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AgriFoSe2030

Outcome evaluation 2024 Scoping document

1. Introduction

Agriculture for Food Security 2030 (AgriFoSe2030) programme

AgriFose2030 is dedicated to overcoming the hurdles to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs), with a primary focus on promoting sustainable agriculture and ensuring food security.

Phases 1 (2016-2020) and 2 (2021-24) of AgriFoSe focused on supporting Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Southeast Asia (SEA) to develop their capacity to catalyse and inform the transition to meet SDG 2, and support vulnerable populations in attaining food security, nutrition improved livelihoods and sustainable food systems.

The overarching objectives of the AgriFoSe programme are:

- increased capacity of scientists, mainly young and emerging researchers, to synthesise, analyse, and communicate science with different stakeholders
- increased use of science-based knowledge in policies and practices
- improved connection between science, policy, and practice.

AgriFoSe2030 works with a programme-specific ToC approach that guides the programme towards a series of desired changes and goals. The programmme works through two channels – i) capacity strengthening of scientists and their institutions to do science translation; and ii) projects working directly with smallholder communities to translate science into improved practices and policies.

In order to inform the design of Phase 3, the programme would like to commission an impact assessment (or outcome evaluation) to establish the extent and significance of outcomes catalysed by the local science translation projects.

This scoping document sets out the parameters, proposed design and workplan for implementing the study.

2. Purpose, focus and scope

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Assess the outcomes that have emerged for local stakeholders – e.g. smallholder farmers, practitioners, policy and decisionmakers, others – catalysed by the AgriFoSe projects, and the significance of these to the stakeholders, including any ongoing benefits.
- Understand the potential for change trajectories to be sustained and/or expanded locally.
- Understand how effective the projects have been at producing these changes, and what has worked, for whom, in what circumstances and why.
- Generate lessons to inform the design of the next phase of the programme.

To meet these purposes, the evaluation is utilization focused, that is, aiming to produce practical, applicable learning for the evaluation users. The evaluation also fulfils an accountability purpose by establishing what has been achieved and the significance of these for local stakeholders.

2.1 Evaluation focus and design

The evaluation is focused on the outcomes that have emerged for local stakeholders – e.g. smallholder farmers, practitioners, policy and decisionmakers, others – catalysed by the AgriFoSe projects.

The evaluation will follow a theory-based evaluation (TBE) design, framed by the outcomes set out in the programme-level theory of change and the project level theories. A theory-based evaluation uses a clear theory of change or logic model to explain how a development intervention works, from activities to outcomes. It tests this theory to see if it holds true. If so, the evaluator provides evidence to show what has changed at each stage and examines the connections between these changes. [1] TBE is appropriate given the complex effects of multi-stranded design of the AgriFoSe projects and their interaction with local dynamics.

Within this frame, the main data collection and analytical approach will be qualitative analysis, although if there is quantitative secondary data available for projects, this will provide additional data points to help quantify outcomes.

2.1.1 Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions to be addressed are:

1. What outcomes have emerged for local stakeholders, both those anticipated by the ToCs and those that were unintended?
    a. How significant are these for local stakeholders, what benefits have they gained?
    b. What's the potential for these outcome trajectories to be sustained or expanded locally?
2. How effective have the sampled projects been at catalysing these changes?
    a. How have the projects contributed to the observed outcomes, alongside other factors? (Contribution analysis)
    b. What has worked, for whom, in what circumstances and why? (Causal analysis)
3. What lessons can be identified for the next generation of AgriFoSe projects?

2.2 Scope

[1] https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Theory-based-evaluation.pdf

The evaluation is focused on the second stream of the AGriFoSe2030 programme – the Challenge projects. It will not be examining the capacity strengthening aspects.

There are 17 change projects, but the evaluation cannot cover them all in depth. Instead, we will do a desk review of the existing monitoring and evaluation documentation from all 17 projects (and four Challenges). Then, four projects will be selected for a 'deep dive' case study. For these case studies, we will generate primary evidence from stakeholder interviews and focus groups in their local settings. Sampling criteria is set out in section 4 below.

The focus will be on priority outcomes of interest, to be identified from the selected projects' ToCs, and common causal processes will be identified, e.g. co-production, to explore across the case studies.

2.3 Evaluation uses and users

The primary intended users are the AgriFoSe2030 management group, including the Director and Deputy Director. Also included as primary users are the eight Challenge Leaders and Deputy Leaders, and the Communications & Engagement team. The programme funder, SIDA is also included in the group of primary users.

