



Resilient Food Systems (RFS) Regional Hub Project

Mid-Term Review: RFS Regional Hub Project

October 1, 2021

Final Report

LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AVSF	Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières
AWPB	Annual workplan and budget
AUC/ECA	African Union Commission/Economic Commission for Africa
BD	Biodiversity
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CCA	Country common analysis
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGIAR	Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research
CI	Conservation International
CI	Core Indicator
CIRAD	Agricultural Research Centre for International Development
COP	Community of practice
CP	Country Project
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DATAR	Diversity Assessment Tool for Agrobiodiversity and Resilience
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECG	Environment, climate change, gender and social inclusion division (IFAD)
EOI	Expression of interest
ESA	European Space Agency's Earth Observation for Sustainable Development
EO4SD	Development
ESG	Environmental, social and governance
Ex-ACT	Ex-ante Carbon Balance Tool
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFS	Farmer Field School
FIES	Food insecurity experience scale
GEB	Global environmental benefit
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEFSEC	GEF Secretariat
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services

GHG	Greenhouse gas
GIS	Geographic Information System
GTA	Gender Transformative Approach
HDDS	Household Dietary Diversity Survey
IAP	Integrated Approach Pilots
IAP-FS	Integrated Approach Pilots Food Security
ICRAF	World Agroforestry
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INRM	Integrated Natural Resource Management
IP	Impact Program
KM	Knowledge management
LD	Land degradation
LDN	Land degradation neutrality
LDSF	Land Degradation Surveillance Framework
M&A	Monitoring and assessment
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MPAT	Multidimensional Poverty Assessment Tool
MTR	Midterm Review
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
OFP	Operational focal point
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PDR	Project Design Report
PFD	Program Framework Document
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PPP	Public Private Partnership
QAE	Quality-at-entry
RFS	Resilient Food Systems

RFSP	Resilient Food Systems Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHARED	Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence Based Decision Making
SHARP	Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of Climate Resilience of Farmers and Pastoralists
SLM	Sustainable land management
SOFI	State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPI	Science and Policy Interface
STAP	Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TM	Task manager
TNC	The Nature Conservancy

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	7
A. Introduction.....	15
Programme overview.....	15
MTR objectives.....	17
Approach and methodology	17
Report outline	18
B. Programme design and early implementation	18
Quality of design and implementation risks	18
RFS start-up and implementation (timeline)	21
C. Progress and results by component	24
Component 1 (Engage): Institutional Frameworks – Science and Policy Interface.....	24
Component 2 (Act): Scaling up of integrated approaches	32
UNDP/AGRA sub-component 2.1	32
FAO sub-component 2.2	34
Component 3 (Track): Monitoring and assessment	38
Sub-components 3.1/3.2: Conservation International	39
Global Environmental Benefits	44
Sub-component 3.3: Biodiversity.....	47
Component 4: Programmatic impact, visibility and coherence	50
Sub-component 4.1 - Programme coherence: Coordination, planning and reporting	51
IFAD role in the RFS programme and Hub project management.....	55
Financial management.....	56
Efficiency of Hub project start-up.....	57
Sub-component 4.2: Knowledge management, communication and learning.....	59
Sub-component 4.3: [Coherent M&E and] Programme and Hub project impact assessment facilitated.....	61
D. Programmatic value-addition	66
Introduction	66
Effectiveness in working with Country Projects	67
Hub Agency partnerships and cooperation – working across components.....	74
Private sector partnerships.....	76
Gender equality and women’s participation	77
Relevance	80

Summary assessment and rating: Programmatic Value Addition	81
Recommendations	82
E. Conclusions and way forward.....	83
Conclusions	83
Way forward and exit	84
Main recommendations.....	84
Extension.....	85

Summary: RFS Hub project performance ratings

Overall RFS Hub project performance	Satisfactory
Component 1: Institutional frameworks and policy	Moderately satisfactory
Component 2: Scaling up	Satisfactory
Component 3: Monitoring and assessment	Satisfactory
Component 4: Programmatic impact, visibility and coherence	Satisfactory
Programmatic value addition	Moderately satisfactory

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The **Resilient Food Systems (RFS) Programme** is one of three Integrated Approach Pilots (IAP) funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF-6) and implemented from 2017-22. Core grant financing (US\$116 million) and an additional US\$785 million in co-financing. The **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** leads the implementation of the whole programme IFAD and 7 CP, with 5 CP implemented by UNDP, FAO, UNIDO and the World Bank. **The RFS Programme covers 12 country projects (CP)** in the Western, Eastern and Southern regions of sub-Saharan Africa in semi-arid and mountainous environments.
2. All 12 CP are connected by the **Regional Hub project**, a cross-cutting coordination and knowledge platform that ensures coherence, technical support for CP, Programme M&E and adaptive learning and dissemination. The Regional Hub project is executed by four GEF Agencies and three non-Agencies, and hosted by the World Agroforestry (ICRAF) in Nairobi. The **objective of this MTR** was to review performance and results of the Hub project, analyze partnerships and cooperation and recommend mid-way adjustments. This MTR was carried out as a desk review of relevant documents and online meetings.
3. **RFS quality-at-entry strongly affected the performance of the Regional Hub project and the RFS Programme as a whole.** The design of the RFS programme and Hub project were well formulated and thought through but had some critical design weaknesses. First, parallel design of RFS programme/hub project and CP and difficult decision processes about RFS hub project composition led to relatively few interactions about jointly planned interventions, sub-components and M&A approaches among RFS partners before programme and CP launch. Programme coherence, understanding and ownership in CP was relatively weak. An exception were the commonly applied core components of Engage, Act and Track.
4. Secondly, CP did not budget for necessary payments for Hub project services, for instance through their GEF incentive payments for RFS participation. Thirdly, the complexity of multi-agency implementation - with seven executing partners in the Hub project, IFAD as lead Agency and two additional Agencies implementing CP - led to high coordination and transaction costs. These three design weaknesses turned into a considerable design legacy throughout RFS project execution. COVID-19 further challenged Hub project and Programme performance. The RFS Hub project worked hard to mitigate these design and external effects that weighed on programme implementation.

Performance by component

Component 1 (Engage): Institutional frameworks - Science and Policy Interface

5. Hub project Component 1 “Engage” supported institutional frameworks, platforms and policy dialogue at multiple scales and was supposed to develop a Science and Policy Interface (SPI). **The component was ambitiously and broadly designed and started up slowly.** There was no real compass for operationalizing this complex component particularly in its multi-scale local, national and regional dimensions. Institutional continuity and memory between design and implementation in both Agencies were weak and the administrative hurdles for jointly recruiting a Science Policy Specialist as component manager proved insurmountable. The two executing Agencies (FAO and UNEP) spent much time finalizing the operational strategy paper and agreeing on respective roles for implementation.
6. Some outputs, mainly training sessions and manuals with background information, were delivered over time and several promising activities had started by mid-term in several RFS CP, but Agency collaboration remained weak despite good intentions. The SPI has not yet been effectively established. Component 1 performance was rated as moderately satisfactory.

Component 2 (Act): Scaling up of integrated approaches

7. **UNDP/AGRA and FAO are showing good progress at mid-term in their RFS related activities in Component 2 ‘Scaling up of Integrated Approach’.** UNDP/AGRA activities have been considerably delayed, however, due to contracting problems. **FAO** has been active through expansion of the Farmer Field School (FFS) model in CP and the region, with many knowledge products and expanded attention to agro-ecology and INRM. But FAO also found that CP often work in small ‘cells’, relatively isolated from other projects, which limits their interest in broader networking, services, policy dialogue and scaling-up. **UNDP/AGRA** developed a high-quality training manual on green value chains and is starting work in three regions. Initial problems in attracting CP interest in green value chain analyses and actions were gradually overcome as projects mature and pay more attention to value chains. Early integration in CP design would have been helpful. Component 2 performance was rated as satisfactory.

Component 3 (Track): Monitoring and assessment

8. **Hub support for M&A of resilience and programme impact on resilience was not well designed and roles and responsibilities were initially not well assigned.** Certain critical M&A tasks such as support for household resilience and CP impact assessments went beyond traditional expertise and capacity of Conservation International (CI), the designated lead Agency for this component. CI expertise is stronger on bio-physical and environmental resilience indicators than on those of socio-economic and food-security. Important responsibilities for M&A were taken on by ICRAF and FAO in late 2019. This turned M&A support in the RFS hub project

around and led to a stocktaking of tools and baselines in CP, re-enforced CP M&A training on resilience assessment and the development of the comprehensive RFS Results Framework.

9. **Conservation International produced and disseminated many useful M&A tools and knowledge products**, including the resilience atlas, an GIS based environmental and land degradation baseline, mapping of RFS country projects, and CP training. But CI work was constrained by low country demand for its M&A tools, specialized expertise and services since GEF CP executing Agencies preferred to use their own M&A tools and approaches. **Bioversity International** (with a sub-grant administered by UNEP) also contributed to M&A assessment. The organization has been developing a practical tool for M&A to support agro-biodiversity and rolling it out in several countries, including a tablet-based App to assess location specific needs and interventions and enable policies and markets. Although delayed, its activities and plans for capacity building and operationalizing its application are promising.
10. The diversity of approaches in addressing and measuring resilience and food security in the RFS, differences by CP and Implementing Agencies of understanding and focus within the broader resilience concept, and specific country contexts complicated the identification of **common indicators, aggregation and reporting of resilience across the RFS**. Some countries essentially focused on ecosystem regeneration and agro-biodiversity, whilst others were more concerned with food security and community-level resilience. For this reason and upon guidance from the GEF most RFS reporting on resilience and food security was done at CP rather than regional level.
11. Component 3 performance was rated as satisfactory.

Component 4: Programmatic impact, visibility and coherence

4.1 Coordination and reporting

12. **The Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) and ICRAF team were effectively established and are performing well, particularly in Knowledge and Communication and M&E, despite some delays in set-up.** Component 4 work is widely appreciated by CP and Hub Agencies. RFS Annual Workshops with CP and other stakeholders and webinars during COVID-10 are well attended, albeit with often-fluctuating CP representatives.
13. **Collaboration between IFAD as Lead of the programme and ICRAF as Coordinator of the Hub project** on RFS Programme and Hub project coordination and management worked well at the operational level. **The PCU support team**, composed of dedicated members from all Hub Agencies and mainly based in Nairobi (pre-COVID-19) appreciated interactions across Hub component boundaries. But formal reporting lines to the PCU coordinator were never established as planned and cross-component workplan coordination and execution remain limited. Inter-Agency information flow and coordination are facilitated through regular quarterly meetings, which usually includes Agency headquarters staff.

14. **PCU and IFAD reported effectively and timely to GEFSEC** on the progress of the Hub project. Hub Agencies provided their progress and financial reports regularly, but several Agencies have been late with audit reports. Some deficiencies were found in **cross-agency planning for annual programmes and working with CP**, as programming and reporting is done individually by each Hub Agency. The assessment of Agency annual outputs and other results against planned, allocated expenditures could be done more systematically.
15. With the progress of RFS programme and Hub project execution **the IFAD Lead Agency task manager had to take on a stronger RFS coordination and portfolio management role than initially planned**. UN Agencies, and some countries, were reluctant to directly report to or deal with ICRAF as an organization that is not part of the UN or GEF Agency system. The IFAD task manager and the ICRAF RFS Programme/project coordinator have been cooperating well and effectively as a team throughout these changes.

4.2 Knowledge management, communication and learning

16. **The RFS knowledge and communication team established a well-designed RFS web page with many knowledge and communication products** that helped connect the countries, Hub partners and others to the RFS. It generated a series of monthly RFS bulletins, technical reports and stories and a repository of online information, products and references. Performance is excellent in this respect. But RFS knowledge management also faced some limitations and has missed some opportunities so far. Most importantly, KM was found to have relatively low priority for CP, particularly in early project phases. Few countries have dedicated and capable knowledge management experts which limits interactive knowledge management with the Hub and dissemination. Currently, and due to prioritization of other activities, the RFS also knows still relatively little about utilization and impact of central RFS knowledge and communication products and effectiveness of training by Hub Agencies in the RFS. Communities of Practice are just starting to emerge.

4.3 RFS Programme results framework and RFS Programme M&E plan

17. **Component 4 developed a coherent RFS M&E plan published in early 2021 with a comprehensive RFS programme results framework** that covers the indicators, targets and results validation for the RFS as a whole and for the RFS Hub project and its components. The system was established in full consultation with CP and Hub Agencies, and it included the review and updating of all indicator targets and achievements. The Hub project also provided extensive support for CP in their transition to the latest GEF-7 core indicators. The RFS results framework and CP interactions permitted the aggregation and critical assessment of key RFS results indicators across the RFS including on Global Environmental Benefits and intermediate progress indicators.

18. All three Annual RFS programming workshops and a special M&E workshop in 2019 included sessions dedicated to improving capacity of country teams on monitoring tools. In addition, specific trainings were provided to countries as per their demand. Outcome mapping was introduced in 4 countries and its adoption is being followed-up. Since 2020 an **online platform (SmartME)** provides up-to-date M&E information from CP and the Hub project.
19. Component 4 performance was rated as satisfactory.

Efficiency

20. **Efficiency of Hub project start-up was mixed by Component** and reasons for longer start-up delays reached from sub-contracting issues, recruitment problems, lack of clarity of strategy to the need to prepare comprehensive training manuals. **Agency withdrawals** from the IFAD account as of March 2021 are between 56 per cent for Conservation International and 74 per cent for UNEP (including the full Bioversity sub-grant).

Programmatic value-addition

21. **The RFS has not yet fully capitalized on opportunities for a strong programmatic value addition (PVA), last but not least due to weak design of the RFS Programme and Hub project in this respect.** The Regional Hub project was expected to play a critical role for PVA through generating programme coherence, promoting the integrated approach and adaptive knowledge management and learning. Hub Agencies and other technical partners that bring in specific skills and expertise would work together, and they would work closely with country projects to deal with the inherent complexity of the integrated approach and achieve systemic shifts in operations and policy.
22. **The main programmatic value addition in the RFS has come from the annual meetings, formal and informal interactions between CP and hub Agencies, webinars and exchange of knowledge and experiences through the rich set of RFS communication channels and materials. But pro-active CP participation in the RFS and demand for Hub Agency services remained moderate.** Reasons are related to RFS design related, as mentioned earlier, and to specific CP circumstances, project cycle phases and readiness. Hub service supply and demand by CP often does not match well. CP interest in the RFS has been growing over time through a series of RFS events and trust-building efforts. Yet the uncertainty of financing in-country interactions and interventions by Hub Agencies remains a major stumbling block. The adaptive capacity of several Hub Agencies to identify and allocate additional resources in this respect has been limited.
23. **As far as Hub Agencies are concerned, their participation in common events and information exchanges was good but cooperation in Hub execution has been**

sporadic for most parts. Mechanisms and incentives to overcome silo tendencies and mentalities were not well defined in RFS Hub project design, nor in Agency workplans, budgets and targets. But RFS experience also shows that cooperation can work, and indeed works best, when it develops organically over time through collaborative windows of opportunities in win-win situations, in countries and the region.

24. There is potential for good programmatic value addition in the RFS through further exploring the effectiveness of innovations and models of support for **gender equality and women's participation and for private sector engagement**, and of measuring such support. Gender equality was identified as a crucial determinant of resilience both at household and community levels. The RFS Hub developed a monitoring framework that shifts from gender indicator lists to a model that emphasizes empowerment. A practical guidance note on gender-responsive project implementation was widely disseminated. Yet indicators on formalizing women's land rights and NRM access are still only sparsely used by CP. **PPP platforms are frequently applied in CP.** At this point, the conditions under which they operate and to what extent they are amenable to adoption of green value chain aspects are less well known.
25. Performance of Programmatic value addition was rated as moderately satisfactory.

Conclusions

26. The RFS Hub project performed well in terms of overall relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, after some initial delays. Project and Programme partners adjusted swiftly to COVID-19 conditions and changed their delivery mechanisms. At times the aspirational integrated and multi-scale RFS agenda, its institutional complexity and the number of partners proved challenging.
27. The Hub project contributed to many positive results and early outcomes in the RFS Programme that are well documented although progress has not been symmetric, with weaknesses on the policy and institutional sides. Yet, the RFS already had a number of positive partnership and programme effects particularly through providing the opportunity and a forum for a rich dialogue among country programmes and with Hub Agencies, compared with previous GEF programmes. Progress was made around a better understanding of integrated programme objectives, of the role of platforms, partnerships, and private sector cooperation for such an integrated approach, and measuring and assessing resilience in all of this.
28. Readiness for close cooperation, partnerships and adaptation to emerging opportunities and challenges were slower to develop, partly due to a design legacy of less coherence, clarity and flexibility than would have been preferable. This affected demand and work in the countries themselves. There is still potential to further develop programmatic value addition in the remainder of the Programme.

29. In sum, the RFS Programme and its Hub project have been a milestone for new ways of doing business for resilience in GEF and it has provided a number of learning opportunities for all those involved. The overall performance of the RFS Hub project was rated as satisfactory.

Way forward and exit

30. **The RFS is a pilot programme that will not be continued after its completion in 2022** (or mid-2023 with the six-month extension proposed by this MTR). Sustainability and scaling-up potential of many activities of the Hub project is good since they are being carried out by well-established Agencies that are likely to carry them forward. The sustainability of the knowledge, communication and CoP platform (including the website) is less assured as none of the current partners has expressed interest so far.
31. **All hub Agencies are behind in their scheduled expenditures and disbursements**, except for ICRAF. By end-2020 disbursements in terms of actual expenditures ranged from 28 per cent for Bioversity to 47 per cent for Conservation International (with ICRAF at 64 per cent). Up to five country projects are unlikely to complete their operations by 2022. **This suggests that there may be merit in an extension of certain Hub Project activities until mid-2023.**

Recommendations

32. The main recommendations by the MTR for the final phase of the RFS Regional Hub project support of the RFS Programme are:
- 1. Full-scale roll-out of component interventions in countries and country projects**, with a focus on working in selected CP that are interested and capable to cooperate effectively. This may require for some Agencies some reallocation of resources for country work. The primary target would be to complete all work by end 2022, with a potential 6-month extension where this is not possible.
 - 2. Adaptive management of Hub Agency workplans and budgets for 2022 through a stock-taking exercise.** This should help to facilitate Agency operations in CP and other ways of programmatic value addition through stronger cooperation as well as contributions to systematic lessons learning and dissemination during the final phase of the RFS Programme.
 - 3. A concerted flagship effort of synthesizing and disseminating critical lessons learnt in the RFS Programme to selected audiences.**
 - Valuable experiences and lessons of CP and Hub Agencies over the years should be mined, with critical reflections to underline the synergistic and pilot nature of the RFS and identify what works and what does not.

- A series of events should inform and, if possible, influence policy and institutions in countries, at regional policy level (eg. AUC, ECA, NEPAD, CAADP), and other collaborative science and policy platforms and partnerships.
- All Hub Agency partners should contribute to this effort.

4. An M&A assessment on the evolving understanding and measurement of resilience in CP and CP Implementing Agencies, as a follow-up to the earlier resilience assessment and TAG involvement, particularly in view of lessons to be drawn from the RFS Programme and the evaluability of impact during the RFSP terminal evaluation expected for 2023.

5. IFAD and ICRAF should further explore the feasibility and options of migrating the RFS K&L platform to potentially interested parties or merging it with other knowledge platforms, such as NEPAD, UN Agencies or CG centers.

33. Additionally, the MTR report made a number of component specific recommendations (see main text for details). They aim to (i) generate clearer intervention and results focus, including gender and private sector; (ii) work more closely with and in countries and CP; (iii) cooperate among agencies within and across components; (iv) further proceed in knowledge management and M&E; and (v) synthesize relevant experiences and lessons from RFS engagement.

A. Introduction

Programme overview

1. The **Resilient Food Systems (RFS) Programme** is one of three Integrated Approach Pilots (IAP) funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in GEF-6 (2014-18).¹ Through the RFS Programme, GEF seeks to position the management of natural capital as a priority in ongoing efforts to transform the agricultural sector, ensure sustainable food production in sub-Saharan Africa and address food insecurity as a driver of environmental degradation.
2. The RFS Programme covers 12 country projects (CP)² implemented in: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. All 12 CP are connected by the Regional Hub project, a cross-cutting coordination and knowledge platform and central Programme instrument for coordination and coherence, CP technical support, Programme M&E and adaptive learning and dissemination beyond the RFS Programme itself. The Regional Hub project is executed by a coalition of partners (four GEF Agencies and three non-Agencies) who work with key stakeholders in each country project to build programmatic coherence and establish beneficial linkages.
3. **Programme and project implementation and execution arrangements.** The RFS Programme is being implemented from 2017–2022. GEF led the overall Programme design and provides its core grant financing (US\$116 million). IFAD was instrumental in co-designing the Regional Hub project. The Programme counts an additional US\$785 million in co-financing provided by technical agencies, governments and other partners. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) leads the implementation of the whole programme and is the GEF agency responsible for the Regional Hub project and seven CP: Burkina Faso, Eswatini, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Tanzania, and Senegal (the latter co-led with UNIDO). IFAD has lead, oversight and financial management responsibilities, but no execution functions, as IFAD is by its statute not an executing Agency. The Regional Hub project is executed through five primary IFAD grantees (FAO, UNEP, UNDP, Conservation International, and ICRAF) and two sub-grantees (AGRA and Bioversity International). UNDP is also (co-) responsible for implementing three CP (Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda) as FAO is (co-)responsible for two CP (Burundi, Uganda).

¹ The Programme was initially known as Food Security IAP or GEF-IAP-FS, and it is formally titled “Integrated Approach Programme on Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa”. After consultations between ICRAF, IFAD, GEF and all other programme stakeholders (initiated at the 3rd Annual Workshop in Ghana), the programme was rebranded in mid-2019 as “Resilient Food Systems”.

² Also called child projects in GEF programmes. This reports uses the term country projects as commonly used in the RFS Programme.

