

**ACP-EU COTONOU AGREEMENT**

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**AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND  
PACIFIC GROUP OF STATES**

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**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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- CTA Strategic Plan 2016-2020

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Delegations will find attached the CTA Strategic Plan 2016-2020 as approved by the Executive Board of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation.

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# Sowing Innovation, Harvesting Prosperity

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CTA's Strategic Plan 2016–2020



June 2016

## Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Key issues in CTA's external environment</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Challenges	3
1.1.1 Climate change	3
1.1.2 Population and urbanisation	3
1.1.3 Sustainability of natural resources	4
1.1.4 Other challenges	4
1.2 Opportunities	4
1.2.1 Political awareness	4
1.2.2 Agriculture as a business	5
1.2.3 Regional markets and trade	6
1.2.4 ICT and telecommunications infrastructure	7
<b>Chapter 2: Learning from experience</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Achievements	8
2.1.1 Becoming more strategic	9
2.1.2 Adopting a thematic focus	9
2.1.3 Adopting results-based management	9
2.1.4 Boosting CTA's digital content and online presence	10
2.1.5 Building a strong and diversified partnership	10
2.2 Becoming a learning organisation	11
2.3 CTA's comparative advantage	12
<b>Chapter 3: Three strategic goals</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 Beneficiaries	13
3.2 Strategic goals	14
3.2.1 Strategic Goal 1: Profitable smallholder value chains	15
3.2.2 Strategic Goal 2: Conducive agricultural policies	18
3.2.3 Strategic Goal 3: Enhanced capacity for knowledge management	19
<b>Chapter 4: Priority themes and cross-cutting issues</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 Supporting climate-smart agriculture	23
4.2 Agribusiness development	24
4.3 Making agriculture nutrition-sensitive	25
4.4 Women and youth	26
4.4.1 Gender	26
4.4.2 Youth	27
<b>Chapter 5: Theory of change</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1 Overview of ToC	28
5.2 CTA's ToC model	28

<b>Chapter 6: Implementation</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1 How CTA works	31
6.2 Regional business plans	32
6.3 Working through partnerships	32
6.4 Programming and project identification	32
6.5 Monitoring, evaluation and learning	33
6.6 Project cycle management	33
6.7 Information technology (IT)	33
6.8 Human resources	34
6.9 Resource mobilisation	34
<b>Annex 1: Vision, mission and values</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Annex 2: CTA's theory of change diagram</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Annex 3: List of complementary CTA strategies and plans</b>	<b>37</b>

## Chapter 1: Key issues in CTA's external environment

**The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)** was established in 1983 under the Lomé Convention between the ACP (African Caribbean and Pacific) group of states and the European Union member states. Currently, CTA operates within the framework of the ACP–EU Partnership Agreement, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, covering a 20-year period from 2000 to 2020. CTA is funded by the European Union.

CTA's mission is to advance food security, increase prosperity and support sound natural resource management through information, communication and knowledge management, facilitation, capacity building and empowerment of agricultural and rural development organisations and networks in ACP countries.

How to feed the world in the coming decades has become a familiar theme in discussions of agriculture and development, with a recognition of the many, diverse challenges that must be faced to build a food-secure future. Many actors – global, regional, national and local – are contributing to solutions, and CTA is proud to count itself as one of the more effective global players. However, CTA also recognises that there is no room for complacency and so is undertaking a revision of its strategic priorities in order to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. As a first step in this process, we look briefly at the external environment to ask what has changed and what remains the same.

The food price spikes of 2007–2008 triggered a crisis that jolted the world out of its complacency about agriculture.<sup>1</sup> Rich and poor countries alike dedicated resources to agriculture, as they realised afresh that a secure food supply is vital for human well-being. More recently, we have seen an overall fall in the food price index from its high of 229.9 in 2011 to around 166 during 2015 to date.<sup>2</sup> This decline has been accompanied by a decrease in fluctuations, and while this is good news there is also a risk that the global community will once again become complacent about food and nutrition security. We cannot afford to let recent calm in food prices distract us from the need to work towards more resilient agricultural systems that will help to buffer food supplies against the kinds of shocks that impact food prices.

Food prices, however, are just one element in the complex and dynamic external environment in which CTA works. And food prices are themselves part of a complex web of interactions, affected by energy prices, urbanisation, climate change, infrastructure and regional trade. In examining the external environment, we have kept in mind that while we cannot predict where or when the next food crisis will occur, or what form it will take, CTA has to continue working

<sup>1</sup> The term agriculture is used throughout this document and CTA's work, in the broadest sense, to include crop and livestock production, forestry and fisheries. Areas where agriculture overlaps with other sectors, such as health (e.g. nutrition, HIV/AIDS) and urbanisation (e.g. urban farming) are also included in CTA's work.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

towards sustainable food and nutrition security in ACP countries. CTA's approach is to promote agriculture as a business that can create value for smallholder producers, provide jobs for women and youth, produce nutritious and healthy food for people, and serve as an engine for economic growth.

According to the UN, since 2000 the number of undernourished people in developing countries has fallen by almost half, to 795 million. There have been positive changes in food and nutrition security too, with small declines in the percentage of children stunted and underweight in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and an overall increase in the food security index.<sup>3</sup> Aspects of food and nutrition security, such as food quality and safety and nutritional standards, have been rising faster in SSA than elsewhere, with 23 of the 28 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) survey registering increases in their overall food security scores. Nevertheless, SSA remains the lowest-scoring region, largely because of the preponderance of low-income countries. Even here, though, there is cause for optimism, with the region's commitment to agricultural research and development stronger than in other regions.

In the last decade, Africa has had six of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world. While the forecast for the next few years is lower than the 5.7% of the last decade it is still a healthy 4–5%.<sup>4</sup> Headcount poverty (less than US\$1.25 a day) is down across SSA, and the International Monetary Fund notes that "growth in agriculture ... has been among the most important contributors to poverty reduction in the region."<sup>5</sup> A 1% growth in agriculture pulls 0.41% of the population out of poverty, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which points out that Ethiopia lifted almost 25% of its people out of poverty in 2000–2010 largely by increasing agricultural productivity. The IMF further notes that job creation "in household enterprises that operate in agriculture" remains the most effective way for countries to begin to drive economic development.

By contrast, falling commodity prices in the Caribbean have resulted in slower economic growth there, although the prospects for additional exports remain good. The Caribbean is expected to grow by 5.9% in 2016. In many of the ACP countries of the Pacific, agriculture remains the chief source of employment and contributes significantly to exports, although the return on investment in agriculture has been declining slowly. In many Pacific countries, although agricultural exports are important, they are in the hands of large corporations rather than smallholder producers. Papua New Guinea, for example, derives most of its export income from palm oil, but only 4% of rural villagers are involved in the production of palm oil.

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<sup>3</sup> Global Food Security Index 2015. Economist Intelligence Unit. London.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, Global Economic Prospects 2015 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects/regional-outlooks/Global-Economic-Prospects-June-2015-Sub-Saharan-Africa-analysis>

<sup>5</sup> Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa 2014. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/reo/2014/afr/eng/sreo0414.pdf>

While the World Bank and the IMF agree that agriculture is a primary driver for economic growth, especially in low-income countries, they also point out that policy changes are needed to derive the maximum benefit. Agricultural exports, especially of added-value products, private-sector investment and better policies and governance can all improve the impact of increased agricultural productivity on poverty reduction and development. CTA takes heart from these analyses, that working to improve agriculture is one of the best ways to reduce poverty, and that our strategic objectives are recognised to be of the utmost importance in agricultural development.

## 1.1 Challenges

The major challenges to achieving food and nutrition security ACP countries are climate change, population and urbanisation and the degradation of natural resources.

### 1.1.1 Climate change

Agriculture is both a victim and a culprit of climate change; productivity is already being negatively affected by changes in climate, and agriculture is a large source of the greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change, with almost one-third of global emissions arising from farming and deforestation.

Climate change is a particularly severe challenge for ACP countries, where predictions are not good. In SSA, extremes of temperature and water availability will become more frequent, resulting, according to one forecast from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in a drop in maize yields of nearly 30% by 2030. In the Caribbean and the Pacific, ocean warming and acidification will damage coral reefs and reduce marine fish catches, and rising sea levels threaten the very existence of some small island nations.

Smallholder producers are especially vulnerable to the extremes forecast to be a key element of climate change, because their production systems lack resilience and, often, the capacity to adapt. The implications for ACP countries are profound. Their agricultural sectors will need to protect themselves against the negative impacts of climate change, which could include a reduction in the availability of cultivated land, depleted water resources, lower crop yields and changing patterns of plant and animal diseases.

### 1.1.2 Population and urbanisation

While the need to feed more than 9 billion people by 2050 poses enormous challenges to agriculture, an even greater challenge may be posed by the concentration of people in cities. The UN predicts that two-thirds of the world's people will be living in cities by 2050.

Africa has the highest population growth rate and is expected to account for more than half of all population growth between 2015 and 2050. The number of youth (aged 15 to 24) will increase to about 400 million by 2050. Many of these young people will look to the cities for opportunities. Africa is currently the most rural continent, with only 40% of its people in urban areas; however, urbanisation is increasing most rapidly there and will reach 56% in 2050. In the

Caribbean and Pacific, rural-urban migration is also a major challenge as many young people see little hope in staying in agriculture and migrate to cities looking for jobs.

The urban-rural dynamic poses new challenges in terms of internal migration, territorial planning and development and local governance, food security and land management. Industrial development and changing patterns of consumption complicate matters further, with competing claims on land, water and energy. But urbanisation also offers new opportunities, such as the growth of local and regional markets.

### 1.1.3 Sustainability of natural resources

The ability of agriculture to produce more is not in dispute. The ability to sustain increased production, however, is. Agriculture contributes to climate change and energy challenges, and can also result in the degradation of the very natural resources and ecosystem services on which it depends. Previous efforts at agricultural intensification have resulted in environmental degradation, and these deleterious changes often reduce agriculture's potential to be part of the solution, for example by sequestering carbon or preventing further deforestation.

