



WATER AND ENERGY FOR FOOD

2024-2025



ANNUAL REPORT



Previous page, top to bottom: Hydroponics Africa (Kenya) end-user cares for her kale plants, which she uses to feed her family and sell extra produce. Nature's Nectar (Zambia) end-users collect honey. Go Baladi (Lebanon) end-user herds his goats. Onergy (India) end-user stands in front of her solar panel and crop fields. Lono (Côte d'Ivoire) end-user stands in front of her biogas digester.

This report was written by Middle East and North Africa Regional Innovation Hub (a consortium of Berytech, cewas, IWMI, and Chemonics Egypt), the South and Southeast Asia Regional Innovation Hub (a consortium of Tetra Tech, CrossBoundary, and Devworks International), the Southern and Central Africa Regional Innovation Hub (a consortium of Tetra Tech, IWMI, and Open Capital Advisors), and the Secretariat Unit (Kathryn Bailey, McKenzie Horwitz, Jatin Yadav). The report was finalized under the WE4F Bridge Contract managed by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI).

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Several Devidayal Solar (India) solar-powered cold storage units lined up for use.

ACRONYMS AND TERMS

AWP	Acceleration Work Plan	NDF	Nordic Development Fund
BoP	Base of the pyramid	NGO	Non-governmental organization
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development	Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	PAYGO	Pay-As-You-Go
CFI	Call for Innovations	OCFI	Open Call for Innovations
CO2e	Carbon dioxide emissions equivalent	QoSS	Quality of Service Survey
COMACO	Community Markets for Conservation	R&D	Research and development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	RIH	Regional Innovation Hub
EMMP	Environmental monitoring and mitigation plan	S/CA	Southern and Central Africa
EMMR	Environmental monitoring and mitigation report	S/SEA	South and Southeast Asia
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ESMS	Environmental and social management system	Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	SMEs	Small- and medium-sized enterprises
FCCT	First Consolidated Cooperative Along Tanon Seaboards	SOP	Standard operating procedure
FPO	Farmer Producer Organization	SWO	Stop Work Order
HR	Human resources	TA	Technical assistance
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
IoT	Internet of Things	USD	U.S. Dollars
IWMI	International Water Management Institute	WE4F	Water and Energy for Food
KPI	Key performance indicator		
kWh	Kilowatt-hour		
LOP	Life of Program		
MENA	Middle East and North Africa		
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning		
MFI	Microfinance institution		
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding		



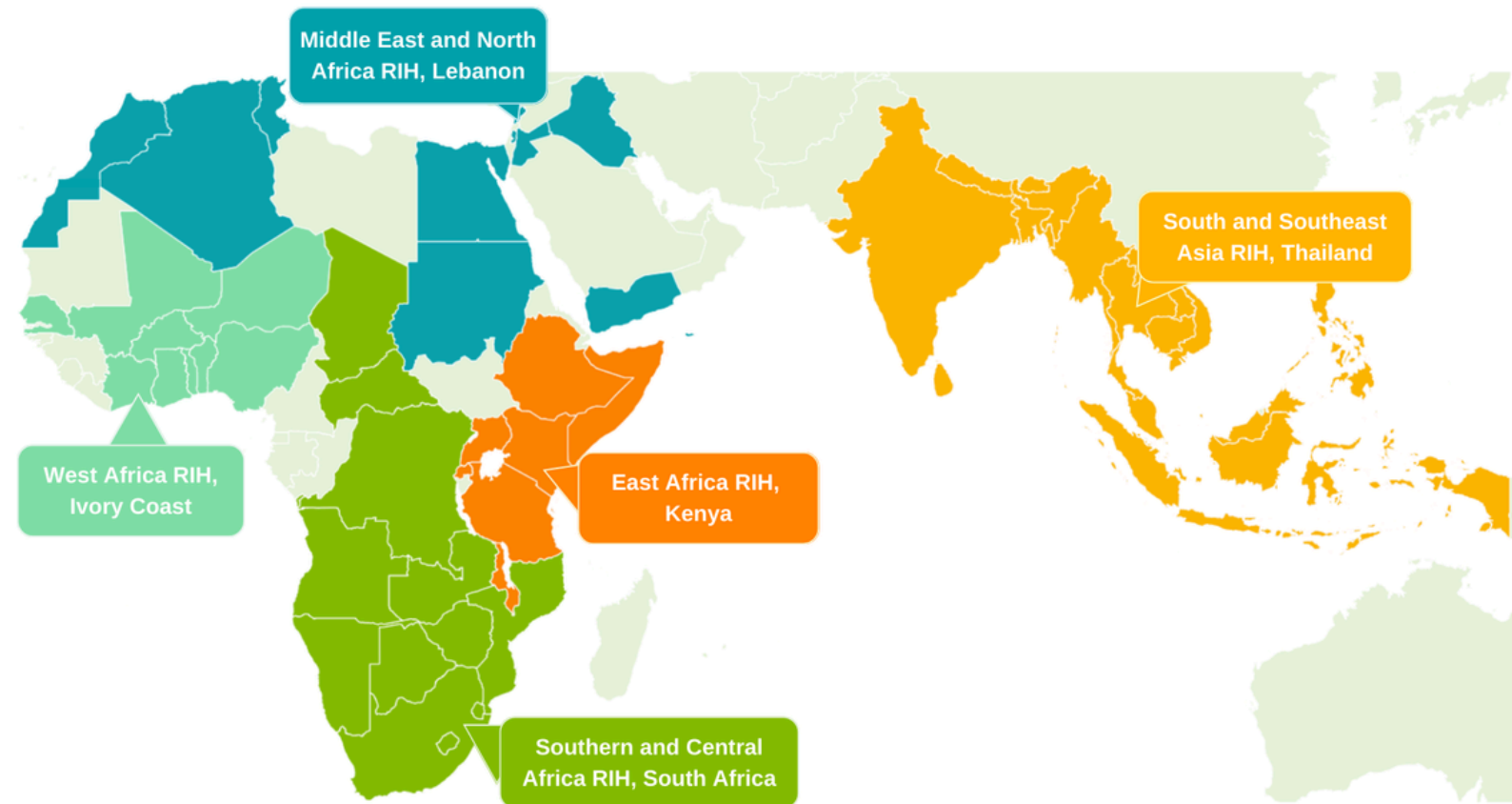
Green Eagle Tech (Egypt) rain irrigation system in use over a field of crops.

GLOBAL PROGRAM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY




WHAT IS WATER AND ENERGY FOR FOOD?

The Water and Energy for Food (WE4F) Grand Challenge was a joint international initiative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic and Development Cooperation (BMZ), the European Union, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The Regional Innovation Hubs (RIH), in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South and Southeast Asia (S/SEA), and Southern and Central Africa (S/CA) were implemented by USAID, while BMZ through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH oversaw the implementation of the East Africa and West Africa RIHs. The program provided financial support, technical assistance (TA), enabling environment support, capacity building, and investment facilitation to water-food, energy-food, and water-energy-food innovations in 42 countries. Supported innovations helped smallholder farmers and other end-users unlock missing agricultural inputs, financing, technology, and markets. The innovations also enabled increased food production and processing while minimizing water and energy use, which in turn enhanced climate resilience and reduced emissions.



Left to right: Center for Biomass Energy Studies (CBES) of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (Kenya) provides an energy efficiency solution to a tea factory. Freejoy (DRC) end-user dries fish using the innovator's solar-powered fish dryer. Husk Ventures (Cambodia) end-user gets ready to fertilize his crops.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND RESULTS TO DATE

Key Performance Indicator	Life of Program Target (2020-2025)	Results to Date (2020-2025)	Current Status
 Share of supported innovators that successfully marketed their innovations with profit	8%	33.1%	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users using WE4F innovations	5 million	6 million	Exceeded
 Total mass of food produced as a result of WE4F innovations	8.5 million tons	15.8 million tons	Exceeded
 Total mass of food processed as a result of WE4F innovations	275,000 tons	227,000 tons	Off Track
 Total energy saved in the food value chain as a result of the use of WE4F innovations	1.35 billion kWh	4.5 billion kWh	Exceeded
 Total volume of water consumption reduction in the food value chain as a result of WE4F innovations	11 billion liters	19.8 billion liters	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users that experience an increase in income	1.5 million	2.4 million	Exceeded
 Share of innovators & other stakeholders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity	58%	71.6%	Exceeded
 Value of investment in U.S. Dollars that WE4F innovators have mobilized from external sources	\$190 million USD	\$211 million USD	Exceeded
 Number of strategies, guidelines, or projects of organizations adopting and disseminating WE4F lessons learned	20	22	Exceeded

UNDERSTANDING THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF WE4F

Across 42 countries, 172 innovators contributed to the cumulative results to date. The impact achieved by the innovators ensured that the program exceeded its latest round of target updates for number of end-users impacted, food produced, energy saved, water consumption reduced, and investment mobilized.

In 2025, WE4F innovators reached a cumulative total of over 6 million smallholder farmers and other end-users, with 2.4 million of them experiencing an increase in income. Most of the impacted end-users originated from the S/SEA RIH as it had the highest number of end-users at 1.9 million. It was also the region that had the highest percentage of end-users that experienced an increase in income at 62%. In contrast, the East and West Africa hubs recorded the lowest income gains, with only 11% of their combined 1.77 million end-users experiencing an increase. In terms of impacting marginalized communities, the S/CA RIH reached the highest number of women end-users (slightly over 50%) predominantly due to the higher percentage of women involved in the African agricultural sector, while the S/SEA RIH accounted for the highest percentage of base of the pyramid (BoP) end-users with 72% of the hub's end-users being in the BoP segment.

By using WE4F-supported innovations, end-users produced over 15.8 million tons of food and processed 227,000 tons of food. The MENA RIH contributed the largest share of food, with 10.6 million tons produced by end-users using innovations supported by the MENA hub, reflecting a stronger presence of large-scale farming operations in contrast to other hubs where innovators predominantly worked with cooperatives and/or smallholder farmers.

In terms of food processing, innovators from S/SEA RIH had the largest result with 123,000 tons of food processed due to successful food-drying processors in India that were able to break into the concentrated food processing market. Overall, food processing impacts were still slightly lower than anticipated by the program due to differing factors in each region: the presence of large scale food processors that prevented the establishment and scaling of food-processing small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); a drought in Southern Africa that delayed food processing activities from occurring; and the USAID Stop Work Order (SWO) which prevented the collection of food processing data from the Lebanese food-processing innovator cohort that was onboarded as part of a strategic shift from the MENA RIH to support Lebanese food-processing innovators during the Israeli-Lebanon conflict during the second half of 2024.

Innovators supported by the MENA RIH also had the highest energy savings (3.7 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy saved) and the highest reduction in water consumption (11.8 billion liters). The MENA RIH's success in water consumption reduction was likely due to the region's geographical context of being a semi-arid region where water-energy-food nexus stakeholders are working to develop more efficient water use, their strong network within the regional water-energy-food nexus and SME ecosystem, and the hub's focus on water-efficient technologies due to lower adoption rates of water efficient technology. Success in energy savings for MENA innovators was likely tied to the regional necessity for renewable energy and solar solutions, for instance the need to have solar energy in Lebanon due to a lack of a functioning grid.

To ensure that WE4F-supported innovations did not negatively impact water or biodiversity, the program worked with innovators to either confirm that they were already monitoring such concerns or to start monitoring them after joining the program. In 2025, the program surpassed the 58% target with 71.6% of innovators monitoring water or biodiversity. The successful push for monitoring can be attributed to the program providing customized TAs, integrating environmental monitoring and mitigation plans (EMMPs) and reports (EMMRs), and conducting capacity building activities.

A shining achievement of the program was the mobilization of \$211 million U.S. Dollars (USD), with the largest investment mobilized being within the S/SEA RIH. Husk Power, a legacy innovator from Powering Agriculture: An Energy Grand Challenge, secured \$103 million USD in debt and equity. What enabled the program to mobilize such large-scale investment for SMEs, was each region and innovator utilizing diverse financing mechanisms that were tailored to their unique investment landscapes and ecosystem maturity levels. Aside from Husk Power's unique, large-scale investment, several other S/SEA innovators based in India closed investment deals beyond \$2 million, showcasing success in leveraging both debt and equity instruments. Their success can be attributed to the advanced investment ecosystem as well as the presence of mature, investment-ready organizations in India. When excluding India, investment deals in South Asia and Southeast Asia shrank to a smaller size, typically in the range of \$300,000 USD to \$2 million USD, reflecting the nascent nature of climate finance.

In MENA, a larger share of innovators raised funding, but they had smaller ticket sizes typically between \$500,000 USD and \$1 million USD. There was limited use of debt in the region; approximately 60% of the investments came from equity deals. This trend was likely due to the innovators being in the early to mid-stage of scaling, as well as cultural norms that prevent interest from being charged on debt which makes it unappealing to financial institutions.

With support from the S/CA RIH, five innovators raised a total of \$8 million, with 39% of all investment raised being public cash in the form of results-based financing. This was a significantly higher percentage than the MENA RIH (3.1% came from public cash and public in-kind support), and the S/SEA RIH (.21% came from public cash). Additionally, S/CA innovators' private capital investment was entirely debt, with 72% coming from commercial banks. The combination of these two financial instruments – results-based financing and debt – highlights the difficult fundraising environment in which S/CA innovators operate. Entrepreneurial beliefs diminished the value of equity in innovators' eyes as they encountered poor valuations of their businesses, while investors and financial institutions' perceived risk of the region due to economic conditions and ongoing conflicts, resulted in debt being the only provided private-capital option.

In accordance with the WE4F Final Evaluation published in June 2024, the results, the hubs' unique approaches, and the diversity of supported innovations described in this report highlights the benefits of programs leveraging a portfolio approach that utilizes the provision of holistic offerings for innovator scaling. By investing financial, technical, and social resources into programs, donors can support localized innovation designs that target country and end-users' specific food production, agricultural input access, and resource efficiency challenges while exceeding key performance indicator (KPIs) targets and unlocking positive externalities across the private sector and donor ecosystems.



Strawberry plants grown with the support of Biomass (Lebanon) are covered to protect them from the elements.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMS, POLICY CHANGES, AND BARRIERS AFFECTING INNOVATION SCALING

In each region, there are unique policy, regulatory, and programmatic recommendations that could improve the water-energy-food nexus for innovators, end-users, and consumers alike. Several strategic policy recommendations, however, are similar across the diverse regions.

There is an ever-growing need to increase investment in technical and financial mechanisms that can improve the scaling capabilities of climate innovations for the water-energy-food nexus. Innovators, no matter the region, often struggled to secure debt, as well as equity, financing due to their level of investment readiness and the risk-averse nature of the private investment ecosystem. Proposed solutions for this challenge differ by hub and their associated region's level of maturity. The MENA RIH recommends the usage of catalytic financing and other de-risking mechanisms (e.g., loan guarantees, first-loss capital) to support the scaling of SME solutions. They also encourage the creation of dedicated impact funds tailored to the unique needs of the MENA region, along with collaboration between international financial institutions and private investors to support the establishment of said funds. Similar to the MENA region, in Southern and Central Africa there is a need to develop carbon credit markets or other early-stage financing mechanisms that can support innovators that are incapable of unlocking private investment due to the low-risk appetite of investors. At the S/SEA RIH, the hub identifies that the provision of matching capital grants, in addition to the TA, secured direct private investment at better terms and improved the bargaining power of the innovators, thereby crowding in investors. For early-stage innovators, or those with smaller capital needs, specific R&D funding is needed, so SMEs can experiment with business growth and product testing before pursuing other types of financing.

For smallholder farmers and other BoP end-users, there is a need to devise and implement end-user financing schemes to help make innovations accessible and affordable. This is possible by improving SMEs' ability to partner with financing organizations to create customized end-user financing solutions relevant to the water-energy-food nexus. A focus on partnership utilization for better end-user impact, also aligns with the need to develop partnership and supplier networks that can create synergies between different innovation providers, unlocking opportunities for the private sector as well as end-users. A key learning from MENA innovator, SOWIT, along with several other innovators, is that building tools that create informal credit ratings for smallholder farmers helps convince microfinance institutions to more easily provide small loans.

To improve business ecosystems and the larger enabling environment, regional stakeholders must advocate for the transparency, streamlining, and updating of customs, licenses, national tax policies, and export/import certifications. This extends to government incentives and subsidies that have proven effective in promoting the adoption of technology but can be difficult to access. Existing policies may prohibit new innovations, and a review of enabling policies is required. In terms of unlocking tax credits in Southern and Central Africa, renewable energy policies are not well defined. These policies are also not consistent across the region. This results in structural barriers preventing biogas innovators from accessing incentives. Policy and regulatory advocacy actors should work with key stakeholders at different stages to identify commonalities that can unite parties together through quick policy wins.



Left to right: Global Green Growth Institute (Senegal), partnered with the West Africa RIH to transformation of the Senegalese rice industry by mobilizing financing for the introduction of renewable energy and energy efficient solutions. The TechnInnov (Niger) solution, remote irrigation controlled through telephone, solar, and Internet of Things digital platforms, collects, analyzed, and models data in the field.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL INNOVATION HUBS SUMMARY



Program staff from USAID-implemented Middle East and North Africa RIH, South and Southeast Asia RIH, and Southern and Central Africa RIH, and Secretariat Unit gather for the 2024 Annual Convening in Morocco.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED IN 2024?

From January 2024 to January 2025, the MENA, S/SEA, and S/CA RIHs and their supported innovators continued to excel at scaling innovations to positively impact smallholder farmers and other end-users. Through WE4F support, innovators exceeded eight of the eleven key performance indicator (KPI) targets and are on track to achieve the remaining three.

After surpassing eight of the KPI targets in 2023, the USAID and GIZ Secretariat Units, in consultation with the Donor Partners, increased the targets for: number of end-users impacted; total mass of food produced; total energy saved in kilowatt-hours (kWh); total volume of water consumption reduction in liters; number of end-users that experience an increase in income; value of investment mobilized; and number of WE4F lessons learned or recommendations adopted.

The program surpassed the new targets partially due to the onboarding of new innovators who joined through the Open Calls for Innovations (OCFI), the Iraq Call for Innovations (Iraq CFI 2) and Zimbabwe Biogas OCFI. Onboarding of the new innovators brought the total number of innovators supported during 2024 to 109 across the MENA, S/SEA, and S/CA hubs. New OCFI and CFI innovators came from 13 countries and included the first selected innovators from the Philippines and Tunisia. Of the 52 new innovators, 22, or 42%, were women-led and/or -owned. The MENA RIH onboarded the most women-led and/or -owned innovators at 54% of all new innovators. A total of 135 technical assistance (TA) instances across categories like business development, investment readiness, operational capacity building, and gender mainstreaming helped innovators reach new end-users, expand geographically, and scale business operations in a financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner.

So far, 4.5 million end-users have been impacted by WE4F-supported innovations, of which 1.5 million were women and 2.6 million were BoP end-users. To encourage access to climate-adaptation, and/or -mitigation innovations for marginalized end-users, hubs' TA Teams, along with the Gender and BoP Specialists, conducted trainings, organized webinars, and delivered TA instances that focused on increasing accessibility through end-user financing, gender mainstreaming in business operations, and integration of BoP individuals as stakeholders, end-users, and company staff. The focus on reaching new end-users by increasing accessibility and affordability helped innovators reach a total of \$246 million USD in gross sales

Innovators also continued to mobilize investment and outperform the target for investment mobilized, reaching a cumulative total of \$196 million USD, which surpassed the increased KPI target of \$175 million USD. Of the innovator's mobilized funding, 97%, or \$191 million USD, came from private capital. Women-led and/or -owned innovators mobilized 24.8% of all investment.

Chief among the KPI achievements was the total reduction in water consumption which reached 18.8 billion liters, exceeding the increased target of 10.2 billion liters. The program also saved 4.5 billion kWh of energy – more than three times the increased KPI target. For the most critical namesake resource of “Water and Energy for Food,” innovators produced almost double the food production's KPI target, reaching a total of 14.9 million tons of food produced.












As part of efforts to mitigate, and adapt to, climate change, innovators received training and TAs on Environmental Impact Assessments, carbon credit opportunities and modelling, and climate resilience approaches. Through their technologies, operational practices, and business models, innovators helped end-users prevent the release of 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). Across the supported innovations, 21% of innovators have climate-adaptation innovations, 32% of innovators have climate-mitigation innovations, and 45% of innovators have climate-adaptation and climate-mitigation innovations.

Program staff, donors, innovators, and external partners participated in various conferences, webinars, workshops, and one-on-one meetings as part of WE4F's commitment to disseminating knowledge and lessons learned on critical themes like climate financing, gender mainstreaming, digitalization in agriculture, and scaling water efficient solutions. External engagements included participating as speakers/panelists at conferences like ICT4Ag 2024 and Cairo Water Week, as well as organizing sessions at World Water Week 2024 and tracks at the Arab SME Summit.

The USAID Secretariat Unit, in collaboration with the MENA RIH, organized the final in-person Annual Convening to provide innovators with learning opportunities on gender mainstreaming, community engagement, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, investment mobilization, and BoP integration. The convening also featured sessions on sustaining program-developed relationships and networks through innovator-to-innovator matchmaking, technology-based networking, a pitch competition, and a global reflection session.

For the remainder of 2025 and early 2026, WE4F will focus on targeting specific nexus stakeholders, program implementers, and other industry actors to ensure the transfer of recommendations and lessons learned that can help the next set of water-energy-food stakeholders achieve more impact while facing lower roadblocks.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND RESULTS TO DATE

Key Performance Indicator	Life of Program Target (2020-2025)	Global Results to Date (2020-2025)
 Share of supported innovators that successfully marketed their climate-friendly, energy and/ or water-efficient innovations with profit	8% of innovations	26%
	25% are led by women	46% women
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users using WE4F innovations	3.2 million end-users	4.2 million end-users
	1.18 million women end-users	1.5 million end-users
	1.06 million BoP end-users	2.6 million BoP end-users
 Total mass of food produced as a result of WE4F innovations	7.8 million tons	14.9 million
 Total mass of food processed as a result of WE4F innovations	185,000 tons	138,000 tons
 Total energy saved in the food value chain as a result of the use of WE4F innovations	1.3 billion kWh	4.5 billion kWh
 Total volume of water consumption reduction in the food value chain as a result of WE4F innovations	10.2 billion liters	18.8 billion liters
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users that experience an increase in income	1.3 million end-users	2.2 million end-users
	429,000 women end-users	792,000 women end-users
 Share of innovators and other stakeholders that use tools, methods, or processes to monitor the protection of water or biodiversity	70%	71.9%
	Monitoring water only	28.1%
	Monitoring biodiversity only	6.3%
	Monitoring water and biodiversity	37.5%
 Value of investment in US Dollars that WE4F innovators have mobilized from external sources	\$175.5 million USD	\$196 million USD
 Number of strategies, guidelines, or projects of international, regional or local organizations adopting and disseminating lessons learned from WE4F	10	9
 Total of GHG emissions saved by WE4F innovations	1 million tons of CO ₂ e	2.5 million tons of CO ₂ e
	End-users using climate-mitigation innovations	1.36 million end-users
	End-users using climate adaptation-related innovations	259,000 end-users

MENA RIH	S/SEA RIH	S/CA RIH	Current Status
14.8%	35%	45%	Exceeded
38% women	67% women	33% women	Exceeded
697,000 end-users	1.98 million end-users	1.58 million end-users	Exceeded
182,000 women end-users	556,000 women end-users	804,000 women end-users	Exceeded
284,000 BoP end-users	1.4 million BoP end-users	946,000 BoP end-users	Exceeded
10.6 million tons	3.4 million tons	1.03 million tons	Exceeded
4,800 tons	123,000 tons	10,700 tons	On Track
3.7 billion kWh	610 million kWh	160 million kWh	Exceeded
11.8 billion liters	6.78 billion liters	256 million liters	Exceeded
323,000 end-users	1.2 million end-users	673,000 end-users	Exceeded
76,900 women end-users	314,000 women end-users	401,000 women end-users	Exceeded
79.5%	56%	72%	Exceeded
31.8%	26%	24%	
6.8%	4%	7%	
40.9%	26%	41%	
\$34.9 million USD	\$153 million USD	\$8.1 million USD	Exceeded
N/A	N/A	N/A	On Track
1.5 million tons	655,000 tons	457,000 tons	Exceeded
106,000 end-users	915,000 end-users	347,000 end-users	
33,000 end-users	4,400 end-users	221,000 end-users	

PROGRAM CLOSURE

While the GIZ-led Secretariat Unit and RIHs in East Africa and West Africa concluded, as expected, in December 2024. The USAID-led Secretariat Unit, and MENA, S/SEA, and S/CA RIHs, unexpectedly closed in February 2025 due to the Executive Order 14169, titled "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid."

In the following days and weeks, hubs closed out their activities; staff lost their positions; and innovators lost access to critical programmatic support. As the program was entering its final months of activities, the early closure mostly affected the recently onboarded OCFI innovators and remaining CFI innovators, who were receiving critical TA support from the hubs. In terms of program management, the early closure prevented the completion of the 2024 Annual Report, the WE4F Final Report, final rounds of data collection, and the documentation and dissemination of program lessons learned and recommendations – a key aspect for the success of future donor programming.

A bright note in this dark period was innovators' commitment to the values of WE4F, even though they were no longer part of the program. Some innovators decided to continue the partnerships, TA, and operational changes that were ongoing at the time of the SWO.

In August 2025, thanks to the generous funding, support, and commitment of Sida to global food security as well as the scaling of water-efficient and renewable energy innovations, WE4F was, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands and Norad, relaunched for a six-month period through the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). Prior to this, in March 2025, the MENA RIH was supported through a similar bridge contract that enabled the hub to conclude its activities in a planned and responsible manner. The MENA RIH's bridge contract was supported by Sweden's Embassy in Amman, Jordan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands and Sweden's Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon.

The purpose of the relaunch is to complete the originally-planned program conclusion while also providing TAs to innovators who were active prior to the SWO and subsequently showed interest in benefiting from WE4F's relaunch. The short activity period will enable the program to transfer lessons learned and recommendations to other challenge funds, support innovators' growth in a dynamic and fragile international development environment, and document achievements and lessons learned in a concrete and compelling narrative format.



Clockwise: Crops grown with the support of The Quinta Group (Lebanon) are prepared for the next stage of growth. Equilibrium (India) encourages end-users to direct seed their rice to reduce water usage. Zircon Energy (Zambia) solar panels stand ready to pump water in an end-user's field.

SECRETARIAT UNIT



ACTIVITIES

ADVOCACY AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

2024 ANNUAL CONVENING

In November 2024, the Secretariat Unit in collaboration with the MENA RIH, organized the final Annual Conference in Marrakech, Morocco. Building on the previous Regional and Annual Convenings, the purpose of the final gathering was to forge new connections between the previous CFI cohorts and the newly-onboarded OCFI innovators, strengthen existing relationships, and prepare innovators to continue their scaling journey without WE4F support.

Themes covered throughout the convening included climate resilience, gender mainstreaming, BoP integration, community engagement, and impact-based investing. Innovators, hub staff, donors, and invited guests shared their knowledge through Unconference sessions, workshops, and panel discussions. Two new sessions that added different methods of supporting innovator capacity building were the matchmaking session and the pitch competition.

Building on an activity concept created by the S/SEA RIH, the matchmaking session featured two rounds of networking. In one round the innovator had a conversation with another individual who could support them in a certain aspect (e.g., business expansion advice, potential partnerships, experience with software, knowledge of financing) and the other round, the innovator provided that same support to a different peer. The matchmaking session resulted in immediate impact as well as long-term partnership developments. An S/CA innovator built a relationship with an S/SEA innovator who uses the same banking partner. Their new connection unlocked financing for the S/CA innovator as the S/SEA innovator felt comfortable vouching for their trustworthiness. For two other S/CA innovators, the matchmaking session identified a collaboration opportunity due to their overlap in the Zambian meat industry. One S/CA innovator offers ecosystem support and cattle sales services, while the other processes beef into biltong. In June 2025, the two innovators partook in outreach visits to cattle abattoirs in Southern Zambia.

The other new session, a global pitch competition with three ticket size tracks (under \$1 million USD, \$1 million to \$1.6 million USD, and over \$1.6 million USD) originated from the S/CA RIH Regional Convening. Designed to help mature innovators practice their elevator pitch, the session also provided less experienced innovators with feedback and advice on their presentation of business plans, results, and funding requests. Each panel consisted of external experts, hub and Secretariat staff, and donor representatives. The diverse panels enabled innovators to interact with private and public sector professionals with whom they might engage during external competitions or investment proposals.

Overall, the 2024 Annual Convening was a success; innovators rated their satisfaction at 100% and left with new skills, ideas for final instances of technical assistance, new partnerships, and a stronger global network.

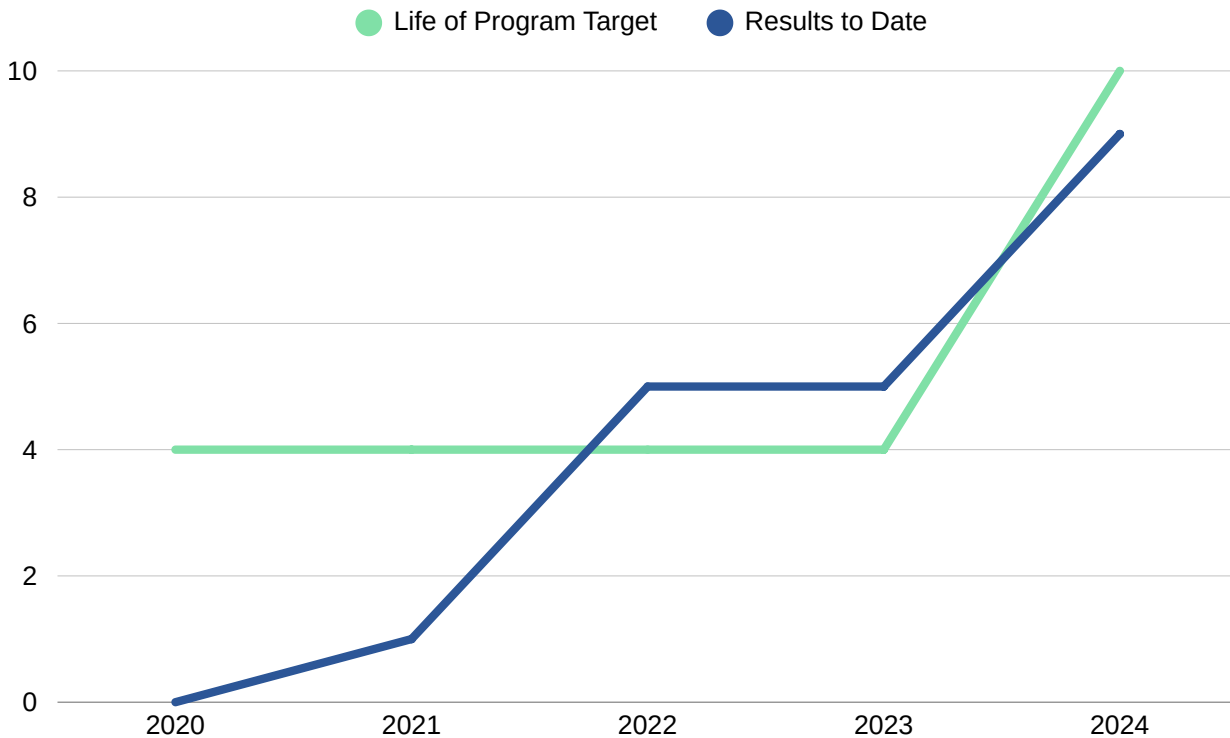
ADVOCACY FOR USAGE OF WE4F LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the Secretariat Unit and RIHs, the program continued to advocate for adoption and implementation of WE4F lessons learned related to program design, usage of knowledge products, and provision of TA. The report, “Grand Challenge Initiatives in AI for Climate and Nature: Landscape Assessment and Recommendations” by Climate Change AI, commissioned and in collaboration with the Bezos Earth Fund, and in partnership with the Center for Open Data Enterprise and Data Innovators, included WE4F in its recommendations for the design for a forthcoming AI Grand Challenge. Building on Donor Partners’ plans to sustain the impact of WE4F, key hub personnel and innovators shared their knowledge and experiences with the Nordic Development Fund (NDF) as part of a market study funded by the organization.

To ensure global dissemination, as well as adoption, by water-energy-food nexus stakeholders, program staff, along with donor representatives, organized, or participated in, online and in-person events to highlight program successes and failures. From a S/SEA RIH in-person session at the 2024 World Water Forum to the MENA RIH’s Women Innovator Network webinar series, knowledge sharing enhanced dialogues on sustainable water management, women-focused marketing, AI in ICT innovations, end-user financing, and SME acceleration.



Number of Strategies, Guidelines, or Projects of International, Regional, or Local Organizations Adopting and Disseminating Lessons Learned from WE4F Publications, Events, or Presentations



BI-ANNUAL DONOR MEETING

In March 2024, the USAID and GIZ Secretariat Units met with the WE4F Donor Partners to discuss program results, innovator challenges, and opportunities for continued engagement and improvement of the program. As the Donor Partners (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands, Norad, and Sida) had already shared their interest in continuing WE4F through a “WE4F 2.0” program, the Secretariat Manager and MENA RIH Manager presented a new fund model that could implement WE4F lessons learned and recommendations.

WORLD WATER WEEK 2024

For the 2024 edition of World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, WE4F organized four sessions, each focusing on different elements of the program. To close out the GIZ-led RIHs and Secretariat Unit, as well as celebrate WE4F’s impact, lessons learned, and recommendations, one hybrid session brought together innovators, donor representatives, and program staff for a multi-level exploration of the program. In support of scaling nature-based solutions, the S/CA RIH Manager presented innovations and their individual support packages at a workshop on designing innovation-scaling programs. As part of the awareness and educational campaign for the WE4F Water Accounting Tools, a webinar for public and private sector actors covered the steps involved in building such tools. It also explored different use applications, depending on the stakeholder’s role in the water-energy-food nexus. To develop more direct connections with attendees, a meet-and-greet was organized at the Netherlands Pavilion, where a multimedia presentation explored various water-saving innovations supported by WE4F while innovators and program staff answered questions on program knowledge products and program engagement. The webinar, workshop, and hybrid session averaged 95 attendees for the full session length, but reached a high of 100 attendees, while the meet-and-greet had meaningful conversations with 25 individuals.

HUB ACTIVITY SUPPORT

GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

To ensure timely submission and organization of hub invoices and innovator documentation for milestone-based grants, the Grants and Finance Manager liaised with the RIH Grants and Finance Specialists as well as WE4F donors. Through monthly check-ins, budget monitoring, and donor compliance advisory support, the Grants and Finance Manager managed the WE4F budget while identifying final funding opportunities for the remaining life of the program.

WATER ACCOUNTING TOOLS

In the WE4F 2022 Mid-Term Evaluation, the evaluator, Dexis Consulting Group, highlighted challenges related to water technologies potential overuse in regions experiencing water stress. As a result, WE4F partnered with the [International Water Management Institute to develop the Zambezi River Basin Water Accounting Tool \(released in July 2024\)](#), and [BRL Ingénierie to develop water accounting tools for Lebanon's Litani River Basin, Vietnam's Red River Basin, India's Ganges River Basin, and Egypt's Nile River Basin \(released in September 2024\)](#). The hubs worked with the vendors, along with the Secretariat to obtain data, build the database, test functionality, and publish the tools for internal and external use. To encourage adoption by innovators and external target audiences, the program launched a training and education campaign. Regional Convenings featured hybrid sessions on the tools' design, potential applications related to innovators' businesses, and how to navigate the dashboard. Social media, blogs, and a webinar at World Water Week, educated external target audiences on how to utilize the WE4F tool or design their own.

Innovators recognized the benefit of the water accounting tools, especially for offering irrigation solutions as the dashboard can prevent them from contributing to falling water tables and help them identify end-users that should receive training on sustainable water management practices. One of the water accounting tool dashboard developers, IWMI, also recognized the benefit of the tool and embedded the methodology of the Zambezi Basin water accounting tool into other projects on crop production and the digitalization of water.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

2024 FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Published in June 2024, the WE4F Final Evaluation by Dexis Consulting Group highlighted the successes and challenges faced by the program from January 2020 until November 2023. It also detailed opportunities for future programs, or challenge funds, to continue building off of WE4F's work. In order to share these findings with the water-energy-food nexus, a public webinar was organized in June 2024. The findings in the report also contributed to the development of the World Water Week hybrid session and the 2024 Annual Convening which, as previously mentioned, explored innovators' futures after the cumulation of WE4F support.

SITE VISITS

Following the conclusion of the S/CA RIH Regional Convening, the Secretariat Unit and a representative from USAID joined the S/CA Hub Manager and the Zambia Country Coordinator on site visits to Nature's Nectar, Ndkay, and Zircon Energy Solutions. The visit to Nature's Nectar involved visiting their honey processing factory, end-users' beehives in protected forests, as well as a new nursery where they were planning to grow indigenous trees. Ndkay had recently installed a new cold storage unit at a local Lusaka market, where site visit participants spoke to end-users who regularly stored crops in the unit. For Zircon Energy Solutions, the site visit involved meetings with two cooperatives that had adopted the innovator's solar-powered irrigation solution in the preceding six months.

By visiting locations where the innovations were in use, the Secretariat Unit developed a deeper understanding of on-the-ground challenges affecting innovators' growth as well as end-users' food production challenges. For Zircon Energy end-users, their main challenge was the ongoing drought in Zambia, while Ndkay end-users highlighted how the cold storage solution reduced food loss because they could now keep their products at market for longer. Interviewed end-users also provided honest feedback on innovators' services and technologies, identifying areas for potential TA instances for innovators.

USAID CLOSURE

Following an Executive Order from the Trump Administration titled, "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid," WE4F was shut down in February 2025. With the cancellation of the contracts that employed the Secretariat Unit, all staff were issued "Termination of Position" notices by their firms. During this closure, the Secretariat Unit secured program data, digital platforms, knowledge resources, and institutional memory that supported the restart in September 2025.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenges	Solutions
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)	
Two KPI targets, “tons of food processed” and “share of innovators using tools to monitor water or biodiversity,” were decreased due to target-specific challenges.	The tons of food processed was decreased due to a lack of food-processing innovators joining WE4F. To ensure the monitoring of water and biodiversity as well as accurate reporting on the indicator at innovator level, RIH MEL Specialists collaborated with RIH Environmental Specialists. Together, staff reviewed innovator reporting on the indicator and shared additional information on their monitoring activities, which improved reported results. Those found by MEL Specialists to not be monitoring water or biodiversity were flagged as requiring additional support from Environmental Specialists. The RIH and Secretariat staff then collaborated to improve innovators’ monitoring activities by the next MEL reporting cycle.
Communications and Knowledge Management	
Secretariat Unit and MENA RIH faced challenges in selecting a country in the MENA region to host the 2024 Annual Convening due to ongoing security concerns, cost limitations, and visa challenges. The country-selection roadblock was followed by challenges in securing innovators’ visas due to a lack of local connections as well as Morocco’s stringent visa requirements for innovators arriving from certain African and MENA countries.	After completing a thorough review of the potential countries, Morocco was selected due to its importance in the agricultural sector as well as friendlier visa policies. To improve the likelihood of securing innovators’ visas, the MENA RIH signed a MoU with a local private sector scaling organization. This partnership not only supported the innovators’ visa applications, but it also resulted in new relationships between Moroccan start-ups and WE4F innovators.
After participating in WE4F for an extended period of time (one to three years, depending on year of onboarding), innovators knew each other’s businesses very well, creating challenges when looking to conduct networking activities at the 2024 Annual Convening.	The Secretariat Unit organized one-on-one matchmaking sessions that utilized a holistic, whole-of-innovator approach to each pairing. Rather than utilizing the standard pre-convening survey, new questions were developed to explore growth, failures, and other elements of the innovators’ businesses that were not necessarily tied to their WE4F innovation.
Loss of institutional knowledge, experiences, and global resources due to the closure of USAID, resulting in the shutdown of key resource libraries (Agrilinks, Marketlinks, Climatelinks). The planned long-term sustainability of WE4F reports and guidebooks, innovator stories, and general program information involved USAID resource libraries that no longer exist.	The abrupt closure of USAID highlighted the need to store program resources and knowledge in different locations. Going forward, WE4F will ensure wider dissemination of products, store copies offline, organize webinars to further share program lessons learned, and, at the time of program closure, transfer ownership of the website and digital platforms to the appropriate party.

LOOKING FORWARD

KEY ROLE IN KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FOR NEW PROGRAMS

Over the course of the program, WE4F demonstrated that a structured blend of TA, catalytic funding, investment facilitation, and enabling environment support – along with a key focus on cross cutting themes like gender, environment, and BoP – can accelerate innovation and scale climate-resilient solutions. The program’s integrated approach of supporting SMEs through tailored capacity building, access to finance, and strategic partnerships set a benchmark for effective donor programming. Inspired by WE4F’s success, several new initiatives adapted and integrated the WE4F structure and/or principles into different sectors and geographies, amplifying impact on the SME ecosystem. Some of the examples are shared below:

Nordic Development Fund: a New Climate-Focused Challenge Fund

The NDF, in collaboration with Sida, is exploring the creation of a new climate-focused challenge fund that will incorporate lessons learned from WE4F and the Energy and Environment Partnership (EEP Africa). During the market and needs assessment phase, WE4F contributed comprehensive insights through Asian and African innovators that participated as primary information sources, articulating their future requirements for scaling climate-focused solutions. Additionally, WE4F Hub Managers provided valuable perspectives and lessons that drew from regional implementation experiences. During the wrap-up phase of WE4F, the Secretariat Unit will continue to share successes and learnings with the NDF team at regular intervals during the exploratory phase of the new fund.

Dutch Embassy in Egypt and Netherlands Enterprise Agency (Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO)): Egypt Sustainable Agriculture Innovation Hub (Agrovance)

Chemonics Egypt Consultants, a partner of the MENA RIH consortium, in partnership with the Dutch Embassy in Egypt and RVO, launched Agrovance, a two-year initiative to strengthen climate-resilient agribusinesses. Leveraging on WE4F's learnings and experience, the program focuses on accelerating 15 early-stage SMEs and scaling 12 mid-stage SMEs with tailored TA and financial support, in addition to facilitating access to financing, building Egypt-Netherlands business linkages, and establishing a sustainable agribusiness hub (following the WE4F hub model) for long-term impact.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO): Italy-Egypt Debt Swap Program

Ms. Annachiara Scandone, who is a Senior Project Manager at UNIDO, was part of the MENA RIH's Regional Advisory Body for innovator selection. Ms. Scandone and her team at UNIDO launched a €1 million program under the Egypt-Italy Debt Swap, targeting technology transfer in the circular economy for mid-to-late-stage firms. They took inspiration from WE4F by adopting a matching fund and TA model for technology transfer. Two WE4F alumni (Biomar and Chitosan) were selected for UNIDO's program. Co-designed with Egypt's Ministry of Environment, the program is now recognized as a successful model for debt swap initiatives.

Cewas: MajiFund and Regional Accelerators

Cewas, a partner of the MENA RIH consortium, established MajiFund, a blended finance and TA facility for water and sanitation (WASH) enterprises in Africa, and integrated WE4F methodologies. Through blended finance (i.e., soft loans, catalytic grants) combined with tailored TA, the facility supports WASH SMEs in strengthening business models, financial management, and operational capacity for scaling. Additionally, Cewas designed accelerator programs in Jordan with the Global Green Growth Institute, and in Iraq with the Coca-Cola Foundation, where they used WE4F-aligned entry criteria to ensure that earlier-stage enterprises were prepared for structured support.

DISSEMINATING LESSONS LEARNED

The aforementioned examples of the WE4F structure and activities being embedded into new programs demonstrate the replicability and scalability of the WE4F model. Lessons learned from WE4F's implementation can provide donors, as well as other innovation and climate finance actors, with methodologies and activity structures through which results can be accelerated, and innovation scaling opportunities explored.

Demonstrated adoption, coupled with USAID's closure, emphasizes the need for comprehensive knowledge dissemination to be at the forefront of program closure plans. Lessons learned, program recommendations, and implementation challenges with executed solutions, must be shared directly with water-energy-food nexus stakeholders as well as published and stored in diverse locations. In the remaining months of program implementation, Secretariat staff will explore information hosting mechanisms and pursue knowledge sharing through webinars, one-on-one exchanges, and the development of a comprehensive final report that focuses on providing design and implementation recommendations through a program lifecycle lens.

FINALIZING A STRUCTURED CLOSE-OUT OF WATER AND ENERGY FOR FOOD

Under the Bridge contract, the Secretariat Unit will work with the S/CA RIH and S/SEA RIH to conduct an orderly closeout of the global program. Key documents that will be produced over the remaining months include financial reports, a final narrative report, webinars on lessons learned and program recommendations, and audit reports.

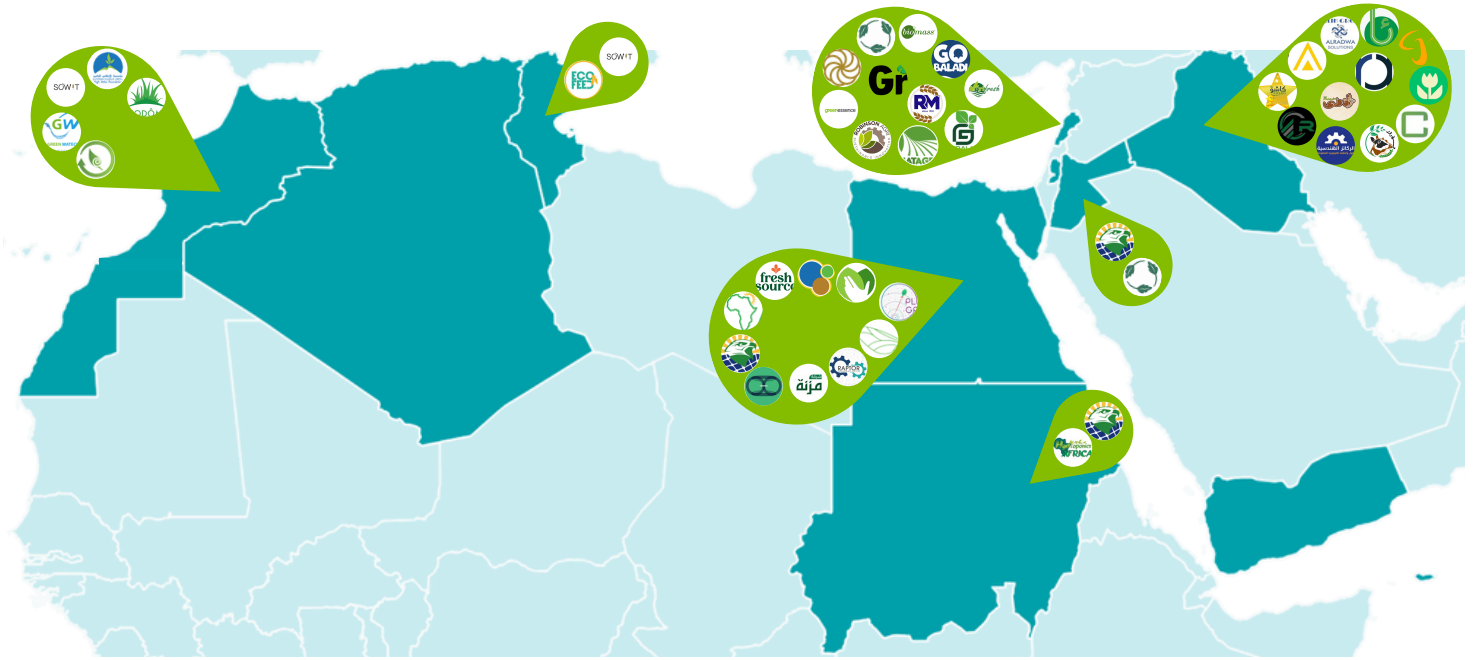
At the Bi-Annual Donor Meeting in November 2025, the program presented results to date, challenges and solutions, program reflections, and discussed future opportunities for scaling innovations. To further support new program creation, in the coming months the Secretariat Unit will provide customized knowledge-sharing sessions to Sida staff as well as the Nordic Development Fund, covering key themes like gender mainstreaming, climate resilience, BoP integration, and providing localized support to geographically and technologically diverse innovations.



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



MAP OF MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA INNOVATORS



- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Agrifresh
Produces sustainable ready-to-eat vegetable products for consumers.  Agrisolar
Provides easy-to-install solar irrigation systems  Ainda Agricultural Center
Develops solar-powered smart irrigation systems  Al Reef Mushroom
Produces, stores, and distributes two types of local mushrooms  Albu Saif
Uses hydroponics to grow barley for sustainable, cost effective cattle feed  Arez Plantation
Plants fruit-producing trees, installs drip irrigation, and produces soil mixes and organic compost  Biodôme
Provides biogas units to farmers as well as a compost packing and promotion service  Biomassr Ltd
Produces homegrown organic products for export  Biomass SAL
Increases organic food production through sustainable resource use  Chitosan Egypt
Manufactures a nature-based shrimp bio-fertilizer  Compost Baladi SAL
Provides a community-based, user-driven bio-waste disposal and composting solution  Cultivision
Provides real-time crop insights for farmers and optimizes irrigation through satellite technology  Ecofeed
Turns locally-sourced agricultural by-products into high-quality animal feed  Egymag
Turns vegetable market waste into bio-fertilizers and black soldier fly larvae into poultry and fish feed | <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Faraday
Designs affordable, efficient, and diversified energy resources for farmers  Freshsource
Bridges the gap between farmers' supply and off-takers' demand through contract farming  Garbaliser
Turns bio-waste into high-quality liquid fertilizer  GoBaladi
Works with local goat farmers to sustainably produce goat and dairy products  Green Eagle Tech
Provides farmers with financing for solar irrigation systems  Green Essence Lebanon
Provides solar energy to rural communities and farmers  Green WaTech
Offers a tested, safe, low-cost, and efficient solution for wastewater treatment and reuse for irrigating vegetables  Greenco
Produces compost utilizing innovative solutions to process agricultural waste into high-quality liquid fertilizer  High Atlas Foundation
Promotes subsidized trees among rural communities in exchange for carbon offsets  Hydroponics Africa
Manufactures, installs, and promotes customized hydroponic fodder and vegetable systems  Irma & Co
Makes and sells pepper paste made from peppers grown with drip irrigation  Kasho Company
Cultivates sunflower seed and utilizing cold-press technology to turn it into oil  Lombrisol
Uses microorganisms and worms to turn local organic waste into fertilizer and compost | <ul style="list-style-type: none">  LORK
Offers low-cost hydroponic fodder systems for livestock feed production, coupled with the integration of associated agricultural products  Mozare3
Provides farmers with access to financing and markets, as well as agronomy support  Mozna
Produces liquid organic fertilizers derived from biogas units and agricultural waste  Natagri
Turns low-grade fruit crops into high-value dried fruit products  Plug'n'grow
Designs and sells hydroponic technology solutions  Quinta Group (Robinson Agri)
Provides holistic irrigation and farming solutions  RAG
Supplies precision irrigation systems, greenhouses, seeds, and organic fertilizers.  Raka'ez Al Handasiyah
Uses smart fish farming technology to control the production environment  Raptor Engineering
Provides rural farmers with reliable and cost-effective solar pumping systems  Ras Al-Ain Sky
Offers renewable energy solutions for sustainable agriculture  Rim Mills
Has the first automated line of moughrabieh in Lebanon that harvests and reuses the water  SOWIT
Optimizing irrigation for sustainable production and market access  Zhany
Produces organic dried fruits, gluten-free flours, organic wheat flours, eco-friendly edible tableware, and vermicompost |
|---|--|---|

2024 SUMMARY

For the Middle East and North Africa Regional Innovation Hub (MENA RIH), 2024 was the peak year of activity, with 39 innovators active during the year and 35 still active at the close of 2024. The hub also onboarded 22 new innovators: two joining in 2024 after being selected during the first round of the Open Call for Innovations (OCFI) in 2023; 11 joining through the second round of the OCFI; and nine becoming part of the program through the second Iraq Call for Innovations (Iraq CFI 2).

For the Middle East and North Africa Regional Innovation Hub (MENA RIH), 2024 was the peak year of activity, with 39 innovators active during the year and 35 still active at the close of 2024. The hub also onboarded 22 new innovators: two joining in 2024 after being selected during the first round of the Open Call for Innovations (OCFI) in 2023; 11 joining through the second round of the OCFI; and nine becoming part of the program through the second Iraq Call for Innovations (Iraq CFI 2).

At the same time, 12 innovators from previous Calls for Innovations (CFI) – seven out of nine eligible CFI 1 innovators, four out of seven eligible CFI 2 innovators, and one of the Iraq CFI 1 innovators – chose to continue participating in the program beyond the expiration of their grant agreements. Their continued participation was due to a desire to benefit from technical assistance (TA) while reporting their impact through the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) process.

Following the escalation of conflict in Lebanon, the MENA RIH launched the Lebanon Call for Innovations (Lebanon CFI) for Lebanon-based food processors that were using water- and energy- efficient production processes and were able to increase their processing capacity through their existing infrastructure. The hub selected 15 grant-only innovators that were onboarded in early 2025.

The MENA RIH achieved an exceptional leap in results due to the growing impact of innovators who had joined earlier in the program, the ability to retain them, the impact of new innovators, and the inclusion of 2023 results that were audited in 2024. Key results from 2024 included:

- The share of women in key performance indicators (KPIs) related to end-users improving.
 - In 2023, 44,000 women end-users had been impacted. In 2024, that number tripled to 182,000.
 - In 2023, 6,000 women end-users experienced an increase in income, by the conclusion of 2024, the new result was 12 times larger, with 76,900 women end-users experiencing an increase in income.
- Tons of food produced reached a cumulative 10.6 million tons – almost two times the life of program (LOP) target.
- Carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (CO₂e) savings surpassed the 1-million-ton CO₂e target by 500,000 tons of CO₂e, reaching a cumulative 1.5 million tons of CO₂e saved.
- The share of innovators that successfully marketed their innovation with profit exceeded the 8% target by over six percentage points, reaching 14.8%.
- Investment mobilized reached a cumulative total of \$34.9 million U.S. Dollars (USD), surpassing the latest LOP target of \$34 million USD.
- Total energy savings in kilowatt-hours (kWh) reached more than double the 2023 results, at 3.7 billion kWh saved, which equates to surpassing the LOP target by 362%.
- Reduction in water consumption reached a total volume of 11.8 billion liters, 3 billion liters more than the LOP target.
- The number of end-users that experienced an increase in income exceeded the LOP target for the first time, reaching 323,000 end-users – 23,000 more than the LOP target.

Targets that were on track to exceed their LOP targets but did not, due to the USAID Stop Work Order (SWO), are:

- The number of end-users impacted, which reached 697,000 – just shy of the 750,000 LOP target.
- The share of innovators monitoring water or biodiversity, which reached 79.5%, half of a percentage point below the 80% target.

The only KPI that was off track at the time of the SWO, was the tons of food processed, which reached 4,800 tons of food processed, or 48% of the LOP target. The hub expected that through the Lebanon CFI food-processing innovators, this target would have become “On Track,” or been “Exceeded.”



Solar panels installed by Green Essence Lebanon (Lebanon) operate throughout the country.

CONNECTING RESULTS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Innovators at the MENA RIH contributed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in several ways:

By increasing end-user income through market access for end-users, facilitating the transition from diesel fuels to renewable and clean energy sources, and improving crop yields, innovators supported poverty reduction, which falls underneath SDG 1 (No Poverty). With productive land and knowledge of sustainable agricultural practices, farmers can produce more food, beyond a subsistence level, and earn income that improves their lives. Through digital innovations that provided information and analysis on farm productivity levels, efficient irrigation innovations that enabled farmers to grow crops in some of the driest regions on Earth, and fertilizer-producing waste management solutions that improved soil health, innovators were able to help end-users produce more food, effectively contributing to SDG 2 (No Hunger).

Many innovators took deliberate steps to target and empower women, helping improve women's engagement in the agricultural sector. The hub provided TAs, trainings, and webinars on various gender mainstreaming activities, from gender-focused marketing, to end-user financing designed for women customers. Their efforts contributed to SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

A common theme in the MENA hub's innovator portfolio was the importance of renewable and clean energy solutions, specifically solar-powered innovations. Innovators across the Middle East and North Africa provided access to technologies for base of the pyramid (BoP) end-users. Having saved millions of kWh, innovators contributed to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Coupled with the mission of saving energy, was the mission of saving water. Through waste-based fertilizer, hydroponic systems, efficient irrigation, and other water-saving practices, innovators contributed to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). The cumulative savings of water, energy, and other resources contributed to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).











Through transitions to renewable and clean energy sources, sustainable agricultural practice promotion, and increased accessibility of climate-smart practices and technologies, MENA innovators contributed to SDG 13 (Climate Action).

The MENA RIH embodied WE4F's integrated holistic approach to sustainably scaling solutions by nurturing partnerships both internally, among its innovators, and externally with institutions that would support innovators in the long-term. The RIH also strived to develop hub-level partnerships with other organizations, promoting knowledge sharing, enabling environment work, and end-user financing. Efforts by innovators, as well as the hub, to create a more connected MENA region – particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) supporting smallholder farmers – contributed to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).



Left to right: Rim Mills' (Lebanon) factory produces moghrabieh. Arez Plantation (Iraq) grows trees and seedlings with locally produced compost.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND RESULTS TO DATE

Key Performance Indicator	Life of Program Target (2020-2025)	Results to Date (2020-2025)	Status
 Share of supported innovators that successfully marketed their innovations with profit	8%	14.8%	Exceeded
	25% are led by women	38% women	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users using WE4F innovations	750,000 end-users	697,000 end-users	On Track
	187,500 women end-users	182,000 women end-users	On Track
	187,500 BOP end-users	284,000 BOP end-users	Exceeded
 Total mass of food produced as a result of WE4F innovations	5.5 million tons	10.6 million tons	Exceeded
 Total mass of food processed as a result of WE4F innovations	10,000 tons	4,800 tons	Off Track
 Total energy saved in the food value chain as a result of the use of WE4F innovations	800 million kWh	3.7 billion kWh	Exceeded
 Total volume of water consumption reduction as a result of WE4F innovations	8 billion liters	11.8 billion liters	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users that experience an increase in income	300,000 end-users	323,000 end-users	Exceeded
	90,000 women end-users	76,900 women end-users	On Track
 Share of innovators & other stake-holders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity	80%	79.5%	On Track
		Monitoring water only	31.8%
		Monitoring biodiversity only	6.8%
		Monitoring water and biodiversity	40.9%
 Value of investment in U.S. Dollars that WE4F innovators mobilized from external sources	\$34 million USD	\$34.9 million USD	Exceeded
 Total of GHG emissions saved by WE4F innovations	1 million tons of CO2e	1.5 million tons of CO2e	Exceeded
		End-users using climate-mitigation innovations	106,000 end-users
		End-users using climate adaptation-related innovations	33,000 end-users

Of the indicators – and associated breakdowns – listed in the KPI chart with LOP targets, the MENA RIH exceeded 9 out of 14 LOP targets, was “On Track” to surpass four targets, and was “Off Track” for one target.

The results for “number of smallholder farmers using WE4F innovations” became “On Track” in 2024 due to a change in end-user reporting that enabled innovators with business-to-business innovations to report end-user results collected by their suppliers, who provided a signed document certifying the number of end-users. Updated MEL activities also resulted in improved end-user data collection for “number of end-users with increased incomes” as five MEL TAs provided to innovators resulted in a better understanding of innovations’ impact on incomes. The result for “share of innovators and other stakeholders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity” improved from “Off Track” to “On Track” due to the hub’s investment in activities that increased innovators’ understanding of what monitoring entails and how to conduct such activities.

In 2024, several indicators had their LOP targets increased due to hub results surpassing the targets in 2023. The KPIs with increased targets included: total mass of food produced (4 million tons increased to 5 million tons); total energy saved (718 million kWh increased to 800 million kWh); total volume of water consumption reduction (5 billion liters increased to 8 billion liters); total investment mobilized (\$20 million USD increased to \$34 million USD); and total GHG emissions savings (300,000 tons of CO₂e increased to 1 million tons of CO₂e).

The continued success of “total energy savings” and “total GHG emissions savings” was tied to Egyptian energy innovators’ increased sales in 2024, while “total volume of water consumption reduction” was related to irrigation innovators and farm input innovators’ growing impact. For “total mass of food produced,” the improved results were due to three key reasons: 1) the growing impact of earlier innovator cohorts; 2) the introduction of new innovator cohorts that were able to complete one data reporting period with the program; and 3) an audit of data and results from 2023. To ensure the best possible investment mobilization results, the hub aimed to provide investment support to 16 innovators but surpassed this goal by supporting 22 innovators throughout the program. This long-term support built a pipeline of innovators pursuing investment, enabling the hub to surpass their updated “total investment mobilized” LOP target.

Despite reducing the LOP target for “total mass of food processed,” the hub was unable to meet the target due to several issues that arose in 2024 and 2025. In 2024, the hub was unable to identify viable food-processing organizations during the OCFI process. In 2025, the USAID SWO caused an early shutdown of the MENA RIH, which prevented the completion of data collection and reporting activities for the Lebanese CFI food-processing innovators.

INNOVATOR UPDATES

2021 REGIONAL COHORT



Biomass received TA to develop climate risk assessments and adaptation measures, which translated into training materials for their network of smallholder farmers. The company expanded its operations by relocating to a new packing house in a more strategic geographic location, improving logistics and market access. Biomass also received a Strategic Planning TA to define a growth-oriented roadmap across its various business lines. The innovator participated in a traceability session led by the Enabling Environment Unit, which supported the development of systems required for export certifications. These initiatives built on Biomass’s broader ambitions to scale its impact, reach new markets, and enhance its sustainability practices.



Chitosan Egypt received strategic planning support to identify its optimal growth path, including expansion to Saudi Arabia, scaling in Morocco, and/or focusing on the Egyptian market. Tied to the strategic planning support was an organizational development TA focused on aligning internal capacities with their growth plans. The company launched a revenue-generating research and development (R&D) unit for public researchers and partnered with TechnoServe to enhance strategic crop practices. It also initiated several key partnerships: one with the Egyptian Food Bank for demo plots in Beheira and Minya; one with Mozare3 to pilot pepper cultivation; and one in Saudi Arabia to test export potential through recently established demo plots. In 2024, Chitosan Egypt achieved certification as an “Organic Inputs Production Unit” and its Co-Founder was awarded third place at the Cartier Women’s Initiative Awards, reflecting the company’s growing recognition in sustainable agriculture.



Compost Baladi received a strategic partnership TA. At an earlier stage in their journey, the innovator restructured its operations by outsourcing machinery sales, expanding its sales team, and empowering middle management to lead consultancy engagements. This shift allowed top management to concentrate on core production and sales activities in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. As part of its organizational strengthening, the company hired a part-time Chief Financial Officer. With a strategic focus on growth within the Gulf Cooperation Council – particularly in Saudi Arabia – Compost Baladi consolidated its production at a single site and expanded its consultancy work, which became a key area of business.



GoBaladi received a TA to support the expansion of its facility, helping scale production and serve a wider base of end-users, including shepherds and consumers. The innovator also benefited from an investment readiness TA, which focused on preparing key investment documents and initiating conversations with potential investors. These efforts laid the foundation for future growth and positioned GoBaladi for stronger engagement with funders and partners.



Green Essence Lebanon received a market assessment and strategic guidance TA focused on identifying renewable energy technologies suitable for the local agricultural sector. The innovator also participated in a carbon credits TA, which provided key insights into the scale and requirements needed to effectively enter and benefit from the emerging carbon credits market. To strengthen its customer reach, Green Essence worked on its marketing strategy. In 2024, they launched a strategic expansion TA to explore new markets and optimize its operational and financial models for long-term growth.



High Atlas Foundation delivered training initiatives focused on legal education, environmental conservation, and solar-powered infrastructure, supporting under-served communities through capacity building and sustainable solutions. Building on this foundation, the innovator planned to expand the use of solar technologies and scale its legal and environmental training programs to reach more remote, and marginalized, regions.



The Quinta Group (previously Robinson Agri) received a strategic expansion TA to help scale its operations and improve its impact. The purpose of the TA was to strengthen the company's business strategy, explore new markets, enhance production capacity, and improve internal systems to ensure sustainable growth. The innovator also received a market research and analysis TA in select African countries, which supported the company's presentation of its profile to new partners and the expansion of its regional presence. Through WE4F matchmaking, The Quinta Group secured a contract with fellow innovator Agrifresh to provide greenhouses for a hydroponic system. The company also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik to offer training and internships for students, while contributing to the modernization of the university's agricultural curriculum. The Quinta Group received certifications from the United Nations Global Compact for the climate change module and the acceleration model, strengthening its data collection practices and fast-tracking its growth strategy.



SOWIT received a digital marketing strategy TA, which helped enhance its outreach efforts and strengthen brand visibility across key markets. Following a 2023 partnership that enabled financial institutions to offer agri-input loans to farmers using SOWIT's smart agriculture tools, in 2024, the company attracted investment from the International Finance Corporation. The investment supported SOWIT's continued expansion into financial technology and enabled the company to scale its impact through data-driven services tailored to farmers' needs.

2022 REGIONAL COHORT



Agrisolar received a market assessment TA to explore export opportunities in Morocco, Lebanon, and Jordan for their locally-manufactured mounting structures. In 2024, they participated in the Solar and Storage Live Egypt exhibition, representing Canadian Solar, Dyness, Solis MEA, and INVT Electric. They also signed a distribution deal with Dyness, strengthening their portfolio with energy storage solutions. Agrisolar actively promoted solar energy in Egypt through market education, workshops, and hands-on projects. As part of the Center for Renewable Energy in Aquaculture (CeREA) Project with WorldFish and Norad, they implemented solar systems for aquaculture farms. The company also secured funding from FranklyGreen to continue building technical and financial capacity through the Climate Finance Accelerator. They also expanded into large-scale projects through partnerships with Africa Solar, Solarize, and Solar Installer. Agrisolar has received a MEL TA to strengthen its ability to track impact, measure performance, and make data-driven decisions for continuous improvement.



Biodôme co-financed pilot educational projects aimed at under-served youth, working in collaboration with local educational associations to promote environmental awareness. The company also partnered with additional associations to scale its pedagogical tools focused on environmental education. On Women and Girls in Science Day, Biodome was recognized by the Union for the Mediterranean for its contribution to inclusive education. In 2024, the innovator re-assessed its business model and product offerings to improve pricing competitiveness and explore new partnerships across the regional market.



Egymag received a strategic planning TA that supported the development of a five-year roadmap, including opportunity mapping across four key areas: expansion to Saudi Arabia through a joint venture; increasing production capacity in Egypt; scaling the Nature2Nature project to reach 2,000 women by 2026; and strengthening overall financial health and profitability. The company also received an investment readiness TA to refine its financial model, improve its pitch deck, and connect with potential investors. A study on the Nature2Nature project helped assess its impact and governance, leading to a \$27,000 USD grant from the non-governmental organization (NGO), Nahdet El Mahrousa, to deploy rearing boxes for women. In 2025, Egymag planned to expand its capacity to process 30-35 tons of organic waste daily, an expansion from its current processing ability of 12-15 tons of organic waste daily. The company was also preparing to launch two new products: Nematomag, a natural nematocide, and Chitimag, a natural anti-fungal. Through the Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness Technical Assistance Facility by the British Embassy in Egypt, Egymag received financial and technical assistance from TechnoServe to strengthen its team structure, enhance hiring processes, and improve the quality of candidates across key departments. From the MENA RIH, Egymag also received a gender TA to promote gender inclusion within its operations and strengthen its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusive workplace practices.



Green Eagle Tech received an investment readiness TA, including a feasibility study, financial and valuation models, and the development of a data room. The TA also facilitated investor meetings, site visits, and term sheet reviews. The company secured a \$2.5 million loan term sheet from Bamboo Capital and is currently in discussions with equity investors to determine the optimal investment structure. Regionally, Green Eagle Tech expanded its footprint by opening a legal entity in Algeria, partnering with Contec and Kher Group in Mauritania, launching a water collection and solar energy project in Northern Sudan, and initiating an over-net project in Nigeria. The company also established a new partnership with iCARDA and the Egyptian Armed Forces Engineering Authority. In 2024, Green Eagle Tech prepared to launch a hydroponic vertical farming system in collaboration with Swedish company, Grow Pipes, and had plans to locally manufacture the system in Egypt. A valuation TA was planned, but the USAID SWO prevented its completion. The SWO also prevented the implementation of plans to begin local sprinkler production to reduce the cost of their rain irrigation systems.



Green WaTech received a strategic planning TA that helped define a clear roadmap for nationally, and internationally, scaling its operations. Building on the foundational TA, the innovator expanded its wastewater treatment projects, particularly the FISO series (a low-tech, solar-powered filtration system) in Dakhla and Marrakech (Dounia Land), and partnered with Azura to deliver sanitation solutions for villa developments. Green WaTech also broadened its regional sales. In 2024, the company gained international recognition when they were selected as a Top 10 finalist in the African Business Heroes competition, securing a \$100,000 USD grant; and when they won First Prize at the Cartier Women's Initiative Ceremony. The company was continuing to scale its FISO technology, with ongoing improvements to compact unit functionality and plans for further regional collaborations. Green WaTech also received a MEL TA to enhance its ability to measure impact, track progress, and use data to improve decision-making and project outcomes.



Hydroponics Africa was forced to halt its planned activities in Kassala, Eastern Sudan, due to the rapidly evolving and insecure situation in the region. Following discussions with the hub to determine a path forward, the innovator shifted its focus to humanitarian efforts. In collaboration with UNHCR and local camp coordinators, Hydroponics Africa delivered hydroponic systems to support Sudanese refugees residing in Kenya, continuing its mission to provide sustainable food solutions under challenging circumstances.



Irma & Co completed a market entry TA for Egypt, which included in-depth market research and analysis. As a result of the TA, the innovator successfully placed its products in five new retail outlets. Building on this momentum, Irma & Co expanded to the United States through a new partnership that will make its products available on Amazon. In parallel, the company worked with World Central Kitchen and local NGO, Sawa Blessed, to provide 30,000 meals per daily to displaced families in Southern Lebanon. To support its growing operations, Irma & Co relocated to a new warehouse and launched a strategic planning TA to guide the company's growth across its diverse business lines. Irma & Co also received a MEL TA to strengthen its impact measurement, improve data-driven decision-making, and enhance overall project performance.



Left to right: Ecofeed (Tunisia) advertises their products at an event. Plug'N'Grow end-users hold crops they grew with the innovator's hydroponic system.





Mozare3 received two traceability sessions from the Enabling Environment Unit. The innovator made significant strides in 2024, expanding both its partnerships and visibility. Mozare3 signed a strategic partnership with the National Bank of Egypt to launch a contractual, agricultural financing program, aimed at improving access to financing for smallholder farmers. It also partnered with RAI-TECH to implement a smart irrigation system across its farms and collaborated with Delphy on the tailor-made training (TMT) project to build extension staff's knowledge of innovative agricultural practices. Mozare3 provided a demo plot for Delphy and Plug'n'Grow to showcase hydroponic systems. The innovator also launched its Freelancer Agronomist Program, in partnership with the Promotion of Rural Incomes Through Market Enhancement (PRIME) project of the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation. Mozare3 gained national recognition through features on TV programs "المليون سيزرع من" and "المغامر," which highlighted the company's contributions to contract farming and crop supply chain development. The company also signed a partnership with Heinz, which started with 50 acres and planned to expand after the first product batch. In collaboration with Connect Money, Mozare3 launched the Mozare3 Card, simplifying agricultural transactions and promoting financial inclusion for farmers and stakeholders. Mozare3 participated in, and contributed to, national and international events: they exhibited at Salon Internationale de l'Alimentation (SIAL) Paris 2024; participated in the Arab SME Summit; organized the third edition of the Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Festival in Fayoum; were featured as a speaker at the Catalyst Accelerator Program Demo Day event; participated as panelists at the Power X Summit in Lebanon; and served as judges at the SONO Competition. Mozare3 also benefited from a gender TA to strengthen gender inclusion across its operations, aiming to make its services more accessible and better tailored to the needs of both women and men in the agricultural sector.



Raptor Engineering received an end-user financing TA, which laid the groundwork for a potential partnership with Commercial International Bank (CIB) Egypt to offer financing solutions for Raptor's clients. Building on the financial models developed through the TA, Raptor secured loans for end-users in collaboration with Crédit Agricole – a development that addresses financing needs for 30–40% of their client base. The hub also completed a strategic planning TA that focused on opportunities for Raptor to scale up their operations. Raptor started expanding their business by offering installation-as-a-service, targeting new customer segments (i.e., large agricultural enterprises, industrial sector actors with on-grid solutions) and integrating outsourced drip irrigation to their solar systems. The company also signed a contract with the Sustainable Agriculture Service Provision Enterprise Network (SASPEN) project, supported by the Netherlands Embassy in Cairo which provided TA and valuable networking opportunities.

2024 IRAQ COHORT



Al Reef Mushroom received a mushroom halls design and production advisory TA and a compost factory design TA, which will assist the company with their expansion to four new, fully-operational mushroom rooms. Additionally, they received an organizational capacity TA to enhance their standard operating procedures (SOPs) and budgeting processes.



Albu Saif rejoined the MENA RIH through the Iraq CFI 2, after participating in the Iraq CFI 1. They received TAs focused on improving SOPs and budgeting, as well as chicken nutrition capacity building.



Cultivision received an organizational capacity TA aimed at improving internal systems and budgeting, and a TA to develop their web portal and mobile application. The innovator started expanding to new markets in Kurdistan and Southern Iraq. They started implementing new projects through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme, and Netherlands Embassy in Baghdad.



Faraday received a software product development TA focused on financial and accounting management, and a TA for organizational capacity support.



Kasho Company responded to customer feedback by launching a new 3-liter product size. The innovator received a TA on marketing strategy and organizational capacity to support its growth and improve operations.



LORK received an organizational capacity TA, along with a marketing and sales TA, to strengthen its internal operations and improve engagement with smallholder farmers for its hydroponic systems.



RAG received multiple TAs covering organizational capacity, business development for cash flow management, and investment readiness through financial literacy. They also received support for a Power BI reporting platform. The innovator launched a greenhouse manufacturing facility in Baghdad with investor support. RAG started expanding their operations in various ways – creating a new customer segment by approaching poultry farms, opening a new branch in Erbil, and increasing the production capacity of greenhouse and center pivot irrigation systems.



Raka'ez Al Handasiyah received a TA for organizational capacity and fish nutrition to strengthen its internal systems and enhance the quality and efficiency of its aquaculture feed solutions. The company was able to expand their fish production to 17,000 fish, adding three times the original capacity to their tanks.



Ras Al Ain Sky received TAs on organizational capacity and business development, as well as a business modeling and cashflow management TA. The innovator signed MoUs with agricultural associations in Salah Ad Din, Ninawa, and Kirkuk to expand outreach. By partnering with RAG, Ras Al Ain Sky now complements its solar energy systems with center pivot irrigation systems and greenhouses, providing integrated solutions for agricultural development. A partnership with Key Card gives them a competitive edge by enabling end-users to access financing through installment plans.



Zhany received organizational capacity TA and contracted new TAs on vermicompost production advisory, sales, and marketing.

Unlike the other cohorts, there are limited outcomes for the Iraqi innovators due to the USAID SWO preventing the completion of some TA instances and data collection. The hub was unable to complete TA instances for the Iraqi cohort because they were funded through a combination of USAID and Sida funding that made the hub unable to separate the work and complete it based on only one budget.

2024 REGIONAL COHORT



Agrifresh extended their agreement with the World Food Programme, continuing to provide fresh produce to around 5,000 students in schools. The innovator participated in a gender TA that organized a series of workshops that concentrated on identifying current efforts on, and new opportunities for, gender inclusion. They received an investment readiness TA that included a financial analysis of historical performance, the development of balance sheets and cash flow statements for previous years, and the preparation of a 2025 budget. They also received a governance TA focused on strengthening the company's financial and corporate governance structure, including the setup of an enhanced Board of Directors. Agrifresh received a resource efficiency TA to understand the benefits of potential investments. They also participated in a traceability session led by the Enabling Environment Unit to meet export certification requirements. On the technical front, Agrifresh received a TA to optimize production protocols for iceberg lettuce, aiming to improve yield and reduce losses. They finalized and launched production using their new hydroponics system, starting with Lollo and Oak lettuce varieties.



Ainda Agricultural Center rejoined the MENA RIH as part of the OCFI Cohort 2024, following the successful completion of their Iraq Cohort 2022 participation. The innovator received an export strategy TA aimed at strengthening the team's capacity on export requirements, including supply chain analysis, regulatory frameworks, and product evaluations. They also received an investment readiness TA focused on providing a comprehensive review of their financial model components to support financial analysis, including assessing profitability by business segment.



Arez Plantation Site received a technical capacity TA to enhance the team's ability to establish their own composting facility, transitioning from traditional practices to a modern, more efficient compost production system.



Biomassr received an organizational capacity TA, after which Biomassr developed tailored organizational charts to support current operations and future growth. The innovator signed new agreements with Nahdet El Mahrousa and other NGOs to install portable biogas units and support food processing in various governorates. Biomassr also received an end-user financing TA to assist them with a financial model for their biogas units and received assistance with preparing a presentation deck to be used when approaching financial entities. After connecting with potential partners during the 2024 Annual Convening, Biomassr started planning to expand to Zimbabwe and Rwanda. The innovator also started preparing to establish a new production line using pyrolysis technology to convert agricultural waste into biochar and wood vinegar.



EcoFeed received a resource efficiency TA to improve its production and operational systems, and participated in a Gender Up training to promote gender-inclusive practices. The innovator also received a cash flow management TA to help improve how the company plans, tracks, and manages its finances. EcoFeed expanded into southern Tunisia with new sales in Kébili and is actively exploring entry into Gulf markets. In recognition of its innovation, EcoFeed secured third place in the She Goes Green competition and was featured on Tunisian television. The company continued its regional expansion and operations scale-up, they installed a solar energy system to enhance sustainability and installed advanced production equipment. They also started working on the development of animal feed for camels and horses.



Garbaliser received a marketing and sales TA to boost outreach and improve deal-closing strategies. Through a gender TA, the innovator explored ways to tailor messaging to women end-users and began drafting a gender-sensitive human resources (HR) manual. The MENA RIH facilitated market linkages with buyers in northern Lebanon, which included the review of initial product samples. Demand for their waste collection system grew, with regular monthly orders from international NGOs like Oxfam. Garbaliser also received a cashflow management TA to optimize its financial cycle, alongside a TA to develop SOPs for future franchising. The innovator received a carbon credits assignment to assess opportunities in carbon markets.



