CIRCULAR ECONOMY BUSINESS MENTORING EXPERTS – SRI LANKA

SHORT TERM CONSULTANCY

In the framework of the European Union (EU) funded CIRCULAR project, Expertise France is seeking **a consultant to support and mentor a food business on identification of Circular Economy practices** in Sri Lanka, with a specific focus on reducing food loss/waste and single-use plastics in the food sector in Sri Lanka.

I. General information

Title of the Assignment	Consultancy for mentoring a food business on identification of Circular Economy practices under the Access to Finance component of the CIRCULAR Project
Name of the project	Circular Economy in the Food Sector (CIRCULAR)
Country	Sri Lanka
Maximum estimated duration	30 days

II. Context and justification of the need

1. Expertise France

Expertise France is the French Public Agency for International Technical Cooperation. As a subsidiary of the Agence Française de Développement Group (AFD Group), it designs and implements projects which aim to contribute to the balanced development of partner countries, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and the priorities of France's external action.

The agency achieves this goal by implementing national or regional-scale projects in major areas of public action:

- Democratic, economic and financial governance
- Peace, stability and security
- Climate, agriculture and sustainable development
- Health and human development.

Expertise France promotes international solidarity by facilitating the transfer of skills, fostering peer dialogue, and mobilising experts to support development cooperation aligned with the rule of law, human rights, and France's Official Development Assistance priorities.
For more information, please visit the website - www.expertisefrance.fr

2. CIRCULAR project

"Circular Economy in the Food Sector (CIRCULAR)" project, is a three-year initiative funded by the European Union and partly co-funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project is jointly implemented by Expertise France (EF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

CIRCULAR takes an integrated approach to promoting a Circular Economy in Sri Lanka's food sector, focusing in particular on reducing food loss and waste, as well as limiting the use of Single-Use Plastics (SUP). The overall objective of the project is to **promote a Circular Economy approach in the food sector**, while increasing resilience to food crises and climate change.

The specific objectives (outcomes) of the project are twofold:
Specific Objective 1 (SO1): *to increase recovery, processing and supply of edible and safe food surplus and/or waste for the benefit of vulnerable consumers and/or food producers* (implemented by FAO).

Specific Objective 2 (SO2): *to enhance effectiveness of the sustainable production, distribution and consumption models related to food waste/loss and single-use plastic food packaging* (implemented by EF and GIZ).

Expertise France contributes under the following outputs:

- **Output 2.1**: Increased awareness (and behavioural change) among the general public, economic operators, consumers and civil society about public incentives, sustainable products, solutions and services on the market.
- **Output 2.3**: MSME, startups, social enterprises, cooperatives have increased access to finance and BDS related to sustainable and gender sensitive business models and practices.

Via **output 2.3,** EF will be taking a holistic approach to increasing access to finance for Circular Economy targeting growth and expansion firms requiring financing of $500,000 to $5 million and by working with Accounting firms, certification bodies, insurance companies, banks, NBFIs, DFIs and other key actors in improving the Circular Economy financing ecosystem.

III. Objectives and desired results

a) General objective of the consultancy

The overall objective of this consultancy is to provide targeted technical assistance to a leading processed food company in Sri Lanka ("the Company") to reduce market returns and improve product freshness management across its distribution value chain. The Company currently experiences annual market returns of over 768 tonnes of food primarily due to product expiry, inventory accumulation, demand variability, and downstream distribution challenges. The Company has already developed strong internal systems, from demand planning, inventory management, sales practices and return policies, including detailed daily, weekly, and annual sales and return data, as well as Power BI dashboards that provide insights on product movement and market performance. These tools are available to sales representatives and relevant teams to support decision-making. The company promotes good inventory management practices up to distributor level and information on Stock Keeping Unit (SKU) level inventory is available up to distributor level. However, visibility on the age of stock is currently limited to the factory warehouse level, meaning the company has limited information on how long products have remained in inventory once they move beyond the factory.

However, despite the availability of data and analytical tools, challenges remain in translating insights into consistent actions across the distribution network. For example, new sales representatives or other market actors may continue to stock additional quantities of products without considering sales trends of the particular product at the store influenced by pressures from sales targets. The consultancy will therefore focus on identifying behavioural, operational, and systemic barriers and developing practical solutions to ensure that existing information, incentives, and processes effectively contribute to reducing market returns.

