EVALUATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE WEST AFRICA PALM OIL PROGRAMME (SWAPP)

FNS WEST AFRICA EVALUATION – PART II

FINAL SUB-EVALUATION REPORT

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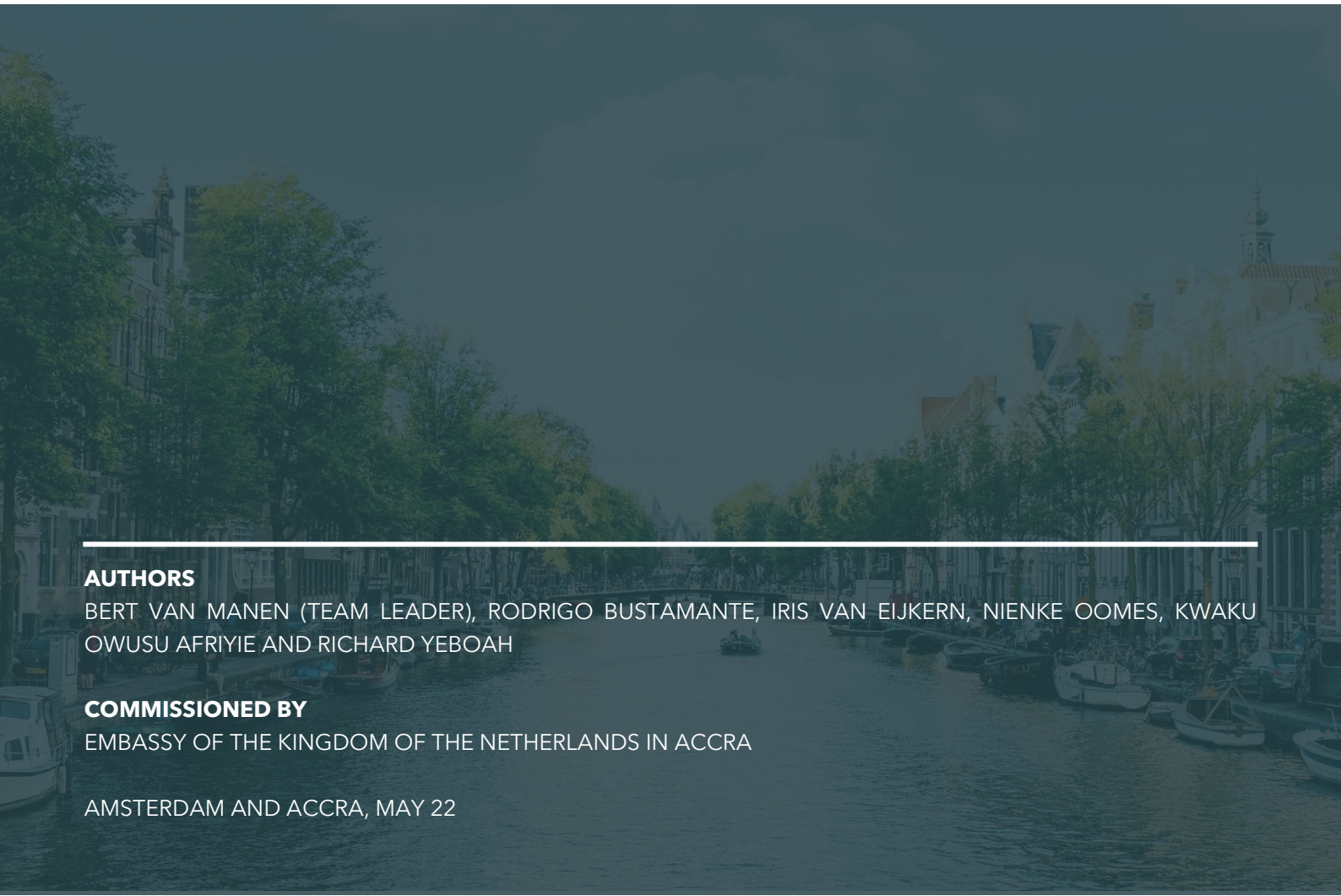

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Executive summary

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana (EKN Ghana) commissioned SEO Amsterdam Economics to conduct the final evaluation of the Sustainable West Africa Palm Oil Programme (SWAPP). SWAPP was implemented by Solidaridad West Africa (SWA) in four countries: Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. EKN Accra funded the programme and managed the evaluation, which was conducted by SEO and its partner MDF Training & Consultancy, with fieldwork carried out by MDF West Africa in late 2021. The evaluation focused on the second phase of the programme, which ran from 2018 to 2021 (extended to April 2022). The quantitative data underlying this evaluation cover the first three years of the programme. 2021 M&E data came in four months after we had delivered our report. However, to do justice to this work, wherever possible we have integrated the new data (in the effectiveness section only), the latest outcome survey in particular. The evaluation findings were not materially affected by these new figures, but we marginally adjusted the text where needed.

The main goal of SWAPP was to improve the livelihoods of farmers, millers, and other stakeholders in the palm oil supply chains in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. This was done via sustainable intensification of oil palm production and Fresh Fruit Bunch (FFB) processing. SWAPP provided technical assistance and facilitated financing for the set-up and operation of SME oil palm mills, SME service centres, farmer organisations and cooperatives.

The design of SWAPP was relevant to the West African oil palm sector. Both oil mills and oil palm farmers confirmed that the technical and management advisory and training by SWAPP met their needs. Due to its focus on upstream activities, SWAPP was less relevant for improving nutrition outcomes or creating market access. However, SWAPP prepared farmers in Sierra Leone for an outgrower arrangement, and built market linkages in Côte d'Ivoire through farmer cooperatives. SWAPP's RSPO certification training was of limited relevance as most palm oil is locally consumed, but it did expose farmers to 'sustainability thinking' in a market where such awareness was low.

The access to finance approach was initially not aligned with sector needs, but SWAPP had some success with setting up Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). SWAPP worked on the assumption that impact investors and local banks would finance artisanal oil mills and service SMEs, which these rarely do. Furthermore, the initial project proposal lacked a component of farmer financing. Although the assumptions behind the access to finance component did not hold, some oil mills and service centres managed to access finance. Moreover, by setting up VSLAs in all countries SWAPP created a mechanism to sustainably finance farmers, albeit only in small amounts and for short durations.

SWAPP has not (yet) delivered on its expected outcomes. M&E data reveal that artisanal mills (in Ghana) did improve their extraction rates, food safety and quality, while farmers became more productive, but less than expected. However, improved tree cropping takes several years to yield results, in particular the introduction of new hybrid seedlings in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Therefore, further outcomes may emerge post-project.

SWAPP contributed to improving oil palm productivity and incomes, but farmers still have a long way to go. Various sources showed that, following SWAPP's extension services and training, oil palm farmers raised their FFB output and productivity. This also helped raise their incomes and improve their access to food. Nevertheless, oil palm farmers in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire remain significantly poor. Surveys revealed that farmers still had a long way to go to apply (all) best management practices, while most do not use any fertilisers or other inputs

at all. The livelihoods training by SWAPP, which focused on topics such as food cropping, did help combat nutrition challenges, particularly in Sierra Leone.

The Rural Service Centres (RSC) model has not (yet) shown to work for the oil palm sector. The evaluation found that many 'service SMEs' were in fact aggregators or input traders, not interested in services provision beyond a commodity transaction. Furthermore, demand for such services was low, as the outcome surveys show that most oil palm farmers use few or no inputs and do not call on labour services to work on their orchards. If oil palm farmers were to intensify their oil palm farms, demand for RSCs would increase, but not likely to the level at which they are used in the cocoa sector.

The effectiveness of the access to finance component was mixed. While SWAPP mobilised some finance for cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire and Achmea Foundation supported four RSCs in Ghana, providing access to finance to oil mills and service providers was difficult. Banks were not structured to provide (medium-term) finance to the oil palm sector, while most SMEs and artisanal oil mills were too small and too early in their development to be bankable. As noted above, SWAPP did successfully set up VSLAs, which mobilised some funding for farmers and even artisanal oil mills, but such funding was limited and short term.

The effectiveness of the skills for development component in generating jobs for youth was also limited. Youth in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire were trained in oil palm skills. Based on the fieldwork, we found that their formal employment prospects were limited, while youth also found it hard to enter self-employment in, for example, service delivery. The main reasons included a lack of start-up capital and a lack of entrepreneurial spirit.

SWAPP was successful at including women and youth, but gender roles continue to limit their possibilities. SWAPP trained many women and youth in VSLAs and various aspects of oil palm production under component 1. Women and youth groups (mainly VSLAs) were linked to financial institutions, and some got MFI or bank loans. RSCs were established, mainly in Ghana and Liberia, and these employed both women and youth. While women took a substantial part of processing and value addition, they were much less present in oil palm farming due to cultural impediments to owning land and their expected household duties.

The RSPO component was not effective in certifying farmers or mills. The RSPO national interpretation was completed in all countries with endorsement from the RSPO Board of Governors. Many farmers and artisanal oil mills were trained in RSPO standards, but few proceeded to RSPO certification as most palm oil was locally consumed. SWAPP did, however, score some results with piloting improved Palm Oil Mill Effluent (POME) management solutions, and raising sustainability awareness.

SWAPP helped put oil palm on the policy agenda. The biggest success was achieved in Ghana with the establishment of the Tree Crop Development Authority (TCDA). This was a significant achievement as oil palm was previously often neglected by policy makers. The National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia supported by SWAPP helped finalise the National Oil Palm Strategy and action plan. Governments now appreciate oil palm's economic potential.

While SWAPP efficiently produced outputs, outcome efficiency was low. While plenty of outputs were produced, key outcomes fall short of expectation. A case in point is the RSPO component, with farmers and mills trained but none certified. Likewise, many youths were trained, but few employed in oil palm. Component 1, the largest, delivered capacity building for farmers, artisanal processors, and SME service providers, but these did not achieve the expected improvements in farm yields and oil mill extraction rates, fell short in finance mobilised for market actors, and only a minority of farmers access farm services, hence outcome efficiency was trailing.

One of the SWAPP interventions most likely to be sustainable is the setting up of VSLAs. Across all four countries there is a high sense of ownership among VSLA members, and they are committed to ensure the continuity of the VSLAs. VSLAs have also been instrumental in allowing women to start other income generating activities, which is likely to sustainably improve their economic position.

The largest sustainability challenge relates to the role of women and youth in oil palm. Although the fieldwork identified positive examples of women and youth making a living in oil palm-related businesses, it is too early to claim that SWAPP has had a transformative effect on women and youth participation in the oil palm sector. Young men and women often see no perspective in the oil palm sector, considering it "a poor man's job", and opting to migrate to urban areas instead. The key challenge here is that even with proper input use and adherence to BMP, most oil palm farms still generate very modest incomes. To make it worthwhile for youngsters to remain in the village and invest in farming would require not only farm intensification but also upscaling. This is beyond most youths' financial capability.

The Theory of Change (ToC) and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system of SWAPP were overly complex. The SWAPP ToC would have benefited from a clearer visual design, showing separate impact pathways with linkages between a reduced number of outputs, outcomes, and impacts. Likewise, the programme's monitoring and evaluation would have benefitted from fewer and more clearly defined performance indicators, nominal targets (rather than percentages), and more regular and reliable data collection methods. This should ideally have been in place before the programme started. The result measurement has lacked in setting baselines for all outcomes, identifying control groups for counterfactuals, and attributing results to SWAPP. For future similarly complex programmes, SWA and EKN Accra could consider outsourcing the responsibility for developing and maintaining a clear and effective M&E framework to an independent M&E advisory party that could support the implementing party with dedicated M&E capacity. The co-funding by SECO also added to M&E complexity, which should have been avoided by the respective donors.

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1 Description of the programme

SWAPP aimed to improve livelihoods in oil palm in West Africa by working with SME oil palm mills, oil palm farmers, and SME service providers to upgrade and intensify sustainable oil palm production and processing.

1.1 Introduction

The Sustainable West Africa Palm Oil Programme (SWAPP) was set up to improve the livelihoods of farmers, millers, and other actors in the palm oil supply chains of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. This was done via sustainable intensification of oil palm production and Fresh Fruit Bunch (FFB) processing. Like CORIP, the programme was implemented by Solidaridad West Africa (SWA). Following a first phase from 2012 to 2016, the programme was extended to include a second phase from 2018 to 2021.[1] This evaluation concerns the second phase.

SWAPP provided technical assistance and financing for the set-up and operation of SME oil palm mills, SME service centres, farmer organisations and cooperatives, and other oil palm sector actors. When SWAPP started, many of the existing oil palm mills in West Africa were artisanal producers, working at very low technological levels, hence achieving very low extraction rates along with poor quality and food safety. The region was a net importer of palm oil, while the natural conditions for oil palm were in fact considered ideal. This was a reason for SWAPP to support upgrading of existing oil palm mills, help establish new mills, and improve the productivity and performance of related SMEs in the palm oil sector. Additionally, SWAPP aimed to set up SME rural service centres to provide farm services, agricultural inputs, aggregation, and transportation services for FFB, as well as on-farm labour support, to sustainably improve the productivity of farmers. Improving access to finance for SMEs, oil mills and farmers was another important component of the programme.

SWAPP emphasised gender and youth inclusion, as well as environmental mitigation. In the area of inclusion, SWAPP specifically supported women and youth groups in attracting financial support to participate in the oil palm sector, and providing training anchored in best practices in farming and milling. Moreover, SWAPP established multi-stakeholder platforms that included the government, training and certification awarding bodies, and other relevant actors in the industry. In the area of environmental mitigation, SWAPP encouraged the sector to adopt sustainability standards to avoid deforestation and reduce Green House Gas emissions, in line with international standards.[2]

The first phase of SWAPP was implemented from 2012 to 2016 and suggested that productivity could increase when farmers and mills adopt best practices. Under the first phase (Ghana and Nigeria), productivity of farmers increased by approximately 15 percent, with 68 percent of farmers reporting improvements in their income. This could be attributed to almost 90 percent of surveyed smallholder farmers implementing more than five out of the ten recommended best management practices. The second phase of SWAPP runs from 2018 to 2021 and is also funded by the Dutch government, through EKN Accra, and co-funded by the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) (for Ghana only). The second phase adds countries as mentioned above, but Nigeria is no longer covered.

This evaluation used a mixed methods approach. SEO and MDF conducted the evaluation of SWAPP simultaneously with the evaluations of CORIP and Hortifresh, thus allowing for a comparison of intervention models and

1 The final version of this evaluation report will therefore be written in past tense.
2 In fact, with greatly increased productivity following adherence to BMP, production is expected to be boosted without felling one single forest tree.

improvement of future approaches in food and nutrition security (FNS) and private sector development (PSD) programmes (see separate synthesis report). The evaluation used several distinct data collection and analysis methods as listed below. Most of the fieldwork was undertaken in Oct 2021, involving field missions in all four countries.

- **Desk review** of available programme- and strategy documents
- **Portfolio analysis** of key characteristics of project beneficiaries
- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** with internal and external stakeholders, such as Solidaridad staff, SMEs, oil palm mills, financial service providers and government staff
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** with farmer groups (including VSLAs)
- **Beneficiary survey** for oil mills in Ghana
- **Outcome Survey** undertaken by a team from the Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research – ISSER (University of Ghana) in the latter part of 2020, which reached 1,504 SWAPP farmers, thereby providing valuable data and analysis on outcomes and impacts. A final outcome survey was undertaken in 2021, reaching 1,532 SWAPP farmers across the four countries.
- **Mid-term evaluation (MTE)** undertaken by Proven Ag Solutions, covering the period until December 2019, also provided valuable inputs for all evaluation questions.[3] This MTE assessed SWAPP on its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The MTE included a survey among project beneficiaries, but these data were unfortunately not included in the report.

1.2 Theory of Change

See Annex A for SWAPP's reconstructed Theory of Change

SWAPP's Theory of Change (ToC) is presented in the project proposal in the form of a logical framework ('logframe'). It is accompanied by a large set of performance indicators at all levels of the ToC, including impacts. In contrast to CORIP, however, the proposal does not include a comprehensive logframe with an integrated result measurement framework, including precise numerical targets for impacts, outcomes, and outputs. Such targets are found scattered throughout the text, and not presented in a systematic, consistent, and comprehensive manner. Consequently, SWAPP has had to make substantial changes to its ToC structure, presentation, and result indicators. Five impact indicators were expanded to seven, while outcomes and outputs were rearranged, all with revised definitions and modified indicators and targets to facilitate their measurement.[4] The (5) core intervention areas, however, have remained the same. In this section, the evaluation team presents its understanding of the current version of the SWAPP ToC. This is based on the latest measurement plan and consolidated report. In section 1.3 we present the most important changes made from the initial project proposal. We assume that these were approved by the Embassy. Interventions may substantially differ among the four countries, given the current state of the oil palm sector.

SWAPP consisted of five intervention components:

- **Component 1 was to increase access to finance and enterprise development in the oil palm sector**. This referred to both artisanal oil mills and farm services providers, including those providing inputs and labour.
- **Component 2 was to set-up Skills Development Centres**. These aimed to train youth with the aim of securing jobs in oil palm production, processing, or as service providers.
- **Component 3 was to enhance women and youth inclusion.** This included specific actions aimed at increasing inclusion in oil palm production and processing, in addition to components 1 and 2.

3 The MTE report uses M&E data and financials up to Dec 2019. It is not clear when the fieldwork took place. The report dates July 2021.

4 SWAPP also needed to match its indicators to the Dutch result measurement framework.

- **Component 4 was environmental mitigation.** This included RSPO certification, zero deforestation and solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. RSPO was considered necessary as international buyers are committed to source sustainably produced palm oil, yet local certification capacity is in its infancy.
- **Component 5 aimed to enhance the enabling business climate in the sector** through policy advocacy and capacity building.

Impact indicators

- Impact was measured on 7 dimensions (see ToC in appendix A), all of which are accompanied by targets for all four countries. These impacts are defined as follows:
  (1) "**Increase in RSPO certified CPO**" relates to crude palm oil that has been produced by RSPO certified mills and RSPO certified farmers. The target of increase is 60 percent in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, and 10 percent for Liberia. However, no nominal baseline data are given.
  (2) "**Jobs created and retained**" relates to both farmers, processors, and workers. The target, per country, is sub-divided into adult males, adult females, youth males, and youth females. The target sum-total is 15,050 jobs.
  (3) "**Farmers with increased access to food**" refers to their capacity to get food from their own harvest or their ability to purchase food. This information is obtained from the outcome survey. The target is 70 percent of targeted farmers in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and 50 percent in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This works out to a target sum-total of 31,628 farmers (and their families).
  (4) "**Farmers experiencing little or no hunger**" is based on the household hunger scale (HHS), looking into the instances when farmers went hungry. This information is obtained from the outcome survey. The target for not experiencing hunger is 70 percent in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and 50 percent in Sierra Leone, and 30 percent in Liberia. This works out to a target sum-total of 29,788 farmers (and their families).
  (5) "**Potentially viable SMEs**" are oil mills, service SMEs, and other value chain partners. The target is 30 SMEs in Ghana and 20 in Côte d'Ivoire, with no targets for the other two countries.
  (6) "**Tonnes of C02 (GHG emissions) reduced**" involves actions and processes aimed at reduction of GHG emissions or enhancing its removal. This would include the percentage of reduced fossil/biomass energy use, energy from renewable sources, energy efficient technologies, water consumption, effluent/chemical management, land cover/use changes etc. Solidaridad has neither defined a method for measuring this impact, nor set a target.
  (7) "**Farmland under sustainable production**" means land where sustainable agronomic practices are applied. This is checked through the outcome surveys that verify several sustainable practices, notably plant handling and input use. The target was set at 73,000 ha.
- Impact indicators # 4 and 7 are directly related to the Netherlands government FNS result measurement framework, while # 1 is closely related. Impact indicators # 2 and 5 are linked to the Netherlands government PSD result measurement framework. # 6 is a new impact indicator. Impact on food security is mostly indirect, a result of increased incomes of farmers and oil processors. However, the programme in Sierra Leone also includes some actions to introduce other (food) crops, intercropped with oil palm.
- Most impact indicators are measured through outcome monitoring surveys. Outcome surveys were done in 2020 and 2021.

Outcome indicators

The (five) outcomes listed in Appendix A correspond with the programme's five interventions components:

- **Outcome 1** ("Increased yields, extraction rates, profitability and income with producers & processors investing in the oil palm sector and alternative livelihoods", and part b "Producers & processors invest in the oil palm sector and alternative livelihoods"), constitutes the core of the programme, and includes many output areas:
  1.1 SMEs (RSCs) are supported, and their capacity enhanced to deliver services to farmers

1.2 Financial institutions are engaged to invest in SMEs, oil mills and farming
1.3 Mills (1-10 t/hr) are upgraded and receive financial investments
1.4 Smallholder farmers capacity is enhanced to receive SME services
1.5 Women are trained in best processing practices
1.6 Producers and processors participate in VSLAs
1.7 Producers & processors mobilize savings through VSLAs

SWAPP formulated ten performance indicators at the outcome level, all with targets, covering both farmers and mills, including:

- % Increase in income of beneficiary mills (target 50 percent over baseline)
- % Increase in oil palm farm income of beneficiary producers (target 75 percent over baseline)
- % Of mills that doubled extraction rates (target 75 percent)
- % Of farmers who implement BMPs (Climate smart innovations) (target 70 percent of beneficiary farmers across all categories)
- Amount of finance mobilized (Euros) for participating SMEs and mills (target EUR 6.6 million)

Outcome area 1 consists of both financial and non-financial services to mills and producers, but non-financial support is proportionately greater.

An important difference with CORIP was the local processing of the palm fruit by artisanal oil mills and some industrial mills. Palm oil is mostly consumed locally or traded in the West Africa sub-region, while cocoa is essentially exported unprocessed or as cocoa paste. Thus, whereas CORIP worked with service providers to support cocoa producers, SWAPP also supported SME oil mills. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, SME mills were eligible for investment grants.

- **Outcome 2** ("Enhanced skills and promoted gender equality for economic activities in the oil palm sector") includes youth training and internships on farms, plantations, farm service companies, mills, machine manufacturers, research institutes and other organisations in the oil palm value chain, making them employable in various parts of the oil palm sector. The core output under this outcome is the establishment of Employment Skills Centres (for the oil palm sector), and the activities are various training programmes including internships for students at tertiary learning institutes. In Ghana this is done with Agricultural TVETs.

