

## Evaluation Report for the TLI Project phase 1



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# Glossary

## List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BTL	Business Transformation Lab
CDE	Center for Development and Environment
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CFS-RAI	Committee on World Food Security's Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CoP	Community of Practice
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EOA	Ecological Organic Agriculture
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessments
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FiBL	Research Institute for Organic Agriculture
FIBL	Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
GPFS	Global Program Food Security
ICRAF	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry
LBI	Land-Based Investment
LEI	Land Equity International
MLRG	Mekong Region Land Governance
MSP	Multistakeholder Platform
OECD/DAC	Development Assistance Committee
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RAI	Responsible Agriculture Investments
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific
RRM	Risk Reward Model
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound.
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers
TLI	Transformative Land Investments
TLIP	Transformative Land Investment Project
VGFSyN	Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries & Forests

## Definitions and explanations/use of terms in this report

**Agroecology**—According to the FAO, Agroecology is an integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of food and agricultural systems. It seeks to optimize the interactions between plants, animals, humans, and the environment while considering the social aspects that must be addressed for a sustainable and fair food system.

**Transformative Land Investments (TLI)**. TLI are large-scale land-based investments that adopt a holistic, systems-oriented approach to simultaneously generate environmental, social, economic, and societal benefits. These investments aim to develop innovative and integrated

solutions to systemic challenges faced by marginalized populations and fragile landscapes. By adhering to agroecological principles and promoting environmental stewardship, economic growth, and human well-being, TLIs seek to ensure sustainable food systems and responsible investment practices that respect the rights of local communities.

**Land-based investments** involve allocating capital into land assets with the expectation of generating returns through various means. These investments can encompass a range of activities, including Agricultural Development, Forestry, Energy (e.g. hydropower), Infrastructure Development or Mineral mining

**Responsible Agriculture Investments, RAI.** FAO defines RAI as investments that are sustainable and beneficial to livelihoods, the environment, and communities. These investments should respect human rights, foster food security and nutrition, and support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. The FAO emphasizes that responsible investments should generate positive social, economic, and environmental impacts.

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## Acknowledgments

As FiBL team evaluators, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all individuals and organizations who participated with us in the different evaluation process steps for the first phase of the *“Transformative Land Investment Project”*. In particular, we thank SDC, ICRAF/CIFOR, SNV, RECOFTC, LEI, and all TLIP stakeholders, including the representatives of the Steering Committee, for the fruitful exchange with us, their inputs, and their commitments to run the project evaluation in appropriate conditions. Special thanks go to SNV for allowing us to prospect in the field of their activities in Ghana and feeding us with the required contacts and information. We are also grateful to RECOFTC and LEI and to their partners who are implementing in Laos for their great cooperation and facilitation support in conducting the interviews in Laos. To our consulted peers from FIBL and CDE, we thank them for sharing their appreciated experience and expertise.

# I. Executive Summary

The Transformative Land Investment (TLI) Project (TLIP), a collaboration between SDC, CIFOR/ICRAF, and partners, aims to promote sustainable and inclusive food systems by improving land tenure and fostering responsible investments in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ghana, Laos, and Myanmar. Following agroecological principles and voluntary guidelines (VGGT, CFS-RAI), TLIP supports the effective consideration of environmental and social impacts in investor practices and policy frameworks. SDC funded 80% of the first phase (2022–2025) but decided in early 2025 to discontinue support due to budget cuts before considering this external evaluation but after finishing its content. This evaluation by FiBL, commissioned in 2024, assessed TLIP's effectiveness using DAC/OECD criteria. The methodology included document reviews, stakeholder consultations, surveys, and participatory workshops. The evaluation assessed the project based on DAC/OECD criteria.

The **Relevance** of TLIP is high, particularly for the target group if involved in (potential or acute) conflicts. In those cases, poverty risk is high, and the food system becomes dysfunctional. However, we can't see (yet) how the approach is a lever for being transformative. For example, agroecology is a system by design with high knowledge needs, and it is not a system by default as a result of responsible investments.

**Coherence:** TLIP fits very well in the GPFS strategy 2021-24, particularly on the objectives level. It follows the logic of bringing evidence to the global debates of the international community well. On national levels, the externally designed TLIP engagement is welcomed and coherent with the objectives but does not integrate well into poorly coordinated international cooperation strategies.

**Effectiveness** is good so far, particularly on the output level, but it is very uncertain if outcomes (in planning after 10 years) will be achieved qualitatively and quantitatively. Outcome development has not started yet. Assumptions are not fully explicit; some haven't been fulfilled yet, and risks remain.

The **Efficiency** of the TLIP implementation is very high. The project has delivered a multitude of document resources and research results that were promised in output planning.

The project's targeted **Impact** for phase 1 is minimal when assessed against the overambitious targets stated in the planning document. Provided the project strategy is further refined and developed considering our recommendations and SDC invests at the same level, we expect the impact to happen, however, to a lower level than planned and at a later stage.

**Sustainability** has not been sufficiently addressed yet. While the Project Document describes a sustainability strategy, this issue is delegated to the future. The visionary sustainability statement depends on strong impact and context development, which are not observable now. Co-funding of the next phase is not yet assured.

The TLIP project integrates gender inclusiveness effectively, with strong sensitivity and engagement at both global and country levels. Youth was not a primary focus in project planning and was only considered during implementation, requiring more emphasis in future phases if prioritized by SDC. While TLIP aligns with agroecological principles, it underestimates the knowledge and capacity-building required for smallholders' adoption in their practices.

Given future development options, SDC can either maintain TLIP's current trajectory, expand its activities, or narrow its focus while keeping resource levels constant. Contrary to the evaluator's assessments, preferring more focus, implementors prefer diversifying or maintaining the present plan.

The evaluation concludes that the project has significantly contributed to the land governance debate, linking responsible investments to transformative food and agriculture systems. It has demonstrated strong coherence, relevance, and efficiency at the output level, with well-functioning partnerships and dedicated staff. However, its complexity, broad scope, limited resources, and ambitious goals have limited its overall effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. This is also due to the currently still short project implementation period (2.5 years out of 11 years that were planned) in which impacts of the system's transformative nature can't be expected.

The recommendations assume that the overall budget remains the same (10 Million USD for 3 years), with SDC providing 50%. Overall, the evaluators consider the TLIP an important project highly relevant to the food system (including for the future one-health approach). TLIP has a very innovative character and the potential to profile consortium partners and SDC in development approaches. We recommend the continuation of the project with strategic adjustments.

The FiBL team makes six recommendations, which are further detailed and substantiated in Chapter 6:

**# 1: Continue investment in TLI with increased or at least the same efforts**

**# 2: Revise the objective system**

**#3: Reduce complexity, focus the strategy**

**#4: Stress transformation strategy**

**#5: Stress sustainability concept**

**#6 Improve usefulness for SDC's global work**

## 2. Background and Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction, context

Large-scale land investments in Africa and Asia often harm smallholders, women, and ecosystems using unsustainable exploitation methods and exacerbating food insecurity. To address this challenge, the thematic section Food System of SDC and CIFOR/ICRAF partnered with a consortium of LEI, RECOFTC, and SNV to implement the Transformative Land Investment (TLI) Project (TLIP). TLIP eventually promotes sustainable, inclusive food systems by improving land tenure systems and promoting responsible investments, following agroecological principles and voluntary guidelines such as VGGT and CFS-RAI. TLIP focuses on integrating environmental and social impacts into investor practices, fostering inclusive policies, and influencing national, regional, and global frameworks. The project targets Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ghana, Laos, and Myanmar on a national level, ASEAN and African Union on a regional level, and the global level institutions (various fora), leveraging local expertise and political will to counter adverse land investment impacts. Gender equity, resilience, and ecosystem health are central goals.

SDC finances 80% of the project's first-phase cost, aiming for long-term sustainability through partnerships and innovation for governments, the private sector, and the international cooperation community.

The main reference documents for this collaboration are the GPFS program framework 2021 – 2024, the TLIP project document phase 1, and the annual reports 2022 and 2023 with all their linked documents. TLI started in January 2022, with a launch event in June 2022, and lasts until June 2025 (42 months). In 2024, SDC called for an external evaluation with the OECD/DAC criteria in the SDC Guidance for Evaluation framework of May 2024, which it commissioned to FiBL. The evaluation is based on the TOR of SDC and the FiBL offer. The inception report, which FiBL discussed with the project team and approved by SDC, explains the details of the evaluation process.

In February 2025, SDC decided to stop the TLIP after the first phase. This decision was not based on this evaluation report but on their need to cut programs based on parliament decisions in December 2024 that SDC's means substantially and forced the SDC management to reduce their activities.

### 2.2 Objective & scope of this evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide SDC with an external assessment of the first phase of the project and contribute prospectively to the learning-accountability-steering triangle. The objectives were to (a) evaluate the first two years of the project phase 1 according to the DAC/OECD criteria against the planning; (b) assess the systemic changes and impacts that were or are about to be triggered by the project; and (c) recommend to SDC how to strategize the TLI support after the present contract expiring mid-2025.<sup>1</sup>

The scope of the evaluation includes all TLIP activities so far in all countries and on the regional and global levels. The evaluation focuses on the overall project, looking at the management, global, regional, and country levels. It takes Ghana and Laos as cases to investigate the countries and pillars, respectively, of the project's mechanisms to coordinate and implement interventions. Other countries participated in the general discussions and were subject to the overall assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> More details see TOR, proposal and inception report

## 2.3 Evaluation methodology

Figure 1 visualizes the evaluation process, which includes seven steps: inception, data collection, verification, and synthesis. The steps were conceptualized to ensure a good independent evaluation (i.e., external assessment) while involving stakeholders to optimize participation and reflection (i.e., stakeholder learning).

