



Ambasáid na hÉireann | An Chéinia
Embassy of Ireland | Kenya

Ireland Kenya Agri-Food Strategy II



(IKAFS II)
2026-2030



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A man feeding chicken and ducks.

Photo Credit: GAIN Alliance

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AADP	African Agri-Food Development Programme
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASALs	Arid and Semi-Arid Areas
ASNET	Agriculture Sector Network
ASTGS	Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy
BETA	Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda
BIK	Business Ireland Kenya
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIDPs	County Integrated Development Plans
CSA-MSP	Climate Smart Agriculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
EPA	EU–Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FLW	Food Loss and Waste
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IKAFS	Ireland Kenya Agri-Food Strategy
ISFAA	Intersectoral Forum on Agrobiodiversity and Agroecology
KALRO	Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization
KAM	Kenya Association of Manufacturers
KCIC	Kenya Climate Innovation Centre (KCIC)
KDB	Kenya Dairy Board
KEBS	Kenya Bureau of Standards
KIRDI	Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute
KMD	Kenya Meteorological Department
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KNCCI	Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NAIPS	National Agricultural Investment Plans
NAS-FST	National Agroecology Strategy for Food Systems Transformation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RAIPS	Regional Agricultural Investment Plans
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SUN-CSA	Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance Kenya
TIMPS	Technologies, Innovations and Management Practises
UNFSS	United Nation Food Systems Summit

Ireland–Kenya Agri-Food Partnership

Ireland is committed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that no one is left behind. Guided by *A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development* and *Food Vision 2030*, Ireland works with partners to promote sustainable, climate-resilient, and inclusive food systems. Our approach integrates humanitarian response, development, and peacebuilding to deliver transformative impact—strengthening communities, advancing gender equality, accelerating climate action, and improving governance. Drawing on expertise, including from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority (Teagasc¹),

and Irish universities, Ireland fosters collaboration with partner countries to advance agroecology, climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods, improved nutrition, and private sector engagement.

Kenya is a longstanding and valued partner of Ireland, with deep collaboration across government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), businesses, and technical experts. Building on this relationship, the Embassy of Ireland in Kenya Mission Strategy (2025–2030) prioritises inclusive, climate-smart, and gender-responsive agri-food systems transformation to strengthen food security, nutrition, peace, and resilience.



Farmers with their potato harvest in Nyandarua County. They received support through the Potato Value Chain Capacity Building (PCB) project implemented by the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) and funded by the Embassy of Ireland.

Photo Credit: DFAT

¹ Teagasc is Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority. Through institutional cooperation with the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization, its Kenyan counterpart, Teagasc supports the development of Kenya's dairy and potato sectors through research, innovation, farmer advisory services, and capacity building aimed at improving productivity, resilience, and livelihoods.

Transforming Kenya's Agri-Food Systems

Kenya's agri-food systems are increasingly unsustainable and inadequate to meet the needs of a growing population. The country faces a triple burden of malnutrition, with undernutrition, rising obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies affecting millions.



Food and nutrition situation in Kenya (KNBS and ICF, 2023; FAO et al., 2024)

2 KNBS & ICF. (2023). Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2022: Key Indicators Report. Nairobi, Kenya: KNBS & ICF.

3 Nutrition International. (2023). Kenya country brief: Addressing the triple burden of malnutrition. Nutrition International. <https://www.nutritionintl.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Kenya-Country-Brief-Feb-2023-Digital.pdf>

4 FAO, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), WFP (World Food Program), and WHO (World Health Organization). 2024. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024: Financing to End Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in All Its Forms. Rome, Italy: FAO

These challenges are compounded by climate change, which drives frequent droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall, undermining agricultural productivity and disrupting food distribution, especially in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas (ASALs). Unsustainable farming, post-harvest losses, and environmental degradation further threaten biodiversity and nutrition. Limited access to safe, nutritious food, inefficient markets, and underinvestment in agriculture make the need for transformation urgent.

Following the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, Kenya committed to modernising its food systems through expanded access to resources for youth and women, adoption of digital agriculture, dietary diversification, climate resilience, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. At the regional level, the CAADP Action Plan (2026–2035) sets strategic objectives for sustainable production, trade, nutrition security, inclusivity, resilience, and

governance, which Kenya is integrating into national and county-level frameworks.