  The performance indicators with targets for outcome 2 are (1) the # of trained youth employed in the sector and (2) the # of new businesses created by these youth (targets 380 and 40 respectively).

- **Outcome 3** ("Gender equality in the oil palm sector"), which is cross-cutting, provides training to women and youth groups, linking to financial institutions and SME incubation (e.g., soap making in Liberia). This cross-cutting outcome is integrated particularly in outcomes 1 and 2, and is thus not shown separately in the ToC, and does not have its own outcome indicators.

- **Outcome 4** ("RSPO certification, zero deforestation, less GHS - Environmentally friendly technologies integrated in on-farm & mill production systems") covers actions to ensure that mills and farmers are RSPO certified. It includes support to the national RSPO interpretation process, given that lack of local RSPO certification and audit capacity is the main constraint. The basic assumption is that because of vastly increased productivity on farms and in mills (extraction rates), palm oil production can be increased without clearing forest, which is a precondition for developing export markets.

Some of the core performance indicators with targets for outcome 4 are the # of RSPO certified smallholders (target 5,850), quantity of RSPO certified CPO (which was also an impact indicator) (no target set), and # of mills adopting improved technologies (target 10 mills).

- **Outcome 5** "Improved business climate for the sector through policy influencing" includes actions to build policy advocacy, multi-stakeholder sector organisations, and technical assistance to government regulators. It also includes action research. The core performance indicator would be a description of policy changes resulting from SWAPP work.

Some interventions differed across the four countries. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, the access to finance intervention was focused on securing debt and equity financing for SMEs (farm service providers and oil mills) from financial institutions and impact investors. This was not the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone, where SMEs and mills were given both grants and loans on a 50/50 cost sharing basis.[5] The farmer capacity building intervention in Sierra Leone included an explicit food security element where farmers are supported to cultivate food crops of their choice. However, the food security impacts # 3 and 4 are applicable to all countries. The skills for employment component in Ghana was implemented in collaboration with the Ghana Skills Development Initiative (GSDI), and co-financed by GIZ, to develop and roll out a nationally accredited curriculum in oil palm. Skills training in Côte d' Ivoire was not based on a nationally accredited curriculum. Skills training is not pursued in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The SWAPP results measurement framework was complex and includes about 90 result indicators at various levels of the ToC, more than half of which are for activities undertaken under outcome 1. We present a select number of performance indicators at the impact, outcome, and output levels. The number of 90 result indicators needs to be multiplied by four, as data are collected separately for all four countries and then aggregated at the programme level. Some indicators include sub-indicators (e.g., youth or women), adding to the number of data points. SWAPP collects over 400 data points that need to be verified, cleaned, processed, and reported on. This presents a large burden on the organisation. Data collection in the field, however, was mostly outsourced to external service providers. Much of the output level data was collected by project staff and community facilitators hired by the project. SWAPP undertook outcome surveys with the help of external consultants to understand its outcomes and impact.

1.3 Current SWAPP ToC compared to the original proposal

The SWAPP ToC was substantially revised since its project proposal was presented to EKN Accra. Inconsistencies in the proposal, such as the confusion between outputs and outcomes, were corrected. Overall, the presentation of the intervention logic was unsatisfactory, and was thus substantially revised. The five intervention components, however, remained unchanged (see appendix A, and the proposal). The core strategy was nevertheless adjusted to emphasize access to finance for SMEs, mills, and farmers from local banks, rather than impact investors, whose financing did not materialise. Furthermore, setting up VSLAs became a core access to finance strategy, which was unforeseen in SWAPP's proposal phase. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire VSLAs have been linked to rural and community banks and microfinance institutions to open accounts and establish banking relationships. [6]

Many changes were made in the respective performance indicators at impact and outcome levels and in their targets. The most relevant are the following:

[5] The support to the Youth groups serving as commercial farm management service providers is a grant in the form of capacity building support.

[6] See sections 2.5 and 3.1 for the consequences and relevance of this change.

Table 1.1 Revised SWAPP ambitions

Proposal ToC and target	Current ToC and target
Production of RSPO certified palm oil increased by 60%	60% increase in RSPO certified CPO (no nominator)
10,000 rural youths derive a sustainable income through providing BMP services and/or oil palm cultivation.	15,050 jobs created and retained
At least 50% of project beneficiaries in Liberia and Sierra Leone increase access to food by 5% annually	% Of farmers with increased access to food (70% Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, 50% Liberia and Sierra Leone) % Of farmers experiencing little or no hunger (70% Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, 30% Liberia and 50% Sierra Leone)
50 SMEs established and operational under 3 service delivery models, 25% owned by women and youth entrepreneurs	50 potentially viable SMEs (30 Ghana, 20 Côte d'Ivoire)
Quantity of GHG emissions measured in Metric tons CO2 equivalent reduced or sequestered (no target)	Tonnes of C02 (GHG emissions) reduced (no target)
70,000 hectares of land brought under sustainable and climate resilient production 100,000 ha of oil palm under sustainable practices	73,000 hectares of farmland brought under sustainable production
50 SMEs provide inputs and farm management services	86 service centres established by SMEs
500 female smallholder oil palm processors improve their incomes because of increase in extraction rate	N/A
50,000 oil palm growers access services through various service providers	49,800 smallholder farmers who have access to services from the SMEs
50,000 smallholder oil palm growers adopt BMP	70% of farmers implement BMPs (Climate smart innovations) on their oil palm farm - 35,308 individuals
50,000 smallholders quadrupled productivity	33,542 SHF with increased productivity and/or income
125 or more SME processors double their extraction rate; this will include at least 25 SME mills (1-10 MT/hr capacity) and 100 improved artisanal mills in Liberia and Sierra Leone	75% of Mills that doubled extraction rate (no nominator.) 75% increase in extraction rate of beneficiary/trained processors
All 125 SMEs receive finance from Financial Institutions and Impact Investors	10 mills (1-10t/hr) receiving finance for investment
N/A	50% increased income from beneficiary mills
50,000 farmers increased incomes by at least 75% over the life of project	75% increase in oil palm farm income of beneficiary producers (there are 50,440 beneficiaries – farmers trained in BMP)
50,000 farmers increase farm productivity by 90% over the life of project	Average Oil Palm Yields (target 14.75 T/Ha)
70% of the targeted SHF farmers integrate the production of additional food crops to enhance household food security	N/A
Euro 6.0 million mobilized as co-investment (50%) from private sector	Euro 6.6 million finance mobilized for participating SMEs
N/A	4,884 VSLA members use VSLA funds to invest in oil palm
N/A	2,664 VSLA members use VSLA funds to invest in alternative livelihood
N/A	380 trained youths employed in the sector
N/A	40 new businesses created by youth groups/individual youth/women groups
20 learning centres established	25 learning centres established
100 students from tertiary institutions have on-the-job training with plantations and mills	40 tertiary students benefiting from internships with farms, plantations, RSCs, mills, machine fabricators, research institutes and other organisations in the oil palm value chain

200 youths attained relevant skills to support industry work	1,400 youths (including women) acquire new skills
# Of RSPO National Interpretation endorsed by the RSPO Secretariat (no target)	4 RSPO National Interpretation processes supported
# Of RSPO certified smallholders (no target)	5,850 RSPO certified smallholders
4 National palm oil platforms strengthened	

Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, based on project proposal and SWAPP Result Measurement

Access to finance targets were reduced. With the comprehensive revision of the SWAPP ToC, most result indicators changed too. The targets relating to financing oil mills and service companies were slashed. Indicators relating to smallholder farmers were also reduced. Some indicators were increased, and VSLA indicators were newly introduced. During the project's start it became apparent that SME oil mills in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone were at most artisanal operations. Therefore, work with oil mills concentrated on Ghana, although some mills were eventually established in Liberia and Sierra Leone.[7] However, the programme in these three countries henceforth consisted of supporting farmers and farmer groups, service SMEs, along with the institutional and policy component and RSPO certification.

1.4 Portfolio analysis

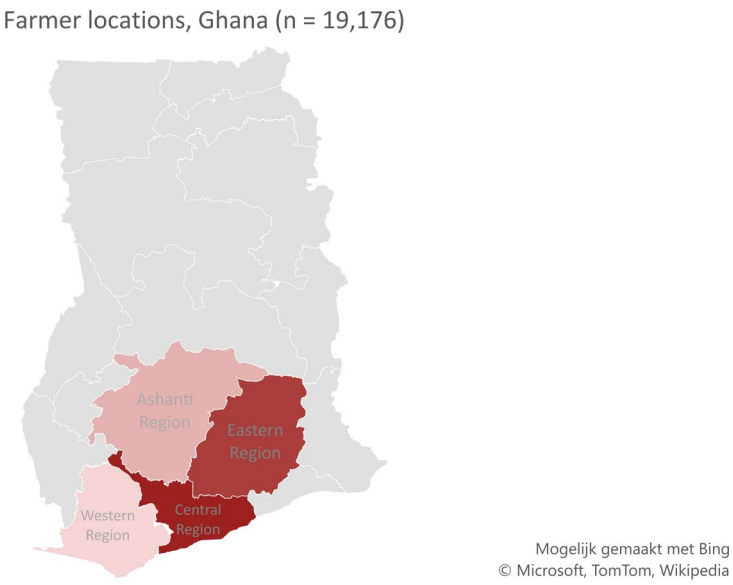
This section presents some descriptive statistics on SWAPP beneficiaries.

1.4.1 SWAPP target areas

We mapped beneficiary farmers using SWA data. In Ghana, most farmers were in the Central Region and the Eastern Region. In Côte d'Ivoire, farmers are roughly evenly distributed in the Gôh-Djiboua District and the Comoé District. In Liberia, nearly 90 percent of farmers are in Nimba County or Lofa County. In Sierra Leone, all beneficiary farmers are in the Eastern Region. There are some small discrepancies between numbers of farmers in the figures below and the M&E 2020 data presented in the remainder of this report. This is because the M&E data are as of December 2020, while the below charts show the present situation.

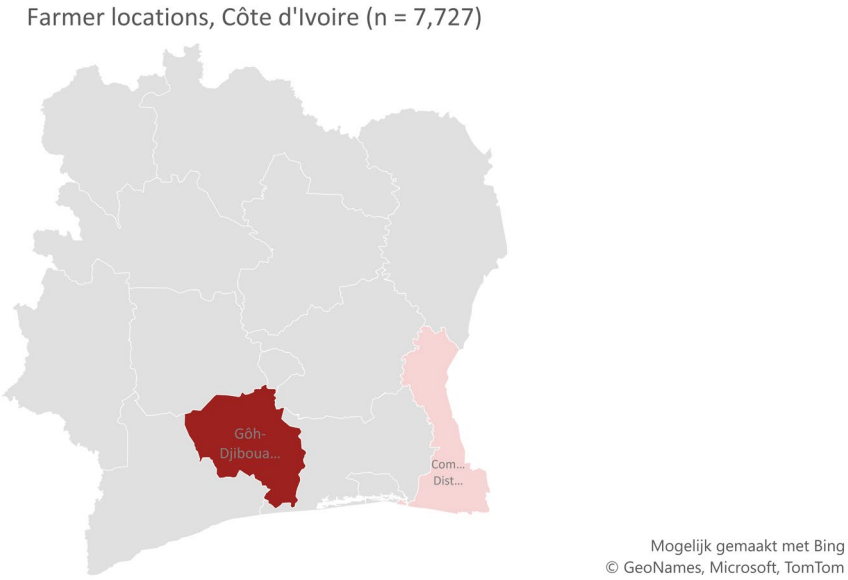
[7] According to the annual report 2020, the components of 5 mills fabricated in Ghana were shipped to Liberia (4 mills) and Sierra Leone (1 mill) as grant funding to SMEs in those countries.

Figure 1.1 In Ghana there were 19,176 farmer beneficiaries of which more than 70 percent were in the Central Region and the Eastern Region



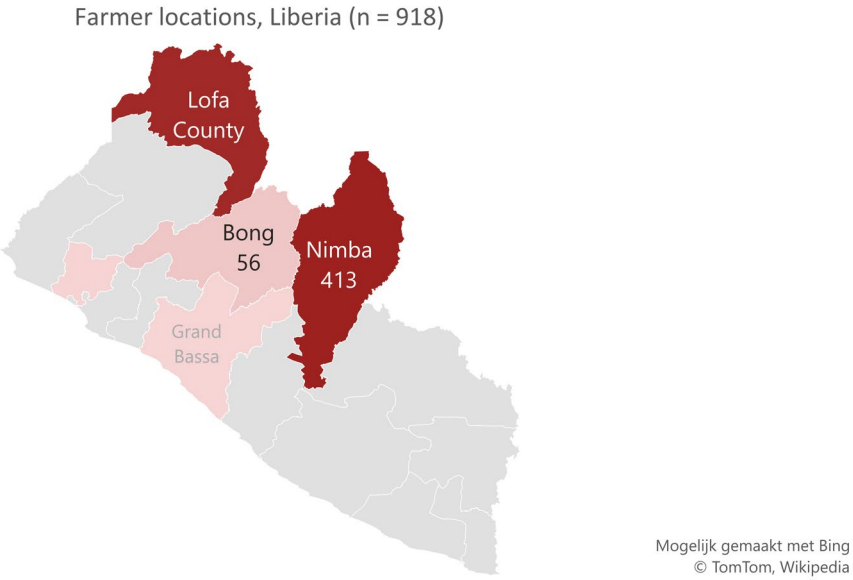
Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, SWAPP districts data

Figure 1.2 In Côte d'Ivoire, the 7,727 farmers were roughly equally divided over the Gôh-Djiboua and the Comoé District



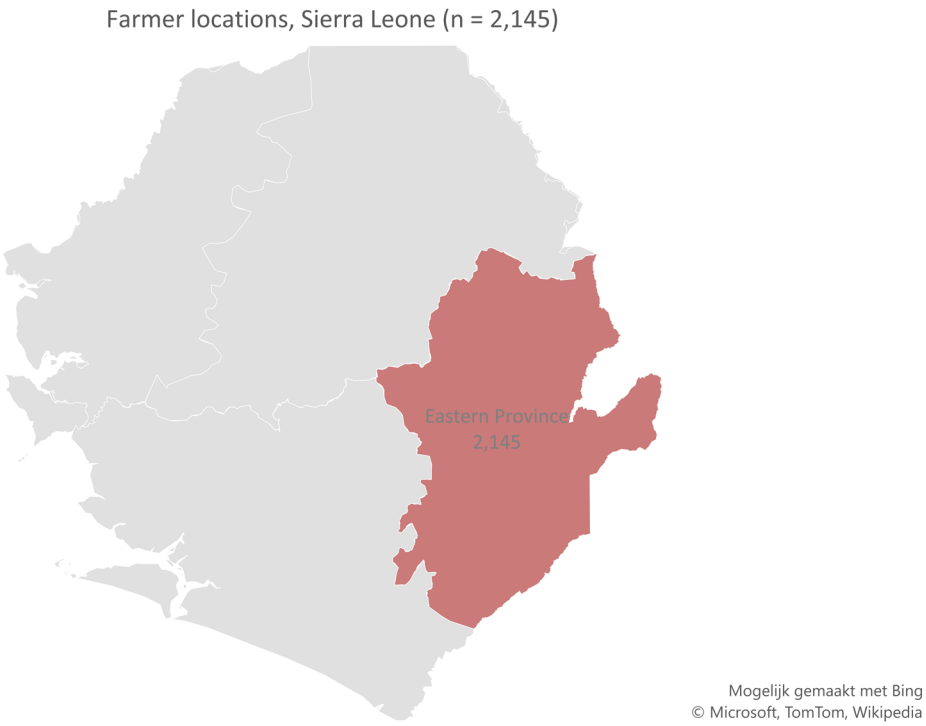
Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, SWAPP districts data

Figure 1.3 Almost 90 percent of the farmer beneficiaries in Liberia are in the Lofa County or the Nimba County



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, SWAPP districts data

Figure 1.4 In Sierra Leone, all 2,145 farmer beneficiaries are located in the Eastern Province



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, SWAPP districts data

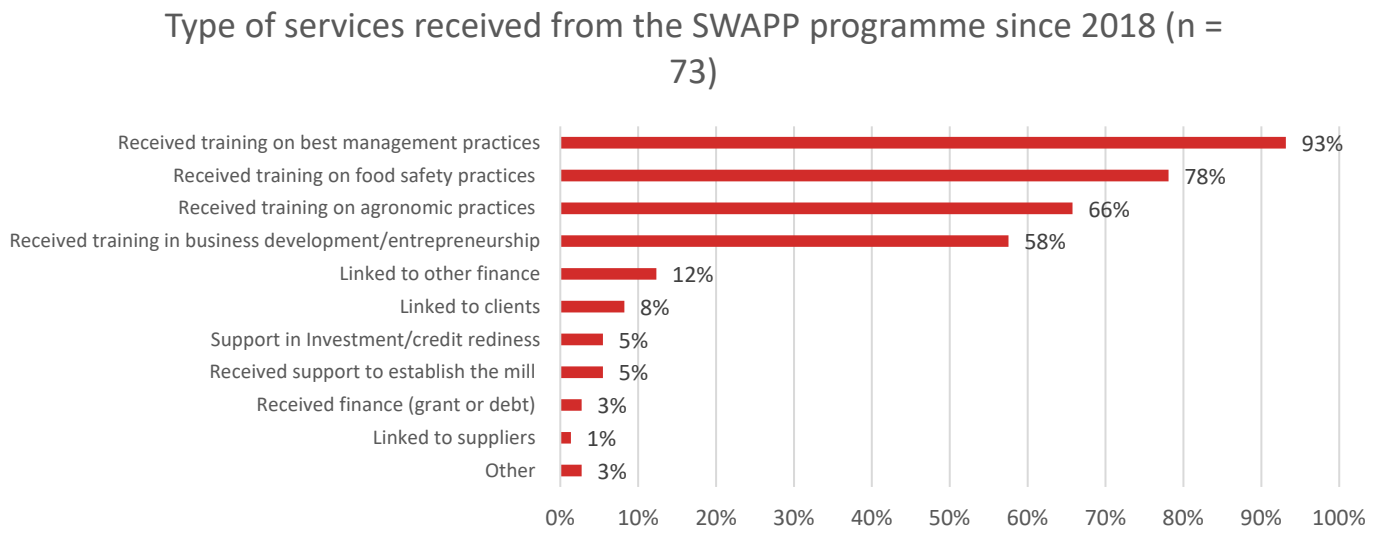
1.4.2 Survey among oil mills

A survey was conducted among oil mills in Ghana. As part of this evaluation, the evaluation team conducted a survey among artisanal mills in Ghana in Central, Ashanti and Eastern regions.[8] Of the 75 total respondents, 40 were the oil mill owners, 3 were managers, and the rest were employees. Slightly less respondents were male (32) than

[8] As SWAPP is not working with mills in the other countries, this with a few exceptions, no survey was done in these countries.

female (43). Oil mills registered as a legal entity totalled 51. All but one respondent was familiar with SWAPP, and they had all received support from SWAPP (see figure 1.5). Nearly all mills were already in operation when SWAPP was launched. Just a handful were established during SWAPP's lifetime, of which four had received support from SWAPP.

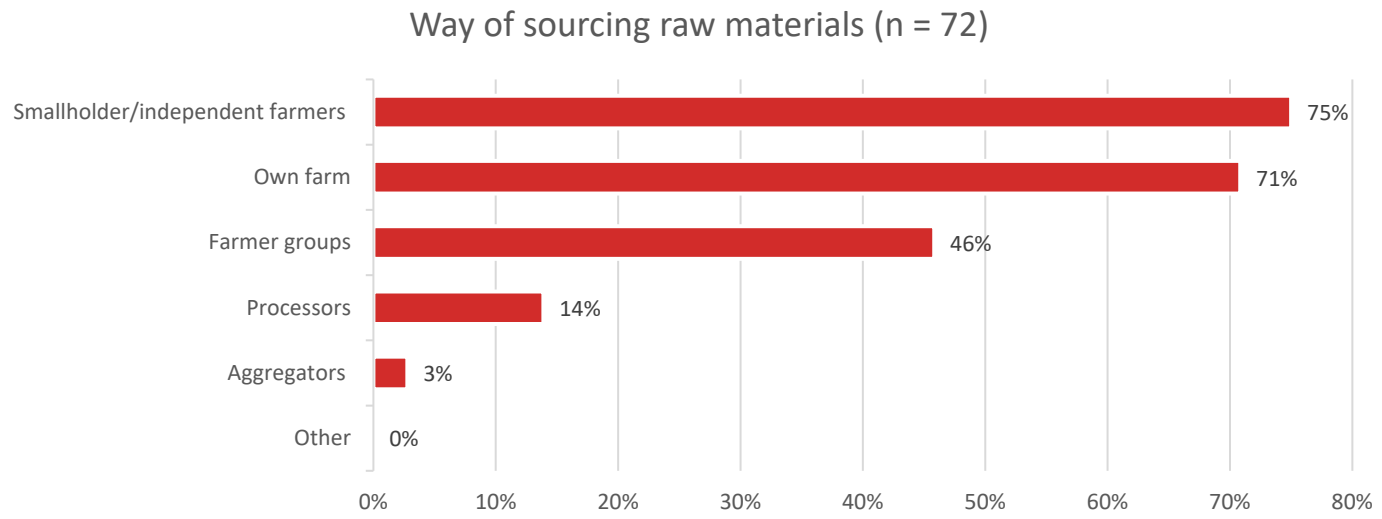
Figure 1.5 SWAPP services received



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics

SME oil mills bought directly from farmers. The survey found that three quarters of raw materials (FFB) sourced by oil mills were sourced from small farmers, and nearly half from farmer groups. In addition, 71 percent had their own oil palm plantation. Very few sourced from aggregators. The lack of aggregators points to an undeveloped value chain. Fieldwork confirmed that limited aggregation takes place in Ghana. Many mills operate as toll mills, hence some processors did not own their own mills and rented capacity instead. They bring their FBB to the mill, collected either in their local communities or farms. Organised aggregation mainly took place for the large industrial processing firms, where aggregation is done by cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire.

Figure 1.6 Sourcing raw materials (FFB)



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics

1.4.3 Farm characteristics

The outcome survey 2021 showed that oil palm farms are larger in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire than in Liberia and Sierra Leone. As can be seen from table 1.2 below, oil palm farmers often have more than one farm, in particular in Côte d'Ivoire. Farmers in Côte d'Ivoire have, on average, the largest farms (hence presumably more trees), and those in Liberia the smallest. SWAPP partners do not always apply SWAPP BMP practices on all their farms.