4. The **Programme/Hub Project Coordination Unit (PCU)** is hosted by the World Agroforestry (ICRAF) in Nairobi, Kenya, and it includes members of the different Regional Hub partner Agencies. Component 1 of this project, focused on institutional frameworks and policy, is co-led by FAO and UNEP; Component 2, targeting the upscaling of integrated approaches, is implemented by UNDP, AGRA and FAO; Component 3, on monitoring and assessment, is implemented by CI and Bioversity International, including some UNEP, FAO, and ICRAF contributions; and Component 4, responsible for overall coordination, impact, visibility and coherence, is led by ICRAF.
5. The RFS has a **Consultative Committee** comprising senior policy makers from all 12 countries and representatives from funding and implementing partners. When needed, technical advisory groups (TAG) are constituted with subject-matter experts from selected partners and external collaborators to guide the programme on specific technical and scientific issues.

RFS programme value added

6. **Programmatic value addition.** Three aspects of RFS Programme implementation would contribute to programmatic synergies and value addition:
 - i. The coherence of overall RFS Programme objectives and those of the CP, interactions by CP with Hub project Agencies as knowledge partners and service providers, and an adaptive and mutual learning approach across the Programme;
 - ii. Broad dissemination of innovative models and partnerships from the RFS Programme, based on experiences and lessons learnt from CP and Hub Agency support. This is a main responsibility of the Hub Project Coordination Unit (PCU), individual Hub Agencies, and the Lead Agency; and
 - iii. A strong application of the GEF integrated approach, i.e. the horizontal and vertical integration of multiple GEF focal areas, multiple scales and multiple partners; engaging institutionally; acting in landscapes and value chains; and tracking food security and resilience effects.
7. **Integrated approach.** The GEF IAP integrated approach is characterized by several principles and synergies. A holistic and systems-based approach brings different partners together, at different levels. Partners include Government agencies at sub-national and national levels, regional partners, CSOs, private sector, and GEF accredited and non-accredited agencies. Integration combines and works across the different GEF focal areas of land degradation, biodiversity and climate change through landscape approaches (horizontal dimension), and across multiple scales, from village community to national and regional levels, through a variety of partnerships, platforms and commodity value chains (vertical dimension). Interactions between the Hub and country projects are critical for programme rationale and performance. Information is expected to flow in both directions and requires the active participation of CP in the Hub and the programme as a whole.

MTR objectives

8. The objectives of the MTR³ are to:
 - i. Review the effectiveness, efficiency and timely implementation of the Regional Hub project; and determine if it is achieving the expected results;
 - ii. Assess risks related to the achievement of results;
 - iii. Analyze the effectiveness of the implementation of partnership agreements, including coordination mechanisms between the Hub-partners in delivering their components;
 - iv. Highlight key technical achievements and emerging lessons learned from Hub project development, implementation and management; and
 - v. Identify issues requiring decisions and remedial action and propose mid-way corrections and/or adjustments and management measures, as necessary.

Approach and methodology

9. The MTR evaluated RFS Hub project performance with regard to the standard evaluation criteria. More detailed evaluation questions and criteria are summarized in Annex II. The review started from the well formulated ToC and RFS Hub project results framework.

Theory of Change and RFS results framework

10. The Theory of Change (ToC) for the RFS is well described in the project design documents and presented graphically in the annual highlights reports (Annex I). The ToC is based on the three main Programme themes of Engage, Act and Track, and specific programme outcomes and assumptions. In short, the ToC consists of developing and testing transformative INRM innovations, green commodity value chains and related measurements of food security and resilience at local and national levels. It calls for engaging stakeholders, mainstreaming these innovations and measurements and influencing behaviors at all levels, coupled with updated approaches for learning, adaptive management and scaling-up. Key stakeholder groups, governments and private would recognize the importance of sustainable agriculture INRM and conservation and support the process with enabling policies, incentives and investments. The recent development of a consolidated RFS Programme results framework changed a few elements of the Theory of Change, but only marginally. The results framework further clarified intermediate outcomes and assumptions of the Programme.

Methodology

11. The MTR as presented in this document was done completely as a desk study of relevant documents and online meetings. This included interviews with members of

³ These objectives summarize those in the MTR TOR related to the MTR of the Hub project

the Regional Hub Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and other representatives from executing Agencies and IFAD (see Annex X for a list of documents reviewed and Agencies interviewed). This report is the second draft that incorporates and addresses observations and comments from all participating Hub Agencies.

Limitations

12. This report reviews the specific contributions of the MTR Hub project to the overall RFS programme. It provides information on programme wide results, such as those in CP, only to the extent that this falls under the responsibility of the Hub project. This includes in particular how the hub project has facilitated the coordinated and aggregate reporting of delivery of programme results, including GEBs and intermediate results, in CP.

Report outline

13. The report starts with some contextual information of the RFS Hub project and the RFS Programme concerning design and start-up of implementation. It then analyzes performance by Hub project component, followed by a section on programmatic value addition. Each component and the cross-cutting question of programmatic value addition are rated separately. The report concludes with recommendations for the way forward.

B. Programme design and early implementation

14. The design and quality-at-entry of the RFS Programme, the circumstances of early implementation, and the emerging COVID-19 crisis in early 2020 all significantly affected the performance of the RFS Programme and the Regional Hub project. For this reason some related issues will be reviewed in the following, as context for the main performance analysis of the Programme.

Quality of design and implementation risks

Design process and Programme start-up

15. After GEF CEO endorsement of the overall RFS Programme Framework Document (PFD) in March 2015 it took two years to develop the specific RFS programmatic, institutional and oversight arrangements through the Regional Hub project and IFAD overall guidance and coordination as Lead Agency. GEF business processes, uncertainties about Hub partners, and lengthy negotiations between the GEF Secretariat, IFAD and Hub project Agencies delayed the completion of the Project Design Report (PDR) and the GEF CEO endorsement document. This reduced the opportunities of early Hub project support for CP design and coherent M&E across CP (2017 GEF IEO GEF-6 IAP Formative Review). The Regional Hub project was eventually endorsed in March 2017. By then, most of the CP had been designed, and 9 of 12 CP started their operations by June 2017, at about the same time when the Programme

and Regional Hub project were inaugurated with a stakeholder workshop in Addis Ababa.

Quality at entry

16. RFS Programme design was based on the common IAP framework of an integrated approach, a thorough review of GEF lessons learnt in previous programmatic approaches, and the long-term development by GEF of an integrated Theory of Change (see PDR Appendix 4, p.73). The RFS also was guided by the Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation Assessment Framework (RAPTA). The Regional Hub project design documents provide comprehensive and detailed guidance on Programme and Regional Hub project objectives, governance and execution.⁴
17. **Formative review of GEF-6 IAP.** The formative review of all three GEF-6 IAPs by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (GEF-IEO) in 2017 concluded that (i) the IAPs were well designed and aligned with multiple Conventions and country environmental priorities; (ii) the Programmes were innovative and flexible, but that the variety of indicators could hinder aggregation across CP; (iii) the multitude of partners offered a variety of comparative advantages but also added complexity; and (iv) the start-up process was overall positive, except for unclear rules of engagement of GEF Secretariat and Agencies, transparency in selection of GEF Agencies and countries and communication on technical design.
18. **Coherence and Theory of Change.** The RFS Programme adopted an innovative Theory of Change that led to coherence of CP along the three components of the RFS of Engage, Act and Track (FS-IAP Technical Review working paper⁵). Consultations took place with GEF Operational Focal Points from eligible CP, other GEF Agencies and potential partners in a series of workshops (PDR). The choice of priority activities for the Hub project was based in part on the nature of the country projects and country project interest in various options (a questionnaire was sent to each CP design team and again after project start-up). In the end, the opportunity was missed to prioritize a few common approaches, interventions, technologies and M&E tools across country projects that could have been further tested, developed and championed within and beyond the Programme (FS-IAP Technical Review). Guidance from RFS Programme Lead and other GEF Agencies and opportunities for discussions with CP on design specifics were limited.

Risks

19. **Number of Hub Agencies.** The RFS Programme has a high number of Hub executing Agencies and CP implementing Agencies (ten). This supported the GEF vision of the

⁴ The CEO Endorsed Document for GEF project 9140 'Cross-cutting capacity building, knowledge services and coordination project for the Food Security IAP' and the more detailed IFAD Project Design Report

⁵ The Author of the 2017 Technical Report is also the MTR consultant.

RFSP as a convening power for the environment and brought in different competencies, view-points and experiences. But it also spread Hub project financial resources thin, led to more competition among Agencies, and increased the complexity of planning and execution of the Hub project. Three Agencies were added at a relatively late stage of RFS Programme and Hub-project development: ICRAF, CI and AGRA. The 2017 GEF-IEO formative review saw this as a potential risk for implementation. The risk was well managed by IFAD and eventually these three Agencies performed satisfactorily in the RFS hub (as shown in section C of this MTR).

20. **Effective cooperation.** The RFS PDR assessed the risk for effective Hub Agency cooperation, alignment of individual Agency platforms, baseline programs and interventions as low since the collaborative arrangements developed through the PDR would ensure smooth cooperation and clear divisions of roles and responsibilities for different Programme/Hub project components and Agencies (PDR, p. 42). The PDR also saw only a low risk that different CP and Hub project start-up dates and country project conditions and implementation circumstances (e.g. co-financing projects) could endanger the perceived momentum gained during the RFSP preparation phase. Hub project components 1 and 3 were expected to be up and running fast, and with additional support and an early focus on selecting M&A tools for establishing baselines.
21. **Engagement with CP.** The PDR clearly noted that the nature and degree of engagement the Hub project would have with any given country project is influenced by CP demand and Hub Agency supply. The level of support from the Hub project to a country project would depend in part on the willingness/ability to cost-share technical assistance and for CP to participate in opportunities generated by the Hub project (for example South-South learning exchanges) etc.. This potential budgetary constraint was stated prominently in the PDR Executive Summary, but not listed and mitigated as a risk.

Design legacy

22. **RFS programme and Hub project design were well thought through and formulated, but had also some key design weaknesses that were well known at inception.** First, the phasing of programme/hub project and CP was not ideal: Parallel design of Hub project and CP and limited CP participation and interactions on interventions and M&A specifics led to less Programme coherence than planned and expected. Differences in starting dates and the large number of CP Implementing Agencies (five) further complicated timely interactions between CP and Hub project Agencies (although there was overlap among them). Secondly, effective CP demand and interests in the Hub, and particularly for technical services provided by Hub Agencies, were not clear, at least partly related to the first point. This was compounded by the fact that there has been ambiguity about who is supposed to pay for Hub services that are delivered directly and specifically in countries for CP. Countries show low

willingness to pay and Hub Agencies point to limited specific cost allocations in their agreed Annual Work Plans and Budgets to work with CP in countries. Third, complexity in multi-agency implementation – 7 grant (sub-)agreements were required for the RFS Hub Project – led to high transaction costs. Spreading the Hub project budget thinly across many Agencies affected implementation and Agency willingness for adaptive measures to facilitate cooperation.

23. **These three key weaknesses in design turned into a considerable negative design legacy throughout RFS Programme execution** (as shown in this MTR). The section on Challenges and Lessons Learnt of the RFS Annual Report 2018/19 (p.115) already pointed to problems generated through the intricate institutional structure of the Regional Hub project, challenges of collaboration among Agencies that have not worked together before, and delayed start-up of Hub and several CP in the initial phase of RFS Programme execution.
24. **Design weaknesses of GEF-6 IAPs have been recognized by the GEF and Agencies.**⁶ They are being avoided, or at least mitigated in GEF-7 Impact Programmes (IP) through enhancing the phasing of regional and global Hub/Knowledge platforms and CP, better structuring of initial interactions with CP on common Programme approaches and interventions, and clarifying the use of GEF CP incentive funds for CP participation in IPs. The number of Agency partners is reduced and the role of the Lead Agency is strengthened.

RFS start-up and implementation (timeline)

25. RFS start-up progressed somewhat slower than expected due to the large number of grant and sub-grant agreements and the time it took for all critical Hub Agency personnel and consultants to be in place. The **RFS Programme Launch workshop in July 2017** coincided with the start of most CP, but **grant agreements** with most Hub executing Agencies were not finalized until March through May 2018 (Table 1). Two sub-agreements with AGRA and UNEP followed later that year. The ICRAF Programme/Project Coordinator was in place early on (June 2017), and the current IFAD task manager took over from his predecessor in early 2018.
26. **Two annual workshops in Nairobi (Kenya May 2018) and Bolgatanga (Ghana February 2019)** allowed Agencies and CP to further familiarize themselves with the Programme and each other. These workshops were instrumental to commence the Hub work with country teams. A number of **RFS outreach activities at high-level events** in the region and globally, spearheaded by IFAD, introduced the RFS programme to a wider audience between Sept. 2019 and Feb. 2020. As elsewhere, the **emerging COVID-19 epidemic** changed the ways and pace in which the RFSP and the Hub project operated and progressed in 2020.

⁶ 2021 GEF-IEO Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach

27. **COVID-19 presented a programme wide challenge.** It disrupted the Hub PCU work and derailed the delivery of important outputs, such as the long-planned 4th RFS Annual Workshop of March 2020 and its accompanying training sessions. It required to postpone several in-country trainings, in addition to the cancellation of scheduled missions and field visits. Partner agencies revised their approaches and adopted more virtual meetings. The PCU made efforts to adjust to the crisis, starting with a survey on the impacts of the pandemic across the RFS portfolio. Its results were widely shared. The PCU supported country teams, such as through the production of a **Guidance Note on Working from Home**; a field training guide on **Running farmer field schools in times of COVID-19** and material produced under FAO's rural information campaign for advisory services on precautions against COVID-19. **RFS internal bulletins and news-letters** covered news related to COVID-19, and virtual resources and opportunities were promoted. A virtual workshop was organized with the African Union Commission in mid-2020 on **Rural Livelihoods in the Context of COVID-19**. A series of virtual meetings and webinars in the second part of 2021 replaced the Annual Planning Workshop.
28. Although work and training were largely upheld and adapted under COVID-19 conditions its delivery was far from ideal, particularly for a Programme that strongly relies on personal communication, relationships and working with teams in the field. Ultimately the arrival of COVID-19 also meant that the RFS Programme and the Hub project had only somewhat more than a year to establish itself, from late 2018 after all Hub-Agencies were formally contracted through early 2020 when COVID-19 hit. **The COVID-19 situation has to be kept in mind as a negative cross-cutting performance factor throughout this MTR.** However, it will not be specifically mentioned in the text to avoid repetitions.

Table 1 - RFS Timeline of start-up and implementation

	Covid 19	RFS Workshops	Grant signed	Agreements	Other events
2017					
May – Sept.		1 st Programme Launch Workshop Addis Ababa (July 2017)	ICRAF (May 2017)		PCU Programme/Project Coordinator Starting Date Rodrigo Cianella (ICRAF)
Oct. – Dec.					
2018					
Jan – March			CI (March 2018)		Transfer IFAD Project Task Manager to Jonky Tenou
April - June		2 nd Annual Workshop Nairobi (May 2018)	FAO (April 2018) UNDP (April 2018) UNEP (May 2018)		
July – Sept.			UNDP/AGRA (Sept. 2018)		
Oct. – Dec.			UNEP/Bioversity (Dec. 2018)		
2019					
Jan – March		3 rd Annual Programme Workshop Bolgatanga, Ghana (Feb. 2019)			
April - June					
July – Sept.					-UNCCD New Dehli COP 14 (Sept. 2019)
Oct. – Dec.		M&E workshop Nairobi (Nov. 2019)			-Global Forum for Rural Advisory Systems Jamaica (Oct. 2019) -17 th Regular Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (Nov. 2019)
2020					
Jan – March		[4 th Annual workshop Dakar canceled (March 2020)]			Programme Highlights Report 2018/19 published -East-Africa Expanded Constituency Workshop Nairobi
April - June					
July – Sept.					-Rural Livelihoods in the context of COVID-19 (AUC)
Oct. – Dec.					
2021					
Jan – March					Programme Highlights Report 2020 published
April – Sept.		Virtual annual workshop (July – Sept. 2021)			MTR

C. Progress and results by component

Component 1 (Engage): Institutional Frameworks – Science and Policy Interface

Obj. 1 – Institutional Frameworks: Create and strengthen integrated institutional frameworks and mechanisms for scaling up proven approaches

Sub-component 1.1: Science and Policy Interface (SPI) – FAO

Sub-component 1.2: Regional network of scientific platforms – UNEP

Plans and background

29. The fundamental objective of RFS Component 1 is to engage policy-makers in a **multi-scale approach through which to assess the viability and create an enabling policy and regulatory environment for scaling up proven practices, approaches and tools for INRM and enhanced resilience**. The focus would be on those developed, tested and promoted in RFS Components 2 and 3 ('act' and 'track') and in the CP, but could include other practices, approaches and tools.
30. Operationally, Component 1 would work towards **linking RFS projects, science partners and policy-decision makers at different levels, from sub-national, national to regional**. A '**Science and Policy Interface**' (SPI) would be established, preceded by a **country needs analysis**. Component 1 would link up with and strengthen relevant **platforms and initiatives for innovation**, including both science and policy platforms. Wherever possible this should be done through existing partnership, but where these are lacking, may facilitate the creation of new fora. A set of **policy-support tools** would be generated and, if possible, tested; including support tools to bring agricultural and environmental actors together, at national and landscape levels.
31. **The component would be jointly carried out by FAO and UNEP**. The original PDR document contains a number of overlaps between components 1.1 (FAO) and 1.2 (UNEP), particularly in terms of responsibility for structuring, organizing and supporting the planned SPI platform.

Achievements and gaps

32. **Many key outputs of Component 1 as specified in the RFS Hub project LogFrame at mid-term have not been achieved** except for the identification of best policy practices and country policy gaps for INRM, the production of certain knowledge products and some initial training in 2019 and more recently in 2021 (for details on capacity development and training events see Annex VI). The planned SPI, including the regional network of scientific platforms, has not been effectively established and no specific guidance has been provided for country policy makers. One important achievement has been the completion of a Component 1 Strategy Report (2019), agreed by FAO and UNEP, that outlines among others common objectives and workplan priorities. Some work started in certain countries, particularly by FAO including training of all RFS countries on Payment for Ecosystem Services during the

Nairobi Annual meeting in 2018 (see below) ; several training workshops for all RFS countries on SHARED and the development of SHARED toolkit (see below); and several trainings on M&E tools (see under C3). These trainings and several meetings with most RFS countries, allowed to lay out the foundations for a more operational and concrete work in the continuation of the project. The main needs of the countries, the focal points both at the technical and political level, and the main platforms with which to strengthen collaborations, have been identified and the processes started.

33. **Component 1 Strategy Report.** At inception, UNEP and FAO agreed on developing a joint Strategy Report for Component 1 to better define priorities and responsibilities by each partner. De-facto, FAO led the recruitment of an experienced consultant for the report and fully financed its design and publication. TOR were agreed jointly with UNEP. The final Strategy Report was accepted by both partners (by end 2019), but the process did not conclude with a formal partnership agreement or MoU between FAO and UNEP since they were considered as administratively too cumbersome. At the moment of this MTR the full buy-in by both partners into this joint Strategy Report is not clear. FAO adjusted its AWPB and activities for 2021 accordingly while UNEP has not yet done so. The Comp. 1 Strategy Report was never properly carried forward – such as through formal agreements of jointly agreed work in countries and region to respond to some of the report’s main propositions and concerns.

Component 1 Strategy Report Outline

1. Ongoing SPI initiatives and lessons learnt
2. Identified RFS country project SPI support needs, including specific scientific, technical and policy support
3. Strategic proposals for pillars A, B and C
 - Pillar A: Science policy interface** – Working with AU, Regional Economic Communities and knowledge partners and collaborators
 - Pillar B: Best practices** for INRM enabling policy and regulatory frameworks
 - Pillar C: Capacity development** for policy-makers and country teams; including on assessment and monitoring tools and project planning for scaling up
4. Revised log-frame and workplan
 - Annex 1:** Online knowledge exchange tools – Reference to more than 70 different INRM/resilience relevant African and international initiatives and organizations
 - Annex 2:** Potential RFS partners, including AUC/ECA and several potential future SPI sponsors (International Donors / UN Organizations)
 - Annex 3:** Outcome mapping

34. **Science Policy Interface.** The planned Component 1 Science-Policy-Interface (also labeled ‘SPI master platform’ in the PDR) does not exist in terms of well identified and committed partners. The rudimentary UNEP SPI platform as currently linked to the RFS web-site⁷ is not in line with what was planned. It SPI web-site currently provides an

⁷ Hosted at <http://cedarekmp.net/ifad/web/index.html>

incomplete list of suggested partners – global international development agencies and a few African entities – that have neither been contacted nor synchronized with the much more relevant potential SPI partners identified in the Component 1 Strategy Report (Annex 1). The web-site currently simply provides generic references to these organizations with an overview of their activities, without details, specific contacts and references for RFS partners and CP. There is also no RFS regional network specifically of *scientific platforms* as planned under component 1.2 in the PDR (Annex 4.c) and also suggested in the Strategy Paper, nor an established RFS *policy network*. No regional partnership agreements have been made to start a serious science-policy dialogue around key INRM and relevance. Few, if any, of the many planned initiatives and partnerships (PDR Annex 5.2) have so far been followed up on. UNEP plans to re-introduce the RFS SPI in the technical part of the next meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), following up on an earlier general introduction to AMCEN in Nov. 2019.