Secondary users are the project leaders who will be designing future science translation projects, and also the wider community of funders and implementers who are interested in research for development and science translation.

4. Methodology

4.1 Evaluation design

To answer the evaluation questions, as mentioned, the evaluation will take a theory based design. TBEs are designed to answer questions such as what has been achieved, how and why this was achieved, and what worked for whom in what contexts. TBE does this by gathering evidence in line with the theory of change, evidence for both outcomes and causal processes. TBE is most appropriate when sufficient time has elapsed for outcomes to have emerged.

The assessment framework will therefore be two nested theories of change – first the programme-level theory of change, which provides the overarching framework and sets out the cross-cutting outcomes and causal processes of interest, such as co-production and catalysing agency and capacities of local stakeholders. Second, the project-level theory of change for each sampled project will provide a guide for the deep dive case studies.

4.2 Approach and process

In summary, the evaluation will follow these steps:

Step 1: Co-identify the priority outcomes of interest with programme stakeholders.

Step 2: Desk review from the reports of all 17 projects, using a realist review approach that is seeking to extract data on the priority outcomes, causal processes and contextual factors identified in step 1.

Step 3: Sampling of four projects for the deep dive case studies.

Step 4: Primary data collection – individual interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders in the project settings. Interview and FGD topic guides will be developed from the evaluation framework and insights from the desk review.

Step 5: Analysis of data and development of the deep dive case studies and narrative case study reports.

Step 6: Programme -level synthesis from desk review and case studies against the programme level theory of change. Synthesis report.

The steps will be described in more detail below.

4.2.1 Co-identify the priority outcomes and causal linkages of interest

As part of the scoping phase, there will be a consultation with the programme stakeholders on the programme level priority outcomes, causal linkages and cross-cutting issues to explore, drawing on the programme-level theory of change. This will be done through a time-efficient process, using tools such as an online polls and discussion.

4.2.2 Desk review

As part of the implementation phase, we will conduct a desk review of documents from all 17 projects, and the Nairobi meeting report. This will use the evaluation framework and programme ToC to extract data on the priority outcomes, causal linkages and contextual factors identified in step 1.

If quantitative data is available for projects, this will be integrated into the data set at this stage.

4.2.3 Sampling of four projects for deep dive case studies

The preliminary criteria for sampling the four projects for the case studies are as follows:

- Alignment with the priority outcomes and causal linkages of interest
- Sufficient time having elapsed for outcomes to emerge, so projects with earlier start dates.
- Representative spread across Challenges and continents
- Feasibility of accessing local stakeholders for individual key informant interviews (KIIs), either in person or remotely.

Other criteria can be included following discussion with programme stakeholders.

4.2.4 Primary data collection process

Primary data collection will focus primarily on local project stakeholders and gathering their perspectives. Target respondent groups will include:

- smallholder farmers, women and men (adults)
- local extension workers and advisers
- local government decision makers
- traders, transporters and other market-oriented entities
- other individuals and groups who have been involved in the sampled projects.

Methods will include primarily KIIs and focus group discussions (FGDs).

We will also conduct some KIIs with the project team for full coverage.

Development of data collection protocols

The interview protocols and topic guides will draw directly from the project theory of change and the priority outcomes, and the evaluation questions matrix. They will also be informed by the insights from the desk review. KII write-ups will be structured according to the evaluation matrix to facilitate analysis.

Target number of KIIs

To ensure a well-rounded case study, we would ideally aim to conduct between 15-20 KIIs per case study. However, this target number will likely vary in implementation, depending on the feasibility of access.

Practical considerations, risks and mitigations

- **Research sites:** Some projects have worked in more than one site within a country. We will need to select one site per case study to allow for an in-depth exploration of outcomes and context.
- **Feasibility**: Feasibility poses a significant risk It may not be possible (due to resource and time constraints) for the evaluators to travel to the project sites to speak to local stakeholders in-person. Some respondents may be able to readily access mobile phones and internet, but others in more remote locations may not. This could affect our coverage of the target groups. ***Mitigation:*** We will seek the advice of AgriFoSe project leaders and local researchers how best to consult with respondents and what kind of channels (e.g. Whats-App) could work. Contacts and appointments may need to be facilitated by project representatives to ensure a good response to the evaluators.
- **Ethical approval**: Ethical approvals will be vital because we are seeking to consult with vulnerable, low income populations, i.e. smallholder farmers, women from low income communities. With a number of universities involved in AgriFoSe, we will need to identify and agree where the ethical oversight is held and which ethical policy and process applies prior to the start of data collection.

