



EVALUATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL ACTION

THEMATIC EVALUATION

EU SUPPORT TO SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES 2014-2020

October 2022

EVIDENCE
MATTERS

A photograph showing a rural village nestled in a valley with terraced fields. The houses are mostly made of red brick or stone with thatched roofs. The landscape is green and hilly.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo)
AFD	French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement)
AFS	Agriculture and Food Systems
AU	African Union
ASAL	Arid- and Semi-arid Land
BS	Budget support
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
CIRAD	Agricultural Research Centre for International Development
CPA	Cotonou Partnership Agreement
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DeSIRA	Development of Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture
DG	Directorate General
DG AGRI	Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegations
EUTF	EU Trust Fund for Africa
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FNSSA	Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture
FQ	Forward-looking Questions
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GDPRD	Global Donor Platform for Rural Development

GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
GPGC	Global Public Goods and Challenges
GSF	Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition
HARD	Heads of Agriculture and Rural Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFIs	International Financing Institutions
IL	Intervention Logic
INTPA	International Partnership Department
IRC	International Research Consortium
JC	Judgement Criteria
MFF	Multi-Financial Framework
MIP	Multi-annual Indicative Programme
EU MS	Member States of the European Union
MSME	Micro- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
NEAR	Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
RBA	Rome-based Agencies
RG	Reference Group
SAFS	Sustainable agri-food systems
SCAR	Standing Committee on Agricultural Research
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SBS	Sector Budget Support
SPRC	Sector Performance Reform Contract
TA	Technical Assistance
TAP	Tropical Agricultural Platform
TEI	Team Europe Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFSS	UN Food Systems Summit
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A strategic evaluation

With the launch of its Farm to Fork Strategy in May 2020, the EU positioned itself *amongst the most ambitious players regarding sustainable agri-food systems transformation*. The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit was unequivocal about the need for a systemic approach to address food-related issues and the interlinkages with other developmental challenges such as inequality, health, climate change and resilience to shocks. A more systemic approach is already part of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy. The Farm to Fork is the most ambitious European food-related policy to date because it defines an explicit overall sustainable agri-food systems strategy for the continent. As an integral part of the Green Deal, it has the potential to guide a more coherent European agenda for climate action and sustainability in policy and implementation regarding agri-food systems.

However, divergence in interests and values of key players at EU and global level has hampered the translation of Europe's ambitions relating to sustainable agri-food systems into *a coherent external agenda that guides programming and funding priorities*. So far, a fully developed external dimension of the Farm to Fork Strategy is missing.

Achieving more sustainable, inclusive and resilient agri-food systems globally and at country level is made even more difficult by the compounded impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures, the war in Ukraine and the impacts of climate change. These multiple crises are adding to an already worsening trend of increasing malnutrition, surpassing planetary boundaries related to food systems and rising food poverty and inequality.

This evaluation covers the period 2014-2020. It aims at producing an *independent assessment of the performance* of EU support to food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and fisheries at country, regional and global level. It also includes forward-looking elements, drawing lessons on 'what has worked and what has not' in past and ongoing EU support, and leading to *recommendations on how to strengthen* the EU's continued support to the transformation towards sustainable agri-food systems worldwide. The evaluation was launched at a time when the EU agenda regarding sustainable agri-food systems was developing rapidly. Since 2014, EU support for food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture has gradually evolved towards a more systemic, integrated, multi-stakeholder approach. Accelerating this development from 2020 onwards, the Farm to Fork and its related strategies provide a single overarching frame of reference for an EU systems approach to supporting agri-food system transformation.

All this indicates that *this evaluation comes at an important time*. The increased strategic importance of food security on global and European political agendas could help reverse the trend of shrinking European budgets explicitly allocated to food and nutrition security. It has proved difficult, however, to maintain a strong coherent agenda for sustainable and inclusive development in a crisis context. The risk of a loss of political traction for transformation towards agri-food systems is real, as the greening obligations foreseen by the Farm to Fork Strategy are relaxed for a focus on food production unhampered by environmental constraints. Balancing short-term emergency responses with investments in longer-term resilience is a challenging task for policymakers. Nonetheless, the evaluation finds a strong momentum for boosting EU support towards the transformation of agri-food systems in response to unfolding geopolitical and regional food crises outside the EU.

Overall assessment

Three overarching messages, which will be further detailed in the sections on conclusions and recommendations below, emerge from this evaluation:

1. **The EU demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting agri-food system changes at the global, regional and partner country level that can ensure more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable food system outcomes.** EU country portfolios are characterised by a context-specific partnership approach that includes a wide range of food system actors and shows a thoughtful selection of strategic entry points. In particular, EU support has consistently targeted small-scale producers, rural entrepreneurs, and vulnerable communities. These efforts led to valuable contributions in several areas, such as enhancing resilience to food crises, fostering nutrition outcomes, stimulating innovations, and increasing responsible investments in agri-food value chains. But, given the complexity and contested nature of agri-food system challenges and the limits of EU leverage, the outcomes and intermediary impacts of EU contributions have been mostly scattered and tentative. Notably, while the EU supported policy changes and institutional reforms, the intensity, inclusiveness and outcomes of the policy dialogue have differed across countries, with government ownership and follow-up emerging as critical determinants for success.

2. **The EU faced many obstacles in applying a more integrated, systemic approach to supporting food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture.** So far, EU support has often been based on sectoral analyses rather than comprehensive agri-food system assessments seeking to understand linkages between different relevant sectors and identify 'winners' and 'losers' of agri-food system transformation. Planning and implementation thus often took place without sufficient and widely shared insight into the different and sometimes competing interests of the multiple stakeholders involved, limiting understanding of the drivers and barriers to change. While some examples of closer cooperation between EU and EU Member States have been identified, overall, integrating EU partners' interventions and realising synergies across policy areas has proven difficult. EU and EU Member States have not agreed on common objectives, complementary strengths, instruments and modalities, and common indicators to track the outcomes of their 'loosely coordinated' actions.
3. **European actors insufficiently invested in developing a common approach to sustainable agri-food systems and jointly fostering agri-food knowledge and innovation systems.** The EU needs to improve collaboration and alignment amongst European actors and intensify its investment in agri-food knowledge and innovation, if it wishes to achieve lasting system-level changes and meet its transformative ambitions. EU policy frameworks and the powerful financial instruments behind these are a good basis for strategic leadership on transformation towards sustainable agri-food systems. Yet, to harness these, the EU must strengthen linkages within its portfolios and with the support provided by other partners, while respecting national governments' ownership in defining national food system pathways and tailoring EU interventions to meet the aspirations, ambitions and initiatives of local food system actors.

Conclusions

The evaluation identifies five conclusions, grouped into two clusters. These are described below.

First, the evaluation highlights *clear achievements of EU support that are conducive to broader agri-food system transformation changes* (Cluster 1):

- **EU support was directed at several strategically chosen entry points (C1)** and investments in partnerships with a wide range of agri-food system actors; this was conducive to encouraging global, regional, national, and local food system changes. As such, EU country portfolios demonstrate a context-specific partnership approach and strong alignment with government priorities on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture.
- **The EU played an instrumental role at the global and regional level (C2)**, by successfully investing in partnerships with the UN Rome-based Agencies, supporting global frameworks and platforms and bolstering the supply of global public goods in the form of data and information, frameworks and metrics, methods and standards, as well as their rolling out at the country level. These global public goods supported constructive debate on widely diverging visions of agri-food system transformation and provided the foundation for coordinated action. Also, through the EU-Africa partnership for research and innovation, the EU has played a central role in strengthening research and innovation policies, governance and platforms in Africa for agri-food system transformation. Yet, such support has been overly fragmented in a plethora of strategies and initiatives, while achieving equality between African and European partners has remained problematic.
- **The EU made substantial contributions to facilitating transformation towards sustainable agri-food systems at country level, but the effects observed at system level are largely scattered (C3).** Notably, the EU has consistently contributed to strengthening the enabling business environment and increasing economic opportunities for small-scale producers and rural entrepreneurs, focusing on innovation and strengthening resilience to climate change and food-related crises. A wide range of EU-supported climate and gender-sensitive policy, governance, economic, and social innovations emerge. However, their effects, sustainability and long-term impacts depend on diverse political, economic, environmental, and social drivers, including government ownership and political will, continued political traction, wide-spread acceptance and adequate implementation by national public and private stakeholders.

Secondly, the evaluation finds that *EU support to food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture has only, to a limited extent, developed a more integrated, systemic approach to transformation towards sustainable agri-food systems at the global and country levels* (Cluster 2).

- **The evaluation finds little evidence of the EU applying a more systemic approach towards supporting agri-food system transformation (C3).** While EU Delegations are usually pro-active in coordinating food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture support with EU member states and other development partners at country level, these partnerships have been strategic and collaborative to different degrees. This is due to the absence of a joint EU framework to track system-level progress and ensure mutual accountability between partners. Also, EU support is mainly based on partial sector-level assessments, and synergies between policy areas and instruments relevant to agri-food system transformation have been limited. Despite consistent engagement in policy dialogues with national governments, their depth, multi-sectorial character, intensity, and bearing upon national policymaking varied a lot across countries. Lastly, implementation difficulties, such as failing to target common beneficiaries, lack of synchronisation of complementary initiatives, or lack of cooperation between implementing partners, often obstruct the timely realisation of synergies intended in EU country portfolios.
- **While the EU has gradually taken steps towards developing a more integrated, systemic approach to supporting food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture, many obstacles persist (C4).** No common EU approach to supporting the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems has crystallised, and varying positions exist between EU member states and the EU on how global agri-food systems transformation ambitions need to be operationalised and implemented. EU member states view EU policy frameworks, including the Farm to Fork strategy, as not directly influencing their policies, priorities, and implementation, as they lack a sufficiently clear and articulated approach to allow for strategic collaboration. As a result, Europe does not speak with one voice in EU-supported partnerships. The Heads of Agriculture and Rural Development (HARD) group could be a forum for policy alignment and coordination on sustainable agri-food systems. However, currently, it does not ensure real dialogue or strategic discussion. Additionally, formal consultation mechanisms between the sustainable agri-food systems and fisheries unit at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (F3) and other Directorates are experienced as rigid and mostly limited to individual consultations of thematic or geographic specialists on specific text proposals and documents. Finally, EU Delegations indicate a lack of capacity and time to upgrade their coordinating role in country partnerships to a more political and strategic one.

Recommendations

This evaluation formulates ten recommendations for enhancing EU support to sustainable agri-food systems. The recommendations are clustered into three areas.

R.1 Adopt a common framework to foster a ‘One EU’ approach to sustainable agri-food systems

This recommendation forms the basis for a more coherent and better articulated implementation of EU support to the transformation of agri-food systems. To put into practice this recommendation, the EU should:

- **Develop clear overarching ‘rules of engagement’ for European actors supporting agri-food systems’ governance at national, regional and global levels (R1.1).** Implementation requires strengthening operational guidance for applying existing EU policy frameworks to national and international partnerships for agri-food system transformation. This includes i) developing a framework for external action that lays out common ambitions, as well as sets core targets and indicators to allow joint monitoring shared by all European actors; and ii) encouraging EU partners to speak with one voice. In doing so, the EU should respect national governments’ leadership and autonomy in defining food system pathways while ensuring alignment of the partnerships established with EU values and overarching goals.
- **Anchor external action support to sustainable agri-food systems in broader, long-term EU-country partnership agendas (R1.2),** including intersectoral policy dialogues and relevant Team Europe approaches.
- **Maintain a clear strategic focus at country and regional level on the most vulnerable food system actors, namely, small producers, women, youth and small and medium-sized enterprises (R1.3).** This entails combining diverse instruments and support modalities in country portfolios, including social protection measures, to improve community resilience and strengthen support along the entire value chain.

R.2 Operationalise this ‘One EU’ approach at all levels

Steps to operationalise such a common approach should include:

- **Upgrade the Commission and EU Member States’ mechanisms to exchange information at headquarters level to a more high-level strategic coordination mechanism (R2.1).** More strategic meetings of the Head of Agriculture and Rural Development (HARD) group could help bridge diverse political views and approaches of EU and EU Member States and strengthen collaboration and synergies.
- **Develop a common understanding of context-specific challenges and opportunities at country and regional level (R2.2),** by supporting joint agri-food systems’ assessments and strengthening the use of foresight and scenario studies and political economy analyses. This would enable the joint identification of the most promising entry points for supporting sustainable agri-food system-level changes.
- **Co-develop and empower Team Europe initiatives for supporting sustainable agri-food systems (R2.3),** by building upon the strengths of EU partners with a strong presence and track record in the relevant global, regional and/or national arenas.
- **Strengthen EU engagement in sustainable agri-food systems diplomacy (R2.4),** by investing in strategic partnerships and enhancing inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues within partner countries, and securing compliance with EU values, rules and regulations of European actors operating locally.

R.3 Enhance learning by articulating, orienting, and strengthening agri-food knowledge and innovation systems

The evaluation underscores the need for strong continued investments in agri-food knowledge and innovation systems. As such, the EU should:

- **Intensify EU support for systemic and joint learning, by investing in networking, experimenting, and platforms for local, national and, where relevant, international agri-food actors (R3.1).** This requires capitalising more systematically upon and learn from relevant local, national, and international initiatives, and supporting the follow-up, application, and scaling of relevant innovations in agri-food policies, regulations, services or practices.
- **Ensure long-term support to** enable smallholders, women, youth, their organisations, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to actively participate in **co-innovation processes for developing home-grown or locally adapted solutions (R3.2)**, to ensure proposed innovations match the conditions and scale at which these actors need to apply them.
- **Consolidate mechanisms that allow for learning from experience within the EU and from EU joint efforts to support sustainable agri-food systems at the national, regional and global level (R3.3),** especially to learn from the broad range of bottom-up programming instruments already developed by EU partners both inside and outside Europe.



1

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives and scope of the evaluation

This evaluation takes place at a crossroads of EU external policy. On the one hand, since 2014, European Union (EU) support to Food and Nutrition Security, Sustainable Agriculture and fisheries (FNSSA) shows a gradual evolution towards a more systemic, integrated, multi-stakeholder approach. On the other hand, from 2020 onwards, the Green Deal and its various related strategies provide a single overarching frame of reference for an EU systems approach to supporting sustainable agri-food systems (SAFS) transformation, inside as well as outside of Europe.

The main objective of this exercise is to produce an *independent assessment* of the past and current support of the EU in *food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, and fisheries*, at country, regional and global levels. The focus is on drawing lessons from experiences that may inform the strengthening of the EU's continued support to SAFS transformation worldwide. While the main expected users of the evaluation are the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and partners at EU level such as EU Members States (EU MS), this evaluation can also be of interest to any partner keen on strengthening its partnership with the EU.

The evaluation aims more specifically at:

- Informing strategic decisions on the implementation and future mid-term review of the new Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF);
- Improving cooperation with EU partners under the new MFF and in the light of the new EU SAFS approach;
- Nurturing the design of new interventions in support of SAFS transformation;
- Guiding choices for scaling up and replicating innovative/pilot approaches.

The evaluation covers non-spending (e.g., policy dialogue and advocacy) and spending activities managed by the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and funded under both geographic (DCI Latin America, DCI Asia, EDF for Africa and Pacific and Caribbean) and thematic *financing instruments* (DCI-GPGC, DCI-CSO&LA, etc). The analysis also considers interventions financed through the EU Trust Fund for Africa and covers all EU *modalities*, including budget support, blending and country level pool funding mechanisms. In terms of *temporal scope*, the stock-taking exercise that underpins this evaluation focuses on the MFF 2014-2020, and takes into account any significant developments that occurred in 2021.

The *geographical scope* of the evaluation is essentially worldwide, but in practice focuses on 59 partner countries for which FNNSA has been a priority sector in the previous MFF (2014-2020). Six countries: *Cambodia, Colombia, Haiti, Kenya, Niger, Malawi* have been analysed in-depth to feed the analysis (see Volume II: case studies).

To be able to consider the gradual evolution towards an EU *systems approach* to support SAFS transformation worldwide, this evaluation takes a human activity system's perspective. This entails looking at food system actors, their activities, interactions, relations, and their evolution over time, as well as their conditioning factors. This is consistent with agri-food sector practice, where multiple stakeholders – producers, processors, retailers, and consumers – act autonomously according to their interpretation of the opportunities and threats they face.

In accordance with the 2020 4th Biennial Report¹ and the 2019 EU Achievements Report,² *four EU priorities* for addressing the challenges of food and nutrition security as well as sustainable agriculture are at the heart of the evaluation:

¹ European Commission (2020): *Report from the Commission to the European parliament and the Council. Implementing EU food and nutrition security policy commitments: Fourth biennial report*.

² European Commission (2020): *EU Achievements in Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture 2014-2018*. International Cooperation and Development.

- Enhancing the resilience of the most vulnerable to food crises;
- Fostering specific nutrition outcomes;
- Increasing responsible investments in agriculture and food systems;
- Stimulating innovations for sustainable agri-food systems.

Other cross-cutting themes have been mainstreamed into relevant EU support and are also considered in this evaluation:

- Addressing *climate change*, mitigating its negative effects, and preserving natural resources and biodiversity is crucial to reducing pressure on the 'supply side' of food systems. Agriculture is one of the sectors increasingly feeling climate change's negative impacts. At the same time, it is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable farming/fishing practices are needed to help beneficiaries adapt to climate impacts and limit their contribution to climate change.
- Strengthening *multi-stakeholder governance* is a necessary precondition for sustainable agriculture and for achieving food and nutrition security. Good governance within and across sectors, needs to ensure a working set of formal and informal rules and processes for decision-making to provide a basic framework (e.g., adequate infrastructure, needs-based agricultural research, education, standards) at local and national levels, for which the basis is laid through agreements at global level.
- Promoting *gender equality* is essential to achieving sustainability in agri-food systems as high levels of inequality are a major obstacle to reducing hunger and malnutrition, increasing rural incomes and respecting planetary boundaries. Women are key actors in agri-food systems, from production to preparation and distribution within the household. Countries where incomes are highly unequal or where discriminatory gender and social norms prevail have, on average, lower levels of land productivity and are more prone to food insecurity. Gender inequalities also intersect with and reinforce inequalities based on other factors (ethnicity, age, class). Acknowledging and addressing the intersectionality of inequalities offers a richer perspective for understanding prevailing sustainability obstacles and developing effective ways to achieve SAFS.

1.2 Purpose and structure of the Synthesis Report

This synthesis report consists of seven main sections, including this introduction section. The second section describes the EU policy frameworks, the international policy frameworks and the external action regional strategic frameworks guiding EU support to SAFS. It also provides a brief overview of the EU institutional environment and the stakeholders' landscape. The third section presents the Methodology used, including an overview of the Evaluation Questions (EQs) and the main methods used for data collection. The fourth section presents the findings of the evaluation structured around the four EQ. The last three sections present the conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations of the evaluation.

The Annexes include the Terms of Reference (ToR), details on the policy and institutional frameworks on SAFS, details on the methodology, the detailed analysis of the e-survey results, the list of persons interviewed, the list of documents and the country and thematic case studies reports.



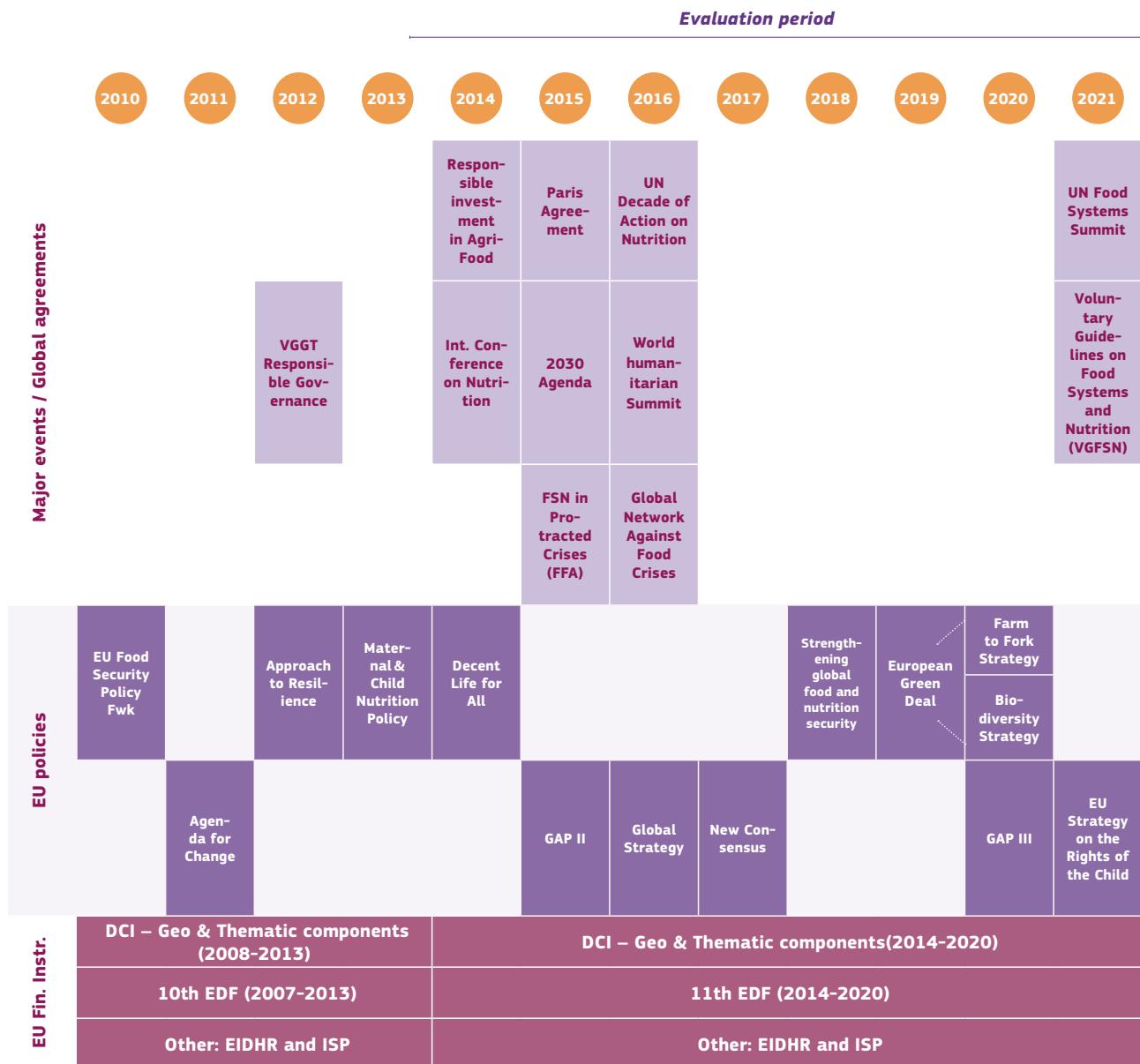
2

POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

2 POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The review presented in this section describes the policy and institutional frameworks related to SAFS at the global and EU level (summarised in Figure 1), taking into account: i) the *relatively recent formal introduction of SAFS* in these frameworks; ii) the fact that *EU support to SAFS is not guided by a single strategic policy framework*, but by strategic directions that come from various levels and have evolved over time.

Figure 1 Key reference frameworks that have guided EU support to SAFS – Timeline



Source: Particip

2.1 Overarching EU policy frameworks relevant to SAFS

The *'Farm to Fork' strategy (F2F)* is the first continent-wide strategy adopting a food systems approach. It sets out the EU's ambitions to contribute to SAFS, both domestically and globally. It is inextricably part of the European Green Deal. The F2F is closely linked to other very recent policy frameworks, including the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Circular Economy Action Plan, both adopted in 2020, and the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change adopted in 2021. The Green Deal and its related strategies provide the most important frame of reference for EU support to SAFS. Before the F2F, three *overarching policy frameworks guiding EU external action* already laid a strong foundation for EU support to SAFS:

1. The *EU Agenda for Change*³ was adopted in 2011 to increase the impact of European development policy. The Communication proposes two EU development cooperation priorities: i) good governance; and ii) inclusive and sustainable growth for human development. In the Communication, food security is framed as a global public good and closely linked with inclusive and sustainable growth. It also underlines how support in agriculture need to help countries insulate from shocks and help tackle inequalities. The Communication suggests EU action to focus on governance reforms that pay particular attention to smallholder farms.
2. The *Communication 'A Decent Life for All: From Vision to Collective Action'*⁴ was adopted in June 2014 and sets out a common EU vision and approach for the post-2015 development agenda. It put out the vision of a transformative agenda that identifies food security and nutrition and sustainable agriculture and fisheries as one of the priority areas.
3. Adopted in 2017, *the new European Consensus for Development*⁵ sets out the vision for a shared European development policy. In Article 56 of the Consensus, sustainable agriculture and food systems, including sustainable fisheries, are explicitly mentioned. Support to agro-ecological practices and actions is framed quite centrally in this article.

Several *EU policies in the area of environment* also contain key elements that have underpinned EU support to SAFS, including the importance of low-carbon pathways to achieve sustainable development. In *A Clean Planet for All*,⁶ adopted in November 2018, the EU establishes a clear vision of how to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. In this European strategic long-term vision for a climate-neutral economy there is no mention of food systems as such, but agriculture, forest and bioeconomy are named as one of the building blocks. It is also relevant to the external dimension, calling the EU to “use its external action, trade policy and international cooperation to support global transformation to low-carbon sustainable development pathways”. The *Communication 'Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests'*,⁷ adopted in July 2019, also presents a vision that combines both a domestic and external dimension to its objective of protecting and improving the health of existing forests and significantly increasing sustainable, biodiverse forest coverage worldwide.

The EU's *LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale)* approach engaged people and local organisations in the development of the EU's rural areas by forming local partnerships consisting of public, private and civil actors. The approach has seven features: bottom-up; area-based; rests on local partnerships; features an integrated and multi-sectoral strategy; has networking at its heart; fosters innovation; and focuses on cooperation. It is also dynamic, with a design that suits adaptation to challenges.⁸ In the 2014-2020 period, the LEADER approach has been extended under the broader term Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), which moves away from a sole focus on rural areas.

The Russian war in Ukraine has put food security high on the political agenda. In March 2022, the EU brought out a Communication aimed to safeguard global food security and to support European farmers and consumers.⁹ The Communication, and subsequent short and medium-term actions, announced support measures and derogation of greening obligations. While more funding was announced for humanitarian aid, a loss of political traction for the F2F is visible as greening obligations are relaxed. These derogations intend to ramp up agricultural production and illustrate how difficult it is to maintain a strong coherent agenda for sustainable and inclusive development in a crisis context, e.g., balancing short-term emergency responses and investing in longer-term resilience. Some synergy between these objectives is evident: given the war and the volatile markets, EU institutions urged EU MS to revise their national strategic plans under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including lowering their dependence on fertilisers. These plans should align with the Green Deal and its F2F and biodiversity strategies to contribute to their targets.

2.2 Global frameworks

Figure 2 presents an overview of the main actors in the global food systems architecture. The United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement are two key reference frameworks of the global food systems architecture. The Green Deal, the F2F and its related strategies are an integral part of the EU's strategy to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the climate commitments in the Paris Agreement. EU support to SAFS is also embedded in these global frameworks.

³ European Commission (2011): *Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change*.

⁴ European Commission (2014): *A decent life for all: from vision to collective action*.

⁵ European Commission (2017): *European Consensus on Development*.

⁶ European Commission (2018): *Clean planet for all*.

⁷ European Commission (2019): *Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests*.

⁸ European Network for Rural Development (2022): *Leader approach*. Website.

⁹ EU (2022): *Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems*. COM (2022) 133 final

Figure 2 Global food systems architecture

Global inter-governmental decision-making		CFS		G20		G7						
		FAO	WHO	UNDP	World Bank	CGIAR	WFP					
International organizations	UNICEF	UNEP		IFC	OECD	IFAD	ILO					
International treaties, conventions and protocols	UNFCCC		UNCCD		CBD	Biosafety						
Multi-actor forums, networks and initiatives	GATT		Genetic resources		FSIN							
	GFAR		GLOPAN		FOLU	AMIS						
	WBCSD		Food Systems Dashboard		GAIN	SUN						
	TAP		PARM		WEF	Foresight4Food						
	Zero Hunger		GAFSP		ILC	EAT						
	IPES		Global Network against Food Crisis		GDPRD	GCARD						
Regional forums and initiatives	Africa		Americas		Asia	Central and Eastern Europe	Mediterranean and Middle East	Western Europe				
	AU	ECOWAS	IDB	CAF	ADB	AIIB	CEFTA	EBRD	IsDB	GCC	EIB	EU
	SADC	EAC	MERCO-SUR	OECS	ASEAN	APEC	CAP	IAMO	AFESD	OPEC Fund	CAP	SCAR
	CAADP	AfDB	CAN	PADF	PIF	SAARC						Agri-natura
	FARA	AGRA	ACS	NAFTA	CAREC							

Source: GDPRD (2021): *Donor contributions to food systems. Stocktaking report*

Since 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* ('2030 Agenda'),¹⁰ including its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), represents the global framework for eradicating poverty and achieving worldwide sustainable development by 2030. Due to the interconnectedness of the SDGs, implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a coherent and integrated approach that manages trade-offs and maximises synergies. Food systems are key in this regard as they affect all of the SDGs.

The *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*,¹¹ which was adopted in 2015, is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, and provides a framework for financing sustainable development by aligning all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities.

The EU and its EU MS are party to the first legally binding global climate change agreement, the *Paris Agreement*,¹² which was adopted in 2015 and signed in 2016. Under the Agreement, countries are meant to develop national plans – nationally determined contributions (NDCs) – indicating the actions they will take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate change.

10 UN (2015): *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

11 UN (2015): *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*.

12 UNFCCC (2015): *Paris Agreement*.

Other relevant global frameworks include the Convention on Biological Diversity,¹³ adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and the Global UN-led initiatives related to nutrition. The *CBD* is an international legal instrument for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity that takes into account “the need to share costs and benefits between developed and developing countries”.

In 2012, the World Health Assembly endorsed a comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. The plan specified a set of six ‘*Global Nutrition Targets*’ that by 2025 aim to reduce stunting, wasting, anaemia and low birthweight, ensure no increase in childhood overweight and increase breastfeeding rate.¹⁴ In April 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution ‘*Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)*’. Through this resolution, UN member states committed to undertake ten years of sustained and coherent implementation of policies, programmes and increased investments to eliminate malnutrition. The EU has been a Lead Group member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, a multi-stakeholder coalition launched in 2010 that aims to improve nutrition in a collective effort.

