Evaluation of the project “FAO support to the Georgian agricultural sector (European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development [ENPARD III])”
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Abstract

This document is a terminal evaluation of the project “FAO support to the Georgian agricultural sector (European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development [ENPARD III])”. The project was funded under the third phase of ENPARD III and implemented in Georgia from 1 January 2018 to 30 November 2022.

The evaluation’s aim was to assess the overall achievement of the project objectives and outcomes, to evaluate the project’s success, identify good implementation practices, drawbacks, and lessons learned, and to renew the linkages to other projects and partnerships or arrangements in place that have contributed to the adequate implementation of project activities. The evaluation covered the whole project implementation period, including three main areas of concern: i) capacity development of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture; ii) grant support to farmers/agricultural companies; and iii) technical support to farmers.

A systematic and objective assessment was made of the project design, the project’s implementation, and its results in order to determine the project’s relevance and achievement of objectives, but also its efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The evaluation was theory-based and used a utilization-focused and participatory approach. The assessment applied a qualitative approach to collect the data and utilized the following tools: i) desk review; ii) interviews with project stakeholders; iii) focus group discussions with project end beneficiaries; and iv) field visits to project sites.

The findings of the evaluation indicated that the project coherently responded to the needs and priorities of the development of agriculture in Georgia. The project was substantially successful in delivering the expected activities and outputs under the three areas, which basically included two components. The deliverables at the policy level consistently met the requirements of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the European Union and the Government and Georgia, which represents an integral part of the agreement. In this respect, FAO’s assistance to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture at the policy level and to gender mainstreaming of the two policies under development (i.e. Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy and Agricultural Extension Strategy) was a significant achievement of the project. In addition, the grants component was very effective, as it was fully tailored to the needs and interests of small- and medium-scale farmers, cooperatives, and also large-scale agricultural companies.

Considering that the capacities in the agriculture sector of Georgia are still not fully developed at all levels and given the fact that large-scale farmers are in a much more advantageous position to support agricultural production on a large scale, FAO is recommended to keep the focus on capacity development activities at small-scale levels. FAO is further suggested to continue and to increase the capacity development with the extension services, considering that the extension services are fundamental to achieve the aspirations of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. To largely facilitate the development of a competitive and inclusive agriculture sector in the country, the monitoring, evaluation and learning culture needs to be further strengthened and the lessons learned adequately incorporated into the programme.
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The evaluation was carried out with the invaluable assistance of the FAO personnel of the Georgia Country Office. Their insight, knowledge, advice, and comments made this review possible.

The evaluation benefitted from the inputs of many other stakeholders, including government officers in Tbilisi and field-based farmers, farmer cooperatives and agricultural companies, as well as staff of other United Nations (UN) agencies. Their contributions were critical to the team’s work and are deeply appreciated.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DCFTA</td>
<td>Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area</td>
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<td>ENPARD</td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>FFS</td>
<td>Farmer Field School</td>
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<td>LAG</td>
<td>Local Action Group</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<td>PIU</td>
<td>Project Implementation Unit</td>
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<td>RDA</td>
<td>Rural Development Agency</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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Executive summary

Introduction

1. The objective of the terminal evaluation was to assess the overall achievement of the project “FAO support to the Georgian agricultural sector (European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development [ENPARD III])”, which included an evaluation of the objectives and outcomes as specified in the project document. The aim was to determine the project’s success or failure with the goal to identify the good implementation practices, but also the drawbacks and the lessons to be learned. The evaluation also reviewed the linkages with other projects and/or partnerships or arrangements in place that have contributed to the adequate implementation of project activities. The time frame of the evaluation covered in total 56 months, from January 2018 (project inception) until August 2022.¹

2. Specifically, the final evaluation provided answers to 27 prepared questions related to the following criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The evaluation was theory-based and used a utilization-focused and participatory approach.

3. The evaluation design included the following tools to collect relevant data: i) desk review; ii) interviews with project stakeholders; iii) focus group discussions with project beneficiaries; and iv) field visits to project sites.

4. The data collected from the interviews, focus group discussions and site visits were triangulated with information received through the desk reviews, including project-relevant documents and reports. This process of triangulation formed the basis to prove evidence of the findings.

5. The Evaluation Team applied only a qualitative approach, which was methodologically justified by the evaluation’s primary objective: i) to understand, how the project delivered its results; and ii) to identify the major prerequisites for their success. As such, the evaluation did not carry out any surveys.

Main findings

Relevance

6. The project coherently responded to the needs and priorities of agricultural development in Georgia. The project activities related to the policy development were well aligned with the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement, signed in 2014 and entered into force in 2016. Notably, all the deliverables at policy level met the requirements of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which is an integral part of the Agreement.

7. The project promoted actions that are highly consistent with the pursue of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 1: No Poverty; SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 13”: Climate Action; SDG 14: Life below Water; and SDG 15: Life on Land.

8. The project design ensured full compliance with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) corporate policy and the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia strategy on gender equality.

9. The project was well designed. Most of the planned activities were linked to the planned outputs to achieve the specific objectives, including well defined indicators and plausible sources of verifications that were in line with the respective outputs and outcomes. However, the indicators

¹ The not-to-exceed (NTE) end date of the project was 30 November 2022.
on the outcome level could have been planned better. Although the indicators developed to measure the results of the grants were well aligned with the planned interventions, they were incomplete: the investments that grantees potentially could have made because of improved production capacities were not adequately monitored.

10. All activities implemented under the technical assistance component were under the guidance of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. FAO provided its technical expertise and large network of institutions, organizations, and consultants in order to properly address all emerging needs of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. The activities related to matching grants and extension services to small-scale farmers were adjusted to their specific needs and interests.

**Effectiveness and efficiency**

11. Although not all planned activities have been implemented (refer to section 3.2 to read more about the evaluation questions on effectiveness and efficiency), the project delivered substantial outputs within the following three areas: i) capacity development of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture; ii) grant support to farmers/agricultural companies; and iii) technical support to farmers.

12. The grants component was very effective. It was tailored to the needs and interests of small- and medium-scale farmers and cooperatives, but also large agricultural companies. The increased productivity and production demonstrated the validity of the approach followed by FAO. The partial analysis carried out by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) on 94 grants revealed the creation of 82 new permanent jobs and 271 part-time jobs. As a result of the received grants, productivity, production, and turnover increased on average by 46 percent, 69 percent, and 75 percent respectively. The community investments even had an effect that went beyond increasing the capacities of the individual grantees procuring from smaller farmers, who in turn became suppliers to support the business expansion of the grantees. However, the data provided was not disaggregated by gender.

13. FAO assisted the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in gender mainstreaming related to the two policies under development: i) the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy; and ii) the Agricultural Extension Strategy. Since its outset, the project engaged a gender-sensitive communication approach for the grant component to reach out to women and to provide clear information about grant award criteria and the application process. In total, 18.6 percent of approved applications were submitted by women. In the extension component, women represented the vast majority in the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) regarding crop, vegetable production and dairy, including in total 830 female farmers.

14. The policy support, capacity development and extension services are areas in which FAO has demonstrated longstanding experience worldwide. The related two components did not represent any particular or unusual challenges for the PIU. However, the work on the grants was an absolute novelty for FAO in the region, and the implementation approach for this component was completely built in-house at FAO, without any support from partners, be it inside or outside the country.

15. Interventions under the policy support and extension services were well organized. FAO provided competent personnel at country, regional and headquarters levels to carry out the activities. The project targeted appropriate beneficiaries, and all relevant departments within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture were involved. The extension component targeted
small-scale farmers, but the activities could not be implemented in collaboration with the Rural Development Agency (RDA), and as originally planned. As a result, and due to the insufficient data situation, it was impossible to identify the reasons behind.

16. As a consequence of important capacity building of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the project created optimal conditions at the policy level to pursue the country’s interest in aligning to the DCFTA. Sixty-eight percent of Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture central level staff received trainings, which indicated 36 percent more officials trained than originally planned.

17. The evaluation revealed that there was no common understanding between the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the RDA on the implementation approach of the extension component. Small-scale farmers in general reported to have received very limited trainings from public institutions. This also highlights the inadequate capacity of the institutions to collaborate with farmers at field levels. Although farmers represent the majority of primary producers in the country, their roles, and responsibilities for the rural development of Georgia seem to be perceived very differently by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officials.

Impact

18. The project awarded 356 grants across 27 value chains. Meanwhile, the extension work covered the dairy sector, crop vegetable and hazelnut production. Farmers, cooperatives, and companies were particularly interested in enhancing their capacities in relation to existing businesses.

19. Project records and anecdotal evidence collected during the field mission particularly highlighted the project’s contribution towards increased rural employment and services to farmers. The quantification of this contribution was, however, not available within the project records, and the enhancement of productivity of grantees was only confirmed through the focus group discussions and interviews. The same applied to the extension component: all farmers who participated in extension activities confirmed a significant productivity increase due to the project interventions (see above).

20. The exchanges proved evidence that the grants component enabled farmers to not only increase their productivity, but to also considerably upscale their operations. Some grantees, in fact, re-invested the gains into new equipment and machineries that originated from the increase in productivity and production. These community investments, in turn, brought broad impacts in the associated value chains that largely went beyond the increase of incomes of the grantees.

21. The evaluation therefore concluded that the project had a significant impact on enhancing the competitiveness of agriculture in certain value chains. However, due to the flaws in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, no assertive and definite statements on the broader effect could be made at the time of the evaluation.

22. Marketing problems still constitute a significant barrier for small-scale farmers. Consequently, and according to several interviews, farmers are struggling to obtain good prices in the local market. Nevertheless, the evaluation acknowledged that strengthening the capacity of small-scale farmers was assessed to be of particular importance to make the agriculture sector more competitive, not least because smallholders are the main drivers of agricultural production in the country. In this light, the project trained 255 farmers on management skills.
Finally, the evaluation also acknowledged that the interventions related to food safety may significantly contribute to increase exportability possibilities of Georgian agricultural products. In this light, it is to be expected that the application of European food safety standards will pave the way to export not only to Europe, but also to other countries worldwide.

**Sustainability**

Although the project document refers to the dimension of sustainability of the project, an explicit exit/sustainability strategy was not identified. However, the lack of an exit strategy was not considered to negatively affect the sustainability of the project, and for the following reasons:

i. Targeting the most important value chains at municipality level and promoting gender and environmental issues throughout the application and approval process of the grants were relevant outcomes, which will positively contribute to the sustainability of the project.

ii. The inclusion of a business plan for grants starting from USD 10,000 represented a valid element to ensure sustainability of the awarded grants.

iii. The e-library represented an effort to initiate a more efficient organization of the communication and knowledge products that accompany the whole process in the agriculture sector and to comply with the DCFTA. However, filling the gap between actual capacities throughout the agricultural value chains, on the one hand, and policy development, on the other hand, remains challenging.

iv. As outlined, the project was successful in boosting the farmers’ production capacities through the extension component. All grantees interviewed (nine men and one woman) highlighted an increase of production and productivity, which bodes well for the continuation of farming activities. Currently, small-scale farmers are in a position to generate incomes, however, technical support, especially capacity building at farm and post-harvest levels, as well as marketing orientation will further need to be strengthened.

Furthermore, in the extension component, women represented the vast majority participating in FFS. Overall, this included 280 women out of 282 registered farmers regarding crop and vegetable production and 550 female farmers among the dairy producers. The project also empowered women who felt involved for the first time in an institutional project, run by an international organization. As a result, women farmers’ inputs were particularly recognized and appreciated, because they directly contribute to important community development. In this respect, these new, important opportunities are highly likely to be sustained.

The policy interventions did not involve any risks to sustainability. As such, it is in the first place the political will of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, and more generally, the Government of Georgia, to further elaborate and implement the necessary measures and next steps that were successfully initiated by the project.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

**Conclusions**

**Conclusion 1.** The interventions on the grants by the PIU is regarded as innovative and appropriate to support the development of value chains in Georgia. This allows to promote an inclusive development of the agriculture sector, while ensuring transparency and accountability.
Conclusion 2. The delivery of project outputs and achievement of outcomes is satisfactory. Capacities of stakeholders and overall competitiveness of the agriculture sector were enhanced by demonstrating that the project strategy, including the three areas of concern, was effective. The project successfully contributed to lay the groundwork for the country’s aim to align to the DCFTA as an integral part of the Agreement of the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement, which is a key priority for the country.

Conclusion 3. The contribution of the extension component to enhanced productivity of small-scale farmers was significant, however, consolidation of the agricultural capacities of small-scale farmers may still require considerable extension of interventions in the long-term.

Conclusion 4. The lack of the RDA involvement in the extension work represented a missed opportunity in terms of promoting a coordinated vision on the development of small-scale farmers, who represent the vast majority of the country’s agricultural primary producers.

Conclusion 5. The policy interventions supported the foundation for Georgia to continue its approximation process to join the European Union, which also significantly contributes to increase the overall competitiveness of the country’s agriculture sector in the medium- and long-term.

Conclusion 6. The project particularly targeted women and made efforts to deliver responsive/transformational effects on gender. The high involvement of women in the extension programme set an important precedent and demonstrated the need to take affirmative actions and to implement women-specific interventions that ensure access to and benefits from the programme. However, the project did not provide any data on gender equality impact measurement. Therefore, longer-term results on gender equality initiatives were not yet conclusive.

Conclusion 7. The cumulative benefits of the project to the targeted farmers were not entirely comprehensible. The project did not indicate any information on the investments that grantees potentially could have made as a result of improved production capacities. The M&E system did not entail the learning and reflection sessions to better understand the bottlenecks, nor did it monitor any achievements, success stories, or challenges that impeded results-focused implementation. This, however, would have been particularly critical in order to conclude important lessons.

Conclusion 8. “Community investments” played a major role in catalysing the development of relevant value chains that promote the inclusion of increased farmer participation (particularly small-scale farmers). Working on most common value chains at municipality level demonstrated to be appropriate and guaranteed a high level of sustainability. The analysis of only partially available M&E data on the grants and extension component indicated an increase of production, productivity, and income through job creation. These findings substantiated the observations made from the interviews and focus group discussions, which all confirmed an overall improvement in the selected value chains.

