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Partnerships: Summary of Evaluative Learning on CGIAR's Ways of Working

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Partnerships: Summary of Evaluative Learning on CGIAR's Ways of Working

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Table of Acronyms

A4I	Advocacy for Impact
ABI	Accelerated Breeding Initiative
AoW	Areas of Work
ARI	Advanced Research Institution
AICCRA	Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa
AWARD	African Women in Agricultural Research and Development
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program
CoPs	Communities of Practice
CRP	CGIAR Research Program
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DOI	Digital Object Identifier
DSI	Digital Sequence Information
EA	Evaluative Assessments
EiB	Excellence in Breeding
EMD	Executive Managing Director
FRESH	CGIAR Initiative on Fruits and Vegetables for Sustainable Healthy Diets
GLoMIP	Global Market Intelligence Platform
GENDER	Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results
GESI	gender, equity, and social inclusion
GI	Genetic Innovation
GREAT	Gender-responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation
HLAP	High-Level Advisory Panel
IA	Impact Assessment
IAES	CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IFA	Integration Framework Agreement
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
IPSR	Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
LS	Listening Sessions
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MELIA	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Impact Assessment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MR	Management Response
MYEP	Multi-Year Evaluation Plan
NARS	National Agricultural Research System
NARIS	National Agricultural Research and Innovation Systems
PP4I	Private Partnerships for Impact
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
PRMF	Performance and Results Management Framework
QoS	Quality of Science

R4D	Research for Development
RAFS	Resilient Agrifood Systems
RIIs	Regional Integrated Initiatives
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG	Science Group
SHiFT	Sustainable Healthy Diets through Food Systems Transformation
SLO	System Level Outcome
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SNA	Social Network Analysis
ST	Systems Transformation
STISA	African Union's Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPPs	Target Product Profiles
WoW	Ways of Working

Executive Summary

The Ways of Working (WoW) learning study was developed to align with the System Council-endorsed Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP) contained in the consolidated [2025-27 workplan for CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service \(IAES\) \(SC/M21/DP5\)](#). This study summarizes partnership related evidence on ways of working (WoWs) 3 and partially 7¹. Areas for improvement in implementing CGIAR's [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#), are identified through the lens of the WoWs. This study synthesizes evidence behind the **31 partnership-related recommendations** from the **eight evaluations between 2021-24** (see Table 4). The 2024 Science Group (SG) evaluations served as the strong foundation for this study.²

CGIAR Science Group Evaluations:

1. Genetic Innovation. [Report \(2024\)](#)
2. Resilient Agri-food Systems. [Report \(2024\)](#)
3. Systems Transformation. [Report \(2024\)](#)
4. CGIAR Genebank Platform Evaluation. [Report \(2024\)](#)
5. GENDER (Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results), Platform Evaluation. [Report \(2023\)](#)
6. [Advisory Report](#): Study on the Performance Results Management System (PRMS) Project Management Approaches and Fit-for-Purpose Information Products (2023)
7. Evaluation of CGIAR Excellence in Breeding Platform [Report \(2022\)](#)
8. Evaluation of CGIAR Platform for Big Data in Agriculture. [Report \(2021\)](#)

Guided by the CGIAR-wide Evaluation [Framework](#) and [Policy](#), the WoW studies aim to steer and provide evidence-based guidance to inform

strategic decisions of the System Council (SC), and its Strategic Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC), and CGIAR boards and leadership more broadly, on the implementation and future planning of the WoWs. Specifically, the study aims to inform alignment with the [2024 Engagement Framework](#) for the [CGIAR Portfolio 2025-30](#) through recommendations³ and support improved evaluability against this 2024 Framework, to help CGIAR establish a baseline for the current state of partnership-related WoWs, and reiterate recommendations for progress towards the independent evaluation of partnerships and the midline evaluations planned for 2027 ([2025-27 Workplan for IAES \(SC/M21/DP5\)](#)).

This study and other summaries⁴, along with knowledge-sharing activities (e.g., dissemination, briefs, and thematic webinars), will support contextualizing discussions on CGIAR's WoWs. This effort will also strengthen linkages between Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Impact Assessment, and Foresight (MELIA-F)—an approach to align with CGIAR's institutional efforts to strengthen linkages between functions across centers, programs, and other independent data provider levels, as well as ongoing efforts across the community of CGIAR assurance providers to leverage evidence and advice while reducing assurance fatigue.

Findings and Conclusions

Report structure follows the 2022 Engagement Framework to highlight progress and remaining constraints in implementing the 2024 Framework principles and the forthcoming strategy. They are grouped into seven areas: 1) Institutionalization; 2) Resources; 3) Alignment and co-design; 4)

implementation of these Management Responses is tracked in the Evaluation & Management Response Actions Tracker.

⁴ To be available at IAES publications portal: <https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/publications>

¹ Studies on other WoWs will be available by the end 2025 on [publications portal](#) of the evaluation function of IAES

² The brief on partnerships from the 2024 evaluations of three Science Groups can be found [here](#).

³ Since 2022, a Management Response for all System Council-commissioned evaluations and the

Collaboration and contribution; 5) Capacity building; 6) Private sector cooperation; and 7) Advocacy. Evaluative evidence from the [four platforms](#), Evaluability Assessments (EAs) and the [three SGs](#) indicate that CGIAR made significant strides to help operationalize partnership principles and improve coordination at national and regional levels, supported by mechanisms such as the Regional Integrated Initiatives (RIIs) and appointment of regional directors and country convenors. The conclusions address the following main challenges:

- The limited role of country convenors and RIIs due to the lack of formal mandates, inconsistent resourcing, and weak structural integration.
- Financial and human resource constraints on the quality and stability of CGIAR partnerships.
- The limited ability to shape research priorities around country and regional needs because of varying levels of coordination and feedback loops, and fragmented or late engagements.
- The current fragmented collaboration model has varying levels of engagement and contribution that are not yet fully aligned across CGIAR.
- The lack of structured follow-up, long-term support and stable funding for targeted training programs and collaborative learning platforms.
- The inconsistent and largely unstructured engagement with private sector actors, including coordination gaps, administrative barriers, and limited internal skills.
- The absence of a unified advocacy strategy which led to fragmented efforts and uneven influence across regions and themes.

Priority Recommendations by Two Ways of Working

Toward effective implementation of the [2030 Strategy](#) including the ways of working (WoW) and the 2025–30 Portfolio, priority **recommendations** are grouped according to the

two partnership-related WoWs. Management Responses to these recommendations with respective implementation status are available in the CGIAR [Management Response Tracker](#). Annex 4 provides a full list of recommendations from evaluations and evaluative studies in scope.

Four recommendations address WoW 3: **Embedding research within ambitious alliances for change (in which CGIAR is strategically positioned) within broader innovation systems and transformation agendas to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs).**

- Consolidate work on transformation of food, land and water systems, especially in countries where various Initiatives are already engaged with a ST focus, by enhancing collaboration with national governments, research/policy institutions and development partners. (Rec. 1b, ST SG Evaluation)
- Invest in **local capacity development for integrated systems research**. Enhance in-country research capacity to apply integrated systems approaches to research. Develop mechanisms to regularly assess and refine innovations on the ground, in collaboration with local communities, ensuring technical soundness and social acceptance before wider implementation. (Rec. 8, ST SG Evaluation)
- Increase **breeding capacities in NARES and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)** for improved genetic gain in farmer-preferred varieties (ABI). (Rec. 8a, EiB Platform Evaluation)
- Develop incentives for interdisciplinary team collaborations across disciplines and centers to effectively tackle interconnected issues under the integrated management framework. Continue using platforms and communities of practice to promote collaboration across all Science Programs and Accelerators, fostering a holistic approach. (Rec. 3, ST SG Evaluation)

Nine recommendations address WoW7: **Growing in-country presence and integration with national research agendas. Positioning regions, countries and landscapes as central dimensions of partnership, worldview, as sources of demand, and as the location of co-design and**

co-delivery of innovation, capacity development, and policy change. Related recommendations from evaluations include:

- Strengthen the crucial role of **country conveners** by allocating adequate budget and establishing clear coordination mechanisms and communication lines with CGIAR regional leadership and Science Programs/Accelerators' coordinators. A single coordination point would enhance and institutionalize cooperation at country level across centers and between partners. (Rec. 3, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Better anchor CGIAR work to national research and development agendas, which would involve a more meaningful involvement of NARES in designing and implementing the CGIAR Portfolio 2025–30. Developing **country level strategies** and results frameworks, aligned with national priorities and strong connections with NARES, would lay the groundwork for CGIAR country-level relevance and coordination capacity. (Rec. 2, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Enhance systematic inclusion of partners in the Portfolio design, implementation, and scaling as per the 2024 Partnership & Advocacy Framework to raise visibility and strategic positioning of CGIAR at country level. (Rec. 4, ST SG Evaluation)
- Encourage collaboration at regional, national, and global levels with **dedicated budget allocations**. (Rec. 6c, GI SG Evaluation)
- Scaling innovations and managing scaling partnerships should be concentrated into a **single scaling program for better coordination**. An enhanced decision tool should be developed to help match innovation readiness with resources and scaling partners at country level with a focus on marketable solutions. (Rec. 9, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Operationalize **CGIAR's IFA (2022)** through financial and human resources and administrative policies, to streamline and harmonize procedures across centers. (Rec. 4, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Ensure financial stability to support long-term planning and continuity. Budget allocations should be **transparent and include contingency funds** to address mid-year budget reductions effectively. (Rec. 8a and 8e, GI SG Evaluation)
- Operationalize the combination of pooled and bilateral funding by providing specific **guidelines** to streamline complementarity between the two modalities, with clarified reporting modalities, both in terms of funding and results. (Rec.5, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Minimize unnecessary changes and maintain consistency in effective processes, leadership, teams, and partnerships to foster ongoing success. (Rec. 1b, GI SG Evaluation)

In summary, the most critical recommendations tackle the underlying reasons behind limited effectiveness of partnering: the perception that partnership is simply a contractual arrangement rather than a way of working (WoW), which demand a different mindset and skillset, as well as a shift in delivery. Evidence strongly indicates that meaningful change requires senior-level accountability for partnerships, including a dedicated CGIAR-wide partnership unit at System Office, and allocated and adequate resources, training, support, and incentives.

Proper measurement of the added value of working in partnerships and budgets must also shift. CGIAR's current heavily output-focused cost recovery model should expand to include essential process elements such as relationship-building, co-designing, co-implementation, and recognition of partner contributions.

1 Background and Context

Launched in 2022, the [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy \(hereafter, 2030 Strategy\)](#) emphasizes the need to strengthen and expand external partnerships, recognizing that global challenges demand collaboration beyond CGIAR. The 2030 Strategy introduced seven new implementation approaches—or ways of working (WoW)—to ensure research delivers tangible development solutions. Two of these WoWs focus specifically on **partnerships**:

Embedding research within ambitious alliances for change, in which CGIAR is strategically positioned, within broader innovation systems and transformation agendas to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs):

- Identification of useful points of entry for science and innovation in existing active partnerships among global and regional bodies, including the private sector, public sector, and civil society.
- Co-communication and co-delivery within these partnerships.
- Adoption of targets and metrics developed, used, and measured by partners at CGIAR Initiative-level.
- Commissioned evaluations to capture partners' assessments of CGIAR contributions to partners' agendas for transformation.
- Co-creation of innovations through interaction with partners., particularly modest breakthroughs that may unlock wider systemic change.

Growing in-country presence and integration with national research agendas: Positioning regions, countries, and landscapes (as central dimensions of partnership, worldview, and impact) as the source of demand, and as the location of co-design and co-delivery of innovation, capacity development, and policy change with partners.

- Active ongoing engagement with regional stakeholders to identify shared priorities, co-design activities, and cultivate critical research and development partnerships.
- Requirement for all research design to define outcomes and impacts in specific regions, countries, and landscapes.
- Country strategies that contribute to regional and country policies and investment programs.
- Research objectives that are aligned with national and regional targets and plans.
- Commissioned evaluations to capture regional and country-level assessments of CGIAR success in meeting demand (CGIAR, 2021).

To support the 2030 Strategy, the [Performance and Results Management Framework \(PRMF\) 2022-30](#) includes two related indicators: Capacity development and Partnerships. Aligned with PRMS, monitoring data for these two and other indicators is available on the CGIAR [Results Dashboard](#).

- **Indicator 1-Capacity development:** The number of people trained, disaggregated by gender; changes in the science and knowledge capacity of key Individuals, organizations (government, civil society, and private sector), and networks (multi-stakeholder platforms) are assessed.
- **Indicator 4-Partnerships:** The number, type, and role of partners along impact pathways; partner typology must align with international standards, e.g., the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

As input to the 2030 Strategy, the Evaluation Function of IAES conducted **a meta-synthesis of 43 evaluations** spanning both phases of the CGIAR Research Programs (2011-19)⁵, and thematic evaluations including the [2017 Evaluation of Partnerships in CGIAR](#). This synthesis produced 41 recommendations, with eight of them on partnerships (see Table 1)—all of which are tracked in the [MR Tracker](#).

⁵ See evaluative review of the 12 CRP evaluative reviews <https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/crp-2020-review>

Table 1. Partnership-related recommendations from [the 2021 Synthesis](#) (see Annex 2 for full description)

Recommendations
✓ (Rec. 2) Prioritize partnership development and stakeholder engagement.
(Rec. 3) Focus much more on institutional capacity development, especially of national boundary partners, in close collaboration with donor agencies and other funding partners.
(Rec. 4) Define CGIAR's comparative advantage in delivery of different elements of the ambitious 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy and its projected scale of funding.
(Rec. 5) Strengthen country and regional coordination structures as a facility for all CGIAR centers/research initiatives to explore integrative solutions at local, landscape, and relevant subnational, national and regional scales, ensuring coherent and responsive engagement with national stakeholders and agenda.
(Rec. 19) Prioritize seed sector development to facilitate impact at scale, including expanding partnerships with the private and civil society sectors and strengthening key policies and regulations.
(Rec. 20) Catalyze partnerships with other research and innovation partners in defined systems to enable crop system diversification and improved access to affordable, healthy diets.
(Rec. 32) Take a more systematic approach to partnership development, and to individual and institutional capacity development at all levels.
(Rec. 33) Draw more extensively on CGIAR's value as a broker of networked actions in making significantly greater use of research and development partnerships to fill knowledge and skill gaps in the research processes and innovation webs involved.
(Rec. 34) Prioritize responsiveness of the research agendas to local, national and regional strategies and Initiatives to facilitate the achievement of outcomes at scale.
(Rec. 36) Strengthen social science capacities to complement the biophysical expertise of CGIAR through increasing in-house resources or external partnerships.

Source: [Synthesis 2021](#)

The [2022 CGIAR Engagement Framework for Partnerships and Advocacy](#) (hereafter, Engagement Framework) was developed to guide collaboration with partners and support implementation of the 2030 Strategy and WoWs. The Framework defines partnership and advocacy in relation to transforming land, water and food systems in a climate crisis as follows:

- **Partnership:** an intentional relationship with other research organizations, the private sector, public sector, academia, or civil society organizations (CSOs) at national, regional, and/or international levels to achieve common aims.
- **Advocacy:** an organized effort that seeks to inform and influence policy, practices, and investments of the private and public sector and CSOs, at national, regional, and/or international levels.

The Engagement Framework highlighted that effective institutional engagement depends on creating an enabling environment at local, regional, and global levels. It identified six key conditions and three priority approaches (Box 1) as the foundation for more structured, impactful, and sustainable partnerships. The priority approaches—capacity sharing, private sector cooperation and advocacy—were considered essential to enhance CGIAR's global impact by improving coordination, fostering collaboration, minimizing duplication, and scaling knowledge, innovations, and technologies. To clarify roles across the innovation pathway, the [Framework](#) categorized partners into three groups—Demand, Innovation, and Scaling Partners. In 2024, CGIAR updated the Framework to incorporate stakeholder feedback and to address recommendations from the [2023 High-Level Advisory Panel \(HLAP\)](#) (Box 2).

Box 1. Recommendations from the 2023 High-Level Advisory Panel

HLAP recommended a wide-ranging reform of CGIAR’s approach to engagement and partnerships, namely to:

1. Better orient the new One CGIAR model and the institutional arrangements being put into place toward improved engagement and partnership with key stakeholders.
2. Develop and implement a visible process for inclusive agenda-setting, co-design, and co-ownership of all aspects of One CGIAR’s programmatic efforts.
3. Prioritize the establishment and urgent implementation of appropriate engagement modalities with host country governments, their central role in the One CGIAR transformation.