In 2016, the *World Humanitarian Summit* aimed to improve humanitarian action and generate commitments for a better functioning humanitarian system. In 2015, the EU adopted the Communication ‘Towards the World Humanitarian Summit: A global partnership for principled and effective humanitarian action’¹⁵ and in 2016 adopted Council Conclusions reflecting the EU’s common vision for the Summit.¹⁶

2.3 International frameworks related to SAFS

The *Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)*,¹⁷ launched in 2010 and reviewed in-depth in 2017, is a non-legally binding document updated annually to incorporate decisions and recommendations adopted by the *Committee on World Food Security (CFS)* Plenary. It aims to improve coordination and guide action by a wide range of stakeholders at the global, regional and country levels by providing practical guidance for food security and nutrition strategies, policies and actions validated by the CFS. Support to the CFS is at the core of EU’s efforts to strengthen global food governance.¹⁸ The GSF draws on, complements and ensures coherence between several international frameworks, including: The *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN)*,¹⁹ the *Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (FFA)*,²⁰ the *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI)*,²¹ and the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT)*.²²

2.4 EU external action policy/strategic framework(s)

2.4.1 EU policy frameworks on food and nutrition security

Policy frameworks that guided EU support to SAFS in the period under review have been mostly geared towards addressing food and nutrition security. There are no official EU external action policy documents specifically on SAFS. However, some policy priorities present in the existing frameworks show how key elements of food systems thinking were already in place during the period. In Annex 2, we highlight the following: i) the EU general frameworks on food and nutrition security; ii) the EU strategic approach to resilience, especially in relation to food crises and the context of climate change; iii) the EU specific frameworks on nutrition; iv) the EU approach to support sustainable agricultural value chain development and work with the private sector and v) the EU approach to agricultural research and innovation systems. These thematic areas have at their core that they aim to integrate multi-actor and multi-sector approaches with systemic, structural and non-linear approaches.

13 UN (1992): *Convention on Biological Diversity*.

14 WHO (2012): *Global Nutrition Targets*.

15 EU (2012): *Towards the World Humanitarian Summit: A global partnership for principled and effective humanitarian action*.

16 General Secretariat of the Council (2016): *Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the World Humanitarian Summit*.

17 Committee on World Food Security (2021): *Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)*.

18 EU (2020): *Implementing EU food and nutrition security policy commitments: Fourth biennial report*, p.2

19 Committee on World Food Security (2021): *CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition*.

20 Committee on World Food Security (2015): *Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA)*.

21 Committee on World Food Security (2014): *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI)*.

22 Committee on World Food Security (2021): *the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests*.

2.4.2 Other key EU external action policy frameworks

The EU commitment to integrate rights-based approaches to development is enshrined in the Agenda for Change adopted in 2012 and the European Union Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy.²³ The EU has committed to 'Policy Coherence for Development' (PCD). The legal commitment to promote PCD was reaffirmed in June 2017 in the European Consensus on Development.²⁴ PCD also takes a central place in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, broadening the perspective for PCD and the Commission's approach and reporting on it.

Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is an intrinsic part of the food systems-related objectives of the EU. The main policy document guiding action on gender is the EU Plan of Action for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2016-2020 (GAP II), which was adopted in October 2015.²⁵

2.4.3 Regional strategic frameworks

Most EU regional cooperation frameworks include key strategic elements relevant to SAFS. In particular, collaboration with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) has been guided by the *Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA)*.²⁶ The CPA, particularly after its 2005 and 2010 revisions, includes several provisions relevant to SAFS, including cooperation efforts on agricultural policies and strategies. The *Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) regulation* also includes a list of priority areas of cooperation per region. For instance, for *North and South-East Asia*, there are relevant references to FNSSA.

2.5 EU institutional environment

2.5.1 Internal institutional organisation

At DG INTPA, the entity leading on SAFS-related issues is the Unit F3 or '*INTPA F3. Sustainable Agri-Food systems and Fisheries*'. INTPA F3 coordinates with a wide range of entities within *EU institutions*, including lines DGs and the other main actors involved in EU external action (e.g., EEAS, EU Delegations, DG AGRI, DG SANTE, DG MARE, DG ENV, DG ECHO, DG NEAR, and the Joint Research Centre – JRC). Beyond formal interservice coordination and quality support mechanisms, joined efforts aimed to promote SAFS also stem from ad hoc and/or informal consultation initiatives.

Building on achievements during the period 2014-2018,²⁷ INTPA F3 and its direct partners within the EU actively promoted the integration of a SAFS multidimensional framework in the 2021-2027 multi-annual indicative programming process. A challenge for INTPA F3 to adopt a SAFS approach has been the difficulty in working in a more integrated way across units. F3 interacts with other DGs in charge of policy making (i.e., MARE, ENV, and SANTE) but has not necessarily the means to influence these policies (its expertise is outsourced, addressing ad hoc requests, with little joint strategic decision-making, lack of time to react due to tight interservice consultation deadlines, etc.). Interviews carried out by the evaluation team show that the situation is the same with the European Union Delegations (EUD); F3 receives the programmes proposals too late to properly react on them.

There is no common Theory of Change across units working in silos. A potentially missed opportunity to strengthen (internal) incentives is the vetoed contribution by the EU to the establishment of a SAFS marker. This marker could be part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) system of purpose codes used to track aid activity across sectors and help introduce a more systemic logic in reporting on donors' contributions to SAFS.

23 Council of the European Union (2012): *Council conclusions on Human Rights and Democracy*.

24 EU (2017): *European Consensus on Development*.

25 GAP II was succeeded by the EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations 2020–2025 (GAP III) in December 2020

26 ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (2020): *Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA)*.

27 EU (2019): *EU Achievements in Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture 2014-2018. DG INTPA*.

The drastic reduction – from EUR 1.250 million to EUR 350 million – in SAFS related funding from the last (2014-2020) to the current MFF (2021-2027) has posed another major challenge. The lack of (internal) human resources and continued prioritisation has limited the ability to capitalise on knowledge management and internal lessons learned. Support to and regular knowledge and information exchange with EUDs was also limited by time constraints on both sides. There is a shared sense of opportunity to work more as a thematic think tank, especially as DG INTPA continues working more according to geographies. Several respondents voiced a need to support EUDs more on political economy issues.

Another challenge is the patchwork of different forums, actors, policy instruments, initiatives, networks, conventions, protocols, and international and regional organisations that form the global food system architecture (see Figure 2 above). This highly complex patchwork suffers from fragmentation and overlapping mandates that can hamper effective action.²⁸ The EU supports and maintains many of the food security organisations as a key donor, but navigation and building coordinated action takes time and capacity.

2.5.2 Partnerships

EU HQ is engaged in various partnerships on SAFS at the European and global levels. Within the EU, the EU coordinates with the *EU MS* via diverse platforms such as: i) the *HARD* group, ii) joint programming and, more recently, Team Europe initiatives, iii) platforms to coordinate EU external action with EU MS at the overall level. At global level, the EU has been supporting food and nutrition security governance by developing universal frameworks, metrics, methods, and standards, laying the foundation for coordinated action. In the framework of the F2F strategy, the EU promotes the global transition to SAFS in (mostly) the same multilateral fora and international standard-setting bodies. Steady support has been provided to the CFS (see also section 2.3). In this context, the EU has increasingly sharpened its strategic dialogue with the UN *Rome-Based Agencies (RBA)*. The EU also supports the *Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD)* and the SUN Movement that proved instrumental in advancing national nutrition policy dialogues, coordination, partner complementarity and collective accountability. More recently, the EU actively contributed to the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Food Systems Summit, and the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit aiming to contribute to SAFS.

During the period under review, the EU has also supported *data collection and data use for agriculture and fisheries* to improve evidence-based analysis and policy decision-making in food security, nutrition, and resilience – and ultimately promote agriculture transformation. EU interventions include notably the 50x2030 Initiative; the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics; the Food Security Information Network; the Food Security Portal; and the INFORMED programme.

At a continental level, the EU has been a steady supporter of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), a continent-wide strategy and framework that aims to spur agricultural development.

Since 2015, the EU also supports National Information Platforms for Nutrition to inform policy decision-making on nutrition across sectors.

The EU has been very active in the launch of the *Global Network Against Food Crises*²⁹ in 2016. The network aims to contribute to resilient agri-food systems across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Recognised as a key achievement of the Network, the annual Global Report on Food Crises compiles joint food insecurity analysis carried out by the EC, UN agencies (FAO, WFP, UNICEF), USAID, and other global and regional stakeholders. The Report keeps acute food insecurity high on the global agenda and assist in the prioritisation and allocation of resources by donors. Finally, in 2017, the EU launched a *Development of Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture (DeSIRA)* initiative to contribute to a climate-relevant sustainable transformation of agri-food systems in low and middle-income countries.

Two thematic programmes were included in the DCI – the Programme on Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC) and the Programme on Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities (CSO-LA). In particular, the GPGC programme has included a specific component on FNSA, which was managed by EU HQ (DG INTPA) and covered a broad range of activities, including support to partnerships at the global level.

28 Rampa et al. (2019): *The global institutional landscape of food and agriculture: How to achieve SDG 2*. ECDPM & Chatham House.

29 Global Network Against Food Crises: *Global report on food crisis*.



3

METHODOLOGY

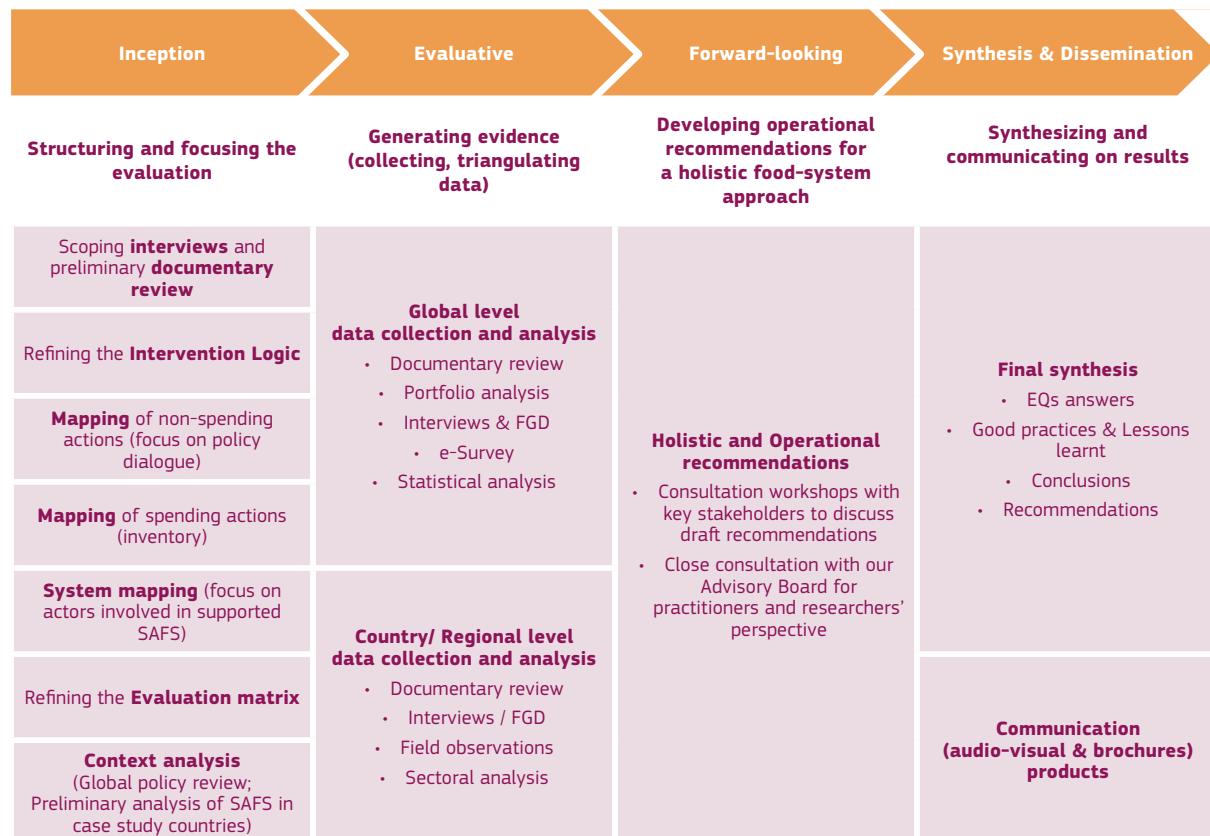
3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overall approach

The overall *approach* adopted in the evaluation follows the EU Better Regulation, DG INTPA methodological guidelines for strategic evaluation, as well as other international good practices and guidance in evaluations. In line with the ToR, the approach was finalised by the evaluation team during the inception phase and discussed and agreed with the Reference Group (RG). The evaluation was conducted in *four main phases* between September 2021 and October 2022, as summarised in Figure 3.

This evaluation is a strategic one, designed to characterise, understand, and assess what has been achieved, how and why and, what lessons can be drawn from the experience. In this regard, the evaluation adopts a *theory-based* approach to measure and evaluate changes at different levels of the reconstructed intervention logic, using a *mix of tools and methods* and exploring different primary and secondary sources. The intervention logic reconstructed in the simplified diagram below (see Figure 4) provided a *framework* for both data collection and analysis. It has been designed to build a comprehensive understanding of whether and how different EU support actions contribute to emerging results and under which conditions, so that lessons can be drawn and applied to future support efforts. It was also used to develop the evaluation matrix.

Figure 3 Evaluation process



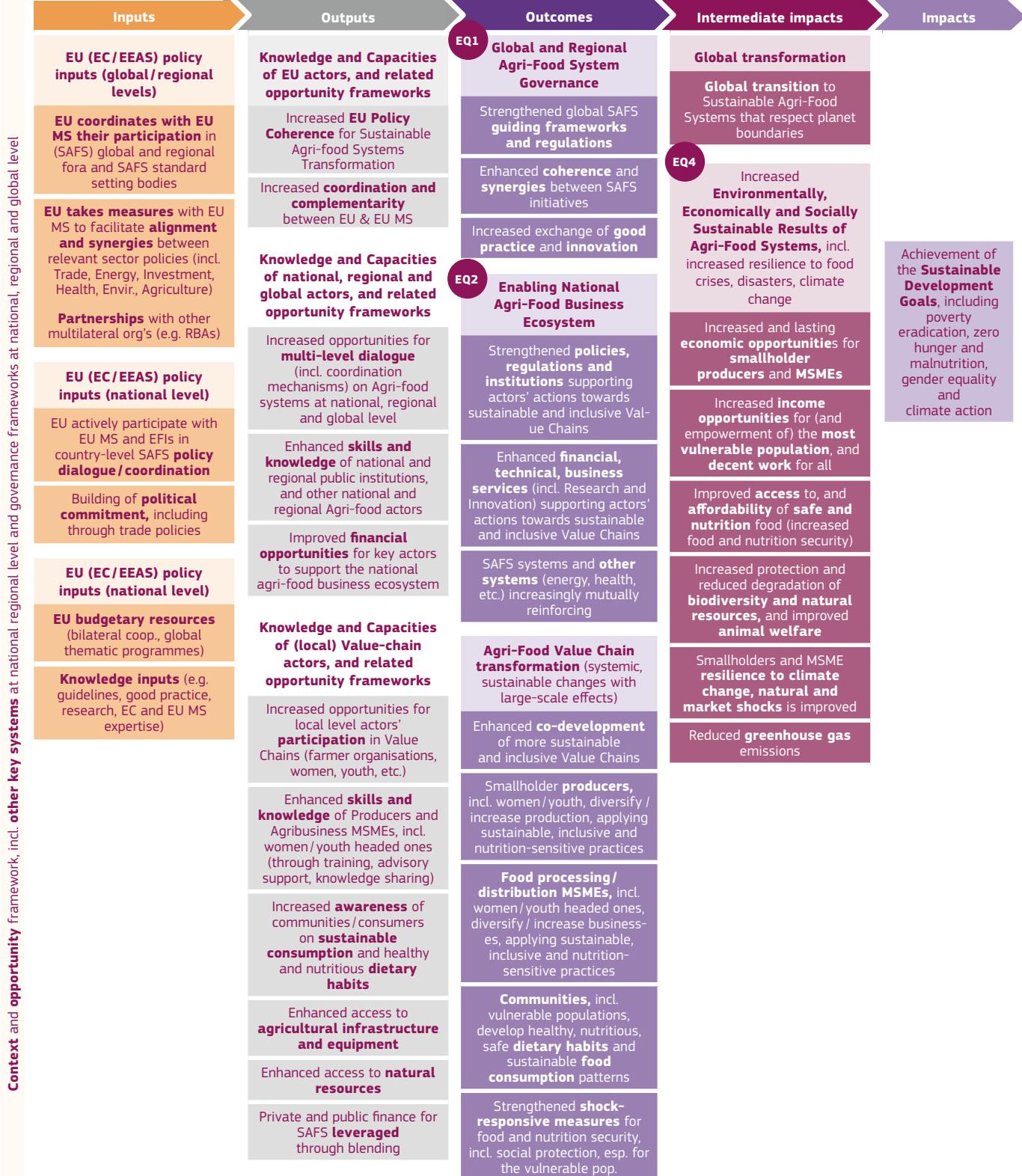
Four mainly *backward-looking EQs* were formulated to capture the complexity of EU support to SAFS and examine its effects in detail (see full EQs, including judgement criteria and indicators, in Annex 3 / Volume III). The EQs cover the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact and coherence (see Table 1). In addition, two Forward-looking Questions (FQ) served the purpose of capturing lessons learned (FQ1) and good practices (FQ2), building on the results of the evaluative phase and additional sources (see Figure 3).

Table 1 EQ coverage of the OECD-DAC and EC-specific evaluation criteria

EQ \ Evaluation criteria	Relevance	Coherence	EU value added	Effectiveness	Impact	Sustainability
EQ1. Global and regional agri-food systems governance: To what extent has the EU supported changes in agri-food system governance at global and regional level that are conducive to support transformation to more sustainable agri-food systems?						
EQ2. National agri-food systems governance: To what extent has the EU supported changes in agri-food system governance at country level that are conducive to support transformation to more sustainable agri-food systems?						
EQ3. Changes in agri-food value chains and nutrition: To what extent has the EU contributed to diversity and climate and nutrition-sensitive changes in agri-food value chains including value chain actors at different levels of society, including local community and consumer level?						
EQ4. Agri-Food System-Level Effects: To what extent have different types of EU support facilitated, or are likely to facilitate inclusive and sustainable agri-food system transformations?						

 Largely covered
  Covered
  Also covered

Figure 4 Reconstructed Intervention Logic



Reduced sphere of control / influence of the EU

3.2 Details on the case studies

Six country case studies across Africa, Asia and Latin America have been selected to go more in depth in the analysis (see also Table 2): Niger, Kenya, Malawi, Cambodia, Colombia, and Haiti. The country case studies focused primarily on finding evidence on EQ 2 (national agri-food systems governance), EQ3 (agri-food value chains), and EQ4 (agri-food system level effects), and how these are linked, while exploring possible linkages to EQ1 (global and regional agri-food governance) and gathering evidence for the forward-looking exercise. To select the countries, the evaluation team used a *purposive sampling strategy* aimed at identifying high 'potential for learning' cases and considering the following criteria: i) volume & diversity of EU instruments and SAFS entry points in EU portfolio; joint programming; ii) diverse partner country contexts i.e., geographical areas, income status, food system governance and business environment, and fragility and iii) access and relevance of available sources of information.

In addition, the evaluation team carried out *three thematic case studies* on key EU partnerships: i) a regional case study focussing on the *EU-Africa collaboration on research and innovation* (R&I), ii) a case study on the *engagement of the EU with the RBAs*, and iii) a case study on *EU Member States (EU MS)*, focussing on coherence and learning at EU level. Eight EU MS were looked at in more detail: Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, and Spain. The thematic case studies collected evidence regarding global and regional agri-food systems governance (EQ1) and helped to assess the extent to which these changes are contributing to improvements in national governance (EQ2) and agri-food value chains (EQ3) as well as broader outcomes on agri-food systems (EQ4) – for more details, see Annex 3 in Volume III.

Table 2 Countries case selection and rationale

Country Case	Justification / Remarks
Africa	
Niger	Niger's fragile context is illustrative of the challenges facing the SAHEL region and is a major recipient of EU FNSSA. EU-funded FNSSA interventions (all financing instruments combined) amounted to 72% of Niger total EU bilateral allocations under the European Development Fund (EDF). The budget support modality has been used to support FNSSA in the country.
Kenya	Kenya is a low to medium-income country. It has also been one of the major EU FNSSA recipients. EU portfolio in the country covers blending as a modality. In recent years, the country has substantially improved its business environment (Doing Business Index) and its national policies strongly emphasise the energy/infrastructure sector.
Malawi	Malawi is a low-income country and has been a major recipient of EU FNSSA funds. The EU portfolio put a strong emphasis on social protection and the HDP nexus. Blending ('Access to finance' facility) has also been used as a support modality in EU support to FNSSA.
Asia	
Cambodia	FNSSA is an important area of cooperation between the EU and Cambodia, as illustrated by the fact that EU FNSSA interventions (all financing instruments combined) amount to one-third of the initial Multi annual Indicative Programme (MIP) bilateral allocations (DCI) and the use of Budget Support (BS). The country context, including in terms of SAFS, is representative of several countries of the South Asia region. Support to fisheries is a key dimension of the EU portfolio in the country.
Latin America and the Caribbean	
Colombia	Classified as an upper-middle income country, Colombia still faces food crisis and conflict challenges. It is one of the biggest recipients of EU support to SAFS in Latin America (the biggest one in South America). EU FNSSA interventions (all financing instruments combined) amount to more than the MIP bilateral allocations (DCI). Moreover, the cooperation has relied on an interesting mix of modalities, including Trust Fund (with EU MS) and budget support.
Haiti	FNSSA interventions in Haiti cover a diversity of themes and the EU portfolio focuses on the HDP nexus. The country context is characterised by a high degree of fragility, including in relation to challenges related to the environment and climate change.

The case studies (both country and thematic ones) are meant to be complementary and to provide the evaluation with a detailed understanding of the SAFS-related EU interventions in DG INTPA partner countries and regions, between 2014 and 2020. These *case studies do not constitute separate, stand-alone evaluations* of EU support in the countries or national contexts. Instead, case study notes are understood as illustrative and are used to contribute, taken as a whole, to answering the EQs of the evaluation and feeding into forward-looking component of the evaluation.

3.3 Main tools/methods for data collection and analysis

The evaluation team has combined qualitative and quantitative data, while relying on a mix of primary and secondary data sources. A series of tools and methods were used for collecting, structuring, processing and analysing data, including:

- Documentation review, covering a wide range of documents, including an extensive set of documentation at global, regional and country levels, and, in the context of the country case studies, project documentation (see Annex 6 (Volume III));
- Interviews and group discussions with key informants (see Annex 5 Volume III);
- An e-survey (see full report in Annexe 4 Volume III);
- Nine case studies (see section 3.2 and Volume II);
- Review of available databases and global indicators (including those provided by INTPA F3 and Research Institutions and the RBA).

Box 1 Number and type of actors interviewed

In total, **305 persons** were interviewed (interviews and focus groups) in the six countries covered by the case studies. Participants, in addition to EU staff, were partners from the governments, the civil society, UN organisations, research institutions, development agencies mainly.

In addition, **99 interviews** were carried out as part of the global analysis and thematic case studies with EU staff (including various line DGs), EU MS representatives, independent experts, research centres, think tanks and UN organisations. For the thematic case studies the selection of interviewees was based on their active involvement and role in the partnership, both on the EU side and the side of the partners. Independent experts were interviewed to provide a more external view on the functioning of the partnership.

Overall, the evaluation primarily relied on qualitative methods of analysis to: i) develop a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which and how the EU support has contributed to / is likely to contribute to transformative outcomes; ii) identify and understand diverse views, perspectives, relations, and cooperation modalities that may inform future EU interventions.

At the *global level*, the evaluation team mostly relied on documentary review, portfolio analysis, thematic case studies, interviews with key informants, group discussions, and an e-survey (see Box 2). The FNSSA portfolio was made available early during the evaluation and provided a solid basis for mapping the EU efforts to be reviewed. At the country level, documentary review, portfolio analysis, system mapping, interviews, group discussions, sectoral analysis and field observations were combined. Quantitative analysis of output and outcome data proved impossible within the timeframe of this evaluation due to the poor quality and incomplete coverage of the data available. Consequently, no statistical analysis was possible of input, output, outcome occurrences and/or relations. And, besides the descriptive statistics of the portfolios and global survey, no statistical analysis was done. All the analysis was rigorously qualitative.

Country case studies mainly relied on a detailed documentary review, including an analysis of the project documentation related to EU support to SAFS, semi-structured interviews and group discussions. For each country case, the team worked with the EUD, a national consultant and local key informants to generate a broad list of stakeholders to be consulted. The objective was to reach out to a diversity of groups, including expected beneficiaries, women, and youth who are involved or, well-informed about EU support interventions and their effects, both at the national and local level. The team conducted semi-structured interviews during the field missions, using a locally adapted selection of EQ/JCs to guide data collection. Findings were validated with diverse stakeholders during seminars at the end of each mission.

Box 2 Short overview of the e-survey

Between May and June 2022, the team conducted an e-survey with a view to collecting additional primary data from country-level stakeholders present in the countries mentioned in the ToR. Respondents included: EUD staff and representatives from National public entities, UN agencies, EU MS, local and International CSOs and other international organisations involved in the delivery of EU support. In total, 695 respondents were invited to the e-survey. The team received 175 responses from 39 countries, covering five regions: Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

The e-survey was pre-tested and managed by Particip in-house staff. The questionnaire consisted of a mix of open and closed questions structured around three main sections: i) Design of the EU support; ii) Modalities and delivery methods; and iii) Effects of the EU support. Open questions were designed to allow for further exploration and contextualisation of the topics, while allowing the respondents to bring in additional qualitative elements or perspectives which they deemed relevant to the questions. The responses to the e-survey allowed triangulation with other primary and secondary sources.

Most findings are based on at least three different building blocks of the evaluation (i.e., case studies, global survey, interviews with key informants) and were identified following an incremental approach.³⁰ Synthesis was primarily done through *qualitative, iterative data analysis*, which refers to an iterative process of identifying key thought units related to each EQ from semi-structured interviews and other sources, organising these thought units into clusters and identifying the key patterns of actions-to-results within each cluster.³¹ Conclusions, lessons and recommendations were developed and validated in a similar incremental way.

3.4 Limitations of the evaluation

This strategic evaluation covers a multi-level effort to influence dynamic and diverse global systems, driven at every level by a variety of (inter)actions between multiple and vastly different stakeholders. Instead of trying to cover these complex systems in an exhaustive way, the evaluation aimed at characterising and assessing transformative outcomes, intermediary impacts and system dynamics induced by EU support actions at four different system levels – global, regional, national, value chain (see also the framework used in the EU's Farm2Fork strategy). The lack of quantitative data and statistical analysis does limit the possibilities to grade 'effectiveness'. However, the links between effort, output, and outcomes are well-anchored in the texts; providing evidence-based insights in the way the various strategies, instruments and support-actions contributed to noticeable results across different contexts.

During case studies and synthesis by the team, data quality proved robust and no imbalances due to limitations of data quality have been identified. Also, the team was able to work freely and independently, access to selected key informants was actively facilitated and no limitations were experienced in obtaining the information required. Information on conflicting interests of different players was made available.

30 In terms of process, overall findings were synthesised from the case study findings, applying three criteria: i) occurrence of the finding across different contexts (reiteration); ii) likely contribution to agri-food system transformation (transformative potential); iii) quality of the underpinning evidence (primary and secondary data quality). The synthesis was done in three phases: i) raw texts from the case studies were organised in line with the EQs and JCs and slightly edited, and authors of the case studies were asked to confirm or adjust any reference made to their materials; ii) a more synthetic version of the findings was shared for scrutiny by team members to correct any misinterpretation or bias they might identify; iii) the findings were edited down to highlight the main substantiated patterns identified and share / rediscussed with the RG and the relevant EUD staff. As a final step, data gathered through the global survey and other sources (e.g. interviews and documentary review at global level) were used to double-check the consistency of the findings with the notions expressed by diverse stakeholders.

31 These patterns are then scrutinised to assess whether they originate from multiple stakeholders, sources, and contexts and validated during a validation seminar with all stakeholders interviewed. Where relevant to understanding how actions did or did not contribute to results, differences of opinions between stakeholders are analysed to understand whether and how these affect progress. The patterns validated provided information on a wide variety of documented EU support actions and their (positive, adverse or lack of) contribution to the emergence of outcomes and intermediate impacts, set within a specific (global/country) context.

Practical limitations have also occurred during the evaluative phase. This includes:

- *Processes examined are often still on-going:* Given the interest in the governance of agri-food systems, and its political economy, data reflects just one time slot in an ongoing process of struggle and/or mutual adjustment between agri-food system actors that characterises system transformation. Where possible, the team has tried to capture the key issues of the ongoing debates, that provide part of the context in which EU support is designed and implemented. However, this can never provide an agenda for change, as such issues may change anytime, under the influence of the political, economic, social, and environmental developments and debates in-country, regionally and globally.
- *Limitation in the use of quantitative data regarding EU spending on FNSSA:* The database of EU interventions in the areas of FNSSA made available by INTPA F3 allowed performing statistical analyses that were both useful for the country case studies and the global analysis. However, the comprehensiveness of the data seems to be better for recent years (>2018) of the period under review. Incomplete data for the earlier part of the period means that it was difficult to come up with precise findings regarding trends in funding during the whole period 2014-2020. Moreover, the exploitation of the data has been challenging for specific analyses such as in the context of the thematic case studies. In particular, the database classification could not provide a comprehensive overview of all R&I EU interventions. To compensate this uncertainty, key initiatives and financial contributions were tracked through a thorough documentation review and quantitative and qualitative information provided by a relatively broad range of interviewees.
- *Limitation in the use of quantitative data regarding results (outputs/outcomes) of EU support:* the availability, comprehensiveness, and level of detail of the data available on results (outputs/outcomes) of EU support substantially vary from an intervention to another. This strongly limited the use of quantitative data in the analysis of the effects of EU support in the country case studies. Moreover, the monitoring indicators used in the interventions' results frameworks were too different to aggregate data in a meaningful way at country or cross-country level. The team made an attempt to use data from the EU Results Reporting (RR) database. However, it was not possible to exploit the data because of various limitations, including: i) non-alignment of the indicators used, including non-alignment with the EU Results Framework³²; ii) lack of baseline value; iii) lack of recent value on the monitoring indicators in a few cases; and iv) ambiguity in possible interpretation of the value being reported in several cases.
- *Remote missions:* Haiti is the only country case study for which a field mission was not possible, due to security and sanitary reasons (COVID-19). However, interviews were carried out with different type of stakeholders present in different regions of the country and the analysis in the case study could still build on a reach evidence base allowing for triangulation and the identification of credible findings.
- *Lack of stakeholders' availability:* Due to a high workload, some of the persons contacted for an interview could not make themselves available to the team. This has mostly entailed some delays in the production of the case study notes. This was compensated with more quantitative data (e.g. in the case of the EU-RBA case study) and additional stakeholders were contacted to ensure sufficient consultations and make possible the triangulation.