The consultancy will include:

- Assessment of current market return drivers and root causes across the sales and distribution value chain
- Deep engagement and discussions of current issues faced with relevant stakeholders, including sales teams, distributors, retailers, and relevant teams within the company
- Review of existing data systems and processes to identify opportunities for better utilisation
- Development of practical interventions to improve decision-making, stock management, and product freshness
- Development of a scalable roadmap to reduce market returns while maintaining sales growth objectives

b) Specific objective of the consultancy

Expertise France is seeking a consultant with expertise in FMCG supply chains, food waste prevention, market systems development, behaviour change, and inventory optimisation.

The consultant will:

- Conduct an assessment of current mitigations systems for reducing market return, including product flows, distributor and retailer practices, sales processes, incentive structures, stock management practices and traceability of aged products
- Conduct consultations and deep-dive discussions with relevant stakeholders, including sales representatives, area sales managers, distributors, modern trade partners, supply chain and commercial teams
- Analyse available Company data, including Power BI dashboards, sales information, market return data, SKU performance, and distributor-level information, to identify key return drivers and intervention opportunities
- Assess why existing information is not consistently translated into preventive actions at market level despite accessibility for sales representatives
- Recommend improvements to sales practices, distributor engagement, stock maintenance, forecasting, product freshness management and analytical tool deployment
- Develop recommendations for integrating market return reduction alongside existing sales targets and incentive structures
- Propose practical training and behaviour change approaches for sales representatives, considering the high turnover of field staff and the need for continuous on boarding
- Identify opportunities for practical AI enabled technological and operational improvements to strengthen early identification of expiry risks
- Develop a financially viable roadmap to reduce market returns and improve value retention

IV. Description of the assignment

The consultant will achieve the objective of this assignment through the following activities:

1. Stakeholder assessment with a Market return lens

The consultant will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the distribution value chain of the company to understand the causes of market returns. The assessment should identify not only where returns occur, but also why existing systems and information are not preventing them. This will include:

- Analysis of historical market return trends
- Review of high-return SKUs, regions, and channels
- Identification of aging stock identifying mechanisms and technical challenges

- Identification of current demand planning practices, inventory management practices at factory, distributor and retail level, sales and merchandising practices, and market return accepting practices
- Assessment of distributor and retailer practices
- Interviews and discussions with sales managers, demand planners, warehouse managers, field sales representatives, distributors, retailers, and other internal teams
- Identification of behavioural and operational factors contributing to returns

2. Data utilisation and decision making improvement

The Company currently has significant data availability, including:

- Daily, weekly, and annual sales data
- Market return data per product level, retail level, distributor level
- SKU-level performance information
- Distributor and outlet-level insights
- Power BI dashboards accessible to sales teams

The consultant will assess how these tools are currently used and recommend improvements to ensure sales teams effectively use available information for stock planning, identifying slow-moving products, preventing overstocking and reducing expiry risks.

3. Identification of circular solutions and technologies

The consultant will identify the most relevant and cost effective operational model, technologies and solutions that can support the reduction of market returns. These may include technologies that are already available in Sri Lanka, as well as proven international solutions that could be adapted to the local context. Each model, technology or solution will be described in detail, including its costs, scalability, and integration requirements. The consultant must also assess whether these technologies and solutions are feasible and practical to be rolled out to the wider sales and distribution team, considering the local context.

4. Operational adoption and capacity building

To ensure the long-term effectiveness of the market return reduction strategy, the consultant will recommend approaches to embed market return reduction practices within the company's existing sales and distribution processes. Particular consideration should be given to ensuring consistency in decision-making across a large and evolving sales network.

This may include:

- Assessing behavioural and operational barriers that contribute to market returns
- Recommending practical mechanisms to improve the use of existing sales data, dashboards, and insights in stocking and replenishment decisions
- Sharing relevant industry best practices for integrating product freshness and inventory optimisation into sales operations
- Developing simple training materials/videos for new and existing sales staff

5. Estimation of costs and revenue opportunities

The consultant will prepare an overall estimate of the financing that the company will require in order to adopt and expand this initiative. This will include capital expenditure, working capital requirements, and any recurring operational costs that will arise during the transition. Although the consultant will not provide direct support for investment readiness or investor matchmaking, the analysis should give the company a clear understanding of the financial resources they will need to mobilise.