Table 1.2 Farm characteristics under SWAPP

	Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
No of farms	1.30	1.80	1.20	1.50
Average total farm size (ha)	3.10	6.30	1.30	2.20
# of farms applying SWA promoted BMP	1.22	0.80	0.80	1.03

Source: Outcome survey 2021 undertaken by SWA

2 Relevance

SWAPP was broadly relevant to the oil palm sector's needs and helped change public perceptions on the sector's potential. The access to finance component, however, overestimated the capacity of oil palm SMEs to qualify for loans.

2.1 Overarching results

SWAPP was classified as an FNS project with PSD elements. According to the ToR for this evaluation, SWAPP was meant to contribute to three overarching Embassy results, namely an increase in:

a. Number of small-scale food producers with increased productivity/income
b. Number of hectares of farmland used that are more eco-friendly
c. Number of jobs created, and people employed

One will easily recognise the Dutch FNS objectives (a and b) and PSD objectives (a and c). Indeed, SWAPP is part of the Dutch FNS programme, which usually incorporates elements of PSD as well (jobs and SME development).[9] Besides a and b, the third FNS goal is access to nutritious food for vulnerable households. SWAPP aims to have an impact on all these goals. SWAPP's FNS focus is evident in the ToC's impact indicators #3,4,7. One also recognises PSD goals in the ToC, namely impact indicators #2 and 5. Impact indicators #1 and 6 refer to environmentally sustainable production and belong to both the FNS and PSD programmes. While palm oil is an important (local) food crop, the proposal's logic is primarily that by enabling oil palm farmers to earn more from their crop (e.g., enhanced productivity hence more income), more money will be available to buy food.[10] SWAPP also encourages households to grow additional food crops to improve nutrition. This was particularly relevant for the food insecure countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

SWAPP's food security component was relevant for Liberia and Sierra Leone, less for Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The targets of impact indicators #3 (increase in access to food) and #4 (little or no hunger) were largely met at project start. The LoP target for impact #4 is that 70 percent of the project beneficiaries in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire experience little or no hunger, while this is 30 percent for Liberia and 50 percent for Sierra Leone. Hunger was not widespread at baseline, although the actual food insecurity in Liberia and Sierra Leone was probably larger than table 2.1 would suggest.[11] Neither the baseline nor the project proposal included any statistics on food and nutrition insecurity to justify this FNS intervention. Therefore, while oil palm farmers in Liberia and Sierra Leone were food insecure to some extent, for Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire SWAPP's food insecurity goals were less relevant.

Field visits by the evaluation team in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire did not suggest oil palm farmers are among the poorest segments of rural life. The team found children to be in school, and we did not see any children walking barefooted. Farmers derive income from the oil palm to feed their families and they live in modest but adequate houses (no mud huts). Most engage in various other income generating activities as well. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, however, poverty was more evident.

9 SWAPP is funded from the Ministry's IGG (FNS) programme, but the embassy has delegated budget authority.
10 Page 12 of the project proposal.
11 There may have been a problem with sampling or perhaps the enumerators, as the incidence of hunger in Liberia and Sierra Leone was much higher at the outcome survey in 2020, and quite worrying in Sierra Leone.

Table 2.1 Percentage of oil palm farmers experiencing little or no hunger.

	Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
LoP target	70%	70%	30%	50%
Baseline 2018	96.5%	94.4%	76%	82.7%

Source: Baseline 2018

SWAPP has both PSD and FNS relevance. SWAPP aims to create resilient SMEs (impact indicator #5) and generate jobs (impact indicator #2). SWAPP also targets all three FNS policy goals, namely 1) End hunger and malnutrition, 2) Inclusive and sustainable growth in agriculture, and 3) Ecologically sustainable food production systems, although we deem the first less relevant. FNS goals #2 and 3 clearly apply to SWAPP, were defined as impacts # 1 and 7, and match the above-mentioned over-arching results of EKN Accra's programme in West Africa. Therefore, SWAPP is relevant to the Embassy's overarching programmatic aims in both FNS and PSD, but the addition of the food security element (impact indicators # 3 and 4) is less relevant. On balance, SWAPP is most relevant to PSD goals given its focus on a cash crop, SME development, jobs, and incomes, albeit with important FNS components.

2.2 Contribution to oil palm sector

Evaluation question: To what extent is SWAPP expected to contribute to "an inclusive and sustainable oil palm sector to meet global demand in the medium to long term"?

Although SWAPP intended to scale up the intervention model of phase I and replicate this in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, in practice the intervention models in these four countries differed.[12] All four intervention models were based on local conditions and opportunities. All are deemed viable and relevant in principle, contributing to a sustainable oil palm sector in West Africa.

Ghana's intervention model supports multiple actors in the oil palm chain. The core of SWAPP in Ghana was to improve SMEs' access to finance and technical support for two complementary business cases: (a) establishment or improvement of Rural Service Centres (RSC), supplying farmers with the necessary inputs and technical services for BMP cultivation of oil palm; and (b) establishment of more efficient and environmentally-sound SME milling operations. Thus, the target groups for SWAPP in Ghana include 1) SMEs providing yield intensification and farm rehabilitation and management services to oil palm farmers, 2) artisanal mills producing CPO (and PKO) for the market and providing tolling services to other processors, 3) medium and large size mills sourcing fresh fruit bunches (FFB) from smallholders and selling end-products to consumers and businesses, 4) farmers who are trained and organised into Farmer Based Organisations (FBO), 5) financial institutions and impact investors, and 6) trade associations and Government ministries, departments and agencies, and local government authorities. SWAPP also links to large industrial buyers, mainly oil processors, but does not support them. In the other three countries, the intervention model is substantially different as there are very few SME oil palm mills. Oil palm processing either takes place in a traditional manner by the farming communities themselves, or by industrial operations. Therefore, in these three countries the emphasis was on farmer training and farmer-facing services.

In Côte d'Ivoire the intervention took place through cooperatives. Like CORIP, SWAPP found that in Côte d'Ivoire oil palm farmers tend to be organised in cooperatives, hence this became the key vector of support. SWAPP supported existing cooperatives, or helped farmers organise in this form. These cooperatives play a role in service and input provision, FBB aggregation, sometimes milling, and sale to a small number (5) of industrial processors. At the

[12] SWAPP I did not have access to finance, skills for employment, policy, and advocacy components. It focused on developing best management practices for yield intensification.

time of this evaluation, the cooperatives counted over 10,000 members. Cooperatives also hosted VSLAs. SWAPP helped cooperatives prepare business plans to access finance, provided technical support in sustainable farming, the provision of plants (nurseries), provision of fertilizers, market development, and supporting the fight against farm infestations. The Farm Field School method was introduced to train farmers in BMP.

In Liberia the project focused on SMEs in the oil palm sector. These SMEs aggregate produce or support the sector through services and input supply, aiming to improve production technology to increase productivity and income of smallholder oil palm farmers. Four SMEs were trained on nursery crop development and management, receiving pre-geminated oil palm seeds for multiplication and sale to farmers. To create markets, SWAPP provided grants to set up four SME oil palm mills. SWAPP also trained government extension officers, reaching out to farmers through the Farmer Field School method. Furthermore, SWAPP worked in skills upgrading of women and youth, preparing them for oil palm work either directly or as service providers. In this respect SWAPP set up youth groups to provide farm services through RSCs. To link to international markets, SWAPP supported the development of RSPO standards. SWAPP also supported the development of the Oil Palm National Strategy.

In Sierra Leone the project included linking with large buyers and introducing new oil palm breeds. Like Liberia, the Sierra Leonian approach includes service provision and training of farmers. It goes one step further by adding an important link to a major palm oil buyer, Gold Tree Holdings, which is a large private sector company in the oil palm sector (plantation and processing). With the help of this company SWAPP distributed a high breed variety of oil palm seedlings to farmers, which will boost their long-term income potential. They will also be able to sell their palm fruit to Gold Tree. The likely motivation for Gold Tree Holding was its interest to enter an outgrower arrangement with SWAPP farmers, as the company had already done with about 10,000 farmers located near its nucleus farm. In this outgrower scheme Gold Tree supplies farmers with the necessary inputs and technical know-how and offers them guaranteed offtake. SWAPP also trained women and youth to take part in farming and processing, receiving intensive training on Best Management Practices (BMP). The overall aim is to show communities that oil palm can be an interesting revenue generating crop.

Despite each intervention model's strengths, the link to global markets remains tenuous. The evaluative conclusion is that all intervention models are logical in their local context and help upgrade sustainable oil palm production. The outgrower arrangement with Gold Tree in Sierra Leone is most likely to boost technical know-how, input availability and quality in the oil farming community, access to certification, while preparing the oil palm sector for export markets. Right now, only Sierra Leone is following that route – SWAPP did not find suitable outgrower opportunities in the other countries. Although several oil palm estates in Ghana have tried to enter outgrower schemes, the results were mixed, with nucleus farms unmotivated to sponsor smallholders.

2.3 Addressing constraints in the oil palm sector

Evaluation question: Does the program address constraints that hinder the growth and viability of the oil palm sector?

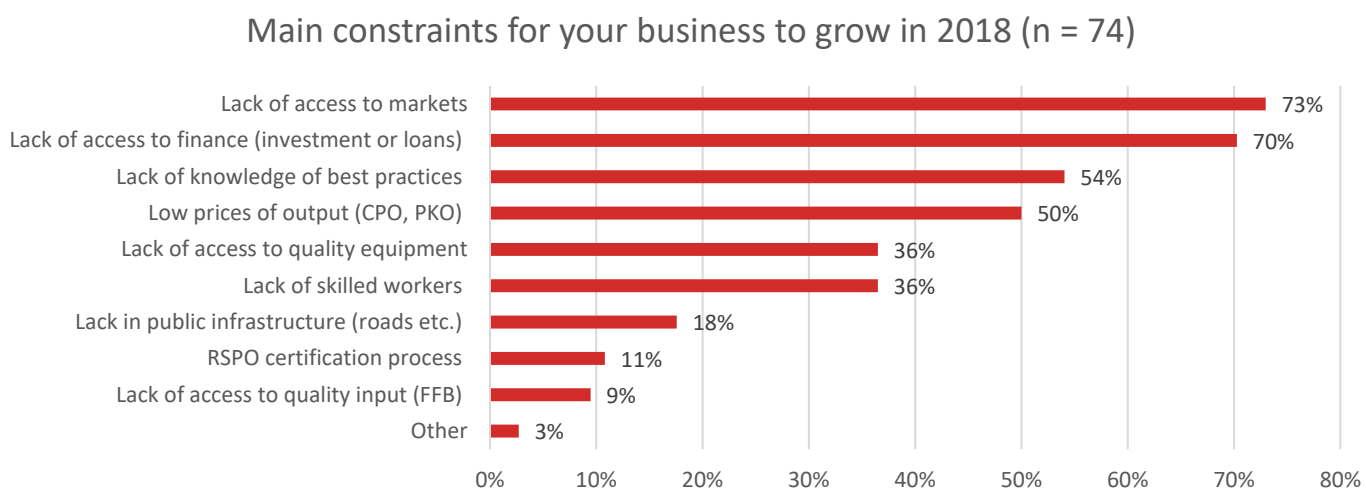
The oil palm sector faces many internal and external constraints. Both the fieldwork and the MTE by Proven Ag Solutions identified the many constraints faced by the West African oil palm sector. The most notable constraints highlighted by value chain actors were the following:

- Low production and productivity, low technical capacity, and subsistence production mentality (farmers do not know good agronomic practices; artisanal millers do not know good manufacturing practices)
- Limited access to finance (banks do not understand/appreciate the oil palm sector, and loans are expensive and cumbersome to access)

- Low access to inputs (Particularly in Sierra Leone and Liberia, tools and chemicals are expensive, and sometimes not even available)
- Difficult market access for FFB (nobody to sell to, and poor infrastructure esp. in Liberia)
- Low participation of youth and women (no capital to invest, no access to land)
- Lacking environmental and social stewardship
- Absence of an enabling policy environment (no national sector policies)
- Low-income and precarious livelihood conditions
- Weak organizational capacity of farm communities
- Old low-yielding stock in Sierra Leone
- Crop disease in Côte d'Ivoire, leading farmers to uproot their orchards

These constraints were confirmed by the survey among 75 oil mills in Ghana. Of the many constraints listed, the most common were in the market (no clients, low prices) and lack of access to finance.[13] Mills were also confronted with lack of best practice knowledge, equipment, and skilled staff. Relatively few mills worried about the RSPO process, presumably because very few operate in export markets where this is in demand.

Figure 2.11 Main constraints in the oil palm sector at project start (2018)



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics

SWAPP addresses the core constraints. Several of the above constraints are directly dealt with by SWAPP, mainly access to inputs and services through SMEs, and training of farmers and staff in mills in Best Management Practices. SWAPP has been similarly relevant in access to finance and RSPO certification, due to the approach chosen (see below). In Sierra Leone in particular, SWAPP helped change people's perception about the oil palm sector, showing that oil palm is also a sustainable means of livelihood. SWAPP addressed the constraints by introducing and distributing high breed varieties to farmers with short maturity, while conducting training on Best Management Practices (BMP).

SWAPP has been adaptive in its A2F approach. The key problem in oil palm production is low productivity, both for farmers and mills. The SWAPP project proposal assumed that all (125) SMEs in the programme, both mills and service providers, would receive finance from financial institutions and impact investors for their upgrading. The proposal assumed they were sufficiently bankable or would become so after SWAPP support. The proposal had not foreseen an instrument for farmer finance. When it became apparent that the sector was at a more basic level, design

[13] Lack of clients and low prices are both driven by poor quality. This combined with poor productivity makes for a precarious business.

updates were made and VSLAs were introduced. While VSLAs are most relevant to oil palm farmers, some mills also participated. In Liberia and Sierra Leone SWAPP had included a grant mechanism to invest in start-up mills given the nascent state of the oil palm industry and relatively under-developed financial sector compared to Ghana and Côte d' Ivoire. This is essentially a one-off capital investment, aiming to set up FFB processing and oil palm markets.

SWAPP tends to focus on the upstream segment of the value chain. In Ghana SWAPP strengthens farmers, rural service centres and artisanal mills. In Côte d'Ivoire SWAPP works mainly with farmers and some rural service centres. In Liberia and Sierra Leone SWAPP chiefly works with oil palm farmers through the Farmer Field Schools and supports the establishment of mills with grants. SWAPP is not a value chain development programme with interventions to the final product. In Sierra Leone, however, the market link is made through the outgrower arrangement with Gold Tree, which links smallholders to a sophisticated buyer with access to global markets and has access to impact investors. In Ghana, the RSPO component intended to prepare smallholders and oil mills for a connection with sophisticated local and international markets, although the Ghanaian market does not yet require it.

Policy work is relevant. On a macro level, it is noted that the oil palm value chain in West Africa is far less structured than in cocoa, for example. The downstream segment of the value chain, including artisanal mills, work with very low levels of technology, input supply is poor, access to finance is weak, aggregation weak, and in general several layers of the oil palm chain are poorly connected. The lack of institutional and policy support further stymies the oil palm value chain's development. SWAPP's efforts to connect private and public sector actors, including government, is relevant. SWAPP is hopeful that Ghana's new TCDA will bring cohesion to the sector, although unfortunately the government has not yet released funding for its work.

2.4 Alignment with other interventions

Evaluation question: How well aligned is the program with other donors' and national governments' interventions in the value chains (no risk of incoherence or duplication)?

None of the four countries has a strong oil palm development policy. The MTE by Proven Ag Solutions provides a list of government interventions in each of the four countries. However, these are generic, such as a "Tree Crops Development Strategy" in Côte d'Ivoire, or "Tree Crops Policy and Planting for Export and Rural Development (PERD)" in Ghana. None has a specific policy for the oil palm sector, but there is some institutional support. In Côte d'Ivoire there is the Rubber and Oil Palm Council (Conseil Hévea – Palmier à Huile CHPH) which has been set up to revitalize the farmers' organizations and to help resolve various problems – it is meant to play a similar role as the new TCDA in Ghana. In Liberia, SWAPP worked with the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL) to develop and finalize the Roundtable Table on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) National Interpretation which was endorsed by the RSPO Board of Governors. In Sierra Leone, SWAPP aligns with and provided technical assistance to the Government's National Agriculture Transformation Plan. None of this, however, is even remotely comparable to the cocoa policies that Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have had for decades.

Donor agencies and the private sector offer limited technical support. In Liberia and Sierra Leone there are some projects focused on tree crops supported by the World Bank and by IFAD. Some NGOs (including Solidaridad) operate projects in Côte d'Ivoire, and in Ghana as well. In Ghana there are also some private companies, mainly milling and processing operations, that are promoting outgrower development, seedling, and input supply. In Sierra Leone, Gold Tree Holdings Limited has been providing improved oil palm seedlings for a tree replanting programme, probably to enlist these farmers as outgrowers later. The list of oil palm interventions, however, is short.

We found limited coherence and no duplication. Overall, the oil palm sector is not bristling with government and donor initiatives. Of the 75 surveyed oil mills in Ghana, only 8 had received support from sources other than SWAPP,

one from another Solidaridad programme, two from another NGO, and five from government. In the absence of strong policy and donor support, SWAPP can be considered aligned or at a minimum not in contradiction or duplicative. Weak sector support has been an opportunity for SWAPP, resulting in Ghana's Tree Crops Development Authority, by an act of parliament in December 2019, to regulate and develop sustainable production, processing, and trading of six tree crops including palm oil. SWAPP has also partnered with various actors, notably the Ghana Skills Development Initiative implemented by GIZ, in developing an ATVET oil palm curriculum. In Côte d'Ivoire various projects coordinate with government through the Programme Advisory Group (PAG), which influences government policy making.

2.5 Access to finance component

Evaluation question: *How does the access to finance (A2F) component fit in with the local and international landscape of A2F activities in the SME and smallholder segment?*

The project proposal focused on financing mills and farm services SMEs, not farmers. In the original project proposal, the A2F component was only foreseen for Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, intended to make investments in SMEs, in particular oil mills and SMEs that provide services to the oil palm sector. SWAPP expected to mobilise finance from both local financiers and impact investors for SMEs. The proposal did not explain how oil palm farmers would access finance for working capital or investment. Recognising the low likelihood of being able to access commercial or impact finance in Liberia and Sierra Leone, grants were foreseen for SMEs in the oil palm sector.[14] Upon project launch the A2F component was immediately expanded to include the establishment of VSLAs in all countries, to open access to finance for farmers and some artisanal processors in Ghana.

The initial A2F strategy did not reflect local realities. Over the past decade, international experience in agricultural finance has increased substantially, particularly for cash crops. International impact investors such as Root Capital, Shared Interest and Rabobank provide value chain finance through off-takers, typically secured through an export contract. This is now common in sectors such as coffee, cotton, and cocoa. Local banks are also providing value chain finance. Oil palm could be eligible for such export finance deals. This is, however, not what SWAPP proposed. SWAPP wanted to mobilise finance for investment in SME oil mills and service companies. It is true that impact investors (e.g., IFC), have started to invest in the form of equity or debt in processing companies. Oil palm SMEs in West Africa, however, have not yet progressed to the level where they could attract any serious level of international or local capital investment. Artisanal mills are generally too small and disorganised to be bankable, farmers operate in isolation, and crop aggregation is weak. There are some oil palm estates in West Africa, and these easily access finance – some are even listed on the stock exchange.[15] The real opportunity would be for smallholder farmers to link to such estates through outgrower or effective aggregation arrangements, at which point value chain finance would be a valid option.[16] This is a real possibility in Sierra Leone. The oil palm cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire, once properly structured, are also an excellent entry point for oil palm financing, as already demonstrated by some cooperatives.

The SWAPP A2F component is not distinctive. Both the field team and the MTE looked at other A2F projects and found that SWAPP shares similarities with access to finance interventions of various other projects. SWAPP is certainly not the only one trying to work with local banks or setting up VSLAs. Projects propose different financial products

14 EUR 2 million for 100 SMEs on a 50% co-funding basis.

15 One may cite BOPP, TOPP, SIFCA/PALMCI which easily access millions in finance. BOPP is listed on Ghana Stock Exchange, SIFCA is listed on Abidjan Stock Exchange.

16 An outgrower arrangement works well for smallholders in the catchment area of the nucleus farm. However, many in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are too far away from the nucleus farms.

depending on their target clients' needs, such as equity, short-term loans, long-term loans, partnerships, grants, leasing, and pro-poor subsidies.

Setting up VSLAs is good international practice. Interview and FGD stakeholders mentioned that VSLAs have created access to short-term micro loans (less than 1 year) for farmers in very remote communities, which has "delivered" them from local money lenders who may cause them to be overindebted and deepen their poverty. VSLAs were highly commended as a reliable and "farmer-friendly" opportunity for farmers to access loans for business or personal needs. It was often mentioned that bank and MFI loans, if at all available, are unappealing due to high interest rates and complicated application processes. VSLA loans at 10 percent per *quarter* are more expensive than bank and MFI loans. But the key advantage is the no-hassle immediate availability. The simplicity of the VSLAs was praised and reflect the experience of countless VSLAs established in Africa over the past decades.

In the evaluators' judgement the redirection of SWAPP's A2F to VSLAs was relevant to farmers' short-term needs. While it is true that VLSAs invariably provide short-term credit in small amounts that is not well suited to investment in oil palm expansion or rejuvenation, VSLAs still enabled farmers to purchase the necessary seasonal farm inputs, seedlings, and/or to invest in livelihoods, e.g., food production or other income generating activities. VSLAs were particularly relevant to women's empowerment, as will be further demonstrated in section 3.

3 Effectiveness

While SWAPP achieved some results with oil palm mills and farmers, as well as in the policy environment in Ghana and Liberia, overall SWAPP fell short in its output and outcome achievement. RSPO standards were accepted, but no companies were certified. Youth were trained but find it hard to be employed. The service concept has not yet gained traction.

3.1 Outputs and outcomes

Evaluation question: *To what extent are the planned outputs and outcomes, as defined in the program proposal, achieved?*

Output and outcomes were checked through various methods. The evaluation of output and outcome achievement is primarily based on data collected by SWA's M&E system up to 2021, and data collected by the outcome survey 2021. However, this is validated and completed with the information obtained by the evaluators in the field. Furthermore, the MTE by Proven Ag Solutions provided valuable insights into effectiveness for the period until late 2019. Information was also obtained from the survey among 75 artisanal oil mills in Ghana. Recall that only few oil mills were supported in the other three countries.

