BE-CLME+ Project: Promoting National Blue Economy Priorities Through Marine Spatial Planning in the Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Plus (GEF Project ID 10211)

Terms of Reference for a Regional Consultancy for the Assessment of Bottlenecks to Value Chain Value-Added Opportunities and the Identification of 'Optimal' Value Chains in Caribbean Fisheries

1.0 Background & Justification.

1.1 The BE-CLME+ Project is a regional initiative aimed at promoting blue economy development in the Caribbean region through Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF), development of climate-smart sustainable fisheries value chains, and knowledge management in Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Panama. The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) is the Executing Agency for the project, while the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations are the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Co-Implementing Agencies.

1.2 The 2024-2025 BE: CLME+ Project Workplan & Budget was approved by the Regional Steering Committee on 6th September 2024, and calls for the linkage of the regional consultancy for the Assessment of bottlenecks to Value Chain Added-Value Opportunities and the Identification of 'Optimal' Value Chains in Caribbean Fisheries under Component 2 of the project.

1.3 The main barriers for improvements in the value chain are bottlenecks which may be due to the legal and/or institutional framework of the different fisheries in different countries and regions. The manifestation of these bottlenecks can be lack of capital/investments which again leads to poor quality, low prices to fishers and difficulty in accessing markets. Therefore, determining the bottlenecks in value chains helps guide the selection of value chains for optimization by identifying the specific constraints or inefficiencies that are limiting performance or growth. Adding, that optimising all the value chain components can result in substantial end-to-end cost savings from streamlined processes, reduced inefficiencies and waste, better inventory control, traceability standards, and improved product quality. This is crucial as it will allow stakeholders to focus their resources on areas where they can retain most of the value generated, maximising impact and contributing directly to the strengthening of local fishing communities.

2.0 Objective of the Consultancy.

The objective of this consultancy is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of relevant value chains in project countries to identify the barriers to seafood value chain value-added opportunities and the identification of value chains for optimization in Caribbean fisheries. The assessment should:

i. identify and detail the weakest linkages, barriers, and bottlenecks across the entire value chain from harvesting to final consumption and outline recommendations or mitigation strategies to overcome these barriers, thereby enhancing the economic returns of the fisheries, and in turn the bottom line of stakeholders.

ii. Detailed assessment of one (1) value chain from each project country after consultation with country representatives to ensure alignment with national priorities.

iii. identify value chains to be optimised in the six (6) participating countries through the development of country-specific case studies and guided by analysis and best practices of case studies and lessons learnt at the international and regional levels. The Consultancy will build on and complement the findings of another consultancy being implemented by the BE: CLME+ Project: Analysis of Existing Value Chains and Identification of Opportunities for New Value Chains in Caribbean Fisheries, which will provide baseline information critical to this consultancy.

3.0 Key Activities will include, but not be limited to those listed below.

Convene Inception Meeting and Prepare Inception report

3.1 The CRFM/PMU shall convene a meeting with the consultant and project countries' national focal points to provide any clarification and additional information on the activities, after which the consultant shall prepare an Inception Report which should include a detailed work plan and timelines for the execution of the expected outputs.

Conduct Assessment of Bottlenecks and Recommendations for Added-Value Opportunities

3.2 Conduct a comprehensive review of existing research, reports, and case studies on Caribbean fisheries, relevant to the region with a focus on fisheries value chains and bottleneck assessments.

3.3 Identify key fisheries within the Caribbean such as lobster, conch, seabob, tuna, dolphinfish, seamoss/seaweed, and other species relevant to the project countries and prioritise those demonstrating socio-economic potential or where bottlenecks exist.

3.4 Conduct a stakeholder consultation (workshops or focus groups) in coordination with the National Focal Points and National Fisheries Authorities of each project country, to collect data and key insights into barriers faced along the value chain, conduct physical visits and hold consultations with key fisheries value chain stakeholders in all six project countries.

3.5 Map stakeholders in the value chain and provide graphic illustrations of the weak linkages, barriers, and bottlenecks that exist along the value chains clearly depicting all actors and their functions, the flow of information, and products/goods.

3.6 Analyse constraints to added-value opportunities such as policy and regulatory challenges, market access limitations, capacity gaps, quality management systems, including environmental and gender considerations. The analysis should assess the enabling policy environment as a lack of supportive policies undermine the development and enforcement of regulations. Also, the capacity of value chain actors in terms of knowledge and skills to optimize the use of resources including extension services. Identify infrastructure and financial services gaps that may impact value addition. Consideration should be given to how social norms, such as gender dynamics, influence value chain operations and the market environment. Furthermore, assessment of environmental challenges such as natural disasters, climate change, and other external shocks, and their impacts on fisheries productivity, resource availability, and supply chain stability. Attention should be given to quality management systems to ensure compliance with industry standards and sanitary and phytosanitary measures that affect trade as well as taxes and tariffs.

3.7 Develop recommendations to address bottlenecks and unlock value-added potential in the fisheries value chain. These recommendations should include measures such as policy adjustments, capacity-building, or financing options to foster an enabling environment for value chain improvements that includes a results-based action plan that stakeholders can implement.

