

**Agropolis Fondation - Fondazione Cariplo
2012 Joint Call for Proposals (CfP)**

“French-Italian Rice Science and Technology (FIRST) Initiative”
[Ref. CfP 2012-01]

TERMS OF REFERENCE

I. Background and context

Agropolis Fondation¹ and Fondazione Cariplo² signed on 16 September 2011 a Partnership Agreement which aims to promote joint action involving scientists and researchers from France, Italy as well as Southern and Mediterranean countries in a joint effort to contribute to knowledge sharing and scientific capacity building. For their initial collaboration, the two foundations decided to focus on rice given its centrality in both the economy and nutrition in most of the developing world where the availability of this staple crop is often equated with food security.

The first collaboration of its kind between the Milan-based Fondazione Cariplo and the Montpellier-based Agropolis Fondation, the **FIRST Initiative** (short for French-Italian Rice Science and Technology) is aimed at developing and supporting scientific research in the agri-food sector as well as in facilitating the emergence of excellent, innovative and potentially high-impact research on rice.

More than 3.5 billion people worldwide depend on rice for more than 20% of their daily calories. An excellent source of complex carbohydrates, it is also rich in nutrients and contains a number of vitamins and minerals. A lot of these nutrients, however, are lost during milling and polishing. More than a billion people depend on rice cultivation for their livelihoods. About 90% of rice is grown in Asia's 200 million rice farms, most of which are smaller than 1 hectare. Rice-growing is the main economic activity of millions of rural poor in this region. Rice is the fastest growing staple in Africa with this region contributing to about 3.4% of the world's production as is the case in South America.

Although not a major food crop in the region, rice consumption is slowly but steadily increasing in Europe. Not only the cost of rice production remains relatively high in this part of the world, there are also a number of constraints associated in producing it, e.g., low temperature, water scarcity and biotic stresses. These are similar to the limitations facing the rice producing countries in Asia and other parts of the world.

Estimates made by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) reveal that an additional 8-10 million tons of rice need to be produced annually to keep its prices stable and affordable at around US\$ 300 per ton. One of the main challenges is therefore to ensure rice supply by boosting its production with less land, water, labor and other inputs, in more efficient, environmentally-friendly production systems.

¹ Agropolis Fondation is a French grant-making foundation that supports and promotes high-level interdisciplinary research and higher education in agricultural sciences and sustainable development. Its founding members are France's main research and higher education institutions in the sector, namely CIRAD, INRA, IRD and Montpellier SupAgro. It provides grants and fellowships to encourage innovative and non-conventional research; and to enable leading and promising international scientists to work in and around Montpellier thereby facilitating knowledge exchange and international partnerships.

² Fondazione Cariplo is an Italian private and not-for-profit grant making foundation. Cariplo's mission, role and operational strategy is to act as an entity that anticipates emerging needs - or selects deep-seated yet still unmet needs - tries new solutions to respond more effectively and less costly to them, and ultimately makes its best endeavors to disseminate successful solutions. Among others, Cariplo funds a number of research and technology transfer projects in agriculture and agro-food sector. It supports research projects with the potential to yield major innovative applications, mainly in terms of improving production processes and developing innovative technology.

II. Scope of the Call for Proposals (CfP)

- 1) Referred to as **FIRST** (French-Italian Rice Science and Technology) **Initiative**, this joint Call for Proposals (CfP) is being made within the framework of the Partnership Agreement between Agropolis Fondation and Fondazione Cariplo. It is aimed at developing and supporting scientific research in the agri-food sector as well as in facilitating the emergence of excellent, innovative and potentially high-impact research on rice.
- 2) Proposed projects should be anchored on original scientific approaches privileging **integration** (from genes to systems, up to the final use of products); and **interdisciplinary approach** (biological sciences, engineering and social sciences). The following structuring, integrating, interdisciplinary axes are of particular interest in the context of this joint CfP:
 - a) Generate the skills and knowledge (genetics, genomics, breeding, eco-physiology) needed to explore rice germplasm and to develop rice varieties capable of responding to major stresses (e.g., climate change, drought, submergence, salinity)
 - b) Understand and control the specificity and interrelations between plants and bio-agressors
 - c) Design efficient agro-ecosystems for a sustainable management of rice-based production system
 - d) Ensuring quality and safety, from genes to end products, to meet market requirements and consumption needs
- 3) Projects to be funded under this joint CfP are expected to:
 - a) Have a high potential in creating positive impact in developing countries;
 - b) Result into a real scientific breakthrough;
 - c) Allow research teams involved to position them and gain visibility at the international level.
 - d) Facilitate and reinforce collaboration involving scientists and other stakeholders from France, Italy as well as Southern and Mediterranean countries
 - e) Foster linkages with international research centers working on rice (e.g., IRRI, CIAT, Africa Rice) and/or major rice-related initiatives (e.g., Global Rice Science Partnership, GRiSP).
- 4) For this Joint CfP, an over-all budget of **€2M** is available **for a small number of collaborative research projects**. Proponents are invited to submit projects for a **minimum of €300K**.

