Canadian Field Crop Research Alliance
Canadian Field Crop Cluster – 2018-2023
Request for Letter of Intent (LOI)
Deadline: January 8, 2017

BACKGROUND

The Canadian Field Crop Research Alliance (CFCRA) is a not-for-profit entity founded in 2010 with an interest in advancing the genetic capacity of field crops in Canada, particularly barley, corn, oat, soybean, and wheat. The Alliance is comprised of provincial farm organizations and industry partners, including: Atlantic Grains Council; Producteurs de grains du Québec, Grain Farmers of Ontario, Manitoba Corn Growers Association, Manitoba Pulse & Soybean Growers, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, SeCan Association, and PepsiCo Global R&D.

Since 2013, the CFCRA has been managing a five-year, $10.3 million AgriScience cluster, in collaboration with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) under the Industry-Led Research and Development Stream of the Growing Forward 2 (GF2) AgriInnovation Program. This Canadian Field Crop Genetics Improvement Cluster focuses on providing Canadian corn and soybean growers, and eastern Canadian barley and oat growers with enhanced genetics for high-yielding, low input, disease-resistant varieties while addressing the needs of the market for value-added traits that deliver higher levels of nutrition and improved processing attributes. The CFCRA is also involved in a separate GF2 AgriScience cluster program focussed on wheat, entitled the National Wheat Improvement Program, led by the Western Grains Research Foundation.

As the current Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) comes to an end in March 2018, CFCRA intends to build on the success of the current cluster by developing a new Canadian Field Crop Cluster for submission to the next generation of research funding initiatives to be announced under the next APF. In preparation for this new cluster application, CFCRA is requesting Letters of Intent (LOI) from researchers to identify strategic research projects and collaborations that would strengthen the value of the Canadian bioeconomy and provide significant benefits to Canadians in years to come. The next APF is expected to be accepting funding applications by summer 2017, and to be fully launched by April 1, 2018.

While the existing cluster supports corn and soybean research nationally, and barley and oat for eastern Canada, a new Canadian Field Crop Cluster would support research on corn, oat and soybean nationally, and eastern Canadian barley. With an expanded geographic scope in mind, CFCRA is strongly encouraging national collaborations on projects, where relevant.

While the CFCRA is the lead handling the development of a group of research projects to specifically address eastern Canadian barley priorities, it is important to note that we are
coordinating with the Barley Council of Canada in this effort. The Barley Council of Canada (BCC) has been leading an effort to generate a list of national barley priorities and the two organizations are working closely together to develop cluster research programs that will be functional and will ensure the long-term competitiveness of the barley value chains across Canada under the next APF.

Overall, research projects should have the goal of widespread use of final results for well-defined end users in Canada. This includes a well thought out communication plan for knowledge transfer of research results to specific target audiences.

**SCOPE OF THE PROPOSED CLUSTER**

The CFCRA has developed a document detailing research priorities that it would like to see specifically addressed though its research cluster under the next APF. This list of research priorities is not comprehensive, but rather identifies strategic priorities that, after consultations with industry stakeholders, the CFCRA identified as key to address through a national cluster funding program under the CFCRA. Please review this research priority document that is included in the Request for LOI package as LOIs must explicitly address one or more of the priorities.

Although the predominant focus of current CFCRA research activities has been on genetic improvement through breeding, the CFCRA recognizes the importance of research on the entire field cropping system. The enclosed LOI priority document reflects this shift in focus with some agronomy priorities.

Several field crop funding organizations from across Canada have also been discussing the development of a new national agronomy cluster to tackle field crop research from a systems approach. As a national agronomy cluster initiative proceeds, a separate set of cross-commodity agronomy priorities will be released for research projects to tackle. Projects that focus on broad, non-crop-specific agronomic research will be directed to the agronomy cluster. Crop-specific agronomy projects will likely be retained under the CFCRA-led field crop cluster.

*If you are unsure whether your research would fit the parameters of this cluster, please contact Matthew Czerwinski, Project Manager, CFCRA by phone or email (519-767-0212 / mczerwinski@gfo.ca).*

**PURPOSE OF LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)**

1. For researchers to express an interest in participating in a new Canadian Field Crop Cluster research program under the new APF
2. For CFCRA to evaluate proposed research activities for their potential impact on crop improvement of one or more of the four target crops over the next five years, based on:
   - Ability to address industry priorities and provide value to the sector
Scientific merit and contribution
Communication plan for knowledge transfer of research results to target audience(s)
Commercialization plan for introducing results to target end users

LOI SUBMISSION

- A LOI submission must align with one or more CFCRA research priorities described in the ‘CFCRA Research Priorities’ document
- Eligible applicants include researchers in Canadian academic institutions, not-for-profit research institutions, and federal and provincial Government research organizations
- Private sector researchers in Canada are eligible but must demonstrate the capacity to conduct sound science and publish in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Applicants must also outline how they will address CFCRA commercialization principles, encouraging transparent, non-exclusive and broad-based distribution of results and new technologies, with the goal to maximize economic benefit to Canadian farmers and the value chain.
- Please complete the “CFCRA Cluster Letter of Intent Template” Microsoft Word document to complete your LOI
- Please follow the instructions provided within the body of the “CFCRA Cluster Letter of Intent Template”

When completing your LOI, please consider the following CFCRA expectations:

1. Teams with complementary expertise are encouraged to tackle specific research targets together. Eligible upstream (basic) research areas are limited to those with end-of-project outcomes directly relevant to breeders or agronomists that produce outputs directly into the hands of the field crop sector
2. CFCRA supports the use of novel cutting-edge technologies (i.e., high throughput phenotyping, gene editing (CRISPR), etc.) to achieve the proposed research outcomes. Public trust must be considered in using these approaches
3. Applicants should be mindful of the need to develop highly qualified personnel (HQP) when developing their LOI, especially where there are current or expected capacity gaps in a particular area of expertise needed to address industry priorities

EXPECTED TIMELINE FOR SUBMISSION

- The submission process will be carried out in two stages: i) the LOI and ii) full proposal stage
- LOI submission deadline: Sunday, January 8, 2017 (11:59 PM EST)
CFCRA will review all LOI and successful applicants will be notified in February 2017, and asked to provide a full proposal for further consideration. Decisions made by the CFCRA are final. Full proposals will undergo a robust peer-review process prior to final selection for inclusion in a cluster application to Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada.

**SUBMISSION DETAILS**

Please submit your completed LOI in **Microsoft Word** format, using the “**CFCRA Cluster Letter of Intent Template**” by email to:

Matthew Czerwinski, Project Manager (CFCRA)
mczerwinski@gfo.ca

All submitted LOI will receive an email confirming receipt within 2-3 business days.

**For more information, contact Matthew Czerwinski, Project Manager, CFCRA:**
mczerwinski@gfo.ca or 519-767-0212

**FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS’ CONTACT INFORMATION**

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