Conclusion 9. The sustainability of project achievements was ensured by project efforts that aimed at strengthening governance and gender mainstreaming in the agriculture sector, and at improving the capacities of farmers (grants and extension component). However, large-scale farmers are better positioned (in terms of capacity) to quickly and effectively respond to the regulations that may follow the groundwork initiated by the project (in terms of policy support), whereas the capacities of medium- and small-scale farmers are not yet sufficient. In the medium- and long-term, there is a substantial risk for the detachment between the situation on the ground and the legal frameworks and relating regulations. Extension services are not yet fully equipped with capacities and resources to support small-scale farmers satisfactorily and sustainably. Hence, strengthening the capacities of both the extension services and small-scale farmers remains essential to allow for the fair and sustainable development of the agriculture sector in Georgia.
Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Strategic: The PIU should continue focusing on capacity development activities for small-scale farmers. The empowerment of smallholders will significantly contribute to increase their possibilities for securing a more stable agricultural production.

27. Small-scale farmers represent the majority of operators in the agriculture sector in Georgia. However, they still lack capacities to secure stable production and market access, which would otherwise result in higher and more stable income generation. FFS and demonstration plots have proved to be efficient tools to promote successful capacity development and to foster opportunities among smallholders. The recommendation also takes into consideration the “leave no one behind” (LNOB) principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is highly relevant for FAO’s mandate.

Recommendation 2. Strategic: The PIU and its main counterparts should implement targeted strategies and activities that promote the formation of women groups (vegetable value chains), with the aim to assist and facilitate application processes and access to small grants.

28. Small-scale farmers experience post-harvest losses due to their incapacity to efficiently plan the harvest period of agricultural production. Supporting especially women with small grants to grow off-season vegetables may represent a valid alternative to generate additional income and to avoid sales at very low prices or post-harvest losses. The recommendation also takes into consideration the LNOB principle of the United Nations.

29. Grants may refer to the procurement of limited equipment and inputs to upgrade production capacities. Local Action Groups (LAGs) may be involved to support the development of such small-scale projects. This also includes regular dissemination of information on current opportunities among women groups. The recommendation may be implemented during the course of the ENPARD IV programme by the PIU and the RDA.

Recommendation 3. Strategic: The PIU should continue working with the RDA to support its capacities and to define modalities for implementing the extension component with the direct involvement of smallholder farmers.

30. The needs for capacity development of the Information and Consultation Centres are clearly spelled out in the extension strategy, which were drafted with the support of the project. As such, the extension services are key to realize the aspirations of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and to create a competitive and inclusive agriculture sector in the country. The agriculture strategy considers the strengthening of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture’s capacities to be essential, but the needs of small-scale farmers are equally important. Improved rural development further entails the substantial improvement of mutual communication between these stakeholders, which should represent important learning exercises for all actors involved. The recommendation may be implemented during the course of the ENPARD IV programme by the PIU and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

Recommendation 4. Strategic: To ensure the award of grants (e.g. the provision of technical assistance from the grantees to small-scale farmers), the PIU should – as an additional criterion – increasingly promote technical support and collaboration from large companies to small-scale farmers.

31. The grants have the potential to generate beneficial effects that go beyond the individual grantees. As small-scale farmers still have dire needs to enhance their production capacities, the recommendation also takes into consideration the “leave no one behind” principle relating to FAO’s mandate. The value chain approach, as pursued by the project, positively contributes to award interested food processors in the following ENPARD phase. The provision of a given
numbers of trainings from applicants to small-scale farmers may be included as a compulsory/preferential option within the overall grant award process (i.e. a compulsory element for each application or a preferential criterion rewarded with a higher score). Once the grant is approved and disbursed, the monitoring of trainings could be an occasion to involve other partners in the process. Information and Consultation Centre employees may play a vital role in the monitoring activities, and the potential of small-scale farmers may positively showcase and set good examples to still sceptical Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officers.

Recommendation 5. Strategic: To ensure the receipt of large grants, the PIU should include – as a compulsory activity and criterion for selecting grant recipients – a gender awareness and labour rights training among all owners and employees of a company/cooperative.

32. Gender awareness and labour rights are relevant to FAO’s mandate and of high relevance for the donor and the recipient country (i.e. the European Union and Georgia), because their effective promotion is part of the process of approximation. In fact, the evaluation acknowledges that the project implemented gender responsive/transformative activities with women. However, the interventions only targeted female farmers. A gender awareness and labour rights training would be an occasion to also introduce male farmers to such topics.

33. Participation in the trainings should be included as a compulsory element in the application process. Training sessions may be organized at municipality levels and should target more than one grantee, depending on the numbers of grants disbursed within the following ENPARD phase. The recommendation may be implemented during the course of the ENPARD IV programme by the PIU, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, and the European Union Delegation.

Recommendation 6. Operational: The PIU should strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and learning culture and ensure that the lessons-learned approach is adopted in the programme.

34. The empowered monitoring, evaluation and learning allows to assess the project achievements, identify any bottlenecks of the implementation process, as well as the good practices of the interventions. Overall, the learning system in place allows to analyse and use the monitoring, evaluation and learning data supporting the programme in order to interpret and apply the learnings for strategic and programmatic decision-making. It is suggested to define a detailed monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan, which is based on the project logical framework (including all details) to effectively monitor the implementation of the initiative. The plan should include data collection tools and an indicator tracking table. Quantitative as well as qualitative data collection tools should be applied. In addition, regular MEL meetings should take place, allowing to present updates on the project progress and to discuss eventual challenges emerging from the monitoring activities. And importantly, the M&E system should also implement the gender dimension of the project. The recommendations may be implemented in the beginning of the ENPARD IV programme by PIU and an M&E Officer. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia may also provide support, if necessary.
Lessons learned

35. The overall process related to the matching grants component represents a valuable lesson, since it was the first time worldwide that FAO introduced this implementation mechanism to support farmers. The evaluation identified five key lessons for a functioning and effective matching grant mechanism to be applied whenever a matching grant process is implemented by a FAO-operated project:

36. **Ensuring efficiency and success**: Open and frank discussions with the relevant ministry (in this project, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture) is the first and foremost important lesson. To further enforce ownership and coherent alignment to the country’s institutional interests, an official agreement on the process is key to be efficient and successful.

37. **Ensuring effectiveness and promoting transparency**: Studies and assessments are the basis for the grants to be effective. They are also useful to operationalize the process and to generally reduce complexity. To ensure effectiveness and to properly manage the cycle of grants, it is important to define their exact scope.

38. **Ensuring accountability and transparency**: Clear application and review processes, guided by a manual and supported by an accessible online system, are key to promote transparency. A functioning Applications Review Committee, formed by members from FAO, country ministries, and donors, ensures accountability and transparency.

39. **Reinforcing accountability**: Visits to grantees, in order to verify whether the equipment procured through the grant is effectively used, reinforces the accountability of implementation.

40. **Facilitating decisive internal learning and accountability**: Finally, as the matching grants represent a novelty within the Organization, FAO’s direct implementation modality of the matching grants is key, as it allows decisive internal learning and accountability.
1. **Introduction**

1.1 **Purpose of the terminal evaluation**

1. The final evaluation aimed at identifying the project outcomes, the sustainability of the project and its potential impact. This also included an assessment of future actions that are needed to assure the continuity of the process that was initiated by the project. The evaluation addressed the main project decision-makers and implementers, specifically the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA),¹ the direct beneficiaries of the project (i.e. individual farmers, cooperatives and agricultural companies), as well as other important actors, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union Delegation to Georgia.

1.2 **Intended users**

2. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia Management in Budapest, Hungary, FAO Georgia, the Budget Holder, the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), the donor and the partner organization(s) are the main users of the evaluation report and are expected to benefit from the evaluation findings and recommendations. Besides contributing to organizational learning and informed planning, the final evaluation is also expected to serve the donor’s purpose by establishing the programme as one that brings the evidence-based findings to the cross-project information.

1.3 **Scope and objectives of the evaluation**

3. The final evaluation analysed the achieved project results in terms of outputs and outcomes and identified possible challenges that are expected in terms of the sustainability of project results. The PIU supported the process of the evaluation at every stage and according to the needs. The time frame evaluated covered 56 months, from January 2018 (project inception) until August 2022.

4. A systematic and objective assessment was made of the project design and the implementation of the results. The aim was to determine the relevance and achievement of objectives, the project’s efficiency, its effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

5. The objective of the final evaluation was to assess the overall achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the project document, and to determine the project’s success or failure with the goal of identifying the good implementation practices, the drawbacks, including the project’s lessons learned. It also reviewed the linkages with other projects and/or partnerships or other arrangements in place that have contributed to the adequate implementation of project activities.

6. The evaluation answered 27 evaluation questions, agreed by the Evaluation Team, the Evaluation Manager, and the PIU, and as outlined in the inception report. An impact assessment was expected to be conducted on the matching grants component.

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¹ Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture is an American NGO that specializes in the design and implementation of sustainable, enterprise-based agricultural initiatives. CNFA implements enterprise-based, agricultural development initiatives to facilitate market access, enhance agribusiness competitiveness, increase productivity, and improve access to inputs and financing around the world.
7. The evaluation questions referred to five evaluation criteria as outlined in the following:

i. Relevance:
   • To what extent was the intervention coherently responding to the actual needs and priorities of agricultural development in Georgia, as well as to the current global agenda for sustainable development?
   • Was the project implemented in complementarity with other initiatives?
   • How adequate was the project design in supporting the activities and expected outcomes (e.g. logframe coherence, linkages between components and activities)?
   • To what extent was the project methodology operational, accessible, understandable, and useful to the targeted beneficiaries?
   • Did the project document identify concerns with respect to gender issues, women’s empowerment, and human rights, including in relation to sustainable development?

ii. Effectiveness and efficiency:
   • To what extent has the project achieved its targeted results?
   • What were the main elements of significance in terms of capacity development of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture; the grant support to farmers/agricultural companies; and the technical support to farmers?
   • To which extent were cross-cutting issues, including human rights and gender equality, adequately considered in project implementation?
   • To what extent has the project made best use of available human, technical, technological, financial and knowledge inputs to achieve its desired results?
   • To what extent have the FAO M&E activities (e.g. indicators, guidelines) been able to collect the necessary, timely, accurate, and comparable data and information?
   • To what extent was the project’s communication strategy effectively promoting the participation of targeted stakeholders at all levels, promoting visibility of the project results, and providing access to relevant information?
   • To what extent have the management/implementing arrangements been appropriate to deliver the achieved project results in an efficient manner?
   • What was the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of results, and how did the project deal with it?

iii. Impact:
   • What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on improved rural economic diversification, employment, and services?
   • What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on enhanced competitiveness of agriculture?
   • What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on an improved environment, the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action?
   • What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on unforeseen impacts?
iv. **Sustainability:**

- Did the project design and/or project implementation address socio-political, financial, institutional, and environmental sustainability issues?
- Was there a credible sustainability strategy and/or appropriate exit strategy developed at the design/implementation stage?
- Did the project design/implementation present strategies to promote/support any scaling up, replication and/or catalytic action?
- What is the likelihood that financial resources will be available, once the assistance ends, to further support the continuation of project benefits?
- Are there any social or political risks that can undermine the longevity of project outcomes?
- What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow the project benefits to be sustained?
- Do the various key stakeholders recognize that it is in their interest and responsibility that the project benefits continue to flow?
- Are the project’s successful aspects being transferred to appropriate parties, potential future beneficiaries, and others who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?
- Are there environmental factors that could undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits?
- Are the changes promoted by the project conducive to systematically address gender equality and human rights concerns?

1.4 **Methodology**

1.4.1 **Approach**

8. The evaluation was theory-based and used a utilization-focused and participatory approach.

9. A theory-based evaluation focuses on analysing a project’s underlying logic and causal linkages (Rossi *et al.*, 1999). Projects are built on assumptions on how and why they are supposed to achieve the agreed results through the selected strategy. This set of assumptions constitutes the “theory of change”. The evaluation analyses the project’s theory underpinning the project. In doing so, it is possible to recognize that a multitude of factors and interactions influence the project’s effectiveness, and thus seek to identify those causal factors judged to be most critical to the project’s overall success.

10. A utilization-focused approach is based on the principle that evaluations should be judged on their usefulness to their intended users. Therefore, they should be planned and conducted in ways that enhance the likely utilization of both the findings and recommendations to inform further decisions (Patton, 2008).

11. The final evaluation process followed a collaborative and participatory approach, ensuring close engagement with the key project stakeholders. The Evaluation Team maintained close communication with the PIU and exchanged regular information throughout the process in order to contribute to enhancing the ownership of the evaluation findings.

### 1.4.2 Evaluation tools

13. The design of the evaluation included the following tools to collect relevant data:
   
   i. desk review of project documents and reports;
   
   ii. individual and group interviews;
   
   iii. focus group discussions; and
   
   iv. field visits to project sites.

14. Project documents and reports were made available to the Evaluation Team in a shared online folder during the elaboration of the inception report. The most updated report (from 30 June 2022) with consolidated data for each indicator had been delivered shortly before the evaluation field mission to Georgia.

15. The evaluation made use of a “purposeful sampling”\(^2\) to identify the stakeholders to be consulted (see Appendix 1). The sampling had been designed in consultation with the PIU. The sampling and the consequent schedule of meetings for interviews, focus group discussions and field visits necessarily took the willingness and availability of stakeholders into account.

16. The “purposeful sampling” was applied to meet the needs of the evaluation. This approach involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable or experienced. Studying information-rich cases – that is, interviewing people who are closely linked to the project and are well informed – generates knowledge and a deep understanding, instead of empirical generalizations, which are characteristic of statistically representative probability sampling. The evaluation dealt with many different questions. For example, it was conceivable that FAO would have a lot of information about the project’s efficiency (project management and administration), whereas farmers (the direct beneficiaries) would have important information on the effectiveness of the project at field levels.

