

SAFA Tool - Beta Testing

Overview

What: The SAFA Secretariat made a call in March 2014 to invite participants to volunteer to Beta test the SAFA Tool version 2.1.50.

When: The Beta testing phase ran for the first half of 2014.

Why: The SAFA Tool version 2.1.50 was released to the public in December 2013. The Beta testing phase sought to obtain feedback on how the Tool was performing. This feedback will be used to improve and finalize the Tool in the coming months of 2014.

Who: A wide variety of different food system actors participated in the Beta testing process. There were participants from Latin America (Mexico, Puerto Rico), Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya) and Europe (France, Switzerland, Sweden) and Asia (Indonesia). Assessments were conducted at a variety of levels of the supply chain, including industrial production and processing to smallholder farming. A variety of different value chains were assessed, such as coffee, beef, wine and vegetables. The assessors also represented a wide range of private enterprises, small and large and a majority of academics who used the SAFA Tool for educational purposes.

How: As the Tool is a self-assessment Tool, the participants were responsible for determining their own assessment projects as they found applicable to their work. E-support was provided by the SAFA Secretariat throughout the Beta testing phase for any questions regarding SAFA and the Tool.

Feedback

Demand for a Mac version: Overall, the Tool received very positive feedback from the testing phase. The software of the assessment Tool was reported to be easy-to-use and there were no technical issues with its performance. There was however a demand for the Mac version of the Tool and to meet this request a Mac version is now being developed and will be released in the coming months.

The need for customization of indicators: While the feedback confirmed that SAFA provides an excellent framework for assessing sustainability universally, in some cases, there was reported the need for assessors to be able to customize their own indicators within the Tool. Therefore, the SAFA Secretariat is now planning to add a new functionality into the final version of the Tool for assessors to be able to add their own indicators as required by the specific assessment context.

Further support for the SAFA Small APP: The feedback from the testing at the smallholder farming level, reported that the current assessment scope of the Tool was challenging in terms of content and resources required. This feedback confirms the need for the SAFA Small APP, which is currently being develop in order to facilitate SAFA specifically at the smallholder farming level.

Two case overviews are provided below in further detail as examples of those that participated in the Beta testing phase:

- Smallholder Vegetable Farmers in Ethiopia
- Industrial Beef Production and Processing in Mexico

For more information please contact SAFA-Secretariat@fao.org.

<p>Test Case Name:</p> <p><u>Smallholder Vegetable Farmers in Ethiopia</u></p> <p>Assessment Location:</p> <p>Oromia Regional State, Rift Valley, Ethiopia</p> <p>Value Chain Assessed:</p> <p>Vegetable sub-sector</p>	<p>Assessor/Organization Profile:</p> <p>Soil and More Ethiopia is a very young for profit social enterprise set up to manage and support composting sites in different parts of the country with small or female owned enterprises through franchise and/or joint ownership in the rural parts of the country mainly with smallholder farmers. Currently the company is operating on its project in the Rift Valley Ziway, which is the first commercial composting and farmers training centre owned by Soil and More Ethiopia.</p>
<p>Supply Chain Stages Assessed:</p> <p>Pre-production stage (Beta testing) + production and marketing stage (after Beta testing)</p>	<p>Details of Assessed Entities:</p> <p>Three primary cooperatives (Negalign, Halaku and Golba) to be treated as separate entities for assessment. In total comprising of 150 smallholder farmers.</p>
<p>Purpose for testing the Tool/interest in completing a SAFA:</p> <p>The primary purpose of conducting a SAFA is to gather data for a pilot climate smart agriculture project in the Rift Valley region of Ethiopia, which is going to be used as a baseline survey for latter comparison. The secondary purpose of conducting a SAFA is to test the tool's comprehensiveness and applicability in addressing the smallholder farming context.</p>	
<p>Benefits of conducting a SAFA/using the Tool:</p> <p>The benefits of using the SAFA Tool was that it was a very useful to help understand, evaluate and communicate how current farming practices are having impacts on different dimensions of sustainability according to the holistic SAFA framework. To this effect, the SAFA Tool will be used in this climate smart agriculture project was effective for introducing different dimensions of sustainability that project partners may otherwise not consider.</p>	
<p>Challenges of conducting a SAFA/using the Tool:</p> <p>Though SAFA Tool by itself is very relevant and comprehensive to assess the sustainability of a given enterprise against its governance, policy, social and environmental matters, tailoring it towards the entity to be assessed is very important. This is because, an enterprise or a cooperative in Europe or Latin America versus Africa are completely different in their level, scope of production not to mention the administrative and educational knowledge they have for environment, good governance and social wellbeing. The following are also a few challenges of conducting SAFA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's very technical for an enterprise working in the agriculture sector in particular and assessor need a good working knowledge of technical content. • It requires an enterprise to obtain data on many areas they don't normally managed. 	
<p>Hotspots Identified and Next Steps:</p> <p>As per the assessment done, sustainability deficits are mainly in the area of biodiversity, genetic diversity and renewable material and energy which shows the short falls of the cooperatives and member farmers. As per our understanding this could be due the lack of</p>	

