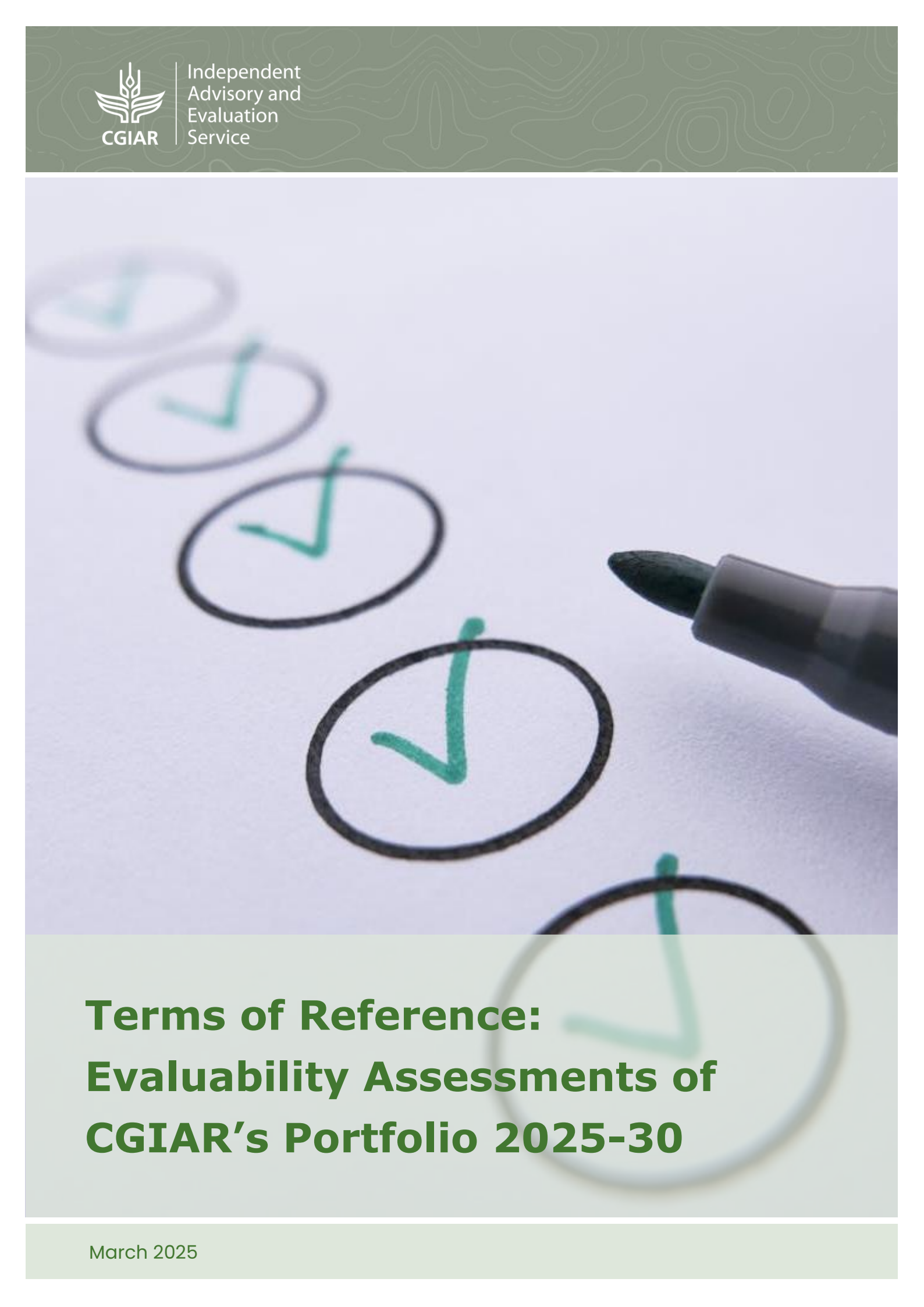




Independent  
Advisory and  
Evaluation  
Service

A close-up photograph of a white sheet of paper with a checklist. Several items are circled in black, and each has a green checkmark drawn next to it. A black marker is visible on the right side of the paper, with its tip pointing towards the checklist. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

# **Terms of Reference: Evaluability Assessments of CGIAR's Portfolio 2025-30**

March 2025

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Cover image: Checklist, IAES stock images.

**Terms of Reference:  
Evaluability Assessments of  
CGIAR's Portfolio 2025-30**

March 2025

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## Acronyms

AAR	After-Action Review	MR	Management Response
AoW	Area of Work	MYEP	Multi-Year Evaluation Plan
AMD	Asian-Mega Delta	P/As	Programs/Accelerators
CA	comparative advantage	PCU	Program Coordination Unit
CG	Consultative Group	PPU	Portfolio Performance Unit
CRP	CGIAR Research Program	QA	Quality Assurance
EA	Evaluability Assessment	QoS	Quality of Science
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group	RII	Regional Integrated Initiatives
NA	Need Assessments	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
EA	Evaluability Assessment	SIMEC	Standing Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
GEYSI	Gender, equality, youth and social inclusion	SME	subject matter experts
GDI	Gender, Diversity and Inclusion	SP	Scaling for Impact Program
IFA	Integration Framework Agreement	SPs	Science Programs
IPB	Integrated Partnership Board	TAFSSA	Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia
IN	Inception Note	ToC	Theory of change
ISDC	Independent Science for Development Council	ToR	Terms of Reference
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning		
MELIA	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment		

# Executive Summary

**Framing:** The Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP) ([2025-27 work plan for CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service \(IAES\) \(SC/M21/DP5\)](#)) includes guided Evaluability Assessments (EAs) in Q1-Q2 of 2025 of all components of [CGIAR's 2025-30 Portfolio](#) under the [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#). EAs would support the inception period of programs and accelerators, to build strong Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) plans in anticipation of mid-line evaluations in 2027.

The Terms of Reference (ToRs) present the design and approach to assessing the EA of 13 Science and Scaling Programs and Accelerators (P/As), including Genebank, of CGIAR's 2025–30 Portfolio, as per the System Council-endorsed MYEP. The [CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework](#) defines evaluability as *“the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion; the concept is central to a culture of results. A strong focus on evaluability at the design and inception stage facilitates overall ‘measurability’, monitoring and subsequent evaluation”*. This exercise will use IAES' [EA Guidelines](#) (2022), which include a framework with six domains (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Six domains of the EA framework**



A bespoke application of the EA process will both facilitate the use of EA results in the inception phase of the 2025–30 Portfolio and

inform evaluation readiness (e.g., for 2027 mid-line evaluations of the P/As, as per the MYEP). The EA exercise aims to provide actionable recommendations in support of improved MELIA components in the Portfolio, with the following **specific objectives**:

- Support increased evaluability of P/As (interventions) and portfolio of CGIAR 2025–30 at large.
- Support the development of a flexible and utility-focused Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) approach at the level of interventions.
- Coordinate with Independent [Science for Development Council \(ISDC\)](#), and CGIAR's Program Coordination Unit (PCU) and Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to maximize synergies and the use of results and learning from the EA process.
- Synthesize results across EAs of 13 P/As for early assurance to System Council.

The EA will adopt a graduated and stepwise process aligned with the P/A's inception phase, and as part of an overall evaluative process in coordination with PCU, PPU and ISDC (EA Guidelines):

1. Identify the EA purpose and scope.
2. Identify and involve stakeholders.
3. Apply the EA Framework.
4. Collect key documents, identify potential evidence gaps, and engage the evaluand.
5. Decide on evaluation readiness and make recommendations (e.g., for 2027 mid-line evaluations of P/As).
6. Use EA results (e.g., for the inception phase and outyears of Portfolio 2025–30).

The EAs will be implemented in a phased process of inception, implementation, and synthesis. The inception phase will involve document reviews and collection of data, as well as a light-touch application of the EA

Framework in support of the P/A Inception Report development. The [EA] inception phase will culminate with final EA Inception Notes (INs) for each P/A in collaboration with their teams. The individual P/A Inception Notes will outline details of an approximate ten-day process (Table 1) of assessment, formulation of actionable recommendations, to include the potential advising and collaboration on specific MELIA deliverables, as agreed upon with senior staff of the P/As.

**Table 1. Initial ten-day implementation per P/A**

<b>Days 1-3</b>	Review of P/A documents; interviews
<b>Days 4-6</b>	Workshop (hybrid format to permit the broadest possible F2F inclusion; or entirely virtual); the timing may be online as short as 1-2 hours or as long as one-half day, depending on agreement in the IN and specific to each EA. The days will combine homework by the EA team and P/A staff; and a coming together to collaborate and co-produce.
<b>Days 7-9</b>	Drafting agreed upon deliverable(s).
<b>Days 9-10</b>	Finalizing deliverable based on P/A staff feedback; and drafting of short and actionable EA report.

The EA workplan for each P/A will be tailored and iterative, with timelines adjusted based on scheduling demands and needs assessment results. Synthesis document of 13 EA reports from P/A will be a core resulting product, with intermediary deliverables presented in Table 2.

The core EA team comprises IAES staff (one evaluation manager assigned and temporary analyst support), and one mid-level evaluator experienced in EA and associated methods. In such a participatory exercise, the CGIAR MEL focal point per P/A will engage as members of the EA team. This will facilitate the EA progress, further enable contextual and program understanding, and build capacity in design and implementing the MELIA plans of the Portfolio.

**Table 2. Deliverables with purpose and dates**

<b>Deliverable/ Date 2025</b>	<b>Purpose/content</b>
<b>Assessment of Individual P/A draft ToC and MELIA Plans</b> –April-May	Per the needs assessment, the EA team will provide early-stage assistance on theory of change (ToC) and MELIA plan development, coordinated with PCU/PPU. This will be implemented as draft ToC and MELIA plans become available from through mid-May. The EA team will produce 13 short (1-2 page) reports with succinct recommendations for P/A teams.
<b>Short analytical paper/PPT across all 13 draft ToCs</b> –May 31	The EA team will prepare a short report consolidating comments on the 13 draft ToCs (due to PPU on 23 May). The report will apply Domain A from the EA framework with reference to historical EA results (i.e., Regional Integrated Initiatives (RII) EA), and cross-reference with the EA team’s initial review of PPU’s guidance on ToCs to the P/As.
<b>EA Inception Notes for P/As (13)</b> –Jul 31	Concise INs will be developed by the EA team in collaboration with the 13 P/As: their director (or delegate) and MEL Focal Point to gather information from available documents. Each IN will serve as a work plan for EA implementation, tailored to the P/A, outlining the application of the EA Framework, timeline, priority assessment domains, interview list, workshop outline, and expected outputs.
<b>EA Reports (13)</b> –October 31	The EA teams will report on the results of each EA exercise in 13 discrete reports for each P/A assessed. The report will present findings per assessment domain and recommendations.
<b>Synthesis EA Report</b> –November 25	A synthesis report detailing the emerging themes of the 13 EA reports, with concluding findings detailed across the Portfolio. Assessment of implementing recommendations from the <a href="#">2024 Synthesis of EAs of RIIs</a> will be conducted against status in the <a href="#">CGIAR’s MR Tracker</a> . In addition to being the final System Council deliverable, EA reports and synthesis will be available to CGIAR for use during the 2026 Pause and Reflect Stage or equivalent.



# 1 Purpose and Objectives

These Terms of Reference (ToRs) present the approach to assessing the evaluability of 13 Programs and Accelerators (P/As) of [CGIAR's 2025–30 Portfolio](#) under the [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#). The Evaluability Assessment (EA) aligns to the System Council endorsed Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP), per the [2025–27 Workplan for CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service \(IAES\) \(SC/M21/DP5\)](#).

Within the inception phase and first year of the P/As, the EA will serve as a learning, advisory and quality assurance (QA) exercise to promote long-term evaluability with the goal to further develop and improve MELIA components and provide concrete and specific ways forward in the form of actionable recommendations. The EA has the following four objectives:

1. Support increased evaluability of P/As (interventions) across CGIAR's Portfolio 2025–27, and the Portfolio evaluability.
2. Support the development of a flexible and utility-focused monitoring, evaluation and learning approach at the level of interventions.
3. Coordinate with Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC), Program Coordination Unit (PCU) and Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to maximize synergies and the use of results and learning from the EA process.
4. Synthesize results across the 13 P/As EAs, towards an early assurance to System Council of the Portfolio's evaluability.

The EA Framework (Annex 1, 3) guides the exercise. The approach and methods are informed by a review of documents (Annex 2), comments by an *ad hoc* EA Consultative Group (CG) on a draft ToRs, and the results of a needs assessment (Annex 4). Finally, several reflective exercises informed the ToRs: 1) Learning on Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) and previous application of CGIAR's EA Framework (found in Annex 5); and 2) Summary of feedback provided on the EA Concept Note found in Annex 6.

**The EA is advisory and learning in its approach.** The main EA outputs are: actionable recommendations underpinning evaluable P/As and CGIAR Portfolio 2025–30, (with early outputs related to ISDC Inception Report review, and latter reports supporting the 2026 P/A Pause and Reflect process); individual EA reports for each P/A; and, a synthesis of the results across the 13 EAs, that will incorporate status of implementing long-term recommendations in the [2024 Synthesis of EAs of RILs](#).