Nationally, Kenya's Constitution (2010) guarantees the right to food, while Vision 2030, the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA 2023–2027), ASTGS (2019–2029), and the Agricultural Policy (2021) recognise agriculture as central to food and nutrition security. The National Agroecology Strategy for Food System Transformation (NAS–FST) promotes climate-resilient livelihoods, social inclusion, and sustainable diets, enabling a transition to sustainable, agroecology-based food systems. Despite these strong provisions, persistent challenges remain: fragmented policies, weak supply chains, limited finance and technology adoption, social inequalities, and climate shocks continue to constrain Kenya's ability to build resilient, efficient, and equitable food systems.

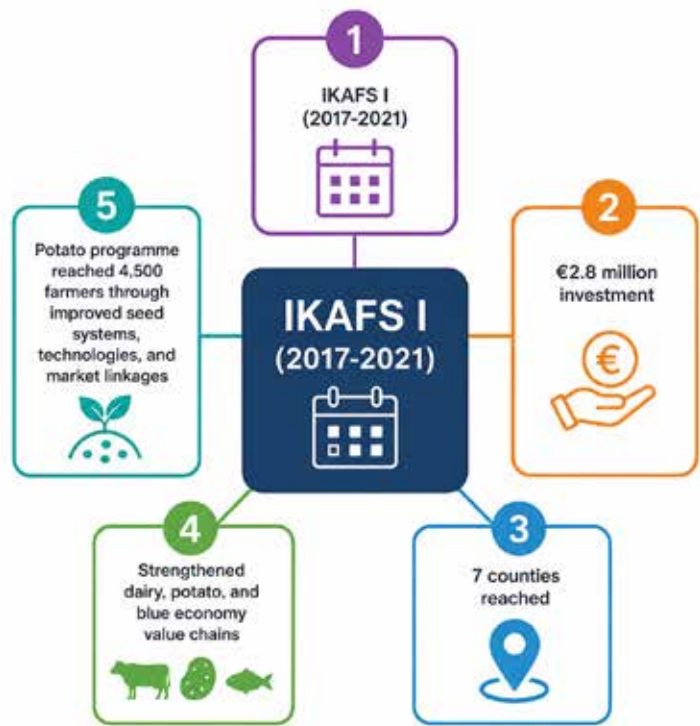


A vendor displays fruits and vegetables at her market stall.

Photo Credit: GAIN Alliance

Strategic Focus

This Strategy builds on the successes and lessons of IKAFS I (2017–2021), a €2.8 million investment by Ireland implemented across seven counties in Kenya. IKAFS I strengthened dairy, potato, and blue economy value chains through targeted investments in production, value addition, extension services, catalytic financing, research and innovation. The potato programme reached about 4,500 farmers through improved seed systems, technologies, and market linkages, while dairy interventions focused on genetics, forage systems, milk cooling, feed processing, and farmer capacity building to improve productivity and market participation. Catalytic support to farmer-owned agribusinesses enhanced infrastructure, governance, and market access. Across both sectors, research-led innovation, digital extension, and innovation hubs improved productivity, incomes, and inclusion, with gender and youth focused interventions expanding women’s participation and leadership. Key lessons underline the need for a more integrated food systems approach, stronger coordination, and early inclusion of youth, gender, finance, and markets, confirming the importance of catalytic, evidence-based interventions.



Building on these lessons, IKAFS II was developed through a co-creation process involving the Embassy of Ireland, Government of Kenya, development partners, civil society, and research institutions. The Strategy aligns with Kenya’s national food systems agenda and global development commitments, strengthening policy coherence and coordination across national and subnational levels. It prioritises smallholder farmers, women, and youth by promoting equitable access to productive resources, services, and markets. Anchored on four pillars: (i) Agri-Food Policy and Governance, (ii) Sustainable Production and Climate Action, (iii) Food Markets and Trade Systems, and (iv) Food Loss and Waste Reduction, IKAFS II leverages digital innovation, inclusive finance, private sector engagement, and evidence-based decision-making to deliver climate-smart, equitable, and sustainable food systems.