Greenco received a marketing and sales TA that provided a detailed market study and a go-to-market strategy, setting the stage for expanded market entry. Through a gender TA, the innovator explored ways to engage more women farmers and began drafting a gender-sensitive HR manual. They received an investment readiness TA that supported the development of a pitch deck for investor outreach, while a cashflow management TA helped improve financial performance. Greenco also participated in a carbon credits assessment to explore future opportunities in environmental markets. On the technical side, the innovator received a product development TA to enhance product quality, alongside a resource efficiency TA focused on reducing water and energy use across operations.



Freshsource received a resource efficiency TA to assess water and energy usage, propose savings measures, and develop a reduction plan. A traceability training improved their systems to meet high-quality and international market standards. They also partnered with the World Food Programme to support farmers in Luxor and market sun-dried tomatoes. The innovator signed new agreements with Metro Markets, Semiramis Intercontinental, and major restaurant chains including Crown Plaza, M Sherif, and Zaatar W Zeit. Freshsource secured impact investment from Village Capital and earned Global GAP and ISO 9001:2015 certifications. The Freshsource leadership continued to gain national recognition – being featured on Sherif Amer on MBC Group, and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Omar Emara, speaking at the Malaikah EAIA panel on agritech innovation. Co-founder, Farah Emara, served on multiple judging panels and was recently appointed to the Egyptian Ministerial Committee for Entrepreneurship, highlighting their growing influence in Egypt's innovation and startup ecosystem.



Lombrisol received a supply chain management TA to enhance operational efficiency across its processes. The innovator also received a cash flow management TA to enhance its financial planning and stability. The company started expanding its presence with a new reseller in Taroudant and exploring partnerships, including one with Chitosan Egypt and potential bulk sales to Aroma Herb in Spain. They won the Global Green Tech prize, awarded by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Moroccan Ministry of Environment, receiving 150,000 Moroccan Dirham (about \$16,436 USD) in funding, a carbon footprint assessment, and sustainability training. Looking ahead, Lombrisol is pursuing regulatory joint ventures and preparing to launch new product lines to support continued growth and market expansion. They have established a physical facility, with a laboratory for micro-organism production.



Mozna received a marketing strategy TA to develop a comprehensive strategy, supporting growth and market penetration locally and regionally. They showcased their offerings at the Food Africa and Middle Egypt Expos and trained 150 farmers monthly through their agronomist team. The company signed a supply agreement with the Sugar and Integrated Industries Company and partnered with PlantFi and Egymag to expand product distribution. Additional partnerships with three cooperatives and a retailer in Beni Suef have strengthened their regional footprint. Mozna won the 2024 Environmental Sustainability Award at Egypt's Entrepreneur Awards. They also benefited from an investment readiness TA to develop a compelling investor pitch deck, a cashflow management TA, and a TA to explore landscaping services in the real estate sector.



Natagri became a grantee-innovator after previously joining the MENA RIH as a 2022 Regional Cohort, TA-only innovator. The innovator received multiple TAs, including: logistics digitalization for better traceability; support for fruit drying and processing to improve product quality, reduce post-harvest losses, and create added value for smallholder farmers; marketing and branding support to understand product demand and positioning; a TA on HR development and organizational strategy to strengthen its team structure, improve internal processes, support long-term growth, improve retention, and introduce compensation based on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) ; a gender TA with follow-up recommendations on gender-sensitive HR policies and outreach strategies; and an investment readiness TA to help refine their investor pitch and facilitate a site visit.



Plug'n'Grow received a market study TA to develop a strategy for a new greenhouse “kit” for smallholder farmers. They partnered with Delphy to deploy hydroponic demo plots across Egypt and started preparing to launch the Grow-net platform. The innovator collaborated with ACSR, Schneider, World Food Programme, Misr Elkhair, and the Islamic Bank to design affordable dome systems. They also partnered with the Arab Academy for research and student projects. Plug'n'Grow operated in Saudi Arabia through two hydroponic projects and started exploring the exportation of grow serums to Saudi Arabia and Morocco. In Lebanon, they started consulting with AgriFresh. The innovator also received a data room management TA.



Rim Mills received a marketing and branding TA, but the work was only partially completed, as it was suspended following the SWO. They also received an organizational development and financial planning TA that improved processes across finance, HR, and business development. The innovator participated in a gender TA with follow-up actions including a gender-sensitive HR manual and targeted marketing strategies for women end-users. Rim Mills received a marketing and sales TA to strengthen their business-to-business and business-to-consumer outreach. They also received a TA to support ISO 22000 certification, boosting credibility and market access.

DIGITALIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Digitalization in agriculture continues to grow in the Middle East and North Africa. In 2024, the MENA RIH supported nine innovators that offer digital technologies or platforms that increase financial inclusion, market access, and climate resilience.

MOROCCO

SOWIT is a leading precision agriculture company that applies AI and remote sensing for the optimization of irrigation, fertilization, and energy use at the plot level. Their tools enhance climate resilience and support financial inclusion by providing risk data to institutions like Crédit Agricole and the International Finance Corporation which in 2023 backed microfinance institution (MFI) loans tied to SOWIT-enabled smart irrigation. In 2024, a digital marketing TA led to 1,000 new farmer leads in the first month. Over the past two years, SOWIT strengthened its user interface and user experience, expanded software infrastructure, and introduced an integrated end-user financing model to broaden access across Africa. SOWIT also actively contributed to the digital agriculture ecosystem through its participation in high-profile events, such as the Africa CEO Forum and webinars on AI in agri-food systems.

EGYPT

Mozare3 operates a contract farming platform that connects smallholder farmers with aggregators and exporters. In 2024, in partnership with the National Bank of Egypt, it launched the Mozare3 Card, enhancing access to digital payments and credit. Mozare3 continues to expand its digital agronomy services and risk modeling tools to support farmers' decision-making and financial inclusion. It also participated in CGIAR's consultation workshop on Egypt's agri-tech ecosystem.

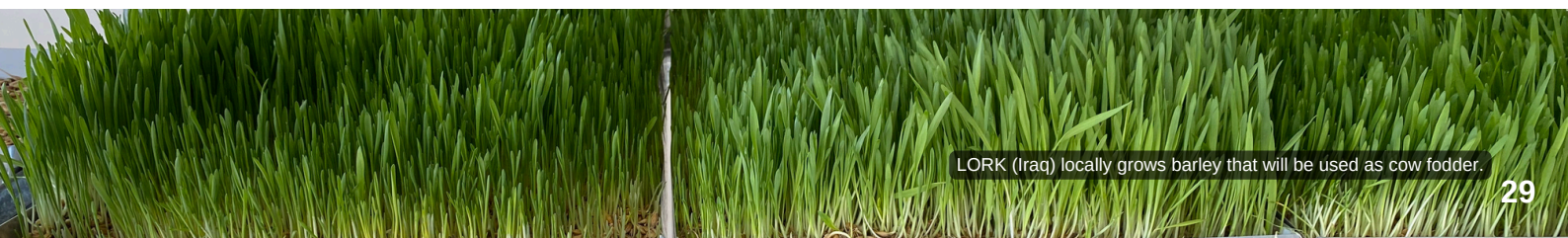
Freshsource is a digital supply chain platform connecting farmers to business-to-business buyers in retail and the hotel, restaurant, and café/catering (HORECA) industries. The company uses data to optimize logistics and reduce post-harvest losses. In 2024, it received a resource efficiency TA to enhance energy and water use across storage and processing facilities, and started investing in digital traceability technologies.

Plug'n'Grow designs scalable hydroponic systems with integrated digital monitoring tools for water and nutrient control. In 2024, the company received a marketing and sales TA to improve outreach to smallholder farmers. Plug'n'Grow partnered with a local tech startup and started exploring collaboration with the Dutch firm, Robinson, to incorporate advanced control systems into its product line.

IRAQ

Ainda Agricultural Center introduced smart poultry systems using automation and sensors to optimize conditions on smallholder farms. With TA support, they developed export strategies and investment readiness tools, including financial forecasting and SOPs.

Cultivision uses remote sensing through IrriWatch to monitor soil health, crop performance, and irrigation needs. They started developing their own digital platform to offer farmers real-time insights, which was supported by a TA.



LEBANON

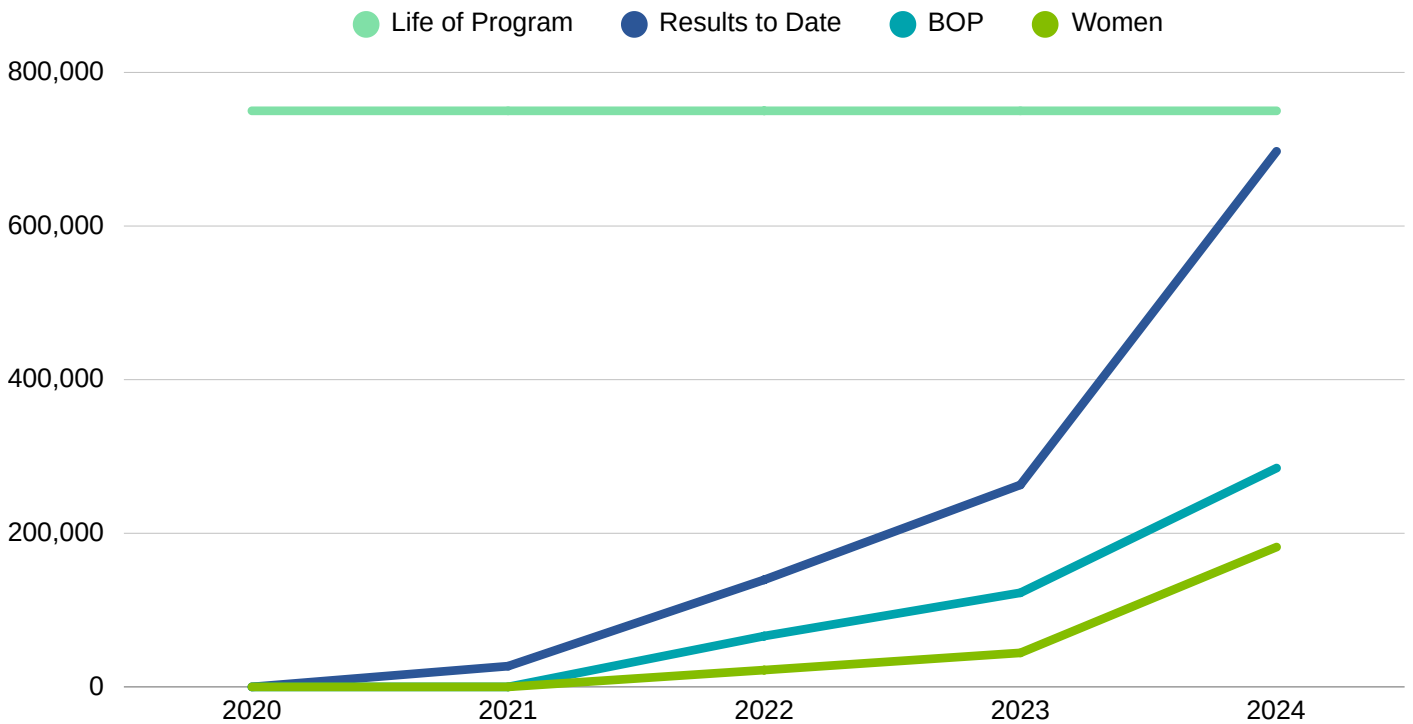
GoBaladi received a marketing TA that included a digital content strategy. The support enabled the company to strengthen its direct-to-consumer communications and boost sales through targeted online engagement.

Agrifresh markets fresh produce through in-house and partner e-commerce platforms. It received a digital marketing TA to grow online sales and enhance customer engagement. The company also completed a digitized hydroponic system that was designed by Plug'n'Grow and included configurable fertigation units and climate sensors. They started the process of linking the system to a dedicated in-house app for farm management.

Natagri, a grower and exporter of grapes, cherries, and dried fruits, received a TA to digitalize its logistics systems, enhancing traceability and operational efficiency.

RESULTS TO DATE
END-USERS IMPACTED

Number of WE4F End-Users



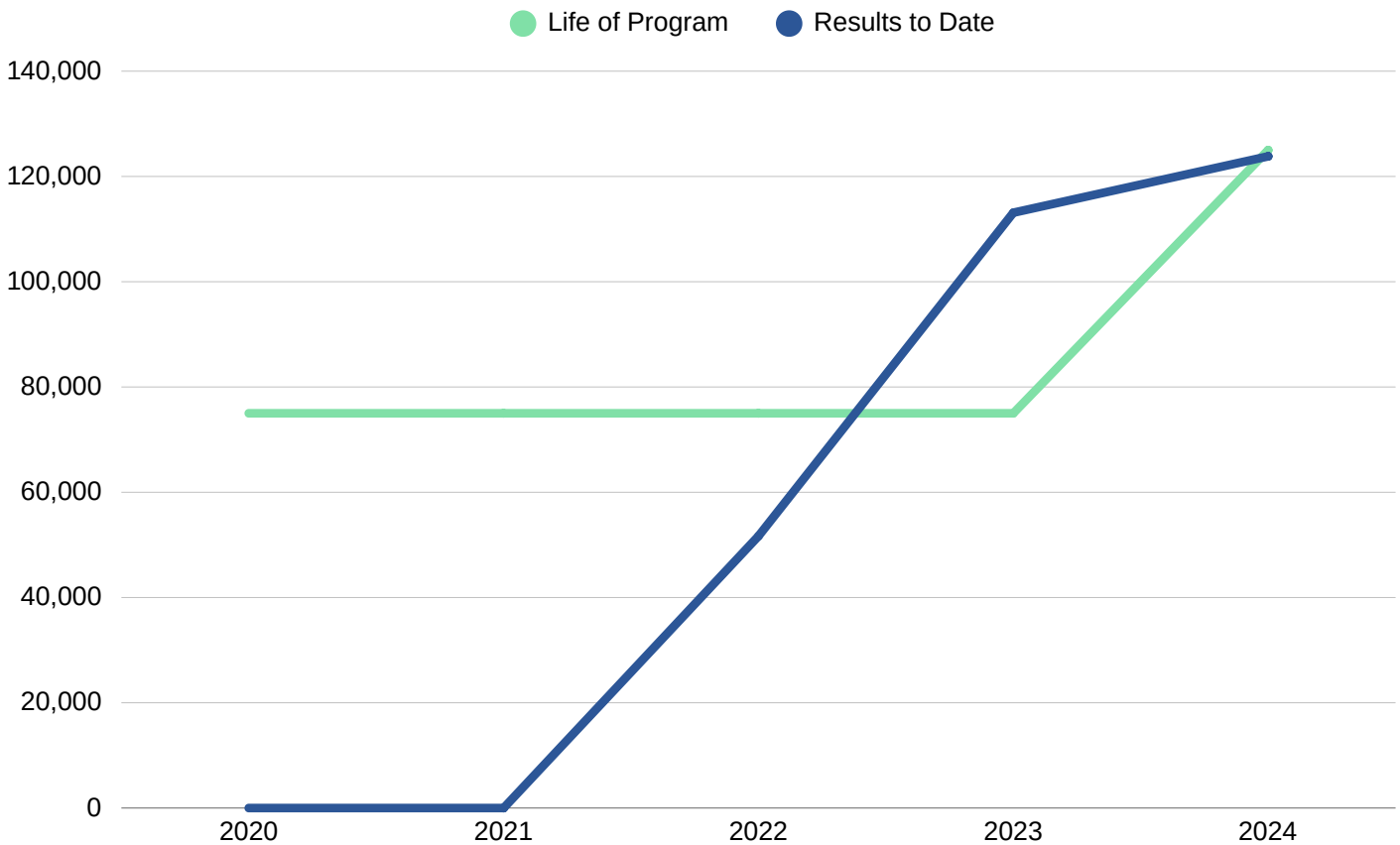
For the MENA RIH, 2024 was a remarkable year, as the cumulative number of end-users climbed to over 697,000, or 93% of the LOP target. The top five contributing innovators in 2024 were one CFI 1 innovator, Compost Baladi (Lebanon), two CFI 2 innovators, Green Eagle Tech (Egypt) and Mozare3 (Egypt), one Iraq CFI 2 innovator, Al Reef Mushroom (Iraq), and one OCFI innovator, Agrifresh (Lebanon). Compared to their men-led and/or -owned peers, women-led and/or -owned innovators contributed 37% of the end-users in 2024.

A key reason for the significant increase in number of end-users was a change in the documentation requirements for reporting the number of impacted end-users. As highlighted in the 2023 Annual Report, given the nature of countries and organizations in the MENA region, it was extremely difficult to meet documentation requirements related to traceable identifiers for every end-user. For innovators who operate a business-to-business model, it was uniquely challenging as they needed to acquire such information from their retailers/distributors who would possibly not be tracking such data. In 2024, the amended documentation requirements began, allowing innovators to submit signed letters from their retailers/distributors sharing and confirming the number of business-to-business end-users impacted by the innovator.



Left to right: Crops irrigated by solar irrigation from RAG (Iraq) grow in a protected environment, Kasho Company (Iraq) employee bottles sunflower oil.

Number of End-Users Using Financing Mechanisms



Of the active MENA innovators, 42% implement end-user financing mechanisms. The most popular technologies by innovators who offer end-user financing services, are focused on solar, biogas, greenhouses, hydroponic systems, and alternative agricultural inputs. Exact end-user financing mechanisms vary, from enabling access to agricultural financing and concessional financing through banks (where available), to consumer financing options and payment solutions tailored to farmers' cash flows, such as installment plans and payments deferred to the post-harvest time period.

In 2024, innovators significantly expanded and systematized their end-user financing services, integrating them into their core business models. Many innovators also strengthened their internal capacity for end-user financing by hiring dedicated team members to manage and scale these services. Some examples of innovators and their end-user financing mechanisms include:

- SOWIT (Morocco) utilizes deep plot-level data to develop alternative risk assessment methods, enabling banks and international financial institutions to extend financing to productive and resource-efficient farmers. By supporting banks in assessing farmers' creditworthiness and providing farmers with digital advisory services to mitigate risks, SOWIT helps reduce default risk and incentivizes agricultural financiers and green concessional lenders to expand their reach to smallholder farmers. Currently, SOWIT has partnered with the International Finance Corporation and several banks in Morocco to channel financing to smallholder farmers. In 2024, the innovator started offering these services as a core offering for development finance institutions and banks.
- Mozare3 (Egypt) partnered with two major public banks in Egypt to provide value chain financing for farmers. Their contract farming model, combined with agronomy support, helps these banks lower perceived risks and increase financial accessibility for smallholder farmers.
- Innovators selling capital intensive solutions, such as solar irrigation systems (Green Essence Lebanon (Lebanon), Raptor Engineering (Egypt), Green Eagle Tech (Egypt), Ainda (Iraq), and Agrisolar (Egypt)), hydroponics systems (Plug'n'Grow (Egypt)), biogas units (Biodome Maroc (Morocco), Biomassr (Egypt)), greenhouses (The Quinta Group (Lebanon)), resource-efficient poultry equipment (Ainda), and small-scale larvae breeding units (Egymag (Egypt)), offer payment facilities and/or access to financing from banks and consumer financing solutions. Raptor Engineering, Green Essence Lebanon, The Quinta Group, Mozare3, and Biomassr have also incorporated end-user financing as part of bundled solutions, using it as a key differentiator for their solutions.
- Green Eagle offers special payment terms to farm owners that install an efficient rain irrigation system with, or without solar energy. Payments are delayed until after the harvest season, at the minimum.
- Some innovators primarily focus on offering payment facilities to help improve affordability and farmer cash flows. These innovators primarily provide alternative agricultural inputs, such as bio-based fertilizers, fungicides, and compost. They include Chitosan Egypt (Egypt), EcoFeed (Tunisia), Lombrisol (Morocco), Egymag (Egypt), Compost Baladi (Lebanon), Garbaliser (Lebanon), and Greenco (Lebanon).

The MENA RIH played a pivotal role in helping innovators understand the potential of end-user financing to expand their market reach and enhance their solution offerings. By providing market data, showcasing the business case for end-user financing, and facilitating peer-to-peer learning through workshops, unconference sessions, and one-on-one meetings, the hub equipped innovators with the necessary tools to integrate end-user financing into their business models. Additionally, international examples of business models were leveraged during training sessions at the Regional and Annual Convenings.

Since the start of WE4F, 15 TAs have focused directly on end-user financing, supporting the development of business models and go-to-market strategies. In 2024, two TAs specifically supported innovators in creating business models and operational plans to expand their end-user financing services. The TAs included financial statement analyses to assess the profitability of offering end-user financing, mapping relevant banks, non-banking institutions, and their associated products and programs, and, in some cases, facilitating introductions for partnership opportunities.

To continue enabling innovators' implementation of end-user financing mechanisms, the hub also supported the improvement of the regional end-user financing enabling environment by providing three TAs to financing institutions – Al Majmoua (a leading MFI in Lebanon), Attawfiq Microfinance (Morocco), and CIB Egypt (Egypt). Innovators, such as Green Essence Lebanon, Biodome Maroc, Biomassr, and Raptor Engineering, now have direct relationships with these financial institutions along with a clearer understanding of how to work effectively with financial institutions and navigate their requirements. The institutions gained increased confidence in collaborating with pre-vetted WE4F innovators as vetted, credible solution providers and anchor partners. And institutions' access to vetted farmers through the WE4F innovators improved end-users' bankability and repayment capacity.

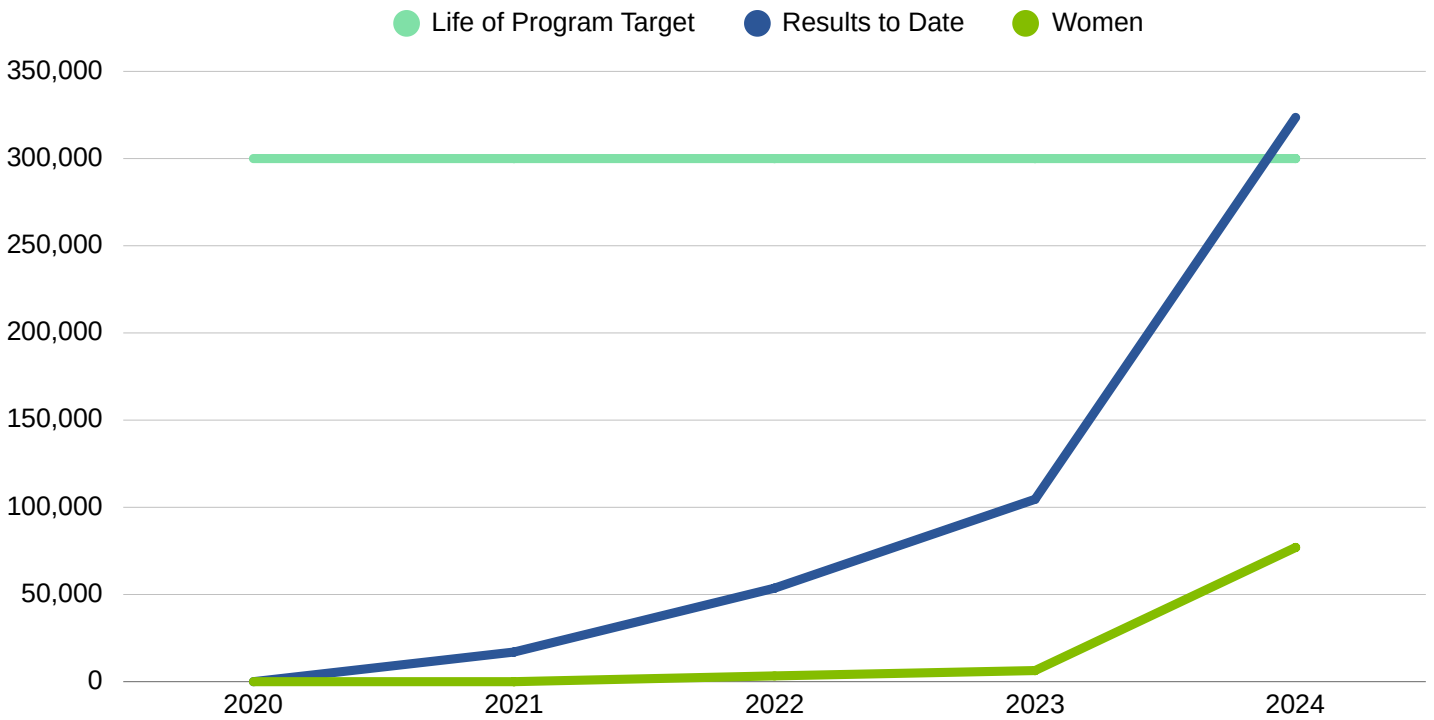
For end-users, SMEs, and financial TA providers within the wider regional environment, the work between the MENA RIH, the innovators, and the financial institutions highlighted that end-user financing TAs focused on the enabling environment, and coordination with SMEs providing solutions and technologies to farmers, demonstrate clear use-cases for financial institutions. The TAs showed that farmers can become credit worthy and bankable when they adopt water-energy-food solutions that enable them to reduce operating costs, increase production volumes, or enhance quality, thereby improving their income. If a financial product is designed to technically account for these parameters, it can be effectively rolled out and scaled.

In addition to the financial institutions' TAs, the hub prioritized strategic collaborations. In Morocco, the MENA RIH and Attawfiq Microfinance launched a call to work with solar irrigation and biogas solution providers to offer specialized loans for smallholder farmers and livestock breeders. Attawfiq aimed to reduce farmers' initial investment burden by providing flexible loan options for solar photovoltaic (PV) and biogas systems, piloting this financing program with select companies that would also act as service providers. In Egypt, during the last quarter of 2024, an MoU was developed with CIB Egypt to help scale the reach of concessional agriculture financing to smallholder farmers seeking to adopt various water-energy-food solutions to improve their productivity and climate resilience.



Clockwise: Zhany (Iraq) turns local produce into dried products, leftover waste will become fertilizer. Al Raka'ez Al Handasiyah (Iraq) end-user monitors their fish farming activities with the innovator's Internet of Things system. Chitosan (Egypt) end-user shows his crop and the innovator's organic fertilizer that was used to grow it.

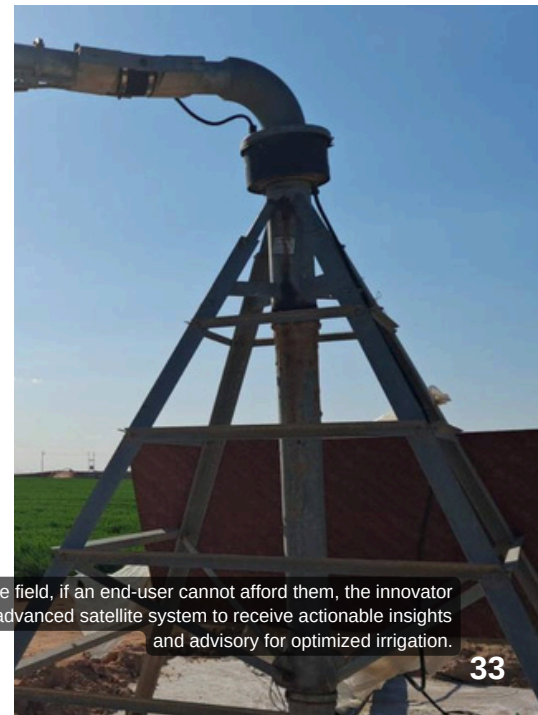
Number of WE4F Innovation End-Users with Increased Incomes



Similar to the number of end-users impacted, in 2024 the MENA RIH saw a significant improvement in the number of end-users with increased incomes, surpassing the LOP target by 20,000 end-users. Overall, 46% of reported end-users experienced an increase in income.

The top contributing countries were Egypt with 71% of the result and Lebanon with 28.5% of the result. These countries had the most end-users because of the innovators based in each country and the types of innovations that they offer. In Egypt, Green Eagle Tech (48% of the result), Agrisolar (7%), and Raptor Engineering (4%) offer solar irrigation solutions that reduce usage of diesel-fueled irrigation systems. Mozare3 (11%), another Egyptian innovator, provides end-users with access to financing and supplier markets. In Lebanon, Compost Baladi (28%) turns biowaste into compost that farmers can use as a substitute for expensive imported raw inputs.

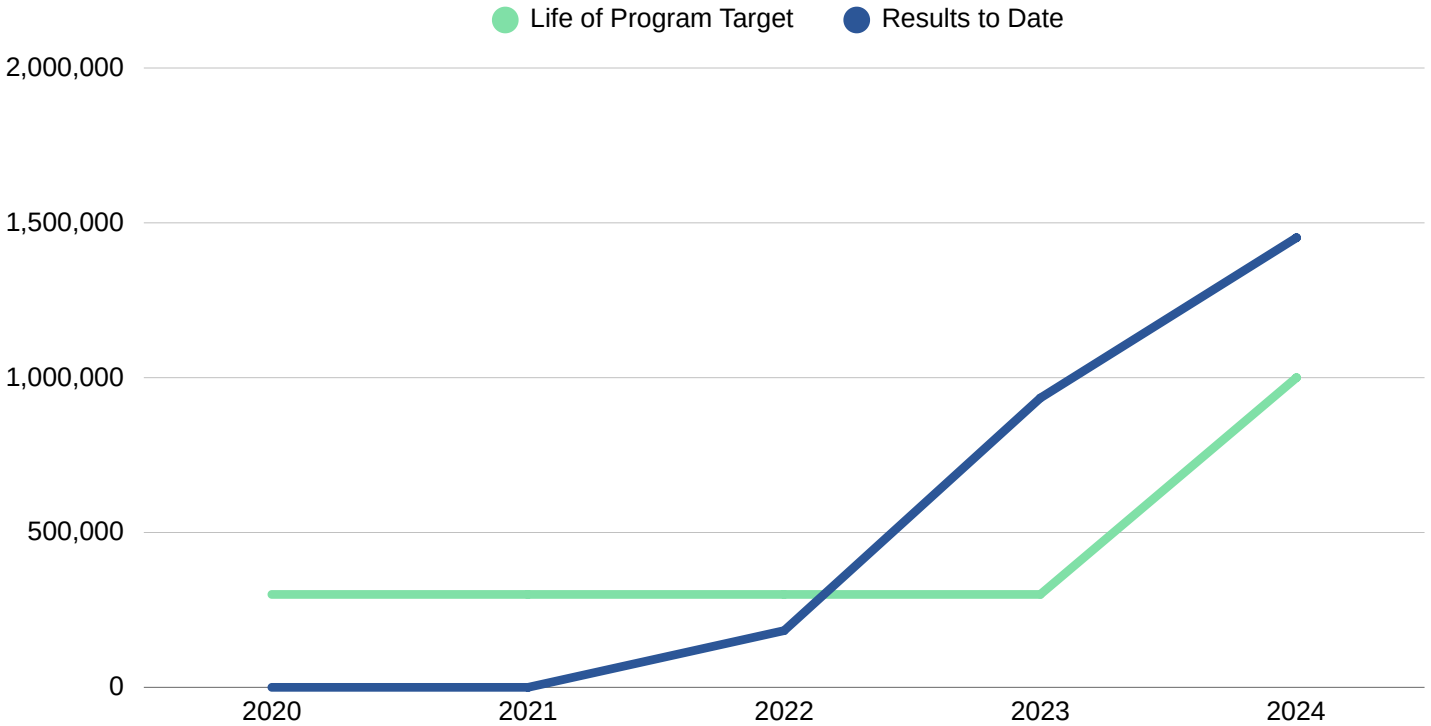
The significant increase in number of end-users with increased incomes was partially due to improved MEL reporting in 2024. Four of the five largest contributing innovators received MEL TAs with surveys that sampled innovators' end-user populations. Through the surveys, the MEL Team and hub learned that significant percentages of the end-users were reporting increased incomes. A ratio was applied to the innovators' total number of end-users to determine the final number of end-users with increased incomes.



Top: Al Reef Mushroom (Iraq) mushroom growth in action. Bottom: Solar panels from Ras Al-Ain Sky (Iraq) in the field, if an end-user cannot afford them, the innovator offers payment facilities. Right: Irrigation pipes in the field; Cultivision (Iraq) end-users will use the innovator's advanced satellite system to receive actionable insights and advisory for optimized irrigation.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCED

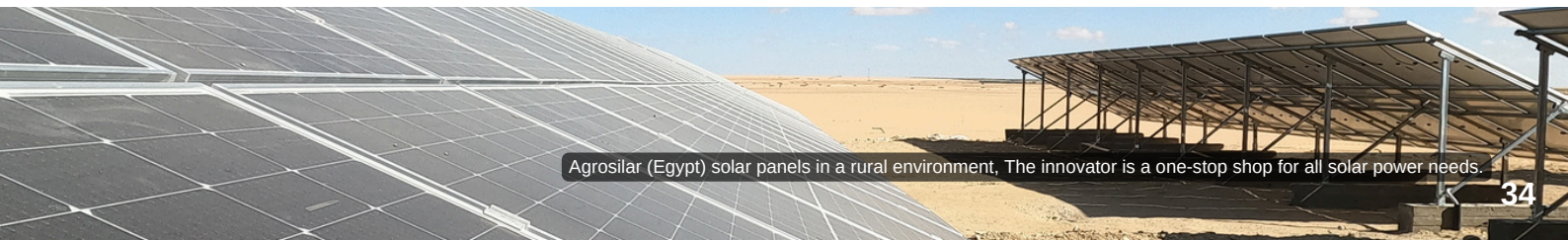
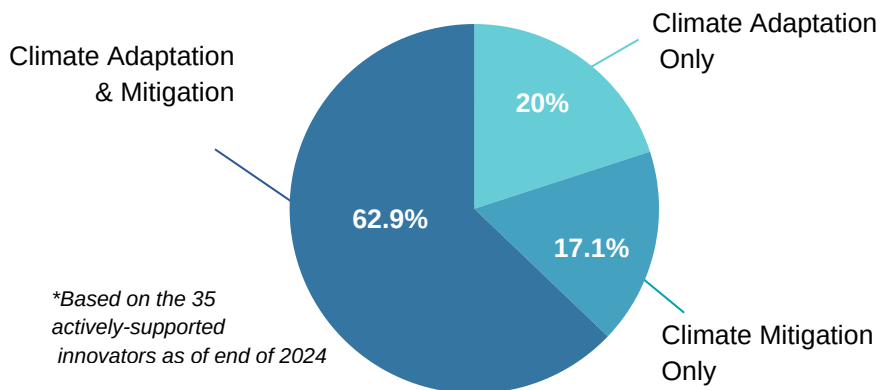
Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions Saved by End-Users Through the Use of WE4F Innovations (tons of carbon dioxide emissions equivalent (CO2e))



The primary source of greenhouse gas emissions reduction by end-users was the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, particularly solar photovoltaic (PV) technologies. Although the LOP target was tripled in 2024 to 1 million tons of CO2e, the hub still surpassed the target, with a cumulative result of almost 1.5 million tons of CO2e. In 2024 alone, end-users using WE4F-supported innovations saved over 520,000 tons of CO2e. To date, women-led and/or -owned innovators contributed to 15% of the total CO2e savings.

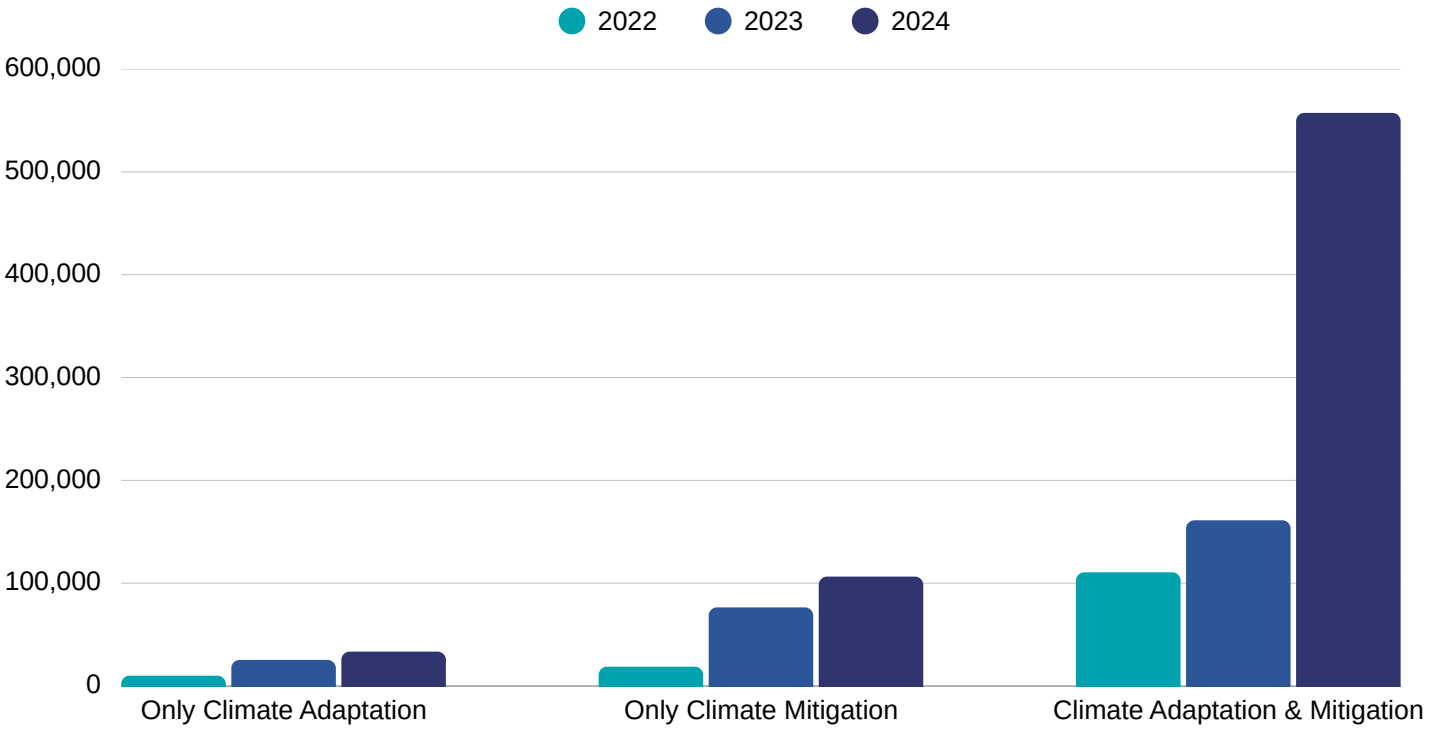
In 2024, the top contributing innovators were Green Eagle Tech (Egypt) with 60%, Agrisolar (Egypt) with 16%, High Atlas Foundation (Morocco) with 10%, Raptor Engineering (Egypt) with 4.11%, and Green Essence Lebanon (Lebanon) with just under 4%. Reflecting on the innovation categories that contribute to CO2e savings, solar-powered irrigation innovations contributed the most savings in 2024 (64%), followed by energy production and infrastructure (21%). This was partially because innovations that save CO2e by diverting waste from landfills are not reported due to the methodologies used by the program.

Percent of Innovators Doing Climate Adaptation and Mitigation*



Agrosilar (Egypt) solar panels in a rural environment, The innovator is a one-stop shop for all solar power needs.

Number of Smallholder Farmers and Other End-Users Using a Climate Adaptation, Climate Mitigation, or an Innovation that Tackles Both



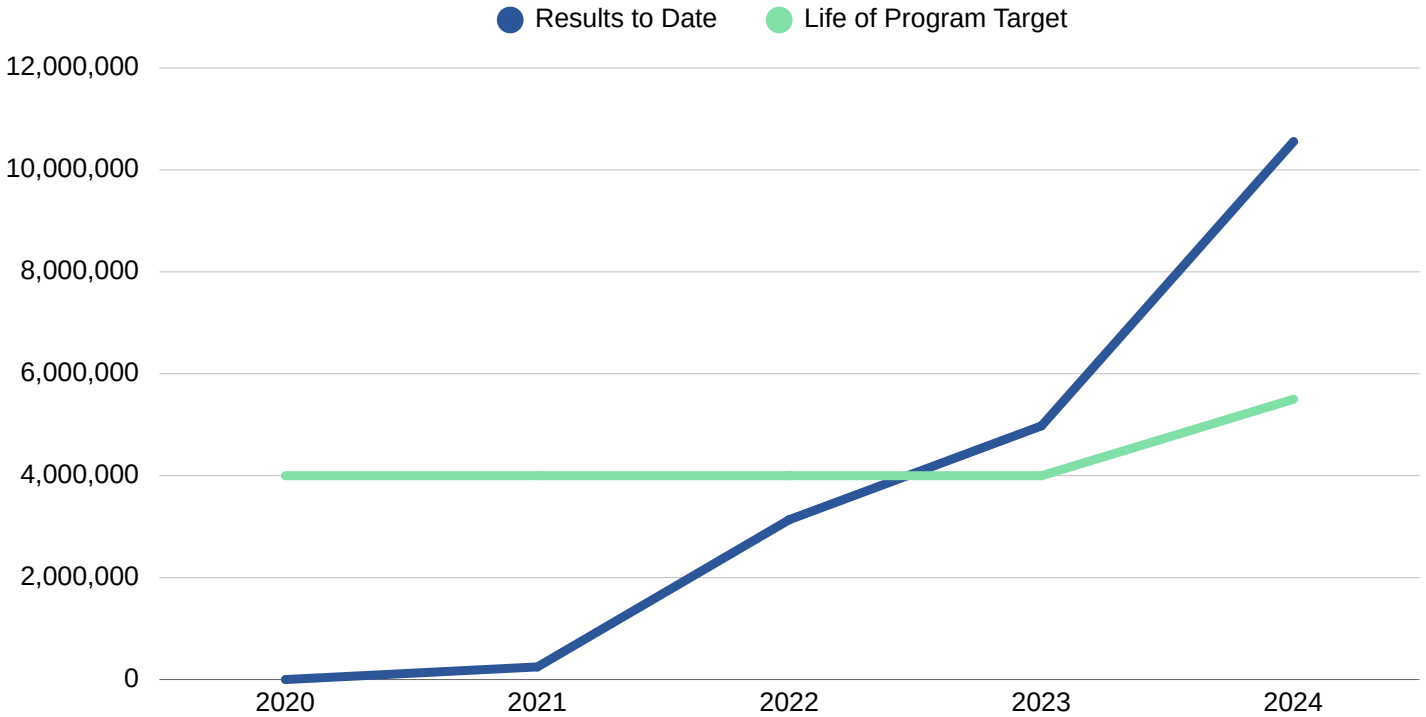
The majority of the MENA RIH's innovators deployed and scaled solutions that focus on both climate mitigation and climate adaptation, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in realizing diverse environmental impact. Climate adaptation innovators, such as The Quinta Group (Lebanon), offer solutions like drought-resistant crop varieties, efficient irrigation systems, controlled farming methods (e.g., greenhouses), or wastewater treatment systems for irrigation, like Green WaTech (Morocco). Climate mitigation innovators, like Raptor Engineering (Egypt) and Green Essence Lebanon (Lebanon), deliver solar irrigation systems and energy efficiency solutions.



Clockwise: Egymag (Egypt) black soldier flies grow in the innovator's system, they will become livestock feed and their waste will become fertilizer. SOWIT (Morocco) employee prepares to collect data for their digital advisory services. Biodome (Morocco) builds a biogas digester for an end-user. Compost Baladi (Lebanon) employee explains their composting solution to an interested individual.

PRODUCED AND PROCESSED MORE FOOD

Food Produced with WE4F Innovations (tons)



In 2024, food production reached a cumulative 10.6 million tons, doubling the 2023 achievements. This exceptional leap in results was due to the growing impact of CFI 1 and CFI 2 innovators, the ability to retain them, the impact of new innovators, and the addition of 2023 results that were audited in 2024.

The top performing innovators were Green Eagle Tech (Egypt) with 35% of total food produced in 2024, Agrisolar (Egypt) with 21%, The Quinta Group (Lebanon) with 10%, SOWIT (Morocco) with 9%, and Platfarm (Egypt) with 5%. These innovators’ services and technologies fall within the categories of solar-powered irrigation, efficient irrigation, and digital solutions.

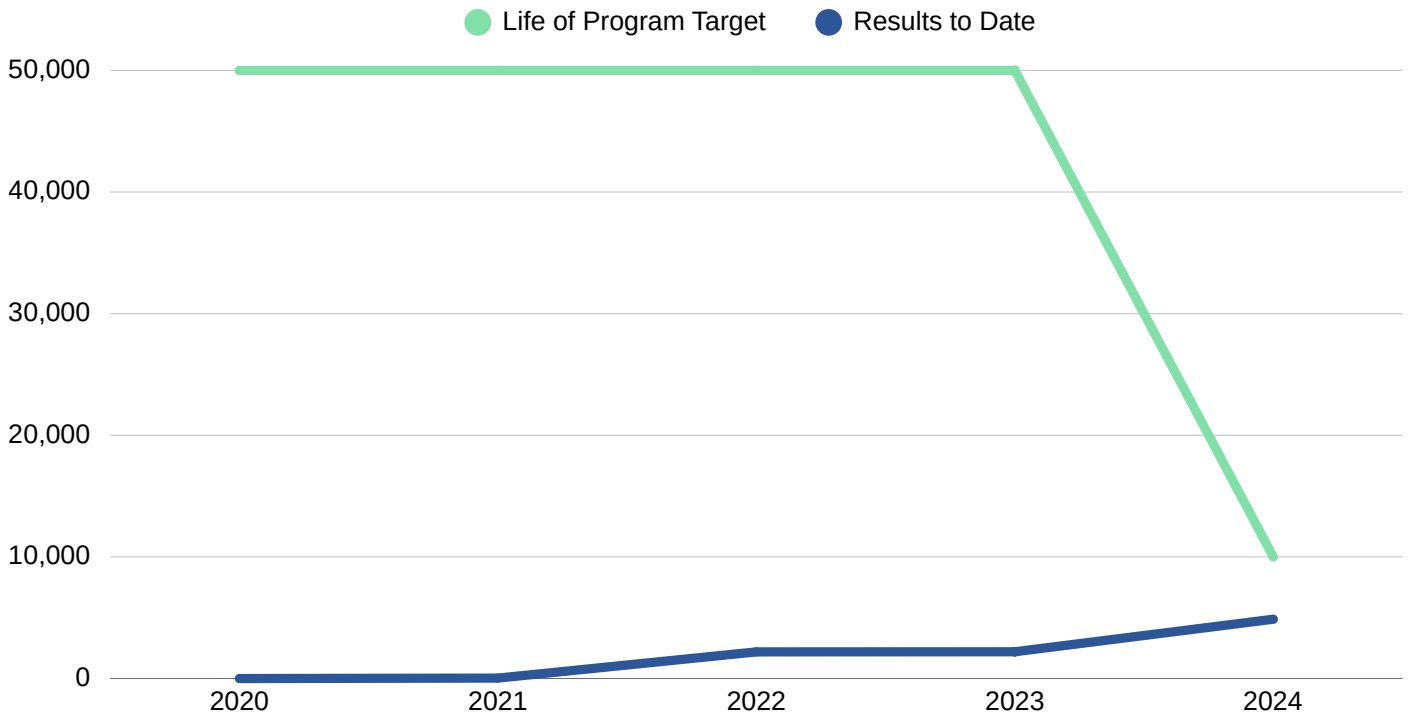
Egypt saw the most food production by end-users due to the number of innovators in the country as well as the type of agriculture supported by such innovators. For instance, Green Eagle Tech focuses on reclaimed lands in the Egyptian desert that produce crops like potatoes, wheat, sugar beet, and alfalfa. Not all Egyptian innovators focus on the same type of crops or end-users. Raptor Engineering and Egymag mainly work with end-users based along the Nile River, while Mozare3 focuses on contractual farming for strawberries, sesame, and peppers.

The OCFI innovators are not highlighted in these results as they only had one reporting cycle at the time of program closure. This was a particular challenge for compost and biofertilizer innovators whose end-users apply their innovations in the last quarter of the year and do not have production results until three-to-six months later.



Green WaTech (Morocco) employees pause to take a photo during the building of a wastewater treatment system.

Total Mass of Food Processed as a Result of WE4F Innovations (tons)



In 2024, the LOP target for food processed was reduced from 50,000 tons to 10,000 tons. The reduction was the result of three CFI rounds that resulted in only two food-processing innovators, signaling a lack of eligible organizations in the region. Following the amended business-to-business end-user data collection and verification process, the MENA RIH increased outreach to food processors during the Iraq CFI 2 and OCFI. The hub was able to onboard four food-processing innovators with water and energy efficiencies – two through the Iraq CFI 2 (Al Reef Mushroom and Kasho Company) and two through the OCFI – Agrifresh (Lebanon) and Rim Mills (Lebanon). Another three OCFI innovators were onboarded who had food processing activities as part of their innovations – Biomassr (Egypt), Freshsource (Egypt), and Natagri (Lebanon).

With the exception of CFI 1 innovator, GoBaladi, all contributing innovators were part of the Iraq CFI 2 and the OCFI. Agrifresh contributed 43% of the total food processed result, Rim Mills contributed 28%, Kasho Company contributed 19%, GoBaladi contributed 6%, and Freshsource contributed 4%. These innovators fell into two innovation categories – agricultural processing, and aggregation and storage.

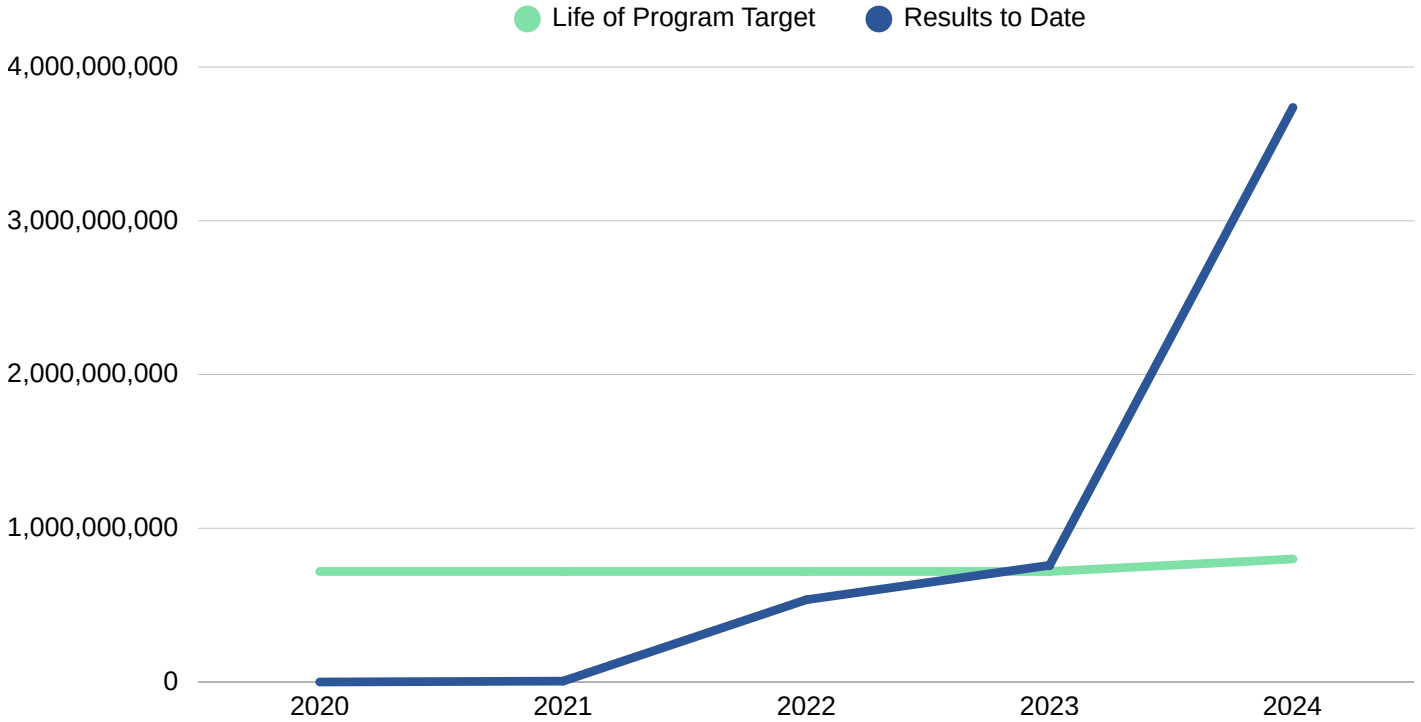
In October 2024, Israel invaded Lebanon, which impacted the businesses of Agrifresh, GoBaladi, and Rim Mills. Following the escalation of the conflict, in the second half of 2024, the hub launched the Lebanon Call for Innovations (Lebanon CFI) to onboard food-processing innovators operating in Lebanon. The initiative came at a crucial time, as the ongoing conflict had severely disrupted food supply chains and heightened existing pressures on agricultural productivity and livelihoods. Through the Lebanon CFI, the hub focused on supporting businesses that were implementing practices to produce more food with fewer resources, enhancing efficiency while addressing key challenges such as food security, water scarcity, and energy reliability. The MENA RIH onboarded 15 innovators who received grants. Originally, the hub planned to collect data from the innovators, believing that it would result in the surpassing of the LOP target, but due to the USAID SWO, the data collection was not completed.



Left to right: A man collecting crops grown with the Hydroponics Africa (Sudan and Kenya) hydroponic system. Mozna (Egypt) employee explains the innovator's solution to interested attendees at a conference.

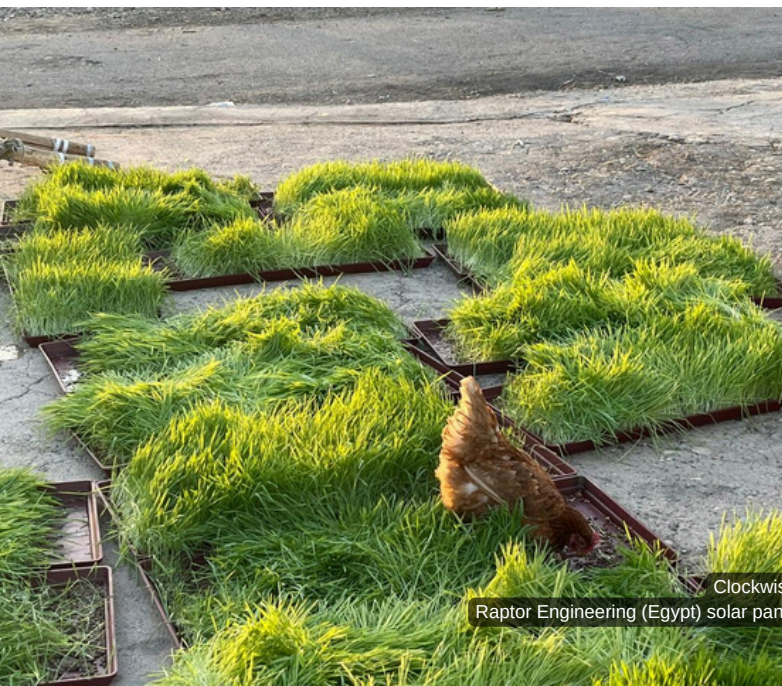
USING LESS ENERGY AND WATER

Energy Saved (kilowatt-hours)



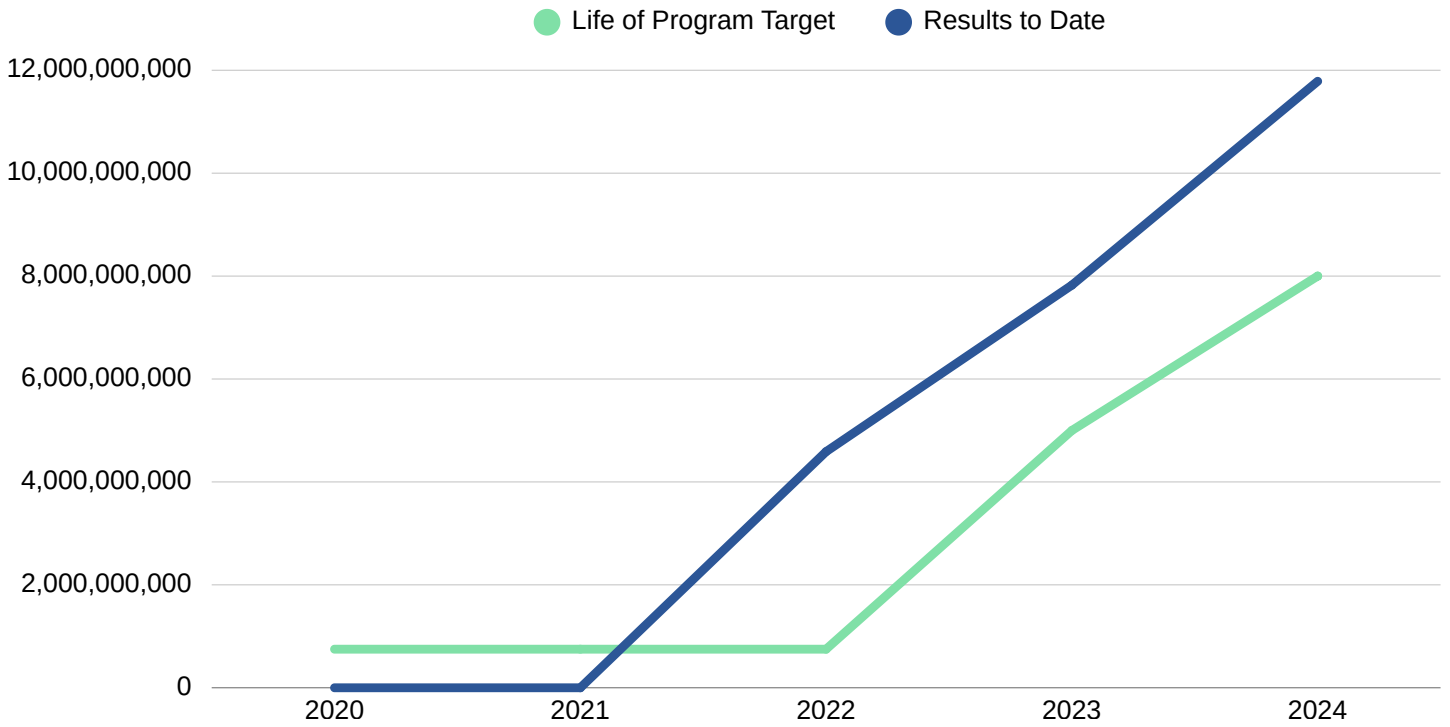
In 2024, the hub, well past its LOP target for energy savings, continued to see new results from innovators, reaching a cumulative 3.7 billion kWh. The top contributing innovation categories were energy production and infrastructure with 60% of the 2024 results and irrigation with 37%. Almost all savings (99%) were in Egypt as it had most of the energy-saving innovations. Overall, the increase in energy savings was due to an expansion in sales in 2024. Egyptian innovators, Agrisolar (59% of the energy savings), Green Eagle Tech (34%), and Raptor Engineering (3%) all had increases in sales.

The main energy-saving innovation category was irrigation. Green Eagle Tech offers solar energy coupled with rain irrigation mounted on locally-produced concrete poles. Agrisolar offers a one-stop shop for solar-powered irrigation with locally assembled solar panels and in-house designed and produced mounting structure. Due to the cost associated with solar-powered irrigation and efficient irrigation systems, Green Eagle Tech and Raptor Engineering also offer end-user financing mechanisms. Raptor Engineering worked with various MFIs and financial institutions to offer loans to farmers. Green Eagle Tech installs their system's infrastructure on large agriculture plots with payment facilities offered to the owner, or lessee, and a partnership with a company who will buy the crops. The landowner, or lessee, will sub-rent small plots to small-scale farmers who benefit from the infrastructure without paying the upfront costs.



Clockwise: Mozare3 (Egypt) end-user shares his crops grown with the support of the innovator. Raptor Engineering (Egypt) solar panels fuel a water pump. Barley grown by Albu Saif (Iraq) will be used as livestock fodder.

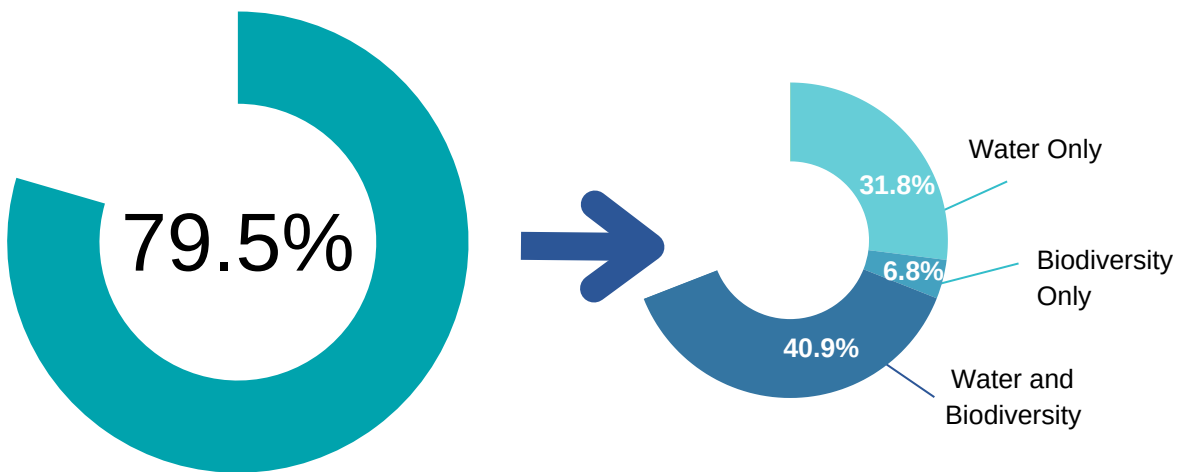
Total Volume of Water Consumption Reduction (liters)



In 2024, MENA innovators continued to surpass the LOP target, even as that target increased to account for the innovators' previous success. At the conclusion of 2024, MENA innovators reduced water consumption by 11.8 billion liters of water. Most of the water savings occurred in Lebanon and Egypt, which accounted for more than 90% of the result. Results mainly originated from irrigation solutions and farm input innovations – The Quinta Group (Lebanon) contributed 26% of savings, Green Eagle Tech (Egypt) contributed 20%, Mozare3 (Egypt) contributed 11%, Compost Baladi contributed 10%, and Chitosan Egypt contributed 9%.

To help innovators, governments, and stakeholders understand the potential impacts of different water innovations, the MENA Hub launched water accounting tools for the Litani River Basin and the Egyptian Nile River Basin. A training was conducted during the 2024 Regional Convening, so the innovators could learn how to use the tool, navigate its different elements, and understand the future scenario implications. The hub also participated in a World Water Week 2024 webinar to educate a wider audience on the tool and explore how other organizations could develop their own dashboards.

Share of Innovators Monitoring Water or Biodiversity



At the conclusion of 2024, the MENA RIH was .5% shy of hitting the 80% LOP target for the share of innovators monitoring water or biodiversity. The innovation category that had the most innovators conducting monitoring activities, was digital innovations with Platfarm (Egypt), GreenShovel (Iraq), SOWIT (Morocco), AbuErdan (Egypt), and Mozare3 (Egypt).

When innovators were first onboarded, their general level of water or biodiversity awareness ranged from beginner to advanced. Some innovators, like Natagri (Lebanon) were already monitoring water consumption. Depending on the innovators' level of engagement with the hub's ESG team, their level of environmental awareness and responsibility increased. Some innovators, like Agrisolar (Egypt), Agritopia (Palestine), Hight Atlas Foundation (Morocco), and Green WaTech (Morocco), became advanced.

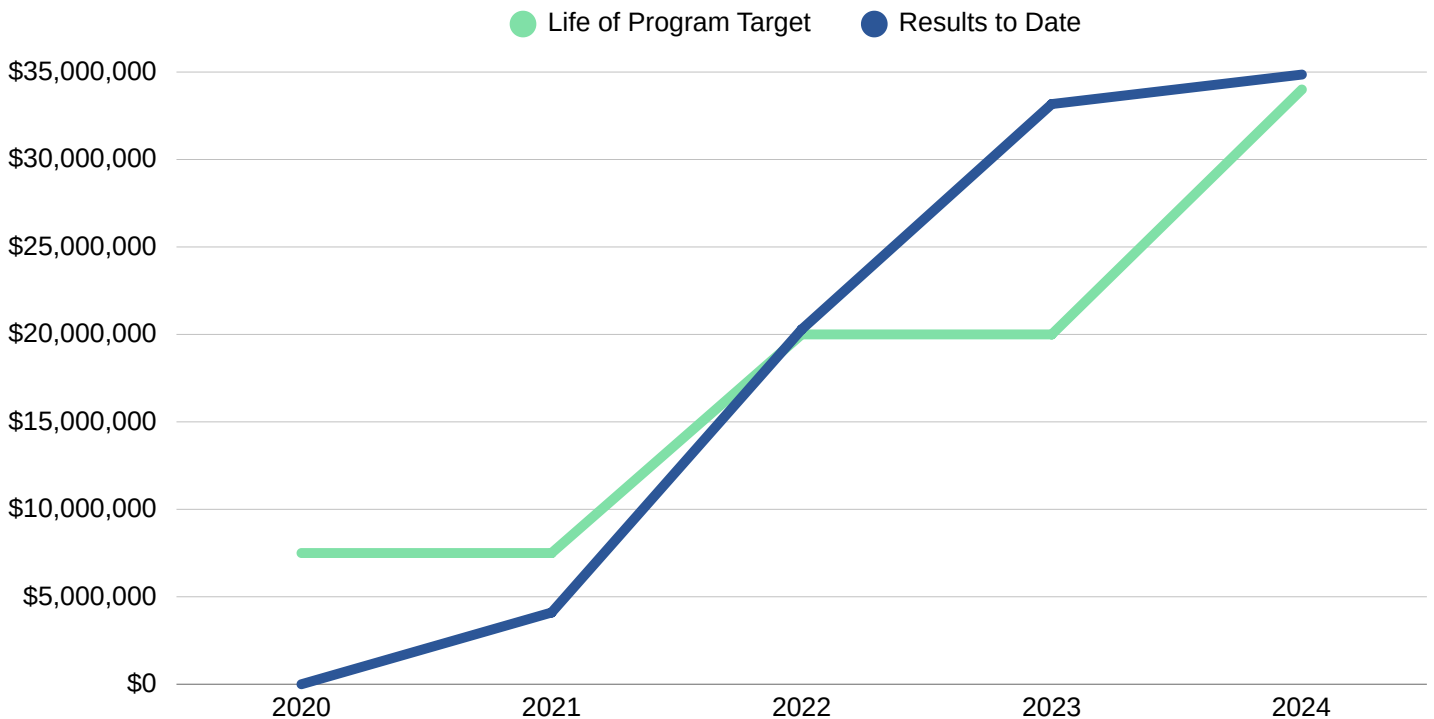
The hub worked with each innovator to raise its awareness on water saving and biodiversity, with all innovators receiving an ESG clinic. For the Iraq CFI 1 in particular, the innovators were given a TA on water resource management and soil health as well as their effect on conservation of biodiversity.

During site visits conducted by the hub's environmental experts to monitor the implementation of the environmental mitigation and monitoring plans, the staff found that the absolute majority of CFI 1, CFI 2, and Iraq CFI 1 innovators reported actions that promoted water conservation and reduction, as well as the enhanced and protected biodiversity. Such actions included:

- Providing advice/recommendations to farmers on sustainable farming techniques (e.g., crop rotation, companion planting, green manure, soil fertility and health, working with beneficial insects, composting, and conserving biodiversity for protected lands).
- Promoting waste management activities to ensure that waste streams didn't reach nearby water bodies and maintenance plans to ensure that the waste didn't reach the soil or groundwater.
- Conducting water sample analysis to ensure that the quality of the surrounding water sources was not adversely affected by the innovator's project activities.
- Digital solutions advisory services for farmers, directly helping them improve soil health and biodiversity, and save water.
- Interventions on vegetation removal to ensure that farmers did not destroy habitats or remove trees to implement solar photovoltaic (PV) systems; and raising awareness to alter potential water overuse upon the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) pumping solutions.

INNOVATIONS SCALED

Innovator Investment Mobilized (in U.S. Dollars)



Over the course of four years, with support from the hub's Investment Facilitation Team, the MENA innovators mobilized more than \$34.9 million USD in investment, successfully exceeding the LOP target on three different occasions. The funds were raised by 22 innovators – exceeding the initial goal of 16 innovators. The largest portion of the total investment mobilized came from Egyptian innovators (55%), followed by Moroccan innovators (30%), Lebanese innovators (10%), Jordanian innovators (4%), and finally Iraqi innovators (2%).

The majority of the investment mobilized was equity at 63% of the total amount, followed by debt at 27%, then grants and hybrid financing at 10%. Aside, from two outlying innovators that mobilized a combined ticket total of \$20 million USD in equity due to their technologies and innovation components, the average ticket size ranged between \$200,000 USD to \$1 million USD.

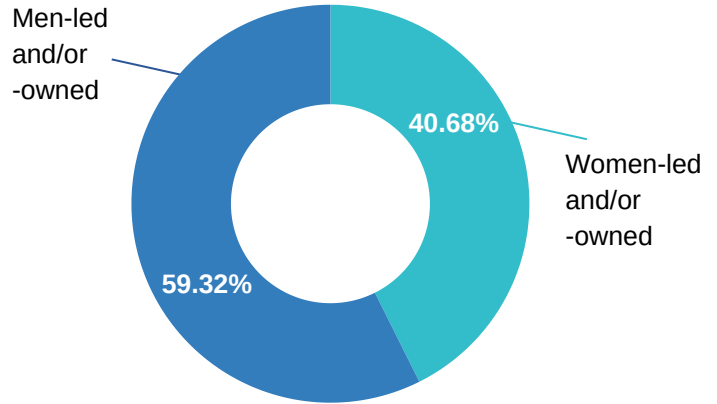
The breakdown of funding shows that 95% of funding came from private cash, compared to a minor 3% from public funding, and a negligible percentage that came from private/public in-kind investment (combined, about 1.47%).

Investment mobilization, in general, is a complex process that requires innovators to devote capital and time to understanding the investment landscape, monitoring their impact, maintaining their due diligence documentation, building relationships with potential investors, strengthening their organizational governance, and developing risk management frameworks. Innovators in the MENA region must navigate this difficult process, while also enduring regional challenges that make fundraising difficult. Investors perceive the MENA countries as being high-risk areas. So, potential investors are often reluctant to invest and require robust de-risking mechanisms and guarantees, as well as strong risk mitigation measures.

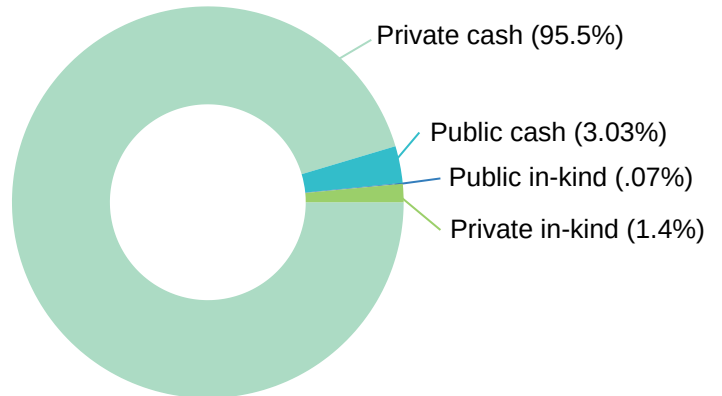
Some notable barriers to investment include:

- Political instability and economic volatility across several MENA countries (e.g., Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq), including currency devaluation, capital controls, and risks associated with the repatriation of funds.
- High interest rates on debt financing with limited access to subsidized loans.
- Cultural barriers and religious concerns about interest-bearing loans.
- Ability to showcase achievement of a solid track record and profitability.
- Non-liquid financial markets and limited exit strategies, in the case of raising equity.
- A long and overwhelming journey for fundraising, especially with heavy, and numerous, documentation requirements by investors – and guarantee mechanisms – who are not familiar with the region.

Investment Breakdown by Gender

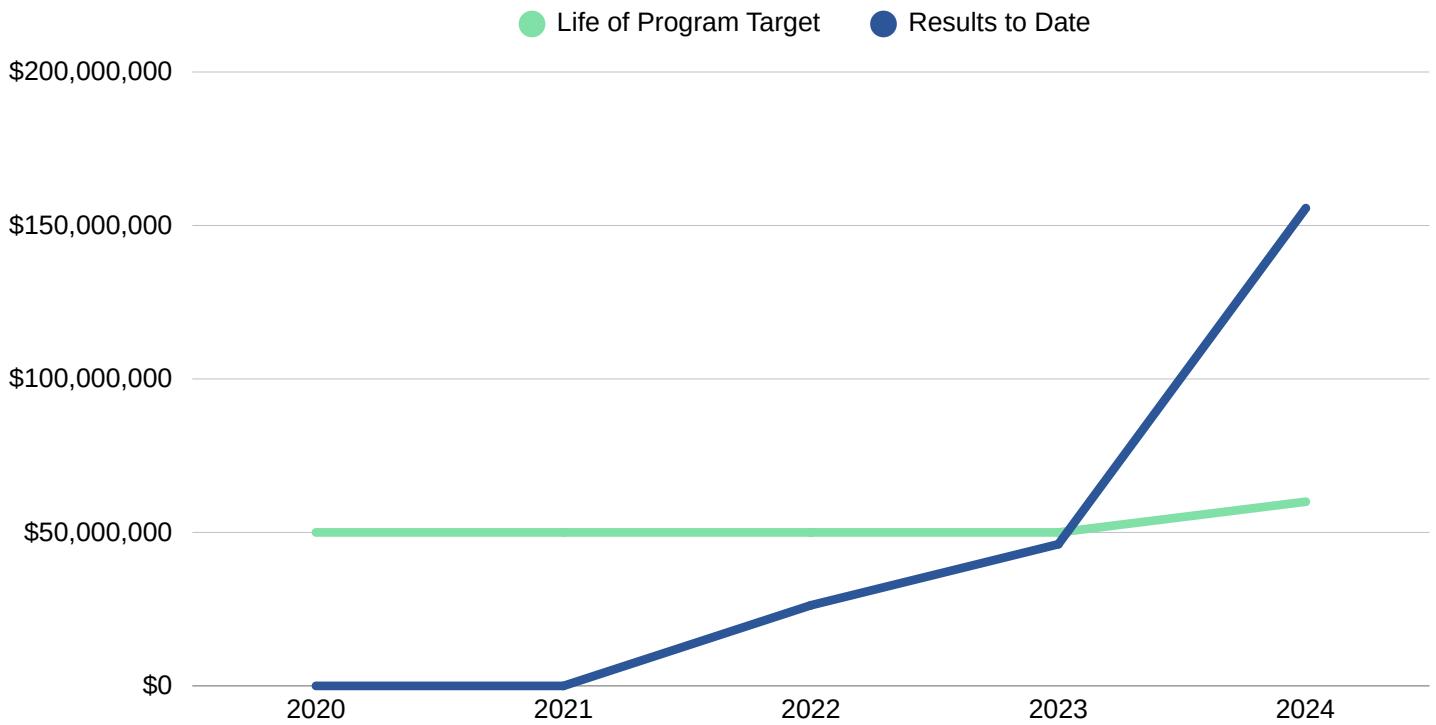


Public versus Private Investment



Clockwise: Crops collected by Agrifresh (Lebanon) await processing in the innovator's factory. Solar panels from Faraday (Iraq) are set-up in a field to fuel water pumping. Dried tomatoes, grown with Biomassr (Egypt) fertilizer, await the next steps in their food supply chain journey.

Innovator Gross Sales (in U.S. Dollars)



In 2024, the MENA innovators surpassed the new hub LOP target of \$60 million USD, achieving a cumulative gross sales result of over \$155 million USD. Innovators that had the most sales were Green Eagle Tech (Egypt) with 53.7% of the total result, Mozare3 (Egypt) with 11.4%, Agrisolar (Egypt) with 7.8%, The Quinta Group (Lebanon) with 4.7%, and High Atlas Foundation (Morocco) with 3.9%. Most sales occurred in Egypt, accounting for 38% of total gross sales. Sudan followed with 29%, and Lebanon ranked third with 13%. The sales in Sudan were mainly due to contracts secured by Green Eagle Tech (Egypt) for rain irrigation and solar energy in Sudan. Sudan-based innovators, Sudagarlic and Hydroponics Africa, stopped their operations due the war.

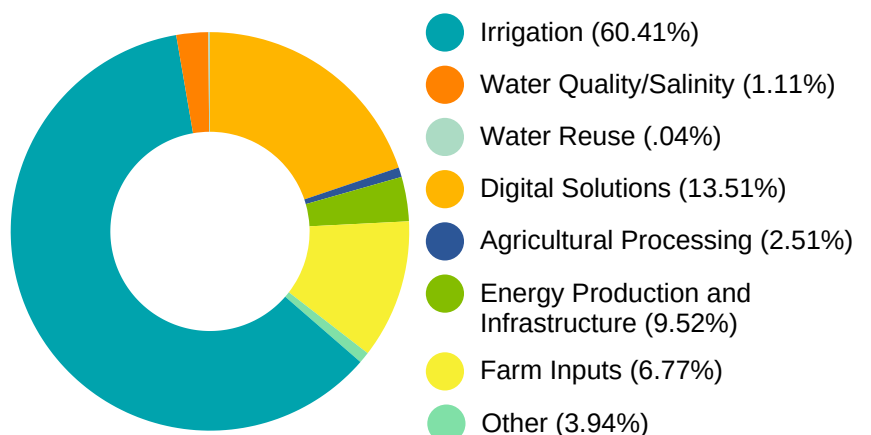
To continue increasing sales, innovators need access to market insights, improved distribution channels, and financial support. Through the MENA RIH’s Investment Facilitation, Technical Assistance, and Enabling Environment Teams, the hub provided various TA instances, including the development of complete financial models, marketing plans, market entry strategies, and partnerships, among other offerings. For instance, Ainda received an export strategy TA that equipped the company with all relevant tools to be export-ready. Garbaliser received a marketing and sales TA to support its expansion and end-user reach goals. SOWIT received a digital marketing strategy TA to boost the visibility and awareness of SOWIT’s products and services, attract qualified web traffic, generate leads and conversions, nurture customer engagement and retention, and ensure a positive return-on-investment by optimizing the digital marketing budget.