As a means to obtain a broad project understanding, the experiences and opinions of the various project-related players, including partners from other donors and others involved in the TLIP, were considered. Nevertheless, the core of the evaluation relates to the review of existing documents and the feedback from the consortium partners, SDC, and participants of the various project formats in Ghana and Laos. Due to the short project period and the fact that the project is still piloting concepts and working with first applicers from the government, private sector, and civil society, e.g., what they call “champions among investors”, it was difficult to get qualified sector feedback from a bigger sample size.

We held nine virtual group interviews, 11 meetings in Ghana and, 14 meetings in Laos. Two virtual workshops, one focused on the African countries and one on the Asian countries (with 10 and 18 participants), discussed the outcomes of the survey and future options with participatory methods (Mentimeter, in which we received 202 contributions for 3 questions including some contributions from other interactions to the same questions). We invited 113 persons to the survey relying on addresses from the various consortium partners (among 0 from Mozambique, 37 from Ghana, 34 from Ethiopia, 15 from Laos, and 9 from Myanmar). Out of the 113 invitees, 24 responded (overall participation rate of 14 %, 0% Mozambique, 33% Ghana, 30% Ethiopia, 13% Laos, 8% Myanmar and 16% from side of the project implementors). The invitations to the survey (including 3 times reminders) were sent out in English, Portuguese, Amharic, and Lao.

The multitude of sources by the various provided a wide range of information and impressions. We processed them with our knowledge, our own means, and with the assistance of artificial intelligence. We balanced and weighed information based on the sources, considering interests to get to a picture that was as sensible as it was possible for us. We can't fully exclude certain biases, for instance, having an overweight group of actively participating groups over others who preferred to be absent.

The detailed methodology is presented in the inception report.

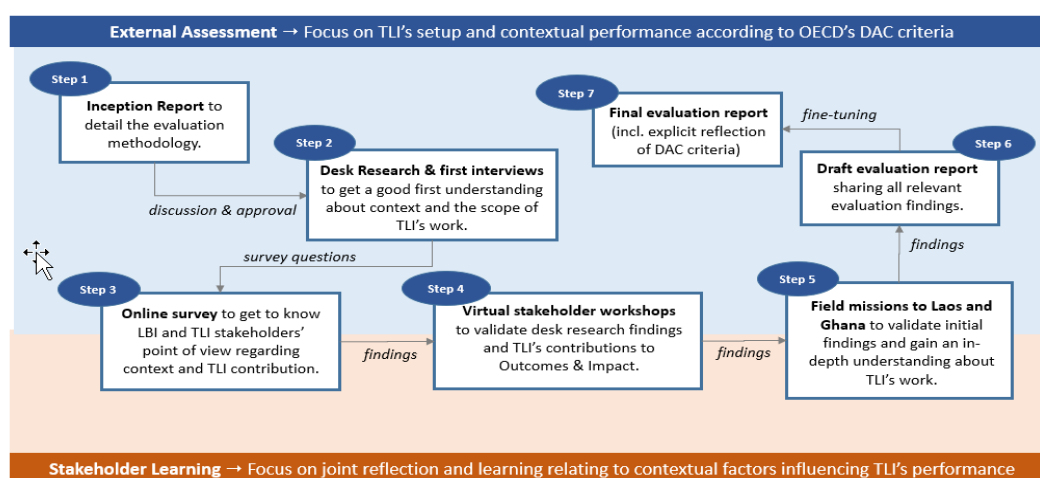


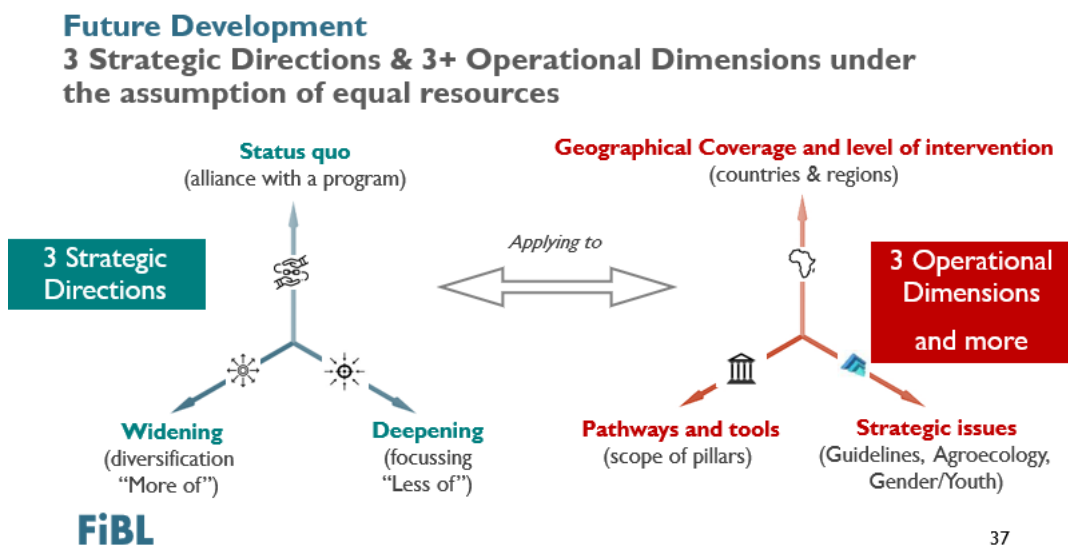
Figure 1: Overview of the different steps involved in the evaluation process

The diversity of the involved methodological steps allowed a broad but still well-focused participation of various stakeholders. Thereby, the specific purpose and degree of participation (see Figure 3) varied, e.g., considering the context, the TLIP commitment, and the triangulation of information. By doing so, we tried to be sensitive to stakeholders' roles, responsibilities, interests, and the gender balance among stakeholder groups (i.e., women/men, youth). Unfortunately, the participation of beneficiaries and target groups was underwhelming since we didn't reach a representative number of them, and the messages we received were biased by the over-representation of project implementors and some main project beneficiaries. This is partly also explainable due to the early stage of the project (after two years, when the implementors have a duration of 11 years in mind). We extrapolated the information we received and balanced it based on the original documents.

The evaluation's "checklist" is the SDC-evaluation questions, based on the DAC criteria outlined in the TOR and made more precise in Appendix 6.2. The evaluation team also decided during the process to consider the following points when answering evaluation questions.

- The geographical scope, i.e. the countries and their institutions.
- The content of action represented in the pathways.
- The level of interventions, i.e. country, region, and continent.
- Tools and strategic issues:
  - The Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP), Risk Reward Model (RRM), Community of Practice (CoP), and Business Transformation Labs (BTL) are described below.
  - Gender and Youth, Agroecology, Management and Finance

Our outlook concept derives and assesses different scenarios. Those are based on the lens of 3 strategic directions paired with 3 operational dimensions (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Overview of the 3 strategic directions and the 3 operational dimensions considered in the evaluation and discussed in the virtual Workshops.

### 3. Evaluation Findings

#### 3.1 The TLIP and the SDC support in a nutshell

The project promotes Transformative Land Investments (TLI), aligning with SDC's Global Program on Food Security and the Sustainable Development Goals. TLIs aim to enhance land

tenure security, livelihoods, resilience, and ecosystem health in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ghana, Laos, and Myanmar. It operates through three pathways: transforming investor practices, strengthening national business ecosystems, and aligning global/regional development strategies.

At the investment level, TLIP supports companies seeking sustainable practices, showcasing risk-reduction and win-win solutions. Outputs and project instruments include the so-called “Investment Risk-Reward Model” (a tool for governments to assess, administrate, and steer land investments), “Business Transformation Labs” (a counseling instrument for private sector investors), “Multistakeholder Platforms” (stakeholder exchange events), a “Community of Practice” (a Civil society forum), and gender-transformative toolkits.

The first outcome is for investors to integrate socio-economic and environmental impacts into their practices. The second is for governments to adopt policies, regulatory frameworks, and incentives that foster TLI. The project collaborates with national governments and civil society to align policies and incentives with TLI. Outputs include appraisals of enabling environments, multi-stakeholder platforms, and grassroots communities of practice. The third one is that national and international development initiatives adopt commitments, guidelines, and finances that promote TLI. The project advocates for alignment among donors and organizations to harmonize strategies and metrics. Outputs include gap appraisals, co-developed mainstreaming models, and harmonized metrics for LBI financing.

The project benefits marginalized rural communities by enhancing food, nutrition, and tenure security, especially for women. It empowers civil society, strengthens government capabilities, and de-risks sustainable business models.

Phase 1 (2021–2024) focuses on countries with substantial LBI activity and sustainability challenges, creating a foundation for systemic change.

