

Outcome Harvesting Evaluation for

CIRCULAR FOOD SYSTEMS FOR RWANDA PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The Circular Food Systems for Rwanda (CIRF) Project aims to transform Rwanda's food systems into sustainable, efficient and resilient models. Running from November 2021 to December 2025, the project is funded by the IKEA Foundation and implemented by a consortium led by World Resources Institute (WRI), with partners including the Cleaner Production and Climate Innovation Centre (CPCIC), Resonance, the African Circular Economy Network (ACEN), and the African Circular Economy Alliance (ACEA).

CIRF operates through two primary workstreams:

**SME Development:**

Providing tailored technical assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to adopt and scale circular business models.

**Policy and Stakeholder Engagement:**

Creating an enabling environment and fostering collaboration for transforming Rwanda's food systems into circular models.

**Cross-cutting Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning (MEL), and communications:**

MEL and communications efforts support continuous improvement and effective dissemination of information throughout the project's implementation. As part of MEL, **Outcome Harvesting (OH)** was used to identify and analyze significant changes influenced by the project. OH was conducted in late 2024 to capture outcomes across both workstreams, understand how change happened, and inform future strategic direction.



OBJECTIVE

The evaluation assessed the impact and effectiveness of the project by identifying outcomes, assessing changes, analyzing the project's contributions to these outcomes, and extracting lessons to inform future initiatives



DEFINITION

"Outcome Harvesting is an innovative participatory monitoring and evaluation methodology that enables evaluators, managers, and stakeholders to **IDENTIFY, FORMULATE, VERIFY, and MAKE SENSE** of observable changes – Specifically in the behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of individuals, groups, organizations, or institutions—to which an intervention has plausibly contributed..."

– Ricardo Wilson-Grau, 2018

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used the Outcome Harvesting approach across six iterative steps: design, data collection, drafting outcomes, substantiation, analysis, and support for use of findings.

FINDINGS

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1 ACHIEVED OUTCOMES (PAST 3 YEARS)

Over the past three years, the project harvested **71 outcomes**. These outcomes reflect meaningful shifts in behaviour, business practices, and enabling conditions, including the development of circular products by SMEs, new market linkages, stronger collaboration between stakeholders, and policy-level changes such as the adoption of international circularity standards.

71 OUTCOMES HARVESTED



2 20 SMES SELECTED

- ✓ facilitated 43 market linkages
- ✓ developed 6 circular products



Eco-fuel pellets – made by Kigasali Coffee Company using coffee husks



Bakery and culinary products – created by Africa Food Supply using ingredients like orange, sweet potato and pineapple peels



Mushroom-based products – including mushroom sambusas and soup, developed by MNB Ltd.



Organic compost – produced by Next Farm using crop residues and animal waste



Organic compost – also produced by Glory Poultry Farm using food and animal waste



Compost and vermicompost – produced by iGisuma Coffee Cooperative



Bio-liquid fertilizer – sold by Golden Insect to local farmers

3 THROUGH THE ESTABLISHED MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM:

- ✓ Integration of circular economy principles into three government strategic policy programs.
- ✓ Adoption of new standards for circular product development.

EXAMPLES OF HARVESTED OUTCOMES

SMEs CASE STUDIES

Most of the harvested outcomes influenced SMEs and multi-stakeholder platform members. For small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in circular food systems, key outcomes included increased adoption of sustainable practices, improved resource efficiency, and the development of new business models centered on circularity.

CIRF focuses on two key areas to strengthen SMEs and by providing tailored technical assistance to SMEs on circularity.



1 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

In November 2024, Kigasali Coffee Company diversified its business model by utilizing coffee husk waste to produce eco-friendly fuel pellets. This initiative led to the production of 5,010 kilograms of pellets, generating total revenue of 1,500,000 Rwandan Francs (approximately US\$1,060) over a two-month period. The development not only created an additional income stream but also demonstrated the company's commitment to sustainability by transforming previously discarded waste into a valuable product.

Between February and June 2024, five SMEs from Cohort 1—Kigasali Coffee Company, MNB, Next Farm, Africa Food Supplier, and Glory Poultry Farm—developed new circular products, including bakery and culinary items, compost, and fuel pellets. This progress was achieved through tailored technical assistance that provided knowledge, skills, resources, and consistent follow-up support. By aligning assistance with each SME's specific needs, the project facilitated innovation and advancement in their circular economy practices. This outcome is a significant step toward promoting the adoption of circular business models among SMEs, a central goal of the project.



2 CREATING MARKET LINKAGES FOR VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

From May to October 2024, Golden Insect sold 2,000 liters of bio-liquid fertilizer to clients acquired through the facilitated market linkages activities.

In 2023 and 2024, 43 market linkages were facilitated for nine SMEs—Africa Food Supply, Next Farm, MNB, Glory Poultry Farm, Kigasali Coffee Company, Golden Insect, Zean, and Rwanda BioSolutions—from both Cohorts 1 and 2. The project helped establish connections with market players in waste management, recycling, and sustainable packaging, leading to the signing of contracts for waste management services, packaging solutions, and product sales.

