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Resilient Food Systems

Programme Highlights 2021



Resilient Food Systems

Programme highlights
2021

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List of abbreviations

AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
CIAT	The International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field School
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IAP	Integrated Approach Pilot
ICRAF	World Agroforestry
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
K&L	Knowledge and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
PAR	Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research
PCU	Programme Coordination Unit
PPP	Public-private partnership
RFS	Resilient Food Systems
SHARED	Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence Based Decision Making
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMS	Short message service
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WOFAN	Women Farmers Advancement Network

Foreword



Gustavo Fonseca

*Director of Programs
The Global Environment Facility*

The 2021 Annual Report of the Resilient Food Systems (RFS) program showcases amazing achievements by countries in spite of the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Smallholder farmers and local communities face undoubtedly the brunt of the pandemic, and in some cases, threats posed by desert locusts and insecurity. The integrated solutions promoted through the RFS have proved to be particularly appropriate to strengthen the resilience of these grassroots actors and help them cope with multiple shocks.

The overall RFS approach to engage, act, track, and foster adaptive learning has created opportunities for harnessing lessons to adjust, replicate, and scale up best practices that foster sustainability and resilience for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. As the RFS is now entering in its fifth and last year, it is the right timing to amplify the knowledge sharing and learning process across the 12 participating countries and beyond. This 2021 report contains multiple data and metrics on the different indicators that

offer a glimpse of the transformative potential of the program approach.

This potential has been highlighted by the GEF Secretariat in a recent synthesis of learning from the Integrated Approach Pilot (IAP) programs and reinforced by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) in its Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to address the Drivers of Environmental Degradation. The IEO specifically highlighted progress toward concrete environmental outcomes and achievements in connecting these to socioeconomic outcomes for diversified livelihoods in the most vulnerable communities. Hence, the RFS was noted as offering a good practice example of how to consistently consider and measure resilience across a program.

The GEF Secretariat is grateful for the continuous involvement and commitment from all the RFS partners and country project teams as they work with communities on collective actions to reverse land degradation and invest in long-term solutions for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. The emerging experiences and lessons will no doubt help to position countries for future engagement in GEF integrated programs seeking to advance systems transformation for healthy people and healthy planet.



Mr Anyonge Tom Mwangi

*Director a.i. of the Environment, Climate,
Gender and Social Inclusion Division - IFAD*

The year 2021 was critical for the Resilient Food Systems programme (RFS), with the majority of its country and regional projects undergoing their mid-term review.

The 2021 Annual Report exhibits evidence from the mid-term review of continued successes and significant progress towards our targets, despite the ongoing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We remain strongly committed and engaged in sharing our ever-growing knowledge and experience with projects, partners and the food systems community at large.

The achievements and quality of performance of the RFS programme are the fruit of collaboration and collective efforts of our partners at both regional and country levels, as well as our beneficiaries and communities. These many actors continue to demonstrate their adaptability and determination to reverse degradation in a diverse array of agro-ecosystems and invest in long-term

solutions for sustained resilience and food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is my great pleasure to take this opportunity to express IFAD's gratitude to all of those involved, for their continued support and commitment to the programme's vital mission, to increase agricultural productivity, improve livelihoods and restore degraded landscapes in smallholder farming systems.

As we move into the fifth year of the programme, recommendations, lessons learned and good practices highlighted in the mid-term review provide a clear direction of action for IFAD and its partners. These learnings are also extremely applicable to enhancing design and implementation of similar initiatives including the upcoming GEF8 programming.

My special thanks to the GEF with whom we have built a trusting and fruitful collaboration around this programme.

Programme Themes



Agroforestry & Reforestation

Integrating trees into agricultural systems to preserve productive ecosystems and adapt to climate change.



Gender

Adopting gender-responsive approaches to support equal access to all project activities.



Integrated Water Management

Planning, developing, and managing water resources for quality.



Knowledge & Learning

Reflecting, discussing, and generating new knowledge and ideas with external and internal audiences.



Monitoring & Evaluation

Tracking the impacts of the programme on ecosystem services and food security.



Rural Extension & Capacity Development

Designing and implementing training and agricultural extension support.



Science, Policy & Institutions

Connecting policy with science to advance agricultural and environmental agendas in institutional frameworks.



Sustainable Land Management

Managing the sustainable use of soils, water, animals and plants for healthy communities and ecosystems.



Value Chains & Market Access

Developing new market-oriented value chains and greening existing chains to reduce economic vulnerability.

Executive Summary

In 2021, Resilient Food Systems (RFS) projects and beneficiary communities continued to demonstrate their adaptability and determination to reverse land degradation and invest in long-term solutions for food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

As the on-going COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge mobility, the programme and its partners harnessed technological solutions and barely missed a beat in advancing the project goals this year. The resilience of the programme to these unprecedented challenges is being translated into building more resilient food systems every day.

The 2021 reporting period was marked by continued successes and significant movement towards our targets, often exceeding them. We engaged in knowledge sharing and continual learning with our projects, partners and with the food systems community at large. The valuable lessons drawn from this year's activities will undoubtedly pay forward into the new year and can also provide helpful insight to other initiatives working to enhance food systems security around the world.

As we move into our fifth and final year of the programme, our mission is as clear as ever and our targets close on the horizon. Thank you for your continued support; we look forward to seeing what's next.

OUR MISSION

Enhancing long-term sustainability and resilience for food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

OUR TARGETS

Increasing agricultural productivity, improving livelihoods, and restoring degraded landscapes in smallholder farming systems.

OUR PEOPLE

Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and led by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the RFS programme is implemented by 12 country projects in the dryland regions of sub-Saharan Africa and connected by one Regional Hub.

CHAPTER 01

About Resilient Food Systems

COUNTRY PROJECTS

Our twelve country projects are located in the dryland regions of sub-Saharan Africa. This area is extremely vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change. In line with the broad approaches of the RFS programme, each country project invests in safeguarding the environment, advancing food security and improving the livelihoods of the people affected by their activities.

SENEGAL

Agricultural Value Chains Resilience Support Project



GHANA

Sustainable Land and Water Management Project



NIGER

Family Farming Development Programme



NIGERIA

Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience in Nigeria



ESWATINI

Climate-Smart Agriculture for Climate Resilient Livelihoods



BURKINA FASO

Participatory Natural Resource Management and Rural Development Project



ETHIOPIA

Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience



KENYA

Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund



UGANDA

Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Karamoja Sub-Region



BURUNDI

Support for Sustainable Food Production and Enhancement of Food Security and Climate Resilience in Burundi's Highlands



TANZANIA

Reversing Land Degradation trends and increasing Food Security in degraded ecosystems of semi-arid areas of central Tanzania



MALAWI

Enhancing the Resilience of Agroecological Systems



Figure 1. RFS country projects

REGIONAL HUB

The main responsibilities of the regional hub:

- Coordinate efforts and provide technical support to the twelve country projects,
- Ensure cross-project learning and collaboration,
- Monitor and assess programmatic progress, and
- Establish partnerships, collaboration, and consistency with other initiatives at the regional and global levels.



Figure 2. RFS Regional Hub components

The three pillars of the RFS approach:

Although the design and implementation of each project are different, reflecting the unique capacities, priorities, vulnerabilities and strengths of each country, the three pillars are the same across the entire programme. This unifying framework, overseen by the Regional Hub, facilitates a common approach, structure and monitoring system across the programme and provides a shared basis for comparing experiences, practices and tools between project teams and countries.

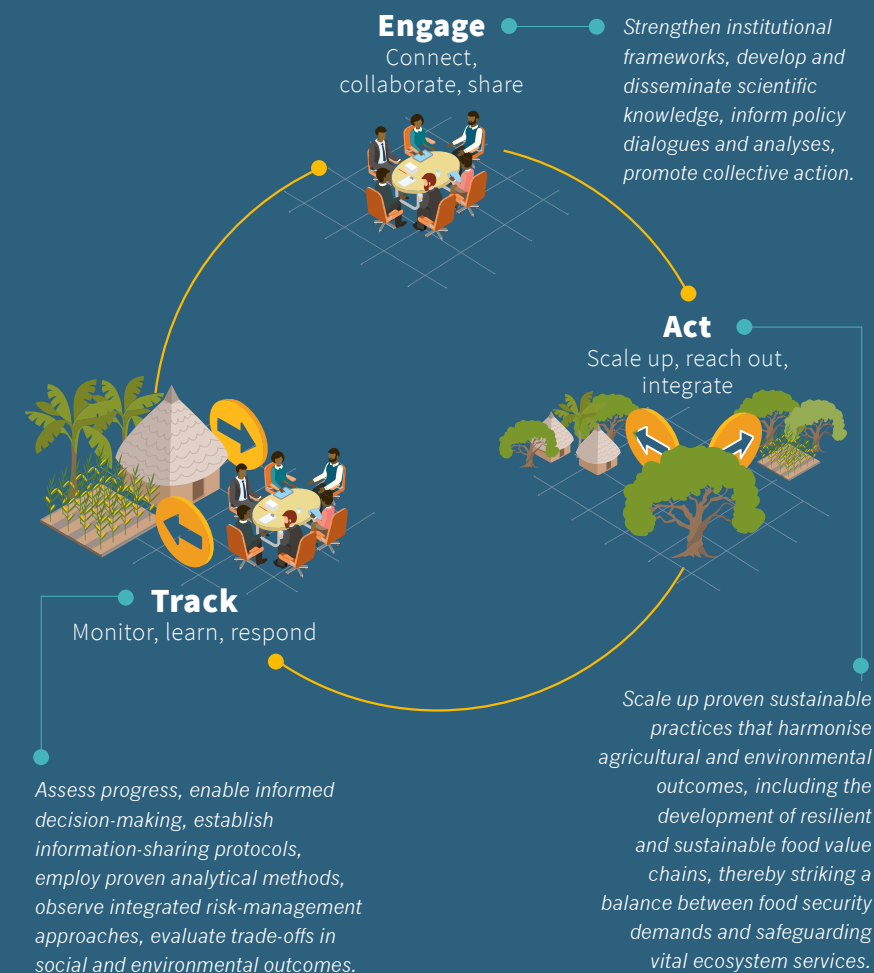
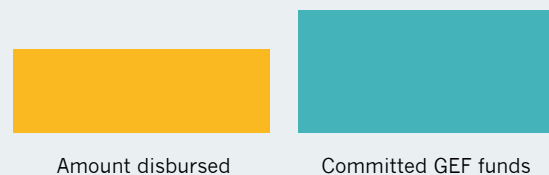


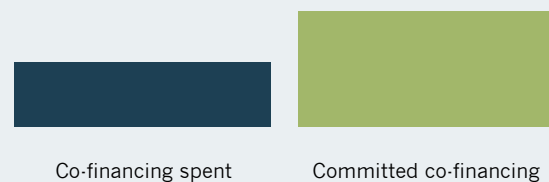
Figure 3. The three pillars of the RFS approach

2021 IN NUMBERS¹

USD 65.6 million out of **USD 96 million** in GEF grant funds disbursed to RFS projects.