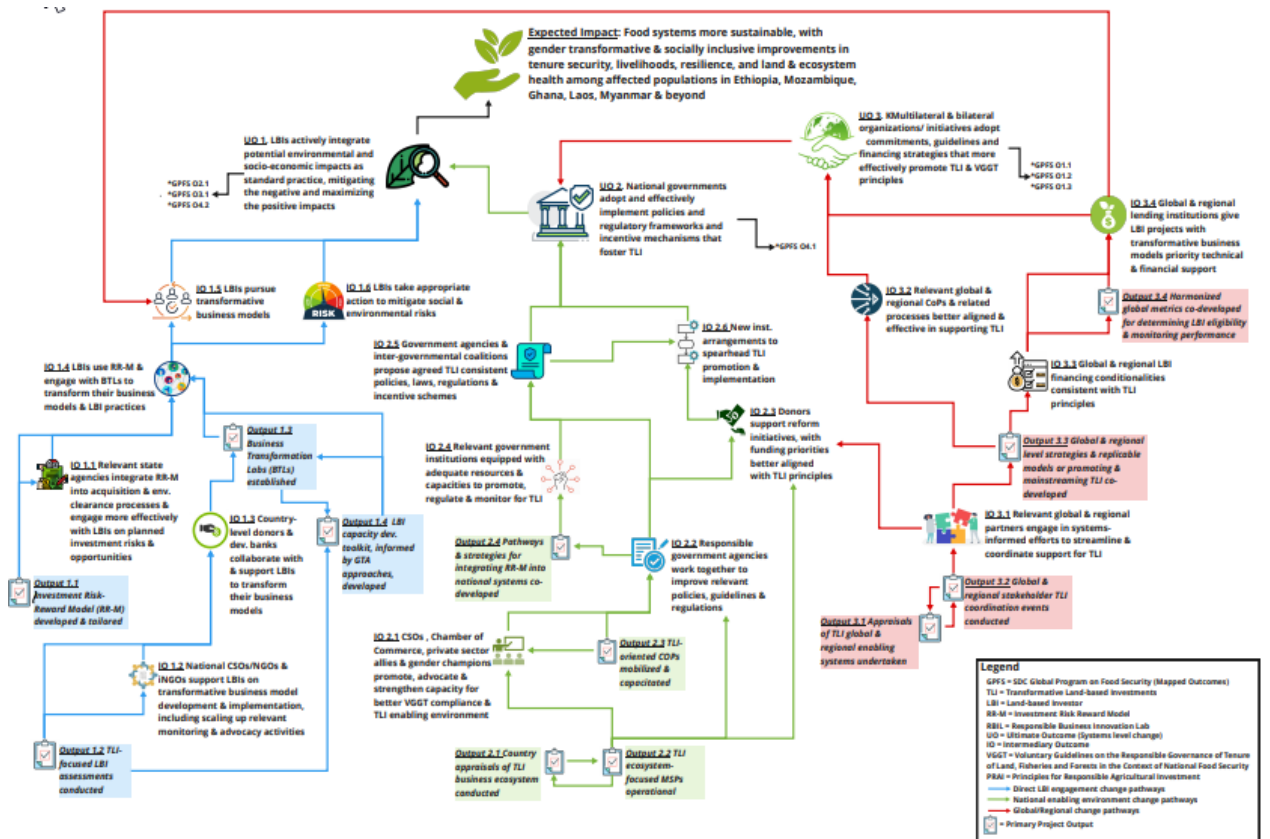


Figure 3: Theory of change of TLIP by TLIP (Prodoc)

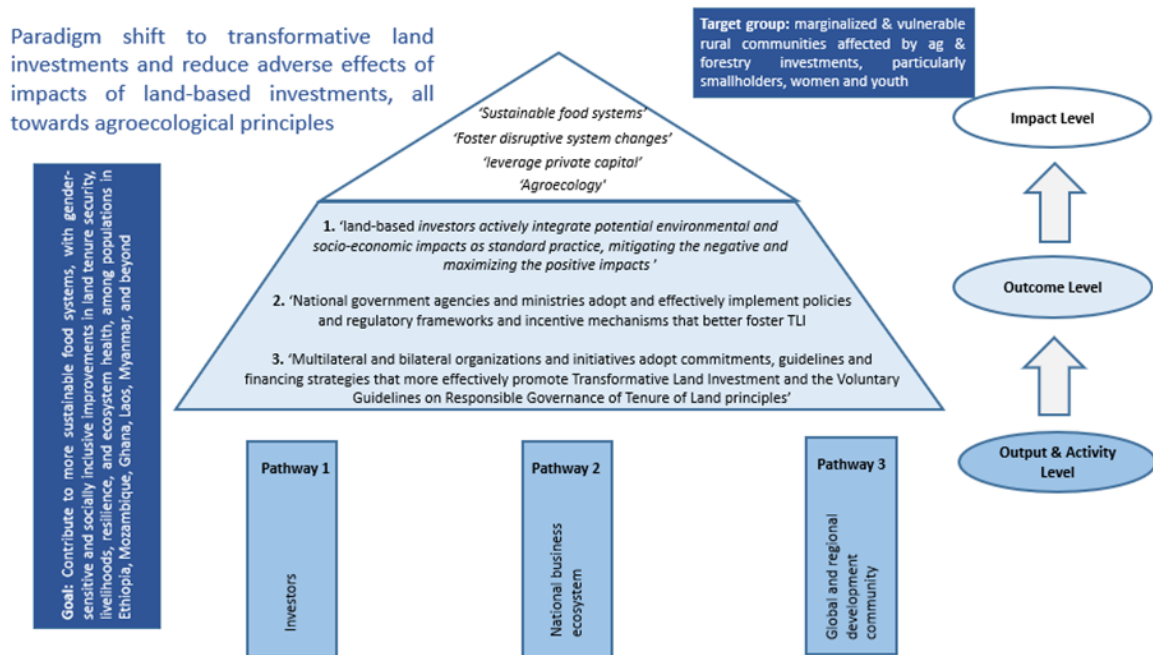


Figure 4: Our overview understanding and visualization of the TLI project

### 3.2 Assessment according to DAC/OECD Criteria

The TOR provided 50 evaluation questions, which we answered individually under Appendix 6.2, a separate report based on data collection and information. In this chapter, we summarize our observations and the evaluation team's assessments for each of the six DAC criteria. Conclusions and recommendations will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

#### 3.2.1 Relevance

**Is the intervention doing the right thing?** The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

The relevance of land-based investments (LBI), simultaneously a problem and an opportunity, is high for smallholder families' food systems, which provide nutritious and healthy food, livelihood security, and environmental health. Responsible LBIs, aligned with agroecological principles, can empower smallholders—especially women—by enhancing access to resources, markets, and sustainable farming practices. They support land tenure security by respecting local rights and fostering inclusive policies, which are essential for social and economic stability. Agroecology's focus on diversity, resilience, and circular systems promotes environmental health and reduces reliance on monocultures that degrade ecosystems. When coupled with equitable frameworks, RAI values, and incentives, LBIs can drive sustainable development, improve rural livelihoods, and support climate-resilient agriculture, creating a balanced pathway for food security and environmental sustainability.

In all target countries, we see pressure on land at the cost of smallholders' well-being. Investors and governments are violating smallholders' rights and needs. Responsible investment can, in fact, be an approach to solutions. The problem is widely recognized, and many agencies, including those involved in TLIP, actively promote principles as developed and agreed upon, e.g., in CFS-RAI. The issue is highly relevant for stakeholders in land conflicts, which arise when land becomes scarce and gets a high value (which is the case in many countries).

However, there is little evidence that supporting investors, land governance, and advocacy to the international cooperation community transforms local food systems regarding agroecology, food security, and improved nutrition. While the topic of land-based investment is often addressed, its ambition to be transformative is new.

We found the issue relevant in all contexts (all five countries, two regions, and the global level). We found interest and demand by concerned stakeholders to be active in that topic. The demand comes mostly from people and institutions that work on and for the system (e.g., civil society or experts) rather than from persons that work in the system (target for change such as governments, investors, and international donor communities).

The issue is relevant due to prevailing problems. We see high interest from beneficiaries, target groups, and stakeholders in the TLIP messages and good participation in the TLIP offers. On the other hand, we can see little change so far in practices due to TLIP and little (political) willingness to change or apply the solutions TLIP offers to context challenges. The project has recently been introduced in a rather saturated support market, and its intervention intensity (e.g. investment per country) is very thin compared to other interventions.

We observed the following points in TLIP that are relevant for our overall assessment of the project's **relevance**:

- **Limited Success and Persistent Issues:** Despite numerous initiatives by the global cooperation community to address land tenure and food security, success remains limited, and unsustainable practices persist.
- **Context-Specific Challenges and Relevance:** Land governance is critical for local people in places, where conflicts and land issues are prevalent. In their absence, it is not, and smallholders show limited interest. They then prioritize resource depletion and poor agricultural practices.
- **Generic, locally adapted Approach:** The TLIP applies a centrally designed logic of change for all countries, which was contextualized with extensive consultations in a second instance only. While this ensures consistency, it may fail to address specific needs in sufficient depth and effectively change existing mechanisms of governments and the private sector.
- **Challenges in Achieving Long-Term Impact:** The project emphasizes capacity building and knowledge sharing but avoids challenging unsustainable or illegal practices. Without pressure or incentives, achieving tangible change remains difficult. The TLIP targets (investors, governments, and the international community) are not very open to reforms, are power-oriented, and are defensive.
- **Survey Insights and Stakeholder Engagement:** Survey participants rated TLIP's relevance highly (average 8/10), especially in Laos, but acknowledged biases. They found it realistic to improve the food system and nutrition via RAI (7.8).