17. During the evaluation mission to Georgia, the Evaluation Team conducted 13 field visits to different project sites. The field mission covered six municipalities during five working days: Dedoplistskaro, Lagodekhi, Kareli, Akhaltsikhe, Ahalkalaki, and Tsalka.

18. Officials from all institutions actively involved in project implementation were interviewed during this field mission, and project beneficiaries of the extension and grant components (farmers, cooperatives, and companies) residing in municipalities were involved through individual interviews or focus group discussions. The stakeholders based in Tbilisi were met during four working days.

19. All value chains covered by the project’s extension component (i.e. dairy, wheat and vegetables) were considered during the country field mission. As for the component of grants, five value chains (i.e. hazelnut, dairy, wheat, maize, and potatoes) were considered.

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\(^2\) "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations." (Patton, 2002)
20. The evaluation took place during 40 working days over a period of four months (between October 2022 and February 2023) and was conducted in three different phases.

**Phase one: Inception phase (home-based)**

21. From 1 September to 4 November 2022: During the inception phase, the Evaluation Team reviewed the project documents and reports made available by the PIU. At the end of this phase, the Evaluation Team submitted an inception report, approved by the Evaluation Manager and the National Project Coordinator.

**Phase two: Data collection phase (field mission to Georgia)**

22. From 7 to 18 November 2022: The mission schedule was organized by the PIU, namely by the Grants Monitoring and Training Specialist and the National Junior Policy Officer.

**Phase three: Reporting phase (home-based)**

23. From 21 November 2022 to 10 February 2023: The Evaluation Team submitted a first draft report to the Evaluation Manager. Following the receipt of an annotated draft from the Evaluation Manager, the Evaluation Team incorporated answers to relevant comments in a second draft report that was circulated among FAO Georgia and subsequently again addressed by the Evaluation Team.

**Analysis**

24. The data collected from the interviews, focus group discussions and site visits were triangulated with data from the desk reviews of project documents and reports for verification purposes. The process of triangulation formed the basis for all the evidence the evaluation was able to provide.

**Ethics**

25. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles as outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations.

**Evaluation Team**

26. An International Evaluator, Mr Giacomo Morelli, and a National Evaluator, Ms Dea Tsartsidze composed the Evaluation Team. The evaluation was managed by the FAO Regional Evaluation Specialist, Dr Luca Molinas.

**1.5 Limitations**

27. The evaluation process only applied qualitative methods. This could have been deemed inadequate; however, the qualitative approach was methodologically justified by the fact that the evaluation’s main interest was to understand how and why the project delivered its results. As quantitative methods do not provide information on how and why something is taking place (Patton, 2008), the Evaluation Team did not carry out any surveys. Nevertheless, the evaluation used the data as recorded in the project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, and this approach was considered appropriate.
28. During the two-weeks field mission, the Evaluation Team interviewed selected beneficiaries (farmers, representatives of farmer cooperatives and agricultural companies) and all key project partners (CNFA, representatives from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, UNDP and the European Union Delegation). As a result, the main categories of project stakeholders to be interviewed were foreseen. However, time constraints and availability issues did not allow to conduct all interviews in person. To save time and not to miss relevant interviewees, the Evaluation Team and the PIU decided to conduct some of the interviews online with stakeholders based in Tbilisi. In this sense, if all interviews had been conducted in person, at least one additional day would have become necessary.

29. Due to ongoing important events in the country with the involvement of major project stakeholders and beneficiaries, the Evaluation Team was challenged to adapt to the needs of the FAO Country Office. On 9 and 10 November 2022, the PIU was involved in the FAO Country Office retreat, and on 18 November, the PIU was busy with the closing event of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) Project in Tbilisi. However, the challenges were mitigated by the possibility to interview officials from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and other project partners during FAO’s retreat. Moreover, two additional persons could be interviewed during the course of the ENPARD closing event.

1.6 Structure of the report

30. Following this introduction, section 2 outlines the background and context of the project. Section 3 is focused on the main findings for the evaluation criteria: relevance; effectiveness and efficiency; impact; and sustainability. Section 4 presents conclusions and recommendations, followed by lessons learned in section 5.

31. Four appendices complete the report. Appendices 1, 2 and 3 include the list of individuals and documents consulted during the data collection phase, as well as the tentative itinerary of the field mission to Georgia. The evaluation matrix, presented in Appendix 3, identifies the evaluation questions, the indicators adopted, the source of the data, and the methods for data collection and analysis.

32. The report is also accompanied by Annex 1. Terms of reference for the evaluation.
2. **Background and context of the project**

2.1 **Description of the project**

33. On 15 May 2018, the launch event for the overall ENPARD III programme was held in Batumi, Georgia, in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia, the Director General of Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) of the European Commission, and the European Union Ambassador to Georgia.

34. The project was executed by FAO through the direct implementation modality (DIM).

35. The design of the FAO support to the Georgian agriculture sector under the ENPARD III programme included two outcomes and five outputs.

**Outcome 1.** The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and other relevant institutions have improved capacity, management practices and technical knowledge to sustainably enhance policies, which foster and support the development of value chains and the sustainable competitiveness of agriculture.

**Output 1.1.** Increased efficiency of the operations of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and more effective implementation of the ministry’s key policies as a result of institutional development.

**Output 1.2.** To assist the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in implementing specific components of the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia (SADG) and of the Support to Rural Development in Georgia (SRDG), directly targeted by the ENPARD Georgia programme.

**Outcome 2.** Farmers, cooperatives, and other rural small and medium agricultural enterprise (SMAE) entrepreneurs, workers and rural households are included on equitable terms in sustainable food value chains through improved access to finance, inputs and services, leading to increased competitiveness of the agrifood sector.

**Output 2.1.** Documented economic improvement of the target population (individual farmers, cooperatives, SMAEs) as a result of equitable agricultural investment support.

**Output 2.2.** The targeted population benefits from the improved provision of agriculture services as a result of increased municipal-level investments of public interest.

**Output 2.3.** The target population has increased knowledge and capacities as a result of improved service delivery by extension services.

36. The project included several municipalities across Georgia, such as eight LEADER municipalities (Alkhalkalaki, Borjomi, Dedopliskhara, Lagodekhi, Kazbegi, Keda, Khulo, and Tetriskar0) and 14 adjacent municipalities.

37. The project started on 1 January 2018 and the expected end date was 30 November 2022. The overall duration of the project covered 57 months. During the conduct of the evaluation, the

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3 LEADER is a methodological approach established in the European Union that derives from the French “Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale” and is translated as “Links between the rural economy and development actions”. The idea of LEADER is to support rural development by forming partnerships at subregional level among public, private and civil sectors. Initially, the LEADER approach focused only on disadvantaged rural areas, however, later the scope of the approach was expanded, now covering all rural areas, and as an integral part of the European Union’s rural development policy. The main tool for the application of the LEADER approach for rural development and engaging local community representatives in decision-making is the Local Action Group (LAG).
Evaluation of the project “FAO support to the Georgian agricultural sector (ENPARD III)”

project was about to close. On 18 November 2022, the ENPARD closing event was held in Tbilisi, Georgia.

38. The total project budget amounted to USD 14 692 400 (including a contribution from FAO of USD 500 000). The project was funded by the European Union, including a budget of up to USD 14 192 400. While FAO implemented the project, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture was the primary beneficiary and partner institution of the project. At field level, FAO collaborated with the Local Action Groups (LAGs) and the international NGO Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture.

39. The project was implemented by the FAO Georgia Country Office through the PIU, which was made up of a Project Coordinator and three teams, each responsible for the policy, grants and extension work respectively. Personnel for M&E, gender mainstreaming and financial management completed the PIU.

40. During its implementation, Georgia experienced the state of emergency and a first lockdown from 21 March 2020 to 22 May 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2020, the spread of COVID-19 reached its highest levels, and a second lockdown was imposed from 28 November 2020 to 1 March 2021. In addition to the negative effects regarding the population’s health situation, the pandemic had a significant impact on the Georgian economy. During 2021, the country went again through several lockdowns, but vaccines were introduced at that time. Considering the political events along with the COVID-19-related restrictions, Georgia’s economic performance demonstrated contrasting tendencies throughout 2021. Despite the economy recovered quite rapidly following the pandemic-induced recession (Civil.ge, 2021a), record-breaking inflation rates were experienced that brought people into most difficult financial situations (Civil.ge, 2021b; 2021c; 2021d; 2021e).

41. The project was expected to contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

42. More specifically, the project directly contributed to SDG target 2.3: By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, particularly women, Indigenous Peoples, family farmers, pastoralists, and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

43. This further included SDG target 2.a: Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

44. The initiative was aligned with following FAO Strategic Objectives: 2. Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry, and fisheries in a sustainable manner; 3. Reduce rural poverty; and 4. Enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems.

45. The project was also expected to contribute to the FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) for Georgia for the period 2016 to 2020, specifically to Priority Area 1: Institutional Development; Priority Area 2: Regional and Sectoral Development – Value Chain Development; and Priority Area 4: Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity, under which FAO is promoting climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and in consideration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures and environmentally-friendly agriculture practices that support and enhance the sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity.
2.2 Theory of change

To contribute to the reduced rural poverty of the targeted rural population because of improved and development-oriented policies, as well as improved agricultural services and investments accessible for farmers, allowing for increased competitiveness and employment creation within the agriculture sector.

Outcomes
- Output 1.1. Increased efficiency of the operations of the Ministry of Agriculture and more effective implementation of the ministry’s key policies as a result of institutional development
- Output 1.2. Technical support has allowed the Ministry of Agriculture to implement the specific components of the SADG and the SRDG targeted by the ENPARD Georgia programme
- Output 2.1. Documented economic improvement of the target population (individual farmers, cooperatives, SMEs) as a result of increased agricultural investment support
- Output 2.2. The targeted population benefits from the improved provision of agricultural services as a result of increased municipal-level investments of public interest
- Output 2.3. The targeted population has increased knowledge and capacities as a result of improved service delivery by extension services

Activities
- A 1.1.1. To develop and implement a Human Resources Appraisal Training and Development Programme
- A 1.1.2. APMA monitoring and evaluation
- A 1.2.1. To collect, analyze and store the data within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture
- A 1.2.2. To support the implementation of the Extension Strategy
- A 1.2.3. Policy support to value chain development
- A 2.1.1. To collect background information and prepare a baseline assessment on investment needs
- A 2.1.2. To develop the baseline for the ENPARD III programme
- A 2.1.3. To create a project structure for the management and approval of applications and the management of documentation
- A 2.1.4. To identify priority subsectors/value chains and to develop the value chain strategy aiming at benefitting the targeted population
- A 2.1.5. To support programmes which match the need of the targeted population
- A 2.1.6. To raise awareness and to outreach to the targeted population on the availability of the investment support programme
- A 2.1.7. To develop coordination mechanisms with other stakeholders and investment support providers in order to prevent overlaps and duplications
- A 2.1.8. To support the development and review of proposals and applications
- A 2.1.9. To monitor and evaluate the implementation of individual investments
- A 2.2.1. To assess municipal investment needs at municipal level
- A 2.2.2. To develop mechanisms for the preparation and technical review of applications, and the verification and superintendence of investments for public interest

Source: Elaborated by the Evaluation Team.
3. Findings

3.1 Evaluation questions on relevance

Finding 1. The project activities related to policy development were consistent with the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement, a key priority document for the country, which was signed in 2014 and entered into force in 2016. Notably, all deliverables at policy level met the requirements of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), which is an integral part of the agreement. Under this perspective, the project responded coherently to the needs and priorities of agricultural development in Georgia.

46. The grant component was responding to the needs of farmers to upgrade their production capacities according to the anecdotal evidence collected through focus group discussions and interviews with grantees. The total number of applications received included 838, which was highly significant, and was also confirmed by interviewed project partners.

47. The designed extension works with small-scale farmers revealed to be responsive to the farmers’ needs and interests, and the inclusion of gender and environmental issues in the application processes acknowledged the importance of promoting both women’s empowerment and environmental sustainability of production processes in the agriculture sector.

48. Finally, the evaluation confirmed that the project had put in place efforts that aimed to promote the 2030 Agenda, which is in line with FAO’s mandate. Specifically, the project aligns to following SDGs: 1. No poverty; 5. Gender equality; 8. Decent work and economic growth; 13. Climate action; 14. Life below water; and 15. Life on land.

49. The interventions focused on capacity building of small-scale farmers and the support to women on economic empowerment in order to create new jobs and to generate incomes. This particularly involved the promotion of a more market-oriented and sustainable agriculture (i.e. climate-smart and conservation agriculture). In addition, the policy work also supported the fishery sector.

Finding 2. The project was implemented in complementarity with the UNDP ENPARD component. Assuring this complementarity with the UNDP interventions did not cause any major challenges, as the work was clearly defined for each of the two agencies: on the one hand, the FAO project in charge of supporting the development of the agriculture sector, and on the other hand, the UNDP, in charge of other sectors referring to economy diversification in rural areas of Georgia.

50. At the operational level, this division of roles was very efficient, because the overall ENPARD programme (i.e. the FAO and the UNDP project, as well as the European Union budget support to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture) was steered by the same Project Steering Committee (PSC).

51. The project also collaborated with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus) to support the implementation of a project that focused on sustainable land management and the support to vulnerable farming communities, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in Gori and Kareli municipalities. The project promoted the establishment of two Farmer Field Schools (FFS), reaching out to 100 farmers with the aim to raise awareness on no-till practices in the context of wheat cultivation. In this light, FAO supported farmers in gaining access to two no-tillage equipment, which was the result of an efficient synergy between the two organizations, as the REC Caucasus would not have been in a position to purchase the equipment.
Throughout the implementation, FAO made sure that gender issues were promoted through the collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Training sessions with women groups included relevant topics such as gender roles, gender rights, reproductive health, family planning and access to finance. However, the evaluation also acknowledged that the integration of the extension component with the existing public extension services at field levels was not implemented.

