

Science Program | Annual Technical Report 2025

Policy Innovations



A local stallholder manages a diverse inventory of fresh produce and essential goods for his community.
Credit: WorldFish

Author: Policy Innovations Science Program

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Collaborating Centers



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CGIAR Technical Reporting 2025

This 2025 Annual Technical Report forms part of CGIAR's first reporting cycle under the System Council-approved 2025–2030 Portfolio. It is grounded in the CGIAR Research and Innovation Strategy Program/Accelerator proposals and Plan of Results and Budget (PORBs) that establish each Program's and Accelerator's scope and objectives. It aligns with the Performance and Results Management Framework (PRMF 2022–2030), and the Technical Reporting Arrangement (TRA 2025–2030).

A Program inception report was developed in 2025 to document initial Program design, scope, and implementation arrangements. This report provides important context for interpreting early progress and implementation choices reported in this Annual Technical Report.

Pooled (Window 1/Window 2, or W1/W2) results are presented alongside mapped Window 3 (W3) and bilateral results. All pooled (W1/W2) results undergo quality assurance according to established standards. W3 and bilateral results are quality-assured at Center level and reviewed by Programs/Accelerators.

All data presented in this report reflect the status as of 30 March 2026 and draw on quality-assured results in the Results Dashboard, unless otherwise stated. While every effort has been made to ensure data accuracy, note that further refinements are taking place and updates will be available via the CGIAR Results Dashboard.

1. Overview for 2025

Program title	Policy Innovations
Program director	Clemens Breisinger
Start–end date	2025–2030
Centers involved	AfricaRice, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, CIMMYT, CIP, ICARDA, ICRISAT, IFPRI, IITA, ILRI, IRRI, IWMI, WorldFish
Targeted Impact Areas	Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods and Jobs (primary); Nutrition, Health, and Food Security; Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion, Climate Adaptation and Mitigation. Environmental Health and Biodiversity
Geographic focus	Global, regional (East and Southern Africa, South Asia, West and Central Africa) with Country Policy Innovation Hubs in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, India and additional work in Egypt, Rwanda, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan.
Mapped W3/bilateral projects	The detailed list of W3/bilateral projects mapped to Policy Innovations is available on pages 10-18 of the 2025 Plan of Results and Budget.
2025 budget (not 2026)	US\$32.1M (W1/2: US\$14M; W3/bilateral: US\$18.1M)

About the Program

The Policy Innovations Science Program responds to government needs for evidence-based solutions to address food system challenges. Operating through three pillars – **Global Agenda Setting, Country Support, and Institutional Capacity Sharing** – it co-creates research and innovation with low- and middle-income countries to inform the design and implementation of strategies, governance mechanisms and investments for food, land, and water systems that drive inclusive and sustainable development.

Within the broader CGIAR Portfolio, the Program serves as the connective tissue between science, scaling, and policy action: collaborating with Programs and Accelerators such as Food Frontiers and Security, Scaling for Impact, Multifunctional Landscapes, Gender Equality and Digital Accelerators among others ensuring that research translates into policy change across the globe, regions and countries.



AoW lead discusses cities' role in sustainable food systems and climate change at CFS 53, Rome. Credit: CFS.

Executive summary

The CGIAR Policy Innovations Science Program entered 2025 with a new structure, consolidating the legacy of four predecessor initiatives into a coherent, six-area research and engagement program. Operating across more than 35 countries and grounded in a demand-driven, co-creation model, as one of the main achievements the Program generated 56 policy changes based on a substantial body of evidence, tools, and policy engagement outputs during the year, translating science into decisions at local, national, and transboundary scales (refer to Figure 1).

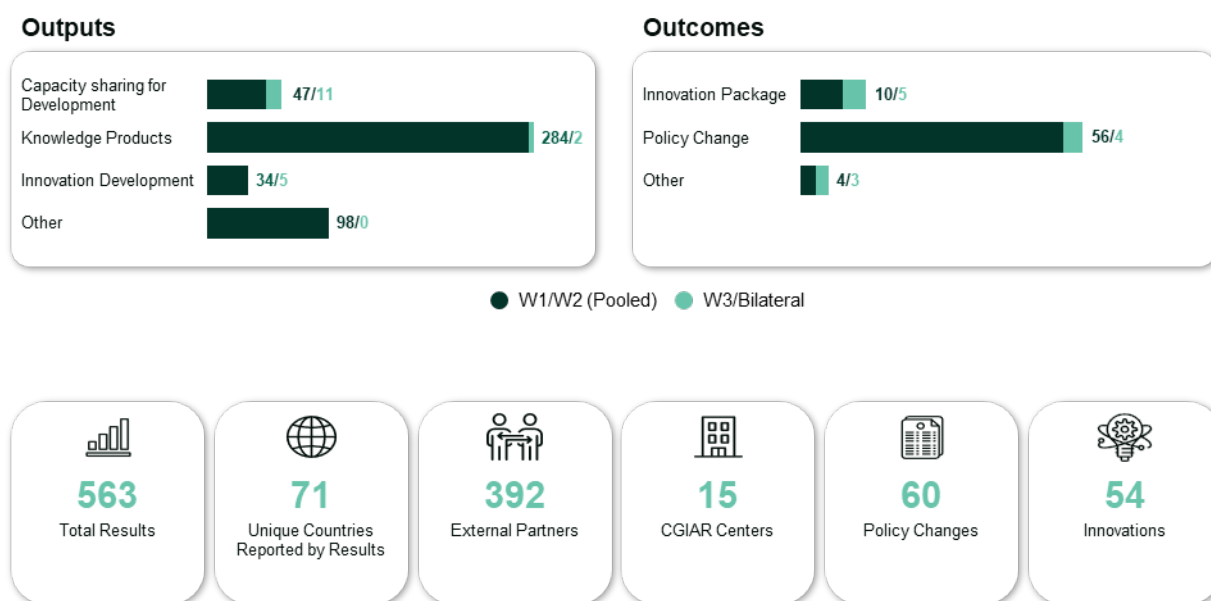


Figure 1: Key performance indicators and 2025 results reported by the Policy Innovations Program. Based on data accurate as of 30 March 2026.

Advancing evidence and tools for policy decisions

A defining feature of 2025 was the breadth and depth of policy advice based on foresight and other analytical tools delivered to governments and partners. A major new volume synthesizing knowledge on [the future of food systems](#) was completed, drawing contributions from across CGIAR and partner institutions globally. Country-specific foresight analyses were produced for priority geographies, including [cost-effectiveness assessments of agrifood investments for seven countries – Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Malawi, Uganda, and Zambia](#) – equipping governments with ranked investment options across multiple policy goals. Economy-wide modeling tools were used to inform national development planning in [Papua New Guinea, Nepal's Nationally Determined Contributions, Bangladesh's climate policy, Uganda's climate targets, and Rwanda's agricultural strategic plan](#) — demonstrating the Program's reach in connecting global science with national decision-making processes.

Market-led transformation research delivered practical evidence that is informing policy and investment choices across agrifood systems. The Portfolio generated actionable insights on what works to improve markets, from enhancing traceability and export access in Bangladesh's shrimp-farmer clusters to how renewable-energy-powered cold storage networks can reduce food loss in Nigeria. It delivered guidance to governments on how to make fertilizer subsidy spending more equitable and higher impact. Rigorous evaluations in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Egypt strengthened the evidence base for social protection and livelihoods programming.

The importance of understanding governance and political economy to foster an enabling environment for policy change was apparent in several contributions at global, national, and local scales. The [Principles for Just Water Partnerships](#), designed by CGIAR (under Policy Innovations) and its partners through a series of extensive negotiations across 34 countries, were launched at COP30. Cross country analysis on the [political economy of fertilizer, fisheries, and animal input subsidies](#) revealed the degree to which interests, institutions, and ideologies interact to either catalyze or stymie subsidy reforms. Sub-nationally, a [decision support dashboard](#) was co-designed with key authorities in Addis Ababa to anticipate and respond to flood risks. Collectively, these efforts underscore this area of work's emphasis on elevating governance in global agendas, addressing coordination and implementation bottlenecks that hinder policy change.

