

WTS RESEARCH GRANTS SCHEME

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WTS RESEARCH GRANTS SCHEME

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Introduction

Welttierschutzstiftung (WTS) is a German charitable foundation, established in 2015 by Welttierschutzgesellschaft e.V. The foundation promotes animal welfare worldwide. The main focus of its work lies on improving animal welfare through academic education and continuous professional development in emerging and developing countries, on scientific research on animal welfare, on raising awareness towards animal welfare in society and on the search for solutions to a global animal-friendly future.

The **research grant aims** to:

- Initiate and promote scientific research in farm animal welfare in developing countries;
- Build and sustain a critical mass of highly qualified, innovative and committed animal welfare scientists capable of addressing current welfare problems faced by farm animals in developing countries.

Scope and Technical Description of the Research Grant

Thematic areas of focus: WTS, in partnership with AWeCCA conducted a comprehensive stakeholder consultation to identify priority thematic areas of interest for advancing farm animal welfare research in Africa. Therefore, with the launch of these research grants, **Round 1** will specifically target research projects that align with the identified priority thematic areas. WTS hereby calls for research proposals to undertake research in the following four thematic areas:

Theme A: Improving Farm animal Welfare through Alternative livestock production systems [*click for details*](#)

Theme B: Changing farmer behaviours towards good welfare for farm animals in Africa [*click for details*](#)

Theme C: Farm animal Welfare assessment [*click for details*](#)

Theme D: Fish Welfare in Africa [*click for details*](#)

Funding Information

- WTS has a budget ceiling of 10,000 EURO per project for its annual grant.
- The work plan should be for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months, and applicants should demonstrate that they have the capacities to successfully execute the described activities.

Eligibility Criteria

- Specific to this call, proposals must be purely for research, activities other than research are not eligible (e.g., program evaluations, outreaches, professional development, scholarships, curriculum development and capital projects). Additionally, proposals for research studies focused on areas other than those focused on the themes above, are not eligible.
- For each application, it is a requirement to indicate a co-Principal Investigator; the requirements for one to be a co-Principle Investigator are similar to those required of a PI.
- Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs applying for these research grants must have earned at least a masters in an academic discipline or professional field in animal science, veterinary science/medicine or agricultural sciences or relevant discipline based on the type of research they intend to carry out.
- The Principal Investigators (PIs) should be nationals of developing countries, however, Co-PIs may or may not be.
- The principal investigators (PIs) and Co-PIs must be affiliated with a non-profit organization or public/governmental institution that is willing to serve as the administering organization if the grant is awarded. The institution must be signatory of the contract. WTS does not award grants directly to individuals. Examples of institutions that qualify include non-profit organisations, universities, and research facilities.
- Proposals are accepted from Africa, and all proposals must be submitted in English and budgets must be proposed in Euros.
- PIs and Co-PIs may not submit more than one research proposal to WTS at a time.
- PIs and Co-PIs may only hold one active research grant from the WTS at a time.

How to apply

- We invite you to read the guidelines carefully before starting to fill in the application form.
- Application is a two stage process, i.e.

1. Submission of concept

The form for submission of concept is provided [here](#). Concepts will be received until the indicated deadline, reviewed within a period of two months from the submission date and successful candidates will be written to directly to submit a full proposal (whose timelines will be indicated).

2. Submission of full proposal

Research proposal shall be written in Microsoft Word, Times New Roman, Font 12, single spacing and normal margins. Proposals should not exceed 3600 words. The proposal shall be submitted to the WTS Office in electronic formats (pdf) to research@welttierschutzstiftung.org. The full proposal should be submitted in a form that will be provided after acceptance of concept.

Outputs and Obligations

Successful candidates will be expected to:

- Attend initial virtual meetings as well as monthly check-ins as shall be agreed from time to time.
- As needed, communicate research findings during a scheduled conference(s) or webinar(s)
- Complete a final report following WTS research grants scheme
- Provide a brief summary of the research activities and results as needed by WTS web portal.
- Fully credit WTS in any communication activities or materials.
- Publish at least one article in a reputable/credible journal and provide evidence of article published
- Submit end of project report and accountability.

When to apply

Concepts have to be sent until 1 March annually. Shortlisted applicants will be informed and asked to send full proposals within two months after their concept note has been accepted.

We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the deadline but submit the applications as early as you can.

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCHERS

Introduction

WTS research grant applicants will submit a competitive concept and proposal for the available funding. The guidelines below apply to both the concept and full proposal application process.

Selecting a theme: Researchers should select a theme under which they would like to seek for the funding among the four thematic areas presented in this call. Researchers should note that it is important to select a theme that is commensurate with their capacities.

Choosing a Title: The title of a research should not be repetitive nor generic nor borrowed from similar work by others. Title needs to be reflective of the main thrust of the research project, preferably short, and simple to understand.

The proposed research or solution: Researchers should clearly articulate the objectives of the planned research describing the critical content of the solution (i.e., the 'research methodology') and defend the relevance of the proposed research to addressing key issues in the respective thematic areas specified in this call.