The analysis was updated to incorporate 2021 survey data. When we drafted our evaluation report in Fall 2021, only the 2020 M&E data and 2020 outcome survey were available. However, as SWA has – four months after completing this report - made available the 2021 M&E data and 2021 outcome survey, we have updated the respective tables and text to the extent possible (but for effectiveness only). Noteworthy is that SWAPP has undertaken some activities that its M&E does not track. In Sierra Leone, for example, responding to the needs on the ground, SWAPP has been providing improved oil palm seedlings and materials for food security crops (cassava, maize), which have neither target nor indicator, yet are very valuable.

Given the time needed for tree crops to reach maturity, many SWAPP outcomes cannot yet be observed. As can be seen from the M&E data in this chapter, SWAPP was still far from achieving its target outcomes as of end-2021, although a lot of output results were achieved. It is logical, however, that outcomes at the level of mills, SMEs and farmers will take time to materialise. This is particularly true for tree crops, as yield improvement may take several years of applying best management practices. The effects of making improved seedlings available (Sierra Leone and Liberia) will likely be visible only after SWAPP's ending. In the sections below, we attempt to give our best understanding of the outcome achievement so far, including those not yet reflected in the 2021 figures.

3.1.1 Access to finance and enterprise development

Table 3.1 SWAPP is falling behind in work with mills, service centres and farmers

Indicator	Target End-of-Project	Achieved as of end-2021	
Outcomes			
Mills that doubled extraction rate	75%	Not estimated[17]	🔴
Increased income from beneficiary mills	50%	Not estimated	🔴
Average oil palm yield (T/Ha) farmers	14.74	9.27 (see table 3.2)	🟡
Increased income of beneficiary farmers (average)	75%	105% (see table 3.5)	🟢
Family farms with increased productivity and/or income	33,542	20,279	🟡
Smallholder oil palm growers who have access to services from the SMEs	49,800	11,888	🔴
Smallholder oil palm growers who adopt BMP	35,308	12,310	🔴
Finance mobilized for participating SMEs	EUR 6.6 m	EUR 3.9 m	🟡
VSLA members using VSLA funds for investing in oil palm	4,884	± 12,000	🟢
VSLA members using VSLA funds for investing in alternative livelihood	2,664	± 7,500	🟢
Outputs			
SMEs (non-mills) receiving finance from FIs/Grants	37	53	🟢
SME workers trained in BMP standards	555	1,098	🟢
Service centres established by SMEs	86	55 (Gh 38, CdI 3, Lib 11, SL 3)	🟡
Smallholder farmers trained/introduced to BMP	50,440	45,422	🟡
Financial institutions trained in oil palm business appraisal	20	56	🟢
Mills (1-10t/hr) receiving finance for investment	10	0	🔴
Mills upgraded	12	13 (12 Gh, 1 Lib)	🟢
Mills incubated (training in new oil extraction technologies and good manufacturing practices)	32	35 (all Ghana)	🟢
VSLAs formed or revived	338	601	🟢
VSLAs linked to a financial institution	253	384 (345 in Ghana)	🟢

Source: SWAPP project measurement framework 2021

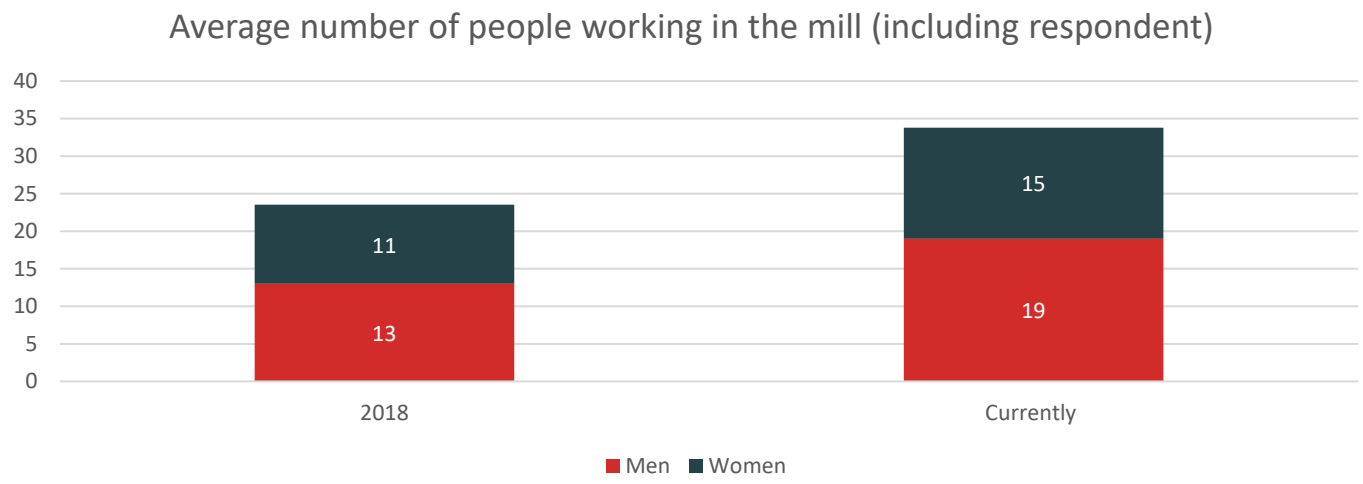
As of end-2021, SWAPP fell short on some of the key outcomes. The amount of loan finance mobilised was less than the LOP target, and this was mainly due to some cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire that aggregate FFB from their members, selling to a small number of industrial processors, as well as some VSLAs accessing loans from rural and community banks.[18] None of the smaller oil mills had received finance. In 2021, however, Achmea Foundation of the Netherlands extended a EUR 1.0 million debt finance facility to four rural service SMEs in Ghana. SWAPP's role mainly consisted of preparing business plans and contacting prospective financiers. SWAPP also trained SME workers in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in BMP. The M&E had not yet reliably estimated progress in extraction rates and oil mill income, but inability to secure financing for mills to upgrade their processing equipment continues to hold them back. Farmers had made some progress in income and yields but were still far from meeting their targets. Although 45,422 farmers were trained in BMP and 11,888 had access to SME services, only 12,310 were reported applying BMP on their farms. Based on other information obtained, however, the evaluators expect results at the mill and farmer levels to be more positive, as will be shown below. By its nature, key outcomes such as productivity increase

17 Because the work with mills started late.
18 This finance came from OikoCredit and local banks.

in tree cropping require several years to materialise.[19] Our fieldwork including farmer FGDs and the survey among (75) artisanal oil mills in Ghana suggests this positive trend in results, and this was confirmed by the 2021 outcome survey.

Oil mills added labour. Our first line of modest optimism lies in the survey undertaken among 75 artisanal oil mills in Ghana, which reported a substantial increase in employment. Not only has employment increased, but women are also well represented. Oil mills would not have added labour if their workload, and presumably income, had not increased.

Figure 3.1 Employment in mills, by gender[20]



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, survey Oct 2021

Oil mills credit SWAPP for their good fortunes. Figure 3.1 does not prove that SWAPP caused the beneficial employment effect. However, the survey among 75 artisanal oil mills in Ghana revealed that most had received SWAPP training in a variety of subjects (see portfolio analysis in section 1.4), and all but one confirmed applying those lessons. Nearly all thought this support was beneficial to the mill, although data on mill productivity in the SWAPP M&E are yet to bear that out. The specific good practices mentioned in the survey were food safety, good management, oil processing practices, as well as saving in the VSLA.

Mill Processor and oil palm grower in Assin Asamankese: "SWAPP through Solidaridad came to train us in oil palm and milling. As farmers and millers, we were taken through training that will help us practice sustainable ways of oil palm farming and oil mill processing."

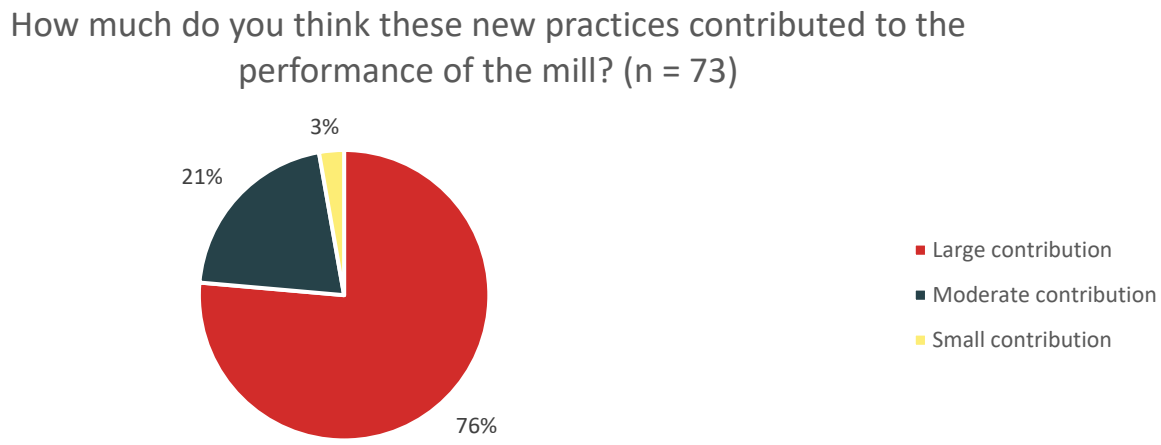
Mill Processor and oil palm grower in Assin Asamankese: "Through our cooperative we received training and support by SWAPP. I have gotten a lot of profit through the selling of palm oil, and I have been able to buy my own machine for palm oil processing. We are still planting more palm and we are hoping to get a higher income."

Oil Mill Processor Asamankese: "We used to have problems with our finances, and it was difficult to get people to buy our oil at high price. After the financial training by SWAPP we were able manage our finances, make profit from our oil, and we are able to get income to cater for our families."

[19] While outcomes such as "Smallholder oil palm growers who adopt BMP" and "Finance mobilized for participating SMEs" likely occur within the project period, "Increased income from beneficiary mills" and "Increased income of beneficiary farmers (average)" may take years to reach a new level.

[20] The figures probably undercount casual workers, which are mainly female.

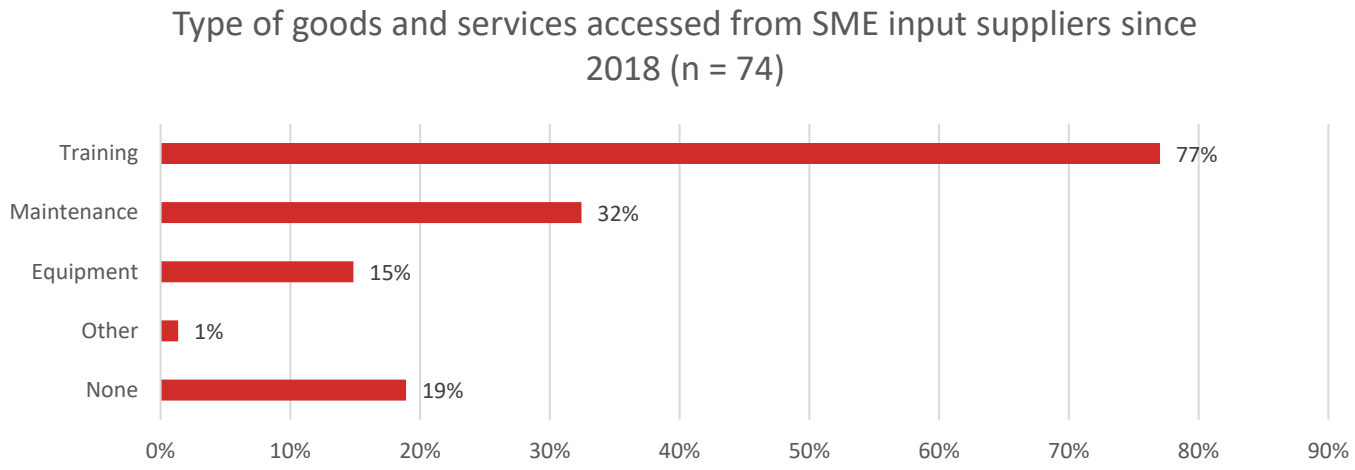
Figure 3.2 Contribution of SWAPP support to mill performance



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, survey Oct 2021

The role of service SMEs was limited. The survey also asked if oil mills received support from SME service providers, such as Business Advisory Centres and Business Resource Centres, and most did, although it was mainly training. Most oil mills thought their access to SME services had increased, and all thought that SWAPP had contributed to this. When asked what keeps them from using SME services, 34 respondents replied they were unable to pay, 14 cited logistical challenges, and 8 thought the services do not meet their needs.

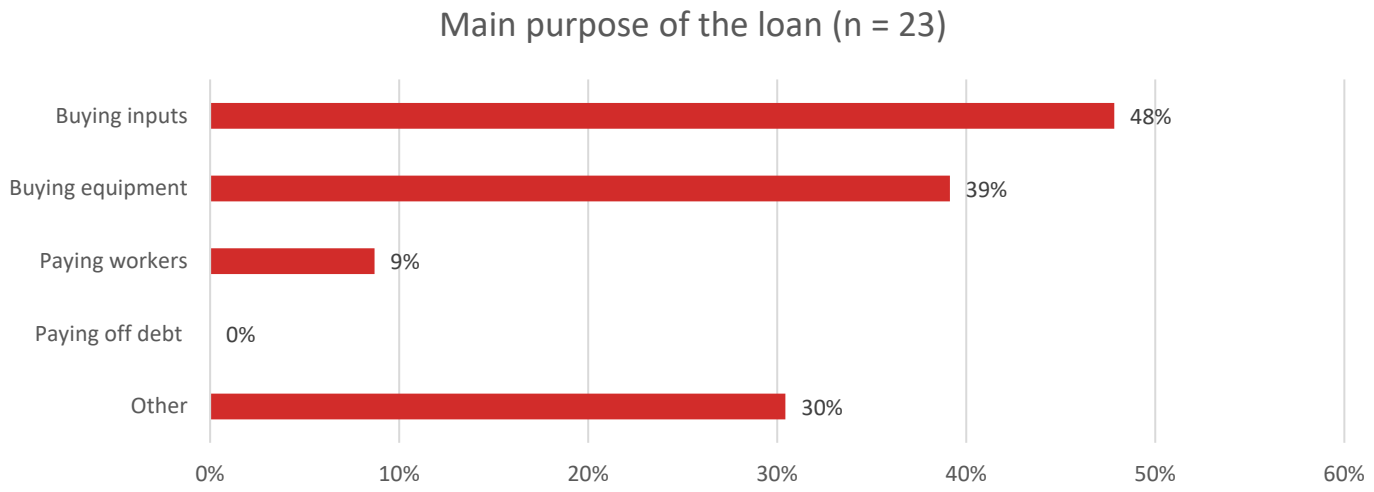
Figure 3.3 Access to SME input services



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics

Most artisanal oil mills (in Ghana) invested in their businesses, but few with bank financing. More specifically to investment and finance, the survey of 75 oil mills found that three quarters had made upgrades to their mill since 2018. However, only 21 had obtained a loan, of which the majority from a VSLA or MFI, hence likely a small amount, and just four from a bank. This confirms the earlier finding on limited access to (investment) finance for artisanal oil mills. Those that got a loan mostly used it for working capital, which is logical given the small loan size. Forty-four percent of loan beneficiaries indicated that in the absence of SWAPP support they might not have succeeded in obtaining a similar loan.

Figure 3.4 Loan use by artisanal oil mills



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics, survey Oct 2021

Farmers made progress. A lot of interesting data can be found in the 2021 outcome survey about oil palm farmers. The key finding relates to farm productivity in 2021 compared to baseline in 2018, depicted in Table 3.2. In two years of SWAPP work with oil palm farmers, good progress was made in farm productivity, but not to the 14.74 T/Ha planned by the project. Given the time-lag between application of best management practices and yield increase in tree cropping, one may expect additional future benefits. This is particularly the case as only about a quarter of the farmers reported yield increase, implying that there is great potential for the others if they were to apply good agricultural practices and depending on access to training and finance as well. The impact of improved seedlings in Liberia and Sierra Leone will certainly take some time to bear fruit.

Table 3.2 Farm productivity

	Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Average yield (T/ha)				
Baseline 2018	6.5	3	4.3	3.2
Survey 2021	10.1	12.2	5.2	9.0
% Farmers who improved productivity	19.8%	51.8%	8.4%	17.7%

Source: Outcome survey 2021, page 12.

Farmers are improving their agricultural practices, but still have a long way to go. The 2021 outcome survey investigated the farmers' production methods by using a checklist of Best Management Practices (table 3.3). When it came to Best Management Practices (BMP), the survey found farmers in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to lag their peers in Liberia and Sierra Leone, this in spite (or perhaps because of) their larger farm sizes. Efficient use of production inputs was low in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and non-existent in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Input use at baseline was absent in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, so these two countries made some progress since SWAPP. The MTE suggests that non-use of inputs in Liberia and Sierra Leone is due to lack of farmers' financial capacity. However, our fieldwork in Sierra Leone (farmer meetings) also revealed that SWAPP had not promoted use of chemicals since the application of proper plant treatment was considered sufficient to have a huge impact on productivity.[21] Indeed, in Best Management Practices, which essentially relies on farm labour, all countries apply BMP incompletely. However, all

[21] This may also have to do with the fact that the most likely buyer, Gold Tree Holding, is an organically certified estate.

countries improved compared to baseline. The introduction of good tree handling goes a long way to explain the above-mentioned gains in farm productivity. What's more, with most farmers not yet applying (all) best management practices and very few using all recommended farm inputs, a lot of productivity improvement is still possible.

Table 3.3 Agricultural practices now and at baseline 2018

	Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
% Of farmers practicing sustainable agriculture	67.25%	50.13%	78.95%	92.59%
% Of land under sustainable agriculture	64.83%	50.96%	80.13%	95.44%
Efficient input use (baseline between brackets):				
Fertiliser	1.99% (0.6%)	7.56% (2.1%)	0.26% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)
Herbicide	1.99% (0.4%)	0.25% (0.1%)	0.26% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)
All inputs	7.81% (0.0%)	3.72% (0.0%)	0.52% (0.0%)	0.0% (0.0%)
BMP (baseline between brackets):				
Weeding/slashing	83.62% (60.8%)	61.52% (72.0%)	89.74% (56.1%)	95.73% (82.4%)
Pruning	48.14% (29.4%)	20.51% (13.2%)	64.21% (35.6%)	46.44% (67.7%)
Cleaning farm circle	54.09% (64.3%)	52.15% (99.0%)	69.47% (57.1%)	90.88% (83.4%)
Harvest every two weeks	33.0% (42.6%)	37.22% (44.5%)	51.84% (57.1%)	33.05% (62.5%)
All four	21.1% (2.5%)	26.33% (3.0%)	41.32% (7.4%)	31.62% (25.6%)

Source: Outcome survey 2021

Mampong Oil Palm Farmers Association: "Before the SWAPP project, we were just leaving our oil palm plantation to grow and bear fruits without doing much to take care of the farm and to increase performance in the farms. Due to the BMP trainings, we acquired knowledge on application of fertilizer, weeding, pruning, timely harvesting practices and other good farming practices. We have seen major positive impact on our farm. The loans we are receiving from the VSLA also helped us to invest in our farm so there has been increase in productivity."

Farmer, Owurakasem: "We have really benefited after the training. We thought cocoa farming helps in generating income, but after going into palm oil I now have recurrent income - every week we can harvest and make money. I have about 13 hectares and through the training I have made profit."

Kwae Oil Palm Farmers Association: "Most of us were into cocoa, but the land was not fertile. Solidaridad team introduced us to palm oil, which is really working. We did not know how to maintain the palm; we were taught how to use fertilizers that were approved such as ammonia and 15/15 which really helped. We now also have knowledge of planting oil palm seedlings.

Farmer and processor Assin Besease: "We were taught how to apply fertilizer. When weeds grow in our farms, we now use the right methods in getting it off. We got training on pruning and how to keep our farm well. I also got a loan to invest in my farm."

Farmer Owurakesem: "Through the training I have learnt to visit a reliable nursery that sells good seedlings – I did not know about this nursery before. I also got to know about good fertilizers that I can also apply in the process to make the crop grow. The training also helped me to do pegging on the farm, in the past I was able to do about 49 on one hectare but through the training I have reduced it to 29 for there to be spacing. I have also seen many changes due to proper weeding and pruning. We also working together to set up a nursery - we have learnt to space it to grow well."

One of the cooperatives visited in Côte d'Ivoire, COPALEN, stated that prior to SWAPP, their farmers harvested 20 tonnes per hectare but are currently doing 24 tonnes per hectare. Land area has increased from 11,000 hectares to 12,000 hectares. Another cooperative, COOPTOSA, has benefited from SWAPP support by setting up palm nurseries.

SWAPP's contribution to eco-friendly production is positive. In addition to the above findings, the field evaluators spoke with farmers about their application of sustainable production practices and avoiding deforestation. In Ghana it was found that training on BMP, including pruning, weeding, right application of fertilizers and insecticides, timely harvesting practices, contributes to eco-friendlier farmland use. Liberian farmers also raised their yields mainly by more intensively working their existing land. Findings were the same in Sierra Leone, where farmers prepare for organic production practices mostly avoiding chemicals use – at the SWAPP advisor's advice.[22]

Farmers engage in multiple revenue generating activities. As one of SWAPP's impact goals is food security, the outcome survey 2021 examined the extent to which farmers intercrop their farms. In Ghana 42 percent of farmers intercrop, 10 percent in Côte d'Ivoire, 60 percent in Liberia, and 68 percent in Sierra Leone (where SWAPP explicitly promotes this). However, 28 percent of farmers in Côte d'Ivoire were found to have other income sources, while this was over 80 percent in the other three countries. Thus, farmers engage in multiple agricultural and non-agricultural activities for their livelihoods and to diversify risk, but less so in Côte d'Ivoire. Nevertheless, about 80 percent of farmers in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone reported that oil palm was their main source of income, while this was 60 percent in Liberia. During the field evaluation the team conducted FGDs with farmer groups, asking them about their activities next to oil palm. Farmers confirmed that SWAPP had introduced them to products and agronomic practices that increase productivity not only from their oil palm farms, but also food crops which increases their income from the produce they sell in the market. This was particularly important for farmers in Sierra Leone who have planted new oil palm varieties, as they now have income while the stock reaches maturity. In Liberia the evaluators met youth and women groups who started to grow food crops. In Côte d'Ivoire, SWAPP created opportunities for women involved in artisanal palm oil production, local soap (locally referred to as cabacrou) and local fire and brooms from the palm residue. SWAPP also linked cooperatives to major oil palm transformation factories.

