

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EVALUATION OF EU SUPPORT TO SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES (2014–2020)

1. ADOPT A COMMON FRAMEWORK TO FOSTER A 'ONE EU' APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

1.1

Develop clearer overarching 'rules of engagement' for European actors in partnerships supporting SAFS governance at all levels

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- **Diversity in EU Member States approaches to SAFS was an asset** when it led to synergies and complementarities. But incoherences in approaches have led to inefficiencies and missed opportunities for SAFS transformation.
- **SAFS-related European policies**, regulations, programming, and funding of research and innovation are overly **fragmented**.
- **Inter-DG coordination is weak**, and human resource constraints limit INTPA's effective participation.
- **Rome-Based agencies have remained implementing partners** rather than strategic partners.

ACTION POINTS

- Develop a **common framework** for external action that lays out ambitions and sets core targets and indicators.
- Facilitate EU-wide **agreement on principles** for engaging in SAFS-related partnerships.
- Review and improve the incentives for **increased inter-service and multi-agency collaboration**

1.2

Anchor external action support to SAFS in long-term EU-country partnership agendas

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- Aligning SAFS support with **broader agendas** helps gain political traction.
- **Political commitment, ownership and leadership** are important determinants for the success of policy dialogues aiming at agri-food system transformation
- Effective **policy dialogue and partnerships** strengthen political commitment to SAFS.

ACTION POINTS

- Identify **shared agendas** with partner countries and strategic partners on which to focus external action support.
- Ensure the **full engagement of national agrifood system stakeholders** (government, private sector and civil society) during the design and implementation of country-level strategies.
- Integrate support to SAFS in **intersectoral policy dialogue** and relevant Team Europe approaches.

1.3

Maintain a focus on enabling the most vulnerable food system actors to play an active role in SAFS transformation at country and regional level

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- The EU has invested in partnerships with a wide range of agri-food system actors applying **context-specific and multi-stranded approaches**.
- EU support has concentrated at the **producers' end of food value chains**.
- **Social protection measures** are key to enhance sustainability, inclusiveness and the resilience of food systems.

ACTION POINTS

- Strengthen **upward, downward, and horizontal agri-food system linkages**.
- Strengthen support for food processors and MSME's.
- Strengthen social protection mechanisms.

»Programmes have most of the time [been] implemented in silos. The Team Europe Initiative might bring this collaboration and enhance linkages.«

2. OPERATIONALISING THIS 'ONE EU' APPROACH AT ALL LEVELS

2.1 Upgrade coordination between EU and EU Member States at Headquarters level

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- ▶ Europe does **not speak with one voice** in strategic EU-supported partnerships on SAFS.
- ▶ **A mix of instruments** and a variety of delivery modalities allows the EU to focus strategically on both country priorities and local needs.
- ▶ **Stakeholders' capacity to network**, share knowledge and learn from each other requires continuous support.

ACTION POINTS

- ▶ Foster **synergies between diverse EU and EU Member States** views and operational approaches to supporting SAFS transformation.
- ▶ Facilitate **more strategic meetings** of the Heads of Agriculture and Rural Development group¹ to come to a common framework.

¹ The Heads of Agriculture and Rural Development (HARD) group is one of the main informal mechanisms for coordinating actions on agri-food system transformation between the EU and EU Member States.

2.2 Develop a common understanding on context-specific challenges and opportunities at country and regional level

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- ▶ EU support has often been based on **partial sectoral analyses**, limiting the ability to track SAFS system-level progress.
- ▶ Common results-**monitoring frameworks** building on a shared vision of EU, EU Member States, national governments and agri-food system stakeholders, enhance **mutual accountability**.
- ▶ The diverse and often **competing interests of stakeholders** are not taken sufficiently into account when planning and implementing.

ACTION POINTS

- ▶ Promote **multisectoral assessments** to identify strategic entry points for supporting system level change.
- ▶ Develop a **common understanding** of how different sectors contribute or constrain SAFS transformation in a particular context.
- ▶ Align **monitoring frameworks** and indicators with the needs and experiences of agri-food system stakeholders
- ▶ Strengthen the use of **foresight and scenario studies and political economy analyses** identifying 'winners' and 'losers' of change.

