



The third project of the Research Hub

Plant Response Test Failures: Investigation of contaminants and phytotoxins in 'End of Waste' composting feedstocks and finished composts

Tender Invitation Document

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Renewable Energy Assurance Limited (REAL) invites contractors, through a competitive process, to tender for the below outlined work.

Purpose of the tender

The purpose of the tender opportunity is to appoint a contractor to develop and deliver the third project of REAL's Research Hub titled *'Plant Response Test Failures: Investigation of contaminants and phytotoxins in 'End of Waste' composting feedstocks and finished composts'*.

Tender timeframe

Deadline for receipt of tender submissions: **Tuesday 26 October 2021**

Deadline for questions in relation to this tender: **Tuesday 05 October 2021**

Tenderers receive written notification of REAL's decision: **December 2021**

Work programme

Contract start date: **March 2021**

Contract duration: **1 year** (to be agreed)

**REAL reserve the right to change these timetables*

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK	5
3	THE TENDER SUBMISSION - INFORMATION REQUIRED	8
4	EVALUATION CRITERIA	10
5	APPLICATION PROCEDURE	11
6	TENDER PROCESS & TIMETABLE.....	12

1 INTRODUCTION

Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd (REAL) is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology. REAL carries out a range of certification and consumer protection activities, all of which promote sustainable energy. REAL's activities fall under two headings; certification schemes and consumer codes.

REAL's certification schemes include, but are not limited to, the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS), the Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS) and the Compostable Materials Certification Scheme (CMCS).

REAL also administer the Compost and Biofertiliser Certification Schemes' Research Hub. The Research Hub has been set up as a tool to source funding from the compost and anaerobic digestion industries as a means, through research projects, of developing the technical and regulatory aspects of certified compost and digestate production, testing and usage, and further to maintain market acceptability.

REAL wishes to appoint a contractor to develop and deliver the third project of REAL's Research Hub titled *'Plant Response Test Failures: Investigation of contaminants and phytotoxins in 'End of Waste' composting feedstocks and finished composts'*. The appointed contractor will be required to work with the Research Hub's Project Management Team, the Research Hub's Research Panel and REAL.

This document sets out the scope and parameters of the work which REAL wishes to commission and describes how contractors may tender to undertake this work for REAL.

2 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 Background

REAL is the owner and administrator of the CCS and the BCS. The CCS and BCS provide assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers and retailers that compost produced from composting processes and biofertiliser produced through anaerobic digestion processes is safe for human, animal, and plant health.

In cooperation with the members of the CCS/BCS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and through liaison with the wider industry, it was the decision of REAL to establish, in the form of the Research Hub, a mechanism to generate research funds and further to sponsor research and development (R&D) projects.

REAL wishes to appoint a contractor to develop and deliver the third project of REAL's Research Hub, as outlined below.

The Plant Response Test (PRT) is a key element in 'End of Waste' compost evaluation as a bioassay to screen for natural and anthropogenic toxins in finished composts. The PRT simultaneously tests for 'weed seeds and propagules'. Overall, the test is doing a good job and there are relatively few failures.

Whilst failure rate is low, any failure results in significant financial and logistical issues (e.g., occupancy of space whilst waiting for retest results). Failure requires the producer to take corrective action. Whilst most causes of test failure are clearly attributable to other measured properties (e.g., salinity, ammonia), some failures on top growth (and to a lesser extent germination) do not correspond to failures in other measured properties and thereby create a challenge when the producer is seeking to implement corrective action. The 'End of Waste' test procedures are designed for compost, which is for horticultural use, whereas the bulk of certified compost is used agriculturally as a soil conditioner and the PRT procedures do not seem entirely relevant to this end use.

The third project of REAL's Research Hub '*Plant Response Test Failures: Investigation of contaminants and phytotoxins in 'End of Waste' composting feedstocks and finished composts*' seeks to investigate natural and anthropogenic organic compounds/phytotoxins present in the feedstocks and compost which may result in test failures which are not explained by the normal suite of measured parameters. Further, with a better understanding of the types/concentrations of relevant organic contaminants/phytotoxins in composting feedstocks and finished composts, the project will look to define a suite of chemical tests (with a significantly faster turnround than the PRT) to enable release to restricted markets following failures.

