

SECTION I – GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

Pulse Canada is seeking a consultant to conduct a consumer research study that will identify marketing and positioning opportunities for whole Canadian lentils. The focus is on ready-to-eat food applications and for lentil flour ingredients in cereal-based foods and other end-use categories with high volume potential in the US and European food industry.

Background

Pulse Canada has set a '25 by 2025' target that aims to direct 25% of Canadian pulse production into non-traditional markets or end-use applications by 2025. From this goal, an incremental increase of 625,000 tonnes of Canadian lentils is targeted for flour processing and use in blended meat, pasta, noodle and bakery applications in retail and foodservice for the U.S. and Europe by 2025.

Pulse Canada Profile

Pulse Canada is the national association representing Canadian growers, processors and exporters of pulse crops – peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas. Pulse Canada works to improve the profitability, and thus the viability, of the industry by enhancing value and reducing costs.

Pulse Canada works under the leadership and direction of four provincial grower associations (Alberta Pulse Growers Commission, Manitoba Pulse & Soybean Growers, Ontario Bean Growers, and Saskatchewan Pulse Growers) and the processors and exporters of Canadian pulses that are members of the Canadian Pulse & Special Crops Trade Association (CPSC).

Pulse Canada works to enhance value by developing new market opportunities for Canadian pulses and creating efficiencies for trade and transportation of pulse crops.

SECTION II – TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Statement of Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

Bidders agree to standard business practice related to the confidential treatment of information provided by the Pulse Canada while this agreement is in effect, and at all times thereafter, the successful Bidder and any officers, employees or agents of the successful Bidder will:

- Treat as confidential all information, data, documents and materials acquired or to which access has been given in the course of, or incidental to, the performance of the agreement,
- Not disclose or permit to be disclosed, to any person, corporation or organization such information, data, documents or materials without first obtaining written permission from Pulse Canada; and
- Comply with any rules or directions made or given by Pulse Canada with respect to safeguarding or ensuring the confidentiality of such information, data, documents or materials.

This document must not be copied in whole or in part for any reason other than in the course of providing the information requested, without the express written permission of Pulse Canada.

2. Proposal

The Bidder offers to provide to Pulse Canada, upon the terms and conditions set out in this RFP, the services detailed herein and at the price set out in the proposal (The “Proposal”) or otherwise agreed to by the parties.

3. Price Quotation/Evaluation Period

The Bidder agrees that the prices quote in its Proposal are firm and must be valid for acceptance by Pulse Canada for 60 days from the RFP submission closing date. All prices must be quoted in Canadian dollars.

4. Schedule of Events – Criteria Dates

Milestone	Date
Deadline for proposal submission	February 15, 2024
Project start date	April 1, 2024
Project end date	July 25, 2024

5. Proposal Acceptance

Pulse Canada reserves the right to award the RFP in whole or in part to the best interest of Pulse Canada. The successful Bidder’s project team or resource will report to the Director, Diversification and Market Insights at Pulse Canada. The Bidder, if successful, agrees by submitting a proposal to abide by the terms and conditions of the RFP as specified.

6. Response Disqualification

Proposals received from a Bidder after the closing deadline WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Pulse Canada reserves the right to reject any and all response, and the lowest or any bid will not necessarily be accepted.

7. Evaluation of Responses

All responses to this RFP will be evaluated on the basis of the following factors:

- Bidder’s understanding of the Statement of Work as stated in Section IV and ability to meet the specifications stated in this section
- Bidder’s reputation, experience and proven results in similar outreach work, and overall qualification
- Cost competitiveness

8. Proposal Costs and Expense

This RFP does not commit Pulse Canada to pay any cost incurred in the submission of proposals or to contract for any services.

9. Publicity and Corporate Identification

A Bidder shall not use Pulse Canada identification or name in any advertisement, promotion or otherwise without the prior written consent of Pulse Canada, which may be delayed or withheld without explanation.

10. Governing Laws

This RFP is governed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the Province of Manitoba and the federal laws of Canada applicable therein.