» A shared vision for resilient food systems

VISION

“ Inclusive and sustainable food systems for improved livelihoods, food and nutrition security, and governance.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To advance the shared interests and values of Ireland and Kenya by supporting sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems that contribute to a stable, secure and prosperous future for both countries, fostering shared growth, innovation and partnerships.

Vendor smiling while displaying a pineapple and watermelon at her stall.

Photo Credit: GAIN Alliance

Objectives of IKAFS II

The overarching objective of IKAFS II is “To strengthen Kenya’s food systems by promoting policy coherence, sustainable and climate-smart production, expanded market access, and reduced food loss and waste in priority value chains.”

This strategic focus is guided by the following objectives:

1

Strengthen national and county-level policy coherence and implementation capacity to drive inclusive, market-oriented food system transformation that aligns with regional and global commitments on sustainability, nutrition, inclusivity, and resilience;

2

Strengthen food system resilience to climate change by promoting sustainable and regenerative farming, expanding access to quality inputs and technology, and fostering partnerships for climate-smart productivity;

3

Enhance the competitiveness and market access of food system actors through targeted support for business development, trade facilitation, and digital innovation while promoting the inclusion of women and youth and building resilience in domestic and export markets;

4

Facilitate the reduction of food loss and waste by strengthening data-driven policymaking, promoting circular economy solutions, and supporting partnerships and redistribution initiatives that enhance value creation and food security and nutrition for all.



A crossbreed of Friesian and Sahiwal in KALRO, Naivasha.
The crossbreed boosts milk production and is more disease and parasite resistant.

