detailed recommendations for the future activities of the KTN.

3. Scope of the services required for KTN III: West, North-West and Centre Development Regions

The Consultant implementing this assignment is expected to undertake a comprehensive and precisely targeted program of work that makes effective use of the budget to **facilitate the exchange of knowledge and practical experience between farmers and other key stakeholders** with the aim of reducing the risk of nitrate pollution from agricultural sources.

A preliminary work plan should be submitted to the INPCP-PMU with the proposal that is broadly in line with - but not necessarily limited to - the activities outlined in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 below. This work plan will be elaborated in more detail in **Phase 1 (Detailed design and development)** of the assignment ready for implementation in **Phase 2 (Implementation and dissemination)**.

3.1 Activities of Phase 1 - Detailed design and development

1. Establish a Network Hub - this should be a modest facility that provides dedicated support to the overall construction, co-ordination and administration of the KTN, including all reporting obligations to the INPCP Project Management Unit. The Hub may or may not be associated with an on-farm demonstration facility. However, the Network Hub must be in contact with the regions stakeholders (representatives of the farmers' associations, relevant institutions, LAGs, NGOs etc.), for ensuring a wide dissemination of the projects outputs and awareness.
2. The Hub should include a permanently-staffed **CoGAP Help Desk** that is available to farmers, advisers and inspectors by telephone and e-mail, as a 'one-stop-shop' to answer questions and provide information on a range of CoGAP-related issues, including forthcoming activities of the Regional KTN. The Help Desk should also ensure on-line publication on a website ¹¹of news CoGAP related, information and training materials and any other relevant information. Moreover, the Hub should administrate and moderate an on-line discussions forum. Shall be also considered, if available and relevant, one yearly participation, under the scope of information dissemination and awareness, at regional or national fairs, which may include practical demonstrations.
3. The Hub should be ready to rapidly adapt to possible modifications of the relevant legislation which may refer to CoGAP / Action Program / Local Action Plans.
4. In case of considered useful, The **Network Hub** should co-ordinate and back-stop an appropriate number of **facilitators** to support the formation and running of the Regional KTN, notably the **annual program of Farmer Discussion Groups** (see below) that is developed by the Consultant. The number of facilitators in the region will depend upon the specific characteristics of the region and the annual program of Farmer Discussion Groups that is developed.
5. A core task of Phase 1 will be to construct a carefully selected **network of (mainly) on-farm demonstration facilities** managed by an appropriate number of so-called "**CoGAP Champions**" who can provide practical demonstration of the successful interpretation and profitable application of the key elements of the *CoGAP* for different types / sizes of farm during all relevant seasons of the agricultural calendar.

These **CoGAP Champions** may be any physical or juridical person who has:

- a) the interest and enthusiasm to engage with (other) farmers;

¹¹ access to an existent website shall be ensured through the Integrated Nutrient Pollution Control Project

- b) successful practical examples of the interpretation and profitable application of key obligations of the *CoGAP* which they are willing to demonstrate;
- c) reasonable access and basic facilities for the regular hosting (during certain seasons) of Discussion Groups of around 15 farmers (see below), and;
- d) the willingness to commit to developing / providing long on-farm demonstration facilities.

The **CoGAP Champions** should be farmers of varying types and sizes that are typical of the region, possibly members of farmers' organizations. It is anticipated that many of the **CoGAP Champions** will already have participated in / benefitted from INPCP project activities or have benefited of funding for rural development (e.g. investment in manure storage facilities or handling equipment). Other potential **CoGAP Champions** might include local authorities (e.g. those managing communal manure storages) and researchers (e.g. with relevant field trials).

6. The CoGAP Champions are expected to engage with the Regional KTN for the full four years of INPCP funding. Ideally, the CoGAP Champions, possibly through the farmers' organizations, will also be interested to play a role in the long-term sustainability of the KTN. As CoGAP Champions will "host" the training sessions, it is expected that the training to be built on their success stories, thus being desirable to have their active involvement in discussions, along with the meeting facilitator engaged by the Consultant.