attention given to it as a far less priority. It also gave us the perception of how much these areas are not yet dealt with by partners working with the cooperatives for many years. Governance, particularly on corporate ethics, participation (specifically that of women) and labor rights were identified as areas that each of the three primary cooperatives performed the strongest. As per the assessment, the fact that the cooperatives are involving women more practically in economic empowerment and daily meetings and discussions shows that there are rooms to pursue other sustainability components further if there is support and awareness making by the stakeholders they work with.

The climate smart agriculture that the three stakeholders are working on is a pilot project to learn from and scale it up to other areas to include more smallholder farmers. Having this SAFA test result will give us opportunity to further look in to areas where the stakeholders never considered previously, which has shown now sustainability deficits. The Tool's comprehensive and holistic view of sustainability is a big learning curve to look back into the project itself not to mention the result we got after the assessment. Now, the stakeholders understand that sustainability is not one part in a system that should be dealt separately; it's a whole system that needs to be designed and approached in a holistic way. Based on the assessment results, the project stakeholders will have a clearer view of what sustainability measures need to be scaled up. We hope in the future though, to use a SAFA Tool that is tailored to the smallholder farming context.

Methodology:

The procedure followed assessment according to the SAFA Guidelines. For data collection, we developed questionnaires from the tools and translated those questions in to local language (Afan Oromo and Amharic) for the assessors to better understand while communicating with farmers and coop board members. The data was then processed and used to complete the assessment in the Tool.

Time/Resources required completing the assessment?

The overall time required to complete the assessment is three months, this includes the following,

1. Identifying potential and willing two to three primary cooperatives within the climate smart agriculture project that is being conducted,
2. Identifying potential model and willing member farmers of the cooperatives,
3. Mapping the SAFA Tool (Setting the goal and scopes),
4. Extracting questionnaire from SAFA Beta Tool,
5. Translating the questionnaire to two different local languages (Afan Oromo and Amharic) as all of the respondents were not uniformly speaking both languages,
6. Doing the field assessment,
7. Sorting out the result to find out what most of respondents have responded in common (putting this in a percentile) that is going to be used for SAFA Tool part of:-
 - a. Description of practices,
 - b. Data quality,
 - c. Rating and
 - d. Critical areas, disclosure issues and data availability.
8. Encoding the result to the SAFA Tool indicators step
9. Writing the reporting step of the SAFA Tool part



Photos from the project site; Rift Valley, Ethiopia



“As a practitioner of organic and sustainable farming and in my eight years of working very closely with smallholder farmers, primary cooperative and unions, doing a lot of baseline surveys, the SAFA Tool is the best assessment tool because it is comprehensive and holistic in its approach of sustainability.”