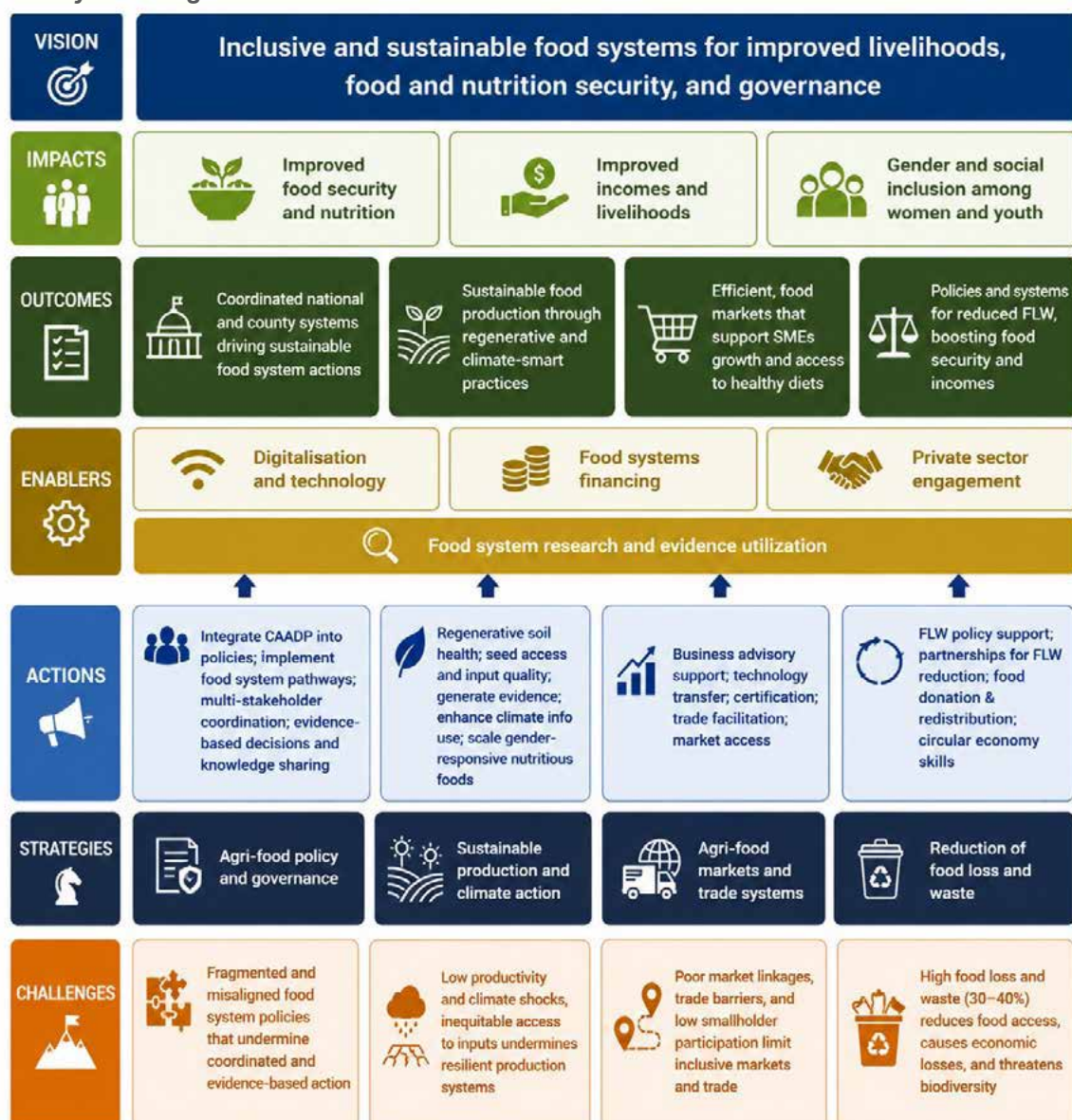
Photo Credit: DFAT

Theory of Change

The theory of change shows how IKAFS II will contribute to Kenya's agri-food systems transformation. It is anchored on four priority areas: agri-food policy and governance; sustainable production and climate action; agri-food markets and trade systems; and reduction of food loss and waste. It is supported by three key enablers: digitalisation and technology; inclusive financing; and private sector engagement. A demand-driven

research system underpins implementation by generating evidence, improving data access, and informing decision-making at national and county levels. Together, these interventions drive coordinated food systems action, climate-resilient production, efficient and inclusive markets, and reduced food loss and waste, ultimately contributing to improved nutrition, stronger livelihoods, and greater equity, particularly for women and youth.

Theory of Change for IKAFS II



Focus Value Chains

IKAFS II focuses on value chains and regions with the greatest potential to advance nutrition, livelihoods, and resilience. Building on lessons from IKAFS I, which improved productivity and technology adoption in dairy, potato, and the blue economy but faced market and policy constraints, the Strategy prioritises potato, dairy, fruits, and vegetables

to combine income, nutrition, and women's economic participation. Interventions target high-potential geographies with supportive institutions and policies, leveraging existing investments while emphasising a holistic food-systems approach, inclusive governance, gender integration, ICT, mechanisation, and coordinated value-chain action.

Focus value chains for IKAFS II



Livestock

- Contributes 5% of GDP; supporting millions of smallholders
- Vital for income and nutrition for women and children
- Low productivity of 3–5 litres/cow/day
- Untapped potential for diversification, processing, and export



Potatoes

- Second most important crop after maize; supports 800,000 farmers
- Key source of income and food security, especially for women and youth
- High post-harvest losses (19–23%)
- Opportunities to boost productivity, trade, and value addition



Fruits

- Has strong potential for nutrition and income diversification
- Existing established export market
- Key for nutrition and employment, especially women and youth



Vegetables

- Key for nutrition and employment, especially women and youth
- High post-harvest losses (30–40%) from spoilage, damage, and poor practices
- Strong potential to connect producers to domestic and regional markets

Target Audience

The Strategy is intended to guide key stakeholders involved in Kenya's agri-food sector and Ireland–Kenya collaboration, including:



Embassy of Ireland in Kenya and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade staff to provide leadership in planning and implementing coherent agri-food transformation programmes.



Irish NGOs and their Kenyan partners to align programme delivery and strengthen partnerships on the ground.



Irish businesses and business representative groups to provide direction for engagement, market linkages, and collaborative opportunities.



Kenyan partners including government agencies, institutions, businesses, and farming organisations.

Who will benefit



Cooperatives, farmer groups, and individual households through improved productivity, market access, incomes, and resilience.



