



INITIATIVE ON

Diversification in East  
and Southern Africa

**CGIAR Food Systems Accelerator: Kick-off and Onboarding  
Workshop**

**Complementary Report on Reflections on the Accelerator and  
Technical Assistance Design and Implementation**

CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa  
(Ukama Ustawi)

WP3: Support and accelerate value chain agribusiness in  
maize-mixed systems

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## CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa

The CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa, also known as Ukama Ustawi, aims to address food and nutrition security risks in the region arising from an overreliance on maize through a climate-resilient, water-secure, and socially inclusive approach.

To learn more about this Initiative, please visit: <https://www.cgiar.org/initiative/diversification-in-esa/?section=about>

## Disclaimer

This publication has been prepared as an output of the CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa and has not been independently peer reviewed. Responsibility for editing, proofreading, and layout, opinions expressed, and any possible errors lies with the authors and not the institutions involved.

## Summary

Food system accelerators are programs that support agribusinesses in scaling their innovations to address the challenges and opportunities in food and agriculture systems. They typically provide a combination of technical assistance, mentoring, networking, and access to finance to help agribusinesses grow and achieve positive social and environmental impact.

Food system accelerators are emerging as a promising approach to foster climate-smart innovation and transformation in agri-food systems, especially in developing regions where climate change, population growth, food insecurity, and malnutrition pose serious threats. Climate-smart innovation can enhance the efficiency, resilience, transparency, and inclusiveness of agri-food value chains, as well as improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and consumers.

However, scaling climate-smart innovations in agri-food systems is not easy. It requires a deep understanding of the complex and dynamic context of agri-food systems, as well as the needs and preferences of different actors and stakeholders. It also requires collaboration and coordination among various actors, such as researchers, entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, extension agents, and end-users. Moreover, it requires overcoming various barriers and risks, such as lack of infrastructure, skills, data, regulation, trust, and financing.

To address these challenges, food system accelerators leverage the expertise and network of CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future. CGIAR has a portfolio of innovations that span various domains of agri-food systems, such as crop improvement, livestock production, natural resource management, nutrition, gender, policy, and markets. CGIAR also has a strong presence and partnership in many developing countries where agri-food systems face the most pressing problems.

One example of a food system accelerator is the CGIAR Food Systems Accelerator Programme (FSA), launched in partnership with 2SCALE in 2022. The FSA aims to support at least 30 agribusinesses in East and Southern Africa by 2024 with scaled-up climate-smart innovations that support diversification, intensification, and risk management of maize mixed systems. The FSA provides tailor-made support to selected agribusinesses under four priority innovation themes: mechanization and irrigation, conservation agriculture, nutrition-sensitive climate-smart agriculture, and agricultural risk management. The FSA also offers de-risking grants and matchmaking with private investors for follow-on capital.

In February 2023, CGIAR FSA organized the initiation workshop for the first successful group of start-up businesses at Norrsken House, Kigali, Rwanda.

**This report has its focus on participants' reflections on the food system accelerator process and the way forward.**

## Introduction

In the key session of the event (see Annex 1), the operational teams of the food system accelerator program and the experts in the technical assistance program took stock of the workshop and discussed the implications for adapting the course of the accelerator. Specifically, they

- Reflected on the sessions and content of the workshop in terms of the design of the overall food system accelerator workflow and technical assistance program
- Discussed the options to increase the coordination among the experts further to maximize the effectiveness of the support provided to accelerator partners
- Identified complementary technical and organizational solutions that can increase the performance of the technical assistance
- Discussed delivery of ongoing technical assistance activities and next steps.

