



Coordination of the Agricultural Research In
the Mediterranean Area

ARIMNet Call

Guidelines for Evaluation Detailed Version July 18th

1. Context and motivation for the guidelines

The objective of the evaluation is to select and fund the best proposals through a transparent system that avoids conflict of interest and is convenient for funding organisations and applicants.

The evaluation will be organised as follows:

All proposals will be checked by the **ARIMNet Call Office jointly with the funding organisations** for formal eligibility (see Guidelines for applicants). This will include a national eligibility check to determine whether the project proposal can be funded, according to the prescribed national funder rules, respectively.

Proposals accepted by this formal eligibility check will be forwarded **to the full evaluation procedure**, following three steps:

a) The first step, under the responsibility of the Evaluation Committee will involve an external peer review, which scores the proposals according to criteria specified in Table I.

b) In the second step, the Evaluation Committee will rank the proposals, on the basis of external peer review scores and its own judgement

c) The final selection of which projects to be funded will be determined by the ARIMNet Call Board based on the Evaluation Committee ranking and recommendations, and taking into account the budget availability of each funding partner and the usage of the available funds for the Call.

After the approval of the final list by respective national funding agencies, the Call Office will – on behalf of the funding organisations – send notification letters to all Project Consortia Coordinators to inform them of the result of the final funding decision. Each national funding agency will enter the contracting process with the national researchers of successful Project Consortia. The Call Office will send to each Consortium leader the summarized comments of the selection committee.

All proposals submitted will be treated confidentially by the ARIMNet Partners and their appointed evaluation experts.

2. ARIMNet Call Evaluation Guidelines

External referees as well as members of the Evaluation Committee should refrain from evaluating a proposal from their own institutions and if in the last 3 years they have collaborated with or had any other interactions with the applicants, or if they are expecting to benefit in a professional, financial, or personal manner from the success or failure of this application. An agreement on confidentiality and non conflict of interests will be signed by referees.

1) External reviews:

Project proposals will be evaluated by external referees according to the criteria set out in **Table 1** and scored on the scale 0-5 (from poor to excellent). This will automatically generate on the Evaluation Part of the Electronic Submission System a proposal final score on a 0 to 100 scale. Peer reviewers will be asked to justify each criteria score by a small comment. In addition, reviewers will be expected to summarize their comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal and make any additional remarks, comments and recommendations in a short written report (~200 words).

2) Evaluation Committee

The role of each member of the Evaluation Committee is to participate as an independent scientist to the evaluation procedure. He/she should remain independent of any country or scientific consortium interests.

The role of the Chair is to inform and manage the Evaluation Committee and to preside its meetings, to present the results of the evaluation to the Call Board and more generally to make the links between the Call Board and the Evaluation Committee.

First Meeting

The evaluation Committee will meet once on the 5th of October.

During this meeting, the research proposals will be distributed among members. Each member of the Evaluation Committee will be responsible as rapporteur for following the evaluation of a certain number of projects. A double list of ranked peer reviewers will be chosen by the Committee for each proposal, on the basis of a proposition of the Call Office.

The external referees will be contacted by the Call Office, and if they do agree, will receive access to the Evaluation Part of the Electronic Submission System where they would be able to download the full proposals and to upload their evaluations.

At the beginning of December the rapporteur will collect the external peer reviews and will have to make the synthesis of the evaluations. In case of a large discrepancy between the two external evaluations, he may ask the President of Evaluation Committee to select a third external evaluation. This will be done with the help of the Call Office.

Second Meeting (19th and 20th of December)

Each rapporteur will present the external reviews of the proposals for discussion inside the Evaluation Committee. He will present the proposal, the similarities and the differences in the external referee's evaluations explain the strengths and the weaknesses of the project and introduce the discussion inside the Evaluation Committee. This will lead the Commission to assign a global score to each project.

The rapporteur will prepare a draft document which will serve as a basis for the evaluation document that will be written at the end of the session and communicated to the Call Board. This comment should summarize in a short paragraph (3 to 8 lines) the main elements (strengths and weaknesses) of the proposal and the reasons for the final ranking. After the Call Board decision it would help to write the final advice that will be communicated to the applicants.

On the basis of the overall evaluation, the Evaluation Committee will classify the proposals in three categories: very good, should be accepted (A), good but would need further improvements to be financed (B), to be refused (C). In the first category the projects will be ranked according to their scientific quality and an A+ category will concentrate the few outstanding projects.

The results of the scientific evaluation will be presented by the President of the Evaluation Committee at the beginning of the December 21 Call Board Meeting.

Table 1: Evaluation criteria for the ARIMNet Call

A. Science and outcome (50)
How well this proposal does complies with the aim(s) of the call?(10) (state of the art, position of the research problems, inter-disciplinarity)
Scientific and technical quality of the proposal (20) (originality , methods, application of field(s) of expertise)
Global impact of the project (20) (output and innovation contribution : e.g. potential of the expected results transfer for future Mediterranean agriculture and policies)
B. Management, Networking and added value (50)
Quality of the Consortium (20) (international competitiveness of participating research groups in the field(s) of the proposal)
Project management (20) (organization and feasibility : prospects for success with regards to the work and financial plan including time schedule)
Added value to the ARIMNet participants research communities (10) (how does the proposal structure new network in Mediterranean agricultural research or strengthen and widen previous networks)

Note: During the evaluation, all criteria must be considered and scored. The description of each criterion (given in brackets) should be used as the basis for this assessment.

After these two meetings, the **selection process** will be organised in two meetings of the Call Board:

- the 21st of December 2011: eventual first selection
- Negotiation time *
- January 2012: final decision.

* If a proposal has to be re-evaluated on scientific relevance and merit at the negotiation step for a final decision, this will be done in **coordination between the Evaluation Committee and Call board**.

3. Evaluation calendar

Activity/ Step	Time
Publication of the Call	June 20, 2011
Deadline for Letter of Intent (not mandatory)	July 12, 2011
Submission Deadline	September 25, 2011
Administrative Eligibility Check	By September 28, 2011
1st Evaluation Committee meeting : -Attribution of 1 EC rapporteur for each proposal and selection of a double list of ranked peer reviewers per proposal	October 5, 2011
Send link to the proposals to Peer reviewers	By October 8, 2011
Deadline for reception of peer reviewers reports on the Electronic Submission System	By December 1st, 2011
PR reports made available to all EC	By December 15, 2011
2nd Evaluation Committee meeting : ranking of proposals	December 19-20, 2011
Call Board meeting : first selection	December 21, 2011
Call Board meeting : final selection	By the end of January 2012
Funding negotiations and Contract signatures	By April 1 st , 2012
Start of projects	April 1 st , 2012 onwards