Writing the concept and/or proposal: This is very critical and offers an insight into the richness and originality of the project. As much as possible spend sufficient time so that it is well written and that the project can win the grant. Specific emphasis should be on the broad context of the study or motivation, your research questions and their relevance, hypotheses or empirical approach including methods, sentences describing data to be used, and ensure to include something about the expected contribution of the study to the literature: what is new in the study about the topic and relative to the country that is the focus of the study.

Data analysis: The data section is very important as it provides information on its relevance to answer the research questions. Ensure to describe the data sources clearly and accurately, mention key variables/indicators that will be used in the study and expected findings (quite brief since you have not done the analysis yet).

Work plan/implementation plan: Researchers will provide a list of key milestones for the project clearly demonstrating the deliverables expected at each point during the project. These milestones will be used as the basis for tracking implementation of activities towards project goals and outputs.

Translation and dissemination: Since this research fund is aimed at generating scientific understanding of farm animal welfare to a wider community, researchers should show a clear plan for disseminating their findings to several audiences.

Budget scope/funding amount: Applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully consider this when constructing their budgets and ensure to stick within recognized country specific rates for purchases of goods and services. Applicants are advised to use only the provided template during submission of budgets. Suggested line items in the template are provided as guidelines but are not comprehensive or required.

Ethical implications: The implications of the research to human subjects, animal subjects and the environment should be articulated where necessary including how key ethical or environmental concerns arising from the study will be addressed. It is anticipated that at the time of contract signing, projects requiring ethical approval will have already obtained that approval from their respective ethics committees.

What the evaluation team looks for?

- The research is led by Africans, other nationalities can exist as Co-PIs or part of research team
- Demonstrates innovative methodologies and approaches- Exhibits scientific rigour and excellence
- Displays knowledge of associated recent or ongoing work on the continent under the chosen theme.
- Defines a clear plan for disseminating research outcomes both inside and outside the scientific community
- Advances the frontiers of knowledge within the chosen thematic area
- Original research with a clear plan for open access publication

Selection Process

Concepts and proposals will initially be reviewed by a team of animal welfare scientists and experts assembled by WTS and will be done according to the guidelines and criteria above. Final selections and decisions will be made by WTS management in consultation with its internal partners.

THEMATIC AREAS OF FOCUS

Theme A:

Improving Farm animal welfare through alternative livestock production systems

Current challenge

Livestock production in Africa is carried out as either extensive, semi-intensive or intensive depending on several factors including; availability of capital, land, labour, environmental conditions among others. These livestock production systems have proved vital to the national economies through providing income to households, jobs, access to food and improved nutrition. Important to note, are the animal welfare challenges that prevail in these production systems as farmers seek to exploit the benefits from these animals. This failure to meet welfare needs of farm animals inadvertently leads to, production losses, poor quality of products (especially meat) and eventual collapse of majority of the farms. Therefore, improvements in livestock welfare are desirable, necessary and in some situations should be enforced by respective authorities and most importantly if production is to continue sustainably. However, farmers and other stakeholders are increasingly seeking for approaches on how to improve standard of care in their current production systems or how to overhaul their current production systems to adopt those that are practically suited to their environmental and economic conditions whilst being good for welfare.

Proposed solution

For this proposal, research should focus on any or all of the following aspects;

- Identifying existing production systems for a particular species of livestock with a focus on establishing prevailing welfare problems/challenges
- Identifying improvements that can be made to existing livestock production methods/systems in order to uplift the standard of welfare while still maintaining productivity and economic viability
- Identifying a promising alternative livestock production method/approach that has preliminary evidence of efficiency of production and fostering good welfare;
- Demonstrating the potential of improved or alternative production systems to ensure good welfare of animals on the farms, economic viability for farmers, production efficiency and environmental sustainability.

Theme B: Changing farmer behaviours towards good welfare for farm animals in Africa

In recent years, there has been an increase in farmer awareness and training programs to improve welfare practices on their farms. However, in most of the cases, follow up investigations have showed no actual improvements made by the farmers. For the majority of farmers in Africa there are many factors to consider regarding changes in practice to improve welfare, and therefore the optimal course of action is not always obvious.

Current challenges

Despite the desire for farmers in Africa to make improvements in the welfare of animals, they are normally prevented from taking action because of the complexity of deciding which practices to improve and by how much. These farmers usually consider several factors including; projected benefits to the enterprise, costs associated with changing practices, what they know and have been doing before, possible benefits to the animal, cost associated with not improving animal welfare among others. Therefore understanding the reasons why farmers act or fail to act in relation to animal welfare is important as it determines whether information provided through trainings, awareness campaigns or research dissemination are translated into real changes on farms. Additionally, the traditional thinking that an intervention that alters attitudes will lead to a change in behavior especially based on the assumption that attitudes predict intentions, which, in turn, predict behavior has proved impractical not just in Africa but also worldwide. Therefore, there is wide realization that what people intend to do does not always determine what they actually do. There is clearly a need to improve the approaches that animal welfare advocates and scientists use when designing and evaluating human behaviour change interventions.

