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**ANNEX 2**

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Republic of The Gambia for 2024

**Action Document for “Accelerating the sustainable and inclusive transformation of agri-food systems in The Gambia”**

**ANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

This document constitutes the annual work programme within the meaning of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, within the meaning of Article 23 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

## 1 SYNOPSIS

### 1.1 Action Summary Table

<b>1. Title</b> <b>CRIS/OPSYS</b> <b>business reference</b> <b>Basic Act</b>	<b>Accelerating the sustainable and inclusive transformation of agri-food systems in The Gambia</b> OPSYS number: ACT-62597 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
<b>2. Team Europe Initiative</b>	No
<b>3. Zone benefiting from the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in The Gambia
<b>4. Programming document</b>	Republic of The Gambia Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027
<b>5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results</b>	MIP objective: Green economy for sustainable growth and jobs Specific objective: - To support the sustainable development of local agri-food systems (SDG 2, 12, 14 and 15): Expected results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Gambia’s food system’s sustainability and resilience is enhanced, including through digital transformation.</li><li>• Food and nutrition security are improved.</li></ul>
<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>	
<b>6. Priority Area(s), sectors</b>	Priority area 2: Green Economy for Sustainable Growth and Jobs Sector DAC code: 310

<b>7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	Main SDG (1 only): 2 Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: 1, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15			
<b>8 a) DAC code(s)</b>	DAC code 311 – Agriculture 70% DAC code 122 – Basic health (basic nutrition) 10% DAC code 430 – Other multisector (food safety and quality) 20%			
<b>8 b) Main Delivery Channel</b>	20000 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society 60000 Private Sector Institution			
<b>9. Targets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate <input type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
<b>10. Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective @</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Participation development/good governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Biological diversity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>11. Internal markers and Tags:</b>	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Digitalisation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital entrepreneurship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	digital connectivity energy transport health education and research	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET INFORMATION</b>				
<b>12. Amounts concerned</b>	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14 02 01 20 Total estimated cost: EUR 20 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 20 000 000			
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
<b>13. Type of financing</b>	<b>Direct management</b> through: - Grant - Twinning grant			

## 1.2 Summary of the Action

The Gambia and the EU have a strong shared interest in promoting better-connected, climate resilient and sustainable agricultural value chains that are market-driven and harness the energies, skills and investments of the commercial private sector, with production of and access to nutritious food, food quality and safety, import substitution and enhanced export competitiveness as key imperatives. This would help propel the largely subsistence rural community into a more profitable future, with enhanced food sovereignty and export outcomes, thereby targeting women and young people to become agripreneurs, so that they can realistically aspire to more profitable and sustainable agricultural livelihoods.

The Action intends to accelerate a people-centred (particularly women and young people), resilient, market-driven and nutrition-sensitive agro-ecological transition in The Gambia. The Specific(s) Objective(s) of this action are to: (1) Increase investments, productivity, income opportunities and working conditions for women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population of targeted agri-food value chains, with a specific emphasis in the horticulture sector; (2) Improve plant health, food safety, control and quality management systems, processes and sustainable agro-ecological practices of producers and processors (particularly women and young people); and (3) Strengthen diversified, nutrition-sensitive, agro-ecologically produced targeted agri-food value chains.

The strengthening of food safety control systems with better standards and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and building the capacity of farmers (particularly women and young people) to produce quality food, will progressively increase the contribution of agri-food systems to Gambia's export revenues. It will also increase the share of food locally purchased by the tourism/hospitality sector while safe and nutritious foods will become more accessible/ affordable, whilst promoting the green and circular economy. The increase of local food consumption will accelerate the transition towards a circular economy in food and beverages, especially regarding high quality products and organic farming, where tourists might be willing to pay a premium price. Biodiversity in The Gambia will be preserved through a higher variety of crops, pesticides reduction and pollinators protection.

This Food Systems project will contribute to The Gambia's efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, improve agricultural value chain connectivity and efficiency and promote food quality and safety. In addition, the Action is expected to contribute positively to nutrition security, especially of children; create green employment opportunities, particularly for women and young people; and facilitate access to finance

for agri-food system development. The Action targets women as key beneficiaries, while aiming to reduce gender inequalities in, for instance, access to land, water, technology and finance. The project will be instrumental for gender equality becoming a powerful catalyser for sustained and inclusive green growth in The Gambia.

Expansion in the use of water resources for horticultural- and other high-value production during the lean season, and the strengthening of water governance will stabilise yields and returns from crop farming. With the use of modern horticultural technologies, innovation, and inputs, farming will become more profitable in The Gambia and attract public/private horticultural investment. Unlocking and leveraging domestic and external financing to replicate and scale-up proven agri-food business models will significantly increase the number of Gambians benefiting directly and indirectly from a sustained and sustainable commercialisation of agricultural and horticultural value chains.

The proposed Action intends to contribute to the MIP 2021-27 Priority Area 2 – “Green Economy for Sustainable Growth and Jobs”, in particular sub-sector 2.2 “To support the sustainable development of local agri-food systems”. The Action embeds the objectives of the EU’s Farm to Fork Strategy<sup>1</sup>: (i) to reduce the environmental and climate footprint of food systems and strengthen their resilience, and (ii) to ensure food security in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss, and lead a global transition towards competitive sustainability from farm to fork, strengthening export opportunities through better quality and standards. The Action will also contribute to the Green Deal Diplomacy *outcome* of the Farm to Fork Strategy, especially the dimensions “Ensure sustainable food production”, “Ensure food and nutritional security” and “Promoting sustainable food consumption and facilitating the shift to healthy sustainable diets”.

With a focus on climate change adaptation and protection of the environment, fostering a transition to agro-ecology and circular economy, the action will limit future climate change and poverty-related migration. The Gambia has demonstrated strong ambition and led the way in combatting climate change, by submitting a Second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC2)<sup>2</sup> in 2021 whose commitment was widely commended for being the only NDC that is 1.5oC compatible. In line with the country’s commitment to the Paris Agreement which it signed on 25th April 2016, The Gambia has developed an ambitious plan for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Combined with the Gambia’s imminent accession to the Great Green Wall initiative, this action also aligns with key commitments set by The Gambia in its NDC, both on climate change mitigation and adaptation, with relevant targets of Greenhouse gases (GHG) reduction. In climate change mitigation in the agriculture sector: improving agricultural resilience by implementing climate-smart agriculture, and reducing food losses. In climate change adaptation: on territorial planning, climate finance, energy/waste management, rural climate resilience.

This Action will further gain visibility and potential to unlock other support opportunities in connection with the Global Gateway investment strategy and with the EU Green Deal (and its underlying strategies, namely the Farm-to-Fork, the Biodiversity<sup>3</sup> and the Adaptation<sup>4</sup> strategy, as well as, the EU Zero deforestation regulation<sup>5</sup>). This Action is coherent with the Paris Climate Accords, adopted in 2015, and will deliver on the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Action will particularly contribute to SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 12, SDG 13 and SDG 15, and comply with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-DAC Rio markers on biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and desertification.

The Action will also contribute to the fulfilment of the EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 (GAP III)<sup>6</sup>, in particular to its thematic areas of engagement “Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women” and ‘Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation’. Likewise, it will contribute to the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities<sup>7</sup>, particularly on the commitment to supporting countries to improve accessibility of the environment and the EU’s Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> COM(2020) 381 final of 20.05.2020

<sup>2</sup> Second NDC of The Republic of The Gambia-16-12-2021.pdf (unfccc.int)

<sup>3</sup> COM(2020) 380 final of 20.05.2020

<sup>4</sup> COM(2021) 82 final of 24.02.2021

<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of 31.05.2023

<sup>6</sup> JOIN(2020) 17 final of 25.11.2020

<sup>7</sup> COM(2021) 101 final of 03.03.2021

<sup>8</sup> JOIN(2020) 5 final of 25.03.2020

Complementing this Action, five NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) grants signed in December 2023 will be supporting the production and use of organic fertilisers. The action will also build synergies and be complementary to other ongoing/planned initiatives under the Investment Climate Reform (ICR) facility and an action being designed on green jobs creation.

The Action will be implemented through direct granting to a Non-Governmental Organisation and a twinning grant with the Food Quality and Safety Authority of The Gambia.

### 1.3 Zone benefitting from the Action

The Action shall be carried out in The Republic of The Gambia, country included in the list of ODA recipients.