11. Contact

If you have any questions regarding his RFP, please contact:

Tanya Der
Director of Diversification & Market Insights
Pulse Canada
Telephone: 204-925-3783
Email: tder@pulsecanada.com

12. Right to Approve Subcontractors

Pulse Canada reserves the right to approve any subcontractors used by the Bidder and the Bidder must have the prior written approval of Pulse Canada prior to contracting any subcontractor for goods or services related to this RFP or the subsequent agreement.

SECTION III – INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS

This section describes the Proposal requirements.

1. Submission of Proposals

All proposals must be submitted via email, be clearly identified and **submitted no later than 4:00PM CT on February 15, 2024** to:

Tanya Der
Email: tder@pulsecanada.com

Bidders should make sure they receive confirmation of the successful receipt of their submission. Bidders must address the requirements described in Section IV – Statement of Work. They must also provide cost information as it is described in Section VI- RFP Response requirements.

All proposals received by Pulse Canada will then be the custody of Pulse Canada. Therefore, proposals shall not be returned to Bidders.

2. Responding to RFP Items

2.1 Complete Proposals

Submissions must propose full specifications for all of the relevant requirements detailed in Section IV – Statement of Work of the RFP. Submissions that do not present complete proposals may be at a disadvantage or may be disqualified.

2.2 Additional Specifications/Alternative Approaches

Submissions may include additional specifications for items not covered by the RFP that the Bidder considers necessary and integral to its proposal. Please include a detailed rationale as to why these specifications should also be considered for adoption.

SECTION IV

STATEMENT OF WORK

Background

Pulse Canada is a national industry association that represents Canadian growers, processors, and exporters of pulse crops – peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas. Canada is actively looking to diversify its markets for pulses to areas that have less risk, provide greater price stability and are higher value. For lentils in particular, Canada is a global leader in production (~2.5 million tonnes annually) and exports the majority of production to India and Turkey. The Canadian lentil industry strategy for diversification is aiming to increase demand and use of 25% production (~625,000 tonnes) of lentils in the US, the EU and UK in whole retail ready-to-eat food products, commercial and non-commercial foodservice, pet food, and to increase value-added ingredient processing (i.e. flour) for use across a range of food product categories.

Lentils are a nutrient-dense plant-based protein whole food and ingredient option, with a complementary amino acid profile to many other protein sources and a strong sustainability story which can be leveraged with consumers across a range of product categories. Pulse Canada would like to better understand the opportunities to align core values and inherent properties of whole lentils/lentil flour ingredients with consumer needs and interests across ready-to-eat and cereal-based food applications with high volume potential for these ingredients.

A June 2020 US consumer omnibus study found that lentils are perceived as being the healthiest pulse in the legume family. While consumers recognize lentils to be high in protein and fiber, other pulses like beans and chickpeas get more credit for these and other attributes. Consuming lentils in dishes such as soups/stews, power bowls, protein boxes, and appetizers was more appealing to consumers than in salads, plant-based and blended burgers, particularly for consumers who do not eat meat or are limiting their meat consumption.

Purpose

The objective of this study is to identify marketing and positioning opportunities for whole Canadian lentils in ready-to-eat food applications and for lentil flour ingredients in cereal-based foods and other end-use categories with high volume potential in the US food industry.

Whole lentils can be incorporated into a range of shelf-stable and refrigerated ready-to-eat food products such as:

- Soups
- Sauces
- Frozen meals
- Refrigerated and shelf-stable salads
- Meat alternatives
- Processed meat
- Milk alternatives

Lentil flour ingredients have potential for greater volume use in many other categories* including:

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- Pasta
- Bakery (gluten-free or conventional)
 - Pan Breads
 - Cakes
 - Cookies
 - Pastries
 - Frozen dough (cookies, pizza, dough, waffles)
 - Crackers
- Breakfast cereals
- Puffed snacks
- Meal replacement/supplements
- Energy bars
- Ground/emulsified processed meat products
- Batter, breaded and coated refrigerator and/or frozen prepared foods (i.e. mozza sticks, chicken tenders, onion rings)

*Technical research on pulse flour use is summarized in the Flour Hub.