Although the grants component was not implemented in operational coordination with other initiatives, FAO ensured that the value of grants (small, medium, large) was in line with the standards of other similar initiatives in the country.

Finding 3. The project was well designed. The results-chain presented in the logframe (see section 3.2 on evaluation questions on effectiveness and efficiency) seemed to have been adequately followed up. Most of the planned activities were linked to the planned outputs and expected to lead to the achievement of the specific results.

The intervention plan was detailed and consisted of one overall objective/goal (impact), including two outcomes, five outputs and 27 activities. The activities were well planned during the project’s lifetime. Although the original framework was slightly modified during the course of project implementation, the modifications were deemed appropriate.

Overall, most of the indicators were of good quality and in line with the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) indicators. All indicators were well-defined, linked to the respective outputs and outcomes, comprehensible, and measurable with reference to the logical framework. The targeted values were realistic, but some output indicators were not gender-disaggregated.

The indicators on the outcome level could have been planned better. Although the list of indicators developed to measure the results of the grants was well aligned with the nature of the intervention, it was incomplete. In particular, the project did not monitor the investments that grantees potentially could have made as a result of improved production capacities. In fact, during the evaluation mission, it was repeatedly reported that some farmers were not necessarily focusing on increasing their incomes, but rather on expanding their overall capacities. The focus on the income diverted the attention from other elements that could have been monitored to identify the effects of the project in terms of the increase of production investments. In addition, certain verification sources could not be used to verify the progress.

Finding 4. FFS and 165 demonstration plots (representing three times as much than originally planned), responded to the dire needs of the targeted beneficiaries. So far, farmers reported to have received only very limited access to any learning activities. In Lagodekhi, the project was the first support ever obtained in terms of trainings and capacity development.

Prior to the project interventions, there was no formal or informal knowledge-sharing experience, as farming activities were exclusively applied through knowledge and experience-sharing within families. FAO agronomists provided 120 training sessions and 864 individual technical assistance and consultations for FFS members. The introduction of a new concept of learning among farmers, allowed to make the participants less sceptical about "modern farming." The FFS trainings focused on demonstrations relating to climate-smart agriculture and integrated pest management (IPM),

4 “IPM is the careful consideration of all available pest control techniques and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations. It combines biological, chemical, physical and crop specific (cultural) management strategies and practices to grow healthy crops and minimize the use of pesticides, reducing or minimizing risks posed by pesticides to human health and the environment for sustainable pest management.” (FAO, 2023)
also known as integrated pest control (IPC), and which were considered highly relevant to the farmers’ needs.

58. As an outcome of the interviews, the grants were appreciated by all farmers, as they largely facilitated the recipients to improve individual ways of doing business. The relative importance of the grants was, however, different for the respective beneficiary. Anecdotal evidence from the field mission revealed that some of the beneficiaries would have – with or without the grants – anyway improved their production methods through relevant investments, whereas other beneficiaries would not have been able to improve their production capacities without the grants.

59. The grant application procedure was fully comprehensible and accessible to the farmers who were interested in receiving a grant. All farmers interviewed reported a user-friendly application process. Since the whole application procedure was conducted online, many small-scale farmers reported to have particularly engaged young family members to support the process.

Finding 5. FAO intensively accompanied the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in policy development. All activities implemented under this component were under the guidance of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

60. The activities implemented were a direct result of the collaboration between the two institutions. FAO provided technical expertise at policy level and its large network, including many institutions, organizations, and consultants. FAO further provided relevant expertise to cover many agriculture subsectors of the relating component, such as aquaculture, fisheries, and food safety, *inter alia*. Notably, the evaluation process recorded a great level of enthusiasm among the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officers involved in policy level activities.

Finding 6. The project design ensured the project’s full compliance with the FAO corporate policy on gender equality and the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia strategy on gender equality. The approach highlighted equal participation and benefits for both women and men and the inclusiveness of vulnerable groups that aimed at avoiding any discrimination.

61. Moreover, the project document encompasses the Gender Strategy, including the Gender Action Plan. It promotes gender empowerment in relation to sustainable development within all project components. The project document promotes gender equality in agriculture that should reduce the gap between rural women and men and states the cross-cutting issues to be targeted at all stages of project implementation. Additionally, the mainstreaming strategy aims at mainstreaming gender across all project outputs and at responding to the target population’s different needs, priorities, and constraints.

62. In this line, by supporting the gender-sensitive agricultural extension services, the project was to help women and men farmers to increase their production in a sustainable manner, considering both the needs at the national level and the constraints in the selected target areas. Notably, the project was to ensure the provision of relevant capacity development for local and national stakeholders, using FAO-developed methodological tools and instruments, particularly the Gender and Rural Advisory Service Assessment Tools (GRAST) (FAO, 2018), a Training-of-Trainers Manual (FAO, 2017), and the Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming and a Human Rights-based Approach (FAO, 2017). Additionally, the project used further participatory extension approaches for farmers, including: i) training of local leaders and trainers; ii) FFS and Farmer Business Schools (FBS); and iii) training of trainers and European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs), such as solution-oriented teams, including gender-sensitive methods for women and youth participation in training needs identification and training delivery.
### 3.2 Evaluation questions on effectiveness and efficiency

**Finding 7.** Albeit not fully, the project was substantial and successful in delivering the expected outputs under the two components (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 1.</strong> The Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant institutions have improved capacity, management practices and technical knowledge to enhance sustainable policies that foster and support the development of value chains and the sustainable competitiveness of agriculture.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1.1: Number of new policies related to agriculture and rural development are developed and approved between 2018 and 2022.</td>
<td>Target 1.1: At least two policies elaborated.</td>
<td>Achievement 1.1: Two policies were developed and approved: the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy 2021–2027 and the Agricultural Extension Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome 1 was achieved.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.1. Increased efficiency of the operations of the Ministry of Agriculture and more effective implementation of the Ministry’s key policies as a result of institutional development.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1.1.1: Implemented Training Programme for the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture’s central level staff.</td>
<td>Target 1.1.1: 50 percent of the staff of the central level of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture participates in targeted training.</td>
<td>Achievement 1.1.1: 68 percent of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture staff from the central level received training sessions. In addition, 72 representatives from the ministry subordinate agencies completed the training courses. This number indicates 36 percent more than expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1.1.2: Evaluation of APMA Programmes.</td>
<td>Target 1.1.2: Five APMA Programmes evaluated.</td>
<td>Achievement 1.1.2: Four programmes were evaluated: Agroinsurance ARDA Support Programme, Plant the Future ARDA Programme, Tea Planting ARDA Programme and the Preferential Agrocredit ARDA Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.1 was delivered. The delivery exceeded the targeted value of the indicator 1.1.1, i.e. 68 percent vs. 50 percent. Although the target value of the indicator 1.1.2 was not met, the evaluation still rated the institutional development successful, as the difference revealed to be minimal.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Output 1.2. Number of policy and legislative documents, tools, policy assessments, systems and institutional measures to allow for the implementation of specific components of the SADG and the SRDG.</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1.2.1: Number of policy and legislative documents, tools, policy assessments, systems, and institutional measures to allow for the implementation of specific components of the SADG and the SRDG.</td>
<td>Target 1.2.1: At least ten policy and legislative documents, tools, policy assessments, systems, institutional measures.</td>
<td>Achievement 1.2.1: The project delivered 12 products: i) a data warehouse was finalized and handed over to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture; ii) a network of demonstration plots was established; iii) the Georgian law on Aquaculture was approved; iv) a working group on food losses and food waste was created; v) six value chain outlooks on avocado, kiwi, persimmon, pistachio, feijoa, garlic and olives were finalized; vi) a law on Geographical Indications was revised and circulated within relevant ministries; vii) a working group on CSA was created; viii) a legal review of sectoral associations was conducted; ix) the State of Black Sea Anchovy Resources in Georgia was conducted; x) a Law on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, Food Recovery and Redistribution was drafted; xi) the CSA Country Profile was finalized; and xii) a policy brief – subsidies in European Union countries – was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 2.1: Number of created permanent and part-time jobs or additional agricultural engagement.</th>
<th>Target 2.1: At least 5 percent increase in the number of jobs / agricultural engagement created with the support from the programme by 2022, disaggregated by gender.</th>
<th>Achievement 2.1: Complete data was not available at the time of the evaluation. However, data collected of 92 farmers demonstrated an increase of new jobs: 82 new permanent jobs and 271 part-time jobs (data not disaggregated by gender).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.2: Share (percentage) of productivity (yield per hectare) increase in the supported investments.</td>
<td>Target 2.2: At least 15 percent of productivity (yield per hectare) increase in the supported investments.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.2: Complete data was not available at the time of the evaluation. However, data collected of 92 farmers demonstrated a productivity increase of 46 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3: Share (percentage) of production/size (total output) increase in the supported investments.</td>
<td>Target 2.3: At least 10 percent increase of production/size (total output) in the supported investments.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.3: Complete data was not available at the time of the evaluation. However, data collected of 92 farmers demonstrated a production increase of 69 percent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.4: Share (percentage) of increase of income (sales and service provision) increase in the supported investments.</td>
<td>Target 2.4: At least 20 percent of income (sales and service provision) increase in the supported investments.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.4: Complete data was not available at the time of the evaluation. However, data collected of 92 farmers demonstrated an income increase of 75 percent (sales and service provision).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcome 2 was partially achieved. However, partial data collected by the project and anecdotal evidence collected during the evaluation revealed that, due to new jobs created, an overall increase in productivity, production and income is very likely to happen. The partial analysis by the PIU on 94 grants resulted in 82 new permanent jobs and 271 part-time jobs, which directly contributed to an increase of 46 percent productivity; 69 percent production; and 75 percent turnover.

**Output 2.1. Documented economic improvement of the target population (individual farmers, cooperatives, SMEs) as a result of equitable agricultural investment support.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 2.1.1: Value chain assessment prepared, and findings used in development of the support programme.</th>
<th>Target 2.1.1: Five value chain assessments.</th>
<th>Achievement 2.1.1: Five value chain assessments were developed: vegetables, wheat, dairy, beef, and potatoes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.1.2: Share of the farmers aware and informed on the available investment support.</td>
<td>Target 2.1.2: 40 percent of the farmers in the target area aware of the available investment support from FAO.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.1.2: 68 percent of the farmers were informed on the availability of investment support (matching grants).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.1.3: Number of investment support applications submitted by project beneficiaries and approved.</td>
<td>Target 2.1.3: At least 2 000 applications submitted, and 400 farmers supported.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.1.3: 838 applications were submitted, and 288 farmers supported as a direct outcome of the project (representing 41 percent and 72 percent of the expected target).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluation considered Output 2.1 delivered. The fact that one indicator was not fully achieved is not relevant. In addition, PIU did not have any control on this indicator.
### Evaluation of the project "FAO support to the Georgian agricultural sector (ENPARD III)"

#### Output 2.2. The targeted population benefits from the improved provision of agricultural services as a result of increased municipal-level investments of public interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.2.1: Municipal profiles identifying priority subsectors, relevant communal infrastructure, and priority needs.</td>
<td>Target 2.2.1: Eight municipal profiles.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.2.1: Eight municipal memos were developed for each of the eight target LEADER municipalities. The analysis of the applications received showed that many investments relating to mechanization service provisions at community level have the same public interest purpose as the planned municipal investments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Indicator 2.2.2: Number of investments of public interest that facilitate provision of improved agricultural services supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target 2.2.2: At least 50 investments.</td>
<td>The analysis of the applications received showed that many investments relating to mechanization service provisions at community level have the same public interest purpose as the planned municipal investments. Accordingly, the Applications Review Committee decided to merge the municipal investment budget with the activities under Output 2.1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluation considered Output 2.2 delivered as per the delivery of Output 2.1.

#### Output 2.3. The target population has increased knowledge and capacities as a result of improved service delivery by extension services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3.1: Share (percentage) of extension services in targeted municipalities with capacities developed on train-the-trainer level on agricultural production, CSA, or quality standards for the targeted priority subsectors.</td>
<td>Target 2.3.1: 75 percent of extension services with capacities developed (specialized) on train-the-trainer level on agricultural production, CSA, or quality standards for the targeted priority subsectors.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.3.1: 64 percent of extension services participated in training programmes (representing 11 percent less than expected).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3.2: Number of Information and Consultation Centre Officers trained on agricultural production, CSA, crop protection and integrated pest management, crop nutrition.</td>
<td>Target 2.3.2: 22 Information and Consultation Centre officers trained.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.3.2: 14 Information and Consultation Centre officers were trained in: agricultural production, CSA, crop protection, integrated pest management and crop nutrition (representing 27 percent less than expected).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3.3: Number of demonstration plots established</td>
<td>Target 2.3.3: 50 demonstration plots established</td>
<td>Achievement 2.3.3: 165 demonstration plots were established (representing more than three times than expected).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3.4: Share (percentage) of farmers (physical entities and legal entities engaged in agricultural production) which are documented to have received extension support through the project.</td>
<td>Target 2.3.4: 50 percent increase in the number of farmers receiving extension support by 2022.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.3.4: Not reported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2.3.5: Number of farmers (physical entities and legal entities engaged in agricultural production) which are documented to have received extension support through the project.</td>
<td>Target 2.3.5: 1,200 received extension support.</td>
<td>Achievement 2.3.5: 1,560 farmers received extension support (representing 24 percent more than expected).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Indicator 2.3.6:                  | Share (percentage) of direct beneficiaries of the project investments that received technical advice or management skills development. | Target 2.3.6:  
100 percent of the direct beneficiaries (investments) received training and advice. | Achievement 2.3.6:  
40 percent direct beneficiaries received training and advice (representing 60 percent less than expected). |
| Indicator 2.3.7:                  | Number of farmers that received management skills training (marketing and production planning, crop budget development). | Target 2.3.7:  
300 farmers received management skills training. | Achievement 2.3.7:  
255 farmers received management skills trainings (representing 15 percent less than expected). |

Output 2.3 was partially delivered.

Source: Elaborated by the Evaluation Team.