1 - 2 <sup>2</sup>	Overall, we rate Relevance as high, particularly for the target group if involved in (potential or acute) conflicts. In those cases, poverty risk is high, and the food system becomes dysfunctional. However, we can't see (yet) how the approach is a lever for being transformative. For example, agroecology is a system by design with high knowledge needs, and it is not a system by default as a result of responsible investments.
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<sup>2</sup> 0 = not assessed, 1 = highly satisfactory, 2 = satisfactory, 3 = unsatisfactory, 4 = highly unsatisfactory

### 3.2.2 Coherence

**How well does the intervention fit?** The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution.

The project's rationale is very well aligned with the priorities and the language of the GPFS. It creates all the linkages of concept and action developments with the conceptual frameworks as demanded by SDC. The same is the case for the project's publications. TLIP is also coherent with government policies and international guidelines on global and regional levels. We haven't found coherence challenges regarding objectives, principles, values, or good practices. The project has an extraordinarily sound scientific and logical, convincing foundation that fits the priorities of SDC and other donors excellently. Governments and policies also don't challenge the objectives and the principles and underline them with their documents.

Many donors and projects address land-based investments. For instance, in Laos, GIZ supports smallholders in claiming their rights with advisory tools. CDE develops cartographic resources for the government to manage land investments and enables it to enforce compliance with laws. Similarly, the MLRG (SDC project implemented by LEI) supports the government of Laos in overcoming bureaucratic land governance issues in managing land concessions. The initiatives are all developed independently and with their own programmatic and strategic logic. On an operational level, we found TLIP's efforts to collaborate and find synergies, but with limited possibilities. In our observations, even within SDC, we found little design compatibility and limited information and interest in the TLIP work since global and national/regional programs serve different strategic frameworks and are reported separately. For instance, TLIP is not listed by the Swiss embassy in Vientiane among all the Swiss contributions.

TLIP has new elements compared to other land investment and land security projects, such as the transformative holistic ambition, instead of only focusing on improved governance or stakeholders' knowledge of their rights. This message is compelling but not integrated by other actors, and it comes in isolation since the weight of TLIP is very little in a country-specific context, where other actors (e.g., GIZ, but also SDC) invest much more per year and over a much bigger lifespan. Project staff try to overcome the challenge with operational measures but can't fix the systemic coherence challenge and their limited convening power. We found various synergies (e.g. taking over of expiring working groups from closing projects) but little donor and/or government coordination.

With the RRM, TLIP proposed a new tool coherently with other actions. The other innovations (CoP, MSP, BTL) are collaboration tools that fit well into the landscape of international cooperation and are well accepted. While they are welcomed by beneficiaries who share the objectives, we haven't found evidence that they reached those who need to change to reach the TLIP objectives.

To conclude, in theory, TLIP is very coherent and compatible with other interventions. In practice, coordination and collaboration with other projects are limited—not because of operational deficiencies, but due to frame conditions for which the three targets (government, private sector, and international community) are responsible. There is adequate project concept response, but the power of GPFS and TLIP is too little if the objective of systemic change is really envisaged.

We observed the following that is relevant for our overall assessment of the project's **coherence**:

- **"Donor Crowdedness"** with overlapping initiatives and competition between programs may create systemic coherence challenges that need better alignment. This criterion was not sufficiently considered in the choice of countries.
- **Operational Synergies but Systemic Gaps:** We observed collaborations at the operational level between implementers of projects with similar objectives, which

fosters synergies, for instance, between MLRG and TLI projects in Laos. However, we saw little coordinated sector transformation design and limited systemic coherence.

- The strategy for the new “**Section Health and Food**” has not yet been published. From the little we know (e.g. the “one health” concept), we don’t expect big challenges to make TLIP coherent with it. Addressing the triple burden of nutrition is already a general TLIP objective.
- **Varied Policy and Stakeholder Dynamics:** Policy coherence and stakeholder engagement vary by country. Ghana shows more openness and stakeholder leverage than Laos, where a top-down approach dominates. Efforts to align with existing initiatives have helped maintain continuity in some regions.

2 - 3	TLIP fits very well in the GPFS strategy 2021-24, particularly on the objectives level. It follows the logic of bringing evidence to the global debates of the international community well. On national levels, the externally designed TLIP engagement is welcomed and coherent with the objectives but does not integrate well into poorly coordinated international cooperation strategies.
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### 3.2.3 Effectiveness

**Is the intervention achieving its objectives?** The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.

The lower the objectives in the project framework, the more they are achieved. The project had operational challenges getting started, not least due to late COVID measures and general logistic issues in some countries (e.g., Myanmar and Mozambique); however, it managed to catch up, and the project generally produced the planned, mostly qualitative outputs expected so far.

RRM is developed (not yet fully tailored), LBI needs assessments done, BTL established and gender toolkits developed. Country appraisals are conducted, MSP events occur, CoPs are operational, and RRM pathways are discussed. Outputs that target the international support community (pathway 3) are progressing. Hence, we expect TLIP to mostly achieve the planned outputs without or with little delay until the end of phase 1 in mid-2025. It is unclear if the project wishes, and SDC grants a no-cost extension. On the level of Outputs, TLIP has been effective.

The outcomes' achievements are more critical. We see land-based investors actively integrate socio-economic criteria and measures to improve their impacts on the concerned communities. However, these are limited to the so-called “champions,” with few (so far, max 5 per country; more are planned for coming phases) committed investors (or their CSR and PR departments) that see the need for responsible investments. They may also be driven by ethical considerations. However, the pressure of consumers (often via standards such as organic) or export country legislators or the social unrest of the concerned communities is much more effective. Rarely do they react to local compliance requirements due to weak enforcement. We have encountered only two investors who claim to have changed due to the project; in general, we perceive that they have inspired TLIP so far. As such, this is not an issue since TLIP can learn, and their piloting and conclusions are more effective than project or science messages. However, the champion’s achievements in general can't be attributed to the project, and we haven’t found sufficient evidence that the project reaches many investments that need to change their behaviors (outcomes).

The same is the case for governments. The project managed to get into dialogue with governments; however, we have not encountered cases that led to government institutions

(executive, legislative, or judicial) adopting mechanisms to improve land administration and governance, let alone policies, frameworks, and incentives that foster transitions.

Equally, we found that TLIP found dialogues and interest in being a discussion partner of multilateral interest groups (e.g., the Interlaken group for private sector action to secure community land rights). However, so far, there is no evidence of commitment, guidelines, or finances that promote transformative land investments with at least some contribution of TLIP.

Since the ProDoc states that outcomes are to be expected after 10 years, a non-achievement of outcomes after 2.5 years can't be a critical point of assessment. Regarding whether the evaluators expect that the outcomes are likely to be achieved, we have mixed expectations and feel that the ambitions and assumptions need to be revisited with more realistic and modest expectations of outcomes and impacts.

Since outcome development has not fully started, we can't extrapolate effects or verify or reject assumptions that were made. Generally, we expect that outcomes can be observed over time if the project continues with the concept described and implicitly in the minds of the responsible persons. We see a competent and committed team, but we feel that the project is spread out too thinly to achieve what it is designed for. More focus and depth are needed if the ambitious objectives are to be reached.

We can, however, state that the outcomes won't be achieved based on the described outputs (which will be done soon), and more performance is needed to achieve the ambitious outcomes. We see a mismatch in the logical framework when 3 years of outputs are put in relation to outcomes after 10 years. There is not only a need to continue the planned 12 activity line for the years 4 to 10 but to have a more outcome-oriented rather than an output-oriented strategy.

In the first three years, much research and assessment work was done. This includes the development of baselines and tools and the creation of trust in networks. Facilitating outcomes has not started, and transformative impacts are very far. So far, we have not seen the TLIP levers of change that trigger demand for improved land governance, improved land-based investments, and adjusted development aid. The RRM can potentially improve land governance and responsible investor behavior if used by governments and investors. Whether they are willing to invest in that tool in the future is very uncertain.

As far as cross-cutting topics are concerned, TLIP engages seriously in gender and conducts deep-going gender analyses. These analyses are gender-specific and focus on women's needs and the opportunity to work gender-transformatively. This activity is planned and performed according to an expected output.

We observed the following that is relevant for our overall assessment of the project's effectiveness:

- **Ambitious Design and Slow Positioning:** The project began with strong scientific grounding but underestimated the time and effort needed to navigate national and international systems. Despite the commitment and competence of

#### The Logframe provides ambitious Outcomes

- *UO1 objectives: A) 21 investors/countries using the RRM to appraise investments. B) 35% improvement on a transformative business practise index, C) leveraged investment ratio of 22.1 and D) 33 LBI accessing BTL services.*
- *UO2 objectives: A) 15% improvement of a Business Ecosystem Index. B) 2.5 Million USD New national resources allocated to promoting TLI (Ethiopia and Ghana)*
- *UO3 objectives: A) 5 Million USD additional global financing for promotion of TLI and B) 3 revised policies promoting TLI*

partners, overambitious planning led to delays in operationalization.