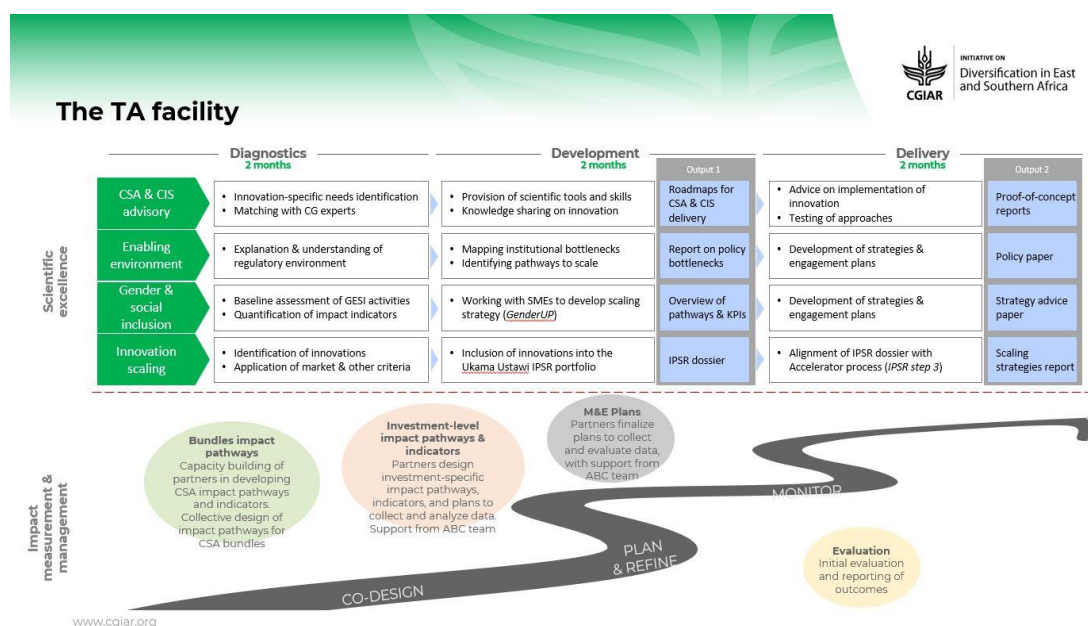


# Summary of Discussions

Multi-disciplinary participants reflected on the workshop and provided their learnings and insights about the ongoing food system accelerator process. The main highlights of the rich discussions are as follows:

- The event was conducted with the participation of more than 50 people representing science, business, and business support service sectors. Participation of multiple stakeholders and the facilitated exchanges provided essential insights into the demand for technical assistance from the partners. There were also rich discussions with partners food system accelerator team can provide more effective technical support.
- The presentations were successful in creating a shared understanding of the overall objective of the Food System Accelerator Program, the niche it fills in the science - innovation - business - impact continuum, the vision and operations of the business partners, the competences the CGIAR initiative technical support teams
- There were multiple general (heated) discussions about the value added of science-based innovation accelerators to the start-ups in the impact sectors. The discussions triggered an initial interest from businesses, scientists, and business support actors to collaborate and learn. However, there are essential mindset differences that need to be addressed for the Food System Accelerator Program to realize its full potential.
- Current configuration of the technical assistance facility (Figure 1) was well-received by the business partners. The combination of case-specific diagnosis, and the development of customized fit-for-purpose tools with the provision of support, culminating with the development of strategies and engagement plans, were considered a comprehensive approach unique for the business partners.
- However, discussions with the business partners indicated a clear need for a broader technical support pool, including a diverse set of technical skills and specialized competences

Figure 1: Technical Assistance Facility of the Food System Accelerator



# The way forward

Having reflected on the workshop and the contributions from the business partners, the food system accelerator team agreed on

**1. *Developing instruments and building an infrastructure for leveraging the broad skill and experience pool of Ukama Ustawi Initiative and CGIAR for the diverse needs of business partners***

Current managerial and technical needs of the accelerator cohort 1 (Annex 2) business partners go beyond the capabilities of the initiative technical experts. The discussions showed that the Food System Accelerator Program needs to develop infrastructure, e.g., competence inventories, speed-dating tools, analytical dashboards, and engagement events, to identify the changing needs and match them with CGIAR capabilities beyond the initiative boundaries. (making sense)

**2. *Developing and publishing technical and research products guiding global research and business community on best accelerator design and best practices for increasing the contribution of science-based CGIAR solutions to agribusinesses and agribusiness ecosystems***

The Food System Accelerator Program is novel not only for scientists but also for business partners and business support service providers. The participants agreed that it is essential to document the technical, operational, and engagement aspects systematically and make sure that learning becomes a global public good informing similar efforts in the impact ecosystem. This would need investment in the learning capabilities in the current and future phases of the accelerator program.

● ***The current design of the technical assistance facility is an effective model for supporting the agribusiness partners***

The technical assistance and business support team discussed and endorsed the technical assistant framework presented in the figure below. They also expressed interest in using a digital tool for facilitating the technical assistance service to business partners.

