



**Invitation to tender for the role of Project Coordinator
for REAL's Research Hub Project:**

*Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison:
Investigating performance of the UK Tomato Plant
Response Test and German Spring Barley Test on CCS
Compost*

Tender Invitation Document

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Renewable Energy Assurance Limited (REAL) invites contractors to tender for the work outlined below. Following a competitive tender process, REAL will appoint the successful contractor.

Purpose of the tender

The purpose of the tender opportunity is to appoint a Project Coordinator to liaise with appointed laboratories to manage the delivery, collection, and organisation of Spring Barley test data for REAL's Research Hub project titled '*Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison: Investigating performance of the UK Tomato Plant Response Test and German Spring Barley Test on CCS Compost.*'

This Tender Invitation Document contains information on the scope of the project, the remit of the Project Coordinator, and guidelines for submitting tenders for this work.

Tender timeframe

Deadline for receipt of tender submissions: **15th March 2024**

Deadline for questions in relation to this tender: **23rd February 2024**

Tenderers receive written notification of REAL's decision: **April 2024**

Work programme

Contract start date: **April 2024**

Contract duration: **14 months**

**REAL reserve the right to change this timetable*

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Section introduces Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd. and explains its work in administering the Organics Schemes and the Research Hub.

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

Among other codes and schemes, REAL owns and administers the following quality certification schemes related to the organics recycling sector: the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS), the Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS) and the Compostable Materials Certification Scheme (CMCS). The CCS and BCS enforce high quality standards for compost and biofertiliser (the latter being quality-certified digestate), respectively. Together, these schemes provide assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers and retailers that quality-certified compost and digestate is safe for human, animal, and plant health.

In 2019, through collaboration with the CCS/BCS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), REAL established the Research Hub. The Research Hub functions as a tool to source research funding from the composting and anaerobic digestion industries. With these funds, the Research Hub commissions projects aimed at developing the technical and regulatory aspects of certified compost and digestate production, improving testing and usage of certified compost and digestate, and reinforcing certified compost and digestate markets.

REAL wishes to appoint a contractor to coordinate the delivery of laboratory work for the project commissioned by the Research Hub entitled '*Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison: Investigating performance of the UK Tomato Plant Response Test and German Spring Barley Test on CCS Compost*'

The appointed contractor will be required to work with the REAL-appointed Project Management Team, the Research Hub's Research Panel and REAL staff.

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 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

This Section explains project's relevance to REAL's work and the wider organics recycling industry and outlines the project's intended contributions.

2.1 Project Background

The tomato plant response test (tomato PRT) is used in the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) as a bioassay to screen for phytotoxins in finished composts. The test simultaneously assesses for 'weed seeds and propagules' and is a general compost maturity bioassay.

Under the CCS, an operator failing the tomato PRT is required to investigate the cause of the failure, apply corrective action to the failed batch of compost, and for a further compost sample to pass a subsequent tomato PRT test to enable positive release under REAL's CCS rules aligned to BSI PAS 100:2018 requirements. The presence of weed seeds and propagules, or abnormalities of plant growth (e.g., due to herbicide residue), provide clear reasons for the cause of tomato PRT failure. However, it is harder to identify the cause(s) of tomato PRT failures on tomato seed germination and tomato plant top growth. If the cause of failure is not identified, operators may face challenges determining and implementing the appropriate corrective action(s). Assuming corrective action(s) can be applied, an additional 28 days is required after receipt and lab preparation of the compost sample for testing until a set of tomato PRT results for that sample can be reported (the test duration being 28 days). Holding of multiple compost batches onsite due specifically to tomato PRT failure can have a dramatic effect on operations.

Recognising the above issues REAL established the plant response test technical working group (PRT TWG) in 2021, comprised of CCS operator and national environmental regulator representatives. In 2022, the PRT TWG submitted a proposal to the REAL Research Hub for a project to investigate the spring barley plant response test (spring barley PRT) as a potential additional/alternative test to the tomato PRT. Perceived benefits of the spring barley PRT being its shorter duration (10-12 days rather than 28 days), comparative simplicity, and relevance to certain compost markets.