³² The indicators compiled in the RR database are very diverse. In 2018, the EU introduced an EU Results Framework (EU RF) at corporate level. The EU RF contains indicators specific to FNSSA (e.g. 2.02 on nutrition and 2.03 on smallholders). However, the EU RF indicators were rarely present in the indicators used to monitor the interventions falling in the scope of this evaluation. As an illustration, EURF indicators relevant to this evaluation represent only 3% of the indicators compiled in the 2019-2020 RR exercise for Kenya and Malawi (two case study countries).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Particip is a member of the UN Global Compact and applies the UN and DAC ethical standards in all the evaluation it carries out. In the various phases of this evaluation, all data collection processes have been based on informed consent, voluntary participation, 'do no harm' (physical/physiological) and confidentiality. During interviews or focus group discussions, the evaluation team has also taken into account social norms, managed power dynamics to the extent possible and tried to hear a diversity of voices. Moreover, the security and sanitary situations have been carefully assessed before the main data collection phase to ensure field missions were possible for both national and international consultants. To ensure confidentiality, the evaluation team has anonymised the sources of information in the evaluative deliverables. No situation of conflicts of interest have been reported. The evaluation team has been able to interviews the various stakeholders freely without any pressure to put forward or to play down any of the findings.



4

MAIN FINDINGS

4 MAIN FINDINGS

This strategic evaluation aims to understand EU support to Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) and its contributions to promoting transformation towards sustainable agri-food systems. The analysis covers EU *partnerships* for improving global and regional agri-food system governance (EQ1), as well as the *design and outcomes* of EU support to national agri-food systems, including changes in governance and agri-food value chains and nutrition at country and community level (EQs2 and 3), and changes at *agri-food system level* (EQ4).

Within the framework of this strategic evaluation, it was not possible to aggregate data from project-level sources in a meaningful way to produce a comprehensive overview of outcomes and/or intermediate impacts. However, through case studies, the team collected an illustrative set of examples, or 'signals', of how EU support contributed to agri-food system transformation and identified some underlying 'patterns of effectiveness' or plausible impact pathways of EU-supported actions. Given the limited temporal scope of this evaluation, and the volatile political landscapes in which EU support and partnerships for sustainable agri-food systems are embedded, these signals are best described as 'early', implying relevant "*design & implementation enabling preconditions for transformation*"³³. Some show more leverage and may be understood as '*interim*' outcomes "*external to the program boundaries evident*." In terms of transformation, the evaluation did not encounter "*long term, self-sustaining outcomes materialising*", also called 'advanced signals' of transformation³⁴. This is not surprising, as the EU is rarely the only reason why an outcome emerges; there is always a partnership with other actors behind it and EU-supported partnerships are not the only ones that influence agri-food system transformation. A multiplicity of other partnerships, actors and support programs drive agri-food system transformation at the global, regional, and national level. Hence, the sustainability of transformative outcomes and intermediate impacts hinges upon political, economic, environmental, and social dynamics, to a large extent outside the EU's sphere of control.

This evaluation carefully limits itself to looking into outcomes and intermediate impacts that can be linked directly to EU support. This brings along two more limitations:

- Firstly, this strategic evaluation focused on a limited number of countries and partnerships the EU supports through its FNSSA actions. The case studies were selected strategically to represent the essence of EU action in a diverse range of countries and partnerships;
- Secondly, due to limited time available in each country and partnership, only a small number of FNSSA initiatives were selected for in-depth scrutiny. Again, the selection was made strategically to represent the relevant EU portfolio in the country.

Consequently, the findings presented are considered a subset of relevant EU chains of actions, outcomes, and intermediate impacts, illustrative of its entire FNSSA portfolio.

The findings presented in this Evaluative Report are based on: i) in-depth interviews, ii) six country case studies, iii) three global case studies, and iv) the e-survey. The interviews served to understand the context in which EU initiatives were situated and operationalised. The case studies provided a more in-depth view of how selected EU-support initiatives were designed, organised, implemented and contributed to transformative change. The e-survey contributed to mirroring the perceptions of EU partners about the operationalisation of its support to FNSSA.

³³ Savage, M. and McPherson, S. et al. (2020): *Signals of Transformational Change, Insights for the evaluation of transformational change in the Climate Investment Funds*. CIF-ITAD.

³⁴ Ibid.

4.1 EQ1. Global and regional agri-food systems governance

To what extent has the EU supported changes in governance at global and regional level that are conducive to support transformation to more sustainable agri-food systems?



Summary answer to the EQ

The EU has contributed substantially to governance at global and regional level that encourages SAFS transformation. At the global level, it has been a vital source of financial support to the RBA (FAO, WFP, IFAD) and the CFS. It strongly supported the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). This support has bolstered the supply of global public goods for SAFS; specifically, data and information, frameworks and metrics, methods and standards that contribute to coordinated global action. The EU's value-driven commitment to stakeholder and multilateral engagement, often demand-driven, has supported assessments, policy reforms, and programmes, which in turn have contributed to sketching the contours of a more integrated approach towards SAFS transformation.

At the same time, and limiting the outcome of that support, the EU operated in contested terrain where commercial and geopolitical interests collide. EU influence in the RBAs is hampered by multiple factors: limited EU (specifically DG INTPA) human capacity, lack of a coordinated position with EU Member States (EU MS), who compete for influence and visibility, and governance issues reducing the EU's voice. The result is that, rather than a strategic partnership, the EU-RBA relationship has remained closer to one between a funder and an implementing agency. Besides, the preparations for the UNFSS were politically contentious, especially regarding the debate between multilateral and multi-stakeholder approaches to SAFS. In this environment, one of the EU's signal contributions has been to support a diverse and, in the end, salutary dialogue of often starkly different visions of the world's food system transformation and, to engage actively with several of its follow-up initiatives: the Food Systems Coalitions.

Through the EU-Africa R&I Partnership and the African Union-EU High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on Science, Technology, and Innovation, established in 2010 as part of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, the EU has played a central role in driving African SAFS transformation. However, taken at all levels, from the country to the continental, the EU-Africa partnership so far has fallen short of its ambitions. EU support is fragmented and there is a profusion of strategies, dialogues, platforms, and initiatives. There are far more bilateral than regional partnerships, in part because donors fear losing visibility in multilateral partnerships. More fundamentally, a basic structural issue plays up, at bilateral as well as EU level: Unless Africa's organisational R&I capacity needs are fully addressed, African partners remain distinctly junior ones.

At the European level, views on coordinating EU MS actions on agri-food system transformation are mixed. The agenda of the HARD group, an informal platform for the exchange of information on issues related to agriculture and rural development, includes FNSSA items. Meetings focus mainly on global events and global initiatives, EC communications and strategies, specific studies, and progress reports. Participants regard HARD more as a forum for exchanging ideas than one for arriving at a shared, action-oriented to-do list, let alone a common strategy. What is clear is that, so far, SAFS-related European policies, regulations, programming, and funding of R&I are overly fragmented. They reflect the broader architecture of food systems-related institutions, public, non-governmental and private sector stakeholders, research organisations, platforms and governance processes which so far has evolved without a clear food system framing. Differences in EU MS approaches to SAFS persist and a more integrated EU approach cannot yet be identified in practice.

In principle, the Green Deal should provide a unified, EU wide view on SAFS and the way forward for unity at Brussels level. In practice, inter-DG coordination has remained less than needed. DGs RTD and INTPA have fundamentally different interpretations of their mission; the one promoting European R&I while recognising that development cooperation can contribute to it and the other promoting development while recognising that R&I can contribute to it. Within DG INTPA, R&I is isolated in a single unit, with little input from other thematic units on R&I prioritisation, programming, and implementation. Human resources shortages, less in terms of headcount than in terms of time, are evident both at EU HQ and in EUDs, where there is pressure to develop and implement projects and programmes rather than to develop and share an EU strategic vision.

4.1.1 EU partnership with the RBAs

The EU-RBA partnership has consistently contributed to strengthening governance frameworks, policies, and strategies conducive to SAFS transformation at global and regional level. (JC1.1/1.3/1.4)

The EU has been a major funder of RBA and the CFS, strongly supporting improved global and regional governance for transformation towards SAFS

EU funding to FAO, a recognised international convenor for agri-food policy and institutional reforms, public goods, capacity development, and strengthened information systems, totalled USD 1,6 billion between 2014 and 2021. EU finance contributed to natural resources governance and management (e.g., land, forests, fisheries, and ocean governance) and food crisis response and prevention (e.g., Global Network Against Food Crises). Overall, the portfolio presents the same focus during the reviewed period, apart from a digitalisation agenda that has recently gained prominence. DG INTPA has been FAO's privileged interlocutor, supporting mainly global- and country-level interventions with funding envelopes amounting to less than EUR 10 million on average. Larger and long-standing finance was channelled through FAO to the Eastern Africa region and, to a lesser extent, the Middle East. According to many interviewees, FAO's unique and multifaceted knowledge in interrelated land, water, soils, forests, and fisheries issues represents an untapped potential in a context where demands for assistance have increased, notably to address resilient SAFS.

EU has been WFP's single largest contributor, with funding amounting to USD 4,72 billion. In 2018, the European Commission funding alone has totalled USD 1,1 billion. If DG ECHO has remained the EU's main entry point to WFP, channelling 90% of the EU's funding on average, and both DG NEAR and DG INTPA have scaled up their support during the period reviewed. EC has encouraged WFP to develop its core strengths, i.e. emergency assistance across the humanitarian, development, peace nexus.³⁵ Committed to delivering 35% of its humanitarian assistance in cash transfers, the EU has been a critical funder of WFP's use of multi-purpose cash-based assistance.

EU contributions to IFAD amounted to USD 1,7 billion for the period, including USD 300 million of EC funding. In 2018, EU-IFAD dialogue was revamped to improve smallholders' capacities, rural agri-food businesses, and research and innovation: joint efforts aimed at strengthening farmers' organisations' voices in governance mechanisms and their integration in agri-food value chains. Support to small and medium agribusiness enterprises was given a renewed impetus through blending. Research and innovation represent another significant pillar of cooperation with, for example, funding allocated to the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and, through the DeSIRA programme, to the African Union's (AU) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme ex-Pillar IV (hereafter, CAADP).

The EU has decisively supported the CFS, contributing to the development of global policy frameworks and products. This has provided the opportunity for the EU to promote its interests and values, the Voluntary Guidelines being a signature example. The CFS governance mechanism offers space for a wide diversity of views to be represented on the desired direction of global food system transformation and its governance. Challenges in reaching consensus are well acknowledged, as is the political imperative to maintain a multilateral space for policy dialogue. In this context, many observers would have expected the EU and EU MS to speak with a strong, unified voice; and for the RBAs to collaborate more closely in the rolling out CFS outcomes. Closer inter-agency cooperation at the Rome level, however, was not seen as a priority by RBA governance bodies.

³⁵ EC (2021): *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles*. COM (2021): 110 final. Council of the EU (2021): *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles – Council Conclusions*.

EU support for the RBAs has contributed to global public goods for transformation towards SAFS, particularly by supporting constructive debate on widely diverging visions of the global food systems.

In a context where multiple research institutions, NGOs, foundations, and private-sector entities compete to produce statistics, EU engagement with RBAs has contributed to developing frameworks, metrics, methods, and standards that provided the foundation for coordinated action. These global public goods have critically underpinned joint action to stimulate agri-food system transformation. EU support has contributed to better-informed policy decision-making, particularly regarding resilient SAFS. EU and RBA have provided demand-driven *à la carte* support via FIRST³⁶, NIPN³⁷, DESIRA³⁸, INFORMED³⁹, and PRO-ACT multi-country programmes. This engagement has contributed to support assessments, policy reforms, and programmes, which in turn have enabled, to a certain extent, a more integrated approach towards sustainable agri-food system transformation. Interviews and review documentation point to the need to maintain and build on this momentum by further articulating these flagship programmes and their contribution to a broad political economy analysis nurturing EU Delegations' policy dialogue. SAFS analysis and foresight need to be further improved; so far these do not necessarily address the long-term processes leading to policy reforms and capacity strengthening for sustainable transformation of agri-food systems.

EU supported the UNFSS in dealing with diverse, sometimes opposing, transformative discourses. Many interviewees emphasised the importance of EU and RBA engagement with the UNFSS through support to its Secretariat, contributions to panels, events, dialogues, or follow-up via a coordination Hub hosted by FAO. The UNFSS has generated an intense (and salutary) political debate over the future of food systems and food systems governance, largely along the dimension of the choice between supporting a multilateral versus a multi-stakeholder approach. The rise of UN and corporate influence on food systems is well documented. As is the tentative bypassing of CFS structures and questioning CFS High-Level Panel of Experts' authority. The creation of a High-Level Expert Group to analyse the potential set-up of an International Platform for Food Systems Science is noteworthy in a context where the global discourse around the contribution of science, technology, and innovation to agri-food system transformation reflects diverging interests which call for starkly different mechanisms and processes to serve as global science-policy interfaces.

EU support to natural resources governance rolled out from CFS to EU partner countries. EU and RBAs have strengthened participatory processes improving natural resource tenure and governance with the development of, for instance, VGGT and RAI global norms, adherence to which is at the core of EU support to agri-food value chains. The EU has steadily supported civil society participation in land governance platforms facilitated by the International Land Coalition fund and transparency in large-scale land acquisitions monitored by the Land Matrix Initiative. The uptake and use of CFS Voluntary Guidelines developed at a steady pace. Uptake seems to have been more successful when global products benefited from strong ownership by one RBA and/or donor support. FAO joint efforts with the EU and Germany to support natural resources governance and management provide good examples.

³⁶ Food and Nutrition Security, Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation programme (budget EUR 47 million from 2015 to 2022)

³⁷ National Information Platforms for Nutrition.

³⁸ DeSIRA results from a G7 declaration to strengthen support to agricultural research for the poor (Elmau, 2015, German Presidency) and from Council conclusions published on 20 June 2016).

³⁹ Information for Nutrition, Food Security and Resilience Decision Making programme (budget EUR 33,5 million from 2015 to 2019).

4.1.2 EU-Africa Research and Innovation (R&I) Partnership

The EU-Africa R&I Partnership contributed to strengthening research and innovation policies, governance, and platforms for sustainable agri-food system transformation at the continental level. (JC1.1/1.4)

The EU has strengthened the basis for SAFS transformation in Africa through direct support for R&I initiatives, ...

... strengthening regional R&I organisations ...

... and engagement in high-level policy dialogue.

Many continental strategies, dialogues and initiatives exist, ...

The EU has strengthened the basis for SAFS transformation in Africa through direct support for R&I initiatives, strengthening regional R&I organisations, and engagement in high-level policy dialogue. The main DGs involved in the EU-Africa R&I Partnership are INTPA, Research and Innovation (RTD) and Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI). DG INTPA supports food system-related R&I as the main funder of African continental and regional research organisations, while DG RTD and DG AGRI are in the lead for the main EU-Africa R&I partnership on FNSSA. The complementarity between RTD and INTPA seems clear: While DG RTD focuses on extending the European Research Area through financing research partnerships and networking between established European and African researchers and institutions, DG INTPA supports organisational capacity building, networking, applied research and learning as a means of strengthening the international linkages and problem-solving capacities of local institutions and researchers. It underscores the need for DG INTPA to be actively involved itself in the EU-Africa R&I partnership on FNSSA.

In 2015-2016, the EU contributed to a fundamental reform of the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), the main actor for AR4D in Eastern and Southern Africa. This reform strengthened the institution's relevance to its members, made a stronger connection between national agenda-setting and the regional agenda, and brought AR4D higher on the political agenda. EU support to the AU's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) institutions, has contributed to create a platform for increased collaboration between research, extension, and advisory services.

The EU has contributed to strengthening R&I policies, governance, and platforms through the AU-EU High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on Science, Technology and Innovation, established in 2010 as part of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. The HLPD defines priority areas for research cooperation to support the implementation of the Strategy. Research on FNSSA has been at the heart of the R&I partnership and was formally adopted as number one priority in the framework of AU-EU Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) cooperation during the AU-EU Summit in 2014. The R&I partnership and roadmap on Climate Change and Sustainable Energy was endorsed at the 2017 AU-EU Summit. The EU has contributed to integrating African farmers and farmers' organisations more strongly into innovation systems.

There is a plethora of continental-level strategies, dialogues, and initiatives. The 2020 EC *Communication Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa* sets out how innovation is key to drive the green transition and how the development of environment-friendly agricultural practices, promotion of local production and addressing biodiversity concerns are at the heart of a partnership on agriculture. On the African Union side, eradication of hunger and achieving food security was identified as the priority area of the 10-year *Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024* adopted during the 2014 African Union Heads of State and Government Summit.⁴⁰ The African Development Bank adopted a new *Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA)*. The *Africa Initiative* is a series of initiatives under Horizon Europe that follow from the 2020 EU-AU Ministerial meeting High-level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation that the EC proposes to implement in close collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC)⁴¹.

40 AUC (2014): *Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024)*.

41 EC (n.d.): *Communication Global approach to research and innovation*.

A working group of experts, EU and AU representatives and representatives of the FNSSA and Climate Change and Sustainable Energy R&I partnerships started its activities in March 2021 to elaborate this agenda.⁴² Unfortunately, the working version of their *Joint AU-EU Innovation Agenda* illustrates how FNSSA and sustainable food systems risk losing visibility in the relatively recent Green Transition framing. While identifying high-level needs and gaps in the innovation ecosystem and management, knowledge exchange and technology transfer, access to financial resources, and human capacity development; organisational capacity development is not mentioned, and African regional and continental organisations are not mentioned as partners.

... but there is little sign that meaningful equal partnerships with African institutions are being established.

Despite the investments of both DGs INTPA and RTD in R&I partnerships between Europe and Africa, achieving equality between African and European partners remains problematic, despite the fact that (according to interviews) the foreseen Horizon Europe European Partnership for Safe and Sustainable Food Systems (the 'Food Systems Partnership') offers the opportunity for African stakeholders to have an equal role. Besides, most European-African partnerships on R&I are still shaped at bilateral level. Investing in multilateral partnerships, donor countries fear losing visibility and the ability to promote their own priorities. This tends to trump the advantage that speaking with one voice, as Europe, increases the chances to coordinate, align and leverage R&I efforts at continental and regional levels.

The new AU-EU International Research Consortium (IRC) is meant to become the long-term bi-continental platform for research and innovation, connecting existing structures, such as regional and sub-regional organisations or partnerships on R&I with the aim of increasing their coherence and impact. The AU-EU IRC zero draft identifies the absence of coordination infrastructure and lack of knowledge management mechanisms and frameworks on food-related R&I as the premise of the need to be addressed by the IRC. Yet the zero draft lacks a thorough analysis of already existing platforms, nor does it elaborate upon the opportunities for seeking synergies with and between existing platforms and initiatives. Such an incomplete assessment is unfortunate, since singling out the lack of platforms and initiatives as the reason for weak implementation of FNSSA goals risks ignoring other structural constraints that may impede already existing initiatives from achieving joint EU-Africa objectives.

4.1.3 Coordination with EU Member States

The EU has to a limited degree strengthened the coordination with EU MS regarding the development and implementation of the sustainable agri-food system approach. (JC1.2)

Challenges in implementing the SAFS approach exist at global level, ...

The EU has faced stiff challenges in the implementation of the SAFS approach. These challenges begin at the global level, with the fraught geopolitics of food. In 2019, Dr. Qu Dongyu took over FAO's leadership by a large margin of votes against the EU-backed candidate. Many interviewees have mixed views regarding the FAO's restructuring processes and the Strategic Framework 2022-2031. Some raised concerns about possible bias towards Chinese foreign policy. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have brought to light diverging priorities among RBA member states, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, testing the renewed EU-RBA partnership.

... with regards to the relationship between the European Commission and the RBAs ...

Although EU dialogues with the RBAs during a period when the latter have been undergoing dynamic change have been high-level and productive, EU staff capacity constraints have increasingly turned RBAs into implementing, rather than strategic, partners. In short, a transactional patron-client relationship, not one of strategic equals, has developed. According to most interviewees, EU-RBA engagement has remained characterised by an accountability perspective, including cumbersome procedures compared to other major donors, and intense negotiation processes raising the issue of the trade-offs between conditionalities and results. Moving into more of a strategic partnership mode might also be affected by the difficulties in capturing and capitalising on the outcomes from EU-RBA long-standing support to individual countries. Limited efforts have been put into calculating the cumulative effects the RBAs made possible thanks to EU support. This leads the EU institutions and EU MS to sense that EU country-level visibility and political return, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, do not match the EU's major contribution.

... and concerning the coordination between the EU and EU MS vis-à-vis the RBAs.

The EU has coordinated, whenever possible, with EU MS. However, there is no shared EU-EU MS plan to steer UN agencies in a certain direction. And, while the EU and EU MS remain the largest contributors to the RBAs, the EU's cohesion is regularly weakened by diverging political interests within Europe. EU MS compete for influence via their contributions to the RBAs. The potential for visibility, not only in beneficiary countries via earmarking, but domestically when aid budget share is under political pressure, is immense in an area having to do with food and hunger.

RBA governance is a significant factor. The EU can only exercise its rights in complementarity to the EU MS; it is a full member of only the FAO Board (hence with equality to contributing MS), having only observer status in WFP and IFAD Executive Boards. High shares of earmarked contributions continue to foster competition between the RBAs for European funds and increase their financial vulnerability, undermining the pursuit of common objectives. In addition, the continuation of overly transactional and "projectised" forms of EU support, certainly in comparison with other donors, stood in the way of moving towards a more strategic EU-RBA partnership.

General coordination with EU MS has been smoother, although not without its difficulties.

There have also been challenges with establishing an effective coordination mechanism between the EU and EU MS at HQ level.

At the European level, the main mechanism for coordinating actions on agri-food system transformation with EU MS is the HARD group, an informal platform for exchange of information on issues related to agriculture and rural development. Its agenda includes FNSSA items, relevant to the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems. During 2018-2019, some seven EU MS regularly participated in the meetings. During 2020-2021, coinciding with the preparations and implementation of the UN Food Systems Summit, this number increased somewhat to 9-13 MS. Virtual meetings always saw the participation of at least 10 EU MS. To some HARD meetings, NGOs and international organisations were invited. The meetings focus mainly on global events and global initiatives, EC communications and strategies, specific studies, and progress reports. From the second half of 2020 the UNFSS is the most important item on the agenda. The agenda is perceived to be overburdened with too many topics and too many documents that are shared late. In addition, interlocutors felt that new important related political initiatives are insufficiently grasped. They also indicate that differing views expressed by DG INTPA and by EUDs are not discussed.

Like the EU, some EU MS have FNSSA as a focus area for international cooperation at least since 2010 – including France, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, and the Netherlands. The EU and France started framing their approach as food systems approach at least since 2018. Others, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, started doing so more recently. Since the climate debate, the Green Growth agenda, the Farm to Fork strategy, and the COVID-19 crisis have created momentum for a more coordinated approach. The war in Ukraine and its effects on global food supplies added additional urgency and impetus towards taking bold steps to further develop a joint approach towards sustainable agri-food system transformation. In general, interviewees see no fundamental differences in approaches to food systems between the EU MS participating in HARD. However, some EU MS believe they have clear policies, while others struggle with the concepts. At the same time, differences in views can be observed, including regarding: i) the collaboration with the CFS on the UNFSS (e.g., the heated debate concerning indigenous peoples that characterised the preparation of the summit⁴³), ii) the emphasis on private sector-driven transformation (bringing to the fore contentious issues concerning the protection of European intellectual property rights), and iii) the focus on Agroecology.

Regarding the latter, the EU took a leading advocacy role strongly supported by France and joined by many African countries. Yet, the emphasis on agroecology met with resistance, reflecting the diversity of views on pathways towards more sustainable food systems. As the summit preparations demonstrated, such differences in views may negatively influence EU collaboration, both internally and in EU-AU relations. In interviews, no EU MS mentioned a form of joint EU follow-up to the UNFSS, and the EC is not perceived to play a facilitating or leadership role.

EU MS participants differ in their views on whether HARD is an effective forum for coordination and policy coherence related to sustainable agri-food system transformation. The EU MS representatives with less experience and who are relatively understaffed generally appreciate the HARD meetings. They find that valuable information is shared, which is useful for shaping their own policies. The EU MS with more articulated food systems approach perceive that HARD is used mainly as a forum for transmitting messages, primarily by DG INTPA. Others bring forward that some EU MS are mostly promoting their own agenda. Mostly, there is no real dialogue or discussion. HARD is therefore considered a forum for sharing ideas but not for seeking to develop a common framework. Also, EU MS see EU policy frameworks, including the Farm to Fork strategy, not as directly influencing their own policies, priorities, and implementation. Yet, all EU MS participants do recognise that EU policy frameworks and the powerful financial instruments behind these, are a good basis for strategic leadership on sustainable agri-food system transformation. Some EU MS believe that the food systems approach is not yet sufficiently articulated and clear, hindering necessary improvements.

So far, European policies, regulations, programming, and funding of R&I related to SAFS are fragmented. They reflect the broader architecture of food systems-related institutions, public, non-governmental and private sector stakeholders, research organisations, platforms and governance processes which has evolved without a clear food system framing⁴⁴. The main guiding policy that frames EU support to global research and innovation is the 2021 EC Communication Global Approach to Research and Innovation, with DG RTD in the lead to implement. It highlights EU support to food systems and soil health as priority areas for EU global support to agricultural research. EU commitment to international openness and fundamental values in research and innovation is central to the global approach. The FOOD 2030 strategy aims to identify the R&I landscape that will help to future-proof the systems for food production, processing, distribution, and consumption for a sustainable future European society. Coordination of European agricultural research lies with the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), established to advise the Commission and the Member State. By mandate, SCAR has a European focus, but this is shifting because of the interconnectedness of Europe's challenges with global and African food system challenges. For example, the joint European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development-SCAR strategic working group ARCH, aims to improve the linkages between Agricultural Research and Agricultural Research for Development to increase the contribution of European agricultural R&I to the solution of global challenges.⁴⁵

43 CFS (2021): *What is wrong with the Food Systems Summit (FSS)? Civil Society Mechanism.*

44 SCAR (2021): Food Systems Partnership; GDPRD (2020): *Donor contributions to food systems. Stocktaking report; LEAP4FNSSA (2022): Zero Draft IRC for elaunch.*

45 SCAR (n.d.): *ARCH Mission and aims – Joint EIARD-SCAR Strategic Working Group.*

Case studies have identified examples of emerging EU-EU MS country-level collaboration. All still at an early stage, without a 'One Europe' approach to sustainable agri-food system transformation, but certainly warranting further scrutiny as practical learning experiences.

The evaluation has found a range of EU-EU MS-Government partnership initiatives related to FNSSA in the six countries studied, where close collaboration between the EU and some EU MS stands out. They represent experiences that vary from quite informal to formally structured, from more EU-led to more jointly orchestrated, from single sector to multi-sector-oriented and include more ad-hoc or formal policy dialogue and alignment with the national government. Here, we will focus on the role of the EUD in strengthening EU-EU MS coordination and alignment vis-à-vis FNSSA, in the light of the SAFS approach and the growing role of joint programming and Team Europe initiatives. These are still not fully operationalised, so the EU MS still exhibit different approaches to SAFS and a consolidated EU SAFS approach has yet to take shape in practice.

In *Kenya*, hardly any EUD-EU MS meetings on issues related to sustainable agri-food system transformation take place. Currently, a Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on the Green Deal is being considered, but relations to SAFS are unclear. In *Cambodia*, besides the EU, Germany and France are active on sustainable agri-food system transformation. EUD and EU MS joint programming discussions led the Joint European Strategy for Development Cooperation 2021-2027. It features SAFS as a specific focus of its first priority "Green Growth and Decent Jobs". Joint programming is expected to become much stronger under the MIP 2021-2027, through Team Europe Initiatives. In *Niger*, joint programming remained limited until the COVID-19 crisis. Only then a joint EUD-EU MS approach was used and contributed to mitigate the risks of the pandemic. During the ongoing joint programming negotiation, the EU shift to budget support related to SAFS came as a surprise to most EU stakeholders active in the country, including some EU MS. A new Team Europe Initiative related to SAFS is being prepared. In *Haiti*, Delegated Cooperation (DC) was used as an instrument to collaborate with EU MS. During the development of the NIP 2021-2027 the EUD and France and Spain joined hands. The joint programming exercise was labelled in an interview "enriching" and as "an approach that works for us". In *Colombia*, the EU has worked closely together with many EU MS (i.e., Germany, Spain, and Sweden) in support of the Peace Agreement, signed in 2016. The peace agreement has strong linkages to sustainable transformation of agri-food systems as its first and third items refer to integrated rural development and reincorporation of former combatants. This resulted in a strong common focus on the most fragile, conflict-affected territories and their communities. The Colombian EU Trust Fund (EUTF), established in 2016 to accompany the peace agreement, has provided a good framework for coordination and joint approach. The EUTF monitoring and evaluation framework, strengthened in 2020, tracks jointly defined objectives and indicators, providing a good learning experience that the Team Europe Initiative is expected to build on. TEI on Peace and Environment have recently started. In *Malawi*, the EUD and some EU MS (Germany, Ireland, Flanders-BE) "have adopted a pragmatic bottom-up approach to Joint Programming"⁴⁶ that focuses on strengthening joint implementation and pooled funding to support nutrition, social protection, and agribusiness. A Team Europe initiative "Green growth for Malawi" will focus on improving productivity, resilience, diversification, value addition and commercialisation of agriculture and fisheries and enhancing environmental sustainability.