## 2 RATIONALE

### 2.1 Context

The Republic of The Gambia, the smallest country in mainland Africa, is surrounded by Senegal except for a short Atlantic coastline. It is categorized as a Low-Income Food Deficit Country (LIFDC). It is ranked 174 out of 189 countries in the UN Human Development Index (HDI), remaining a Least Developed Country among the poorest African Nations. Likewise, by 2022, Gambia was ranked 109 out of 156 countries with a Gender Gap index of 0.60<sup>9</sup>. Income poverty is pervasive with nearly half of the population living below the poverty line of US\$ 1.25/day. Over the years, the incidence of poverty has been rising, with the proportion of the population living in poverty increasing from 48.4% in 2010 to 48.6% in 2015/16 and further increasing to 53.4% in 2020, attributed to the COVID pandemic. Poverty is largely a rural phenomenon (35.4% urban and 64.6% rural) with the rural areas accounting for 42.2% of the population and 65% of the poor.

Although there is some progress on women's rights, work still needs to be done in the Gambia to achieve gender equality. The adolescent birth rate is 67.5 per 1,000 women aged 15-19 as of 2016, down from 86 per 1,000 in 2012. As of February 2021, only 8.6% of seats in parliament were held by women. In 2018, 10% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Moreover, women of reproductive age (15-49 years) often face barriers with respect to their sexual and reproductive health and rights: in 2020, 39.7% of women had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods<sup>10</sup>

Agriculture is one of the main drivers of Gambia's GDP growth; it is the source of livelihoods for 72% of the population and generates 33% of GDP. Crop production is dependent on rain-fed agriculture<sup>11</sup>, making it vulnerable to rainfall variability. Besides shifting precipitation patterns, sea level rise threatens to inundate forest and mangrove areas and increase salinity levels in the River Gambia estuary. To tackle these challenges the Government of The Gambia is working hard on climate change adaptation interventions and there is the need to mainstreaming the planning of adaptation strategies into national planning and budgeting processes.

The agriculture sector has been performing below its potential attributed to constraints including the effects of climate change, low productivity, underdeveloped value chains and limited access to markets and finance which has led farmers to partially transition towards horticulture as an income supplement with huge potential. The sector remains characterized by low commercialization, as 62% of farm households produce solely for self-consumption, 34% produce for both self-consumption and commercial sale, leaving only 4% of households producing purely for commercial sale. There is limited value addition and there exist few formal private sector enterprises in agribusiness. Local agricultural products are largely marketed through informal channels, in contrast to organized large-scale imported products (rice). Food insecurity has been on the rise, increasing from 5.6% in 2011 to 8% 2016, 13.4% in 2021 and by 2022 to 26.5%. Agribusiness, agro-industries and agro-processing sectors are characterized by numerous smallholder entities using low input technologies and labour-intensive systems. Market opportunities are not easily known or accessed by small producers. Infrastructure such as warehouses for bulk or cold storage and handling, as well as processing equipment to develop value adding business and job creation to increase profit margins are limited, inadequate, absent, not used or poorly maintained. The action will work with the private sector for infrastructure maintenance.

<sup>9</sup> [WEF GGGR 2022.pdf \(weforum.org\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Country Fact Sheet | UN Women Data Hub](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fao.org/gambia/fao-in-gambia/gambia-at-a-glance/en/>

The Gambia is amongst the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. These vulnerabilities span several sectors, livelihoods and assets within each sector. According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Index (ND -GAINS) 2021, The Gambia is the 32<sup>nd</sup> most vulnerable country and 43<sup>rd</sup> least ready country in the world. Related factors that limit adaptive capacity and exacerbate vulnerability to climate change include gender inequalities, environmental degradation, poor educational outcomes, and declining health indicators. Environmental degradation and unsuitable land use practices are reducing the generation of ecosystem services that could support agricultural productivity, livelihoods, and resilience against food and nutrition insecurity, as well as climate resilience in The Gambia. Key drivers of environmental degradation and reduced climate resilience, including over-extraction of woodland trees for firewood, uncontrolled bushfires and production of charcoal, have resulted in reduced capture of rainfall within the watershed catchment areas, loss of vegetative cover leading to widespread soil erosion and sediment transfer to the river, as well as loss of biodiversity and increase in Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

While The Gambia registered improvements in nutrition indicators, particularly from 2013 to 2018, these were reversed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the National Surveillance Survey (NSS, Nov, 2022) revealed that for Children Under Five (CUF) stunting increased from 18% in 2019 to 18.6% in 2021, wasting increased from 12% to 16.8% and underweight increased from 5.0% to 16.8%. Young people in Gambia face a high unemployment rate with only 17% of the working-age population work in waged employment. As of 2018, only one in four young people aged 15-24 years were employed and only one in seven worked in paid employment. These limited opportunities for market employment for the young has culminated in high illegal migration to Europe dubbed “the backway”. In 2017/18, The Gambia had the second per capita immigration to Europe in the World.

The Gambia Constitution recognizes that all women are to be considered and treated as equals to men with respect to political, social, and economic opportunities. Provisions for the protection of women against all forms of discrimination is recognized in laws on issues around adoption, marriage, divorce and inheritance as related to Personal Laws (1997, rev. 2002). The Gambia National Development Plan (2018-2021) recognizes women’s empowerment as one of the seven critical enablers that crosscut their strategic priorities and proposes the realization of women’s full development potential as part of its vision. This is partly the result of the enactment of legislative acts, including the National Women’s Council and the Bureau of Integration of Women established in 1980, the National Policy for the Advancement of Women in 1999, the Gambia National Gender Policy 2010-2020 and the Women’s Act in 2010<sup>12</sup>. Despite legal provisions safeguarding women’s access to resources in The Gambia, their effective implementation remains deficient, particularly in rural areas governed by customary land tenure systems. The prevalent male dominated decision-making structures, influenced by both customary and religious beliefs, consistently favour men, limiting women’s representation in positions of authority. This bias extends to land and resource allocation, impeding women’s ownership and decision-making<sup>13</sup>.

## 2.2 Problem Analysis

### Problem 1: Lack of market access and market-led production

The expanding urban population and the hotel industry are providing an increasingly large local market for fresh produce. In addition, large-scale producers are exporting horticultural produce to the European market, and indications are that this trade can be developed substantially because of The Gambia's close proximity to Europe, availability of direct air transport, and capacity to produce during the winter months when horticultural products are in greatest demand in Europe. With high-quality produce, The Gambia could compete with other African and Middle East countries for a share of the European export market. As of today, the volume of export of fruits and vegetables is very small. According to FAO data, mangoes are the dominant export product, followed by tomatoes, chilies, and onions.

At present, and as is the case in many countries, few smallholders in The Gambia plan for the demands of the market. They generally grow what the rest of the community is growing and primarily for subsistence purposes with excess production in good years sold into the local market. With EU funding over the past decade, considerable investments have been made into developing a network of Community Vegetable Gardens throughout

<sup>12</sup> [The Gambia National Development Plan – The Gambia's National Development Plan \(ndp.gm\)](https://ndp.gm/)

<sup>13</sup> [Socio-legal-review-Gambia.pdf \(cifor-icraf.org\)](https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/socio-legal-review-gambia.pdf)



the country where primarily women's collectives and young people are actively pursuing opportunities to earn cash incomes through horticulture production. However, linking seasonal horticulture production to market has proven challenging. In order to improve access to markets, there is a need to support a transition from a "production-led marketing to a market-led production" among small-scale farmers by demonstrating to them the commercial potential of horticulture. A dedicated marketing organization or farmers association or cooperatives could be created to help farmers plan their production based on market demand, and connect them to large local buyers (such as hotels and schools), processors, and export contractors. This initiative could build on the experience of a former organization ("Gambia is Good)."

#### Problem 2: Lack of investment in the post-harvest segments of horticultural value chains

Demand for fruits and vegetables are very high in the Gambia, yet farmers are unable to meet this demand. Scarcity does occur and the motive behind it is that vegetable farmers are not active during the rainy season. Market access for horticultural products is an issue, as fruits and vegetables are perishable. Farmers need to have a ready market or standard cool stores for storage of the harvested products which is inadequate in the Gambia. Value-added horticulture products and the processing of fruits and vegetables into finished products would help to increase the shelf-life of the products and the market prices as well. Farmers often face high costs for storage even more for cooling. The transition to the use of renewable energy solutions should be supported, both from an environmental and an economic point of view.

Horticultural farmers use available local materials for packaging such as bamboo baskets, plastic containers, and recycled bags to package their harvested products. The cooling process is conducted either in the garden or at home before packaging, cooling immediately after harvest will remove the heat. Storage is done at home using locally available stores which are not up to standard for storing fruits and vegetables and that leads to a lot of losses. Solar drying systems can also be an alternative or additional solution. Processing of horticultural products in the Gambia is done on a small-scale, hence there are no processing plants for farmers to process on large scale. They use the available local materials to process on small scale. The lack of basic financial planning skills on the part of MSMEs in horticulture limits their financial management capacity and their ability to submit good quality loan request files. From the local banks' perspective, horticulture appears to be too risky, returns are not attractive, and the typical beneficiary would not meet their profile requirements. Promoting the development of green financing instruments with ESG (Environmental, social, and governance) standards for commercial/smallholder farmers will be considered.