35. The Component 1 Strategy Report defines the **Science Policy Interface (SPI) as a process rather than a tool, single website or platform**. The strategy suggests linking RFS partners and CP with existing knowledge platforms and processes rather than developing a unique RFS Science-Policy-Interface (or master platform). But so far there are no detail on how to operationalize such an SPI process and introduce it to RFS partners and countries.
36. **The Science Policy specialist for Component 1 was not recruited as planned.** Component 1 work was to be ‘driven by a Science Policy specialist who would be supported by other specialists and in close collaboration with the PCU (the other components) to develop the science-policy platform’ (PDR p. 80, for TOR see p. 172/73). Such a specialist was supposed to be jointly financed by FAO and UNEP. FAO, in consultation with UNEP, unsuccessfully tried to recruit for such a jointly financed position. One qualified person signed up in 2018 as a consultant but resigned soon after finding a position in the UN system with more status and job security. Plans for a subsequent FAO recruitment for a P4 position were discontinued after it became clear that UNEP administrative procedures did not allow to financially contribute to such a position in a way that was satisfactory to FAO. Eventually, **FAO** recruited its own lead consultant for component 1 by July 2020. The consultant is expected to join the PCU team in Nairobi in person as soon as COVID-19 policies will allow. **UNEP** has not yet recruited or formally assigned staff of its own to the PCU but informed the MTR team that it is now in the process of recruiting a consultant to specifically work for UNEP with the PCU and FAO on component 1.
37. **Connecting with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).** Linking up with regional policy and development institutions, particularly the AUC and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, was a major objective of the multi-scale policy dialogue and the RFS transformational

agenda. UNEP and FAO were expected to leverage their partnerships and institutional 'seats at the table' for RFS policy dialogue. UNEP is well placed for this since one of its two RFS UNEP staff is located in Addis Ababa and FAO has its regional office for Eastern Africa in Addis Ababa, too. The IFAD RFS programme coordinator is also based in Addis Ababa in order to contribute to the regional dissemination and policy dialogue of the RFS programme, although he is not formally part of Component 1 of the Hub Project.

38. So far, UNEP and FAO have conducted Component 1 dialogue with AUC/ECA only informally through their staff and agency networks. But there is no formal entry point yet for strategic RFS collaboration by Component 1 with the AUC or ECA, apart from annual reporting by the IFAD RFS Task Manager on RFS achievements through the UN-AU Regional Coordination Mechanism. After finalizing the Comp. 1 Strategy Report a meeting was planned with the AUC, facilitated through UNEP, but it was eventually canceled due to the emerging COVID-19 crisis. As of mid-2021 the idea of organizing a regional workshop with AUC and others to develop a structured dialogue and cooperation is being pursued again. In the meantime, FAO has utilized its regional office for Eastern Africa based in Addis Ababa to initiate contact and discussions with the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC), an AUC/ECA/AfDB initiative on land governance, sustainable land management and agriculture.
39. A number of specific activities and outputs have been produced by Component 1 executing partners (FAO and UNEP) as further specified in the following paragraphs, and in line with the Component LogFrame (Annex III) and the Comp. 1 Strategy Report.

FAO activities and outputs

40. **FAO** started with some initial training of CP partners during the RFS Annual Meeting in 2018, followed by an analysis of RFS country project needs from the Hub⁸ and a stocktaking exercise of existing best practice and guidelines on INRM/SLM policy development. Several webinars for policy makers and practitioners were conducted with participants from 11 countries. They covered INRM/SLM challenges and bottlenecks of policy and institutional development, understanding of key policy processes and support mechanisms, and relevant monitoring tools for progress on policy dialogue.
41. The FAO Comp. 1 RFS team linked up with other FAO divisions and external partners to start several country activities. One of the most promising is the promotion of the **SHARED approach** for policy dialogue. SHARED stands for 'Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence Based Decision Making', a concept that was developed by ICRAF and has already been applied in several countries. It is a holistic process to influence and shift decision-making processes and cultures at national and devolved levels in order to bridge sectors and institutions and to accelerate resilience and

⁸ Reportedly there are lots of assessments of 'country needs' and their response rate is low.

sustainable development (Comp. 1 Strategy Report p. 26 ff). Behavioral specialists and trans-disciplinary scientists would be working directly with partners from RFS country projects. FAO collaborates on SHARED with ICRAF on a special contract funded through RFS Comp. 1. The RFS already published a SHARED toolbox report for enhancing inclusive and evidence based policy development. An unpublished report on 'FAO-SHARED Training: Resilient Food Systems Country Engagement and Analysis' is also available. Full roll-out of SHARED activities is planned soon in several RFS CP.

42. Building on an internal cooperation arrangement with the FAO forestry division the RFS Comp. 1 also has started to support a South-South, multi-stakeholder initiative of **'Making every voice count'**, in Burundi, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania. This initiative trains local specialists to analyze information needs and dynamics at different levels, from district to national decision- and policy-makers; and to bring in information on best practices and approaches from the field. Moreover, the RFS FAO Comp. 1 team is working with the FAO Land Management Team on **Decision Support for Sustainable Land Management** through a 3 session webinar series (building on the GEF funded FAO-WOCAT project). And collaboration was also initiated with the FAO Land and Water Division on awareness and capacity building for RFS country teams on integrating the **Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT)** to achieve the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) objective.
43. As part of its cross-component outreach **FAO has also supported M&A activities of Component 3** although it is not formally engaged in this component and does not have a dedicated budget for this. Since late 2019 FAO has organized a series of capacity-development workshops on different FAO methodologies and tools of interest to CP. For instance, several training workshops have been organized on EX-ACT, a tool for measuring carbon balances, on SHARP for resilience assessment, and on HDDS and FIES for food and nutrition monitoring.
44. Last, the FAO Comp. 1 team has been working with the ICRAF Communication Unit and The Nature Conservancy in the Kenya RFS CP to place RFS success stories and best practices for transforming food systems in the annual FAO flagship report on **State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI 2021)**.

UNEP activities and outputs

45. **UNEP** started its work in Component 1 by putting together several knowledge products and a first edition SPI platform website (see above), even before the joint Comp. 1 Strategy Paper was drafted. Several **best practice reports** were produced by UNEP, and are partly available on the RFS website, including a report on best SLM practices and on M&A methods promoted by the RFS (Component 3). An overview report with Country Assessments on the State of Environment in the 12 RFS countries is available as draft, but not yet on the website. These reports provide some useful information for environmental, inter-sectoral dialogue and capacity development in

RFS countries. They are partly based on complementary work by UNEP and other RFS Hub components. Some of these reports are already being used by UN country teams for the UN Country Common Analysis (CCA). UNEP also started the process of collecting **story maps and policy briefs** that would eventually be put on-line, among others for Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Kenya, and Uganda.

46. UNEP started some **interactions with RFS CP** by linking up with the RFS national focal points in each country – as provided by the RFS PCU. Capacity building and establishment of national multi-stakeholder platforms has so far been slow, due to COVID-19 and technical problems with online training. UNEP selected Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Kenya and Uganda as its initial focal countries.

Why did things happen or not?

47. There are a number of reasons why Component 1 is behind schedule, also in comparison with other RFS components. First, the component was conceived and designed not by those ultimately tasked with their implementation, both in FAO and UNEP. At implementation start-up there was clearly a **lack of institutional continuity and memory in both institutions. There was no clear vision and compass for operationalizing this complex component.** Under these circumstances, having two organizations without clear lead responsibility agree and cooperate on an overlapping and aspirational agenda took time, caused high administrative transaction costs, and so far has not worked out well, despite some laudable efforts made on both sides.
48. Second, the **process for narrowing down a broadly defined and complex agenda** in its multi-scale design from informing policy makers from sub-national over national to regional levels was not fully followed. There was a lack of operational leadership in the component to develop a joint workplan with focused activities and clearly assigned responsibilities. The development of the Comp. 1 Strategy Paper was a good starting point but there are **lingering uncertainties about its operationalization.** The Strategy Paper is a living document with built-in flexibilities for interpretation and adaptation to changing circumstances and opportunities. Both Agencies agree that they need to work more on clarifying specific actions, division of labor and workplans, particularly on how to approach and work with the countries and CP. Foreseeing this problem, the PDR had envisaged **review process led by a review panel** that would guide the process of deciding where to focus specific support in Component 1. According to the PDR, such a panel would identify, during the first year or two, specific topics and focus areas that would emerge, partly based on specific country requests. The RFSP did not establish such a panel.
49. Third, the **failure to recruit a joint Science Policy Specialist component manager**, supported and financed by both FAO and UNEP, compounded the problem of operational leadership. FAO and UNEP are moving ahead now with two separately

recruited consultants. The two Agencies stay in touch with each other whenever it is opportune and necessary.

50. Fourth, a large part of **UNEP and FAO focus in the RFS has been on administrative and bureaucratic processes and challenges**, including on collaboration arrangements. UNEP also had to work out quite a few administrative and financial procedures related to their sub-grant agreement with Bioversity for Hub Component 3. Despite many efforts, the administrative cooperation between FAO and UNEP has not worked out too well so far due to bureaucratic obstacles in both organizations, particularly on joint recruitment and developing a formally agreed implementation plan. In this situation, both Agencies preferred to pursue their individual contractual obligations and Agency specific agreed outputs with IFAD, rightly so.

Summary assessment and rating

51. Since inception, Component 1 was not clearly defined in its focus nor specific roles and responsibilities of the two partners. Much time was spent by the two partners (FAO and UNEP) to finalize a joint strategy paper, agree on respective roles and develop joint implementation arrangements. Administrative procedures and trust between the two Agencies were not conducive for finalizing these arrangements. In the end FAO moved ahead with recruiting a senior consultant to carry out several activities identified in the Comp. 1 Strategy Paper and to liaise with UNEP. UNEP also started with some activities and is currently in the process of recruiting its own Comp. 1 consultant. There still is potential for some collaborative implementation arrangements by FAO and UNEP, but selectively, and fully aligned with individual Agency workplans and budgets.
52. There have been a number of Component outputs over time and several promising activities started in RFS countries recently, mainly by FAO. The outlook for some of these activities is good. Component 1 still has potential, particularly in view of one of its main goals of informing policy-makers at multi-scale levels on lessons learnt and experiences with RFS scaling up approaches, methods and tools for better INRM and enhanced resilience, preferably in combination with inputs from science at all levels. But this Component requires attention from IFAD and PCU in order to facilitate its operations for the remainder of the RFS and, if necessary, revise some of the specific originally planned work outputs and targets; and ultimately put it in service of the RFS programme as a whole, as planned from the start.
53. The work of the first two years is a good foundation for Component 1 – notwithstanding a slow start-up and weak Agency collaboration so far Partners in principle are ready to move ahead with some promising activities. For this reason the overall progress of implementation at mid-term and likelihood of contributing to achieving RFS development objectives is rated as **moderately satisfactory**.

Recommendations

54. It is recommended for Component 1 partners to:

1. **Adopt the definition and understanding of the Science Policy Interface** in the Comp. 1 Strategy Paper; and to determine what this means for organizing partnerships and policy dialogue with national and regional science and policy entities.
2. For FAO and UNEP to **decide on the future of the SPI platform site**, if any, and Agency responsibilities for a possible future site. In the meantime, take down the current site.
3. **Continue the FAO / UNEP partnership for component 1**, but with separate organizational arrangements and workplans that emphasize each Agency's comparative advantage.
4. **Establish an informal component review panel** consisting of at least one representative each of the FAO and UNEP Comp. 1 teams and chaired by IFAD. Such a panel would facilitate the finalization of partner work plans, responsibilities and any joint approaches and operations for 2022 and beyond.
5. **Link up with other Hub project components and partners**, particularly UNDP and FAO (Comp. 2) and CI (Comp. 3) to bring in feedback, experience and lessons from the field and from partners. The aim would be to demonstrate to policy makers at different levels proven practices, approaches and tools from RFS CP and Hub Agencies programmes for scaling-up, enabling policy and regulatory environments; with the intent of stronger support by policy makers for INRM, resilience, and models of cooperation between environmental and agricultural institutions (environmental governance). This would also include lessons from establishing and operating various platforms at different scales for bringing partners together around joint interests, negotiated actions and policy dialogue. Such cooperation across Hub components could also be useful to feed into the planned **broader RFS lessons learnt dissemination / road show for 2022** that would summarize experiences from the RFS pilot programme for policy and learning purposes.
6. **For FAO and UNEP to finetune their Comp. 1 work programmes and activities** in line with findings from this MTR and the Comp. 1 Strategy Paper, strengthen their cooperation, and work in-depth with a limited number of interested and manageable CP (preferably no more than 5). This would include more emphasis on regional policy institutions, particularly in Addis Ababa, and science partnerships. Comp. 1 regional policy dialogue also should be aligned with and support the broader responsibilities of the IFAD task manager for policy dialogue and RFS dissemination.

Component 2 (Act): Scaling up of integrated approaches

Obj. 2 – Upscaling of integrated approach: identify and scale up successful integrated approaches and practices

Sub-component 2.1: Greening food value chains - UNDP and AGRA

Sub-component 2.2: Wide-scale uptake of INRM – FAO

55. **What was planned?** Component 2 focuses on identifying, demonstrating and scaling-up practices and approaches for balancing the growing demands on agricultural systems to produce ever more food for growing populations with the need to safeguard vital ecosystem services; and in doing so, contribute to the sustainability and resilience of the livelihoods of smallholders. This would happen through two priority intervention pathways.
56. **UNDP** would work with **AGRA** on value chains and the power of market opportunities for smallholder farmers, while simultaneously identifying green options for production diversification, marketing and low external inputs. This would include developing guidelines and toolkits on integrating sustainability and resilience in relevant value chains, training, and a competitive small grant mechanism following AGRA experience with this modality. An important aspect would be scaling-up through private sector partnerships in value-chains. There would be engagement at sub-regional level drawing on and benefiting a wider range of stakeholders.
57. **FAO would be leveraging its Global Farmer Field Schools Platform to adapt, uptake and scale up agricultural INRM best practices in IAP (RFS) countries and beyond**, with a particular focus to identifying financially sustainable models for propagation. FAO would support the country projects by availing capacity development, technical support and knowledge exchange on these topics. For CP specific support beyond a common minimum level FAO would act as a referral service.

UNDP/AGRA sub-component 2.1

Achievements and gaps

58. UNDP/AGRA started off with a dedicated face-to-face initial training workshop in 2019 for interested CP participants. After a number of subsequent delays due to lengthy sub-contracting procedures, grantee procurement and a failed consultancy this sub-component managed to catch up in late 2020. The milestone accomplishments were the finalization of the **well-designed green value chain manual** and the **award of three catalytic grants**. The VC manual promotes a bottom-up approach to operationalizing and greening VC, points out main entry and leverage points for value-chain actors, and provides several interesting case studies for practitioners, from an academic focus to the telling of field experiences, including from RFS CP.

59. With the manual ready, initial **on-line induction training** started end-2020, followed by three training sessions of sub-regional groups in May 2021 in East, Southern and Western Africa regions. It is recognized that these 2.5 – 3 hour virtual training sessions cannot substitute for the required real training requirements of 2 – 3 days that are needed to cover the theory, the full dimensions of value chains, and to offer so called ‘country clinics’ where specific concerns and problems of CP participants are addressed and UNDP/AGRA are exploring alternatives under COVID-19 conditions.
60. The Team also awarded **three catalytic grants** to cover specific value chains (sorghum in Tanzania and Uganda, rice in Burkina Faso, and groundnuts in Malawi and neighbouring countries) for testing models and scaling them up. Contracts were signed with two organizations in Malawi and Tanzania (African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership [AFAP] and Kilimo Trust. First tranches have been disbursed to these two organizations.). A proposal has been invited from a third organization in West Africa, the Institute of Environment and Agricultural Research in Burkina Faso (INERA).⁹ The contract is expected to be signed in the third quarter of 2021, barring any further delays. Grantees are also expected to improve business models and produce knowledge products. Their work will be synchronized during the inception phase. The work in this component follows the AGRA methodology of selecting priority value chains with governments and then set up multistakeholder platforms. Due to COVID-19, **work on the ground** in countries has not yet been pursued as planned, but the Team is zooming in on several countries in East- and Southern Africa, specifically starting with a commercialization platform in Uganda, and following up on interests from Burundi, Eswatini and Ethiopia. Nigeria has expressed interest, too.
61. At the same time, RFS contributions already provided the UNDP regional programme with expertise and working capital through the technical assistance with AGRA to start addressing additional demand for support on value-chain development coming up from other countries beyond RFS (Namibia, Benin and Cameroon) and to cover diverse other interests particularly in fruits and vegetable exports.
62. Altogether the delayed start-up led to three planned **LogFrame outputs** at mid-term not having been achieved yet, mainly related to the adoption of green value chain practices on the ground, through the work with the grantees. Training has been partially done, but not at the intended intensity as already mentioned. The UNDP/AGRA team now plans to consolidate and deliver what needs to be delivered, with special attention to post-COVID to pilot-testing and advancing digital delivery, virtual advisers, and peer networking. Incorporating private service delivery, supporting MSMEs and empowering farmer groups are priorities.

⁹ GRAD consulting group, an organization that had been earlier prioritized by AGRA for work in West-Africa, turned out to be not sufficiently qualified upon closer analysis for the planned work. This delayed start of work in this region through the catalytic grant.

Why did things happen or not?

63. Initially UNDP/AGRA had problems in attracting CP interest, as many CP had already started to work on and implement the specifics of their value chain activities when the Comp. 2.1 Hub project services were ready to start. They showed little interest to add to their ongoing work, potentially delaying it through complex additional analyses and changes. With projects progressing, interest is gradually growing.
64. From its preparatory work and experience from other programmes, the UNDP/AGRA team sees the need to work towards **collaborative arrangements between the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture**, to assure mainstreaming and scaling up of green value chain principles. Yet a precondition is that the Ministries of Agriculture are indeed receptive to the idea of a green agricultural transformation, which is clearly at the moment not the case in all CP countries in the Team's experience. But even in countries with low receptivity or lip service only, the Team found that there often is scope for introducing new ways of doing things at district or local levels, with the respective local governments.
65. A second important lesson is the importance of **transnational trade and commodity chain arrangements** for green transformation as they would generate the incentives for countries and sub-national regions to follow. For this reason UNDP/AGRA intend to enhance their dialogue at regional level to provide input from the RFS experience into the formulation of policies, regulations and trade agreements at regional level.

FAO sub-component 2.2

Achievements and gaps

66. **FAO has been very active in Component 2.2**, mainly through its ongoing Farmer Field School (FFS) programme, as originally planned in the PDR. The RFS contribution produced many results in terms of additional and also RFS country focused knowledge products, training activities, regional platforms and country support. All LogFrame outputs planned for mid-term for this component have been achieved. The advantage of its well-established and connected FFS programme shows.
67. RFS contributions allowed more focused attention of the FFS programme to INRM issues, responding to the COVID-19 crisis and advancing innovative alternative advisory approaches, including digital methods such as e-learning and new video dissemination channels. RFS also facilitated the **translation of several FFS products into French**, thus contributing to scaling-up of knowledge throughout the region.¹⁰ There is **agro-ecology expertise in the FAO RFS team** and RFS funding helped with starting a stocktaking of the extent to which agro-ecological principles such as soil

¹⁰ See for instance the 2020 French translation of the "Practical Guide for Farmer Field Schools. Discovery-based Learning in Land and Water Management" for distribution in French speaking RFS countries.

health and crop and livestock resilience are embedded in FFS curricula and participatory rural advisory services. FAO also commissioned a stocktaking of the use of FFS to enable change in agroforestry and forestry smallholder systems.

68. Several **FFS activities were clearly tailored to the needs of RFS country projects**. For instance, FAO through Component 2.2 supported several RFS CP technically, such as by organizing a national training of Master Trainers in Tanzania and leveraging FAO participation in CP in Burundi and Uganda for the promotion of FFS principles in these countries. In other RFS CP countries, such as Nigeria and Niger, the FFS is active in collaboration that pre-dates the RFS. The FFS platform is also promoting the development of FFS practitioner networks in several RFS countries (e.g. Nigeria, Niger, Kenya, etc). Other activities took place in the context of **the broader FFS programme**, such as the FFS workshop on the role of information and communication technologies. Component 2.2 outputs include a number of general publications, knowledge products and events that acknowledge the use of RFS funds. Even if not intentionally produced for RFS CP they are indeed useful for these countries, contribute to scaling up, and are actively promoted by the hub project through RFS communications channels. A prominent example would be the **2019 guide for practitioners “Enabling Sustainable Food Systems: Innovators’ Handbook”**.
69. **Expanding the regional FFS platform** in terms of its members and the number and quality of its offers was an explicit RFS objective to help scaling up best INRM practices in Africa. A number of new regional and national partner organisations and entities joined and increased their participation in the FFS platform during the time. This FFS platform primarily serves as a knowledge hub to support the quality of FFS implementation through partnerships, provide a regional anchor for the FFS community of practice, and contribute to evidence-based policy with its publications. The platform is also a network device to link up globally with strategic partners such as the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) (primarily through a partnership with the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory services, AFAAS) and the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.
70. The platform and related partners propagate not so much the FFS concept as such, but its **main principles and methods** that would help reforming Government and other rural advisory services through in-depth practical training combined with partnered actions in the field. Among others it is suggested to **move away from top-down advice to a co-producing, peer-to-peer principle** with an extension worker as an external facilitator and farmers as internal facilitators, contributors and multipliers. Many FFS facilitators are initially coming from Government agriculture, livestock and environment ministries.
71. In 2021/22 FAO plans to further advance its **focus on agroecology and nature-based approaches through ecological literacy** of farmers and service providers and innovation, as well as **advisory approaches that build more and more on digital**

technologies and communication while safeguarding the inclusiveness for those with limited access to e-learning.

72. FAO is well aware of some of the **criticism of FFS** in the literature and through meta-analysis evaluations¹¹, particularly regarding the inclusion of poorer farmers, the scalability and sustainability of FFS activities. Also, FFS M&E in the past has mainly focused on bio-physical and natural impacts and less on financial and social impact. FAO has learnt from these studies and is now promoting, among others, more community-based approaches, working with producer organizations, and institutionalization of FFS principles into national advisory services and Farmer Organizations, as already noted above. The programme is also developing a toolbox for better, real time and participative M&E in FFS and is working with Wageningen University on overall programme improvements. In collaboration with CIRAD and AVSF, FAO has supported research on better documenting the impact of FFS and the role of FFS in supporting upscaling of FFS in two countries. This led to two operational guidance documents and a policy brief.

Why did things happen or not?

