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AGROECOLOGY WORKSHOPS PROPOSAL

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PRESENTED BY
Rory Clark

Introduction

We are pleased to submit this proposal in response to the request for consultancy services to design and facilitate a series of Agroecology Workshops, as detailed in the Terms of Reference by the Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI). This proposal is presented by a dynamic team composed of Rory Clark and Sasha Mentz, both of whom bring a wealth of experience, dedication, and passion for sustainable development, with a particular focus on agroecology and food sovereignty.

Rory Clark, with over two decades of experience in project management, organic farming, and ecological restoration, has demonstrated a profound commitment to advancing sustainable agriculture practices within and beyond South Africa. His expertise encompasses a broad range of areas, from agroecological farming and permaculture design to stakeholder engagement and community development projects, making him a seasoned professional in translating sustainable visions into actionable plans.

Sasha Mentz, a French-South African advocate for sustainable development, has spent the last fifteen years dedicated to food systems, agroecological and organic agriculture, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. With extensive experience in advocacy research, project design, and facilitation of multi-stakeholder workshops, Sasha brings a global perspective to local challenges, ensuring that solutions are both innovative and rooted in community needs and realities.

Together, Rory and Sasha propose to bring their collective knowledge, skills, and passion to the Agroecology Workshops project, aiming to empower faith leaders and communities in South Africa with the tools and understanding necessary to foster sustainable and just food systems. This proposal outlines our approach to achieving the objectives set forth by SAFCEI, engaging key stakeholders, and ensuring that the workshops serve as a catalyst for long-term positive change in agroecology and food sovereignty.

Through this partnership, we are committed to delivering informative, empowering and instrumental workshops in building resilient communities and sustainable food systems in the face of climate change and environmental degradation. Our shared vision aligns closely with SAFCEI's mission, and we are excited about the opportunity to contribute to this transformative journey.

Consultants' Experience

Rory Clark: Over 19 years of experience in senior management with a strong focus on organic farming, horticulture, permaculture, and ecological restoration projects. Rory has been instrumental in project management for the African Conservation Trust and as a private consultant through Bhanu Consulting, showcasing his expertise in agro-ecological farming practices and sustainable project management.

Sasha Mentz: Brings 15 years of experience in sustainable development across the Global South, with a focus on food systems, agroecology, and organic agriculture. Sasha's work includes significant contributions to advocacy, research, policy development processes, and project management, particularly in tracking organic compliance and promoting Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) within the agricultural value chain.

Approach

Our methodology for the Agroecology Workshops project is designed to be holistic, participatory, and impactful, reflecting the depth of experience that Rory Clark and Sasha Mentz bring to this initiative. Our approach is anchored in four key pillars: Inclusivity, Knowledge Exchange, Practical Application, and Sustainability.

Inclusivity

Understanding the diverse backgrounds of our stakeholders, from faith leaders to smallholder farmers, we aim to create an inclusive environment that respects and incorporates a wide range of perspectives. This involves:

- Tailoring communication and materials to be accessible and engaging for all participants, regardless of their prior knowledge of agroecology.
- Facilitating workshops and discussions that encourage active participation and voice from all attendees, ensuring everyone's experience and knowledge are valued.

Practical Application

We believe in the power of learning by doing and plan to:

- Organise field visits to successful agroecology projects, where participants can observe and learn from real-world applications of the principles discussed.
- Conduct hands-on sessions during the workshops, including seed swaps, composting tutorials, and permaculture garden design, facilitated by Rory's direct experience and Sasha's understanding of organic compliance and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS).

Sustainability and Follow-up

Ensuring the longevity and impact of the workshops beyond the immediate sessions is crucial. We plan to:

- Develop action plans with participants, outlining clear steps for implementing agroecology practices within their communities.
- Establish a mentorship and follow-up program, leveraging our connections to provide ongoing support and guidance to the participants.
- Utilise online platforms for continuous learning and community building among participants, fostering a network of agroecology champions.

Implementation Plan

1. Pre-Workshop Preparation: Engaging with stakeholders to tailor content, organizing logistical aspects, and ensuring materials and resources are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
2. Workshop Delivery: Facilitating interactive and participatory workshops, blending theoretical knowledge with practical applications, and ensuring a supportive learning environment.

3. Post-Workshop Support: Providing participants with resources, support networks, and follow-up mentoring to implement their learnings and projects in their communities.
4. Reporting and closeout.

Our collaborative approach, informed by the extensive experiences of Rory Clark and Sasha Mentz, is designed to engage, empower, and equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and networks needed to effectively promote agroecology and sustainable food systems.

Key Stakeholders to be Engaged

The success of the Agroecology Workshops hinges on the meaningful engagement of a diverse array of stakeholders. Our approach leverages the vast and varied networks Rory Clark and Sasha Mentz established through their years of dedicated work in sustainable development, agricultural advocacy, and project management across South Africa and other global South countries. Drawing upon their experiences with organizations and various government bodies across Africa and a multitude of advocacy groups and NGOs, it is possible to engage the following key stakeholders (It is the assumption that SAFCEI will provide a list of Faith organisations they would like to engage. The Consultant can also recruit and screen eligible faith groups. The following is a suggestive list of stakeholders the consultants have worked with and could be engaged and contribute to various aspects of the project if needed:

1. **Biowatch** - A leading environmental organization focused on promoting biodiversity, organic farming, and sustainable livelihoods. Biowatch works tirelessly to influence policies and practices towards more ecological and equitable food systems, making it an essential stakeholder for fostering discussions on agroecology and environmental stewardship.
2. **African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)** - This research and advocacy organization is dedicated to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in Africa. Through its critical analysis of biotechnological advancements and promotion of indigenous knowledge, ACB is at the forefront of debates on food sovereignty and the rights of smallholder farmers.
3. **Participatory Guarantee Systems South Africa (PGS SA)** - PGS SA is instrumental in implementing community-based certification systems that uphold organic standards. By facilitating local networks that assure the quality of organic products, PGS SA empowers small-scale farmers and fosters trust within local food systems.
4. **Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)** - As a continental voice for food sovereignty, AFSA brings together various actors to advocate for policies and practices that empower smallholder farmers and ensure sustainable, agroecological food systems. Their extensive network and influential campaigns make them a crucial ally in promoting agroecology.
5. **SAOSO South Africa** - The South African Organic Sector Organisation champions organic principles and practices, working towards the development and harmonization of organic standards and policies. Their efforts to support organic certification and market access for organic products align closely with the goals of the Agroecology Workshops.
6. **African Conservation Trust (ACT)** - ACT focuses on conservation and restoration projects that not only protect the environment but also support community development. Rory Clark's leadership role in ACT underscores our commitment to integrating conservation efforts with sustainable agriculture and community empowerment.