

STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	11214
Project title	Food Systems Integrated Program
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP welcomes the "Food Systems Integrated Program". STAP is pleased with the robustness of the Program Framework Document, and encourages the country teams to design their projects with the same rigor. When designing their projects, countries are recommended to be explicit about whether, and what, transformations will be required to achieve their objectives, and how these fit in with the IP plans for regional or sector or value chain clusters. The country's theory of change will need to support scaling, innovations, and learning to meet the desired transformations.

The Global Coordination Program has an important responsibility in generating and managing knowledge and learning. Important knowledge gaps exist about food system transformations, including how social networks, such as platforms, coalitions, or communities of practice respond to multiple, interlinked changes facing food systems. Furthermore, because the logic chains are long and complex, the impact of blended finance on environmental, social, and financial transformations, is characterized by important knowledge gaps. This IP can contribute to generating knowledge in multiple ways.

STAP is pleased to be named a member of the Program's technical advisory group, and looks forward to continuing providing advice as necessary. Below, STAP rates its assessment and provides details of its screening.

Note to STAP screeners: a summary of STAP's view of the project (not of the project itself), covering both strengths and weaknesses.

STAP's assessment

- Concur - STAP acknowledges that the concept has scientific and technical merit
- Minor - STAP has identified some scientific and technical points to be addressed in project design
- Major - STAP has identified significant concerns to be addressed in project design

Please contact the STAP Secretariat if you would like to discuss.

2. Project rationale, and project description – are they sound?

See annex on STAP's screening guidelines.

The project rationale for the Food Systems Integrated Program (FS-IP) has been thoroughly described. The rationale articulates clearly why investing in food systems is an issue of global importance to the GEF: sustainable food systems underpin the missions of the Rio Conventions, and are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The key drivers affecting food systems are described comprehensively. The drivers described include: environmental, climatic, biophysical, demographic, gender inequalities, governance, market, subsidies, among several others. This description also includes a brief analysis of the interactions between drivers and how they could affect the socioecological systems in the future. In essence, the rationale describes comprehensively the global, and local, impacts of unsustainable agricultural production on the environment and livelihoods.

STAP welcomes this comprehensive description of the drivers and an indicative narrative of plausible futures and applauds the recognition of the need to change “mindsets, rules and structures at regional and global levels” (p.22). STAP encourages the different IP partners to apply the same rigor in the country projects by detailing the drivers and the plausible futures that could influence the socioecological systems. The GEF’s additionality is also solidly presented, arguing for a holistic approach to food systems (agriculture, livestock, and fisheries) that contributes from the supply and demand-side, while generating multiple global and local benefits. STAP recognizes this is a long-term aspiration, and appreciates that the theory of change recognizes this, in part, by concretely defining assumptions for each impact pathway. It will be necessary for the country projects to embrace rigorous monitoring and learning to address these assumptions, and knowledge gaps, to support the IP’s incrementality.

Scaling, innovation, and transformation are deeply embedded throughout the project logic, and thoroughly articulated in the components. The categories for transformation (governance and policies, finance, multi-stakeholder dialogues, and innovation), defined in the IP, will require careful monitoring to assess change. In this regard, STAP is pleased that transformation metrics, for each of these categories, will be emphasized in the country projects, and coordinated through the Global Coordination Project (GCP). However, defining these would be helped by more explicit articulation of how much change is needed to scale to achieve transformation, or at least set the system on an irrevocable pathway to achieving this. To detail this at this stage is hard, but it will often emerge from the various communities of practice that the proposal usefully identifies (Fig.8, p.62). The GCP should, therefore, be more explicit about the intended process for identifying (i) the level of transformation needed in each of these groupings and (ii) the pathway to achieving this level in each grouping, even if the explicit targets cannot yet be defined. Whether through these groupings or other ways, the GCP will need to facilitate a theory of change for scaling in each transformation mechanism, and a commitment to doing this should be clear in this proposal (an outline of some of the elements of such a commitment is suggested below).

Strong links to past, or on-going, GEF and non-GEF initiatives are also evident from the proposal’s description, demonstrating a good potential to leverage learning and scaling. STAP values the role of the communities of practice to embody, and channel, learning across scales and sectors. STAP believes it will be important to capture how the communities of practice enable collaboration and innovation to enable desired change.

Below, STAP details further its recommendations.

Note: provide a general appraisal, asking whether relevant screening guideline questions have been addressed adequately – not all the questions will be relevant to all proposals; no need to comment on every question, only those needing more attention, noting any done very well, but ensure that all are considered. Comments should be helpful, evaluative, and qualitative, rather than yes/no.

3. Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions

To strengthen the design of country projects in a manner they collectively contribute to the effectiveness of the IP and GCP, STAP recommends addressing the issues below. Note, however, that some issues below are specific to the GCP.