**These ToRs are organized into five sections:** 1) Background with an overview of the 2025–30 Portfolio; 2) Overview of EAs at CGIAR; 3) Approach, method, and process; 4) Description of deliverables, knowledge management and dissemination; and 5) Timeline, roles and responsibilities in carrying out the EAs, including management response (MR). Eight Annexes are included.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 CGIAR's 2025–30 Science and Innovation Portfolio- Overview

Aligned to the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, the 2025–30 [Portfolio Narrative](#) of CGIAR aims to address significant global challenges, including climate change, gender and social inequalities, poor-quality diets, rural poverty, environmental degradation, as well as fragility, conflict, and

violence. In doing so, it considers the ways in which those challenges are affected by [megatrends](#) (ISDC).

Figure 1 presents the Portfolio, directed towards five Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-focused impact areas: eight Science Programs (SPs), a Scaling for Impact Program,<sup>1</sup> and three Accelerators, which aim to aggregate expertise and partnerships around critical areas, and to collectively deliver against CGIAR's ToC. The [ISDC Review of 2025-30 Research and Innovation Portfolio Proposals](#) notes realignment in the [2025-30 Portfolio](#) with a shift from a "traditional linear, technologically focused research agenda" to what is regarded as a "contemporary, systems approach, and impact-oriented research culture".<sup>2</sup> In making this shift, the intent is to enable the best possible science in support of intended development outcomes across [CGIAR's centers](#) as governed by its Integration Framework Agreement (IFA) ([2022](#), updated [2023](#)). The P/As aim to frame and provide greater coherence and complementarity across different sources and types of funding (CGIAR Trust Fund Windows 1-2 [W1/2], Window 3 [W3], and bilateral funding), with the intent that greater impact will be achieved.

The 2025-30 Portfolio has a proposed year one baseline budget of USD 288.7 million, with P/A budgets ranging from USD 1.9 million to 78.3 million.<sup>3</sup> Guided by the [2024 CGIAR Engagement Framework for Partnership and Advocacy](#), P/As are implemented with partners ranging from local and national governments to communities. The Framework distinguishes types of collaboration: demand partners, innovation partners, and scaling partners; as well as type of partner with which to engage in advocacy, such as national and international NGOs, international financial institutions, or farmers' organizations.<sup>4</sup>

The ISDC proposal review (November 2024) suggested a need for further developing MELIA sections during the inception phase, which aligns with envisioned detailed MELIA plans in Inception Reports of the P/As. ISDC's review noted lack a learning plan, insufficient detail on how independent evaluation results will be used, and absence of plans for collecting baseline data, key performance indicators, and data.<sup>5</sup> This observation echoes MELIA-specific evaluative results at CGIAR, discussed below.

**Figure 2. CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio**



Source: [CGIAR Portfolio Narrative](#), page 5.

<sup>1</sup> [The Scaling for Impact Program](#) aims to advance scaling of innovations as a means of achieving five desired impact areas. Genebanks will be handled through distinct planning and management channel.

<sup>2</sup> [ISDC Review of 2025-30 Research and Innovation Portfolio Proposals](#), page 1.

<sup>3</sup> [CGIAR Windows 1 & 2 budget for 2025](#), Annex 1. For the purposes of EA planning, current, System Council-approved budgets used.

<sup>4</sup> [CGIAR Portfolio Narrative 2025-30](#), page 17.

<sup>5</sup> [ISDC Review of 2025-30 Research & Innovation Portfolio Proposals](#).

## 2.2 CGIAR Evaluability Assessments

CGIAR's IAES developed a [guideline for evaluability assessments \(EAs\) in 2022](#)<sup>6</sup> under the CGIAR-wide [Evaluation Framework and Policy](#) (2022). Box 1 provides key concepts and definitions.<sup>7</sup>

### Box 1. Evaluability versus evaluation

**Evaluability** is defined as the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion; the concept is central to a culture of results (CGIAR, 2022).

An **Evaluability Assessment** is an early review of a proposed activity to ascertain whether its objectives are adequately defined, results verifiable, and evaluation questions answerable. An EA establishes whether and how an intervention can be evaluated reliably and credibly.

An **Evaluation** is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, initiative or policy, its design, implementation, and results (CGIAR, 2021).

A strong focus on evaluability at the design stage of an intervention facilitates its overall measurability, monitoring and subsequent evaluation. EAs serve as a QA mechanism of an intervention, including a health check on its MELIA components.

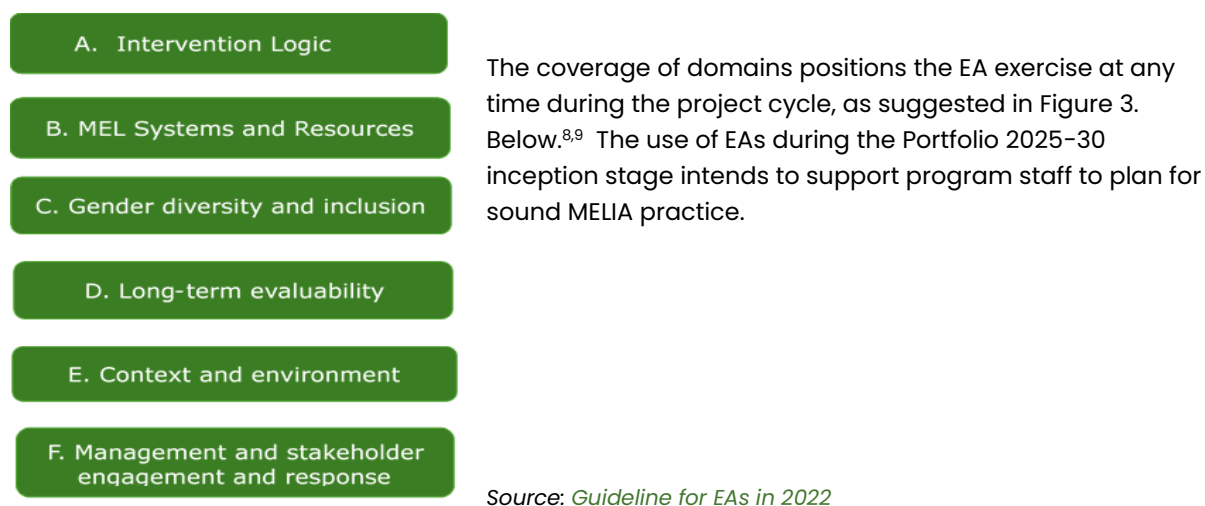
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*“Judgements are not made about an intervention itself and what has been achieved, but rather about the possibility of making such [evaluative] judgements and their likely utility” (Child and Davies, 2022)*

---

In effect, EAs are largely advisory, learning, and recommendations focused. The EA Framework comprises six domains (Figure 2):

**Figure 2. Six domains of the EA framework**



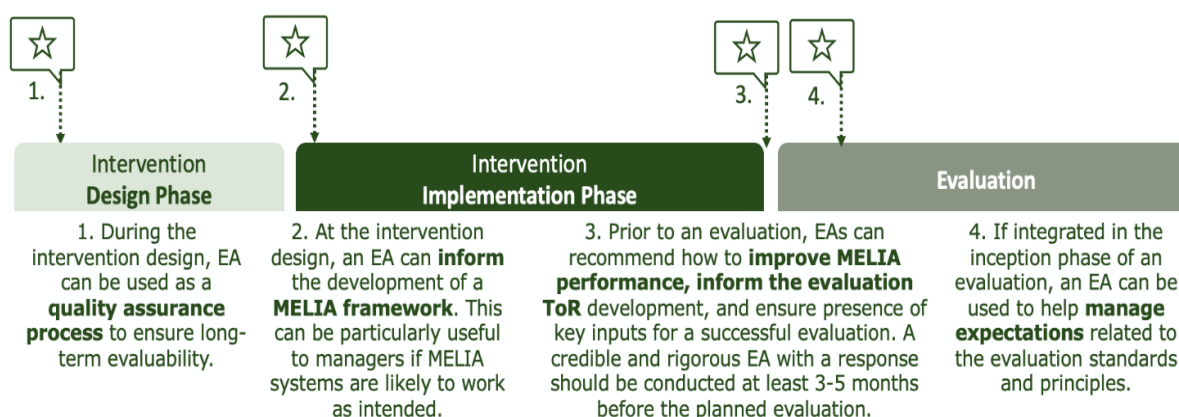
<sup>6</sup> Also available in Spanish <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4d085af3-a10d-4bac-b9a2-cfd990a7e934/content>.

<sup>7</sup> The EA team adopts the terminology from the EA Guidelines and the 2021 [CGIAR MELIA Glossary](#).

<sup>8</sup> See blog [Evaluability Assessments Are an Essential New Tool for CGIAR Managers](#).

<sup>9</sup> Read more about an EA example from the Asian Mega-Delta (AMD) Initiative here: <https://iaes.cgiar.org/evaluation/news/cgiar-through-iaes-engages-irri-asian-mega-deltas-initiative-and-asia-pacific>.

**Figure 3. Timing and purpose of an EA**



Source: *Guidelines on Conducting and Using EA in CGIAR (2022)*

## 3 Method and Approach to EAs

The **primary method** to meet the objectives of the EA exercise is to apply the EA Guidelines (aligned to CGIAR's Evaluation Framework, 2022) and process during the inception and roll-out of the P/As. Applying the EA Framework (ToR Annex 1, or Appendix 3 of EA Guidelines) will drive implementation plans for 13 EAs (section 3.3). As noted above, per the Needs Assessment (NA), advanced work will proceed with initial, targeted recommendations in May.

### 3.1 Methods for P/A EAs

Assessment design is guided by a six-step process applying the EA Framework (Annex 1). For ToRs and each EA, the first step is to identify the EA purpose and scope. The second step is to identify and involve stakeholders. The EA participants will include P/A programmatic and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) leadership, and others might be identified at this second step.

Data collection will include gathering, *inter alia*, documentation (draft ToCs and MELIA plans, Proposals, Inception Reports, and complementary data as made available). NA data was collected in advance, to develop this ToR. P/A programmatic and MEL leadership will be interviewed in Science Week, and either virtual or face-to-face workshops will take place during the EA. This work aligns with the defined framework step to collect key documents, identify potential evidence gaps, engage the evaluand.

The EA teams will use the EA framework criteria (with traffic light system), employing 40 questions, thus applying the EA Framework with 40<sup>10</sup> questions aligned to the six domains.

The analysis to assess whether, per question, the traffic light is green, amber or red (i.e., against the 40 questions) relies on expert opinion from EA team. Analysis will allow the EA team to conduct the fifth step, to decide on evaluation readiness and make recommendations (e.g., for 2027 mid-line evaluations of 2025-30 Portfolio in the case of these EA ([IAES Workplan 2025-27](#))).

The final step pertains to knowledge management. Implementing step six of the process, to use EA results (e.g., for inception phase and first year of the Portfolio 2025-30).

During the step applying the framework, the EA team will emphasize key domains of the EA Framework, as determined by the results of the NA survey: intervention logic, MEL systems and

<sup>10</sup> Several additional questions may be added.

resources, and long-term evaluability. The key steps in the implementation of this method are detailed in section 3.2. Furthermore, the EA team will address recently published or draft frameworks and methods notes to reflect pertinent principles and definitions. Based on the emergent content and in preparing the ToR, no systematic adjustment of the EA Framework was undertaken; rather, the EA team will adopt the principles of nascent Method Notes in their interpretation of the EA Framework. Annex 3 discusses the concepts and principles of the concepts and frameworks and how the EA team will address them from an evaluability perspective on topics ranging from evaluation of scaling, to gender, diversity and inclusion (GDI), to comparative advantage. The INs will establish in-depth application to each P/A.

- **Scaling** (cross-cutting with relevance to Domains A, B and F).<sup>11</sup>
- **Comparative advantage**<sup>12</sup> (cross-cutting with relevance to Domains A and B).
- **Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI)** (related to Domain C and cross-cutting, with relevance to Domain B), and gender, equality, youth and social inclusion (GEYSI).
- **Partnerships** (related to Domain F and cross-cutting, with relevance to Domain C)-the [2024 Partnership Framework](#).

The EA team will also address the cost and technical feasibility of MELIA mechanisms for existing and new indicators in the Results Framework. This may involve exploring the feasibility of implementing a study as a means for promoting learning in this area, as part of an overall MELIA approach.

Further presentation of the approach and methods builds on summary reflection on the application of the EA Framework in 2023 along with the NA survey results (see Annex 3).

## 3.2 EA Process

The EA team will adopt a three phased process to the EA: inception, implementation, and synthesis, as part of a gradual approach, aligned with other units within CGIAR, and to best support the intent to produce results that are actionable during the 2025 Portfolio inception phase and first year. This section details how the EA will be implemented in support of and to complement other processes taking place. Products resulting from these steps are referenced and described, and a fuller description may be found in Section 4 below. Relevant documents, including those listed in Annex 2, will be continuously gathered and reviewed throughout the inception and implementation phases.

### 3.2.1 Inception Phase

**Assessment of draft ToCs and MELIA plans as they are made available:** IAES was invited by PPU to review the P/A ToC Update Guidance and the P/A MELIA Plan Update Template and Guidance in February and March 2025, respectively, from the perspective of an EA. The contribution focused on assessing the clarity, feasibility, and measurability of the intended outcomes and indicators, ensuring that both documents align with evaluability standards and are designed to facilitate effective MEL processes. IAES provided feedback and recommendations to strengthen the consistency of the ToC and MELIA plans, with an emphasis on improving their capacity to inform evidence-based decision-making.

