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EVALUATION OF GEF FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAMS

(Prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF)

Abbreviations

CFI	Coastal Fisheries Initiative
COFCO	China Oil and Foodstuffs Corporation
EOI	expression of interest
ESG	environmental, social, and governance
EUDR	European Union Deforestation Regulation
FACS	Food and Agricultural Commodity Systems
FoKSBI	Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil Platform
FOLUR	Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Impact Program
FSIP	Food Systems Integrated Program
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GGP	Good Growth Partnership
GHG	greenhouse gas
GIS	geographic information systems
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILM	integrated landscape management
INRM	integrated natural resource management
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MTR	midterm review
PFD	program framework document
PMU	project management unit
PPP	public-private partnership
RFS	Resilient Food Systems
SLWM	sustainable land and water management
ToC	theory of change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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QUICK SCAN

1. Food systems significantly impact global health, food security, and economic and social development. They also have important environmental impacts, as major drivers of global forest and biodiversity loss, land degradation, water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. Unsustainable practices occur at every stage, from the production and use of agricultural inputs, to harvesting, storing, processing, packaging, distribution, retail, consumption and waste generation. As the global population approaches eight billion, the urgency to improve efficiency and sustainability throughout food systems is increasing.

2. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has been engaged in shaping food systems since its first replenishment period. In GEF-6, the GEF began emphasizing the need for a radical transformation of global food systems in its Programming Directions. During this phase, the Resilient Food Systems (RFS) Integrated Approach Pilot (IAP) and Good Growth Partnership (GGP) IAP addressed sustainability challenges in dryland agriculture and deforestation in commodity supply chains, respectively. Another GEF-6 program, the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI), complemented these efforts by addressing governance in artisanal fisheries. In GEF-7, the integrated programming model was expanded through the global Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program (FOLUR). The GEF-8 Food Systems Integrated Program (FSIP) builds on previous lessons to reinforce a systems transformation agenda. Collectively, these programs account for $822 million in GEF financing and more than $6 billion in cofinancing.

3. With several GEF-funded food systems programs now completed or underway, and as the GEF begins shaping its GEF-9 programming, this is an opportune time to evaluate the GEF's performance in food systems. As outlined in the approach paper, this evaluation assessed the extent to which these programs and their component projects adopt a comprehensive food systems approach in their design and implementation. The evaluation also analyzed the added value of using a programmatic approach for food systems interventions. The evaluation covered the five GEF food system programs from GEF-6 to GEF-8 and their 84 child projects, along with 21 stand-alone food system projects included for comparison. A systems-thinking perspective and mixed-methods design guided the work, drawing on two theoretical frameworks to structure the analysis of integrated and programmatic benefits. Methods included existing evidence synthesis, structured reviews of program and project documents, interviews and surveys to gather stakeholder perceptions, and country case studies in Ghana, Indonesia, Peru, and Tanzania.

Findings and Conclusions

4. **GEF food systems programs are highly relevant to addressing environmental challenges within food systems.** At the global level, they have responded to the growing international recognition on the links between food systems, environmental degradation, and climate change. They have also contributed to reducing the significant financing gaps for sustainable food systems transformation. Demand for participation in GEF food systems programs has been high, exceeding available funds. These programs have provided countries with the flexibility to design

interventions tailored to national needs, while also introducing innovative themes where appropriate. Child projects have aligned with countries' environmental needs, priorities, and policies in the agriculture, livestock, and fisheries sectors. GEF Agencies and countries have enhanced relevance in project design through analyses of country policies and priorities, baseline assessments of target sectors and intervention areas, and stakeholder consultation and validation. As projects move into implementation, they have often applied adaptive management to stay relevant in response to evolving policy landscapes and global disruptions, although some opportunities were missed.

5. **GEF food systems programs—and stand-alone projects—address many of the most significant environmental challenges in food systems through integrated approaches.** They have designed activities to address multiple environmental challenges, most frequently focusing on combating land and soil degradation, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Other concerns, such as maintaining capacity of natural systems to sequester carbon and avoiding pollution from use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, were less commonly addressed by project activities. Both child projects and stand-alone projects adopt integrated approaches that address multiple environmental issues, target synergies between environmental and socioeconomic benefits, work across local, landscape, and national scales, promote multistakeholder engagement, and pilot innovations.

6. **Food systems programs have concentrated on reducing the environmental footprint of agricultural and fisheries production at community and landscape levels.** By design, the five GEF programs vary considerably in how comprehensively they cover food system value chains. For example, RFS intentionally focused more on productive capacities and ecosystem services for smallholder farmers, reflecting its emphasis on resilience and food security. FOLUR focused primarily on sustainable production within commodity-specific landscape systems. GGP stands out for its innovative and explicit supply chain approach, with separate projects addressing production, demand, and finance for beef, soy, and palm oil in four countries. Across all programs, however, most interventions have centered on environmental impacts in the production stage, with comparatively fewer activities targeting post-production segments, such as storage, processing, and distribution, or sustainable demand and consumption. FSIP demonstrates emerging program-level attention to the roles of markets and consumers in stimulating demand for sustainably produced, safe, and nutritious foods, though the evaluation could not assess how fully these elements are reflected in child project designs.[1]

7. **While programs comprehensively describe drivers of food systems change, child projects have given limited consideration to political and sociocultural drivers.** All five programs' PFDs (program framework documents) describe the systemic drivers of food systems transformation, including environmental, political, economic, sociocultural, and science and technology drivers. However, as these intentions translated into child project design, attention to these drivers has varied. Environmental drivers are emphasized in 90 percent of child projects, consistent with the GEF's mandate, and economic drivers also feature relatively prominently (79

[1] Child projects were not yet CEO-endorsed at the time that data collection and analysis for this evaluation closed.

percent). Case studies and interviews highlighted tensions stemming from whether GEF food systems initiatives are perceived as "environmental" or "agricultural" projects, often shaped by which ministries lead these efforts. Limited analysis of political economy dynamics or trade-offs among competing objectives has constrained projects' transformational potential. In GEF-8, FSIP intends to strengthen engagement with policy as a lever for transformational change, reflecting the programming period's emphasis on policy coherence. Sociocultural dynamics that influence behavior and behavioral change have not been frequently and consistently identified or targeted in GEF projects and programs. Similarly, reducing food loss and waste and promoting healthy diets have also been infrequently addressed, despite their importance for food systems' transformation.

8. **Food systems programs have become increasingly internally coherent over time; external coherence has varied both in its approach and intensity.** Child projects are more closely aligned with program components and objectives, creating a stronger foundation for interaction and learning. In FOLUR, all child projects (100 percent) explicitly incorporated program-level guidance or knowledge during design, compared with far lower levels in RFS (15 percent) and GGP (20 percent). This guidance contributed to stronger alignment between child projects and their parent programs, as reflected in Agency interviews, country survey responses, and country case study findings. Interviewees widely agreed that the FSIP design process has best supported internal coherence, largely because the global coordination project was approved early, enabling it to support countries in child project formulation. Regarding external coherence, GEF food systems interventions often planned to engage with other initiatives, but actual coordination varied. Although 77 percent of child projects planned to engage in knowledge sharing or joint activities with other donor-funded initiatives, only 30 percent reported implementing these activities. Some GEF Agencies have effectively linked GEF interventions with their own broader country programs and project portfolios, and successful examples of collaboration among GEF Agencies were identified in all three GEF-6 programs, in some cases generating useful spillover effects.

9. **Food systems programs have delivered substantial –though uneven-- environmental benefits.** The GEF-6 programs account for most of the global environmental gains reported to date, with early outcomes beginning to emerge from FOLUR. The most significant results relate to improved land management, biodiversity conservation, and mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. These outcomes have largely been achieved through a combination of policy reforms and dialogue, strengthened land-use and marine planning and management, and community-level activities that promote sustainable agricultural and fisheries practices. Despite this strong overall picture, however, contributions to outcomes have been uneven across child projects. Some projects fell short due to overly ambitious or unclear objectives, implementation delays, or unclear causal pathways linking activities to measurable environmental outcomes. Several GGP and CFI child projects did not report global environmental benefits. Although the GEF-6 food systems programs produced strong results, none fully realized the broad ambitions set out in their program designs. Achieving these ambitious goals would require engagement that extends beyond a single programming cycle.

10. **GEF food systems programs have generated important food production and socioeconomic outcomes, including benefits for women, youth, and vulnerable groups.** All GEF-6 programs contributed to more sustainable agricultural practices and strengthened natural resource management. Increased agricultural productivity was the most frequently reported outcome observed in 70 percent of projects. In CFI and RFS, increases in household income were common and RFS also demonstrated food security and nutrition outcomes consistent with its emphasis on reducing food insecurity as a driver of environmental degradation. Approximately half of the child projects reported at least one gender-related outcome—most often improved skills and increased participation of women--and more than half reported inclusion outcomes, involving youth engagement in agriculture and support to vulnerable smallholders. However, as noted earlier, most programs placed less emphasis on non-production activities of the value chain, such as improving farmers' market access and processing and storage practices, which limited the breadth of socioeconomic outcomes. Findings from fieldwork revealed a mix of promising practices and ongoing challenges in achieving gender and inclusion results. Robust project design and early integration of gender considerations emerged as key factors shaping positive outcomes.

11. **GEF programs advanced policy and governance, though results varied due to design and institutional constraints.** The GEF-6 programs contributed to establishing or strengthening commodity platforms and policies aimed at reducing deforestation in supply chains, promoted integrated planning through multistakeholder platforms, and helped align fisheries governance with ecosystem-based management principles. Policy coherence was a recurring goal but partly achieved in most cases. Vertical coherence—alignment between national policies and subnational implementation—was evident in several RFS and GGP projects. Horizontal coherence—alignment across government agencies and sectors—was less common, though notable successes occurred in Indonesia, Liberia, and Paraguay. Although still early in its implementation, FOLUR builds on these earlier efforts, particularly in promoting jurisdictional planning and national and subnational policy coherence**.** Interventions that built on existing policy agendas and embedded multistakeholder platforms into existing institutions were more successful, benefiting from enhanced legitimacy and government ownership. However, the sustainability of policy and governance outcomes was frequently constrained by design and institutional constraints. Limited attention to political economy dynamics in design led to unrealistic assumptions that increased support for coordination would naturally lead to alignment. Changes in political leadership also undermined policy coherence efforts, especially where governance platforms lacked legal status or were not institutionally anchored.

12. **Across GEF food systems programs, performance metrics have often fallen short of capturing the complex, multidimensional nature of transformational change.** Most annual monitoring efforts by child projects and coordination projects have remained output-focused. Although midterm reviews and terminal evaluations provide more quantitative and qualitative analysis, the lack of standardized formats and of a set of common indicators has limited the ability of program Lead Agencies and the GEF to aggregate findings across countries and programs. The GEF experience highlights the need for more sophisticated and adaptive metrics that can meaningfully track progress along transformation pathways. Recent GEF Secretariat guidance on

program evaluation and updated monitoring templates may help address these gaps by better capturing qualitative outcomes and institutional change.

13. **GEF programs are generating substantial knowledge and technical support, but there is limited evidence that countries are applying program-facilitated learning.** The creation of a broader knowledge management ecosystem is widely perceived as a substantial added value of GEF food systems programs. Programs have effectively generated and disseminated knowledge and technical resources offerings to participating countries and wider audiences, as evidenced through program reporting, interviews, and country-level survey results. Despite these successes, the evaluation found few concrete examples of countries applying this knowledge to adapt their child project activities. Limited visibility and insufficient targeting of knowledge products, along with country resistance to adaptive management, have hindered knowledge uptake by child projects. Inadequate staffing for knowledge management in both coordination and child projects has also hindered application. Programs have attempted to address these challenges through adaptive management and stakeholders report positive experiences with efforts to promote peer exchange and shift from global events toward more region- and commodity-specific learning opportunities, such as regional commodity dialogues.

14. **Challenges in aligning country needs with program technical support have constrained countries' benefits.** Effective "docking"—the process of matching program knowledge and technical services with country child projects—was one of the most frequently cited issues in interviews. Three factors have undermined this process: timing mismatches between when support is offered and when countries are ready to use it, a top-down matching approach that does not fully reflect country priorities, and limited resources for localized, hands-on technical assistance. GEF-7 and GEF-8 programs are beginning to address these constraints, but it is too early to assess the results.

15. **Programs have achieved some notable private sector results but continue to face challenges in linking private sector engagement across global and child projects—limiting their transformational potential.** GEF food systems programs have engaged the private sector in multiple ways, ranging from global commodity supply chain initiatives to localized market interventions. These efforts have generated important results, including significant investment in sustainable commodities like soy and palm oil and strengthened capacity among financial institutions to provide sustainable financing. However, many of these achievements stem from FOLUR's coordination project and GGP's unique program structure, as integrating private sector engagement across global and child projects has proven difficult. A perceived advantage of integrated programming for food systems is the potential to support vertical value chain engagement, especially in commodity supply chains, where production and demand may be in different geographies. Yet, so far, there has been limited progress in connecting global value chains with country-level child projects. Child project designs have not been well suited for this type of integration and challenges have been compounded by timing issues, siloed implementation structures, and an underestimation of the collaborative effort required.

16. **Program governance has adapted and improved over replenishment cycles, even as operational complexity remains a challenge.** Country and Agency selection processes for food systems programs improved in GEF-7 through clearer criteria and processes, which were carried forward into GEF-8. Roles and responsibilities between child projects and the coordination project have also become clearer over time. Overall, food systems programs have generally been well and adaptively managed, with most midterm reviews urging coordination projects to improve integration across partners and child projects, and closed programs showing evidence of improvements. Endorsement and implementation timelines for food systems programs are broadly comparable to, if not more efficient than those of stand-alone projects. However, the inherent complexity of programs and the food systems agenda present trade-offs between efficiency and inclusive, robust design, and has contributed to implementation delays, consistent with findings from previous IEO evaluations.

17. **Despite their critical role in enabling effective programmatic collaboration, coordination budgets have not kept pace with the expanding scope of food systems programs**. A key lesson from GEF-6 is that the time and effort required for effective collaboration should not be underestimated. Yet, coordination project budgets for food systems programs have been decreasing across programming periods, in contrast with the overall trend in GEF integrated programming, where an increasing share of funding has been allocated to global coordination projects. In food systems programs, coordination budgets have decreased from 10 percent of total program cost in GEF-6 to 7 percent in GEF-8. In GEF-8, the FSIP coordination project also has a smaller budget than FOLUR in absolute terms ($18 million compared to FOLUR's $29 million), even though FSIP will be responsible for coordinating with more country child projects (32, compared to FOLUR's 27) and a wider range of commodities. This growing gap between program expansion—in both size and scope—and shrinking coordination resources risks undermining the programs' value proposition. Lower coordination budgets reduce the ability to provide contextualized, hands-on support to countries—an issue that many Agencies and partners believe may weaken overall impact.

Recommendations

18. **RECOMMENDATION 1: Sharpen program focus and phasing across GEF replenishment periods**. The GEF Secretariat should establish clearer boundaries and priorities in program design to better reflect regional and commodity-specific dynamics. This may involve concentrating on a smaller number of targeted commodities, geographies, or biomes. The Secretariat should also consider adopting a phased approach to food systems programming. Such an approach would recognize the longer time frames required for food system transformation and the need to align coordination mechanisms and country project schedules. Phased implementation would enable the GEF to strengthen readiness—such as through policy development, governance improvements, capacity building, and pilot investments—before progressing to larger-scale investment alignment and expansion.

19. **RECOMMENDATION 2: Expand focus on value chain segments beyond production and on vertical value chain integration, in order to fully realize the benefits of an integrated**

program approach. Future food systems programming should extend engagement beyond the production segment of the value chain when broader GEF support can (a) generate substantial environmental or socioeconomic benefits, and/or (b) ensure the long-term sustainability of environmental outcomes from production-oriented activities, recognizing the interdependencies across value chain segments. The GEF Secretariat should also strengthen the performance of GEF food system programs in both vertical and geographic value chain integration. This includes developing more targeted and effective approaches on the demand and financing side, supporting activities related to national and international standards, and fostering stronger linkages between supply and demand actors across countries.

20. **RECOMMENDATION 3: Increase attention to political economy dynamics and behavioral change in food systems transformation at design and during implementation.** The GEF Secretariat should require more comprehensive and structured political economy and risk analyses to inform the design and implementation of PFDs and child projects. Agencies should be encouraged to incorporate mechanisms that mediate trade-offs and balance short-term incentives with long-term sustainability objectives. The GEF Secretariat should also prioritize engagement with countries demonstrating commitment to the policy and institutional reforms needed to address food systems challenges and work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders to co-develop solutions. To enhance the potential for lasting transformation, greater emphasis should be placed on understanding and influencing behavior change throughout program design and implementation.

21. **RECOMMENDATION 4: Strengthen country docking to enhance the knowledge value of country engagement with the global coordination project**. The GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with Lead Agencies, should intensify efforts to improve country docking and knowledge uptake. These efforts should ensure that (a) the coordination project—and its relevant partners and service providers—remains active and able to engage with child projects when they are ready to receive support and (b) learning is continuously generated, captured, and shared throughout implementation. These efforts should also involve a more participatory and ongoing process to identify country needs for knowledge and technical services and align program offerings accordingly.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

1. Food systems significantly impact various facets of our world, including global health, food security and nutrition, economic and social development, and, importantly, the quality and status of the natural environment and the critical ecosystem services it provides. In fact, food systems are major drivers of global forest and biodiversity loss, land degradation, water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. As the world's population nears eight billion people and continues to grow, pressure is building to increase efficiency and sustainability in food production, processing, and distribution, as well as reduce food loss and waste.

2. Over the last three replenishment periods, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has advocated in its Programming Directions the need for a radical transformation of global food systems (Box 3), affirming that the achievement of this transition will require a holistic, system-wide approach that integrates both horizontal (land and natural resources) and vertical (food value and supply chain) dimensions, and includes consideration of women's role in health and nutrition.[2] This approach was first tested and then fully introduced through a series of dedicated food system programs from GEF-6 onwards.

Box 1. Food systems

As established in the Approach Paper for this evaluation, food systems are understood to encompass the whole array of activities along the food chain, ranging from the use of agricultural inputs such as germplasm and agrichemicals, through harvesting, storing, processing, packaging, distributing, and retailing food, to consuming food and generation of food waste. Food systems are intricately dependent on natural capital at every stage of agricultural production, and downstream operations along the agricultural value chains. Food systems are also dependent on rich socio-cultural capital held in form of knowledge and skills of diverse players, particularly rural and indigenous people—the original custodians of biodiversity which sustains the food systems.

3. With multiple food systems programs in implementation or closed and another in advanced design, and as the GEF turns its attention to GEF-9 programming, the time is opportune to evaluate the GEF's performance in food systems. This evaluation assessed the degree to which food systems programs and their constituent projects supported by the GEF take a comprehensive food systems approach, in both their design and implementation. It focused on both processes and results. The evaluation also paid particular attention to the added value of taking a program approach in GEF food systems interventions. More details and a comprehensive account of the evaluation design and approach are provided in the Approach Paper (GEF IEO 2024). Quality assurance for this evaluation was provided by a senior independent expert in food systems, Dr. Neeraja Havaligi, who reviewed the Approach Paper and the draft evaluation report (see Annex 1). In addition, the IEO

[2] The GEF-6 Programming Directions recognize that women are primarily responsible for food consumption choices and family health in addition to their roles in agriculture.

circulated the draft report to GEF stakeholders for feedback on factual and analytical errors and the feasibility of recommendations, and considered and responded to all feedback received.

4. The GEF embraces a learning approach to its food systems programming, including through the GEF-8 strategic commitment to building on previous efforts to bolster sustainable food systems. In preparation for the ninth replenishment cycle, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) will undertake the Eighth Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF (OPS8), which will generate crucial evidence to guide decision making around GEF-9. This evaluation of GEF food systems programs contributes to that evidence base by producing findings and recommendations on the performance and impact of GEF interventions in food systems thus far. The evaluation's findings also contribute to a growing global body of evidence suggesting that achieving food systems transformation requires addressing structural barriers, including political economy constraints, consumption patterns, and institutional incentives that current programming approaches often overlook (Winkler et al. 2025).

1.2 Scope, methods, and limitations

5. The evaluation covered five GEF food system programmatic interventions from GEF-6 to GEF-8: two Integrated Approach Pilot (IAP) programs and a third program from GEF-6, one Impact Program from GEF-7, and one Integrated Program from GEF-8 (see section 2). It also covered 21 stand-alone food system projects[3] that were included for comparative purposes (see Annex 2: Food Systems Project Portfolio). Across these food systems programs and projects, the evaluation sought to address 13 evaluation questions grouped around five areas of enquiry: design, relevance and coherence, performance and results, programmatic value addition, and efficiency. It assessed the quality of design and achievement of results, as well as how the GEF has adapted to changing contexts and incorporated lessons learned into the design of subsequent programs in GEF-7 and GEF-8. The evaluation took a summative approach to assessing GEF-6 programming, while the assessment of GEF-7 and GEF-8 programming was largely formative given their active implementation status.

6. The evaluation took an integrated, dynamic, and systems thinking approach, consistent with the framing set out in the Approach Paper. It involved multiple quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods and analyses selected to support the assessment of interrelated components within food systems. To guide this assessment and to operationalize key concepts from the Approach Paper, the evaluation team developed two theoretical frameworks. These frameworks enabled a structured exploration of complex dynamics within the food systems portfolio. Each was built around a set of evaluative claims, supported by associated pathways or assumptions, allowing the evaluation team to apply the frameworks systematically across methods and analyses.

[3] As noted in the Approach Paper, these projects were identified based on a keyword search for “food systems” in GEF-6 – GEF-8 project titles, objective, and/or components on the GEF Portal. Additional stand-alone projects were added at the suggestion of the GEF Secretariat.

(a) The **food systems framework** (presented in section 3.1.2 and described in further detail in Annex 3) establishes a theoretical understanding of food systems and the expected benefits of integrated food systems programming. It was developed based on a literature review, as well as a review of GEF programming directions and food systems program framework documents (PFDs), including program theories of change.

(b) The **programmatic value addition framework** (presented in section 3.3.1 and described in further detail in Annex 4) defines expected benefits of a food system's programmatic approach compared to a non-programmatic baseline. Developed in the absence of counterfactual analysis—due to the limited number of completed child and stand-alone projects—it draws on GEF programming directions, PFDs, past IEO evaluations, and IEO guidance for evaluating programs.

7. Document and portfolio reviews included a structured implementation document review (Annex 5) of 15 terminal evaluations, 3 reviews of terminal evaluations, 7 midterm reviews (MTRs), and 18 project implementation reports (40 child projects and 3 stand-alone projects). A quality-at-entry analysis (Annex 6) was done for 69 GEF project proposals (52 child projects and 17 stand-alone projects). Perception gathering included 44 key informant interviews at the central level (Annex 7) and an online survey (Annex 8) for national stakeholders (163 responses). The evaluation also built on available evaluative evidence on GEF food systems programs generated by previous GEF IEO evaluations, including the Formative Review of the Integrated Approach Pilot Programs (2018) and the Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to Address Drivers of Environmental Degradation (2022).

8. Country case studies provided a more in-depth exploration of the evaluation questions. Field missions were conducted in four countries: Ghana (Annex 9), Indonesia (Annex 10), Peru (Annex 11), and Tanzania (Annex 12). These countries were purposively selected based on the presence and maturity of child projects of food systems programs across GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8, enabling analysis of how newer interventions build on prior learning (see Annex 13). The selection also reflects diversity in geographic regions, GEF Agencies, and sectors (e.g., commodities, livestock, and aquaculture). Each week-long country visit involved interviews with national stakeholders, field visits, and validation of preliminary portfolio-level findings, with a total of 133 interviews conducted across four countries.

9. The main limitation encountered was the relatively early stage and consequent lack of information on outcomes of GEF-7 and GEF-8 interventions. In terms of individual projects and programs, the evaluation assessed completed GEF-6 projects, while many GEF-7 activities are still under way, and GEF-8 activities are mostly at either the design stage or an early stage of implementation. Those projects that are CEO endorsed or have just started being implemented were mainly assessed in terms of the quality of their design. Most GEF-8 child projects had not yet received CEO endorsement at the time of this writing, and therefore the evaluation was not able to assess the quality of their design. In addition, the global coordination project for the GEF-7 Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Program (FOLUR) was undergoing its midterm review concurrently with this evaluation, and the results were only made available after this report was

drafted, limiting its use. The evaluation takes appropriate account of these limitations when discussing related findings.

2. GEF SUPPORT TO FOOD SYSTEMS

2.1 Evolution of food systems programs

10. **The GEF has been engaged in shaping food systems since its first replenishment period.** Many projects from GEF-1 to GEF-5 addressed critical dimensions of food systems but were spread across focal areas without an overarching framework. For example, the Lake Victoria Fisheries project (GEF-2, GEF ID 3399) strengthened co-management of fisheries to sustain a vital protein source for millions in East Africa; the Tropical Fruit Tree Diversity Project (GEF-4, GEF ID 2430) safeguarded indigenous fruit varieties for nutrition and livelihoods; and the global Pollinators Project (GEF-4, GEF ID 2123) highlighted the importance of ecosystem services for crop yields. Collectively, these efforts demonstrated how environmental investments could deliver both global environmental benefits and food systems outcomes. However, they remained fragmented, raising concerns about diminished impact in the absence of an integrated, programmatic approach.

11. **GEF-6 marked the shift toward food system transformation** with the introduction of dedicated integrated approach pilot (IAP) programs to address the drivers of environmental degradation and value chain dynamics. The Resilient Food Systems (RFS) IAP and Good Growth Partnership (GGP) IAP tackled sustainability in dryland agriculture and deforestation in commodity supply chains, respectively. Another program, the Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI), complemented this work by addressing artisanal fisheries governance.

12. **GEF-7 scaled up this integrated programming model** and transitioned to a more ambitious and globally focused Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Impact Program (FOLUR). It is a $339.9 million, seven-year initiative currently ongoing and led by the World Bank. With a broader global reach and a stronger focus on transforming major commodity value chains—like palm oil, soy, coffee, and cocoa—FOLUR expanded the GEF's efforts across 27 countries with large coalitions of partners.

13. **The GEF-8 Food Systems Integrated Program (FSIP) was built on lessons learned and recommendations from previous phases** to reinforce a systems transformation agenda, which emphasizes sustainability in production, resource efficiency, and demand-side measures to

reduce agriculture's environmental footprint. With $281.5 million in GEF funding and $2.2 billion in cofinancing, FSIP is the second-largest GEF program in this cycle, involving 32 countries. The program targets greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction, improved water and nutrient use, and ecosystem conservation, solidifying the GEF's leadership in promoting integrated, cross-sectoral food system reform at global scale. The GEF-8 FSIP design reflects the urgency of food systems challenges, when 3.1 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet, and food inflation has been higher than non-food inflation, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations (Ruggeri Laderchi et al. 2024). The program's emphasis on resource efficiency and sustainability aligns with the growing recognition that economic accessibility and environmental sustainability of food systems are interconnected challenges requiring integrated solutions.

Box 2. Integrated programs

The GEF's integrated programs are multi-country, cross-sectoral initiatives designed to address the systemic drivers of environmental degradation while generating multiple global environmental benefits. Unlike stand-alone projects, integrated programs offer a set of coordination projects for the child projects of a given integrated program, under a shared strategic framework to enable synergies across GEF focal areas for greater impact. These programs are structured around major environmental and economic systems such as food, land use, and cities, and aim to deliver transformational change by linking environmental objectives with sectoral priorities, enhancing multistakeholder engagement, and mobilizing private sector investment.

14. **The GEF's integrated programs feature three key aspects** (see also Box 2): incentive funding for country participation, a dedicated funding envelope for a coordination or platform project to act as the knowledge hub for selected countries, and a competitive selection process through the preparation and evaluation of expressions of interest (EOIs). The coordination (or hub) project is expected to play a crucial role in extending the program's impact beyond the selected countries and ensuring the overall delivery of the program achieves transformational change. While CFI is not an integrated program, it does share similar features, such as the global coordination project. Nonetheless, each of these food systems programs is very different from one another, in terms of their objectives, approaches, and intervention areas.

2.2 GEF food systems portfolio

15. **The evaluation identified a total of 105 food systems-related projects during the last three GEF replenishment periods**, including 84 child projects implemented under the food systems programs (Table 1), as well as 21 stand-alone projects.[4] Approximately 87 percent of child projects are national in scope (n=73), accounting for 84 percent of total GEF financing to food systems programs. Only one child project is regional, while 10 child projects are global, receiving 12 percent of GEF financing.

[4] All child projects of the food systems programs are funded by the GEF Trust Fund (GET). Of the 21 stand-alone projects included in the evaluation, 12 are GET projects, 4 are funded by the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), 2 are funded by the Strategic Climate Change Fund (SCCF), and 3 are multitrust fund.

Table 1. Overview of GEF food systems programs

Program	Lead Agency	Implementing Agencies	Countries	Objective
GEF-6				
Resilient Food Systems (RFS) (GEF ID 9070)	IFAD	IFAD, FAO, UNDP, World Bank, UNIDO	Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda	Improving agricultural sustainability and productivity for smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa
Good Growth Partnership (GGP) (GEF ID 9072)	UNDP	UNDP, WWF-US, World Bank	Brazil, Indonesia, Liberia, Paraguay	Reducing deforestation in commodity supply chains
Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI) (GEF ID 9060)	FAO	FAO, UNDP, WWF-US, World Bank	Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Indonesia, Peru, Senegal	Bolstering small-scale coastal fisheries governance while securing environmental, social, and economic benefits for local communities
GEF-7				
Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program (FOLUR) (GEF ID 10201)	World Bank	World Bank, CI, FAO, UNDP, UNEP, WWF-US	Brazil, Burundi, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Nigeria, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam	Transforming production landscapes and value chains for eight major commodities to influence regional and global food systems
GEF-8				
Food Systems Integrated Program (FSIP) (GEF ID 11214)	FAO / IFAD	FAO, IFAD, IUCN, UNDP, World Bank	Angola, Argentina, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Grenada, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Namibia, Nauru, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Türkiye, Uganda	Improving sustainable food production and reducing adverse environmental impacts from agriculture

Source: Program documents.
Note: ADB = Asian Development Bank; CI = Conservation International; EBRD = European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; IDB = Inter-American Development Bank; IBRD/World Bank = International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank; UNDP = United Nations Development Programme; UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme; UNIDO = United Nations Industrial Development Organization; WWF-US = World Wildlife Fund-US.

16. **The GEF's programmatic investment in food systems has grown over time**. The number of child projects (including coordination projects) under food systems programs increased steadily from 23 in GEF-6 to 28 in GEF-7 and 33 in GEF-8 (Table 2). GEF financing for food systems programs peaked in the GEF-7 FOLUR program ($339.9 million), showing a 70 percent increase from GEF-6 programs, and declined to $281.5 million in GEF-8. GEF-7 FOLUR and GEF-8 FSIP

together account for over 80 percent of total expected cofinancing leveraged by food systems programs, with the promised cofinancing ratio reaching 8.4 and 7.8, respectively. Together, the 84 child projects account for about $821.8 million in GEF financing and an additional $6.33 billion in cofinancing. The 21 stand-alone projects account for about $132.2 million in GEF financing and an additional $542.6 million in cofinancing.

Table 2. Overview of food systems programs financing (GEF-6 to GEF-8)

Food Systems Programs		No. of child projects	Total GEF financing (USD million)	Total cofinancing ($ million)	Average size of child project (USD million)	Promised cofinancing ratio
GEF-6	CFI	5	37.8	208.0	7.6	5.5
	GGP	5	44.7	263.5	8.9	5.9
	RFS	13	117.9	786.2	9.1	6.7
	GEF-6 subtotal	23	200.4	1,257.7	8.7	6.3
GEF-7	FOLUR	28	339.9	2,869.3	12.1	8.4
GEF-8	FSIP	33	281.5	2,201.6	8.5	7.8
Total		84	821.8	6,328.7	9.8	7.7

Source: GEF portal

Note: No. of child projects includes coordination projects. Total GEF financing includes GEF grant, Agency Fee, project preparation grant (PPG) and PPG fee.

17. **The growing investments in Asia and Latin America suggest an expanding geographic scope of GEF food systems support beyond Africa.** Table 3 shows the top five country recipients among food systems child projects from GEF-6 to GEF-8. By region, Africa received the highest overall allocation throughout GEF-6 to GEF-8, totaling $343.8 million across 40 child projects. Asia saw a sharp increase in funding after GEF-6, growing from $11.4 million in GEF-6 to a total of $242.5 million across 25 projects in GEF-8. Latin America and the Caribbean follows with $187 million for a total of 22 projects, while Europe and Central Asia has received the lowest financing across three phases ($33.9 million), with minimal funding in GEF-8. GEF financing for regional and global projects declined progressively in GEF-7 and GEF-8, compared to GEF-6, indicating a shift toward more country-specific investments in the integrated programs.

Table 3. Top country recipients among child projects (highest to lowest)

GEF-6	GEF-7	GEF-8
Ghana	Brazil	China
Indonesia	Indonesia	Benin
Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Indonesia
Niger	India	Ghana
Burundi	China/Peru/Mexico	India/Peru

Source: GEF Portal.

18. **The food systems programs show growing country coverage.** The number of participating countries has increased continuously from GEF-6 to GEF-8 (Table 4). Thirteen countries participate in both FOLUR and FSIP, while 14 countries participate exclusively in FOLUR, and 19 new countries joined FSIP, indicating broader country engagement in the recent GEF phase. With regards to special country groupings, GEF-8 FSIP features the greatest number of least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). Across the three replenishment periods, LDCs receive 30 percent of projects and 27 percent of funding, while SIDS account for 6 percent of projects and 4 percent of funding.

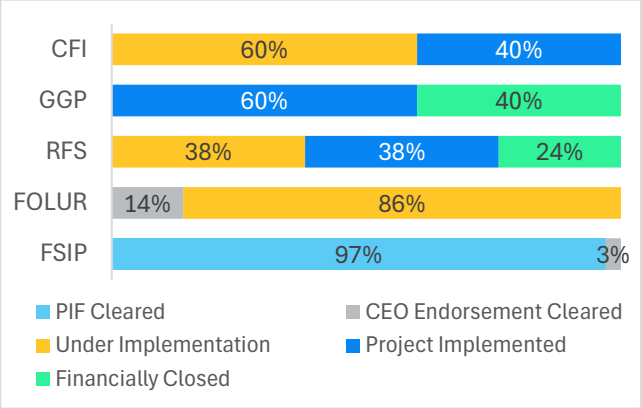
Table 4. Participating countries in food systems programs

Food Systems Programs		No. of Countries	SIDS	LDCs
GEF-6	CFI	6	1	1
	GGP	4		1
	RFS	12		8
	Unique count	22	1	9
GEF-7	FOLUR	27	1	7
GEF-8	FSIP	32	3	9

Source: GEF Portal.

19. **Implementation progress varies by GEF replenishment phase and program.** At the time of analysis, 37 projects (44 percent) were under preparation (project identification form (PIF) or CEO endorsement-cleared), 32 projects (38 percent) were under implementation, and 15 projects (18 percent) were either implemented or financially closed. Implementation progress varies by program (Figure 1), with FSIP having the largest share of projects under preparation, and CFI and FOLUR having the largest share of ongoing projects. The GGP IAP has reached full completion, with all child projects implemented or financially closed.

Figure 1. Implementation status of child projects by program



Source: GEF Portal.

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Relevance and coherence

3.1.1 Relevance to needs, policies, and priorities

20. **GEF food systems programs are highly relevant for broader global efforts to make food systems more sustainable, ensuring environmental protection while protecting benefits for the people who depend on them.** The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Zero Hunger and Responsible Consumption and Production, in 2015 coincided with the GEF-6 replenishment period, and the launch of the RFS, CFI, and GGP programs. As attention to

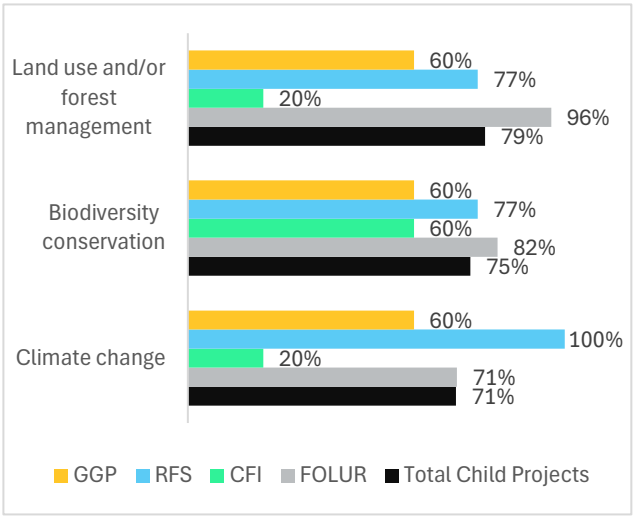
the interconnectedness of food systems, environmental degradation, and climate change has increased, the GEF has kept pace with this global movement through dedicated food systems programs in GEF-7 and GEF-8. The continued relevance of GEF food systems programming is underscored by initiatives like the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and subsequent Stocktakes, which highlight persistent challenges in transforming food systems globally (UN Sustainable Development Group 2023). Moreover, recent reports have drawn attention to significant gaps in environmental and climate financing for food systems in developing countries, reinforcing the urgency of the GEF's contributions to driving transformational change (UNCTAD 2025; Kirchherr et al. 2024; Díaz-Bonilla 2023; IFAD 2025; van Gaal et al. 2023). Recent economic analysis demonstrates that food systems transformation could generate net benefits of $5–10 trillion annually while current systems impose $15 trillion in hidden costs, reinforcing the urgency of the GEF's contributions to driving transformational change (Ruggeri Laderchi et al. 2024; FAO 2023).

21. **Food systems programs also address the objectives of multiple conventions and in an integrated manner.** GEF funding for food systems programs has come from the focal areas associated with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Child projects show good alignment with convention objectives by addressing climate mitigation and resilience, land degradation, and biodiversity conservation within agricultural landscapes (GEF IEO 2022). (See also section 3.1.2 on specific environmental concerns targeted by food systems programs).

22. The relevance of GEF food systems programs has also been validated through both formative and retrospective geospatial analyses conducted by the GEF IEO. The 2022 Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to Address the Drivers of Environmental Degradation developed spatial relevance indexes that retroactively confirmed the alignment of selected countries in the GGP and RFS with key drivers of environmental degradation, with few exceptions (GEF IEO 2022). Additionally, during FOLUR's program design, a formative multicriteria spatial analysis approach was used to identify countries with high environmental, agricultural, and socioeconomic relevance, ensuring that the program strategically targeted priority food systems challenges (Sidman and Carugi 2023).

23. **These initiatives are well aligned with countries' environmental needs, consistent with the GEF's mandate.** Across programs, child projects have frequently described the relevance of project design to environmental policies, strategies, and programs, including biodiversity conservation, climate change, and land use and/or forest management (Figure 2). Nearly all country-level survey respondents (95 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that child projects align with their country's environmental priorities and needs. All country case studies found evidence of child projects contributing to national environmental and development goals relevant to agriculture, livestock, and fisheries. Child projects with terminal evaluations were almost universally rated as highly relevant or relevant.[5] RFS, for example, was well matched to beneficiary needs, country policies, and regional priorities. The COVID-19 pandemic only increased the relevance of RFS' objectives, given heightened concerns about resilience of smallholder farming systems and household food security in rural Africa. RFS also helped African drylands farmers adapt to climate change through adaptive innovations, increased ecological awareness, and enhanced extension services (IFAD 2024). While GGP projects were not designed as national projects, terminal evaluations still found that projects aligned with environmental concerns and priorities at the national level.

Figure 2. Child project alignment with environmental policies, strategies, and programs at design



Source: Project documents.

24. **GEF food systems interventions have generally described alignment with country policies and priorities in the agriculture, livestock, and fishery sectors.** Most child projects (70 percent) describe alignment with country policies, strategies, and/or government programs in agriculture, livestock, and fishery sectors, with nearly all other projects aligning with land use/forest management priorities. Systematic review of project implementation documents supports this trend, finding that all but one child project remained relevant to country needs in these sectors during implementation. The country survey also shows strong agreement of relevance among government counterparts and in-country GEF Agency staff (94 percent). Some variation is noted, however, between RFS and FOLUR. As noted earlier, a higher proportion of RFS child projects are executed by ministries of agriculture, and a higher proportion of RFS projects explicitly demonstrate relevance to agricultural policies (85 percent). In contrast, a lower proportion of FOLUR projects are executed by ministries of agriculture, and a lower proportion

[5] One project was deemed moderately relevant due to design flaws (e.g., unclear logical framework, lack of consideration of socioeconomic dimensions in site selection). Source: terminal evaluation for project GEF ID 9134.

of FOLUR projects explicitly demonstrate relevance to agricultural policies (61 percent). See **Error! Reference source not found.** for additional examples.

Box 3. Attention to environmental footprint of food systems and systemic design in case study countries

Case study results in all four countries demonstrate explicit attention to environmental footprints in their theories of change (ToCs) and results frameworks. In **Tanzania**, this is evident across RFS, FOLUR, and FSIP projects, which prioritize land use planning, climate-sensitive practices, and biodiversity conservation. **Indonesia** exhibits strong integration of environmental concerns, with attention to deforestation-linked commodity supply chains (FOLUR, GGP), marine ecosystem management (CFI), and sustainable livestock production (FSIP). **Ghana's** projects all focus on climate-smart agriculture and land restoration but maintain a narrower emphasis on production-related impacts. **Peru's** projects also incorporate environmental objectives, especially through biodiversity conservation (CFI) and deforestation reduction (FOLUR, FSIP).

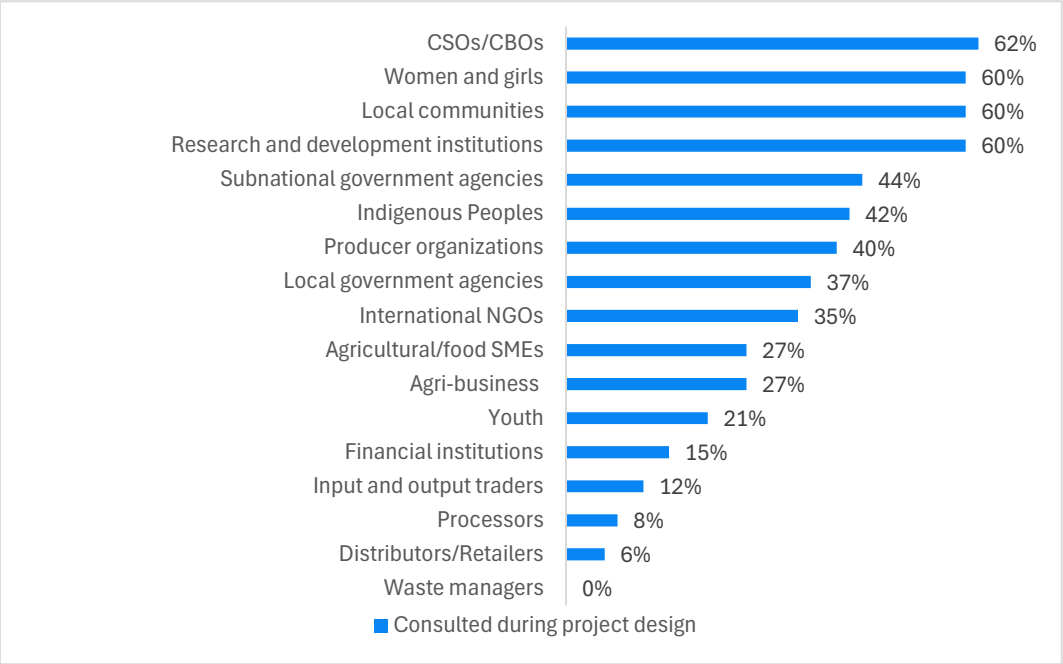
The process of developing and socializing ToCs has helped to broaden thinking, yet systemic design has sometimes been constrained by siloed institutional mandates and rigid project structures. In Ghana, while the FOLUR project design reflects efforts to move beyond the production-centric focus of RFS, it lacks specificity in how it will engage private sector downstream food systems actors. Similarly, Peru's FOLUR project plans to address food systems linkages through partnerships and market access efforts, but lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities of the diverse actors involved undermines coordination and limits the project's ability to operationalize its systems-oriented ambitions.

Source: Project documents.

25. **Relevance in project design was enhanced through analyses of country priorities, baseline assessments of target sectors and intervention areas, and stakeholder consultation and validation.** GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects consistently identified key national challenges and linked planned interventions to specific policies, priorities, and programs. Some project design documents included annexes demonstrating comprehensive assessments of national priorities.[6] When describing the selection of intervention areas, activities, and partners, most child project design documents (75 percent) highlighted analyses conducted during the project preparation grant phase, including problem tree analyses, economic and financial analyses, and analyses of potential benefits for target communities, or referenced external analyses, such as those used in a country's NDC/National Adaptation Plan (NAP) development or other development projects. Exceptions included eight projects that planned to conduct such analyses early in project implementation. Stakeholder consultations played a key role in validating analytical findings and shaping project design (Figure 3). Child projects often engaged individuals and organizations representing the perspectives of local communities.

[6] Such as FOLUR's Preventing Forest Loss, Promoting Restoration and Integrating Sustainability into Ethiopia's Coffee Supply Chains and Food Systems (GEF ID 10243, UNDP) and Food System, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program in Uzbekistan (GEF ID 10601, FAO) and the stand-alone Building Climate Resilient Livelihoods in Vulnerable Landscapes in Bangladesh (GEF ID 10207, FAO).

Figure 3. Stakeholders consulted during child project design



Source: Project documents.

26. Private sector and downstream value chain actors were less frequently involved during the design phase, reflecting a broader tendency to prioritize production over post-production value chain elements (see also Figure 6). Engagement with input and output traders, processors, distributors, and retailers at design was primarily driven by GGP projects, while RFS child projects rarely involved post-production value chain actors during the design phase, consistent with their programmatic priorities. FOLUR projects tended to focus on consultation with agricultural and food small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and/or agri-businesses (over 40 percent), while just over 20 percent engaged financial institutions.

27. **GEF food systems programs have provided sufficient flexibility for countries to focus on national needs, while using common components to enhance program coherence.** The high relevance of GEF food systems projects, along with interview and case study evidence, indicate that program designs have allowed sufficient flexibility for countries to design interventions that address their national needs. Over time, programs have shown stronger internal coherence (see section 3.1.3)—aligning project designs with core components—while interviews and case studies suggest that these components are not limiting countries from focusing on their needs. At the same time, ad hoc evidence suggests that programs are introducing innovative topics that some countries had not yet identified as a strategic focus. In Peru, for example, the GEF Agency introduced regenerative livestock management as a focus for FSIP, an idea initially met with skepticism by the ministries of environment and agriculture. However, over time, these ministries have begun to embrace the opportunity, recognizing the potential to pilot a new approach to addressing ecosystem degradation. Relevance of program components to countries' needs is also

demonstrated by the strong interest in GEF food systems programs. Demand for participation in FOLUR and FSIP far exceeded available funds; 48 EOIs were submitted to FOLUR, compared to 27 country child projects selected, and 38 countries applied for FSIP funding, compared to 32 chosen.

28. **Some concerns were raised about limited time for project preparation, given the multisectoral approach needed for food systems transformation.** At the same time, a concern that the design of some GEF-8 projects was more Agency- than country-driven emerged in interviews with multiple GEF Agencies and program partners. This was largely attributed to scheduling pressure exerted by the GEF Secretariat in response to an important lesson from GEF-6 and GEF-7, where discrepancies in child project timelines—both among child projects themselves and between child projects and the coordination project—created coordination challenges (see also sections 3.3.1 on program governance and 3.3.7 on efficiency).

29. **In response to evolving policy landscapes and global disruptions, GEF food systems interventions have often employed adaptive management to stay relevant, albeit with some missed opportunities.** A notable change was the passage of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)[7] while most FOLUR projects were in early implementation, changing the global policy landscape for five out of eight FOLUR commodities. Interviews and case studies highlighted how projects are adapting. For instance, the FOLUR Deforestation Free Commodity Supply Chains in the Peruvian Amazon (GEF ID 10307, UNDP) revised its policy analysis and is promoting compliance with the EUDR through an existing policy mechanism to secure land use rights for smallholders. In both Peru and Indonesia, projects also maintained relevance by adapting during COVID-19, with CFI in Peru introducing financial support through credit unions to mitigate income loss—a driver of illegal fishing—while GGP Demand in Indonesia adjusted strategies to still meet its market transformation targets despite pandemic-related obstacles.

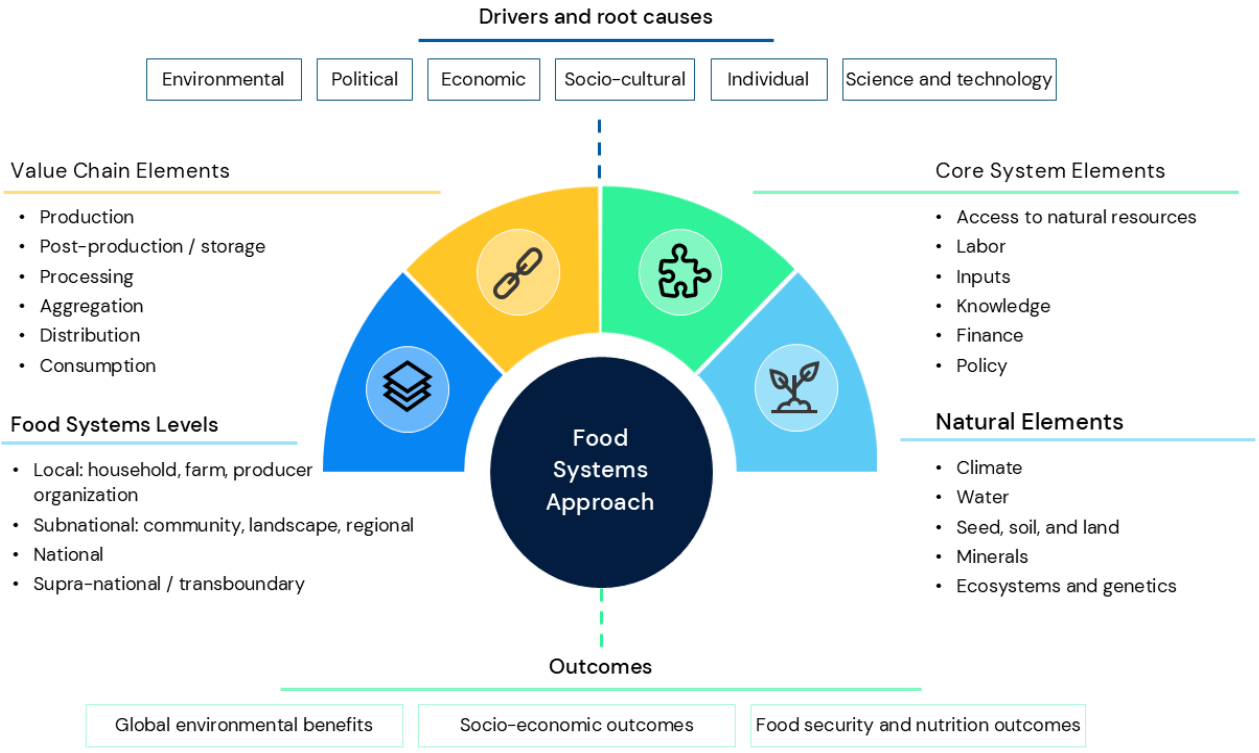
30. There are also examples of missed opportunities for more effective adaptive management. In Indonesia, the GGP Enabling Transactions–Market Shift to Deforestation Free Beef, Palm Oil and Soy project (GEF ID 9696, World Bank) was not able to engage smallholder palm oil producers in line with the government's priorities, leading to the reallocation of GEF funds for other purposes, and the CFI Eco-system Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in Eastern Indonesia project (GEF ID 9129, WWF) has struggled to adapt implementation activities to more effectively achieve behavior change. The RFS program terminal evaluation also highlighted that child projects faced challenges with adaptive management due to limitations in their monitoring and evaluation systems, which limited feedback loops for rapid adaptation in response to changing policy environments.

[7] The European Union Deforestation Regulations (EUDR) was passed in May 2023 to ensure that products sold in EU markets or exported from the EU are not linked to deforestation or forest degradation. It applies to seven commodities, five of which FOLUR covers: cattle, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, soy, rubber, and wood. While the regulation could encourage more sustainable agricultural practices and deforestation-free supply chains, it also may influence market access and investment decisions, with potentially negative implications for smallholder producers in areas with high deforestation risk. See more here.

3.1.2 Designing for food systems change

31. This evaluation considers whether GEF integrated programming applies a comprehensive systems approach to its food systems interventions, as well as how the design of GEF programs has evolved over time in response to lessons learned. To do this, the evaluation developed a framework understanding of food systems, identifying the drivers and root causes of food systems change, the value chain, core, and natural system elements, nested levels, and outcomes, as shown in figure 4 below. This framework guided the systematic review of food systems programs and projects, as discussed below (see also Annex 14 for a heat map showing its application at the program level). In particular, the evaluation considered the benefits of taking a food systems thinking approach in four key areas:

Figure 4. Food systems approach



Source: Evaluation team.

(a) **Addressing multiple drivers and their root causes.** A key principle of systems thinking is the identification and systemic resolution of drivers and root causes of food systems challenges, including environmental degradation, social inequities, and economic vulnerabilities. The evaluation focused on whether project designs are informed by multidimensional analyses and aim to tackle underlying issues. In-

country data collection further explored the actual effectiveness of these interventions in reducing drivers and their root causes and whether the project components reinforce one another to yield sustained impact.

(b) **Integrated solutions across elements.** Systems thinking recognizes the linkages and interactions among different value chain, core system, and natural elements, leading to the design of integrated solutions to environmental, social, and economic challenges within food systems. The evaluation looked for evidence that programs and projects addressed multiple global environmental benefits and socioeconomic outcomes across relevant food systems elements, including different parts of the food systems value chain. The evaluation also sought evidence that programs and projects promote food system sustainability at multiple levels, from local to national to transnational.

(c) **Stakeholder engagement and multilevel governance.** Effective food systems require engagement of diverse stakeholders. The evaluation looked for evidence of inclusive and strategic engagement across multiple levels—local to international—and actors—from producers to policy makers and including private sector and civil society actors. The evaluation also looked for evidence of thorough stakeholder analysis and facilitating multistakeholder dialogue and coordination.

(d) **Synergistic outcomes across food systems dimensions.** Finally, a food systems approach emphasizes the importance of achieving positive and complementary outcomes across the food system, including environmental sustainability, socioeconomic resilience, food and nutrition security, and health. The evaluation explored the extent to which projects demonstrated layered, integrated activities designed to produce cross-sectoral environmental and other benefits and were designed to produce synergistic effects and effective management of trade-offs.

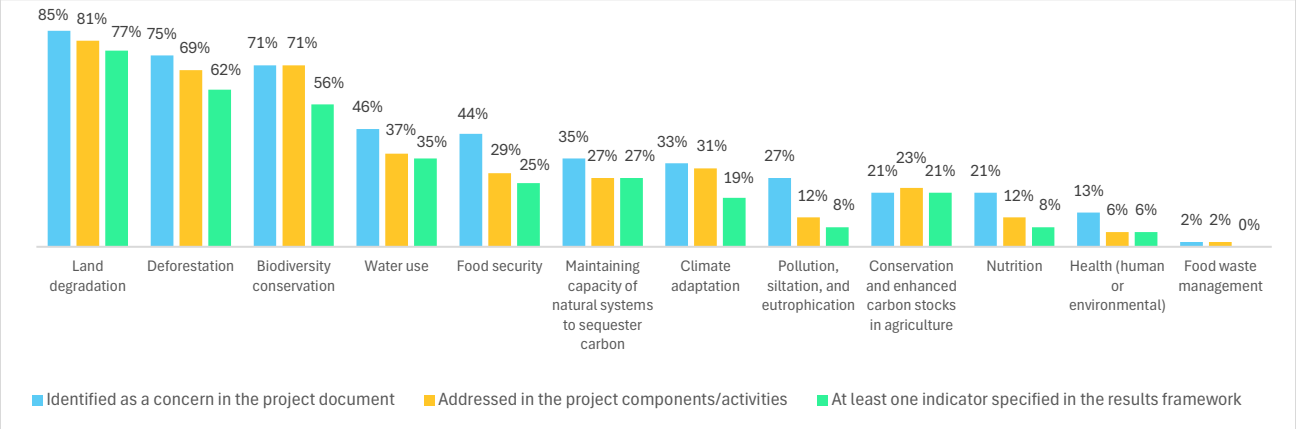
32. The interpretation of this framework was nuanced to recognize that a food systems approach is not equivalent to a holistic or inclusive approach that engages all elements or stakeholders indiscriminately. Systems thinking is expected to demonstrate strategic thinking and governance, such as by identifying and acting on the most influential levers of change. Ultimately, a food systems perspective means working strategically within complex systems to enable targeted, scalable, and adaptive interventions that have the potential to drive transformation. This framework was used as a proxy for assessing the potential of GEF interventions to contribute to transforming food systems, in the absence of a clear definition or metrics for what constitutes food systems transformation in GEF programming.

3.1.2.1 An integrated approach to environmental challenges

33. **GEF food systems programs address many of the biggest environmental challenges in food systems in an integrated way.** Across GEF food systems programs, environmental benefits remain central, in line with the GEF's mandate. PFDs emphasize biodiversity conservation, land restoration and GHG emissions reduction—demonstrating an integrated approach to environmental sustainability. FSIP stands out by additionally targeting chemicals and waste

reduction, while CFI is unique in its strong contribution to transboundary water management and marine biodiversity. Country and Agency survey respondents widely agree (94 percent) that food systems programs address multiple environmental benefits in an integrated way. Country child projects designed activities to address multiple environmental challenges—mostly frequently combating land and soil degradation, deforestation, and biodiversity loss (Figure 5 and Box 3). Other concerns, such as maintaining capacity of natural systems to sequester carbon and enhancing carbon stocks in agriculture, were less commonly addressed by project activities (27 percent and 23 percent, respectively), but still present in the portfolio nonetheless. Stand-alone projects similarly addressed multiple environmental issues, although with relatively more emphasis on water use (65 percent) and climate adaptation (71 percent) and less on land degradation (65 percent) and deforestation (53 percent). Most child projects (94 percent) and stand-alone projects (100 percent) also describe plans to create synergies between environmental and socioeconomic benefits.

Figure 5. Environmental challenges identified and addressed in child project designs



Source: Project documents.

Box 4. Attention to policy coherence in food systems project design

Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration in Tanzania's Forest Landscapes (GEF ID 10262, WWF). In **Tanzania**, the current pricing mechanisms for domestic and irrigation water use in the project's target landscapes do not reflect the true environmental costs of managing, conserving, and restoring water catchments. Many users are unregistered and access water at no cost, creating incentives for overuse and mismanagement, and prices are not aligned across agencies. This FOLUR project aims to promote better alignment between land use planning and water management through establishing a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism and institutional capacity building.

Enabling Transactions - Market Shift to Deforestation Free Beef, Palm Oil and Soy (GEF ID 9696, World Bank). Low commodity prices for sustainable products pose an ongoing disincentive for farmers, noted particularly in **Paraguay** (beef) and **Indonesia** (palm oil). This GGP child project sought to address temporal policy coherence by developing immediate financial and policy tools, such as targeted guidance for financial institutions and regulators and country analyses on fiscal incentives, that support long-term goals for reducing deforestation in target supply chains.

Scaling up Cocoa-based Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (GEF ID 10247, FAO). This FOLUR child project in **Cote d'Ivoire** seeks to achieve horizontal policy coherence by coordinating the implementation of various existing policies at the landscape and community level to resolve contradictions and conflicts. Specifically, it aims to balance forest conservation policies with agricultural development policies, reconcile policies encouraging tree cover on farms with logging practices, and address the conflict between prioritizing lowland for food crops versus cash crops.

Support for Sustainable Food Production and Enhancement of Food Security and Climate Resilience in Burundi's Highlands (GEF ID 9178, FAO). Natural resource management in **Burundi** has been hindered by fragmented planning, under-resourced coordination bodies, and the absence of coherent land use frameworks across governance levels. This RFS child project was designed to tackle both vertical and horizontal policy coherence by strengthening the technical and managerial capacity of existing multi-sectoral platforms, ensuring regular engagement, action planning, and inclusive participation from ministries, local governments, and communities. GEF financing also sought to support integrated planning at national, provincial, and landscape levels by enhancing the Agriculture and Rural Development Working Groups and establishing knowledge-sharing systems to align stakeholders around common goals.

34. **Reducing food loss and waste, avoiding pollution, and promoting healthy diets have been infrequently addressed in GEF food systems programs, although attention is now emerging.** In GEF-6 and GEF-7, few child projects addressed food waste management or pollution, such as from the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Similarly, few projects identified nutrition or health as a key concern and even fewer included relevant activities. The limited focus on healthy diets partially reflects the GEF's mandate to deliver global environmental benefits, with improved nutrition seen as a co-benefit. Several interviewees noted that food systems levers like promoting alternative proteins and reducing food loss and waste have not been a focus of GEF programs. Interviewees were also unaware of any analysis comparing the environmental impact of these levers to production-focused ones in GEF countries. These findings also reflect broader patterns identified in food systems interventions globally. Research has shown that food systems transformation efforts disproportionately focus on linear production-side interventions while underemphasizing critical downstream challenges such as food waste reduction and pollution prevention. This linear production-centric bias limits the transformational potential of food systems interventions, as achieving global food security and environmental sustainability requires integrated approaches across the entire food value chain (Winkler et al. 2025).

35. More attention to pollution and nutrition in food programs is emerging. In GEF-8, FSIP has started to recognize food waste, pollution, and nutrition aspects in its program theory of change and technical papers. [8] Another GEF-8 program, Financing Agrochemical Reduction and Management Plus (FARM+), also intends to support countries in transitioning toward sustainable agricultural practices that reduce soil and water pollution. It is not yet known whether these activities will be linked with FSIP ones in the few overlapping countries. The relevance of these efforts is validated by concerning global trends in malnutrition[9] and research underscoring that failing to integrate food waste and pollution dimensions risks undermining the long-term sustainability and resilience of food systems (FAO et al. 2025; Winkler et al. 2025). Looking forward, the GEF-9 Programming Directions aim to deepen the focus on nutrition by introducing nutrition as a subcriterion in project selection, encouraging the use of nutrition-related indicators, like dietary diversity and yields of biofortified crops, and promoting measures to reduce post-harvest losses of nutrient-dense foods.

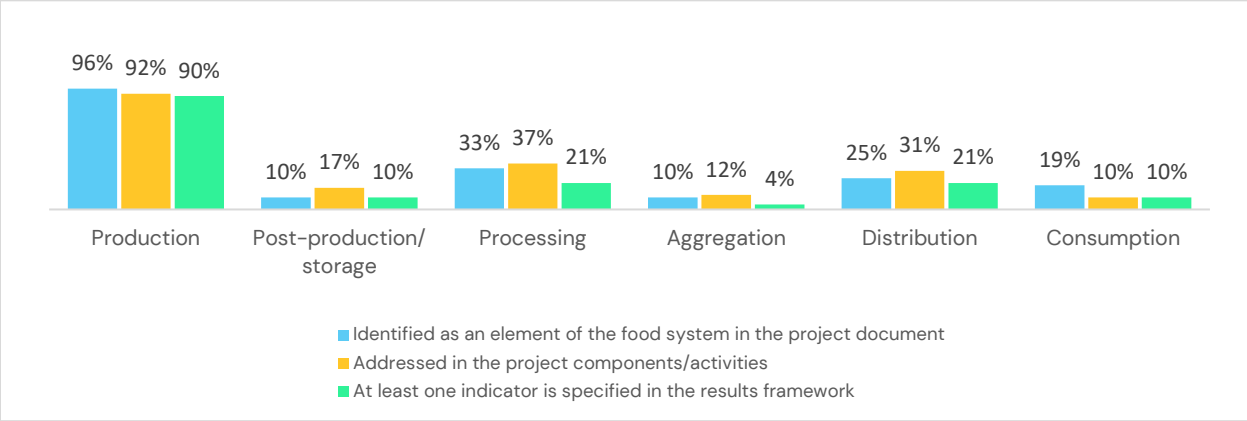
[8] The FSIP theory of change (ToC) explicitly promotes "sustainable, regenerative, and inclusive food systems that are nature-positive, resilient, and pollution-free," and a briefing paper provides guidance on enhancing nutrition co-benefits in child projects.

[9] Only one-third of children aged 6–23 months and two-thirds of women aged 15–49 meet minimum criteria for dietary diversity, while adult obesity has risen from 12.1 percent in 2012 to 15.8 percent in 2022. This "double burden of malnutrition"—the coexistence of undernutrition with overweight and obesity—highlights the complex nutritional challenges that food systems interventions must address beyond environmental objectives. The continued relevance of GEF food systems programming is further validated by the latest global data showing that despite modest improvements in global hunger levels, stark regional disparities persist, with Africa accounting for 60 percent of projected hungry people by 2030, while overlapping crises, such as conflict, climate shocks, and inflation, continue to expose the fragility of food systems (FAO et al. 2025).

3.1.2.2 Food systems value chain elements

36. **GEF programs differ considerably in their coverage of food value chains, although their primary emphasis remains on the production side.** Country child projects focus heavily on agricultural and fisheries production, followed by processing and distribution, based on the quality-at-entry analysis (Figure 6). Child projects' treatment of sustainable demand, market and consumer-facing elements is uneven. Stand-alone food systems projects show similarly high rates of focus on production (94 percent), with slightly higher proportions of projects addressing post-production/storage, processing, distribution, and consumption.

Figure 6. Value chain elements in child projects



Source: Project documents.

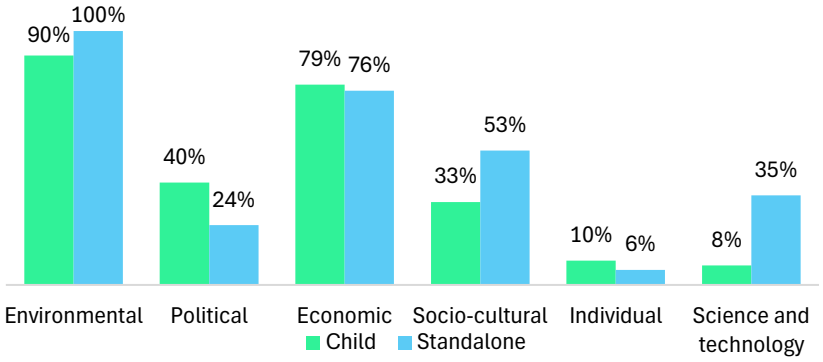
37. The GGP took an innovative and explicit commodity supply chain approach to its program design, with separate projects focused on the production, demand, and finance transactions for beef, soy, and palm oil across four countries. A key lesson from GGP's design was the need to better design for integration of value chain elements, which led to challenges during implementation (see section 3.3 on programmatic approach). Due to its focus on resilience and food security, RFS intentionally focused more on productive capacities and ecosystem services for smallholder farmers, with less prominent downstream value chain support. CFI is also not seen by program stakeholders as a "value chain" program, with its focus on governance and sustainable management of production. The original program design did not focus on connecting production and demand, although some interviewees saw CFI's lack of attention to the demand side as a potential risk for sustainability and a stronger environmental focus of fisheries. FOLUR has also primarily emphasized sustainable production within commodity-specific landscape systems, targeting upstream components such as land use planning, crop inputs, and farming practices in its country projects. Value chain development has mostly focused on midstream actors like processors and off-takers to date, while downstream demand-side components—including retail, consumer behavior, and market incentives—have received limited attention. FOLUR's global platform is intended to play a key role in engaging with vertical value chains and the demand side, to add programmatic value to child projects (see section 3.3).

38. While FSIP remains focused on productive aspects—as evidenced by the program documents and Agency interviews—the program is also attempting to support financial needs in the supply chain and leverage the role of markets and consumers to stimulate demand for sustainably produced, safe, and nutritious foods. Interviewees acknowledge, however, that operationalizing these demand-side components remains challenging. While few FSIP child projects have reached CEO endorsement yet, early interviews indicate that the focus remains largely on production, with room for greater attention on consumption and downstream behavior. The GEF's continued focus on production-side interventions, while important, reflects a broader pattern in food systems programming that systematically underweights demand-side interventions, food waste reduction, and consumption pattern changes that could deliver significant environmental benefits. This imbalance limits the potential for achieving the scale of transformation needed to address global food systems challenges within planetary boundaries (Winkler et al. 2025).

3.1.2.3 Drivers and root causes of food systems change

39. **GEF food systems programs comprehensively describe the systemic drivers of food systems transformation at the PFD level, while child project designs largely focus on environmental and economic drivers.** All five programs' PFDs describe the systemic drivers of food systems transformation, including environmental, political, economic, sociocultural, individual, and science and technology drivers. An innovation of the FSIP design is addressing how systems change through key levers of transformation: governance and policies, finance, multistakeholder dialogue, and innovation. Yet, as program intentions have been translated into child projects, the level of attention to these drivers has varied. Environmental drivers are central in child projects—given the GEF's mandate—and economic drivers also feature relatively prominently (Figure 7); stand-alone projects show similar rates of attention to environmental and economic drivers. Root causes such as poverty and income inequality are touched upon through efforts to improve food security, market access and financing for producers.

Figure 7. Distribution of project documents that discuss impact drivers of food systems change for child versus standalone projects



Source: Project documents.

40. **Political drivers have received less but growing attention, reflecting the increased emphasis on policy coherence in the GEF.** Political drivers affecting food systems are only described in 40 percent of child project designs, although the proportion is higher among GEF-7 than GEF-6 projects. This finding aligns with recent global evidence highlighting political economy

dynamics, including corporate dominance and the financialization of food systems, as crucial but often neglected drivers of unsustainable food system outcomes (Winkler et al. 2025, Resnick and Swinnen 2023). Higher proportions of projects (71 percent of child projects and 88 percent of stand-alone projects) describe how policy misalignment impacts food systems, even if policy coherence is not identified as a key driver of food systems transformation. Projects most frequently identify misalignments between production policies (e.g., subsidies, price incentives) and environmental and climate goals, as well as trade-offs between short-term gains and long-term sustainability in agriculture. In Paraguay, for example, one stakeholder explained that taxes on unproductive land can incentivize landowners to convert forest land to productive land to avoid taxes, illustrating how embedded economic and policy systems can discourage environmental stewardship. The quality-at-entry analysis provided further ample examples of policy misalignments identified at the design stage (Box 4). Nearly all child projects (95 percent) that identified policy misalignments also designed interventions to address them. As noted above, FSIP is explicitly incorporating policy coherence and enabling regulatory environments as transformation levers, although the extent to which these are reflected in child projects is not yet known.

Box 5. Attention to policy coherence in food systems project design

Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration in Tanzania's Forest Landscapes (GEF ID 10262, WWF). In **Tanzania**, the current pricing mechanisms for domestic and irrigation water use in the project's target landscapes do not reflect the true environmental costs of managing, conserving, and restoring water catchments. Many users are unregistered and access water at no cost, creating incentives for overuse and mismanagement, and prices are not aligned across agencies. This FOLUR project aims to promote better alignment between land use planning and water management through establishing a multi-sectoral coordination mechanism and institutional capacity building.

Enabling Transactions - Market Shift to Deforestation Free Beef, Palm Oil and Soy (GEF ID 9696, World Bank). Low commodity prices for sustainable products pose an ongoing disincentive for farmers, noted particularly in **Paraguay** (beef) and **Indonesia** (palm oil). This GGP child project sought to address temporal policy coherence by developing immediate financial and policy tools, such as targeted guidance for financial institutions and regulators and country analyses on fiscal incentives, that support long-term goals for reducing deforestation in target supply chains.

Scaling up Cocoa-based Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (GEF ID 10247, FAO). This FOLUR child project in **Cote d'Ivoire** seeks to achieve horizontal policy coherence by coordinating the implementation of various existing policies at the landscape and community level to resolve contradictions and conflicts. Specifically, it aims to balance forest conservation policies with agricultural development policies, reconcile policies encouraging tree cover on farms with logging practices, and address the conflict between prioritizing lowland for food crops versus cash crops.

Support for Sustainable Food Production and Enhancement of Food Security and Climate Resilience in Burundi's Highlands (GEF ID 9178, FAO). Natural resource management in **Burundi** has been hindered by fragmented planning, under-resourced coordination bodies, and the absence of coherent land use frameworks across governance levels. This RFS child project was designed to tackle both vertical and horizontal policy coherence by strengthening the technical and managerial capacity of existing multi-sectoral platforms, ensuring regular engagement, action planning, and inclusive participation from ministries, local governments, and communities. GEF financing also sought to support integrated planning at national, provincial, and landscape levels by enhancing the Agriculture and Rural Development Working Groups and establishing knowledge-sharing systems to align stakeholders around common goals.

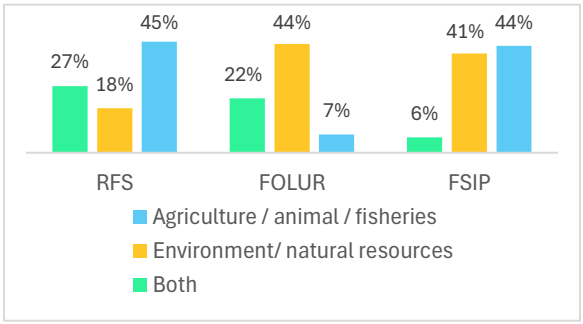
41. GEF food systems programs increasingly use multisector and multistakeholder coordination platforms—adopted by 73 percent of GEF child projects—to improve policy coherence.[10] FOLUR projects lead this trend (90 percent of projects) compared to GEF-6. This approach underscores the need for whole-of-government action to align different interests for food system transformation. GEF projects, however, rarely tackle deeper issues like agricultural subsidies or regulatory contradictions because they are often executed by environmental ministries that lack influence over subsidy policies and are often small-scale relative to subsidies.

[10] While stand-alone projects also emphasize coordination mechanisms (67 percent of projects), they more frequently emphasize policy review and improving the policy framework as expected results in project design.

42. **Variable attention to political economy dimensions of the food systems agenda at design has possible implications for transformational potential, according to interviews and case studies.** Scholarship on food systems transformation emphasizes that "disagreements and competitions—over ideas, facts, interests, values, and desired outcomes—are inherent to the process of food systems transformation" and that "true transformation cannot occur without contention of the underlying social, political, and economic arrangements that had created and maintained the existing status quo" (Béné and Abdulai 2024). GEF projects show variable attention to analyzing and addressing these political dimensions. In Peru, for example, some government agencies with key responsibilities for food systems were only consulted once the project was nearly fully designed. Conversely, in Ghana and Tanzania, environmental ministries have successfully engaged agriculture ministries in design, raising awareness of environmental issues within food systems. The Indonesia case study pointed to an emerging challenge as governments pursue ambitious food sovereignty, agricultural growth, and export targets that can be difficult to reconcile with environmental sustainability objectives. National strategies may show apparent policy alignment across sectors, but fail to reflect subnational priorities, capacities, and governance realities, leading to significant incoherencies in practical policy implementation and vertical misalignments. Recent research highlights the systematic neglect of political economy analysis in global food systems interventions as a critical barrier to achieving transformational change (Winkler et al. 2025), aligning with the GEF experience, where projects often assumed that coordination would lead to alignment without adequately assessing the political constraints that influence real-world outcomes (see also section 3.2.6).

43. Agency interviews also highlighted tensions between the perception of GEF food systems projects as "environmental" or "agricultural" projects, influenced by which ministries lead these efforts. This challenge has been heightened in GEF-7, as project execution shifted from agriculture ministries to environment ones (Figure 8). The tensions between agricultural and environmental ministries observed in GEF programming reflect broader challenges in food systems governance where the inherent complexity and diversity of food systems requires integrated approaches that often exceed traditional sectoral boundaries (Gaitán-Cremaschi et al. 2019). As Farmery et al. (2025) observe, "agriculture departments may be limited in their ability and capacity to deliver on a broad range of areas outside their technical areas of expertise, requiring capacity support in systems integration and cross-sectoral planning." Interviews also point to fundamental challenges in reframing GEF interventions to ensure local buy-in, by focusing on improving productivity to strengthen livelihoods, while improving efficiency and environmental sustainability of production.

Figure 8. Child project executing agency

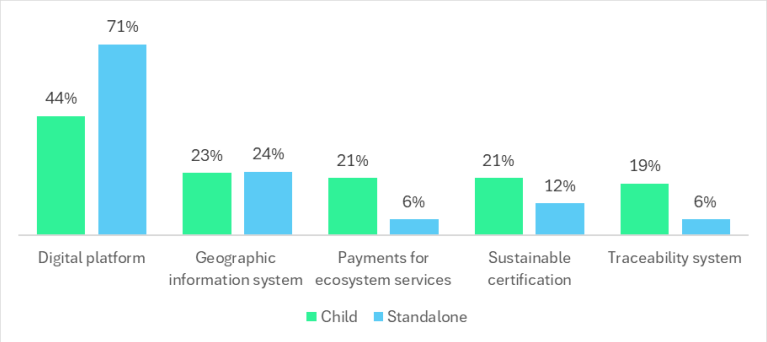


Source: GEF Portal.
Note: GGP and CFI are excluded due to the global and regional nature of their child projects.

44. **Sociocultural drivers—such as dietary preferences, social norms, and food traditions—are largely underaddressed in most GEF programs.** Sustainable food systems transformation requires understanding and addressing the complex socio-ecological relationships that shape food choices and practices (Winkler et al. 2025). With a production-centric lens, GEF programs have rarely directly tackled harmful sociocultural practices and changing consumption and demand patterns. Exceptions include the GGP Demand project in Indonesia that promoted deforestation-free palm oil through national consumer campaigns; in Ghana, the Women in Agriculture Development Unit of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture has pushed soybean-based meals to improve nutrition. In its program design, FSIP references promoting healthy diets and changing consumption patterns, but it is too early to see whether these aspects are consistently translated into actionable components in child projects. Individual-level drivers, including behavior change and capacity development, are touched upon in project designs to some extent, especially through training, extension, and awareness activities.

45. **While projects rarely identified science and technology as key drivers of food systems change, they often included innovative approaches or technologies in design.** Technologies and the digital revolution have an important role to play in transforming food systems, including through resource optimization, enhanced productivity, improved decision making, and reduced waste. Digital platforms are the most identified innovation in child project design (Figure 9), while stand-alone projects show similar, and sometimes greater, planned use of innovative approaches or technologies. Some GEF programs have emphasized innovative agricultural research and technologies, especially RFS, which focused on science-research-technology linkages in child projects and attempted to generate a Science and Policy Interface in the coordination project. Many projects (69 percent) have planned to involve research and development institutions. FSIP aims to deepen the focus on scaling up transformative technologies, with strategic guidance for child projects on how to promote the adoption and dissemination of agri-tech. (See section 3.2.5 for findings on use of innovations in generating results.)

Figure 9. Most common innovations in food systems project design



Source: Project documents.

3.1.2.4 Working across scales and actors

46. **The evolution from GEF-6 through GEF-8 demonstrates a broadening of scope with programs increasingly working across multiple levels in food systems.** Literature on food systems recognizes that they are multidimensionally nested, with systems and elements at lower levels nested in higher levels (Bustamante et al. 2024; Olafsson et al. 2021; Schneider et al. 2016; van Bers et al. 2019). The quality-at-entry analysis showed that child and stand-alone project

activities alike targeted food systems at several levels, with the greatest share of child projects intervening at the landscape level (83 percent), and individual/household level (81 percent). FOLUR's focus on integrated landscape management partly explains the landscape emphasis, as far fewer stand-alone projects (47 percent) plan to engage at this level. Given the levels targeted, food systems projects appropriately engage a range of subnational and local actors, including subnational and local government agencies (62 and 60 percent of projects), civil society organizations (83 percent), and local communities (79 percent). Food systems programs show variable focus on the national level, from RFS and CFI's strong emphases (85 and 80 percent of projects) to a more tempered focus in FOLUR (43 percent). Looking forward, FSIP is aiming to combine landscape-level work with policy, finance, and supply chain considerations at national and regional scales.

47. **The integrated program modality remains largely national in focus, limiting the ability of child projects to engage meaningfully with regional markets, trade dynamics, or international policy environments—except where such engagement is facilitated by the coordination project.** The integrated program architecture, while effective for aligning interventions with national priorities and enabling country ownership, tends to limit attention to transboundary or regional food systems dynamics.[11] GEF food systems programs have begun to focus on regional and commodity groupings but typically through the lens of technical learning and knowledge sharing (see also section 3.3.3 on knowledge and learning), rather than as attempts to conceptualize or intervene in food systems at the regional scale. There is also limited evidence across all four case study countries that child projects are integrated in a way that reflects systems thinking across national boundaries. In Ghana, for example, planned cocoa-related activities do not connect with supply chain dynamics in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, missing the chance for cross-national systems approaches. Still, the majority of FOLUR projects intend to engage with sector-based platforms, roundtables, or coalitions, which can help link national efforts to regional ones (see also section 3.2.7 on private sector).

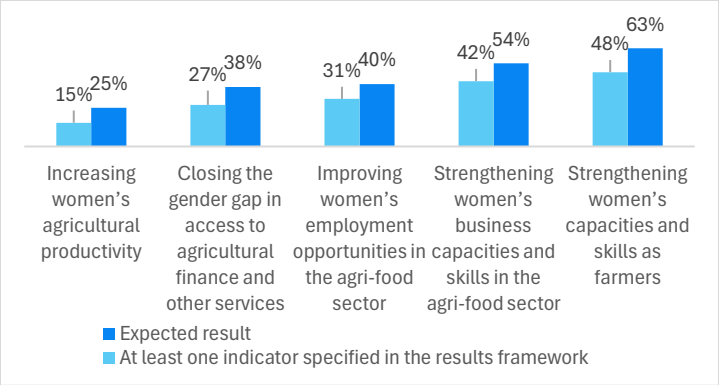
48. Notably, not all GEF food systems programs follow this integrated program model. For instance, the GGP was structured by supply chain components, with most projects working across multiple countries. CFI is a programmatic approach with regional child projects, such as in West Africa and Latin America. Yet, these programs have also struggled to enable stronger regional cooperation and governance alignment across shared ecosystems. For example, GGP and CFI projects in Indonesia initially aspired to link global and national efforts across deforestation-linked value chains and marine ecosystems, but these goals were only partially realized due to coordination and implementation challenges. In Peru, the Coastal Fisheries Initiative-Latin America project (GEF ID 9124, UNDP) operated in a transboundary ecosystem but did not design

[11] This is echoed by the country-level survey, which showed higher levels of disagreement that GEF programs support food systems across national boundaries. While disagreement was generally low across survey questions (1–4 percent), disagreement was higher for this statement (9 percent overall, 17 percent for FOLUR, and 26 percent for FSIP).

for cross-border collaboration to address illegal fishing—an opportunity for systems integration that remained unfulfilled.

