
New Rules on Agricultural Research and Development Support Programme

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It is possible to develop technology to provide sufficient and safe access to food for the rapidly increasing population with limited agricultural resources, only through Research and Development (“**R&D**”) and innovation activities. Accordingly, the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (“**Ministry**”) put the R&D Support Programme into force in 2007 in order to develop the R&D infrastructure of the private sector in the field of agricultural R&D, to increase public-private sector cooperation, to use the existing infrastructure more effectively, and to ensure the transfer of high value-added products/results obtained as a result of R&D to trade and practice.

In order to call for projects in 2023, the Ministry published the Communiqué No. 2023/6 on the R&D Support Programme (“**Communiqué**”) in the Official Gazette dated 19 March 2023^[1]. The Communiqué sets the main framework for R&D project supports for the development of information and technology on significant issues concerning agricultural sector and transfer this information and technology to farmers and agricultural industrialists.

The Communiqué sets forth that (i) universities, (ii) TÜBİTAK R&D units, (iii) civil society, professional and farmer organisations, and (iv) private sector organisations can apply for the support of their projects. In this regard, it should be highlighted that as a novelty under this Communiqué, the farmer organisations are also eligible to apply for support. Moreover, it is stipulated that an R&D Support Programme Evaluation Board (“**Board**”) comprised of twenty members will be established as the highest authority empowered to take all kinds of decisions regarding the execution of the R&D Support Programme.

The Board’s duties and powers are to (i) determine prioritised topics which will be announced on the website of the General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policies (“**TAGEM**”), (ii) set the upper limits of the support that can be paid and support rates that can be given for each project, (iii) make decisions regarding the continuing projects, (iv) evaluate the projects and pick the projects which will be supported, (v) decide on the suspension of projects, cancellation of support, budget increase, change of project partner institution, change of executive institution for universities and other issues, (vi) evaluate and decide on the issues specified in the inspection reports, (vii) decide on the payments regarding the projects, (viii) take the necessary measures and decisions in order to prevent issues that may adversely affect the functioning of the projects and (ix) decide on issues not specified in the R&D legislation. In this regard, it can be observed that the

powers of the Board are rather extensive. The Board will take its decisions by majority of votes, and in case of equality of votes, the decision of the side where the Chairman of the Board is present will be accepted.

Further, the upper limits and support rates determined according to the types of executing institutions by the Board prior to the call for the submission of the projects cannot be exceeded. That said, if an additional support amount is requested by the executing institution due to unforeseen expenses and/or cost increases after the start of project activities and it is deemed appropriate by the Board the Ministry, the support amount specified in the contract can be increased by a maximum of 10%. In case of an increase, it is emphasized that the Ministry's support rates determined according to the types of executing institutions will be maintained. Support payments are made for machinery and equipment, consumables and service procurement items required for the execution of the projects.

Additionally, the projects whose applications are received within the project application period will be subjected to a four-stage evaluation according to the criteria specified in the directive; secretariat's preliminary evaluation, departmental evaluation, expert's evaluation and the Board's evaluation, respectively. After the selection of the projects to be supported, the technical and financial realisations thereof will be carried out in accordance with the R&D legislation and project content will be monitored and controlled through development and on-site monitoring reports.

Through the new Communiqué, the rules covering support for R&D projects regarding the agricultural sector are established. These projects are highly important considering the effects of rapidly increasing population and exponentially increasing needs in terms of agricultural sector are taken into account. Within this scope, between 2007 and 2023, 477 projects were included in the scope of support, 415 of which were finalised and 62 are ongoing.

By way of conclusion, it is crucial for interested parties to be informed of the procedure which should be followed to apply for R&D support. In this regard, after the call regarding the priority topics is made on TAGEM's website the interested parties should submit the project form and its annexes within the project application period specified in the call to TAGEM. In this regard, it should be emphasized that the calls not made within the application period will not be taken into consideration. Hence, it is important to be up to date with regards to developments and regularly check the website of TAGEM. Moreover, considering that the project form consists of extensive request for information such as a budget plan, the aim and reason of the project, subject, scope, literature review etc. it would be prudent for interested parties to start filling it in prior to the call.

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[\[1\]](#) The Communiqué is applicable starting from 1 January 2022 and it revokes the Communiqué No. 2021/24 on the R&D Support Programme published in the Official Gazette dated 3 August 2021.