63. The grants component, that targeted farmers intending to upgrade their production capacities, was effective. It was well tailored to the needs and interests of small- and medium-scale farmers, cooperatives, and large agricultural companies. The increased productivity and production demonstrated the validity of the approach followed by FAO.

64. According to the assessment, the community investments had an effect beyond increasing the capacities of the individual grantees. In fact, the increased capacities of the grantees allowed an increase of the overall capacity within the relevant value chains. Specifically, the received grants enabled beneficiaries to procure from small-scale farmers, who became suppliers to support the business expansion of the grantees.

65. In addition to the key grants provided to farmers and agricultural cooperatives and companies, the project provided a grant to a Biochip Firm, which is engaged in research, development, and commercialization of bacteriophages. The company aims at deploying bacteriophage technology to create natural, safe, and effective preparations in response to the growing development of conventional antibiotics resistance of the pathogens. The grant allowed the project to partially contribute to the research field, which is very relevant for agriculture applying antibiotics on a large scale, and specifically in the animal husbandry industry, where antibiotics resistance is predominantly observed.

66. The extension component, i.e. the demonstration plots and FFS, had a significant effect on the gained capacities of small-scale farmers, representing the majority of agricultural primary producers in the country: their production increased substantially. While the capacities of the Rural Development Agency (RDA) were only improved through trainings provided to its staff, including 64 percent of capacities on train-the trainer level strengthened (indicating 11 percent below expectation), the direct engagement of the RDA extension staff through FFS field activities with farmers in demonstration plots could not be implemented.

67. At policy level, the project contributed to important capacity strengthening of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (including 68 percent central level staff trained, which indicated 36 percent more than expected), which importantly supports the country’s interest to align to the DCFTA as an integral part of the Agreement. As such, the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement remains a key priority document for the country.

68. The aspirations of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture were highly consistent with the requirements of the Agreement. However, and as mentioned, the major discrepancies between the capacities of farmers on the one hand and the extension services on the other hand would need to be overcome in order to create the best conditions.
Finding 8. The project ensured important steps towards women’s inclusion and participation.

69. In the policy component, the developed documents integrated gender perspectives. FAO assisted the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in gender mainstreaming within the two policies under development: the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy 2021 to 2027 and the Agricultural Extension Strategy.

70. The draft National Strategy for Agricultural Extension of Georgia, for instance, reflects the different extension needs and challenges of women and men farmers in their access to extension and quality advisories. Gender equality dimensions were reflected in objectives, indicators, action plans, targets, assumptions, and risks. A survey was designed in line with FAO’s Gender and Rural Advisory Service Assessments Tools that included key informant interviews with the Information and Consultation Centre in order to assess the capacities of the Information and Consultation Centre staff in terms of delivering gender-sensitive advisories and trainings (data revealed the training of 14 Information and Consultation Centre Officers in: agricultural production, climate-smart agriculture, crop protection, integrated pest management, and crop nutrition (which represented 27 percent less than expected). The project assessed the awareness of extension staff on the needs and priorities of rural women and men and identified existing gaps.

71. Since its beginning, the project engaged in gender-sensitive information for the grant component to reach out to women and provide clear information about grant-award criteria and the application process. Overall, 18.6 percent of approved applications were submitted by women at the time of this evaluation. According to the PIU, the measures taken to ensure the inclusion of women in the grant component were justified by a combination of various reasons, such as: the lack of access to agricultural land and other property; the limited access to finance and information; existing stereotypes considering entrepreneurship activities under men’s domain; unpaid care and domestic work; and the general lack of time for participating in economic activities. Such challenges for women were confirmed by anecdotal evidence throughout the field mission.

72. For the extension component, women represented the majority of registered participants in the 35 introduced FFS, which included crop, vegetable, and dairy. Out of a total of 282 farmers registered in the FFS, 280 were female farmers. Overall, 550 women dairy producers were registered to join the FFS. As for income generation activities, the data collected for 92 farmers demonstrated an increase of 82 new permanent jobs and 271 part-time jobs (generating an income increase of 75 percent in the supported investments). However, the available data at the time of the evaluation was not disaggregated by gender.

73. A specific approach to mainstream human rights was neither foreseen in the project document, nor pursued during project implementation. The evaluation, however, also acknowledged that this observation did not represent a weak point relating to project performance. In summary, the evaluation revealed the high level of transparency and accountability applied throughout the grants approval and disbursement process, as well as the improved overall governance of the agriculture sector at policy level.

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5 The numbers reflect preliminary findings. During the evaluation reporting period, the created 35 FFS included two different categories: five FFS in vegetable production in Akhmeta (Alaverdi, Kvemo Alvari), Lagodekhi (Heretiskari), Khulo (Dioknisi), and Marneuli (Maradisi); and 30 FFS in dairy production in Tsalka. As the Veterinary Team acquired more knowledge of dairy farmers in Tsalka, activities could be expanded to trainings on milk handling, including the distribution of California Mastitis Kits, stainless-steel cans and steel tables.
Finally, 84 women from the villages Telavi, Marneuli, Keda, and Tsalka participated in trainings on gender roles, gender rights, reproductive health, family planning and access to finance. These trainings were conducted in collaboration with the UNFPA.

**Coordination, decision-making, stakeholder engagement, management arrangements and work planning, monitoring and evaluation, communication, and knowledge management**

Finding 9. The policy support, capacity development and extension services are areas in which FAO has long-standing experience worldwide. As such, the two components to be implemented did not represent any particular challenges for the PIU. FAO provided consolidated in-house expertise, including a large network of experienced consultants (see also the relevance section).

FAO’s roles included the following: i) FAO supported the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture with national and international consultants and technical officers.; ii) FAO collaborated intensively with the different European Union-funded LEADER partners (developing eight memos for eight municipalities), providing technical support in agriculture.; iii) FAO nutritionists visited several milk, beef and dairy producers, and provided farmers with individual recommendations on improving the cattle feed production in their respective farms for increased, sustainable productivity; and iv) FAO agronomists provided 120 training sessions and 864 individual technical assistance and consultations for FFS members. Finally, iv) FAO facilitated the policy dialogue between the European Union Delegation and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

Notably, not only were the interventions on the grants an absolute novelty for FAO in the region, but also worldwide. Accordingly, the component was challenging for FAO, as the whole working process was built in-house, without the support of any partners. However, this choice was deemed appropriate by the Evaluation Team for the following reasons:

i. the approach promoted an internal learning process that was simple to manage, because all activities and decisions were under the direct control of the PIU.

ii. it provided sufficient flexibility for work plans that had to be adapted during implementation. This would have not been possible if letters of agreements (LOAs, the usual FAO contractual arrangements) with partners would have been signed; and

iii. the approach promoted a high level of accountability, as FAO ultimately was the sole entity responsible to smoothly operate the overall grants approval and disbursement mechanisms.

The different cycles of grants application and approval was built upon the previous cycle experience. Lessons and accumulated knowledge were taken into account to fine-tune the formulation of the calls. Adaptations did not entail changes in the objectives of the calls that basically remained unaltered throughout the whole implementation period. The changes related to procedural aspects aimed at facilitating the overall process of grants disbursement, i.e. from application to monitoring. Each cycle represented an improvement of the previous cycle. The third cycle specifically intended to respond to the emergency situation that was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. FAO developed a list of preselected, eligible investments.

The overall fine-tuning process of the grant application process and monitoring proved to be very efficient and was characterized by a strong FAO Grants Team.

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6 The evaluation did not include an assessment on the financial management of the project.
79. The development of an online grant management platform dedicated to the entire grants process, (from submission to monitoring) was an approach that promoted transparency, accountability, and the participation of relevant stakeholders, but also reliable administrative procedures and efficient grant follow-up and monitoring.

80. The platform was accessible to every Georgian citizen. Interested persons could verify the eligibility criteria for all grant cycles and create their own account to apply.

81. Furthermore, the platform provided different interfaces for the various stakeholders (the applicants on the one hand, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, FAO, or the European Union Delegation on the other hand). The platform was organized in the manner that each application could be followed and monitored by FAO – from its submission to its approval or rejection, including baseline information and supporting documents.

82. The different operations under the planned components were efficiently implemented and well organized. FAO provided competent personnel at country, regional and headquarters levels.

83. The project also targeted the right beneficiaries. With regard to the policy component, the relevant departments within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture were involved. Concerning the extension component, however, collaboration between the RDA and small-scale farmers was not realized according to the initial plan (see above).

Finding 10. The Evaluation Team gathered mixed evidence to explain the low involvement of RDA extension services and the expected collaboration with the FFS. A common understanding between the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the RDA on how to implement the extension component and the activities related to public extension services were deemed a missed opportunity.

84. Some of the reasons included the following: some the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and RDA officials stressed that extension services should rather focus on commercial agriculture. However, a precise definition is not available, and commercial agriculture is only vaguely defined. While some of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officials emphasized that demonstration plots should only be implemented in state-owned extension centres, other members highly valued the FFS interventions and demonstration plots, that were worth being replicated throughout the country.

85. The interviewed small-scale farmers clearly stated to have received only very limited technical support (in terms of trainings) from public institutions. This anecdotal evidence also highlighted the limited capacity of the institutions to work with farmers at field levels. Although small-scale farmers represent the highest number of primary producers in the country, it was concluded that the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officials have quite different perceptions and expectations on the roles and responsibilities of smallholders regarding Georgia’s rural development.

86. FAO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and through its extension team, re-organized existing education materials in a dedicated and easily accessible, open-source webpage. In this light, the established e-library contains comprehensive information on capacity building and provides training material that was developed by a broad range of stakeholders operating in the country. However, while it was not possible to adequately assess the actual utilization of the training materials relating to the agriculture sector, it became evident that the e-library was visited regularly, including a total of 47,908 page views. Unfortunately, it was not possible to track the different groups of users (such as farmers, institutions, consultants,
etc.) that consulted the website, which may, however, contribute to the distortion of this finding: it was found that the interviewed smallholders were not very knowledgeable about the e-library.

87. Although the RDA extension services were not involved in delivering the trainings to farmers through the FFS and demonstration plots, the evaluation concluded that FAO made efficient use of the available human, technical and knowledge inputs.

Finding 11. Overall, there was a lack of data to explain and demonstrate the evidence of change. The project built an information management system that allowed the tracking of achievement indicators, mostly at the output level. However, the system did not provide sufficient, robust data to identify the precise number of beneficiaries. Also, there was no effective M&E approach in place to assess the results of the training activities, particularly in measuring knowledge change. In addition, and except for those who received grant support, the FFS activities lacked a comprehensive M&E system.

88. The system collected information at the output level, which also allowed visualizing the information at the activity level, but it lacked data to properly assess the outcome or impact level indicators. In particular, the project managed to collect information through interviews from only 92 grantees to determine the effects on the individual grants (see Table 1). However, this limited sample was not representative for the generalization of the findings across all disbursed grants as a consequence of both time constraints (as grants do produce effect only after some time) and the lack of proper sampling methodologies (which would have entailed data collection from all grantees).

89. Although pre- and post-surveys were applied under the extension component to measure knowledge change among the training participants, the quality of the data was insufficient, and therefore, the results from the pre- and post-tests were not comparable.

90. Furthermore, throughout the implementation process, the project provided only an indicator summary table, but not an indicator tracking table that would have allowed to identify the progress by output indicator, and to track possible delays. In addition, no regular M&E meetings were held to brief the team about the project’s performance, which adversely affected decision-making, thus resulting in ad hoc decisions.

91. Finally, the M&E activities did not include any qualitative data that would have allowed to assess the results or to fill the gaps regarding quantitative information. Although the grant component provided more solid M&E evidence, the extension component did not include any qualitative data that would have provided relevant information on the obtained results.

92. Overall, the M&E approach did not foresee specific learning and reflection sessions to better understand the positive outcomes during implementation and to identify the lessons and the challenges that impeded efficient project implementation.

Finding 12. The project’s communication/visibility strategy was organized in close coordination with the ENPARD Communication Unit of the European Union Delegation and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, as well as other institutions involved in the project, following the “Communication and the Visibility Manual of the European Union External Actions” and the communications guidelines for European Union projects in Georgia.

93. Shortly after the project’s onset, the PIU prepared a communication and visibility plan that aimed at raising awareness about the European Union’s leading role in promoting rural development in Georgia and communicating successful cooperation between the European Union and FAO towards enhancing rural development policies. This comprised: i) communication to raise public awareness and ensure complete visibility of the European Union’s leading role in promoting rural
development in Georgia; and ii) communication to raise awareness of the project’s rationale, objectives, and activities in order to facilitate implementation.

94. The awareness raising and outreach activities were planned and executed to inform the target audience about the availability of the investment support programme. The project conducted awareness campaigns in the target municipalities to attract representatives from municipalities, heads of villages, Information and Consultation Centres, input dealers, local NGOs, and farming community members. As part of the awareness campaign, the project contracted the Journalism Resource Centre to develop a TV communication campaign. The local televisions covered the events that were broadcasted on the regional televisions, informing about the grant component and referring to the relevant website for potential applications. Additionally, FAO project personnel participated in several TV shows and other media events to provide information on the matching grant competition. Moreover, all information broadcasted by radio reached a broad audience. To further reach out to the public, LAGs from every municipality were contracted to conduct information meetings in the villages of respective municipalities. The LAGs in charge of the campaigns were responsible to make the farmers aware of the grants. According to data collected during the field mission, the campaign seemed to have been quite successful.

95. The first step of planned activities aimed at communicating the successful cooperation between the European Union and FAO, while the second was designed to raise awareness among farmers on sustainable approaches, and in close coordination with the extension services. Moreover, the plan involved a visibility strategy to ensure that the results achieved by the project would receive the broadest possible dissemination.

96. Importantly, in all phases of project implementation, communication and visibility complied with the European Union Delegation visibility guidelines and was ensured for all project-supported activities.

97. One the one hand, the grants platform, which was mandatory to receive a grant, was well known among all farmers. In this light, the motivation of farmers to consult and utilize the platform was very high. On the other hand, the e-library that provided the extension material proved to be quite unknown among the interviewed farmers (see above).