To coincide and in coordination with PCU's work in supporting the P/As in developing their ToCs and MELIA plans in preparation for submitting Inception Reports on 2 June, and to respond to the NA, the EA team will offer a preliminary assessment during its inception phase. This will involve applying Domains A and B to draft ToCs and MELIA plans shared by the P/As between mid-April to mid-May. Upon request from P/As, one- or two-page documents will be produced providing observations and recommendations for continued development of their draft ToCs and MELIA plans. Per PPU guidance,

<sup>11</sup> Towards the development of the Methods Note, see [discussion](#) on [EvalforEarth Community of Practice](#).

<sup>12</sup> Foundational document-the [ISDC Technical Note on comparative advantage](#).

an annex containing the following table will be prepared as part of the Inception Report, where P/A teams will record the results and their response.

**Table 1. Template for responses to EAs (Appendix 2 of P/A Inception Report Template)**

<b>Evaluability Assessment Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree or disagree with the recommendation?</b>	<b>Actions taken to align with recommendation or rationale for disagreement</b>	<b>Timeline to complete agreed-upon action</b>
Recommendation 1			
Recommendation 2			
Recommendation 3...			

Source: P/A Inception Report template developed by PPU (11 March 2025)

**Analysis across the 13 draft ToCs:** A second product will be developed during the inception phase by the EA team. The team will prepare a short report (three to five pages) following a review of the 13 draft ToCs on May 23, along with the notes of April discussions on ToCs with the P/A teams. The report will cover analysis across the ToCs (not per ToC) with a light application of Domain A of the EA Framework. Where relevant, the report will draw on previous work, with reference to two other pieces of analysis (results): the results of the RII EAs, and the EA team’s analysis of PPU’s ToC Guidance Note on ToCs provided to the P/As in March 2025. The EA team will aim to produce the report one to two weeks after receipt of the ToCs on 23 May. This may be the sole activity implemented which focuses on the ToCs, should drafts not be readily available prior to 23 May, or it may be a concluding exercise to the individual reviews of the ToCs and MELIA plans detailed above.

**Development of EA INs:** During the inception phase, the EA team will meet with P/A senior staff and MELIA focal points during Science Week in Nairobi 6-11 April. The output of these meetings will support the development of INs for implementation of the full EA Framework, in coordination with the P/A teams, further clarity about EAs on the part of the P/As, and increased buy-in to the process. The INs will detail a maximum ten-day plan for implementation, as detailed below.

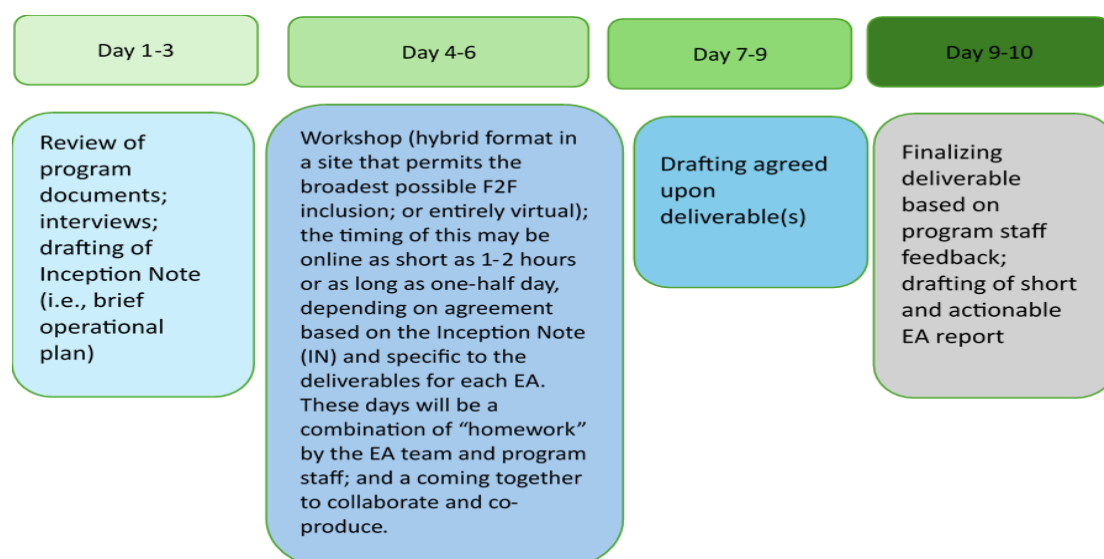
A systematic approach will be adopted to outline both in-person and virtual workshops for each of the EAs. A rationale for in-person country workshops will be applied as follows: 1) Upon agreement and invitation from the director of the P/A; 2) MEL FP, Director and at least one area of work (AOW) lead are based in country; 3) More than one P/A is located in a given country; and 4) The country is in a favorable time zone to facilitate the participation of other hybrid participants. NA survey results indicate a high level of interest in in-country collaboration on EAs, with eight respondents out of the 13 P/As indicating a ‘yes’ to the EA team working in person with their staff, while four respondents have indicated ‘maybe’.

The ten days per EA may be spread out due to scheduling demands. Should online work be preferred over in-person, scheduled workshops may be done over a longer period as well based on agreed upon workshop agendas with the program directors and MEL focal points. The workplan will likely be an organic back-and-forth specific to the design and desired output of each EA.

### 3.2.2 Implementation phase

The EA team will apply the six-step process for implementation as outlined in the EA Guidelines, with the participation of the P/A teams, as detailed in the INs (See section 3.1). An approximate ten-day dedicated effort for EA implementation is found in Figure 4 above. The protocol for implementing the ten-day timeline will be outlined in the INs. The implementation phase will end with the finalization of 13 EA reports detailing findings, recommendations, and any associated outputs.

**Figure 4. Estimated initial ten-day plan for EA program implementation**



Endorsement from the Standing Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) will be sought for final EA reports. The EA synthesis will be inclusive of 13 executive summaries from 13 EA reports.

### 3.2.3 Synthesis of EA Results

The EA team will synthesize the results of the 13 EAs. To plan this well, at the outset and during inception of the EA, the design of the synthesis report will be set out and tested with the CG, to ensure a holistic and useful conclusion to the exercise. As part of the synthesis, the EA team will describe findings and conclusions, based on evidence collected in the EA Framework as defined in a prepared IN, based on the P/As, and make recommendations logically aligned with the conclusions across the totality of the 13 EAs. An assessment of implementing recommendations from the [2024 Synthesis of EAs of RILs](#) will be conducted against status in the [CGIAR's MR Tracker](#) managed by PPU. The recommendations will be evidence-based, relevant, focused, clearly formulated, and actionable. They will be prioritized and addressed to the different responsible stakeholders. The executive summaries of the 13 EA sub-reports will be annexed to the report.

IAES will share this first draft EA synthesis report with a team of 1) external peer reviewers with relevant expertise called up from IAES's vetted roster; and 2) some members of IAES's [Evaluation Reference Group](#) (ERG). The draft report will also be shared with the CG and the P/As for their review and comments, mostly with the aim of validating conclusions and recommendations. After integrating feedback from peer-reviews and QA, the EA advisor, who has final responsibility for the deliverable, will submit the final EA report by email to the IAES evaluation manager in electronic editable form (MS Word) aligned with IAES's Style Guide, and a standardized structure and template to be provided by IAES. The EA team will integrate the collective feedback received into a discussion version of the report which will be professionally copy-edited. Subsequently, the discussion version will be presented to SIMEC for endorsement. SIMEC endorsement will be sought for final reports to be endorsed by the System Council. For EA, this will be the synthesis inclusive 13 executive summaries from 13 EAs. With the feedback of SIMEC integrated, the discussion version of the report will be presented to System Council for their endorsement. The final synthesis report with the MR (template is found in Annex 6), will be published on the IAES website.

### 3.3 Approach

In applying the EA method detailed above, the EA team's approach may be summarized as follows:

a) ***EAs as one part of an overall evaluative approach coordinated across units within CGIAR***

The NA results indicated a need and interest by the P/As to collaborate on the development of ToC and MELIA plans. The EAs will be primarily a recommendation-oriented exercise, aiming to provide clear and granular recommendations on how to address those areas that the P/As have expressed initial interest in, including: 1) Strengthening program logic to ensure greater evaluability; and 2) Developing MEL systems to better support evaluability. The EAs will establish the concern and interest expressed, identify a way forward to strengthen program evaluability, and serve to support other related units within CGIAR, namely PCU and PPU, to provide technical assistance. The EA results will also assist IAES in designing future independent evaluations in cooperation with the P/As, which will aim to support adaptation and learning.

b) ***A flexible and holistic use of the EA Framework based on previous learning***

To meet the evolving context during the Portfolio's inception phase and aligned to the revised timing and objectives the EA exercise, the EA Framework will focus on specific domains for the EAs, such as program logic (Domain 1), reference others that are cross-cutting across the domains, such as gender (Domain C) and which are specific to the P/A context will be used in a more holistic approach. In addition, a value will be placed on in-person engagement as much as possible, as well as inviting the participation of non-CGIAR stakeholders in the EA process.

c) ***Participatory and Iterative in nature***

The scoping and planning for the EAs has been, and will continue to be, participatory with each of the 13 P/As—to ensure that EA INs will reflect clear objectives, scope and timeline that is tailored to their needs and specific to development of their **Inception Reports** due in June 2025. The EA Framework will be applied in a participatory manner, with findings collectively derived through facilitation by the evaluator, and recommendations discussed and defined. This level of participation, which will also involve the MEL(IA) staff of the P/A, will support the desired outcome of clear, granular, relevant and actionable recommendations.

### 3.4 Considerations and Limitations

The main considerations and limitations to the implementation of the ToRs stem from the inception phase of the 2025-30 Portfolio and the designated timing of this exercise: the ongoing recruitment of permanent directors/deputies (announcements online at the ToR finalization) and evolving development of documentation towards Inception notes for 13 EAs. The following are other considerations and limitations:

- With evolving Inception Report development and a ToC and MELIA plan deadline for 23 March, subsequent EA workplans will be integrated into EA INs later, as discussed in the Methods section.
- While the EA Framework provides a structured approach, it must remain flexible enough to accommodate the diversity and complexity of the Portfolio, while implemented in coordination with other units in CGIAR. Managing these constraints will be key to ensuring that the EAs deliver meaningful and actionable insights for Portfolio design and implementation.
- The MELIA plans will be separate from the Inception Reports, for a total of 26 documents.
- As requested in the NA, P/A staff make themselves available for side meetings with the EA team.
- The EA team will engage with P/As during and after Science Week to review ToCs and MELIA plans, contingent on draft versions due to PCU, by May 23 and are available on a rolling basis starting in April. This will be done as part of the EA's inception phase. A short report will be



provided to the P/As detailing recommendations, for response in Appendix 2 of their Inception Reports for submission on June 2.

- The inception period for the P/A ends with submission of IRs to ISDC, with roll out later in 2025 for implementing EAs. The EA team will review the IRs in their entirety following ISDC’s review in September when applying the full EA Framework.
- Without a formal second submission of IRs that takes into consideration ISDC’s review and the recommendations of the full EA, we assume that the IRs can still be reviewed and revised until Q4 of 2025. This also coincides with the concept of a MELIA plan that is a living document which can be revised during the course of program implementation, and not something static.
- The Management Action Plan from Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) in response to ISDC review will focus on higher level recommendations, to inform the Synthesis, and triangulated evidence across 13 EA reports.

## 4 Deliverables, Knowledge Management and Dissemination

### 4.1 EA Reports

Given that the purpose of the EAs is to support the further development and improvement of MELIA components for the P/As, the products planned are designed to support recommendations that can be acted upon. The EA team will develop three deliverables as part of the inception phase: 1) an assessment of individual draft ToC and MELIA plans in April-May; 2) a short analytical paper across all 13 draft ToCs in May; and 3) 13 EA Inception Notes for each P/A EA. At the end of the implementation phase, the EA team will produce 13 EA reports detailing the results, both findings and recommendations, of the 13 EAs.

### 4.2 Synthesis EA Report

An EA Synthesis Report will aggregate learning across all EAs of the 2025–30 Portfolio. IAES will seek SIMEC endorsement of this deliverable for transmissions to Science Council ([example](#)). The public document will address all 13 EA exercises and will include analysis of integration of EA findings and recommendations across the inception reports to identify common themes emerging from the exercise, how they were addressed, and what challenges remain; it will also assess implementation of recommendations from the [2024 Synthesis of EA of RII](#)s against status in the MR Tracker. A conclusion and strategic priority recommendations will be detailed from the totality of the 13 EAs. A two-page brief summarizing the main points of the synthesis report will also be drafted. Development of the synthesis report design will be taken into consideration as the INs are developed during the inception phase.