4.1.4 EU Internal institutional environment conducive to sustainable transformation of agri-food systems

The EU has to a very limited degree taken steps to create an internal institutional environment conducive to effective support to agri-food system transformation. (JC1.5)

Inter-DG coordination, particularly between DGs INTPA and RTD, is weak. INTPA's contribution is limited by human resource constraints.

The EU Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy potentially provide a unifying framework to bring together different DGs on food systems. The historically divergent perspectives between RTD and INTPA on the role of R&I in contributing to food system transformation appear to be converging. For example, the narrative for the upcoming Food Systems Partnership describes how the driving force of the envisaged food systems knowledge hub would not be technology uptake, but *“the multi-objective societal problems to be addressed and the associated risks”*.

Yet, in the preparations of the upcoming Food Systems Partnership, part of Horizon Europe, DG INTPA's engagement has been weak. A closer engagement of INTPA is an important way to foster science and innovation capacity in Africa through DG RTD instruments. A representative of a knowledge institute reported that, for instance, a stronger connection of the Horizon Food Systems Partnership to the global agenda on food systems transformation.

An increased emphasis within DG INTPA on integrated programming, from 2018 onwards, has helped align strategy, planning, and funding. Internally, more systemic views have led to working ‘beyond production’, shifting towards a more integrated approach to food system transformation (including agroecological ones), and becoming more responsive to issues such as environment and health.

However, the implementation of such an approach beyond HQ in Brussels was limited. EUD's felt that contradictory guidance was given. For example, in divergences between HQ and country priorities, lack of clear guidelines on systems approach and, at times, a strong push for private sector support without adequate consideration for sustainability and inclusivity objectives. One of the reasons noted is lack of human resources, or more specifically that the need to respond to day-to-day pressures of designing and meeting deadlines for the implementation of programmes based on existing approaches, crowds out DG INTPA's function to serve as guides and knowledge brokers for innovative, more integrated approaches, facilitating synergies with other policy areas. This lack of resources is also mentioned as one reason for DG INTPA's limited involvement in the Food Systems Partnership. And may have a bearing on EU's limited visibility among the EU MS in engaging various UN Food Systems Coalitions. Several EU MS interviewees viewed DG INTPA as being very inward-looking.

In comparison with its 2016 document,⁴⁷ DG RTD has acknowledged the importance of the DCI instrument to fund R&I actions. However, left out is a comprehensive mapping of all EC, let alone EU MS, services' funding programmes, strategies, and initiatives that make up ‘the rich European R&I landscape of FNS’. Thus the 2016 document sets out how European R&I policy contributes to ‘the major global challenge of ensuring food and nutrition security’ without translating this into concrete choices in design process, programming or partners.

Examples for coordination platforms between DGs are rather rare

There have been some examples of platforms that have contributed to bringing together different DGs. An example is the framework programme FOOD SECURE (2012-2017), which provided a safe space for stakeholders to share visions of desired futures and discuss the impacts of agricultural and trade policies. This, in turn, helped deepen the understanding of the complex factors underlying food security crises and encouraged policymakers to go beyond quick fixes and simple solutions.⁴⁸

Such examples are, however, the exception rather than the rule. Efforts to contribute to stronger partnerships and governance frameworks at global and continental level are undertaken by different DGs in parallel, without apparent coordination. DG RTD established a 19-member High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) in February 2021 to advise on appropriate approaches for science-policy interfaces to support food system transformation⁴⁹. In the same period, DG INTPA, through their support to GDPRD, contributed to a 2022 White Paper that sets out directions on how donors can support food system transformation, identifying key systemic innovations in technology, institutions, and governance processes, with the emphasis on *how* food systems transform. The EU would gain both internal and external traction and visibility if there had been more transparent in sharing its views, even if divergent, on science-policy interfaces and the type of innovations needed for SAFS transformation.

Fragmentation within DG INTPA has had adverse effects on programme performance

There is fragmentation within DG INTPA, in addition to which, programmes have sometimes performed disappointingly at country level due to lack of EUD time or interest. Some characterise the relationships between the different thematic units of DG INTPA's unit F3 as disconnected, fragmented. Other thematic units, apart from the one where R&I is housed formally and the nutrition sector, do not influence the decisions around prioritisation, programming and implementation of R&I. Knowledge management and learning systems between DG INTPA/F3 and EUDs are challenged by human resource constraints. Interviews suggest that it is difficult to reach EUDs with information and guidance to support them on research-related issues. Additionally, the lack of a mechanism to track the progress of R&I-related projects implemented at EUD level back to HQ limits the ability of DG INTPA/F3 to gather insights on outcomes and achievements and draw lessons from country experiences.

The DeSIRA programme provides an example of the important role of EUDs, and the disappointing results when they do not fill it. DeSIRA is the most recent and visible DG INTPA initiative to boost policy dialogue, research, networking and innovation for agriculture and food system transformation at country level. It has been developed with close collaboration and consultation with interested EU MS. Since mid-2019, DeSIRA supports the provision of technical support to country-based projects and to the AU's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and funds multi-stakeholder dialogues with the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and the Tropical Agricultural Platform (TAP) while linking country and organisation-level projects to relevant EU, AU, and wider policy processes. Generating recommendations on the role of R&I to DG INTPA, EU Delegations and their partners is an explicit part of the programme's mandate⁵⁰.

It is too early to tell if DeSIRA country-level actions will be able to fulfil high expectations. The scarcity of human resources at EUD level, the focus on directly managed projects and the sometimes disappointing follow-up of national research agendas have been signalled as bottlenecks. Initially a mechanism for knowledge sharing and feedback between EUDs and headquarters was lacking but has been put in place (DeSIRA-Lift). In future plans, embedding learning practices beyond projects in the way INTPA works, and strengthening linkages between national, regional and continental efforts is crucial to counter fragmentation. Alignment with national food system priorities will enhance traction of effective support to agri-food system transformation while engagement with regional level institutions can enhance learning and knowledge sharing.

48 Source: Interviews.

49 EC HLPE (2021): Everyone at the Table. Co-creating knowledge for food system transformation

50 EU (n.d.): project document LIFT: Leveraging the DeSIRA initiative for agri-food system transformation.

4.2 EQ2. National agri-food systems governance

4.2.1 Synergies within country portfolios

EQ2a (design of country portfolios). To what extent has the EU supported changes in agri-food system governance at country level that are conducive to support transformation to more sustainable agri-food systems?



Summary answer to the EQ

The EU country portfolios demonstrate context-specific, multi-stranded approaches towards supporting the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems and strong alignment with government priorities on FNSSA. The choice of sectors and the balance in EU support across sectors differ from country to country, varying, amongst other things, with the EU's partnership history with the country, shifting EU priorities, national political leadership and prioritisation of food and nutrition security, the capacities of national institutions, local agencies, and civil society organisations and prior experiences in the country of development partners. However, strategically integrating multiple interventions towards common objectives remains a huge challenge. Synchronisation of different instruments, programmes and projects can be challenging. EUD staff time is scarce and working in silos is institutionally embedded. To a limited extent, EU support at the country level shows linkages to infrastructure, trade, environment, private sector development, research, and health. While the EU is committed to ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD), operational linkages with some key EU policy areas, such as international trade, infrastructure, energy, climate, consumer protection, and animal welfare are weak. FNSSA linkages with rural nutrition and social protection are better integrated; those with the private sector and environment are increasingly being addressed.

The EU based its support at country level on partial assessments of sectors relevant to food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture, and fisheries. Programme documents generally include assessments of sectors relevant to sustainable agri-food systems. They provide good quality descriptions of the main issues they focus on; but not of the evidence-based reasons for and the consequences of choosing these as entry points. Some linkages with related issues are made explicit, pointing at some of the drivers for transformative change. For example, resilience programmes often pay due attention to the consequences of climate change, such as an increasing number of droughts that affect specific segments of the population in various ways, including food security. More recently, the effects of Covid-19 on food security have been assessed. However, issues of differential impact and inclusiveness are not always given due attention, ignoring the fact that some target groups may be more affected by climate change than others, and the reasons why. Also, programmes focusing on enhancing economic opportunities in agricultural value chains may address issues of inclusiveness and specifically target women and youth while ignoring climate and sustainability concerns to a large extent. A comprehensive assessment of the drivers (and blockers) of agri-food system transformation seems mostly lacking.

Overall, there has been a lack of in-depth analysis of gender-sensitive developments. Reporting and monitoring on gender-specific indicators is mostly limited, and few in-depth analyses of specific cases have been found. Too often in the objectives and indicators for focal sector support, no reference is made to gender-sensitive indicators. Programme and action documents of the selected interventions show important variations in the depth of gender equality analysis.

4.2.1.1. FNSSA approaches at country level

EU country portfolios show context-specific, multi-stranded approaches to FNSSA governance at the country level (JC2.1).

Kenya: no attempt to develop a systems approach

In Kenya, there was no deliberate attempt to develop a systems approach and EU support was rather given in the form of programme and project support. Agriculture and rural development has been a focal sector of support since 2008. The 2014 evaluation of EU support to Kenya found that “*the EU had a coherent strategy for its support to Arid- and Semi-arid Lands (ASAL) areas, but a comprehensive strategy for the entire agriculture and rural development focal sector was lacking*”. During the 11th EDF the overall objective for focal sector support became: “*Food security of the rural population and their resilience to future climatic shocks is sustainably improved*”. The focus on ASALs remained. Focal sector support called for a multisectoral approach to nutrition, for agriculture productivity to integrate market linkages, the diversification of livelihood sources, and supporting climate-proof investments at community- and at county levels to support stakeholders in developing and implementing Disaster Risk Reduction strategies. Also, reference is made to Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) principles for the food security. The two other sub-sectors supported – climate-resilient agriculture and climate-proof agriculture – continued earlier support to agricultural value chains and community development with more emphasis on climate change adaptation. Over the years the focus of the EU support shifted more towards the private sector, incorporating blended finance as a new instrument. The food security and resilience focal sector became one for ‘Job creation and resilience’ and direct support to the GoK decreased. In 2020 the European Court of Auditors concluded: “*A significant share of EU support in this sector went to communities in [ASAL] regions and to smallholder farmers (...) This support is likely to improve the living standard of those communities but does not help progress towards the commercialisation of farming and the expansion of agro-processing.*”⁵¹

Niger: budget support as a “game changer”

In Niger, an integrated approach was applied through the BS programme ‘Sector Performance Reform Contract (SPRC)’. The EU supported policy and institutional reforms in public services delivery, sustainable value chain development, and road infrastructure, with emphasis on the economic and social dimensions of SAFS. Introducing budget support proved a “game changer” in terms of the EU partnership with the government, as it provides a new platform for policy dialogue and supports specific entry points in agriculture value chain development such as water management, access to inputs, and improved land tenure. The SPRC main entry point to nutrition was access to water and sanitation at local level and the development of a framework for nutrition-sensitive safety nets. Thematic funding was used in a complementary fashion to support nutrition governance and information systems. Beyond the SPRC, there is little evidence a more integrated approach. EDF projects contributed to a range of objectives such as sustainable agro-pastoral intensification, improved water access for smallholders, strengthened institutional capacity at decentralised level, or improved nutrition, with very limited attention to value chains. The EUTF portfolio includes only one project dedicated to agri-food value chain development and another that contributed to securing and managing natural and pastoral resources, protecting biodiversity, and job creation (focus women and young entrepreneurs). A DeSIRA project supports the sustainable intensification of irrigated agricultural systems, while EDF funds a Regional Dialogue and Investment Programme for Pastoralism and Transhumance.

Malawi: strong alignment between EU interventions and national priorities

In Malawi, EU-funded FNSSA interventions are well aligned with national priorities. They address the four EU priorities: resilience, nutrition, responsible investments, and innovations in agriculture; as well as key cross-cutting priorities climate change, governance, and gender equality. Moreover, since 2016, the EU programming – in line with the new National Resilience Plan – has set out to better integrate actions under the four pillars of agriculture, natural resource management, social protection, and disaster risk reduction. The portfolio also addresses improved land tenure and rural transport infrastructure, and resilience building issues, as well as sustainable natural resource management and the protection of the environment. 11th EDF was the main instrument used. Budget support being suspended, a broad range of implementation modalities was used. These include Contribution Agreements with International Organisations, EU MS Agencies, the European Investment Bank (EIB), indirect management with the Government's National Authorising Office (NAO), and direct management of grants by the Delegation. The EDF-funded programmes contributed to a range of objectives such as increasing and diversifying agricultural production; improving women and children's dietary intake; supporting commercialisation and value addition of smallholders' production; improving farmers and MSMEs' access to finance; rehabilitating and improving rural transport infrastructure; improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities through the participatory management of forests; and mainstreaming climate change into agricultural and land management practices. DCI-FOOD, DCI-ENV and DCI-CSO thematic instruments supported the poor and food-insecure to react to crises and strengthen resilience to climate variability and change (Pro-Act; GCCA); to improve climate change adaptation through R&I (DeSIRA); to increase the participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in tackling climate change challenges; and to contribute to improved land governance frameworks conforming to the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Governance (VGGT). EU interventions targeted mainly the national, district and community level, while only one intervention (not SAFS-specific) targeted the regional level.

Colombia: agri-food system transformation in the context of the peace process

EU support to agri-food system transformation in Colombia (both DRET and EUTF) is strongly linked to the peace process, focusing on territories most affected by the armed conflict. Starting in 2014, the EU has supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) with budget support to Rural Development Policy (DRET). It aimed at reducing poverty and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth in the most vulnerable and poorest rural areas of the country. The Italian Cooperation Agency and FAO are partners in the implementation of the technical assistance (TA) part of the second phase of DRET. In addition, BS to competitiveness in the dairy sector was an accompanying measure to the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between EU and Colombia to alleviate the perceived impact of the FTA on the sector. The Ministry of Commerce received BS through the Sector Reform Contract for Regional Competitiveness in Colombia (CreC) and support to sector reform for Local Sustainable Development in marginalised areas. All BS envelopes have a strong focus on socio-economic inclusion in the most vulnerable and poorest rural areas. The support combines public sector support with sector- and territorial-level support implemented by national and international NGOs and CSOs. Civil society organisations and NGOs are mostly partners for the implementation of the project and programmes, most of them under the EU Trust Fund for Colombia. EU support is territorially focused on areas, where the state has little presence, and which have been particularly affected by the internal conflict. Stakeholders targeted to benefit from EU support are communities in post-conflict rural areas, specifically indigenous and/or afro-descendant communities. Engagement with local communities is an integral part of the EU approach. There are clear examples of an integrated approach, with a strong multi-actor and multi-sector practice; emphasis on strengthening local and adaptive (land) governance and inclusivity, not only in the targeting of 'beneficiaries' but also in the problem identification, design, and implementation of interventions. The 2018-2022 National development plan (NDP), to which the DRET also contributes, targets specifically small and medium agricultural producers.

Haiti: FNSSA as a focal sector

In Haiti, FNSSA was one of four focal sectors of the national indicative programme (NIP). Other sectors included state reform, supporting decentralisation and the modernisation of the public administration, and education, including the strengthening of school canteens. The 11th EDF provided over 80% of the funding, while the remaining was channelled through the thematic programmes of the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and, to a much lesser extent, through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Support sought to contribute to a range of objectives such as strengthened resilience to food shocks of chronic and acute food-insecure people; increased production and productivity in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries; increased processing of locally produced agricultural goods; and strengthening of intersectoral governance of food and nutrition security. Most funding (30%) was classified as food assistance. Grants to NGOs was the main implementing modality. Delegated Cooperation with EU member states, the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID); Contribution Agreements with international organisations such as the FAO, UNDP and WFP and contracts with government institutions were used, too. Given the importance of Haiti's relations with the Dominican Republic, the bulk of EU regional support went to trade and environmental interventions in bi-national programmes. In the NIP for 2021-2027, "productive and resilient territories" is a focal sector, with one priority to "promote and enhance equitable, climate-resilient, biodiversity regenerating and sustainable agri-food systems". Other focal sectors include support to improve the business climate and sustainable investments, strengthening the social protection system and vocational training.

Cambodia: governance reform and the fisheries sector

In Cambodia, EU support sports a strong focus on governance reform and includes budget support (EDCS) for reform of the fisheries sector, support for value-adding, land rights and access. The portfolio features resilience, sustainability, inclusivity, and circularity interventions, aiming for sustainable production, governance, and ecosystem protection, and less for sustainable consumption. The CAPFISH-Capture programme is "*the most important programme on fisheries around the world, by far*". While a dedicated nutrition intervention is absent, the programme has a strong element of biodiversity conservation. The EU's main partners are the national ministries Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries (MAFF) and Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), local CSOs such as the Fisheries Action Coalition Team, international organisations like FAO and UNIDO, and international development partners such as AFD, GIZ and NGOs, like FACT, Oxfam International, and ActionAid. The EU supports the national level through budget and governance support and local interventions that seek to empower local communities. Direct beneficiaries include government departments, R&I actors, fishing communities, fish processing companies, farmers' organisations and NGO networks. Women and youth are often explicitly targeted in EU support to local actors.

4.2.1.2 Synergies at country level

The EU has actively promoted the development of synergies within its country portfolios (JC2.1).

Malawi: flagship programmes lack synergies

In Malawi, despite attempts, progress to achieve complementarity and synergy between two flagship programmes has been limited. Two flagship programmes, KULIMA and Afikepo, were established in parallel and envisaged as "*complementary and mutually reinforcing interventions*".⁵² They targeted the same ten districts, used the same community outreach approach, had major implementing partners in common, and pursued similar entry points in agriculture (such as climate-smart technologies; value chain and business development; and sector governance) and nutrition (through nutrition-sensitive agriculture, nutrition education, and multisectoral governance). They also built on the investments made during the previous programming period. Nonetheless, the programmes lack a common approach, workplan or vision integrating contributing institutions, and the complex design and fragmented implementation have resulted in limited progress. Coordination between the two main line ministries (in charge of agriculture and nutrition, respectively) has also been challenging, resulting in a mismatch between the governance structures in which the two programmes are anchored. As a result, while informal collaboration emerged locally, the anticipated synergies could not be realised at scale.

Kenya: multiple obstacles to integrated approaches

In Kenya, despite attempts to forge cross-sector linkages, obstacles exist in the form of multiple financing instruments, limited staff time, and the structure of the EUD itself. Formal linkages between the focal sectors of support are emphasised (especially in the context of the SDG framework). Yet, in practice, linkages across focal sectors and between the support provided through different EU financing instruments are few. As a result, very few examples exist of synergies between EU interventions, such as other programmes making use of agricultural research done by KALRO, or efforts to exchange and coordinate at the county level between (resilience) programmes. The explanations offered during the interviews point at fragmented implementation and working in silos at the EUD.

EUD-development cooperation department sections deal with different focal sectors and in-depth discussions between them are limited. Moreover, the Agriculture and Rural Development section staff is very busy with planning and implementing the high volume of support, leaving limited time for cooperation with others. Besides, it is very difficult, given the separation of roles and responsibilities for different EU financing instruments (EDF covering bilateral and regional cooperation, thematic programmes under the DCI and EIDHR, ECHO covering humanitarian funding, EUTF) to develop a practical and efficient approach for identifying and realising synergies. Difficulties to forge a more integrated, synergetic approach may be repeated within a focal sector even if one EUD section is in charge and regular staff meetings are organised. As staff members are each responsible for several programmes, managing these through identification and formulation, approval, contracting, contacts with implementing agencies, field visits including meetings with county officials and beneficiaries, monitoring, reporting, organising Mid-Term Evaluations or final evaluations, etc. takes up most of their time.

The time required for the EUD to start Up and integrate interventions is generally longer than expected, even more so if a new instrument, such as blended finance, is involved. As a result, some programmes or programme components may start early while others, including the new ones, commence much later. This may also be influenced by different implementing partners being contracted to implement different components, or by different partners. As a result, programme implementation may be fragmented over time and space and address different categories of stakeholders, creating physical barriers to integration and synergy.

Haiti: harmonisation of an integrated programme proved challenging

In Haiti, challenges in harmonisation limited the effectiveness of an integrated health and social protection programme (PMSAN). PMSAN was cast as an integrated programme, overcoming the limitations of earlier scattered actions to implement *“truly integrated activities within a sustainable national institutional framework”*. The programme focused on three sectors and their interlinkages, namely agriculture, social protection, and health, while targeting the national, departmental, and communal levels. Sectoral integration was foreseen to be achieved through graduation of beneficiaries: malnourished children were to be treated in a health centre, the family then to be integrated in a social protection scheme, followed by agricultural support to ensure the family's livelihood. While identified as a good practice in a ROM report, the implementation of this graduation approach was hindered by differences between operators about eligibility criteria and databases used to select beneficiaries. No clear methodology was available from the onset, so *“each implementer had its own design”*.⁵³ Harmonisation efforts in the first year of implementation were successful, but this conceptual weakness has so far slowed down the project and limited its effectiveness. Graduation from health treatment to either social protection or agricultural support has happened only to a fraction of the households referred to it by the health sector. Interviewees, including from the EUD, recognise that the integrated nature needs to be better reflected in the initial phase of a project, with a clear conceptual framework.

Cambodia: some evidence that the EU pursued an integrated approach

In Cambodia, an integrated approach is reflected in the wide selection of entry points for fisheries development, with strong entry points being governance capacity building and strengthening regulatory frameworks, and other entry points being community empowerment and supporting multi-stakeholder networks. According to the MIP 2014-2020, “*the aim is to focus the EU’s interventions on a restricted number of sectors so as to increase their impact*”. The CAPFISH-Capture programme, which builds on previous EU support and complements other EU support, is an example of a large, holistic programme with integration between interventions. The design of interventions often includes SAFS-related outcomes, such as sustainable production, adequate diets, climate change resilience and environmental protection, while working with a diversity of actors.

Some evidence for modest linkages with other sectors across the case studies

While sector-level synergies have been scarce, there are (scattered) examples of more modest linkages.

In *Niger*, *Malawi* and *Cambodia*, portfolios present clear linkages with nutrition, food safety and health through institutional strengthening, water, and nutrition-sensitive interventions (i.e., EU quality requirements, school meals, fortification, and consumer education). EU-supported environmental interventions contribute to improved forest management, soil restoration, sustainable farming or fishing and climate change adaptation. This includes support for climate-smart agricultural practices, sustainable natural resource, and integrated watershed management. While the EU consistently supports agricultural research and innovation activities and their linkages with farmers, advisory and extension services, their engagement with food processing and the international climate change debate could be strengthened. In *Haiti*, strong efforts have been made to ensure coherence and linkages between agriculture and environmental concerns. In *Kenya*, *Cambodia* and *Colombia* EU support was related to fostering compliance with European quality standards.

The evaluation identified few linkages with energy, and animal welfare sectors, except in *Cambodia*, where the promotion of animal health and renewable energy in fish value chains has been strengthened by policy reform. EU strongly supports rural roads and irrigation infrastructure; for example, in *Niger*, *Kenya*, and *Malawi*, but operational linkages with other agri-food interventions are weak. For example, links with international trade have been observed in *Haiti* but were not integrated in EU-supported FNSSA interventions. But this may change now that private stakeholders in *Colombia* have expressed concerns about potential changes in policies and directives following the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy that could significantly impact important export-oriented agri-food industries. A concrete example is the potential prohibition of the use of the fungicide Mancozeb in the banana value chain.

Gender equality is mainstreamed to a limited extent across the case studies

Mainstreaming of gender equality varies across the case studies. In *Kenya*, the attention to gender equality in strategic documents has marginally increased over time. Interesting examples of EU-supported gender-specific initiatives include the development of a participatory approach to land registration with attention to the registration of women as owners or co-owners of land. In *Colombia*, gender equality is prominent on the agenda of the policy dialogue with the government and is increasingly integrated in the programming, implementation and monitoring of EU support to sustainable agri-food systems. EU support is fully aligned with the government’s priorities on this area. In many EUTF projects, women’s economic empowerment is addressed. In DRET, EUD pushed for and succeeded in including an indicator on women’s access to rural productive assets. In *Cambodia*, the EU and EU MS translated their commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment in a joint European Action Plan 2016-2020. The EU has also appointed a Gender Focal Person who promotes, jointly with EU MS, gender equality in policy dialogue. In *Haiti*, a PMSAN ROM report notes that gender has been well considered in the intervention strategy and the choice of beneficiaries, except for initiatives to combat gender-based violence, which are judged insufficient.

In *Malawi*, women's empowerment is a central feature of the Afikepo programme, particularly its second component (NAPE), which seeks “to achieve optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts”. To the extent possible, key indicators are disaggregated by sex and age category throughout several actions to capture progress for women and youth. Also, an in-depth gender analysis was conducted in 2019 in the context of the KULIMA-MIERA project and analysed the needs, constraints and economic opportunities of women and men in its target areas. Similarly, PROACT conducted a gender gap analysis in its first year of implementation and integrated a gender module in the household approach. The action also carefully monitors impacts on a gender-disaggregated basis to ensure that interventions do not reinforce gender stereotypes or impose additional burdens on women. The EIB facility was also envisaged to “support bankable proposals from women smallholder farmers and women-led Micro- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), as well as women's groups and cooperatives”.⁵⁴

4.2.2 *Contributions to national agri-food systems governance*

EQ2b (effects on national governance). To what extent has the EU contributed to changes in national governance that are conducive to sustainable transformation in partner countries' agri-food systems?



Summary answer to the EQ

EU support to strengthening national governance for SAFS has contributed to scattered changes in agri-food system governance at country level, signals of system change that are both pertinent and tentative: their application and sustainability hinges upon government ownership, continued political traction, institutional embedding, wide-spread acceptance and uptake, and, often, further donor support.

EU support sizeably contributed to policy dialogue and institutional reforms, including pilots on more inclusive and gender-sensitive land governance; the establishment of multi-stakeholder dialogues and platforms and specific actions to strengthen evidence-based policy and decision making at the country level. The intensity, inclusiveness and outcomes of the policy dialogues differs across countries. Government leadership and follow-up emerge as an important determinant for their success. In their effort to promote sustainable agri-food system transformation, the EU and other donors navigate national political dynamics and possible trade-offs between the EU and national policies. In fragile situations, characterised by political, social and/or security crises, including natural disasters, donor cooperation appears more forthcoming even if conditions seriously limit the possibility for lasting change.

EU support has credibly contributed to improving the enabling environment at country and local level. EU support has strongly supported the building multi-stakeholder platforms and dialogues, strengthening of agricultural services to smallholders and MSMEs, in particular, agricultural extension, advisory and input distribution services and their links with agricultural research and innovation. The EU consistently supported specific actions to strengthen evidence-based policy and decision-making on Food and Nutrition Security. To a limited extent, the EU is contributing to improving smallholders access to markets, agribusiness activities, healthy diets, and finance. Gender equality is mainstreamed, yet adequate monitoring of gender-specific indicators and in-depth analysis of gender-sensitive developments is limited. To a limited degree the EU supported advocacy for enhanced nutrition security and community empowerment. Some initiatives have been identified to improve the use of gender-disaggregated and target group-specific data. Nonetheless, a swift introduction of new finance instruments, has been noted to increase the risk of 'mission creep', shifting attention and means from sustainable (climate-smart) and inclusive (women) transformation objectives, towards financial and business objectives.

The EU plays an active role in coordinating FNSSA support with national governments, EU MS and other donors. Most donor coordination is limited to exchange of priorities and information. Joint priority setting and joint programming is introduced to a limited extent. Some opportunities for shared political economy analysis may have been missed. Delegated cooperation is used regularly to coordinate support actions and draw upon specific competencies of EU MS, international organisations, and International NGOs. EUTFs have been used successfully to create a more formal structure for policy dialogue and collaboration between EU MS, their agencies, and national partners. In the often-volatile political landscape, that characterises the governance of agri-food systems, the EU develops a judicious approach to deal with shifting and at times adverse, domestic political interests in the host country as well as sometimes diverging trade and development interests of EU MS, and international private sector.

Integrating EU and EU MS-supported interventions remains a huge challenge. Some good examples of closer cooperation have been identified, yet overall, it proves difficult to realise synergies across policy areas and with EU partners. Given the shared competencies in SAFS-related policy areas, the EU and EU MS would have to agree on common objectives, complementary strengths, instruments and modalities, and common indicators by which to track the outcomes of 'loosely coordinated' actions. And decide to base their support on joint assessments of possible food system scenarios, recognising the drivers of agri-food system transformation and linkages between different relevant policy areas.

4.2.2.1 Policy dialogue and donor coordination

Main EU-supported changes in policy dialogue and donor coordination are harmonisation at country level (JC2.1), but the EU could play a stronger role to coordinate platforms where all actors could express their views.

This finding is further detailed by the responses provided in the e-survey. To the question about coordination and alignment of the EU and EU MS actions, respondents reported that improvements have been more significant during the period 2018-2021 than during the period 2014-2017.⁵⁵ However, respondents also highlighted scope for a stronger role by the EU in coordination. Several interviewees also highlighted the potential of recent Team Europe initiatives for increased EU coordination and leverage on national reforms. The text below presents specific country-level findings.

The EU pro-actively promoted and participated in policy dialogue with national governments

The EU pro-actively promoted and participated in policy dialogue with national governments in the case study countries. In *Kenya*, conversations with the host government were limited to periodic discussions between the agriculture and the ASALs donor groups and the Government of Kenya. Mechanisms have been put in place for coordination among development partners, but these were mainly limited to information exchange. According to stakeholders, existing Agricultural and Rural Development Partners Group (ARDPG) and ASAL DP coordination mechanisms functioned satisfactorily and involved all major Development Partners including EU MS. Some EU MS expressed they would be in favour of a more articulated and joint Team Europe approach to sustainable agri-food system transformation, but this was not a widely shared idea. In *Niger*, in 2016, the BS SPRC represented a significant shift in that dialogue and collaboration moved from multiple projects implementation to one single programme and the policy dialogue was revamped with different levels and sectors of the public administration. Involved in different coordination mechanisms, the EU pursued a strategic dialogue by co-leading with the three government coordination poles of the Economic and Social Development Programme (ESPD): rural transformation; demographic transition, health, education, and vocational training; and infrastructure and equipment. While the coordination framework set by the ESPD and weak institutional capacity challenged coordination at project level, the budget support modality provided for more successful coordination mechanisms for agri-food system transformation via, for example, an agreement reached in 2018 between the Minister of Finance and the technical and financing partners.

