

Terms of Reference

NATAE **Fostering agroecology transition in North Africa through multi-actor, evaluation, and networking**

Expertise on Social Acceptability of Agroecological Practices - focus on North Africa

1. Context

NATAE (Fostering agroecology transition in North Africa through multi-actor, evaluation, and networking) is a Research and Innovation project under the Horizon Europe programme funded by the European Union. NATAE will run for four years (December 2022-November 2026) with the aim to foster the adoption of science-based, locally-tailored and co-designed agroecology strategies in North Africa. This is planned by creating a comprehensive and quantitative baseline on agroecology, providing a shared understanding, multidimensional performance measures, and analyses of agroecology potential for meeting consumers demand on the market.

Coordinated by CIHEAM Montpellier, NATAE gathers 22 partners including research and education institutions from around the Mediterranean, international organisations, specialized NGOs and local associations with the participation of the private sector. The project will rely on participatory approaches to be used in 6 North African countries to identify optimal combinations of agroecological practices, discuss their overall performance, and develop a replicable methodology to design evidence-based and locally-tailored strategies for agroecology transitions. Through the project's 9 Work Packages, the aims are to (i) identify, evaluate and eventually promote the best observed and experimented combinations of practices inspired by agroecology in North Africa, and (ii) to set up a Mediterranean agroecological network for knowledge exchange and advocacy at regional level.

The approach is based on Multi-Actor Labs called Living Labs, as territories that are anchored in specific agroecosystems of North Africa. Each Living Lab will mobilize: (i) an interdisciplinary research team supervised by the Living Lab Leader; (ii) a local facilitator (usually an NGO with proven knowledge of local actors and challenges); (iii) a group of stakeholders with various profiles and responsibilities in a potential agroecological transition (NATAE adopts a global approach to agroecological transitions, considering all stakeholders involved from farm to fork and at territorial & food system level); (iv) a representative board of Living Lab stakeholders. NATAE Living Labs are led by CARI (in Algeria), CIHEAM IAMM (in Egypt), ENAM in relation with IAV (in Morocco), GRDR (in Mauritania), INAT (in Tunisia)¹.

A considerable amount of data will be collected, through experimentation and surveys, but also generated, through the use of an integrated modelling chain.

¹ CIHEAM IAMM: The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier; INAT: National Agronomic Institute of Tunisia, IAV: Agronomic and Veterinary Institute Hassan II, ENAM: Meknes National School of Agriculture, GRDR: Groupe De Recherche Et De Realisations Pour Le Developpement Rural, CARI : Centre d'Actions et de Réalisations Internationales.

2. Objective of the Expertise

The transformation of agriculture to a sustainable food production system based on a combination of agro-ecological practices (AEPs) requires constructive societal dialogue to reach a socially accepted approach for change. Such transition, especially if it needs deep changes, requires transformative innovations that are most relevant to the territorial context (Brunson, 1993) with all its environmental, social, economic, technical and cultural dimensions. Hence, the social acceptability of the technical, institutional and behavioural changes is crucial to the establishment of clear transition pathways towards the adoption of AE practices and products in sustainable food systems (Moula et al., 2013).

According to Brunson and Shindler (2004), social acceptability is defined as a judgment that people make about whether an action, attribute or condition is considered preferable to possible alternatives. Gendron, 2014, precises that SA is a collective evaluation rather than an individual position, in the sense that the judgment of acceptability participates in the social dynamics likely to forge and transform it. Thus, the author stresses that social acceptability is primarily determined by shared values and beliefs, while acknowledging that individual preferences can also play a role in shaping this collective judgment.

Social acceptability is influenced by these social dynamics: changes in relations between experts, decision-makers and civil society reflect this dynamic. As civil society has become more active, it has more capacities to challenge decisions, eventually by mobilizing its own experts. As a result, social acceptability is shaped by complex social interactions, in which values, beliefs and scientific knowledge play an important role.

Under NATAE's Work Package 3, a specific task (T.3.3) aims to:

1. **Develop a replicable methodology to:**
 - Assess the social acceptability of AE practices (and combinations of practices) by farmers, farmer networks, actors in the value chain and supporting institutions at territorial level;
 - Identify suitable instruments to strengthen acceptability, adapted to the local context of NATAE Living Labs.
2. **Oversee, facilitate and capitalize** all tasks on social acceptability in NATAE project, with the aim: (i) to help design evidence-based and locally-tailored strategies for agroecology transitions in North Africa, and (ii) to feed in policy recommendations in support of agroecological transitions.