49. **GEF programs focus on empowering women as key food systems actors but still face gaps in addressing the gender gap on access to resources and underlying power dynamics.** Consistent with GEF policy requirements, all GEF-7 child projects have gender action plans, and nearly all have gender mainstreaming strategies. The FOLUR midterm review found that countries that have shown leadership in gender mainstreaming, such as Mexico, Ghana, and Indonesia, have pursued participatory gender analysis, dedicated budgets, and accountability mechanisms for gender results (World Bank 2025). Nearly all GEF-6 and GEF-7 child projects (96 percent) include measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment as key food systems actors (see examples in **Error! Reference source not found.**). Notably, more than half of RFS child projects (53 percent) seek to increase women's participation in landscape and regional resources governance mechanisms. Many child projects also aim to strengthen women's capacities on the farm and in agri-food business, as well as to improve women's employment opportunities and access to finance in the agri-food sector (see Figure 10). Far fewer projects address women's ownership of land and livestock, access to inputs and resources, or decision-making related to food consumption or within the household/farm. Few projects (10 percent) also consider the potential unintended consequences of changing gender dynamics through project activities, underscoring a critical area for improvement. Stand-alone projects show similar trends in designing gender-responsive measures, although a somewhat larger proportion of projects aim to increase women's skills and employment in the agri-food sector, agricultural productivity and access to finance and markets.

Figure 10. Expected child project gender-related results



Source: Project documents.

Box 6: Examples of gender-responsive and inclusive measures in child projects' design

Delivering Sustainable Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits in West Africa through Good Governance, Correct Incentives and Innovation (GEF ID 9126, FAO). This CFI child project in **West Africa** aims to strengthen tenure and access rights for women fish workers, recognizing that insecure access limits their ability to benefit from project activities. By facilitating access to raw materials and land, the project seeks to ensure women can participate in fish handling and processing initiatives. Gender analysis identified these barriers as critical to address. The design explicitly links resource access to empowerment. As a result, land and materials are positioned as enablers of inclusion and economic benefit for women.

Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience in Nigeria (GEF ID 9143, UNDP). This RFS child project in **Nigeria** included a dedicated outcome for improved youth involvement and reduced gender disparities in agricultural production for enhanced food security. In partnership with the Women Farmers' Advancement Network (WOFAN), it sought to enhance access to finance, inputs, and training for women smallholders in rice and groundnut value chains. The project also promoted food and nutrition awareness and employed information and communication technology (ICT) tools developed by youth to support inclusive community monitoring.

Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand (GEF ID 10268, UNEP). This FOLUR child project in **Thailand** addresses gender inequalities with targeted support for women environmental defenders and indigenous groups. Guided by gender consultants, it includes comprehensive gender-sensitive policies, methodologies, and a tailored monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. A strong focus is placed on inclusive data collection and evidence-based policy responses to environmental and health threats. The design links gender empowerment to ecosystem resilience and sustainable rice value chain transformation. By embedding gender-responsive tools and safeguards, the project aims to generate long-term benefits for vulnerable women and girls.

Deforestation Free Commodity Supply Chains in the Peruvian Amazon (GEF ID 10307, UNDP). This FOLUR child project in **Peru** aims to promote inclusivity by supporting indigenous communities, particularly the Shawi in Alto Amazonas and the Awajun in Amazonas. The project focuses on incorporating integrated landscape management (ILM) into indigenous peoples' life plans and territorial development plans, with the dual goals of reducing deforestation and boosting sustainable livelihoods. Through partnerships with indigenous organizations, the project provides tailored technical assistance, supports the implementation of community life plans, and promotes deforestation-free production methods like sustainable cocoa cultivation.

50. **Entrenched operational and structural barriers continue to hamper gender-transformative and inclusive design.** Only 23 percent of food systems child projects included a gender expert during the design phase. Positive examples, like Indonesia's Strengthening Sustainability in Commodity and Food-Crop Value Chains, Land Restoration and Land Use Governance through Integrated Landscape Management for Multiple Benefits in Indonesia project (GEF ID 10238, UNDP), where a gender specialist was embedded from the outset, set a benchmark for replication in other countries. Interviews also underscored persistent challenges rooted in the typical project design process—consultant-led, followed by delayed team formation—which disconnects project intent from on-the-ground execution. This delay can limit the effectiveness of participatory, inclusive design. Interviewees shared examples where project teams re-did gender analysis or retrofitted gender actions.

51. Moreover, gender integration across government levels, agencies, and the public-private divide remains complex and inconsistently addressed. Without early alignment and institutional coordination, even well-conceived gender strategies risk marginalization, especially in male-dominated implementation teams and government agencies, as interviewees explained. Opportunities to engage women and other vulnerable groups have also been constrained at times by the choice of commodities and project design decisions, as the FOLUR MTR and case studies illustrated. In FOLUR, many child projects have worked on gender entry points outside of the focus commodities. In Peru, for example, women traditionally play a limited role in production of the shellfish and livestock that CFI-LA and the Regenerative Livestock Farming to Promote Sustainable Landscapes project (GEF ID 11221, FAO) chose to focus on, and neither project has specific activities designed to address barriers to women's participation in production.

3.1.3 Coherence of food systems interventions

52. **The internal coherence of food systems programs has increased over time.** In programs, internal coherence means consistency between child project and program design, including in terms of components and objectives, coverage of similar focal areas and landscapes, and results management systems (GEF IEO 2022). More child projects explicitly incorporated guidance and/or knowledge from the program level at the design phase in FOLUR (100 percent), compared to RFS (15 percent) and GGP (20 percent), based on the quality-at-entry analysis. Nearly all FOLUR child projects incorporated program-level guidance on results framework indicators (96 percent), project components (86 percent), and knowledge management (89 percent). FOLUR country government and Agency survey respondents from the 2022 Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to Address Drivers of Environmental Degradation widely agreed (88 percent) that they received guidance and information during design and start-up to align child project objectives and components with overall program-level objectives.

53. Interviewees widely agreed that the FSIP design process has best supported synergies between child projects and the global program. This was mainly due to the earlier approval of the global coordination project, which then supported countries in their child project formulation. For instance, the FSIP coordination project team developed briefing papers for designing child projects and facilitated country attendance at FOLUR regional commodity events, enabling in-

person design consultations. However, resource constraints have limited the depth of review and follow up by the coordination project team to ensure that child projects reflect program guidance, according to Agency interviews. Some activities are also being postponed until after CEO endorsement. For example, although transformation metrics are expected to be emphasized in the child projects—as explained in the PDF and underscored by the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel's (STAP) feedback (GEF STAP 2024)—the global coordination project team has not yet produced guidance on them.

54. **With regard to external coherence, GEF food systems interventions often planned to engage with other initiatives, but actual coordination at the child project level varied in approach and intensity.** While 77 percent of child projects planned for knowledge sharing or joint activities with other donor-funded initiatives, only 30 percent reported execution of such activities. In Tanzania, for example, the FOLUR project builds on learning from a World Bank project and intends to align with a Korean-funded sustainable rice initiative, while the FSIP Food Systems Transformation in Usangu Landscape project (GEF ID 11230, FAO) is seen as a pilot to inform a proposed $200 million Green Climate Fund initiative. The RFS program terminal evaluation also highlighted collaboration with major regional initiatives, such as the African Union Commission (AUC) Agenda 2063, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD's) Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Plan (CAADP), and International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF's) Stakeholder Approach to Risk-Informed and Evidence-Based Decision-Making (SHARED) decision hub.

55. Some GEF Agencies, such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Bank, have effectively linked GEF interventions with their own country programs and projects. Successful examples of collaboration among GEF Agencies were also identified in all three GEF-6 programs. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partnered with the World Wildlife Fund WWF under CFI-Latin America in Peru to launch a traceability app, while UNDP and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) collaborated to engage technicians trained under a previous IFC project to support with palm oil farmers in Indonesia under GGP's Reducing Deforestation from Commodity Production (GEF ID 9180, UNDP). In Ghana, the World Bank has implemented, and continues to implement, three consecutive projects across GEF-6 to GEF-8 food systems programs as part of the World Bank's broader operations in the cocoa sector. These efforts have included linking World Bank financing to the FOLUR project to address related environmental challenges associated with artisanal small-scale mining. The RFS Enhancing the Resilience of Agro-Ecological Systems project (GEF ID 9138, IFAD) in Malawi also benefited from coordination among IFAD, World Bank, and UNDP projects to build watershed development capacity among local institutions. Some of these instances of collaboration led to spillover effects, as discussed in section 3.3.1.

56. In crowded landscapes, some projects sought to carve out a niche, while maintaining light coordination with other actors through existing multistakeholder platforms to ensure distinct contributions. For instance, Peru's FOLUR project selected San Martin as its first intervention landscape but given the presence of many other donor initiatives focused on cocoa and coffee in the area, the FOLUR project is exploring gender as a niche entry point to ensure added value and

avoid duplication. This includes working with women producer networks, particularly by strengthening their representation at the regional level, and helping women to benefit from agroforestry concessions through targeted training and inclusion on land use titles. Meanwhile, some projects missed opportunities for greater collaboration with other development partners. The Indonesia CFI project's midterm review highlighted missed opportunities for stronger collaboration with similar programs supported by the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development. Similarly, the Ghana case study found that some major food sector development partners had negligible engagement with GEF interventions.

3.2 Performance and effectiveness

57. This chapter reviews the performance and results of four GEF food systems programs, three of which are completed or nearing completion (RFS, GGP, CFI), along with emerging findings from the ongoing FOLUR program. Following a brief overview of performance ratings, the analysis explores key dimensions of food systems transformation, including environmental and value chain outcomes, socioeconomic inclusion and gender, policy coherence and governance, and private sector contributions. It also considers innovations and the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, while broader insights into results from programmatic value addition and global commodity supply chains are addressed in the subsequent chapter.

Table 5. Share of GEF-6 projects with satisfactory performance ratings

Performance Ratings	GEF-6 Food Systems Projects	GEF-6 Portfolio
Outcome	89%	89%
Quality of implementation	100%	94%
Quality of execution	100%	91%
Quality of M&E implementation	100%	79%
Quality of M&E design	88%	89%
Likelihood of sustainability	75%	77%
Quality of terminal evaluation	78%	90%

Source: GEF IEO terminal evaluation dataset.
Note: "Quality of" ratings are based on a 6-point scale while "Likelihood of" rating is based on a 4-point scale.

3.2.1 *Overall performance*

58. **Almost all food systems child projects and programs with terminal evaluations have achieved satisfactory outcomes and performed similarly well on other dimensions to the overall GEF-6 portfolio.** Only nine of the 23 GEF-6 food systems child projects have ratings in the IEO terminal evaluation database, but these projects demonstrate good performance across all dimensions (see Table 5). Food systems projects performed comparably to the overall GEF-6 portfolio on outcomes and outperformed the broader GEF-6 average on quality of implementation and execution.[12] Review of additional terminal evaluations that did not have ratings also showed satisfactory performance among closed GEF-6 projects. A comprehensive self-assessment done by IFAD management of the RFS program found that its 12 country child

[12] With only one stand-alone food systems project from the comparator dataset closed, a valid comparison of the performance of child projects to stand-alone projects is not possible.

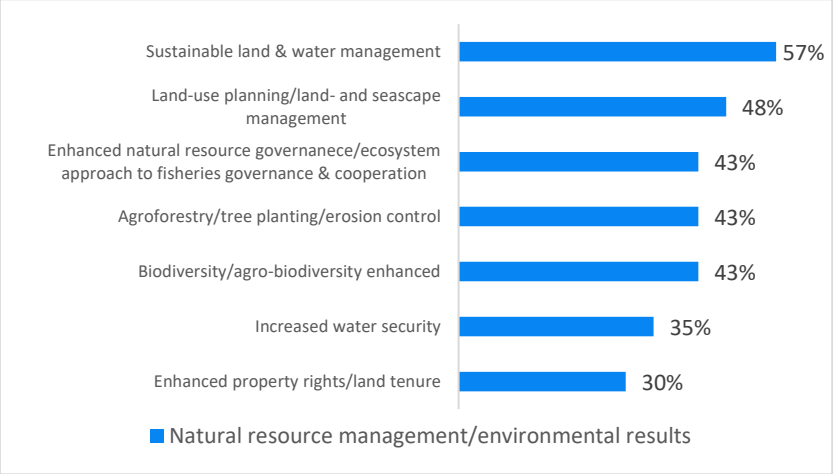
projects generally had overall satisfactory performance at completion, either documented through terminal evaluations or latest project implementation reports (IFAD 2024).

59. Sustainability and M&E design and implementation were, however, often only moderately satisfactory in RFS. Food systems child projects have shown satisfactory outcome achievement in areas such as policy support and implementation, governance, sustainable agricultural practices, support to farmer organizations and community development, land use and marine area management, and the protection or restoration of high-value ecosystem areas. Effectiveness ratings also generally improved from midterm to terminal evaluations, highlighting the slow but steady progress of performance in these complex initiatives.

3.2.2 Environmental results

60. **Food systems programs have reported delivery of substantial environmental benefits, particularly in improved land area management, biodiversity conservation, and GHG emissions mitigation.** Environmental outcomes were primarily reported across the GEF-6 programs, with emerging data from the GEF-7 FOLUR. [13] Across child projects, sustainable land and water management outcomes were the most commonly reported (in 57 percent of projects), followed by land use and landscape planning (see Figure 11). Child projects also showed positive outcomes in enhanced natural resources management (43 percent), reported most frequently in GGP and RFS child projects (see Annex 15 for results by program). Other contributions to different environmental outcomes reflect the nuances of individual program design. For example, agroforestry, increased water security, and land tenure results were primarily generated by the RFS, with agro-biodiversity also strong in the RFS due to

Figure 11. Environmental outcomes and outputs of child projects across GEF-6 and GEF-7 programs



Source: Project documents.

[13] The evaluation's implementation document review (IDR) applied a structured methodology to assess outputs and outcomes reported in terminal evaluations and other progress documents across the three major GEF-6 food systems programs (RFS, GGP, and CFI), the GEF-7 FOLUR program, and three stand-alone projects, using common indicators to ensure comparability. This report only summarizes and analyzes the results from the programs, as only one standalone project was sufficiently advanced to show some results. Of the 17 FOLUR projects reviewed, many were not mature enough to evaluate progress toward results. Some occasional early results were observed in country projects in Indonesia, China, Ukraine, Ghana, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Nigeria, Thailand, and Liberia. For an overview of FOLUR progress in the evaluation case study countries, see Annex 15.

support to child projects by the hub "Bioversity" partner. Similarly, CFI had meaningful contributions associated with the implementation of its ecosystems approach for fisheries.

61. Two closed programs, RFS and GGP, have made notable contributions to global environmental benefits:

(a) **RFS** achieved or exceeded targets in core indicators related to terrestrial protected areas (57 thousand ha, 100 percent), biodiversity landscapes (613 thousand ha, 144 percent), and GHG emissions avoided (88.4 million tCO_2, 137 percent), but fell short on land restored (350 thousand ha, 77 percent) and production landscapes under sustainable management (478 thousand ha, 78 percent).

(b) **GGP** exceeded its target for land benefiting from improved natural resource management and practices for biodiversity (28.4 million ha, 123 percent), and reported avoiding 29.4 million tCO_2 emissions program-wide.[14] Most gains in improved land management were reported in the GGP Production project in Paraguay (24 million ha) and Indonesia (3.2 million ha), and in the Brazil child project (81,099 ha). Major gains in terms of High Conservation Value/High Carbon Stock (HCV/HCS) area protection (846,672 ha preserved) were driven by peatland in Indonesia.

62. With implementation still at an early stage, FOLUR has reported limited global environmental benefits—typically well below 5 percent of end-of program targets, mainly concerning forest protection, land under improved practices, forest restoration, and GHG mitigation (FOLUR Impact Program 2024). While initial progress reflects groundwork in sustainable commodity value chains in some child projects, the scale remains nascent, and most FOLUR projects have not yet reached midterm where global environmental benefits are usually first reported.

63. **Despite this strong overall picture, contributions to environmental outcomes were uneven across child projects, and issues of attribution and data verification limited the credibility of some results claims.** While several child projects exceeded environmental outcome targets, others fell short due to overly ambitious or unclear objectives, delays in implementation, or a lack of clarity on how specific activities would lead to measurable environmental outcomes. In RFS, for example, achievements were uneven across countries, with inconsistencies between reported outcomes and funding scope. Issues of data quality and verification methods (e.g., lack of ground-truthing) also limited the credibility of some results (IFAD 2024). The GGP Transaction project and Generating Responsible Demand for Reduced-Deforestation Commodities project

[14] Source: GGP Workshop 2024, Indonesia. Due to different tools used to calculate data on CO_2 emission reductions for the GGP Production and Brazil projects, those projects report significantly higher greenhouse gas emission reductions in their own terminal evaluations (129 million tons of CO_2 emissions, or 217 percent of target, with Indonesia alone responsible for 110 million tons, in the Production project, and the Brazil project accounting for 39.3 million tons of CO_2 emissions). These figures were included in the Annex 15 global environmental benefits table.

(GEF ID 9182, WWF),[15] as well as several CFI projects, lacked global environmental benefits reporting (see also section 3.2.7 on private sector and section 3.2.9 on M&E). Only the CFI-Latin America child project has so far reported a global environmental benefits contribution—covering 973,000 ha of marine surface under spatial planning and 119,902 ha of marine and coastal areas under conservation. In contrast, the 2024 MTR for the Indonesia CFI project flagged weak progress toward global environmental benefits, citing unclear links between policy support and environmental outcomes, and no measurable behavioral change in fisheries.

64. Global environmental benefits were achieved through a combination of policy reforms and dialogue, land use and marine area planning and management, and local activities promoting sustainable agricultural practices and marketing standards. However, attribution challenges were common, particularly where outcomes relied on indirect or long-term changes, such as policy implementation and enforcement, the adoption of sustainable practices by extension services and farmers, or behavioral shifts at the community level. In the GGP Production project, core biodiversity management indicators were supported through policy reforms, regulatory tools, and improved mapping. Nonetheless, concerns remain due to institutional fragility, limited clarity around the link between activities and global environmental benefits outcomes (as in Paraguay), and weak post-project sustainability and uptake of improved agricultural practices.

3.2.3 Food production and value chain results

65. **GEF food systems programs have delivered important food production and value chain results, particularly by enhancing sustainable agricultural and fisheries productivity at the community level and directly supporting farmers' and fishers' access to markets.** While the scope and depth of results varied, all three GEF-6 programs contributed to more sustainable agricultural practices, enhanced market access, better land and marine resource management, and stronger engagement of farmers and fishers in governance processes. These local-level achievements, when combined with programs' and projects' policy engagement and upstream work along commodity supply chains, contributed significantly—and in synergy—to the environmental results reported above.

66. The **RFS** program delivered substantial results through integrated natural resource management (INRM), climate-smart agriculture, and enhanced market access. Sustainable land and water management (SLWM) practices—including erosion control, agroforestry, and conservation farming—were tailored to diverse ecosystems and local needs. Infrastructure improvements, notably for irrigation in Malawi, Niger, and Burkina Faso, enhanced climate resilience and food security. Participatory extension models—such as farmer field schools and lead farmer approaches—accelerated knowledge diffusion among others in Ethiopia, Ghana, and

[15] For example, the GGP Transactions terminal evaluation emphasized financial outcomes, noting $488.9 million in additional transactions (versus $400 million planned), but direct environmental targets were not considered relevant for these components.

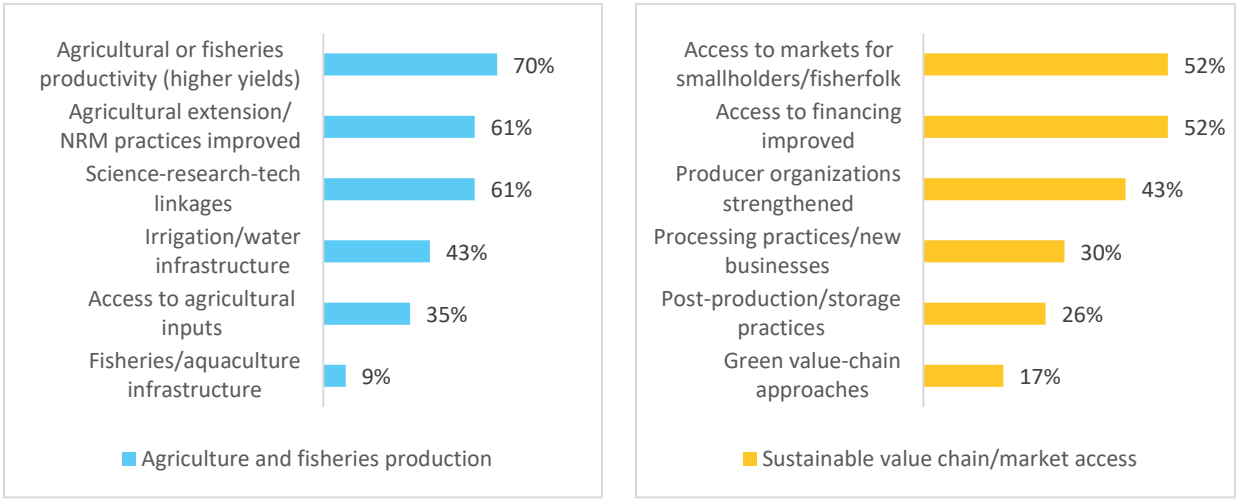
Malawi. The program also effectively supported value chains in Burundi, Eswatini, Nigeria, and Senegal, with attention to women's empowerment, processing, and marketing.

67. The **GGP** Production, Transaction, and Brazil child projects achieved important outcomes at the community level, although mostly moderate in scope and geared towards proof-of-concept. In Liberia, smallholder palm oil producers adopted more sustainable practices, while in Paraguay's Chaco region, ranchers improved grazing and traceability. In Indonesia, nearly 2,700 farmers were trained in sustainable intensification, with 89 percent adoption. The project supported protection of High Conservation Value (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) areas, alongside land certification and collective farmer action. In Brazil's Matopiba region, land-use planning, tenure regularization, and technical support for soy producers fostered zero-deforestation commitments and multistakeholder dialogue.

68. The **CFI** presented more varied outcomes. In West Africa, modest progress was made in cold chain and market access improvements in Cabo Verde, while Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal focused on preparatory work with fisheries cooperatives. In contrast, more tangible results emerged in Indonesia and Peru, reflecting more mature implementation. In Indonesia, traditional sasi marine governance was revitalized, empowering local fishers and women entrepreneurs. In Peru, support to fisher organizations helped strengthen co-management of marine protected areas and expand livelihood opportunities through processing and savings initiatives.

69. **These qualitative patterns are mirrored in program-wide project data.** Across all food systems programs and child projects, increased agricultural productivity was the most frequently reported outcome, cited by 70 percent of projects (Figure 12; see Annex 15 for program-level detail). RFS stood out, with 92 percent of its child projects reporting productivity gains, supported by significant cofinancing from IFAD, UNDP, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). GGP reported field-level productivity increases in half of its child projects. CFI showed fishery productivity improvements in only one child project (CFI-Latin America), though infrastructure upgrades were noted in another (The Coastal Fisheries Initiative Challenge Fund: Enabling Sustainable Private Sector Investment in Fisheries [GEF ID 9125, World Bank]). Improved extension and natural resource management (NRM) practices—especially SLWM—were reported in 61 percent of child projects, again led by RFS (92 percent), followed by GGP. Science and technology linkages were strengthened in 61 percent of child projects across all three programs. Irrigation and input access improvements were exclusive to RFS child projects.

Figure 12. Food production and value chain outcomes and outputs of child projects across GEF-6 programs



Source: Project documents.

70. Around half of child projects (52 percent) across the three GEF-6 programs reported improvements in farmers' and fishers' market access as a key value chain outcome, particularly in RFS and CFI. RFS led due to its dedicated value chain component, though the RFS terminal evaluation noted uneven performance across child projects on this indicator. In CFI, three of five child projects (Challenge Fund, Latin America, and Delivering Sustainable Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits in West Africa through Good Governance, Correct Incentives and Innovation [GEF ID 9126, FAO]) reported improved market access, with notable efforts in processing and small enterprise development in Latin America and West Africa. For GGP, only the Production project worked directly with farmers at this level but did so in several countries. Results on access to finance emerged in about half of child projects across all programs, with particular emphasis in GGP through its Transactions project. Forty-three percent of projects included outcomes on farmer producer organizations and were most common in RFS (62 percent), while post-production and processing results appeared in 30 percent and 26 percent of all child projects, respectively. Green value chains received some niche attention (17 percent), mainly present in RFS and GGP.

71. Although this section highlights several outcomes related to non-production value chain elements, most programs have devoted limited attention to these activities and outcomes, such as improving farmers' market access, storage facilities, price formation mechanisms, and rural roads (see also section 3.1.2). Approaches to meso-level outcomes have also varied widely, addressing different aspects and segments of vertical value chains (see section 3.2.7). Several programs placed greater emphasis on macro- and meso-level governance and policy issues, for instance by convening commodity stakeholders through multistakeholder platforms (MSPs), supporting regulatory reforms (e.g., commodity traceability), promoting coherence across governance levels, and expanding private sector participation and integration in areas such as product aggregation and rural finance. The corresponding findings are discussed in more detail in other sections of this chapter addressing policy and governance, private sector engagement, and innovation. There are also notable limitations in both the quantity and quality of outputs and

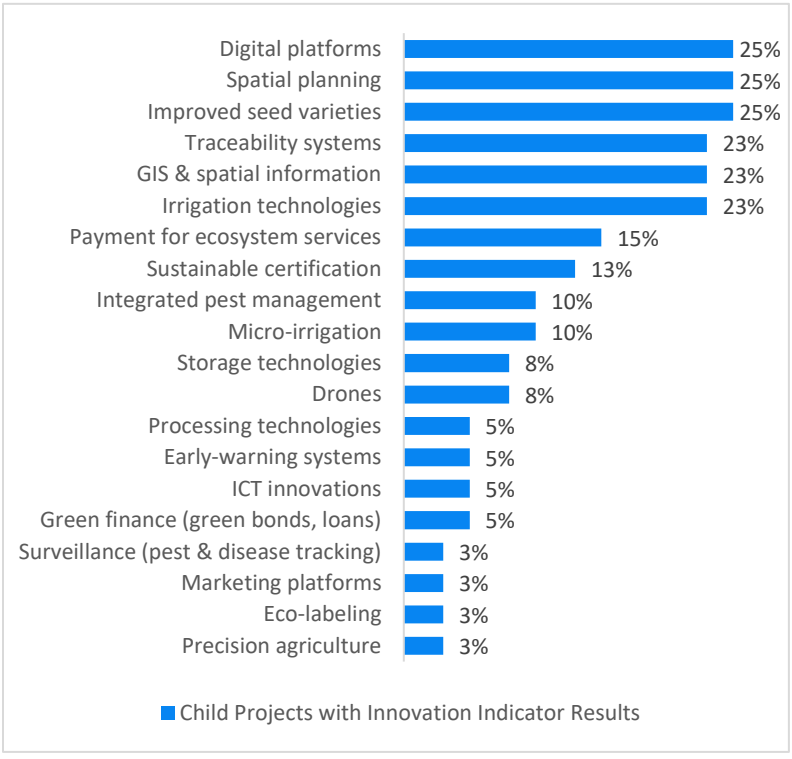
outcomes concerning non-production value chain elements, as neither the GEF nor most Agencies systematically monitor these aspects—particularly through qualitative indicators. Such indicators are often treated primarily as output or process measures (see section 3.2.9).

3.2.4 Innovations

72. **Innovation was a defining feature across GEF-6 and GEF-7 food systems programs, with nearly all projects adopting new technologies, practices, or governance models tailored to diverse landscapes, programs, and contexts.** Diverse innovation approaches are essential for food system transformation, requiring not only technological advances but also supportive governance models and systemic changes to achieve sustainability at scale (Herrero et al. 2020). Innovation took on distinct forms across GEF programs (see Annex 15). RFS was strongest on improved seeds, irrigation and micro-irrigation, geographic information systems (GIS) applications, and digital platforms. GGP stood out for its inclusion of digital platforms, GIS for spatial planning, sustainability certification, and traceability. CFI also introduced meaningful spatial planning and sustainable certification in marine contexts. FOLUR, still in early stages, prioritized jurisdictional planning, traceability, payments for ecosystem services, and digital platforms.

73. The most frequently adopted innovations across programs included digital platforms, spatial planning, improved seed varieties, GIS applications, and traceability systems—each captured through the results indicators of approximately a quarter of all projects (Figure 13). Digital innovations ranged from the RFS knowledge portal and Caribbean soil maps shared via the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS), to GGP support for Trase's[16] global supply-chain transparency platform and FOLUR Indonesia's national traceability dashboard and farmer land registration linked to sustainable oil palm cultivation (STDB). Spatial planning innovations were particularly prominent in FOLUR (e.g., integrated landscape

Figure 13. Frequency of innovations in child project result indicators across all programs



Source: Project documents.

[16] Trase is a not-for-profit initiative founded in 2015 by the Stockholm Environment Institute and Global Canopy to bring transparency to deforestation and agricultural commodity trade.

management [ILM] incorporated into Indonesia's district plans) and GGP (e.g., landscape planning and tenure mapping in Brazil's Matopiba region). GIS tools supported ILM and M&E across programs, such as in Paraguay, Ghana, and Indonesia. Agricultural technology innovation was strong in RFS. In Uganda's Karamoja region, high-yield, drought-resistant crops were piloted alongside demonstration gardens with drip irrigation. Burundi distributed improved seed varieties and established community seed banks. Burkina Faso integrated agroforestry seedlings with nursery training. Irrigation technologies (e.g., treadle pumps in Nigeria) and payments for ecosystem services (Ghana) also featured in some countries.

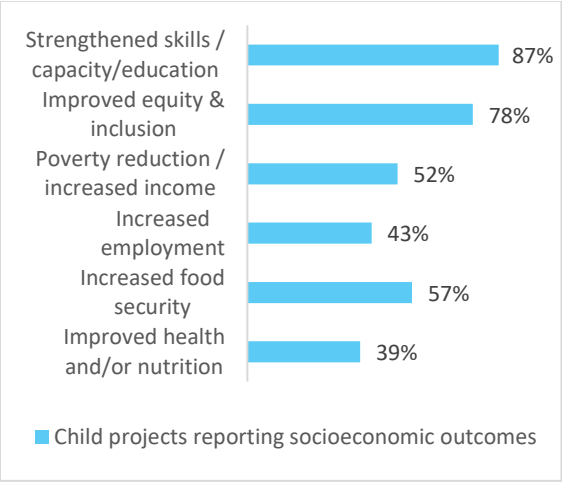
74. The country case studies further highlighted context-specific innovations. In Indonesia, CFI reactivated traditional sasi marine conservation systems, linking them with digital planning tools and women-led branding. Tanzania's village land use planning work helped formalize land tenure and introduced village-level governance structures for shared natural resources. Ghana advanced farmer-led ecological innovations and community finance (village savings and loan associations). In Peru, innovations included community-based mussel repopulation, women's cooperatives for crab processing, and village-based microfinance systems (UNICAs), which helped buffer households against COVID-era shocks.

75. Private sector involvement (see also section 3.2.7 on private sector) also played a role in some innovation efforts, such as when the GGP's Demand Project engaged over 130 firms through tools like the Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard and RESPOND environmental, social, and governance (ESG) benchmarking system, which promoted sustainable sourcing. Unilever's engagement in supply and demand sides as a global buyer and field collaborator was also cited as a good way to build up innovative models, such as the West Kalimantan oil-palm platform in Sintang District in Indonesia.

3.2.5 Socioeconomic, gender equity, and inclusion results

76. **Six main socioeconomic outcomes are reflected across GEF-6 food systems project reports.** The most common achievements were strengthened skills and capacities and gender equity and inclusion (Figure 14). All food systems programs performed strongly on these outcomes, especially GGP on skills and capacity and RFS and CFI on inclusion (see also performance by program in Annex 15). About half of child projects reported increased income/reduced poverty and/or increased employment, with variation by program. Notably, 80 percent of CFI projects reported both outcomes, while no GGP projects reported these outcomes since the program focused more on policy and governance. Among projects with terminal evaluations, the share was even higher, with 71 percent reporting increased income from

Figure 14. Socioeconomic outcomes reported by child projects across GEF-6 programs



Source: Project documents.

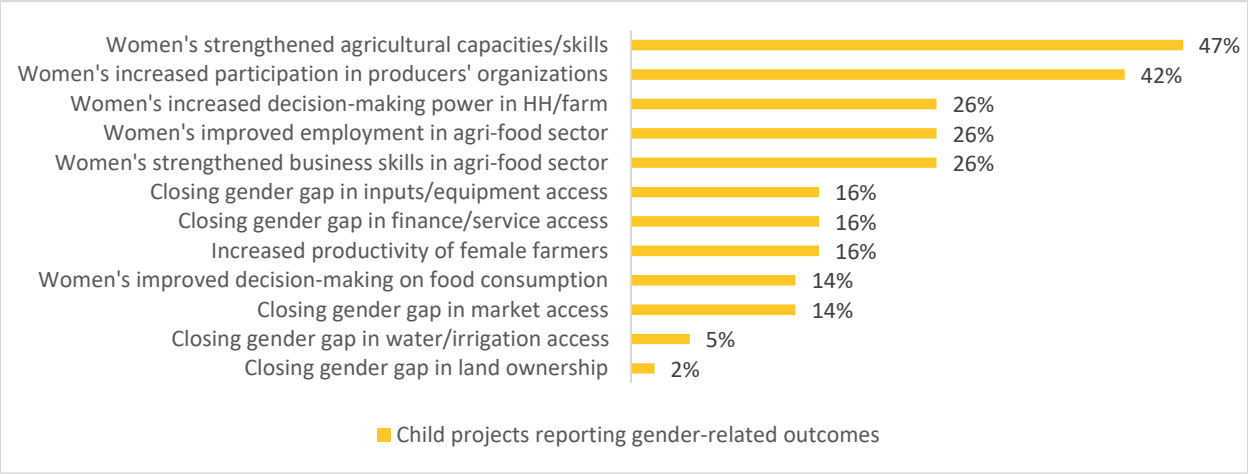
agricultural productivity. A higher proportion of closed projects also reported increased food security results (65 percent). Food security and nutrition results were most evident in RFS, given its focus on reducing food insecurity as a major driver of environmental degradation. Research has demonstrated that nutritional outcomes are closely intertwined with ecological, socioeconomic, and food system dynamics, underlining the importance of integrated interventions (Winkler et al. 2025).

77. **The number of people benefiting—and the proportion of those beneficiaries that are women—varies significantly across food systems programs.** With 4.7 million beneficiaries (111 percent of target), RFS far outpaced the other GEF-6 food systems programs. Importantly, 47 percent of beneficiaries were women, exceeding gender targets by 10 percentage points partly due to more inclusive outreach. In contrast, GGP reached a smaller number of beneficiaries, though the exact count is unclear due to inconsistencies in program- and project-level reporting. Program-level reporting indicates that more than 10,000 farmers, producers, and community members directly benefited from agricultural training and community conservation agreements.[17] The GGP Production project far exceeded its beneficiary target but was five percentage points below its gender target (achieving 37 percent female beneficiaries); the GGP Brazil project achieved only 18 percent female beneficiaries, well below the 50 percent planned. As of this writing, no consolidated results on beneficiaries were available for FOLUR. The program aims to reach 7.3 million people, with an intended female share of 49.6 percent. Beneficiary data for CFI remain vague and inconsistent across countries. While the CFI-Latin America project has shown tangible marine area impacts, gender-disaggregated and total beneficiary figures have not yet been systematically reported across the child projects as most terminal evaluations have not yet been submitted (see Annex 15 for details).

[17] In individual child project terminal evaluations, the GGP Production project reported reaching 10,496 beneficiaries (175 percent of its target) and the GGP Brazil project reported reaching 22,526 beneficiaries (66 percent of target).

78. **About half of GEF food systems projects report at least one gender-related outcome, with a focus on women's skills development and increased participation.** Overall, about half of projects (53 percent) reported at least one gender-related outcome (Figure 15). The highest rates of reporting (13 out of 13 child projects) were observed in RFS, reflecting the program's emphasis on gender mainstreaming since early in program design. Variable performance was found among GGP and CFI child projects, each with 60 percent of projects reporting gender results.[18] The most reported gender outcomes highlight a focus on women's skills development and increased participation. Nearly half of the projects (47 percent) reported strengthened capacities and technical skills among women in agriculture, while 42 percent documented women's increased participation in producer organizations.

Figure 15. Gender-related outcomes in child projects across GEF-6 programs



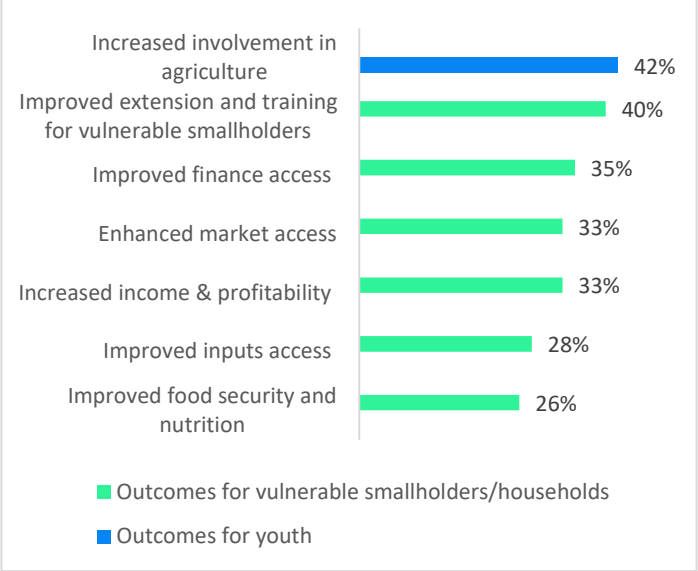
Source: Project documents.

79. Additional results included enhanced intrahousehold and on-farm decision-making roles, improved employment opportunities in the agri-food sector, and strengthened business acumen in value chains—each mentioned in roughly a quarter of the projects. In the RFS, for example, most child projects supported women through value chains and alternative income-earning activities that were mostly dominated by women, such as non-timber forest products and beekeeping. Seasonal cereal banks and participatory village savings and loan associations (VSLA) were an additional basis for women's empowerment, improved food security, and nutrition. Few food systems projects, however, have reported results related to closing the gender gap in women's access to agricultural inputs, finance, markets, and land—which represent many of the structural barriers to transformative gender action.

[18] Gender outcome reporting among FOLUR child projects was markedly lower, with only 12 percent of projects providing such data, although this is likely explained by the early stage of implementation of many of the FOLUR projects.

80. **More than half of projects report inclusion outcomes**, with a focus on youth involvement in agriculture and vulnerable smallholders (Figure 16). RFS and GGP projects performed well, with inclusion outcome reporting across all child projects. However, inclusion outcomes have been less explicitly reported in CFI (40 percent of projects), pointing to a broader challenge of capturing outcomes for socially or economically marginalized groups. The most frequently reported inclusion-related outcomes included increased youth involvement in agriculture (42 percent) and improved access to training and extension services for vulnerable smallholders (40 percent). Other outcomes—such as enhanced access to finance (35 percent), better market linkages (33 percent), and increased incomes and profitability (33 percent)—signal growing attention to socioeconomic equity within food systems interventions.

Figure 16. Inclusion outcomes reported by child projects across GEF-6 programs



Source: Project documents.

81. **Findings from field work show a mix of promising practices and ongoing challenges in achieving meaningful gender and inclusion outcomes, with project design and early integration of gender considerations playing a key role in shaping results.** Collectively, these examples reveal that while isolated successes are present, especially in projects with robust gender design and early integration, deeper structural changes and comprehensive equity outcomes remain inconsistent.

(a) In **Tanzania**, gender was actively mainstreamed across interventions, with women comprising roughly 40 percent of beneficiaries and engaging in training related to agriculture, goat rearing, business, and leadership in the RFS child project. These activities created tangible income opportunities for women and strengthened their role in production sectors. However, while participation and skill-building outcomes were well documented, there is limited evidence so far on deeper empowerment outcomes—such as shifts in decision-making authority or control over assets.

(b) **Indonesia** presents contrasting examples. In the GGP Production project, where gender was embedded from the design stage, outcomes were notably stronger. Approximately 39 percent of trained farmers were women, and the training scope included both agricultural and household financial management. Conversely, the GGP Demand project, which incorporated gender only during implementation, achieved limited results due to its reactive and fragmented approach.

(c) In **Ghana**, interventions under the RFS SLWM Project, Second Additional Financing (GEF ID 9340, World Bank), facilitated some economic gains for women, who began to earn income from project-supported activities. However, the project did not address pre-existing gender norms or intra-household power dynamics, resulting in reported tensions around income management. This highlights how economic empowerment alone, when not paired with social norm transformation or gender-sensitive design, may trigger unintended consequences.

(d) **Peru's** CFI project similarly illustrates both limitations and achievements. Women's participation was largely concentrated in the village-based microfinance systems' (UNICAs') savings and credit initiatives, with minimal engagement in fisheries or regional capacity-building efforts. Nonetheless, the project significantly exceeded its target for economic autonomy outcomes among women, with 393 women improving their conditions compared to a target of 129. This suggests that while broader gender inclusion objectives were not met, focused livelihood interventions—when well implemented—can still yield meaningful results for economic empowerment.

3.2.6 Policy implementation, coherence, and governance results

82. **GEF programs advanced policy and governance through commodity-focused platforms (GGP), integrated natural resource management and food systems planning (RFS), and ecosystem-based fisheries management (CFI), with FOLUR frequently building on these foundations in countries with program overlap.** Program-wide, GGP helped establish, strengthen, and/or support 22 commodity platforms and forums for targeted commodities in countries such as Indonesia, Liberia, Paraguay, and Brazil. GGP also supported 38 policies or action plans to enable reduced deforestation supply chains, 35 of which have been adopted or proposed for adoption (UNDP 2022b). RFS made strong contributions to integrated natural resource management (INRM), food security, and food systems policy in Africa's semi-arid and mountainous regions in general, rather than for specific commodities. RFS supported national and district-level planning frameworks in countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, and Niger, often linked to national food security strategies (e.g., 3N in Niger).

83. Multistakeholder platforms were used to foster integrated planning in RFS, such as the Nairobi Water Fund (Kenya) and district INRM committees in Ethiopia. CFI mainly focused on aligning fisheries governance, policies, and regulations with ecosystem-based management, with notable policy advances in Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal. Indonesia developed and partially implemented fisheries management plans, though local enforcement and fisher adoption were limited. In Peru, marine resource management plans and new protected areas were established, although lack of funding and regional coordination (e.g., with Ecuador) constrained broader outcomes. FOLUR is still in early stages but builds on these previous efforts, particularly in promoting jurisdictional planning, national and subnational policy coherence, and private sector integration.

84. **Despite being a frequent goal across GEF food systems programs, policy coherence was realized unevenly, with stronger results in RFS and GGP.** Policy coherence, or the alignment of goals, incentives, and actions across sectors and levels, was a recurring goal in policy and governance support interventions but was more often aspirational than fully realized. Across programs, coherence was supported through interministerial committees, cross-sectoral platforms, and vertically aligned planning processes. None of the reviewed projects explicitly identified policy misalignment as having influenced the achievement of environmental or co-benefit outcomes, suggesting that such constraints are likely underreported or unrecognized in reporting.

85. RFS showed the strongest policy coherence results: 10 of 13 child projects reported horizontal and vertical coherence, supported by national coordination committees and decentralized structures (see Annex 15, table 2). RFS also performed strongly on governance results, with 8 of 13 child projects achieving expected results, particularly through local resource management committees and planning bodies. Three of the five child projects each in GGP and CFI showed some coherence results. FOLUR projects have not yet reported policy coherence outcomes, largely due to their early implementation stage.

86. **Horizontal coherence—working toward aligned policy actions across government agencies and sectors—was often pursued through interministerial committees and shared policy frameworks.** While commonly referenced in project reports, few projects described national-level interministerial engagement as having yielded concrete positive outcomes. Exceptions included significant results that were achieved in Indonesia, where the GGP Production project supported the Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil Platform (FoKSBI) and the development of national and provincial palm oil action plans, with involvement from the agriculture, environment, and planning ministries. In Liberia, GGP support for the National Oil Palm Platform (NOPPOL) aligned partners around sustainability guidelines that followed the global Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. Paraguay's Platform for Sustainable Beef (MPCS) strengthened regulatory coherence and multistakeholder dialogue. CFI's Challenge Fund in Ecuador's Galápagos aligned fisheries and environmental institutions under a unified ocean governance approach. However, in several Latin American and West African countries, competing mandates and weak linkages across ministries hindered progress.

87. **Several instances of vertical coherence, marked by alignment between national policies and subnational implementation, were observed, particularly in RFS and GGP.** Projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Burundi [19] decentralized planning and agreed on memoranda of understanding (MoU) with local authorities that aligned national frameworks with district action. In Ghana, the Ministry of Environment led the RFS steering committee, fostering effective cross-agency coordination from the national down to the field level. GGP Indonesia's national palm oil policies were initially poorly implemented at the district level until the GGP Production project

[19] Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience [GEF ID 9135, UNDP]; Establishment of the Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund (UTNWF) [GEF ID 9139, IFAD]; Support for Sustainable Food Production and Enhancement of Food Security and Climate Resilience in Burundi's Highlands [GEF ID 9178, FAO]

supported the rollout of subnational action plans. Implementation of these plans reached 60 percent in the targeted provinces by 2023. Brazil's GGP project also achieved some success in institutionalizing the Produce, Conserve, and Include strategy at the state level and supporting land tenure regularization and local compacts in line with national policies.

88. **The strength and sustainability of policy coherence and governance outcomes across GEF programs were shaped by deeper enabling conditions, such as national alignment, institutional embedding, and scientific partnerships.** Programs that built on existing policy agendas—such as Ethiopia's decentralized INRM planning (RFS) or Liberia's national palm oil development strategy (GGP)—were better able to integrate new platforms and strategies. This alignment enhanced legitimacy and increased the likelihood of government participation. Similarly, multistakeholder platforms were more effective when they were embedded in existing institutions or supported by broader policy initiatives. For example, Indonesia's FoKSBI and related subnational planning mechanisms contributed to enhanced coherence by coordinating across ministries and provincial authorities. In Kenya and Burundi, RFS-supported planning bodies benefited from strong ties to government decentralization frameworks. GGP and FOLUR also promoted spatially explicit (jurisdictional), multilevel planning approaches—such as the MATOPIBA compact in Brazil or subnational palm oil plans in Indonesia—that created clearer entry points for coordination and coherence. Lastly, collaborations with research institutions and technical networks helped ground policy processes in evidence. In RFS, partnerships with national and regional research bodies and universities informed land and resource planning, while in Brazil's GGP project, coordination with the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) lent credibility to land-use mapping and monitoring efforts.

89. **Despite these positive examples, persistent political and institutional constraints consistently hindered policy effectiveness and coherence.** These constraints included:

(a) *Weak or ambiguous policy mandates and institutional fragility.* In several cases, governance platforms lacked formal legal status or institutional embedding, which weakened their ability to influence decision making. For example, Paraguay's Platform for Sustainable Beef—while inclusive and widely recognized—lacked a clear legal identity and formal policy mandate, making it vulnerable to dissolution after the Production project closure. Similarly, in Liberia, although the National Oil Palm Platform (NOPPOL) facilitated alignment during the Production project, weak ministerial coordination and limited institutional support meant that policy gains were difficult to sustain or enforce. Lessons for successful policy implementation were learned for Indonesia (Box 7).

(b) *Absence of political economy and risk analysis.* A critical weakness across programs was the insufficient attention to political economy dynamics, as noted earlier in section 3.1. Many interventions assumed that coordination would lead to alignment, without adequately assessing the power asymmetries, institutional resistance, or economic interests that shape real-world policy outcomes. For example, in Latin America, agricultural and environmental mandates often reside in separate

ministries with conflicting priorities, yet projects rarely engaged these dynamics systematically. In FOLUR, staff interviews noted that in some countries, project positioning within the government was determined more by political expediency than strategic alignment, resulting in coordination gaps and bureaucratic competition. Across all programs, the lack of early risk analysis led to overly optimistic assumptions about stakeholder cooperation, underestimating the resistance of entrenched interests or the capacity shortfalls in target institutions. Research confirms that "food systems transformation requires strategic attention to political economy" and that technical interventions, regardless of their quality, cannot achieve transformation without explicit attention to power structures, competing interests, and institutional dynamics (Resnick and Swinnen 2023).

(c) *Fragmentation across ministries and turf conflicts.* Interministerial competition slowed progress in many countries, particularly in Brazil, Paraguay, and parts of West Africa. “Turf wars” emerged when multiple ministries claimed overlapping mandates for land use, agriculture, or environmental planning. These conflicts often surfaced during project inception—suggesting insufficient participatory engagement during project design (see also section 0)—and were not always resolved during implementation, particularly when no senior coordination body existed.

(d) *Disconnection across the policy cycle*. Many projects lacked mechanisms to link implementation feedback to policy adaptation. Even where multistakeholder platforms or technical committees were active, their role in monitoring, learning, and revising strategies was limited. In RFS, for example, local planning bodies sometimes operated in isolation from national ministries, creating a disconnect between grassroots priorities and formal policy processes.

(e) *Institutional turnover and political transitions.* The sustainability of policy coherence was often undermined by changes in political leadership. In Brazil, shifts in federal and state administrations disrupted continuity in GGP-supported platforms, while in Indonesia, staff turnover weakened institutional memory around the National Action Plan for Sustainable Palm Oil. In the absence of durable institutional frameworks, policy commitments often stalled or reversed with leadership changes.

Box 7. Blueprint for successful policy implementation in Indonesia

Based on the GGP Indonesia experience, a blueprint for effective policy design and implementation emerged:

- A win-win policy proposal, developed through a participatory process that responds to genuine demand
- Strategic communication to build and sustain momentum
- Targeted advocacy and stakeholder engagement at all levels
- Timely communication to support policy passage through political and bureaucratic systems
- Clear action plans linked to policies to guide implementation
- A visible and trusted policy champion to foster credibility and facilitate decision making
- Tailored capacity-building and planning support to prepare stakeholders for implementation and enable structured dialogue
- Adequate technical assistance for policy formulation and multi-stakeholder engagement at all stages.

Source: Terminal evaluation of GGP Production project.

3.2.7 Private sector engagement and contributions

90. **Across GEF food systems programs, the role of the private sector has varied significantly in ambition, form, and scale—from globally connected commodity supply chain strategies to localized market engagement**. The GGP had a strong private sector focus from the outset, most visibly through the GGP Transactions and Demand projects. The program also intended to build connections between local, national, and, to some extent, global public-private actors through its Production and Brazil projects. In comparison, FOLUR has a broad mandate with explicit objectives for private sector engagement—particularly through its global value chain and sustainable finance work. Building on GGP experience, FOLUR retained IFC, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI) as program partners at global and national levels, with emphasis on sustainable finance and systems alignment. In CFI, private sector engagement was supported mainly through the World Bank-led Challenge Fund project, which offered technical assistance to mobilize private sector investments.[20] Meanwhile, RFS targeted the private sector primarily through improved farmer and other beneficiary access to value chains, often focused on non-timber forest products, horticulture, and women's entrepreneurship, and mobilizing private finance for environmental goals. While RFS introduced green value chain concepts, implementation remained limited beyond initial trainings. In summary, GGP and FOLUR have emphasized private sector engagement across commodity value chains—including market systems and finance—while CFI and RFS focused more on early-stage value chain development, local investment opportunities, and connecting producer or community organizations, especially women-led, to domestic markets.

[20] Child projects in Latin America, West Africa, and Indonesia also contributed, including through a $2 million grant to Conservation International's Blue Abadi Fund and through aiming to generate market partnerships.

91. Building on earlier food systems programs, the FSIP aims to catalyze private sector co-investment through de-risking tools like blended finance, with a focus on strengthening SMEs and farmer organizations by improving access to sustainable finance and markets. The program plans to support policy reforms that promote green investments and encourage private sector engagement in multistakeholder platforms. FSIP also aims to engage private firms in developing innovations such as digital tools, climate-smart technologies, and sustainable inputs. Detailed mechanisms and partners are yet to be finalized but build to some extent on GGP and FOLUR experience, such as through engaging WBCSD.

92. **A diverse array of private sector actors spanning different levels and sizes has contributed to GEF food systems interventions and results through varied forms of participation.** Private sector engagement ranges from global corporations to community-based microenterprises. GGP and FOLUR focused on engaging large-scale firms, given their potential to shift commodity procurement, demand, and financing practices across global supply chains. Multinationals such as China Oil and Foodstuffs Corporation (COFCO), Unilever, McDonald's, Nestlé, and Louis Dreyfus participated in supply chain reform, traceability pilots, and sustainability platforms like the Consumer Goods Forum. In Indonesia, for example, national-level companies—including Wilmar, Musim Mas, and PT ANJ—have supported production and certification efforts through platforms like FoKSBI. At subnational levels, platforms such as district forums in Indonesia and the MATOPIBA Coalition in Brazil enabled regional coordination. RFS and CFI, by contrast, often worked with local-level actors, such as micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (e.g., small processors), women-led enterprises and producer cooperatives, such as those involved in community fisheries in Indonesia and Peru or beef production in Paraguay. These actors are essential for inclusive development and often face investment barriers and weak market linkages.

93. Private actors have played diverse roles and been engaged through diverse strategies. For example, **value chain operators** (e.g., Wilmar, COFCO, Neuland) participated in production, sourcing, and certification efforts across palm oil, soy, beef, cocoa, and fisheries. Retailers like Super Indo and IKEA/Hero Group were targeted on the demand side, resulting in the launch of a sustainable cooking oil line by Super Indo and encouragement to use sustainable cooking oil in IKEA/Hero Group restaurants (WWF 2021). Blended finance models—especially under GGP Transactions and FOLUR—helped leverage private co-investment (e.g., for soy in Brazil). IFC's dual advisory-investment role, notably in beef and soy, enabled it to mobilize significant private finance.

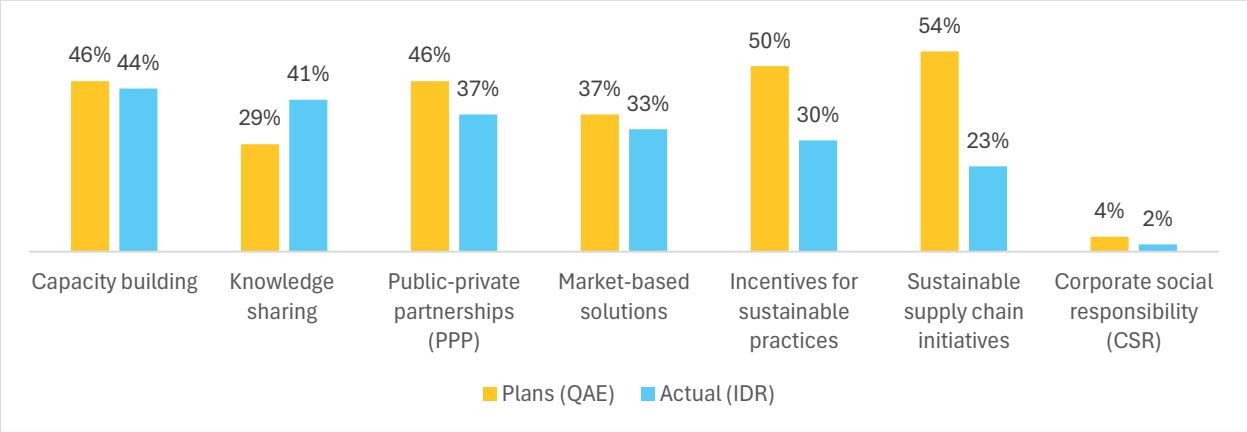
94. Private sector actors were also engaged in national or regional **coordination platforms or forums**, often to co-develop sustainability visions and standards. Platforms like FoKSBI (Indonesia), MATOPIBA Coalition (Brazil), and beef roundtables in Paraguay enabled joint planning, policy alignment, and sector dialogue. Projects also supported jurisdictional planning (e.g., Sintang, Indonesia) and national dialogues to embed sustainability goals, although enforcement and institutional follow-through varied.

95. **Financial institutions** such as Cooperative and Rural Development Bank Tanzania and Bank Negara Indonesia supported or piloted ESG-linked lending and investment models, often with technical assistance from GEF projects. Under GGP, UNEP-FI strengthened awareness of deforestation risks, internal guidelines and policies, capacity to use risk management tools, and financial product offerings for zero-deforestation commodity production among around 200 financial institutions. Training materials were deeply adapted to national needs and through intensive support, significant outcomes were achieved in countries like Paraguay. This work has continued under FOLUR, although in a more limited way (see box 9). Also under GGP, WWF Singapore led efforts to build the capacity of financial institutions to influence palm oil buyer companies toward deforestation-free portfolios. This included workshops and bilateral training sessions that showcased how leading asset managers are integrating deforestation considerations into their investment strategies.

96. **Strategic partners**—including Proforest, Agrosatélite, Smithsonian, and Incabiotec—helped develop traceability tools, mapping systems, and investment cases to guide private decisions and public policy alignment. For example, the GGP Demand project developed widely used tools—such as the Soy Toolkit, Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard, and RESPOND ESG benchmarking—that helped companies and investors shift internal policies. Trase further advanced soy supply chain transparency.

97. **GEF programs have employed a range of strategies to engage the private sector, with capacity building, knowledge sharing, and public-private partnerships (PPPs) among the most used.** Overall, 63 percent of projects reported some form of private sector engagement—primarily through capacity development, knowledge sharing, and PPPs (Figure 17). Incentives for sustainable practices and market-based solutions were planned in 30 percent of projects, typically involving input subsidies and improved market access for farmers. However, actual implementation has thus far fallen short of expectations, reflecting in part FOLUR's early implementation stage.

Figure 17. Strategies for GEF programs to engage the private sector (plans and actual)



Source: Project documents.

98. Private sector engagement strategies varied by program: GGP consistently employed sustainable supply chain models (100 percent), CFI prioritized PPPs (80 percent), RFS focused on capacity building (46 percent), and FOLUR relied most on incentives (64 percent). Examples include FOLUR Papua New Guinea's collaboration with the Cocoa Board and milling firms to train smallholders, and market-oriented partnerships in RFS countries such as Eswatini and Niger that involved input suppliers, processors, and financial institutions. In Uganda and Nigeria, RFS child projects[21] brokered value chain agreements and contract farming models. FOLUR's Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand project (GEF ID 10268, UNEP) attracted private actors through blended green loans and incentive funds, while in China, FOLUR's Innovative Transformation of China's Food Production Systems and Agroecological Landscapes project (GEF ID 10246, FAO) secured private partners to contribute to on-farm demonstrations promoting sustainable practices. These experiences illustrate that, when backed by credible tools, strong platforms, and financial innovation, private sector engagement can deliver meaningful environmental outcomes (see box 8).

Box 8. Notable private sector results

In Latin America, the IFC-led GGP Transactions Project showed strong firm-level results. In Brazil, collaboration with COFCO and Louis Dreyfus helped mobilize close to half a billion US dollars for sustainable soy finance, backed by traceability systems, degraded land suitability maps, and trade finance pilots. In Paraguay, partnerships with Minerva Foods and local producer organizations led to the development of a national sustainability seal and the rollout of monitoring tools like SAGAS and Asist-Chaco, aimed at deforestation-free beef intensification.

In Indonesia, the GGP Production project enabled national and district-level platforms engaging companies like Unilever, Wilmar, and Musim Mas to support sustainable palm oil practices and land-use planning, while the GGP Demand project supported the launch of sustainable palm oil sourcing guidelines for downstream companies like retailers, hotels, and restaurants. The FOLUR project builds on this foundation through co-investment mechanisms and sustainability strategies in palm oil, cocoa, and coffee sectors.

Through the GGP Transactions project, IFC adapted its Global Trade Supplier Finance (GTSF) tool for the soy sector, linking financing to sustainability standards like the Round Table on Responsible Soy and Proterra in Brazil. It secured interest from six companies, including a $30 million investment in Barry Callebaut to support compliant sourcing of soy, sugar, and dairy. IFC developed customized models of the tool for the remaining five companies, which focus on animal nutrition, aquafeed, food production, food processing, and coffee.

The CFI Challenge Fund, while not mobilizing significant investment during its lifetime, succeeded in preparing 26 investment-ready cases across six countries. This work laid an early foundation for sustainable fisheries finance in regions like Indonesia, Peru, and Ecuador. (See Annex 15 for more details on private sector results by program.)

[21] Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Karamoja Sub Region (GEF ID 9137, UNDP); Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience in Nigeria (GEF ID 9143, UNDP)

99. **Despite these advances, scaling and transformation have been hindered by insufficient enabling conditions, a lack of long-term commitments, and an unclear business case for sustainability—especially for global buyers and investors whose decisions shape entire supply chains.** Projects faced significant barriers in the enabling environment that were beyond their direct influence, such as regulatory uncertainty, limited readiness among financial institutions, and fragmented value chains. For example, while GGP Demand tools were widely adopted, they rarely translated into shifts in sourcing and procurement. In Brazil and Paraguay, traceability and sustainability uptake in the GGP Production and Transactions projects lagged due to weak producer incentives and limited regulatory pressure. In Paraguay, for instance, scaling the project outcomes is constrained by the lack of strong market demand for sustainable Paraguayan beef, combined with continued, legally allowed land clearing in the Chaco and lack of legislative enforcement. In Brazil, land clearing remained more profitable than restoration, despite sustainability pilots. Engagement with major buyers in Europe, the United States, and China yielded few fundamental sourcing reforms.[22] Strengthening private sector engagement in equitable and sustainable food systems requires effectively aligning political economy factors—such as investor influence, transparency, and supply chain accountability—with regulatory, governance, and market reforms at both national and global levels (Clapp 2023).

100. Market and finance dynamics also limited private sector successes. For example, in Paraguay and Brazil, private sector actors in soy and beef continue to have access to commercial finance that does not have strong ESG requirements, which makes using finance as a lever for systemic change challenging. Even with incentives, ESG finance is struggling to compete with conventional lending terms.[23] In other countries, strong private sector engagement was limited by a fragile financial sector (Liberia) or concerns about differences in public and private sector priorities and a lack of established institutional relationships to facilitate collaboration and trust-building (Peru).

101. **GEF programs have mobilized notable levels of cofinancing and parallel finance from the private sector, particularly through IFC.** GGP demonstrated strong results in mobilizing private sector financing, particularly through IFC and the Transactions project. IFC facilitated nearly $489 million in deforestation-free finance in Brazil's soy sector, including a $288 million COFCO pre-financing facility and a $200 million green loan to Louis Dreyfus. These achievements were grounded in direct client transactions, technical assistance, and targeted risk mitigation. FOLUR initially committed to leverage a total of $2.7 billion, including $405 million from the private sector. Achievements so far include $507 million mobilized by IFC through the FOLUR

[22] These findings are supported by a growing body of evidence showing that short-term, market-driven food systems and corporate dominance are shaping incentives, practices, and outcomes across supply chains—further reinforcing unsustainable practices and pollution externalities in the absence of adequate governance (Winkler et al. 2025).

[23] According to the literature, systemic innovations in financial instruments and disclosure requirements are needed to better align private sector contributions to global environmental benefits with stronger regulation, transparency, and accountability—helping to shift current market incentives away from short-term profits toward the sustainable transformation of food systems that promotes sustainability, equity, and health (Winkler et al. 2025).

global coordination project[24] for 11 livestock-related investments that were facilitated by the FOLUR-funded Practices for Sustainable Investment in Livestock Operations in 2022, much of it in Latin America. IFC (with FOLUR funds) has also supported the Government of Brazil's new Brazil Sustainable Land Project, which is expected to mobilize another $50 million, and IFC's FOLUR-funded Nespresso advisory services in Uganda generated another $4.5 million private loan. WBCSD has also mobilized $7.2 million from agro-traders in Brazil.

102. RFS fell short of expectations in private sector mobilization. While there were some contributions—such as $1.21 million from Coca-Cola Foundation, Frigoken, and a U.S. donor to the Kenya Water Fund under the RFS Kenya project—this was well below the $7.5 million target. Much of the private sector contribution was earmarked or in-kind and directly disbursed to project activities. Additional attempts under RFS child projects led by the Alliance for a Green Revolution (AGRA) (e.g., in Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Malawi) involved small grants to stimulate private sector engagement, but outcomes remain unclear. CFI presents the fewest available data. While there was potential for mobilizing finance through the Challenge Fund and a $2 million GEF contribution to Conservation International's Blue Abadi Fund in Indonesia, no concrete investment outcomes have been documented to date. Key informant interviews highlighted that there was little information on the profitability of investments identified in the prospectuses prepared under CFI, and that limited attention was given to whether there would be sufficient demand for the products and services being developed.

3.2.8 Synergies between food systems dimensions

103. **Across the GEF food systems programs, synergies between food production—particularly agricultural and fisheries productivity—and environmental sustainability emerged as the most evident and recurring pattern.** These linkages were visible in all programs, such as where sustainable land or marine management was combined with improvements in productivity, through better farming or fishing practices. However, synergies between environmental objectives and enhanced incomes or broader food security and nutrition goals were less consistently demonstrated and often remained aspirational or under-monitored.

104. In RFS, several country projects (e.g., Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria) linked climate-smart agriculture and land management to improved productivity and, in some cases, market access and income diversification. The GGP Production project activities in Indonesia and Paraguay also illustrated how sustainable agricultural practices could align with value chain improvements and enhanced producer incentives. The CFI Indonesia project demonstrated synergies between customary marine governance (sasi) and local economic empowerment—particularly for women—through branded enterprises and livelihood diversification. Synergies often hinged on implementation-level policy coherence—i.e., effective governance mechanisms that integrated sustainability into planning and resource use. Multistakeholder platforms and governance

[24] FOLUR Global Knowledge to Action Platform to Support Transformational Shifts in Food and Land Use Systems (GEF ID 10306, World Bank)

arrangements supported coordination, but their impact depended on being well resourced and institutionally embedded.

105. Still, trade-offs and their management were rarely identified or monitored systematically. There was little evidence and robust analysis, for example, of how short-term beneficiary income or agricultural input support might affect long-term environmental integrity, or of how competing objectives were balanced in decision making, at community as well as policy level. In addition, few projects tracked whether incentives such as conditional input provision or support for income generation actually resulted in durable behavioral shifts or structural transformation or included the private sector to facilitate the shifts.

106. **Several enabling and limiting factors that are closely related to the degree to which GEF food systems programs were able to generate and sustain synergies across environmental, socioeconomic, and other food system outcomes emerged from country case studies and interviews.** They offer both explanatory factors for where synergies did emerge—particularly between productivity and sustainability—and insights into why such synergies often remained partial or undersustained.

107. The Indonesia country case study underscored a key constraint to operationalizing synergies: overly ambitious, multi-objective designs without adequate time, decentralization, or operational realism. When projects tried to simultaneously pursue environmental, socioeconomic, and market transformation goals—especially across diverse geographies and value chains—implementation fell short, weakening the integrated outcomes synergies depend on. The political and institutional trade-offs governments can face between expanding food security and environmental protection were especially highlighted in the Indonesia and Tanzania case studies. Where national goals prioritized staple food sovereignty or agricultural expansion, projects struggled to achieve environmental gains. Structural trade-offs, if not proactively addressed and navigated, can block or reverse synergies.

108. Case studies in Tanzania, Ghana, and Indonesia pointed to bottom-up approaches as an important enabling factor to operationalize synergies, including farmer- and community-driven approaches, participatory extension, and participatory adoption of locally relevant technologies. These factors supported win-wins between productivity, income, and environmental stewardship—although sustainability and scaling were not always ensured due to inadequate long-term support. Across all programs, the most durable synergies were observed when environmental objectives were directly tied to effective income generation or food security benefits, backed by ongoing policy incentives and market engagement. Examples from Peru, Ethiopia, and Nigeria show that when projects backed technical innovations and good governance—with aligned incentives and institutional support—synergies had greater traction. Sustained behavioral change and long-term adoption of conservation-linked practices—both critical to lasting synergies—proved particularly difficult to achieve. CFI Indonesia's limited shift in destructive fishing practices illustrates this gap. Trust, committed local actors, and time-intensive engagement were all seen as preconditions for behavioral shifts that support synergies across ecological and socioeconomic dimensions.

3.2.9 Program monitoring and reporting

109. **Across the GEF food systems programs, performance metrics have often fallen short of capturing the complex, multidimensional nature of transformational change.** Most annual monitoring efforts by child projects and coordination projects have remained output-focused, tracking easily quantifiable elements such as events or participation, while offering little insight into deeper behavioral, institutional, or systemic shifts. Although midterm reviews and terminal evaluations provide more quantitative and qualitative analysis, the lack of standardized formats and of a set of common indicators limits the ability of the program Lead Agency and the GEF to aggregate findings across countries and programs. This reflects a broader structural challenge in the GEF's corporate target setting, which relies heavily on a narrow set of core indicators for child projects and programs—like global environmental benefits and cofinancing—that are weak proxies for the intricacy of integrated food systems outcomes. Moreover, child projects by different implementing agencies use their own monitoring systems and indicators, even as projects under the same program, creating the possibility of further misalignment with GEF priorities—as illustrated by the IFC's difficulties in GGP aligning its reporting with the GEF's framework. The RFS program made a deliberate effort to overcome these challenges by developing a harmonized monitoring and assessment system, introducing shared indicators and tools to track and assess resilience and biodiversity. Yet uptake was limited, in part due to inadequate technical support and in part because many child projects and their implementing agencies preferred to retain their original metrics as identified in their logical frameworks.

110. The challenge of measuring food systems transformation extends beyond GEF programs (Winkler et al. 2025), reflecting a wider recognition that traditional monitoring frameworks inadequately capture the complex, multidimensional nature of systems change, including behavioral, institutional, and political shifts. The GEF experience further highlights the need for more sophisticated and adaptive metrics to track transformation pathways, introduced early in program design and supported by ongoing technical assistance to ensure meaningful tracking of progress. In the absence of such alignment, key dimensions of food systems transformation—such as policy implementation, value chain development, and behavioral change—remain poorly monitored, especially across programs. To address these gaps, among other efforts, the GEF Secretariat has developed guidance for evaluating programs and is now developing a new program monitoring template aimed at moving beyond basic output tracking to more effectively capture qualitative outcomes, knowledge contributions, and institutional change.

3.2.10 Sustainability of results

111. **Given the relatively early stage of many food systems child projects, there is little evidence of sustained food systems results, though some factors affecting sustainability are beginning to emerge**. Only eight completed projects with terminal evaluations have sustainability ratings. [25] Due to the limited sample size, the evaluation could not draw generalizable findings across the wider portfolio. According to the RFS terminal evaluation, at

[25] These projects are: GEF IDs 9124, 9135, 9137, 9143, 9179, 9180, 9182, and 9617.

least four child projects were able to sustain and scale activities through confirmed follow-up projects. The hub project's sustainability is supported by the involvement of well-established agencies that are likely to continue many of the activities. The sustainability of the knowledge, communication, and community-of-practice platform is uncertain, as no partners have committed to maintaining it without additional resources.

112. Across the eight completed child projects, financial sustainability at completion was supported by cofinancing arrangements that helped ensure post-project continuity. For example, the Generating Responsible Demand for Reduced-Deforestation Commodities project (GEF ID 9182, WWF) supported the development and expansion of the Trase online platform to provide comprehensive data and analytics on supply chain transparency. At project completion, Trase secured 96 percent of the funding required to sustain operations as a result of the success of this platform and catalytic initiative.

113. Institutional sustainability was demonstrated through strong ownership by executing partners and the integration of project outcomes into existing systems. In the case of the project Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Karamoja Sub Region (GEF ID 9137, UNDP), sustainability was reinforced through the integration of project implementation in the national implementation modality and active involvement of government actors at both national and subnational levels. Environmental sustainability was promoted through the adoption of sustainable practices such as climate-smart agriculture, sustainable fishing practices, and digital monitoring systems, which led to achievement of global environmental benefits like carbon sequestration and land restoration.

114. Despite these contributing factors, recurring challenges were identified that may threaten long-term sustainability. Financial sustainability was often undermined by continued reliance on donor funding and the absence of formal financial models. Sociopolitical risks included complex political climate, high turnover of government officials, and uncertainties around ownership and control after project closure. For example, in the project Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience in Nigeria (GEF ID 9143, UNDP), the terminal evaluation raised concerns about the operational sustainability of agricultural centers due to unclear ownership arrangement, which could potentially limit access for smallholder farmers.

3.3 A Programmatic approach to Food systems: added value, costs, and governance

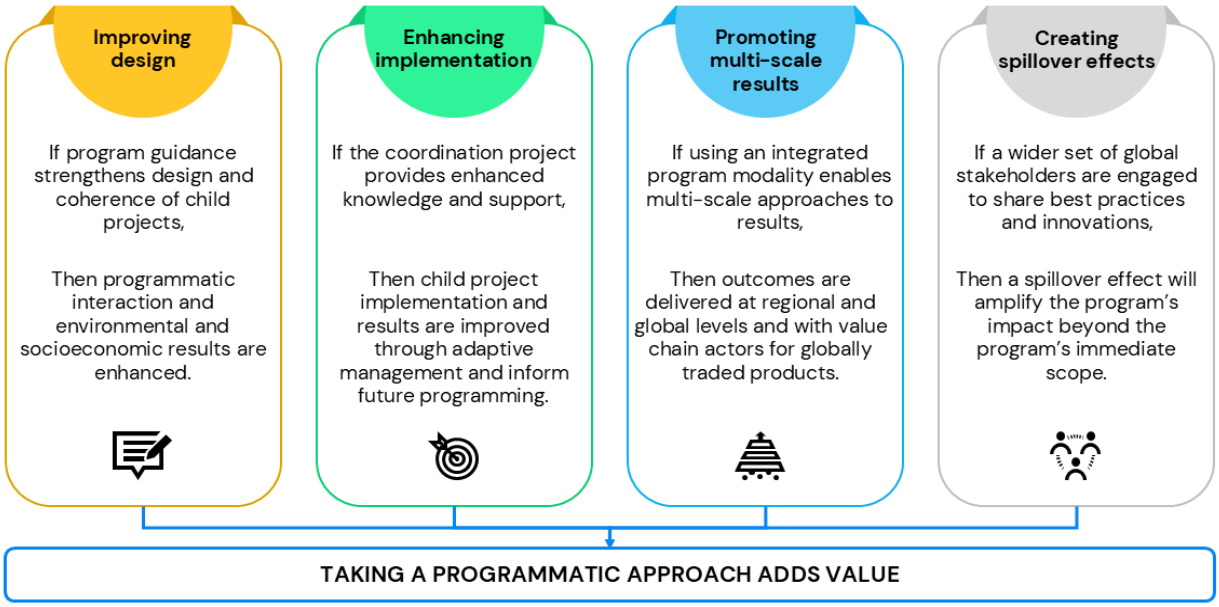
3.3.1 Added value of an integrated program approach

115. This evaluation considers the added value of taking a programmatic approach—including through integrated programs—to transforming food systems, compared to non-programmatic (i.e., stand-alone) project interventions. Core to the integrated program modality is the relationship between country or thematic child projects and a coordination project led by a Lead Agency, which focuses on program coordination and governance. In the GEF, program-level coordination is posited as critical for advancing transformative change, and ensuring coherence

and consistency, so that the whole of each program is greater than the sum of its parts (GEF 2022).

116. To assess this added value, the evaluation developed a theoretical framework drawing on program documents[26] and the GEF's own guidance around program additionality and evaluating programs, as well as expert peer reviewer input (see Figure 18). This framework envisions food systems programs' potential added value through four main pathways, as shown in Figure 18, while recognizing that not all GEF food systems programs have equally emphasized each pathway. The findings below analyze programmatic value addition according to each pathway.

Figure 18. Programmatic Value Addition Framework



Source: Evaluation team.

3.3.2 Improving design

117. **Coordination project support has increasingly strengthened the basis for interaction and learning.** Guidance from food systems coordination projects has improved the design and coherence of child projects within the overall programs (see also section 3.1.3), as evidenced through Agency interviews, country survey responses, and country case studies. In Tanzania, for example, country officials perceived that FOLUR and FSIP projects benefited from robust technical design support from the global coordination project teams. In Indonesia, the FOLUR project was designed with strong programmatic additionality in mind, by aiming to engage in

[26] Including a review of food systems program framework documents (PFDs) and program evaluations (e.g., the Resilient Food Systems terminal evaluation). It also reflects GEF IEO guidance on how to evaluate integrated programs. See for example, GEF Guidelines for Conducting Program Evaluation (2023).

global communities of practice, learn from other FOLUR country experiences in Asia, and connect to international buyer networks and certification bodies.

118. **Yet, evidence is weak that individual food systems child projects are better designed to deliver impact than stand-alone projects.** Food systems child projects and stand-alone projects alike are taking integrated approaches (see section 3.1.2). Nonetheless, the important influence of food systems programs can still be observed in the design of child projects. For example, GEF-7 child projects show a higher emphasis on landscape-level interventions than stand-alone ones, reflecting FOLUR's emphasis on this. Stand-alone food systems projects largely emerged in GEF-7, possibly influenced by RFS and GGP experiences. The evaluation did not find concrete evidence that Agencies are improving the design of their stand-alone projects based on lessons learned through food systems child projects, although interviews suggested that tacit learning is happening but not documented. While most stand-alone projects referenced lessons learned from previous GEF interventions (75 percent), none specifically referenced RFS, GGP, CFI, or FOLUR projects or programs.

3.3.3 Enhancing implementation through knowledge sharing and technical support

119. All GEF food systems programs have included dedicated knowledge management components. These components have involved general knowledge functions such as producing global knowledge products and holding learning events, as well as specialized ones like providing technical support services directly to child projects. This evaluation considers both.

120. **Creating a broader knowledge management ecosystem is perceived as a substantial added value of GEF food systems programs.** This was achieved primarily through knowledge generation, dissemination, and exchange. Coordination projects for GGP and RFS generally met or exceeded targets related to numbers of people trained on good practices, knowledge products developed, events held, and platforms established. GEF-6 terminal evaluations found knowledge products to be generally of high quality, and FOLUR's coordination project has reported production and dissemination of 263 diverse knowledge products to FOLUR child projects. Some programs have also provided technical service offerings directly to child projects. For example, FOLUR's customized support has included pilot testing of FAO's Participatory Integrated Landscape Approach (PILA) in four child projects, implementing UNDP's economic assessment tool in two child projects, and holding a workshop on effective collaborative action with five child projects, among other activities. FOLUR's Gender Learning Programme has also been considered highly useful by child project gender experts surveyed.

121. Building on this foundation of knowledge generation and dissemination, GEF food systems programs have fostered active knowledge exchange. Facilitating a two-way flow of knowledge, whether generated by the program or another source, is one of the most significant values added by GEF food systems programs, according to interviewees and program documents. Country participants value knowledge sharing through food systems knowledge platforms; they widely agree that country child projects have learned from each other's experiences (86 percent) and that the coordination projects have used effective strategies to generate, capture, and/or share knowledge with country child projects (90 percent). Participants have been largely satisfied

with program communities of practice, with three-quarters of GGP and FOLUR participants satisfied with the Food and Agricultural Commodity Systems (FACS) community (UNDP 2025a).

122. **Despite these successes, the evaluation found limited tangible, verifiable examples of countries applying program-facilitated learning.** Much program reporting has been at the output level, as noted in section 3.2.9 on monitoring and reporting, which may not capture actual knowledge application. The benefit of knowledge sharing and technical support to child projects is also not yet evident in terminal and midterm evaluations. Only five of the 21 child project terminal evaluations (24 percent) mentioned engagement with the hub project.[27] Across all project implementation reports, about half of child projects reported participation in global program-related forums, meetings, or workshops to share results and bring back lessons. Fewer than 10 percent explicitly mentioned undertaking adaptive management or adopting new strategies or policies, citing learning or support from the global program. Program partners often struggled to identify concrete examples in evaluation interviews, and case studies also largely failed to surface tangible examples of converting new knowledge to action. Moreover, available information is largely insufficient to appreciate the significance or on-the-ground benefit of examples identified.

123. The limited evidence available of country participants using learning from program-level activities presents a mixed picture. For example, a recent assessment found that 74 percent of practitioners participating in FACS reported applying learning that contributes to better project outcomes,[28] and a GGP survey found that 64 percent of respondents changed their programs, practices, or policies based on GGP learning.[29] The recent FOLUR MTR found that the global coordination project has made limited progress so far in driving country-level implementation and policy change, with few countries having adopted new policies or strategies due to FOLUR knowledge or tools.[30] This is partly due to knowledge products delivered ahead of country readiness, given the early stage of implementation of many child projects, as well as other design issues discussed below. Despite these shortcomings, tangible and verified examples of knowledge uptake do exist (see box 9).

27 The two hub projects were excluded from this question in the analysis. Nineteen of the 23 projects (83 percent) reported that the child project describes how the project-level results framework aligns with the global program.
[28] Based on an annual consultation conducted by FACS. Eighty-three (83) percent of FOLUR practitioners reported learning about at least one strategic theme or practice through FACS—mostly commonly multistakeholder collaboration, gender and farmer support systems.
[29] Although the terminal evaluation questioned the means of verification of these GGP survey findings, given that the survey was administered to conference participants right after the conference.
[30] The FOLUR CEO-endorsed document planned for 5 countries by year 3 and 10 by year 4, making FOLUR well behind its planned targets.

Box 9. Examples of benefits to countries from knowledge exchange and technical services

- After participating in a **GGP** conference, a Liberian producer modified their practices for rural oil palm development, based on learning from a GGP Indonesia presentation.
- After participating in an **RFS** workshop, the RFS Uganda team requested a follow-up visit to learn more about SLM and climate smart agriculture technologies and practices presented by the RFS Kenya team. The Uganda team visited Kenya for six days and applied their learning to their own projects. After the same RFS workshop, the RFS Nigeria team also adopted the composting approach presented by the RFS Ghana team.
- Through an event on the Effective Collaborative Action methodology, a FAO staffer working on **FOLUR's** Promotion of Sustainable Food Systems in India through Transforming Rice-Wheat Systems in Punjab, Haryana, Odisha and Chhattisgarh project (GEF ID 10480, FAO) learned about farmer extension services and innovative sustainable practices. These learnings have reportedly been applied in the project to solve issues with receding water levels that were causing soil deterioration in rice and wheat systems.
- A **FOLUR** project manager in the Ministry of Planning & Development in Ethiopia attended four FOLUR events in 2024 and learned about private sector engagement. The ministry team has drawn on these learnings to produce a training report and action plan for private sector engagement.
- As a result of coordination between the World Resources Institute (WRI) and Ghana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the **FOLUR** Landscape Restoration and Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Food Systems (GEF ID 10348, World Bank) and WRI's TerraFund program, 14,985 ha of land have been brought under restoration in Ghana. These restoration projects are also expected to create 29,841 jobs for local communities. FOLUR funding helped WRI engage with the government of Ghana on the criteria and selection of these projects to receive funding.
- Support from the **FOLUR** Gender Learning Program, as well as direct technical gender support to child projects, helped to shift a handful of countries' approaches to more gender-responsive ones, according to interviews. In FOLUR's Connecting Watershed Health with Sustainable Livestock and Agroforestry Production project (GEF ID 10735, World Bank) in Mexico, for example, gender briefs inspired innovations like childcare provisions during trainings, enhancing women's participation. FOLUR's Promoting Integrated Landscape Management Approach for Conservation of the Mount Elgon Ecosystem in Eastern Uganda (GEF ID 10463, UNEP) team took ownership of the gender agenda by developing a context-specific gender action plan, prioritizing practical and targeted gender interventions.

Sources: Program terminal evaluations and annual reports and interviews. Note that not all examples could be triangulated.

124. **Limited visibility and targeting of knowledge products, as well as adaptive management capacities, have hindered knowledge uptake by child projects.** In FOLUR, for example, many of the global platform's knowledge resources are not being accessed by countries. Reasons include a lack of targeted promotion, a fragmented approach to knowledge management across core partners, and inadequate staffing for knowledge management in both coordination and child

projects. Multiple food systems programs have not had dedicated knowledge management staff, despite the centrality of knowledge to the coordination projects' theory of change. One FOLUR partner lamented that most of the effort goes toward producing the knowledge product rather than its practical application or uptake.