- Carefully assess whether the project’s objective will be transformative, and if so, for what sector(s) or in what ways (e.g. aligning several countries to address perverse incentives, or tackle policy misalignments). If the project team confirms a transformative ambition (e.g., is the goal to trigger a significant step change in GEBs by scaling a value chain through a novel financial instrument), the project’s theory of change (or perhaps more likely the theory of change for a larger grouping like a community of practice, or value chain) will need to reflect it and metrics for transformation will need to be identified. To help assess whether the project has a transformative potential, STAP’s logic tree on transformation could be useful (See Figure 1: https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/STAP_Achieving%20Transformation_web.pdf). Also, refer to STAP’s blended finance information note to design for transformative scaling that can achieve outcomes for pathways 2 and 3 on blended

finance and value chains, respectively.: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-01/EN_GEF.STAP_.C.66.Inf_.02_Blended_Finance.pdf)

- Where possible it would help to become more explicit about the levels of change needed to have a realistic prospect of achieving, or at least triggering transformation. For example, the indicator under 2.2 includes “32 countries and 8 sector/commodities receiving **increased** investments...” – but how much ‘increased’ is enough – 1% or 200%? This does not have to be precise, but the theory of change should enable an estimate of the level of change that would have sufficient leverage. If this cannot be stated now, then there should be a clear commitment here that the GCP will develop this more explicit target as the IP starts up (perhaps in relation to each of the emerging communities of practice), and to report progress towards it.

Similarly, 3.1 “strengthened planning...” but how much strengthened? 3.3 “increase in proportion of products...traded...” – how much increase? In a similar vein, core indicator targets for 3.2 include 870k hectares of land restored, 13.85m hectares under ‘improved’ practices, etc – what is the logic that says this much is enough to trigger transformation? Fig.1 & 2 outline how scaling may happen generally, but this logic needs to be made explicit (for example, for a small number of key scaling pathways that may relate to each community of practice). Here (e.g. clause 81) one might articulate targets in the form of “X% of all countries involved in value chain A are acting towards FS transformation on that value chain”. Then it is possible to discuss whether X5 is enough for value chain A, and track progress towards the target. The GCP should seek to develop this type of logic for each transformation pathway covered by the IP. The potential for this could be made clearer around clause 158, for example.

- Develop a robust theory of change for each major pathway to transformation in the GCP (as well as for individual country projects by those projects), which:
 - identifies the assumptions associated with the key outcomes. During the design and implementation, revisit the assumptions, and where necessary, adapt. This step is essential to the triple learning loop mentioned briefly in component 4. More importantly, learning is essential to achieve the scaling and transformative ambition of the IP. Clause 97, for example, – progress against these assumptions needs to be tied to monitoring and learning. Also, it seems implausible that these two assumptions are the only or even the most important assumptions for pathway 1. Indeed, the issue of coalitions may be something to design for and seek to influence rather than an assumption. Comparatively, there could be issues like power dynamics and vested interest being too strong as to overwhelm change that may be more important assumptions here. A critical look at assumptions in all pathways would be helpful (noting that Component 4 has no assumptions listed at all). STAP’s theory of change primer will be helpful in developing the project logics:<https://stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/theory-change-primer>
 - describes each targeted socioecological system, including the social structures (e.g., gender, values, norms, ethics) associated with each system. Understanding the social context of the targeted key stakeholders is an important part of characterizing the system, and its needs for scaling and transforming. These needs will certainly include building, or strengthening, stakeholders’ capacities to become agents of change. Additionally, for the demand-side activities of the IP to have a positive effect on sustainability, the activities will need to be designed based on consumers’ social traits – e.g., what they value. Therefore, designing activities with a thorough recognition of stakeholders’ values will be important.
 - describes drivers of change, including the climate and non-climate drivers and risks, relying on current information (qualitative and quantitative) to support the development of activities. For climate, STAP strongly encourages the project teams to undertake a climate risk screening to inform the project design. The World Bank’s climate risk screening tool is one option that countries can use: <https://climatescreeningtools.worldbank.org/>

