

AgriFoSe2030 Communications and Engagement Strategy



Photo: Malin Planting, SLU

1. Introduction

AgriFoSe2030 is a collaborative, multi-stakeholder programme aiming to support a transformation of smallholder farming systems in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and in South and Southeast (SE) Asia, to enable them to tackle food insecurity and increase local economic growth. The programme supports crosscutting issues of sustainable intensification of smallholder agriculture. These encompasses the engagement of women and youth in the practice of farming, together with improving smallholder access to markets and value chains. To do this the programme focuses on translating state-of-the-art science into knowledge relevant for policymakers and practitioners.

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Lund University, University of Gothenburg and Stockholm Environment Institute are all consortium partners of this programme, who together have developed four thematic 'challenges'. Each AgriFoSe2030 challenge addresses a specific aspect of agriculture and food security in SSA and South and SE Asia. These challenges form the platform for project activities. The challenges are as follows:

1. Improving access to safe and nutritious food
2. Agricultural productivity and ecosystem functions
3. Science-based innovation and extension
4. Smallholder agriculture within transforming food systems

Communication and engagement permeate all four challenges, see figure 1.

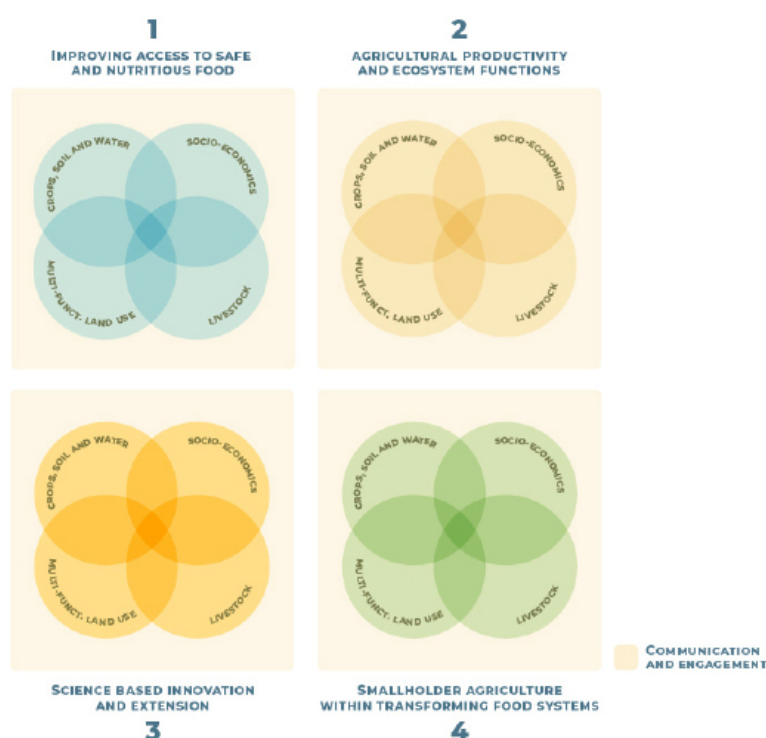


Figure 1 shows how the four themes from Phase I intersects each AgriFoSe2030 challenge in Phase II, and how C&E embodies all challenges.

This Communications and Engagement (C&E) Strategy is developed so that it can be used and consulted for all AgriFoSe2030 communication. Appendix I provides communication guidelines, which includes concrete instructions to the programme's challenge teams, on how they can best interact with the AgriFoSe2030 C&E team and how to best plan communication outputs and activities. The C&E strategy is aligned with the overall programme document as well as programme strategy on monitoring, evaluation and learning.

2. Overall objective of the programme

The overall objective of the AgriFoSe2030 programme is to contribute to social, economic, and environmental sustainability of smallholder farming systems in SSA and South and SE Asia for improved food and nutrition security. The programme works at multiple scales from local to global level.

To reach the overall objective, the programme has the ambition to reach the following outcomes:

1. Increase the capacity of scientists to synthesise, analyse, and communicate science with different stakeholders.
2. Increase the use of science-based knowledge in policies and practices.
3. Improve the connection between science, policy, and practice.

The programme, the challenges and the projects are using Theory of Change (ToC), an approach for mapping change pathways and for evaluation. This will result in more effectively integrated science-based knowledge in agricultural practice and policy. Read more about this approach in the AgriFoSe2030 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strategy.