125. A key consideration is whether knowledge is appropriately targeted for its intended audiences' needs and interests. While programs have increasingly tailored knowledge exchange to country contexts, evidence is less positive for knowledge generation. Several program partners responsible for major knowledge products expressed concerns that the suite of knowledge products and technical services was being driven more by the interests and capacities of partners, than by demand from countries (see also discussion below on country docking). FOLUR's recent capacity needs assessment suggested interest in more tailored technical support and targeted capacity building, as well as demand for resources and support in multiple languages to overcome linguistic barriers. The FOLUR MTR also pointed to language barriers and a lack of locally adapted materials as constraining country-level engagement.

126. Resources and willingness to adapt can also be barriers to knowledge uptake by country child projects, according to Agency and country informants. For example, one country survey respondent explained that some countries show a lack of willingness to consider modifying their project approaches based on lessons learned from other countries during global and regional knowledge exchanges. Multiple Agencies expressed that innovative solutions emerged through programmatic knowledge exchange, but the country executing agencies did not embrace those new solutions due to lack of resources in the project plan and a tendency to comply with the original project planning documents. Some GEF and Agency interviewees shared the view that resistance toward adaptive management reflected more of a perceived than actual GEF policy constraint. In other words, the processes for adaptive management exist, but they are not well understood or embraced.

127. **Programs have adaptively managed to shift from global exchange to target regional- and commodity-specific issues and facilitate peer-to-peer learning.** As food systems programs have expanded to cover more commodities and countries, global exchange has become less relevant. Interviewees stressed that the context-specificity of food systems challenges and solutions is better aligned with targeted exchanges. FOLUR, for example, has pivoted away from global exchange toward regional commodity dialogues[31]—a strategic direction that interviewees consistently commended. FSIP countries and partners have also begun to attend these dialogues, facilitating continuity and early learning for FSIP child projects. Another oft-raised example of valuable contextualized learning was IFC's technical training on agricultural lime to reduce soil

[31] Regional dialogues have now been held in Africa focused on coffee and cocoa value chains, in Asia on low-emission rice, and in Central Europe on sustainable maize and wheat. These events have served to share lessons from country projects as well as to promote the tools and offerings that the global platform can provide to country projects.

acidity and restore degraded lands, which addressed a localized challenge for specific FOLUR commodities in West Africa.

128. Additionally, GGP and CFI adaptively managed to support more peer exchange. GGP increased the number of in-country exchanges over the program lifetime, to build connection and trust among country teams and promote country-led collaboration and learning. After CFI's midterm review found that The Coastal Fisheries Initiatives Global Partnership (GEF ID 9128, FAO) had failed to facilitate significant program-wide exchange and learning beyond its global consultation meetings, the global project ramped up efforts, including by launching communities of practices across CFI national research institute partners that promoted south-south learning. FOLUR is showing similar signs. Some countries wanted FOLUR to enhance connection and collaboration across child projects more so than with external initiatives, highlighting a desire for more focused regional engagement (UNDP 2025b). Feedback from FOLUR practitioners on the FACS community echoed this sentiment, with only 33 percent of respondents satisfied with the digital program's effectiveness in facilitating south-south knowledge exchanges (UNDP 2025a).

129. **Country "docking"—matching country needs with program technical support—has been one of the most significant programmatic challenges.** The need to improve country docking in GEF food systems programs was one of the most frequently raised issues in interviews. Ineffective docking undermines both the relevance and uptake of global knowledge and technical service offerings by country child projects—and is therefore critical to ensuring the added value of a programmatic approach. Effective docking has been undermined by misaligned timing, top-down approaches, and insufficient resourcing.

(a) **Misaligned timing**: Technical offerings have generally been identified early in the program lifetime—before country child projects are operational—based on the program design and partners' review of child project documents, leading to widespread perceptions of top-down support despite intentions to be demand-driven. In RFS, early work plans constrained efforts to reallocate resources to meet emerging needs. FOLUR consequently shifted annual work planning and conducted a capacity needs assessment, but service offerings were still largely determined before the project management units (PMUs) for child projects were established. FSIP is learning from these experiences by designing its coordination project to retain more flexibility in determining its service offerings over time. In addition, a timing discrepancy is emerging between when program partners are available to provide support and when child projects are ready to receive it. For example, many FOLUR partners' agreements are set to terminate this year, even though most child projects are still in early implementation, and some have not yet established a PMU. CFI faced similar challenges, with the key program tool expected to benefit child projects completed only after some child projects had closed. FSIP is reflecting these experiences in its design, with the coordination project expected to run alongside child projects until close to completion, though resource constraints for the coordination project may still result in earlier closure unless additional funding is secured.

(b) **Top-down engagement approaches**: Food systems programs are also learning the importance of proactive support for country docking. Early efforts to connect countries with technical support were largely passive. In RFS, high transaction costs were experienced for the child projects to familiarize themselves with the many different hub partners and their services. FOLUR's early approach, for example, was to disseminate the global offer to country counterparts, who were expected to follow up for technical services. This approach was not successful, according to interviewees, particularly for countries that were not ready to absorb the support. This approach also created inefficiencies as many partners reached out to child projects individually. As noted, through the new capacity needs assessment, FOLUR has evolved to a more proactive approach to matchmaking, but it is too early to assess the success of this strategy.

(c) **Insufficient resources**: Limited partner resources have constrained the scope and customization of technical support. Global partners typically have budget to support only a few countries per tool (e.g., 2 to 6 out of 27 FOLUR countries), and child project funds are generally pre-programmed and not available to finance these services. Countries express more interest in customized—and likely on-the-ground—support than broader exchanges, which is also more resource intensive. In RFS, the lack of designated budgets for country collaboration on the ground and continued technical support from hub partners limited the effectiveness of this support. For instance, the Nigeria child project team worked with an RFS partner on several tools but found them too technically complex to implement without continued support.

3.3.4 Promoting multiscale results

130. **While some food systems programs have added value by facilitating vertical or multiscale engagement, integrating value chain support has proved highly challenging.** A perceived advantage of integrated programs is the potential to engage with different value chain actors than might be possible in the context of a stand-alone project. This includes vertical partnerships linking national actors to regional and global platforms and value chain actors for globally traded products (e.g., the demand side). This is especially important in commodity supply chains, where demand and supply may be in different geographies. Both FOLUR and FSIP, for example, aim to create a leverage effect on buyers and producers by connecting sustainable sourcing efforts across supply and demand. However, country child projects have often focused efforts on supporting sustainable production, with only about a quarter expecting to engage buyers and traders, and even fewer planning to work with retailers or financial institutions. Interviewees explained that an integrated program approach can help align these production-focused country efforts with global ones to advance commitments toward sustainable sourcing and financing—actions that are difficult to undertake in the context of stand-alone projects. Vertical value chain development features more prominently in GGP, FOLUR, and FSIP than in CFI and RFS (see also section on food systems design). Despite the ambition, GEF food systems programs have faced practical challenges to integrate value chain development across scales and

geographies. Interviewees widely agree that the ambition of integrating value chains would be difficult to accomplish without a programmatic modality. When integration has been more successful, such as in Paraguay (see Box 10), results have been notable.

Box 10. Benefits of the GEF's integrated program modality in Paraguay

Through GGP's systems-oriented design, three child projects achieved results in the sustainable beef value chain in Paraguay (Reducing Deforestation from Commodity Production, GEF ID 9180, UNDP; Generating Responsible Demand for Reduced-Deforestation Commodities, GEF ID 9182, WWF; and Enabling Transactions - Market Shift to Deforestation Free Beef, Palm Oil and Soy, GEF ID 9696, World Bank). The Production and Demand child projects were implemented in a coordinated manner, establishing a platform to work toward a common vision of sustainable beef both nationally and in the Chaco region. Paraguay's FOLUR child project (Paraguay FOLUR, GEF ID 10464, UNEP) will continue to support this platform and build on past successes.

Similar continuity of support has been provided to the financial sector in Paraguay. The GGP Transactions project provided substantial training and policy support to the Paraguay Central Bank, including the development of a law requiring financial institutions to disclose their impact on deforestation (Resolution 8). Through the GGP experience, GEF partners learned that additional support was needed for secondary financial institutions that provide finance at the landscape level. Cooperatives are now receiving training through FOLUR's global coordination project.

A programmatic approach also delivered value chain results, including the establishment of a traceable supply chain connecting farmers with a slaughterhouse responsible for supplying beef to McDonald's. However, FOLUR's early implementation has revealed challenges in scaling these gains. Building trust and agreement with value chain actors, especially around sustainability indicators for beef and soy, has proven difficult. Several producer cooperatives have raised concerns about the proposed project approach and requested revisions to its strategy, slowing the formation of strategic alliances. The project now plans to launch a new consultancy to co-develop a sustainable meat production standard that aligns with national law and market expectations.

131. **Food systems programs have encountered challenges in channeling demand and financing toward the target landscapes where child projects are operating.** For example, the GGP Demand and Transaction projects, while individually successful, were not well designed to route demand or financing toward the target landscapes where the Production project operated. In both GGP and FOLUR, interviewees explained that the mainstream financial institutions that the programs originally targeted are not the same institutions that finance sustainable production at the landscape level. This design flaw is being addressed now, partway through FOLUR implementation, by focusing more on microfinance institutions, impact investors, and other niche market players that are closer to primary production. In the recent FOLUR capacity needs assessment, some child projects expressed unmet needs related to financing mechanisms and linking finance stakeholders with smallholders. Institutional ways of working have also limited partners' abilities to channel financing to specific geographies. For example, IFC must have an existing client or a strong pipeline of potential investments to undertake technical work in a specific country and commodity context.

132. There has been limited integration between value chain work with global and, to some extent, national private sector companies and country child projects to date. The FOLUR MTR found that the coordination project was not designed to work through direct country entry points, and thus has done less well in linking private sector global support to child projects. For example, in Uganda, FOLUR-funded advisory services to ensure smallholder farmers have sustainable production practices helped unlock a $4.5 million IFC loan with Nespresso to open a small processing facility. This investment, however, is in a different subregion than the Uganda child project, and there has not been collaboration between the activities. Similarly, in Brazil under the Sustainable Multiple Use Landscape Consortia–Vertentes Project (GEF ID 10468, World Bank), WBCSD's work with six main agro-traders on soy in Brazil has preceded development of a country platform through the child project, creating questions for how to integrate the latter. Although it did not focus on a value chain approach, CFI similarly struggled to link private sector Challenge Fund projects to the country child projects, which sometimes worked in different subregions. Similarly, RFS's catalytic grants to engage in PPPs, through the coordination project, were implemented separately from the child projects in those countries.

133. **Timing issues, siloed implementation, and underestimating the collaborative efforts needed contributed to the programs' challenges in value chain integration.** Sequencing the timing for demand, production, and financing support has not been entirely feasible in five- to seven-year programs. Demand is typically a driver of production change, and then private financing enters at the end. Interviewees expressed frustration with the timing challenges in GEF programs, explaining that private finance has tended to align best with public sector efforts only after those initiatives are complete and farmers are prepared, which rarely happens early enough in a five-year program. Similarly in GGP, interviewees explained that the expectation that sustainable finance mechanisms would be ready to support emerging production needs did not match reality. Developing tailored financial facilities can take more than five years, far exceeding the duration of most program cycles.

134. Partners responsible for value chain work with the global and national private sector have also tended to work separately. For example, the IFC and UNEP-FI components of the GGP Transaction project were executed independently, although some exchange at the country level (e.g., in Indonesia, Brazil) occurred that would not have without the GEF project. Similarly, the FOLUR global partners responsible for value chain work described limited cross-fertilization, despite working in similar countries (e.g., Brazil) and commodities (e.g., rice, soy). CFI's Challenge Fund was also implemented separately from the other CFI child projects. As a result, food systems programs have missed potential opportunities for leveraging impact, according to interviews and terminal evaluations. Food systems programs have also underestimated the level of collaboration and sustained engagement needed for value chain integration (see also section on program governance). For example, a key lesson from GGP is that the program misjudged the need for sufficient time, resources, mechanisms, and incentives to establish effective coordination that can lead to integrated value chain impact.

3.3.5 Creating spillover effects

135. **By engaging with a broader set of global stakeholders, food systems programs are sharing their learning and influence beyond the boundaries of the child projects.** One key pathway for broader influence is through the programs' partners themselves. For example, in CFI, World Bank staff that worked on the Challenge Fund project have replicated good practices in subsequent lending programs, such as in Indonesia, according to one interviewee. Global knowledge sharing through CFI ignited the development of some new project concept notes by UNDP, FAO, and UNEP, which draw on good practices and initiatives started under the CFI. In FOLUR, interviewees referred to a wider influence through "FOLURization"—namely, leveraging FOLUR funding to influence World Bank project design and frameworks for client country engagement. Program reporting indicates that FOLUR has provided technical assistance to World Bank projects with collaboration between Bank global departments responsible for agriculture and environment, including in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Ukraine. Similarly, one interviewee explained that FOLUR and FSIP have enabled FAO to integrate support across its technical divisions, breaking down silos.

136. Food systems programs have also catalyzed some partnerships that continue to yield results after the program ended. For example, IFC's partnerships with WWF and Conservation International in Brazil and Paraguay, established through GGP, have continued to advance. Program partners described how they are still using the business cases for restoration of degraded lands developed under GGP to try to implement them with soy farmers, as well as working in partnership to develop biodiversity corridors in the Amazon, Chaco, and Cerrado regions.

137. Some programs are also expanding the reach of their learning through leveraging partners' existing broader networks such as FACS and the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF), participating in global high-level events, and implementing multifaceted communications strategies. These efforts have reached large numbers of people (e.g., more than 15,000 for FOLUR), although the extent of influence or uptake of GEF food systems program knowledge is largely unknown.[32] Most survey respondents (70 percent) agreed that engaging with a wide set of partners has enabled food systems programs to generate benefits beyond the program boundaries. There is a long theory-of-action chain, however, from sharing FOLUR knowledge through global events to the ultimate goal of "transform[ing] global thinking, policy options, and actions related to food systems" (GEF 2023a).

3.3.6 Program governance and delivery

138. **Country and Agency selection for food systems programs improved in GEF-7 through clearer criteria and processes, which were carried forward into GEF-8.** The GEF Secretariat

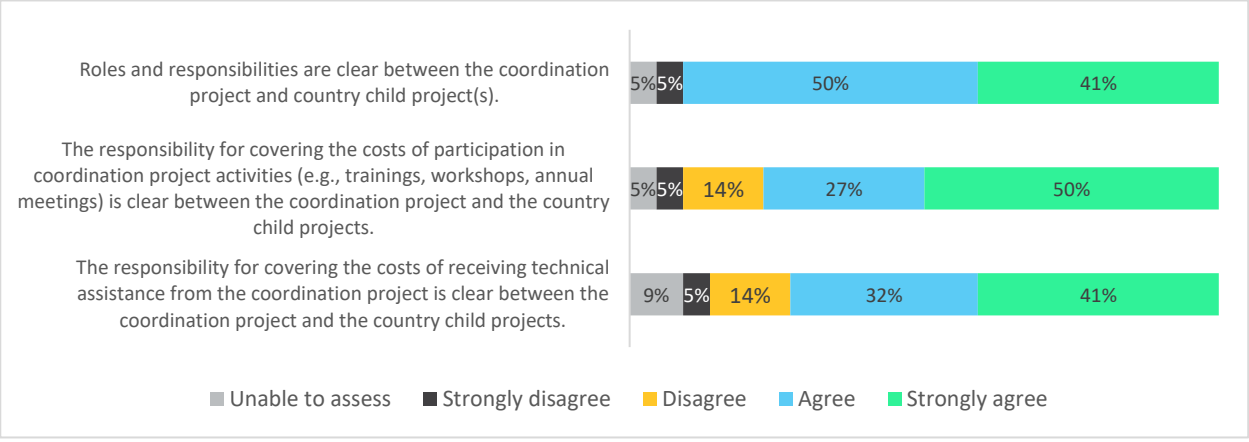
[32] A recent FACS report provides a few examples of impact stories from broader FACS community members that have benefited from FOLUR knowledge exchanges, including a GEF Secretariat staff and a project officer for GLF in Liberia (UNDP 2025a).

introduced a competitive, criteria-based selection process for participation in GEF-7 programs through preparation and evaluation of expressions of interest, which improved the transparency of country selection. This EOI process was continued in GEF-8. Across all food systems programs, about two-thirds of country stakeholders agreed that the process for selecting countries and child projects was transparent (only 8 percent disagreed for GEF-6 and GEF-7 programs and 11 percent disagreed for GEF-8). Acceptance rates were higher in GEF-8 than in GEF-7, when a smaller number were accepted in the first round due to poor quality.[33] A key difference is that the large majority of EOIs in GEF-8 were from the co-Lead Agencies (29 of 35 submissions and 26 of 32 accepted EOIs), whereas in GEF-7, the Lead Agency implemented a minority of country child projects (4 of 27).

139. Interviewees raised two main considerations for future country selection processes. First, country continuity across replenishment periods was viewed as potentially beneficial for progress toward transforming food systems, as demonstrated in Ghana and Indonesia. Second, some stakeholders believed that country selection could be used more assertively to ensure that participating countries are committed to transformation and meaningful engagement with other ministries.

140. **Roles and responsibilities between child projects and the coordination project have become clearer over time.** Since GEF-7, the Lead Agency role has included a terms of reference with well-defined roles and responsibilities, building on a lesson from the IAPs that clarity between global or regional coordination projects and country child projects is critical to good program governance. In both the RFS and GGP, budgetary responsibility for programmatic engagement was less clear at design, leading in part to some resistance among child projects to engage in programmatic activities or no assigned staff in the child projects for the coordination project to coordinate with. The design of GEF-7 and GEF-8 food systems programs reflects this lesson, with clearer articulation of the responsibilities of the coordination project and child

Figure 19. Responses to online survey from government child project points of contact



Source: Online survey.

[33] In GEF-7, only 18 of the 48 EOIs submitted in the first round were accepted, in part due to poor quality. In GEF-8, 22 of 25 EOIs were accepted in the first round and 10 of 10 in the second round.

projects in relation to programmatic support. Country stakeholders widely agreed that roles and responsibilities are clear between the coordination project and country child projects (Figure 19). Challenges associated with the lack of authority or leverage of the Lead Agency over child projects, as raised in previous IEO evaluations, however, have not been directly addressed.

141. **Food systems programs have generally been well and adaptively managed.** RFS and GGP Lead Agencies received positive evaluations of program management and coordination, and country survey respondents widely agreed on their strong performance. Continuity of Agencies, partners, and individual staff has been a supportive factor for robust and adaptive program governance, particularly when staff and organizations have been involved in multiple programs and carry lessons and experiences into new program design. Interviewees also praised FOLUR for leveraging partners and capacities built through previous programs, rather than re-inventing new processes and structures. Coordination projects also show effective adaptive management. In FOLUR, for example, the coordination project has adaptively managed to close gaps between itself and the country projects, as well as to respond to emerging policy priorities, such as the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). Midterm reviews have consistently urged coordination projects to improve integration across partners and child projects, while terminal evaluations have noted relevant improvements in the latter part of implementation. Adaptive management has also been supported by the GEF Secretariat, which has made efforts to push lead agencies and core partners for impact and integration.

142. **Coordinating across multiple executing partners remains a persistent program governance challenge.** RFS highlighted the complexity and high transaction costs of multi-Agency implementation, with seven executing partners in the coordination project, IFAD as Lead Agency, and five Agencies implementing child projects. Thematically overlapping responsibilities among partners and extensive subcontracting arrangements further contributed to operational complexity. FOLUR faces similar issues, involving numerous partners and unwieldy coordination that has tended toward bilateral channels at times, limiting visibility. Thematic working groups (e.g., on private sector, gender, and other topics) support coordination but have varied in level of activity. Information sharing among multiple partners has also remained a challenge, leading to some partners feeling inadequately informed about developments in in-country projects, though FOLUR's recent capacity needs assessment aims to help rectify this coordination gap (see also previous discussion on country docking).

143. FSIP design reflects lessons from RFS and FOLUR by adopting a more centralized model. Co-Lead Agencies (FAO and IFAD) work with three core executing partners in the global coordination project (GEF ID 11215, FAO), without any indication of further subcontracting and a smaller budget share for these partners (e.g., less than 15 percent in FSIP vs. 65 percent in FOLUR). Interviews indicate that FSIP partners consider their roles more marginal than in previous food systems programs, though partnerships are still evolving.[34] FSIP is also more

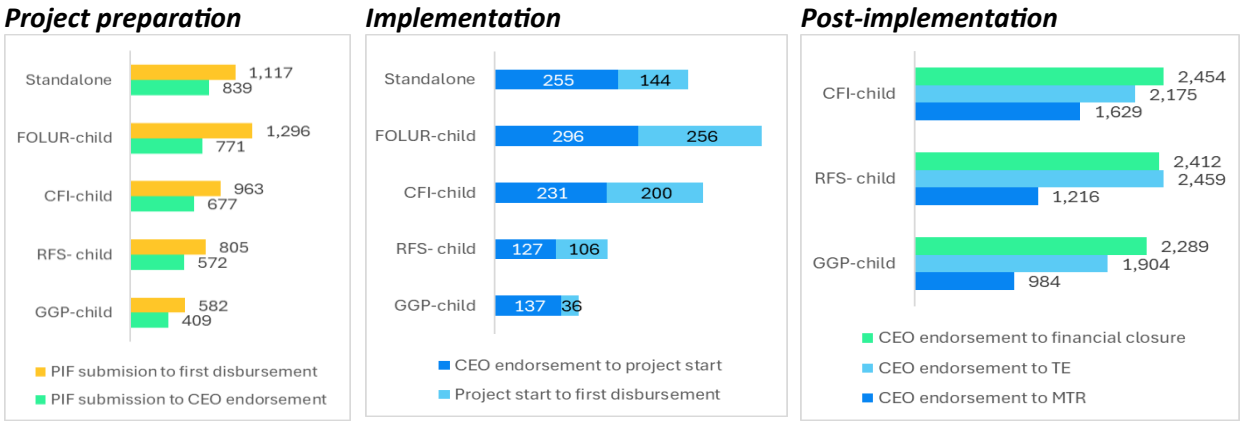
[34] The itemized budget in the global coordination project document suggests that less than 15 percent of the budget is currently allocated for named core executing partners and service providers (e.g., UNDP, the Nature Conservancy [TNC], WBSCD, Young Professionals for Agricultural Development [YPARD]).

concentrated in terms of child project implementation. Just four Agencies implement the 32 child projects, with 26 implemented by lead Agencies FAO or IFAD. FSIP's centralization may improve Lead Agency oversight, though its impact on administrative complexity is yet to be seen.

3.3.7 Efficiency

144. **Endorsement and implementation timelines for food systems programs are broadly comparable to, if not more efficient than, stand-alone projects.** GEF-6 food systems child projects demonstrated relatively shorter average preparation times from project identification form (PIF) approval to CEO endorsement compared with GEF-7 FOLUR (Figure 20).[35] FOLUR child projects took longer for preparation, an average of 24.7 months, which is partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When compared with stand-alone projects in each GEF replenishment period, programmatic child projects achieved CEO endorsement in a shorter time.

Figure 20. Elapsed time between project milestones by program (number of days)



Source: GEF Portal.

145. **For an agenda as complex as food systems, however, programs are contending with potential trade-offs between efficiency and inclusive and robust design.** Interviewees raised concerns that the short time frame for preparing EOIs and Concept Notes in GEF-8 led to some approved submissions without meaningful input from key government ministries. These trends work against principles of effective collaborative action for systems change by undermining potential for cross-sectoral coherence and ownership. Interviews also point to tensions between the time needed to align different partners around an agenda as complex and multisectoral as food systems transformation and the relatively short time available to prepare project documents. This tension echoes the lesson from GGP that time pressures and competing

[35] In GEF-8, only one FSIP child project has reached CEO endorsement so far (the global coordination project), which took 9.1 months from PIF approval.

demands during the preparation phase meant that opportunities for integration between projects were not explored in depth or sufficiently embedded in the structure of the program.

146. **Moving into implementation, delays are frequently related to the increasing operational complexity of programs and the food systems agenda.** In FOLUR, delays are often linked to the complexity of coordinating across multiple stakeholders (36 percent), staff capacity to implement integrated programming (45 percent), and difficulties in managing financial transfers between Agencies (36 percent). Cross-case-study observations and interviews raised concerns about the time needed to start country projects involving multiple commodities and agencies, each with different food systems priorities. This includes the time needed to meaningfully engage a range of relevant stakeholders, establish platforms, and refine objectives and activities within the broader food systems agenda. As noted previously, some child projects have faced tensions around institutional leadership for GEF food systems projects, especially between environment and agriculture ministries, that have contributed to delays. Related to this is navigating the challenge of identifying the most critical and value-adding entry points across countries, institutions, diverse ecologies, and commodities while maintaining common programmatic priorities—without overextending resources or reducing the number of communities that could be piloted and served.

147. **Coordination projects are the main added cost of an integrated program approach, yet they also deliver results.** Determining the incremental cost of using an integrated program approach is not straightforward. Food systems coordination projects have represented seven to 10 percent of total program costs, or between $4 million and $29 million in absolute cost. Coordination project budgets are mostly allocated for capacity strengthening, technical assistance, policy engagement, global and regional value chain engagement, and knowledge exchange. Accordingly, these projects have delivered knowledge, policy, and financing results, and sometimes contribute to environmental and co-benefit outcomes; they also help position the GEF as a leader on a global agenda. Coordination project budget allocations for overall program management and administration are much smaller. For example, the component of FOLUR's coordination project focused on program management, operations, and M&E is budgeted at $3.6 million, representing about 1 percent of the total FOLUR program value. For FSIP, the project management cost plus M&E is equivalent to $2 million, or 0.7 percent of the total program value. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity cost for these resources (e.g., country or other programming), and the GEF Secretariat may also incur additional costs to oversee these complex programs.

148. **Despite their importance for effective programmatic collaboration, coordination budgets have not kept pace with expanding program scope**. Terminal evaluations, interviews, and GEF documentation of programmatic lessons learned all indicate that GEF-6 coordination budgets were not sufficient for this purpose. In RFS, for example, neither child projects nor coordination project partners budgeted for in-country and field program interactions, which later proved to be a critical gap. While the share of funding allocated to global coordination projects has increased across all integrated programming from GEF-6 to GEF-8, in food systems programs, coordination project budgets have been decreasing over GEF programming periods. This

decrease has happened even as programs have increased in scope and size, posing a risk to program viability. In the GEF-6 programs, the coordination project represented 10 percent of the total program cost. In GEF-7, the FOLUR coordination project represents 9 percent of the total program cost. Moving into GEF-8, the FSIP coordination project has a smaller GEF budget than FOLUR in both absolute and percentage terms ($18 million compared to FOLUR's $29 million, representing 7 percent of the total FSIP program budget). Yet, FSIP will be responsible for coordinating with more country child projects (32, compared to FOLUR's 27) and more commodities than FOLUR.[36] Agency interviewees expressed concerns about delivering greater added value with fewer resources. Several interviewees who have been involved in multiple GEF food systems programs also opined that programs have reached their limit, becoming too large and overstretched, diluting programmatic value addition.

149. **While program stakeholders widely agree that an integrated program approach to food systems adds value that exceeds its costs, systematic evidence is not yet available to make this comparison.** GEF, Agency, partner, and country interviewees—including those who have been involved in multiple GEF food systems programs—consistently shared the view that an integrated program approach to food systems adds value compared to a non-programmatic approach. At the country level, 28 percent of survey respondents strongly agreed, and 61 percent agreed, that the value addition of using an integrated program approach is greater than the cost of the coordination project.

150. As described above, food systems programs have added value, albeit sometimes implicit, through knowledge and learning pathways, while evidence of converting knowledge to action remains limited. Stakeholders view aligning country-level, production-focused initiatives with global commitments on sustainable sourcing and financing as a unique and transformative added value of program approaches. Yet despite successful global and regional engagement, programs have struggled to link these efforts with child projects. A common refrain in interviews was that an integrated program approach can deliver outcomes and transformation that would not be feasible through a stand-alone project. However, integrated programs are not yet systematically tracking progress toward food systems transformation, and evaluative evidence is not yet available comparing the outcomes and global environmental benefits of child projects to stand-alone ones, making it difficult to weigh the balance of added value to costs.

[36] There are some indications that budgetary responsibilities for engagement with the coordination project are shifting down to country child projects to help overcome this gap. In FSIP, the budgetary responsibilities of child projects with respect to engagement with the global platform are intended to include meeting their capacity and technical support needs, gathering and sharing information on lessons learned, and participating in regional and global platforms. As noted earlier, FSIP child projects were advised to set aside 10 percent of their budget for these (and other) programmatic functions, although Agencies reported some resistance from countries to do so. CEO-endorsed project documents are not yet available to assess the extent to which this directive was followed.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

151. **CONCLUSION 1: GEF programs have contributed to global and national agendas by taking integrated approaches to address environmental challenges in food systems.** At the global level, GEF programs have kept pace with the growing discourse around the interconnectedness of food systems, environmental degradation, and climate change, and the significant financing gaps for sustainable food systems transformation. Programs allowed sufficient flexibility for countries to design relevant interventions, while also sometimes introducing innovative topics that countries had not yet identified as a strategic focus. Child projects align with countries' environmental needs and sectoral policies and priorities related to agriculture, livestock, and/or fisheries. Programs and projects feature integrated approaches that address multiple environmental issues, target synergies between environmental and socioeconomic benefits, work at local, landscape, and national levels, and promote multistakeholder engagement.

152. **CONCLUSION 2: Food systems projects have concentrated on the production segment of the value chain, although attention to post-production segments has emerged more recently.** The five GEF programs vary considerably in how comprehensively they cover food system value chains. Some programs made deliberate design decisions to focus more on objectives such as resilience for communities and ecosystems and less on value chain elements. Overall, however, program interventions have concentrated on the environmental footprint of agricultural and fisheries production at community and landscape levels, tackling issues like land and soil degradation, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Programs feature fewer activities targeting post-production segments, such as storage, processing, distribution, and consumption, and related challenges like food loss and waste, pollution, and health and nutrition. FSIP shows emerging attention in its program design to the role of markets and consumers in stimulating demand for sustainably produced, safe, and nutritious foods. The GEF-9 Programming Directions further integrate nutrition, moving beyond commodity-focused approaches.

153. **CONCLUSION 3: Food systems projects have focused on environmental and economic drivers of food systems change, devoting less attention to political and sociocultural drivers.** GEF interventions have struggled to adequately identify and address political economy dynamics, such as resistance from sector interests, power asymmetries, insufficient policy buy-in, and policy mis-incentives. Trade-offs among competing objectives have not always been addressed, limiting the transformational potential. FSIP plans to engage more strongly with policy as a lever of transformational change, reflecting the added emphasis on policy coherence in GEF-8. Sociocultural dynamics that influence behavior and behavioral change have not been frequently and consistently identified or targeted in GEF projects and programs.

PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

154. **CONCLUSION 4: GEF programs have delivered substantial, but uneven, environmental benefits, enhanced food production, and advanced food systems policy and governance. A key challenge was to deliver the full set of objectives in a single replenishment cycle.** Improved land management, biodiversity conservation, and GHG emissions mitigation are the main environmental outcomes reported by GEF programs. These have been largely achieved through a combination of policy reforms and dialogue, support for land use and marine area planning and management, and activities that enhanced sustainable agricultural and fisheries productivity at the community level. Contributions to outcomes have been uneven across child projects, however. Some projects fell short due to overly ambitious or unclear objectives, delays in implementation, or a lack of clarity on how specific activities would lead to measurable environmental outcomes.

155. Despite strong results, none of the GEF-6 food systems programs fully delivered on the broad ambitions set out in their program designs. While coordination and child projects achieved positive results, they often focused on upstream or process-related outcomes—such as policy engagement, stakeholder coordination, or investment analysis—without yet reaching the scale or depth needed for systemic transformation. As noted, programs and projects are largely focused on the production and community side without adequately integrating sustainable value chains and demand-side elements needed to drive change. Across all programs, many promising results would require more time and further investment to mature into tangible transformation. The current model of short, time-bound programs within a single replenishment cycle is poorly matched to the complex, long-term nature of food system transformation.

OPERATIONALIZING PROGRAMMATIC VALUE ADDITION

156. **CONCLUSION 5: GEF programs are generating substantial knowledge, but there is still limited evidence of country uptake.** Food systems programs have successfully generated and shared substantial knowledge both with program participants and a wider audience, as well as supported coherent child project design that establishes a strong basis for intra-program learning. Yet, there are few tangible examples of countries applying this knowledge to adapt their project activities. Challenges like limited visibility and insufficient targeting of knowledge products, as well as country resistance to adaptive management, have hindered knowledge uptake by child projects. Nonetheless, programs' ongoing adaptive measures to encourage peer exchange and address specific regional- and commodity-related issues are positively received by country stakeholders.

157. **CONCLUSION 6: GEF food systems program governance has improved across replenishment cycles, although matching country needs with support remains a challenge.** Program governance has strengthened over time. Country selection is now more transparent and criteria-based, and roles between coordination and child projects are clearer and better codified. The GEF Secretariat and Agencies have further improved program operations by streamlining the number of partners and aligning technical support more closely with country needs. However, this "country docking" process remains a persistent programmatic hurdle that limits the potential for countries to benefit fully from their participation in integrated programs. This is largely driven

by three issues: (1) misaligned timing between when programs offer support and when countries are ready to absorb that support, (2) a passive, top-down matching approach, and (3) limited resources for context-specific and hands-on technical support. GEF-7 and GEF-8 programs are recognizing these issues and evolving to address them, although it is too early to evaluate their efforts.

158. **CONCLUSION 7: Programs have yet to fully realize the value of an integrated program approach for transforming food systems, including vertical value chain integration.** Programs have delivered some notable results through private sector engagement, resulting in significant investments in sustainable commodities and strengthened capacity of financial institutions to provide sustainable financing. Many of these results have been delivered outside of country child projects, however, such as through FOLUR's coordination project and GGP's unique program structure. Linking private sector support from the global project to the child projects has proved challenging. Some of the areas where programs have struggled to make these linkages—such as integrating value chain support across levels and geographies and strengthening incentives for sustainable sourcing—are key for enabling transformational change and reaching scale. Food systems programs have not been well designed to channel demand and financing toward the target landscapes where child projects are operating. Challenges have been partly due to a lack of designing for vertical linkages in child projects, siloed implementation, and an underestimation of the collaborative efforts needed to support integration. Sequencing the timing for stimulating sustainable demand, improving production practices, and engaging private financing to scale have proven difficult within programs operating over a single replenishment period.

159. **CONCLUSION 8: The growing mismatch between program expansion—in both size and scope—and lower-resourced coordination projects risks undermining programs' value proposition.** Program expansion is creating a potential trade-off between depth and breadth, with food systems programs attempting to cover more objectives, commodities, and countries, but with sometimes diluted efforts. A key lesson from GEF-6 is that the time and efforts required for effective collaboration should not be underestimated, and yet GEF-7 and GEF-8 food systems programs feature declining budgets for these efforts—contrary to the upward trend in the rest of GEF integrated programming. Lower coordination project budgets also mean less contextualized and hands-on support to countries, which many Agencies and partners believe will weaken impact. As programs expand, some operational complexity is also re-emerging as programs seek to create regional and commodity clusters within global programs. At the country level, overly ambitious project designs spanning multiple goals, value chains, and sub-regions have led to subpar implementation and outcomes.

4.2 Recommendations

160. This evaluation makes four recommendations specifically linked to the key findings and numbered conclusions (C2-C9). These recommendations cover both strategic and operational programmatic adjustments to enhance food system impacts, as well as cross-cutting considerations for improving design and implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Sharpen program focus and phasing across GEF replenishment periods (linked to C4, C7, C8)**.** The GEF Secretariat should establish clearer boundaries and priorities in program design to better reflect regional and commodity-specific dynamics. This may involve concentrating on a smaller number of targeted commodities, geographies, or biomes. The Secretariat should also consider adopting a phased approach to food systems programming. Such an approach would recognize the longer time frames required for food system transformation and the need to align coordination mechanisms and country project schedules. Phased implementation would enable the GEF to strengthen readiness—such as through policy development, governance improvements, capacity building, and pilot investments—before progressing to larger-scale investment alignment and expansion.

161. **RECOMMENDATION 2: Expand focus on value chain segments beyond production and on vertical value chain integration, in order to fully realize the benefits of an integrated program approach** (linked to C2, C7)**.** Future food systems programming should extend engagement beyond the production segment of the value chain when broader GEF support (a) can generate substantial environmental or socioeconomic benefits, and/or (b) ensure the long-term sustainability of environmental outcomes from production-oriented activities, recognizing the interdependencies across value chain segments. The GEF Secretariat should also strengthen the performance of GEF food system programs in both vertical and geographic value chain integration. This includes developing more targeted and effective approaches on the demand and financing side, supporting activities related to national and international standards, and fostering stronger linkages between supply and demand actors across countries.

162. **RECOMMENDATION 3: Increase attention to political economy dynamics and behavioral change in food systems transformation at design and during implementation** (linked to C3)**.** The GEF Secretariat should require more comprehensive and structured political economy and risk analyses to inform the design and implementation of PFDs and child projects. Agencies should be encouraged to incorporate mechanisms that mediate trade-offs and balance short-term incentives with long-term sustainability objectives. The GEF Secretariat should also prioritize engagement with countries demonstrating commitment to the policy and institutional reforms needed to address food systems challenges and work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders to co-develop solutions. To enhance the potential for lasting transformation, greater emphasis should be placed on understanding and influencing behavior change throughout program design and implementation.

163. **RECOMMENDATION 4: Strengthen country docking to enhance the knowledge value of country engagement with the global coordination project** (linked to C6)**.** The GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with Lead Agencies, should intensify efforts to improve country docking and knowledge uptake. These efforts should ensure that (a) the coordination project—and its relevant partners and service providers—remains active and able to engage with child projects when they are ready to receive support and (b) learning is continuously generated, captured, and shared throughout implementation. These efforts should also involve a more participatory and ongoing process to identify country needs for knowledge and technical services and align program offerings accordingly.

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6. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Independent Reviewer Statement

Date: October 31, 2025

Reviewer: Neeraja Havaligi

This evaluation of the Global Environment Facility's Food Systems Programs (GEF-6 through GEF-8) presents a rigorous assessment at a pivotal moment. Food systems are now the major contributors to the breach of five critical planetary boundaries—land system change, biosphere integrity, freshwater use, biogeochemical flows, and climate change. These systems impose an estimated $15 trillion in annual hidden costs through health impacts, environmental degradation, and social inequities. This highlights the urgent need for transformation, which could unlock $5 to $10 trillion in net annual benefits, showcasing the global significance of this evaluation.

Using a multilayered mixed-methods approach, the evaluation analyzes 84 child projects representing $821.8 million in GEF financing and $6.33 billion in cofinancing across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe and Central Asia. Quantitative metrics demonstrate improved management of 28.4 million hectares, avoidance of 88.4 million metric tons of CO_2-equivalent emissions, and socioeconomic benefits for over 4.7 million beneficiaries. These findings are validated by qualitative insights from 133 stakeholder interviews across country case studies, providing strong thematic rigor and ground-truthing of reported outcomes.

Systems thinking principles guide a nuanced analysis of transformation pathways, distinguishing the value of integrated approaches versus stand-alone projects across environmental, economic, social, and governance domains. The report documents significant advances in multistakeholder governance models, sustainable land and water management, and public-private partnership development. The evolution from GEF-6 to GEF-8 reveals a progressive shift toward policy coherence and strengthened collaborative platforms, reflecting deepening institutional learning.

Innovations including digital traceability platforms, spatial planning tools, and geographic information systems have been integrated into the interventions. Case studies from Ghana, Indonesia (with particular attention to the revival of traditional Sasi marine conservation), Peru, and Tanzania highlight notable context-specific governance innovations. These examples demonstrate how programs have effectively combined traditional knowledge systems with contemporary technologies to achieve context-appropriate solutions.

Significant opportunities for improvement remain, particularly in four areas: vertical value chain coordination involving demand-side actors, including consumer behavior, market incentives, and food loss reduction; political economy analysis to effectively navigate institutional power dynamics and incentivize cross-sectoral reforms; adaptive management practices through mechanisms that enable iterative learning and real-time adaptation; and country docking and knowledge management platforms to align technical assistance with implementation readiness.

The evaluation process included independent review of the draft approach paper, conceptual framework, initial and final reports, as well as detailed analysis of field case studies and stakeholder interviews. This iterative process, together with the evaluation team's dedication, has resulted in a robust, evidence-based analysis that balances accountability with forward-looking learning.

The report transparently acknowledges data maturity and attribution constraints, enhancing the credibility of its nuanced conclusions. The resulting evidence base offers practical guidance for positioning the GEF's ninth replenishment cycle to address the complexities inherent in food systems transformation.

In conclusion, this evaluation presents a critical milestone in advancing understanding and strategic action toward sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems. Its rigor and policy relevance provide a solid foundation for the GEF's ninth replenishment cycle, enabling the GEF to decisively advance its leadership in food systems transformation amid escalating environmental and social pressures.

Annex 2: Food Systems Project Portfolio

Child Projects

ID	Title	Country	Region	Focal Area	Agency	GEF Grant	Cofinance	Status
GEF-6 - Resilient Food Systems								
9141	GEF-IAP: Participatory Natural Resource Management and Rural Development Project in the North, Centre-North and East Regions (Neer Tamba project)	Burkina Faso	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,269,448	35,900,000	Under Implementation
9178	Food-IAP: Support for Sustainable Food Production and Enhancement of Food Security and Climate Resilience in Burundi's Highlands	Burundi	Africa	Multi	FAO	7,396,330	45,050,728	Under Implementation
9133	Food-IAP: Climate-Smart Agriculture for Climate-Resilient Livelihoods (CSARL)	Eswatini	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,211,009	48,000,000	Under Implementation
9135	Food-IAP: Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience	Ethiopia	Africa	Multi	UNDP	10,239,450	144,965,431	Project Implemented
9340	Food-IAP: Sustainable Land and Water Management Project, Second Additional Financing	Ghana	Africa	Multi	World Bank	12,768,832	22,000,000	Financially Closed
9139	Food-IAP: Establishment of the Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund (UTNWF)	Kenya	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,201,835	61,050,330	Financially Closed
9138	Food-IAP: Enhancing the Resilience of Agro-Ecological Systems (ERASP)	Malawi	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,155,963	87,397,000	Under Implementation
9136	Niger: Food-IAP: Family Farming Development Programme (ProDAF)	Niger	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,636,422	60,320,000	Under Implementation

9143	Food-IAP: Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience in Nigeria	Nigeria	Africa	Multi	UNDP	7,139,450	57,000,000	Project Implemented
9140	Food-IAP: Cross Cutting Capacity Building, Knowledge Services and Coordination Project for the Food Security Integrated Approach Pilot Program	Regional	Regional	Multi	IFAD	10,825,688	85,057,850	Under Implementation
9134	Food-IAP: Agricultural Value Chains Resilience Support Project (PARFA)	Senegal	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,219,450	28,544,133	Financially Closed
9132	Food-IAP: Reversing Land Degradation Trends and Increasing Food Security in Degraded Ecosystems of Semi-arid Areas of Central Tanzania	Tanzania	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,155,963	52,961,800	Under Implementation
9137	Food-IAP: Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Karamoja Sub Region	Uganda	Africa	Multi	UNDP	7,139,450	58,000,000	Under Implementation
GEF-6 - Good Growth Partnership								
9617	Taking Deforestation Out of the Soy Supply Chain	Brazil	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	UNDP	6,600,000	28,204,678	Financially Closed
9179	Adaptive Management and Learning for the Commodities IAP	Global	Global	Multi	UNDP	3,978,441	5,266,887	Project Implemented
9180	Reducing Deforestation from Commodity Production	Global	Global	Multi	UNDP	14,584,403	164,700,268	Project Implemented

9182	Commodities-IAP: Generating Responsible Demand for Reduced-Deforestation Commodities	Global	Global	Multi	WWF-US	8,748,060	42,334,902	Financially Closed
9696	Enabling Transactions - Market Shift to Deforestation Free Beef, Palm Oil and Soy	Global	Global	Multi	World Bank	6,405,101	22,958,419	Project Implemented
GEF-6 - Costal Fisheries Initiative								
9126	Delivering Sustainable Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits in West Africa through Good Governance, Correct Incentives and Innovation	Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Global	Global	Multi	FAO	6,433,027	45,551,500	Under Implementation
9124	Coastal Fisheries Initiative- Latin America	Ecuador, Peru	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	UNDP	6,588,991	65,562,889	Project Implemented
9125	The Coastal Fisheries Initiative Challenge Fund: Enabling Sustainable Private Sector Investment in Fisheries (CFI-CF)	Global	Global	IW	World Bank	7,873,394	33,000,000	Project Implemented
9128	The Coastal Fisheries Initiatives Global Partnership	Global	Global	IW	FAO	2,652,294	11,850,000	Under Implementation
9129	Eco-system Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in Eastern Indonesia (Fisheries Management Area (FMA)- 715, 717 & 718)	Indonesia	Asia	Multi	WWF-US	10,183,486	52,071,783	Under Implementation
GEF-7 - Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program								
10232	Reducing deforestation from palm oil and cocoa value chains	Liberia	Africa	Multi	CI	7,139,450	66,999,065	Under Implementation

10237	Integrated Landscape Management of Heart of Borneo Landscapes in Sabah and Sarawak	Malaysia	Asia	Multi	UNDP	7,368,807	65,113,144	CEO Endorsement Cleared
10238	Strengthening Sustainability in Commodity and Food-Crop Value Chains, Land Restoration and Land Use Governance through Integrated Landscape Management for Multiple Benefits in Indonesia	Indonesia	Asia	Multi	UNDP	16,213,762	132,510,462	Under Implementation
10239	Establishing System for Sustainable Integrated Land-use Planning Across New Britain Island in Papua New Guinea	Papua New Guinea	Asia	Multi	UNDP	10,709,174	50,566,514	Under Implementation
10243	Preventing forest loss, promoting restoration and integrating sustainability into Ethiopia's coffee supply chains and food systems	Ethiopia	Africa	Multi	UNDP	20,342,202	208,478,969	Under Implementation
10245	Integrated Sustainable Landscape Management in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam	Vietnam	Asia	Multi	FAO	5,354,587	77,950,000	CEO Endorsement Cleared
10246	Innovative transformation of China's food production systems and agroecological landscapes	China	Asia	Multi	FAO	13,461,468	402,190,000	Under Implementation
10247	Scaling up Cocoa-based Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration / Transformative Innovations in Cote d'Ivoire (SCOLUR-CI)	Cote d'Ivoire	Africa	Multi	FAO	5,354,587	65,231,987	Under Implementation
10262	Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration in Tanzania's Forest Landscapes	Tanzania	Africa	Multi	WWF-US	7,368,808	72,686,863	Under Implementation
10263	Promoting sustainable landscapes in the Motagua River watershed	Guatemala	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	UNDP	11,162,802	60,017,006	CEO Endorsement Cleared

10264	Promoting sustainable livestock management and ecosystem conservation in Northern Ukraine	Ukraine	Europe and Central Asia	Multi	UNDP	6,756,000	67,385,366	Under Implementation
10265	Promotion of sustainable food systems and improved ecosystems services in Northern Kazakhstan Landscape	Kazakhstan	Europe and Central Asia	Multi	UNDP	10,467,000	132,307,166	Under Implementation
10268	Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes in Thailand	Thailand	Asia	Multi	UNEP	5,535,963	67,300,000	Under Implementation
10306	FOLUR Global Knowledge to Action Platform to Support Transformational Shifts In Food and Land Use Systems	Global	Global	Multi	World Bank	29,128,440	44,500,000	Under Implementation
10307	Deforestation Free Commodity Supply Chains in the Peruvian Amazon	Peru	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	UNDP	13,561,467	112,149,960	Under Implementation
10348	Landscape Restoration and Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Food Systems	Ghana	Africa	Multi	World Bank	12,756,881	129,500,000	Under Implementation
10463	Promoting integrated landscape management approach for conservation of the Mount Elgon ecosystem in Eastern Uganda	Uganda	Africa	Multi	UNEP	9,433,027	82,014,000	Under Implementation
10464	Paraguay FOLUR	Paraguay	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	UNEP	8,189,450	47,568,002	Under Implementation
10468	Sustainable Multiple Use Landscape Consortia - Vertentes Project	Brazil	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	World Bank	24,577,982	172,000,000	Under Implementation

10480	Promotion of Sustainable Food Systems in India through Transforming Rice-Wheat Systems in Punjab, Haryana, Odisha and Chhattisgarh	India	Asia	Multi	FAO	20,366,973	378,685,207	CEO Endorsement Cleared
10481	Promoting Integrated Landscape Management and Sustainable Food Systems in the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria	Nigeria	Africa	Multi	FAO	5,354,590	67,739,549	Under Implementation
10594	Burundi Landscape Restoration and Resilience Project	Burundi	Africa	Multi	World Bank	6,000,000	31,000,000	Under Implementation
10598	Integrated Landscape Management for conservation and restoration of the Mt. Elgon Ecosystem in Western Kenya	Kenya	Africa	Multi	FAO	5,354,587	46,506,320	Under Implementation
10599	Transforming Food Systems and Reducing Deforestation in the Protected Areas and Biological Corridors landscapes from the Southern Caribbean Coast and San Juan River autonomous region	Nicaragua	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	FAO	5,354,587	44,690,934	Under Implementation
10600	Integrated management of degraded landscapes for sustainable food systems and livelihoods in Guinea Forest Region and Upper Guinea	Guinea	Africa	Multi	FAO	9,498,165	43,395,420	CEO Endorsement Cleared
10601	Food System, Land Use and Restoration Impact Program in Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan	Europe and Central Asia	Multi	FAO	5,992,661	72,754,400	Under Implementation
10735	Connecting Watershed Health with Sustainable Livestock and Agroforestry Production	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	World Bank	13,761,468	99,013,829	Under Implementation

10750	Integrated Landscape Management for a zero-deforestation coffee and rice value chains in the Central South and Eastern coast of Madagascar	Madagascar	Africa	Multi	FAO	9,874,117	28,884,587	CEO Endorsement Cleared
GEF-8 - Food Systems Integrated Program								
11370	Sustainable aquaculture in the northern region of Angola	Angola	Africa	Multi	FAO	3,441,306	30,500,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11219	Sustainable Livestock in the forest region of the Argentine Parque Chaqueño through Forest Management with Integrated Livestock (MBGI)	Argentina	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	FAO	4,742,966	35,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11217	Sustainable food systems for greater resilience and food & nutrition security in Benin	Benin	Africa	Multi	FAO	5,966,207	20,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11223	Productive and Sustainable Food Systems in Bhutan for Environmental Benefits and Gross National Happiness	Bhutan	Asia	Multi	FAO	9,585,933	49,540,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11222	Promoting Nature Positive Food Systems in Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	Africa	Multi	IUCN	10,709,174	65,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11224	Integrated production of rice and secondary crops using an agroecological approach in the Tandjilé province	Chad	Africa	Multi	UNDP	3,825,535	23,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11220	Scaling-up regenerative practices for the recovery and improvements of soils, biodiversity, and associated ecosystem services in the Chilean agricultural sector	Chile	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	FAO	5,966,207	30,120,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11225	Ecological and Low-Carbon Food Systems in China	China	Asia	Multi	FAO	18,048,622	140,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared

11218	Child Project Food Systems Integrated Programme	Costa Rica	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	UNDP	5,843,883	31,100,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11369	Promoting the mainstreaming of biodiversity and protection of ecosystem services through regenerative and deforestation-free livestock in provinces of Manabí, Pichincha and Morona-Santiago.	Ecuador	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	FAO	2,346,481	4,800,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11226	Catalyzing transformation to sustainable food systems in Eswatini	Eswatini	Africa	Multi	FAO	3,519,725	31,544,500	CEO PIF Cleared
11235	Participatory Agriculture and Climate Transformation Programme	Ethiopia	Africa	Multi	IFAD	9,585,933	78,200,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11375	Ghana Sustainable Food System and Forest Management	Ghana	Africa	Multi	World Bank	13,942,064	240,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11215	Global Coordination Project	Global	Global	Multi	FAO	18,232,110	200,000,000	CEO Endorsement Technical Review Completed
11374	Advancing Transformative Agricultural Systems in Grenada through the Promotion of Integrated and Resilient Ecosystem approaches throughout the cocoa value chain (ASPIRE)	Grenada	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	IFAD	15,196,847	10,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11228	Transforming Andhra Pradesh aquaculture to a sustainable, reduced footprint and climate resilient food system	India	Asia	Multi	FAO	13,155,657	224,198,657	CEO PIF Cleared

11229	Sustainable Livestock Production to Support Resilient Food Systems, Environment and Rural Livelihoods in Indonesia	Indonesia	Asia	Multi	FAO	14,378,897	150,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11373	Transforming Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture in Kazakhstan to Ensure Environmental Sustainability	Kazakhstan	Europe and Central Asia	Multi	FAO	2,346,484	-	CEO PIF Cleared
11216	Integrated land and water management for food, water and climate security in the dairy food system,	Kenya	Africa	Multi	IFAD	7,139,450	120,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11367	Sustainable Agriculture and Plantations in Peatland Landscapes in Malaysia (SAPPLIM)	Malaysia	Asia	Multi	IFAD	5,354,588	20,500,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11372	Food systems, indigenous peoples and biodiversity	Mexico	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	FAO	4,620,643	28,125,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11371	Circular Integrated Aquaculture-Horticulture Systems for Climate Resilience in Namibia (NamiGreen)	Namibia	Africa	Multi	UNDP	7,445,260	51,700,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11368	Transforming Nauru's Food Systems through Climate Smart Agriculture	Nauru	Asia	Multi	UNDP	5,916,207	24,250,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11236	Transformation to sustainable crops, livestock and aquaculture food systems in Nigeria	Nigeria	Africa	Multi	FAO	7,139,450	61,200,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11231	Sustainable and regenerative management of rice production in Pakistan	Pakistan	Asia	Multi	FAO	6,894,801	30,500,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11221	Regenerative livestock farming to promote sustainable landscapes	Peru	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	FAO	13,155,659	100,400,000	CEO PIF Cleared

11237	Transforming Agricultural Landscapes in Island Ecosystems and Key Biodiversity Areas towards Sustainable Food Systems and Climate Resilient Communities	Philippines	Asia	Multi	FAO	9,581,028	73,219,350	CEO PIF Cleared
11232	Revitalizing and transforming Solomon Islands' food system through sustainable agriculture and livestock production for enhanced environmental and community benefits.	Solomon Islands	Asia	Multi	FAO	4,742,966	15,500,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11227	Catalyzing sustainable aquaculture systems for South Africa	South Africa	Africa	Multi	FAO	4,742,965	30,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11233	Sustainable, regenerative and resilient rice-based food systems to strengthen community and ecosystem health in three river basins of Sri Lanka1	Sri Lanka	Asia	Multi	FAO	4,742,965	21,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11230	Food Systems Transformation in Usangu Landscape	Tanzania	Africa	Multi	FAO	836,290	85,250,000	CEO PIF Cleared
11234	Increasing the sustainability and resilience of agriculture/food system through nature-based solutions	Türkiye	Europe and Central Asia	Multi	FAO	4,804,128	30,000,000	CEO PIF Cleared

Stand-alone Projects

ID	Title	Country	Region	Focal Area	Agency	GEF Grant	Cofinancing	Project Status
GEF-6								
9194	Strengthening Adaptative Capacities to Climate Change through Capacity Building for Small Scale Enterprises and	Gambia	Africa	CC	UNIDO	2,200,000	9,621,062	Under Implementation

	Communities Dependent on Coastal Fisheries in The Gambia							
GEF-7								
10195	CSIDS-SOILCARE Phase1: Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) multicountry soil management initiative for Integrated Landscape Restoration and climate-resilient food systems	Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Regional	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	FAO	7,515,936	16,000,000	Under Implementation
10866	Comprehensive land management in forestry and agri-food systems of three water basins in Argentina to contribute to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and to mitigation and adaptation to climate change	Argentina	Latin America and Caribbean	LD	CAF	2,623,377	24,971,732	CEO Endorsement Cleared
10694	Integrated Landscape Management for Addressing Land Degradation, Food Security and Climate Resilience Challenges in The Bahamas	Bahamas	Latin America and Caribbean	LD	UNEP	5,717,580	15,092,080	Under Implementation
10207	Building climate resilient livelihoods in vulnerable landscapes in Bangladesh (BCRL)	Bangladesh	Asia	CC	FAO	8,932,420	47,460,000	Under Implementation
11011	Mainstreaming Sustainable Marine Fisheries Value Chains into the Blue Economy of the Canary Current and the Pacific Central American Coastal Large Marine Ecosystems	Global	Global	IW	UNDP	10,733,945	47,572,083	CEO Endorsement Cleared

10511	Crop Diversity Conservation for Sustainable Use in Indonesia	Indonesia	Asia	Biodiversity	FAO	6,192,694	92,815,024	Under Implementation
10362	Resilient, productive and sustainable landscapes in Mali's Kayes Region	Mali	Africa	Multi	FAO	6,831,964	27,875,700	Under Implementation
10862	Sustainable food systems and integrated land/seascape management in the Marshall Islands	Marshall Islands	Asia	Multi	FAO	2,100,913	6,030,000	CEO Endorsement Cleared
10867	Towards Sustainable and Conversion-Free Aquaculture in Indonesian Seas Large Marine Ecosystem (ISLME)	Regional	Asia	IW	ADB	4,449,542	112,165,000	CEO Endorsement Cleared
10857	Strategies, technologies and social solutions to manage bycatch in tropical Large Marine Ecosystem Fisheries (REBYC-III CLME+)	Regional	Latin America and Caribbean	IW	FAO	5,329,452	30,336,212	Under Implementation
10919	Enhancing capacity for the adoption and implementation of EAF in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (EAf4SG)	Regional	Latin America and Caribbean	IW	FAO	1,776,484	7,814,157	Under Implementation
10517	Integrated Agro-ecosystem Approach for enhancing Livelihoods and Climate Resilience in Tuvalu	Tuvalu	Asia	LD	FAO	2,639,726	6,772,995	Under Implementation
GEF-8								
11270	Barbados - Accelerating transition to climate-resilient agrifood systems (BATCRAS)	Barbados	Latin America and Caribbean	CC	FAO	3,502,968	19,950,000	Council Approved

11453	Promoting social and ecological resilience in land-water-food systems in blue economy sectors in Benin	Benin	Africa	CC	AfDB	9,781,000	41,116,800	Council Approved
11100	Climate change adaptation of Cabo Verde's agri-food systems for improved food security and livelihoods	Cabo Verde	Africa	CC	FAO	2,639,726	15,000,000	Council Approved
10980	Enhancing Land Management and Strengthening Ecosystem Resilience for Integrated Landscape Restoration and Climate-Resilient Food Systems in Carriacou, Grenada	Grenada	Latin America and Caribbean	LD	UNEP	863,242	2,300,000	Under Implementation
11411	A Holistic Approach to Food Systems Resilience and Adaptation in Maldives	Maldives	Asia	CC	FAO	2,639,726	3,000,000	Council Approved
11401	Climate resilient transformation of rice-based farming and food systems in central Nepal (CRAFT Nepal)	Nepal	Asia	CC	FAO	9,781,000	10,000,000	Council Approved
11390	CSIDS SOILCARE Phase 2 - Caribbean Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) multi-country soil management initiative for integrated Landscape Restoration and climate-resilient food systems	Regional	Latin America and Caribbean	LD	FAO	17,968,099	26,500,000	Council Approved
11066	Yield Lab Opportunity Fund I: Accelerating technology and local innovation for sustainable and decarbonized food systems in Latin America and the Caribbean.	Regional	Latin America and Caribbean	Multi	IADB	6,000,000	27,275,000	CEO Endorsement Cleared

Annex 3: Food Systems Approach Framework

GEF FOOD SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

This draft framework establishes the expected benefits of using an integrated food systems approach, compared to a non-food systems baseline approach. Each food systems approach (FSA) claim has been developed based on a review of food systems program PFDs and

evaluations (e.g., RFS TE). This framework would also inform the design of the QAE tool, Implementation Document review and Interview topic guides. GEF FS framework • ICF Public Sector (mural.co)

This evaluation adopts a holistic food systems approach (FSA) by emphasizing systems thinking and integrated solutions to environmental, social, and economic challenges within food systems. It is structured around four core claims, each linked to specific pathways or assumptions and accompanied by clearly defined evaluation criteria across multiple sources such as project documentation, stakeholder interviews, and case studies.

1. Systems integration and alignment with national goals

   Programs and projects are expected to address multiple Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs) across all relevant food system elements—natural, core, and value chain. The evaluation seeks evidence of alignment with country-specific food systems challenges and broader national development goals. Emphasis is placed on cross-boundary integration, including transboundary trade and science-policy coordination. The evaluation looks for evidence on integrated project designs that reflect systemic interdependencies and promote sustainability at both national and transnational levels.

2. Addressing root causes through integrated design

   A key principle is the identification and systemic resolution of root causes of food system challenges, including environmental degradation, social inequities, and economic vulnerabilities. The evaluation focused on whether project designs are informed by multidimensional analyses and whether interventions are interlinked, aiming to tackle underlying issues from diverse perspectives. Data collection in the field further explored the actual effectiveness of these interventions in reducing root causes and whether the project components reinforce one another to yield sustained impact.

3. Stakeholder engagement and multi-level governance

   Effective food systems require broad stakeholder engagement. The evaluation looks for evidence of inclusive and strategic engagement across multiple levels—local to international—and actors—from producers to policymakers. Projects should be designed based on thorough stakeholder analysis and facilitate multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) for dialogue and coordination. The evaluation assesses the quality and sustainability of these engagement mechanisms and their role in fostering long-term governance structures.

4. Synergistic outcomes across food system dimensions

   Finally, the evaluation approach emphasizes the importance of achieving positive and complementary outcomes across the food system, including environmental

sustainability, food and nutrition security, economic resilience, and health. Projects should demonstrate layered, integrated activities designed to produce cross-sectoral benefits. The evaluation approach seeks tangible evidence of outcomes in multiple areas, synergistic effects between them, and effective management of trade-offs. Beneficiary perspectives were crucial in validating the actual synergies achieved.

Overall, this evaluation approach aims at rigorously testing whether food system interventions embody systems thinking, promote multi-sectoral integration, and lead to sustainable, multidimensional improvements in food system outcomes.

Holistic food systems approach (FSA) claim	Pathway/assumption	What to look for
Programs/projects ultimately aim at achieving mutually reinforcing environmental benefits across all relevant elements of the food system with projects integrated in a way that reflects systems thinking, including across national boundaries	Programs/projects address multiple Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs) in each relevant element of the entire food system (natural elements, core system elements, value chain elements) Programs/projects have overarching objectives well aligned with the main food systems challenges in the country that contribute to broader national goals Programs/projects have components and activities that consider and support food systems across national boundaries (for example transboundary trade and commodity supply chains etc.) Programs/projects include design elements that support stronger integration of policy and science aspects across scales in the food system, including cross-sectoral relationships	QAE: - Evidence of programs/projects addressing multiple GEBs - Evidence of programs/projects addressing multiple dimensions of the food system, guided by country challenges - Evidence of program/project components supporting cross-boundary issues - Evidence of program/project components supporting better food system integration in terms of policy and science linkages

Programs/projects adequately identify and appropriately address the root causes of environmental, social and economic challenges in the food system in an integrated manner	Programs/projects show an understanding of the different drivers of environmental, social and economic challenges in the food system and the relationships between them Programs/projects have design elements that address the root causes of food systems challenges in an integrated way and address systemic issues 164. Programs/projects have components that are linked and build on each other to tackle the underlying challenges from multiple angles/perspectives	QAE: - Evidence of programs/projects informed by a robust analysis of the multiple drivers - Evidence of program/project design elements aimed at addressing root causes Interviews: - Extent to which programs/projects are addressing root causes - Extent to which program/project components are linked and build on each other - Extent to which programs/projects achieved to positively contribute to diminishing root causes of food system challenges •
165. Programs/projects engage with various actors in the food system at different levels in a coordinated way, facilitating sustainable governance mechanisms that support such interactions	Programs/projects show design elements that adequately identify various actors in the food system including operational value chain actors (such as farmers, traders and processors) and supporting or enabling actors (such as government or science)	QAE: - Evidence of program/project design informed by robust stakeholder mapping and analysis - Evidence of program/project components aimed at facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement

	Programs/projects activities target multiple food system actors at different levels of intervention (individual, household, farm, PO, national and regional etc.) Programs/projects engage with the various actors in an integrated and coherent way at all levels through dedicated and inclusive mechanisms such as multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs)	Implementation Document review: - Number of stakeholder groups (e.g., farmers, government agencies, NGOs, private sector) actively involved in project planning, implementation, and monitoring Interviews: - Evidence of multi-level coordination platforms, meetings or forums bringing together actors from local, national, and international levels to collaborate on food system challenges - Evidence of project activities that involve multi-level partnerships, where actors from different levels of the food system work together to achieve common goals - Evidence of purposeful, sustainable (well-resourced) and inclusive platforms
Programs/projects achieve positive, complementary and synergetic outcomes in all relevant outcome areas of the food system	Programs/projects have design elements showing relevant outcomes in environmental management and sustainability (including relevant GEF focal areas and GEBs), food security, nutrition and health, resilience and other socio-economic benefits	QAE: - Evidence of expected key program/project outcomes in all relevant areas - Evidence of integrated project activities designed in multiple sectors and related outcomes

	Programs/projects show a level of synergies between outcome areas (where improvements in one area lead to benefits in other areas) Programs/projects have layered and integrated activities that are clearly designed to lead to positive changes across different elements of the food system	Implementation Document review: - Evidence of projects achieving outcomes and/or having clearly defined targets in more than one area of the food system showing improvement within a specific time frame as a result of project activities - Evidence of synergies between program/project outcomes ● Interviews: - Evidence of synergies between program/project outcomes - Evidence of managing trade-offs between the different outcome areas Case studies: - Evidence of beneficiaries reporting multiple benefits across different outcome areas - Evidence of beneficiaries reporting engagement in integrated project activities in multiple sectors

Annex 4: Programmatic Value Addition Framework

GEF FOOD SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK for PROGRAMMATIC VALUE ADDITION

In the impossibility to conduct counterfactual analysis due to the limited availability of completed child and stand-alone food system projects, this framework establishes the expected benefits of using a programmatic approach, compared to a non-programmatic baseline approach. Each programmatic value addition (PVA) claim has been developed based on a review of food systems Program Framework Documents (PFDs) and program evaluations (e.g., the Resilient Food Systems Terminal Evaluation). It also reflects GEF IEO guidance on how to evaluate integrated programs.

This framework has been developed to inform the design of the PVA-focused online survey that will be administered to GEF Agency and country project teams as a component of the GEF Food Systems Programs Evaluation. It also informs the design of the two templates being developed to review food system project documents, namely the Quality at Entry (QAE) template and the Implementation Document Review (IDR) template covering PIRs, MTRs and TEs. This PVA framework will inform the design of central level interview guidelines as well.

Programmatic value addition (PVA) claim	Pathway / assumptions	What to look for
Program guidance strengthens the design of Child Projects (CPs) to enhance results and interaction	Programs generate and share guidance and knowledge (e.g., best practice, innovation) with CPs early in the design process Agencies and governments use this guidance and knowledge to inform design because they recognize its value (rather than being imposed) CPs have common components / themes that support relevance of interaction, learning, and experimentation CPs include design elements that support stronger integration, including addressing relationships among system elements across scales	QAE: - Evidence of incorporating guidance and/or knowledge from program level - Common components to enable interaction and learning - Activities and budget for engagement with the global hub project - Activities designed to work across higher scales (e.g., regional, global) Interviews (*to be translated into questions in interview guides*): - Extent to which knowledge and innovation (and approaches to be tested) shared by the parent program flowed into CPs: Why / why not? - Extent to which multi-scale elements are reflected in CPs: Why / why not? - Whether countries perceived value for design in the knowledge and innovations shared by the parent programs: Why / why not?

Enhanced knowledge and support improve implementation of CPs through adaptive management and informs future programming	Programs use effective tools/techniques to generate, capture, and disseminate knowledge (e.g., websites, global versus regional events, communities of practice, peer-to-peer learning) to country representatives involved in CPs and similar programming Hub projects provide direct technical support to CPs to manage the complexity of an integrated approach, including helping them engage with policymakers and science partners; and CPs want and demand this support Effective feedback loops are established that facilitate timely course correction CP and hub project implementation is adaptively managed based on knowledge gained, to increase effectiveness and results Lessons and best practices learned inform subsequent projects/programs and policies/strategies in CP countries	IDR: - Evidence of (a) adaptive management (b) that is linked to programmatic learning or support - Explicit references to knowledge products, solutions, or tools generated by the program - Evidence of strategies designed to create synergies between GEBs and social and economic co-benefits. Interviews / survey: - Examples of adaptive management based on learning from program participation and hub project support during CP implementation: Why / why not? - Examples where IP best practices have been mainstreamed into new projects/programs and policies/strategies: Why / why not? - Examples of solutions and tools that were not explicitly planned but emerged through collaboration and delivered value. - Compelling examples of success in pursuing a) synergies between GEBs and social and economic co-benefits b) and solutions and tools that were not explicitly planned but emerged through collaboration and delivered values, and their challenges/ pitfalls if any.

Using an integrated program enables a multi-scale approach that delivers outcomes at regional and global level and with value chain actors for globally traded products	Programs establish vertical[37] connections that would otherwise not be possible in a single country project A critical mass of engaged CPs provides a leverage effect for value chain actors, investors/financers, and global policy fora/institutes working at multinational scale, motivating and influencing those actors to adopt more responsible and sustainable practices	IDR: - Evidence of CP activities implemented that involve (a) vertical engagement with value chain actors, investors/financers, and global policy fora/institutes working at multinational scale and (b) that this engagement is linked to environmental benefits - Evidence of vertical engagement through governance to ensure that the expected GEBs and financial returns are both delivered, especially when impact pathways are longer. - Evidence of support from global hub project for vertical engagement Interviews / survey: - Extent to which programs are successfully linking VC actors in countries with demand side: Why / why not? - Whether mass of CPs has been sufficient to motivate VC actors to engage and change practices: Why / why not?

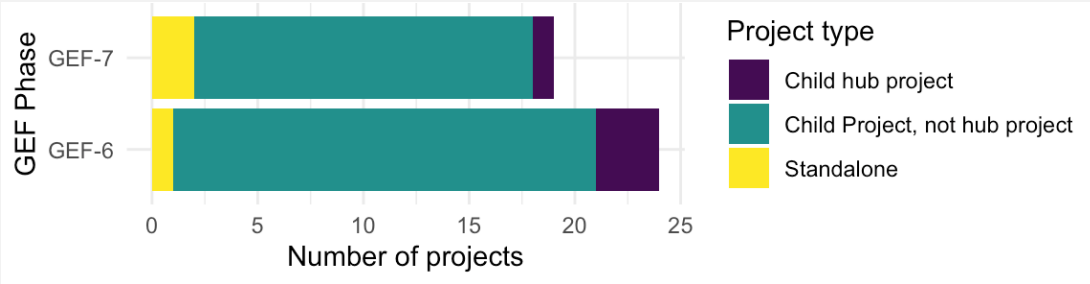
[37] Partnerships linking national actors to regional and global platforms and coalitions, as well as value chain actors for globally traded products (linking VC actors in countries with demand side)

Engaging with a wider set of global stakeholders (e.g., other development and technical partners, networks of civil society and private sector organization) results in a greater impact beyond the immediate scope of the program, by spreading best practices and innovations and inspiring replication	The learning value of the IP extends within and beyond the program actors themselves A broader set of global stakeholders participate in global programming activities and are exposed to program-generated knowledge, which is convincing enough to motivate them to act Participating global stakeholders apply something they have learned to their own practices / policies. Partners and stakeholders work together to develop or consolidate approaches or methods.	IDR: - Evidence in hub projects of influencing the practices or policies of global stakeholders - Evidence of finance mobilized for food systems investment through program implementation Interviews / survey: - Examples of program partners and global stakeholders using knowledge gained through participation in program activities - Additionality of GEF in linking up with existing Agency-led platforms and efforts - Other examples of inspiring replication of best practices or innovation - Enhanced or intensified collaboration within or beyond the IP

Annex 5: Implementation Document Review Analysis

The analysis covered a total of 43 projects, comprising 24 GEF-6 and 19 GEF-7 projects. Of these, 3 were stand-alone projects and 40 were child projects.

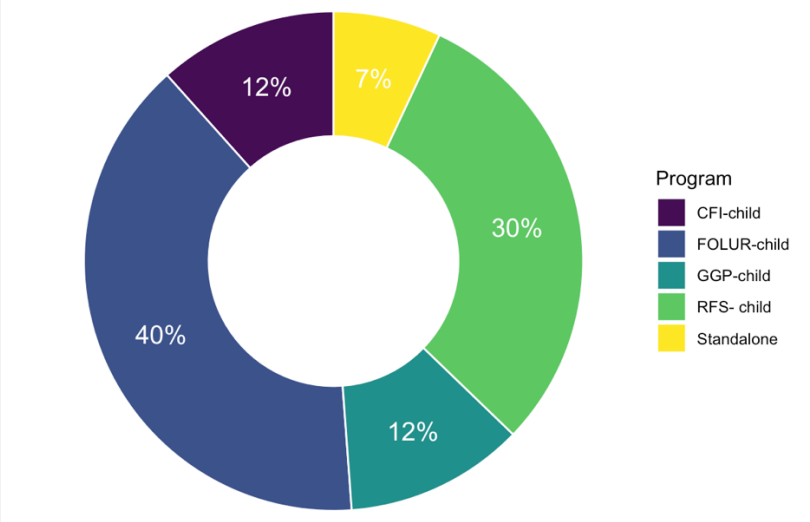
Figure 1 Project types by GEF Phase



Source: IEO analysis

Among the 43 projects analyzed, 17 (about 40 percent) were FOLUR child projects, 13 (30 percent) were RFS child projects, 5 (12 percent) were GGP child projects, 5 (12 percent) were CFI child projects, and 3 (7 percent) were stand-alone projects.

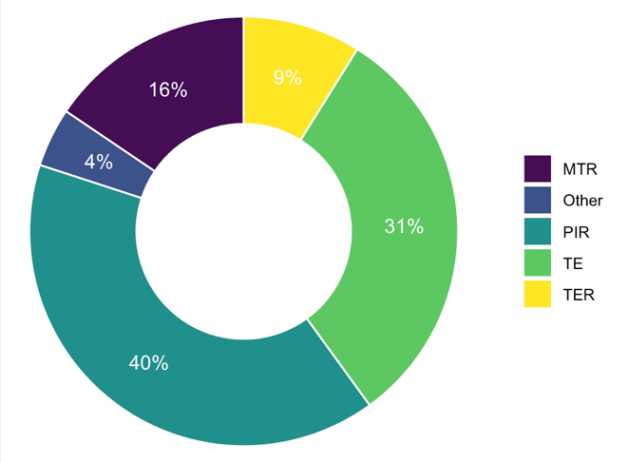
Figure 2 Project types by IP



Source: IEO analysis

Evidence was drawn from multiple sources, notably 18 Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), which represented the most frequently used source. Additional sources included 14 Terminal Evaluation (TE) reports, 7 Midterm Reviews (MTRs), and 4 Terminal Evaluation Reviews (TERs), among others.

Figure 3 Sources of evidence

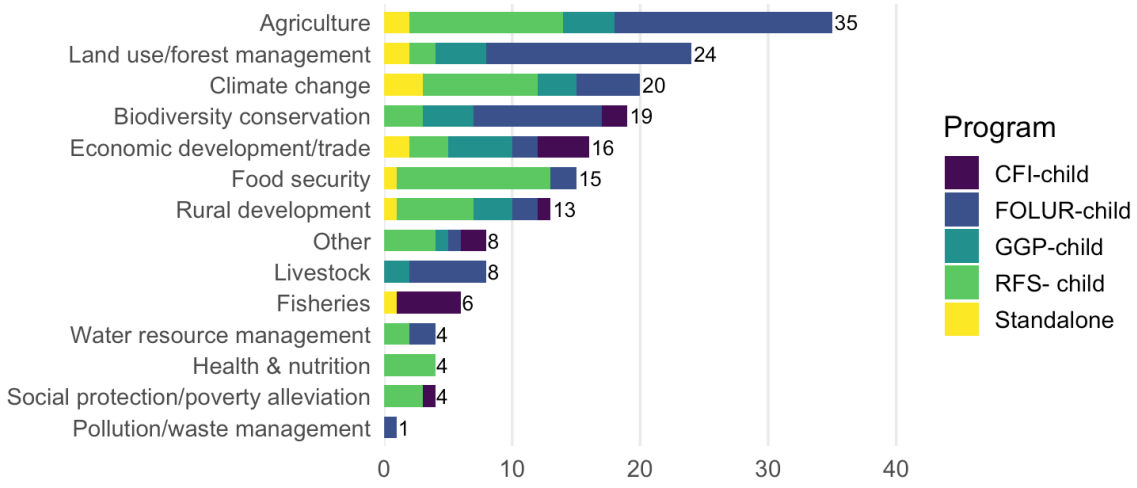


Source: IEO analysis

Relevance to national policy, priorities, and needs

Across the 43 projects analyzed, the sectors most frequently assessed as relevant to countries' policies, programs, priorities, and needs were agriculture (35 projects, or 81 percent), **land use and forest management** (24 projects, or 56 percent), **and climate change** (20 projects, or 47 percent). Other sectors with notable relevance included biodiversity conservation (19 projects, or 44%) and economic development and trade (16 projects, or 37%).

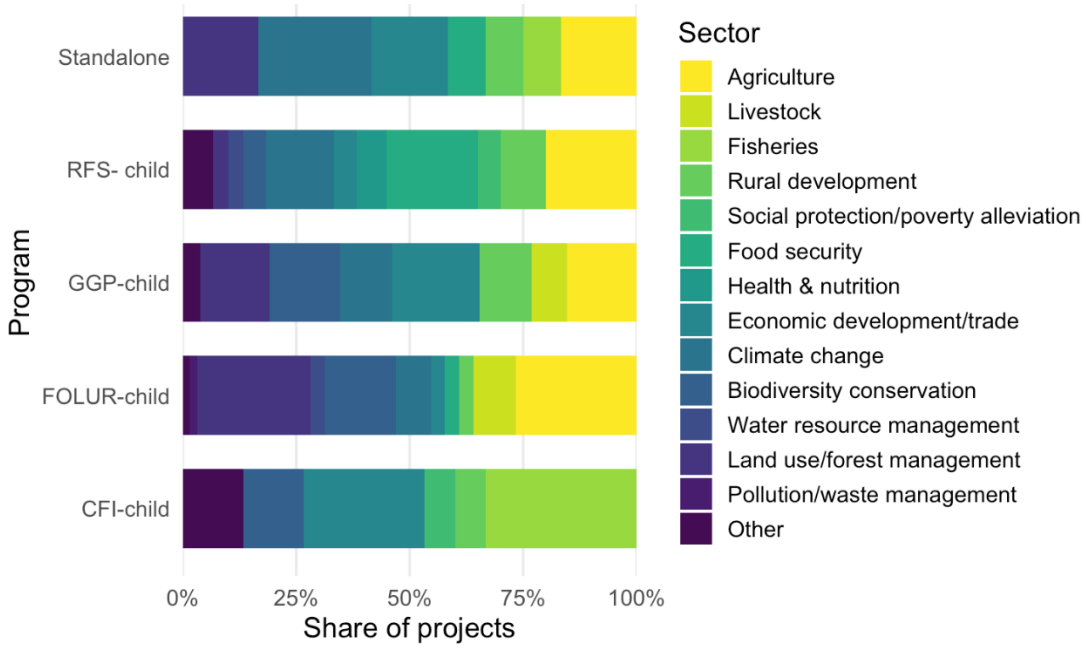
Figure 4 Project relevance to key sectors (# of projects)



Source: IEO analysis (Q6)

Sectoral relevance also varied by program. For example, FOLUR child projects emphasized agriculture (17 projects) and land use (16 projects). CFI projects mostly highlighted policy relevance in fisheries (5 projects) and economic development (4 projects). Food security relevance was prominent in RFS child projects, along with agriculture.

Figure 5 Sectoral relevance across programs (% of mentions)



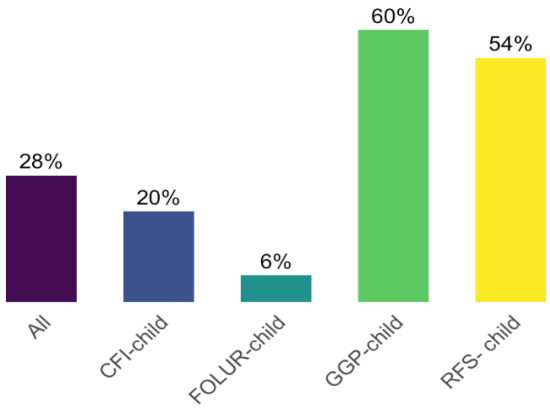
Source: IEO analysis (Q6)

Knowledge sharing

Out of the 43 projects, 12 (about 28 percent) reported knowledge sharing or joint activities related to food systems with other donor-funded projects in the country. RFS child projects and GGP child projects stood out, with 54 percent and 60 percent respectively reporting such activities. In contrast, FOLUR and CFI child projects had very limited reporting, with only one project each (6 percent and 20 percent, respectively). Stand-alone projects reported no such activities. **Among the 12 projects that did report knowledge sharing, all indicated that these efforts occurred at multiple geographic levels** - national, intermediate (state or regional), district or community level, and across levels.

Notably, **none of the 43 projects reported any conflicts or duplications with other donor initiatives in the country**.

Figure 6 FS-related knowledge sharing or joint activities, with other donor funded projects in the country (% of projects)



Source: IEO analysis (Q10, Q11, Q12)

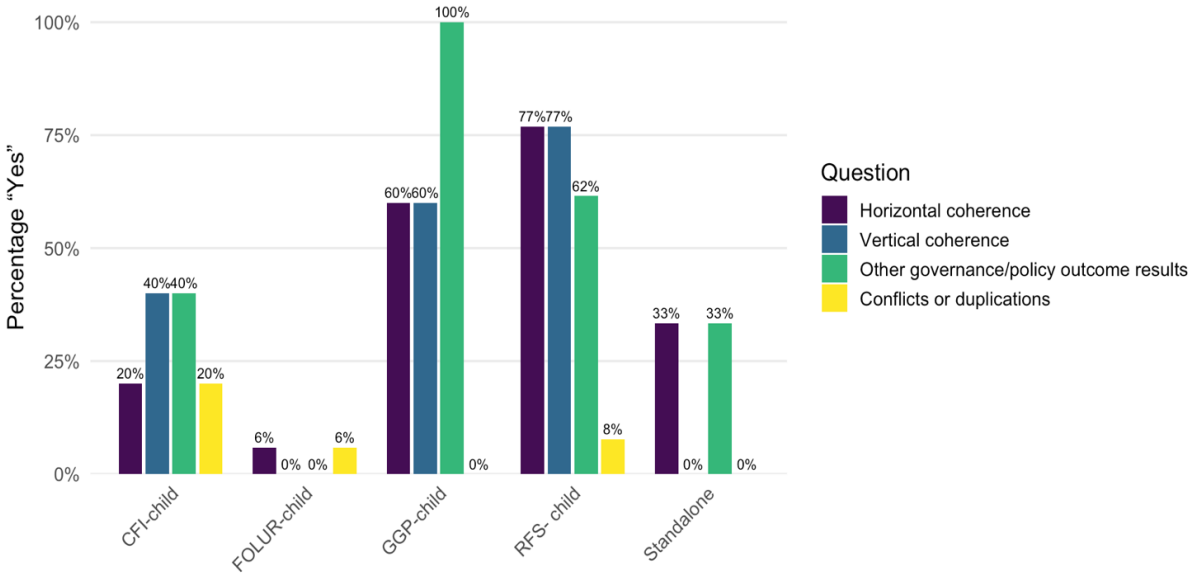
Policy coherence

Out of the 43 projects analyzed, 16 (about 37 percent) reported results related to **horizontal policy coherence,** 15 (35 percent) to **vertical coherence,** and 16 (37 percent) to **other governance or policy outcomes,** such as multi-stakeholder platforms.