73. Although FFS is working with many projects in the field across Africa, including many RFS countries, this did not necessarily help in working specifically with RFS CP. According to FAO, three reasons contributed to the limited work with CP. A number of CP, with some notable exceptions such as in the Sahel or in Ethiopia, work in small 'cells' that are not necessarily related to other projects and programmes going on in the country. This limits their interest in broader networking and services and scaling-up as intended by the RFS. Secondly, several problems in working with CP date back to RFS design, since these CP were not designed to include sub-components and related budgets that would facilitate cooperation with Hub-Agencies that offer special services and support. And last, COVID-19 significantly reduced the opportunities for more in-country interactions.

Summary assessment and rating

74. Although at very different stages of their RFS work, partly delayed (UNDP/AGRA) and often constrained for a number of reasons both UNDP/AGRA and FAO are showing good progress in their RFS related activities. FAO has been very active through expansion of the farmer field school (FFS) model, including some CP, many knowledge products and stronger attention to agro-ecology and INRM. The FFS strengthened partnerships at regional level that are promising for scaling-up and policy dialogue. UNDP/AGRA has by now developed a good training manual on green value chains, recruited three companies for support of value chains in RFS countries and regions,

¹¹ See for instance the 3ie systematic review of farmer field schools (meta-analysis) by Hugh Waddington and Howard White in 2014, and a study by Henk van den Berg and others from Wageningen University in 2020.

and the Team is ready for take-off. Combining its work in countries and on value chains with some regional focus will help with policy dialogue and scaling up. Both teams have started some operations in RFS countries and CP but the limitations of working with CP are evident and focus is needed to not spread activities thinly in the final phase of the RFS programme. FAO has already much to offer in terms of learning and inputs for multi-scale policy dialogue during the final phase of the RFS programme, and UNDP/AGRA is likely to be in the same position by 2022.

75. Overall progress in implementation of Component 2 at mid-term and likelihood of the Component 2 contributing to achieving RFS overall development objectives is rated as **satisfactory**.

Recommendations

1. For FAO and UNDP/AGRA to select no more than 5 focal countries/CP each with clear demand for Hub services and favorable working conditions to focus their work on in 2022, and if necessary, reallocate resources for carrying out work in these countries.
2. For FAO to focus on deepening and summarizing their experiences and specific evidence on the following themes: 1. Integrating and scaling up INRM and agroecology into rural advisory services (ecological literacy); 2. Developing alternative extension approaches through digital technologies; 3. Lessons from COVID-19 for rural advisory services and support for resilience; and 4. Scaling up through country and regional partnerships.
3. For UNDP/AGRA to preferably focus on a few commodities and maintain their attention to the market linkages, private sector and demand parts of the value chains.
4. For FAO and UNDP/AGRA to start bringing in their pilot experiences on INRM, digital approaches, green value chain transformation, platforms and scaling-up into policy dialogue in Component 1, including from some CP, and prepare for a broader lessons learnt outreach campaign by the RFS in 2022.

Component 3 (Track): Monitoring and assessment

Obj. 3 – Monitoring and assessment: Monitor and assess global environmental benefits and agro-ecosystem resilience

Sub-component 3.1: Conceptual framework for multi-scale M&A of eco-system services and socio-economic benefits - Conservation International

Sub-component 3.2: Operational framework for monitoring Global Benefits - Conservation International

Sub-component 3.3: Capacities for monitoring agro-biodiversity and resilience - UNEP – Bioversity International

What was planned?

76. This component was to focus on two main tasks: (i) the development of a conceptual framework for **multi-scale monitoring and assessment of ecosystem services and socio-economic benefits**, and (ii) operationalizing such a framework in countries through **quantitative baselines** and **monitoring and measuring changes** in ecosystem services and socio-economic benefits at multiple scales, and ideally their interactions in terms of food security and resilience.
77. **The lead responsibility for this component was to be with Conservation International (CI)** that would leverage its Vital Signs and Resilience Atlas tools at regional and, where data permits, country levels. CI would be responsible for facilitating M&A of resilience related impacts; both in terms of changes in the resilience of the ecosystems but also changes in resilience of socio-economic systems.
78. **Capacities would be developed through knowledge products and training** of country CP and at regional level to apply appropriate tools and practices for monitoring ecosystem services and socio-economic benefits indicators at multiple scales.
79. **Bioversity International** would work with interested CP and other actors specifically on improving smallholders' adaptation and resilience through agro-biodiversity options (administered through a sub-contract with UNEP). For this purpose the RFS would support the further development and rollout to interested CP of Biodiversity's Diversity Assessment Tool for Agrobiodiversity and Resilience (DATAR).
80. **Data from Component 3 would be essential for monitoring and assessment of the overall impact of the IAP Program**, particularly of Global Environmental Benefits (GEB). It would also be useful to inform evidence-based policy activities in Component 1, and to scale up approaches and pathways for green value chains and INRM in Component 2.

Sub-components 3.1/3.2: Conservation International

Achievements and gaps

81. CI developed a **conceptual framework for multi-scale assessment** together with other RFS Hub project partners. For this purpose, CI produced a brief basic guidance document (March 2019) with some useful overviews on resilience concepts, assessment tools, indicators for data collection at multiscale levels and some data sources. But essentially, the framework relies strongly on the more than 15 different tools and approaches used by CP and Hub Agencies, including CI, for various forms of M&A/M&E activities, at different scales. In 2020/21 the initial conceptual framework was complemented by the M&E plan for the RFS programme that was developed by ICRAF under component 4, with technical support from CI and other Hub project partners, and in consultation with the CP.
82. For CI, the **Resilience Atlas** is the central and constant online regional database that is used, among others, for the RFS. The Atlas contains all kinds of GIS referenced data for Africa, such as global information from the European Space Agency and other sources¹². The Atlas has graphic interfaces of some of its data and allows for overlays of various data sets and variables for decisions on food security and resilience, such as climate, land cover, stressors and shocks, as well as assets and capacities. The Atlas is regularly updated with country and CP information, collected from various sources, including from RFS CP. CP project boundaries were established and are available as GIS boundary files. The Resilience Atlas also includes a data-sharing platform.
83. CI established **bio-physical baseline data for all CP projects**, at national and sub-national levels through the CI Resilience Atlas, which was customized and updated for this purpose with specific data for country projects as made available by CP. While the Atlas clearly focuses on **land cover, land degradation, and NDVI**¹³ it also contains various socio-economic and non-biophysical resilience information. Twelve country baseline maps of indicators were handed over to the RFS country teams. CI is in regular contact with CP and M&E officers, mostly by email, and previously during various joint RFS annual and thematic M&E meetings and Comp. 3 trainings. A **draft baseline report of land degradation** has been produced which also includes historical data for the CP project areas.
84. CI is also carrying out some RFS specific assessments through its **Trends.Earth database**, another online tool that focuses on land degradation analysis for LDN

¹²

https://knowledgecentre.resilientfoodsystems.co/assets/resources/pdf/eo4sd_agri_finalreport_en_2019-final.pdf

https://knowledgecentre.resilientfoodsystems.co/assets/resources/pdf/eo4sd_agri_iap_en_2019.pdf

¹³ Normalized Difference Vegetation Index

reporting, and more specific LD data is being collected from 5 RFS countries. CI developed land cover maps for the 12 RFS countries (from Sentinel 2, high resolution maps).

85. In addition, CI introduced the **Vital Signs** programme to the RFS, to monitor and provide real-time data on interactions between environment, agriculture and resilience variables in countries and projects. But its application was limited to Nigeria whose CP team received a comprehensive in-country training (2019) and carried out a baseline survey using Vital Signs (detailed reports from the training are available). The CI Vital Signs protocols had earlier produced nationwide atlases in four other countries, three of which are also part of the RFS programme (Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda). But this work was financed through other sources and is not explicitly linked to the RFS CP.
86. In addition to the Nigeria training mentioned in the previous paragraph, **country specific capacity development and training** has been carried out through a number of online meetings and training sessions, as well as during the Nairobi (May 2018) and Ghana (Feb. 2019) annual RFS workshops. Some specific assistance was provided upon request, such as support to the Ethiopia CP to apply CI tools through a locally hired consultant. At least four more countries have expressed interest in country specific training, but budgets for such training are an issue as explained below. CI by now has finalized the preparation of its training material. More on-line training is planned on how to specifically apply the Resilience Atlas in CP, monitor trends in land degradation with Trends. Earth, draw attention to tradeoffs among agriculture and ecosystem services and create data network partnerships on resilience. Several **knowledge products** were generated to support training and further dissemination of tools, including indicator frameworks, best practice guidelines for remote sensing and training manuals.
87. **For the future**, CI plans to keep updating and maintaining the Resilience Atlas, to continue carrying out on-line trainings and further develop its training materials, and to **conduct end-line assessments mainly of the RFS programme environmental targets**. In terms of other work activities CI also plans to intensify its contacts at regional level with other organizations and programmes that actively promote M&A and data collection for resilience in Africa.
88. CI almost fully achieved its mid-term Hub project **LogFrame targets** (Annex III). While part of its work is evidently making good progress, other roles and responsibilities originally foreseen for CI have not worked out as planned.

Why did things happen or not?

89. There have been **two major challenges to CI's work** as planned and agreed on in the PDR and the Grant agreement.

90. First, **demand from the countries for CI's tools and specialized expertise and services** is much lower than anticipated, particularly for targeted operationalization of the M&A framework in countries and country-specific training, and data collection. This also affected the performance of countries in providing the necessary data for populating the Resilience Atlas. Neither Agencies nor countries have made any specific budgetary allocations for such work. For instance, the Burundi CP was interested in principle, but not ready to pay between US\$30-40k from CP funds for in-country CI training or backstopping. It was also caused by the fact that other GEF Executing Agencies in charge of CP have their own tools and approaches for executing their M&A – which are part of the RFS M&A conceptual framework but do not fall under CI's special expertise.
91. Secondly, **CI was not able to effectively assume full leadership of Component 3 as planned.** CI institutional expertise and strength has so far been more on bio-physical and environmental resilience indicators than on socio-economic and food-security resilience indicators, notwithstanding the Vital Signs concept that bridges these indicators.
92. **PDR and grant agreement were clear about ultimate CI responsibility for overall programme impact assessments** and working with countries to facilitate impact reporting, including Global Environmental Benefits (GEB), i.e. the GEF Core Indicators in GEF-7. CI was expected to 'provide intellectual and substantive guidance in Monitoring and Assessment (M&A) as opposed to standard project M&E. M&A in a GEF context refers to the means by which impacts are measured specifically with respect to the global environmental benefits ... In the case of this Program, however, it also refers to impact assessment more generally, and in particular in the case of CI on resilience related impacts; both in terms of changes in the resilience of the ecosystems but also changes in resilience of socio-economic systems.'¹⁴. Although 'CI was not responsible for M&A of the country projects, it would be providing guidance and practical support to ensure that the aggregation of impacts directly attributable to the country projects is possible and sound'. The role of CI in Comp. 3 was considered particularly important during the first year of the Project in terms of helping country projects establish the right baselines. For the reasons mentioned above, CI was not able to fully assume this responsibility, except for baselines on bio-physical, land degradation and land cover indicators.
93. **Building on CI led work in component 3, ICRAF in its overall coordinated RFS reporting function was responsible for the assembly of all relevant information from the CP for the programme as a whole.** Component 4 LogFrame indicators emphasize among others the capacity of the programme for aggregated reporting and impact assessments. This includes relevant GEF reporting against targets and indicators

¹⁴ CI Grant Agreement, page 9, Component 3 (b)

specified in the GEF Tracking Tools.¹⁵ ICRAF also was expected to ensure a common understanding between the country and regional level.¹⁶

94. **At a Nov. 2019 M&E workshop in Nairobi ICRAF and FAO volunteered to take on additional tasks in M&A.** Subsequently, **ICRAF** developed a common results framework for the RFS Programme, in participation with CP and Hub Agencies (2021 M&E plan). ICRAF also carried out a review of the adoption of M&A tools and the execution of baseline studies by CP and facilitated the complex transition from GEF-6 M&A tools to GEF-7 core indicators. This additional work was done through reallocating funds from other Component 4 activities. **FAO** took on the responsibility of providing support to CP for food security and household resilience indicators, baselines and impact assessments; through training and follow-up on specific M&A tools used for this purpose in CP (SHARP, FIES, HDDS). Again, this was done through reallocation of funding within FAO budget. FAO also carried out the training for GEB indicator measurement of CO₂ emissions reduction (Ex-ACT tool). Available baseline data by different tools and countries can be found in Table 2.
95. **Several tools were used in 5 CP or more** (with those definitely planned for in 2021 included): The most popular one was the Ex-ACT tool (FAO) for measuring carbon balance and emission reductions (applied by 9 countries); the Multidimensional Poverty Assessment Tool (MPAT), applied in 6 IFAD managed CP; the ICRAF Land Degradation Surveillance Framework in 6 countries (LDSF)¹⁷, including two planned for 2021, and the Collect Earth (NDVI) tool in 5 CP. All other tools were used in less than 5 countries. 8 countries have done baselines applying between 2 and 4 of these M&A tools and 3 countries apply 6 or 7 tools (Uganda, Burkina Faso, and Kenya). Eswatini is trying to use 11 M&A tools but 8 of these are still to be done in 2021.
96. The collection of information on baseline information by tool from CP still raises a few questions on their usefulness for impact assessment in the RFS CP in several CP cases. Some data seems to have been collected well before the RFS CP started, in other countries the baseline data was collected well into project implementation.

¹⁵ ICRAF grant agreement

¹⁶ CI grant agreement

¹⁷ <http://landscapeportal.org/blog/2015/03/25/the-land-degradation-surveillance-framework-ldsf/>

Table 2 - RFS CP baselines by tools and countries

(Information collected in June 2021 through RFS M&E team)

Tool	Burkina Faso	Burundi	Eswatini	Ethiopia	Ghana	Kenya	Malawi	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Tanzania	Uganda	Total
Diversity Assessment Tool for Agrobiodiversity and Resilience (DATAR)	2017		2021 plan				2021 plan Blouv.					2021	4
Earth Observation for Sustainable Development (EO4SD)	2016			2019									2
Collect Earth (NDVI)	2015	2020		2019	2018							2021	5
Trends Earth			2021 plan									2021	2
EX-Ante Carbon Balance Tool (EX-ACT)	2015	2019	2021		yes	2016		2019		2020	2021	2021	9
Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)			2021 plan										1
Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands Mapping Tool (WOCAT-LADA)													-
Land Degradation Surveillance Framework (LDSF)		2019	2021 plan			2017 /18	plan				2021		5
Management Effectiveness Tool (METT)					2010	2021							2
Multidimensional Poverty Assessment Tool (MPAT)	2017		yes			2017	2019			2020	2019		6
Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA)													-
RESILIENCE ATLAS			2021 plan							2021		2021	3
Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) model													-
Results and Management Impact System (RIMS)	2015		yes			2017		2016					4
Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of climate Resilience of farmers and Pastoralists (SHARP); HH-BAT		2016	on-going	2021 plan								2016 & 2021	4
FIES		2016										2016	2
HDDS		2016							2019			2016 & 2021	3
Vital Signs monitoring framework									2020				1
Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)			yes				2019	2020					3
Outcome mapping			plan			2017		2016	2020	2020			5
Total	6	6	11	3	3	6	4	4	3	3	3	8	61

	Baseline done, and year if available
	Concrete plans exist for baseline in near future
	Countries not yet reporting

97. The diversity of approaches in measuring resilience and food security in the RFS, differences by CP and Implementing Agencies of understanding and focus within the broader resilience concept, and specific country contexts **complicate the measurement, aggregation and reporting of resilience in the RFS**. Some countries focused essentially on ecosystem regeneration, whilst others have a greater focus on food security, agro-biodiversity, and community-level resilience. A clearer programme-wide and consistent methodological framework for assessing resilience and the establishment at design of a minimally common methodology and indicators across all countries for the monitoring of food security and resilience would have enhanced the collection of baseline data and quality of reporting for assessing the RFS programme's key expected impact in the region at mid-term and at the end. These were already some of the key findings of a study carried out in early 2018 by ICRAF and Bangor University to understand the different approaches on resilience of food security taken by each of the 12 IAP country projects (ICRAF-Bangor 2018). As mentioned above, ICRAF Component 4 by now has been working extensively with country teams to address this issue, by consolidating some approaches for monitoring and assessing food security and resilience, including the identification of some indicators that are to be monitored at regional level. A number of baselines have been done. In principle, all this work is expected to bear fruits in measuring and reporting impact, but many issues concerning the diversity of approaches, the complexity of the resilience concept and the data, and the ultimate contribution by the RFS programme remain and are expected to affect impact measurement in the end.

Global Environmental Benefits

98. **Aggregate Global Environmental Benefits (GEB) across all CP are reported in Table 3.** The RFS Hub project is not considered to generate additional GEB. Annex IV reports GEB targets and achievements also by country project. When aggregating comparable indicators across the 12 RFS CP for this Hub project MTR the M&E and MTR teams found that it is always important to provide sufficient background and country specific explanations for reported aggregate numbers.
99. **In the aggregate**, achievements for core land indicators 1.2 and 3 (terrestrial protected area and land restored) are still considerably lower than targets at mid-term whereas those of landscapes under improved management for biodiversity and of production systems are close or have even been overachieved (Table 3). The number of individual beneficiaries reached is on good track, with a considerably higher proportion of women reached than originally planned (46 vs. 37 per cent). Only two countries have measured GHG so far which explains the low rates of aggregate achievements for this indicator.¹⁸

¹⁸ In Senegal the baseline project has already been completed and in Niger the GHG indicator numbers at this point include the baseline project, while the targets do not.

Table 3 – GEB Core indicator targets and achievements at mid-term

Core indicators	Unit	Actual achievements At MTR	Targets With latest revisions GEF-7 core indicators	Original targets ¹ CEO endorsed
1.2 Terrestrial protected area	ha	56,697	148,650	-
3 Land restored	ha	151,064	676,559	1,387,249
4.1 Landscapes under improved management to benefit bio-diversity	ha	672,951	496,449	1,079.516
4.3 Landscapes under sustainable management in production systems	ha	203,517	223,060	12,000
6 GHG mitigated	mtCO ₂	5,261,577	57,366,812	59,345,162
11 Number of individual beneficiaries	No.	2,874,807 (46% female)	4,229,088 (37% female)	-

¹ Note: Original targets are not fully comparable with GEF-7 targets and actual achievements as GEF GEB indicators changed since RFS design. For detailed GEB targets and achievements by country project see MTR Annex IV.

100. **The transition from GEF-6 tracking to GEF-7 core indicators and the redefinition of some indicators led to some movements between land based indicators.** Many targets of the original GEF-6 sustainable land-management (SLM) indicator were re-categorized in GEF-7. Often countries found it difficult to differentiate or clearly assign their interventions to core indicators 3, 4.1, and 4.3, i.e. land restored, improved land management to benefit bio-diversity, and landscapes under sustainable management in production systems.
101. There were several debates among CP and the RFS Hub project M&E and Biodiversity teams about how **bio-diversity indicators** (1.2 and 4.1) should be reported. This led, among others to some double-counting of land. In these cases interventions on the same plot of land served both land neutrality and biodiversity objectives and could not be separated. While GEF does not condone double-counting, some countries insisted on reporting land neutrality and biodiversity indicators separately. Double-counted cases are marked with an asterisk in MTR ANNEX VI table, which shows results by CP.
102. **Aggregate figures should not mask considerable differences for individual CP**, of achievements and actual numbers (Annex IV and Figures 1a and 1b). For several CP actual **achievements at mid-term were considerably lower than planned**: for some countries these plans were not realistic from the beginning (Eswatini, Nigeria), for others their CP faced long delays in intervention start-up and emerging results (Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda). Aggregate figures across the 12 CP were often **strongly influenced by outliers in the upper end**. Some land-based indicators were particularly high in Ghana, Niger and Nigeria and to a lesser extent in Ethiopia; this was partly explained by the fact that figures in Ghana and Niger are including baseline projects.