Some commentators have called for “sustainable intensification” but there is still little general agreement on what this constitutes. Nevertheless, it is clear that the sustainable management of natural resources, including ecosystem services, is of great concern, especially for poorer smallholder producers who cannot afford the capital required to replace some of the services they receive “for free.” Sustainability will be a central concern for poverty reduction, food and nutrition security and economic development more generally.

### 1.1.4 Other challenges

Population, climate change, energy and sustainability are probably the most important challenges to food and nutrition security, but there are other obstacles too. Post-harvest losses in ACP countries amount up to 40% of harvests. Trade barriers, such as production standards and phytosanitary measures, can prevent market access, and even within regions trade is weak; only 20% of trade in SSA is intra-regional, compared with 78% in the EU and 60% in Asia. Farmers in ACP countries are ageing; the average farmer in ACP countries is 55–60 years old and young people see no future in farming. These are some of the additional challenges that CTA will be working with partners to address.

## 1.2 Opportunities

While the challenges are formidable, there are promising opportunities that can transform ACP agriculture to an engine of growth, guarantor of food security and nutrition and source of prosperous livelihoods for smallholder producers.

### 1.2.1 Political awareness

Agriculture's importance in achieving food security, prosperity and economic growth for developing countries, especially ACP countries, has recently attracted unprecedented political attention. One manifestation of this is the number of public political commitments.



In June 2014, for example, member countries of the African Union adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. The Malabo Declaration calls for renewed focus and action on agricultural development in Africa, and repeats an earlier commitment to allocate 10% of national budgets to agriculture. And in September 2014 the United Nations formally adopted the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action – or SAMOA Pathway – in which countries recognise the need to support and invest in these nations so that they can achieve sustainable development. Both of these commitments, along with the African Union’s declaration of 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security and the UN declaration of 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming, are clear examples of the political importance attached to agricultural research for development.

Political activities were bolstered by \$8.3 billion in new commitments to agriculture from the World Bank Group in 2014. The 11th European Development Fund (EDF) likewise saw more than 50 ACP countries prioritise agriculture in spending plans.

The Millennium Development Goals, although patchy, resulted in some real achievements in development. These have now been transformed into the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the UN Special Assembly in September 2015. Adding to political momentum, agriculture and rural development play a prominent role in six of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These overarching goals will guide CTA’s work in the foreseeable future.

Taken together, the various political and societal commitments offer hope for agricultural development in ACP countries.

### 1.2.2 Agriculture as a business

Complementing the political will to increase the priority of agricultural development, the private sector is also directing more attention to the topic, helped by EU and ACP entities increasing their support for private sector development. In Africa, the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, launched by the G8 in 2012, seeks to unlock responsible private investment in African agriculture to benefit smallholder farmers and reduce hunger and poverty. The European Commission noted the importance of agribusiness for economic development in its report *A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries*. And the ACP Council of Ministers adopted the ACP–EU Joint Cooperation Framework for Private Sector Development in ACP Countries in June 2014. As noted above, agriculture and agribusiness are key sectors in the 11th EDF, with a budget of €2.6 billion.

These shifts are driven at least in part by the realisation that there are benefits for the private sector. According to the World Bank, urban food markets in Africa could be worth \$400 billion by 2030. This will be accompanied by a rise in the demand for processed food and in

the need for efficient logistics, offering further opportunities. As a result, agricultural and agribusiness in Africa are expected to be worth around \$1 trillion by 2030, a fourfold increase.<sup>6</sup>

The private sector is responding with investment. Of the 49 large multi-national companies in the agro-food sector listed in the Fortune Global 500, 21 are active in SSA. Through the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, international and African private companies have committed \$3 billion of new investments in Africa. All have pledged to work with smallholder producers, and current targets speak of reaching at least four million farmers.

Public investments in agriculture have increased too, by more than 7% per year across Africa (and more than 12% in low-income countries). Public-sector spending on agriculture has now more than doubled since the launch of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2003.

The additional investment in agriculture by private sector and public sector alike signals a renewed recognition that agriculture is a potent driver of economic growth and poverty reduction.

### 1.2.3 Regional markets and trade

Regional markets are key drivers of economic growth, and will become increasingly important to ACP countries as EU markets become more difficult to access.<sup>7</sup> Intra-regional trade offers the opportunities for growth that ACP countries need. In Africa, for example, intra-regional trade accounts for only about 20% of total agricultural trade, compared with averages of 78% in the EU and 60% in Asia. Closer ties are also developing between ACP countries and some of the emerging economies such as Brazil, China and India. These ties, and the growing role of the private sector, are changing the nature of agricultural trade for ACP countries. Making the most of the opportunities will require resources to be mobilised, for example through Aid for Trade programmes. In addition, linking farmers to national and regional markets through

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/ery/news/press-release/2013/03/04/africas-food-markets-could-create-one-trillion-dollar-opportunity-2030>

<sup>7</sup> Restricted access is the result of EU trade liberalisation and several factors. Non-tariff barriers such as sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT) will increase for ACP countries. In some cases ACP production will become less profitable, for example as EU prices of commodities such as sugar drop as a result of reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

appropriate institutions and tools increasingly forms a key feature of several initiatives and programmes in the ACP regions.<sup>8</sup>

#### 1.2.4 ICT and telecommunications infrastructure

The rapid technological changes taking place, especially in the areas of the Internet, mobile and data applications, create an enormous opportunity for growth in the agricultural sector. The world is currently experiencing two revolutions – the mobile and data revolutions. Of interest to the agricultural sector is the substantial improvement in access to international broadband bandwidth, with a continuous fall in prices that is steepest in developing countries; average prices are declining 20% year-on-year. In mobile technology, the GSMA Intelligence estimates that almost 50% of the developing world population owned a mobile phone in the first quarter of 2015.<sup>9</sup>

Big and open data, made available and facilitated by information and communication technology (ICT) applications, is producing large-scale insights for public policy and international development. Effective use of big and open data relies on mobile applications that analyse large data sets – containing a variety of data types – to uncover hidden patterns, unknown correlations, market trends, customer preferences and other factors that help to make sense of the data. The successful functioning of the information society is also improving with more and more government exploring the options for the development of strategies to guide the effective and efficient exploitation of these technologies in agriculture.

While agricultural and rural development (ARD) in the ACP regions faces daunting challenges, the opportunities to transform agriculture into an engine for sustainable growth are tremendous. With more than 30 years of serving ACP institutions and individuals in the ARD sector, CTA is well positioned to contribute significantly to the transformation of ACP agriculture.

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<sup>8</sup> Initiatives and programmes include several EU facilities, such as the All ACP Agricultural Commodities Programme, the Trade.Com programme, and COLEACP's PIP, among others. ACP Regional Economic Communities have also set up specialised agencies that deal specifically with agricultural trade (e.g. COMESA's ACTESA) or implemented dedicated regional programmes (e.g. the EU Facilitating Agricultural Commodity Trade project of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the EU Agribusiness Development Programme of the CARICOM Secretariat). Other bilateral donors (e.g. USAID, DFID, GIZ, AFD, DGIS, etc.), and private foundations (e.g. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) are also funding large agricultural trade-related activities with a focus on regional trade (e.g. the Market Access Programme of the AGRA, Trade Hub programmes, etc.).

<sup>9</sup> ICTupdate Issue 80, August 2015 - [http://ictupdate.cta.int/Regulars/Guest-editor/More-than-mobile/\(80\)/1439914024](http://ictupdate.cta.int/Regulars/Guest-editor/More-than-mobile/(80)/1439914024)

## Chapter 2: Learning from experience

CTA's 2006–2010 Strategic Plan sought to maximise outreach. By contrast, in its 2011–2015 Strategic Plan, CTA opted to maximise its relevance and impact by re-aligning its priorities and competencies with the priorities elaborated in key ACP regional agricultural policies such as the CAADP. This fundamental change in orientation set CTA on a different and unfamiliar path, with widespread repercussions in almost all facets of its operations. Some of the changes are reflected in strategies developed to meet specific important issues such as gender, youth and partnership. CTA has also changed its approach to project management, built strong, new, high-level partnerships, sharpened its regional focus and established CTA as a key player in a number of thematic areas.

Internally, CTA has embarked on profound transformations to facilitate the transition from outreach to impact. Restructuring has reduced the number of programmes from 12 to two, with five master projects. A significant change in CTA's staff profile has enabled the Centre to have the expertise needed to deliver on its strategic priorities. These changes have been carried out against a background of improving internal services and systems to boost efficiency and effectiveness.

Together, the changes CTA has made, both in response to the external environment and in implementing the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan, have placed the Centre in a strong position to pursue further excellence in executing its 2016–2020 Strategic Plan.

In this chapter we give some details of the specific steps taken to bolster our change in orientation and how these have created a solid basis for the 2016–2020 Strategic Plan.

### 2.1 Achievements

During its implementation of the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan, CTA registered significant progress in its overall pursuit of impact and institutional transformation. Highlights identified by external evaluations and joint impact assessments include:

- strengthening producer organisations and improving their visibility
- opening opportunities for youth and women and building their capacity
- supporting multi-stakeholder engagement in policy processes
- promoting climate change policy and practice
- organising high-level international conferences and regional policy briefings to share lessons and set agendas
- supporting ACP Small Island Developing States
- strengthening agribusiness and private-sector development
- advancing value-chain finance
- building capacity in Web 2.0 and social media activities
- publishing and disseminating valuable, useful information
- building capacity of key partner institutions.

These represent considerable achievements. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go and in 2016–2020 CTA will build on the foundations already laid to become a fully results-based, and impact-oriented organisation.