USD 252 million co-financing spent against **USD 454 million** committed

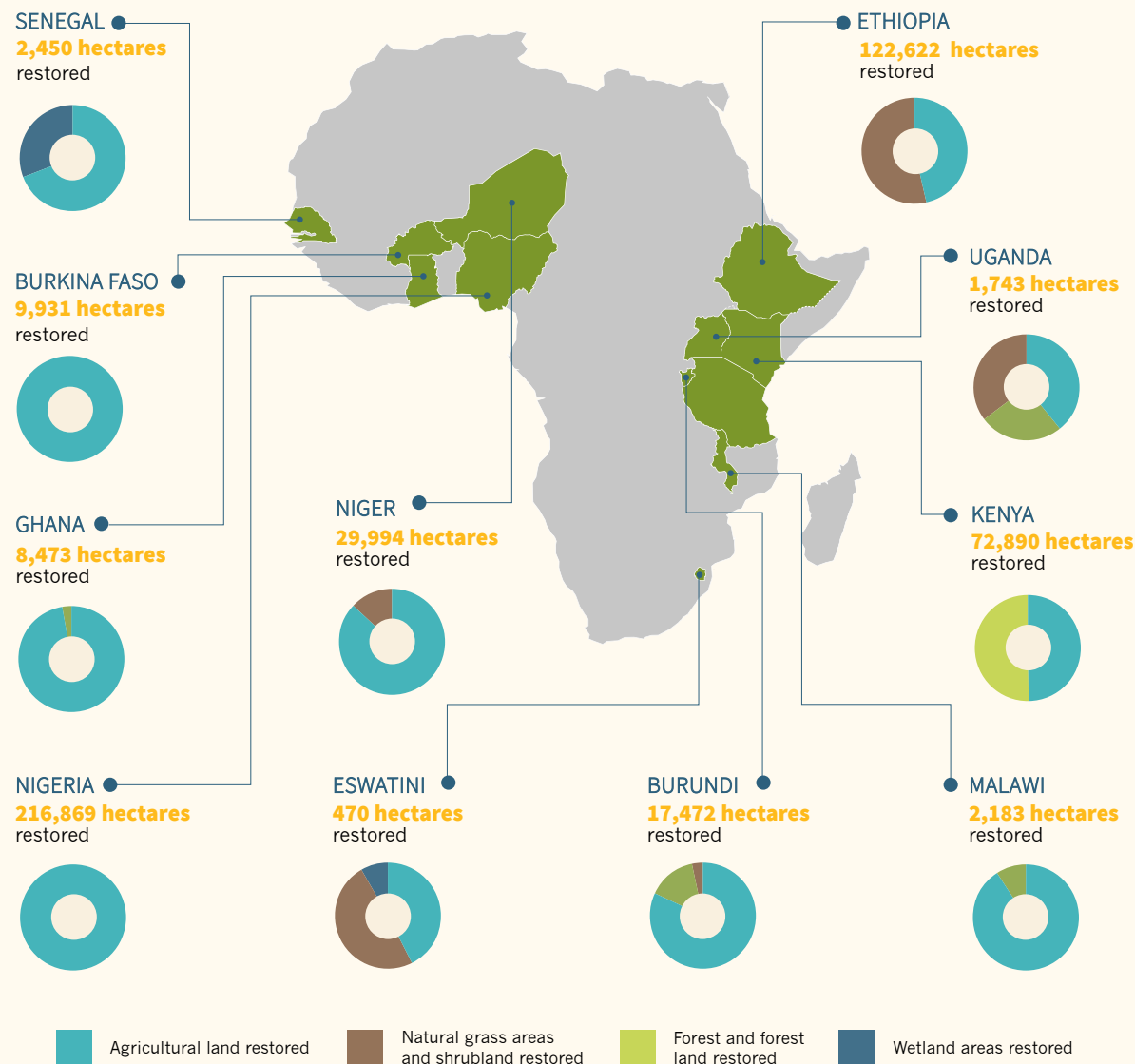


¹Figures are based on cumulative data from programme inception until June 2021. Data is reported by projects to the programme Coordination Unit at the end of each reporting period.

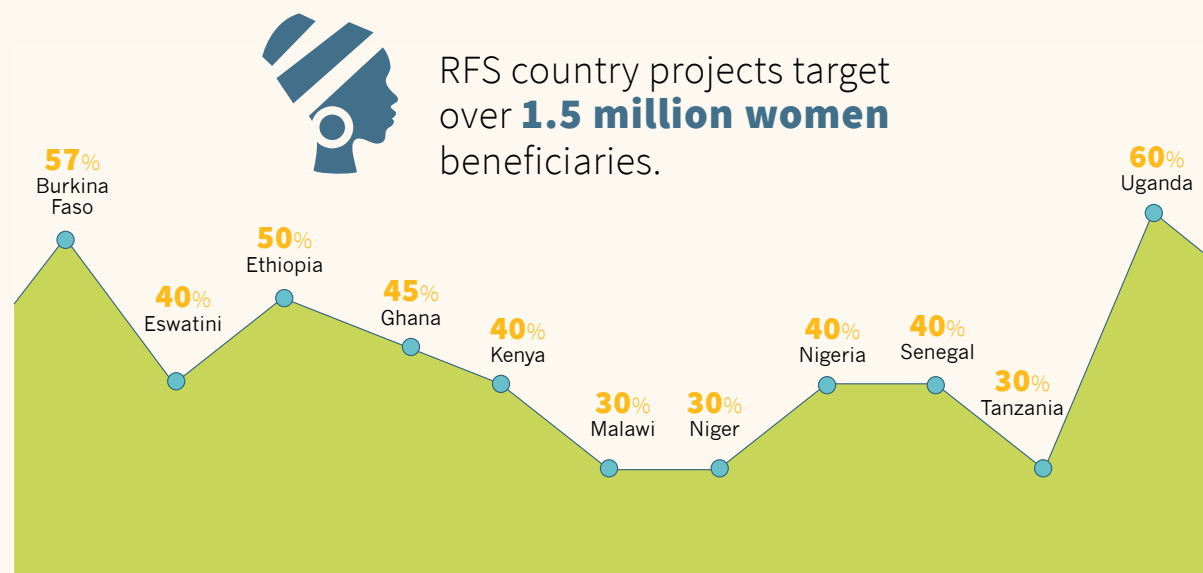
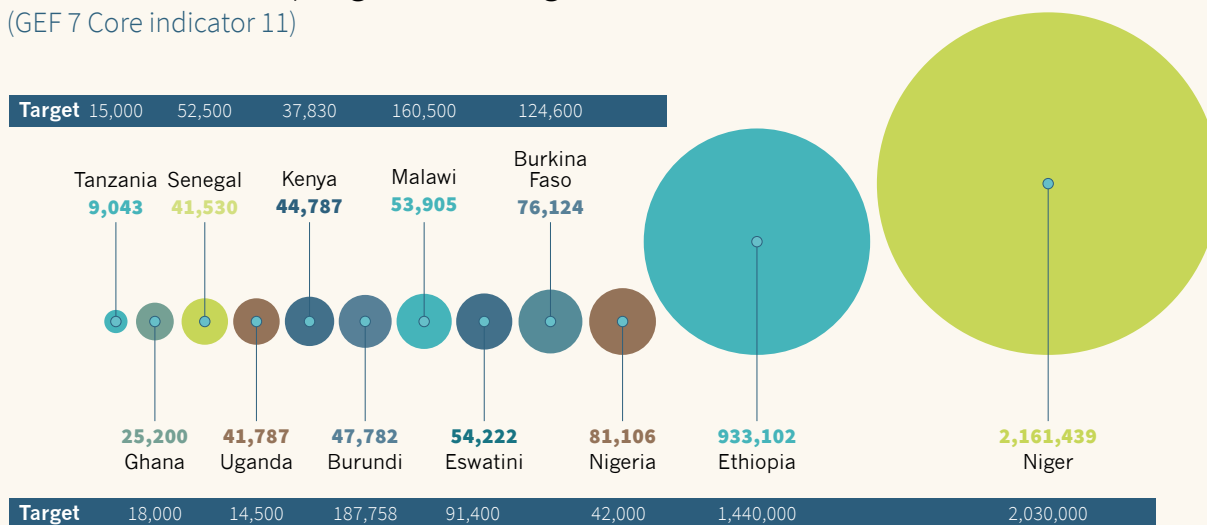
484,547 hectares of previously degraded land restored (70% of the programme target)

(GEF 7 core indicator 3)

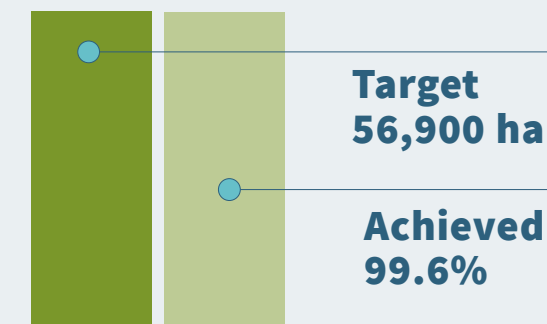
RFS country projects are working to restore degraded land in a diverse range of landscapes using a wide variety of approaches, practices and technologies.



RFS country projects engage over **3.6 million** beneficiaries.
(Over 77% of the programme target)
(GEF 7 Core indicator 11)



RFS country projects target over **1.5 million women** beneficiaries.



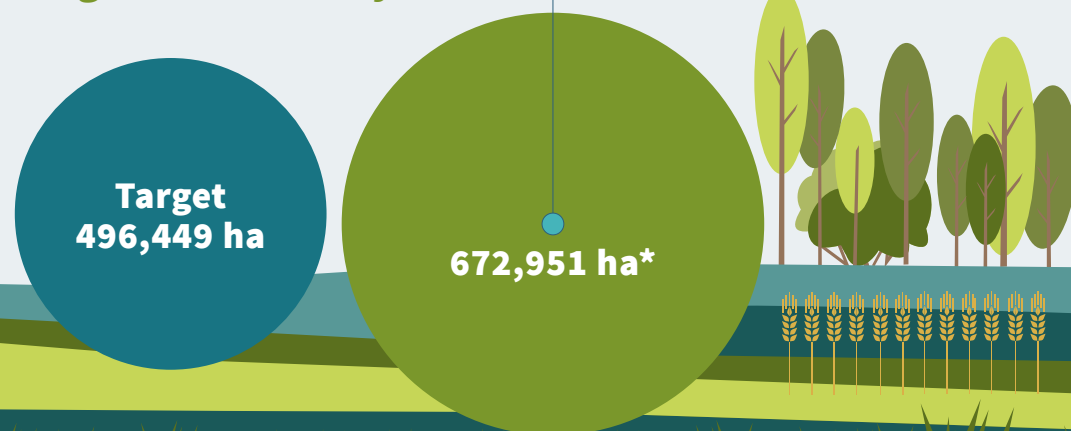
of terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness
(GEF 7 core indicator 1.2)



Landscapes under sustainable management in production systems

(GEF 7 Core indicator 4.1)

Target exceeded by 36%

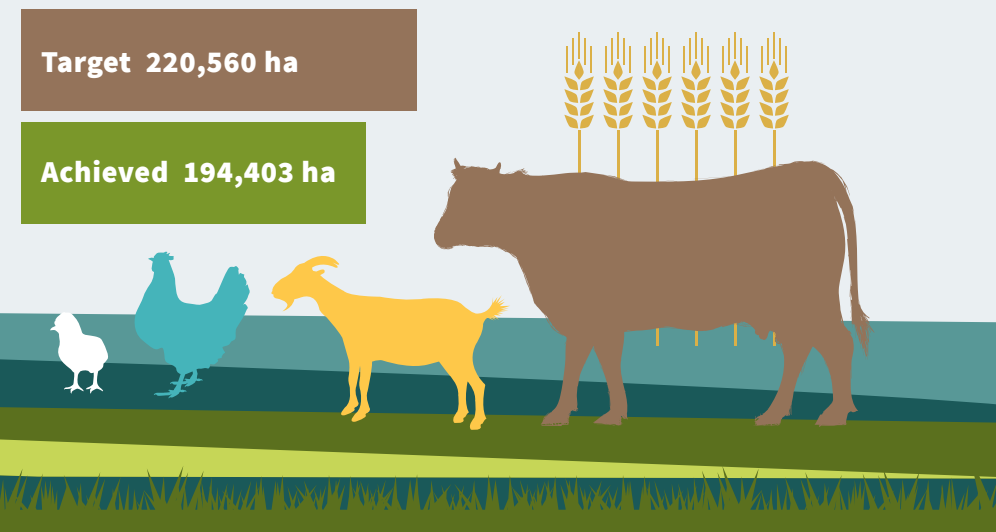


Landscapes under sustainable management in production systems

(GEF 7 core indicator 4.3)