3. Specific goals of this communications and engagement strategy

To reach the overall programme objective and its outcomes, this communication strategy has a set of C&E goals:

- Support all four AgriFoSe2030 challenges in their work with applying and following a challenge-level ToC, as well as support them with their MEL work.
- Together with challenge leaders, support all AgriFoSe2030 projects in developing and following their ToCs and monitor their MEL work.
- Facilitate dialogue, when appropriate, between agriculture-related science, practice and policy, both on programme and project level.
- Support the projects on communication and engagement plans linked to their ToCs, as well as in creating communication content, products and campaigns that make project outcomes accessible to target audiences and for capacity development purposes.

A separate communications plan, based on this strategy, will be developed yearly by the C&E team, with scheduled follow-ups. The plan will be aligned with the annual workplan of the programme.

By having regular meetings with challenge leaders and their projects (as described in the MEL strategy), C&E support needs are mapped and addressed. When needed, the C&E team supports the projects in developing communications products, packages and campaigns.

4. Target audiences

The AgriFoSe2030 programme engages with a wide range of target audiences which can differ between challenges, projects, countries and local contexts. It includes different types of stakeholders, such as policy- and decision-makers at various governance levels in society, academia, farmers, civil society, the private sector, funders and development organisations. Within each project, as well as for all programme-level activities and outputs, appropriate target audiences are identified and specified. Activities for communications and engagement are designed differently for different target audiences. On a programme level we specify, document and follow up in our communications plans. On a project level we ask project teams to specify, document and follow up in their ToC and MEL plans.

5. Channels and tools

The AgriFoSe2030 programme will mainly use four communication channels, each of which are further described below: 1) online (programme website, social media), 2) publications (synthesis reports, policy briefs, peer-reviewed journal articles), 3) events and courses (policy dialogues, capacity sharing workshops, training courses), 4) media (local and regional media in target regions, international blog channels). The C&E team can support development and use of specific tools and channels for specific programme outputs, however the communication for outputs is decided within each AgriFoSe2030 project. See appendix I for guidelines on how the C&E team can give support to the challenges and projects. To further extend our network for outreach we will also draw on key collaborations, both nationally in Sweden and internationally (please see appendix II for these collaborations).

Online

The main online communication channel for the programme is the AgriFoSe2030 website hosted by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). All AgriFoSe2030 publications, such as synthesis papers and policy briefs are published on the website. Events, blogs, research exchanges and news items are also published there continuously.

To reach target audiences we; 1) publish and share an online newsletter 4 times a year with content from the website to our networks in target regions and 2) use social media outlets for all published content, see below.

The following outlets are used and/or tagged (where appropriate):

Twitter: @SLUglobal1, @SIANlagri, @SElforskning, @SElresearch, @Focali_se, @SIDA. AgriFoSe2030 does not have its own Twitter account but will broadcast messages through above partners platforms.

Other social media outlets will be used (where appropriate): LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp, online discussion forums, podcasts etc.

The programme has its own Facebook group, where everyone who has been involved, who is currently involved or who is interested in AgriFoSe2030 are welcome to join. We regularly post updates and activities in the group, both programme-wide and from the projects. Everyone involved in AgriFoSe2030 is welcome to post content.

Publications

The programme aims to publish knowledge synthesis in different types of publication formats; peer-reviewed journal articles, reports, policy briefs, training materials etc. The large number of publication formats is used to reach a broader audience than when focusing only on journal publications. When a publication is being planned, a brief dissemination plan will be put in place for each item. The plan will be discussed between the C&E team and the authors/project teams behind the publication.

Events and courses

Events aimed to disseminate results and engage stakeholders are first and foremost very targeted and take place on project level. The Communication and Engagement team, together with challenge leaders, support the project teams in developing arenas for dialogue. These events and stakeholder meetings will tie into the projects' ToCs to make sure outcomes can be leveraged.

We organise training courses for researchers involved in the AgriFoSe2030 projects. This course package includes a course on Theory of Change, a course on synthesising scientific science, as well as on how to translate science into policy and practice. When possible, the course package will also be given to others beyond the projects, as part of the institutional collaboration and capacity building with universities in the target regions.