- Describe simple narratives of plausible futures by assessing the interactions between the key drivers, and how these interactions will affect the components in positive and negative ways. The simple future narratives will need to take place during stakeholder engagement and co-designing processes. (Note: the climate entry in the Risk table, p.67, does not make it bluntly clear that all projects WILL be operating under conditions of a changed (and changing climate) so that they must plan for this, as well as other drivers of change that may be less certain.) STAP’s guidance on future narratives will be useful in helping guide the development of the narratives: <https://stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/simple-future-narratives-brief-and-primer>
- In addition to the resources mentioned previously, the country project teams are highly encouraged to use the following resources developed by STAP and the GEF secretariat to help design robust projects: “How to build a strong project rationale and description for your PIF”: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-04/03_GEF8_PIF_Briefing_Six_Aspects.pdf “Frequently asked questions” about designing robust PIFs: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-04/04_GEF8_PIF_Briefing_FAQ.pdf
- To support component 1 and 4 in the IP, countries are encouraged to analyze the policy context that will affect the project to identify perverse incentives that need to be addressed. The GCP is also highly encouraged to coordinate groups of countries to redirect perverse incentives toward positive GEB outcomes. This process will require understanding how the partnerships, coalitions, or communities of practice are learning, innovating, and responding to a range of changes associated with drivers of food systems. In this regard, STAP recommends identifying measures to assess how the platforms/coalitions/communities of practice are addressing change. This process will generate necessary learning, including learning that helps validate the assumptions associated with this component on how platforms/coalitions/communities of practice catalyze transformation. STAP’s advice on metrics for transformation is a good start for the GCP to focus on, as well as STAP’s policy coherence advice. STAP’s policy coherence and transformation resources can be found here: https://stapgef.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Policy%20Coherence%20in%20the%20GEF_advisory_June%202023_0.pdf <https://stapgef.org/index.php/resources/advisory-documents/achieving-transformation-through-gef-investments>
Additionally, literature on social networks can also valuably inform countries’, and the GCP’s, efforts on policy alignment and KM&L platforms/coalitions/communities of practice, such as: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0743016723002577>
- To support component 4, the country teams are highly encouraged to complement core indicators with outcome measures. These measures will facilitate assessing change, and learning. As previously stated, STAP’s advice on metrics for transformation provides a good start for identifying ways to monitor change, especially for those projects, or groupings of projects, whose ambition is sufficiently transformative. STAP encourages the GCP steering committee to identify partners, and experts, whose knowledge on outcome measures on food systems can be leveraged for the IP and country projects.
- STAP suggests it would be helpful to briefly reflect on the mechanisms that will ensure that the 4 Hubs of the GCP (p.51-52) will continue to work closely, and adaptively, together after the IP is signed off, regardless of institutional exigencies. Hopefully the Program Management Unit will enable (and even enforce) this, but internal organizational priorities can disrupt the intent.
- It would also be good to see a commitment for the GCP coordination (p.57) to briefly review the relevant theories of change with the team from time to time, and explicitly to do so with new players as part of an induction package to ensure the overall team understands the intended logic of the IP.

Note: number key points clearly and provide useful information or suggestions, including key literature where relevant. Completed screens should be no more than two or three pages in length.

ANNEX: STAP'S SCREENING GUIDELINES

1. How well does the proposal explain the problem and issues to be addressed in the context of the **system** within which the problem sits and its drivers (e.g. population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, and technological changes), including how the various components of the system interact?
2. Does the project indicate how **uncertain futures** could unfold (e.g. using simple **narratives**), based on an understanding of the trends and interactions between the key elements of the system and its drivers?
3. Does the project describe the **baseline** problem and how it may evolve in the future in the absence of the project; and then identify the outcomes that the project seeks to achieve, how these outcomes will change the baseline, and what the key **barriers** and **enablers** are to achieving those outcomes?
4. Are the project's **objectives** well formulated and justified in relation to this system context? Is there a convincing explanation as to **why this particular project** has been selected in preference to other options, in the light of how the future may unfold?
5. How well does the **theory of change** provide an "explicit account of how and why the proposed interventions would achieve their intended outcomes and goal, based on outlining a set of key causal pathways arising from the activities and outputs of the interventions and the assumptions underlying these causal connections".
 - Does the project logic show how the project would ensure that expected outcomes are **enduring** and resilient to possible future changes identified in question 2 above, and to the effects of any conflicting policies (see question 9 below).
 - Is the theory of change grounded on a solid scientific foundation, and is it aligned with current scientific knowledge?
 - Does it explicitly consider how any necessary **institutional and behavioral** changes are to be achieved?
 - Does the theory of change diagram convincingly show the overall project logic, including causal pathways and outcomes?
6. Are the project **components** (interventions and activities) identified in the theory of change each described in sufficient detail to discern the main thrust and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they address the problem, their justification as a robust solution, and the critical assumptions and risks to achieving them?
7. How likely is the project to generate global environmental benefits which would not have accrued without the GEF project (**additionality**)?

8. Does the project convincingly identify the relevant **stakeholders**, and their anticipated roles and responsibilities? is there an adequate explanation of how stakeholders will contribute to the development and implementation of the project, and how they will benefit from the project to ensure enduring global environmental benefits, e.g. through co-benefits?

9. Does the description adequately explain:
 - how the project will build on prior investments and complement current investments, both GEF and non-GEF,
 - how the project incorporates **lessons learned** from previous projects in the country and region, and more widely from projects addressing similar issues elsewhere; and
 - how country policies that are contradictory to the intended outcomes of the project (identified in section C) will be addressed (**policy coherence**)?

10. How adequate is the project's approach to generating, managing and exchanging **knowledge**, and how will lessons learned be captured for adaptive management and for the benefit of future projects?

11. Innovation and transformation:
 - If the project is intended to be **innovative**: to what degree is it innovative, how will this ambition be achieved, how will barriers and enablers be addressed, and how might scaling be achieved?
 - If the project is intended to be **transformative**: how well do the project's objectives contribute to transformative change, and are they sufficient to contribute to enduring, transformational change at a sufficient scale to deliver a step improvement in one or more GEBs? Is the proposed logic to achieve the goal credible, addressing necessary changes in institutions, social or cultural norms? Are barriers and enablers to scaling be addressed? And how will enduring scaling be achieved?

12. Have **risks** to the project design and implementation been identified appropriately in the risk table in section B, and have suitable mitigation measures been incorporated? (NB: risks to the durability of project outcomes from future changes in drivers should have been reflected in the theory of change and in project design, not in this table.)