2.3 Co-develop and empower Team Europe agri-food initiatives

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- ▶ **Pooled funding** can be an effective way to jointly implement interventions at country-level.
- ▶ EU and EU Member States have not agreed on a **common set of objectives and indicators** to track progress on SAFS transformation.
- ▶ **Coordination amongst partners** and synchronisation of support interventions are vitally important for promoting synergies and system level change.
- ▶ **Lack of synchronised implementation** can cause well-designed projects to struggle to interact, reinforce and learn from each other.

ACTION POINTS

- ▶ Build on the **strengths of EU partners** with a strong presence and track record in relevant global, regional and/or national arenas.
- ▶ Build on successful experiences with **pooled funding** at country level.
- ▶ Improve coordination between the **Commission and EU Member States** on partnership engagement **with the Rome-based agencies**.

2.4 Strengthen EU sustainable agri-food system diplomacy

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- ▶ **Long-term partnership** with national governments, implementing partners and other strategic partners is key to achieve lasting beneficial agri-food system-level effects.
- ▶ Support to **SAFS transformation extends beyond development** by including trade and investment themes, among others.

ACTION POINTS

- ▶ **Pursue stronger EU leadership in SAFS at the bi-and multilateral level**, including by a common EU approach to partners like the UN Rome-Based agencies strengthened by more coordination within the EU's DGs, and between EU Member States.
- ▶ **Leverage EU's external action in international fora** and institutions to ensure complementary and coherent support to SAFS.
- ▶ Ensure **compliance of European-based actors** operating abroad with agreed principles and regulations.
- ▶ Support **stronger SAFS transformation leadership** of European-based actors and partners abroad.

»The EU plays an articulating role that can be strengthened with all the member states [...] to leverage funds from European financial instruments to strengthen finance actions for development, create infrastructure for agri-food markets, among others.«

representative from civil society organisation

3. ENHANCING LEARNING AT EU, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVEL

3.1

Intensify support for networking, experimenting and learning

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- ▶ The EU has positioned itself as a **facilitator of inclusive** international, regional, national and subnational **agri-food system dialogues**.
- ▶ Sizeable **investments in information systems** are required to assess progress and nurture policy dialogue at different levels.
- ▶ National **research and innovation systems need to strengthen their focus** on SAFS transformation.

ACTION POINTS

- ▶ Capitalise upon and **systematically learn** from relevant initiatives and experiences.
- ▶ Facilitate the development and provide incentives for the **effective use of SAFS analytical approaches and assessment tools**.
- ▶ Strengthen support to **follow-up and scale relevant food system innovations** by intensifying the investment in enabling policies, regulations, services, and practices.

3.2

Enhance local and broader participation in co-innovation processes

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- ▶ **No single individual actor**, government, government department or other institution **has all the knowledge**, resources, authority and governance mechanism to adequately ensure SAFS.
- ▶ **Local agri-food system actors** are important partners as **sources of ideas, knowledge** and initiatives for context- and needs-appropriate innovations.

ACTION POINTS

- ▶ Foster **inclusive food system governance of innovation processes** and promote multi-level governance, linking local, national and global governance structures and processes.
- ▶ Foster **knowledge co-production on SAFS** among stakeholders and ensure meaningful **participation of smallholders, women and other food system entrepreneurs** in innovation processes.
- ▶ Systematically **mobilise local financial, research and advisory services**.

3.3

Strengthen learning at EU level

SELECTED FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- ▶ Better **coherence and coordination of learning opportunities** and activities are required to foster mutual learning on SAFS.
- ▶ The EU has **smartly used a mix of instruments and a variety of delivery modalities**, and chosen implementing partners, national and/or international, based on their experience of working with national and local stakeholders across multiple themes.
- ▶ Newly introduced **private sector instruments need to be adapted to local conditions** and intended users.
- ▶ Sufficient **access to relevant on-the-ground knowledge** on SAFS is required to enhance learning.

ACTION POINTS

- ▶ Develop **space for knowledge sharing**, operational research, and on-the-job learning from Team Europe initiatives
- ▶ Strengthen the focus of relevant Team Europe initiatives, and meetings of the HARD-group, to **learn from the bottom-up programming instruments** already developed by EU partners.
- ▶ Deepen the learning on how **private sector instruments used by the EU, EU Member States and European financing institutions** can better identify risk and success factors to effectively inform future programming.

»You can only contribute to food systems if you have a proper understanding of the system, otherwise contribution is random«

representative from civil society organisation

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