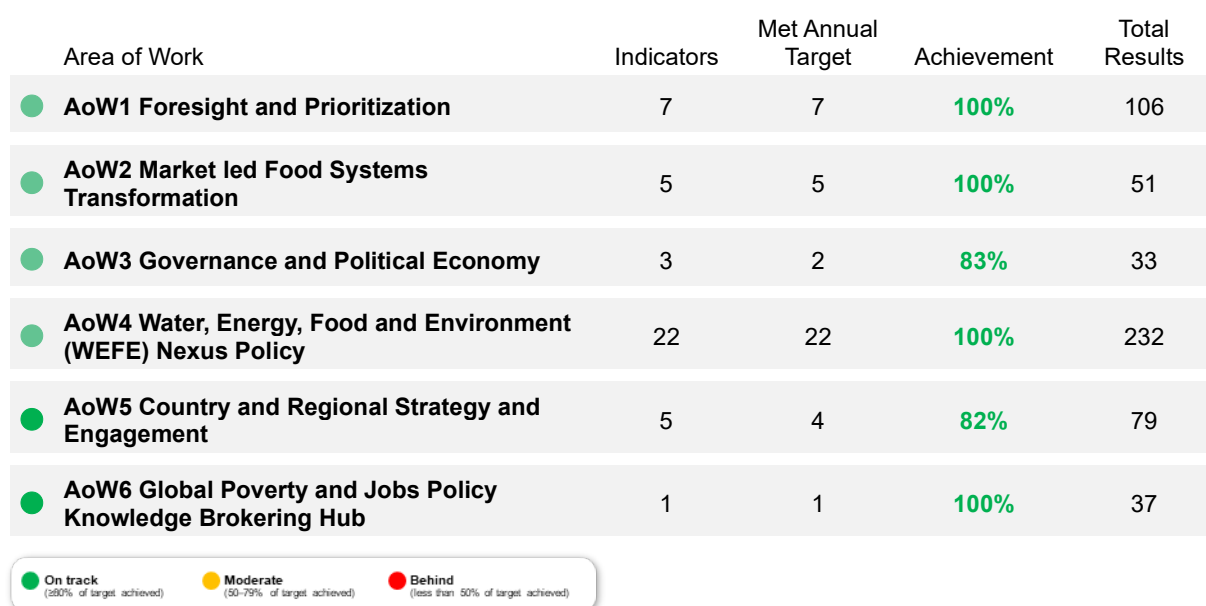


Figure 2: A performance overview across the Program's six Areas of Work (AoWs).

Water-energy-food-environment nexus analysis remained a core pillar of the program's technical offer and policy change. A comprehensive [hydro-economic decision support system for Pakistan's Indus Basin](#) was developed and shared with government agencies, while the [Groundwater Management Information System](#) was formally adopted by five major Pakistani institutions for evidence-based water regulation. In Nepal, [an integrated irrigation monitoring system](#) developed with the Department of Water Resources and Irrigation was replicated across the [eastern canals of the 36,000-hectare Babai Irrigation Project, with a plan to extend to the entire system in future](#). In India, [underground flood-transfer technology](#) investment was scaled across hundreds of villages in Uttar Pradesh, increasing groundwater availability by up to 8 percent.

Social policies and youth employment policies are key instruments for poverty reduction and job creation. The program has supported governments and partners by co-generating essential evidence on the impact of flagship [social protection](#) and youth interventions. Together with partners, the program produced landscape assessments on [youth engagement](#) in African labor markets as well as evidence and events on the potential public policies and [investments](#) to support youth engagement in agriculture.

Country engagement and emerging [country policy innovation hubs](#) serve as a strategic engine for the whole Program. By bridging the critical implementation gap between global science and national action, these engagements provide a "front door" for policymakers to access rapid response analytics and cost-effective technical innovations.

The Program navigated 2025 amid significant funding constraints. This required prioritization across research areas and geographies, with some activities scaled back while core country engagements were maintained. The withdrawal of major bilateral funding streams — including the impact of [United States foreign assistance suspension on Malawi](#), which Policy Innovations rapidly analyzed in partnership with the National Planning Commission — illustrated both the Program's responsiveness to crisis and the fragility of the operating environment.

The 2025 results confirm that the program's integrated analytical approach — linking foresight, governance, market analysis, impact evaluations, and country engagement across key thematic areas of work— is generating measurable policy change and impact. As the Program moves into its next phase, it will put an even stronger focus on **impact** by driving global and country-level policy changes with an emphasis on co-creation and capacity sharing with national institutions and AI-enabled policy innovations.

2. Annual progress

2.1. Progress along the theory of change

In 2025, Policy Innovations made significant progress along its systems-oriented [Theory of Change](#), operationalized through six interlinked Areas of Work (AoWs). The Program's achievements reflect its commitment to co-creating evidence-based policy solutions, strengthening institutional capacity, and supporting governments and partners to address complex food, land, and water (FLW) challenges.

The Program's research and tools were widely used by governments and partners to inform strategic policy reforms and investment decisions. Ethiopia's government adopted a comprehensive [National Agroecology Strategy](#), developed through multi-stakeholder collaboration, to restore ecosystems and build climate resilience. Rwanda integrated [nine IFPRI research products, including climate-smart agriculture modeling](#), into its 2025–2030 strategic plan, reflecting commitment to climate-resilient agricultural transformation. In Nigeria, national policy dialogues facilitated the [co-development of a stakeholder-informed Theory of Change for sustainable agrifood system transformation](#), strengthening alignment and actionable pathways for inclusive growth.

Rapid response modeling and analytical tools from the program informed timely policy decisions in response to crises and emerging risks. For example, in Laos, a new Policy Research Agenda was formulated and launched with direct support from the Program, reflecting the responsiveness of policy research to national development needs. In Pakistan, innovative decision-support systems and integrated water accounting dashboards were operationalized by government agencies, enhancing sustainable water resource management and policy and climate adaptation efforts. Further, extensive training and capacity-building initiatives were delivered during the year to empower national think tanks, policymakers, and researchers for evidence-based policy analysis. In Malawi, for example, [the National Planning Commission and other government agencies were trained to use advanced modeling tools](#) for national development priorities.

Enabling factors and challenges

Critical enablers included strong partnerships with governmental and research institutions, demand-driven research design, and programmatic flexibility in the face of fiscal constraints. The Program's embedded country presence and iterative co-design processes facilitated the translation of evidence into policy action. Country-focused progress was evident in Malawi, for instance, where [economic modeling tools](#) shaped national planning and donor engagement. Collaboration with [Scaling for Impact](#) and the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator enhanced the reach and relevance of innovations, particularly in scaling climate-smart agriculture and promoting gender-responsive approaches. Nevertheless, funding uncertainties and capacity constraints at partner institutions posed ongoing challenges, emphasizing the need for continued investment in capacity sharing and adaptive research approaches.