#### Problem 3: Lack of compliance with food safety and food quality standards (Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures - SPS)

In recent years, the horticulture subsector has seen the most commercial investment, in particular for export of high-value products like fresh mangoes, baby corn and chili peppers. There are great prospects in horticulture export markets, with a projected growth of USD 17 million from 2019 to 2025. However, the agri-food export market is constrained by inadequate compliance with SPS requirements, and a failure to meet standards and technical requirements in EU markets.

The Gambia has not taken full advantage of its export opportunities due to its inability to alleviate critical supply-side constraints owing to non-compliance with necessary SPS requirements and technical barriers to trade agreements, market information gaps, and failure to meet food safety standards.

There is much work to be undertaken to strengthen the capacity of the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) to enable the authority to provide adequate food chain safety programs. This is crucial for the protection of public health and the expansion of much needed trade. Presently, The Gambia is not in the position to meet its obligations and accrue the benefits associated with the WTO (World Trade Organisation) Agreement on the Application of SPS Measures and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade due to deficiencies in its food safety and quality capacity. To address these challenges, significant investments are essential. Such investments will support the development of facilities and systems necessary for compliance with SPS measures, thereby enhancing The Gambia's ability to meet international standards. There is a need to support Gambia's initial efforts to improve the national food chain safety control system based on international standards, guidelines, and recommendations, and to establish functional scientific assessment and risk management capabilities to enable The Gambia to expand its export potential and protect public health.

International regulations are stiffening and certification requirements are becoming more and more stringent. For The Gambia to capture a higher share of the international addressable market for horticulture, the country will need a robust quality management system. This could be also linked to international certifications that can add value to the production, namely organic certification, fair trade and the EU zero deforestation regulation. There is high opportunity to establish such a system, with testing labs focused on exported crops. It could either be a public organization or private-led (to capitalize on existing investments) with government support, such as tax incentives or technical expertise to conduct specific analyses. As parallel initiatives are being launched in The Gambia (such as the National Seed Secretariat that has the mandate to certify seeds, and the Indian government support for the certification of ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States - exports), further partnership opportunities could be explored as well.

There is a lack of financial and human resources to monitor diseases and pests and to carry out effective inspections and controls. As regards the non-compliance with SPS standards, the most recurrent problems include the presence of harmful organisms, non-compliance with maximum residue levels (MRLs) for pesticides, and the lack of adequate procedures. There is a major market barrier because of non-adapted regulatory requirements since the standards and regulations of the target markets (local, regional, international) are largely not adapted to the context of the Gambian agri-food sector, which has a negative impact on the most vulnerable operators. As an example, Gambian farmers are particularly affected by the aflatoxin content in the groundnut value chain, which prevents its access to the EU market. There is also a lack of effective coordination between private and public partners in the Gambian agri-food sector at national and regional levels. Many of the current agronomic practices are unsustainable in terms of waste, use water, energy, biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions. There is not only a limited access to affordable quality inputs but also a low uptake of new technologies. A poor level of skills and research on sustainable production methods is currently prevalent in The Gambia's horticulture sector.

The Gambia's soil is fertile enough to produce good yields without the application of chemical fertilizers. This is also true for fruit trees such as mangoes, which do not require many inputs once the trees are established. There is an opportunity to develop a Gambian organic brand, along with the adequate standards, to feed hotels in the short term (thus benefitting from the growing desire for organic produce among tourists). This initiative would build on an existing "organic" culture among farmers, drawn from limited access to imported inputs, and governmental support in using bio-fertilizers. The development of an international hub for organic products could also be envisioned.

#### Problem 4: Lack of irrigation facilities for horticultural production

The Gambia has abundant underground water resources and the Gambia River reaches most of the country's agriculture areas, however there is an increasing problem of salinisation and many Community Vegetable Gardens have drying boreholes. This natural asset, if adequately leveraged, would allow the country to increase productivity significantly and if the potential of the river Gambia is tapped, this would allow for the spread of horticultural production throughout the year and in all parts of the country. However, this "extension" must be decoupled from the expansion of areas (meaning deforestation), but rather on increased productivity - thanks to irrigation, improved techniques, CSA, agro-ecology, etc.

Major sources of water for vegetable production in the region are rivers, wells, and boreholes. The soil type of the region is sandy loamy. There is an opportunity to develop water storage infrastructure in the Eastern part of the country, where groundwater reserves are less abundant. Such storage would allow rainwater to be preserved for further usage. In the Western part, the provision of irrigation systems and training on their usage and maintenance would support an increase in production.

The Gambian climate is well-suited for the production of horticultural crops. There are two distinct seasons: a short wet season, from June until September, when temperatures and humidity are quite high; and a long dry season the rest of the year. From November until March, the dry season is cool and especially suitable for the production of a wide variety of vegetables. The most critical environmental factor affecting horticultural production is the shortage of water. Fruit and vegetable production is largely rain-fed and suffers the brunt of climate change.

Since horticultural production is confined largely to the dry season, good production is only possible with reliable irrigation but most farmers do not have access to irrigation systems and many depend on waterlogged areas to produce vegetables or on relatively shallow, hand-dug wells. Sites are often located in low-lying areas where the water table is near the surface and borehole drill with reservoir displayed in all four corners of the garden. Some assisted gardens also have deeper, concrete-lined wells. In both cases, however, irrigation/watering is done by



hand/buckets. Only the commercial farms are equipped with deep boreholes and sprinkler-irrigation systems. Trickle irrigation has been tried occasionally on an experimental basis, but is not in commercial use. Production practices are highly labour-intensive. Land preparation and cultivation of vegetables is done entirely by hand, using small hand hoes.

#### Problem 5: Lack of green skills development to support a sustainable increase in agri-food systems productivity

In The Gambia, there is a pressing need to continue addressing the shortfall in skills and skills development among farmers, especially those engaged in pioneering agri-food value chains focused on agro-ecology and climate-smart agriculture. The integration of these sustainable practices is crucial for enhancing the resilience of agricultural systems to climate change, improving the quality of production and improving food security. However, there is an increasing awareness of technical knowledge and practical skills in these areas hampers the ability of farmers to effectively implement and benefit from such approaches. By continuing strengthening the capacity of farmers on green skills and circular business models in agri-food systems, The Gambia can equip them with the competencies required to implement innovative agricultural practices, thus fulfilling the objective of developing sustainable and productive agri-food systems and at the same time increasing productivity without decreasing the health of ecosystems, biodiversity or climate change resilience. This support is essential for the country to deliver on its goals and enhance its agricultural productivity sustainably since the share of horticulture in overall agricultural production has been growing in recent years.

#### Problem 6: Nutrition insecurity and lack of dietary diversity

In 2021, The Gambia ranked 72 out of 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI). With a score of 17.6, The Gambia has a moderate level of hunger. According to the Global Nutrition Report (The Gambia Nutrition Profile, 2018), The Gambia was significantly below African and global average consumption levels. The high level of malnutrition in rural communities continues to be a public health concern. The higher stunting rate is attributable to the high level of poverty (above 70% in some local government areas and there is a relative high prevalence of micronutrient deficiency in rural communities in The Gambia. Vitamin A deficiency at 18.3% is twice as high among children from rural areas as those from urban centres. Very high rates of iron deficiency anaemia are found in children aged 6–59 months and women of reproductive age (15–45 years).

Most households (>90%) source their food from the market and are experiencing substantial increases in food prices (cereals, fish and meat) as evidenced by sharp increases of the Food Consumer Price Index (CPI), which has more than doubled since 2010. The high prices of animal proteins and the high share of food (>50%) in household expenditure are key reasons why Gambian diets are primarily based on carbohydrates, principally imported, highly polished rice.

The Gambia's food and nutritional security is dependent on food imports, which exposes the country's food system to external shocks. Food imports constitute around 30% of merchandise imports, making a huge drain on foreign exchange resources, being rice the main staple and accounting for most of these imports. Given The Gambia's dependence on food imports, changes in exchange rates generate impacts that are substantial higher than the repercussions of retail pricing. The behaviour of profit-seeking traders is another factor in the price rise. The price set by importers is at times almost 50% higher than the economic cost. Over 80% of rice, a major staple food in The Gambia, is imported. The preference for rice is driven by its availability in processed form, relative cheapness, ease of preparation and short time to cook compared to coarse grains and other foods. However, the traditional method of rice meal preparation results in further loss of nutrients, including thiamine, due to the several washings involved.