Source: [High-level Advisory Panel Report to CGIAR System Board-On Improving One CGIAR’s Strategic Engagement with Partners \(11 January 2023\)](#)

The updated [2024 Engagement Framework](#) sets out an approach to strengthen partnerships at country, regional, and global levels. It aligns with the [Integration Framework Agreement \(IFA\) 2022](#), which established a structured partnership between CGIAR research centers and the System Organization to enhance collaboration, governance, and operational efficiency.

Box 2. Conditions and priority approaches of engagement according to 2022 Engagement Framework

Main Conditions

- **Institutionalization:** A strong mandate and clear objectives for partnerships and advocacy.
- **Resources:** Adequate financial means and human capacity.
- **Co-design:** Support of activities, processes, and plans with a range of stakeholders.
- **Collaboration:** Opportunities for multi-dimensional engagement in support of agendas and plans for research, delivery, and engagement.
- **Contribution:** Work towards a continuous cycle of impact.
- **Alignment:** Based on careful stakeholder consultation, align demand, supply and feasible for effective institutional engagement.

Priority Approaches

- **Capacity sharing for development:** Develop deeper collaboration with National Agricultural Research and Innovation Systems (NARIS), with a long-term, collaborative approach focused on mutual learning and co-creation, with the goal to enhance the skills and capacities of both partners and CGIAR staff, especially in the Global South.
- **Private sector cooperation:** Scale impact and achieve the SDGs, leveraging shared resources, innovation, and networks. Collaboration includes business incubation, sustainable finance, market access for innovations, IP management, and promoting responsible agri-food practices.
- **Advocacy:** Inform and influence policy, investment, and practices through evidence-based knowledge to advance the SDGs. Advocacy supports national priorities by presenting policy options, fostering inclusive, science-based dialogue, and engaging in strategic partnerships. Advocacy is collaborative, rooted in science diplomacy, and is aligned with global commitments, emphasizing South-South cooperation and shared capacities.

Source: [CGIAR 2022 Engagement Framework for Partnerships and Advocacy](#).

Table 2 provides a high-level comparison of the 2022 and 2024 Engagement Frameworks, highlighting shifts in governance, alignment, and partner engagement approaches—primarily driven by the adoption of the [IFA](#). The 2024 Framework reflects a move toward more structured, centralized, and risk-aware mechanisms, with emphasis on regional coordination. This learning study found no evidence that evaluative recommendations from independent evaluations commissioned by the System Council were considered in the revision process.

Table 2. Comparison between the 2022 and 2024 Partnerships Engagement Frameworks

	2022 Framework	2024 Framework
GOVERNANCE AND ALIGNMENT		
Central Oversight	Decentralized, center-led partnerships	CGIAR Partnership Forum for centralized governance
Partner Selection & Due Diligence	No standardized selection criteria	Formalized selection and risk assessment mechanisms
Regional Engagement Strategy	Limited regional structures	Structured engagement at country & regional levels
Policy & Global Decision-Making Engagement	Focused on bilateral partnerships	Integrated into global policy forums & advocacy
Risk Management	Limited risk evaluation	Structured financial, reputational, and operational risk assessments
PARTNER TYPOLOGY		
Segmentation	Local and national government not segmented	local and national government segmented

Since 2022, complementary to the 2022 Partnership Framework, CGIAR introduced a range of innovations and services to strengthen collaboration with external partners. These include the [Discovery Hub for collaboration](#), [Stakeholder Intelligence for market analysis](#), Advocacy for Impact (A4I) for policy engagement, and [Private Partnerships for Impact \(PP4I\) for intellectual property management and scaling](#). To deepen engagement at country and regional levels, CGIAR has taken the following steps:⁶

- **Appointment of regional directors and country conveners:** Introduced in 2021–22, regional directors lead partnership-building efforts, align regional strategies with the SDGs, and integrate countries and landscape-level work in CGIAR's broader impact agenda. Country conveners coordinate CGIAR Initiatives at national level and serve as key focal points for governments and strategic partners—helping align research activities with national priorities, enabling responsiveness to country-specific needs.
- **Listening Sessions:** Between late 2023 and April 2024, CGIAR held stakeholder Listening Sessions (LS) in 28 countries⁷ to inform the design of [CGIAR's Portfolio 2025–30](#). These sessions created space for dialogue with local partners to explore collaboration opportunities, align CGIAR research agenda with national strategies, and build a foundation for deeper, more impactful engagement.
- **A system of intelligence gathering on private sector:** Implemented with the University of Minnesota three-year project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), a system of intelligence gathering on private sector players and their research and scaling capacity was set up.
- **Training:** Ingoing development of the training for CGIAR staff and partners to become available in Q3/Q4 of 2025, for ongoing learning and skill enhancement in resource management and partnership coordination.
- **Partnering Strategy and Tools:** As part of operationalizing the 2024 Engagement Framework, CGIAR is developing a system-wide partnering strategy alongside a tools, procedures, and guidelines to define clear roles, responsibilities, and processes for engagement and advocacy. A set of recommended partnership tools was published in December 2024 (Table 3.2) to complement the strategy. The inception phase of the 2025–30 Portfolio serves as a test to pilot key principles of the strategy through the co-design of Science Programs and Accelerators. Insights and lessons from these pilots will inform the final version of the strategy, to be refined and approved later in 2025. This forthcoming strategy intends to be a call to action and a resource document to ensure CGIAR's partnerships create measurable value. The

⁶ Formal documented evidence for selected steps would be considered in the Partnership evaluation.

⁷ From CGIAR P25 LS Forward Looking Update.

strategy would outline key shifts that are expected from its adoption, including the following changes (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below):

Table 3.1. Process guidance and tools to support CGIAR's Partnership Strategy

Current partnership approach	Transformed partnership approach
Partnerships tend to take place with 'usual suspects', based mostly on existing relationships. Potential misalignment with national priorities.	Partnerships designed strategically with diverse partners, including more from the Global South. Stakeholder mapping used to identify ideal partners. Close alignment with national agricultural priorities
Inconsistent approach to assessing partnership success. Evaluation focused mainly on project outputs.	Clear partnership success metrics based on value added, including regular 'health checks'. Holistic evaluation considering both impacts and partnership health.
Partnerships may be created according to CGIAR agenda. <i>Ad hoc</i> and inconsistent engagement with partners.	Partners engaged early, often and effectively to co-identify problems and co-create solutions.
Limited structured reflection on partnership learnings. Fragmented partnership efforts and little cross-center coordination.	Dedicated processes and communities of practice for reflection, learning, and continuous improvement. Partnership support team established to coordinate efforts across programs, centers and regions.
Partnerships treated as short-term, transactional or project based. Inconsistent use of the term 'partnership', making systematic approaches difficult.	Focus on building long-term, strategic partnerships that go beyond individual projects to drive sustained impact. Clear distinction between different partnership types, based on agreed definitions.

Table 3.2. Process guidance and tools to support CGIAR's Partnership Strategy

Considerations and decision points	Guidance and tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What specific problems and challenges require a partnership to address effectively? What value is gained by working collectively rather than alone? 	Motivation to partner guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which organization has an interest in or influence over this problem? 	Stakeholder Mapping Tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the best modality/way of working with each stakeholder/potential partner? 	Spectrum of CGIAR's work with external organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Might the organizations be interested in working with CGIAR? 	Value Assessment Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there internal buy-in and sufficient capacity for partnership? 	Internal Prospective Partnership Assessment Tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What form of joint agreement can be used to guide the partnership? 	Partnership Agreement Template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we (CGIAR and partners) know how the partnership will operate in practice? 	Partnership Workplan Template
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can we keep the partnership on track and undertake the necessary course correction? 	Partnership Health Check Tool

Considerations and decision points	Guidance and tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we know what the partnership achieved? 	Self-assessment process/independent evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we identify the next steps? 	Partnership transition strategies guidance

Source :[CGIAR's Partnership Strategy Partnering Systematically to Deliver our Research & Innovation Strategy](#). (working version shared by CGIAR Executive Managing Direction (EMD) in December 2024).

Despite progress, a setback includes elimination of a dedicated partnership unit at the System Office as of 2025, with early signs of undermined systemwide coordination. Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with large partners, partnership information management, and defining and strategically reassessing the position of CGIAR in relation to the changing realities are better when centrally managed.

2 Purpose, Scope and Method

The purpose of this summary study is to consider CGIAR's progress since 2022 in strengthening external partnerships framed by recommendations and evidence and to highlight priorities and reiterate remaining challenges during roll-out of the 2025–30 CGIAR Portfolio. Conducted under the System Council–endorsed Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP) as part of the [2025–27 Workplan for IAES](#) (SC/M21/DP5)), the study delivers on Year 1 commitments by synthesizing findings from eight evaluations of the 2021–24 CGIAR Portfolio. It draws on evidence behind the 28 partnership–related recommendations (see Table 4) and proposes ways to align efforts with the [2024 Engagement Framework](#) in the [CGIAR Portfolio 2025–30](#).⁸ The study also supports improved evaluability of the 2025–30 Portfolio and will inform the design of the full partnership evaluation planned for Year 3 of the MYEP. Details on Management Responses (MRs) and the status of recommendation implementation are provided in Annex 4.

Table 4. Evaluative studies and evaluations 2021–24

No.	Title with Report, Annex and MR links	Number of partnership-related recommendations
1-3	CGIAR Science Group Evaluations: – Genetic Innovation. Report (2024) ; Annexes ; Management Response	5 (out of 9)
	– Resilient Agri-food Systems. Report (2024) ; Annexes ; Management Response	3 (out of 15)
	– Systems Transformation. Report (2024) ; Annexes ; Management Response	4 (out of 11)
4	CGIAR Genebank Platform Evaluation. Report (2024) ; Annexes ; CGIAR Management Response ; Crop Trust Management Response	6 (out of 11)
5	GENDER (Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Results), Platform Evaluation. Report (2023) ; Annexes ; Management Response	3 (out of 11)
6	Evaluation of CGIAR Excellence in Breeding Platform Report (2022) ; Annexes ; Management Response	6 (out of 9)

⁸ Since 2022, a Management Response for all System Council–commissioned evaluations and the implementation of these Management Responses is tracked in the Evaluation & Management Response Actions Tracker.

No.	Title with Report, Annex and MR links	Number of partnership-related recommendations
7	Evaluation of CGIAR Platform for Big Data in Agriculture. Report (2021) ; Annexes ; Management Response	1 (out of 10)
	Sub-total Partnership related recommendations	28 (out of 76)

Aligned with the 2022 Partnership Framework and evaluative recommendations, this learning summary study applies a partnership lens to synthesize findings from eight evaluations. Six of these included explicit evaluation-related questions on partnerships (see Annex 1). While the synthesis of Evaluability Assessments (EAs) of the regional-integrated initiatives (RIIs)⁹ did not focus specifically on partnerships, it nonetheless gathered relevant partnership-related insights, as they were the core concept of regional integration, operationalized through CGIAR and external partnerships. As Annex 1 illustrates, the evaluation lines of inquiry examined how partnerships are integrated into research design, their alignment with CGIAR's strategic goals, and their contribution to research quality and impact. They also assessed how resources support collaboration, the inclusiveness of partnerships, and the extent to which they strengthen relationships with key players like national research systems and external organizations.

Section 3 presents the partnership-related findings of the eight evaluations by the main categories of the [2022 Engagement Framework](#): *Conditions of Engagement* and *Priority Approaches*. Sub-section 4.2 draws out priority conclusions and implications for action.

3 Key Evidence on Partnerships

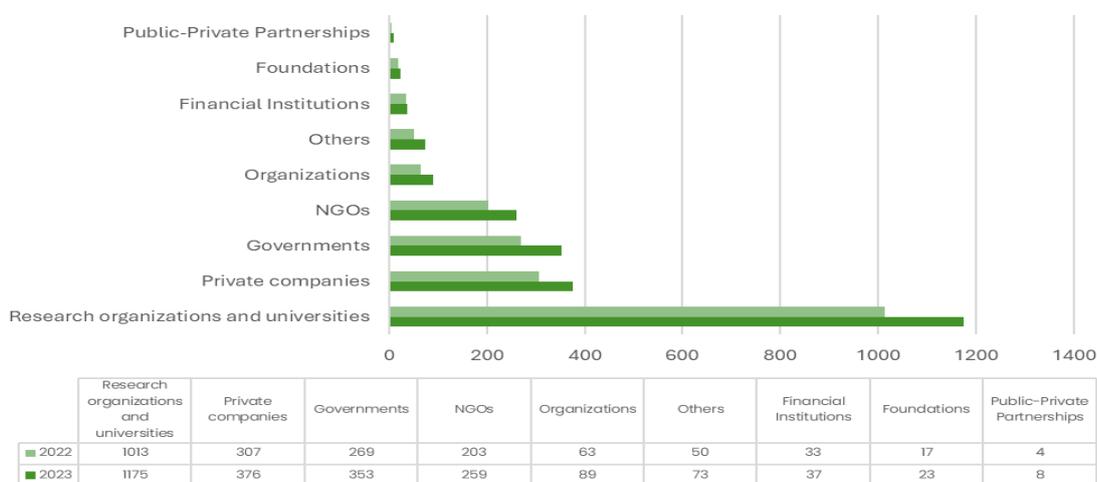
The 2022–24 Portfolio was implemented through CGIAR's three Science Groups (SGs):¹⁰ Genetic Innovation (GI), Resilient Agrifood systems (RAFS), and Systems Transformation (ST). The Portfolio was also implemented with performance monitored via [the Results Dashboard](#). Complementing work of CGIAR platforms, data indicates increased collaboration between 2022 and 2023 as Initiatives under three SGs gained momentum.¹¹ Each partnership type contributed differently to CGIAR's objectives, based on a standardized typology. Typology used in the Results Dashboard was a simplified version of the one outlined in the 2022 Engagement Framework, which originally listed 16 partner types. Figure 1 illustrates that in 2023, research organizations and universities made up the largest partnership group, with 1,175 partnerships. Private companies formed the second-largest group, followed by government entities (353 partnerships). Others included NGOs, financial institutions and foundations, and primarily implemented or contributed technical expertise and funding. These sample numbers are largely quantitative indicators and do not reflect the depth or effectiveness of the partnerships. The degree to which these partnerships are transformational according to the definition of partnerships is to be seen in the evaluation of partnerships.¹²

⁹ See CGIAR IAES (2023), Synthesis: [Evaluability Assessment Review of Four Regional Integrated Initiatives](#).

¹⁰ See [Portal](#) for the three 2024 SG evaluations.

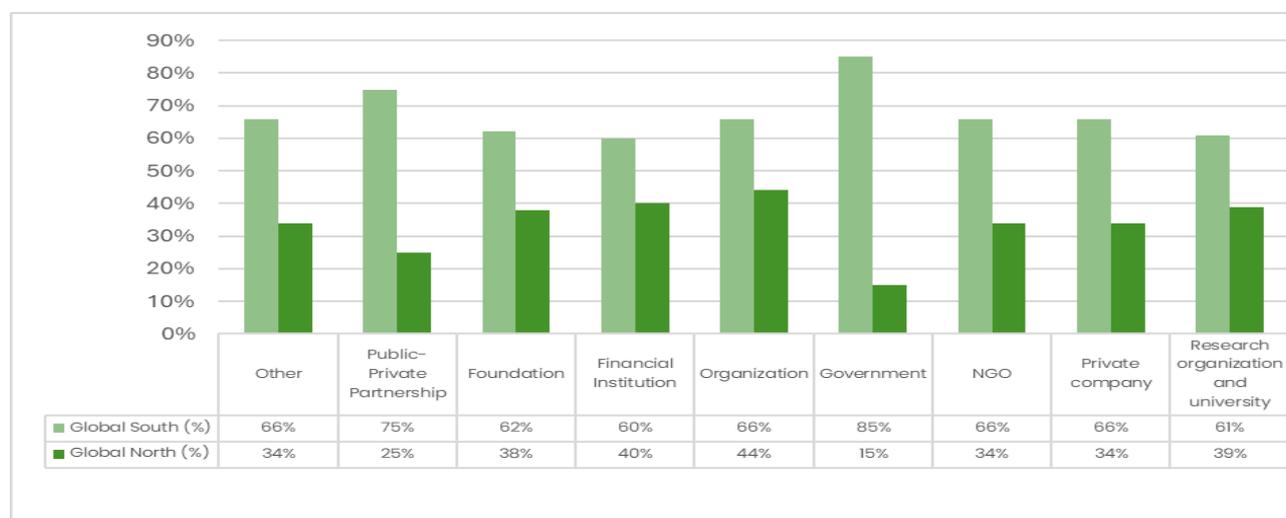
¹¹ Data for 2024 were B/A at the time of report development in Q1 2025; 2022–23 data is provided as an example.