Even with the hub’s support, achieving sales targets could be challenging for some innovators due to several factors:

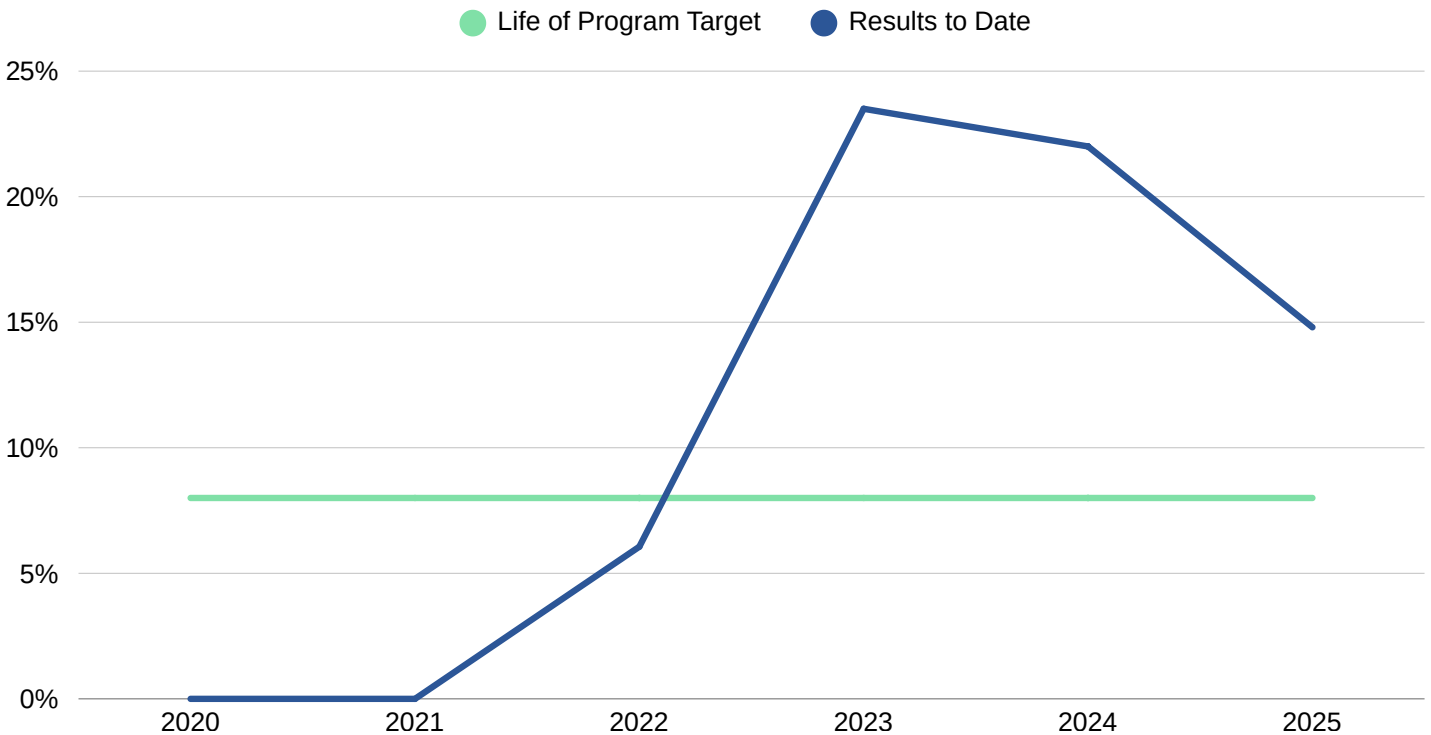
- Financial limitations, such as insufficient working capital or expensive customer acquisition.
- Regulatory obstacles and compliance requirements delaying market entry.
- Political and economic instability in some MENA countries, which limit the potential for exporting to nearby countries.

To date, most sales were generated from irrigation innovations (60.41%), followed by digital innovations (13.51%), and then energy production and infrastructure innovations (9.52%). For the hub, examining the gross sales result by innovation category helped pinpoint which innovations achieved the most sales, and identify underperforming ones to adjust and enhance their strategies. The analysis also helped reduce the reliance on a single innovation by uncovering opportunities for diversification. For the innovators, it provided insights into customer preferences and adoption patterns, enabling them to tailor their offerings and maximize market impact.

Gross Sales Breakdown by Innovation Type



Share of Supported Innovators that Successfully Marketed their Climate-friendly, Energy and/or Water-efficient Innovations with Profit



The MENA innovators exceeded the hub's 8% LOP target with 14.8% of innovators having effectively marketed their innovation with profit. Most of the successful innovators are based in Lebanon, Egypt, or Iraq. Of the innovators that contributed to the result, 37.5% are women-led and/or -owned innovators such as, GoBaladi, Egymag, and Abu Erdan.

To consider an innovator as having successfully marketed their innovation with profit, two criteria must be met: first, achieving an EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) margin greater than 8%; and second, demonstrating an increase in scaling level in their current countries of operation since the last MEL cycle.

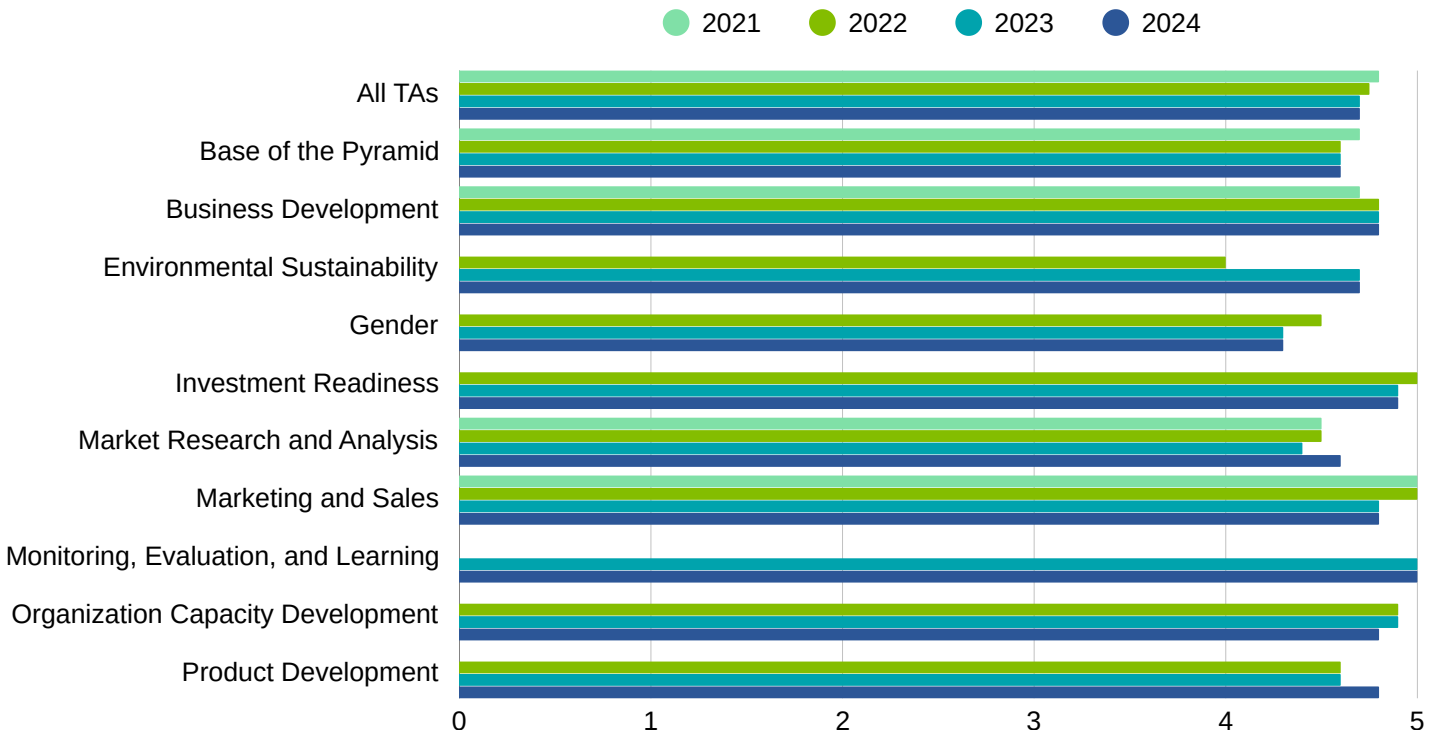
In 2024, 20 new innovators joined the MENA RIH and reported MEL data for the first time, affecting the overall percentage of innovators who effectively marketed their innovation with profit. So, the inclusion of new innovators in the results brought the percentage down from 2023 result of 23.5%.

To support MENA innovators in improving the profitability of their companies, scaling operations, reducing costs, and achieving better results, the hub provided several TAs focused on resource efficiency, cost structure, cash flow management, production plan, product enhancement, and supply chain management. For instance, Freshsource received a resource efficiency TA to improve the water and energy efficiency of its production process, which will ultimately lead to cost savings. Raka'ez Al Handasiyah received a fish nutrition TA to improve their technical knowledge of fish nutrition and how to optimize this knowledge for business growth and sustainability. By executing these TAs, the hub aimed to drive cost reductions, enhance revenue streams, and help innovators navigate major challenges, eventually enhancing their profitability and long-term sustainability.



Left to right: Lombrisol ((Morocco) system used for recycling waste into compost and fertilizer. Greenco (Lebanon) compost silt packaged and ready for use.

Average Technical Assistance “Quality of Service Survey” Score



Generally, TA requests from innovators have followed similar patterns across the six cohorts. For the first and second instances of TA, innovators prioritized operational TAs to achieve their Acceleration Work Plan (AWP) milestones, focusing on areas such as end-users, water and energy savings, food production, and food processing. These TAs supported innovators in meeting the first operational grant agreement milestones and included market studies, marketing and sales, resource efficiency, product development, end-user financing, and financial and operational efficiency (e.g., cash flow management, customer relationship management, and inventory management).

For innovators who met their grant agreement milestones and AWP targets, TAs became more forward-looking, addressing mid- to long-term needs. These TAs included investment readiness, strategic planning, organizational development (e.g., team building and organizational structure), and technical scopes such as food safety, or quality assurance and quality control.

As their journey with WE4F progressed, earlier cohorts primarily requested strategic TAs during the later stages of their support, emphasizing long-term planning and advanced technical needs that required in-depth and technically-intensive support. Unlike earlier cohorts, the latest cohort's TAs were more action-oriented, focusing on addressing immediate operational priorities to ensure timely progress to achieve their AWP milestones. Additionally, there was a difference between older and younger companies. Older innovators typically requested strategy-focused TAs, or those aimed at guiding new investments, such as strategic planning, partnership development, feasibility studies, market expansion studies, and product mix tailoring. In contrast, younger companies tended to prioritize operational TAs, including cash flow management, marketing and branding, governance, and internal controls. In terms of business models, firms selling costly innovations for farmers (e.g., solar systems, drip irrigation systems) often focused on end-user financing solutions. Meanwhile, firms providing inputs categorized as operational costs for farmers (e.g., compost) tended to prioritize supply chain and cash flow management.



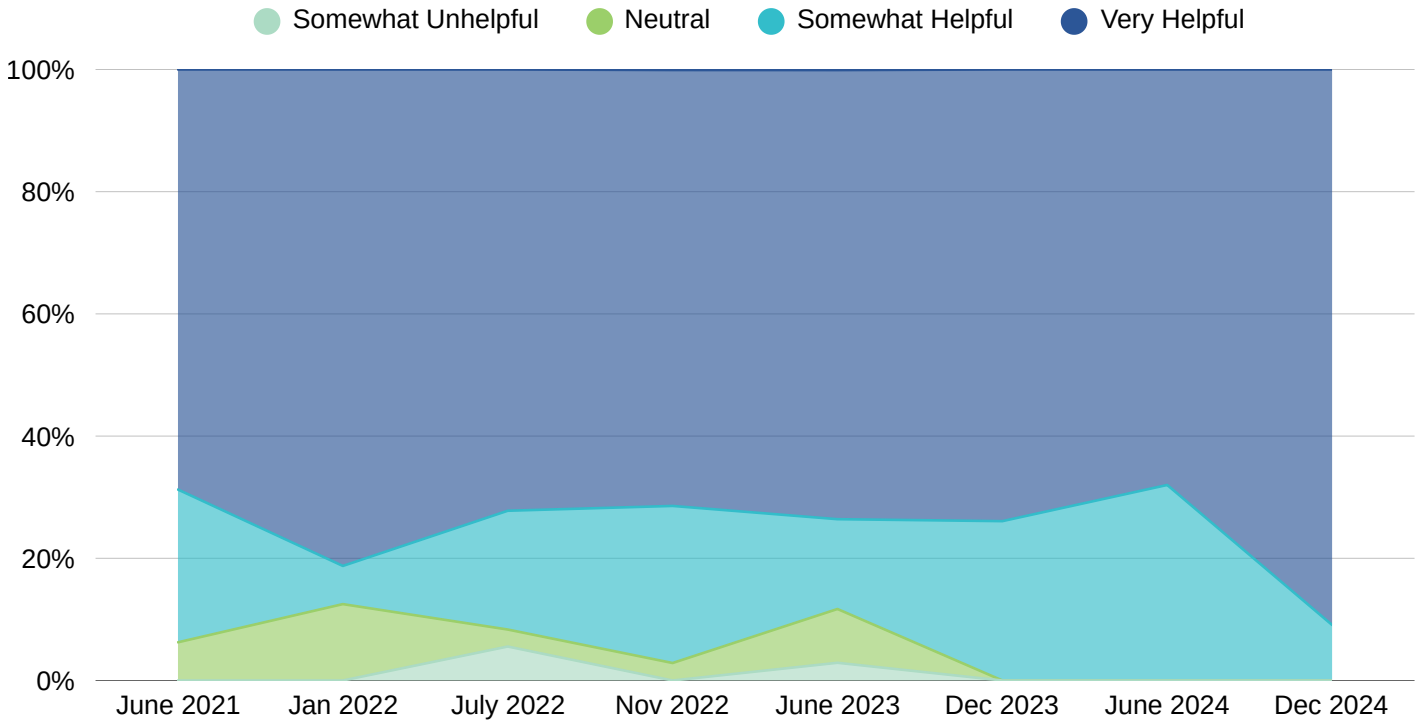
Ainda (Iraq) installed a water distribution system on this chicken farm; the system reduces water by functioning in a manner similar to drip tape for irrigation.

QUALITY OF SERVICE SURVEY

Conducted by the Secretariat Unit, the Quality of Service Survey (QoSS) gathers innovators' feedback on their experiences working with the MENA RIH. The QoSS helped the hub improve problem areas and identified successful pivots that could be shared with the other hubs. The latest QoSS in December 2024 gathered results from 35 active MENA innovators.

GENERAL HUB SUPPORT

Overall, how helpful has the MENA Hub's support been to your organization's success?

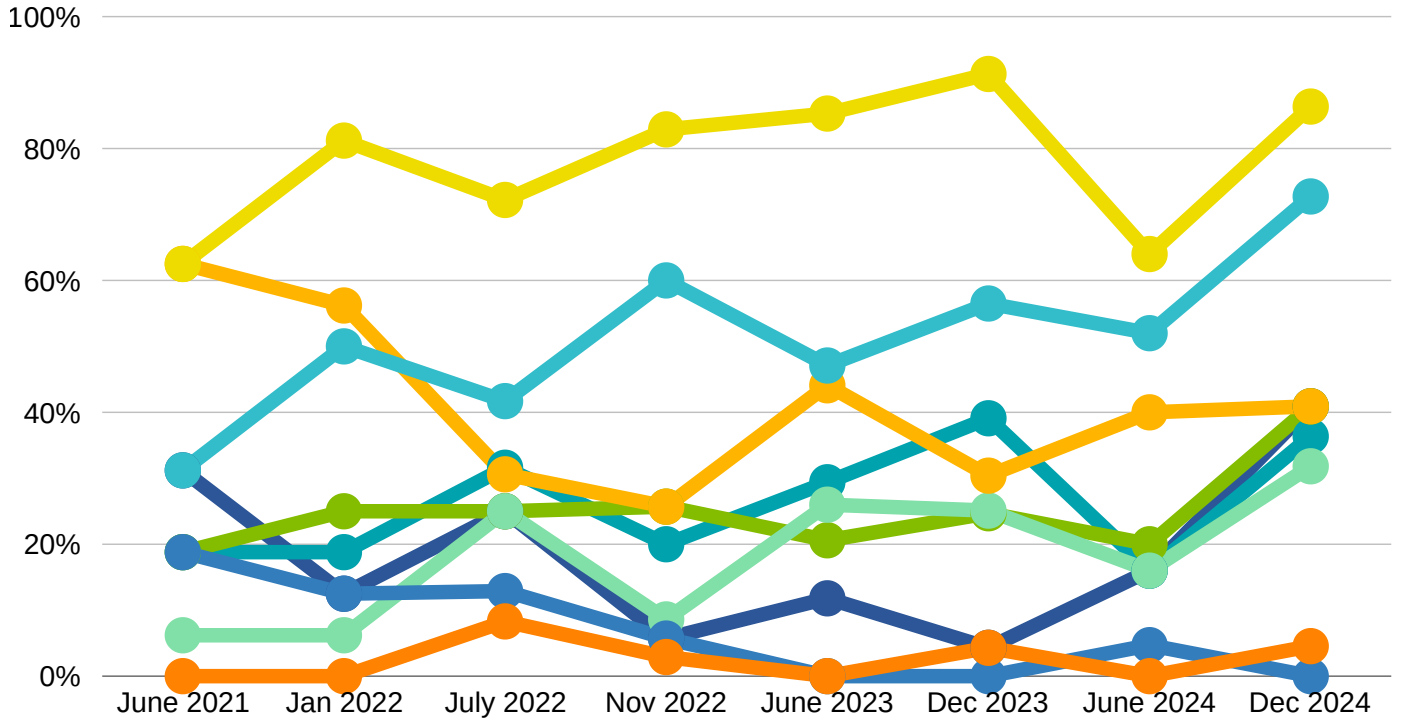


In the latest QoSS, the hub's support was considered "Very Helpful" by 91% of innovators and "Helpful" by the remaining 9% of innovators. This was the best score the hub received since the beginning of the program, and was especially significant as the MENA staff were supporting 39 innovators in 2024. It highlighted how the hub successfully leveraged its lessons learned in previous years to streamline processes and activities.



Left to right: Garbaliser (Lebanon) end-user treats his crops with the innovator's liquid fertilizer. Freshsource (Egypt) employee moves produce as part of the innovator's logistics services.

Reflecting on the support received from the MENA Hub, which of the following has been most useful to you?



As the innovators scaled their businesses, their needs evolved and expanded. Over time, hub offerings grew to include new categories, such as demand for strategy-focused TA along with support for expanding operations across countries. This evolution reflects the growth and maturation of the innovators. Most of the innovators from CFI 1 and CFI 2 chose to remain part of the hub to continue benefiting from the TA services, underscoring the importance of these offerings and the innovators’ perception of TA being high-value support.

Chart Key

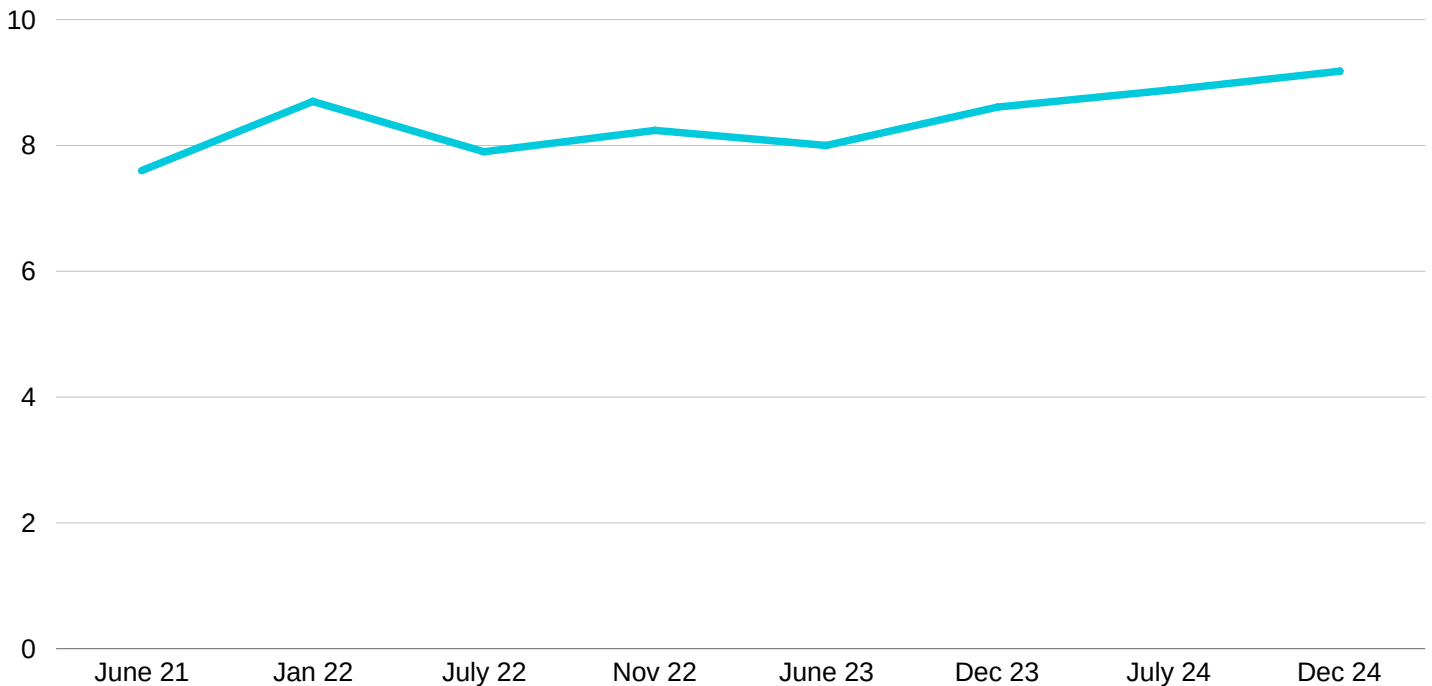
- Addressing Enabling Environment Barriers
- Technical Assistance
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Investment Facilitation
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Environmental Sustainability and Compliance
- Other
- None
- Partnership, Networking, and Ecosystem Building



Agrifresh (Lebanon) produce journey in action: from caring for crops, to harvest, to processing and packaging.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the MENA Hub's Technical Assistance Unit (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)



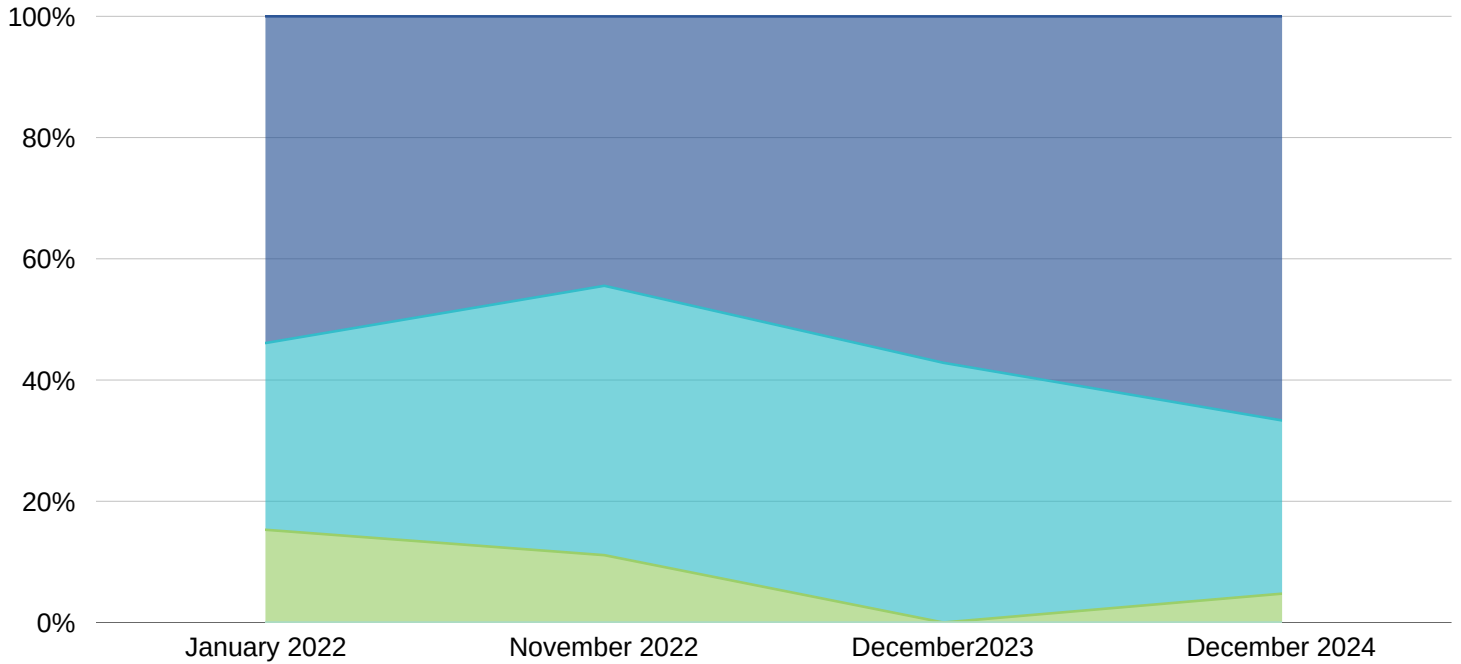
In December 2024, the MENA hub achieved its highest satisfaction rate by continuing to implement a quality assurance process. This includes a two-tiered review system, where all deliverables underwent a double review by two team members to ensure consistency, alignment with innovators' objectives, and adherence to the defined scopes of work. Bi-monthly meetings with innovators further enhanced this process by presenting deliverables, gathering immediate feedback, and making timely adjustments to address any concerns. Additionally, the hub adopted a proactive approach to scoping TAs. By initiating the planning and scoping of second-round TAs as soon as the first was launched and ahead of expected procurement cycles, the hub ensured smoother transitions, better preparedness, and sustained quality in delivering services. This structured and forward-thinking strategy enabled the hub to maintain high standards of TA quality and satisfaction.

The MENA RIH also worked to improve innovators' perception by providing structured and proactive support. Innovators were informed early-on about programmatic milestones, such as the pre-award survey, semi-annual reporting, and events, with a collaboratively-prepared calendar outlining key dates and deliverables. Clarity on the TA process and timelines was provided during onboarding, allowing innovators to plan effectively. The TA scopes of work were drafted within the first month of onboarding, leveraging insights from the selection and pre-award survey process to ensure relevance and alignment with immediate needs. Country Coordinators regularly tracked innovators' AWP KPI achievements and offered monthly guidance to support data collection and the preparation of supporting evidence. Gender and investment readiness TA support was streamlined and systematically deployed shortly after onboarding, ensuring innovators received foundational support early in their journey. Additionally, pre-award survey TAs were designed to enable innovators to achieve operational excellence efficiently and realize benefits in the short-term. The MEL process and requirements – as well as the benefits and the business case for MEL documentation and reporting – was communicated early-on in the program. This structured approach demonstrated the hub's commitment to delivering high-quality and impactful support.



Reflecting on the technical assistance provided to you, what could be the impact of technical assistance in the long term (1+ years post-completion of the assignment)?

● Negative ● Neutral ● Positive ● Very Positive



The results of the long-term impact of the TA throughout the program remained consistently positive, with over 85% of feedback falling between "Positive" and "Very Positive." The hub balanced TAs that could deliver rapid results with TAs focused on long-term strategy and planning. Cohorts had only received one TA due to only recently joining the hub, were unable to assess long-term impact, which could account for the slight increase in "Neutral" responses.

The hub also managed expectations by providing clear explanations of expected outcomes. It ensured that the first TA was quickly contracted and implemented to achieve quick wins, while more advanced scopes were developed. Additionally, potentially large and time-consuming scopes were split into smaller, sequentially implementable projects to avoid delays and ensure steady progress.

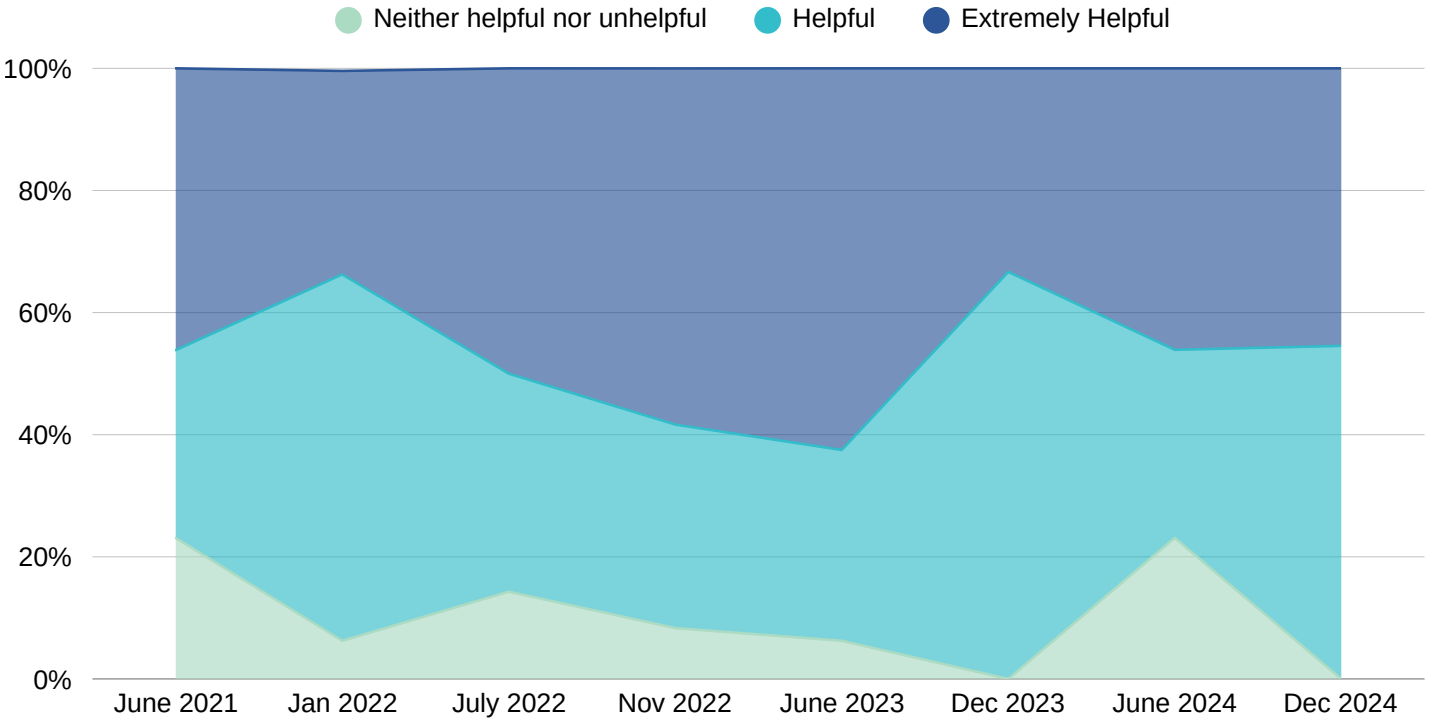
Innovators highlighted that the TA directly improved partnerships with small-scale farmers, enhanced internal organizational development for growth, and supported expansion into new markets by providing valuable market insights. It also helped define product roadmaps, make strategic decisions, and develop end-user financing schemes. Additionally, hub-delivered TA support proved instrumental in enhancing sales processes, gender integration, and investment readiness.



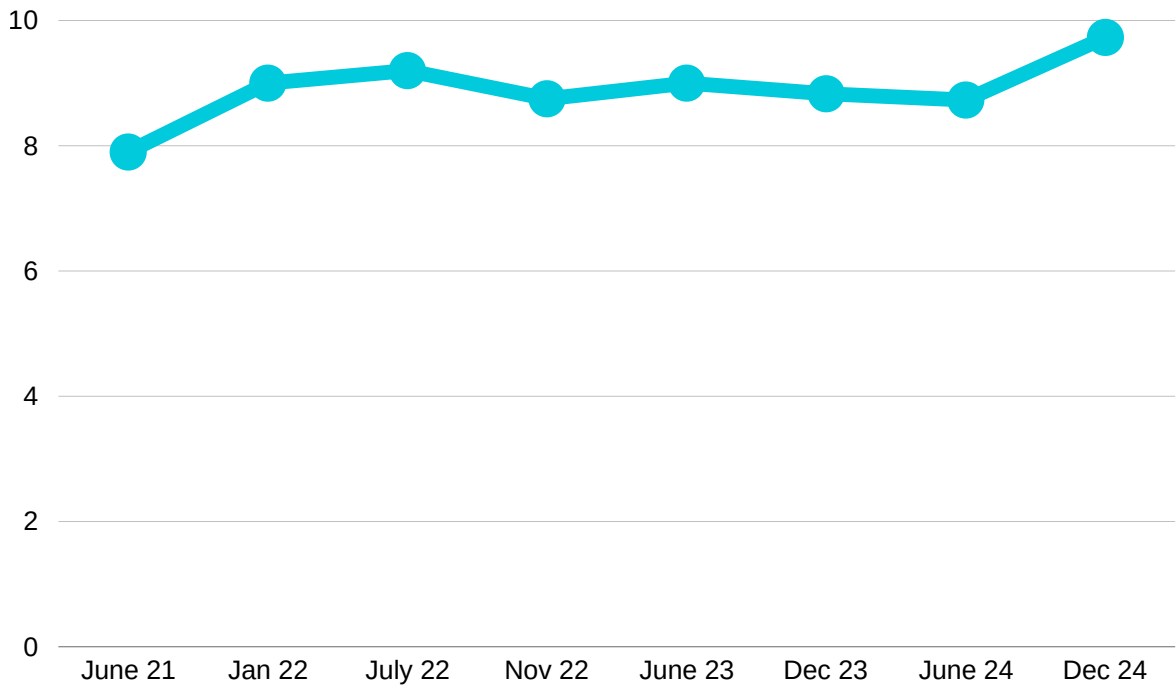
An avocado grown with support from Biomass (Lebanon)

INVESTMENT FACILITATION

How helpful has the investment readiness team's support been in moving your organization toward your goal of raising investment?



On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the MENA Hub's Investment Readiness Team (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)

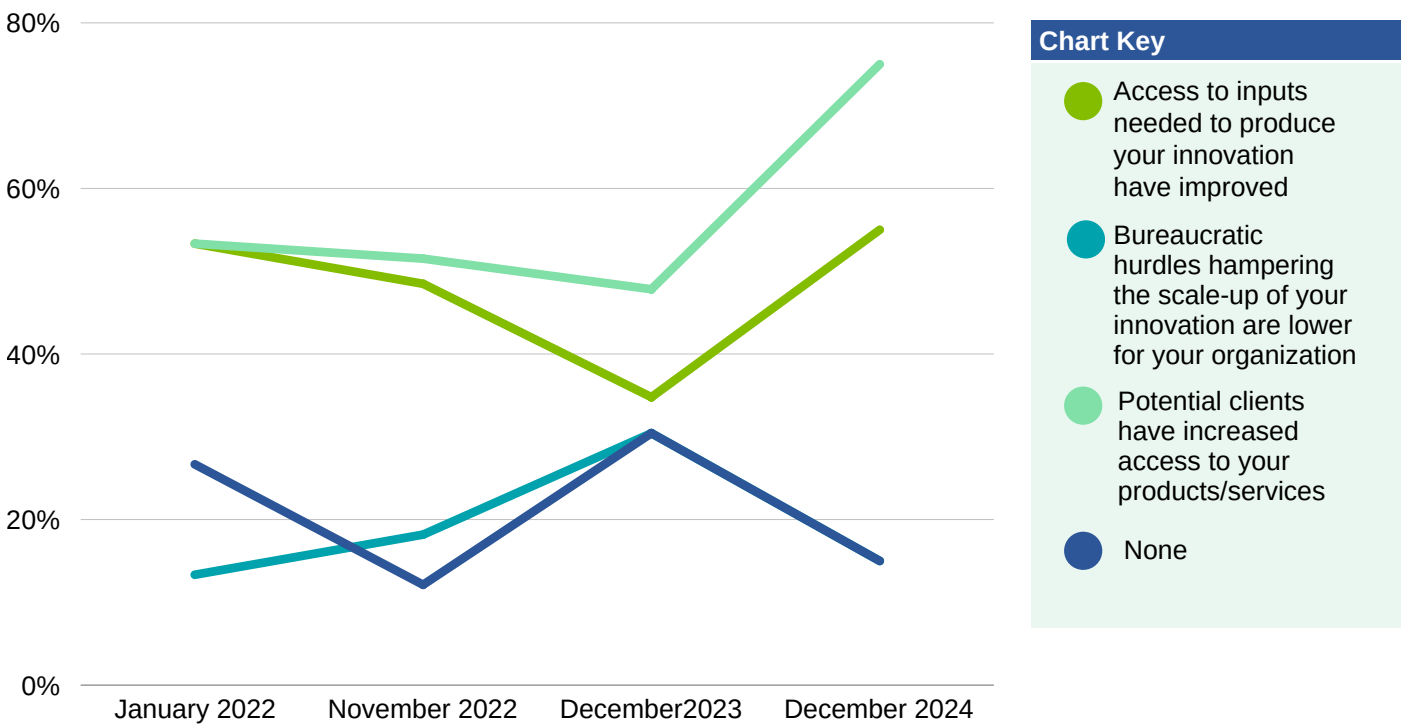


The December 2024 QoSS results were the best satisfaction and helpfulness levels achieved by the Investment Facilitation Team throughout the program. In order to improve the innovators' positive perception of the team, several implemented changes enhanced investment readiness and facilitation outcomes, therefore increasing innovators' satisfaction.

While innovators do understand the long-term nature of the fundraising journey, the hub still needed to help innovators set realistic expectations and align their strategies accordingly. The Investment Facilitation Team worked with innovators to develop tailored strategies to address the specific challenges faced by innovators in Islamic countries, focusing on Islamic-compliant financing and investment opportunities in potential markets. To help innovators make connections with potential investors, the hub organized their participation in regional and international impact and investment events. As part of efforts to increase investment sustainability and opportunity in the region, the hub also conducted a feasibility study for an impact fund.

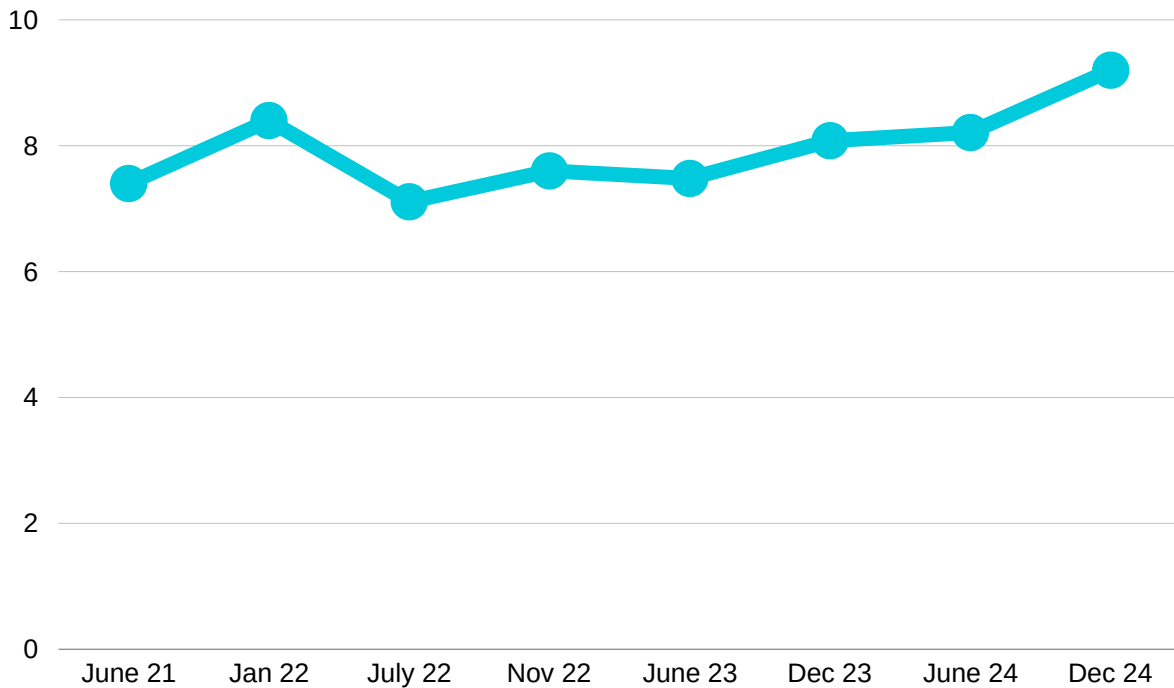
LEGAL, POLICY, AND REGULATORY SUPPORT

Since joining WE4F, which of the following have occurred? Select all that apply.



Left to right: Cows that are fed fodder grown by LORK (Iraq) and said barley fodder in the process of growing in a LORK system.

On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the MENA Hub's Enabling Environment Unit (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)



The satisfaction level with the MENA RIH's Enabling Environment Team increased over time, peaking in the latest December 2024 QoSS. Innovator's satisfaction can mainly be attributed to the Enabling Environment Team engaging with innovators by listening and assessing their regulatory and policy challenges and priorities on country and regional levels.

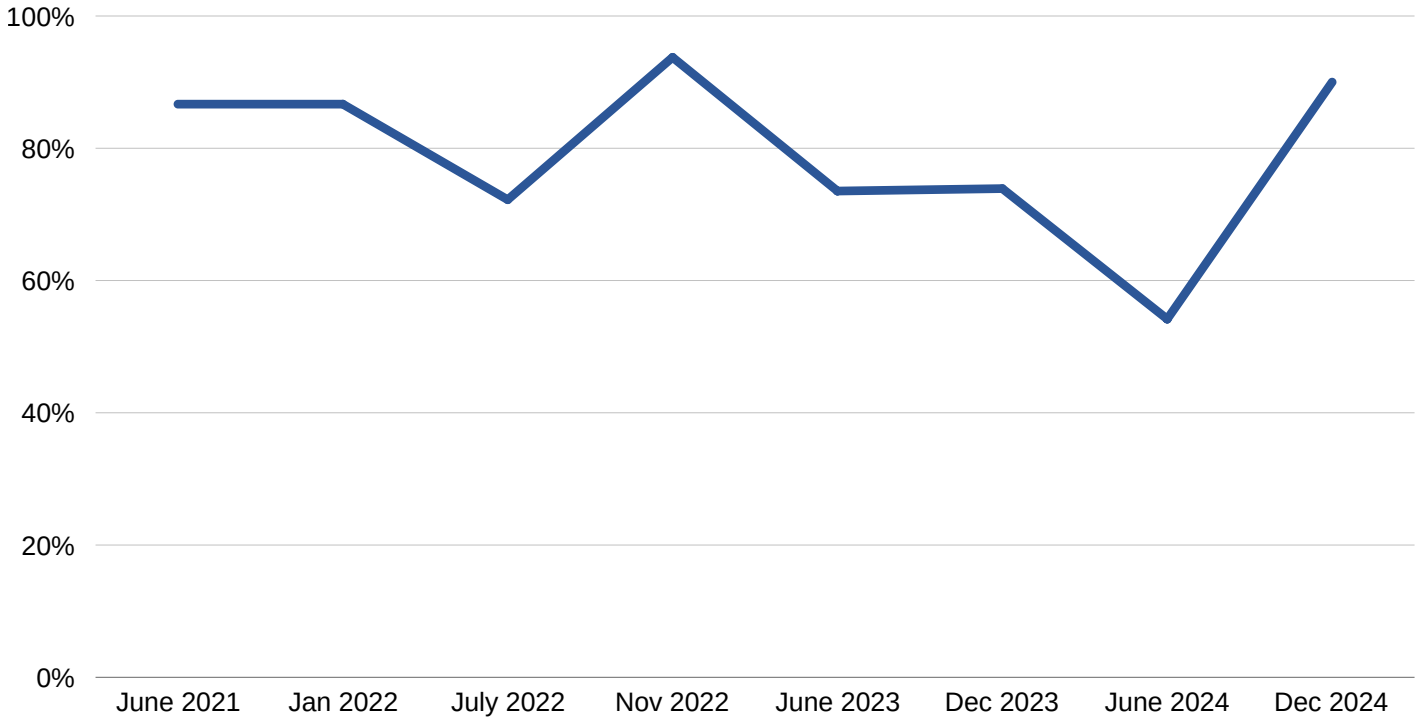
Over the years, innovators repeatedly flagged regulatory barriers as a key challenge to navigate, and overcome, while scaling their businesses. As many of the innovators are working in industries, and on products, that are new to local markets, regulatory frameworks often either don't exist yet, are inconsistent, lack clear information, or are not context-specific. On an innovator level, key barriers included difficulties obtaining agricultural organic certification, limited access to funding (particularly in Lebanon and Iraq), and challenges related to legislation promoting organic farming. Additional issues included export bans in Gulf Cooperation Council countries, bureaucratic procedures, and political and security instability in Iraq. Innovators were further hampered by regulatory challenges, competition with illegal practices, and aggressive tax policies.

These insights were combined with additional research and assessments by the Enabling Environment Team, Country Coordinators, and other hub teams to identify feasible and effective interventions. The Enabling Environment Team then focused its efforts on TAs that had visible results and the provision of knowledge and networking engagements with innovators, (e.g., value chain traceability information access, climate lens exposure for new impact investors, network and capacity building activities as part of the webinars with Middle East Institute and Res4Africa). The hub also supported innovators by helping them understand and access information that would facilitate a smoother navigation of current regulations. One example of this work is an enabling environment TA on the biofertilizer industry in Egypt, which involved peer-to-peer exchange with innovators and support from the Country Coordinators.

The Country Coordinators and Technical Assistance Team also incorporated enabling environment-related support in the day-to-day engagement and TA work with innovators. For example, the facilitation of connections with authorities and other businesses in the value chain, information on external markets, best practices on supply chain hurdles, and partnerships between innovators, to name a few. At the same time, the businesses' growth and increased experience helped to improve access to new clients and inputs.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about gender integration?

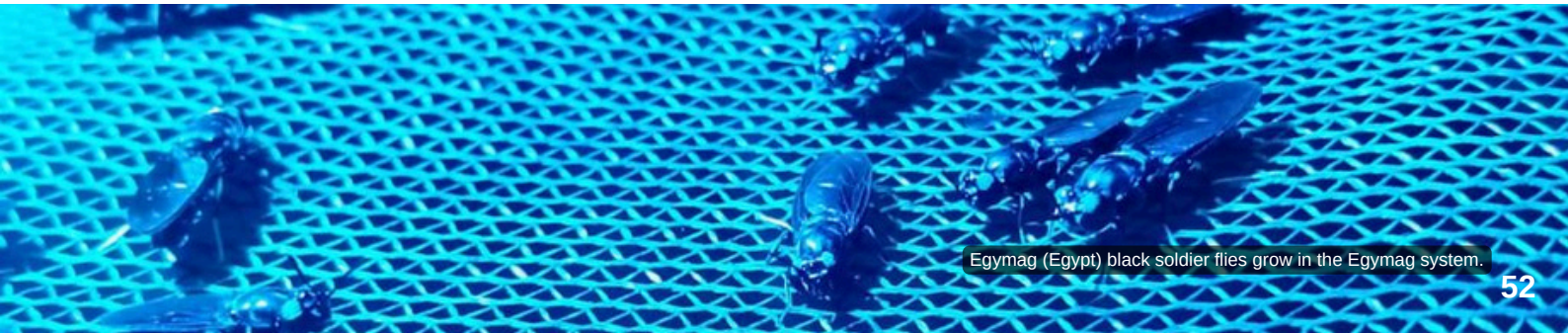


The December 2024 QoSS survey saw increases across gender, BoP, and environmental sustainability knowledge after lowers scores in June 2024. The progress was driven by a combination of targeted training sessions, one-on-one support, TAs, and participation in events such as regional and annual convenings, unconferences, and panel discussions. To further enhance impact, there is a need to strengthen the link between WE4F themes and TAs in areas such as marketing, sales, product development, and end-user financing activities. Post-provision of TA, there must be close follow-up on thematic recommendations provided through TAs.

The rise in gender knowledge, from 54% to 90%, may be attributed to the gender TAs, Gender Up training, gender mainstreaming recommendations, and Annual Convening gender sessions provided by the hub to innovators. The different capacity building activities covered a wide range of business operations, from gender-sensitive HR policy development, to women-focused marketing. Additionally, the MENA Women Innovate Network hosted a webinar on women-led and/or -owned innovations mitigating climate change in Morocco and Tunisia.

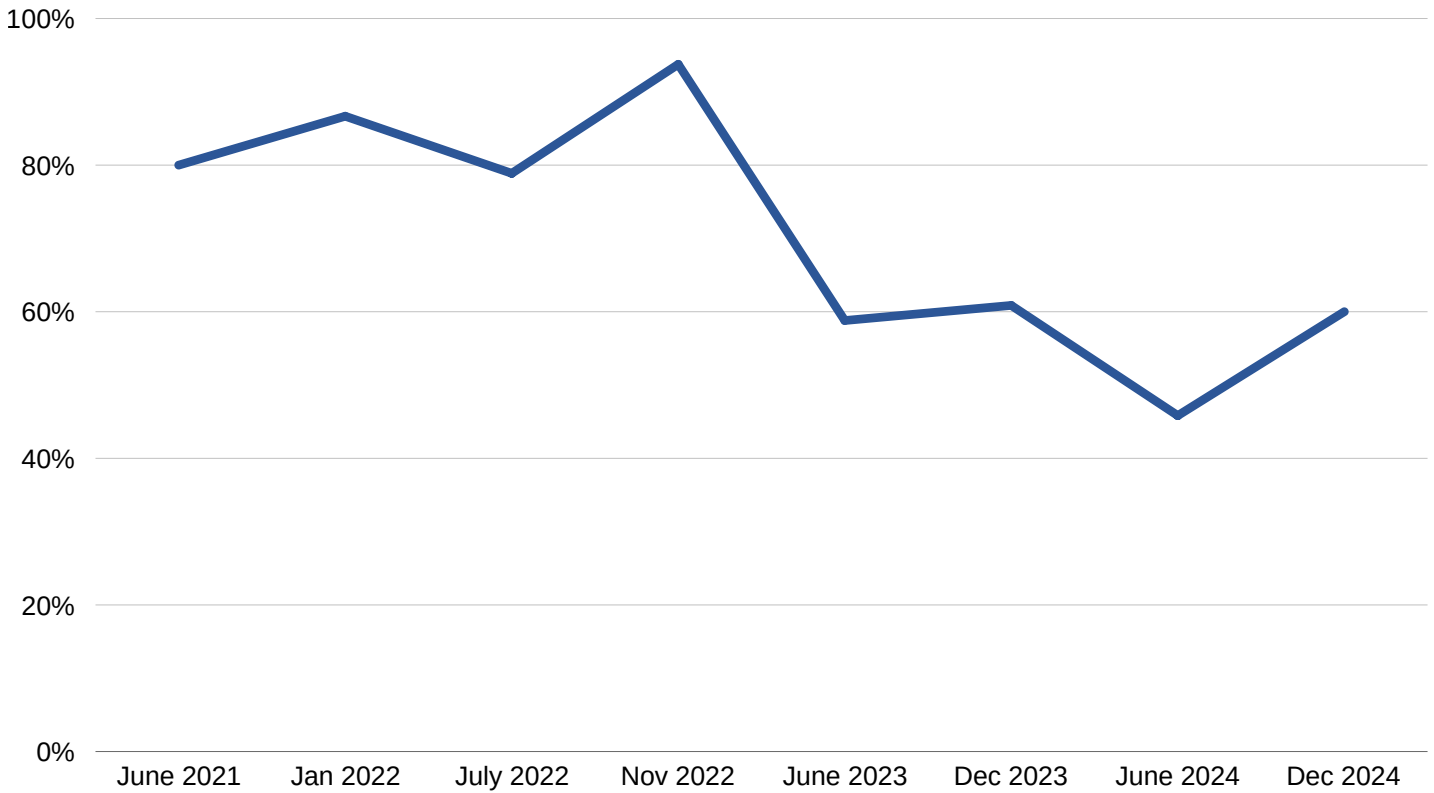
The positive effects of the hub’s multi-year efforts to improve innovator’s gender knowledge can be seen in the outcomes of KPIs, where the number of women end-users more than tripled between 2023 and 2024. The fruits of the efforts are also highlighted in the “Innovator Updates” section, where changes to innovators’ operations are summarized. Business models became more inclusive as innovators received new TAs and trainings to embed gender into their policies and guidelines. Market linkage surveys connected women cooperatives in Lebanon to innovators and MFIs. Engagement with women end-users helped innovators identify new areas for growth.

While many innovators experienced an increase in gender knowledge, not all of them were able to take steps to improve their business models or operations. Due to the ongoing conflicts in the region, including the Sudanese civil war, Israel’s occupation of – and violence perpetrated against – Palestine, and Israel’s attacks on Lebanon, innovators had to prioritize activities focused on safety as well as developing new operations for revenue generation.



Egymag (Egypt) black soldier flies grow in the Egymag system.

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about Base of the Pyramid (BOP)?

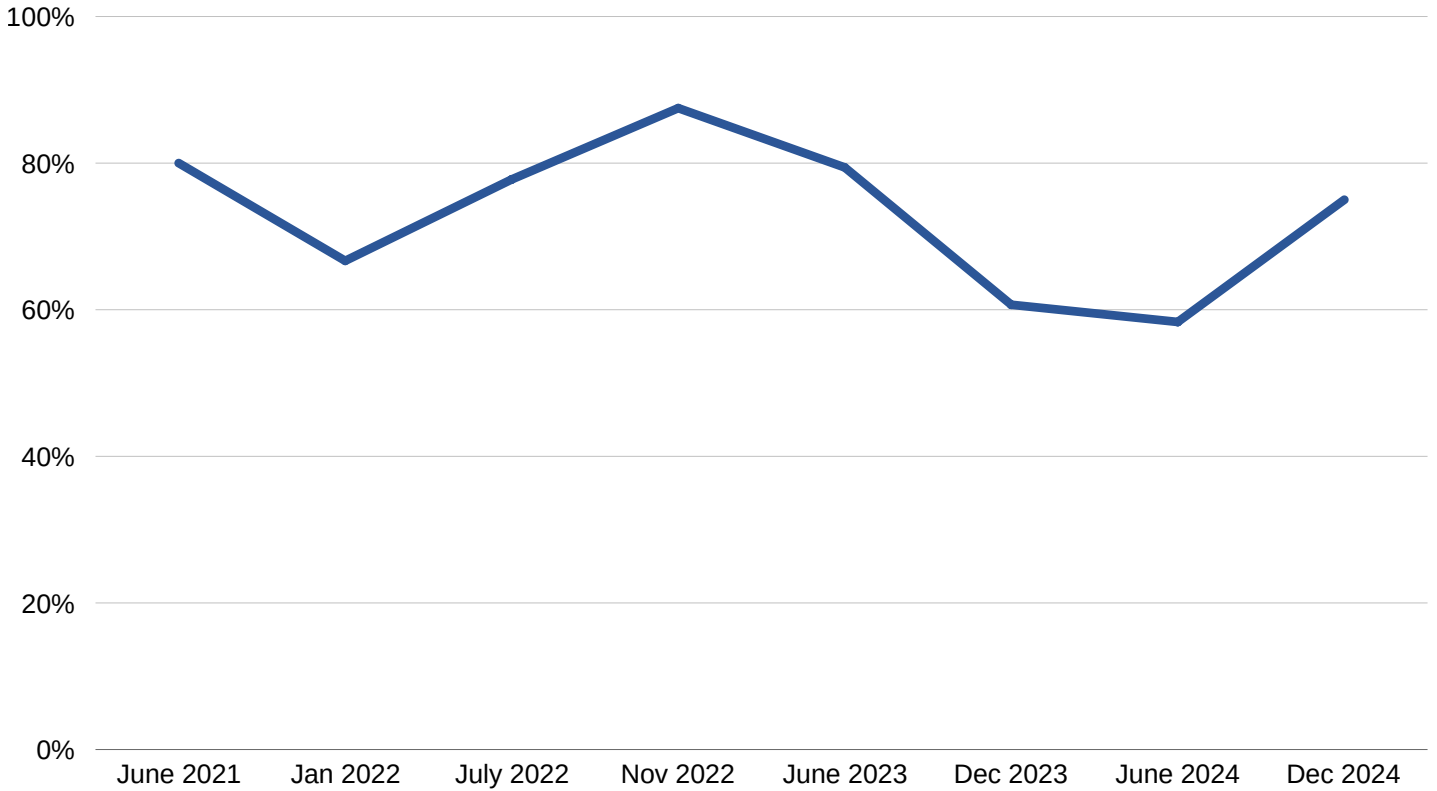


In December 2024, 60% of innovators reported an increase in BoP knowledge. When breaking down the cohorts' responses, it is seen that OCFI innovators reported lower percentages of increased knowledge than Iraq CFI 2 innovators. This was due to the OCFI innovators having existing connections with programs in the SME ecosystem, so they were already familiar with the concept of BoP integration and inclusion. For instance, several Lebanon-based innovators have contracts with the World Food Programme, or other similar organizations. For example, the main customer of Agrifresh's ready-to eat vegetables is a Lebanese fast food restaurant chain, their off-take agreements with small-scale farmers include informal on-site agricultural guidance. For Rim Mills, their partnerships with local farmers for wheat-based staple foods, borghol and moghrabieh, could be developed further with improved access to finance and storage capacity for Rim Mills. Knowledge of BoP also sometimes increased immediately after joining the program because the hub helped innovators assess their full impact during the pre-award survey and AWP.



Tomatoes grown with Biomassr (Egypt) fertilizer enter the next stage of their processing journey.

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about environmental sustainability, including climate resilience and biodiversity?

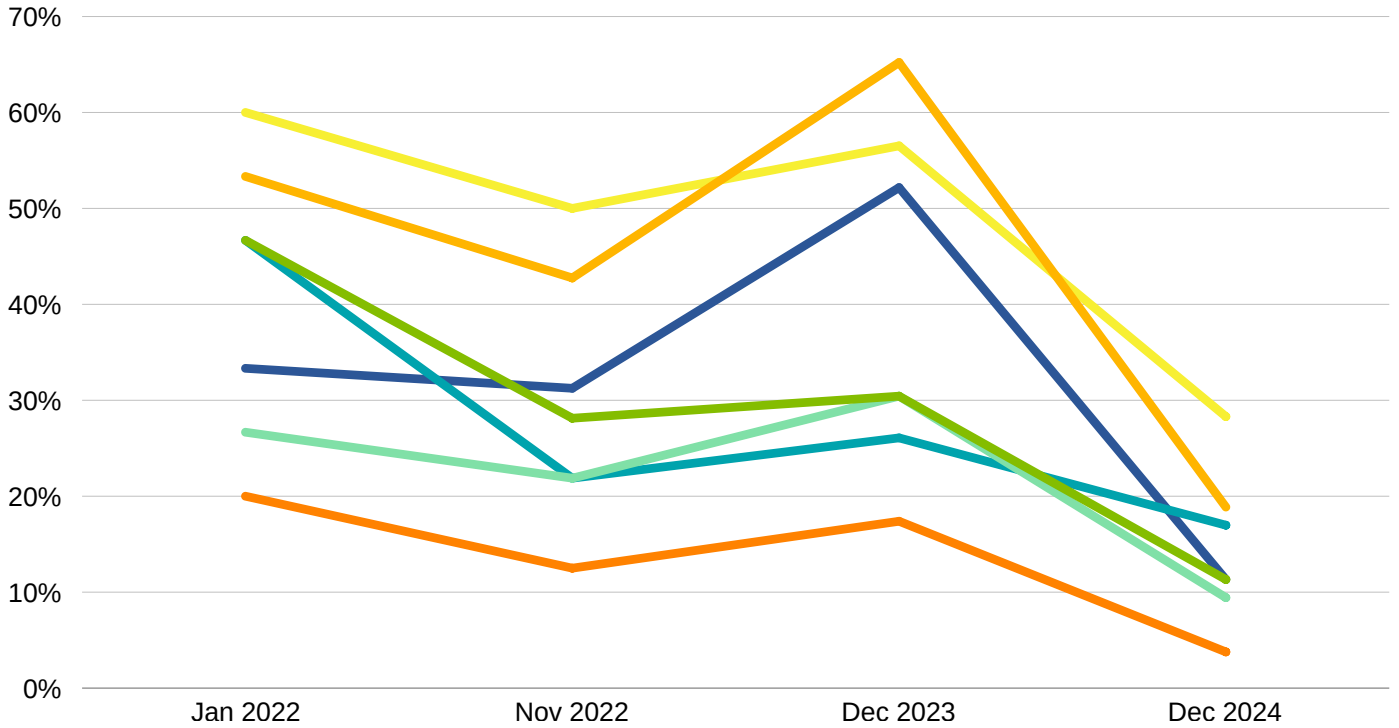


Knowledge about environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and biodiversity saw a slight increase in from 58% to 75%. This was most likely due to the hub’s efforts to improve innovators’ water and biodiversity monitoring awareness, along with the creation of the water accounting tools, and innovators’ work with the ESG Team. Innovators were also able to increase their knowledge levels through ESG sessions at the Annual Convening.



Clockwise: Crops grow alongside RAG (Iraq) drip tape. Farmed fish, raised using the Al Raka’ez Al Handasiyah monitoring system and inputs await being sold. Arez Planation (Iraq) trees grow in a nursery.

Does M&E data collection for WE4F support any of the following aspects of your business/organization?



From December 2023 to December 2024, there was a general downward trend for most categories, indicating a decrease in innovators' perceived value of MEL data collection. This dip coincided with the hub's decreased support for MEL data collection and a decrease in innovators' ability to appropriately utilize data gathered during MEL surveys for strategic growth and expansion decisions. It is important to note that the decrease in ability to use the MEL data, could be tied to the which innovators took part in the QoSS. The hub onboarded a significant number of new innovators in 2024, so they would be unfamiliar with the MEL data collection process and the long-term value of the impact data.

Chart Key

- Customer analysis
- Fundraising
- Managing partners
- Publicizing impact
- Sales/marketing
- Strategic decision-making
- Don't use WE4F data outside of reporting



Left to right: Oranges are processed by Zhany (Iraq) into dried products. Drip tape attached to Faraday (Iraq) solar panels and water pump cover an end-user's field.

USAID CLOSURE

On January 27, 2025, the MENA RIH received a SWO from USAID, instructing the hub to stop all WE4F activities pending the outcome of a USAID review of the project. Subsequently, on February 10, 2025, the hub received communication from USAID that the MENA RIH had been terminated for convenience, with immediate effect. The SWO affected innovator's financial opportunities, business operations, growth plans, and planned technical capacity improvements.

Financial impacts related to the loss of TAs on cashflow that would have helped the innovators become more operationally sound, as well as the loss of grants that would have provided financial support to innovators during periods of limited cashflow. Al Reef Mushroom's expansion faced major challenges, as they had already signed contracts with construction companies and placed orders for the capital expenditures required for the new mushroom halls and compost factory. Agrifresh encountered cashflow constraints and had to secure additional funding to cover seasonal expenses and maintain production. As a result, some growth plans were temporarily put on hold as a result. Rim Mills also faced cashflow issues at the time of the SWO, which put the company in a tight situation during their operational season. The tight cashflow of RAG resulted in payments to vendors being delayed, and some payables becoming overdue. The cashflow TA loss slowed the progress of Arez Planation's improvements to its financial planning and cash management. Greenco's lost TA would have helped the innovator analyze and solve cashflow challenges, which would have enhanced its capacity for expansion. And Freshsource's cancelled cost structure analysis TA delayed the optimization of the company's profitability.

The SWO's effect on growth plans prevented innovators from pursuing the next step towards investment readiness. Plug'n'Grow's cancelled data room delayed documentation requested by investors. While Green Eagle Tech and Egymag had valuation TAs cancelled that delayed the innovators' ability to attract investors. High Atlas Foundation had their feasibility and break-even analysis TA cancelled.

Other cancelled growth TAs, as well as the delay of innovators' milestone payments, negatively impacted innovation end-users, staff, and consumers who lost out on planned improvements for end-user support, job opportunities, and new sales channels. Freshsource's second milestone payment was delayed from January 2025 to July 2025, which affected their hiring plans and their purchase of machinery for the cutting, washing and drying of fruits and vegetables. It also affected their deployment of farmer education and women farmer empowerment programs that targeted 1,000 farmers, of which 60% are women. Plug'n'Grow also had their milestone payment postponed until July 2025, delaying the hiring of key senior personnel and the commercialization of their key product for smallholders, Grow Serum.

For EcoFeed, their second milestone was delayed from January 2025 to May 2025, affecting their hiring plans to recruit agricultural engineers. The same postponement also happened to Biomassr, which delayed their production and sales targets for dried garlic and tomato production, as well as the development of their online sales channels.

Egymag's delayed milestone payment setback some of their marketing and outreach activities to smallholder farmers, as well as some of their R&D studies on new crop types. Continuing on the path of lost crop opportunities, Agrifresh had a TA cancelled that would have enhanced in-field cabbage production. This particular TA would have been valuable in Lebanon, as the country has very low precipitation and cabbages are a top-selling crop in the country. Greenco had resource efficiency and product enhancement TAs cancelled that would have added quality assurance and quality control processes to improve their products quality and impact along with optimized production costs and resource use. The implementation of these measures were delayed. Mozna's production was affected, as they, too, lost a quality control TA opportunity.

Rim Mills, Natagri, and Irma & Co had planned marketing and branding TAs that were cancelled. These TAs planned would have expanded innovators' markets, reaching new end-users and consumers. Rim Mills planned to expand their market through stronger sales and marketing efforts, including a website upgrade and development of their business-to-consumer line. The TA's cancellation slowed progress for this expansion. Natagri's efforts on the go-to-market phase of their dried fruit line were slowed due to the TA's cancellation. Irma & Co faced the same issue as Natagri, because they were also working on their go-to-market strategy for dried fruit.

From a strategic perspective, innovators lost TA opportunities that would have improved governance, market expansion, and operations management. Green Essence's TA on strategic expansion and market entry was cancelled, which resulted in their planned expansion to Africa being suspended. Their plans are on hold until a consultant can be re-engaged. Agrifresh's governance TA, which would have involved governance restructuring – including setting up a board of advisors and segregating accounting processes between Agrifresh and its sister company – was put on hold due to the SWO.

Garbaliser's TAs on the development of SOPs as well as a supporting manual were cancelled; the TAs would have helped the company establish administrative policies covering accounting, financial planning, and cashflow management. The resulting operational manual would have supported future franchising efforts in Lebanon and Iraq, ensuring consistent quality and product compliance. Following Mozare3's recent investments, the innovator needed a strategic planning TA to support the company's growth. Due to the SWO, this critical TA was cancelled. They also lost out on additional hub support for traceability, and support to training agronomists in impact measurement and data-driven product improvement.

Iraqi innovators were the most negatively affected, as several innovators had two TAs planned for the remaining months of the program. Ainda had TAs on optimization of smart poultry component sales, and chicken nutrition, cancelled. LORK's TA on hydroponic fodder optimization was cancelled. The innovator also needed the WE4F grant to build affordable hydroponic systems for farmers; the funding was lost due to the SWO. RAG had their PowerBI Platform TA cancelled. Ras Al Ain Sky lost out on a sales and marketing TA and a solar energy audit TA. Al Raka'ez Al Handasiyah was highly affected, as the innovator planned additional capital expenditures to build new ponds for their aquaculture system. They also lost out on TAs for bio floc technology advisory, and fish disease and hatchery assistance. Faraday's TA on Baghdad market research was cancelled. Zhany was unable to receive two TAs, one on sales and marketing TA, and a second on vermicompost advisory support. The consequences of the SWO not only affected Cultivision, but also their end-users, as the innovator had their market research, and portal and web development, TAs cancelled. The loss of the WE4F grant almost resulted in the closure of their training and awareness campaigns due to a drop in cash flow – their forecast had been based on funding from WE4F.

To minimize the negative effects of USAID's SWO, the MENA RIH quickly worked with the Swedish Embassies in Jordan and Lebanon to re-start activities. The hub received a bridge contract that was funded by Sweden's Embassy in Amman, Jordan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands and Sweden's Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon. The contract enabled Berytech and its partners to sustain critical activities, ensure a responsible program closure, and protect the interests of innovators and stakeholders.

Of the 35 innovators involved in the program pre-SWO, 15 joined the bridge contract to receive final instances of TA and investment readiness support that were initiated before the suspension. The hub provided 13 TAs focused on organizational development, food safety, partnerships, strategic planning, fruit drying, end-user financing, digitalization, mushroom halls design and production advisory, compost factory design, cash flow management, and technical design for plant extension.

In addition to the TAs, the hub focused on reviewing and processing pending grant and TA payments. As the program approached closure, priority was given to the claim and payment of all amounts due to innovators, subcontractors, and service providers, ensuring that each received the compensation stipulated in their agreements. Legal addenda were prepared to document dues under the terminated USAID contract, while transitioning the responsibility for settlement to Sida's bridge mechanism. Over 35 companies across Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and other MENA countries benefited from continued follow-up, with the hub verifying deliverables, negotiating adjustments, and settling outstanding obligations. These efforts led to the recovery and settlement of substantial amounts in grants and TAs from USAID, reflecting diligent financial and operational management during a complex transition period. The hub submitted a termination settlement to claim remaining amounts due to innovators and stakeholders.

In May 2025, the Power X Summit in Lebanon became a key milestone of the bridge period and a celebration of WE4F's regional legacy. Organized by Berytech with WE4F team support, the event gathered innovators, investors, and partners from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Iraq, alongside hub and consortium team members, to reflect on lessons learned and chart pathways for future collaboration. The WE4F team curated sessions such as "Navigating Macro Challenges," "Gender-Inclusive Business Models," and "Empowering Change: Impact Finance and ESG Integration." Innovators exhibited their technologies and impact stories, while a dedicated "Lessons Learned Room" facilitated open reflection on grant design, TA quality, and adaptive management. The insights collected during Power X informed the Impact & Success Story Report and guided the design of WE4F 2.0 and the MENA Impact Fund.

Following the Power X Summit, and with the support of Sida and the Stockholm Environment Institute, more than 15 innovators were invited to Stockholm to participate in the EAT Forum and She Entrepreneurs Week, deepening their exposure to international networks and showcasing MENA-based climate and agri-food innovations on a global stage. In parallel to these in-person activities, the bridge team launched a series of knowledge-sharing webinars focused on nexus markets, digital agricultural systems, solar technologies, sustainable water solutions, and bio-fertilizers, highlighting tangible lessons from WE4F's leading enterprises.

Through these combined efforts, the WE4F MENA Bridge Contract maintained program continuity, safeguarded beneficiaries, and ensured a structured and transparent transition toward future sustainability initiatives across the MENA region, setting the foundation for the next generation of programming.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenges	Solutions
Conflict and Instability	
<p>One of the key challenges throughout program implementation was the ongoing conflicts in several target regions, including Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan, and Yemen. These conditions limited the program’s ability to operate in Sudan and Yemen. It also caused delays for Lebanese and Palestinian innovators who were trying to meet their targets.</p>	<p>To address these constraints, the program adopted a flexible implementation approach, offering timeline and no-cost extensions wherever possible. The hub also adjusted TAs and deliverables to match on-the-ground realities. The Lebanon CFI was also developed to help innovators maintain their operations and tackle food security in vulnerable communities. This flexibility allowed innovators to maintain engagement and continue progressing toward their objectives, despite the volatile context.</p>
Environmental, Social, and Governance	
<p>Innovators often did not prioritize gender aspects due to cultural and social norms in the MENA region.</p>	<p>To mitigate this challenge, the hub proactively reached out to innovators to discuss the importance of gender mainstreaming. The hub also organized gender sessions during the Regional Convening; launched the MENA Women Innovate Network; and conducted continuous discussions with Country Coordinators to make them more engaged in gender mainstreaming issues.</p>
<p>Innovators lacked awareness of activities related to environmental sustainability, including waste management, biodiversity conservation, and climate adaptation activities that counted towards mitigation measures in the EMMRs.</p>	<p>The hub provided activity examples during ESG clinics and one-on-ones that helped innovators link the activities that they were already implementing with impact on natural resources management, habitat conservation, and biodiversity preservation.</p>
<p>Some innovators did not prioritize environmental sustainability-related activities due to competing priorities and resource constraints.</p>	<p>The hub shared innovators’ final EMMR on the USAID Environmental Compliance Database and communicated how they can use it for investment rounds as well as to showcase that they are compliant with USAID’s Regulation 216.</p> <p>The USAID Regulation 216 procedure necessitated grantees recognize and address potential environmental risks. The hub’s team offered comprehensive assistance to innovators in achieving these objectives, holding regular one-on-one meetings to highlight the significance of environmental considerations for their overall business advancement.</p> <p>The hub also connected the implemented interventions with their work, helping innovators avoid extra burdens or effort (e.g., if innovators had an existing site inspection report, the hub added the environmental requirements to it, rather than creating a new template).</p>

Challenges	Solutions
Access to Financing	
<p>While men and women face barriers when trying to access end-user financing, this is especially challenging for women. Banks often demand personal collateral which is difficult for women in the MENA region who often lack the personal collateral (e.g., land) that they could submit for financing due to lower rates of asset ownership than men.</p>	<p>The hub focused on alternative risk assessments in end-user financing and worked with partner financial institutions. It also connected relevant innovators with donors/NGOs who support women economic empowerment, helping innovators put forward a financially sustainable model.</p>
<p>Throughout the program, innovators faced challenges when trying to raise investment in the MENA region because of the difficult economic and political environment (e.g., high inflation, currency depreciation, banking and import restrictions in many countries, and high interest rates).</p>	<p>The hub mapped various investment mechanisms from different types of investors, including concessional debt from investment funds. The Investment Facilitation Team identified and connected innovators to impact funds in the region. The team also designed a sustainable impact fund that is currently in development. To ensure positive outcomes for all stakeholders were reached, the Investment Facilitation Team maintained regular communication with all stakeholders. Additionally, the hub helped innovators upgrade their financial and budgeting skills, as well as identify gaps in their organization and business plan, prior to facilitating connections.</p>
<p>Challenges preparing innovators to raise investment in the MENA with many innovators having limited human resources working in finance.</p>	

LOOKING FORWARD

The MENA RIH completed a number of strategic initiatives to ensure the sustainability of its impact, consolidate key lessons learned, and lay out the groundwork for future programming in the region.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

The hub completed a feasibility study for a future sustainable impact fund, which was delivered by KPMG PCC in partnership with BSEC and KPMG Advisory Netherlands. The TA advanced through five key phases: investment strategy, fund structure and domiciliation, fundraising roadmap, governance framework, and impact measurement design. The focus is now on finalizing the investment documentation package, including the Private Placement Memorandum, pitch deck, and financial budget. The next step is investor outreach in preparation for the fund's first \$50 million USD fundraising round, targeted within the next year. In parallel, a proposal to the Green Climate Fund has been completed, marking a critical step toward scaling climate finance solutions in the MENA region. Submission is planned as the next milestone. The MENA RIH will continue to play a catalytic role in de-risking pipeline opportunities and supporting investment readiness of aligned SMEs.

CONSOLIDATION OF LESSONS LEARNED

After the closure of the final round of TA activities, there was a review to assess the effectiveness, outcomes, and lessons learned of the entire portfolio of TAs delivered since program inception. This reflection fed into a broader assessment to document successes, gaps, and actionable recommendations for future programming. Based on feedback received through Power X and the Annual Convening, the hub will continue to deliver TAs by program staff that could provide critical support to innovators that did not benefit from the bridge contract's provided TAs. To deepen stakeholder engagement, a series of thematic webinars was launched. These sessions focused on specific value chains and market opportunities across the water-energy-food nexus, drawing on the experience of lead innovators and WE4F. Each webinar included presentations from select innovators and interventions from key stakeholders, aimed at sharing best practices on reaching smallholder farmers and catalyzing water-energy-food nexus solutions. The hub also updated the MENA Investor Landscape Report, integrating new insights from fund development efforts, market engagements, and recent shifts in investor appetite across the water-energy-food nexus. Finally, lessons learned from the MEL process were consolidated and used to inform and strengthen future program design and delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRIORITY DIALOGUE

Although the policy landscape, market trends, and opportunities for WE4F innovations differ across the MENA region, the hub identified several areas that require – and can benefit from – advocacy, capacity building, and showcasing efforts that target governments, the private sector, and development partners. Areas of priority include:

- Showcasing proven WE4F-supported technologies and business models that can achieve significant impact across the MENA region (e.g., solar irrigation, Internet of Things (IoT) smart control for water efficiency, resource recovery for biofertilizer). Showcasing can be done by innovators and supporting organizations either at key industry events in the region (i.e., MENA Climate Week, Cairo Water Week), as part of specialized capacity building programs (i.e., Res4Africa) or through dedicated webinars. The targeted audiences should include, among others, public decision-makers, business enablers and partners, and financiers.
- Advocating for catalytic finance and other de-risking mechanisms (e.g., loan guarantees, first-loss capital) to support the scaling of SME solutions.
- Encouraging the creation of dedicated impact funds tailored for the unique needs of the MENA region.
- Collaborating with international financial institutions and private investors to support the establishment of these dedicated impact funds.
- Devising and implementing end-user financing schemes that can help make innovations accessible and affordable.
- Partnering with financing organizations to create customized end-user financing schemes relevant for water-energy-food nexus.
- Highlighting the close linkages between gender mainstreaming and innovations.
- Facilitating cooperation and exchange on investment strategies by traditional and impact investors that can help scale innovations.
- Advocating for the transparency and streamlining of registration, customs, and license issues, on a national level and for export/import and international certification.
- Building public and private business partnerships that can facilitate significant operational and market expansions.

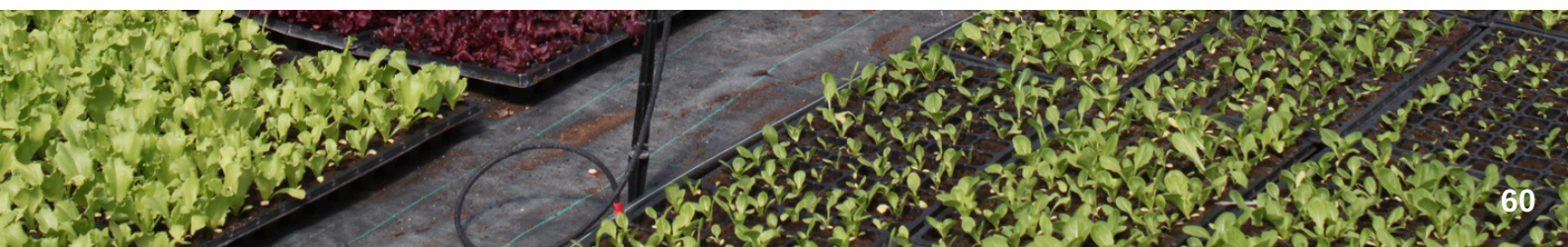
Stakeholder engagement around each topic varies. Depending on the needs of the topic, it could involve partnership development, enabling environment interventions, communications and knowledge management activities, and/or event and conference participation. By engaging with external stakeholders, especially those aligned with larger programs, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), organizations can strengthen their influence in policy dialogues and drive improvements within the nexus.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE AND LOCAL CONTEXT-AWARE GUARANTEE MECHANISMS

Throughout WE4F's existence, the MENA RIH and Secretariat Unit worked to present innovators to different potential investors. One of the pursued mechanisms was the BUILD Fund, a global guarantee mechanism, created through partnership by Sida and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and managed by Bamboo Capital. The purpose of the mechanism was to provide businesses with low-interest loans. Of the more than 40 innovators presented to the guarantee, only one innovator, Green Eagle Tech, successfully made it to the final stages. It then took two years of persistent follow-up by Green Eagle Tech for Bamboo Capital to approve the transaction. This delay resulted in the innovator losing a critical opportunity window to scale during a challenging period in Egypt. Consequently, Green Eagle Tech had to rely on alternative investment sources, mainly equity investors from the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Two key lessons can be drawn from this experience.