The evaluation team found that oil palm farmers often use the space under and around oil palm to grow other crops, mainly staples such as cassava, maize, and plantain. They sell these crops to generate income to feed their families and pay the school fees of their children. Through the VSLAs farmers can take a loan which they invest in the cultivation of such fast-growing crops.

Farm service SMEs in SWAPP do not play the same role as CORIP RSCs. The 2021 outcome survey also investigated the extent to which oil palm farmers are aware of the services provided by SMEs (SWAPP usually does not call them RSCs) and found this to be quite low in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Liberia (Table 3.4), but much higher in Sierra Leone. A majority in Sierra Leone had used SME farm services.[23] The 2020 outcome survey had asked about the precise services received, and most common was purchase of raincoats and protective clothing (78 percent), training (54 percent), seedlings (54 percent), and agrochemicals (22 percent). Only 4 percent had used farm management services. The fieldwork confirmed that farm service SMEs in SWAPP do not play the same role as CORIP RSCs. While CORIP RSCs tend to be village-based and strongly invested in service delivery, in SWAPP many are aggregators cum input dealers not generally interested nor structured to provide farm services. In Côte d'Ivoire many oil palm farmers are organised in cooperatives, which may offer some services including product aggregation and access to finance.

22 See above note on Gold Tree.

23 As 29% of palm oil farmers in Côte d'Ivoire us fertiliser and few do in Sierra Leone, it is likely the question has not been posed in the same manner by the respective enumerators.

Since cooperatives provide services for farmers, it is likely that few farmers are directly accessing farm services from SMEs. In Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone SWAPP has also started to organise farmers in Farmer Based Organisations (FBO), this as a possible prelude to a cooperative movement modelled on Côte d'Ivoire, with collective input supply and sales.

Table 3.4 Awareness and use of SME services

	Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Aware of SME services	35.7%	34.5%	31.2%	96.0%
Accessed SME services	11.4%	33.8%	6.6%	66.7%

Source: Outcome survey 2021

The RSC model has not yet caught on in oil palm. In CORIP, the core of RSCs consist of providing inputs and labour / farm management. The best RSCs send their workers around on motorbikes, delivering production materials or their technical know-how and labour as needed. In oil palm, however, farmers use very little chemicals and input materials (see Table 3.4) and expend little on labour. Therefore, with less need (or demand) for inputs and labour, the RSC model is intrinsically less viable in oil palm. Noteworthy is that cocoa in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have received public support for decades, unlike oil palm, which increased farmers' awareness of the need to take care of their trees. If oil palm farmers were intensifying their oil palm farms, demand for RSCs would increase but not to the level at which they are used in the cocoa sector.

Farmers are progressing out of poverty, but still have some way to go. A final set of interesting statistics from the outcome surveys 2020 and 2021 relates to the farmers' welfare (Table 3.5). Many farmers experienced substantial income increases but certainly not all, as expected because yield increases and accompanying income from tree crops like oil palm takes at least two years of consistent application of best management practices. It was noted, however, that due to shortages of palm oil on the world-market prices had nearly doubled since baseline, hence income increase is in large measure due to exogenous factors, not SWAPP's intervention. Incomes of oil palm farmers in Liberia trail Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, undoubtedly due to their smaller farm sizes and lower productivity. Farmers in Sierra Leone (and Liberia) have seen the largest increases in oil palm income since their participation in SWAPP. Nonetheless, given low incomes, many oil palm farmers in all countries remain vulnerable in terms of poverty and food security. The 2020 outcome survey included a poverty analysis grouping oil palm farmers into categories of poorest 40 percent, middle 20 percent, and richest 40 percent, and found oil palm farmers in Liberia and Sierra Leone concentrated in the bottom segment of poverty. These findings were broadly confirmed by the fieldwork, although we found that many oil palm farmers in Côte d'Ivoire were also significantly poor.

Table 3.5 Farmer welfare[24]

	Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Average farm income (EUR) at baseline 2018	€ 643	€ 340	€ 132	€ 183
Average farm income (EUR) 2021	€ 1,564	€ 1,082	€ 318	€ 1,170
% Farmers with increased income since SWAPP	68.7%	19.5%	40.5%	69.7%
% Farmers experiencing little or no hunger	95.8%	100.0%	83.5%	84.3%
% Farmers above poverty line (2020 survey)	97.1%	33.4%	N/A	20.8%

Source: Outcome survey 2020 and 2021, baseline 2018

[24] The figure for Côte d'Ivoire was left out because of sampling issues.

The VSLA component was particularly active in Ghana and Sierra Leone. SWAPP managed to create or revive 601 VSLAs with 19,680 members, of which 406 in Ghana, 49 in Côte d'Ivoire, 6 in Liberia, and 140 in Sierra Leone (Dec 2021). A majority of the 2021 outcome survey respondents in Ghana and Sierra Leone were active VSLA members and VSLAs became a core component of their projects (Table 3.6). VSLA membership was much lower, but growing, in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. In all countries oil palm farmers are the core of VSLA membership. In Ghana artisanal oil mills take part as well. In all countries women play a strong role in VSLAs, as members and leaders. In most countries members have used funds to invest in their oil palm business (e.g., buy inputs or seedlings) as well as alternative livelihoods. On average, however, only one third of those receiving funds used this for either palm oil or alternative livelihoods, VLSA members often spending the money on family needs instead. The fieldwork concluded that the loans obtained from VSLAs are helpful, but generally too small for meaningful investment in oil palm farming. Indeed, according to the SWAPP annual report 2020, the total saved by all VSLAs was EUR 421,365 (non-cumulatively), hence about EUR 45 per person. One VSLA visited by the field team in Ghana had managed to borrow USD 20,000 from a bank, but as this had to be distributed to all members, the impact was limited. The bank interest rate was considered high, procedures onerous and lengthy, and loan duration too short.[25] The experience in Côte d'Ivoire was quite similar.

Table 3.6 VSLA membership and use of funds

	Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
% Farmers member of VSLA	100%	30.9%	29.4%	77.6%
% Of members receiving VSLA funds	68.7%	20.7%	20.2%	70.2%
% Investing in oil palm plantation	33.4%	2.3%	2.39%	33.61%
% Investing in alternative livelihoods	13.5%	0.9%	2.28%	9.4%

Source: Outcome survey 2021

The field teams asked oil palm farmers for what they had used VSLA funds. Farmers most purchased fertilisers and insecticides. They also hired labour (or RSCs) for weeding, pruning, and other farm work. Some used VSLA funds to purchase seedlings, and some started to nurse seedlings themselves.

According to SWAPP, some VSLAs have allowed non-oil palm producers to take part. This allowed the VSLA to increase its volume while offering access to credit and savings to smallholder producers with apparently no access to the existing credit unions.

3.1.2 Skills for development

Table 3.7 Trained youth, not employed

Indicator	End-of-Project Target	Achieved as of End-2021	
Outcomes			
Trained youth employed in the sector	380	300 (185 Gh, 115 CdI)	
New businesses created by youth groups/individual youth/women groups	40	1	
Outputs			

[25] According to the annual report 2020, 131 VSLAs in Ghana had been linked to regional or universal banks or an MFI, but data do not show how many accessed loans. SWAPP sees success also in terms of financial inclusion i.e., integrating informal savings groups into the formal banking sector.

# Of learning centres established	25	40 (37 Gh, 3 Lib)	●
# Of youth (including women) acquiring new skills	1,400	1,341	●

Source: SWAPP project measurement framework 2021

SWAPP trained youth at vocational and higher levels for oil palm employment. Youth and workers were trained at training institutes only in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Ghana's trainings are based on a nationally accredited curriculum for competency-based training (CBT).[26] Between 2018 and 2020 SWAPP and GIZ implemented the Ghana Skills Development Initiative (GSDI) and developed curriculum for accreditation by the Commission for Technical and Vocational Educational Training (CTVET). Training providers (schools) and workplace facilitators were also identified, trained, and certified by CTVET. School closures in Ghana in 2020 because of the COVID pandemic postponed admissions of the first batch of 506 learners until the first quarter of 2021.[27] In 2020 Côte d'Ivoire's SWAPP adapted Ghana's curriculum for training 200 students and youth at an agricultural college, but not as a nationally accredited training. Some took part in internships at cooperatives. In Liberia, 440 youths were trained in BMP and entrepreneurship to deliver farm management services, and 256 agriculture students from five community colleges as a means of technology dissemination in their respective communities, but this was part of the farmer capacity building and farmer services development in Component 1. There was no such activity in Sierra Leone.

Too few trained youths are employed in the oil palm sector. According to SWA, 300 trainees in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are employed in the oil palm sector, of which none had created their own business. In Liberia some joined youth groups that provide RSC services (with SWAPP start-up capital). Field evaluators' discussions with youth, however, shed doubt on the above employment figures, suggesting not all are in oil palm. Furthermore, the field research suggests that lack of business creation is in part due to youth's lack of initiative and in part due to lack of access to finance. Some youth would like to set themselves up in oil palm services but lack the capital. SWAPP managed to give some seed capital to youth groups in Liberia, but SWAPP does not have a grant facility in Ghana or Côte d'Ivoire, precisely where service provision for oil palm is lacking (knowledge, labour). It is near impossible for youth to enter farming, given the large capital required to get access to land and planting stock. Currently, the most feasible entry to oil palm farming is through inheritance.[28]

Society does not encourage youth to enter the sector. The evaluators' discussions with farm owners revealed they are generally male, rather old, and worried about their succession.[29] Still, most were not inclined to recommend oil palm farming to their children as it is associated with low potential for income generation. Having spent a life in poverty, many preferred their offspring to try their luck in town instead, make some money, and send it back to the village. Although some youth stay behind, it is the brightest and most dynamic who depart first. Table 3.5 confirms societal misgivings about poverty in oil palm farming are confirmed, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone. While the SWAPP strategy is to raise oil palm incomes, it would have to go up significantly to make it an attractive livelihood to youngsters.

In a focus group discussion, farmers stated "we do not encourage our children to go into oil palm farming. We rather encourage them to find jobs in the city." Farmers consider they work very hard yet get too little income from that work. So, they do not encourage their children to do the same thing. Instead, they want their children to send them money from town to invest in the plantation and want their children to stay in town indefinitely. The evaluation team found that (elderly) farmers have no succession plan. In many cases, they expect their children to

26 CBT combines both school and workplace training. Apprenticeship is mandatory
27 CTVET expression for trainees
28 There have been initiatives that get traditional rulers and community leaders to lease land to youth for farming, but this is uncommon.
29 The 2021 outcome survey found the average age to be 47 years.

maintain the farm as absentee farmer upon inheritance, hence without taking much care of it. This is reflective of much of oil palm farming now, which takes place with minimal maintenance, no clearing of weeds, no use of fertiliser, hence very low productivity.

The youth inclusion component of SWAPP is not aligned with societal reality. The evaluative conclusion is that the SWAPP strategy on youth inclusion has underestimated the economic and cultural realities, with youth generally unable to enter the oil palm sector due to lack of opportunities and lack of capital, and society not inclined to encourage this career. While SWAPP's basic idea to involve youth in upgrading the oil palm sector is sound, youth's capacity and the oil palm sector's capacity to absorb them as service providers, processors, or farmers, is limited. Notably missing are positive role models that can convince youth that oil palm business can lead to good incomes that offer a way out of the poverty they remember from their childhood. Although SWAPP farmers and mill proprietors have certainly made progress (see the previous section), it is not to such an extent that youth anticipate a financially rewarding future in the village. SWAPP might have pursued a different strategy, that targeted a much smaller and more selective number of farmers whose income level could have been raised to a level that demonstrates working in the oil palm sector equates to success in life.

3.1.3 Women and youth inclusion

Figure 3.8 Women and youth inclusion

Indicator	End-of-Project Target	Achieved as of End-2021	
# Of SMEs operated by women and youth	26	26	●
Women trained in health, safety, quality standards and entrepreneurship	3,620	8,211	●

Source: SWAPP project measurement framework 2021

Women are empowered in processing, less in farming. According to the 2021 M&E data, about 20,000 women and youths were trained in VSLAs and various aspects of oil palm production under Component 1, and 26 SMEs were operated by women and youth. Under Component 3 women were trained in health, safety, and entrepreneurship. Women and youth groups (mainly VSLAs) were linked to financial institutions, and some got bank loans. RSCs were established in Ghana and Liberia mainly, and these employ women and youth. The fieldwork and survey show that women play a strong role in processing as well as production of various by-products. Where they use the mill just as a service provider (toll mill), they monetise the product. Women were not seen to operate oil palm farms. In general terms, women are helping their husbands on the farm, but women are culturally impeded from owning land hence the farm hence revenue. This is true for all countries, but most explicitly in Côte d'Ivoire, and much less in (parts of) Ghana. Nevertheless, rather explicit gender roles are seen in the oil palm sector of all four countries.

Women are VSLA leaders. Women take the lead in many VSLAs. Savings mobilised are often invested in alternative income generating activities, hereby empowering women, and alleviating poverty. It is noted that developing alternative livelihoods was not an explicit outcome area of SWAPP (as it is in CORIP), thus these results are bonus.

3.1.4 Mitigation of environmental impact

Table 3.9 RSPO and other environmental impact actions

Indicator	End-of-Project Target	Achieved as of End-2021	
Outcomes			
RSPO National Interpretation processes supported	4	4	🟢
RSPO certified smallholders	5,850	0	🔴
Quantity of RSPO Certified CPO attributable to SWAPP 2 / from beneficiary mills	N/A	0	🔴
# Of mills adopting improved technologies such as improved cooked stove/improved POME	10	0	🔴
Outputs			
Smallholder farmers trained in RSPO Standards	22,500	4,226	🔴
# Of mills introduced to improved technologies such as improved cooked stove/improved POME	15	679	🟢
# Of improved Palm Oil Mill Effluent (POME) management solutions introduced	3	2 (all Gh)	🟡

Source: SWAPP project measurement framework 2021

There were few results with respect to the introduction of RSPO standards. This component aimed at achieving RSPO certification of both farmers and millers, preparing West African oil palm producers for global markets where environmental stewardship is increasingly demanded. At the end of 2021, SWAPP had supported and completed the RSPO national interpretation process in all four countries. SWAPP also trained farmers and mills in RSPO standards primarily to build awareness of sustainability standards, but none were certified at the end of 2021 according to M&E data. In 2020, SWAPP in Ghana enrolled and began capacity building for 1,020 smallholder farmers and 2 Group Managers in the RSPO Independent Smallholder Scheme (RISS) with the expectation to complete the eligibility phase by December 2021. Noteworthy is that RSPO certification is perhaps more of a necessity once palm oil is exported.

For many farmers and mills RSPO may be premature. The survey among 75 oil mills, however, found that 10 claimed to be RSPO certified with 5 in process, while 24 claimed another certification with 12 in process. It is likely, however, that all this self-reported data was mistaken, and referred to Food and Drugs Authority certification. Thirty mills had no certification. Although 56 mills expressed an interest in RSPO certification, it was clearly not a priority for most. Although SWAPP trained 7 SME mills in RSPO, none were certified. Nor were farmers, even though scores were trained. For most of the SWAPP farmers, RSPO certification may be premature. There is no demand for this certification in the local market where they sell. In Sierra Leone, by contrast, SWAPP farmers are building up an outgrower relationship with Gold Tree Holdings, which is organically certified, adheres to RSPO principles and exports its palm oil. That label is probably even more demanding than RSPO. The evaluative conclusion is that the certification status of a farm or oil mill needs to reflect the demands of their market. SWAPP obviously needs to encourage sustainable oil palm farming, and this can be part of the Farmer Field Schools and BMP training. RSPO training and preparing for certification may be premature for many, particularly if there is no immediate financial incentive to do so.

SWAPP also contributed to wider sensitisation on sustainable production and climate change preparation. Apart from RSPO national interpretation, awareness and certification, various other activities were undertaken under Component 4. In Ghana, a climate vulnerability assessment was done, looking at the likely impact of global warming on the oil palm sector. The study also looked at the establishment of an alert system for the early detection and

control of deforestation, improved palm oil mill effluent (POME) treatment and discharge, and the use of improved cooking stoves (or improved boilers) for boiling FFB. SWAPP collaborated with Somera Farms of Techimantia in the Ahafo region to establish a 15-acre oil palm agroforestry pilot farm, consisting of oil palm, mango, cashew, coconut and 200 timber tree species. The farm is intercropped with tomatoes, pepper, and maize to generate income for the initial maintenance of the farm. This practice will continue as an alternative livelihood through rotation after planting oil palm. SWAPP also supported the construction of two pilot POME digestion ponds at two artisanal mills, 40m^3 at Kusi in the Eastern region and 20m^3 at Assin Odumase in the Central region. These digestors will produce biogas for cooking.

3.1.5 Policy and institutional strengthening

Table 3.10 Multi-stakeholder and policy

Indicator	End-of-Project Target	Achieved as of end-2021	
Outcomes			
Description of policy changes resulting from SWAPP II			
Outputs			
Policy dialogue meetings/workshops held between stakeholders and government	25	27	●
# Of active national multi-stakeholder platforms	11	17	●
# Dissemination/learning workshops held	16	17	●

Source: SWAPP project measurement framework 2021

In all countries SWAPP initiated policy dialogue and meetings, this in view of creating an enabling environment for the oil palm sector. The biggest success was achieved in Ghana with the establishment of the Tree Crop Development Authority (TCDA) as a statutory public institution to develop and regulate six tree crops: Cashew, Shea, Mango, Coconut, Rubber, and Oil palm in Ghana. TCDA is currently developing regulations to submit to Parliament for passage as a Legislative Instrument that will guide the registration and licensing of all value chain actors including the establishment of zonal offices; inspection, grading, and certification of products; and fair pricing mechanism. Farmers and millers hope this will change the current practice where the price is simply dictated to them by a small number of oligopolistic buyers. Farmers also hope to access certain services like those available to cocoa farmers. The true benefits from TCDA are hard to predict, and the institution is in fact quite complex. Of its 29 Board members, 24 are from the private sector, 4 for each of the six tree crops, and includes representatives of smallholder farmers and small processors. With the Board including many voices one may anticipate a lot of debate, which is probably the objective.

SWAPP also supported private sector representative organisations, such as OPDAG in Ghana and AIPH in Côte d'Ivoire, to undertake policy advocacy and provide services to members. SWAPP contributed to creating an inclusive palm oil sector by building the capacity of the OPDAG in advocacy, policy influencing and organizational management. SWAPP actors within the oil palm value chain came together and contributed to the formation of the Tree Crop Development Authority (TCDA), while SWAPP also provided assistance in negotiating and drafting the text. SWAPP collaborated with OPDAG to conduct a census to profile 2,706 artisanal processors and 264 artisanal mill owners. This enhanced OPDAG's visibility in the artisanal mill sub sector. SWAPP trained 33 OPDAG executives in advocacy and policy dialogue.

In Côte d'Ivoire, SWAPP and AIPH undertook policy dialogue to support the integration of artisanal palm oil producers within the sector, to be implemented by AIPH. Côte d'Ivoire already had the Rubber and Oil Palm Council,

like Ghana's TCDA, and is probably the country with the highest level of sector regulation. Like for cocoa, a minimum unit price of palm kernel oil is nationally fixed. However, market buyers do not respect this with no apparent consequences.

In Liberia and Sierra Leone SWAPP took the first steps toward sector organisation. Liberia and Sierra Leone do not have national regulatory institutions or private sector organizations primarily because of the relatively underdeveloped industry compared to Ghana and Côte d Ivoire. In Liberia SWAPP supported the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), a multi stakeholder group to develop the Liberian RSPO NI and provided inputs to the National Oil Palm Strategy and action plan. In Liberia 38 extension workers from the Ministry of Agriculture were trained in BMP. In Sierra Leone, SWAPP organized a stakeholder meeting with 55 participants including paramount chiefs, farmers, and officials from the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen collaboration. SWAPP in Sierra Leone has supported a multi stakeholder group to develop the Sierra Leone NI which is yet to be endorsed by the RSPO Board of Governors.

SWAPP helped put oil palm on the policy agenda. The evaluative conclusion is that SWAPP helped raise policy awareness of the economic potential of oil palm, galvanizing policy support to the sector. This was most evident in Ghana and Liberia.

3.2 Factors that influenced results

Evaluation question: What internal and external factors (both positive and negative) have aided/inhibited the project to meet expected results and targets?

SWAPP has experienced some disappointments and some unexpected successes. Overall, SWAPP has not achieved its intended outcomes in access to finance, farm and mill productivity, employment and RSPO certification. This is true even when considering that most outcomes in tree cropping take time to emerge, and that a lot of work was done from mid-2019 onward.[30] Consequently, it is unlikely that all impacts will fully materialise. However, interventions unforeseen in the original project proposal generated positive impact, notably the VSLAs. The MTE and the field visits highlighted positive and negative factors that influenced results.

SWAPP staff were regarded positively by beneficiaries. Staff made available by SWAPP as well as community facilitators have been appreciated by beneficiaries. The survey among 75 artisanal oil mills in Ghana supports this finding, as all but one confirmed applying the practices promoted by SWAPP, and three-quarters reported a large impact on performance. From those accessing finance, nearly half thought SWAPP played a decisive role. The evaluation also confirmed that most oil mills have made use of SME services, but struggle to pay for them. Other good practices were training farmers in BMP through Farmer Fields Schools, and the Programme Advisory Group in Côte d'Ivoire for coordinating stakeholders.

Farmers were willing to work together, either in VSLAs or cooperatives (Côte d'Ivoire). A lot of the results stem from the farmers' commitment to work toward a better future together, either in FBOs/cooperatives or in VSLAs. The VSLAs further contributed to SWAPP's social goals. Farmers were also grouped in Farmer Field Schools to receive practical knowledge on BMP in oil palm cultivation. It was noted that VSLAs are more attractive lending partners than banks and MFIs for two main reasons: 1) volume of the transaction, not having to deal with individual farmers, and 2) the fact that VSLAs – in contrast to many cooperatives – have a savings capital as part guarantee.