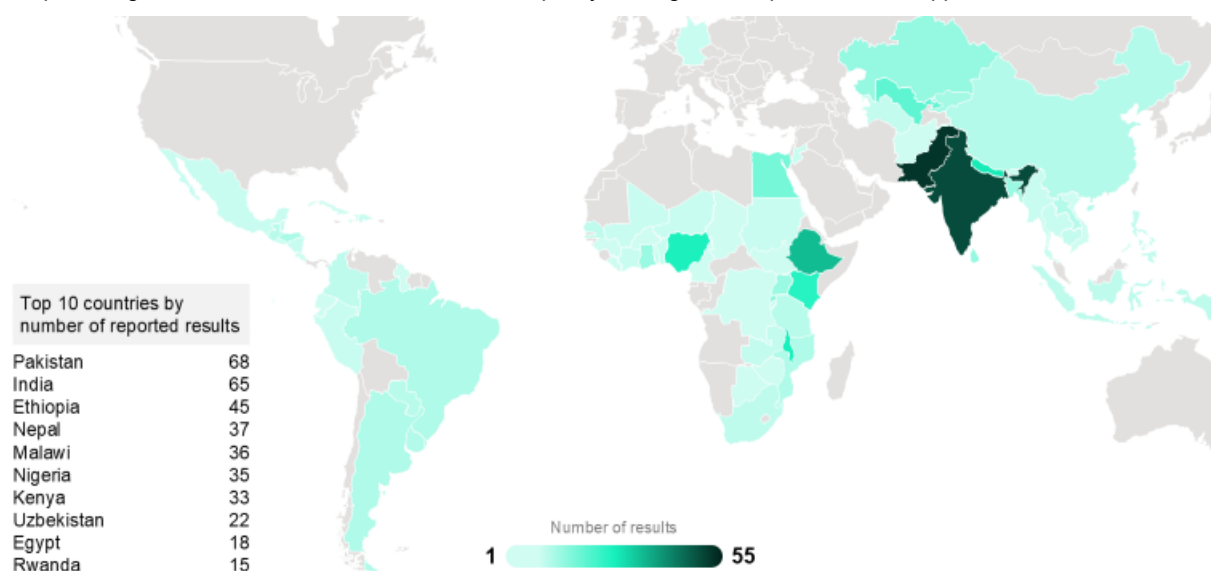


Figure 3: Geographic focus of 2025 results, with top ten countries by result count. Based on data accurate as of 30 March 2026.

Contributions to CGIAR Impact Areas

The Program's results contributed across all five CGIAR Impact Areas. In Kenya, [youth employment and gender equity](#) were advanced through targeted training and policy recommendations adopted by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA). In Cambodia and Vietnam, climate-resilient rice production policies and innovations were adopted at scale, supporting adaptation, food security, and [environmental sustainability](#). The institutionalization of water governance innovations—in the [Niger Basin](#), [Nepal](#), and across Central Asia—strengthened environmental health and biodiversity while enhancing climate resilience in transboundary contexts.

2.2. Area of Work progress

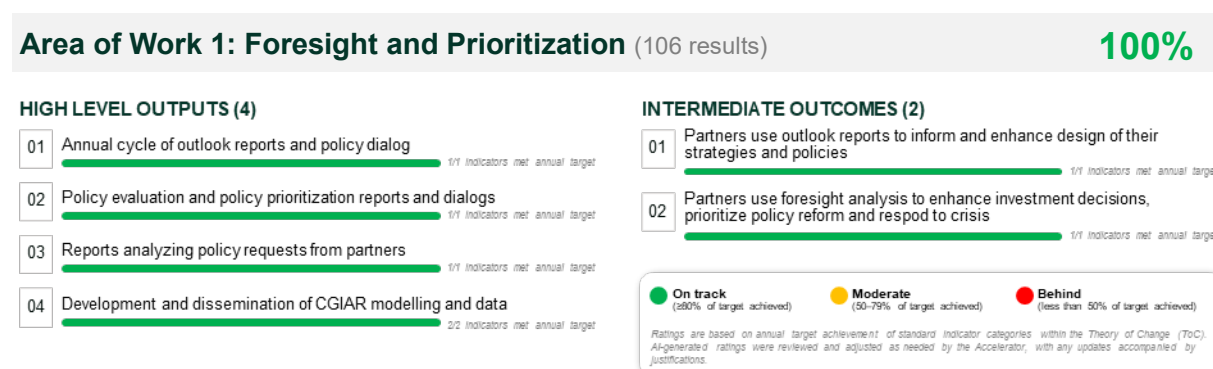


Figure 4: AoW1 progress against 2025 ToC indicator targets.

The Foresight and Prioritization AOW made substantial progress in 2025, delivering a broad portfolio of analytical tools, knowledge products, and capacity-sharing activities designed to help governments and partners make difficult policy and investment decisions.

Expanding the analytical toolkit

Drawing on experts from across CGIAR, the AoW updated crop yield and animal production growth estimates were incorporated into the IMPACT model, along with the latest climate change projections. This improved the accuracy and policy relevance of the 2026 Global Food Systems Outlook. Complementing this, the Linked Economic and Animal Systems model was expanded to include sheep and goats alongside cattle, with pilot studies in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Nigeria. This has reduced the cost of integrating livestock into national agricultural planning. A spatial analytics report drawing on 11 use cases from across CGIAR centers demonstrated how geospatial methods can translate local patterns into actionable policy insights across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. An artificial intelligence-based system using fine-tuned language models was also developed to help researchers identify and classify policy demands from large volumes of policy documents. Finally, an AI-driven version of the RIAPA country modeling system was developed and tested for release in mid-2026.

A rich suite of outlook and policy analysis products

A major edited volume on the future of food systems — comprising 36 chapters from contributors across CGIAR and partner institutions — synthesized the current state of foresight knowledge across commodities, regions, and modeling methods. Regional outlooks were published for the Mercosur agricultural bloc, China, India, Indonesia, and South Africa, among others. Country-level agrifood system diagnostic presentations were prepared for 14 countries. Systematic cost-effectiveness analyses were completed for seven countries — Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Malawi — ranking investment options across agrifood income growth, job creation, poverty reduction, undernourishment, and environmental footprint. Economic risk profiles quantifying the impact of world market and domestic production shocks were produced for Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, Papua New Guinea, and Egypt.

Capacity sharing across regions

Consistent with the Program's emphasis on building durable analytical capacity in partner institutions, more than eight training events on computable general equilibrium and related modeling tools were delivered across India, Nepal, Argentina, and China, engaging national research institutes and government agencies. A training and dissemination workshop with Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture and a training workshop supporting Malawi's National Planning Commission in reviewing the country's First Ten-Year Implementation Plan under the Malawi 2063 Agenda further demonstrated the demand-driven, government-facing character of this work.

Policy uptake: A notable highlight

Policy influence came from several documented cases of governments using CGIAR modeling to inform major decisions. For example, Nepal's cabinet-approved Nationally Determined Contributions, submitted ahead of the COP30 climate negotiations, were directly informed by modeling conducted with the Institute for Integrated Development Studies, with a stakeholder consultation attended by more than 60 participants from government agencies and international organizations. Similarly, Uganda's and Bangladesh's climate policy processes drew on modeling analysis co-produced with national partners. The World Bank's AgriConnect initiative — designed to help smallholders commercialize — used CGIAR value chain modeling analysis to identify high-potential job-creating value chains

Area of Work 2: Market-led Food Systems Transformation (51 results)

100%

HIGH LEVEL OUTPUTS (4)

- 01 Evidence on policies and institutional innovations 1/1 indicators met annual target
- 02 Knowledge available on how markets perform and respond to policies 1/1 indicators met annual target
- 03 Evidence on social protection and livelihood interventions 1/1 indicators met annual target
- 04 Methodological innovations are available for policy guidance 1/1 indicators met annual target

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (1)

- 01 FLW system actors get guidance to sustainable transform food systems 1/1 indicators met annual target

● **On track** (≥80% of target achieved)
 ● **Moderate** (50–79% of target achieved)
 ● **Behind** (less than 50% of target achieved)

Ratings are based on annual target achievement of standard indicator categories within the Theory of Change (ToC). AI-generated ratings were reviewed and adjusted as needed by the Accelerator, with any updates accompanied by justifications.

Figure 5: AoW2 progress against 2025 ToC indicator targets.

Generating evidence to guide food system actors

In 2025, the Market-led Food Systems Transformation AoW advanced work on farm-level technology, market and policy reform, and social protection, while strengthening policy evaluation tools.

