

JPO Position Title: Project Officer, Sustainable Cocoa Initiative

Project or Unit: SPEC/ Business Development and Diversification

Supervisor: Gianpiero Menza and Cacao Connect Project Director

Location: Rome, Italy/ Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

The Organization

The Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) delivers research-based solutions that harness agricultural biodiversity and sustainably transform food systems to improve people's lives. Alliance solutions address the global crises of malnutrition, climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation. With novel partnerships, the Alliance generates evidence and mainstreams innovations to transform food systems and landscapes so that they sustain the planet, drive prosperity, and nourish people in a climate crisis.

The Alliance is part of CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future.

Background

The Alliance is seeking a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) to support the design and implementation of the "The Italian Vision for Sustainable Cocoa Initiative" led by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) alongside other strategic initiatives.

The initiative aims to position cocoa as a driver of climate resilience, economic opportunity, and social equity across key producing countries. It is implemented in partnership with Save the Children Italy and Ferrero, and aligns with European national initiatives for sustainable cocoa organization (ISCOs), as well as global platforms such as the Cocoa and Forests Initiative and the EU Sustainable Cocoa Initiative (TEI).

During the first year, the JPO will be based in Rome, Italy, working at the Alliance headquarters, as part of an operational team that support the implementation of the initiative. This phase will focus

on project design, partnership development with Italian and African stakeholders, and preparation for field implementation. The position also requires travel within the country, and internationally.

Subject to project needs and satisfactory performance, the JPO may be relocated to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in the second year, to work closely with field partners across West Africa. In this phase, the JPO will support technical implementation and partnership coordination.

This position is well suited to a motivated professional with a background in agronomy, agricultural systems, or sustainable development, seeking hands-on experience in international partnerships, research-for-development, and project management. The position also requires travel within the country, region and internationally.

Responsibilities

Under the supervision of the designated supervisors, the JPO will contribute to the delivery of partnership and coordination activities. The JPO will perform the following duties:

Project Design, Coordination and Implementation Support

- Contribute to the development and planning of project activities ensuring they are well-structured and aligned with overall goals.
- Support implementation of frameworks to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships commitments, implementation milestones, and project activities.
- Support field research and analyse data to support the development of sustainable value chains, focusing on sustainable intensification through improving soil fertility, managing pests and diseases, increasing resilience to shocks and biodiversity.

Engagement with the “Sistema Italia”

- Support and facilitate engagement with project related partners such as universities, research centres, NGOs, and particularly Italian private sector actors in the agri-food and development space.
- Support the design and delivery of events fostering dialogue among local farmers, cooperatives, government counterparts, and private sector partners. Ensure these interactions contribute to visibility, collaboration, and effective project implementation.

Knowledge Management and Reporting

- Knowledge Management: Maintain stakeholder databases and partnership tracking tools to ensure timely, inclusive communication and sharing of information.

- Reporting: Prepare comprehensive reports, partnership briefs, and documentation of lessons learned.

Requirements (Qualifications and Experience)

- Advanced university degree in International Development, Agricultural Sciences, Economics, Environmental Science, Sustainable Development, or a related field.
- Experience in international development cooperation, partnerships, value chain development, or sustainability-related programmes.
- Experience working with or coordinating multi-stakeholder partnerships involving public institutions, NGOs, research organizations, and/or the private sector, particularly in West Africa and/or in agriculture, cocoa, or agri-food systems, is highly desirable.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to work in multicultural environments.
- Fluency in English, French and Italian is required.
- Desirable: Statistical data analysis abilities will be helpful.;
- Familiarity with project cycle management and donor-funded programmes.;
- Strong analytical, synthesis, and writing skills.;
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability, agricultural value chains, and inclusive development is considered an asset.

Expected Outputs

Year 1:

- Technical inputs to project design, baseline studies, and feasibility assessments.
- Support the launch and early implementation of priority field interventions.
- Contribution to monitoring frameworks and technical progress reporting.
- Support the delivery of partner consultations.

Year 2:

- Technical coordination of pilot projects.
- Analytical reporting on field performance and results.
- Contribution to refinement of interventions based on lessons learned.
- Documentation of best practices and technical knowledge products.

Expected Benefits for Incumbent

The JPO will develop his/her skills in program design and implementation and will be integrated in the work of an international research organization. As part of the JPO programme, the incumbent will benefit from structured guidance provided by the supervisors, and exposure to scientists specialized in diverse aspects of sustainable cacao management. The role is dynamic and the JPO will be able to take full advantage of learning opportunities offered by the organization as well as external learning and training within the area of responsibility, including but not limited to:

- **Professional Development:** Gain hands-on experience in value chain development and sustainable agriculture within an international research organization.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Build connections with a wide range of stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, NGOs, and private sector partners.
- **Skill Enhancement:** Enhance technical, analytical, and project management skills through diverse and challenging assignments.
- **Career Growth:** Opportunity to contribute to high-impact projects, supporting professional growth and career advancement in the field of sustainable development.