The EU has played an active role in promoting donor coordination and harmonisation, sometimes against obstacles

The EU has played an active role in promoting donor coordination and harmonisation, sometimes against obstacles. In *Malawi*, the EU has helped align donor support to national policies and strategies in the framework of Malawi's Development Cooperation Strategy (2014) as one of the country's key diplomatic, economic and development partners. The Strategy established two main formal structures for dialogue: the Development Cooperation Group and the High-Level Forum. Cooperation is particularly strong in the agricultural sector, where the EU chairs, on a voluntary basis, the Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security (DCAFS) and the Donor Committee on Nutrition Security (DONUTS); important tools to harmonise program implementation and minimise duplication. In *Haiti*, the EU has played an active role in coordination groups with EU member states and beyond, groups led by Haitian authorities as well as groups for technical and financial partners only. This included the group of EU heads of mission, the broader group of heads of technical and financial partners, as well as sectoral donor groups. However, Development Partners, including EU MS, often found it difficult to coordinate due to diverging interests and working methods and limited staff resources in both quantity and skills terms. Institutional weaknesses and political instability negatively affected the government's ability to provide leadership and direction for donor coordination.

⁵⁵ 83% of respondents indicated that alignment and coordination had improved to some or a great extent for the period 2018-2021.

Examples for joint programming with EU MS and others

Some examples of joint programming efforts with EU MS and other donors can be observed across the case study countries.

In *Niger*, in a cooperation landscape featuring multiple projects, often funded by one EU MS, joint programming remained limited until the COVID-19 crisis. A joined EU-EU MS approach contributed to mitigating the pandemic's risks via support to the implementation of the National Preparedness & Response Plan to COVID-19. In *Haiti*, the NIP 2021-2027 was developed jointly with the main French and Spanish cooperation agencies present in the country, and is the first joint programming document of the EU and EU MS in the country.

In *Malawi*, the EU and EU MS (notably Germany, Ireland, and Belgium (Flanders-BE)) have opted for a pragmatic bottom-up approach to joint programming that focuses mostly on strengthening joint implementation and joint financing arrangements at sectoral level. In the FNSSA domain, joint programmes or pooled funding mechanisms have been developed to support nutrition, social protection, and agribusiness. The EU and EU MS joint approach aims at extending beyond development, encompassing issues like political engagement or trade, in the framework of the European Economic Diplomacy agenda. The MIP 2021-2027 aims at building on the experience with joint implementation and pooled financing, while gradually shifting towards joint, multi-annual programming.

In *Cambodia*, the EU has facilitated donor coordination, which has contributed to strengthening donor-government dialogues and an EU MS cooperation framework that has caught the interest of other countries. Most of the EU MS, for 2014-2018 adopted a joint European Development Cooperation Strategy (EDCS) for Cambodia, which "*developed a good dynamic and was used as an example for other countries*". This allowed the EU to play a leading role coordinating EU and EU MS support in Cambodia and facilitating the policy dialogue with the Government. At first, exchanges between EU and EU MS were limited to joint analysis and information sharing. This led to common positions on topics of concern, feeding into the high-level dialogue between the EU and EU MS with government officials. The EU coordinated a monthly informal meeting with development partners to discuss policy, procedural and technical issues. These informal meetings have continued beyond the evaluation period and have expanded in membership. The CAPFISH-Capture and CAPFISH-Aquaculture programmes are an example of joint programming: EU (Capture) and AFD (Aquaculture) programmes complement each other by targeting different segments of the same sector.

Particular efforts for EU-EU MS coordination in Colombia through the EUTF and Team Europe Initiatives

In Colombia, efforts to work together with EU MS have been reinforced by the establishment of the European Trust Fund and the Team Europe approach is starting to take shape.

EU-EU MS cooperation in *Colombia* has its roots in the strong support from the EUD and various EU MS to the GoC and civil society in the decades before the peace agreement was signed. The strong ties have been reinforced by the establishment of the EUTF Colombia in 2016, designed to accompany the GoC in the implementation of the peace agreement and bringing together 19 EU MS to support the first and third items of the peace agreement: integrated rural development and reincorporation of former combatants. The EUTF Colombia is governed by a Strategic Committee, consisting of the EU Ambassadors, and the Operational Committee, consisting of the Heads of Cooperation. Despite slower decision processes around the identification and implementation of interventions, the efforts of aligning between EU MS and with GoC policies and priorities resulted in increased visibility of the EU as a whole and a stronger voice in the policy dialogue regarding the implementation of the peace agreement. The GoC acknowledges that "*the EUTF Colombia has been instrumental in working in a more integrated way in the implementation of the peace agreement*"⁵⁶.

Colombia also offers an example of two Team Europe Initiatives: TEI Peace and TEI Environment. TEI Peace priority areas are socio-economic development with a focus on strengthening local governance, reforms for social inclusion and local development and comprehensive rural policy. These priorities have a strong linkage with sustainable agri-food system transformation challenges such as more inclusive territorial and value chain development, land governance, investments in infrastructure and facilitating access to markets. Austria, Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden, and Switzerland, Norway and the United Kingdom have been part of discussions around the TEI on Peace. There is a consensus on the need to work in a collective way between the EU MS. The EU MS interested in joining the TEI have developed a joint Theory of Change to define what they want to achieve. This process will hopefully help avoid fragmentation of efforts and distorting the discussion by already thinking of instruments.

TEI Environment aims to contribute to Colombia's transition towards green development and to support Colombia as a model of sustainable development in Latin America. The Green Deal and Farm to Fork strategy are areas where EU MS have an interest and expressed willingness to support GoC, for example by supporting efforts to improve access to the EU market for Colombian sustainably produced products (e.g. timber, agricultural products). There is potential to build on the German experiences on deforestation in the Amazon and Swedish efforts in the Sustainable Colombia Fund.

4.2.2.2 *Promotion of SAFS agenda*

The EU faced important challenges in supporting the promotion of a SAFS agenda at country level. (JC2.1)

The EU must deal with conflicting policies and interests at country level

At country level, conflicting policies and interests constitute obstacles to EU efforts of promoting SAFS. In *Haiti*, government trade policies have long benefited large food importers instead of local food producers, while EU-support attempted to foster sustainable smallholder production. In *Kenya*, Netherlands and Ireland aimed to introduce potato seed and acquire certification but met with hostility from the National Potato Council against imported varieties, leading to fierce competition between promoters of the new varieties and foreign as well as national promoters of local varieties; unfortunately happening against the backdrop of acute shortages of potato seed during the planting season.

Unique challenges were faced in *Colombia* in maintaining coherence between development objectives relating to sustainable and inclusive development and climate change and the practices of European companies. Colombia has strong environmental and labour protection laws, but enforcement is problematic, especially in the Amazonian and Pacific regions most affected by the conflict, corruption, and illegal activities. In those regions, the incentive for foreign companies and investors to apply due diligence is weak. AECID, the Spanish International Cooperation Agency, has established dialogue with Spanish companies on this but feels that it has too little leverage as an agency to affect companies' behaviour. Therefore, AECID has asked the Spanish Ministry of Trade to increase the pressure on those companies. AECID supports the Colombian Human Rights Council and other institutions to promote the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. AECID indicates: "The EU is an important partner to provide stronger directives that are enforceable" which would give them a stronger mandate to stop Spanish companies from doing harm⁵⁷.

The lack of a practical monitoring framework limits understanding of drivers and barriers to agri-food system transformation

The EU has not systematically invested in a practical monitoring framework for identifying and assessing progress on agri-food system outcomes. The EU Results framework has been aligned with the SDGs in 2018, yet is not used systematically (see 3.4). Consequently, this evaluation has not found aggregated data on key SAFS/FNSSA indicators at country level. Even in *Malawi*, where a comprehensive approach was rolled out, programmes are not based on comprehensive agri-food system assessments, nor have results frameworks been developed that allow tracking progress on (sub)system-level indicators. Planning and implementation continue without sufficient and widely shared insight into the different and sometimes competing interests of the multiple stakeholders involved, limiting understanding of the drivers and barriers to agri-food system transformation.

However, interesting examples of context-adapted frameworks have been identified in some countries. In *Colombia*, outcome monitoring for the different BS envelopes tracks agreed-upon indicators. For DRET, for example, in dialogue with GoC, six indicators derived from the Rural Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (*Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo*, MADR), National Rural Development Agency (*Agencia de Desarrollo Rural*, ADR) and National Land Agency (*Agencia Nacional de Tierras*, ANT) databases have been agreed for tracking progress. Team Europe initiatives may be able to build on the EUTF monitoring and evaluation framework that tracks objectives and indicators jointly defined by the GoC, the EUD and other European development partners. In *Cambodia*, EDCS includes a results framework and an associated monitoring and evaluation plan which monitors key outcomes, outputs and related indicators, tracks progress and generates lessons for future programming. It is built to reinforce existing national monitoring processes.

4.2.2.3 Changes in the governance of agri-food systems

EU support contributed in varying degrees to policy- and institutional reform. (JC2.2)

Achievements on strengthening national governance depended on the country context.

The success of EU efforts to strengthen national governance depended highly on the country context. In *Colombia*, the EU supported the 'Mission for the Transformation of the Countryside', contributing to the reform of MADR and the creation of ANT, ADR and the Territorial Renewal Agency (*Agencia de Renovación Territorial*, ART) as specialised entities with well-defined competencies. A stronger regional presence of agencies charged with rural and agricultural development was aimed for. EU BS was instrumental in establishing the Rural Women Directorate within MADR. It also supported dealing with crucial SAFS governance issues such as access to land, property, land rights registration and the development of an inter-ministerial agenda between the Agriculture and Rural Development and Environmental Ministries. DRET catalysed changes in rural policies and institutions, strengthening their presence in targeted areas and making them more conducive to increased and lasting economic opportunities for smallholder producers and MSME's. This contributed to increased voice and empowerment of communities in conflict-affected areas and improved their capacities and bargaining power. Additionally, an increased territorial focus, a more participatory approach, and the integration of ethnicity and gender perspectives in implementing the peace agreement can be partly attributed to the consistent support of the EU and other international partners to the peace process. As well as the emphasis the EUD put on the institutional sustainability of these reforms.

In *Kenya*, EU helped improve the resilience of vulnerable communities by supporting three institutional changes: the formal establishment of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) in November 2011, providing the Drought Early Warning System (DEWS) to warn communities on droughts and other climate-related emergencies; the formulation of the Ending Drought Emergencies (EDE) strategy in 2013, and the Contingency Fund. These changes resulted in policies, laws, and institutional frameworks for the management of drought and other climate-related risks and technical improvements to early warning and contingency planning systems. In addition, the EU co-funded the Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP) II, implemented and funded by SIDA, which supports agricultural sector transformation in the light of devolution to the counties. Notably, via FAO, the EU contributed to the digitalisation agenda in agriculture. In *Niger*, progress has slowly been made regarding DNPGCA (Dispositif national de prévention et gestion des crises alimentaires) food crises response and prevention. In the framework of a National Strategy for Local Food Purchases from Smallholders, the dialogue between producer organisations and the RECA (Network of Agriculture Chambers) was strengthened. Moreover, EU support contributed to better land rehabilitation monitoring systems for the Ministry of Environment, Urban Hygiene and Sustainable Development, and groundwater monitoring systems for the Ministry of Water and Sanitation. In *Cambodia*, strong support was given to public sector reform related to the fisheries sector.

EU support has piloted new ways of making land governance more inclusive.

Across case study countries, there is evidence that the EU has contributed to reducing unequal access to land and resources via support to land reforms, the strengthening of governance dialogue and new pilot projects and participatory approaches. In *Colombia*, progress in addressing unequal access to land and productive resources has been significant, yet the Kroc Institute⁵⁸ warns that “*the pace of implementation of the long-term commitments is insufficient to accomplish them within the stipulated period*”. Concerns are raised on the institutional embedding and financing of the PDET (*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial*) projects, and the strengthening of local institutional capacity of departments and municipalities remains to be completed and sustained. In *Niger*, the EU contributed to national land governance dialogue and land reforms at the regional level. EDF and DCI support was channelled to contribute to the organisation of a participatory land tenure forum, a critical step facilitated by FAO to take stock of the situation in 2019. The forum laid the foundation for an EU-Niger collaboration toward the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT). In *Malawi*, an EU-funded pilot, implemented by Oxfam and the Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA), contributed to accelerating the enactment of a new Customary Land Act (2016) and ensuing regulations (2018) and has tested a model for customary land governance in three pilot districts, in diverse cultural settings (patrilineal, matrilineal, and mixed). In *Kenya*, a new participatory approach for the registration of community lands was developed. The approach includes land ownership for women and is now planned to be rolled out in many counties, even though evidence on actual respect for community land registration, and hence on the reduction of land grab, is still scattered.

58 Source: interviews and Instituto Kroc de Estudios Internacionales de Paz (2022): *Informe trimestral: estado efectivo de la implementación del Acuerdo Final*, octubre – diciembre 2021 <https://doi.org/10.7274/k0698626x28>.

The EU has supported the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms and dialogues.

EU support has led to the creation of new and the strengthening of existing platforms and dialogues across case study countries. The support to the National Information Platform for Food and Nutrition (NIPFN) in *Kenya* aimed at linking up scattered responsibilities for food security and nutrition among the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health, while giving to the counties also an important role. Due to delays in the release of EU funds by the Treasury, implementation was substantially delayed. A new intervention is now being planned to improve the institutional set-up of the platform – an inter-ministerial National Food and Nutrition Council comprising relevant ministries responsible for food and nutrition. In *Colombia*, the strengthening of RedAdelco was of strategic importance. It has resulted in stronger linkages between private sector policy processes at national and local level. It also institutionalised the spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue at local level, in the form of the Agencias de Desarrollo Económico Locales or 'Adels'. They include public and private sector, producers' organisations, and cooperatives. Different EU instruments have supported these 'Adels' since 2010 and between 2016 and 2020 they participated as implementing partner in several projects funded by development partners like EC, AECID, USAID. In *Niger*, farmers' and women's organisations play a critical role in policy and programme implementation via the Reseau national des Chambre d'Agriculture (RECA) and via the EUTF-funded Rural Hubs programme. Women's organisations have a paramount role in implementing the multisectoral plan of the national nutrition policy, including value chain fortification projects funded by the EU. In *Malawi*, the EU supported an advocacy programme for enhanced nutrition security and community empowerment implemented by Save the Children and the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET). In partnership with the Department of Nutrition HIV and AIDS the action is also advocating for the enactment of a food and nutrition bill and related regulatory framework.

The EU has consistently supported specific actions to strengthen evidence-based policy and decision-making on Food and Nutrition Security.

The EU has promoted evidence-based policy and decision-making on Food and Nutrition Security through specific actions at country level in a consistent manner. In *Colombia*, DRET contributed to improved monitoring mechanisms through, for example, integrating indicators for sustainable use of land as well as gender- and ethnicity-sensitive indicators. In *Niger*, the EU funds a policy assistance facility strengthening institutional capacities, nutrition mainstreaming, and governance mechanisms. The facility provided a critical contribution to the development, implementation, and review of the National Food Security Policy and its Action Plan. In addition, in *Niger* the EU supports the NPIN hosted in the National Statistics Institute and contributes to improving Ministry of Agriculture information systems for land monitoring. EU-supported DNPGCA was able to better respond to and prevent food-, flood-, security-, or COVID-related crises – including support to smallholders' contribution to the national food security stock. In *Malawi*, EU support contributed the National Agricultural Management Information System (NAMIS), and the National Nutrition multisectoral information system (NNIS), both in early stages of development. In *Haiti*, the PRO-Resilience programme contributed to strengthening the information system of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SIMAST). The National Social Protection and Promotion Policy recognises the key role of SIMAST for targeting social protection measures. Also in *Malawi*, the EU supported Parliament and the media with the aim to strengthen governance in the agriculture sector by i) developing media capacity to better follow up and inform on agriculture policy issues and the concerns of rural people and ii) improving the capacity of parliamentarians to appraise agriculture budgets, track public expenditures and assess agriculture-, food security- and nutrition- related policies and legislation. It is too early to assess the impact of this very ambitious action, but there are encouraging signs; for example, the interest generated by an excellent first workshop, notably amongst journalists. Engaging parliamentarians has proven more challenging.

The effectiveness and sustainability of EU support is conditioned by political dynamics.

Political dynamics shape the conditions for effective and sustainable EU support to strengthen agri-food system governance in partner countries. In *Colombia*, long-term engagement included effective policy dialogue, EU policy alignment, and partnership, allowing the EU to contribute substantially to sustainable agri-food system transformation over the years. However, advances in transformational change continue to be limited by changes in political agendas and the persistent presence of armed groups involved in illegal activities, including the coca value chain, in the country's most socioeconomically and environmentally fragile territories. EU support to embedding key components of the peace agreement in legislation was successful. At the same time, there are concerns on the lack of clarity around the public budget allocated to finance these components and, EU-supported reforms lost political traction under subsequent presidential regimes. Bureaucratic requirements, such as co-financing by local governments and technical ones, create barriers for the PDET municipalities and projects to access funding and prioritise public services, impeding access by more vulnerable communities⁵⁹.

In *Malawi*, the EU has spearheaded the operationalisation of the multi-sectoral approach and strengthened nutrition coordination committees at central and district level; at the latter level, by improving data collection, analysis and strategic use of nutrition and agriculture information. Through DCAFS and an important contribution to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, managed by the World Bank, the EU has supported policy reforms meant to improve the regulation of the national agricultural markets. Moreover, the EU has promoted reforms of the Government's agricultural input subsidy programme to increase its efficiency and broaden the support to a more balanced package of crops and inputs beyond maize and conventional fertiliser. However, the uptake of the proposed reforms remains limited because of weak vertical (siloed by line ministries) and horizontal (only partially decentralised) coordination, as well as by entrenched political dynamics shaping priorities and budget allocation. EU interventions provided targeted capacity development and technical expertise in line with the government's priorities. Several actions directly involved government services at the district level, allowing for direct funding transfers to Agricultural Development Divisions, District Councils and Government Departments. Even so, the engagement and ownership at district level varied across projects, service delivery was uneven and the budget available for coordination and monitoring was insufficient.

In *Haiti*, amid a multidimensional political, social and security crisis, punctuated by regular natural disasters – and despite policy, technical and capacity support from the EU and other donors – the Haitian State has steadily weakened, limiting the effectiveness of EU support to sustainable transformation of the Haitian agri-food systems. The *Alliance Mondiale contre le Changement Climatique* programme has supported sectoral coordination by the government concerning climate change, but a ROM report notes that it “currently seems to be losing momentum, slowing down the process of integration of climate change into the Haitian state.”⁶⁰ While government officials value engaging with other departments, it is also widely recognised that institutional ownership is still limited. Finally, Haiti *Coordination Nationale de la Sécurité Alimentaire* (CNSA) received long-term support from the EU for collecting, analysing, and disseminating information, particularly through the *Integrated Food Insecurity Classification Framework* (IPC). Nevertheless, in 2020 the CNSA still faced difficulties in carrying out its mandate, in which information provision plays an important role.

59 Source: interviews with local implementing partners and EUD.

60 EU (2018): ROM report – *Alliance Mondiale Contre le Changement Climatique – Haïti*.

4.2.2.4 *Enabling ecosystem for agri-food system transformation*

EU support has credibly contributed to improving the enabling environment at country and local level. (JC2.3)

EU efforts to improve agricultural services for smallholders and MSMEs have brought about promising results

EU has sizeably supported the improvement of agricultural services for smallholders and MSMEs, and their links to research and innovation, thereby improving their position vis-à-vis value chain demands. National agricultural advisory systems have long suffered loss of funding and fragmentation, forcing a withdrawal from remote areas. NGOs filled some of the gaps while, more recently, private operators are stepping in. At the regional level, the EU contributed to strengthening the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) through the CAADP XP4 programme. In *Niger*, the formation of the National Agricultural and Advisory Services system addressed the fragmented landscape and responded to new demands for information and training about managerial, marketing, and economic aspects of farming and agribusiness. Since 2017, the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Advice coordinates the National Association of Agricultural Students (NAAS) and aims to strengthen synergies between public and private services providers. The EU plans to support the NAAS and the operationalisation of the Agency in the next SRBC in a context where – beyond production – extension systems are also expected to address natural resource management, human health, resilience, and climate change adaptation.

Collaboration of extension services and research has been supported, including with 8 CGIAR centres in *Malawi* and with local universities, such as the University of the Amazonas, in *Colombia*. The EU portfolios in Niger and Malawi present clear linkages with nutrition and health services through institutional strengthening, water, and nutrition-sensitive interventions (i.e., school meals, fortification). In *Kenya*, EU support contributed to a fundamental change in the agricultural inputs system, introducing e-vouchers. In a game-changing move, the Government of Kenya withdrew from active interventions in Input distribution, creating ample opportunities for private sector engagement. The system is still in the early stages and roll-out requires due attention. Further attention needs to be paid to the promotion of women and youth as agro-dealers and to the quality of climate-smart agricultural input packages. Within the framework of rural infrastructure programmes, EU supports local traders, agribusiness and MSMEs, enhancing their access to finance, advisory and input services, access to natural resources, markets, and information systems. EU-supported environmental interventions support smallholders to improve forest and integrated water-shed management, soil restoration, sustainable farming or fishing and the introduction of climate-smart agricultural practices.

EU efforts to improve access to markets and finance have shown limited results

EU supported improved access to markets and finance for smallholders and MSMEs to a limited extent. The latter carries the risk of practical financial and business concerns taking priority over sustainability and inclusivity. In *Malawi*, the impact of EU-supported road rehabilitation so far has been limited because of poor implementation. Only few agricultural marketing centres have been connected to rehabilitated roads, the sustainability of which during the rainy season is doubted. In *Niger*, the EU has a long-standing partnership with the World Bank and the Millennium Challenge Corporation in the transport sector. EU support contributed to sector governance, as well as road construction and maintenance to better link Northern and Southern regions and facilitated smallholders' and pastoralists' access to national and regional markets. EU also started to contribute to setting up the Investment Fund for Improved Food and Nutritional Security in Niger. This Fund is to provide financial services (including credit, guarantees, and investment) to smallholders and agribusinesses, cooperatives and MSMEs, and local authorities and rural communities. Three facilities focused on financing the acquisition of productive equipment, financing local authorities, and funding agricultural advisory programs and applied agronomic research, respectively. The budget support modality proved critical to improving Public financial management (PFM) systems in FNSSA sectors. It included support for pioneering programming and accountability tools, and significant funding was channelled to strengthen the institutional capacity of the FNSSA line ministries. Still, the increasing level of insecurity in the neighbouring countries has led to a significant reallocation of budgetary resources initially earmarked for these programmes.

In *Kenya*, new blended finance instruments were introduced in support of private sector development. The *AgriFi Challenge Fund* is an innovative blended finance initiative that from 2018 focuses on agricultural value chains. Its design, integration and anchoring in national financial institutions took more time and energy than expected. Under pressure to start, the preparatory work on eligibility criteria and allocation procedures lagged. Similarly, *AgriBiz* was under pressure to move quickly, even when its value chain approach was not yet operational, and no clear eligibility criteria were in place for the selection of beneficiaries beyond being female or young. It led the implementation of both instruments to become biased towards getting the finance- and business-sides done without ensuring that support reached the intended beneficiaries or the promotion and use of sustainable and climate-smart technologies. The evaluation found other cases where the lack of clear eligibility criteria and their effective implementation contributed to diluting targeting efforts. This is compounded by the fact that EU support programmes, not just in Kenya, do not usually differentiate and monitor their effects on diverse SAFS stakeholders, each with different, sometimes competing interests; i.e., women, youth, pensioners, vulnerable communities, MSMEs, and food exporters/importers.

4.3 EQ3. Changes in agri-food value chains and nutrition

To what extent has the EU contributed to strengthening agri-food value chains, including value chain actors at different levels of society?



Summary answer to the EQ

EU support contributed sizeably to making value chains more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive, either directly or indirectly. While properly disaggregated data are limited, it can credibly be concluded that EU support disproportionately benefited smallholders, including women and youth, and vulnerable groups. Evidence from isolated cases suggests that the EU has sometimes been confronted by the dilemma of supporting an environmentally unsustainable value chain with high commercial potential for those with access to it versus supporting the development of more innovative and alternative value chains. Taken as a whole, however, the evidence suggests that EU support has been coherent with its high-level policy commitments to promoting poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and principles such as 'no one left behind' and 'do no harm'. In some countries reviewed, the EU has supported actions, typically community-based and with strong awareness-raising and capacity building components, to promote better nutrition.

Case studies suggest that EU actions have concentrated on the production end (mostly smallholders) of agri-food systems value chains. Pertinent yet scattered results in diversification, dissemination of technical skills, and adoption of more sustainable farm practices have been credibly documented, with concrete results for food security and income. At the same time, the EU has done relatively less in the middle range of the value chain. Little evidence has been found that EU mobilised the private sector, including MSMEs (disproportionately rural in most EU partner countries) with its commercial incentives. Examples have been found where opportunities to develop commercial potential have been stymied by unfavourable conditions ranging from unreliable access to electricity to credit constraints to lack of bargaining power on the part of the smallholder farm households and agricultural labourers who are the EU's ultimate target beneficiaries.

Resilience to sudden shocks and chronic stress, both often linked to global environmental change, have featured strongly in EU support, with credibly documentable evidence of contribution to progress. It supported the strengthening of disaster risk assessment, early warning, and response systems at national, district and community levels. Moreover, it supported the integration of agri-food system actions with social protection more broadly, a theme that has emerged strongly in recent work on the humanitarian-development support axis. There are, in this area, as well, credibly documentable instances of EU contribution to progress.

However, within the framework of this strategic evaluation, it is difficult to aggregate the available evidence in a globally meaningful way. Effects are highly context-specific, an advantage from the standpoint of relevance, but one which makes broad conclusions difficult. Many actions analysed are small, even pilot, in scale, or limited in scope, with little guarantee that they will be rolled out with any prospect of sustainability in the absence of donor support. While EU-supported actions reviewed have produced many results pointing towards more sustainable, inclusive and resilient agri-food systems, these results are too scattered and often too tentative to add up to the sustainable transformation of national or local food systems.

4.3.1 **Sustainability, inclusiveness and resilience of agri-food value chains**

EU support has contributed to enhancing the sustainability, inclusiveness and resilience of agri-food value chains through a diversity of channels. (JC3.1) However, within the framework of this strategic evaluation, it is not possible to provide an exhaustive overview or to aggregate the available information in a meaningful way. To take the example of *Kenya*, estimates of the number of beneficiaries reached through EU-supported value chain and resilience interventions range from 1-2 million people directly reached to a maximum of 4-5 million people directly or indirectly reached. EU-funded programmes report the adoption of more sustainable practices leading to increased production and productivity, as well as capacity development of smallholders, including women and youth. These changes in value chains likely led to an increase in income and food security, improved access to finance and jobs, and support for SME start-ups. The EU supported the dissemination by the Kenya Meteorology Department of weather information to support sowing and treatment timing decisions, etc.

EU support has contributed to making value chains more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient ...

In several case study countries, the evaluation team found evidence that EU support has contributed to increasing the sustainability, inclusiveness and resilience of agri-food value chains. Farmers' resilience in *Malawi* has been increased through production diversification, uptake of sustainable practices and increased ability to manage environmental and market risks, with increased production in some cases enabling farmers to acquire resilience-enhancing assets such as agricultural equipment. EU support was instrumental in rehabilitating the banana sector after the outbreak and spread of the Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV), identifying accessible varieties, supplying farmers with safe planting material through the establishment of community-managed orchards, and thus rehabilitating the country's genetic diversity. The EU's response to a Fall Armyworm (FAW) outbreak during the 2017-2018 planting season averted large crop losses and introduced more sustainable practices. Beyond these isolated crisis responses, some early signals of change towards improved sustainability and inclusiveness of agri-food value chains are visible. Investments in capacity building are providing farmers with technical tools to sustainably increase productivity and diversify production. This knowledge transfer is visible in the field, although uptake needs strengthening and long-term engagement.

In *Niger*, EU investments have strengthened the institutional capacity of regional authorities, professions, public bodies, and private sector actors such as MSMEs and smallholders. The EU reports positive results regarding access to inputs (equipment and services), information, and techniques, with positive effects regarding agricultural output and diversification (upstream), agri-food-processing and logistics (midstream), and increased participation of smallholders in institutional purchase (downstream). Unfortunately, no clear links were found between these results and EU sustained funding of roads infrastructure, which aimed to strengthen market access and trade.

Colombia represents a case where, despite progress in strengthening value chains, the inclusion of the poorest populations has proven challenging. This is partly due to the security conditions in the most fragile regions, but also due to the limited influence of government policy and donor interventions on food system change, as Colombia's private sector investments in agri-food have mainly focused on the development of export-oriented value chains. The EU invested in strengthening institutions relevant to smallholder-related value chain operations through reform of MADR, and the creation of the ANT, ADR and ART at the beginning of the evaluation period, and the strengthening of extension services through TA, BS and policy dialogue. Direct support to value chain strengthening was funded through the EU Trust Fund and budget support contributed both directly and indirectly to strengthened capacities of actors all along the value chain. Within large, export-oriented agricultural value chains, rural households, often not part of these value chains or working as contract farmers or labourers, benefited less than large agribusiness firms. However, small-scale farmers and rural households, as well as smaller agri-business SMEs, were successfully reached by intervention targeting niche markets such as speciality coffee and cacao, as well as innovative forest-based product value chains. The effects of these activities suggest improved sustainability and inclusiveness of smallholder-related agri-food value chains, especially in the areas most affected by the conflict.