Policy coherence outcomes varied across programs. RFS child projects consistently reported the highest levels of coherence, with 77 percent of projects indicating both horizontal and vertical coherence results. GGP child projects also demonstrated strong coherence, with 60 percent reporting both horizontal and vertical coherence, and all (100 percent) noting other policy or governance outcomes. In contrast, FOLUR child projects had low coherence reporting, with only 6% indicating horizontal and none reporting vertical or other governance outcomes. Stand-alone and CFI child projects showed more mixed patterns, with moderate levels of horizontal and other governance coherence, but limited vertical alignment.

Finally, **conflicts or duplications with initiatives supported by other donors** in the country were reported in 3 projects (7 percent of total), one each in CFI, FOLUR and RFS.

Figure 7 Policy coherence results

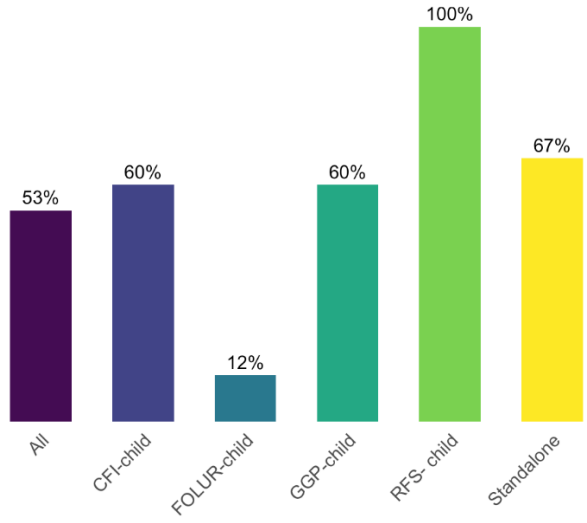


Source: IEO analysis (Q15, Q17, Q19, Q21)

Gender

Out of the 43 projects analyzed, 23 projects (53 percent) reported at least one **outcome related to gender**. RFS child projects performed particularly well, with all 13 projects (100 percent) reporting gender outcomes. High rates were also observed in GGP and CFI child projects (60 percent each). In contrast, only 12 percent of reviewed FOLUR child projects reported gender outcomes.

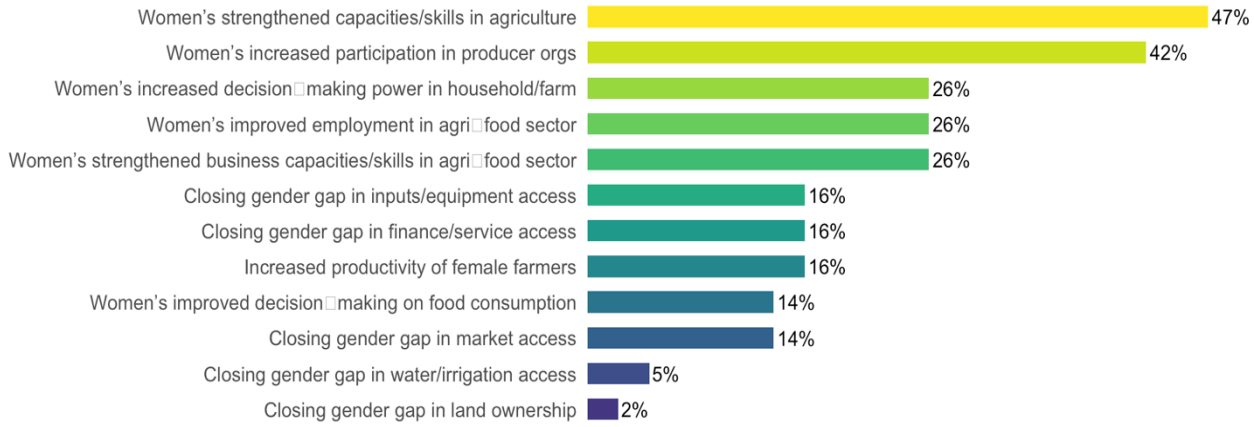
Figure 8 Gender outcomes (% of projects)



Source: IEO analysis (Q40)

The most commonly reported gender-related outcomes were **women's strengthened capacities and skills in agriculture** (47 percent) and **increased participation in producer organizations** (42 percent). Other frequently cited outcomes included **enhanced decision-making power within the household or on the farm**, **improved employment in the agrifood sector**, and **strengthened business skills or capacities in agrifood value chains**, each reported by 26% of projects.

Figure 9 Commonly reported gender outcomes (% of projects)

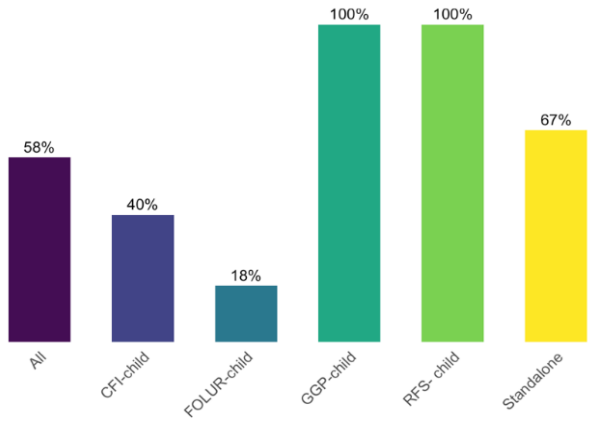


Source: IEO analysis (Q40)

Inclusion

Out of the 43 projects analyzed, 25 (58 percent) reported at least one **outcome related to inclusion**. RFS and GGP child projects performed particularly well, with all of their projects (100 percent) reporting inclusion outcomes. In contrast, only 40 percent of reviewed CFI child projects and 18 percent of reviewed FOLUR child projects reported inclusion outcomes.

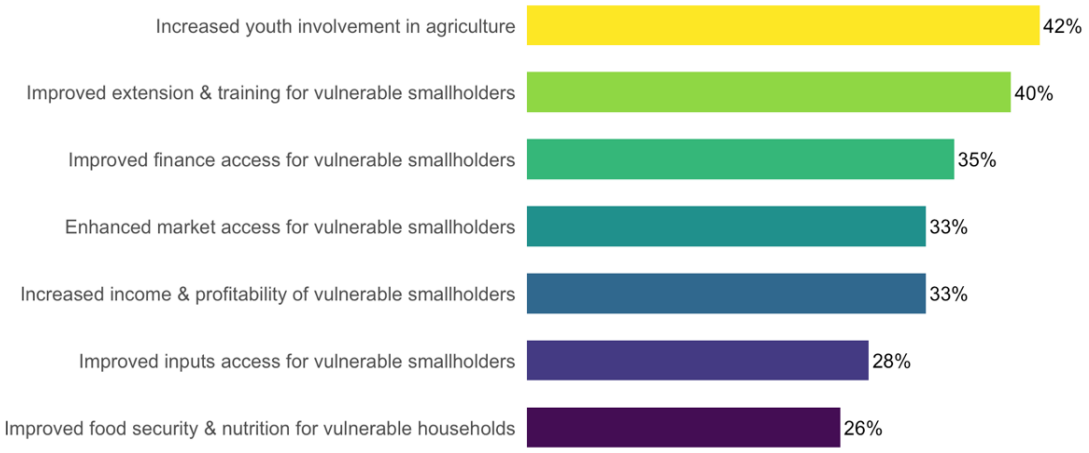
Figure 10 Inclusion outcomes (% of projects)



Source: IEO analysis (Q39)

The most commonly reported inclusion-related outcomes were **increased youth involvement in agriculture** (42 percent) and **improved extension and training for vulnerable** smallholders (40 percent). Other frequently cited inclusion outcomes for vulnerable smallholders included improved finance access (35 percent), enhanced market access (33 percent), and increased income and profitability (33 percent).

Figure 11 Commonly reported inclusion outcomes (% of projects)



Source: IEO analysis (Q39)

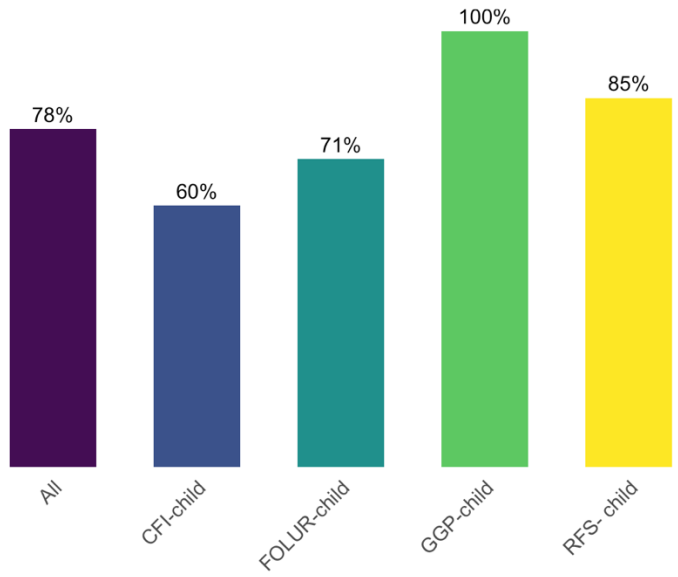
Use of traditional knowledge

Out of the 43 projects, 4 (9 percent) reported using traditional knowledge (TK). Of the 4 projects, 3 were RFS and 1 was FOLUR.

Alignment of child projects result framework with the global program

Among the child projects, about 78 percent reportedly aligned their project-level results framework with the global program. The percentage is the highest among GGP child projects (100 percent) and RFS child projects (85 percent).

Figure 12 Alignment of CP results framework with their global program (% of CPs)

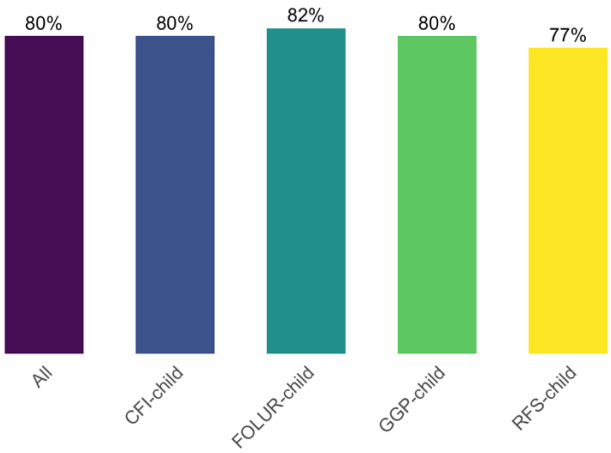


Source: IEO analysis (Q36)

Engagement with the hub project

Among the child projects, about 80 percent reportedly engaged with their hub project. The percentage is slightly higher among FOLUR child projects (82 percent). About 80 percent of CFI and GGP child projects reported some type of engagement with their hub project.

Figure 13 Engagement with the hub project by program (% of CPs)



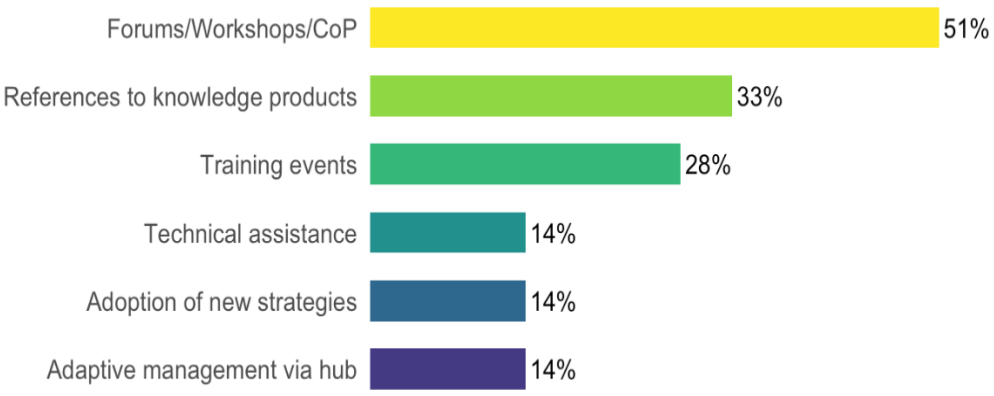
Source: IEO analysis (Q50)

Across the child projects, engagement with the project hub most often took the form of participation in global or regional forums, meetings, or related events. Over half (about 51

percent) of sampled CPs sent staff to global program-related forums, meetings, or workshops to share results and bring back lessons. These include Conference of Parties (CoP) meetings (ID 9133), the Global Landscape Forum, FOLUR African Dialogues (ID 10232), and the Mining Indaba conference (ID 10348).

Knowledge exchange was the next most common modality (33 percent). CPs drew on dashboards, white papers, toolkits and media libraries developed by hub partners. **Training events** also featured in about 28 percent of CPs. These range from formal workshops to sector-specific webinars, and from the roll-outs of monitoring tools to grassroots radio trainings. In Indonesia, FOLUR was actively involved in the CP representation at a global gender webinar (ID 10238).

Figure 14 Types of CP engagement with the hub project (% of CPs)

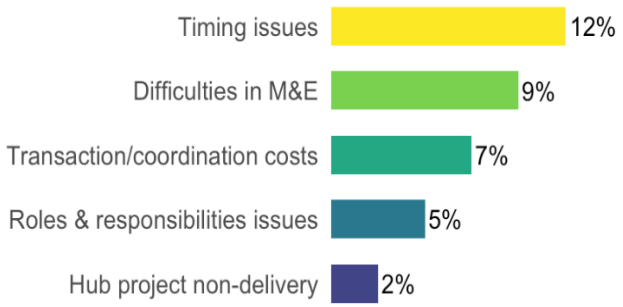


Source: IEO analysis (Q50, Q51)

Challenges in engagement with hub projects

The review highlights several challenges in CPs' engagement with hub projects, though evidence is limited. Commonly reported issues relate to timing, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) difficulties, and transaction and coordination costs. However, many of the source documents are early-stage Project Implementation Reports (PIR), where such challenges may not yet be fully visible or documented. **Delays in implementation were the most frequently cited challenge** (12 percent of sampled CPs)**.** Several child projects experienced significant delays due to slow team mobilization, postponed baseline surveys, or adjustments due to COVID-19, often resulting in project extensions. **M&E challenges also featured** in 9 percent of sampled CPs. In some cases, indicators were poorly defined or misaligned with the Theory of Change. **Transaction and coordination costs** further complicated implementation in some cases (7 percent of reviewed CPs). Multiple implementing agencies, reliance on global hub inputs, and complex governance structures often slowed decision-making and led to coordination fatigue.

Figure 15 Common challenges in engaging with the hub project (% of CPs)

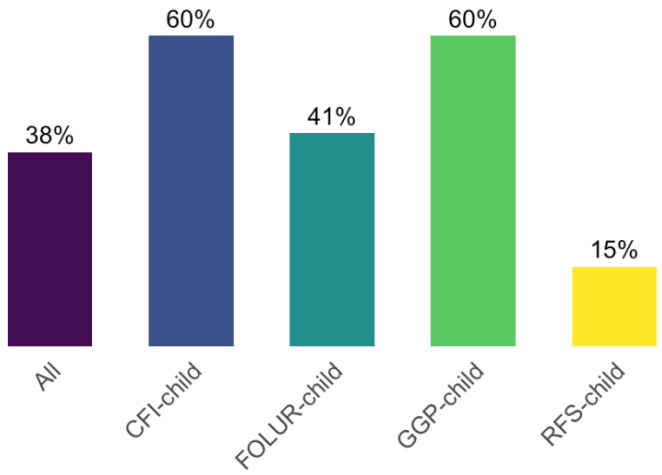


Source: IEO analysis (Q54, Q55)

Interaction between child projects

Among the child projects, about 38 percent reported engagement with other country CPs that are part of the same integrated program or impact program. The figure is the highest for CFI child projects and GGP child projects (about 60 percent in each).

Figure 16 Engagement with other country child projects (% of CPs)



Source: IEO analysis (Q52, Q53)

Where CP-to-CP engagement happened, it typically took the form of international meetings and dialogues, South-South exchanges and peer visits, or knowledge-sharing repositories. FOLUR CPs joined the Global Landscape Forum and FOLUR African Regional Dialogue in Nairobi (ID 10232), while Paraguay's FOLUR CP attended annual "Global Platform" meetings each year (ID 10464). Within the Food Security IAP, some CPs organized in-region exchanges (Kenya with Uganda, Ghana with Nigeria) and passed on their own small follow-up grants (ID 9140). Some CPs

built national exchange networks integrated with the global program platform (ID 10265), or shared gender data via a central "dashboard" under the umbrella project (ID 9143).

Lessons learned

Mid-term reviews (MTR) amd terminal evaluations (TE) offer useful lessons for designing or implementing future food systems interventions. Common themes include strong governance and coordination systems and stakeholder engagement practices. Other insights relate to the value of dedicated KM strategies, private sector partnerships, and tailored design.

Based on the evidence, food-systems interventions succeed when they pair strong governance with locally grounded practices. They include clearly defined roles, formal partnership protocols (MoUs), and dedicated program management units (PMU) to align hubs and child projects (ID 9140). In Eswatini, the CSARL project demonstrated how investing early in robust baseline data and gender-sensitive indicators can foster accountability (ID 9133). On the technical side, the Neer Tamba project in Burkina Faso highlights how securing land tenure and the provision of bundled "investment kits" (irrigation, storage, training) should be considered in future interventions (ID 9141). Project 9696 used blended finance incentives to lock in private-sector co-funding for sustainable soy and beef value chains.

Table 1 Selected lessons from

Theme	# of projects	Key insights
Coordination and governance	16	• **Early alignment** between hubs and child projects (define roles, set up MoUs, dedicate a full-time PMU, ID 9140) • **Clear intervention scope** (narrowly defined areas, ID 9140) • **Formal partnership mechanisms** (shared protocols, data-sharing frameworks) to avoid duplication and fragmentation (ID 9128)
Stakeholder engagement and ownership	12	• **Participatory processes** (chiefdom plans, community mapping, multi-actor workshops) for local buy-in (ID 9128) • Trust-building takes time - **leverage local champions** and "safe spaces" for dialogue (ID 9180)
Knowledge management	10	• **Robust KM strategies** – dedicated KM staff, periodic reviews, executive summaries (ID 9133) • **Lessons must feed back into new tools**/products (ID 9129)
Private sector role	7	• **Targeted incentives** (concessional/blended finance, co-funding) for corporate buy-in (ID 9696) • **Long-term funding readiness** and clear co-finance tracking for market linkages (ID 9126)
Design and implementation	6	• Land tenure security, integrated spatial planning, and **packaged "investment kits"** (sheds + irrigation + training) (ID 9141) • **Small design details** (biodegradable sandbags, invasive species control protocols)(ID 9143)
M&E	6	• Early investment in baseline data and gender-sensitive indicators (ID 9133) • **Separate "learning frameworks" (theory of change)** from **routine reporting metrics** to keep M&E agile (ID 9126)

Source: IEO analysis

Transformational change

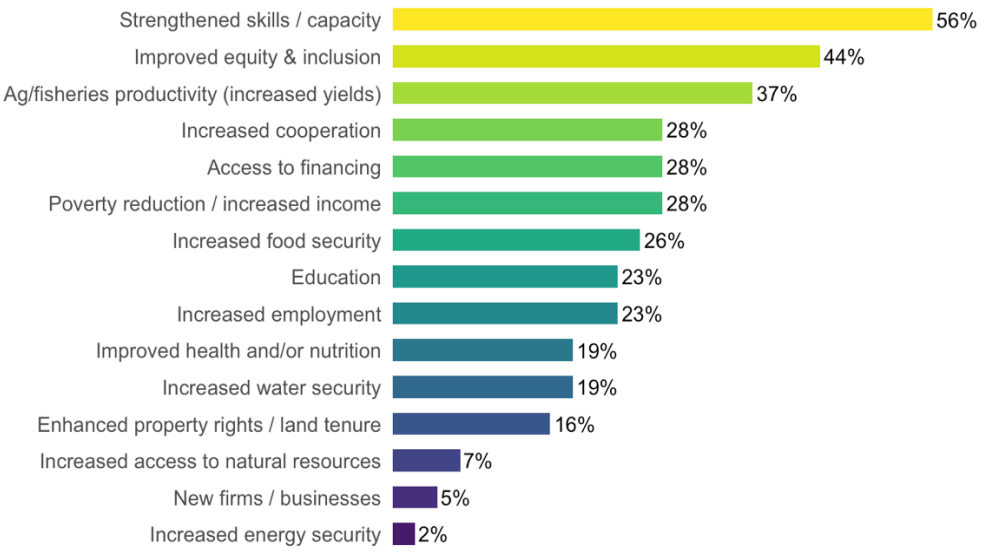
Socio-economic results

Among the projects reviewed, about 84 percent reported one or more positive socio-economic results. The most frequently cited benefits include strengthened skills and capacity, improved equity and inclusion, and increased agricultural or fisheries productivity.

More than half of projects (about 56 percent) leveraged training - whether in Good Agricultural Practices, extension services, or technical workshops - to set the stage for income, productivity, or resilience gains. In Thailand, the Inclusive Sustainable Rice Landscapes project trained more than 7,000 farmers in good agricultural practices (ID 10268). The ProDAF project in Niger built capacity for more than 13,000 producers through farmer field schools (ID 9136).

Projects that set explicit gender quotas in training or governance bodies also reported co-benefits for equity and inclusion (about 44 percent). In Burkina Faso, literacy classes under the project reached 90 percent of participating women (ID 9141). **Yield increases and other productivity gains** were reported in about 37 percent of sampled porjects. In Eswatini, the CSARL project saw tomato yields rise from 5.4 to 9.8 t/ha (ID 9133), the global Enabling Transactions project delivered a 45 percent boost in cattle productivity (ID 9696). Other notable gains included enhanced cooperation and expanded access to finance.

Figure 17 Positive socio-economic results (% of projects)

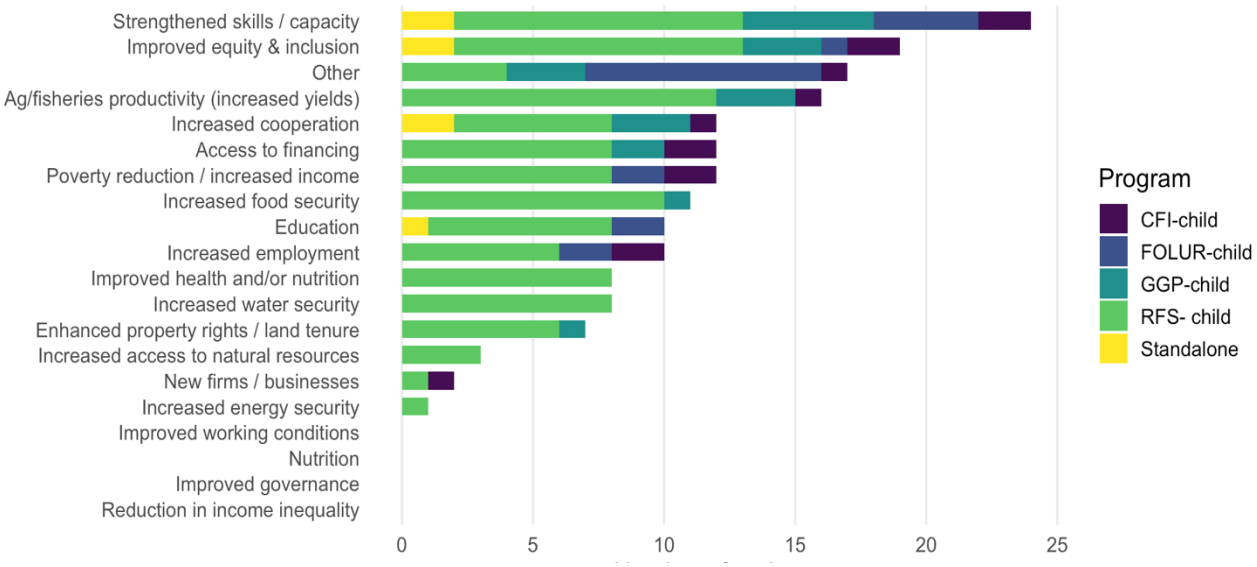


Source: IEO analysis

Socio-economic results varied across programs. Improved equity and inclusion, which is the second most common result, is especially prominent in RFS child and FOLUR child projects. RFS child projects consistently reported the highest number of positive socio-economic results overall,

often leading across most results. In contrast, CFI child and stand-alone projects reported fewer results.

Figure 18 Positive socio-economic results (# of projects)



Source: IEO analysis

Other intermediate results

In addition to socio-economic results, about 77 percent of the reviewed projects reported intermediate results that are relevant for advancing sustainable food systems. The most frequently cited results include: the establishment of linkages between science, research, and technology; improvements in agricultural extension practices; and the adoption of sustainable land and water management practices.

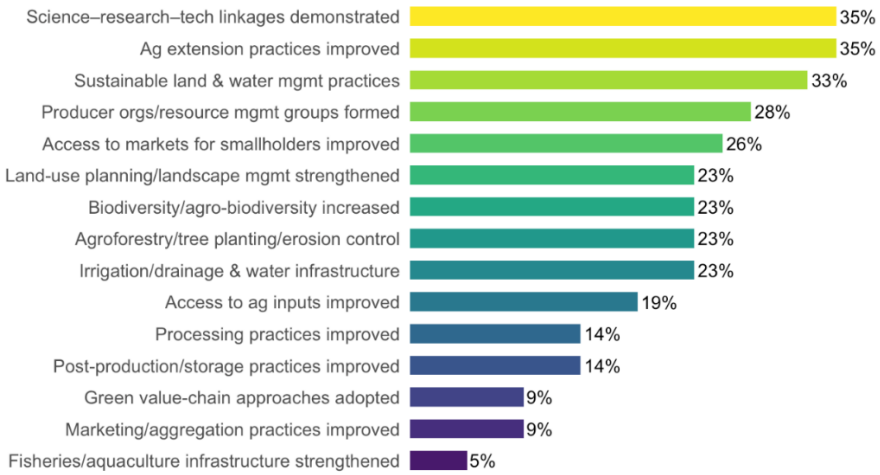
Around 35 percent of projects helped bridge the gap between research institutions and field implementation. In the Gambia, a partnership was being developed with the local technology university to support knowledge management activities (ID 9194). In Brazil, under the Commodities IAP, the child project co-developed an online map for sustainable land use in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution (ID 9167).

Improved agricultural practices are also prominent, with about one-third of projects (33 percent) invested heavily in capacity building. In Eswatini, Training of Trainers (ToT) for Ministry of Agriculture extension officers supported smallholder farmers (ID 9133). Similar initiatives were implemented in Tanzania (ID 9132) and Burundi (ID 9178), where facilitators of farmer field schools (FFS) were trained.

Sustainable land and water management practices were adopted in approximately one-third of the projects (33 percent). In Burundi, micro-watershed management plans were developed and implemented using Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Integrated Natural Resource

Management (INRM) approaches (ID 9178). In Ghana, nearly 16,000 hectares were brought under SLM practices, with adoption rates in target communities reaching up to 97 percent (ID 9340). In Niger, more than 31,000 hectares of degraded land were rehabilitated through combined mechanical and biological treatments, including erosion control structures and native vegetation planting (ID 9136).

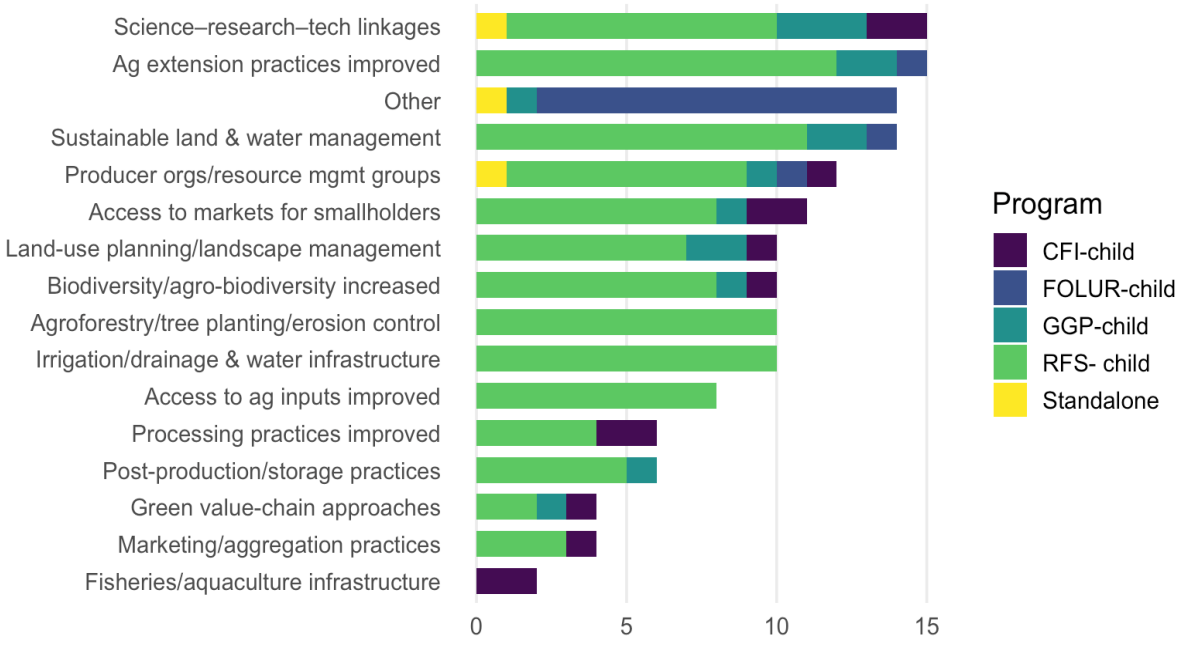
Figure 19 Other FS-relevant intermediate results reported (% of projects



Source: IEO analysis

Results varied across programs. **Science-research-technology linkages** and **improved agricultural extension practices** were particularly reported in **RFS child projects**. As with previous findings, **RFS child projects** consistently demonstrated the broadest range of intermediate results, while **CFI and stand-alone projects** reported fewer and more narrowly focused results.

Figure 20 Other FS-relevant intermediate results reported (# of projects)



Source: IEO analysis

Synergies between GEB and socio-economic results

About one in four projects (23 percent) discussed strategies that created synergies between global environmental benefits (GEB) and socio-economic results. Three broad patterns emerge: integrated multi-pillar packages, community-driven partnerships, and market/value chain linkages.

Several CPs combined technical, financial and social supports into cohesive interventions. In Burundi, a "resilience fund approach" linked watershed protection techniques with village savings and loan associations and community listening clubs to strengthen inclusion and social cohesion (ID 9178). In Ghana, the project bundled land-use planning, seedling distribution, payments for ecosystem services, and post-harvest marketing assistance into a single sustainable land-and-water management (SLWM) package (ID 9340).

A second pattern focus on empowering local institutions to co-own interventions. In Niger, a "concerted action" framework created community rooted structures to manage assisted natural regeneration sites as sources of timber and non-timber products, while aiming for benefits to remain within the communities (ID 9136).

Another approach explicitly connected environmental practices to market access and income opportunities. In Kenya, farmers involved in avocado and coffee value chains who adopted soil-and-water conservation measures were connected to new private-sector partnerships and commercial networks, transforming subsistence farms into commercially viable enterprises (ID 9139). In Nigeria, the CP addressed the interdependence between food security and ecosystem health, helping stakeholders see reduced land degradation through sustainable farming as integral to economic growth (ID 9143).

Innovative approaches/technologies

Nearly all of the projects (about 95 percent) reported the use of innovative approaches or technologies to support implementation and produce results. The most frequently cited innovations include digital platforms, geographic information system (GIS) and spatial information, spatial planning, and improved seed varieties.

About one quarter of projects reported using digital platforms (26 percent). Under the Food IAP, the Cross Cutting Capacity Building, Knowledge Services and Coordination project launched the RFS knowledge-management website with dashboards tracking user engagement, newsletters, monthly bulletins, technical reports, and field stories (ID 9140). The Commodities IAP supported the Trase platform, an online tool that promotes supply-chain transparency for forest-risk commodities (ID 9182). In the Caribbean, the CSIDS-SOILCARE project developed the Caribbean Soil Information System (CARSIS) to support the creation and use of digital soil maps (ID 10195).

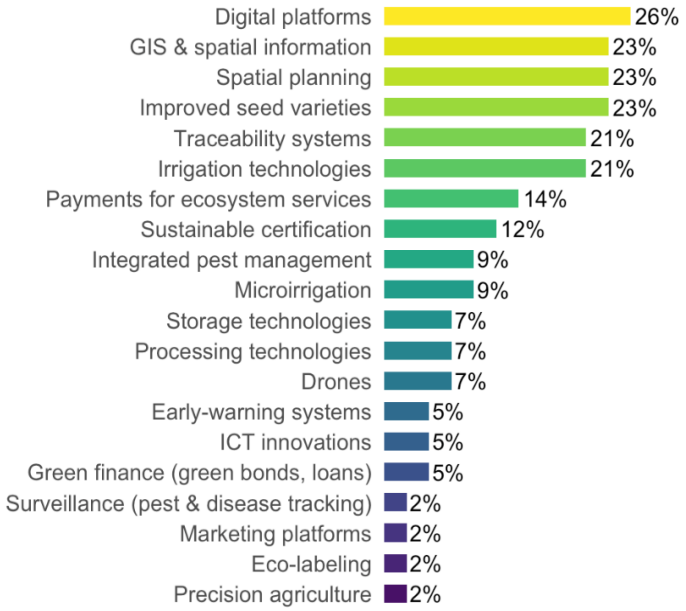
Projects applied GIS tools for monitoring, evaluation, and land-use planning (23 percent). In Paraguay, under the FOLUR IP, a GIS course was created for municipal staff alongside an integrated information system combining geospatial tools, an M&E platform, and decision-support functions (ID 10464). In the Reducing Deforestation project**,** 35 frontline conservationists were trained to operate a GIS-based monitoring system covering 5,000 ha of high-conservation-value forest (ID 9180). In Ghana, baseline geospatial data was collected to support integrated land-use planning (ILUP) in pilot communities, working with the State Geocadastre (ID 9340).

Spatial planning was used in 23 percent of projects to guide sustainable land and resource use. In Indonesia, stakeholders mainstreamed integrated landscape management (ILM) into district spatial plans, while developing a national traceability dashboard in coordination with the national government (ID 10238). In Ukraine, an "ILUP integrated methodology" was developed using GIS for landscape planning with a focus on biodiversity and environmental protection.

About 23 percent of projects reported the adoption of improved seed varieties. In Uganda's Karamoja region, the FOOD IAP's CP introduced Introduced high-yield, drought-resistant sorghum, cassava and sweet potato varieties, and set up demonstration gardens (e.g. irrigated vegetables via drip) to showcase agronomic best practices (ID 9137). In Burundi, the FOOD IAP's CP distributed seed potatoes, wheat seed and market-garden seeds, and established community seed banks with adapted varieties. In Burkina Faso, seedlings of local species (baobab, moringa, Ziziphus) were provided along with training on nursery creation to boost replanting efforts (ID 9141).

Other commonly cited innovative approaches or technologies include traceability systems (shell web-app and fisheries e-logging in CFI-LA, ID 9124), small-scale irrigation technologies (treadle pumps in Nigeria, ID 9143) and payments for ecosystem services (conditional tree-planting payouts in Ghana, ID 9340).

Figure 21 Innovative approaches or technologies used (% of projects)



Source: IEO analysis

Results reported at higher scales

About 23 percent of the projects reported results achieved at higher scales, beyond the household, farmer, or community level, including impacts at the sector level or along entire value chains. These results speak to the projects' contributions to policy formulation, industry standards, and scalable innovations, and can be broadly grouped into several patterns.

Several projects contributed directly to national policy frameworks or planning instruments. In Burkina Faso, the CP informed the National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES 2021–2025), supported the revision of the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), and helped shape the National Strategic Plan for Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral Investment (ID 9141). In Uganda, CP results were incorporated into the country's third National Development Plan (NDPIII) and influenced the passage of the 2021 Climate Change Act (ID 9137). In Kenya, the CP contributed to the formulation of four national and county-level policies covering wetlands, invasive species management, mining and quarry regulation, and rural road development (ID 9139).

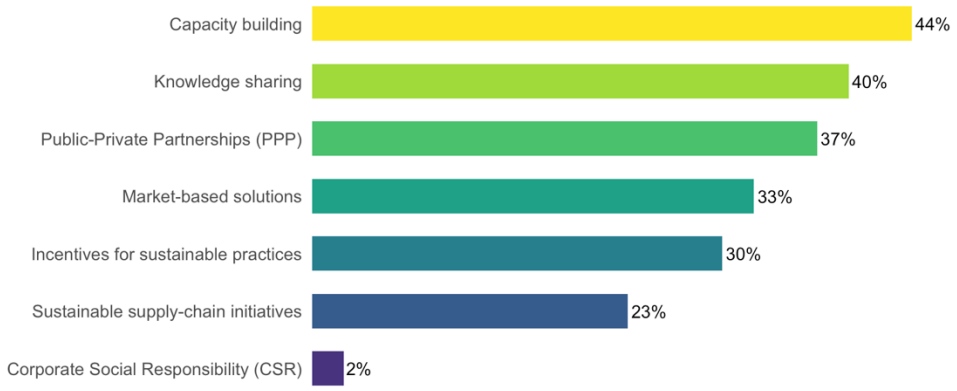
Some projects helped develop or mainstream standards to be adopted across sectors. The Soy Toolkit developed under the Commodities IAP has been used by companies to guide zero-deforestation commitments in agricultural supply chains (ID 9182). Under the CFI-LA program, rod-caught tuna from artisanal fisheries has been integrated into international markets through Fair Trade certification (ID 9124).

Innovations piloted under GEF-funded initiatives have been scaled up or replicated through complementary projects. In Senegal, soil phosphate application, wet sowing techniques, and integrated market gardens developed under the PARFA project were scaled through IFAD/GEF and World Bank-supported programs (ID 9134). National and sub-national commodity platforms established under the Reducing Deforestation from Commodity Production project have been adapted for use in other value chains, including soy (ID 9180).

Private sector engagement

About 63 percent of reviewed projects have reportedly engaged the private sector. The review reveals a diverse range of private sector engagement approaches across the projects. Among the reported strategies, the most commonly cited are capacity building (44 percent), knowledge sharing (40 percent), and public-private partnerships (37 percent).

Figure 22 Strategies used to engage the private sector (% of projects)



Source: IEO analysis

Engagement commonly took the form of **capacity-building and training** (44 percent). In Papua New Guinea, the project partnered with the Cocoa Board and milling companies to co-deliver smallholder training (ID 10239).

Public–private partnerships (PPPs) emerged as another frequent modality (37 percent). Under the RFS IAP, more than half CPs were already designed with a market orientation, which encouraged durable market linkages. Child projects like eSwatini and Niger collaborated with input suppliers, processors, and financial institutions to facilitate market access and credit (ID 9140). Projects also focused on value chain partnerships, brokering agreements and supporting contract farming models, such as in Uganda (ID 9137) and Nigeria (ID 9143).

Knowledge sharing activities were employed in 40 percent of the reviewed projects. Under the Commodities IAP, there are instances of multinational companies contributing to case studies on jurisdictional approaches (ID 9179, ID 9182). Sometimes, knowledge sharing activities were performed in tandem with with PPPs. For example, in Indonesia, a private sector engagement study was followed by multi-level PPPs dialogues to scope future co-investments (ID 10238).

Several projects mobilized **market-based solutions**. In Thailand, a revolving fund was combined with green loan programs and private sector incentives to promote sustainable rice production (ID 10268). In some cases, the private sector provided technical support and demonstration services. In China's Jiangxi province, private sector partners supported on-farm demonstrations (ID 10246).

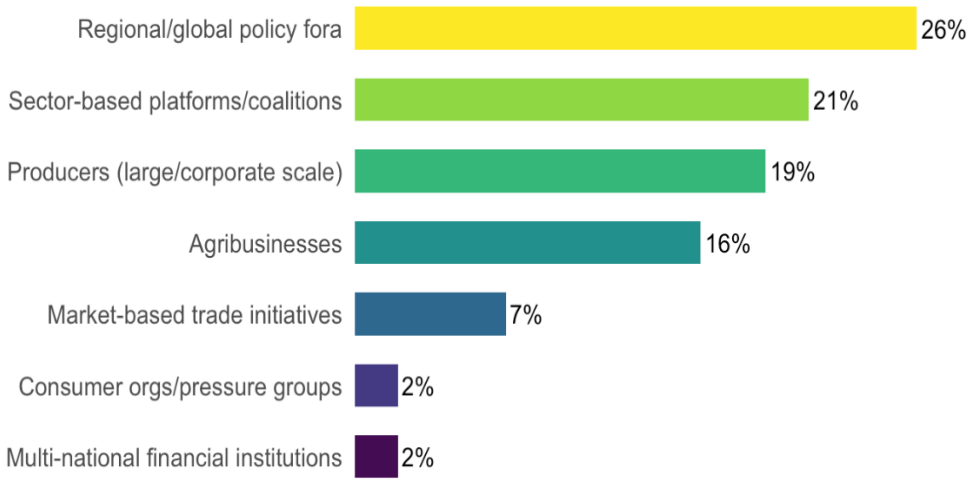
In a few cases (7 percent), private sector stakeholders have been included in the projects' **steering committees**. Similarly, a small minority of reviewed projects (about 9 percent) reported **private-sector-related GEB outcomes.** In Ethiopia, a dedicated outcome tracked the increase in investment flows to integrate natural resources management (ID 9135). In Nigeria, the project

tracked partnerships with private sector entities to develop interstate food commodity value chains under public-private partnerships (ID 9143).

Vertical engagement with value chain actors

The review highlighted a variety of vertical engagement activities, predominantly through global and sectoral policy fora, as well as sector-based platforms and supply-chain partnerships. **About 26 percent of reviewed projects referenced participation in high-level dialogues**. These include COP-26 webinars (ID 9140) and UN Food Systems Summit sessions (ID 9179), as well as Good Growth Partnership events (ID 9617) and regional water-fund forums (ID 9139). **Sector-based platforms & roundtables were mentioned by 21 percent of projects.** Multi-stakeholder roundtables (e.g. Paraguay's Mesa de Carne Sostenible, ID 9696), global consultations for fisheries (ID 9128), and competitions that unite coalitions and investors (9125) have been cited. **In 19 percent of cases, projects worked directly with large producers or cooperatives** (e.g. Paraguay, ID 9696; seed-producer networks, ID 9134) or with traders and processors (e.g.– 10264; ID 9180).

Figure 23 Common types of vertical engagement (% of projects)



Source: IEO analysis

Summary tables

Table 6 Policy coherence (Q15, Q17, Q19)

		CFI-child	FOLUR-child	GGP-child	RFS- child	Stand-alone
Horizontal coherence	*Count*	1	1	3	10	1
	Pct	20%	6%	60%	77%	33%
Vertical coherence	*Count*	2	0	3	10	0
	Pct	40%	0%	60%	77%	0%
Other governance/ policy outcomes	*Count*	2	0	5	8	1
	Pct	40%	0%	100%	62%	33%
Total	*Count*	**5**	**17**	**5**	**13**	**3**
	Pct	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Table 7 Types of gender outcomes reported

Outcome	Count	Pct of All
Women's improved decision-making on food consumption	6	14%
Women's increased participation in producer orgs	18	42%
Women's strengthened capacities/skills in agriculture	20	47%
Women's increased decision-making power in household/farm	11	26%
Women's improved employment in agri-food sector	11	26%
Women's strengthened business capacities/skills in agri-food sector	11	26%
Closing gender gap in land ownership	1	2%
Closing gender gap in livestock ownership	0	0%
Closing gender gap in inputs/equipment access	7	16%
Closing gender gap in water/irrigation access	2	5%
Closing gender gap in market access	6	14%
Closing gender gap in finance/service access	7	16%
Reduction in gender-based violence	0	0%
Increased productivity of female farmers	7	16%

Table 8 Gender outcomes reported

Program	Count	Total	Percent
All	23	43	53%
CFI-child	3	5	60%
FOLUR-child	2	17	12%
GGP-child	3	5	60%
RFS- child	13	13	100%
Stand-alone	2	3	67%

Table 9 Inclusion outcomes reported

Program	Count	Total	Percent
All	25	43	58%
CFI-child	2	5	40%
FOLUR-child	3	17	18%
GGP-child	5	5	100%
RFS- child	13	13	100%
Stand-alone	2	3	67%

Table 10 Types of inclusion outcomes reported

Outcome	Count	Pct of All
Increased income & profitability of vulnerable smallholders	14	33%
Enhanced market access for vulnerable smallholders	14	33%
Improved inputs access for vulnerable smallholders	12	28%
Improved finance access for vulnerable smallholders	15	35%
Improved extension & training for vulnerable smallholders	17	40%
Improved food security & nutrition for vulnerable households	11	26%
Increased youth involvement in agriculture	18	42%

Tabel 11: Reported indigenous knowledge

Program	yes_count	total	pct_yes
All	4	43	9%
CFI-child	0	5	0
FOLUR-child	1	17	6%
GGP-child	0	5	0
RFS- child	3	13	23%
Stand-alone	0	3	0

Table 12 Reported engagement with hub project

Program	Count	Total	Percent
All	32	40	80%
CFI-child	4	5	80%
FOLUR-child	14	17	82%
GGP-child	4	5	80%
RFS- child	10	13	77%

Table 13 Types of CP engagement with the hub project

Engagement	Count	Pct of All
Forums/Workshops/CoP	22	51%
References to knowledge products	14	33%
Training events	12	28%
Adaptive management via hub	6	14%
Adoption of new strategies	6	14%
Technical assistance	6	14%

Table 14 Common challenges in engaging with the hub project

Challenge	Count	Pct of All
Timing issues	5	12%
Difficulties in M&E	4	9%
Transaction/coordination costs	3	7%
Roles & responsibilities issues	2	5%
Hub project non-delivery	1	2%
Insufficient budget to participate	0	0%

Table 15 Engagement with other country CP

Program	yes_count	total	pct_yes
All	15	40	38%
CFI-child	3	5	60%
FOLUR-child	7	17	41%
GGP-child	3	5	60%
RFS- child	2	13	15%

Table 16 Positive socio-economic results

Result	Count	Pct of All
Strengthened skills / capacity	24	56%
Improved equity & inclusion	19	44%
Ag/fisheries productivity (increased yields)	16	37%
Poverty reduction / increased income	12	28%
Access to financing	12	28%
Increased cooperation	12	28%
Increased food security	11	26%
Increased employment	10	23%
Education	10	23%
Increased water security	8	19%
Improved health and/or nutrition	8	19%
Enhanced property rights / land tenure	7	16%
Increased access to natural resources	3	7%
New firms / businesses	2	5%
Increased energy security	1	2%

Table 17 Other FS-relevant intermediate results reported

Intermediate Result	Count	Pct of All
Ag extension practices improved	15	35%
Science–research–tech linkages demonstrated	15	35%
Sustainable land & water mgmt practices	14	33%
Producer orgs/resource mgmt groups formed	12	28%
Access to markets for smallholders improved	11	26%
Irrigation/drainage & water infrastructure	10	23%
Agroforestry/tree planting/erosion control	10	23%
Biodiversity/agro-biodiversity increased	10	23%
Land-use planning/landscape mgmt strengthened	10	23%

Access to ag inputs improved	8	19%
Post-production/storage practices improved	6	14%
Processing practices improved	6	14%
Marketing/aggregation practices improved	4	9%
Green value-chain approaches adopted	4	9%
Fisheries/aquaculture infrastructure strengthened	2	5%

Table 18 Innovative approaches or technologies used

Approach / Technology	Count	Pct of All
Digital platforms	11	26%
Improved seed varieties	10	23%
Spatial planning	10	23%
GIS & spatial information	10	23%
Irrigation technologies	9	21%
Traceability systems	9	21%
Payments for ecosystem services	6	14%
Sustainable certification	5	12%
Microirrigation	4	9%
Integrated pest management	4	9%
Drones	3	7%
Processing technologies	3	7%
Storage technologies	3	7%
Green finance (green bonds, loans)	2	5%
ICT innovations	2	5%
Early-warning systems	2	5%
Precision agriculture	1	2%
Eco-labeling	1	2%
Marketing platforms	1	2%
Surveillance (pest & disease tracking)	1	2%

Table 19 Strategies used to engage the private sector

Category	Count	Pct of All
Capacity building	19	44%
Knowledge sharing	17	40%
Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)	16	37%
Market-based solutions	14	33%
Incentives for sustainable practices	13	30%
Sustainable supply-chain initiatives	10	23%

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	1	2%

Table 20 Common types of vertical engagement

Engagement Type	Count	Pct of All
Regional/global policy fora	11	26%
Sector-based platforms/coalitions	9	21%
Producers (large/corporate scale)	8	19%
Agribusinesses	7	16%
Market-based trade initiatives	3	7%
Multi-national financial institutions	1	2%
Consumer orgs/pressure groups	1	2%

Annex 6: Quality-at-Entry Analysis

Universe of Analysis

Total project count	69
Number of child projects	52
CFI child projects	5
GGP child projects	5
RFS child projects	13
FOLUR child projects	28
FSIP child projects	1
Number of stand-alone projects	17

Design – Systems thinking

Outcomes addressed in the project design

- Food systems projects identified a wide range of outcomes, with the greatest focus on land degradation, deforestation, and biodiversity conservation.
    - Community resilience; decreased use of fossil energy resources; food safety and quality; and food waste management were rarely addressed.
- Child projects usually included related activities and indicators in the results framework to address the concerns identified in the project document.
    - The exceptions to this trend are poverty reduction (35% of projects identified as a concern, 13% included a specific indicator) and food security (42% of projects identified as a concern, 25% included a specific indicator).
    -
- **Child projects**

Outcome	Identified as a concern in the project document	Addressed in the project components/ activities	At least one indicator specified in the results framework
Conservation and enhanced carbon stocks in agriculture	21%	23%	21%
Maintaining capacity of natural systems to sequester carbon	35%	27%	27%
Decreased use of fossil energy resources	2%	12%	6%
Climate adaptation	33%	31%	19%
Land degradation	85%	81%	77%
Deforestation	75%	69%	62%
Water use	46%	37%	35%
Pollution, siltation, and eutrophication	27%	12%	8%
Biodiversity conservation	69%	71%	56%
Food security	42%	29%	25%
Nutrition	21%	12%	8%
Health (human or environmental)	12%	6%	6%
Food waste management	2%	2%	0%
Food safety and quality	4%	2%	2%
Poverty reduction	35%	17%	13%
Community resilience	4%	4%	2%
Enhanced sustainable livelihoods for local communities and forest-dependent people	37%	50%	48%
Fair and equitable benefits sharing	21%	27%	21%

Food system elements addressed in child project design

- Child projects focus heavily on production, followed by processing and distribution.
- Child projects address core food system elements through project activities more often than they are explicitly acknowledged in the project document or results framework.
    - Knowledge and finance are the main core system entry points.
- Child projects consistently address all natural system elements except for minerals.

Child Projects

Element	Identified as an element in the project document	Addressed in the project components/activities	At least one indicator specified in the results framework
Production	94%	92%	90%
Post-production/storage	10%	17%	10%
Processing	31%	37%	21%
Aggregation	10%	12%	4%
Distribution	23%	31%	21%
Consumption	19%	10%	10%

Access to natural resources	33%	25%	19%
Labor	10%	8%	10%
Inputs	25%	37%	13%
Knowledge	73%	92%	88%
Finance	58%	62%	52%
Other services	2%	2%	2%
Climate	56%	62%	52%
Water	40%	37%	33%
Seed, soil and land	77%	79%	75%
Minerals	4%	4%	2%
Ecosystems and genetics	65%	62%	62%

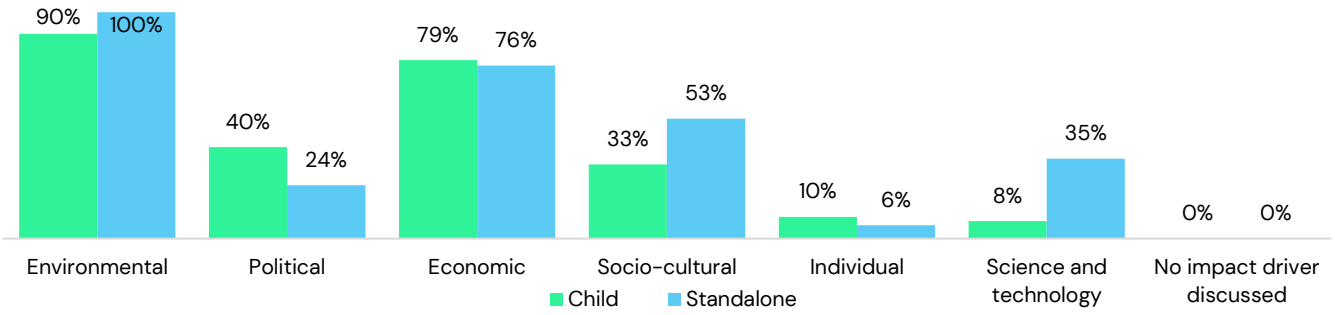
Other elements of systems thinking

- Child and stand-alone project activities alike targeted several levels, with a greater share of child projects targeting individuals and households.

Level	Child	Stand-alone
Individual / household	81%	65%
Farm / producer organization	48%	59%
Community	50%	71%
Landscape	83%	47%
Value chain/supply chain	63%	65%
Regional	42%	12%
National	60%	82%
Supra-national/ transboundary	13%	18%

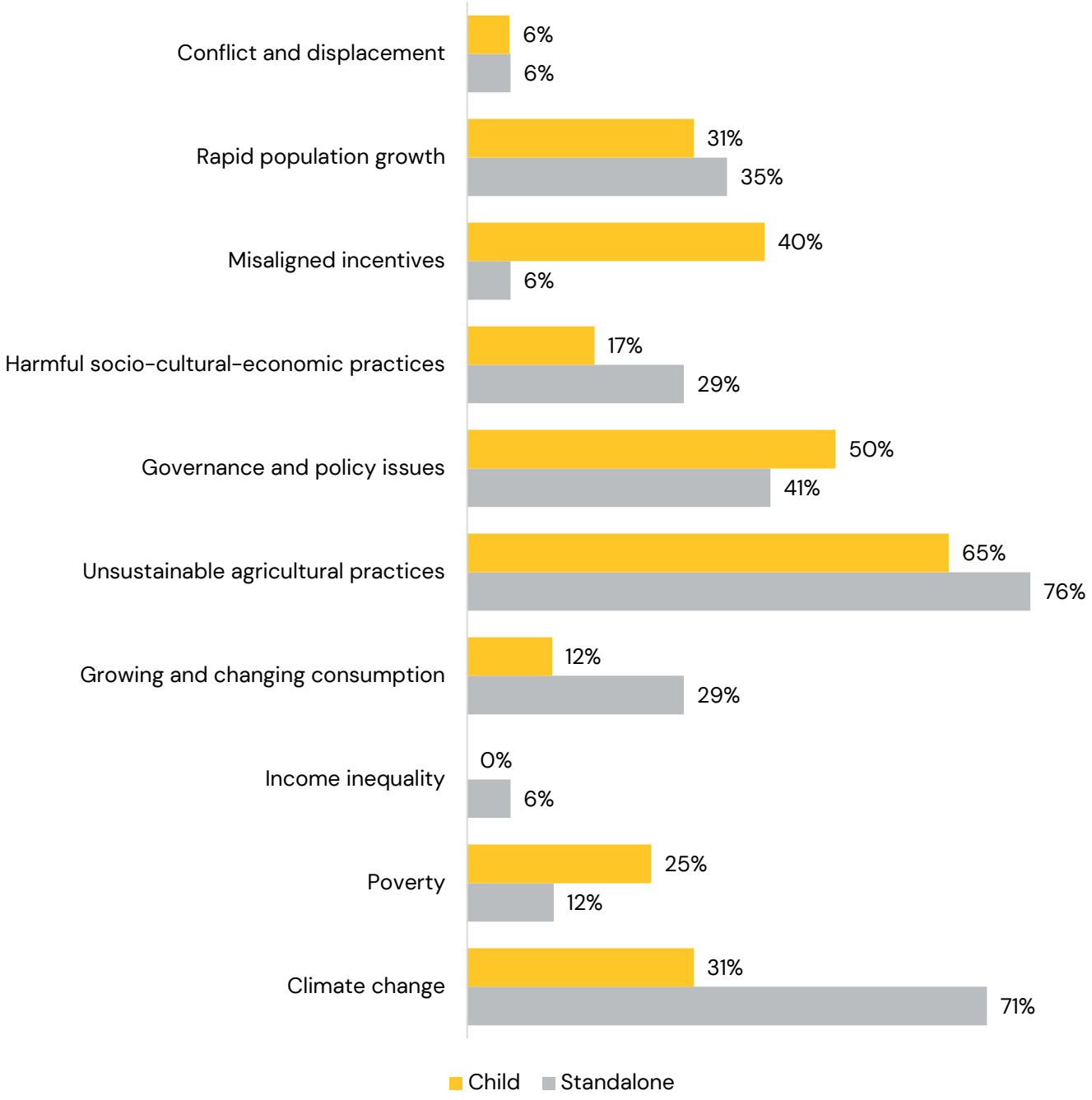
- Environmental and economic impact drivers of food systems change were most discussed in child project and stand-alone project documents. Few child projects addressed individual or science and technology impact drivers.
- Economic and political country-specific root causes of food systems challenges are discussed by the greatest share of projects. Misaligned incentives are discussed much more frequently by child projects than by stand-alone projects.
- While 90% of child projects discussing environmental impact drivers, much fewer (31%) identify climate change as a country-specific root cause of food system challenges (see Figures 1 & 2).
- 60% of child projects support integration in terms of policy and science linkages.
- 94% of child project documents discuss interventions to create synergies between GEBs and social and economic co-benefits, while 100% of stand-alone project documents discuss such synergies.

Figure 21. Distribution of project documents that discuss impact drivers of food systems change for child versus stand-alone projects.



Source: Evaluation team analysis of project portfolio

Figure 25 Distribution of project documents that discuss country-specific root causes of food systems challenges for child versus stand-alone projects.



Source: Evaluation team analysis of project portfolio

Design – Gender and social inclusion

Planning

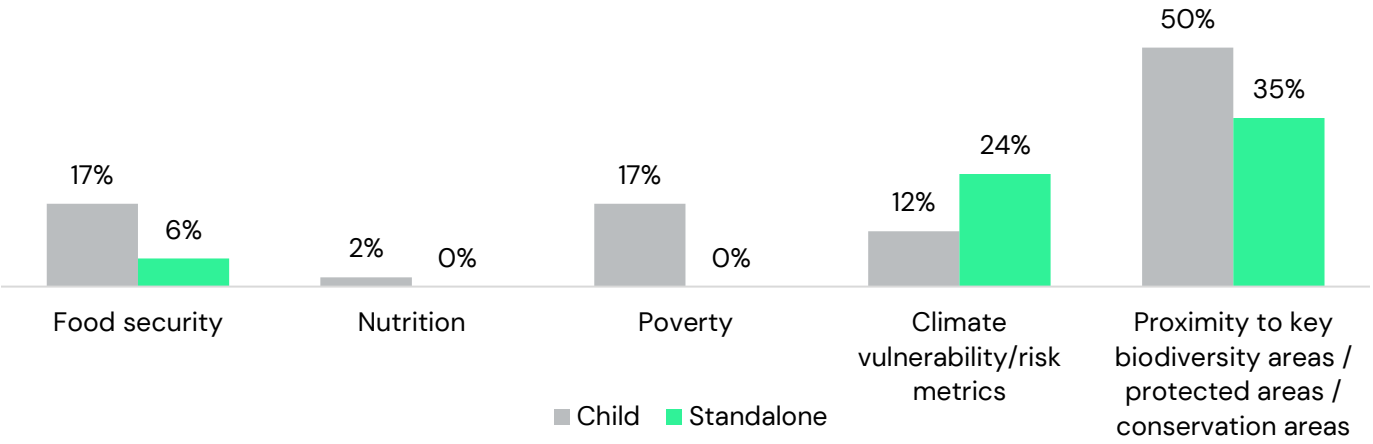
- Many projects did not include a gender expert on the team in the design stage, and only 10% considered the unintended consequences of changing gender dynamics through project activities.
- Yet nearly all projects included gender-responsive measures, and most developed an action plan (65%) and/or included a gender mainstreaming strategy (77%).

Child Projects	Yes
Developed gender action plan	65%
Included gender mainstreaming strategy across all project activities/components	77%
Included gender-responsive-measures/project components to address the gender gap in agriculture and/or promote gender equality and women's empowerment as key food systems actors	96%
Considered the unintended consequences of changing gender dynamics through project activities	10%
Gender expert on team in the design stage	23%
Gender expert on project implementation team	58%

Implementation

- Food systems projects most often included activities targeting specific beneficiaries based on proximity to key biodiversity areas, protected areas, and conservation areas, climate vulnerability/risk metrics, food security, and poverty

Figure 26. Distribution of project documents that describe targeting of activities for specific beneficiaries for child versus stand-alone projects.



Source: Evaluation team analysis of project portfolio

- All country child projects and stand-alone projects include gender-responsive-measures/project components to address the gender gap in agriculture and/or promote gender equality and women's empowerment as key food systems actors (see Box 1).
    - The CFI and FOLUR global platform child project documents do not identify such measures.

Box 1. Examples of gender-responsive measures used by child projects

ID 9126 – CFI, West Africa

This project includes activities focused on improving tenure and access rights for women fish workers, recognizing that this is a barrier to their ability to participate in and benefit from other project activities.

ID 9182 – GGP, Global

This project develops gender-specific training tutorials for the private sector, informed by a gender analysis.

ID 9178 – RFS, Burundi

This project sets quotas for women's participation in watershed committees to ensure improve their involvement in planning and decision-making.

ID 10268 – FOLUR, Thailand

This project supports development of gender-responsive data collection tools for an inclusive agriculture diversification and development plan, including data for coffee, fruit trees, agro-forestry, and food production.

ID 10207 – Stand-alone, Bangladesh

This project identifies entry points for women in selected value chains or market orientation/value addition activities, earmarking certain productive assets for management by women.

Results

- Child projects frequently aim to strengthen women's capacities and skills, both on the farm and in agri-food business, and to improve women's employment opportunities in the agri-food sector. There is also a notable focus on closing the gender gap in access to agricultural finance.
- Few projects focused on improving women's decision-making related to food consumption behaviors (8%) or on increasing their decision making in the household/farm (21%).

Child Projects

Results	Expected result	At least one indicator specified in the results framework
Improving women's decision-making related to food consumption behaviors	8%	4%
Improving women's participation in producer organizations	19%	13%
Strengthening women's capacities and skills as farmers	63%	48%
Increasing women's agricultural productivity	25%	15%
Increasing women's decision making in the household/farm	21%	15%
Improving women's employment opportunities in the agri-food sector	40%	31%
Strengthening women's business capacities and skills in the agri-food sector	54%	42%
Closing the gender gap in land ownership	10%	6%
Closing the gender gap in livestock ownership	2%	2%
Closing the gender gap in access to agricultural inputs and equipment	23%	19%
Closing the gender gap in access to water and irrigation	6%	2%
Closing the gender gap in access to agricultural markets	23%	21%
Closing the gender gap in access to agricultural finance and other services	38%	27%
Reducing gender-based violence	4%	4%

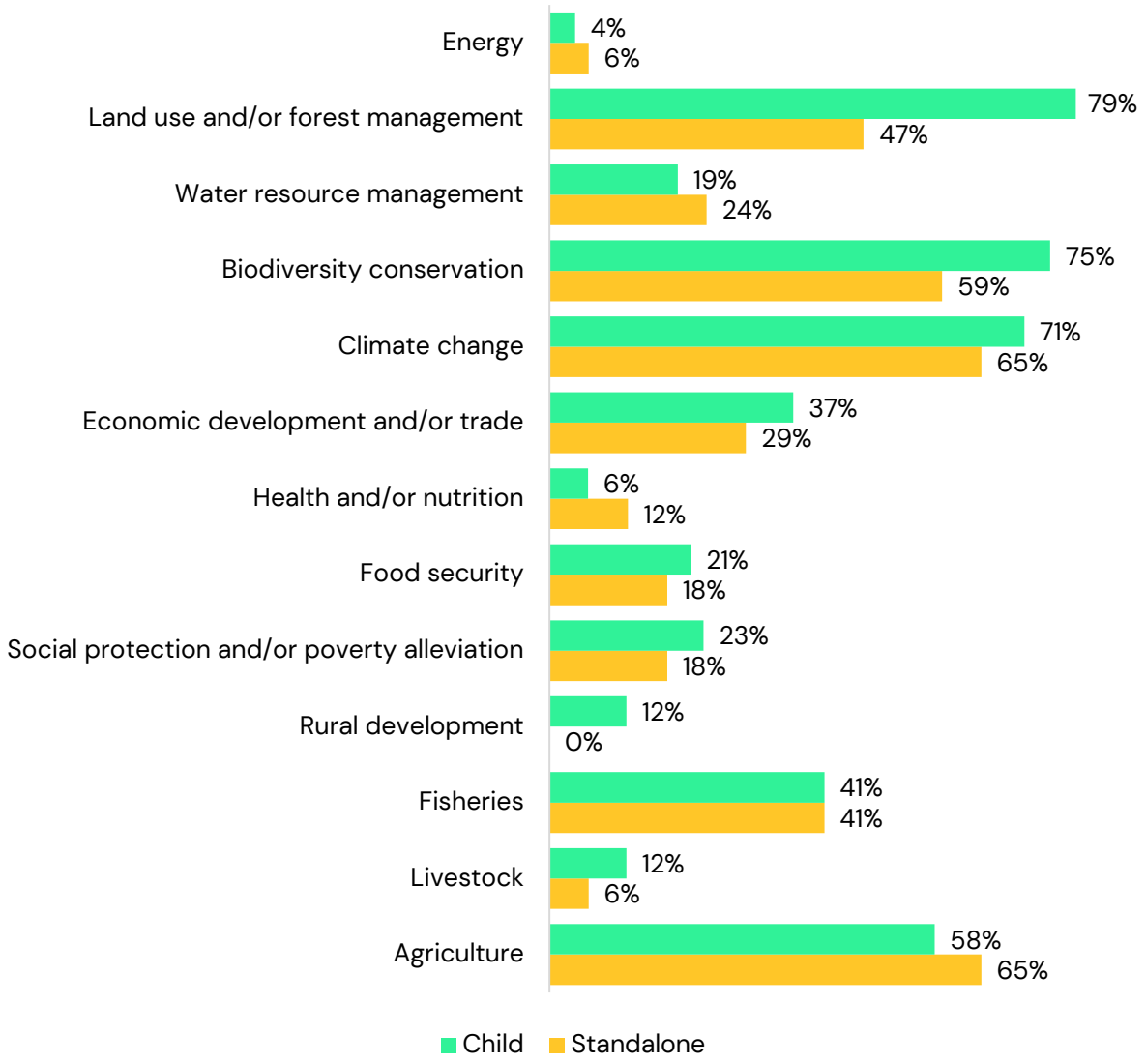
- Over a third of projects (n=29) sought additional gender-related results not captured in the QAE tool, including related to enhancing women's positions in their communities, promoting labor-saving technologies to ease unpaid workloads, and improving understanding of gender-related concepts among public and private sector partners.
    - 54% of RFS country child projects sought to increase women's participation and decision-making in natural resource management, primarily through ensuring their inclusion in landscape and regional governance mechanisms.

Relevance

Alignment with country policies, programs, priorities, and needs

- Child projects and stand-alone projects discuss alignment with country policies, programs, priorities, and needs across topics of interest to a similar degree, with a slightly higher share among child projects for most topics related to natural resource management and socioeconomic development.
    - Outliers include land use and/or forest management, biodiversity conservation, agriculture, and water resource management.

Figure 27 The project/program confirms that the proposed interventions are aligned with countries' policies, programs, priorities and needs in the following areas:

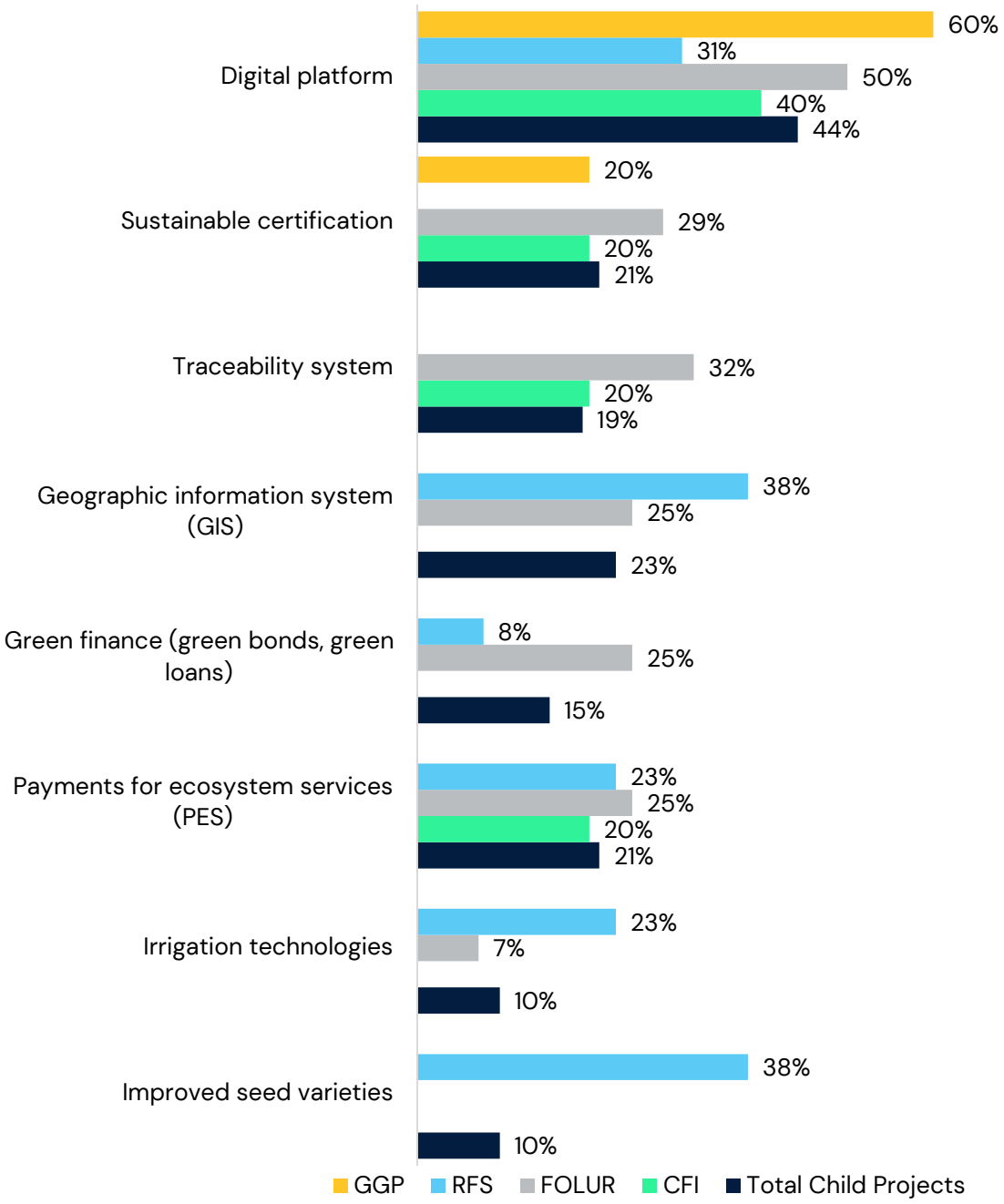


Source: Evaluation team analysis of project portfolio

Innovation

- **Digital platforms** are the innovative approach or technology used most often by food systems projects (44% of child projects, 71% of stand-alone projects), followed by **geographical information systems (GIS)** (23% of child projects, 24% of standalone projects).

Figure 28 Project plans utilize the following innovative approaches or technologies to produce results, by program.



Source: Evaluation team analysis of project portfolio

Traditional knowledge

- 43% of food systems projects (40% of child projects, 53% of standalone projects) **incorporated traditional knowledge / traditional ecological knowledge / Indigenous Knowledge Systems** into the design of project components and activities.

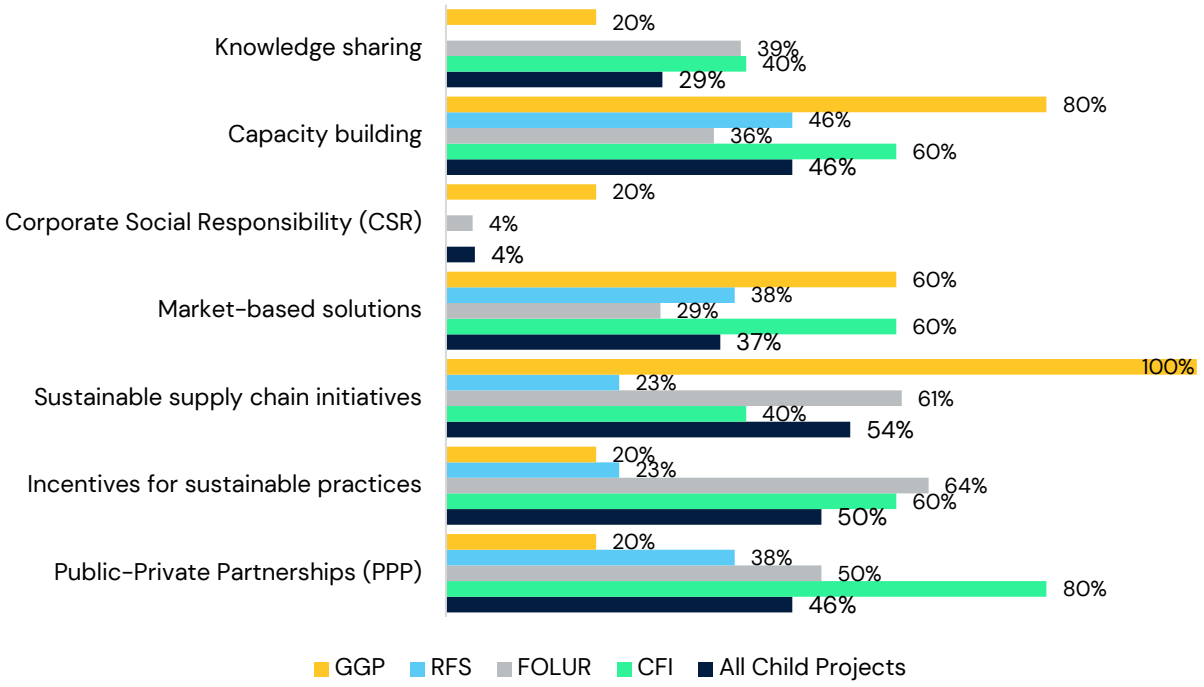
Private sector engagement

- Private sector engagement was varied across the portfolio, with the greatest share of both child and standalone projects using **sustainable supply chain initiatives**. Only 4% of child projects explicitly used **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** to engage private firms.

Method for Private Sector Engagement	Child	Standalone
Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)	46%	53%
Incentives for sustainable practices	50%	47%
Sustainable supply chain initiatives	54%	71%
Market-based solutions	37%	47%
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	4%	0%
Capacity building	46%	71%
Knowledge sharing	29%	41%

- The most used method for private sector engagement varied by program.
    - CFI: 80% of projects used **PPPs**
    - RFS: 46% of projects used **capacity building**
    - GGP: 100% of projects used **sustainable supply chain initiatives**
    - FOLUR: 64% of projects used **incentives for sustainable practices**

Figure 29 What are the strategies that the project plans to use to engage the private sector, by program?



Source: Evaluation team analysis of project portfolio

Coordination/coherence

Stakeholder engagement

- 83% of child projects showed evidence of stakeholder mapping/analysis of the country's food system.
- Child projects planned to engage a broader range of stakeholders during implementation than those who were consulted during project design.
    - The group of stakeholders involved in decision-making during implementation was much less diverse.

Stakeholders engaged in child projects

Stakeholder	Consulted during project design	Planned to be engaged during implementation	Planned to be engaged in project decision making during implementation
Women and girls	60%	83%	12%
Indigenous Peoples	42%	46%	4%
Local communities	60%	79%	4%
Youth	21%	35%	0%
Persons with disabilities	8%	6%	0%
Producer organizations	40%	65%	8%

Input and output traders	12%	15%	2%
Processors	8%	17%	2%
Distributors/Retailers	6%	13%	0%
Waste managers	0%	0%	0%
Civil society organizations (CSOs)/Community-based organization CBOs	62%	83%	15%
International NGOs	35%	54%	8%
Agricultural/food SMEs	27%	38%	0%
Financial institutions	15%	31%	2%
Agri-business (national and international)	27%	33%	4%
Subnational government agencies (e.g., provincial, municipal)	44%	62%	21%
Local government agencies (e.g., district, community)	37%	60%	12%
Regional bodies	17%	21%	8%
International development organizations	52%	69%	29%
Research and development institutions including universities	60%	69%	15%

- The ministries of agriculture/animal/fisheries and environment/natural resources were most commonly the executing agency (37% and 33%), respectively.
- Other ministries/departments/agencies were sometimes involved in specific project activities (forest – 38%; water – 27%; planning – 27%; economy/finance/trade – 29%), and less frequently involved in the project steering committee

Coordination

- 100% of child projects included activities aimed at facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement, compared to 88% of standalone projects.
    - Most projects (68%) included at least one indicator to related to improving implementation through multi-stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

Uses of Child Project Multi-Stakeholder Engagement Mechanisms

Mechanisms	Expected results	At least one indicator is specified
Improve coherent decision making on laws, policies, strategies and regulations	50%	44%
Increase buy-in and support	37%	27%
Improve resource utilization	8%	6%
Reduce risks and conflicts	17%	12%
Improve implementation	83%	69%
Promote sustainability of other project results	12%	8%

- 77% of child projects included knowledge sharing or joint activities with other donor funded projects in country, compared to 94% of standalone projects.
- 4% of child projects (n=2) identified conflicts or duplication with initiatives supported by other donors in the country

Policy coherence

- 71% of child projects discuss policy misalignment in project documents, compared to 88% of standalone projects
    - 65% of these child projects discuss tradeoffs or misalignment between agricultural production policies and environmental and climate goals
    - 30% of these child projects discuss short-term gains versus long-term sustainability in the agriculture sector
    - Few projects discuss policy misalignment for livestock or fisheries.
- 95% of child projects designed interventions to address the identified policy misalignment

Child Project Policy Coherence Activities

Intervention	Expected results	At least one indicator is specified
Policy review	30%	27%
Improve legal, regulatory framework	27%	24%
Establish multi-sectoral coordination mechanism (e.g., across environment, agriculture, health and nutrition)	73%	68%
Institutional capacity building	49%	43%
M&E systems for policy implementation	14%	14%
Champions for policy coherence	0%	0%

- Nearly all child projects that sought policy coherence outcomes pursued horizontal (51%) or vertical (19%) policy coherence, or both (22%) (see Box 2).

Box 2. Examples of projects that seek different types of policy coherence outcomes

Horizontal

ID 10247 – FOLUR, Cote d'Ivoire

This project seeks to achieve horizontal policy coherence by coordinating the implementation of various existing policies at the landscape and community level to resolve contradictions and conflicts. Specifically, it aims to balance forest conservation policies with agricultural development policies, reconcile policies encouraging tree cover on farms with logging practices, and address the conflict between prioritizing lowland for food crops versus cash crops.

Vertical

ID 9129 – CFI, Indonesia

This project seeks to achieve vertical coherence by amending national and local policy and institutional frameworks, including Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), to support a holistic ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM). By aligning national frameworks with provincial frameworks and ensuring the adoption and implementation of Fisheries Management Area (FMA) decrees with provincial governments, the project aims to create a cohesive strategy that integrates efforts across different levels of government.

Horizontal and Vertical

ID 9178 – RFS, Burundi

This project supports multi-level, cross-sectoral coordination through multi-sectoral policy platforms for sustainable land management and integrated natural resource management, enhancing decision-making processes and knowledge sharing mechanisms across national, provincial, and municipal levels.

Temporal

ID 9182 – GGP, Global

This project works at the regional scale in Southeast Asia to deliver learning exchanges and workshops to encourage demand country governments to commit to and adopt policies that incentivize reduced deforestation sourcing.

Political

ID 9132 – RFS, Tanzania

This project seeks to achieve political coherence across the policy cycle by strengthening local and district-level institutional capacity in participatory joint land-use mapping, planning, and regulation. Despite the decentralized and participatory framework being in place for decades, few Village Land Use Plans (VLUPs) have been developed and implemented, particularly joint VLUPs. By enhancing stakeholder consultation, adoption, implementation, and enforcement processes, the project aims to support sustainable land management and forest conservation, ensuring that policies are effectively executed throughout the entire policy cycle.

Programmatic value addition

- Child project design incorporated guidance or knowledge from the global program most often related to M&E (63%), project components (50%) and knowledge management (50%).
    - 29% of child projects did not include any information from the global program in its design, driven primarily by RFS (85%) and GGP (100%).

Knowledge from Global Program Incorporated into Child Project Design

Knowledge Incorporated	Yes
M&E (e.g., indicators)	63%
Theories of change	40%
Project components	50%

Gender and social inclusion	8%
Multi-stakeholder country engagement / platforms	8%
Knowledge management	50%
None	29%
Other	4%

- 85% of child projects include linkages with other CPs in the same integrated / impact program.
    - All CFI and GGP projects identified such linkages, while 86% of FOLUR projects and 69% of RFS projects identified them.
- Child project activities frequently included engagement with the global hub project, but this engagement was less frequently incorporated into the budget or results framework.