30 All project managers in all four countries were replaced.

The access to finance component was based on unrealistic expectations. SWAPP overestimated the level of development of SMEs in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire that led to the assumption that local banks and international impact investors would be willing to engage.[31] Many bottlenecks faced by SMEs in the oil palm sector could be solved by accessing finance. The MTE showed weaknesses in the credit supply side (banks have little experience with the oil palm sector, no suitable products including medium term crop loans, no specialised lending teams) and demand side (e.g., SMEs' lack of business plans, lack of assets which can be used as collateral, poor record keeping and lack of financial management skills and financial literacy). The MTE also showed that many oil mills are simply too small to be bankable, especially in Côte d'Ivoire. Impact finance is also completely out of their league (although two co-operatives in Côte d'Ivoire succeeded and Achmea Foundation supported four service centres in Ghana). Even after SWAPP worked with them, prepared business plans, improved their management, it remained challenging to secure investment finance. Fieldwork in Côte d'Ivoire also showed that many cooperatives have incurred bad debts in the past, further deterring banks to engage. Furthermore, SWAPP's initial emphasis on access to finance was one-sided as agribusinesses and farmers do not just need cash, but also management skills and technical knowledge, which SWAPP later provided through Business Advisory Services (BAS) and Farmer Field Schools (see above).

The sector-wide low level of oil palm development is a constraint in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Institutional, infrastructural, and commercial constraints in Liberia and Sierra Leone tend to be larger than in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire (e.g., no input shops in the vicinity). SWAPP knew this from the outset, which is why, in contrast to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, a grant mechanism was included in the project design. The MTE, however, suggested that these grants may create a dependency syndrome, as well as jealously between those who did and did not receive grants.

Oil palm is, however, on the radar of the private and public sector. In a wider and positive sense, the fact that demand for palm oil is increasing locally and internationally has not escaped the attention of local business and government, which has helped SWAPP find interested partners. In Ghana, the government would not have agreed to establish the Tree Crop Development Authority if it did not see its economic potential. In Liberia government was also responsive. In Sierra Leone SWAPP managed to link with a major oil palm exporter, backed by impact investors, which presumably sees scope in working with smallholder farmers as outgrowers or suppliers.

COVID caused delays and reduced results. The COVID pandemic influenced results in all countries, disrupting both input supply chains and offtake. Temporary lack of essential inputs affected farm yields, and markets were sometimes blocked as well. In Ghana, the closure of schools and associated suspension of government school feeding programmes affected artisanal processors. The closure of borders also affected cross-border trade in palm oil produced by artisanal processors. As indicated earlier, the enrolment of learners for the Ghana ATVET competency-based training was postponed to the first quarter of 2021 because of school closures in 2020.

Nigeria closed it land border. Nigeria is a major market for palm oil exports within West Africa. The Nigerian government closed their land borders from August 2019 to December 2020 affecting cross border exports and palm oil sales from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

3.3 Suitability of the M&E framework

Evaluation question: *Were the M&E frameworks suitable to monitor and support implementation of the targeted results?*

[31] In Liberia and Sierra Leone only, grants were foreseen.

3.3.1 Theory of Change (ToC)

The review of the SWAPP ToC suggests that it is needlessly complex. At the impact level, #3 and 4 quasi duplicate each other (access to food and no hunger), or at least the outcome survey does not measure two entirely different dimensions of FNS.[32] On impact #6 (C02 emission reduced) Solidaridad has neither method nor target, so this impact could as well have been omitted. We also have our doubts on impact #1 (increase in RSPO certified CPO) as it is not in the NL FNS and PSD frameworks and could have been an outcome instead (and indeed, is mentioned as an outcome indicator). On impact #7 (farmland under sustainable practices) it was noted that the outcome survey just scores the extent to which farmers apply several best management practices. But the same are also scored for the outcome indicator on adherence to GAP/BMP. So, for both impact # 1 and 7 the impact indicator duplicates an outcome indicator.

Outcomes are not distinctive. Outcome 1, which is the core of the programme, has the outcome area "finance and enterprise development", but access to finance is no longer leading. Outcome area 2, skills for employment, might as well have been folded into outcome 1, and it is the same for crosscutting outcome 3. There are indicators both for outcomes and outputs that are duplicative or are insufficiently different. Some outputs read more like outcome indicators and vice versa.[33]

Indicator definitions are wanting. Like impacts, many indicators at outcome and output levels are not clearly defined or hard to measure (e.g., "% Increase income from beneficiary mills"). We were not given access to an M&E manual defining the respective indicators and detailing their measurement process and interpretation. It is also problematic that many indicators are defined as a percentage given the unclear baseline figure to which this percentage refers. For some indicators one may question their achievability, e.g., "Mills that doubled extraction rate". More generally, for every mill or farmer that raised productivity there may be another one which lost productivity, which is not captured in these indicators.

Having a complicated ToC implies having a complicated M&E system. The evaluative conclusion on the ToC is that SWAPP would have benefitted from a simpler ToC, with fewer and clearly defined performance indicators, nominal targets (and not percentages), suitable for regular and reliable data collection methods. All of this would ideally have been well-documented in an M&E manual that should have been accessible and understood by all. Regarding the impact level indicators, it would have been sufficient just to include the three core FNS impact indicators (#1, #4, and #7) and the PSD core indicator #2, and leave out the other three or relegate them to be outcome indicators.[34] It would also have been helpful to build up the ToC logically and show with arrows which outputs result in which outcomes, and which outcomes contribute to which impacts. The component on women and youth inclusion could have been incorporated in the first component, as is the case in practice.

3.3.2 M&E

M&E reports are incomplete. The quality of M&E depends on the quality of the ToC. Given that the ToC is unnecessarily complex, as described above, the same is true for the M&E system. The M&E system essentially consists of a series of spreadsheets. These sheets tend to be incomplete, lacking the nominal figures, while one finds differences between data in the spreadsheet and the narrative report.[35] We also found calculation errors in the spreadsheets.

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32 Questions under food security and hunger essentially try to find out if the farmer had enough to eat (all the time) and does neither delve into the dietary diversity of nutrition (e.g., by counting the food types regularly eaten), nor into affordability.

33 For example, the output indicator "# of RSCs established by SMEs" would be a suitable outcome indicator as SWAPP does not do this, the SME does it after having been supported by SWAPP.

34 As noted in section 2, we also have our doubts on impact #4 as food insecurity is not leading.

35 E.g., on the indicator "farmers serviced by RSCs", which was 46,935 in the 2020 annual report and 36,521 in the accompanying spreadsheet.

The key challenge is probably that the M&E has simply become too complicated. The underlying data sources are sound, however.

Output data are adequate. The key output indicators are collected by SWA staff with the help of field facilitators and consultants. Most farmers and SMEs interviewed by the field evaluators confirmed that monitoring visits had taken place, this in addition to outcome surveys and the MTE. M&E officers in all four countries transmit data to SWA. The annual reports give a good overview of results at the output level, hence giving the impression that collection of M&E data on the output level is adequate. Indeed, as outputs are what SWAPP produces, output measurement should not be difficult.

Measurement of outcomes and impact is robust. Regarding outcome and impact data, Solidaridad has hired outside experts to undertake outcome surveys. The M&E systems of both SWAPP and CORIP, and indeed all Solidaridad programmes in cocoa and oil palm, are to a large extent depending on this work, including the data definitions and data collection methods. The outcome surveys cover SWAPP and CORIP simultaneously, along with five more Solidaridad programmes in the cocoa and oil palm sectors. This is logistically efficient considering that cocoa and oil palm farmers are often in the same regions.[36] These surveys, however, are only done bi-annually.

Baseline, midline and endline surveys were conducted. A first profiling was done in 2018/19, serving as the SWAPP baseline. The second outcome survey was undertaken in late 2020. On that occasion the survey team visited 5,061 farmers in five countries, of which 1,504 SWAPP farmers (100 from Côte d'Ivoire, 559 Ghana, 476 Liberia, and 369 Sierra Leone), and 1,100 CORIP farmers (32 from Côte d'Ivoire, 320 from Ghana, 365 Liberia, and 383 Sierra Leone). In late 2021, SWAPP undertook a final outcome survey among 1,532 oil palm farmers, namely 403 farmers in Ghana, 397 farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, 381 farmers from Liberia and 351 farmers from Sierra Leone. It is noted that this final survey was not meant to resurvey the same individuals surveyed earlier.

The survey method is sound. The outcome survey is undertaken through a standard survey list, 81 pages in total, with enumerators inserting answers in Kobo Collect. The survey is very detailed, covering the programmes' impact and outcome levels, as well as data of a general nature (e.g., family composition, other income generating activities). The survey generally follows a high methodological standard, although the survey does not include a method for collecting relevant data on access to food and nutrition security.[37] Some questions may not be important for CORIP and SWAPP because the same survey instrument is used to collect data for seven different programmes (hence the enumerator skips irrelevant questions).[38] A summary report was produced afterward, covering findings from all programmes. This report was informative and of high quality. In addition, there were sub-reports for the respective programmes, which were used in the previous sections of this report. An interesting survey finding was that some farmers, many in Ghana, were active in both cocoa and oil palm, so could have benefited from both CORIP and SWAPP or any other programmes simultaneously. Therefore, any effects on their poverty or food security may not always be attributable to SWAPP only (e.g., a cocoa farmer who becomes more food secure because of improved oil palm production).

The survey, however, neither attributes change to SWA, nor includes counterfactuals. Where, for example, 57 percent of oil palm farmers in Ghana report an increased productivity after SWAPP (see table 3.2), it would be interesting to know how the remaining 43 percent fared– perhaps they saw their yields decrease. Furthermore, the survey implicitly assumes that any effect measured is due to SWA, although it never says so explicitly. Perhaps the above-

36 The other five programmes were COCOLIFE, MASO, LISCIP, BAFS, and RSPO.

37 Essentially, the survey just asked whether people were hungry, and did not try to establish a dietary diversity index for example.

38 In addition, the same survey template can be used for four crops, namely cocoa, oil palm, cashew and coffee, so entire sections of the survey are commodity specific.

mentioned yield gain can also be observed in a control group. Lack of counterfactuals, lack of control groups and lack of decisive attribution of results to SWAPP renders much of the impact and outcome survey (hence this section 3 on effectiveness) open to challenge. However, our field visits did indeed show that SWAPP brought about outcomes in terms of improved farm, RSC and VSLA operations.

M&E is adequate but incomplete and late. Overall, SWAPP's M&E has the proper building blocks but is weak in execution. This is visible in M&E reports that are incomplete and sometimes contradictory. The quality of outcome and impact measurement is high, although it lacks a sound methodology for measuring food and nutrition security. Furthermore, the M&E data stream on outcomes and impacts is only available intermittently due to its reliance on a limited number of surveys spaced over the final two years of the programme. Although Solidaridad has a fair idea of output achievement as it collects these data itself, there is no up-to-date information on outcome achievement. It was only by early 2021 that information on outcomes (up to Dec 2020) came available, with very little time left to correct approaches. The survey does not cover all outcome and impact indicators of the SWAPP ToC, while no other method is available to collect those data.[39] For some impacts the baseline is missing.[40] SWAPP could try to collect baseline data on all or a sample of its beneficiary farmers, but such data has not been seen by the evaluators.

A simplified M&E system would have been more effective. Our evaluative judgement is that the SWAPP M&E system is a victim of its own complexity. The sheer volume of data to collect has overwhelmed staff, not to speak of the methodological challenges they must overcome. A recommendation for future similar M&E frameworks is therefore to construct a substantially simpler ToC, with fewer impacts and outcomes, while only tracking performance indicators that really matter. This is particularly true for the impact and outcome levels because such indicators are often quite hard to measure. Once the performance indicators are defined and their methodology of measurement ascertained, SWA should be scrupulous in following up on data collection. SWA should also diligently collect baseline data for outcomes and impacts, hence data on SWAPP (and CORIP) farmers before their inclusion in the programme, or a similar sample of farmers that have not yet been receiving assistance. SWA must also collect data from a control group to show the counterfactual of effects in non-assisted farmers. The mechanism by which results can be attributed to SWAPP must be clarified (e.g., in the ToC and through contribution analysis). All of this must be in place before the project starts. Given the complexity, Solidaridad and EKN may be wise to outsource M&E to a specialised data processing firm. Outsourcing outcome and impact surveys is also important to ensure the necessary independence and integrity of data collection, which may be questioned when a project implementor (e.g., SWA) performs this task itself.

39 E.g., GHG emissions
40 Such as impact #1 (increase RSPO certified CPO), or #2 (jobs created or retained).

4 Efficiency

Resources were efficiently used to provide some but not all outputs. There were, however, significant differences in resource-use efficiency among countries and between components. SWAPP was not cost-effective in terms of achieving key outcomes. Even though the budget will be fully spent, not all outcomes have been achieved.

4.1 Use of financial resources

Evaluation question: Were the financial resources used efficiently to achieve outputs?

This section assesses the efficiency of SWAPP's financial resource use based on a combination of quantitative analysis and a review of working practices. The quantitative evaluation of output efficiency requires a comparison of outputs and expenditures to the initial budget and project proposal, while efficiency indicators may be benchmarked to other development projects, as well as among countries within the SWAPP programme. In the interpretation of output efficiency, we also need to look at the working practices and operational realities of the respective countries, which is dealt with in sections 4.3 and 4.4.

Nearly 90 percent of the programme budget had been used up by end-2020, a year before closing. Table 4.1 shows spending by programme components until December 2020 and the entire budget until project closure in December 2021. The figures reveal that, as of end-2020, nearly 90 percent of the budget had already been used. The subsequent progress reports stated that all SWAPP budget was expected to be used by the end of the project at end-2021. The table also shows that spending for components 4 and 5 (78 and 73 percent) is lower than for components 1 to 3 (91 to 132 percent). For the latter Component 3, this means the programme budget had already been exceeded by Dec 2020. This points to a prioritization of "gender and youth participation". The largest component in the budget, though, is still Component 1 ("facilitate access to finance"). Looking across countries, Table 4.2 shows that budgets for Liberia and Sierra Leone had a lower utilization (68 and 80 percent respectively) than for Ghana and Ivory Coast (both 94 percent).

There was a budget revision for Ghana. As indicated in the budget data shared by SWA, there was a revision of the total budget for Ghana (co-financed by SECO and EKN Accra), representing an increase of almost EUR 1.2 million. The initial budget over the entire programme period was EUR 6.1 million, with the revision it reached EUR 7.3 million. EKN Accra's part of the budget increased from EUR 1.7 to 2.9 million.

Operational and overhead costs amounted to a third of total costs, with big differences between countries. Up to 2020, SWAPP spent 35 percent of the budget on operational costs (staff, equipment/supplies, programme management/technical assistance), and overhead. Our evaluative judgement is that the division of one-third for staff, management, and overhead costs (indirect costs), and two-thirds for specific activities (direct costs) is to be considered normal, and acceptably efficient - as well as in line with CORIP. Operational and overhead costs as a percentage of total costs, however, varied among countries. In Côte d'Ivoire these were 56 percent, in Liberia and Sierra Leone only 28 percent, and in Ghana with 39 percent not far above the average (see Table 4.2Table 4.1). The high operational costs (e.g., project staff) point to significant inefficiencies in Côte d'Ivoire. These figures are distorted, however, by the fact that Liberia and Sierra Leone disposed of a grant fund, which the other two countries did not.

Most of the total SWAPP budget was expended on Liberia and Sierra Leone. These countries took up 29 and 30 percent of the total programme budget respectively, whilst expenditures in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire amounted to 24 percent and 17 percent of total costs, respectively (see Table 4.1). SWA has explained that working in Liberia and Sierra Leone is generally more difficult and expensive than Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, considering the lower level of economic development and poor infrastructure. In addition, Liberia and Sierra Leone benefitted from grant funds, which the other two countries did not.

Table 4.1 The programme budget (EKN Accra only) is on track to be fully utilised

Budget item	Actual (Up to 2020)	Budget (Through 2021)	Budget use (through 2020)	% Of total
Project staff	1,907,380	2,479,415	77%	17%
Equipment, supplies and others operational cost	436,279	467,799	93%	4%
Programme Management and Technical Assistance	1,156,815	1,521,057	76%	10%
Subtotal operational costs	**3,500,473**	**4,468,272**	**78%**	**30%**
Intervention 1: Facilitate Access to finance for the Establishment and operation of SME farm support services for oil palm producers	3,796,812	4,163,271	91%	33%
Intervention 2: Promote Skills for Employment	990,612	1,028,896	96%	9%
Intervention 3. Promote gender and youth participation in production and processing	1,491,602	1,129,175	132%	13%
Intervention 4. Mitigation of Environmental Impact	709,874	912,112	78%	6%
Intervention 5. Policy and Institutional strengthening and capacity building	483,846	664,588	73%	4%
Total programme cost	**10,973,220**	**12,366,313**	**89%**	**95%**
Overhead	548,661	618,316	89%	5%
Grand total programme budget	**11,521,881**	**12,984,629**	**89%**	**100%**
Ghana	2,726,219	2,906,013	94%	24%
Ivory Coast	2,006,920	2,966,231	68%	17%
Liberia	3,333,999	4,145,413	80%	29%
Sierra Leone	3,454,743	4,145,597	83%	30%

Source: SWAPP budget data and audited reports (up to 2020).

Table 4.2 Budget utilisation until end-2020 was lower in Liberia and Sierra Leone than Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

	Ghana		Côte d'Ivoire		Liberia		Sierra Leone	
	% Used	% budget	% used	% budget	% used	% budget	% used	% budget
Project staff	83%	24%	83%	31%	64%	11%	65%	11%
Equipment, supplies and other operational cost	98%	3%	98%	5%	82%	4%	87%	9%
Programme Management and Technical Assistance	104%	8%	104%	16%	73%	9%	60%	9%
Subtotal operational costs		**34%**		**51%**		**23%**		**23%**
Intervention 1: Facilitate Access to finance for the Establishment and operation of SME farm support services for oil palm producers	131%	22%	131%	17%	68%	39%	77%	38%
Intervention 2: Promote Skills for Employment	85%	9%	85%	8%	53%	9%	104%	9%
Intervention 3. Promote gender and youth participation in production and processing	81%	15%	81%	9%	95%	14%	143%	14%
Intervention 4. Mitigation of Environmental Impact	60%	10%	60%	4.9%	66%	6%	77%	6%
Intervention 5. Policy and Institutional strengthening and capacity building	82%	4%	82%	4.9%	58%	4%	64%	4%

Total programme cost	**94%**	**95%**	**94%**	**95.2%**	**68%**	**95%**	**80%**	**95%**
Overhead 5%	94%	5%	94%	4.8%	68%	5%	80%	5%
Grand total programme budget	**94%**	**100%**	**94%**	**100%**	**68%**	**100%**	**80%**	**100%**

Source: SWAPP expenditure data and audited reports (up to 2020).
Note: % Used: percentage use on the respective budget line. % Budget: percentage of the total budget till 2021. Actual figure is calculated using data up to 2020, and as a percentage of the total LoP budget (until 2021). For Ghana, this LoP budget corresponds to the revised budget.

Resources were used efficiently to provide some (but not all) outputs. Table 4.3 shows different measures of output efficiency, in total and by programme components. For each component, the table shows (1) a selection of two core outputs and (2) two aggregate measures of output efficiency: the average achievement across all component targets, and the number of targets achieved as a proportion of all component targets.[41] The table then compares this measure of output achievement to the percentage of total budget used for the same component until 2020. The ratio of these two numbers is listed in the rightward-most column, as the Resource Use Efficiency (RUE). As the M&E data are up to 2020, we also used expenditure data till 2020. Generally, the *average* output efficiency was high for components 1, 4 and 5, but low for components 2 and 3. For example, the number of mills trained in RSPO (indicator 4.2.1) was much higher than targeted, but the number of RSCs established (1.1.4) and youth trained (2.1.3) was lower than targeted, while all available budget was used. The RUE indicators suggest that there were inefficiencies in the delivery of some outputs.

Table 4.3 SWAPP's Resource Use Efficiency (RUE) was relatively high for interventions 1, 4 and 5

Budget component (TOTAL)	Selected measures of RUE	LOP Target	LOP Achieved 2020	%Output achieved 2020	%Budget used 2020	RUE
Intervention 1: Facilitate Access to finance for the Establishment and operation of SME farm support services for oil palm producers	1.4.1: # of smallholder farmers trained/introduced to BMP	50,440	45,422	90%	91%	99%
	1.1.4: # of RSCs established by SMEs	86	31	36%		40%
	Average target achievement			105%		115%
	% Of targets achieved			44%		48%
Intervention 2: Promote Skills for Employment	2.1.2: # of learning centres established	25	40	160%	96%	167%
	2.1.3: # of youth (including women) acquiring new skills	1,400	640	46%		48%
	Average target achievement			73%		76%
	% Of targets achieved			33%		34%
Intervention 3. Promote gender and youth participation in production and processing	3.1.4: # of women trained in health, safety, quality standards and entrepreneurship	3,620	4,515	125%	132%	94%
	3.2.2: # of SMEs operated by women and youth	26	12	46%		35%
	Average target achievement			55%		42%
	% Of targets achieved			14%		11%
Intervention 4. Mitigation of	4.1.1: # of smallholder farmers trained in RSPO Standards	22,500	3,598	16%	78%	21%

41 Both measures of output efficiency are methodologically fallible, but still useful indications. Using the average target achievement mixes various indicators with different meanings. Furthermore, the number of targets achieved as a percentage of total does not indicate by how much a target was achieved. Neither indicator reflects possible priorities among different indicators (e.g., achieving the target for # farmers trained may be more important than # dissemination workshops). These indicators also assume that the planned cost (per unit) was accurate, which may not have been the case. All figures should be taken as complementary indications of efficiency and not as ultimate judgements.

Environmental Impact	4.2.1: # of mills introduced to improved technologies such as improved cooked stove/improved POME	15	639	4260%		5462%
	Average target achievement			1448%		1856%
	% Of targets achieved			33%		42%
Intervention 5. Policy and Institutional strengthening and capacity building	5.2.1: # of active national multi-stakeholder platforms	15	12	80%		110%
	5.3.1: # dissemination/learning workshops held	16	16	100%	73%	137%
	Average target achievement			93%		127%
	% Of targets achieved			43%		59%
Total Funds	**Average target achievement**			**197%**	**89%**	**221%**
	% Of targets achieved			**37%**		**42%**

Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics based on SWAPP expenditure and M&E data (consolidated M&E measurement spreadsheets, audited financial reports, and budget spreadsheets shared by the programme implementors).
Note: Resource Use Efficiency (RUE) is defined as the % of a given output having been produced (against the LoP targets) for a given % of budget used (i.e., against initially planned budget). A higher RUE means that LoP output targets are (over)achieved at a relatively low cost.