3.8 Ensure the recommendations identified to mitigate against bottlenecks identified for value chain value-added opportunities consider socio-economic and gender dynamics such as the empowerment of women, indigenous peoples, youth, and other vulnerable groups.

3.9 Ensure these recommendations better embrace Marine Spatial Planning and Blue Economy principles, including clear and visible representation of the role of women in fisheries value chains and blue justice.

Identify Optimal Fisheries Value Chains using a Case-Study Approach

3.10 Investigate and document best case scenarios or practices of successful seafood value chains at the international, regional or national levels. Leverage findings from prior consultancies and relevant case-studies to inform the selection of optimal fisheries value chains tailored to the specific context of each of the six project countries. Ensure the assessment uses profitability, efficiency, sustainability, and resilience as key indicators.

3.11 Engage key stakeholders responsible for fisheries and fisheries related activities such as the national fisheries authorities, private sector actors, small-scale fisherfolk, national fisherfolk organisations, and relevant research institutions, to develop a structured value chain selection criteria. At least one priority fishery value chain should be identified per project country, with a justification based on the framework.

3.12 For each value chain to be optimised, present an assessment of the factors that affect value chain performance such as the policy environment, regulations, Sanitary and Phytosanitary procedures, traceability, best practices, quality and presentation of fish and fish products, and tangible constraints such as access to finance, technology and markets, and less tangible dynamics that involve the nature of relationships and incentives that can constrain competitiveness.

3.13 Identify opportunities for innovation and market intelligence (processing techniques), product diversification (market form or new products), digitalization (traceability, market access and linkages), product differentiation, certification and compliance schemes (MSC, ASC, PC, Fair Trade), sales and distribution strategies (branding, e-commerce, niche markets), and marketing opportunities (partnerships, alliances, PPPs, commercialization). The recommendations should align with national economic priorities and consumer trends in local and export markets in project countries.

3.14 For each value chain to be optimised conduct a financial and feasibility analysis, market assessment, market determinant factors, governance, seafood trade (local and imported), implementation plans, marketing and distribution strategies or roadmap ensuring that the economic impact or desired outcome is comprehensively examined to determine the best course of action that enhances the seafood value chain and addresses areas of national priorities in project countries.

3.15 Provide graphic illustrations of optimised value chains clearly depicting all actors and activities, processes, inputs, outputs, connectivity and interlinkages, assumptions, including flow of goods and information.

Prepare Final Report (Recommendations and Roadmap)

3.16 Prepare a comprehensive report detailing findings, analyses, recommendations, or roadmap ensuring actionable recommendations for optimising the value chains with a focus on strengthening of seafood value chains and markets, including empowerment of women, indigenous peoples, youth, and vulnerable groups.

3.17 The findings should also include recommendations for enhancement and expansion of seafood market forms and packaging that meet consumer preferences and improve quality, marketability, and value of seafood products, policy recommendations that will foster an enabling environment for the growth of seafood value chains, and considerations for building resilience to natural disasters, climate change, and other external shocks.

3.18 Develop an outline of a framework for the monitoring and evaluating the progress of the implemented recommendations, roadmaps, or strategies including key indicators and metrics for success.

3.19 The optimization of fisheries value chains shall include recommendations for adapting value chain practices to better embrace Marine Spatial Planning and Blue Economy principles, including clear and visible representation of the role of women in fisheries value chains and blue justice.

3.20 This consultancy must consult with partners of the BE: CLME+ Project, including but not limited to Central American Fisheries and Aquaculture Organization (OSPESCA), PROCARIBE+ Project (both of whom are involved with traceability work in the fisheries sector), Non-partners such as FISH4ACP Project and GCAF Project, and the National Fisheries Authorities who have made varying degrees of progress in value chain analyses at the national level.

3.21 Consult with the CRFM/PMU and be informed of the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) triggered by the BE: CLME+ Project and identify where value chain optimization may be in violation of ESS and make specific recommendations to ensure value chain compliance with ESS. In the optimization of fisheries value chains ensure these comply with the ESS triggered by the BE: CLME+ Project.

3.22 In coordination with the CRFM/PMU, organise and convene virtual national workshops in each project country and a virtual regional workshop to present the results of the value chain optimizations and to discuss synergies with other national and regional activities and projects.

3.23 Develop at least one (1) communication and visibility material for each country plus one which integrates the results in all countries for regional dissemination. These materials will be submitted to the CRFM/PMU for review, vetting of content, and onward communication via the CRFM's Knowledge Management and Information System and broader regional network.

Final Technical Report

3.24 Prepare a final technical report that highlights the under-mentioned, inter-alia:

a) The nature of the assignment undertaken, noting the level of success and constraints;
b) The quality of participation in consultations;
c) Lessons learned during the assignment;
d) Any limitations to the outputs and their intended use; and
e) Recommendations for continued monitoring of project outcomes and sustainability.

4.0 Expected Outcomes and Deliverables.

4.1 The consultant(s) are expected to deliver the following products:
Product 1: Inception Report – A Report detailing activities, milestones, timeline, and a robust methodology to carry out the assignment.