6. Circular transition plan

The consultant will prepare a step-by-step circular transition plan for the company. The plan will outline the sequence of actions for implementation, define responsibilities, and include timelines and milestones. It will also identify priority solutions for pilot implementation and provide guidance for scaling up successful interventions.

7. Estimation of total financing requirements
The consultant will provide an estimate of the total financing required for the company to implement and scale the proposed Circular Economy solutions. This will include capital expenditure, operational costs, and indicative investment requirements for pilot and full-scale implementation.

8. Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
The consultant is expected to identify and integrate opportunities for gender equality, disability inclusion, and broader social inclusion as part of the circular transition for the company. This should go beyond identification and include practical, business relevant recommendations that can be embedded within operations and value chains.

The consultant will:

- Identify opportunities to enhance inclusive participation in circular activities (e.g. waste management, processing, value addition, supply chain roles) and for integration of universal design principles within operations
- Integrate GEDSI considerations into the circular transition plan, including roles, responsibilities, and capacity-building actions across departments
- Recommend indicators to track progress on inclusion (e.g. participation of women-led enterprises, employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, generation of income opportunities for smaller or informal actors)

The anticipated deliverables for the proposed scope of work is as follows:

Tasks	**Deliverables**	**Indicative Days**
1. Inception and engagement planning with the selected business	**Inception report outlining:** • Methodology including engagement approach, and work plan • Consultation schedule with relevant departments within the business (management, production, sales, distribution, finance, operations, etc.) • Simple tools to map the market returns process and assess opportunities tailored to the business	2
2. Business-level diagnostic and value chain assessment	**Detailed diagnostic report based on cross-department consultations covering:** • End-to-end value chain mapping for the market returns (sourcing, production, processing, packaging, distribution, end-of-life) to identify food loss, food waste, and single-use plastic waste • Assessment of existing data systems, including daily, weekly, and annual sales data, market return data, SKU-level performance information, distributor/outlet insights, and Power BI dashboards • Evaluation of how existing information is currently used by teams for stocking and replenishment decisions • Identification of behavioural, operational, and systemic barriers preventing effective market return reduction	8

Tasks	Deliverables	Indicative Days
3. Identification of circular economy opportunities and solution design	**Circular Economy opportunities report including:** • Identification of practical and cost-effective solutions to reduce market returns • Assessment of relevant technologies and operational solutions available locally and internationally (where possible conduct pilot trialling of solutions) • Evaluation of solution feasibility, scalability, costs, integration requirements, and suitability for implementation across the sales and distribution network • Recommendations for priority solutions and conclusions from potential pilot interventions	10
4. Validation and refinement with the business	**Validation report including:** • Feedback from the company on Diagnostics report and Circular Economy opportunities report • Notes on management selection of service providers for circular technologies and solutions • Feedback for training materials and handouts	2

5. Development of Circular Transition and Investment-Ready Plan	**Comprehensive Circular Economy Transition Plan including:**
	• Step-by-step implementation roadmap
	• Timeline with milestones and departmental responsibilities
	• Organisational and process changes required across departments
	• Capacity building training plan for departments
	• Estimation of total financing required for implementation and scale-up:
	  o CAPEX and OPEX estimates for circular interventions
	  o Identification of new revenue streams from circular models
	  o Financial viability analysis (ROI, payback period, break-even analysis)
		4

6. Inter-departmental Circular Economy training and capacity building	**Delivery of tailored inter-departmental training sessions for relevant teams on the circular transition plan covering:** • Consolidated findings from diagnostic, data assessment, solutions assessment, financial analysis, and transition planning • Final recommendations for implementation • Development of simple training materials that can be used for educating new and existing sales staff on the solutions • Executive summary highlighting expected business, environmental, and circular economy benefits	2
7. Final submission and reporting	• Final Circular Economy Transition Plan after incorporating feedback from management • Summary of training outcomes and capacity building recommendations • Standalone 5 page investment case for financing discussions	2

The company will designate a dedicated focal point to support the consultant with the required data, coordination and guidance for completing the deliverables. The consultant's level of effort allocated in this ToR directly reflects and relies upon this active support from the company to finalise the Circular Transition Plan.

Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)
Expertise France has signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with the company. All business related information and project details shared during the assignment shall be treated as strictly confidential. To support this, the consultant will be required to sign a NDA with the company prior to commencing the assignment.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the consultancy assignment
The consultant will be required to report on the progress of the assignment. As the work progresses, the consultant may need to adjust the approach or activities based on findings from the diagnostic and needs assessment. Any changes should be clearly documented. The consultant should also outline how data will be collected, analysed, and reported, including the tools and methods used to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the assignment.

Visibility and Communication
The consultant will have to ensure that the visibility and communication about the activities are compliant with European Union and the CIRCULAR project guidelines.

V. Place, Duration and Indicative Timeline

1. **Estimated contract start date:** 15 10 2026
2. **Effective duration**: The mentoring is expected to take place within 6 months from the start date
3. **Location:** Colombo, Sri Lanka - Pilot location to be determined based on initial scoping

VI. Required Expertise and profiles

The assignment requires strong technical and analytical expertise in Circular Economy applications within the agri-food sector, combining sustainability knowledge with practical business and financial insights. The consultant or consulting team should collectively demonstrate the following qualifications and skills:

- The consultant or consultant team is expected to hold an advanced degree in FMCG Supply Chain Management, Logistics, Circular Economy, Sustainable Business, Food Technology, Environmental Economics, or related disciplines
- Over 10 years of relevant professional experience in FMCG supply chain optimisation, inventory management, food waste prevention, or circular economy implementation in the private sector (for individual consultants, or collectively across key team members for consulting firms)
- Direct professional experience working in Sri Lanka or the South Asian region is preferred

Technical expertise

- Advanced understanding of Circular Economy frameworks applied to the agri-food and FMCG sectors, with specific expertise in food loss and waste reduction, product freshness management, value retention, and single-use plastic reduction
- Proven track record in conducting end-to-end supply chain, inventory, and value chain diagnostics in the processed food or FMCG sectors, with deep knowledge of downstream distribution networks, distributor/retailer practices, stock rotation, and return mechanics
- Demonstrated ability to identify, evaluate, and trial practical, cost-effective technologies including AI-enabled early risk identification, batch traceability systems, and digital stock monitoring to improve inventory freshness and mitigate expiry risks

- Strong knowledge of financial modeling for circular transitions, including evaluating total financing needs, calculating CAPEX and OPEX, payback periods, ROI, break-even thresholds, and identifying new circular revenue streams.
- Understanding of Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) integration and ESG frameworks within private sector operations and value chains.

Analytical and advisory skills

- Proven capacity to diagnose behavioral, operational, and systemic barriers that prevent sales teams, distributors, and retailers from taking proactive preventive actions despite data availability
- Ability to translate complex data and field insights into practical, scalable business interventions that balance return reduction targets with existing sales growth objectives and sales incentive structures
- Experience in developing comprehensive, actionable Circular Transition Plans, step-by-step implementation roadmaps, departmental responsibility matrices, and investment-ready business cases.
- Strong analytical, synthesis, and reporting skills, with a proven ability to synthesize complex diagnostic data into clear executive summaries and standalone investment cases for financial institutions.

Other requirements

- Excellent stakeholder engagement, interview, and facilitation skills across all organisational levels, from executive leadership and demand planners to field sales representatives, distributors, and modern trade partners
- Demonstrated experience in designing tailored capacity-building programs, producing simplified training materials/videos, and conducting inter-departmental training sessions for high-turnover sales and field teams
- Ability to work effectively under strict confidentiality requirements, including adherence to Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs)
- Excellent research, analytical, and professional writing skills in English. The use of AI-assisted research and editing tools is permitted; however, the consultant is expected to apply their own judgment and writing style to ensure the final product is accurate, actionable, and consistent

VII. Application

All applications must be submitted on Expertise France platform through the following link: https://expertise-france.gestmax.fr/16255/1/consultancy-opportunity-sri-lanka-circular-economy-business-mentoring-h-f/en_US

and e-mailed to: amila.bogahawatta@expertisefrance.fr
CC: habbipriya.karthigesan@expertisefrance.fr

All applications must include:

- A technical note (maximum 1 page) detailing the suitability and interest to engage on this assignment
- Company profile and CVs of the key members of the consultancy
- A financial offer including a daily rate excluding VAT

Deadline for submission: 08/10/2026 (17:00 Paris local time)
All proposals will be forwarded to the partner food business for review and interview shortlisting.