### 2.1.1 Becoming more strategic

CTA has developed several specific strategies, including strategies on youth, gender, partnerships, communications, private-sector engagement, resource mobilisation and monitoring and evaluation. The benefits of developing these strategies through a participatory approach, open to external inputs from partners and experts, have been evident. Although the process has been time-consuming, it has encouraged team work and ownership of the strategies. However, the rapid development of several strategies has resulted in a need for additional resources, including staff time and new systems and tools to fully implement the strategies and monitor their performance.

### 2.1.2 Adopting a thematic focus

The 2010–2015 Strategic Plan saw a firm commitment to thematic prioritisation and specialisation. This commitment enabled CTA to advance its work on key topics such as climate change, value-chain development, regional trade and knowledge management. For example, on climate change, CTA worked closely with key institutions and regional farmers' groups in capacity building, information dissemination and policy dialogues to raise the profile of agriculture in climate change policy negotiations.

For 2016–2020 CTA will continue its thematic focus as the most effective way to prioritise its interventions. Climate change, agribusiness development and links between agriculture and nutrition will be the key themes through which CTA will serve its key partners and their constituents.

### 2.1.3 Adopting results-based management

After 15 years of using logframes, CTA moved to results-based management (RBM) with the inclusion of impact pathways in the 2011–2015 Strategic Plan. This change prompted the development of CTA's theory of change and then, drawing on external evaluations and joint impact assessments, a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework that included indicators of outputs, outcomes and impact. By developing and refining these elements in its results framework, CTA has been able to increase coherence and effectiveness in project conception, design and implementation. As part of embracing a results-oriented culture, CTA embarked on collecting and disseminating impact stories from its interventions.

CTA will work to mainstream RBM from the corporate level to individual projects, including those conducted through partnerships. In addition, CTA and its key partners need to invest in M&E and impact studies to obtain more documented evidence of impact on smallholder farmers, women and youth.

#### 2.1.4 Boosting CTA's digital content and online presence

During 2011–2015 CTA invested massively in improving its web presence and making its unparalleled ARD publications available online. CTA's Web site infrastructure has been transformed from a patchwork of proprietary ad hoc solutions to an open source, service oriented infrastructure.

To make all CTA online content accessible, discoverable, available and (re)usable for a wide range of ARD clientele, CTA invested in the underlying technology to enable data and services being accessible across a growing number of platforms and devices, transforming CTA's Web site infrastructure from a patchwork of proprietary ad hoc solutions to an open source, service oriented infrastructure. Mobile users of the corporate site grew rapidly, from 666 in 2011 to 20,252 in 2015. In 2015 CTA had a total of almost 800,000 visits across all sites, and monthly visits to the cta.int website have more than doubled over the past year (from about 11,000 in Oct 2014 to 23,000 in Oct 2015). More granular analytics data and better integrated social media are used to drive further growth.

Most new publications are now available as hard copy and in electronic format for free download, and since the launch of the publishing website in January 2012 more than 30,000 items have been downloaded. The number of printed publications that have been distributed has dropped, although the total distributed and downloaded continues to rise, which is a benefit both for information sharing and for the environment. Direct downloads of publications is just one reflection of the growing importance of all CTA websites, which will continue to be enriched with high-quality content.

#### 2.1.5 Building a strong and diversified partnership

Over the past four years, not only has CTA developed a robust partnership strategy, supported by wide-ranging implementation guidelines, it has taken impressive strides towards becoming a partner of choice for major ACP and international development agencies. The partnership strategy, adopted in 2014, is guiding the Centre in its endeavour to bring together different organisations – large and small – that play a variety of roles, depending on the problems to be addressed under each priority area. Furthermore, CTA has drawn on the partnership strategy to develop the regional business plans (RBPs) that will serve as the cornerstone for the implementation of its 2016–2020 strategy.

CTA is using its partnership strategy to better manage its relationship with close to 200 partners, including ACP, regional and international organisations, classified as strategic, programmatic or project partners. CTA also maintains a fourth category of partners, referred to as "friends of CTA" or social capital. The 2015 external evaluation of CTA referred to the Partnership Strategy and RBPs as a "key innovation... that has further enhanced [CTA's] relevance to the needs of ACP agriculture and key counterpart partner country and regional stakeholders." The report also noted that, over the past four years, "CTA has been able to renew and extend considerably the set of its partners," underlined by the fact that roughly half of all partners have less than five years of collaboration with CTA.

## 2.2 Becoming a learning organisation

As a learning organisation, CTA strives to draw lessons both from its successes and shortcomings. During the past four years, more than at any time in its past, CTA has invested in Centre-commissioned external reviews of its major activities and programmes. While continuing with the long-established practice of conducting evaluations using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria, CTA has diversified its approach through investment in a relatively substantial number of impact studies. As well as helping CTA to identify specific achievements, these evaluations and impact studies have also provided important lessons, many of which have been used to improve its operations and in the development of this Strategic Plan.

### *External evaluations initiated by CTA*

Past and ongoing CTA activities evaluated in the past four years using the DAC criteria include: the Question and Answer Service (QAS), Knowledge for Development and Agritrade portals, Brussels weblog, Brussels Development Briefings, Spore and the Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) programme. The QAS evaluation in 2011 guided CTA in its decision to discontinue this activity because of concerns about its relatively high cost and limited degree of financial sustainability. Following the evaluation of thematic portals in 2014, the K4D portal was discontinued pending the finalisation of plans to integrate the content of all CTA web portals in the main website. Most recently, the ST&I and Spore evaluations have generated recommendations that will be taken into consideration in the implementation of the 2016–2020 Strategic Plan.

CTA has embarked on two sets of impact studies. First, activity-specific studies focused on Web 2.0 and social media, participatory three-dimensional mapping (P3DM) and international conferences, and, secondly, joint studies with 14 long-term ACP partners, using capacity-centred impact pathway analysis. These joint impact studies have provided documented evidence of significant growth and increased performance of several ACP partner organisations and networks with CTA's support. All the partners indicated that CTA's support was most beneficial at critical stages in their development, such as soon after the organisation or network was established, or during transition towards a new strategy. Also, all partners credit CTA with having made a significant contribution to their capability to relate to their external stakeholders.

### *Evaluation of CTA in 2015 commissioned by the EC and ACP Secretariat*

The external evaluation concluded that CTA's 2011–2015 Strategic Plan has been "highly relevant to the Cotonou Agreement [...], key EC policies [...] and ACP Regional and Continental (Africa) policies". The evaluation report also noted that "almost half (49%) of CTA partner respondents believe that CTA services and work has led to improved skills/knowledge/awareness among farmers, over 40% consider CTA has brought improved use of ICTs and improved organisation/collaboration with other smallholders/farmers. Almost one-third of CTA partners consider that CTA's services have improved access to markets and just under one-quarter (24%) believe that CTA's services have improved income, employment or livelihoods."

The report also made wide-ranging recommendations that CTA will take into account in the implementation of this strategy, including:

- Strengthening reporting, results measurement, and communication flow and exchange with the EC to boost the added value of CTA's work for the EC and ACP Group of States.
- Continuing to develop the Partnership Strategy with a view to optimising the potential impact of activities and programmes.
- Reviewing CTA's current approach to tracking impact with a view to identifying scope for improved capture of long-term impacts.
- Increased focus on scaling successful CTA activities and projects to deliver significantly increased impact.

In order to generate greater long-term impacts during the implementation of the 2016–2020 strategy, CTA will increase investment with stakeholders who provide services directly to smallholders. CTA will also work with partners to help improve their M&E capacity so as to make it easier to document impact on smallholder farmers, women and youth.

### 2.3 CTA's comparative advantage

While many international and regional organisations work in ARD, CTA brings unique skills and network capital that adds value for agriculture and rural development in the ACP. Here we offer a summary list of some of our comparative advantages.

- CTA is trusted by its partners as an honest broker, thanks to its strong convening power and experience working with a range of stakeholders.
- As a joint ACP–EU institution, CTA enjoys unprecedented access to high-level policy- and decision-makers and is invited to important high-level policy forums.
- CTA is embedded in an extensive set of networks across the ACP ARD communities.
- CTA enjoys strong partnerships with a wide range of institution types, including regional policy bodies, government agencies, farmer organisations, youth groups and research and academic institutions.
- CTA's specific strategies for partnership, gender, youth and private-sector engagement, along with six RBPs, provide focus and purpose.
- CTA's multidisciplinary and multi-cultural staff enhance its ability to work with a wide range of partners.
- CTA has a strong brand and products and services that are well-recognised and widely known, giving additional value to new products and services.
- CTA's funding has been stable, allowing longer-term support to partners.
- CTA has the flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities and needs.



## Chapter 3: Three strategic goals

CTA will continue to direct its work primarily towards three strategic goals: profitable value chains<sup>30</sup> for smallholders, supportive agricultural policies, and enhanced capacity for knowledge management (KM). In developing this strategy, CTA has kept a close eye on how to achieve the greatest impact for its work. This requires a focus on the beneficiaries, who are discussed in the first section, prior to a more detailed discussion of the three strategic goals. The theory of change that underpins CTA's approach is presented in Annex 2.

### 3.1 Beneficiaries

Smallholder farmers<sup>31</sup> can produce not only enough to feed themselves but also most of the food that burgeoning urban populations in the ACP countries need, thus reducing those countries increasing dependence on imported food. They can ensure that this food is healthy and nutritious. And they can adapt their production systems so that rural livelihoods become more resilient to climate change. In the process of realising their full potential many of the ACP smallholder farmers – who are mostly poor – will finally escape the vicious cycle of poverty. As they do so, the growing gap between rural and urban lives will close, and with it the driver of so many social and political upheavals will lose much of its force.

While CTA recognises the importance of smallholder producers, CTA realises too that it cannot work directly with these producers. Instead, CTA works through partner organisations and networks in ACP regions and countries that serve smallholder producers directly, e.g. farmers' cooperatives. These are the direct beneficiaries of CTA's activities, and it is through their activities that CTA has an impact on smallholder producers.