Activities, Budget, and Indicators for Child Project Engagement with Global Hub Project

Inclusion	Activities	Budget	At least one indicator is specified
Knowledge management activities that contribute to the global program (e.g., case studies, success stories, learning, expertise)	69%	40%	31%
Participation in global hub project activities (e.g., annual meeting, regional or commodity related events, communities of practice, south-south learning, etc)	79%	63%	52%
Technical assistance from the global hub project	31%	8%	2%
Linkages with other CPs under the program (e.g. south-south exchanges or project visits)	73%	33%	23%

- 85% of child projects described how the project-level results framework aligns with the global program parent / hub project
    - None of the GGP projects included such a description.
- 79% of child project results framework measured at higher scales, including the sector and value chain levels, compared to 88% of standalone projects.
- 65% of child projects included activities designed to work at transboundary (e.g., regional or global) scales, driven by the large share (96%) of FOLUR projects with such activities.
    - 70% of FOLUR projects working at transboundary scales planned to work with sector-based platforms / roundtables / coalitions, followed by 30% working with market-based trade initiatives and 19% working with agribusinesses involved in purchasing, trading, transporting, processing, and/or adding value

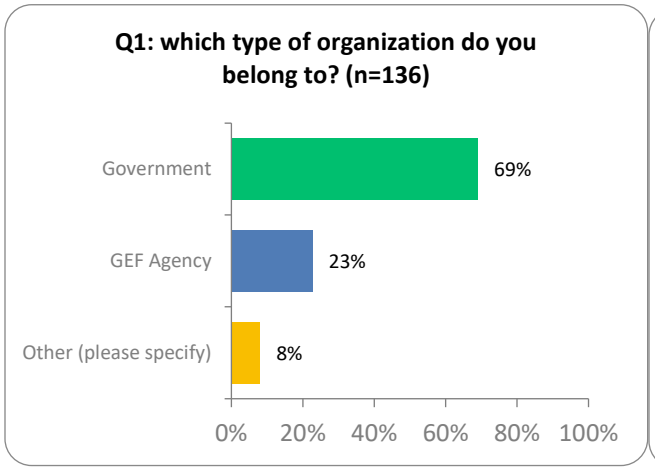
Annex 7: Stakeholders Consulted

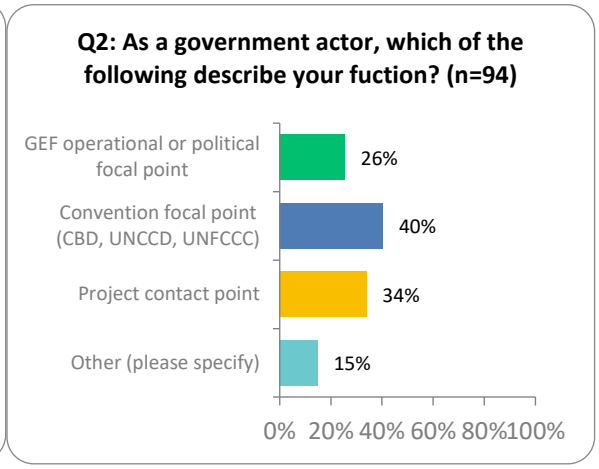
Name	Affiliation
Andrew Hume	GEF Secretariat
Astrid Hillers	GEF Secretariat
Mohamed Bakarr	GEF Secretariat
Matthew Ready	GEF Secretariat
Cyril Blet	GEF Secretariat
Peter Umunay	GEF Secretariat
Teayeon Kim	GEF Secretariat
Mark Stafford Smith	GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)
Guadalupe Duron	STAP
Lorenzo Paolo Galbiati	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Fatou Sock	FAO
Hernan Gonzalez	FAO
Patrick Kalas	FAO
Adrian Barrance	FAO
Carley Willis	Global Landscapes Forum (GLF)
Ludwig Liagre	GLF
John Colmey	GLF
Rodrigo Ciannella	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF)
Paola Palestini	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
Michael Von During	IFAD
Dieter Fischer	International Finance Corporation (IFC)
Josefina Maiztegui	IFC
Pascale Bonzom	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
Saswati Bora	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
Andrea Bina	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
James Leslie	UNDP
Pascal Fabie	UNDP
Robert Erath	UNEP
Lara Yacob	United Nations Environment Programme – Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI)
Aline Mosnier	United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN)
Clara Douzal	UNSDSN
Rachel Collie	UNSDSN
Mimako Kobayashi	World Bank
Gayatri Kanungo	World Bank
Christopher Brett	World Bank
Dinara Akhmetova	World Bank
Ishita Kaushik	World Bank
Patti Kristjanson	World Bank
Claire Murphy McGreevey	World Bank
Deviah Aiama	World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)
Stefania Avanzini	WBCSD
Jared Messinger	World Resources Institute (WRI)
Farid Hakemi	WRI
Genna Tesdall	Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD)

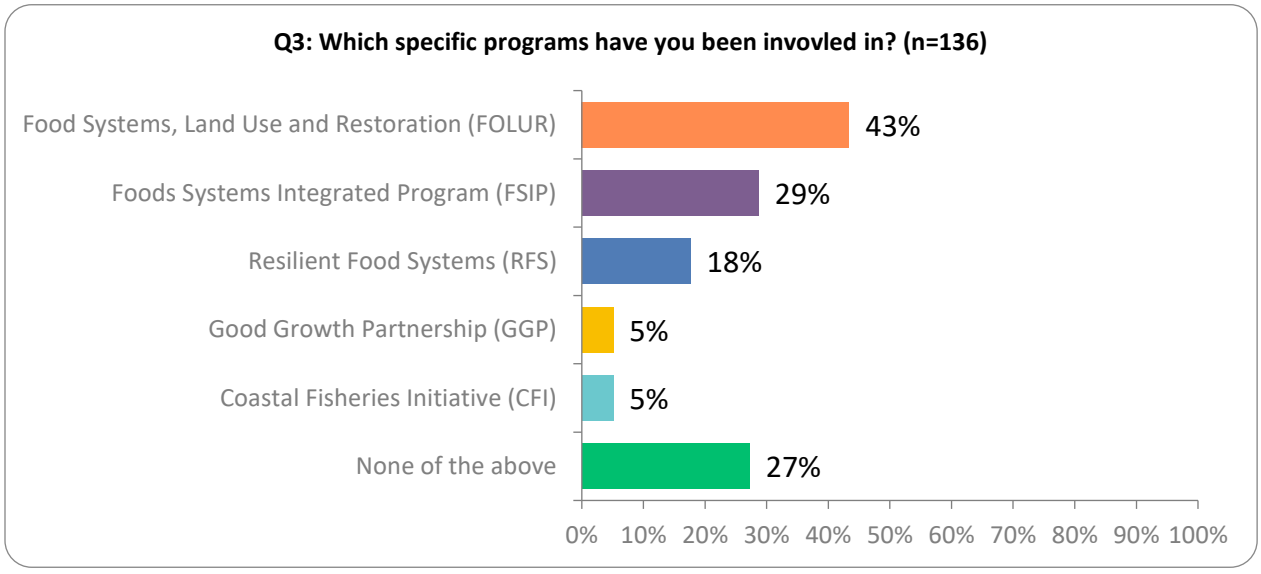
Annex 8: Online Survey Results

The online survey was sent to 709 stakeholders for the period from February 6 to March 31, 2025. The survey had 136 completed responses for a response rate of 19 percent.

Majority of the respondents are government stakeholders (69%, 94), serving as Convention focal points (40%), project contact points (34%), or GEF operational/political focal points (26%).

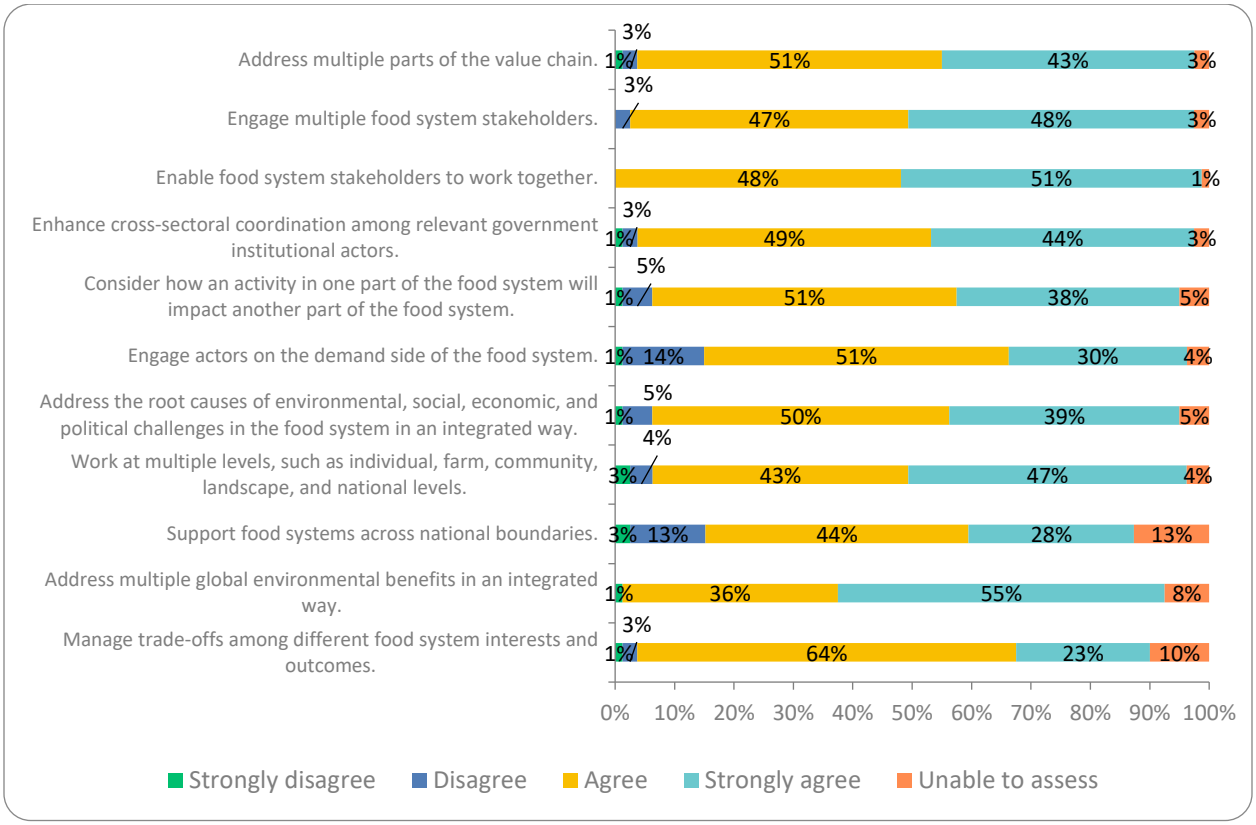






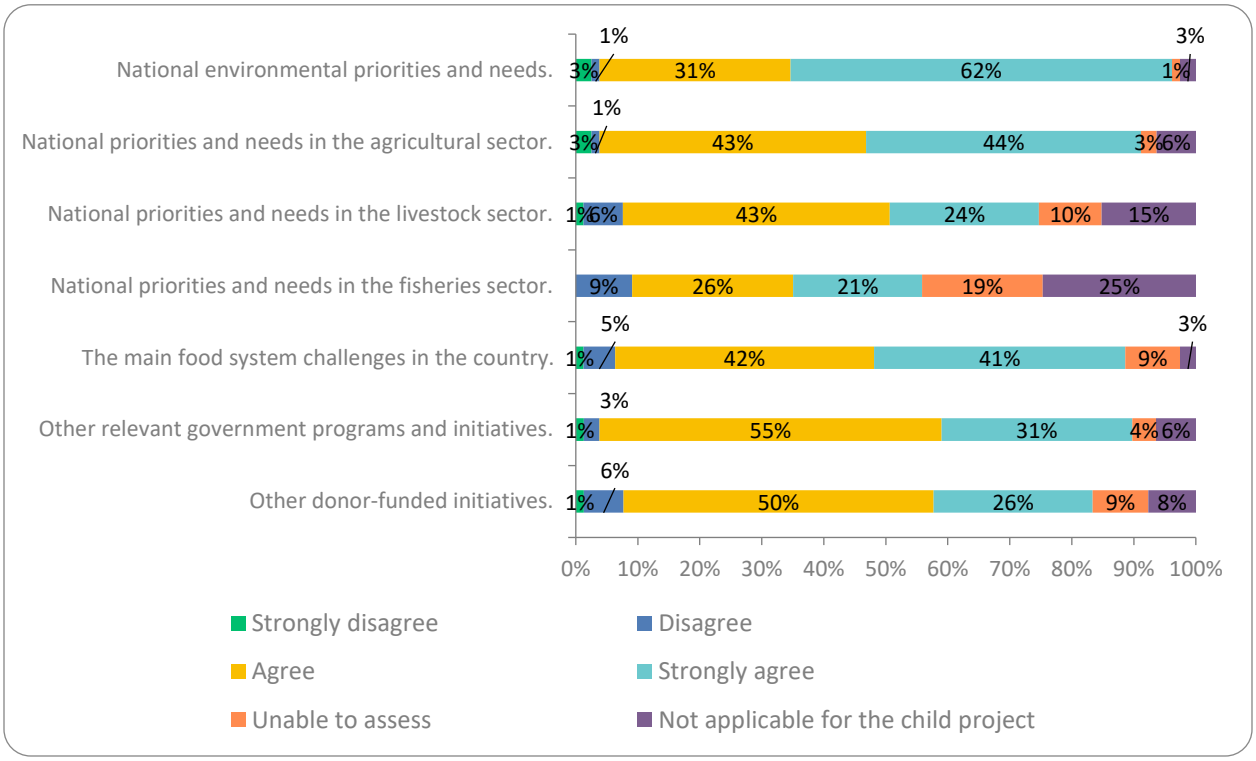
Q4: To what extent do GEF integrated programs apply a food system approach? Integrated programs adequately (n=80):

The agreement level is well above 70% for all statements under Q4. “Enable food system stakeholders to work together” has the highest level of agreement (99%), “Support food systems across national boundaries” has the lowest level of agreement (72%).



Q5: To what extent do country child projects align with national priorities and other initiatives? Country child project(s) are well aligned with (n=80):

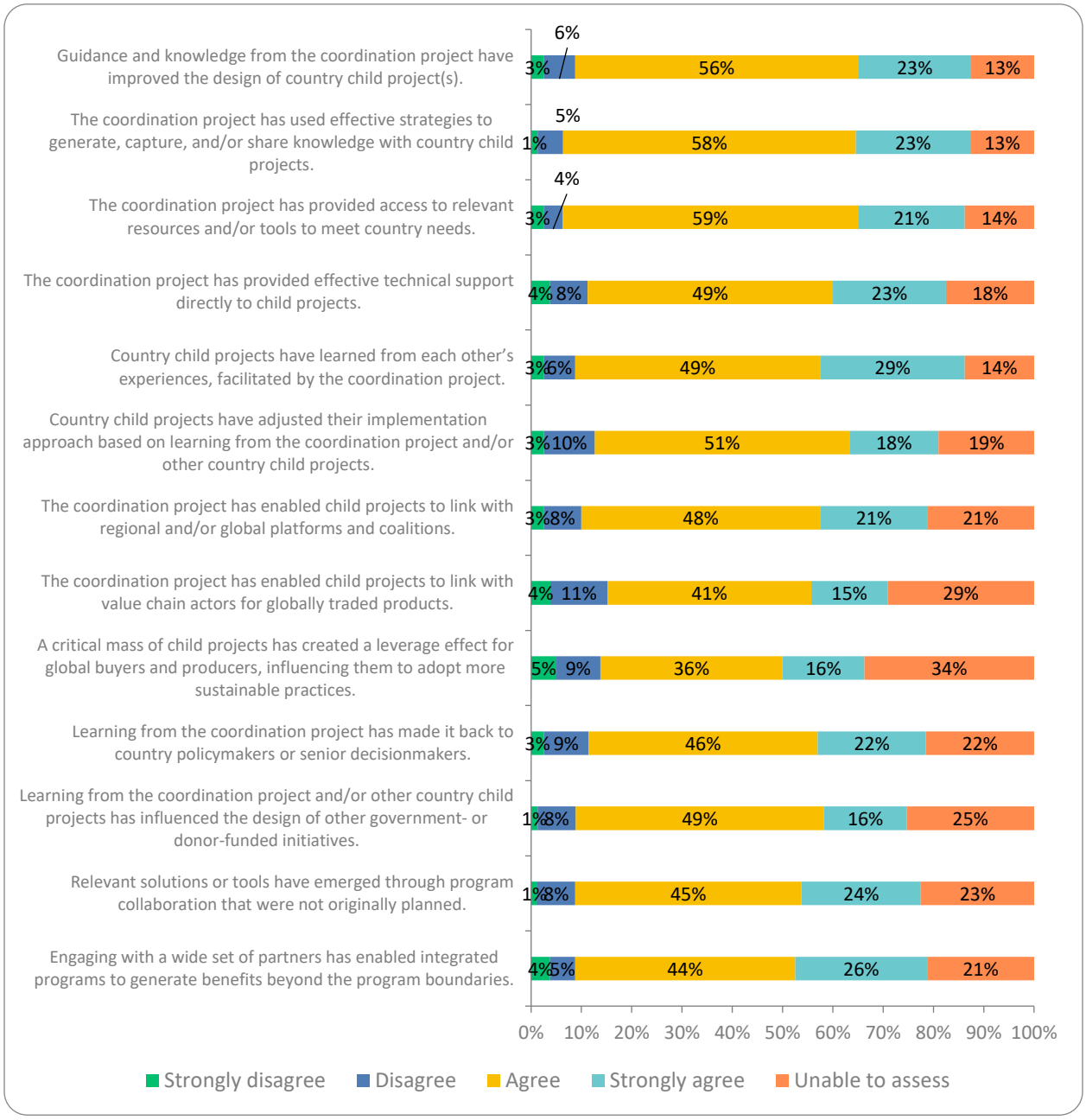
The agreement level varies for the statements under Q5. Country child projects align with “national environmental priorities and needs” has the highest level of agreement (92%), while alignments with “national priorities and needs in the fisheries sector” and with “national priorities and needs in the livestock sector” were at 47% and 67%, respectively.



Q6: What has been the added value of using an integrated program approach, compared to a standalone project approach? (n=80)

80% of respondents perceived the added value of using an integrated program approach as "the coordination project has used effective strategies to generate, capture, and/or share knowledge with country child projects" (81%) And "The coordination project has provided access to relevant resources and/or tools to meet country needs" (80%).

The agreement level was low for the statement related to "A critical mass of child projects has created a leverage effect for global buyers and producers, influencing them to adopt more sustainable practices" (53%), and "the coordination project has enabled child projects to link with value chain actors for globally traded products" (56%).



Q7: Have the integrated programs' management systems been transparent, effective, and efficient? (n=80)

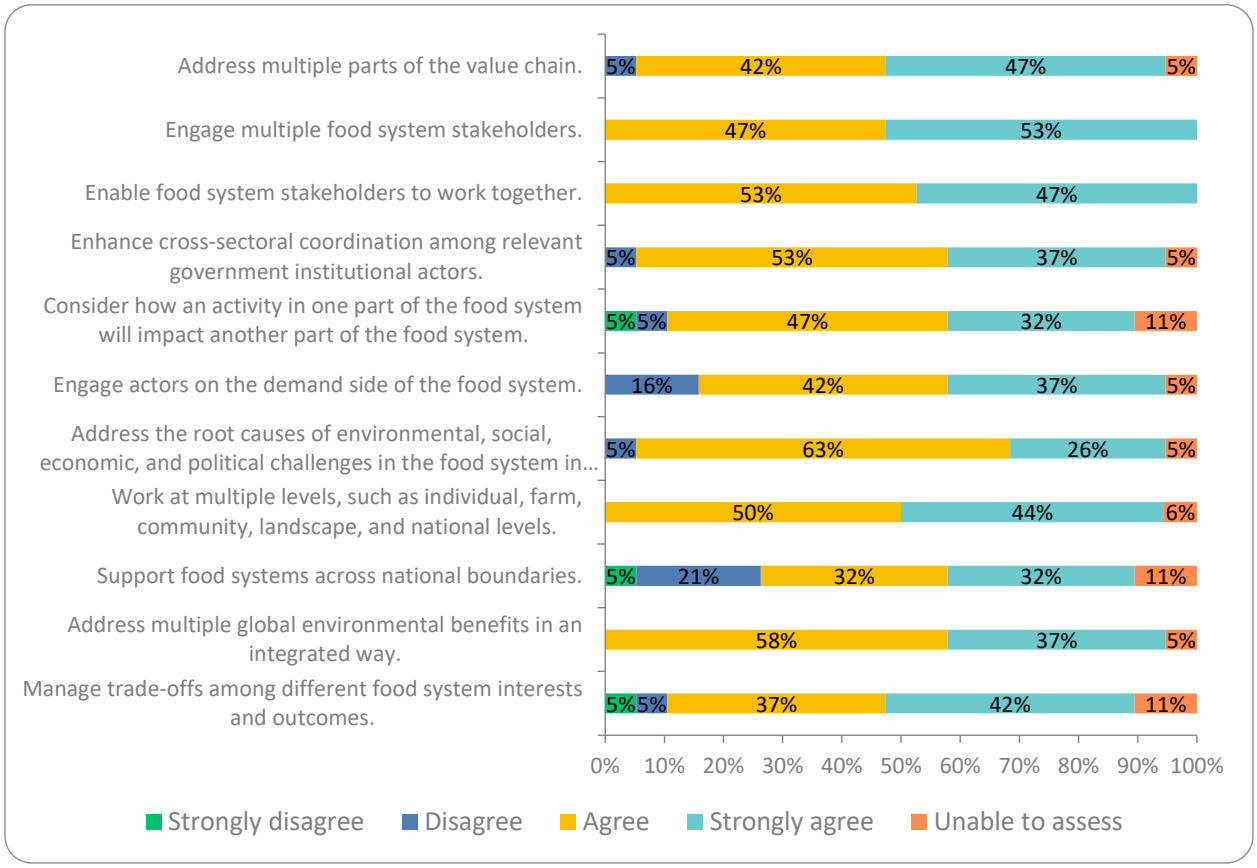
83% of respondents agree that "roles and responsibilities are clear between the coordination project and country child project(s)", which is the highest agreement level among all statements, followed by "the value addition of using an integrated program approach is greater than the cost of the coordination project" (78%).

"The coordination project has struck the right balance between coordinating across child projects and engaging externally with other initiatives and partners" has the lowest level of agreement at 64%.

FSIP-only questions:

Q8: To what extent does the GEF-8 Food Systems Integrated Program (FSIP) apply a food system approach? The FSIP adequately plans to: (n=19)

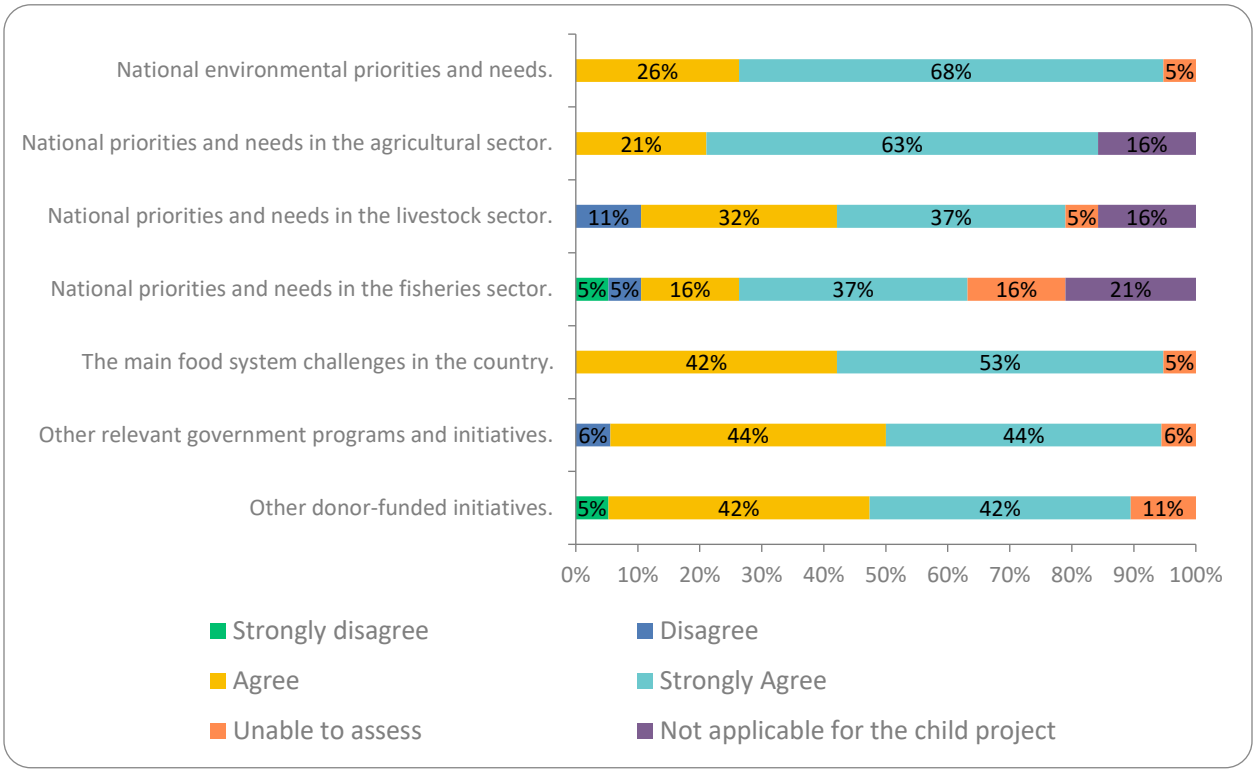
All the 19 respondents agree that the FSIP adequately plans to "Engage multiple food system stakeholders" and "Enable food system stakeholders to work together". The agreement level was low at 63% for the statement that FSIP plans to "support food systems across national boundaries."



Q9: To what extent do FSIP country child projects align with national priorities and other initiatives? The country child project is well aligned with: (n=19)

95% of respondents agree that the country child project under FSIP is well aligned with "national environmental priorities and needs" and "The main food system challenges in the country."

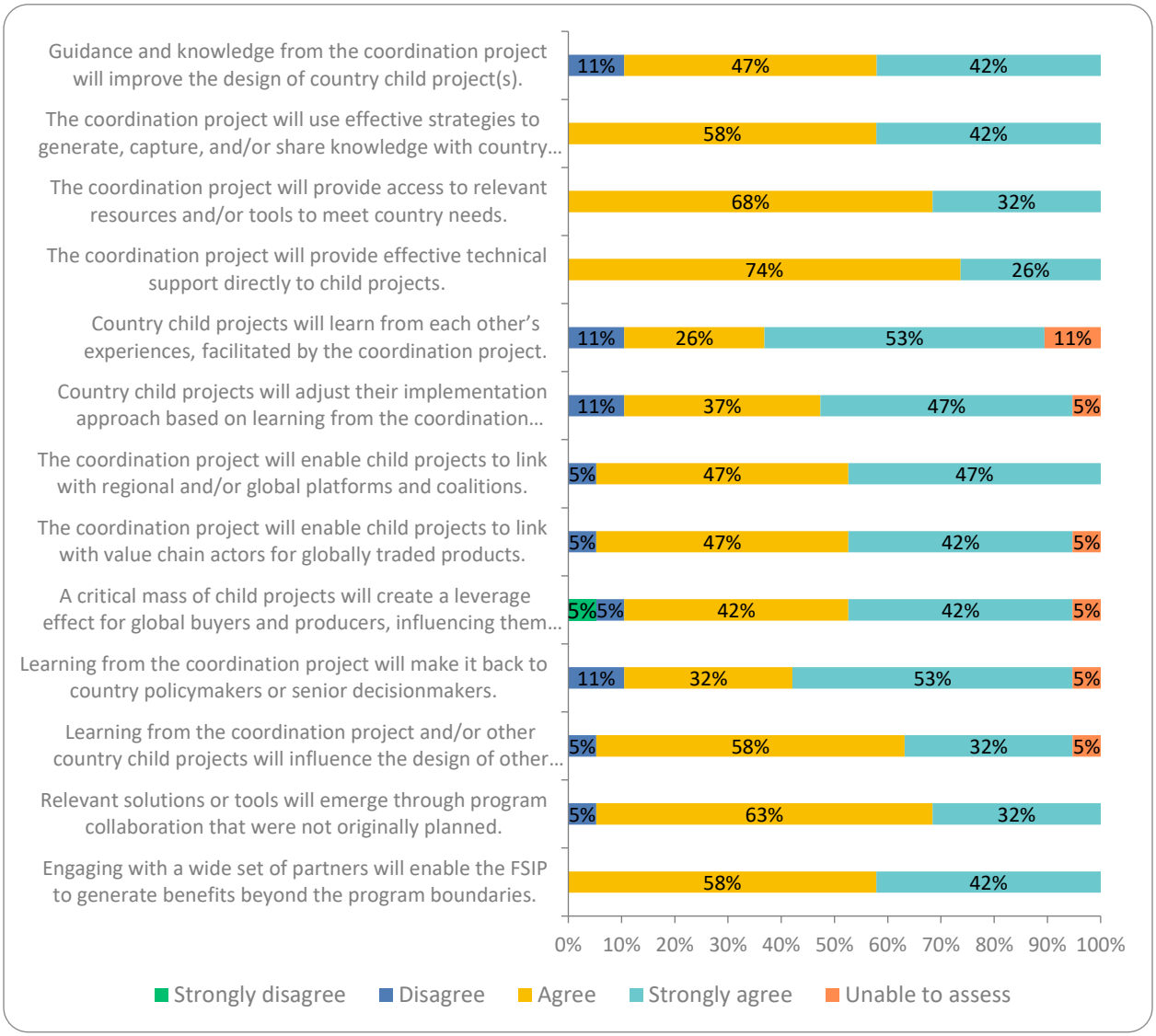
Alignments with "national priorities and needs in the fisheries sector" and "national priorities and needs in the livestock sector" have lowest level of agreement at 53% and 68%, respectively.



Q10: What do you expect to be the added value of using an integrated program approach in FSIP, compared to a standalone project approach? (n=19)

All 19 respondents agree that the added value of using an integrated program approach in FSIP are the following: "the coordination project will use effective strategies to generate, capture, and/or share knowledge with country child projects", "The coordination project will provide access to relevant resources and/or tools to meet country needs", and "the coordination project will provide effective technical support directly to child projects".

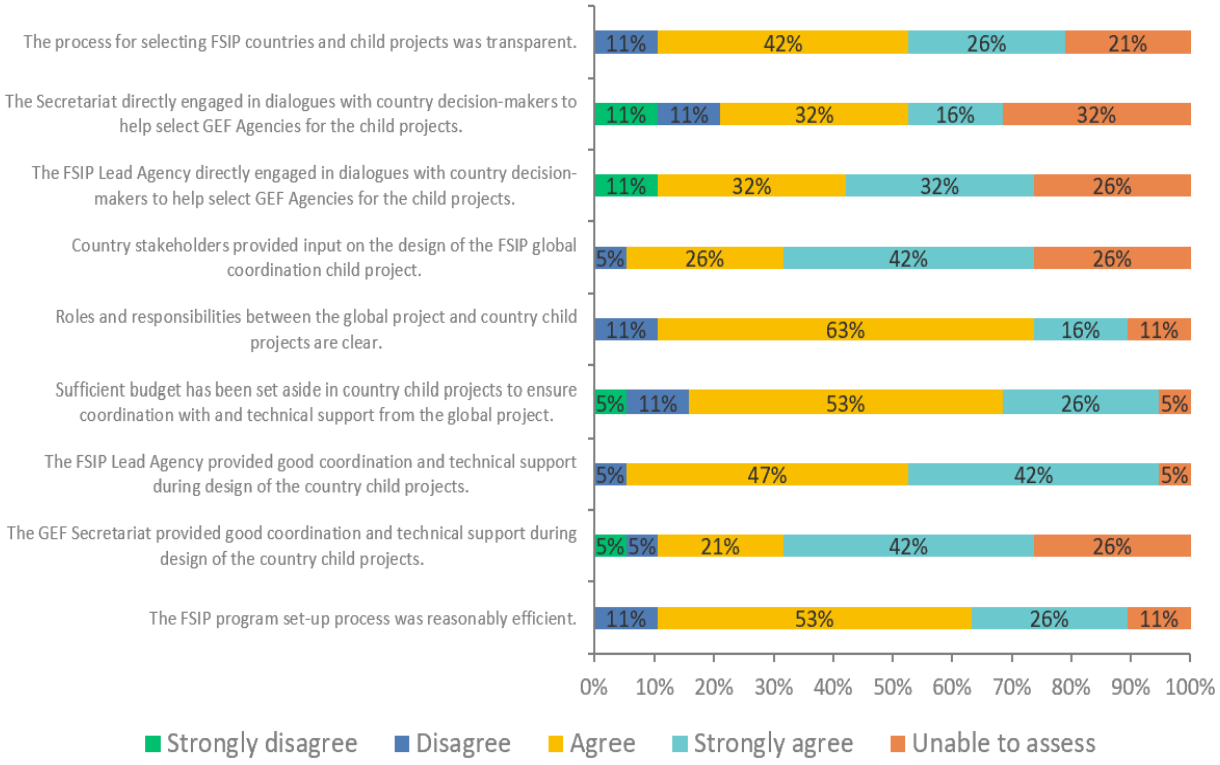
"Country child projects will learn from each other's experiences, facilitated by the coordination project" has the lowest level of agreement at 79%.



Q11: Have FSIP decision-making processes been transparent, efficient, and equitable? (n=19)

"The FSIP Lead Agency provided good coordination and technical support during design of the country child projects" has the highest level of agreement at 89%, while "the Secretariat directly engaged in dialogues with country decision-makers to help select GEF Agencies for the child projects" has the lowest level of agreement at 47%.

68% of respondents agree that "the process for selecting FSIP countries and child projects was transparent", and 79% agree that "the FSIP program set-up process was reasonably efficient".


The process for selecting FSIP countries and child projects was transparent.
11% 42% 26% 21%
The Secretariat directly engaged in dialogues with country decision-makers to help select GEF Agencies for the child projects.
11% 11% 32% 16% 32%
The FSIP Lead Agency directly engaged in dialogues with country decision-makers to help select GEF Agencies for the child projects.
11% 32% 32% 26%
Country stakeholders provided input on the design of the FSIP global coordination child project.
5% 26% 42% 26%
Roles and responsibilities between the global project and country child projects are clear.
11% 63% 16% 11%
Sufficient budget has been set aside in country child projects to ensure coordination with and technical support from the global project.
5% 11% 53% 26% 5%
The FSIP Lead Agency provided good coordination and technical support during design of the country child projects.
5% 47% 42% 5%
The GEF Secretariat provided good coordination and technical support during design of the country child projects.
5% 5% 21% 42% 26%
The FSIP program set-up process was reasonably efficient.
11% 53% 26% 11%
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Strongly disagree
Disagree
Agree
Strongly agree
Unable to assess

Annex 9: Ghana Country Case Study

Acronyms

COCOBOD	Ghana Cocoa Board
CREMA	Community Resource Management Area
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EUDR	EU Deforestation Regulation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FC	Forest Commission
FOLUR	Food, Land Use, and Restoration
FSD	Forest Services Division
FSIP	Food Systems Integrated Program
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IDH	Sustainable Trade Initiative
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LUSPA	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority
MEST	Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology
MoFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RFS	Resilient Food Systems
SLWM	Sustainable Land and Water Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WD	Wildlife Division

Introduction

This Ghana case study is part of the Evaluation of Global Environment Facility (GEF) Food Systems Programs. This evaluation seeks to assess the quality of design and achievement of results of food systems programs in GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8, as well as to evaluate how the GEF has adapted to changing contexts and incorporated lessons learned into the design of later programs. The global evaluation covers three GEF-6 programs (Resilient Food Systems [RFS], Coastal Fisheries Initiative [CFI], and Good Growth Partnership [GGP]), one GEF-7 program (Food, Land Use, and Restoration [FOLUR] Impact Program), and one GEF-8 program (Food Systems Integrated Program [FSIP]). The evaluation scope also includes standalone country and regional projects focused on food systems from GEF-6 through GEF-8 that were identified by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) using a keyword search.

Country case studies are a key component of the evaluation, intending to help:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the outcomes resulting from GEF food systems interventions and the explanatory factors for and sustainability of these changes;
- Understand how the GEF integrated programs' approach to food systems has evolved at the country level by assessing the similarities and differences between projects from each replenishment cycle and capturing links and interconnection; and
- Collect the perspectives of local communities affected by GEF interventions.

Ghana was one of four case study countries selected purposively by the GEF IEO. Case study countries were selected based on their having food systems program child projects from all three GEF replenishment cycles included in the scope of the evaluation. Other factors considered include maturity of projects and variation across regions, GEF Agencies, and sectors targeted.

1.1 Methodology

This Ghana case study used a systems thinking approach that was guided by the global evaluation's theoretical framework for understanding food systems that integrates GEF concepts with relevant literature to identify the drivers, actors, parts, and outcomes of a given system. The case study sought to answer thirteen overarching evaluation questions pertaining to design, relevance and coherence, performance and results, value addition, and efficiency of GEF food systems programming.

The case study used multiple methods to extract robust and credible findings, including desk reviews of project and program documents, virtual and in-person key informant interviews, in person focus group discussions with project beneficiaries, in person group interviews with project implementation teams and direct observation through site visits. The case study team conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to develop an initial list of key informants, then used a snowballing approach to identify additional key informants through interviews with representatives of the national, regional, and local Government of Ghana, GEF Agencies, project staff, private sector actors, and other donors (see Annex 1 for a full list). The case study team visited sites in the Eastern and Ashanti Regions associated with the FOLUR project (GEF ID 10348) under implementation as well as the Upper East and North East regions associated with the financially closed RFS project (GEF ID 9340) (see Annex 2).

The team received support from EPA in facilitating the in-person mission to visit sites and stakeholders. However, there were limitations to primary data collection. For example, the team was unable to secure a response from the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (both part of the PSC at the national level) to understand socio-economic policy outcomes, despite targeted and repeated outreach. The evaluation team sought other perspectives to understand

the socioeconomic outcomes to the extent possible mainly through focus group discussions with project beneficiaries. At the national level the evaluation team was not able to interview the project focal point from COCOBOD, although the team did engage with several COCOBOD extension agents at the district and local levels. Similarly, the evaluation team has not received a response from the Water Resources Commission.

Another gap in evidence is the lack of civil society and NGO perspectives. The study team was not able to consult any national or local level NGOs/CSOs involved in GEF projects design or implementation despite repeated inquiries. The study team reached out one NGO involved in the implementation of RFS but was informed that their involvement ended years ago and thus they were not able to share their views on the project.

1.2 Scope

Ghana was selected for a case study due to the existence of child projects from GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8 food systems programs. Table 1 below shows the three child projects in Ghana included in this case study. Each program also has a corresponding global/regional coordination projects, although these projects were only secondarily covered by the case studies from the perspective of the value added at the country level from participation in an integrated program.

GEF ID	Project Name	GEF Agency	FS Program	Project Status	Target Landscape
9340	Sustainable Land and Water Management Project	World Bank	RFS	Financially closed	Northen Savanna Zone
10348	Ghana Landscape Restoration and Ecosystem Management for Sustainable Food Systems	World Bank	FOLUR	Under implementation	Northen Savanna Zone and Cocoa Forest Landscape
11375	Ghana Sustainable Food System and Forest Management	World Bank	FSIP	CEO PIF Cleared	Cocoa Forest Landscape

The Sustainable Land and Water Management Project (SLWMP) (GEF 4, 5 & 6) was implemented in Ghana with US$29.87 million in GEF funding. The project aimed to improve sustainable land and water management practices to reduce land degradation and enhance biodiversity conservation in targeted watersheds of Ghana's Northern Savannah Zone (Upper East, Upper West, and Northen Regions). The project was implemented between 2010 and 2021 with two additional financing cycles in 2014 and 2016. GEF 6, which falls under the scope of this evaluation, started implementation in 2016 and had a total budget of US$12.77 million.

The Ghana Landscape Restoration and Small-Scale Mining Project (GLRSSMP) (GEF 7) is a US$103.36 million initiative funded by the World Bank (IDA - US$75 million), GEF (US$12.76 million), ~~and~~ the Global Partnership for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes, a World Bank administered multi-donor trust fund (PROGREEN - US$15 million) and Extractive Global Programmatic Support Multi-Donor trust fund (US$ 0.6m). The project aims to promote sustainable land use, forest conservation, and formalization of the Artisanal small-scale mining sector (component funded by the World Bank) while improving livelihood opportunities for local communities in Ghana's savannah and cocoa forest landscapes (expanding the project to the Eastern, Central and Ashanti Regions). The project implementation started in 2021 and is expected to close in 2027.

The Ghana Sustainable Food System and Forest Management (GEF 8) project aims to address environmental challenges and enhance food security in Ghana through sustainable practices in agriculture including cocoa and aquaculture. The project focuses on the Cocoa Forest Landscape, particularly in the

Western North, Ashanti, Central, and Eastern Regions of Ghana. The project aims to preserve landscapes by addressing deforestation and environmental degradation. The project is financed by $15.2 million from the GEF, with a total of $240 million in expected co-financing from various sources.

The map below (Figure 1) shows national data from 2020 on food insecurity being most prevalent in the northern regions of Ghana. The Upper East, Upper West, North East and Savannah Regions, where the RFS project was implemented, have over 30% of food insecure households. It is important to note the differences in the landscape between the northern and southern regions with the first being savanna landscape and later moist semi-deciduous forest. Thus, cocoa production in Ghana is concentrated in the southern regions (Figure 2) including Ashanti, Eastern and Central Regions where FOLUR project is active. These regions have the lowest levels of food insecure households (below 10%) (Figure 1). Therefore, the types of farmers targeted by the two GEF projects differ to a larger extent. The FSIP project will include regions in the middle tier of food insecurity (10-20% of households) extending GEF support to most administrative regions in the country.

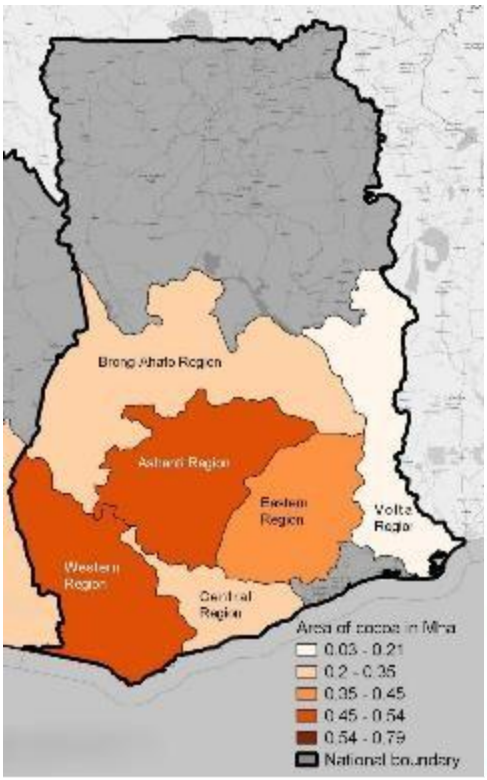


Figure 1. (left) Food insecurity situation in Ghana by administrative regions (2020)[1]
Figure 2. (right) Cocoa producing regions in Ghana in million hectares (Mha)[2]

Findings

2.1 Design

- **Systems thinking**

The GEF food systems interventions in Ghana demonstrate a partial consideration of the environmental footprint of food systems and largely focus on production aspects. While projects show efforts to integrate sustainable agricultural practices—such as agroforestry, climate-smart agriculture, and

responsible aquaculture—the interventions primarily concentrate on increasing productivity and improving environmental practices in production. The consideration of the broader food system, including the stages of post-production, processing, aggregation and distribution, and consumption, is minimal, and there is little emphasis on value chain integration, market access, or value addition. While RFS activities largely focus on increasing agricultural yields in a sustainable manner in order to increase food security of beneficiary households, some livelihood diversification activities have been implemented such as beekeeping and shea nut picking and processing (by women's groups from the fringes of the Gbele Resource Reserve) to reduce pressure on land use. The project established shea and cassava processing facilities, and some consideration has been given to establishing market linkages between those groups and premium markets (through selling in bulk to Savanna Fruit Company). However, RFS beneficiaries reported that the presence of the shea processing facility has contributed to increased pressure on access to wild shea nuts. This pressure is further intensified by the growing number of other communities and off-takers operating in the area. While the rise in off-takers cannot be solely attributed to the project, the facility has played a role in making shea processing more accessible. As a result, more households are now engaged in processing activities than before, contributing to the overall demand for wild shea nuts.

There is a notable evolution from RFS to FOLUR and FSIP in terms of increased consideration of value chain approaches in project design. The FOLUR project includes activities aimed at sustainable practices for key commodity crops including cocoa, shea nut and cashew. The project appraisal document mentions encouraging partnerships with the private sector and exploring market access for targeted commodities to increase community access to financial resources and better adapt to economic shocks. However, on the ground the evidence of private sector engagement is missing. One interview confirmed that the Cocoa Forest Initiative[3] (convening major cocoa companies) was invited to initial stakeholder consultations in the context of FOLUR, but they have not been involved in project implementation. Similarly, the FSIP concept note mentions sustainable development of cocoa, maize and aquaculture value chains in Ghana but it is unclear to what extent the private sector has been involved at project design stage. The project is meant to support sustainable certification standards for cocoa including implementation of traceability efforts and environmental guidelines to ensure responsible aquaculture practices implying close coordination efforts on the demand side of the value chains. However, the positive linkages of certification standards with ecological and biodiversity outcomes are not fully proven[4]. The evaluation team found no evidence on the ground of GEF projects integrated in a way that reflects system thinking across national boundaries for example with Ivory Coast in the case of cocoa supply chains. Importantly, this was not foreseen at the design stage of the GEF project.

The interventions under FOLUR and FSIP lack a fully integrated approach to health, nutrition, and food security outcomes, with no clear strategies for directly measuring these aspects. RFS, partly due to its focus on a highly food-insecure population, did not take a holistic approach to addressing issues further down the value chain. The focus of RFS remained on boosting agricultural yields and RFS project beneficiaries reported significant improvements in their levels of household food security and nutrition through the inclusion of soybeans, cowpeas, and groundnuts in the intervention. Moreover, the Women in Agriculture Development Unit at the Department of Agriculture has been assigned to educate communities on incorporating soybeans into their local diets and developing new nutritious meals using soybeans such as soy milk, soy kebabs and adding soy to local staples (tubaani).

GEF projects are also starting to address food system interactions with artisanal small-scale mining. The GEF-7 FOLUR project was the first environmental project in which the government also accessed World Bank IDA credit to complement GEF grant funding (for the formalization of artisanal small-scale mining component). While the government sets a fixed price for cocoa, it limits the ability of farmers to sell at market-driven rates, even when international prices rise as seen since 2022.[5]. The limited financial

incentives in the cocoa sector has led some farmers to abandon their cocoa farms and sell their land for mining activities. This shift not only undermines the sustainability of the cocoa sector but also contributes to environmental damage and unregulated extraction of resources, exacerbating the challenges faced by the agricultural sector. The IDA credit demonstrates that the government recognizes the environmental issues at hand as a priority. The decision to secure a sovereign loan reflects the government's commitment to support formalization of artisanal small-scale mining, indicating that it is considered a critical area.

- ## Learning

GEF-8 food systems interventions build upon previous GEF-6 and GEF-7 efforts by integrating lessons learned, especially in terms of geographical focus and crop diversification. For example, the lessons from GEF-6, which were more concentrated on specific regions and crop types, were applied in GEF-7 with a broader focus on different regions and crops such as cocoa. This shift reflects lessons learned about the need for diversified approaches to address varied environmental and socio-economic conditions across the country. However, the transitions between these phases have not significantly expanded beyond production-focused initiatives. While lessons were incorporated regarding environmental aspects of production (such as riparian establishment, land preparation, organic composting) the project has yet to fully incorporate post-production aspects such as market access, value chain integration, and private sector involvement, which were less emphasized in previous stages.

GEF-funded support in Ghana is not implemented as separate projects (starting from GEF4), but rather a continuous approach building on each four-year replenishment cycle, ensuring sustainability and integrating lessons learnt in subsequent child projects. GEF-4 and GEF-5 served as the foundation for GEF-6 efforts. As the initiative progressed from GEF-6 to GEF-7, a coordinated approach was introduced to address the intersection between small-scale artisanal mining and sustainable land management (component funded by the World Bank) in the case of cocoa farming. In GEF-8, the scope was further expanded beyond cocoa production to include aquaculture, as the impacts of mining on these sectors became evident. Throughout this evolution, the core mandate of the GEF food systems support remained unchanged, with smallholder farmers kept at the center of all interventions. To effectively tackle cocoa-related deforestation, COCOBOD was brought on board as a key partner in the initiative under GEF-7.

One of the lessons learnt from GEF-6 (and before) taken forward to GEF-7 and GEF-8 is working with a community-based approach to natural resources management though the creation and institutionalisation of Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs). Unlike government-protected areas, CREMAs are established on community-owned lands to prevent environmental degradation and support biodiversity, including migratory species. Under GEF-6, six CREMAs were established within the Western Wildlife Corridor. Communities actively participate in resource management through governance structures, constitutions, and bylaws, which, once gazetted, grant them legal authority over their resources. Interviewees mentioned that previously, communities were sidelined, with conservation efforts driven by a top-down approach. However, when communities are actively involved and see tangible benefits, they take ownership of conservation efforts and play a crucial role in protecting natural resources.

- ## Gender and Social Inclusion

GEF food systems interventions in Ghana have considered gender and inclusion in their design and met targets for women's participation. Yet projects were not designed to close gender gaps in agriculture, and thus do not have strategies to address underlying gender dynamics or enhance women's economic empowerment. Projects have set and exceeded targets for women's involvement as GEF beneficiaries (40%) as 56% of the RFS beneficiaries were women and 50% of FOLUR beneficiaries are women (larger project including the small-scale mining component). However, by design, project targets are not

supported by a well-defined strategy or specific activities aimed at engaging women in transformative ways. There is also a noticeable absence of strategies to address gender inequalities in the agricultural sector or to create opportunities for women to challenge traditional roles. This limited gender-focused approach reduces the potential for addressing broader inclusion and empowerment objectives within the food systems interventions. For example, FOLUR beneficiaries in some communities reported that the project's requirement of an initial investment from the farmer for labor costs related to first weeding of their land (about GHC 600/USD 51 per 0.5 hectare) has practically meant that women cocoa farmers and poorer farmers are unable to participate in project activities. Interviewees noted that this requirement was set at the national level, and that COCOBOD district extension officers did not feel empowered to question the decision, which resulted in many women and poorer cocoa farmers initially interested in joining the project to withdraw. The evaluation team noted discrepancies in the project inclusion criteria with different communities not being required to make this initial investment themselves showing a lack of transparent inclusion strategy.

Even though access to land is one of the main project inclusion criteria, the GEF interventions do not seek to engage with the land tenure arrangements (such as abunu or abusa)[6]. The decision of whether the landowner or the sharecropper joins the project is made by the landowner and sharecropper themselves. If the sharecropper chooses to participate, the landowner must grant power of attorney to authorize their involvement This arrangement may lead to issues of inclusion, as the decision-making power remains with the landowner, potentially limiting the sharecropper's autonomy in participation. If the landowner is not supportive, the sharecropper may be excluded from benefiting from the project, despite their active involvement in land cultivation. It is also likely that this approach results in the inclusion of individuals who are relatively better off within their communities, rather than focusing on the poorest or most vulnerable populations. From a project implementation perspective, there is often a trade-off between the expediency of implementation, particularly when securing tenure can be a lengthy process—and the goal of ensuring broader inclusion. Similarly, issues of women's land tenure rights (especially in the north) and youth's limited access to land have not been addressed by the GEF interventions. The projects acknowledged these issues during the design phase but did not provide clear solutions during implementation. In GEF-6, men were sensitized and encouraged to allocate land for their wives, and while some did, the land provided was typically small and located near households or communities, often with lower fertility. . In GEF-7, although tenure insecurity for women and youth was recognized, the project chose not to engage with this issue directly.

Transparency of beneficiary inclusion processes has been repeatedly questioned by the project communities. In GEF-6 targeted communities the inclusion process was initially perceived as very transparent by farmers, as they were asked to form groups, and only those interested chose to participate. However, after joining a group and having their names submitted, they were informed that support could only be provided to certain groups. This has been considered unfair by farmers, who believe that the Department of Agriculture is favoring some groups over others. The project team later clarified that these perceptions were primarily due to several limitations: (1) during field verification, some farmers who submitted sub-project proposals did not have land available to implement the interventions; (2) there was an oversubscription of applicants in certain communities; and (3) the project had limited funds, which made it impossible to support all eligible participants.

Another issue emerged as some communities targeted under RFS have been included in FOLUR. Beneficiaries reported that the inclusion of older GEF-6 communities was prioritized, with a focus on allowing only those communities and beneficiaries who were deemed committed to participate in GEF-7. However, farmers were questioning how this "commitment" is determined, as it appeared that more affluent farmers are being selected as GEF-7 beneficiaries. This has raised concerns among the original

beneficiaries, who feel that the criteria for commitment may not have been applied consistently, leading to an unfair shift in who receives support. Project team later explained that commitment was assessed based on the extent to which farmers adopted the technologies promoted by the project. Farmers who were not included in GEF-7 project expressed that they were informed the selection process was managed by "computers" in Accra, which made their exclusion feel arbitrary as they were not provided with a clear explanation for the decision.

2.2 Relevance and Coherence

2.2.1 Alignment with country priorities and needs

GEF food systems interventions have been well aligned with the priorities and needs of Ghana in the agriculture, livestock, and fishery sectors. The focus on sustainable agricultural practices, including agroforestry and climate-smart agriculture as well as curbing deforestation, matches the country's broader goals for improving agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability.

RFS aligned well with Ghana's central development strategies and policies on land degradation and natural resource management such as Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) (2006–2009) which recognized land restoration and integrated ecosystem management as essential for sustainable development; National Development Policy Framework (2010–2013) and Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy (FASDEP II) which emphasized sustainable land and environmental management; Forest and Wildlife Policy (1994) and National Land Policy, and Forestry Development Master Plan (1996–2000) which provided a policy foundation for natural resource governance; Natural Resources and Environmental Governance Program (NREG) and the Northern Savannah Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NSBSAP) which reinforced ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation, and socio-economic benefits to local communities.

Similarly, FOLUR demonstrates robust alignment with Ghana's economic and environmental policies, particularly in sustainable agriculture, forestry, and climate resilience through the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (CPESDP) 2017–2024 which supports Ghana's goal to double per capita GDP by 2024, with a focus on transforming agriculture and industry. Key environmental and agricultural policies which directly correspond to FOLUR objectives include Forest and Wildlife Policy (2011), National Land Policy (1999), National Biodiversity Policy (2018), and National Environment Policy (2014), Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy (FASDEP II) and Tree Crops Policy. FOLUR is strongly integrated with Ghana's economic growth strategies and climate action policies, ensuring a multi-sectoral approach to sustainable land management. The alignment with REDD+ and international commitments (NDCs, AFR100, Aichi Targets) positions FOLUR as a key contributor to Ghana's environmental and economic development goals. FOLUR success depends on effective policy coordination across sectors and sustained government support.

FSIP focuses on landscape restoration, sustainable food systems, and climate resilience, aligning with key government policies and programs such as: Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy (FASDEP II) and Cocoa Sector Development Strategy (CSDS II) promoting agricultural sustainability and support Ghana's major cash crop industries (e.g., cocoa, tree crops); National Food System Strategy and Investment Plan (2023–2030) and Aquaculture Development Plan (2022) reinforcing food security, fisheries, and sustainable agricultural investments and Green Ghana, Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Program (GCFRP), and Forest Investment Program (FIP). FSIP also contributes to Ghana's obligations under the Bonn Challenge, AFR100, and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It supports Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, reinforcing climate adaptation and resilience efforts. Despite these

positive policy alignments, integrating smallholder farmers and vulnerable communities into large-scale investment plans requires additional policy safeguards to ensure inclusive benefits.

Table 1. GEF's alignment with country priorities and needs

GEF Project	Policy alignment	Key strengths	Potential gaps
RFS	Strong alignment with land degradation, biodiversity conservation, and ecosystem restoration policies	Well-integrated with national land and forest governance strategies (NREG, NSBSAP)	Sustainability concerns if long-term funding is not secured
FOLUR	Strong coherence with economic, agricultural, and climate policies	Aligns with CPESDP 2017–2024, REDD+, NDCs, and Ghana's agriculture and forestry policies	Requires effective cross-sectoral coordination
FSIP	Broad alignment with agriculture, forestry, and climate adaptation policies	Supports major government programs (GCFRP, FIP, Food System Strategy) and international commitments	Needs policy safeguards for smallholder inclusion

Interviews at the national level confirmed the above and showed a high level of awareness of climate change impacts including impact on/from agriculture and the consequences for future generations. National interviewees stated that the projects are effectively addressing national priorities, and even without funding from the GEF to be part of the integrated program, these are topics they would still seek support for.

2.2.2 Interaction with similar government and donor-funded activities

Interactions between GEF food systems interventions and similar government or donor-funded activities in Ghana have been limited. Notably, interviews showed that key international organizations like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) were not fully involved GEF activities in Ghana. While there is some alignment with the GCF, the overall interaction between GEF and other programs could be significantly improved. For example, GEF-6 aimed to expand Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) in the same communities where World Vision had already established VSLAs, under the assumption that the existing VSLAs were insufficient. However, farmers often preferred joining the GEF project activities including VSLAs, believing they would receive more benefits such as free agriculture inputs in addition to joining the VSLA. This led to conflicts within the community, as some members want to leave the World Vision VSLAs to join GEF-6 activities, anticipating greater access to free inputs.

Some components of GEF-7 and GEF-8 share similarities with other government programs that have not been successful. This suggests that while projects broadly align with the country's needs, the specific activities on-the-ground may not be fully aligned with local communities' needs or preferences. For example, in the FOLUR project farmers reported initial resistance to join COCOBOD implemented interventions (rehabilitation of moribund cocoa farms) due to the failure of similar rehabilitation activities started under the Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs) which begun in 2017. The PEPs encouraged farmers to adopt major agronomic practices geared towards improving cocoa yield per hectare. This strategy included interventions such as cocoa farm rehabilitation, mass spraying, pruning, hand pollination, and subsidized fertilizer application, among others.[7] Nevertheless, the implementation on the ground faced significant challenges which led to lack of trust in COCOBOD actions from farmers. They repeatedly mentioned that only after learning the COCOBOD interventions were supported by GEF (and in particular the World Bank) they were willing to join the project.

Tree planting interventions under the GEF-6 initiative have faced challenges, making them less popular among communities. One significant issue is the delayed benefits of tree planting, as it takes years for

trees like teak and mahogany to mature. Additionally, there are concerns around land and tree ownership, as communities may lose out when these trees are eventually harvested by the landowner. This uncertainty over ownership and the long-term nature of tree planting undermines the appeal of such interventions. To address this, leguminous crops were provided to farmers interested in tree growing as an incentive and to improve soil fertility.

The similar approach of the Modified Taungya System (MTS)[8] shows that a clear, shared benefit structure is critical for engaging communities in long-term forest management and conservation efforts. Therefore, addressing the issues of tree and land ownership and ensuring more immediate, tangible benefits could improve the popularity and effectiveness of tree planting interventions under GEF. The MTS has been the primary public-community partnership for forest plantation development since 2002. It is a collaboration between the government, represented by the Forestry Commission, and forest-fringe communities, offering equal benefit-sharing. Through MTS, communities can participate in the restoration of degraded landscapes, while benefiting from food crops, income from tree seedling sales, and a share of the standing timber value—40% from commercial thinning and the final harvest.[9]

2.2.3 Policy coherence

GEF food systems interventions have not had a particular focus on promoting policy coherence in Ghana. The focus of GEF interventions has been primarily on sustainable agricultural practices and environmental outcomes, rather than addressing the broader policy frameworks related to subsidies or engaging in dialogue about agricultural support mechanisms. This lack of focus on policy coherence, especially in relation to subsidies, means that GEF interventions have not been a significant driving force in shaping or influencing agricultural policy reforms that could better align with sustainability goals. While agricultural inputs are subsidized by the government, in recent years, government's share of subsidies under the Fertilizer Subsidy Program (FSP) has declined steadily since 2020 mainly due to fiscal pressures on government, the need to continue the subsidy program and expand the number of beneficiaries.[10] FSP has been a key component of the Planting for Food and Jobs (PfJ) initiative targeted at improving crop productivity, ensuring food security and creating employment opportunities in Ghana. Over a five-year period (2017 to 2021), the government has spent about GH¢2.7 billion mainly for covering subsidies on selected fertilizers and seeds supplied to smallholder farmers. Eligible farmers were provided a 50% input subsidy, which was reduced to 15% as of 2022.[11] There is no evidence however to argue that GEF food systems interventions have contributed to this reduction.

Interministerial coordination of the GEF support is ensured by the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MEST) convening the Project Steering Committee. MEST has an oversight role, ensuring the successful implementation of the project. The interviewees explained that they formed a project coordination unit at the national level and mini teams at the regional level to ensure ownership and participation. They emphasized the importance of speaking with one voice and having a common sense of purpose. At the national level, coordination is evident among key ministries and government agencies, such as:

- EPA (environmental protection interventions)
    - Ministry of Food and Agriculture (agricultural productivity and sustainability)
- Forest Service Division (forest conservation and management)
    - Wildlife Division (biodiversity conservation)
- COCOBOD (cocoa sector interventions)

Despite these high-level engagements, implementation at the district level shows a mix of coordinated and sector-specific approaches. While some interventions remain ministry-specific—with COCOBOD, the

Ministry of Agriculture, and the Forestry Commission operating independently—there are positive signs of cross-sectoral collaboration through District Watershed Management Teams. These teams include representatives from:

- EPA
  - Department of Agriculture
  - Department of Social Welfare and Community Development
  - Department of Gender
  - Ghana National Fire Service
  - Forest Services Division
  - National Disaster Management Organization
  - Physical Planning Department
  - Development Planning Department
  - Wildlife Division of FC (where they are present)

Districts maintain a list of stakeholders to include in local implementation efforts. The Department of Agriculture typically occupies 4 spots (District Director, Schedule Officer and two Agric Extension Agents), leaving 6 for other stakeholders, with a total of 10 spots available. This allocation also includes the community extension agent. Private sector entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), and NGOs are usually not included. Moreover, when a department is located outside the district, it is often excluded from the team due to budget constraints. For example, in many districts, the Wildlife Department is based in Bolgatanga, the regional capital, and oversees all districts (Wildlife Dep offices are established based on the prevalence of wildlife). As they are not situated in the district capital, they are not included in the district-level implementation. Many of the units and departments represented on the committee are primarily tasked with sensitization efforts (as agreed at the project inception), rather than providing substantial support or realistically addressing issues within their areas of expertise. A clear example of this is the District Fire Service, which, while involved in awareness-raising, does not have the capacity to contribute effectively to practical implementation.

Despite coordination efforts at the district level, there is limited evidence of collaboration at the community level. Many interventions remain siloed, with different departments and/or agencies implementing their activities independently rather than in an integrated manner building on each other. This gap raises concerns about efficiency, resource allocation, and the sustainability of interventions at the community level.

2.3 Performance and Results

2.3.1 Global environmental and socioeconomic benefits

RFS is the only project that has closed at the time of the evaluation and generated tangible outcomes. The RFS project closed in 2020 and has been subject to both a terminal evaluation[12] and a development impact evaluation by the World Bank[13]. The FOLUR project has only started on-the-ground implementation in the last year, and emerging results, particularly in terms of yields increase, are only anecdotal at this stage. For the purpose of the case study this section refers only to the RFS project results.

Through its phased implementation, RFS covered 15,861 hectares under sustainable land and water management practices (SLWM), benefited over 63,500 individuals, and the development of the Western Wildlife Corridor Management Plan including the establishment of six CREMAs covering 600,995.71 hectares improving biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management. Interviews with

project staff at different levels and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries confirmed that RFS has been largely successful in achieving environmental and socioeconomic benefits including significant progress in SLWM, livelihood and food security improvements, and environmental restoration.

Key project benefits reported by farmers include:

- Adoption of low-input farming methods such as crop rotation with manure, zero tillage, and organic compost has improved soil fertility and crop yields.
- Restoration of riparian zones has protected water bodies, preventing river drying and enabling dry-season vegetable farming in surrounding communities (in some areas, riparian did not necessarily refer to water bodies).
- The abandonment of slash-and-burn farming has helped preserve soil health and biodiversity.
- The introduction of nutrient-rich crops like soya, cowpea, and groundnuts has enhanced dietary diversity.
- Farmers report higher crop yields, reducing hunger and improving household nutrition.
- Reduced reliance on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides has improved post-harvest storage, with crops such as onions now lasting significantly longer.
- Increased agricultural productivity has led to higher household incomes, though full income security remains a challenge as expenses continue to exceed earnings.
- Some farmers have invested in livestock to create a more stable income stream, ensuring financial security beyond seasonal farming. This can be seen problematic from an environmental perspective.

Spillover effects to neighboring communities have been notably strong, suggesting a broader impact beyond the immediate project areas. However, the interventions have primarily focused on production with limited evidence of benefits extending to other aspects of the food system. Communities have been strategically selected to be surrounded by other settlements, enabling knowledge transfer and the adoption of best practices through farmers' own initiatives. Within the beneficiary communities and in other non-beneficiary communities, demonstration plots have been used to facilitate learning for farmers. Adjacent communities are also engaged, where knowledge is shared through interactions with extension officers and project beneficiaries. Non-beneficiary communities have independently adopted SLWM techniques, demonstrating the project's broader influence. Farmers outside the project have begun implementing composting, zero tillage, and dry-season farming after witnessing successful outcomes.

While environmental practices that were adopted led to yield improvements and environmental protection, the sustainability of these benefits remains uncertain due to the higher labor demands associated with these practices, which may deter long-term engagement if there is no financial compensation. Additionally, climate change impacts, such as increased droughts, present ongoing challenges, especially in relation to irrigation and water management. This challenge has been partially addressed through the introduction of SLWM practices, including integrated in-field water harvesting techniques—such as earth and stone bunding, which are semi-permanent—and conservation methods like mulching, all of which help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

To ensure sustainability of project results, a bottom-up approach was adopted. Decisions were not imposed; rather, funding was provided to support technologies that received approval from farmers. Once

the benefits were recognized, farmers independently adopted the practices, even if not in their entirety, implementing what was within their means. The introduction of certified seeds ensured that farmers continued their use beyond initial project support. Many farmers have sustained the practices they were taught, leading to higher yields. As a result, they were introduced to VSLAs, enabling them to save and rely on their savings for purchasing necessary inputs at the appropriate time. Interviewees recognized that as GEF support may eventually end, measures have been implemented to ensure continuity. Interventions remain location-specific, with programs adjusted based on emerging needs. To enhance motivation and long-term ownership, economically valuable species such as mango and cashew have been integrated into restoration efforts. The demand-driven approach ensures that farmers remain committed to maintaining the interventions.

2.3.2 Role of women in RFS interventions

RFS interventions have had a limited focus on the role of women in agriculture and household gender dynamics. While women have started to earn more income as a result of their participation in the project, this has led to some tensions within households, particularly in terms of gender dynamics and decision making around income. Under GEF-6 women's participation in group-based activities, such as VSLAs and shea processing, has expanded their economic opportunities and allowed them to contribute to children's school fees and other household expenses. However, the project was not designed to close gender gaps, and interventions did not specifically target the role of women in influencing household or farm decisions. The increasing empowerment and financial independence of women have led to emerging household conflicts, particularly around traditional gender roles. Both men and women in the GEF-6 communities mentioned that men interpret women's financial independence as a challenge to their authority and respect within the household. This shift in dynamics has created power struggles and tension in decision-making.

Although there has been some progress in granting women land for farming (from their husbands), the allocation remains limited. Women are typically given small plots near their homes or within the community, while men continue to control larger plots of land outside the community. Women mentioned that they are seeking access to more land to expand their farming ventures, highlighting the unequal distribution of resources. Moreover, while women are now gaining access to more land from men, this shift has not been coupled with broader strategies to address land tenure issues or actively promote gender equality in the food systems.

2.3.3 Private sector engagement

While farmers' ownership of their land and involvement in decision-making has been a central factor in the success of the RFS interventions, the lack of a comprehensive private sector strategy has hindered the scaling of benefits. Early interventions were largely focused on supporting farmers directly with agricultural inputs, which were provided for free, enabling them to reinvest savings into agricultural expansion. Additionally, as the sustainability of the environmental practices adopted by farmers is uncertain, largely due to the labor intensity of these practices without adequate financial support, private sector involvement could play a critical role in ensuring continued success and expanding the environmental impact. Government programs such as Input Credit through Planting for Food and Jobs phase II (PfJ 2.0) could support the continuity of interventions beyond the project closure. The GEF food systems support in Ghana considers the individual farmer as their entry point. Interviewees mentioned that farmer group or cooperative formation is not discouraged however, experience has shown a preference among farmers for an individual approach. While a collective approach could facilitate greater private sector participation.

With the recent introduction of the EU's Regulation of Deforestation-free Products (EUDR) including commodities such as cocoa, close coordination with the private sector cocoa companies will need to be ensured down to the field level. Under the Regulation, any operator or trader who places these commodities on the EU market, or exports from it, must be able to prove that the products do not originate from recently deforested land or have contributed to forest degradation. The evaluation team observed a high awareness of the implications of this regulation among the COCOBOD staff involved in FOLUR implementation. However, how this will be operationalised is yet to be seen.

2.4 Programmatic value addition

The broader knowledge exchange has provided valuable insights and practical benefits to individual child projects in Ghana, though access to these opportunities has been limited to specific individuals. One notable example is the learning experience from Burkina Faso, where Ghanaian farmers were exposed to advanced tomato and onion production techniques. This exchange directly contributed to strengthening Ghana's agricultural value chain by fostering the establishment of producer organizations while keeping individual farmers at the center of interventions. Additionally, participation in international workshops, such as those organized under the RFS regional hub project, has facilitated cross-country learning. Recent engagements in Kenya on gender inclusion, for example, have enhanced the projects' ability to integrate more women effectively. While these knowledge-sharing initiatives have been beneficial, their reach has not yet been expanded to ensure more project beneficiaries and implementers gain access to such opportunities, further strengthening local implementation capacity.

3. Summary of findings and emerging lessons

- **Design and systems thinking:** The GEF food systems interventions in Ghana have primarily focused on increasing productivity and improving environmental practices in production. They show minimal consideration of the broader food system, including post-production, processing, aggregation, distribution, and consumption. The interventions have evolved from RFS to FOLUR and FSIP, with increased consideration of value chain approaches and sustainable practices for key commodity crops. Despite efforts to harmonize stakeholder involvement, the interventions lack a fully integrated approach to health, nutrition, and food security outcomes.

Emerging Lesson: There is a need to increase value chain integration, market access, and private sector involvement to ensure the sustainability of interventions. The lack of a comprehensive private sector strategy has hindered the scaling of benefits.

- **Learning:** GEF-8 food systems interventions build upon previous efforts by integrating lessons learned, especially in terms of geographical focus and crop diversification. The continuous approach ensures sustainability and integrates lessons learned in subsequent child projects. The creation and institutionalization of Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) have been effective in preventing environmental degradation and supporting biodiversity.

Emerging Lesson: Expanding the reach of knowledge-sharing initiatives can further strengthen local implementation capacity. Participation in international workshops and cross-country learning has provided valuable insights and practical benefits to individual child projects.

- **Gender and social inclusion:** While GEF food systems interventions have considered gender and inclusion in their design and met targets for women's participation, they do not have strategies to address underlying gender dynamics or enhance women's economic empowerment. Projects have set and exceeded targets for women's involvement, but there is a noticeable absence of strategies to address gender inequalities in the agricultural sector. Issues of land tenure arrangements and transparency of beneficiary inclusion processes have also been questionable.

Emerging Lesson: Addressing underlying gender dynamics and enhancing women's economic empowerment are crucial for achieving broader inclusion and empowerment objectives within food systems interventions. Projects have not incorporated strategies to address gender inequalities and create opportunities for women to challenge traditional roles.

- **Relevance and coherence:** GEF food systems interventions have been well aligned with the priorities and needs of Ghana in the agriculture, livestock, and fishery sectors. The focus on sustainable agricultural practices matches the country's broader goals for improving agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability. However, interactions between GEF food systems interventions and similar government or donor-funded activities in Ghana have been limited.

Emerging Lesson: Promoting policy coherence and engaging in dialogue about agricultural support mechanisms can better align GEF interventions with sustainability goals. Effective interministerial coordination and community-level collaboration are essential for the success of interventions.

- **Performance and results:** The RFS project has generated tangible outcomes, including significant progress in sustainable land and water management practices, livelihood and food security improvements, and environmental restoration. Key project benefits reported by farmers include improved soil fertility and crop yields, enhanced dietary diversity, higher household incomes, and spillover effects to neighbouring communities. However, challenges remain in coordination, beneficiary inclusion, and long-term sustainability.

Emerging Lesson: Ensuring the sustainability of project results requires a bottom-up approach, with funding provided to support technologies that receive approval from farmers. Measures should be implemented to ensure continuity beyond project closure.

Annex 1: Stakeholders Consulted

List of interviewees

No.	Type of stakeholder	Organization	Date of Interview
1	Government GEF Focal Point	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	16/01/25
2	Project Management Team	Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA)	20/01/25
3	Project Management Team	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	20/01/25
4	National Government	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA)	20/01/25
5	National Government	Ministry of Finance - Resource Mobilization Division	21/01/25
6	National Government	Ministry of Finance - Climate Change Division	21/01/25
7	National Government	Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MEST)	22/01/25
8	National Government	Forest Service Division (FSD)	10/02/25
9	National Government	Wildlife Division (WD)	12/02/25
10	Donor	EU Delegation in Ghana	22/01/25
11	Private sector	The Cocoa and Forest Initiative (IDH Ghana coordinator)	22/01/25
12	GEF Agency	IFAD Ghana Country Office	22/01/25
13	GEF Agency	FAO Regional Office for West Africa	22/01/25
14	GEF Agency	UNDP Ghana Country Office	29/01/25
15	Local government	Mpraeso Forest Service Division (District Office)	23/01/25
16	Local government	Nkawkaw Area Office (EPA)	23/01/25
17	Local government	Nkawkaw COCOBOD (District Office)	23/01/25
18	Local government	Nkawie Forest Service Division (District Office)	24/01/25
19	Local government	Nyinahin COCOBOD (District Office)	24/01/25
20	Local government	Nyinahin Fire Service Division (FSD)	24/01/25
21	Local government	Talensi District Agriculture Development Unit (DADU)	28/01/25
22	Local government	West Mamprusi District Agriculture Development Unit (DADU)	27/01/25
23	Local government	EPA Office Bolgantaga	30/01/25
24	GEF Lead Implementing Agency	World Bank	26/02/25

List of Focus Group Discussions

No.	Type	Community	Participants
FOLUR			
1	Fire volunteers	Dwerebease	14 (4F; 10M)
2	Farmers	Dwerebease	26 (12F; 14M)
3	District Watershed Assembly Management implementation team	Atibie	7 (1F; 6M)
4	Farmers	Old Jejeti	16 (4F; 12M)

5	COCOBOD implementation team	Old Jejeti	9M
6	Farmers	Botrampa/Agogoso/Akatanso/Agogo Agya	13 (1F; 12M)
7	COCOBOD implementation team	Botrampa	15 (2F; 13M)
8	Farmers	Pamuroso	35 (14F; 21M)
9	Forestry Commission (including Fire Service Division) implementation team	Pamuroso	6M
RFS			
1	Farmers	Takorayilli	30 (22F; 8M)
2	Department of Agriculture implementation team	WaleWale	3M
3	Farmers	Yameriga	50 (29F; 21M)
4	Farmers	Santeng	40 (22F; 18M)
5	District Watershed Assembly Management implementation team	Talensi	9 (2F; 7M)
6	Famers	Tarikom	12 (5F; 7M)
7	Farmers	Gbantongo	64 (31F; 33M)

Annex 2: Project sites visited

Below are descriptions of project site visits conducted during a fieldwork mission from January 20 to January 30, 2025.

Region	District	Community	Interventions
FOLUR			
Central	Kwahu East	Damano	Riparian establishment and prevention of wildfires
Central	Kwahu East	Dwerebease	Riparian establishment
Central	Nkawkaw	Jejeti	Rehabilitation of moribund cocoa farms
Central	Nkawkaw	Atibie Nkwanta	Rehabilitation of moribund cocoa farms
Ashanti	Nkawie	Offin Shelterbelt Forest Reserve	Green fire breaks, reforestation and Modified Taungya System
Ashanti	Nyinahin	Botrampa	Rehabilitation of moribund cocoa farms
RFS			
Upper East	Bawku West	Tarikom	Integrated soil fertility management, agroforestry
Upper East	Bawku West	Gbantongo Agoadabot	Rangeland and dugout, composting, earth bunding
Upper East	Talensi	Yameriga	Stone lining, enrichment planting and natural regeneration
Northen	West Mamprusi	Takorayilli	Riparian establishment, woodlot and shea processing facility

Pictures from project sites visits

Eastern Region, Kwahu East District, Dwerebease community, reforesting activities (before picture on the left; after picture on the right)

Eastern Region, Nkawkaw District, Jejeti community, cocoa farm rehabilitation activities, new cocoa seedling replanted, and plantain planted as a shade tree, bottle irrigation for cocoa seedling

Ashanti Region, Nyinahin District, Botrampa community, cocoa farm rehabilitation activities, new cocoa seedlings replanted with plantain as shade tree, intercropping with peppers

Bridge at Takorayili from SLWM (left) and dry season farming by the bridge Takorayili (right)

Shea processing facility at Takorayili (left) and shea butter produced by women's group (right)

Stone bunding and leaving crop residue at Yameriga

Smallholder oil palm plantation in West Kalimantan

Annex 10: Indonesia Country Case Study

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ADM	Archer Daniels Midland
Bappenas	Ministry of National Development Planning.
Bapperida	Regional Development Planning Agency
BERLKAN	Initiative to Promote Sustainable Palm oil in Indonesia
BNI	Bank Negara Indonesia
BPDPKS	Palm Oil Plantation Fund Management Agency
CFI	Coastal Fisheries Initiative
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CI	Conservation International
CMEA	Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs
CMFA	Coordinating Ministry of Food Affairs
CSP	Cocoa Sustainability Platform
DO	Development Objectives
EAFM	Eco-System Approach to Fisheries Management
ESG	Environment, Social and Governance
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FMA	Fisheries Management Area
FMP	Fisheries Management Plan
FOKSBI	Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil Platform
FOLUR	Food, Land Use, and Restoration
FSIP	Food Systems Integrated Program
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GEB	Global Environmental Benefits
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GGP	Good Growth Partnership
GHG	Green House Gas
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HCV / HCS	High Conservation Value / High Carbon Stock
HQ	Headquarter
IAP / IP	Integrated Approach Pilot / Impact Program
ISPO / RSPO	Indonesian Standard for Palm Oil / Regional Standard for Palm Oil
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILM	Integrated Landscape Management
IP	Implementation Performance
ISEAL	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling Alliance
ISLME	Indonesian Seas Large Marine Ecosystem
KEHATI	Indonesia Biodiversity Foundation
MMAF	Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries
MoEF	Ministry of Environment and Forestry
MS	Moderately Satisfactory
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Platform
MTR	Mid-term Review

MU	Moderately Unsatisfactory
NAP IT	National Action Plan Implementation Team
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NTFP	Non-Traditional Forest Products
OneCGIAR	Unified Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research System
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PMU	Project Management Unit
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Comittee
PT ANJ	Indonesian Diversified Agribusiness Holding Company
RAME	Rurality, Accountability, Monitoring, and Engagement Framework
RAN-KSB	National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil
SASCI	Sustainability and Value Added in Agricultural Supply Chains
SoC	Signals of Change
SRP	Sustainable Rice Platform
STDB	Surat Tanda Daftar Budidaya (Cultivation Registration Certificate)
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToC	Theory of Change
TORA	Agrarian Reform Scheme
TSC	Targeted Scenario Analysis
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
YKAN	Yayasan Konservasi Alam Nusantara (NGO)

1. Introduction

This Indonesia case study is part of the Evaluation of Global Environment Facility (GEF) Food Systems Programs. This evaluation seeks to assess the quality of design and achievement of results of food systems programs in GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8, as well as to evaluate how the GEF has adapted to changing contexts and incorporated lessons learned into the design of later programs. The global evaluation covers three GEF-6 programs (Resilient Food Systems [RFS], Coastal Fisheries Initiative [CFI], and Good Growth Partnership [GGP]), one GEF-7 program (Food, Land Use, and Restoration [FOLUR] Impact Program), and one GEF-8 program (Food Systems Integrated Program [FSIP]). The evaluation scope also includes standalone country and regional projects focused on food systems from GEF-6 through GEF-8 that were identified by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) using a keyword search.

Country case studies are a key component of the evaluation, intending to help:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the outcomes resulting from GEF food systems interventions and the explanatory factors for and sustainability of these changes;
- Understand how the GEF integrated programs' approach to food systems has evolved at the country level by assessing the similarities and differences between projects from each replenishment cycle and capturing links and interconnection; and
- Collect the perspectives of local communities affected by GEF interventions.

Indonesia was one of four case study countries selected purposively by the GEF IEO. Case study countries were selected based on their having food systems program child projects from all three GEF replenishment cycles included in the scope of the evaluation. Other factors considered include maturity of projects and variation across regions, GEF Agencies, and sectors targeted through FSIP.

1.1 Methodology

This Indonesia case study used a systems thinking approach that was guided by the global evaluation's theoretical framework for understanding food systems that integrates GEF concepts with relevant literature to identify the drivers, actors, parts, and outcomes of a given system. The case study sought to answer thirteen overarching evaluation questions pertaining to design, relevance and coherence, performance and results, value addition, and efficiency of GEF food systems programming.

The case study used mixed methods to extract robust and credible findings, including desk reviews of project and program documents, virtual and in-person interviews, and direct observation through site visits. The case study team conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to develop an initial list of key informants, then used a snowballing approach to identify additional key informants through interviews with representatives of the national, regional, and local Government of Indonesia, GEF Agencies, project staff, private sector actors, external experts, and civil society organizations (see Annex 1 for a full list). The case study team visited sites in West Kalimantan associated with the GGP and FOLUR programs (GEF ID 9180 and 10238) (see Annex 2).

Key limitations faced during the study included the difficulties related to carrying out an evaluation mission during the volatile and fluid transition period after a new President took over and key responsibilities for GEF projects were changing, especially due to the break-up of the former Ministry of Environment and Forestry into two separate entities and the transfer of GEF FOLUR execution oversight from the Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs (CMEA) to the new Coordinating Ministry of Food Affairs (CMFA). This limited the availability of competent interview partners to some extent. Secondly, the large number of projects covered (eight) during a relatively short mission period of about 10 days posed

a challenge. The availability of solid documentation in the form of Terminal Evaluations (TE), Mid-term Reviews (MTR), Project Implementation Reports (PIR) and basic Project Documents, and the pro-active support by UNDP, FAO, and the FOLUR Project Management Unit (PMU) in organizing the field visit and linking the evaluation team with knowledgeable interview partners from other projects in Jakarta, were instrumental for the success of the mission. The CFI, WWF-Indonesia, and IFC teams equally contributed. The early stages of three projects, the FAO-implemented FSIP child project and the two standalone projects, limited comparisons with earlier and ongoing GEF programs to some extent.

1.2 Scope

Indonesia was selected for a case study due to the existence of child projects from GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8 food systems programs as well as two standalone GEF projects with a food systems approach. Table 1 below shows the 8 projects in Indonesia included in this case study. The three projects of the Good Growth Partnership (GGP) program, part of the GEF-6 Integrated Approach Pilots (IAP), were global projects covering three countries each: Paraguay, Liberia, and Indonesia. As global initiatives, they were managed partly by central and regional implementing agency quarters and partly by the respective country offices of UNDP, WWF-US, and IFC. GGP projects were implemented between 2017 and 2022 and are now closed. The GEF-6 Coastal Fisheries Initiative (CFI) project on Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management has been under phased implementation since 2018, with WWF-US engagement (starting in 2021) following an earlier component executed by Conservation International (2018-2022). The project is currently ongoing and expected to close by December 2026.

