

Advancing Impact Scaling of Sustainable Agricultural Innovations (SCALE)

Implemented by the *Fund for the Promotion of Innovation in Agriculture (i4Ag)*
As part of the special initiative *Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems*

The Challenge

The potential for scaling impacts of sustainable agricultural innovations is largely untapped.

Agricultural innovations are key enablers for the transformation of agri-food systems. Since September 2021, the Fund for the Promotion of Innovation in Agriculture (i4Ag) supports a diverse portfolio of agricultural innovation projects globally. Sustaining and multiplying positive impacts beyond project cycles, requires concerted and interdisciplinary efforts to scale-up agricultural innovations and to match needs of target groups over time across geographies.

Evidence from i4Ag's project implementation has outlined the need for interacting within innovation networks as well as untapping blended sources of funding to effectively disseminate and scale agricultural innovations, their impact and learning experiences. Although there are numerous initiatives to promote agricultural innovations, they often do not comprehensively bundle necessary services for up-scaling successfully, i.e.: Providing knowledge on state-of the art innovations, their business models and scaling potential; matching innovators, investors, and multipliers; and tailored, market-based financial support.

Name of the Project	Digital Platform for Scaling the Impact of Sustainable Agricultural Innovations (SCALE)
Name of the Global Fund	Fund for the Promotion of Innovation in Agriculture (i4Ag)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project Region	Global
Implementing Partners	
Duration	08/2023 - 06/2027

The Innovation

Establishing a global platform for scaling sustainable agricultural innovations and their impact.

For promoting the scaling of sustainable and gender-responsive agricultural innovations, a matchmaking platform (SCALE platform) is being set up. By sharing, developing, and disseminating knowledge on high-impact agricultural innovations, their scaling potential and requirements, SCALE aims to bring together relevant stakeholders (investors, multipliers, innovators, and end-users) in order to form enduring innovation partnerships. Demand-led and blended investments leverage the multistakeholder scaling process. Integrating both analogue and digital methods, the platform approach encompasses a variety of in-person events, including conferences, pitch sessions and the provision of practical space for communities of practice (COPs). Those dialogs are supported by a digital marketplace which serves as a social-network and decision-making-tool supporting the identification of relevant innovations and/or investment opportunities.

The SCALE platform is characterized by:

- **Triangular business model:** linking innovators, investors, and multipliers as indispensable elements of participatory and collaborative innovation networks.
- **Knowledge management:** building on local expertise, shared learnings and knowledge transfer between local, regional, and global levels.
- **Investment packages:** customising (bundles of) high-impact innovation and services geared towards the needs of investors to facilitate sustainable investment.
- The provision of **tailored financial products** through a **revolving fund** provides the necessary financial means for smallholders and/or innovators to invest and sustainably benefit from agricultural innovations.



L.: Extension worker explaining an app enabling smallhold farmers to make informed decisions R.: Vision of the marketplace SCALE

€15.000.000 investments have been generated in scaling partnerships.

100.000 smallholder farmers, 30% of whom are women and 50% young adults, have been reached through access to technologies, advice, or knowledge transfer.

35.000 customers use financial services for the scaling of sustainable agricultural innovation.

The project contributes to the achievement of these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



The main objective

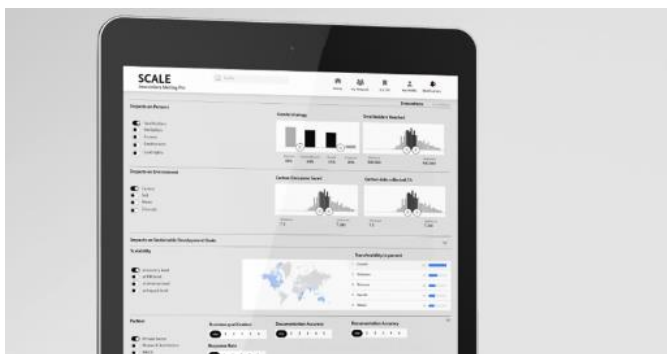
Bringing together public and private actors for the scaling of sustainable and gender-responsive agricultural innovations.

Methodological approach and innovation partnership

To ensure that both digital marketplace and matchmaking activities are participatory and needs-oriented, user groups of a variety of innovations will be involved from the outset. This involves in-person matchmaking-workshops to refine the approach based on practical experience. In a test phase, the digital marketplace relies on proven agricultural innovations from the i4Ag portfolio. When successful, it will be opened to further innovations outside i4Ag, to reinforce their impact through scaling.

Important Activities

- Development, testing and refinement of the digital and analogue marketplace and its functions with a user-centred-approach.
- Criteria-based assessment and profiling of innovations, including impact, scaling readiness and scaling potential.
- Provision of scaling intelligence, tools and methods.
- Showcasing innovations through target group-specific innovation profiles and an inclusive communication strategy.
- Identification of matchmaking opportunities and setting up scaling partnerships.
- Provision of financial services to scale agricultural innovations.



Vision of the decision-making tool of the marketplace.

Sustainability

The projects' sustainability is addressed at various levels: To secure long-term financing of the digital marketplace, various business models are being examined, such as the inclusion of external partners for sustained support, long-term collaboration or incorporating the marketplace with user-funded options like pay per match or premium access. Additionally, continuous user surveys will help to improve the platform's services and ensure its continued use.

Recognising that scaling is beyond the sum of individual adoption decisions, SCALE's focus is on facilitating and navigating dynamic scaling processes where contexts, skills, approaches, and modes of cooperation may evolve over time.

To ensure sustained upscaling of innovations, consideration of the end user is crucial: access to financing constitutes a particular barrier for the target group in the application and dissemination of innovations. Therefore, the access to tailored financial products allows innovations to be financed and implemented in the long-term and independently be carried on and disseminated by farmers and small business. A particular emphasis is placed on women, who often encounter difficulties in accessing financial resources, despite their substantial contributions to agriculture.

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