CTA's 2011–2015 Strategic Plan has begun to tackle the underlying problems that prevent many ACP smallholders from sharing in global economic growth. In 2016–2020 CTA will intensify these efforts, articulating more clearly the ways in which it intends to convert global challenges into opportunities for smallholders. CTA will do this in part by putting more of its investment into larger partnerships that provide services directly to smallholder producers, a process that CTA began in 2015. In this way, although CTA will still not be interacting directly with smallholders, it will be involved as an active partner throughout the project cycle.

Another shift in emphasis will be to continue the move towards greater involvement with organisations that work with women and youth. The importance of concentrating on women is evident given their importance in production, nutrition of the family and engagement in small enterprises, among many others. Youth are most likely to be open to modern agricultural

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<sup>30</sup> The value chain refers to the full range of activities required to take a primary product from conceptualisation through design, product development, production, marketing, distribution, consumption, and disposal after use. This implies a linear (and hierarchical) flow of value-adding activities, knowledge and resources.

<sup>31</sup> Wherever the text makes reference to smallholders, this is intended to also include livestock herders and small-scale fisher folk.

practices just as young people are in principle best-placed to create innovative companies that will deliver agricultural services and value addition. CTA has developed gender and youth strategies that are discussed in Chapter 4.

The overarching objective for CTA remains the same: to support well-informed, inclusive agricultural policy formulation and implementation in the ACP regions that will empower key stakeholders and will contribute to sustainable food and nutrition security and to income growth. In this new strategy, however, the overall objective will be delivered through highly leveraged and tightly integrated interventions that target those value chains that will permit smallholders to build wealth.

CTA's focus remains on partners that benefit smallholders, but CTA has long recognised that smallholder producers are just one part of the agricultural value chain, all of which needs to work well if ACP agriculture is to be transformed. CTA's approach is intended to empower smallholder families because it believes that this is the only way to lift large numbers of rural people out of poverty. Moreover, smallholder producers, with the right inputs and supportive policies, can sustainably supply many of the agricultural products that growing urban populations want and need. To respond, smallholders need to produce what the market wants, at prices people can afford. They, and the associations that give them strength, need to think and act as entrepreneurs.

For this to be possible, smallholders need to be surrounded and supported by conducive policy, regulatory and legal frameworks. They need a range of services, such as input supplies, extension and advisory services, financial services, market information and so on. They need, in fact, to be part of a new ecosystem, in which many new jobs in agriculture will be created to provide the needed services. The value chain that links producers to consumers will be where most of the additional value in agriculture will be located, and to capture more of that added value, farming families will need to move up the value chain. This could happen as producers come together in associations or form partnerships with the private sector, for example in food processing. It could also happen as younger members of farm families set up as service providers of one sort or another. CTA will support both processes to ensure that smallholder farmers capture more of the value inherent in their production.

CTA will continue to build the capacity of farmer groups, women and youth associations to ensure that they effectively engage in well-informed agricultural policies and initiatives that support development of demand-driven technologies that address food security, nutrition, income and that protect the most marginalised and poorest rural communities from the added burden of climate change and variability.

### 3.2 Strategic goals

The complex realities of agricultural development generally require several interventions to come together under one umbrella. CTA intends to address this problem by using three interrelated strategic goals to bring a multi-dimensional approach.

Strategic goal 1 is the development of profitable smallholder value chains. Under this goal, CTA will focus on supporting the development of sustainable, inclusive value chains for key food commodities, in particular value chains that connect a region's producers to its rapidly growing urban centres. But value chains and regional trade can develop properly only when policy conditions are favourable.

Strategic goal 2 is therefore to support the development and implementation of conducive agricultural policies and regulatory frameworks. Because stakeholder engagement can have a strong impact on the quality of policies, CTA will focus on the inclusiveness of policy support processes, strengthening the ability of value-chain actors to contribute and building the evidence base for agricultural policy-making.

Strategic goal 3 is to enhance the capacity of stakeholders in information and knowledge management, which in turn supports both value-chain development and policy processes. CTA activities will range from helping value-chain stakeholders to build networks for information exchange and for policy advocacy, to the organisation of ICT interventions to solve specific challenges in value-chain and inclusive policy processes. This includes CTA's important work on Web 2.0 and social media.

### **3.2.1 Strategic Goal 1: Profitable smallholder value chains**

#### **Context**

Development actors have spent decades trying to link smallholder farmers to markets. They have gradually realised the necessity to go beyond simple market access to develop sustainable and inclusive business models that effectively integrate smallholder farmers into modern value chains. The key is to help farmers to understand what the market demands, grow it and sell it. Agricultural value chains are well-known to contribute to economic growth and food and nutrition security, and can also play a vital role in fostering regional trade, but only if all the stakeholders in a value chain trust each other and receive a fair share of the benefits generated.

Traditionally, much of the work of international organisations on value chains dealt with long-distance North-South trade, for example, cocoa, coffee and cotton. In ACP countries, however, cross-border trade and trade between regions is of great importance and is growing rapidly. The bulk of such trade, especially among neighbouring countries, is informal and often unrecorded, and the informality of such value chains means that key stakeholders often miss out on policy backing, regulatory frameworks and support services, such as access to affordable working capital to finance their business. Work on these short-distance value chains promises large gains for ACP agriculture.

Development agencies and buyers alike often do not understand how to include smallholder producers in commercially viable value chains. This, and a lack of exploratory dialogue, is hampering investment in value-chain development. More action research and evidence are needed to inform policy-making and the private sector about how best to overcome the difficulties of working with smallholders, about why some smallholder farmers enter modern value chains while others do not, about the role of producer marketing organisations and about the impacts of standards and certification schemes.

Access to finance is something that smallholder farmers need – in addition to everything else – in order to participate in modern value chains. At the same time, banks find it difficult to lend to farmers. Agriculture is inherently risky, jeopardising the ability of farmers to repay their loans. Even where farmers are able to repay, government policy may encourage them not to do so. As a result, over the past decades many dedicated agricultural banks have failed and many financiers are increasingly sceptical about the wisdom of lending to farmers. This problem will become more acute as agriculture becomes riskier (or is perceived to be so) with the added phenomenon of climate variability in the predominantly rainfed agriculture that is prevalent in ACP. And yet, smallholder producers remain essential to feed expanding cities in their countries. They will only do so if they can make a profit from farming, and that will require investment.

Another problem is the lack of trained staff in many ACP countries. Technical skills (such as ICTs, post-harvest handling and marketing) and management (including business, logistics, finance and others) are currently in short supply, and most universities and business schools are not in a position to supply the trained graduates needed or to upgrade the skills of those already working in value chains. They lack trained teachers, curricula and teaching materials. Furthermore, farmers need greater guidance to become more market oriented, which in turn requires an upgrade to the skills of those who work with them, such as extension officers, NGO staff and others. The risk-aversion of farmers and the reluctance of youth to enter farming mean that the great potential returns of more advanced approaches remain untapped.

### ***CTA's approach***

All of CTA's value-chain work will be carried out with an eye on the thematic priorities indicated in Chapter 4; climate change, agriculture–nutrition linkages and agribusiness development.

For value chains to deliver more to smallholder producers, two elements need to be improved. Horizontal coordination, for example strengthening the organisation among producers, will enable them to capture a greater market share. And vertical coordination, strengthening the link between different sets of actors, such as between producers and processors, will build trust and improve the efficiency of the entire chain.

CTA will continue to build partnerships that focus on both aspects of coordination, and will increasingly stress upgrading existing value chains so that all actors in the chain cooperate more effectively to become more competitive, generating greater wealth for all. However, CTA will concentrate its work on a limited selection of agricultural value chains that have been prioritised by the ACP regions. Occasionally, CTA will work on commodities that have not been designated as a priority regionally. For example, in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, we will target the links between agriculture and tourism, aiming to reduce the high imports of food by the tourism industry, which could be a much more important buyer for local production.

Collaboration with the private sector will be at the heart of the value-chain programme.

The value-chain programme will draw on several components.

## 1) Supporting the optimum use of ICTs

ICTs can play an important role in enabling small farmers to engage in value chains. For example, ICTs can be used to check for counterfeit seeds, to order inputs, to seek additional information and to find buyers. Developments in this area move rapidly. CTA will not only document experiences, but also extract lessons from them, help stakeholder groups to adopt proper ICTs, and help entrepreneurs, especially youth, to develop viable businesses based on ICTs for agriculture.

## 2) Documenting and sharing success stories and best practices

CTA will continue to document success stories and best practices to address the gap in understanding of how smallholders can best work within value chains. Cases will be targeted to share experiences and derive lessons that can effectively improve specific policies and practices. For example, we will gather success stories that show how farmers' organisations can move up the value chain to gain a larger part of the value added to their produce.

## 3) Building skills

Stakeholders need to be properly equipped with the skills they need. CTA and partners will disseminate and promote training materials that have already been developed to address inclusive business models. We will also work closely with commodity platforms and institutes of further education to develop new curricula for specific value chains.

## 4) Facilitating dialogue and institutional strengthening

Multi-stakeholder bodies act as a focal point for dialogue and offer CTA leverage for its activities, and so will be at the core of value-chain work. Typical support from CTA will address market information services, value-chain finance, ICTs, advocacy and policy dialogue. CTA will also provide KM and communication support according to the needs of each organisation.

## 5) Strengthening finance and risk management mechanisms

Value-chain finance offers a solution to the problem of lending to farmers. The provider of credit uses the interconnections within the value chain to reduce the risks in providing credit to individual chain participants. Farmers who would otherwise be unbankable can, as a result, get access to credit, both pre- and post-harvest. CTA will build on the lessons learned in a strategic partnership with the African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (AFRACA) and will carry out further pilot activities, including insurance and micro-insurance, in specific value chains and in close collaboration with strategic partners.