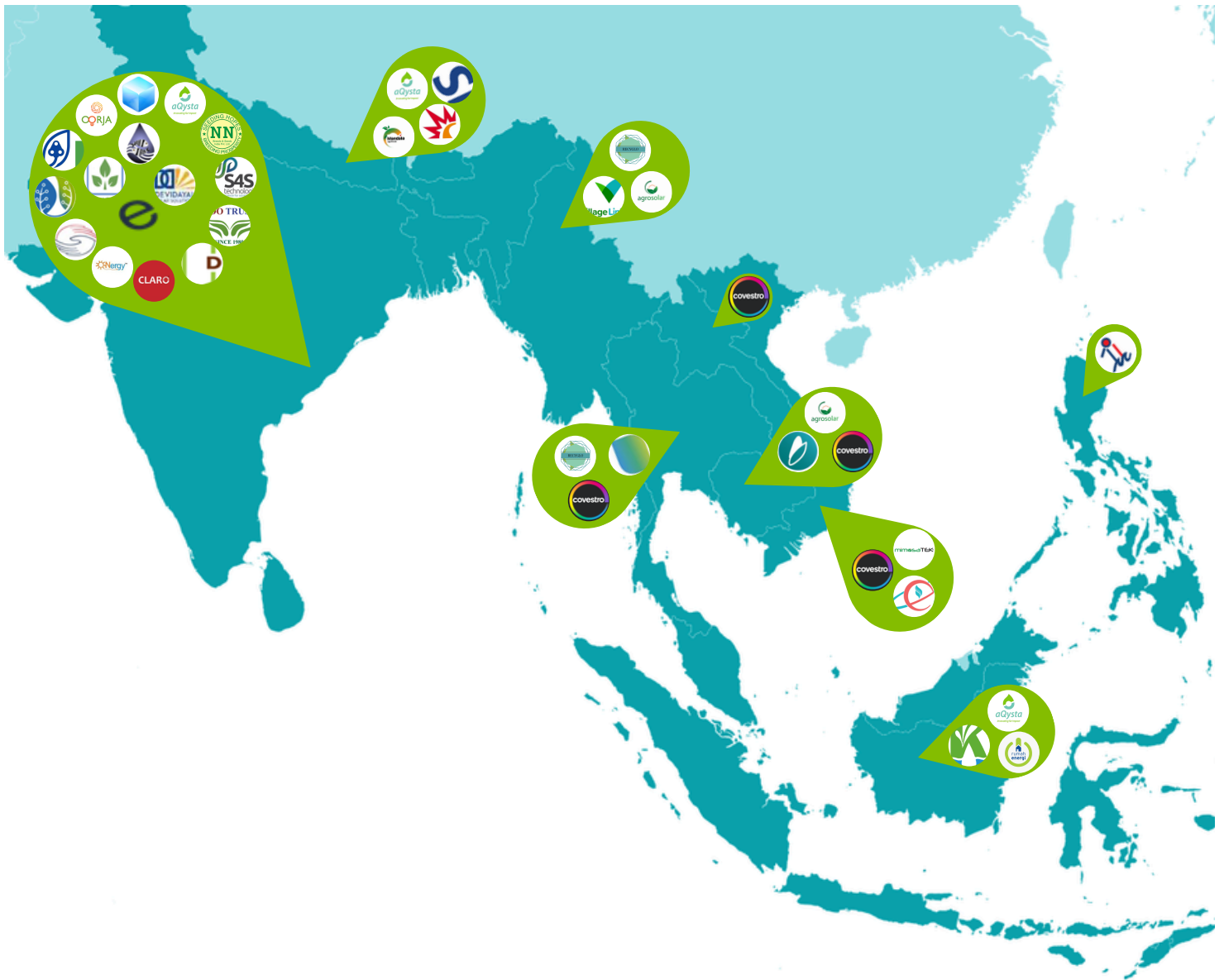
1. Guarantee mechanisms should be accessible to firms that have a demonstrated track record of working with water-energy-food innovators. Despite the breakthrough achieved with Green Eagle Tech, Bamboo Capital's assessment followed a conventional approach, closer to the requirements of a commercial bank, in terms of structuring and guarantees requested. While Green Eagle Tech was eventually able to comply, many other innovators cannot, and this defeats the purpose of a guarantee mechanism, which is meant to enable higher risk tolerance for such vehicles.
2. The local context matters significantly. Bamboo Capital did not have prior experience in Egypt nor in the broader MENA region, which contributed to major delays in the transaction. They indicated that they needed to hire experts familiar with local laws, regulations, and market dynamics to support their due diligence, which further slowed the process.



SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA



MAP OF SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA INNOVATORS



- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Agrosolar
Solar-powered pumping systems with integrated pay-as-you-go financing plans  aQysta Nepal
Sustainable irrigation with a pay-per-harvest models  Centre for Aquatic Livelihood - Jaljeevika
Provides an IoT sensor-based advisory support system for small-scale fish farmers  Claro Energy
Solar irrigation systems for food security and reduced production costs  Climesverse
Incentivizing farmers to transition to low emissions agriculture through carbon finance  CoolCrop
Business model innovation for enhanced energy & operationally efficient post-harvest management of horticulture crops  Covestro Inclusive Business ASEAN
Tackles the challenges of post-harvest loss in underserved communities with the Solar Dryer Dome technology  Devidayal Solar
Solar-powered preservation empowering the farming community | <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Dvara E-Registry
Harvesting change by innovating for sustainable agriculture, gender equality, and poverty reduction  Egreen Technology
Supplies efficient biogas digesters and purifiers that allows farmers to generate electricity from farm waste  FCCT
Expanding and scaling Takakura composting technology for food security at home  Gham Power
Integrated solar solutions for farmers  Human Ventures
Climate-resilient crop diversification  Husk Power Systems
Biomass and solar PV hybrid minigrids for off-grid farming communities  Husk Ventures
Carbon-based solutions for water and food security | <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Komodo Water/PT. Tinamitra Mandiri
Offers island and coastal communities sustainable water management and solar-powered ice production for fisheries  Mandala Agrifresh
Helps farmers manage post-harvest food waste through a solar-powered cold storage unit  MimosasTEK
Internet of Things platform for precision agriculture  New Leaf Dynamic Technologies
Provides farmer cooperatives with biomass-powered cold storage units  ONergy Solar
Integrated solar irrigation systems for vulnerable populations  Oorja Development Solutions
Pay-per-use clean energy services for marginalized farmers  Promethean Power Systems
Milk-chilling technology for small-scale dairy farmers  RDO Trust
Turning faecal sludge and organic solid waste into nitrogen-rich co-compost. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">  RecyGlo
Turning organic waste into biogas and fertilizer and recycling batteries into solar power sets  S4S Technologies
Procures farmers' produce, engages women micro-entrepreneurs for solar-powered drying, and sells the products  Shreenagar Agritech
Offers innovative low-cost floating fish feed and climate-smart solutions  Village Link
Offers farmers a mobile app with location-specific, timely recommendations to reduce water usage  Yayasan Rumah Energi
Facilitates small and mid-size enterprises and microfinance organizations to install biodigesters for small livestock farmers. |
|---|--|--|--|

Previous page: Yayasan Rumah Energi (Indonesia) end-user applies the fertilizer by-product of the innovator's biodigester to a field.

2024 SUMMARY

For the South and Southeast Asia Regional Innovation Hub (S/SEA RIH), 2024 was a successful year. The hub supported 40 innovators through a combination of grants, technical assistance (TA), investment facilitation, and/or capacity building. It also exceeded the Life of Program (LOP) targets for all but one of its key performance indicators (KPI). Innovators noted the hub's success, reporting high satisfaction levels in Quality of Service Survey (QoSS). Externally, hub staff and innovators advocated for the implementation of WE4F lessons learned and recommendations that could improve the wider water-energy-food nexus. Internally, TAs, convenings, and webinars helped innovators increase their knowledge of key themes and scale their businesses to reach new end-users.

The 40 supported innovators included nine new innovators onboarded through the Open Call for Innovations (OCFI). The OCFI cohort came from five countries, including the first innovator from the Philippines. Among the 17 TA instances provided by the hub in 2024, most innovators were interested in organizational growth, with most completed TA instances focusing on business development, investment readiness, and public relations and communications.

As a result of innovators' commitment to impacting base of the pyramid (BoP) end-users to reduce inefficient water usage and increase renewable energy access to produce more food, a total of 1.98 million end-users – 28% of them being women – have been impacted. Together, innovators and end-users produced over 3.4 million tons of food and processed over 123,000 tons. Energy savings reached 610 million kilowatt-hours (kWh), while water consumption was reduced by 6.78 billion liters. These savings in water consumption and energy, helped end-users and innovators save over 655,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (CO₂e). In terms of unlocking economic opportunity, over 1.2 million end-users saw an increase in income, while innovators, with support from the S/SEA RIH, reached a total mobilized private sector investment of over \$153 million U.S. Dollars (USD).

CONNECTING RESULTS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

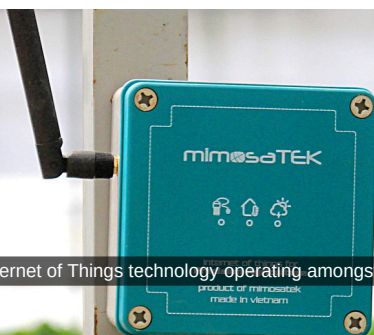
Through the S/SEA RIH's support of water-energy-food nexus innovators, the program made substantial contributions to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), 1.98 million end-users adopted WE4F-supported sustainable water-food, energy-food, or water-energy-food innovations, with more than 1.2 million end-users experiencing increased incomes. Additionally, the S/SEA innovators collectively raised \$153 million USD in investment, demonstrating significant economic growth and infrastructure development.

Under SDG 2 (No Hunger), supported innovations processed 123,000 tons of food by reducing post-harvest losses, providing cold storage solutions, or improving market access. Additionally, over 3.4 million tons of food were produced, contributing to the enhancement of food security.

For SDG 5 (Gender Equality), the S/SEA RIH prioritized women-led and/or -owned innovations, as well as offering gender mainstreaming TA instances, aiding in the unlocking of gender-lens investment, and offering organizational capacity building workshops and webinars. Through innovator scaling, women-focused services, and internal operation adaptations, S/SEA innovators impacted more than 556,000 women end-users.











For SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), innovators reduced water consumption by more than 6.7 billion liters through water conservation strategies, agricultural advisory services, and efficient technologies. Similarly, for SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), innovators saved more than 610 million kWh and prevented the release of 655,000 tons of CO₂e, or greenhouse gas emissions. These activities also contributed to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The S/SEA RIH integrated WE4F's holistic approach to sustainably scaling solutions by facilitating the development of innovators' partnerships, both internally and externally. The hub also strived to develop hub-level partnerships with other organizations, promoting knowledge sharing, enabling environment work, and end-user financing. Efforts by innovators, as well as the hub, to build partnerships that would create a climate resilient and sustainable region contributed to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).



Mimosatek (Vietnam) Internet of Things technology operating amongst crops.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Key Performance Indicator	Life of Program Target (2020-2025)	Results to Date (2020-2025)	Status
 Share of supported innovators that successfully marketed their innovations with profit	8%	35%	Exceeded
	25% are led by women	67% women	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users using WE4F innovations	1.5 million end-users	1.98 million end-users	Exceeded
	375,000 women end-users	556,000 women end-users	Exceeded
	375,000 BOP end-users	1.4 million BOP end-users	Exceeded
 Total mass of food produced as a result of WE4F innovations	1.75 million tons	3.4 million tons	Exceeded
 Total mass of food processed as a result of WE4F innovations	100,000 tons	123,000 tons	Exceeded
 Total energy saved in the food value chain as a result of the use of WE4F innovations	500 million kWh	610 million kWh	Exceeded
 Total volume of water consumption reduction as a result of WE4F innovations	2.3 billion liters	6.78 billion liters	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users that experience an increase in income	700,000 end-users	1.2 million end-users	Exceeded
	175,000 women end-users	314,000 women end-users	Exceeded
 Share of innovators & other stake-holders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity	80%	56%	Off Track
		Monitoring water only	26%
		Monitoring biodiversity only	4%
		Monitoring water and biodiversity	26%
 Value of investment in U.S. Dollars that WE4F innovators mobilized from external sources	\$135 million USD	\$153 million USD	Exceeded
 Total of GHG emissions saved by WE4F innovations	450,000 tons of CO2e	655,000 tons of CO2e	Exceeded
		End-users using climate-mitigation innovations	4,400 end-users
		End-users using climate adaptation-related innovations	915,000 end-users

Of the indicators – and associated breakdowns – listed in the KPI chart with LOP targets, the S/SEA RIH exceeded 13 out of 14 LOP targets and was “Off Track” for one target.

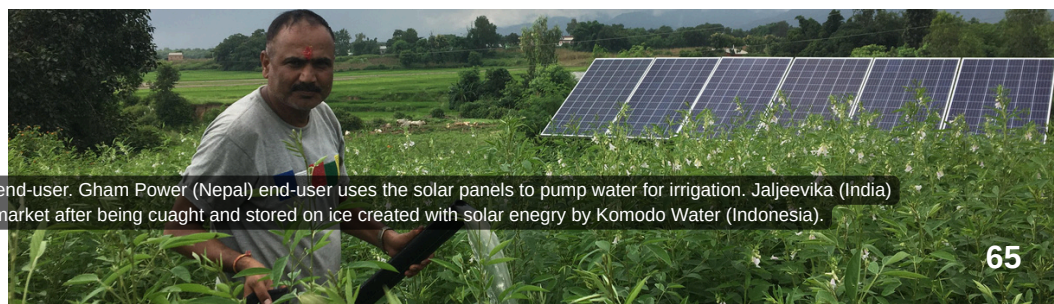
Compared to the 2023 results, two indicators (total mass of food processed and total GHG emissions savings) moved from “On Track” to “Exceeded,” while one indicator (total mass of food produced) moved from “Off Track” to “Exceeded”. The target for “total mass of food produced” was decreased from 2.25 million tons to 1.75 million tons; this was done to reflect the on-the-ground reality, as most innovators supported by the hub were targeting smallholder farmers rather than large-scale producers. Underneath the new LOP target, the hub and innovators were able to exceed 1.75 million tons due to more mature innovators seeing increases in innovation use.

Five indicators had their targets increased: total number of end-users (1 million increased to 1.5 million); total energy savings (20 million kWh increased to 500 million kWh); total volume of water consumption reduction (1 billion liters increased to 2.3 billion liters); and total amount of investment mobilized (\$20 million USD increased to \$135 million USD). These five indicators, even with higher targets, were exceeded by the hub, due to increased levels of innovator maturity. The only indicator where an OCFI innovator had a major contribution was “total volume of water consumption reduction”. Equilibrium was a top 3 contributor as they had had one data collection submission prior to the USAID Stop Work Order (SWO).

Differences emerge when the sources of results are compared – with the exception of “total GHG emissions savings” where innovators of all technologies contributed to the new results. Increases in energy savings were a result of increased usage of biogas and solar irrigation solutions. Innovators outperformed the “total mass of food processed” target due to the maturing of solar-powered food processing and cold storage innovators who reached more end-users and established market linkages. Aside from the contributions of Equilibrium, additional water savings occurred due to usage of digital technologies, specifically advisory services and Internet of Things (IoT) monitoring systems.

The LOP target for “total investment mobilized” was significantly increased because of Husk Power securing \$103 million USD in equity and debt, which pushed the \$20 million USD LOP target to the new \$135 million USD LOP target. The hub was able to exceed the new target due to innovators’ increasing maturity levels as well as the pursuit of a new funding mechanism – matching capital grants. Several innovators leveraged matching capital grants provided by the hub to unlock additional debt and equity funding.

The only indicator that was “Off Track” was the “share of innovators and other stakeholders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity”. Through the hub’s provision of TA, training, and a new collaboration between MEL and environmental staff, there was a 20-percentage point increase in monitoring, but the new result was still unable to reach the LOP target. Several factors could have contributed to the “Off Track” result, such as continued under-reporting or new innovators who joined the program in 2024 not yet implementing their monitoring plans.



Clockwise: Covestro (Vietnam) solar dryer loaded by an end-user. Gham Power (Nepal) end-user uses the solar panels to pump water for irrigation. Jaljeevika (India) aquaculture system set up in a pond. Fish are sold in a market after being caught and stored on ice created with solar energy by Komodo Water (Indonesia).

INNOVATOR SCALING AND MATURATION

2021 REGIONAL COHORT MILESTONE TRACKER

● On target
 ◐ Targets partially met
 ● Not on target
 ● Status unknown/TBD

Innovator	Overall Status	Successfully Marketed	End-users Impacted	Food Produced	Food Processed	Energy Saved	Water Saved	Increased Incomes	Investment Mobilized
aQysta	●	●	●	●		●		◐	●
Claro Energy	●		●	●		●		●	●
Promethean	●	◐	◐		●	●		◐	●
RDO Trust	◐		●	●		●	●	◐	

2022 REGIONAL COHORT MILESTONE TRACKER

● On target
 ◐ Targets partially met
 ● Not on target
 ● Status unknown/TBD

Innovator	Overall Status	Successfully Marketed	End-users Impacted	Food Produced	Food Processed	Energy Saved	Water Saved	Increased Incomes	Investment Mobilized
Agrosolar	◐	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Egreen	●	●	●	●		●		●	●
Jaljeevika	◐		◐	●		●	◐	●	●
Komodo Water	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Mandala Agrifresh	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
New Leaf	◐	●	●		◐	●		◐	●
S4S Technologies	◐	●	◐		●	●		●	◐
Village Link	●	●	●	●			●	●	●

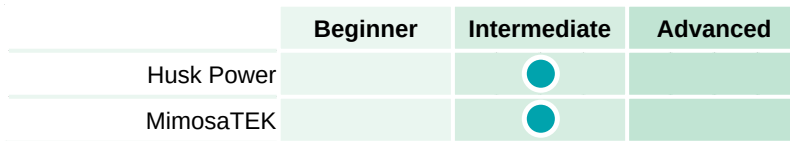
Those not part of the above chart due to the Stop-Work Order by USAID affecting data collection and preventing further assessment are: Equilibrium, CoolCrop, Devidayal Solar, Dvara, FarmConnect, FCCT, Human Ventures, HUSK Ventures, and Shreenagar Agritech. Those not part of the above chart due to lack of data, graduating from WE4F, or otherwise becoming inactive, are: AST, ATEC Biodigesters, Covestro, Gham Power, Husk Power, Khmer Green Charcoal, Pteah Baitong, MimosasTEK, ONergy, Oorja, Pumpkin Plus, RecyGlo, Sumba Sustainable Solutions, Techno-Hill Engineering, The Goat Trust, Tun Yat, Yayasan Rumah Energi, and ZooFresh.



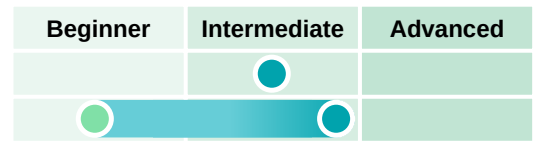
Claro Energy (India) end-user starts the solar-powered irrigation system to water the fields.

LEGACY COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment

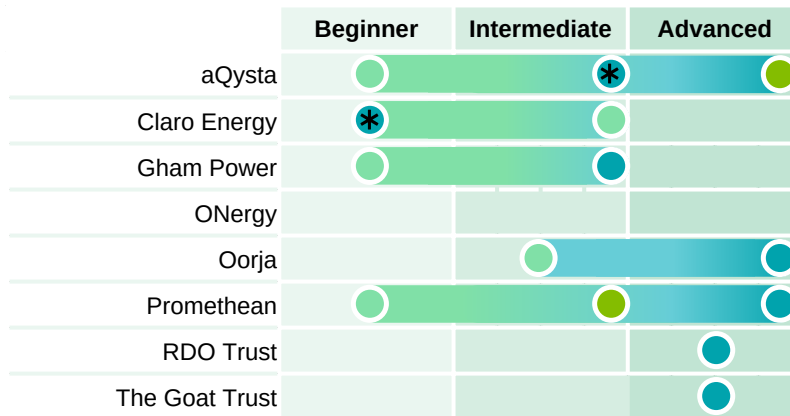


BoP Assessment

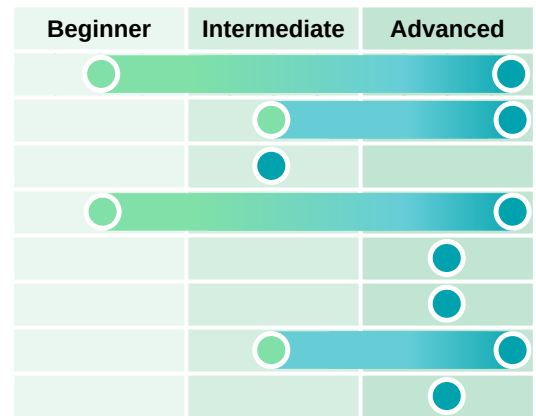


2021 REGIONAL COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment

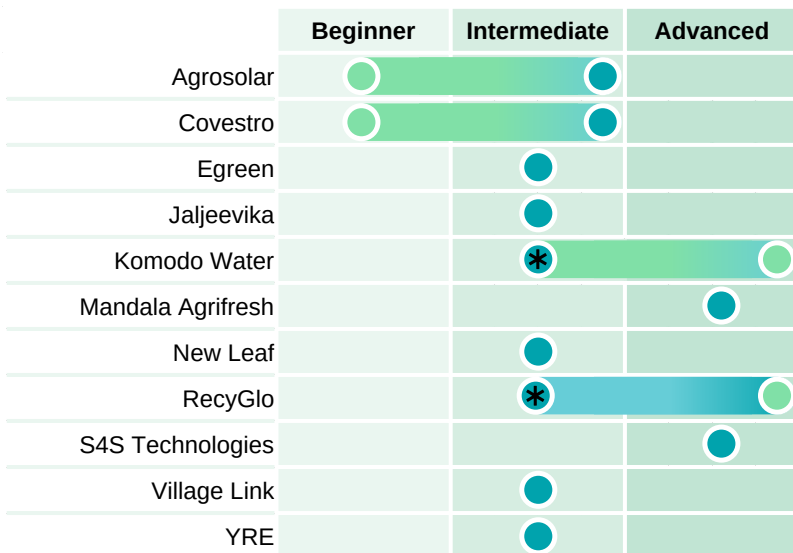


BoP Assessment



2022 REGIONAL COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment



BoP Assessment

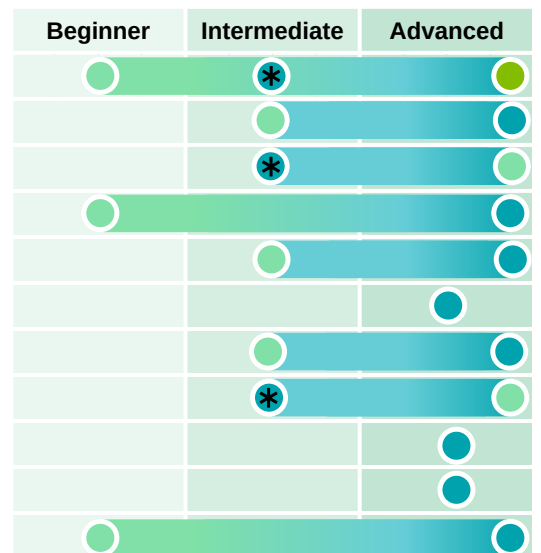


Chart Key

- First Assessment
- Latest Assessment
- Second Assessment (if not matching the first or latest)
- * Denotes a backwards slide due to change in women or BoP end-user percentage (due to increase in total number of end-users or lack of monitoring)

Those not part of the above charts due to lack of data, graduating from WE4F, or otherwise becoming inactive, are: AST, ATEC Biodigesters, Khmer Green Charcoal, Pteah Baitong, Pumpkin Plus, Sumba Sustainable Solutions, Techno-Hill Engineering, Tun Yat, and ZooFresh.

2024 OCFI COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
CoolCrop	●		
DD Solar		●	
Dvara		●	
Equilibrium	●		
FarmConnect		●	
FCCT			●
Human Ventures		●	
HUSK Ventures			●
Shreenagar Agritech			●

BoP Assessment

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
CoolCrop			●
DD Solar		●	
Dvara			●
Equilibrium			●
FarmConnect			●
FCCT			●
Human Ventures			●
HUSK Ventures			●
Shreenagar Agritech			●

Chart Key

● Latest Assessment

INNOVATOR UPDATES LEGACY COHORT



Husk Power Systems received TA to develop a marketing and sales strategy aimed at increasing sales and enhancing customer engagement. They expanded their product portfolio by adding banana products and extended their food processing operations to new districts, leveraging their mini-grids and customer base to drive growth in new geographies. Globally recognized for its innovation, Husk Power was named one of the 50 most innovative companies in the world by Fast Company and featured in the World Bank's Development Podcast series, discussing the concept of "green jobs."



MimosaTEK received TA to research and design wastewater recycling technology, specifically focusing on reuse of ferti-water drainage waste on the farm-level. The innovator also signed a four-party contract involving buyers, farmers, and investors within the flower value chain. The contract aims to manage the farm production process and commit to specific results for farmers using their services. MimosaTEK was one of the innovators selected to present on its impact at the 10th World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia and was invited to join a three-day conference on "Managing Water Risks in a Changing Climate" in Vietnam.

2021 REGIONAL COHORT



aQysta received two TAs on organizational capacity development, the first to improve talent management and the second to develop human resources (HR) systems for fast-growing company operations and recruitment. A key partnership was formed with the Alternate Energy Promotion Center (AEPC) to include Hypump under a sustainable challenge fund, while new collaborations were established with Ecosia (a search engine that funds climate projects), Eco-Himang (a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Nepal), and Aloj (fintech for loan and repayment monitoring). aQysta earned organic certifications for ginger, Sichuan pepper, and beans. The innovator also piloted exports to Europe. In partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Nepal, aQysta expanded its certified organic produce through market linkages and export facilitation. Additionally, it was selected for USAID's Market System and Partnerships Program to promote best practices in market systems and private sector engagement.



Claro Energy received a matching capital grant to raise debt for expanding their operations in agricultural irrigation services. The innovator also received a business development TA for a website re-design and the integration of a chatbot to improve customer engagement and operational efficiency. A notable collaboration with Husk Power aimed to scale Claro Energy's solar irrigation services, combining expertise and resources to bring sustainable and efficient irrigation solutions to under-served rural areas. Their partnership underscores a shared commitment to leveraging renewable energy for agricultural and community development.



Gham Power received a TA on organizational capacity development, which helped the innovator develop scalable approaches to building effective talent practices for its rapid growth. In 2024, Gham Power achieved several key partnership milestones: they signed an agreement with the Shechen Foundation to install solar water pumps, marking the start of a collaboration to expand clean energy solutions; partnered with the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Associations of Nepal (FWEAN) to promote the Super Krishak application and solar water pumps, empowering rural women farmers and supporting sustainable farming; and partnered with Finn Church Aid to promote solar water pumps, reinforcing its commitment to sustainable agriculture. In collaboration with Meromicrofinance Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha Ltd., Gham Power installed solar water pumps, boosting smallholder farmers' productivity. The innovator also partnered with Community Development & Advocacy Forum Nepal (CDFAN) to fund an additional four solar water pumps. The innovator won the National Energy Globe Award in Nepal and the SolarX Startup Challenge by ISA and Invest India. It was also selected for Feed the Future and received a funded impact study through 60 Decibels. For its climate change efforts, Gham Power was a finalist for the 2024 Keeling Curve Prize.



ONergy partnered with Punjab National Bank to facilitate end-user financing for infrastructure loans, enabling farmers to install solar irrigation pumps and adopt sustainable energy solutions. The innovator also entered into a partnership with Sustain Plus Energy Foundation to solarize agri-processing machinery in West Bengal and with Selco Foundation to solarize three Farmer Producer Organizations' (FPOs) food processing units. In collaboration with the Selco Foundation, ONergy completed the solarization of an FPO working with Goat Trust in Lucknow.



Oorja Development Solutions received a 2X certification TA, which will help them leverage the 2X platform to access funding from a larger pool of investors. The innovator achieved significant recognition and success: it won the "Best Practice" award at Partnering For Change 2024 for its work in equitable energy access in Hardoi district, Uttar Pradesh; co-founder Amit Saraogi was awarded an OC Fellowship to the Opportunity Collaboration 2024; the company won the Empowering Vulnerable Communities Challenge by the World Economic Forum; was featured on the cover of The Philanthropist magazine; was selected as one of the top 30 tech-driven solutions at MIT Solve's 2024 Global Challenges; and won the Efficiency-as-a-Service (EaaS) Innovation Showcase Award. Oorja secured a grant from the Swiss-Re Foundation to expand its business-to-consumer farming services and promote digital farm advisory. The innovator closed a \$1.5 million USD Pre-Series A funding round, with \$1.2 million in equity and \$300,000 in non-dilutive funds from the Swiss-Re Foundation.



Promethean Power Systems received a carbon financing TA to estimate carbon emission savings and develop an implementation plan for registering carbon credits. The TA will help Promethean Power Systems contribute to environmental sustainability while exploring new opportunities for financial growth. Efficiency for Access awarded Promethean an R&D Fund to improve refrigeration access for dairy farmers in rural India. To further accelerate expansion, the company signed a term sheet with Akshayakalpan, securing financing to scale its business and reach new markets.



Rural Development Solutions (RDO Trust) received a business development TA to strengthen the Green Workers Compost Production Company's business plans as a private limited company, which helped the company to commercially market its products, expand within Tamil Nadu markets, and eventually reach other states in India. In addition to the TA, RDO Trust received business development training to support women green workers' improvement of their organic fertilizer marketing which expanded the customer base, and to provide business and leadership training to staff and management at the Green Workers Compost Production Company. The innovator received the Best NGO Award from the Governor of Tamil Nadu in Chennai.





The Goat Trust expanded its reach through strategic partnerships, collaborating with initiatives in northeast India, supported by NABARD, to promote rural women entrepreneurship in Assam and Tripura. The innovator partnered with Nandinadan Breeds and 20 Goat FPCs to create Pashumarts. They also signed agreements with the Tribal Development Fund and the Directorate of Biotechnology to improve livestock value chains and genetic quality. The Goat Trust was recognized as a Social Entity on the NSE Social Stock Exchange and certified as a “Great Place-To-Work.” Looking ahead, The Goat Trust plans to establish an incubation center and launch a diploma program in livestock business with the International Institute of Goat Management and CV Raman University. They are also collaborating with the National Minority Finance Development Corporation to establish a goat bank and farmer business center in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh.

2022 REGIONAL COHORT



Agros (Agrosolar) expanded its operations to Indonesia and entered into a contract with the Cambodia Australia Partnership for Resilient Economic Development (CAPRED) to fund the calibration of agro-soil services and research and development (R&D). In Myanmar, operations continued cautiously, while in Indonesia, the sales team focused on East Java, with plans to launch Agrosoil and target more pumps. Agros received recognition for its innovations, winning a spot in UNDP Cambodia’s Growth Stage Impact Ventures program. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Max Nelen was also invited to share his expertise on the TV program ‘SEA Today’ in Indonesia, discussing ways to boost farm activity and reduce carbon emissions. Looking ahead, Agros plans to expand new branches.



Covestro, since November 2023, has partnered with People In Need on a project funded by the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The project introduces solar conduction dryers in Laos and Cambodia, focusing on small solar dryer domes. Covestro provided training and technological support to local partners in both countries, enabling them to assist farmers with increasing their income. Covestro also continued its flagship project with the Agroecology Learning Alliance in Southeast Asia (ALISEA) and the Community Development and Environment Association (CDEA), which has already positively impacted 208 households in Laos.



Egreen Technology received an HR and talent management TA to develop a competencies framework, performance evaluation, and corporate culture document. The innovator also received support from the hub for investor outreach and discussions. As part of its partnership activities, Egreen signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and contracts with major livestock companies in Vietnam – including CP and Son Thien Groups – to install biogas digesters, with Tân Long Group as an impact investor. The innovator also completed the testing phase of its S-Circle project product, an IoT biogas purifier, and started preparing to launch a project with a German university partner. Egreen participated in key events, showcasing its innovation on the Voice of Vietnam talk show and presenting at the Impact Investment Forum in Vietnam.



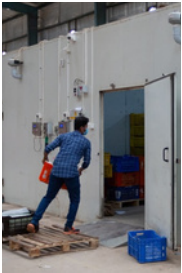
Jaljeevika received a TA instance for a go-to-market strategy to support its Nepal expansion. The innovator also established a partnership with the Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Mission to provide technical support on aquaculture to women Self-Help Groups. Jaljeevika was selected for Vilgro’s Powering Livelihoods program, receiving grant funding and TA. It was also selected for the Rebuild India Fund by Dasra and partnered with the National Rural Livelihood Mission to scale its advisory services to various state livelihood missions. The organization registered as a Social Entity (Not-for-Profit) on the NSE Social Stock Exchange and was empaneled with the Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI) to provide training to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) farmers in coastal Maharashtra.



Komodo Water received an investment readiness TA to refine its strategic investment approach and enhance related documents. They also received a 2X certification TA, which will help them leverage the 2X platform to access funding from a larger pool of investors. A key milestone for the innovator, was entering a contract with the PT Indokomoditi Putra Sikka to supply cocopeat, coir (coconut fiber), and coconut charcoal. The company also launched an affordable clean water product line in response to community needs. Expanding further into agriculture, Komodo Water invested in a Maumere-based firm focused on coconut and corn farming. It also partnered with an Indonesian state-owned company to install a solar water pump in Golo Mori village. The innovator was selected as one of 10 startups in the Green Techmaker program, an acceleration initiative supported by GIZ and the Ministry of National Development Planning of Indonesia. It was shortlisted for the SDG Award 2024 for its clean water and ice block production work as well as sustainable development efforts. Komodo Water won the SDGs Action Award 2024 in the MSMEs category. To support clean water access and regenerative agriculture in Manggarai Barat district, the innovator received corporate social responsibility funding from Pertamina Shipping.



Mandala Agrifresh received an HR TA to develop scalable talent management practices tailored for a fast-growing scale-up. It benefited from an investment readiness TA to create a compelling pitch deck, financial model, cash flow analysis, and capitalization table optimization. The innovator also received a 2X certification TA which will help them leverage the 2X platform to unlock funding from a larger pool of investors. In collaboration with Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, the innovator conducted a market study on integrated IoT management systems in agriculture. It also hosted a USAID and Feed the Future Innovation Labs delegation, showcasing its active role in global agricultural innovation. Mandala worked with aQysta on a USAID-supported Market Systems Partnership project and provided training for the Rural Economic Development Association (REDA), a local partner of Heifer Nepal. The innovator established key partnerships with Aloj and SWISSCONTACT to expand its outreach.



New Leaf Dynamic Technologies received a public relations and communications TA to enhance its graphic design, website upgrades, and branding of fundraising and marketing materials, boosting its outreach and visibility. New Leaf's GreenCHILL biomass-powered refrigeration technology was granted a patent by the Indian Patent Office. As part of its expansion, the company signed a contract with CKinetics to install GreenChill units, and shipped new units to Bangladesh and Thailand as part of a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) project on market linkages for fruit and vegetable value chains. Additionally, it expanded internationally into the ice-making business. The innovator participated in the Hon. Balasaheb Thackeray Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART) Project, supported by the Government of Maharashtra and the World Bank.



RecyGlo was named Most Promising Start-Up (Runner-Up) at the King Power Thailand International Business Award 2024 and received the Exceptional Entrepreneur (Runner-Up) Award for outstanding vision and leadership. The innovator was shortlisted for the Business Excellence Award at the Thai-Swedish Chamber of Commerce. RecyGlo partnered with Himalaya Innovate Partner for Change to promote sustainability, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) leadership, and inclusive practices by offering training to Thai businesses.



S4S Technologies received a TA to develop its own environmental and social management systems (ESMS), with a manual to guide sustainable practices. The innovator expanded into Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, as well as launched a new solar-powered green miller for cornflakes, which empowers 60 women entrepreneurs. S4S also began pilot projects in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, along with securing a new partnership in Ghana to support its programs. The innovator attended the prestigious UpLink Press Conference in Davos, engaging with global leaders in sustainability, and was featured in The World Bank's Development Podcast, discussing "What is a Green Job?"



Village Link received a digital marketing and communications TA, which included newsletter development, gender-inclusive social media messaging, and staff training on content creation. The support helped the company engage more end-users and increase app subscriptions. Despite challenges in Myanmar, Village Link signed two contracts with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), and an MoU with a microfinance institution (MFI) to train 50,000 farmers. They also partnered with RecyGlo to strengthen circular economy practices in Myanmar's animal feed value chain. Village Link won the Consultative Group for International Agriculture Research (CGAIR)'s Award for Outstanding Outcomes in the Agriculture Sector in Southeast Asia and received a grant from the European Union's Switch Asia Program on Circular Economy.



Yayasan Rumah Energi experienced a change in leadership as part of their plans for a for-profit entity. In collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the innovator implemented the Gerilya Academy Program 2024, which was integrated into its local milk sourcing project to strengthen local economies and promote sustainability. Through a partnership with PT Pertamina Hulu Rokan (PHR), Yayasan Rumah Energi launched the Biogas-Based Independent Energy Village project in Kampar Regency and Pekanbaru City, promoting renewable energy and empowering local communities. This was followed by the launch of a Biogas-Based Energy Independent Village (DEB) program in Mukti Sari Village, Kampar District, aiming to create a self-sustaining energy model through renewable biogas technology. The innovator received support from INSIGHT Investment (Singapore) to conduct an impact assessment and a social return on investment analysis for its Pro Women 2 project. This helped the company assess the social impact of its initiatives, further reinforcing its commitment to making a positive difference in the communities it serves.

2024 OCFI COHORT



CoolCrop Technologies received a TA on market linkage strategies for its cooling-as-a-service business model. The company benefited from organizational capacity development TA, along with technical support from a Singapore-based investment firm on legal and financial structuring. It secured new contracts with GIZ India and India PURE Finance Facility (IPFF) to scale its model and broaden its impact. The innovator participated in the Impact Harvest Forum Investing in Inclusive Businesses by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and organized with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The innovator received a grant from Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) and was also in conversation with several organizations about raising capital.



Devidayal Solar (DD Solar) received a TA to develop a go-to-market strategy to evaluate the best approaches for entering new market segments and expanding its outreach. The innovator partnered with fishery cooperatives in Maharashtra and S/SEA innovator, Human Ventures, for financial advisory support. As part of its WE4F involvement, it hosted four project-launch events in September 2024 in coastal areas of Maharashtra to engage the local community and generate leads. Looking ahead, DD Solar plans to extend its services to Uttar Pradesh.



Dvara E-Registry received a TA instance to identify potential biochar clients, supporting its goal of developing sustainable, shorter-term revenue streams. Biochar offers a strategic advantage as it has a shorter carbon credit registration period compared to Dvara's existing direct-seeded rice revenue stream, which requires at least three years. Dvara benefited from an investment readiness and 2X certification TA, which strengthens its position for blended finance and ESG funding. In partnership with five FPOs in Maharashtra, Dvara launched Amaravati Annakshetra, creating a 74% farmer-owned venture where farmers manage milk production, while Dvara oversees business operations and mentors them in enterprise management. Dvara won the BRICS Solutions Award for its in-house climate resilience tools, Khetscore and Doordrishti.



Equilibrium (formerly Climeverse) received an investment readiness TA focused on structuring blended finance vehicles to effectively pitch to investors and commercial businesses. The company evolved into two independent entities: Climes which helps brands and enterprises discover and offset their carbon footprint to bridge the world's climate finance gap; and Equilibrium which focuses on pioneering carbon removal solutions in the Global South by channeling capital from enterprises, carbon financiers, and impact institutions.



FarmConnect Asia, as part of its expansion, identified three potential sites in northeastern Thailand's Roi Et and Kanchanaburi Provinces. The sites are large cooperatives with many smallholder farmers focused on vegetable cultivation. At the end of 2024, the hub was in the process of designing a TA instance to upgrade the innovator's software interface, aiming to improve user experience and streamline operations for end-users. Recently the CEO was featured on Thailand's Amarin channel, highlighting FarmConnect Asia's leadership and innovation in the agricultural start-up space.



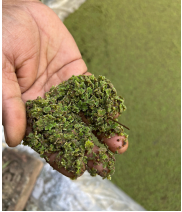
First Consolidated Cooperative Along Tanon Seaboards (FCCT), to support its sales and distribution expansion for Takakura compost, received a business development TA. The TA mapped FCCT's production, sales, and distribution structure, and provided strategic recommendations. A follow-up TA on pivot table training helped the company organize, as well as analyze, sales and farmer data for informed decision-making. At the end of 2024, another TA was being arranged to assess unit economics, optimize pricing, and develop a go-to-market strategy for scaling Takakura compost. To continue its focus on youth engagement and sustainable agriculture, FCCT conducted composting training programs in the Caraga Administrative Region and Cebu. The innovator was recognized as a Champion in the National Government's 2024 Program for Best National Urban and Peri-Urban Agricultural Community Garden.



Human Ventures received a TA for ESG impact advisory services. The innovator signed an MoU with the Adani Foundation and Vedanta Foundation to reach 1,000 women farmers across 13 states. Human Ventures also partnered with two other innovators from the hub to facilitate end-user financing for the innovators' smallholder farmers, based on the fintech platform and networks of Human Ventures. They collaborated with DD Solar on end-user financing for women, offering loans with a 5-year term and a 12% interest rate per year.



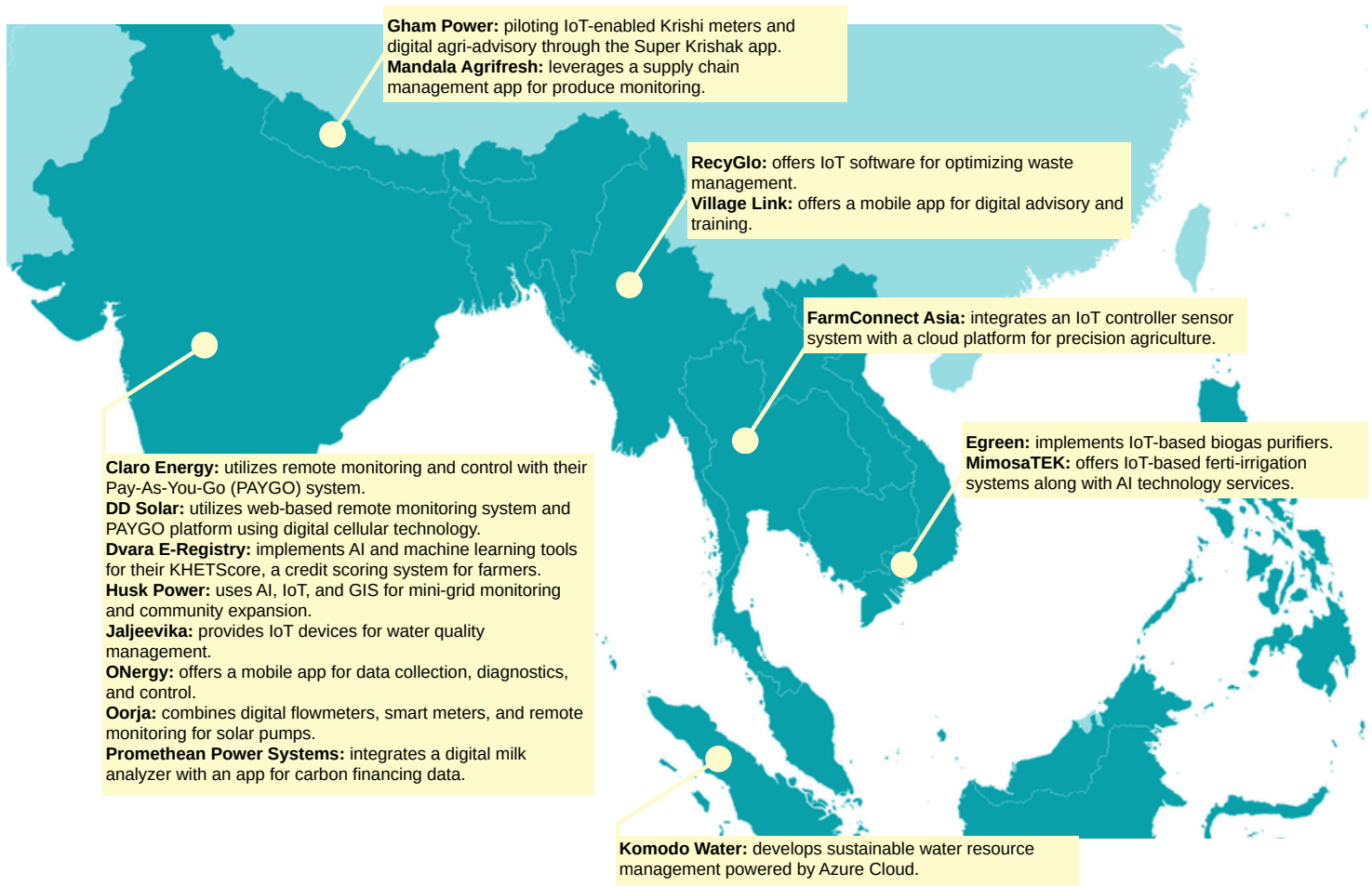
HUSK Ventures received a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) TA focused on developing a strategic MEL framework and data collection, along with related training. The innovator secured a \$5 million investment from Mekong Capital, a Vietnam-focused private equity firm. This investment will help HUSK Ventures scale its production, expand its distribution network, and reach more farmers in Cambodia, Vietnam, and beyond. It also facilitated Husk's entry into the Vietnamese market and the opening of an office in the country. Husk was recognized as one of the nine winning impact ventures in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Cambodia's Growth Stage Impact Ventures program and received a Certificate of Excellent Efforts Towards ESG at the EuroCham Cambodia 2024 ESG Contest and Awards. In 2025, Husk planned to continue expanding its business, leveraging recent investments and partnerships to enhance its impact through the hub's TA support in operational management and 2X certification for gender lens financing.



Shreenagar Agritech received a business development TA to refine growth projections for floating feed and formalize raw material supplier engagement for more effective, sustainable operations. The innovator launched a partnership with five farmer cooperatives in Nepal to develop the market for floating fish feed. It also established two agri-centers in Rupandehi District, serving as hubs for agricultural innovation and community development. These centers were critical for training 15 farmers through the Village Aqua Promoters program, equipping them with skills to promote sustainable aquaculture practices.

DIGITALIZATION IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Digitalization is a critical component of the agricultural sector's climate adaptation and mitigation actions, as well as sustainable water management and renewable energy adoption. The S/SEA RIH supported 16 innovators focused on digitalization, with solutions ranging from IoT-driven technologies to AI and GIS applications. Innovators' solutions empowered smallholder farmers, enhanced sustainability, and streamlined operations across various sectors, including agriculture, waste management, energy, and finance.



As AI integration grew in popularity over the course of 2024 and 2025, several innovators adopted its use in various ways:

- RecyGlo: uses AI to power its circular economy zero-waste management platform, providing third-party logistics, resource recovery, data analytics, reporting, and ESG compliance. Its AI-driven enterprise resource planning software streamlines the supply chain and ensures traceability for clients.
- Husk Power: utilizes an AI platform to predict clean energy demand and supply, employing AI-powered algorithms to deliver electricity at the most cost-effective rates in real-time.
- Egreen: applies AI to its business management, including AI note-takers, HR strategy, and monitoring the technical performance of its biogas generator systems.
- Village Link: piloting AI in its Htwet Toe App, using automatic diagnostics for crop diseases based on photos submitted by farmers.
- Dvara E-registry: developed a platform using in-house AI technology, which includes an analytical tool that serves as an alternative to traditional credit scores for smallholder farmers.
- MimosaTEK: uses generative AI to facilitate farmers' data logging process, which will be used to optimize their system.

Compared to other innovator technology categories, digitalization innovators required similar TA instances – digital marketing, business expansion, investment facilitation, and communications, to name a few. One key difference between digital solution and non-digital solution innovations, is that the innovator's usage of digital platforms resulted in a need for TAs to build software applications that enhanced user interfaces or back-end operations.

The hub also witnessed was an increase in innovator support that aided farmer decision-making through better information and enhanced access to finance for adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices. This was more specific to technologies that are farm-input oriented and require assured incomes along with clear value proposition, for farmers to invest in them.

In terms of digital innovators' role in the S/SEA RIH results, they significantly influenced number of end-users and water consumption reduction. Village Link reached more than 847,000 end-users, the highest in the cohort, through its digital innovation, providing climate and water-smart agricultural information. Their Htwet Toe app, part of the innovator's Climate and Water Smart Agriculture initiative, encouraged a shift to less water-intensive crops like green and black grams, resulting in a 6-billion-liter reduction in water usage and improved land management across 678,000 hectares.

To scale their reach, innovators developed partnerships that focused on their digital solutions. In Nepal, Gham Power partnered with the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Associations of Nepal (FWEAN) to promote the Super Krishak application and solar water pumps for empowering rural women farmers and supporting sustainable farming. While in Thailand, RecyGlo Thailand partnered with Himalaya Innovate to advance ESG leadership, promote inclusivity, and provide vital training for Thai businesses. RecyGlo's partnership with Betterfly Thailand Social Enterprise focused on strengthening sustainable waste management practices across Southeast Asia.

To advance sustainable agriculture and solar irrigation through digital solutions, Oorja collaborated with the Swiss Re Foundation and GIZ India to facilitate digital farm advisory services and solar pump installations, benefiting farmers by reducing carbon emissions and operational costs. Through partnerships with MICA Ahmedabad and Autodesk Foundation, Oorja gained insights into climate-resilient practices and accelerated growth in emerging business streams. In partnership with The 4th Wheel, and with support from Acumen, Oorja started conducting an external impact assessment to evaluate its effects on smallholder farmers.

OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATIONS

In 2024, the S/SEA RIH concluded its OCFI, with the last applications being accepted in March 2024. The usage of a rolling process enabled the hub to receive 395 applications from almost all of the countries supported by the hub. After years of outreach, the hub onboarded its first innovator from the Philippines. In 2025, the hub planned on providing the final instances of TA to the nine onboarded innovators. Under IWMI's WE4F Bridge Contract, OCFI innovators, who re-joined the program, will finish TAs that were started before the SWO, or will be supported with new TAs, in the case that they have outgrown the need of their old TAs.

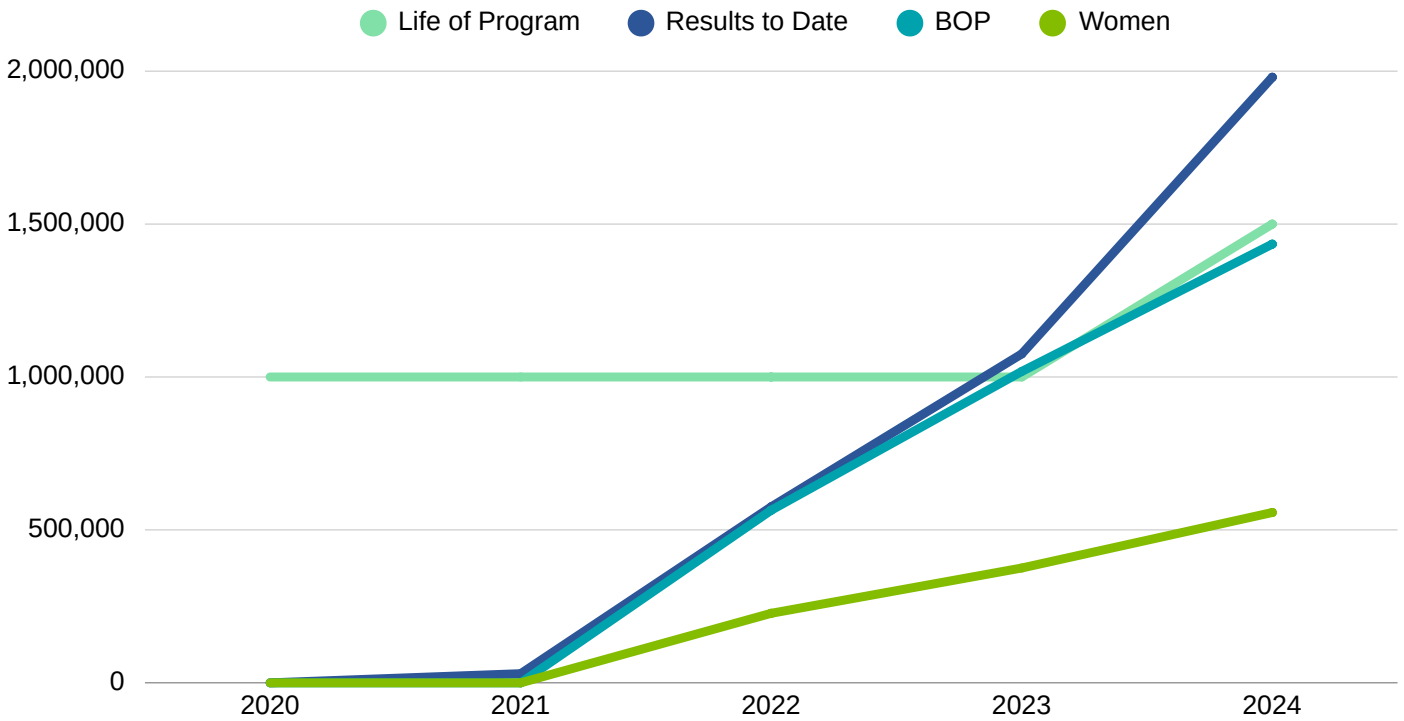


aQysta (Nepal) water-powered pumps stand ready for use along a river.

RESULTS TO DATE

END-USERS IMPACTED

Number of WE4F End-Users



By the end of 2024, S/SEA innovators reached 1.98 million end-users, surpassing the LOP target by 32%. The innovators also exceeded the BoP goal by more than five times the target, with 72% of all end-users belonging to the BoP income quintile. The hub also surpassed the LOP target of 375,000 women end-users, by reaching 556,000 women end-users.

Village Link (Myanmar) impacted 847,000 end-users, the highest in the region, through its digital innovation providing climate and water-smart agricultural information. It was followed by Claro Energy (India) and S4S Technology (India) who reached 262,000 through solar irrigation and 252,000 end-users with solar dryer innovations, respectively.

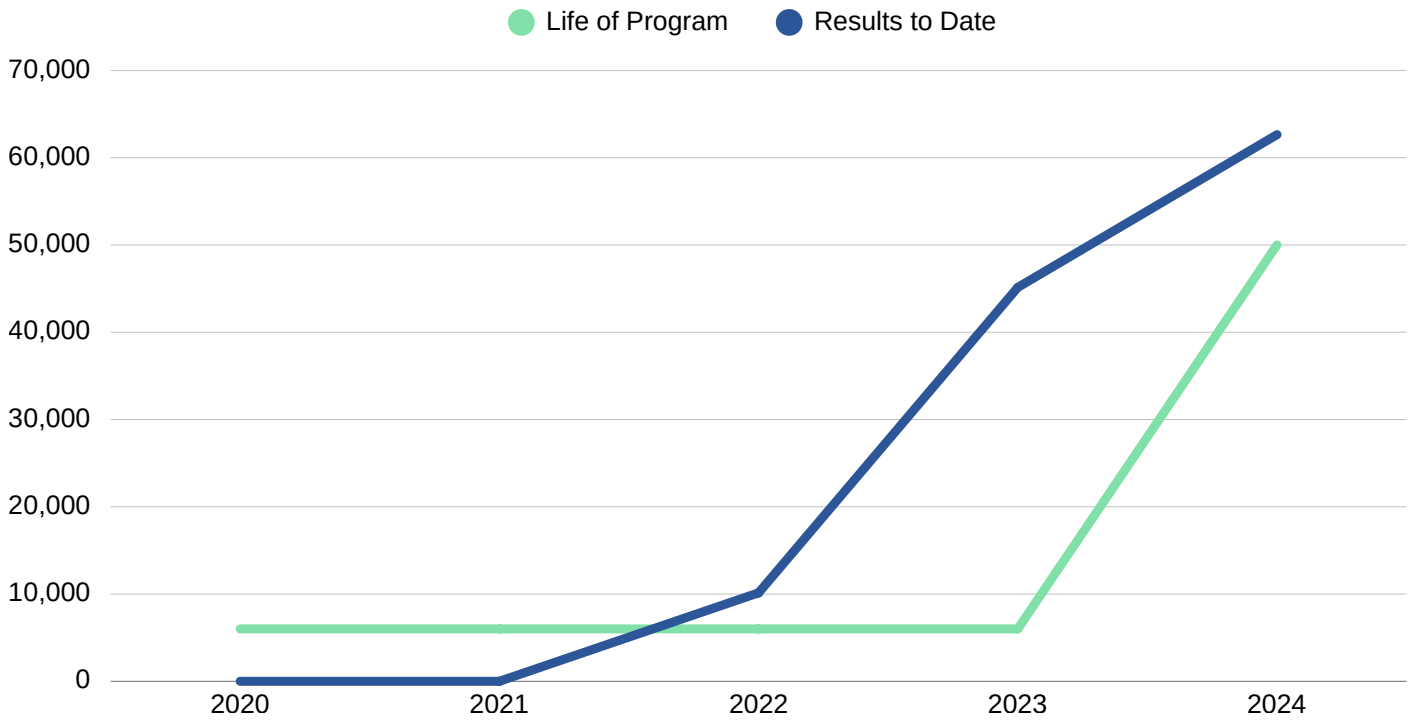
To support more BoP end-users, innovators expanded their end-user financing partnerships and used default guarantees to increase the availability of loans to smallholder farmers. They also deployed more inclusive marketing and sales strategies to advertise their products and services to women end-users. To support the innovators' endeavors across various outreach, accessibility, and engagement efforts, the hub provided TAs on end-user financing, gender integration in business models, and communications.

Women-led and/or -owned innovations had the largest impact on end-users, accounting for 71% of the total end-users. They also reached the most BoP end-users (890,000 end-users, or about 62% of all BoP end-users) and the most women end-users (331,000 women end-users, or about 60% of all women end-users). This result is partially due to the fact that over 50% of all supported innovations were women-led and/or -owned. Additionally, two of the largest contributors to end-users, were women-led and/or -owned innovations (S4S Technologies and Village Link). Their approach to working with women farmers and entrepreneurs in the value chain enabled innovators to contribute a higher share of women end-users. Village Link's digital platform enables access without geographic limitations. While S4S Technologies works with women food processors install solar food dryers on their home lots or build processing centers in the local community.



Left to right: RecyGlo (Myanmar) stakeholders discuss the innovator's recycling solution. Potential women end-users attending a training by The Goat Trust (India).

Number of End-Users Using Financing Mechanisms



Forty-five percent of S/SEA innovators focus on end-user financing, employing diverse business models to support end-users, including pay-per-use, PAYGO, energy service company (ESCO) models, government schemes, and funding from banks and MFIs. Some innovators use default guarantees (e.g., New Leaf Dynamic, Gham Power, ONergy), while others prefer banking correspondent models (e.g., Promethean), or peer-to-peer lending platforms (e.g., Jaljeevika).

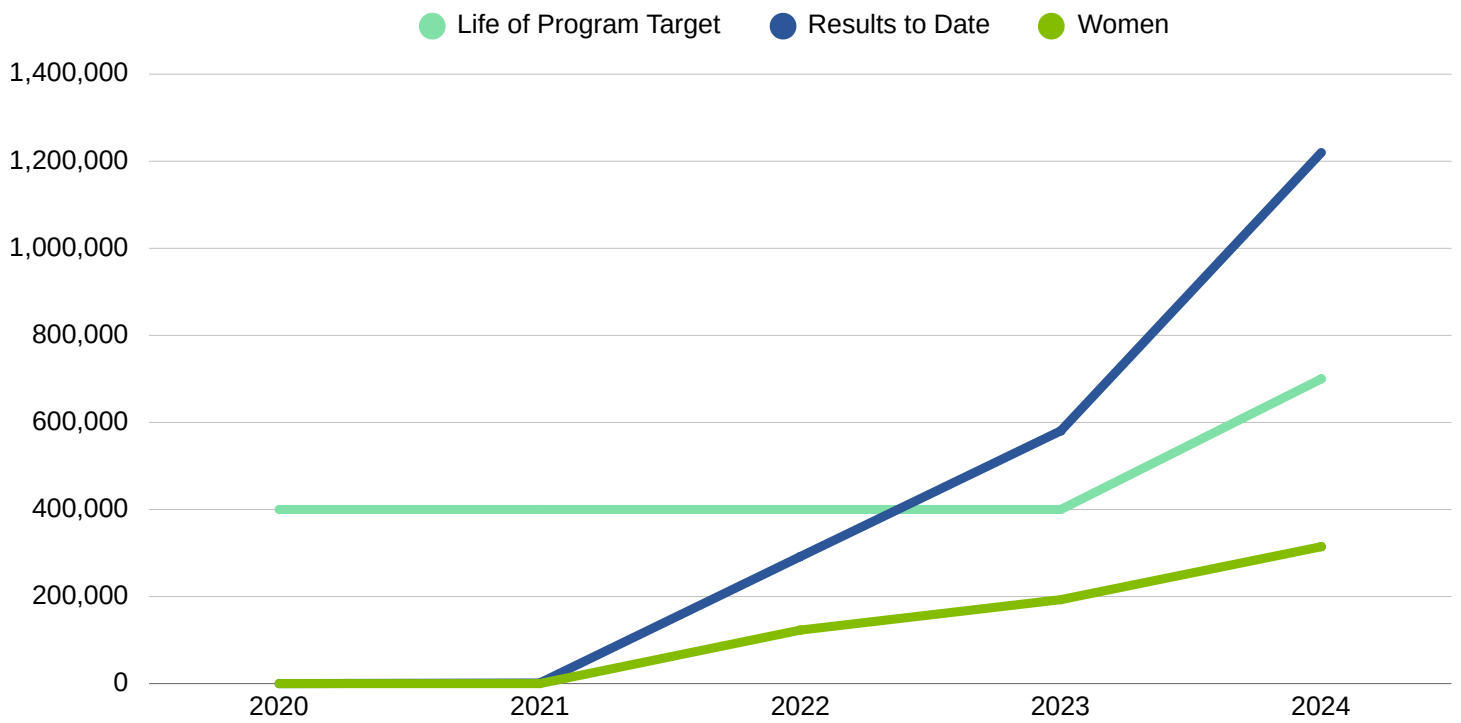
At the conclusion of 2024, 62,000 end-users were using end-user financing mechanisms – surpassing the hub’s target by 25%. The top end-user financing scheme providers were New Leaf (36,000 end-users), ATEC (7,000 end-users), Goat Trust (5,000 end-users), aQysta (4,700 end-users), and Agrosolar (2,900 end-users). New Leaf and ATEC led in end-user financing due to the high cost of their innovations – biomass-powered cold storage (New Leaf) and biogas digesters (ATEC). Financial support was essential for unlocking farmers’ access to these technologies.

To improve end-users’ access to financial solutions, the S/SEA hub provided innovators with TAs focused on partnership development for end-user financing. The hub also supported innovators by providing a matching capital grant that could be used as guarantee for working capital. Innovators used grant budgets to unlock loans for smallholder farmers and offer them energy service-based models (e.g., Claro Energy, Oorja Development Solutions, and aQysta).

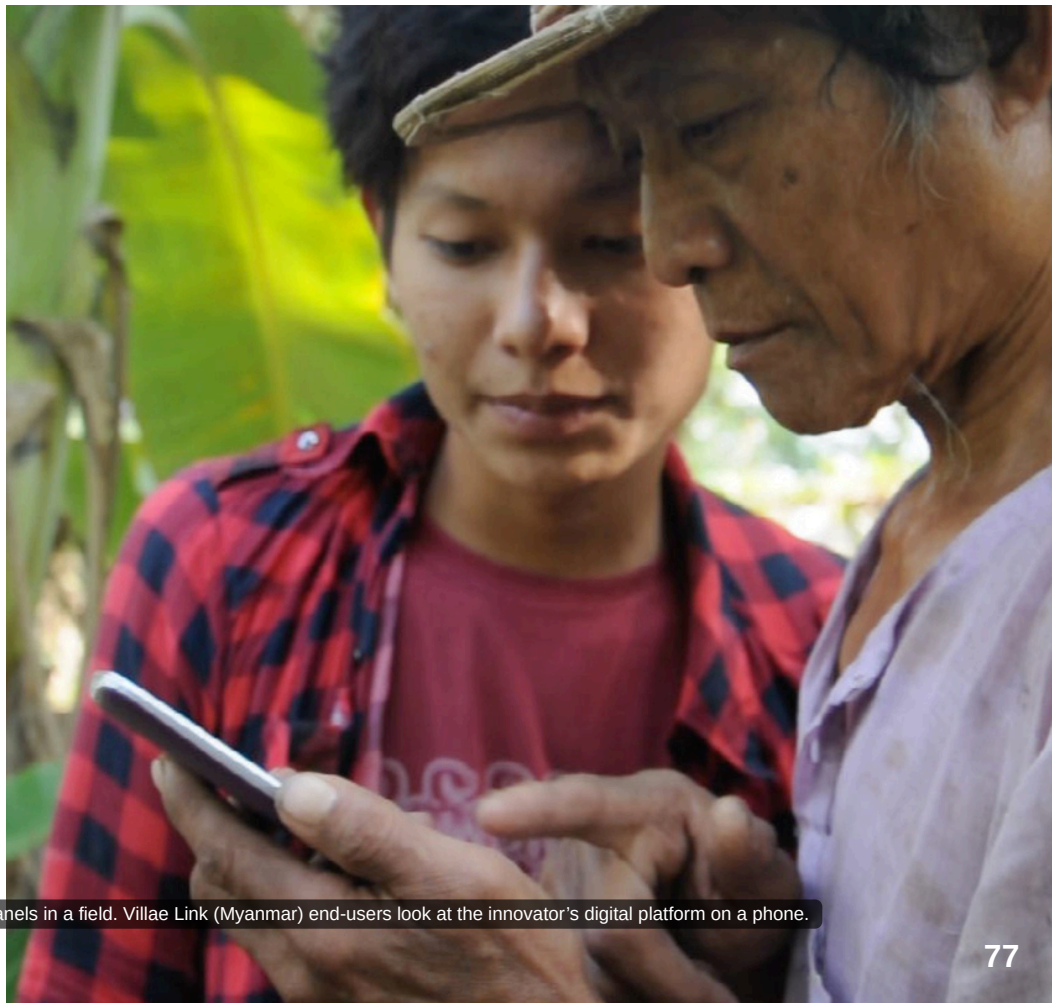


Left to right: Egreen (Vietnam) end-user shows his biodigester. Husk Power (India) employee installs solar panels. New Leaf Dynamic Technologies (India) shows the biomass system that fuels the innovator’s processing solution.

Number of WE4F Innovation End-Users with Increased Incomes



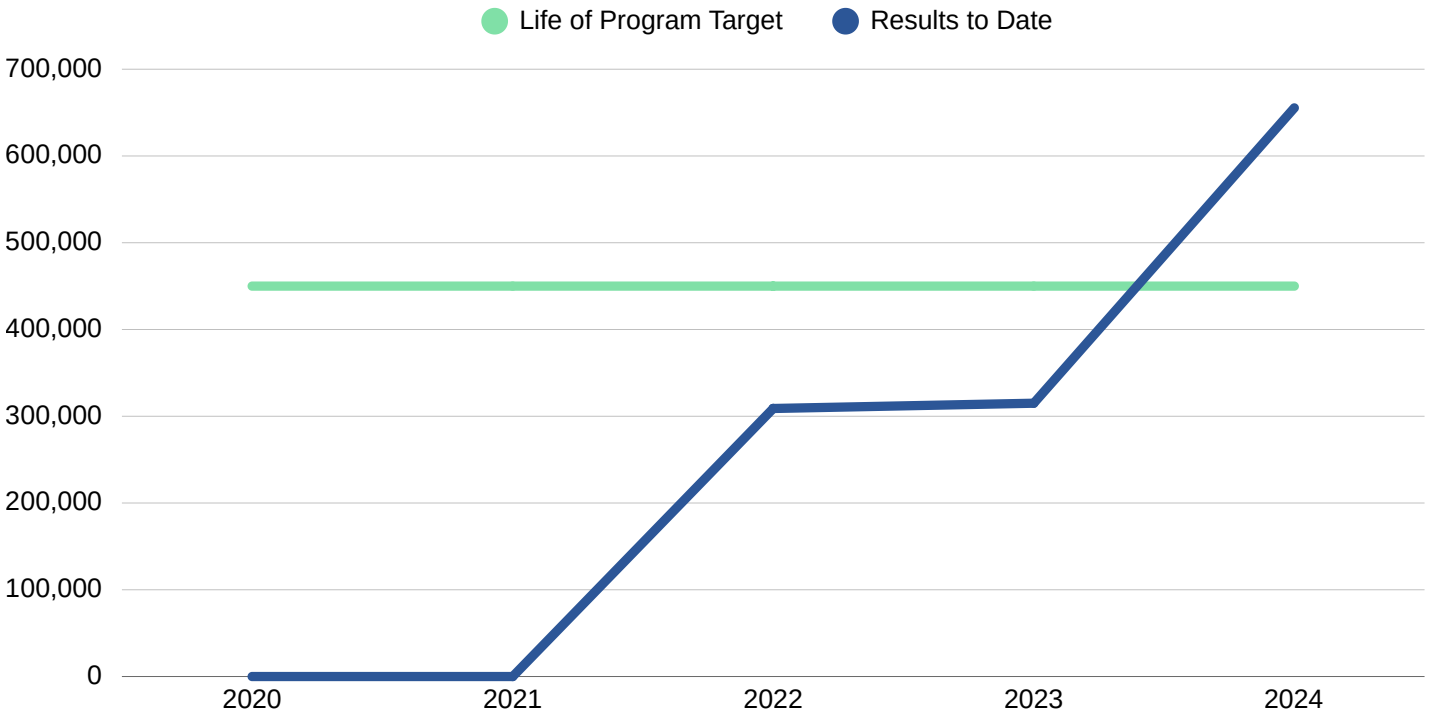
Utilizing innovators' technologies and services led to 1.2 million end-users (62% of all end-users) experiencing an increase in income, which surpassed the S/SEA LOP target by 74%. The top three innovators with the highest number of end-users reporting increased income were Village Link (Myanmar), S4S Technology (India), and ONergy (India). Income growth among end-users ranged from 14% to 70%, depending on the innovation. Village Link's Htwet Toe app helped end-users improve farming practices and productivity, leading to increased income. S4S Technology's solar dryers improved food quality, which reduced processing costs and minimized food waste. While ONergy's solutions reduced diesel expenditures for end-users by enabling their transition to solar energy.



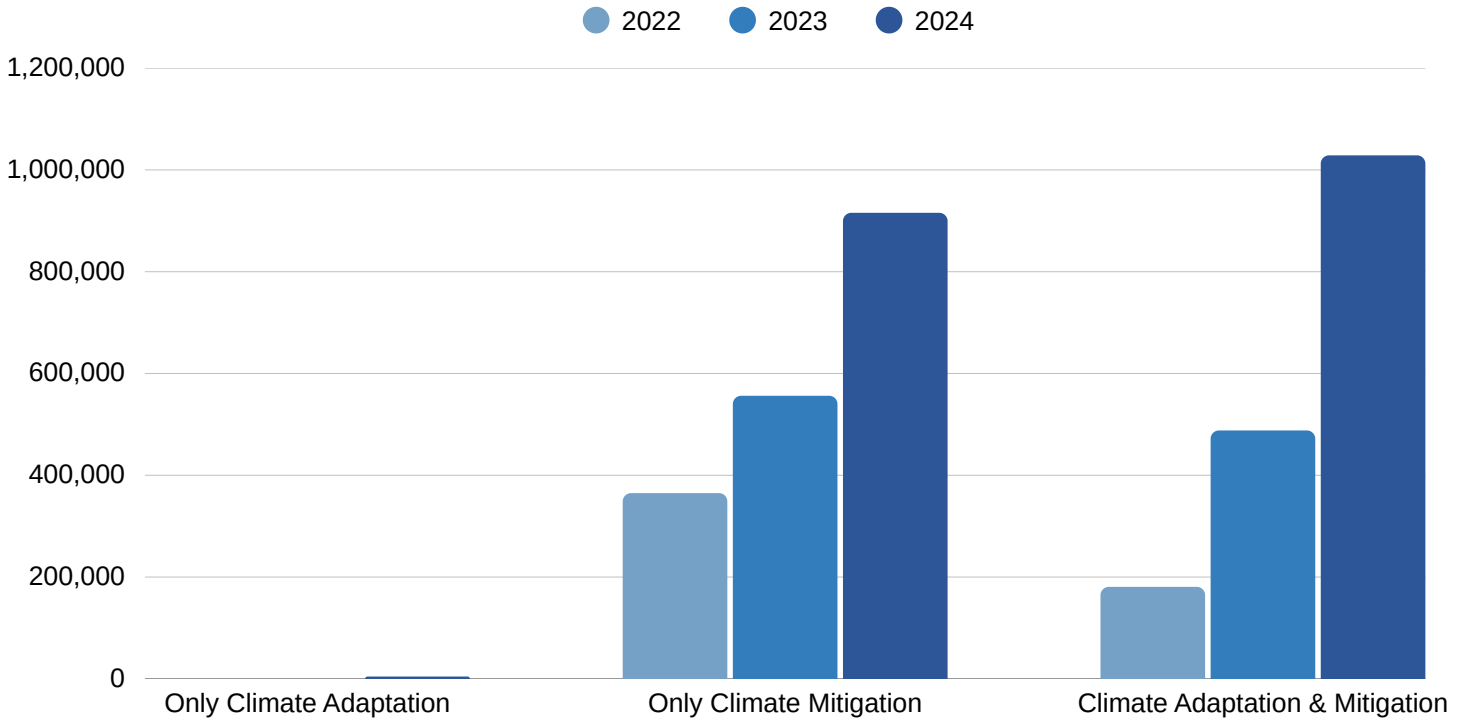
Left to right: Agrosolar (Cambodia and Myanmar) solar panels in a field. Villae Link (Myanmar) end-users look at the innovator's digital platform on a phone.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCED

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions Saved by End-Users Through the Use of WE4F Innovations (tons of carbon dioxide emissions equivalent (CO₂e))

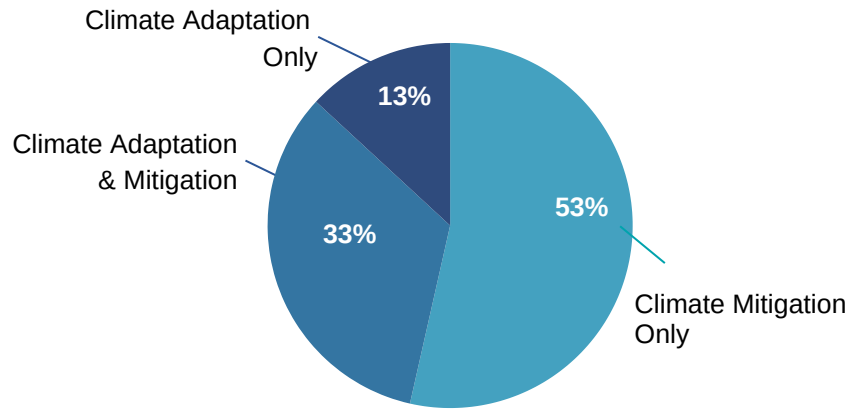


Number of Smallholder Farmers and Other End-Users Using a Climate Adaptation, Climate Mitigation, or an Innovation that Tackles Both



In 2024, S/SEA innovators surpassed the GHG emissions target by 46%, reaching more than 655,000 tons of CO₂e. The main contributors to these savings were smallholder farmers, who accounted for over 80% of the reduction. In terms of innovators, women-led and/or-owned innovators contributed approximately 75% of the total emissions savings. These results were achieved by replacing diesel with biogas-powered generators (Egreen, Vietnam) or deploying renewable energy solutions, such as solar-powered irrigation (Claro Energy, India) and solar-powered dryer systems (S4S Technologies, India).

Percent of Innovators Doing Climate Adaptation and Mitigation*

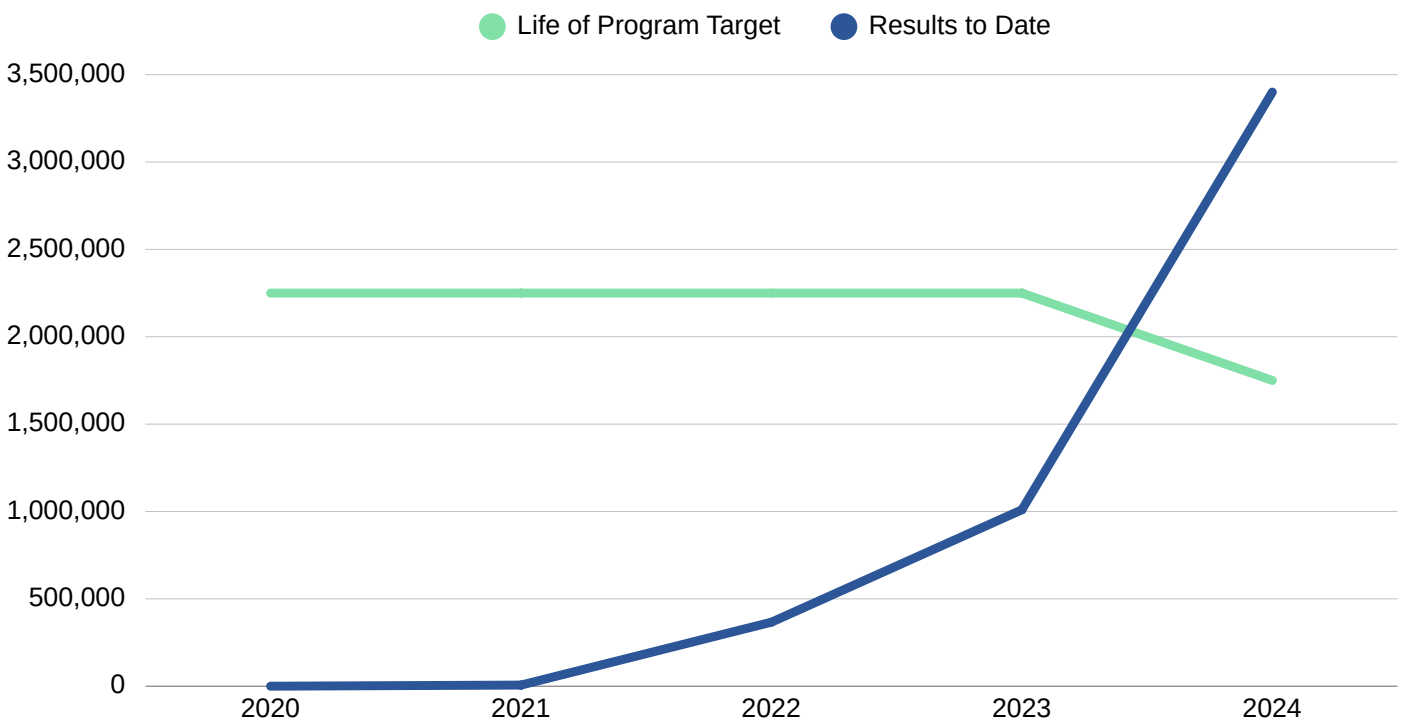


Through farm advisory, soil testing, crop insurance and bank credit services, S/SEA innovators enabled farmers to adapt to, or mitigate, the uncertainties arising from the effects of climate change on their incomes. Additionally, the introduction of innovations, such as drying technologies and cold storage, aided farmers in reducing crop loss and waste while promoting the production of high-value fruits and vegetables. Furthermore, capacity-building programs and training on sustainable farming practices empowered farmers to adopt eco-friendly methods, ensuring long-term soil health and resource conservation.