¹² [2025–27 Workplan for IAES](#) (SC/M21/DP5).

Figure 1. Total number of partners by type reported in CGIAR Results Dashboard, 2022 & 2023

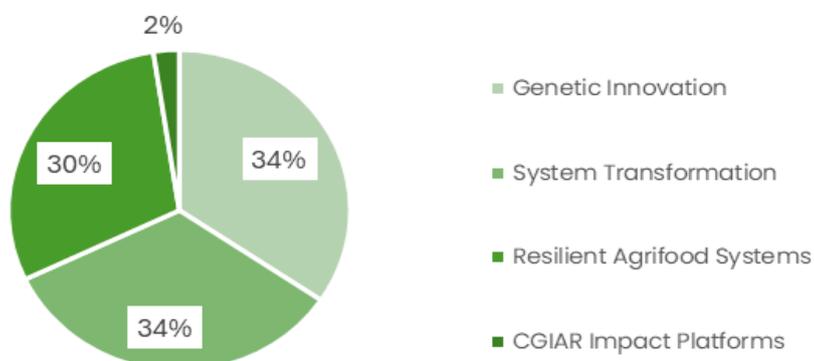
Source: Adapted from CGIAR Annual Report, 2023.

Figure 2 shows the 2023 distribution of partnerships across the Global South and Global North by organizational types. Government (85%) and public-private (75%) partnerships were predominantly based in the Global South, along with 66% of NGOs and civil society partnerships. In contrast, foundations (62%) and financial institutions (60%) were mainly concentrated in the Global North. Partnerships with research organizations and universities were more balanced, with 61% located in the Global South.

Figure 2. Regional location of partner organization types, 2023

Source: Adapted from CGIAR Annual Report, 2023.

In the 2022–24 SG Portfolio, (see Figure 3), GI, ST, and RAFS each accounted for roughly one-third of the total number of partners, which did not correlate to the number of Initiatives in each SG. Under a more specialized area of collaboration, CGIAR Impact Platforms represented a smaller share of partners.

Figure 3. Partner distribution by Science Group in 2023

Source: Adapted from CGIAR Annual Report, 2023.

3.1 Evidence on Conditions of Engagement

This section explores key factors influencing CGIAR's collaboration with external partners, namely **institutionalization, resource availability, and stakeholder alignment**. Social Network Analysis (SNA) provides insights into the structure and dynamics of these partnerships, assessing engagement levels across partner types. The evaluations identify critical challenges and opportunities to strengthen collaboration through more structured mechanisms, strategic co-design, and deeper partner integration.

3.1.1 Institutionalization

The 2022 Engagement Framework sets out key definitions used in this section.

Institutionalization: A strong mandate and clear objectives for partnerships and advocacy.

The **2022 Engagement Framework** lacked structural integration within CGIAR, limiting its practical application and impact to strengthen partnerships. The **HLAP** found that the Framework was insufficiently embedded into the broader One CGIAR institutional architecture, programmatic plans, and operational processes. While it focused on system-level engagement, it offered little practical guidance for center- and project-level partnerships. There was no clear mechanism for incorporating partner input into system-wide decisions or governance. Stronger structural alignment and the formalization of partner roles in decision-making to enhance the Framework's impact were recommended.

Country conveners played a key role in fostering cross-center collaboration, improving research integration, and enhancing coherence across Initiatives. However, their effectiveness was limited by unclear mandates, insufficient resources, and weak institutional support. The **RAFS SG Evaluation** underscored the importance of both country conveners and Initiative country focal points in promoting synergies and research integration. The **ST SG Evaluation** noted that while the convener created opportunities for greater coherence, its impact varied by country due to budget constraints, undefined responsibilities, and limited authority. Internal stakeholders recognized that conveners are often faced with competing responsibilities and resource challenges, yet their coordination efforts were widely viewed as essential to improving initiative collaboration. The evaluation recommended a more systematic approach to country-level programming, including clearer Terms of Reference (ToR) for conveners, and stronger

governance structures to support leadership, advocacy, and CGIAR's influence at national level. Evidence in Box 3 includes evidence on legitimacy and credibility, e.g., the Quality of Science (QoS) brief.

Box 3. List of regional and thematic briefs¹³

- [Brief on Partnerships](#)
- [Kenya Country Brief](#)
- [Africa Brief](#)
- [Asia Brief](#)
- [QoS Brief](#)

Regional Integrated Initiatives (RIIs) play a key role in fostering partnerships by coordinating with government partners, stakeholders, and various CGIAR Initiatives within their regions. As administrative platforms, RIIs support collaboration across CGIAR centers and regional actors, helping to integrate resources, expertise, and activities. However, the RII [EAs Synthesis](#) found that

RIIs lack a systematic mechanism for engagement with regional directors, country conveners, and other RIIs, resulting in coordination gaps. Overlaps between RIIs-led activities and bilateral projects by CGIAR centers created challenges in attributing contributions toward shared national or regional outcomes.

3.1.2 Resources: Adequate Financial Means and Human Capacity

The operationalization of the 2022 CGIAR IFA is essential for improving resource management, financial stability, and administrative efficiency across CGIAR centers. Adequate funding and human resource allocation are key to streamlining operations, minimizing bureaucratic inefficiencies, and strengthening institutional coordination. As part of the One CGIAR reform, efforts to consolidate research programs and financial flows aim to boost operational effectiveness. Addressing persistent financial constraints and refining funding mechanisms will be critical to sustaining partnerships, scaling innovations, and supporting long-term capacity-building—particularly through regional research hubs and strengthened collaboration with National Agricultural Research System (NARS).

Financial management inefficiencies, particularly budget instability, delayed disbursements, and unpredictable allocations remain major challenges for CGIAR interventions. The three SG evaluations identified budget uncertainty, reliance on annual rather than multi-year budget allocations, and frequent re-budgeting as key barriers to effective implementation. Sudden funding cuts disrupted research activities, delayed staff contracts, undermined sustainability and scaling of partnerships, and affected CGIAR's credibility with partners. Survey responses cited inconsistent funding as a major obstacle to contracting local partners. To address these issues, evaluations recommended greater budget transparency, structured contingency planning, and the adoption of long-term funding mechanisms—similar to those used in bilateral agreements—to improve financial stability and support more reliable planning (see section 3.1.4).

Scaling innovations effectively require a coordinated program that improves resource allocation and fosters synergy across CGIAR centers with external partners. The **Accelerated Breeding Initiative (ABI)** highlights the benefits of aligning financial and technical resources to support large-scale dissemination. To enhance this process, a structured decision-making tool was proposed to match innovation readiness with funding opportunities and identify appropriate scaling partners at country level. Strengthening these mechanisms is expected to accelerate the adoption of CGIAR's innovations—such as stress-tolerant crop varieties and climate-smart agricultural practices—across agricultural and environmental systems. In the new 2025-30 Portfolio, CGIAR established the [Scaling for Impact Program](#), an Initiative dedicated to advancing the uptake of food, land, and water systems innovations.

Human resource constraints remain a key challenge, particularly in regional leadership and partnership coordination roles. While the introduction of country conveners and RIIs aimed to strengthen collaboration, their effectiveness has been uneven, mainly due to funding constraints and unclear mandates. In several regions and/or countries, conveners struggled to mobilize resources and coordinate across diverse research

¹³ See more at the SG evaluation [Portal](#).

priorities, reducing their impact. Limited investing in structured staffing plans and formalized leadership roles undermined coordination, accountability, and overall program performance; as did administrative operational inefficiencies. The System Organization's effort to harmonize HR policies and financial management under CGIAR's IFA has a potential to streamline operations across the system.

Transparent and accessible grant-awarding processes are critical for improving financial efficiency and reducing administrative burdens. Some CGIAR centers adopted digital grant management platforms, making applications and disbursements more accessible, especially for local and regional stakeholders. To further enhance access, streamlining financial procedures and harmonizing grant management systems is recommended.

Strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks, aligned to the [CGIAR's PRME](#), can help assess the impact of resource allocation decisions, ensuring that financial and human resource investments contribute to long-term sustainability and measurable outcomes. Appropriate monitoring with the combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence is warranted, e.g., triangulation of evidence from LS, and interrogating evidence from independent evaluations.¹⁴

3.1.3 Alignment and Co-Design

Alignment: Based on careful stakeholder consultation, effective institutional engagement occurs when demand, offer, and feasibility align.

Co-design: Support activities, processes, and plans with a range of stakeholders.

Evidence below goes deeper into the above Framework concepts (see Figure 4)

Figure 4. Alignment for effective engagement—as per the Framework



Source: [2022 CGIAR Engagement Framework for Partnerships & Advocacy](#).

Alignment with global, regional, and national priorities are uneven. While CGIAR research aligns well with global agendas—such as the UN Food Systems Summit agenda—regional integration particularly in the

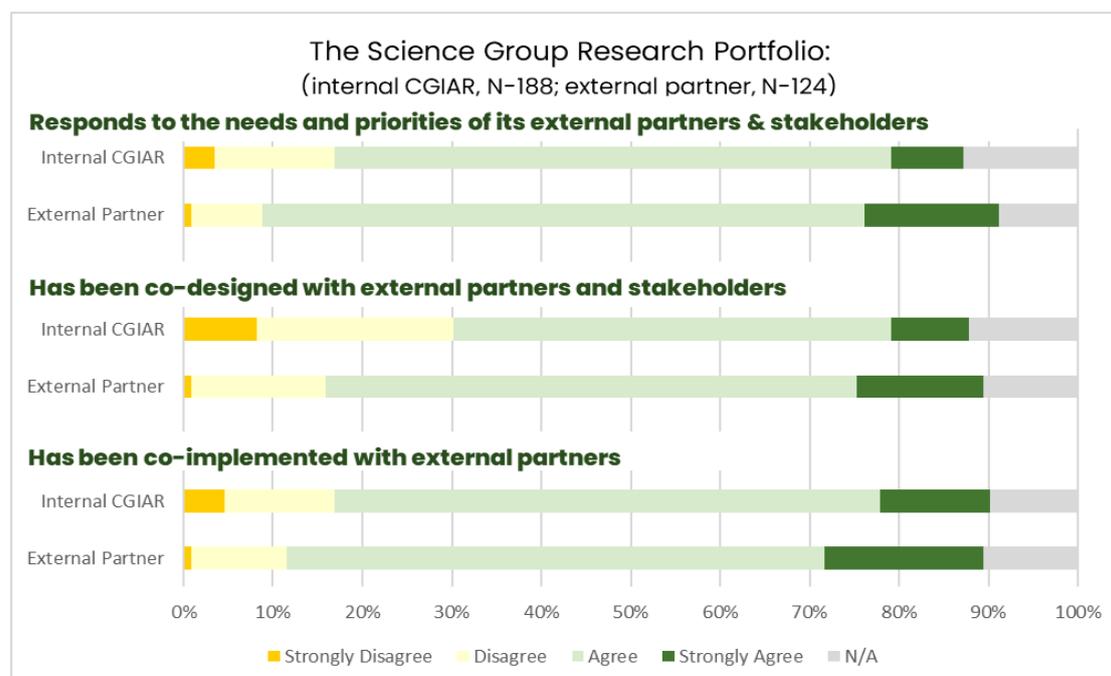
¹⁴ For example: [Evaluation of CGIAR SGs and Social Network Analysis Evaluation of the CGIAR Genebank Platform Evaluation](#).

Science and Technology Action Areas is less consistent. The [SG Evaluation Synthesis](#) calls for stronger alignment with regional frameworks, such as the [Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program \(CAADP\)](#) and the [African Union's Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa \(STISA\)](#). At national level, responsiveness varied. CGIAR's work was found well-aligned with national research agendas in **Vietnam, Ghana, and Kenya**, while work in **Bangladesh and Colombia** was weaker due to limited engagement with national research partners and perceptions of donor-driven research priorities (see Box 3).

Stakeholder engagement across CGIAR varies significantly. [RAFS](#) and [ST](#) SG evaluations found that external stakeholders had mixed views on their involvement in the design and planning of the 20+ Initiatives. In contrast, the [GI SG Evaluation](#) reported strong stakeholder engagement across the five Initiatives, particularly in breeding Initiatives, which helped to align CGIAR's goals with national and regional priorities. One reason for stronger engagement in GI may be the smaller, more homogeneous group of long-standing partners and stakeholders. Having worked with the same partners for decades, the GI SG is generally well-integrated into national agricultural research systems. By contrast, stakeholders in the ST SG reported lower engagement and challenges in aligning with regional frameworks. Stakeholders recommended earlier and more frequent engagement to better adapt CGIAR's research to country-specific needs.

Improving stakeholder engagement requires tailored approaches and stronger inclusion of vulnerable populations. The [RAFS SG Evaluation](#) highlighted limited capacity and insufficient focus on involving vulnerable populations in research design. The ST SG evaluation emphasized the need for more targeted engagement to close research and policy gaps and ensure that CGIAR's interventions align with local priorities. In **Bangladesh**, stakeholders acknowledged CGIAR's technical expertise but called for stronger national leadership, clearer communication, and more integrated programming to support the country's transition to a resilient and sustainable food system. Country conveners were identified as a potential mechanism for strengthening national engagement, however their impact has been unstable due to under-funding and lack of a clear mandate.

Figure 5. Perspective on SG Research Portfolio engagement with partners

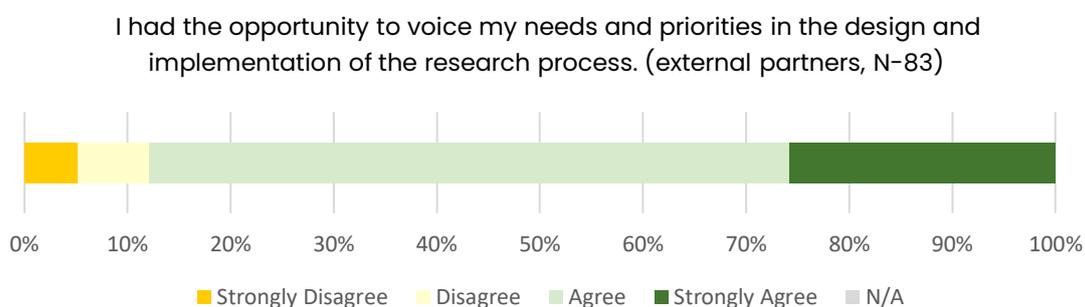


Source: SG Evaluations Survey 2024.

Co-design practices vary across SGs.¹⁵ The [GI SG Evaluation](#) found strong and consistent engagement with external stakeholders, helping to align breeding goals with national and regional priorities. Unlike other SGs, GI found evidence of regular collaboration with partners to ensure that breeding efforts addressed key needs, such as productivity, climate resilience, gender inclusion, and improved grain quality and nutrition. [The Market Intelligence Initiative](#) stood out for its active engagement with farmers and end-user representatives in identifying target market segments and product profiles. However, relevance could be enhanced by creating explicit feedback loops between product design and delivery, and by better integrating RAFS SG research on agronomy and plant health. In **Ghana**, NARES partners reported strengthened collaboration with CGIAR since 2022, citing more frequent meetings, trainings, workshops, and joint research. Scientists from the Savannah Agricultural Research Institute expressed a greater sense of ownership of CGIAR research, as their priorities were reflected in co-developed activities.¹⁶ Some NARES stakeholders recommended deeper involvement, including greater integration into leadership and decision-making processes within GI SG.

Perceptions of CGIAR's co-design process vary across stakeholder groups. The 2023 H LAP study emphasized that in line with the [2022 Engagement Framework](#), early stakeholder involvement should be systematically integrated into planning and reflected in M&E indicators to ensure alignment with national agendas. Survey results from the [SG Evaluations Survey](#) show that nearly 90% of external respondents involved in CGIAR research design and implementation felt they had opportunities to express their needs and priorities. There was also strong agreement on the co-implementation of research. However, Figure 6 reveals a gap in perceptions of **co-design**. External partners (particularly NARES respondents) showed less agreement on co-design involvement. Findings underscore the need for stronger, earlier engagement to ensure that research priorities are collaboratively shaped from the outset.

Figure 6. External partners' perception of involvement in CGIAR's research design and implementation



Source: [SG Evaluations Survey 2024](#).

