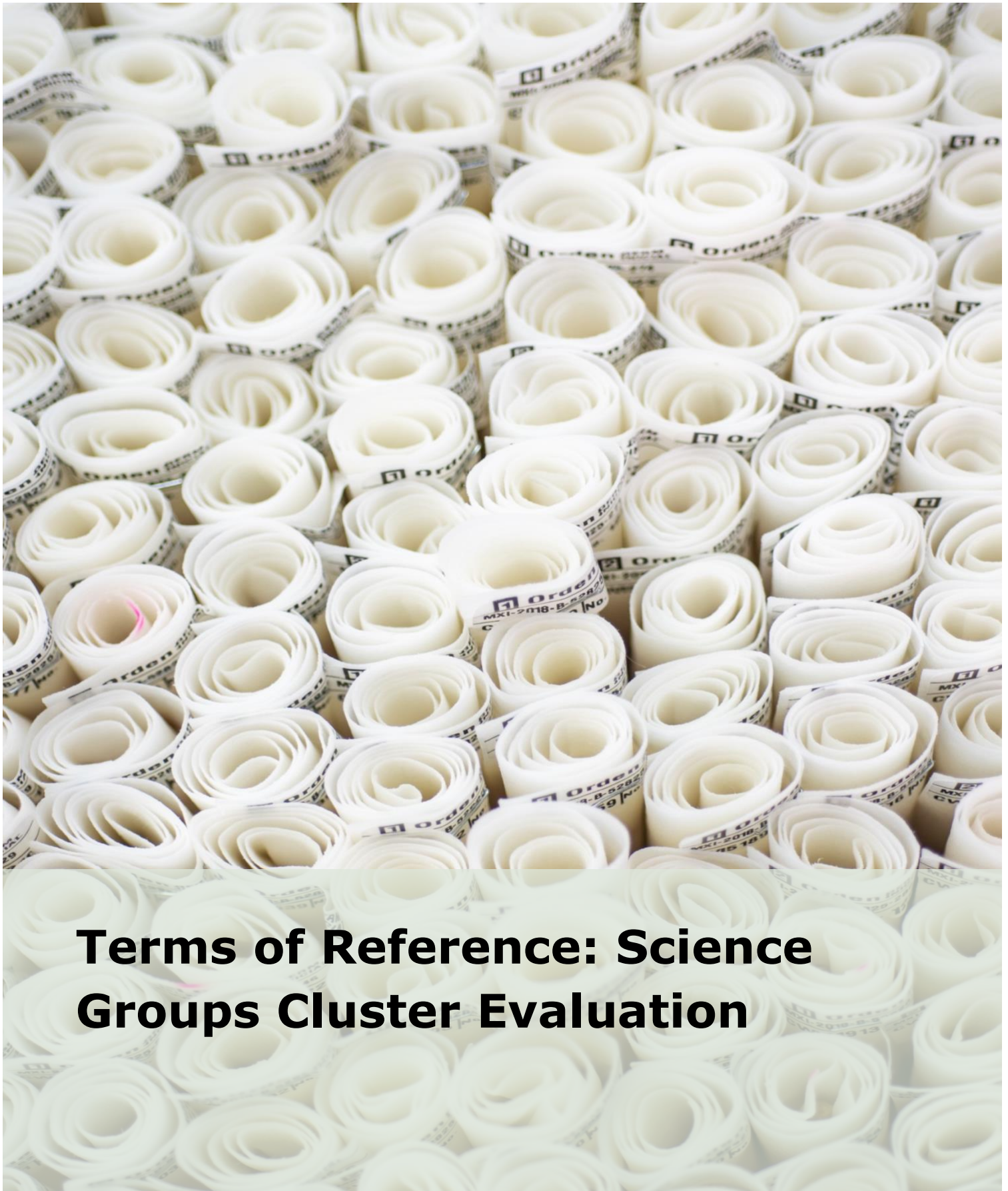




Independent  
Advisory and  
Evaluation  
Service



# Terms of Reference: Science Groups Cluster Evaluation

December 2023

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Cover image: Seed viability test at the CIMMYT genebank. Credit: CIMMYT / Alfonso Cortés.

# **Terms of Reference: CGIAR Science Group Evaluations**

December 2023

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# Table of Acronyms

AFS	Agricultural and Food Systems
AMD	Asian Mega-Deltas
CAS	CGIAR Advisory Services
ClimBeR	Climate Resilience
CRPs	CGIAR Research Programs
CWANA	Central and West Asia and North Africa
DE	Developmental Evaluation
EA	Evaluability Assessment
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESA	East and Southern Africa
ECA	East and Central Africa
FRESH	Fruit and Vegetables for Sustainable Healthy Diets
GI	Genetic Innovation
GTIs	Global Thematic Initiatives
HER+	Harnessing Equality for Resilience in the Agrifood System
IA	Internal Audits
IAES	The Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ISDC	Independent Science for Development Council
KM	Knowledge Management
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MD	Managing Director
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MER	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research
MYEP	Multi-Year Evaluation Plan
NARES	National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PPU	Portfolio Performance Unit
PRMS	Performance and Results Management System
QoS	Quality of Science
QoR4D	Quality of Research for Development
RAFS	Resilient Agrifood Systems
RII	Regional Integrated Initiatives
RTE	Real-Time Evaluation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG	Science Group
SHIFT	Sustainable Healthy Diets Through Food System Transformation
SIMEC	Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
SME	small- and medium-sized enterprise
SP	SharePoint
ST	Systems Transformation

TAFSSA	Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UFE	Utilization-Focused Evaluation
VF-Nutri	Reducing Malnutrition with Vegetables and Fruits
WCA	West and Central African Food Systems Transformation
WP	Work Packages



# Evaluation Brief

## Background

The Evaluation Function under CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) executes the multi-year independent evaluation plan consistent with its mandate per the 2018 IAES Terms of Reference (ToR). The IAES' 2022–24 multi-year workplan ([2021 Decision Reference SC/M14/DP4](#), 2023 plan re-confirmed in 2022) provides for the evaluation of ten initiatives in 2024. In agreement with deliberations in April, August and October 2023, Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) and Science Group Managing Directors, the System Board, and SC19 in October 2023 ([Concept Note](#) shared as pre-read), supported the option of cluster evaluations using Science Groups (SGs) as the entry point.

## Objectives

Aligned to the CGIAR-wide [Evaluation Framework and Policy](#), the **purpose** of the independent external evaluation of three SGs is to promote learning and lessons, and support evidence-based efforts by CGIAR to adapt the portfolio design to reach the ambition and vision of the 2030 Strategy. The key objectives of the SG-level evaluations are:

- to provide real-time feedback and recommendations to contribute to CGIARs' institutional learning by those implementing and revising the CGIAR Portfolio.
- to facilitate initial accountability for, and learning from, the first two years of implementing the CGIAR Portfolio pertaining to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Portfolio.
- to assist IAES and SIMEC to identify evaluative needs for the 2025–27 multi-year evaluation plan (MYEP).

## Scope

Given the nascent and evolving status of the CGIAR Portfolio, 2024 formative real-time evaluations supplied to align with the three-year assurance reporting cycle will be framed by targeted evaluation criteria: (1) relevance; (2) coherence; (3) effectiveness; (4) efficiency; and (5) quality of science (QoS). To address these five criteria, lines of inquiry will include: comparative advantage and value addition; compliance to relevant CGIAR frameworks and policies (e.g., [2022 Engagement Framework](#) for Partnerships and advocacy and recommendations from the [independent High-Level Advisory Panel Report on Partnerships](#)); integration of cross-cutting themes (e.g., gender and climate change); and linkages to the five impact areas and Platforms.

## Timeline and Deliverables

- March–June 2024: data collection and analysis; 'real-time' learning and reporting to CGIAR management.
- October 2024: official release for System Council endorsement, with Management Response (MR) developed by CGIAR management and approved by the CGIAR Board.

**Formal Deliverables for Endorsement by SIMEC**  
– ToR for the evaluation.  
– Three evaluation reports, one per SG (MR required for each).

# 1 Background

## 1.1 Introduction

The [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) sets the stage for doing business differently to ensure that research provides real solutions for development. The priorities set out in the strategy are delivered through 33 initiatives grouped within three [Action Areas](#): Systems Transformation (ST), Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS), and Genetic Innovation (GI). CGIAR scientists are organized into three SGs that correspond to these three Action Areas. The Portfolio aims to achieve impact across CGIAR's five impact areas: (1) climate adaptation and mitigation; (2) environmental health and biodiversity; (3) gender equality, youth, and social inclusion; (4) nutrition, health, and food security; and (5) poverty reduction, livelihoods, and jobs. Five impact area platforms are organized under the ST SG. Regional Integrated Initiatives (RII) function as a key vehicle for the co-design and co-delivery and scaling of innovations, capacity development, and policy change with local and regional partners. All Action Areas and the RII work together drawing on the capabilities of multiple SGs and five cross-cutting impact area platforms.

The Evaluation Function under CGIAR's IAES executes the independent MYEP consistent with its mandate per the IAES ToR (ToR, latest revision 2023). The IAES 2022–24 multi-year workplan (2021 Decision Reference SC/M14/DP4, 2023, plan re-confirmed in 2022) provided for the evaluation of a sample of Initiatives in 2024. On this basis, two potential evaluation options for the 2024 independent and external Initiative evaluation were considered at the first three-year stage-gate of delivery of CGIAR Initiatives. In agreement with deliberations in April and October 2023, SIMEC and SG Managing Directors, the System Board, and SC19 in October 2023 ([Concept Note](#) shared as pre-read), supported the option of cluster evaluations using SGs as the entry point, rather than an alternative option of evaluating selected Initiatives using purposive sampling across the CGIAR Portfolio of 33 Initiatives. Considering the ongoing evolving status of the CGIAR Portfolio, this was considered the best option to promote learning and lessons, and support CGIAR efforts to adapt the Portfolio design to reach the ambition and vision of the 2030 Strategy.

## 1.2 Overview of the Three Science Groups

CGIAR aims to achieve global and regional impact by organizing its work along three interlinked strategic Action Areas (GI, RAFS and ST) in which accelerated innovation is required to create sustainable and resilient food, land, and water systems and to meet sustainable development goal (SDG) targets. The three Action Areas build on the foundation of CGIAR's traditional strengths in genetics and farming systems with a more ambitious agenda around food, land, and water systems.

The CGIAR Research Initiatives within the CGIAR 2022–24 Investment Prospectus have been organized around these Action Areas. CGIAR scientists are organized into three SGs

### Box 1. CGIAR Initiatives

CGIAR Initiatives are major, prioritized areas of investment that bring capacity from within and beyond CGIAR to address well-defined, major challenges. CGIAR Initiatives are designed to deliver evaluable benefits towards all five Impact Areas. Initiatives state quantitatively what they intend to achieve and by when, and then work backwards to generate compelling theories of change, activities, and resource requirements. Initiatives come with evaluable results frameworks and clear reporting of results against investment. Management is divided into distinct stages, separated by assessment and decision points known as stage-gates, designed differently depending on type of research. Initiatives may be targeted at global, regional, or country levels, based on triangulation of global significance, regional relevance, and investor preferences, and will involve partners in all phases from design to scaling.

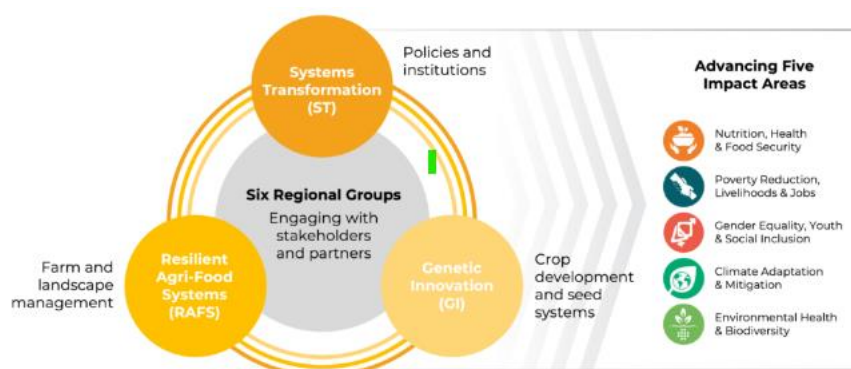
Source: [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#)

which correspond to these three Action Areas. While each Initiative is managed by a specific SG, scientists working on these Initiatives typically come from across the CGIAR system and partner organizations.

The Action Areas are interlinked, with innovations, partnerships, capacity development (sharing<sup>1</sup>), and policy engagement in each complementing and reinforcing each other. Through these channels, interdisciplinary research and innovation systems connected by a common mission are expected to generate positive shifts for environment, livelihoods, equality, nutrition, and climate.

Science Groups are led by Managing Directors (MDs), who are part of CGIAR's Executive Management and Senior Leadership Teams.<sup>2</sup> At the time of this ToR development, the GI SG has a full-time director, while the leaders of RAFS and ST SGs hold additional roles as the Directors General of CGIAR centers (ILRI and IFPRI, respectively; the RAFS MD ad interim is also One CGIAR Senior Director of Livestock-Based Systems). Since inception in Jan 2022, both RAFS and GI MDs have seen a personnel change. Each SG has a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) focal point, none of whom on a full-time basis. The maximum individual level of effort for these focal points on SG MEL matters is 20%. GI is the only SG to have had the same MEL Focal Point since inception; the current RAFS MEL focal point was appointed approximately three months before these TORs were developed.

**Figure 1. Three Science Groups Deliver Integrated Research and Innovation Solutions**



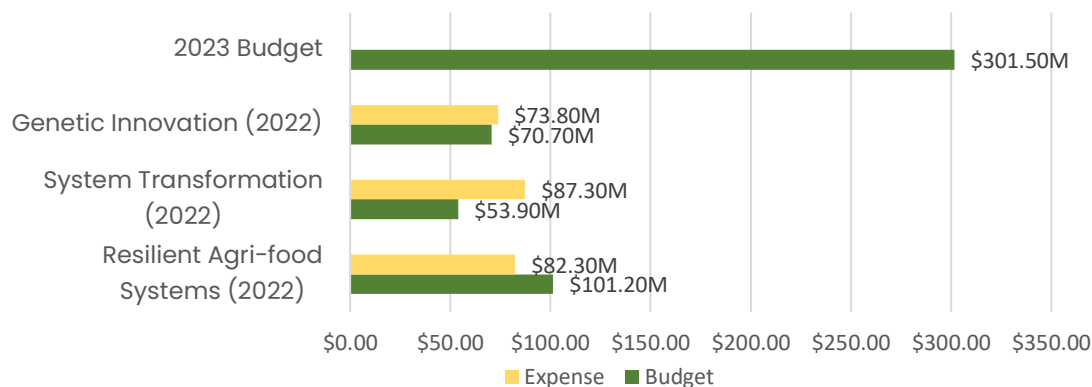
Source: [CGIAR Science Groups](#)

Figure 2 below shows the 2022 budget and expenditure for each SG, as well as their 2023 planned budget. All SGs have increased on their Year 1 funding, with ST expected to have approximately USD nine million in additional funding in 2023 compared to 2022. Almost all continue to have a shortfall against proposals; the funding for Initiatives constitutes approximately one third of the total funding for CGIAR per annum.

<sup>1</sup> [https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2023/10/SC19-15\\_Capacity\\_Sharing\\_for\\_Development.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2023/10/SC19-15_Capacity_Sharing_for_Development.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cgiar.org/senior-leadership/> Accessed December 2023

**Figure 2. Science Groups 2022 Expenditures and 2023 Budget (in USD)**



Source: [CGIAR Financing Plan Dashboard \(accessed November 2023\)](#)

### 1.2.1 Resilient Agrifood Systems

The RAFS Action Area aims to use systems thinking to deliver on research priorities that support the decision-making of different stakeholders—particularly small-scale producers who are most affected by climate change—to increase their capacity to invest in more productive and sustainable innovative production practices, business models, and to reduce the gaps in livestock, fish, crop, and farming system productivity. This is all carried out in order to achieve the 2030 targets set in the One CGIAR Research and Innovation Strategy.

Processes further along the value chain are considered, and RAFS also focuses on reducing the contribution of agriculture to global greenhouse gas emissions, land degradation and the depletion of water resources. RAFS includes research results coming from the GI Action Area, working with GI management to demonstrate the genetic potential of new varieties, and contributes to, receives, and applies ST Action Area innovations related to enabling policies and responses to market trends. The RAFS Theory of Change (ToC) is included in Annex 2 and can also be viewed [here](#).

RAFS has the following four interconnected research areas that house Global Thematic Initiatives (GTIs).

- 1) crop-based systems
- 2) livestock-based systems
- 3) aquatic food systems
- 4) biodiverse agroecosystems.

The GTIs prioritize interactions with the RIIs, housed under RAFS and designed to help synchronize national, regional, and global needs. Notably, parallel to developing these ToRs for SG evaluation, aligned to the CGIAR [IAES 2022–24 multi-year workplan \(2021; Decision Reference SC/M14/DP4, confirmed\)](#) and SIMEC-endorsed ToRs, **the evaluability assessments (EAs) of four RIIs** were being conducted (AMD, TAFSSA, CWANA and WCA). One of the objectives of EAs were to prepare for evaluations; and the intent is to integrate learning from EAs processes.

**Box 2. Resilient Agrifood Systems Initiatives**

**Plant Health:** will develop and scale fit-for-purpose innovations to combat established, emerging, and invasive pests and diseases and mycotoxin contamination, which are collectively responsible for over USD 10 billion worth of annual losses.

**Excellence in Agronomy:** will develop and deliver crop, soil, water, and nutrient management solutions that intensify smallholder farming systems while adapting to and mitigating climate change, restocking or conserving soil health, and ensuring that inputs are used efficiently.

**Sustainable Animal Productivity:** aims to transform livestock sectors in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nepal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam to make them more productive, resilient, equitable and sustainable.

**One Health:** aims to demonstrate how One Health principles and tools integrated into food systems can help reduce and contain zoonotic disease outbreaks, improve food and water safety, and reduce anti-microbial resistance, benefitting human, animal and environmental health.

**Livestock and Climate:** aims to partner with public and private actors to develop and deliver actionable innovations that measurably help producers, businesses, and governments adapt livestock agrifood systems to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to sustainability and development goals across livestock systems.

**Nature-Positive Solutions:** will combine technical learning with the indigenous knowledge gathered over time by smallholder farmers, to make science-relevant, context-appropriate and, above all, more likely to be adopted.

**Aquatic Foods:** aims to transform the aquatic food system to be healthier, fairer, more sustainable and benefit consumers and producers of aquatic foods.

**Mixed Farming Systems:** aims to understand the diversity of farming systems and their ability to interact across crop-livestock components, and develop, adapt, and scale sustainable intensification options suitable to mixed farming systems in different agroecologies.

**Resilient Cities:** seeks to understand how agrifood systems need to change to meet humanity's food, economic and environmental needs. Working with partners, Resilient Cities will address urban challenges and opportunities, specifically those facing the urban poor.

*Regional Integration Initiatives (RIIs):*

**Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia (TAFSSA):** will deliver a coordinated program of research and engagement across the food production to consumption continuum to improve equitable access to sustainable healthy diets, improve farmer livelihoods and resilience, and conserve land, air, and groundwater resources.

**Diversification in East and Southern Africa (ESA):** will support climate-resilient agricultural livelihoods and agribusiness ecosystems in 12 east- and southern-African countries to help smallholders transition from maize-mixed systems to sustainably intensified, diversified, and de-risked agrifood systems.

**Fragility to Resilience in Central and West Asia and North Africa (CWANA):** will aim at building resilient agrifood systems in the CWANA region, primed to withstand the effects of climate change and generate better livelihoods for rural communities.

**West and Central African Food Systems Transformation (WCA):** will bundle sustainable intensification and diversification innovations for use and impact at scale, while informing policies.

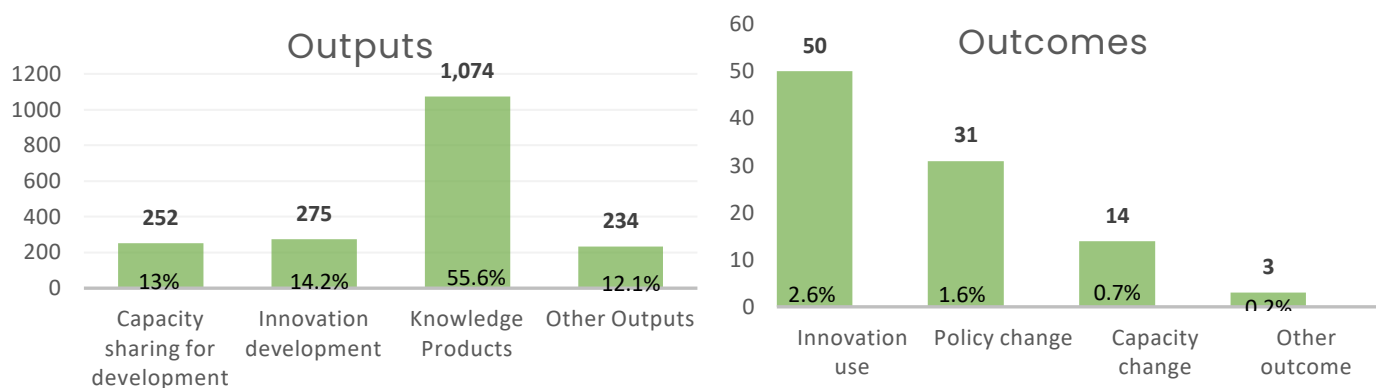
**Asian Mega-Deltas (AMD):** will assess climate risks and vulnerabilities and co-develop viable adaptation strategies, in addition to creating networks for knowledge exchange and integration to catalyze resilient delta development.

**AgriLAC Resiliente:** will address climate change, nutrition, and migration challenges across seven countries by working through novel and transformative partnerships on the ground.

Source: <https://www.cgiar.org/resilient-agrifood-systems/>

In 2022, the RAFS Initiatives delivered 1,835 results, including 1,074 knowledge products, 275 innovations and 252 capacity development outputs, and contributed to 98 outcomes (50 were innovation uses, 31 policy changes, and 14 capacity changes).

**Figure 3. Resilient Agrifood Systems Science Group 2022 Results at the Output and Outcome Level**



Source: CGIAR Results Dashboard

### 1.2.2 Systems Transformation

ST contributes to the transformation of food, land, and water systems in support of CGIAR’s five Impact Areas, with an emphasis on supporting key policy and decision-makers at global, regional, national, and sub-national levels with timely, policy-relevant impactful insights. ST research combines tradeoff and synergy analyses across Impact Areas aiming to identify sustainable pathways and enabling investments for the food and agriculture sectors along with the development of transformative approaches. This is carried out to address specific challenges in the climate, environment, nutrition, poverty, and gender domains in ways that are compatible with goals in other Impact Areas. The ToC for ST action area is included in Annex 2 and can also be viewed [here](#).

Through the ST Action Area, CGIAR commits to forge with partners ambitious new multi-sectoral policies and strategies for food, land, and water systems transformation in 50 countries across six regions, via a set of 12 ambitious Initiatives (described in Box 3) to:

- Improve access by the poor in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to productive resources, knowledge, and finance, and stimulate creation of decent jobs in food systems.
- Generate innovations and strategies to shift food systems toward healthier diets, especially for the poor in LMICs.
- Develop appropriate landscape institutions, national policies, and global actions to address the climate crisis, environmental degradation, water mismanagement, and loss of biodiversity.
- Build resilient food, land, and water systems, including effective crisis response systems to respond to shocks and conflicts, which are major drivers of food insecurity.

In 2022, the ST Initiatives delivered 949 results, including 580 knowledge products (of which 130 are journal articles), 110 innovations and 97 capacity development outputs, and contributed to 35 outcomes (20 were policy changes, six innovation uses, and six capacity changes). The ten countries which had the most results are, in order of highest to lowest by continent, Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, Egypt and Zambia in Africa; India, Vietnam and Bangladesh in Asia; and Colombia in South America.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.cgiar.org/portfolio-narrative/action-area-focus/systems-transformation/>.

### Box 3. Systems Transformation Initiatives

**Agroecology:** develops and scales agroecological innovations in eight countries. In Agroecological Living Landscapes, diverse food system actors are convened to work towards commonly agreed agroecological transition pathways with a focus on evidence building, developing agroecological business opportunities and financial mechanisms for local enterprises and building strategies that support behavior change oriented towards agroecology, as well as building suitable agroecological policies and policy integrations.

**Climate Resilience (ClimBeR):** works to transform the climate adaptation capacity of food, land, and water systems in six countries, with spillovers into other countries and regions, ultimately increasing the resilience of smallholder production systems to withstand severe climate change effects such as drought, floods, and increasing temperatures.

**Digital Innovation:** focuses on three flagships: a Digital Co-lab to generate research-based evidence and applied digital solutions to overcome the digital divide, Digital Twin case studies that incorporate real-time data and modelling into decision-support systems, and a Digital Inclusion Framework to measure the digital divide and promote gender equity in digital ecosystems. Digital Innovation has the potential to transform food, land, and water systems, but research is needed for these transformations to be inclusive and sustainable.

**Foresight:** combines state-of-the-art analytics, innovative use of data, and close engagement with national, regional, and global partners to offer better insights into alternative transformation pathways that can inform choices and sharpen decision-making today, leading to more productive, sustainable, and inclusive food, land, and water systems in the future.

**Fragility, Conflict, and Migration:** aims to enhance the resilience of food, land, and water systems in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where migration-related challenges are prevalent. By taking a systems approach and working in partnership with local stakeholders, this initiative seeks to generate evidence to inform effective policies and programs that promote social and gender equity, climate resilience, conflict mitigation, and peace building in these settings.

**Fruit and Vegetables for Sustainable Healthy Diets (FRESH):** FRESH researchers are working to address constraints that contribute to low fruit and vegetable intake in LMICs. FRESH takes an innovative, holistic, end-to-end approach that begins with consumers and works back through the food system to improve year-round availability of a diverse range of safe and sustainable nutrient-dense vegetables, and to increase the accessibility, affordability, and desirability of both fruits and vegetables.

**Gender Equality:** researchers aim to inform strategies to achieve climate resilience through gender equality and social inclusion. They use impactful gender research to address the four dimensions of structural gender inequality in agrifood systems by applying gender-transformative approaches to harmful norms, bundling socio-technical innovations for women's empowerment, leveraging social protection to increase women's access to, and control over, resources, and promoting inclusive governance and policies for increased resilience.

**Low-Emission Food Systems:** supports countries in meeting their emissions reductions objectives (NDCs) through transformative food system change, without compromising food security and while delivering environmental, social, and economic co-benefits.

**National Policies and Strategies:** aims to improve the lives of millions of people by identifying ways of building stronger policies and strategies with greater coherence and capacity sharing, integration of policy tools, and helping countries address current policy demand, crises, and future development needs. Addressing the food, land and water systems-level challenges facing LMICs requires in-country analytical capacity, strong institutions, and decisive and effective policy action.

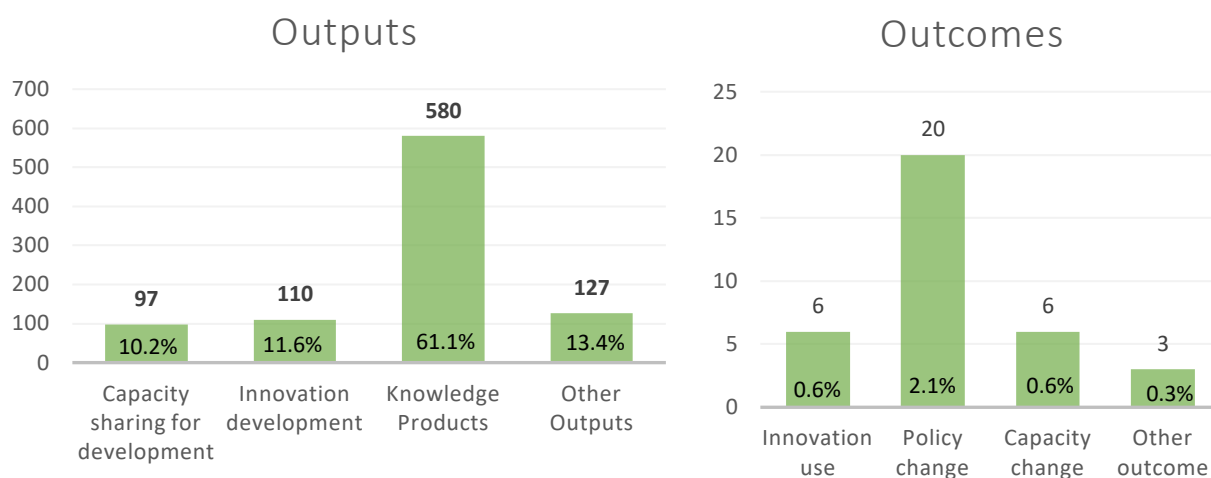
**NEXUS Gains:** promotes the integrated management of water, energy, food, and ecosystems for sustainable, resilient, and inclusive development. Investments in water, energy, and food are often disconnected from each other, resulting in sub-optimal solutions that, in some cases, undermine development objectives and sustainability, with adverse impacts being borne disproportionately by the poorest and most marginalized.

**Rethinking Food Markets:** aims to identify the obstacles to improving smallholder and medium- and small-sized enterprises' returns to participation in higher-value food value chains and to adopting sustainable practices. Researchers are engaging with stakeholders to identify, test, adapt, and scale bundles of game-changing innovations, incentive schemes, and policies to create more equitable and inclusive sharing of income and greater employment opportunities in growing food markets.

**Sustainable Healthy Diets:** aims to identify effective policy options through research, strengthening capacity, and developing robust metrics and tools. By doing so, this initiative aims to support stakeholders' decisions when developing, implementing, and monitoring national pathways to transform food systems toward sustainable healthy diets, while supporting improved livelihoods, gender equity, and social inclusion. This is the only CGIAR Initiative with the main goal of ensuring sustainable healthy diets for all through food systems transformation.

Source: [Systems Transformation](#)

**Figure 4. System Transformation Science Group 2022 Results at the Output and Outcome Level**



Source: CGIAR Results Dashboard

### 1.2.3 Genetic Innovation

The GI SG<sup>4</sup> leads innovation to enable rapid improvement of crop varieties and helps steward the world’s genetic resources of crops and their wild relatives. By working to increase the rate of genetic gain and varietal turnover in farmers’ fields, the goal of the GI SG is to improve food and nutrition security at global, national, and household levels. The Toc GI is included in [Annex 2](#) and can also be viewed [here](#).

#### Box 4. Genetic Innovation Initiatives

**Accelerated Breeding:** aims to develop better-performing, farmer-preferred crop varieties and to decrease the average age of varieties in farmers’ fields, providing real-time adaptation to climate change, evolving markets, and production systems.

**Breeding Resources:** supports improving and modernizing crop breeding operations, ensuring CGIAR-NARES breeding networks access modern breeding practices, technologies, and analytics as institutionalized services.

**Genebanks:** aim to support the global system for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

**Market Intelligence:** brings together strategic information on future crops, market segments and trait priorities aligned to the needs and preferences of farmers, agribusiness and consumers.

**Seed Equal:** Aims to support the delivery of seed of improved, climate-resilient, market-preferred and nutritious varieties of priority crops, embodying a high rate of genetic gain to farmers, ensuring equitable access for women and other disadvantaged groups.

Source: <https://www.cgiar.org/genetic-innovation/>

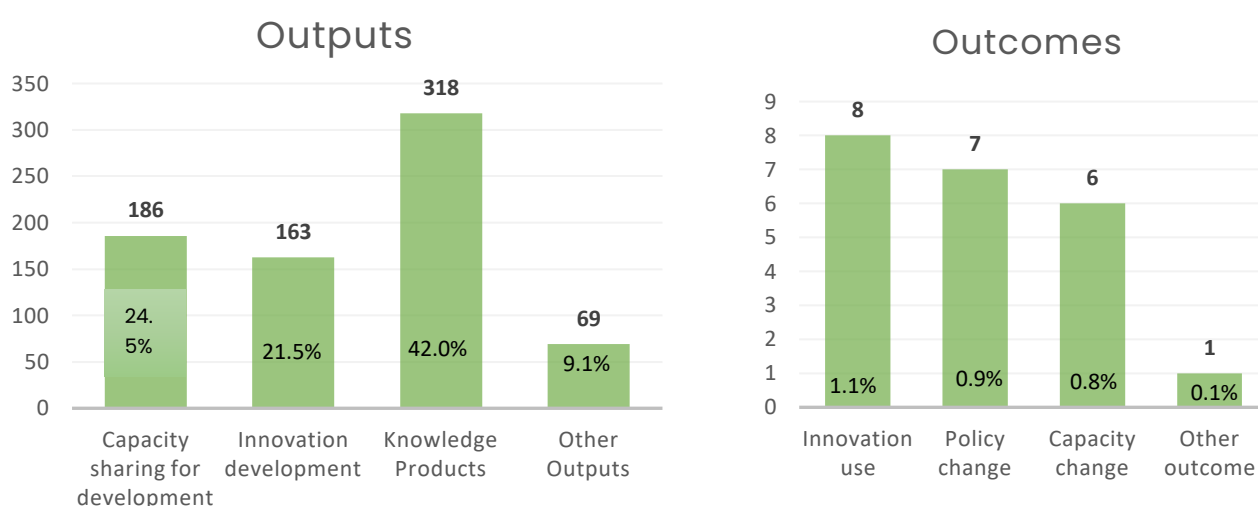
<sup>4</sup> Sonja Vermeulen, managing director of GI at CGIAR, at the 10th Session of the International Plant Treaty Governing Body, on the role of CGIAR in addressing global challenges through sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation: <https://lnkd.in/dzm8i3hD>.

The GI SG works closely with peer National Agricultural Research and Extension Systems (NARES) around the world to scale up uses of genetic advances in ways that benefit poor producers and consumers. The interconnected GI Initiatives work with partners to:

- Identify local demand for diverse genetic resources and improved crop varieties and translate this market intelligence into crop improvement strategies (Market Intelligence, Accelerated Breeding).
- Conserve future-proof crop genetic diversity as part of a global multi-partner system of genebanks (Genebanks).
- Co-deliver trait discovery, breeding, field trials, and farmer testing of improved crop varieties with an aim of (Accelerated Breeding).
- Modernize crop breeding networks through shared services, impact-driven management systems, innovation adoption, and capacity building (Breeding Resources).
- Innovate in seed systems so that they deliver genetic improvements to farmers more equitably and impactfully (Seed Equal).

In 2022, the GI Initiatives delivered 736 results, including 318 knowledge products, 163 innovations and 186 capacity development outputs, and contributed to 22 outcomes (eight were innovation uses, seven were policy changes, and six were capacity changes).