● ***The design of the technical assistance needs to be updated after the first implementation***

There is significant learning in the implementation of the food system accelerator program, and implementation of the accelerator creates valuable feedback coming from the business partners. It is very beneficial for the accelerator to update itself with a living-lab approach and provide enough space and resources to think and improve the facility with more agile and effective workflow and engagement processes

## Annex 1: Agenda

**Meeting Date:** 22 - 24 February 2023

**Venue:** Norrsken Kigali House, Rwanda

Day	Time	Activity	Speaker/Facilitator
<b>Day 1</b> <b>Wednesday 22nd February</b> <b>08:00am - 3:00pm EAT</b>	08:00	Networking over coffee/tea	
	08:30	Opening remarks	CGIAR East and Southern Africa Regional Initiative Lead/Co-lead <i>Inga Jacobs-Mata/Evan Girvetz</i>
	08:40	Official address	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
	08:50	Ice breaker <i>Who is in the room?</i> <i>What do you want to get out of today?</i>	
	09:00	The role and purpose of the Food Systems Accelerator Programme	Programme Lead <i>Mercy Zulu-Hume</i>
	09:10	How can the Food Systems Accelerator Programme support your business journey?	2SCALE <i>Salome Ng'ang'a</i> Programme Co-lead <i>Hauke Dahl</i>
	09:25	Mentimeter <i>What's on your wish list for the Food Systems Accelerator Programme?</i>	
	09:30	<i>Who Wants to be a Millionaire?</i> Setting the scene: the agribusiness ecosystem in	Briter Bridges

		East and Southern Africa	
	<b>10:00</b>	<b>Tea break and networking/photo</b>	
	10:30	Fireside chat	Moderator

	11:30	Interactive session	
	11:45	Unveiling of the cohort	
	<b>12:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
	13:00	Cohort onboarding ( <i>closed session</i> )	2SCALE <i>Salome Ng'ang'a Peter Karimi</i>
	15:00	<b>End of Day One</b>	
	18:00	Evening cocktail social	

**Closed Sessions with Agribusiness Cohort and Technical Assistance Providers**

Day	Time	Activity	Speaker/Facilitator
<b>Day 2</b> <b>Thursday 23rd</b> <b>February</b> <b>08:00am - 4:30pm</b> <b>EAT</b>	08:00	Review Day 2 Agenda	Programme Lead <i>Mercy Zulu-Hume</i>
	08:10	Community building exercise	
	08:30	Diagnostic - Investment Readiness	2SCALE
	<b>10:30</b>	<b>Tea break</b>	
	11:00	Diagnostic - Climate Smart Agriculture technical assistance	Programme Co-lead <i>Hauke Dahl</i>  Scaling readiness specialist <i>Dr. Murat Sartas</i>  Gender and social inclusion



			<i>Karen Nortje</i> Impact Measurement and Management <i>Andreea Novak</i>
	<b>12:30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
	13:30	Enabling environment session	<i>Inga Jacobs-Mata</i> <i>Idil Ires</i>
	<b>14:30</b>	<b>Break</b>	
	15:00	Peer Learning Session	
	16:00	Recap/next steps	Programme Lead <i>Mercy Zulu-Hume</i>
	<b>16:30</b>	<b>End of Day 2</b>	
	18:00	Social dinner	

#### Closed Sessions for Internal Team

Day	Time	Activity	Speaker/Facilitator
<b>Day 3</b>  <b>Friday 24th February</b> <b>09:00am - 3pm EAT</b>	09:00	Scaling readiness brainstorming and learning	Programme Co-lead <i>Hauke Dahl</i>
	11:00	Info session – Norrsken (Open to cohort)	Norrsken
	<b>12:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
	14:00	Core team meeting  <i>Post-event reflection</i>	Programme Lead  <i>Mercy Zulu-Hume</i>
	15:00	<b>End of Day 3</b>	

## Annex 2: The First Cohort Businesses of Food System Accelerator

	Country	Innovation	Managers
<b>East Agricultural Development Company Ltd</b>	Uganda	Nutrition	Female
<b>AfriFarmers Market</b>	Rwanda	Mech & irri	Mixed
<b>Shamba Records</b>	Kenya	ARM	Mixed
<b>Aggregator Trust Limited</b>	Rwanda	Nutrition	Female
<b>Yellow Star</b>	Uganda	Nutrition	Female
<b>Stable Foods</b>	Kenya	Mech & irri	Male
<b>Forest Africa</b>	Zambia	Conservation Agriculture	Male
<b>Farm Depot</b>	Zambia	ARM	Mixed
<b>Batian Nuts</b>	Kenya	Nutrition	Male
<b>The Insectary</b>	Kenya	Nutrition	Female