Proposed solutions

For proposals in this area, research should focus on any or all of the following:

- Identifying current farmer behavioural practices that affect welfare in the different production systems and factors driving or predisposing to such behaviours
- Explore the potential for available and existing human behavioural change models for their applicability in changing farmers' animal welfare behaviours and practices
- Tailored to the current livestock production systems in Africa, explore the costs of doing nothing to improve welfare, cost of improving welfare, the benefits of improving welfare

Theme C: Fish Welfare in Africa

In the past 20 years, fish production has seen a worldwide expansion and it seems that growth is set to continue. According to the World Bank, by 2030, global fish demand, driven by growing population and income, is expected to rise by 40 million tons, and to consistently continue growing over the coming decades. There is a strong opportunity for Africa to play a crucial role in the sector through capture fisheries with improved management systems and enhanced value chains; and investments in sustainable aquaculture that would enable to meet regional and global shortfalls in food fish supply.

Current challenges

Sustainable aquaculture and improved fisheries management could make fish production highly profitable for African farmers supporting their social and economic development. The increasing importance of fish welfare in aquaculture comes, not just from product acceptance, public perception and marketing, but also often in terms of efficiency of production, quality issues and quantity. The welfare status of the fish is an intrinsic part of fish production in that only when the basic biological requirements such as water quality, feed and others are adequately fulfilled will growth, food utilization, health and physical integrity of farmed fish be optimal and production being both economically sustainable and ethically defensible. Additionally, fish kept under good welfare conditions are less stressed, less susceptible to diseases, require less medication and treatment, and therefore show good food conversion, better growth rates and hence provide a better-quality product. When fish are raised under suboptimal welfare conditions, they will perform poorly especially showing slowed growth and increased susceptibility to disease. This negatively affects fish production and compromises the image of the industry. It is also important to highlight that good fish welfare cannot simply be extrapolated from terrestrial animals, a specific understanding of current welfare issues and tailored solutions for improvement is necessary.

Proposed solutions

For this proposal, research should focus on any or all of the following aspects;

- To create a general understanding of current fish production systems in Africa with a focus on establishing prevailing welfare conditions and practices
- Utilise scientifically recognized behavioural and welfare measures to create an understanding of the effects of aquaculture procedures on welfare in order to produce data and recommendations for best practice and future legislation.
- Identifying solutions to enhance the welfare of fish in current production systems.
- Identifying human activities other than fisheries, aquaculture that can harm fish welfare.

Theme D: Farm animal welfare assessment

The first step towards the improvement of welfare of animals on farms is accurate and frequent welfare assessment which requires a reliable assessment protocol. However, a 'gold standard' for welfare assessment is still lacking and existing welfare assessment protocols may not apply to all production systems and environments.

Current challenge

A welfare assessment generally involves examining the animals to ensure good health and well-being as well as monitoring for any signs of pain, distress, or suffering. Animal welfare assessments are therefore a critical component of farms and related institutional animal management programs. Several on-farm assessment protocols have been developed during the last decades which serve different purposes, e.g., farm assurance, in terms of on-farm decision support or assisting other parties in the supply chain in driving changes. Welfare assessments also facilitate refinement of husbandry and procedures to reduce animal suffering and improve welfare. Successful refinement depends upon the ability to assess animal welfare effectively, and detect any signs of pain or distress as rapidly as possible, which is an important factor of the assessment protocol used. Therefore, it is important to test the feasibility of using existing welfare assessment protocols and adapt to prevailing production systems in developing countries or a potential overhaul to create new Afrocentric welfare assessment protocols.

Proposed solutions

For this proposal, research should focus on any or all of the following aspects;

- Studies to assess the applicability of existing welfare assessment protocols to existing farm animals production systems in developing countries
- Identifying a combination of animal or resource-based welfare indicators that are easier and faster to measure by farmers and corresponding methods for utilisation and interpretation of results
- Studies to evaluate the usefulness of welfare assessment for the farmers.

CONCEPT SUBMISSION FORM

Please answer the following questions:

Name of PI
Telephone contact
Email address
Name of Co-PI
Telephone contact
Email address
Organisation/Institution (PI)
Organisational/Institutional URL (PI)

1. Short description of project

Theme
Title (120 characters max)
Objectives (500 characters max)
Background (1000 characters max)

Material and Methods (Among other aspects, **clearly indicate**; *Participants/study subjects, Data collection process, Ethical considerations and Potential risks or problems to encounter*; 1500 characters max)

Statistical analysis (500 characters max)

References (500 characters max)

2. Funding and budgets

Requested amount

Budget breakdown (do not itemise, *indicate in percentages, e. g. field costs 20 %*; 1000 characters max)

3. Approvals needed

(500 characters max)