

# FROM SEED TO SCALE: TURNING EARLY ACTION INTO LASTING IMPACT FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

A summary of the Seed Funding Track of the Joint SDG Fund Food Systems Transformation Window





Established by the **UN Food Systems Coordination Hub** and the **Joint SDG Fund**, the Window for food systems supports country-owned transformation aligned with national pathways and coordinated UN action. It operates through a **Seed track** that builds enabling environments and tests innovative solutions, and a **High Impact track** that scales systemic interventions and unlocks finance.

# PROGRAMME COUNTRIES AND REACH



Source: Powering National Food System Transformation Pathways and Delivering Results – The Joint SDG Fund: A Global Window for Food Systems Action (2025)

## Seed Funding Track

Fosters capacities, policies, and institutions to nurture early-stage innovations and institutional foundations for long-term transformation.

*Cambodia, Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, Kenya, Rwanda, Samoa, Serbia, Tanzania, Uganda, Viet Nam*

## High Impact Track (HIT)

Catalyses game-changing initiatives that deepen partnerships, unlock large-scale financing, and scale up transformative action.

*Bolivia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, Tajikistan and Timor-Leste*

# INTRODUCTION

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Food systems transformation does not begin with big loans or large-scale investments. It begins with the enabling conditions and operational readiness that will make these successful. It requires more than ambition - it demands policy coherence, institutional coordination, operational capacity, and practical experimentation.

Through 2024-2025, the Joint SDG Fund Food Systems Transformation Window provided seed funding to 12 countries to initiate the shift from ambition to practice. With this injection of resources, in just one year, governments strengthened policy frameworks, embedding food systems priorities into national development and climate agendas, reinforced governance systems, and piloted innovations that delivered early results for communities and local markets.

Seed funding lays foundations: reducing fragmentation, clarifying institutional mandates, costing national priorities, testing solutions, and generating evidence.

## **This report answers three questions:**

- What does early-stage food systems transformation look like in practice?
- How can catalytic investments unlock systemic change?
- What conditions must be met before large-scale financing becomes possible?

The result is a clear pathway from early action to scale. Countries such as Rwanda, Jordan, and Kenya have already transitioned from Seed support to High Impact Track Joint Programmes, demonstrating how early investments lay the groundwork for larger, system-wide transformation.

This publication brings that journey together. It shows what early-stage food systems transformation looks like in practice and how targeted, time-bound investments can lay the groundwork for sustained, system-wide progress.



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# Key Messages

1

## VALUE FOR MONEY

Across 12 countries, USD 250,000 per programme over 12 months unlocked policy reform, strengthened coordination, and generated early results for businesses and communities.



## NATIONALLY LED AND ANCHORED

Joint Programmes are guided by an essential implementation mechanism for national plans, food systems pathways, climate commitments, and sector strategies, so that gains last beyond the programme cycle.



2

## COORDINATED ACTION

Through Resident Coordinator leadership and multi-agency collaboration, Seed Joint Programmes brought together governments, UN entities, and partners to align expertise, financing, and action behind national priorities, delivering integrated solutions with greater impact.



## FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

Despite tight timelines, countries piloted innovative solutions, strengthened markets, improved service delivery, and generated early results across markets, services, and communities.



4

## A PIPELINE TO SCALE

Seed funding built operational capacity, evidence, and governance systems that position countries to scale impact, launch integrated programmes, and mobilize new investments.



5

# Policy:



**Turning Goals into  
Actionable National Agendas**

Seed Joint Programmes enabled governments to translate their high-level food systems commitments into costed, implementable, institutionally anchored strategies. Rather than creating parallel initiatives, programmes strengthened national pathways and embedded food systems priorities into development planning instruments, sector strategies, regulatory frameworks, and climate commitments.

Across countries, this work moved food systems transformation from high-level vision to operational architecture, establishing the foundation for implementation and investment.

### Operationalizing National Pathways:

National pathways were translated into implementation-ready frameworks by prioritizing concrete interventions, costing them, developing financing strategies, and establishing accountability systems.



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**El Salvador, Serbia, and Cambodia** updated their national roadmaps through inclusive consultations, accompanied by monitoring systems. Cambodia's Second Roadmap includes a Financing and Advocacy Strategy plus a fully digitalised Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework, positioning it for investment.

**Tanzania and Samoa** advanced costed action plans and budgeting tools, strengthening operational readiness at national and local levels. Tanzania developed a new National Food Systems Planning and Budgeting Tool (2025–2030) together with gender-responsive budgeting guidelines, while Samoa finalized the costing and M&E frameworks for its National Food Systems Transformation Pathway.

### Embedding Food Systems in National Development Plans:

Embedding food systems priorities into national development plans secures political commitment, strengthens coherence across sectors, and ensures continuity beyond political cycles.

**Uganda** integrated 80% of identified priorities into its forthcoming National Development Plan, supported by a Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)-aligned indicator framework.

## Strengthening the Policy and Regulatory Backbone:

Seed Joint Programmes helped governments advance the policy and regulatory instruments needed to translate strategic vision into implementation by updating sectoral policies, drafting legislation, and producing analytical inputs that sharpened priorities and informed investments. The resulting frameworks offer clearer mandates, aligned standards, and practical regulatory guidance across key sectors.



Focusing on production, **Jordan** integrated value chain strategies for fruits, vegetables, and citrus into the National Food Security Action Plan.

**Kenya** shaped coffee regulations and market guidelines through value chain assessments and surveys, and developed school meals guidance informed by field-level consultations.

**Uganda** drafted a National School Feeding Policy, revised the Food and Nutrition Policy, and supported the Food and Agriculture Regulatory Authority (FARA) Bill.

