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Innovative Solutions for Decision Agriculture (iSDA Ltd)

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Executive Brief

December 2017



## About iSDA Ltd

Innovative Solutions for Decision Agriculture Limited (iSDA Ltd) is currently seeking an individual for the position of Chief Executive Officer to develop the company as a social enterprise. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, iSDA will be formed as a new non-profit startup company focused on driving change through ongoing innovation, sustainable social good enterprise and the delivery of solutions which are aimed at public and commercial sectors.

As the guardian of the Africa Soil Information Service (AfSIS) legacy, a project supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which delivered highly innovative digital solutions to map the soils and cropland of Africa, iSDA will continue to utilise and leverage AfSIS innovations for greater developmental impact and transformative change in Sub-Saharan Africa. iSDA seeks to provide data-based technology and decision solutions that can make a lasting difference to smallholder farming in Sub-Saharan Africa.

An opportunity in Africa for Africa, the aim for iSDA's is to develop open-sourced and paid-for-world-class geospatial technology and decision science solutions at scale for the soils, cropping and agronomy of the croplands of Sub-Saharan Africa. This will be achieved through scientifically rigorous integration of remote sensing and dry-spectral soil analysis techniques and knowledge aggregation to build user-friendly data and digital client decision support assets for the public and commercial sectors.

iSDA's work will enable governments, NGOs, commercial enterprises and R&D organisations to develop their own data-driven tools and services for the sustainable improvement and prosperity of smallholder farming in Sub-Saharan Africa. iSDA's ambition is to be a trusted, agile innovator, with a focus on end-to-end solutions for its customers and clients who are likely to be:

- National and local government, policy makers, development banks/agencies, NGOs
- Advisory/service businesses to farmers
- National agricultural researchers and development specialists needing tools for using iSDA approaches and capacity development on using them
- Dry-spectral and wet chemistry testing labs
- Academic community & students
- African and international commercial enterprises

# Chief Executive Officer

## **The Role of the Chief Executive Officer:**

Rothamsted Research, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) are currently working together to facilitate the process of establishing iSDA as an independent, not-for-profit entity, with its own Board of Directors. Reporting directly to the Board of iSDA, the successful candidate for this role will drive the formation of iSDA, shape its vision, products and services, develop the team an outcome-driven, lean startup culture, and establish excellent partnerships.

## **Specific Responsibilities**

Key priorities and roles during the first 18 months include:

- Developing a detailed business plan based on the objectives of the current business plan framework, including the company's vision, key performance indicators, objectives and time-based deliverables
- Defining and appointing key personnel in consultation with the Board and in-line with the approved business plan
- Establishing partnerships with stakeholders from relevant innovation communities, end users and others deemed appropriate to support the company's objectives
- Working with the Board, manage and allocate the company's funds and budgets and work to secure further private and public funds in line with the strategy
- Establishing structures, controls and procedures to support the effective operation of the organisation and to comply with its legal, regulatory and contractual obligations
- Providing clear communications with relevant stakeholders and ensuring the ongoing work of iSDA is readily available through its website and other digital services

Ongoing priorities and roles over the longer term include:

- Working to secure private and public-sector funding to develop the company into a self-sustaining not-for-profit business
- On behalf of the Board, set the strategic priorities, provide leadership and deliver well-structured stakeholder governance
- Ensure that the company complies with its legal, regulatory and contractual obligations
- Promote the activities of the company to its target market including the development of new business opportunities
- Create a trusted "go to" point innovators and partners so that new innovations are developed in collaboration

## **Qualification Requirements**

- Proven leadership skills, enthusiasm, passion and a sound appreciation of solutions thinking coupled with a good understanding of the relationship between research, development, innovation, and economic growth

- A sound background in evaluating new business opportunities
- Ability to broker senior relationships and partnerships in the private and public sectors
- Mid to senior level (but not necessarily C-suite) operating experience
- Evidence of an understanding of the place and value of innovation in an open platform and architecture environment
- Excellent promotion and negotiating skills, presenting and gathering support, especially at the interfaces between the public and private sector
- Preferably a track record in securing or working with external funding on national and international stages
- Proven ability to inspire and motivate teams towards a common objective
- Experience of organisational design and good project/financial management
- Experience in contract execution including performance measurement and quality control
- Proven ability to analyse and present clearly complex information and concepts
- Good understanding of African agricultural complexities

### **Academic Qualifications**

- Academic qualifications for this role may vary. The CEO will work at the interface of agriculture/environment, data science/digital applications, and business management, so may have qualifications and/or a strong professional track record in any of those. Good understanding of modern geospatial data and analysis approaches would be an advantage.