An expert (or team of experts) contracted by CIHEAM-IAMM will consider those critical dimensions, in designing a methodology and tools to assess the social acceptability of AEPs in NATAE Living Labs. In particular, specific questionnaires and interview guidelines will be developed to be used by researchers in each LL area. The methodology and tools will consider the diverse contexts of the LL, in a territorial approach, and thus be fine-tuned in collaboration with NATAE LL Leaders.

The methodology developed should be suitable to be implemented with researchers in the different Living Labs, who are not specialized in social acceptability analyses. The research on social acceptability should be embedded – to the extent possible – in approaches and steps already foreseen for the Living Lab approach.

To help design a strategy for agroecological transition tailored to local contexts, social acceptability analyses should bring light on a number of research and policy questions:

- What are the main factors which facilitate or limit social acceptability of agroecological practices?
- What are the sources of heterogeneity in social acceptability among various types of practices or various contexts?
- Which actors, platforms or social networks play a key role in influencing social acceptability?
- Can specific measures/approaches facilitate social acceptability of specific agroecological practices, or agroecological practices combinations?
- Does project intervention strengthen acceptability? Under which key conditions?

3. Main tasks

The role of the Expert(s) will be to provide in-depth expertise in social acceptability at different stages of NATAE project, ensuring the coordination and completion of T3.3, under the leadership of CIHEAM IAMM.

The Expert(s) will be requested to:

1. Elaborate a **tailored methodology** to assess social acceptability in NATAE project. Social Acceptability will be assessed at the level of the participating Living Labs, maximizing synergies with other activities conducted through the Living Labs. In particular, close synergy with experimentations co-designed, implemented and re-evaluated in a participatory approach is expected. A **draft methodology** will be discussed with the project coordinator (CIHEAM IAMM), the Living Lab component coordinator (Wageningen University), Living Lab leaders (see above), and leaders of tasks with which close synergies will be proposed. Approaches developed should be fully in line with the Ethics guidelines and Data Management Plan adopted in NATAE.
2. Prepare detailed **data collection tools**, such as interviews or focus group guidelines.
3. **Test and Implement the research**, providing an in-depth focus on social acceptability, on **one or two** of the abovementioned **Living Lab(s)** in agreement and close cooperation with the Living Lab leader.
4. **Refine the methodology and data collection tools based on the first implementation phase**
5. **Train** researchers designated by the Living Labs leaders in the implementation of the refined research.
6. **Oversee and support** the implementation of the research on social acceptability for the whole project. This includes:
 - answering **questions** which may arise from the implementation of the research in any Living Lab area;
 - fostering **collective work**, partners dialogue and coherent implementation of the overall task T3.3, in close coordination with CIHEAM-IAMM and WP3 leader (University of Thessaly);
 - ensuring the **quality and consistency** of the relevant contributions to project deliverables as listed below in the section on "Deliverables".
7. **Review** analyses on social acceptability developed in Living Lab areas
8. **Produce transversal analyses** necessary to the deliverables listed in the section below.

Option: In addition to the research on social acceptability of agroecological practices, candidates can also propose to reflect on the social acceptability of the living lab approach, in close coordination with Living Lab coordinators and WP Leader (Wageningen University).

4. Deliverables

All dates and deadlines listed below correspond to the current NATAE Gant Chart and project advancement. Those could be revised during the project by NATAE Coordinator and General Assembly, pending approval by the European Commission for all formal project deliverables (see below).

The expertise is intended to start in **September 2023**.

The Expert(s) should produce:

- Draft methodology and research tools, by **November 2023**.
- First implementation in one LL from November 2023
- Final **methodology and research tools**, by **January 2024**.
- **Training** of research teams, by **February-March 2024**.
- In **depth social acceptability analysis** in one Living Lab, by **November 2024**.

The Expert(s) should also produce dedicated contributions to the following NATAE Deliverables, which are expected to include **dedicated data and report sections on Social Acceptability**:

- Results of surveys implemented at farm and value chain levels, in each LL areas (report and synthetic data,) due to the European Commission in November 2024 => **specific data set and data analysis** on Social Acceptability for the first LL (test), to be produced under the supervision of the Expert(s);
- Synthesis report on AE Value Chains, identifying levers and potential policy measures to foster AE transitions in the LL areas, due in November 2024 => **specific report Chapter** on Social Acceptability to be produced by the Expert(s) including final methodology, result analysis for the first LL;
- Second results of surveys implemented at farm and value chain levels, in each LL areas. Data will be accompanied by an analytical synthesis for each survey completed, due in November 2025 => **specific data set and data analysis** on Social Acceptability, to be produced under the supervision of the Expert(s) for all relevant LL in the project.