- **Unproven strategy and big steps in Theory of Change**  
While the TLI strategy is innovative, its transformative potential remains unproven. The step between land tenure governance and agroecology is very big.
- **Monitoring**  
TLIP still needs to build the framework that is monitoring quantitative indicators and targets. Achievements are reported mostly qualitatively with detailed narratives, but this approach limits the ability to measure broad impacts or cost-effectiveness.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Data Usage**  
TLIP collected quality data for country appraisals but lacks evidence of governments effectively using this data.

As with any theory of change, the TLIP impact chain is based on assumptions. For the Outcomes, the Output assumptions are relevant and we discuss them here:

1. *LBI and state agencies are engaged in RRM.* We see government agencies engaged, but we also realize that the engagement time is long and that engagement of operational civil servants is not yet sufficient to achieve Outcome 1. The political will of higher-level government and parliament people is required to achieve change.
2. *RRM is adapted to needs:* That is an achievable assumption in the hand of the TLIP, which is happening.
3. *Assessments of LBI are made based on quality data and gender focused:* The pilot assessments are in the hand of TLIP. However, the step that Governments and Investors assess LBI with a TLI focus has not happened (yet)
4. *BTL are adapted to domestic needs/priorities:* As far as we could observe they are adapted to the needs of the champions.
5. *BTL are well staffed and capacitated:* This is not the case. BTL is on project staff. They would need to build own structures and it requires from LBI a readiness to pay for transitional services (which is there if services of high quality and relevant).
6. *LBI engaged in gender tools and willing to incorporate these in business:* Champions are but not LBI on broad level. Bold assumption
7. *Quality data collected for country appraisal:* TLIP has collected quality data, but we cant see how governments work with these data.
8. *MSP with relevant stakeholders adapted to national level.* The Forum has so far not been a driver of change, rather an opportunity to exchange
9. *Relevant CSO in CoP and tailor-made capacity building:* CSO have capacity and willingness, but are not resourced for that. They prefer mandates over training.
10. *State agencies are willing to integrate RRM in their systems:* We can see willingness by civil servant, but could not see the interest to invest and change.
11. *Quality data are accessible and analyzed on regional and global level:* Yes, by Academia, but not regional/global governance structures
12. *Availability and interest of target participants at global events.* Interest is confirmed, however limited convening change power.
13. *Donors supportive of TLI and willing to explore how to integrate in programming:* TLIP input

- **Overambitious Outcomes in Limited Time**

The project outcomes were designed to be achieved over an 11-year horizon (with high targets in the Logframe). However, non-achievement is more a result of ambitious design and short timelines than operational flaws.

1 and 3	Overall, we rate effectiveness as good so far, particularly on the output level, but it is very uncertain if outcomes (in planning after 10 years) will be achieved qualitatively and quantitatively. Outcome development has not started yet. Assumptions are not fully explicit, and some of them haven't been fulfilled yet and remain risks.
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### 3.2.4 Efficiency

**How well are resources used?** The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economical and timely way.

Resources have been used efficiently. The project has produced many intellectual products that are either available to the project management (e.g., company details of investors), to beneficiaries (e.g., RRM data for governments), or to the public (e.g., scientific publications). The various project staff were productive and produced materials of high academic quality. As stated in the previous chapter, the project covered the planned activities and delivered the expected outputs thanks to the hard-working and efficient staff. The team has met regularly on various levels (project, continent, and national) and coordinated effectively. The outputs (e.g., the enabling environment document) contain much precious information in coherent structures. We observed that the staff's academic qualities and performance are very good. TLIP personnel are very busy (including commitment beyond their working time without complaints) and work efficiently.

TLIP has used the resources extensively. We expect a burning rate close to 90%, particularly regarding internal personnel costs. The project could catch up with delays in the beginning. There is likely no need for a no-cost extension.

We see the potential for efficiency gains in reducing complexity on various levels (see recommendations). While much information has been collected and stored, not all information has been used. Details are scattered, e.g., in reports and Excel sheets, and a central database with information that directly feeds into operations is missing. Some of this information based on staff's industrious and efficient work from research and interviews is also confidential and expires quickly.

We observed the following that is relevant for our overall assessment of the project's **efficiency**:

- **Strong Financial and Implementation Performance:** Financial management shows an 85% burn rate over 1.5 years, with most budget lines utilized well. Implementation stayed largely on track despite challenges like COVID and government delays, supported by excellent coordination, expert delivery, and alignment with Prodoc structures.
- **Complex Project Structure and Communication Issues:** The project's complexity, academic language, and numerous activities make it challenging for stakeholders, beneficiaries, and even insiders to understand. Simplifying the intervention structure and using more accessible communication could improve efficiency, engagement, and impact.
- **Underutilization of produced resources**  
Rich resources like databases and detailed company information are underutilized. Prioritizing practical, directly applicable outputs (e.g., actionable contact lists) over highly technical details could enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the work

- **Civil Society Engagement and Focus Shift**  
Civil society finds capacity building relevant but prefers mandates with direct beneficiary engagement over theoretical training. Shifting from awareness-building to action-oriented interventions could make the project more effective for NGOs and target groups.
- **Risk of Over-Prescription**  
While useful, the detailed and prescriptive project document adds complexity and limits flexibility. Reducing the number of interventions and focusing on fewer, clearer priorities would mitigate management risks and improve operational efficiency.

1	Overall, we rate that efficiency as very high. The project has delivered a multitude of document resources and research results that were promised in output planning.
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### 3.2.5 Impact

**What difference is the intervention making?** The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

The impact created so far is limited. It is not quantifiable and only observable in single cases. This can be explained by the short project duration and strategy, which stresses inception activities such as research, set-up, and trust-building through networking and events in the first year. Impact building and observation have not been part of the project. A second factor is the rather long impact chain in the project. From deep research, for example, of a multitude of investment projects, standards landscape, gender study, or scientific publications to changing the national frameworks, private investor behavior, and donor methodology to sustainability food system transitions based on agroecological principles, it is a very long impact chain with bold assumptions and uncertain attributions.

If the expected outcomes are uncertain, the envisaged transitions are even more uncertain. Stakeholders in the evaluation mission's focus group discussions rightly wondered how the agroecology transition could happen without technical capacity building or other agroecology-specific actions. Also, government civil servants concerned with the rule of law of land-based investments did not see the logic and direct link to the food system, without specific interventions and specialized competence in that area and not considering, for instance, short value chains or territorial food markets with agroecological or organic products of the targeted local communities. Private companies observe standards (in Laos and Ghana, mostly GAP, Organic Agriculture, and, to a lower degree, Fairtrade) and provide that information to the database. While the project does business counseling, it does not have the strategy or capacity to support technical and certification challenges

While there is no doubt that agroecology development needs investors to join in creating the impact on broader livelihoods, there is little evidence that responsible investment and good investment governance lead to the agroecology transition beyond single case studies. According to the initial plan, the TLIP still has 7 years to demonstrate the impact chain, which, in our view, requires more food system-specific measures rather than relying on responsible investment alone.

We observed the following that is relevant for our overall assessment of the project's **impact**:

- **Planned Impact Not Yet Realized:** The anticipated impacts remain theoretical, with no observable community changes. Governments have not implemented policy changes, and investors either follow their own principles or remain unreachable. Champions' activities improve with pre-existing efforts.

- **Unrealistic Impact Targets:** The ambitious impact targets (e.g., 292,180 producers benefiting and 160,718 ha improved) for Phase 1 were unrealistic.
- **Strong Focus on Research and Analysis:** The project has excelled in generating rich research and analyses on various topics, including policy, gender, and investment standards. However, this has not translated into observable impact yet.
- **Disconnect Between Impact Planning and Evaluation:** The SDC evaluation questions in the TOR did not address the planned impact figures, suggesting limited relevance of these targets. This disconnect highlights a need for more grounded and realistic planning to align impact expectations with achievable outcomes.

4	Overall, we rate the project's progress as minimal compared to the targeted impact for phase 1. Provided the project strategy is further refined and developed considering our recommendations and SDC invests at the same level, we expect the impact to happen, however, to a lower level than planned and at a later stage.
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### 3.2.6 Sustainability

**Will the benefits last?** The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.

The project's objective is that by 2030, the BTLs will become financially independent public-private or non-profit organizations using grant funds and service fees. Secondly, it foresees institutionalizing and outscaling transitional land investments through additional partnerships, training, exchange, and external grant provision. These partnerships shall be part of phase 3 before phasing out TLIP. Thirdly, TLIP believes that country systems will take over project activities. TLIP also believes that horizontal coordination between various actions towards transitional land investments with improved coherence and harmonization, e.g. through consistent metrics and greater harmonization and addressing inefficiencies of development agencies, would be part of the TLIP impact and sustainability contribution.

The evaluation team has not encountered these visions at the implementation level, probably not least because TLI intends to address its sustainability in phase 3 only. Future action plans shall provide more details on how this vision is achieved.

We observed the following that is relevant for our overall assessment of the project's sustainability:

- **Uncertainty Around Co-Funding and Continuation.** The requirement for 50% co-funding in the next phase has not been met yet, jeopardizing the continuation of the 11-year strategy.
- **Sustainability Vision Versus Reality:** The Prodoc outlines an idealistic sustainability vision, which relies on significant outcomes and impacts that are neither not (yet) observable nor don't seem realistic at this stage. A clearer and more practical sustainability plan is needed.
- **Sustainability of Key Components:** The RRM and BTLs show the most potential for long-term sustainability if supported by a robust business plan. In contrast, MSPs and the CoP are unlikely to become self-sustaining unless adopted by other projects.
- **Lack of Exit Strategy:** The project lacks a well-developed sustainability objective and exit strategy. Without concrete plans and agreements on how elements will be sustained post-project, their long-term viability depends on being taken over by subsequent initiatives.