III. Eligibility

- 1) Within the spirit of collaboration between the two foundations, this Call will fund cooperative projects that involve at least one partner from France, one from Italy as well as one from Southern and/or Mediterranean country. Proponents, who are unable to identify partners from the South or the Mediterranean at the time of submission, should present how they intend to involve such partners and/or how the research outputs are to be made accessible to them.
- 2) A proposed project should be co-led by an Italian and a French scientist. The lead French scientist should be from a research unit that is part of Agropolis Fondation's scientific network.³ French scientists outside of the Foundation's scientific network may be associated in a project as partners. As regards the lead Italian scientist, he/she should be from a research organization within Fondazione Cariplo's reference area, i.e., the provinces in Lombardy and provinces of Novara and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola (VCO) in the Piedmont region. Italian scientists outside of the Fondazione Cariplo's reference area may be associated in a project as a partner. Other parties interested to submit a proposal or be involved in a project are highly encouraged to contact directly the concerned research unit(s) in writing.

³ For the list of the Foundation's research units, please visit <http://www.agropolis-fondation.fr/uk/about-us/research-unit-leaders.html>.

IV. Description of the categories of funding

Under the present Call, **collaborative research projects** to be funded are expected to create a strong leverage effect on the promotion or strengthening of strategic scientific themes and international visibility. Proposals may include a combination (“**package**”) of any of the following (See *Annex Table of Funding Categories*):

- Senior Fellowship
- Junior Fellowship
- Post-doctoral Fellowship
- Doctoral Fellowship
- Visiting Fellowship for short period of stay
- Grants for structuring scientific platforms
- Support for education- and training-oriented initiatives (e.g., international thematic schools, etc.)
- Small grants (should not include any type of support under categories above)
 - a) Support for the organization of high-level scientific events (conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.)
 - b) Support for the preparation of application to international calls for Proposals
 - c) Overseas travel grants for Doctoral students, Post-docs and scientists of the network
 - d) “Release from teaching duties” with a view to contributing to the attainment of the Foundation’s objectives
 - e) Support for publication and dissemination of research results
 - f) Support for small exploratory, risky and innovative projects (proof-of-concept studies, new frontier research) including training by research projects
 - g) Support to hosting pre-doctoral students

V. Evaluation process

- 1) In addition to the eligibility requirements specified in the *Annex Table of Funding Categories*, submitted proposals shall be evaluated according to the following criteria:
 - a) Scientific quality: originality, innovativeness, feasibility
 - b) Extent of interactions and partnership strengthening
 - Integration (from genes to systems, up to the final use of products)
 - Inter-disciplinary approach (biological sciences, engineering and social sciences)
 - Interactions between temperate, Mediterranean and tropical issues to be tackled by the proposed project
 - Partnership quality, in particular between France and Italy as well as with partners from the South and/or Mediterranean countries and international players/initiatives
 - c) Contribution to international attractiveness and visibility
 - d) Relevance to socio-economic and sustainable development issues
 - Does the proposal show strong potential to result into a real scientific breakthrough that can be used to address major sustainable development issues linked to plants?
 - Does the proposal explicitly state how its expected outputs can (- or will-) be put in use, and linked to broader issues related to sustainable development?
 - e) Value addition of the financial support from Agropolis Fondation and Fondazione Cariplo as compared to other sources of funding
- 2) In addition to the above, proposals submitted under the present Call will pay particular attention to the following:

- a) Strong scientific leadership and proven capacity to mobilize partners
 - b) Robustness of the capacity building component
 - c) Clarity of project management and coordination
 - d) Adequacy of project budget
- 3) Depending on the complexity of the project and level of funding request, a proposal may undergo either a one-stage (result by May 2012) or two-stage (result by October/November 2012) evaluation process. Proponents may be requested to submit further documentation and/or make an oral presentation of their proposed project.

VI. Submitting proposals and provisional Calendar

- 1) All proposals must be written in English and must follow the prescribed format for the present Call. It should include all the following documents:
 - Application Form
 - Project LOGFRAME (as Annex 1)
 - Gantt Chart (as Annex 2)
 - Financial Table (Aggregate and breakdown per partner as Annex 3)
 - Required CVs (as Annex 4)
- 2) All proposals must be sent electronically to first2012@agropolis.fr by the deadline indicated below. Incomplete and late submissions will be automatically disqualified.
- 3) Neither Agropolis Fondation nor Fondazione Cariplo shall be held responsible for submissions not received due to technical problems preventing the transfer of proposals electronically.
- 4) By submitting a proposal, the proponents assure that they have obtained the approval of their managing authorities and of all the participants involved in the project.

VII. Provisional Calendar

Launch of the 2012 Call for Proposals	13 January 2012
Deadline for the submission of Proposals <i>Late and incomplete submissions will not be accepted.</i>	12 March 2012 (12 noon, French time)
Publication of results	May 2012

VIII. Documents attached

- Table of Funding Categories
- GFP Application Form
- Project LOGFRAME
- Gantt Chart
- Financial Table

IX. Documents available online

All documents related to the present Call for Proposals are available online at <http://www.agropolis-fondation.fr/uk/supporting-science/call-for-proposals.html> <http://www.fondazioneCARIPLO.it>. Go to the Utility Box, at the bottom of the home page, and click on the icon "Bandi".