In some cases, the Consultant implementing the assignment might be one of the **CoGAP Champions** or representing one or more farmers' organizations which might, for example, take responsibility for developing specific new demonstration facilities (e.g. field trials).

7. The Consultant should **identify and clearly justify** the most appropriate / important good agricultural practices for demonstrating in the region taking into account of the agro-climatic conditions and specific farm types / sizes that prevail. Numerous factors are likely to influence the selection of good practices and these should be clearly identified / explained. Appropriate reference should be made to the *Local Action Plans for water protection against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources* that have been prepared by local authorities in the region.
8. The consultant must provide an indicative list of the **CoGAP Champions** throughout the region, demonstrating having access to them. Their distribution should consider the need to limit the time for participants to travel and the fact that proximity of the site of Discussion Farmer Group to farmers means also an exchange of experience within the local environment. This might include existing farmers' organizations.
9. To enhance the learning processes within the Regional KTN, the Consultant should **prepare dedicated information and training materials**. These materials must be "farmer-friendly" and carefully tailored to the specific characteristics of the Farmer Discussion Groups set-up, considering the various productions sectors, their associated water pollution issues and the most important good agricultural practices to promote. As it is requested a participatory involvement of the CoGAP Champions, they also should be consulted for the preparation of the information and training materials.

Consultants are encouraged to look beyond classical formats for the information and training materials and to consider more innovative formats, such as the use of Farmer Workbooks and/or Check-lists, which have real practical use for farm management decisions.

10. It will not be possible to demonstrate all obligations of the *CoGAP* in one meeting at one time of the year. The challenges and benefits of compliance with CoGAP need to be discussed and demonstrated throughout the farming calendar. An annual program of

Farmer Discussion Groups and visits to the **CoGAP Champions** is therefore needed for demonstrating, discussing and exchanging knowledge, experience and skills about complying with the *CoGAP* at specific times in the agricultural calendar and according to the specific context of individual farms.

11. It is anticipated that the network of **CoGAP Champions** and the annual program of **Farmer Discussion Groups** will need to be developed in parallel to ensure the optimal learning experience for participating farmers (and where appropriate, other key stakeholders such as advisers, inspectors and local authority officials). For example, it is likely that the selection of **CoGAP Champions** will need careful matching with the good agricultural practices identified as most relevant to the specific production sectors and farm sizes that are characteristic of each region.
12. The Consultant should i) adopt a clear and simple methodology for the **Farmer Discussion Groups** that is appropriate to the region and ii) ensure that the **regional Discussion Group meetings will respect the methodology**. It shall be also ready to rapidly adapt its methodology to possible modifications of the relevant legislation which may refer to *CoGAP* / Action Program / Local Action Plans.
13. The Farmer Discussion Groups topics may include, but shall not be limited to: transposed national legislation and the role of the various public institutions in implementing the Nitrates Directive, technical solutions and technical characteristics of various manure storages -depending on the farm type and size, methods for the use and maintenance of the manure storages, specific equipment/machinery and methods for the transport of the manure and its field spreading, trade/market opportunities for manure, rules related to manure storage and spreading that are included within the control elements of the paying agency responsible for the cross-compliance rules, funding opportunities, costs savings in fertilization etc. The participants shall be evaluated at the end of each training sessions while a centralized table with their results and the analysis of the results should be included within the Consultant reports.
14. The Consultant must be ready to adjust the actions and materials related the information, awareness and trainings in due time as a consequence of possible changes of the relevant legislation, *CoGAP* and/or Local Action Plans.
15. The Consult must describe how the experience gain by the trained farmers/other participants **may be further applied** beyond the period financially supported for the consultancy services.