98. The project’s communication strategy efficiently promoted the participation and motivation of farmers to implement planned activities. Anecdotal evidence supported this finding, as all farmers interviewed on the matter confirmed the population’s awareness of the project in targeted municipalities. This result was observed for both the grants and the extension component.

Finding 13. The arrangements put in place to achieve the expected results had demonstrated to be appropriate. Three different management/implementing measures were promoted during project implementation: coordination, evidence-based management and transparency.

99. Coordination with stakeholders was at the core of project implementation. The project coordinated with UNDP and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture within the overall ENPARD programme, with national institutional stakeholders, the private sector, and the international donor community. Coordination aimed at promoting synergies to avoid the overlapping of efforts.

100. In addition, evidence-based management was characteristic for the project, and the M&E system put in place suffered from some flaws. In fact, each major decision was supported by studies (such as assessments and surveys). The project promoted actions based on previous acquired
knowledge. Efforts were put in place in order to decrease the level of arbitrariness in making choices.

101. Transparency was ensured throughout the grants’ disbursement process. All decisions related to the disbursement process were agreed by the Project Steering Committee. The award of grants was governed by clear and transparent regulations, and an Applications Review Committee oversaw the final decisions. The committee was formed by three persons: the FAO Programme Officer, the relevant European Union Delegation Officer, and the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. Finally, all grantees were visited by project staff to verify that the actual investments effectively had been made and all requirements met. The funds were disbursed only upon satisfactory results of the field visits. A standard operating procedure of the grant manual, such as workflows, investment support manuals, application administration protocols and application review procedures were also developed alongside a grant management online platform.

102. Finally, as the main beneficiary institution of project implementation, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture played a key role in the decision-making process. With the PIU’s technical assistance, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture ensured that their particular needs and interests were addressed.

Finding 14. The COVID-19 pandemic created many unexpected challenges for the project. Significant obstacles were experienced during the implementation of specific activities, which caused considerable delays.

103. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the corresponding restrictions influenced the pace of training sessions for the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture staff and considerably slowed down some of the policy discussions on areas of work that had already been initiated under the technical assistance component.

104. Under the matching grants component, the challenges caused by the pandemic created many delays in the implementation of the third cycle of the matching grants, starting from the delivery of the equipment to the matching contribution payments from the grantees’ side. As a result of the insecurities caused by the pandemic, many farmers refused the grants or expressed their plan to delay any investments. However, the project team successfully mitigated the difficulties through an information dissemination campaign, which significantly increased the number of applications received during the fourth cycle.

105. Under the extension component, farmers experienced some delays in receiving the support, but the trainings and FFS activities were carried out as planned.

106. The devaluation of the Georgian Lari and the exchange rate fluctuations created difficulties for the equipment suppliers to provide quotations in Lari and on the imported equipment. To mitigate this risk, the grant teams contacted suppliers to discuss in detail the terms of the support agreements and to negotiate accordingly, which resulted in the need to modify the budgets. Moreover, the exchange rate fluctuations between the grant award date and the grant agreement signature date caused additional challenges for the grantees and the project team. To overcome the difficulties caused by fluctuations, the Application Review Committee allowed a 10 percent buffer between the approved and signed amounts.

107. Finally, due to the travel restrictions, the implementing partner CNFA could not meet the grantees to support the business plan development, which again caused project implementation delays.
As a result, the programme contracted a second service provider to assist applicants developing their business plans.

3.3 Evaluation questions on impact

Finding 15. During its lifespan, the project did not contribute to rural economic diversification. However, as this was not a specific project goal, the interventions primarily intended to support the agriculture sector. In order to boost economic development, FAO and its partners focused on 27 most common existing value chains in the target municipalities. The Evaluation Team found this approach appropriate, as it facilitated the promotion of value chains at the primary production levels. Under this perspective, large grants were crucial.

108. The project awarded 356 grants related to 27 value chains: wheat, vegetable, milk, potato, corn, cheese, fruit, honey, hazelnut, grape, fodder, barley, beef, dry fruit, lamb, seedlings, wine, almond, livestock, table grape, mechanization services, antibiotics, pesticides/fertilizers, silage, sunflower, vine plants and wheat seed. Meanwhile, the extension work covered: the dairy sector, crops, vegetable production and nuts. Farmers, cooperatives, and companies were interested in enhancing their capacities relating to their existing businesses. However, no effect of the project on economic diversification was recorded by the project.

109. Project records and anecdotal evidence collected during the field mission in Georgia highlighted the project’s contribution to increase rural employment and service. The quantification of this contribution was, however, not fully available within the records, but it revealed highly evident that the grants component promoted an increase of productivity that was accompanied by an increase of employment within the economic activities carried out by the very same grantees.

Finding 16. The enhancement of productivity of grantees was confirmed by the focus group discussions and interviews. The same applied to the extension component: all farmers who participated in extension activities, confirmed a significant productivity increase (see Table 1).

110. The grants component enabled farmers to increase not only productivity, but also to scale up their operations. Some grantees, in fact, re-invested the gains into new equipment and machineries that originated by the increase in productivity and production, thus enabling them to considerably scale up their operations. This, in turn, especially for large community investments, influenced the relevant value chain that went beyond the simple income of the grantees. According to the interviews, large investments in the dairy, crop and potato sector allowed the grantees to expand their business relationships with suppliers. In other words, they were able to procure and commercialize products from a larger number of suppliers, i.e. small-scale farmers.

111. The evaluation considered that the project contributed, to a certain degree, towards enhancing the competitiveness of agriculture in certain value chains. However, due to the flaws in the M&E system, assertive and definite statements on the actual extent of this contribution could not be made.

112. Although 255 farmers received management skills trainings in marketing, production planning, and crop budget development (which was 15 percent less than anticipated), the competitiveness of participating small-scale farmers in extension activities were not possible to be assessed, as the project mainly focused on enhancing the smallholders’ farming knowledge, which included the planning of harvest off-seasons for vegetable producers in order to obtain better prices on the local market. However, marketing problems constitute great barriers for small-scale farmers, as they are still struggling to obtain good prices. Nevertheless, to make the agriculture sector more competitive, the evaluation acknowledged the strengthening of farmers’ capacities a primary
Findings

importance, not least because smallholders represent the majority of agricultural producers in the country. Notably, the project made significant efforts to support the diversification of small-scale farmer production: lettuce, asparagus, sweet potato, sweet corn, jalapeño pepper, zucchini, broccoli, cherry tomatoes, etc. were promoted to reduce the competition in traditional vegetables, such as tomato and cucumber.

113. Finally, the evaluation further acknowledged that the interventions at policy level, particularly related to food safety, would have significant impact in terms of exportability of the Georgian agricultural produces. In this sense, the application of the European food safety standards would largely facilitate the possibility to not only export to Europe, but also to other countries worldwide.

Finding 17. Although direct activities on environment and climate action were not the ultimate goals of the project intervention, FAO introduced important elements in the agricultural practices that focus on environmental issues.

114. Some regulations that aim at improving the sustainability of the overall primary production of Georgia are also important elements of the project regarding environmental impact and sustainability, namely the deliverables of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, including the report on “The State of Black Sea Anchovy Resources in Georgia”, the draft Law on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, Food Recovery and Redistribution, and the Climate-Smart Agriculture Country Profile.

115. Furthermore, the promotion of environmental dimensions in the grant cycles represented an additional important project outcome.

116. Finally, the integration of environmentally friendly technologies into the extension work, such as integrated pest management, the integration of good agricultural practices and conservation agriculture, including no-tillage cultivation techniques, were interventions of particular importance that significantly contribute towards a more sustainable and secure agriculture.

Finding 18. A wide range of stakeholders among vulnerable groups were engaged in capacity building: women, minorities, and the young generation. The (originally not planned) training of young agronomists and veterinarians was an important step to enhance awareness of succeeding generations and to open up development opportunities.

117. The project created the internship programme at FAO Georgia, aiming at developing technical and managerial skills of young students or recent graduates from the areas of agronomy and veterinary science, while providing a hands-on experience in the field. The selected interns participated in a one-week basic training, followed by operations in the field. Each intern was assigned one demonstration plot or group of beneficiaries and was mentored by FAO international and national agronomists. According to the interviewed farmers, the young agronomists and veterinarians were assessed as “good supports”, thus contributing to improving the farming practices in the targeted municipalities.

118. Finally, the project supported the implementation of the FFS, a long-term and sustainable methodology of extension services, established by FAO in many countries and customized to the level of technology, agricultural, economic orientation, and beneficiaries’ expressed needs. Notably, women FFS were evaluated to be particularly transformative, as they increase women’s decision-making power on production priorities, including the adoption of new practices. Worth mentioning was the project’s inclusion of ethnic minorities, representing the most vulnerable community members in terms of access to information and knowledge. As a result, the interviews revealed an increased inclusion of minorities into farming activities, but also an income increase for women. However, as the sample of data was not complete and representative, it was not
possible to deduce any statement on the longer-term impact in terms of stable economic conditions for disadvantaged and minority groups.

### 3.4 Evaluation questions on sustainability

**Finding 19.** The project design emphasized the importance of the sustainability dimension, but a specific exit strategy was not determined.

119. The risk log included in the project document identifies relevant risks that may negatively affect the performance and the sustainability of the project. Each risk is associated with pertinent mitigation measures. Although the project document underlines the sustainability dimension of the project in several places, a specific exit strategy was not identified.

120. A sustainability strategy was not developed during the lifetime of the project. However, sustainability concerns were taken into consideration in the project components. As such, the lack of an exit strategy was not considered to negatively affect the overall sustainability of the project.

**Finding 20.** Targeting the most important value chains at municipality level and promoting gender and environmental issues throughout the grants’ application and approval process were deemed relevant, because this approach enhances the level of project sustainability.

121. All anecdotal evidence collected through interviews and focus group discussions with grantees confirmed the plans in place that build on the results of the project.

122. The inclusion of a business plan for grants starting from USD 10 000 represented a valid outcome to ensure the sustainability of the awarded grants. In addition, it supported both the applicant and the project and was also an occasion for applicants to reflect on specific needs and interests, while for FAO, the European Union and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture it provided an important basis that help the awarding process by allowing informed decisions.

123. The so-called community investments served as catalysers of production and marketing processes. This means that the targeted companies and/or cooperatives were able to expand their business operations. Such expansions were mainly related to the capacity of these grantees to support other farmers through business activities within a given value chain. A supported dairy cooperative was enabled in its production capacity which, in turn, resulted in an expanded capacity to procure higher volumes of milk. A company (operating in the silage maize for animal feeding) and a cooperative (active in the hazelnut production and marketing) reported similar experiences. The grants were able to boost production and marketing capacities that ultimately allowed other farmers to collaborate.

124. Finally, although not assessable by the Evaluation Team, the e-library initiated efforts towards an improved organization of the communication and knowledge products that accompany the whole process in the agriculture sector to comply with the DCFTA.

125. However, filling the gap between actual capacities throughout the agricultural value chains and the policy work was deemed challenging for the future.

126. The policy interventions did not bear any risks to sustainability. However, political ownership of the Government of Georgia, and more particularly the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, will remain fundamental to further develop and implement the necessary measures and to build upon the important achievements of the project.
Findings

127. Finally, the small-scale farmers targeted with the extension component acquired high levels of capacity as well as increased awareness. Improved knowledge and skills are expected to be sustained in the medium-term. However, continued, relevant support to farmers in order to fully consolidate gained capacities is still needed.

128. The focus on gender issues and environmental concerns were assessed to be relevant for the grants and the extension components to significantly contribute to improving the sustainability of rural development projects. Although the project did not evaluate the gender dimension and environmental concerns, it carried out gender-sensitive information campaigns to specifically target women and to provide relevant information about programme admission criteria and application processes. Moreover, women small-scale farmers were engaged in activities that particularly empowered their role in the agriculture sector.

Finding 21. The evaluation did not identify any specific strategy to promote the scaling up, the replication and/or any catalytic action. The project, however, presented different notions that may constitute a strategy for such purposes.

129. The technical assistance component related to policy interventions formed the basis to promote agricultural development at country level for the upcoming years, and particularly with reference to the national strategy guiding document.

130. The matching grant component per se represents a lesson learned and may henceforward be applied by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in Georgia, but also by FAO in other countries.

131. Finally, the extension component, worth to be replicated in other regions of the country, was found to be the responsibility of the RDA extension services. The interviews, however, revealed that the usefulness of the extension component raised different opinions among RDA representatives (particularly between the management and the staff). Due to this missing collaboration, the replication effect of the component was deemed insufficient.

Finding 22. The evaluation did not identify any specific institutional source of financing that will support the continuation of benefits of the project in the longer-term. However, the lack of such financing source does not necessarily negatively impact the sustainability of the initiative.

132. As a matter of fact, the anecdotal evidence collected during the evaluation confirmed that grantees have plans to continue expanding their operations. All grantees interviewed stated to have been enabled to generate important additional incomes as a result of increased production and productivity capacities, which positively impacts the continuation of farming activities.

133. The project was particularly successful in boosting production capacities. Despite these achievements, small-scale farmers are still in need of technical support, especially regarding capacity building at farm and post-harvest levels, which also includes enhanced marketing orientation.

Finding 23. The Evaluation Team identified two social and political risks associated with the sustainability of project benefits: the geopolitical tensions in the Caucasus region and the fragile national economic situation that could divert the government’s focus and public funding, hence moving away from the support of the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy.

134. This situation could significantly slow down the implementation of vital reforms and strategic goals under the Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia, that is undermining the objectives to be achieved through the capacity development activities. Accordingly, due to
changes of priorities, the government may not further develop the Extension Strategy and associated documents, resulting in limited sustainability of the achievements that were successfully initiated by the project.

Finding 24. The European Union and Georgia signed an association agreement that introduced a preferential trade regime, i.e. the DCFTA. Since then, the DCFTA was declared as the absolute priority for the country. In this line, political ownership was confirmed by many relevant stakeholders, which will most likely sustain the project benefits in the longer-term.