## 6) Building institutions for intra-regional and international trade

Value-chain stakeholders need proper institutions to be in place to support their various efforts. CTA will therefore continue to work on market institutions and tools such as market information systems, warehouse receipt systems and commodity exchanges.

### 3.2.2 Strategic Goal 2: Conducive agricultural policies

The focus of CTA's policy work is on empowering smallholder farmers and rural communities to engage in the policy process in order to make value chains work better and to advance sustainable agriculture

#### Context

An enabling policy environment for farmers and the private sector to invest in agriculture is an important prerequisite in achieving successful transformation of the sector. Experience has shown that such an enabling environment encourages farmers to invest, especially in activities that protect their land from degradation and in activities that enhance their productivity. To do so, they need secure ownership and the capacity to realise the benefits of their labour.<sup>12</sup>

In Africa, the CAADP has steered agricultural transformation on the continent for more than a decade. In 2014, the African Union Assembly adopted the Malabo Declaration, which commits nations to agricultural transformation as a route to economic development. Similar developments have taken place in the Caribbean and Pacific regions. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) adopted a Community Agricultural Policy in 2011 and in the same vein, in the Pacific, the Regional Programme for Food Security and the Framework for Action on Food Security called for a focus on healthy food rather than just agricultural production per se and a greater involvement of the private sector.

The above notwithstanding, in the current global climate of financial austerity and volatile food and energy prices, one cannot be certain whether the renewed interest in agriculture and food security will continue to be backed by effective investments. Likewise, it is uncertain whether governments in the ACP regions will devise durable policies that promote the interests of smallholders in a socially just and economically attractive manner.

There is, therefore, a strong case for undertaking sustained advocacy and capacity building measures so that this opportune moment for the revitalisation of agriculture is seized upon effectively. An important plank of CTA's engagement in the policy arena should, therefore, be anchored on the twin pillars of supporting its strategic partners in building institutional capacity for effective policy engagement of key actors and clients and of facilitating learning lessons and sharing experiences in ARD policy formulation and implementation. CTA's mandate and track record as a convener of policy dialogue and policy debate platforms, as well as its ability to straddle the different spatial scales within the ACP regions, gives it an edge to operate in support of broadening the enabling environment so that other specific ARD programmes, including the work on value chains, can flourish.

CTA's policy work will therefore revolve around creating awareness and providing evidence for policy and facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues.

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<sup>12</sup> The Role of Policies in Agricultural Transformation: Lessons from Brazil, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, ESCAP Working Paper No. 106

**CTA's approach**

In work on policy processes, CTA tends to adopt two approaches, each of which supports the other.

CTA builds and documents the evidence base, bringing together expert consultation with studies on the ground and in the literature to assemble a case that can feed into multi-stakeholder policy dialogues. CTA also helps to create awareness of the need for policy changes with briefings, publications, media releases and other communications activities. CTA is able to reach an important policy audience that can effect policy changes.

CTA strengthens the capacity of stakeholders to contribute to policy dialogue, by working closely with farmer organisations, researchers and regional organisations and networks so that each is better able to present the evidence and influence policy discussions. CTA's work in this area helps to fill a gap in the ability of key stakeholders to engage in the policy process, and ranges from promoting innovative techniques such as participatory mapping to supporting attendance of stakeholders at important meetings.

CTA's policy work is thus directed at ensuring that stakeholders are able to take part in policy formulation, with the evidence to back them, and that the evidence is made available for others to use. The focus will be on policies that support value chains and promote sustainable agricultural practices, but CTA will act in support of other policies where required. For example, if farmers are to have better access to the extension information they need, government policy needs to ensure that ICTs are mainstreamed in extension services. Similarly, government policy could encourage central banks to support bank schemes to increase value-chain finance. Beyond these examples, CTA will engage in policy work to address emerging issues as needed by CTA and its partners.

**3.2.3 Strategic Goal 3: Enhanced capacity for knowledge management**

In promoting the empowerment of stakeholders CTA has always been strongly engaged in strengthening information and knowledge management. This will continue in the 2016–2020 strategy, making optimal use of ICTs because they create an opportunity for knowledge creation and sharing and in the development of social and professional networks.

**Context**

Timely information, knowledge sharing and the capacity to properly use these in decision-making are critical in enabling ARD actors to contribute to the development of agriculture. Sharing knowledge within and between organisations and networks is essential for those actors to be able to better respond to the challenges of food and nutrition security and climate change. Access to relevant information will support ARD actors as they engage in these processes. In addition, ARD actors have their own knowledge and experience, and so another crucial aspect is the ability to document their knowledge and experience, share that information and make use of similar information shared by others around the world. CTA'S work on KM will thus take place in two broad areas.

First, the collection, packaging and dissemination of information, including untapped local knowledge, organised to better serve the needs of various actors along the agricultural value chain. In addition, CTA will actively seek to fill existing knowledge gaps by targeting specific material for sourcing and dissemination. Closely linked to these activities are suitable policies that nurture capacity for content production and sharing and the co-creation of knowledge.

Secondly, CTA will continue to develop the capacity of its partners to manage and share their knowledge. In addition, CTA will strengthen its work to help partners make sense of and manage the copious streams of data and information that confront them every day, including exploring new opportunities offered by ICTs. Smaller organisations and networks will be enabled to tap their collective information and knowledge resources to support policy positions, market integration, collective bargaining and knowledge generation and sharing.

### ***CTA's approach***

Sound KM comprises people, processes and technology and is at the core of ensuring effective exchange and empowerment of ACP actors in ARD. Improving the exchange of knowledge needs to build on effective communication strategies, approaches to learning and good information management.

CTA's work in KM and communication will draw on several components. These efforts will concentrate on the thematic priorities as well as key priority intervention areas identified in the RBPs. CTA will work closely with its partners in terms of building their capacity for KM. CTA will also encourage South-South learning and knowledge sharing that will lead to the development of public goods, including best practices, tools and methods that can be valuable for the broader ACP community of users.

#### 1) Enhancing availability of strategic information

CTA will publish appropriate and relevant content on ACP agricultural policies and priority value chains, with an emphasis on publishing and repurposing ACP content. In recognition of the changing technical landscape in ACP countries, CTA will also diversify content into a variety of formats, including multimedia and mobile versions, and fully adopt an open-access approach. This is encapsulated in CTA's publishing strategy, making use of new distribution channels to increase outreach and impact.

CTA will target its interventions at knowledge platforms and networks for specific priority value chains and partner with ACP publishers to support content development through community involvement. Promotion of content will also be pursued through advocacy and support to regional knowledge forums.

#### 2) Capitalising on knowledge and experience

CTA will add value to the knowledge base around priority value chains and themes by working with multiple stakeholders and networks to facilitate documentation of experiences, learning processes and lessons learned. These stakeholders will be supported to carry out their own analysis of knowledge gained and share such reflections and insights in the form of knowledge



products and services. Regional networks and value chains will thus facilitate the generation of knowledge that better support various actors. CTA will also facilitate the exploration of documented experiences beyond ACP regions to enrich its knowledge base through comparative studies with ACP experiences, as a way of stimulating innovation within value chains development and policy processes.

### 3) Increasing access to knowledge

CTA will provide access to content relevant to and provided by ACP regions, by supporting the creation and development of digital archives, virtual libraries and open-access repositories using information management standards for agriculture. Priority will be given to processes that contribute to gathering and documenting ACP knowledge on specific priority value chains and themes, such as initiatives that promote participatory inclusion of stakeholders and adoption of innovation systems.

### 4) Strengthening KM capacities

CTA will strengthen the KM skills, competencies and institutional capacities of partners. CTA will do so by supporting partners in the development and implementation of strategic approaches for information and knowledge management using the KM Scan approach and facilitating adoption of good practices. CTA will also work with partner organisations to develop modules and courses to provide curriculum-based training in the development and implementation of KM strategies and action plans. These interventions will be prioritised to support the Centre's work in value-chain development and policy formulation and implementation.

CTA will support the development of appropriate virtual policy dialogue spaces (electronic platforms) to complement face-to-face interactions between actors involved in policy development and value chains development.

### 5) Harnessing the data revolution

CTA will enhance its work to help stakeholders in the agricultural sector to manage the manifold data and information streams that confront them every day. For many, this will involve building their capacity to choose what to focus on, how to interpret these data and then helping them to understand how to act on them.

CTA will promote awareness of opportunities presented by the data revolution, open data and ICTs, and facilitate engagement of ACP organisations in international forums, including the Global Open Data in Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) network. Building on this, CTA will work with partners to document case studies on data in agriculture and support innovative projects.

### 6) Using the knowledge base for extension and advisory services

CTA will encourage the scaling up of innovative approaches, in particular, through the exchange of knowledge among actors within the agricultural innovation system. This will be done through continuous interactions facilitated by extension and advisory services within

regional agricultural networks and value chains while country forums for rural advisory services will facilitate knowledge flows for the benefit of farmers. Furthermore, CTA will leverage its experience in ICTs to build and strengthen the linkages within these functional networks and support the development of viable business models of ICTs for agriculture to boost extension and advisory services in their provision of actionable knowledge.

## Chapter 4: Priority themes and cross-cutting issues

While CTA's three strategic goals of value chains, policy and KM define the major competence areas of the Centre and where it will contribute in addressing key ARD challenges in ACP countries, the thematic priorities identify the intervention areas where the Centre's competencies will be brought together to bring about concrete results and impact on the ground. Together with the RBPs, the priority thematic areas provide the framework for CTA's engagement with its partners.

### 4.1 Supporting climate-smart agriculture

Climate change presents opportunities to farmers in some cases, for example, being able to grow a new crop. In general, however, it is expected to have a negative impact on all aspects of food and nutrition security. Food-insecure smallholder producers are among those least able to adapt and cope with the challenges of climate change, which makes it clear that efforts must concentrate on helping farmers to become more resilient at the same time as increasing their productivity. Policy and practice need to favour smallholder producers with a fundamental shift to more climate-resilient development.