Figure 1a – GEB: RFS Degraded land restoration by country project (hectares)

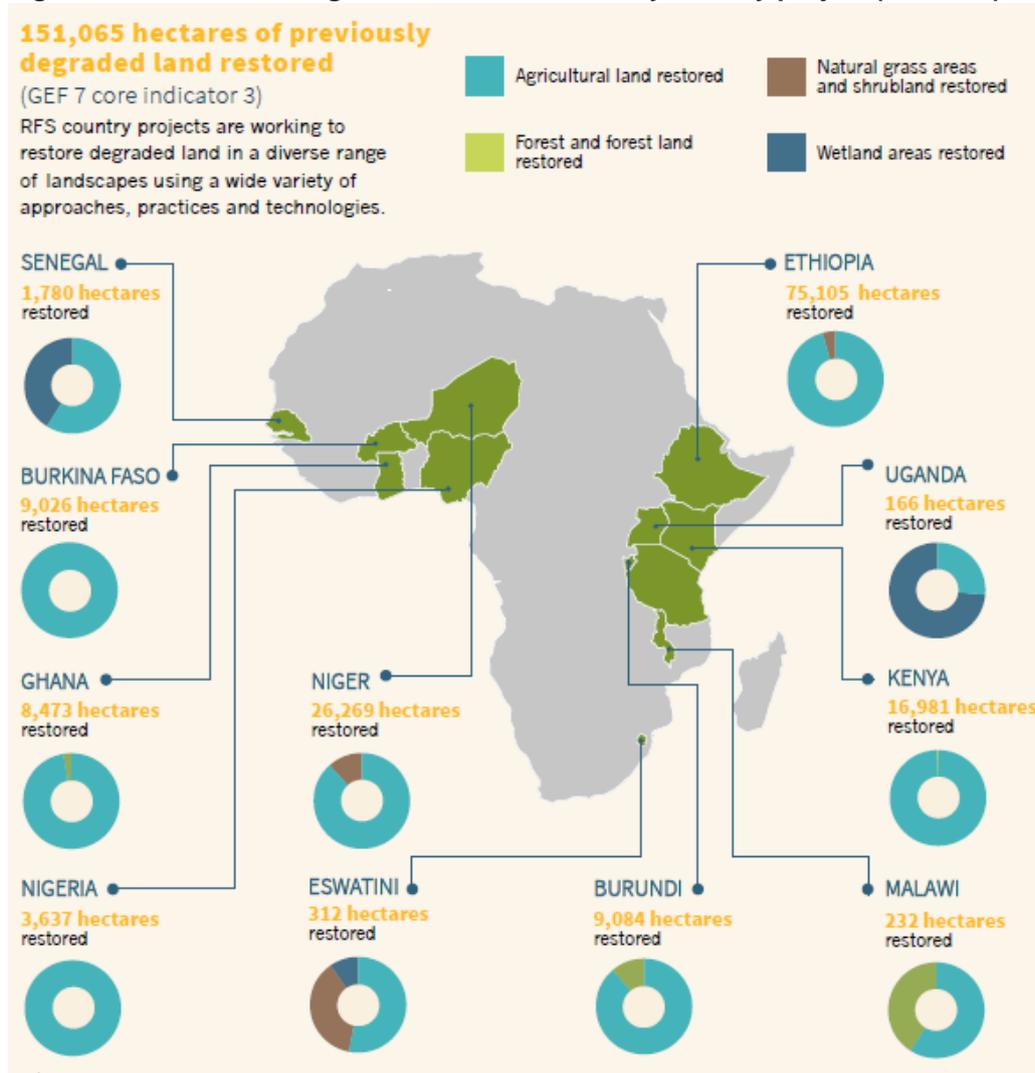
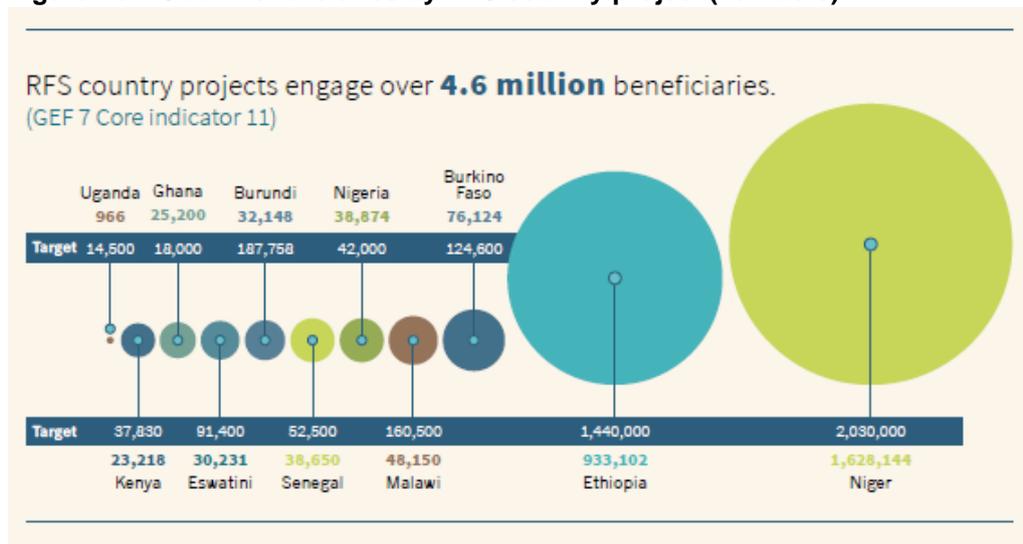


Figure 1b – GEB: Beneficiaries by RFS country project (numbers)



103. For Nigeria and Ethiopia figures include similar Government activities in targeted districts as baseline achievements (for Nigeria so far only the target numbers).
104. For a number of CP the **estimation of the number of individual beneficiaries targeted and reached** (core indicator 11) was particularly difficult. In some countries targeted households in GEF-6 original design had to be converted to individual beneficiaries to conform with the new GEF-core indicator 11. Some countries preferred not to assume that for every beneficiary reached with interventions all associated household members should be counted as beneficiaries, as was done in others. And again, Ethiopia and Niger count an unusual high number of beneficiaries by including all households in targeted districts (Ethiopia) and including those reached by the baseline project (Niger). In contrast, Uganda has a very low number of targeted beneficiaries since the PMU preferred to not follow MTR suggestions of including all food insecure households in the parishes/counties the project has been working in as beneficiaries.

Sub-component 3.3: Bioversity

Achievements and gaps

105. Component 3.3 is executed under the responsibility of the **Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research** within Bioversity International. The main objective is to help countries and farmers in developing environmental and climate change resilience through adapting and choosing the most appropriate seed and livestock varieties which can include local and modern breeds.
106. It took Bioversity some time since first disbursement in Feb. 2019 to upgrade its DATAR M&A tool for the purposes of the RFS, develop its training material and establish interest and contacts in CP. This also significantly delayed the establishment of agro-biodiversity baselines in these countries, and the establishment of realistic targets. But the roll-out to the CP has by now started as of early 2021. The main accomplishment of Component 3.3 so far has been the **development of a tablet and phone-based Application (App) and a web-portal, as part of the DATAR system**, to assess location specific biodiversity needs and interventions and to enable policy support and market development. The RFS funded a large part of developing this App.
107. As of June 2021, Bioversity has completed **6 letters of agreement with CP and 2 more are about to be signed**. US\$15-25k were budgeted for each country for training and support, depending on technical conditions in the country of collaboration. Work started already in Burundi, with the FAO CP investing extra funds for the activity. For Malawi funds will be released soon, and the baseline would be done as part of the initial assessment. Bioversity works or plans to work in all CP with GEF biodiversity focal area funds, except for Ghana and Senegal where BD goals are natural habitat rather than agro-biodiversity oriented (wildlife and mangroves respectively).

108. The developed Web-portal and App provide information and guidance on variety choice for different country settings, programme and project objectives and scenarios. It covers 15-20 crops and some livestock species. The App helps with data collection and analysis during basic assessments, defining country/project goals and interventions, and determining indicators and targets for baseline and impact surveys. It is available in different languages besides English (French, Spanish etc.). Complementary to the App, Bioersity also works with other funds through “community seed banking”, stores where farmers borrow and return seeds, and seed multiplication is part of this story. A **cross-country meeting** with RFS partners is planned for the second half of 2022 to exchange experiences. Scaling up of the expanded tool is already going on with different funds in Morocco and Egypt.
109. **Multifocal approach.** The extent to which this comprehensive DATAR assessment, planning and monitoring tool for agro-biodiversity will be integrated with other M&A tools in the CP to facilitate a multifocal approach with land-degradation and climate change remains to be seen.

Summary assessment and rating

110. The intended comprehensive M&A of resilience and programme impact on resilience through related environmental, socio-economic and food-security indicators and GEB was **not well designed**. Roles and responsibilities were initially **not well assigned**. This changed when some of these responsibilities were taken on by ICRAF (Comp. 4) and FAO (Comp. 3) in late 2019. This step helped to turn the M&A component around which eventually led to a stocktaking of M&A tools applied and baselines done, to re-enforced M&A training of CP on various tools and the development of the comprehensive RFS Results Framework. These are major accomplishments.
111. **Conservation International produced and disseminated very useful M&A tools and knowledge products** in the RFS programme, including a baseline with environmental GIS data and mapping of RFS country projects. Many RFS CP country partners were trained to apply GIS tools for analysis and were equipped with CP data maps. CI focus has been on environmental, bio-physical and land degradation databases and indicators.
112. **There is more to be done in Components 3.1 and 3.2**, for instance, in particular for CI to interact more closely on the ground with CP and, at a broader level, stronger guidance on how to operationalize resilience comprehensively in the field and in M&A, also in view of the terminal RFS programme impact assessment.
113. **Bioersity International** (with a sub-grant administered by UNEP) has been developing a practical tool for M&A of agro-biodiversity and rolling it out in several countries. Although delayed, its activities and plans for capacity building and operationalizing its application are promising.

114. Overall progress in implementation of Component 3 at mid-term and likelihood of the component contributing to achieving RFS overall development objectives is rated as **satisfactory**.

Recommendations

1. For CI to finalize the **land degradation baseline report** and share it with CP.
2. For CI to consider **reallocating a part of its funds for more effective engagement with CP on the ground** (at a minimum recruiting some local staff or consultants should COVID 19 travel restrictions persist)
3. For CI to **summarize lessons learnt from its work with the Resilience Atlas** and other resilience M&A tools used in the RFS programme, to document its experience in applying these tools for the RFS 2022 planned regional policy dialogue. Ideally this would include concrete stories from the field.
4. For CI to undertake, in collaboration with ICRAF and FAO, a **follow-up to the earlier 2018 study of resilience in the RFS**.
 - i. Such a study would, among others, take stock of the variety of baselines done at regional level and in the field and their quality and usefulness for impact assessment and review the overall effectiveness of operationalizing the various M&A methods and RFS results framework indicators for measuring resilience, intermediate RFS outcomes, and reporting on GEF core indicators.
 - ii. Such a study would also identify the prospects and further support needs for RFS wide CP impact reporting at the end-of project. It would help to draw initial lessons on M&A from the RFS programme for future resilience impact measurements in similar programmes.

Component 4: Programmatic impact, visibility and coherence

Obj. 4 – Programmatic Impact, Visibility and Coherence: Coordinate, report and perform general management functions across RFS projects to enhance programmatic impact, visibility and coherence

Sub-component 4.1: Programme coherence and coherent M&E and reporting – ICRAF

Sub-component 4.2: Knowledge management, communication and learning – ICRAF

Sub-component 4.3: Programme and project impact assessment facilitated – ICRAF

What was planned?¹⁹

115. **The primary objective of Component 4 is Hub project management and RFS programme coordination.** In outlining Comp. 4 objectives, the PDR includes overall IFAD programme oversight, financial management and representation in the Region as well as the Programme Governance structure under this Component (Program Technical Advisory Committee and Program Steering Committee).
116. A **Programme and Project Coordination Unit (PCU)** hosted by ICRAF in Nairobi would be responsible for Hub project coordination and management, *and* for coordinating the larger IAP Program. The PCU would consist of a full-time **Programme/Project Coordinator** and a PCU support team (mostly based in Nairobi and with a line of reporting to the Coordinator), with staff assigned to the PCU by each Hub Agency or directly hired by ICRAF.
117. **IFAD** would have the responsibility of oversight, guidance and supervision of delivery of the Hub project by ICRAF and its Hub Agency partners and for overall RFS programme management. For this purpose, IFAD would hire a full time **P4 Programme Task Manager** funded from GEF fees. IFAD overall programme management responsibilities include early warning of lagging projects in the portfolio, communication with and reporting to the GEF, and facilitation of regular dialogue with the other GEF Implementing Agencies in the programme. IFAD's roles as RFS Lead Agency and oversight agency for the Hub project are different than its role in the seven CP that IFAD implements.
118. The IFAD Task Manager would also work on policy engagement and collaboration between Agencies in the region to ensure synergies and scaling up of best practices identified by the RFS programme. The IFAD Task Manager would be based in Addis Ababa, a deliberate choice that reflects the importance of the African Union as a forum for discourse about and as an opportunity for policy advocacy on agriculture, food security, environmental sustainability and climate resilience in Africa.

¹⁹ From PDR, para. 27/31, PDR appendix 9 of Indicative TORs, and ICRAF grant agreement

119. **Delivery of Component 4** would be the responsibility of ICRAF. Delivery of other components in the Hub project would be the responsibility of the respective executing Agency (or 'grant recipient'). Each grant recipient is ultimately responsible to IFAD through the grant agreement. ICRAF is responsible via the PCU to ensure coordination of their outputs and synthesis of planned and reported activities, such as through AWPBs and through compiling annual partner reports (technical and financial) to assist IFAD in assessing whether the trigger for release of funds has been satisfied. ICRAF is responsible for all collection of information from CP required for GEF reporting, including on the programme as a whole, and from Hub Agencies for reporting on the Hub project as a whole (annual PIRs). GEF reporting will be centralized through IFAD.
120. Component 4 would also assure applied **knowledge and communication mechanisms** to the country projects and beyond, through multiple channels. It would coordinate and facilitate capacity building of CP through Hub Agency partners and **biannual (first two years) and subsequently annual programme planning meetings**. It would ensure that **gender considerations** are properly mainstreamed throughout the Program. Component 4 would also establish an **operational M&E system**, for the Hub project and the programme as a whole, to ensure overall monitoring, assessment and impact reporting of the Programme at mid-term and at the end, through **combining regular results-based metrics and outcome mapping of behavioural change**.
121. The Hub project would not seek to directly generate **global environmental or socio-economic benefits (GEF Core Indicators)**, but rather strengthen the overall Program delivery to maximize those benefits through support to the country projects and beyond. It would facilitate their reporting at mid-term and at the end.

Sub-component 4.1 - Programme coherence: Coordination, planning and reporting

PCU start-up and operation

122. **The PCU Programme/Project Coordinator was in place early on** (in 2017), shortly after signing of the Grant Agreement between IFAD and with ICRAF in May 2017, the ICRAF gender expert followed soon thereafter. Other members of the ICRAF team took longer to start their work effectively, on knowledge management and communication. The original plans of an additional full-time ICRAF staff knowledge management officer did not work out. In the end a team of six long-term consultants-on-demand were recruited, but this took until mid-2019 and handicapped some of the early Comp. 4 activities, mainly on KM and communication. Eventually, the full team was able to proficiently catch up on the assigned tasks (see below for details).
123. **The PCU support team** assigned by the Hub Agencies consists of 13 persons, out of whom 5 are based in Nairobi (Annex X). UNEP has not officially assigned a person to the PCU but is currently in the process of recruiting a dedicated consultant for the

UNEP part of Comp. 1. Moreover, the lead UNEP staff in charge of the Hub project is located in the vicinity of the ICRAF compound (pre-COVID) and attends the quarterly PCU meetings. Hub PCU staff work largely independently on their individual components but participate in regular PCU meetings. They appreciate the opportunity to work as a team across component boundaries, as reported in interviews during this MTR.

124. Formal reporting lines to the Coordinator as suggested by the PDR were in practice not possible. Agencies are not willing to allow their staff to formally report to someone from another organization. Performance assessments remained the sole responsibility of each hiring organization. The idea of having all PCU members at the same location was well intentioned and added some value. The PCU allowed partners to communicate better, formally and informally, and to respond to requests faster. But in the end the original PCU concept of a coherent team with members from all partners working together from the same physical space was never possible. Most Hub meetings had to be virtual, often with additional members to those seconded to the PCU team joining from Hub Agencies. Having everyone available at the proposed date and ICT challenges (before the arrival of Zoom) made these meetings sometimes difficult to organize and carry out.

Coordination between Hub-Agencies and with CP

125. **Inter-Agency information flow and coordination** are facilitated through regular quarterly meetings of all Hub project executing Agencies (mostly as conference calls, except for meetings at Annual Workshops). These meetings usually include lead members from the Executing Agencies beyond PCU staff. Attendance and participation in these meetings are good, meeting minutes are taken and shared. The IFAD Task Manager attends these meetings (in person before COVID-19) and also chairs the meetings. Between the meetings, bilateral interactions between Hub Agency leads, the ICRAF Programme/Project Coordinator and the IFAD Task manager are common.
126. The main avenue for PCU interactions and coordination with CP are the **RFS Annual Workshops** and some thematic meetings that were organized before COVID-19. A total of three annual workshops of 3-4 days of meetings each have been organized so far (Table 1 in Chapter A). These meetings were well attended and conducted. Besides staff from the Hub Agencies, IFAD and the PCU these meetings gathered CP staff, country GEF focal points and members of the programme Consultative Committee. Meetings also included GEF Secretariat and STAP members, as well as external strategic and technical partner representatives from the African Union Commission, NEPAD, ESA (EO4SD) and from the private sector. These meetings served for information exchange on the Programme and the services offered by the Hub project, thematic debates and CP capacity development, and RFS annual work planning. But it was also noted by IFAD and ICRAF that participants in these annual meetings fluctuate

across the years, country participants are not always the most important ones for the tasks, and time and required preparation do not permit sufficient attention to all purposes, particularly annual work planning. Still, their usefulness is widely acknowledged, particularly for building a sense of programmatic purpose, understanding and trust through personal encounters. Detailed reports are available for the three annual meetings, and meeting evaluations were done for the second and third one. A fourth planned meeting for March 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19 and replaced by a series of webinars. For 2021, the annual face-to-face meeting has been replaced by a set of virtual interactions and webinars on specific themes across the second half of 2021, for CP and specifically targeted audiences.

127. **Communication channels.** Beyond these meetings, Hub Agencies communicate with individual CP separately, for instance on questions of specific service support and training events. A list of the most important contact persons for each country has been made available (contacts are available at the RFS website and the Focal Points spreadsheet). The Programme/Project Coordinator asked to be informed and copied on initial contacts and on the most important communications with CP, to help facilitate contacts and coordination of Hub-Agency activities in these countries and to avoid duplication and confusion around Hub project activities among CP and Hub Agencies. It has been observed by PCU and Hub Agencies that CP coordinators are not always as responsive to Hub (Agency) communications as it would be necessary for effective collaboration to take place. In some cases, the PCU was not even notified of important changes in CP team composition. Some confusion on communication channels also remains as responsibilities for CP execution and GEF co-financed parts of CP vary by Implementing Agency and can be complex. For instance, IFAD is involved in seven CP but is not actually executing in countries unlike other UN Agencies. Furthermore, The GEF CP is sometimes handled separately as a part of the co-financing project. But overall, this system has worked reasonably well so far. Hub Agency staff is encouraged to contact the PCU coordinator in case of problems.
128. A limitation of coordination and interaction with CP is the fact that the ICRAF PCU coordinator does not have the mandate and budgets to travel to countries/CP, except in the context of broader RFS events.

Annual work planning (AWPB) and implementation

129. In terms of annual work planning and implementation, Hub Agencies prepare their Agency **annual work plans and budgets (AWPB)** and submit them to IFAD. AWPB consist of a budget table (COSTTAB), with planned annual expenditures by budget line against certain expenditure categories agreed in the grant agreements. To the extent costs are allocated, the AWPB shows detailed planned expenditures by activities, outputs and outcomes as specified in the PDR (Appendix 8). Two Agencies so far have introduced changes in their AWPB compared with original activities, categories and

budgets (FAO and UNDP for 2021). Individual Agency AWPBs are reviewed by the IFAD Finance Department and consolidated in an EXCEL spreadsheet/workbook by the PCU. Budgetary changes beyond 10 per cent plus/minus by main expenditure categories over agreed project lifetime expenditures in Grant Agreements are permitted, with IFAD RFS Task Manager approval.

130. Each Hub Agency submits **two annual progress reports** of its main results, its contributions to major RFS cross-cutting goals, and bottlenecks to ICRAF PCU. Annual progress reports measure for results, without reporting detailed expenditures. They commonly show the latest results against targets, for each output indicator, either taken from AWPB categories or taking into account changes made during the development of the M&E results framework in 2020. In addition, regular **financial reports of semi-annual expenditures** – by major expenditure categories – are separately provided by Agencies to IFAD. The PCU uses Agency progress reports for Hub M&E and for aggregate reporting on the Hub project to the GEF in the annual Hub Project Implementation Report (PIR).
131. This process means that there is only limited assessment of produced outputs and other results against planned, allocated expenditures for the year. Progress report results are not always narrowly defined and related to specific budgets which makes such assessments difficult. It was also noted by this MTR that updated Hub Agency output goals of the M&E Hub results plan are not always reflected in the 2021 AWPBs and the latest annual progress reports. This is understandable as the update occurred only relatively recently.
132. The RFSP so far has not had a **fully satisfactory cross-agency planning process** in the Hub project for annual programmes and working with CP, as programming and reporting is mainly done individually by each Hub Agency. Annual meetings or regular quarterly meetings with Hub Agencies could not close this gap. The process of cross-agency planning and coordination is currently not sufficiently structured and prepared. A more coordinated process appears to be necessary for three reasons: (i) it could facilitate a more coordinated approach of service provision and engagement with individual countries and CP; (ii) it could support coordination and cooperation among Agencies within and across components; and (iii) it could help in pursuing common purposes and outputs across the RFS (such as the joint Lessons Learnt event in 2022). It is of paramount importance that any enhanced cross-agency planning process respects the principle of autonomy and primary responsibility of each Hub Executing Agency for fulfilling its commitments in the grant agreements.

Reporting

133. **The PCU has reported regularly, timely and effectively to IFAD (and implicitly GEFSEC) on progress of the Hub project.** Three aggregate annual Hub Project Implementation Reports (PIR) were submitted to GEFSEC, and three annual reports of

the RFS programme as a whole were produced (the ones for 2018 and 2019 were submitted in a combined report). In addition, ICRAF submitted its regular Agency bi-annual reports on Component 4 progress. The PCU had only minor problems with timely submission of progress reports from Hub Agencies. Any delays or incomplete reporting that may have occurred was insignificant or was quickly remedied and did not affect submission of the full reports to IFAD. In contrast, some of the CP PIR Implementing Agency reporting was found late or delayed, some by design as Agencies are accustomed in their own systems to report later. Not all CP PIR reports were shared directly with IFAD or the PCU but had to be requested from the Agencies.

IFAD role in the RFS programme and Hub project management

134. **Delivery of Component 4 is the responsibility of ICRAF**, but IFAD plays an important role in overall RFS programme management and coordination, including coordination of CP and interactions with Hub Agency partners (such as on the grant agreement and financial management), apart from its role of Hub project and programme oversight.

IFAD Task Manager responsibilities and engagement

135. The IFAD TM is responsible for RFS Hub project financial management and for receiving and reviewing all finance-relevant Hub Agency partner reports, such as AWPB, expense reports and audit reports, and of approving financial withdrawals by the Agencies. The IFAD TM is also responsible for all aspects related to IFAD grant agreements with Hub Agency partners and any related contractual and administrative questions that may come up during implementation, such as on sub-grant agreements. Internally, the IFAD TM is expected to mediate and coordinate with IFAD colleagues in charge of the seven IFAD implemented CP, which includes IFAD Country Directors, CP task managers, and regional environmental climate specialists (ECG). The TM thus has an important complementary CP coordination role for Comp. 4. Additionally, IFAD takes on a significant role in RFS policy dialogue and dissemination at AU/ECA level as programme lead Agency which is part of the TOR of the IFAD TM.