There are different marketing, nutrition, and sustainability advantages to using whole lentils/lentil flour ingredients in these various categories. Whole lentils and lentil flours are non-GMO, naturally gluten-free, and are not considered a major allergen in North America. Lentils are high in protein, fibre and complex carbohydrates, and have a low glycemic index. The protein in lentils has a complementary amino acid profile to cereal, nut and seed sources of protein. This is because pulse proteins contains higher amounts of the essential amino acid lysine, which is lacking in these cereals, nuts and seeds. Therefore, when lentil flours are blended with these other protein sources, the quality of protein is improved because higher amounts of all the essential amino acids are provided. Lentils have a positive impact on the environment. Compared to most other field crops, they do not require nitrogen fertilizer due to their unique ability to fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, and nitrogen fertilizer is the largest contributor of green house gas emissions for agricultural crop production. Pulses are also a very drought tolerant crop, requiring minimal moisture or water for production compared to other protein sources. Growing pulses in rotation with other crops can improve soil health, and particularly when lentils are produced in a no till system, are a key aspect of regenerative agricultural systems. Lentils and their derived ingredients may also be used for functional advantages such as enhancing texture and/or colour of foods.

The objective of this study is to prioritize opportunities for marketing and positioning whole lentil and lentil flour ingredients in food applications based on US consumer perception of these ingredients and the range of attributes that these ingredients offer to food formulations and products.

Under the current project, Pulse Canada is aiming to:

- Understand current US consumer perceptions of whole lentils and lentil flour ingredients
- Understand which reasons/attributes/claims related to nutrition, sustainability or other attributes that lentils/lentil flour ingredients provide to food formulations, would appeal most to consumers in this geographic market and influence purchase intent

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- Understand how to best market the inclusion of lentils and lentil flour ingredients and/or the particular attributes that lentils offer to end-products that are most effective to leverage among consumers in the US, including most effective language to optimize understanding of specific sustainability, nutrition and health attributes OR whether lentil inclusion is viewed as a downgrade of products and should not be specifically marketed or called out
- Understand the opportunities for whole lentils and lentil flour in the US food industry across product categories with high volume potential
- Understand market readiness by gathering consumer data that shows which end-product product categories are ready to grow in lentil use; and that consumers identify with product attributes that lentils contribute and thereby willing to purchase (outside of cost factor).

Project Scope

- Assessment should include an evaluation or determination of ingredient or end-product attributes that are most important to consumers for the following ready-to-eat food applications that are relevant for whole lentils: soups, sauces, frozen meals, refrigerated and shelf-stable salads, pouches, pre-cooked, meat alternatives, processed meat, milk alternatives
- Assessment should include an evaluation or determination of ingredient or end-product attributes that are most important to consumers of the following food products that are relevant for lentil flours: pasta, gluten-free or conventional bakery i.e. pan breads, cakes, cookies, pastries, frozen dough (i.e. cookies, pizza, dough, waffles), crackers, breakfast cereals, puffed snacks, meal replacement/supplements, energy bars
- Lentils of interest include both red and green types, however Canadian production of red lentils is 3 times that of green lentils. Red lentils with an intact hull are typically brown in color. Niche varieties such as French Green or Black Beluga are not of interest due to their extremely low production.
- Assessment should include an evaluation of consumer perceptions of whole lentils and lentil ingredients for relevant attributes such as allergenicity, flavor, plant-based, free from/clean label, nutrient density (vitamins, minerals), protein quality/amino acid profile, sustainability (low green house emissions, improve soil quality/soil health, low water use, role in regenerative agriculture, local production (North America))
- Study design should generate data insights that can be presented to food manufacturers in order to support the adoption and positioning of lentil/lentil ingredients in their product offerings.
- While the project scope includes various geographies (USA, UK, EU), ingredient formats (whole lentil, lentil flour) and product segments (cereal-based, meat, milk, RTE meals), the primary aim of the project is to scan and prioritize prospect opportunities and provide insights on top positioning strategies that will most resonate with CPG's and/or their customers.