The proposal was shortlisted by the REAL Research Hub panel and a tender process followed. Unfortunately, no tenders were received.

Given the unsuccessful tender process, REAL were tasked by the Research Hub to develop a project specification for the project with a view to tendering for a project coordinator (PC) to coordinate the delivery of laboratory work for the project. The REAL project specification was developed involving consultation with the PRT TWG members principally via three online meetings held on the 8th June, 15th June and 28th July 2023.

2.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The aims of the project are:

- To compare the performance of the spring barley PRT with the tomato PRT on CCS composts with a view to adding the spring barley PRT in future versions of PAS 100
- To use the spring barley PRT results and compost sample characterisation analysis to better understand tomato PRT performance/failures

To fulfil these aims, the project's key objectives are as follows:

- Trial of a UK spring barley PRT method in CCS approved laboratory facilities.
- Develop a dataset of the comparative performance of the tomato PRT and the spring barley PRT with CCS compost samples to support decision making in the development of PAS 100.
- Use spring barley PRT performance data, alongside standard compost sample characterisation analysis, to better understand tomato PRT performance with regards to germination and top growth failure.

2.3 Approach and Scope of Tender

REAL intend to use CCS-approved laboratories to deliver all testing. This approach was preferred given the expertise of the approved laboratories in performing the tomato PRT. As such, CCS-approved labs will conduct Spring Barley PRT tests alongside routine tomato PRT and compost sample characterisation analysis. Tomato PRT results will be reported as usual—sent to the CCS database. However, as the Spring Barley Test is not a routine element of PAS 100 testing required for the scheme, the labs are unable to upload these results to the database and will have to report them by another means.

Through this invitation to tender, REAL seeks to appoint a Project Coordinator (PC) to liaise with appointed laboratories to ensure that Spring Barley test results are delivered smoothly, and data managed securely for further downstream analysis.

REAL intends to issue a separate tender for statistical analysis, interpretation, and reporting of Tomato PRT, Spring Barley test data and compost sample characterisation results at a later date. The appointed PC may tender for this subsequent piece of work, but all bidders will be subject to a competitive tender process.

3 SERVICES REQUIRED

This Section describes the work which will be required of the Project Coordinator.

- 3.1** The appointed Project Coordinator (PC) will manage the delivery of data by three CCS-approved labs for REAL's Research Hub Project titled '*Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison: Investigating performance of the UK Tomato Plant Response Test and German Spring Barley Test on CCS Compost.*'

The appointed contractor will be responsible for ensuring the work is delivered to REAL's specification (to be provided upon appointment). This includes the following tasks and timescales:

April 2024: Secure spring barley supply

- A shortlisted spring barley variety will be sourced by the PC ready for distribution to the participating approved laboratories.

April-May 2024: Spring barley PRT setup and samples

- The UK spring barley PRT method and analysis reporting template are shared with CCS approved laboratories.
- Instructions for sourcing nutrient solution and pots for the spring barley PRT are provided to the approved laboratories within the UK spring barley PRT method.
- Laboratories experiment with the method as necessary – PC to ensure the approved laboratories' interpretation of the method is comparable.
- PC to ensure approved laboratories are clear on spring barley PRT reporting requirements and procedure.
- PC to discuss with approved laboratories whether (some) operators need to be contacted to provide a larger compost sample volume to ensure adequate material for running the spring barley PRT in addition to other tests.

June 2024 – May 2025: Sampling processing

- Participating approved laboratories test CCS samples with the spring barley PRT. Compost samples selected for comparative testing should be those submitted for validation (category 1) or routine verification (category 2) only i.e., those samples which will generate corresponding characterization and tomato PRT data.
- The PC checks that unique *lab sample reference numbers* are correct on the spring barley report sheet i.e., these correspond with the *lab sample reference numbers* in the CCS database.
- Approved laboratories run one compost sample (in three pots of 25% compost:75% peat by volume, and in three pots of 50% compost:50% peat by volume) per peat control (three pots) for the spring barley PRT as far as possible. Two different compost samples per peat control is acceptable.
- Compost samples supplied for tomato PRT and spring barley PRT shall be spread throughout the year i.e., not concentrated in a few months of the year.
- At the end of each month approved laboratories should send spring barley PRT reports to the PC for checking, data management and invoicing.
- Approved laboratories are paid £150 per spring barley PRT carried out and reported in full.
- The PC provides a factual report on the data collection phase.