Supervision and coordination of the Hub project

136. **The IFAD TM has carried out regular quarterly supervisions of the Hub project** (pre-COVID-19 in person, afterwards virtual) and submits BTO reports of these supervisions to IFAD ECG management. Additional supervisions of the RFS programme as a whole are done by the TM in context, such as at the Annual Workshops, through peer learning events, or during TM country missions, such as to Senegal (2019) and Malawi (2021) as part of IFAD CP supervisions. The annual Project Implementation Report (PIR) of the Hub project for GEF consolidates major IFAD supervision findings and reporting from Hub Agencies.
137. **As implementation of the RFS programme progressed the IFAD TM had to take on a stronger RFS coordination and portfolio management role than initially planned.**

Several UN Agencies were reluctant to report directly to ICRAF as a Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) center or receive requests for reports from the PCU. This affects a number of business processes of ICRAF's primary role in coordinating the PCU. Some of these problems were foreseen at design which led to very clear ICRAF TOR and division of roles and responsibilities between ICRAF and IFAD in the ICRAF Grant Agreement. Overall, the IFAD TM and the ICRAF RFS Programme/project Coordinator have been cooperating very well as a team at the operational level.

Financial management

138. IFAD is fully in charge of RFS financial management, of reviewing AWPB for coherence with Grant Agreements and long-term expenditure plans and categories, and for approving Hub-Agency withdrawal requests upon a summary review of expenditure (by categories) and an assessment of results achieved by the Agency until such a point. The latter is done with inputs from the PCU. The IFAD Finance Department and the IFAD Task Manager have assumed these responsibilities with care. ICRAF has provided the necessary technical advice for the IFAD TM to take an informed decision on withdrawal requests. Financial Reports have been submitted by Agencies as required and largely on time (bi-annually), with few exceptions especially for UN agencies.
139. According to its financial rules UNEP requested the full amount of the sub-grant payment to Bioversity International in advance, with payments to Bioversity being made in tranches. This caused some discussions about subsequent UNEP withdrawals that were sorted out satisfactorily for all parties. have been satisfactorily settled between IFAD and UNEP. FAO does not distinguish in its financial reports expenditures for each of the two components it contributes to and that were separately budgeted (Comp. 1.1 and 2.1; there is no budget for FAO contributions to Comp. 3 that were agreed later on). FAO is not required to do so by the general agreements and regulations that govern financial interactions between FAO and IFAD. For this reason results produced by FAO in each of these Components cannot be related to expenditures.
140. Agency audit reports have been submitted annually by ICRAF and Conservation International as required by internal rules of these Agencies. For the Hub's UN-Agencies audit reports are only required every 2-3 years. Yet no audit report has been received by IFAD so far from these Agencies. It is recommended to IFAD to request missing audit reports with urgency from those Agencies that have not yet submitted any.

Cofinancing by Hub Agencies

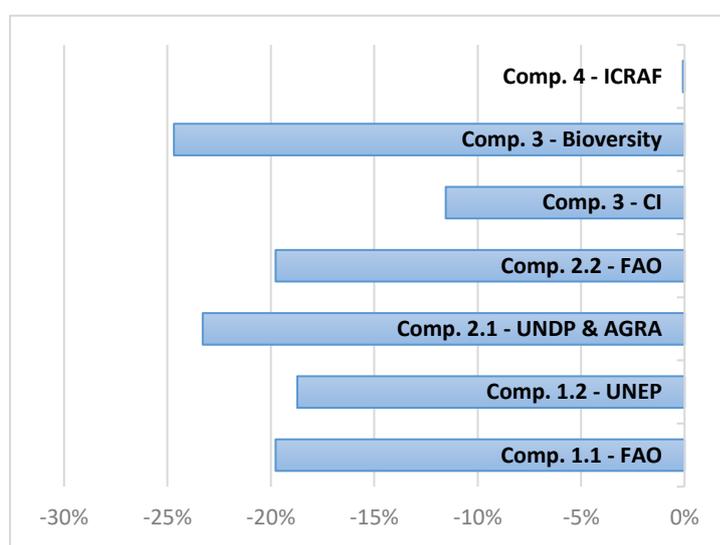
141. Hub Agency co-financing is not specifically mentioned in Grant Agreements, with the exception of the ICRAF grant agreement that refers to a 20 per cent in-kind ICRAF co-finance contribution. Expected co-financing budgets by hub-Agencies are mentioned

in the PDR (p. 167) and the GEF CEO hub project endorsement document. Agency commitment letters to GEF are available. They range from US\$364k for UNEP to US\$18m for ICRAF (for details on co-finance see Annex VIII Table 1). IFAD committed to US\$41.5m). Agencies report on aggregate co-financing expenditures in their financial reports. As of December 2020 these expenditures ranged from 0 percent (UNDP) to 110 per cent (ICRAF) of planned amounts (Annex VIII Table 1). FAO is the only Agency that submits details on co-financing sources and amounts in its annual progress reports.

Disbursements (Agency withdrawals) and expenditures

142. Agency withdrawals from the IFAD account as of March 2021 are between 56 per cent for CI and 74 per cent for UNEP (including the full Bioversity sub-grant) (Annex VIII Table 1). As of Dec. 2020 Agency expenditures ranged from 34 per cent for UNDP (including AGRA), 38 for cent for FAO, 47 per cent for CI, to 64 per cent for ICRAF. UNEP expenditures were at 38 per cent and Bioversity expenditures at 26 per cent. With the exception of ICRAF, all other Agencies have been underspending at a rate between about 12 - 24 per cent compared with what would have been expected at this stage (Figure 2). The largest budget shares of Agency expenditures are for consultancies and salaries and allowances, but ranging from 34 per cent (Bioversity) to 78 per cent (CI) (Annex VIII Table 2).

Figure 2 – Variance (per cent level of underspending compared with plans) of cumulative expenditures by Hub Agency (Dec. 2020) (adjusted for actual contract durations)



Efficiency of Hub project start-up

143. Efficiency of project start-up was mixed by component and sub-components. Most **grant agreements** with Hub-Agencies were finalized in mid-2018, with two sub-agreements only being finalized later in the year (Table 4). The ICRAF grant agreement was signed already in May 2017. FAO in Comp. 2.2 and CI and Bioversity in Comp. 3

were able to start operations pretty much after signing the grant agreements. ICRAF was present early on in 2017, as the first Hub Agency, and efficiently organized the RFS launch workshop and early coordination of other key events and activities (e.g. M&E TAG group and resilience study). But some ICRAF deficiencies on knowledge management and communication remained until early 2019. The other components had longer start-up delays due to various reasons, from sub-contracting issues, recruitment problems, lack of clarity of strategy to the need to prepare comprehensive training manuals as explained in more detail in other parts of this report. By late 2020, the last of the delayed (sub-) components was ready to start full operations on the ground (to the extent COVID-19 limitations permit).

Table 4 - RFS Milestones by component

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Comp. 1 FAO/UNEP		Grant Agreements signed April/May 2018	Draft Comp. 1 Strategy Report (March 2019) Some UNEP activities started earlier	FAO Comp. 1 Expert joins PCU (July 2020)
Comp. 2.1 UNDP		Grant Agreement signed April 2018	1 st disbursement to AGRA mid-2019	Catalytic grants awarded and Green VC manual finalized end-2020
Comp. 2.2 FAO		Grant Agreement signed April 2018		
Comp. 3 (CI)		Grant Agreement signed March 2018	Monitoring Guidance Framework paper (March 2019) Agreement on change of responsibilities for Comp.3	
Comp. 3.3 (Biodiversity)		Sub-Grant Agreement signed Dec. 2018	1 st Disbursement (Feb. 2019)	DATAR App and field work agreements with CP finalized end-2020/early 2021
Comp. 4	ICRAF Grant Agreement signed May 2017 PCU Coordinator recruited mid-2017		Full ICRAF team in place mid-2019 M&E workshop Nairobi (Nov./Dec. 2019)	

	Some work started but without full readiness
	All resources, personnel and grantees on board and major preparations completed

Recommendations Component 4.1

- The AWPB 2022 process of annual work planning should be revised** to provide more opportunities for interactions between Hub-Agencies and to ensure that work plans are to the extent possible coordinated in terms of (i) planned country focus, (ii) enhanced work among Agencies across components, and (iii) working towards some common outputs, such as a potential RFS Lessons Learnt campaign for policy outreach in 2022.
- For ICRAF to review the links between AWPB planned budgets and reported outputs for each Agency** (for use by IFAD for financial management decisions) and to

ensure that both are updated/synchronized in line with the agreed RFS Hub results framework. If necessary, clarify the definition of output indicator in AWPBs and Progress reports to facilitate accountability.

Sub-component 4.2: Knowledge management, communication and learning

What was planned (PDR)

144. **The work expected from the knowledge management and communications team in the Hub project is well summarized in the PDR:** to deliver applied knowledge services to the country projects, to facilitate peer learning between the country projects, and to connect them to other sources of experience and expertise. The Hub project would also ensure results and impacts are well documented and shared among all the stakeholders and refine and apply a well-articulated external communication strategy to reach a broader audience (PDR Appendix 6).

Achievements and gaps

145. Despite a relatively late start in mid-2019 the RFS knowledge and communication, team has quickly established a **well-designed RFS web page with many knowledge and communication products** that help connect the countries, Hub partners and others to the RFS. This has been particularly useful during COVID-19. Work is grounded in an **RFS knowledge and communication strategy** that was developed to guide its activities particularly on outreach. At mid-term, the quantitative targets in the Hub LogFrame clearly are over-fulfilled.
146. The **annual and thematic regional meetings (before 2020) proved particularly useful** to attract CP and Hub partners' interest and lay the ground for further communication and mutual knowledge exchange. Demonstrating common interests and overlap of work areas in CP was important and the publication of a matrix of activities by CP helped link several of the CP.
147. The Component 4 KM Hub produced a series of **monthly RFS bulletins, technical reports and stories as a communication tool, with attention to cross-cutting issues such as gender**. It generated a repository of online information, products and references on each of the main programme objectives of engage, act and track for country and Hub-Agency references. Attractive lay-out design of the many publications of the RFS helped with their dissemination (see Annex VII for a detailed list of products). Several important reports deserve to be mentioned, such as the two RFS programme highlights reports so far for GEF, the Assessment of resilience approaches (ICRAF/Bangor), the Strategy report of Component 1 (FAO/UNEP), the Report on extension during COVID-19 by Component 2.2 (FAO), the Green value chain manual (UNDP), and the RFS M&E plan.
148. The **importance of peer-to-peer and cross-country learning** was acknowledged through an RFS toolkit for farm and field level learning and the packaging of 12 stories

from the field – such as on the importance and ways of working with local councils on land tenure/NRM access in Eswatini. The next goal are the generation of Communities of Practice and reaching beyond RFS CP.

Limitations for KM and what next?

149. But knowledge management also faced a number of limitations and missed opportunities as of now. First, knowledge management in general still has relatively **low priority for countries and CP**, particularly in initial project phases. Countries usually have no dedicated knowledge management experts and M&E officers are often not well equipped for knowledge management. Project leaders tend to be very busy and also were found to be often not dedicated to assume additional tasks of KM since they are often multi-tasking officials. Active KM is often not part of the TOR of country staff, nor are there clear KM indicators and targets embedded in CP.
150. The **role of KM as a cross-cutting approach** for the different Hub components has so far only partly been reflected and realized in Hub planning and implementation in terms of interactions with and support by the KM/Communication team for other Hub components and Agencies. For instance, KM plays a central role in feedback of lessons to policy makers at national and regional levels (Component 1). The strategic question raised by the RFS 2020 Lessons Learnt report is whether the Component 4 team should be more in the role of producing products or playing a support function for other Hub partners? There may have been too little collaboration with Hub-Agencies early on in defining and designing their knowledge products, trainings and approaches.
151. It is also recognized that the Component 4 RFS KM platform has so far mainly been used as a **repository for documents and links, and less for interactive and virtual communication, events and learning**. There are plans to become more proactive, have a new structure develop organically through co-creative KM networking and emphasize longer-term relationships and capacity building rather than simple provision of information, links and tools.
152. Last, the RFS currently knows little about the **utilization and impact of central knowledge products and communication**, those produced by Component 4 or by other Hub Components including the many training events of the Hub project. The RFS is currently not even monitoring utilization and clicks for RFS knowledge products (e.g. views/downloads) due to prioritization of other activities. There has been **no systematic review of training effectiveness in the RFS** or guidance on how to enhance training impact, particularly of virtual learning vs. face-to-face learning.

Recommendations Component 4.2

1. The RFS should increase its **assessment of knowledge product dissemination and utilization as well as training effectiveness** as a delivery mechanism in the RFS, across all components. All affected Hub-Agencies should work together on this.

2. The Comp. 4 KM and communication team should **shift some resources from the production of regular communication products to interactive KM and communication sub-projects with CP and Hub partners**, particularly around the planned RFS 2022 knowledge and lessons learning drive, and if necessary, reduce some of the regular output targets.
3. Search for a **host to transfer/adopt the knowledge platform after RFS completion.**

Sub-component 4.3: [Coherent M&E and] Programme and Hub project impact assessment facilitated

RFS Programme results framework and RFS Programme M&E plan

153. Between 2019 and 2020 the RFS M&E team of Component 4 carried out significant work to develop a coherent and agreed **RFS programme results framework**, with distinct but connected indicators and targets for the RFS programme as a whole and for the RFS Hub project and its various components. The work was done with full consultation and participation of almost all countries and Hub Agencies, including CI. Subsequently, a **comprehensive RFS M&E plan** was published for the RFS in 2021 to guide M&E at all levels of the Programme (multi-scale), including among others a more detailed description of the results framework indicators and the various tools and frameworks for monitoring and assessing (M&A) project impacts in countries (see Comp. 3).
154. The new results framework has updated indicators (with the latest GEF-7 indicators), updated targets and results achieved. 10 of 12 country CP worked with the M&E team on updating these indicators. The results framework includes GEBs and other critical output, outcome and process indicators, targets, measurement instruments, and monitoring/reporting responsibilities, in line with the RFS Theory of Change. Figures 3a-c illustrate some of these intermediate indicators, . (See also Annexes IV and V for Global Environmental Benefits GEB core indicators and for an example of tracking intermediate and other results through the SmartME platform²⁰). The platform is actively managed by the M&E consultant of Comp. 4.
155. The **RFS programme results framework** and **RFS M&E plan** respond well to the most urgent demands on the M&E system and by GEF to support the transition to GEF-7 core indicators and (re-)formulation of targets; ensuring coherence of indicators and reporting; and aggregating programme results across country projects. There are still some remaining questions, though, on validating and analyzing some of the country level indicators for aggregated reporting at the Programme level.

²⁰ The SmartME platform can be found under <https://smartme.adalia.fi/> . Access to the platform requires permission that will be granted upon request and review by the RFS PCU Coordinator: Rodrigo Cianella, r.cianella@cgiar.org

Figure 3a - Intermediate Indicators: RFS Stakeholder platforms and policies

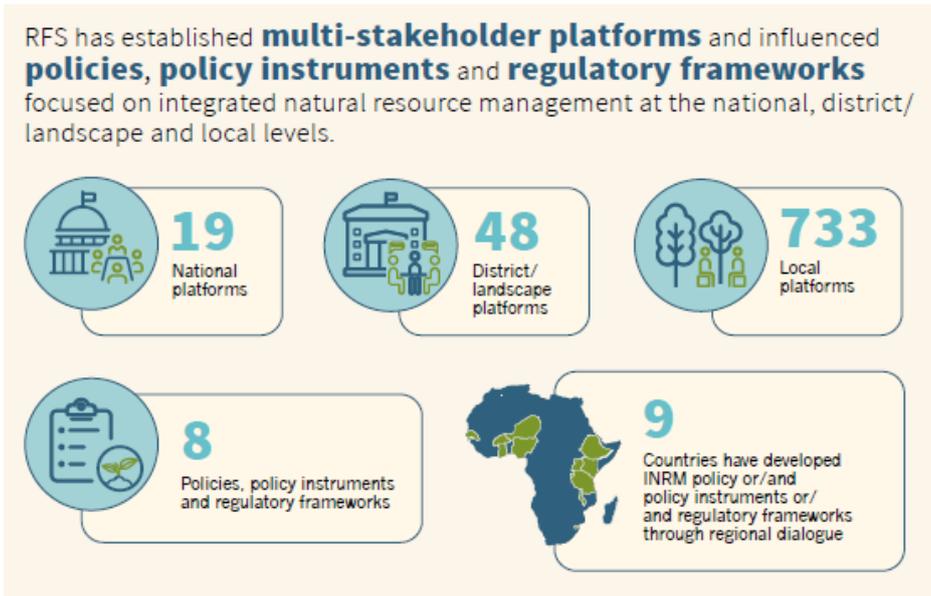


Figure 3b - Intermediate Indicators: RFS value chains

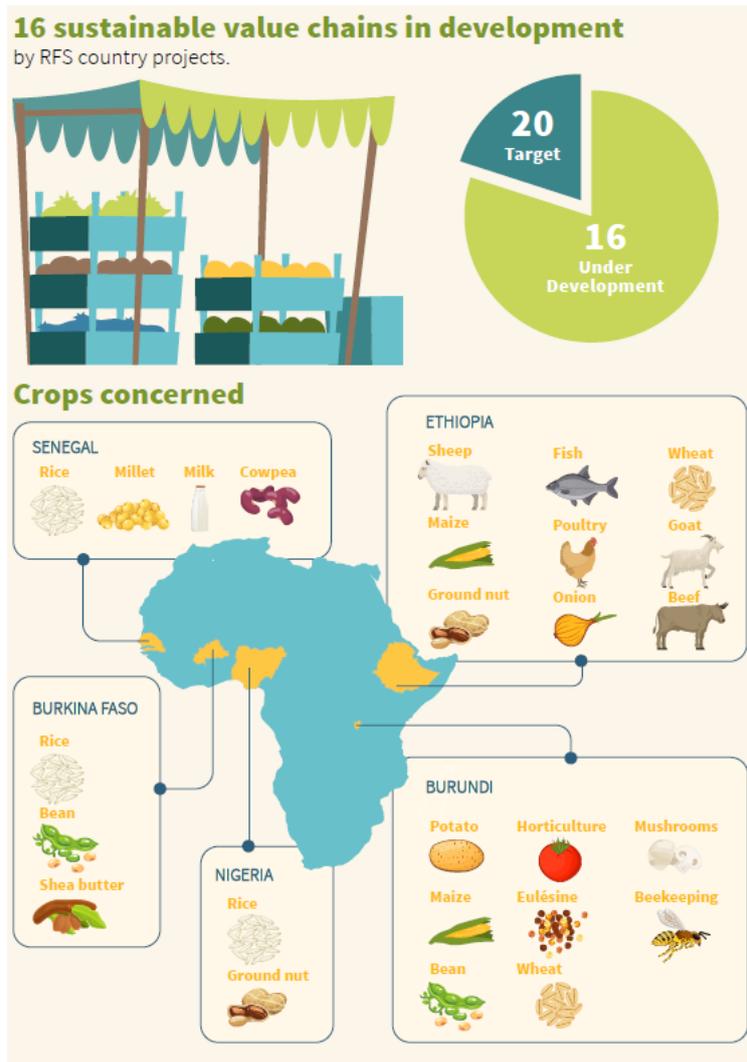
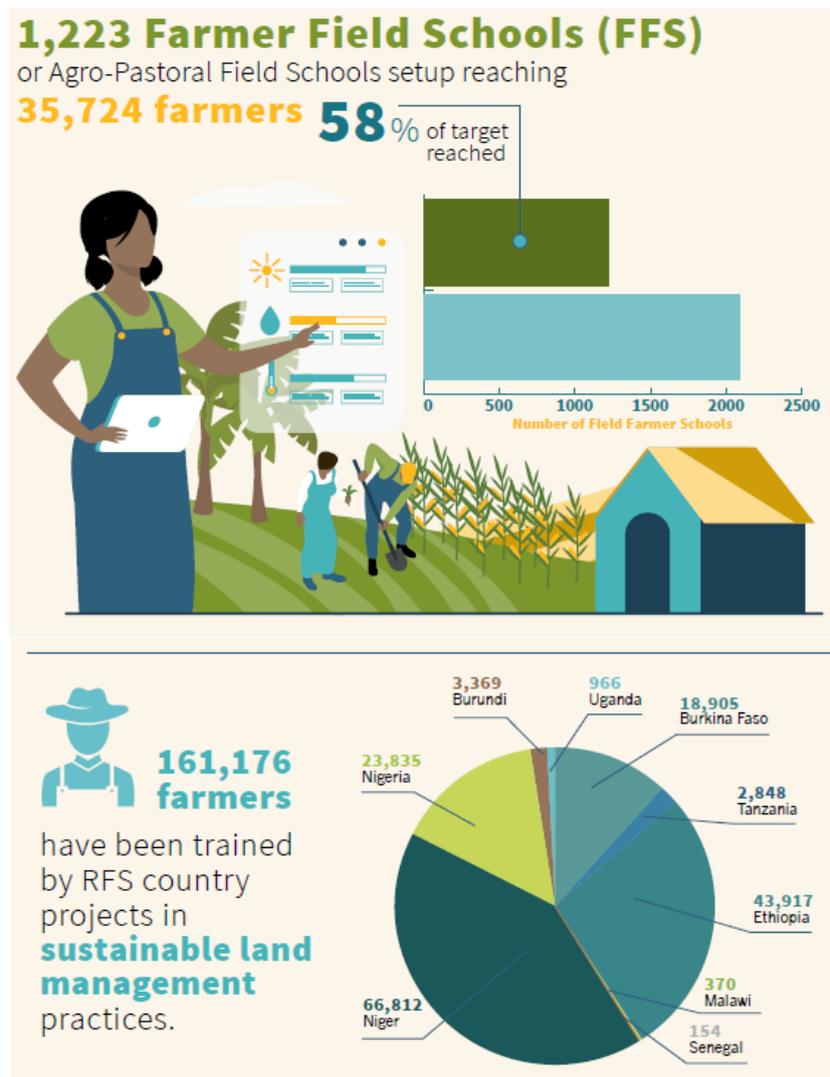


Figure 3c - Intermediate Indicators: RFS Farmer training



156. The development of the results framework was supported by the Technical Advisory Group for M&E and the ICRAF/Bangor University led background study on food security and resilience monitoring.