**Table 2. Key EA deliverables**

Deliverable	Purpose/content	Length/scope
<b>Assessment of Individual P/A draft ToC and MELIA Plans – April-May</b>	Per the needs assessment, the EA team will provide early-stage assistance on ToC and MELIA plan development, coordinated with PCU/PPU. This will be implemented as draft ToC and MELIA plans become available from mid-April to mid-May. The EA team will produce 13 short (1-2 page) reports with succinct recommendations for P/A teams on draft ToC and MELIA plans.	Included in annex 2 of individual Inception Reports

Deliverable	Purpose/content	Length/scope
<b>Short analytical paper/PPT across all 13 draft ToCs-</b> <i>May 31</i>	The EA team will prepare a short report consolidating comments on the 13 draft ToCs (due to PPU on 23 May). The report will apply Domain A from the EA framework with reference to historical EA results (i.e., RII EA), and cross-reference with the EA team’s initial review of PPU’s guidance on ToCs to the P/As.	3 to 4 pages
<b>EA Inception Notes for P/As (13)-</b> <i>July 31</i>	INs will be short papers completed by the EA team with 13 P/As. The EA team will interact with the P/A director (or delegate) and MEL Focal Point, to obtain details based on available document review. The IN will serve as a detailed workplan on how the EA will be implemented, tailored to P/A, including application of the EA Framework, agreed upon timeline and participatorily determined priority assessment domains, full interview list, a tentative outline and purpose for the workshop, and a description of the expected output(s).	3 to 5 pages with annexes
<b>EA Reports (13)-</b> <i>October 31</i>	The EA teams will report on the results of each EA exercise in 13 discrete reports for each P/A assessed. The report will present findings per assessment domain and recommendations.	5 to 7 pages with annexes
<b>Synthesis EA Report-</b> <i>November 25</i>	A synthesis report detailing the emerging themes of the 13 EA reports, with concluding findings detailed across the Portfolio. Assessment of implementing recommendations from the <a href="#">2024 Synthesis of EAs of RIIIs</a> will be conducted against status in the <a href="#">CGIAR’s MR Tracker</a> . In addition to being the final System Council deliverable, EA reports and synthesis will be available to CGIAR for use during the 2026 Pause and Reflect Stage or equivalent.	15 pages with 2-page brief

## 5 Timeline, Management, Roles and Responsibilities in the EA Process

The CGIAR System Council is EA commissioner via IAES. In line with the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy (2022), CGIAR management share leadership and mutual responsibility for the conduct and use of results of independently conducted evaluation activities.

### 5.1 Timeline of EA Process and Team

The three phases of the EA project are: 1) Inception, from May to June; 2) Implementation, from July to October; and 3) Synthesis, from November to December. Figure 5 provides a visual representation of the main project milestones.

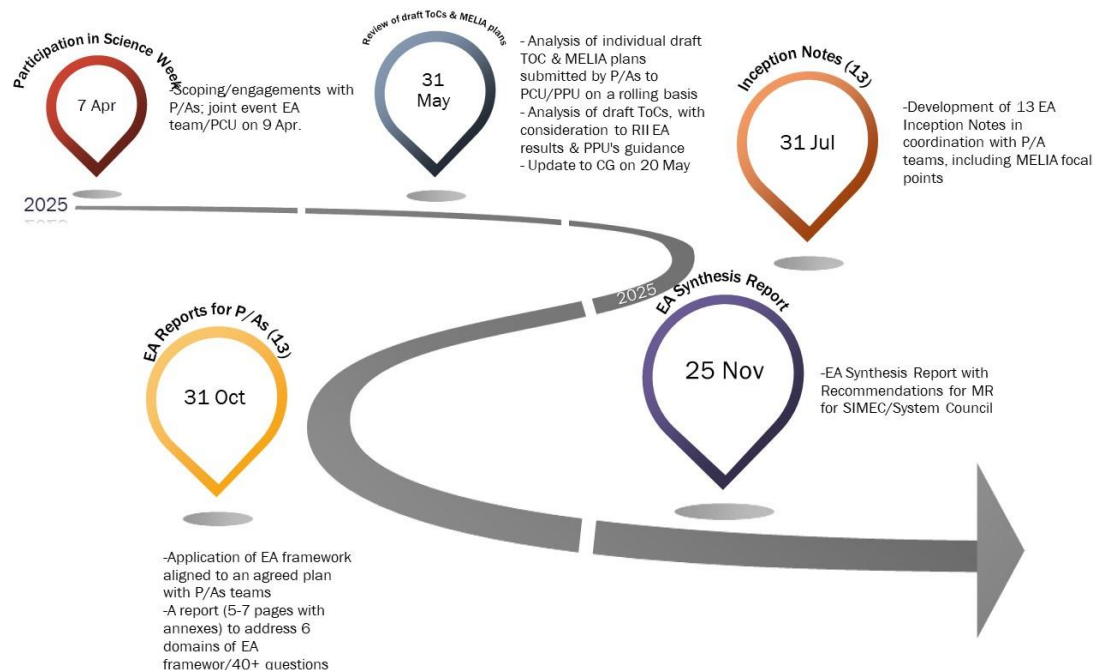
Annex 8 shows the core EA team composition. Upon ToR finalization, IAES will engage external team members from the IAES roster of pre-selected evaluation and subject matter experts (SMEs). The selection will be guided by the P/A documentation provided and their needs. The number of SMEs will not exceed ten per maximum of seven days level of effort/per SME.

### 5.2 CGIAR Management Engagement and Response

Consistent with the principles and standards in the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework, utility and use guide the evaluative engagement with stakeholder groups (CGIAR management, funders and other key intended users) throughout the exercise. To stimulate the uptake of the EA results and

learning, early management engagement began in the scoping and design phase, which facilitated the co-development of the objectives and NA (Annex 4).

**Figure 5. Timeline of EA project**



In line with the CGIAR Evaluation Policy and EA guidelines, MRs are mandatory for all System Council-commissioned evaluations in CGIAR. The draft EA Synthesis Report will be circulated to SIMEC for endorsement. After a formal presentation to the CGIAR System Council, and the System Council's approval of the Synthesis Report, the MR and EA Synthesis Report will be considered final and will be published on the IAES website. PPU oversees the procedure for tracking, monitoring and outyear reporting against the implementation of EA recommendations in CGIAR. Recommendations from the recently completed MR System Review will be put into practice, for example recommendation refinement, smaller number of prioritized recommendations captured, and suggestion of potential easily actionable measures.

The P/A management and assigned focal points (actors) are expected to engage with the process, e.g., to attend EA sessions, respond to the EA team's requests for documentation and data, access to partners and P/A staff for engagement with the EA team, and obtain information on partners and stakeholders. These actors will also engage in developing and refining recommendations with the EA team and will be responsible for giving factual feedback on the draft EA reports and EA Synthesis Report, as required.

Underscored by learnings and recommendations from the [summary](#),<sup>13</sup> CGIAR's PCU has engaged with the EA exercise design to date, i.e., NAs, given its role providing or supporting use of the core MELIA related resources by P/As during inception: PRMS, ToC module and [CGIAR Performance & Results Hub 2025–30 Transition & Inception](#). At the time of ToR development, both PCU and PPU have been finalizing MELIA Guidelines for Portfolio teams for Inception Reports—both documents reviewed

<sup>13</sup> Brief: [Summary of MELIA from 2022–24: Knowledge Product](#). Full report available upon request from IAES and to be published [here](#).

by EA team. A joint session during Science Week between PCU and the EA team will further enhance uptake of NA and EA results.

### **Box 2. The role of the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) in the EA process**

The **ISDC** plays a strategic role in supporting and aligning EAs with broader CGIAR review processes. Drafts of the INs for each P/As EA, which will be finalized by end of July, in the processes coordinated with ISDC to foster collaboration and avoid duplications. As outlined in Table 2 of ToRs, ISDC, as part of the CG and along with key stakeholders, will receive a presentation in late-May summarizing with core overarching recommendations. Final EA-specific recommendations will be included in the IR reports to ISDC by 30 June, and a presentation by EA lead to ISDC reviewers will be given for their review in July. With their feedback and other documentation, EA reports will be finalized by 31 October.

## **5.3 IAES Management and Responsibilities**

IAES is responsible for planning, conducting the initial design, managing evaluator selection and contracts, and initiating and managing the workflows of the EA. The latter is done in a way that ensures the quality and independence of the evaluative process and EA reports, as well as the timely delivery of high-quality key outputs. IAES is also responsible for ensuring the compliance of processes and products with the Evaluation Framework/Policy (2022) and the IAES mandate (see IAES ToR).

The IAES/Evaluation Function, in the capacity of EA evaluation manager, is specifically responsible for 1) selecting, contracting, and convening the EA team; 2) contractual arrangements; 3) monitoring and supervision of the EA team against agreed ToR and contracts; 4) facilitating access for data collection by the EA team; 5) coordinating QA and validation; 6) guidance and support on documentation (e.g., required templates, editorial services and graphics); and 7) developing a knowledge management approach and products. The EA team, including external experts and analysts with the manager appointed from IAES/Evaluation Function, will ensure they undertake adequate consultation with EA stakeholders throughout the process. The IAES Director will convene an *ad hoc* consultative group at strategic moments of the exercise, for inputs from governance and Global Leadership Team representatives, to adapt to needs expressed by these groups, and strengthen the understanding and use of the EAs in CGIAR.

IAES will follow its layered QA system to assure EA process and **outputs**, which involves a review by IAES, and an external peer review by the CG, including **ERG** members. Both QA groups will be called upon to interrogate the EA methodology. For validation, IAES will circulate the draft IN to the CG for comments—particularly to flag if the EA questions posed will meet the needs of governance bodies and senior management. Represented within the group, SIMEC members will comment on the adequacy of the design *vis-a-vis* their needs as a commissioner, CGIAR System Council, likewise the Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) representative will comment on the design and conduct of the exercise per the Board. ISDC, Internal Audit and Global Leadership Team via the Chief Scientist are part of the CG. IAES will ensure QA and that the EA team incorporates the relevant feedback. The final IN subsequently represents the contractual basis for the EA team's subsequent work and deliverables, and it will be published on IAES's website.

## **5.4 EA Team Roles and Responsibilities**

The EA team will require facilitation skills for participatory processes, have an in-depth understanding of the EA methods and guidelines, and demonstrate an advanced level of program

evaluation and ToC development experience. Ideally the EA team will have experience in the primary countries of implementing the work of P/As. IAES prefers for the CGIAR MEL focal point per program to engage as a committed member of the EA team; this will facilitate the EA progress, further enable contextual and program understanding, and build capacity, particularly for the MEL focal point, in conducting EAs.

It is anticipated the work will be highly interactive, with problem-solving and identification of pathways forward to better institutionalize and develop MELIA activities for each P/A. A balance will be sought with the ten days available per P/A EA between the work of assessing, articulating recommendations based on the findings of the assessment, and identifying what kind of applied work by the EA team, in collaboration with the program staff, would be most viable and of use.








The core team will be comprised of IAES staff, at least one senior and two mid-level evaluators, and additional SMEs specific to the thematic area of the P/As. Final decisions about team makeup will be driven by the most efficient and economical approach for supporting the purpose of the EA. See Annex 7 for proposed EA team bios and conflict of interest statements.





## **5.5 P/A Participation and Responsibilities**

A guiding principle of the EAs is participation. The most successful EAs will benefit from the MEL appointee of the P/A to be a full member of the EA team. The planning will be consultative and collaborative. Some logistical backstopping from colleagues on site would be required for face-to-face events. Furthermore, a successful EA would require the P/A staff to make available relevant documents for review. Importantly, the P/A staff would participate in the EA as a learning exercise, actively engage with the EA team, and reflect and build P/A staff evaluation capacity going forward in planning and preparing for impactful evaluation.