3	Sustainability is insufficiently addressed yet. While the Prodoc describes a sustainability strategy, this issue is delegated to the future. The visionary sustainability statement depends on strong impact and context development, which is not observable now. Co-funding of the next phase is not yet assured
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### 3.3 Lessons learned and transversal issues assessment

#### 3.3.1 Lessons concerning Gender & Youth

TLI does not have explicit transversal issues; however, gender inclusiveness is prevalent in the project. TLIP has a serious analysis before and during the project phase. Publications and analyses discuss gender issues decently and are very sensitive to gender in their messages to business and government targets. Structural, mostly cultural-based gender problems are named openly, and the project takes clear positions and is credibly engaged in gender through its sensitivity and transitional ambitions. This can be stated at the project management and global level, but also in the focus countries we visited.

Youth is not an explicit topic in the project planning. It came up during implementation, and it is an SDC evaluation question. We found that the project team is intrinsically oriented to Youth and the next generation, but that Youth is introduced as a new criterion and, therefore, much less considered in implementation. For example, we don't find Youth analyses in research, or start-ups of young people are not a specific project target in the BTLs. If a priority for SDC, Youth needs to be part of a management briefing for the second phase. That would not be a big challenge for the TLIP2.

#### 3.3.2 Lessons concerning Governance

While we had intensive discussions with SDC and the global and country-level project management, we had little contact with the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The PSC minutes were not subject to the evaluation documentation that was provided by SDC&TLIP, and we have only heard from the PSC and have not interacted with it. The annual reports mention external expert participation in the PSC, which is good, but don't report on the PSC's performance. We also did not see the PSC actively participating in the survey and the virtual workshop. Overall, no concerns are reported, but we can't assess the PSC's role and performance.

#### 3.3.3 Lessons concerning Agroecology, Local Markets, and Nutrition

Agroecology, local markets, and nutrition are important topics of SDC that come from the GPFS strategy. This is well reflected on the objective level. Staff is also well aware and credibly represents the values and the directions promoted by Agroecology. However, the project design ignores that the transformation to agroecology requires more than secure land tenure and investors that provide responsible labor. The assumption that Agroecology leads to the stimulation of local markets and nutrition-sensitive agriculture is quite robust. However, a big step exists between assuring land security and supporting smallholders' changes towards more sustainable agriculture practices. Agroecology is not agriculture input but knowledge- and attitude-intensive and requires specific capacity building if a transformation to Agroecology is expected to happen on the farm level.

### 3.3.4 Project triggers/ levers for systemic change and global scaling

The theory of change (see Figure 2) suggests that improved land management by investors (UO1) based on RAI will impact the food system positively and lead to resilient smallholders, sustainable agriculture, and healthy nutrition. It also suggests that good land governance and good international cooperation influence investors' behavior. TLIP has (as with every project) output/outcome and outcome/impact assumptions. These assumptions are big, and the attributions of the project are rather small compared to the big expected impacts. Big steps need clearly identified levers that are powerful enough beyond the project influence so that envisaged change can happen. For TLIP, the evaluation team failed to see sufficient convening power of the various elements, which are all desirable but supposedly too weak to trigger change sufficiently far so that the models can be used to propose and convince in the global RAI dialog. While we support the intent and the logic, we question that TLIP has sufficient (financial and others such as reach to stakeholders, network, reputation, and time) resources to have as much impact as planned in so many arenas and topics (5 countries, 2 regions, global level and being transformative for land governance, food system, nutrition, and gender).

## 4. Assessing Options for future Developments

This report was developed based on the premise that SDC may further support TLIP according to the initial plan or use the opportunity of a need for a new project contract to introduce change, including on a strategic level. This may be grounded on evaluation findings, changes in the framework conditions (Swiss parliament or Government decisions, budget opportunities or internal strategic adjustments, changes in global, regional, or country situations or consortium changes), or changes in the partner's willingness to commit. We only discuss the evaluation findings and don't consider political change that is happening (e.g., parliament debates or the willingness of partners to fulfill the 50% co-funding condition).

Approaching the options for future development, we chose a very simple model (see Figure 3) that differentiates between the options of a) keeping the plan (**Status Quo**), b) expanding the activities (**Diversification**) or c) reducing the number of activities (**Focus**) always under the assumption that the overall resources remain the same. Important elements that can be applied are a) the geographical coverage/level of intervention, b) the pathways and tools, and c) the strategic themes.

We discussed future development on various occasions during the evaluation process, most formally at the two inclusive and virtual workshops where participants were asked to participate in the discussion and contribute their priorities. Based on the logic of Figure 3, we had 212 responses in 1 - 2 words each (more than one response per person was possible) to the three questions a) What should the project do the same (or what is planned in the Prodoc), b) what should be done less and c) what should be done more. The result is the word clouds below. Of course, these results are not representative, depending on individual engagements, and they had more of a brainstorming nature. However, the results are indicative and inspirational and contribute to the evaluators' impressions.

**Figure 5:** Word Cloud of 55 responses (from Workshop and other responses) to the what should stay in **Status Quo** **What should TLIP do the same and stay on the long term plan?** TLIP

55 responses



We interpret the geographic scope as important. Myanmar is very prominent among the responses. The topic of land and land tenure/investment is prominent, and agroecology, agriculture, soil, and smallholders also come out clearly.

Participants also want to keep many methodological features (e.g., collaboration, training, business support, multi-stakeholder work, and the RRM, BTL tools). More messages from the interviews on what should stay the same:

- **Continue to develop and institutionalize MSPs** to facilitate ongoing dialogue among stakeholders. This will help maintain engagement and ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes;
- **Integrate Agroecological Principles:** Ensure that agroecological practices are embedded in all project activities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of project activities continuously
- **Sustainability Planning:** Create clear plans for the TLIP sustainability
- **Leverage Partnerships:** Continue to build and strengthen partnerships

**Figure 6:** Word Cloud of 112 responses (from Workshop and other responses) to what should be done more in TLIP

**Widening, diversification: What should TLIP do more?**

112 responses

The picture is coherent. Geographical (Myanmar) concerns are followed by agroecology, organic, climate-smart, sustainable, nutrition-sensitive, regenerative agriculture, etc. Participants want to see more work on policy, capacity building, gender/youth, and finance. All in all, there is a feeling that respondents advocate for diversification and doing more rather than focusing.



During the interviews, project implementors stated in summary that there is a need for

- **Broader Engagement for grassroots organizations** and local civil society organizations (CSOs) to enhance project continuity and ensure that diverse perspectives are included.
- **Integration of Agroecological Principles.**



- Despite challenges, the project set up and **performed well** in most countries. The partners collaborate well and contribute their long-term experience and assets to the project. Very little energy is lost due to internal conflicts, idle processes, and duplications.
- The project has **highly qualified and highly intrinsically motivated, even passionate staff**, with big ownership in the case of transformative land investments. In the two evaluation focus countries, they gained the trust of their partners (i.e., champions, government working groups, etc.)

## 5.2 Critical conclusions

### Project complexity is too high

- TLIP is **very complex and difficult to explain**. The context's complexity, the diversity of project approaches, and the academic language present communication challenges. This is one reason there is limited outreach and few people outside the inner circle of implementation participants.
- The project intervenes in 5 countries, 2 regions, and the global level, and it addresses 3 target groups in 12 Outputs and with 4 guiding tools. All in all, that means roughly more than **50 results to be managed and monitored**. At the same time, it has an **extremely long impact chain** with big assumptions and uncertain attributions. The basic idea of making responsible investments transformational to sustainable food systems is compelling. However, the first 2,5 years of the project could not bring evidence that this will happen on a broad scale.
- TLIP takes a holistic approach and aims to showcase how the proposed methodology based on RAI can make a difference in reality and improve the social, economic, and environmental living conditions of smallholders in low-income countries. This noble and desirable goal is coherent with the GPFS strategy. However, while we endorse holistic analyses, interventions must be more targeted (acupuncture method). The project can't have this enormous convening power required for such a holistic approach. It must reduce its ambition, focus the intervention, and share the work with other initiatives.

### Project resources are too broadly allocated

- TLIP resources are in the ordinary frame of an SDC global project. The project budget is low given the performance, ambitions, and complex setup. The various units of TLIP work lean and benefit from progressing IT development and the habit of working virtually and remotely. Nevertheless, change needs sufficient depth in each context.
- While the project works efficiently with the resources, effectiveness needs to improve. This requires priority on targeting the outcomes (beneficiary's behavior change) instead of focusing on one's **performance**.

### Review of Theory and Levers of Change

- We conclude that after 2.5 years of project implementation, we have too little information and uncertainties about fulfilling the explicit and nonexplicit assumptions for achieving outcomes and impacts. Assumptions are the donor's responsibility; therefore, SDC needs to test assumptions once again before entering a new contract. The theory of change needs to be revisited and revised qualitatively and quantitatively in relation to the available resources.
- We particularly feel that food system ambitions and agroecology introductions need specific measures or further and deeper collaboration partnerships (e.g., with the APP

project, the ALISEA network, or CDE in Laos), with work sharing and the possibility of deepening the work.