Resource use efficiency varied by country. In Ghana, the RUE for the average target achievement was 242 percent (M&E indicators and budget up to 2020), mainly because in Ghana output achievement was high for all components. In Sierra Leone, on the contrary, RUE was only 74 percent. While Sierra Leone used its budget (see table 4.2), output production fell short of plan, especially for components 2 and 3.

Table 4.4 The programme in Ghana was the most efficient in use of resources; Sierra Leone shows inefficiencies

	RUE based on average achievement of all outputs (2020)			
Budget component	**Ghana**	**Ivory Coast**	**Liberia**	**Sierra Leone**
Intervention 1: Facilitate Access to finance for the Establishment and operation of SME farm support services for oil palm producers	102%	141%	105%	106%
Intervention 2: Promote Skills for Employment	109%	49%	81%	Indicators not applicable, but budget was used.
Intervention 3. Promote gender and youth participation in production and processing	95%	33%	55%	41%
Intervention 4. Mitigation of Environmental Impact	2401%	217%	0%	2%
Intervention 5. Policy and Institutional strengthening and capacity building	164%	209%	165%	39%
Total Funds	242%	131%	103%	74%

Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics based on SWAPP expenditure and M&E data (consolidated M&E measurement spreadsheets, audited financial reports, and budget spreadsheets shared by the programme implementors) up to 2020.
Note: RUE was calculated using the average percentage achievement among all outputs for each component and country, and then dividing this figure by the percentage of budget use till 2020.

Output efficiency was adequate, but with differences among components and countries. The evaluative conclusion is that on the whole financial resources were used efficiently to achieve outputs, or at least in line with the initial cost estimates. Much of this, however, was due to Ghana by virtue of the large number of outputs this subprogramme managed to produce. In terms of output efficiency, Ghana had the advantage of a relatively more developed oil palm sector to start with (including artisanal mills) as well as stronger institutional and infrastructural support conditions, in comparison to Liberia and Sierra Leone. It is observed that the above output efficiency calculations were made comparing the current M&E targets to the initial budget. Output efficiency on some components would have turned out lower if we had applied the (higher) targets of the initial project proposal.

4.2 Costs in relation to results

Evaluation question: Did the actual results (outputs and outcomes) justify the costs incurred? Were resources effectively utilized?

This is essentially the "value for money" question. The evaluation question is to what extent the output and outcomes achieved were a "good deal" for the Embassy, whether it was worth the money. This analysis is done by looking at the cost of outcomes, hence outcome efficiency or cost-effectiveness.

Budget utilization was not effective to achieve outcomes overall. As demonstrated in section 3, on most outcome indicators SWAPP had vastly underperformed by 2020 (hence was ineffective), while 89 percent of budget had been used (section 4.1). So, it can immediately be seen that outcome efficiency ("value for money") was low, or at least much less than initially intended. Although it is expected that by end of 2021 more outcomes will have been achieved, perhaps even a lot more, SWAPP's own interim reports mention the expectation of underperformance by project ending.

In terms of cost-effectiveness indicators, the programme did not effectively use the programme budget in reaching its LoP targets. Table 4.5 shows the component costs per outcome unit.[42] We used expenditure and M&E data until 2020. Outcomes 1.0.2 (% increase in oil palm farm income) and 4.0.1 (# of RSPO National Interpretation process supported) were most costly. Moreover, it shows that the programme spent EUR 342 per farmer to effectively improve their management practices (ind. 1.0.5a), EUR 3 for every EUR 1 of finance mobilized, and EUR 20,531 for every trained youth employed in the sector. Some other outcomes, like the number of RSPO certified smallholders, had no achievement, so offered no "value for money". All of this looks distinctly expensive when one compares them with the implicit costs in the outcome targets. For example, the target for the number of farmers implementing BMPs was 35,308 (or 70 percent of the 50,440 farmers trained); considering the entire budget for this component (SECO and EKN, total 3.5 million), the target implies a cost of EUR 100 per farmer—a third of the cost effectiveness achieved.

Table 4.5 Increasing oil palm farm income and RSPO National Interpretation processes were most costly.

Component	Selected outcomes KPI	LoP Achieved	Component costs per outcome unit (EUR)
Intervention 1: Facilitate Access to finance for the Establishment and operation of SME farm support services for oil palm producers	1.0.5a: # of farmers who implement BMPs	7,166	342
	1.0.6: # of smallholder farmers who have access to services from the SMEs	31,448	162
	1.0.7 Amount of finance mobilized	1,483,793	3
	1.0.2: % increase in oil palm farm income of beneficiary producers	13%	391,396
Intervention 2: Promote Skills for Employment	2.0.1: # of trained youth employed in the sector	65	20,531
	2.0.2: # new businesses created by youth groups/individuals	0	NA
Intervention 3. Promote gender and youth participation in production and processing	*Outcomes for this component are cross cutting in C1 and C2*		
Intervention 4. Mitigation of Environmental Impact	4.0.1: # of RSPO National Interpretation process supported	6	171,089

[42] The method chosen, whereby we compare the outcome achieved to the full component costs has the obvious flaw that only part of this cost was made for this specific outcome. However, available data do not allow for a higher level of granularity.

	4.0.2: # of RSPO certified smallholders	0	NA
Intervention 5. Policy and Institutional strengthening and capacity building	*No data available*		
Total programme cost (EKN+SECO) (up to 2020)			15,435,183

Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics based on SWAPP budget and M&E data (consolidated M&E measurement spreadsheets, audited financial reports, and budget spreadsheets shared by the programme implementors).
Note: "Component cost per outcome" is calculated by dividing only the costs that correspond to the specific programme component by the outcome indicator.

Interventions in Côte d'Ivoire were most cost-effective. Using country-level budget data (up to 2020), we computed the component costs per outcome unit of each intervention area per country, see Table 4.6. SWAPP was most cost-effective in Côte d'Ivoire, where total costs per outcome were lower than in the other three countries for all selected outcome indicators.

Table 4.6 Interventions in Côte d'Ivoire exhibit lower component costs per outcome units

Component	Selected outcomes KPI	Component costs per outcome unit (EUR)			
		Ghana	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Intervention 1: Facilitate Access to finance for the Establishment and operation of SME farm support services for oil palm producers	1.0.5a: # of farmers who implement BMPs	1,466	211	527	171
	1.0.6: # of smallholder farmers who have access to services from the SMEs	784	22	163	280
	1.0.7 Amount of finance mobilized	8	0.29	57	-
	1.0.2: % increase in oil palm farm income of beneficiary producers	96,704	31,467	286,205	73,224
Intervention 2: Promote Skills for Employment	2.0.1: # of trained youth employed in the sector	-	2,382	-	-
	2.0.2: # new businesses created by youth groups/individuals	-	-	-	-
Intervention 3. Promote gender and youth participation in production and processing	*Outcomes for this component are cross cutting in C1 and C2*				
Intervention 4. Mitigation of Environmental Impact	4.0.1: # of RSPO National Interpretation processes supported	486,459	32,926	214,088	230,648
	4.0.2: # of RSPO certified smallholders	-	-	-	-
Intervention 5. Policy and Institutional strengthening and capacity building	*No data available*				

Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics based on SWAPP expenditure and M&E data (consolidated M&E measurement spreadsheets, audited financial reports, and budget spreadsheets shared by the programme implementors).
Note: The cost per outcome unit is here computed using country-level expenditure data till 2020.

SWAPP has provided limited "value for money". Whereas the evaluative conclusion is that most outcomes have been expensive, the above is not the final analysis. The final outcome survey should provide new data on outcomes, and the above-shown indicators may turn out more favourable. Nevertheless, as SWAPP expects underachievement in its outcomes, the conclusion that SWAPP will have presented moderate value for money remains.

Post-scriptum. As was shown in chapter 3 above, on most outcomes SWAPP made progress in 2021, see the latest 2021 outcome survey and M&E data, hence the "value for money" would be a bit larger than calculated above. However, the finding that key outcomes underperformed hence value for money was lacking remains.

4.3 Factors that influenced efficiency

Evaluation question: Which factors facilitated or impeded the implementation efficiency?

Broadly, the working methods were suitable to produce outputs. The fieldwork and the MTE identify several factors that aided or hampered efficiency. The recruitment of community facilitators and BDS service providers by SWAPP to assist SMEs with training and handholding was identified as successful and efficient. The use of the Farmer Field School has also been an efficient way of reaching out to farmers. Likewise, the formation and operationalization of VSLAs was efficient as a mechanism to increase access to finance for smallholder farmers (indicators of VSLA formation and participation surpassed targets by 2020). In Ghana, support for the Oil Palm Development Association of Ghana (OPDAG), the private sector industry association, to advocate and influence public policy is likely to improve Ghana's performance of the tree crop sector. Some results were already achieved.

Farmers can be efficiently reached in groups. The organisation of farmers in cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire is certainly efficient from SWAPP's point of view, as large numbers of farmers can be reached through a united channel. The cooperatives have also acted as buyers or off-takers of oil palm products from the farmers and at the same time, provided technical support in the form of provision of farm inputs (fertilisers and nurseries), and capacity building about best farming practices. It is for this reason that SWAPP started to introduce the FBO concept in other countries, Ghana in particular. This efficiency was reflected in the total number of farmers trained, which by 2020 reached more than 45,000 (90 percent of target).

The selection of SMEs to fulfil the RSC role was not always appropriate. In Côte d'Ivoire, apart from RSCs being quite redundant in the presence of cooperatives, service SMEs did not in fact have that vocation. Instead, service SMEs were mostly aggregators, weighing produce and then selling to a big industrial transformation firm. Likewise, in Ghana many service SMEs interviewed by the field team were not truly interested in providing services. The selection and orientation of such SMEs needs to be based on clearly defined and responsive criteria. This hurdle in access to SME services in the intervention design was reflected in low effectiveness: by 2020 only 63 percent of target farmers had access to these services. Admittedly, the concept of a service centre may take time to be understood, both by farmers and service providers, but the difference with CORIP RSCs is striking.

Sharing resources among projects is not necessarily efficient. It was noted that CORIP and SWAPP, being implemented by the same organisation, share resources which is deemed efficient and allows for cross-learning. This is less so for HortiFresh, implemented by SNV, and housed in the same office in Côte d'Ivoire. However, this sharing between CORIP and SWAPP may also impede efficiency if the same MEL staff work on several projects simultaneously.

The grant fund was criticised for being late. Some inefficiencies were mentioned in late mobilisation of (grant) funds for Liberia and Sierra Leone, while there was also mention made of the risk of overdependence on free input resources in Sierra Leone in particular. Indeed, the outcome survey suggests little appetite among oil palm farmers to pay for services.

4.4 Project management

Evaluation question: Was the project management of SWAPP appropriately established, staffed, and equipped?

The field evaluation did not identify strong issues in project management. SWAPP is made up of a project manager in each of the project countries as well as PMEL officer, regional coordinators and supported by community facilitators. There have, however, been several changes in staff which resulted in implementation delays of project

activities. Indeed, SWAPP only took off as of mid-2019. SWAPP is also faced with long travel distances, which may discourage them from visiting the field as much as they should. Some farmers and SMEs in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia suggested rarely seeing SWAPP staff. In all countries M&E officers take responsibility for several Solidaridad projects, which in our view may compromise M&E quality, based on our review of the various spreadsheets.

5 Sustainability

Improvements of operations at oil mills and oil palm farmers have a good chance of being sustained. VSLAs are durable too, while policy makers are starting to understand the developmental potential of oil palm. SWAPP support to RSPO is not likely to endure. The greatest risk in sustainability relates to insufficient numbers of youth with appetite to take over the oil palm work.

5.1 Take up by policy and public / private organisations

Evaluation question: To what extent are the strategies and activities being taken up by policy and public / private organizations?

SWAPP has helped put oil palm on the radar. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire oil palm had not received the same level of public policy attention as has the cocoa sector. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the industry is relatively underdeveloped compared to Ghana and Sierra Leone. Both public and private sectors, however, are starting to realise that West Africa offers excellent conditions for a variety of tree crops, and oil palm is just one of them. SWAPP has fostered public awareness, especially in Ghana and Liberia. Global and regional market demand for vegetable oil is strong and growing and West African palm oil is well-placed to capture a good part of that market.

SWAPP had notable policy success in Ghana and Liberia. In Ghana SWAPP contributed to the Tree Crop Development Authority's establishment by statute as a public institution that will continue to exist. However, TCDA as a new entity requires continuous short to medium term institutional support from the government, development partners and the private sector. It is hoped that the TCDA will help farmers and SMEs improve both their skills and their negotiation position toward industrial buyers, as TCDA will in conjunction with value chain actors develop a fair pricing mechanism without accumulating COCOBOD-like market powers. In Côte d'Ivoire government already sets minimum prices for palm oil, but buyers generally disrespect this. In Liberia SWAPP also actively engaged with government and other partners to build alliances to support oil palm initiatives and to sustain the long-term sustainability of the oil palm sector. The National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), which supports the development of the national oil palm strategy, is just one of them. It resulted in the National Oil Palm Strategy.

5.2 Likelihood of continuation of outcomes, scalability and systems change

Evaluation question: What is the likelihood of continuation of outcomes, scalability of outcomes and systems change beyond the scope and timespan of the program?

Capacity building of SMEs will lead to sustainable change as it demonstrably improves performance. SWAPP has provided capacity enhancement to oil palm farmers, artisanal mills, and related SMEs. One may assume SWAPP contributions will be sustained when beneficiaries can monetise the benefits. The survey among 75 mills in Ghana revealed that three quarters found that SWAPP had made a large contribution to their performance, and the others believed this to a lesser extent. Concrete examples were given of lessons learned, such as food safety practices, better farming, or better processing. With beneficiaries clear about the benefits, we may assume they will continue to apply them. Indeed, the SMEs visited by the evaluation team confirmed the value of business planning,

productivity improvement, and better accounting systems to their business. It may also enable their access to finance now or in the future. Likewise, the MTE by Proven Ag Solutions in 2019 found beneficiary oil mills likely to practice new insights in health and safety, and practice better processing. Better quality of their oil will open a higher-end market, so they have a financial incentive to pursue this. The MTE also found that millers and processors were generating profit, which is both a pre-condition and an incentive for sustainability.

Farmers will continue to apply BMP. The MTE surveyed farmers and was confident that application of some BMP would continue. The main incentive is the higher yield these farmers have experienced. FGDs also suggest that farmers will maintain their new BMP practices, and even teach these to their neighbours. Finally, the outcome survey also pointed to (modest) income benefits to farmers applying BMP, which can be considered an incentive to continue to apply BMP. In this respect it was noted that the full effect of better agronomic practices is not yet apparent, for new tree seedlings. There is plenty of scope for further productivity improvement, particularly through good input use.

VSLAs are likely to outlive the SWAPP intervention. The setting up of VSLAs was one of the most successful, and likely most sustainable, activities of SWAPP. Not only do VSLAs instil a savings culture, allowing for a safe space to keep money, they have also enabled farmers to borrow and invest in their farms or other livelihoods, despite the small and short-term amounts. Some artisanal mills used this source of funding too. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, VSLAs linked to MFIs and Rural and Community Banks to open a bank account and start a banking relationship so that they can safely keep their deposits in the bank and access loans when needed. In this respect it is a pity that VSLAs share savings at year-end, as per standard VSLA methodology, hereby reducing the VSLA capital and thus capacity to leverage bank or MFI loans. Farmers' participation in a VSLA also contributes to their financial inclusion and literacy, removing their fear of working with banks and MFIs in the future. Apart from the above, there is a high sense of ownership among VSLA members.

The evaluators expect the VSLA system to continue beyond the lifetime of the programme. This is based on the statements of farmers below:

Farmer Mampong: "The VSLA helps the community members to save money, which can help us to invest in our business. Also, when we are in need, we can get financial assistance."

Farmer Assin Asamankese: "The function of the VSLA is to help us in time of need – we can access our contribution later for our businesses or even have a loan bigger than what we have contributed. When you take the loan, the rules are that you pay monthly, and we pay five percent interest."

Farmer Assin Besease: "The VSLA is there to help us work together as a team, create trust among each other, save money and be able to access money in time of need or invest into our farms and oil mill."

Farmer Mampong: "The function of the VSLA is to help the members to save money among ourselves, which can help us to invest more money to our Palm farming and oil making. Also, the function is to support the members financially to access loan whenever needed."

The durability of RSCs under SWAPP is uncertain. As SWAPP I did not have RSCs, no conclusions on RSC sustainability can be derived from phase 1. Although the concept of RSC was conceived in SWAPP I this was only implemented in SWAPP II. In the second phase, the strategy of setting up SME service delivery for oil palm growers has not been successful, as many SMEs selected for the RSC role are mostly interested in aggregating produce, or sometimes selling farm inputs, which few farmers buy. Also, the "RSCs" in SWAPP are rarely based in the community. Whereas in CORIP RSCs are really invested in service provision and are likely to endure, this is far less certain in

SWAPP. In Côte d'Ivoire, however, the aggregation, input supply and service roles are played by cooperatives, which are likely to sustain themselves if benefits are generated to farmers. The project's efforts to set up FBOs in the other three countries are to be applauded in this respect. However, the experience from all countries including Côte d'Ivoire suggests that farmers are unlikely to spend much on inputs and labour, whether it is from cooperatives or RSCs, and this is not different in the other countries. This is precisely what holds back the RSC business model in SWAPP.

Lack of youth inclusion jeopardizes all SWAPP's achievements. The strategy of educating youth to work in oil palm, e.g., as service providers, farmers, or processors, has so far disappointed. Although some youths have found employment, many others have not. Youth lack access to finance and may not have the entrepreneurial acumen needed to start a business. So, whereas the ATVET programme in Ghana is set to continue, if it does not provide a clear path to employment and income to youth, one may doubt its sustainability and rationale. The fieldwork clearly demonstrated that rural communities rarely encourage their sons and daughters to enter oil palm or remain in the village, given precarious income perspectives. While not every youngster departs the rural community for town, many do.

SWAPP's RSPO work has little potential to be sustained. As confirmed by SWAPP staff, there is low private sector demand for RSPO certification by SME mills because they sell their palm oil in the local and West Africa market. Given the RSPO certification requirements and associated compliance and audit costs, it is unlikely to be sustained. The RSPO certification process delayed right from the beginning, as the development of RSPO National Interpretation and endorsement by the RSPO Board of Governors took almost 2 years. The new RSPO Independent Smallholder Standard (RISS) was released by the RSPO International Secretariat in early 2020. Certification of farmers and mills could only begin in 2020 after NIs and RISS.

5.3 Factors that negatively influenced sustainability

Evaluation question: In case of reduced likelihood of sustainability, scalability and systems change what are the causes and how could subsequent programs learn from that?

Lack of access to finance hampers the sector's development and sustainability. Although SWAPP managed to mobilise some financial resources, the hoped-for links with banks and impact investors did not materialise. Although some VSLAs linked with banks and MFIs, lack of access to funding is a problem in all countries and hampers the oil palm sector's sustainability. Investment funds are needed for modernisation and rejuvenation of ageing oil palm farms and plantations and for upgrading mills. In Côte d'Ivoire many cooperatives cannot access finance due to their poor reputation in banking, or past debts.

Lack of interest and capability of youth to enter oil palm. As mentioned above, sustainability challenges have been detected in youth capacity after training under the skills development component. Some youth would like to set up a service centre but lack the necessary capital. In a less generous interpretation, the field team suggests that many simply lack the initiative and acumen to capitalise on their new skills, and simply wait for a job to fall into their laps. In the context of youth inclusion there are two fundamental issues that SWAPP perhaps could have addressed:

Lack of good role models. For youth to remain in oil palm, it must be evident to them and their communities that good money is to be made in the sector, better than by chasing (probably non-existent) jobs in town. The SWAPP strategy was oil palm intensification, and to maximize outreach. The first challenge here is that results in tree cropping take years to emerge. The new breeds introduced in Sierra Leone and Liberia will come to fruition only after SWAPP has ended. Also, for farmers to embrace all best management practices taught to them, they will first have to be convinced, and that takes a couple of successive harvests. The time frame of SWAPP was simply too short for that.

But even a "typical" oil palm farmer implementing all BMP is unlikely to earn much beyond EUR 1,000 annually, hardly enough to entice youth. An alternative SWAPP strategy might have been to target fewer farmers and build them into true role models for the community to admire. This would have entailed not just farm intensification but consolidation/upscaling as well (enlarging the farm), resulting in an income of several thousand EUR per year. The corollary of this intensification / consolidation strategy would evidently be that some other farmers would have to seek other employment or income sources.

Lack of seed capital for youth to launch an oil palm business, with banks and MFIs unwilling to invest in a start-up. While SWAPP had in principle agreed with EKN (and SECO in Ghana) that some budget allocation should be provided to pilot a Women and Youth Fund in Ghana in collaboration with financial institutions to provide seed capital for youth start-ups, the intended budget of Euros 200,000 was reallocated for Covid mitigation in all four countries in 2020. Liberia and Sierra Leone did invest some limited money in youth groups.

Women face cultural impediments to enter oil palm work. For oil palm in West Africa to prosper sustainably, it would be beneficial if women took part in farming and processing. The fieldwork, however, showed substantial impediments to women's participation due to restricted access to land and societal expectations of women's role in the family and household. This constraint is more acute in Côte d'Ivoire than in Ghana.

Climate change remains another threat to sustainability in all four countries. Weather patterns are changing, generally leading to less rainfall. This has an adverse effect on oil palm productivity, while there have also been instances of wildfires reaching oil palm farms.

5.4 Sustainability of VSLAs

Evaluation question: Will VSLAs continue to exist and be functional after the programme ends?

VSLAs will continue to exist after the programme ends (see section 5.2 above). According to VSLA members their high sense of ownership and the benefits they get from the VSLAs will motivate them to continue operating the VSLAs after the end of the programme. In Ghana, for instance, some VSLAs have moved from contributing GHC 1 to GHC 20 per week in just two years' time. This is because they are aware of the benefit in saving through the VSLAs and of the loans they get from their group savings.