# Annex 1: Evaluability Assessment Framework

Domain	Assessment criteria	Indicator/ core criterion	Stop light scoring system
<b>A. Intervention logic:</b> To be evaluable, an intervention must clearly describe what it hopes to achieve and how. Intervention logic represents the overall logical integrity of the intervention. This logic should be supported by a robust ToC and a body of evidence that lends credibility/plausibility to the ToC.	<b>Theory of change:</b> a. <u>Is there an explicit ToC (or logical framework) that describes the intervention’s expected results and impact pathways?</u> <sup>27</sup> b. <u>Are the ToC model and narrative well aligned? (e.g., the narrative explains the model and elaborates the causal logic with examples).</u> c. <u>Have ToC assumptions that are essential to the working ToC been explicitly stated, in sufficient detail that they can be assessed?</u> d. <u>Are there sufficient causal linkages to plausibly suggest that intervention activities are sufficient to produce desired outcomes (e.g., End of Initiative outcomes)?</u>	1	
	<b>Quality and quantity of evidence base:</b> e. <u>Is the ToC supported by a credible body of evidence (primary or secondary)?</u>	2	
	<b>Clarity of intervention additionality, comparative advantage<sup>28</sup> and spheres of control:</b> f. <u>Has evidence been provided around specific claims made about the intervention’s comparative advantage and contribution, and that of other actors, to the achievement of the desired results (spheres of control and influence of an intervention) which could be assessed?</u>	3	
	<b>Feasibility:</b> g. <u>Are the ToCs’ causal logic realistic and feasible to achieve within the timeframe and resources allocated?</u>	4	
	<b>Complexity:</b> h. <u>Are there complex relationships between different intervention components that will make the attribution of results difficult to assess?</u> i. <u>Is the ToC appropriately aligned and linked with other nested ToCs to realize broader strategic goals (e.g. organization, country)?</u> j. <u>Is there an explicit written acknowledgment of how complex change processes are expected to occur (e.g., non-linearity, emergence, adaptation, feedback loops)?</u>	5	
<b>B. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems and resources:</b> To be	<b>Quality of MEL framework:</b> a. <u>Does the intervention have a MEL framework in place that is fit to generate evidence to support all the key events in the ToC and generate the data in support of the Results Framework and</u>	6	

Domain	Assessment criteria	Indicator/ core criterion	Stop light scoring system
<p>evaluable, an intervention must have a credible plan in place to track its contribution to outcomes. The plan should include a unified vision of how monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E) activities will fulfill accountability, delivery, and learning needs. The MEL system must generate relevant and quality data. Most often, this data is defined by an intervention's indicators. Having appropriate indicators that are aligned with desired results is essential. A baseline is a necessary starting point against which to assess intervention performance and results.</p>	<p><u>Performance and Results Management Framework (PRMF)?</u></p>		
	<p>b. Does the MEL framework specify a monitoring plan for indicators (specifying who, when and how indicator data will be collected)?</p>		
	<p><b>Information resources and systems in support of MEL:</b></p>	7	
	<p>c. <u>Are there designated MEL personnel at evaluand level?</u></p>		
	<p>d. Is the MEL system generating the data in support of the Initiative/intervention Results Framework and PRMF (information system, excel)?</p>		
	<p><b>Quality of approach to learning:</b></p>	---	
	<p>e. Are there mechanisms in place for making use of findings from MELIA products (reviews, evaluations, impact assessments) for decision-making?</p>		
	<p>f. What evidence is there about quality (strategy, uptake) and use of learning opportunities in the past?</p>		
	<p><b>Quality of indicators or other measures:</b></p>	8	
	<p>g. <u>Does the intervention results framework include indicators that are appropriate to evidence its ToC from outputs to impacts?</u></p>		
<p>h. Do indicators include both human/social and environmental qualities?</p>			
<p>i. Are there indicators around science delivery and quality?</p>			
<p>j. Are the indicators SMART?<sup>29</sup></p>			
<p><b>Quality of baseline:</b></p>	9		
<p>k. <u>Does the intervention have baseline evidence against its targets towards its objectives?</u></p>			
<p>l. Is baseline data related explicitly to the results framework of an intervention (indicators)?</p>			
<p><b>Quality of results statements?</b></p>			
<p>m. Are results statements for the evaluand (output, outcome, statements) sufficiently clear for success to be recognizable?</p>			
<p>n. Do the result types make sense?</p>			
<p>o. Are elements framed correctly? Outcome statements are actor-specific and presented in active language: i.e., answers the question 'who is doing what differently?'</p>			
<p><b>C. Gender, diversity, and inclusion:</b> CGIAR is committed to the inclusion of women, youth, and socially excluded and vulnerable groups. To be credible and legitimate, CGIAR research must be based on the inclusion of the end-users it hopes to reach.</p>	<p><b>Clarity of partners and end-user groups:</b></p>	10	
	<p>a. <u>Are partners and other stakeholders clearly defined, within spheres of control and/or influence, along with how their interests may coincide or conflict?</u></p>		
	<p>b. Have important differences between end-user groups been identified, concerning differences in their expected roles and results?</p>		
<p><b>Data disaggregation (gender, youth, other):</b></p>	11		
<p>c. <u>Do existing data allow for data disaggregation according to targeted cross-cutting groups?</u></p>			

Domain	Assessment criteria	Indicator/ core criterion	Stop light scoring system
	d. For assessing inputs to quality of science (QoS) – is evidence in place about young and mid-career researchers?		
<p><b>D. Long-term evaluability:</b> Many of the impacts of CGIAR research will not be recognized until long after intervention delivery.</p>	<p><b>Sustainability:</b></p> <p>a. Have the expectations about the nature and duration of the sustainability of the intervention and/or its effects been made clear enough to be evaluable?</p> <p>b. Is there clarity on the linkages across the ToC towards the potential and actual sustainable development impact, as appropriate?</p>	---	
<p><b>E. Context and environment:</b> To be evaluable, an intervention must be accessible to evaluators and key stakeholders in the evaluation.</p>	<p><b>Accessibility:</b></p> <p>a. <u>Is there anything about the timing of a planned evaluation that would make it difficult/impossible to conduct (e.g., seasonality, budget allocations, public holidays, local elections)?</u></p> <p>b. Are there security or political issues that would make a planned evaluation difficult/impossible to conduct?</p> <p>c. Are there any geographical constraints on accessibility, either by the evaluation team or by local stakeholders in the intervention</p>	12	
<p><b>F. Management and key stakeholder engagement and support:</b> To be evaluable, management and stakeholders must be active participants in the evaluation process.</p>	<p><b>Return to management and other key stakeholders:</b></p> <p>a. <u>Do evaluation criteria and potential questions address the issues of importance to stakeholders?</u></p> <p>b. Is there a commitment to learning from evaluation findings by any of the stakeholders?</p> <p>c. Do stakeholders have mechanisms and the capacity to learn from potentially negative evaluation findings?</p> <p>d. Is there likely to be a process for ensuring Management engagement and response to the evaluation findings?</p>	13	
	<p><b>Demand from and participation of key Stakeholders:</b></p> <p>e. <u>Do stakeholders understand expectations about their role and potential contribution to an evaluation?</u></p> <p>f. Are stakeholders available and ready to participate in an evaluation?</p>	14	



## Annex 2: Documents Reviewed and for Review During EA Inception

- a. [CGIAR's 2030 Strategy](#)
- b. [CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy \(2022\)](#)
- c. [CGIAR Evaluation Guidelines: Evaluability Assessments \(2022\)](#)
- d. [ISDC Review of 2025–30 Research Innovation Portfolio Proposals \(2024\)](#)
- e. [CGIAR Portfolio Narrative 2025–30](#) and [Portfolio by P/A](#)
- f. Sample of proposals of 13 P/As: [Policy Innovations Program](#) and [Food Frontiers and Security Program](#), [Scaling for Impact Program Methods Paper](#) (draft)
- g. Summary Assessment of MELIA: Knowledge Product 2020–24 (draft)
- h. [CGIAR Windows 1 and 2 budget for 2025](#)
- i. [Terms of Reference: Review of CGIAR's Management Response System to Independent Evaluations](#)
- j. [Review of CGIAR Management Response System to Independent Evaluations \(January 2025\)](#)
- k. Davies, Rick and Keith Child (2022). [Evaluability assessments are an essential new tool for CGIAR managers \(blog\)](#)
- l. [Synthesis: Evaluability Assessment Review of Four Regional Integrated Initiatives](#)
- m. Enhancing pathways to impact: CGIAR's experience with evaluability assessments of regional [programming](#) (blog)
- n. CGIAR, through IAES, engages with IRRI, Asian Mega-Deltas Initiative and Asian Pacific stakeholders to promote [and strengthen evaluation practice and culture in the region](#) (blog)
- o. [Johannes F. Linn and Ezgi Ecem Yilmaz \(2024\). Mainstreaming scaling initiative evaluation report](#)
- p. [Larson Sam, Dearing Thomas, and Backer Thomas \(2017\). Strategies to scale up social programs: pathways, partnership and fidelity.](#)
- q. [CGIAR Performance & Results Hub 2025–30 Transition & Inception](#)
- r. CGIAR Result Framework, January 2025
- s. [Program/Accelerator Inception Report template \(11 March 2025\)](#)
- t. Program and Accelerator Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Impact Assessment (MELIA) Plan Update Template Guidance (13 March 2025)
- u. Program and Accelerator Theory of Change Update Guidance (Zero draft), 14 February 2025
- v. Theory of Change Tool Guidance, March 2025
- w. Method Note on Evaluation of Scaling in CGIAR
- x. [Comparative Advantage Analysis template \(11 March 2025\)](#)

Domain	Preliminary documents/sources as of 24 March 2025			Sources
<b>A. Intervention logic</b>	<a href="#">CGIAR Preliminary 2025 Work Planning &amp; Budgeting Guidance (4 Dec 2024)</a>	<a href="#">2025 Portfolio Budget Summary (16 Jan 2025)</a>  <a href="#">CGIAR Work Planning and Budget Inputs (Nov 2024)</a>	- <a href="#">PRMS Planning Module</a> - <a href="#">Finalizing preliminary 2025 work plans and budgets (16 Jan 2025)</a>	<a href="#">Performance &amp; Results Hub 2025–2030 Transition &amp; Inception</a>

Domain	Preliminary documents/sources as of 24 March 2025			Sources
	<a href="#">Program and Accelerator proposals</a>	<a href="#">ISDC Feedback on CGIAR Portfolio Narrative 2025-2030</a>	-	<a href="#">One CGIAR InfoPoint</a>
	<a href="#">CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy</a>	-	-	<a href="#">CGIAR Performance and Results Knowledge Hub</a>
	<a href="#">Program and Accelerator Theory of Change (TOC) Update Guidance (11 March 2025)</a>			<a href="#">Performance &amp; Results Hub 2025-2030 Transition &amp; Inception</a>
<b>B. MEL systems and resources</b>	<a href="#">Program/Accelerator Transition MELIA Focal Point</a>	<a href="#">Program/Accelerator Transition Coordination Lead</a>	<a href="#">Program/Accelerator Transition Finance Focal Point</a>	<a href="#">Performance &amp; Results Hub 2025-2030 Transition &amp; Inception</a>
	<a href="#">Program and Accelerator proposals</a>	-	-	<a href="#">One CGIAR InfoPoint</a>
	<a href="#">Program and Accelerator MELIA Plan Update Template and Guidance (March 2025)</a>			PPU
<b>C. Gender, diversity, and inclusion</b>	<a href="#">Export of Initiative/Platform contact database for PMU roles</a>	<a href="#">Export of Initiative/Platform contact database for PMU roles</a>		<a href="#">Performance &amp; Results Hub 2025-2030 Transition &amp; Inception</a>
	<a href="#">Program and Accelerator proposals</a>	-	-	<a href="#">One CGIAR InfoPoint</a>
	<a href="#">CGIAR Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) Dashboard</a>			<a href="#">CGIAR Dashboards</a>
<b>D. Long-term evaluability</b>	<a href="#">Program and Accelerator proposals</a>	-	-	<a href="#">One CGIAR InfoPoint</a>
<b>E. Context and environment</b>	<a href="#">Program and Accelerator proposals</a>	<a href="#">Program/Accelerator Transition Communications Focal Point</a>	-	<a href="#">One CGIAR InfoPoint</a>
<b>F. Management and key stakeholder engagement and support</b>	<a href="#">Process to select &amp; assign AoW Transition Leads and Co-Leads</a>	<a href="#">Guidance Note: Transition Program Unit (PMU) roles for Programs and Accelerators - Selection and assignment</a>	<a href="#">Terms of Reference for Program and Accelerator Transition Teams</a>	<a href="#">Performance &amp; Results Hub 2025-2030 Transition &amp; Inception</a>

## Annex 3: The concepts and principles of core frameworks

- **Scaling** (*cross-cutting with relevance to Domains A, B and F*): Scaling for Impact plays an important role in CGIAR's Portfolio of supporting the capacity of other P/As to scale innovations and their programmatic outcomes. CGIAR's draft methods note on evaluating scaling addresses a series of considerations for scaling based on four principles: 1) Justification; 2) Optimal scale; 3) Coordination; and 4) Dynamic evaluation. From an evaluability perspective, areas of inquiry include exploring a clear process and rationale for ToC. Scaling itself is an intervention, and the program's clarity on process, moving from inception, piloting to scaling, will be assessed, as well as the program's identification of how to monitor and evaluate<sup>14</sup>.
- **Comparative advantage** (*cross-cutting with relevance to Domains A and B*): The [ISDC Technical Note on CA](#) includes four principles of incentives: human capital, biophysical capital and social capital. Under development by IAES, a draft Method Note on evaluating CA will be pretested to align with CA analysis requested from P/As. From an evaluability perspective, the EA team will address alignment.
- **Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI)** (*related to Domain C and cross-cutting, with relevance to Domain B*): In CGIAR, GDI refers to the context of the workplace, i.e., the location in which research portfolios are implemented. Gender, equality, youth and social inclusion (GEYSI) are also addressed by the draft evaluation guidelines. This refers to how research and innovation is delivered to marginalized groups, what is being delivered, and its results. From an evaluability perspective, the extent to which an intervention clarifies what is meant by social inclusion and gender equality in its desired outcomes at both research innovation outcome level and overall programmatic outcome will be assessed. This holds implication for M&E activities.
- **Partnerships** (*related to Domain F and cross-cutting, with relevance to Domain C*): The [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) includes two ways of working (WoW) which are focused on partnerships: *Embedding research within ambitious alliances for change in which CGIAR is strategically positioned within broader innovation systems and transformation agendas aimed at achieving the SDGs; and growing in-country presence and integration with the national research agenda*. From an evaluability perspective, in light of the upcoming 2027 evaluation of partnerships, clarity on how an intervention engages with the [2024 Partnership Framework](#) will be considered.