Target 220,560 ha

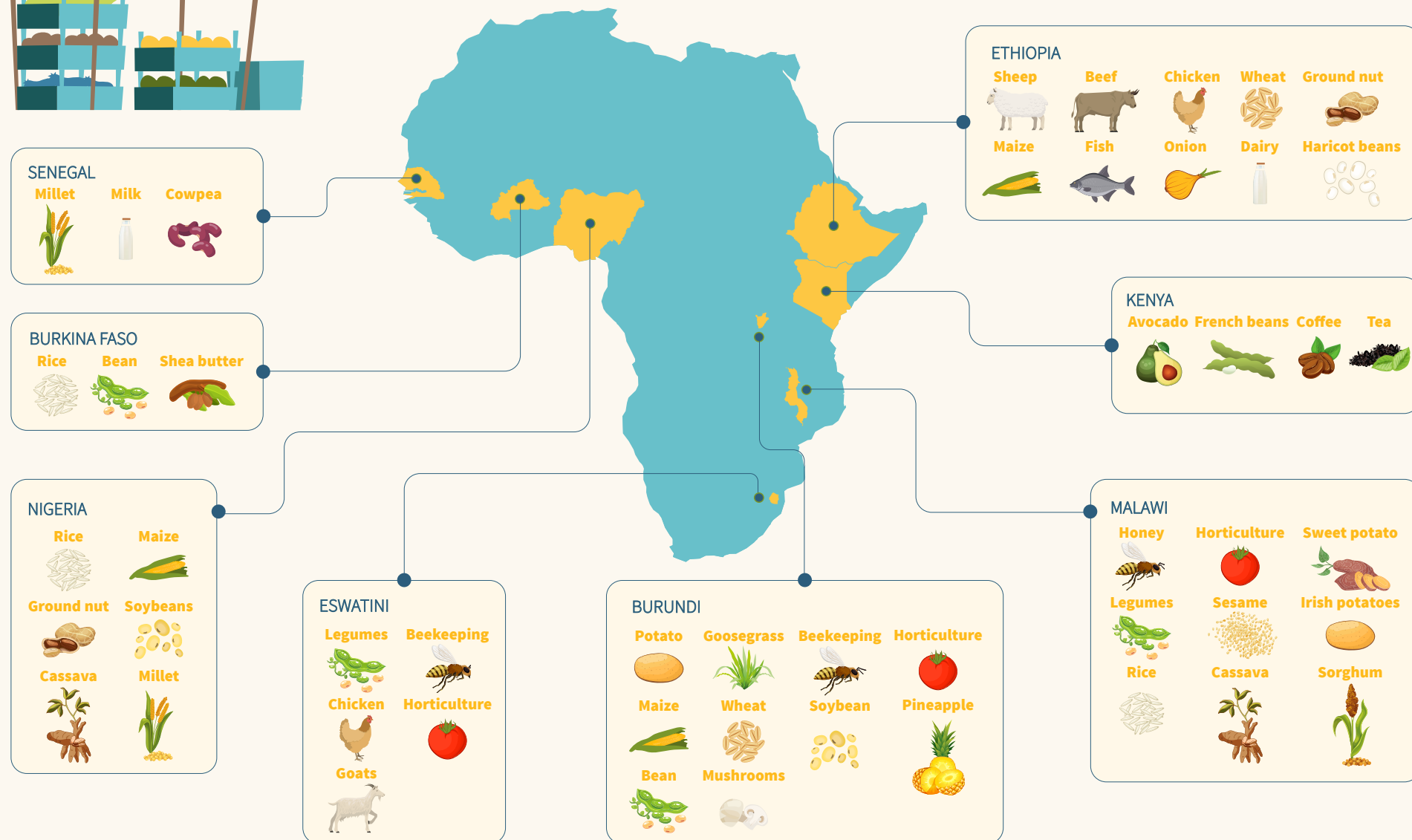
Achieved 194,403 ha



*note that for Ghana this achievement includes the co-financed project and for Ethiopia this is land already reported under indicator 3.1



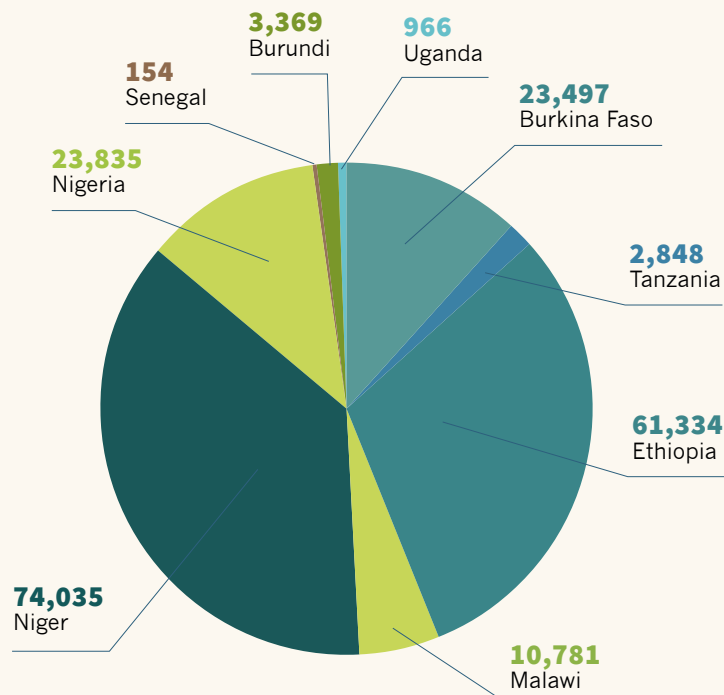
19 sustainable value chains in development by RFS country projects.





200,819
farmers

have been trained
by RFS country
projects in
**sustainable land
management**
practices.



**Over 17 million
metric tonnes (Mt) CO₂e**

have been avoided or sequestered
through RFS activities.



57,720
Nigerien
Farmers

declare a 10%
increase in
crop yields as a
result of **green
value chain
development**



Niger

has seen a

47,8%

reduction in chronic
malnutrition in the
RFS project area



47 new knowledge products

created and disseminated

Achieved
47

Target
15



Target 475

Achieved

432 communication products

created and disseminated



39 Intra-country learning exchanges conducted



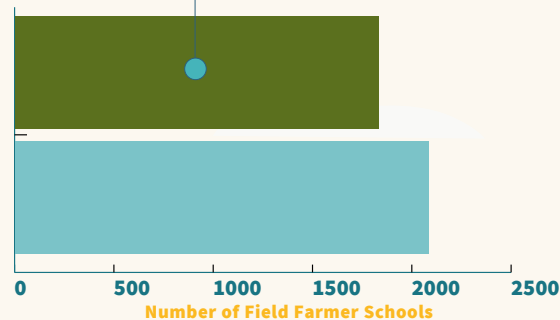
©Adamawa State Agricultural Development Project, UNDP-GEF Nigeria.

1,832 Farmer Field Schools (FFS)

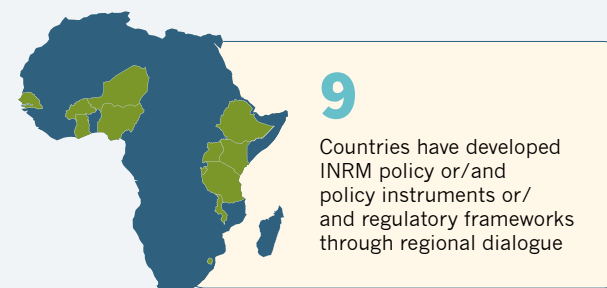
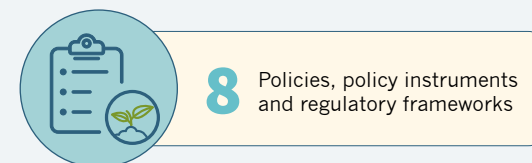
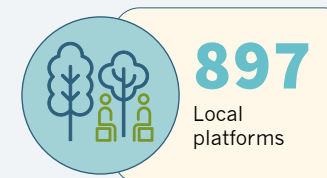
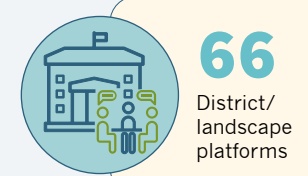
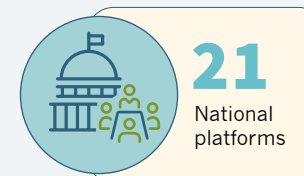
or Agro-Pastoral Field Schools setup reaching

104,284 farmers

87% of target reached



RFS has established **multi-stakeholder platforms** and influenced **policies, policy instruments** and **regulatory frameworks** focused on integrated natural resource management at the national, district/landscape and local levels.



Insights from our Country Projects

RFS country projects leave no stone unturned. Here are some scattered numbers that represent the tip of the RFS iceberg across a variety of programme activities:



Kenya



Provided **3.4 million** assorted tree seedlings



Installed **14,584** rainwater harvesting pans



Uganda



Engaged **1,373 (655M, 718F)** community members in alternative livelihood activities like **bee keeping**



Senegal



Held **33 awareness workshops** engaging 2,500 people



Niger



Recovered **29,994 ha** of degraded land (145% of the project target)
Assisted **land natural regeneration** on **188,234 ha** of land



Nigeria



Facilitated the creation of **68,629 (38,179M, 30,450F)** jobs



Increased crop production by **19%**



Burkina Faso



Trained **3,839 beneficiaries** (32% women) on climate change and environmental monitoring tools



Ethiopia

Planted **65.6 million seedlings** across **18,952 ha** of land

Reclaimed **5,484 ha** of **agro-pastoral land** under integrated management techniques



©Gombe State Agricultural Development Project, UNDP-GEF Nigeria.



©2018 RFS Annual Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya.



©Benue State Agricultural Development Project, UNDP-GEF Nigeria.

YEAR IN REVIEW

The RFS programme is continually engaging in knowledge exchanges, facilitating dialogue and gathering key actors across the programme to streamline cross-cutting themes. This timeline presents some of our key events from this year, but this is far from comprehensive.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about other events that have made this year one of the best ones yet for RFS.

2020

The forum provided a multi-stakeholder review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 from the Economic Commission for Africa. The forum themes aligned with the High-level Political Forum held later on in July.

Seventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

1-4 MARCH 2021

IAP Task Manager for IFAD, Yawo Jonky Tenou, participated as a panelist at this summit discussing the role of CSA and utilizing investments to boost food security.

The Africa Climate Resilience Investment Summit (ACRIS V) Panel 4: Boosting food security through Climate Smart Agriculture

17 JUNE 2021

This session presented the new RFS M&E system, including an updated M&E Plan and online platform, as well as provided an opportunity for programme stakeholders to reflect on the progress achieved so far towards transitioning to the GEF-7 results architecture.

Webinar on the new Resilient Food Systems M&E System: Transitioning to GEF-7 results architecture

8 JULY 2021

As one of the GEF's three integrated approach pilots, RFS participated in the **Food Systems Summit Dialogue** to reflect on progress made in addressing food systems transformation. Panellists from different integrated approach initiatives discussed environmental challenges in the global food system and how experience and emerging lessons from advancing integrated solutions can inform future GEF programming directions.

Advancing the Integrated Approach to Transform Food Systems: A GEF Independent Dialogue for the Food Systems Summit

20 JULY 2021

17-18 MAY 2021

3rd Africa Climate Talks - 2nd Session

This session focused on exploring recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and building a climate-resilient Africa. RFS contributed insights from the programme and the IAP approach.