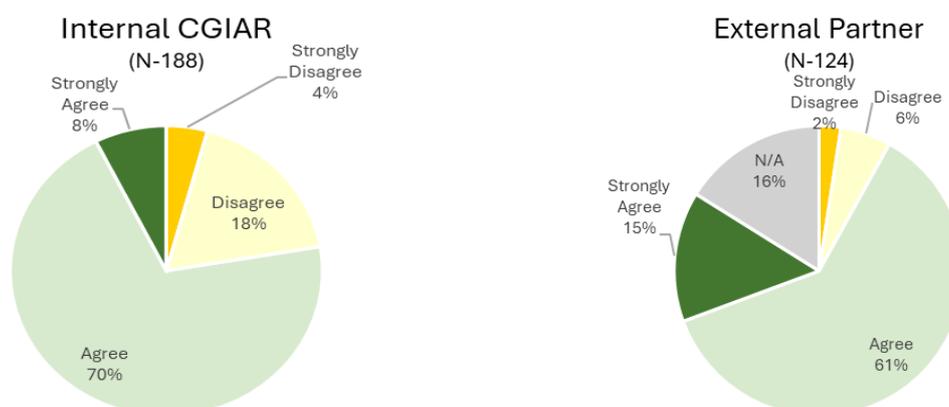
Stakeholder consultations have improved but remain uneven and poorly coordinated. Following the [2021 Synthesis](#) recommendation to strengthen CGIAR's institutional capacity for engaging national boundary partners and collaborating with donor agencies, progress has been made, particularly in the Global South. Figure 7 reflects this positive shift, with 74% of CGIAR respondents and 63% of external partners acknowledging a greater improvement of scientists, research institutes, and policymakers in shaping CGIAR's policy research agenda. Additional successes under ST SG in fostering collaboration and aligning with regional priorities include: [SHiFT](#) Initiative's work with national stakeholders to develop country-specific

¹⁵ One of the criteria used by the ISDC to review the proposals of the new portfolio was evidence that the Science Program is demand driven through co-design with key stakeholders and partners ([ISDC Review of 2025-30 Proposal, 15 November 2024](#)).

¹⁶ Read more about experiences in this [blog post](#) on insights from the Ghana field mission.

implementation strategies, and the [FRESH](#) Initiative with local universities and research institutions to co-develop research agendas across multiple countries.

Figure 7. Engaging the Global South in research policy agendas



Source: [SG Evaluations Survey 2024](#).

The [SG Evaluation Synthesis](#) found that many stakeholder meetings were often poorly coordinated, resulting in fragmented engagement and limited clarity on how partners' input influenced final research priorities.¹⁷ Responses to the [SG Evaluations Survey](#) further revealed a perceived misalignment between CGIAR's initiative Portfolio and national priorities, with some external stakeholders viewing the agenda as more CGIAR-driven than co-created to address systemic challenges. In several countries, partners were approached multiple times for different Initiatives, often without clear links between them, making the consultation process confusing and less effective. To improve this, stakeholders recommended establishing a standardized, coordinated consultation framework to ensure alignment across Initiatives, reduce redundancy, and strengthen the quality and consistency of stakeholder engagement.

3.1.4 Collaboration and Contribution

Collaboration: Opportunities for multi-dimensional engagement in support of agendas and plans for research, delivery, and engagement.

Contribution: Work towards a continuous cycle of impact.¹⁸

CGIAR's external partnership network shows moderate cohesion with limited connectivity among partners. The [SG Evaluations Survey](#) SNA revealed that while CGIAR engages with eight key partners¹⁹—government agencies, international organizations, NARES, NGOs, the private sector, public-private partnerships (PPPs), universities, and research organizations—interactions among these partners are often

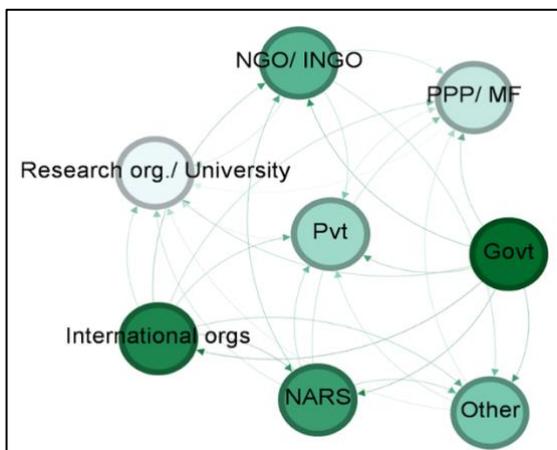
¹⁷ [LS](#) to improve partner engagement were carried out as part of new CGIAR Portfolio design.

¹⁸ See: [2022 CGIAR Engagement Framework](#).

¹⁹ In SNA analysis "cohesive subgroups are subsets of actors among whom there are relatively strong, direct, intense, frequent, or positive ties" (Wasserman et al., 1994).

weak, limiting collaboration and knowledge-sharing. The analysis reported uneven collaborations, calling for more structured and facilitated, engagement (Figure 8).²⁰

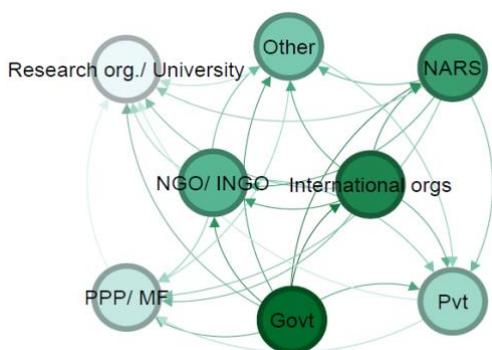
Figure 8. Network of CGIAR external partners and their relationships



Source: *SG Evaluations Survey 2024*.

Partnerships influence the level and nature of engagement. SNA findings highlight the need for CGIAR to strengthen engagement with governments, international organizations, and the private sector to foster a more balanced and integrated partnership (Figure 9). Research organizations and universities were the most actively engaged contributing across the design, implementation, and diffusion phases of CGIAR projects. In contrast, governments and international organizations were more involved in agenda setting and strategic guidance with less direct collaboration. Private sector engagement remained limited compared to research institutions.

Figure 9. Network of CGIAR partners based on their partnership types²¹



Source: *SG Evaluations Survey 2024*.

²⁰ The average clustering coefficient of 0.5. It is the measure of the likelihood that two associates of a node are associated. A higher clustering coefficient indicates a greater 'cliquishness'. The clustering coefficient is often used to explain the network connectivity. It is a metric of the degree to find the nodes in a network that cluster together. More information can be found in the *SG Evaluations Survey*.

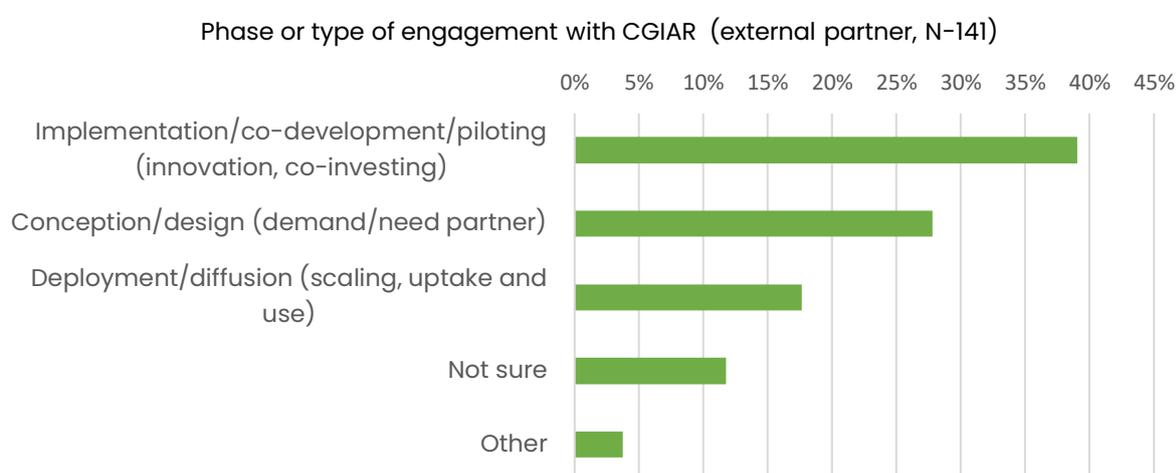
²¹ CGIAR external partner network with 14 CGIAR centres based on their partnership types indicated a network comprising of 14 nodes (actors/entities) and boosting a network of 91 linkages and connections. The survey asked external partners to report their engagement with CGIAR in three different stages—design, implementation and diffusion. A plurality of external partners (nearly 40%) reported engagement with CGIAR in the implementation stage of Initiatives, co-development and/or piloting of innovation.

CGIAR's engagement with partners is strong in some areas but uneven overall. The 2023 [GENDER Platform Evaluation](#) highlights robust linkages between external gender experts and donors, but found its engagement with regional organizations, governments, NARES, and NGOs to be inconsistent. While training events and workshops contributed to strengthening partnerships and improving coherence, the lack of sustained engagement remains a challenge. The GENDER Platform is widely recognized as a valuable resource hub for gender-related Initiatives, but its full potential is not yet realized to address gaps in global gender policy discussions.

CGIAR's breeding programs are strengthened by partnerships, despite concerns with scaling and sustainability of results. Collaboration with NARES breeding programs is leading to greater effectiveness and efficiency. Key achievements include alignment with [Target Product Profiles](#) (TPPs), strengthening NARES capacity, the adoption of **genomic selection** to accelerate genetic gains, and improved genetic diversity through partnerships with private companies. Tools such as the [Breeding Portal and GLoMIP](#) supported better strategic planning and data sharing. Despite these gains, the **sustainability and scalability** of results remains uncertain, as they depend on the capacity of national partners to adopt and scale innovations. Echoing the [2021 Synthesis Report](#), the [SG Evaluation Reports](#) emphasize the need to move beyond individual training programs and focus on institutional capacity-building. They also flag limited private sector engagement as a critical gap that must be addressed to support effective scaling of innovations.

Funding uncertainties are limiting CGIAR's ability to sustain and expand partnerships. Both the [EiB Platform Evaluation](#) and [SG Evaluations](#) highlight financial instability and delayed funding as major barriers to broadening and deepening partnerships. These constraints forced CGIAR to rely on pre-existing relationships, limiting the inclusion of new actors and reducing the diversity of its partner network. Limited financial resources also hindered investments in long-term capacity-building efforts and institutional strengthening, preventing CGIAR from fully leveraging the potential of its collaborative Initiatives.

Figure 10. Perceptions on partner engagements with CGIAR, by phases



Source: [SG Evaluations Survey 2024](#).

External partner engagement is strongest during implementation, but lower during the design and scaling phases. Figure 10 from the [SG Evaluations Survey](#) reveals that 40% of external partners were most engaged during the implementation phase covering co-development, piloting, and innovation activities. Engagement dropped to 30% during the conception/design phase and 18% in the deployment/diffusion phase. Around 10% of partners were unsure about their role, indicating that some lack clarity on engagement expectations. This uneven distribution highlights the need for CGIAR to strengthen collaboration across the entire project cycle, ensuring that partners remain actively involved beyond implementation.

External partners view CGIAR's engagement efforts more positively than internal staff. According to the [SG Evaluations Survey](#) (Figure 11), external partners generally rated CGIAR's collaboration and risk management practices more positively than internal respondents. However, external stakeholders also highlighted weaknesses in resource-sharing and co-investment. These differences indicate a need for CGIAR to better understand the factors behind divergent perceptions, to align internal and external expectations, to strengthen internal buy-in, and to enhance greater consistency in its collaboration strategies.

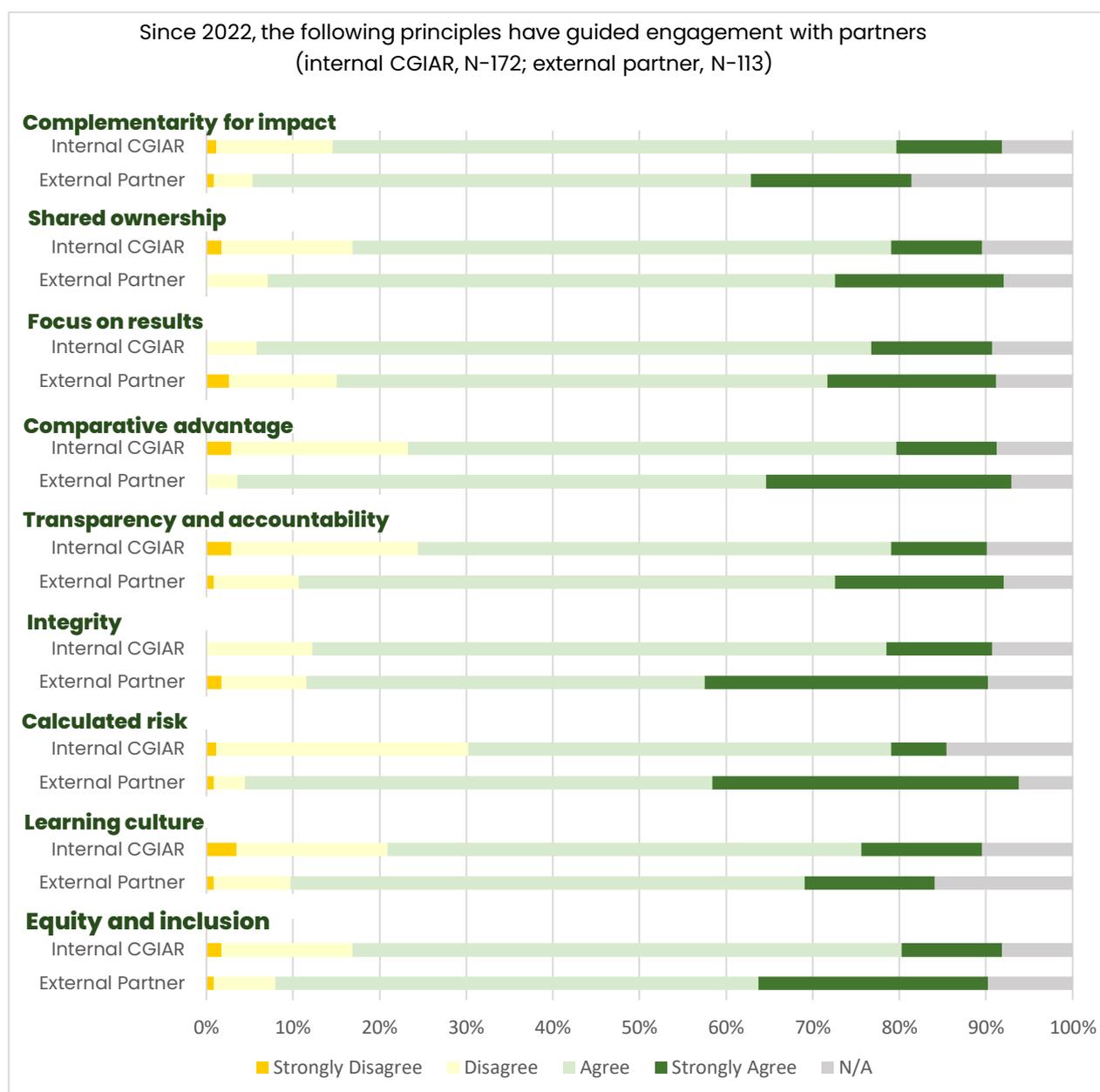
Administrative complexity and transaction costs were increased. While it has facilitated improved cross-center collaboration, the participation of multiple centers in each Initiative—combined with a greater number of Initiatives compared with CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs)—has exacerbated administrative burdens. Frequent structural changes, disruptions to Initiatives, and a shifting focus toward new Science Programs adds to uncertainty. CGIAR staff report difficulties in communicating these evolving structures to partners, many of whom remain unclear about the changes. The continued use of center-specific administrative procedure has led to inconsistencies. In some cases, partners hold multiple agreements with CGIAR centers under the same Initiative, sometimes for identical activities, further compounding the administrative load.

CGIAR's Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Impact Assessment (MELIA) systems are not yet fully equipped to capture long-term development outcomes or access partnerships effectiveness. The [RII EAs \(2024\)](#) highlighted critical gaps in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems, including incomplete indicators, unclear baselines, and limited data transparency, that hinder effective progress tracking. The assessment called for a more nuanced stakeholder analysis to align MEL efforts with [2022 Partnership Framework](#) and to ensure inclusivity. These findings echoed [the 2022 EIB Platform Evaluation](#), which already underscored the need for clarity and alignment with the [2022–30 CGIAR Results Framework](#), covering all levels of results from outputs to impact.

3.2 Evidence on Approaches to Engagement

The [2022 Engagement Framework](#)²² integrated three priority approaches—capacity sharing, advocacy, and private sector cooperation—as critical levers to enhance CGIAR's global impact. These approaches aim to improve coordination, foster collaboration, reduce duplication, and expand opportunities to scale knowledge, innovations, and technologies. The sections below summarize evaluative evidence on CGIAR's progress and remaining challenges in each of these areas.

