Scaling Sustainable Forest and Farm Producer Organisation Enterprises

The Forest and Farm Facility (FFF) is a partnership between FAO, IUCN, IIED and Agricord with support from eight donors including FCDO.

FFF operates in 15 countries globally, including 8 in Sub-Saharan Africa. It strengthens the organisations of Indigenous Peoples, forest communities and family smallholders to help secure their rights, build sustainable enterprises, and improve forest and land management. Evidence from the ARCAN MEL Midline Evaluation shows FFF in Kenya contributes principally to enterprise development, as well as land management and resilience, though gaps remain with insufficient evidence of FFF's work on mobilising private finance and growing sustainable agroecological enterprises.

A case study in Kenya – selected for its strong examples of enterprise development – examined the scalability and sustainability of forest and farm producer organisation (FFPO) enterprises. Selected experience from FFF work in other regions in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond was also examined. The team conducted interviews and focus group discussions with 91 in-country stakeholders, and international FFF staff.

FFF's Holistic Approach Works When Fully Applied

FFF Kenya has focused heavily on entrepreneurship compared to other outcome areas such as climate resilience, advocacy, or social services. Business development training, financial management support, and guidance in procuring service providers have helped organisations increase production, membership, and access to policymakers. Some project activities – such as tree nurseries, beekeeping, honey processing, and eco-tourism – have provided new livelihood opportunities to beneficiaries.

However, the Kenya portfolio does not yet show the fully integrated FFF model seen in its work in countries including Bolivia, Nepal, and Vietnam. For example, in 2024, the FFF-supported El Ceibo Cooperative in Bolivia exported cocoa beans to France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, worth more than USD 5 million. This success reflects an agroecological approach combining indigenous forest species, Amazonian fruits, and diverse cocoa varieties – helping avoid climate-vulnerable monocultures. In a 2024 ARCAN MEL Unit field visit, FFF Tanzania appeared to consider entrepreneurship equally with climate resilience, forest protection, advocacy, and social services.

Project Selection Shapes Who Benefits

Findings show older men benefit disproportionately from FFF Kenya's interventions. Many supported value chains – such as avocado, honey, coffee and dairy – are traditionally dominated by men and wealthier households. Membership data shows men make up the majority of case study FFPO members benefiting from training and enterprise support, limiting opportunities for women. Further, many of the FFPO enterprises visited during the case study had been established and growing profits prior to FFF support.

More Strategic Advocacy Could Help Drive Transformational Change

Some Kenyan FFPOs are working to shift cultural norms on land and cattle ownership, but women and youth still hold limited decision-making power. These issues cannot be resolved by FFF Kenya alone, but it could focus its advocacy on systemic constraints – such as policies that favour subsidised chemical fertilisers over natural, environmentally friendly alternatives produced by FFPOs. FFF has influenced beneficial policies for FFPOs elsewhere, including expanded government funding for farmer-managed seed banks in Tanzania.

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Agrobiodiversity Is an Underused Opportunity for Resilience

Diversification of FFPO products – a core FFF principle – is less visible in Kenya than in other regions. FFF has successfully supported diversification in Latin America and elsewhere in Africa. In Kenya, whilst there has been an emphasis on establishing tree nurseries to produce grafted fruit trees of high quality (avocado, mangoes etc.) beekeeping and some indigenous timbers, there appears to be far less focus on encouraging the diversification of FFPO value chains into indigenous crops and Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) value chains. This would have been a relatively easy and cost-effective step to increase resilience to climate change.

Learning Across Regions Could Strengthen Kenya's Programme

Increased peer to peer learning, especially between Latin America, Kenya and other African countries can add value. FFPOs in Latin America supported by FFF were identified as being the most advanced in applying agroecological practices. There would be benefits from seeing how FFPOs are applying agro-ecological practices in sub-Saharan African contexts, such as Tanzania and Madagascar and also from their work specifically with Indigenous Peoples in Bolivia and Ecuador. Work by other donor programmes and the private sector could also be complementary to FFF Kenya's work.

The Midline Evaluation Summary Report and full case studies will be available at: DevTracker Programme GB-GOV-1-300808 Documents and the Ecorys website at: World-class research-based consultancy | Ecorys

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Keep a strong focus on gender equality**, social inclusion, agroecology, and value-chain diversification across grant design and delivery.
- **Select value chains where FFF support is additional**, placing greater emphasis on indigenous crops and NTFPs.
- **Give greater emphasis to selecting FFPOs involved** in agroecological approaches which encourage diversification in farm and forest systems.
- **Ensure strong monitoring and evaluation data collection** for adaptive management.
- **Strengthen collaboration with government**, private-sector and NGO actors at all levels to increase the likelihood of sustainable landscape restoration, tree planting and agroecology.

"In 2024, the FFF-supported Bolivian El Ceibo Cooperative exported 14,065 quintals of cocoa beans to France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, with a commercial value exceeding USD 5 million. This success is a result of El Ceibo enriching and stabilising soils by planting indigenous forest species and Amazonian fruits alongside multiple varieties of cocoa plants, including indigenous varieties. Such methods are key to fighting against climate vulnerable monocultures of non-indigenous crops."

This brief has been produced by the Africa Regional Climate and Nature Programme (ARCAN) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Unit. This material has been funded by UK International Development from the UK government; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

The Africa Regional Climate and Nature Programme (ARCAN) has supported a range of existing multi-partner initiatives in sectors most affected by climate change since 2022. With International Climate Finance (ICF) funding of over £100 million, ARCAN has been a key vehicle to meet the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) ICF commitments in Africa. Ecorys (with support from Altai and IIED) has been contracted as ARCAN's independent MEL Unit.