6-15 JULY 2021

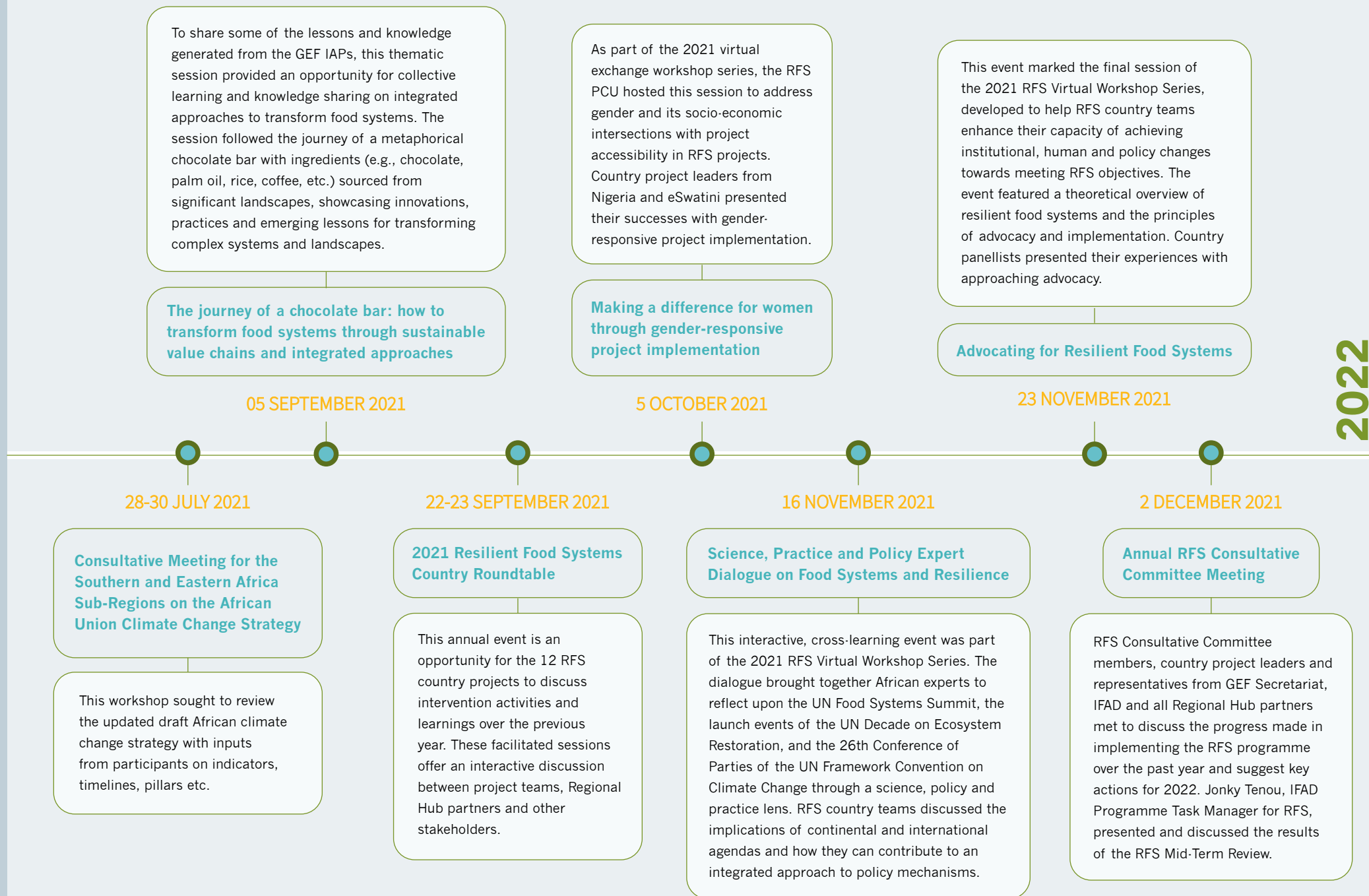
High-level Political Forum

RFS partners contributed the IAP approach to ensuring sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19.

12-14 JULY 2021

Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) awareness and capacity building series

FAO is supporting the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat in the development of a technical guide on integrating the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure on Land, Fisheries and Forest in the context of National Food Security (VGGT). As part of the development process, FAO conducted initial country consultations to help gather information and compile a list of potential case studies for the report.



CHAPTER 02

ENGAGE (Connect, Collaborate, Share)



CONNECT

RFS country projects are always finding new ways to connect with beneficiaries and relay useful information. Here are some examples of how RFS country projects are using technology to advance project activities and reach as many people as possible on the ground:



Kenya



The project is employing a **messaging and polling SMS platform** that is now enabling communication between farmers and project staff and is providing weekly climatic information and extension support to more than **44,000 farmers**.



eSwatini



A **women's TV station** is disseminating information on local project activities and facilitating dialogue surrounding women's roles in decision-making and leadership. Participants on the station discuss the challenges they face and the solutions they employ towards making sure their voices are heard.



Nigeria



Two **new apps** are making it easier for farmers and extension agents to connect in a socially distanced, safe, and secure way. The **RiceAdvice** and **WeedManager** apps provide valuable information on everything to do with rice production, harvesting and management, and are freely available on Android phones and tablets.

Visit our [website](https://www.resilientfoodsystems.co) to read the full story.

Connect with us!



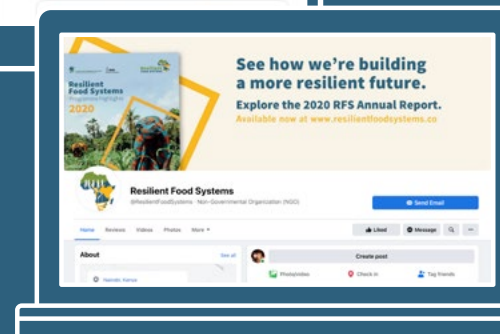
www.resilientfoodsystems.co



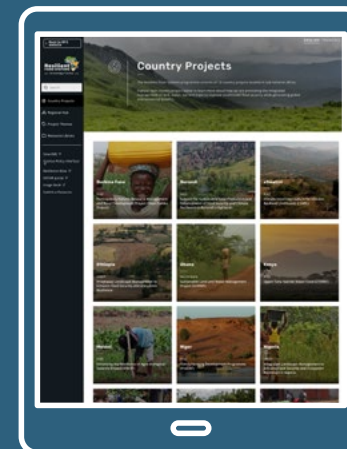
Knowledge centre



Twitter
@ResFoodSystems



Facebook @ResilientFoodSystems



Visit our **County Project Pages** to find social media links, contact emails, project information and more!

COLLABORATE

The RFS programme's successes are reflective of the diverse partnerships cultivated with the public, private, civil society, research, and educational spheres since the programme's inception. These partnerships bring localised knowledge, expertise, and networks to the table that advance country project operations and the agenda of the programme at large. Below are just a few ways that RFS country projects have engaged in strategic partnerships this year:



Tanzania



The **Tanzania Forest Agency (TFS)** is working with the project to implement a Participatory Forest Resource Assessment with the help of a local community. TFS is also establishing tree nurseries to supply seedlings to FFS groups. Read the full story [here](#).



Uganda



With the support of small grants supplied by **seven NGO partners**, **26 hectares** of woodlots were planted to restore adjacent forests and provide wood fuel for cooking to communities. The woodlots were planted around manyattas (homesteads) and **4 ha** of this land were planted as demonstration woodlands showing tree species agronomy, seedling production, and spacing under different planting regimes.



Nigeria



In collaboration with **WOFAN**, RFS Nigeria is employing the PPP approach to link smallholder farmers with formal markets. They are working on **establishing 3 interstate food commodity value chains** between private groundnut and rice milling companies and project beneficiaries. Under the agreement, the companies will supply improved seeds and other qualitative farm inputs to farmers in the seven project states and farmers will sell the produce back to the companies.



Feature Tool

In collaboration with the ICRAF SHARED team and FAO, **four training sessions** were held to build the skills of country teams to enhance policy and institutional engagement. Follow-up support on the SHARED methodology was requested by and provided to the Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi country teams. Insights from these sessions culminated into the production of the **Resilient Food Systems Tailored SHARED Toolbox**: Enhancing inclusive and evidence-based policy development.



Feature Training

FAO's Forestry Division (NFO) and the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Division are collaborating to connect local communities and decision-makers through the Making Every Voice Count for Adaptive Management (MEVCAM) initiative. The project aim is to identify challenges and develop common solutions to acute problems on the ground through the development of participatory videos. RFS country projects in Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi participated in a virtual training workshop in March to identify good practices from their experiences which will serve as the themes of the videos produced. [Find out more about this initiative on our website](#) and keep an eye out for updates from this exciting project emerging this year!



SHARE

RFS projects have gone above and beyond in sharing knowledge, connecting stakeholders, and relaying information at the regional and global scales during this reporting period. Here are some of the ways we facilitated connections in 2021:



Burkina Faso



A **knowledge fair** was held on April 29th and 30th in Ouahigouya, the capital of Yatenga Province, addressing a central theme: **promoting innovation to strengthen the resilience of rural populations in the face of climate, security and food shocks**. The fair was an experience sharing event between beneficiaries and implementing actors, featuring an exhibition of agricultural and non-timber forest product processing methods, and a panel discussion on community support initiatives led by IFAD.



Burundi



3 Agriculture and Rural Development Sector Working Groups were organized and implemented, facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration between 151 government officials, technical and financial partners, territorial administration, NGOs, and community representatives.



Kenya

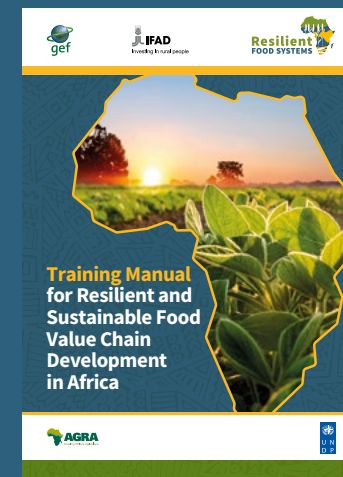


The project is supporting **two information sharing centres**, which work with youth and students to increase awareness of environmental conservation through establishing school arboreta and tree planting programs on public lands. **92 schools** have been reached through the program so far!



Feature Training

Through the Regional Hub, UNDP-AGRA have developed the **Training Manual for Resilient and Sustainable Food Value Chain Development in Africa**. The manual underwent troubleshooting during **training sessions** held in May before finalization to ensure its success in facilitating the development of resilient and sustainable (green) food value chains. UNDP-AGRA also now hosts a related, on-going **e-learning course** to advance this important sustainability agenda.



Feature Media

Produced by the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission (EFCCC) of Ethiopia, the RFS Ethiopia documentary film Yekermo Ersho (the Spine of Development) lays out project best practices and community engagement. Watch it now on the **RFS YouTube Channel!**





ENGAGE Highlight

Food Systems Transformation Through the GEF Integrated Approaches

In July 2021, key stakeholders with the GEF integrated approach programmes met to discuss the progress made thus far in advancing food systems transformation during a **virtual Independent Food Systems Summit Dialogue** as a prelude to the UN Food Systems Summit. Organized by the GEF Secretariat in collaboration with IFAD, FAO, UNDP and the World Bank, the dialogue engaged governments, the private sector, financial institutions and civil society organisations involved with the GEF's integrated approach programmes.

The dialogue emphasised the importance of employing integrated approaches to bridge agricultural and environmental agendas at the governmental level. **Carlos Manuel Rodriguez**, CEO and chairperson of the GEF, opened the dialogue by sharing his personal experience with facilitating collaboration between these two sectors earlier in his career as Minister of Environment in Costa Rica. He underscores that the disconnect that is often felt between their institutional objectives is the result of focusing on differences rather than similarities.

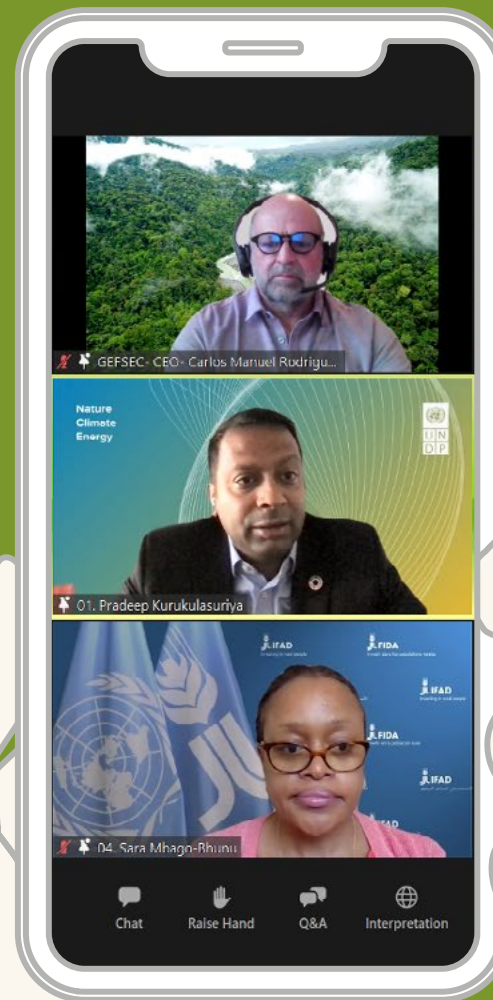
Panellist **Sara Mbago-Bhunu**, Director, East and Southern Africa Division at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), presented experiences from RFS during the event. Drawing

from successes and lessons learned, Ms Mbago-Bhunu stressed the importance of sustainable financing to support multi-stakeholder platforms, standing by their effectiveness in long-term solutions for food systems transformation.