Significant progress was made in advancing policies promoting farm-level technology, complemented by key research achievements in input and service market innovations to boost smallholder productivity in [India](#). Additional milestones included the [assessment of drone technology in sustainable agriculture](#), and [analysis on renewable-energy cold storage](#) to reduce food loss. Building on these innovations, regional studies addressed specific barriers to implementation. In Nigeria, for instance, research found that conflict disrupts fertilizer use and reduce maize yields, providing a basis for new subsidy design in [fragile settings](#). Similarly in Bangladesh, a multi-year cluster intervention for smallholder shrimp farmers — organized through the Department of Fisheries with World Bank support — offered concrete lessons on the conditions under which [clustering can strengthen traceability and access to export markets](#).

Deepening knowledge on markets, subsidies, and social protection

On market performance and policy reform, new evidence showed how [trade policies affect price volatility in rice and wheat markets](#), and [how global price shocks transmit domestically](#).

Research on fertilizer subsidies provided the first comprehensive review of targeting approaches, finding that while subsidies often reach poor households, [targeting rules](#) and supply shortfalls can reduce progressivity and create informal rationing. A companion note explored options to [repurpose subsidy spending toward higher-return investments](#), supporting broader reform efforts. A spatial framework identified “risk traps” in sub-Saharan Africa, where fertilizer use is productive but unattractive for risk-averse farmers, [informing better geographic targeting](#).

On social protection and livelihoods, strong impact evidence emerged across contexts. In Ethiopia, cash and livelihood grants improved nutrition, informing the PSNP (R21360). [Somalia's graduation program for internally displaced people](#) increased consumption and assets via livestock while in Egypt, long-term evaluation of the Takaful and Karama cash transfer programs shaped Ministry of Social Solidarity program designs.

Traceability and compliance in Honduras' coffee value chain

A key achievement in 2025 was the development and uptake of an open traceability framework in Honduras to support compliance with the European Union Deforestation Regulation. The open-access TraceFoodChain tool, designed as shared digital infrastructure, [reduces compliance costs and avoids vendor lock-in](#).

In Marcala, registries and certification were digitized, youth trained in digital mapping, and encrypted traceability systems deployed. With potential national adoption, it could benefit up to 120,000 farmers. This work was carried out in close collaboration with Scaling for Impact and with support from the European Union and GIZ. It was showcased at a congress bringing together approximately 250 participants from public and private sectors to advance practical EUDR compliance solutions.

Strengthening policy guidance

Methodological innovations strengthened policy evaluation through a new incentive verification framework for small-scale farming addressing [aflatoxin mitigation](#), biofortification, and conservation agriculture developed with Addis Ababa University and the University of Bordeaux. In Kenya, co-creation workshops across five counties produced [alternative fertilizer subsidy models](#) to inform pilots, engaging government, private sector, and farmer groups with support from GIZ, the World Bank, and BMZ.

Area of Work 3: Governance and Political Economy (33 results)

83% (3/4 results)

HIGH LEVEL OUTPUTS (3)

- 01 Identify examples of governance and institutional innovations for improved FLW policy coordination
1/1 indicators met annual target
- 02 Developing knowledge products on the impact of agrifood policy distortions
1/1 indicators met annual target
- 03 New communities of practice, political economy and policy process tools are developed
0/1 indicators met annual target

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (1)

- 01 Partners and key constituencies adopt tools and modalities for uptake of politically feasible and coherent policies
1 no target

On track (≥80% of target achieved) **Moderate** (50–79% of target achieved) **Behind** (less than 50% of target achieved)

Ratings are based on annual target achievement of standard indicator categories within the Theory of Change (ToC). AI-generated ratings were reviewed and adjusted as needed by the Accelerator, with any updates accompanied by justifications.

Figure 6: AoW3 progress against 2025 ToC indicator targets.

Strengthening the evidence base for politically feasible food system reform

In 2025, this AoW delivered a substantive body of evidence, tools, and capacity-sharing results focused on policy coherence, subsidy reform, and the political economy of food, land, and water governance.

Advancing policy coherence across food, land, and water systems

A significant strand of 2025 work generated new knowledge on governance and institutional innovations for improved policy coordination. A [flagship report on food, land, and water policies and institutions in Lao PDR](#) diagnosed critical gaps in normative, horizontal, and vertical policy coherence — finding that while national policies align with development goals, ministries lack the financial and technical resources to execute them effectively. Complementing this, a [methodological handbook for analyzing policy coherence](#), developed jointly with the Center for Agrifood Systems Research at Universidad de los Andes, provided policymakers, civil society, and international organizations with a practical five-step framework — successfully piloted in Colombia's water sector. [Research on governing sustainable urban and peri-urban food systems](#), co-hosted with partners at the Committee on World Food Security, further contributed to global discourse on multi-sectoral governance. In Nigeria, [research on gender mainstreaming in water sector governance](#) identified concrete pathways for inclusive water policy design.

Building analytical tools for political feasibility

A notable 2025 achievement was the development and deployment of new political economy tools designed to bridge evidence and implementation. [The Political Economy of Rural Investments methodology](#) — developed to complement the program's economy-wide modeling framework — scores priority agricultural investments across three domains: alignment with government incentives, resilience to vested interests, and likelihood of accountable implementation, producing a heatmap to guide decision makers toward politically feasible choices. In parallel, [the Political Economy and Policy Analysis artificial intelligence tool \(PEPA.AI\)](#), was deployed as a decision-support resource enabling policymakers and researchers to analyze policy choices and uncover implementation barriers. [A training workshop in Nairobi brought together 42 representatives](#) from national agricultural research and extension institutions across Eastern and Central Africa — organized jointly with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa, IFPRI, and the Alliance — to build capacity in applying PEPA.AI for evidence-based agrifood policy analysis

Generating actionable knowledge on subsidy reform

Subsidy reform — one of the program's three cross-cutting priorities for 2025 — received sustained analytical attention. A synthesis of political economy findings across fish, fertilizer, and animal input subsidies drew cross-sectoral lessons on how distributional conflicts undermine reform. This synthesis drew on three separate studies. The first, a systematic review of fertilizer subsidy reform cases across 15 countries and 38 reform episodes. The second was a country-specific analysis of livestock input subsidy reform in Kenya while the third, on the political economy of World Trade Organization fisheries subsidy negotiations. Other work included a political economy assessment of green input subsidies in Colombia. A policy note on realistic options for repurposing fertilizer subsidy spending translated findings into actionable guidance for governments facing fiscal pressure.

A concrete policy outcome illustrates the area's real-world traction. [A multi-stakeholder process supported the Government of Ethiopia in developing its National Agroecology Strategy](#), working directly with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture — a result jointly attributed to this program and the Multifunctional Landscapes Science Program, demonstrating the value of cross-portfolio collaboration in translating governance research into adopted policy.

Area of Work 4: Water, Energy, Food and Environment (WEFE) Nexus Policy (232 results)

100% (22/23 results)

HIGH LEVEL OUTPUTS (4)

- 01 Water, energy, food and environment (WEFE) nexus models and data on synergies and tradeoffs 0/0 indicators met annual target
- 02 Evidence on WEFE nexus solutions informs government policies 0/0 indicators met annual target
- 03 Capacity sharing on WEFE nexus solutions 1/1 indicators met annual target + 1 no target
- 04 Governance mechanisms and institutional innovations 0/0 indicators met annual target

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (3)

- 01 Partners achieve a shared understanding of emerging challenges in WEFE systems and foresight data, tools and analysis 2/2 indicators met annual target
- 02 Systems-level interactions in FLW systems are better understood and addressed 1/1 indicators met annual target
- 03 Decision makers support pro poor and gender inclusive policies and investments 1/1 indicators met annual target

● **On track** (≥90% of target achieved)
 ● **Moderate** (50–79% of target achieved)
 ● **Behind** (less than 50% of target achieved)

Ratings are based on annual target achievement of standard indicator categories within the Theory of Change (ToC). AI-generated ratings were reviewed and adjusted as needed by the Accelerator, with any updates accompanied by justifications.

Figure 7: AoW4 progress against 2025 ToC indicator targets.