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is gaining traction as a response. CSA can offer a triple benefit to farmers and countries that implement it. First, it allows farmers to adapt and build resilience to climate change. Secondly, it can mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Thirdly, and most important, it does these while at the same time increasing productivity and incomes sustainably.

Technologies for more climate-resilient production exist, but that these are not widely adopted because of a lack of awareness and knowledge among farmers and extension services, a weak institutional environment and poor supporting policies. CSA has been a cornerstone of CTA's programme for the past several years, and building on these foundations, CTA will increase its efforts to promote climate-smart agricultural practices and create the necessary supportive policy environment.

CTA's sees four entry points to promote CSA.

- Offer robust information brokerage that synthesises information from a range of sources to give smallholders 'news they can use.' This will include converging efforts to envisage alternative scenarios for ARD under climate change.
- Demonstrate proof of concept for the implementation of appropriate solutions, working through partnerships to scale up proven good practices.
- Facilitate policy and institutional solutions to trigger the uptake of proven climate-resilient agriculture both upstream, in the form of a conducive policy environment, and downstream in field adoption by farmers. The private sector will need to be included in these efforts.
- Support key partners engaged in promoting CSA in the field, undertaking joint resource mobilisation where appropriate.

## 4.2 Agribusiness development

Most ACP countries need smarter agrifood systems: more productive, more integrated, less wasteful and more profitable, inclusive and sustainable. At present, food exports from ACP countries are low and food imports are high – annual food import bills are US\$4 billion for the Caribbean and US\$35 billion for Africa. This presents a great opportunity for a competitive agricultural sector. Agribusinesses that can effectively link farmers to national, regional and international markets will contribute to poverty alleviation, export-led growth, food import substitution, enhanced food security and job creation.

However, most farmers are currently unable to benefit from the opportunities that rapidly growing markets provide, because value chains are poorly developed. Farmers, processors, traders, retailers and consumers are linked, but not in any organised manner, which results in high post-harvest losses, lack of support to farmers to meet consumer demand, low value added and poor food standards. Better organised value chains, in which farmers interact on an equal footing with input and service providers as well as with buyers will increase value creation in agriculture, and in the process drive rural transformation. Fewer people will be dependent on primary agriculture, more will make their living in the other parts of the value chain and ideally, as is the case in developed economies, farmer cooperatives will own companies in the value chain, retaining more of the added value.

A series of actions is needed to develop agribusinesses of various sizes that can underpin commercially viable value chains, with a focus on priority value chains that have the potential to transform economies. Integrating ICTs is a key aspect, as is collaborating with education systems and applied learning. Agribusinesses should be enabled to meet global best practices in food safety, food production and processing technologies, process standards, marketing, finance and transport. While market development should be led by the private sector, government has a key role to play to minimise market failures through well-designed and targeted interventions and regulations.

Building on the work done to enhance regional trade and develop value chains, CTA is well placed to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are farmer-friendly in the following ways:

- Document successful business cases of diversification, value addition and innovation and new market opportunities, in order to increase farmer revenues and investment and strengthen links with financial institutions. In this context, CTA can expand public-private-producer partnerships to facilitate inclusive agribusiness investments on the basis of the strategic alliances developed so far with farmer and agribusiness groups at global, regional and ACP-EU level.
- Support regional and national actors to identify new market opportunities. These could include import substitution markets, niche markets and tourism-related markets aimed at increasing sustainable local sourcing. This will also require support to commercially-oriented activities such as fairs and business group meetings.

- Strengthen the significant and growing pool of entrepreneurial and innovative people who can transform rural spaces across ACP regions by supporting the organisational and entrepreneurship capacities of young people.
- Promote the development of a market oriented and competitive regional agribusiness sector, with opportunities for farmers to move up the value chain, by supporting ACP organisations in providing analytical data that will help decision-making by policy and agribusiness actors and encourage investors along supply chains.
- Support the capacity development of key actors and support institutions, in particular existing and emerging market-oriented farmer and agribusiness organisations.

### 4.3 Making agriculture nutrition-sensitive

There is overwhelming evidence of the grave consequences of the double burden of malnutrition (under- and over-nutrition) on the economic, health and social well-being of citizens in ACP countries. Stunting and micro-nutrient deficiencies are especially prevalent in SSA. At the same time, obesity in adults and children is also increasing and contributing to chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Under-nutrition and over-nutrition both contribute to a lack of productivity and rising health care costs.

Multi-sectoral, food system approaches are needed to address nutrition issues. These approaches include efforts to make agriculture more nutrition-sensitive, for example by systematically mitigating inefficiencies along value chains and thus decreasing high nutrient losses and health risks such as aflatoxin contamination. Efforts to improve the nutrition awareness of consumers are also helping to ameliorate the problems. However, attempting to address health through nutrition-sensitive agriculture is a daunting prospect because agriculture, economic development and health ministries tend to be disconnected in terms of their policies, programmes, professionals and related organisations.

CTA recognises that there are many ways to start moving towards a more integrated approach to nutrition-sensitive agriculture among policy-makers and in institutions. CTA is committed to joint action to strengthen the links between agriculture and nutrition, using priority value chains as a point of entry. CTA will identify, document and promote successful agricultural interventions that improve nutrition, including market development and supportive policies. It will strengthen the human and institutional capacity of farmer organisations, government agencies and associated organisations and the private sector to provide effective extension, training and information services. And it will work with farmer organisations, value-chain actors, agribusiness, women and youth to advocate increased production, marketing and consumption of diverse, nutrient-dense foods.

Given the diversity across the ACP regions in national and regional cultural differences, policies, priorities and capabilities, CTA's interventions and actions will always be context specific and embedded in the relevant applicable policy. CTA will apply an innovation systems approach, and the analysis of the context and pilot interventions will yield results that can inform the details of policy changes to improve nutrition outcomes. At the same time, such

results will provide lessons for agriculture and nutrition policies and programmes elsewhere in the ACP.

## 4.4 Women and youth

Reviews of past strategic plans indicated that gender and youth, while they have been important elements in CTA's work from the outset, needed to be integrated into CTA's programmes and projects. This has been done with separate strategies for each.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, women and youth are the most prominent target group of the SDGs, at least five of which relate directly to agriculture. The future therefore offers a strong common framework for CTA work on issues of women and youth in ACP countries.

### 4.4.1 Gender

The importance of women in CTA's work cannot be over-emphasised. Almost half of economically active women worldwide depend on agriculture for their livelihood, a figure that rises to almost 80% in least developed countries. And yet women earn less than men for the same tasks, have fewer rights to land and property, and where they do hold land, it is generally poorer than land held by men. Differences in the yields obtained by men and women are the result not of less skill but of lower access to inputs. And because women make decisions about what their family eats, empowering women has a disproportionate beneficial effect. One study showed that an increase of US\$10 in a woman's income has the same impact on household food and nutrition security as an increase in a man's income of US\$110. More broadly, studies have shown that given access to the same productive resources as men, women can increase national gross domestic product by about 4%.

Women are already deeply engaged in agriculture; the problem is that they lack influence in the sector. Hence, the need to empower women is clear, and by empowerment CTA understands giving women the ability to participate in policy processes, a forum where they can voice their concerns – and be heard! – and ensuring that they have access to and control over resources.

The importance of integrating women into value chains is beyond doubt. Estimates suggest that full integration can boost a country's agricultural output by around 3% and reduce worldwide malnutrition by 17%, with spin-off benefits outside the food system.

CTA will work with partners to offer women the assistance, training and access they need. Overall, CTA's Gender Strategy aims to highlight the importance of women as a marker of the inclusiveness of value chains and to demonstrate how the inclusion of women increases the benefits derived from such value chains. Participation in policy processes is also crucial, and can be part of a positive feedback loop: the more that empowered women can influence policy decisions, the more empowered women will be. In fact, CTA regards the full empowerment of women as absolutely essential to enable gender equality in engagement.

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<sup>23</sup> The two realms are treated separately but are strongly interlinked.

#### 4.4.2 Youth

More than half the people in ACP countries are under 30 years old.<sup>19</sup> The future, quite literally, belongs to them. These people are clearly an asset for ACP countries, but they face unemployment and a lack of opportunities – and the skills to take advantage of them. Many young people currently see no future in agriculture, which is associated with hard physical work and low wages, in addition to being dirty and uncertain. However, agriculture offers two to four times more opportunities for poverty reduction than any other sector, and with 11–12 million young people joining the labour market in Africa each year, modernising agriculture and encouraging young people to enter the sector would be a winning strategy.

There is some movement in that direction. The experience of CTA and others is that young people are beginning to organise themselves to play a bigger part in agriculture, and these organisations require support. CTA's intention is to partner with such organisations to change the mindset of young people with regard to agriculture, by demonstrating that agriculture offers a variety of money-earning options in value addition and services and by building their entrepreneurial skills. As with women, many young people are not equipped to play an effective part in the policy process and do not have access to the assets they need, so these areas too will be targeted.

ICTs have a special role to play with regard to youth, because they can act as a two-way conduit. In one direction, ICTs offer channels through which to contact youth, supply them with information and enthuse them about opportunities in agriculture and the non-farm rural economy. In the other, youth is well placed and motivated to innovate through ICTs to deliver the services agriculture needs. Young people in urban areas also have opportunities in smaller urban agriculture businesses, food processing and other parts of the value chain.

Many elements in CTA's Youth Strategy echo the Gender Strategy, promoting engagement in value chains and policy processes. One area of difference is the importance of supporting young professionals in agricultural sciences and innovation. These people will set the direction for ARD and will help to educate future generations of smallholder producers. Their importance is as multipliers and role models, in addition to their direct contributions.