Meeting the demands of growing populations (and the mouths global food systems need to feed) means that agricultural expansion can come at the cost of environmental integrity. This is why the GEF is committed to finding solutions that are environmentally sound and socially responsible by planning and implementing interventions at the landscape and supply-chain level through multi-level stakeholder engagement.

Multistakeholder platforms allow for dialogue to take place from diverse perspectives, mitigating tension between actors. They're about collaborating, compromising, problem solving and listening. In the end, the common goal is a sustainable and resilient global food system because all of our livelihoods depend on its success.

Visit our website to read our full reflection of this exciting event!



CHAPTER 03

ACT (Level up, Reach out, Intersect)



LEVEL UP

Country projects are continually exceeding expectations and seeing the results of their work scale outwards and upwards. Here are some ways the RFS country projects are working towards and beyond the goals set to increase food systems resilience in their local areas:



Malawi



Beekeeping and fuel-efficient cook stoves are combatting deforestation and environmental degradation and are being enthusiastically received by project beneficiaries. Beekeeping is a lucrative practice that many charcoal producers are switching over to ([read the full story here!](#)), and the cook stoves are decreasing the amount of fuel wood needed for household consumption. These initiatives have been so successful that they are being adopted beyond the project catchment, often by farmers who are **self-motivated**.



Burundi



Project targets are not project limits. The RFS Burundi team has **engaged 1260 farmers** in using the participatory impact monitoring tool, Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA), effectively **doubling their target of 636 farmers**, to monitor SLM indicators in the project area.



Senegal



This project is well on its way towards **restoring mangrove forests**. By engaging beneficiaries in beekeeping and oyster farming techniques on reclaimed wetlands, the project is moving exponentially towards its target of restoring **1000 hectares** of this diverse ecosystem.

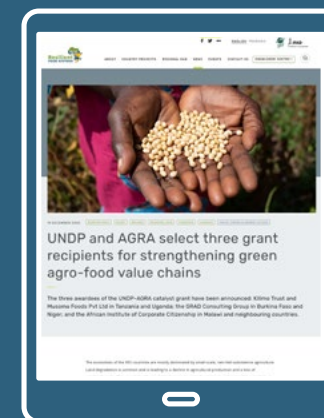


Between June 2020 and June 2021, **730 ha of mangroves were restored**



Feature Activity

AGRA and UNDP kick-started three sub-regional catalytic grants in partnership with organisations working to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of agri-food value chains and the integration of natural resource management into African food systems. In total, they received sixty-three concept notes across the twelve RFS countries, awarding three grant winners namely, Kilimo Trust and Musoma Foods Pvt Ltd in Tanzania and Uganda; the GRAD Consulting Group in Burkina Faso; and African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnerships in Malawi and neighbouring countries. To learn more about the recipient projects, see [the brief ICRAF produced with the details](#).



REACH OUT

Beneficiaries engage with RFS through project activities like FFS, workshops, and training sessions that build capacity and improve livelihoods. The programme is also committed to facilitating inter-community bonds and reaching out to beneficiaries to improve their livelihoods beyond direct project activities. Here are some examples of how RFS country projects are establishing holistic food systems that are resilient, sustainable and that encourage a sense of community:



Malawi



A small livestock pass-on program is finding success in Phalombe district where livestock rearing was previously inaccessible to villagers. As per the scheme, a farmer receives five goats and is expected to pass on five of their offspring to the next line of beneficiaries. **So far, 660 households have received goats translating to 3300 goats in total!**

[Visit our website to read the full story!](#)



eSwatini



The project team is reaching out to food-poor households to provide **training on food preparation and preservation that seeks to minimize the amount of nutrients wasted through cooking or storing food**. The training is offered with the help of the Ministry of Agriculture's Home Economics Department and complements the permaculture home garden projects also being carried out in the project area. The eSwatini Standards Authority is also involved in overseeing food preservation standards through canning, bottling, and drying vegetables.



Nigeria



A program for improving nutritional inputs to families in Nigeria is engaging women in dairy goat rearing. **100% of the 815 beneficiaries across the 70 project communities are women** whose income and livelihoods have seen improvement from this off-farm, alternative livelihood activity. One of the benefits of the program? Building **inter-familial bonds** through the gifting of goat calves born under the program to other women in the project area.



Feature Activity

FAO is advancing knowledge sharing of the FFS approach through the production of resources and organization of sessions. Their initiatives this year culminated in the following outputs:

- An e-learning course on FFS, which was developed following an **online stakeholder consultation** to gather feedback on the structure and content of the course. RFS stakeholders were many among the 150 total participants.
- **Two webinars** on COVID-19 and FFS organized in collaboration with the Eastern African Hub and the Agricultural Forum for Agricultural Advisory Systems (AFAAS)
- Two webinars on Promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture through FFS conducted in collaboration with the Nutrition and Food Systems Division, Management Team on Sustainable Agriculture and the FAO Livestock Technical Network.
- Three peer-reviewed papers on the impact of FFS in collaboration with Wageningen University
- E-learning courses on **FFS programme introduction and implementation**, and a Poultry FFS blended course
- A **climate change adaptation manual for FFS** in collaboration with FAO's climate change unit based on experiences from projects across Africa.



Matilda Kuntaja, chair of the Mwaiwathu Goat Club, carries one of the younger goats planned to be passed on in August

Images: ©Felix Malamula, Malawi

INTERSECT

Recognizing that different folks have different barriers to accessing project extension, and the different knowledge and expertise they bring into the mix, is central to the success of RFS activities. Here are some examples of how RFS projects committed to advancing intersectional empowerment, harnessing the diverse experiences of local people, and fostering long-term independence in communities this year:



Kenya



Through facilitated farmer-farmer learning and mobilization activities, RFS Kenya is deliberately targeting intersectionality in project implementation. So far, the project has worked with **149 women farmers, 15 youth technology promoters** and **57 people living with disabilities** on their technical capacity, leading to more than **22 000 direct beneficiaries**.



eSwatini



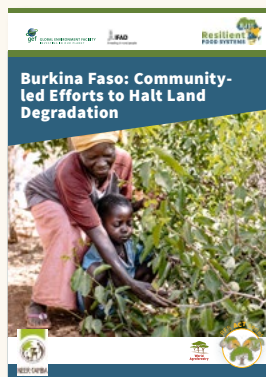
Youth are the custodians of the future, and now in eSwatini, they are the custodians of flora in their Chiefdoms. In a push to increase youth knowledge on biodiversity and environmental stewardship, **youth beekeepers were provided with 480 fruit trees** to improve flora for producing honey.



Burkina Faso

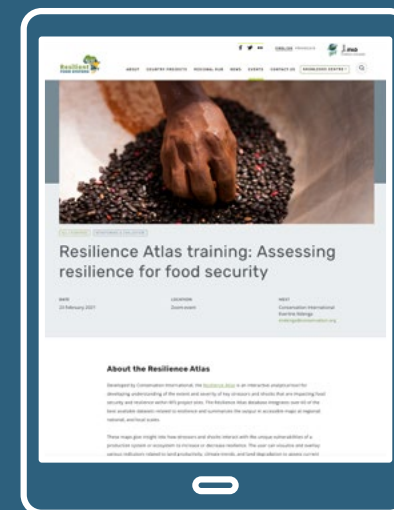
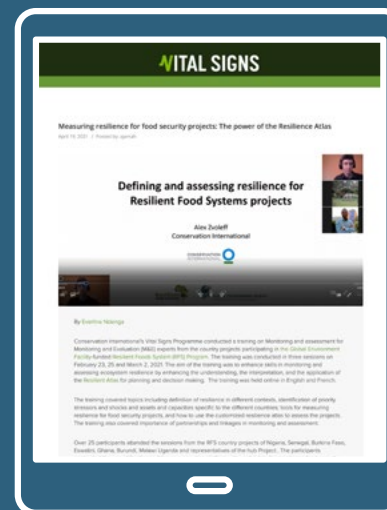


Severe land degradation, low agricultural productivity, and pervasive food insecurity make food systems transformation a formidable challenge in Burkina Faso. Best practices that have emerged from the RFS project were collected into the ICRAF-produced knowledge brief, **Burkina Faso: Community-led efforts to halt land degradation**, part of the **RFS ACT Series**. The lessons learned from this initiative can be integrated into other projects facing similar challenges and stress the importance of community-based action in building sustainable and resilient food systems.



Feature Tool

Conservation International's **Vital Signs Program** conducted a **training for RFS country teams on monitoring and assessment of ecosystem resilience through application of the Resilience Atlas tool**. The training sought to enhance the understanding, interpretation and application of the Resilience Atlas for planning and decision making in RFS country projects. The **Resilience Atlas platform** itself was updated this year to include additional land cover, environmental and socio-economic datasets. Additional socio-economic data provided by RFS countries are being reviewed and uploaded to the platform.





ACT Highlight

RFS Transitions to the GEF-7 Results Architecture

As one of the three GEF Integrated Approach Pilot programmes, the RFS Regional Hub has been transitioning the programme to the **GEF-7 results architecture** throughout 2021.

RFS was approved during the previous replenishment cycle, and our original M&E plan, laid out at the project's inception, reflected the GEF-6 Global Environmental Benefits. So when the new framework became an official expectation, the RFS Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) immediately sprang into action.

As the programme's supporting body, the PCU has been consulting with country teams and Hub partners to streamline understanding and adoption of the new reporting procedures for **GEF-7 core indicators and sub-indicators** at the country project level. The Hub facilitated updating GEF-7 compliant versions of the **RFS Monitoring & Evaluation Plan** and the **SmartME system**, with the overall transition led by ICRAF with support from all Hub partners, especially FAO, Conservation International and Bioversity. The new programme results framework is based on the GEF-7 simplified framework of eleven core indicators and associated sub-indicators that span across five focal areas (biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters, and chemicals and waste).

