

Terms of reference for an external evaluation of GRAIN in 2026

of projects:

Brot für die Welt N-WEL-2024-5389,

Supporting social movements in their struggles for land and seeds
and

Misereor 600-600-2998 ZG,

Corporations and climate: supporting the struggle for community-controlled food systems

1. Introduction to GRAIN

GRAIN is a small international non-profit organisation that works to support small food producers and social movements in their struggles for community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems. The objectives of GRAIN are to deepen public understanding of the forces shaping the global and local food systems and their impact on farming and food security and to support grassroots groups, social movements and civil society organisations in advancing towards food sovereignty. GRAIN's programme takes the form of two strategic approaches: research and information work and movement building, capacity sharing and support to groups, across five programme areas: Corporations, power and the global food system; Land grabbing and the struggle for land; People's control over seed; Food sovereignty to fight the climate crisis; and Cross-cutting and organisational development. Our work is carried out both globally and on the ground with partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For more background on the organisation and repository of publications, see www.grain.org.

GRAIN was founded in 1990 with a set of goals as articulated in our statutes. GRAIN underwent an external funder evaluation (Sida) in 1997 that resulted in a series of recommendations related to its programme focus and organisational development. This was also a time of GRAIN's transition to a more decentralised, global, movement-support organisation. In 2003, GRAIN underwent another external evaluation that allowed the organisation to better define its objectives, operating criteria and indicators. This resulted in a new planning, monitoring and evaluation system based on overall principles and a set of indicators. In 2019, the set of indicators was reviewed and adapted into an online tracking system. Other funder-sponsored evaluations took place in 2007 (focused on GRAIN's information and outreach work), 2012 (focused on land grabbing) and 2018 (examining GRAIN's work in all programme areas).

In 2022, GRAIN began a strategic planning process with the goal of articulating specific programme objectives and indicators for the coming years and developing a planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL) framework. This strategic plan (2024-2028) and PMEL system have been used as the basis of funding proposals, reports and internal learning for the past two years. This includes the objectives and indicators for the current funding projects to be evaluated.

2. Objective and scope

This external evaluation will take place at the beginning of the second year of a three-year project cycle (2025-2027) with both Misereor and Brot für die Welt. It is an obligatory procedure in this current third funding phase with both funding entities, given the last external evaluation took place in 2018.

Both projects have a similar development objective, tightly aligned with GRAIN's overall mission: Achieve community-controlled and biodiversity-based food systems.

As has been the case for several project cycles, the Brot für die Welt project focuses on work within two of GRAIN’s programme areas, land and seeds, while the Misereor project focuses on the other two programme areas, corporations and climate. In particular, the current projects consist of four objectives, as follow:

Funder	Project objective (period 2025-2027)
Brot für die Welt	Community and NGO coalitions block carbon farming deals, particularly in Africa.
Brot für die Welt	The STOP UPOV (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants) campaign members and other allies thwart the advancement of UPOV at national and regional levels in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
Misereor	Partners and allies successfully organise to disrupt investment in industrial agriculture, in particular in the aquaculture or livestock sector.
Misereor	Partners and allies active on climate, energy and food systems coalesce to position the chemical fertiliser industry as a critical target of climate action.

These are both follow-on projects from previous iterations with both funders. The previous project objectives are as follows:

Funder	Project objective (period 2022-2024)
Brot für die Welt	GRAIN materials broaden public understanding on new and emerging issues around land and seed privatisation through wider visibility in social and mainstream media.
Brot für die Welt	GRAIN partners and social movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America mobilise to influence policies and decisions on land and seed issues.
Misereor	The materials composed by GRAIN help changing the prevailing narrative on agricultural corporations, agricultural trade and the food-climate link.
Misereor	GRAIN partners and social movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America influence policies and decisions on agribusiness, trade and climate policy.

This evaluation will assess the projects’ ability to reach the desired impacts and align with the needs of partners, taking into account the previous project phase (2022-2024) as well as progress during year 1 (2025) of the current project. This feedback will provide insights for the remainder of the project implementation (through 2027), especially measuring and reporting on project impact.