3.1.1 Project Deliverables

- Regular meetings with the REAL Project Management Team to provide project updates and agree project milestones.
- Collated dataset.
- A factual report on the data collection work.
- A final meeting with REAL to discuss the project in its entirety, during which the appointed contractor shall present the findings enclosed in the final report.

3.2 Competence requirements

REAL will appoint a contractor (an individual, organisation or consortium) with:

- Experience and/or expertise in managing large volumes of scientific data with accuracy and attention to detail;
- Experience and/or expertise in managing long-term projects and delivering work to a firm deadline; and
- Strong communication written and verbal skills.
- Experience in, expertise in or knowledge of bioassay tests sufficient for ensuring appropriate data analysis and description of statistical findings in this project's context is desirable.

4 TENDER REQUIREMENTS

This Section provides instructions for preparing tenders.

4.1 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).

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

I. An executive summary

This should be no longer than one side of A4 paper, outlining the proposed work and including the total cost of the proposed work, inclusive of Value Added Tax (“VAT”) and anticipated expenses.

II. Company/Organisation details

Please include 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.

III. 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.

IV. 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.

V. An identification of any sub-contractors to be used

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

VI. Evidence of a track record in undertaking work similar to that described in this document

VII. Breakdown costs (exclusive of VAT) including;

- Individual day rates and number of days of each staff member involved in delivering work
- Expenses

VIII. Identification of any conflicts of interest

Please disclose any conflicts of interest which might arise if you were selected to undertake the work. Please also include a contingency plan for addressing any identified conflict(s) of interest, should conflict(s) arise. Where you tender as part of a consortium, all members of the consortium should be considered.

- IX. A copy of your Environmental Policy and evidence of any accredited Environmental Management System.**
- X. Written confirmation that you have the necessary permits, licences or exemptions required for the services.**
- XI. Appendices**

Tenderers should include the following documents as appendices:

- 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.

- 4.3** Should you have any questions in relation to the type of information required by REAL, please contact the person identified in Section 6 of this Tender Invitation Document to discuss.
- 4.4** 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.

5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

This Section specifies the criteria REAL will use to evaluate the tender submissions and appoint a contractor.

- 5.1** 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.
- 5.2** REAL will select its Research Hub contractors through a competitive process. 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%

6 SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

This Section provides instructions for submitting tenders.

Please send one electronic copy (via email) of your tender submission to Megan Muller-Girard, Research Hub Manager at Renewable Energy Assurance Limited at **megan@realschemes.org.uk**.

Emails containing Tender submissions should clearly state the following in the subject field: 'Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison – Tender Submission Document.'

The deadline to submit a tender for this project is: **15th March 2024**

If you wish to ask any questions relating to this tender, please contact the Research Hub Manager in writing only. *

**NOTE: All questions submitted to REAL about this Tender Invitation Document will be anonymised and uploaded to the Research Hub website as a Q&A at least one week prior to the deadline for tender submissions.*

7 TENDER PROCESS & TIMETABLE

This Section explains the tender process and outlines the expected timeline.

- 7.1 All tender submissions must remain valid for a minimum period of 90 days following the deadline for receipt of tender submissions.
- 7.2 All tender submissions will be competitively assessed against the evaluation criteria, outlined in Section 5 of this document.
- 7.3 The target timetable for this process is as follows:
- Deadline for tender submissions: **15th March 2024**
 - Deadline for questions in relation to this tender: **23rd February 2024**
 - Tenderers receive written notification of REAL's decision: **April 2024**
- 7.4 All tenderers will receive written notification of REAL's decision and will have the opportunity to discuss feedback on their tender submission.
- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 Any contract entered into as a result of this tender process shall be in accordance with REAL's terms and conditions of contract.
- 7.7 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.