Building the evidence base for integrated water governance, AoW4 integrates CGIAR's water research portfolio, develops new policy-relevant water analyses, governance innovations, and delivers capacity sharing across South and Central Asia, and East and Southern Africa. Demonstrating this impact, in South Asia, a [groundwater management information system \(GMIS\)](#) co-developed by IWMI and partners was adopted by four major Pakistani government institutions — the Punjab Irrigation Department, Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources, the [Living Indus Initiative](#), and the [National Disaster Risk Management Fund](#). Building on this, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) established a dedicated Groundwater and Climate Change Division within its Irrigation Department, representing a formal institutional shift toward proactive groundwater management. This was further solidified by a provincial approval of PKR 236 million to institutionalize groundwater monitoring across KPK, directly scaling approaches piloted with program support.

Policy changes driven by nexus evidence

The government of Uttar Pradesh, India, enacted a pilot ban on summer rice cultivation in two districts, using evidence on groundwater depletion generated by IRRI and partners — a significant step toward sustainable water. At the transboundary level, the [Incomati and Maputo Watercourse Commission](#) adopted guidelines establishing a formal multistakeholder platform for inclusive governance of the shared Incomati–Maputo River Basin. In West Africa, the Niger Basin Authority used nexus guidance co-developed by the Authority and partners, including IFPRI, to develop its 2026–2030 Operational Plan, with potential benefits for more than 160 million people across nine countries. In Central Asia, the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination operationalized the Pywr water allocation model for the Chirchik River, replacing a static planning tool with scenario-based evidence for water allocation decisions.

Pakistan's integrated water decision-support ecosystem

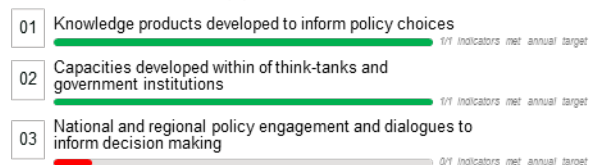
Alongside groundwater governance advances, a hydro-economic decision-support system based on a computable general equilibrium model was institutionalized with the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics to help policymakers simulate trade-offs across water, food, and economic sectors. A water productivity atlas was used by Punjab's Crop Reporting Services to guide crop assessments and irrigation planning. Capacity sharing and global discourse

AOW4 invested significantly in building partner capacity, including training on the Pywr model delivered jointly with the University of Manchester, glacier water modeling training for female hydrologists in Nepal, and a virtual training workshop on the nexus approach for South Asian governments funded through the Oxfam-led Transboundary Rivers of South Asia program. Experiential learning games were adopted across Indian states, improving groundwater governance. They increase women's participation in decision-making and lead to better decisions — a result jointly tracked with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator. A WEFE nexus graduate course was officially institutionalized at Tribhuvan University and other institutions in Nepal in 2025, following a 2024 pilot. Nexus course materials were co-developed with Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, embedding integrated systems thinking in higher education in Uzbekistan.

Area of Work 5: Country and Regional Strategy and Engagement (79 results)

82%

HIGH LEVEL OUTPUTS (3)



INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES (2)

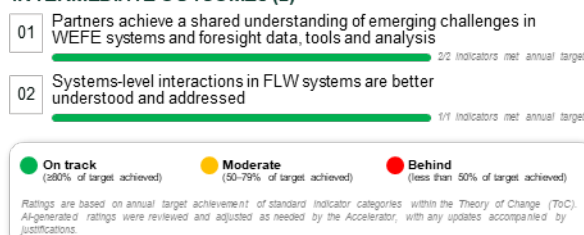


Figure 8: AoW5 progress against 2025 ToC indicator targets.

This AOW underwent a significant transition process in 2025 as part of the overall portfolio and program prioritization process. A major change is the reduction of focus countries from 10 to 5.

Grounding policy research in national priorities

The Program's 2025 country engagement demonstrated its core value proposition: translating rigorous research into actionable policy change through sustained, embedded partnerships with governments and national institutions. Across 10 countries in Africa and Asia the Program generated a substantial portfolio of knowledge products, capacity-sharing activities, and verifiable policy changes – all co-designed with national partners to reflect their specific development priorities.

Building evidence and institutional capacity: Example Malawi

A defining feature of the year's progress was the volume and quality of knowledge products delivered directly to national decision-makers.

For example, in Malawi, monthly maize market reports provided timely price intelligence to policymakers and development partners, with monthly briefings shared with the Donor Committee on Agriculture keeping stakeholders informed of emerging food security risks. This real-time evidence had direct policy consequences: analysis from the monitoring series informed government enforcement of an existing maize export restriction during a period of heightened risk, receiving prominent national media coverage.

Furthermore, IFPRI research on urbanization trends directly informed the Government of Flanders' development cooperation strategy, while findings on anchor enterprise models shaped the Ministry of Agriculture's farming approach. Capacity sharing was equally prominent; at the request of Malawi's National Planning Commission, the program delivered a five-day training workshop on economy-wide modeling tools for four government institutions, directly supporting the midterm review of the Malawi 2063 national development plan.

Catalyzing policy change across priority countries: Kenya and Nigeria

In Kenya, the Program generated a cluster of verifiable policy changes. An economic assessment of a proposed agricultural withholding tax –conducted jointly with KIPPRA –prompted government stakeholders to reconsider the policy's potential negative impacts on rural poverty. Following CGIAR-supported dialogues conducted with IFPRI and GIZ, the Ministry of Agriculture initiated a new fertilizer subsidy policy framework. Additionally, Kenya's National Livestock Research Agenda 2025–2035 was officially adopted with ILRI's technical support, alongside the development of a National Farmers Registry. Capacity-sharing activities reinforced these gains, including trainer-of-trainers workshops for researchers from the Kenya Revenue Authority and the Central Bank of Kenya.

In Nigeria, two national policy dialogues convened by IFPRI brought together 272 participants from government, civil society, and the private sector to co-develop a theory of change for agrifood system transformation. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security adopted a value-chain investment prioritization tool at the National Council on Agriculture, while sub-national governments submitted formal letters of commitment to support Nigeria's Marine and Blue Economy strategy.

Rwanda's agricultural strategic plan

Nine IFPRI research products –including the program's RIAPA model –were integrated into the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation (PSTA-5) by the Ministries of Agriculture, Finance, and Environment. Climate change considerations appear 38 times throughout the plan, reflecting the direct influence of the program's analytical tools on national planning at scale.

Cross-Portfolio contributions and bilateral funding

Results reflected strong collaboration with the several programs, for example Climate Action and Scaling for Impact, including Ethiopia's public-private partnership framework for irrigation. Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate that a model combining sustained presence, co-design, and rigorous evidence is delivering measurable policy results across its priority geographies (see more examples in the key results story).

Area of Work 6: Global Poverty and Jobs Policy Knowledge Brokering Hub (37 results)

100% (1/2 results)

HIGH LEVEL OUTPUTS (2)

01	6.1.1: Cross-cutting studies synthesizing the evidence for global CGIAR positioning	1/1 indicators met annual target
02	6.1.2: Enhanced repository of suitable and innovative models, methods and tools	1 no target



Figure 9: AoW6 progress against 2025 ToC indicator targets.

Building the evidence base for inclusive growth

The Global Poverty and Jobs Policy Knowledge Brokering Hub (AoW6) is the Program's cross-cutting platform for synthesizing evidence on poverty, inequality, and decent employment — with a particular focus on youth engagement in agrifood systems. Operating with the smallest pooled budget among the Program's six areas of work, the hub nonetheless generated a substantial portfolio of knowledge products and methodological innovations in 2025, drawing on both pooled (Window 1/Window 2) and bilateral funding streams.

Youth, jobs, and food systems transformation

Youth employment in agrifood systems emerged as the hub's defining thematic priority for 2025. A major convening event, [The Future of Youth Jobs in Agrifood Systems in Africa](#), brought together African youth leaders, researchers, and policymakers to examine barriers, success stories, and policy solutions for youth inclusion across the entire food system — not just on-farm agriculture. This was complemented by [research and youth dialogue at the 22nd International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy](#).