### **Personal Skills**

- Inspired by the impact decision agriculture informatics can play in the improved prosperity of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Excellent ability to drive and build a start-up business in a not-for-profit charitable environment.
- Excellent ability to develop and manage a growing team.
- Diplomatic skills by working collaboratively with government, research institutes, innovators and the wider digital agriculture community to deliver tangible change and social good benefits.

### **Terms of Appointment**

The post will be based at the World Agroforestry's Centre's (ICRAF) headquarters in Nairobi Kenya, where excellent facilities are available. iSDA will provide relocation expenses (depending on circumstances) and work to support the successful candidate in establishing themselves in Nairobi if they are not already a resident.

The role will be initially based on a fixed-term contract in line with the timeline for establishing iSDA, but with the clear expectation that the successful candidate will lead iSDA for several years. A competitive, salary and benefits package will be available for the right candidate that will reflect their background and abilities as well as the social enterprise nature of iSDA. Frequent travel will be required for this position, as well as a flexible attitude towards working hours.

### **Application procedure**

SRI Executive has been retained to support the appointment of the new CEO of iSDA. Should you require further information or wish to apply for this position, please contact/submit your CV in Word format to Nicola Seery [nseery@sri-executive.com](mailto:nseery@sri-executive.com) by 31 January 2018.

Pre-employment screening of all external candidates is part of the selection process.



## Location: Nairobi, Kenya

Nairobi is the capital and largest city of Kenya. The name comes from the Maasai phrase Enkare Nairobi, which translates to "cool water", a reference to the Nairobi River which flows through the city. Nairobi is the second-largest city by population in the African Great Lakes region after Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Known as the safari capital of Africa, this former Maasai watering hole is an energetic, modern city that offers a fascinating introduction to both wildlife and nightlife. The city pulses with life, shops and markets bustle, and international restaurants sit alongside those offering more regional fare. Top sights include the Karen Blixen Museum, Giraffe Centre and the black rhinos of Nairobi National Park. The compact city centre is safe to walk in and taxis make other areas accessible.

Under the Köppen climate classification, Nairobi has a subtropical highland climate. At 1,795 metres (5,889 ft) above sea level, evenings may be cool, especially in the June/July season, when the temperature can drop to 9 °C (48 °F). The sunniest and warmest part of the year is from December to March, when temperatures average the mid-twenties during the day.

## Key Steps in the Selection Process

1. All information received will be in the strictest confidence as we pride ourselves on our professional service. We will revert to you as soon as feasible when we have reviewed your application.
2. During the recruitment process, SRI Executive Search will require your cooperation in completing a Competency Profile. You will also be required to participate in a number of telephone or Skype conversations with the team to ensure there is a clear understanding of the Terms of Reference and also an appropriate “fit” for you and iSDA.
3. We will require that you provide us with full details of three people who are willing to act as a referee. We will not contact these referees without your express permission. Please note that reference checks may be conducted prior to your face-to-face interviews.
4. Once we have the details of all those interested in going forward for this role, we will evaluate all applicants against the requirements of the role as outlined above. SRI will conduct a number of interviews with interested parties.
5. Should both the parties wish to proceed an interview with the Selection Committee will take place. The face-to-face interview with the committee will take place in Nairobi, Kenya. Please note a meeting with SRI Representatives may be required prior to this. You may be asked the terms and conditions that you would require for an offer to be acceptable to you.
6. After you meet with the Selection Committee, we will advise you of the Committee’s decision as soon as possible. At the selection stage should you be the preferred final candidate, our client will likely extend a verbal offer to you. Please note that the successful candidate will be required to furnish us with original copies of their qualifications prior to an offer being extended.



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