2.2 Services

2.2.1 The appointed contractor will develop and deliver the third project of REAL's Research Hub titled '*Plant Response Test Failures: Investigation of contaminants and phytotoxins in 'End of Waste' composting feedstocks and finished composts*'. Key elements of the research project include:

- I. Sampling an array of feedstocks and composts to determine the presence of a range of key organic contaminants and phytotoxins present (e.g., phenols and volatile fatty acids) not covered in routine testing.
- II. Identifying whether the organic contaminants identified in I. above are more prevalent at different times of the year or under different climatic conditions (e.g., cool moist winters) and composting regimes (e.g., vessel or pad composting).
- III. Defining a suite of chemical tests and threshold values to enable restricted market release following PRT germination/top growth failure.
- IV. To coordinate regular update meetings with the REAL Project Management Team.
- V. To present to the REAL Project Management Team the outcome(s) and recommendation(s) from this project.
- VI. To produce a final report, for REAL's purposes, to detail:
 - the identification of any patterns in the nature of feedstocks, composting process (in-vessel or open windrow pad composting) or time of year in which the failure occurs.
 - the determination of the types and concentrations of phytotoxins present in the feedstocks and composts.
 - a suite of chemical tests and threshold values to enable restricted market release following PRT germination/top growth failure.

2.2.2 The appointed contractor will report findings (and appropriate analysis and/or written comments) to REAL.

2.3 Deliverables

- Regular meetings with the REAL Project Management Team to provide an update on project progress and to agree the completion of project milestones.
- A final report covering all project elements, to be understood by both the composting and anaerobic digestion sectors, as well as those not directly involved in either industry. The data on organic contaminants/phytotoxins in feedstocks and composts will have wider benefit to the sector beyond addressing this project. The report will provide a fuller understanding of the organic contaminants/phytotoxins that may help interpret PRT failures.
- A final meeting with REAL to discuss the project in its entirety and present the final report mentioned above and as outlined in section 2.2.1 of this tender.

2.4 Competence requirements

REAL will appoint an individual or organisation with experience and/or expertise of the following:

- Composting and horticulture knowledge, or involvement in related industries.
- Experience of conducting laboratory analysis.
- A track record in undertaking work similar to that described in this document.

3 THE TENDER SUBMISSION - INFORMATION REQUIRED

3.1 Your tender should be submitted by email and should be limited to no more than 10 x A4 sides at minimum 10pt font (excluding appendices).

3.2 Your tender must include the following information in the order indicated:

(1) An executive summary of no more than one side of A4 in length, outlining the proposed work and including the total cost of the proposed work, inclusive of Value Added Tax (“VAT”) and anticipated expenses.

(2) Company/Organisation details. REAL will need the following information:

- The name of the Company submitting the tender;
- The registered office name, address, VAT number (if applicable) and company or charity registration number;
- The name of the nominated contact person within the tenderer’s organisation;
- Contact details including address, telephone number and e-mail address

REAL will accept tenders from both individual companies and from consortia. Should you decide to tender as part of a consortium, you will need to identify one member of the consortium (the “Lead Contractor”) to act as the contracting party. All other consortium members will be sub-contractors to the Lead Contractor.

(3) A description of your working methods

You will need to make clear how you intend to deliver the work and provide estimated timescales for delivery.

(4) A description of the project team who will manage and deliver the work

This should include a list of individuals, their respective roles within the organisation and, for the purposes of this work their relevant skills and experience including any relevant professional qualifications.

(5) An identification of any sub-contractors to be used

You should include a list of any sub-contractors you intend to use to fulfil the requirements of the work.