Online platform

157. In 2020 an **online platform** (SmartME) was developed, based on the new RFS programme results framework, with up-to-date M&E information from countries and the Hub project. The platform went live in 2020 and is fully functional. For each of the indicators it demonstrates the progress – in per cent – towards achieving the main programme and Hub project results. Updated (GEF-7-compliant) versions of both the RFS M&E Plan (available in English and French) and the SmartME system have been disseminated to RFS stakeholders.

Consultations and training

158. There were extensive discussions on M&E in the RFS through **three annual RFS workshops and a dedicated M&E workshop in Nov. 2019**. All three annual programme workshops organized so far, as well as the M&E workshop held in 2019 (discussed below), included sessions dedicated to improving capacity of country teams on these monitoring tools. In addition, specific trainings were provided to countries as per their demand.
159. **In November 2019, a workshop organized by the PCU** brought together key country project focal points and Hub partners for an in-depth discussion towards consolidating the programme M&E system. A total of 34 people attended the workshop, including representatives from 10 RFS countries (all except for Burundi and Eswatini), all Hub partners and IFAD. This exercise resulted in commitments from nine countries (all countries present, save for Tanzania) to adopting new indicators and targets. Upon request from GEF SEC in 2020 the Comp. 4 M&E team facilitated the programme's transition to the GEF-7 results architecture, through a consultative process with all RFS country teams and Hub partners. This helped to inform them on the new reporting procedures and definitions related to GEF-7 core indicators and provided support where needed to adapt their previous project M&E frameworks and cross check assigned targets for each country. While the transition process has been completed at regional / programme level, the Regional Hub plans to continue to support RFS country teams as needed.

Frontier

160. The M&E team is aware that more guidance may be required to CP, Hub partners and Implementing Agencies on some issues that could determine the quality of outcome/impact M&E in terminal evaluations. This concerns particularly (i) the attribution of any results, i.e., the relationship of indicators to actual project interventions (or whether they just pick up broader trends); (ii) the intervention quality, i.e., qualitative aspects of outputs and GEBs beyond their quantities; (iii) linking policy, institutional and knowledge interventions and their outputs theoretically and practically more strongly to GEBs and environmental outcomes, including at the Hub-level; and (iv) address questions around broad adoption, and how different treatment of co-finance and complementary interventions in CP affects targets and aggregate reporting.

Outcome mapping

161. ICRAF, in partnership with Bangor University and IFAD, has been working over the years with interested country project teams to integrate Outcoming Mapping into project implementation and monitoring activities (starting at the 2019 Annual Meeting in Bolgatanga, Ghana). Outcome mapping is a method that tries to capture a project's "boundary partners", i.e. actors with whom a project interacts directly or those that it

“seeks to influence” and the degree of progress in terms of behavioural change. A series of tailored virtual training sessions were provided from July to September 2020 for four country projects – Nigeria, Niger, Senegal and Uganda. It is not fully clear to what extent the efforts in training on outcome mapping have already led to actual adoption and implementation of this tool.

Recommendations Component 4.3

1. Carry forward the integrative work on M&A and impact assessments with/under Comp. 3 and **support recommended activities in Comp. 3** that concern enhanced programme-wide reporting.
2. **Clarify outstanding questions of mechanisms for data validation and analysis** of some country level indicators in the results framework (such as for CP platforms and FFS / falling under FAO and UNDP managed Hub components).
3. Work with the PCU and Hub Agencies to **reconcile agreed and changed RFS outputs in the Hub results framework and outputs planned for in future AWPB (2022)** and reported in future Agency Progress reports.
4. **Assess the status of outcome mapping** in CP and the reasons why outcome mapping appears to be only slowly adopted. Work with Comp. 1 partners to enhance the utilization of this tool.

Summary assessment Component 4

162. Despite early delays, the PCU and ICRAF team are well established and work has been performed well, particularly in Knowledge and Communication and M&E. Comp. 4 work is widely appreciated by RFS partners. IFAD/ICRAF interactions on coordination and management of the programme and the Hub project have worked effectively *at the operational level*. Overall positive feedback from Agencies.
163. Overall progress in implementation of Component 4 at mid-term and likelihood of Component 4 contributing to achieving RFS overall development objectives is rated as **satisfactory**.

D. Programmatic value-addition

Introduction

164. In the programmatic approach of the GEF-6 Integrated Approach Pilots the Regional Hub projects (also known as coordination or knowledge and communication platforms) were expected to play a critical role for programmatic value addition. This would happen through their role for generating programme coherence, promoting the integrated approach and adaptive knowledge management and learning. Hub Agencies and other technical partners that bring in specific skills and expertise would work closely with CP to deal with the inherent complexity of the integrated approach to achieve systemic shifts in operations and policy. Such an approach involves multiple dimensions, from agriculture to ecosystems, across multiple focal areas, and different vertical scales (including policy and commodity value chains).²¹ As also noted by GEF²², at regional level challenges may be posed with different Agencies having to work collectively in delivering projects and services that are designed to be part of a coherent and transformative program. How complex governance issues have been tackled by the IAP programs is seen as invaluable for future programming by the GEF.
165. Programmatic value addition through the RFSP and its programmatic approach is also important as GEF supports various Agencies involved in the Hub through other GEF grants and projects for the same activities that are offered in the RFSP. This raises the question of additionality and why going through a programme such as the RFSP unless there are additional benefits? Countries frequently raised the question in the beginning of the RFSP why funds spent on the Hub project could not be used directly by themselves to work with these Agencies.
166. This chapter focuses specifically on four questions of programmatic value addition: (i) What determined effective cooperation between CP and Hub projects in the RFSP? (ii) To what extent have partnership synergies within and beyond the RFS Hub Agencies been effectively deployed? (iii) How well did the RFS Hub deal with the important cross-cutting issues of gender and private sector for transformational shifts? And (iv) To what extent did CP and Hub project engage on relevant themes at multiple scales? Other questions on programmatic value addition have already been dealt with in previous sections, concerning the integrated approach through multi-scale policy and institutional engagement (component 1), various forms of platforms (component 2) new ways of assessing and measuring its performance and impact (3), and knowledge management, communication and dissemination.

²¹ RFS 2020. Emerging lessons from the implementation of the resilient food systems programme.

²² GEF 2020. Concept Note for a Technical Workshop to assess progress and emerging lessons from the GEF-6 IAPs.

Effectiveness in working with Country Projects

167. All CP participated in the Annual Meetings, many in the thematic workshop organized by the PCU on M&E in Nov. 2019 in Nairobi, and the face-to-face and virtual training events by the Hub Agencies. Before March 2020 and the start of the pandemic crisis, face-to-face meetings were the preferred, and most effective way for Hub Agencies and CP to make contact, build trust and assess CP demand and interests as a first step of collaboration. These meetings were also used by the Agencies to present the services they were able or wished to offer to CP.
168. In addition, the PCU carried out a survey in 2018 of CP interests (and related activities) in participating in the RFSP. A range of topics emerged, from questions around baselines and understanding of M&A concepts, difficulties with implementing the CP as designed, thematic interests in value chain management, environmental conservation and sensitization to fund raising for scaling ongoing interventions. Many of these fell under the broader services offered by the RFS Hub. Few were either too general or specific to be followed up. As a next step, in 2019 the Hub KM team mapped key themes and activities across all CP to facilitate cross-country learning and collaboration. Mapped themes were published in an informative RFS Knowledge Management Brief.²³ This showed commonalities but also many different specific activities across the CP.

CP engagement with the Hub

169. Intensity of CP interaction and engagement with the Hub is summarized in Table 5, (please also refer to Annex VI on RFS capacity development and training events). The shades of color depict the following (from light to dark): (i) expressed CP interest in participating in the specific Hub project component, (ii) participation in training, but limited cooperation and application in countries, (iii) follow-up and application in countries, with CP; and (iv) cooperation with CP funds. Most interactions are found in the first and second category, only two CP so far provided some funds of their own for such interactions (category 4): Nigeria (with CI) and Burundi (with Bioversity).
170. Only Components 2.2 (FAO FFS) and 3 (CI, Bioversity and FAO M&A) have so far engaged with at least some countries beyond initial contacts and training. For FAO FFS this is the case in the two countries where CP are (co-)implemented by FAO (Burundi and Uganda) and where FFS has other longer-term country engagements with FAO or IFAD projects (Tanzania and Niger). CI worked in a single country at an advanced level (Nigeria), Bioversity started its work in Burundi and Uganda and made contracts with other CP to begin work soon.

²³ RFS Knowledge Management Brief. 2019. Key themes and activities across the twelve Resilient Country Projects

Table 5 - RFS Hub Agency cooperation with RFS country projects

Component	Agency	Burkina Faso	Burundi	Eswatini	Ethiopia	Ghana	Kenya	Malawi	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Tanzania	Uganda	Notes
1	FAO	SHARED	Voices	SHARED	SHARED		SHARED	SHARED Voices	SHARED	SHARED	SHARED	SHARED Voices	SHARED Voices	SHARED – ‘Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence Based Decision Making’ (based on an ICRAF model). Longer term engagement in Eswatini, Kenya, and Malawi. Initial webinars with participants from 11 countries in 2020, in English and French (except Ghana). Voices – FAO initiative on Making every Voice Count for Adaptive Management.
	UNEP	SPI		SPI			Show- case			SPI			SPI	UNEP agreed with RFS CPs on appointing SPI focal points in all countries. Some cooperation and interactions are noted for Burkina Faso, Eswatini, Uganda, and Nigeria (for the latter country most advanced). For Kenya UNEP provides assistance in showcasing the Water Fund CP
2	UNDP / AGRA	VC Grant	AGRA	T	On hold	T		VC Grant		T		VC Grant	T	T - Four countries participated in web-based value chain training VC grants: Selected value chain companies are working in/from these countries Ethiopia interested, but on hold due to CP management changes
	FAO		S		T				S		T	S	S	S – Special support on FFS to date in four countries (Burundi, Niger, Tanzania, and Uganda) T – CPs showed interest in Ethiopia and Senegal and were referred to in-country FFS Master Trainers (not yet picked up). Regional FFS training courses for a broader audience with some CP participation are not shown as active country cooperation.
3	Conservation International									Training and baseline with CP funds				Intensive training and baseline data collection was done in Nigeria, financed by the CP (US\$40k). Ethiopia CP recruited a consultant to do a baseline with CI tools. Two other countries (Niger and Uganda) showed interest in training on Trends.Earth and remote sensing technologies.
	Bioversity		Ongoing with CP funds					Pilot about to start					Baseline in Feb. 21	Burundi ongoing, with FAO RFS CP providing funds. Pilot to be started in Malawi in 2021. Uganda started some baseline work. 4 other marked countries have shown interest.

Table 5 cont. - RFS Hub Agency cooperation with RFS country projects

	Agency	Burkina Faso	Burundi	Eswatini	Ethiopia	Ghana	Kenya	Malawi	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Tanzania	Uganda	Notes
	FAO (Ex-ACT; Resilience tools)	EX-ACT (non-RFS)		EX-ACT	SHARP		EX-ACT		SHARP		SHARP		SHARP	
4	ICRAF													
	Communication pieces by RFS on CP	2	6	14	8	3	12	7	5	13	8	5	6	Legend: 1-5 stories – light green, 6-10 stories – medium green, :10 stories dark green
	RFS results frame-work & CI. LDSF (ICRAF)	RFS M&E & Core indicators	LDSF RFS M&E & Core indicators	LDSF RFS M&E & Core indicators	RFS M&E & Core indicators	All countries participated in the development of the RFS results framework and the transition to Core Indicators. Most participated in the 2019 Nairobi M&E workshop. LDSF – Land Degradation Surveillance Framework (ICRAF)								
	Outcome mapping								T	T	T		T	T - Training took place
	South/South learning						Exchange						Exchange	Exchange between Uganda and Kenya CPs, supported by ICRAF. Two other South-South exchanges took place between RFS CPs: 1. Burkina Faso/ Niger/Senegal and 2. Ghana/ Nigeria.

Legend:

	CP advanced interest in cooperation with RFS hub
	Actual cooperation happening, but active participation of CPs so far limited to some induction training, with the intention to start RFS country work
	Actual cooperation happening, with in-country follow-up and results (beyond initial training)
	Cooperation with CP fund contributions
	Various shades of green depict other forms of cooperation, either not directly with the CP (UNDP/AGRA grantees; South/South exchange outside of RFSP) or through Hub communication products

171. Bioversity is the only Hub Agency that budgeted money to work directly in countries and on the ground (between US\$15-25k for each country). FAO conducted training on two M&A tools (SHARP and Ex-ACT) and the SHARED approach (the latter virtually). Follow-up on M&A training in countries is mixed (see information on actual baselines and their timing in Table 2 in previous chapter).
172. Some other activities in CPs are on their way for components 1.1 and 2.1, although CP commitments remain to be seen, with fewer specifics available for component 1.2 (as elaborated in Ch. C). In principle, UNDP/AGRA are well equipped to expand their services in several countries, through the three grants and other CP contacts and training.
173. Many CP have shown interest in interacting with the ICRAF executed Hub Component 4 on communication and dissemination such as of stories from the field (most prominently Eswatini, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Senegal) and summarizing experiences and lessons for other publications (Kenya and Burkina Faso). Comp. 4 also made good headway in cooperating with almost all CP on developing the common RFSP results framework and transition to GEF-7 Core Indicators. In addition, ICRAF Comp. 4 supported one South-South exchange involving Kenya and Uganda and two other exchanges were organized independently between CP in West-Africa (in the Sahel, and between Ghana and Nigeria). ICRAF has been less successful so far in convincing countries to adopt the outcome mapping M&A tool for assessing behavioural change at institutional and policy levels, with training ongoing.
174. Based on these findings and conversations with Hub partner Agencies the MTR ranked the intensity of CP engagement and interactions with the Hub Project. Nigeria, Eswatini and Kenya are in the upper tier, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda in the upper medium tier (despite CP delays and communication problems in the latter two), Ghana in the lower tier, and five remaining countries in the lower-medium tier (Table 6). Variations in engagement across countries have several reasons as further discussed below.
175. In sum, most CP have shown some interest in collaboration and Hub project services, as documented through initial expressions of interest and training, but most have not gone very far yet in concretizing such cooperation in the countries themselves. Some countries utilize the Hub well for communicating their lessons to a larger audience, and most have been participating in obtaining support for transition to GEF-7 indicators.

Table 6 - Country project interactions with Hub project

Upper tier	Nigeria, Eswatini, Kenya
Upper medium tier	Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda
Lower medium tier	Ethiopia, Malawi, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal (<i>but many stories</i>)
Lower tier	Ghana

Reasons for CP engagement

176. **Project start-up efficiency had some impact on effective collaboration with the Hub.**

At least five CP had long start-up times, for various reasons. Three of these only started in 2018 (see Figure 4) and 3 CP had disbursement rates of less than 20 percent by mid-2020 (Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda). Burundi and Eswatini had disbursements of only 27 and 34 per cent. The CP in Malawi and Tanzania suffered from delayed start-up of their baseline projects. While initial collaboration with the Hub was impeded for most of these CP, several caught up quickly and have become increasingly interested in the Hub (eg. Eswatini, Uganda and Burundi). Three CP started on time (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria) all of which have been relatively active in the Hub, with intensity of CP engagement over time mainly determined by specific project management circumstances (next paragraph). For at least 4 other CP start-up was easier as they were closely connected with longer-term baseline projects and programmes, through supplementary funding or co-finance (Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal and Ghana; Table 7). The Ghana CP already closed in Dec. 2020. But in these four CP, collaboration with the Hub was not as intensive as could have been expected since their advanced status, experience and close connections to their baseline projects actually lowered their interest in RFS Hub services and connections. Language was initially another barrier for the three francophone Sahelian countries. ICRAF set up an efficient translation / interpretation system in an attempt to mitigate this problem – most of content (on the website, monthly bulletins, core knowledge products) is translated and all programme-wide events have simultaneous interpretation. This helped with participation. The fact that two CP (Ghana and Burkina Faso) have not carried out a separate MTR for RFS CP funds is yet another indicator of interest and focus on the RFSP.

177. **Changes in CP project management and the management of baseline/co-financed projects** - through changes of managers, transfer of responsibilities between agencies, project completion etc. - were instrumental for participation and motivation to

Figure 4 - RFS programme country project implementation periods (March 2021)

Country	Disbursement June 2020 (per cent)	Project period	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Burkina Faso	50	04/17-12/22 Mid-term SV					S U P		
Burundi	27	01/17-09/22					M T R		
Eswatini	34	12/16-09/22					M T R		
Ethiopia	50	05/17-04/22				M T R			
Ghana	95	05/17-11/20 No MTR							
Kenya	77	01/17-06/22				M T R			
Malawi	17	04/18-12/23					M T R		
Niger	50	02/17-06/22				M T R			
Nigeria	64	02/17-06/22					M T R		
Senegal	61	07/17-02/22				M T R			
Tanzania	16	03/18-03/23 MTR TBD							
Uganda	16	02/18-02/23					M T R		

No MTR expected for Ghana as RFS CP grant was additional finance for long-term project (ended in 2020). No MTR has been done in Burkina Faso for the GEF CP, since an earlier MTR was done in 2018 for the co-finance (baseline) project that started in 2013. 2020 SV report serves as MTR substitute (although it was not labeled that way). MTR still needs to be done for Tanzania.

	Regular CP implementation period. Implementation period is shown for quarter when at least 1 month of project implementation takes place in the quarter.
	Countries with disbursement <50 per cent by June 30, 2020. Extension may be required.

Table 7 - GEF project integration by country and Agency

	GEF Agency	Degree of integration	project Long-term programme upscaling
Burkina Faso	IFAD	Add-on	Yes
Burundi	FAO	Free-standing	
Eswatini	IFAD	Co-design	
Ethiopia	UNDP	Free-standing	Yes
Ghana	World Bank	Add-on	Yes
Kenya	IFAD	Add-on	
Malawi	IFAD	Co-design	
Niger	IFAD	Co-design	Yes
Nigeria	UNDP	Free-standing	
Senegal	IFAD	Add-on	
Tanzania	IFAD	Co-design/later standing	free-
Uganda	UNDP / FAO	Free-standing	

engage. This was most obvious in Senegal and Ghana, where baseline projects ended in 2020 (and the CP itself too for Ghana), with downside effects on Hub engagement. In Nigeria a change in project management in 2019 led to much stronger cooperation than before. In Ethiopia the departure of the UNDP CP coordinator caused some complications in communicating with different Government agencies at central and decentralized levels. Some general problems in communication with CP due to the lack of specific CP KM officers, incentives and overcommitted government project managers were already mentioned earlier in the text.

178. There are certain advantages for Hub Agencies to cooperate with and focus on CP in countries where the Agency itself also (co-)implements the CP. There was more interaction by FAO and UNDP Hub partners with CP where they were either in charge or implemented long-standing parallel projects/programmes in the country (the latter particularly in the case of FAO). But interaction is far from guaranteed and depended also on specific Hub Agency work and demand in the country (example of UNDP in Ethiopia and Nigeria). ICRAF, FAO and Bioversity had fitting ongoing and partly long-standing non-RFSP activities and relationships with CP countries, such as Kenya, Tanzania and Eswatini, which helped a lot with stronger interactions.
179. **Supply and demand.** The importance of matching the Hub supply of services and support and the CP demand for such services was emphasized already in the PDR. But the in-built mechanisms in the RFSP to achieve such an equilibrium were relatively weak as already mentioned. Design did not ensure sufficient overlap of specific interests early on and Hub Agencies often came too late in the CP cycles to influence specific activities they could have contributed to and where the RFS could have engaged more pro-actively. But where specific interests overlapped and CP realized that Hub topics coincided with their own country level cooperation could work, as in Nigeria (on M&A) and Uganda (on value chain platforms, biodiversity). Another important factor is that Hub-Agencies had relatively weak incentives to adapt to CP demand during implementation. Workplans, budgets and expected deliverables of Hub project components were structured well in advance. With very few exceptions, Agencies have been slow in aligning their plans, indicators and budgets to adapt to different and changing demands and circumstances in CP after Programme start-up.
180. **CP staff at all levels are indeed interested in a potentially transformative Programme as the RFS**, particularly as far as their own learning is concerned (as confirmed in various Hub Agency interviews). But they are so only to the extent that they are not overly burdened with responsibilities beyond what they are already tasked with in their projects and TOR, particularly at an early implementation stage. For instance, few CP were able to grapple with the complexity and implications of the multi-scale approach. And no one in a CP is evaluated based on regularly sharing or linking up with RFS programme partners, most staff in CP actually are not directly connected with the RFSP.

Hub Agency partnerships and cooperation – working across components

181. **All Hub Agencies show good motivation and high participation in joint RFS events such as annual workshops and quarterly planning meetings.** Initial reservations and sentiments that originated in a competitive and controversial design process were by and large overcome. A foundation of trust has been established among hub partners but it took some time to get there.
182. **The discussion of individual components in the Hub project in the previous chapter already demonstrated the mixed experience of cooperation between technical Agencies.** There were some positive examples of effective cross-component and Agency cooperation such as the joint work by ICRAF, CI, FAO and Bioversity on M&A and the development of a programme results framework; and the collaboration between FAO and ICRAF through the SHARED work on Comp. 1. But this remained the exception. For the most part each Agency focused on delivering its own committed deliverables and (sub-) component.

