

Provision of Climate and Environment Verification Services 2026-2027 in Uganda

Aceli Africa is seeking a qualified partner to provide Climate and Environment (C&E) verification services. The selected firm will support the verification of climate and environmental practices implemented by selected agri-SMEs and affiliated farmers working with Aceli's partner financial institutions in Uganda

The assignment will be implemented between April 2026 – April 2027.

Aceli Overview

Aceli Africa is a market incentive facility designed to bridge the gap between capital supply and demand for agricultural SMEs, unlocking their growth and impact potential. The program aims to mobilize \$2 billion in lending to agricultural SMEs and improve livelihoods for five million farmers and employees in East Africa by 2030. Aceli's model provides financial incentives and capacity-building support to lenders while facilitating technical assistance for agri-SMEs and smallholder farmers linked to the agri-SMEs, creating a more sustainable and competitive marketplace.

Aceli is keen to promote improved climate and environment practices at SME and farmer level by:

- offering lenders higher incentives in the form of an impact bonus for loans that meet our climate & environment standards;
- targeting pre-investment technical assistance (TA) to SMEs with climate and environment business models; and
- conducting a diagnostic on capacity needs and recommend Agri-SMEs for TA to address specific business practices related to climate and environment.

Aceli's Climate & Environment

Aceli Africa's incentives for lenders includes an Impact Bonus for loans to businesses that implement "Climate & Environment" practices that are planet positive through **regenerative agriculture** and/or **circular agri-based systems**.

A loan qualifies for the bonus if the borrower does **at least one** of the following as reported by the lender and subject to external audits or validated by either a recognized third party or pre-approved certifier (see annex for more details):

- 1. Regenerative Practices:** Activities that support long-term solutions by rebuilding soil health, restoring degraded land, and applying holistic land and ecosystem management practices resulting in both carbon sequestration and improving the water cycle.
- 2. Circular Agri-based systems:** Approaches that optimize the use of biomass and renewable resources on-farm (reduce waste or zero waste), in value-added processing, and along value chains.
- 3. Certification by one of the following:** Rainforest Alliance/UTZ, Organic, Forest Stewardship Council.
- 4. Validation of C&E practices by a recognized third party:** Aceli maintains and updates a list of programs that have demonstrated success in leading to implementation of regenerative and circular agricultural practices. Evidence showing that an SMEs that have evidence showing that they have gone through a rigorous training program with a recognized third party will be considered as qualifying for Aceli C&E standard.

Purpose of the Engagement

In line with the impact policy, Aceli identifies businesses that meet C&E criteria as registered by lenders and offers impact bonus to lenders for lending to these SMEs. To date, 425 SMEs have been verified to meet Aceli's Climate & Environment criteria across Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania. In addition to continuing this verification, Aceli now plans to support SMEs in accessing capacity building for them to adopt and scale up Climate & Environment practices at enterprise level and with farmers affiliated with the SME.

Aceli is therefore seeking a partner to conduct Climate & Environment verification and diagnostics for **75 agri-SMEs in Uganda**, including a sample of farmers affiliated with each SME.

Scope of Work

The selected firm will be responsible for the following activities:

1. Collaborate with Aceli to update and refine the existing Climate & Environment diagnostic tool, assessing both current practices and capacity-building needs.
2. Coordinate with Aceli partner financial institutions to schedule and organize SME site visits.
3. Conduct on-site verification of Climate & Environment practices to confirm whether SMEs meet Aceli's C&E standards.

*Note: Aceli is **not** seeking certification services. The purpose of this engagement is to verify that SMEs and their affiliated farmers are implementing the C&E practices outlined in the Annex.*

Expected deliverables

1. Climate & Environment verification report
2. Agri-SME climate & environment capacity assessment reports

Required Qualifications

Interested firms should demonstrate the following qualifications:

- Strong experience in SME and farmer level audits for certification schemes such as Rainforest Alliance, Organic and Forest Stewardship Council.
- Strong experience in conducting diagnostic/ capacity needs assessment on sustainability practices.
- Experience in the private sector orientation with demonstrated ability to be customer-focused and collaborate with financial institutions
- Proven experience and/or presence in Uganda.
- Proven track record of delivering similar services for multi-country programming with evidence of data collection approval and permits.

Aceli invites proposals from firms that offer audit and diagnostic services to Agri SMEs and farmers in East Africa. Proposals should be no more than 12 pages (excluding appendices) and include:

- Approach for conducting both diagnostic and verifications;
- Description of relevant team members, including a dedicated project manager and representative profiles of team members conducting diagnostics and verifications;
- Capacity to deliver in each of the four countries (note: applicants that have capabilities in just one or two countries will also be considered);



March 26th, 2026

- Narrative description of previous experience, including an appendix with a list of past projects of similar nature detailing the client, assignment and a sample of a similar assignment and references for each of a past project listed;
- Financial costs, including daily rates and costs associated with the exercise (i.e transport, accommodation, per diems).
- Appendices

Proposals should be developed based on an estimated **75 SMEs in Uganda**, noting that SMEs are geographically dispersed within the country.

Interested firms should send the proposals before **April 9th, 2026** to nkapepula@aceliafrica.org

Annex

1. Regenerative Practices: Activities that support long-term solutions by rebuilding soil health, restoring degraded land, and applying holistic land and ecosystem management practices resulting in both carbon sequestration and improving the water cycle.

i). Implement or source from farmers who implement agricultural practices that restore **soil health** and apply **holistic land and ecosystem management practices**. *These practices need to be applied in a purposeful manner and affect at least 50% of the farm level activities:*

- Soil health improvement (crop management, no/low till with increased retention of organic residues, organic fertilizer, rotational grazing, carbon sequestration)
- Enhancing ecosystem functions (erosion control, Integrated Water Resource Management, natural pollination)
- Integrated Pest Management

ii). Implement activities that increase biodiversity, agroforestry, and forestation of the ecosystem

- Increasing biodiversity (habitat provision, biological pest control)
- Reforestation or land restoration activities, including establishing commercial forestry, agroforestry, promoting avoided deforestation and conversation of waste land back to productive land.

2. Circular Agri-based systems: Approaches that optimize the use of biomass and renewable resources on-farm, in value-added processing, and along value chains.

iii). **Design out waste and pollution:** reduce waste, use renewable energy, optimise water management; apply sustainable packaging, promote local sourcing/short supply chains, apply smart integration between animal-based and plant-based supply chains

- *These practices need to be applied in a purposeful manner and affect at least 50% of the farm level activities. OR*
- *50%+ of sourcing volume originates from farmers who apply these holistic practices*

iv). **Apply bio-economy based solutions and re-use by-products** from farming and processing activities at farm and enterprise level. These include food by-products that are transformed into organic fertilisers, biomaterials (e.g., for packaging), medicines, bioenergy that is suited to the agroecological context and uses natural resources efficiently, or waste streams from one supply chain that are used as raw materials for another.

- *This must be relevant for at least 50%+ of the business activities at farmer or enterprise level.*

3. Certification by one of the following: Rainforest Alliance/UTZ, Organic, Forest Stewardship Council. We have determined that these certifications require a minimum level of practices consistent with the climate & environment criteria above. If a business is certified by one of these schemes that promotes sustainable practices at farm level, it is automatically be considered as meeting the C&E bonus standard.