²² The [2024 Engagement Framework](#) retained these three priority approaches.

Figure 11. Perceptions on effectiveness of the principles of partner engagement

Source: [SG Evaluations Survey 2024](#).

3.2.1 Capacity Sharing for development

Capacity sharing efforts garnered positive results but require more inclusive and sustained engagement.

Evaluations indicate that capacity-building initiatives contributed to advancing research and policy agendas, though gaps in stakeholder engagement remain. The [GENDER Platform Evaluation](#) found that limited private sector involvement restricted the broader impact of gender integration. Similarly, the [Genebank Platform Evaluation](#) highlighted the need for stronger engagement strategies to broaden participation and outcomes. The [ST SG Evaluation](#) reiterated weak engagement at national level, particularly in Africa, where NARES representatives reported inconsistent interaction with CGIAR and a lack of structured mechanisms to support long-term capacity strengthening. CGIAR's role in capacity sharing is evolving and must transition towards more integrated and long-term approaches. Stakeholders emphasized the need to

strengthen South–South capacity-sharing mechanisms, which would enable stronger NARES institutions to support weaker ones and ensure sustainable knowledge exchange and technical training.

Capacity building efforts strengthen partnerships and research effectiveness; however, they face sustainability challenges. The [ST SG Evaluation](#), [GI SG Evaluation](#), [GENDER Platform](#) and the [Genebank Platform Evaluations](#) found that capacity-building initiatives significantly improved research effectiveness and institutional collaborations. Training programs, such as the Breeding Academy (GI SG), gender-focused Initiatives supported by GREAT and AWARD (GENDER Platform), and the AICCRA Initiative (ST SG) enhanced researchers' knowledge, skills and confidence. The [SHiFT](#) Initiative (ST SG) successfully supported national partners in embedding sustainable healthy diet policies into food systems, contributing to policy changes in Vietnam.²³

However, stakeholders noted that capacity building efforts lack the continuity and support needed to create lasting change. National partners and trainees often lack the resources to apply or sustain independent training. The GI SG Evaluation highlighted the need for structured follow-up mechanisms, while the GENDER Platform Evaluation called for ongoing engagement to institutionalize gender-responsive research. The [Genebank Platform Evaluation](#) pointed to documentation gaps, suggesting the need for more structured, long-term strategies to capture and sustain capacity-building efforts. Many partnerships rely on one-off training programs that lack the follow-up funding and resources to ensure sustainability. While CGIAR plays a key role in capacity development, efforts are often limited by inadequate follow-up mechanisms, sustained funding and insufficient metrics to track meaningful progress. Agroecology and Climate Resilience case studies under the ST SG pointed out that capacity-building efforts were not well-integrated with national research and policy institutions, weakening their potential to influence systemic change.

Budget constraints significant limited the sustainability and reach of capacity building efforts. Financial uncertainties undermined the ability to sustain long-term capacity development. [The RAFS SG](#) and [ST SG evaluations](#) found that constraints discouraged investment in new partnerships and forced Initiatives to scale down or eliminate training and engagement activities. Gender-related training components were especially affected, jeopardizing progress in building capacity for gender-responsive research. Both evaluations highlighted that funding inconsistencies weakened long-term commitments with national research institutions, making it difficult for partners to independently sustain and apply training. The ST SG Evaluation further emphasized that while many capacity-building efforts were effective, their impact was undermined by a lack of structured follow-up mechanisms and reliable financial resources.

3.2.2 Private Sector Cooperation

The private sector is pivotal for scaling innovations, agricultural innovation, and sustainability, especially in a time of shrinking public aid, but lack systematic engagement strategies. The 2021 Synthesis Report emphasized CGIAR's role as a broker of networked actions, calling for greater use of research and development partnerships to address knowledge and skill gaps in research processes and innovation webs, allowing CGIAR to focus on its core strengths. These partnerships should include the private sector, non-CGIAR ARIs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and CSOs, to scale innovations, enhance value addition, and expand market access. The [2023 HLAP Report](#) identified the private sector as a critical actor in driving agricultural innovation, scaling solutions, and supporting sustainability. However, it noted that the [2022 CGIAR Engagement Framework](#) lacked a clear strategy for private sector engagement. HLAP recommended developing a dedicated sub-strategy to articulate CGIAR's approach defining clear benefits, engagement modalities, and mechanisms for structured, long-term partnerships.

Structured engagement strategies are needed to improve private sector partnerships. The [GI SG Evaluation](#) underscored the critical role of PPPs in advancing genetic innovation, particularly by integrating

²³ See the [Asia Brief](#).

market intelligence into breeding programs. Tools such as the [Breeding Portal and Product Design Teams](#) enabled CGIAR to align breeding outputs with market demands, making them more relevant, scalable, and responsive to consumer needs. The [SG Synthesis](#) recommended the development of systematic engagement frameworks to guide and enhance collaboration with private sector actors across CGIAR's Research Portfolio.

Box 4. GI SG achievements in building private sector partnerships

- Established the Private Sector Platform as a one-stop shop and level playing field for engaging large-scale private sector partners, with leadership based at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).
- Secured financial and technical support from BMGF to support the Private Sector Platform.
- Undertook a stakeholder mapping of major multi-national firms and systematically engaged with priority partners to establish working relationships in key areas, particularly capacity strengthening and licensing of genetic tools.
- Generated a set of universal principles to guide private sector partnerships.
- Worked with CGIAR legal teams and CGIAR Private Partnerships for Impact team to develop a CGIAR Licensing Framework which guides best practice in contracts and royalties when transferring germplasm to private sector users.
- Systematically included small and medium enterprises in the Breeding Networks associated with crop-geography market segments.
- Invited private sector participation into the GI Advisory Group.

Source: [GI SG Evaluation: List of Annexes](#).

Operational challenges and unclear coordination mechanisms continue to hinder effective private sector collaboration and scalability.

The [GI](#) and [RAFS](#) SG evaluations highlight persistent barriers such as budget uncertainties, administrative complexities, and limited capacity. All three SG evaluations point to knowledge and skill gaps as major obstacles, noting CGIAR's limited expertise in market-driven research and aligning outputs with private sector expectations. The lack of specialized skills in market analysis and commercialization strategies further impacts these challenges, making targeted capacity development essential.

Unclear coordination mechanisms also impede private sector engagement and scalability. The [ST](#) and [GI SG](#) evaluations found that unstructured and unclear coordination created inefficiencies, fragmenting collaboration efforts. Without streamlined frameworks, partnerships lack strategic alignment, which hampers the long-term sustainability and impact of CGIAR's private sector engagement.

Without clear engagement frameworks and incentives, private sector involvement—especially in gender-inclusive agricultural innovation—remains constrained and not prioritized. Private sector collaboration was not a central focus in gender-related initiatives under the [GENDER Platform](#), leading to missed opportunities to influence commercial agricultural practices and promote gender-responsive approaches within value chains. Additionally, absence of structured incentives to encourage private sector participation in gender-responsive projects, limited the Platform's ability to effectively engage this critical stakeholder group.

Advocacy

CGIAR played a significant role in global policy advocacy, particularly in food systems transformation, climate resilience, gender equity, and agricultural innovation. Evaluations highlight CGIAR's research-driven contributions to shape both national and international policy agendas. The GI Evaluation recognized the 2022 Engagement Framework as instrumental in guiding efforts to integrate gender, social inclusion, and research outputs into global policy dialogues. The RAFS SG Evaluation demonstrated CGIAR's influence at national level, supporting sustainable rice production and climate adaptation in Vietnam, and strengthening

food security and agricultural resilience in Ghana. Contributions to [FAO's Status of Rural Women in Agrifood Systems Report](#) and the [Cultivating Equality Conference](#), as noted in the GENDER Platform evaluation, further highlight CGIAR's role in advancing gender-related policy advocacy.

Lack of a unified, system-wide advocacy strategy reduced the coherence and overall impact of CGIAR's policy engagement. The [ST](#) and [RAFS](#) SG evaluations found that advocacy remained fragmented, with some Initiatives influencing policy successfully, while others struggled with inconsistent engagement from governments, NARES, and regional organizations. The SG Evaluations Synthesis emphasized that full adoption of the [2024 Engagement Framework](#) presents an opportunity to close these gaps. Aligning advocacy efforts with national, regional, and global policy goals will be essential to reinforce CGIAR's role as a key influencer in food and agricultural policies.

Gaps in advocacy training communication strategies limit CGIAR's policy influence. The GI Evaluation highlighted that while CGIAR has expanded its use of virtual convenings, workshops, and policy dialogues, these efforts have not been supported by formal advocacy training or structured capacity-building initiatives. Without adequate resources and training, CGIAR's ability to engage effectively with policymakers remain constrained. The RAFS SG Evaluation also identified weaknesses in communication, noting that despite producing high-quality research, CGIAR often fails to deliver policy messages in a way that facilitates uptake and implementation. Strengthening advocacy training programs and developing clear, evidence-based messaging would significantly improve CGIAR's ability to shape agrifood policies.

Weak linkages between research and policy uptake highlight the need to embed advocacy into research planning. Across multiple evaluations, a recurring issue is the lack of structured mechanisms to ensure that research informs policy. The [ST Evaluation](#) noted that while CGIAR's scientific work is frequently cited in policy forums, it rarely translates into concrete actions. Similarly, the RAFS Evaluation found that stakeholders struggle to apply research outputs into policymaking due to poor integration, since advocacy is often treated as separate from research. Embedding advocacy considerations into research design from the outset would help to ensure that CGIAR's outputs are more policy-relevant and actionable.

Inconsistent stakeholder engagement limits CGIAR's advocacy impact, underscoring the need for stronger partnerships. The 2024 [ST](#) and [RAFS](#) evaluations found wide variability in engagement with policymakers, research institutions, and CSOs. While some Initiatives built strong partnerships, others struggled with limited outreach and fragmented collaboration, reducing CGIAR's ability to influence policy. The [Synthesis of SG Evaluations](#) emphasized the potential of public-private partnerships and collaboration with NARES breeding programs to reinforce advocacy efforts. Expanding these partnerships could improve research to policy translation, while ensuring more consistent engagement across regions.

Advocacy should be embedded into CGIAR's 2025–30 Strategy, with mechanisms to track policy influence. The [Synthesis of SG Evaluations](#) emphasized making advocacy a core pillar of CGIAR's strategic vision, to shape funding priorities, strengthen engagement with policymakers, and enhance CGIAR's role in global policy arenas. However, [ST](#) and [GI](#) SG evaluations pointed to the lack of structured impact assessment (IA) tools for tracking how advocacy influences policy over time. Without clear metrics and monitoring frameworks, it is challenging to evaluate or refine CGIAR's advocacy strategies. Embedding advocacy within CGIAR's long-term strategy—supported by robust M&E systems—would ensure that CGIAR's contributions to policy decisions are measurable, visible, and impactful.

Strengthening gender-focused advocacy within CGIAR's policy engagement strategy is essential for advancing gender, equity, and social inclusion (GESI). Aligning advocacy efforts with CGIAR's evolving Gender Strategy is critical to advancing GESI goals. The GENDER Platform Evaluation found the Alliances Module effective in advancing gender advocacy, but broader integration was hindered by institutional barriers—including inconsistent prioritization by leadership and limited gender expertise among non-gender researchers. CGIAR lacks IA tools to track how gender-focused advocacy efforts translate into policy change, highlighting the need for dedicated mechanisms to measure and sustain progress in this area.

4 Conclusions and Priority Recommendations

The [2022 Engagement Framework](#) laid a foundation for improving partnerships across CGIAR, to align with the 2030 Research Innovation Strategy and its WoW. Evaluative evidence from the [four platforms](#), EAs and the [three SGs](#) acknowledges significant strides in operationalizing partnership principles and improving coordination at national and regional levels, supported by mechanisms such as the RIs and appointment of regional directors and country convenors. Table 5 provides a quantitative overview of this progress, while Annex 4 details the status of 28 partnership-related recommendations drawn from eight evaluations conducted between 2022–24. Implementation progress is updated bi-annually in [CGIAR's MR Tracker](#).

Table 5. Implementation progress of action plans for evaluation recommendations

Action plan for recommendations	Status of MR implementation ²⁴			
	On track	Not started	Completed	Delayed
Partially Accepted	2	6	1	
Fully Accepted	4		7	4
Deferred		1		

Source: [Evaluation and Management Response Action Tracker](#), (10 April 2025).

The next section summarizes key conclusions and highlights **priority recommendations**, stemming from evaluative evidence and the MR Tracker. The assessment in the right-hand column in Annex 3 and evaluative findings indicate that additional work is needed to bridge the 2024 Engagement Framework and the forthcoming Partnership Strategy with adequately resourced CGIAR partnership efforts.

4.1 Conclusions

Next section follows the structure of the 2022 Engagement Framework (conditions and approaches to engagement) to assess the progress and remaining constraints encountered in translating the Engagement Framework principles into pragmatic implementation.

4.1.1 Institutionalization

Institutional gaps limited the effectiveness of CGIAR's coordination and partnership mechanisms at country and regional levels. Findings highlight a gap between the ambition of CGIAR's integrated reform agenda and the institutional mechanisms in place. The impact of country convenors and RIs was limited by the lack of formal mandates, inconsistent resourcing, and inadequate structural integration. The 2022 Engagement Framework was unable to secure the support necessary to translate its recommendations into the system-wide mandates and mechanisms. Progress in coordination and partnership come about mainly through the initiative of committed individuals rather than through consistently applied institutional support. **Lessons from evaluations suggest that institutionalization of partnerships could be improved as follows:**

²⁴ The implementation status was unavailable for three recommendations, which were therefore not included in this analysis. As a result, only 25 out of 28 recommendations were analyzed.

- Establish clear mechanisms for cross-Initiative and cross-country collaboration, including better linkages between RIIIs and bilateral projects.
- Provide dedicated funding, formal incentives, and more formal, structured roles to improve the impact of country conveners and RIIIs.
- Embed structured coordination mechanisms to improve collaboration.

4.1.2 Resources

Evaluations highlight the influence of financial and human resource constraints on the quality and stability of CGIAR's partnerships. Inconsistent funding disrupted collaboration with national and regional actors, creating uncertainty around research continuity and partner engagement. While examples of strong alignment and collaboration exist, the ability to maintain and scale partnerships impacts the availability of stable resources. **Evaluations suggest that resource-related challenges could be improved as follows:**

- Shift from annual budget cycles to a multi-year financial planning approach to improve predictability and reduce disruptions caused by mid-year adjustments.²⁵ Integrate a reserve or contingency fund mechanism to manage unforeseen financial constraints.
- Establish and strengthen independent financial governance and oversight and implement real-time financial tracking systems for transparency and timely decision-making.
- Establish country convener and RII roles as permanent and well-resourced with clear mandates. Create a performance monitoring framework to track effectiveness of regional leadership positions.
- Create structured mechanisms for managing pooled and bilateral funding to prevent duplication efforts. Introduce a flexible funding model, allowing re-allocations based on evolving program needs without bureaucratic delays.
- Implement a unified financial and administrative platform across centers to streamline grant processing, reduce inefficiencies, facilitate due diligence, and lower transaction costs. Adopt standardized templates and reporting tools to improve coordination.
- Reduce administrative bottlenecks in grant application, awarding, and disbursement for funding of CGIAR centers and partner organizations for inclusivity in funding access.
- Develop succession planning and knowledge transfer strategies to maintain institutional knowledge and prevent disruptions in staff transition.
- Strengthen M&E tools and utilize independent evaluations to assess funding efficiency, track how financial and human resources contribute to long-term goals, and make data-driven adjustments.

4.1.3 Alignment and Co-Design

Patterns across the evaluations indicate CGIAR's progress in engaging partners. Stronger integration was observed where long-standing relationships and stakeholder groups enabled more collaborative planning, particularly in areas such as breeding. Varying levels of coordination and limited feedback loops, as well as fragmented or late engagements, limited the ability to shape research priorities around country and regional needs. This caused perceptions of top-down agenda setting. These dynamics suggest that achieving deeper alignment depends on how well those processes are institutionalized across the Portfolio.

Evaluations suggest that alignment and co-design efforts could be improved as follows:

- Tailor engagement strategies across programming [SGs] to ensure that partnerships adapt to the unique needs of different research areas and stakeholders.
- Coordinate stakeholder consultation processes, reducing and develop an overarching CGIAR-wide framework that aligns with Initiatives and enhances coherence in stakeholder interactions.

²⁵ SG programs were developed with multi-year budgets. However, funding commitments from the system to all programs and partners were only annual.