The GEF-7 FOLUR project, implemented by UNDP, began effective operations in 2022 and is scheduled for completion in 2028 (six-year duration). The planned GEF-8 FSIP livestock project, to be implemented by FAO, is still in formulation phase, and the project proposal was not available for the purpose of this evaluation. Meanwhile, the ADB-implemented standalone project on aquaculture in Indonesia and Timor-Leste started operations effectively in April 2024. A standalone FAO project on crop diversity became effective in 2022; however, its first disbursement and inception workshop only occurred in 2024 due to prolonged restructuring and changes in nomenclature in the government executing institution.

Table 1. Overview of projects included in case study

GEF ID	Project Name	GEF Agency	FS Program	Project Status	Target Food System
9129	Eco-system Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in Eastern Indonesia (Fisheries Management Area (FMA)- 715, 717 & 718)	WWF-US (plus CI)	CFI	Under implementation since 2018	Marine fish in coastal areas
9180	Reducing Deforestation from Commodity Production	UNDP / FAO	GGP	Completed	Palm oil
9182	Commodities-IAP: Generating Responsible Demand for Reduced-Deforestation Commodities	WWF-US	GGP	Completed	Palm oil
9696	Enabling Transactions - Market Shift to Deforestation Free Beef, Palm Oil, and Soy	World Bank	GGP	Completed	Palm oil
10867	Towards Sustainable and Conversion-Free Aquaculture in Indonesian Seas Large Marine Ecosystem (ISLME)	ADB	Standalone	CEO endorsement cleared	Shrimps and seaweed
10511	Crop Diversity Conservation for Sustainable Use in Indonesia	FAO	Standalone	Under implementation Since 2022	Crops with national and global importance for crop diversity (and their crop wild relatives)

10238	Strengthening Sustainability in Commodity and Food-Crop Value Chains, Land Restoration and Land Use Governance through Integrated Landscape Management for Multiple Benefits in Indonesia	UNDP and FAO	FOLUR	Under implementation since 2022	Palm oil, rice, cocoa and coffee
11229	Sustainable Livestock Production to Support Resilient Food Systems, Environment and Rural Livelihoods in Indonesia	FAO	FSIP	Under design (Project document submitted to GEF)	Livestock (cattle, other ruminants, poultry)

2. Findings

2.1 Design

2.1.1 Systems Thinking

All Indonesian food systems programs and projects—including the two standalone initiatives—apply a relatively strong and comprehensive food systems approach, albeit in slightly different ways. Their scope consistently covers multiple food systems dimensions, with explicit attention to environmental footprints. The **GGP program** was food systems-oriented from the outset, guided by a Theory of Change focused on key deforestation-linked commodity supply chains and incorporating production, demand, and finance aspects—an approach mirrored in its child projects across three countries, including Indonesia. The **FOLUR Indonesia project** similarly developed a strategic vision encompassing all key food systems dimensions across four globally traded commodities, (palm oil, rice, coffee and cocoa) aligned with the global FOLUR program's objectives. The **FSIP GEF-8 livestock project** reflects the food systems orientation of its parent programwell at this current formulation stage, while the **CFI Indonesia fisheries project** was also shaped by the broader vision of its global program. The way these programs and projects address the four core food systems dimensions—production; commodity value addition and finance; policies, enabling environments, and governance; and the demand side—is detailed in the next section and summarized in Table 2.[38] More details on each of the programs/projects are provided in Annex 5 (Project Synopsis).

All programs and projects address production aspects, though this dimension has been less prominent in GGP implementation compared to what is planned or has been done in the other initiatives (see Table 2). While the GGP Production project focused on policy and commodity value addition (Chapter 2.3: *Performance and Results*), the GGP Transactions project was unable to fulfill its intended and important role in indirectly supporting production (through private sector enterprise finance) due to the cancellation of its GEF funding in the absence of suitable client enterprises (Chapter 2.3: *Performance and Results*). In contrast, the other projects give strong attention to production, even though the CFI has so far focused more on policies and regulatory frameworks than direct support to fishing communities—aside from some training activities. Both the FOLUR and FSIP projects express high ambitions to work directly with farmers at the provincial level, although specific interventions at project sites are yet to be fully defined.

[38] Only the GGP projects are completed and several have not yet started. For the GGP and CFI projects, the reported coverage of food systems dimensions reflects achievements to some extent, while for others the analysis is mostly based on project design.

Commodity value addition, markets and finance have played—or are expected to play—a significant role in the CFI and FOLUR projects. This includes investments in commodity processing, value addition through better standards, higher prices or creative product transformation and partnerships with private sector companies. FOLUR also explicitly supports improved finance access for smallholders, specifically through partnerships with the Ministry for Coordinating Food Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as through farmer capacity building. The CFI contributed to a Fund to support private sector finance for community fisheries investments These elements are also emphasized in the FSIP livestock project, the stand-alone FAO crop diversity project, and the ADB marine fisheries project. The GGP Transactions project was originally intended to cover this dimension through its GEF-financed component, which ultimately did not materialize (Chapter 2.3: *Performance and Results*).

Policy, enabling environment, and governance—including multi-stakeholder platforms and engagement across different administrative levels—have been central to all food systems programs and projects. Most include dedicated components to ensure attention to this dimension (Table 2). Once again, the GGP Transactions project likely could have contributed more in this area, particularly in developing an enabling finance environment, had it been fully implemented.

On the demand side, the WWF-led GGP Demand project—designed as a specialized intervention within the broader GGP—focused most intensively on consumer awareness and the promotion of sustainable products, particularly at the national level. The ADB marine aquaculture project (ISLME) also articulates strong ambitions in this area. In addition, the FOLUR and FSIP livestock projects, along with the standalone FAO crop diversity initiative, intend to contribute meaningfully to increasing consumer demand for deforestation-free, environmentally sustainable and GHG emission reducing products. However, plans in this area are generally described in less detail compared to other dimensions.

Table 2 – Indonesia food systems projects : components and coverage of broad food systems dimensions

Project / Implementat-ion perid	Components, target sites/companies and commodities	Coverage of broad FS dimensions			
		Production and ILM	Commod.. value-addition & finance	Policies, enabling environm.& governance	Consumer demand
GGP Production March 2017 – June 2022	**3 landscapes/districts** **Palm oil** Comp. 1 – Dialogue, action planning, policies and enforcement Comp. 2 – Farmer support systems Comp. 3 – Land use planning (incl. HCV/HCS) Comp. 4 – KM, and M&E				
GGP Demand April 2017 – Dec. 2021	**Private sector companies and consumers in Indonesia** **Palm oil** Comp. 1 – Mainstreaming demand for reduced deforestation palm oil with major buyers and traders				

	Comp. 2 – Strengthening enabling environment in demand markets Comp. 3 – Promoting reduced deforestation palm oil in major markets Comp. 4 – Advancing supply chain transparency, traceability and decision support tools				
GGP Transactions March 2017 – 2019 (plus co-finance period) (No suitable company found for GEF finance; IFC co-finance supported GGP Production)	**Private sector companies and smallholder farmers in Indonesia** **Palm oil** Comp. 1 – Support for commercial transactions Comp. 2 – Support to financial markets & institutions Comp. 3 – Support to public sector (finance alignment and incentives)	Co-finance only	Co-finance only	Co-finance only	
FOLUR 2022 – 2028 (6 years)	**5 landscapes/districts** **Palm oil, cocoa, coffee, rice** Comp. 1 – Enabling Value Chains and ILM Comp. 2 – Sustainable Crop Production and Value Chains Comp. 3 – Conservation and Restoration (incl. HCV/HCS) Comp. 4 – KM, Coordination and Collaboration, M&E				
FSIP n/a	**5 livestock prod. systems in 5 provinces** **Livestock (ruminants and poultry), incl. integr. crop/livestock production systems** Comp. 1 – Strengthening multi-sectoral food system governance from national to local levels Comp. 2 – Scaling of sustainable livestock production Comp. 3 – Enhancing delivery of market-based incentives for sustainable production and consumption (VC) Comp. 4 – Data and Knowledge Management systems				

CFI WWF: May 2021 – Dec. 2026 CI: March 2018 – March 2022	**3 Fisheries management areas** **Marine fish** Comp. 1 – Enabling conditions (policy, regulations management) for ecosystem approach fisheries mngmt. (EAFM) Comp. 2 – Implementing EAFM tools to support EAFM Comp. 3 – Sustainably financing the protection of coastal ecosystems and EAFM activities Comp. 4 – KM, M&E for sustainable coastal fisheries				
FAO Crop Biodiversity Effective: 2022 First disburse-ment 2024	**Covering project sites in 3 provinces** **Various ag. crops** Comp. 1 – Enabling environment for conservation and use of globally important crop biodiversity Comp. 2 – Conservation and utilization of crops and their wild relatives for agriculture, food security and environment stability Comp. 3 – Development of market/non-market incentives and linkages for target crops (incl, demand) Comp. 4 – Strengthening knowledge management (incl. processing and recipe dev.)				
ADB Marine aquaculture (ISLME) n/a	**Six pilot sites in Timor-Leste, sites in Indonesia still to be determined through suitability mapping** **Shrimp and seaweed** Comp. 1 – National strategies for priority commodities (Indonesia and Timor-Leste) Comp. 2 – Shrimp feed and shrimp product connectivity (incl. VC) Comp. 3 – Amplification of seaweed aquaculture (Timor Leste) Comp. 4 – Improved market linkages (national and international) Comp. 5 – KM and Learning (IW, regional/global)				

Key: Darker shades of green indicate more intensive coverage, lighter green indicates less intensive coverage, white signifies areas not covered.

Dealing with food systems complexity

The various programs and projects have addressed the complexity of a comprehensive food systems approach in different ways, with implications for their outcomes. This includes variation in their

emphasis on horizontal, landscape-level strategies versus vertical, commodity chain approaches, as well as differences in the intensity of engagement at the community level versus the policy level (district/regional and national). All projects make compromises, which become more evident when examining their performance in Chapter 2.3 and their efficiency in light of complexity in Chapter 2.5.

In terms of design, the **GEF-6 GGP program** attempted to separate key food systems dimensions and intervention areas—production and markets, financing, and consumer demand—and to integrate them at both country and global levels. However, this integration did not materialize effectively, and interactions among components remained minimal, as already noted in the 2022 GEF IEO Integrated Approach evaluation. [39]This also applied to the Indonesia projects (see later chapters). In contrast, the **GEF-7 FOLUR program** sought to integrate all critical food systems dimensions within each country project and, in Indonesia, included a broader range of commodities than GGP, which had focused solely on palm oil. Commodity selection in FOLUR was guided by relevance to deforestation and globally traded commodities in the targeted regions, resulting in a focus on four commodities across five widely dispersed provinces and districts. From the outset, the FOLUR Indonesia project faced challenges due to the socio-economic diversity, the range of targeted commodities, and the geographical spread of its five implementation sites. These challenges include determining the most effective approaches to cover this diversity within budgetary and management constraints, and managing the complexity of stakeholder engagement (FOLUR PIR 2024; see also later sections). The **GEF-8 FSIP livestock project**, as outlined in Indonesia's Concept Note, simplified its approach by focusing solely on a single commodity, that is livestock production—including ruminants such as cattle, goats and sheep, as well as poultry—while still aiming to apply a comprehensive food systems approach to the sector. Meanwhile, the ambitious goals of the **GEF-6 CFI program**—both in terms of its integrated food systems and ecosystems approach and its intent to link global and country-level CFI initiatives—met clear limitations during implementation with the executing Ministry that found it difficult to identify and execute the broad range of program intentions (see section 2.5)

2.1.2 Learning

The progression from GEF-6 (GGP), to GEF-7 (FOLUR), and now to GEF-8 (FSIP Livestock) in Indonesia reflects institutional continuity and an evolving understanding of how to design and implement food systems interventions. **However, while learning has occurred, it has often been partial and uneven, with room for more structured knowledge transfer across projects and GEF program phases.** Across GEF phases, learning has occurred mainly within agencies and institutional channels, particularly UNDP and FAO, which have played recurring implementation roles. However, opportunities to formally capture and apply learning—especially around governance coordination, local engagement, and the operational integration of food system dimensions—have not always been maximized.

Learning from GEF-6 (GGP) to GEF-7 (FOLUR). Based on interviews with FOLUR PMU and UNDP staff in Indonesia, the FOLUR project clearly builds on the achievements of the GGP program-particularly the GGP Production project—even though the FOLUR ProDoc includes no dedicated section on lessons learned. According to these sources, GGP lessons are being transferred both informally and institutionally, as UNDP served as the Implementing Agency (IA) for both projects. The lessons relate especially to the implementation of policy reforms, partnerships, and multi-stakeholder platforms. FOLUR also aims to scale GGP approaches, especially in overlapping areas and neighboring districts related to palm oil sustainability (ProDoc p. 61). One such area is the legalization of the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB), to which GGP significantly contributed. Early exchanges have taken place between

[39] https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/environmental-degradation

FOLUR and WWF Indonesia, which led the GGP Demand project, though systematic knowledge sharing remains limited. As the GEF 2022 Integrated Approach Evaluation already observed, while FOLUR references GGP at the global level, it does not reflect sufficiently on GGP's coordination challenges—particularly in integrating supply and demand measures across governance levels. For example, in West Kalimantan, FOLUR has not yet drawn systematically on lessons from the adjacent GGP project in Sintang, partly due to delays in its own field-level activities. This could be useful, for instance, in FOLUR HCV studies and forest conservation baseline and targeted scenario analyses (TSA) to identify economically viable pathways for sustainable practices. The FOLUR project confirmed during the Evaluation mission that it would be initiating on-the-ground interventions in Sanggau District in West Kalimantan in 2025, building at that stage upon the lessons of the successful model established by the GEF-6 GGP production project in Sintang as well as another standalone GEF project in Sintang (not included in this evaluation) which established ecological corridors and fostered strong local ownership.

Learning from GEF-7 (FOLUR) to GEF-8 (FSIP Livestock). The design of the GEF-8 FSIP livestock project has benefitted from observations of early-stage implementation bottlenecks in FOLUR related to perceived weaknesses in consultations with provincial and district governments and line ministries during project design and early implementation. This resulted in limited early ownership and weak understanding of objectives at the sub-national and to some extent national levels. The FSIP livestock project aims to embed provincial and district perspectives more strongly from the outset using livestock as an entry point for engagement and to ensure continuity of institutional knowledge at sub-national and national levels, also considering bureaucractic turnover at these levels. This adjustment reflects a growing recognition of the importance of bottom-up design processes, something that was less present in GEF-6 and only partially addressed in GEF-7. It also signals a move toward more targeted and commodity focused interventions—livestock in this case—while maintaining a comprehensive food systems framework.

2.1.3 Gender and Social Inclusion

Gender and social inclusion analysis and consultations

Most of the reviewed projects conducted some form of gender and social inclusion analysis during the design stage, though the depth and methodology varied, and there is limited evidence of explicit consultations with women. The **GGP Production** project is notable for integrating gender assessments early in the design process, producing a comprehensive Program Gender Mainstreaming Strategy that informed child project implementation. Similarly, the **FOLUR** project included a dedicated gender assessment in its ProDoc and annexed a detailed Gender Action Plan, supported institutionally by a full-time gender and safeguards officer. The **CFI EAFM fisheries** project also ensured that gender analysis and sex-disaggregated indicators were embedded in the project framework from the start.

In contrast, the **GGP Demand** project initially lacked full gender integration during development even as the project developed entry points for addressing gender in each project component; gender considerations were introduced more systematically only after a gender mainstreaming and action plan was introduced during implementation. The **FAO-led Crop Biodiversity** project distinguished itself with a detailed gender analysis and a standalone action plan during the PPG phase, rooted in both field observations and literature review. The FSIP livestock concept note, while more recent, builds on FAO's broader experience and includes clear gender commitments. Meanwhile, the **IFC Transactions** project's design included some gender-responsive language (e.g., gender-balanced training participation), but lacked a substantive analysis or consultation process, reflecting its limited community-level interface.

The **FAO Crop Biodiversity** and the **GEF-8 FSIP Livestock** projects provided clear evidence of consultations with women's groups during the design phase (through documents and evaluation interviews), as did the **ADB ISLME** project in its design document. The **GGP UNDP Production** project involved gender analysis

and consultation with a gender-focused ministry (Ministry of Women and Child Protection). According to interviews, the project also engaged directly with women and women's groups during design at multiple levels and embedded gender responsive elements in the project document.

Women's roles in food systems and targeted activities

Across the reviewed projects, women's roles in food systems were acknowledged to varying degrees—ranging from integrated, targeted approaches in GGP Production, FOLUR, FSIP, and the FAO Crop Biodiversity project, to more limited or peripheral treatment in IFC Transactions. The **GGP Production** project acknowledged women's marginalization in palm oil value chains—particularly in formal ownership and decision-making—and planned corrective actions, such as inclusive farmer support systems and technical training. The **CFI EAFM fisheries** project recognized the importance of women's participation in fisheries and community-level monitoring, with specific activities such as alternative livelihood training planned for women fishers. **FOLUR** design documents emphasized the integration of women into agroforestry and social forestry efforts and promotion of gender-sensitive livelihood alternatives. The **FSIP livestock** project concept note clearly highlights women's multifaceted roles in livestock management and committed to equitable access to resources, workload balance, and leadership strengthening. The **FAO Crop Biodiversity** project gave substantial attention to women's contributions to seed conservation, home gardens, and food processing, identifying barriers in access to extension services and proposing support for women's groups and rural entrepreneurship. Conversely, projects like **GGP Demand** and **IFC Transactions** generally treated women's role in food systems as a more peripheral issue—relegated to participation counts or high-level ESG policy language, partly caused by their higher-level attention on food demand and financial institution support.

Gender mainstreaming strategies and consideration of power dynamics

Only a few projects—particularly GGP Production and FOLUR—applied structured, policy-aligned gender mainstreaming strategies, while most others gave limited attention to shifting gender roles or potential unintended consequences. GGP Production and **FOLUR** stand out for their structured, policy-aligned and mainstreamed approaches, with analytical clarity. GGP embedded gender in monitoring frameworks and coordinated its strategy with the Indonesia Ministry of Women and Child Protection, while FOLUR set targets for equal representation and committed to budgeted activities supporting women's participation and leadership. The FOLUR project's gender mainstreaming strategy is fully cognizant of differences between men and women in terms of needs, priorities, the division of labour and access to knowledge and resources. The **FAO FSIP Livestock** and **FAO Crop Biodiversity** projects emphasized inclusive access to resources, training, and financial services, with attention to avoiding excessive burdens on women. Notably, the FAO projects were among the few that recognized the risk of unintended consequences from shifting gender dynamics, such as reinforcing traditional roles or increasing unpaid work. Gender mainstreaming was largely absent in the **CFI EAFM fisheries** project design which did not develop a gender mainstreaming strategy, nor did it consider gender power dynamics within fishing communities. Indeed, despite broad commitments to equality, few projects explicitly addressed how shifting power relations—such as through women's increased agency or leadership—might affect intra-household or community dynamics, or how potential backlash could be mitigated.

2.2 Relevance and Coherence

2.2.1 Project alignment with policies and needs

Across Indonesia, GEF food systems programmatic and standalone projects have demonstrated a strong alignment at design with country policy priorities and sectoral needs in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and the environment. The **GGP Production project** was rated *highly satisfactory* in terms of relevance (Terminal Evaluation). Its design and objectives aligned well with Indonesia's twin priorities of stabilizing rural livelihoods and reducing deforestation, particularly in the post-COVID context where sustainable palm oil production gained renewed attention. The project supported smallholders in adopting the Indonesian Standard for Palm Oil (ISPO) certification, directly reinforcing national marketing standards and environmental goals.[40] The **GGP Demand project** was assessed as *satisfactory* in relevance as its focus on raising awareness, promoting transparency, and creating demand for sustainably produced palm oil aligned well with national sectoral needs (TE). The project complemented existing government and private sector actions, adding value by fostering consumer engagement and strengthening supply chain accountability.

The **FOLUR Indonesia project** represents one of the strongest cases of policy alignment. Its design closely follows national strategies such as the 2020–2024 Medium-Term Development Plan, Indonesia's Biodiversity Strategy, and key commitments under the UNFCCC and Land Degradation Neutrality targets (FOLUR ProDoc). It also supports major national programs like the Agrarian Reform (TORA) and Social Forestry schemes, aiming to improve land governance and equitable access to services. FOLUR's integrated landscape management approach and its multi-commodity scope further reflect Indonesia's broader development goals. However, early implementation has highlighted the complexity of working across five dispersed provinces with diverse socio-economic conditions and commodity dynamics (as already noted in the previous part). In the case of the **FSIP livestock project** the alignment with national priorities is particularly strong. The project builds on Indonesia's National Medium-Term Development Plan (2025-2029), the Master Plan for Economic Development, the Agriculture Development Strategy (2015–2045), and the Food Law 18/2012. It addresses growing demand for protein and livestock products as well as resilient food systems, while also emphasizing environmental sustainability, genetic resource conservation, and reduction of GHG emissions. The design supports national goals of improving food systems governance and resilience and is well positioned within Indonesia's broader food sovereignty and sustainability agenda.

The standalone **ADB GEF-7 marine (ISLME) project** with focus on nature based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation for shrimp and seaweed production is highly relevant to the national policy and strategic priorities of both Indonesia and Timor-Leste where it operates, including the RPJMN 2020-2024 in Indonesia and the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2011–2030 in Timor Leste, and especially in light of the countries' exposure to climate risks and commitments to inclusive and ecosystem-based adaptation. Many of the selected pilot sites are vulnerable to flooding, sea-level rise, and socio-economic marginalization—underscoring the geographic and social relevance of the intervention. The project is coherent with other national and international government and donor initiatives (such as by the World Bank and GCF) and includes clear provisions for coordination and synergy with government and development partners. The standalone **FAO GEF-7 Crop Biodiversity Project** is highly relevant to Indonesia's policy priorities on agrobiodiversity, climate resilience, and food sovereignty. It aligns with outcomes from Indonesia's National Food Systems Dialogues, particularly on crop genetic diversity as a foundation for resilient food systems. The project addresses gaps in on-farm conservation, seed systems, and smallholder access to local crop varieties supporting Ministry of Agriculture goals. By promoting Indigenous knowledge and community-based conservation, the project also responds to national policy

[40] ISPO was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2011, and strengthened through two Presidential Regulation, in 2020 (No. 44) and 2025 (No. 16).

aims to elevate local innovation. It is coherent with ongoing efforts by government institutions and development partners and includes mechanisms to coordinate with programs such as IAARD's work on local seed systems and BRIN's research on genetic diversity and climate-smart agriculture.

While relevant and well aligned at design two projects became less relevant over time as they failed to deliver or adapt. The **GGP Transactions project** led by IFC, struggled to achieve its intended results. The Government of Indonesia expressed a preference for support directed toward smallholder oil palm producers and companies, in line with IFC plans. But ultimately the project failed to connect with the realities of Indonesia's smallholder palm oil landscape, processing companies and the financial sector. It didn't manage to identify credible client companies within the GGP target areas that met IFC environmental and financial requirements to serve smallholder producers, leading to the eventual reallocation of GEF funds (IFC TE). The **CFI fisheries project**, while based on a relevant and forward-looking concept—the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM)—had mixed results in terms of alignment. The Government of Indonesia formally endorsed EAFM in 2010, and the project's goals are consistent with national fisheries management strategies. Yet, according to the project's Midterm Review, implementation has not consistently followed through with activities that match policy frameworks or stakeholder needs. The gap between design and delivery has limited the realization of the project's full relevance.

Feedback from government stakeholders reinforces these assessments of strong GEF project alignment that addresses sector needs. A representative from the Ministry of Environment welcomed the emphasis on food systems as a concept that aligns well with national food policy and environmental commitments. The representative emphasized the importance of focus and thematic clarity in food systems projects, particularly given the breadth of the approach. GEF integrated food systems projects would benefit from clearer sub-themes and targets, along with measurable outcomes linked to these priorities. A representative from the **Ministry of Agriculture** expressed positive engagement with the FOLUR project, particularly on rice systems in upland areas. They noted the importance of improving access to high-yield varieties and addressing land tenure issues, while welcoming FOLUR's role in helping farmers qualify for government support services. The project's potential to link farmers to agricultural services and improve good agricultural practices (GAP) and good handling practices (GHP), including environmentally responsible pesticide use, was seen as a valuable contribution. An interview partner from the **Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs –** which has overseen FOLUR project execution until a recent government re-organization (see below) – emphasized the importance of coherence and integration across ministries. They noted that FOLUR's food systems model of an integrated landscape management combined with a multistakeholder approach encouraged the necessary learning between institutions: for example, allowing the Ministry of Agriculture to gain a better understanding of environmental issues, and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) to better appreciate the practical needs of farmers. Given Indonesia's limited national budget, they regarded GEF co-financing as a valuable resource to support long-term food systems transformation, especially in terms of bringing in the environmental and holistic perspective.

Several common themes emerge: strong policy alignment in concept, but persistent implementation gaps, and a continued need for smallholder inclusion, cross-sector coordination, and measurable outcomes. First, conceptual alignment with policy is consistently strong across all projects. Most designs are well integrated with national strategies on sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation, and rural development. However, there are implementation gaps—particularly in projects like CFI and GGP Transactions—where activities either failed to materialize or did not fully match the needs on the ground. Second, smallholder inclusion remains a central concern for the Government. Projects that successfully target small producers (e.g. GGP Production, FOLUR, FSIP) receive stronger institutional backing. Third,

stakeholders consistently emphasize the importance of coherence, cross-sectoral coordination, and measurable outcomes. Integrated approaches like FOLUR are valued for bringing ministries together, but their complexity also demands clearer operational focus and better tools for measuring impact. For this reason, the FOLUR project, for instance, pro-actively facilitates alignment between the CMFA and relevant line ministries.

2.2.2 Policy coherence and incentives alignment

Indonesia has established ambitious national policies to promote both agricultural production and food security, as well as environmental sustainability and climate resilience; however, despite much conceptual coherence, fragmentation and incoherence persist in practice. The country's agricultural policy emphasizes four key goals: self-sufficiency in strategic commodities (especially rice), affordability of food, dietary diversification, and improved competitiveness and farmer welfare. Environmental policies, on the other hand, include strong commitments to forest preservation, climate change mitigation, and sustainable commodity production, as seen in past various Presidential Instructions and national action plans on palm oil (e.g., RAN-KSB for sustainable palm oil). The GGP Production TE noted "conflicting laws and regulations" and a lack of integrated land-use planning as persistent barriers to coherent systemic change that would reconcile agricultural policy goals and environmental safeguards and protection. The FOLUR ProDoc further highlights this divide: while national commitments exist, mechanisms to implement them—such as harmonized incentives, planning tools, and cross-sector coordination—are reportedly underdeveloped. Policy gaps and weak alignment between environmental and agricultural stakeholders remain significant. During its interviews and field visits, this evaluation also encountered many mapping inconsistencies and regulatory overlap between agencies and levels of government, especially regarding forests and forested areas that continue to hinder sustainable Integrated Landscape Management (ILM).

The FOLUR project identified key policy challenges in an early analysis of government policies and commitments, including poor harmonization across sectors, weak integrated planning, limited cross-sectoral coordination, and a lack of incentives for implementing sustainable policies. A recent analysis lays the groundwork for improving coordination and planning through existing but underused multi-stakeholder forums, which the project will activate in its next phase. Relevant stakeholders have been mapped using an ILM Matrix, outlining their roles and contributions.

GEF projects highlight major gaps in vertical coherence of policies and implementation strategies between national and sub-national administrative entities. According to the FOLUR ProDoc, sub-national regulations often diverge from or fail to implement national standards. Despite the 2018 One Map Policy aiming to resolve overlapping land uses, coordination across administrative levels remains limited. This is echoed in stakeholder interviews: regional authorities lack capacity, tools, and incentives to enforce environmental safeguards or integrate landscape considerations into development planning. The FOLUR program explicitly addresses this through tools like policy integration scorecards and multi-stakeholder planning processes at multiple administrative levels.

Agricultural subsidies and the challenge of misaligned incentives require balanced interventions into integrated landscape planning, responsible input use and market based incentives. Indonesia's agricultural subsidy regime—fertilizer, seeds, credit, price support—has played a central role in food policy, especially in support of smallholder farmers that cultivate less than 2 hectares, often rice farmers (FOLUR ProDoc). Fertilizer subsidies, in particular, have grown despite rising production costs, and credit is widely accessible at below-market rates. These instruments are designed to raise productivity and stabilize smallholder incomes. From an environmental perspective, these subsidies are potentially misaligned. If not conditioned on sustainability criteria, they can encourage overuse of environmentally damaging chemical inputs or indirectly incentivize expansion into forested areas (a concern that the GGP

production TE also discussed). However, GEF interventions (notably in FOLUR) recognize the dual nature of intensification: if well-managed, it can reduce pressure on forests by meeting production targets on existing land. Yet if intensification is done without safeguards, it can also make commodity production more attractive and drive expansion into protected forests and other lands. This underscores the need for coherence between subsidy policies and land-use governance—a gap which GEF projects aim to address through integrated landscape management, jurisdictional planning, environmentally responsible agricultural input use and market-based incentives for sustainability.

The new Government's increasing focus on food sovereignty and security and institutional changes in the national government offer both opportunities and risks. The new government reemphasizes food sovereignty, resilience and diversity and it has launched a universal free nutritious meal program for school children. While the main focus of food sovereignty policy is on rice and maize, livestock is also interesting in this context as Indonesia is import dependent on animal-based protein, especially beef and milk. The recent creation of the **Coordinating Ministry of Food Affairs (CMFA)** after the Presidential elections in late 2024 marks a pivotal shift in Indonesia's governance of food systems. The CMFA is tasked with aligning food, agriculture, trade, and environmental agendas under a single institutional roof.[41] It now oversees initiatives like FOLUR, previously coordinated by the Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs (CMEA). This change, although still unfolding, is widely viewed as a step toward greater horizontal coherence across relevant food systems sub-sectors. However, risks remain. For instance, declarations by the new administration—such as plans to convert up to 20 million ha of forest into food and energy estates—have raised alarm among environmentalists and others (Monabay and Jakarta Post articles)[42]. While pitched as a means of achieving food sovereignty and security, such plans contradict global and national climate goals. Civil society and parliamentary voices instead advocate for "no deforestation" strategies, focused on improving yields through sustainable intensification and better support for farmers, approaches that are also taken by GEF programs and projects. The Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas as the main long-term planning Ministry in Indonesia continues to support low-carbon agriculture[43]. But some evaluation interview partners note internal contradictions within the new policy directions: a revived biofuel mandate, for example, may spur deforestation, even as the Government claims to prioritize environmental stewardship.

All major GEF food systems interventions in Indonesia have attempted to support coherence, with varying intensity and results: the **GGP Production** project established Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) to align national and sub-national stakeholders on palm oil governance. It contributed to the RAN-KSB plan and supported ISPO certification uptake. The **FOLUR** project places policy coherence at its core: integrating HCV/HCS forest set-aside designation with ILM planning, stakeholder engagement, and value chain incentives. It also promotes jurisdictional planning to align national environmental goals with district-level food production plans. **CFI** similarly aimed to align fisheries policy (EAFM) with sustainable value chain incentives.

[41] The CMFA is supposed to coordinate the following ministries : Min. of Agriculture, Min. of Forestry, Min. of Marine Affairs and Fisheris, Min. of Trade and Industry, and the National Food Agency (the latter responsible for food security etc.). Please also note that the former Min. of Environment and Forestry, MoEF, was split into two ministries in this government reorganization, one of Environment, and another one of Forestry.

[42] https://news.mongabay.com/2025/01/indonesian-forestry-minister-proposes-20m-hectares-of-deforestation-for-crops/ ;
www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2025/01/15/facing-palm-oil-nonsense.html

[43] 2025–2045 National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN). Bappenas - Indonesia Ministry of National Development Planning

Across the policy contexts and projects, several themes emerge:

- **Conceptual alignment exists, but implementation lags**. Coherence in official strategies is undermined by regulatory fragmentation, weak capacity, and budgetary constraints at sub-national levels.
- **Misaligned subsidies and mandates** (e.g., biofuels and to a lesser extent inorganic fertilizers) risk undercutting sustainability. Without safeguards, they may promote land conversion or degrade ecosystems.
- **Jurisdictional ILM planning and MSPs**, as promoted by FOLUR and GGP, represent valuable tools to enhance coherence—but require continued investment in capacity and coordination.
- **Institutional changes like the creation of CMFA are promising** but must be supported by clear mandates and leadership, sufficient personnel, coherent planning tools, and robust safeguards.

2.2.3 Interaction with similar government or donor-funded activities

Across the GEF food systems portfolio in Indonesia, interaction of the GEF programs with other government and donor-funded initiatives has varied. FOLUR stands out for its strong emphasis on planned multi-stakeholder collaboration and alignment with donor efforts, although practical collaboration is still early-stage. **GGP** projects were mostly embedded within broader implementing partner activities but otherwise lacked clear links to other external programs. **CFI** has identified relevant actors but has struggled to translate this into meaningful synergy, although recent steps suggest improvement. **FSIP livestock** is too early for assessment but is expected to emphasize selective partnerships building on prior lessons. The following section provides additional details for each of the programs and projects.

The **GGP Program** and its Production, Demand, and Transactions projects were generally well integrated into the workplans, partnerships, and other initiatives of their implementing and field-executing agencies. For instance, the UNDP-led Production project worked closely with partners like WWF Indonesia and Conservation International (CI) in West Kalimantan and North Sumatra, embedding GEF-funded activities within broader ongoing efforts in Indonesia by WWF and CI, as well as UNDP itself. For instance, WWF-ID's GGP Production activities in Sintang District were well embedded in its long-term engagement in the District on Palm Oil and interactions with other interventions in the District.[44] Similarly, the WWF Demand project was embedded in broader and still ongoing efforts by WWF-ID to work comprehensively on the palm oil sector in Indonesia through Government and other projects, covering, production, demand and other aspects. However, the Terminal Evaluations of these projects did not detail coordination with parallel donor or government initiatives much, focusing instead on outcomes within each GGP component.

The **FOLUR Indonesia project**, led by UNDP and FAO, has made collaboration and coordination with other government, private sector and donor initiatives a central pillar of its strategy, particularly in planning. Its ProDoc outlines an ambitious vision for alignment at national and sub-national levels, including partnerships with platforms such as FoKSBI, CSP, SCOPI, SRP, and international initiatives like the UNDP Green Commodities Programme and GIZ's jurisdictional approaches. The project also seeks alignment with Indonesia's Low Carbon Development Initiative and the Sustainable Palm Oil Initiative. FOLUR has established mechanisms for national-level coordination via its Project Board and aims (or already started)

[44] https://earthinnovation.org/uploads/2018/09/profiles_led/SJS_Profiles_ENG/Indonesia/Profile_SINTANG_Sukri_2020_ENG.pdf

to create or reinforce provincial and district-level fora (multi-stakeholder platforms) to ensure coherence and collaboration with others. In terms of actual implementation, FOLUR collaboration is just beginning, such as by working with GIZ in Sanggau district, including joint scoping for an Action Plan for Sustainable Palm Oil, similar to the one in neighbouring Sintang district (covered by GGP Production). GIZ has further identified the SASCI (Sustainability and Value Added in Agricultural Supply Chains) project as a promising area for future partnership. It has also initiated dialogue with the Palm Oil Fund (BPDPKS, now BPDP) and Unilever, although the latter is not yet active in the same landscapes planned by FOLUR.

The **CFI Indonesia fisheries project**, led by WWF-US, includes stakeholder mapping and categorization at national and local levels in its design. However, its Mid-Term Review (2024) highlighted missed opportunities for stronger collaboration with similar MMAF programs (e.g. BerlKAN, Oceans) and NGOs (Rare, YKAN, KEHATI). While the PMU asserted that regular monthly coordination meetings were sufficient, the MTR noted weak use of potential synergies. But the project does maintain relationships with NGOs such as ATSEA, LAUTRA, BERIKAN, as well as BRIN, universities, and the MOE's GEF Focal Point. Coordination has improved somewhat through recent initiatives such as through CFI's Annual Reflection forum, which now invites staff from other projects to foster cross-learning.

The **FSIP livestock project** (GEF-8), currently at formulation stage, has not yet detailed specific collaboration mechanisms, though its alignment with national strategies and future coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of National Development Planning, the Indonesian Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) and broader food system initiatives on livestock suggest much potential.

2.3 Performance and Results

2.3.1 Environmental and socio-economic results

This section presents the main findings, contexts and takeaways in terms of performance and results for four projects, the GGP Production and Demand projects that have been completed since 2022, and the ongoing FOLUR and CFI projects. The GGP Transaction project will be discussed in the section on Evolution of the PS engagement later in this chapter. The focus is on environmental and socio-economic results at policy, institutional and community levels (including GEB), challenges and factors that facilitated these results and main lessons learned by each project.

GGP Production project

The GGP Production Project in Indonesia performed well across several key indicators, with the Terminal Evaluation (TE) rating the project satisfactory in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and overall outcomes. Despite challenges related to lengthy policy approval processes, implementation complexity, and the late delivery of some key activities, the project made tangible progress, especially in the areas of enabling policy frameworks and land use protection (HCV/HCS). Sustainable farmer support systems for oil palm production were tested in three districts.

GEBs were notably achieved through forest and peatland protection and emissions reduction. By project end, over 824,000 ha of HCV/HCS areas were set-aside in Indonesia, nearly reaching the target of 925,000 ha, with the most significant contribution being 651,234 ha of protected peatlands in Pelalawan District. The project reported over 100 million metric tons of CO_2 avoided, far exceeding its original target.

A central strength of the GGP project lay in its work to develop policies and platforms that support sustainable palm oil production and land management. Indonesia recorded the highest achievement rates among the three GGP countries for this component. Key results included:

- Establishment of a National Platform for Sustainable Palm Oil (FOKSB), transformed into the National Action Plan Implementation Team (NAP IT) under legal decrees from 2020, institutionalizing national coordination.
- Development of four sub-national multi-stakeholder platforms and three district-level fora, enabling localized dialogue and planning.
- Adoption of one national action plan for Sustainable Palm Oil (RAD-KSB) and three sub-national, regional action plans (for North Sumatra, West Kalimantan and Riau).
- Approval of key national and subnational policies, such as the MoA Decree on Community Plantation Development and the MoA Decree on Strengthening Extension Services for Smallholders.

Despite these successes, the TE points to challenges. Policy and platform development proved time- and resource-intensive, with underestimated costs, timelines and sustainability challenges. Shifts in national political priorities and a lack of systematic policy demand analysis or strategic communication also hindered faster adoption (Box 1). Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) played a key role in aligning different actors, fostering coherent decision-making and reducing conflict but their institutional sustainability remained uncertain due to their reliance on project funding. The TE notes they were still "works in progress" at closure.

The Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil Production 2018-23 implemented with GGP support, its monitoring in 2022/23 and the development of a follow-up plan for 2025-29 show progress and learning. Reaching an implementation rate of about 60 per cent in 2022/23, the Plan's progress on Corporate Social Responsibility and business legality was stronger than on coordination and economic empowerment, due to administrative restructuring and limited budget allocations. The new plan indicates among others a shift towards more regulatory clarity, smallholder inclusion and market-based goals (Annex 2).

Box 1: Blueprint for successful policy implementation

The GGP Production project underestimated and underbudgeted the steps, efforts, and timeframes required for policy development and implementation. Progress was further constrained by shifting national priorities, a slow policy approval process, and overly optimistic assumptions. Critical elements for successful policy formulation were missing or insufficiently addressed: there was no robust estimation of demand for the proposed policies, no strategic communications plan, and limited provision for advocacy or visible policy champions—at national or sub-national levels—to drive implementation, neutralize strong interests and counter other resistance. Multi-stakeholder platforms played an important role in the process, but trust—essential to open dialogue—was not adequately planned for. Stakeholders engage meaningfully only when common interests can be safely discussed.

Based on this experience, a blueprint for effective policy design and implementation emerged:

A. A win-win policy proposal, developed through a participatory process that leverages or responds to real demand;
B. Strategic communications to build and sustain momentum;
C. Targeted advocacy and stakeholder engagement across all levels;
D. Well-timed communications to support policy passage through political and bureaucratic systems;
E. Action plans linked to policies to guide implementation;
F. A visible, trusted policy champion to foster trust and facilitate decision-making;
G. Tailored capacity building and planning support to prepare stakeholders for implementation and enable structured dialogue.

Technical assistance for policy formulation and multi-stakeholder engagement proved essential to preparing leadership for constructive dialogue. GEF Implementing Agencies may benefit from partnering with organizations better equipped to support these dimensions.

Source: Terminal Evaluation GGP Production project, pages 5, 7 and 8

Farmer training, production and marketing support helped farmers increase their productivity in pilot projects, but with uncertain sustainability. While the project was seen by the TE as "heavy on policy and light on production" it still managed to train about 2,700 farmers in sustainable crop intensification techniques (through WWF-ID, CI and UNDP sub-contractors), with a reported 89% adoption rate. Practices included improved fertilizer use, water-saving methods, proper spacing, and effective pesticide application, contributing to higher productivity in districts like South Tapanuli (Riau province, Sumatra) and Sintang (West-Kalimantan). However, their sustainability after project completion without further support was uncertain. The project also promoted farmer organizations especially in view of Surat Tanda Daftar Budidaya (Cultivation Registration Letter) (STDB) certification for palm oil sales and thus improving their bargaining positions with palm oil buyers. These efforts were complemented by the Pelalawan district 'Farmer Support Strategy', which was aligned with the national action plan. While yield increases were reported, the TE notes that these were mostly anecdotal, and no agronomic baseline had been established to systematically measure gains. The absence of process and outcome indicators related to agricultural production and socio-economic benefits weakened the evidence base.

A major lesson of working with farmers was the importance of trust-building through agricultural production support at the community level to achieve environmental objectives. In fact, production components were critical in closing the trust gap between the project and local stakeholders. Many

farmers were skeptical of external initiatives related to forest protection. The project succeeded where it used locally respected technicians and emphasized production-related support over regulation.

The environmental impact of the project was particularly evident in its protection of High Conservation Value (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) areas. This was supported by improved regulations, mapping tools, and stakeholder platforms. However, the TE underlines that the time allocated to building political support and institutional platforms was insufficient. Awareness raising and consensus building took longer than expected, and sustainability of these arrangements post-project remains uncertain.

GGP Demand project

The GEF-Demand project in Indonesia focused primarily on palm oil, and aimed to mainstream demand for deforestation-free palm oil by fostering awareness and commitments among companies, consumers, and investors. It sought to increase the domestic supply and uptake of certified palm oil (Indonesian Standard for Palm Oil / Regional Standard for Palm Oil, ISPO/RSPO), generate consumer support through public campaigns, and build investor capacity to drive sustainability through Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks. The project concluded with a performance rated *Satisfactory* in both development objective and implementation progress. Although the project was not intended to directly deliver GEBs, its influence on awareness, accountability, and transparency within markets positioned it as a key enabling initiative.

The project achieved notable results particularly in corporate engagement and market tools, public awareness efforts and influencing investor behavior. One major accomplishment was the development of Sustainable Sourcing Guidelines, produced in collaboration with the Indonesian Business Council for Sustainable Development. By project end, nine companies had adopted the guidelines, marking a significant step toward mainstreaming sustainability in procurement. Another major success was the Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard, which rated over 130 global companies on sustainability and transparency. This tool helped pressure brands and retailers to strengthen deforestation-free commitments, with indirect benefits to Indonesian suppliers seeking access to more discerning markets. Public awareness efforts were concentrated in cities such as Jakarta and Medan. While overall recognition of palm oil's link to deforestation remained modest, the campaign helped raise awareness to nearly 50 percent of survey respondents. COVID-19 forced a shift toward digital outreach, which was successfully adapted through partnerships with media outlets like Kompas Radio and by linking campaigns to recognizable sustainable products such as RSPO-labeled cooking oil. The project also influenced investor behavior through tools like RESPOND, which benchmarked asset managers' ESG integration, including on palm oil. Regional knowledge-sharing platforms, particularly the ISEAL-led South–South Learning project, allowed Indonesia's strategies and innovations to inform broader efforts across Asia.

Transformation of the palm oil market remains unfinished, although a strong foundation has been established. Challenges persist around consumer demand and behavior change, as well as certification, traceability, and pricing. Although the project met many logframe performance targets, national and regional demand for deforestation-free palm oil is still limited, policy frameworks remain fragmented, and structural incentives and pricing favor conventional palm oil production practices. The project also faced clear limitations in outcome-level monitoring. While an outcome harvesting approach was applied, it lacked the scale to fully capture behavior change across important stakeholder groups, enterprises and consumers. Nonetheless, WWF-Indonesia showed adaptive capacity, adjusting strategies during the pandemic and realigning deliverables to the changing context. The project is considered to have established a strong foundation for continued progress under FOLUR and related programs.

The GGP Demand project showed that shifting market dynamics requires both technical tools and compelling narratives. Progress was supported by strong national ownership, adaptive project

management, and strategic engagement with both private sector and regional actors. The project's credibility benefited from its integration with global initiatives like Trase and RESPOND, which connected local efforts with international accountability frameworks. At the same time, several constraints limited impact. These included the short project duration, challenges in measuring behavior change, limited consumer awareness beyond urban centers, and weak visibility of sustainable products in mainstream retail. As commented by some interviewed external observers, the GGP project budget also was too low to seriously promote and facilitate intake of certified products into the palm oil market and ensure attractive premium prices for producers. There are enduring obstacles in Indonesia in reaching smallholder producers, whose participation in sustainable supply chains remains limited by certification barriers and traceability challenges. The project underscored that demand- and supply-side (production) efforts must go hand in hand, a linkage that was only achieved to a very limited extent between the GGP Demand and Production projects in Indonesia.

FOLUR project

While notable foundational work in FOLUR has been achieved, field implementation has yet to fully commence. Slower than expected implementation progress is, however, not expected to affect achievement of development objectives. As of the 2024 PIR, the FOLUR Indonesia project remains in the early phases of implementation, with the inception workshop held in August 2022 and the Project Management Unit (PMU) fully operational only by late 2023. The 2024 PIR rated overall implementation progress as *Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)*, largely due to slow financial delivery and delays in executing field activities. Nonetheless, the *Development Objective* (DO) rating is *Moderately Satisfactory (MS)*, reflecting the considerable work done to set baselines, build partnerships, and complete technical assessments.[45] The GEB targets set for the project include the restoration of 20,000 ha of land, conservation of 46,900 ha of High Conservation Value (HCV) forest, and placing 1.474 million ha under sustainable management. So far, the potential area identified for improved management across four provinces totals just under 415,000 ha—revealing a substantial gap between aspirations and current progress.

Despite limited implementation on the ground, the project has made important strides with preparatory analytical work and in establishing a supportive policy and partnership environment. Stakeholder engagement is a strength that stands out for this component, as seen in the volume and breadth of participation across consultations, scorecard assessments, and cross-sector dialogues. Over 200 documents—including technical studies, meeting minutes, gender-disaggregated sign-in sheets, and spatial maps—serve as evidence of progress. However, these efforts have yet to translate into formal regulatory instruments or active landscape-level interventions, as much of the effort remains in preparatory and planning stages.

In this context, district-level spatial planning offers a critical entry point for environmental impact, especially for conserving HCV and HCS areas. The promotion of traceability systems and farmer registration are promising early wins, offering a platform to build credibility and scale interventions. The FOLUR project has completed key assessments, including HCV surveys and Targeted Scenario Analyses (TSA) as central planning tools for ILM[46], which are already influencing local and provincial planning

[45] According to a photo shared by the FOLUR team with the evaluation, the quality of GEF PIR was rated Satisfactory in all respects (completeness, balance, consistency, substantiveness, and clarity.

[46] FOLUR uses Targeted Scenario Analyses (TSA) to evaluate different land use and sustainable development scenarios and pathways by projecting the costs, benefits, and economic, environmental and social trade-offs of

processes. ILM is also being mainstreamed into jurisdictions through the *Signals of Change (SoC)* scorecard, guided by UNDP's effective collaborative action approach. Sanggau District has been singled out for urgent attention, especially regarding the inclusion of Customary Forest areas in the updated spatial plan due in 2024 by leveraging Government Regulation No. 17/2017 which provides a legal mandate for integrated spatial planning.

At the community and smallholder farmer level, the project's most tangible achievement lies in the early rollout of traceability systems for estate crops to track palm oil, cocoa, coffee, and rice, working with the Ministry of Agriculture. A total of 23,712 smallholders have already received farm registration certificates (STDBs) through co-financing partners, covering nearly 50,000 ha—primarily in palm oil. The project has conducted initial gap analyses of traceability systems and grading practices, revealing the need for greater support in creating value-added products and ensuring commodity quality differentiation. Local actors supported by co-financing agencies (GIZ, Unilever) have implemented over 100 technical training sessions, with about 41% of participants being women, notably in Sanggau.

Early assessments indicate modest adoption of best management practices, and while GAP and GHP frameworks exist, they are currently weak on gender inclusion and agroforestry content. The project has also begun identifying pro-climate and socially inclusive livelihood alternatives, particularly in forest-dependent communities, including women-led households and communities suitable for eco-tourism or NTFP-based activities. Overall, the foundations for farmer support, sustainable practices, and income diversification are being laid, but outcomes remain largely at the planning, assessment, and early mobilization stages (see also Box 2 for the Evaluation Team's observations in Sanggau and Sintang districts, West Kalimantan).

Factors supporting and limiting progress. Supportive factors include the resilience and coordination capacity of the strengthened PMU, robust stakeholder engagement, and strategic co-financing from the private sector and development partners such as GIZ. Alignment with government regulations and leveraging existing policy momentum—such as spatial planning mandates and agricultural credit facilities—have also helped anchor the project within existing institutional frameworks. Limiting factors revolve primarily around slow fund disbursement and the complex procedural requirements (involving multi-partner design and mobilization processes as well as finalization of inter-agency agreements). The extensive planning, coordination, and assessment processes required during the early stages of implementation have contributed to slower-than-expected field activities. While these foundational steps were necessary to establish a robust implementation framework, they have also created procedural bottlenecks, resulting in delayed disbursement and limited tangible progress on the ground. Several stakeholders expressed concern that this prolonged preparation phase may reduce momentum and partner engagement.

The strategy going forward emphasizes transitioning from assessment to implementation. This involves finalizing baselines by mid-2024, accelerating rollout of on-the-ground activities in selected priority districts, and using the dialogue platforms to formalize regulatory and conservation instruments. The project also aims to consolidate farmer support systems, build tailored training content (especially on gender and agroforestry), and operationalize traceability and value chain initiatives with the help of public-private-community partnerships. The project expects to recruit executing partners/consultants for field work and other purposes by late 2025.

each scenario over 50 years. Key TSA aspects include multi-stakeholder dialogues and consultations to reflect local priorities. TSA are used to formulate a Jurisdictional Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) Plan, with zoning, monitoring, and costed action plans. (FOLUR project ProDoc)

Box 2: Observations from the evaluation field visits in West-Kalimantan

As part of the evaluation, field visits were conducted to Sanggau and Sintang districts (regencies) in West Kalimantan—both significant areas for oil palm production and key engagement sites for GEF-supported initiatives (FOLUR and GGP respectively). Sanggau is one of Indonesia's largest palm oil-producing districts in Indonesia, while Sintang has emerged as a frontier area for oil palm production, but with strong long-term NGO and multi-stakeholder engagement (including GEF through GGP).

In **Sanggau**, agricultural productivity, palm oil price fluctuations, and food self-sufficiency dominated the local agenda, with limited attention to environmental sustainability. Awareness of FOLUR objectives among district officials and farmers was low at this early stage of the project, and landscape-scale planning efforts, such as ILM, were skeptically perceived, reportedly facing complex regulatory and institutional barriers. District officials and farmers prioritized practical needs—agricultural inputs, road access, and basic services—over broader conservation agendas. The visit highlighted that unless tangible local benefits materialize quickly, the perceived value of FOLUR risks remaining limited.

Sanggau District

Organizing oil palm farmers in Sintang District

In contrast, **Sintang** presented an encouraging example of systemic progress, gained over a period of continuous work. Building, among others, on sustained engagement through WFF Indonesia and the GGP Production project, the district successfully institutionalized sustainability through multi-stakeholder platforms and local regulations promoting sustainable palm oil and land management. Farmer organizations were increasingly organized around certification (STDB, ISPO) and cooperative strengthening, although challenges around pricing, land legality, and company partnerships persist. Stakeholders stressed that effective sustainability transitions must be rooted in practical support and address farmers' immediate needs, such as legal land status and better market conditions.

The two districts underscore the importance of early engagement, local relevance, and tangible incentives for farmers. Multi-stakeholder processes, if effectively supported and grounded in practical realities, can catalyze sustainable practices and policy innovation. However, projects like FOLUR must work hard to ensure visibility, local ownership, and clear benefit pathways in complex and production-oriented environments like Sanggau.

CFI project

While the 2024 PIR rated the project performance as largely *Satisfactory*, particularly in terms of enabling policy achievements and inclusive planning processes, the MTR painted a more sobering picture. The MTR

judged most performance indicators as *unsatisfactory or moderately unsatisfactory*, especially in terms of tangible socio-economic and environmental outcomes. It concluded that the project's actual effectiveness and progress toward GEBs—particularly improved management of marine resources and behavioral changes in coastal fisheries—remain limited. Despite a more positive recent trajectory, with renewed engagement from MMAF and strengthened PMU leadership, key impact areas, particularly behavioral change and private sector engagement, remain weak and underdeveloped.

The project made some clear progress in strengthening Indonesia's policy and regulatory environment for fisheries management. The development and partial implementation of Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for FMAs 715, 717, and 718 (see map in Annex 4, A.3 for FMA location), along with regulatory efforts targeting destructive fishing, represent concrete outputs. The project also facilitated more inclusive planning processes by embedding gender and indigenous rights considerations in the finalized plans. Stakeholder consultations—particularly on the Destructive Fishing Regional Action Plan and Governor-level flying fish egg regulations—helped promote awareness and build legitimacy around new rules. These efforts, according to the PIR, were well received and began shaping more accountable governance frameworks, especially through improved central–local coordination and transparency. **However, the MTR was more skeptical about the depth and sustainability of these achievements.** It noted that attribution to national-level policy changes remained questionable, and that the project's reliance on outputs such as management plans or decrees had not yet translated into outcomes—especially improved environmental conditions or changes in resource use patterns. Furthermore, the MTR emphasized that local benefits from these plans were unclear, and policy coherence across agencies remained a challenge.

At the community and fisher level, the project emphasized empowerment, especially through the revival and support of *Sasi*—a traditional co-management and conservation system. Sasi areas were formally recognized in Kataloka, Menarbu, and Ohoirenan, and linked to women-led enterprises under a new *Sasi label* which seeks to brand sustainably harvested marine products, batik cloth made out of natural dye and promote value addition. These interventions fostered community ownership and alternative livelihoods, especially for women, and were among the project's most tangible socio-economic achievements. Training activities were widespread: over 550 fishers received technical training on fish handling, and more than 600 individuals—many of them women—received skills certifications.

Several factors contributed to the project's progress, while others significantly constrained performance. On the enabling side, embedding the PMU within MMAF and the appointment of a capable new manager led to improved alignment with national systems and enhanced institutional legitimacy. Coordination and communication also improved, with more open planning processes and the use of digital platforms such as WhatsApp helping to increase transparency and foster stronger local ownership. Additionally, the project's strong gender mainstreaming—particularly through the involvement of women in Sasi-related enterprises—strengthened social resilience and garnered broader community support.

The CFI project illustrates the complexity of integrating community-based marine conservation with national policy frameworks and private sector development. While policy development and participatory planning advanced steadily, these achievements have yet to catalyze broader behavioral or systemic change. A central challenge identified in the MTR was the persistent gap between increased awareness and actual behavioral change. While the project delivered extensive outreach and knowledge transfer, destructive fishing practices largely continued, and tangible shifts in governance behavior were limited. Many of the benefits cited by beneficiaries were confined to improved knowledge or minor equipment support, with little evidence of lasting environmental stewardship. Field-level enforcement remained weak, as community enforcement teams were under-resourced and lacked sufficient support. This disconnect was compounded by the absence of a monitoring and evaluation system to assess

behavioral adoption. Additionally, frequent leadership changes within MMAF introduced institutional instability and disrupted political engagement. The project's emphasis on regulatory frameworks and planning (component A) came at the expense of field-level implementation and feedback loops. Compounding these issues, the project lacked sufficient adaptive management, failing to revise strategies or apply behavioral science approaches that might have more effectively shifted local norms and practices.

Despite the project's slow start, recent signs of renewed commitment—especially from the MMAF, a revitalized PMU and revised project steering mechanisms—suggest that the project still has a window of opportunity to realize more of its ambitious goals.

2.3.2 Role of women

Early integration of gender in project design, as in GGP Production, led to stronger results, while adaptive approaches—like those in CFI—can still be effective, particularly when paired with livelihood support. The **GGP Production project** made the most systematic efforts to mainstream gender. Although women's direct roles in palm oil production are limited—typically to support tasks like herbicide spraying or nursery work—the project made notable strides in increasing women's participation and visibility. Nearly 39% of the farmers trained in technical activities were women, and training extended to household financial management, harvesting, fertilizing, and pesticide application. The project also promoted occupational health and safety for women, in terms of adhering to protective guidelines during pesticide use. Gender was institutionalized through national and subnational planning: the **NAP M&E framework integrated gender indicators**, and gender consultants were engaged to support policy alignment across ministries. Webinars and assessments further examined women's role in the palm oil sector (GGP Production TE). In contrast, the **GGP Demand project** struggled with gender integration and tangible results due to its late incorporation during implementation. Although the project introduced a gender mainstreaming and action plan in 2019, gender remained largely siloed. The topic was often perceived as a separate issue that could not be addressed further with the actors in the project context. Although some activities targeted women, the limited integration into broader strategies and absence of specific outcome indicators curtailed meaningful tracking of gender-related results (GGP Demand TE).

The TE of the **IFC Transactions project** did not report any specific contributions to gender equality, although significant achievements were reported in IFC co-financing activities. An early survey showed the marginalization of women in palm oil production, with fewer rights, decision-making powers and access to resources. Through proactive targeting and activities, women in the end accounted for 45% of farmers trained, increasingly participated in farmer groups associations (FGA) for RSPO certification, and were represented in the Boards of four FGAs. Activities also included pilot training for women on nutritious vegetables and cooking, risks in oil palm plantations, and reproductive health care in North Sumatra and Riau Province that were highly appreciated. [47]

Gender outcomes in the **CFI fisheries project** gained traction in the second half of implementation. Gender-sensitive training and tools were developed, facilitating greater participation of women in community monitoring and fisheries governance and gender results were incorporated more explicitly into M&E. Notably, the project organized **15 alternative livelihood training sessions for 312 women fishers** in 2023/24, focused on product processing, marketing, and value addition. The development of the *Sasi Label – already reported above* – offered the opportunity to significantly enhance women's economic roles and livelihoods in sustainable marine product marketing.

[47] IFC. 2021/22. The IPODS Story

In **FOLUR**, gender integration is still at an early stage but shows promising direction. The project has identified over **500 women-led households** in priority areas and initiated gender-sensitive approaches in social forestry, eco-tourism, and processing-based livelihood alternatives. A comprehensive **gender and safeguards training program—organized with support from the global FOLUR project—**was conducted with 57 participants, including ministry officials and the full PMU team at both national and provincial levels. However, gaps remain: initial assessments of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) issued by the government lacked gender-sensitivity, resilient farming or agroforestry guidance, highlighting areas needing further attention.

2.3.3 Evolution of private sector engagement

While the vision and ambition for private sector engagement have grown from GEF-6 to GEF-7 and GEF-8, translating that ambition into sustainable investment, behavior change, and measurable environmental outcomes remains a significant challenge. Future success depends on integrating push (regulations, incentives) and pull (market demand, reputational drivers) factors more effectively across public and private domains, including smallholder farmer groups.

The IFC-led **GGP Transactions project** aimed to contribute to re-engaging IFC with the Indonesian palm oil sector through finance mobilization for sustainable production, targeting small-scale companies and engaging financial institutions like BNI. However, the GEF-funded component (~USD 1 million) was canceled and funds reallocated after two years due to a lack of eligible clients at target locations (e.g., North Sumatra). Prospective clients did not meet IFC's due diligence requirements on environmental and social (E&S) standards or lacked interest and co-financing capacity.

Despite this, IFC used co-financed resources to support enabling conditions and palm oil farmer groups. It helped at least four farmer groups obtain RSPO certification, which improved quality and extraction rates. IFC also worked with BNI to launch a loan product, though uptake was very low (only USD 145,000 disbursed to 19 farmers, versus a target of USD 25 million) (Terminal Evaluation). Barriers included rigid eligibility rules, weak demand for certified products, and a lack of regulatory pressure on environmental risk integration in financial institutions. Indonesian financial institutions also showed little interest in factoring environmental risks into credit assessments. This stemmed from short investment horizons, lack of regulatory pressure, and limited sustainable finance options.

Main lessons from this project were that private sector engagement requires not only access to finance but also demand-side incentives, stronger regulatory frameworks for financial institutions and farmer groups, and flexible financial products tailored to smallholder realities. Without these, behavioral change remains elusive.

The **GGP Production project** successfully established national and subnational multistakeholder platforms (e.g., FoKSBI, district-level forums in Sintang), involving major companies like Wilmar, Musim Mas, and Unilever. These platforms fostered cooperation in HCV/HCS area delineation and land use zoning. Private sector-backed farmer support systems (e.g., ADM Capital, PT ANJ) were considered financially sustainable and helped independent smallholders adopt better practices to supply reduced deforestation palm oil domestically, through adhering to national and international standards (ISPO/RSPO). Successful private sector engagement requires aligning business interests with sustainability goals, embedding collaboration in formal local structures, and translating high-level platforms into tangible support for smallholders. Sustained government commitment and dialogue are essential, but long-term success depends on platforms achieving financial self-reliance.

The **GGP Demand project** in Indonesia worked with private firms to change their palm oil sourcing behaviors via the Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard and Sustainable Sourcing Guidelines. These tools influenced

behaviours to some extent and also helped to push for greater transparency and accountability among over 130 global and domestic companies. Project efforts, alongside bilateral dialogues with Indonesian manufacturers and retailers (e.g., Super Indo and IKEA restaurants via Hero Group), helped build momentum for sustainable palm oil sourcing in domestic markets. WWF also engaged financial actors through its RESPOND platform to improve ESG integration in investment decisions. Campaigns and corporate dialogues helped build awareness, but structural changes remained limited.

FOLUR significantly aims to expand the private sector engagement model. It has developed partnerships with Unilever, Mondelez, and SCOPI and is working on PPPs and Public Private Community Partnerships (PPCP) across palm oil, cocoa, and coffee sectors. A study on private sector engagement mapped out existing initiatives, which now inform intervention design. Unilever alone has committed EUR 15 million to regenerative agriculture training for 28,000 farmers. FOLUR's approach emphasizes systemic engagement—linking upstream (farmers) and downstream (buyers) actors, mobilizing blended finance, and fostering investment-ready value chains. However, most activity remains in the preparatory and coordination phase; measurable outcomes are yet to materialize.

The **CFI project** aimed to advance MSC certification[48] through Fisheries Improvement Plans (FIPs), including through strong private sector engagement and financing. While intentions were clear, engagement and investment from companies remained weak. CFI Mechanisms like the Blue Abadi Fund (implemented by Conservation International) and the World Bank Challenge Fund underperformed or were poorly integrated. Based on interviews and CFI project document reviews the evaluation did not find any indication about presence and activities of the Challenge Fund in Indonesia that may have been linked to the CFI project. Women-led groups in the CFI project showed significant initiatives for commercial marketing (e.g., Sasi labeling), but market linkages with companies were nascent. The MTR criticized missed opportunities to reform regulatory incentives and the project noted the need for better communication between communities and the private sector as a major constraint. The project indeed facilitated several MoUs between community groups and private actors, but tangible investment or linkages remained weak or are just about to emerge.

Summary observations and evolution of private sector engagement:

- **From vision to implementation:** GEF-6 projects like GGP and CFI laid the foundation for PS engagement, but results were mixed. GGP Production succeeded in building dialogue platforms, while the IFC Transactions and CFI struggled to translate finance or partnership goals into results.
- **Market and policy signals matter:** Weak demand for certified products and a lack of strong environmental regulation made it difficult to motivate companies to invest in higher standards.
- **Shift toward systems thinking:** GEF-7's FOLUR has shifted toward systemic partnerships, aligning commodity value chains with jurisdictional planning and aiming to mobilize private investment through coordinated platforms and studies. The enabling groundwork is robust, but results are early-stage.

[48] MSC certification refers to certification by the Marine Stewardship Council, an international non-profit organization that sets standards for sustainable fishing, by ensuring that fisheries leave enough fish in the ocean; minimize environmental impact on marine ecosystems; and are effectively managed, with clear, science-based rules and enforcement.

- **GEB linkages still thin:** Across all programs, actual linkages between private sector engagement and measurable GEB outcomes (e.g., deforestation avoided, emissions reduced) and other outcomes remain limited.

2.4 Program Value Addition

All Indonesia child projects planned for close connections with their global coordination project(s) and child projects in other countries. CFI and FOLUR in particular are actively linking up with global coordination projects. From the outset, the GEF-6 GGP and CFI programs had clearly articulated ambitions to go beyond isolated project-level interventions. Both were designed to foster complementarity across projects and implementation partners, promote systemic change, and enable multi-level engagement—from local implementation to global learning. These ambitions were foundational to their design and reflected in the objectives and structures of their country projects/activities. Building on these early models, FOLUR and FSIP were conceived with even more comprehensive approaches. This is particularly visible in the FOLUR Indonesia ProDoc and FSIP livestock concept note, which strongly emphasize alignment with global platforms and multi-country collaboration mechanisms.

While **GGP's** programmatic design intended to enable additionality through interlinked interventions (production, demand, and finance), implementation in Indonesia fell short of these aspirations. The Terminal Evaluation of the GGP Production project found no clear evidence that the Indonesia child project was actively linked to global supply chains or international exchanges, despite being part of a three-country setup. Inter-country cooperation and engagement with global fora were largely absent during implementation, even though they may have occurred at headquarters level. Thus, while each project addressed important dimensions of the food system, the additionality expected from their integration was not realized in practice. Another core lesson from the GGP Demand project was the importance of adapting global program strategies more effectively to local country contexts at design.

In contrast, **FOLUR** in Indonesia was designed with strong programmatic additionality in mind. The project aims to engage in global Communities of Practice, learn from other FOLUR country experiences in Asia, and connect to international buyer networks and certification bodies. This exchange is expected to particularly enhance commodity traceability and policy alignment. Regular Zoom meetings are held with the FOLUR global project team. While most international learning is still in early stages due to the delayed start-up, the design provides a strong enabling framework for leveraging global knowledge and ensuring programmatic added value.

The **CFI** Indonesia project was also envisioned as the first GEF-supported effort in Indonesia to bring all EAFM dimensions (policy, tools, financing, and global knowledge exchange) together across a broad marine geography, rather than approach them in a piecemeal fashion. For instance, the CFI project in Indonesia is the first project to apply a comprehensive approach to address policy needs and tools (such as FIPs and MPAs), sustainable financing and knowledge sharing. In implementation, the project participated in quarterly meetings of the International Waters Learning Group, with all CFI project managers joining biannual global coordination sessions. These fora supported mutual learning, e.g., from Latin America (Ecuador, Peru) on market systems and Senegal on high-tech fish processing. The CFI project plans to proactively share best practices coming out of the Indonesia project with the global program and community.

Though still in its early stages, the **FSIP** livestock project is designed with global engagement and programmatic learning as key features. According to the FAO Concept Note, Indonesia plans to participate in the FSIP Global Platform and Asia-Pacific exchanges (with China, Bhutan, Solomon Islands), share experiences and lessons on sustainable livestock practices, and collaborate on joint evaluations,

innovations, and policy development, including with OneCGIAR, ACIAR, and private sector actors. The project explicitly links its national objectives with regional and global systems transformation goals.

The case study team also found considerable interest from the Ministry of Agriculture in regional-level cooperation, particularly in rice production. However, any partnerships beyond Indonesia must involve the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which can pose an administrative hurdle that has to be considered.

Summary lesson across programs. To fully realize the potential of programmatic approaches, cross-country learning works best when it is not only built into design, but knowledge management and cross-country exchanges are also adequately budgeted for, operationalized, incentivized and monitored during implementation.

2.5 Efficiency

The GGP projects demonstrated mixed levels of efficiency. The GGP Production project was hampered by excessive design complexity, unrealistic timelines, and limited resources compared to its ambitions. The TE highlights that stakeholders considered the project underbudgeted and overly ambitious, especially given the multiple outcomes and "moving parts" involved in landscape-level transformation. While project management at the national level was strong and adaptive, inefficiencies arose due to delayed field-level coordination and mismatched expectations between national and local actors. In contrast, the GGP Demand project was more efficient, earning a "Highly Satisfactory" rating in the TE. It was able to rapidly adapt and deliver against outputs despite COVID-19 delays, and also significantly exceeded co-financing targets (USD 130 million vs. USD 42 million planned). Execution was lean and effective, with innovative outputs like the Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard and sustainable sourcing guidelines.

Efficiency issues in terms of delays in FOLUR start-up have been significant, although not unexpected, given the complexity of recruitment of the PMU due to Indonesian government regulations and the complexity of the project and its implementation modalities. Although the project inception workshop occurred in August 2022, full staffing of the PMU only concluded in April 2024 and baseline assessments were done in mid-2024 (PIR 2024). The long start-up phase, especially of project preparation (Project Preparation Grant/PPG phase) and full project design, was also pointed out by CMEA, which noted that the project had been under preparation since 2017 but effectively started only in 2022. At least some of this timing was due to the distinct roles, functions and coordination requirements of the two GEF Agencies (UNDP and FAO) and, in particular, of the multiple ministries directly involved (CMEA, MoA, MoEF, BAPPENAS). While much has already been achieved by FOLUR (see Performance Chapter), thanks to the PMU's dedication and hard work, a significant portion of the National Project Manager's time and effort has been absorbed by coordination with partners and compliance with GEF agency requirements (PIR 2024).

The GEF objective of encouraging national ownership through the use of the National Implementation Modality (NIM) – in UNDP terminology – and the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) – in FAO terminology – contributed to certain inefficiencies and delays. The use of NIM/OPIM was particularly problematic for FAO, which lacked institutional familiarity with it and operates under more stringent constraints than UNDP under this modality, especially for the recruitment of Consultants and Service Providers that all have to be carried out directly through the Executing Ministries following their procedures. FAO also has to coordinate workplans and budgets directly with technically large ministries as MoA and MoEF, making execution slower and more cumbersome. According to FAO staff, limited decentralization within FAO itself further constrained delivery. In fact, cumulative project delivery remains under 12%, largely due to FAO-related disbursement delays (PIR 2024).

Efforts are underway in the PMU to explore alternative implementation modalities, including field-level execution by third parties which is expected to commence towards the end of 2025. There is also a need to expedite policy-related components, where CMEA and BAPPENAS have been asked to take stronger leadership. Despite these hurdles, the PMU has worked intensively to coordinate across five provinces, and the Project Board is expected to become more operationally effective going forward.

The CFI project also faced significant start-up delays, including a one-year lag in PMU establishment after approval and disconnects between CI and WWF-implemented components. A key cause of inefficiency was the exclusion of WWF-Indonesia as an executing partner, which removed important in-country technical capacity (MTR 2024). During implementation, the PMU lacked decision-making authority in its early years, contributing to mismanagement, alleged misuse of some funds (now addressed) and delays. Budget inefficiencies were noted, with too much spent on travel and not enough on staffing—especially at decentralized field sites. Although recent changes have empowered the PMU and diversified the Project Steering Committee (PSC), workload remains very high, with over 100 activities needing monitoring annually. The MTR called for more targeted technical assistance to site managers and greater local staffing (at least 20 personnel across HQ and field sites), as well as better feedback loops from the field to ensure adaptive management.

Government counterparts highlighted inherent coordination and administrative complexity within the Indonesian Government system as major sources of inefficiency. A CMEA representative emphasized the difficulty of engaging four ministries with unclear roles and slow adaptation processes. Frequent turnover of focal points also disrupted momentum. An MoA representative noted that while inter-ministerial coordination was possible, administrative burdens, such as forming standing committees and appointing responsible persons, were major obstacles. The GEF Operational Focal Point flagged the institutional transition from CMEA to CMFA as a critical challenge, mainly for the ongoing FOLUR project. According to interviewees, the new CMFA National Program Director (NPD) is, however, well experienced in GEF project guidance and management.

Across all projects, several common efficiency constraints emerge:

- **Ambitious designs** often misjudged the institutional capacity, timelines, and resource needs for delivery.
- **Multi-agency and multi-ministry coordination** proved complex, particularly where roles and incentives were not clearly aligned or adequately resourced.
- **The NIM approach** poses serious implementation barriers when unfamiliar to executing partners (notably for FAO).
- **Project startup delays** were especially acute in FOLUR and CFI, often linked to bureaucratic requirements for contracting, staffing, and AWPB approval.
- **Decentralized execution** remains limited, even though many interventions are at the district level.

Efficiency and effectiveness in addressing a complex food systems agenda

The GGP was ambitious in its intent to address multiple food systems dimensions—production, markets, finance, and demand—but struggled to implement them in an integrated manner across its three separate projects. There were several reasons for this: differing institutional mandates, timetables, metrics, and organizational structures made coordination difficult across the different implementing agencies (UNDP, WWF-US, IFC). Crucially, the absence of a shared Theory of Change or Logframe during

project design resulted in fragmented implementation and limited synergies (GEF 2022 IEO Integrated Approach evaluation). To some extent, logistical and institutional challenges, including the regional dispersion of key international CP implementing agencies, further hindered joint implementation, fieldwork and cross-learning despite the involvement and oversight of Jakarta offices for each Implementing Agency involved in the relevant GGP CPs for Indonesia (GGP Production, Demand and Transactions). The lack of a dedicated coordination budget for travel or integration among the different GGP CPs meant that each component operated largely independently, undermining the GGP's systems-level ambitions.

In contrast to the GGP projects, FOLUR was designed as a single integrated project aiming to address the full spectrum of food systems—from production to governance and demand—under one umbrella. While this bundled approach allowed for better alignment with national systems, it also introduced considerable complexity, in design and early implementation. The project's early years have been marked by an extensive volume of assessments, surveys, and dialogues contributing to delays in transitioning to field level implementation. The PIR also notes that the heavy procedural load driven by requirements for the basic agreement between UNDP and FAO (which took some time to be signed) and for workplan agreements between FAO and Executing Government partners contributed to delays in the start of field work and delivery of early outcomes especially on forest restoration, HCV protection, and livelihood improvements in (sub-)components managed by FAO. To manage this and other complexities, the project selected 25 high-impact villages for concentrated investment. This strategic bundling aims to create demonstration effects in production, value addition, and traceability, which could then spill over to surrounding areas.

The CFI fisheries project faced a different set of complexity-related challenges rooted in internal project fragmentation and contextual difficulty. First, the project had two distinct results frameworks, managed by WWF and CI respectively, which were poorly aligned and connected (MTR 2024). Legal agreements with different agencies and separate timelines further complicated internal coherence. Moreover, the nature of the work—marine protected areas, customary rights, and fisheries governance—required deep engagement with diverse stakeholders and regulatory layers. However, a limited understanding among implementers at the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of what "ecosystem approach to fisheries management" (EAFM) actually entails hindered initial progress and the project was used as a fund for all types of activities not directly related to its objectives. Moreover, the individuals implementing the project often had little connection to those who designed it, and lacked shared clarity on the project's full scope (MTR 2024). Insufficient focus on enabling community-level transformation further limited the project's ability to integrate food systems dimensions. Changes in the Project Management Unit in 2023/24 and more independent PMU decision-making helped to turn the project around, but with only 2 years to go until its completion. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) was also highlighted as a critical missing link in managing this complexity. WWF emphasized the need to diversify PSC membership to better reflect its range of activities and stakeholders and give new members voting rights in order to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration.

Cross-Cutting Observations and Lessons

Across the three programs, several patterns emerge:

- **Design structure shapes integration capacity.** GGP's fragmentation across agencies limited integration, while FOLUR's bundled approach improved coherence but introduced management complexity. CFI suffered from siloed implementation tracks, initially weak understanding of the project by the executing ministry, and unclear project ownership.

- **Common frameworks and shared understanding are essential.** Projects with distinct results frameworks (GGP, CFI) lacked the shared logic needed to operate systemically.
- **Governance and decision-making structures matter.** Weak PSCs or lack of inclusive representation (as in CFI) constrained adaptive management. Clearer governance mechanisms could help navigate food systems complexity.
- **Trade-offs are inevitable.** Bundled designs (e.g. FOLUR) offer more integrated potential but risk slower implementation; split-component designs (e.g. GGP) are easier to manage but may not deliver systemic outcomes.
- Addressing food systems complexity requires not just whole-of-system design, but also fit-for-purpose implementation strategies, aligned stakeholder incentives, and institutional structures that promote collaboration and learning.

3. Summary of findings and emerging lessons

Lesson 1 – Balancing food sovereignty and environmental objectives: Navigating trade-offs

The Government of Indonesia's strong political drive for food sovereignty—emphasizing expanded rice, maize, and to some extent livestock and palm oil production—creates clear tensions with environmental sustainability and the preservation of traditional export crops like coffee and cocoa. GEF projects, particularly GGP Production and FOLUR, aim(ed) to reconcile these goals through sustainable intensification, agroecological practices, and traceability. However, national declarations to open up to 20 million hectares of forest for agriculture reveal persistent trade-offs and risks of inverse incentives (e.g., food self-sufficiency, palm oil for biofuels). GEF programming that navigates this political economy carefully—promoting win-wins while guarding against displacement effects is more likely to succeed. Supporting institutions like the new CMFA and aligning with spatial planning mandates can strengthen coherence, but require safeguards and clearer GHG mitigation strategies. Sustainable intensification—including via improved seeds and balanced inorganic fertilizer use—gains potential when backed by land governance reforms, market alignment, and well-enforced forest protection regulations.

Lesson 2 – Managing complexity: The tension between program ambition and operational focus

All major GEF food systems projects in Indonesia—GGP, FOLUR, and CFI—grappled with the inherent complexity of working across multiple commodities, scales, and administrative levels. FOLUR's broad commodity scope and geographic dispersion, while conceptually sound, created challenges in targeting, coordination, and early implementation. The CFI project struggled to move from policy and planning to actual fisher behavior change partly due to institutional silos and unclear ownership and priorities. Measurable behavioral changes in demand for deforestation-free palm oil also remained largely elusive under the GGP. Program designs often overestimated the feasibility of operationalizing transformation without first investing in adaptive structures, feedback mechanisms, and localized buy-in. The FOLUR experience in particular highlights the need for complexity-informed design: allowing space for bottom-up prioritization, iterative adjustments, and differentiated engagement strategies. Simpler, commodity-focused models like FSIP may offer greater traction if coupled with strong governance and buy-in across national, provincial and district levels. Across cases, a key lesson is that transformational ambition is more likely to be achieved when matched by implementation realism, adaptive governance, and a willingness to depart from overly top-down, blueprint-style planning.

Lesson 3 – Clarifying GEF's role and maximizing programmatic value

The GEF has played a catalytic role in advancing integrated food systems thinking in Indonesia, particularly in areas such as sustainable palm oil, jurisdictional planning, and ecosystem-based fisheries—at a critical juncture in Indonesia's national policy development. Its comparative advantage, however, has varied by context and remains somewhat undefined. In the GGP Demand project, GEF support enabled WWF to elevate sustainability discourse into the private sector and consumer arenas. In Sintang district, the GGP Production project helped build sub-national platforms that informed national palm oil action plans. Yet the case also highlights that in the absence of strong IFI involvement—IFC being the only presence, with limited success—GEF's leverage depends heavily on robust co-financing, intra-governmental coordination, and alignment with development partners. Without these, effectiveness and sustainability are hard to ensure. While programmatic coherence has improved—FOLUR's alignment with RAN-KSB and TORA being one example—coordination across child projects and with non-GEF initiatives remains largely ad hoc. GEF's greatest value may lie in creating trusted platforms, fostering reform processes, and piloting approaches such as integrated land management and attractive STDB traceability models for farmers that others can later scale.

Lesson 4 – Implementation efficiency and institutional readiness

Nearly all projects suffered from protracted start-up phases due to complex implementation modalities (e.g., NIM/OPIM), administrative requirements, and coordination challenges across agencies. FOLUR faced delays in fund disbursement, consultant procurement, and translating analytical work into action. CFI struggled with institutional instability and gaps in adaptive management. These experiences highlight the importance of early establishment of empowered PMUs with adequate political backing (such as by National Program Directors and program Lead Agencies), diverse and well-mandated Project Steering Committees, and technical capacity to broker partnerships, navigate bureaucracy, and push field implementation. High transaction costs are endemic to multi-stakeholder food systems projects, but these can be mitigated through phased implementation, early field-level pilots, and flexible workplans. Stronger feedback loops between ground-level realities and national project planning (e.g., STDB rollout, Sanggau land use planning, CFI community success stories) can also accelerate implementation and foster relevance. GEF's challenge is to design processes that are both credible to national institutions and agile enough to adapt to field dynamics.

Lesson 5 – Engaging the private sector and addressing gender inclusively and early on

Private sector and gender integration varied widely across projects. In terms of private sector engagement, GGP Production and FOLUR offer promising models for aligning corporate incentives with sustainability, particularly through traceability, jurisdictional engagement, and public-private-community partnerships. However, IFC's GGP Transactions experience reveals the limits of finance-led approaches when private sector ESG uptake is weak, too narrowly targeted, and smallholder access is constrained. Similarly, private sector buy-in for fisheries sustainability in CFI remained minimal. Effective private sector engagement requires a mix of enabling policy signals, credible demand-side pressure, skilled communication, and grassroots capacity-building—elements that are still being pieced together across projects. On gender, GGP Production and FOLUR invested in mainstreamed approaches from the outset, while the CFI project retrofitted gender activities mid-stream, but with encouraging results. Across the portfolio, structured gender analysis was common, but power dynamics and potential backlash from shifting gender norms were seldom addressed. Embedding both gender and private sector strategies into core design, implementation pathways and adaptive management—instead of treating them as peripheral or

downstream add-ons—makes it more likely to avoid these shortcomings.

Annex 1: List of Interviewees

Organization	Sample size
Government (various Ministries)	5
Development Partners (national level)	2
GGP (Production, Demand and Transactions projects)	
Project Management and Execution	3
Implementing Agencies (UNDP, WWF-ID, IFC)	7
Sintang District Govmt. Implementing Agencies (GGP Production)	4
Beneficiaries and Frontline Workers (GGP Production)	2
FOLUR	
Project Management and Execution	6
Implementing Agencies (UNDP and FAO)	4
Sanggau District Govmt. Implementing Agencies	7
Beneficiaries and Frontline Workers	2
CFI	
Project Management and Execution	2
Implementing Agency: WWF-US	1
FSIP Livestock	
Implementing Agency: FAO Country Office	2
FAO Crop Biodiversity project	
Implementing Agency: FAO Country Office	1
Total	46

Annex 2: Project Sites Visited

Below are descriptions of project site visits conducted during a fieldwork mission from January 19 - 22, 2025.