To support innovators' exploration of carbon offsets and financing, the hub published guides detailing carbon offset programs and how to expand financing sources to support smallholder farmers. Several innovators emphasized the potential of carbon credit revenues to drive sustainability, reinvesting them into R&D, market expansion, and lower product prices for farmers. For those not yet mature enough to pursue carbon credits, the hub's guide served as an introduction to the topic, helping innovators assess their interest in the revenue stream as well as the viability of pursuing carbon credit financing, based on each model.

PRODUCED AND PROCESSED MORE FOOD

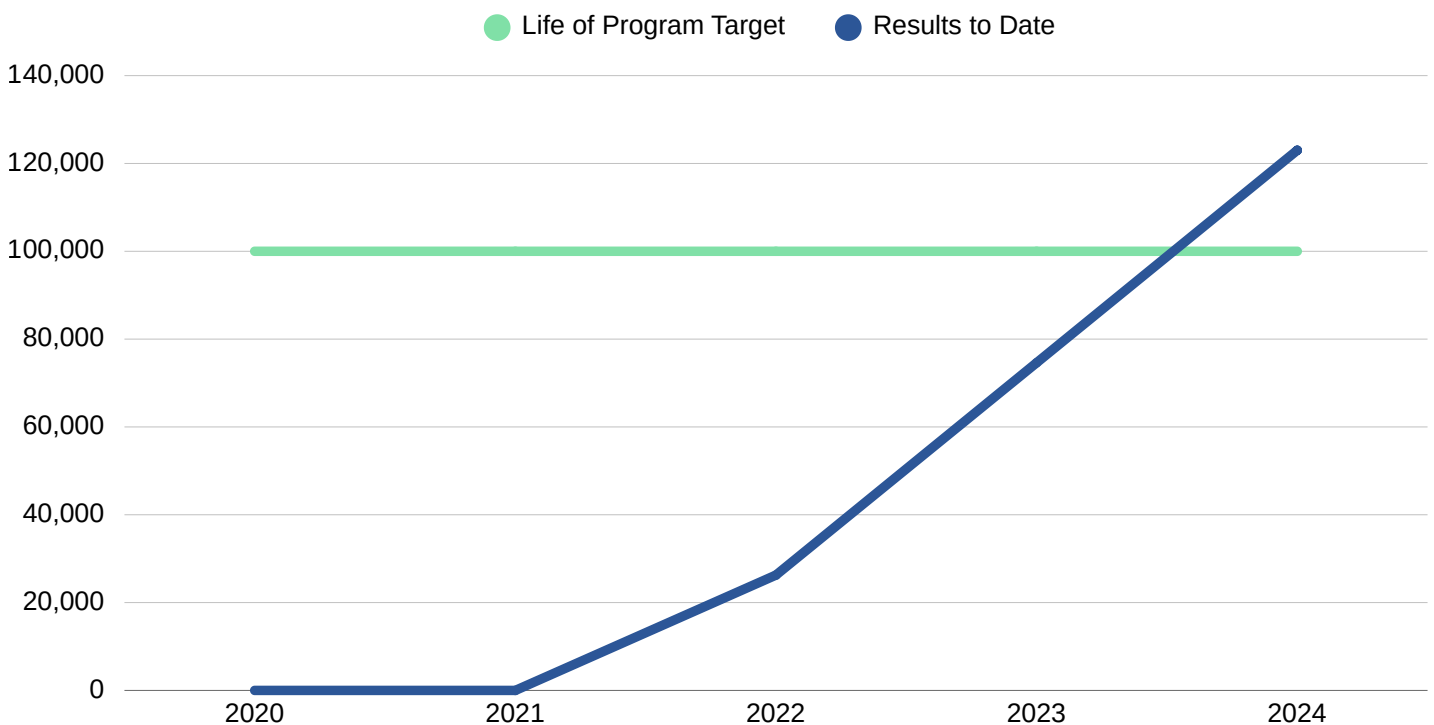
Food Produced with WE4F Innovations (tons)



In 2024, the hub’s proposed 1.75 million ton LOP target took effect, reflecting the reality of the market. This change was made to align with the hub’s focus on supporting innovators who work with smallholder farmers. Under the new LOP target, S/SEA innovators surpassed the target by 95%, producing a cumulative total of 3.4 million tons of food. Smallholder farmers contributed the most to the result, having produced 63% of the total food tonnage. In terms of innovators with the most impact, Village Link (Myanmar), which offers a digital advisory services app, helped end-users produce over 2.3 million tons, while Claro Energy (India), which offers solar-powered irrigation systems, helped end-users produce 396,000 tons of food. Egreen (Vietnam) helped end-users produce 218,000 tons of food.

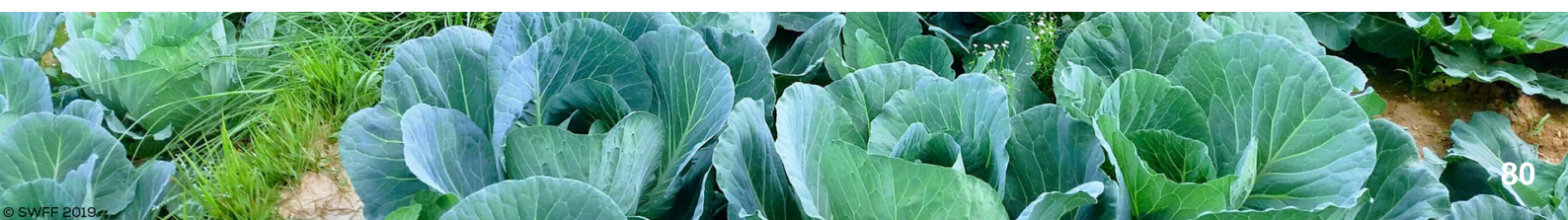
Village Link’s climate and water smart agriculture technology significantly boosted food production by increasing yields through sowing-dates optimization and the prevention of crop damage through weather data. It also reduced water usage by monitoring irrigation time and fertilizer use. Egreen’s biodigester made a notable impact by cutting energy costs through biogas-powered generation, freeing up financial resources for greater production. Similarly, Claro Energy’s solar-powered irrigation systems helped end-users reduce their diesel expenses as farmers no longer needed to use fossil fuel to power water pumping. Due to no longer needing to buy diesel, end-users were able to purchase more agricultural inputs, enabling more crop cycles per year.

Total Mass of Food Processed as a Result of WE4F Innovations (tons)



In 2024, S/SEA innovators surpassed the hub’s LOP target, processing 123,000 tons of food – and exceeding the LOP target by more than 20%. S4S Technologies (India) contributed the most, helping end-users process over 85,000 tons of food through its solar dryer technology. They were followed by Mandala Agrifresh (Nepal) who helped end-users process 10,500 tons due to its solar-powered cold storage. Komodo Water (Indonesia) also helped end-users process 10,000 tons through their solar-powered ice block production, which helped fishermen store their catches. Their success was attributed to their mature operations, large end-user bases, and established market links. By helping end-users process food, the innovators improved market access for smallholder farmers, which provided them with a guaranteed income and access to formal credit for investing in processing technologies. Food processing sectors typically have a higher female participation rate, so innovators, like S4S Technologies, customized their services and business models to be able to work with women at scale.

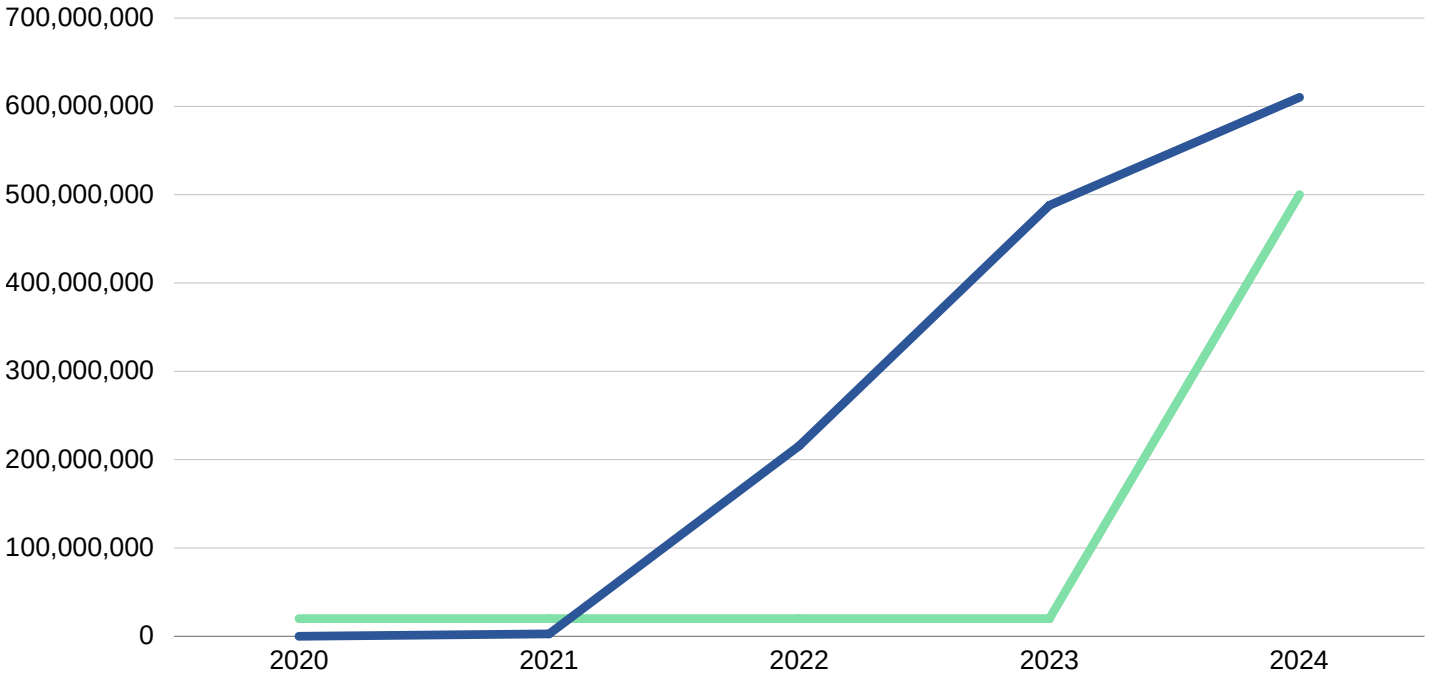
Innovators faced the challenge of navigating a fragmented market that is monopolized by middlemen, making strong market partnerships essential for scaling food processing companies. Additionally, companies started adopting business-to-business-to-farmer models to increase food quantity and focus on varieties that yield higher returns for farmers.



USING LESS WATER AND ENERGY

Energy Saved (kilowatt-hours)

● Life of Program Target ● Results to Date

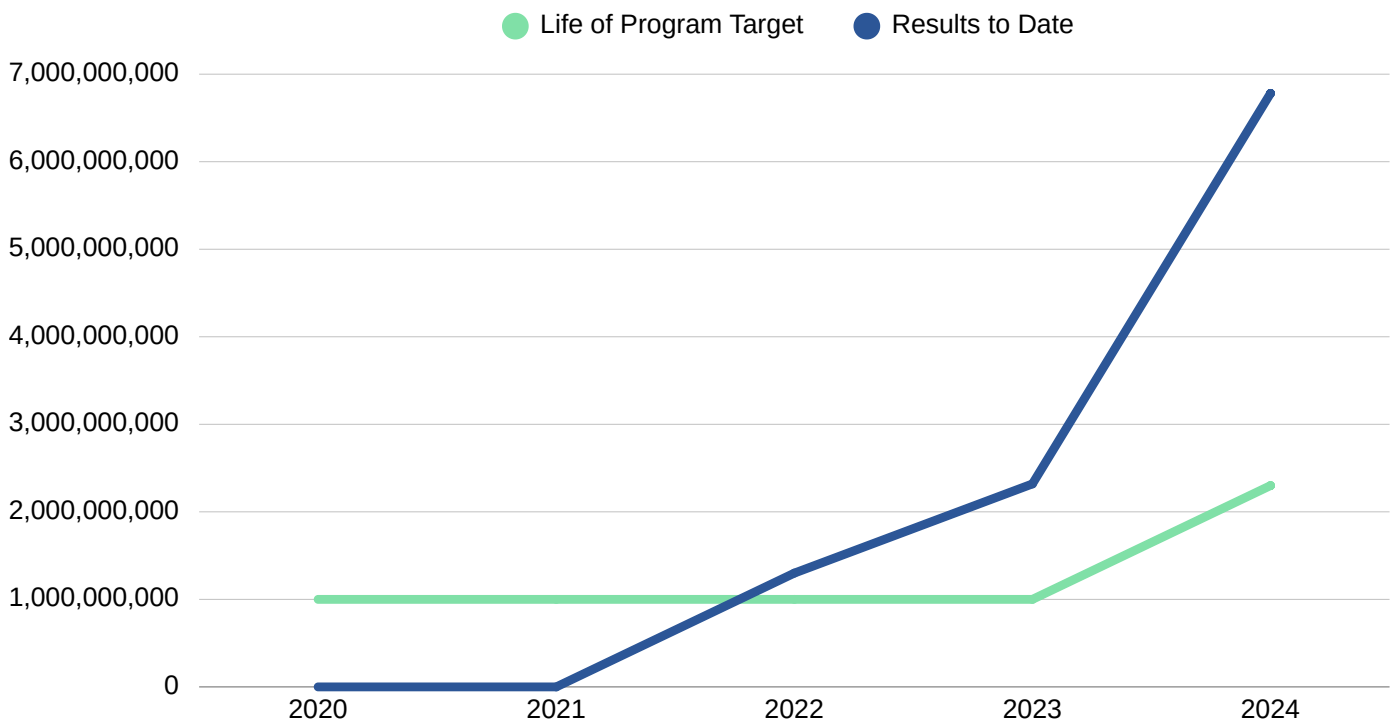


Innovators continued to surpass the LOP target in 2024, reaching 610 million kWh, or 22% above the LOP target. Smallholder farmers accounted for more than 87% of the savings. Women-led and/or-owned innovators contributed approximately 30%, or just over 183 million kWh. The innovators that helped end-users save the most energy were Claro Energy (India) with 367 million kWh, Egreen (Vietnam) with 75 million kWh, and S4S Technologies (India) with 74 million kWh. These savings resulted from the effective substitution of fossil fuels with efficient solar water pumps (Claro Energy), biogas-powered electricity (Egreen), and the reduction of food waste through solar dryers (S4S Technologies). Solar energy use not only reduced the dependence on fossil fuels, but also reduced electricity usage, leading to substantial energy and cost savings for agricultural operations. Capacity-building programs empowered innovators like S4S Technologies and Egreen to train smallholder farmers on their technologies, increasing end-user adoption which enhanced energy efficiency and reduced waste.



Left to right: S4S Technologies (India) end-users process onions into dried products. Mandala Agrifresh (Nepal) cold storage unit holds produce waiting to be sold.

Total Volume of Water Consumption Reduction (liters)



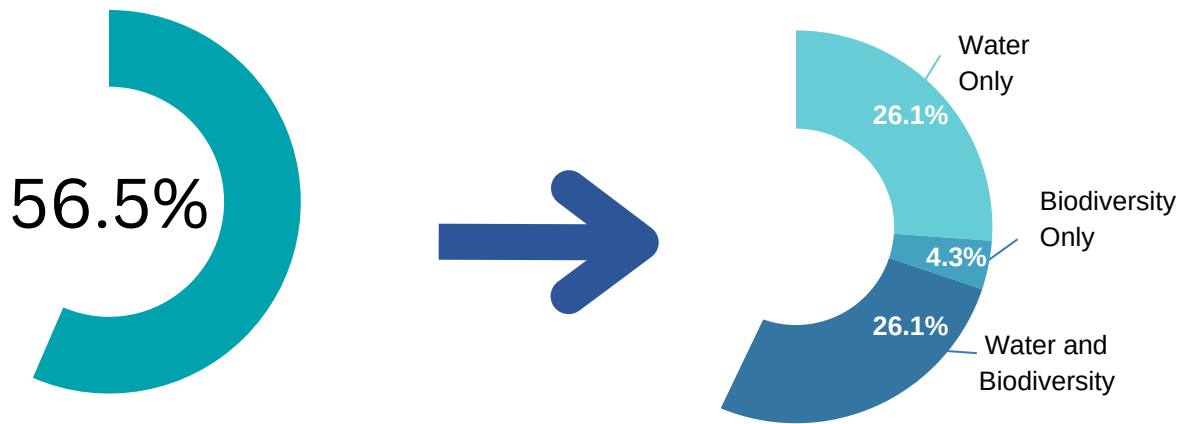
Reduction in water consumption was the most successful result in 2024, with total reduction in consumption reaching 6.7 billion liters, or nearly three times the LOP target. Smallholder farmers accounted for 72% of the reduction. Women-led and/or -owned innovators contributed about 91% of the water consumption savings. The top three contributors were Village Link (Myanmar), MimosasTEK (Vietnam), and Equilibrium (India).

Village Link's climate and water smart agriculture app, Htwet Toe, encouraged a shift to less water-intensive crops, such as green and black grams, resulting in a 6-billion-liter reduction in water use. MimosasTEK's IoT solutions enabled precision agriculture, saving 216 million liters, while the regenerative agriculture practices of Equilibrium helped reduce water use by 213 million liters.

To ensure sustainable water practices by innovators as well as their end-users, the hub supported innovators in developing environmental monitoring and mitigation plans (EMMPs) that recommended creating water resource management plans, operational strategies, and training modules to optimize water usage and reduce waste. The assignment of external surveyors to innovators also played a crucial role in capturing the full scale of innovations' impact on water resources, as many had either underestimated it or lacked the capacity to collect the data required to make accurate assessments. Several innovators saw significant increases in their reported water impact due to these in-depth field studies. Examples of other activities undertaken by innovators include conducting baseline water assessments, implementing efficient irrigation systems, and developing wastewater management and stormwater systems. As part of capacity building for sustainable water management, hub staff emphasized training stakeholders, including farmers, on sustainable practices such as biochar application and water-efficient farming. Climate risk assessments, along with adaptive measures like rainwater harvesting, were recommended to address water stress-related challenges. Innovators also received TAs, such as the instance provided to MimosasTEK on reusing water and nutrients as feed for plants, preventing the discharge of wastewater containing fertilizer.



Share of Innovators Monitoring Water or Biodiversity



In 2024, 56.5% of S/SEA innovators reported utilizing tools, methods, or processes to monitor water or biodiversity – an increase of more than 20 percentage points from 2023. Much of the result was attributable to increased collaboration between MEL and environmental staff to capture results related to water and biodiversity monitoring. This effort reduced under-reporting among innovators on their environmental monitoring activities.

Innovators monitoring water or biodiversity did not originate from one specific innovation category. Instead, they represented the diversity of the S/SEA RIH, as well as the concern of innovators had about their potential environmental impact. The most popular categories were solar water pump innovations, solar-powered cold storage innovations, and innovators who turn agricultural waste into energy products.

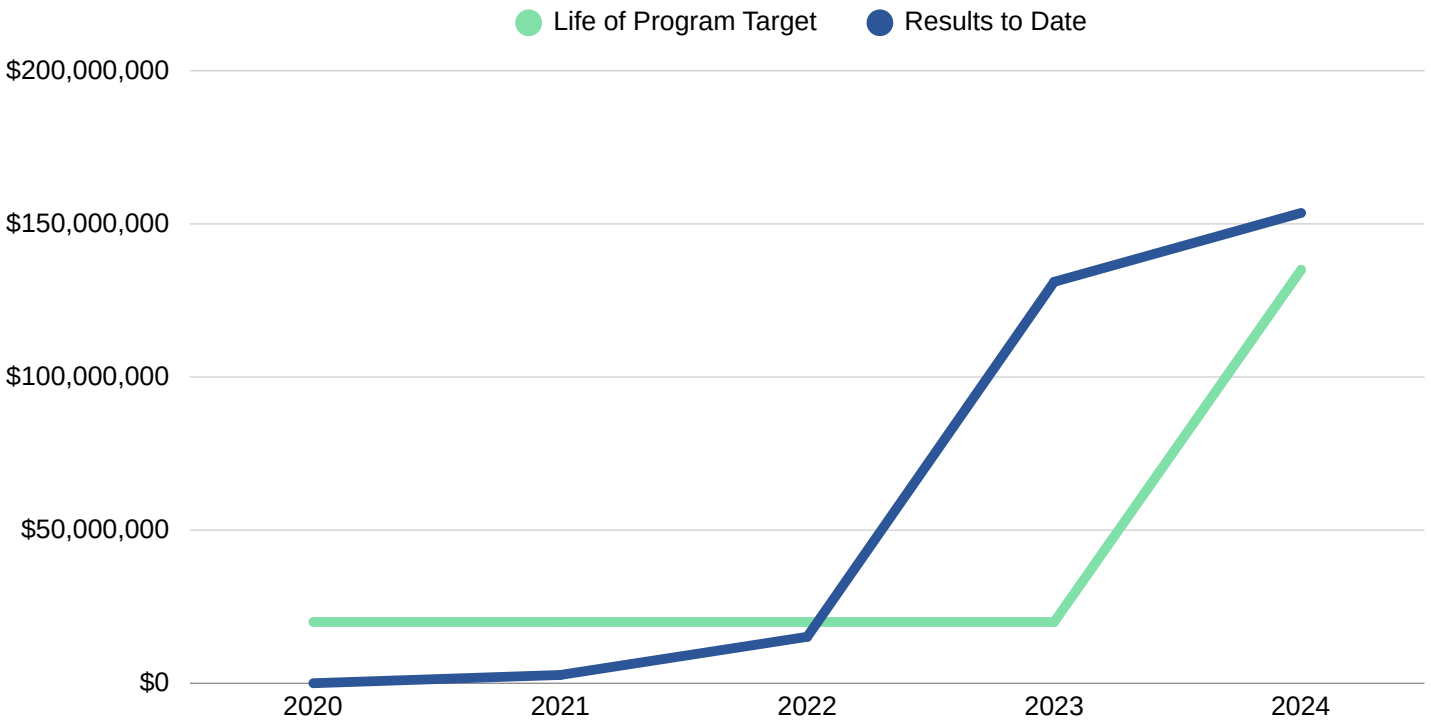
To help innovators monitor the potential impact of their technologies on water tables, water accounting tools were published in August 2024 for use by innovators, partner organizations, sector stakeholders, and end-users. The developed tools covered the Ganges River Basin and the Red River Basin. They provided crucial information on water availability within these basins, with forecasts for 2025, 2030, and 2035, based on baseline data from 2010 to 2020. By offering comprehensive visualizations and analyses of hydroclimatic conditions and seasonal water availability, the dashboard enables stakeholders to plan sustainable water usage and introduce innovative solutions to address potential water shortages. To help innovators understand, as well as adopt the tool, a training was conducted at the 2024 Regional Convening. For global adoption, the hub water expert participated in a World Water Week 2024 webinar to explain what results highlighted in the water accounting tools, meant for India and Vietnam.



Left to right: RDO Trust (India) end-user shows produce grown with the innovator's fertilizer product. Ooorja (India) solar panels stand ready for pumping irrigation water.

INNOVATIONS SCALED

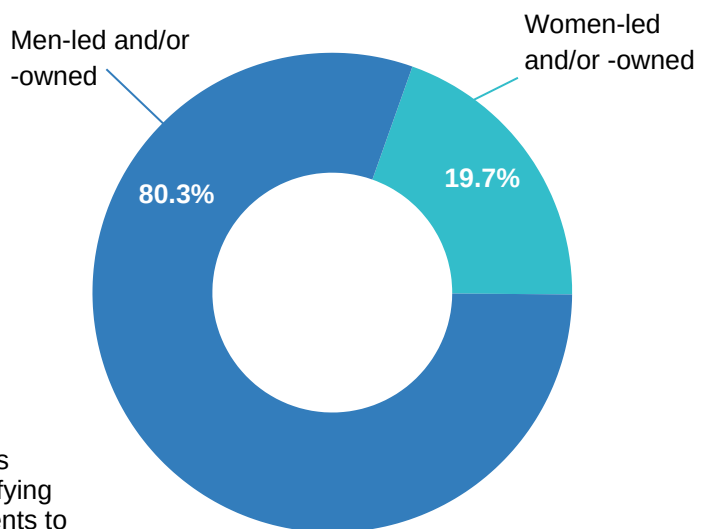
Innovator Investment Mobilized (in U.S. Dollars)



Making a case for the viability of innovators within the water-energy-food nexus mobilizing private sector investment, the S/SEA innovators raised a total of over \$153 million USD, of which \$103 million USD was raised by Husk Power, a leading renewable energy mini-grid developer based in India with operations in Sub-Saharan Africa. The remaining cumulative \$50 million USD includes investments mobilized by innovators all over South Asia and Southeast Asia – Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, and Vietnam. Additionally, women-led and/or -owned innovators accounted for \$30 million USD – or 20% – of the investment mobilized. The most successful women-led and/or -owned innovators were S4S Technologies (India), who secured \$22 million USD by utilizing a variety of investment types (i.e., seed, Series A, Series B, debt, and grants) and HUSK Ventures (Cambodia), who secured \$5 million USD from the private equity firm, Mekong Capital through their Mekong Enterprise Fund IV.

Most of the secured investments involved equity and working capital debts, reflecting the reality that many innovators are early-stage start-ups who faced barriers in accessing investment as well as finding – and securing – investment opportunities. This is a different reality than growth-stage innovators, such as Husk Power and S4S Technologies, who typically pursued a combination of equity and debt financing. Other innovators explored new business models that tapped into different sources of funding, such as carbon credits and project financing to meet their requirements and blend the overall cost of capital. For instance, Komodo Water (Indonesia) received \$191,000 USD grant from the DBS Foundation to support their business expansion.

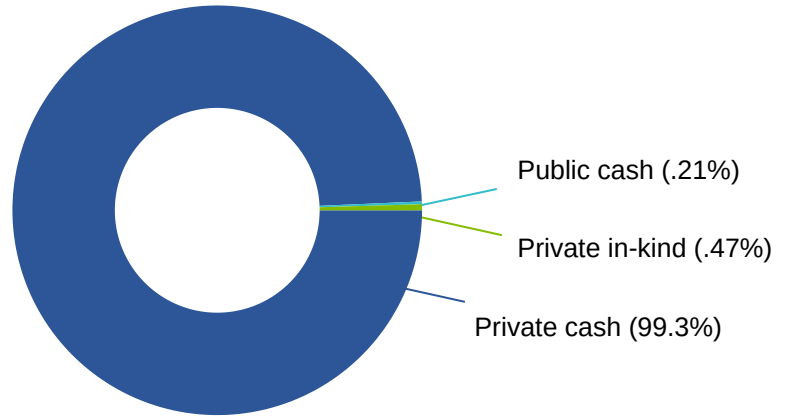
Investment Breakdown by Gender



Mobilizing private capital is a complex process that requires innovators to invest significant time and resources in identifying potential investors and preparing the investment requirements to access the capital. Most of S/SEA innovators are early stage, with limited resources and organizational capacity. Additionally, the agricultural sector's dependence on nature and climate conditions adds further risk to their business models. These factors led investors to perceive S/SEA innovators as high-risk, making them hesitant to invest, unless appropriate de-risking mechanisms and strong risk mitigation measures were in place.

To reduce investors' perceived risk of the agricultural sector and early-stage innovators, some innovators pursued scaling in new geographies and product categories. One method of funding such expansion was matching capital grants where the grantor agreed to match funds raised by the grantee. Claro Energy received a \$60,000 USD matching capital grant from the S/SEA RIH to help them unlock \$600,000 USD in working capital for their next phase of expansion. The hub also provided aQysta with a \$50,000 USD grant to unlock debt financing of \$650,000 USD, and Oorja with a \$50,000 USD grant to unlock \$450,000 USD in equity.

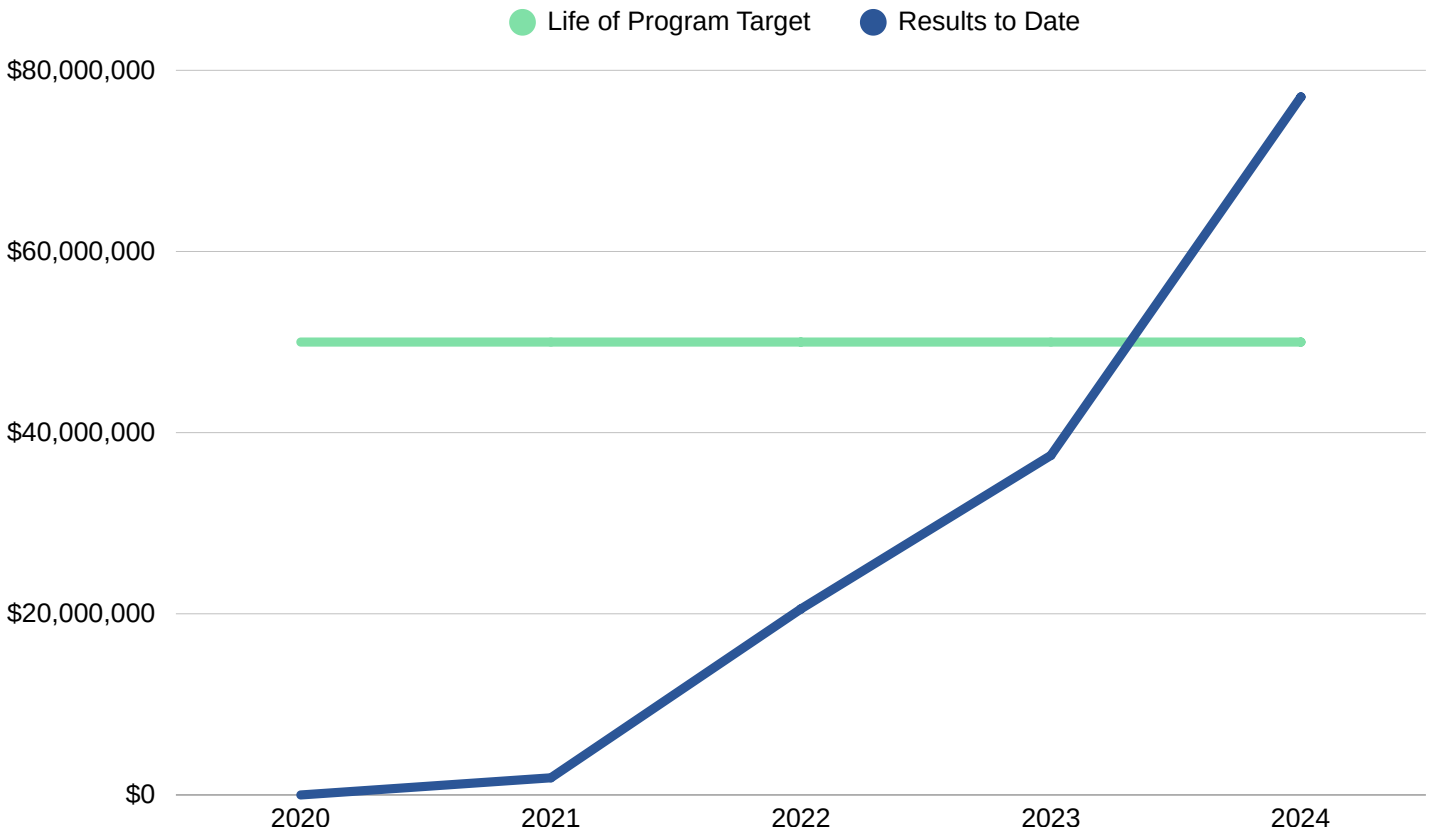
Public versus Private Investment



For future programs and donors looking to support investment readiness and facilitation, it is critical that all investment activities maintain high-touch support in the form of regular check-ins, clear explanation of processes, coaching, feedback on business assumptions, and improvement of innovators' ability to meet investors' due diligence and ESG compliance requirements.

Requests for this type of support came from many S/SEA innovators, regardless of their location or business model. To ensure that the needs of the innovators were met, without compromising the overall support provided by the hub, an Investment Facilitator and Environmental Sustainability were hired. The hiring of these experts also enabled the innovators to better identify potential investors as well as communicate their innovation's impact.

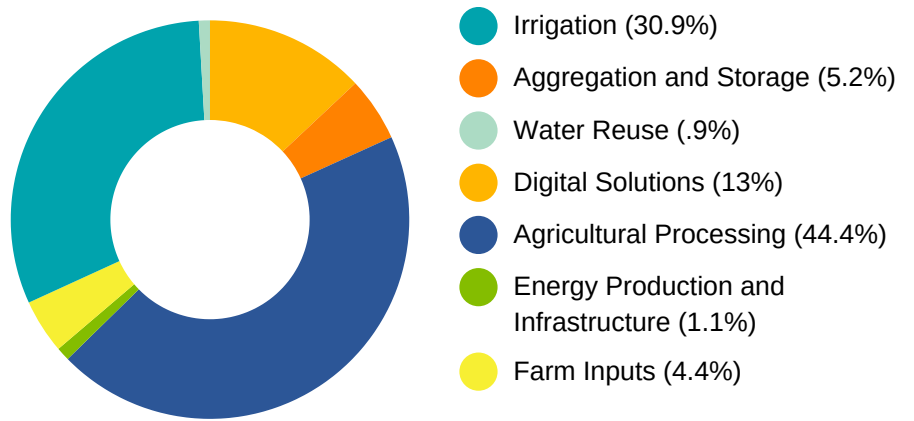
Innovator Gross Sales (in U.S. Dollars)



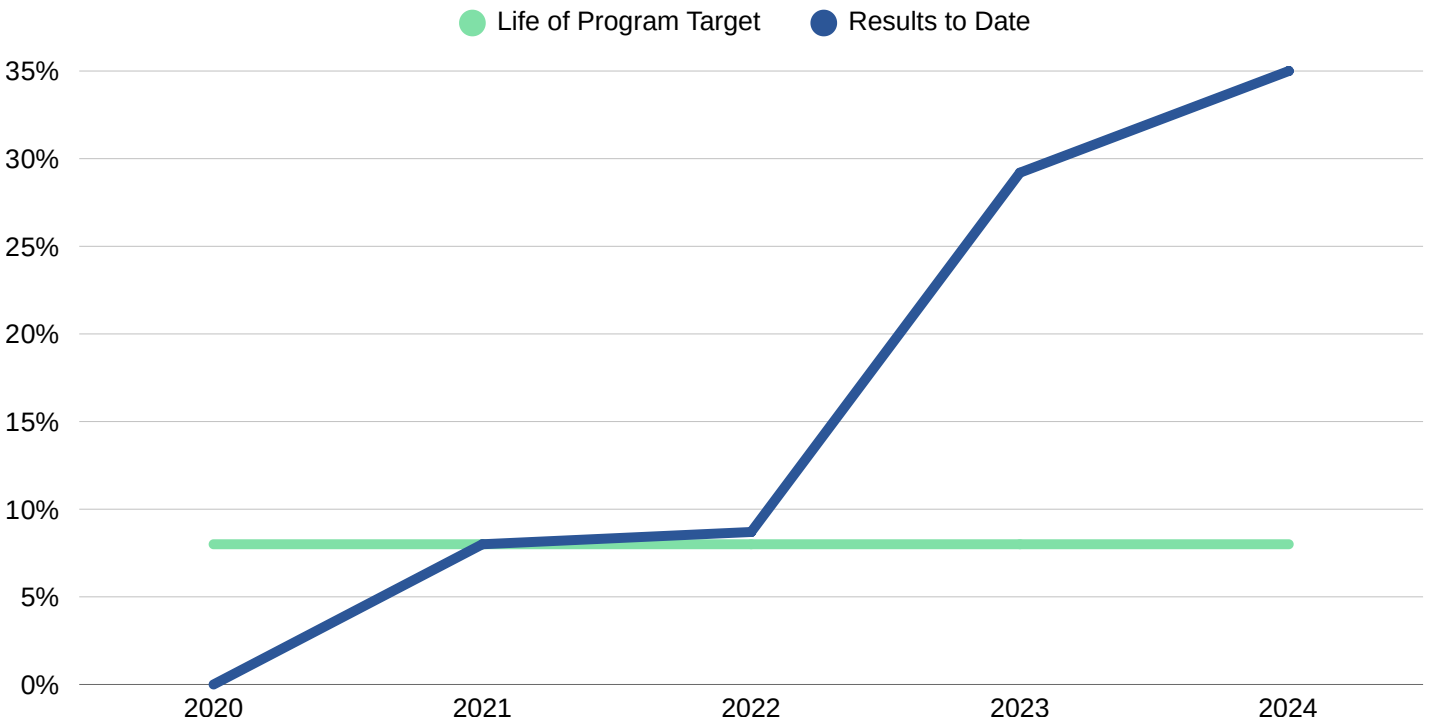
Matching the success in investment raised was S/SEA innovators' success in gross sales. They achieved \$77 million USD, surpassing the hub's LOP target by 54%. India contributed the largest share with 83%, followed by Myanmar (7%) and Vietnam (5%). Key contributors to gross sales in India included S4S Technologies (\$33 million USD), Claro Energy (\$14 million USD), Agros (\$5.3 million USD), ZooFresh (\$4.8 million), and Promethean (\$3.8 million). Women-led and/or -owned innovators generated over \$42 million USD, accounting for 55% of total sales. This is mostly attributed to two women-led and/or -owned innovators, S4S Technologies and ZooFresh, who had two of the four highest gross sales totals for the hub.

While innovators had success in generating gross sales, they still faced challenges in closing potential clients. Two of the most common challenges were access to financing and the innovators' marketing strategies. While potential customers recognized innovations' benefits, many of them, especially the BoP farmers, had limited financial capacity to adopt the technology. Therefore, innovators' usage an end-user financing mechanism was crucial for tapping into the BoP market segment. For innovators' marketing strategy, challenges arose when innovators lacked targeted marketing strategies. For example, innovators experienced higher lead conversion rates for women end-user sales after receiving gender mainstreaming TA focused on ameliorating marketing messaging that targeted women end-users.

Gross Sales Breakdown by Innovation Type



Share of Supported Innovators that Successfully Marketed their Climate-friendly, Energy and/or Water-efficient Innovations with Profit

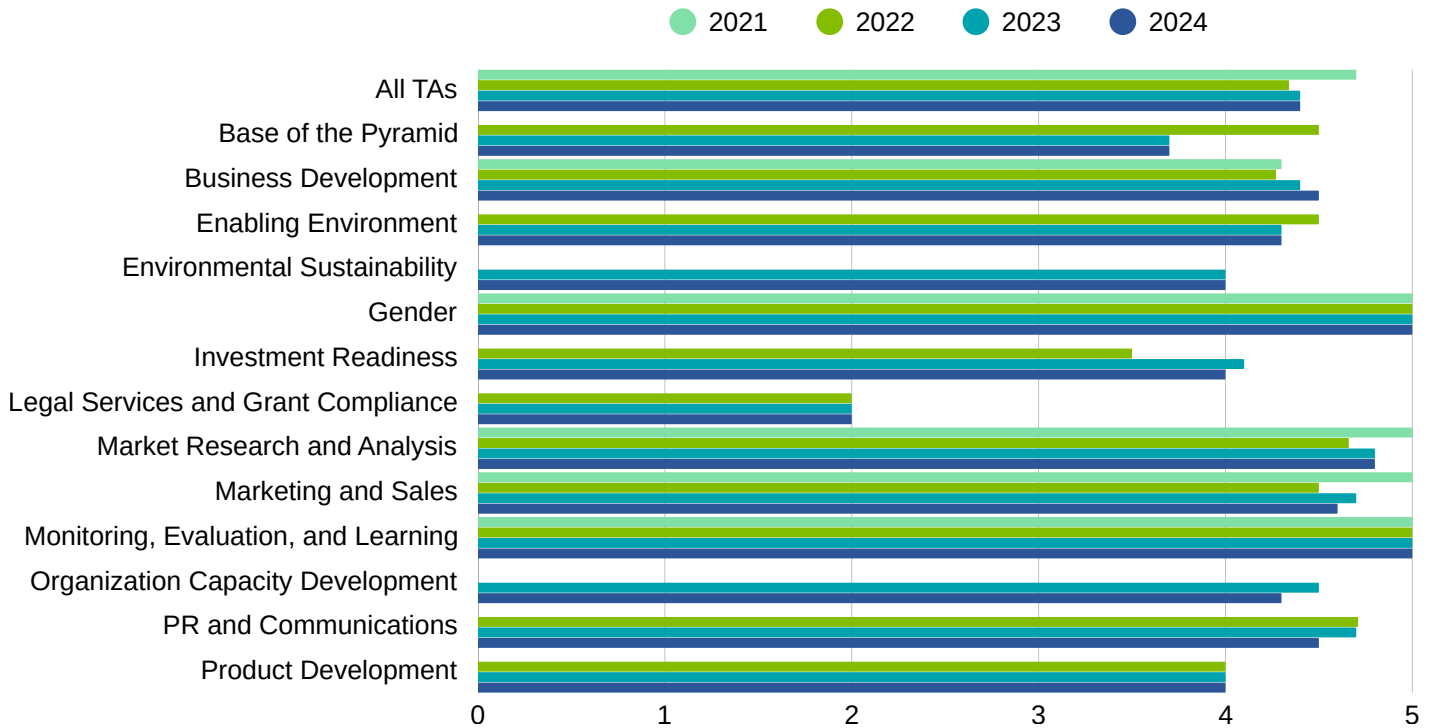


Almost 35% of innovators successfully marketed their businesses, while others are gradually scaling their business and impact in the region. More than two-thirds of the innovators who successfully scaled their innovations with profit were women-led and/or -owned. Five women-led and/or -owned innovators made profits in 2024, namely Village Link, Komodo, S4S Technologies, HUSK Ventures, and Oorja. Other innovators reinvested profits into expansion, impacting short-term profitability but achieving growth in year-on-year sales and end-users.

The main drive of this success was affordability, in which their innovation was either affordable by their target customers or came with an end-user financing scheme. Another success factor was the utilization of various media channels to reach more audiences and raise awareness about their innovation. To further support innovators' growth, the hub provided TA support on end-user financing, business strategy development, and expansion partnerships. Digital marketing TA was also provided to many innovators to help them reach the right potential customers. Lastly, the hub provided market research TA to identify new markets that innovators should prioritize during expansion, and to support development of a strategy detailing how to enter the specific markets.



Average Technical Assistance “Quality of Service Survey” Score



To maintain the high quality of TA services, the hub employed a structured approach that included regular evaluations of the process and deliverables from the team and the service providers, as well as feedback from the innovators. The hub ensured that TA providers were experts in their respective fields, often working with specialized consultants who brought in-depth knowledge and practical experience. Furthermore, continuous monitoring and follow-up calls were conducted throughout the assignment to assess TA effectiveness and address any emerging challenges. The hub also encouraged innovators to provide feedback on their TA experience through surveys and one-on-one check-ins, which helped refine future TA offerings and maintain a high standard.

Over the years, S/SEA innovators' TA requests evolved in a manner aligned with their growth stages and the increasingly complex challenges they faced. Initially, many innovators sought TAs for product development and partnerships. As their businesses expanded, the focus shifted towards more strategic and advanced areas, such as HR management, investment readiness, and market expansion. As the market demands and funding landscape evolved, many innovators adjusted their specialized TA requests for support in areas such as blended finance, carbon finance, and supply chain efficiency. This change reflected their strategic shift towards long-term sustainability from scaled solutions and expanded reach. To ensure equitable market expansion as well as innovation access, all TAs had gender and BoP recommendations integrated into the activities, resulting in a greater impact on smallholder farmers.

Aside from differences in TA requests due to the level of innovator maturity, TA request types were also defined by the country and innovation type. Innovators that originated from countries like Myanmar and Nepal were more likely to request TAs focused on market linkages and expansion strategies that grew their local presence and impact. In contrast, innovators from India, who were based in more mature markets, requested advanced TAs for investment readiness, gender integration, and business model optimization to attract international investors and scale operations. Innovators with technologies or services tied to financial access or end-user financing, had a noticeable increase in TA requests for blended financing and carbon financing. These innovators were aiming to scale their impact and attract investors. For example, Prometheus Power Systems received a carbon financing TA to develop strategies for carbon credit registration, reflecting a growing awareness of the need for climate-conscious business models. For innovators not pursuing investment and had a stronger focus on building product value for end-users, there was a demand by innovators for capacity building support. One innovator, RDO Trust, utilized a TA to train women green workers on scaling organic fertilizer production.

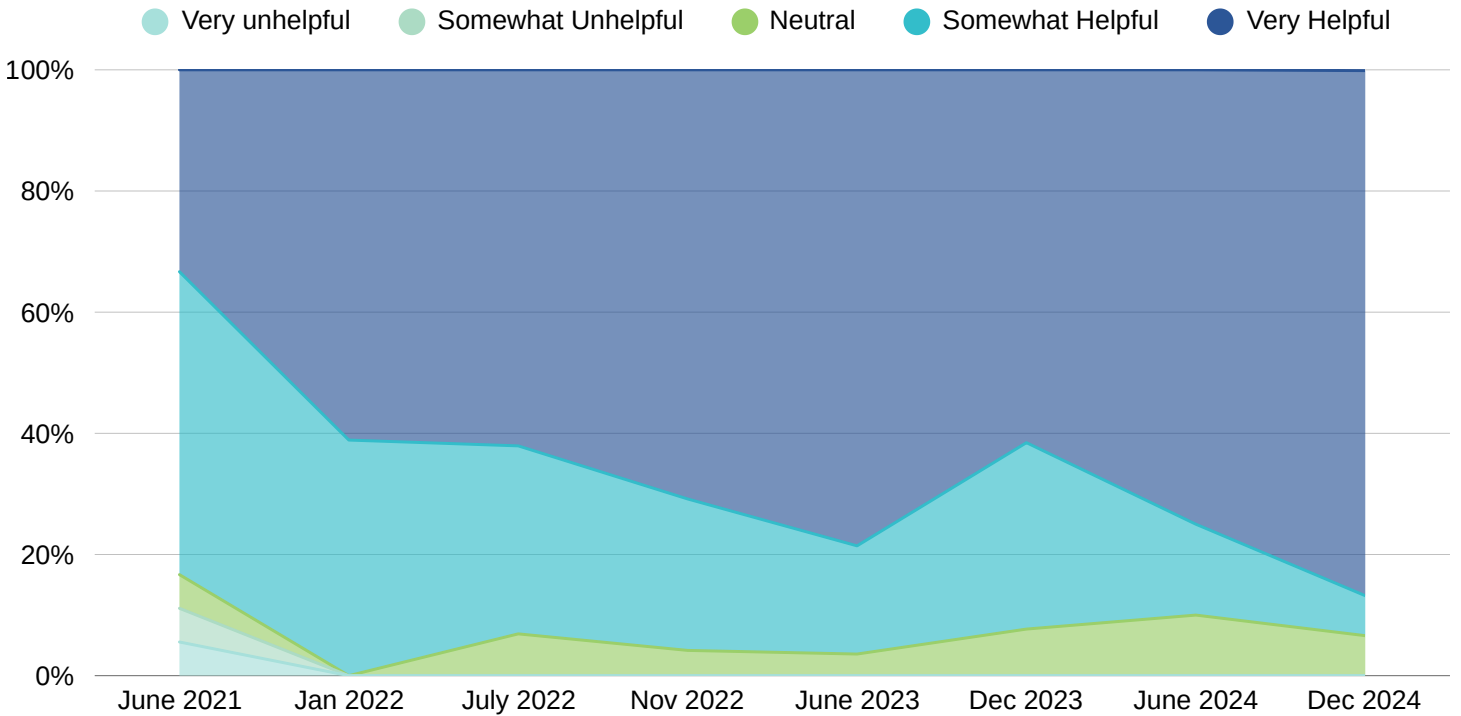
When comparing women-led and/or -owned innovations to those led and/or owned by men, there were no differences in the types of TA requested. Differences did emerge, however, in methods of delivery and expectations of the service provider. As most women-led and/or -owned businesses were early-stage, they required more high-touch guidance on review of TA requirements than more mature innovators.

QUALITY OF SERVICE SURVEY

Conducted by the Secretariat Unit, the Quality of Service Survey gathers innovators' feedback on their experiences working with the S/SEA RIH. The QoS helped the hub improve their service delivery to innovators by identifying problem areas and successful pivots that could be shared during hub-to-hub knowledge exchanges. The latest QoS instances gathered results from 20 innovators in June 2024 and 15 innovators in December 2024.

GENERAL HUB SUPPORT

Overall, how helpful has the S/SEA Hub's support been to your organization's success?

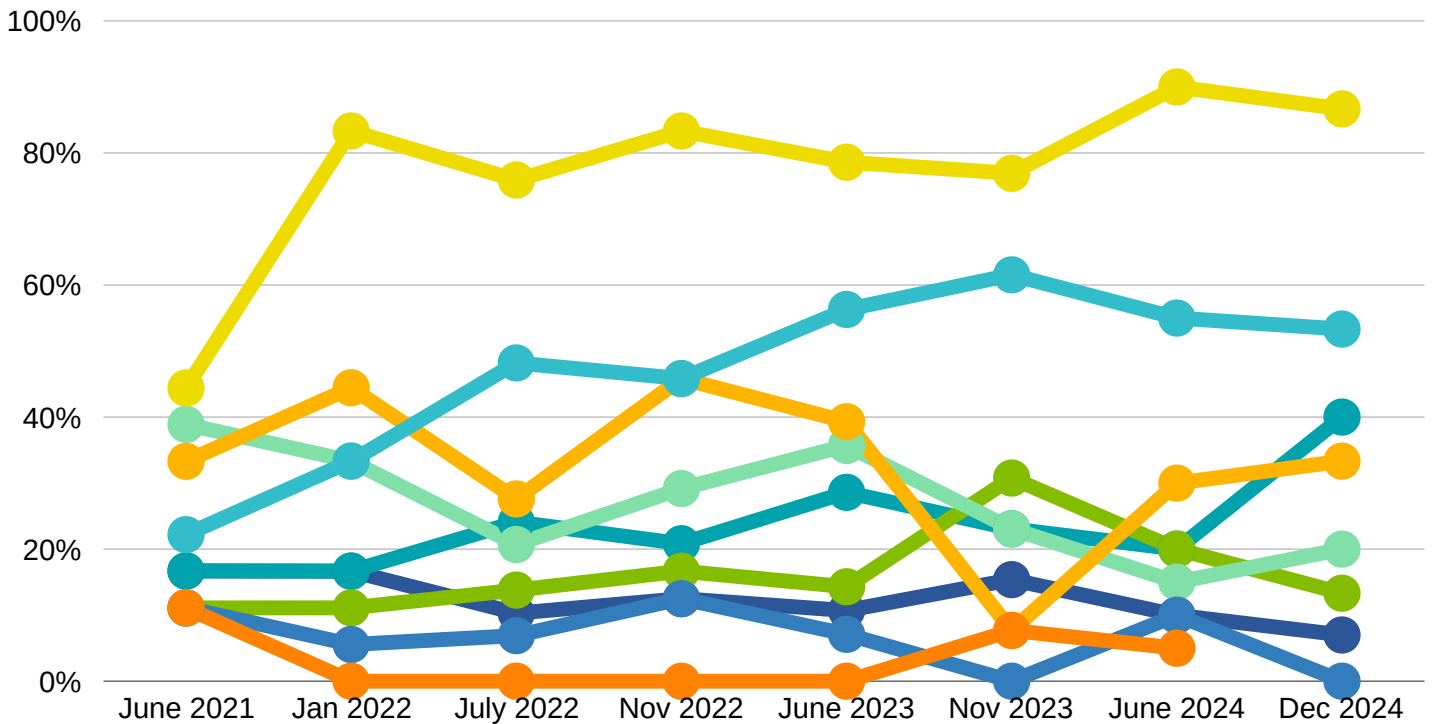


Innovators' appreciation for the responsiveness of S/SEA RIH consistently improved over time. In June 2021, the rating was 3.72 out of 5, but by December 2024, it had risen to an impressive 4.87, with almost all innovators thinking that the hub was "Somewhat Helpful" or "Very Helpful." The continuous positive increase in innovators' perception of hub helpfulness indicates that the S/SEA staff's focus on responsiveness to innovators' needs and relationship building directly contributed to innovators' satisfaction.



Left to right: Husk Ventures (Cambodia) educates potential end-users. Devidayal Solar (India) cold storage units rest filled with products.

Reflecting on the support received from the S/SEA Hub, which of the following has been most useful to you?



As every innovator was entitled to receive at least one TA – with most innovators receiving additional TAs during their participation in WE4F – the category was consistently rated as the most valuable support provided by the hub. Of the innovators who took part in the December 2024 survey, 86.67% cited it as the “Most Useful.” Partnerships and networking also ranked highly, with 53.33% of innovators valuing it, due to innovators’ need for partnership to complete activities like end-user financing, capacity building, innovation access, and market access. Investment facilitation remained important but fluctuated, with 33.33% of innovators highlighting it in December 2024.

Chart Key

- Addressing Enabling Environment Barriers
- Technical Assistance
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Investment Facilitation
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Environmental Sustainability and Compliance
- Other
- None
- Partnership, Networking, and Ecosystem Building

Other areas like MEL, gender mainstreaming, and environmental sustainability saw varied levels of usefulness due to the different contexts in which innovators operate. For example, during the EMMP development when innovators and hub staff were discussing environmental impacts and required mitigation, innovators recognized environmental sustainability as more important during that specific QoSS cycle, likewise for gender integration.

In December 2024, MEL saw an uptick in usefulness due to the increasing number of innovators looking to highlight their impact when pursuing investment, as well as the new OCFI innovators that joined the program in 2024.

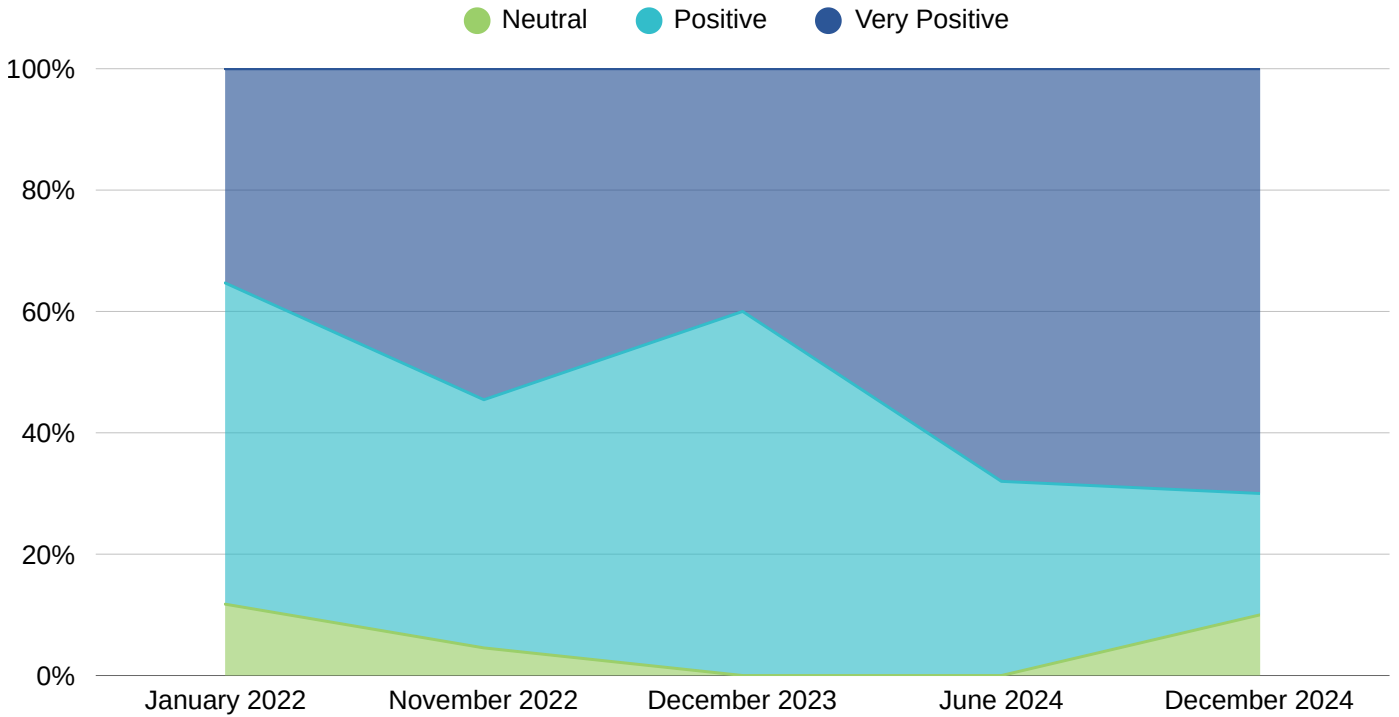
One change in 2024, that might have had a positive effect on support satisfaction, was the merging of TA and investment facilitation support. This proved successful in ensuring seamless continuing support between investment readiness (provided by the Technical Assistance Unit) and investment facilitation (provided by the Brokering Unit). The hub also prioritized TA support completed by local service providers, which helped ensure the localization of final recommendations. Throughout the TA instance, regular check-ins between the hub, the service provider, and the innovator ensured satisfaction with the TA deliverables.

The aforementioned results also highlight how the hub has improved its provision of support to innovators, especially in understanding their growth needs, TA identification, and facilitation of long-term partnerships with local stakeholders.

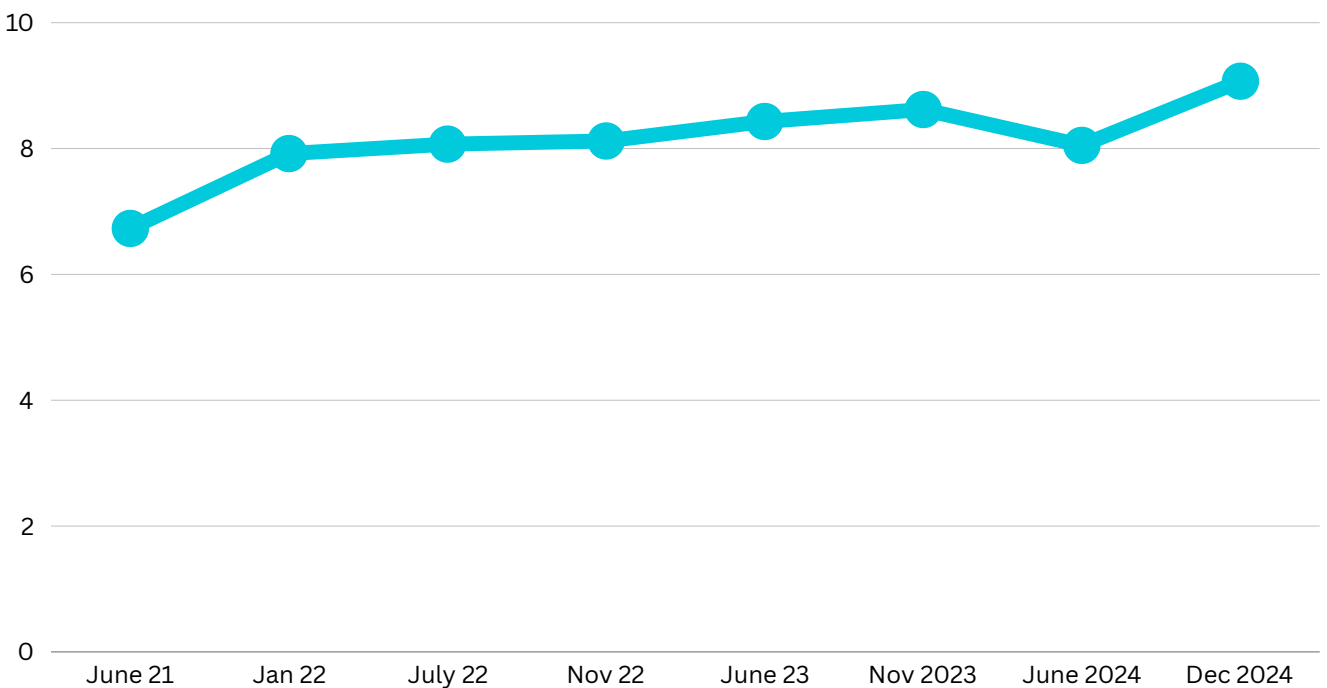
As the program draws to a close, the hub will capture the technical assistance and innovator support lessons learned in the final report as well as share them during lessons learned sharing events. In addition to delivering the final instances of TA, the hub will connect the S/SEA innovators with pre-identified partners and platforms that could potentially provide follow-on support to them.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Reflecting on the technical assistance provided to you, what could be the impact of technical assistance in the long term (1+ years post-completion of the assignment)?



On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the S/SEA Hub's Technical Assistance Unit (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)



Innovators' satisfaction with the hub's Technical Assistance Unit steadily increased over time, starting with a score of 6.72 out of 10 in June 2021, before gradually improving to 9.07 by December 2024. The upward trend reflects a growing appreciation for the hub's support, indicating that the quality and relevance of TA have been highly valued by innovators, and the hub successfully met their evolving needs over time.

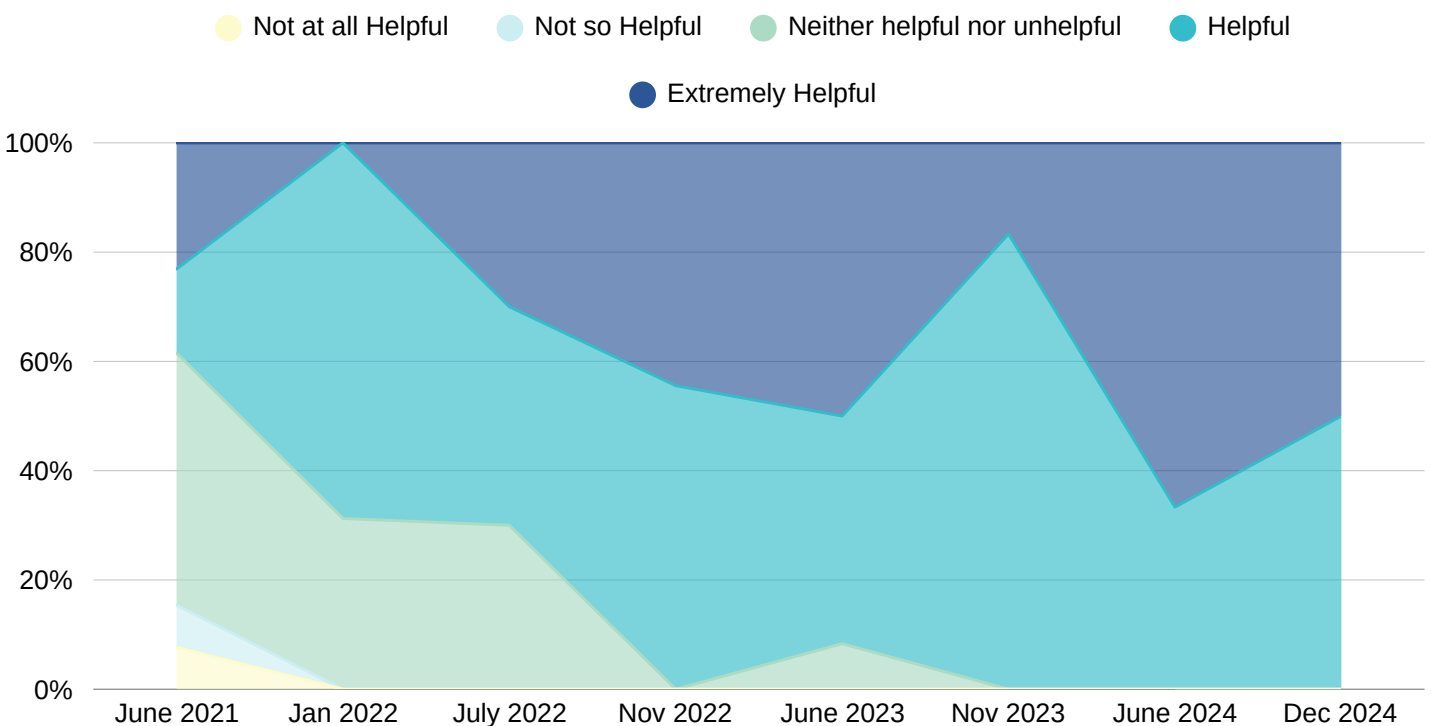
To improve satisfaction levels, the hub implemented several key strategies. First, the Technical Assistance Unit started working closely with Country Coordinators, who acted as a bridge between the innovators and the Technical Assistance Team, ensuring that the provided support was tailored to each innovator's specific needs. The close collaboration also helped ensure timely and relevant assistance. Second, the hub refined its procurement process to onboard the right service providers when in-house TA support was not sufficient. To reach more relevant, and newer, service providers, the hub also leveraged local professional networks while staying in close communication with the innovators to mitigate potential vendor concerns. Finally, continuous feedback from innovators, including information gathered during site visits, was integrated into the refinement of TA offerings, improving the overall experience.

The long-term value of TA increased for innovators over time. In June 2021, 36.4% rated the long-term impact as "Very Positive," which grew to 70% by December 2024. While "Positive" ratings remained high, the overall shift towards more "Very Positive" responses indicates that innovators increasingly saw TA as having a significant and lasting impact on their businesses. Additionally, when the first QoSS was conducted in June 2021, it was completed with the first cohort of innovators who had not been part of the program for a full year. In the latest QoSS, while only 15 innovators completed the survey, new innovators had heard of the positive impacts of TA from previous innovator cohorts, potentially leading to the new innovators holding a higher opinion of TA's long-term impact. For older innovators who completed the QoSS, their longer participation in WE4F, coupled with knowledge of the actual long-term impacts of TA, could have increased their positive perception of it.

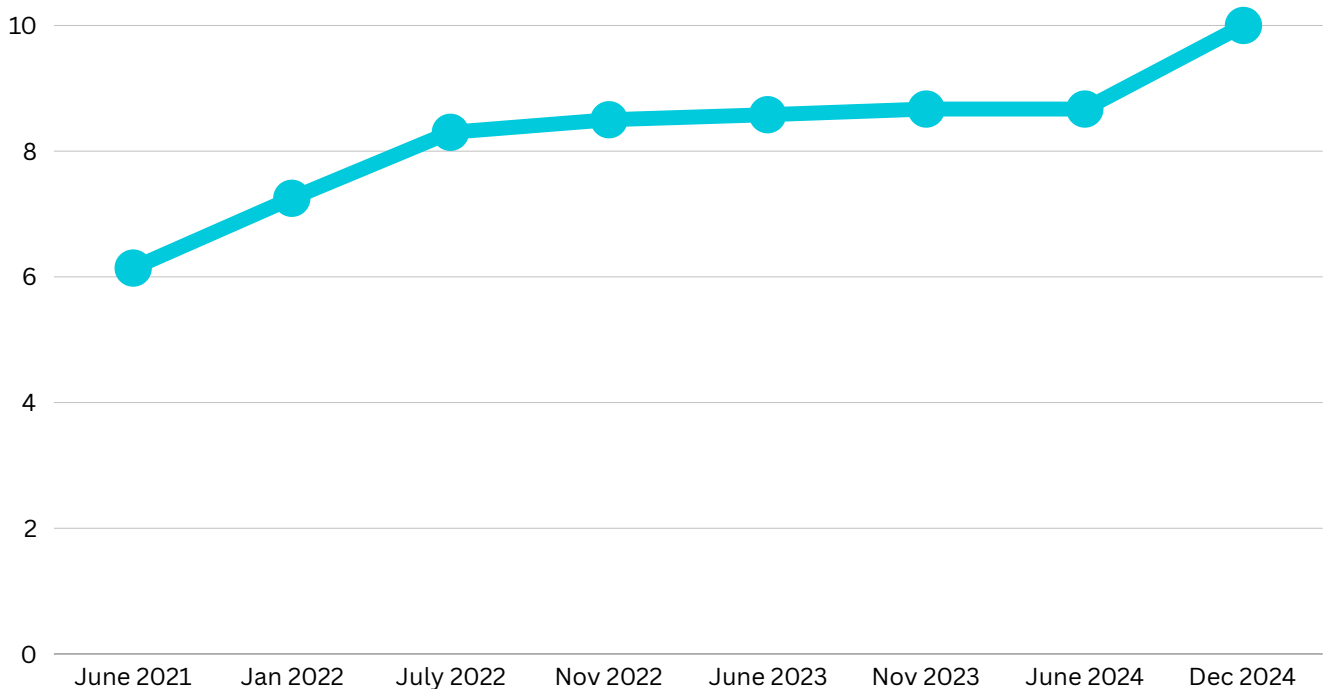
A couple of innovators raised interesting points about the benefits of TA to their businesses. For one innovator, their TAs helped them identify middle management needs as well as identify what they needed in a Chief Financial Officer. Other innovators appreciated the hub's support on sustainable and inclusive waste management planning, as it helped the innovators improve the sustainability of their operations and supply chain.

INVESTMENT FACILITATION

How helpful has the investment readiness team's support been in moving your organization toward your goal of raising investment?



On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the S/SEA Hub's Investment Readiness Team (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)



Innovators' satisfaction with the hub's Investment Readiness Team significantly improved over time. Starting with a score of 6.1 out of 10 in June 2021, satisfaction levels steadily increased before reaching four innovators giving the team a 10 out of 10 in December 2024. To achieve this improvement, the hub made several strategic enhancements, including the hiring of a new Investment Facilitator with extensive experience in fundraising and company mentorship. Together, the Technical Assistance Unit and the new Investment Facilitator worked to ensure continuous, seamless support between investment readiness and investment facilitation. The hub also enhanced communication with innovators, promoting investment readiness improvement opportunities for those with smaller funding requirements, and creating customized investor outreach lists for mature innovators.

Part of the customized approach to the innovators' investment readiness and facilitation needs, is the evolving ticket sizes. As innovators scaled and their needs increased, they pursued larger equity and debt investments as well as blended finance deals. While some innovators needed an investment strategy and capital structuring support, others required support to design innovative financing structures that merged grants and other forms of capital. Additionally, within the investment requests and pursuits, the hub saw increased interest in climate and gender lens investment opportunities, with TA support for ESG integration and 2X certification becoming more popular.

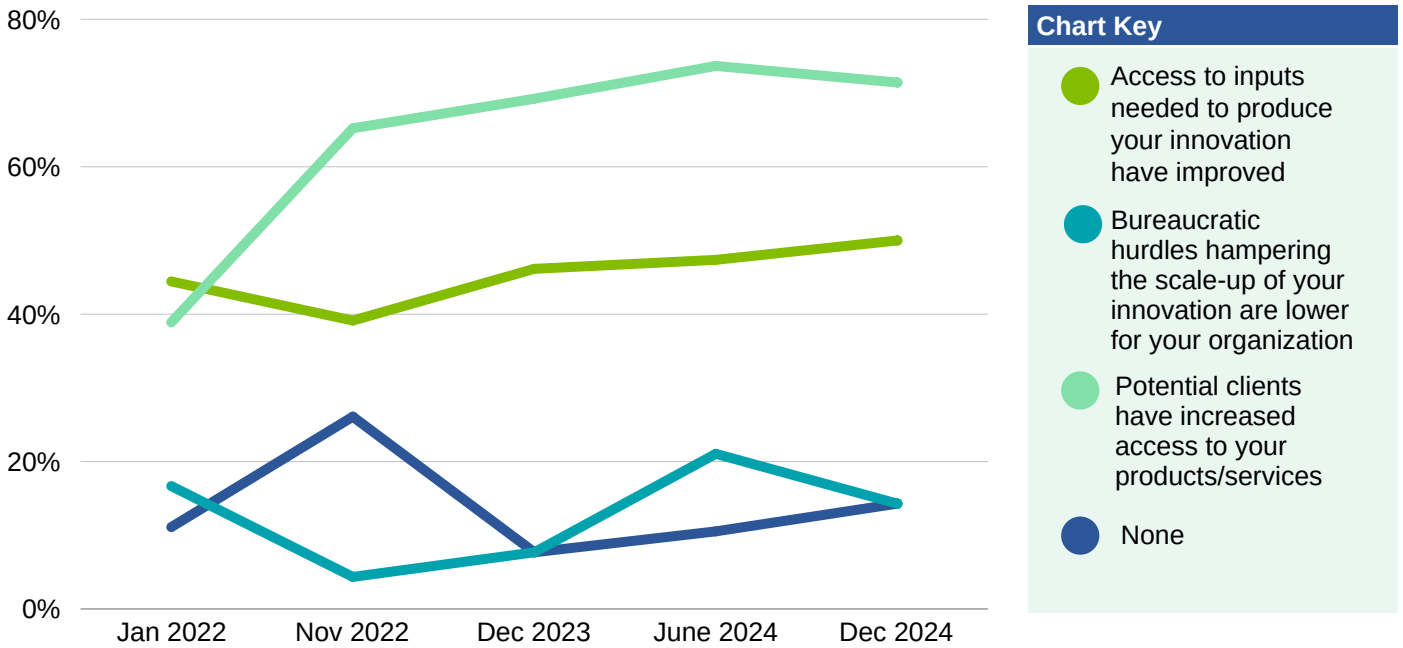
In June 2024, there was a slight dip in satisfaction. It was immediately corrected in December 2024, with the hub reaching the highest satisfaction score possible. This dip can be attributed to the introduction of new processes at the hub and the transition to a new Investment Facilitator, as innovators felt slightly less satisfied while adjusting to the new approaches. December's 100% satisfaction rating likely reflects the long-term impact of these improvements, as innovators began to see more tangible results, such as better access to funding and more customized support for their growth, leading to higher confidence in the hub's services.



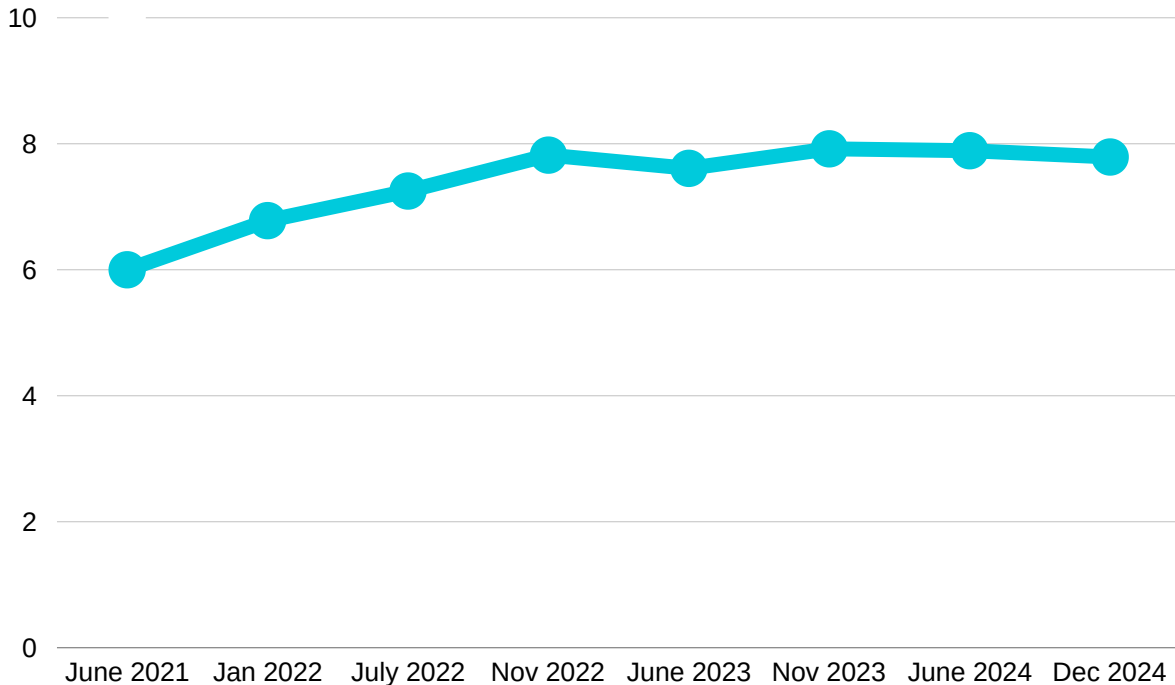
Left to right: The CoolCrop (India) innovation of solar panels and cold storage. FarmConnect (Asia) Internet of Things technology in use in a field.

LEGAL, POLICY, AND REGULATORY SUPPORT

Since joining WE4F, which of the following have occurred? Select all that apply.



On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the S/SEA Hub's Enabling Environment Unit (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)



Innovators' satisfaction with the Enabling Environment Unit slowly rose during the first half of the program before remaining steady around 7.9 since November 2023. The latest satisfaction rating was 7.79 in December 2024. A steady hold near 7.9 reflects the positive experience of the innovators working with the Enabling Environment Unit as well as satisfaction with the hub's support in overcoming enabling environment barriers.