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<sup>19</sup> CTA uses the age range 15–35 to encompass 'youth.' This is wider than the UN's range of 15–24, but also reflects practice in many countries, where 35, or even 40, is still considered "young" by community elders. Although CTA's age range for youth is broader than the UN's, it will disaggregate data for 15–24 year olds where possible, to facilitate international comparisons.

## Chapter 5: Theory of change

CTA adopted the theory of change (ToC) approach in 2011, as the conceptual model for defining and illustrating its strategy, as the ToC provides a holistic and systemic (hence non-linear) view of the impact pathways. In this chapter, we will briefly highlight the key features of the ToC approach and present CTA's ToC diagram in detail. We will draw on this conceptual model to illustrate and further explain the numerous developmental changes described in Chapters 3 and 4, which CTA's interventions are expected to trigger in ACP countries.

### 5.1 Overview of ToC

The ToC is focused in particular on mapping out or "filling in" what has been described as the "missing middle" between what a programme or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions that must be in place (and how these relate to one another causally) for the goals to occur<sup>35</sup>.

Furthermore, the ToC approach, when applied to its fullest, facilitates M&E, because it requires the specification of a number of details about the nature of the desired change – including specifics (i.e. baseline data and other pertinent information) about the target population, the amount of change required to signal success, and the time frame over which such change is expected to occur. This attention to detail is often expected to lead to a reassessment of the feasibility of reaching goals that may have initially been vaguely defined and, in the end, to promote the development of reasonable long-term outcome targets that are acceptable to all the interested parties.

### 5.2 CTA's ToC model

Viewed from top to bottom, CTA's ToC diagram (Annex 2) has several distinct, albeit interrelated, levels including the results chain (impacts, outcomes and outputs).

#### *Impacts*

CTA's long-term impact is reflected in its overall objective of contributing to rural prosperity, healthy diets and resilient food systems in ACP countries. In pursuing this objective, CTA will promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural value chains and markets, focusing primarily on the smallholder farmers, women and youth. This will involve the availability of healthy and nutritious food, profitable agribusiness and climate-smart practices. Additional benefits or impacts indicated in Chapter 3 include farmers escaping the vicious cycle of poverty and closing the gap between rural and urban livelihoods. Consumers will also benefit from healthy and nutritious diets.

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<sup>35</sup> The Center for Theory of Change; <http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>



In addition to the problem of attribution, tracking and measuring these impacts will pose a serious challenge, not least because CTA does not work directly with the millions of smallholder producers in ACP countries. CTA will seek to address these challenges by investing in bigger projects involving partner organisations and networks that provide services directly to smallholder farmers. Part of this additional investment will go towards boosting the M&E capabilities of ACP partners, which, according to all the available information, are currently mostly either rudimentary or non-existent. On the whole, assessing impacts at the level of farmers will be an entirely new experience for CTA and one of the key innovations in the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan.

### **Outcomes**

CTA's outcomes are reflected in its strategic goals of 'inclusive value chains that cater for smallholder farmers, supportive agricultural policies, and enhanced capacity for knowledge management (KM).' The overall aim is to provide an enabling and more conducive environment for smallholder farmers by removing or attenuating various constraints, including inefficient marketing systems and structures, inappropriate policies, poor access to innovations and inputs, and weak support institutions. Outcomes occur at different levels and reflect improvements in systems, structures and practices. The direct beneficiaries, from CTA's perspective, are ACP regional, national or local organisations and networks that may be grouped as: (i) governmental and intergovernmental agricultural organisations and networks, (ii) producer associations, youth and women's groups, (iii) research extension and rural advisory services; and tertiary education institutions and networks and; (iv) agribusiness SMEs. The expected results at the level of the direct beneficiaries include 'improved agribusiness and value-chain practices', an 'enabling policy environment' and 'empowered, capable and informed agri-food sector actors'.

The multi-dimensional and ongoing relationships that CTA has nurtured with its direct beneficiaries over the years are the mainstay of its ToC. CTA implements the bulk of its programme in collaboration with a significant number of its direct beneficiaries in their capacity as strategic, programmatic and project partners. At the same time, the direct beneficiaries – whether or not they are partners – have access to various services provided by CTA, including support for attendance at thematic workshops and short training courses as well as access to print publications and online resources. This has resulted in the creation of significant and growing quantity of social, technical and political capital for CTA and its partners, built on trust, long-standing collaboration and, of course, the quality of its products and services. In addition, following the adoption of RBPs in 2014, CTA has invested in multi-partner regional projects, thus opening the door to investment in bigger projects with a higher chance of leveraging and impacting smallholder farmers.

### **Outputs**

CTA's outputs are characterised by their diversity, high quality and contribution towards developing the ICT and KM capacities of ACP organisations and networks. CTA has a good reputation for knowledge brokering advocacy and convening multi-stakeholder engagement in ARD policy processes and value chains, regularly and on a relatively large scale at regional and

international levels. Its stock of publications continues to grow from year to year and these are available online free of charge. Publications, including the flagship magazine *Spore*, constitute an invaluable source of knowledge for CTA's direct beneficiaries and help to raise awareness about innovations and new technologies. CTA also invests in studies aimed at providing evidence for policy-making and documenting best practices; supports projects that provide proof of concept, especially in relation of ICT applications for agricultural development; and promotes sharing of lessons among different stakeholders. It also invests in KM and ICT skills enhancement of its direct beneficiaries, which could involve the development and testing to new tools, as well as support for face-to-face and online training.

CTA's established practice is to produce these public goods, whenever feasible, in collaboration with its direct beneficiaries and other development agencies, on a cost-sharing basis. This approach invariably guarantees the relevance of the outputs, while allowing economies of scale.

### ***Impact pathways***

During the implementation of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, CTA's impact pathways will increasingly be built around region-specific interventions that are multidisciplinary and involve several key actors. CTA's ToC will serve as the basis for guiding the investment decisions under the RBPs, regarding, for instance, the ideal combination of outputs needed to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts. Regular and systematic M&E feedback will be used to refine and update CTA's theory of change and impact pathways.

## Chapter 6: Implementation

Once this Strategic Plan has been approved by the Executive Board, CTA will develop a strategy implementation plan (SIP) to align the Centre with the new strategy. It will outline the practical steps that CTA will need to take in 2016 to lay a solid foundation for the implementation of the new Strategic Plan. The SIP will fully reflect the new strategic orientations (cf. Chapter 3), thematic and cross-cutting priorities (cf. Chapter 4), theory of change (cf. Chapter 5) and the type of interventions earmarked for each of the three strategic goals (cf. Chapter 3). It will also take account of the lessons learned during the implementation of the 2011–2015 strategy and the recommendations of the 2015 external evaluation.

The SIP will address wide-ranging operational and institutional issues, including in particular those briefly highlighted in this chapter. In nearly all cases, the SIP will be based on the existing complementary CTA strategies or plans, which are listed in Annex 3.

### 6.1 How CTA works

CTA, being a relatively small organisation with a mandate to serve 79 ACP countries, has to find a 'smart' way of using its resources efficiently and effectively, while ensuring that its interventions remain relevant and are likely to have the desired impact. The building blocks of a smart approach to making the 2016-2020 strategy operational have, in fact, been outlined in Chapter 3 for each of the strategic goals, under the heading 'CTA's approach', as well as in Chapter 5.2 (CTA's ToC model).

CTA's approach to programme implementation is characterised by a range of clearly specified types of intervention that are underpinned by a unique way of interacting with its direct beneficiaries and partners. As stipulated in Chapter 3, the interventions are aimed essentially at facilitating information and knowledge sharing; identifying, documenting and sharing best practices; supporting proof-of-concept projects; capacity building of individuals and institutions; and facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement. Of these, multi-stakeholder engagement constitutes a relatively new focus that CTA adopted during the implementation of its 2011-2015 SP, which has proved to be a very effective way of promoting interaction and learning.

In pursuing its interventions, CTA avoids being perceived as a donor agency and concentrates instead on building solid working relationships with potential partners including regional ACP organisations and networks. As explained in Chapter 5.1, this approach has the potential of both strengthening the ACP partner (a desirable developmental outcome in its own right) and resulting in greater impact at the level of smallholder farmers and other beneficiaries on the ground (i.e. youth and consumers), on the assumption that there is a positive correlation between an organisation's capabilities and its performance or impact.

Another advantage of the partnership approach relates to the possibility to leverage CTA's funds with investments by public or private-sector organisations involved in ARD in ACP countries. ACP partners usually provide in-kind contributions whereas development agencies collaborating with CTA tend to provide counterpart funding, which makes it possible to up-scale activities.

## 6.2 Regional business plans

CTA's work will be driven primarily by three-year revolving RBPs, formulated on the basis of each of the six ACP regions' agricultural-sector priorities and making best use of CTA's comparative advantages. Put in place in 2015, each RBP identifies a set of key priority intervention areas for CTA interventions that address challenges and realise opportunities specific to that region. The RBP approach helps to better identify target clients and opportunities for making an impact. It also helps to improve coordination and team work among various programmes. It allows CTA to fully leverage the power of the private sector and catalyses complementary actions along agricultural value chains, such as those that support greater nutritional value. Finally, RBPs provide a medium for interaction with partners, including possible funding agencies.

## 6.3 Working through partnerships

CTA's major mode of project implementation will continue to be through different kinds of partnerships with a range of institutions.

CTA's partnership strategy has identified four categories of partners – strategic, programmatic, project and friends/social capital. While engagement with project partners may be limited to short-term collaboration on a specific CTA activity or project, engagement with programmatic partners will be much broader and will evolve towards greater systemic collaboration in a defined area, because this improves the opportunities to have impact. Engagement with strategic partners will be driven by a shared vision, with CTA and the partner organisations both expressly recognising the value of long-term collaboration in a number of areas. Joint thinking will be at the root of the both programmatic and strategic partnerships. CTA will implement the partnership strategy more vigorously, for example by systematically developing and periodically reviewing joint work plans with strategic partners. CTA will adhere to its internal operational guidelines for implementing the partnership strategy, and may require some institutional changes that will be outlined in the SIP.