As part of programme-wide activities, AgriFoSe2030 organises or takes part in international events, for example conferences, webinars, dialogues and meetings,

through collaborations with partners.

Media

We use different types of media outlets where appropriate and possible, for example:

- Broadcast media (such as television and radio)
- News journals and newspapers
- Popular science media platforms

All these outlets will be context and country specific, depending on the locations of the projects. The C&E team will encourage and support the AgriFoSe2030 projects to be active in media at some point throughout their project period.

When appropriate, AgriFoSe2030 engages in media to communicate overall findings/ key messages from the programme in broader and more international media.

Appendix I

Communication guideline

The communication guideline below provides recommendations of what AgriFoSe2030 challenges, partners and project teams should think of when communicating about the programme and its activities and outputs. It also has information on what support the AgriFoSe2030 Communications and Engagement team (C&E) can give.

The C&E team

The C&E team consists of consortium partner Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) as well as the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU):

- C&E team leader, 30%, SEI. Coordinates the C&E team and activities, supports AgriFoSe2030 projects with their ToC and MEL activities, as well as plans and produces communications products and website content.
- C&E assistant team leader, 20%, SEI. Supports projects with their ToC and MEL activities, as well as stakeholder engagement.
- Communications officer, 25%, SLU. Manages the AgriFoSe2030 website and content, the Facebook group, the programme newsletter and graphic design.
- Communications officer, 60%, SEI. Supports projects in their ToC and MEL activities as well as supports in planning and producing communications products and website content. Supports in media outreach and write content for media in target regions of projects.

We also have access to graphic designers and editors at SLU and SEI.

Visual identity

A new visual identity has been created for the AgriFoSe2030 programme. This includes logotype, publications layout, presentation material and banners. The visibility of AgriFoSe2030 is ensured through consistent application of logotype, programme branding. Where appropriate, consortium partners' branding shall also be included on communications material produced and presented, according to the branding guidelines of these partners.

The AgriFoSe2030 logotype should also be used in email signatures.

The programme banner will be visibly located at all events, especially the ones involving media visits.

Publications

Challenge leaders and project teams will interact with the C&E team to ensure that all written outputs will be published on the AgriFoSe2030 website. Besides the peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, AgriFoSe2030 is producing two types of publications: shorter “briefs” and longer “reports”. The C&E team provides templates for these publications and there is an internal review process that needs to take place for each publication. The C&E team will further disseminate the outputs (in close collaboration with authors) through social media outlets, and help to further develop the material.

The following text should be included in the scientific journal articles:

“This study was financially supported by the Sida-funded programme AgriFoSe2030.”

On other publications, such as briefs and reports, a longer boilerplate is needed. Contact the C&E team for further details.

Please note that the C&E team can help with text editing for briefs and reports as well as for web-based popular-science material, given that there are available budgets and editors. For publications, this needs to be communicated at least 6–8 weeks in advance of expected publication deadline. For stories for the website, see below.

Stories for the website

There are often activities that are taking place at project level that do not end up being described or talked about in a publication, hence there is always the option to write a story for the website. Stories can have either more of a news character or more of a narrative structure and be more personal, depending on the topic and what we wish to communicate.

These stories need to be shared with the C&E team ahead of publication, to go through editing and formatting. When needed, the C&E team will provide support in writing them.

As part of projects’ MEL activities, project teams will be writing up their outcomes in the form of “change stories”. When appropriate, these change stories can be developed into publishable website stories. The C&E team will provide support in writing these stories.

Media

Any media contacts/appearances should be communicated to the C&E team. It is recommended that if challenge leaders or project teams get requested for an interview as an AgriFoSe2030 representative, they should get in touch with the C&E team ahead of the interview, and the C&E team can help in the preparation.

The C&E team can also support researchers in preparing key messages to make a pitch for a media channel. Stories that have been published on our website can in some cases also be pitched for media, and vice versa. As above, the C&E team will support the projects in these undertakings.

Facebook

You are welcome to contribute with material you think might be relevant for people with an interest in the questions AgriFoSe2030 is working with, i.e. upcoming events at partner universities or reports/articles within relevant agricultural areas. Be aware that the group is open for external persons not involved in the programme, so do post material relevant for all interested in agriculture/food production and not for example working material.