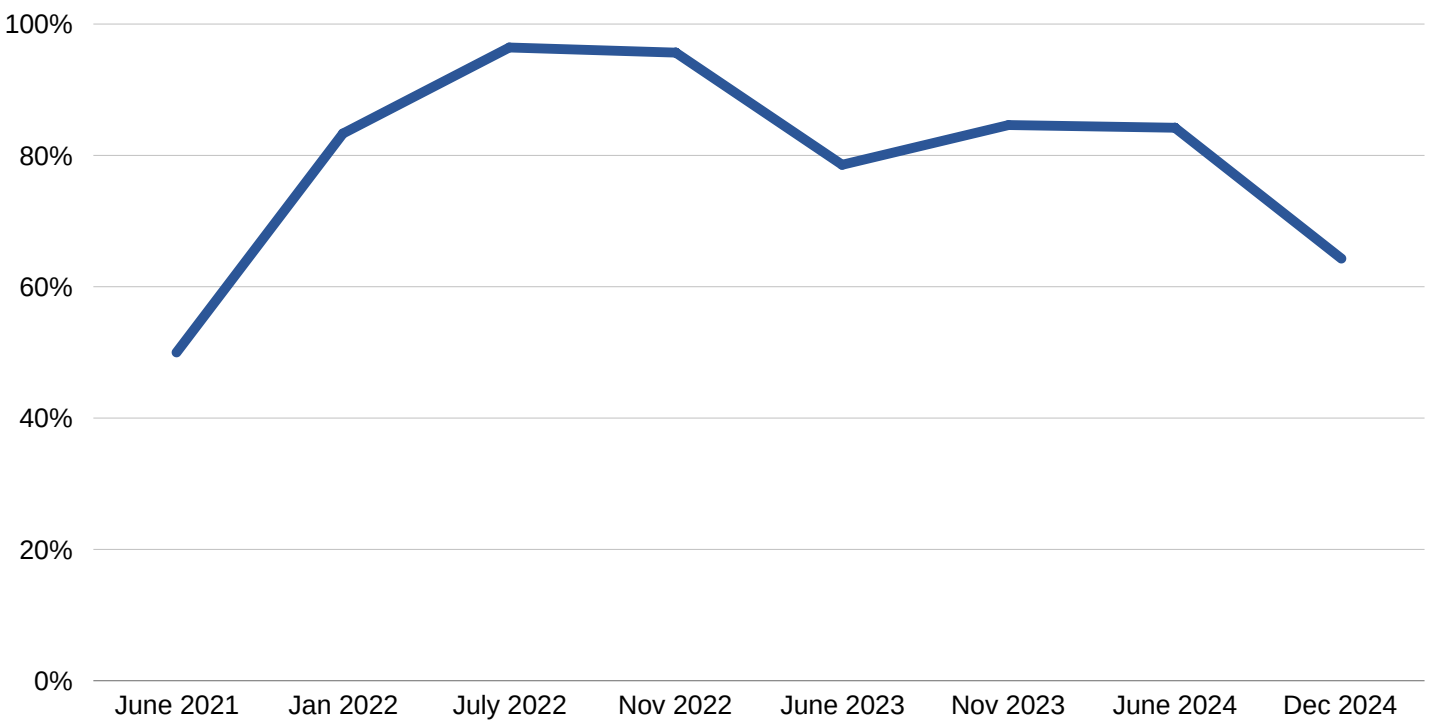
A potential reason that the hub has not been successful at moving innovators' satisfaction above 80%, is the difficulty in tackling enabling environment issues. Policy challenges tend to be complex while evolving regulations across the region make it even more difficult to navigate. The diverse local contexts of different regions also required tailored solutions, adding complexity and resource demands. Finally, limited access to key decision-makers further complicated efforts to address regulatory barriers. To counteract these challenges, the hub worked with local business associations, as well as

other programs, to try to increase visibility of the barriers. For innovators unfamiliar with the policy advocacy process, the limited, or delayed, movement of policy changes could be a difficult process.

To address enabling environment issues, the hub focused on a bottom-up approach by working through Country Coordinators to directly communicate with innovators and understand local barriers and challenges. Country Coordinators also helped innovators tackle policy challenges by facilitating discussions with relevant ministries and departments, lending innovators' voices to the humanization of different policy challenges. For issues that could be solved through networking, or relationship development, the hub supported innovators in creating partnerships. The S/SEA RIH also signed an MoU with the USDA Thailand Regional Agriculture Innovation Network (USDA RAIN) to establish a knowledge exchange and unlock further support for WE4F innovators.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about gender integration?

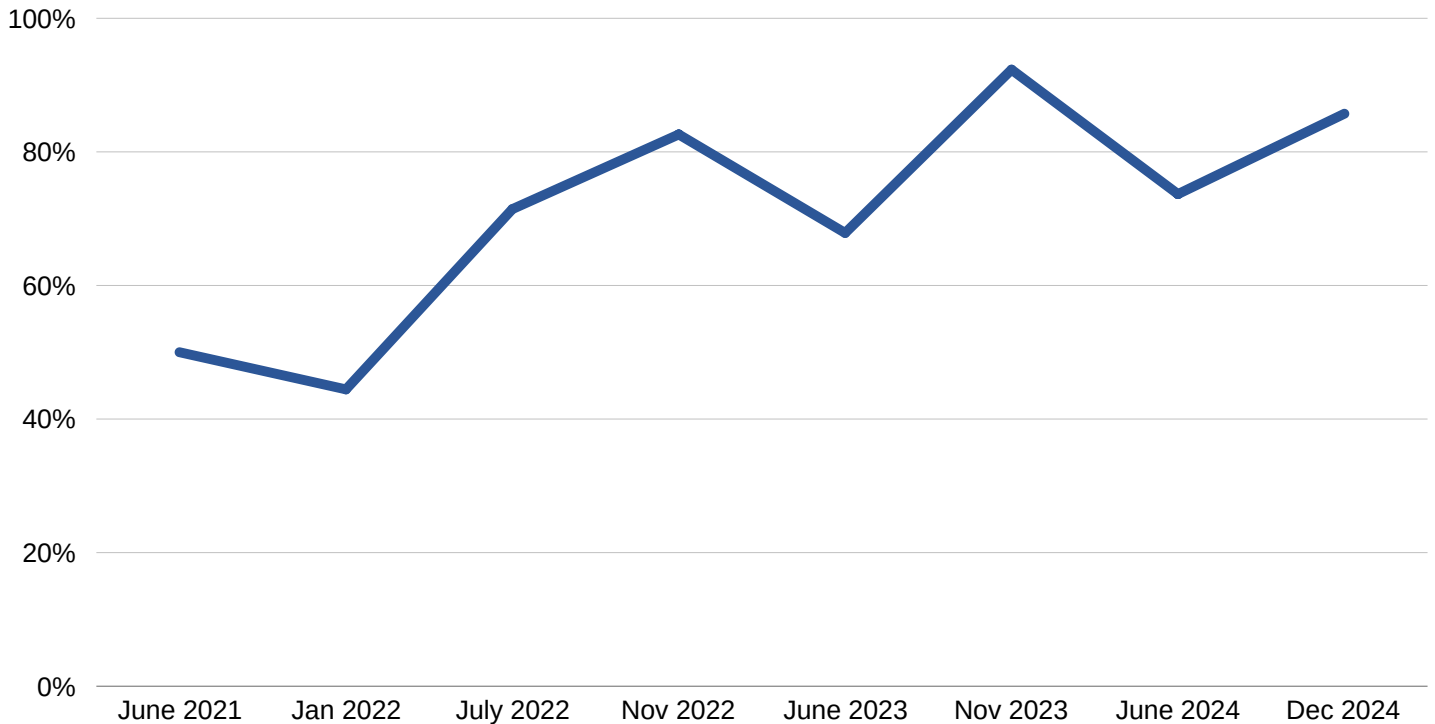


Only 65% of innovators stated in December 2024 – a 20-percentage point decrease from June 2024 – that engagement with the hub increased their gender knowledge. This could potentially have been due to several factors – onboarded OCFI innovators being more advanced in their gender knowledge (seven out of nine innovators were assessed as being at an intermediate or advanced gender level), a stronger focus on environmental sustainability and BoP during the second half of the year, or the advanced gender topics covered by the hub having raised innovators' gender knowledge to an already high level. Throughout 2024, by providing TAs, webinars, and workshops, the hub did elevate innovators' knowledge on gender-based violence and harassment, women-focused end-user financing mechanisms, and gender integration in business operations. Topics discussed throughout the year, as well as the methods in which they were covered, differed from the subject material of earlier years in the program, where innovators were just being introduced to the gender mainstreaming.



Left to right: Shreenagar (Nepal) fish feed. FCCT (Philippines) end-user processes waste into fertilizer.

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about environmental sustainability, including climate resilience and biodiversity?



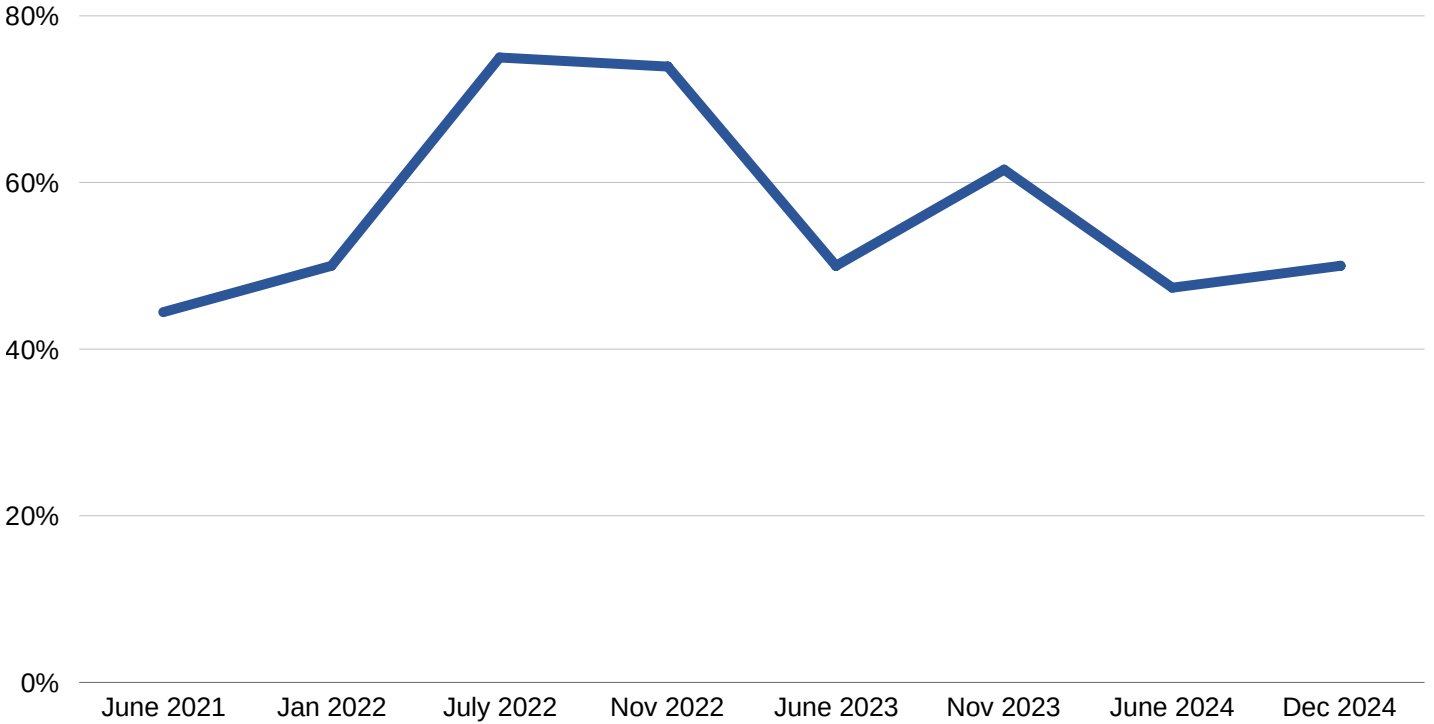
For environmental sustainability, over 85% of innovators stated that an engagement with the hub increased their knowledge level – a 10-percentage point increase from June 2024. Throughout the year, several forms of environmental sustainability support were provided to innovators: one-on-one calls to assess environmental sustainability gaps; co-development of EMMPs for OCFI innovators; hosting an environmental and social management system (ESMS) webinar; and offering customized environmental sustainability TA.

In order to complete the sustainable water management actions recommended by the 2022 Mid-Term Evaluation, in 2024, the hub worked with Middle East and North Africa Regional Innovation Hub (MENA RIH) to develop a water availability dashboard/water accounting tools for the Ganges River Basin and Red River Basin. The two dashboards/tools provided comprehensive visualizations and descriptions of the basins, crucial information on water availability within the basins and sub-basins, forecasts for 2025, 2030, and 2035, hydroclimatic conditions, and seasonal water availability analysis. With a user-friendly design, the dashboard's purpose was to assist WE4F's donors, innovators, and stakeholders in predicting water availability, enabling them to determine whether interventions were necessary during scaling up, or when establishing innovations in the river basins. The provided information could also serve as an early warning system for farmers, promoting thorough planning and adoption of water-saving innovations or practices.



Promethean Power (India) end-user stands with one of the innovator's milk storage containers.

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about Base of the Pyramid (BOP)?

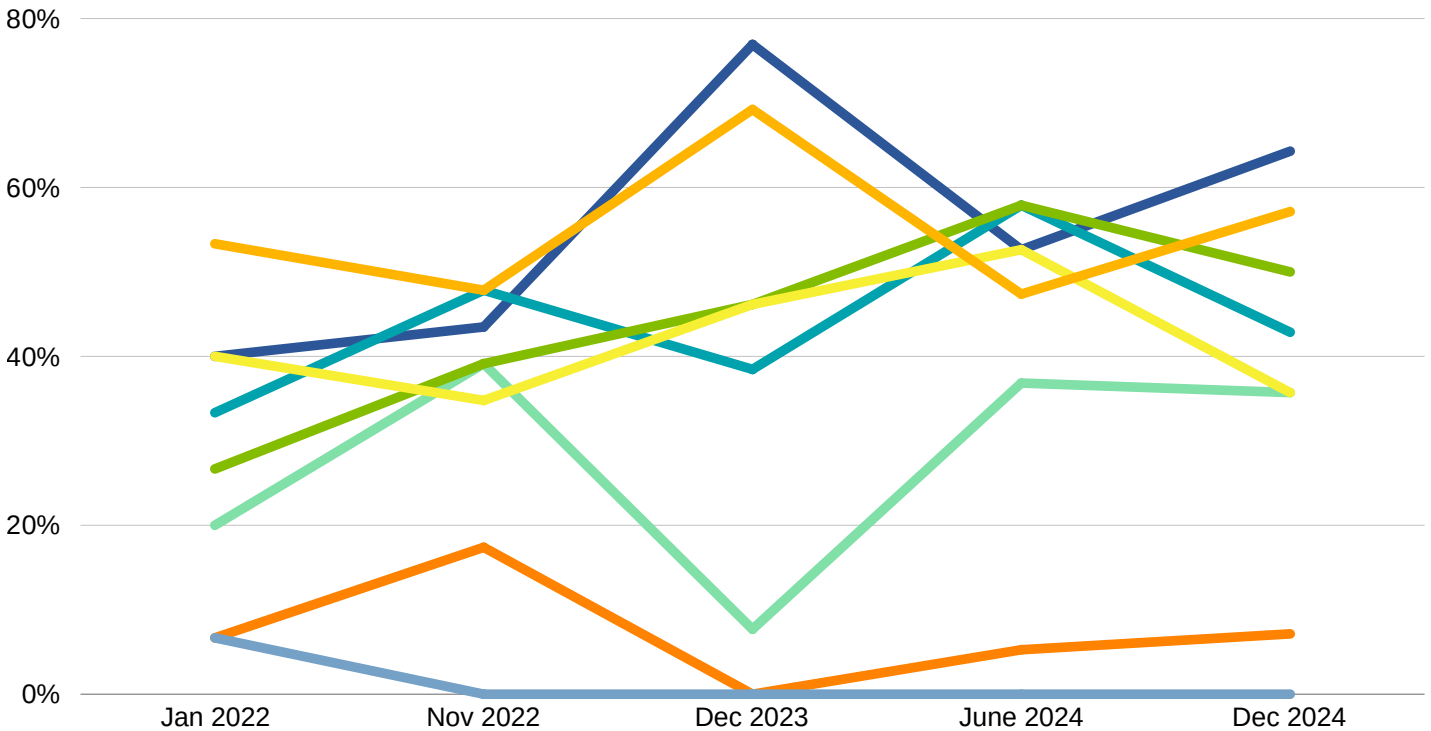


Among the innovators who completed the survey in December 2024, about 50% of them said that engagement with the hub increased their knowledge of BoP integration. This was a slight uptick from June 2024, when slightly under 50% of innovators reported the same. The factors for this result align directly with the factors for the gender knowledge result – OCFI innovators joining the program with a high level of knowledge (all nine innovators were assessed at having an intermediate or advanced BoP knowledge), innovators from previous cohorts having matured throughout the program to high awareness levels, and the topics covered by the hub in 2024 were much more advanced than previous years, limiting the amount of knowledge that can be gained over the course of the year. For instance, in 2024, innovators’ BoP TAs focused on customer segmentation, integrated marketing and communications approaches for smallholder farmers, and end-user financing that allowed innovators to define BoP and non-BoP farmers based on their operations and mobilize financing accordingly. These are much more advanced topics than earlier in the program where innovators attended convening sessions or webinars that explained the definition of BoP farmers and early approaches for engagement.



Village Link (Myanmar) employees speak with a potential end-user.

Does M&E data collection for WE4F support any of the following aspects of your business/organization?



Over the years, innovators' usage of MEL data increased across all support categories, with the exception of sales/marketing, which trended downward. December 2024's sales/marketing result was the lowest usage rate since November 2022. As innovators engaged with the hub, they became more adept at integrating MEL data into their business operations. Innovators more effectively used MEL data for strategic decision-making (57%), customer analysis (64%), and fundraising (43%). This growing knowledge base reflected the hub's successful support in these areas through tailored TA and one-on-one consultations that built innovators' awareness of the potential usage of data being collected for WE4F.

Chart Key

- Customer analysis
- Fundraising
- Managing partners
- Publicizing impact
- Sales/marketing
- Strategic decision-making
- Don't use WE4F data outside of reporting
- Other

There were slight decreases in usage for most categories, when compared to June 2024, but this could potentially be related to the onboarding of the new OCFI innovators who would have only experienced limited benefits of MEL data collection at the time of the survey in December 2024.

For the percentage of innovators who say, "they do not use WE4F data outside of reporting," there were instances where innovators reported challenges in the data collection process and its complexities, especially in the financial reporting system. Despite the hub's support, the difficulty some innovators faced in handling complex formats for reporting, remained a barrier due to legal and governance requirements. Additionally, time constraints, and the program's limited duration for some innovators, contributed to a sense of missing out on deeper engagement. The challenges could be more obvious for some innovators who were not mature and/or have never worked with donors before. Innovators reported that external surveyor studies bridged much of the gap faced in data collection and reporting capacity, improving both their ease of MEL reporting and number of MEL insights deemed valuable for business operations.

Innovators expressed strong satisfaction with the hub's support, emphasizing the value of the WE4F ecosystem in fostering growth and providing real, impactful assistance. Many innovators highlighted the collaborative nature of the program, with some noting it helped structure organizational values and connect with investors. However, there were challenges mentioned regarding financial reporting and submitting supporting documents, which could be streamlined for ease. Overall, innovators were grateful for the support and eager for continued opportunities to scale their businesses with the knowledge and connections gained through the program.

USAID CLOSURE

On January 27, 2025, the S/SEA RIH received a SWO, instructing the hub to stop all WE4F activities pending the outcome of a USAID review of the project. Subsequently, on February 10, 2025, the hub received communication from USAID that the S/SEA RIH had been terminated for convenience, with immediate effect. All RIH staff working for the hub lost their positions.

The contract termination resulted in the closure of S/SEA RIH, which brought the program to an abrupt and immediate halt without the following orderly closeout procedures. As a result, the technical assistance, investment facilitation, and grants provided to innovators were suddenly discontinued, preventing both the completion of planned TAs and proper closeout of program activities. At the time of termination, there were 15 active grantees, or TA-only, innovators whose businesses were affected. Fortunately, two cohorts of innovators had completed their grants and concluded their active TA support.

The impact of the program's sudden termination on innovators was varied, with grant-receiving innovators facing the greatest challenges. While the number of job and monetary losses have yet to be fully assessed, the abrupt termination of grant funding combined with the absence of immediate alternative financing options, forced many innovators to pause their expansion plans or scale back operations. Some innovators, such as Equilibrium, had made upfront payments to farmers and support organizations and had no way of reimbursing the cost, so they had to shut down projects or look for alternative sources of funding. FCCT had to postpone their market expansion for Takakura compost due to the termination of TA, and support from the Country Coordinator. The TA and hub support would have increased their capacity to design and implement a go-to-market strategy. Meanwhile, DD Solar had to delay their expansion plan and pivot to new products and pilots that enabled expansion without financial support.

Some innovators had to shut down activities and lay off staff. In the case of Human Ventures, local staff engaged in community mobilization activities to onboard farmers had to be laid off. Dvara E-Registry closed their carbon credit project on sustainable rice cultivation due to discontinuation of its grant. The innovator also had to pause its fundraising activities, impacting its ability to raise alternative forms of capital for expansion and credit offering to smallholder farmers. Human Ventures and Shreenagar reduced their field staff and adjusted their business models to continue operating. HUSK Ventures wound down its market expansion in Vietnam due to limited financial capacity. The termination of TA on technical support for manufacturing caused delays for their manufacturing development in Cambodia.

Some innovators were able to cope better than others, albeit while facing high levels of uncertainty. Equilibrium accessed other forms of bridge funding to continue their support of regenerative agriculture for farmers. Additionally, the innovator was unable to receive the much-needed TA that would have set up a blended finance facility to expand regenerative agriculture projects with carbon credits in India. This delayed access to new funds for project implementation. Many innovators like Equilibrium and DD Solar were counting on the matching capital grants from the hub to raise more private capital.

Beyond grants, the loss of TA impacted many innovators, delayed and paused TAs included: software development, capacity building for investment readiness, and market research. These losses not only negatively impacted innovators, but also their end-users, partners, and staff. FarmConnect relied on the hub's support to develop their software interface for reaching new farmers. To date, the team has not been able to build their internal team expertise in user interface development due to the interlinked capacity development planned under the TA. RDO Trust's TA was paused halfway through completion, impacting the innovator's ability to expand its co-compost business and sales. The SWO also paused much-needed skill development of RDO staff and women green workers, adversely impacting their potential growth of co-compost sales. Claro Energy was also affected by a TA paused mid-implementation. The innovator had to divert their own financial resources to complete half-designed modules for an AI-powered chatbot for their digital platforms.

In August 2025, thanks to the generous funding, support, and commitment of Sida to global food security as well as scaling of water-efficient and renewable energy innovations, the S/SEA RIH was, in collaboration with Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad, relaunched for a six-month period through International Water Management Institute (IWMI). During the closeout activities, the S/SEA RIH will provide a final round of TAs and reporting, followed by distilling and disseminating WE4F lessons learned to ensure sustainability of hub efforts. Prior to the relaunch, hub staff contacted all 15 previously-active innovators to determine their interest in rejoining WE4F. All 15 innovators stated they were interested in rejoining the hub and have since begun collaborating to develop scopes of work for the final TA instances. Of the TAs that will be completed during the bridge contract, seven will focus on innovation scale-up through various actions such as go-to-market strategies, AI integration/adoption, management capacity building, and climate-smart aquaculture; three will focus on improving ESG reporting and action plans for investors and sustainable business operations; two will finish 2X certifications; and four TAs will improve innovators' investment readiness.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenges	Solutions
Open Call for Innovations	
<p>In 2024, the hub onboarded nine new OCFI innovators. With the program concluding (originally) in June 2025, there was a challenge related to providing them with the support necessary to ensure their successful scaling in a limited timeframe.</p> <p>As TA was still ongoing, there was a risk that the innovators may not be able to implement all of the recommendations, or that the transition to post-program support may not be smooth.</p>	<p>Implemented accelerated TA support along with mentorship and partnership opportunities. The process involved setting clear milestones and prioritizing critical support areas like investment readiness, market access, and business model optimization to ensure that the innovators were well-prepared for scaling post-program.</p> <p>The hub also planned to continue close engagement with the vendors to ensure timely completion of all TAs.</p> <p>As of September 2025, the hub will work with returning OCFI innovators to complete TAs that had not been completed when the SWO was issued.</p>
<p>The development of an EMMP can be a long process, where innovators typically benefit from implementation of plan recommendations. However, the onboarded OCFI innovators had a shortened time period to develop the EMMP, which might have only been approved by Bureau Environment Officer closer to the program end date, resulting in less implementation time.</p>	<p>Although there is no Bureau Environment Officer, the hub continues to provide environmental advisory support to ensure the completion of EMMPs and to provide ongoing advisory support that will help innovators strengthen their ESG practices beyond the completion of WE4F.</p> <p>Regarding EMMP implementation, the hub asked innovators to prioritize quick-win recommendations that could be implemented within the program timeframe, while sharing tools and platforms for the innovators to use as references when they wanted to implement the other recommendations post-WE4F support. Three innovators requested additional TA support to prepare stronger ESG action plans and train their staff on the relevant activities.</p>
Support post-WE4F	
<p>The program will conclude, but almost all innovators will still require additional support to ensure the financial sustainability of their operations in the long run.</p>	<p>The hub started connecting OCFI innovators with potential investors and partners, ensuring that they could continue to receive support and funding after the program concludes.</p> <p>The hub is also focused on facilitating mentorship opportunities and peer-to-peer learning within the WE4F network to help these innovators leverage resources beyond the program. The hub is open to connecting innovators with other regional programs funded by donors.</p> <p>The hub is working closely with innovators to help develop long-term sustainability plans and identify follow-on opportunities, including grant funding or partnerships that extend beyond program's closure.</p>

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenges	Solutions
Support post-WE4F	
<p>Termination of WE4F contracts by USAID impacted innovators' operations as well as their trust of the program, making the relaunch of the program, MEL data collection, and lessons learned collection potentially challenging as innovators may no longer prioritize the WE4F relationship.</p>	<p>Offered critical TAs (e.g., investment readiness, market research, business development) to that supported active innovators' immediate needs. Despite their grant termination, the TA is likely to encourage innovators to collaborate.</p> <p>Reduced MEL indicators, improving innovators' ability to report by removing burdensome targets and allowing them to report only on the critical data.</p> <p>The few indicators selected for the bridge contract reporting period were selected from those previously reported on by each innovator. This eliminates any challenges or learning curves associated with the return to WE4F MEL reporting.</p>

LOOKING FORWARD

In the remaining months of the program, the S/SEA RIH will focus on delivering pending TAs to select innovators that have not received any TAs. All TA activities are planned to be completed by early January 2026. In January and February 2026, the hub will collect and document MEL data, lessons learned, and other insights for an effective closeout of the S/SEA RIH as well as the informing future programming. These collections will contribute to the preparation of the final narrative, financial, and audit reports.

In addition to the TA completion, the hub will explore linkages between innovators and relevant investors, government bodies, NGOs, and private sector partners who could potentially support, or collaborate with, innovators after the conclusion of WE4F. To ensure regional and global relationships formed during the program continue to have a connection, the hub is exploring options to establish an alumni network that enables peer learning, collaboration, and sustained engagement.

By the end of the program, the hub will develop a comprehensive report highlighting program achievements, metrics, and success stories. The report will include both quantitative results and qualitative insights. Under the Secretariat Unit's guidance, the hub will identify proper channels for storing and sharing knowledge products to ensure continued availability. By maintaining long-term access to WE4F-developed products, the hub will ensure WE4F's sustainability and inform effective design of future programs. Given the program's success in meeting the KPI tied to the inclusion of WE4F's lessons learned and recommendations in external organizations' guidelines and programs, it can be anticipated that these resources will be used not only by WE4F innovators, but also by other donors, NGOs, foundations, and governments. To ensure that the hub's lessons learned reach external audiences throughout the water-energy-food nexus, lessons learned will be disseminated through direct connections as well as digital platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRIORITY DIALOGUE

Reflecting on what has been successful for innovators, as well as the barriers they faced, several themes emerged. These barriers could be addressed by various innovation-scaling organizations – governments looking to create business-friendly environments, nexus stakeholders looking to build bridges, or investors and grant-making organizations looking to fulfill existing financial gaps for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as early-stage businesses operating in historically “risky” environments. Improving all, or even just one barrier, could unlock scaling opportunities for innovators and positive benefits for end-users.

Government incentives and subsidies have always proven effective in promoting the adoption of technology, but accessing them can be difficult as old policies may exclude newer innovations. For example, Mandala Agrifresh (Nepal) is seeking access to import subsidies and other government incentives for cold storage and modified atmosphere packaging bags to diversify its product portfolio, which can help reduce the price at the farm level. If they are able to achieve access, increased adoption due to a lower price point will benefit smallholder farmers as well as Nepal's overall food security and food loss challenges.

Barriers to market entry arise at many points along the scaling journey. Aligned with the challenges innovators face in securing government support, they also face complex regulatory environments and policy barriers when looking to expand into new markets. Roadblocks associated with accessing new markets, especially for underserved communities, remains a significant challenge. Providing tailored market entry support and facilitating strategic partnerships will help innovators expand their reach.

The development of partnerships and supplier networks needs attention. Creating synergies between different innovation providers unlocks opportunities for the private sector as well as consumers. A common theme for most innovators seeking partnerships and suppliers, is the difficulty they face in identifying trustworthy, expert organizations. For instance, Shreenagar (Nepal) is looking for new partners and suppliers to ensure a consistent and high-quality supply for its fish feed production. Meanwhile, Human Ventures (India) is seeking end-user financing partnerships with innovators, particularly within the S/SEA hub. The innovator is also planning to partner with Agros (Cambodia) for expansion in Cambodia, Kenya, and Vietnam.

Access to R&D funding is critical and must be improved. A common challenge faced by early-stage innovators, or those with smaller capital needs, is the inability to secure financing. Innovators often struggle to secure debt, as well as equity financing. Accessing investment in the range of \$500,000 USD to \$2 million USD remains a challenge for many innovators. Angel investors generally provide smaller ticket sizes, while venture capital and impact investors often prefer investments above \$2 million USD, as transaction costs are similar regardless of deal size. Additionally, investors are typically reluctant to fund R&D due to the high risks involved. Komodo Water (Indonesia) is developing water resource data and seeking potential partners, or research funding, to support their survey efforts. They also plan to expand their solar-powered clean water and ice production facilities to other coastal communities. These investments in critical research projects, innovation access, and infrastructure development require more investment than what one organization can achieve on their own.

Most innovators struggle with data collection and reporting, a key contributing factor for innovators' difficulty in securing funding. A time-consuming and difficult-to-manage task, donors should consider the level of effort required of innovators as they develop partnerships and grant requirements. When first launching data reporting requirements, or when at the point of programmatic change, streamlining these processes and providing more training could help innovators manage their data more effectively. Aligning MEL requirements with impact investment metrics and building associated capacity may also benefit innovators in the long run, as they pursue impact investment or recognition opportunities. At the start of the program, it would be beneficial to onboard a third-party evaluator to develop baselines, standardize data collection, and obtain more accurate information, especially for environmental indicators that are harder for innovators to measure. As seen in the results of the QoSS WE4F data utilization question, MEL data can have a larger, long-term impact if supported innovators are able to understand, and appreciate, the collected results and its applications. Additionally, donors could collaborate with investors to provide verified data for due diligence to enable investment decision-making, reducing investors and innovators' burden and enabling stronger fundraising opportunities, especially for relatively early-stage innovators, or those in less investor-friendly geographies.

For actors looking to design new programs in the wake of global changes to international development in 2025, several lessons stand out from the hub's activities in 2024:

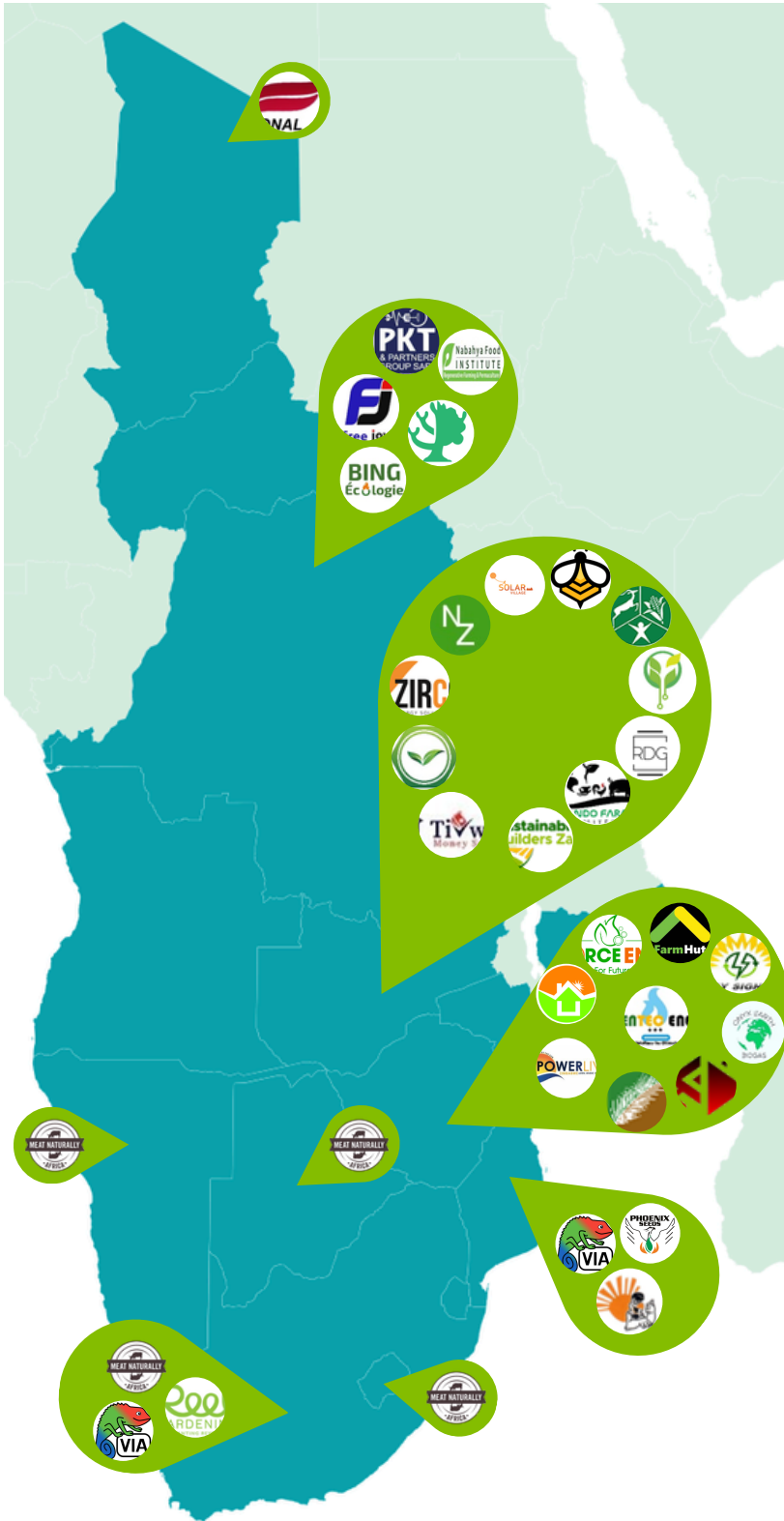
1. Tailored support proved crucial for addressing the unique challenges innovators face. By customizing TA, investment readiness support, and market access facilitation, the hub ensured that the support provided was relevant and impactful.
2. Matching capital grants, in addition to the TA, secured direct private investment at better terms – and improved the bargaining power of the innovators.
3. Innovators required consistent engagement. Regular communication and collaboration helped address challenges in real-time and strengthen relationships.
4. The hub's strategy of using data-driven decision-making was instrumental in refining strategies and enhancing outcomes to achieve the hub's targets. By leveraging MEL data to adjust its feedback-based approach, the hub ensured continuous improvement in its operation.
5. Peer-to-peer learning and networking proved invaluable. Encouraging innovators to share knowledge and collaborate fostered a supportive community, helping them solve common challenges, development partnerships, and learn from each other's experiences.

SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA



Rural Integrated Engineering (South Africa) end-user checks moisture levels to determine if irrigation must be run.

MAP OF SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA INNOVATORS



- Agripredict**
Has a digital platform that provides weather information, agricultural extension, and market services
- Alzanael Private Limited**
Provides farmers with agro-processing services through their solar-powered dryers
- Bwando Farms**
Produces briquettes from waste and biochar, which helps to reduce deforestation and rejuvenate soil
- Bing**
Produces organic fertilizer from pig waste and trains farmers on compost production and regenerative land management practices
- Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO)**
Helps farmers use sustainable agricultural practices to produce organic food and protect biodiversity
- Energy Signatures**
Helps rural farmers by constructing biogas systems that provide energy for cooking and organic fertilizer for crop production. Their systems are accessible on a pay-as-you-go scheme helping farmers to access energy more affordably
- FarmHut Africa**
Provides a digital marketplace & logistic service to farmers, helping reduce their energy consumption
- FreeJoy**
Works with non-governmental organizations to provide end-users with solar dryers for fish and training on how to use the technology
- Greencare Eco Solutions**
Produces compost-based organic granular fertilizer and liquid organic fertilizer
- GreenZim Ventures**
Provides biogas solutions to the dairy industry by installing biogas digesters at dairy cooperatives' communal milk collection centers
- KivuGreen**
Provides farmers with weather and extension services through their digital platform
- Lanforce Energy**
Sells and provides access to biodigesters through a pay-as-you-go system
- Meat Naturally**
Links smallholder farmers to commercial meat buyers and trains farmers on regenerative agricultural practices
- Nabahya Food Institute**
Produces briquettes using loaded biochar-manure-urine to increase agricultural yield and works with cooperatives, teaching them sustainable tillage practices
- Nature's Nectar**
Helps farmers use sustainable agricultural practices to produce honey in a manner that protects biodiversity
- Ndkay**
Provides farmers with solar cold rooms that extend product shelf life and reduce post-harvest losses

- Onyx Earth**
Constructs biogas systems that separate nutrient water, creating an organic by-product that can be used as fertilizer and saving water that can be used to irrigate gardens and farms
- Ovos de Ouro**
Produces day-old chicks, eggs, layers (chickens that lay eggs), and chicken feed, and offers extension services and advisory support
- Palmworth Investments**
Constructs biogas systems for pig farms; the organic by-product the system produces provides surrounding communities with an organic fertilizer for their crop fields
- Phoenix Seeds Limitada**
Provides farmers with drought-tolerant seed varieties to boost agricultural production
- PKT and Partners Group**
Manufactures charcoal briquettes and organic fertilizer from biodegradable waste
- PowerLife**
Solar-powered water pump with a pay-as-you-go option
- RDG Collective**
Reduces end-users' reliance on rain-fed irrigation by offering pay-as-you-go solar water pumps and micro-irrigation products
- Reel Gardening**
Manufactures and sells biodegradable seed tape
- Rural Integrated Engineering**
Produces irrigation products and services through the Virtual Irrigation Academy
- Solar Village**
Sells Micron's highly water-efficient sprayers and the Solar Village Battery Stick to rural smallholder farmers
- Sustainable Builders**
Focuses on strategies to tackle constraints in the agricultural supply chain that affect smallholder farmers through business and agronomic advisory services
- Tiwawe Money Solutions**
Provides financial services to small businesses and small-scale farmers in rural areas in Zambia, with a specific focus on solar water pumps and agricultural inputs
- Zircon Energy Solutions**
Sells solar-powered water pumps to base of the pyramid farmers through a pay-as-you-go business model
- Zonal**
Works with farmers to produce fish by-products and train fishermen on sustainable fishing methods
- Zontful Energy**
Sells affordable solar-powered water pumps using a pay-as-you-go business model

2024 SUMMARY

The Southern and Central Africa Regional Innovation Hub (S/CA RIH) saw great success in 2024, it reached its target number of innovators, exceeded – or was on track to exceed – all but one key performance indicator (KPI), and provided excellent technical assistance (TA) as well as knowledge transfer.

In 2024, the S/CA RIH doubled its number of supported innovators, onboarding 15 new innovations which brought the cumulative total to 32. The Open Call for Innovations (OCFI) brought 11 new innovators into the program, with 10 receiving grants and one being a TA-only innovator. Through the Zimbabwe Biogas OCFI, the hub onboarded four innovators as grantees.

Over 90% of the hub's innovators received support in various forms, including grant funding, TA, enabling environment support, capacity building, and investment facilitation. As a consistently high-ranked method of knowledge transfer, the 2024 Regional Convening was well attended, with only three innovators not participating. Sessions inspired new and returning innovators to explore potential changes to their businesses while providing a testing ground for a pitch competition that was later integrated into the global 2024 Annual Convening due to its popularity amongst innovators.

The hub saw a significant improvement in its KPIs compared to the previous year, exceeding 78% of its KPIs' Life of Program (LOP) targets. Of the indicators that were off track in 2023, the hub managed to exceed the LOPs for the following KPIs:

- 1.5 million end-users impacted, surpassing the LOP by 500,000 end-users
- 670,000 end-users experienced an increase in income, more than 2.5 times the LOP target

For the targets that the hub expected to exceed in 2024, the results were:

- 160 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy saved, surpassing the target by 3,100%
- \$8 million U.S. Dollar (USD) of investment mobilized, exceeding the LOP target by \$500,000 USD
- 1.03 million tons of food produced, completing the 1-million-ton target

The hub also continued to exceed its LOP targets for several indicators, namely:

- 256 million liters of water saved, now 10 times the LOP target
- 475,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (CO₂e) saved, 100,000 tons above the target
- 45% of innovators scaled with profit – beating the LOP target by 37 percentage points

One LOP target that was on track to be exceeded before the USAID Stop Work Order was:

- 72% of innovators monitor for water or biodiversity, which was just below the 80% target.

One indicator was off track, and despite interventions by hub, was unlikely to be reached. Innovators processed about 10,700 tons of food, which was well below the LOP target of 140,000 tons.

CONNECTING RESULTS TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Innovators at the S/CA RIH contributed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in several ways. Their contributions were critical, as the Africa Sustainable Development Report 2024 highlighted that regional contributions must be accelerated.

By increasing end-user income through improved market access, facilitating the transition away from diesel fuels to renewable and clean energy sources, and improving crop yields, innovators supported poverty reduction, which falls underneath SDG 1 (No Poverty).

About 6 million hectares of productive land are lost each year due to agricultural practices and land degradation. With almost half a million hectares of land under improved land management practices, as well as the hub's provision of trainings and TA related to land restoration and effective soil management, innovators were able to help end-users produce more food, effectively contributing to SDG 2 (No Hunger).

Supporting smallholder farmers in Africa inherently leads to encouraging gender equality and empowerment as women are heavily involved in the continent's agricultural sector. Many S/CA innovators recognized the critical role that women play in impacting the water-energy-food nexus, as well as achieving SDGs. Several innovators enacted deliberate measures to target and empower women, promoting gender equality by adjusting policies to ensure equal pay, adapting messaging to be more inclusive for women, and forming partnerships with women cooperatives. Their efforts contributed to SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

A common theme in the S/CA hub’s innovator portfolio was the importance of renewable and clean energy solutions, from solar-powered irrigation to biogas digesters. Innovators across Southern Africa and Central Africa provided access to technologies for base of the pyramid (BoP) end-users, contributing to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Coupled with the mission of saving energy, was the mission of saving water; through soil moisture monitors, digital weather services, biodegradable seed tape, and other water-saving practices, innovators contributed to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). The cumulative savings of water, energy, and other resources through digital marketplace services, food processing, and storage solutions, contributed to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).











Innovators’ facilitation of transitions to renewable and clean energy sources, promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, and assistance with increasing accessibility of climate-smart technologies, contributed to SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Foreign direct investment into Africa lags behind other regions. The S/CA RIH faced challenges in attracting investment during the first half of the program. In the second half of the program, innovators attracted more than \$8 million USD in investment, enhanced debt sustainability, and leveraged innovative financing instruments to mobilize resources for innovators. This achievement was partially due to the hub’s concerted efforts to form partnerships that could unlock investment for innovators operating in challenging countries. In addition to financial partnerships, the S/CA RIH embodied WE4F’s integrated holistic approach to sustainably scaling solutions by nurturing non-financial partnerships internally, among the innovators, and externally with institutions could enable innovators’ continued scaling. Efforts by innovators, as well as the hub, to create a more connected S/CA region contributed to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).



Clockwise: Lanforce Energy (Zimbabwe) end-user lights stove pilot fueled by biogas created through a Lanforce Energy biodigester. KivuGreen (DRC) met with end-users and presented information on seasonality and innovation usage. FarmHut (Zimbabwe) employee loads a truck with potatoes moved through their digital logistics platform. COMACO (Zambia) collects and processes peanuts from end-users to turn into peanut butter to sell in stores.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Key Performance Indicator	Life of Program Target (2020-2025)	Results to Date (2020-2025)	Status
 Share of supported innovators that successfully marketed their innovations with profit	8%	45%	Exceeded
	25% are led by women	33% women	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users using WE4F innovations	1 million end-users	1.58 million end-users	Exceeded
	250,000 women end-users	804,000 women end-users	Exceeded
	250,000 BOP end-users	946,000 BOP end-users	Exceeded
 Total mass of food produced as a result of WE4F innovations	1 million tons	1.03 million tons	Exceeded
 Total mass of food processed as a result of WE4F innovations	140,000 tons	10,700 tons	Off Track
 Total energy saved in the food value chain as a result of the use of WE4F innovations	5 million kWh	160 million kWh	Exceeded
 Total volume of water consumption reduction as a result of WE4F innovations	25 million liters	256 million liters	Exceeded
 Number of smallholder farmers and other end-users that experience an increase in income	250,000 end-users	673,000 end-users	Exceeded
	62,500 women end-users	401,000 women end-users	Exceeded
 Share of innovators & other stake-holders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity	80%	72%	On Track
		Monitoring water only	24%
		Monitoring biodiversity only	7%
		Monitoring water and biodiversity	41%
 Value of investment in U.S. Dollars that WE4F innovators mobilized from external sources	\$7.5 million USD	\$8.1 million USD	Exceeded
 Total of GHG emissions saved by WE4F innovations	350,000 tons of CO2e	457,000 tons of CO2e	Exceeded
		End-users using climate-mitigation innovations	347,000 end-users
		End-users using climate adaptation-related innovations	221,000 end-users

Of the indicators – and associated breakdowns – listed in the KPI chart with LOP targets, the S/CA RIH exceeded 12 out of 14 LOP targets, one indicator was “On Track,” and one was “Off Track”.

Compared to 2023, three indicators (number of end-users, total mass of food produced, number of end-users with increased incomes) went from “Off Track” to exceeding their LOP targets. Two indicators (number of women end-users and total energy savings) went from “On Track” to exceeding their targets. And one indicator (share of innovators and other stakeholders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity) improved from “Off Track” to “On Track”. One indicator (total mass of food processes) stayed “Off Track” in 2023 and 2024, though the hub saw a slight improvement in 2024.

The hub surpassed the LOP target for “number of end-users” as well as “number of women end-users” due to COMACO and Zonal partnering with cooperatives to provide access to agricultural inputs and financial support. Innovators’ efforts to work with cooperatives, coupled with gender mainstreaming TAs, led to an increase in women end-users as Southern Africa and Central Africa have a high percentage of women working within the agricultural sector. Unlike the most recent “number of end-users” result which mainly came from two innovators, the updated “number of end-users with increased incomes” result was due to several innovators – all of whom provided access to agricultural inputs and knowledge (e.g., training, weather information). Innovators enhanced incomes by helping end-users build their food production skills, resulting in higher yields, of which they could sell the surplus. Trainings and agricultural inputs were also provided through cooperatives, which benefited innovators and end-users. Innovators had access to more end-users, while smallholder farmers accessed markets or directly sold their crops to the innovators.

Results for “total energy savings” and “total volume of water consumption reduction” exceeded their LOP targets, even when said targets were increased in 2024. The “total energy savings” LOP target was increased from 3.2 million kWh to 5 million kWh, and the “total volume of water consumption reduction” target was increased from 12 million liters to 25 million liters. Almost all energy savings (150 million kWh of the 160 million kWh) came from a DRC-based innovator providing low-cost, efficient ecological briquettes to end-users affected by the extremely limited energy access in the country. Similar to energy savings, “total volume of water consumption reduction” also had a new contributor – a soil moisture monitoring digital technology that prevented water overuse, reducing consumption by over 180 million liters. The target for “total GHG emissions savings” was also increased from 240,000 tons of CO₂e to 350,000 tons of CO₂e. It was exceeded due to new contributions from an innovator providing ecosystem services within the cattle industry, as well as innovators manufacturing briquettes made from agricultural waste.

Due to challenges afflicting the region, including conflict, drought, and (specifically for food processing) the lack of relevant, mature innovators in the region, the targets for “total mass of food produced” and “total mass of food processed” were decreased. The “total mass of food produced” target was decreased from 1.3 million tons to 1 million tons, and the “total mass of food processed” target was decreased from 475,000 tons to 140,000 tons. With the decreased target for “total mass of food produced,” the hub exceeded the LOP target due to new results from mature innovators, particularly those with digital service and holistic practice innovations that reached large end-user bases. For the “total mass of food processed,” the hub was unable to overcome existing long-term challenges. The hub, however, did see some improvement in 2024 through the contributions of DRC-based food processors and biochar providers.

The result for “share of innovators and other stakeholders monitoring the protection of water or biodiversity” was “Off Track” in 2023. To ensure that the indicator would be “On Track” in 2024, the hub provided reporting and monitoring support, improved innovator comprehension of EMMP implementation, developed ESMSes for innovators, and organized capacity building environmental workshops, webinars, and additional resources.

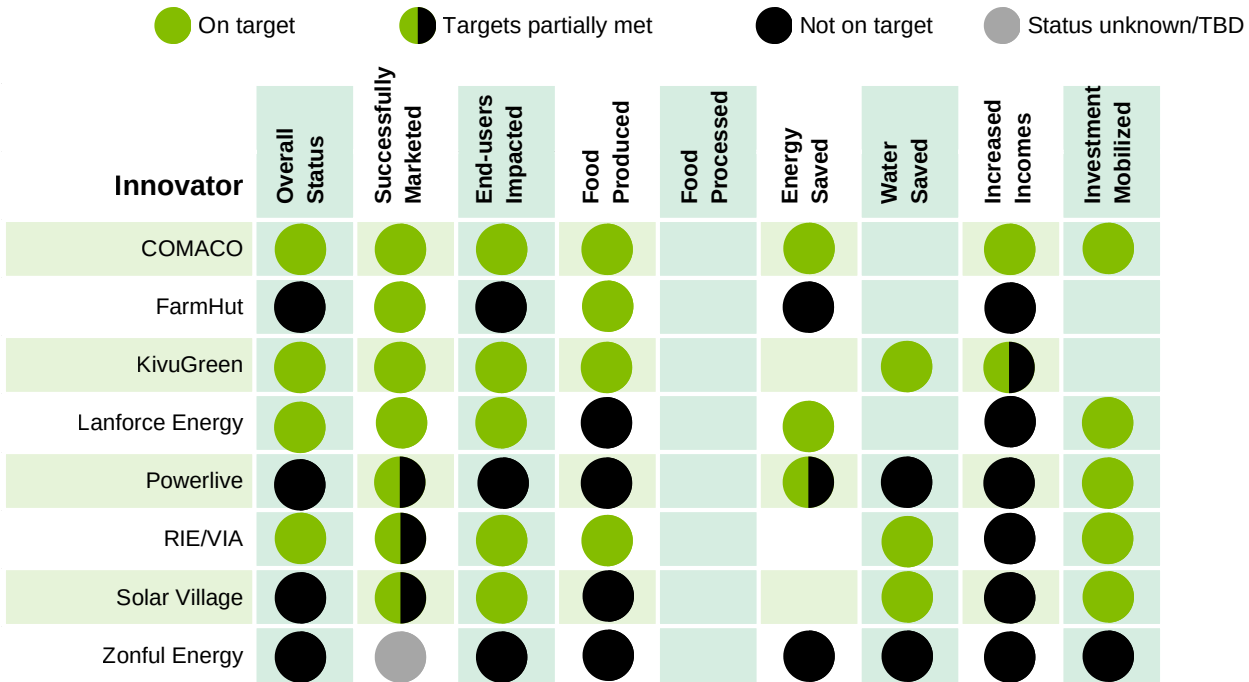
A similar high-touch approach was used to exceed the “total value of investment mobilized” LOP target. The hub not only provided investment facilitation support and investment readiness TAs, but it also developed partnerships with local finance institutions, helped innovators pursue results-based financing, and supported the securing of international certifications to unlock additional public capital.



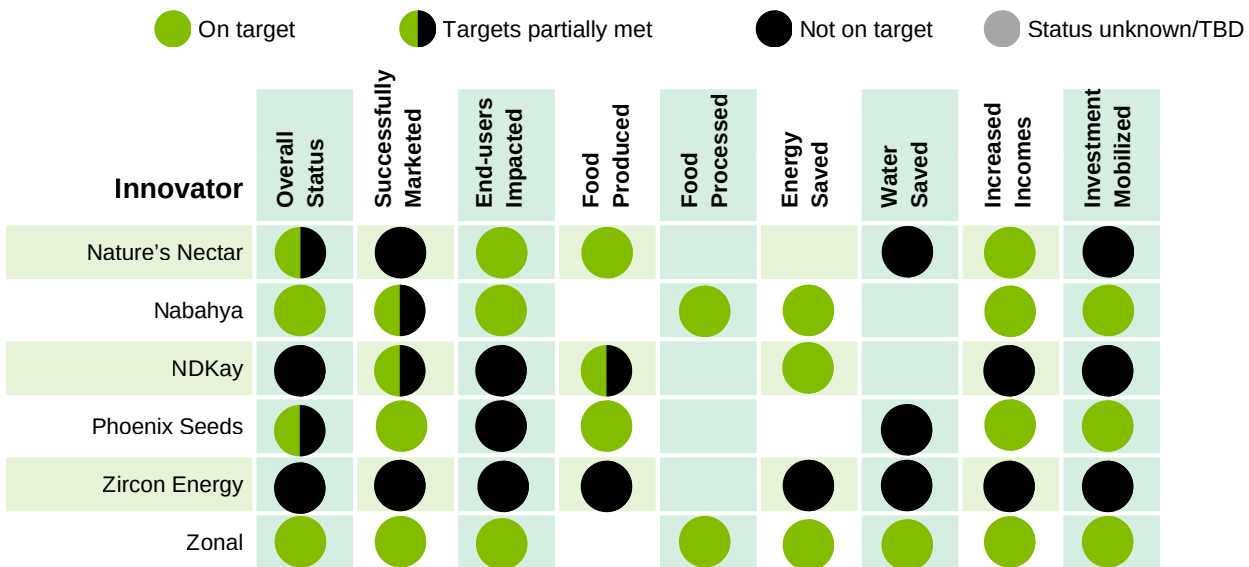
Powerlive (Zimbabwe) employees stand with end-user (second from right) and S/CA RIH Gender Advisor (far right) in front of panels used to fuel the end-user’s water pump.

INNOVATOR SCALING AND MATURATION

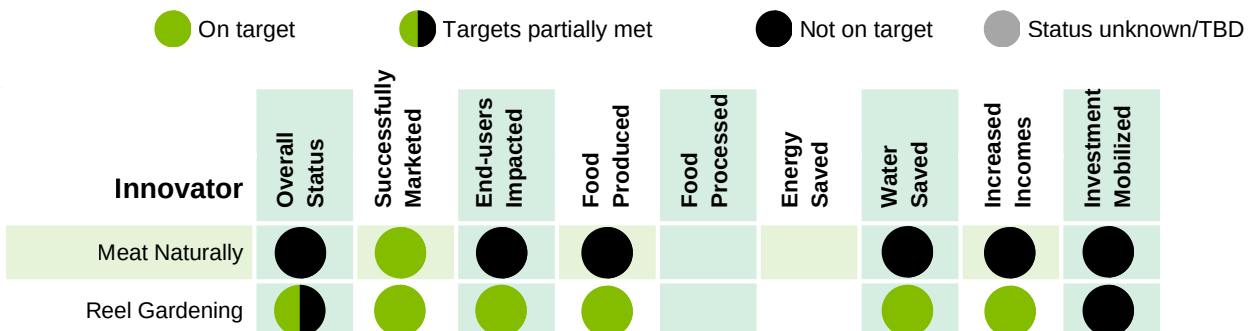
2022 REGIONAL COHORT MILESTONE TRACKER



2023 REGIONAL COHORT MILESTONE TRACKER



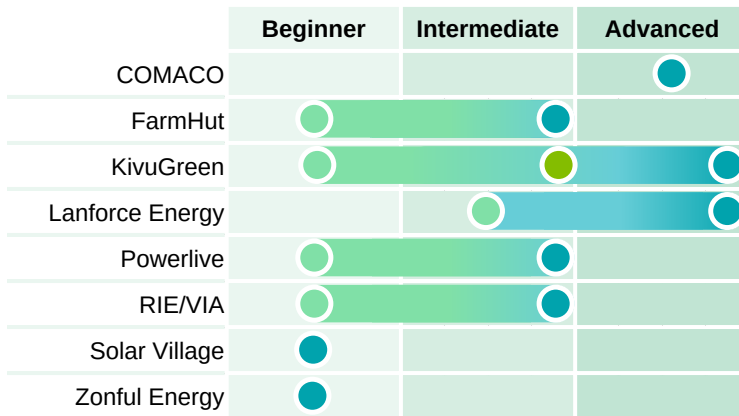
2023 OCFI COHORT MILESTONE TRACKER



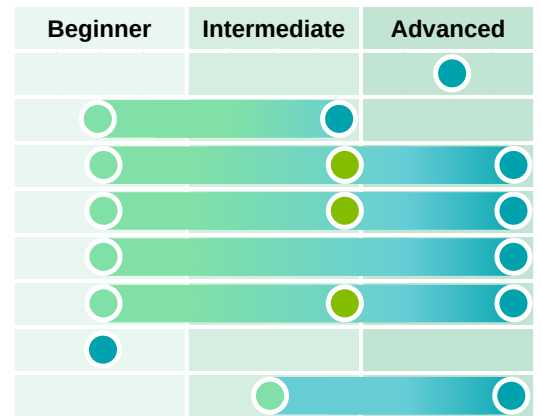
Those not part of the above chart due to the Stop Work Order by USAID affecting data collection and preventing further assessment are: Agripredict, Alzanael, BING, Bwando Farms, Energy Signatures, Freejoy, Greencare Eco, GreenZim Ventures, Onyx Earth Biogas, Ovos de Ouro, Palmworth Investments, PKT and Partners, RDG Collective, Sustainable Builders, and Tiwane Money Solutions. Those not part of the above chart due to lack of data and/or becoming inactive alumni: Sylva Food Solutions.

2022 REGIONAL COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment

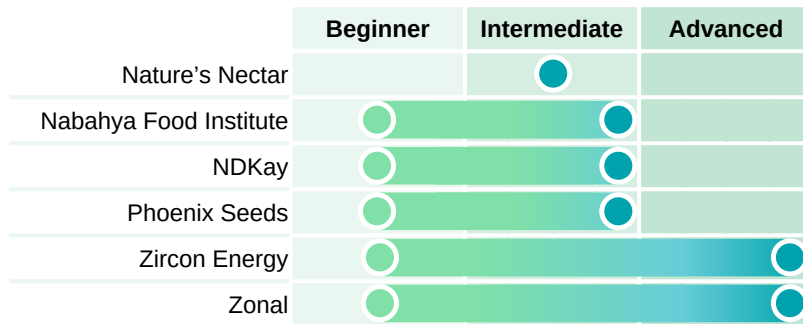


BoP Assessment

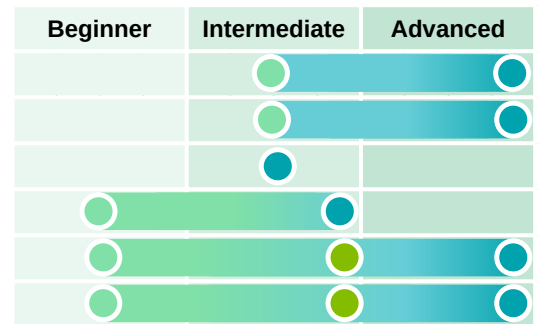


2023 REGIONAL COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment

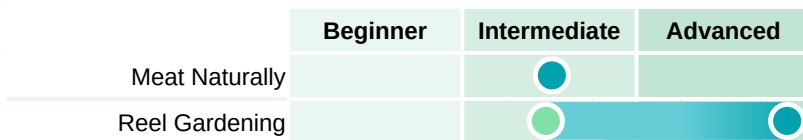


BoP Assessment

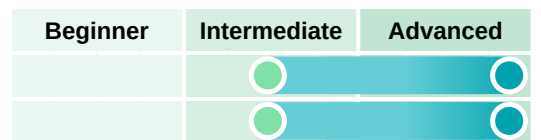


2023 OCFI REGIONAL COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment

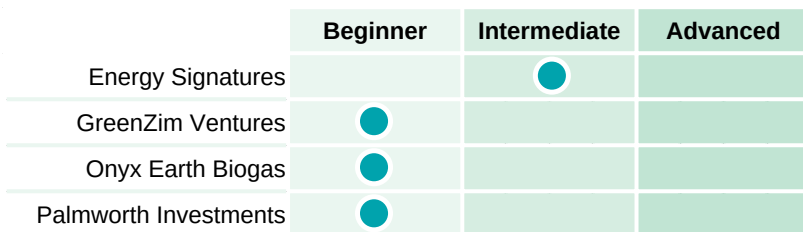


BoP Assessment



2024 ZIMBABWE BIOGAS COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment



BoP Assessment

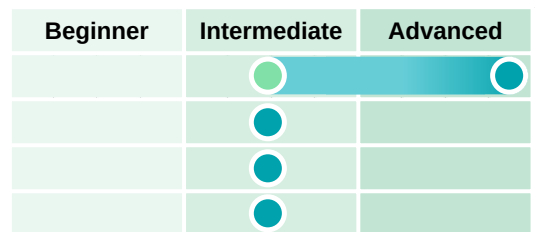


Chart Key

- First Assessment
- Latest Assessment
- Second Assessment (if not matching the first or latest)

2024 OCFI REGIONAL COHORT THEMATIC ASSESSMENTS

Gender Assessment

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Agripredict	●		
Alzanael		●	
BING	○	○	○
Bwando Farms	●		
Freejoy	○	○	○
Greencare Eco	○	○	○
Ovos de Ouro	●		
PKT and Partners	○	○	○
RDG Collective	●		
Sustainable Builders			●
Tivwane Money Solutions		●	

BoP Assessment

	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Agripredict	●		
Alzanael			●
BING	○	○	○
Bwando Farms	●		
Freejoy		○	○
Greencare Eco		○	○
Ovos de Ouro	○	○	○
PKT and Partners	○	○	○
RDG Collective			●
Sustainable Builders	○	○	○
Tivwane Money Solutions		○	○

INNOVATOR UPDATES

2022 REGIONAL COHORT



Community Markets for Conservation (COMACO) received investment readiness and facilitation support which resulted in the innovator raising \$2.2 million USD. COMACO trained the board of a federation of cooperatives in business management to further support the federation’s sustainability as they are weaned from their support. The innovator was nominated for the Agri-Processing Company of the Year Award at the Farmers Choice Awards – Southern Africa. In 2024, COMACO graduated from WE4F, achieving more than 80% of their targets.



FarmHut received support from the hub in the form of knowledge transfer that took place at the Regional Convening. Since its expansion into Zambia, completed with support from the hub, the innovator managed to establish a partnership with the National Association for Small Holder Farmers (NASFA), a representative body for smallholder farmers in Zambia. Through this partnership, the innovator will have access to hundreds of thousands of farmers who are affiliated with NASFA and can upscale their business by providing their agritech solution to the farmers in Zambia.



KivuGreen received a TA to upgrade its online platform to include a digital plug-in that would enable its provision of more accurate weather data to end-users. In 2024, the innovator achieved regional and global recognition by winning Best Agritech Innovation in Central Africa in the Startup Award; winning a prize for the pitch contest at the Gitex Africa roadshow; being selected as one of the nine innovations blazing a trail for zero hunger, a Kofi Annan Award for Innovation; was selected as a panelist at the Amani Festival; participating in the Barka Fund Investment Readiness Workshop in Cote d'Ivoire; meeting with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); and holding meetings with the Minister of Agriculture to discuss improving their business. The innovator also expanded its network of end-users on Idji Island, located between the North and South Kivu Provinces. In 2024, KivuGreen also successfully graduated from WE4F, achieving more than 80% of their targets.



Lanforce Energy received investment facilitation support, which resulted in them raising \$1.9 million USD. The innovator received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. To help Lanforce understand renewable energy tax regulations in Zimbabwe, the hub provided the innovator with renewable energy classification training and capacity building. Lanforce Energy also secured an EEP Africa grant of \$450,000 USD to be implemented over two years and received a term loan from Opes. In 2024, the innovator earned regional and global recognition: receiving the Empretec Zimbabwe Entrepreneurship Award; being recognized by EY Winning Women; winning the Chartered Institute of Project Management in Zimbabwe Award; joining the Stanford Seed Transformation Program; and gaining Alliance for Rural Electrification membership. In 2024, Lanforce Energy also graduated from WE4F, achieving more than 80% of their targets.



Powerlive received support from the hub in the form of capacity building to address challenges for BoP end-users in Zimbabwe who wanted to adopt water, energy, and food technologies but could afford the upfront costs. The innovator explored a partnership with Solarworx on a mesh grid project for home and productive use connections at a community level, for which they are actively pursuing funding. Powerlive expanded its offerings to include clean cookstoves alongside their solar home systems and pump systems, and they are currently in the due diligence stage for funding for a clean cooking project.



Rural Integrated Engineering (Virtual Irrigation Academy) received support from the hub through a review of their innovation and strategies, assessing the degree to which they can reach and benefit the smallholder farmers. The hub supported the innovator with standard dimensions and specific indicators that could be used to guide interventions that promote digital inclusivity, offering recommendations to make their innovation more accessible and affordable for women and BoP end-users. The innovator graduated from WE4F, achieving more than 80% of their targets.



Solar Village received investment readiness support from the hub to update its financial model and investment teaser. The innovator is pursuing additional funding opportunities as their product is capital-intensive and does not reach the intended customers without a form of end-user financing.



Zonful Energy received TA to develop human resources (HR) and legal compliance policies to strengthen its internal governance and protect intellectual property. The innovator was selected as a Global Distributors Collective (GDC) Innovation Adopter and highlighted as a member by the Seed Transformation Network. Zonful Energy is in its early planning stages for expansion into India, where they want to explore partnerships with solar water pump distributors to access a bigger market.

2023 REGIONAL COHORT



Nature's Nectar received a market expansion TA, building on similar TA that they received to help them break into the European market. The innovator also received support for a study that provided insights and market entry strategies for South Africa, DRC, and Botswana. Hub staff helped the innovator leverage its network of honey retailers and major distributors in the DRC and facilitated meetings for the innovator. The hub also helped Nature's Nectar determine the impact of bark bees on the Miombo woodland to help them outlaw bark bee hives in Zambia. As the 2024 farming season began, Nature's Nectar commenced their agroforestry component by distributing Pongamia seedlings to farmers who had received bee hives, and conducting organic honey farming training. The innovator will be monitoring seedling performance, growth of crops, and tracking the effect of the Pongamia on honey production while also working with honey-producing farmers.



Nabahya Food Institute received a TA for the development of a website to expand its reach to smallholder farmers throughout the DRC. The innovator also received a TA on carbon credit diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. Nabahya Food Institute signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with new cooperatives in the region to expand end-user reach, including Passion of Hope International and GreenPower Solution. In 2024, Nabahya Food was recognized globally and received multiple awards, they won the 2024 Food Planet Prize; were awarded a grant from TerrafundAFR100 for the restoration of forest ecosystems in Uvira; were recognized at the Global Center on Adaptation 2024 – From Waste to Wealth; and were a finalist in the Grand Humanitarian Challenge-Creating Hope in Conflict Regions.



Ndkay received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. The innovator signed a contract with Zambia Telecommunications Company (Zamtel) to enable mobile payments for clients. The partnership will help farmers who try Ndkay's innovation for free, transition into paying customers. The innovator also had a second cold room commissioned.



Phoenix Seeds received support from the hub in the form of knowledge transfer at the Regional Convening. The hub also supported the innovator with the identification of potential export partners in Angola. Since receiving a market penetration strategy TA to export seed to Zimbabwe in 2023, the innovator signed a partnership agreement with Matapiri Seeds to distribute their seeds in Zimbabwe. Phoenix Seeds also signed several other partnership agreements – an MoU with United Purpose Mozambique for the supply of open-pollinated varieties of maize, cowpeas, and groundnuts, and a 4-year basic seed production partnership with AGRA. In 2025, Phoenix Seeds will produce 75 metric tons of basic maize seed to sell to other seed companies.



Zircon Energy received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. The innovator also received support from the hub in the form of knowledge transfer at the Regional Convening.



Zonal received a TA that supported a study of Lake Lere to determine the sustainability of the innovator's fishing operation. The TA resulted in Zonal training 700 fishermen, fish sellers, and fish buyers on sustainable fishing practices. Zonal also received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. The hub assisted Zonal with the development of tools to report against Zonal's environmental monitoring and mitigation report (EMMR). In 2024, Zonal joined the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as part of a network of interstate actors for the protection of elephants between Chad and Cameroon. The innovator also established an expertise exchange network with WE4F innovators from the East Africa and West Africa hubs who provide nature-based solutions for soil fertilization in West and Central Africa. Zonal launched its product sales with the Mayor of Pala to spread awareness on the importance and benefit of consuming fish flour and fish oil. In 2024, Zonal received local and regional recognition: they were shortlisted for the Collective Leadership Institute (CLI) for the Transformative Partnership Award 2025; received a letter of appreciation from the Municipality of Pala for its actions in favor of the communities; and hosted the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) team for the first field visit to the region since joining the program. The innovator also raised \$35,000 USD. In 2025, the innovator planned on focusing efforts on raising \$341,000 USD for the implementation of a local milk value chain project and \$421,000 USD for agricultural soil fertilization, biodiversity restoration, and human-elephant conflict resolution.

2023 OCFI COHORT



Meat Naturally received a TA on communication materials for their profit-sharing model. The TA simplified messaging and made it inclusive for farmers with lower literacy levels. The hub also provided Meat Naturally with gender integration support to increase women's participation at livestock auctions and as Eco-Rangers. In 2024, the innovator signed a partnership agreement with Global Textile Exchange, a global wool certification board that ensures wool production and handling is done in a sustainable and climate change-responsive manner.



Reel Gardening received support from the hub in the form of knowledge transfer that took place at the Regional Convening. The innovator signed a partnership with Boschveld Pty Ltd to introduce the free-range chickens among 2,000 Garden-in-a-Box end-users in the Eastern Cape. The chickens are fed with vegetable scraps and provide protein (meat and eggs) to households.

2024 ZIMBABWE BIOGAS COHORT



Energy Signatures received a TA to have their biogas stoves tested and certified as part of assessment requirements for a grant funding opportunity. The hub also assisted the innovator with the development of an interactive website that will enable them to sell products online. Energy Signatures received gender lens investment support to attract more women to their business and increase their chances of attracting gender-focused investment. In 2025, the innovator planned to focus on constructing biogas systems for at least 15 households.

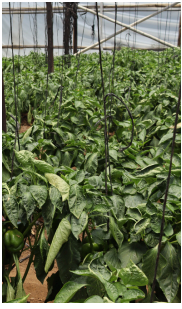


GreenZim Ventures received TA to support their biogas burners becoming certified by the Centre for Research in Energy and Energy Conservation (CREEC) in Uganda. The hub also assisted the innovator with the development of an interactive website that will enable them to reach more smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe and sell products online. The innovator received gender lens investment readiness support to attract more women to their business and increase their chances of attracting gender-focused investment. In 2025, the innovator planned to focus on completing construction at four rural milk collection centers. The innovator also planned on exploring a potential expansion into the DRC, and they continued to engage various potential customers in the DRC.



Onyx Earth received a TA to support the testing and certification of their biogas stoves as part of their final assessment requirements for a grant funding opportunity. The hub supported the innovator with a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. The innovator also received gender lens investment readiness support to attract more women to their business and increase their chances of attracting gender-focused investment. Onyx continues to grow its business by exploring opportunities in Zambia and Ethiopia. The innovator is also partnering with various financial institutions in Zimbabwe to construct biogas and anaerobic baffled reactors for housing projects.





Palmworth Ventures received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. The innovator also received gender lens investment readiness support to attract more women to their business and increase their chances of attracting gender-focused investment. Palmworth Ventures received assistance from the hub to develop an interactive website that would help diversify their markets and initiate online sales. In 2024, Palmworth Investments was accepted into the Sustainable Energy Accelerator 2024 Cohort funded by USAID South Africa. Through the same fund, South Africa Industrial Development Cooperation (IDC), supported Palmworth's expansion of their business into South Africa and Zambia. The innovator is also in the process of developing an MoU for piggery production and pork processing with Bwando Farms in Zambia (a fellow S/CA innovator).

2024 OCFI COHORT



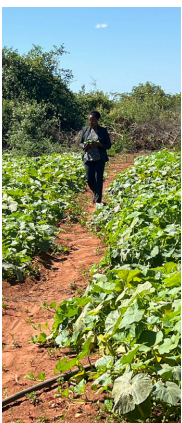
Agripredict received a water savings data collection sheet to help them understand the benefits of water use and savings, as well as food production. The sheet allowed the innovator to demonstrate the usefulness of their innovation to customers and potential funders. The hub also assisted Agripredict with gender lens investment readiness support to attract more women to their business and increase their chances of attracting investment. Agripredict signed a partnership with Zambia Telecommunications Company (Zamtel) to give the innovator access to bulk SMSing for real-time data dissemination to its end-users and expand to regions in the country where Zamtel has a strong customer base.



Alzanael Private Limited received a gender readiness assessment along with gender lens investment support to enable them to attract investment. The innovator received multiple awards and accolades in 2024: Best Food Waste Mitigation Enterprise 2024 – Food Preservation Champions of the Year 2024; Southern Africa Award by MEA Business Awards; a Bronze Medal for Education and Innovation category by SMEs International Expo 2024; acceptance into the Advancing Young Women Agribusiness Entrepreneurs and Innovators Program; and an invitation by the World Intellectual Property Organization to exhibit products in Jamaica and Switzerland. The innovator expanded into Zambia through an investor who wanted to also replicate the innovator's business model in Botswana and South Africa. Alzanael signed a partnership agreement with a distributor in Zambia that has operations in DRC and Angola. The distributor partnership will assist the innovator in accessing a wider market in Southern Africa. In South Africa, the innovator entered partnerships with two online shops/platforms, BOBZA and Takealot, to sell and deliver their products. In Zimbabwe, the innovator established three new partnerships with African Sun, Redan Petroleum, and Highlanders Club. In 2025, the innovator planned to relocate from their current premises to a larger one to accommodate their growing production and to be compliant with the FSSC 22000 certification.



Bing Ecologie received TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. The innovator also received a gender readiness assessment, along with gender lens investment support, to help them attract more women to their business and pursue investment. To develop their investment materials, the hub provided Bing with an additional round of investment readiness support. As part of their scaling efforts, Bing signed an MoU with Rawbank to implement sanitation activities at the Amani Festival, collecting waste to make into briquettes. The innovator had previously received a 3-year scholarship for entrepreneurship from the African Leadership Academy in South Africa and graduated in July 2024. Within a few months of joining WE4F, Bing expanded into Bukavu, South Kivu. In 2025, the innovator planned to begin producing electricity from organic waste in South Kivu to facilitate irrigation among farmers and increase their access to electricity.



Bwando Farms was exploring an expansion into the DRC and received a TA for an expansion strategy. The hub has also assisted the innovator with an environmental and social management system (ESMS) template and capacity building to help them address environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards. As part of Bwando Farms' efforts to pursue gender-focused investment as well as attract women to their business, the innovator received a gender readiness assessment and investment TA. As Bwando expanded in 2024, they formalized a partnership with Coteva to support farmers with seeds for the upcoming farming season. Through the hub, the innovator received partnership mapping support to identify partners with whom they could work to further expand their offering of training on sustainable agricultural practices. Bwando Farms also installed water reticulation systems for lead farmers, in an effort to support year-round agricultural activities. In 2025, the innovator planned on establishing training centers on lead farms that have the most favorable locations, water availability, and catchment areas. Additionally, Bwando Farms planned on commissioning a slaughterhouse so they could offer send-to-end services for their market. Due to the national grid's erratic power supply, Bwando planned on installing an alternative energy source to run the slaughterhouse, once resources were secured.



Freejoy received a TA to develop of an interactive website to sell its products online. They also received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. As part of their efforts to pursue gender-focused investment and engage women in their business, the innovator received a gender readiness assessment as well as gender lens investment support. The innovator amplified their expansion efforts and formed multiple partnerships throughout the year, signing MoUs with a local association of gillnet fishermen (Fishermen N'10 of Lake Tanganyika), the association of fish sellers of Lake Tanganyika, and MitAfrika to train and empower youth and women in fish drying processing. Freejoy partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to create and digitalize a fish quantity and quality database of Lake Tanganyika for the four countries utilizing the lake. The innovator also met with the Mayor of Kigoma to strategize a partnership with Tanzanian organizations that have similar activities. Freejoy expanded their partnership with Leg Up Corporate. The innovator was shortlisted for the Mastercard Agribusiness Challenge Fund. In 2025, Freejoy planned on expanding their operations to new regions in the DRC like Fizi, Bukavu, and Kinshasa. The innovator also planned on making fishponds in the Ruzizi Plain and floating cage ponds in Lake Kivu to avoid a fish shortage during the off-season.



Greencare Eco Solutions received assistance from the hub to obtain organic certification for their fertilizer to enable further market penetration. They also obtained a certified seal for easy market entry. As part of their efforts to access gender lens investment, the innovator received gender readiness TA along with relevant investment support. Greencare Eco started expanding to other parts of Zambia, with the future goal of exploring cross-border markets that would include the DRC and Zimbabwe. In 2025, Greencare Eco planned to further mobilize farmers within Kabwe by supporting them with soil remediation through the innovator's organic fertilizer and growing mediums. The innovator also planned various trainings, as well as demo plots, to showcase how their fertilizers work.



Ovos de Ouro received a TA for a marketing plan to increase visibility as they expanded in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Angola. As part of their pursuit for increased women engagement in the business, as well as gender-focused funding, the innovator received a gender readiness assessment and investment support. In 2024, Ovos signed two partnerships with Moz-Farms, who Ovos will supply with 31,000 day-old chicks every month, while Moz-Farm provides Ovos de Ouro with broiler toll processing services. The innovator also signed five partnerships to support transportation of their organic produce and stock their fertilizer. Ovos partnered with the National Association of Smallholder Farmers in Mozambique to gain access to its members and expand its customer base. In 2025, Ovos planned to conduct two broiler farming training courses each month to increase day-old chick and feed sales. To increase egg production, the innovator planned on adding an additional 30,000 egg-laying chickens to their operations.



PKT and Partners Group received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. To help their business engage women, as well as pursue gender lens investment, the innovator received a gender readiness assessment along with relevant investment support. To sell products online, PKT received a TA to develop an interactive website. In 2025, PKT planned to leverage its partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to expand its activities in the Équateur Province.



RDG Collective received a TA to develop a water savings data collection sheet to help them understand the benefits of their water savings and food production. The innovator also received a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream. The hub provided the innovator with a gender readiness assessment and investment support to help them attract more women to their business and pursue gender lens investment. RDG received the Acumens "Hardest to Reach" Award in 2024. In 2025, the innovator planned on updating its marketing and communications strategy.