The Gambia's food supply is produced in countries similarly vulnerable to climate change, which also has severe implications for food availability, affordability, and consumption, intensifying nutritional challenges. In the absence of adaptation and resilience options, adverse climate conditions will continue to widen yield gaps, exacerbate crop losses, and increase dependency on imports, further threatening the food security of The Gambia. Without adopting climate resilience options, adverse climate conditions will continue to decrease yields and reduce production, widening the gap in food supply, decreasing The Gambia's food self-sufficiency and increasing its dependency.

By focusing on nutrition-sensitive value chain development, the action will improve food security and nutritional outcomes and investments will lead to quality food consumption. A large proportion of households consume cereal-based diets with inadequate inclusion of proteins, vitamins and minerals; and, hence, enjoy low dietary

diversity. Low intake of nutritious foods is particularly detrimental for children, who are mainly fed high-carbohydrate foods such as millet or corn flour porridge. The childcare situation is particularly difficult for households during the lean season (July–September) when food stocks are depleted.

### Stakeholder Analysis

There are very few large companies operating in the Gambian horticultural value chain. In the early stages of the value chain, public actors provide extension services while inputs are primarily imported. At the production stage, only three farms operate at commercial scale and communal gardens and small-scale farms dominate the rest of production. The few commercial farms have farm sizes between 40 to over 100ha. Although less than 10 enterprises are under this category, they are responsible for supplying over 90% of total horticultural exports. Vegetable crops grown include Hot pepper (Chilies); Green French beans, Okra, Baby corn, Squash; Butternut, and Eggplant. Typically, they employ capital-intensive means of production with modern farming tools, machinery, and equipment as the farm sizes are relatively large and have sprinkler or drip irrigation systems. These farms (i) are often vertically integrated with their customers and are close to the market, react to market demand, and can organize production accordingly, (ii) have a high level of professionalism in production by the mastering of the agronomy and post-harvest handling of all crops of interest, (iii) outsource from smaller growers through contract farming for export purposes, (iv) make substantial investment and fund further developments and (v) have good leadership and business management skills.

Post-harvest actors are fragmented and the processing market is still nascent, with some new businesses expected to come online in the next year. Marketing activities are limited to logistics, with no additional effort in packaging and labelling. At the production level, smallholder farmers - the majority of whom are women - are the primary drivers of horticulture in The Gambia. 65% of the agricultural workforce - over 100,000 farmers - in The Gambia grow horticultural products. The average yearly income of Gambian horticultural farmers is USD 600, yet this income is primarily earned through the sales of cash crops grown in parallel to fruits and vegetables. Because horticulture production is culturally a woman-dominated activity (women represent 75% of horticulture farmers), the sector plays a particularly important role in the employment of women.

Communal Vegetable Garden producers have organized themselves into six marketing federations (one in each agricultural region) and an apex body. i. Fangsoto (West Coast Region) ii. Khewal (Central River Region – North) iii. Nematulai (Upper River Region) iv. Sofaniama (Lower River Region) v. Fangkaso (Central River Region – South) vi. Solicita (North Bank Region) vii. Sosolaso (National Apex Body) These federations can potentially play many useful roles such as representing the voice of horticulture farmers in policy circles, assisting farmers to collectively bargain to purchase critical inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, seeds and collectively market their produce; iii. Conducting training, especially on good agronomic practices, and business development; iv. Advocating to improve access to finance; and v. Linking producers with exporters and other buyers. These organizations can also be building blocks for the setting of agriculture cluster models as a way to modernize and catalyse production.

### Identification of main stakeholders (duty bearers and right holders) and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action:

Duty bearers: Key public sector stakeholders are Gambian institutions, at national level: Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, Ministry of Trade, and relevant agencies; and at regional and local levels: Local Government Area Councils. Ministry of Women's Affairs, the National Women's Council (with representation from different ministries including agriculture as well as local authorities, civil society, private sector, and religious groupings)

Right holders: Within civil society, there are CBOs, CSOs and business and farmer organisations and rural communities in general.

Key stakeholders within the private sector are MSMEs - commercial companies, providing financial products and/or physical inputs and other services, such as contract farming, value addition, marketing and transport along agricultural value chains.

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

#### 3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The Overall Objective (**Impact**) of this action is to accelerate a people-centred (particularly women and young people), resilient, market-driven and nutrition-sensitive agro-ecological transition in The Gambia.

The Specific(s) Objective(s) (**Outcomes**) of this action are to:

1. Increase investments, productivity, income opportunities and working conditions for women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population of targeted agri-food value chains, with a specific emphasis in the horticulture sector;
2. Improve plant health, food safety, control and quality management systems, processes and sustainable agro-ecological practices of producers and processors (particularly women and young people); and
3. Strengthen diversified, nutrition-sensitive, agro-ecologically produced targeted agri-food value chains.

The Outputs to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives are:

- 1.1 Increased opportunities for mutually beneficial deals (contractual arrangements) between private companies and producer organisations.
- 1.2 Increased market access opportunities for Gambian operators in local, regional and international markets.
- 1.3 Increased capacities for entrepreneurial and employability of women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population in targeted value chains
- 1.4 Increased access to finance and investment opportunities in technologies to support the agro-ecological transition (integrated crop and pest management, soil health, small-scale irrigation, affordable greenhouse technology and ICTs innovations) for women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population.
- 2.1 Enhanced capacity of regulatory and institutional bodies in food safety and quality control in line with international standards and best practices.
- 2.2 Strengthened capacity of producers and MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) involved in targeted value chains in compliance with SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) and quality requirements.
- 3.1 Increased capacities of local producers and processors of bio-fortified vitamin A-rich (orange flesh) sweet potatoes, iron and protein-rich beans (cowpeas) and other high-nutrient local commodities.
- 3.2 Increased awareness of domestic and foreign investors in infant food value chain opportunities in The Gambia.

#### 3.2 Indicative Activities

Indicative key activities include, but are not limited to:

##### Output 1.1

- Scope and identify existing and potential horticultural commodities and private companies for the programme.
- Advise companies on investment in the horticulture sector.
- Promote horticultural investment opportunities (i.e. green finance instruments linked to landscape approaches) in The Gambia among EU retailers and traders.
- Provide match-making facilities between local MSMEs and foreign retailers and traders.

##### Output 1.2

- Identify and broker mutually beneficial deals (contractual arrangements) between private companies and producer organisations.
- Facilitate direct farmer-processor linkages, where processors are local or international companies with direct local-regional-international market linkages.
- Establish and broker links between farmer organisations and national, regional and international supply chains.

- Establish regular roundtables and other public-private dialogue spaces to catalyse the problem-solving capacities of key stakeholders in the Gambian horticultural sector, promoting the participation of community-based organizations.
- Support Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) with commodity-based business opportunity cases to attract Diaspora investors

#### Output 1.3

- Undertake an assessment of the capacity, educational outcomes and labour market linkages of existing horticultural training centres in The Gambia, with specific attention to gender barriers and needs, as well as identify the barriers in access to people from vulnerable backgrounds and plan measures to address those barriers.
- Support social and eco-entrepreneurship opportunities, with specific attention to gender aspects, in The Gambia's horticulture sector by scoping and linking international social business and impact investors to The Gambia.
- Promote use of Farmer Field Schools/Farmer Business Schools for Value Chain actors.
- Establish partnerships with world-class academic institutions leading innovation in the horticulture sector (e.g. Wageningen in the Netherlands or other Agrinatura<sup>14</sup> members).
- Facilitate knowledge transfer/exchange between Gambian and West African public and private institutions in the horticulture sector through grants.
- Strengthen extension capacity using relevant approaches (Fee-for-service and Innovation Platforms) through Trainers of Trainers (ToT) with ICT-based smart tools and learning materials support)

#### Output 1.4

- Design of a simple and small greenhouse technology for vegetable production adapted to the agro-environmental and socio-economic situation of The Gambia and interest of a Gambian manufacturer to build the greenhouse materials;
- Promote potential financial opportunities and products to make small-scale irrigation and greenhouse technology more affordable in The Gambia.
- Support the testing, validation, and promotion of integrated pest management practices and technologies to improve crop protection, increase yields, and ensure compliance with SPS requirements for target markets. In critical problem areas affecting production and trade, collaborate to broker and support Plant Protection Products (PPPs) screening, efficacy and residue trial towards definition of local Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and local registration with particular focus on biopesticides.
- Support the testing, validation, and promotion of integrated crop production practices and technologies with particular focus on soil health and diversification of crop system to strengthen environmental and livelihoods resilience.
- Realise pilot projects with lead companies to test and operate the proposed solutions to develop links between The Gambia and horticultural industry stakeholders in the EU and ECOWAS countries.
- Strengthen existing training centres, demonstration greenhouses and small-scale irrigation plots, and training-in-cascade to improve farmers' capacity for sustainable greenhouse production and value addition, ensuring outreach to vulnerable groups of people.
- Identify and develop tools for digitalisation of selected Agricultural Value Chains
- ToT of service provider on best practices (Good Agricultural, Storage, Manufacturing Practices) for selected VCs through digital tools
- Promotion of Farmer Managed Seeds System, breeding, research and exchange as well as provision of climate-smart products (seeds, vines) and services (extension advise, early warning).
- Promotion of conservation agriculture – upland conservation (contour bunds, gabions, planting pigeon pea on bunds), anti-saline intrusion structures (labour intensive – Cash for Work schemes to strengthen environmental and livelihoods resilience)
- Promotion of community greening – community forest, agro-forestry and tree planting, and protection against infestations.