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<sup>14</sup> Towards the development of the Methods Note, see [discussion](#) on [EvalforEarth Community of Practice](#)

## Annex 4: Needs Assessment Survey Results

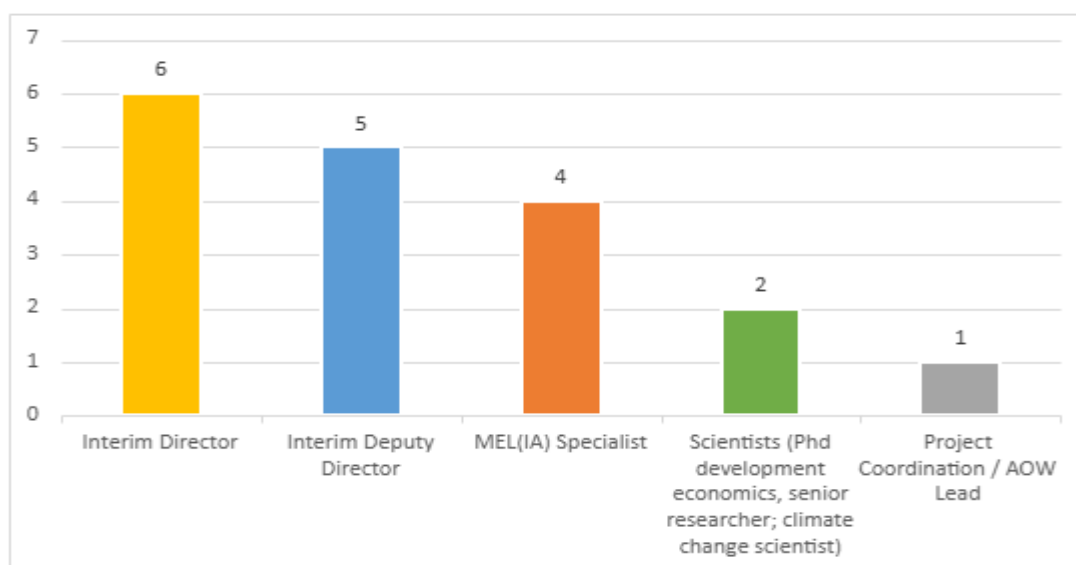
### 1. Science Programs

- Breeding for Tomorrow (B4T)-1
- Food Frontiers and Security -2
- Better Diets & Nutrition + Breeding for Tomorrow-1
- Sustainable Farming Science Program -2
- Scaling for Impact -2
- Multifunctional Landscapes- 2
- Policy Innovation Program - 2
- Climate Action Science Program-1
- Sustainable Animal and Aquatic Food Science Program-1

### 2. Accelerators

- Digital Transformation Accelerator-1
- Genebanks -2
- Gender Equality and Social Inclusion -1
- Capacity Sharing Accelerator -1

### 3. Respondents Title



4. **The six domains of CGIAR's EA Framework are described below. Which of them do you find most challenging while recreating Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plans and preparing for Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) activities? Please specify and explain your reasons.**

#### **Evaluability Assessment (EA) Domain A: Intervention Logic**

*Description: To be evaluable, an intervention must clearly describe what it hopes to achieve and how. Intervention logic represents the overall logical integrity of the intervention around research questions that underpin the outcome of the interventions. This logic should be supported by a robust theory of change (ToC) and a body of evidence that lends credibility/plausibility to the ToC.*

**Your thoughts and comments:** Redacted/summarized

A logic is important to keep programs true to purpose and modes of working. Lack of guidance on formulating research questions. Need to provide guidance on research questions to improve ToC by a researcher not an administrative staff.

- The ToC mentioned in the proposal is high level and it needs to be updated according to the P/A implementation.
- The main challenge for the intervention logic is to provide evidence for causal links, as sometimes those are the ones that need to be explored/evidenced throughout the program.
- Some of the Programs and Accelerators (P/As) provide services and not only address research questions. Please consider this as well. Otherwise, we broadly agree, though the scope of what defines 'intervention' could be more clearly defined in this and other questions.
- Sometimes, the process of developing a robust ToC remains the core business of few and not very much participatory, which limits its use in the evaluation and learning process. Agreeing on a robust ToC, and related evidence, which everyone signs up to contribute to and use is quite challenging.
- Intervention logic has always been a challenge to interpret the thoughts into an actionable workplan. For Science Programs (SPs), the logic becomes complex to address all the proposed outcomes. A robust ToC with well described interpretation and development hypothesis may be helpful to support this process.
- The process of developing ToC is not participatory which limits in evaluation and learning. Differentiating outcomes and output is challenging in Gender Accelerator because the outcomes are internal. Internal changes in P/As should be clear in new portfolio as a gender perspective is an outcome.
- Intervention logic should be clearly articulated through a ToC and impact pathway. Intervention Logic and relevance should not be determined at the beginning of the SP but should be continuously evaluated throughout implementation to ensure evolving needs and priorities.

**EA Domain B: MEL systems and resources**

**Description:** *To be evaluable, an intervention must have a credible plan in place to track its contribution to outcomes. The plan should include a unified vision of how M&E activities will fulfill accountability, delivery, and learning needs; and whether there are available tools, templates and methods need for effective monitoring, program evaluation and learning. The MEL system must generate relevant and quality data. Most often, this data is defined by an intervention's indicators. Having appropriate indicators that are aligned with desired results is essential. A baseline is a necessary starting point against which to assess intervention performance and results.*

**Your thoughts and comments:** *Redacted/summarized*

- We experienced a centralized effort from Program Coordination Unit (PCU) to ensure indicators are set with annual target an aligned as much as possible to the standard indicators. This effort deviates the focus from the most important aspect that was the relevance/proxy of the indicator to the outcome we want to measure including cost-effective and reliable methods to assess it. In addition, the goal to have a list of MELIA studies deviate from the main effort to define studies for the assumptions we defined at ToC level. What is required is to ask for studies along the assumptions when outcomes are defined to validate their feasibility?
- It is missing a key criterion for MEL systems which is that it should be parsimonious in the data and resources and should focus only on indicators used for accountability, monitoring and learning.
- Challenges encountered while working with LOA is lack of reporting against indicators. Need to provide training to stakeholders on measuring results with indicators.
- MEL systems and resources should be established at CGIAR level to be cascaded to CGIAR

centers, SPs and bilateral projects. MEL systems used for Initiatives needs to be updated for program level, and there are no MEL systems with harmonized indicators for P/As and limited resources for executing and establishing MEL system. As ToC facilitates the development of indicators, it is challenging to have simplified tools and template for complex programs.

- The Scaling Program integrates and works with other programs, providing services and supporting functions. To do a baseline for the program alone would generate misleading and not useful data. CGIAR should achieve economies of scale, combining baselines to multiple relevant programs in particular countries, and deploying those. This said, many Initiatives also did baselines, and to my knowledge, few of them were used for actual MELIA reporting purposes.
- A more thoughtful and tailored approach to MELIA could help reduce costs while enhancing effectiveness, ensuring that studies are better aligned with program needs and generate actionable insights.
- The main bottleneck is a clear definition of indicators. For the activities of the Gender Accelerator, the targets and indicators are clear. However, for outcomes (defined as internal changes within CGIAR) these indicators are not clear. There are no clear methods for effective monitoring progress and changes towards gender equality. The existing assessment tools (0, 1, 2) say nothing about the expected results.

### **EA Domain C: Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI)**

**Description:** CGIAR is committed to the inclusion of women, youth, and socially excluded and vulnerable groups. To be credible and legitimate, CGIAR research must be based on the inclusion of the end-users it hopes to reach. Consider knowledge and use of gender transformative data and data elements in tools and systems.

**Your thoughts and comments:** Redacted/summarized

- It would be appropriate to consider end-users involvement in steering bodies or in alternative an independent mechanism to collect user feedback to validate if management decisions are going in their directions.
- The tendency to ask for only numbers (e.g., number of youth and number of gender) won't provide useful information on inclusion. It is important to not only focus on statistically including women in interventions but rather showing actual impact on women and marginalized group (perhaps setting targets beyond 'x number of women trained').
- Including GDI from the design phase of the program proposal needs to be matched with availability of resources and expertise and commitment from program AOW leaders, directors and center teams. Need to establish some level of mandatory requirements to assign budget to gender responsive teams.
- GDI disaggregated data is important to show the spectrum of reach of a program but, these data are sensitive and may not be available for all countries as we experienced that ethnicity information (diversity) may be sometimes challenging to obtain due to the local context.
- Gender accelerator should have short courses available online for MEL and program leaders to do a quick check and make sure they are using the up-to-date data and tools to capture how our work affects vulnerable groups.
- Issues of GDI are currently being discussed as a component of human resources within CIARG. Most of the data is quantitative showing how many women and diversity groups are present/represented in CGIAR. However, some more fundamental issues such as participation of women, youth and other intersectional groups in processes of technology design and deployment are not considered. There are some tools available, but the bulk of CGIAR

biophysical research does not include them. There are no systematic and replicable processes in place to ensure the voices of these groups are included in research prioritization. The accelerator tools, methods and approaches go well beyond sex-disaggregated data and into transformative approaches, but this has yet to be internalized across the Portfolio.

**EA Domain D: Long-Term Evaluability**

**Description:** *Many of the impacts of CGIAR research will not be recognized until long after intervention delivery. A plan to identify the extent of evaluability of long-term effects is formulated, and there is clarity in the ToC on linkages for possible and actual long-term sustainable impact.*

**Your thoughts and comments:** *Redacted/summarized*

- IA plans are best developed at CGIAR level and not ask programs to develop individual ones. A program will end before the impact will be realized and the new program will not be accountable or will not allocate resources to measure it.
- Putting more focus on behavioral outcomes (including in terms of relationships and interactions, as well as changes in strategic planning, and in decision making, and not solely innovation use or policy change) would allow to better capture sustainable transformations.
- In our proposal we show how our high-level outputs will directly impact 2030 outcomes, however we need more guidance on how these results will be measured in 2030 because annual reports may not capture the extent of progress against 2030 outcomes.
- Given the fact that the Program is integrating the work of three Initiatives, which in turn are an evolution of what used to be the CGIAR Research Programs (CRP), there is the need to discuss a feasible impact assessment plan for the Program. There could be research results that are already in the adoption phase and generating benefits, which would deserve impact evaluation. However, under the new logic of the Sustainable Farming SP, the added value for impact would come from integrated farm management solutions, which would come in the medium term.
- Challenge is to allocate resources and determine the right authority for this responsibility as for post-project evaluation we need a core team to carry out the process.
- We should capture early outcomes and track towards impacts. CGIAR impact evaluation should be coordinated by the System Organization to capture various CGIAR interventions and reduce multiple surveys.
- It is important that MEL budget include line items for *ex-post* evaluation or Impact assessment during program planning.
- CGIAR research time horizons are unfortunately insufficiently long to expect anyone to have a long-term evaluation plan in place. Having this would require donors to commit to longer-term, stable and reliable funding. Need to see how we can integrate impact assessment surveys that is not limited to the duration of projects
- Long-term evaluability is not considered in the current Portfolio. We are asked about the impact on gender, and we don't have enough data because of lack of resources. P/As are given resources to research and scale but not to consistently embed assessment of past interventions. This info could provide us with valuable guidance to re-direct research. Furthermore, it is important to address this process systematically with the support of an external quality guidance such as SPIA, but priorities of what needs to be assessed should be defined by the SPs and Accelerators and not by the calls. Finally, all long-term evaluation processes should consider gender. There is always a positive, neutral or negative effect on gender dynamics and gendered livelihood strategies from different technologies. Failing to capture this, hinder potential re-design.

- A plan should be developed to identify the extent of evaluability of long-term effects and that the ToC on linkages for possible and actual long-term sustainable impact is clearly established. We can assess early signs of impacts and think about their projections based on ToC and assumptions.

#### **EA Domain E: Context and Environment**

**Description:** *To be evaluable, an intervention must be accessible to evaluators and key stakeholders in the evaluation.*

**Your thoughts and comments:** *Redacted/summarized*

- We primarily focus on research data accessibility. This is standardized and reported to be accessible to evaluators. We would need to provide guidance on management processes as well at program level but also at center level, since they are the implementer of the programs.
- Stakeholders should be involved in the evaluation for the identification of the context and the actors involved in co-designing and scaling of the solutions.
- Need to add in the project agreements that the P/A will provide relevant information to the responsible team for their access for evaluation.
- Independent evaluators should have accessibility to households to do an IA, if the project has invested in developing capacity among the stakeholders to self-sustain after the project funding cycle is over. While positive impact is always desirable, the IA would also have important learnings in cases where this is not the case.
- One of the big challenges in evaluability is the availability of base line data to measure when no baselines were collected considering gender. Instead of collecting gender specific data, it would be ideal if studies across the different P/As would collect gender relevant information.
- We aim to assess the effects of the interventions on stakeholders and the interventions should be accessible and mechanisms should be put in place with private and development organizations to ensure the use of the interventions by the stakeholders.

#### **EA Domain F: Management and Stakeholder Engagement and Response**

**Description:** *To be evaluable, management and stakeholders must be active participants in the evaluation process.*

**Your thoughts and comments:** *Redacted/summarized*

- Challenges on active participation of evaluation due to conflicting timeline. It would be important to ensure that IAES inform specific evaluation periods and those are factored in the annual workplans.
- Caution is needed in the potential bias and steering that the managers might influence on the evaluation.
- Educating the SP team leads about the process and annual refresher is important to ensure management and stakeholders' engagement in this evaluation process. The challenge is that as the program rolled out most of the team leads undermine the need of evaluation as an integral part of the program. So, we would strongly recommend this process to be integrated from the very beginning of SPs.
- This will depend on kind of evaluation; mid-line and end-of-project evaluation must have management involved, but an impact assessment, should be conducted by an independent entity for open response and effective results.