Site Visit #1			
Site Name	*Sanggau District. Sami village (Bonti Sub-District), Smallholder oil palm plantation*	***Date of Site Visit***	*January 20, 2025*
Region	*Sanggau District, West-Kalimantan*	***Geo-Coordinates***	*0.4035, 110.5630 Sami village 0.1938, 110.4587 Smallholder oil palm plantation*
GEF FS Project	*FOLUR project GEF 10238*		

Site Visit #2			
Site Name	*Sintang*	*Date of Site Visit*	*January 21, 2025*
Region	*Sintang District, West-Kalimantan*	*Geo-Coordinates*	*0.0728, 111.4952*
GEF FS Project	*GGP Production 9180*		

Sanggau District Field Visit Report

Introduction and context

Sanggau District is one of Indonesia's largest palm oil-producing areas, with palm oil production starting in 1981. It now has 42 large companies cultivating approximately 180,000 ha of land and an additional 180,000 ha farmed by smallholders. The region has over 733,000 ha of other land uses, mainly agriculture and forestry, and 500,000 ha of protected forests. The district has been at the center of expansion and sustainability debates, particularly as oil palm cultivation has grown significantly over recent decades. The evaluation team visited several district offices and met with stakeholders involved in agriculture, livestock, environment, and regional development. The field mission included a site visit to Sami Village in Bonti Sub-District—one of FOLUR's planned five high priority villages in the District.

Findings from district government interviews

District-level stakeholders expressed strong concerns about agricultural productivity, low and fluctuating palm oil prices (ranging between 1,000 and 3,000 rupiah per kg of kernel[49]), limited traceability mechanisms, and the district's ongoing struggle to meet food self-sufficiency goals. Yield improvements in oil palm had reportedly risen from 9.5 to 13–14 tons/ha between 2019–2024, mainly pulled by larger plantations, and still lagging behind Malaysia's average of 24 tons/ha. Officials noted some support from the Government's Crude Palm Oil Supporting Fund (short CPO Fund) for replanting but

[49] About 7 – 20 USD cents

highlighted that only 6,000 farmers had completed STDB (Surat Tanda Daftar Budidaya - smallholder registration) covering just 13,000 ha, mainly due to lack of agriculture funding. STDB is a cultivation registration document that helps identify who is growing what, where, and on how much land. While not a proof of ownership, it plays an important role in improving traceability, formalizing smallholder engagement in sustainable supply chains (such as ISPO and RSPO), and facilitating access to support programs. Livestock integration is also a district objective. Although Sanggau has 10,000 cattle, it requires about 50,000 to reach self-sufficiency in meat. One model farm, that was also visited by the evaluation team, integrated 25 cattle on 5 ha of oil palm land. Officials proposed that FOLUR help facilitate this integration and support the permitting process with the Ministry of Agriculture.

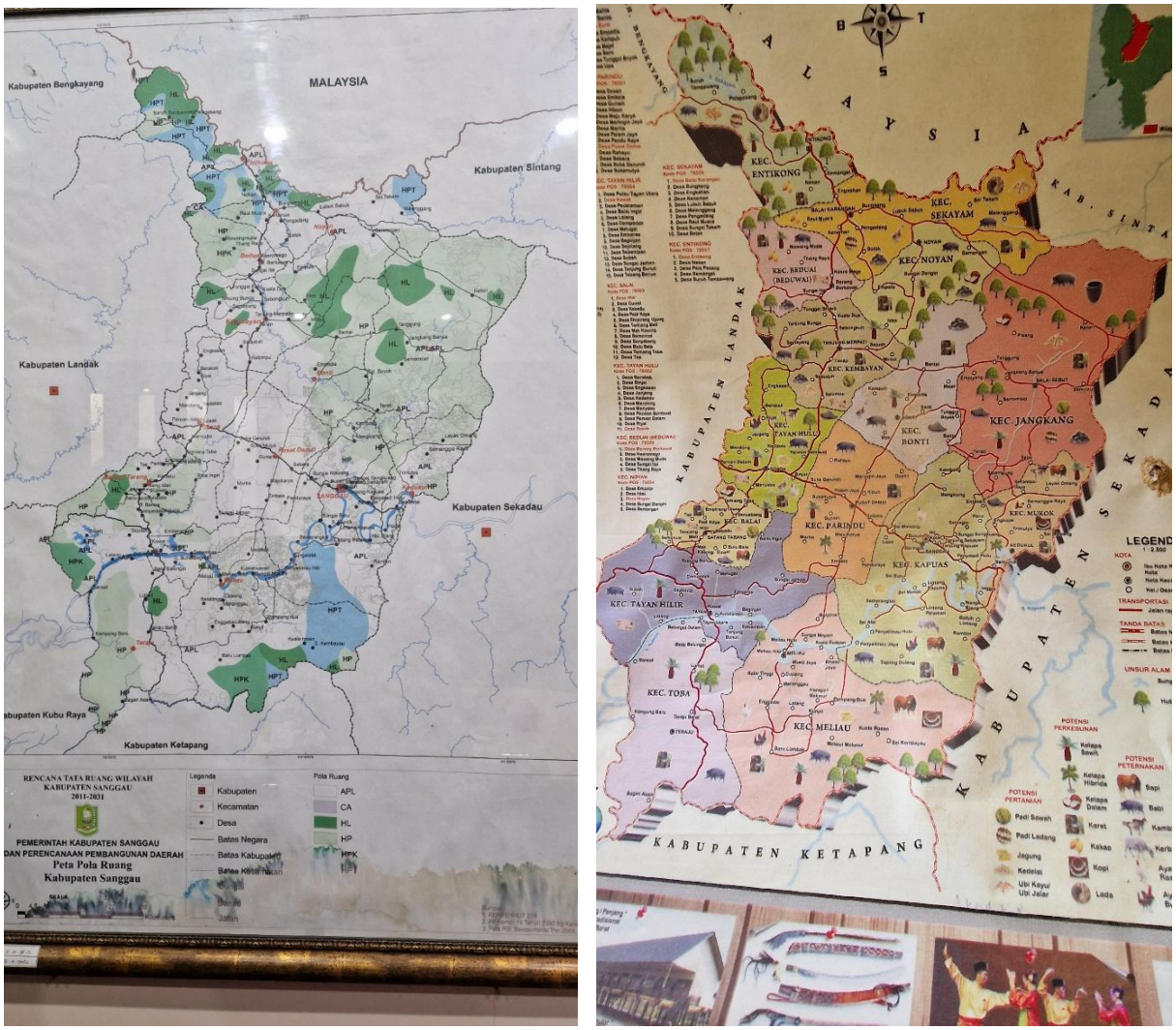
Environmental concerns were given comparatively lower priority in most agricultural and other government services, although the Environmental Services Bureau emphasized enforcement of no-burning regulations in oil palm area expansion. But awareness and engagement with the ongoing FOLUR project remained limited, especially regarding its environmental objectives. Key FOLUR activities such as the Targeting Scenario Analysis were conducted without clear involvement of local agencies, except for some data provision. Perceived benefits from FOLUR activities have yet to materialize at the district level. With regard to broader landscape planning and Integrated Landscape Management (ILM), interviews with BAPPERIDA and the Environmental Services Bureau revealed several coordination challenges. Advancing jurisdictional ILM may prove challenging due to complex and sometimes conflicting land use regulations, overlapping mandates among government agencies, and inconsistencies in land mapping that cannot easily be resolved at the district level. BAPPERIDA also noted the complexity of aligning district, provincial, and national frameworks.

FOLUR Project: Field Visit to Sami Village (Bonti-sub District)

In Sami Village, the FOLUR project builds on a prior KfW-funded initiative to protect a 133 ha High Conservation Value (HCV) forest area. This area is both culturally and ecologically significant, serving as a tribal heritage zone, source of spring water, and habitat for bird species. KfW had previously introduced mixed-use forest enrichment with durian and jackfruit trees. Despite this promising baseline, community awareness of FOLUR's broader food systems and environmental objectives remains low. Local stakeholders expressed interest in palm oil management training, access to quality seedlings and inputs, and road infrastructure to support tourism and access to the HCV area. A speedboat ambulance was also proposed due to limited health access. Several of these demands are clearly not in line with the project's ability to support.

Take-away messages from Sanggau

- **Limited local awareness of FOLUR**: District officials and communities in Sanggau have limited understanding of FOLUR's objectives.
- **Production priorities dominate**: Agriculture and livestock services emphasize production, palm oil pricing and food self-sufficiency, with limited attention to environmental protection and sustainability.
- **Jurisdictional ILM remains low-priority**: Due to regulatory complexity, limited capacity, and unresolved spatial data conflicts; with a large number of multiple-layer government organizations having jurisdictions related to lands and forests, enforcement and permits.
- **Community expectations are practical**: Farmers in Sami village primarily seek agricultural inputs, training, and infrastructure—not landscape-scale planning.
- **FOLUR must show clear benefits**: Officials emphasized that unless clear differences are visible between assisted and non-assisted villages, FOLUR's value could be questioned.



Maps of Sanggau district with forest and forested areas (various shades of green, left) and main crops grown

Sanggau town

Forested area in Sanggau

Smallholder Palm oil plantation in Sanggau with mixed livestock farming

Environmental analysis for a new palm oil plantation

Environment Department, Sanggau District, Meeting with the Secretarat

Sintang District Field Visit Report

Introduction and context

Sintang District lies to the east of Sanggau and is considered a frontier district for oil palm, where plantations began later (1992) but expanded rapidly from 2004. The first palm-oil intensification study was conducted in Sintang in 2015. The area now has approximately 200,400 ha of plantations and a strong civil society presence, with more than 40 NGOs active across sectors. Sintang has benefited from considerable donor and NGO engagement since 2012, especially through WWF-Indonesia (WWF-ID) which was supported by the GGP production project (9180).

The evaluation team participated in a one-day workshop on organizing smallholder oil palm farmers, hosted by the Rainbow Alliance, which brought together representatives from government, NGOs, and farmer organizations. Interviews with government officials and a prominent palm oil farmer were also conducted.

Achievements of the GGP production project (2018–2021)

Sintang was a key district for the Good Growth Partnership (GGP) production project, especially through the efforts of WWF-ID (sub-contracted by UNDP). The project focused on improving agricultural practices, institutional coordination, and strategic policymaking. In 2017, the Indonesian Sustainable Oil Palm Forum (FKSB) was formed in the district, contributing eventually to the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil, ratified under Presidential Instruction No. 6/2018.

Major GGP achievements in Sintang included:

- Development and implementation of the Sintang District Action Plan for Sustainable Palm Oil and Land Management (2018–2020). This plan has been annually reviewed for five years, with 50% achievement rates in 2022/23.
- Training for independent smallholders and capacity-building on sustainable practices.
- Mapping and land rights documentation for over 100 smallholders.
- Establishment of a multi-stakeholder task force (MSF) including local government, farmers, NGOs, and academics.

Important tasks of the MSF in Sintang are: (1) improving infrastructure in the District, (2) establishing and managing oil farmer groups, (3) awareness generation to environmental issues, including HCV/HCS areas; and (4) promoting ISPO mechanisms and developing partnerships with oil palm and other companies/ This MSF also facilitated two important district regulations:

- **Regulation No. 70/2023** on HCV/HCS conservation, including lake protection (which was one of the priorities of GGP in the district). Processes for this Regulation are advanced but not finalized); and
- **Regulation No. 104/2024** on multi-stakeholder land use and zoning cooperation.

WWF and partners also released an HCV/HCS baseline study in 2023 showing that 51.2% of the area has high conservation value, although the map has yet to be officially adopted.

Insights from farmer interviews

The workshop revealed significant momentum among smallholder organizations to professionalize oil palm farming and pursue STDB and ISPO certification. Two cooperatives have already been certified. Farmer Yoanes, interviewed during the workshop, expanded its oil palm farm from 2 to 8 ha since 2009

and emphasized the needs for good prices, road infrastructure, and legal land status (STDB). His multi-purpose farmer organization, formed in 2018 with WWF support, has 178 members. Its main purpose include the facilitation of loans and input delivery for members. His wife also works in the plantation, women usually are involved in weeding and gleaning of fallen oil palm seeds.

Despite much progress in Sintang on sustainable palm oil production, concerns remain regarding enforcement of sustainable practices, gaps in company-farmer partnerships (companies manage 8 ha vs. 2 ha for farmers), and the lack of a pricing premium for ISPO certification. While they appreciated GGP's facilitation of dialogue, farmers were cautious about whether long-term benefits would materialize in the absence of better price incentives for sustainability standards.

Take-away Messages from Sintang

- **Sintang demonstrates strong momentum**: The district is a clear example of how sustainability and governance can be advanced through coordinated efforts.
- **Multi-stakeholder platforms are working**: The MSF in Sintang functions effectively as a forum for planning, coordination, and policy innovation.
- **GGP had catalytic impact**: The project influenced both field-level practices and policy, and its legacy is institutionalized in the MSF.
- **Field-grounded strategies are key**: Stakeholders emphasized that effective policy must be built on practical realities, local needs, and sustained support. Or as stated by one interviewee: 'You cannot talk directly about deforestation with farmers; you have to offer them something first'.
- **Farmers are engaged and organized**: Farmer cooperatives are actively seeking certification and partnerships but need continued support on pricing, legality, and capacity.

Interview with head of palm oil farmer organization in Sintang

Workshop on organizing palm oil farmers in Sintang

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Annex 11: Peru Country Case Study

Acronyms

ASL	Amazon Sustainable Landscapes
AIDESEP	Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest
CFI	Coastal Fisheries Initiative
CN	Concept Note
CONMANOPE	Consortium Mangroves of the Northwest of Peru
CUSAF	Assignments in Use for Agroforestry Systems
DGFFS	Directorate of Forestry and Wildlife Management
ECA Chayu Nain	Executor of the Administration Contract of the Chayu Nain Communal Reserve
EUDR	EU Deforestation Regulation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FOLUR	Food, Land Use, and Restoration
FPAI	Fisheries Performance Assessment Instrument
FSIP	Food Systems Integrated Program
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GGP	Good Growth Partnership
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILM	Integrated Landscape Management
IPLP	Indigenous People's Life Plan
MIDAGRI	Ministry of Agricultural Development and Irrigation
MINAM	Ministry of Environment
NIM	National Implementation Modality
ORDEPIAA	Regional Organization for the Defense and Development of Indigenous Peoples of Alto Amazonas
PRODOC	Project Document
PRODUCE	Ministry of Production
PROFONANPE	Fund for the Promotion of Natural Protected Areas of Peru
RFS	Resilient Food Systems
SERFOR	National Forestry and Wildlife Service
SIPAM	Sustainable Management of AgroBiodiversity and Vulnerable Ecosystems Recuperation in Peruvian Andean Regions Through GIAHS Approach
SNLMT	National Sanctuary Mangroves of Tumbes
TDP	Territorial Development Plan
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UNICAs	Credit and Savings Unions (Uniones de Crédito y Ahorro)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
YLL	Yield Lab Opportunity Fund I

1. Introduction

This Peru case study is part of the Evaluation of Global Environment Facility (GEF) Food Systems Programs. This evaluation seeks to assess the quality of design and achievement of results of food systems programs in GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8, as well as to evaluate how the GEF has adapted to changing contexts and incorporated lessons learned into the design of later programs. The global evaluation covers three GEF-6 programs (Resilient Food Systems [RFS], Coastal Fisheries Initiative [CFI], and Good Growth Partnership [GGP]), one GEF-7 program (Food, Land Use, and Restoration [FOLUR] Impact Program), and one GEF-8 program (Food Systems Integrated Program [FSIP]). The evaluation scope also includes 21 standalone country and regional projects focused on food systems from GEF-6 through GEF-8 that were identified by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) using a keyword search.

Country case studies are a key component of the evaluation, intending to help:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the outcomes resulting from GEF food systems interventions and the explanatory factors for and sustainability of these changes;
- Understand how the GEF integrated programs' approach to food systems has evolved at the country level by assessing the similarities and differences between projects from each replenishment cycle and capturing links and interconnection; and
- Collect the perspectives of local communities affected by GEF interventions.

Peru was one of four case study countries selected purposively by the GEF IEO. Case study countries were selected based on having food systems program child projects from all three GEF replenishment cycles included in the scope of the evaluation. Other factors considered include maturity of projects and variation across regions, GEF Agencies, and sectors targeted through FSIP.

1.1 Methodology

This Peru case study used a systems thinking approach that was guided by the global evaluation's theoretical framework for understanding food systems that integrates GEF concepts with relevant literature to identify the drivers, actors, parts, and outcomes of a given system. The case study sought to answer thirteen overarching evaluation questions pertaining to design, relevance and coherence, performance and results, value addition, and efficiency of GEF food systems programming. Questions on performance and results were only relevant for the one closed project.

The case study used mixed methods to extract robust and credible findings, including desk reviews of project and program documents, virtual and in-person interviews, and direct observation through site visits. The case study team conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to develop an initial list of key informants, then used a snowballing approach to identify additional key informants through interviews with representatives of the national, regional, and local government of Peru, GEF Agencies, private sector actors, producers' organizations, as well as NGO and academia (see Annex 1). The case study team visited sites in Tumbes and Piura regions associated with the CFI project (GEF ID 9124), including the National Sanctuary Mangroves of Tumbes and the Estuario de Virrilá (see Annex 2 for geographic coordinates).

Key limitations faced during the study included a high rate of staff turnover within government institutions, such as the Ministry of Environment (MINAM) and the Regional Governments of Piura and Tumbes, and gaps in individual memory and knowledge of available interviewees. This was especially applicable to the CFI project, which was closed for over two years at the time of conducting this case study. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team interviewed the original project staff, including

those who had moved to other parts of the government, rather than those individuals who currently occupy relevant positions in the regional and local governments. Staff turnover at UNDP also impacted the FOLUR project (GEF ID 10307), so the evaluation team conducted two GEF Agency interviews, one with the technical advisor who accompanied the design process, and one with the programme officer who is now involved in implementation. Another limitation was the delayed start to implementation of FOLUR, which prevented the realization of a second site visit to collect the perspectives of additional project-affected people.

1.2 Scope

Peru was selected for a case study due to the existence of child projects from GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8 food systems programs, as well as a standalone food systems project. The table below shows the four projects in Peru included in this case study and is followed by brief project descriptions.

Table 1.1. Overview of projects included in case study

GEF ID	Project Name	GEF Agency	FS Program	Project Status	Target Food System	Target Environmental Impact
9124	Coastal Fisheries Initiative- Latin America	UNDP	CFI	Closed	Artisanal fisheries (black mussel, crab)	Marine-coastal biodiversity loss
10307	Deforestation Free Commodity Supply Chains in the Peruvian Amazon	UNDP	FOLUR	Active	Cocoa and coffee production landscapes	Commodity production-driven deforestation
11221	Regenerative livestock farming to promote sustainable landscapes	FAO	FSIP	Concept	Livestock	Ecosystem degradation and loss of land productivity
11066	Yield Lab Opportunity Fund I: Accelerating technology and local innovation for sustainable and decarbonized food systems in LAC*	IADB	Standalone	Active	Agritech for sustainable food production	Carbon-intensive agriculture

**Regional project portfolio includes: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.*

Other GEF projects relevant to food systems from GEF-6 through GEF-8 were mentioned by key informants during data collection, but they were not included in the scope of this case study. These include child projects under the first and second phases of the Amazon Sustainable Landscapes (ASL) Program (GEF ID 9387 and GEF ID 10248), as well as standalone projects focused on preserving traditional agricultural systems (GEF ID 9092) and sustainable livestock (GEF ID 10541).

Table 1.2. Brief project descriptions

Project	Objective	Components
CFI	To demonstrate holistic ecosystem-based management and improved governance in southeast Pacific coastal fisheries	1. Increase and strengthen the capacities of key actors for improved governance of coastal fisheries with an inclusive, poverty reduction and gender sensitive approach; 2. Test methods and tools for marine and coastal spatial planning with an ecosystem-based approach to disaster risk reduction; 3. Knowledge management (KM) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).
FOLUR	To introduce sustainable commodity production models	1. Development of integrated landscape management (ILM) systems;

	to reduce deforestation and land degradation caused by the ongoing increasing unsustainable production of agricultural commodities	2. Promotion of sustainable deforestation-free commodities and responsible value chains; 3. Reducing biodiversity loss and restoring ecosystems, HVCF and natural habitats; and 4. Coordination, M&E and KM
FSIP	To transform and enhance the resilience of food systems in productive landscapes vulnerable to biodiversity loss and climate change	1. Strengthened enabling environment to catalyze food systems transformation at national and subnational levels; 2. Improved and increased financing deployed in support of food system transformation; 3. Environmental benefits leveraged through sustainable management of food systems; 4. Knowledge, innovation, M&E and coordination promoted
Standalone	To support a transition to decarbonized and sustainable food systems through the acceleration and upscaling of catalyst tech-based innovation as enablers to achieve climate change mitigation, adaptation, and restoration	1. Increased private finance for investment in tech-based food systems innovation for decarbonization and inclusive, sustainable development; 2. Strengthening of the innovation ecosystem as an accelerator, support and leverage of tech-based innovations for sustainable and resilient food systems; 3. Enhanced adoption and scaleup of tech-based innovation available supporting resilience, adaptation and less environmentally harmful models in agriculture and food systems in LAC as a result of the Yield Lab Opportunity Fund I investments; 4. Increased number of people benefiting directly from climate smart innovation in agriculture and food systems; 5. Project M&E.

2. Findings

2.1 Design

2.1.1 Systems Thinking

GEF food systems interventions in Peru primarily address the production element of the value chain, while engaging with other elements to a much lesser extent. Each project pilots improved techniques in production landscapes/seascapes and strengthens natural resource governance through capacity building (i.e., knowledge element), coordination, and policy support at national, regional, and local levels. CFI, for example, sought to foster sustainable production through capacity building for improved governance of crab and black mussel fisheries and black mussel repopulation in the National Sanctuary Mangroves of Tumbes (SNLMT). CFI was also the only project with an explicit focus on the access to natural resources core system element, which was addressed by strengthening management committees for protected areas. Although not in the original project design, CFI introduced pandemic response activities that sought to address socioeconomic challenges created by COVID-19, including the installation of a small processing plant for crab and shrimp (extracted mostly from the SNLMT and its buffer zone) in Tumbes. None of the projects focus on the aggregation, distribution, consumption, nutrition, or health value chain elements. In CFI, the species selected (crab and black mussels) are not used for local consumption or nutrition, but rather are delicacies consumed primarily outside the project area.

GEF-7 and GEF-8 projects take more of a value chain approach, relying on partnerships to connect to other elements. FOLUR and FSIP have a strong focus on governance, capacity, and sustainable

management of production landscapes for cocoa and coffee and regenerative livestock, respectively, but they go beyond CFI to include activities focused on improving market access for smallholder producers. In FOLUR, this entails plans to promote the commitment of buyers—who will take on other parts of the food system (e.g., processing, transportation)—to support producers in adopting good practices. Though not part of the formal project design, FOLUR is promoting compliance with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), which is expected to help producers access EU markets (see Relevance and Coherence). FSIP design is still under development but is expected to take a similar approach to enhancing access to finance and market participation for small regenerative livestock producers.

The standalone project, The Yield Lab Opportunity Fund I (YLL), has a regional agritech investment focus that could be applied to multiple elements of the value chain, although supporting production-oriented companies is a core competency of the executing entity, The Yield Lab Latam. The project so far has selected one production-oriented company to support in Peru.

Project designs identify and target multiple root causes and barriers in target food systems, but CFI's experience demonstrates how a lack of integration and attention to policy barriers can undermine results. The CFI project aimed to tackle two major challenges: overfishing and resource depletion in small-scale fisheries, and conflicts among coastal and marine resource users. The project identified capacity, coordination, and behavior barriers, as well as challenges related to open access policies and unclear or overlapping jurisdiction of marine and coastal zones. The latter challenges were not addressed, although the project did strengthen enforcement of existing restricted access policies in the protected areas targeted by project interventions (see Performance and Results). The SNLMT extends to the border with Ecuador with no buffer zone, which makes it a common entry point for illegally extracted black mussels from Ecuador and illegal extraction by Ecuadorian fishers. The volume of the product from Ecuador often crowds out the local product in the national market, forcing extractors in Tumbes to engage primarily with regional markets. Despite being a binational project, there was no cross-boundary exchange of learning or joint activities to address the impact of illegal fishing in Ecuador on Peruvian fisheries.

The CFI project design sought to deliver GEBs by protecting biodiversity and over-exploited fishery resources but missed the chance to integrate components for mutual reinforcement. Instead, the project supported biodiversity conservation through marine spatial planning in Piura and sustainable fisheries management in Tumbes, without coordination or knowledge sharing between the two regions. Although not part of the original design, adaptive management during COVID-19 introduced financial support through credit and savings unions (UNICAs), which helped to address the lack of income during the closed season, which is a root cause of illegal fishing (see Performance and Results).

While FOLUR and FSIP intend to take an integrated approach to address environmental impacts, root causes, and barriers, doing so is proving challenging. The FOLUR PRODOC includes detailed analysis of how structural/root, underlying, and immediate causes impact the promotion of deforestation-free commodities in landscapes experiencing significant deforestation-driven CO_2 emissions, wildlife habitat loss and fragmentation due to expanding commodity production. Approximately 80 project interventions aim to collectively address these challenges from multiple angles, including by strengthening local and regional governance, increasing access to finance for regional governments and smallholder producers, encouraging adoption of climate-smart agriculture and conservation/restoration practices to reduce biodiversity loss, and fostering new relationships between smallholder producers and private commodity buyers. But stakeholders believe that the large number of interventions, along with a lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of some different stakeholders and the sequencing of interventions, will complicate implementation. This lack of clarity is exacerbated by the withdrawal of FAO and IFAD as implementing agencies in December 2023 (see Efficiency), which prompted revisions of the PRODOC and budget to transfer all responsibility to UNDP. Some actors indicated that the revisions to the PRODOC

made it harder to comprehend, with one stakeholder referring to the revised PRODOC as a "Frankenstein" document that is proving overly complicated to understand and implement, while others believe that the revisions have improved the document by making the roles of different actors clearer, compared to when there were other agencies involved too.

The FSIP child project aims to address ecosystem degradation, loss of land productivity, and GHG emissions resulting from livestock production-induced land use change through the introduction of regenerative production practices. The theory of change presented in the Concept Note (CN) offers a detailed list of drivers, barriers, and environmental impacts from the target food system, with some mapping between the barriers and expected project outcomes. The results framework presented in the CN and interviews with government and GEF Agency stakeholders suggest that the project will aim to take a similar approach to FOLUR in terms of addressing these challenges from multiple angles. Given that the FSIP project is still under design, it is too early to assess whether the components will be designed in an integrated manner.

Projects consistently identify and seek to deliver benefits to multiple actors across administrative levels, but unclear design and interministerial tensions have made more meaningful collaboration difficult, especially at the national level. All three projects involve a range of national and sub-national government institutions, smallholder producers and producers' organizations, and relevant private sector actors. MINAM and GEF Agencies have played the most substantial role in project design and implementation so far. Since GEF-6, MINAM has increasingly taken ownership of GEF projects in Peru,[1] leading to both benefits and challenges. Political support from MINAM leadership has allowed staff to dedicate significant time and resources to project design and implementation. Coordination with other national government actors has been challenging, including the Ministry of Production (PRODUCE) and the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Irrigation (MIDAGRI), and their active participation in the design process has been perceived as limited. One interviewee explained, for example, that their ministry was only consulted once the project was nearly fully designed. There has also been confusion about MINAM's leadership in food systems projects that appear to be focused on agricultural commodities and livestock, which are typically the purview of MIDAGRI. Some key informants from MINAM and MIDAGRI explained that despite their initial confusion, MINAM's role made sense once they understood the environmental objectives of the projects, while other national government informants noted that they feel excluded from GEF support, as all funds are channeled through MINAM.

MINAM has effectively engaged with regional and local government actors, who are active in regions where MINAM itself is not present. It is also easier for MINAM to work with regional actors because of the emphasis on production activities in the child projects. While regional and local governments are closely involved in production activities, national actors like PRODUCE, are typically involved in later stages of the value chain.

Further opportunities to engage multiple stakeholders, especially on the local and regional level, arise through strengthening and facilitating multi-actor spaces such as mesas técnicas[2] and management committees, which are considered in all three child projects. For example, CFI has strengthened the mesa técnica of benthonic resources in Tumbes, which led to a collaboration between a private research company, a local university, and a fishermen's consortium on reproduction and repopulation of black mussels in the SNLMT (see Performance and Results).

2.1.2 Learning

GEF food systems projects in Peru focus on different value chains and regions of the country, with limited learning among them, but projects have built on other GEF interventions in the country. Projects have focused on different value chains, including fisheries for CFI, cocoa and coffee for FOLUR, and

livestock for FSIP. This has also meant that different actors from MINAM and MIDAGRI are engaged for FOLUR and FSIP. The projects have also targeted different regions of the country. One area—Piura—is involved in both CFI and FSIP, but the target food systems were different, and the CFI did not conduct any direct food systems work in Piura (focusing instead on protected areas). Lessons from the CFI project have informed UNDP's efforts to scale sustainable fisheries governance in Peru and Chile through the Humboldt II project (GEF ID 9592).

Although not included in the scope of this evaluation, the GEF-6 Sustainable Productive Landscapes (SPL) project (GEF ID 9387) and Sustainable Management of Agro-Biodiversity and Vulnerable Ecosystems Recuperation in Peruvian Andean Regions Through Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems Approach (SIPAM) project (GEF ID 9092) have provided key lessons for FOLUR and FSIP, respectively. Multiple stakeholders referenced SPL as a strong predecessor for FOLUR, which is expected to use similar financial instruments as those developed under SPL to support sustainable production and other activities along the cocoa and coffee value chains. Key informants also noted that MINAM has learned how to more effectively engage in the cocoa value chain and work with relevant actors, especially producer organizations, through SPL. Stakeholders also referenced learning related to project governance from SPL (e.g., the importance of involving a range of actors in design) as a benefit for the FOLUR project. One key difference between the projects is that UNDP was responsible not only for the administrative aspects of SPL, but also for the technical aspects, and was therefore considered a UNDP project. Learning from this, the FOLUR project is using the National Implementation Modality (NIM), which ensures greater ownership by MINAM. SIPAM has strengthened the capacity of MINAM and other relevant actors (i.e., the Fund for the Promotion of Natural Protected Areas of Peru [PROFONANPE] which may be closely involved in FSIP implementation). Key learnings include effective stakeholder communication, incorporating social inclusion into project design, and effectively managing GEF resources.

Child projects have also learned from non-GEF projects in Peru, including some implemented by GEF Agencies. For instance, WWF is implementing a regenerative livestock project in the Madre de Dios region that heavily influenced the design of the FSIP project. Although the FSIP project will target different regions, the WWF project has demonstrated effective ways to socialize and increase buy-in for regenerative livestock production and has shared technical knowledge through a site visit with the FSIP design team. Through a project socialization workshop, FSIP has also engaged somewhat with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which works on regenerative livestock. FOLUR stakeholders also highlighted other UNDP interventions (e.g., UN-REDD Programme, German IKI Fund, SECO projects in Cajamarca and San Martin) as providing learning opportunities, however the depth and breadth of this learning were not clear.

2.1.3 Gender and Social Inclusion

Opportunities to engage women have been constrained by the choice of commodities and project design decisions. All three CPs primarily focus on production activities, but women do not play a large role in production of the commodities addressed by CFI and FSIP (i.e., crab, black mussels and regenerative livestock). Instead, they most often participate in post-production activities, which are not a central part of either project's design. Neither project has specific activities designed to address barriers to women's participation in production activities.

The CFI project did not undertake the food consumption activities focused on women as described in the CEO endorsement document (e.g., conducting studies, training sessions, and communication campaigns to understand the role of women in determining household food consumption and to ensure their participation in the project). Instead, women primarily benefitted from the implementation of UNICAs.[3] FSIP project design documents (e.g., CN, socialization slide deck) and MINAM stakeholders reference

gender inclusion and intergenerational learning and knowledge, but the specific activities are not yet determined. FSIP also faces a similar risk, given the traditionally small role of women in livestock production, although one stakeholder noted that FSIP may focus on certain types of livestock that could increase the opportunities to benefit women. YLL also struggles to promote gender inclusivity due to the limited number of women-led startups in Latin America. Nonetheless, the project's investment thesis promotes women's leadership within the fund and requires funded startups to contribute to inclusion efforts. For instance, one startup is digitizing aspects of the work of day laborers to open new opportunities of financial inclusion, such as through microfinance.

Although not a central feature of the original project design, FOLUR offers the greatest opportunity to engage women, as they are already active in coffee and cocoa production. A gender specialist was hired to find opportunities to engage women through the project, but the original budget lacked funds for the gender action plan. MINAM is now amending the budget to allocate adequate resources to gender activities. FOLUR is also using gender equality as an entry point to the crowded development landscape in the San Martin region (see Relevance and Coherence). In addition to working with women producer networks, the project has begun supporting the implementation of Assignments in Use for Agroforestry Systems (CUSAFs)[4] in target landscapes and expects to implement specific activities to ensure women benefit from this support. These include training for women farmers on the concept of CUSAF and including women's names on CUSAF titles. During project startup, the project also consulted women community leaders in cocoa and coffee landscapes to assess the need for and added value of creating a network of women leaders in coffee and cocoa. The consultations highlighted that such a network for cocoa already exists but would benefit from project support to strengthen its regional representation.

FOLUR also aims to contribute significantly to promote sustainable development and mitigate deforestation among Indigenous communities, especially in Alto Amazonas (Loreto) and Amazonas. To this end, it will promote the integration of Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) principles into Territorial Development Plans (TDP) and Indigenous Peoples' Life Plans (IPLP) to improve governance and promote sustainable production practices. Beneficiary communities have been selected by the project based on criteria developed jointly with Indigenous organizations. In Alto Amazonas, six Shawi communities have been identified as beneficiaries that will receive support through collaboration with the Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Alto Amazonas (ORDEPIAA). The project has developed tailored work plans to provide technical assistance to empower these communities through the implementation of life plans, the restoration of degraded areas, and the promotion of deforestation-free production practices, such as sustainable cocoa cultivation. The project is also reaching Awajun communities in Amazonas through partnerships with organizations such as the Executor of the Administration Contract of the Chayu Nain Communal Reserve (ECA Chayu Nain) and the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP).

2.2 Relevance and Coherence

2.2.1 Alignment with Country Priorities and Needs in Key Sectors

All three child projects align with key Peruvian policies and strategies. For instance, the CFI project aligns with the National Biodiversity Strategy for 2021; the "Plan Bicentenario," focusing on conserving natural resources and biological diversity through the participation of local populations; and the Organic Law of Regional Governments, contributing to improved management of small-scale fisheries. The FOLUR project seeks to strengthen collaboration between MINAM and MIDAGRI to promote deforestation-free commodities and strengthen smallholder livelihoods, aligning with Peru's national strategies and international commitments, such as the National Forests and Climate Change Strategy and the Joint Declaration of Peru, Norway, and Germany on reducing deforestation in Peru. Both FOLUR and FSIP are

also expected to contribute to achieving Peru's NDC GHG emission reduction commitments in the agriculture and livestock sectors, respectively.

The FSIP project also plans to support Peru's *Roadmap to Achieve Sustainable Food Systems in Peru*, a national strategy document prepared by MIDAGRI in 2021 to guide the development of actions by the public and private sectors to resolve the country's problems regarding health and nutrition, poverty and inequality, and the degradation of ecosystems originating from food production. One of the key roadmap actions is to improve pastures and reduce agricultural vulnerability to climate events. However, some key informants indicated that the FSIP project design does not yet reflect a meaningful linkage with the roadmap, suggesting the need for a closer assessment once the project is fully designed.

Although the projects clearly describe policy alignment, they also reveal challenging tensions between environmental drivers and political economy issues. The FOLUR PRODOC discusses the environmental impacts (i.e., deforestation) of the three target commodities (coffee, cocoa, and palm oil), but does not adequately assess the political economy implications of each commodity. During project startup, MINAM determined that it could not promote sustainable palm oil production because of the inherent negative environmental impacts and chose to proceed with coffee and cocoa only. FSIP may face similar challenges if it selects cattle livestock, although it is too early to assess. Key informant interviews suggest that both MINAM and MIDAGRI are well aware of these potential complications and may support other kinds of livestock with less of an environmental impact. Some stakeholders also questioned the selection of project areas, which span a large geographic scope (i.e., one northern landscape and one southern landscape) that may create challenges for internal project coordination across regions.

The FOLUR project has maintained relevance by adapting to the changing policy context. The project redid its policy analysis twice: once to consider developments due to COVID-19, and again to adequately consider the new EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) that passed in 2023. Even though EUDR is not mentioned in the revised PRODOC, the project is promoting compliance with the European regulation and the Forestry Law from 2011 (Law N° 29763) to ensure conservation and improved management of agroforestry systems. This is being done through CUSAF, which are an opportunity to ensure land use rights for smallholders, especially those that cultivate products such as cocoa and coffee, without making the land private property. Although mentioned in the current forestry law, CUSAF have not yet been widely implemented.[5] They will be implemented through collaboration between the project, SERFOR and the regional governments. Both CUSAF and EUDR are now highly relevant for the project's restoration activities, and compliance with EUDR is one of the reasons that regional governments are interested in working with FOLUR, as they need to ensure their producers continue to have access to the European market.

2.2.2 Interaction with Similar Activities and Initiatives

CFI collaborated with other initiatives to promote synergies. While it is too early to assess for FOLUR or FSIP, stakeholders seem aware of opportunities for interaction. During the pandemic, CFI established an alliance with the Ministry of Production's (PRODUCE) initiative "A Comer Pescado" ("Let's Eat Fish"), which is still supporting the processing plant in Tumbes with the marketing of their products. There was also collaboration with WWF, who had designed a smartphone app for traceability that reports directly to the Regional Directorate of Production. CFI helped deploy the app, including encouraging its use by local fishermen in both regions. The app is still in use today and generates important benefits for fishermen, buyers and regional authorities. It is also worth mentioning that when CFI ended, the GIZ project "EVEMAR" stepped in to help implement the management plans in the bay areas. The TNC project "BAF [Blue Action Fund]: Mar 2025", which is currently being implemented, has also been inspired by CFI to work with the protected areas, women and fishermen in the regions.

Because the FOLUR project management unit was not established until 2024, FOLUR has not had significant collaboration opportunities yet. However, it has identified valuable entry points in sustainable coffee and cocoa production, such as established mesas técnicas. These groups will receive capacity building support related to deforestation-free commodity value chains and represent an important opportunity to engage different stakeholders and exchange knowledge. It is still too early to assess FSIP's engagement with similar initiatives, but interviewees demonstrated a good understanding of relevant stakeholders and projects that could add value.

2.2.3 Policy Coherence

Policy coherence is not a key focus in any of the child projects, however FOLUR has found opportunities to promote policies that are outside of MINAM's purview but contribute to its objectives. CFI did not have any activities related to mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments or agencies, or across different stakeholder groups. Although policy coherence was not one of the objectives in its design, the FOLUR project has started promoting multiple policies within MIDAGRI's jurisdiction during implementation to ensure effectiveness. First, FOLUR is advancing the CUSAF mechanism recognized under the Forestry and Wildlife Law, which is implemented by SERFOR. Relatedly, the project expects to be involved in efforts to enact or support the implementation of a regulation needed to apply a new law on agricultural extension that mandates coordination between SERFOR and the National Institute of Agricultural Innovation (INIA, also under MIDAGRI) to provide agroforestry extension services, which are currently being provided by both actors to a limited degree. It is not clear what the project's involvement will entail, however the regulation, if approved, would be highly relevant to the success of CUSAF implementation.

A new law passed in January 2024 which may become a significant challenge for FOLUR, or it may present an opportunity to promote environmentally sustainable production despite this policy constraint. Law N° 31973, which is implemented by MIDAGRI, modifies the current Forestry Law and promotes the implementation of private property titles for producers. This stands in direct contrast to CUSAF, and its many critics do not consider the law an environmentally sustainable option. FOLUR will have to find its path to promote and ensure the implementation of CUSAF as a key instrument to securing market access for smallholder farmers of cocoa and coffee, while at the same time avoiding conflict and reducing interference from this new law's implementation through MIDAGRI.

2.3 Performance and Results

The CFI project achieved its objective of piloting approaches for improved governance of coastal fisheries and marine areas and building capacity among various stakeholders at the local and regional levels. The project was not designed to produce any results at the national level and missed opportunities to pursue greater global results through binational coordination.

- Activities in Piura were focused primarily on biodiversity and environmental conservation, without explicit attention to the interaction of those activities with food systems. Key results included the development of management plans for three Sechura, Talara and Paita bays; recognition of the Estuario de Virrilá as a Ramsar site and support in the establishment of the Environmental Conservation Area Balcones; development of management plans for two Ramsar sites (Estuario de Virrilá and Manglares de Vice); and strengthening of SERNANP and management committees of protected areas, bay areas and Ramsar sites through capacity building and support with coordination. There was a missed opportunity to strengthen monitoring and surveillance within the protected areas; such activities were not included in the management plans and the

municipality did not allocate any funding to the voluntary park rangers association in Estuario de Virrilá.

- In Tumbes, the project focused on implementing and promoting sustainable fisheries practices, specifically among extractors of crab and black mussel from the SNLMT, which is also a Ramsar site. Results include the strengthening of the Consortium Mangroves of the Northwest of Peru (CONMANOPE, a group of six fishers' and extractors' organizations that is in charge of executing the contract of administration of the SNLMT); strengthening of multi-actor spaces, such as a mesa técnica of benthonic resources and the technical committee of the SNLMT; the implementation of community-supported practices of monitoring and surveillance in the SNLMT; and progress with the repopulation of crab and black mussel in the SNLMT. Interviewees highlighted the importance of the improved monitoring and surveillance, which led to better compliance with extraction bans and minimum sizes and reporting of unusual occurrences (e.g., entry of unregistered fishermen, or the felling of mangroves). There was also consensus that black mussel density increased from before CFI to after the repopulation efforts, with most interviewees citing reports[6] from IMARPE, which annually monitors the population density of different species of benthonic resources. Some interviewees credited the improved monitoring and surveillance for the increased density while noting that climate factors (e.g., ingress of freshwater and sediment in years with the occurrence of "El Niño" events) remain a barrier to greater density. There is also a lack of information related to pathological agents that can affect the populations of natural banks. The research firm Incabiotec S.A.C. also continues to use knowledge gained under CFI to continue strengthening their black mussel and crab repopulation efforts today. The project also worked with SERNANP and the Regional Directorate of Production (DIREPRO) to strengthen capacity to administer the fisheries and implemented a small plant for processing crab and shrimp for distribution in the national market. The results in Tumbes have contributed to livelihoods impacts for the local population, including sustained or increased income for black mussel extractors due to the repopulation efforts, employees of the processing plant, and ecotourism operators in the protected area.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the project introduced activities to mitigate the economic impacts on the local population, including the implementation of UNICAs with a seed capital of USD 1,000 each. The UNICAs established by CFI in both Piura and Tumbes have become so popular that they grew substantially in number, members, and capital. For example, an interviewee mentioned that the UNICAs in Tumbes have increased from 12 to 17, and many of them are managing tens of thousands of dollars by now. Funds from the UNICAs are used to repair fishery equipment (e.g., boats, motors, fishing nets), establish additional sources of income (e.g., small stores, food stands), and attend to family emergencies (e.g., illness). In Piura, CFI has also worked with women's cooperatives, with a focus on generating additional family income, for example, to overcome the slow season of fishing. The processing plant in Tumbes was also implemented in response to the pandemic, as a means of decreasing the pressure that was on the extractors and, consequently, the SNLMT. Furthermore, CFI promoted and facilitated the digitalization and modernization of public institutions in both regions, in particular, DIREPRO, through capacity building as well as by providing equipment.

- The project generated limited results for women, as that their participation was mostly through UNICAs. Only one woman participated in the fisheries activities with CONMANOPE, and the project did not achieve targets for women reached through regional government capacity building efforts. Nonetheless, the project achieved more than 200% of its target for the number of women achieving better conditions of economic autonomy (i.e., via UNICAs), after participating in knowledge transfer processes (393 achieved; 129 target).

Some of the results achieved by CFI can be replicated and scaled, although there is limited evidence of scaling so far. For example, there is potential to scale the black mussel repopulation, marine-coastal spatial planning, and UNICAs. According to one interviewee, MINAM continues to work on and generate knowledge about marine-coastal planning in many places along the Peruvian coast. However, it is still an incipient process and progress is slow. On the other hand, the aforementioned project BAF: Mar 2025 continues to support the implementation of management plans for protected areas, capacity building for fishermen's organizations, and supporting UNICAs in Tumbes, Piura, and a third region, Ica.

Adaptive management and flexibility in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and political instability were central to achieving results in the CFI project. CFI showed great adaptability in the context of COVID-19; instead of being paralyzed due to the extreme unforeseen events, the project found ways to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on project beneficiaries and partners, continued to work closely with the public sector and was able to keep up progress towards project results. Unrelated to the pandemic, CFI also demonstrated flexibility when reallocating funding that was not sufficiently used in Piura to Tumbes**,** as well as in adapting to the frequent changes in key positions of public institutions. In Piura, multiple people passed through the position that was established as the main point of contact with CFI, and each time a new person took over, there was a period of adjustment and learning that slowed down implementation.

FOLUR is not yet reporting results because implementation did not begin in earnest until 2024. GEF CEO Endorsement for FOLUR was in 2021, but the PRODOC was not signed until 2023 and the Project Management Unit was established in 2024 (see Efficiency). MINAM began to implement the project through the NIM whereby it assumed full leadership of the project, with UNDP focused on oversight. Startup activities are ongoing, but there are doubts about how to proceed. MINAM and UNDP are now considering transitioning the project to a supported NIM, whereby the project management unit and all administrative responsibility would sit within UNDP.

All three child projects engage or plan to engage different types of private sector, resulting in different advantages and challenges. CFI partnered with a private research firm, Incabiotec, to improve processes for black mussel production and reproduction in a lab environment, with the goal of repopulating the SNLMT and its buffer zone. CFI stakeholders report positive experiences through the collaboration due to shared interest in generating innovative scientific knowledge about an important environmental topic, and Incabiotec's existing relationship with CONMANOPE based on previous repopulation efforts.

Meanwhile, FOLUR and FSIP project designs rely on engaging the private sector to strengthen sustainable value chains by establishing purchasing agreements with national and international commodity buyers and deploying sustainable finance instruments for smallholder producers and regional governments facilitated by financial institutions. Yet, key informants shared the view that the success of this approach may be constrained by MINAM's perception that the private sector's interests are fundamentally different from its own. To date, only one meeting has been held with a private sector buyer, which resulted in the establishment of a work plan to promote collaboration agreements to coordinate activities for the benefit of producers. This contact was established through personal relationships between staff working on the project and at the buying firm. To date, the global program has not yet provided support to the child project in making these value chain connections. The FOLUR project team is also struggling to identify

financial institution partners due to their limited presence in the target landscapes. Although they focus on different value chains, MINAM has an opportunity to use learning from FOLUR about engaging with commodity buyers and financial institutions to strengthen the design and implementation of FSIP.

YLL, implemented by a private firm, takes a different approach by targeting private businesses that aim to transform the agriculture, forestry, and other land use (AFOLU) sector through innovative technology. The project began implementation in 2024 and plans to begin reporting on results in 2025. To date, there is no evidence that lessons from the YLL experience are being sought or used to inform FOLUR or FSIP.

2.4 Programmatic Value Addition

MINAM and GEF Agency staff involved in FOLUR and FSIP generally perceive participation in global programs valuable, though benefits and costs are limited. Staff report improved project design and implementation through guidelines, trainings, and knowledge sharing events, and they value opportunities for South-South knowledge exchange. The voluntary nature and minimal time requirements for global program activities keep participation costs low for country actors. One stakeholder emphasized that benefits of the global program depend on the country's ownership and efforts invested in the relationship with the global program.

Not all country stakeholders are benefitting equally from the global programs. While MINAM has engaged with the global program, other government actors involved in CPs, like MIDAGRI and regional governments, have had little contact with or awareness of the global programs. Engaging these actors could build capacity and foster coordination across sectors and levels of government. Stakeholders also pointed to a potential missed opportunity for the FSIP global program to add value to the Peru CP during project design. Regenerative livestock farming is new in Peru and mostly applied on a smaller scale through NGO-led projects. FAO introduced this innovative practice in the CP proposal, and MINAM and MIDAGRI were both initially skeptical of the approach. Participation in the Regional Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation in Uruguay in 2024 may have helped increase the government's familiarity with the concept, but due to poor communication, Peru did not send a delegation to the conference. FAO's Livestock Environmental Assessment and Performance Partnership (LEAP) is working with FSIP to explore collaboration and strategies tailored to the LAC region's unique needs, including through this conference.[7]

Participation in the global program added limited value to the CFI child project in Peru due to misalignment with the global project timeline and limited collaboration with Ecuador. CFI-LA was approved in 2016, a year before the global program and other child projects. Also, global project implementation was delayed by two years. CFI-LA was expected to pilot the Fisheries Performance Assessment Instrument (FPAI), a key monitoring and evaluation tool developed by the global program for social, economic, and environmental assessments of fisheries. However, due to implementation delays, the tool was not completed in time for the project to pilot it. Nonetheless, CFI-LA, having started earlier, served as a learning example for representatives from other countries during a knowledge exchange visit to Tumbes. Lessons learned related to project governance, black mussel repopulation, women's participation in productive processes, monitoring and surveillance mechanisms, and fishermen's involvement in supervision and oversight of fishing activities. CFI-LA also had a unique opportunity for cross-border learning and collaboration as a binational project, but strong linkages between Peru and Ecuador were lacking.

Being a standalone project did not appear to create any challenges or drawbacks for YLL. This is likely because it was a private sector project and the YLL is a global network, so there are in-house resources and a high level of efficiency that wouldn't exist in a public sector project.

2.5 Efficiency

The original FOLUR project design included three GEF Agencies sharing implementation responsibilities, leading to inefficiencies in design and startup. MINAM encouraged GEF Agencies to submit project proposals together and selected one prepared by UNDP, FAO, and IFAD. Project design was a lengthy and complicated process due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased political instability in Peru, but also due to the difficulties that the three agencies faced in agreeing on methodologies, vision, and concepts. Despite obtaining CEO Endorsement in 2021, the PRODOC was not signed until two years later in 2023. This was due to delays by UNDP in translating the PRODOC into Spanish and revising its Social and Environmental Screening Procedure, and by MINAM in signing the translated PRODOC due to staff turnover. In 2023, after signing the PRODOC, the implementation arrangements were revised to remove IFAD and FAO as implementing agencies. This led to substantial revisions of the PRODOC, including the results framework and budget, delaying the start of activities until 2024. Some Government and Agency stakeholders perceive the resulting project document as complex, with unclear roles and responsibilities, which may further hinder efficient implementation.

3.Summary of main findings and emerging lessons

- **Systems thinking design.** Projects focus primarily on the production element of food systems, while seeking to address multiple environmental, social, and governance barriers. Yet, comprehensively addressing these barriers and implementing an integrated approach is proving challenging. Projects consistently identify the root causes and barriers for food systems challenges, but vary in the extent to which activities are designed to address these challenges. In CFI, a lack of integration across approaches within Peru and with Ecuador led to missing an opportunity to generate greater environmental and socioeconomic results. FOLUR is also struggling to implement its integrated approach due to the complexity of navigating environmentally and culturally diverse regions, although this is being managed by identifying the most appropriate intervention strategies for each of the six landscapes. While FOLUR and FSIP seek to build private sector partnerships to connect producers to other value chain elements, FOLUR is already facing some challenges in this regard. MINAM is struggling to engage private commodity buyers due to the perception of differing interests and the limited presence of financial institutions in target landscapes. A key lesson may be that to implement a systems thinking approach, child projects need to expand their focus beyond production to encompass other parts of food systems and ensure that activities are designed to work together in a way that can maximize impact without making implementation overly complicated.
- **Multi-stakeholder engagement.** Collaboration among government agencies with relevant responsibilities is critical for transforming food systems, but has been challenging and limited in GEF projects in Peru. Stakeholders express initial confusion about whether GEF food systems projects are “agriculture/livestock” or “environmental” projects. Ultimately, MINAM has taken a leading role in GEF projects while other national government ministries responsible for agriculture, livestock, and production have had more limited engagement during project design, which may limit the transformative potential of GEF projects.

- **Gender and inclusion.** Project designs have tended to focus on parts of the value chain (production) where women are traditionally not involved, although FOLUR has a stronger opportunity to benefit women due to their existing involvement in coffee and cocoa production. FOLUR plans to focus on promoting women's leadership and financial inclusion, while FSIP seeks to increase women's participation in production. Projects have not focused on consumption or nutrition, elements of the food system where women are key decision-makers. Still, women experienced socioeconomic and resiliency benefits through the UNICAs under CFI. FOLUR is the only project with specific efforts to meaningfully engage Indigenous People in its activities.
- **Policy alignment and coherence.** Project documents assert alignment with key national policies, although interviews paint a more nuanced picture. For example, the FSIP CN suggests that the MINAM-led project will support MIDAGRI's Roadmap for Sustainable Food Systems in Peru, although key informants could not identify meaningful linkages. Through FOLUR, MINAM is helping to implement policies within MIDAGRI's jurisdiction, such as advancing the CUSAF mechanism and supporting a new regulation for agroforestry extension services. However, FOLUR is now facing challenges due to emerging policy misalignment. A new law modifying the Forestry Law and promoting private property titles poses a challenge to successfully implementing CUSAF and securing market access for smallholder farmers.
- **Results.** CFI successfully delivered on its objective to demonstrate improved governance of coastal fisheries and marine areas but impact was tempered by the lack of integration in activities across sub-regions and countries. Results in Piura and Tumbes were separate, but notable. In Piura, the project strengthened management of protected areas to generate conservation impacts, while in Tumbes, results included enhanced governance of fisheries in the SLNMT and advancement of the repopulation of black mussels. The COVID-19 response measures also introduced socioeconomic benefits in both regions. The project missed a key opportunity to address illegal fishing activities at the Peru-Ecuador border, as there was no interaction between relevant authorities in the two countries to address the issue.
- **Programmatic value addition.** MINAM and GEF Agency country staff find participation in global programs valuable for strengthening design and implementation and sharing learning across countries, although not all country stakeholders have yet benefitted, such as MIDAGRI. FOLUR stakeholders praised the voluntary opportunities to benefit from global program guidelines, trainings, and knowledge sharing. The CFI project in Peru saw limited value from the global program due to the misaligned timeline of the global child project, which especially impacted the piloting of a tool to evaluate environmental, social, and economic performance of the target fisheries. Despite this, Tumbes served as a learning example for other CFI projects.
- **Efficiency.** MINAM initially accepted a proposal for FOLUR led by three GEF Agencies, but coordination and agreement between them proved difficult, delaying project design and implementation. The decision to move to one Agency during implementation required significant revisions to the PRODOC, causing even further delay. Despite the efficiency gains resulting from having only one GEF Agency involved, implementation remains slow due to unclear roles and responsibilities, including for key government actors like MIDAGRI.

Annex 1: Number of Stakeholders Interviewed

No.	Category	Total	Men	Women
1	**Public Sector, National**	10	5	5
2	**Public Sector, Regional and Local**	12	9	3
3	**GEF Agencies**	5	2	3
4	**Private Sector**	7	5	2
5	**Producers' Organizations and Cooperatives**	5	2	3
6	**NGO and Academia**	4	3	1
	Total	**43**	**26**	**17**

Annex 2: Project Sites Visited

Below are descriptions of project site visits conducted during a fieldwork mission from December 17 to December 20, 2024.

Site Visit #1			
Site Name	Environmental Conservation Area and Ramsar Site "Estuario de Virrilá"	**Date of Site Visit**	12/18/24
Region	Piura	**Geo-Coordinates**	05°50'S 80°49'W
GEF FS Project	Coastal Fisheries Initiative Latin America (CFI-LA)		
Description of the Intervention	The Estuario de Virrilá has been recognized as an Environmental Conservation Area (ACA) since 2015. ACAs are managed by the local governments, in this case, the Municipality of Sechura. It preserves a sample of the Sechura Desert ecoregion and has a high ecological value, given that it is considered a "stopover" for migratory birds that may eventually facilitate the establishment of permanent populations. It is one of the key sites for birds on the South American Pacific migratory route.[8] One of the main contributions of the CFI-LA project in Piura was the support to get the Estuario de Virrilá recognized as a Ramsar Site in 2021. The project also implemented a series of large signs with information about the site, which can help visitors avoid damage to the environment and understand the importance of the site. CFI-LA also supported the ACA's Management Committee, which consists of representatives of the local public sector, private companies and representatives of civil society, and helped in preparing the estuary's management plan.		
Photos			Photo 1: Estuario de Virrilá, landscape recognized as a Ramsar Site.

		Photo 2: Signs displaying information about the Estuario de Virrilá, put in place by CFI-LA.
		Photo 3: Voluntary Park Rangers' Organization at Estuario de Virrilá; the project missed an opportunity to provide financial support to this important and un-funded group

Site Visit #2			
Site Name	National Sanctuary Mangroves of Tumbes	**Date of Site Visit**	12/20/24
Region	Tumbes	**Geo-Coordinates**	03°25'S 80°17'W
GEF FS Project	CFI-LA		
Description of the Intervention	The Tumbes Mangroves National Sanctuary has an area of 2,972 hectares, located in the far north of Peru on the border with Ecuador. It is the only protected natural area in Peru that preserves the mangrove ecosystem (approximately 60% of all mangroves in the country). It is an important area for migratory shorebirds as a feeding and resting site. In addition, the site is a key habitat for economically important crustaceans and mollusks: these play a critical role in the socioeconomic system of the population that lives around the mangrove.[9] CFI-LA had multiple important interventions and results in relation to the mangroves: • Improved monitoring and surveillance of the extraction of crab and black mussels by SERNANP and CONMANOPE • Applied scientific investigation to reproduce black mussels in the Incabiotec lab and repopulation activities in the Sanctuary with involvement from CONMANOPE. • Strengthening of key actors (SERNANP, CONMANOPE, DIREPRO). • Strengthening of governance and multi-actor spaces for dialogue (management committee of the Sanctuary, technical table of benthic resources). • Implementation of a primary processing plant for crab extracted from the Sanctuary and shrimp produced in its buffer zone.		

Photos		Photo 4: *Ucides occidentalis*, crab extracted from the Manglar de Tumbes
		Photo 5: Crab extractor in his boat in the Manglar de Tumbes
		Photo 6: Isla Chalaquera, an island within the Manglar de Tumbes where repopulation efforts with crab and black mussels are made
		Photo 7: Informative sign about COVID-19 protocols

Rice production in Kilombero valley

Annex 12: Tanzania Country Case Study

Acronyms

CCRO	Certificate of customary right of occupancy
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CRDB	Cooperative and Rural Development Bank
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FOLUR	Food, Land Use, and Restoration
FSIP	Food Systems Integrated Program
FST	Food Systems Transformation
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GEB	Global Environmental Benefits
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICRAF	World Forestry
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILM	Integrated Landscape Management
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LAC	Landscape Advisory Committee
LDFS	Land Degradation and Food Security (RFS GEF-6 project)
MSP	Multi-stakeholder platform
NLUPC	National Land Use and Planning Commission
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PIR	Project implementation report
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
ProDoc	Project (Design) Document
RFS	Resilient Food Systems
SAGCOT	Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
TBD	To be done / determined
VLUP	Village Land Use Plan
VPO	Vice President's Office
WWF-US	World Wildlife Fund – United States

1. Introduction

This Tanzania case study is part of the Evaluation of Global Environment Facility (GEF) Food Systems Programs. This evaluation seeks to assess the quality of design and achievement of results of food systems programs in GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8, as well as to evaluate how the GEF has adapted to changing contexts and incorporated lessons learned into the design of later programs. The global evaluation covers three GEF-6 programs (Resilient Food Systems [RFS], Coastal Fisheries Initiative [CFI], and Good Growth Partnership [GGP]), one GEF-7 program (Food, Land Use, and Restoration [FOLUR] Impact Program), and one GEF-8 program (Food Systems Integrated Program [FSIP]). The evaluation scope also includes standalone country and regional projects focused on food systems from GEF-6 through GEF-8 that were identified by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) using a keyword search.

Country case studies are a key component of the evaluation, intending to help:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the outcomes resulting from GEF food systems interventions and the explanatory factors for and sustainability of these changes;
- Understand how the GEF integrated programs' approach to food systems has evolved at the country level by assessing the similarities and differences between projects from each replenishment cycle and capturing links and interconnection; and
- Collect the perspectives of local communities affected by GEF interventions.

Tanzania was one of four case study countries selected purposively by the GEF IEO. Case study countries were selected based on their having food systems program child projects from all three GEF replenishment cycles included in the scope of the evaluation. Other factors considered include maturity of projects and variation across regions, GEF Agencies, and sectors targeted.

1.1 Methodology

This Tanzania case study used a systems thinking approach that was guided by the global evaluation's theoretical framework for understanding food systems that integrates GEF concepts with relevant literature to identify the drivers, actors, parts, and outcomes of a given system. The case study sought to answer thirteen overarching evaluation questions pertaining to design, relevance and coherence, performance and results, value addition, and efficiency of GEF food systems programming (Annex 4).

The case study used mixed methods to extract robust and credible findings, including desk reviews of project and program documents, virtual and in-person interviews, and direct observation through site visits. The case study team conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to develop an initial list of key informants, then used a snowballing approach to identify additional key informants through interviews with representatives of the national and local Government of Tanzania, GEF Agencies, and project staff (see Annex 1 for a full list).

The case study evaluation team visited sites in Tanzania associated with the following projects: RFS Land Degradation and Food Security (LDFS) project and FOLUR project (GEF ID 9132 and GEF ID 10262) (see Annex 2).

Key limitations faced during the study included the limited time available for exploring the relevant sites and organizations involved (especially in the FOLUR project) and the early phase of FOLUR project implementation. For instance, the mission was not able to encounter private sector and civil society actors as few agreements have been signed so far and no major activities have started, and it would have been difficult to identify and make arrangements with the most relevant organizations during the time available

during the field mission. Another limitation was the unavailability of the Terminal Evaluation for the LDFS project which is expected to be ready later in early 2025.

1.2 Scope

Tanzania was selected for a case study due to the existence of child projects from GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8 food systems programs and its geographic location to represent the Eastern and Southern Africa region in the evaluation. Table 1 below shows the three projects in Tanzania included in this case study.

Evolution and status of projects. The RFS GEF-6 Land Degradation and Food Security (LDFS) project concluded in November 2024 after almost 7 years of implementation. Meanwhile, the GEF-7 FOLUR project became effective in July 2024 following nearly seven years of planning, design, and consultations, which began in November 2017, as outlined in the FOLUR Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The FOLUR project Steering Committee approved the Annual Work Plan in 2024, and the project is now finalizing the recruitment of its national and landscape coordinators. The FSIP GEF-8 project on Food Systems Transformation (FST) is expected to submit the first draft of its design report to GEF for CEO endorsement in March 2024.

Project documentation. Apart from interviews and field visits during the evaluation team mission, this report drew on several design and implementation documents of the three projects. For **LDFS** this included the project MTR and the latest Project Implementation Reports (PIR) of 2023 and 2024, the IFAD project design report and information from the RFS early formative, mid-term and terminal evaluations. The LDFS terminal project evaluation is expected to be completed by end-March 2024. The main documents for the **FOLUR** project on 'Food systems, land use and restoration in Tanzania's forest landscapes' were the WWF-GEF Project Document (ProDoc) of July 2021, the Operational Manual of July 2023 and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (not dated, but likely to be from 2020/21). Basic design information for the **FST** is currently found in the early Concept Note in the FSIP program framework document.

Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar island. All GEF projects cover both the Tanzania mainland and the island of Zanzibar, two separate political entities that are constitutionally joined in one State through their Union. Both entities have separate (and different) systems of political, administrative and customary governance.

The LDFS covered 5 districts, 4 of them in the North-Eastern region of Tanzania, plus 1 in Zanzibar, while FOLUR plans to work in two landscapes. One is the large Kilombero valley in central Tanzania, where FOLUR selected 3 districts for special attention; and one is the North Unguja landscape in Zanzibar where 2 districts are covered. Similarly, the FST decided to expand its work from the initially chosen landscape in the Southern Highlands (Usangu) to include a second landscape in Zanzibar.

Table 1. Overview of projects included in case study

GEF ID	Project Name	GEF Agency	FS Program	Project Status	Target Food System
9132	Food-IAP; Reversing Land Degradation Trends and Increasing Food Security in Degraded Ecosystems of Semi-arid Areas of Central Tanzania	IFAD	FS-IAP / RFS	Completed	Semi-arid drylands, no specific commodity. Mainly maize as the staple crop
10262	Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration in Tanzania's Forest Landscapes	WWF-US	FOLUR	Under implementation since July 2024	Rice
11230	Food Systems Transformation in Usangu Landscape[1]	FAO	FSIP	Under design	Rice, livestock and aquaculture

2. Findings

2.1 Design

2.1.1 Systems Thinking

All three projects applied extensive systems thinking in their design. The **RFS LDFS** project drew on the GEF Project Framework Document for the Resilient Food Systems program, which guided its overall approach and components. It also benefited from being implemented by IFAD, which later became the lead agency of the RFS. However, the LDFS project was, from the outset, less ambitious in terms of value chain development and policy engagement than other RFS child projects, according to the RFS Terminal Evaluation.

The **FOLUR project** underwent a long design process, during which the design notably shifted from an initial focus on forest sustainability to a broader integrated agricultural landscape approach, aligning with the FOLUR global program. Its participatory and well-documented design process resulted in a comprehensive and coherent project document, with detailed attention to the rice value chain—particularly in the Kilombero landscape, a large and rapidly expanding rice production zone in central Tanzania. Recent population growth in the area has contributed to growing environmental pressures and land-use conflicts. The project design covers a wide range of food systems elements, either through direct interventions or through planned partnerships.

The **FST project**, still under design, is drawing on FAO's experience in previous GEF food systems and drylands initiatives. In many respects, it aims to build upon and align with the comprehensive FOLUR approach. The mainland landscape targeted by the FST in southern Tanzania (Usangu) is more densely populated and affected by severe land degradation and persistent water allocation conflicts. This context highlights the need for better integration of livestock and aquaculture into rice-based production systems.

While GEF food systems projects in Tanzania share strong thematic similarities, they also display important differences, particularly in scope and ambition. Table 2, illustrates the intensity of coverage of various food systems dimensions across the three projects, including the most important project activities. All three projects—LDFS (GEF-6), FOLUR (GEF-7), and FST (GEF-8, still at concept stage)—prioritize land use planning, the promotion of environmentally and climate-sensitive agricultural practices, and the protection or restoration of areas with high conservation value (although this last aspect is not yet fully elaborated in the FST concept note). However, the projects differ notably in their commodity focus and corresponding ambitions in value chain development. LDFS did not prioritize value chains or specific commodities. In contrast, FOLUR places strong emphasis on the rice value chain (see for instance the schematic presentation of the Tanzania rice value chain in the Annex), and FST further expands this scope by including livestock and aquaculture as priority commodities.

Policy engagement, multi-stakeholder platforms, and food systems financing feature far more prominently in FOLUR and FST than in LDFS. The FST concept note even dedicates one of its three components to developing improved financing models, products, and services for its priority commodities, consistent with the FSIP program design. While FOLUR focuses on the vertical integration of rice value chains within an Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) framework, FST adopts a broader landscape-level integration across rice, livestock, aquaculture, and forest systems. Both FOLUR and FST also allocate dedicated resources for regional and global engagement. Importantly, land use planning

beyond the village level—such as district or zonal planning—is more prominent in FOLUR and FST, although it had also been envisioned in LDFS but was not successfully implemented. Strengthening landscape governance to support ILM is a key objective in the newer projects.

All three projects face challenges in managing their broad scope across the food systems spectrum relative to available resources. LDFS narrowed its food system focus and geographic coverage. FOLUR, while more ambitious in partnerships and policy influence, limits fieldwork to selected districts and villages. The FST project, even at the concept stage, is already considering reducing the number of villages it covers (from the initially planned 28) or scaling back activities in some locations to ensure feasibility of coverage of multiple value chains.

Projects also differ in their ambitions and co-finance. For instance, the FOLUR project aims to achieve GEB that are far above those of LDFS, especially for land under improved agricultural practices (1.2 million vs. 6,000 hectares), at a similar GEF budget (Table Annex 1), A planned co-financed investment project for FOLUR by Korea operates only in Zanzibar.

Table 2. Coverage of food systems dimensions by GEF projects in Tanzania

Food systems dimension	RFS LDFS (9132)	FOLUR (10262)	FSIP FST (11230)
Value chain			
Production *(ag. services, infrastructure, inputs)*	Ag. extension and inputs, ag. alternative IGA	SRI Public and private ag. infrastructure investments	Sustainable rice, livestock and aquaculture production and related services
Storage *(post-production)*		Yes, as part of FOLUR partnerships /PPP	Tbd
Processing	Honey, rice and sea-weed in selected districts	Investments by farmers / women (rice milling)	tbd
Aggregation Farmer market access Grading, standards (market/consumer demand, eco-criteria)	Dairy/milk aggregation in one district (in the context of the project exit strategy)	Rice grading Yes, as part of FOLUR partnerships /PPP	tbd
Links to food consumption – regional and global value chains		Demand for rice and learning on SRI	Information exchange
Core system			
Natural resources access Land use and landscape planning and management Land tenure	Village land use planning	Village land use and landscape planning and governance Land tenure assessment	Village land use and landscape planning and governance
Policies and regulations	Village land use planning policy : pilot-testing expanded applications	Strengthened policy coherence and regulations	Strengthened policy coherence and regulations
Finance and private investments		Finance for ag. and environm. investments at all levels (as part of FOLUR partnerships/PPP)	Develop financial products and services at all levels (partnerships /PPP)
Knowledge / extension / capacities	Ag. extension, women's and NRM committees' capacities	MSP for information exchange, PS business opportunities and models	tbd
Natural elements			
Land	Soil fertility management	(See above under NR access)	Tbd
Water	Soil, land and water management; Water use for livestock	Multiple-user water management	Integrated water management across producers of rice, livestock, and aquaculture

Forests, wetlands (HCV)	Village HCV areas	Village HCV and landscape conservation ares; governance	tbd

Key: Darker shades of green indicate more intensive coverage, lighter green indicates less intensive coverage, white signifies areas not covered, and grey indicates aspects that remain uncertain at this stage

2.1.2 Learning

GEF food systems projects in Tanzania informed future GEF programs—although active exchange among GEF projects in the country was limited. The main interactions were between the FST and the FOLUR project, and mainly at the level of the FAO country office and external project design teams. The FST project coordinator in the Vice-President's Office (VPO) was aware of the earlier LDFS project—also coordinated by the VPO—but was unfamiliar with the FOLUR project, which is under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT). The FAO country office reportedly drew valuable lessons from FOLUR's approach to ILM, and one FAO staff member participated in the FOLUR Global Platform meeting in Hanoi in October 2024, accompanied by a representative from the Tanzania Ministry of Agriculture. This exposure deepened understanding of rice system integration with aquaculture, sustainable rice platforms, and the transition from subsistence to commercially-oriented rice production.

The FOLUR project placed more emphasis on building upon lessons from past interventions in Tanzania's rice sector, notably the introduction of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI),[2] rather than lessons from the LDFS, which did not specialize on rice (FOLUR ProDoc, p. 119). The FOLUR project design recognized that scaling up SRI would require more than technical training alone, highlighting integration and the importance of comprehensive support, including strong technical assistance and bundled financial services—such as access to credit and crop insurance—as critical for successful adoption. The FOLUR project design document also outlines plans to collaborate further with other projects in the future through its Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs), including the LDFS project, the parallel GEF-7 Drylands Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program project in Tanzania (with which initial discussions had taken place), and two other stand-alone GEF projects.[3]

2.1.3 Gender and Social Inclusion

The LDFS and FOLUR projects both integrated gender considerations in their design but differed significantly in their depth, structure, and focus. While the LDFS project emphasized community-driven tools and household-level empowerment, the FOLUR project adopted a more structured and comprehensive approach, particularly in integrating women into formal decision-making, land use planning, and value chains. The FOLUR project also took a more proactive stance in anticipating and mitigating risks linked to shifting gender dynamics, an area less developed in the LDFS design. As the FAO FST project is still at the concept note stage, many gender considerations have yet to be fully developed. While some aspects are mentioned, they lack the depth and specificity seen in the LDFS and FOLUR projects.

Both the LDFS and FOLUR projects included ***gender and social inclusion analyses*** in their design, although they varied in detail and emphasis. Each identified gender gaps, integrated measures to enhance women's roles in agriculture and resource management, and included strategies to improve women's participation in value chains. The LDFS placed stronger emphasis on community-driven tools like the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to promote social change and empower women at the household and community levels. In contrast, the FOLUR project prioritized integrating women into formal land use planning processes and improving their financial access.

Women's roles in food systems, spanning production, processing, and marketing, were recognized and supported in both projects. Each provided training to improve women's technical and management skills

and promoted income-generating activities. The LDFS project emphasized small-scale, household-focused initiatives such as food crop farming and goat-rearing, while the FOLUR project placed greater focus on women's roles in broader landscape management and value chains.

Both project designs acknowledged the importance of ***consulting women, women's groups, and marginalized communities***, though the extent and structure of these consultations varied. Efforts to align activities with women's needs were evident in both cases, particularly regarding food production and income generation. The FOLUR project adopted a more structured and deliberate approach, emphasizing inclusive planning for landscape management and governance. The LDFS project maintained a stronger focus on household and productive activities.

Efforts to ***target women in project activities***, enhancing their participation in agriculture and improving their socio-economic benefits featured in both projects, with a focus on productive activities, capacity-building, and targeted livelihood support. However, the LDFS project lacked explicit measures to strengthen women's control over natural resources or their participation in household decision-making. By contrast, the FOLUR project adopted a more comprehensive gender approach, promoting women's involvement in decision-making, strengthening their control over resources (e.g., via land use planning), and enhancing their roles in governance structures and value chains.

While both projects integrated gender considerations, the FOLUR project presented a clearer and more comprehensive ***gender mainstreaming strategy***. Its design outlines defined gender objectives linked to project outcomes and emphasizes women's roles in decision-making, resource management, and enterprise development, while also identifying risks linked to gender inequality. The LDFS project, in contrast, relied more on targeted activities than on a structured, overarching gender mainstreaming strategy.

The two projects differed significantly in their attention to ***risks linked to shifting gender dynamics***. The FOLUR project anticipated potential resistance or conflict from increased women's participation in decision-making and resource control and outlined mitigation measures. The LDFS project did not clearly assess how such changes could impact traditional roles or result in unintended gender-related consequences.

2.2 Relevance and Coherence

2.2.1 Policy alignment

GEF food systems projects in Tanzania have demonstrated strong alignment with national development goals and policy priorities in agriculture, environment, and climate change. All projects underwent official vetting by the President's Office – Planning and Investment, which ensures coherence with overarching frameworks like the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, the Third Five-Year Development Plan (2021–2026), and other key sectoral and cross-cutting policies. The Vice President's Office (VPO), as the primary governmental institution responsible for environmental management, plays a central role in coordinating these policies with GEF priorities. The GEF operational focal point, who is part of the VPO, further ensures that projects reflect both national needs and global environmental objectives.

GEF project design documents reference and align with a comprehensive suite of sector-specific policies and strategies. These include the Agricultural Sector Development Programme II (ASDP II, 2017–2028), which guides broader agricultural transformation, and the National Rice Development Strategy III (2019–2030), which is especially relevant to projects focused on rice value chains like FOLUR and FST. On the environmental side, key frameworks include the National Environment Policy (2021) and the National Environmental Master Plan for Strategic Interventions (2022–2032), both of which emphasize integrated

landscape management and climate resilience. The projects also link to cross-cutting plans such as the Climate Smart Agriculture Programme (2015–2025) and Tanzania's Nationally Determined Contributions (2021) under the Paris Agreement.

In addition, projects were shaped through extensive stakeholder consultations at national, district, and community levels that support alignment. For example, the FOLUR project's participatory design process was formally documented in its Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Line ministries and government institutions played an active role in project design and implementation, reinforcing alignment with public sector priorities.

2.2.2 Policy coherence between agricultural and environmental objectives

GEF-supported food systems projects operate in a Tanzanian policy context that has evolved since the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, particularly through the development of a National Roadmap for Sustainable Food Systems Transformation and the National Environmental Master Plan for Strategic Interventions (2022–2032). These frameworks signal a growing commitment to environmentally sustainable food systems.

Policy coherence between agricultural production and environmental sustainability remains limited—particularly in policy implementation—while several incentives continue to be misaligned. While environmental sustainability is recognized as a priority, ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Livestock tend to dominate the policy and implementation space, with their strong focus on increasing agricultural production, achieving food sovereignty, and promoting exports—notably in rice and livestock sectors. This emphasis often overshadows environmental goals. The FOLUR project document explicitly highlights key challenges (ProDoc p. 26/27). Tanzania lacks a conducive policy and regulatory framework that links agricultural growth with environmental safeguards. For instance, while there are strategies to boost rice production, corresponding environmental standards to ensure sustainable intensification are largely absent. The absence of clear incentives from national or regional markets to pursue sustainability further weakens policy alignment. As a result, agricultural implementation strategies often diverge from natural resource management goals. Overlapping mandates and gaps between central government and local (district) authorities contribute to fragmented planning and implementation. This leads to conflicting interests and undermines coherence in developing sustainable value chains and food systems.

For instance, the current pricing mechanisms for domestic and irrigation water use in the project's target landscapes do not reflect the true environmental costs of managing, conserving, and restoring water catchments (ProDoc p. 26/27). Many users are unregistered and access water at no cost, creating incentives for overuse and mismanagement. Prices are also not aligned across agencies. This misalignment hinders long-term sustainability and landscape-level water governance. In FOLUR's Kilombero landscape, the Rufiji Water Basin Board, mandated to oversee water use and issue permits, face major enforcement challenges due to widespread informal irrigation schemes, inadequate monitoring infrastructure, and illegal withdrawals. The FOLUR project aims to address these gaps by promoting better alignment between land use planning and water management. The FAO FST concept note also acknowledges policy misalignments and includes activities under Component 1 to align the Government's subsidy policies with broader food systems sustainability. This includes a stronger emphasis on supporting mechanization, organic nutrients, and biological pest control, rather than relying on inorganic fertilizers and pesticides. It also involves strengthening and aligning coordination and planning frameworks at the landscape level, along with the development of an integrated environmental management information system. FAO plans to recruit a competent NGO to pursue these objectives.

There is currently no clear institutional lead for coordinating Tanzania's food systems agenda. While the Ministry of Agriculture convenes the national multi-stakeholder platform, concerns have been raised about its ability to address environmental issues impartially due to its production-focused mandate. This has led to calls for a more neutral, cross-cutting coordinating body, potentially under the Prime Minister's Office. Although plans exist to establish an agricultural transformation office, its future institutional home remains undecided. Two of the three GEF projects (LDFS and FST) are implemented by the Vice President's Office, while FOLUR is led by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. The selection of the executing government agency was based on its institutional and technical capacity and expertise in relation to the specific objectives of each project and program. Decisions were also informed by the need to ensure a fair distribution of projects among government agencies with comparable competencies. In all cases, it remains uncertain how effectively these institutions can influence the Ministry of Agriculture to help align incentives.

2.2.3 Interaction with government and donor initiatives

All three projects recognize the importance of working with broader initiatives, but FOLUR stands out for its deliberate and structured integration strategy, followed by FST's planned partnerships. Given their relatively limited funding, GEF food systems projects are expected to play a catalytic role by leveraging existing and planned government and donor-funded initiatives. This is essential to scale up interventions and achieve their intended Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs), particularly across entire landscapes. Among the three projects, FOLUR and the FAO FST project clearly reflect this ambition in their design, while the LDFS project had only limited engagement.

FOLUR places significant emphasis on collaboration with past and ongoing initiatives. It explicitly builds on experience from the World Bank-supported *Expanding Rice Production Project* and intends to align with a Korean-funded rice irrigation project in Zanzibar. In its mainland landscape, FOLUR aims to partner with Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) initiatives to catalyze socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable value chain investments—particularly from the private sector—and with related efforts such as IUCN's SUSTAIN Africa and the Development Corridors Partnership. The project also plans to work with Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI), the Agricultural Seed Agency (ASA). These collaborations are particularly important for FOLUR's planned two **Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs)**—key mechanisms to drive synergy and alignment at landscape level, and to raise funds for public and private investments.

The **FAO FST** project, still at the concept stage, also envisions strong alignment with other government and GEF-supported projects. It plans to link with GEF-7 initiatives such as the *Drylands Impact Program* and the *Integrated Adaptation Program for Dry Miombo and Zanzibar Drylands*. Notably, FST is seen as a pilot to inform a proposed $200 million Green Climate Fund initiative, highlighting FAO's strategic intent to mobilize broader financing for transformative change. Beyond GEF partnerships, FST seeks to engage with regional platforms like the East Africa Grain Council, SAGCOT PPP, the Global Dairy Platform, and Southern Africa Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. In contrast, the **LDFS project** had limited interaction with other initiatives. Its originally planned co-financing did not materialize, narrowing its operational scope. While it collaborated with FAO on technical training through Farmer Field Schools, broader linkages with donor or government programmes remained minimal.

2.2.4 Strengthening Coordination and Coherence Through Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

FOLUR aims to overcome the fragmentation in institutional and planning frameworks by creating multi-stakeholder platforms for sustainable land and water management. The FOLUR project recognizes the

persistent fragmentation across institutional and planning frameworks as a key obstacle to sustainable land and water management. To overcome this, it places strong emphasis on establishing structured, inclusive, and well-supported multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs). These platforms—a first in the Kilombero landscape and subsequently in Zanzibar— are intended to align the diverse interests of actors across agriculture and environmental sectors, harmonize planning processes, and move from fragmented strategies toward more coherent, actionable implementation.

The Kilombero Valley exemplifies the complexity of the institutional environment for sustainable rice intensification. A multitude of institutions and committees—such as the National Land Use Planning Commission (NLUPC), Rufiji Basin Water Board, SAGCOT Secretariat, and District and Village Land Use Committees—operate across various levels. Several overlapping landscape plans exist, including the draft District Land Use Framework Plan and the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Plan for the Rufiji Basin. Despite this institutional density, coordination remains limited, interests are not adequately negotiated, and many plans lack implementation due to constrained authority, technical capacity, and financial resources (FOLUR ProDoc p. 27-31). The project identifies this disconnect as a key barrier to achieving integrated land management (ILM) and sustainable value chain development. It further notes that these challenges extend to Zanzibar, where landscape-level coordination is made more difficult by the absence of a comprehensive land and water management strategy.

The MSPs are designed as a cornerstone of FOLUR's strategy to overcome coordination gaps, but their effectiveness will ultimately depend on their ability to move beyond dialogue toward generating the right incentives for public and private stakeholders, enforceable action and accountability. These inclusive, action-oriented platforms aim to improve coordination, facilitate joint planning, and mobilize investments across sectors. In Kilombero, the MSP has already been formed—supported by NLUPC, SAGCOT, and district authorities—and is functioning as a Landscape Advisory Committee (LAC). It brings together a wide range of stakeholders from national and local government agencies, academia, private sector actors, and civil society, including institutions such as WWF, Kilombero Plantations, and local rice processors. The platform is expected to meet quarterly to monitor progress and guide implementation. A similar MSP is now under development in Zanzibar, drawing on lessons from Kilombero. In both regions, the platforms aim to institutionalize commitments through compacts signed by Regional Administrative Secretaries to ensure shared accountability. While these MSPs offer strong potential for fostering integrated governance, several stakeholders have raised concerns about their limited authority. Without formal enforcement powers, there is a risk that these bodies may remain primarily consultative rather than driving implementation. Nonetheless, they are seen as critical vehicles for building cross-sectoral dialogue, aligning fragmented planning efforts, improving public and private investments through better information and the right incentives, and advancing FOLUR's integrated landscape management approach.