In addition, in this opportunity for an external evaluation, GRAIN would like to evaluate the effectiveness of its PMEL system and receive feedback on how to improve it for future project development. GRAIN would like to determine how the PMEL system can be optimised in the planning of the next agreement with each funder to build on the results of the current project and contribute to the overall strategic objectives of GRAIN. GRAIN holds as an objective to maintain (in the case of Misereor) and return to (in the case of Brot für die Welt) government-backed funding.

3. Evaluation orientation and key questions

As this evaluation will take place early in the project implementation period, it is clear we will not be able to determine the final outcomes or impact. The evaluation may take into account aspects from the previous project phase to complement findings. The evaluation should be oriented to

providing insights into its project design process, its theory of change, the advances towards the intended objectives thus far and identifying challenges or emerging threats that could hamper the fulfilment of the project as designed. In addition, GRAIN is interested in improving its PMEL process to collect the necessary evidence to be able to demonstrate, share and learn from the project outcomes and impacts upon its completion.

The evaluation will be compliant with OECD–DAC standards¹ and fulfil the project evaluation requirements as laid out by both funding entities. It will also assess the project upon the DAC-evaluation criteria. Therefore, the questions that follow represent a reasoned selection of the evaluation criteria, with a focus on relevance, effectiveness and impact. These are the areas where GRAIN would like the evaluation to provide input and recommendations for improvement. The key questions for each category below include the evaluation standard questions required by Brot für die Welt.

Relevance

1. To what extent are the project goals aligned with the needs of the target groups?
2. How can GRAIN better assess the relevance of activities and outputs in responding to the needs of partner groups and the global political and economic context for future planning

Coherence

3. To what extent is the project complementary to the efforts of partner groups and other allies in work related to sustainable food and agriculture systems?

Effectiveness

4. To what extent have the project objectives been, or are expected to be, achieved?
5. Which civil society groups have been reached by the project and which not? What are the major factors limiting outreach?
6. What were the main factors that contributed or challenged the achievement of the project objectives?

Efficiency

7. To what extent were the project's inputs (financial, human and material resources) used economically in relation to the outputs produced (products, capital goods and services) (production efficiency)?

Impact

8. To what extent did the past project and does the current project so far had positive effects for the target groups?
9. To what extent does the current project contribute to the realization of the right to food and nutrition, protect the natural basis of food production and advance food sovereignty? How can this be improved for future projects?

Sustainability

10. To what extent are the positive effects of the project sustainable?

¹https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2010/02/quality-standards-for-development-evaluation_g1ghc6e7.html

PMEL

11. To what extent is the current PMEL system aligned with GRAIN's organisational culture, values and set-up?
12. How can planning, monitoring and reporting be done more efficiently to maximize learning but not overburden staff and partners?
13. How can GRAIN's M&E process more effectively provide the information needed to determine progress towards project objectives?
14. How can GRAIN better capture qualitative examples of the project's impact?

4. Methodology and schedule

The ideal evaluation methodology will be participatory. The evaluators should propose methods that ensure consultation and close collaboration with key stakeholders.

Stakeholders to be consulted may include:

- current GRAIN staff and Board members
- former staff and Board members
- partner organisations working closely with GRAIN on project activities
- social movements and local and regional civil society organisations promoting the right to food and sustainable food systems
- funders of GRAIN

GRAIN will provide a list of persons that it considers relevant to be asked for input. The evaluators are expected to create a sample of organisations that are broadly representative of social movements and local and regional civil society organisations promoting the right to food and sustainable food systems relevant to the project objectives being evaluated.

The evaluation itself will be carried out between January–May 2026, with preparatory conversations and background information shared prior, between October–December 2025. The final report will be submitted by 30 May 2026. The workload is anticipated to account for an estimated total of 36 days (around 288 work hours).