Hussen Ahmed, Soil and More Ethiopia

<p>Test Case Name:</p> <p><u>Industrial Beef Production and Processing in Mexico</u></p> <p>Assessment Location:</p> <p>Veracruz, Mexico</p> <p>Value Chain Assessed:</p> <p>Mexican Intensive Beef Supply Chain</p>	<p>Assessor/Organization Profile:</p> <p>The Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria y Zootecnia (FMVZ) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) is an institution that prepares people capable to apply, generate and transfer knowledge on animal production, veterinary medicine and consumer health. It has a close link with the society and the productive sector in México. The FMVZ is the most important institution of its kind in Latin America and is certified by the American Veterinary Medical Association since 2011.</p>
<p>Supply Chain Stages Assessed:</p> <p>Primary production stage (feedlot) and processing stage (slaughterhouse).</p>	<p>Details of Assessed Entities:</p> <p>Feedlot: 11 employees, 5,888 heads fattened per year. Grain fed (corn, sorghum and soybean). 147 hectares of land used. Slaughterhouse: 200 employees, 70,320 processed per year. 5.5 hectares. Standard production system and highly mechanized.</p>
<p>Purpose for testing the Tool/interest in completing a SAFA:</p> <p>To analyze the current state of sustainability of the intensive beef supply chain in Mexico. To identify hotspots and areas for improvement in order to take the results to managers of the enterprises and to wider public policy developers who can influence a more sustainable development of the supply chain.</p>	
<p>Benefits of conducting a SAFA/using the Tool:</p> <p>The SAFA tool allows the users a detailed assessment of sustainability performance of animal production-related companies. The tool helps identify the hot spots of food chains, which will allow proposing practices to improve current production systems. For Mexico SAFA is a useful tool since there is generally a lack of knowledge on sustainable food production, therefore this tool provide guidance in the planning of a company toward sustainability.</p>	
<p>Challenges of conducting a SAFA/using the Tool:</p> <p>In Mexico companies do not conduct sustainability assessment since it is not a legal requirement; therefore there is much information needed for the SAFA tool that does not exist in the companies. Therefore many of the important indicators documented in the SAFA tool for Mexico have been approaches or come from secondary sources. Conducting the SAFA test is complex and extensive and requires a long period of time.</p> <p>Furthermore, the direct involvement of managers or employees with long time in companies is necessary to respond to those indicators that are known only internally, throughout the life of the business, as there is information that is not recorded (for example, evolution of the company's relationship with the community). Moreover, in Mexico there are gaps, mainly in the theme of "biodiversity" it makes difficult or impossible to answer indicators on this theme.</p>	

Hotspots identified and Next Steps:

Feedlot: There is potential for improvement in 12 of the 21 subjects evaluated. These subjects are: "Biodiversity," "Atmosphere", "Holistic management", "Materials and energy", "Water", "Rule of law", "Participation", "Accountability", "Corporate Ethics", "Cultural Diversity", "Equity" and "Fair Trading Practices ". Most of these themes (5) belong to the dimension Good Governance, which is followed by Environmental Integrity (4) and Social Well-being (3). So it would be advisable to strengthen the company's policies on sustainability and then enhance the rest of sustainable issues.

Slaughterhouse: From the data visualization polygon, it's identified that the area with the most strength in sustainability is "product quality and information" followed by "vulnerability", "investment", "decent livelihood", "labor rights", "human safety and health" and "water" which showed a good performance. Unacceptable performance was found for "cultural diversity" and "holistic management".

From the above, it can be observed that these companies have endeavored to obtain a product of international quality, products backed up by investment, strategies and legal requirements compliance, including the provision of employee benefits to staff with adherence to national legislation. However, with the exception of sub-theme water, companies lack attention on environmental indicators as well as biodiversity and equity ones. They have obtained an unacceptable rating in the knowledge of traditions and culture of the region, as well as the one related to management plan for sustainability.

This was a study for academic purposes, which was not requested by the evaluated companies. The results are an initial diagnosis of sustainability in the TIF slaughterhouses and the next step is to approach the slaughterhouses managers and government institutions to publicize the strengths and weaknesses shown on this analysis, which may be the basis for improvements in the evaluated business processes.

Methodology:

The procedure followed assessment according to the SAFA Guidelines. For data collection, we developed questionnaires from the tools and translated those questions in to local language (Afan Oromo and Amharic) for the assessors to better understand while communicating with farmers and coop board members. The data was then processed and used to complete the assessment in the Tool.

Time/Resources required completing the assessment:

Full time researcher + supervisor required 8 hours per day for 6 weeks

“In our opinion, SAFA is a friendly tool because it is easy to work with and it has all the explanatory information to answer all the questions. However, SAFA is a very large and detailed test which requires a long time to complete. Additionally, as some of the questions are highly specific, they are hard to be answered, because of the lack of information. According to our experience with this tool, we believe that to have precise SAFA answers, the collaboration of specialized people in the different topics is required, but above all, the interest and active collaboration of the assessed companies is required to supply the information needed.”

Adriana Rivera Huerta & Maria Salud Rubio Lozano, The Autonomous National University of Mexico



Photo of a beef processing site; Mexico