Institutional complexity

183. The **number of partners in the Hub** project (seven) enriched the experience and allowed broader offers of services to CP, but it also led to a thinning of Agency budgets which caused among others fewer interactions with CP than planned. It also significantly increased transaction costs for managing and reporting on the programme, for finalizing and managing the many grant and sub-grant agreements, coordinating a large team of Hub partners and team members (up to 20-25 persons), ensuring information flows and transparency, and general and financial oversight. The multitude of partners in the Hub is seen as one of its most challenging aspects, particularly when there has been overlap of responsibilities as in sub-components 1.1 and 1.2 or in components 3 and 4 (on M&A). From an administrative and financial standpoint it would definitely have been desirable to have fewer Agencies according to IFAD and the PCU. Whether it would have helped with more programmatic focus is not clear. Dealing with many Hub Agencies also was initially difficult for CP.
184. **It was useful to bring in ICRAF, Conservation International and AGRA** as Hub Agencies as they contributed indeed different technical perspectives beyond those of the UN Agencies involved. But neither ICRAF nor CI have been able to bring in the full range of their competencies and potential in this programme so far, for different reasons as described earlier.

Motivations for inter-Agency cooperation

185. **Hub Agencies are very protective of their autonomy in the RFSP and skeptical of joint programming and depending for their deliverables on other Agencies.** According to the PCU, experience in the RFS shows that cooperation works best when

it develops organically between different partners over time, when windows of opportunities for collaboration open and are seized in countries and the region, and when implementation schedules remain somewhat flexible. For this reason, joint annual programming is not codified in the RFSP. The attempt by two RFS Agencies to develop a common work programme and joint implementation arrangements has been tedious and not encouraging (FAO and UNEP in Component 1). UN institutional and administrative cultures and approval processes reduced the appetite for more formalized and joint cooperation (as discussed in the previous Chapter).

186. **There are few formal incentives for Hub Agencies for working closely together in the RFSP** since cooperation goals and activities by themselves are not well enshrined in the initial specific work plans, targets and budgets (similarly as for CP). It requires a certain amount of self-motivation and patience to cooperate and adapt to the demands and the pace of the Programme, CP and partners. Agency responsiveness varies. Since most Hub Agencies regard the funding for executing such an ambitious programme as the RFSP as relatively low for a five-year period this further led them to rely more on putting their regular work plans and activities into the service of the RFSP than to embark on new joint ventures outside of well-trodden paths. There is nothing wrong with this, as long as it helps the RFSP and in particular the CP to advance the Programme objectives, but it limits the scale of openness to adapting to new cooperation opportunities throughout the Programme.

Agency visibility and programme facilitation

187. **Agency visibility during RFS presentations in conferences and workshops is important to Hub Agencies**, as well as appropriate representation on knowledge and communications products. Most Hub-Agencies see themselves as equals in the Programme and the Hub – and IFAD as ‘first among equals’. This is encouraged by the GEF programmatic model of autonomous GEF Agencies and relatively weak constitutional and institutional powers for the Programme Lead Agency.²⁴ They question why only GEF, IFAD and the RFS programme logo are on top of many reports and why many RFS presentations – partly due to GEFSEC request – are dominated by the Lead Agency or the Hub PCU. Such concerns may be valid or not, and they have already been raised and discussed among Agencies in previous Annual RFS Workshops. In any case, they were expressed again during the MTR by several Agencies and affect to some extent Agency motivation in the Programme.
188. **More attention to programme facilitation.** In this context it was particularly noted that a Programme such as the RFS requires to be much more than the promotion of certain approaches, tools and methods, as technically excellent they may be. It is about bringing different sub-skills together in a common approach, it is about the

²⁴ GEF IEO 2021. Formative Evaluation of the Integrated Approach in the GEF.

building of relationships within the Programme that encourage change and adoption of innovations, and it is about the acknowledgment of conflicting interests, group and power dynamics within the Programme.

Operational leadership

189. **The autonomy of Hub Agencies and the dual role by IFAD and ICRAF in de-facto co-managing and coordinating the Hub project**, and to a lesser extent the Programme as a whole (with ICRAF mainly responsible for coherence and common reporting) has led to some gaps on operational leadership where it is required to set policy directions and focus across Components and Agencies. Yet the experience of M&A in the RFS has also shown how such operational leadership can work, although this was a long process involving the TAG, several Agencies and countries and ultimate transfer of operational leadership to ICRAF. Such cross-component and cross-Agency leadership is, for instance, not yet visible in the all important Component 1 that has as part of its mandate to advance, enrich and disseminate RFS lessons and best practices from across the Programme at a multi-scale policy and institutional level.

External technical partners

190. The GEF programmatic approach, including that of the RFSP, relies on bringing in **other technical and policy partners**, and not only through the science and policy platforms promoted in Component 1, but also for instance in Component 3 (CI). It is very difficult to see the range of such outside partners that effectively contribute in the RFS as the boundaries of the Programme are fluid. Hub Agencies work with many partner agencies in other projects and programmes and often on similar issues as in the RFSP. The same is true for intra-Agency partnering with other Agency divisions. These partner agencies are often proffered in RFS annual reporting but their specific relevance and contributions remain mostly unclear, as well as the additionality of such work. Few concrete financial agreements or formal work arrangements (MoU or similar partnership agreements) have been made so far with such external (or internal) partners. The one exception was cooperation and some specific work with the European Space Agency on GIS and resilience data – but this was on a separate grant with IFAD. FAO may be another exception in their internal collaboration. FAO also recruited ICRAF as an outside organization for some work to be carried out in the context of RFSP Component 1.

Private sector partnerships

191. RFS Hub project communications have repeatedly highlighted and drawn attention to experiences by CP on collaborating with and through the private sector in briefs, stories and contributions to external publications. This concerns particularly the private sector water endowment fund in Kenya and the mobilization of the banking

sector for greater access to finance for smallholders and SMEs in Niger. The Nigeria and Eswatini CP use a PPP approach to connect smallholder farmers to businesses. Other CP are investing in multi-stakeholder platforms with private sector at different levels (such as Senegal and Uganda); and Hub Agencies have started to explore ways to 'green' the ambitions and agendas of such platforms and broader value chain market access promotion. The grant to UNDP/AGRA works on this specific aspect, with its sub-grant to three regional partners for engaging the private sector. There is great potential in the RFS to synthesize and learn from experiences in such platforms of private sector engagement and support, as a next stage. The provision of farmer extension services through private and private/public service providers is a model that is being explored and tested in RFS Component 2.2 in the context of Farmer Field Schools. Private sector representatives have also been attending some of the RFS annual workshops. It is expected that the RFS Hub will continue to pay attention to activities of private sector engagement throughout its activities and the topic itself remains a priority.

Gender equality and women's participation

192. **Gender is a significant cross-cutting theme within the RFS Programme with programmatic value addition.** Gender mainstreaming was a major aspect of country project design. A gender expert is part of the ICRAF PCU team under Component 4. The RFS Hub gender work has been focusing on communicating the specific GEF reporting requirements to CP and to break down complex gender concepts into practical applications. The RFS Hub developed - in a consultative manner with country CP and the GEF Secretariat - a programme-level gender monitoring framework that shifts from gender indicator lists to a best practice model, emphasizing empowerment through secured access and rights to lands, water, forests, financial services, and technology; increased incomes, improved capacities in literacy, market/economic activities; and a better daily time management. The regional hub project also trained country teams on gender transformative approaches and the distinction between reaching women with project interventions and realizing tangible benefits for women as a result of those interventions. In addition, the regional Hub provided specific gender-related support to country child projects, including Uganda, Eswatini, and Nigeria.
193. In 2020 the RFS Hub developed and disseminated **a practical guidance note for CP on gender-responsive project implementation within the RFSP** (RFS knowledge brief series; available in both English and French). The note assists country teams in identifying activities, methods and approaches to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from the CP. It makes concrete proposals for programming and implementation, and the types of outcomes

that can be achieved when a gender dimension is recognized and addressed. The guidance note highlights examples of what RFS countries are doing or are planning to do, at different scales, that could be replicated. It also offers a selection of tools, methodologies and resources to support gender-responsive project implementation.

194. **Annual programme workshops have been the main channel for the Hub gender team of interacting with CP** to (i) build a common understanding on gender equality, gender inclusion outcomes and gender responsiveness in their activities and approaches; (ii) identify activities and clear country specific indicators in the CP that could contribute to gender outcomes; and (iii) link gender, environment and gender transformative approaches (GTA) as a requirement for strong landscape restoration and resilience. These training events also discussed how transformational approaches relate to gender. Attention was paid to having CP partners realize that women participation alone does not necessarily help on gender relations.
195. In terms of dissemination, the Hub gender team contributed several RFS-related inputs for the **Progress Report on the GEF Gender Implementation Strategy**, prepared by GEF SEC for the 60th GEF Council Meeting. **Several stories on how women are benefiting from the RFS Programme have been collected and disseminated to the RFS community**, including an article on how beekeeping is being promoted by several RFS country projects (Burundi, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Senegal) as a leading income-generating activity targeting women as primary drivers and beneficiaries.
196. **There were various challenges to integrating gender considerations in CP implementation.** They included insufficient resourcing for delivery of activities envisioned in gender action plans, low capacity among project staff and short timeframes for delivering concrete results. Most country projects were already underway when the Hub became operational (mid-2018), with little room for regional partners to influence the activities and approaches selected.

Gender results

197. Almost all CP report gender-specific information, 92 per cent of projects reporting gender-disaggregated indicators in PIRs/MTRs and 77 per cent gender specific results (i.e., demonstrated progress toward achieving gender equality or the empowerment of women).²⁵ As of mid-term all country projects reported the **proportion of women reached by the projects** (Figure 5). **The average figure is 38 per cent, compared with 40 per cent planned**, with the best achievements of reaching women, and above target at design, reported for Eswatini and Nigeria (51 and 49 per cent), and the least for Ghana (only 9 per cent vs. 45 planned).

²⁵ GEF-IEO Formative Evaluation of the Integrated Approach in the GEF. 2021.

Figure 5 - Proportion of women reached across the RFS



198. **The adoption of specific gender outcome indicators varies across the CP** (Table 8) and reporting on these indicators has not yet started in all CP that adopted them. The indicator of training and rural extension access for women still remains the most broadly used and reported indicator (10 out of 12 CP), with indicators and proxies on women's earning opportunities and market access being a close second, followed by representation in committees and leadership positions. Indicators on formalizing women's land rights and NRM access are still only sparsely used, and even less frequently reported on. More work is needed to find out reasons why and to facilitate adoption of this important indicator.

Table 8 - CP adoption of gender indicators

Indicator	CP adopted indicator for reporting	CP already measured and reported indicator (out of CP that adopted indicator)	Notes
	<i>number</i>	<i>number</i>	
Formalization of women's land rights, NRM access	3	1	Includes platforms that facilitate access
Increase of women's income earning opportunities and market access	9	6	IGA were discontinued in Niger, surveys not yet done in two other countries
Training and extension services, directed to women and youth	10	10	Mostly gender disaggregated information
Attitudes to women's participation in markets	1	0	Uganda
Representation in committees and organizational leadership positions	6	4	Still too new to report for 2 CP

Time savings in fetching water or firewood	3	2	e.g. through energy saving techniques
Labor and time-saving technologies for women	4	4	e.g. through agriculture technology

Source: RFS Programme survey of CP in June 2021 (Comp. 4.1, M&E)

Emerging lesson: Importance of gender dimension for resilience

199. The RFSP design emphasizes gender mainstreaming and enabling poor rural women to benefit from improved food security and income, but the programme was less explicit in recognizing **gender inequality as a key determinant of resilience both at household and community levels**. The experience of the first years of RFSP implementation shows that it is crucial to understand how gender roles and norms mediate people's different relationships to the environment and access to resources; as well as how social dynamics and power relations affect people's vulnerability by constraining their responses to shocks.

Relevance

200. **The RFS continues to be highly relevant for countries and regional development.** The urgency of its objectives even increased with the COVID-19 pandemic that heightened concerns about resilience of smallholder farming systems, ecologies and household food security in rural Africa. The attendance by the RFS of various international and regional conferences and the feedback received – for instance at the UNCCD COP 14 and the 2019 African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) – and the COVID-19 dialogue with the African Union Commission (AUC) in 2020 confirmed this relevance.
201. **At the farm level,** smallholder farmers continue to require support to adapt to the multiple inter-connected challenges of climate change, market volatility, natural resource depletion, and better livelihoods and nutrition, and increasingly so. The RFS can contribute to adaptation among others through FFS as laboratories for innovation to support and redesign Extension and Advisory Services for ecological literacy. This is fully aligned with CP country policies and sector strategies. Opportunities for peer learning between countries develop capacities and contribute indirectly to the alignment and relevance of national interventions with overall development objectives.
202. **Commercialization of agriculture, commodity value chain development and export orientation** are very high on the agenda of the AUC, ECA and NEPAD. Informing the development of new policies and strategies through policy dialogue on sustainable and green solutions remains critical. Production, productivity growth and land

extension are still the most important issues in many debates and Hub Agency partners recognize the uphill battle of strengthening the greening side. Yet, the resurgence of farmer resilience aspects during COVID-19 and increasing demand for nutritious and healthy food by African consumers open a window of opportunity for an informed dialogue through the RFSP. Basing policy dialogue and influence on evidence from the field is critical for the debate on opportunities, merits and potential trade-offs of interventions and policy measures for sustainable ecosystems, INRM, green value chains and resilience; and for the identification of best practices to get there and measure the achievements.. This is where the RFS Programme can be most useful and relevant.

203. **Globally**, the RFS is addressing key issues of the SDG agenda (particularly SDGs 1, 2, 15 and 17) and is playing a catalytic role in reinforcing countries' commitment for implementation for the Rio Convention. The Programme is indirectly helping countries to achieve priorities in NDCs and NAPs. **As a continental programme** the RFSP has already connected to existing initiatives and platforms based on RFSP experiences, such as the AUC and the Agenda 2063 for environmentally sustainable climate resilient economies and communities, and the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Plan (CAADP). The RFS is also active in several countries on policy harmonization and alignment at national and sub-national levels, including among Agriculture and Environmental Ministries.

Summary assessment and rating: Programmatic Value Addition

204. **A number of factors affected a relatively moderate CP participation and demand for Hub Agency services in the RFSP.** Many reasons are RFS Programme and CP design related (such as too little 'glue') or due to specific CP circumstances and project cycle phases. But CP interest in the Programme has been growing over time in several countries and through a series of RFS events and trust-building efforts. Yet the uncertainty of financing more direct, in-country interactions and interventions by several Hub Agencies with CP remains a major stumbling block. And so does the adaptive capacity and creativity of (some) Agencies to identify and allocate additional resources in their workplans and budgets for this purpose.²⁶
205. **Mechanisms and incentives for cooperation between Hub Agencies are not clearly defined in the RFS Hub project PDR**, nor in individual workplans, budgets and targets. Strong cooperation in the Hub remains aspirational for most parts. Overcoming silo mentality in the RFS Hub is not easy. But RFS experience also shows that cooperation can work, and indeed works best, when it develops organically over time through

²⁶ Agencies are not expected to adapt in a way that would be out of line with their offers, skills and commitments. Demand orientation is important, but Grant agreements also state that Agencies do not have to respond to CP requests, unless it fits with their offers and agreements.

collaborative windows of opportunities, in countries and the region. While some coordination of annual planning should be encouraged (see Component 4) it appears best for partners in the RFSP to commit to finding such win-win windows-of-opportunity for partnered cooperation.

206. **Sensitivities of Hub Agencies about their visibility and appropriate representation in the Programme** and particularly the Programme’s interactions with the outside world in conferences etc. are valid and need to be acknowledged and addressed in an appropriate way, but they also should be balanced with respect for clarity of roles and responsibilities as per Agency TOR, particularly that of the Lead Agency, and follow agreed GEF branding guidelines for such products.²⁷
207. There is potential for good programmatic value addition in the RFS through further exploring the effectiveness of innovations and models of support for **gender equality and women’s participation and for private sector engagement**, and of measuring such support. Gender equality was identified as a crucial determinant of resilience both at household and community levels, yet indicators on formalizing women’s land rights and NRM access are still only sparsely used in CP. PPP platforms are frequently applied in CP. The conditions under which they work and are amenable to adoption of green value chain aspects are less well known.
208. In sum, the RFSP has not yet fully capitalized on opportunities for a strong programmatic value addition in all areas. Weak design of the Programme and the institutional complexity of the Programme Hub project play a large role in this respect. There is, however, scope and motivation for mitigating design weaknesses during the remainder of the RFS Programme. For these reasons, the overall programmatic value addition of the RFSP is rated as **moderately satisfactory**.

Recommendations

209. It is recommended
1. For Hub Agencies to do a **stocktaking exercise** in view of facilitating their work in CP countries and other ways of programmatic value addition through strong cooperation and contributions to systematic lessons learning and dissemination during the final phase of the RFS Programmes.
 2. Such an exercise should particularly review the possibility of reallocating some funds (eg. consultancy budgets) for **working more directly in selected CP countries**

²⁷ The [RFS Branding Guidelines](#) have been approved by GEF SEC and are in full compliance with the [GEF Brand Guidelines](#). GEF COM periodically scrutinizes RFS knowledge products for compliance against these rules, which include specific instructions on the disposition of partners’ logos in publications from GEF-funded programs – see page 11 of the GEF Brand Guidelines. All core RFS knowledge products published through Component 4 are compliant to these GEF Brand Guidelines.

and for **identifying ‘win-win’ windows of opportunity for synergistic partnerships** with other Agencies or RFSP relevant external partners.

3. The PCU and IFAD – in collaboration with the Hub Agencies – should identify sufficient **structured opportunities for all Hub-Agencies to assume adequate visibility in the Programme**, particularly during the final RFSP dissemination stage.

4. The Programme (PCU and others) should integrate reviews of **CP experiences of promoting women’s role for resilience and the role of PPP platforms for private sector engagement and green value chain promotion**, in the proposed Resilience Study and elsewhere.

E. Conclusions and way forward

Conclusions

210. The RFS Hub project performed well in terms of overall relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, after some initial delays. The project adjusted swiftly to COVID-19 conditions and changed its delivery mechanisms. At times the aspirational integrated and multi-scale RFS agenda, its institutional complexity and the number of partners proved challenging. This MTR provides several recommendations to support the programme to take these challenges, make necessary adjustments and draw lessons from its integrated pilot nature.
211. The Hub project contributed to many positive results and early outcomes in the RFSP that are well documented although progress has not been symmetric, with weaknesses on the policy and institutional sides. Yet, the RFS already had a number of positive partnership effects particularly through providing the opportunity and a forum for a rich dialogue among country programmes and with Hub Agencies, compared with previous GEF programmes. Progress was made around a better understanding of integrated programme objectives, of the role of platforms, partnerships, and private sector cooperation for such an integrated approach, and measuring and assessing resilience in all of this.
212. Readiness for close cooperation, partnerships and adaptation to emerging opportunities and challenges were slower to develop, partly due to a design legacy of less coherence, clarity and flexibility than would have been preferable. This affected demand and work in the countries themselves. There is still potential to further develop programmatic value addition in the remainder of the Programme.
213. In sum, the RFSP has been a milestone for new ways of doing business for resilience in GEF and it has provided a number of learning opportunities for all involved. The overall performance of the RFSP is rated as **satisfactory**.

Way forward and exit

214. **The RFS Programme is a pilot programme that will not be continued after its expected completion in 2022** (or mid-2023 if extended by six months as proposed below). There is no indication of additional funding from GEF or any other donor, and no resource mobilization efforts have so far been planned for this purpose. Some of the early lessons from RFS design and implementation have already been acknowledged and included in GEF-7 programme designs. Many more lessons are expected to emerge and be synthesized by the Hub and its Agency partners over the remaining 1-2 years of the Programme. As fit for a pilot programme it will be critical to share these lessons with policy makers and practitioners at all levels, before the end of the Programme, i.e. latest in the second part of 2022. This is also when most CP will be completed.
215. **Sustainability.** Sustainability and scaling-up potential of many activities and objectives promoted in the Hub project is good since they are being carried out by well-established Agencies that are likely to carry forward at least some of these activities in future. The sustainability of the knowledge, communication and CoP platform (including the web-site) is less assured as none of the current partners so far has expressed any interest in doing so unless additional resources will be mobilized.

Main recommendations

216. The five main recommendations for the final phase of the RFS Regional Hub project are as follows:
1. **Full-scale roll-out of component interventions in CP**, with focus on working in selected CP that are interested and capable to cooperate. This may require for some Agencies some reallocation of resources for country work. The primary target would be to complete all work by end 2022, with a potential 6-month extension where this is not possible.
 2. **Adaptive management of Hub Agency workplans and budgets for 2022** as proposed in the earlier recommendation of a **stock-taking exercise**.
 3. **A concerted flagship effort of synthesizing and disseminating critical lessons learnt in the RFSP to selected audiences.** Valuable experiences and lessons of CP and Hub Agencies over the years would be mined, with critical reflections to underline the synergistic and pilot nature of the RFSP and to identify what works and what does not work. Such a series of events would inform and, if possible, influence policy and institutions in countries, at regional policy level (eg. AUC, ECA, NEPAD, CAADP), and other collaborative science and policy platforms and partnerships. All Hub Agency partners should contribute to this effort.

4. An M&A assessment on the evolving understanding and measurement of resilience in CP and CP Implementing Agencies, as a follow-up to the earlier resilience assessment and TAG involvement, particularly in view of lessons to be drawn from the RFSP and the evaluability of impact during the RFSP terminal evaluation expected for 2023.

5. IFAD and ICRAF should further explore the feasibility and options of migrating the RFS K&L platform to potentially interested parties or merging it with other knowledge platforms, such as NEPAD, UN Agencies or CG centers.

Extension

217. **All hub Agencies are behind in their scheduled expenditures and disbursements**, except for ICRAF. By end-2020 disbursements ranged from 28 per cent for Bioversity to 47 per cent for Conservation International (with ICRAF at 64 per cent). Delayed start-up by some components and COVID-19 caused relatively slow disbursements for most Hub Agencies. Three to five country projects are unlikely to complete their operations by 2022 (Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda; possibly Burundi and Eswatini).

218. **This suggests that there may be some merit in an extension of certain Hub Project activities until mid-2023**, the absolute limit that would be feasible from a financial and overall management stand-point for IFAD and ICRAF. For ICRAF and Component 4 an extension would mean that some outputs would have to be downscaled in 2022 to pay for such an extension.