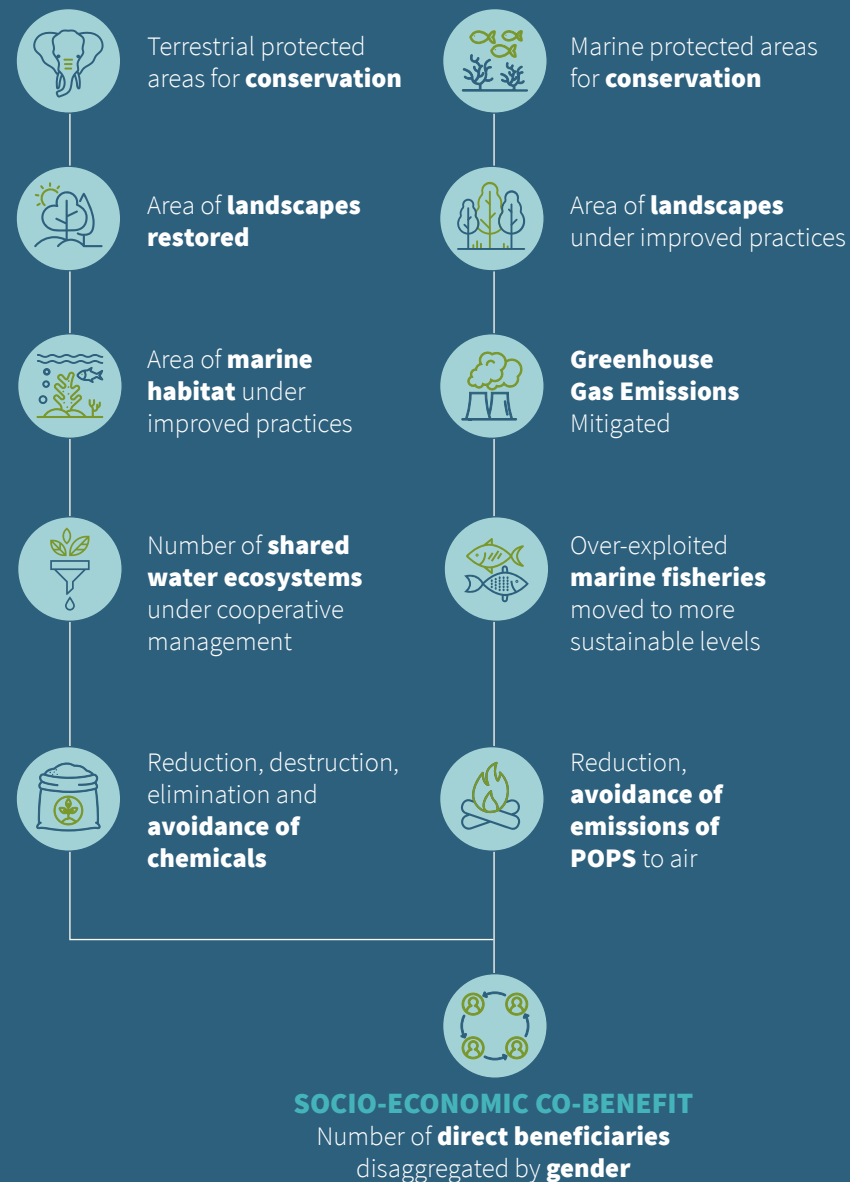
In July 2021, the RFS PCU hosted a **virtual workshop** to present the new M&E system, and engage programme stakeholders in an experience sharing exercise reflecting on the progress and challenges observed in the transition so far. The workshop comprised the first session of the 2021 RFS Annual Workshop Series.

Continued support is being provided to fill capacity gaps at the country project level and to streamline the results framework across the RFS programme as a unit. For more information on how the RFS M&E structure has evolved from its inception, we published an article in our May news cycle to share our story and provide links to all our main M&E resources. [Read it on our website!](#)



Core indicators increase the focus on strategic priorities

GEF-7 indicators are aligned to environmental challenges



CHAPTER 04

TRACK (Monitor, Learn, Respond)



MONITOR

The Regional Hub streamlines M&E across the programme through sharing platforms, such as the **SmartME database** or the online **RFS Knowledge Centre**, which assist in cross-country monitoring against specific project goals. Additionally, country projects adopt their own M&E frameworks to suit their specific needs and monitor progress that is context-specific and accessible within the project framework. Here are some examples of how RFS country projects are engaging in M&E to remain accountable to their project objectives:



Kenya



The project has been monitoring water quality and quantity data for the upper-Tana River, collected at **33 river stations** and **6 weather stations**. These data have now been consolidated, validated and established into a database using the **DHIS2 tool**. This system provides stakeholders with real-time data to track the environmental integrity of the river that provides water to 95% of Nairobi's some 4 million residents.



Nigeria



Using the **Vital Signs monitoring and reporting tool**, and with technical support from **Conservation International**, the project is collecting and submitting data at the community level to track project success. The system also regularly updates **satellite data** that display changes in land use, land cover, degradation, soil fertility and groundwater level, among others. M&E officers have been trained in all 7 project states and are using this tool to monitor **food security indicators**. The database is also accessible to federal administrators and the National Project Management Unit (NPMU) of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to **provide relevant and timely information to decision-makers**.



Niger



Through **their partnership with the National Centre for Environmental and Ecological Monitoring (CNSEE)**, the project has set up a geo-localized environmental monitoring system to track the impact of the biophysical and human implications of the project interventions. The project also delivered GIS and geolocation training the Maradi, Zinder and Tahoua regions for regional actors to streamline data collection methodology and increase project capacity for using GIS systems.



Feature Activity

World Agroforestry (ICRAF), in partnership with Bangor University and IFAD, is supporting the integration of Outcome Mapping into country project implementation. Outcome Mapping indicates a shift in behavioural change from stakeholders as indicators of project success, instead of the traditional system changes we tend to monitor such as crop yield, number of trees planted etc. To strengthen capacity in RFS country projects, the Regional Hub held a series of virtual training sessions for the Nigeria, Uganda, Senegal and Niger teams. Read more about this shift and what it means [on our website!](#)



LEARN

The ability to make informed decisions is contingent upon the quality of the information available. Our country projects and Regional Hub partners are always conducting research and creating resources for sharing best practices and data collected under the programme while engaging with stakeholders and the academic community to exchange knowledge and facilitate inter-institutional learning. Here are some of the ways that our projects have worked towards learning as much as possible about the people and places they serve this year:



eSwatini



With **5 on-going studies** currently being conducted in the project area, activities that complement, exceed, and enhance the delivery of target goals are forming an integral part of the project framework. One study is exploring the quality of the water harvested through the **roof top water harvesting ferro-cement tanks** that are provided under the project, while another study is focusing on the feasibility of **using grey water** in watering the food and nutrition gardens so that **not a drop of precious household water is lost**.



Senegal



23 awareness-raising workshops were held at the regional level this year. **1706 people (53% of whom were women and 21% youths)** were reached through the workshops which discussed integrated and sustainable approaches to benefit peasant agriculture and promoting agricultural and livestock products.



Ethiopia



The project organized a **national experience-sharing field-visit and workshop** in the Doba and Chiro districts of Oromia state, one of the seven RFS Ethiopia beneficiary regions. The 87-person attendance list consisted of woreda (district) stakeholders, steering committee members from all the beneficiary regions, government officials, **plus project managers and M&E experts from neighbouring projects, keen to adopt and scale out the project best practices**.



Feature Report

The RFS programme has been fostering food systems transformation in sub-Saharan Africa since 2017 and we have learned a lot along the way. In September, the GEF Secretariat published the report **GEF-6 Food Securities IAP Program: Emerging Lessons from the Resilient Food Systems Program**, highlighting lessons and experiences from project implementation. Co-authored with ICRAF and IFAD, the report comes as part of a **push for learning from the three GEF-6 IAP programmes** and serves as both a reflection and a resource for RFS and other projects working to advance food systems security and environmental objectives.



RESPOND

Resilient food systems require responsive action in the face of environmental, social, and institutional change. This means adjusting methods and seizing opportunities to advance outcomes where they present themselves. Here are just some of the ways our country projects responded to opportunities and would-be setbacks this year:



eSwatini



In response to a campaign by the Ministry of Tourism and Environmental affairs to **plant 25 000 000 trees by 2025**, the project has initiated a complementary **'adopt a tree' campaign** to ensure the survival of trees once planted. Campaign rollout began at the project offices where trees were adopted by employees, and is moving towards adoption by Chiefs, councils and other local decision-makers. The goal? To green the project development area, mitigate the effects of climate change, contribute to the extensive project beekeeping initiatives, and provide value in non-timber forest products for the communities.



Burundi



While non-biodegradable sachets are commonly used for **growing tree seedlings**, they are prohibited from being imported into the country. But necessity is the mother of invention and communities responded with an innovative and environmentally friendly solution; **banana leaves**! This activity **generates income** for households who make the tubes by hand and contributes to the on-going **fight against pollution** in the project area and across Burundi.



Nigeria

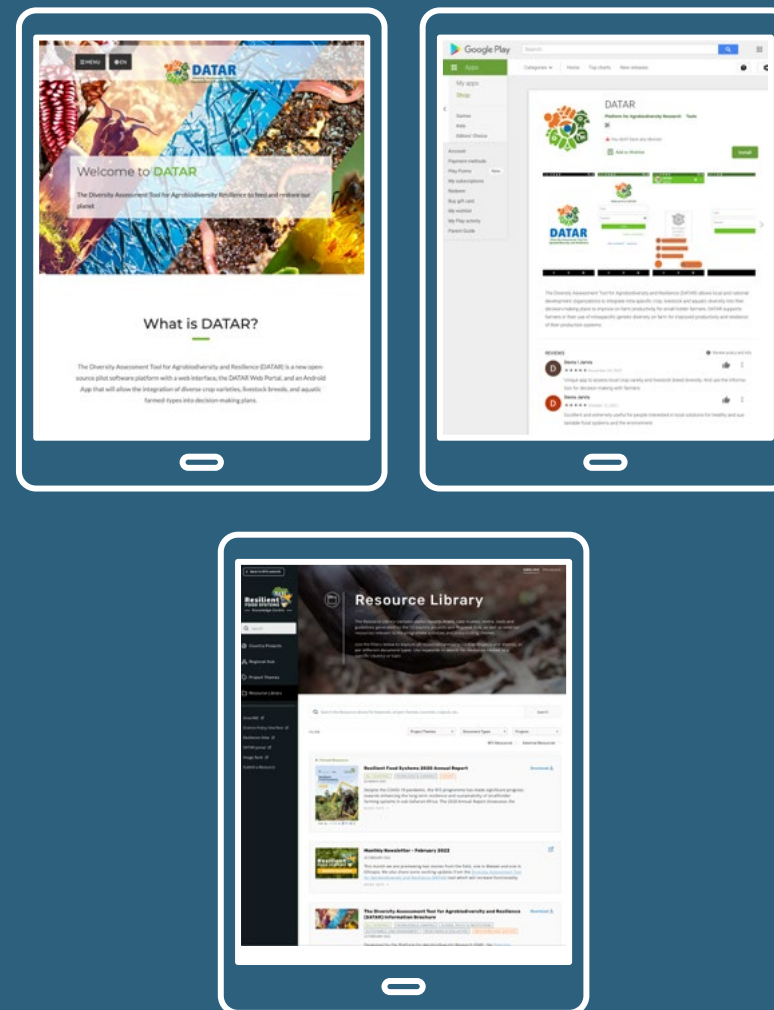


Tackling erosion has been a project goal from the outset in response to the **84.4 ha of land categorized as degraded** by sheet and rill erosion on farmer pilot plots. The project is conducting erosion control activities in the region and has **reclaimed nearly 14.5 ha** of the plots against the project target of 8.4 ha (10%) of the original surveys.



Feature Tool

Designing food systems that are resilient and sustainable requires biodiversity planning that considers intra-specific species diversity such as livestock breed, aquatic farmed-types or crop variety. In response to this need, The Alliance of Bioversity International-CIAT and the Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research (PAR) have launched the Diversity Assessment Tool for Agrobiodiversity and Resilience (DATAR) decision-support tool to provide guidance for country projects that refines beyond the species level and considers access and required inputs. The tool can be accessed through the **DATAR Web Portal** and the **DATAR App** or through the **RFS Knowledge Centre**.





TRACK Highlight

The RFS Programme Conducts a Mid-Term Review of Project Successes and Challenges, Highlighting the Way Forward

Implementation of the RFS programme has so far culminated into a wealth of knowledge and experience that will undoubtedly be useful for the final programme stages and to other initiatives working to facilitate resilient and sustainable food systems in the future. While most RFS projects had their mid-term review (MTR) conducted across 2020-2021, the **Regional Hub MTR** was conducted in mid-2021 to parallel a programmatic assessment of the overall RFS performance and results; a process which resulted in several recommendations for mid-way adjustments for Hub partners.



Key Findings

LESSON 1

Early engagement by all agencies and country projects during design is critical. Aim for some common, defining activities, M&E indicators, and ways to measure. What's not in Country Project (CP) or Agency design, Logical Frameworks, budgets or workplans, will not be done.

LESSON 2

SMART output/outcome indicators for knowledge and learning (K&L) platforms, including for partner cooperation, are imperative.

This requires a Theory of Change specifically for K&L and programmatic value addition with measurable intermediate process and outcome indicators, including for programme cooperation by all partners.

LESSON 3

Future programmes should consider fewer executing Agencies at the on-set. Technical partnerships and expertise can be added over time when necessities and demands emerge, e.g., through sub-contracting.

LESSON 4

Inter-agency cooperation by programme partners requires effective mechanisms, incentives and agreements for joint programming and adaptive management.

Individual agency workplans are necessary and good, but agencies share the burden in the broader success of the programme.