All posts will be admitted by the administrators before seen in the group. Administrators automatically receives notifications when you post.

Research exchanges

The C&E team is responsible for publishing short interviews with researchers involved in the AgriFoSe2030 research exchanges on the AgriFoSe2030 website. When a research exchange is planned, contact the C&E team, and provide details about the exchange, as well as contact details.

If you plan, or would like to suggest, an in-depth interview, contact anyone in the AgriFoSe2030 C&E team.

Courses

When arranging a course, contact the C&E team, to ensure announcement on the AgriFoSe2030 site (if the course is public). Any post-course content that could be published as a follow-up (photos, videos, blogs, etc.) should also be sent to AgriFoSe2030 C&E team.

If you would like support with, for example a blogpost, video interview, etc., contact anyone in the AgriFoSe2030 C&E team.

Workshop/conference

When an event is being planned, contact the C&E team to ensure announcement on AgriFoSe2030's website. Any post-event content that could be published as a follow-up (photos, videos, blogs, etc.) should also be sent to the AgriFoSe2030 C&E team.

If you would like support with, for example a blogpost, video interview, etc., contact anyone in the C&E team.

Appendix II

Key collaboration partners in target regions

Institutional collaborations

The second phase of the programme (2020–2023) focus more explicitly on institutional collaborations. The reason for targeting relevant institutions is to ensure that the programme is sustainable beyond individual researchers' work and outputs, and contribute to actual capacity building at partner institutions to foster a “translating science into policy and practice – culture”. Institutional collaborations will also facilitate South-to-South collaborations and exchanges.

Currently the AgriFoSe2030 programme has established institutional collaboration with 3 universities in SSA and South and SE Asia:

- i. University of Nairobi, Kenya
- ii. University of Kyambogo, Uganda
- iii. Nong Lam University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Other partners

Below is a list of partners where we have established contacts and ongoing collaborations through AgriFoSe2030 projects, please note that this list is not exclusive and will grow during the implementation of the programme. This list was latest updated 17 January 2022.

- Chinhoyi University of Technology in Zimbabwe
- INERA (Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles) in Burkina Faso
- Makerere University in Uganda
- ReSAKSS (Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System)
- National University of Laos in Lao PDR
- University of Embu in Kenya

- University of the Philippines Visayas Tacloban College
- University of Pretoria in South Africa
- Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry in Vietnam
- Kotebe Metropolitan University in Ethiopia
- Royal University of Phnom Pehn in Cambodia
- Fruits and Vegetable Research Institute in Vietnam
- World AgroForestry (ICRAF) in Kenya
- Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development in Vietnam

Key collaboration partners in Sweden

To broaden the outreach of the AgriFoSe2030 programme, we, to the extent possible and useful, collaborate and engage with existing and relevant networks in Sweden, which reach our target regions. AgriFoSe2030 researchers and challenge leaders are well connected to these networks, and this facilitates communication.

Our main partners:

SLU Global coordinates and supports SLU research and education aiming at developing the agricultural sector in low-income countries. The SLU Global secretariat hosts the AgriFoSe2030 programme and parts of the C&E team. The programme also uses SLU Global's channels for reaching a wider audience within the international community for agricultural research.

SEI is an international non-profit research and policy organisation that tackles environment and development challenges. Parts of the C&E team works at SEI. The programme also uses SEI's channels for reaching a wider audience within the international community for sustainability and environment.

Other key partners:

SIANI (Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative) is a well-established international network and platform for communication of many AgriFoSe2030-related topics. The SIANI platform can be used to share information, events, courses, and news generated from the programme to reach target audiences. SIANI is also planned to

be a collaborative partner for specific programme activities, such as seminars and conferences.

Focali (Forest, Climate, and Livelihood research network) is a Swedish research network focusing on forest/bioenergy, climate change and poverty issues. In addition to direct collaborations for specific programme activities, Focali is seen as an important network for outreach and dissemination of outputs and promoting dialogue.

EfD (Environment for Development) is a global network of environmental economics research centers solving the world's most pressing environmental and development challenges. The network is coordinated by the EfD Global Hub, located at University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Gunnar Köhlin, the Director of EfD, sits in the steering group of AgriFoSe2030.