Despite some evidence that EU-supported interventions contributed to more sustainable practices in *Haiti*, these were limited and at small (pilot) scale. Unsustainable agricultural practices continue to prevail. While pesticide application is limited, a strong point of Haitian agri-food systems, the use of chemical fertilisers in *Haiti* is problematic. Uncontrolled use of these fertilisers destabilises the microbial life in the ground, thus contributing to soil degradation; it also causes eutrophication of the aquatic environment (water tables, rivers and lakes), threatening the survival of corals and threatening fisheries resources, a major source of protein. Some evidence has been found that the EU has contributed to a substitution of natural for chemical fertilisers by providing training and awareness-raising to farmers. Nevertheless, an interviewed government official pointed out that the priority of the government is to reduce the costs of inputs, not their sustainability. Post-harvest food losses are high in *Haiti* and, while some limited EU support in this area provides early signals of positive change, no evidence has been found of an actual reduction of food loss and waste along food value chains.

... but available evidence is both mixed and scattered, not permitting an unequivocal finding.

In none of the countries studied is it possible to unequivocally conclude that there has been a sustainable improvement in agri-food systems, nor is it possible, because of the very different conditions and contexts, to make strong generalisations across countries. In *Kenya*, no clear conclusion can be drawn regarding overall value chain effects. It is probable that, thanks to EU support some value chain actors are more aware of, and implement more sustainable agricultural, livestock management, and fisheries, forestry and natural resource management practices, but the extent to which this occurred is impossible to assess. No evidence was found regarding less food loss or waste or reduced use of dangerous chemicals, pesticides, and insecticides. Adoption of weather-related technologies remains low and utilisation of meteorological information is still at an early stage. In *Malawi*, despite early positive signs at the level of the farmer, the sustainability and resilience of agri-food value chains themselves remain weak. The case of *Niger* is similar; while there are encouraging signs at all points of the value chain, it is unclear that the hoped-for access to markets and opportunities for trade have materialised, in part because of the poor security situation. This is also a factor in *Colombia*, where the potential for transformational change is limited by the absence of the state and deeply entrenched inequalities, and the persistence of armed groups involved in illegal activities, including the coca value chain, in the most fragile territories of the country (both socioeconomically as well as environmentally). The security situation in some areas, especially in the Pacific has worsened in the last three years, with local communities suffering from high levels of violence and weak enforcement of the rule of law. This has a direct impact on the communities' abilities to exploit economic opportunities and government and development partners' efforts to support inclusive and sustainable value chain development. EU efforts to bring in private investment are limited due to the security risks in these areas, as well as the limited progress in rural structural reform. As described above, despite some EU-supported progress at pilot level, agricultural practices in *Haiti* are not compatible with sustainability.

4.3.2 MSME's, smallholder producers, women and youth

Case studies suggest that EU actions have concentrated on the production end (mostly smallholders) of agri-food systems value chains with pertinent, yet scattered results, that come nowhere near to achieving the broader changes necessary for the wider transformation of agri-food systems. (JC3.2)

The EU contributed to strengthening smallholder farmers to increase and diversify production

All case studies contain examples of EU-supported actions that improved the situation of smallholder farmers, but results are scattered.

Through the e-survey, responses showed that EU support was the most visible in '*Improving vulnerable communities' access to safe, affordable, and nutrition food*' and in '*Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of climate change, natural and social disasters*'.⁶¹

EU support to *Malawi* has contributed to the objectives of improved and diversified agricultural production by investing significant resources in smallholders' farming skills, "enabling them to understand the specific challenges of their area (e.g., characteristics of the soil, parasite risks etc.) and encouraging them to develop better approaches to cultivation. Farmers have been provided with a set of knowledge and tools that is allowing them to increase productivity and diversify their farms by growing a more varied set of crops, leading to some results in terms of strengthening household income (including through diversification of income sources) and engagement in at least one of the emerging value chains (e.g., banana, pineapples, apiary, soya beans, and livestock, and to a smaller extent aquaculture). A partnership amongst two CGIAR centres (ICRISAT and ILRI) and the local NGO Small Scale Livestock and Livelihoods Program (SSLLP) piloted an approach to identify high-potential value chains (goats, dairy, poultry, feed and fodder), diagnose their key bottlenecks and promote inclusive business models and MSMEs, with a view to developing integrated crop-livestock production systems. The bottom-up approach effectively targeted women and youth-headed MSMEs and the strong focus on market creation and diversification of farm-level production proved good for income strengthening. The KULIMA-MIERA programme implemented by GIZ supported farmers, farmers organisations, and MSMEs to increase their income and create more employment opportunities, with a strong youth orientation.

In *Kenya*, there are many scattered examples of EU-financed projects that introduced new agricultural practices that appear to lead to increased productivity, production, improved livelihoods, increased incomes, more food security, and better nutrition. These promoted sustainable pest management practices, a shift from traditional crops to new ones with greater potential for income generation, such as white sorghum for brewing (traditionally a women's activity), dryland crops for sustainable and affordable food production that meets basic nutrition requirements. The promotion and adoption of various technologies are said to have resulted in improved food and nutritional security, as well as increased farm incomes.

In *Colombia*, both government programmes to which EU support is aligned and EU support itself explicitly targeted MSMEs, women, youth, and marginalised groups with an integrated and participatory approach to diversify and increase sustainable production. Results include strengthened stakeholder capacities in different segments of the cocoa value chain, new or strengthened commercial alliances between local producer associations and EU MS buyers, and investments in local processing and storage. Compliance with international Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and quality standards was supported and more diversified and sustainable agricultural practices were successfully disseminated among farm households. At the same time, as discussed below there were potential inconsistencies in EU support.

In *Haiti*, some evidence points to EU contributions to diversify and sustainable production increases in certain localities. The EU, with co-funding from AFD, provided training in good agricultural practices, as well as the distribution of subsidies for the purchase of seeds, ploughing material and fertiliser, focusing on Maize, haricots, and banana value chains. After cyclone Matthew in 2016, the project adopted a Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRD) approach. Impressive yield increases are reported for bananas, maize, beans, and groundnuts. Another project rehabilitated irrigated land and provided irrigator" associations infrastructures, offices, tools (regulations, budgets) and training.

61 79% and 78% of respondents answered that EU support had contributed to "a great extent" to these two outcomes, respectively.

... however, while positive results observed may contain the seeds of transformational change, there have been failures as well as successes.

The positive results observed in the case studies come nowhere near to achieving the broad change and synergies that would be necessary to transform local, let alone national or global, agri-food systems.

In *Malawi*, as acknowledged by several stakeholders, the uptake of technology, while promising, has been slow. As stated by one of the implementing partners *“changing mindsets and convincing farmers of the benefits of new technologies takes time”* and requires long-term investments and engagement at farm level. In addition, farmers are credit-constrained and have only limited access to markets, reducing their ability and willingness to invest in new technologies. Sustainability of the livestock and livelihood initiatives described above is far from assured because of limited time for implementation and the continued demands for skilled human and financial resources. One major infrastructure investment, the Lifuwu irrigation scheme in Salima district, failed to translate into tangible production and income improvements when management difficulties at the Water User Association (WUA) and the high costs of connecting the pumping station to the electricity grid have rendered the rehabilitated infrastructure idle for the most part.

A recurrent issue is that of supporting agri-food systems that are vital to the populations that depend on them for income in the present but are environmentally unsustainable in the long run. For example, the evaluation report of the EU-AFD supported project in *Haiti* (discussed above) points out that the impressive yield increases reported rely on chemicals that are often unavailable on the market or unaffordable for farmers to apply the recommended doses, which raises the question of the sustainability of these yield improvement over time as well as their environmental sustainability.

In the case study on *Colombia*, an example of a highly export-oriented country, the problem of such inconsistencies is stark. Supporting value chains geared towards high-end (European) markets provides producers with higher incomes, but it also requires levels of capital (financial, human, and social) which exclude the most vulnerable groups. Export orientation also comes at the expense of increased exposure to external shocks in the form of commodity-price fluctuations against which the poorest are least capable of insuring, whether through financial markets or income diversification.

Also in *Colombia*, as in *Haiti*, there are inconsistencies in the form of value chains that are strategically important for local actors but are environmentally unsustainable. For example, the dairy value chain in Caquetá is an important one for promoting stability in that conflict-affected region. Cattle ranching is the mainstay of family farmers in the region, and the dairy value chain is a major contributor to the local economy. At the same time, current practices of cattle ranching are unsustainable in the fragile ecosystems of the region. Some EU-supported actions have sought to make the dairy value chain more sustainable through targeted extension and technical support to help cattle rangers adopt intensive silvo-pastoral system practices which combine higher milk yields with lower environmental impact. Other EU-supported actions have explicitly decided not to work on the dairy value chain, as the program manager considers this choice as limiting the impact of the project at scale due to sustainability concerns. The dilemma is between supporting an existing value chain, attempting to make it more sustainable, in the interests of inclusivity and supporting value chains that are of less benefit to those most in need in the near term, but sustainable in the long term.

Moreover, while case studies are rich in evidence related to smallholder farmers, most provide little evidence on whether MSMEs, women, and youth were targeted or disproportionately benefitted.

EU support has largely benefitted target beneficiary groups, including smallholders, MSMEs, women, youth, and marginalised or vulnerable populations.

Its strong focus on supporting the agricultural and rural economy in fragile areas is of particular importance to these target groups, and project design in all countries reflects this. Over the past few years, specific attention to supporting women and youth has increased. 91 % of the e-survey respondents assessed that EU support have integrated to some extent or to a great extent, issues related to inclusion such as gender equality and youth. Evidence from the EUTF in Colombia shows specific targeting of youth, women, and ethnic groups; including a specific indicator to track impact on youth participation. Also, in *Kenya* and *Malawi*, increasingly women and youth are targeted for training and support in setting up their own businesses. Aggregating the scattered evidence in a meaningful way, without the availability of consolidated data at project and programme level, proved impossible within the framework of this strategic evaluation.

4.3.3 Food processing and distribution

EU actions have concentrated on the production side (mostly smallholders) and resilience and poverty aspects of agri-food systems, not on the middle range of the value chain. (JC3.3)

EU support to local food processing and retail has been limited both in number and in impact.

The case studies only show a few examples where EU support has aimed at improving value chains in terms of food processing and retail, and their impact was found to have been limited. In *Malawi*, the EU has supported, although less consistently compared to sustainable production, small and medium-scale food processing and the development of more inclusive and sustainable agri-food value chain development. Approaches have differed, ranging from grants awarded to private sector actors, NGO partnerships, research and innovation, or programme funding to other development partners for agribusiness development. Among the initiatives were a smallholder outreach programme by the first mango processing plant in the country, with promising early results, and an NGO-led partnership to develop new value chains and retail bakery products, which has led to the successful adoption of new varieties but was initially challenged by delays in the procurement of equipment and a too-short time horizon. As such, improvements in productivity and incomes still need to be consolidated. Generally, the impacts and achievements in this domain varied considerably, as value chains face different challenges and constraints in different contexts. The case study does not reveal clear signals of increased employment opportunities and improved working conditions and sees risks of excessive reliance on one buyer in some of the projects. In the next programming cycle, the EU intends to place stronger attention on securing viable markets and fostering agribusiness and may replicate or upscale its most successful experiences. A 2021 mid-term review of the KULIMA project (mentioned under JC3.2), while acknowledging the relevance and usefulness of the value-chain approach employed, characterised it as “*capacity-constrained, too broad in geographical scope, and unable to make complex and long value chains more joined-up and efficient*”⁶².

In *Kenya*, there has so far been less attention in the EU portfolio to food processing, although there have been some specific activities and private sector food processing may get more attention in future programming. The evaluation had a closer look at two outcomes related to food processing and market standards. White sorghum was promoted for brewing, traditionally a female activity, but no precise figures on beneficiaries or resulting increases in incomes are available. The Standards and Market Access Programme (SMAP) aimed at increasing the competitiveness and market access of Kenya's products through improved food safety. The European Court of Auditors found that the SMAP had contributed to export volumes and to economic development by supporting an institution with a clear and indispensable role in the process of exporting agricultural products. Exports of horticultural products have increased in recent years, with perhaps some SMAP contribution. This was, however, essentially an export development project; it had no inclusiveness or sustainability dimensions.

The agri-food industry is small in *Haiti* and dominated by a few actors producing primarily for export markets. Factors hindering food processing are an unfavourable fiscal policy, strong competition from cheap imported processed products, an unstable supply system, and unreliable access to energy, hindering processing. With this as context, the EU dedicated little attention to food processing. In the handful that were identified, gains in productivity, quality and safety remain to be demonstrated and improvements in food processing, preservation and marketing capacities have been limited. Interviewees from the government and the EU delegation indicate that food processing needs to receive more attention, perhaps with less focus on vulnerable populations in order to free up space for more effective support.

4.3.4 **More healthy, nutritious safe dietary habits and more sustainable food consumption patterns.**

EU supported promoting nutrition through community based actions to communities developing more healthy, nutritious, safe dietary habits and more sustainable food consumption patterns. (JC3.4)

EU support has covered nutrition, including the demand for a healthy diet, as well as food production.

In some countries reviewed, the EU has supported actions, typically community-based and with a string awareness-raising and capacity building component, to promote better nutrition.

In *Malawi*, nutrition is integrated to different degrees in many if not all EU interventions. Afikepo, the main EU intervention on nutrition, built capacities of schools and communities to better understand the role of home-grown school meals as well as their roles in providing high-quality school meals and applying appropriate hygiene practices. Capacity building activities are directed essentially to women and the trainers are mostly women. In *Kenya*, by contrast, EU funded interventions in food consumption and nutrition have included actions related to food fortification and mother-and-child community-based strategies to improve practices and increase demand for nutrition-specific and sensitive services. Contrary to agricultural production statistics, nutrition statistics show significant improvement nationwide. For the specific results achieved by EU-funded programmes, the EU contribution is clear and straightforward, but the contribution of the EU to overall nutrition improvements is difficult to assess. In *Haiti*, the EU has supported strong efforts to improve food access and utilisation. Documentation and interviews suggest EU-funded awareness raising on nutritious, safe dietary habits and preventing malnutrition; e.g., community awareness raising combined with screening and training of school canteen staff, has achieved good results.

4.3.5 **Responses to agri-food-system shocks**

Resilience to sudden shocks and chronic stress, both often linked to global environmental change, have featured strongly in EU support, with credibly documentable evidence of contribution to progress. (JC3.5)

The EU's approach was problem-driven and drew on experience as it accumulated.

Building resilience is at the heart of many EU FNSSA interventions. The EU has supported the strengthening of disaster risk assessment, early warning, and response systems, at national, district and community level.

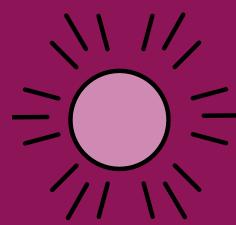
In *Kenya*, the EU has provided substantial assistance to resilience programmes in ASAL areas over the years, at national and county-level. Besides the establishment of the National Disaster Management Authority, EU-supported results include an early warning system; county committees' community-level disaster risk reduction projects, and the Drought Contingency Fund. As confirmed by beneficiary surveys, these measures have contributed to strengthened community responses to agri-food systems shocks in the form of enhanced food security, reduced disaster risk, and increased protection of assets. In *Niger*, prey to both fast- and slow-moving disasters worsened by ecological vulnerability to climate change, the EU partnership with national institutions increased SAFS resilience in a context of multiple crises. EU support strengthened national capacity to analyse and address vulnerabilities to acute shocks and chronic stress. The EU provided support, for example, to social safety nets schemes for food and nutrition security. As revealed by recent changes observed at policy and institutional level, the EU incorporated peace components to complement the humanitarian-development approach. In *Haiti*, as well, the EU has contributed to strengthening food hazard information systems to improve shock responsiveness.

In *Malawi*, a country highly vulnerable to a broad range of climate-related and other agri-food system shocks, EU support has applied a multi-pronged approach to fostering synergies between humanitarian, social and economic interventions. The EU supported resilience-building efforts at the community level, including an increase in income-generating assets and activities, diversification of crop production and integration of livestock into farming systems so as to increase their ability to deal with environmental and market risks and to facilitate a quicker recuperation response. It promoted nutrition-sensitive Climate Smart Agriculture. Crisis modifiers to be activated in response to shock (e.g., resilience grants and school meals) were integrated in most, if not all, development programmes. EU-funded interventions contributed to linking ultra-poor households benefiting from the social cash transfers to resilience-building interventions, breaking the cycle of chronic food and nutrition insecurity. Finally, by supporting land policy reforms, the EU has contributed to improving resource access and the land rights of rural communities. Although comprehensive evaluations are lacking, all evidence reviewed credibly suggests that EU-supported actions have contributed to significant improvements in food security, resilience, and poverty; with hints of transformative potential.

In *Haiti*, the EU sought to reduce food and nutrition insecurity by tackling the root and underlying causes of vulnerability and reducing the negative impacts of shocks. It combined support for elaboration of national social protection policy with support for its operationalisation in fragile communities through consortia of NGOs. EU-supported actions forged closer links between local production and consumption by setting up local food and nutrition safety nets for the most vulnerable populations (i.e., food coupons), thereby ensuring access by local consumers to EU-supported local value chain actors.

4.4 EQ4. System level effects

To what extent have different types of EU support facilitated agri-food system changes that ensure more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable food system outcomes?



Summary answer to the EQ

At agri-food system level no data are available to aggregate and assess the effects of EU-supported actions. Besides, very few of these actions were designed to affect system level change. Consequently, we limit ourselves to signals found during the case studies that suggest EU-supported partnerships contributed to what might become system-wide changes conducive to environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable transformations in agri-food systems, now or in the future, their drivers, and obstacles.

Through its partnership with the RBA and the GDPRD, the EU has actively contributed to framing the global transition towards a SAFS approach. With its support to the RBA and the CFS, the EU sizably contributed to developing instruments for strengthening multilateral governance for SAFS world-wide. Its long-term support to the CAADP XP4 organisations, GFAR and TAP has helped African countries to be better connected to continental and global dialogues and partnerships. Also, the EU supported the preparations for and implementation of the UN Food Systems Summit and followed through by committing to being a partner in eight Coalitions for Action, involving various DGs. However, in the geo-political landscape of food system transformation today, the EU and its partners face strong challenges. Agri-food system transformation pathways are strongly contested among global and EU partners. Diverging economic and political interests promote different forms of science-policy interfaces. And also, among EU Member States, perceptions about progress made on global governance and, the role played by the EU differ widely. Yet all agree that the war in Ukraine affects food systems worldwide and that it creates the momentum for taking bold steps to further develop and operationalise a joint SAFS approach. And EU MS acknowledge the potential leadership role of the EC and the availability of EU policy frameworks to back it up. However, to take up leadership most interviewees suggest the EC should become more demand-driven, co-active, and less focused on its own programmes. It still needs to overcome a number of internal coordination challenges.

EU support to food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and resilience programmes contributed to economic opportunities for smallholder producers, women, youth, workers in agri-food systems, and MSMEs. Actions to empower farm households consisted largely of capacity building to improve farming practices and outputs by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and strengthening smallholders' capacity to meet market and safety demands. In addition, access to services has been improved. At the same time, gains remain fragile in many cases, either because of uncertain government support, lack of widespread adoption of innovation, or weak links such as poor access to markets and capital, including land. Hence, the transformative impact of EU support to agri-food systems is tentative. Success is also speculative to the extent that, as outputs and outcomes are monitored only at the project and programme level, it is difficult to aggregate to an overall assessment. In the specific case of nutrition, although a range of EU-supported initiatives was identified, it is only in recent years that nutrition has been more strongly integrated in EU support to FSSNA, and country-level strategies have yet to reflect the priority given to nutrition at global level.

The EU contributed to improved governance for sustainable agri-food system transformation through institutional strengthening and capacity building at all levels. At national level, the EU was actively involved in policy dialogue. The effectiveness of policy dialogue depended on government leadership, ownership, institutional capacity and follow-up on agreements and the political agendas of interlocutors (on both sides), with the risk that gains are vulnerable to shifts in the political winds. In view of development effectiveness, the need to achieve a vision shared between the EU and its EU MS and, national governments and agri-food system stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, has grown, as has the need for mutual accountability based on a common framework to monitor progress.

The EU has started to integrate environmental sustainability and climate change response into its approach to agri-food systems. In addition to supporting research and innovation, it has promoted climate-friendly agriculture and strengthened capacity to monitor and respond to environmental threats (chiefly droughts and floods) related to climate change. The political economy of agri-food system transformation holds strong challenges. For example, environmentally unsustainable practices may be a coping strategy or serve producers' commercial interests or value chains vital to poor households' livelihoods may be unsustainable. Besides, scaling up climate-sensitive and sustainable agricultural practices, that have become available through research and farmer experimentation, requires adequate and sustained investments in enabling policies, regulations, and institutions.

4.4.1 EU support has actively facilitated a global transition towards a SAFS approach

Through its partnerships and cooperation with a multitude of international and regional SAFS actors, EU has contributed to paving the way for a global SAFS approach. (JC4.1)

The EU contributed to a global transition to SAFS

EU strategic convergence with RBA and the GDPRD has actively contributed to a global transition towards a sustainable agri-food systems approach. Through partnership with the RBA and the CFS the EU sizably contributed to developing instruments for strengthening multilateral governance for SAFS worldwide, including policy products, reliable and up-to-date information and data systems, and improved natural resources governance. If much remains to be done, these striking outcomes stemmed from joint forces, shared analytical and technical capacities, and willingness to catalyse stakeholders' participation around common objectives, networks, and initiatives. This participation has often involved research and academia, producers' organisations, and civil society organisations. EU and RBA have developed 'shock-responsive' social protection mechanisms, including large-scale cash transfers to better address needs via humanitarian, development, and peace actions in fragile situations. Here, EU spending contributed to political stability and state building, social cohesion and inclusion, education and health, and enhanced consumption and production patterns⁶³. Concerns remain about the lack of documentation and visibility of EU engagement with the whole RBA family; the siloed approaches embedded in work routines and organisational set-up weighed heavily on past programming and gaps in critical areas such as gender equality and women empowerment.

The global transition to SAFS faces many challenges

At the global and national level, agri-food system transformation pathways are contested. At global level, diverging national, economic, and political interests promote different priorities and pathways for achieving agri-food system transformation, different technological choices, and different forms of science-policy interfaces. At the national level, vulnerable communities' livelihood may depend on unsustainable agricultural practices, such as the excessive use of chemicals, international and national companies may not be ready to adopt and pay for sustainably produced food products, and national governments may prioritise food production and availability and not, sustainability in view of ongoing or upcoming food crises. It illustrates the many obstacles implied in the UNFSS challenge to countries to design and implement national pathways.

63 DG INTPA, DG ECHO, and DG NEAR (2019). Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises. Tools and Methods Series Reference Document No 26.

The EU consistently supports African R&I institutions to develop their capacities

The long-term support to the CAADP XP4 organisations, GFAR and TAP has helped African countries to be better connected to and have a stronger voice in continental and global dialogues and partnerships. EU support has also contributed to improved regional governance of XP-4 CAADP institutions. It contributed to create a platform for increased collaboration between innovation and extension systems (AFAAS). And it contributed to a reform process of ASARECA, the main actor for AR4D in EAC, COMESA and IGAD, in 2015-2016. This process led to the adoption of a new governance structure and a new strategy redefining the institution's added value/niche as regional mobilisation, partnership brokering, catalysing, facilitating, and communicating. ASARECA's voice has helped to bring AR4D higher on the political agenda; e.g., by organising policy discussions based on achievements and challenges of R&I programmes.⁶⁴ The EU continues to support global and regional R&I capacity building, multi-stakeholder networking and learning for sustainable innovation through DeSIRA.

EU has considerably supported the UNFSS

EU supported the UNFSS and engaged in Action Coalitions to follow up on its outcomes. In his Summary and Statement of Action on the UNFSS,⁶⁵ the UN Secretary General affirms it was made a "*Solution's Summit to make the transformative effects of food systems a driver for the achievement of the SDGs by 2030*". He underscores "*participants urged a systems approach to food, aligned with the 2030 Agenda, that embraces the complexity of our world to deliver the transitions we need.*" And: "*the food system does not thrive without all sectors working as one, towards common goals.*" He mentioned as key actions to be undertaken, for UN and the international community to support the development and implementation of national pathways to 2030 that are inclusive and consistent with countries' climate commitments. He invited to build upon national food systems dialogues, driven at country level by their local contexts. In the follow-up to the Summit, the European Commission committed to being a major partner in eight Coalitions for Action, involving various DGs.

EU and EU MS do not speak with one voice on SAFS governance

EU MS' perceptions on progress on global SAFS governance differ. Interviewed representatives of EU MS consider that, despite many initiatives and significant funding, progress in global governance of agri-food systems is very slow. They pointed out the limited progress in improving collaboration among RBAs and problematic political leadership at FAO. Besides, overlapping global platforms hinder global governance progress and initiatives are too many. An overall issue, shared by all interviewees, is the actual lack of global leadership on SAFS. Despite strong support for the development and implementation of a food systems approach, FAO is not perceived as a natural leader for implementing support to sustainable agri-food system. For example, some interviewees suggest an international panel on food systems like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), others prefer to improve the functioning of CFS and the HLPE, and the position of others is unclear.

EU MS see the need to develop a joint approach

EU MS considered the UNFSS a good umbrella for strengthening EU cooperation on SAFS, also with other global actors. Most interviewees believe the Summit indeed created momentum and increased the visibility of food systems, especially in the preparations and during the Summit. However, the Civil Society, and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM) of the CFS, took a critical position towards the Summit that led to a heated debate between EU MS and confused preparations. Despite good visibility and improved interconnectivity, some believed far too many dispersed topics were addressed, and coalitions formed, for which the leadership was criticised. Eventually, most EU MS intend to be proactive in the follow-up and will join coalitions, while some aim to assist partner countries in implementing national pathways. During the interviews, EU MS did not mention any form of joint EU follow-up and didn't perceive the EC to play a facilitating or leadership role.

64 Source: Interview

65 Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit, 23 September 2021.

However, EU MS do recognise the need to develop a joint EU approach; further development and operationalisation of the food systems approach is urgently needed. All agree the war in Ukraine affects food systems worldwide and creates the need and the momentum to take bold steps to further develop a joint SAFS approach. And in this area, they acknowledge the potential leadership role of the EC, considering the availability of relevant overall EU policy frameworks, its position, and its resources. In this context, the complementary relation between HARD on the one hand and the EU Practitioners network for European Development Cooperation on SAFS-related issues on the other should be considered. In this context HARD might focus on more strategic and political issues and the EU Practitioners Network more on operational issues. However, to take up leadership most interviewees suggest the EC should become more demand-driven, co-acting and less focused on its own programmes.

The EC faces elemental internal integration challenges

SAFS was operationalised to a limited extent within DG INTPA/F3, in the support to EUDs and in EU programming. The available tools, mechanisms, institutional restructuring, and unclear guidance from leadership, created serious limitations. Also, practical, clear mechanisms are lacking to develop an effective joint agenda with regional and global partners. Besides, relevant DGs hold quite different perspectives on the role the EU needs to play in supporting food system transformation, and no signs of a systematic, open discussion about this have been found. At the same time, strong signals have been noted that hint at the obstacles such lack of integration creates for the EU to speak with one voice in relevant SAFS platforms on how to operationalise the external dimension of Europe's ambition for food system transformation, for example, the Horizon Europe Food Systems Partnership.

4.4.2 Economic opportunities for smallholder producers, MSMEs and other workers in agri-food systems

EU support to food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and resilience programmes contributed to economic opportunities for smallholder producers, women, youth, workers in agri-food systems, and MSMEs. (JC4.2)

EU support has contributed to creation of economic opportunities, but sustainability and transformative impact remain tentative.

EU support to agricultural and fisheries production, value chain approaches, and resilience programmes contributed to the creation of economic opportunities for smallholders, women, and youth. However, their transformative impact depends on continued alignment of relevant drivers of agri-food system development.

In *Niger*, for example, most of the projects identified by the case study present a set of common objectives in terms of value chains development, namely their inclusiveness dimension with support targeted to strengthen producer organisations, women's organisations, and or young people's position and participation. EU support increasingly developed the entrepreneurial capacity of these groups and supported the provision of technical and financial services and infrastructure. However, lasting economic opportunities for rural MSMEs and smallholders was limited to few interventions that have, overall, experienced significant delays (due to design issues and low national capacity), and sustainability issues.

Also in *Malawi*, some evidence indicates that the participation of smallholders, women and youth in value chains has improved. Yet, they continue to be vulnerable to the risks of dependence on one buyer and suffer from poor access to market information, and investment capital. Besides, the lack of true pricing and high transport costs erode profits. All this combines to reduce the incentive to invest in improved technologies and practices; limiting, in turn, opportunities for further sustainable productivity increases and diversification. Weakness and unpredictability on the supply side in turn hampers the development of agribusiness, especially the emergence of start-ups, setting in motion a vicious cycle in which farmers with a production surplus have limited opportunities to market it and consequently few incentives to increase it.

While EU support contributed to the empowerment of many households, data to confirm system level effects are unavailable.

Actions to empower farm households consisted largely of capacity building actions to improve farming practices and outputs by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and strengthening smallholders' capacity to meet market and safety demands. However, as outputs and outcomes are monitored only at project and programme level, no meaningful aggregation of the data was possible within the framework of this strategic evaluation. Consequently, the extent to which this contributed to increased income, improved nutrition and resilience cannot be quantified.

In *Kenya*, scattered value chains and resilience results are reported; e.g. an estimated 1-5 million people directly or indirectly reached with EU-funded agricultural production value chain approaches and resilience programmes. The extremely large range of this estimate is itself testimony to the lack of credible aggregate data. It is claimed these programmes led to changes in livelihoods due to the adoption of innovations emerging from EU-financed research and increased incomes and improved nutrition of people directly reached. However, as in other countries visited, EU-supported research results and innovative practices have yet to be disseminated and applied at scale. Concerns are also raised about the sustainability of some of these innovations in view of climate change and increasing competition for scarce resources.

In *Cambodia*, where Tonle Sap Lake and Tonle Sap River are considered the world's most productive inland fisheries, EU support involved large numbers of small-scale fisherfolk. The FAO-CAPFISH intervention potentially creates economic opportunities by addressing the declining yield of fisheries due to overfishing and developing new export markets by increasing compliance to Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU)-free fishing, which is essential to reverse the EU's red card notice on the country. So far, yields in fisheries are declining, which could negatively impact food security and livelihood support.