LESSON 5

Ownership and drive from partners in the success of the whole programme are the most important asset. It takes time and restrained leadership to build trust and ownership. Visibility of all agencies is important.



©Gombe State Agricultural Development Project, UNDP-GEF Nigeria.

Recommendations for the Regional Hub

- 1 **Roll-out component interventions in CPs**, with a focus on working with selected CPs that are committed and have the resources to participate effectively.
- 2 **Determine adaptive management of Hub Agency workplans and budgets for 2022 through a stock-taking exercise.** The goal is to facilitate agency operations in CPs and other ways of programmatic value addition through stronger cooperation as well as contributions to systematic lessons learning and dissemination during the final phase of the RFS programme.
- 3 **Conduct a concerted flagship effort of synthesizing and disseminating critical lessons learned in the RFS programme.** Include experiences and lessons from CPs and Hub Agencies to underline the synergistic and pilot nature of RFS and to identify what works and what does not work.
- 4 **Prepare an M&E assessment on the evolving understanding and measurement of resilience in CPs and CP Implementing Agencies.** This will help inform lessons to be drawn from RFS and the evaluability of impact during the terminal evaluation expected in 2023.
- 5 **Explore the feasibility of migrating the RFS Knowledge Centre to potentially interested parties** or merging it with other knowledge platforms after the programme ends.

How are we doing as an Integrated Approach Pilot?

Under the GEF's Integrated Approach Pilot programmes, tracking progress comes in many forms. In June, the GEF Independent Evaluation Office conducted an external **Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to address the Drivers of Environmental Degradation**. RFS achievements are largely recognized throughout the report, with examples including:

“Progress [toward concrete environmental outcomes] is most common for RFS projects (77 percent)” – Page 38

“[Reporting of concrete evidence of socioeconomic outcomes] is much higher (62 percent) among RFS child projects, where income-generating activities for diversified livelihoods in the most vulnerable communities are supported through microprojects in Burkina Faso and Uganda, and beekeeping projects in eight RFS child projects.” – Page 40

“In the GEF-6 IAPs, the RFS IAP offers a good practice example of how to consistently consider and measure resilience across a program” – Page 56

Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach to address the Drivers of Environmental Degradation



June 2021

Note: Average time elapsed for “Other GEF-6 projects” does not include projects showing in the GEF Portal actual start dates that are earlier than the CEO endorsement date, or projects showing earlier first disbursement dates than actual start dates.

2.3 Progress toward results

84. This section focuses on the IAPs' overall progress toward achieving results and the factors enabling and challenging that progress. This includes environmental outcomes and GEBs; policy and institutional outcomes, including platforms and partnerships; socioeconomic outcomes; and broader adoption. This section also addresses the effectiveness and sustainability of IAP knowledge platforms and the extent to which the design of the GEF-7 impact program knowledge platforms reflects these lessons.

2.3.1 Program and project results

85. Lead Agency annual program highlights reports, MTRs, PIRs, and country case studies demonstrate progress, although it is still early to report on many GEBs, and results vary across programs. Only nine of 31 IAP child projects have MTRs so far.²⁴ Many are delayed because of COVID-19, although most IAP child projects have at least two PIRs (this analysis reviewed 67 PIRs). PIRs and MTRs most commonly reported delays (71 percent) and COVID (77 percent) as the most common challenges. They are interrelated, with delays in project governance and operational challenges, changes in partner governments, and stakeholder engagement often affected by COVID-19. Cumulative disbursement is about 20 percent for Sustainable Cities IAP, 40 percent for RFS, and 60 percent for GGP (GEF 2020a). IAP child projects receive ratings for implementation progress comparable to the rest of the GEF portfolio (84 percent in the satisfactory range for both groups), and slightly higher ratings for development objective (94 percent in the satisfactory range for IAPs, compared to 88 percent in the overall GEF portfolio) (GEF 2020a).

86. Among reporting IAP child projects, about half indicate progress toward concrete environmental outcomes in PIRs and MTRs, confirmed by country survey responses. Progress is most common for RFS projects (77 percent) and less for GGP (40 percent) and Sustainable Cities (23 percent) projects, according to a PIRs and MTRs analysis. Program-level reporting refers to concrete GEBs (GEF-7 core indicators) that have been achieved at midterm or are on track to be achieved by project completion. For the RFS IAP, nearly 151,000 hectares of previously degraded land have been restored, according to program data for 2020. The Kenya case study illustrates some of these results (see Box 10). RFS project linkages to existing and sometimes cofinanced baseline projects helped child projects deliver these results faster, in part because projects did not have to take the time to establish new project management structures.

²⁴ GGP four MTRs; Sustainable Cities three MTRs; RFS two MTRs.



What's next?

The RFS is a pilot programme that will not be continued after its completion in 2022-2023. Some of the early lessons from RFS design and implementation have already been acknowledged and included in GEF-7 programme design, and many more lessons are expected to emerge and be synthesized by the Hub and its agency partners over the end of the project. Sharing these lessons with policy makers and practitioners at all levels will be a key step towards closing the program and ensuring successful adoption of the program structure by other agencies.

And just in case you missed it:

The **2021 Annual RFS Consultative Committee Meeting** was held in December. Informed by the results of the MTR, the meeting brought together RFS Consultative Committee members and country project leaders, including representatives from GEF Secretariat, IFAD, and all Regional Hub partners to review project success in 2021 and plan next steps for 2022. During the session, Jonky Tenou (IFAD) gave a **presentation on the findings and lessons from the MTR**.

Watch the session on our **YouTube channel!**



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

Detlev Puetz, MTR evaluator

CHAPTER 05

TARGETING GENDER (Integrate, Represent, Empower)



INTEGRATE

Gender-responsive actions need to be integrated at all levels of project implementation, and RFS country projects know this. Creating plans of action, engaging with stakeholders, challenging gender stereotypes, and building support networks are all effective methods of advancing the gender agenda at multiple levels of project implementation. Here are some examples of how RFS country projects integrated gender activities into project activities this year:



Malawi



This country project is engaging with stakeholders and beneficiaries on women's important roles to the success of rural development. Information is being disseminated through **gender and social inclusion leaflets and posters**, as well as through **frontline staff** who engage in gender **dialogue sessions**. Gender, disability, and youth issues are targeted in a set of **guidelines** produced by the project that form the focal point of discussions held on these important topics.



Burundi



A gender sensitive approach is being employed in FFS. Last year, **105 FFS groups were implemented, engaging 3373 people**, so the reach of their message is far. Within the groups, **69% of participants are women** and female FFS committee member participation is around 50%. This approach is in the works for application to watershed committees. Stay tuned for updates on this initiative's success!



Burkina Faso



Gender goals are monitored through the country projects against quantifiable indicators. In Burkina Faso, integrating indicators into the monitoring framework, and ensuring that advancing women's participation is integrated in all activities is an on-going process. **In water and soil conservation practices, the project is seeing more than 27% participation from women and 35% from youth.**



Feature Tool

Integrating gender into project implementation needs to go beyond a 'do-no-harm' approach, calling instead for gender-responsiveness and specific actions towards addressing intersectional constraints that affect stakeholder access to project activities. So asserts CIFOR-ICRAF Gender Specialist, Ana Maria Paez-Valencia in the ICRAF-produced guidance note, **Gender-responsive project implementation within the Resilient Food Systems Programme**, released in early 2021. The guidance note provides tools, methodologies, and resources to support gender-responsive project implementation as well as examples of what RFS countries are planning to do or have done to advance the gender agenda at different scales.



Gender-responsive project implementation within the Resilient Food Systems Programme

Guidance note

Produced by



REPRESENT

Representation matters, and don't we know it! Having women in the driver's seat of projects, committees, decision-making, and inter-household support systems is incredibly encouraging and helps other women to see themselves there too. To advance the gender agenda in our project sites, we are committed to seeing women's representation move forward at every level. Here are some examples of how women showed up and put themselves forward in our projects this year:



Malawi



Gender mainstreaming begins at home, so the project developed an approach to promote equal power relations at the household level in the Phalombe, Machinga and Karonga districts. **45 local community members were trained as facilitators to mentor 3-5 peer households in gender equality for a total of 165 peer households.** This programme is linked with FFS and business schools to enhance their capacity to **maintain food, income, and nutrition security in a gender responsive way.**



Kenya



Advancing women's participation in decision-making processes ensures that their needs are being met, but cultural conditions can mean that this doesn't always feel accessible for women. The RFS Kenya team is prioritising representation of women in these positions through membership on decision-making teams. So far women hold **20%** of positions on the project Board of Trustees, **42%** of positions on the County Advisory Committee, **38%** of positions on the Project Steering Committee, **43%** of positions on the Project Management Unit, and **55%** of positions in Focal Area Teams including youth technology promoters and frontline extension officers.



Nigeria



The RFS Nigeria project has seen nearly **217 000 ha of degraded land undergo conversion to gender sensitive, integrated sustainable management practices.** For example, cultivating fruit trees and planting flowers in the project area are complementary to beekeeping activities, so land use is not mutually exclusive. The women leaders of these climate-mart activities are a huge testament to this success.



Use of improved farm inputs promoted by the project

10062
Total Hectares

44%
Led by Women



Animal fattening and goat production

164
Total Hectares

70%
Led by Women



Biopesticide management

2085
Total Hectares

48%
Led by Women



Community seed multiplication practiced by youth and women

1748
Total Hectares

63%
Led by Women



Cultivated using identified crops suitable to local context

4184
Total Hectares

52%
Led by Women



Beekeeping

5200
Total Hectares

57%
Led by Women

EMPOWER

Women are critical actors in the fight towards building resilient food systems, but are often disadvantaged by limited access to resources, decision-making power, and options for independent income generation. Empowering women in RFS on our part means mitigating these constraints by facilitating systems in which women can undertake different livelihood options independently in the long-term. Here are some examples of how women in RFS country projects are taking advantage of the support offered and engaging in new practices for the benefit of themselves, their families, and their communities:



Uganda



Women are dominating training programs in Uganda, taking new information and applying it to diverse income generating options that are sustainable and nature centred. In total, 1373 community members (**52% women**), including youths, **engaged in alternative livelihood activities** such as vegetable production, commercial seed production, and bee keeping. Of the participants trained on **value chain development** for honey, **59% were women**.



Ethiopia



Gender teams (more than **60% of representatives for which are women**) facilitate conversations with community members, not just about **agriculture and conservation**, but also regarding social issues such as **family planning and gender equality**. Activities like this, plus resource provision for livelihood diversification, create a holistic approach to women's empowerment by positioning their autonomy over their own lives into their own hands.



Senegal



Targeting specific actions of support in all activities has led to the increased economic autonomy and leadership of women in the various initiatives of the project. Some of the most successful activities have been the **women's beekeeping*** and **oyster farming groups**. Through its activities, the project has directly benefitted **3865 family farms**, including **2033 women**.

***In case you missed it**, May 2021 saw the publication of a news story on some of the wild successes of beekeeping projects for advancing the gender agenda in Senegal, eSwatini and Nigeria! Visit our [website](#) to get the whole scoop!



Feature Activity

In preparation for the 60th GEF Council Meeting in June, 2021, the RFS PCU contributed to the [Progress Report on the GEF Gender Implementation Strategy](#) (check us out on pages 11-13!). The report was the third of its kind since the approval of the GEF's Gender Implementation Strategy in 2018. As one of three Integrated Approach Pilot Programmes under the GEF, RFS's gender-responsive project implementation in Ethiopia serves as an excellent example in the report of how we are contributing to the GEF's gender-related progress.



Visit our [website](#) to read the story of empowerment of **Ferdahusa Moalimu**, a young Ethiopian farmer, and how she took every opportunity presented to ensure a food-secure future for herself and her family.



GENDER Highlight

Nigeria and eSwatini Share Successes of Gender-Responsive Project Implementation

On 5th October 2021, RFS partners, stakeholders and the PCU gathered to [attend the fourth session of the 2021 RFS Virtual Workshop Series](#). The session sought to bring together insights from the Nigeria and eSwatini country projects in implementing the gender-responsive project implementation [strategy](#) of the RFS programme. The different experiences of the two presenting country projects highlight the nuance of gender constraints and their effect on project approach, but the fantastic results presented demonstrate that gender-responsive implementation is adaptable to diverse contexts.