## 6. Recommendations on further TLI Support

We make these recommendations based on the assumption that the overall budget remains the same (10 Million USD for 3 years), with SDC providing 50% of it and the partners finding sufficient co-funding in the TLIP budget.

We consider the TLIP an important project highly relevant to the food system (including the future one-health approach). It has a very innovative character, and the potential to profile consortium partners and SDC in development approaches. Hence, **in our view, the project must continue.**

Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, we see a clear **need for reforms for the next phase of the project** to make it a successful component of the SDC global program and eventually also serve Swiss multilateral collaboration (this means projects shall reach the objectives and be useful as a reference for SDC in global and internal debates).

We have the following recommendations:

### # 1: Continue investment in TLI with increased or at least the same efforts

TLI is a relevant issue, and the idea of transforming food systems through TLI deserves a real chance. While the investments so far risk getting lost in the too-thin spreading of resources, the idea can be a game changer, when it gets the required strategic and financial support. If well-focused, TLI can become a successful SDC asset with the present means level.

### # 2: Revise Objective System

We recommend keeping the overall goal (Prodoc version) in principle but include “Food System,” “Agroecology,” and “Nutrition” to make the strategy more explicit. We also recommend removing the target countries from the overall goal to clarify that intervention countries serve as representative cases for the global concept contributions rather than with a national agenda and commitment.

In communication, TLIP should become more modest and evidence-based. Differentiate between TLI and TLIP. Promote realistic goals and success cases of TLIP and TLI.

The outcomes shall focus mainly on Investors (UO1) and the International community (UO3).

Articulate the ToC in more detail, especially linking the impact chain from outputs to outcomes.

### #3: Reduce complexity, focus the strategy

The main focus of the TLIP is to demonstrate that TLI promotion works and that the approach can be copied. Therefore, the focus needs to be on the transformational character rather than on general land management (from LBI management to TLI). TLIP shall reduce its intervention elements and focus on two countries. We recommend:

- Two successful countries are sufficient to reach the purpose of testing the approach and promoting it on a global level. Ghana and Laos (alternatively, Ghana and Ethiopia) are suitable for that. (-> overall strategy)
- On the outcome level, focus on the work with investors (-> UO1, for the national level) and the international community (-> UO3, for the regional and global levels). The work with Governments (UO2) shall focus on the RRM and one annual MSP event.

- Turn BTL into Business Development Services companies (BDS) in the market system approach (MSD) and support them in their business plan and technical competence depending on investors' demand. A part of BTL actions must be direct interventions at the community level to support the target group in adopting food system changes such as agroecology and nutrition. (focus Output 1.3)
- Reduce the MSP to a flexible annual event (reduce Output 2.2)
- Turn the CoP from capacity building into mandates for the NGOs to accompany communities in the BTL program (re-strategize Output 2.3 and include into 1.3). Create a link to BTL so that the LBI's CSR means to contribute to the NGO mandates.
- Support the introduction of RRM for countries that invest in it (conditional to relevant cost contribution from the governments. The countries invest, TLIP supports rather than the other way round as of now). Make a long-term business plan for the RRM use (re-strategize 2.4)
- Gender and youth should be cross-cutting and mainstreamed across all outputs and not an output on their own (mainstream 1.4).
- Focus UO3 on a clear advocacy strategy for TLI and harmonized metrics (re-strategize 3.3 and 3.4) in a limited number of highly relevant fora.
- Give up 1.1., 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 3.1, and 3.2. Conclude the work done in Phase 1 and integrate these assets into the re-focused activities where appropriate and needed.

This requires strong strategies a) for BTL (turning into sustainable BDS), b) on Civil Society mandates (to support communities for food systems improvement facilitation), c) on RRM introduction (on demand of Government and companies that are paying), and d) advocacy to international communities (with a target on selected relevant processes). Ownership and driving change must come more from stakeholders rather than from implementing service providers.

#### **#4: Stress transformation strategy**

Review the Theory of Change and identify the levers and triggers for transformations starting in phase 2. Set "SMART" objectives and realistic assumptions. Focus on creating outcomes rather than outputs. Test the robustness of the TLI approach and make credible recommendations for the SDC global-level work. Set up clear and feasible MEL with timed indicator progress

#### **#5: Stress sustainability concept**

A realistic sustainability plan shall be developed with concrete business plans relying on the participation of market actors rather than on follow-up programs by the donor community and other international funding. RRM and BTL are the elements with the highest sustainability opportunities if they are based on the ownership and investment willingness of sustainable service providers/users. TLIP and SDC shall only be catalysts.

#### **#6 Improve usefulness for SDC global work**

Given the nature of TLIP as a global program with a global scope and SDC's interest in profiling the Swiss contribution and reputation in the global cooperation communities, the TLIP needs to include SDC as a beneficiary. Consequently, TLI considers and orients itself to these needs and provides relevant services for behavioral change. SDC may benefit from high-quality policy briefs, methodological materials, and evidence of how the TLI of TLIP and other actors can be effective and impactful. The new "One Health" approach in the future SDC section strategy 2026 onwards shall play a role in planning phase 2.

## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 SDC DAC evaluation grid

#### Tool 7: Assessment Grid for the DAC Criteria

#### **Transformative Land Investment Project (TLIP) for the Period 2022-2025<sup>3</sup>**

Period of phase: 2022 – 2025

Project Number: 7F-10494.01

Contribution agreement: 81071212

Assessment Grid for project/programme evaluations of the SDC interventions

Version: 30.06.2020

**Note:** this assessment grid is used for evaluations of SDC financed projects and programmes (hereinafter jointly referred to as an 'intervention'). It is based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria.<sup>4</sup> In mid-term evaluations, the assessment requires analysing the likelihood of achieving impact and sustainability. All applicable sub-criteria should be scored and a short explanation should be provided.

Please add the corresponding number (0-4) representing your rating of the sub-criteria in the column 'score':

0 = not assessed, 1 = highly satisfactory, 2 = satisfactory, 3 = unsatisfactory, 4 = highly unsatisfactory

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<sup>3</sup> Project name as used in the ProDoc title

<sup>4</sup> For information on the 2019 revisions of the evaluation framework see: Better Criteria for Better Evaluations. Revised Evaluation Criteria. Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019.

Key aspects based on DAC Criteria		
<b>Relevance</b>		
1. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the target group.	1	Overall, we rate Relevance as high, particularly for the target group if involved in (potential or acute) conflicts. In those cases, poverty risk is high, and the food system becomes dysfunctional.
2. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of indirectly affected stakeholders (not included in target group, e.g. government, civil society, etc.) in the country of the intervention.	1	Same as above, since the RAI is a priority in all target countries and it is very political.
3. The extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as the theory of change, structure of the project components, choice of services and intervention partners) adequately reflect the needs and priorities of the target group.	2	We see the needs reflected by the target group directly influenced by land-based investments. However, we can't see (yet) how the approach is a lever for being transformative. For example, agroecology is a system by design with high knowledge needs, and it is not a system by default as a result of responsible investments
<b>Coherence</b>		
4. Internal coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country and thematic field (consistency, complementarity and synergies).	3	TLIP fits very well in the GPFS strategy 2021-24, particularly on the objectives level. It follows the logic of bringing evidence to the global debates of the international community well. On national levels, the externally designed TLIP engagement is welcomed and coherent with the objectives. However, global and national SDC programs don't collaborate well. There is little interest and acceptance from national programs.
5. External coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other	2	It fits well with other donors' priorities. However, there is little donor coordination and collaboration. Everyone—including SDC—has their

actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity and synergies).		own programs. There is a big donor crowdedness, and the interest of governments and investors is limited.
<b>Effectiveness</b>		
6. The extent to which approaches/strategies during implementation are adequate to achieve the intended results.	2	Overall, we rate effectiveness as good so far, particularly on the output level, but it is very uncertain if outcomes (in planning after 10 years) will be achieved qualitatively and quantitatively. .
7. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes).	1/ Output 3/Outcom	Outputs for phase 1 are achieved or expected to be achieved. However not so the outcomes. Outcome development has not started yet. Assumptions are not fully explicit, and some of them haven't been fulfilled yet and remain risks
8. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended results related to transversal themes.	1	No transversal themes were identified. Gender is an output and is well achieved. Youth is not part of the project design, but addressed to some extent
<b>Efficiency</b>		
9. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcomes) cost-effectively.	1	Overall, we rate that efficiency as very high. The project has delivered a multitude of document resources and research results that were promised in output planning.
10. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcome) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe).	1	While there were delays in some countries in the beginning, they catch up and are expected to achieve outputs by end of the phase
11. The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms support efficient implementation.	2	Monitoring framework not yet set up. Extensive qualitative baselines for project work purpose but not for all target indicators. PSC was absent during evaluation and cant be assessed.