- Build greater flexibility into research Initiatives to ensure that national and regional contexts shape project design and implementation for local relevance and impact.
- Strengthen design efforts to involve stakeholders at all stages of research, enhancing local ownership and long-term sustainability.
- Clearly define and adequately resource the role of country conveners to strengthen national engagement, facilitate coordination across Initiatives, and promote meaningful partnerships with local stakeholders.

4.1.4 Collaboration and Contribution

CGIAR's extensive partnership network enabled broad engagement, albeit with an uneven structure and inconsistency. Strong engagement with research institutions and universities contrasts with limited involvement with governments, international organizations, and the private sector. Collaboration is mostly shaped by established relationships instead of an integrated, system-wide approach. Fragmented collaboration model has varying levels of engagement and contribution that are not fully aligned across CGIAR. **Lessons from evaluations suggest that collaboration/contribution could be improved as follows:**

- Strengthen CGIAR's integration across its partner network, ensuring that key stakeholders are more actively engaged.
- Balance partner engagement across all phases of the project cycle for long-term adoption and impact.
- Enhance engagement with under-represented stakeholders for a more diversified and structured partnership approach to strengthen research uptake and policy influence.
- Shift reliance toward institutional capacity-building strategies that allow national partners to independently sustain and scale CGIAR-supported initiatives.
- Stabilize funding mechanisms for more sustainable collaborations, to expand CGIAR's network, strengthen resource-sharing, and improve co-investment strategies.
- Align internal and external perspectives on partnership effectiveness, so internal collaboration strategies reflect external partner expectations.

4.1.5 Capacity Building

Across multiple Initiatives, targeted training programs and collaborative learning platforms built technical skills, supported national policy engagement, and reinforced institutional relationships. However, these efforts lacked structured follow-up, long-term support, and stable funding—factors that limited their ability to drive enduring change. Variability in stakeholder inclusion further constrained the reach and impact of capacity-sharing initiatives. One-off trainings were not embedded into broader systems or supported by ongoing institutional engagement, leading to missed opportunities for more resilient forms of knowledge exchange. **Lessons from evaluations suggest that capacity building efforts could be improved as follows:**

- Strengthen follow-up mechanisms and long-term support, so capacity building translates into sustained impact. Secure trainings into institutional frameworks and national development strategies.
- Establish fit-for-purpose M&E indicators to help track substantive progress.
- Integrate capacity-sharing efforts with national research and policy institutions to create systemic change and reinforce long-term research and policy advancements.
- Expand and formalize stakeholder engagement strategies to enhance reach and sustainability.
- Strengthen South-South collaboration, allowing stronger NARES institutions to support weaker ones, and ensuring a more sustainable and self-reinforcing approach.

4.1.6 Private Sector Cooperation

The growing relevance of private sector cooperation advances CGIAR's research, innovation, and scaling objectives—particularly with shrinking public funding. Overall engagement with private sector actors remains inconsistent and largely unstructured. Coordination gaps, administrative barriers, and limited

internal skills and capacity hinder CGIAR's ability to align outputs with private sector needs and expectations. Without a clear system-wide strategy and tailored engagement mechanisms there are limits. These challenges are pronounced in commercialization, gender-responsive value chains, and downstream innovation pathways, where more deliberate and inclusive collaboration could significantly enhance impact.

Evaluations suggest that partnerships with the private sector could be improved as follows:

- Develop a clear and structured private sector engagement strategy with defined goals, incentives, and engagement modalities that align with CGIAR's broader research and policy objectives.
- Strengthen capacity building efforts to engage effectively with the private sector, addressing gaps in market-driven research, commercialization, and private sector alignment, and fostering effective and sustainable partnerships.
- Align research outputs with private sector needs, for a research market that is responsive, commercially viable, and strategically integrated into industry needs.
- Establish stronger coordination mechanisms to improve efficiency and scalability.
- Ensure sustained support for public-private partnerships through consistent funding, administrative backing, and structured engagement strategies.
- Prioritize gender-responsive private sector engagement, thereby integrating structured incentives and mechanisms for the private sector.

4.1.7 Advocacy

Research-driven engagements positioned CGIAR as a policy actor with a credible voice with clear contributions to national and global dialogues on food systems, climate resilience, gender equity, and agricultural innovation. However, without a unified advocacy strategy fragmented efforts and uneven influence across regions and themes surfaced. Communication challenges, limited advocacy training, and weak integration between research and policy planning further constrained the reach and uptake of CGIAR's work. Broad stakeholder engagement remains inconsistent, and linkages between research outputs and concrete policy actions are rarely well-defined. **Evaluations suggest that advocacy efforts could be improved as follows:**

- Embed policy outreach in research planning from the outset, systematically translating CGIAR's high-quality research into policy actions and informed decision-making.
- Establish advocacy training and structured, consistent communication strategies.
- Expand and formalize stakeholder engagement strategies, enhancing advocacy reach and influence.
- Strengthen M&E frameworks for advocacy impact, to refine advocacy strategies and demonstrate tangible policy influence.
- Embed advocacy into the 2025–30 Portfolio, as a core pillar for improved coordination, strategic alignment with policy frameworks, and sustainable funding mechanisms.

4.2 Priority Recommendations by Two Ways of Working

Towards effective implementation of the [2030 Strategy](#), the 2025–30 Portfolio and the WoWs to support it, evidence warrants reiterating several important recommendations that are particularly relevant to partnership progress and constraints. Recommendations are grouped according to the two partnership-related WoW. Follow the status of MR action implementation in the CGIAR [MR Tracker](#) and in the forthcoming evaluative studies [here](#).

Embedding research within ambitious alliances for change (in which CGIAR is strategically positioned) within broader innovation systems and transformation agendas to achieve SDGs. Related recommendations from evaluations include:

- Consolidate work on transformation of food, land and water systems, especially in countries where various Initiatives are already engaged with a ST focus, by enhancing collaboration with national governments, research/policy institutions and development partners. (Rec. 1b, ST SG Evaluation)
- Invest in **local capacity development for integrated systems research**. Enhance in-country research capacity to apply integrated systems approaches to research. Develop mechanisms to regularly assess and refine innovations on the ground, in collaboration with local communities, ensuring technical soundness and social acceptance before wider implementation. (Rec. 8, ST SG Evaluation)
- Increase **breeding capacities in NARES and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)** for improved genetic gain in farmer-preferred varieties (ABI). (Rec. 8a, EiB Platform Evaluation)
- Develop incentives for interdisciplinary team collaborations across disciplines and centers to effectively tackle interconnected issues under the integrated management framework. Continue using platforms and communities of practice to promote collaboration across all Science Programs and Accelerators, fostering a holistic approach. (Rec. 3, ST SG Evaluation)

Growing in-country presence and integration with national research agendas. Positioning regions, countries and landscapes as central dimensions of partnership, worldview, as sources of demand, and as the location of co-design and co-delivery of innovation, capacity development, and policy change.

Related recommendations from evaluations include:

- Strengthen the crucial role of **country conveners** by allocating adequate budget and establishing clear coordination mechanisms and communication lines with CGIAR regional leadership and Science Programs/Accelerators' coordinators. A single coordination point would enhance and institutionalize cooperation at country level across centers and between partners. (Rec. 3, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Better anchor CGIAR work to national research and development agendas, which would involve a more meaningful involvement of NARES in designing and implementing the CGIAR Portfolio 2025-30. Developing **country level strategies** and results frameworks, aligned with national priorities and strong connections with NARES, would lay the groundwork for CGIAR country-level relevance and coordination capacity. (Rec. 2, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Enhance systematic inclusion of partners in the Portfolio design, implementation, and scaling as per the 2024 Partnership & Advocacy Framework to raise visibility and strategic positioning of CGIAR at country level. (Rec. 4, ST SG Evaluation)
- Encourage collaboration at regional, national, and global levels with **dedicated budget allocations**. (Rec. 6c, GI SG Evaluation)
- Scaling innovations and managing scaling partnerships should be concentrated into a **single scaling program for better coordination**. An enhanced decision tool should be developed to help match innovation readiness with resources and scaling partners at country level with a focus on marketable solutions. (Rec. 9, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Operationalize **CGIAR's IFA (2022)** through financial and human resources and administrative policies, to streamline and harmonize procedures across centers. (Rec. 4, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Ensure financial stability to support long-term planning and continuity. Budget allocations should be **transparent and include contingency funds** to address mid-year budget reductions effectively. (Rec. 8a and 8e, GI SG Evaluation)
- Operationalize the combination of pooled and bilateral funding by providing specific **guidelines** to streamline complementarity between the two modalities, with clarified reporting modalities, both in terms of funding and results. (Rec.5, RAFS SG Evaluation)
- Minimize unnecessary changes and maintain consistency in effective processes, leadership, teams, and partnerships to foster ongoing success. (Rec. 1b, GI SG Evaluation)

Annex 1. Partnership-Specific Evaluation Questions in Reviewed Reports

Title	Evaluation questions related to partnerships
1. CGIAR Science Group Evaluations: Genetic Innovation, 2024 –see Terms of Reference (ToR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ1 (page 17): To what extent does the Genetic Innovation (GI) Science Group (SG) Portfolio respond to the needs and priorities of its internal and external stakeholders? - EQ2 (page 20): To what extent have the GI SG Initiatives selected/Work Packages achieved and/or are expected to achieve, the objectives, including any differential results across subgroups of users/clients? - EQ3 (page 22): How coherent and compatible has the design and implementation of the GI SG Portfolio with the Partnership Framework been towards CGIAR's 2030 Research Strategy? - EQ4 (page 26): To what extent does the GI SG ensure the quality of science (QoS)– scientific credibility and legitimacy?
2. CGIAR SG Evaluations: Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS), 2024 (see ToR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ1 (page 12): To what extent does the SG Research Portfolio respond to the needs and priorities of its external stakeholders, and to what extent is the SG theory of change (ToC) based on CGIAR's comparative advantage and suited to deliver results? - EQ2 (page 19): How coherent and compatible was the design and the implementation of the SG Portfolio with the CGIAR Integration Framework Agreement towards CGIAR's 2030 Research Strategy? - EQ5 (page 35): To what extent does the SG ensure the QoS (scientific credibility and legitimacy)? - EQ6 (page 42): How well were the cross-cutting themes of partnerships, gender and climate change integrated into design and implementation of the SG Portfolio?
3. CGIAR SG Evaluations: Systems Transformation (ST), 2024 (see ToR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ1 (page 15): To what extent does the ST SG Research Portfolio respond to its internal and external stakeholders' needs and priorities? Which stakeholders were engaged in the prioritization process, and how? How flexible and adaptable has the research portfolio been to increase its relevance and reprioritize around emergent needs? - EQ3 (page 19): To what extent do the management processes of the SG ensure the QoS (including credibility, legitimacy, relevance to next stage users, and potential effectiveness) of the research and operations? - EQ4 (page 21): In what ways are the research outputs by the ST SG of high quality and influential? - EQ5 (page 22): How do the research outputs contribute to advancing science? How did the ST SG collaborate with NARES to enhance the scientific credibility of CGIAR? What is the evidence that ST SG research initiatives were co-developed with researchers in the Global South?
4. CGIAR Genebank Platform Evaluation, 2024 (see Inception Report)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ1 (page 22): How relevant were the mandates of the Genebank Platform and ways to achieve it? - EQ2 (page 27): How did allocation of resources (funds, people, time, expertise) support the achievement of the Genebank Platform's outputs and outcomes?
5. GENDER Platform Evaluation, 2023 (see Inception Report)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ1 (page 8): How did the GENDER Platform support CGIAR's continued relevance to deliver on gender equality? - EQ2 (page 14): To what extent did the GENDER Platform achieve progress toward intended outcomes? - EQ3 (page 16): How did allocation of resources (such as funds, human resources, time, expertise) support the achievement of GENDER Platform outputs and outcomes?

Title	Evaluation questions related to partnerships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ4 (page 19): How has the GENDER Platform filled a gap and/or engaged in vital linkages among key external organizations and relevant policy discourses? - EQ5: What learning mechanisms have been built into the GENDER Platform and its strategy to facilitate the potential sustainability of positive gender outcomes?
6. Evaluation of CGIAR Excellence in Breeding (EiB) Platform Report, 2022 (see Inception Report)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ1 (page 30): To what extent are the EiB Platform's objectives relevant to the needs of its internal and external partners and stakeholders, including end-users? - EQ2 (page 17): How synergetic is the EiB Platform with other platforms and CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) in CGIAR and comparable public and private sector programs/Initiatives?
7. Evaluation of CGIAR Platform for Big Data in Agriculture, 2021 (see Inception Report)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EQ1 (page 12): To what extent are the platform's objectives relevant to the needs of its internal and external partners, including end-users in target groups? - EQ2 (Page 17): Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise) been allocated strategically and timely to achieve platform outcomes? - EQ3 (page 19): How effective has the platform been in building digital capabilities and partnerships supporting CGIAR research?

Annex 2. Partnership-related recommendations from the 2021 Synthesis

Recommendations

(Rec. 2) **Prioritize partnership development and stakeholder engagement.** Develop and implement a system-wide strategy for equitable engagement and effective communication with partners and stakeholders of all categories in the foresight, planning, delivery and follow-through of CGIAR research, with metrics derived from partner perspectives.

(Rec. 3) **Focus much more on institutional capacity development, especially of national boundary partners, in close collaboration with donor agencies and other funding partners.** Develop and implement a system-wide strategy and partnerships with other agencies to facilitate the development of required capacities for uptake, transformation and use of CGIAR products, through capacity development. To help achieve development outcomes, CGIAR and its programs should more actively advocate and help leverage financial resources for capacity development of national partners in pathways to impact.

(Rec. 4) **Define CGIAR's comparative advantage in delivery of different elements of the ambitious 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy and its projected scale of funding:** review where internal investments and capacities are most needed, and where gaps can be more effectively met through external partnerships.

(Rec. 5) **Strengthen country and regional coordination structures as a facility for all CGIAR centers/research initiatives to explore integrative solutions at local, landscape, and relevant subnational, national and regional scales, ensuring coherent and responsive engagement with national stakeholders and agenda.** These can leverage assets and scientific knowledge, local relationships and reputation developed by centers over five decades. The Partnerships Review noted the significant cross-CGIAR Research Program (CRP) efforts made in this regard through GCARD 3 at the start of Phase 2, but the process was not followed through—a lack of coherence is also a burden on NARES partners.

(Rec. 19) **Prioritize seed sector development to facilitate impact at scale, including expanding partnerships with the private and civil society sectors and strengthening key policies and regulations.**

(Rec. 20) **Catalyze partnerships with other research and innovation partners in defined systems to enable crop system diversification and improved access to affordable, healthy diets.**

(Rec. 32) **Take a more systematic approach to partnership development, and to individual and institutional capacity development at all levels.** Develop strategies for partnership and capacity development. Establish explicit timebound targets for progressive transfer of responsibilities and resources to enable local partners to sustainably take on a research/innovation area for themselves through agreed exit strategies.

(Rec. 33) **Draw more extensively on CGIAR's value as a broker of networked actions in making significantly greater use of research and development partnerships to fill knowledge and skill gaps in the research processes and innovation webs involved.** This will enable CGIAR to focus on its own strengths and areas of comparative advantage. These should include partnerships with the private sector throughout the food system and with non-CGIAR advanced research institutions (ARIs), Facilitate partnerships linking non-CGIAR ARIs to local and national partners for collaborative research and capacity development in the new Initiatives. Explore opportunities for CGIAR programs to productively contribute to national development agendas, foster synergies and reduce duplication of effort.

(Rec. 34) **Prioritize responsiveness of the research agendas to local, national and regional strategies and initiatives to facilitate the achievement of outcomes at scale.** Initiate or strengthen long-term, transdisciplinary research at dedicated field facilities strategically located in relevant landscapes of developing countries. Co-locate activities from many programs in these geographic areas, to better coordinate outcome-driven research activities, build partnerships and share infrastructure.

(Rec. 36) **Strengthen social science capacities to complement the biophysical expertise of CGIAR through increasing in-house resources or external partnerships.** Integrate social scientists into action research and develop appropriate incentives to encourage interdisciplinary and systems research.