## 6.4 Programming and project identification

CTA will continue its focus on regional projects rather than national ones. This complements well the regional ARD initiatives, supported by the regional economic communities, in the six ACP regions. CTA will only engage in national projects to build the evidence base, develop or test new approaches, support proof-of-concept pilot studies, identify how to scale up successful approaches, and strengthen the contribution that national actors can make to regional and international programmes.

As a comparatively small actor in international development, CTA has to choose judiciously the areas in which it intervenes. Such choices are guided by two key considerations. First, where possible, CTA uses its own resources to promote investment by public and private sectors, thus leveraging CTA's investment. Secondly, CTA concentrates on interventions that will potentially have high impact. Faced with these considerations, CTA will start the implementation of its new strategy by re-examining its programme structure and the constituent projects and activities,

with a view to further streamlining its operations, both to ensure greater leverage and a deeper, more tangible, impact.

## 6.5 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

CTA will update its strategy for monitoring, evaluation and organisational learning, making sure of an increased Centre-wide focus on developing reliable performance indicators at project and programme level, collecting baseline data, impact assessment and enhanced collaboration with partners in project design and M&E. The strategy will build on the progress CTA has made over the past four years in embracing an M&E culture. It will be based on the principle that CTA project coordinators and partners will assume much greater responsibility for M&E using common tools and methodologies.

CTA will place monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment at the forefront of implementing its partnership strategy and the RBPs, while pursuing key M&E and learning activities – such as systematic collection and management of baseline data, independent evaluations and impact assessments and promoting organisational learning within CTA and with key partners.

## 6.6 Project cycle management

CTA will complement its RBM with a more stringent application of project cycle management (PCM) practices. While RBM will ensure that CTA pays greater attention to effectiveness and impact, PCM will lead to higher efficiency at the operational level. During the preparation of the SIP, CTA will review its current project cycle with a view to identifying and removing weaknesses and bottlenecks.

As indicated above, CTA already places a lot of emphasis on programming, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, which are key components of the project cycle. In order to adopt a comprehensive and systematic approach to PCM, CTA will also strengthen other stages in the project cycle, including project identification and budgeting. More attention will also be paid to the scheduling of activities across projects and programmes, Centre-wide, to ensure that events are more evenly spread out during the year. Where possible activities will be integrated during implementation to promote team work and increase cost efficiency. The SIP will also identify steps to ensure that CTA has all the key tools, including policies and guidelines, required to backstop its PCM and RBM practices.

## 6.7 Information technology (IT)

A robust IT infrastructure is essential for efficient and effective delivery of CTA's programmatic, administrative and financial operations. Over the past few years CTA has invested substantial resources in upgrading its internal IT network and server infrastructure, resulting in improved service delivery capabilities and the establishment of a disaster-recovery mechanism. An IT Action Plan was drawn up in 2015, which targets over the next couple of years the rebuilding of core information technology infrastructure, defining key building blocks of CTA's future information management landscape and establishing an effective IT operating and governance model. The overall goal is to ensure that CTA has a strong IT-based business

continuity management facility. CTA seeks to identify and adopt the appropriate business software applications in a timely and efficient fashion.

## 6.8 Human resources

During the past 3–4 years, CTA's staff has changed substantially in terms of skill mix and age profile. New staff members with professional backgrounds in value chain, policy, ICT, KM, publishing and finance have joined the Centre. In addition, several younger professionals have joined CTA as Associates or Interns. The change in staffing has created a dynamic and exciting professional environment that must be nurtured and developed to encourage team work, result- and impact-orientation and an overall high level of performance for the Centre. The performance management system has been improved significantly, with clear performance contracts and mid-year and year-end performance assessments. The performance management system will be further refined and strengthened to support a high level of accountability for results and continuous improvement for staff. CTA will strive to attract talented and motivated staff members to fill its vacancies and will continue to build a conducive work environment that engenders team work and excellence.

## 6.9 Resource mobilisation

CTA will continue to rely on the EDF for the bulk of the budget required to implement its 2016–2020 strategy. However, CTA will also work with its partners to raise additional funds that will leverage its EDF funding to reach out to a larger number of beneficiaries and provide support to CTA's partners. Over the past year, CTA, as leader of various consortia consisting of several ACP regional organisations and development actors, has won a number of competitive grants from non-EDF sources. These successes have given CTA good experience and the confidence to continue engaging in resource mobilisation to expand its funding for greater outreach and impact. The internal financial system, which has been largely geared to servicing EDF requirements, has been enhanced to handle grants from other sources of funding.

## Annex 1: Vision, mission and values

CTA's mandate as set out in the 2000 Cotonou Agreement (Article 3 of Annex III) is:

To strengthen policy and institutional capacity development and information and communication management capabilities of ACP agricultural and rural development organisations. It shall assist such organisations in formulating and implementing policies and programmes to reduce poverty, promote sustainable food security, preserve the natural resource base, and thus contribute to building self-reliance in ACP rural and agricultural development.

### Vision

Smallholder agriculture as a vibrant, modern and sustainable business that creates value for farmers, entrepreneurs, youth and women, and produces affordable, nutritious and healthy food for all.

### Mission

To advance food security, resilience and inclusive economic growth in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific through innovations in sustainable agriculture.

### Core values

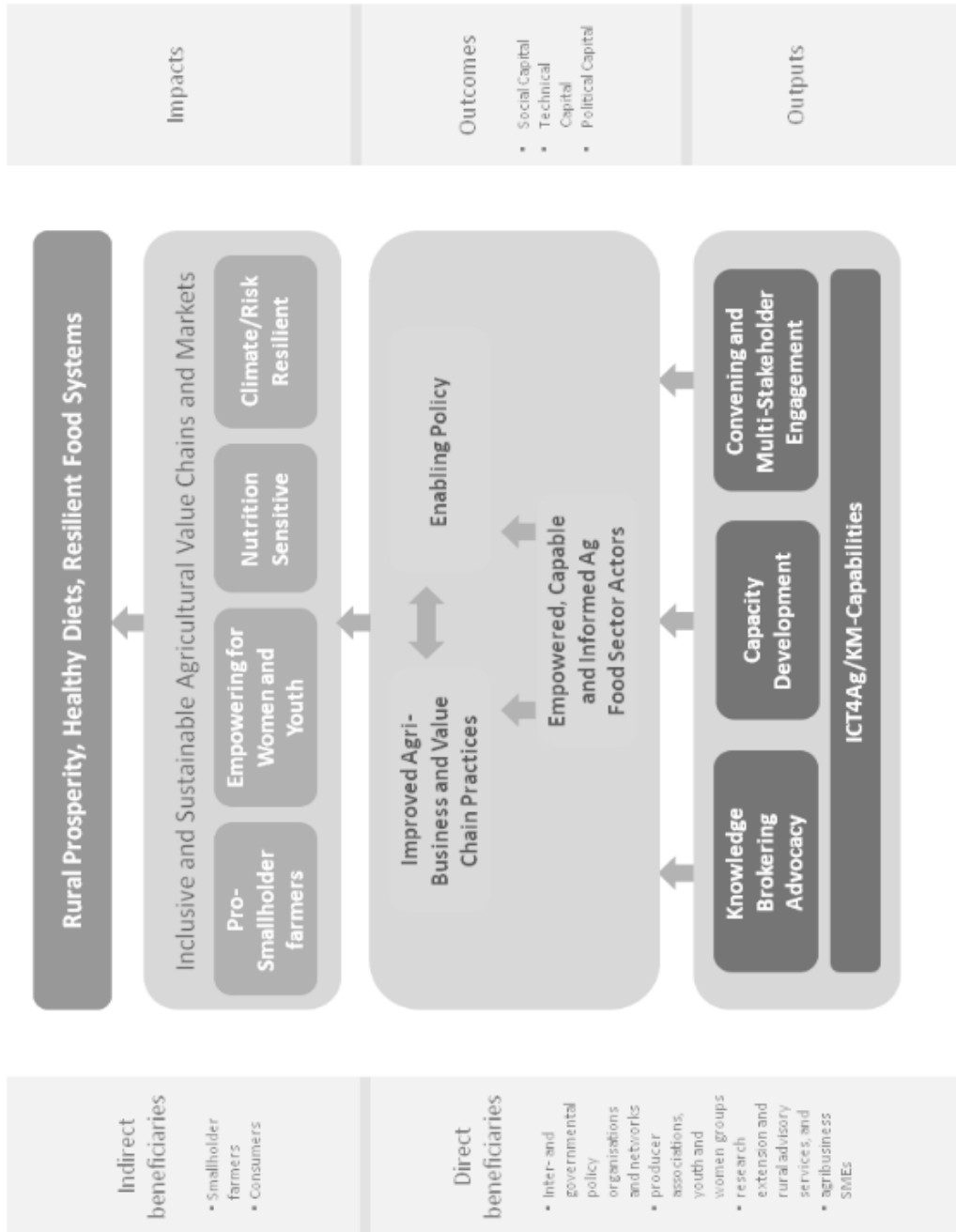
#### Transparency

- CTA is committed to serving as an honest broker by bringing together, and facilitating communication among, different stakeholders to achieve sustainable solutions for ARD challenges in ACP countries.
- CTA will demonstrate a high level of accountability to its supervisory authorities, partners and beneficiaries.

#### Collaboration

- CTA will strive to build strong partnerships with groups and institutions to achieve common objectives.

## Annex 2: CTA’s theory of change diagram





### **Annex 3: List of complementary CTA strategies and plans**

- CTA's Regional Business Plans: West Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, Caribbean and Pacific
- Youth strategy
- Gender strategy
- Partnership strategy
- Internal operational guidelines for implementing CTA's Partnership Strategy
- CTA's Monitoring, Evaluation and Organisational Learning (MEOL) Strategy