- This is an incredible conflict of interest and would make the results of the MELIA highly susceptible to manipulation and thus is very non-ideal.
  - There is always an embedded bias in any evaluation process. To be more precise, it is important that management and stakeholders jointly define the objectives of the evaluation to ensure that they analyze the process through the same lens. Many times, stakeholders have a different perspective based on their own interest and needs which should be respected and adequately internalized.
  - I fully agree and a strong focus of the CASP has been on co-design and co-implementation. A whole area of work is on locally led processes for adaptation and mitigation co-benefits.
4. **What aspects of the Framework do you believe are most pertinent for your P/A to focus on in the upcoming EA? (Please choose no more than 3, and rank them in order of importance, 1 being highest and 3 being lowest) N=15**

EA Domain A: Intervention Logic

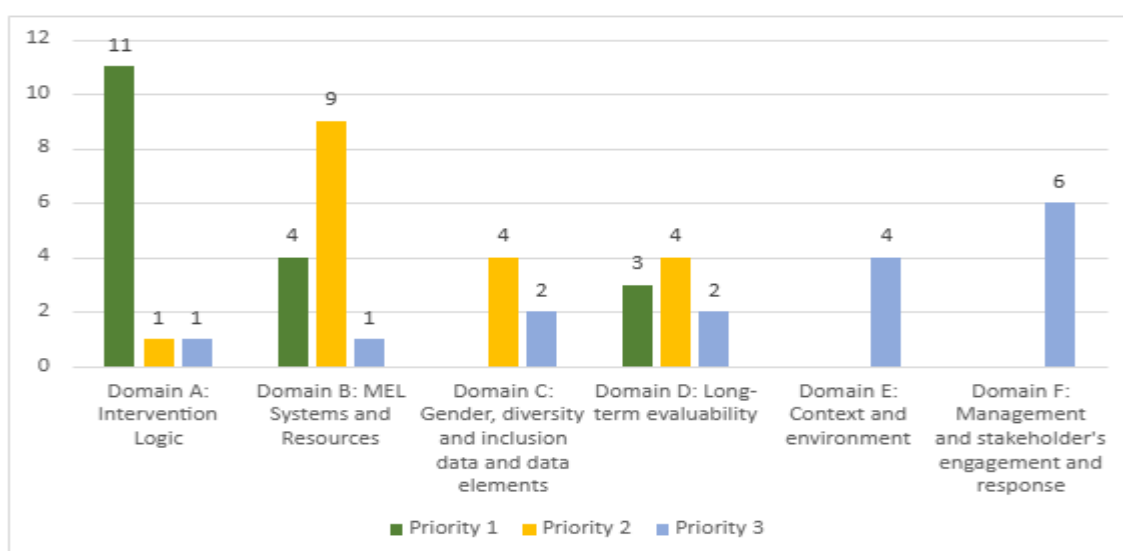
EA Domain B: MEL systems and resources (including tools and template for routine monitoring of intervention)

EA Domain C: Gender, diversity and inclusion data and data elements

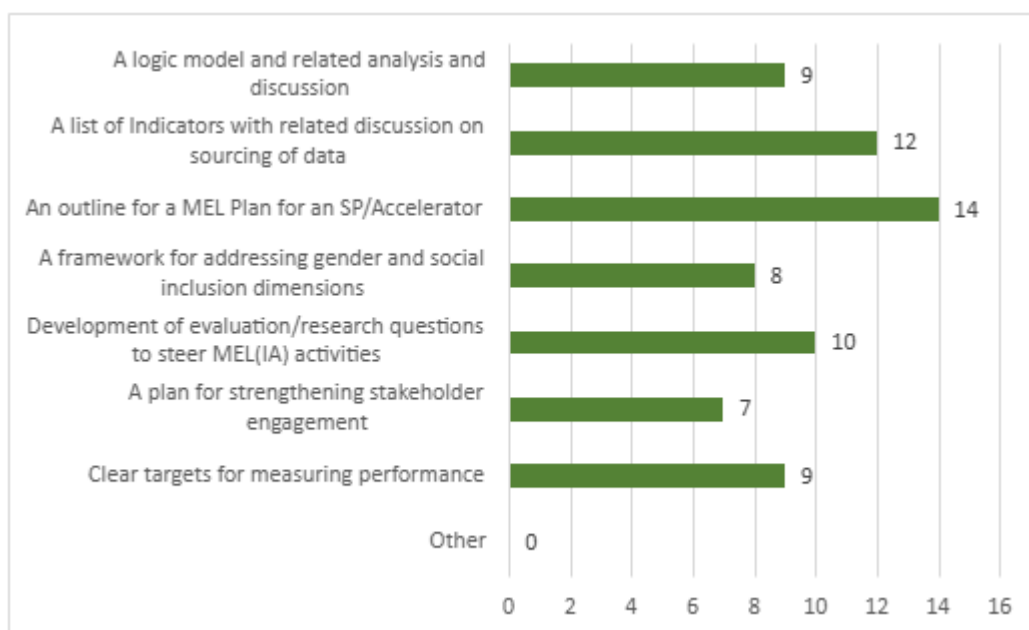
EA Domain D: Long-term evaluability

EA Domain E: Context and environment

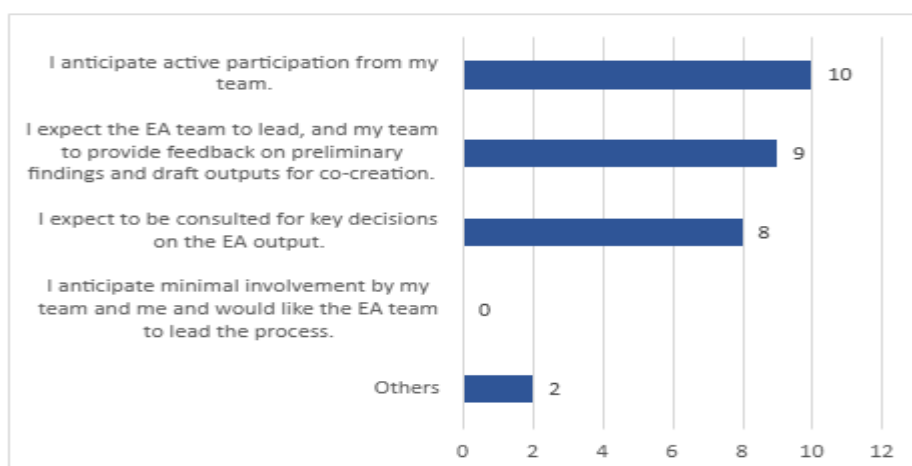
EA Domain F: Management and stakeholder engagement and response



5. **During interaction between the EA team and your P/A, we expect to develop certain outputs that will assist in the development of a larger MEL plan and to support your work on the Inception Report for the System Council. What kind of deliverable(s) do you think would be most beneficial as an output of the EA exercise, given your responses above to questions 1, 2 and 3? N=15**



**6. What are your expectations about the level of involvement of you and your team during the EA exercise? You may choose more than one option below. N=15**



**13. We think that the EA of your P/A will require ten working days from the EA team. What do you believe would be the best use of time for the ten days? Please share any concerns you may have about the timing or scope of the ten-day EA process. Redacted/summarized**

- The EA team should provide clear guidelines to P/A teams for a harmonized evaluation process, ensuring cross-program learning and flexibility for each program's specific needs. However, the ten-day timeframe for the process seems too long, and innovative ways should be explored to shorten it. EA should ask the SP teams to prepare and send data and key indicators ahead of time to streamline the review and assessment.
- The focus should be on both research-oriented and operational MEL, balancing causal analysis with resource-efficient approaches. In terms of the ten-day involvement, it is important to consider whether it will be spread out or be continuous. Since SP teams may not have ten continuous days available, it is better to break it into manageable sessions.

14. For the development of ToCs, indicators, and frameworks, there is a need for joint revision with a focus on clear suggestions, not just questions. The process should be flexible to accommodate the distinct needs of each SP, and there should be clear paths for coordination between SPs on HLOs and impacts. It is also essential to discuss how Genebank deliverables

are measured based on realistic commitments and work expectations. **We are considering an onsite workshop and/or meeting for some of the 13 EAs we will conduct. For your P/A, are you interested in having a member of the EA team working with you in-person?** Yes=8, Maybe =7

15. **Are you planning to participate in Science Week (April) in Kenya? Would you be interested to schedule an in-person meeting around/during Science Week in Kenya?** Yes = 14, No = 1
16. **Would you be interested to schedule an in-person meeting around/during Science Week in Kenya?** Yes = 14, No = 1
17. **Are there any other dates and locations where your P/A staff will convene that would be an opportunity for scheduling a meeting and/or workshop?**

*Selected responses/summarized:*

- Dates for future meetings not defined yet; need email for communication.
  - Prefer virtual sessions, but two MELIA members should be in Nairobi.
  - Annual Genebanks Meeting in Lima, Peru at the end of 2025.
  - Tentative meeting in early June, pending MELIA team consultation.
  - Plans are not finalized; will stay in touch for alignment.
  - Potential AoW team meeting before or after Science Week (dates TBD).
  - Science Week as an initial interaction opportunity for most colleagues.
  - Meetings in Washington, DC from 3–4 March.
  - End of April/beginning of May meeting, venue TBD.
  - Gender Conference in South Africa, 7–9 October.
18. **We would like to follow up with your P/A staff about any documents in existence that would help the EA Team prepare, such as ToCs, logic models, a draft MELIA plan or Results Framework. Could you provide the name and email address of the colleague to contact? Could you also indicate which documents are available beyond those we should request to review?** *Names provided*
  19. **What expectations do you have for the EA of your P/A?** *Redacted/summarized*
    - The EA exercise should provide actionable insights to improve SP effectiveness, focusing on practical guidance rather than academic exercises. Clear communication of expectations is essential to understand the commitment required from teams and the value generated. The EA will help highlight the value of MELIA activities, optimize limited resources, and enhance the evaluation process.
    - EA team to provide clear guidelines and products from the beginning, leading the process of resource allocation and supporting the development of MEL and Impact Assessment frameworks. Collaboration across SPs can be fostered by creating a platform for idea sharing, such as a Community of Practice.
  20. The EA should offer hands-on support with clear suggestions, focusing on a well-defined MEL plan. Given limited time and resources, actionable guidance should take priority over questions. The EA should aim to create a strong ToC, robust monitoring systems, evidence-based impact assessments, and ensure stakeholder engagement to help the program effectively report its results and achievements. **The EA team looks forward to working with you and your colleagues. Is there anything else you would like to communicate to the EA team as we finalize ToRs for EA exercise: workplan for your review, including what expectations you may have from the EA team?** *Redacted/summarized*
    - Ensure SPs have enough time to complete activities before the EA exercise begins.

- Flexibility is needed for 2025 due to the interim Program structure; a clear EA plan should be defined for 2026-30.
- The EA should be conducted after institutional arrangements are finalized, with the report provided mid-implementation for timely adjustments.
- Challenges include tight deadlines, limited staff, and budget constraints, which may be addressed by reducing the number of questions and simplifying data entry and reporting.
- Sharing workplans and holding web meetings to explain the EA exercise and its benefits would be helpful. Clarity on the EA team's mandate is needed to avoid duplicating MEL planning efforts.
- Looking forward to collaboration, with expectations of support for refining existing processes.

# Annex 5: Learning and Reflection about MELIA at CGIAR: Implications for the 2025–30 Portfolio EA

## **Overview of learning on MELIA from evaluations**

In [ISDC's review of the new 2025–30 Portfolio proposals](#), there was suggested the need for further development of the MELIA sections during the inception phase. Indeed, the summary on MELIA-related learnings highlights<sup>15</sup> the need for a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework, which is often not completely developed in CGIAR programming, with a narrative on a logic rationale and analysis for the theory of change (ToC). Recommendations in the Regional Integrated Initiatives (RIIS) Evaluability Assessment (EA) (2023–24) focused on the need to develop a sound framework to provide rationale and justification to MELIA activities for the interventions. Further, the review of MELIA-related findings and recommendations of 11 CGIAR program evaluation reports, including the [EA Synthesis Report \(2023\)](#), found common problems in ToC development and use, the development of MEL systems, development and use of SMART indicators, and relation to impact assessment. The discussion below identifies findings from evaluations of CGIAR programming that are specific to MELIA, such as quality of ToC design and MEL system design and structure.

**ToCs:** The reports identified important advances made in standardizing ToC concepts and terminology, tools, and guidance, and integrating ToC into annual reporting and evaluation. Nevertheless, many of the ToCs were insufficiently clear and specific, with substantial scope for further improvement. This was due in part to the rushed and decentralized proposal development process and in part to different mental models of research-for-development processes and gaps in understanding and capacity. Findings of the evaluative studies reviewed reveal that the key reasons why the ToCs are not fit-for-purpose is that they are not sufficiently granular, lack some core elements (e.g., assumptions and feedback loops), and were not regularly reviewed and revised.