#### Output 2.1

- Support implementation of FSQA strategy and action plans
- Support the national certification body under the Gambia Bureau of Standards to expand certification

<sup>14</sup> <https://agrinatura-eu.eu/>

- Provide training to national auditors for assessment testing and calibration labs and auditing of enterprises
- Provide training for inspectors of the FSQA and Plant Protection Services (PPS) with relevant training courses at tertiary institutions
- Develop a roadmap for institutional reforms of the food safety and quality system, including specific roles and responsibilities for government and private sector stakeholders.
- Develop clear processes for enforcement of mandatory standards and adoption of voluntary standards, including Codex.
- Promote the adoption and development of technical standards, specifications, procedures and guidelines for the implementation of voluntary certification schemes, such as organic certification and the EU zero deforestation regulation, among others.
- Strengthen capacity to provide conformity assessment services related to food quality and safety.
- Support for the establishment of a national food testing laboratory (conditioning of laboratory spaces and provision of equipment) and the expansion of scope to provide independent and recognised testing services needed by the national SPS regulators and other food industries in addition to the horticulture sector
- Provide technical support to ensure that national food standards are prepared and published with respect to international best practices

#### Output 2.2

- Identify and analyse market requirements for food safety and quality in the processing and preservation of fruits and vegetables in the domestic market and key current and potential markets for Gambian exports.
- Train producers, enterprises, food sector organisations and other actors along the value chains on the use and potential of internationally recognised conformity assessment services, private certification schemes to meet target market requirements and the use of better practices.
- Supporting capacity building at enterprise level in the application of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 22000 or other certification schemes.
- Support capacity building of Quality Infrastructure (QI) experts to provide training and guidance to entrepreneurs
- Support MSMEs to invest in the equipment and infrastructure needed to meet food safety and quality requirements.
- Establishment of a sustainable mechanism, based on ICT tools, to ensure traceability, food safety and quality compliance for selected products in the value chain.
- Training of relevant VC actors on the national food standards prepared and published
- Support the private sector with technical business advisory services to enhance compliance with international standards and technical regulations on TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade) and SPS
- Develop and implement a communication strategy to raise awareness of international regulations and voluntary compliance for upstream value chain actors
- Develop and implement marketing campaigns in support of certified products
- Provide support through provision of SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) on market quality requirements to be disseminated through relevant communication channels (social media, community radios, etc.).

#### Output 3.1

- Prepare crop-growing protocols for biofortified vitamin A-rich sweet potatoes (orange flesh), iron and protein-rich beans (cowpeas), nutritious maize and other nutritious crops identified during the inception phase.
- Prepare training manuals, guides and innovative ICT tools to promote the above crop-growing protocols.
- Establish participatory trials and demonstration plots.
- Train and certify ToT in the promotion of the above crop-growing protocols.
- Promotion of nutrition-sensitive interventions (with emphasis on ‘the first 1,000 days’ to prevent stunting)
- Promote expansion/upscaling of BFCI (Baby Friendly Community Initiative ) coverage using SBCC (Social and Behavioural Communication Changes) approach for community-based nutrition education campaigns

#### Output 3.2

- Track and identify key trends in the infant food market and key drivers of market dynamics.



- Assess how diversified the infant food market is in terms of competitive intensity, fragmentation and environment.
- Assess the growth potential, opportunities, demand drivers and challenges in The Gambia's infant food market.
- Support marketing, branding, strategy, product and business development of SMEs in the infant food market.

### 3.3 Mainstreaming

#### **Environmental Protection & Climate Change**

**Outcomes of the SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) screening** (relevant for budget support and strategic-level interventions)

The SEA screening concluded that no further action was required.

#### **Outcome of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening**

The EIA screening classified the action as Category B (not requiring an EIA, but for which environment aspects will be addressed during design).

The action will place strong emphasis on climate change adaptation strategies, including the promotion and adoption of agro-ecology and circular economy practices. This is expected to help reduce climate-induced migration by improving the resilience and sustainability of agricultural practices. Contribution to the Great Green Wall Initiative adds an important environmental conservation dimension to combat desertification and promote agro-biodiversity and local ecosystems.

The action will furthermore ensure compliance with the EU Deforestation Regulation and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, which obliges companies to mitigate effects of their activities on pollution and biodiversity loss.

**Outcome of the CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening** (relevant for projects and/or specific interventions within a project)

The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

#### **Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**

As per the OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that the action is gender sensitive and gender equality is considered as a significant objective. The action targets women as key beneficiaries and aims to reduce gender inequalities, for example in access to land, water, technology and finance, while increasing women's inclusion and economic empowerment.

A gender sector analysis of food systems in The Gambia has been carried out and its recommendations have been incorporated into the intervention. Women will be targeted in specific activities, particularly those related to horticultural gardens, which are generally in the hands of women in The Gambia, while processing and transforming horticultural products is also done by women. In addition, the Action is expected to make a positive contribution to nutrition security, especially for children; to create green job opportunities, especially for women and young people, including the most vulnerable among them (whose access to employment is even more difficult); and to facilitate access to finance for the development of agri-food systems.

The action will support the collection of gender-disaggregated data, the qualitative monitoring of the design and implementation arrangements, and the assessment of their impact on gender inequalities. This will make it possible to reduce the gender gap in socio-economic opportunities. The action will contribute to the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III, 2021-2025)<sup>15</sup>, in particular under the thematic area "Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women".

<sup>15</sup> European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EE External Action {SWD(2020) 284 final}, [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf)

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**Human Rights**

The action recognises and addresses the linkages between food security, nutrition, health, livelihoods, and other human rights principles. It follows a holistic approach, taking into account the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of food production and consumption.

Sustainable food systems are multi-sectoral and have a direct impact on the enjoyment of a range of human rights. A human rights-based approach can empower individuals, local communities and environmental civil society organisations to defend basic human rights such as the right to food, water, health, livelihoods, land and resources, cultural identity, participation, education or non-discrimination. This action will apply the working principles of the rights-based approach throughout the design and implementation of the intervention as well as an intersectionality approach.

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**Disability**

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D0 with regard to people with disabilities. However, to the extent possible, due consideration will be given to people with disabilities.

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**Reduction of inequalities**

In terms of reduction of inequalities, this action is labelled as I1. Inclusion and equality considerations will be mainstreamed in all the activities planned in the contracting and during the Inception Phase of the project – with a view to promoting equal rights and opportunities for women, men and vulnerable groups. This will be assessed through monitoring and evaluation.

From an operational point of view, the differing needs and abilities of the most vulnerable women, men, girls and boys will be identified and assistance targeted accordingly. The action will ensure equal opportunities and access to services and sensitive monitoring and evaluation system including disaggregated data collection and performance indicators. This implies that inequality reduction is a significant objective. The action targets the agricultural sector, notably women and young farmers in rural areas, which in The Gambia are among the bottom poorest 40% of the population.

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**Democracy**

There are no elements directly focused on democracy. By supporting farmers associations and civil society organisations, the action will indirectly impact on democracy by raising accountability and transparency of government actions/inactions.

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**Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience**

Pressure on natural resources (water and land) alongside fast population growth can be top drivers of conflict. The agriculture sector is highly sensitive to climate change because of its high dependence on rainfall. Increased frequency in droughts and erratic rainfall over the past decade have stressed livelihoods, with recurrent food insecurity across the country, particularly in rural areas. Moreover frequent droughts and a decline in rainfall have placed pressure on land and water resources in The Gambia.

By promoting sustainable agricultural practices and equitable access to land, water, and other resources, the program can help mitigate the competition and tensions that often lead to conflicts in rural areas. Sustainable farming methods can also reduce environmental degradation, which is a common source of disputes over land and natural resources.

Moreover, the action can bring community cohesion by involving local communities in decision-making processes and fostering collaboration among different groups to strengthen social cohesion and trust.

Supporting sustainable food systems will also help diversify rural livelihoods, reducing dependency on a single source of income and making communities more resilient to economic shocks. By promoting alternative income-generating activities in for example agro-processing, the action will create opportunities for economic empowerment and reduce competition over limited resources.

Improving access to markets and to finance can enhance the resilience of rural communities. By connecting smallholder farmers to markets and supporting the development of rural infrastructure, the program will increase household incomes and improve living standards, reducing vulnerability to shocks and crises.