Source: [Synthesis 2021](#)

Annex 3. Selected Results from the Survey: 2024 Science Group Evaluations

For full survey report click [here](#)

Figure 1. Priorities of the 2030 CGIAR Research Portfolio—external partners by region

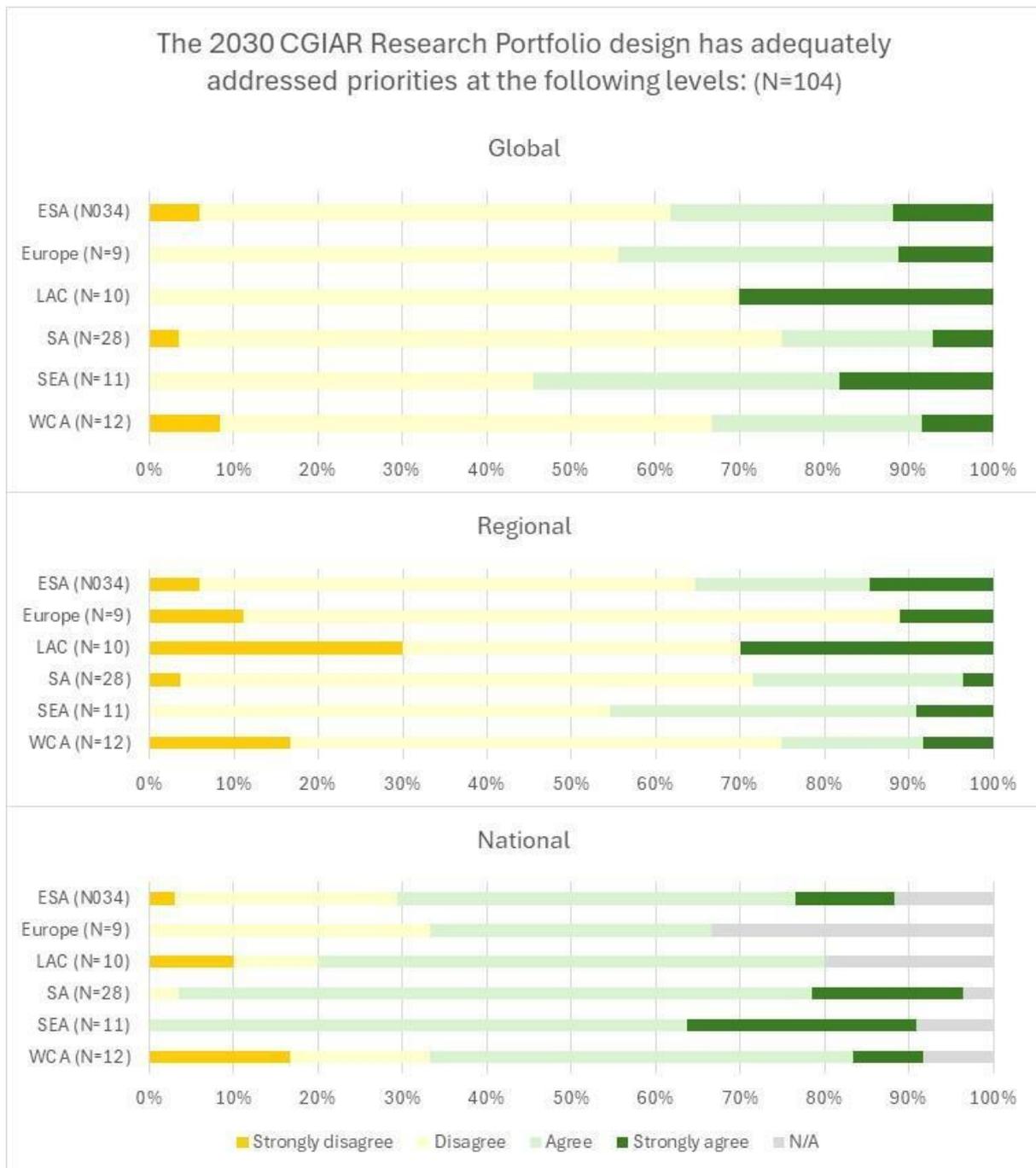


Figure 2. Science Group consideration of the needs and realities at country level