3

CREATING AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR CIRCULAR SMES TO THRIVE

In November 2024, the Rwanda Standards Board adopted ISO 59004 and incorporated circularity measures from ISO 59020. These standards, directly or indirectly related to the circular economy, have been adopted and domesticated through the institutional gazette and are now available for use.



This milestone demonstrates the strengthened capacity of Rwandan institutions to align with international standards in advancing a circular economy.

"The platform makes it possible to talk to each other and not work in silos. We avoid problems that could easily be addressed just by communicating. We see the group as behavior change actors playing a catalytic role."

– Multi-stakeholder platform member

KEY LESSONS

1



SYSTEMS APPROACH IS ESSENTIAL:

Implementing circular economy principles requires considering the full product lifecycle.

2



COLLABORATION ACROSS SECTORS IS CRUCIAL:

It facilitates innovative solutions, sharing resources, and the development of new value chains that support circularity.

3



CULTURAL AND MINDSET SHIFTS ARE NECESSARY:

Transitioning to a circular economy requires rethinking business models to prioritize long-term sustainability, educating consumers, and fostering innovation to develop circular solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATION

01

Challenge of financing and credit facilities for small SMEs and start-ups

- Improve risk assessment and collaborate as an ecosystem on tool development
- Establish dedicated funds for circular economy projects
- Collaborate with financial institutions to provide tailored products for circular businesses
- Establish green financing mechanisms and blended finance solutions
- Introduce tax incentives and subsidies

02

Strengthen capacity building for diverse groups and monitoring of outcomes

- Design inclusive training and provide scholarships/stipends
- Establish monitoring frameworks and use Outcome Harvesting for MEL
- Strengthen gender-sensitive indicators

03

Enhance long-term sustainability of project outcomes and event scheduling

- Develop a clear exit strategy
- Establish a local circular economy hub for agribusiness to ensure sustainability
- Integrate circular economy principles into education and create a certification program



Photo: WRI

HARVESTED OUTCOMES

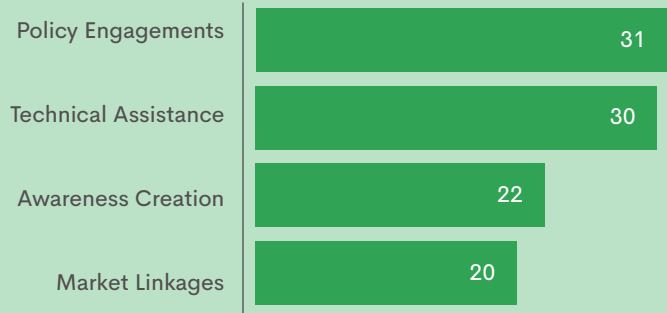
BY CONTRIBUTION STRATEGY

One significant strategy was policy influence, where CIRF contributed to the integration of circular economy language in three ministry documents, including the Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 5). These achievements reflect elements of systems change and broader transformation.

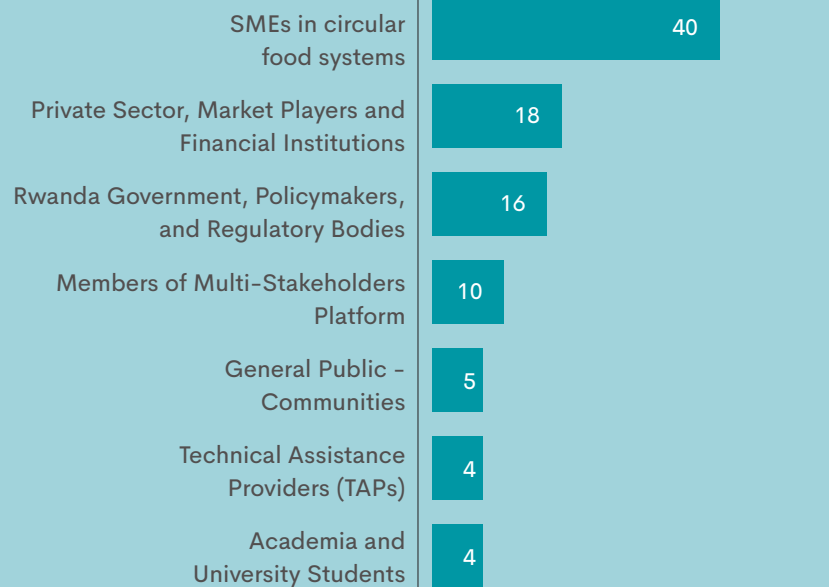


BY TYPE OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Most of the harvested outcomes reflect changes in practices and the introduction of new business models that led to product innovation and development.



BY SOCIAL ACTOR INFLUENCED



circularfoodsystemsrwanda@wri.org