Investing in training and capacity building for farmers and local institutions will strengthen their ability to manage natural resources sustainably, adapt to climate change, and respond effectively to emergencies. By empowering communities with knowledge and skills, the program will enhance their resilience and ability to cope with challenges, reducing the risk of conflict and instability.

Ensuring the active participation of women in sustainable food systems development can promote gender equality and social justice, reducing gender-based inequalities that can contribute to conflict. By recognizing and addressing the specific needs and priorities of women farmers and entrepreneurs, the program will contribute to more inclusive and peaceful communities.

#### **Disaster Risk Reduction**

Agriculture production can be highly affected by natural disasters / extreme weather events. The action places a main emphasis on climate resilience of food systems; it will address climate vulnerability and seek to actively promote climate resilience, closely linking and inherent to disaster risk reduction.

#### **Other considerations if relevant**

n.a.

### 3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)</b>	<b>Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)</b>	<b>Mitigating measures</b>
External Environment	Risk 1: Climate change and extreme weather events	Medium	Medium	Employment of climate smart practices and services, as well as adoption of preparedness measures for climate-proofing
Planning, processes and systems	Risk 2: Population growth and rapid urbanization	Medium	Medium	Decentralization of intervention targeting rural area for improved livelihood with employment creation and income enhancement
Planning, processes and systems	Risk 3: competing uses of land	Medium	Low	Promote optimal and sustainable practices with high yield s and income; support to the development of territorial planning
Communication and Information	Risks 4: lack of policy coordination among agencies	Medium	Low	Policy dialogue and inclusion of relevant agencies
External Environment	Risk 5: Limited engagement in favour of gender equality and the empowerment of women, a human-rights based	High	Medium	The project will provide adequate resources to work with institutions and non-state actors on the importance of integrating gender equality/ human rights-based approach

	approach by the targeted institutions			
People and organizations	Risk 6: adverse local business environment and weak government support for local food producers and agri-manufactures	Medium	Medium	Provide incentives and promote the consumption of local products; promote food safety of consumers

### Lessons Learnt:

The action is designed to build on previous experience with systemic and practical approaches at the field level to promote rural employability, lift the poor out of poverty, contribute to improved food security and transform the current subsistence-based agricultural system into a fully-fledged sustainable food system (including food security) with increased private sector participation. The action will also build on the lessons learnt from recent programmes and projects implemented in The Gambia, and take into account key challenges identified in The Gambia's Food Systems Profile<sup>16</sup>.

The main lessons learnt result from the EU-funded “Fit For Market” programme, implemented by COLEAD, as well as from previous implemented projects in the agricultural sector in The Gambia, implemented by FAO (Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Fortification):

1. Need for The Gambia to have a robust, reliable, standardised and certified national system and institutional capacity strengthened in relation to food safety and quality
2. Support to private sector (smallholder farmers, agri-food businesses) through targeted support to improve and implement best practices in agriculture, food handling, processing, storing and manufacturing, as well as methodologies to analyse, test and control food quality and safety.
3. Ensure community cohesion and preparedness at implementation sites prior to project start-up.
4. Need to build a participatory approach towards community resilience against food and nutrition insecurity and natural disasters, with ownership and endorsement of a given intervention
5. Encouraging self-reliance through successful community vegetable gardens as part of an attitude change, away from a waiting-for-the-next project-to-train-us-or-bring-us-free-handouts attitude. The Gambia is a graveyard of project noticeboards, with insufficient sustainability post-project
6. Secure better intervention monitoring and follow-up mentoring and trouble-shooting, with an enabling post-project budget ring-fenced
7. Offer interventions with a bottom-up approach, implementing those are deemed feasible, useful and necessary by the beneficiary institutions and stakeholders (SMEs, communities), to ensure ownership and commitment to sustainability. Support provided will be selected on a demand-driven rather than a supply-driven basis, according to need, interest and technical capability to engage.

<sup>16</sup> <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9f0e318e-b55a-4280-9d81-4936d31d67b9/content>

### 3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that it intends to accelerate a people-centred (particularly women and young people) agro-ecological transition towards resilient, climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive agri-food systems in The Gambia, based on a market-driven approach, which will also help to reduce the current dependence (estimated at over 50%) on food imports. The expected results will be: (i) To enhance investments in climate-smart, agri-food value chains in The Gambia to increase productivity through sustainable agro-ecology in horticultural and other selected value chains with local and international demand; (ii) To improve food safety and quality through the adoption of agro-ecological practices by producers and processors (particularly women and young people) and an enhanced food control system; and (iii) To develop more diverse, nutrition-sensitive and agro-ecologically produced value chains in The Gambia.

If the promotion and adoption of **agro-ecological practices**<sup>17</sup> (sustainable soil management and crop rotation, integrating livestock with crop farming, agro-forestry), climate-smart and other innovative agro-technologies is facilitated, then productivity and production will be increased, thereby reducing dependence on food imports and avoiding land use change.

If the use of **water resources** for horticultural- and other high-value production during the lean season is expanded and water management is strengthened, then yields and returns from farming will be stabilised, modern horticultural technologies, innovations and inputs used will become more profitable in The Gambia and public/private investments in horticulture will be attracted.

If domestic and external financing to replicate and scale proven **agri-food business models** is unlocked and leveraged, then the number of Gambians benefiting directly and indirectly from a sustained and sustainable **commercialisation** of agricultural and horticultural value chains could be significantly increased.

If **gender and socioeconomic** barriers to resources, leadership roles and safe workplaces are identified, monitored and progressively addressed for selected agri- and horticultural value chains, involving public and private domestic and international stakeholders, then gender and socioeconomic equality can become a powerful catalyser for sustained and inclusive green growth in The Gambia.

And if **food safety control systems** are strengthened with better standards and SPS measures and farmers (particularly women and young people) are capacitated to produce quality food, then the contribution of agri-food systems to Gambia's export revenues will progressively be increased. The share of food locally purchased by the tourism/hospitality sector will also progressively increase and safe and nutritious foods will become more accessible and more affordable, and at the same time promote the green and circular economy. The increase of local food consumption will accelerate the transition towards a **circular economy** in food and beverages, especially regarding high quality products and organic farming, where tourists might be willing to pay a premium price.

Mainstreaming sustainable agricultural practices (like crop rotation and organic farming) will improve **soil health**, will shorten supply chains with fresher produce more accessible, encouraging seasonal consumption and minimising the need for energy-intensive food production. Support to local food systems will require less packaging and processing. Storage and cooling system will use less energy and from renewable sources. Community engagement and **consumer education** on sustainable agri-food systems will lead to more sustainable choices, bolster economic resilience and local **job creation, leading to inequality reduction**. **Biodiversity** in The Gambia will be preserved through a higher variety of crops, wide-spectrum pesticides reduction and pollinators protection.

Although the project will primarily focus on the horticultural sector (fruit trees, fruits and vegetables), the potential inclusion of traditional crop value chains (groundnut, maize, millet, cowpea, orange-fleshed sweet potato) will be assessed during the inception phase, and based on a detailed analysis – but keeping in mind the need for a focused approach. The inclusion of other value chains, such as poultry and fisheries, which are important for domestic consumption and for meeting the nutritional and dietary needs of the Gambian population, may also be considered (although fisheries may be covered through other programmes – see below).

<sup>17</sup> Synergies and linkages with R&I initiatives like DeSIRA+, CORAF, JRC/PANAP, 50x2030 etc., will be explored during implementation.



There is a need to strike a balance between focusing the support/narrowing down the choice of value chains and the existing agricultural context in The Gambia, where the choice of horticulture is made taking into account that the country has four different agro-ecological zones and two seasons (rainy and dry). This Action combines support to farmers with eco-restoration of degraded agricultural land and focuses on promoting agro-ecological practices that require the use of mixed cropping, while the use of agro-forestry will further help to conserve soil and water and combat desertification. This is in line with the Great Green Wall objectives.

This action will build synergies and will be complementary to the following ongoing/planned actions and initiatives:

- Complementing this Action, five NGO grants signed in December 2023 will be supporting the production and use of organic fertilisers.
- The Gambia is requesting support of the Investment Climate Reform (ICR) facility to design and pilot the implementation of digital financial services that will expand women's access to finance and the range of options and choices open to them. The intervention will support the development of a suite of financial products and services that boost women's financial and economic empowerment and resilience.
- The EU regional West African Sustainable Ocean Governance Programme (WASOP) will support regional fisheries governance, blue economy (including and fisheries and aquaculture value chains), and conservation and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems.
- Within the horticultural value chains, Cashew presents a very interesting prospects in terms of added value and job creation for Gambia. With production increasing 25% in 2022, Gambia could tap into the wave of investments in processing across West Africa focusing on exporting Cashew Kernels to Europe instead of Raw Cashew Nuts to Asia as it is the case now. With these aims and across producing countries in Africa, EU is launching a Cashew Initiative based on technical assistance, support to business development and policy support. This action could contribute to this initiative in The Gambia.
- In line with the MIP, the EU is developing an action on green jobs creation focusing on climate change adaptation and mitigation (tree planting, agro-forestry, environmental protection and conservation, integrated coastal zone management, mangroves restauration, among others).