Cross-country research underpinned these convenings. A study [examining youth engagement in labor markets across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria](#) — countries accounting for 40 percent of Africa's youth population — challenged the assumption that young people are rapidly leaving agriculture, finding that exit rates from agriculture are broadly similar for youth and adults. Country-specific analyses deepened this picture: [research on Nigeria's food systems demographics](#) documented that between 2003 and 2022 women's participation in non-farm agrifood employment increased by 190 percent and youth participation grew by more than 300 percent. Parallel work [on Rwanda's food systems employment trends](#) extended the geographic coverage of this evidence base.

Critically, research findings moved beyond documentation toward policy uptake. A study on soft skills training for young women in Kenya [directly influenced the Federation of Kenya Employers and Nairobi Technical Training Institute](#) to co-develop a new industry-aligned soft skills. Meanwhile, [evidence on public agricultural expenditure and youth out-migration in Nigeria](#) found that a one percentage point increase in the share of public agricultural spending was associated with up to a 0.9 percentage point reduction in youth out-migration, offering quantifiable guidance for investment policy.

Portfolio linkages and partnerships

The hub's work was strengthened through active collaboration across the CGIAR Portfolio. Joint work with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator was evident in a [capacity-building event on youth employment in potato and sweet potato value chains at the 8th Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis Annual Regional Pre-Conference](#), connecting the hub's youth agenda to value chain-specific evidence. Bilateral-funded work also contributed: [a regional workshop on water challenges in Central Asia](#), funded through Window 3, connected poverty and livelihoods evidence to regional policymakers, while [a policy-driven workshop on micronutrient data in Nigeria and Malawi](#) strengthened partners' capacity to translate nutrition modeling into actionable policy.

Together, these results demonstrate the hub's role as a coherent bridge between cross-cutting evidence synthesis and the Program's broader goal of informing pro-poor, inclusive food system policies.

3. Portfolio linkages and Partnerships

The Program's partnerships in 2025 spanned continents and sectors, reflecting a deliberate strategy to bridge global science with local action. National governments, research systems, and universities played a co-leadership role in developing and deploying analytical tools and policy innovations. For example, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), and South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) partnered with IFPRI through Policy Innovations to deliver high-level capacity sharing on computable general equilibrium modeling, directly strengthening institutional skills to anticipate and adapt to economic and environmental challenges in South Asia. Likewise, in Africa, IFPRI's collaboration with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and the ANAPRI network led to the establishment of a modeling service center in Zambia, which now operates independently – demonstrating a transition from CGIAR-led capacity-building to locally owned and sustained policy analysis.

Government co-ownership was evident in the uptake and use of tools and innovations. In Malawi, the National Planning Commission not only co-designed and received training on [Social Accounting Matrices \(SAMs\)](#) and Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models from the Program, but subsequently institutionalized the use of these tools for national policy analysis, enabling country-led evidence-based decisions on agricultural and economic policy.

Geographic and cross-portfolio linkages

In Kenya, the partnership between IFPRI and the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) under the Program enabled the co-design of [advanced economic modeling tools for evidence-based tax](#) and subsidy policy development. The Kenya hub also supported youth-focused capacity development in partnership with the International Potato Center, equipping young professionals with skills to engage productively in potato and [sweet potato value chains](#).

Cross-CGIAR linkages were exemplified by integrated capacity sharing initiatives, such as the training on gender equality and social inclusion-responsive WEFE nexus planning in Nepal, delivered by IWMI and Governance Lab (R22470). Collaboration with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator was also evident in policy dialogue events, such as the KIPPRA Youth Conference and the Future of Youth Jobs in Agrifood Systems in Africa event, which brought together youth leaders, policymakers, and researchers to co-create [solutions for youth employment and empowerment in African food systems](#).

Strengthening partners in countries and scaling through co-design

National think tanks, including the Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES) were an integral partner in co-design, implementation, and scaling of results. In Malawi, the National Planning Commission's sustained engagement with IFPRI resulted in the [independent application of advanced modeling tools for policy scenario analysis](#), supporting a shift toward country-led, evidence-based decision-making. In Uganda, collaboration with the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) and the Agricultural Policy Research Centre (APRC) enabled the integration of spatial analytics and economic modeling into [national pest and disease management strategies, demonstrating how NARES co-creation supports policy prioritization and investment planning](#). In Pakistan, government agencies not only adopted digital water resource management platforms, but also co-developed and institutionalized groundwater monitoring methodologies, leading to the creation of dedicated divisions and investment in real-time monitoring networks.

Malawi's capacity sharing and policy innovation

Malawi's experience demonstrates the transformative potential of co-designed partnerships. Through formal requests and ongoing collaboration, the National Planning Commission and multiple ministries participated in intensive training on economywide analysis using IFPRI's RIAPA framework. This partnership led to the independent use of advanced modeling tools for midterm review of national development plans and informed government responses to major shocks such as the withdrawal of USAID funding. The co-created evidence directly influenced updates to national strategic assumptions, exchange rate policy, and agricultural programming, highlighting how embedded partnerships deliver adaptive, demand-driven, and sustainable policy innovation.

Multi-stakeholder platforms and inclusive governance

The adoption of formal multi-stakeholder platform guidelines by the Incomati and Maputo Watercourse Commission in Southern Africa enabled structured participation of farmers, civil society, and private sector actors in transboundary water management, strengthening coordinated and equitable decision-making. In Nepal, women-led multi-stakeholder platforms facilitated the co-design of groundwater governance models, with strong representation and leadership by marginalized groups.

Contribution to 2030 outcomes and CGIAR Impact Areas

The strength and diversity of partnerships directly contributed to progress along the Program’s theory of change, advancing capacity sharing, rapid response, and agenda setting, the three pillars linked to 2030 outcomes. National think tanks and research systems strengthened their analytical and institutional capacities, enabling data-driven policy and investment decisions that consider complex trade-offs between sustainable development goals. Governments and partners across Africa and Asia adopted and scaled evidence-based policy solutions such as climate-resilient rice and water management innovations, addressing critical challenges and shocks while promoting gender inclusion and environmental sustainability.

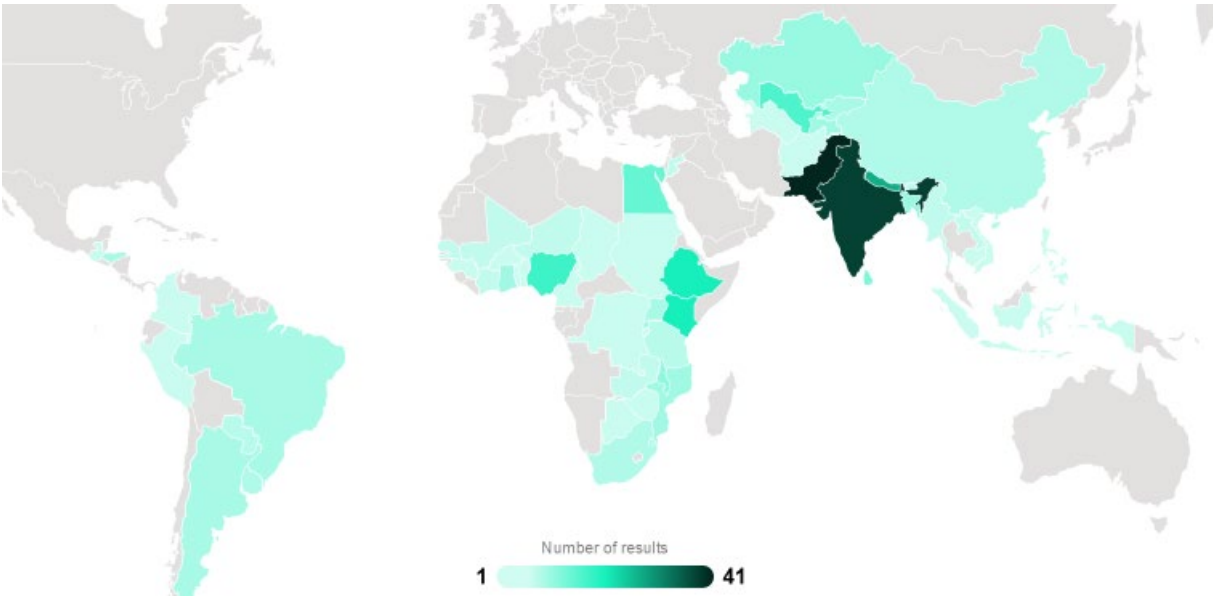
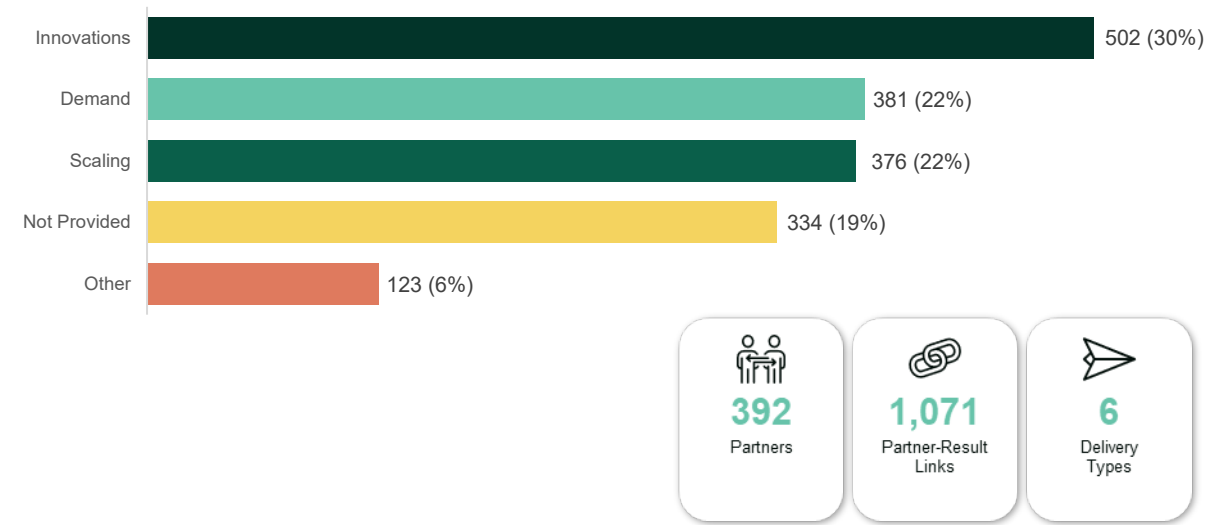


Figure 10: Geographic distribution of results reported by Policy Innovations and achieved in collaboration with partners. Based on data accurate as of 30 March 2026.



4. Adaptive management

The Policy Innovations Program approaches adaptive management as a structured, iterative process that enables teams to plan, implement, review, and adjust work in response to evolving contexts, emerging evidence, and stakeholder feedback and demand. By embedding the “Plan-Report-Reflect-Adapt” cycle into our core operations, we ensure that our scientific research remains relevant, innovative, and strategically aligned with global and country-level food system needs. This approach was operationalized in 2025 through significant refinements to the Theory of Change (ToC) to simplify, improve clarity, and facilitate performance-based tracking.

Evidence and Learning Enabler

Informed by feedback from the Evaluability Assessment, which highlighted an unclear Theory of Change characterized by weak causal pathways, vague assumptions, and a MELIA system focused more on outputs than outcomes with limited engagement beyond government actors, the Program addressed these issues in 2025 by elevating intermediate outcomes to the program level, clarifying the causal chain, and replacing assumptions with SMART KPIs that track behavioral change within its Sphere of Influence.

Specifically, KPI review recommendations were implemented to improve evaluability and alignment with the Program’s stage logic. This included refining indicators to reflect clear, observable behaviors, distinguishing between different actor roles, and separating numeric targets from indicator descriptions. As a result, the use of standard CGIAR policy change indicators has been clarified, with early-stage uptake reflected at the intermediate outcome level and later-stage enactment and impact aligned with longer-term outcomes. Similarly, the Program transitioned from custom to standard CGIAR indicators to enable more consistent reporting across the portfolio. For the 2026 Theory of Change, new indicator types were introduced to ensure all outputs and outcomes are captured within the formal framework, including work previously considered unplanned. The causal logic was strengthened by consolidating intermediate outcomes at the program level and reinforcing the link between high-level outputs and innovation use.

The Program has also proposed changes to the Area of Work (AoW) structure as highlighted below;

- AoW1 – Effective funding synergies with UAE and Gates and clear cross-center tasking worked well; NDC engagement did not deliver meaningful impact and will be phased out. Will continue its highly regarded investment prioritization and agrifood system diagnostics, but will now place a stronger focus on employment
- AoW2 – Leadership transition opened space for stronger strategic positioning; renewed focus on comparative advantage and tighter collaboration with AoW1.
- AoW3 – Key adjustments include stricter adherence to promised deliverables and a rebalancing of efforts to prioritize core research over technical tools like dashboards.
- AoW4 – Despite excellent results, delivery was slowed by budget instability and restructuring, creating reputational risks with partners. Going forward, it will focus on stabilizing/growing funding and strengthening cross area coordination.
- AoW5 – Refined its geographic footprint from 10 to five priority countries through prioritization, and in each of these countries established Policy Innovation Hubs drive policy impact.
- AoW6 – Faced major budget cuts and the departure of its Program lead; going forward, it has consolidated its thematic to focus on social policies and employment.

The Program also institutionalized multistakeholder participation, including the adoption of formal guidelines by the Incomati and Maputo Watercourse Commission to ensure the participation of farmers and civil society in transboundary water management, and convening African youth leaders and private researchers to co-create inclusive food system policy solutions.

Lastly, to address ISDC feedback regarding over-reliance on government actors, the Program is establishing Policy Innovation Hubs in Kenya, Malawi, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and India as “connective tissue” to engage more diverse stakeholders, including private sector and civil society. This approach facilitated, for example, community-led scaling of flood-transfer technology in India, increasing groundwater availability by 8%, and involved the Federation of Kenya Employers in aligning workforce policies with industry needs. These networked hubs also enable the Program to synthesize cross-country evidence, such as analyzing labor market data across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria to challenge global assumptions on agricultural exit rates and generate Global Public Goods. Furthermore, the Program more explicitly focuses on research-based agenda-setting, based on rigorous empirical evaluations, ex-ante modeling, and political economy assessments.

Therefore, these reforms aim to strengthen the Program’s evaluability and impact with considerable achievements already reported as part of 2025 reporting where the Program delivered 56 policy changes (primary submitter, excluding bilateral mapping) that passed QA, including 23 at Stage 2 (formally enacted or implemented). By aligning with 2030 goals and demonstrating science uptake at scale, the Program now provides a cost effective, verifiable pathway to inclusive and sustainable impact.