**El Salvador** drafted a Healthy Eating Law and revised dietary guidelines that promote healthy diets.

**Samoa and Viet Nam** advanced policy-relevant analytical work that informs investment and partnership models, including Samoa's Cost of Diet analysis and Viet Nam's review of public-private partnership mechanisms for food systems transformation, helping governments identify priority areas for financing and private-sector engagement.

# Governance:



**Building the Architecture  
for Systemic Delivery**

Food systems transformation relies on strong coordination across sectors and levels of government. Seed Joint Programmes established and strengthened governance platforms that align national leadership, local actors, and implementation partners behind shared priorities.

### Strengthening the Policy and Regulatory Backbone:

Countries strengthened national coordination mechanisms to align institutions, reduce fragmentation, and enable more coherent delivery.

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**Uganda** strengthened its National Food Systems Coordination Committee by convening six ministries, the private sector, civil society, and academia, and by using workshops and consultations to guide implementation.

**Tanzania** advanced multisector consultations to establish a governance framework under the Presidential Food and Agriculture Delivery Council (PFADC), consolidating the mandate of the Food Systems Steering Committee.

**Jordan, Uganda, and Viet Nam** advanced digital governance systems, with Jordan designing a gender-sensitive food systems M&E framework that will inform the national Food Security Management Information System (FSMIS), Uganda piloting a Food Systems Monitoring Information System that links district-level data to national decision-making, and Viet Nam integrating sectoral data through its National Agriculture Information Portal.

### Territorial and Local Governance Models:

Local governance structures translated national priorities into practical, context-specific action, ensuring that implementation is responsive, inclusive, and scalable.

**Serbia** established bio-districts as an innovative, locally driven development model in which farmers, municipalities, citizens, tourism actors, cultural institutions, and businesses jointly manage natural resources, promote organic value chains, and coordinate investments.



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**Costa Rica** embedded food systems priorities into the Buenos Aires, Guatuso, and Northern North Territorial Development Plans, setting targets, budgets, and governance structures. These models translate national commitments into locally anchored, scalable solutions connecting authorities, communities, and stakeholders.

**Cambodia** strengthened Provincial Working Groups, ensuring that women, youth, and Indigenous communities shaped the Second Roadmap, resulting in a roadmap that is more grounded in local realities, clearer in its priorities, and better aligned with subnational implementation capacity.

# Piloting Solutions:



**From Enabling Conditions  
to System-Level Results**

Beyond enabling environments, Seed JPs also incubated practical innovations through private-sector and community engagement, demonstrating pathways to scale. By linking producers, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), institutions, and financing actors, they generated early evidence of scalable solutions.

### Strengthening Producers and Local Markets:

Seed Joint Programmes strengthened market linkages by connecting producers, MSMEs, consumers, and institutions, while piloting solutions that reduce risk and improve productivity.



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**Uganda** piloted clean-energy technologies by introducing biogas digesters and solar-powered mills in school feeding programmes.

**Kenya** developed a territorial procurement "Aggregator Model" linking smallholders to school feeding markets, supported by training in post-harvest management and food safety.

**Rwanda** boosted MSME creation by deploying mobile solar dryers and shellers to reduce post-harvest losses and improve grain quality, and by encouraging cooperatives and business-to-business opportunities.

**Serbia** established the country's first biodistrict in Kolubara, strengthening rural entrepreneurship by integrating community services, rural tourism, and biodiversity protection and sustainable production.

### Financing Pathways and Investment Readiness:

Countries' advanced financing pathways to de-risk investments and align partners around national priorities. Seed Joint Programmes supported governments in creating financing platforms, blended finance mechanisms, and investment pipelines that transform pilot interventions into bankable opportunities.

**Cambodia** developed a national multi-partner Financing Platform engaging International Financial Institutions (IFIs), bilateral partners, banks, and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), creating a coordinated mechanism to align investment pipelines with the Second Food Systems Roadmap and operationalize its new Financing and Advocacy Strategy. The platform aligns investment pipelines with national priorities, mobilizes public and private capital, and provides a structured mechanism to coordinate partners.



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**Viet Nam** designed a blended finance mechanism to de-risk sustainable agrifood initiatives, combining Official Development Assistance (ODA), climate finance, state budget, and private capital. The mechanism now provides a government-endorsed blueprint for a future Blended Finance Fund for Agrifood Systems Transformation, positioning the country to crowd in private investment through guarantees, concessional tranches, and equity-like instruments.

**Jordan** combined municipal coordination with blended finance pilots to address longstanding fragmentation among local producers, service providers, and financing institutions. Municipalities in Deir Alla and Mafraq were brought into the design of value-chain upgrades, helping link farmers, cooperatives, and new post-harvest centers with banks, MFIs, and IFIs, and capacitating local production actors with viable credit instruments to access climate-smart technologies.

### **Community-Level Education and Behavior Change:**

Programmes strengthened demand-side capacity through nutrition education and culturally grounded food practices. These initiatives enabled households and community institutions to make more informed food choices and helped translate broader food systems objectives into everyday practices.

**Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Samoa** strengthened community and household capacity around healthy diets, sustainable food practices, and food affordability. These efforts led to new community gardens and recipe books in Costa Rica, training of school feeding committees in El Salvador, and improved understanding of diet affordability and culturally grounded, nutritious food choices in Samoa.

# CONCLUSION

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Early investments in systems change deliver results far beyond their scale. By turning national priorities into action, piloting practical solutions to address existing bottlenecks and loopholes, and building the foundations for scale, these programmes show what early-stage food systems transformation looks like in practice and what catalytic support can achieve.

The next phase is clear: scaling what works. With systems, evidence, and capacity in place, countries are now positioned to expand impact, mobilize investment, and accelerate the transition toward more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems.



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