VSLAs have started to connect to banks and MFIs. SWAPP has successfully connected some VSLAs in Ghana to financial institutions, which has been beneficial to both VSLA and bank/MFI as each side has increased its understanding of the other. Smallholder farmers have come to better understand the requirements of the financial institutions, while banks have come to better understand how the oil palm sector operates. It was reported that MFIs in Ghana now call SWAPP asking if new VSLAs have been created for them to do business with. Once connected, the bank/MFI and VSLA are likely to continue working together.

VSLAs should not return their capital at year end. As noted in section 3, VSLAs share the saved capital among members at year end. If instead VSLAs decided to keep the capital, their capacity to leverage bank finance and serve their members would increase. This could also, eventually, allow the VSLAs to provide finance beyond the current very short-term operations, and thus contribute to agricultural investment in more impactful amounts. The more capable the VSLAs, the more sustainable they may be expected to be. This is not the usual VSLA model but could be a useful innovation as it enhanced their sustainability (although more money would also raise the managerial challenges) and may even be the basis for a new rural finance cooperative or cooperative bank.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Relevance

i.	*To what extent is SWAPP expected to contribute to "an inclusive and sustainable oil palm sector to meet global demand in the medium to long term"?*
ii.	*Does the programme address constraints that hinder the growth and viability of the oil palm sector?*
iii.	*How well aligned is the programme with other donors' and national governments interventions in the value chains (no risk of incoherence or duplication)?*
iv.	*How does the access to finance (A2F) component fit with-in the local and international landscape of A2F activities in the SME and smallholder segment?*

SWAPP is relevant to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' policy goals, not just in terms of ability to contribute to Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) but also in terms of Private Sector Development (PSD). Regarding the Dutch MFA's core FNS policy goals, SWAPP is relevant for "Inclusive and sustainable growth in agriculture" and "Ecologically sustainable food production systems". However, SWAPP is less relevant to the FNS policy goal "End hunger and malnutrition", in particular not in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, SWAPP also has strong PSD characteristics, due to its focus on cash crops, SME development, jobs, and incomes.

The design of SWAPP was relevant to oil palm farmers' and processors' needs but did not follow a food systems approach.[43] Both artisanal oil mills and oil palm farmers confirmed that the technical and management advisory and training of SWAPP was relevant and indeed helped them to improve their performance, and M&E data show that this happened to some extent. However, SWAPP was focused more on upstream activities than on value chain development. For example, there was not much effort to connect farmers with aggregators, let alone to provide further value addition up to the final consumer, as one would have expected in a food and nutrition security programme. In Sierra Leone, however, SWAPP prepared farmers for an outgrower arrangement, while in Côte d'Ivoire market linkages were built through the farmers' cooperatives.

RSPO certification may be relevant as a long-term strategy, but less so in the short-term. RSPO certification is most relevant for the export market, but most SWAPP producers were still serving local markets by the end of the programme. Given this, few farmers and processors expressed interest in certification as they could not convert the cost and effort (e.g., compliance and recurrent audits) into revenues. Nonetheless, RSPO training did expose farmers to 'sustainability thinking' in a market where such awareness was low, and thereby addressed some gaps. RSPO certification may become more relevant in the future if producers access world markets.

SWAPP was reasonably aligned with private and public interventions in oil palm. Overall, the oil palm sector in West Africa is not bristling with government and development partner initiatives. In the absence of strong policy and development partner support, SWAPP can be considered aligned or in any case not in contradiction or duplicative. Weak sector support provided an opportunity for SWAPP, and its policy work was relevant in drawing attention to oil palm's potential.

The initial access to finance approach was not aligned with sector needs. SWAPP expected impact investors to finance artisanal oil mills and service SMEs, which they rarely do – impact investors usually finance export transactions. The initial project proposal also lacked a farmer financing component. Although SWAPP got some oil mills financed, overall, the assumptions behind the intervention design did not hold. However, SWAPP was successful in

[43] It is to be acknowledged that at the time of formulation of SWAPP the food systems approach was not yet well embedded in MFA/IGG.

setting up VSLAs in all countries, establishing a mechanism to sustainably finance farmers, albeit in small amounts and only for short maturities, not well suited to capital investment (e.g., in orchards).

The assumptions behind the relevance of the Rural Service Centre (RSC) model in oil palm did not materialise. The assumption behind this model was that oil palm farmers would need and be able to buy services and inputs. The evaluation, however, found that oil palm farmers were not using many inputs nor expending much on labour. If oil palm farmers were intensifying their oil palm farms, as SWAPP advises, demand for RSCs would increase but probably not to the level of input-intensive sectors like cocoa. It is to be noted that there were no service centres in SWAPP phase 1.

6.2 Effectiveness

i. To what extent are the planned outputs and outcomes, as defined in the programme proposal, achieved?
ii. What internal and external factors (both positive and negative) have aided/inhibited the project to meet expected results and targets?
iii. Were the M&E frameworks suitable to monitor and support implementation of the targeted results?

Output and outcome data showed SWAPP lagging on key indicators. On the one hand, this is logical, as one may expect results in improved tree cropping to take some years to materialise, particularly the introduction of new hybrid stock in Liberia and Sierra Leone. On the other hand, SWAPP itself does not anticipate that all outcomes will be achieved.

The effectiveness of the access to finance component was mixed. Although SWAPP managed to mobilise funds for cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire and a few service providers in Ghana, providing access to finance to artisanal oil mills and service providers proved difficult. Most SMEs and oil mills are too small and too early in their development to be bankable beyond small amounts from rural banks and MFIs, while banks are not structured to provide suitable medium-term credit to this sector. SWAPP successfully set up VSLAs, particularly in Ghana and Liberia, and these mobilised funds for farmers and even artisanal oil mills, but the amounts were necessarily small and short-term. In Ghana, however, some VSLAs were linked with rural and community banks to operate bank accounts and access loans.

SWAPP helped artisanal oil mills and farmers to improve their performance, but significant productivity and management gaps remained. Oil mills (in Ghana) raised their extraction rates, food safety and quality (which in turn raised the product price), and they credited SWAPP advisors for this improvement (table 3.2). Likewise, farmers raised their output and productivity due to extension services and training. However, the outcome surveys and M&E data showed a lot of uncaptured potential for both mills and farmers. Only a minority of trained farmers had increased productivity, and most still have a long way to go to apply (all) best management practices. Most farmers did not use any fertilisers or other inputs at all (table 3.3).

SWAPP helped farmers increase their incomes, but these were not yet progressing out of poverty. Income data from the outcome surveys found that oil palm farmers were raising their incomes and were gaining access to food as well (table 3.5). Nevertheless, oil palm farmers in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and many even in Côte d'Ivoire remained significantly poor. The field visits and meetings with farmers suggested that the livelihoods training by SWAPP, such as food cropping, helped combat nutrition challenges, in Sierra Leone in particular.

The skills for development component did not generate a lot of employment. Based on our fieldwork, we found that formal employment prospects were limited, while youth also found it hard to start up self-employment in, e.g., in service delivery. The main reasons included a lack of start-up capital and a lack of entrepreneurial spirit.

SWAPP was successful at including women, but gender roles continue to limit their possibilities. SWAPP trained many women and youth in VSLAs and various aspects of oil palm production under Component 1. A total of 26 SMEs trained were operated by women and youth according to M&E data. Under Component 3, women were trained in health, food safety, and entrepreneurship. Women and youth groups (mainly VSLAs) were linked to financial institutions, and some got MFI or bank loans. RSCs were established in Ghana and Liberia mainly, and these employ women and youth. Women take a substantial part of processing and value addition. Women are much less present in oil palm farming due to cultural impediments to owning land and their expected household duties.

While SWAPP trained many farmers and mills in RSPO standards, the RSPO component was not (yet) effective at the outcome level. None of the trained farmers and mills were certified by the time of the evaluation. While this was in part due to the delays in having RSPO national standards endorsed by the RSPO Board of Governors (completed in all countries), the interest of farmers and mills to be certified is limited, as noted above. SWAPP did, however score some results with piloting improved Palm Oil Mill Effluent (POME) management solutions.

SWAPP was effective in helping to put oil palm on the policy agenda. The biggest success was achieved in Ghana with the establishment of the Tree Crop Development Authority (TCDA) as a statutory public institution to develop and regulate six tree crops: Cashew, Shea, Mango, Coconut, Rubber, and Oil palm in Ghana. Policy makers had not given sufficient attention to oil palm. SWAPP also supported private sector business associations such as OPDAG in Ghana and AIPH in Côte d'Ivoire, to undertake policy advocacy (e.g., on the above-mentioned TCDA) and provide services to members. The National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia executed public consultations with support of SWAPP and helped draft the National Oil Palm Strategy and action plan.

SWAPP would have benefited from a more clearly outlined ToC and simpler M&E framework. The ToC would have benefited from a clearer visual design. Showing separate impact pathways with clear linkages between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts could have provided more clarity in the intervention design. The M&E framework would have benefited from fewer and more clearly defined performance indicators that use nominal targets instead of percentages. Data reporting could have been more regular and reliable, including baselines, control groups and counterfactuals. This would ideally have been in place before the programme started. For future similarly complex programmes, SWA and EKN Accra could consider engaging an independent firm to support M&E activities, in close collaboration with the implementors.

6.3 Efficiency

i. *Were the financial resources used efficiently to achieve outputs?*
ii. *Did the actual results (outputs and outcomes) justify the costs incurred? Were resources effectively utilized?*
iii. *What factors facilitated or impeded the implementation efficiency?*
iv. *Was the project management of SWAPP appropriately established, staffed, and equipped?*

SWAPP's output efficiency was adequate, but with differences among components and countries. Overall, SWAPP produced large numbers of outputs, such that its budget use could be justified. Much of this, however, was due to high output generation in Ghana, with Sierra Leone trailing. There were also large differences among components, with components 2 and 3 showing unfavourable ratios between costs and outputs.

SWAPP's outcome efficiency ("value for money") was limited. Given that SWAPP lagged in its key outcomes (hence ineffective) while the budget was being used up, it logically follows that on average, the achieved outcomes were expensive. Although due to the nature of tree cropping some outcomes will emerge post-project, SWAPP expects underachievement in its outcomes, hence the conclusion will likely remain that SWAPP has been an expensive programme.

Some outputs did not result in outcomes. The combination of high output efficiency and low cost-effectiveness (outcome efficiency) is caused by the finding that on all components ample outputs were produced, but these outputs generated fewer than expected outcomes. A case in point is the RSPO component, with farmers and mills trained but none certified. Likewise, in Component 2 many youths were skills trained, but far fewer gained employment as a result. Component 1, the largest, also included lots of capacity building for farmers, artisanal processors, and SME farmer service providers, but delivered below expectation improvements in terms of farm yields and oil mill extraction rates, below target performance in finance mobilized for market actors, and few farmers accessing farm services.

6.4 Sustainability

i.	*To what extent are the strategies and activities being taken up by policy and public / private organizations?*
ii.	*What is the likelihood of continuation of outcomes, scalability of outcomes and systems change beyond the scope and timespan of the program?*
iii.	*In case of reduced likelihood of sustainability, scalability and systems change what are the causes and how could subsequent programs learn from that?*
iv.	*Will VSLAs continue to exist and be functional after the programme end?*

SWAPP's capacity building for oil palm farmers and SMEs is likely to lead to sustainable change as it demonstrably improves their performance. One of SWAPP's main contributions is that it provided capacity enhancement to oil palm farmers, oil mills and related SMEs. As multiple sources confirmed, this improved capacity helped them raise production and income, making it likely that these improvements will be sustained (which was also the experience of SWAPP phase 1). The full effect of best management practices is yet to reveal itself, e.g., for new tree seedlings. There is plenty of scope for further productivity improvements, through BMP adherence and better input use.

The setting up of VSLAs was one of the most successful, and likely most sustainable, interventions by SWAPP. Not only do VSLAs contribute to a savings culture, allowing for a safe space to keep money, they also enabled smallholder farmers to borrow and invest in their farms or other livelihoods. This makes it likely that VSLAs will outlive the SWAPP intervention. VSLAs could further add to their sustainability if they ended the share-out at year-end, expanding their capital and creating the conditions for larger amounts and longer maturities.

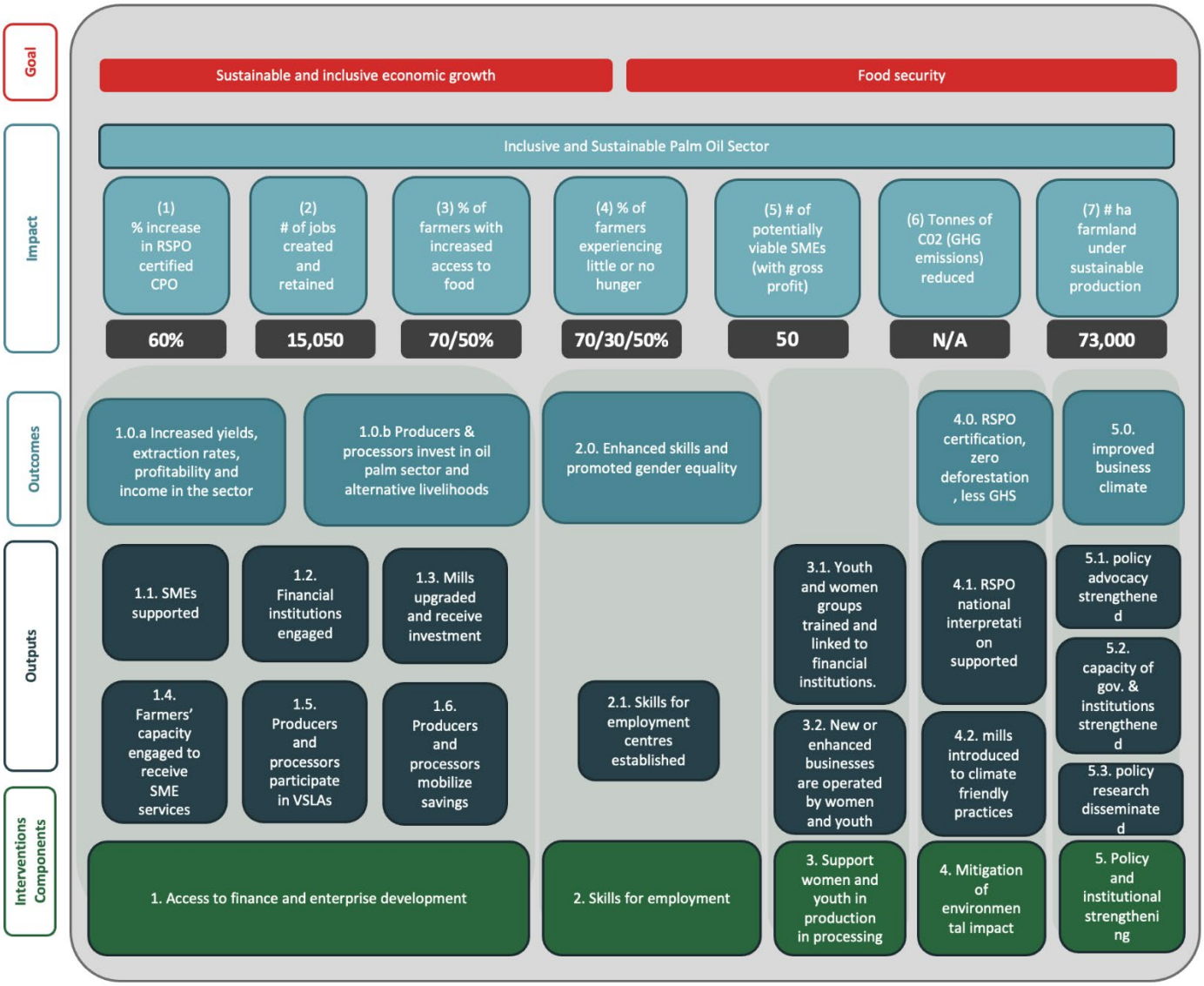
RSCs under SWAPP were less durable than under CORIP. While SWAPP has not found the suitable entrepreneurs to operate RSCs, it was also noted that compared to cocoa, oil palm farmers use far less inputs and labour, hence are less in need of a service offer.

Lack of youth interest to enter oil palm is a risk factor for sustainability. SWAPP's strategy of educating youth to set themselves up in oil palm, e.g., as service providers, farmers, or processors, has had mixed results. Although some youth found employment, many others did not. Youth lack access to finance for start-ups and may also lack the necessary entrepreneurial mindset. The fieldwork also revealed that rural communities do not encourage their sons and daughters to enter oil palm or remain in the village as income prospects remain poor. With young men and women leaving, the brightest minds first, the sustainable intensification of oil palm is at risk.

SWAPP's RSPO work had little potential to be sustained. Although SWAPP laid the groundwork, the chances of a vibrant and sustainable RSPO practice emerging, including compliance and audit capacity, are limited for now.

Durable effects on sector policy are most likely in Ghana and Liberia. In these countries governments have come to understand that oil palm offers economic potential, yet the sector is not yet structured and is riddled with inefficiencies. In Ghana this resulted in the creation of the TCDA, while Liberia is also working on sector strategies.

Annex A SWAPP Theory of Change



Annex B Contribution case

"How significant was SWAPP's capacity building of OPDAG (Oil Palm Development Association of Ghana) in influencing policy on national level in Ghana for an improved business climate for the oil palm sector via the TCDA (Tree Crops Development Authority)?"

The Oil Palm Development Association of Ghana (OPDAG) is a private sector, non-Governmental association formed to help address the challenges facing the oil palm sector in Ghana, OPDAG intends to increase competitiveness by strengthening coordination whilst improving management practices, market linkages and fair trade amongst key value chain actors in Ghana's Oil Palm industry. The association comprises of relevant stakeholders and value chain actors in Ghana's oil palm industry – small, medium to large scale growers and processors, refiners, manufacturers, marketers, input suppliers and distributors along the supply chain. These business account for more than 240,000 jobs in the economy. [44]

With the formation of OPDAG having a strong private sector in the association was key. SWA facilitated the reunification of stakeholders involved in the oil palm sector in Ghana so they can play a role in the formation of the Tree Crop Development Authority (TCDA). TCDA is a body established by an Act of Parliament, the Tree Crops Development Authority Act 2019 (Act 1010,2019) tasked with the responsibility if regulating and developing in a sustainable environment; production, processing, and trading of six tree crops: Cashew, Shea, Mango, Coconut, rubber, and oil palm in Ghana.[45]

With the creation of the TCDA there was a need for members of OPDAG to be given training on how lobby, advocate and engage with both government and non-government stakeholders to influence policy in the oil palm sector and tree crop sector in general. Member of OPDAG were therefore provided with training in policy influencing, lobby and advocacy. Through this training OPDAG members through the TCDA was able to engage with parliamentary committees responsible for the tree crop sector.

To facilitate engagement with parliamentary committees SWAPP funded meeting sessions between TCDA and parliamentary committees by providing funds that catered for the cost of lunch, cost of conference/meeting locations and per diems for participations who were presents in such meetings. Through the engagement with parliament, the TCDA bill was changed into an Act of parliament (Act 1010,2019) which is now enshrined in the constitution of Ghana.

SWAPP also provided the management of OPDAG and TCDA with a training on organizational Development. This training created an opportunity for the management of OPDAG and TCDA to learn how to put in place the proper management structures that will enable them to manage the OPDAG and TCDA as an organization. Through the OPDAG has been able to put together the proper management structures to ensure that TCDA is fully able to continuously engage with the government and influence the policy direction of the government with regards to the oil palm sector.

Other factors that contributed to **influencing policy on national level in Ghana** for an improved business climate for the oil palm is the high level of collaboration between the SWAPP team, OPDAG, TCDA and the government of

[44] Oil Palm Development Association of Ghana - history and background (opdagh.com)
[45] Tree Crops Development Authority - Who We Are (tcda.org.gh)

Ghana. The level of collaboration between stakeholders ensured that ensured that each stakeholders played their role.
Although stakeholders (especially private members) involved in OPDAG are interested in **influencing policy on national level in Ghana** for an improved business climate for the oil palm, they remain competitors. This tends to affect the extent to which they collaborate as one body.

Although TCDA is fully established now, they are limited in resources. This has affected the level of effectiveness of the TCDA and the achievement of its objectives. Again, the TCDA Act has not had any significant influence on millers and farmers. This is because, TCDA is still in the process of developing guidelines and regulations for the 6 tree crops.

The management of TCDA is made up of both government and private sector members. Private sector members are expected to be very vocal in negotiations with the government. Respondents during the interview indicated that the inability of the private sector members to advocate and negotiate with other members on the management of TCDA will have a negative effect on the results achieved.

Observed Change (outcome)	Contributing FACTORS	TYPE	SIGNIFICANCE Scale 1 (low) -4 (high)	Evidence
Influenced policy on national level in Ghana for an improved business climate for the oil palm sector via the TCDA (Tree Crops Development Authority)	1. Capacity building of OPDAG members in policy, lobby, and advocacy by SWAPP	Primary	3	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG
	2. Capacity building of OPDAG management team on organizational management by SWAPP	Primary	3	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG
	3. The high level of collaboration between OPDAG, and the government of Ghana played a key role in the formation of the TCDA.	Primary	3	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG
	4. SWAPP provision of logistical support to OPDAG during drafting of bill and later the Act played a key role	Primary	3	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG
	5. Collaborations with all major actors in the oil palm sector is a clear indication of their willingness to work together to address the issues affecting the tree crop sector.	Primary	3	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG
	6. Competition among stakeholders in the sectors. Although private sector members are willing to work together, they remain competitors in the sector. This tends to affect the extent to which they can collaborate and freely share information and knowledge among themselves	Rival	1	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG, SWAPP
	7. Millers not yet influenced by OPDAG/TCDA Act. The TCDA act has not yet been implemented yet as TCDA is still in the process of drafting regulations to govern the sector	Rival	1	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG, SWAPP
	8. Farmers Influenced by OPDAG/TDCA Act. The TCDA act has not yet been implemented yet as TCDA is still in the process of drafting regulations to govern the sector	Primary	1	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG, SWAPP
	9. Lack of resources for TCDA. TCDA does not currently have the requisite funds to be able to operate and carry out its mandate.	Rival	1	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG, SWAPP
	10. In ability of the private sector members to negotiate on the TCDA management board	Rival	1	Interview with OPDAG Director of Crops MoFA, Ag Director of Operations TCDA, President OPDAG, SWAPP

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