135. Except in the case of sudden or unforeseen political changes, there is no relevant risk towards the government’s ownership of the project. However, the high staff turnover of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, including the associated loss of “institutional memory” could negatively affect the absorption capacity of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to make full use of the policy development support provided by FAO, thus jeopardizing the project results.

136. The ownership of the project from the farmers’ perspectives is very significant. All anecdotal evidence collected throughout the evaluation field mission confirmed that the farmers (regardless of whether they represent large or small businesses) are enthusiastic to improve their capacities.

137. The RDA’s expansion and growth may threaten the coordination and governance, considering that the RDA consolidated several agencies, that the project engaged through capacity building activities. Due to important changes of the RDA’s structure, the consolidation of agencies under the RDA may threaten the continuation of project benefits.

Finding 25. The initiative was fully compliant with the strategic plans of the Government of Georgia and entirely in line with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. The evaluation revealed that it is in the full interest of the project key stakeholders to build on the continued benefits of project results.

138. The concept development originated from profound discussions with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officials. FAO designed the interventions with a view to a high involvement of stakeholders, which included their regular consultation. During the project design phase, FAO conducted intense discussions with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officials and related agencies that largely contributed to facilitating to develop a good understanding of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture priorities. Building on the continued benefits will therefore remain a key priority among the main stakeholders.

Finding 26. The project planned to continue in the phase IV of the ENPARD programme, and FAO will carry on supporting the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. Replication and scaling up ought to be ensured through important knowledge gained and lessons learned.

139. FAO and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture will remain the main stakeholders in charge of promoting the agricultural component of the upcoming ENPARD phase. FAO will engage with the extension work, policy work and the grants process, which will shift from the primary production to the food processing sector.

140. The appreciation of the extension work carried out through the FFS and demonstration plots was recorded to be significant among farmers. However, at RDA level, the Evaluation Team collected mixed evidence: the focus on small-scale farmers was not valued by all the interviewed stakeholders. Consequently, the lack of participation of the RDA in the extension work with small-scale farmers as a great opportunity for the replication of well-established approaches across the country will have a negative effect in the short and medium-term.
**Finding 27.** Environmental benefits, but also threats that could be harmful for the environmental benefits of the project, were not monitored. The project incorporated a very specific focus on value chain development, capacity development and technical assistance.

141. The evaluation did not identify any specific factors that could undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits. It was acknowledged that the project promoted sustainable agricultural practices through all the planned interventions.

**Finding 28.** The project systematically addressed gender and human rights concerns throughout its implementation, but the initiatives taken towards women’s empowerment are not yet sufficient to conclude major changes in gender equality.

142. The focus group discussions with women participating in the extension component revealed important steps towards women’s empowerment. For the first time, women felt involved in an institutional process, which resulted in important contribution to community development. However, the project did not yet provide any data on impact measurement related to gender-equality concerns. It is not yet evident whether the measures taken will be sustained in the long-term.
4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The interventions on the grants by the PIU is regarded as innovative and appropriate to support the development of value chains in Georgia. This allows to promote an inclusive development of the agriculture sector, while ensuring transparency and accountability.

Conclusion 2. The delivery of project outputs and achievement of outcomes is satisfactory. Capacities of stakeholders and overall competitiveness of the agriculture sector were enhanced by demonstrating that the project strategy, including the three areas of concern, was effective. The project successfully contributed to lay the groundwork for the country’s aim to align to the DCFTA as an integral part of the European Union–Georgia Association Agreement, which is a key priority for the country.

Conclusion 3. The contribution of the extension component to enhanced productivity of small-scale farmers was significant, however, consolidation of the agricultural capacities of small-scale farmers may still require considerable extension of interventions in the long-term.

Conclusion 4. The lack of the RDA involvement in the extension work represented a missed opportunity in terms of promoting a coordinated vision on the development of small-scale farmers, who represent the vast majority of the country’s agricultural primary producers.

Conclusion 5. The policy interventions supported the foundation for Georgia to continue its approximation process to join the European Union, which also significantly contributes to increase the overall competitiveness of the country’s agriculture sector in the medium- and long-term.

Conclusion 6. The project particularly targeted women and made efforts to deliver responsive/transformative effects on gender. The high involvement of women in the extension programme set an important precedent and demonstrated the need to take affirmative actions and to implement women-specific interventions that ensure access to and benefits from the programme. However, the project did not provide any data on gender equality impact measurement. Therefore, longer-term results on gender equality initiatives were not yet conclusive.

Conclusion 7. The cumulative benefits of the project to the targeted farmers were not entirely comprehensible. The project did not indicate any information on the investments that grantees potentially could have made as a result of improved production capacities. The M&E system did not entail the learning and reflection sessions to better understand the bottlenecks, nor did it monitor any achievements, success stories, or challenges that impeded results-focused implementation. This, however, would have been particularly critical in order to conclude important lessons.

Conclusion 8. “Community investments” played a major role in catalysing the development of relevant value chains that promote the inclusion of increased farmer participation (particularly small-scale farmers). Working on most common value chains at municipality level demonstrated to be appropriate and guaranteed a high level of sustainability. The analysis of only partially available M&E data on the grants and extension component indicated an increase of production, productivity, and income through job creation. These findings substantiated the observations made from the interviews and focus group discussions, which all confirmed an overall improvement in the selected value chains.

Conclusion 9. The sustainability of project achievements was ensured by project efforts that aimed at strengthening governance and gender mainstreaming in the agriculture sector, and at improving the capacities of farmers (grants and extension component). However, large-scale farmers are better positioned (in terms of capacity) to quickly and effectively respond to the regulations that may follow the groundwork initiated by the project (in terms of policy support), whereas the capacities of medium- and small-scale farmers are not yet sufficient. In the medium- and long-term, there is a substantial risk for the detachment between the situation on the ground and the legal frameworks and relating regulations.
Extension services are not yet fully equipped with capacities and resources to support small-scale farmers satisfactorily and sustainably. Hence, strengthening the capacities of both the extension services and small-scale farmers remains essential to allow for the fair and sustainable development of the agriculture sector in Georgia.

4.2 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** The PIU should continue focusing on capacity development activities for small-scale farmers. The empowerment of smallholders will significantly contribute to increase their possibilities for securing a more stable agricultural production.

*Type of recommendation:* Strategic.

*Responsibilities for implementation:* PIU of the ENPARD IV phase.

*Rationale behind the recommendation:* Small-scale farmers represent the majority of operators in the agriculture sector in Georgia. However, they still lack capacities to secure stable production and market access, which would otherwise result in higher and more stable income generation. The recommendation also takes into consideration the LNOB principle of the United Nations.

*Operationalization of the recommendation:* FFS and demonstration plots have proved to be efficient tools to promote successful capacity development and to foster opportunities among smallholders. In addition, the e-libraries as free sources of information greatly facilitate improving businesses.

*Timeline for implementation:* During the course of the ongoing ENPARD IV programme.

**Recommendation 2.** The PIU and its main counterparts should implement targeted strategies and activities that promote the formation of women groups (vegetable value chains), with the aim to assist and facilitate application processes and access to small grants.

*Type of recommendation:* Strategic.

*Responsibilities for implementation:* PIU of the ENPARD IV phase, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the RDA.

*Rationale behind the recommendation:* Small-scale farmers experience post-harvest losses due to their incapacity to efficiently plan the harvest period of agricultural production. Supporting especially women with small grants to grow off-season vegetables may represent a valid alternative to generate additional income and to avoid sales at very low prices or post-harvest losses. The recommendation also takes into consideration the LNOB principle of the United Nations.

*Operationalization of the recommendation:* Grants may refer to the procurement of limited equipment and inputs to upgrade production capacities. LAGs may be involved to support the development of such small-scale projects. This also includes regular dissemination of information on current opportunities among women groups.

*Timeline for implementation:* During the course of the ongoing ENPARD IV programme.

**Recommendation 3.** The PIU should continue working with the RDA to support its capacities and to define modalities for implementing the extension component with the direct involvement of smallholder farmers.

*Type of recommendation:* Strategic.

*Responsibilities for implementation:* PIU of the ENPARD IV phase and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

*Rationale behind the recommendation:* The needs for capacity development of the Information and Consultation Centres are clearly spelled out in the extension strategy, which were drafted with the support of the project. As such, the extension services are key to realize the aspirations of the Ministry of
Environmental Protection and Agriculture and to create a competitive and inclusive agriculture sector in the country. The agriculture strategy considers the strengthening of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture’s capacities to be essential, but the needs of small-scale farmers are equally important. Improved rural development further entails the substantial improvement of mutual communication between these stakeholders, which should represent important learning exercises for all actors involved.

**Operationalization of the recommendation:** Implementing the FFS and demonstration plots, ideally in collaboration between the PIU and the Information and Consultation Centre staff.

**Timeline for implementation:** During the course of the ongoing ENPARD IV programme.

**Recommendation 4.** To ensure the award of grants (e.g. the provision of technical assistance from the grantees to small-scale farmers), the PIU should – as an additional criterion – increasingly promote technical support and collaboration from large companies to small-scale farmers.

**Type of recommendation:** Strategic.

**Responsibilities for implementation:** PIU of the ENPARD IV phase and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

**Rationale behind the recommendation:** The grants have the potential to generate beneficial effects that go beyond the individual grantees. As small-scale farmers still have dire needs to enhance their production capacities, the recommendation also takes into consideration the “leave no one behind” principle relating to FAO’s mandate. The value chain approach, as pursued by the project, positively contributes to award interested food processors in the following ENPARD phase.

**Operationalization of the recommendation:** The provision of a given numbers of trainings from applicants to small-scale farmers may be included as a compulsory/preferential option within the overall grant award process (i.e. a compulsory element for each application or a preferential criterion rewarded with a higher score). Once the grant is approved and disbursed, the monitoring of trainings could be an occasion to involve other partners in the process. Information and Consultation Centre employees may play a vital role in the monitoring activities, and the potential of small-scale farmers may positively showcase and set good examples to still sceptical the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture officers.

**Timeline for the implementation:** During the course of the ongoing ENPARD IV programme.

**Recommendation 5.** To ensure the receipt of large grants, the PIU should include – as a compulsory activity and criterion for selecting grant recipients – a gender awareness and labour rights training among all owners and employees of a company/cooperative.

**Type of recommendation:** Strategic.

**Responsibilities for implementation:** PIU of the ENPARD IV phase, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and the European Union Delegation.

**Rationale behind the recommendation:** Gender awareness and labour rights are relevant to FAO’s mandate and of high relevance for the donor and the recipient country (i.e. the European Union and Georgia), because their effective promotion is part of the process of approximation. In fact, the evaluation acknowledges that the project implemented gender responsive/transformative activities with women. However, the interventions only targeted female farmers. A gender awareness and labour rights training would be an occasion to also introduce male farmers to such topics.

**Operationalization of the recommendation:** Participation in the trainings should be included as a compulsory element in the application process. Training sessions may be organized at municipality levels and should target more than one grantee, depending on the numbers of grants disbursed within the following ENPARD phase. Finally, FAO counts with a Gender Specialist in Georgia, who works within the
PIU and also provides experts on labour rights and gender issues in its Regional Offices and at FAO headquarter in Rome. The capacities to develop a training curriculum for a half-day course are in place.

**Timeline for implementation:** During the course of the ongoing ENPARD IV programme.

**Recommendation 6.** The PIU should strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and learning culture and ensure that the lessons-learned approach is adopted in the programme.

*Type of recommendation:* Operational.

*Responsibilities for implementation:* PIU and M&E Officer. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia may also support, if necessary.

*Rationale behind the recommendation:* The empowered monitoring, evaluation and learning allows to assess the project achievements, identify any bottlenecks of the implementation process, as well as the good practices of the interventions. Overall, the learning system in place allows to analyse and use the monitoring, evaluation and learning data supporting the programme in order to interpret and apply the learnings for strategic and programmatic decision-making.

*Operationalization of the recommendation:* To define a detailed monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan, which is based on the project logical framework (including all details) to effectively monitor the implementation of the initiative. The plan should include data collection tools and an indicator tracking table. Quantitative as well as qualitative data collection tools should be applied. In addition, regular MEL meetings should take place, allowing to present updates on the project progress and to discuss eventual challenges emerging from the monitoring activities. And importantly, the M&E system should also implement the gender dimension of the project.