W1/W2 Funding and Financial Planning

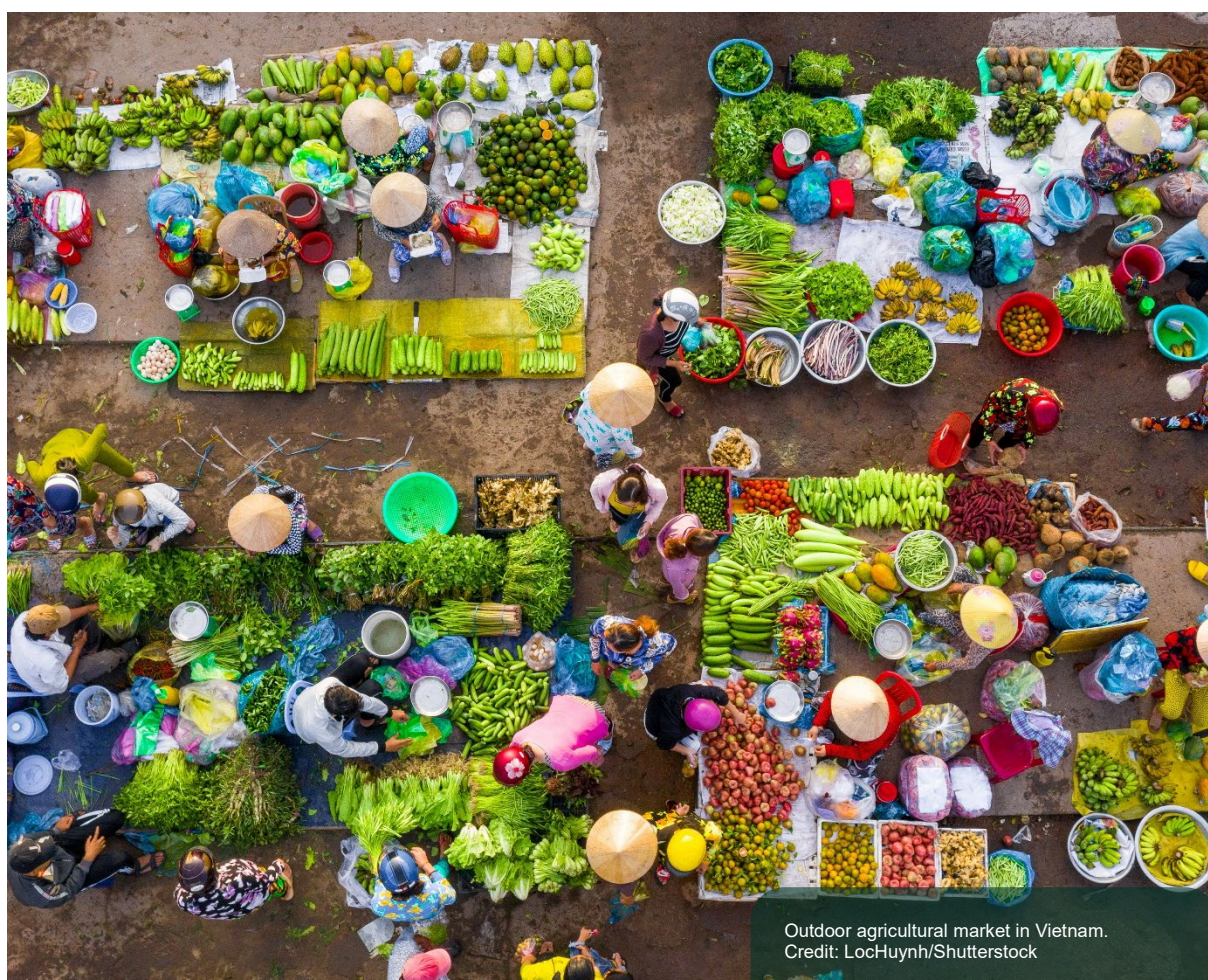
The 2025 funding environment was constrained; however, the Program used budget reductions to streamline resource allocation toward delivery of its 2030 outcomes, particularly in relation to policy change. This prioritization enabled the achievement of 56 of the 200 policy changes targeted for 2030. While this supported effective adaptation, it also required scaling back other important impact pathways, including expanded country engagement and regional and global agenda-setting.

Additional funding in 2026 and 2027 would enable the Program to scale up these high-impact activities, while also enhancing efficiency through the use of AI-driven policy modeling and advisory tools.

Risk Management

Funding uncertainty remained the highest risk, affecting planning predictability and slowing implementation in some areas, though mitigation efforts helped maintain core delivery. Limited uptake and partner dependency risks partially materialized, highlighting challenges in institutionalizing innovations and reliance on key partners, but targeted engagement and co-creation improved traction. Misalignment with policy cycles and capacity constraints continued to affect timely uptake, though adaptive approaches reduced disruptions. A new emphasis on partner diversification emerged to strengthen resilience. Overall, while risks impacted timelines and scaling in select cases, proactive management ensured continued progress toward policy outcomes.

Read Policy Innovation's [Risk Register](#), which includes the top five submitted risks for 2025 and related actions and controls to manage those risks.



5. Key result story

Building resilience in a shifting global landscape

In 2025, the Program contributed to 56 agricultural, economic, social and water policy changes at global and regional levels, and across 15 countries, building resilience and impacting millions of people.



Water champions and community members engage in discussions on leadership training in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.
Credit: IWMI.

Shaped agricultural policies and value chains

The Program's impact begins at the value chain level, where it provides the empirical backbone for critical decisions. In Kenya, the Program quantified the economic burden of livestock diseases, while in Nigeria and Liberia, it moved national intent toward implementation by operationalizing the aquaculture agenda and the National Seed Development and Certification Agency. In Uganda, spatial analytics and economic modelling empowered the government to prioritize public investments against transboundary banana diseases, protecting a vital food security staple. Across Latin America, high-level dialogues on the future of rice and cassava helped partners align R&D with shifting market dynamics.

This value-chain focus naturally fed into broader agricultural strategy and input reforms. In Kenya and Bangladesh, the Program informed subsidy frameworks for fertilizer and mechanization, shifting them toward more sustainable, evidence-based models. Policy Innovations also shaped high-level national strategies, such as Odisha's inclusive agriculture policy and Ethiopia's national agroecology strategy.

Informed economic policy for food systems transformation

Through rigorous economy-wide modelling, the Program provided Kenya's government with the evidence needed to reconsider a proposed 5% withholding tax, highlighting its potential negative impacts on rural poverty. In Malawi, analysis of the economic fallout from major donor withdrawal directly influenced the assumptions and exchange rate policies within the updated national strategy. To foster evidence-based economic policy making, the Program is also embedding long-term analytical capacity within government institutions; in Malawi, hands-on training has empowered the National Planning Commission to independently conduct policy-relevant scenario analysis. Globally, the Program's value-chain modeling guided the World Bank's AgriConnect initiative, while its support in Nepal and Uganda informed their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the COP30 climate negotiations.

“ Synergy with development partners like CGIAR is indispensable for achieving sustainable food security

Hon. Sen. Abubakar Kyari, Minister of Agriculture, Nigeria

“ Significant impacts have been witnessed with CGIAR, including policy advice that has led to bold institutional reforms

H.E. Dr. Fikru Regassa, Minister for Livestock and Fishery Development, Ethiopia

Strengthened social policies for protecting the poorest

The Program has significantly strengthened social safety nets by providing the empirical evidence needed to protect the most vulnerable. In Egypt, rigorous CGIAR impact evaluations for the Ministry of Social Solidarity have optimized the Takaful and Karama cash transfer schemes and the Forsa graduation program, with many countries learning lessons from the Egyptian experience and the World Bank now scaling these insights globally. In Ethiopia, the Program developed new tools and methods to support targeting of social protection and safety net programs. In Kenya, the Program co-generated evidence on the impact of an economic inclusion program together with the Ministry for Labor and Social Protection. In Sri Lanka, the Program produced the first nationally-representative household survey following the 2022 economic crisis, enabling the Welfare Benefits Board to refine targeting for the Aswesuma National Social Protection program.

Improved water policies and governance

The Program is moving water policies and governance from reactive crisis management to proactive systems thinking. At the transboundary level, the Niger Basin Authority adopted the first-of-its-kind Nexus guidance to manage the interconnections between water, energy, and food for 160 million people. National institutional reforms have been equally significant: in Pakistan, sustained advocacy led to the creation of a dedicated Groundwater and Climate Change Division, while in India, the Program informed Uttar Pradesh's pilot ban on summer rice to combat depletion. Strategic investments are now guided by high-resolution tools like the Water Productivity Atlas and Kenya's National Irrigation Sector Investment Plan. By fostering collaborative flood risk management in Addis Ababa and mainstreaming gender through the FemiWash Network, the Program ensures that water governance is not only technically robust but also inclusive and resilient.