  In addition, in some countries (notably Kenya and South Africa), formal ethical approval needs to be obtained from the national government via local institutions, at a cost, prior to the start of data collection.
- **Local languages**: The evaluators will need support with local languages. Including local researchers in the evaluation team may help to mitigate this.

4.3 Analytical approach

4.3.1 Deep dive case studies

The unit of analysis in the deep dive project case studies are the outcomes identified via the project ToC, and the causal processes contributing to these, including those catalysed by the project and those already present in the context.

The main analytical approach for the case studies is qualitative analysis, applied within a TBE design known as Contribution Analysis (CA).[2] Contribution analysis was developed by John Mayne in the early 2000s. It is a methodology used to identify the contribution a project or programme – has made to a change or set of changes. Contribution analysis is based on a recognition that it is difficult to prove direct attribution for many research for development interventions, because there are multiple causal factors at play within a context that have contributed to change, alongside the project of interest. CA provides a systematic approach for assessing each step of the ToC, and exploring additional enabling and inhibiting factors in the context, as well as alterative explanations.

[2] https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Contribution-analysis.pdf

We will combine CA with a deeper exploration of the causal processes or mechanisms and contextual factors at play (drawing on concepts from realist evaluation).

4.3.2 Programme level synthesis

The analytical approach for the synthesis will be a qualitative thematic synthesis, with the themes aligned with the priority outcomes identified in Step 1. New themes and variations that have emerged from the case studies will also be incorporated at this stage.

4.8 Evaluation matrix

– to be annexed

4.6 Strengths and limitations

– to be added.

5. Implementation

5.1 Team members

The evaluation team will be made up of the following roles and individuals:

- Team Leader: Isabel Vogel, AgriFoSe MEL adviser.
    - Responsibilities: Oversight of the outcome evaluation and implementation; development of data collection tools and guidance; programme-level synthesis and report; quality assurance, training and guidance of the team.
- Three/four evaluators: In-country researchers, who are not directly linked to the projects. The individuals are still to be identified.
    - Responsibilities: Lead 1-2 case studies; contribute to the desk review; lead on case study data collection and analysis: write-up of case studies.

5.2 Timeline and milestones

The timeline for the outcome evaluation runs from July 2024 – February 2025. Key milestones are as follows:

Suggested phases and milestones	Outputs/Deliverables	Timeline	Team level of effort (indicative)
1. Consultation with AgriFoSe2030 management and Challenge Leaders to refine scope of evaluation	- Agreed priority outcomes and causal processes to evaluate. - Agreed sample frame for selecting 4 deep dive projects	July - August	Team Leader: 2 days (already covered by existing contract)

	- Feasibility of data collection scoped. - Additional researchers identified to join team		
2. Desk review of 17 projects – End of Project Reports, Nairobi report, MEL tools, Change Stories.	- Annotated Excel table of documentary/secondary data, structured by priority outcomes, causal processes and associated contextual factors. - Additional literature reviewed to formalise descriptions of key causal mechanisms.	August	Team Lead: 4 -5 days (already covered by existing contract) Evaluators: 2 days each = 8 days
3. Sampling of four projects and preparation for data collection	- Sample of 4 projects identified - Ethical approval commenced - Data collection protocols and tools developed; analysis templates developed - Orientation and training of team members	September	Team Leader: 4 days (already covered by existing contract) Evaluators: 2 days each = 8 days
4. Data collection period	- Data collection implemented, locally and remotely. *- 10 KIIs per case study = 40 KIIs* - KIIs written up	October-November	Team Leader: 4 days Evaluators: 8 days each = 32
5. Analysis of data and development of the deep dive case studies and narrative case study reports.	- KIIs coded - Excel or Word analysis tables for each case study produced. - Team online workshops to share emerging findings and calibrate	November 2024 – January 2025	Team Leader: 4 days (mainly team guidance, developing templates and QA) Evaluators: 12 days each = 48

	- Narrative case study reports produced		
6. Programme level synthesis and report	- Programme -level synthesis from desk review and case studies against the programme level theory of change. Synthesis report, to feed in to the End-of-programme report	January – February 2025	Team Leader: 15 days
Total			**Team Leader:** 23 days (new contract 10 days (covered by existing contract) **Evaluators:** 96 days