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Sustainable agriculture and food systems

Enabel supports the transition to more sustainable food systems by working on food production, processing, distribution and consumption. The aim is to guarantee food and nutritional security for all, while taking account of the environmental, climatic and socio-economic issues involved.

Background and approach

In 2022, it was estimated that between 690 and 780 million people were suffering from hunger, and that 2.4 billion people did not have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Furthermore, the industrialisation of our food systems has contributed to significant degradation of land, water and ecosystems, generating high levels of greenhouse gas emissions and causing considerable biodiversity loss. Finally, our food systems are marked by profound socio-economic disparities as power is more and more concentrated in a few large companies while the situation of the 2.3 billion small-scale farmers who depend on them for their livelihoods is increasingly dire.

In the light of these many challenges, Enabel supports a transition towards sustainable food systems through an approach that recognises both the close links that exist between food production, distribution and consumption and the need to balance the challenges of food and nutritional security with challenges of an environmental and socio-economic nature. Based on the principle that each food system is complex and specific to its region, we look for specific levers for action to make these food systems more sustainable.

The food system





Sustainable and resilient food systems

It is essential to strengthen the resilience of food systems so that they have a greater capacity to withstand the shocks and stresses associated with climatic, health and socio-economic disturbances. To achieve this, Enabel supports stakeholders in implementing agro-ecological transition strategies, to design and promote innovative and pragmatic production systems that optimise interactions between plants, animals, people and the environment.

In consultation with local and national authorities, we also use territorial approaches to ensure that agriculture is better integrated into natural ecosystems and coexists harmoniously with other land uses. Finally, our action also aims to make agri-food chains more sustainable by reducing food loss and waste, promoting the use of renewable energies, and supporting the transition to more local and regional food systems.

Inclusive agri-food chains that create decent jobs



Our ambition is to promote the creation of decent jobs in the agri-food chains, particularly for the smallholders, young people and rural women, as well as displaced, often marginalised, people. To promote fairer trade relations between the various players in the supply chain, we are strengthening producer organisations and the various links in the chain.

We also support entrepreneurship and the professionalisation of players by facilitating their access to quality technical and financial services. Finally, we are improving labour markets governance by promoting social protection schemes and decent work standards, while supporting the inclusion of informal workers.



Healthy and safe food for everyone

To eradicate hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, we are taking action on several fronts. We work to create healthier food environments by promoting consumer access to nutritious food and supporting local initiatives.

At the same time, we are strengthening food safety by supporting rigorous certification systems and promoting good hygiene practices. Finally, we are raising public awareness of the benefits of a healthy, balanced diet.

An institutional framework that is conducive to sustainable transition



Enabel is working to change the rules of the policy and institutional game to make our food systems more sustainable. To achieve this, we are building the capacity of stakeholders at national and local level to adopt policy and regulatory frameworks that support the transition to sustainable food systems.

As a firm believer in the power of partnerships, we support multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms and the establishment of technical working groups that support advocacy efforts and influence the adoption of sustainable public policies.

Finally, we attach particular importance to the role of innovation and science in policy dialogue: through action research conducted by innovative players in Belgium and in our partner countries, we feed into strategies and evidence-based policy-making.

Link with the Global Challenges

Food-related challenges are complex and intrinsically linked to other global issues. By adopting a systems approach, Enabel establishes clear links between its actions focused on food systems and the various global challenges identified in Enabel's 2030 Strategy. These links are explained below:

Climate change and the environment



By supporting the transition to more sustainable food systems, Enabel is improving the food security and livelihoods of millions of people, while helping to combat climate change. In particular, our actions help to reduce the pressure on natural resources and strengthen the resilience of small-scale producers in the face of climatic shocks.

Urbanisation



Faced with the rapid changes in food systems linked to urbanisation, Enabel is playing a catalytic role by fostering the development of solid links between urban markets and peri-urban and rural production areas. In this way, we are supporting the creation of short local supply chains, enabling agricultural products to be of better use and providing healthier, more sustainable food.

Social & economic inequality



Enabel works for fairer and more equitable food systems by tackling the inequalities underlying these systems. We support initiatives aimed at empowering small producers, women and marginalised groups by giving them better access to resources, markets and the decisions that affect them.

Peace and Security



Enabel helps to prevent food crises and conflicts by supporting the development of resilient food systems in fragile areas. By boosting agricultural production, improving access to markets and promoting natural resource management mechanisms, we are helping to reduce tensions over land and access to food.

Human Mobility



By recognising the role of seasonal and circular migration in addressing the challenges of food systems, Enabel supports rural communities by strengthening their livelihoods. Enabel, for instance, supports pastoralism in the Sahel region by facilitating access to the information, financial services and skills needed for better integration into local and regional economies.

Our experience



Support for agro-ecological transition in Burundi

Donor: Belgium

In the provinces of Cibitoke and Kirundo in Burundi, the Sustainable Food Systems (SysAD) project aims to improve the food and nutritional security of the most vulnerable farming households, while promoting the environment-friendly transformation of agri-food systems.

To achieve this, Enabel supports agro-ecological production through Integrated Farmer Field Schools (IFFS) and develops infrastructures to facilitate the marketing of these products. The project also supports incubation and acceleration programmes for entrepreneurs and SMEs active in the green and circular economy.



Natural resource management in the Mono Delta

Donor: European Union

Located on the southern border of Benin and Togo, the Mono River delta is home to a wide variety of animal and plant species threatened by demographic growth and pressure on natural resources. The project that is implemented jointly by Enabel and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), aims to improve the protection and management of the Mono biosphere reserve and the Avlékété-Bouche du Roy marine protected area.

We reinforce the use of agro-ecological practices and the construction of sustainable food systems among farmers and fishermen through training and the promotion of fish farming. The project also offers vocational training courses in agro-ecology, and supports entrepreneurial initiatives in the field of sustainable food systems.



The resilience of agro-pastoral systems in West Africa

Donor: European Union

The Research and Innovation Project for Productive, Resilient and Healthy Agro-Pastoral Systems in West Africa (PRISMA) is helping farmers and livestock breeders in Niger and Mali to undertake an agro-ecological transformation adapted to climate change. By improving the health of animals, humans and the environment, PRISMA makes agro-pastoral systems more productive and sustainable.

This project is carried out in collaboration with three cooperation agencies: while LuxDev and AECID are working on improving access to pastoral resources and the availability of livestock feed, Enabel is focusing on the control and management of animal diseases transmissible to humans.



Sustainable agri-food value chains in Rwanda

Donors: Belgium, European Union and GIZ

To improve the Rwandan population's access to and consumption of quality food Enabel supports the development of sustainable, resilient and inclusive agri-food value chains. The Belgian cooperation's sustainable agriculture and food systems programme, in combination with other European initiatives, is building the capacity of smallholder groups, SMEs, cooperatives and young entrepreneurs in agri-food value chains (small-scale livestock, aquaculture, beekeeping, vegetables and fruit) to improve the quality and quantity of their products, reduce post-harvest losses and improve access to local and regional urban markets.

Through training and skills development programmes, we are helping to create decent jobs and improve the incomes of local people.



Sustainability of the Côte d'Ivoire cocoa industry

Donor: European Union

The world's leading cocoa producer, Côte d'Ivoire, faces major environmental and social challenges, including deforestation, low incomes and difficult working conditions. To improve the living conditions of producers and their families and ensure the sustainability of this sector, which is vital to the country's economy, the European TEICACAO project is supporting cocoa cooperatives in adopting more environment-friendly approaches that are more profitable for producers.



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