4.4.3 An enabling policy and institutional environment for sustainable agri-food system transformation

The EU contributed to improved governance for sustainable agri-food system transformation through institutional strengthening and capacity building at all levels. (JC4.1)

The EU contributed to strengthened governance for transformative change, but actual change and the effectiveness of dialogue to encourage it are dependent on the political context.

EU country support includes initiatives that contribute to strengthening governance for sustainable agri-food system transformation. EU supported programmes are integrated with existing and or new national government policies that address the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity in the country and more than 90 % of the e-survey respondents agreed that EU support "had been clear and understood by national partners" and "aligned with national priorities". Integration may take place as an occasional policy dialogue on priority FNSSA issues or, may be driven by a more structured policy dialogue embedded in a stronger EU-Government partnership. The intensity, inclusiveness and outcomes of these policy dialogues differ according to the degree and diversity of SAFS stakeholders, government ministries, sectors and donors involved. As a result of the transition from the aid effectiveness agenda to the development effectiveness agenda Government political commitment, ownership and leadership are important determinants for the success of policy dialogues aiming at agri-food system transformation. So, too, is the importance of donor coherence and coordination ("speaking with one voice"). Active policy dialogues may lead to a joint strategy for inducing system transformation, including agreed-upon priorities for EU support and a common results-monitoring framework to enhance mutual accountability between Government, development partners and agri-food system stakeholders. In some cases, a joint multi-stakeholder SAFS assessment has contributed to priority setting for EU country support.

For instance, in *Colombia*, EU support to SAFS was well aligned with government strategies, programmes and commitments related to the Peace Agreement. Although small to the overall government budget, EU support has been able to leverage and contribute to transformational change. This took the form of policy and institutional reform to reduce inequalities between territories by strengthening local economic development and improving the reach of public services in the areas most affected by conflict. Top-down efforts have catalysed changes in rural policies and institutions, making them more conducive to increased and lasting economic opportunities for smallholder producers and MSME's. Capacities, bargaining power, and voice have been strengthened in conflict-affected areas communities. Simultaneously, bottom-up programme-level efforts reinforce and contribute to shared government and EUD objectives to strengthen inclusive local governance, inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development, and peace and stability by working directly with local food system actors.

At the same time, Colombia illustrates the political fragility of the transformational agenda. The national reforms supported by the EU were high on the agenda under the presidency that signed the Peace Agreement but lost political traction under the Duque presidency.

4.4.4 *An enabling business environment for sustainable agri-food transformation*

In several countries, the EU has supported strengthening of business and commercial aspects of farming.

EU support contributes to improving agricultural and, increasingly, business services for MSMEs and smallholders, also contributing to an increase in bargaining power vis-à-vis value chain demands. (JC4.2)

For example, in *Niger*, EU support to systemic transformation focused on setting up institutions such as the FISAN (*Fond s "investissement Pour La Securite Alimentaire Et Nutritionnelle*). The Fund aims to support sustainable agri-food system transformation with a focus on smallholders and agricultural enterprises, the modernisation of processing and marketing systems (cooperatives and MSMEs), and investments by local authorities and rural communities. It is organised around three facilities to support financing for acquisition of productive equipment, financing mechanisms for local authorities, and the funding of agricultural advisory programs and applied agronomic research to increase smallholders' bargaining power in value chain development. The EU will support the operationalisation of the Fund in the next State and Resilience Building Contract (SRBC), at the end of which lasting systemic effects should be assessable. In the next SRBC, the EU also plans to support the National Agricultural Advisory Service to move beyond its traditional concern with production and rural food security to meet emerging demands for information and training on managerial, marketing, and economic aspects of farming and agribusiness; as well as to strengthen synergies between public and private organisations.

Another example of strengthening the private sector comes from *Kenya*, where EU support contributed to fundamental change of the agricultural inputs system in Kenya via e-vouchers. In a game-changing move the Government of Kenya withdrew from active intervention in input distribution, creating opportunities for private sector engagement. The system is still at early stages and broad roll-out is still to be achieved. Further attention needs to be paid to the promotion of women and youth as agro-dealers and to the quality of climate-smart agricultural input packages.

Access to market is a problem in many settings, and the EU supported infrastructure development and/or rehabilitation to a limited extent improves access to markets for remote rural populations. In *Malawi*, the impact of the road rehabilitation component of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund so far has been limited because of poor implementation (weak supervision, quality issues, delays and overlapping responsibilities). Only few agricultural marketing centres have been connected to rehabilitated roads, the sustainability of which during the rainy season is doubted.

Scaling access of smallholders, including women and youth, to knowledge and innovation remains a huge challenge. Government investments in the quality and coverage of public extension services are to a limited extent influenced by EU support. And while private-sector services may help increase coverage, their involvement often tends to shift focus to less resource-poor farmers and MSMEs. Besides, financial services often remain reluctant to fund the innovative practices necessary to make food systems more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient. Substantial efforts to raise women and youth' capacities to engage in small businesses may therefore achieve limited impact due to their lack of access to finance and technology as well as suitable markets. Half of the respondents from the e-survey also considered that the EU support contributed to 'little to no extent' to leverage private sector investment conducive to sustainable agri-food system transformation.

The introduction of private sector support and financial services to smallholders comes with challenges to the inclusivity and sustainability of EU-supported changes. This evaluation has identified the risk of 'mission creep' due to an unintended shift away from the introduction of more sustainable practices and from targeting resource poor farmers, women, and youth, in the most vulnerable areas. And, with the – rather natural – tendency of financial, and extension and advisory services to reach out first to farmers that are easier to reach, and/or show more immediate potential for change, which are normally found in less vulnerable areas.

4.4.5 Vulnerable communities' access to (including affordability of) safe and nutritious food

Despite the more prominent role nutrition has taken in EU support to FNSSA during the period under evaluation, gains at country level remain scarce and fragile. (JC 4.3)

While the EU has contributed to improving access to diverse, safe, and nutritious food, gains remain fragile in countries studied suffering from long-standing nutrition crises.

One essential aspect of framing a SAFS approach is to create a direct link between initiatives supporting SAFS and nutrition outcomes. In that light, since 2014 nutrition has been more prominently integrated in EU support to FNSSA. However, **the strong leverage generated to support nutrition priorities at the global level is not yet matched by an equally strong support for country-level advocacy on nutrition-sensitive policies, finance, and services even if a range of EU support initiatives was identified.**

In *Niger*, where the most pervasive form of malnutrition was and will likely remain undernutrition, the EU has supported evidence-based policy, decision making, and nutrition mainstreaming. However, no increase in national financial capacity to achieve nutrition objectives was achieved. The EU portfolio reveals a scattered approach with a range of projects addressing undernutrition, access to health and water, and fortification issues. Also, little evidence was found regarding nutritional effects of EU support for agricultural production and value chains, production and diet diversification or improved processing methods making healthy foods available. Finally, EU-supported projects on food fortification experienced a series of hurdles in the form of inadequate inputs supply, high production costs, limited R&D investments, burdensome certification processes, an adverse tax environment, and poor access to markets.

In *Haiti*, despite efforts by the EU and many other international partners and the fact that there appear to be small pockets of improvement, the food security overall situation has worsened and access to quality food is a major issue. High food prices and low agricultural incomes continue to negatively affect the purchasing power and food security of poor households; furthermore, dietary habits are inadequate, even among high-income households. An EU-supported food systems assessment concluded that food systems in Haiti still do not allow for decent remuneration for farmers. Not only are plots of smallholders too small, but in many cases their natural capital is degrading due to unsustainable agricultural practices and climate change. A small group of powerful importers and exporters hold considerable power over local value chains, the economy, and politics in general. There is growing reliance on food imports. Processing is rare, as it also faces harsh competition from imported (processed) goods, as well as unstable input supply. Furthermore, a parallel and illegal economic system exists, consisting of smugglers and criminal actors (e.g., theft, racketeering) that significantly disrupts the functioning of markets and calls into question the profitability of the legal activities of the other actors.

In *Malawi*, while widespread poverty leaves the population highly vulnerable to external shocks, amongst the population targeted by EU-supported Afikepo, diverse dietary intake has improved significantly, particularly for women and children. Also, positive trends have been recorded across key child, adolescent, and maternal nutrition indicators. Moreover, the EU is contributing to increase vulnerable households' adaptive and absorptive capacity to food shocks through strengthening social support for the ultra-poor and targeting the most vulnerable with resilience-building actions. These impressive advances are, however, still fragile, as the approach relies on volunteers as leaders and trainers, who are themselves coming from very poor communities. Therefore, the risk of care groups not being able to continue the implementation of activities after the project ends is substantial. Achievements are also fragile due to weak Government ownership and the limited budget available for nutrition programmes at the national and district levels.

In *Colombia*, the EU supported on project improving food environments, awareness against malnutrition. Obesity and chronic malnutrition affect Colombia. With EU support, an NGO developed several initiatives around gastronomy and locally sustainable food production. Targeting rural and smallholder producers, the project builds capacity and creates linkages that result in profitable business models like catering services, restaurants, food products, etc. that generate revenues to reinvest in the project. Through the project local consumers have access to locally produced, affordable and healthy food, while awareness is raised about the sustainability impacts (both socially as well as environmentally) of dietary choices. Gastronomy and ecotourism are proving to bridge the gaps between rural areas and cities; creating space for dialogue and making visible where food is produced and who produces it.

In *Cambodia*, the food safety component of UNIDO-CAPFISH or the promotion of equitable access over land and natural resources for vulnerable groups of SECURE-LNRM, are likely to contribute to better nutrition outcomes.

The EU has supported improved nutrition by promoting local community food production, including in the context of school feeding.

In some cases, EU support aiming at improved nutrition was directed towards food production in local communities and also included school feeding programmes.

In *Malawi*, with EU-support, the WFP has recently started the provision of diversified school meals using the *home-grown school feeding (HGSF) model*, by sourcing commodities locally from smallholder farmers. This approach is gradually substituting WFP centralised model of in-kind distribution of daily nutritious meals. The HGSF approach enhances children's access to nutritious foods, improves school attendance levels, and reduces drop-out rates, especially among girls, it also benefits the broader community. Incomes are increased and knowledge and skills related to nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, crop and dietary diversification, and meal preparation are enhanced through cooking demonstrations and nutrition messaging. It is too early to assess HGSF impact on agri-food system transformation, as its implementation has just started, but its territorial focus and integrated approach looks promising.

In *Haiti*, the *Programme Multisectoriel de Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle* (PMSAN) made the link between local production and consumption support, setting up local food and nutrition safety nets (in the form of food coupons) made up of locally-produced food from value chain actors supported by the same programme. However, a ROM report notes that the food products did not all come from local producers supported by the programme and the tracing of the sellers' sources of supply was slow to be put in place.

In fragile situations, nutrition security achievements can be easily wiped out.

In *Malawi*, for example, the Covid-19 pandemic quickly worsened nutrition-related indicators. A number of factors contributed to this. First, wet feeding stopped during the school closure period, although EU-funded interventions provided take-home rations for school children, “ensuring they can access a nutritious meal at home”.⁶⁶ These, however, were not sufficient to maintain the positive trend of enrolment and attendance rates, which experienced a significant drop, particularly for girls. Nutrition screening decreased as a result of limited access of mothers and children to health facilities, which were overwhelmed by Covid cases. In *Colombia*, employment and income losses due to the pandemic worsened inequality and slowed progress on food- and nutrition security-related commitments of the peace agreement. In *Haiti*, food and nutrition security have deteriorated in the evaluation period, partly due to natural disasters, socio-political instability, and insecurity. Access to food remains a major limiting factor also due to the low and unstable purchasing power in a context of continuously rising prices, as well as weak social security systems. Women, the elderly, children, and rural people are particularly vulnerable.

4.4.6 *Progress towards respecting planetary boundaries*

The EU has started to integrate environmental sustainability and climate change response into its approach to agri-food systems. Positive results are mostly scattered in the countries reviewed and scaling up for broader, transformative change remains challenging. (JC4.5)

EU support contributed to community awareness, adoption of climate-sensitive technologies, and to increase resilience against environmental and climate risks. But scaling up for system change remains a challenge.

While gradually more climate-sensitive and sustainable agricultural practices and, management solutions become available through research and farmer experimentation, scaling such innovations remains a huge challenge. In the overall statistics, the large-scale effects of adoption of climate-sensitive technologies by smallholder farmers and MSME's are not yet visible. **However, signals of transformative change have been found in several countries reviewed.**

EU support in *Malawi* integrated environmental protection and climate change as cross-cutting issues in several FNSSA-related interventions. Nonetheless, interviews suggest that measures addressing climate change specifically do not prevail in their design and that actions in the environmental domain have been fragmented, lacking a holistic approach. As in most countries visited, deforestation and degradation of agro-ecosystems is fast-paced. The EU has supported substantial actions in sustainable management and conservation of forest ecosystems, under threat from illegal charcoal production, as well as in afforestation. It contributed strongly to providing communities with incentives to manage forest resources more sustainably, while empowering them economically. It supported the promotion of community-based forest management and the establishment of Forest-Based Enterprises for the commercialisation of forestry products. This combination of improved forest governance, agroforestry activities at village- and individual farm level, economic empowerment and alternative livelihood strategies suggests sustainability of impact and helps protect forests. Nonetheless, the chronic deficiency of Government funds allocated to environmental resource management and forestry may endanger the sustainability of these achievements. Consequently, EU-supported efforts on the ‘supply side’ of the charcoal value chain have not been matched by adequate actions to address the underlying driver of deforestation, energy demand in growing urban areas. Therefore, the next MIP intends to integrate the provision of clean and sustainable energy more strongly, in conjunction with environmental protection and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

In *Kenya*, the EU was a main contributor to setting up and institutionalising an adequate drought management system, with early warning and preparedness components, leading to increased resilience to shocks at community level. Next, EU envisages support for a more multi-sectoral approach, bringing in other stakeholders, and going beyond a drought emergency approach to address other kinds of shocks that impact vulnerable communities, to enhance economic opportunities as well as improve food security. A broad approach is also evident in Niger, where the EU supports regional interventions promoting a nexus approach linking food security, water, energy, and ecosystems objectives. A set of regional interventions aims to enhance national capacities to participate in multisectoral and regional dialogues. Among these are dialogues to support pastoralists and transhumance and to improve the livelihoods of local communities depending upon ecosystems and watersheds environments in the Mekrou river basin. These objectives shape EU Western Africa regional programming, for which little evaluative documentation is available. Only limited and fragmented information is accessible to assess whether, and to what extent, transformative effects were achieved both at beneficiary and at systemic level.

In *Colombia*, both at national governance and value chain levels, EU support is contributing to promote the adoption of more environmentally sustainable practices. In the first phase of DRET, the integration of climate change and environmental topics was one of six lines of action of the accompanying technical assistance. This was particularly relevant due to the environmental fragility of rural and post-conflict areas. However, integrating environmental and climate change issues in, for example, extension packages had little impact, as after decades of underfunding, public extension services have limited coverage in those areas. Part of the prioritised EU support to the national extension system (through BS and policy dialogue) has been to strengthen linkages with the private sector, as some of these services had been taken over by civil society organisations, the 'gremios' (producer organisations). Consequently, the EU was able to support an inter-ministerial agenda between the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Environmental Ministry, which resulted in six value chain-specific guides that were jointly developed with producers, Ministries, the 'gremios', and CSOs. It is too early to assess whether these guides have an impact on the adoption of more sustainable practices, but a wide range of persons interviewed felt that the European F2F strategy was a powerful lever to achieve it.

In *Colombia*, as in *Malawi*, EU support had little impact on major drivers of deforestation, which include the coca value chains and other illicit crops and the expansion of cattle ranging (e.g., in the dairy value chain, which provides livelihoods to the most vulnerable people). In addition to driving deforestation, these dominant production systems continue to show excessive and inefficient use of agrochemicals that pollute soils and water sources. There is little opportunity for or support from government or international cooperation, hence influencing their contribution to transformational change is hard. However, opportunities exist to improve the coherence between EU cooperation and trade strategies and strengthen coordination between the EUD Cooperation and Trade sections so stronger actions can be taken to promote responsible business conduct. The F2F strategy is already showing itself to be a potential lever to push for these changes. Impeding progress are loud voices against stricter environmental directives, voiced especially by representatives from the banana exporting companies and coalitions of banana-producing countries.

The poor situation in *Haiti*, where environmental degradation continues to be an enormous challenge, has been noted in several places above. High demographic pressure pushes farmers to cultivate marginal land unsuitable for agricultural production, including steep slopes. Furthermore, unsustainable agricultural practices continue to be widespread. This leads to the accelerated degradation of natural resources and makes the agricultural sector more vulnerable to natural disasters like floods and cyclones that are becoming more frequent due to climate change. Food waste and loss is high, as is the problematic use of chemical fertilisers.

In *Cambodia*, where climate change is likely to worsen floods and droughts with impact on fish productivity, the EU-supported FAO-CAPFISH intervention contributed to improved institutional capacity at national and community levels, potentially strengthening resilience. The programme strengthens both mitigation and adaptation in the form of habitat enhancement, conservation measures, and livelihood diversification. However, it is only in the MIP 2021-2027, which supports sustainable food systems with enhanced resilience to climate change, that climate change began to feature strongly in the design of FNSSA-related interventions.



5

CONCLUSIONS

5 CONCLUSIONS

This strategic evaluation aims to understand EU support to FNSSA and its contributions to promoting the transformation of agri-food systems. Based on the findings highlighted in the previous sections, the team identified five conclusions, grouped into *two clusters*: i) achievements of EU support to sustainable agri-food system transformation; and ii) challenges in the application of an integrated, systemic approach to SAFS. Table 3 below links these conclusions to the evaluation questions.

Table 3 Overview of the conclusions

Cluster	Conclusion related to...	Main related EQs
Achievements of EU support	C1. Diversity of entry points used at country level	All EQs
	C2. Instrumental role played at global and regional level	EQs 1, 4
	C3. Key contributions to strengthening agri-food system actors at country level, but scattered system level effects	EQs 2, 3, 4
Challenges in the application of an integrated, systemic approach to SAFS	C4. Limited application of an integrated, systemic approach by the EU at country level	EQs 2, 3, 4
	C5. Several obstacles to a more integrated European approach to SAFS in partner countries	All EQs

5.1 Achievements of EU support

Overarching conclusion: EU support to FNSSA convincingly contributed to scattered changes conducive to sustainable agri-food system transformation.

Besides positive findings on the diversity and judicious choice of entry points used by the EU in FNSSA support (C1), **the evaluation highlights clear achievements of EU support that are conducive to broader agri-food system transformation changes**, including i) the important role played by the EU in agri-food system transformation at the global level (C2); and ii) substantial contributions to the strengthening of a broad range of agri-food systems actors at the national level (C3). However, where such changes occur, they take place in highly variable contexts. Hence, their effects and sustainability are contingent upon diverse political, economic, environmental, social and institutional drivers, or constraints, of agri-food system transformation; many of which are outside the control of the EU and some, within its reach. From a SAFS transformation perspective, the system-level effects observed so far are therefore mostly tentative.

5.1.1 **Conclusion 1: Diversity of entry points used at country level**

During the period 2014-2020, EU FNSSA support was directed at several strategically chosen entry points for encouraging food system change at global, regional, national, and local levels. EU country portfolios demonstrate a context-specific partnership approach and strong alignment with government priorities on FNSSA.

This conclusion is based on all EQs

At global, regional, national, and local levels, **the EU invested in partnerships with a wide range of agri-food system actors**, supporting multi-stakeholder dialogue, concerted action and food system change along four priorities: i) enhancing resilience for the most vulnerable to food crises; ii) fostering specific nutrition outcomes; iii) increasing responsible investments in agriculture and food systems; and iv) stimulating innovations for sustainable agri-food systems. In the contested political landscape governing agri-food system transformation, the outcomes and intermediary impacts of EU contributions, though pertinent, were mostly scattered and tentative (see C4), their sustainability depending on continued partnership focus on, and attention to, enabling the drivers of transformational change.

EU country portfolios demonstrate a context-specific partnership approach and strong alignment with government priorities on FNSSA. The choice of sectors and the balance in EU support across sectors differ from country to country, varying, amongst other things, with the EU's partnership history with the country, shifting national and EU priorities, national political leadership and prioritisation of food and nutrition security, the capacities of national institutions, local agencies, and civil society organisations and prior experiences in the country of EU development partners. EU contributions include support to policy dialogue, policy change and institutional reforms, including pilots on more inclusive and gender-sensitive land governance; the establishment of multi-stakeholder dialogues and platforms and specific actions to strengthen evidence-based policy and decision-making at the country level. EU support consistently contributed to strengthening government and community responses to agri-food-system shocks. The intensity, inclusiveness and outcomes of the policy dialogues differs across countries. Government interest and follow-up emerge as important determinants for success. In their effort to promote sustainable agri-food system transformation, the EU and other donors navigate national political dynamics and possible trade-offs between EU, EU MS, and national policies. In fragile situations characterised by political, social and/or security crises, including health crises and natural disasters, donor cooperation appears more forthcoming even if conditions seriously limit the possibility for lasting change.

5.1.2 *Conclusion 2: Instrumental role played at global and regional level*

The EU contributed sizeably to global and regional partnerships for strengthening the global governance of agri-food systems.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 1 and 4

The EU successfully invested in partnerships with the RBAs, including with FAO as a recognised international convenor for agri-food policy and institutional reform with multifaceted competencies on land, water, soils, forests, and fisheries development issues, particularly relevant to improve the inclusiveness and resilience of agri-food systems. It also decisively supported the global Committee on Food Security, hosted by FAO i.e., in developing and rolling out the VGGT and the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems. The EU also strongly supported the collection of information and data to support international consensus-building and agreements. EU was WFP's single top contributor encouraging it to develop its core strengths, emergency assistance across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and funding multi-purpose cash-based assistance, developing risk-sensitive systems, including social protection. EU contributions to IFAD focused mainly on strengthening smallholder capacities, rural agri-food business, farmers organisations' voice in food system governance, and research and innovation.

The EU was a supporter of the UNFSS where it helped deal with diverse transformative discourses and is set to play an active role in diverse coalitions for follow-up. EU's initiatives to strengthen collaboration between the RBAs met with limited interest from the governance bodies of these agencies. The need to compete for funds in the fragmented funding landscape seems to impede more integrated partnerships. The EU-AU Research & Innovation partnership took up the challenge to strengthen R&I governance, research, and innovation for SAFS transformation in Africa. The diversity of views and approaches, as well as the organisational complexity of European R&I governance, were recognised but not addressed yet.

5.1.3 Conclusion 3: Key contributions to facilitating SAFS transformation at country level

The EU strategically contributed to facilitating sustainable agri-food system transformation at country level, but effects observed at system level are largely scattered.

This conclusion is based mainly on EQs 2, 3, 4

At national and local level, EU support has consistently contributed to strengthening the enabling business environment for small-scale producers and rural entrepreneurs. It substantially contributed to capacity development for rural agencies, smallholders, and rural and farmer organisations; the geographic coverage of advisory and extension services to economically and ecologically fragile and conflict-affected areas, while moving their agenda from purely agricultural to commercial, nutrition and health services; and promoted stronger links between smallholders, women and youth with in-country research and innovation. More recently, business and financial services to small-scale producers were included with technical advice, equipment, and capacity support for the agencies engaging small-scale producers and agribusinesses. Hence, EU support increasingly contributed to incubating opportunities for smallholder producers, women and MSMEs in agri-food systems, mostly by supporting climate and gender-sensitive innovations in production and commercialisation. The maintenance of institutional capacity built with EU support remains a huge challenge. Political follow-up, adaptation of policies, rules and regulations and limited institutional anchoring of services in decentralised budgets emerge as limiting factors.

EU support contributed consistently to increasing economic opportunities of smallholder producers and MSMEs, focusing on innovation, strengthening organisation and resilience to climate change and food-related crises. By focusing on small-scale producers, including women and youth, the EU contributed to enhanced sustainability, inclusiveness, and resilience of smallholder-related agri-food value chains. EU support also contributed to improving vulnerable communities' access to and affordability of safe and nutritious food, most importantly by helping to raise and diversify agricultural and fisheries production and marketing; and by strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of climate change, natural and social disasters. More recently, EU added support to improving food processing and distribution; to communities developing more healthy nutritious safe dietary habits and more sustainable food consumption patterns. However, wide-spread adoption of technological, social, and institutional innovations incubated with EU support is pending. The availability and affordability of inputs and accessible marketing channels interfere with the motivation of smallholders, women, and youth to continue applying the sustainable innovations offered. Budgetary provisions for institutional change often lag and measures to ensure gender equality and the inclusion of youth often fail to be mainstreamed and monitored.

System level effects observed so far are mostly scattered and tentative. *In potential*, EU FNSSA-supported changes may contribute considerably to increasing the inclusivity and reducing the ecological footprint of targeted agri-food systems. The evaluation identified a range of climate and gender-sensitive policy, governance, economic, and social innovations that can help ensure more environmentally, economically, socially sustainable food system outcomes. And these could be linked directly to EU-supported initiatives and partnerships. However, this evaluation also shows that system-level changes, where they occur, take place in highly variable political, economic, and social contexts and, while pertinent, are mostly tentative; their sustainability is contingent upon many factors outside the control of the EU and some, within its reach. The effects and sustainability of these innovations depend on diverse political, economic, environmental, and social drivers of agri-food system transformation, including government ownership and political will, continued political traction, wide-spread acceptance and adequate implementation by national politicians, institutions, public and private stakeholders, and the public at large; and as further highlighted below, also on the design, organisation, and continuity of donor support.

5.2 Challenges in applying an integrated, systemic approach

Overarching conclusion: EU support to FNSSA to a limited extent developed a more integrated, systemic approach to agri-food system transformation at global and country level.

The evaluation found limited application of an integrated, systemic approach by the EU at country level (C4), in particular due to the absence of a joint EU framework to track SAFS system-level progress, sector-level assessments, and limited synergies between policy areas and instruments relevant to SAFS. Obstacles to a more integrated European approach to SAFS in partner countries include varying positions between EU MS and the EU on key global issues, and Europe not speaking with one voice in EU-supported partnerships. Moreover, formal coordination mechanisms and capacity constraints at the EC level hinder synergistic and flexible coordination on SAFS (C5).

5.2.1 Conclusion 4: Initial steps towards an integrated, systemic approach by the EU at country level

There was limited application of an integrated, systemic approach by the EU at country level.

This conclusion is based on EQs 2, 3, 4

While the EUD usually plays a pro-active role in coordinating FNSSA support with EU MS and other development partners at the country level, country level EU partnerships have been strategic and collaborative to different degrees. In countries where the policy dialogue of EU partners with the National Government was pushed further towards joint strategising and priority setting, valuable learning experiences were identified towards more joined-up EU operations. In Colombia, the basis for cooperation was laid during the long-term partnership for peace supported by the EU and several EU MS; the Free Trade Agreement might also have contributed. And the EUTF is organised as a joint programming exercise. In Malawi and Cambodia EU and several EU MS started Joint Programming, while Delegated Cooperation was the instrument for more EU-EU MS cooperation in Haiti. In Kenya, the government had no interest in engaging development partners at a more strategic level, so coordination was fully theirs.

At country level, the evaluation found little evidence of the EU applying a more systemic approach towards supporting FNSSA and agri-food system transformation. The EU based its support on *partial assessments* of sectors relevant to FNSSA. More comprehensive assessments are only recently piloted with FAO and CIRAD that may inform strategic decision-making about selecting the most promising entry points for agri-food system transformation. Only one of these managed to informally inspire the elaboration of country National Indicative Programme for 2021-2027. As far as official documentation is concerned, political economy analysis of food system dynamics remained limited, and sector oriented. The EU did consistently engage in *policy dialogues* with national governments; the EU played an active role in these dialogues yet, their depth, multi-sectorial character, intensity, and bearing upon national policy making about sustainable transformation of agri-food systems varied a lot across countries. The same applies to the EU support to multi-stakeholder platforms and dialogues on food system changes. The EU consistently supported their formation and inclusivity, but their inclusion in, and influence on, national food system governance mechanisms is variable. Finally, the EU has not agreed to a *joint EU framework and set of indicators* for tracking system level progress on SAFS and ensuring mutual accountability between partners. Information on results is incomplete and available at project and programme level only. In a few countries, system level indicators have been agreed to within the framework of budget support. While EU engagement with the RBA has considerably contributed to developing frameworks, metrics, methods, and standards to provide a foundation for coordinated action and to inform policy making on sustainable and resilient agri-food system transformation globally and in partner countries, a consistent EU framework to help orient partnerships and policy dialogue at global, regional, and country levels towards desired transformation pathways is missing.

EU support at country level to a variable degree exhibits synergies between various policy areas and instruments relevant to SAFS. The EU increasingly supports integrated programming, to facilitate synergies between agriculture and fisheries, research and innovation, advisory and social services, nutrition, gender, youth, road infrastructure, the environment, and resilience of vulnerable communities. Our case studies show that often a combination of support to the public sector (where possible through BS) with programme and project support (sometimes through multi-donor EU TF) to local authorities, civil society, the private sector, and user organisations is used. But implementation difficulties, such as failing to target common beneficiaries, lack of synchronisation of complementary initiatives, or lack of cooperation between implementing partners, often obstruct the timely realisation of synergies intended. More recently, linkages with finance, commercialisation, and agri-business are more systematically included. Early interactions with blended finance support to the private sector flagged possible 'mission creep', moving the focus of an initiative away from sustainable and inclusive agri-food system transformation, towards business first. Increasingly, linkages with health, retail and consumers are recognised as well. Trade-offs with national and international trade are increasingly recognised, but not yet systematically addressed. This is also the case about possible synergies between agri-food system transformation and EU regulations and bilateral agreements.