Moreover this Action complements and takes into account other donors supporting the development of agricultural VCs, namely:

- (i) The World Bank's approved USD 68 million financing for The Gambia Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural Value Chain Development (GIRAV Project), addressing food insecurity by scaling up implementation of impactful activities – improving water availability and land tenure to foster climate resilient agriculture and supporting improved water and sanitation in the targeted areas.
- (ii) The Resilience of Organizations for Transformative Smallholder Agriculture Project (ROOTS) with a total cost of USD 81 million, with co-funding from IFAD, OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), Global Environment Fund, AfD and the Government of The Gambia, whose main objective is to achieve rice self-sufficiency.
- (iii) The African Development Bank Group, granted additional USD 12 million to bolster the ongoing Global Agriculture and Food Security Project, to promote the production of climate-resistant local food products in The Gambia, expanding cultivation areas for plant crops, upland crops -- groundnuts, maize, millet, cowpea and findi--and rice.
- (iv) The Green Climate Fund project "Climate Resilient Fishery Initiative for Livelihood Improvement in The Gambia (PROREFISH Gambia), with USD 25 million, implemented by FAO, aims to support vulnerable fishing communities in building resilience to climate change and in diversifying livelihoods through among other interventions climate proofing the sector, technology improvements, and enhance the fisheries and aquaculture value chains.

### 3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

This indicative logframe constitutes the basis for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the intervention.

On the basis of this logframe matrix, a more detailed logframe (or several) may be developed at contracting stage. In case baselines and targets are not available for the action, they should be informed for each indicator at signature of the contract(s) linked to this AD, or in the first progress report at the latest. New columns may be added to set intermediary targets (milestones) for the Output and Outcome indicators whenever it is relevant.

- At inception, the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).
- Progress reports should provide an updated logframe with current values for each indicator.
- The final report should enclose the logframe with baseline and final values for each indicator.

The indicative logical framework matrix may evolve during the lifetime of the action depending on the different implementation modalities of this action.

The activities, the expected Outputs and related indicators, targets and baselines included in the logframe matrix may be updated during the implementation of the action, no amendment being required to the Financing Decision.

Results	Results chain (a): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (a): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years.)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
<b>Impact (OO)</b>	To accelerate a people-centred (particularly women and young people), resilient, market-driven and nutrition-sensitive agro-ecological transition in The Gambia.	<p>1 Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (OPSYS predefined indicator)</p> <p>2 GERF 1.1/ SDG 2.3.2 Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status (OPSYS predefined indicator)**</p>	<p>1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>2 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>2 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>1 <a href="http://www.ifpri.org/publication/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index">http://www.ifpri.org/publication/womens-empowerment-agriculture-index</a></p> <p>2 FAO / Agriculture and Rural Integrated Surveys (AGRIS)</p>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Outcome 1 (SO1)</b>	Increase investments, productivity, income opportunities and working conditions for women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population, of targeted agri-food value chains, with a specific emphasis in the horticulture sector	<p>1.1 Number of smallholders supported by the programme engaged in year-round commercial production of horticultural- and other selected crops, supported by technologies to facilitate the agro-ecological transition to safe, nutritious and sustainable food production, disaggregated by location, sex, age and income.</p> <p>1.2 Number of smallholders supported by the programme exhibiting improvements in the application of sustainable agro-ecological practices</p> <p>1.3 GERF 2.1. Number of smallholders reached with EU supported interventions aimed to increase their sustainable production, access to markets and/or security of land (OPSYS predefined indicator), disaggregated by gender and age**, *</p>	<p>1.1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>1.2 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>1.3 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>1.1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>1.2 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>1.3 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>1.1 Baseline and endline studies conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>1.1 and 1.2 COLEAD's Sustainability Self-Assessment System to measure qualitative and quantitative changes in farming practices (at farm level, aggregating producers) in terms of environmental, social and economic sustainability</p> <p>1.2 World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Techniques (WOCAT) by FAO: <a href="https://www.wocat.net/en/knowledge-base.html">https://www.wocat.net/en/knowledge-base.html</a></p> <p>1.3 Intervention M&amp;E system</p>	Government is supportive of the different programme components and committed to support the private sector driven approach and the targeted value chains.

<b>Outcome 2 (SO2)</b>	Improve plant health, food safety, control and quality management systems, processes and sustainable agro-ecological practices of producers and processors (particularly women and young people)	<p>2.1 GERF 2.15 Number of processes related to partner country practices on trade, investment and business, or promoting the external dimension of EU internal policies or EU interest, which have been influenced **</p> <p>2.2 Number of private sector companies/farmers implementing pest surveillance and pest management protocols, disaggregated by sex and age, among partner beneficiaries in targeted value chains</p>	<p>2.1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>2.2 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>2.1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>2.2 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>2.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)</p> <p>2.2 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)</p>	Beneficiaries from targeted value chains keen to comply with food safety and quality standards and to adopt sustainable agro-ecological practices.
<b>Outcome 3 (SO3)</b>	Strengthen diversified, nutrition-sensitive, agro-ecologically produced targeted agri-food value chains	<p>3.1 Number of women of reproductive age, adolescent girls and children under 5 reached by nutrition-related interventions supported by the EU GERF 2.33 (GAP III)**</p> <p>3.2 Number of diverse, nutrition-sensitive and sustainable value chains developed with support of the EU-funded intervention</p>	<p>3.1 0</p> <p>3.2 0</p>	<p>3.1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>3.2 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>3.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)</p> <p>3.2 Project-commissioned studies (at the beginning and end of the Action)</p>	Beneficiaries from nutrition-sensitive targeted value chains keen to adopt sustainable agro-ecological practices.
<b>Output 1</b>	1.1 Increased opportunities for mutually beneficial deals (contractual arrangements)	1.1.1 Number of connections between private companies and producer organisations created	1.1.1 0	1.1.1 tbd in the	1.1.1. COLEAD's Sustainability Self-Assessment System to measure qualitative and quantitative changes in	Business and regulatory environment conducive to

<b>relating to Outcome 1</b>	between private companies and producer organisations	with support of the EU-funded intervention		inception phase	farming and trading practices (at farm level, aggregating producers)	timely conclude contractual arrangements
<b>Output 2 relating to Outcome 1</b>	1.2 Increased market access opportunities for Gambian operators in local, regional and international markets.	1.2.1 Number of linkages initiated by the project between Gambian operators and local, regional and international markets, disaggregated by sex, age, and location	1.1.1 0	1.2.1 tbd in the inception phase	1.2.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)	Target beneficiaries commit to participate in planned project activities according to set timeline
<b>Output 3 relating to Outcome 1</b>	1.3 Increased capacities for entrepreneurial and employability of women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population in targeted value chains	1.3.1 Number of business / entrepreneurs supported (disaggregated by sex, age, area)  1.3.2 Number of people trained by the EU-funded intervention with increased knowledge and/or skills in entrepreneurship and/or employability, disaggregated by sex, age, income level, area of residence.	1.3.1 0  1.3.2 0	1.3.1 tbd in the inception phase  1.3.2 tbd in the inception phase	1.3.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)  1.3.2 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)	Target beneficiaries commit to participate in planned project activities according to set timeline
<b>Output 4 relating to Outcome 1</b>	1.4 Increased access to finance and investment opportunities in technologies to support the agro-ecological transition (integrated crop and pest management, soil health, small-scale irrigation, affordable greenhouse technology and ICTs innovations) for women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population.	1.4.1 Number of climate-smart technology investments directly funded with the support of the Action, among partner beneficiaries in targeted value chains.  1.4.2 Value of the investments directly mobilised with EU support, among partner beneficiaries in targeted value chains.	1.4.1 0  1.4.2 0	1.4.1 tbd in the inception phase  1.4.2 tbd in the inception phase	1.4.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)  1.4.2 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)	Target beneficiaries commit and effectively participate in planned project activities according to set timeline  The new technologies are available at the 8 <sup>th</sup> quarter of the project