It is anticipated that each **Farmer Discussion Group** will meet at least three times/year, focusing on practical on-farm demonstrations at different times of the year. Nevertheless, some farmers' groups may have more meetings, as may be deemed necessary. The **Farmer Discussion Groups** should be organized at local level and farmers should not be expected to travel more than 30-60 minutes from their home to participate in a Discussion Group.

All meal and travel costs should be paid for participating farmers, but they will **not be financially compensated for their time**.

It is anticipated that the motivation for farmers joining a Farmer Discussion Group will be for the purpose of learning how compliance with *CoGAP* can benefit his/her business and / or avoid the risk of prosecution for non-compliance¹² and for successfully implementing

¹² A recent (2013) independent study from Ireland shows that farmers who participate in Discussion Groups can achieve higher profits by: gaining new skills and knowledge through practical demonstration; interacting with and learning from the experience of other farmers in a similar situation; discussing and dealing with problems as a group in a friendly, open environment; keeping up-to-date with current issues, and; increasing contact with their local advisor. The study can be downloaded from: https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2013/Discussion_Group_Report_Web_Jan2013.pdf

investments under rural development funding which are conditioned by compliance with CoGAP rules.

Participants in the **Farmer Discussion Groups** will be expected to sign a simple “letter of commitment” in which they agree to attend all the meetings. It is suggested that individual Discussion Groups will not be initiated until at least 15 “letters of commitment” are signed. The target size for each Group is of 15 farmers, with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 18. The participants who attended all the meetings of a Discussion Group will receive an official ‘certificate of attendance’ from the INPCP. On top of the foreseen number of farmers (12 - 18), a Discussion Group may include up to maximum 4 public institutions representatives. Desirable, the total number of the trainees will not exceed 20 participants.

It should be avoided including in the same Farmer Discussion Group officials with control duties over the same area with the farmers, for avoiding possible reluctance / passive participation of farmers while expressing their problems.

The **Farmer Discussion Groups** must be carefully **targeted, considering especially the production sectors**. Given the diversity of farming systems in Romania it may **not be appropriate to mix farmers from different types / sizes of farm**. Special attention shall be given to households’ owners with livestock, farmers registered with irregularities under SMR1 due to APIA controls, rural development support beneficiaries for setting-up young farmers and for small farmers and agri-environment beneficiaries and the farmers that may benefit from the previous and future investments funded under the Integrated Nutrient Pollution Control Project (INPCP). Other categories of farmers should be considered, as justified by the Consultant.

The Consultant may propose and justify alternative approaches for the setting-up and running of the **Farmer Discussion Groups**.

All non-key experts should be agreed in advance by the **INPCP Project Management Unit**.

16. The approval of the **INPCP Project Management Unit** must be obtained for all the above elements of the Regional KTN before proceeding to Phase II.

3.2 Activities of Phase 2 - Implementation and dissemination

The scope of work for Phase 2 will be clearly defined by the Consultant in Phase 1 and agreed upon by the **INPCP Project Management Unit** before commencement of its implementation. The following minimum list of activities are anticipated:

1. Administrative procedures for engaging the **CoGAP Champions** with the Knowledge Transfer Network must be finalized at the start of Phase II before any planned activities commence. It is assumed that the **CoGAP Champions** will be offered appropriate compensation within the framework of a simple service agreement with the Consultant.
2. The core task for the first 12 months of Phase 2 will be implementing the **first annual programme of Farmer Discussion Groups** using the network of **CoGAP Champions** built in Phase 1. The further two **annual programmes of Farmer Discussion Groups** will be implemented in 2020 and 2021.
3. Each year, starting with 2019, should be foreseen one workshop (at least 80 participants) with the main scope of debating and centralizing the most important issues raised during trainings, including challenges in implementing the CoGAP. In workshops, all the agricultural sectors should be represented. Possible changes of the **CoGAP** and of the Local

Action Plans should be considered. Participants from relevant public institutions is recommended. Each workshop will be for one day and will include at least: a) coffee, drinks and open buffet for registration and breaks b) lunch c) compensation for the transportation costs d) workshop materials e) one overnight accommodation costs in case of participants travelling more than 200 km.