Sustainable Builders received support to develop a water savings data collection sheet to help the innovator understand the benefits of their water savings and food production. The hub also assisted the innovator with gender lens investment readiness support to enable the expansion of their operations, employment of more women, and pursuit of gender lens investment. In an effort to support innovation accessibility for more end-users, Sustainable Builders signed a partnership agreement with Microloan Foundation. The innovator also started planning to collaborate with a bank and Microloan Foundation. The bank will be the guarantor, while the Microloan Foundation offers loans to the end-users to enable their financing of the solar water pumps on a pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) basis. In 2025, farming inputs previously distributed to farmers were closer to maturity, so the innovator planned on providing the farmers with access to markets by bulk-buying their crops.

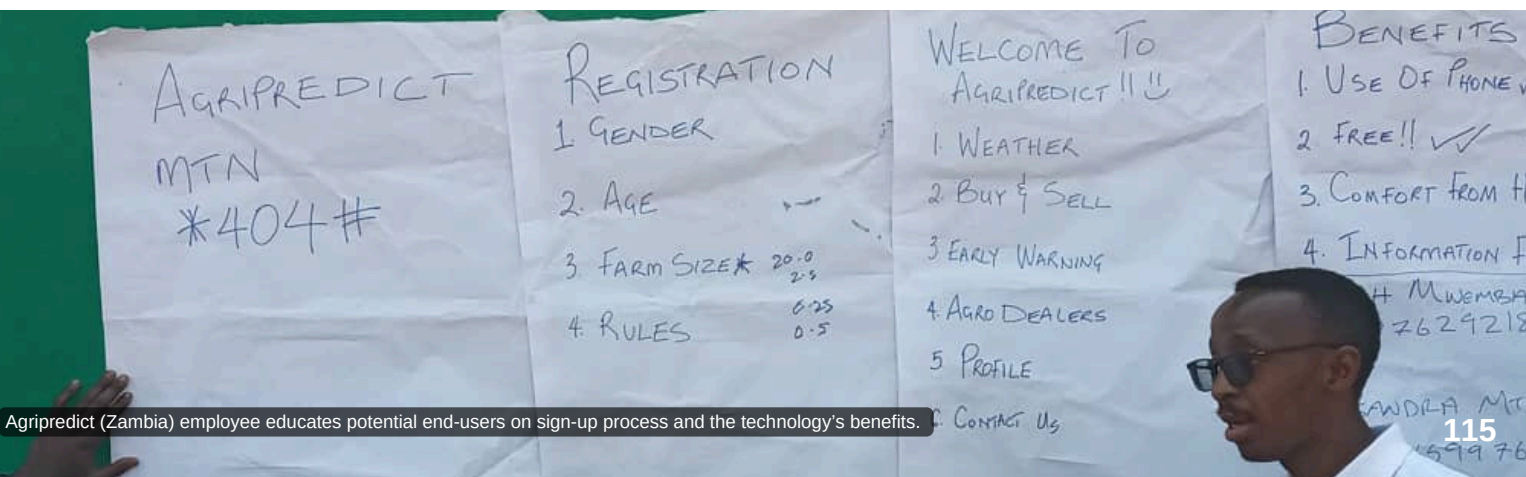


Tiwane Money Solutions received a TA to enhance and upgrade its digital payment platform to automate payment processing. The hub provided the innovator with an ESMS template and capacity building to address ESG standards. To help the innovator access investment, Tiwane received two different investment support instances. One, which was part of a gender readiness assessment, focused on helping the innovator attract more women to the business as well as pursue gender lens investment. The second investment support instance focused on developing a financial teaser and model. In 2024, the innovator partnered with the Eastern Disability Network to support differently-abled farmers with access to financing. In 2025, Tiwane planned on reaching more farmers by brokering and leveraging new partnerships. The innovator also planned on updating its marketing and communications product sensitization activities to include digital platforms and in-person trade shows.

DIGITALIZATION IN SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Digital development in sub-Saharan Africa is typically characterized by challenges that impede transformation – an existing digital divide due to gender, digital illiteracy, investors’ risk perception of the region, and limited digital infrastructure, to name a few. The S/CA RIH digital innovators, however, highlighted key examples of accessible digital innovations that enable smallholder farmers’ food production while reducing water usage and increasing renewable and clean energy adaptation. These innovators – Agripredict, FarmHut, KivuGreen, Tiwane Money Solutions, and Virtual Irrigation Academy – also showcase how digital agricultural solutions can overcome existing obstacles through localized innovations. As technology use grows in the region, so does the need to assist other innovators in understanding digital agricultural landscape and transforming their solutions, so their offerings meet market demand.

AGRIPREDICT	
Innovation	Provides Zambian farmers with a user-friendly platform that is accessible through instant messaging done by dialing a short code on any phone, and through a mobile application for Android phones.
Challenges	Investors’ perception of Africa prevents innovators from being able to access financing that would scale their innovation and enable end-user growth.
Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The hub worked with the innovator to develop a water savings data collection tool to help Agripredict better track its water use and savings, as well as food production. Collected data can be used when applying for funding or pursuing investment to showcase ESG-related impact. 2. To promote inclusivity within Agripredict’s organization, the hub provided the innovator with gender lens investment readiness support to attract more women to their business and increase their chances of attracting investment.
FARMHUT	
Innovation	<p>Provides two solutions that improve farmers’ ability to access markets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A logistics service matches rural farmers with logistics service providers and aggregates farmers’ demand for produce transportation. 2. A digital marketplace that is accessible through various mobile technologies, providing farmers with a place to sell their products. <p>FarmHut also provides customers with information on water-saving and strategic agricultural practices; and offers end-user financing mechanisms to ensure BoP end-users’ access to the solutions.</p>
Challenges	Through a gender TA provided by the S/CA Gender Specialist, the innovator learned that their messaging was unwelcoming to women.
Solutions	With support from the Gender Specialist, the innovator shifted their tone and adapted their vocabulary which increased women’s willingness to utilize FarmHut’s services.



Agripredict (Zambia) employee educates potential end-users on sign-up process and the technology’s benefits.

KIVUGREEN	
Innovation	Provides a web and mobile platform that supports efficient water management by connecting smallholder farmers to agricultural information and advice. This innovation works with, or without, an internet connection. KivuGreen also offers end-user financing mechanisms to ensure BoP end-users' access to their solutions.
Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Smallholder farmers in the DRC struggle with illiteracy and lack of knowledge on how digital technologies function. 2. Had difficulty locating investors focused on tech and innovation operations. 3. Local business ecosystem has limited enabling policies, incentives, and tax credits.
Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Received a TA to develop tools that delivered simplified messaging, and technology explanations that were aligned with the communities' needs, which educated potential end-users on how KivuGreen's services functioned. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. KivuGreen developed audio solutions that enabled innovation usage by farmers who were illiterate, helping them access services that are available to end-users who are literate. b. The updated messaging and explanations strengthened trust amongst KivuGreen's partners and beneficiaries while solidifying relationships with agricultural cooperatives. c. KivuGreen's new strategies also led to increased adoption of their services by farmers – more people gained access to markets, climate resilience training, and digital tools, thereby improving their daily lives. d. KivuGreen educated other agritech entrepreneurs on their experiences by sharing their knowledge and lessons learned through different platforms – KivuGreen Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chris Ayale, played a key role in the launch of the Agri Modern Academic in Goma and spoke to 200 agriculture students about digital agriculture. 2. The hub assisted KivuGreen with investor mapping to facilitate connections between potential investors in DRC. 3. The S/CA Enabling Environment Unit identified potential investors with a focus on renewable energy, water management, and food security; and the Brokering Unit helped KivuGreen develop investment readiness materials.

TIVWANE MONEY SOLUTIONS	
Innovation	Offers microfinance facilities to farmers in Zambia through their mobile payment platform. By using Tivwane's platform, farmers can access solar water pumps and premium agricultural inputs on credit.
Challenges	Farmers must be able to conduct transactions on their phone.
Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The hub provided a TA to enhance Tivwane's digital system. The upgrade integrated mobile money usage so farmers can pay, or transfer, funds through the Tivwane platform. It enabled automatic payment processing, ensuring timely and accurate payment collection. 2. Tivwane received a gender mainstreaming TA to improve their ability to attract gender lens investment and increase women's engagement with the business.

VIRTUAL IRRIGATION ACADEMY	
Innovation	Provides a simplified soil moisture monitoring system that can collect and display data, so farmers can govern, manage, and implement efficient water use.
Challenges	The innovator needed a better understanding of their innovation's ability to be inclusive of all potential end-users as well as end-users' ability to afford the technology.
Solutions	The hub supported Virtual Irrigation Academy with the development of a Digital Inclusivity Index Report, offering recommendations on how to make their innovations more accessible and affordable for women and BoP end-users. The report resulted in the innovator receiving support to integrate a mobile application into their digital platform, which will assist smallholder farmers in accessing timely irrigation data and insights.

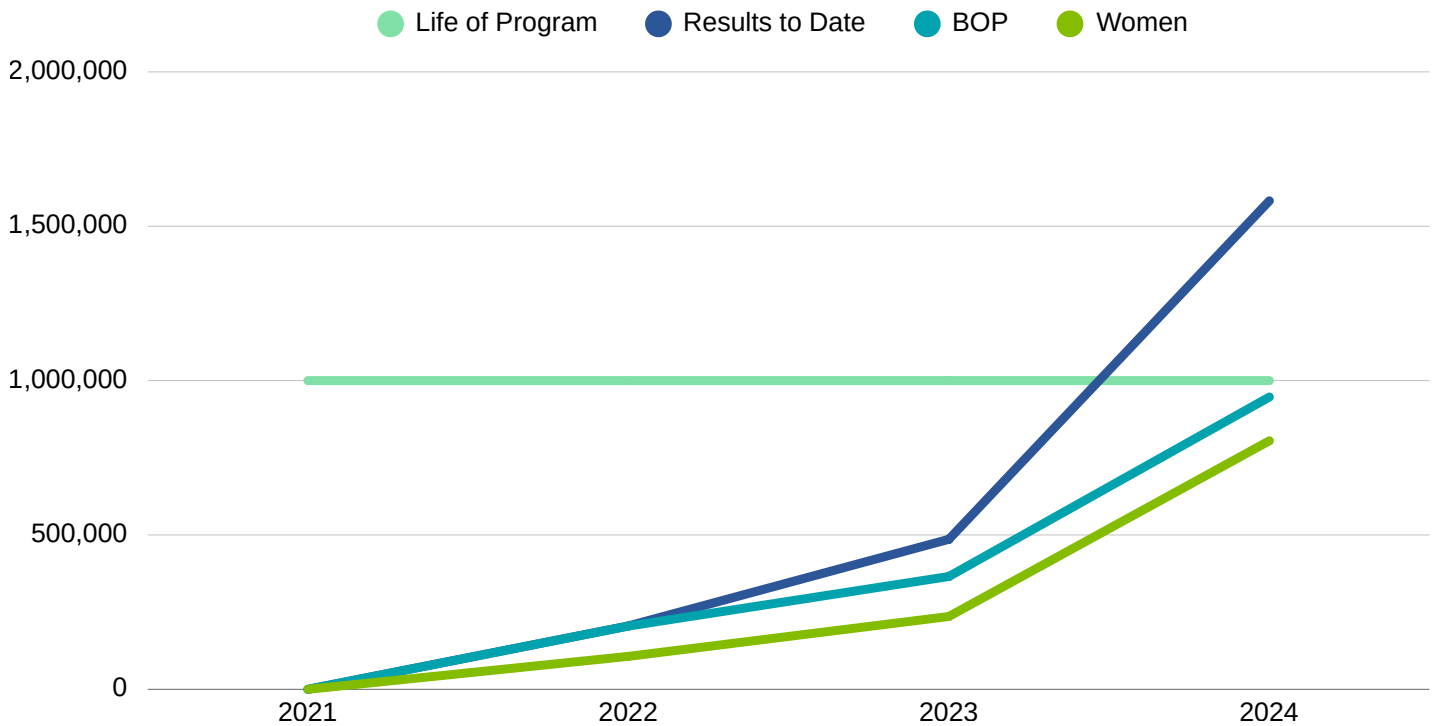
OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATIONS

In 2024, the hub welcomed 11 new innovators through the OCFI and four innovators through the Zimbabwe Biogas OCFI. The 11 OCFI innovations came from the DRC, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The first OCFI round had nearly 100 applications submitted, with most applicants coming from the Central African Republic, South Africa, and Zambia. Of the 13 applications that continued on to the full application stage, three were selected to join WE4F. In the second OCFI round, the hub received over 50 applications, mainly from the DRC, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia. Of these applicants, 17 were selected to participate in the full application stage, and eight were welcomed into the program. Following the USAID Zimbabwe buy-in, the S/CA RIH developed a Zimbabwe Biogas OCFI which was focused exclusively on biogas innovators in Zimbabwe. The S/CA RIH received 22 concept notes, of which seven companies completed their full applications, and four were selected to join WE4F.

RESULTS TO DATE

END-USERS IMPACTED

Number of WE4F End-Users



As of 2024, S/CA innovators surpassed the LOP target of 1 million end-users by 58% – more than doubling the cumulative impact reported in 2023. The innovators that contributed the most to this result were COMACO (Zambia) with over 640,000 end-users and Zonal (Chad) with over 300,000 end-users.

COMACO was able to reach hundreds of thousands of end-users due to their focus on empowering local communities by providing training and support to 65 cooperatives. The innovator uses year-round, weekly radio broadcast programs to promote sustainable farming practices by smallholder farmers, which played a significant role in scaling its impact.

As part of their cooperative support, COMACO provides cooperative managers with farming inputs, extension services, and a market for their produce. The support services and provision of inputs function in a circular manner. Cooperatives use the provided inputs to grow crops that have high yields due to COMACO's advice, which results in the cooperatives selling the yields to COMACO. The innovator is then able to recover costs associated with the original provision of agricultural inputs. Additionally, COMACO is involved in carbon projects that incentivize end-users to participate by redistributing the carbon financing.

Zonal employs a similar strategy of working with cooperatives to reach more end-users. In Africa, artisanal fish processing is mainly done by women. Through 14 partnerships, Zonal works with women's organizations that sustainably produce fish products. One of Zonal's partnerships provides tax exemption for women traders, while another provides financing for women's projects. These partnerships lead to an increase in disposable income and the standard of living of women traders.

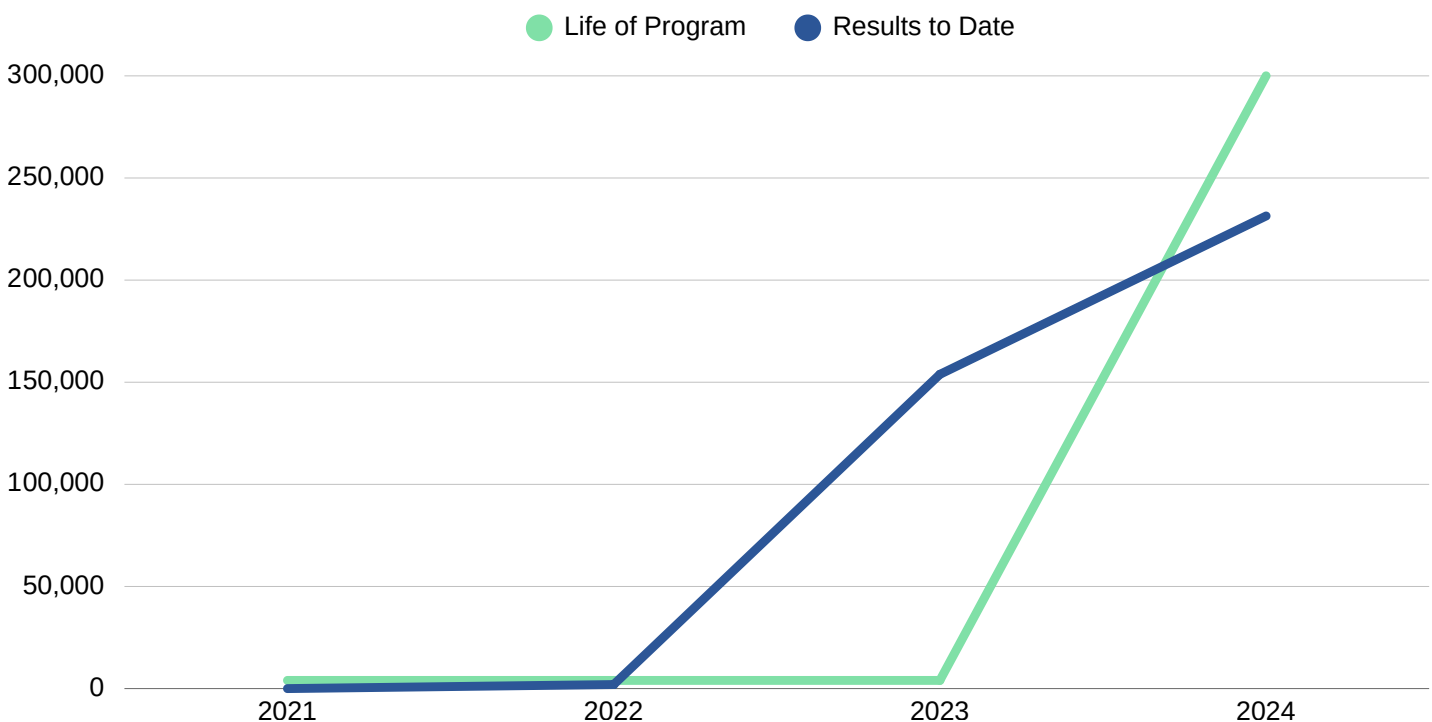
To ensure long-term sustainability of their impact on women end-users, Zonal received a TA that conducted a study on Lake Lere to determine the sustainability of their fishing operation. The TA resulted in the provision of training to 700 people, including fishermen, fish sellers, and fish buyers on sustainable fishing practices.

Women-led and/or -owned innovators accounted for less than a fifth of total end-users (252,000). This was partially due to the limited number of women-led and/or -owned innovations that were part of the earlier cohorts. It may have also been due to the types of innovations that they provide, such as biogas digesters or solar irrigation pumps. These are more expensive technologies that, even with end-user financing, would not be as accessible as other, less costly technologies offered by the man-led and/or -owned innovations.

Since the previous report in 2023, the S/CA RIH exceeded its targets for the number of women end-users and the number of BoP end-users, reaching more than 800,000 and 945,000 respectively. In Africa, women tend to make up a larger percentage of BoP individuals, so employing strategies that target women tends to increase both results. To enable better women and BoP integration by innovators, the hub hosted webinars on gender action plans and frameworks, as well as women-focused end-user financing. It also provided gender lens investment readiness support. At the 2024 Regional Convening, the hub had a training on gender-based violence and harassment.

Men-owned/or -led innovators have been highly receptive to the gender integration support. Digital solutions innovators improved messaging on their platforms to be more women and BoP-inclusive. Innovators also made efforts to transform their organizations by hiring more women and closing gender pay gaps. To make their workplaces safer, innovators improved internal policies, which made their businesses more inviting to women employees, especially those dealing directly with clients and customers. Innovators also prioritized training women – and working with women-owned cooperatives – to build their capacity as well as increase their skill set.

Number of End-Users Using Financing Mechanisms

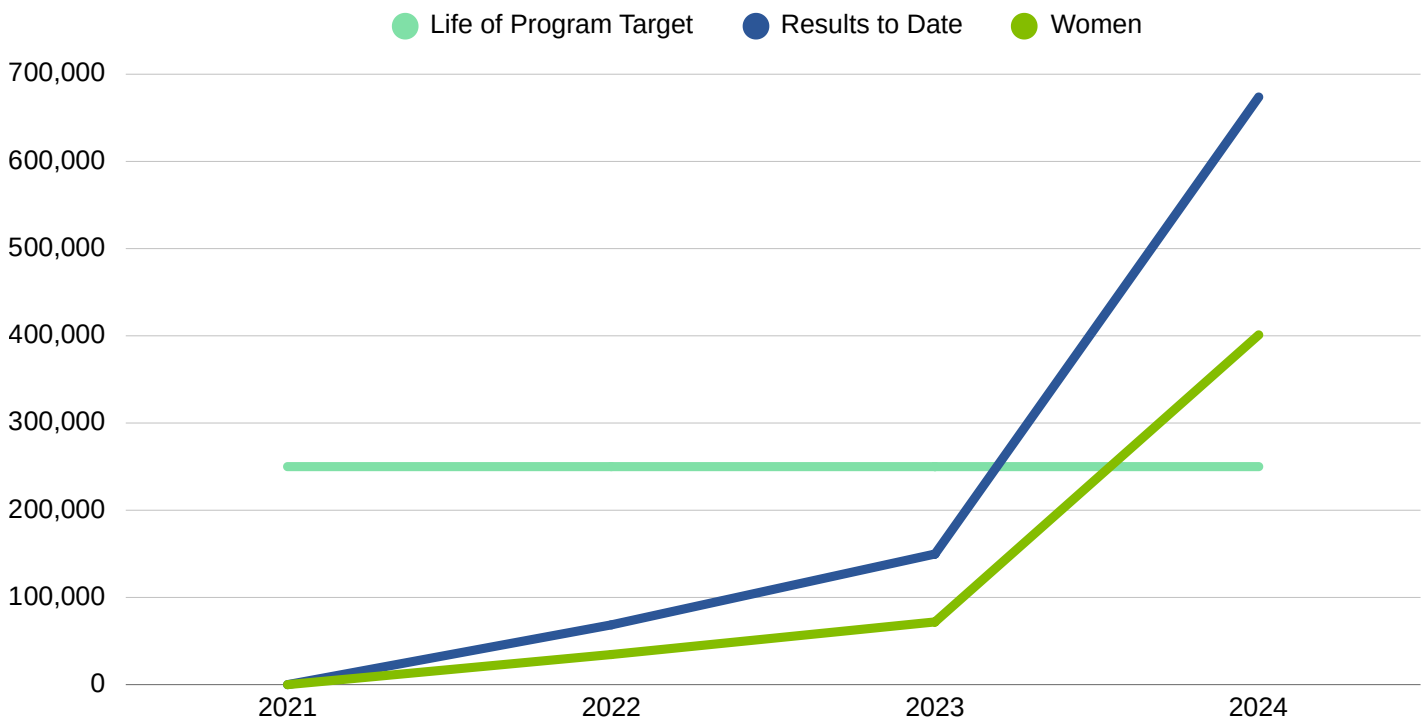


In 2024, the hub fell short of the LOP target for the number of end-users using financing mechanisms, as the LOP target was increased from 4,000 to 300,000. Out of the 230,000 end-users using financing mechanisms, 140,000 are women and 90,000 are men.

Of the 230,000 end-users, digital solutions contributed the majority of end-users using financial mechanisms. KivuGreen (DRC) – a weather services and agricultural advisory platform – and FarmHut (Zimbabwe) – a digital marketplace and logistics platform – make their solutions accessible through affordable monthly subscriptions. Their innovations accounted for over 90% of S/CA end-users using financing mechanisms. Other innovators offer PAYGO schemes due to their innovations' cost and a preference to tie payment to farmers' income cycles. These innovators include Solar Village (Zambia) who has micro-sprayer for pest management; Lanforce Energy (Zimbabwe) which constructs biogas digesters; and Zonful Energy (Zimbabwe) and Powerlive (Zimbabwe) who provide solar water pump innovations.

With the onboarding of more biogas and renewable energy innovators, the hub recognized the importance of utilizing end-user financing schemes to reduce upfront costs for farmers and households. To enable end-users' access to end-user financing schemes, the S/CA RIH signed an MoU with Zambuko Microfinance, a prominent financial institution in Zimbabwe that is dedicated to serving marginalized communities. The MoU established a strategic partnership to create tailored financial products that meet the unique needs of BoP communities, providing them with the capital needed to invest in renewable energy solutions and efficient water management systems. In addition to direct financial support, the partnership with Zambuko Trust also focused on capacity-building initiatives, providing training and resources to help community members make informed decisions about their investments. In September 2024, the hub and Zambuko Trust hosted an end-user financing workshop aimed at addressing challenges faced by BoP consumers who are interested in water-energy-food nexus technologies, but unable to afford upfront payments. Under this partnership, WE4F and Zambuko Trust brought together local financial institutions to explore and identify robust financing models that can enhance access to essential technologies provided by S/CA innovators, thereby accelerating their adoption in Zimbabwe.

Number of WE4F Innovation End-Users with Increased Incomes



In 2024, the number of S/CA end-users who experienced an increase in income reached 670,000, or about 43% of the total number of end-users. Those experiencing an increase in income were spread across the DRC, Chad, South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Five innovators were the main contributors to the number of end-users that experienced an increase in income: COMACO (Zambia), FarmHut (Zimbabwe), KivuGreen (DRC), Nabahya Food Institute (DRC), and Zonal (Chad).

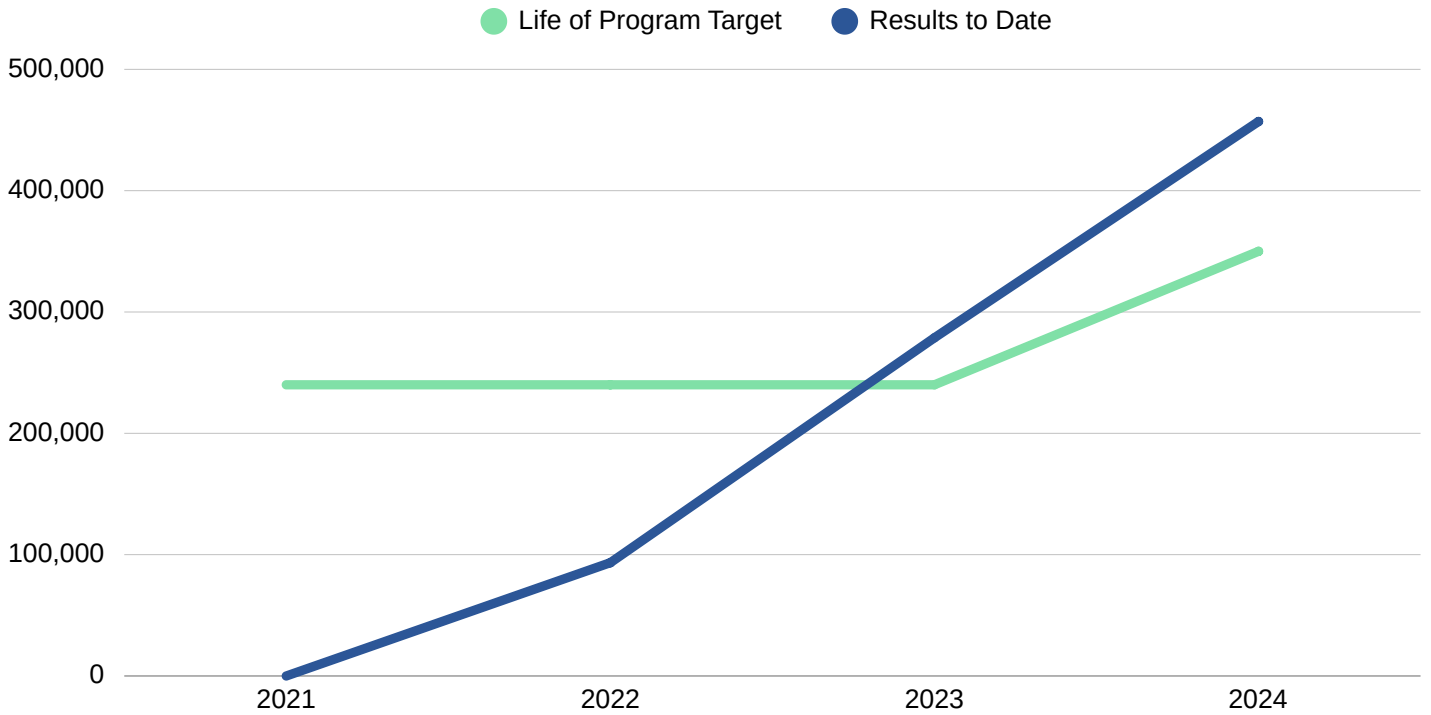
COMACO significantly contributed to the result, with 289,000 of its end-users experiencing an increase in income. The innovator works with farmers to improve the quality of their produce, therefore increasing its value by training them on good agricultural practices. They also provide a much-needed market for farmers by purchasing their produce and processing it into products like instant porridge and dried fruits. By working with cooperatives, COMACO can purchase produce in bulk, which increases income for the majority of farmers.

In the DRC, firewood resources are dwindling and becoming harder to access, so rural households now must purchase fuel to meet their energy needs. By selling ecological briquettes, Nabahya Food Institute provides households with a more cost-efficient energy source. Additionally, the biochar produced from the purchased briquettes improves agricultural yields, enabling farmers to sell surpluses. To reach a larger end-user base, Nabahya Food Institute works with cooperatives and field schools to provide trainings that help end-users benefit from increased yields that result in increased incomes. The agricultural practices shared on KivuGreen's platform enable smallholder farmers to save on inputs and use their resources elsewhere. In Zimbabwe, FarmHut's marketplace reduces transport costs, and simplifies market access, for farmers.

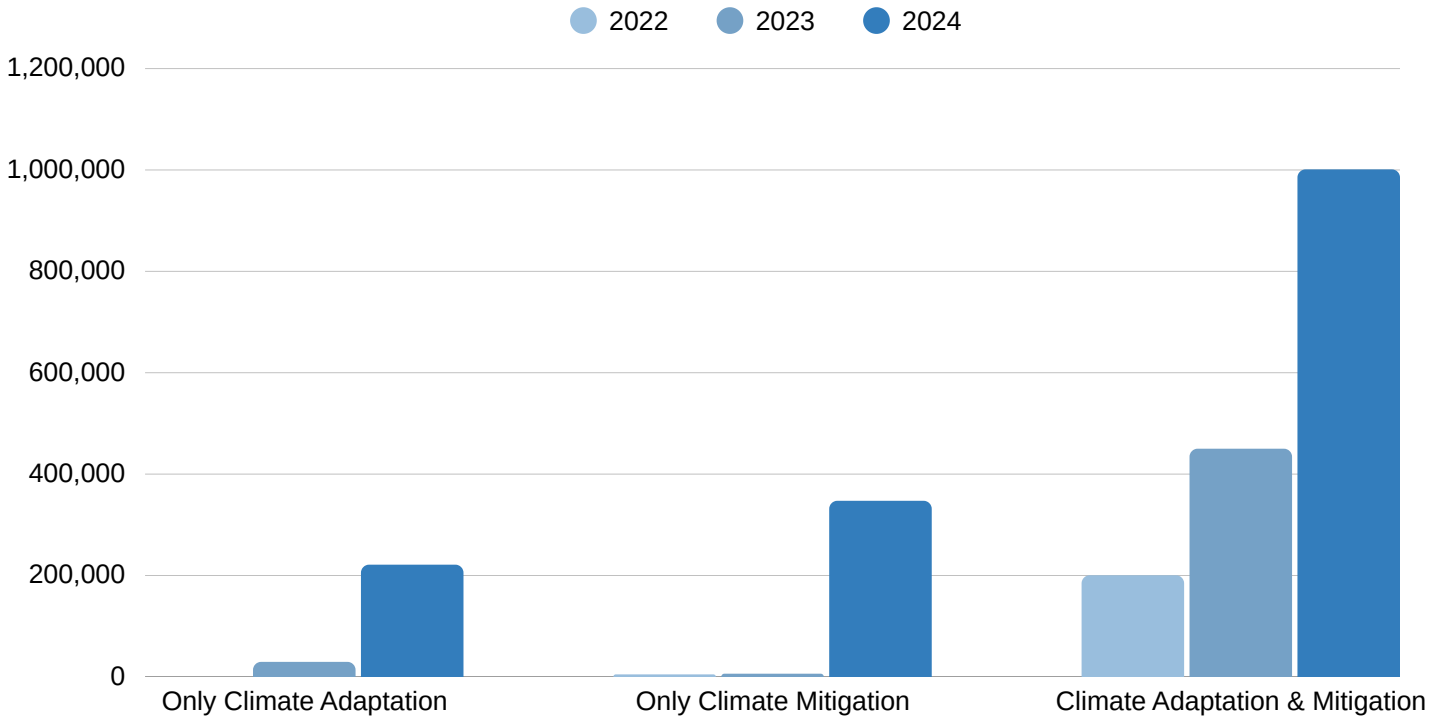
Zonal, a food-processing innovator, helps fish farmers and communities increase their incomes by training them on sustainable fishing practices, so they can maintain healthy fish populations as future income sources, and for generations. They also partner with cooperatives – typically female cooperatives – to produce fish products in a more environmentally friendly manner, resulting in increased disposable income.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCED

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions Saved by End-Users Through the Use of WE4F Innovations (tons of carbon dioxide emissions equivalent (CO2e))



Number of Smallholder Farmers and Other End-Users Using a Climate Adaptation, Climate Mitigation, or an Innovation that Tackles Both



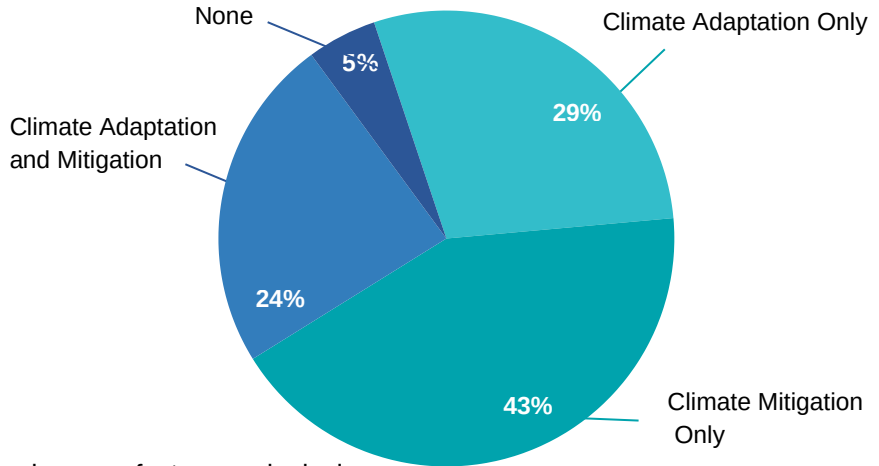
Due to surpassing the greenhouse gas emissions target in 2023, the LOP target was increased in 2024 to 350,000 tons of CO₂e. The S/CA innovators surpassed the new target, reaching a cumulative total of 475,000 tons of CO₂e saved.

Meat Naturally (South Africa), contributed to more than half of the total savings – 261,000 tons of CO₂e. The innovator's core business is the conservation of rangelands and wildlife through its Eco-Ranger initiative. The local communities with whom they work are incentivized to remove alien invasive plants from rangelands and water courses, promoting the restoration of carbon sinks.

In contrast to the previous year, innovators who manufacture ecological briquettes made a significant contribution to the reduction of GHG emissions. Nabahya Food Institute (DRC) and COMACO (Zambia) reduced emissions by 69,000 tons of CO₂e and 48,000 tons of CO₂e, respectively. In the DRC, households replaced wood burning with briquette usage (reducing deforestation), while in Zambia, COMACO used their briquettes as part of their food processing operations.

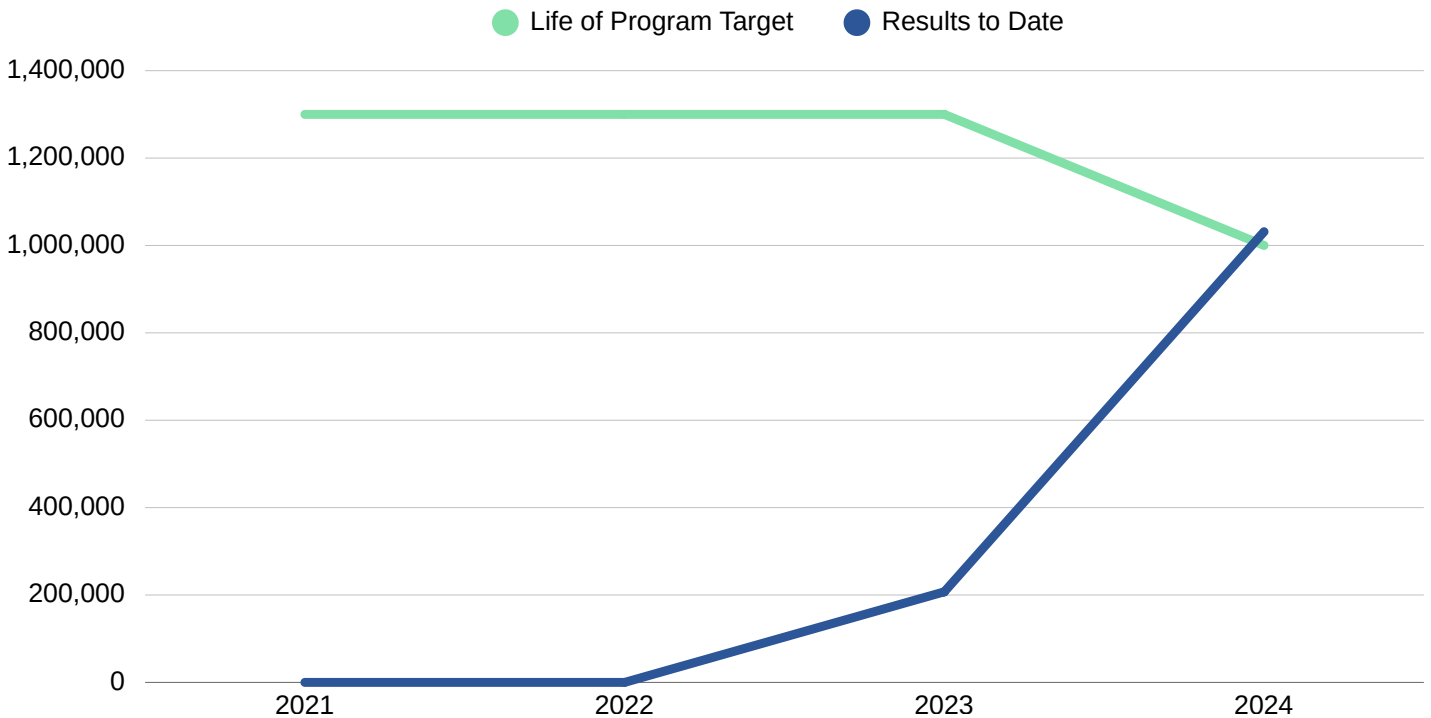
As a solar-powered technology innovator, Zonful Energy, remained a consistent contributor of CO₂e savings with over 53,000 tons saved. The innovator's solar water pumps replace petrol-powered pumps, significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Percent of Innovators Doing Climate Adaptation and Mitigation*



PRODUCED AND PROCESSED MORE FOOD

Food Produced with WE4F Innovations (tons)

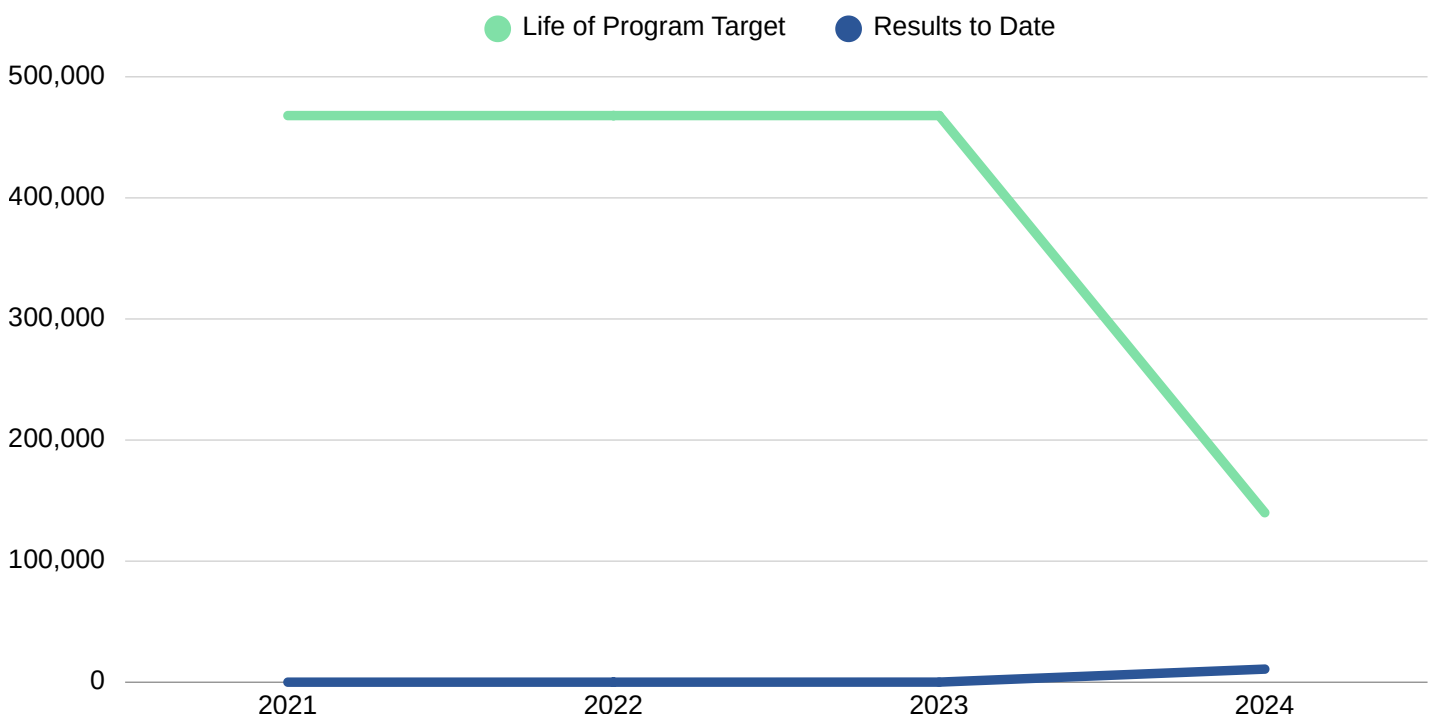


In 2024, S/CA innovators continued the food production progress that started in 2023. FarmHut (Zimbabwe), COMACO (Zambia), and KivuGreen (DRC) reaped the benefits of multiple harvest seasons, as they were some of the first innovators to join the S/CA RIH. End-users using FarmHut's innovations produced over 400,000 tons of food, more than doubling their result from 2023. COMACO increased their food production results by more than 40 times over the previously reported total, reaching 305,000 tons. Contributing the third largest result, KivuGreen end-users produced more than 218,00 tons of food.

FarmHut and KivuGreen are both digital innovators, while COMACO provides agro-forestry solutions. These innovators have had the most success with food production due to a couple of factors. Digital solutions are easy to scale across geographical locations, thus reaching more end-users, and a larger cumulative food production result, at a faster rate. The only equipment needed to use the technology is a cellphone, making it easier to access, understand, and use. Additionally, digital solutions are more affordable, as they are often purchased on a monthly or annual basis and the average cost in rural areas is less than \$1.50 USD per month.

COMACO contributed towards food production because of their holistic approach that enables dual implementation of complementary and symbiotic farming practices. By following a holistic approach focused on naturally improving soil health and nutrition, crops grown by COMACO end-users achieved better yields. Despite some regional challenges related to a long-term drought, COMACO's farming practices supported farmers' climate resilience during the growing seasons, fostering sustainable food production and enhanced farmer livelihoods.

Total Mass of Food Processed as a Result of WE4F Innovations (tons)



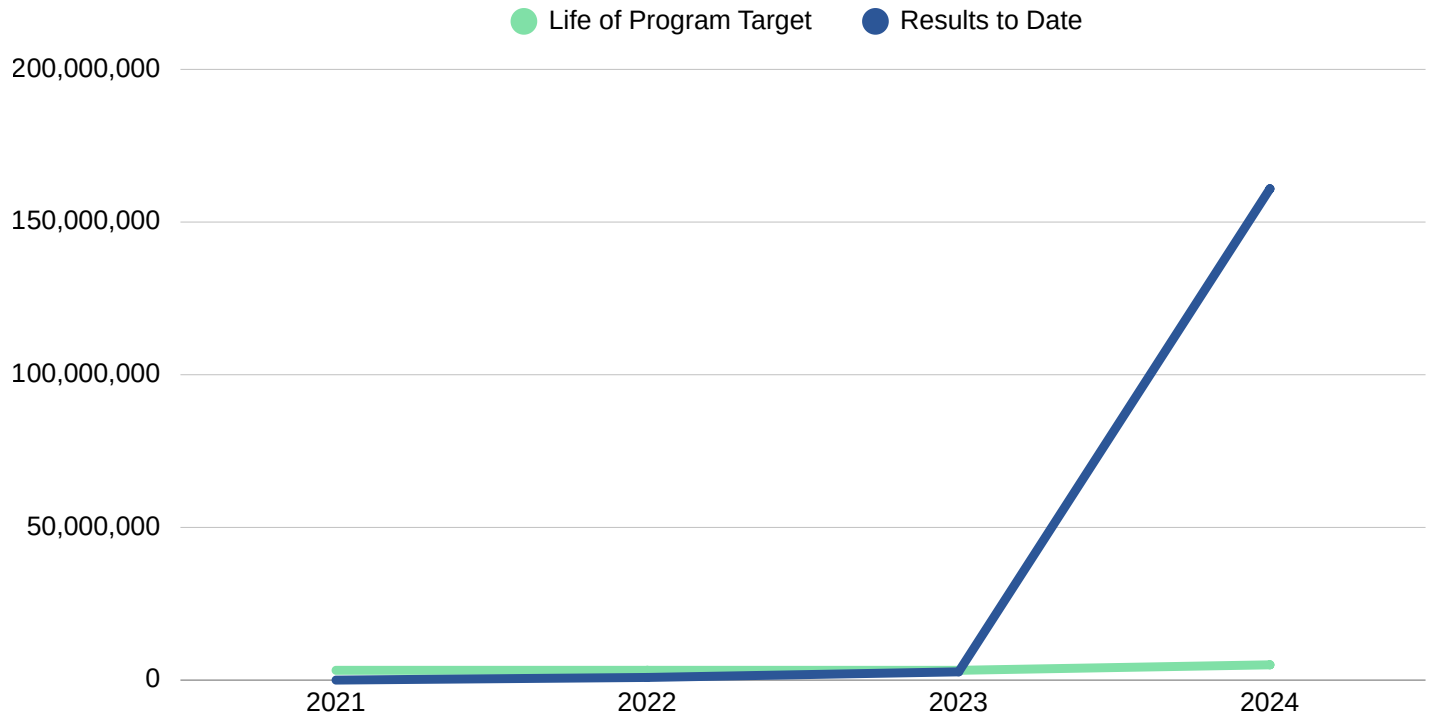
Following years of concerted efforts to onboard food-processing innovators, in 2024, the LOP target for food processing was reduced to 140,000 tons. In 2023 and 2024, the hub did see some success in onboarding food-processing innovators, but not enough to overcome the existing lack of results. Almost all 2024 results – about 70% – came from Freejoy (DRC) who contributed a total of 8,044 tons. Freejoy's solar-powered dryers help communities dry fish at low temperatures, retaining all of its nutritional value. Food processing innovators that do not rely on typical energy sources are of great interest in the DRC, where the population size, a need for local food production, and extensive energy poverty, makes renewable-energy fueled innovations attractive to many end-users.

Fellow DRC innovators, PKT and Partners and Nabahya Food Institute – both of whom are ecological briquette manufacturers – also contributed to the food processing result. Biochar from their innovations helps to produce higher yields. The surpluses from the end-users' yields can then be processed for storage or selling. Unfortunately, PKT and Partners, as well as Nabahya Food Institute, had limited food processing results due to the drought that affected the region in 2024. A lack of rain affected local food production, so food-processing innovators' raw material supply lacked quality materials and became unreliable. To counteract these effects as well as diversify revenue streams, the hub helped innovators explore new markets and partnerships. For example, Freejoy, which operates along the shores of Lake Tanganyika, is at risk of being affected by climate change due to the lake's decreasing water levels and reduced habitat zones. Fishermen must travel further into the lake to catch fish. The innovator started expanding into Tanzania to address the shrinking raw materials supply, as well as expand their customer base.

In addition to sourcing challenges, food-processing innovators also lack attractive financing options that hinder their growth, especially in the DRC. To help innovators unlock financing, the hub supported the exploration of funding opportunities. Francophone innovators received funding-focused TA instances, such as investor matching and a TA on carbon credit diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits could be a sustainable revenue stream.

USING LESS ENERGY AND WATER

Energy Saved (kilowatt-hours)



Energy poverty remains one of Africa's biggest challenges. Compared to other regions, sub-Saharan Africa experiences the most acute forms of energy poverty, along with the lowest electricity generation capacity. Millions of people live without reliable access to electricity. They are forced to rely on wood fuel for cooking and heating, which causes deforestation. S/CA innovators have made huge strides in addressing this challenge. Cumulatively, S/CA innovators helped end-users save over 160 million kWh of energy through solar-powered, biogas, and briquette energy solutions.

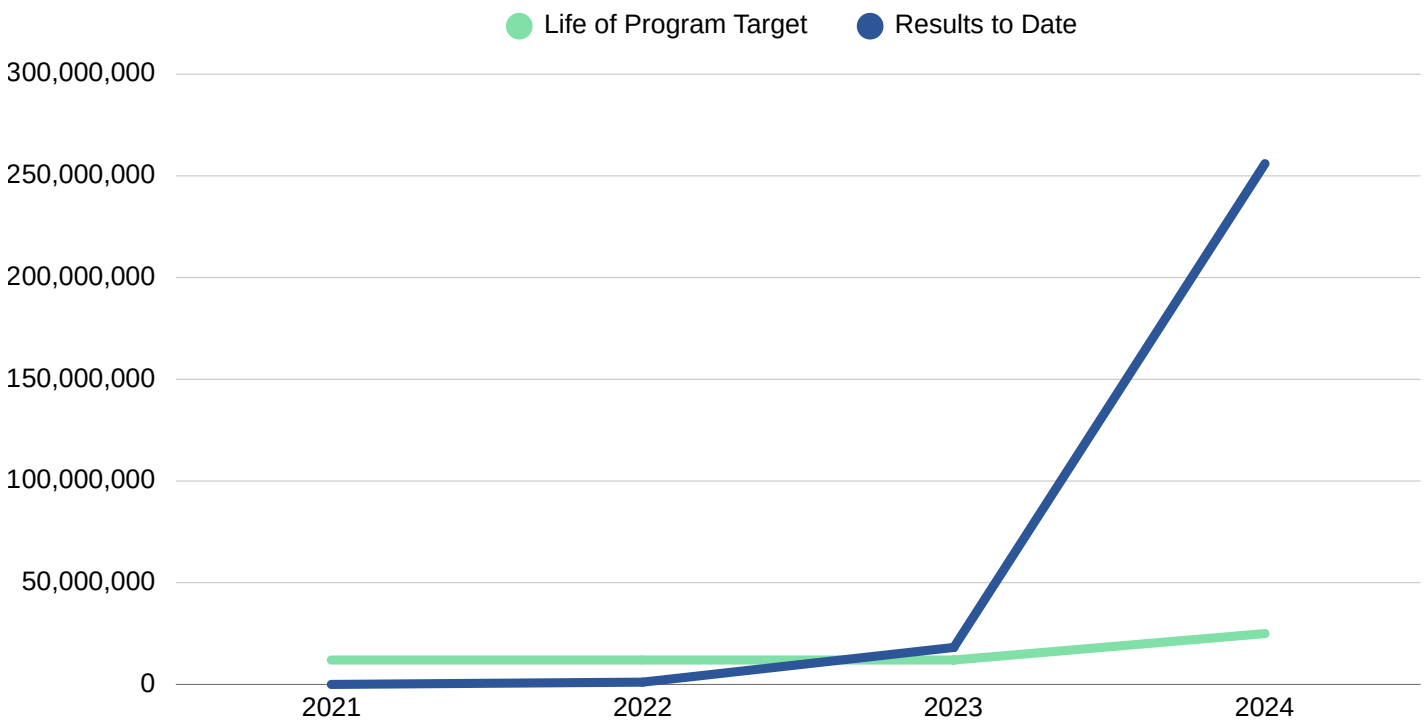
Nabahya Food Institute operates in the DRC, which has the third largest population in the world that lacks access to electricity. The innovator has helped households across the country save more than 150 million kWh of energy, making Nabahya Food Institute the largest contributor to the energy savings result. Their briquettes – which are made from a combination of biochar, manure, and urine – have made it possible for the S/CA hub to surpass its LOP target. The demand for Nabahya's innovation is high, so the hub assisted the innovator with acquiring additional equipment to increase production. Nabahya Food Institute also received assistance with attracting funding through investor matching and a TA on carbon credits diagnostics and capacity building to help them determine if carbon credits would be a sustainable revenue stream.

In Zimbabwe, innovators mainly saved energy in two ways: 1) by reducing fuel consumption that farmers would typically have used to look for a market; and 2) by providing alternative solutions to wood-burning energy. FarmHut's digital marketplace and logistics service helped farmers save over 3.6 million kWh of energy, while Lanforce Energy's biodigesters helped save more than 1.5 million kWh of energy. Lanforce's biogas digestors provide households and farmers with a renewable energy source made from waste, reducing reliance on wood fuel. The hub provided Lanforce with renewable energy classification training and capacity building to help them understand, and potentially benefit from, the renewable energy tax regulations in Zimbabwe. Lanforce also received a TA on carbon credit diagnostics and capacity building to help them explore carbon credits as a sustainable revenue stream.

COMACO's agro-forestry innovation helped Zambian farmers save nearly 3 million kWh of energy. By using biomass briquettes for their fruit drying and nut roasting processes at their manufacturing plant, they replaced other energy sources. In the past year, the hub supported the innovator's efforts to raise \$2.2 million USD in investment to help COMACO further scale up their operations.

The hub encouraged all innovators to calculate their energy use through the CLEER tool. As innovators were onboarded, they received tools to measure energy consumption so that they could understand how they were saving energy in the region.

Total Volume of Water Consumption Reduction (liters)



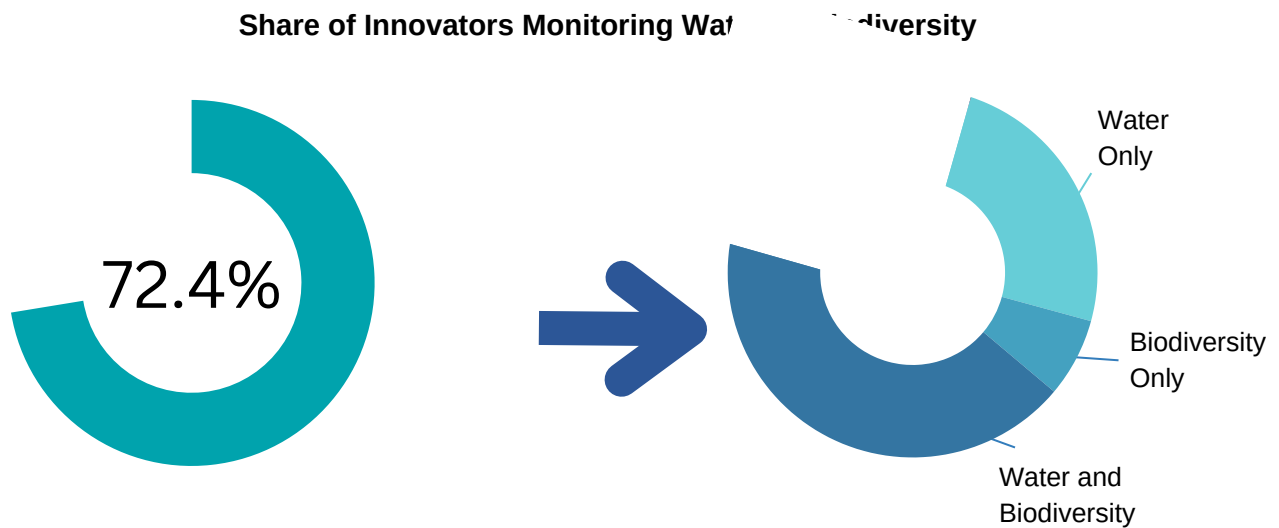
In 2024, the S/CA innovators continued to exceed the hub's LOP target for reduction in water consumption. The main contributors were two innovators in South Africa whose solutions are designed to prevent overwatering. Virtual Irrigation Academy, who provides a soil moisture system, helped end-users save more than 180 million liters of water. While Reel Gardening's biodegradable seed tape helped end-users save more than 37 million liters. In total, the innovators contributed about 85% of the cumulative hub result.

Both Virtual Irrigation Academy and Reel Gardening have made efforts to prioritize BoP populations. In the past year, the hub supported Virtual Irrigation Academy with a review of their innovation and strategies, assessing the degree to which they can reach and benefit smallholder farmers. The hub supported Virtual Irrigation Academy with standard dimensions and specific indicators that can be used to guide interventions that promote digital inclusivity, offering recommendations to make their innovation more accessible and affordable for women and BoP end-users.

Zimbabwean innovator, Powerlive, also contributed to the hub result, with more than 20 million liters saved. Communities using their solar water pumps are able to access clean water for drinking and agricultural purposes. Their systems are provided on a PAYGO basis, so customers are able to use the system while they pay in monthly installments. The hub assisted Powerlive with capacity building to address existing barriers for low-income end-users who want to adopt water, energy, and food technologies but cannot afford the upfront costs.

Digital solution innovator, KivuGreen (DRC), also contributed well to the water savings target, with over 13 million liters in reduced water consumption. Their digital platform provides weather information and agricultural extension services by using historical weather data to advise farmers on the best crops to plant with the expected rainfall. In 2024, the hub supported the innovator's efforts to acquire an API plug-in for their platform that would improve the reliability and accuracy of their information. The API plug-in's data is updated every few minutes, so farmers could make real-time decisions relating to climatic patterns without internet access through KivuGreen's SMS and USSD services.

The hub encouraged all innovators to calculate their water use. Newly onboarded innovators with technologies similar to the ones mentioned above, like RDG Collective (Zambia), Sustainable Builders (Zambia), and Agripredict (Zambia), received TA on water accounting so they could continue saving water in the region. Following the recommendations of the WE4F Mid-Term Evaluation, in May 2024 the hub published the Zambezi Basin Water Accounting Tool which provided innovators with water availability predictions for the next 25 years, maps of annual rainfall in different basin regions, and locations of supported innovations to understand potential impact. To ensure innovators understood how to use the tool, a session at the 2024 Regional Convening conducted a tool usage demonstration and answered innovators' questions. Promotion of the dashboard continued throughout 2024, so innovators could understand the dashboard's value and external audiences could become aware of its existence.



In 2024, the number of S/CA innovators who reported using tools, methods, or processes to monitor water protection or biodiversity increased to 72%. Previously, innovators were unsure of how to report on biodiversity and water, so there was a misalignment that caused under-reporting. To rectify the under-reporting, the hub not only assisted the innovators with water and biodiversity reporting, but also improved awareness of how to monitor and manage water and biodiversity in innovators' daily operations. Through the implementation of the environmental mitigation and monitoring plan (EMMP), assisting with the development of EMSes, providing monitoring tools, and providing capacity building, the hub increased innovators' knowledge of the different tools and processes that could be used in daily operations. Afterward the provision of the support, biodiversity and water savings were reported more accurately.

A total of 41% of S/CA innovators monitored both water and biodiversity. The number of innovators who only monitored water more than doubled since 2023; and innovators who only monitored biodiversity was nearly 7%.

Innovators who monitored both water and biodiversity did not belong to only one innovation type nor one country. The country that had the most innovations monitoring water and biodiversity was Zambia and included innovators like COMACO, Zircon, Solar Village, Nature's Nectar, Greencare Eco Solutions, and RDG Collective. The country that had the second highest number of innovators monitoring water and biodiversity was Zimbabwe, which consisted of biogas innovators Lanforce, Palmworth Investments, and Onyx Earth. Two innovators from South Africa also monitored water and biodiversity – Virtual Irrigation Academy and Reel Gardening – and so did two from Mozambique, Phoenix Seeds and Ovos De Ouro.

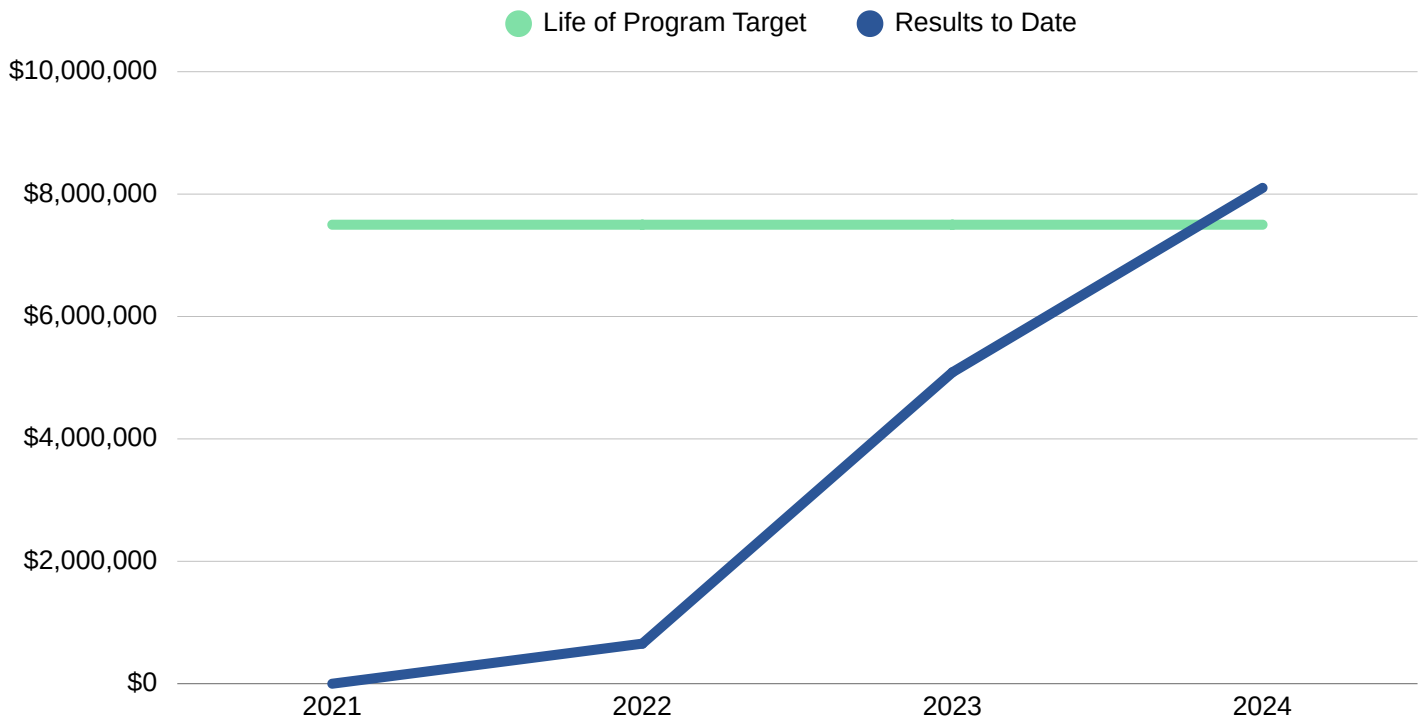
Innovators who only monitored water were spread across four countries – Chad, the DRC, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The main innovation types in this category were farming inputs, value-added processing, digital solutions, and financial solutions. The innovators contributing to this result included Nabahya Food Institute, Energy Signatures, Bwando Farms, Alzanael, Zonal, KivuGreen, and Tivwane Money Solutions. Only two innovators monitored exclusively biodiversity – Meat Naturally in South Africa and Freejoy in the DRC.



Zonful Energy (Zimbabwe) end-users stand in front of their solar panels which they use to fuel their water pump and irrigate their crops.

INNOVATIONS SCALED

Innovator Investment Mobilized (in U.S. Dollars)

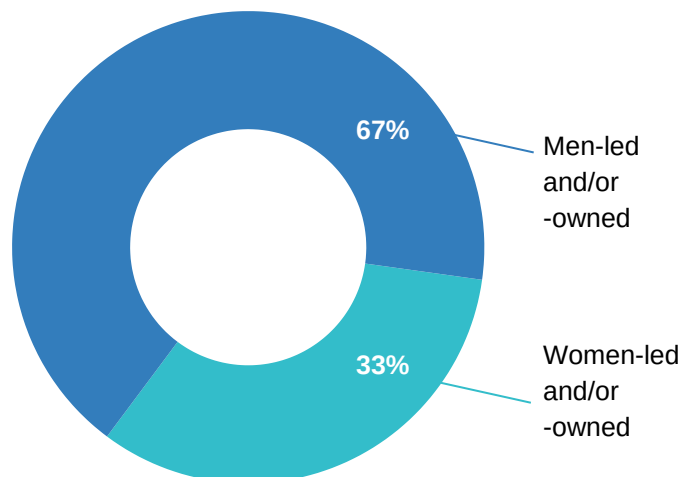


Between 2021 and 2024, the S/CA Hub mobilized a total of \$8 million USD. The funds were secured by five innovators – two from Zimbabwe, two from Zambia, and one from Mozambique. The capital pie chart reveals a strategic reliance on blended finance and debt, with private capital accounting for the majority share (61%) of the total funds mobilized. Most notably, this private capital component contained zero equity.

The complete absence of equity financing highlights a persistent trend among SMEs in Southern Africa and Central Africa. Founders in the region often view equity as a "last resort" for several reasons:

- 1. Fear of Dilution:** many SMEs are founder-led, so they resist relinquishing ownership stakes or decision-making control to external investors.
- 2. Valuation Disconnects:** in volatile economies, investors often apply heavy risk discounts to company valuations. This creates a significant gap between what founders believe their business is worth and what investors are willing to pay, leading to stalled negotiations.
- 3. Complexity:** equity transactions require rigorous due diligence and complex legal structuring, which can be resource-intensive, when compared to straight-forward debt facilities.

Investment Breakdown by Gender



Consequently, the private capital raised was entirely debt, constituting 37.5% of all investment mobilized. Commercial banks provided nearly 72% of the debt-based capital, affirming a strong indicator for the bankability of scalable businesses in recovering markets like Zambia and Mozambique. Innovators' preference for debt aligned with a hub-identified preference among investors for traditional debt financing. This trend was particularly pronounced in markets with more restrictive central bank policies, such as Mozambique, where foreign investment regulations and limitations on foreign-denominated interest rates have deterred some international investors. Mozambique-based innovators like Phoenix Seeds increasingly relied on local financial institutions for financing (e.g., FNB Moçambique). While debt financing remains dominant, there are emerging opportunities for more results-based funding structures in less restrictive markets, as well as matching capital grants that could catalyze private capital mobilization by helping de-risk investments.

Public capital accounted for the remaining 39% of the total capital mobilized, which was derived entirely from results-based financing facilities managed by Social Impact Managers & Advisors (SIMA). A key impact investor in the region that manages funds from development finance institutions and international donors, SIMA provided catalytic capital to Lanforce Energy (Zimbabwe), and Powerlive (Zimbabwe), and Solar Village (Zambia). The S/CA Hub also pursued large-ticket institutional capital by supporting COMACO (Zambia) as they worked to secure a \$5 million debt facility from the U.S. Development Finance Corporation. The transaction closed shortly before the USAID SWO, thus preventing its inclusion in the 2024 results.

In 2023 and 2024, the S/CA RIH increased its number of DRC-based innovators. To help these innovators scale their innovations, the hub maintained a strong focus on improving local enabling environment conditions and facilitating end-user financing. This work was particularly critical for the DRC, where there is a large financing gap due to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) being too large for microfinance institutions (MFIs), but too small to access commercial loans from banks. As part of the S/CA RIH's efforts to reduce this barrier, the hub signed an MoU with Equity Banque Commerciale du Congo (EquityBCDC) a subsidiary of Equity Group Holding. As one of the largest private sector banks serving micro- and SMEs in the DRC, the partnership represented a promising opportunity to support DRC-based innovators while promoting financial inclusion, financial literacy, social investment, and improved access to financial credit for low-income households.

Under the MoU, EquityBCDC and the S/CA Hub worked together to empower innovators and their end-users. Eligible innovators had the opportunity to benefit from EquityBCDC's debt and grant funding support to expand their operations, with the S/CA Hub Brokering Unit aiding innovators as they navigated the application process. End-users, mainly smallholder farmer cooperatives, using WE4F innovators' products and services benefited from the partnership through EquityBCDC's facilitation of micro-loans and credit, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial skills capacity building.

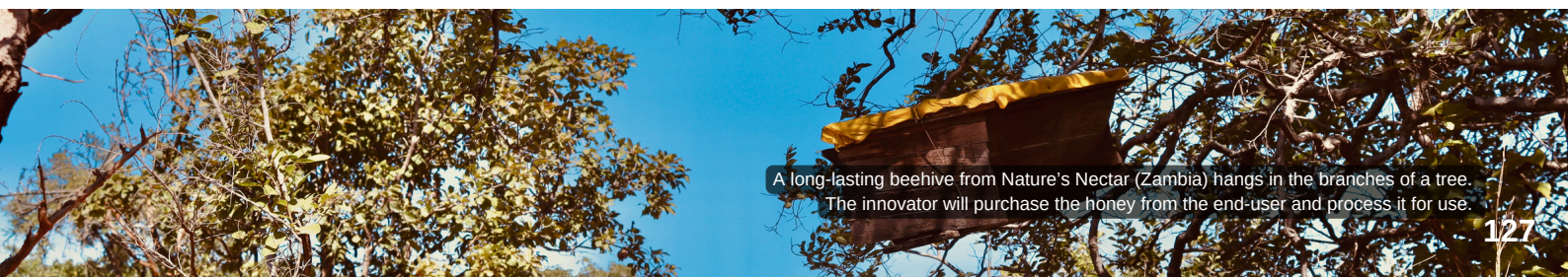
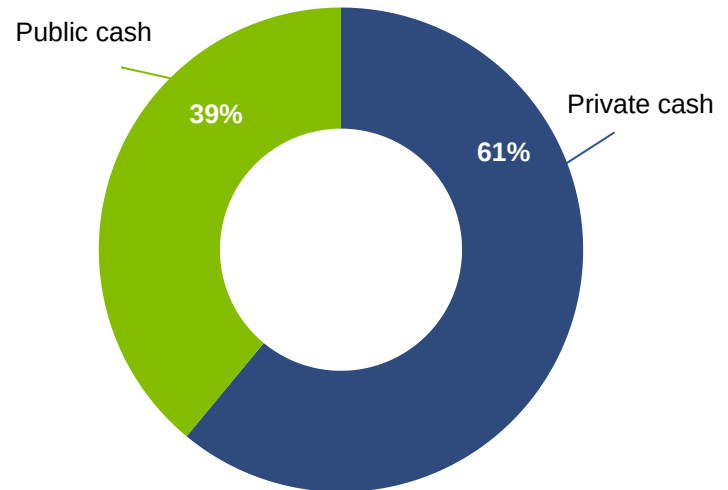
LOOKING FORWARD

The region remains a volatile investment landscape. High inflation, currency fluctuation, and policy unpredictability have historically deterred investors. The hub's data initially reflects this harsh reality – only 5 out of 32 innovators successfully mobilized capital. The ratio, however, does not solely reflect external market risk. It is also indicative of the early- to medium-stage maturity level of the innovators. The majority of the 32 innovators were small enterprises not yet structured to absorb commercial capital. Recognizing this gap, the hub provided targeted investment readiness TA to the earlier-stage innovators. Interventions focused on strengthening business models, financial structuring, and governance. As a direct result, all earlier-stage innovators have now built robust business models and are actively planning to raise hybrid capital (mostly grants and debt) within the next 12 to 18 months, representing a strong future pipeline.

Based on the growing innovation ecosystem in the region and the aforementioned gaps, there are several recommendations that the S/CA RIH proposes for future programming:

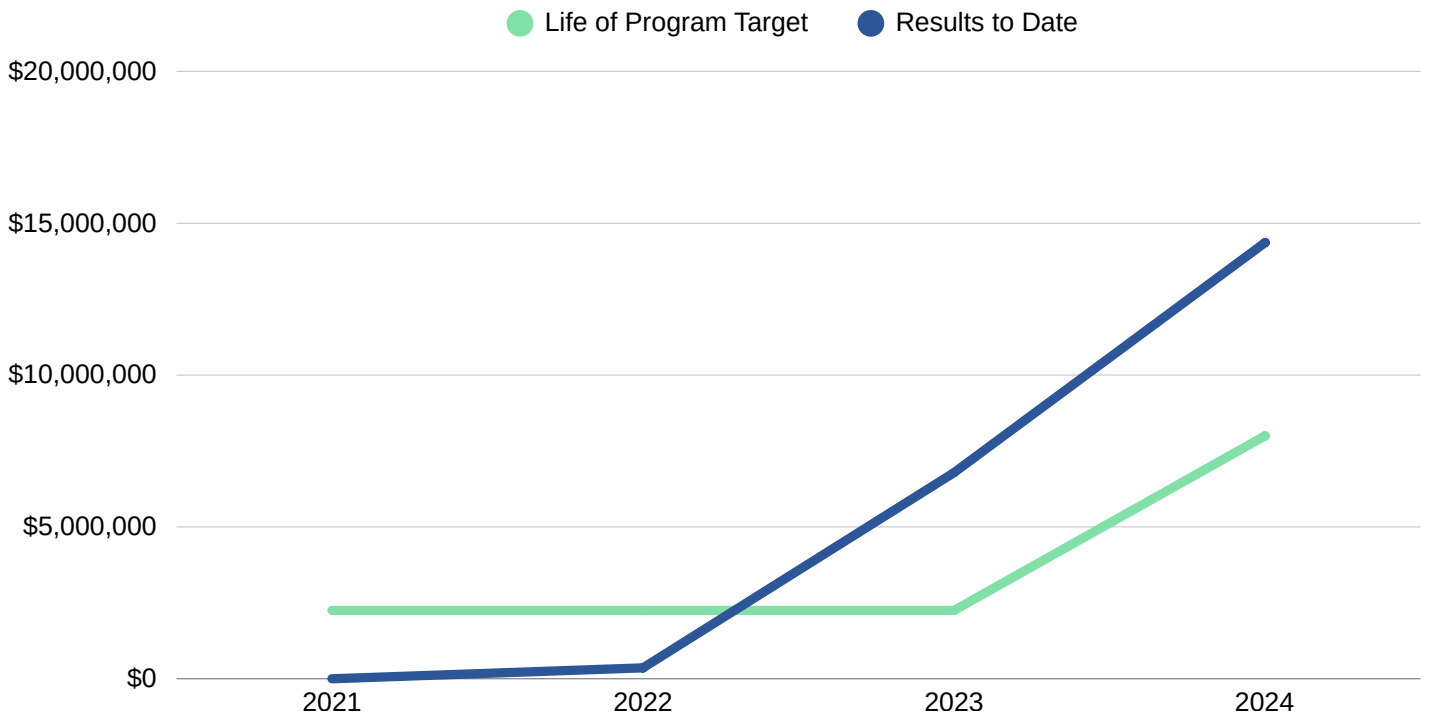
1. **Structured Technical Assistance:** most innovators are not "transaction-ready" at the beginning of their support journey. Future programs should provide TAs in two distinct tracks:
 - a. **Transaction Support:** for innovators ready to raise capital immediately and require support with deal room preparation, term sheet negotiation, and legal support.
 - b. **Enterprise Structuring:** for "pipeline innovators" whose TA requirements focus on strengthening governance, financial models, and pitch decks.
2. **Prioritize Hybrid Instruments over Pure Equity:** the "zero equity" finding confirms that future programming should actively promote mezzanine debt or results-based financing. These instruments do not require founders to give up ownership (solving the dilution fear) while offering investors better returns than standard bank debt.

Public versus Private Investment



A long-lasting beehive from Nature's Nectar (Zambia) hangs in the branches of a tree. The innovator will purchase the honey from the end-user and process it for use.

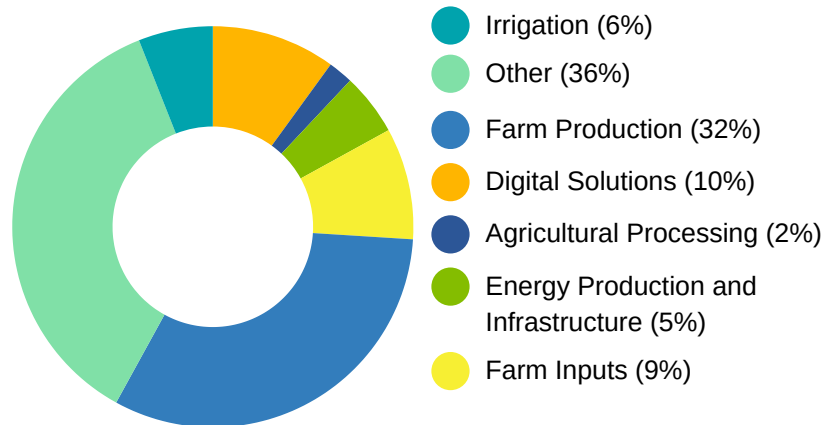
Innovator Gross Sales (in U.S. Dollars)



In 2024, S/CA innovators increased their sales, reaching over \$14 million USD and surpassing the LOP target nearly twice over. Innovators that had significant contributions to the sales target were COMACO (Zambia) with more than \$5 million USD, Ovos de Ouro (Mozambique) with more than \$4 million USD, and Zonful (Zimbabwe) and KivuGreen (DRC) who both had \$500,000 USD.

COMACO was able to generate sales due to its diverse range of products, including peanut butter, instant porridge, dried fruits, and forest-derived items (e.g., mopane worms – the edible caterpillar form of the emperor moth). Their high-quality offerings generated significant demand, leading to widespread availability in major retail outlets like Shoprite (the largest supermarket chain in the country) as well as smaller stores. In addition to retail sales, COMACO established agreements with schools and feeding programs, providing nutritious products to support the diets of students, mothers, and infants. With support from the hub, COMACO organized roadshows in 2024 to raise awareness about their products. The initiative expanded its reach, attracting new customers and increasing adoption across diverse markets.

Gross Sales Breakdown by Innovation Type



The sales result of Ovos was due to internal and external growth by the innovator. Ovos expanded its operations by opening of seven new shops, bringing its tally to 13 chick-and-feed shops. Ovos also integrated into the downstream production of broiler chickens for slaughter, increasing broiler chick and feed sales. They made concerted efforts to ensure that their income was diversified. With the establishment of the new shops, there was a need to connect and attract new and existing poultry clients to the shops. The hub began supporting the innovator with a market expansion plan to strengthen its marketing and branding activities.