Nigeria

By design, the project targets women and youth as direct beneficiaries with some interventions being strictly allocated to women or giving women priority participation spots. Even in the youth groups, though the minimum rate of participation is set to be 50/50 female-male, the actual participation rate is closer to 70/30, demonstrating how effectively women are targeted through project activities.

The project was designed based on a gender-baseline study at its inception which identified gender gaps, participation rates and roles in the communities to inform interventions and provide indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Following this, cooperative groups in each state were engaged to identify the livelihood activities that were most appropriate, interesting, and beneficial to their communities. The results of women's participation in these activities can be seen at the community level where women are taking on financial roles in their families, actively participating in decision-making, and improving the livelihoods of themselves and their communities.

Rate of women's participation in livelihood activities:



Dairy goat keeping/
production: **100%**



Rice and groundnut
processing & value
addition: **95%**



Production of noodle
making machines: **100%**



Beekeeping: **80%**



Mushroom farming: **79%**



Contract rice
farming: **95%**



Seed multiplication: **63%**



eSwatini

Establishing livelihood activities in which women are actively targeted to participate in is a great idea, but what if none show up? Because eSwatini is a patriarchal country where traditional authorities (who are mostly male) hold the most influence over community-level decisions, the project team's approach is to work closely with Chiefdoms to demonstrate the value of women's participation in agriculture, in addition to reversing the socialization of women who tend to take a back seat in decision-making and leadership. The team meets with traditional authorities on a quarterly basis to engage them in this important work.

In the project areas, **25% of women who are involved in community institutions are now in chair positions**. This is a big step considering that in the past most women would turn down roles, even if they were elected, as they trusted the leadership of men more than themselves. The project is also seeing women leading demonstration plots and educating men and women, alike. A podcast where women farmers discuss their challenges in leadership and decision-making, and the approaches they use to overcome these is connecting women in the project area, changing minds and hearts.

- WATCH the presentations on our [YouTube channel](#)
- READ more about the workshop on our [News centre](#)
- ACCESS the Guidance Note on Gender-Responsive Project Implementation within RFS in the [Knowledge Centre](#)
- REACH OUT to the Nigeria and eSwatini teams on our [Country Project pages](#)

CHAPTER 06

Challenges from 2021

Part of the purpose of building resilient food systems is being able to respond to unprecedented, unexpected, or unforeseen circumstances. Overall, the RFS country projects are progressing with success, exceeding several targets, and facilitating sustainable food systems in our project sites, but it isn't always straightforward. Here are some of the sticks that were thrown into the wheels of the programme this year and a few wins for overcoming obstacles:



Environment

- Activities in **Nigeria** were affected by delayed rains, and seasonal flooding damaged demonstration plots on the project sites.
- Foot in mouth disease affected livestock rearing and a locust infestation challenged crop production in **Uganda**.



Disruption

- Cattle rustling in **Uganda** sent fear into communities and delays in project implementation.
- Food inadequacies in **Uganda** affect more than 50% of population and influence their capacity to take up project activities.
- Delayed delivery of water pan liners for a project in **Kenya** disrupted activities which in turn affected motivation and uptake.



Context

- Challenging gender norms is a continuous process being undertaken by the project teams. This means engaging with local groups and facilitating dialogue with men and women, alike.
- Markets cannot always meet fair and equitable prices for produce and this has been reported as a negative impact on farmers in **eSwatini**.





COVID-19

- Limited movement in most country project areas has made stakeholder engagement a challenge. The programme has responded by utilizing virtual platforms as much as possible and deploying lean teams for in-person field activities. **Technology** is also being used in **Nigeria** to reach beneficiaries at a distance by connecting them with extension agents in response to limited staff and COVID restrictions. In **Kenya**, graduate interns were not recruited in light of the current situation which decreased the on-ground staff capacity from the original project plans, delaying implementation.
- In **Niger**, relaxed restrictions meant that the project was able to carry out land reclamation works on sites that were identified in 2021. This has brought the amount of agropastoral land under reclamation up to 1468 of against a target of 1641 ha. Not much more to go!
- In September, the African Union (AU) Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) **co-organised a virtual conference** with IFAD, FAO and other partners. The event drew insights from stakeholders and RFS Implementing Agencies, FAO and IFAD, on strategies, actions, and approaches to mitigating the impact of COVID-19.
- Co-published with the RFS programme and FAO, the guidebook **Running Farmer Field Schools in times of COVID-19** is supporting the adaptation of participatory extension models even in the context of COVID-19.

Safety is priority #1 so where there's been room to accommodate lockdowns and safety measures, our country projects have and will continue to take them while pushing forward in the fight for more resilient food systems.



CHAPTER 07

Looking Towards 2022

With many successes behind us and many objectives still on the horizon, the RFS programme is looking in to our fifth and final year with plans to move full force.

So what are our country projects looking forward to most in 2022?

“ In Burkina Faso, the project is in the phase of capitalizing on its achievements in order to draw lessons to guide future actions. These achievements, which are mainly its contribution to LDN (Land Degradation Neutrality) and to the NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) which is 10.86%, are related to the scaling up of good agricultural practices, CES/DRS, agroforestry in the framework of sustainable land management in the agro-ecosystems of the intervention zone”

– S. Simon KABORE,
Environmental Monitoring Manager
of the Neer-Tamba Project.



Burkina Faso



Ethiopia

“ The country project key objectives and themes need to be the focus of 2022, as underlined during both the experience sharing workshop and the national steering committee meeting.”

– Birara Chekol, Project Coordinator for Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience.



Uganda

“ In 2022, the project looks forward to ensuring access to food and money for 3000 households in the 6 project districts, through operationalising two stakeholder platforms around sorghum and honey” – Alfred Okello, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Fostering Sustainability and Resilience Food Security in Karamoja sub-region.



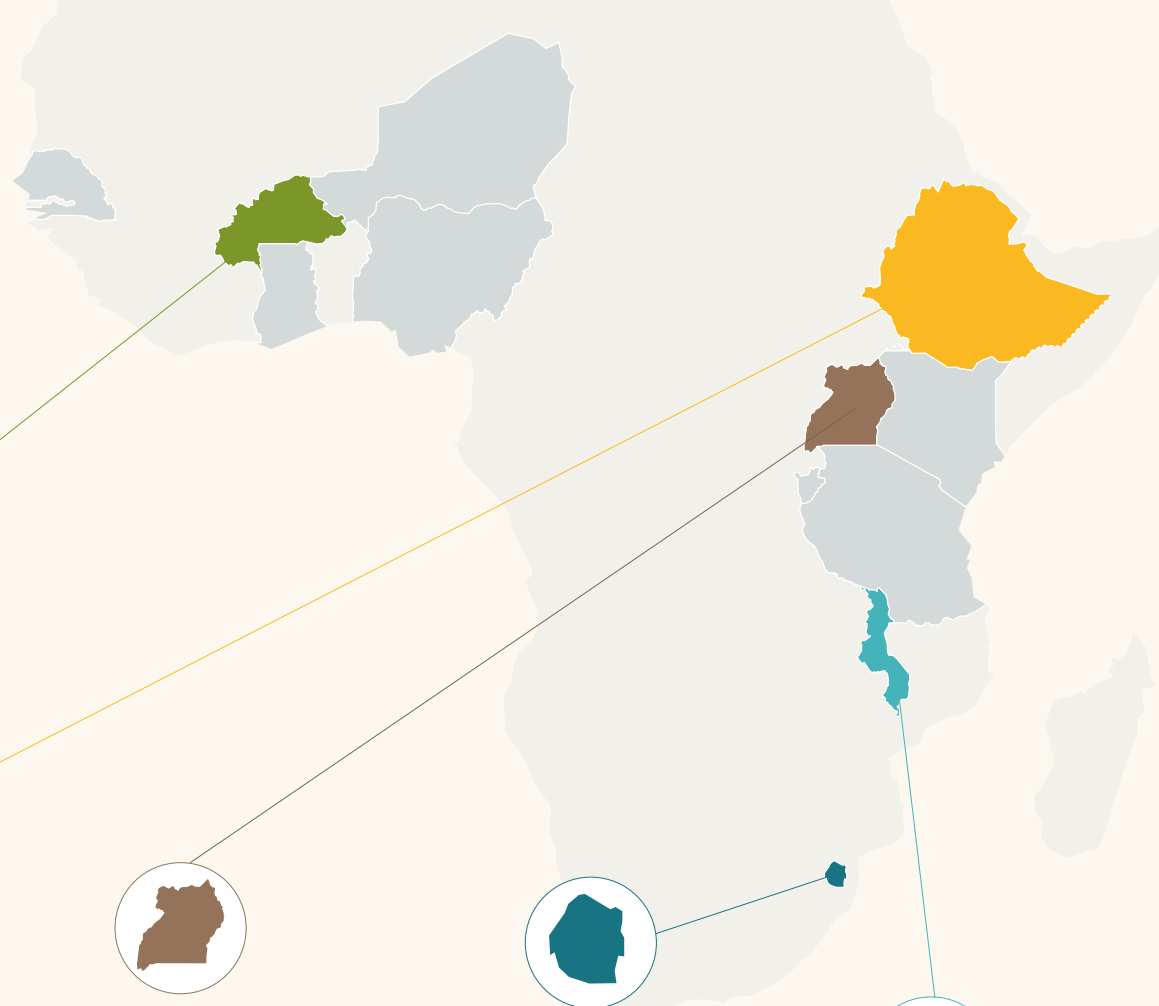
eSwatini

“ Towards enhancing livelihoods and building resilience through land and ecosystems restoration, biodiversity conservation to achieve sustainable development” - Bhekisisa Mkhonta, Project Engineer.



Malawi

“ In 2022 we are looking forward to intensified catchment management activities and the rolling out of the DATAR and LDSF tools” – Munday Makoko, Project Coordinator for Programme for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE).





Nigeria

“ Since the project is rounding up in few months’ time, we want to ensure the Agricultural Centres built and equipped by the project are fully put to use by the beneficiaries. We plan to replicate multi-stakeholder platforms at the community level and follow up with government partners on counterpart funding for the sustainability and upscaling of the project. We’ll also be documenting lessons learnt from project implementation” – Rhoda Dia, Project Coordinator, Integrated Landscape Management to Enhance Food Security and Ecosystem Resilience in Nigeria.



Tanzania

“ Empowering economic producer groups in bee keeping technology, provision of tools and equipment so as to add value to their produce and empowering project beneficiaries in adopting agricultural practices through Farmers Field Schools” – Amon Sanga, Mkalama District Project Focal Point.

“ Empowering rural communities in adopting and practicing user friend technologies and innovation for combating climate change challenges and ensuring rural community food security” – Isaack Luambano, Kondoa District Project Focal Point.

“ Addressing sustainable community forest management while adding value through beekeeping investment” – Yobu Kiungo, Project Natural Resource Management Officer, Project Coordination Unit.



Kenya

“ As we start 2022, this will be the year when the independence of the Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund Trust will be tested, while continuing to deliver on the conservation commitments to our farmers upstream and watershed stakeholders” – Emmanuel Rurema, Ag. Executive Director, UTNWF Trust.

“ Our focus in 2022 is to close the Integrated Approach Program (IAP) project, since we completed the project activities 6 months ahead of time. We are awaiting a Terminal Evaluation Review by IFAD before we can officially close the project, after which we will proceed with scaling up community benefits in the watershed” – Fred Kihara, Africa Water Funds Director, TNC.

“ Operating the Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund Trust as an independent entity with the requisite governance and financial structures in place to scale out nature-based solutions across the Tana River watershed will be an exciting undertaking in 2022” – John Gathagu, M & E officer, UTNWF Trust.

“ Rainwater harvesting infrastructure and extraction of underground water for small scale irrigation and livestock” – Ngussa Buyamba Magu District Project Focal Point.

“ We are looking forward to using participatory video as a tool to monitor change and share knowledge between communities and stakeholders” – Simeon Shimbe, Project Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist.



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