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***SEEDS OF SUSTAINABILITY: Outcome
Harvesting Lessons From Rwanda's
Circular Food Systems Project Revolution***

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EvalforEarth

Evaluation for Food Security, Environment,
Agriculture and Rural Development

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Goal: Transform Rwanda's food systems toward circularity, sustainability, and resilience



Duration: November 2021 – December 2025

Lead Partners:

WRI, CPCIC, Resonance, ACEN, ACEA

Funding:

IKEA Foundation



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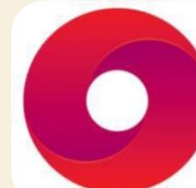


CLEANER PRODUCTION AND
CLIMATE INNOVATION CENTRE

resonance
Igniting Opportunity. Advancing Global Good.



**AFRICAN CIRCULAR
ECONOMY NETWORK**



**AFRICAN
CIRCULAR
ECONOMY
ALLIANCE**

KEY PILLARS



**SME DEVELOPMENT &
TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE & MARKET
LINKAGES**



**POLICY &
STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT – MULTI-
STAKEHOLDER
PLATFORM (MSP)**



**MONITORING,
EVALUATION AND
LEARNING (MEL) AND
COMMUNICATION**

OUTCOME HARVESTING APPROACH



**1.
Design the
Harvest**

**2.
Review
Documentation and
Draft Outcome
Descriptions**

**3.
Engage with
Informants**

**4.
Substantiate
Outcomes**

**5.
Analyze and
Interpret**

**6.
Support Use of
Findings**

KEY OUTCOMES HARVESTED

1. Strengthened SME Capacity	2. Policy Integration & Influence	3. Market Linkages & Economic Viability	4. Knowledge Management & Adaptive Learning
Adoption of circular practices and eco-innovation	Circular principles embedded in PSTA 5 and environmental policies	SMEs connected to new markets and income opportunities	Documentation and dissemination increased national awareness
Tailored technical support and mentorship	Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) institutionalized for policy dialogue	Eco-friendly innovations like pellet-based jikos	Wider engagement with ITC, universities, and networks

Highlights from Outcome Harvesting



SME Innovation in Circular Products

OH identified that Kigasali Coffee Company developed biomass pellets from coffee husks – a circular innovation



Policy Integration via Multi-Stakeholder Influence (tracking the indirect contribution)

OH revealed the CIRF project's indirect contribution to embedding circular economy principles into Rwanda's Strategic Plan for Agricultural Transformation (PSTA 5)



Emergent Collaborations Beyond Formal Partnerships

OH documented how the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) fostered unplanned partnerships, such as academia – SME alliances for waste valorization research

SUCCESSES IN MEASURING IMPACT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CIRCULAR FOOD SYSTEMS AND CLIMATE RESILIENT PROGRAMMING



Comprehensive identification of observable behavioural changes

- The OH methodology enabled the capture of 71 validated outcomes across SMEs, policy engagement, and MEL workstreams
- The approach systematically traced contributions to these changes, even in non-linear contexts, by analyzing documentation, interviews, and workshop data



Integration of qualitative insights via Most Significant Change (MSC) stories

Three MSC stories provided narrative depth to quantitative outcomes, highlighting transformative journeys like SMEs adopting circular product lines

These stories were selected through stakeholder consensus, ensuring alignment with the *project's* theory of change and offering actionable lessons for scaling impact



Participatory validation through multi-stakeholder engagement

- The evaluation team conducted 3 Outcome Harvesting workshops and 3 FGDs, involving SMEs, policymakers, and partners
- This participatory process strengthened outcome substantiation, with 87 outcomes initially harvested and 71 validated through independent verification

BEST PRACTICES IDENTIFIED



Clear objectives aligned with systems thinking



Tailored technical assistance for SMEs



Collaborative leadership with dual co-chairs (MINAGRI, Ministry of Environment [MOE] & CPCIC)



Open communication and learning culture



Evidence-based policy advocacy

CHALLENGES IN MEASURING IMPACT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CIRCULAR FOOD SYSTEMS AND CLIMATE RESILIENT PROGRAMMING



Attribution and causality in complex systems

Circular food systems project operate within highly dynamic, multi-actor environments where changes are often non-linear and influenced by numerous external factors

This complexity makes it difficult to directly attribute observed outcomes to specific project interventions



Measuring systemic and long-term change

- The project aimed for systemic transformation — such as shifts in business models, policy frameworks, and stakeholder relationships — that unfold over long timeframes
- Capturing these broad, long-term impacts within the typical project evaluation cycle is inherently challenging



Data gaps and verification constraints

- Strong impact measurement is supported by timely, reliable data
- In circular food systems, while opportunities for improvement remain, there was a challenge of establishing clear causal links between project activities and outcomes, especially when changes may be the result of overlapping initiatives, policy shifts, or broader market trends

SUSTAINABILITY LESSONS BEYOND THE PROJECT



1. Policy Embedding & Institutionalization	2. Capacity Building of Local Institutions	3. Environmental Stewardship	4. Financial Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integration into national strategies for government ownership• Institutionalizing MSP under Circular Economy Roadmap	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthened technical and managerial capacity• Leadership development and resource mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting regenerative agriculture, climate adaptation, and biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovative financing and mobile platforms for SMEs• Tailored credit models for circular economy enterprises

ENSURING LONG-TERM IMPACT



Embed circular
economy curricula in
universities



Establish peer-learning
networks for SMEs



Continue M&E and
technical assistance
post-project



Gradual handover to
local institutions and
government agencies

CONCLUSION

CIRF catalyzed systemic change in Rwanda's food system



Sustainability requires ongoing policy integration, capacity development, and innovative finance



Future initiatives should prioritize gender inclusion, local ownership, and scalable innovation

THE END



Erokamano

감사합니다 Natick

Grazie Danke Ευχαριστίες Dalu

Thank You

Köszönöm

Tack

Спасибо Dank Gracias

谢谢

Merci

Seé

ありがとう

Obirigado

Asante