						Beneficiaries along the value chain are committed to cooperate/ collaborate
<b>Output 1 relating to Outcome 2</b>	2.1 Enhanced capacity of regulatory and institutional bodies in food safety and quality control in line with international standards and best practices.	<p>2.1.1 Number of standards, codes of practice, guidelines and procedures created or updated, aligned with international best practices</p> <p>2.1.2 Number of accreditation schemes (e.g. organic) with international recognition, or prepared (ready) to receive it</p>	<p>2.1.1 0</p> <p>2.1.2 0</p>	<p>2.1.1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>2.1.2 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>2.1.1. Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>2.1.2 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p>	<p>Responsible authorities and institutions support international recognition</p> <p>Official partners are committed to and have sufficient staff and resources to improve and implement standards in the best interest of the sector and the environment</p>
<b>Output 2 relating to Outcome 2</b>	2.2 Strengthened capacity of producers and MSMEs involved in targeted value chains in compliance with SPS and quality requirements.	<p>2.2.1 Number of accredited or internationally recognised certification services for product or system certification for relevant standards, or prepared (ready) for it</p> <p>2.2.2 Number of accredited other conformity services (e.g. inspection, proficiency testing, personnel certification), or prepared (ready) for accreditation</p>	<p>2.2.1 0</p> <p>2.2.2 0</p>	<p>2.2.1 tbd in the inception phase</p> <p>2.2.2 tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>2.2.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)</p> <p>2.2.2 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)</p>	<p>Private sector target beneficiaries and partners are committed to and have sufficient staff and resources to improve and implement standards in the best interest of the sector and the environment</p>

<b>Output 1</b> <b>relating to Outcome 3</b>	3.1 Increased capacities of local producers and processors of bio-fortified vitamin A-rich (orange flesh) sweet potatoes, iron and protein-rich beans (cowpeas) and other high-nutrient local commodities.	3.1.1 Number of crop-growing protocols and tools for biofortified vitamin A-rich sweet potatoes (orange flesh), iron and protein-rich beans (cowpeas), nutritious maize developed with support of the EU-funded intervention	3.1.1 - 0	3.1.1 tbc in the inception phase	3.1.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)	Target beneficiaries commit and effectively participate in planned project activities according to set timeline
<b>Output 2</b> <b>relating to Outcome 3</b>	3.2 Increased awareness of domestic and foreign investors in infant food value chain opportunities in The Gambia.	3.2.1 Number of MSME representatives trained by the EU-funded intervention with increased knowledge and/or skills in food safety and quality requirements, disaggregated by sex, age, area of residence, lead's income level.	3.2.1 - 0	3.2.1 tbd in the inception phase	3.2.1 EU intervention monitoring and reporting system (progress and final reports)	Relevant authorities approve timely campaigns to be aired / printed / established in different communication channels

## 4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country.

### 4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 60 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

### 4.3 Implementation of the Budget Support Component

N/A

### 4.4 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>18</sup>.

#### 4.4.1 Direct Management (Grants)

##### **Grants: (direct management)**

##### **4.4.1.1 Twinning Grant**

###### **(a) Purpose of the grant(s)**

One **Twining Grant** is foreseen to implement a part of output 2.1 "Enhanced capacity of regulatory and institutional bodies in food safety and quality control in line with international standards and best practices". With an aim at increasing the safety of Gambian agri-food systems, a Twinning Grant will be developed, indicatively, with the Food Quality and Safety Authority, in order to support Gambian Public Institutions mandated to develop and implement Phytosanitary regulations and standards and perform controls.

###### **(b) Type of applicants targeted**

EU member States Administrations or mandated organisations (to develop and implement food safety standards and to perform controls) selected on the basis of criteria that will be spelt out in the Twinning Fiche to be published through a Call for Proposals targeting Member State Administrations.

##### **4.4.1.2 Grant**

###### **(a) Purpose of the grant(s)**

A Grant contributing to achieve all the Specific Objectives of the Action, namely: SO1. Increase investments, productivity, income opportunities and working conditions for women, young people and people from the bottom 40 per cent of the population of targeted agri-food value chains, with a specific emphasis in the horticulture sector; SO2. Improve plant health, food safety, control and quality management systems, processes and sustainable agro-ecological practices of producers and processors (particularly women and

<sup>18</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu). Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

young people); and SO3. Strengthen diversified, nutrition-sensitive, agro-ecologically produced targeted agri-food value chains.

**(b) Type of applicants targeted**

Non-Governmental Organisations specialised in the horticultural sector with experience in The Gambia.

#### 4.4.2 Changes from indirect to direct management mode (and vice versa) due to exceptional circumstances

If the management mode described in section 4.4.1.1 (Twinning Grant) and/or section 4.4.1.2 (Grant) cannot be implemented due to circumstances outside of the Commission's control, the related outputs of the Action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

Demonstrated operational capacity; experience in analysing and strengthening value chains; experience in building partnerships with the private sector; previous working experience in The Gambia; ability to set up multi-stakeholders partnerships.

The implementation by this entity entails achievement of all the specific objectives of this Action. The entity will be responsible for preparing/coordinating the preparation of work plans and budgets, procurement, monitoring and reporting. It will collaborate with other relevant implementing partners on the basis of their specific areas of expertise to ensure rapid, effective and efficient delivery of services.

#### 4.4.3 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

#### 4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
<b>Implementation modalities</b> – cf. section 4.4	
<b>Objective 1 (Outputs 1.1 + 1.2 + 1.3 + 1.4)</b>	
Direct management-Grant - cf. section 4.4.1.2	7 550 000
<b>Objective 2 (Outputs 2.1 + 2.2)</b>	
Direct management-Twinning grant - cf. section 4.4.1.1	1 000 000
Direct management-Grant - cf. section 4.4.1.2	7 550 000
<b>Objective 3 (Outputs 3.1 + 3.2)</b>	
Direct management-Grant - cf. section 4.4.1.2	3 800 000
<b>Evaluation</b> – cf. section 5.2	100 000
<b>Audit</b> – cf. section 5.3	
<b>Totals</b>	20 000 000

## 4.6 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The overall coordination of all components of the programme will be ensured through a Steering Committee co-chaired by EU Delegation and Government of The Gambia (indicatively the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Trade and Employment, the Ministry of Finance and the Food Safety and Quality Authorities) involving the implementing partners, financing institutions, representatives of civil society (when relevant) and of the private sector.

The Steering Committee will provide oversight on the programme's implementation, provide recommendations on the annual workplan and budget, assess overall progress and recommend remedial actions when needed. The meetings will take place every 4 months in the first project year and bi-annually later.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action and may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, for the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this action and ensuring effective coordination.

## 5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

### 5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix.

Inequality reduction will be mainstreamed into the monitoring and evaluation of the project and indicators will be income-disaggregated and disaggregated by other relevant aspects whenever possible (sex, age, area of residence, etc.).

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

Studies to set baseline data and targets as well as final data will be conducted by the entrusted entities (with project funding) during the inception phase and at the end of project implementation, respectively. These will be regularly reviewed (and updated if necessary) during implementation.

The entrusted entities will have the responsibility of day-to-date monitoring. Data collected will be used in the regular reports. The reports shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

Progress in the achievement of results will be measured by means of the indicators of the LF of this Action. The internal monitoring systems of the implementing partners should include the tracking of these indicators. In addition, given that the Gender Equality Marker is G1 (Significant Objective) the monitoring systems should facilitate a gender-sensitive monitoring of results, including the collection and reporting of gender disaggregated data.

The findings will also be discussed within the Steering Committee.



## 5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a mid-term and final evaluation(s) may be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission and/or via an implementing partner.

A mid-term evaluation will be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, in particular with respect to lessons learnt for formulation of similar projects.

A final evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision).

All evaluations shall assess to what extent the action is taking into account inequality reduction as well as how it impacts the most vulnerable (bottom 40% and socio-economically disadvantaged individuals). Expertise on inequality reduction will be ensured in the evaluation teams.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 3 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports may be shared with the partners and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination<sup>19</sup>. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, apply the necessary adjustments.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract under the budget of the Action.

## 5.3 Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

# 6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

In line with the 2022 “[Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Actions](#)”, it will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union’s support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

However, action documents for specific sector programmes are in principle no longer required to include a provision for communication and visibility actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

<sup>19</sup> See best [practice of evaluation dissemination](#)

## Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary Intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

Articulating Actions or Contracts according to an expected chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure efficient monitoring and reporting of performance;

Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);

Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

Primary Interventions are identified during the design of each action by the responsible service (Delegation or Headquarters operational Unit).

The level of the Primary Intervention chosen can be modified (directly in OPSYS) and the modification does not constitute an amendment of the action document.

The intervention level for the present Action identifies as (tick one of the 4 following options);

<b>Action level (i.e. Budget Support, blending)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
<b>Group of actions level (i.e. top-up cases, different phases of a single programme)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): <Present action> <Other action(s)>
<b>Contract level</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract)>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 2	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract)>
	(...)	
<b>Group of contracts level (i.e. series of programme estimates, cases in which an Action includes for example four contracts and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts 1	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 1> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 2> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) #>