

08 July 2024

Good afternoon, dear applicants, and a warm welcome to all of you. I am truly delighted to be here as we launch the third round under the MGF fund.

First and foremost, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to GIZ. It hasn't been an easy journey, considering the challenges of war and the long road we've walked together to prepare for today's call. So congratulations to that.

I also want to express my gratitude to our partners, the EU, whose support provides the resources necessary for us to implement the activities under the MGF. This Matching Grant Fund, housed within the Business Support Facility, plays a crucial role in our efforts to promote value addition in the agriculture sector. As many of you know, agriculture is a cornerstone for most OACPS countries, making this tool vital for empowering actors across various value chains, particularly focusing on women, youth, SMEs, and farmers.

The Matching Grant Fund is part of a broader initiative known as the Framework Program on Agriculture Value Chains, which consists of three key components: capacity building, finance, and facilitating market access into the EU market. Through this program, our goal is to enhance the capacity of our private sector partners, facilitate their access to finance, and support them in trading and attracting investments, all while emphasizing innovation.

Under this framework, we are focusing on 11 value chains. Today we discuss the value chains cashew, livestock, maize, and cocoa. These value chains are critical for the sustainable development of our member states, as identified by OACPS members. In addition to this efforts, the International Trade Center will be implementing a parallel intervention focusing on sugar, RAM, coffee, cotton, coconut, cava, and cassava.

One of our key objectives with the Matching Grant Fund is not only to build capacity and facilitate access to finance but also to support compliance with new EU legislation, such as regulations on deforestation and corporate sustainability due diligence. These regulations are crucial for environmental protection and ensuring smooth trade relations, and our interventions aim to prepare our member states to meet these standards.

Furthermore, synergy building is essential. We aim to harmonize efforts between OACPS and EU programs in private sector development to maximize resources and impact. We encourage active participation from all stakeholders to ensure that the Matching Grant Fund achieves its intended outcomes, especially in empowering the missing middle and fostering sustainable impact.

In conclusion, I echo the points already raised: we are here to support you through this launch and readiness program. Your active engagement, questions, and clarifications are crucial as we strive for a Matching Grant Fund that truly makes a difference. Thank you all for your attention, and I look forward to a productive session ahead.

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