Draft data sets and contributions for those deliverables will be submitted by the Expert(s) or under their supervision at the latest in **October 2024**.

Draft data sets and contributions for D4.7 will be submitted in **September 2025**.

It is expected that the findings on Social Acceptability outlined in the deliverable above mentioned will feed in the following strategic deliverables:

- Strategic options for AE transition, due in January 2025;
- Evaluated strategic options for AE transition: Synthesis of promising option derived from participatory analyses and assessments at LL level, due in January 2026.

It is expected that the expert(s) in Social Acceptability **contribute to the drafting, and review** those deliverables with critical mobilization in **December 2024-January 2025**; and **December 2025-January 2026**.

Duration: The overall execution of these tasks is expected to be implemented over 2,5 years, on a part time basis.

Location: The expert(s) is(are) expected to ensure a close coordination of the research on social acceptability to be conducted in each of the 6 NATAE Living Labs.

5. Confidentiality- Conflicts of Interest

The Expert or Experts contracted will be expected to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement and a Declaration of an absence of Conflict of Interest to warrant independence and the provision of fair ethical judgements and expertise.

The Social Acceptability Expert(s) will maintain regular contact with the Project Coordinator (CIHEAM-IAMM) as the main partners bearing responsibilities for the task under NATAE. The Social Acceptability Expert(s)'s principal link to the task participants remains the Project Coordinator.

6. Required qualifications

The Social Acceptability Expert must meet the following requirements:

- A PhD degree or equivalent, in **rural sociology, social psychology, economy, geography with a focus on Social Acceptability analysis preferably in the Mediterranean / North African region;**
- At least 5 years of prior experience in the field of **social or psychosocial analysis in rural and agricultural areas in the Mediterranean;**
- Experience in **multi-actor and interdisciplinary approaches** is highly appreciated;
- Excellent oral and written communication skills in **English** (the official language of the project) and/or **French** (preferred communication language with certain task participants and local partners, and needed for most of the administrative tasks); **Arabic** knowledge is a plus.

Other appreciated skills include:

- Capacity to facilitate dialogue between different stakeholders, such as scientists, NGOs and international organisations and to moderate discussions and debates;
- An interest in agroecology;
- Organizational skills, ability to establish and maintain lasting and constructive formal relationships;
- Dynamism, reactivity and autonomy;
- Excellent writing and reporting skills (work plans, technical reports and other acts and management, ordinary correspondence, notes, messages, summary sheets);
- Teamwork, particularly in a multicultural and multi-disciplinary context;
- Ability to propose solutions to problems and critical issues that might arise during the project.

The selection committee will consider both the proposal from a single expert or a team of experts: in case of a team proposal, attention will be paid to how the team is complementary scientifically, and also how it contributes to capacity building and transfer of knowledge between senior and junior experts

7. Submission of proposals and main criteria for evaluation

Interested applicants are invited to submit the following:

- CV detailing relevant previous experience for the candidate expert(s);
- A step by step description of the proposed methodology;
- A provisional budget including a breakdown of the main planned tasks, for each of the proposed expert, and specific identification of travel and subsistence costs.

Proposals should be submitted **in English** by email with the subject “**NATAE Social Acceptability Expertise Proposal**” addressed to:

Virginie Avignon, NATAE Project Assistant : avignon@iamm.fr and

Rita Jalkh, NATAE Project Manager: jalkh@iamm.fr and

Melanie Requier-Desjardins, NATAE Scientific Coordinator: requier@iamm.fr

Main criteria for evaluating the proposals will be: the qualification of the candidate(s), relevant experience, proposed methodology and price. The selection process may include interviews (through Zoom or phone), as well as a pre-selection phase followed by requests for complementary information / negotiation if required.

A maximum of 30 000 euros for human resources and of 10 000 euros for travel and field subsistence costs is expected.

Deadline for submission: 24 Septembre 2023

8. Contact at IAMM

For any information, please liaise with the NATAE Scientific Coordinator and Project Manager using the emails listed above. Additional information on NATAE project can also be found on NATAE website: <https://www.natae-agroecology.eu/>