4. By the end of 2021, the Consultant should organize, in coordination with the Consultants from KTN I and KTN II, a national Conference (at least 120 participants, organized alternatively during 2019 – 2021, by each KTN, in cooperation with the other 2 KTN), gathering various stakeholders, including representatives from KTN I and KTN II and central institutions (MAP, MM, MARD, APIA, AFIR etc.). Special aim should be on presenting, from all KTN, success stories / innovation actions, challenges and lessons learnt, possible recommendations for policy makers for updating the **CoGAP** and the Local Action Plans. The Conference shall be for one day and will include at least: a) coffee, drinks and open buffet for registration and breaks b) lunch c) compensation for the transportation costs d) conference materials, e) 1 overnight accommodation costs in case of participants travelling more than 200 km.
5. A simple procedure for monitoring and evaluating the results of the first **annual program of Farmer Discussion Groups** should be put in place and followed. The results of the evaluation (including participant's feedback) should be used to refine subsequent Farmer Discussion Groups. The Discussion Groups are not a typical training format for Romania and it is possible that some adaptation will be required.
6. To enhance the learning processes within INPCP sub-component 2.1, the Consultant should collect a number of "**CoGAP success stories**" from the region for **dissemination** via other regional Knowledge Transfer Networks and the INPCP Project Management Unit. These "success stories" should include a full-range of practical examples of the **effective** and **profitable** implementation of all key obligations of the *CoGAP* in the specific context of the region. In the case of manure management, for example, this might range from traditional practices found on family small-holdings (*gospadaria*) to investment in innovative new technologies on large-scale intensive livestock enterprises.

It is likely that many of the **CoGAP success stories** collected from the region will originate from the **CoGAP Champions**.

5. During Phase 2, the Consultant should make recommendations for the **on-going implementation and describe how may be ensured the sustainability** of the Knowledge Transfer Network after the period of INPCP funding has ceased.

4. Required capacity and experience for KTN III: West, North-West and Centre Development Regions

Considering the complexity of the actions, it is expected that the assignment to be carried-out by an "association" consisting of 2 or more of the following entities: consulting firms, farmers` organizations, clusters (research institutes/universities and farmers), research institutes / universities, NGOs, Local Action Groups. The "association" may take the form of a Joint-Venture, with or without sub-consultancy, existent or formed for the purpose of submitting a proposal for the execution and completion of this assignment.

The Consultant should prove, for the last 5 years, general experience in working with farmers on agriculture or environment issues and specific experience in minimum 2 similar projects (on information dissemination and/or training activities related to farming environmental friendly practices). The Consultant should also demonstrate previous

experience on information dissemination and/or training activities, preferably in the targeted region.

This is an integrated assignment and the successful applicant will need to demonstrate **deep understanding, wide experience and appropriate capacity** in:

- a) the relationship between *CoGAP* and i) the eco-conditionality (cross-compliance) and greening rules for area-based support payments, and ii) the conditions for investment support under the *NRDP 2014-2020*;
- b) agricultural information dissemination, training and extension, with a specific emphasis upon participatory advisory approaches (including the facilitation of Farmer Discussion Groups).

It is expected that the Consultants team will include, at least, the following key experts:

1. **Team Leader** with at least 10 years of experience in management of practical advisory / training projects in the field of sustainable agriculture / environmental protection, having relevant university degree in agriculture, environmental sciences, economics or equivalent. Previous experience in Romania or neighboring countries, with World Bank, EU or other internationally funded projects will be considered an advantage.
2. At least one (1) **expert in agricultural and environmental policies** with at least 5 years of experience in working with the interpretation and implementation of the *CoGAP* and on Water Framework Directive / agri-environment-climate measures / CAP eco-conditionality (cross-compliance) / greening rules, having relevant university degree in agriculture, environmental sciences, economics or equivalent. Previous experience in Romania is required. Experience in neighboring countries, with World Bank, EU or other internationally funded projects will be considered an advantage.
3. At least one (1) **expert in communication** with at least 5 years of relevant experience in preparing user-friendly information materials (and other communication tools) for farmers, having relevant university degree in communication/journalism, sociology, psychology or equivalent. Previous experience in Romania or neighboring countries, with World Bank, EU or other internationally funded projects will be considered an advantage.
4. At least 1 **expert in communication with farmers** with at least 5 years of experience on information dissemination towards farmers, including via web-platforms, email, phone etc., having relevant university degree in communication/journalism, agronomy, agriculture sciences, sociology, psychology or equivalent. Previous experience in Romania or neighboring countries, with World Bank, EU or other internationally funded projects will be considered an advantage.
5. At least one (1) **expert in farm advisory techniques or communication between farmers** with at least 5 years of experience, including good knowledge and experience of the principles and practice of planning / running Farmer Discussion Groups / Interactive Demonstration of Good Farm Practices at farm site, having relevant university degree in agriculture, economics, environmental sciences or equivalent. Previous experience in Romania or neighboring countries, with World Bank, EU or other internationally funded projects will be considered an advantage.

It is the Consultant duty to assure that any of the proposed key experts are not also proposed, by the same Consultants, for the other regional KTNs.

In addition to the key experts, the Consultant must ensure at least 1 full-time non-key expert in agriculture to consolidate the information dissemination process at the level of the Network Hub and at least 2 full-time non-key experts for facilitating the training-sessions.

The Consultant's technical proposal should include detailed and well justified description of the expertise proposed, the capacity/means to ensure the CoGAP Champions within the region and a short description of the Farmer Discussion Groups training methodology. The Consultant should provide job descriptions and tasks assigned for each proposed position and clearly indicate the estimated staff time input for each expert proposed for each phase of the assignment. If appropriate, the Consultant should demonstrate they have access to all relevant analytical facilities considered necessary for execution of the assignment.

5. Duration of services and schedule of reports and deliverables

5.1 Duration of services

The duration of this assignment is estimated to be for a period ending no later than December 2021.

The Consultant will start the activities within 7 days from the effective date of the Contract. The duration of Phase 1 will be three (3) months from the commencement of services. Successful implementation of Phase 1 will be conditional for commencement of Phase 2. Phase 2 of the assignment will be implemented within a maximum period of thirty-six (36) months.

5.2 Reports and deliverables

Reports and Deliverables for Phase 1 - Detailed design and development

Inception Report The **Inception Report** will be due within **two weeks** from the commencement of services and will include:

- The **overall strategy** for management of the assignment, including a detailed timetable for mobilization of the key experts to implement Phases 1 and 2.
- A **detailed work plan for Phase 1** with clear identification and elaboration of:
 - i) all activities to be undertaken by the Consultant;
 - ii) link between the activities and the related outputs and result indicators set targets, as included within ToRs;
 - iii) the delegation of responsibility amongst the experts, and;
 - iv) allocation of resources.
- an **updated version of the preliminary work plan for Phase 2** that was submitted with the proposal. This will be a provisional update to take account of any agreements etc. during contract negotiation. The full work plan for Phase 2 will be elaborated in more detail during Phase 1.
- An **assessment of the potential risks** (if any) and possible measures to counteract them for timely and effective implementation of Phase 1.

Phase 1 Interim Report The **Phase 1 Interim Report** will be due by the end of phase I (**three months** as from the commencement of services) and will include:

- A **summary of the activities** undertaken in Phase 1;
- A **full description of the outputs** achieved in Phase 1,
- **Explanation for any deviation** from the detailed work plan for Phase 1 that was submitted with the Inception Report.

Deliverable 1 - Detailed Work Plan for Phase 2

Deliverable 1 will be a **Detailed Work Plan for Phase 2**. It will be due by the end of phase 1 (**three months as** from the commencement of services) and will include:

- A short description of: i) the agricultural systems characteristic of the Development Regions, and; ii) the water pollution issues associated with the different agricultural systems / farm types.
- Clear identification (with description, differentiation and justification) of the **specific farm types / sizes** forming the primary target group for Phase II of the assignment.
- If appropriate, clear identification (with description, differentiation and justification) of the **additional stakeholders / actors** forming the secondary target group for Phase II of the assignment.
- A detailed **work plan for Phase 2** of the assignment complete with comprehensive and detailed descriptions of:
 - a) the proposed network of on-farm demonstration facilities / **CoGAP Champions**;
 - b) the most appropriate / relevant **good agricultural practices** for demonstrating in the Development Regions, and;
 - c) the four **annual programs** of Farmer Discussion Groups (including the theme and dates of individual Discussion Groups, the CoGAP Champions to be visited and practices to be demonstrated etc.).
- A **full description of the methodology** that will be used for running the Farmer Discussion Groups, including contingency arrangements for over- or under-subscription, conflict / unexpected problems with CoGAP Champions etc.
- The **criteria and approach** for collecting and disseminating “CoGAP success stories” from the Development Regions.
- An **updated full cost estimate** for implementation of Phase 2 based on the unit rates as initially foreseen in the financial proposal.
- An **assessment of the potential risks** (if any) and possible measures to counteract them for timely and effective implementation of Phase 2.
- A **full description of the methodology and indicators** (quantitative and qualitative) that will be established by the Consultant to monitor and evaluate the results and impact of the Knowledge Transfer Network during its four years of implementation in Phase 2.

Deliverable 2 - Information and Training Materials

Deliverable 2 will be the **ready-to-print versions of the Information and Training Materials** prepared by the Consultant in Phase 1 according to the specific characteristics of the region.

This deliverable will be due by the end of phase I (**three months** from the commencement of services) and based on its approval by the Client the first Farmer Discussion Groups will be launched.

Reports and Deliverables for Phase 2 - Implementation and dissemination**Progress Reports**

Progress Reports will be due every 3 months from the commencement of Phase 2. Each report will include detailed information about the activities carried out during the reporting period; a list of any new service agreements with CoGAP Champions; the results of the monitoring and evaluation indicators against the set targets; a centralized table with all the participants evaluations results and the analysis of the results,

including future training needs identified by the Consultant, additional observations, feedback and comments; problems encountered (and how resolved); a list of the CoGAP Success Stories collected, and; recommendations for the forthcoming period.

Reports on the Workshops and Conference implemented actions and outcomes should be delivered by the Consultant.

The Progress Reports will also include a detailed description and schedule of activities for the next three months.

All Progress Reports should be as clear and concise as possible.

Phase 2 Interim Report

The **Phase 2 Interim Report** will be due by **31 December, 2019** (approximately half-way through the implementation of Phase 2) and will include:

- A **synthesis of all Progress Reports** from the 2018 and 2019 seasonal programs of Farmer Discussion Groups, including:
 - i) a summary of all activities carried out;
 - ii) the outputs and results of monitoring and evaluation (with reference to the indicators defined in ToRs);
 - iii) additional observations, feedback and comments, and;
 - iv) all problems encountered and they were how resolved.
- A **summary of all lessons learnt to-date** regarding practical implementation of the Knowledge Transfer Network and **recommendations** for the remaining period of Phase 2 in 2020 and 2021.
- A **list of the CoGAP Success Stories** collected and disseminated to-date.
- A **detailed explanation of any adjustments proposed** to the network of on-farm demonstration facilities / CoGAP Champions; the agricultural practices being demonstrated; the remaining seasonal programs of Farmer Discussion Groups, or; the methodology used for running the Farmer Discussion Groups.
- An **updated work plan** for the remaining period of Phase 2 in 2020 and 2021.
- **Detailed recommendations** for the on-going implementation and sustainability of the Knowledge Transfer Network after 2021 when the period of INPCP funding has ceased.

Final Report

The **Final Report** will be due by **31 December, 2021** (after the completion of Phase 2) and will include:

- A **synthesis of all Progress Reports** from the 2020 and 2021 seasonal programs of Farmer Discussion Groups, including:
 - i) a summary of all activities carried out;
 - ii) the results of monitoring and evaluation (with reference to the indicators defined in Phase 1);
 - iii) additional observations, feedback and comments, and;
 - iv) all problems encountered and they were how resolved.
- The **overall results of the monitoring and evaluation of Phase 2**, including the Consultant's assessment of the overall outcomes and results of the assignment with reference to its general and specific objectives.

- A **summary of all experience gained and practical lessons learned** regarding practical implementation of the Knowledge Transfer Network.
- A **list of all CoGAP Success Stories** collected and disseminated in Phase 2.
- Final recommendations for the on-going implementation and sustainability of the Knowledge Transfer Network after 2021 when the period of INPCP funding has ceased. At the end of his assignment, the Consultant will prepare a detailed assessment of all these results, will present the most efficient proved actions, as well as the ones that proved less efficient, and will make detailed recommendations for the future activities of KTNs.

Deliverable 3 - Service Agreements with CoGAP Champions Deliverable 3 will be the **signed Service Agreements** between the Consultant and the CoGAP Champions that will form the basis of the network of on-farm demonstration facilities used by the Knowledge Transfer Network.

The first tranche of Service Agreements must be agreed and signed within 3 weeks from the commencement of Phase 2. It is anticipated that additional Service Agreements will be agreed and signed throughout the Phase 2 implementation period. All new Service Agreements should be listed in the Progress Reports that are prepared and submitted every 3 months, together with a short description of the CoGAP Champions.

Deliverable 4 - Farmer Discussion Groups Deliverable 4 will be the **planned and successfully implemented Farmer Discussion Groups** that are delivered within the framework of the four seasonal programs of Discussion Groups organized in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. To these should be added 3 regional workshops (2019, 2020 and 2021) and the National Conference.

This deliverable is dynamic and will accumulate during the full period of Phase 2. The deliverable will be regularly reported and reviewed in the Progress Reports, Phase 2 Interim Report and Final Report (see above).

Deliverable 5 - CoGAP Success Stories Deliverable 4 will be the **portfolio of CoGAP Success Stories** collected and disseminated by the Consultant within the framework of the four seasonal programs of Discussion Groups organized in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

This deliverable is dynamic and will accumulate during the full period of Phase 2. The deliverable will be regularly reported and reviewed in the Progress Reports, Phase 2 Interim Report and Final Report (see above).

6. Facilities provided by the client

The Client will provide access to all existing data and information that is: a) relevant to the scope of work, and; b) reasonably required by the Consultant to perform the tasks under this assignment.

7. Institutional arrangements

The appointed Consultant will work in close cooperation with the specialists within the INPCP Project Management Unit.

All reports prepared by the Consultant will be submitted to the Authorized Representative of the INPCP Project Management Unit for analysis and approval by the commission nominated by the Client for this purpose. All reports will be submitted in one printed copy and in electronic format, both in English and Romanian.

If necessary, the Consultant will respond to comments from the Client by modifying, amending or supplementing the reports and resubmitting them to the Client within 15 working days as from the receipt of such comments.

Approval of the reports will constitute the basis for payments to the Consultant under the terms of their contract.

Full and effective cooperation is also expected with other Consultants conducting assignments under sub-component 2.1 of the INPCP. It is anticipated that at the country level there will be a total of three **Regional Knowledge Transfer Networks**.

A single Consultant **may submit a proposal for one or more of the Knowledge Transfer Networks**. Where multiple proposals are submitted, the Consultant should clearly identify the complementarities / synergies between the proposals and any advantages that are created for overall implementation of INPCP sub-component 2.1.