5.2.2 Conclusion 5: Small steps but many obstacles to a more integrated European approach to SAFS

The EU made small steps but faced many obstacles in the development of a more integrated European approach to SAFS transformation

This conclusion is based mainly on all EQs

Gradually, most visibly since 2018, the EU has taken steps towards developing a more integrated, systemic approach to supporting FNSSA. The integration between EU priorities was improved, and the contours of a sustainable agri-food systems approach towards food system transformation were sketched and further developed with partners at the Rome-Based Agencies and the GDPRD. Ideas were shared with EU MS during meetings of the HARD meetings, some of which were prepared and vocal about proposing food systems approach themselves. During preparations for the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021, it became clear that no common EU approach to supporting the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems had crystallised. Some EU MS and the EU (EC/EEAS) held very different positions on their support for the CFS, and their role in UN Food Systems Summit preparations. And while everyone participated intensively in the Food Systems Summit itself, opinions vary greatly about its outcomes and follow-up; not so much regarding the UN FSS setting the stage for global food system transformation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, but certainly, on the ways this ambition needs to be operationalised and implemented. And the EU, although very active in various of the coalitions following up on the various pathways to impact prioritised during the UN FSS, is not seen by the membership as taking leadership for Europe.

The EU to a limited extent integrated its approach with EU MS. Within the European Union, the EC and EU MS share competencies in the various (external) policy areas to be integrated into an EU SAFS approach. These policy areas include internal ones (Other EC DGs), EU ones (EU MS) and external ones (Multilateral and international agencies and organisations, national governments, private sector, civil society, farmers, and community organisations). At HQ level, the evaluation found some evidence of a SAFS impact pathway or theory of change being discussed to make transparent choices in formulating a common SAFS approach. However, participants of the HARD committee observed the EU just presented 'its own approach', without providing much space for discussion and/or (mutual) adjustment. There is no evidence of systematic introduction, discussion, and feedback from EUDs and governments or other partners at country level. And no indication that the approach has been adjusted based on their input.

Europe does not speak with one voice in EU-supported partnerships. HARD could be a forum for policy alignment and coordination on SAFS, but it is not. While considered valuable, EU MS see EU policy frameworks, including the Farm to Fork strategy, not as directly influencing their own policies, priorities, and implementation. Yet EU MS participating in HARD also recognise that EU policy frameworks and the powerful financial instruments behind these, are a good basis for the EU to take strategic leadership on sustainable agri-food system transformation. To achieve such leadership the EC should become more demand-driven and less focused on its own initiatives and, the HARD agenda should be considerably more focused on important strategic issues while allowing sufficient time for debate and, if possible, mutual adjustment and agreement on a way forward. Some EU MS warn that the food systems approach is not yet sufficiently clear and articulated to allow strategic collaboration.

Formal consultation mechanisms between F3 and other DGs are experienced as rigid and mostly limited to individual consultations of thematic or geographic specialists on specific text proposals and documents. While more informal and group exchanges between DG INTPA and other DGs have been open and constructive, there is little opportunity to organise those due to staff workload and time constraints. As a result, exchanges are not often synergistic. Not frequently, consultations include a frank and open internal dialogue on the needs and obstacles for the EU to operationalise a more systemic approach towards agri-food system transformation. The lack of synergistic, knowledge and expertise-based interactions is also expected to affect the quality and coherence of support to EUDs in upgrading their strategic role in country partnerships.

EUDs indicate a lack of capacity and time to upgrade their coordinating role in country partnerships to a more political and strategic one, burdened as they are with operational roles, each developing and managing a range of different sector programmes and projects. Also, integrating multiple EU and EU MS supported interventions towards common objectives is a huge challenge that requires developing a joint approach and more joint programming and delegated cooperation with EU MS, or other agencies. Besides, they need time and means to adapt and integrate new instruments into context-specific programmes at country level that respect sustainable agri-food system transformation objectives. Finally, EUDs indicate that working in silos seems institutionally anchored in EU HQ-EUD relations, structures and working processes.



6

**LESSONS LEARNED
AND PRACTICES THAT MAKE
A DIFFERENCE**

6 LESSONS LEARNED AND PRACTICES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

This evaluation looked for lessons learned and good practices to inform the process of strengthening EU support to sustainable agri-food systems. More broadly, it aimed to provide the EU and its partners with a framework for considering how to improve their future support to SAFS. 'Lessons learned' are taken as *insights gained from past EU support* to FNSSA that should be considered to improve future EU support to SAFS. A 'good practice' is understood as a *specific example* of an EU policy, approach, application of an instrument, or implementation of an action that, based on the evidence gathered, has been of importance to moving from a linear to a more systemic approach to supporting SAFS transformation. The evidence-base for this section consists of interviews and validation workshops carried out during the evaluation, including within the framework of the country and thematic case studies.

6.1 *Lessons on partnerships and strategic approaches*

L1.1. *The role of partners must be clear, and national government ownership and leadership are needed, as is the full engagement of the local partners and their communities.*

A strong partnership with national governments and implementing institutions is needed to achieve agri-food system-level effects that can be sustained over time. These partnerships may be built on a narrowly-defined SAFS agenda or a wider one, including aspects such as peace, security, trade, and migration. A shared understanding of what each of the partners seeks to achieve through supporting SAFS transformation is a prerequisite; laying, as it does, the foundation for synergies between programmes, mutual accountability, joint monitoring frameworks and learning from experience, as well as making it easier to ensure the visibility of each of the partners. Strong government follow-up to the main EU supported policy and institutional changes emerges as a critical factor for success. Without it, coordination amongst large numbers of implementing partners and inter-ministerial coordination becomes difficult, standing in the way of achieving synergies and slowing the implementation of government-led programmes.

Local agri-food system actors and their communities, whether directly supported or not, are important partners not only as the testing ground for policy and institutional reforms, but as sources of context- and needs-appropriate initiatives and innovations. SAFS transformation needs to respond to the aspirations, ambitions and initiatives of local food system actors; as well as to their capabilities and needs in the form of inclusion and resilience. Agri-food system stakeholders are, to an overwhelming degree, private operators acting within the prevailing regulatory, financial, marketing, and quality support space, and subject to its constraints. A characteristic of most business ecosystems today is that some entrepreneurs do better than others in gaining access to enabling resources. Generally, remote, small-scale, resource-poor entrepreneurs find it more difficult, even if they are innovative. Therefore, the EU must tailor its support to meet the needs of smallholders, women, youth, MSMEs and start-ups for a fair chance to meaningfully participate in and benefit from the transformation of SAFS.

L1.2. *Social protection mechanisms play a key role in SAFS transformation.*

The support to the transformation of SAFS is never only about food and agriculture; it needs to address multiple challenges such as food and nutrition security, unsustainable use of natural resources, political instability, inequalities, and social conflict, as well as natural disasters. The inclusion of social protection measures in SAFS-related EU interventions proved of key importance to improving the sustainability and inclusiveness of agri-food systems and contributing to the resilience of both rural and urban communities. Graduation frameworks may help to define practical pathways for adjusting support mechanisms in line with gradual improvements in the livelihoods of vulnerable groups participating in agri-food system transformation.

L1.3. Smart use of complementary EU instruments, modalities, and channels in a strategic and context-specific way can ensure both horizontal and vertical linkages between SAFS actors.

The use of a mix of instruments and a variety of delivery modalities allows the EU to focus strategically on country priorities as well as local needs with a short-, mid-, and long-term perspective. Implementing partners, national and/or international, are chosen based on their long-standing relationships and experience of working with national and local stakeholders across multiple themes. Besides food and agriculture, these may include resilience, nutrition, organisation development, land rights and natural resource management, as well as rural livelihoods, climate adaptation, trade, roads, and digital infrastructure. Government leadership and buy-in, coordination amongst partners and synchronisation of support interventions by different partners are vitally important. Strong linkages between EU-RBA short-term, mid-term, and longer-term support proved to be of utmost importance to both respond to food crises and address structural issues challenging SAFS transformation.

L1.4 Targeting new private sector instruments to smallholders, women, youth and MSMEs comes with challenges.

Experience in Kenya and Malawi suggests the introduction of new private sector instruments tend to focus partners' attention and energy on securing institutional arrangements, to the detriment of developing the tools needed to meet the programme's social and environmental objectives. Consequently, in the absence, for instance, of clear eligibility criteria, there are no guarantees that economic opportunities and enabling mechanisms advanced by the programme effectively reach the intended target groups, causing what we might call 'mission creep'. A careful consideration of the facility's adaptation to local conditions and intended users is needed to help identify risk and success factors and inform future programming.

6.2 Lessons on the promise of joined-up approaches

L2.1. A joint assessment of the ongoing SAFS transformation pathway(s), its trends, and drivers of change lays the foundation for a shared agenda for change.

So far, support agendas are often based on sector assessments and hence, plan for (multi-) sector support, not inter-sectoral support. To achieve system-level outcomes, support to SAFS transformation should link and seek to create synergies between relevant sectors. In preparation for support to SAFS transformation, assessments should therefore focus on system-level understanding to identify the drivers of and constraints to transformation. These would include a political economy analysis to identify winners and losers if current unsustainable trends continue, and how vulnerable groups can be supported to develop more sustainable practices. A timely, comprehensive, and high-quality agri-food system assessment (e.g., such as those prepared by FAO and CIRAD) can identify the most promising entry points for supporting needed system-level change, maintain momentum on implementation of the food systems roadmap, and contribute to a basis for advocacy.

L2.2. Stakeholders' capacity to network, share knowledge and learn from each other requires continuous support.

Supporting and connecting joint actions by diverse SAFS stakeholders at all levels helps to create dynamic action and learning networks in which shared ambitions on SAFS transformation can be pursued. DG INTPA has provided strong support for national, regional as well as global knowledge networking programmes, scaling up its investments in multi-level knowledge building, and strengthening the position of multi-stakeholders in co-design and programming processes. This has been instrumental to shaping the relationships and trust necessary to work toward a shared vision.

L2.3. National agri-food research and innovation systems need to strengthen their focus on sustainable transformation of agri-food systems.

National R&I systems play a decisive role in national economic, ecological, and social transformation. Expected contributions are many: Technological options for change need to be identified, and adapted to national and local needs and circumstances. Policy options need to be developed, specified, and discussed amongst stakeholders before introduction; while ecological, social, and economic considerations need to be reconciled. The impact of measures on different social groups needs to be assessed and addressed. Strategies need to be developed for enabling the most vulnerable sectors of the population to take advantage of the changes envisaged or be compensated if harmed by them.

L2.4. Agri-food information systems at various levels fail to provide consistent, actionable data, requiring sizeable contributions to improve their utility.

Sizeable investments in international, regional, and/or national information systems are required to provide appropriate data for assessing transformative progress, and to support policy dialogue and regular analysis of the drivers and blockers of change, as well as the winners and losers of SAFS transformation. SAFS information systems, however, are still in the early stages, and stronger buy-in from the Government is needed to make them effective management and monitoring tools. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems of EU programmes are meant to be building blocks for national information systems to support evidence-based decision-making. FAO's capillary data collection and robust monitoring provide another important building block. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, such as lack of consistency of M&E systems across EU-funded interventions; lack of resources to staff and equip M&E teams, data quality issues and, the resistance of some partners to share databases.

6.3 Practices related to adopting a mix of instruments and modalities in country portfolios

P1.1. Pooled funding approaches can be an efficient and effective way for EU partners to jointly implement interventions in the country.

The EUTF Colombia has proven to be a timely, efficient, and effective joint intervention. It was deployed immediately after the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement, so the fund itself and the commitment to timely preparation were opportune. As a result, after the conclusion of the peace agreement, the Operational Committee of the Trust Fund was able to quickly finance the first projects. At the end of 2020, the Trust Fund was financing 34 actions for a total budget of about EUR 113.8 M. The Trust Fund was found to be an appropriate modality to continue the accompaniment of the GoC in the peace process. Also, the EUTF has increased the visibility of the EU support to the peace process in Colombia, amplified the voice of EU MS in the policy dialogue around the implementation of the agreement and proved to be adaptive and flexible. The EUTF also supported the reintegration of ex-combatants after it became clear that this was at risk of being deprioritised by the GoC and other key development partners like USAID. Sources observe that the management of coordination, alignment, and consensus-building in the EUTF Operational Committee could be improved. Even so, the Colombian EU Trust Fund provided a good learning experience on which the following Team Europe Initiative was able to build.

P1.2. In some contexts, budget support can be a 'game changer' in the governance of SAFS transformation.

EU Delegations have used Sector Budget Support (SBS) complementary measures such as technical assistance to mobilise FAO and WFP expertise which contributed to inclusive policy dialogue, information systems, and institutional capacity strengthening for example, in Niger. In Colombia, departments within the Ministry of Agriculture report that SBS has been instrumental in structurally increasing their budget. The National Planning Department routinely adds these amounts to next years' budget and allocates national budget to it. The strategic use of SBS provided an opportunity for the Directorate for Rural Women within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to permanently increase their government budget. At the same time, the lack of synchronisation of the SBS disbursement process with national budget cycles has been signalled as a source of large operational risks for the sector departments receiving it. In Niger, the Sector Performance Reform Contract SANAD played an important role in contributing to macroeconomic stability and to the reinforcement of the credibility of the public finance system. It also paved the way for higher-level policy dialogue, institutional reforms and evidence-based policy development and implementation. This dialogue contributes to the mainstreaming of environment, climate change, and nutrition⁶⁷ issues and complements the dialogue undertaken in the framework of Peace and Education budget support programmes.

67 Including food diversification according to WFP Fill the Nutrient Gap study carried out in 2018.

6.4 Practices related to enhancing political commitment to SAFS

P2.1. Political commitments to SAFS can be enhanced by laying the foundation for effective dialogue and partnerships.

The EU in Colombia has built a strong partnership with the Government of Colombia, Colombian non-state actors, and other development partners, by supporting early on, jointly with EU MS, the process that was to lead to peace. The EU actively supported the central role of multistakeholder dialogues between civil society organisations and local and national governments during the armed conflict. The fruits of these efforts can be seen in the acknowledgement of the EU as a trusted interlocutor for the GoC (partly attributed to the leverage of the budget support instrument with different Ministries), the presidency of the international donor's coordination group in 2018 and the relative success of the EUTF in amplifying the voice of European development partners. The EU Trust Fund facilitated context-specific local initiatives. In Malawi, the EU has forged strong formal relations with the Government, both at the technical and political levels. It has also strengthened policy dialogue and partnership with EU MS and other development partners through formal and informal channels. The development partners interviewed highlight that this structured and continuous policy dialogue has helped in conveying policy messages, even on politically charged topics, with one voice. Beyond its convening power, Partners stress that the EU's convening power, the large volume of funding it provides, and close trade relations are key factors behind the EU's formal political power.

P2.2. Aligning agendas to gain political traction and transformative impact can improve commitments to SAFS.

EU support to sustainable agri-food systems needs to align SAFS support with other, sometimes broader, agendas in order to gain political traction. In Colombia, EU support in the area of R&I illustrates the importance of doing so. Support to food systems in Colombia was included in the Peace agenda and was able to adapt to ongoing political dynamics, striking a balance between adhering to country-led objectives and EU priorities. EU support to R&I was frequently linked to the Youth and Job creation agenda, for example, through support to incubators and innovative start-ups in the food sector. Also, Climate funding can be used as an opportunity to scale up innovations, making climate funding more relevant and compatible with African needs. Aligning investments in R&I with climate finance also positions support to R&I in partnership to the climate action agenda instead of standing alone as a development/food security agenda. In Kenya, Cambodia and Malawi, the EU has actively facilitated donor coordination resulting in strengthened donor-government dialogues and, in Cambodia, in an EU MS cooperation framework that has served as an example of good practice on which future Team Europe and Joint Programming initiatives for other countries can build.

P2.3. Enhancing political commitments to SAFS requires collective learning while paying attention to synchronisation and follow through.

The very diverse SAFS-related portfolio in Kenya, with different EU instruments, modalities, and funding channels, on the one hand, allows for a broad systems perspective but, on the other hand, mostly due to current EU procedures, leads to working in silos. Even though due attention was paid to coherence and synergies in the programming stage, during implementation, this was lost. In Malawi, the diversity and large volume of EU funding to SAFS potentially creates momentum for system-wide learning and change. Yet, disbursement procedures, short 2 to 3-year project time frames, and asynchronous implementation caused well-designed projects to struggle to learn from each other.

P2.4. Political commitments to SAFS can be enhanced by leveraging SAFS policy information and on-the-job learning

In Niger, EU partnerships with national counterparts – at centralised and decentralised levels – contributed to building information systems in different segments of targeted value chains, including land and water governance, prevention of malnutrition, food crises response and prevention. EU support to improving national information systems has enhanced policy dialogues, the prevention of malnutrition, and food crises response and prevention in a context of increased regional fragility. In Malawi, the EU has significantly contributed to improving national monitoring and information systems in agriculture and nutrition through the development of web-based open access platforms collecting weather and agricultural market information as well as nutritional indicators, disaggregated at district, traditional authority and village levels. The EU promoted iterative learning and advocacy that involved feeding evidence generated from on-the-ground implementation into high-level dialogue and advocacy, leveraging programme achievements to influence policy decision-making with the aim of improving SAFS governance. EU's interventions also included piloting national-level policies and regulations in priority areas (e.g., land governance, forest management, and social protection), thus contributing to close the gap between policy

and practice. In addition, EU support to local CSOs and policy advocacy networks increased strategic engagement with civil society, building their capacities for evidence-based advocacy and fostering their active participation in policy dialogue and programme implementation. In Haiti, an analysis of the institutional setting of the food and nutrition sector conducted in 2017 formulated clear recommendations to improve FNS governance.

6.5 *Other good practices*

P3.1. Adopting consistent support for multistakeholder dialogue and joint action

The EU actively supported a range of platforms for multistakeholder dialogue and joint action at different levels, contributing to space for joint reflection, agenda setting and learning – for example, through its partnerships with the RBAs, including with FAO as a recognised international convenor for agri-food policy and institutional reform having multi-faceted competencies on land, water, soils, forests, and fisheries development issues that are particularly relevant to improve inclusiveness and resilience of SAFS. It also decisively supported the global CFS in developing and rolling out the VGGT and the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI). The EU also strongly supported the collection of information and data to support international consensus-building and agreements. In addition, the EU supported global, regional, and national networking and collective action to strengthen the link to SAFS-related research and advisory services (FARA, GFAR, GFRAS, AFAAS). It supported facilities such as INFORMED, NIPN, and FLEGT that (i) assist partner countries upon requests from EU Delegations, and (ii) support the documentation and synthesis of lessons learned and systematise sharing of lessons learned and best practices. Through DeSIRA and FIRST, the EU supported regional and national capacity development, knowledge networking and dialogue on SAFS. The EU has also provided steady support to, as well as having a steering role in, the development of the Global Network Against Food Crises. This included through significant funding and the delivery of public goods such as the Global Report of Food Crisis and Hunger Hotspots reports, which provide up-to-date information to the United Nations Security Council on food security in countries affected by conflict.

The EU has positioned itself in partner countries (for example, Cambodia, Colombia, Kenya, Malawi, and Haiti) as a facilitator of inclusive national and subnational agri-food system dialogues. It fosters the participation of civil society and users' organisations in SAFS-related policymaking, accountability, and implementation. In several instances, EU support has not only engaged stakeholders in policy dialogue but also increased their actual participation in public decision-making processes.

P3.2. Supporting multi-faceted and flexible approaches to R&I

A multi-faceted and flexible approach is key to articulating and strengthening National Research and Innovation Systems. The EU supported the development of national SAFS R&I systems in all countries studied. Support to research and innovation systems may take many forms. In Cambodia's R&I sector, EU FNSSA support has contributed to launching the Food Technology, Research, and Innovation Platform and academic curriculum development. In Malawi, the EU has promoted the adoption of the Farmer Field School approach and has contributed to strengthening the connection between extension and advisory services, farmers, and the R&I community. While the FFS approach is not a new concept, the programme played a pivotal role in harmonising its use and embedding it in national-level policies. Moreover, the programme fostered a more participatory approach to technology development and dissemination, thus contributing to the enhanced adoption of relevant innovations and technologies at the farm level. The ICRISAT-led CLIM project has piloted Innovation Platforms as a new approach to the development of integrated value chains in Malawi. By bringing diverse stakeholders together and fostering their own experimentation and knowledge exchange, innovation platforms improve the relationships between value chain actors and allow them to move from discussing problems to developing common solutions.



7

RECOMMENDATIONS

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents ten recommendations, which emerge from the conclusions, lessons and practices highlighted in the previous sections. The recommendations are clustered into three areas, as shown in Table 4 below: i) adopt a common *framework to foster a 'One EU' approach* to SAFS governance at the national, regional and global level, ii) take concrete *steps to operationalise this 'One EU' approach at all levels*, and iii) continue to *enhance learning* by articulating, orienting, and strengthening agri-food knowledge and innovation systems.

Table 4 Overview of the recommendations

Recommendation	Urgency	Importance
Cluster 1: Adopt a framework to foster a 'One EU' approach to SAFS		
1.1 Agree on clearer overarching 'rules of engagement' for European actors	Very Urgent	Very High
1.2 Anchor external action support to SAFS in long-term EU-country partnership agendas	Very Urgent	Very High
1.3 Maintain a clear focus in the support to SAFS at country and regional level	Urgent	High
Cluster 2: Operationalise this 'One EU' approach at all levels		
2.1 Upgrade coordination between EU and EU MS at HQ level	Very Urgent	Very High
2.2 Develop a common understanding on context-specific challenges and opportunities at country and regional level	Very Urgent	Very High
2.3 Co-develop and empower Team Europe agri-food initiatives	Urgent	High
2.4 Strengthen EU sustainable agri-food system diplomacy	Urgent	High
Cluster 3: Enhance learning at EU, national and global level		
3.1 Intensify support for networking, experimenting and learning	Medium	Very High
3.2 Enhance local participation in co-innovation processes	Urgent	Very High
3.3 Strengthen learning at EU level	Medium	High

7.1 Cluster 1: Adopt a framework to foster a ‘One EU’ approach to SAFS

Overarching recommendation: The EU should enhance its contributions to sustainable food system governance at national, regional, and global level through a clearer common approach.

Implementing this recommendation would require adopting the following three sub-recommendations.

Recommendation R1.1. European actors should agree on common ‘rules of engagement’ for supporting SAFS governance at national, regional and global level

Considering conclusions 1, 2, 4 and 5, lesson 1.1, and practices 2.3 and 3.1

There is a need to: i) strengthen EU-wide operational guidance for applying existing EU policies and international commitments (the Green Deal, F2F, Biodiversity strategy, and COP Climate commitments) to EU partnerships for agri-food system transformation; ii) enhance EU-wide collaboration and alignment on sustainable agri-food systems; iii) encourage EU partners to speak with one voice in national and international partnerships on agri-food system governance.

To respond to these challenges, *DG INTPA* should facilitate EU-wide agreement on principles for engaging in SAFS-related partnerships with multilateral and international organisations, national governments, and other SAFS stakeholders on agri-food system transformation. These common ‘rules of engagement’ should respect national governments’ leadership and autonomy in defining food system pathways yet ensure alignment of the partnerships established with EU values and overarching goals. *DG INTPA* should invite all *European players* – including Council and Parliament – to strongly support greater EU convergence on agri-food systems and invite key European entities involved in EU support to SAFS to review and improve the incentives for increased inter-service and multi-agency collaboration, especially in view of the urgency to support agri-food systems in crisis more effectively.

In parallel, *DG INTPA* should work with *line DGs* and other *European partners* – including EU MS and European financial institutions – to develop a framework for external action support to SAFS shared by all European actors involved in external action that would lay out their common ambitions as well as set core targets and indicators allowing joint monitoring of investments in SAFS and results.

R1.2. The EU should anchor its support to SAFS in broader, long-term EU-country partnership agendas.

Considering conclusions 1, 3 and 4, lesson 2.1, and practices 2.1 and 2.2

DG INTPA and EUDs should integrate more systematically EU support to SAFS in broader, long-term EU-country partnership agendas. In particular, they can improve the effectiveness of EU support to SAFS by integrating it in intersectoral policy dialogues and, where possible, into relevant Team Europe approaches geared towards broader national and EU priorities.

R1.3. The EU should maintain a clear strategic focus on the most vulnerable food system actors in its support to SAFS at country and regional level.

Considering conclusions 3 and 4, lessons 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3, and practice 1.1

In designing support for sustainable and inclusive agri-food system transformation, *DG INTPA* and *EEAS/EUDs* should retain the primary focus on enabling and creating opportunities for the most vulnerable food system actors – namely, small producers, women, youth and MSMEs – with an emphasis on building resilience from the bottom up. This implies combining diverse, complementary financial instruments and support modalities in country portfolios to ensure strengthening both upward and downward agri-food system linkages (see R2.2). Social protection mechanisms can support those who are not (yet) able to opt-in to agri-food system transformation.

So far, EU support to agri-food systems has been concentrated at the lower ends of the food value chain. Much transformational potential can be gained by strengthening the linkages with and support along the entire value chain to rural and urban food processors, retailers, and consumers. The EU (*DG INTPA* and *EEAS/EUDs*) should strengthen its support for local and national MSMEs along the entire food value chain.

7.2 Cluster 2: Operationalise this ‘One EU’ approach to SAFS

Overarching recommendation: The EU should act at various levels to ensure that a ‘One EU’ approach is operationalised to support transformation towards more sustainable agri-food systems.

Implementing this recommendation would require adopting the following four sub-recommendations.

R2.1. The Commission and EU MS should upgrade their mechanisms to exchange information at HQ level to a more high-level strategic coordination mechanism.

Considering conclusions 4 and 5, lessons 1.3 and 2.2, and practice 1.1

DG INTPA and *EU partners* (including EU MS) should upgrade the existing mechanism for exchange of information to a more high-level strategic coordination mechanism for aligning their support to SAFS. In particular, more strategic HARD meetings could help strengthen collaboration and create synergies between diverse EU and EU MS views and approaches to supporting agri-food system transformation. The meetings should recognise complementarity in diverse EU and EU MS approaches and address political differences between the EU MS, or with the Commission, as necessary.

R2.2. The EU should develop a common understanding of context-specific challenges and opportunities at country and regional level

Considering conclusions 1 and 5, lessons 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4, and practices 2.2 and 2.3

DG INTPA/F3, EUDs and other European partners should strengthen the use of foresight and scenario studies, and political economy analysis to jointly identify the most promising entry points for supporting sustainable agri-food system-level changes. These should inform flexible partnership frameworks to guide ‘One EU’ support actions relating to agri-food system transformation at national and international levels. Context-specific challenges require diverse, flexible and adaptive approaches. In this regard, EUDs and EU partners should continue to strategically combine diverse, complementary financial instruments, such as budget support and grants to NGOs, to address entry points and strengthen the public administration’s intersectoral role and capacity, and promote synergies between diverse national, subnational, and local sector support actions.

R2.3. The EU should co-develop and empower Team Europe initiatives for supporting sustainable agri-food systems.

Considering conclusions 4 and 5, lessons 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4, and practices 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4

DG INTPA, line DGs and *EU partners* should ensure that *Team Europe* initiatives build upon the strengths of EU partners with a strong presence and track record in the relevant global, regional and/or national arena. Internationally, it means closer coordination between the Commission and EU MS on partnership engagement with, for instance, the Rome-based and other UN agencies. At the country level, it can build on successful experiences in several countries with pooled funding mechanisms and, more recently, with Team Europe Initiatives.

R2.4. The EU should strengthen its engagement in sustainable agri-food system diplomacy.

Considering conclusions 4 and 5, lessons 1.1, 1.3, 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4, and practices 3.1 and 3.2

The EEAS, DG INTPA and *EUDs* should continue to strongly invest in strategic partnerships and enhance inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues within partner countries between international and regional organisations and national governments. More active support for compliance and complaints mechanisms encouraging agri-food actors is necessary to ensure European actors operating locally adhere to agreed principles and regulations; and to secure their compliance with EU values, rules, and regulations – i.e., Due Diligence, Liability, and Environmental damage.

7.3 Cluster 3: Enhance learning at EU, national and global level

Overarching recommendation: The EU should continue to invest strongly in articulating, orienting, and strengthening agri-food knowledge and innovation systems.

Implementing this recommendation would require adopting the following three sub-recommendations.

R3.1. The EU should intensify its support for systemic and joint learning, by investing in networking, experimenting, and platforms for local, national and, where relevant, international agri-food actors.

Considering conclusions 1 and 2, lessons 2.4 and 3.2, and practices 2.3, 3.1 and 3.2

DG INTPA and EUDs should capitalise more systematically upon and learn from relevant local, national, and international initiatives and mobilise the strengths of public, private and civil society partners for sustainable agri-food system transformation. Joint, systemic and coupled learning and innovation is key to developing effective food system transformation pathways.

Learning mechanisms supported by the EU at country level should be more firmly grounded in local realities by ensuring inclusive processes (see R3.2) and systematically mobilising financial, research and advisory services from the region.

DG INTPA and EUDs should also support the follow-up, application, and scaling of relevant innovations in agri-food policies, regulations, services, or practices far beyond their introduction date.

R3.2. The EU should ensure long-term support to enable smallholders, women, youth, their organisations, and MSMEs to actively participate in co-innovation processes for developing home-grown or locally adapted solutions.

Considering conclusion 3, lessons 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 2.2, and practice 2.3

DG INTPA and EUDs should continue to support the creation of local opportunities and enabling mechanisms for smallholders, MSMEs and prospective start-ups. This support should enable actors to meaningfully participate, contribute, and benefit from networking and innovation support; to improve the match between proposed innovations and the conditions and scale at which smallholders, MSMEs, women and youth need to apply them.

R3.3. The EU should consolidate mechanisms allowing to learn from experience within the EU and from EU joint efforts to support SAFS at national, regional and global level.

Considering conclusion 5, lessons 1.3, 1.4 and 2.1, and practice 2.4

So far, little attention and resources have been dedicated to documenting and learning from support interventions that were considered effective in supporting food system stakeholders in achieving sustainable agri-food system outcomes. DG INTPA should invite the *HARD group* to strengthen its capacity to capitalise upon and learn from the broad range of bottom-up programming instruments already developed by EU partners both inside and outside Europe. Over time, individual EU MS and the Commission have developed and tested a range of programming instruments to support local actors to take ownership and play decisive roles in sustainable agri-food system transformation, together with national and international public, private and CSO partners. The EU can benefit from the knowledge and experience gained through these local, country or region-based partnership approaches, including those within the EU itself. In particular, *DG INTPA and EUDs* are to further develop space for knowledge sharing, operational research, and on-the-job learning from Team Europe initiatives for agri-food system transformation.

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