*Timeline for implementation:* At the beginning of the ongoing ENPARD IV programme.
5. **Lessons learned**

143. The overall process related to the matching grants component represents a valuable lesson, since it was the first time worldwide that FAO introduced this implementation mechanism to support farmers. The evaluation identified five key lessons for a functioning and effective matching grant mechanism to be applied whenever a matching grant process is implemented by a FAO-operated project:

i. **Ensuring efficiency and success**: Open and frank discussions with the relevant ministry (in this project, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture) is the first and foremost important lesson. To further enforce ownership and coherent alignment to the country's institutional interests, an official agreement on the process is key to be efficient and successful.

ii. **Ensuring effectiveness and promoting transparency**: Studies and assessments are the basis for the grants to be effective. They are also useful to operationalize the process and to generally reduce complexity. To ensure effectiveness and to properly manage the cycle of grants, it is important to define the exact scope.

iii. **Ensuring accountability and transparency**: Clear application and review processes, guided by a manual and supported by an accessible online system, are key to promote transparency. A functioning Applications Review Committee, formed by members from FAO, country ministries and donors, ensures accountability and transparency.

iv. **Reinforcing accountability**: Visits to grantees, in order to verify whether the equipment procured through the grant is effectively used, reinforces the accountability of implementation.

v. **Facilitating decisive internal learning and accountability**: Finally, as the matching grants represent a novelty within the Organization, FAO's direct implementation modality of the matching grants is key, as it allows decisive internal learning and accountability.
Bibliography

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Additional resources

- Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for Georgia 2021–2027
- Minutes of Application Review Committee meetings
- Climate-Smart Agriculture in Georgia
- Concept Paper on the Implementation of a Warehouse Receipt System in Georgia
- Grants Manuals - FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme:
  - 1st Cycle
  - 2nd Cycle
  - 3rd Cycle
  - 4th Cycle
  - 5th Cycle
- Law of Georgia on Aquaculture (draft)
- Law of Georgia on Food Loss and Waste Reduction, Food Recovery and Redistribution
- National strategy on agricultural extension in Georgia (2022-2027)
- Project document
- Progress reports:
- Inception report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”
- Second progress report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”
- Third progress report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”
- Fourth progress report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”
- Fifth progress report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”
- Sixth progress report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”
- Seventh progress report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”
- Eighth progress report “FAO Support to the Georgian agricultural sector under the ENPARD III programme”

- Websites:
  https://elibrary.mepa.gov.ge
  https://eu4georgia.eu/ka/enpard-faoignant
# Appendix 1. People interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last name</th>
<th>First name</th>
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<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Akhobadze</td>
<td>Sophiko</td>
<td>REC-Caucasus</td>
<td>Executing Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bakauri</td>
<td>Meri</td>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Agronomy Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beridze</td>
<td>Shorena</td>
<td>CNFA</td>
<td>Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibileishvili</td>
<td>Gia</td>
<td>CNFA</td>
<td>Project Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butliashvili</td>
<td>Gogita</td>
<td>LAG Lagodekhi</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dehoux</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>EU Delegation to Georgia</td>
<td>Attaché – Programme Officer Agriculture, Food Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dekanoidze</td>
<td>Zurab</td>
<td>Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, National Environmental Agency, Department of License</td>
<td>Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gelashvili</td>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>RDA, Project Development Department</td>
<td>Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genenidze</td>
<td>Gvanta</td>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>National Grant Analyst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidotti</td>
<td>Alessandra</td>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>International Agronomist and Extension Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inauri</td>
<td>Lasha</td>
<td>Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Department of International Relations and European Integration</td>
<td>Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javakhishvili</td>
<td>Maia</td>
<td>Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Department of Environment and Climate Change</td>
<td>Deputy Head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalandadze</td>
<td>Tengiz</td>
<td>Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Structural Unit of the Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karanadze</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation Officer</td>
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<td>Kharatishvili</td>
<td>Natalia</td>
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<td>Khvadadze</td>
<td>Nutsa</td>
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<td>National Junior Policy Officer</td>
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<td>Sanz Alvarez</td>
<td>Javier</td>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Programme Officer</td>
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<td>Chief Specialist</td>
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<td>Tsilosani</td>
<td>Khafia</td>
<td>Agrarian Issues Parliamentarian Committee</td>
<td>Deputy chairperson</td>
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<td>Chairperson</td>
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<td>Uglava</td>
<td>Nino</td>
<td>FAO (former employee)</td>
<td>Former Monitoring and Evaluation Officer</td>
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## Appendix 2. Field mission itinerary

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 07 November 2022</td>
<td>Interview with Mr Zurab Tetvadze, CEO Agroconsulting (grant beneficiary, community investment).</td>
<td>Dedoplistskaro</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus group discussion with five wheat farmers (grant beneficiaries; five men).</td>
<td>Dedoplistskaro</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus group discussion with vegetable farmers (FFS beneficiaries; six women and three men) and visit to a vegetable farm.</td>
<td>Lagodekhi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group discussion with hazelnut farmers (grant beneficiaries; two men and the director (man) from a hazelnut cooperative) and visit to the cooperative.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Night in Lagodekhi</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 08 November 2022</td>
<td>Demonstration site visit and interview with a lead vegetable farmer (man) of the extension component,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with large-scale grant recipient (man) (maize silage, community investment).</td>
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<td>Focus group discussion with Lagodekhi LAG representatives: Mr Gela Tedeevi, Mr Giorgi Sulahahidze, Mr Aleks Tchankotadze, Mr Gogita Butliashvili, and Mr Papuna Lobjanidze.</td>
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<td>Wednesday, 09 November 2022</td>
<td>Interview with Mr Lasha Inauri.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Sophiko Akhobadze.</td>
<td>Tbilisi (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Maia Javakhishvili.</td>
<td>Tbilisi (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Mr Zurab Dekanoidze.</td>
<td>Tbilisi (online)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Night in Tbilisi</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 10 November 2022</td>
<td>Interview with Mr Nodar Kereselidze.</td>
<td>Tbilisi (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Tkeshelashvili Mariam, Ms Tsilosani Khatia, and Ms Tsilosani Nino.</td>
<td>Tbilisi (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Natalia Kharatishvili, Mr Lasha Shalamberidye, Ms Mariam Gelashvili, and Mr Ilia Tamarashvili.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Shorena Beridze, and Mr Gia Bibileishvili.</td>
<td>Tbilisi (online)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Night in Tbilisi</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, 11 November 2022</td>
<td>Interview with Mr Javier Sanz Alvarez.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with Mr Mathieu Rouviere.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Ana Margebadze, Ms Gvanta Genenidze, and Ms Lika Takidze.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Alessandra Guidotti, Mr Allan Pieda Burgos, Ms Meri Bekauri and Ms Anuki Natsvlishvili.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Type of activity</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, 12 November 2022</td>
<td>Weekend in Tbilisi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, 13 November 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, 14 November 2022</td>
<td>Focus group discussion with six key Farm Service Centre farmers (five men and one woman)</td>
<td>Kareli</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Information and Consultation Centre representative (man).</td>
<td>Kareli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key informant interview with a member (woman) of a dairy cooperative (grant beneficiary).</td>
<td>Kareli, village Gverdzineti</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Night in Akhaltsikhe</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 15 November 2022</td>
<td>Interview with dairy processor and grant beneficiary (man) and visit to the factory (community investment).</td>
<td>Akhaltsikhe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion with nine potato farmers (eight men and one woman; grant beneficiaries).</td>
<td>Akhalkalaki</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key informant interview with large-scale grant recipient and visit to the potato storage (community investment).</td>
<td>Akhalkalaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Night in Akhalkalaki</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 16 November 2022</td>
<td>Focus group discussion with dairy farmers (eight women) involved in extension activities.</td>
<td>Tsalka</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Interview with a grantee representative (man) of a pharmaceutical company.</td>
<td>Tbilisi (online)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Night in Tbilisi</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, 17 November 2022</td>
<td>Interview with Ms Teona Maketsaria.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Ana Samushia.</td>
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<td>Interview with Ms Tamta Tavartkiladze.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with Mr Jumber Maruashvili and Ms Nutsa Khvadadze.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Nino Karadadze.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field mission de-briefing with Mr Javier Sanz Alvarez, Mr Allan Pineda Burgos, Mr Jumber Marusashvili, and Mr Mathieu Rouviere. Mr Luca Molinas (Evaluation Manager) attended the de-briefing meeting online.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Night in Tbilisi</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, 18 November 2022</td>
<td>Participation as observers at the ENPARD III closing event.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Ms Nino Uglava.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview with Mr George Dehoux.</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3. Evaluation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Methods/informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Relevance</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1.1. To what extent was the intervention coherently responding to the actual needs and priorities of agricultural development in Georgia, as well as to the current global agenda for sustainable development? | Extent of project response to identified needs and priorities at country and international level. | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable) | - Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
| 1.2. Was the project implemented in complementarity with other initiatives? | Identification of complementarities with other ongoing initiatives. | - Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Progress reports |
| 1.3. How adequate was the project design in supporting the activities and expected outcomes (e.g. logframe coherence, linkages between components and activities)? | Assessment of the adequacy of project design. | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
| 1.4. To what extent was the project methodology operational, accessible, understandable, and useful to the targeted beneficiaries? | Identification of elements that made the project methodology operational, accessible, understandable, and useful to the targeted beneficiaries. | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
| 1.5. Did the project document identify concerns with respect to gender issues, women’s empowerment, and human rights, including in relation to sustainable development? | Identification of concerns. | - Project document |

**Relevance:** The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements, country needs and global priorities.
## 2. Effectiveness and Efficiency

### Effectiveness:
The extent to which the development intervention’s results were achieved, or are expected to be achieved.

### Efficiency:
A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1. To what extent has the project achieved its targeted results?</td>
<td>Project indicators as per the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM).</td>
<td>- Project document (and revisions, if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Progress reports</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Sources of verification</td>
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<td>- Interviews with project personnel</td>
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<td>- Interviews with project partners</td>
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<td>- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Visit to project sites</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Triangulation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. What were the main elements of significance in terms of capacity development of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture; the grant support to farmers/agricultural companies; and the technical support to farmers?</td>
<td>Identification of main elements of significance.</td>
<td>- Progress reports</td>
<td>- Interviews with project personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. To which extent were cross-cutting issues, including human rights and gender equality, adequately considered in project implementation?</td>
<td>Identification of evidence that cross-cutting issues were considered in project implementation and assessment of their adequacy.</td>
<td>- Progress reports</td>
<td>- Interviews with project personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. To what extent has the project made best use of available human, technical, technological, financial and knowledge inputs to achieve its desired results?</td>
<td>Identification of evidence that project made best use of available human, technical, technological, financial and knowledge inputs and assessment of their use.</td>
<td>- Progress reports</td>
<td>- Interviews with project personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation criteria</td>
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<td>Indicators</td>
<td>Methods/informants</td>
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</table>
| 2.5. To what extent have the FAO M&E activities (e.g. indicators, guidelines) been able to collect the necessary, timely, accurate, and comparable data and information? | Identification of the extent to which M&E systems ensured effective and efficient project management (capacity to make informed decisions). | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Progress reports  
- M&E system  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
| 2.6. To what extent was the project’s communication strategy effectively promoting the participation of targeted stakeholders at all levels, promoting visibility of the project results and providing access to relevant information? | Identification of the extent to which project’s communication strategy ensured effective and efficient participation. Identification of elements of transparency in the communication strategy. | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Progress reports  
- Communication strategy  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
| 2.7. To what extent have the management/implementing arrangements been appropriate to deliver the achieved project results in an efficient manner? | Extent to which the project management structure was efficient in generating the expected results. | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
| 2.8. What was the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of results, and how did the project deal with it? | Identification of problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and assessment of mitigation measures put in place. | - Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
### Appendix 3. Evaluation matrix

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 3. Impact           | 3.1. What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on improved rural economic diversification, employment, and services? | Identification of the improved rural economic diversification, employment and services and identification of evidence that contributed to that. | - Progress reports  
- M&E system  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
|                     | 3.2. What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on enhanced competitiveness of agriculture? | Identification of the enhanced competitiveness of agriculture and identification of evidence that contributed to that. | - Progress reports  
- M&E system  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
|                     | 3.3. What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on an improved environment, the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action? | Identification improved environment, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action and identification of evidence that contributed to that. | - Progress reports  
- M&E system  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
|                     | 3.4. What are the elements of evidence regarding the contribution of interventions on unforeseen impacts? | Identification of unforeseen impacts and identification of evidence that contributed to that. | - Progress reports  
- M&E system  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |

**Impact:**
Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
Evaluation of the project “FAO support to the Georgian agricultural sector (ENPARD III)”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Sustainability</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
|                     | 4.1. Did the project design and/or project implementation address any/all of the following: sociopolitical, financial, institutional and environmental sustainability issues? | Identification of sociopolitical, financial, institutional, and environmental sustainability issues at design and implementation level. | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
|                     |                                                                            |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                   |
|                     | 4.2. Was there a credible sustainability strategy and/or appropriate exit strategy developed at the design/implementation stage? | Identification of appropriate exit strategy and assessment of their robustness.                        | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
|                     |                                                                            |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                   |
|                     | 4.3. Did the project design/implementation present strategies to promote/support any scaling up, replication and/or catalytic action? | Identification of strategies to promote/support scaling up, replication and/or catalytic action and assessment of their catalytic potential. | - Project document (and revisions, if applicable)  
- Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
|                     |                                                                            |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                   |
|                     | 4.4. What is the likelihood that financial resources will be available, once the assistance ends, to further support the continuation of project benefits? | Identification of possibilities for financial resources to be available after project closure.        | - Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |

**Sustainability**: The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after closure.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
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<th>Methods/informants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.5. Are there any social or political risks that can undermine the longevity of project outcomes?</td>
<td>Identification of social or political risks that can undermine the longevity of project outcomes. Identification of threat that may jeopardize the continuation of project benefits. Identification of relevant frameworks, policies, governance.</td>
<td>- Progress reports  - Interviews with project personnel  - Interviews with project partners  - Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  - Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6. What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow the project benefits to be sustained?</td>
<td>Identification of risk that the level of stakeholder ownership will be insufficient to allow the project benefits to be sustained.</td>
<td>- Interviews with project personnel  - Interviews with project partners  - Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  - Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7. Do the various key stakeholders recognize that it is in their interest and responsibility that the project benefits continue to flow?</td>
<td>Identification of areas of interest for key stakeholders and opportunities and challenges for them to continue enjoying project benefits.</td>
<td>- Progress reports  - Interviews with project personnel  - Interviews with project partners  - Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  - Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8. Are the project’s successful aspects being transferred to appropriate parties, potential future beneficiaries, and others who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?</td>
<td>Identification of successful aspects and their transfer to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future.</td>
<td>- Progress reports  - Interviews with project personnel  - Interviews with project partners  - Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  - Triangulation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9. Are there environmental factors that could undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits?</td>
<td>Identification of environmental risks that can undermine the longevity of project outcomes.</td>
<td>- Progress reports  - Interviews with project personnel  - Interviews with project partners  - Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  - Triangulation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.10. Are the changes promoted by the project conducive to systematically address gender equality and human rights concerns?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
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<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Methods/informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                     | 4.10. Are the changes promoted by the project conducive to systematically address gender equality and human rights concerns? | Identification of the changes promoted by the project that are conducive to addressing gender equality and human right concerns. | - Progress reports  
- Interviews with project personnel  
- Interviews with project partners  
- Interviews and focus group discussions with project beneficiaries  
- Triangulation |
Office of Evaluation
E-mail: evaluation@fao.org
Web address: www.fao.org/evaluation

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy