Challenge

Agriculture contributes 30–50% of West and Central Africa’s GDP and provides income and livelihoods to 70–80% of the region’s population. But the sector has been unable to feed the growing population due to low productivity and the effects of climate change.

As a result, consumers often resort to imported and ultra-processed foods, increasing the triple burden of malnutrition. Reduced biodiversity is affecting soil health and crop reproduction, while degraded landscapes affect the health of people, animals, plants and their shared environment. Markets and value chains are, at best, fragmented, due to huge post-harvest losses, dilapidated infrastructure and a non-supportive policy environment. The capacity of youth and women to participate in the transformation of food systems remains low.

However, the region’s young population (and strong labor force) and CGIAR’s almost five decades of work there mean there is great scope to leverage on innovations from past and current projects and make impacts at scale.

Objective

This Initiative aims to improve nutrition, incomes and food security within the context of climate change in West and Central Africa through nutritious, climate-adapted and market-driven food systems.

Activities

This objective will be achieved through:

- Enabling sustainable intensification and diversification of food production through sustainable seed systems and improved management practices by pursuing demand-
creation to promote nutritious foods, co-designing cost-effective, diverse and sustainable production systems and promoting good agricultural practices.

- **Managing climate risks and accessing services through informed digital agriculture** by creating or improving, contextualizing and complementing existing digital services for small-scale farmers, value chain actors and governments to facilitate informed decision-making.
- **Creating pathways for scaling land and water innovations for resilient agrifood systems** by combining participatory tools and citizen science to co-develop and implement inclusive landscapes, owned by communities, that enable sustainable scaling of bundled land, water, aquaculture and climate-smart agronomic and digital innovations.
- **Enhancing youth and women’s entrepreneurship models in food value chains** by promoting and preparing youth and women in developing and managing agribusinesses while addressing social barriers.
- **Creating a coherent management system to catalyse the Initiative’s impact at scale**, combining state-of-the-art, evidence-based solutions to articulate the demand for research and innovations and increase impact investments.

**Engagement**

This Initiative will work in Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Rwanda.

**Outcomes**

Proposed three-year outcomes include:

1. At least 80,000 smallholder households will have access to climate-resilient nutrient-dense crop varieties, and at least 16,000 of them will use five climate resilient, nutrient-dense crop varieties and 6 good agronomic practices.
2. At least 10 key partners in the next phase implementation plans consistently use three validated scaling tools.
3. At least four governments use inclusive approaches to landscape management and 100 rural communities develop informed and inclusive land and water management plans that will diversify income from agriculture and increase production to create jobs and stability.
4. Timely climate information and early warning systems for improved decision-making are in use by 3 million farmers, 30 value chain actors and three governments.
5. The Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index shows a 20% increase in the target countries.
6. Household dietary diversity scores increase by at least 30% in the target countries.
7. At least 20,000 youth and 15,000 women are engaged in value-added activities related to agriculture, and at least 50% of these will have access to credit.

**Impact**

Projected impacts and benefits\(^1\) include:

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\(^1\) Projected Benefits are a way to illustrate reasonable orders of magnitude for impacts which could arise as a result of the impact pathways set out in the Initiative’s Theories of Change. In line with the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, Initiatives contribute to these impact pathways, along with other partners and stakeholders. CGIAR does not deliver impact alone. These projections therefore estimate plausible levels of impact to which CGIAR, with partners, contribute. They do not estimate CGIAR’s attributable share of the different impact pathways.
Access to quality, nutrient-dense seed and climate-smart agricultural practices, as well as reduced post-harvest losses, will contribute to food and nutrition and health security for **8.82 million people** (1.76 million households).

The provision of opportunities and tools for women and youth to engage in the labor market, coupled with an increase in their access to finance, will contribute to poverty reduction, livelihoods and job creation for **8.82 million people** (1.76 million households).

Through a gender-transformative approach and by reducing the risks in agricultural production, **1.28 million youth** and **2 million women** will be empowered, reducing existing gender gaps and increasing business opportunities. Support for enabling regulatory and policy environments will contribute to creating a socially inclusive platform for public and private partnerships.

The matching of digital supply-demand services will increase productivity and improve adaptation to climate change for **4.41 million people** (almost a million households).

Through citizen science, landlessness and disputes among resource users will be mitigated, while issues of poor environmental health and biodiversity loss will be addressed through good governance of natural resources, bringing **3.93 million hectares** of land under improved management.

Partners

Partnerships are essential to the success of CGIAR Initiatives. Each Initiative will engage a wide range of different types of partners supporting demand, innovation and scaling including: academic, training and research partners; private-sector partners; government and other public-sector partners; multilateral organizations; foundations; international, regional, national and local NGOs; and public-private partnerships.

For more details on this Initiative, visit the Initiative website.

*Header photo: Dr Hakeem Ajeigbe, ICRISAT scientist and Nigeria country representative, in a sorghum field. Photo by C. de Bode/CGIAR.*