Kenyan companies through new business opportunities in Ireland and partnerships with Irish businesses operating in Kenya.



Government departments, universities, and research institutions in Kenya through strengthened collaboration, knowledge exchange, and institutional capacity.



Irish government departments, research centres, and higher education institutions through enhanced international collaboration, research partnerships, and innovation exchange.

Strategic Priority Areas

Kenya's food systems transformation is guided by national frameworks and the 2021 Food Systems Transformation Pathway, but progress is constrained by sectoral policies, fragmented coordination, and data gaps. The country faces declining productivity, climate shocks, limited access to inputs and digital services for smallholder farmers and challenges in markets and high food loss and waste. IKAFS II addresses these gaps through

sustainable production, climate resilience, inclusive governance, strengthened markets, and reduced food loss, leveraging Ireland's expertise to support a holistic and resilient transformation of Kenya's agri-food systems. Implementation of these interventions will be guided by the availability of financial resources, other enabling inputs, and evolving national and partner priorities.



Woman holding spinach.
Photo Credit: GAIN Alliance

PILLAR 1

AGRI-FOOD POLICY AND GOVERNANCE



Work with identified policy and knowledge partners to support the national government ministries in integrating the CAADP agenda into National and Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs and RAIPs) and reviewing selected agri-food-related policies to expand market access, enhance input and technology availability, and align with system thinking;



Work with policy and knowledge partners to support county governments to domesticate and track progress on food systems transformation pathways in line with existing government planning and monitoring structures;



Strengthen food systems coordination by leveraging existing multi-stakeholder platforms (e.g. ISFAA, SUN-CSA, CSA-MSP) to convene periodic national and county-level dialogues and stock-taking forums to improve policy alignment, learning, and evidence-based decision-making, and enable actors to prioritise and scale high-impact interventions;



Facilitate evidence-based decision-making in food systems by partnering with knowledge institutions to support the sharing and use of existing data, strengthen cross-sector learning, address key evidence gaps in food systems transformation, and improve the utilisation of food systems data.

PILLAR 2

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CLIMATE ACTION



In partnership with knowledge institutions, build county-level capacity for regular soil diagnostics and interpretation to guide targeted soil fertility interventions, including the use of organic amendments and biofertilisers;



Collaborate with Irish and local knowledge partners to pilot and refine seed delivery models that strengthen last-mile access to high-quality, climate-resilient, and market-preferred seed varieties, with priority given to key value chains including potato, dairy, vegetables, and fruits;



Collaborate with private-sector actors and relevant regulatory agencies, such as the Kenya Dairy Board (KDB) and Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), to pilot digital tools that strengthen verification and traceability of livestock feed, improving access to quality feed products;



Work with CGIAR centres and universities to generate context-specific evidence on the efficacy and impact of sustainable food production practices such as bio-inputs, regenerative agriculture, and agroecological practices to inform policy and scaling interventions in the priority value chains;



Partner with meteorological and climate information service providers such as Kenya Meteorological Department (KMD), and Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) to strengthen farmers' ability to use climate forecasts and risk tools, while bridging the gender digital divide to ensure women and youth benefit equitably;



Collaborate with partners to design and implement gender-responsive approaches that promote the scaling up of production and consumption of underutilised, nutritious foods, particularly vegetables.

PILLAR 3

Agri-Food Markets and Trade Systems



Partner with business development and innovation hubs (e.g. KCIC, KIRDI, ASNET and KAM) to deliver targeted technical and business advisory support to food SMEs in priority value chains, with a focus on women - and youth-led enterprises, to enhance access to nutritious foods;



Work with Irish and Kenyan private sector partners to establish twinning arrangements that support technology transfer, input access, and skills development, enabling SMEs to capitalise on AfCFTA and EU-Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) market opportunities;



Partner with certification bodies, standards agencies, and regulators to simplify compliance processes for agri-food SMEs, enabling women- and youth-led enterprises to access domestic and export markets;



Work with trade sector partners and relevant government agencies (including the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry and the Kenya Revenue Authority) to train trade and border officials and develop a trade facilitation roadmap for priority value chains, enabling SMEs to better access and leverage cross-border trade opportunities;



Facilitate market access for agri-food SMEs by partnering with digital service providers, private sector associations, including relevant international chambers and Irish organisations where possible to deliver buyer roundtables, market immersion, and a trade platform that connects SMEs to markets, strengthens linkages, and boosts food security and incomes.