**MEL systems:** Findings from the evaluative work indicate that CGIAR's MEL systems face challenges in integration, resource allocation, and learning. The systems are reactive and lack real-time monitoring, posing potential challenges for decision-making. Issues such as missing baseline data, incomplete indicators, and misaligned frameworks limited effective monitoring. The MEL staff within CGIAR is under-resourced, and there is also a need for a standardized MEL approach across CGIAR to improve data quality, enhance capacity, and establish clearer accountability.

**Indicators:** The key message from the suite of evaluations is that CGIAR faces challenges with poorly defined indicators, inefficient reporting systems, and fragmented governance—all of which undermine the effectiveness of its results frameworks. These issues lead to inconsistent data and an incomplete picture of outcomes.

**Impact assessment:** An Impact Assessment, while not directly within the scope of the Evaluation Framework and Policy (2022), are essential components of CGIAR's broader MELIA continuum. Key lessons from the SLO Study and EA of Initiatives like Transforming Agrifood Systems in South Asia (TAFSSA) and Asian Mega-Delta (AMD) highlight the importance of strategic planning, realistic target setting, and stakeholder engagement to make the most of their results within a developed MEL system. Impact-level targets should be ambitious but measurable and aligned with CGIAR's goals and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitments. By advancing comprehensive MEL frameworks, building internal capacities, and aligning funder metrics, CGIAR can generate

<sup>15</sup> Draft under review as of 16 January 2025, available by request from Evaluation Function of IAES.

actionable insights and enhance accountability. Robust planning, stakeholder engagement, and continuous learning will be essential to navigating systemic transformation and achieving global development goals.

### **Reflection on EAs at CGIAR: Experience applying the EA Framework**

Since 2022, the three reflective exercises have contributed toward the rationale for this EA exercise:

- 1) Reflection by the EA team of the RIIs on its experience conducting EAs.
- 2) After-Action Review (AAR) conducted following self-assessments using an EA tool, for GENDER Platform and Genebank Platform evaluations ([portal](#)).
- 3) The results of the AAR by the Evaluation Function on its 2024 work provided further reflection by the RII program staff on relevance.

The second and third reflective exercises are currently being compiled and will support Inception Note (IN) development for the Portfolio EAs.

Overall, feedback and engagement with individual RII teams during and/or after respective EAs found value in application of the EA Framework to both identify aspects of evaluability in programming and to support programs in defining a strong MEL purpose and strategy. The RII EA team observed a link between EAs and improved program design, with EA results providing support to planning, monitoring and future evaluations. Additional reflections on process include a greater need to engage program staff to collaboratively plan the EA; the value of in-person interviews and engagement with program staff; the value of interviews with non-CGIAR staff associated with the program; the need for engaging program staff on how results are best communicated in a user-friendly way; and the need for fewer and more actionable recommendations. Finally, both near-term and long-term recommendations were made, the former for use by an evaluation team preparing to conduct an evaluation, and the latter for management. Given the near-term recommendations were not targeted to management, but to future evaluations, their visibility was lost in CGIAR's Management Response (MR) system. Care should be taken on fashioning recommendations that align with the MR system so they can be tracked. Box 2 provides a summary of the RII EA team learning.

### ***Box 3. RII EA team learning***

- The EA team for RIIs applied the EA Framework, first time fully engaging with all six domains to assess evaluability. While the approach was thorough, the team found duplication and suggests a more tailored, lighter approach to improve efficiency and focus.
- The team recognized the need for more collaboration with program staff during the planning phase to enhance buy-in and participation. Although virtual interviews were useful, onsite visits are recommended for more nuanced data collection and better communication.
- A limitation was the focus solely on CGIAR stakeholders; engaging non-CGIAR stakeholders could enrich the evaluation. The team also suggests making the EA reports more readable and user-friendly, with actionable recommendations developed in collaboration with program staff.

### **Reflection on CGIAR's New Portfolio and Implications for EAs**

In shifting toward a systems-focused programmatic approach, a Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) strategy needs to reflect and support this approach. With limited MEL human resources at the intervention level and a strong focus on Impact Assessments (IAs), and a shift in programming modality, an EA should focus on assessing more in-depth pertinent aspects

of the EA Framework as applied to the MELIA continuum to the extent possible. Given that the ToC is central to the analysis of the intervention, with the articulation of assumptions that may be used to inform planning for both monitoring and evaluation, an EA that supports ToC development, particularly in a non-linear approach that takes into consideration the complexity of the program, while also providing practical recommendations toward the development of a full MELIA Framework would be beneficial. Other pertinent areas of need and relevance include program logic, MEL capacity, and budgeting, to address long-term evaluability (including cost-benefit and cost effectiveness).

The [2025-30 Portfolio](#) may pose similar challenges to the current EA exercise as seen in the past. The distribution of administrative and programming functions across multiple countries and regions housed at many Centers presented difficulties for planning evaluation, specifically regarding understanding the parameters of the evaluand and clarity on the inputs contributing toward identified outcomes. The 2025 EA will require greater definition of the evaluand when engaging with staff, while also providing support to MEL framework conception and development. Echoing a complexity of the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) era in CGIAR, the Programs/Accelerators (P/As) must also embed and include the W3/Bilateral funding. The EA exercise is designed to use past lessons learned and mitigate these challenges.

The assigned EA team would aim for an appropriate balance between objective assessment and a practice of conceptualizing and codeveloping with P/A staff. Clarity on that balance in an EA exercise that is formative in nature will be deliberated, expanded and recorded during the Inception Note (IN) development.

## Annex 6: Reflection on Additional Data Collected towards TORs

### **Reflection on Preliminary Needs Assessment (NA) Results**

To inform the Terms of Reference (ToRs), jointly with the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) of CGIAR, an online NA survey was administered to 40 CGIAR staff, including interim directors and their deputies and five assigned MEL staff. The objectives of the survey were to ascertain the level of understanding about EAs, expectations, and concerns, and to enable the EA team to better understand how to focus the EA exercise for each of the programs. To date, responses from 15 colleagues were received (37% response rate), representing ten of the 13 P/As. They indicate an enthusiasm in collaborating on the EAs, and a strong interest in focusing on several domains to support greater evaluability, including Domains A (program logic), B (MEL systems) and D (long-term evaluability). Of the types of outputs desired from the EA exercise, respondents expressed greatest interest in a further evolved theory of change (ToC) with underlying assumptions identified and discussed, development of evaluation and research questions to steer MELIA activities, and a list of indicators with related discussion on sourcing of data. The survey responses are detailed in Annex 2.

### **Feedback on Evaluability Assessment (EA) Concept Note**

Feedback on the consultative note from Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) was positive, with support to the EA design as striking a good balance between rigor and practicality. A word of caution was relayed, noting that EAs in and of themselves are not a means for improving evaluability; rather, it is the quality of EA recommendations themselves that are articulated and then applied based on a well communicated report. It is an action-oriented exercise with implementation of EA recommendations leading to greater evaluability. Further, feedback called for support to implementing recommendations after the EA exercise, as it could result in greater evaluability. An ongoing and collaborative relationship with management and MEL community would best support true improvement in the ToC, MELIA framework and other mechanisms.

Positive feedback from PCU lead to collaboration on the NA and use of its results, further exploration of roles and areas of collaboration going forward in both PCU and IAES' respective areas of work; and a joint session during Science Week.

### **Ad Hoc Consultative Group Feedback on Evaluability Assessment (EA) draft Terms of Reference**

Key members of the CG groups expressed appreciation of the intent and the proposed, collaborative approach of the EA process and value of its outputs. They welcomed the opportunity to identify and address any issues at an early stage with a view to ensuring effective and efficient evaluation exercises downstream. The following summary observations were made:

- Emphasize the potential for EAs to focus on capacity development, fostering a learning culture based on reflexivity and enhancing medium- to long-term programming capacity.
- Deliberately articulate between EA and MELIA-related needs assessments instead of adding layers, to improve researcher engagement and reduce bureaucratic fatigue.
- Propose a phased EA process, starting modestly in the inception phase and expanding to address broader expectations during implementation.
- Reevaluate timelines for EAs in Q3-4 2025, following June 2025 Inception Reports, to avoid overlap with critical delivery periods.
- Engage with management to maximize shared value, particularly for the integrated Office of the Chief Scientist.



- Coordinate closely with ISDC, IPB's Science and Partnership Committee, and management to align on multiple objectives and maximize synergies.
- Plan for synthesis across the 13 EA reports for Programs/Accelerators, considering a portfolio narrative from the outset to shape individual evaluations.
- Consider funding based on Dashboard numbers when making recommendations for mid-line (2027) and 2030 assessments.
- Detail the Comparative Advantage, Partnership Framework, and other methodologies to inform the process.
- Acknowledge that high-level points are important; granularity identified by SP/Accelerator will strengthen the linkage among design, programming, evaluation, and learning.

## Annex 7: Management Response Template to Synthesis<sup>16</sup>

**Evaluation title:**

**Date of MR:**

**Overall response to the evaluation:**

**Person-in-charge for Follow-up to Management Response:**

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTIONS:					
<b>Recommendation 1</b> (copied from the <b>Evaluation Report</b> ):					
A. Intervention Logic B. MEL systems and resources C. Gender, diversity and inclusion D. Long-term evaluability E. Context and environment F. Management and key stakeholder engagement support					
<b>Management Response</b>	<i>Fully accepted</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Partially accepted</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not accepted</i> <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Management Response (commentary):</b>					
Brief explanatory statement if recommendation is rejected or partially accepted:					
Management Follow-up					
Actions to be implemented	Responsible	Timeframe	Is additional funding required to implement recommendation		If further funding required – how much and what is to be done if no funds available?
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	

<sup>16</sup> Management Response will be included in each Inception Note of 13 P/As.

## Annex 8: EA Team Lead and Analyst Bios and Declarations of Interest

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EA Advisor</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Amy Jersild</b></p>
<p><b>Amy Jersild</b> was the Team Lead for the Evaluability Assessments (EAs) of 4 Regional Integrated Initiatives (RIIs) by CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) in 2023–24 and has previously worked on EAs for the Adaptation Fund and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Her international career includes 25 years in the development sector as an official with the International Organization for Migration, a senior programme manager with INGOs, and as faculty teaching evaluation courses in a MA degree program on sustainable development at the School for International Training Graduate Institute in Washington, DC. As an independent evaluation consultant, she has worked with a wide range of donors and implementing agencies, including US Department of Labor, UN agencies, The Rockefeller Foundation, and FCDO designing evaluations, conducting evaluations, and advising on evaluation, as well as conducting syntheses and meta-evaluations. Amy is the author of multiple book chapters and peer reviewed articles on evaluation, and she is a PhD candidate in interdisciplinary evaluation studies at Western Michigan University, USA. She resided in the Global South for 20 years (Cambodia, Kosovo, Lao PDR, Thailand) and is currently based in the USA.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EA Lead</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Federica</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evaluation Analyst</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gaia Gullotta</b></p>
<p><b>Gaia Gullotta</b> is a Data Analyst and GIS Specialist with an academic background in biodiversity conservation and natural resource management. During the past ten years of working experience within Bioversity International, she was involved in different research projects. She also contributed to developing a methodology to assess 'on-farm biodiversity' in Latin America and Asia as part of the research activity of UNEP–GEF projects. Currently, she is Research Assistant for the Policy Unit conducting data analysis on ex situ conservation. A collaboration with IAES started in 2019. As Evaluation Data Analyst she supported the IAES team in developing a robust data analysis methodology as part of the independent evaluative review of the CGIAR Research Programs. She also provided coordination, analytical and content support to the Evaluation component of the <a href="#">Performance and Results Management System (PRMS) Study</a>. Gaia is passionate about biodiversity conservation, landscape analysis and sustainability.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Evaluation Analyst</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Samriti Maharjan</b></p>
<p><b>Samriti Maharjan</b> has been working with the Evaluation Function under CGIAR's IAES from December 2022 and previously supported the Evaluation of CGIAR GENDER Platform and EA of CGIAR RIIs. She has worked as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Officer in Nepal and a Junior Consultant to support the "Real-Time Evaluation of Gender Integration in UNICEF COVID-19 Response in South Asia". Further, she holds a master's degree in international cooperation and development. She is a grant recipient from the Cooperating and Development Network 2021/2022 for her research on "Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Health Care Workers in Kathmandu Based Hospital", conducted as part of her master's degree.</p>	

S/N	Conflict of Interest Statements	Amy Catherine JERSILD	Gaia Gullotta	Samriti Maharjan
		Independent Consultant	Position: Evaluation Analyst	Position: Evaluation Analyst
1	Main employer and any other organization that provides you with remuneration (which may be named participants in the project/ program/ proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate.	No	Alliance Bioversity International and CIAT	No
2	Are you aware whether a relative, close friend, close colleague or someone with whom you have financial ties is receiving funding from or giving advice to a project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate?	No	No	No
3	Does any project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate cite any of your own current research?	No	No	No
4	Does any project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate name researchers with whom you have active collaborations, recently published joint papers or are in regular email correspondence?	No	Yes	No
5	Does any project/program/proposal you are being asked to review/evaluate name any of your past PhD students are active participants?	No	No	No
6	I declare that the information provided on this statement is true and complete.	Dated: 14 February 2025	Dated: 14 February 2025	Dated: 14 February 2025



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