(6) Evidence of a track record in undertaking work similar to that described in this document

(7) Breakdown costs (exclusive of VAT) including;

a. Individual day rates and number of days of each staff member involved in delivering work

b. Expenses

- (8) Identification of any conflicts of interest** which might arise if you were selected to undertake the work and if such a conflict were to arise, an indication of how this conflict would be addressed. Where you tender as part of a consortium, all members of the consortium should be considered.
- (9) A copy of your Environmental Policy** and evidence of any accredited Environmental Management System.
- (10) Written confirmation** that you have the necessary permits, licences or exemptions required for the services.
- (11) As appendices**, tenders should include:
- Audited or management accounts for the last 2 financial years;
REAL reserves the right to reject bids from Contractors where the accounts show that the Contractor might be at risk of insolvency.
 - A statement of any material litigation, pending or threatened, or other legal proceedings;
REAL reserves the right to reject bids from Contractors subject to legal proceedings where in REAL's reasonable opinion such proceedings could impact upon the Contractor's ability to deliver the services required.
 - Evidence of the level of professional indemnity, public liability and property damage insurance cover held.

REAL will require minimum cover levels of:

- £1 million professional indemnity;
- £2 million public liability;
- £2 million property damage.

To be considered for evaluation, Contractors must have this cover in place at the time of bidding or must include (as part of the tender submission) a commitment to take out such cover in the event of being appointed.

3.3 Should you have any questions in relation to the type of information required by REAL, please contact the person identified in Section 5 of this Tender Invitation Document to discuss.

3.4 All tender submissions will be treated on a confidential basis by REAL and its advisers, subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

4 EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 4.1** REAL must be satisfied that each potential contractor has the appropriate capabilities and resources available to undertake the work to REAL's requirements and provide the necessary services.
- 4.2** The process REAL will use to select its contractors is a competitive one. Your tender submission should be written to address the key requirements and scope of the work and demonstrate how it meets the evaluation criteria below:

Evaluation criteria	Weighting
Cost of work	20%
Methodology proposed to deliver required services	40%
Authority of allocated personnel, their skills and technical capability	20%
Corporate environmental commitment – submission of credible environmental policy and/or environmental management system details	5%
Relevant experience	15%

5 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

You should send one electronic copy (via email) of your tender submission to:

Olivia FursseDonn, Renewable Energy Assurance Limited

Email: **olivia@realschemes.org.uk**

Emails containing Tender submissions should clearly state the following in the subject field: 'The third project of REAL's Research Hub – Tender Submission Document'

If you wish to ask any questions relating to this tender, please contact Olivia in writing only.*

**NOTE: All questions submitted to REAL will be uploaded as a Q&A to the Research Hub website, one week prior to the deadline for tender submissions.*

6 TENDER PROCESS & TIMETABLE

- 6.1 All tender submissions must remain valid for a minimum period of 90 days following the deadline for receipt of tender submissions.
- 6.2 All tender submissions will be competitively assessed against the evaluation criteria, (stated in Section 4 of this document).
- 6.3 The target timetable for this process is as follows:
- Deadline for receipt of tender submissions: **Tuesday 26 October 2021**
Deadline for questions in relation to this tender: **Tuesday 05 October 2021**
Tenderers receive written notification of REAL's decision: **December 2021**
- 6.4 All tenderers will receive written notification of REAL's decision and tenderers will be given the opportunity to discuss feedback on their tender submission.
- 6.5 This information is offered in good faith for the guidance of interested parties, but no warranty or representation is given as to the accuracy or completeness of any of it. REAL and its advisers shall not be liable for any error, misstatement, or omission. No aspect of this procedure shall constitute a contract or part of a contract. Tenderers participate in the process on the strict understanding that the procedure may be altered or that REAL may not proceed for any reason. REAL reserves the right not to follow up this Tender Invitation Document in any way and in particular not to enter into any contractual arrangement with any of the tenderers. REAL does not bind itself to enter into negotiations or proceed with or accept any tender. Any decision to tender is at the sole discretion of the tenderer and REAL excludes all liability in respect of any tendering costs incurred.
- 6.6 Any contract entered into as a result of this tender process shall be in accordance with REAL's terms and conditions of contract.
- 6.7 Tenderers taking part in this process acknowledge and accept that REAL may publish details about the winning bid (such as the contract value and the name of the winning bidder) on appropriate webpages under its control.