**Figure 5. Genetic Innovation Science Group 2022 Results at the Output and Outcome Level**



Source: CGIAR Results Dashboard

## 2 Evaluation Purpose, Scope, and Users

The overarching purpose of the cluster evaluations of three SG (hereafter, SG evaluations) aligns with the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework (2022): the evaluations will contribute to the steering of evidence-based decisions, support CGIAR's institutional learning, and provide accountability on the effectiveness and efficiency of the 2022-24 Portfolio. Moreover, the early evidence-based findings and conclusions of the three independent evaluations will contribute to informing the design of the next portfolio, a process underway from November 2023 to May 2024, to enhance its coherence and efficiency. The suite of new Big Initiative proposals will benefit from both early-stage evidence, during their drafting (February to June 2024), with MR formulation during the proposal revision stage (September to October 2024) coinciding with the response to Intendent Science for Development Council (ISDC) *ex ante* proposal reviews. The CGIAR

System Council will receive the cluster evaluations for endorsement, along with the System Board-approved management responses, at the 22<sup>nd</sup> System Council meeting in November 2024. This will coincide with the System Council funding decisions on the 2025–27 suite of WI projects. The evaluative exercise will also assist IAES and SIMEC to identify parameters and evaluative needs to include in the 2025–27 MYEP. (see Table 6)

The SG evaluations will focus on learning from the implementation of the CGIAR Portfolio from January 2022 to February 2024. Given the magnitude of the CGIAR Portfolio, the evaluation will cluster initiatives within SG according to a group-level ToC and a clear set of criteria (see section 2.2 Methodology below). The five Impact Area Platforms are outside the scope of this evaluation, although the mechanisms of interaction between them and the SGs will be considered, as well as learnings gained from past platform evaluations.

**Targeted users of the evaluations results are shown in Table 1 below.** To the extent feasible, given the limited time available to conduct the evaluations, key stakeholders will be widely consulted and engaged throughout the evaluation process through appropriate channels and tools.

**Table 1. Targeted User Groups by Evaluation Objectives**

Targeted Users	Rationale for Prioritizing User Groups	Primary Objectives
<b>A. CGIAR System Council (commissioner, funder)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The System Council commissions all independent and external evaluations that IAES executes.</li> </ul>	Accountability, Steering
<b>B. Management of SGs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support evidence-based decision-making.</li> <li>Evaluative evidence to support the evolution of the current portfolio and the design of the next one.</li> </ul>	Accountability, Learning, Steering
<b>C. CGIAR-wide stakeholders: senior leadership team and centers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">See One CGIAR</a></li> <li><a href="#">CGIAR’s Integration Framework Agreement (2022)</a>, signed by all centers in 2023<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	Learning, Steering
<b>D. External partners such as policymakers, national governments and NARES researchers, the scientific community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2022 <a href="#">Engagement Framework for Partnerships &amp; Advocacy – Toward Greater Impact</a> and recommendations from <a href="#">the independent High-Level Advisory Panel Report on Partnerships</a><sup>6</sup></li> <li>Update: <a href="#">2023 Capacity Sharing for Development (CapSha)</a></li> </ul>	Accountability, Learning

## 2.1 Key Evaluation Questions

Consistent with the evaluation objectives to support learning, steering and accountability among the key user and stakeholder groups, the SG evaluations will collect, analyze, and present the information to meet their diverse needs framed by the five evaluation criteria. Table 2 presents key evaluation questions; and Annex 1 includes tentative sub-questions, which have been developed with the contribution of SG key staff

<sup>5</sup> In the news: <https://www.cgiar.org/news-events/news/paving-the-way-for-a-united-cgiar-boards-approve-cgiars-integration-framework-agreement/>.

<sup>6</sup> The independent High-Level Advisory Panel presented results in 2022, however report was released in 2023: [Improving One CGIAR’s Strategic Engagement with Partners \(2021–22\)](#).

and System Board. These questions will be refined and expanded in three **inception reports**, one for each SG, based on preliminary interviews and engagements, including with SG MDs, SIMEC, SG MEL professionals, and Initiatives leaders.

**Table 2: Evaluation Criteria and Key Questions**

CGIAR Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions
<p><b>(1) Relevance</b>                      Relevance is concerned with the extent to which the intervention and its design respond to the needs, policies, and priorities of users/clients and global, regional, and country partners and institutions, and will continue to do so if circumstances change.</p>	<p>1) To what extent does the SG research Portfolio respond to the needs and priorities of its internal and external stakeholders?                      2) How well have the SG strategies and objectives been articulated in terms of a ToC and impact pathways and drawing on comparative advantage across the system?</p>
<p><b>(2) Effectiveness</b>                      Effectiveness is concerned with the extent to which the intervention achieved, and/or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across subgroups of users/clients.</p>	<p>3) 3) To what extent has the selected initiatives/WP achieved and/or is expected to achieve, its objectives, including any differential results across subgroups of users/clients?                      4) How well were the cross-cutting themes of gender and climate change integrated into design and implementation (tagging)?                      5) To what extent does the SG draw on the capacities of the Impact Area platforms and vice versa?                      6) 6) To what extent did the SG design enhance partnerships reach (internal and external) of CGIAR, and how aligned it was to the <a href="#">Partnership Framework</a>?</p>
<p><b>(3) Efficiency</b>                      Efficiency and cost-effectiveness are concerned with the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economical and timely way—i.e., the overall use of resources.</p>	<p>7) To what extent is the governance and management of the SG deemed suitable for achieving the objectives?                      8) How has the CGIAR's Integration Framework Agreement design and roll-out aided SGs to effectively stimulate the learning, monitoring, and adaptability of the SG Portfolio, through Initiatives?                      9) 9) What are the internal and external factors influencing efficiency within a system of fully independent centers, considering the constraints of limited resources?</p>
<p><b>(4) Coherence</b>                      The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country or a sector or within CGIAR; its overall fit. Internal coherence addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out within CGIAR, and the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which CGIAR adheres. External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context—that is, its complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with others, its value-added, and its avoidance of duplication of effort.</p>	<p>10) How coherent and compatible been the design and implementation of the SG Portfolio with Partnership Framework towards CGIAR's 2030 Research Strategy?                      11) How have the SGs operationalized CGIAR's collective vision in the 2030 Research Strategy and <a href="#">CGIAR's Integration Framework Agreement</a>?                      12) 12) In what ways have SGs addressed key considerations and opportunities for enhancing coherence across, between, and within each SG?</p>

CGIAR Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions
<p><b>(5) Quality of Science<sup>7</sup></b>                      The QoS evaluative criterion pertains to scientific credibility and legitimacy. The criterion definition derives from the QoR4D frame of reference, which records CGIAR’s System-wide agreement on the nature and assessment of research quality. The QoR4D describes research quality according to four key elements: relevance, scientific credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness.<sup>11</sup> Relevance and Effectiveness are treated as separated evaluation criteria above.</p>	<p>13) To what extent do the management processes of the SGs ensure the QoS, including credibility, legitimacy, relevance to next stage users, and potential effectiveness, of the research and operations?</p> <p>14) In what ways are the research outputs by the SGs of high quality and influential?</p>

## 2.2 Approach and Methodology

The [CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy](#) (2022) will guide the design and implementation of the evaluation. The Cluster evaluations<sup>8</sup> will use SGs as the entry point and will therefore consist of three independent evaluations. Cluster evaluations allow for identifying synergies (systemic coherence) and strategic issues to better inform CGIAR’s understanding of its effectiveness in delivering on its mandate and on areas of potential improvement, leveraging the influence of each SG. This is consistent with the three evaluations’ learning purposes, explained above under section 2.

The SG evaluations will merge developmental evaluation (DE) and utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) approaches. Such a combination is most suitable given that the current CGIAR Portfolio has only been implemented for two years. DE is intended to provide real-time feedback and generate rapid learning, while UFE is based on the principle that evaluations should be planned and conducted in ways that enhance the likely utilization of the findings and of the process itself, to inform decisions and improve performance. The evaluation will also include elements of real-time evaluation (RTE), which stresses monitoring and real-time adjustment. RTE is adopted to ensure that authors of CGIAR initiative proposals, as well as members of the ISDC, can benefit from early-stage evaluative evidence in time to inform the development and review of 2025–27 research proposals.

The key evaluation questions across three SGs in Table 2 will guide the evaluation. Annex 1 includes sub-questions, elaborated with SG leadership and MEL professionals. Further sub-question methodological details will be conducted by the individual SG evaluation teams during the inception phase, based on scoping discussions with SGs and staff from Initiatives. The inception phase will also include an in-depth review of evaluative information, such as the [2021 Synthesis](#), CGIAR Platform evaluations,<sup>9</sup> and the 2021 ISDC reviews of CGIAR Portfolio.<sup>10</sup> The evaluation teams will prepare an inception report for each SG, that will articulate how the evaluation will be undertaken. The individual evaluation design matrix will detail how evaluation sub-questions will be answered with the methods and tools selected for data collection. The inception reports will outline the data collection protocols and include a stakeholder mapping.

<sup>7</sup> <https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/publications/conducting-and-using-evaluability-assessments-cgiar-cgiar-evaluation>

<sup>8</sup> A cluster evaluation is an envelope of evaluations of projects combined into a single evaluation based on results or strategic or thematic area of scope (as defined in ILO Guidance Note 3.3 Strategic clustered evaluations to gather evaluative information more effectively, June 2020).

<sup>9</sup> [GENDER Platform \(2023\)](#), [Excellence in Breeding Platform \(2022\)](#), [Big Data in Agriculture Platform \(2021\)](#), and the [Genebanks Platform Evaluation \(2023–24\)](#).

<sup>10</sup> ISDC Reviews to be obtained from the PRMS through the Project Coordination Unit (PCU).

In answering the evaluation questions and sub-questions, the evaluation teams employ a mixed methods approach, using evidence from multiple sources of primary and secondary data, and draw upon both qualitative and quantitative data for analysis and triangulation. The selection of methods will be guided by the following key considerations:

- The use of evaluation guidelines developed in support of the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework and Policy, including the Guidelines on Management Engagement and Response,<sup>11</sup> on Applying Quality of Research for Development Frame of Reference to Process and Performance Evaluations, and on Gender and Responsive Evaluations.<sup>12</sup>
- Grounding in and incorporating advice and recommendations from the 2021 ISDC reviews of 33 Initiative proposals and supporting documentation, and against learning and recommendations from the [2021 Synthesis](#), including the three specific Action Area briefs produced as part of the Synthesis.<sup>13</sup>
- Given the width and breadth of the activities covered by the three SGs, case studies and deep dives on initiatives, Work Packages (WP), or other programmatic/technical topics will be identified. The criteria below for selecting Initiatives/WP are meant to ensure diversity, relevance to the evaluation’s objectives, and characteristics of the Initiatives/WPs. Preliminary suggested criteria are listed in Table 3 below. These will be finalized during the inception phase in consultation with SG management teams.
- Approaches and methods will consider the emergent draft of the CGIAR Portfolio25, and CGIAR’s intentions related to Big Initiatives, using draft materials made available in December 2023 and Q1 2024.

**Table 3: Suggested Selection Criteria for Case Studies and Deep Dives**

Criteria	Description
C1. Strategic importance to Portfolio re-organization	<p>Initiatives that are strategically important to be assessed within the SG may be prioritized for sampling. This ensures that the evaluation captures key contributors to the overall outcomes and/or informs an upcoming decision about the future of a selected Initiative/WP.</p> <p>Strategic considerations include the following sub-criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maturity level (golden eggs,<sup>14</sup> etc.) based on the number of outputs and outcomes reported Y1–Y2<sup>15</sup></li> <li>• Weighted mapping to Impact Areas</li> <li>• Number of SDGs contributed to</li> <li>• Number of NARES as delivery partners.</li> </ul>
C2. Geographic considerations and contextual factors	<p>Each SG includes Initiatives/WP in different geographic locations. Sampling will consider regional variations of countries involved in implementation to understand the impact of context on outcomes. Along the same lines, center affiliation balance of Initiatives leads, and co-leads will be also considered.</p>
C3. Availability of data and stakeholder fatigue	<p>A MEL focal point (as of the inception/Initiative and ongoing) is a key conduit to assure availability of data and evidence. Therefore, a staffed MEL position (ongoing) will be considered to select an Initiative. The availability of data for each Initiative is important. Initiatives with comprehensive, timely and reliable data are more likely to contribute meaningfully to, and benefit from, the evaluation (see also expected limitations).</p>

<sup>11</sup> Expected to be finalized and published in December 2024.

<sup>12</sup> The beta version of the guidelines is expected to be rolled-out in Q1 2024.

<sup>13</sup> <https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/publications/2021-Synthesis>.

<sup>14</sup> Golden eggs are collective assets for One CGIAR. 19 Golden eggs can be defined as frameworks, approaches and tools together with their community of developers and users that show the added value of a CGIAR Research Program.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Maturity level’ will be determined in consultation with SG leaders, to enhance buy-in and contextualize learning and accountability.

Criteria	Description
	To avoid stakeholder fatigue and duplication of efforts, Initiatives subject of a recent EA <sup>16</sup> or of an ongoing impact assessment, will be excluded.
C4. Resource availability for the evaluations	The available resources, including time and budget, will likely influence the sampling. Time is an important constraint given the urgency of providing timely evaluative evidence to inform the Portfolio redesign.
C5. Variability in outcomes	Initiatives/WP with variability in outcomes, both positive and negative, will be considered for sampling. This helps to understand the factors contributing to success or challenges within the SG. For the three evaluations, maturity level (e.g., golden eggs) based on the number of outputs and outcomes reported, Y1-Y2 will be considered.

It is important to note that criteria is not exhaustive, and the specific criteria to be selected for sampling Initiatives and/or WPs within a SG will be specific to the characteristics and objectives of each SG evaluation. The sampling process will be transparent, systematic, and well-documented in SG inception reports to underpin the credibility of evaluation findings.

**Data collection** will include the following methods, tailored to the evaluation questions:

- **Documents and data reviews:**
  - Desk review of programmatic and reporting documents
  - Analysis of resources available to the SG
  - Relevant evaluations, impact assessments and studies, including ISDC 2021 reviews of proposals
  - EAs carried out by IAES
  - Review and validation of outputs produced by the SGs.
- **Primary data collection:** key informant interviews, focus group discussions, in site/events observation, online survey across three SGs and its core stakeholders, field data collection in sites strategically sampled to provide targeted evidence for each SG.
  - Countries for field work will be selected strategically and systematically, according to the predetermined criteria: regional representation, WP diversity and center-related characteristics *vis-à-vis* SGs, Initiatives and WPs.
- **Case studies and deep dives:** as part of the clustered evaluation process, these studies will help explore unique contexts, challenges, and outcomes to provide a nuanced understanding of individual Initiatives and their contributions to the overall SG. Suggested criteria for the selection are listed in Table 3 above, but these will be refined in the inceptions reports for each SG. Two site visits will be planned for each SG evaluation.
- **SG common and/or tailored analysis:** a series of analyses will be conducted for each SG, including but not limited to:
  - Analysis of the validity of SG and selected Initiative ToC.
  - Process analysis of the implementation of selected Initiative/WP, including fidelity to the proposal, delivery mechanisms, and challenges encountered. This is a useful for understanding how well Initiatives/WP are implemented and for identifying factors influencing success or failure.
  - Portfolio analysis and other quantitative analysis as appropriate, to address the efficiency evaluation criteria, based on data availability.

<sup>16</sup> EAs were carried out on four RIIs under the RAFS SG (see [ToRs](#)).

- Consideration of bilateral and W3 projects mapped affiliated to the SG, as made available through SG and system-wide records.

The evaluation will also consider the extent to which the recommendations of the 2021 Synthesis related to three Action Areas have been implemented (see Annex 2).

### **Expected Limitations and Assumptions**

The development of the 2025–27 Portfolio will already be advanced when the outcome of the evaluation will become available.

- To mitigate this limitation, and to ensure maximum use of evaluation results, IAES will integrate mechanisms to facilitate access to, evaluative knowledge in real-time in key strategic moments for proposal developers and make available early observation from external evaluation teams prior to the finalization of Portfolio25.
- During the data collection and formulation of preliminary findings and conclusions, various informal learning sessions will be conducted in an opportunistic engagement style, intended to openly share any valuable insights that can contribute to the development of proposals and redesign of the CGIAR Portfolio.

The following **assumptions** would need to hold to assure efficiency of design and conduct of the three evaluations, and the uptake of results and implementation of recommendations:

- The availability of two years of quality-assured monitoring data (2022 and 2023) by 1 March 2024, and other standard monitoring and reporting information, e.g., two rounds of annual reports (to mitigate delays to final formatted 2023 reports that will be available only in May, the initiative draft reports as of 1 March will be the data source used); and documentation (details) from Pause/Reflect episodes per Initiative; documentation of any SG-wide research, strategy or ToC reorganization (e.g. SG and Initiative annual stage gating).
- Aligned to the Evaluation Guidelines on MER, availability of the individual SG leadership for launch and kick-off, and other key engagement points. A master calendar will be made available in January to mitigate competing priorities.
- Access to, and use of, center-level data pertaining to initiatives (NB Q1 internal audits of Initiatives envisaged in 2024 IA plans may be consulted as a potential data source if results are available during the data collection and analysis stage of the SG evaluations).
- The availability throughout the process of a qualified MEL professional per SG, empowered to engage the key points throughout the evaluation design and implementation (see Annex 5, from MER Evaluation Guidelines).
- Facilitated access to CGIAR-wide email lists by CGIAR management or centers for online survey and support in disseminating the survey through multiple channels (e.g., broadcast email, internal staff newsletter).
- Availability of the EAs of four RIs and facilitated EA of East and Central Africa (ECA) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), under the RAFS Science Group, expected by February 2024.
- The MR development and endorsement processes scheduled September–October 2024 would be coordinated by the assigned CGIAR business unit, according to the procedure foreseen by the Guidelines on MER and CGIAR Process Note.

Three Inception reports (for each SG) will elaborate these and other considerations and limitations, with expanded mitigation strategies.

## 3 Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 CGIAR Management and SIMEC

The CGIAR System Council, as evaluation commissioner, takes accountability for the evaluation aligned with its ToR. IAES is responsible for the System Council-commissioned process and performance evaluations implemented through its Evaluation Function. The CGIAR System Board is responsible for the management Response. Management shares leadership and mutual responsibility for the conduct and use of evaluations consistent with the MER Evaluation Guidelines and in line with the [CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy \(2022\)](#). Aligned to the principles and standards in the Evaluation Framework, **utility** and **use** guide the engagement with the evaluand, CGIAR management and other key intended users throughout the evaluation design and implementation. To stimulate the uptake of the evaluation results and learning, early management engagement began in the scoping and design phase, to facilitate the co-development of the priority evaluation questions.

In line with the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy, MRs are mandatory for all System Council-commissioned evaluations in CGIAR. In line with the guidelines under development, for MR, IAES will liaise with the SG management as well as the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to coordinate the MR preparation within a stipulated timeframe.<sup>17</sup> The draft evaluation report will be circulated to SIMEC for endorsement. Once formally presented to the CGIAR System Council, the MR and evaluation report are considered final and will be published on the IAES website. PPU oversees the procedure for tracking, monitoring and outyear reporting against the implementation of evaluation recommendations when the evaluand is CGIAR.

Towards mutual responsibility, throughout the evaluation, the SG Managing Directors, MEL, and other core focal points would respond to the evaluation team's requests: documentation and data, access to partners and staff for engagement with the evaluators, and information on partners and stakeholders. These actors will also be responsible for giving factual feedback on the draft evaluation report and case studies, as required.

### 3.2 Evaluation Teams

Under the oversight, management, and guidance of IAES, the three evaluations of SG will be conducted by three independent evaluation teams, each led by an evaluation team lead. The work of the three teams will be coordinated by a learning coordinator. All will be independent experts drawn from IAES's standing competitively recruited subject matter and evaluator expert roster, supported by analysts, with all team members complying with the IAES conflict of interest policy.

- **Each of the three SG evaluation teams** will be led by an evaluation lead, and they will coordinate the work of designated evaluation team members, including two subject-matter experts per each SG. The independent team leads will strategically leverage experts' expertise to address the evaluation objectives and respond to the evaluation questions.
- **Evaluation and learning coordinator** will act as learning facilitator throughout the evaluation process. Under guidance from the IAES/Evaluation Function, based on feedback from SIMEC, they would finalize the overall evaluation approach, scope and methodology to facilitate and ensure harmonization and coherence across the three evaluation designs (to be elaborated in Inception reports), and coordinate the internal peer reviews among SG evaluation teams. They will develop a synthesis report based on

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<sup>17</sup> See also CGIAR Evaluation Guidelines and Management and Engagement Response are expected to be released in December 2023.

the three SG evaluation reports. The evaluation coordinator will engage subject-matter experts on cross-cutting themes for their inputs.

- Other additional expertise:
  - up to four designated Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) will be recruited for prioritized topics.
  - minimum of two evaluation analysts will provide designated support to the evaluation teams and learning coordinator.

### 3.3 Independent Advisory Evaluation Service

IAES is responsible for planning, conducting the initial design, managing evaluator selection and contracts, and initiating and managing the workflows of the evaluation. The latter is done in a way that ensures the quality and independence of the evaluation process and evaluation reports, as well as the timely delivery of high-quality key outputs. IAES is also responsible for ensuring the compliance of processes and products with the [CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy](#) (2022). Further information on IAES's mandate is available in its ToR. The IAES staff, particularly the Evaluation Function lead and senior evaluation manager, will assume an active role throughout this process. This includes providing technical oversight for the evaluation design, to facilitate strategic compliance of evaluation processes in line with multi-level quality assurance; mitigating for interviewee fatigue during data collection; and facilitating use of secondary evidence, including from previous evaluations. Aided by the knowledge management officer of the Evaluation Function of IAES, its lead and senior manager would be involved in disseminating evidence-based insights to CGIAR personnel, both during and after the evaluation process. This dissemination necessitates a substantial engagement between I'ES's Evaluation Function and various CGIAR entities, including the SG, Initiatives, and centers. This is in line with the IAES objective to support improved programming and operations by communicating evaluative evidence.

IAES will follow its layered quality assurance system, which involves: (1) an internal peer review within the evaluation teams; (2) a second-level review by IAES; and (3) an external peer review mechanism(s) and the [evaluation reference group of IAES](#).

### 3.4 Evaluation Timeline

The indicative timeline by evaluation phases is illustrated in Figure 6. In summary, the following timeline with related milestones is envisaged for the evaluation:

- September 2023–January 2024: design, including stakeholder consultation, preparation of the ToR and selection of evaluation team.
- January–February 2024: inception phase and finalization of inception reports.
- March–June 2024: data collection and analysis; 'real-time' reporting to management.
- September 2024: supply of discussion version initiates MR activities.
- October 2024: official release for Council endorsement, with MR.

## 4 Evaluation Deliverables, Knowledge Management and Dissemination

Formal deliverables for the evaluation, subject to endorsement by SIMEC, are the ToR and the three evaluation reports (see Box 5). In summary, the following deliverables will be produced during the evaluation process:

**Box 5. Formal Deliverables for Endorsement by SIMEC**

- ToR for the evaluation.
- Three evaluation reports, one per SG (MR required for each).

**Three inception reports:** separate inception reports will be produced, one for each SG. The reports will build on and expand these evaluation ToRs and will outline the evaluation teams' proposed approach as well as the detailed methods to be used during the main inquiry phase of the evaluations.

**Validated results of the three evaluations:**

**(1) Three evaluation reports:**

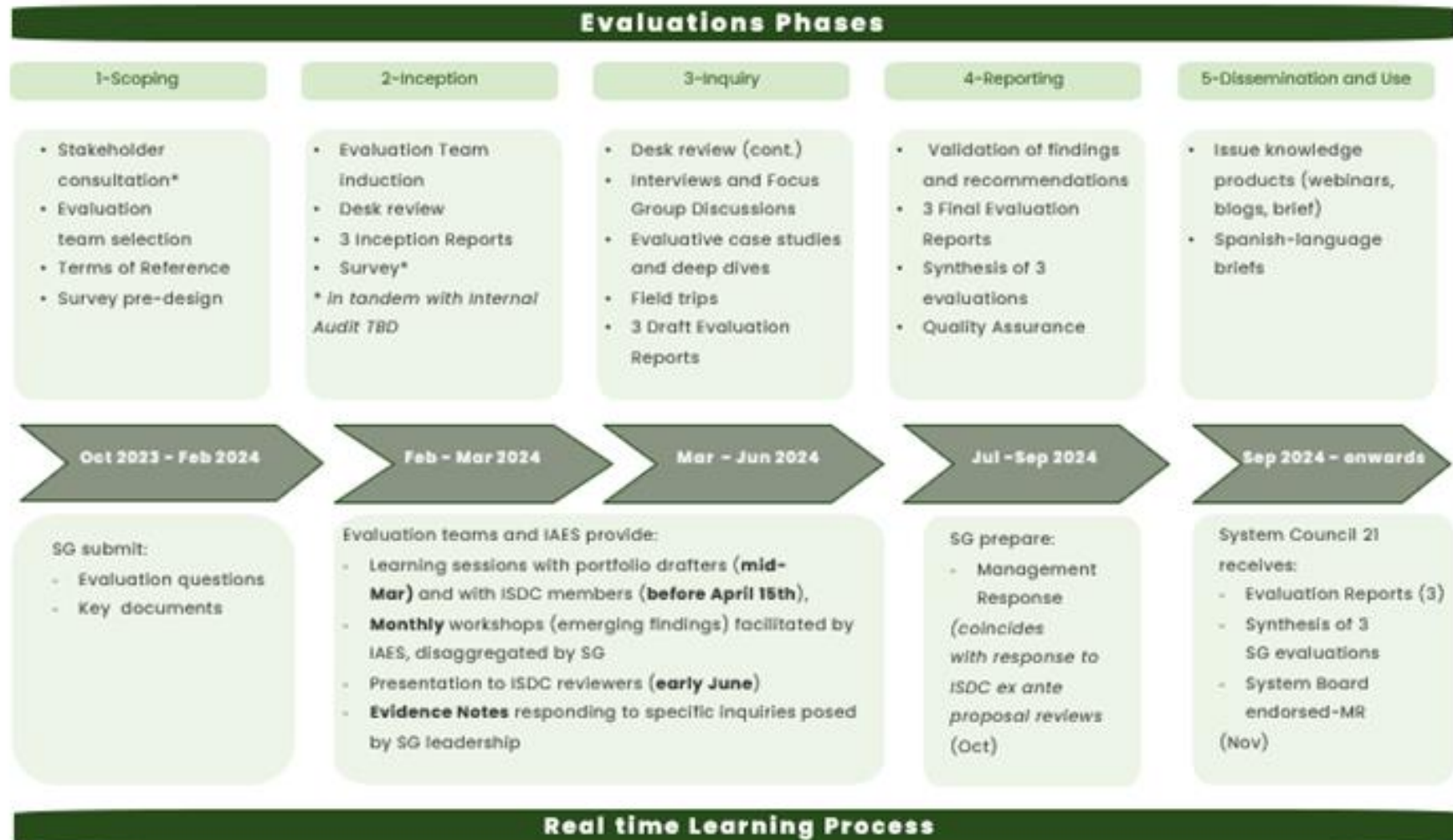
**Three draft evaluation reports:** will be prepared in line with CGIAR's guidelines on evaluation final reports and aligned with IAES's Style Guide. Findings and conclusions will be based on the evidence collected as part of the evaluation framework defined in the inception reports, and recommendations will logically follow the conclusions. The recommendations will be action-oriented, focused and clearly formulated. They will be prioritized and addressed to the different stakeholders responsible for their implementation. The reports will be concise, and include executive summaries with the main findings and recommendations:

**Three discussion-versions of the SG evaluation reports:** the reports will be shared with the SG teams for their review and comments, including to check for any factual errors and to highlight the significance of any such errors in the conclusions. The evaluation team will integrate the collective feedback received into a discussion version of the report which will be professionally copy-edited. Subsequently, the discussion version will be presented to SIMEC for acceptance.

**Three final evaluation reports:** after SIMEC endorsement, with their feedback integrated, these reports will be presented to System Council together with the respective Management Responses. The final reports will be published on IAES's website.

**Briefs:** For the three reports, briefs will be produced, including conclusions, and recommendations.

Figure 6. Indicative Science Group Cluster Evaluation Timeline, 2023





A **Synthesis Report of the three SG evaluations**: will aggregate key findings, conclusions, and CGIAR-wide recommendations across the three evaluations for the purpose of supporting organization-wide learning and steering. The recommendations would be evidence-based, relevant, focused, clearly formulated, and actionable.

**(2) KM products, including a series of iterative presentations on preliminary findings and conclusions (Q2) will be produced to facilitate access to** any valuable insights that can contribute to the development of proposals and the evolution of the CGIAR Portfolio. A cross-cutting brief will be produced, including key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

**(3) Presentations:** The evaluation teams will present and share the evaluation-related results to targeted audiences via various communication channels. They will produce a PowerPoint presentation based on the reports and geared towards use of evidence by key stakeholders, detailing the results for each evaluation. A short video may be created from recorded events, including footage of evaluators and evaluand and user groups. Blogs and social media will be used as a vehicle to further disseminate findings and recommendations, and both evaluators and evaluands may be invited to participate.

**(4) Workshops:** Virtual 90-minute workshops to ensure the iteration of emerging findings and recommendations into Portfolio25 and Big Initiative proposals will be planned with invited, targeted author groups on 1 April, 15 April, 30 April and 15 May 2024 (the latter three to be disaggregated by SG, the former directed to the Portfolio drafting team). Rather than using a presenting/telling format, these facilitated, discussion-oriented workshops will supply access to, and exploration of, emerging findings and recommendations in real-time to those actively drafting the portfolio and proposal documents. The timing and audience are engineered to support the real-time learning and use of the evaluative evidence.

**(5) Input into the discussion version of the MYEP (2025–27):** The evaluation learning will contribute to articulating the discussion version of the MYEP of IAES for the forthcoming business cycle (2025–27) in 2024. There will be a sustained focus on aligning with, and contributing to, CGIAR business and decision cycles. In accordance with the IAES ToR (3.4.a), the MYEP will be widely consulted across CGIAR and receive strategic guidance both from the System Council and the System Board.

Except presentations, all deliverables that will be published on the IAES website are subject to proofreading revision by an editor engaged by IAES. The IAES Style Guide, Branding Guidelines and Templates must be employed for all evaluation team products.

## Annex 1: Evaluation Questions and Sub-Questions by Evaluation Criteria

CGIAR Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions (to be tailored for Each SG Evaluation)
<p><b>Relevance</b></p> <p>The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design respond to the needs, policies, and priorities of users/clients and global, regional, and country partners/institutions, as well as continue to do so if circumstances change. Consistent with the Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) framework, attention is given to the importance, significance, and usefulness of the work implemented in the problem context, associated with CGIAR's capacity to address the problems.</p>	<p><b>1) To what extent does the SG research Portfolio respond to the needs and priorities of its internal and external stakeholders<sup>18</sup>?</b></p>	<p>a) How appropriate were mechanisms of prioritization of research in SG level portfolios towards stakeholders' current and future needs and priorities?</p> <p>b) To which extent individual (by Initiative) or collective actions (by SG), capitalized on contextual opportunities to increase the relevance of the SG Portfolio?</p> <p>c) How well did activities under SG ensure flexibility and adaptability of the research Portfolio, to increase its relevance and reprioritize around emergent needs?</p>
	<p><b>2) How well have the SG strategies and objectives been articulated in terms of a ToC and impact pathways and drawing on comparative advantage across the system?</b></p>	<p>a) How aligned are the SG objectives, scope of initiatives, and activities?</p> <p>b) What is the evidence-base behind assumptions underlying the impact pathways? How valid were they considering contextual factors, internal and external?</p>
<p><b>Effectiveness</b></p> <p>The extent to which the intervention achieved, and/or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across subgroups of users/clients. Consistent with the QoR4D framework and in the CGIAR context, this criterion considers the extent to which research is positioned for use and has generated knowledge, products, and services with high potential to address a problem and contribute to innovations, outcomes, and impacts.</p>	<p><b>3) To what extent has the selected initiatives/WP achieved and/or is expected to achieve, its objectives, including any differential results across subgroups of users/clients?</b></p>	<p>a) What has been the progress towards outputs of the research activities carried out by the SG?</p> <p>b) What is the likelihood that outputs will lead to the achievement of the planned outcomes?</p> <p>c) How effective has SG research contributed to key SG outcomes?</p>
	<p><b>4) How well were the cross-cutting themes of gender and climate change integrated into design and implementation (tagging)?</b></p>	<p>d) What constraints—both internal and external—has the SG faced in implementing their activities? How have these constraints been addressed?</p> <p>e) What are the most important opportunities for enhancing effectiveness across the research portfolio of SG?</p> <p>f) To which extent the budgetary turbulence has affected effectiveness?</p>
	<p><b>5) To what extent does the SG draw on the capacities of the Impact Area platforms and vice versa?</b></p>	<p>d) How has the SG used their ToC to reflect on different impact pathways?</p> <p>e) To what extent has an affiliation or mapping of bilateral and Window 3 grants accelerated progress on the delivery of SG ToCs?</p>

<sup>18</sup> External stakeholders refers to entities external to the CGIAR system such as policymakers, national governments and NARES, researchers and the scientific community.

CGIAR Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions (to be tailored for Each SG Evaluation)
	<p><b>Partnerships<sup>19</sup>:</b></p> <p><b>6) To what extent did the SG design enhance partnerships reach (internal and external) of CGIAR, and how aligned it was to the Partnership Framework?</b></p>	<p>a) To what extent is the 2022 Engagement Framework for Partnerships &amp; Advocacy Toward Greater Impact being implemented at the SG level and are actions being taken to implement the recommendations from the independent High-Level Advisory Panel Report on Partnerships?</p> <p>b) How is efficiency in research and partnership influenced by the structure of the SG and the wider system?</p> <p>c) What is the role of the SG (in comparative advantage) and centers in piloting the evolution of the research agenda with external partners, including partners' capacities to do own research for/and development?</p>
<p><b>Efficiency</b></p> <p>The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economical and timely way—that is, the overall use of resources. “Economical” refers to the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, natural resources, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes, and impacts in the most cost-effective way possible compared with feasible alternatives in the context.</p>	<p><b>7) To what extent is the governance and management of the SG deemed suitable for achieving the objectives?</b></p> <p><b>8) How has the CGIAR’s Integration Framework Agreement design and roll-out aided SGs to effectively stimulate the learning, monitoring, and adaptability of the SG Portfolio, through Initiatives?</b></p> <p><b>9) What are the internal and external factors influencing efficiency within a system of fully independent centers, considering the constraints of limited resources?</b></p>	<p>a) Have the financial and human resources been made available in an effective and timely manner for smooth implementation of the SG Portfolio?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Has the budget allocation and management affected SG cohesion, mission, and delivery?</li> <li>ii. What would be the most effective allocation of time commitments and synergies between other roles of the SG management teams ?</li> </ul> <p>b) How is efficiency in research and partnership influenced by the structure of the SG and the wider CGIAR system?</p> <p>c) What has been the role of centers in facilitating efficiencies of implementing the SG Portfolio?</p> <p>a) What approaches are used in the different SGs to improve efficiency of management of the research Portfolio and how effective are they?</p> <p>b) How did the approach to allocation of resources (funds, people, time, expertise) support the achievement of the SGs results?</p> <p>c) How timely have financial or other mechanisms been identified and implemented to enhance the responsiveness of research and innovation to new challenges?</p> <p>a) What mechanisms and systems (e.g., finance, human resources, digital) at the SG level have supported an effective administration and achieved efficiencies in delivery within and across the SG-level portfolios?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. What cost recovery mechanisms are in place for services and functions provided across centers, and how could these be optimized for best value-for-money in delivery of the SG portfolios?</li> <li>ii. Has the research funding mechanism been effective for funding critical continuous operations and operational improvements?</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country or a sector or within CGIAR; its overall fit.

CGIAR Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions (to be tailored for Each SG Evaluation)
<p><b>Coherence</b> The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country or a sector or within CGIAR; its overall fit. Internal coherence addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out within CGIAR, and the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which CGIAR adheres. External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors' interventions in the same context—that is, its complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with others, its value-added, and its avoidance of duplication of effort.</p>	<p><b>10) How coherent and compatible been the design and implementation of the SG Portfolio with Partnership Framework towards CGIAR's 2030 Research Strategy?</b></p> <p><b>11) How have the SGs operationalized CGIAR's collective vision in the 2030 Research Strategy and CGIAR's Integration Framework Agreement?</b></p> <p><b>12) In what ways have SGs addressed key considerations and opportunities for enhancing coherence across, between, and within each SG?</b></p>	<p>b) What is the role of the SG and/or the centers, in raising funds to support the Portfolio?</p> <p>a) How and to what extent have GTIs and RII engaged one another to assess, prioritize and align around regional and national priorities?</p> <p>b) How has the SG architecture facilitated coherence, coordination and collaborative research and innovation offers from CGIAR, considering comparative advantage?</p> <p>b) What measures have been taken to enhance coherence of the SG research Portfolio delivery and how effective have they been?<sup>20</sup> Have SGs facilitated reduction in duplication of research efforts within CGIAR?</p> <p>c) To what extent have SG management arrangements informed decisions about how to enhance the coherence of the CGIAR Portfolio?</p> <p>d) In which ways did a partnership model among GTIs and RIIs advance internal coherence?</p>
<p><b>Quality of Science</b> The QoS evaluative criterion pertains to scientific credibility and legitimacy. The criterion definition derives from the QoR4D frame of reference, which records CGIAR's system-wide agreement on the nature and assessment of research quality. The QoR4D describes research quality according to four key elements: relevance, scientific credibility, legitimacy, and effectiveness. Relevance and effectiveness are</p>	<p><b>13) To what extent do the management processes of the SGs ensure the QoS including credibility, legitimacy, relevance to next stage users, and potential effectiveness, of the research and operations?</b></p>	<p>a) How did SG collaborate with CGIAR centers and/or their grants held bilaterally to enhance the scientific credibility of CGIAR?</p> <p>b) What have been the CGIAR management approaches, tools, and incentives in holding scientists to a standard of inclusive research and innovation practice?</p> <p>c) How aligned is the research adhering to good scientific practice, including aspects such as peer review, to ensure the highest standards of credibility?</p> <p>d) How did the SG collaborate with NARES to enhance the scientific credibility of CGIAR?</p> <p>e) To what extent did the Integration Framework facilitate integration of science delivery across SGs?</p> <p>f) What have been approaches to identify and manage trade-offs between QoS outputs and SG-level impact pathways in ToCs?</p>

<sup>20</sup> Examples to be considered for each SG evaluation: coherence with non-pooled portfolio activities as well as within the pooled portfolio; coherence between the SG Portfolio and center activities or strategies.

CGIAR Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions	Sub-Questions (to be tailored for Each SG Evaluation)
treated as separate evaluation criteria above.	14) <b>In what ways are the research outputs<sup>21</sup> by the SGs of high quality and influential?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What is the evidence that SG scientific outputs been co-developed with researchers in the global south?</li> <li>b) What is the evidence in how SG outputs influenced global discourses e.g., citing in scholarly research?</li> <li>c) How effectively are the research findings presented and logically interpreted, reflecting a commitment to clear communication and comprehension?</li> <li>d) To what extent is there clarity on differentiating scientific and research outputs from external technical advice?</li> </ul>

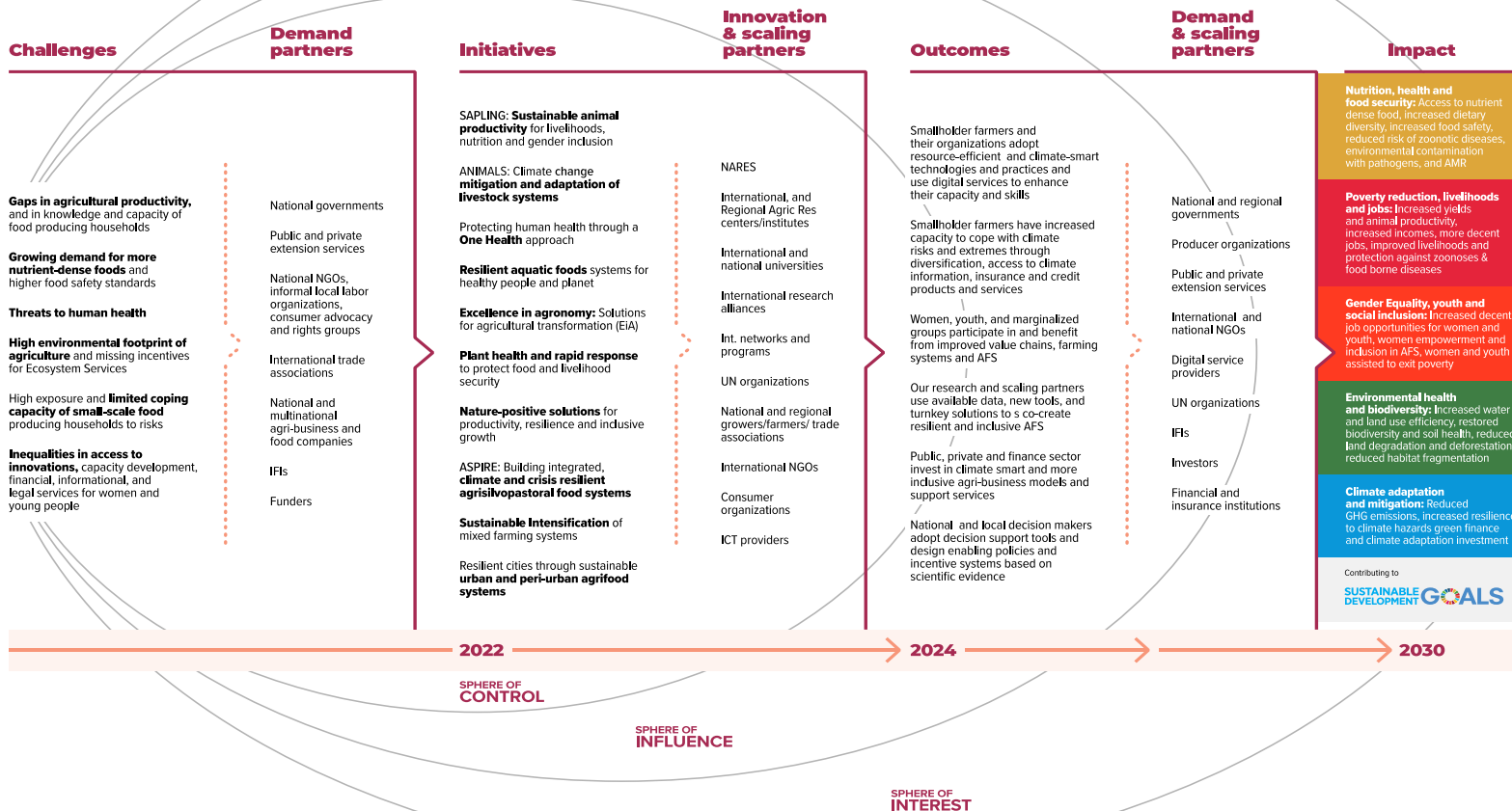
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<sup>21</sup> Outputs vary considerably but are often tangible products or services, e.g., new seeds or germplasm, or technical outputs such as policy documents, journal articles, technical briefs, and new soil management.

## Annex 2: Action Areas Theories of Change



### CGIAR Action Area Theory of Change: Resilient Agrifood Systems

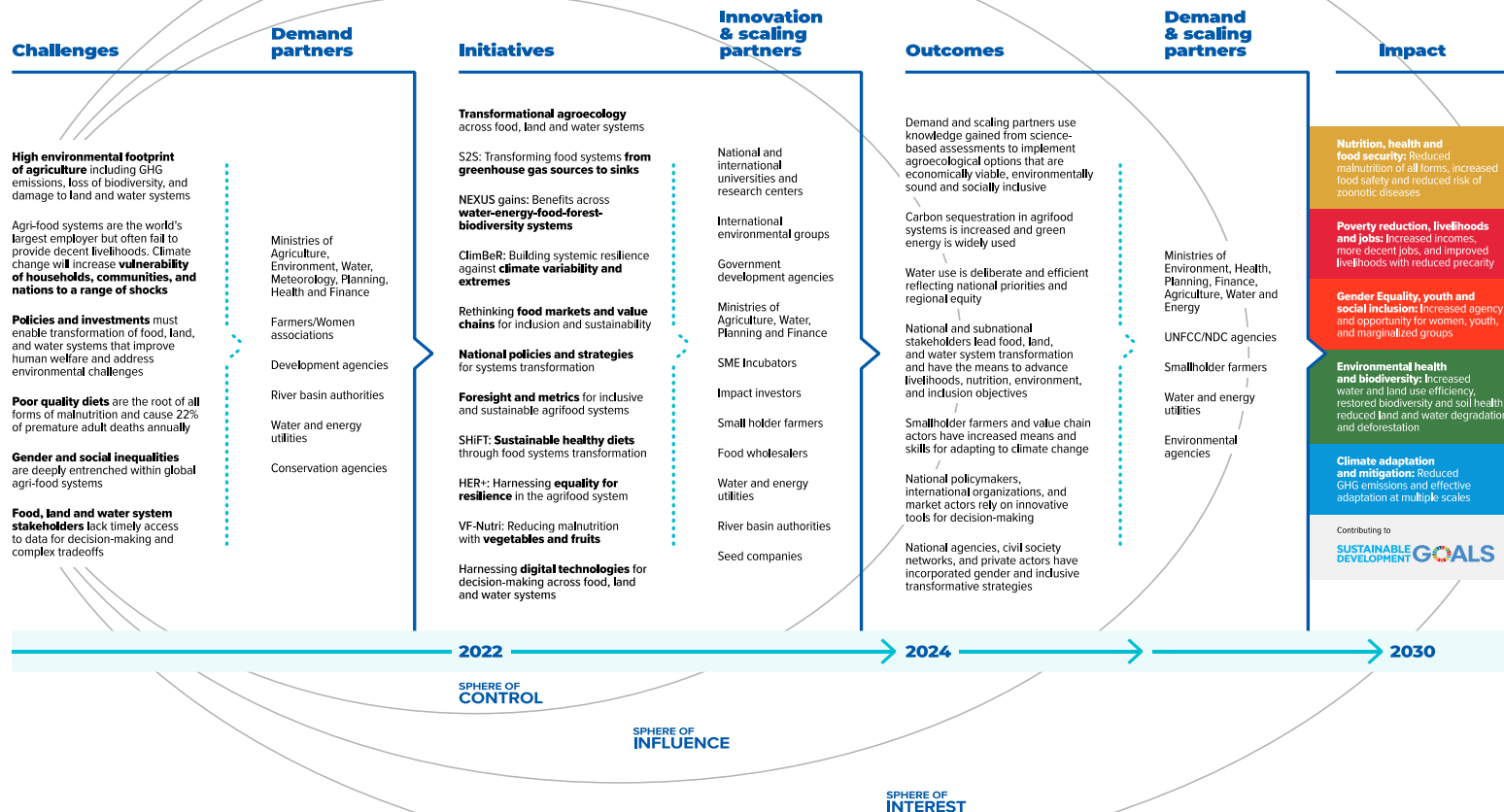


Source: CGIAR 2022–2024 Investment Prospectus

Source: <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiargov/2021/06/CGIAR-Action-Area-Theory-of-Change-Resilient-Agrifood-Systems.pdf>



## CGIAR Action Area Theory of Change: Systems Transformation

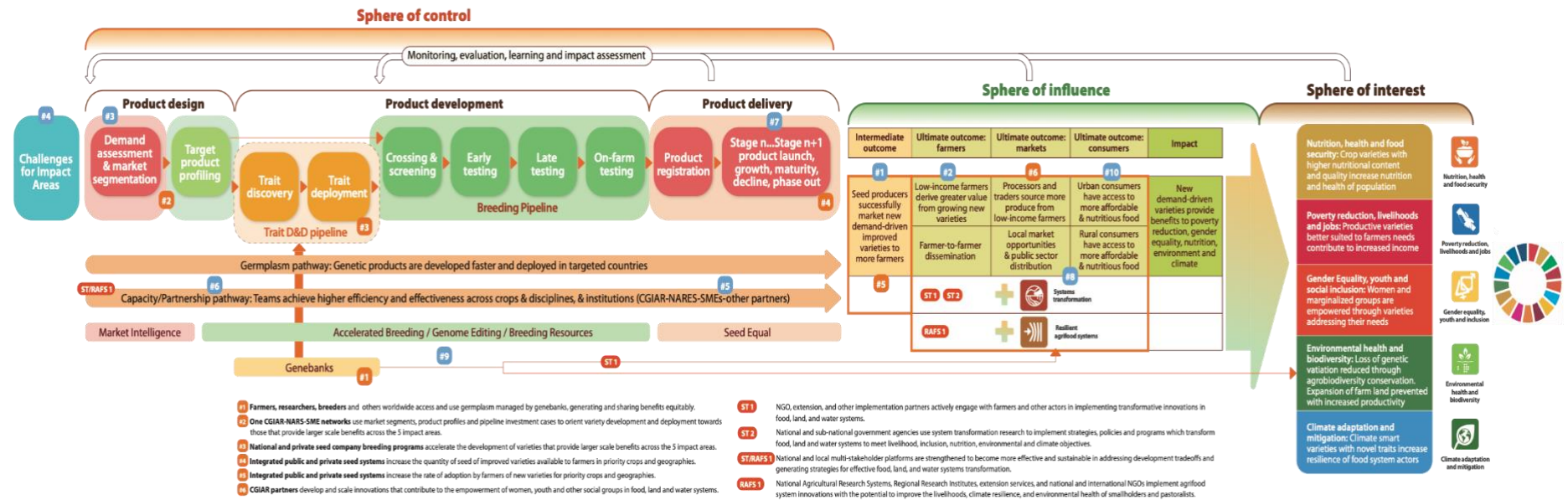


Source: CGIAR 2022–2024 Investment Prospectus

Source: [https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2021/06/CGIAR-Action-Area-Theory-of-Change\\_Systems-Transformation.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2021/06/CGIAR-Action-Area-Theory-of-Change_Systems-Transformation.pdf).



CGIAR Action Area Theory of Change: Genetic Innovations



Source: <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2023/04/GI-Theory-of-Change-March-2023-long-v.pdf>.



## Annex 3: Recommendations for Three Action Areas from the 2021 Synthesis

In 2021, the Evaluation Function of the CGIAR Advisory Services (CAS) conducted a [Synthesis and Lessons Learned from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs](#) to inform the development of future research programs of One CGIAR. As part of the synthesis, briefs for each Action Area were produced. The briefs included the conclusions and recommendations below.

### Action Area 1: Systems Transformation

The achievements of the global integrating programs and systems CRPs provide an important foundation for Action Area 1 research Initiatives, but the significant challenges they faced also provide warning signals about what must be addressed to ensure the success of new Initiatives. These include:

- Rather than tackling climate change, NRM, and agriculture for nutrition and health separately, CGIAR should consider them together, holistically, exploring science-policy synergies and tradeoffs across the areas as food systems transform.
- To achieve a stronger focus on poverty reduction across all programs, target the rural resource-poor, women, and those most disadvantaged. Increase attention to understanding and addressing the equity impacts of policies, shocks, and risks faced by poor people in taking up technologies and research solutions.
- Address the linkages between environmental sustainability and resilient agrifood systems. Relationships between the dynamics of environment, ecosystems, biodiversity, and livelihoods in agroecosystems will require significant attention.
- Identify a handful of place-based programs in high-priority agroecologies, where the triple challenge of achieving sustainable food production, enhancing human well-being, and conserving ecosystem services can be addressed, and where national commitments bring opportunity for impact at scale through integrated innovation systems.

The full brief is available [here](#).

### Action Area 2: Resilient Agrifood Systems

Despite ongoing funding challenges, the CRPs showed great flexibility, ingenuity, and commitment in opening new and important areas of research with partners—including climate change, natural resource management, health and nutrition, and gender—and in experimenting with approaches to expand the meaningful participation of stakeholders in research prioritization, design, implementation, and scaling. These efforts provide a solid foundation for CGIAR efforts to strengthen the resilience of agrifood systems to meet increasing challenges related to climate change, natural disasters, and political and economic crises. Moving forward, One CGIAR should:

- Reorient work to focus more on the vulnerable poor, in particular women and the disadvantaged and those at greatest risk from natural resource depletion, severe climate change impacts, economic deprivation, and conflicts.
- Improve assessment and metrics related to risk and resilience and co-develop social and technical innovations with at-risk populations.
- Foster adoption of technical and social innovations at scale, as required to achieve system transformation, and give greater emphasis to research on scaling science and implementation science.

The full brief is available [here](#).

### Action Area 3: Genetic Innovations

CGIAR and partners have long been the custodians of invaluable genetic resources and have played a vital role in developing and releasing high-yielding, nutritious and resilient germplasm. Building on this legacy, and in the face of unprecedented global challenges, moving forward One CGIAR should:

- Ensure that high priority is given to nutrition, health, resilience, and environmental sustainability objectives in research groups focused on genetics.
- Increase inclusiveness in defining product profiles, executing programs, and delivering outputs, to better contextualize the variety of development and tailor research to diverse agricultural communities and to the needs of children, youth, women, and other at-risk or marginalized groups.
- To facilitate impact at scale, prioritize seed sector development, including by expanding partnerships with the private sector and civil society and strengthening key policies and regulations.
- Catalyze partnerships with other research and innovation partners in defined systems to enable crop system diversification and improve access to affordable, healthy diets.
- Accelerate the modernization and technical capacity development of plant-breeding programs across centers and in national program partners.
- Integrate research with wider development and investment commitments related to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Engage strategically with policies (e.g., International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture) around the value of germplasm diversity, farmers' and breeders' rights to plant and animal genetic resources, and international transfer agreements to ensure access to, and availability of, diverse and valuable germplasm, improved varieties and strains, and wild crop relatives.

The full brief is available [here](#).

## Annex 4: List of Stakeholders Consulted Toward Terms of Reference Development

Affiliation	Modality of Engagement
<b>SG Directors and MEL coordinators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual engagement to introduce two options: April 2023.</li> <li>Email communication prior to, and post SC19.</li> </ul>
<b>SIMEC members</b>	Presentation of the draft Concept Note, August 2023.
<b>Science Council Members – SC19</b>	Concept Note shared as pre-read shared for comment.
<b>Members of the Evaluation Reference Group to IAES</b>	Peer review of the Draft ToR shared for comments; discussion at the ERG meeting, November 2023.

## Annex 5: Preliminary List of Readings

CGIAR, Management Response to the 2021 Synthesis of learning from a decade of CGIAR Research Programs: [https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/pdf/SC16-05b\\_MgmtResponse-CRPSynthesis-split.pdf](https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/pdf/SC16-05b_MgmtResponse-CRPSynthesis-split.pdf)

CGIAR/IAES, Synthesis Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs – Action Area 1: Systems Transformation:

[https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/images/Publications/2021%20Synthesis\\_AA1%20Brief\\_Systems%20Transformation\(1\).pdf](https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/images/Publications/2021%20Synthesis_AA1%20Brief_Systems%20Transformation(1).pdf)

CGIAR/IAES, Synthesis Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs – Action Area 2: Resilient Agrifood Systems:

[https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/images/Publications/2021%20Synthesis\\_AA2%20Brief\\_Resilient%20Agrifood%20Systems\(1\).pdf](https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/images/Publications/2021%20Synthesis_AA2%20Brief_Resilient%20Agrifood%20Systems(1).pdf)

CGIAR/IAES, Synthesis Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs – Action Area 3: Genetic Innovations:

[https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/images/Publications/2021%20Synthesis\\_AA3%20Brief\\_Genetic%20Innovations.pdf](https://iaes.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/images/Publications/2021%20Synthesis_AA3%20Brief_Genetic%20Innovations.pdf)

## Annex 6: Key Points of Engagement and Tasks for the Evaluand’s MEL Focal Point

Evaluation Phase	MEL Focal Point Key Tasks
Scoping/pre-planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assemble relevant and reliable extant program documentation and data for the evaluation against the requested detailed list of required documentation. This will constitute the evaluation repository.</li> <li>○ Provide access to a designated, secure SharePoint (SP) folder for the evaluation document upload, or upload to designated SP folder of IAES.</li> <li>○ Review key evaluation questions.</li> </ul>
Inception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Participate in the EA; namely, provide the supporting documentation and reliable data. Complete the spreadsheet based on the condensed core parameters of the <a href="#">CGIAR guidelines on conducting an evaluability assessment (2022)</a> and provide supporting documentation where necessary.<sup>21</sup></li> <li>○ Review the evaluation design matrix and comment on the methods/and data sources (e.g., Annex 2 in an inception report from evaluation of <a href="#">Big Data Platform</a>).</li> <li>○ Co-facilitate engagement(s)/meetings, with evaluation team members.</li> <li>○ Review the evaluation IR, developed based on the ToR, see above example for Big Data.</li> <li>○ Review questionnaire for online survey.</li> <li>○ Contribute to the review of the stakeholder analysis.</li> </ul>
Inquiry/data collection & analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support/facilitate access to interviewees/key informants to answer questions from the evaluation team.</li> <li>○ Serve as a key informant about the MEL system for an interview and respond to online survey.</li> <li>○ Participate in the validation of preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations.</li> </ul>
Reporting/dissemination and use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coordinate comments from the evaluand team on the draft evaluation report and any sub-studies, and ensure they are sent to IAES within the stipulated time.</li> <li>○ Contribute to the development of the MR, e.g., from <a href="#">Big Data Platform Evaluation</a>.</li> <li>○ Monitor and report to the PPU and other stakeholders on the implementation of MR.</li> </ul>





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