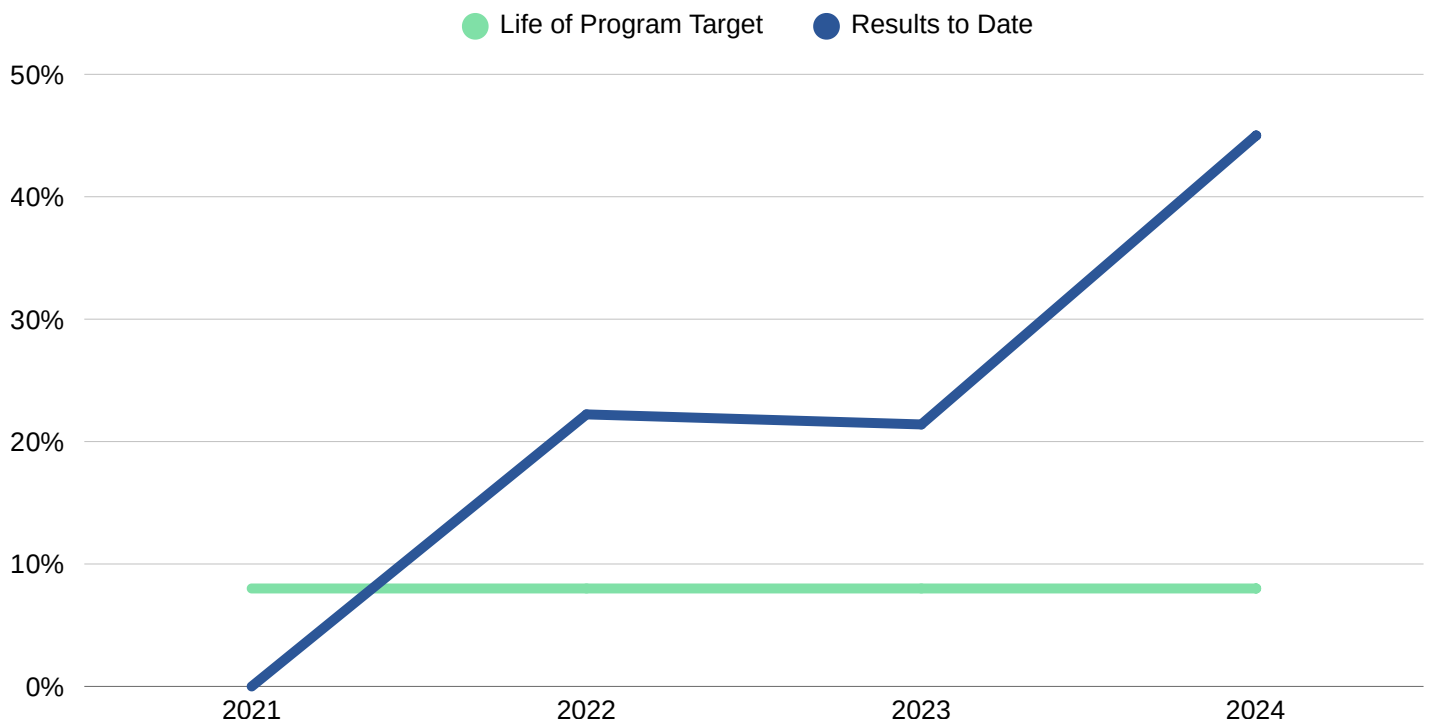
Innovators with the largest sales results were spread across various innovation types, including farm production (32%), innovations with no specific category (36%), and digital solutions (10%). Agricultural processing (2%), Energy production and infrastructure (5%), and irrigation (6%) saw the smallest sales results. A common reason for this trend, was that innovators who do not generate as many sales lack production capacity as they expand. This typically correlates with issues related to financing.

The demand for certain innovations is sometimes higher than what they can supply. To enable liquidity, innovators could pursue an order financing mechanism. As part of efforts to support innovators' production activities, the hub signed MoUs with banks in the DRC and Zimbabwe with facilities that could be pursued and established to enable innovators' access to funds. Another challenge that innovators face was cash flow. A possible solution is building up the customer segments that pay cash on delivery to avoid scenarios where funds are tied up in the pipeline. Additionally, innovators could explore shorter credit terms of up to 14 days, which could help access funds for operations.

Energy production and infrastructure innovators typically face the challenge of new competition. Bing, PKT and Partners, and Nabahya Food Institute are all ecological briquette manufacturers selling their products across different parts of the DRC. To remain competitive in the market, Nabahya Food Institute had to lower its briquette price to generate sufficient sales. This was not an ideal scenario, so the hub pushed innovators to explore additional revenue streams, like carbon credits.

Despite generating significant sales, innovators like COMACO still faced challenges. The drought in Southern Africa triggered by El Nino resulted in shortfalls and reduced production of raw materials. Innovators began exploring drought-resistant base products (e.g., cassava), as an alternative to generate sales. For COMACO, new market entries into other countries could also greatly increase their sales because they have a solid local base.

Share of Supported Innovators that Successfully Marketed their Climate-friendly, Energy and/or Water-efficient Innovations with Profit



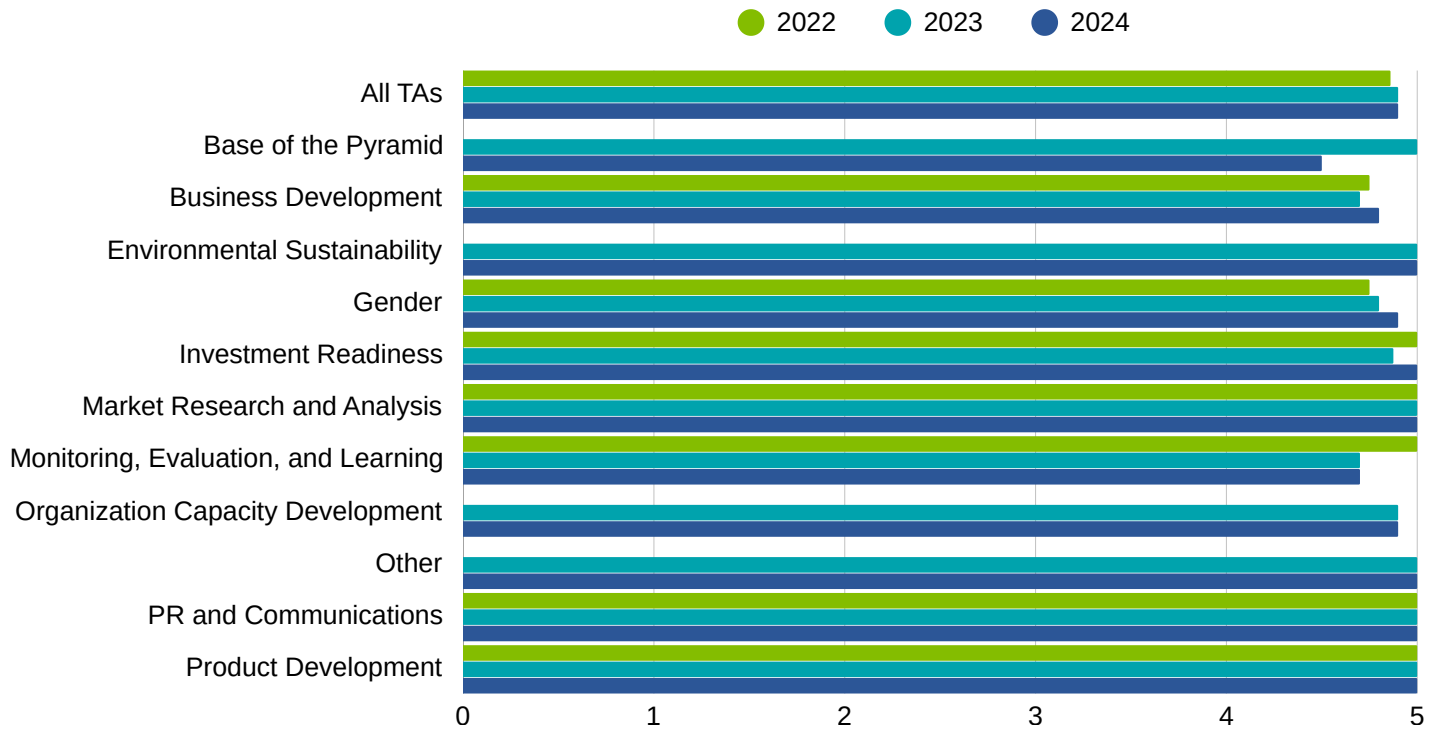
In 2024, about 45% of S/CA innovators successfully marketed their innovation with profit. A key factor in innovators being able to achieve this result, was a robust expansion strategy that outlined how their companies conducted marketing and sales strategies to reach more customers. Innovators were becoming better at marketing their innovations and targeting specific groups. Being part of the WE4F program also exposed them to wider markets through networking opportunities at convenings and the encouragement of the hub to collaborate with others. Grant funding provided innovators with much-needed capital to increase production and leverage the hub's support to increase sales and marketing efforts.

More and more, innovators were seeing the value of certain types of support that helped drive their success. This was evident in the growing number of requests for TAs on market research, marketing, and public relations and communications. The holistic incorporation of their requested TAs with aspects such as gender, BoP, and ESG considerations helped innovators tap into larger customer bases.

Several aspects can help an agribusiness market itself successfully, in particular, familiarity with regulatory frameworks and expanding reach by using data analytics. The hub saw women-led and/or -owned innovators do this particularly well. Nature's Nectar (Zambia), for example, with the support of the hub, used market research to break into the European market.

Innovators also saw the benefit of strengthening relationships with customers to drive success. Zonal (Chad), for example, provided capacity building on sustainable fishing practices to fishermen, fish sellers, and fish buyers with whom they work. Innovators in South Africa (Reel Gardening, Meat Naturally, and Virtual Irrigation Academy) increased their work on innovation inclusivity to reach a wider customer base. Meat Naturally focused on simplifying communication materials to make it improve comprehension by farmers with lower literacy levels. Virtual Irrigation Academy underwent a digital inclusivity assessment of their technology for similar reasons. Meanwhile, Reel Gardening designed a mobile banking solution to make it easier for farmers to sell produce that was grown with the innovator's seed tape.

Average Technical Assistance "Quality of Service Survey" Score



As the number of innovators at the S/CA RIH increased, so did the total number of TA requests. In the 2024 alone, 65 TAs were completed, which matched the number of TAs completed in the first two years of the program (64). The new TAs brought the total number of TA instances to 129. Over the course of 2024, the hub saw a significant increase in requests related to business development. Requested business development TAs had a strong financial element with a particular focus on exploring carbon credits as a potential revenue stream, as well as investor mapping. For Francophone innovators, business development, carbon credits, and investor mapping were particularly critical due to economic and conflict-related challenges in their countries. To help the Francophone innovators achieve long-term sustainability, the hub prioritized assisting them with raising funds. This was evident through the collaborative work completed by the Enabling Environment Unit who supported innovators by matching them with potential investors and the Brokering Unit who provided innovators with investment readiness support.

Even though they were in the process of exiting the program, CF1 and CF2 innovators who started earlier in the program, requested investment readiness and facilitation TA. The TAs resulted in innovators securing \$6 million USD in 2024. As part of onboarding new innovators, the hub provided gender-related TAs covering gender lens investment readiness.

Product development TA, in the form of support with attaining certification to pursue funding opportunities, was popular with Zimbabwean innovators. The certification of biogas cookstoves was crucial for these innovators to be eligible for grant funding, such as the opportunities provided by the Modern Cooking Facility for Africa. Due to their certifications, two S/CA innovators were able to secure funding from the organization.

There was also a demand for website development TA, particularly from innovators in the DRC and Zimbabwe. A number of these innovators did not have websites or had outdated, non-functional websites. The TA helped innovators establish and improve market presence in their respective countries, as well as globally. The websites now have specific functions to help innovators sell their products. For example, a catalogue page where products can be purchased online.

The hub saw women-led and/or -owned innovators requesting far more TA support than their male counterparts. These innovators requested support across varying categories, with TAs related to environmental sustainability and business development being the most common.

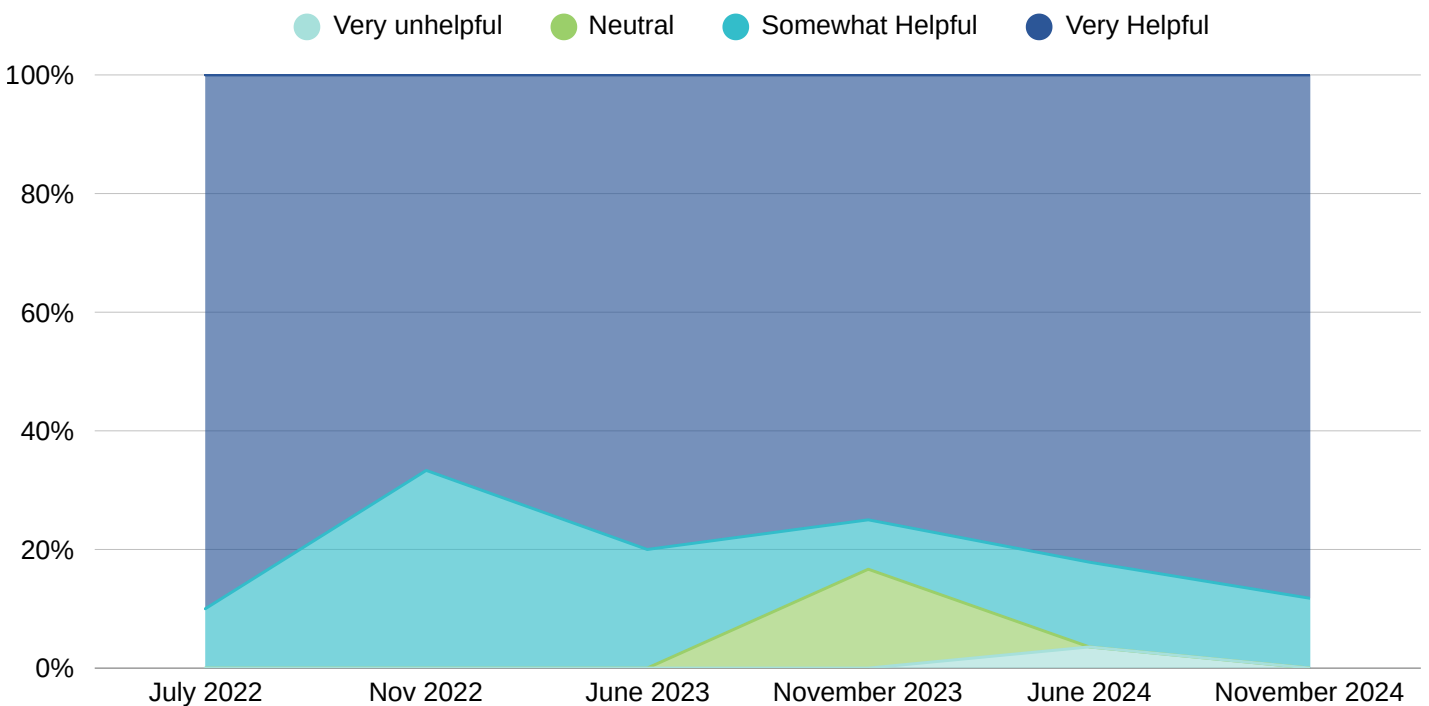
To ensure that TA quality levels were maintained, the TA scopes of work were co-created by the innovator and hub experts. The TA Facilitator had weekly check-in calls with the Country Coordinators to ensure that the hub conducted TAs as efficiently as possible. Country Coordinators and the TA Facilitator also reviewed all TA deliverables developed in-house by hub staff and TA leads, as well as deliverables developed by sub-contracted service providers. The Hub Manager completed a final review and approved the deliverables. Results from the individual TA Quality of Service Survey also played a role in understanding innovators' needs. Innovators that found value in their TAs were likely to score them as a "5," whereas innovators that did not value the TA, scored it lower than a "3".

QUALITY OF SERVICE SURVEY

Conducted by the Secretariat Unit, the Quality of Service Survey (QoSS) gathered innovators' feedback on their experiences working with the S/CA RIH. The QoSS helped the hub improve problem areas and identified successful pivots that could be shared with the other hubs. The latest QoSS, completed in December 2024, gathered results from all S/CA RIH innovators.

GENERAL HUB SUPPORT

Overall, how helpful has the S/CA Hub's support been to your organization's success?

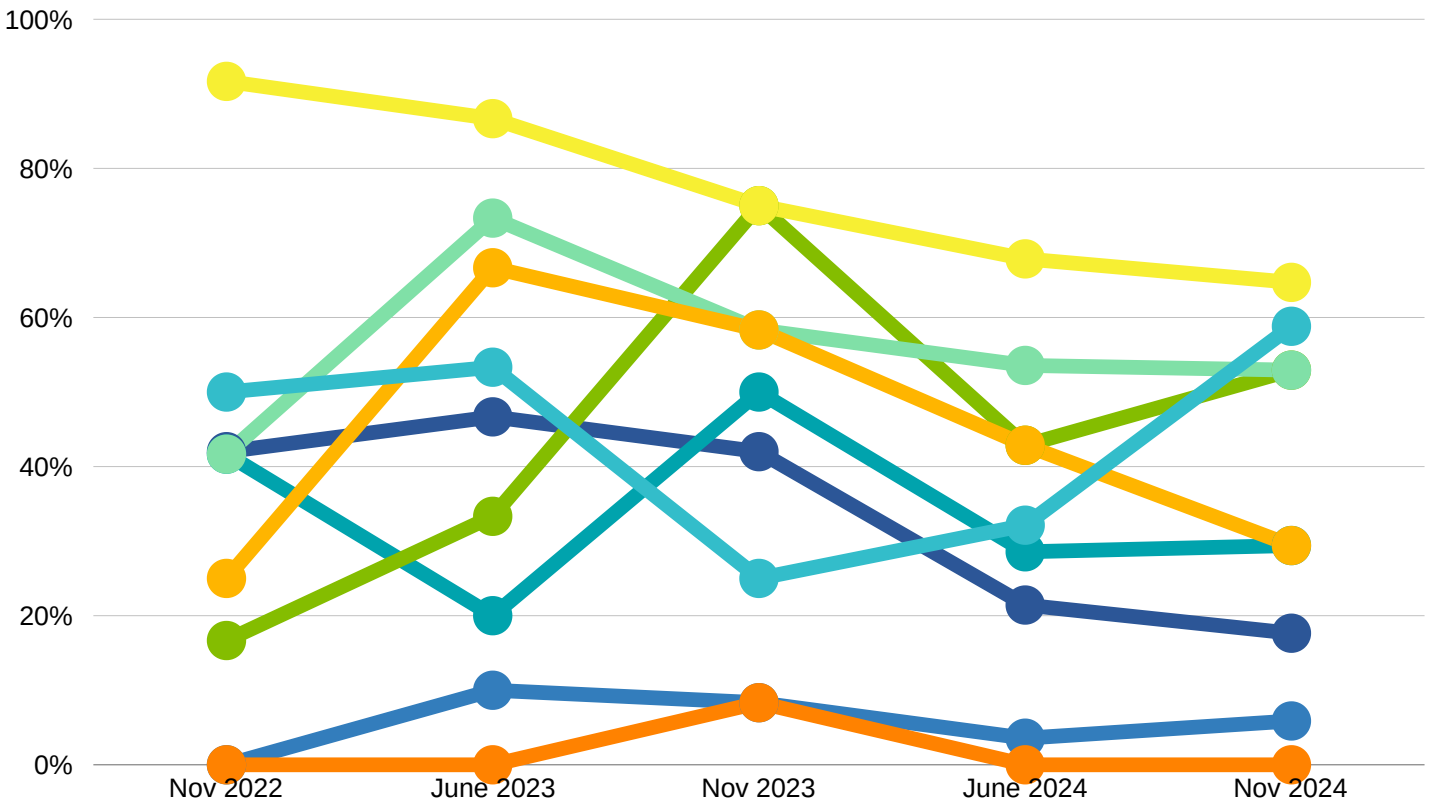


The S/CA innovators maintained a high level of appreciation for the hub's support throughout all reporting cycles. Overall, the hub's average rating on a 5-star scale was 4.5. In the final half of 2024, innovators rated their overall satisfaction with the hub at an all-time high of 4.88. By the end of 2024, all innovators expressed only positive opinions of the hub's helpfulness, even converting one innovator's dissatisfied rating.

Innovators expressed that hub support helped them establish new networks focused on expanding innovators' services and impacting the communities in which they operate. The innovators also shared how the S/CA RIH's support enabled them to build robust business models with efficient operations. Appreciation for environmental sustainability support peaked in the latter of 2023 and maintained its popularity among innovators in 2024.



Reflecting on the support received from the S/CA Hub, which of the following has been most useful to you?



In the latter half of 2024, partnerships and networking reached its peak as a support category that innovators found most helpful, ranking almost as highly as TA. Innovators showed consistent appreciation for gender mainstreaming support, which was centered around innovator’s gender integration practices (i.e., employment, supply chain, leadership, and entrepreneurship). Support provided by the hub concentrated on business practices becoming more gender-focused, thereby strategically positioning innovators for gender lens investment as well as increasing their productivity and upscaling their businesses. Support also focused on assisting innovators with the development of gender action plans for their businesses, which improved their eligibility for other types of funding.

Over time, categories like ESG, gender, BoP, and investment facilitation gained popularity as innovators sought to strengthen, and better position, their business models to scale while meeting global standards for gender lens investment opportunities.

At the beginning of the S/CA RIH, the hub adopted an innovator-centric approach, ensuring that all innovator inquiries were attended to within 24 hours. Furthermore, the hub leveraged the proximity and local knowledge of in-country Country Coordinators to provide day-to-day support to innovators. Additionally, S/CA innovators highlighted the important role that Country Coordinators play in the program. The hub empowered Country Coordinators to work with innovators to identify challenges and co-design scopes of work for TAs. This made innovators feel like they were being listened to, and increased the efficacy of each TA instance.

To address any concerns raised in each QoSS, the hub actively implemented a course correction plan. For instance, the hub planned on leveraging Country Coordinators’ in-country networks to address downward trending satisfaction with investment facilitation. Plans were aligned with innovators’ recommendations to have in-person engagements with support related to investment facilitation.

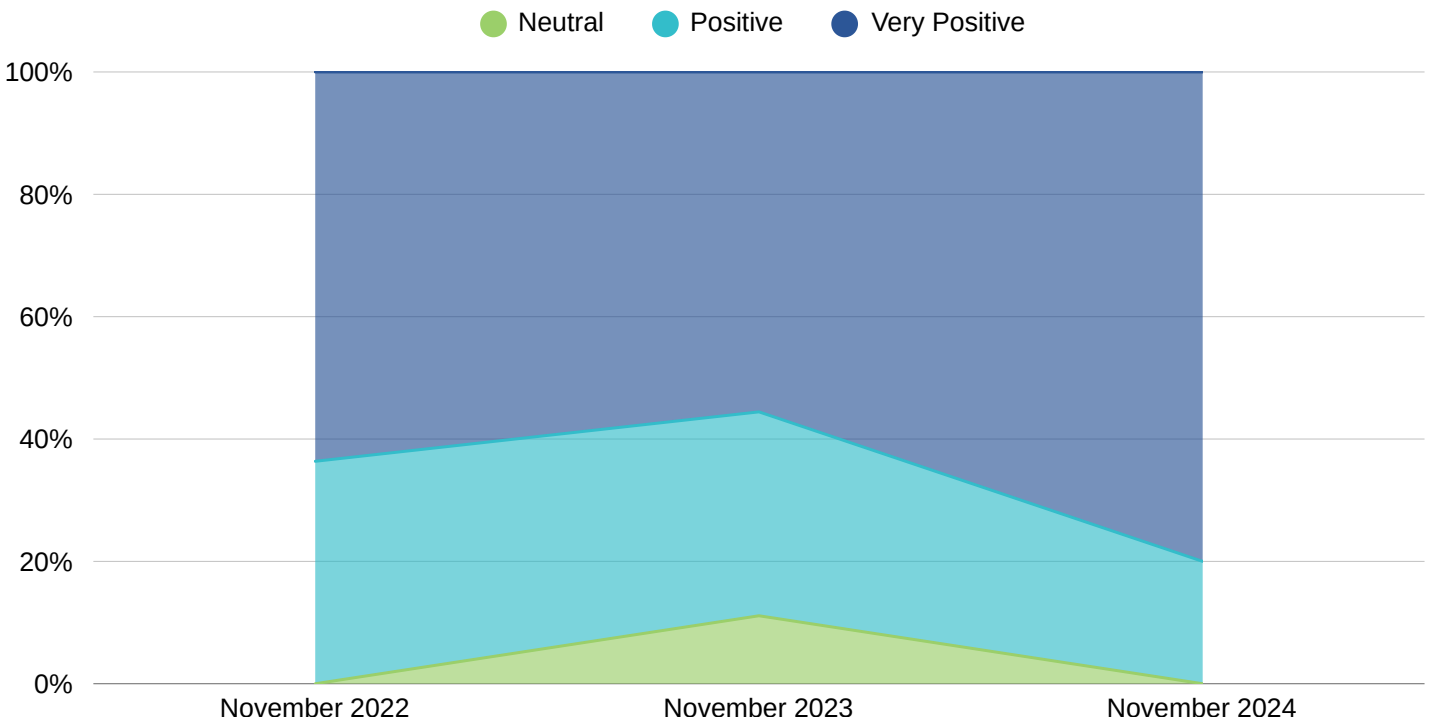
Having exceeded its targets during the previous year, the hub planned on ensuring that satisfaction levels were maintained in 2025 by accelerating support for all Call for Innovations (CFI) 2 and OCFI innovators.

Chart Key

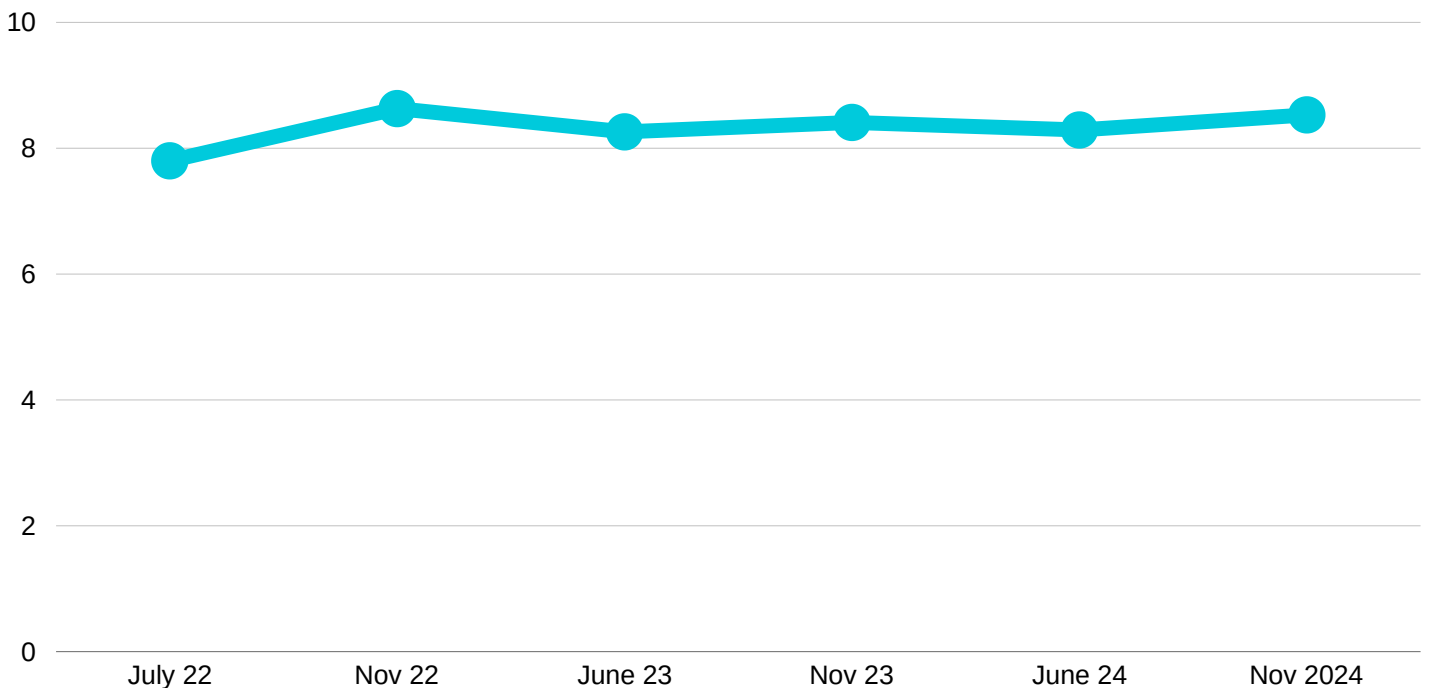
- Addressing Enabling Environment Barriers
- Technical Assistance
- Gender Mainstreaming
- Investment Facilitation
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Environmental Sustainability and Compliance
- Other
- None
- Partnership, Networking, and Ecosystem Building

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Reflecting on the technical assistance provided to you, what could be the impact of technical assistance in the long term (1+ years post-completion of the assignment)?



On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the S/CA Hub's Technical Assistance Unit (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)



In 2024, the Technical Assistance Unit maintained its consistent satisfaction levels, which was over 80%. The number of extremely satisfied innovators decreased slightly, with some innovators expressing more neutral satisfaction levels. This could be attributed to some innovators expressing a desire to have external service providers conduct a particular TA.

Despite the outlying dissatisfaction, more than 90% of innovators were satisfied with the hub staff, or vendors procured for their TA. Innovators expressed a desire to be more involved in the onboarding of external service providers at all stages, to ensure that their needs are met. The hub leveraged the Country Coordinators to lead TA scoping processes, as they were more frequently engaging the innovators. The hub aimed to tailor its work to best meet innovators' needs while managing their expectations.

In previous years, the majority of TA instances were completed by hub staff. In 2024, there was an increase in the use of external service providers. To ensure the continuation of high TA satisfaction levels, the hub encouraged the co-creation of TA scopes of work, so innovators were invested in their request. The hub also managed TAs very closely to minimize delays.

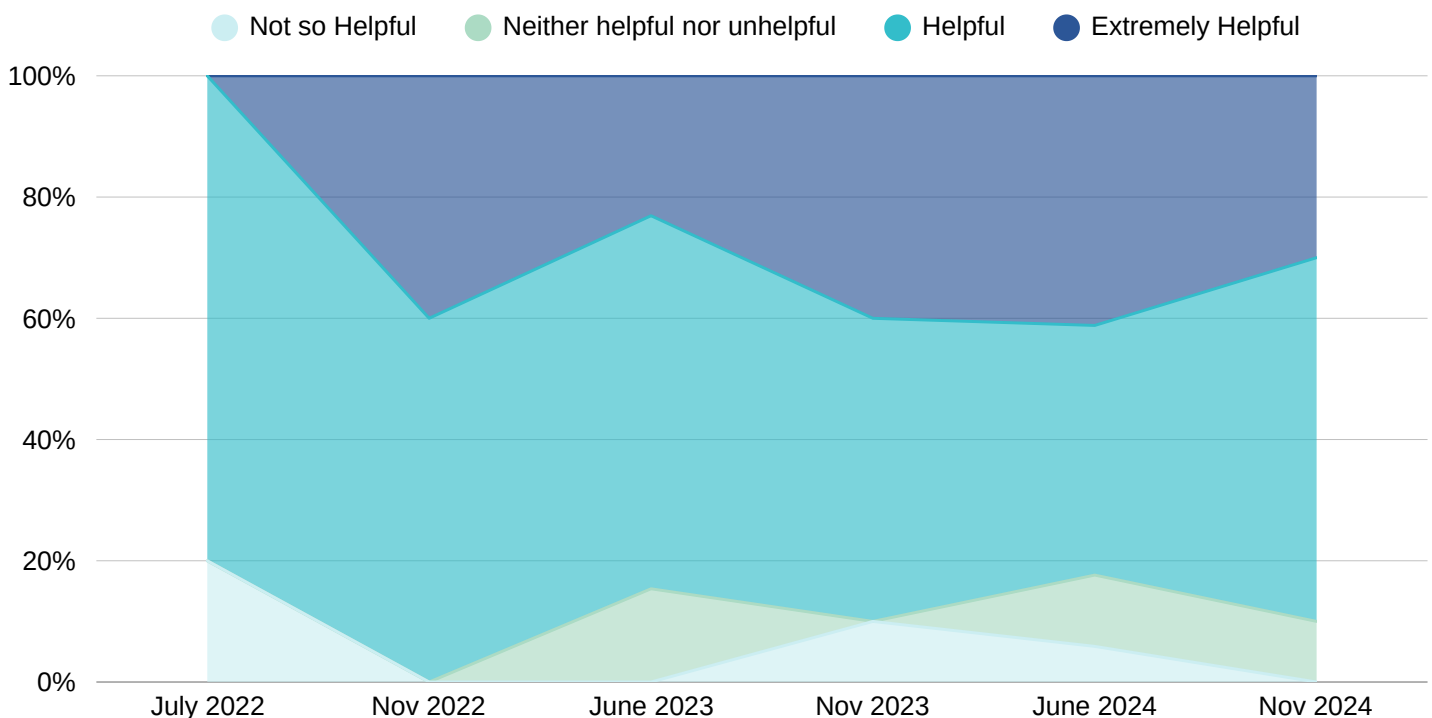
In 2024, the hub saw a significant increase in innovators rating the long-term impact of TAs as extremely positive and positive. The neutrality of the impact was also at its lowest, at 5%. Many innovators relayed very positive feedback on the long-term impact of gender TA.

One innovator stated: "The TA helped us to formalize our previously informal and haphazard way of incorporating women employees, customers, and other women-led stakeholders into our business operations. For example, we now have a formal policy to offer equal employment opportunities to both female and male candidates. The TA also helped us to reinforce a deliberate approach to favor more women in contracting new small outgrower farmers and agro-dealers. Through completing the 2X Assessment, we were able to evaluate ourselves on where we stand and areas we need to improve on gender mainstreaming."

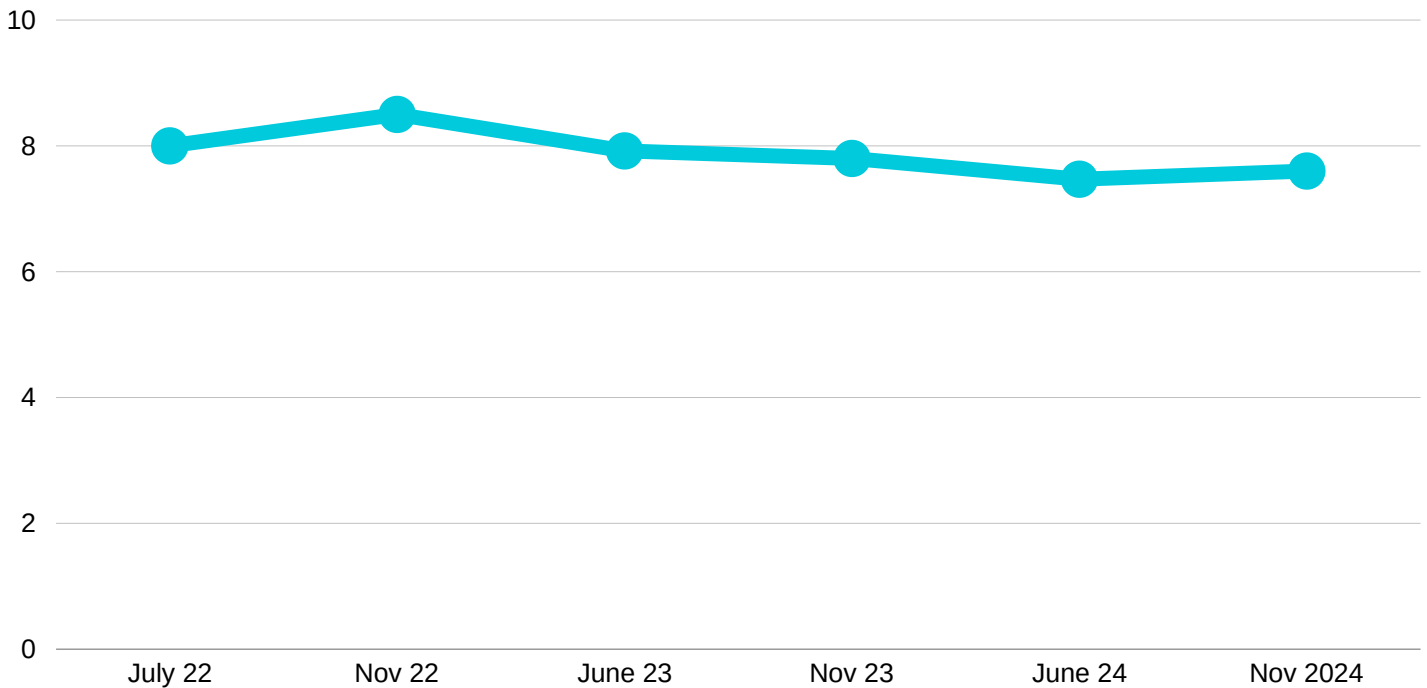
Long-term impact of environmental sustainability TA was also highly praised, particularly for how it could help innovators as they tried to raise investment. Regarding the ESMS template developed for them, COMACO shared "The support of the hub has allowed COMACO to better integrate environmental and social safeguards into its operations. This system has helped ensure that COMACO's activities are aligned with environmental standards, reducing the risk of adverse environmental impacts. It has enhanced our compliance with local sustainability requirements, making COMACO a more attractive partner for investors, donors, and other stakeholders who prioritize environmental and social responsibility."

INVESTMENT FACILITATION

How helpful has the investment readiness team's support been in moving your organization toward your goal of raising investment?



On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the S/CA Hub's Investment Readiness Team (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)



Innovators' level of satisfaction with the Brokering Unit had a slight increase between June 2024 and December 2024, largely driven by the successful delivery of investment readiness support and capital mobilization efforts during the latter half of the year. The hub made targeted efforts to enhance support through tailored coaching, actionable feedback, and increased opportunities for investor engagement.

When compared to 2023, however, there was been a gradual, overall decline. The downward trend could be attributed to frustrations among innovators, particularly in the Francophone region, where they faced significant challenges while trying to secure financing. Additionally, fewer innovators responded to questions related to investment, when compared to other QoSS questions which could have led to fluctuating figures.

Innovators shared a desire for more direct engagement with investors, emphasizing the value of interactive discussions and relationship-building opportunities. They also expressed enthusiasm for continuing their collaboration with the Brokering Unit and hub teams to further refine their investment strategies.

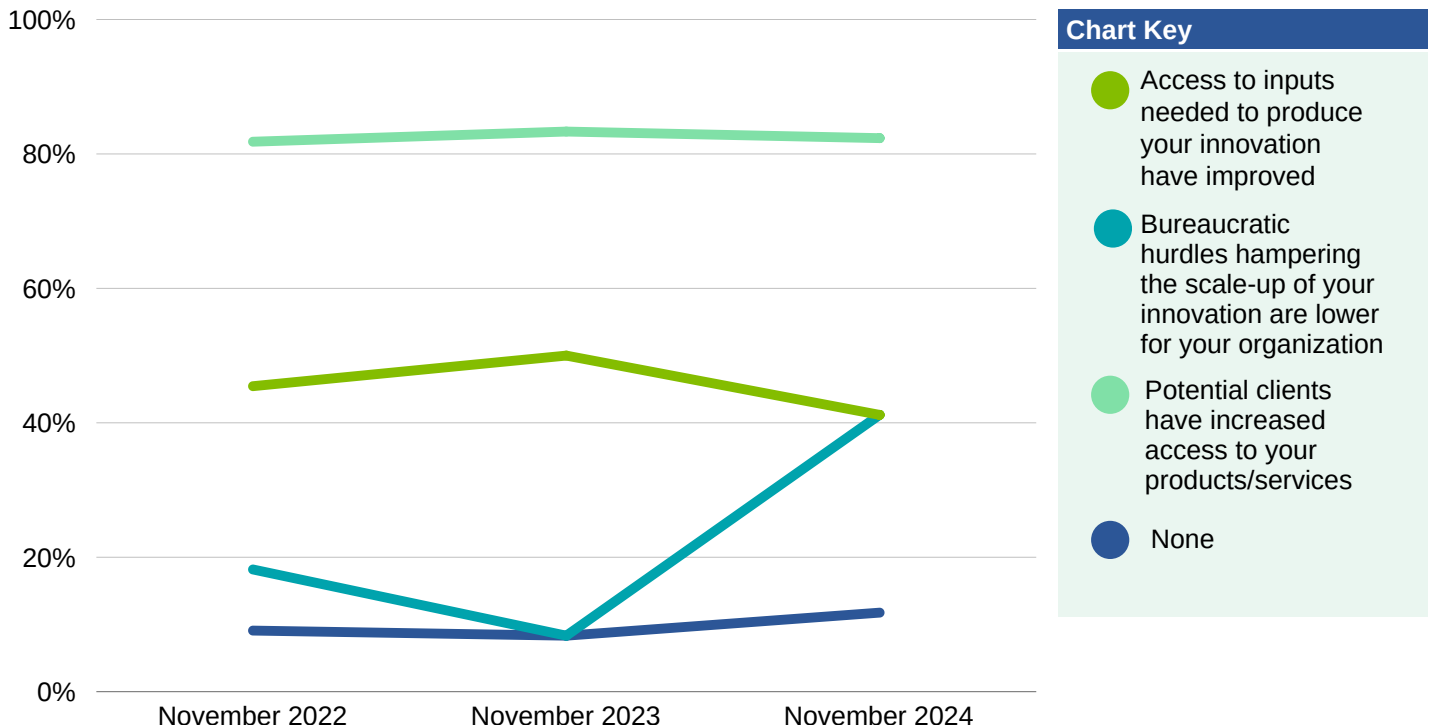
To address concerns and improve satisfaction among innovators, the Brokering Unit and the S/CA RIH implemented targeted initiatives designed to enhance the overall experience and outcomes. These efforts included the dedication of additional time to coaching innovators through the intricacies of the investment process and ensuring that they thoroughly understood hub-provided investment readiness materials. Furthermore, the hub prioritized educational initiatives by organizing panels and knowledge transfer sessions during convenings to provide innovators with practical tools and insights. To support innovators' pitch development, the hub facilitated pitching opportunities where innovators received actionable feedback, helping them refine their strategies and achieve better alignment with their long-term capital-raising goals. Collectively, these efforts strengthened innovators' preparedness and contributed to the recovery in satisfaction levels observed in the latter half of 2024.

Half of the innovators expressed that the support provided by the Brokering Unit was either "helpful" or "extremely helpful" in enhancing their long-term investment readiness. Now, they are better positioned to navigate the complexities of the capital-raising process, equipped with more knowledge, improved confidence, and refined strategies to attract investment. This was evident in one innovator's feedback, who was optimistic about their investment prospects after receiving support from the hub.

They shared "Open Capital's help with financial modeling, further developing the investor deck, as well as the conversations accompanying those about how to position our case combined with actual introductions to potential investors, has helped us to seriously engage with potential investors and present ourselves in a more convincing manner. Although this has not led to actual investments yet, it has taken us to the pre-due diligence stage with several potential investors. We are hoping to close investments with at least one of them in the next 4-6 months."

LEGAL, POLICY, AND REGULATORY SUPPORT

Since joining WE4F, which of the following have occurred? Select all that apply.



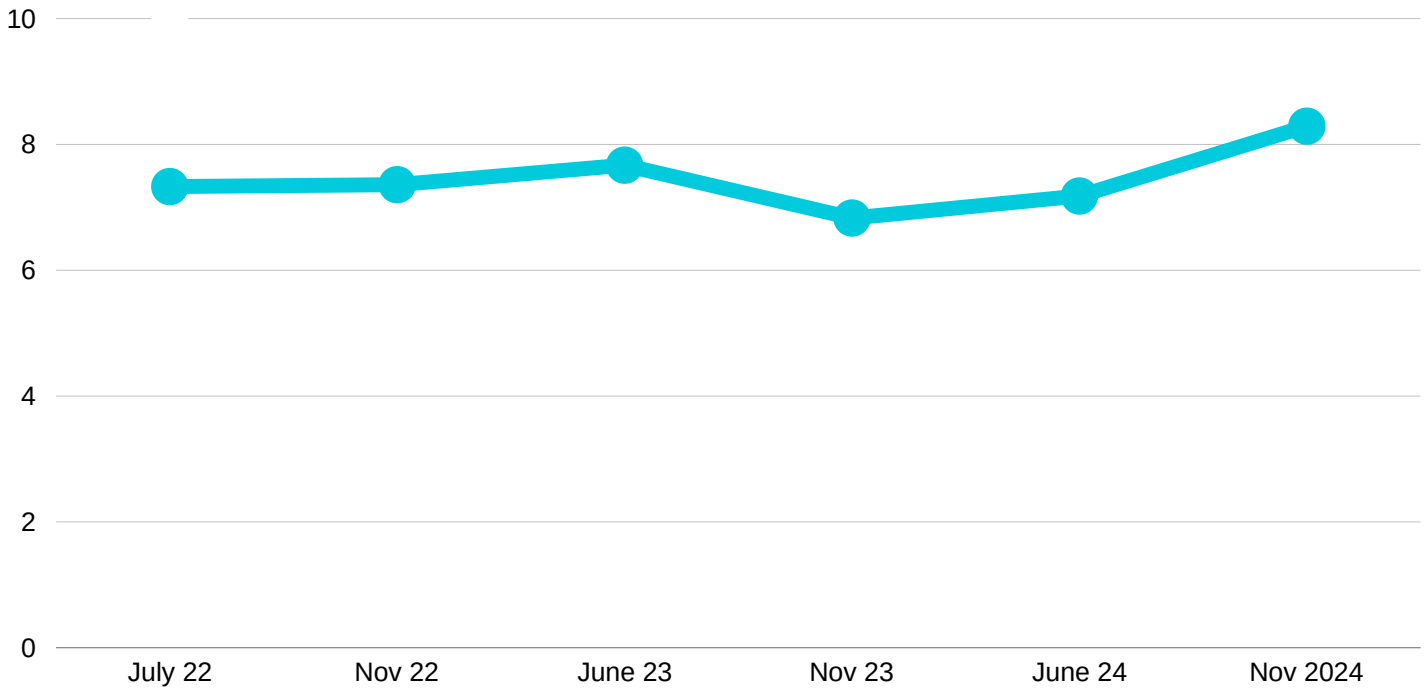
The S/CA hub saw significant improvement in innovators' satisfaction levels within the Enabling Environment Unit; it increased by almost 20% since November 2023. In 2024, Francophone innovators expressed a pressing need to receive investment facilitation assistance. Hub staff understood the DRC and Chad's challenging investment environment, so the Enabling Environment Unit matched innovators with investors. All six Francophone innovators were matched to over 85 investors operating in the region, with meetings for partnerships established between innovators and some investors. Innovators expressed great satisfaction with the matchmaking. The support may have been a contributing factor to the increased level of satisfaction with the unit.

It is also probable that the delayed realization of enabling environment-related impact, which contributed to a lower satisfaction level in 2023, became evident in 2024 as earlier support bore results. The value of market expansion, registration and intelligence support that the Enabling Environment Unit provided to innovators was seen in almost all innovators reporting an increase in knowledge about markets in which they currently operate, or in which they intend to operate. For example, Bwando and Nature's Nectar received extensive market intelligence reports for their expansion and partnership building in DRC, Botswana, and South Africa. The goal was to empower the innovators by connecting them with potential distributors and partners.

In 2023, the hub began supporting the efforts of Zambian honey-producing innovators, COMACO and Nature's Nectar, to export honey to South Africa. The hub's support required organizing engagements between the South African Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development and the Zambian Department of Veterinary Services. The Enabling Environment Unit's policy and regulatory-related support led to the drafting of a new Trade Protocol Guideline; importation of honey in South Africa was authorized by an import permit under section 3(1) of the Agricultural Pest Act, 1983 (Act No 36 of 1983). Zambian honey is still subject to irradiation until final revision of the trade protocol is established. The draft import requirement also resolves that honey from Zambia, being imported into South Africa, be accompanied by negative laboratory test results for African Foul Brood (AFB). While this was not the expected final outcome, the innovators were aware of the milestone achieved within this period.

Increased satisfaction further showed that the Enabling Environment Unit became better at understanding innovators' needs, as well as the complexities of enabling environment support, by following a bottom-up approach and utilizing continuous feedback loops. For example, the bottom-up approach was used to understand Central African innovators' specific investor-mapping challenges. Through the unit's efforts, innovators were able to connect to 85 potential investors as well as develop pitch decks and increase potential clients due to that networking and connecting of innovators to distributors, and partners.

**On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the S/CA Hub's
Enabling Environment Unit (1-Extremely Dissatisfied to 10-Extremely Satisfied)**



When enabling environment issues occurred, in an effort to improve satisfaction levels, the hub assisted innovators with navigating new and existing markets, and addressing new challenges faced by innovators. A strong interest in carbon credits started appearing in 2023, so the hub provided TA support to innovators through webinars on carbon credits and renewable energy to innovators. The carbon credit webinar, which was hosted by VERRA (a carbon standards organization), helped innovators obtain clear information on carbon credit trading. Afterwards, innovators worked one-on-one with a consultant to understand their unique needs and the challenges of carbon credits, along with the benefits of carbon credits for their operational growth.

The hub was also able to review existing organic standard certification requirements for Zambia, then share requirements with Bwando who was looking to certify its products. This support helped the innovator meet the required standards for its products as they made plans to expand into the DRC for a broader market reach.

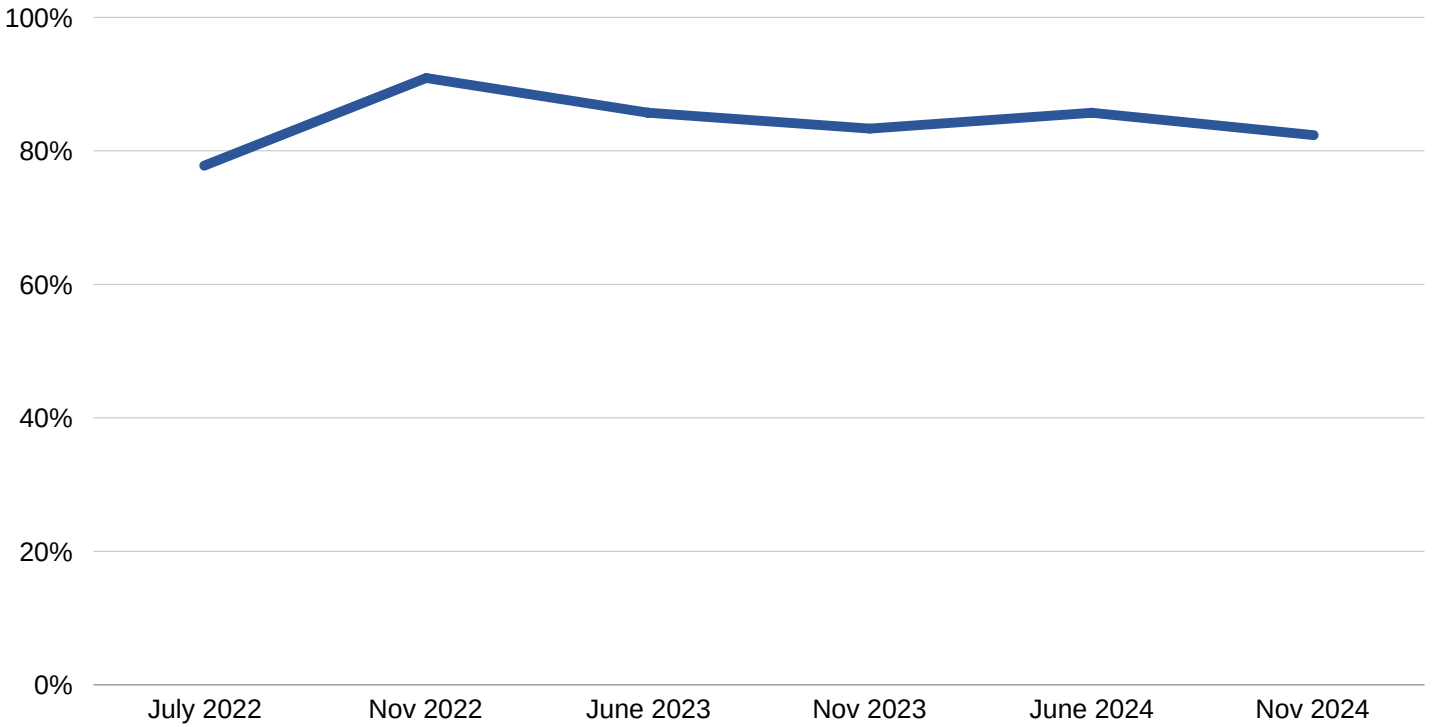
Challenges faced by the hub and innovators in addressing enabling environment issues were unique within the two regions – Southern Africa and Central Africa. The diverse parties – government departments, financial institutions, investors, associations, value chain distributors, and retailers – had differing interests and priorities. Working together to align innovators' needs with a focus on the different actors remained challenging, especially as policies and regulations differed within regional and national water-energy-food nexuses. It was often time-consuming due to slow responses from bureaucracies, as well as organizational protocols.

In the DRC and Mozambique, the constant presence of conflicts, civil unrest, and war specifically in Goma made it even more challenging for innovators to scale and expand as they were often constrained by mobility. Clearly communicated in innovator feedback, was the need to develop market alternatives as well as connect innovators to potential investors who had high-risk appetites. The long certification process in Zambia and the opaque business registration process in the DRC, made it hard for innovators to expand their businesses. As a result, Bwando and Nature's Nectar shelved their expansion plans. The above issues, however, were often beyond the control of the hub as solutions could only be externally driven at the pace set by partners within the value chain.

Despite shelved expansion efforts focused on more challenging regions, innovators maintained that the hub continued to support partnership mapping within and outside of innovators' countries, linking them to potential distributors and partners willing to support their expansion. For example, in Zimbabwe, inconsistencies in regulatory frameworks, importation, licensing, and taxation of renewable energy products excluded some innovators from benefiting from the tax exemptions that were enjoyed by others. The Enabling Environment Unit maintained continuous engagement with government departments for revisions and coherence, particularly for innovators needing support around tax exemption and public procurement.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about gender integration?



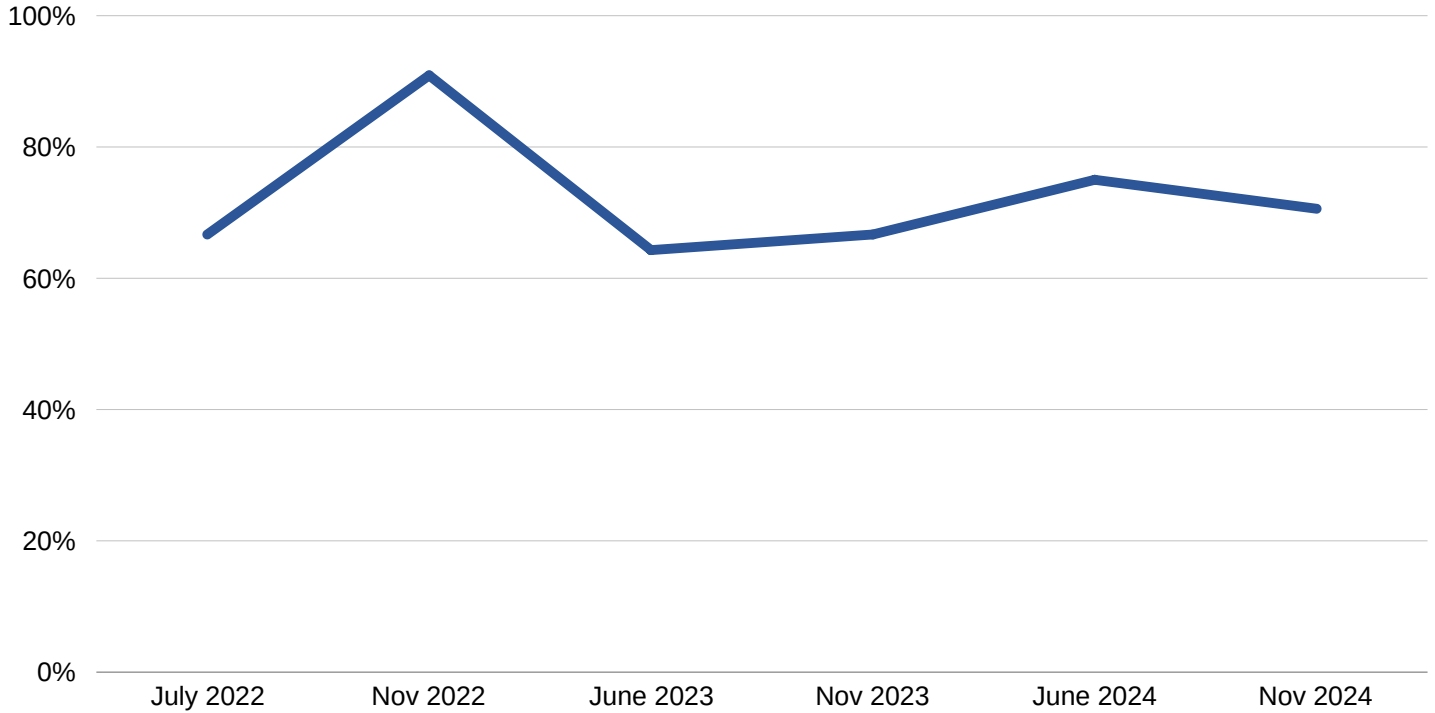
The hub provided various gender integration learning opportunities to innovators, including, but not limited to, hosting a webinar series on gender integration, conducting sessions during Regional and Annual Convenings, and facilitating gender integration assessments through the Equillo platform. Innovators were able to scientifically track gender integration progress in their businesses. Through the support, 33% of innovators are now in the advanced stage, while 12.5% of innovators moved up at least one stage from where they were before joining WE4F. The support also empowered innovators to reach more women end-users, resulting in 51% of all end-users reached being women end-users. Additionally, 33% of all hub-supported innovators were women-led and/or -owned.



Left: Zonal (Chad) works with women cooperatives who process caught fish into fish meal and oil.

Right: Ndkay (Zambia) provides cold storage solutions near markets so end-users can store their unsold produce overnight.

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about Base of the Pyramid (BOP)?



Since 2023, S/CA innovators' BoP knowledge slightly increased. In the latter part of 2024, innovators began initial assessments and received introductory webinars related to BoP, particularly for the OCFI innovators. To date over 50% of the OCFI have expressed an interest in developing gender and BOP action plans for their businesses and they are currently in the initial phase of this process where they are undertaking a survey to determine their specific needs and priorities. The hub had planned several BoP activities, but they were not completed due to the SWO and subsequent program termination.

Future funding/programs that offer gender and BoP support for innovators should conduct more individualized activities that cover a range of key themes. Some recommendations are:

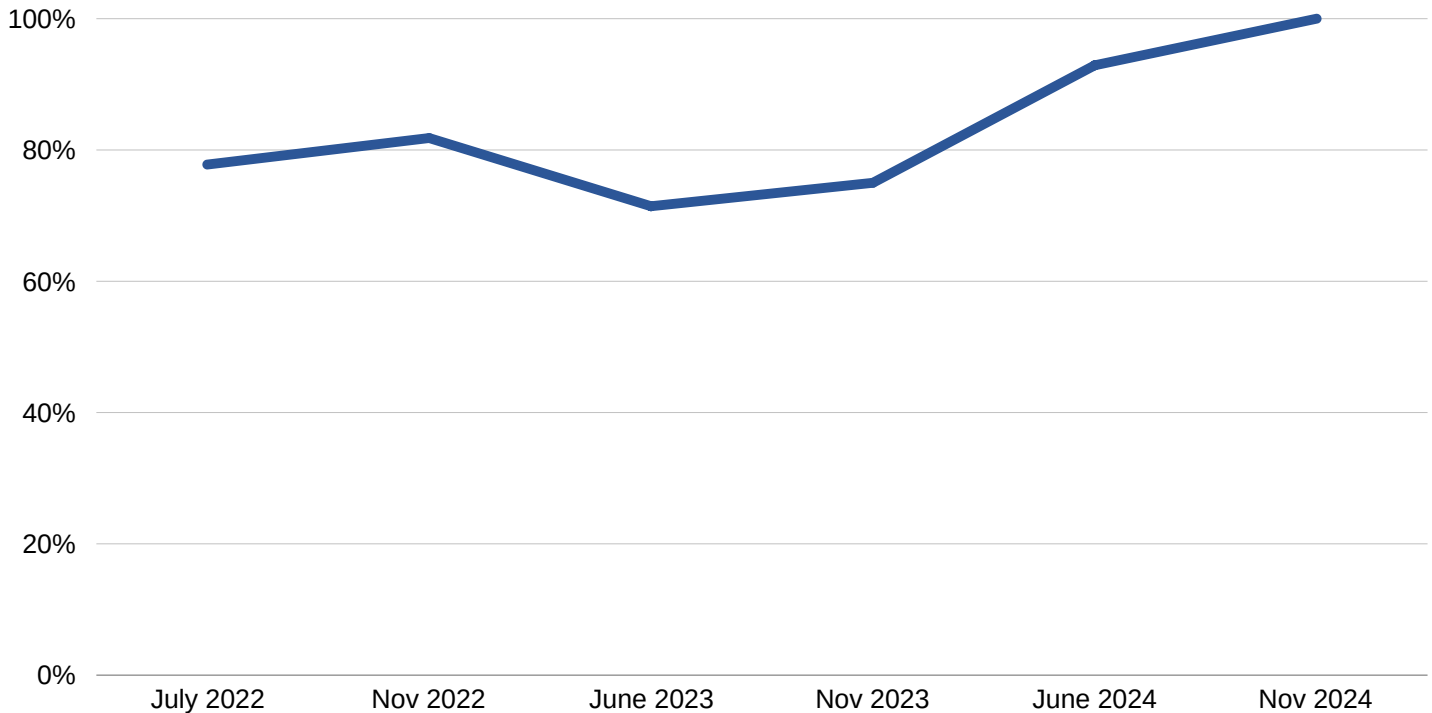
- Assisting innovators with developing and operationalizing their anti-gender-based violence in their workplace policies
- Prioritizing the implementation of key actions that were recommended in the 2X Eligibility Criteria Survey
- Convening quarterly webinars and identifying more areas for TA as well as end-user financing workshops
- Organizing in-person gender and BoP integration meetings with Zimbabwe-based innovators
- Introducing short 15-minute learning slots in the quarterly webinars to educate the innovators on BoP and what it means for their bottom line
- Demonstrating clearly who the BoP are and how they can help innovators' businesses scale.



Left: Corn grown by seeds sold by Phoenix Seeds (Mozambique) sways in the wind.

Right: Meat Naturally (South Africa) Eco-Rangers (employees) and cattle owners prepare for an auction.

Has the engagement with WE4F led to an increase in knowledge about environmental sustainability, including climate resilience and biodiversity?



In 2024, all innovators reported an increase in knowledge on environmental sustainability, including climate and biodiversity. To achieve this increase, the hub built awareness around integrated waste management, which contributed to innovators' understanding of the circular economy. It also helped innovators understand what they needed to manage waste throughout the lifecycle of their activities and operations. The development of, and continuous engagement with innovators on, the Supplemental Initial Environmental Examination, EMMP, and EMMRs led to innovators not only understanding their environmental impacts, but also understanding how to mitigate and manage them. Tools and webinars developed and presented by the hub also supported innovators' development of sustainable operations.

The hub made efforts to analyze and understand each innovator's knowledge gaps and prepare information packages designed to meet them at their point of need. This was done through webinars and continuous engagement with each innovator on the conditions of their EMMP, status updates on EMMP compliance, and closing identified gaps. The EMMR was also used as a tool to audit the innovators. Throughout the auditing process the hub identified where innovators needed support.

To encourage ESG integration, the hub highlighted innovators that raised finance as a result of ESG-principle integration. Meat Naturally, for example, led a session at the 2024 Regional Convening where they shared the benefit of becoming registered for carbon credits. Reel Gardening showcased their strong circular economy model, which led to them having an almost zero-waste footprint, which saved them money while protecting the environment. Nature's Nectar also explained how reducing waste and chemicals benefited their business.

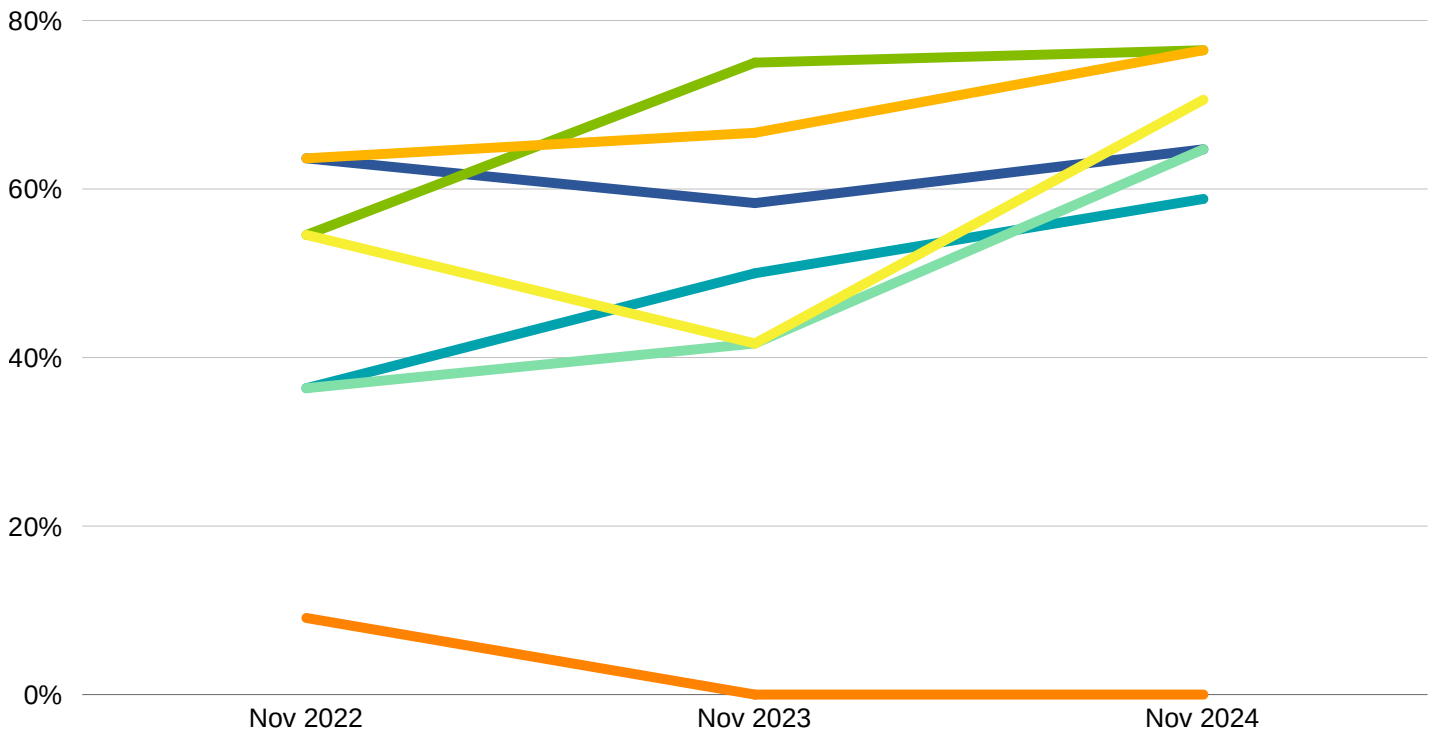


Left: Freejoy (DRC) prepares drying racks for their fish processing activities.

Right: Bing (DRC) employee poses next to a batch of their agricultural waste-based briquettes.



Does M&E data collection for WE4F support any of the following aspects of your business/organization?



In 2024, there was a slight increase in the utilization of monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) data by innovators. For strategic decision-making, in 2024, 68% of the innovators used MEL data, up from 65% in 2022. Furthermore, in 2024, 64% of innovators used MEL data to publicize their business impact, up from 62% in 2022. These results suggest that innovators were increasingly recognizing the value of MEL data in making data-driven decisions and communicating their impact. Even when new innovators were being onboarded, upward trends in the use and perceived value of MEL among innovators continued. The persistence of said trends indicated that improvements in MEL support may have been even stronger in 2024 than what was captured in surveys. It is a possibility due to the fact that newly onboarded innovators typically report lower scores on MEL learning progresses. Additionally, there was a fair distribution of innovators who found that target setting, indicator selection, and data collection processes were "easy" or "neither easy nor difficult." This suggests that while a portion of innovators navigated these processes easily, some still faced moderate challenges.

Chart Key

- Customer analysis
- Fundraising
- Managing partners
- Publicizing impact
- Sales/marketing
- Strategic decision-making
- Don't use WE4F data outside of reporting

In addition to the aforementioned uses, innovators also leverages MEL data for fundraising by incorporating it into their funding applications to demonstrate their footprint and impact. There was a decline in the number of innovators who did not use MEL data outside of WE4F reporting, with figures decreasing from 9% in 2022, to 7% in 2023, down to 3% in 2024.

Overall, innovators demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of MEL processes and expressed satisfaction with the support provided by the hub. A large proportion of the innovators shared that through the hub's support, they felt ready to collect data for "most" of their indicators. They also noted, however, a need for the hub to simplify data collection processes and provide customized data collection tools for improved reporting.



Left: Food grown through the closed loop system of Palmworth Investments (Zimbabwe).



Right: End-user shows the processed end result of crops grown using organic fertilizer from Bwando Farms (Zambia).

USAID CLOSURE

On January 27, 2025, the S/CA RIH received a Stop Work Order (SWO), instructing the hub to stop all WE4F activities pending the outcome of USAID's review of the project. Subsequently, on February 10th, 2025, the hub received communication from USAID that the S/CA RIH project had been terminated for convenience, with immediate effect.

The sudden termination of the hub led to job losses for 17 project staff. Furthermore, the SWO affected several ongoing TA instances. Disruption of the TA delivery negatively impacted innovators as they relied on the TA to facilitate their investment funding search efforts, scale their business operations, and forge strategic partnerships. At the time of termination, a total of 18 innovators were actively participating in hub activities – four Zimbabwe biogas OCFI innovators, one CFI 1 innovator, and 13 OCFI innovators. The other 14 innovators had already either graduated or been terminated for poor performance.

The termination of the hub caused severe operational and financial challenges for all innovators. In Zimbabwe, GreenZim Ventures, who had received TA to secure a €2 million (about \$2.3 million USD) grant, lost the opportunity. This significantly affected their expansion and day-to-day operational plans, leading to job losses for biogas masons.

Four of the five DRC-based innovators suffered a double tragedy as the termination of their grants occurred as they had to flee their homes due to war. Many lost their business assets due to rampant looting. These innovators are now carrying out market studies in new, more secure areas. Some of them, like Freejoy, are expanding their business offerings to include fish canning and spice drying.

Zonal, based in Chad, is seeking support to access alternative funding by applying to the Adaptation Fund for accreditation. Bwando Farms in Zambia is pivoting its business model from business-to-business to business-to-consumer. The innovator estimates that having direct access to end-users will triple its revenue.

The impact of the S/CA RIH termination is likely to last into the foreseeable future as innovators adjust to the new business realities and pivot accordingly. Innovators had to reduce their staff, which in turn affects their business development and expansion plans. Given the critical role that water-energy-food innovations play in ensuring food security and promoting climate-smart agriculture, the USAID closure will have far-reaching impacts on food security, livelihoods, and environmental sustainability of the Southern Africa and Central Africa regions, and beyond.

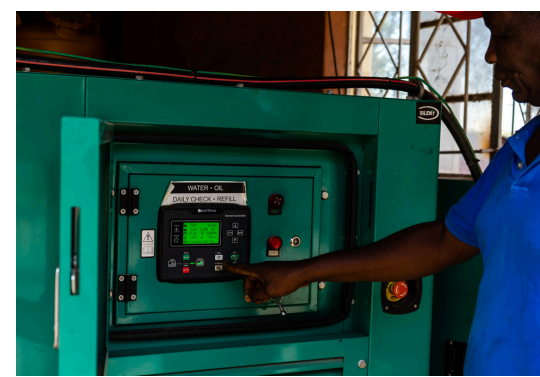
In August 2025, the WE4F program was re-started by remaining WE4F Founding Partners to implement an orderly closeout of the WE4F program by June 2026, as originally envisioned in previous workplans. The hub will provide a final round of TA and reporting to appropriately support innovators, and distill lessons learned to ensure sustainability of WE4F's activities.

In preparation for resuming activities under the bridge framework, the hub engaged all 18 active innovators to discuss the impact of USAID closure on their businesses and identify one priority TA required by each innovator – only one TA per innovator was approved due to budget and time limitations. One of the 18 innovators, Alzanael, an agro-processing SME from Zimbabwe, indicated that they would not be able to join the bridge program as they needed to re-focus their efforts on growing their revenue base. Four of the 18 innovators did not respond to the hub's invitation to rejoin WE4F under the new bridge framework.

Thirteen innovators accepted the invitation to re-join WE4F and confirmed their willingness to participate in MEL reporting to ensure accurate innovator performance and programmatic impact assessment. Returning innovators requested TA support mainly for investment facilitation, market research, and marketing. The TA is critical for mitigating the impact of USAID's closure on innovators' respective business operations. Innovators based in the DRC requested support with market studies as they plan to find new and more secure areas from which to operate due to their original operational areas being destroyed and rendered inaccessible during the war. The hub will also provide capacity-building support to innovators like Onyx and GreenZim to strengthen their internal systems, including but not limited to, financial management systems, ICT systems, and legal templates.



Left: Food grown using biodegradable seed tape from Reel Gardening (South Africa).
Right: Onyx Earth (Zimbabwe) end-user completes daily check-in of biodiegster system.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenges	Solutions
Open Call for Innovations	
Innovators receiving TA-only under the WE4F bridge program have multiple TA requests.	The hub will accelerate the delivery of TA through the identification of strategic high-impact business needs and providing targeted and sustainable TA that has an impact and value beyond the life of WE4F.
Innovator Reporting	
The onboarding of innovators was not aligned across cohorts, so the hub ran reporting cycles almost continuously throughout the year. This strained MEL Specialists and supporting staff, as their work continuously required a high level of effort. OCFI innovators were onboarded towards the end of the 2023/24 agricultural season. This posed reporting challenges as most of them did not have any data yet at the end of the season. The time period between their onboarding and the end of the season was too short.	The hub utilized Country Coordinators to support document collection, verification of deliverables, and general first-line review of all reporting documents before final review and approval by the MEL Specialist. The support provided some relief on the MEL Specialist's bandwidth. The hub moved the reporting of affected KPIs reporting to the next reporting cycle when the agricultural season would have been completed, and the innovators collected data.
Partnerships	
The hub signed MoUs with local and regional partners to provide end-user financing support to innovators. However, the time left to execute the MoUs was limited as the WE4F program moved towards closure.	As part of implementing the MoUs, the hub directly connected innovators to their in-country MFIs and other partners so that they could have independent relationships that persisted even after the end of WE4F.
Post-SWO Challenges	
Some OCFI innovators lost match funding contracts from other donors/programs leading to staff layoffs.	During the WE4F bridge program, the hub is prioritizing TAs that help innovators access alternative funding and increase their sales volumes.
Innovators aborted their business expansion plans due to a lack of financial resources.	The hub is seeking opportunities to facilitate strategic partnerships for innovators during the WE4F bridge program. These partnerships will be instrumental in expanding innovator businesses.

LOOKING FORWARD

WE4F BRIDGE CONTRACT

Following the closure of USAID, WE4F resumed activities in August 2025 to support innovators under a new TA-only bridge framework. The purpose of the bridge framework is to ensure a smooth close-out to the WE4F program after five years of implementation. Additionally, the bridge framework will complete TA instances that were ongoing at the time of project termination. The hub will also provide critical TA that mitigates the impact of USAID closure on innovators' business survival and scaling. The hub will also collect and document the data and information necessary for the effective closeout of the WE4F program. Collection and documentation will include, but not be limited to, the collection of MEL data, lessons learned, and other insights to inform future programming, along with the preparation of the final narrative, financial, and audit reports. All TA activities are planned to be completed by early January 2026, followed by collection of MEL data and lessons learned in the following months.

INNOVATOR SUSTAINABILITY POST-PROGRAM

With the program set to end in 2025, the S/CA RIH focused on setting the foundations of sustainability for its innovators beyond the program. The financing gap for agricultural SMEs, and farmers, is significant. Through MoUs with EquityBank and Zambuko Trust, the hub planned on intensifying its efforts to facilitate farmers' access to financing. The unsatisfied demand of smallholder farmers and SMEs for financial services can be met by MFIs. Banks are beginning to recognize the opportunities available through small-scale farmers and are taking steps to adapt systems to facilitate micro-lending. An end-user financing workshop held in Zimbabwe resulted in the signing of an MoU with First Banking Corporation (FBC Bank) to assist the bank with market intelligence on the viability of funding biogas technologies.

The USAID closure disrupted hub and innovators' discussions with a German voluntary carbon markets non-profit organization called Atmosfair. Atmosfair had expressed interest in investing in six innovators from the hub and had initiated detailed discussions with the selected innovators, mainly from Zambia and DRC. Unfortunately, this alternative investment opportunity was lost due to USAID closure.

DATA COLLECTION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

The hub made tremendous efforts to catch up on the targets that it had been lagging behind in 2023. Support provided to innovators resulted in the hub exceeding most of its indicators. In the last quarter of 2025, the hub will collect data from all 13 innovators who agreed to rejoin WE4F for final assessments. The data collected and observations made will be crucial inputs into the final narrative report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRIORITY DIALOGUE

Challenges related to policy and regulatory barriers are significant and need to be addressed to reduce the issues faced by S/CA innovators. Challenges linked to structural ecosystems that should be addressed are: finding reliable buyers for products; unclear renewable energy policies; policy inconsistencies across the region; foot-and-mouth disease trade barriers; capital constraints; and public sector engagement. To overcome these challenges, governments, the private sector, and other actors should focus on policy and advocacy; structural ecosystems (market trends and expansion); partnership and networking; digital innovations; water management (water savings tools); energy efficiency; and carbon markets.

As the program heads toward closure, other water-energy-food nexus stakeholders can learn several lessons from the S/CA RIH's 2024 activities:

1. Partnership engagements, as well as policy and public advocacy with public and private actors usually takes time. Innovators often do not get to see many benefits in the short term as the process is often delayed. There is a need to manage innovators' expectations for them to see the long-term impact and benefits.
2. Having many stakeholders involved in solving enabling environment-related issues, such as government departments, associations, and the private sector, opens room for bureaucratic processes. Engagements are hard to manage, especially when there is limited responsiveness on the part of some actors. The lesson learned is to work with actors at different stages and find commonalities that can bring all parties together through quick wins.
3. Innovators often tend to have broad needs and priorities that are, occasionally, not well articulated. It is important to follow a bottom-up approach that groups issues by themes and provides relevant solutions in a way that can be beneficial to other innovators – a needs assessment is a useful tool for achieving this task.
4. Regulatory challenges can sometimes be similar for innovators across countries and regions. A key lesson is to document and share enabling environmental challenges to raise awareness, as well as share success stories with innovators and donor partners



Left: RDG (Zambia) employee sets up a solar-powered water pump.

Right: Tivwane Money Solution (Zambia) end-users learn about the innovator's services.