Impact		
<p>12. The extent to which the intervention generated or is expected to generate 'higher-level effects' as defined in the design document of the intervention.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> when assessing this criterion, the primary focus is the intended 'higher-level effects'. In the event that <i>significant</i> unintended negative or positive effects can be discerned, they must be specified in the justification column, especially if they influence the score.</p>	4	<p>Overall, we rate the project's targeted impact for phase 1 as minimal. Provided the project strategy is further refined and developed considering our recommendations and SDC invests at the same level, we expect the impact to happen, however, to a lower level than planned and at a later stage.</p> <p>The project planning overstated the impacts, which are not measurable with reasonable means.</p> <p>Implementors counted on 11 years of implementation and the assessment takes place 2.5 years after launch.</p>
Sustainability		
<p>13. The extent to which partners are capable and motivated (technical capacity, ownership) to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.</p>	3	<p>Sustainability is insufficiently addressed yet. While the Prodoc describes a sustainability strategy, this issue is delegated to the future. The visionary sustainability statement depends on strong impact and context development, which is not observable now.</p>
<p>14. The extent to which partners have the financial resources to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.</p>	3	<p>Partners have contributed co-funding (20%) but for the next phase it is not yet assured.</p>
<p>15. The extent to which contextual factors (e.g. legislation, politics, economic situation, social demands) is conducive to continuing activities leading to outcomes.</p>	3	<p>There is high dependency of implementors and target groups on donor financing. Appetite for political and company policy reforms is low and depends on consumer and rural neighbourhood community pressures. Change is desperately needed, but challenging to achieve. Focus required which is difficult in global system-oriented program.</p>

## 7.2 Answers to the evaluation questions

See separate report

## 7.3 Literature

### Project documents

- Needs survey
- Lao Results
- Lao analysis
- Community Survey
- Gender Analysis
- FGD guide
- Appraisal LaoPDR
- Appraisal Myanmar
- Appraisal Ethiopia
- Appraisal Ghana
- MSP Consultations LaoPDR
- MSP Launch Ghana
- MSP Launch Ethiopia
- MSP Stakeholder List Mozambique
- MSP CoP Planning Document SSA-SNV
- MSP Terms of Engagement Ghana
- A Ghana CoP Launch Report
- Initiatives mapping.xlsx
- Global appraisal full report
- Global appraisal summary
- Progress Report - Transformative Land Investment, different years
- TLI Communications Strategy
- TLI\_LogFrame
- Launch Program

### Other literature

- C. Luttrell, A.M. Larson, G. Schoneveld, R. Kalman, E. Gallagher (2024): Transformative land investment - How do environmental, social, governance and societal standards add up? Info brief CIFOR-ICRAF
- G. Schoneveld, X. Weng (2023): Smallholder value creation in agrifood chains: Value network approach. In: Elsevier - Land Use Policy 131 (2023) 106676
- G. Schoneveld (2022): Transforming food systems through inclusive agribusiness In: Elsevier - World Development 158 (2022) 105970
- Netherland Enterprise Agency (2024): LAND-at-scale Mali: Boosting local capacity to manage land conflicts and protect customary rights in Mali (<https://projects.rvo.nl/projects/nl-kvk-27378529-las20ml1o>)
- CIFOR-ICRAF (2024): Land investment standards and guidelines - An overview in light of the need for food systems transformation (2024)

## 7.4 Reference to other deliverables

The evaluation produced the following available products:

1. Letter of interest and FiBL-Technical and financial offers
2. Inception report
3. Minutes of the interviews
4. Results of the survey
5. Country mission minutes
6. Workshop Presentation
7. Report about the answers to the 50 Evaluation Questions
8. SDC Evaluation Grid
9. Administrative reports (finances, timesheets, and supporting documents)

## 7.5 Ghana and Laos Mission Plan

### Ghana 20<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

#### Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> October

- Travel time for Toralf. Arrival in Ghana 19:50 – 20:40

#### Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> Oct, 2024:

##### SNV OFFICE

- 8:30 – 10:00 In-person meeting with SNV: Security briefing for TLI evaluators at SNV office, introductions, review of mission visit in Ghana, overview of SNV, and presentation on TLI project phase I activities and results.
- 10:30 – 11:30 Online interview with TLI stakeholder from the MSP, Mr. Selorm Quame, Oil Palm Association of Ghana
- 12:30 – 14:00 Online interview with Mawuli Sevor, CIFOR, Data- Household survey
- 15:00 – 16:00 In-person meeting with Magdalene Wüst, Deputy Head of Co-operation – Swiss Embassy; North-Ridge, Accra

#### Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2024

##### FIELD VISIT

- 5:00 – 20:00 BTL Champion - MIRO Forest Limited at Drobonso, Ashanti Region.

#### Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2024

##### SNV OFFICE

- 10:00 – 11:00 Online interview with TLI Stakeholder from the BTL, Prof Kingsley Opoku Appiah, KNUST Business School
- 13:20 – 14:05 Online interview with CSO stakeholder on the MSP, Dr. Abena Karikari, Abuntu for Development; CSO- MSP
- 14: 15 – 15:00 Team discussion on interviews

#### Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

##### AT PEDUASE VALLEY RESORT, EASTERN REGION

- 8:00 -10:00 to Peduse, Eastern Region.

- 10:00 – 12:00 Observation at TLI stakeholders meeting at Peduase Valley Resort: SNV review meeting with TLI Stakeholders.
- 14:20 – 15:25 In person interview with TLI RRM Expert, Dr. Frank Gyamfi Yeboah, KNUST Department of Economics.
- 16:00 Travel, TLI evaluation Team from Suhum to Accra.
- Toralf Departs from Accra.

### Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

#### FIELD VISIT

- 8:00 -10:00 Travel to Suhum, Eastern Region .
- 10:15 – 15:00 Field visit to Land-based investor Champion, Yayra Glover Organic Cocoa at Suhum, Eastern Region.
- 14:00 -14:30 Summary visit update to Toralf

### Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

- 9:00 am - 10:15 In-person interview by TLI evaluator Ernestina joined online by Toralf with Dr. Foster Boateng, TLI Stakeholder from MSP, Director for the Tree Crop Development Authority in Ghana.
- Interview recording editing.

## Laos 20<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024

### Thursday

16 - 17.30: TLIP Team Laos: in Person and online

- Logistics (program, debriefing, mission finances, contacts, etc.), Overview of TLIP Laos, clarification of approaches, introduction to partners, and start brainstorming about future orientation.

### Friday

08:30 – 10:00: Mr. Micah Ingalls (Mekong Region Land Governance, MRLG)

- MRLG and its work, touching points and synergies with TLI, SDC coordination, and suggestions to TLI from an expert view.

11:00: SDC office Mekong region/Laos:

- SDC in Laos/Mekong, relation to TLIP and global program including MLRG. Complementarity with private sector work. From rice sufficiency to nutrition. Land tenure security. Dialog with China.

13:00 – 14:30: Ms. Phouvone Thammavong (Investment Promotion Department, MPI)

- Work with TLIP under MoU. RAI Task Force, RRM Model for new investment projects, administrating/managing investors, participation, regional guidelines, Gender, challenges of law enforcement, incentives for responsible investments, prosperity of farmers as objective.

15:00 – 16:30: Ms. Khankeo Oupravanh (GIZ)

- From RGIL to ILM-MR, FPIC, Reaching the village and smallholders, extension materials, need for learning attitude and simplicity, Conflicts and resolutions

18:00 – 20:00: Manivanh Aliyavong and Marie-Christine Lebret (Ali-SEA, GRET)

- ALISEA, ASSET and APP, Agroecology in TLI, contribution to same SDC strategy

## Saturday

### 12.30 Team Discussion

- Logistics (program, debriefing, mission finances, contacts, etc.), Overview of TLIP Laos, clarification of approaches, introduction to partners, and start brainstorming about future orientation. Lab and MSP/MSD and their functioning.

### 13.30 – 15.00 Saffron Coffee

- Company profile and its operations, growth strategy, relationship to farmers and building groups, scalability of their approach

### 16.30 – 18.00 FGD Discussion in the village

- Livelihood, challenges, extension, coffee growing, village and natural resources development, economic development and wellbeing impact, nutrition, health and education, MEL

## Sunday

### 09.00 – 10:00: Team discussion

- RRM, CoP and its functioning. More/less/status quo of xy for future

### 11:00 Discussion at the Airport/Flight

- CoP, Capacity Building and role of Gvt/CSO and private sector in Laos, MSP, Lab, Myanmar

## Monday

### 8.00 DALaM/MAF

- DALAM/MAF role in TLI with SAEDA, RAI, study tours, Vision and work of DALAM for RAI, RRM unknown, Gvt vision for Ag and RLI, collaboration Gvt with project without CSO, (impact) monitoring. Role of ASEAN (Guidelines) for Gvt

### 10.00 MLRG, regional RAI advisor, Naomi

- TLI and ASEAN, Backstopping and assessment work and scientific publications, RRM and its opportunities and challenges, Link to global food system discussions, private sector, and finance sector; role of incentive/regulations(carrot/stick), role and limits of CSO. More/less of ..

### 13.00 LaoDRRHA

- Work of LaoDRRHA and AsiADRRRHA. RAI techn. working group, role of CSO, CSO functioning and development suggestions. More/less of ...

### 15.30 SAEDA

- Role of SAEDA in TLI. CSOs and platforms in Laos. History, structure and operation of SAEDA. TLI and agroecology and organic agriculture, ALISEA, PGS/ICS. More/less of...

Tuesday: CDE visit and debriefing with the team in RECOFTC Vientiane office.

## 7.6 Terms of References (TOR)

See separate file