PILLAR 4

Food Loss and Waste Reduction



Support selected counties to develop FLW reduction action plans in line with national FLW policies, set clear reduction targets, and strengthen monitoring and reporting to track progress toward SDG 12.3 and CAADP commitments;



Facilitate partnerships with farmer-facing businesses and knowledge institutions to catalyse FLW reduction and food-waste-to-value initiatives in priority value chains, especially those benefiting smallholder farmers, women, and youth;



Support food donation policies and strengthen local food banks in selected counties to recover and redistribute surplus produce to vulnerable communities, while encouraging companies and processors to pilot and scale redistribution strategies;



Foster partnerships with knowledge institutions to build circular economy skills for farmers, cooperatives, and agribusinesses, including resource-efficient production, waste valorisation, recycling, and water and energy efficiency, to promote sustainable and profitable practices.

Strategic Enablers

Transforming Kenya’s agri-food systems requires strong enabling conditions. IKAFS II will strengthen digital inclusion, expand financial access, and foster private sector partnerships to improve market integration, drive innovation, and create opportunities for smallholder farmers and women-led agribusinesses.

Digitalisation & Technology	Food Systems Financing	Private Sector Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen farmer capacity on TIMPs through research and extension partnerships• Embed digital tools across priority value chains to improve efficiency and coordination• Build evidence systems to track adoption, performance, and impact of digital solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catalyse financing for innovative SMEs, prioritising youth- and women-led enterprises• Expand SME access to tailored finance through MSME Gateway partnerships• Map food systems financial flows to guide targeted public investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generate evidence and advocacy tools to improve the agri-food business environment• Use local SME performance data to strengthen programme targeting and design• Promote adaptive learning through continuous feedback and knowledge sharing

Working with Partners

The Embassy of Ireland recognises that Kenya’s food system faces complex challenges requiring collaboration across multiple stakeholders to achieve meaningful change. Priority will be given to partners with the capacity to act as catalysts for system-wide change. Some of the partner groups we will work with include:

Actor	Role in IKAFS II
National Government	Provides policy and infrastructure support, aligns strategies, and enables evidence-based decision-making. Supports climate-smart agriculture, value addition, market access, and SME participation.
County Governments	Integrate food systems into CIDPs, facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration, strengthen local capacities, and ensure interventions meet community needs.
Private Sector	Align actions with strategies, participate in multi-stakeholder dialogues, improve market integration, and drive investment and innovation.
Non-State Actors (NSAs)	Build local capacity, influence policy, enhance coordination, and implement sustainable agroecology projects.
Development Partners	Support localising pathways, strengthen platforms, scale sustainable solutions, and promote inclusive, evidence-based approaches.
Research and Academia	Generate actionable evidence, coordinate research, inform policy, guide programming, and support continuous learning.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

A robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework has been developed to guide tracking of progress across policy, production, markets, and food loss and waste, while addressing cross-cutting priorities like gender, equity, and youth inclusion. Each strategic action links to outcomes, activities, responsible actors, and phased timelines, using both quantitative and qualitative data to capture real impacts. By incorporating real-time stakeholder feedback, the Strategy remains adaptive, evidence-informed, and accountable.

Budget

The Strategy will be implemented within a total indicative budget of EUR 3.5 million over a five-year period (EUR 700,000 per year). In addition to this allocation, opportunities will be explored to leverage complementary financing and technical support from headquarters and other strategic partners to enhance impact and scale. The budget will be subject to periodic reviews to ensure value for money, relevance, and responsiveness to emerging priorities. Furthermore, cross-departmental budget optimisation will be applied to improve efficiency, avoid duplication, and strengthen coordination across interventions. Implementation will be guided by detailed partner annual workplans, which will define priorities, outputs, and resource allocations for each financial year.





A worker putting grains in the processor.
Photo Credit: GAIN Alliance



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