Proposed steps and timeline:

1. October / November / December 2025: Preparatory conversations and background information will be shared with evaluators. GRAIN will submit a set of papers it deems relevant and the evaluators can request others.
2. January 2026: Review of key GRAIN programme outputs and institutional documents by the evaluators.
3. Early January 2026: Virtual kick-off meeting between the evaluators and GRAIN to: clarify objective and intended utilisation of the external evaluation, expected deliverables finalise details of the evaluation process: evaluation questions, timeline and methodology, stakeholders to be interviewed, logistics and administration understand GRAIN's history, institutional set-up and functioning and the current PMEL system and respond to any questions stemming from initial review of key outputs and documents

4. By end of January 2026: Evaluators submit an Inception report, prepared based on the agreements of the kick-off meeting and the Terms of Reference. The Inception report should include an overview of the evaluation purpose and scope, the evaluation approach and methodology, a work plan with time frame and potential limitations. (GRAIN will review and approve the inception report within 10 days of receipt).
5. January / February / March 2026: Interviews – by phone and teleconference – with GRAIN current and former staff (14-16 people), current and former Board members (5-7 people), funders (2-3 selected) and key partners and allies (3-4 selected groups with geographic representation in Asia and Latin America). Evaluator travel to do an estimated 3-5 day site visit to partners and civil society representatives in Africa.
6. By 30 March: Check in between evaluators and GRAIN.
7. By 30 April 2026: Evaluators present the draft evaluation report.
8. By 15 May: GRAIN, Brot für die Welt and Misereor provide feedback on the draft report (within 14 days of receipt).
9. By 30 May 2026: Presentation of the final report to Brot für die Welt, Misereor and GRAIN at a virtual meeting, and discussion about its recommendations.

The suggested steps and timeline will be coordinated with the evaluators and adapted if necessary.

5. Desired profile and deliverables

GRAIN is planning to commission the evaluation assignment to an evaluator or team of evaluators.

The desired profile of the evaluator include: familiarity with civil society organisation like GRAIN that work in the field of food and agriculture; strong understanding of MEL culture and practice; and, ideally, experience with German government funding criteria (BMZ / KZE). The ideal evaluator will have experience with participatory methodology and evaluating programmes for complex social impact. The evaluator has to be gender-sensitive and fluent in English; an ability to communicate in French and also Spanish will be highly advantageous.

Deliverables from the evaluator will include an inception report, draft evaluation report, final evaluation report and presentation.

The Evaluation report to be produced by the evaluator will have the following sections:

1. Executive summary
2. Methodology used
3. Description of GRAIN's work, history, programme, partners, and the project objectives agreed with Brot für die Welt and Misereor
4. Findings related to the key issues and leading questions highlighted in section 3, divided into sections related to a) the Brot für die Welt agreement and b) the Misereor agreement.
5. Evaluation grid
6. Conclusions, from the findings.
7. Recommendations, following from the conclusions.
8. Annexes, containing: TOR, chronology of the evaluation, list of interviewees, list of documents on which the evaluation was based.

The main body of the report will not exceed 30 pages, excluding annexes, with an executive summary of conclusions and recommendations.

The final report (in English) will be submitted to GRAIN, Brot für die Welt and Misereor by 30 May 2026.

6. Evaluation offer

Individual evaluators or an evaluation team may apply.

The evaluation offer should contain:

- Expertise/CVs of evaluator(s)
- A brief summary of fulfilment of the above mentioned criteria
- A short proposal detailing the methods to be deployed, how each of the requirements shall be met point by point and timeline
- Complete cost estimate in line with GRAIN's evaluation budget of EUR 26,500. Cost estimate should include the fee, all travel expenses for site visit to groups in Africa, and any ancillary costs (e.g. communications, administration, office costs and taxes).

Proposals must be submitted in PDF as an email attachment, subject line: GRAIN evaluation proposal. The proposal as well as any questions should be directed to: GRAIN evaluation team, procurement@grain.org

Deadline for proposals: 5 September 2025

GRAIN's decision will be communicated to all candidates by the beginning of October.