Product 2: Draft Preliminary Report on the Assessment of bottlenecks to value chain added-value opportunities (consistent with Sections 3.2 to 3.9 of these Terms of Reference).

Product 3: Final Report on Assessment of bottlenecks to value chain added-value opportunities and Draft Report on the Identification of Optimal Value Chains in Caribbean Fisheries (consistent with Sections 3.10 to 3.16 of these Terms of Reference).

Product 4: Final Report on the Assessment of bottlenecks to value chain added-value opportunities and the Identification of Optimal Value Chains in Caribbean Fisheries (consistent with Sections 3.17 to 3.24 of these Terms of Reference).

Product 5: Materials consistent with Section 6.0 of these Terms of Reference.

Product 6: Final Technical Report.

5.0 Project Schedule and Milestones.

Deliverable/s	Date	Payments
Product 1: Inception Report detailing activities, milestones, timeline, and a robust methodology to carry out the assignment.	0.5 month after contract signature	10% of contract value
Product 2: Draft Preliminary Report on Assessment of bottlenecks (consistent with Sections 3.2 to 3.9 of these Terms of Reference).	3.0 months after contract signature	30% of contract value
Product 3: Final Report on Assessment of bottlenecks & Draft Report on the Identification of Optimal Value Chains in Caribbean Fisheries (consistent with Sections 3.10 to 3.16 of these Terms of Reference).	4.0 months after contract signature	30% of contract value
Product 4: Final reports (consistent with Sections 3.17 to 3.24 of Terms of Reference)	7.0 months after contract signature	20% of contract value
Product 5: Communication Materials consistent with Section 6.0 of Terms of Reference		
Product 6: Final Technical Report	8.0 months after contract signature	10% of contract value

6.0 Reporting Requirements.

6.1 The consultant will present the deliverables following the schedule established in section 5 of these terms of reference. The deliverables must include reports in Word, PowerPoint presentation of major findings and recommendations, and other documents used as the basis of the analysis (including other formats such as Excel spreadsheets, etc. as applicable) and a folder with the list of bibliographic references used to develop the analysis. All reports should follow the CRFM Guidelines for Publications and Reports. All materials must be delivered in **English. The following final**

deliverables must be submitted in both English and Spanish: Final reports (Product 4) and Visibility Material (Product 5) must be delivered. All reports, studies, plans, drawings, source code, technical data, specifications, and any other material prepared by or worked upon by the consultant exclusively for the CRFM under this Agreement are the sole and exclusive property of the CRFM and as such the CRFM has exclusive title, rights, and interest in all such material including the right of dissemination, reproduction, and publication. The consultant will also work closely with the Regional Project Coordinator and the Marine Spatial Planning Specialist of the BE-CLME+ Project on the assignment.

7.0 Acceptance Criteria.

7.1 Payments will be authorised once the CRFM accepts the products specified by the TOR. The CRFM will have up to three weeks to provide written comments/recommendations to the consultant(s) reports. Unless previously determined, the CRFM will generally accept the deliverables once the consultant or consulting firm confirms the following: (i) receipt and additional inclusion of comments/recommendations in a revised version and (ii) provision of date for presentation of the revised versions of the submitted deliverables. The consultant(s) are expected to include these comments two weeks after receipt.

8.0 Consultant's Efforts and Required Skills

8.1 Applicants should meet the following requirements:

- At least a master's degree in Value Chain Management, Fisheries Economics, Agricultural Economics, Agri-business Management, Natural Resource Economics, Fisheries Resources Management, or other relevant and related fields.
- Training in value chains, investment analysis, finance, marketing, business planning, management, or economics, or trade will be an asset.
- Minimum of 5 years' experience in fisheries value chain analysis, agricultural economics, or business and marketing analysis of food products.
- Experience in consultancy work related to value chains, market analysis and feasibility, fisheries management plans, and public private partnerships, in relation to food products.
- Experience in facilitating regional stakeholder meetings or discussions.
- Experience working with resource users across marine-related sectors, especially in the fisheries, protected areas, tourism, recreational fisheries, and maritime transport.
- Ability to work with senior government officials, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local communities.
- A good understanding of dynamics of the fishery sector, social dimensions, markets, trade, fisheries management, eco-systems-approach to fisheries, and blue economy.
- Work experience in any of the project countries or within the region.

9.0 Application and Selection Procedure.

9.1 Interested consulting teams / firms are invited to submit their Technical and Financial Proposal outlining observations on these Terms of Reference, understanding of the objectives of the assignment, details of methodology to be applied, proposed work plan and timeline, personnel to be involved, skills and Curriculum Vitae of all proposed team members, declaration of availability, declaration of no conflict of interest, and tax-inclusive price proposal with details of professional fees for team members, logistics, travel, printing, and all other associated costs.

9.2 Technical and Financial Proposals will be evaluated using a Quality and Cost-Based Selection procedure, in which the Technical Proposal can be awarded a maximum of 70% of the evaluation score and price a maximum of 30% of the evaluation score.

9.3 Please submit your application in PDF format by July 26, 2025 to jobs@crfm.int and secretariat@crfm.int.