

A PERSPECTIVE ON SCALING INNOVATIONS IN AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS TO GENERATE IMPACT

Five bold solutions for scaling with impact in agrifood innovations

The global challenge: Developing innovations is not enough if they do not achieve scaling with lasting and sustainable impact.

Despite decades of investment in research on agrifood systems, many promising solutions remain stuck in pilot phases and fail to generate sustainable change, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address crises such as climate change, inequality, and biodiversity loss, we need a new scaling paradigm.

Impact data:

- Only **18%** of SDG targets are on track to be met. *United Nations. (2023).*
- **18%** have fallen below 2015 levels. *United Nations. (2023).*
- Reduced investment in international development threatens to cause millions of additional deaths by **2030**. *The Lancet Commission on investing in health. (2023).*

Why don't innovations reach their full potential?

We have identified 5 barriers that limit impact:



1 Disconnected innovation from demand: Designed from the supply side, not from real needs.



2 No clear path to impact: Lack of co-design, packaging, and a systemic vision.



3 Weak enabling environments: Inconsistent policies, fragile markets, and institutional barriers.



4 Insufficient financing and partnerships: Lack of sustainable models or connection to large-scale investment.



5 Limited learning: Poor documentation of failures and weak innovation portfolio management.

What is Scaling for Impact?

The goal is not just to “reach more people.” It is about driving a dynamic, inclusive, and adaptive process, structured across the following dimensions:

- **Scaling out:** Expands the reach to more users.
- **Scaling up:** Drives changes in policies and institutions.
- **Scaling deep:** Transforms norms and capacities.
- **Scaling down:** Reduces or replaces undesired practices.



Scaling with impact is not the end of the journey. It is the path toward resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems.

From pilots to systemic change: the 5 bold solutions

1

Focus on user demand: Co-creation, diagnosis, and prioritization at the national level.

2

Apply tools adapted to local contexts: Measure innovation maturity and scaling potential, integrating environmental and social criteria.

3

Build inclusive enabling environments: Consistent policies, functional markets, and fair access to resources.

4

Mobilize financing and long-term partnerships: Integrate innovations into credit, budgets, and value chains.

5

Embed science and learning in scaling: Continuous evaluation, learning networks, and innovation portfolio management.

Cross-cutting areas:

- **Scaling culture:** Strengthen capacities to integrate scaling processes.
- **Capacity:** Align scaling processes with institutional processes.
- **Coordination:** Connect science, policy, funding, and users.
- **Responsibility:** Anticipate risks and ensure equity and sustainability.

Who does what:

- **Innovation users:** Engage as co-creators, demand transparency, and ensure tangible benefits.
- **Donors and investors:** Fund innovations with clear scaling pathways beyond the pilot phase.
- **Development organizations:** Integrate scaling strategies from the program design stage.
- **Science and innovation actors:** Go beyond pilots and connect with real markets and policies.
- **Private sector:** Invest in inclusive and scalable models.
- **Governments:** Create governance models that enable scaling.

Join the CGIAR journey

Through its Scaling for Impact program, CGIAR connects **science, policy, and practice** to close the gap between innovation and impact through:



Strategic alignment



Technical collaboration



Capacity strengthening



Financing mechanisms