2.3 Performance and Results

2.3.1 Performance and results in the GEF-6 LDFS project

The LDFS project faced initial challenges that influenced its overall trajectory and performance, but ultimately achieved GEBs that surpassed initial targets. Originally designed to be part of an IFAD baseline project that did not materialize, the LDFS experienced a delayed start-up, which constrained early progress. Implementation was slow during the initial phase with less than 20 per cent disbursed at mid-term, but performance improved over time as project delivery became more effective. Gradual improvements elevated the project's implementation ratings from moderately unsatisfactory to satisfactory in the end, reflecting enhanced management and strengthened engagement with beneficiaries. Despite these gains, lingering challenges remained, particularly in ensuring consistent

support by limitations in technical project staffing, procurement, and monitoring. Climate-related events, including floods and droughts, further affected progress. At completion, overall achievement of development objectives was moderately satisfactory.

Despite these challenges, the project achieved notable GEBs. Preliminary figures show that the project more than doubled its target for protected and managed conservation areas, achieving 9,289 hectares (GEF core indicator 3). It also implemented sustainable agricultural practices across 7,583 hectares of productive landscapes, exceeding its target by over 25 percent (GEF core indicator 4.3). The project nearly doubled its intended greenhouse gas reduction outcome, at 1,099,647 tons of CO_2 equivalent, reflecting the successful adoption of climate-smart practices and improved land management. In addition, the project reached 15,106 beneficiaries, surpassing the target of 12,991, highlighting effective community engagement.

Enhanced soil and planting techniques: improved and non-improved maize fields

Mixed farming (livestock/crops) in Kondoa District

The LDFS contributed meaningfully to environmental management through improved land use planning, sustainable agricultural practices and forest protection and restoration. Village Land Use Plans (VLUPs) legally clarified land tenure in more than 20 villages, particularly for village forest reserves, reducing conflict and enhancing environmental protection. However, these new plans largely mirrored previous land use patterns, reflecting limited incentives for major adjustments in land designation without accompanying infrastructure investments or compensatory measures that would be required if land use were significantly changed. Efforts to establish effective land use committees beyond village level to improve NRM at a broader landscape level faced challenges. Limited community interest and diverging priorities across villages hindered the establishment of these committees, ultimately reducing the project's effectiveness in landscape-level planning.

The project introduced sustainable agricultural practices that improved yields and strengthened environmental sustainability, with farmer field schools playing a key role. Techniques such as ridging, improved soil fertility management, water retention methods, line planting, and intercropping were promoted to address soil degradation and enhance productivity. By project completion, nearly 6,300 farmers—45% women and 43% youth—had adopted these practices. Farmers reported significant production gains, with maize yields tripling or more for those adopting improved practices, and cassava yields doubling when intercropped with legumes. Despite these successes, some farmers faced adoption challenges due to labor intensity and reliance on manure. Overall, 4,000 households reported increased production (PIR 2024). In addition to promoting improved agricultural practices, the project supported the rehabilitation and construction of earth dams, micro-irrigation systems, and dip tanks across several

districts. As these interventions were completed late in the project cycle, their outcomes are yet to be reported.

Beyond the immediate project area, improved practices reportedly spread to neighboring communities, contributing to broader environmental and income benefits. This wider adoption reflects effective knowledge-sharing efforts, including expanded extension services, informative briefs and publications, and visits by high-ranking government officials, highlighting the project's potential to promote sustainable practices at scale.

Gully control through gabions and plants in water run-off area

Demarcation stone in village high conservation value (HCV) area

The LDFS prioritized forest protection through improved land demarcation, strengthened community natural resource management, and income-generating activities. Clarifying village forest reserve boundaries reduced encroachment risks and promoted sustainable forest use, while contributing to habitat conservation and biodiversity gains. To support conservation efforts, the project distributed beehives to provide alternative income sources while encouraging forest guardianship. Communities were also empowered to enforce bylaws and patrol forest reserves. Additional measures included gully control and beautification efforts aimed at promoting tourism. However, villagers observed that erosion control structures were already showing signs of being insufficient within a year, due to heavy siltation, highlighting the need for reinforcement, scaling up, and continuous management and oversight.

The project successfully introduced several income-generating initiatives to reduce reliance on forest damaging practices, especially charcoal production. In Kondoa district, the dairy initiative initially provided 24 dairy cows to targeted households, which have since grown into a herd of 80 animals. Despite early challenges with water supply and veterinary services, the initiative has delivered positive results. As dairy farmers primarily sell surplus milk within the village, this limits the full utilization of the new milk collection center's 1,000-liter capacity, prompting efforts by the project to increase milk production and strengthen market linkages through its exit strategy. In another district, the project supported the procurement of 150 goats to diversify incomes and improve household resilience. Goat-rearing, requiring less intensive management, proved particularly valuable for vulnerable households. Additionally, the development of collection and processing facilities for rice, honey, and seaweed (the latter in Zanzibar) enhanced local value chains and improved market access for agricultural products.

Gender was actively mainstreamed throughout the project, with women participating significantly in training on improved agricultural practices, crop production, and business and leadership skills. Women also played a key role in goat-rearing activities, creating new income opportunities. Approximately 40% of project beneficiaries, or around 7,200 women, actively participated in various interventions. While these efforts contributed to strengthening women's roles in productive sectors, available data does not yet provide clear evidence of broader empowerment outcomes, such as increased decision-making roles

or improved control over resources. These aspects may be addressed in the upcoming terminal evaluation.

While Village Land Use Planning (VLUP) is a well-established and important tool in Tanzania, GEF projects such as FOLUR and LDFS reveal that its full potential is only realized when extended beyond individual villages to address broader, cross-boundary landscape challenges. Achieving this requires moving from fragmented, community-level planning to more coordinated, resource-backed approaches at district and ecosystem levels. Land use planning plays a central role in GEF food systems projects in Tanzania, especially in promoting ILM and improving environmental governance. It is a well-established government priority, with the National Land Use Planning Commission estimating that around 40 per cent of villages have some form of VLUP. These plans are crucial for clarifying land tenure—often through Certificates of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCROs)—reducing conflicts, and enhancing environmental protection. However, extending planning from village to broader landscape levels remains a major challenge.

A notable contribution of GEF projects, particularly FOLUR and LDFS, has been their support to complete the later stages (V–VI) of VLUPs, which focus on formalizing land rights and land management. These stages are vital for legal tenure security, reducing encroachment, and encouraging investment. While VLUPs offer strong legitimacy and promote community ownership, they are often spatially narrow and fail to account for shared ecosystems and upstream–downstream linkages. This limits their effectiveness in managing forests, rivers, or catchment areas that span multiple communities. They also often fail to adequately reflect the interests—and underlying conflicts with sedentary communities—of migratory pastoralists that have traditionally used large tracts of land in central and southern Tanzania for livestock grazing. Inter-village or zonal planning efforts have seen limited progress due to fragmented interests, low incentives, and weak implementation capacity. Many plans also remain unimplemented due to enforcement and funding gaps.

Experience from LDFS and FOLUR underscores the need to move beyond village-level efforts and pursue integrated land and water management at district or landscape scales. The FAO FST project reinforces this by linking upland degradation to downstream siltation in rice fields and identifying broader land use planning as a strategic priority. Yet such planning is costly, technically complex, and often constrained by institutional fragmentation. Barriers include aligning interests across villages, establishing compensation mechanisms for land use changes, and developing cohesive investment strategies. Ultimately, scaling land use planning for environmental and agricultural goals requires stronger inter-village coordination, integration with sectoral planning, and robust resource mobilization.

2.3.2 Private sector engagement

Private sector engagement has significantly evolved across the GEF food systems projects in Tanzania, moving from relatively limited roles in GEF-6 (LDFS) to an approach in GEF-7 (FOLUR) that aims to engage the private sector as co-investors and governance partners. In LDFS, private sector actors were mainly service providers—input suppliers or contractors—with some emerging support to dairy value chains toward the end of the project. By contrast, the FOLUR project places private sector engagement at the core of its strategy to develop sustainable rice value chains and foster integrated landscape management. FOLUR stands out for its explicit private sector engagement strategy, detailed in its GEF CEO endorsement document. It recognizes that scaling up sustainable rice intensification and achieving long-term environmental goals hinges on the active participation of value chain actors and financial service providers. The private sector is broadly defined—from landowners, traders, millers, and retailers to financial institutions and ecotourism operators—but the emphasis lies on engaging downstream value chain actors and those facilitating investments.

Key mechanisms planned for private sector engagement include:

- Participation of private actors in Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) in both Kilombero and Zanzibar for joint planning, dialogue, and investment mobilization.
- Direct collaboration with the Rice Council of Tanzania and SAGCOT Secretariat to identify investment opportunities and design public-private partnership agreements.
- Formal agreements between public, private, and civil society actors to coordinate and support sustainable rice development.
- Development of guidelines, standards, and training packages for public and private value chain actors, drawing on international best practices for sustainable rice production.
- Opportunities analyses to identify viable private sector investments in sustainable rice value chains, backed by clear business cases.
- Engagement in landscape restoration and formulation of fiscal or financial incentive schemes, co-designed with private actors through inclusive consultations.

The Kilombero landscape presents both opportunities and challenges. The rice value chain is fragmented, with weak coordination, poor infrastructure, and limited access to credit, insurance, and reliable input supply systems. While structures like the Tanzania Investment Center and SAGCOT offer platforms for engagement, a coherent framework for private sector collaboration is still being built. FOLUR's strategy aims to close these gaps by demonstrating the economic and environmental viability of more integrated, sustainable production systems.

The FAO FST project, still in its early design stage (GEF-8), plans to build on FOLUR's approach. It seeks to attract investors, particularly through collaboration with institutions like the commercial CRDB Bank, which already handles a US$ 70 million non-sovereign GCF loan, to support smart agricultural mechanization and climate-resilient agriculture. However, specific mechanisms are yet to be defined.

2.4 Value Addition

The programmatic approach was seen as timely, relevant, and beneficial in Tanzania, offering advantages in project scope, knowledge exchange, and technical support for planning. The GEF's food systems programmatic approach was widely viewed in Tanzania as timely and relevant, aligning with broader global trends that emphasize food systems transformation, such as the UN's 2021 Food Systems Summit. Tanzanian officials valued the programmatic approach for its broader focus on environmental sustainability and production systems. They noted its advantage in addressing watershed and landscape-level challenges while also incorporating income-generation elements.[4] Additionally, project members and government officials highlighted the benefits of participating in international knowledge-sharing platforms, such as the 2024 FOLUR global exchange meetings in Hanoi (Vietnam), where insights on rice systems from Asia were found particularly relevant and useful for the FOLUR and FST project that heavily focus on the rice sector.

The programmatic approach also provided a more structured and coherent planning process compared to stand-alone projects. Especially FOLUR and FST benefited from robust technical design support from global teams put together by Implementing Agencies and GEF, ensuring aligned project designs and improved synergy between programme country projects.

FAO's experience highlights both strengths and challenges of the programmatic approach, drawing on lessons from the Tanzania project in the GEF Drylands Impact Program implemented by FAO. While GEF stand-alone projects, such as several livestock projects FAO is working on, can offer a more targeted focus,

programmatic approaches add value by adopting a broader landscape and value chain perspective. They also foster knowledge exchange, enhance technical inputs, and strengthen collaboration between countries. FAO emphasized that insights gained through the FSIP network improved the FST project design and introduced valuable expertise on financial instruments through IFAD, reinforcing the value of the programmatic model.

The three projects demonstrated varying levels of engagement with global platforms and budget allocations, with FOLUR standing out for its detailed and structured approach. All three projects — LDFS, FOLUR, and FST —actively engaged or plan to engage with the global platforms. The FOLUR project stands out for its more detailed and deliberate approach to engaging with the global platform compared to the LDFS project. FOLUR outlines clear strategies for leveraging global and regional knowledge-sharing opportunities in a separate section of the Project Document that is also related to a distinct project output (output 4.1.3, p. 67-69). For example, the project plans to actively participate in the Global FOLUR Community of Practice and contribute to regional commodity platform gatherings, annual meetings, and training workshops. It also intends to share its planned policy reviews on improved land tenure and water governance, as well as on opportunities for sustainable rice value chain investments and landscape financing mechanisms in Tanzania. In contrast, the LDFS project expressed more general intentions to exchange knowledge and lessons with other country projects. The FST project, still at the concept stage, has expressed its intent to establish linkages with the FSIP global platform and other relevant networks once its design advances.

The LDFS project engaged actively in knowledge-sharing activities through the RFS hub-project. This included participating in annual workshops, virtual learning events, and contributing significantly to various RFS knowledge products, such as on sustainable agricultural practices and village land use planning. The project also collaborated with ICRAF, the coordinating agency of the RFS coordination project, to measure land degradation trends using the Land Degradation Surveillance Framework, providing valuable baseline data. However, due to expired funding, no follow-up assessments are currently planned under LDFS. Despite this, the project's participation in the hub project's knowledge-sharing activities definitely contributed to enhanced learning and insights according to project staff.

Budget allocations to participate in programmatic activities varied across the three projects. The LDFS project had no dedicated budget for engagement with the RFS hub-project, while the FOLUR project allocated funding for participation in regional learning events and exchange visits with other countries. The FST project intends to allocate funds to engage with the FSIP global platform once its design progresses.

2.5 Efficiency

Project delays and efficiency challenges were evident across the LDFS and FOLUR projects, influenced by a mix of administrative hurdles and the projects' complex, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder nature. While both projects faced delays, the extent to which these delays were directly linked to their ambitious design and integrated approach is difficult to determine.[5] The LDFS project experienced moderate delays in becoming effective, but was delayed more strongly during its early stages of implementation. These delays were partly linked to uncertainties surrounding the IFAD baseline project, which affected implementation arrangements, further delays came from the project's multi-sectoral nature. Negotiating and formalizing agreements (MoUs) with multiple ministries, government agencies, and districts required considerable time, reflecting the complexity of coordinating across diverse stakeholders.

The FOLUR project faced significant delays, requiring nearly five years to finalize its design and an additional two years to become effective and fully operational. Several factors contributed to this:

- The shift in project focus from a primarily forest-related intervention in its early conception (prior to becoming a FOLUR child project) to a broader integrated landscape approach in FOLUR required time and added complexity.
- The project's ambitious, integrated, and multi-stakeholder approach generated extensive discussions among stakeholders and government authorities, particularly regarding its main objectives and focus, implementation arrangements and budget concerns.
- Administrative delays were also significant, including slow communication between ministries, protracted processes for establishing project accounts, and finance transfer delays between the central government and local authorities. Coordination challenges between Tanzanian mainland and Zanzibar Government authorities further complicated matters.

While the programmatic and integrated nature of the projects undoubtedly added complexity and extended timelines, the precise extent of their impact is difficult to isolate from more routine administrative and bureaucratic delays, plus the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Project insiders noted that persistent uncertainties about implementation arrangements and repeated demands for clarification further contributed to the slow start. Despite these challenges, the participatory nature of FOLUR's design and the efforts to align multiple stakeholders were seen as crucial for ensuring future buy-in and effective execution.

3. Summary of findings and emerging lessons

Lesson 1 – Aligning agricultural and environmental objectives requires incentives, dialogue, and enforcement

While all three GEF projects align well with Tanzania's national development goals, achieving coherence between agricultural production, food sovereignty and export goals, and environmental sustainability remains an ongoing challenge. Government strategies strongly prioritize expanding food production and exports, while environmental objectives—although being strongly championed by GEF-executing agencies within the Government (VPO and MNRT)—receive less operational support. Addressing this trade-off requires effective negotiation, clear incentives, and robust enforcement mechanisms. The later projects, especially FOLUR, place greater emphasis on multistakeholder platforms (MSPs) as spaces for dialogue, joint planning, and policy alignment. However, success hinges on these platforms being more than consultative forums; they must enable real accountability, attract public and private investment, and generate sustained buy-in from influential actors like the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock.

Lesson 2 – Clarifying the catalytic role of GEF projects Is crucial for realistic scaling and transformational change

GEF food systems projects are expected to catalyze transformational change, yet their limited budgets and broad ambitions require sharper clarity on how and where this catalytic effect occurs. LDFS, FOLUR, and FST all apply extensive systems thinking, but FOLUR and FST stand out for their more sophisticated programmatic design. Even so, they must better articulate and monitor with clear indicators how high-level plans translate into action at field and results at institutional levels, such as through MSPs. In practice, these projects function as pilots that strongly rely on co-financing, private sector investment, and policy uptake to deliver results at scale. The central question remains: how to bridge the gap between

national policy ambitions and community-level adoption, especially given slow and resource-intensive behavior change processes. Moving beyond box-ticking, projects must focus their M&E and KM systems on tracking real system shifts, including how for instance MSPs contribute, and scalable, self-sustaining models.

Lesson 3 – Village land use planning Is foundational but must be embedded in broader landscape-level strategies

Participatory Village Land Use Planning (VLUP) has proven to be a useful and legitimate tool for clarifying land tenure, reducing local conflicts, and raising awareness of conservation needs. LDFS in particular made notable progress in advancing land use planning to later stages involving CCRO issuance and by-laws for compliance. However, VLUPs are inherently limited in spatial scope and often fail to address inter-village dynamics, shared ecosystems, or landscape-level pressures, for instance from pastoral migrants. Attempts to coordinate across villages have largely stalled due to institutional fragmentation, limited incentives for villagers, and capacity gaps. FOLUR and FST recognize these limitations and now place greater emphasis on landscape governance, integrated land and water planning, and linking VLUPs with higher-level strategies.

Lesson 4 – Regenerative and climate-smart agriculture requires long-term support and market pull

All projects sought or seek to promote regenerative and climate-smart agricultural practices through demonstrations and training. While localized success was reported in the completed LDFS project — especially in maize and cassava yield improvements—broad adoption remains slow and constrained by labor intensity, financial resource needs, and weak extension systems. Integrating such practices into the mandates of Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock, and ensuring they are backed by political will, policy reform, and market demand, is essential. GEF projects can contribute through piloting and learning, but lasting transformation requires coordinated investment in input supply systems, extension services, market development, and incentive structures.

Lesson 5 – Project efficiency is undermined by complex designs and administrative processes

Delays in project effectiveness and implementation have been a recurring issue, especially for LDFS and FOLUR. These stem from a mix of administrative hurdles, lengthy design processes, and the inherent complexity of multi-sectoral, multi-level project structures. In several cases, implementation teams struggled with unclear mandates, overlapping responsibilities, and uncertainties about what was expected on the ground. While programmatic designs offer opportunities for alignment and knowledge exchange, they require clearer prioritization and division of labor—especially when working across ecologies, food systems, and institutional settings. As a senior project manager observed, the challenge lies in identifying critical, value-adding entry points without overextending or losing sight of practical delivery.

Lesson 6 – Private sector engagement has evolved significantly but needs structured implementation support

Private sector roles have evolved from peripheral (as in LDFS) to strategic partners in FOLUR and FST, where they are expected to co-invest and contribute to sustainable value chain development and mobilization of finance. FOLUR has made notable progress, with a dedicated private sector engagement strategy, planned activities such as business opportunity analyses in rice, information exchange and training for all value chain actors, and collaboration with the Rice Council of Tanzania and SAGCOT, as the main promoting organization for the private sector in key FOLUR landscapes. Still, challenges remain in turning these plans into operational partnerships, especially in fragmented value chains and

underdeveloped rural financial markets. Future success will depend on aligning commercial incentives with sustainability objectives, and delivering tangible benefits to private actors willing to take risks.

Annex 1: List of Interviewees

Organization	Sample size
Government High Level	
Vice-President's Office (VPO)	2
National Land Use Planning Commission	3
LDFS	
LDFS Project Coordination Unit (VPO)	3
LDFS IFAD Country Office	3
Kondoa District LDFS Execution	5
Kondoa District Beneficiaries and Frontline Workers	18
FOLUR	
Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT)	3
Kilomberi District FOLUR Execution	7
Kilomberi District Beneficiaries and Frontline Workers	5
FOLUR WWF-US Project Focal Point	1
FSIP	
VPO and FAO Country Office	2
Total	29

Annex 2: Project Sites Visited

Below are descriptions of project site visits conducted during a fieldwork mission from Feb. 10 to Feb. 14, 2025.

Site Visit #1			
Site Name	Haubi and Mafai villages	**Date of Site Visit**	Feb. 11, 2025
Region	Kondoa District, Tanzania	**Geo-Coordinates**	-4.834628, 35.985282

RFS LDFS project - Observations from the GEF evaluation team's field visit to Kondoa District

During the first field visit of the mission, the team visited the district headquarters of the RFS LDFS project in Kondoa (Bukulu office) and met with district representatives, followed by meetings with farmers and other project beneficiaries in the two neighbouring villages of Mafai and Haubi that are supported by LDFS in this district. The villages traditionally grow maize, sunflowers and other crops. The site has a sizeable village forest reserve on village lands and is surrounded by national forests (please see maps, Figure Annex 1-3).

The two villages visited face significant environmental and socio-economic challenges. Severe land degradation, compounded by soil erosion from occasional heavy rains, has impacted agricultural productivity. Permanent cultivation practices, combined with inadequate soil conservation measures such as ridging, have further exacerbated erosion risks. The villages comprise approximately 1,400 households,

with an average household size of 5 to 6 members, highlighting the need for sustainable agricultural practices and natural resource management to support the community's long-term resilience and food security.

The field visit to Kondoa focused on four key project aspects: enhanced sustainable agricultural productivity, improved livestock production as an alternative income generating activity, village land use planning, and forest protection/restoration. The following summarizes key observations and insights from the visit.

Two improved agricultural technologies were observed: *Mbegu Tisa* and *Jembe la Mzambia* for maize production. Both offered better crop performance than traditional practices, yet each had distinct trade-offs. *Mbegu Tisa* delivered higher yields but required more labor and manure for its elaborate, multi-year soil preparation and planting in pods, limiting its use on larger plots and by families with less access to labor. *Jembe la Mzambia* was less demanding and is mostly used in drier areas. The technique mostly focuses on deeper tillage and mulching for soil and nutrient improvements and water retention as well as planting in rows, but produced lower yields. Both methods relied heavily on manure, underscoring the need for integrated livestock farming to sustain their application. Despite improved productivity, the labor intensity and resource demands restricted widespread adoption. In addition to these methods, the team learnt that many farmers had adopted crop diversification strategies to reduce reliance on maize. Some introduced drought-tolerant crops to mitigate climate risks. Others planted napier and elephant grass in between fields to reduce erosion and improve feed production for their animals.

Dairy production emerged as a viable and new income source with project support, reducing former reliance on unsustainable charcoal production. The initial distribution of 24 cows has grown to a herd of approximately 80 animals, indicating positive adoption rates. The initiative provided families with both milk for home consumption and surplus milk for sale. However, milk production in the village remains insufficient to fully utilize the milk collection center's 1,000-liter capacity, limiting broader market expansion. The project is currently looking for ways to put this project investment to work, among others through linking up with an NGO to facilitate sales outside of the village. Farmers also reported challenges with feed and water access for cattle and a lack of veterinary services, highlighting the need for improved support structures such as para-veterinary training and additional pasture farms to ensure long-term sustainability. The project supported the installation of boreholes and water tanks to improve the village's water supply. However, the handover to the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA) needs to be expedited to enable the installation of pipelines that will deliver water directly to dairy livestock keepers, reducing the current burden of transporting water over long distances.

The village land use planning process facilitated improved land demarcation and issuance of land titles (CCRO), yet it brought limited change to actual land use practices due to minimal investment in land improvements. The village land use management committee (VLUM) play an important role in enforcing bylaws, establishing penalties for unauthorized trespassers and protecting designated land through patrols and other ways. While some villages successfully adopted new land use planning strategies, others resisted due to concerns over land reallocation during the process. Land demarcation has improved legal clarity, particularly for forest reserves on village lands, but the resulting land use maps show minimal differences from the original plans (Figures Annex 2 and 3). This is largely because, in the absence of significant pending infrastructure projects or compensation for changes in land use, there is limited motivation among villagers and planners to introduce adjustments. The absence of printed maps displaying land use zones – apart from the booklet available at the village center – limited community members' understanding of the designated zones. This lack of visual guidance may affect awareness and compliance with the land use plan. Moreover, the project was unable to establish inter-village land use committees as planned to enhance natural resource management across village boundaries at a broader

landscape level. This was due to limited interest among villagers and conflicting views between different communities.

Forest protection efforts included active community involvement through land use planning, by-law enforcement, and alternative income-generating activities such as beekeeping. The beekeeping group effectively leveraged modern hives, resulting in improved honey yields and access to markets in Arusha and beyond. Forest restoration efforts focused on erosion control using gabions; however, some structures and biological measures were observed to be reaching their capacity already after one year, raising concerns about long-term effectiveness and maintenance.

Key Observations and Conclusions

The field visit highlighted several important points:

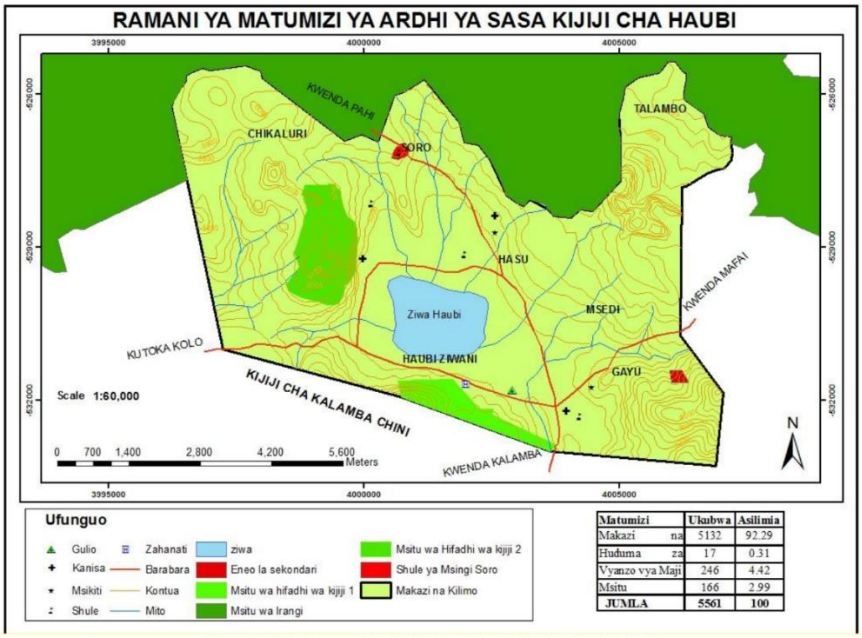
- **Land Use Planning as a Foundation:** While land use planning provided a strong foundation for improved resource management, its impact on driving new land use practices remains limited without additional investments in infrastructure and services.
- **Integration of Livestock and Crop Production:** The interdependence between improved crop methods and manure supply demonstrated the importance of integrating livestock and agriculture for sustainable productivity gains.
- **Dairy Production Potential:** While the dairy initiative showed promising growth, unresolved issues such as water scarcity, limited veterinary services, and underutilized milk collection facilities require attention to unlock its full potential.
- **Forest Protection Through Livelihoods:** The combination of by-law enforcement and alternative livelihoods such as beekeeping proved effective in promoting environmental conservation. However, ongoing maintenance of erosion control measures will require improved funding and oversight.

Figure Annex 1 – Map of Mafai and Haubi villages in Kondoa district

Source: Google maps

Figure Annex 2 – Existing land use prior to Village Land Use Planning Haubi village

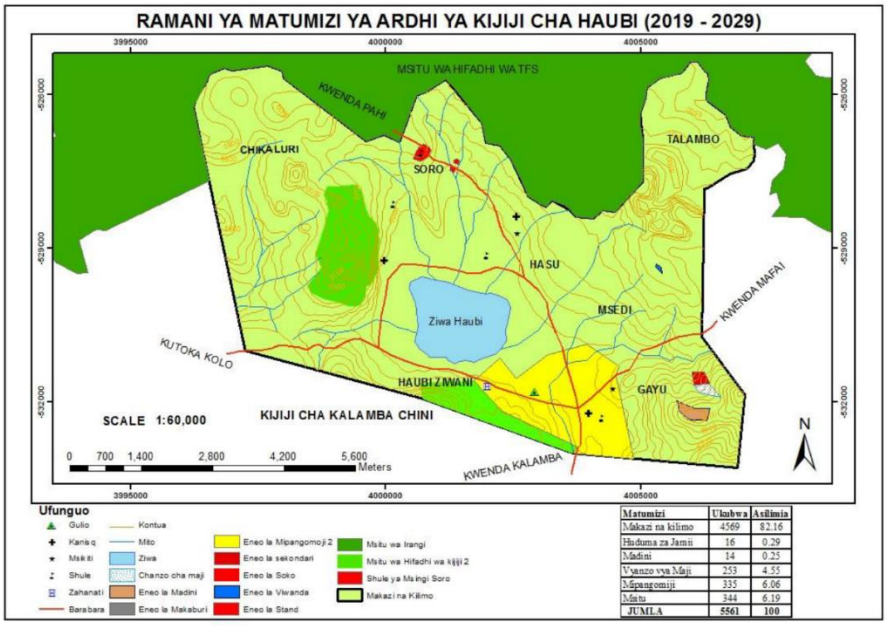
Ramani 12: Matumizi ya sasa ya ardhi katika kijiji cha Haubi



Chanzo: Tathmini shirikishi kijiji cha Haubi Aprili, 2019.

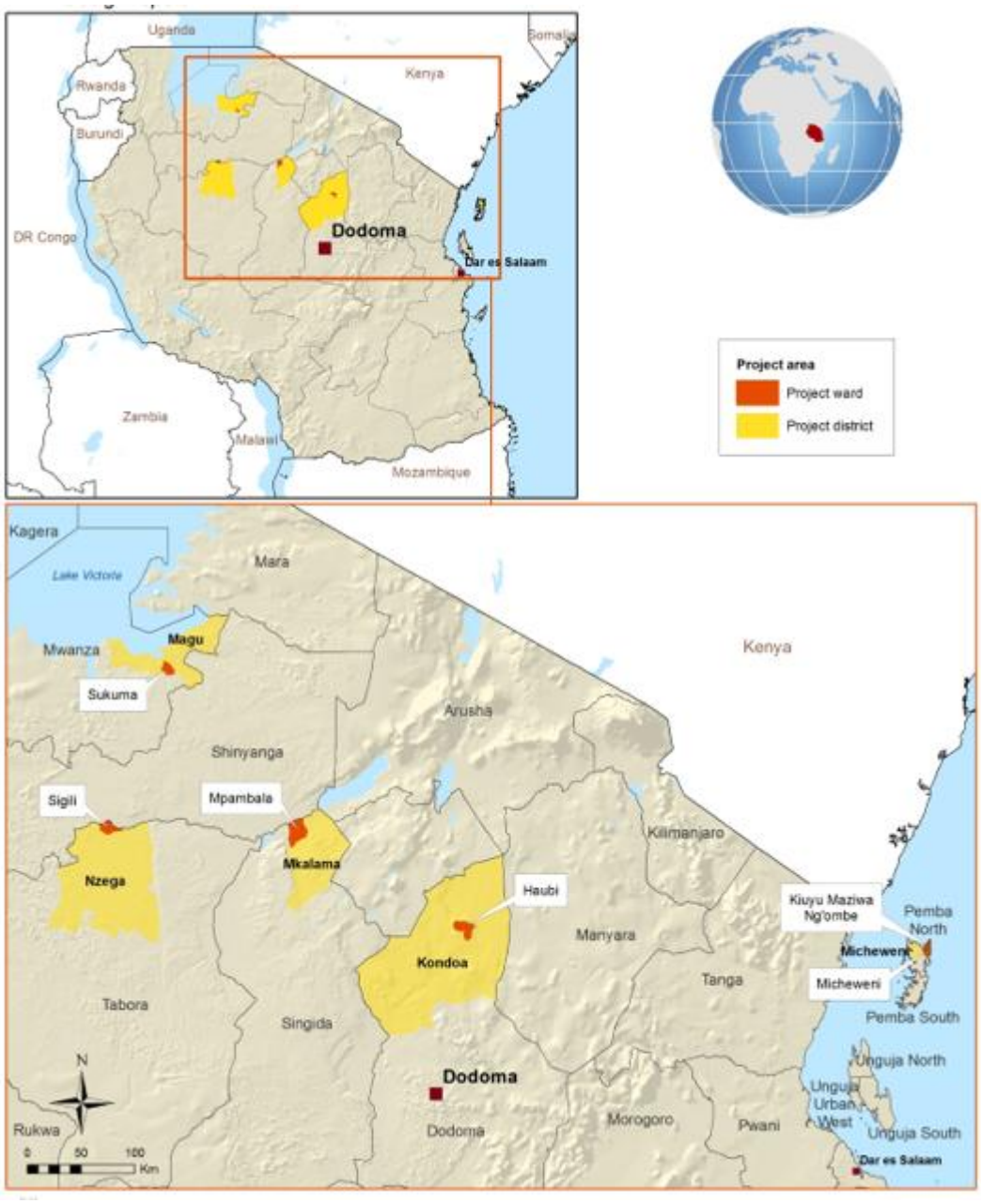
Figure Annex 3 – Land use after Village Land Use Planning Haubi village

Ramani 13: Mpango wa Matumizi bora ya ardhi 2019 – 2029



Chanzo: Taathmini shirikishi Kijiji cha Haubi April, 2019.

Figure Annex 4 – Map of LDFS project districts and project wards



Source: FDFS PDR

Site Visit #2			
Site Name	Ikule village	**Date of Site Visit**	Feb. 13, 2025
Region	Mlimba District, Kilombero	**Geo-Coordinates**	-8.412403, 36.012038

FOLUR project - Observations from the GEF evaluation team's field visit to Mlimba District and Ikule village (Kilombero landscape)

Mlimba District is located within the Kilombero Valley, a fertile area historically used for fishing but increasingly targeted for major investments in rice production and other agricultural activities. The area has seen an influx of settlers over recent years, contributing to rising land pressure. The district is characterized by environmental challenges, including encroachment into forest reserves and disruptions to wildlife movement corridors.

The FOLUR Kilombero landscape project operates in this area, focusing on improving agricultural productivity while promoting environmental sustainability. The project office is still under construction, and project implementation is gradually being rolled out. Key activities are coordinated through the district council, with funds channeled via the council and other implementing stakeholders.

The field visit included discussions at the district headquarters, a visit to a 200-hectare traditional irrigation scheme, and an assessment of a village forest reserve. During the visit, stakeholders described challenges such as limited land use planning across village boundaries and the need for improved environmental protection strategies.

Multi-Stakeholder Platforms and Land Use Planning

The FOLUR project aims to foster collaboration and coordination through Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs). While an MSP has been formed in Mlimba District, it has yet to convene for its first meeting. Once fully operational, the MSP will provide a platform to align project activities, encourage dialogue, and ensure shared responsibility among stakeholders. Participants will sign a compact to formalize their engagement and accountability within the platform.

The project's land use planning approach is primarily village-based, in accordance with Tanzania's Village Land Act. While this system provides villages with autonomy over land management, it also limits the scope for coordinated planning across multiple villages — a key challenge in managing large landscapes like Kilombero Valley. Organizations such as IUCN and AWF have advocated for broader landscape planning, but implementation has faced difficulties. Limited land evaluation data and weak resource assessment frameworks further constrain evidence-based decision-making, making it difficult to align land management with environmental protection goals.

The MSP is expected to provide a space for dialogue on improving these issues by promoting collaboration among government entities, private sector actors, and civil society organizations. The platform could also address practical issues such as improving communication between villages and district authorities to strengthen local governance structures.

Sustainable Rice Intensification and Environmental Considerations

The field visit highlighted efforts to improve rice productivity through Sustainable Rice Intensification (SRI). Farmers in the area have begun adopting improved practices, including transplanting seedlings at optimal spacing rather than broadcasting seeds, and using improved rice varieties and fertilizers. These changes have resulted in a substantial increase in yields — rising from 5-8 bags per acre to 15-18 bags in well-managed fields. This productivity boost has encouraged more farmers to adopt improved practices. The 200-hectare irrigation scheme visited during the field trip is fully owned and managed by farmers, with no government involvement. While the irrigation system supports productivity, expansion of irrigation infrastructure is seen as essential to improving water control, ensuring resilience against flooding, and sustaining year-round production.

Farmers currently rely heavily on self-financing or informal family support to access essential inputs. Some additional funding is obtained through value chain actors, such as warehouse and mill owners, who may advance resources in exchange for future produce sales. However, access to formal financial services remains limited, posing challenges for sustained investment in improved practices. Environmental concerns linked to rice cultivation include pesticide and herbicide use, with poor disposal practices posing risks to water sources. Soil degradation, particularly rising salinity levels, is also a concern in some areas. Greater awareness of environmentally sustainable farming practices is required to address these risks and ensure long-term productivity.

Beyond rice, stakeholders acknowledged the potential for crop diversification to improve resilience. Crops such as cocoa and bananas are being explored to enhance incomes and reduce dependency on a single commodity. However, supporting farmers to expand into these alternative value chains will require improved market linkages and appropriate extension services.

Forest Protection and Restoration

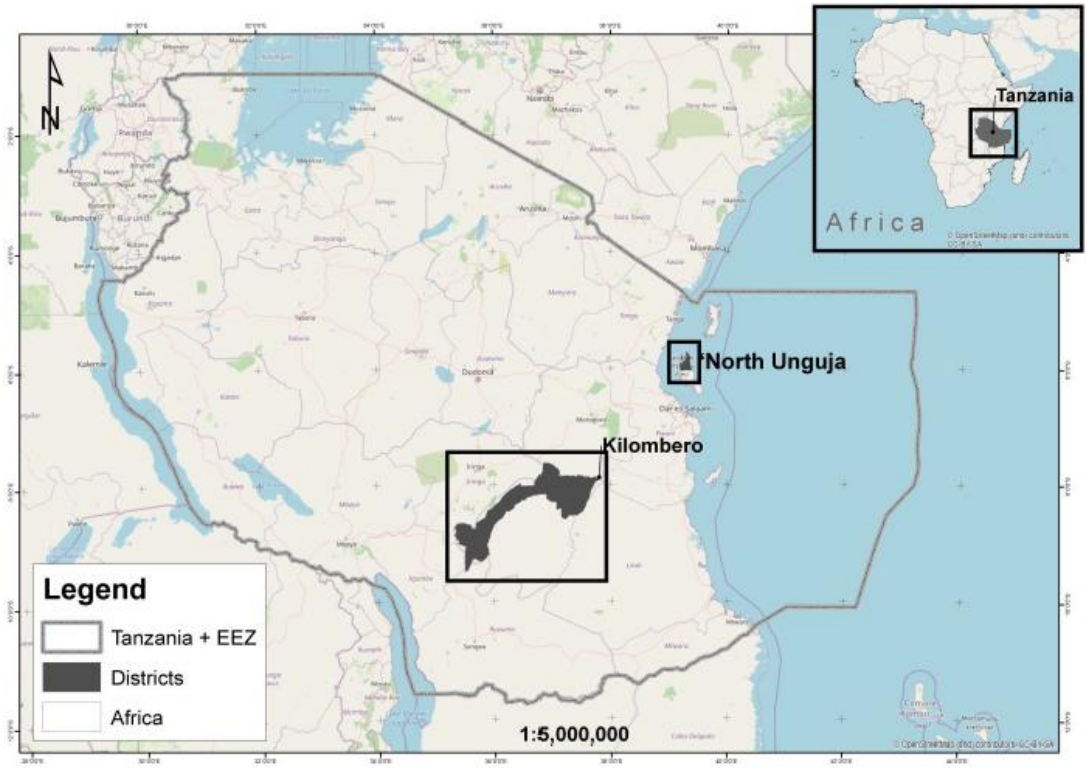
Forest protection and restoration efforts are important in the Kilombero Valley due to the ongoing threat of deforestation and encroachment. The village visited had designated a 783-hectare forest reserve in 2005, with the community believing that preserving forests was critical for attracting rainfall and maintaining environmental stability. The reserve is managed by a Village Natural Resource Management (VNRM) committee, which enforces rules on allowable activities such as beekeeping, collecting fallen firewood, and harvesting traditional medicines. While the forest reserve remains largely intact, the committee faces challenges in preventing encroachment, particularly from settlers seeking land for cultivation. Efforts are underway to demarcate the forest boundaries using beacons to reinforce land protection measures. Beyond this specific village forest reserve, it was reported that over 20 village forest areas have been established across the Kilombero Valley, demonstrating broader community interest in conservation. However, long-term sustainability remains reliant on improved institutional support, enforcement mechanisms, and resources for forest management.

Conclusions

The visit underscored several key findings.

- Multi-Stakeholder Platforms are considered to have strong potential to improve coordination among project actors but require prompt activation which has not happened yet.
- Improved rice productivity through sustainable practices and irrigation investments is promising, though scaling this will require addressing financial constraints and environmental risks.
- Diversification into alternative crops like cocoa and banana could enhance resilience if supported with appropriate services.
- Lastly, strengthening forest protection mechanisms will be crucial for balancing environmental conservation with agricultural expansion in the Kilombero Valley.

Figure Annex 5 –Map of FOLUR project landscapes (Kilombero and North Unguja)



Source: FOLUR ProDoc p. 12

Figure Annex – Map of Ikule village in Mlimba district (Kilombero landscape)

Source: Google maps

Annex 3: Bibliography

IFAD. 2024. Resilient Food Systems Programme. Terminal Evaluation. Rome, Italy
The United Republic of Tanzania. 2023. Reversing Land Degradation Trends and Increasing Food Security in Degraded Ecosystems of Semi-arid Areas of Tanzania. Final Report. April 2023. Kilimo Dodoma, Tanzania
The United Republic of Tanzania. 2022. National Environmental Master Plan for Strategic Interventions (2022 – 2032). Food and Agriculture Organization. Kilimo Dodoma, Tanzania
The United Republic of Tanzania. 2021. National Roadmap to Sustainable Food Systems Transformation by 2030. United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021. Kilimo Dodoma, Tanzania
(Project documents still to be added)

Annex 13: Country Case Study Selection Criteria

Prior to tendering the evaluation, the GEF IEO purposively selected six initial candidate countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Tanzania, Peru and Indonesia) that have multiple food systems program child projects to ensure that case studies could capture evidence of how GEF-8 interventions have built on GEF-6 and GEF-7 learning. The evaluation team further purposively selected four countries for case studies: Ghana, Indonesia, Peru, and Tanzania. All four countries have food systems program child projects for GEF-6, GEF-7, and GEF-8, with variation across the GEF-6 programs. The GEF food systems portfolio includes four countries (Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal) with a financially closed child project and one country (Indonesia) with a standalone project and multiple program child projects. These factors were considered in the country case study selection, as were variation across regions, GEF Agencies, and sectors targeted through FSIP. These selected case study countries are shown in Table 1.

Table 21: Case study country selection

			GEF-6 Program			GEF-8 Target Sector				GEF Agencies				
Country	**Region**	**No. FS Projects[1]**	RFS	GGP	CFI	Food crops	Livestock	Commodities	Aquaculture	World Bank	IFAD	FAO	WWF-US	UNDP
Ghana	West Africa	3[2]												
Indonesia	Asia and Pacific	4[3]												
Peru	Latin America	3												
Tanzania	East Africa	3												

[1]Counts include country-specific program child projects and standalone projects, but do not include regional or global hub projects. The exception is for Peru, where CFI was implemented in Peru and Ecuador through one regional project.

[2]Includes one financially closed food systems program child project.

[3]Includes one active standalone project on food systems.

Annex 14: Program Framework Document Analysis Heatmap

Table 1. Results of Program Framework Document analysis – Heatmap

IP name	*Food system elements*[4]	*GEBs*[5]	*Drivers*[6]	*Root causes*[7]	*Actors targeted*[8] *and levels of intervention*[9]	*Key outcomes*[10]	*Overall rating*
RFS	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium/High
FOLUR	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	High
FSIP	High	High	High	Medium	High	High	High
CFI	High	Low	High	High	Low	High	Medium
GGP	High	Medium	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Summary	Across the programs there is a strong and consistent focus on transforming food systems by engaging comprehensively with the three major parts of the food system: natural elements, core system elements, and value chain elements. FSIP emerges as the	All programs contribute significantly to GEBs, though their emphasis varies. RFS, FOLUR, FSIP, and GGP each address biodiversity conservation, land restoration, GHG emissions reduction, and beneficiaries, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to	All programs address the six systemic drivers of food system challenges. FSIP and FOLUR take particularly integrative approaches across terrestrial landscapes, while CFI adapts these drivers effectively within coastal and marine contexts.	Across the five programs, FSIP, FOLUR, and CFI address the broadest range of root causes, each targeting 7 out of 9 identified issues, including climate change, poverty and inequality, unsustainable agricultural practices, governance gaps, and misaligned	Across the programs, FSIP and GGP stand out for engaging all 10 key actor groups and operating across every level of intervention, from individuals and households to global platforms. FOLUR also demonstrates strong inclusiveness with 8/10 actors	Four programs explicitly target all four key outcomes: environmental sustainability, climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security and nutrition, and resilient livelihoods with equitable socio-economic	All programs engage comprehensively with natural, core, and value chain elements, with FSIP standing out as the most holistic. Each contributes significantly to GEBs though with varying emphasis; FSIP leads in breadth, while CFI focuses on marine systems. All five address the six systemic drivers of transformation and

	most comprehensive, addressing all six natural elements and fully covering both core and value chain elements. RFS, FOLUR, and CFI closely follow, each tackling five of the six natural elements (excluding minerals) while achieving full engagement across the other dimensions. GGP, though slightly less comprehensive in its natural elements coverage (4/6), still provides a robust framework by fully addressing all core system and value chain elements.	environmental and social sustainability. FSIP stands out by additionally targeting chemicals and waste reduction, while CFI is unique in its strong contribution to transboundary water management and marine biodiversity, though it does not directly address land, GHG emissions, or chemical waste. Overall, FSIP emerges as the most holistic in GEB coverage (5/6), followed closely by RFS, FOLUR, and GGP (4/6), with CFI focusing more narrowly on biodiversity, water, and livelihoods (3/6).	GGP and RFS stand out for aligning political and market mechanisms with inclusive, science-based action.	incentives. RFS closely follows by tackling 6 out of 9, with strong focus on climate adaptation, sustainable livelihoods, and inclusive governance, though it engages less with consumption trends or fragility. GGP addresses 5 out of 9, effectively targeting production-driven degradation, incentive structures, and governance, but does not directly engage with socio-cultural norms, population dynamics, or conflict.	targeted and multi-scalar engagement. RFS focuses primarily on production-level and institutional actors (7/10), with limited direct involvement of consumers and waste managers, though it still operates across community to national levels. CFI targets 6/10 actors, mainly within fisheries-related production and governance, and works across individual to global levels. Overall, FSIP and GGP exhibit the most integrated systems-level engagement, while CFI and RFS are more sector-focused in actor targeting.	benefits. In contrast, GGP delivers strongly on environmental, climate, and socio-economic outcomes but does not directly address food security or nutrition, marking it as the only program with 3 out of 4 outcomes. Overall, FSIP and FOLUR offer the most comprehensive integration of outcomes within broader systems transformation efforts.	multiple root causes, with FSIP, FOLUR, and CFI covering the broadest range. FSIP and GGP demonstrate the most inclusive engagement across key actor groups and intervention levels. Four of the five programs explicitly integrate environmental, climate, nutrition, and socio-economic outcomes, reflecting a maturing, multi-dimensional approach to food systems change.

Methodological note on the PFD heatmap rating

High rating	A program is considered highly rated when it demonstrates a holistic and integrated approach to food systems transformation. Specifically, it must address all three core food system (FS) elements—natural resources, core system components (like inputs and finance), and the value chain from production to consumption. It should also include five or six of the six GEBs, such as biodiversity conservation, GHG emission reduction, or sustainable water and land management. A high-rated program further engages with all six key drivers—environmental, political, economic, socio-cultural, behavioral, and technological—indicating an understanding of the multiple forces shaping food systems. It should tackle at least seven to eight of the nine root causes, including issues like climate change, poverty, governance challenges, and harmful socio-cultural norms. Moreover, it actively involves nine to ten key actors across all relevant levels—from producers and traders to government and civil society—ensuring a systemic approach. Finally, it delivers on all four key outcomes, including environmental sustainability, climate adaptation/mitigation, improved nutrition, and equitable socio-economic benefits.
Medium rating	A medium-rated program also addresses all three food systems elements, ensuring that it covers the foundational components of a food system. However, its breadth is slightly narrower: it includes four out of six GEBs, and engages with five of the six drivers. This suggests a solid but not exhaustive approach to addressing systemic challenges. Such programs typically respond to six out of nine root causes, addressing many—but not all—of the underlying issues that disrupt food system sustainability and equity. They involve seven to eight actors, indicating good but not full engagement with all stakeholders across the system. In terms of outcomes, a medium-rated program delivers on three of the four key outcomes, which reflects effective impact but leaves some areas—such as socio-economic equity or environmental resilience—partially unaddressed.
Low rating	Programs that fall into the low rating category, while still addressing all three food systems elements, do so with limited scope and integration. They include only three out of six GEBs, and engage with just four of the six drivers, leaving important system dynamics untouched. They respond to only five of the nine root causes, missing critical factors that perpetuate vulnerability, inequality, or environmental degradation. Actor engagement is also insufficient, with six or fewer of the ten key actors involved—often at uneven or inappropriate levels. In terms of results, low-rated programs achieve only two of the four key outcomes, indicating limited systemic change. These programs may be well-intentioned and locally effective, but they lack the complexity and reach required for meaningful transformation at scale.

Annex 15: Additional Supporting Data and Analysis

Annex Table 1 – GEBs - Core Indicators (CI) : Achievements and targets by GEF food systems program and project

Program/ Project	CI 3 – Land restored	CI 4.1 – Improved mngmt. for bio-diversity	CI 4.2 – Landscapes with bio-diversity considerations	CI 4.3 – Sust. mngmt. in production systems	CI 4.4 – HCV/HCS area (CI 1.2 Terrestrial protected area for the RFS and FOLUR)	CI 5 – Area of marine habitat under impr. practices for bio-diversity	CI 8 – Over-exploited fisheries moved to sust. level	GHG (dir. and indir.)	Beneficiaries
GGP Production *(achieved; source TE, Annex 11)*	-	**27,505,238 ha** (24m ha in Paraguay, 3.2m ha in Indonesia, remainder in Liberia) Close to 5 times (468%) of 2015 CEO endorsed target	**117 ha** (Indonesia) No target	**427,432 ha** (98.6% in Indonesia, and 6k ha in Paraguay) No target	**846,672 ha** (824,424 ha in Indonesia [Annex 19, p.211 updated]; 17, 248 ha in Paraguay; and 5,000 ha in Liberia) 89% of target of 925,000 ha	-	-	**129 million mtCO2** (110m mt in Indonesia, 13.6m in Liberia, and 5.4m mt in Paraguay) 217% of target	**10,496 (37% women)** (4,915 in Paraguay, 2,752 in Indonesia, 2,829 in Liberia) 175% of target; 5% points below gender target
GGP Demand *(no targets, nor achievements)*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GGP Transactions *(targets not seen as relevant by Transactions TE)*	The GGP transactions ProDoc was unclear how the project was meant to contribute to GEBs (see TE GGP IFC, para. 285-290, and para. 355 – 360). The CEO endorsement document *for the total GGP IAP program* **targeted 23 million ha of improved management of landscapes/for biodiversity, 150,000 ha under SLM in production systems**), and **80 mtCO2 mitigated** (p. 8). The IFC GGP TE did not see these targets as relevant for the GGP Transactions CP. The TE rather reported a GEB contribution for GGP Transactions CP of **USD 488.9 million of (additional) commercial transactions compared with USD 400 million planned *over 4 years***.								
GGP Brazil Mitopiba *(achieved; source GGP Brazil TE)*	**6,878 ha** (reforested)	**8,485 ha** (terrestrial areas under improved practices)	-	**-**	**81,099 ha**	-	-	**39.3 million mtCO2**	**22,526** 66.3% of target Women are 17.8% of beneficiaries, compared to 50% planned
RFS *(achieved; source RFS TE, p. 61)*	**350,421 ha** 77% of target	**613,688 ha** 144% of target	-	**476,027 ha** 78~~144~~% of target	**56,707 ha** 100% of target	-	-	**88.4 million mtCO2** 137% of target	**4.7 million (47% women)** 111% of target; above gender target(10% points)

Program/ Project	CI 3 – Land restored	CI 4.1 – Improved mngmt. for bio-diversity	CI 4.2 – Landscapes with bio-diversity considerations	CI 4.3 – Sust. mngmt. in production systems	CI 4.4 – HCV/HCS area (CI 1.2 Terrestrial protected area for the RFS and FOLUR)	CI 5 – Area of marine habitat under impr. practices for bio-diversity	CI 8 – Over-exploited fisheries moved to sust. level	GHG (dir. and indir.)	Beneficiaries
CFI *(planned – source CFI PFD 2016; no achievements in avail. TE (LA) and Activ. Compl. Summ. (Challenge Fund)*	-	-	-	-	-	(Latin America CP only:) **973,000 ha** (coastal marine surface) **119,902 ha** (coastal protected area) Target: "At least 3 million ha of coastal marine areas with EEZs under sustainable fisheries mngmt."	**Achievements not reported** Target: "At least 8 percent of fisheries, by volume, moved to more sustainable levels"		
FOLUR *(achieved; source FOLUR Annual Report 2024)* *(planned targets (T); ProDoc 2020)*	**6,400 ha** (T) 2,387,402 ha*	- (incl. under CI 4.3)	-	**420,000 ha** (T) 46,507,174 ha*	**26,000 ha** (T) 664,908 ha	-	-	**6.2 million mtCO2** (T) 304 million mtCO2*	7.3 million* (49.6% women)
FSIP *(planned targets- PFD 2023)*	870,434 ha	8,142,528 ha	-	5,417,194 ha	284,644 ha	4,220 ha	-	174 million mtCO2	3.4 million (49.1% women)

* Includes some results from the Global Coordination Project (<10% for different core indicators)

Annex Table 2 – IDR results by policy coherence dimension and program

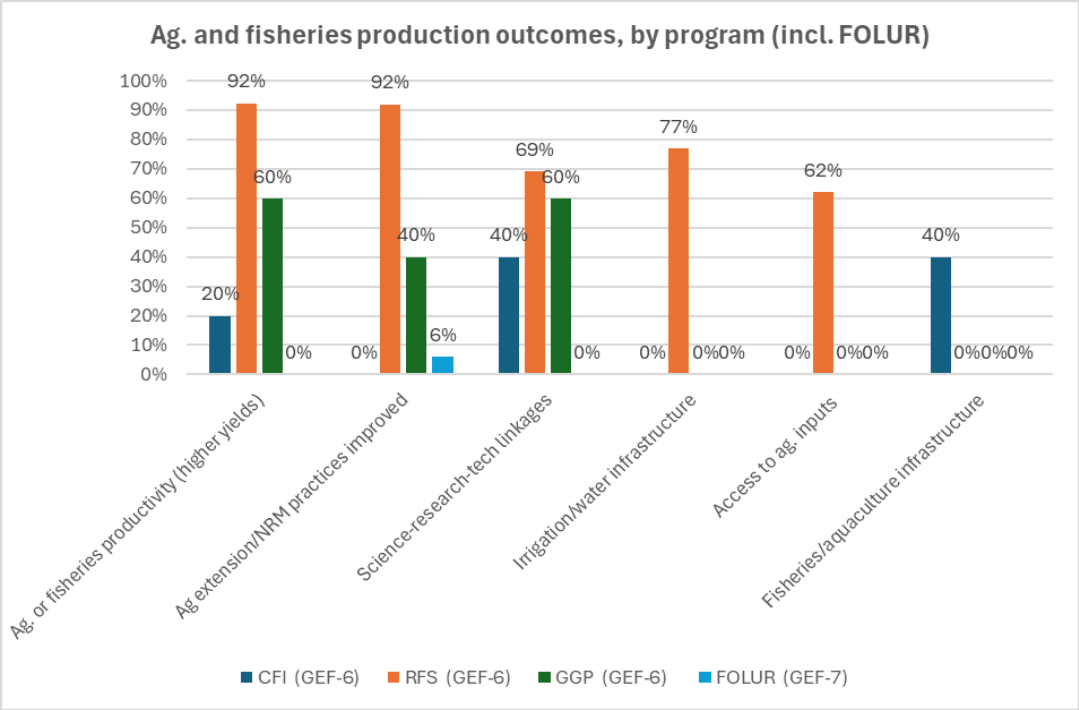
`	No. of cases (CP)	Horizontal coherence	Vertical coherence	Other / governance	Policy in-coherence and outcomes	Issues around engagement of multiple government ministries	Pos./neg. (related to previous column)	
							pos.	neg.
CFI	5							
yes		1	2	2	1*	3	2	1
no		2	1		4	1		
unable to assess		2	2	3		1		
RFS	13							
yes		10	10	8	1*	9	3	6
no		1			12	4		
unable to assess		2	3	5				
GGP	5							
yes		3	3	5		5	1	4
no					5			
unable to assess		2	2					
FOLUR	17							
Yes						6	2	3**
No						6		
unable to assess		17	17	17	17	5		
Stand-alone projects	3							
yes		1		1		1		**
no					3	2		
unable to assess		2	3	2				

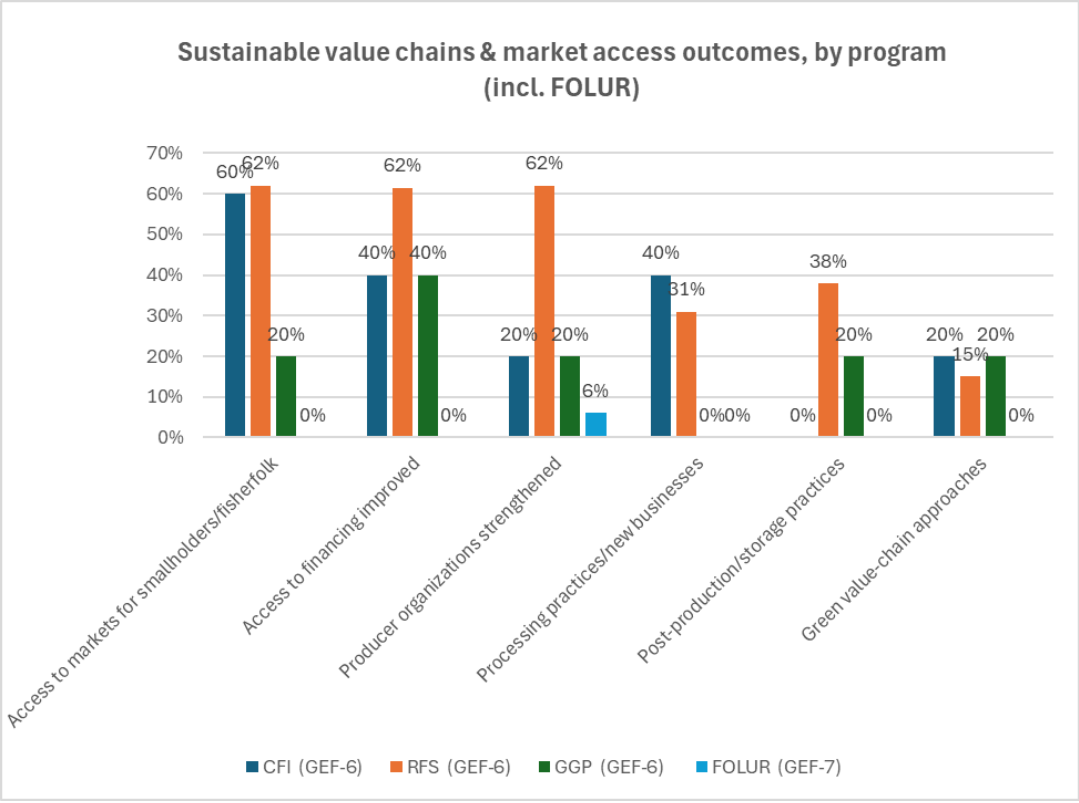
***** Explanation indicated that response was not based on true policy in-coherence

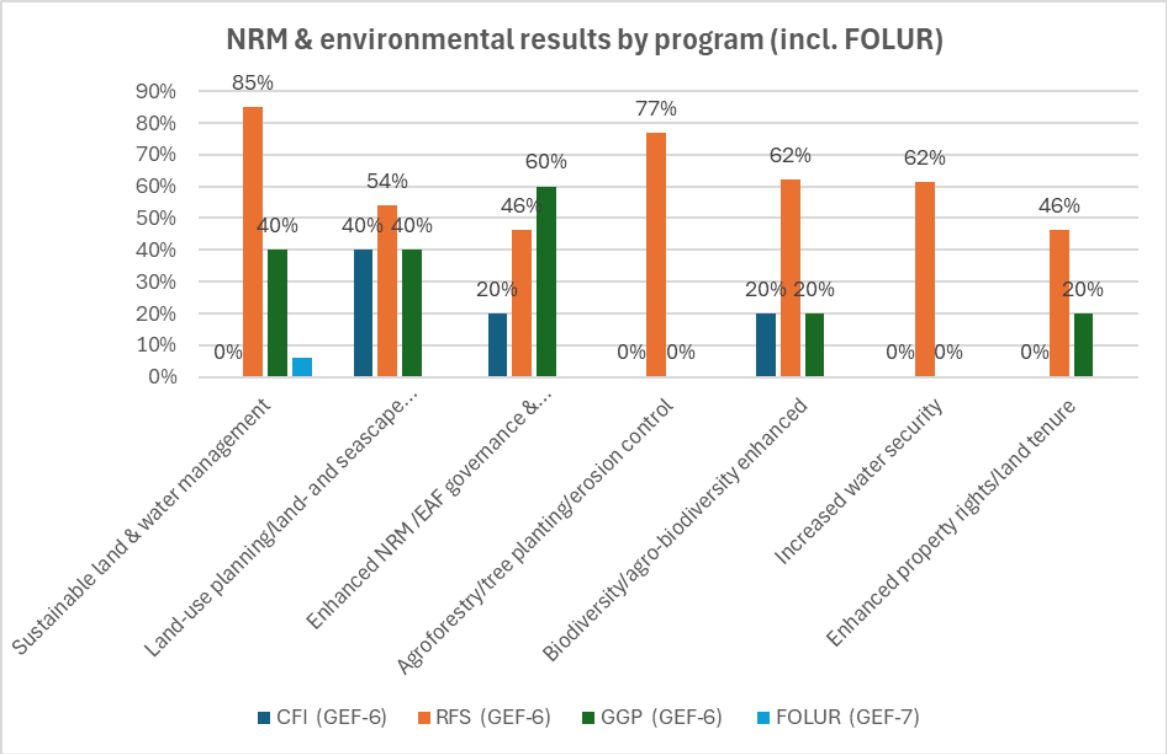
****** (plus) 1 neutral response

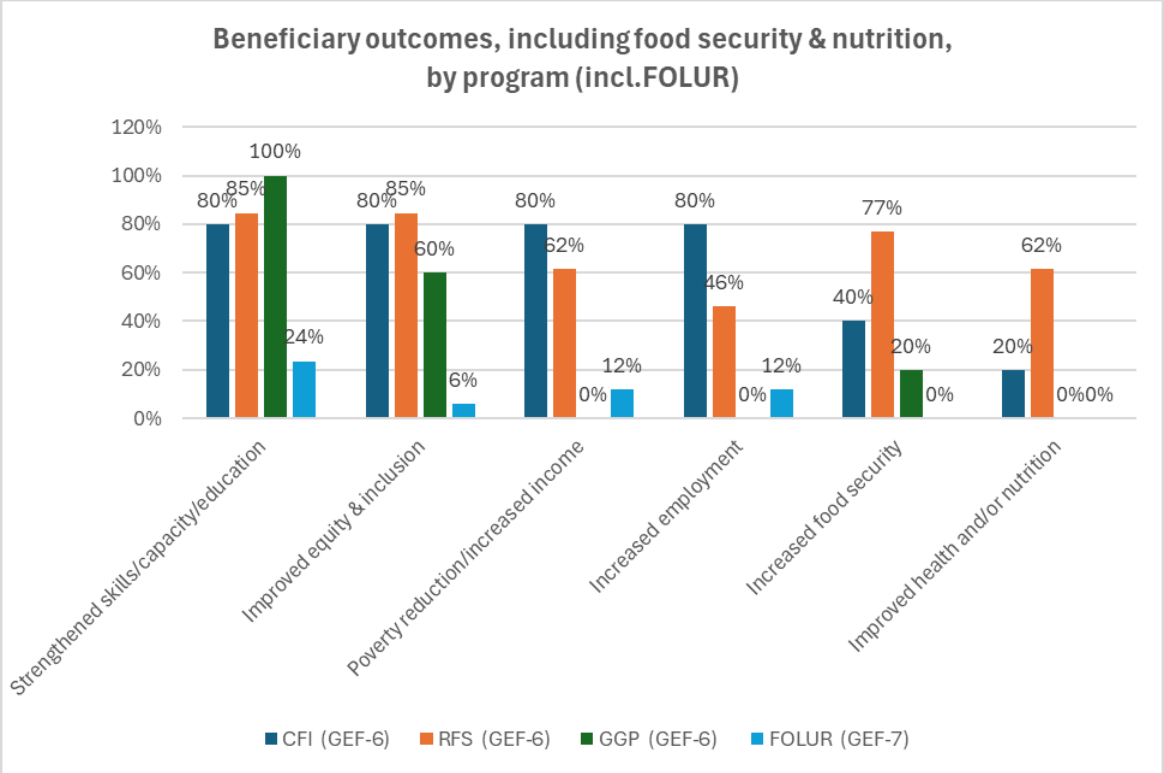
Source: IDR – analyzed by DP

Annex Figure 1 (a-d) – IDR analysis of outputs and outcomes by program and food systems dimension (percent of CPs for each program with indicator results)

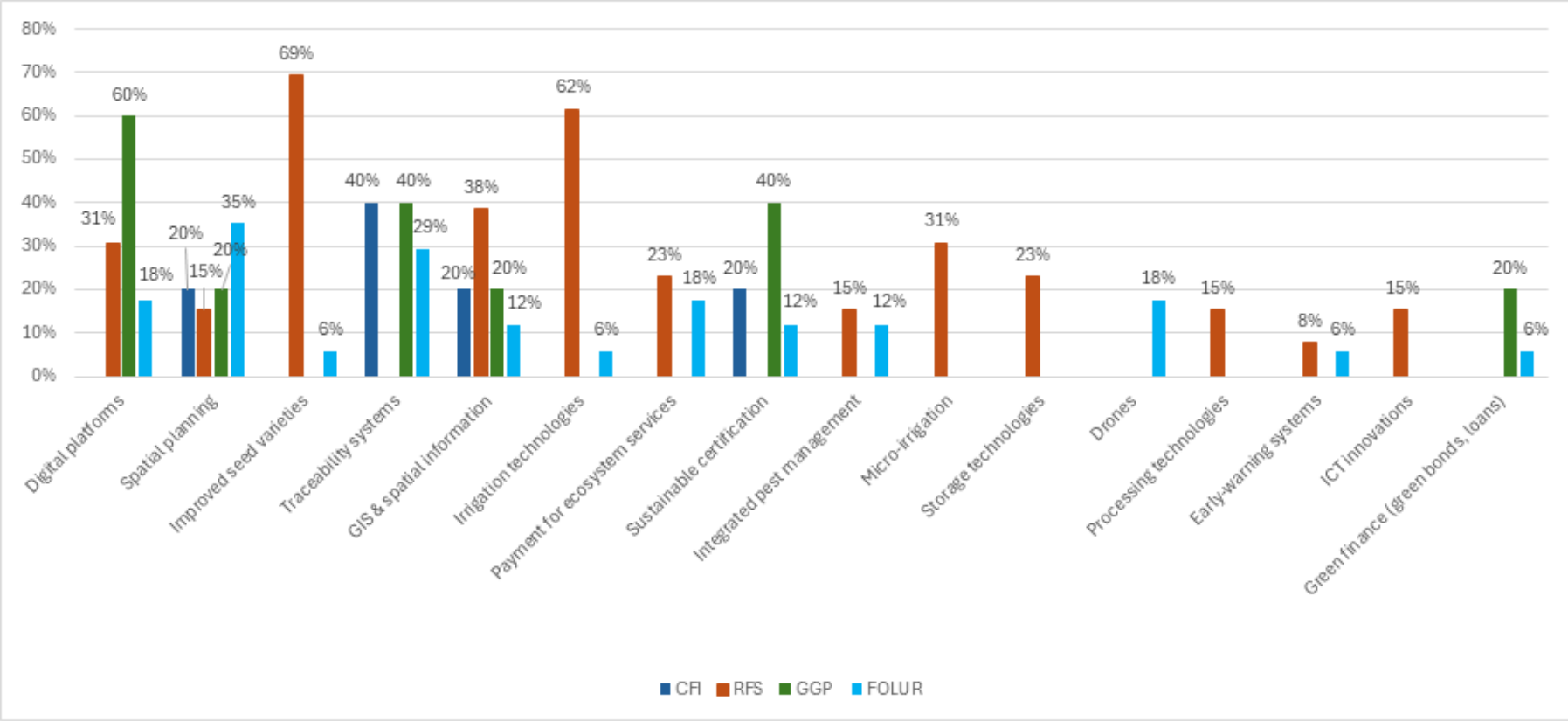





NRM & environmental results by program (incl. FOLUR)
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
85%
40%
0%
54%
40%
40%
46%
20%
60%
77%
0%
0%
62%
20%
20%
62%
0%
0%
46%
0%
20%
Sustainable land & water management
Land-use planning/land- and seascape...
Enhanced NRM/EAF governance &...
Agroforestry/tree planting/erosion control
Biodiversity/agro-biodiversity enhanced
Increased water security
Enhanced property rights/land tenure
CFI (GEF-6)
RFS (GEF-6)
GGP (GEF-6)
FOLUR (GEF-7)


Beneficiary outcomes, including food security & nutrition, by program (incl.FOLUR)
120%
100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
80%
85%
100%
24%
80%
85%
60%
6%
80%
62%
0%
12%
80%
46%
0%
12%
40%
77%
20%
0%
20%
62%
0%0%
Strengthened skills/capacity/education
Improved equity & inclusion
Poverty reduction/increased income
Increased employment
Increased food security
Improved health and/or nutrition
CFI (GEF-6)
RFS (GEF-6)
GGP (GEF-6)
FOLUR (GEF-7)

Annex Figure 2 – Innovations by program



Private sector results by program

GGP Transactions project (ICF)

The IFC-led GGP Transactions project demonstrated how targeted private sector engagement and strong sustainability tools advanced deforestation-free supply chains, especially in Latin America, while also exposing structural, financial, and institutional limitations to broader engagement and transformation. The project aimed to engage private firms and financial institutions in sustainable soy, palm oil, and beef production, combining investment facilitation, advisory services, and tool development across Brazil, Paraguay, Indonesia, and Liberia—though implementation focused largely on Latin America.

In **Paraguay**, IFC partnered with Minerva Foods to develop a sustainability certification, the "Raised on Fertile Land" seal, and tools like SAGAS and Asist-Chaco for traceability and investment planning. Work with local producer organizations promoted deforestation-free intensification, but lacked strong public incentives to scale. The project also contributed to a biodiversity mapping tool used by banks in the Sustainable Finance Roundtable. In **Brazil**, achievements centered on the soy sector where IFC collaborated with COFCO and other companies to strengthen traceability, created degraded land suitability maps, and piloted a trade finance facility (GTSF). Yet incentives to clear land remained stronger than those for restoration, and zero-deforestation policies lacked political backing. Efforts in **Indonesia** and **Liberia** were less successful and neither country yielded investable clients. In Indonesia, expectations of working with large-scale certified palm oil firms proved unrealistic due to the dominance of smallholders and weak ESG capacity in local banks. Liberia's fragile financial sector and absence of bankable agribusinesses stalled engagement altogether. **Globally**, the project supported investment readiness through tools like SIMFaz and platforms like the Sustainable Beef Vision Summit. IFC's dual role as investor and advisor, along with strong partnerships (e.g., COFCO, Minerva), contributed to firm-level success. However, internal restructuring, limited coordination with UNEP-FI, and pandemic-related delays reduced overall effectiveness.

Lessons from the IFC GGP Transactions Project highlight the challenges of scaling sustainable finance in complex commodity markets. IFC's dual role as advisor and investor proved effective, especially in Brazil, but also exposed limits where prospective investments were lacking. The project underscored the importance of strong internal coordination, targeted collaboration, and long lead times to align financing with environmental outcomes. IFC often does not have the necessary prospective PS investments in place to allow it to fully engage through advisory services and tools. Blended finance showed clear potential, but its success depended on early structuring, appropriate incentives, and the ability to compete with more flexible, conventional credit. Market transformation in deforestation-linked commodities requires patient, multi-year engagement, and realistic expectations around uptake and measurable outcomes. Impact was strongest where IFC co-developed high-quality tools—like soy suitability maps and ESG scorecards—with credible partners, helping foster ownership and replication. However, limited coordination with global platforms such as UNEP-FI reduced synergies, and mismatched M&E systems between IFC and GEF created reporting inefficiencies. Ultimately, outcomes hinged on

the presence of capable and motivated private sector partners—a reminder that sustainable finance only works where there is real client readiness and demand.

GGP Demand project (WWF-US)

The GGP Demand Project sought to transform market demand for sustainable commodities by partnering with private sector actors, investors, and multi-stakeholder platforms—but while it achieved technical progress in transparency and tools, its influence on actual procurement behavior and investor commitments remained limited.

Implemented by WWF-US, the Demand Project positioned itself as a key complement to production efforts under GGP. It invested heavily in building partnerships with companies, industry platforms, and investors to promote reduced-deforestation sourcing of soy, palm oil, and beef. Through initiatives such as the **Soy Toolkit**, **RESPOND ESG benchmarking**, **Trase** supply chain transparency platform, and the **African Palm Oil Initiative (APOI)**, the project created widely used knowledge products and contributed to regional dialogues on sustainability. It also engaged corporate and investor communities in West Africa, Latin America, and Asia and launched a branded RSPO-certified cooking oil for domestic consumers in Indonesia.

Despite this extensive engagement, the project fell short in catalyzing widespread shifts in private sector sourcing and investor behavior. **In Brazil**, while it supported soy traceability and corporate platforms like the Soft Commodities Forum, national political resistance and low buyer incentives limited broader uptake. **In Paraguay**, engagement with the beef sector led to the formulation of national sustainability guidelines, but no consensus emerged on what "sustainable beef" actually means. **In West Africa**, private sector participation through APOI varied widely, with limited participation in national action plans. **In Indonesia**, partnerships with retailers and the IBCSD were noteworthy, but GGP Demand engagement remained tied more to government priorities than private sourcing reforms.

The project benefited from WWF's global credibility and the ability to convene diverse actors. Strategic partnerships with platforms like RSPO, IBCSD, and UNEP-FI ensured influence. However, results were constrained by a fragmented and often hesitant private sector and the absence of strong commercial incentives. Efforts to engage major global buyers and traders particularly in the EU, US, and China, did not lead to tangible shifts in sourcing strategies. Time horizons were too short for what are long-term market transformations.

In summary, the GGP Demand Project laid important groundwork through tools, platforms, and early-stage partnerships with the private sector and others. It helped build awareness and institutional pathways for sustainable sourcing. Yet, it struggled to convert this into deeper market or investment reform.

GGP Production and Brazil project (UNDP/UNEP-FI)

The GGP Production and Brazil projects showed that PS engagement in deforestation-free supply chains is feasible through a multi-level approach combining tools, platforms, and

partnerships. However, persistent market, governance, and incentive failures limited broader adoption and transformation. Both projects complemented GGP Transformation and Demand efforts and pursued PS engagement through five approaches: multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs), tool development, strategic partnerships, capacity building, and enabling environment support.

GGP used existing and new **MSPs** to engage companies across supply chains. In Indonesia, firms like Wilmar, Musim Mas, and Unilever participated in national (FoKSBI) and district platforms in West Kalimantan (Sintang), advancing land-use planning and smallholder sustainability. Brazil's MATOPIBA Coalition involved soy actors in regional dialogues, while Paraguay's platforms aligned stakeholders around sustainable beef. **Tools and guidelines** supported sustainability adoption: Value Beyond Value Chains (on public-private collaboration), Responsible Beef Guidelines (WWF–Paraguay), and the Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard which rates corporate traceability commitments (WWF Global). The Soy Toolkit enabled risk assessments and supplier management, while Brazil piloted traceability and monitoring systems for soy.

Public–private partnerships (PPP) and **training and capacity development** reinforced these efforts. In Indonesia, a Musim Mas MoU enabled farmer training; in Liberia, a partnership with MANCO supported palm oil outgrowers. Paraguay's work with the Rural Association informed public debate via deforestation data. Brazil's CP partnered with agribusinesses to support zero-deforestation compliance. Training targeted producers and financial institutions alike. The Brazil Matopiba project enhanced soy producer practices, while collaboration with ADM Capital and PT ANJ in Indonesia helped test financially viable farmer support models. WWF and UNDP's long-standing presence helped build trust. Efforts also **targeted policy alignment**. In Brazil and Indonesia, GGP supported subnational strategies and jurisdictional compacts. Indonesia's regional district palmoil platform in West-Kalimantan (Sintang) became a model for decentralized coordination. Yet, weak regulatory enforcement and limited public incentives often hindered voluntary standards' uptake.

Several constraints curbed broader impact. Short project durations reduced the ability to embed and scale successful models. Inadequate incentives, limited demand for certified commodities, and institutional challenges—such as corruption and fragmented supply chains—complicated PS transformation. In Brazil, the lack of a regulatory push stalled traceability uptake. Economic concerns often outweighed environmental goals.

FOLUR program

Building on the GGP, the GEF FOLUR program is also advancing private sector engagement through approaches including co-developing sustainability strategies, mobilizing investments, and piloting incentives. To date, several FOLUR Child Projects have aligned with companies and farmer groups to co-develop sustainability strategies across key supply chains such as palm oil, soy, cocoa, coffee, and livestock. FOLUR CPs made some progress in investment mobilization, with countries securing private co-financing through blended finance and de-risking mechanisms. In parallel, CPs are designing incentives—such as access to credit, pricing premiums, and insurance schemes—to support sustainable production, especially in soy and palm oil.

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Nonetheless, linking upstream producers with downstream buyers and ensuring long-term financing for smallholders remain significant hurdles. Challenges include limited investor confidence, regulatory uncertainty, and pressures from emerging requirements like the EU deforestation regulation (EUDR). In response, initiatives such as the IFC-led case study on soy supply chain risks in Brazil are helping to identify mitigation strategies (based largely on FOLUR Annual Report 2024).

CFI Challenge Fund project (World Bank)

The CFI Challenge Fund advanced private sector engagement in sustainable fisheries by preparing investment-ready projects across six countries—but weak value chain integration and lack of follow-through on financing limited its broader impact. The Fund significantly outperformed its targets in developing 26 investment cases in countries like Indonesia, Peru, Ecuador, and Cabo Verde. It engaged over 70 financial stakeholders and supported the creation of risk mitigation plans and investment criteria, helping shape a shared understanding of investable fisheries. Country-level successes included policy briefs and business cases in Indonesia, support for rights-based fisheries in Peru, and contributions to Ecuador's Galápagos 2030 Plan.

However, actual investment mobilization remained out of reach. Technical assistance could not support downstream financing, and structural issues—such as informality, poor infrastructure, and investor hesitancy—persisted. Governance weaknesses and climate-related risks further discouraged capital flow. Coordination challenges also emerged, with fragmented implementation and limited linkage to global seafood markets. In sum, the CFI-CF laid useful groundwork for sustainable fisheries finance but lacked the mechanisms and incentives to catalyze investment at scale. Its accomplishments highlight the importance of coupling readiness and real PS capital flows.

Country case studies

Private sector engagement across the Evaluation's case study countries varies by country, reflecting different program approaches, interests and readiness and institutional capacities. Indonesia and Tanzania have adopted the most structured and proactive approaches. As noted earlier, Indonesia's GGP and FOLUR projects have engaged with the PS through multi-stakeholder policy platforms and action plans, including national and multinational companies on the production and demand sides. In Tanzania, the RFS had very limited PS engagement, but the FOLUR CP is expected to promote co-investments and institutional collaboration, while engaging banks like CRDB and exploring partnerships with agro-processors. In contrast, Peru's engagement in FOLUR is more fragmented, constrained by weak inter-ministerial coordination (notably between MINAM and MIDAGRI), regulatory uncertainty, and the absence of strong financial partners. Nevertheless, promising partnerships with agritech funds like Yield Lab Latam and research entities like Incabiotec are emerging. CFI has been developing some niche models. Beyond some early discussions with cocoa industry actors, Ghana remains at an aspirational stage, constrained by limited policy alignment, weak collective structures, and the absence of clear business cases to attract serious private investment.

Progress in FOLUR projects across the four case study countries

FOLUR CPs in the evaluation's case study countries are currently still laying the groundwork on translating ambitious multi-commodity sustainability frameworks into tangible ground-level impact, while facing complex policy, value chain and private sector engagement situations. Across the four FOLUR country projects, early implementation has largely focused on groundwork and coordination, with varying degrees of progress in policy engagement, landscape planning, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. While all projects remain in relatively early phases, Indonesia and Peru appear more advanced in policy and institutional engagement, whereas Ghana and Tanzania are still in formative stages of implementation, particularly at the community level.

Progress. Indonesia has made the most visible headway, leveraging strong national ownership and coordination led by the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. The project builds on prior GGP experience in sustainable palm oil and has expanded to include coffee, cocoa, and rice. It has achieved early successes in multi-stakeholder coordination, policy reviews, and preparation of co-investment mechanisms—particularly with national actors such as the BPDP. The project is also preparing targeted scenario analyses to support implementation starting in 2025. Peru has similarly advanced policy engagement through close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment (MINAM) and sub-national actors. Building on established territorial development frameworks, the project has initiated groundwork through consultations and preparatory work in palm oil and coffee-growing areas. In Tanzania, the most notable achievement is the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) in the Kilombero Valley. This platform has started stakeholder mapping, awareness-building, and early planning for sustainable rice intensification (SRI). A second MSP is being launched in Zanzibar. Ghana's project has made modest progress, capitalizing on earlier cocoa sustainability efforts and existing partnerships in the Juaboso-Bia landscape. Initial steps have included land-use planning, investment plan development, and stakeholder consultations, supported by alignment with the Cocoa & Forests Initiative.

Constraints. A key constraint across all four countries lies in the complexity of aligning national policies with sub-national implementation structures—particularly pronounced in Indonesia and Peru, where decentralized governance creates additional layers of coordination. In Peru, these dynamics have slowed consensus-building and delayed the start of field activities. Ghana and Tanzania, while making progress in setting up multi-stakeholder platforms and initial planning processes, have yet to move meaningfully into implementation on the ground. Ghana faces difficulties in sustaining the engagement of value chain actors beyond policy dialogue, and Tanzania is still refining its operational roadmap to connect planning with farmer-level interventions.

Private sector engagement is another cross-cutting challenge. Although all four country projects aim to attract co-investment and partnerships with commodity actors, tangible results have yet

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to emerge. Indonesia appears most advanced in laying the foundation, particularly through its engagement with national institutions such as the Palm Oil Plantation Fund (BPDP) and its links with parallel initiatives by Unilever and others. Peru and Tanzania have also initiated outreach to commodity stakeholders, but formalized partnerships remain pending. More broadly, the inherently ambitious design of the FOLUR program—spanning multiple commodities, sectors, and levels of governance—has contributed to implementation complexity in all four countries. Successfully managing this complexity requires strong institutional coordination, clear priorities and well-sequenced planning; without it, the transition from preparatory work to concrete results in the field may be slow and uneven.

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