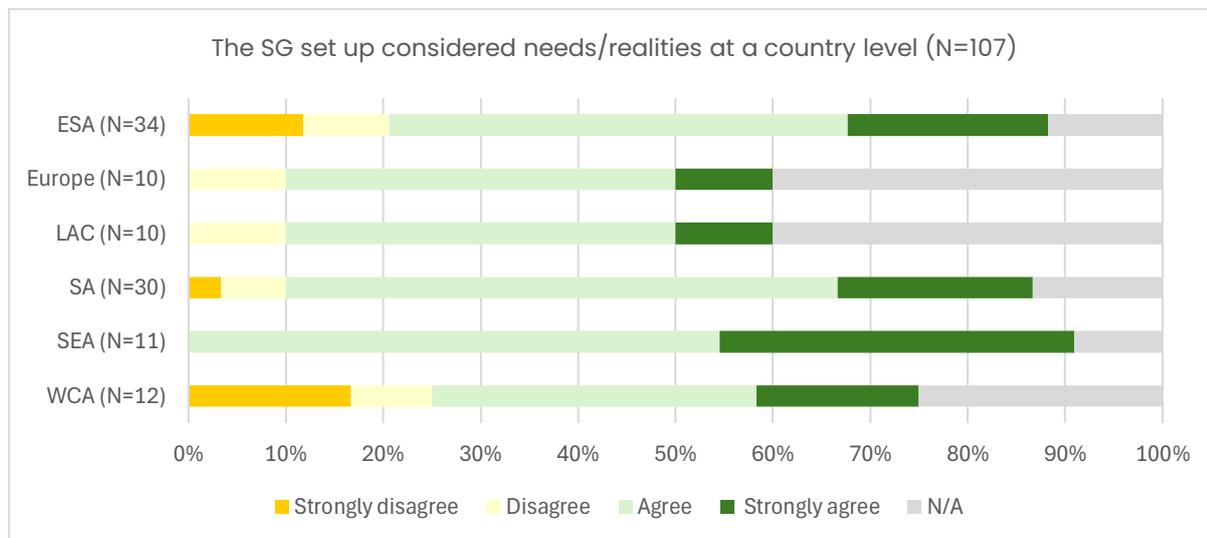


Figure 3. CGIAR's engagement with external partners

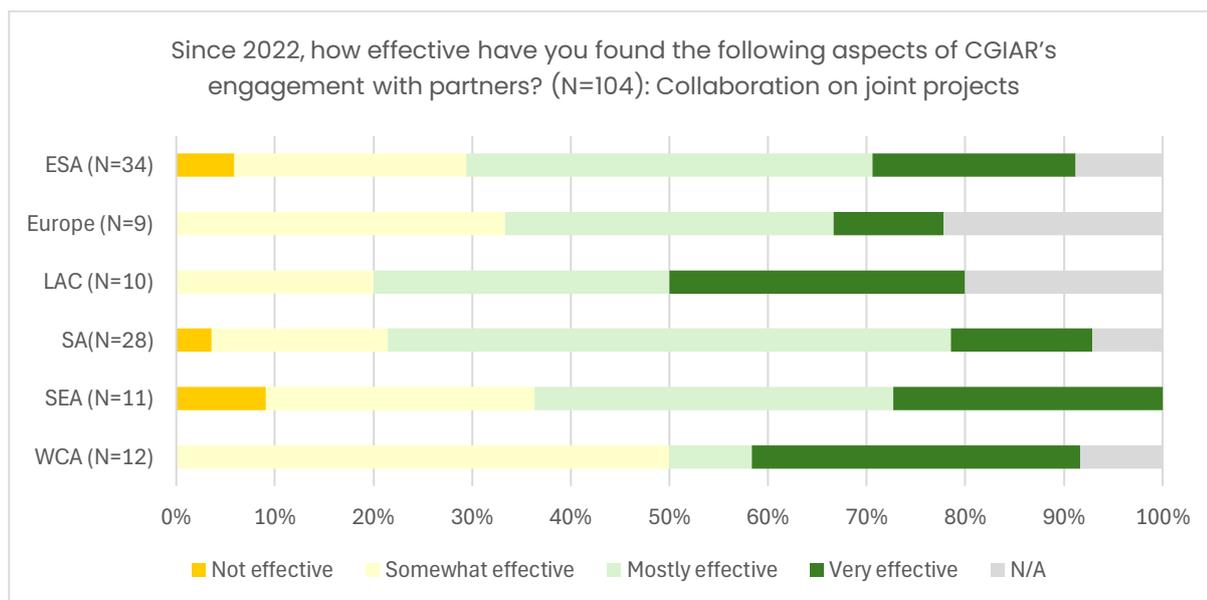


Figure 4. Effectiveness of capacity alignment with CGIAR's comparative advantage

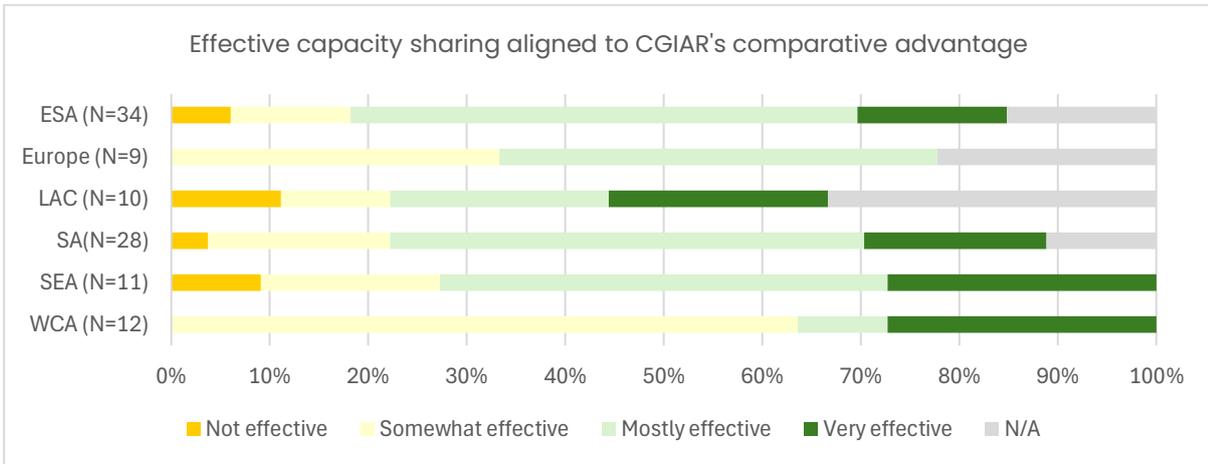


Figure 5. Engaging the Global South—external partners

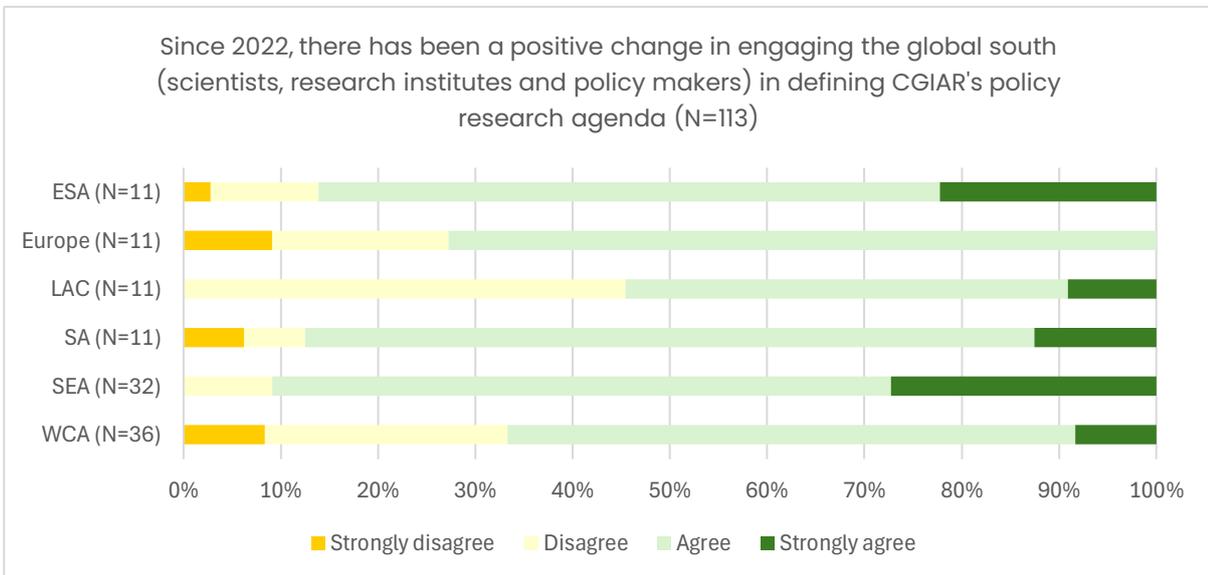


Figure 6. Resources to manage the SG Research Portfolio—external partners

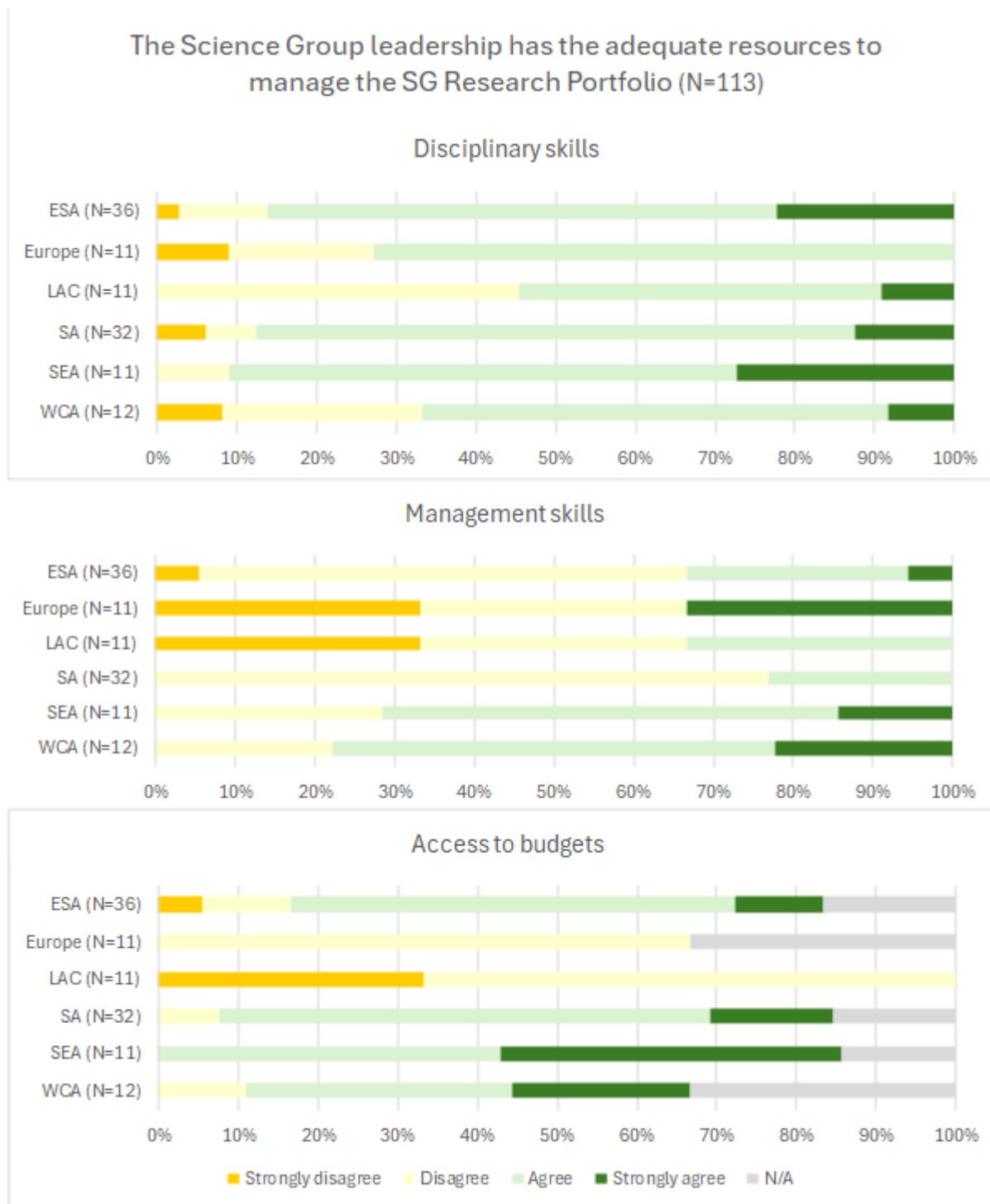


Figure 7. New challenges encountered since 2022-external partners

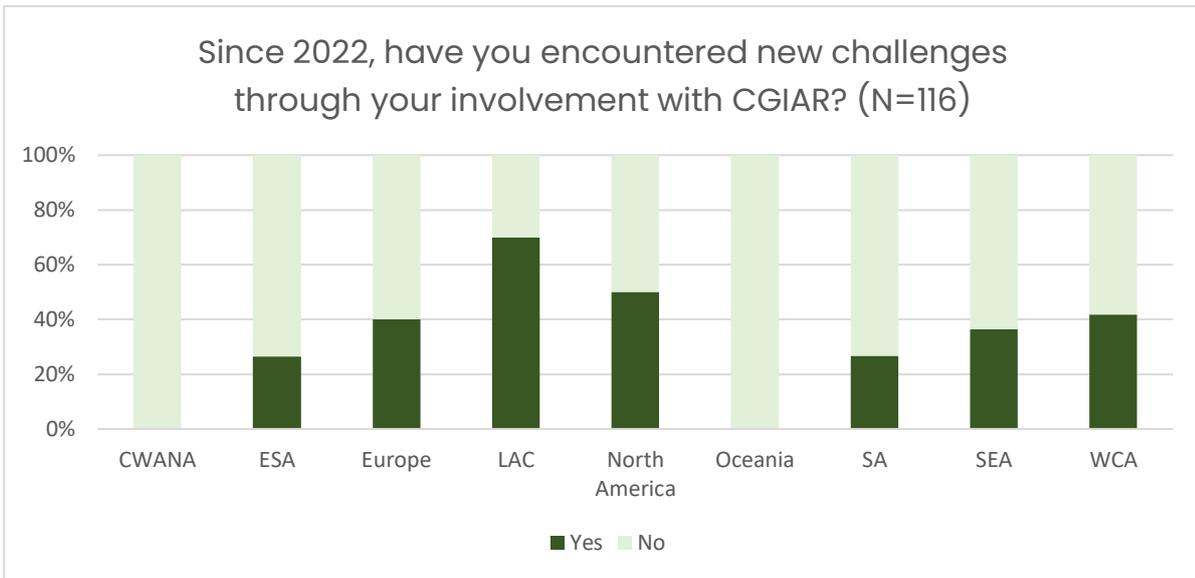
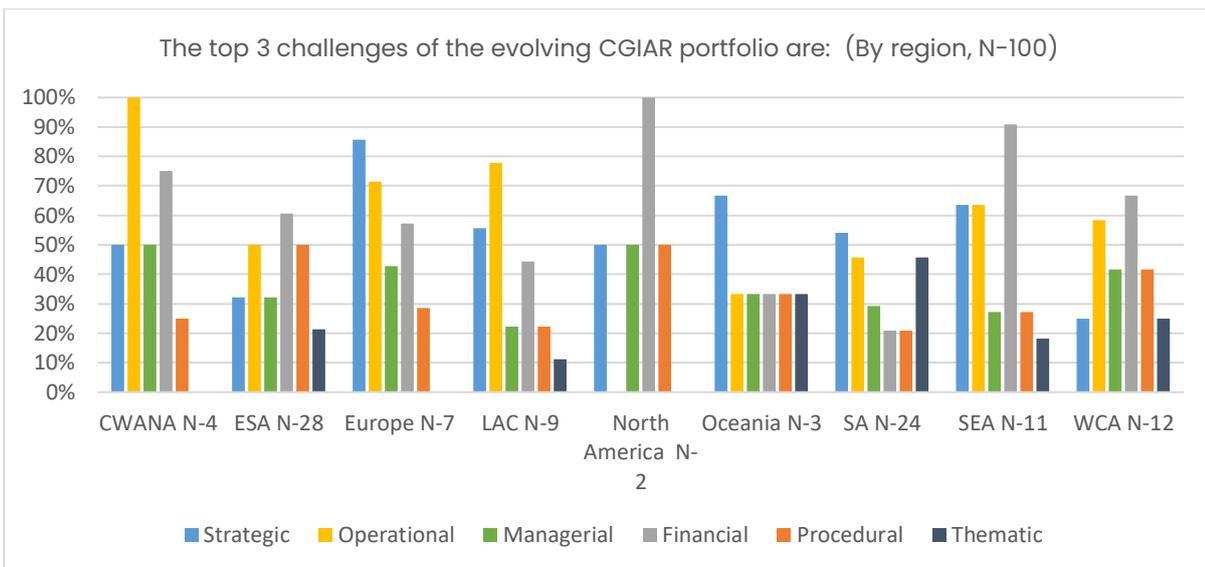


Figure 8. Top three challenges of an evolving CGIAR Portfolio-external partners



Annex 4. Evaluative Recommendations on Partnerships by Status

The table w includes recommendations from eight evaluations with the Management Response (MR). Additional information on the status of MR implementation is provided in the right-hand column based on evidence and information in this study,²⁶ and the review of CGIAR's Partnership Partnering Systematically to Deliver our Research & Innovation Strategy (working version shared by CGIAR's Executive Managing Director (EMD) in December 2024, and not publicly available as of April 2025).

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
Engagement/Condition/Approaches: ALIGNMENT AND CO-DESIGN				
Resilient Agrifood Systems (RAFS) Science Group (SG)-2024	Better anchor CGIAR work to national research and development agendas. This would require a more meaningful involvement of NARES in the design and implementation of CGIAR Portfolio 2025-30. Developing country level strategies and results frameworks, aligned with national priorities and strong connections with NARES, would strengthen and lay the groundwork for CGIAR country- level relevance and coordination capacity. The partnership strategy currently being designed (CGIAR, 2024) should specify how CGIAR will ensure an inclusive agenda setting with national and international partners, including by developing a framework strategy for a multi-level consultation and decision-making mechanism with partners. Country level strategies should be informed by this approach and include comprehensive rolling engagement plans to ensure that the national research programs are constantly part of the dialogue.	Partially accepted	Not Started	Draft Partnership strategy envisaged by the 2024 Engagement Framework, seeks to ensure that partners engaged early, often and effectively and provides guidance and tools to this effect.
Systems Transformation (ST) SG-2024	Enhance systematic inclusion of partners in the Portfolio design, implementation, and scaling as per the 2024 Partnership & Advocacy Framework to raise visibility and strategic positioning of CGIAR at country level.	Partially accepted	No information provided	

²⁶ As of 10 April 2025.

²⁷ Reporting against the MR has not yet taken place for SG evaluations.

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
CGIAR Excellence in Breeding (EiB)-2022	ABI should play a crucial role in further modernizing CGIAR and NARS breeding programs by being the link between upstream disciplines and breeding programs and knowing both in detail.	Fully accepted	No information provided ²⁸	Tools like the Breeding Portal and GLOMIP have advanced standardized planning and data sharing across CGIAR and NARES.
CGIAR Genebank Platform-2024	Ensure funding for the wider evaluation of collections including phenotypic and molecular of high potential material areas of study to be decided in conjunction with researchers and breeders to maximize value of the accessions to all users.	Fully accepted	Delayed June 2024	N/A
Engagement/Condition/Approaches: INSTITUTIONALIZATION				
RAFS SG-2024	The chief scientist should be responsible for measurable improvement in quality of science (QoS) and alignment to Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) across all science programs. An action plan to implement this should be developed and implemented within a year. This plan should aim to generate the highest quality of scientific outputs and innovations in the next planning cycle. A focus on improving quality and encouraging greater engagement in QoS improvements from NARES partners should form part of this plan to promote improving legitimacy over time.	Partially accepted	Not Started	N/A
ST SG-2024	Develop a cross-CGIAR system transformation strategy using learning from the SG implementation. The strategy should provide further clarity on ST principles, approaches, and processes. 1) Use the ST Strategy to mainstream transformative policy research in a sizable number of countries beyond the focus countries. The countries should be determined based on country-specific needs, opportunities, and CGIAR's comparative advantage. 2) Consolidate work on	Deferred for consideration by the incoming CGIAR Chief Scientist and 2025-30 Portfolio/Program/ Accelerator leadership	Not started	N/A

²⁸ No information in the MR Action Tracker—The MR online indicates that this is Rec 5 and that actions are described only for sub-recommendations.

Partnerships: Summary of Evaluative Learning on CGIAR's Ways of Working

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
	transformation of food, land and water systems, especially in countries where various Initiatives are already engaged with a ST focus, by enhancing collaboration with national governments, research/policy institutions and development partners. c. Maintain and incentivize leadership on the topic of ST and build organizational capacity to conduct transformative research and policy work.			
Genetic Innovation (GI) SG-2024	Conduct specialized training: Offer short, impactful training-of-trainers modules for scientists on partnership identification, creation, and management.	Partially accepted. The format of specialized partnership training will need to be developed under the new management structure. However, the GI SG Aide Memoir events with high-level NARES leadership, identified the need to develop partnership health metrics (which are now being developed), which allows the identification of partnership strength and health. Moreover, in the PARTNER/TRANSFORM sub-Areas of Work (AoW), breeding networks will continue to innovate and implement impact-oriented, sustainable partnership models in which partners systematically contribute to innovation, priority setting, decision-making, and the development and	Not Started	Partnership strategy addresses professional development support in partnerships.

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
		delivery of farmer-valued cultivars.		
GI SG-2024	CGIAR and BT science program writing team/management: enhance partnership effectiveness and communication.	Partially Accepted	On Track	Partnership strategy developed, with guidance and tools.
CGIAR EIB-2022	Increase the breeding capacities in NARES and SMEs for improved genetic gain in farmer-preferred varieties (ABI).	Fully accepted	Completed	Breeding Portal and GLOMIP improved standardized planning and data sharing.
GENDER Platform-2023	Co-develop transparent criteria to continue to identify evidence, methods, and partnership needs.	Fully accepted	Completed December 2023	
Genebank Platform-2024	Adopt a wider definition of users when designing outreach programs. This should include users whose focus is to enhance the conservation and use of genetic diversity in situ—as noted in the Genebank Proposal. This would better address the System Level Outcome (SLO): “improving natural resources systems and ecosystem services”.	Fully accepted	On Track December 2025	System-wide partnership strategy developed, with guidance and tools, including stakeholder mapping.
CGIAR Genebank Platform-2024	In collaboration with partners, possibly including IFPRI, carry out policy research on important policy related issues such as Digital Sequence Information (DSI), benefit sharing and user tracking both to inform CGIAR on its own stance on key issues but also to inform international policy fora.	Fully accepted	On Track	N/A
Engagement/Condition/Approaches: COLLABORATION AND CONTRIBUTION				
RAFS SG - 2024	Scaling innovations and managing scaling partnerships should be concentrated in a single scaling program for better coordination. An enhanced decision tool should be developed to help match innovation readiness with resources and scaling partners at country level with a	Partially accepted. This is being addressed through a dedicated Scaling for Impact Program, the	Not Started	Launch of Scaling for Impact Program and a tool to match innovation readiness

Partnerships: Summary of Evaluative Learning on CGIAR's Ways of Working

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
	focus on marketable solutions. A deliberate, consistent and coordinated approach across all science programs is needed for this to work. The feedback loops between the Scaling for Impact Program and the rest of the science programs should be clarified and the pathways towards reciprocal engagement should be articulated. The mechanisms on how the achievements of Scaling Program would contribute to impact at national and regional levels should also been made explicit.	widespread use of the Innovation Packages and Scaling Readiness (IPSR) protocol, and the emerging country and regional engagement structure overseen by three continental convenors.		with funding and scaling partners.
GI SG-2024	Minimize unnecessary changes: Maintain consistency in processes, leadership, teams, and partnerships to foster ongoing success.	Partially accepted, with detailed actions to be defined by incoming Chief Scientist and 2025-30, Science Program/Accelerator leadership, and functions overseeing CGIAR's country and regional engagement.	On Track	Partnership strategy stated approach is to focus on building long-term, strategic partnerships.
GI SG-2024	Enhance breeding programs and partnerships: Strengthen CGIAR and NARES breeding programs, their interactions, and public-private partnerships.	Fully accepted	Delayed December 2024	Breeding efforts strengthened through Target Product Profiles (TPPs), with the Breeding Portal and GLOMIP , aiding coordination. The Private Sector Platform engages large-scale private sector actors.
EiB-2022	Listen to all CGIAR breeders and implementing partners and ask what they need. Change is built on equal and equitable partnerships built on trust, which takes time and proximity.	Fully accepted	Completed December 2024	Country convenors: Learning Sessions are steps in this direction.
Platform for Big Data in	Improve grant scheme management, monitoring, and governance to foster the Platform's (or successors) relevance to contribute to solving agriculture development challenges.	Partially accepted	No information provided	N/A

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
Agriculture-2021				
Engagement/Condition/Approaches: CAPACITY SHARING FOR DEVELOPMENT				
ST SG-2024	Invest in local capacity development for integrated systems research. Enhance in-country research capacity to apply integrated systems approaches to research. Develop mechanisms to regularly assess and refine innovations on the ground, in collaboration with local communities, ensuring technical soundness and social acceptance before wider implementation.	Partially accepted	Not Started	Learning Sessions with local partners were conducted as part of the design process of the new portfolios.
EiB-2022	Increase awareness of the value of molecular breeding at NARS through trainings and capacity building. Ask for and listen to feedback from participants to facilitate increasing adoption of the approach and the use of shared services (ABI).	Fully accepted	Completed	N/A
GENDER Platform-2023	Continue to engage with key identified partners to identify comparative advantages.	Fully accepted	Completed December 2023	PPU issuing guide
Engagement/Condition/Approaches: RESOURCES				
Genebank Platform-2024	Improve data curation to ensure CGIAR and other breeders' confidence in data published in Genesys and Digital Object Identifier (DOI).	Fully accepted	Delayed June 2024	N/A
Genebank Platform-2024	The policy component should serve as the 'sensory system' of CGIAR and should reinforce the ability to consult a wider section of stakeholders, identify the existing opportunities for the consultation, and design new mechanisms if gaps are identified. The policy team should strengthen anticipatory work on emerging and innovative topics (e.g., open-source seed).	Fully accepted	On Track	
ST SG-2024	Develop incentives for interdisciplinary team collaborations across disciplines and centers to tackle interconnected issues effectively	Partially accepted	Not Started	

Partnerships: Summary of Evaluative Learning on CGIAR's Ways of Working

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
	under the integrated management framework. Continue using platforms and communities of practice to promote collaboration across all Science Programs and Accelerators, fostering a holistic approach to reducing food system vulnerabilities to climate change.			
EiB-2022	Ensure that seed multipliers provide quality seed of new improved varieties, from CGIAR and NARS networks, at greater scale, tailored to the needs of the beneficiaries and thereby increasing varietal turnover and contributing to achieving genetic gains in farmers' fields (SeEdQUAL).	Fully accepted	On Track	The development of tools like the Breeding Portal .
GENDER Platform-2023	Co-identify and prioritize research gaps and activities with key partners, which will likely vary. Use stakeholder map results and transparent criteria to identify and prioritize research gaps and activity needs. GENDER Platform needs to carefully balance broad studies that synthesize evidence from across different LMIC geographies to studies that dive deep and are co-developed with local stakeholders to meet specific gender evidence needs.	Fully accepted	Completed December 2023	The partnership strategy provides guidance and tools to this effect, including a stakeholder mapping tool
Genebank Platform-2024	CGIAR and Crop Trust should work together to strategically identify and ensure a coordinated approach to the many common goals including funding, visibility, and the development of non-CGIAR genebanks	Fully accepted	Delayed December 2024	N/A
Engagement/Condition/Approaches: ADVOCACY				
GI SG-2024	BT science program writing team/management: insist on a system-wide optimization mindset. a1) Focus on system optimization: Shift the focus from optimizing individual roles and processes to enhancing the entire system. 2) Document role impacts: Recognize and celebrate how each role contributes to overall project outcomes. 3) Facilitate coordination and collaboration: Encourage collaboration at regional, national, and global levels with dedicated budget allocations.	Partially accepted. To develop an appropriate Management Response against this recommendation, input from specific functions such as the Chief Scientist is required, and CGIAR's new operational structure and Management Arrangements must first be operationalized. However,	Completed	N/A

Evaluation	Recommendation	MR	MR Status ²⁷ + Due Date	Additional assessment of status
		<p>Breeding for Tomorrow (B4T clearly identifies the roles of each work area – MARKET INTELLIGENCE, ACCELERATED BREEDING, INCLUSIVE DELIVERY, SUPPORT and ENABLE – and how each will contribute towards the goal of the overall program. Jointly and through coordination and collaboration with other Science Programs and Accelerators, a system-wide optimization mindset can be achieved through the process-based activity, FAIR data principle and partnership driven outcomes.</p>		
Engagement/Condition/Approaches: PRIVATE SECTOR COOPERATION				
EiB	<p>Listen to all CGIAR breeders and implementing partners and ask what they need. Change is built on equal and equitable partnerships built on trust, which takes time and proximity.</p>	Fully accepted	<p>Completed December 2024</p>	<p>The partnership strategy provides guidance and tools to this effect, including a partnership value assessment framework.</p>

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