MAINSTREAMING SCALING INITIATIVE CASE STUDIES

Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA)

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Nov 2023

SCALING
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

MAINSTREAMING SCALING

A Case study of SFSA

by

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November 2023

A Case Study for the Initiative on
Mainstreaming Scaling Funder Organizations

For the Scaling Community of Practice
www.scalingcommunityofpractice.com

Case Study Summary

This study describes the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture's (SFSA) scaling experience, lessons, and areas to explore. It mainly draws on interviews with staff and partners. The study forms part of a Community of Practice series. The authors are independent.

SFSA's mission is to strengthen smallholder farming and food systems, and to catalyze market development and delivery of innovations while building capacity across the public and private sectors. SFSA sees its roles as: identifying the most appropriate, demand-led solutions that have proof of concept; working on viable and scalable business models for these solutions; influencing and crowding-in the right public and private sector actors to support and deliver the solution; supporting transition to a commercially viable market-based model; and handing-off the solution to the right partner(s) at the right time and in the right way. SFSA that believes other entities can then better manage innovations that are scaling or at scale.

SFSA has scaled adoption of some the innovations it has supported. Several factors have contributed to this success. These include clearly articulating a vision and theory of change for scaling as well as its role in the process. SFSA is clear on its target group of pre-commercial smallholders. This focus helps the Foundation to be "demand-led". SFSA uses a systems-thinking approach and positions itself as a catalyzer and facilitator.

Leadership is another enabler. Both Directors since 2008 have had a major impact. The first moved the organization from small-scale philanthropic projects to "bigger-picture thinking" and greater ambitions. The second has built the organizational infrastructure and culture of "how to scale" and brought greater clarity to the organization's role in scaling.

Over the past 15 years, SFSA has focused on three main areas of work (seeds, insurance, and agri-entrepreneurship) and built corresponding expertise. This continuity of focus has helped SFSA build reputation and contacts and to acquire a depth of experience which has advantages when seeking partners. In all three focus areas there has been significant cross-organizational learning.

SFSA has benefitted from a period of stable funding from Syngenta. It has also increasingly attracted funds from third parties. By 2022, SFSA was able to more than double Syngenta's donation through external funding, much of which flows directly to programs and local partners.

People are critical enablers of SFSA's mainstreaming of scaling. A positive organizational culture and high motivation have contributed to low staff turnover. The organization invests in recruitment and development and has been able to retain expertise, experience, and contacts as well as use the team's local networks. Where there are gaps, the Foundation hires consultants or collaborates with complementary institutions. It also invests in capacity-building to help partners scale the work.

Partnerships are fundamental to the Foundation's theory of change on scaling. SFSA knows that it cannot achieve scale on its own and does not want to. Partnerships enable SFSA to tap not only into funding, but also into knowledge, experience, competencies, and networks. These also help to enable scaling. Partners can be funders, multistakeholder organizations, investors, businesses, NGOs, and/or government. Local partners are essential, but those with a "scaling mentality" can be hard to find.

SFSA's portfolio management allows it to look across the organization at different innovations' status on their scaling journeys. This approach helps prioritize projects and thus align the portfolio to SFSA's strategy and create maximum impact for smallholders. It seeks to help answer the questions: (i) Are we doing the right things? (ii) Are we doing them the right way? (iii) Are the investments making an impact?

SFSA views Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) as a critical tool for mainstreaming scaling. Independent M&E eliminates bias from decisions whether to continue investing in an innovation. Farmer impact studies examine whether an innovation is making a difference aligned with SFSA's strategic goals.

Scaling at SFSA: challenges and lessons

Each project encounters different challenges and learning opportunities. There is no "one-size-fits all" model. There will never be absolute certainty that something will work, nor is it always easy to achieve scale by simply copying what worked well elsewhere. Individuals can become very attached to their innovations and don't want to let go, and there is a temptation to keep trying to make things work which may never scale. Finding the balance between SFSA's impact aims and scaling goals can be difficult, as can finding the right alignment of incentives for all partners.

Partnerships as well as policy research and engagement with policymakers and governments are critical but difficult. SFSA must be willing to let go of some control and ownership. Handing off can be painful and complicated if done too late or with the wrong partner. Creating a bridging organization or catalytic intermediary can be difficult to finance. The Foundation however moves flexibly between its roles as implementer, funder, and technical advisor. This agility is a signature feature of the SFSA approach. It enables the Foundation to do what it believes is needed more easily than those entities with more restricted roles.

Recommendations and areas for future exploration

SFSA's scaling experience leads to some guidance for its own future and for other organizations:

- Embed more structure and objectivity into scaling. This includes better applying the portfolio management approach to move innovations through the scaling stage gates, deciding to terminate projects that aren't working and sharing more lessons on this approach.
- Develop and implement partnership management strategies and tactics. These will help staff to better vet, structure, manage and evaluate partnerships and the partnering cycle.
- Invest more in M&E, learning and knowledge management to build evidence and influence others.
- Learn from external sources. Discussions relating to outside organizations tend to focus on how much SFSA could influence them. Less thought, it seems, goes into which organizations or networks SFSA could learn from.
- Keep interrogating and learning about the process of handoffs – what works and what doesn't.
- Continue to seek an equilibrium between impact and commercial opportunities and consider how to best align incentives.
- Have patience. The entire scaling process takes time. Anticipating how long scaling will take at every part of the journey is hard — the answer is almost always "longer than anticipated".
- Continue to let context drive decisions. Many organizations would like to standardize and structure scaling. However, the setting, partners, and solution vary. These contextual factors influence and sometimes drive the processes and tools needed. Mainstreaming scaling therefore always requires flexibility to allow the most appropriate approach to take shape.

Further information on how SFSA progresses innovations to scale-up is available here.

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Preface

The Scaling Community of Practice (CoP) launched an action research initiative on mainstreaming scaling in funder organizations in January 2023. This initiative has three purposes: to inform the CoP members and the wider development community of the current state of support for and operationalization of scaling in a broad range of development funding agencies; to draw lessons for future efforts to mainstream the scaling agenda in the development funding community; and to promote more effective funder support for scaling by stakeholders in developing countries. (For further details about the Mainstreaming Initiative, see the Concept Note on the COP website).

The Mainstreaming Initiative is jointly supported by Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the Scaling Community of Practice (CoP). The study team consists of Richard Kohl (Lead Consultant and Project Co-Leader), Johannes Linn (Co-Chair of the Scaling CoP and Project Co-Leader), Larry Cooley (Co-Chair of the Scaling CoP), and Ezgi Yilmaz (Junior Consultant). MSI staff provide administrative and communications support, in particular Leah Sly and Gaby Montalvo.

The principal component of this research is a set of case studies of the efforts to mainstream scaling by selected funder organizations. These studies explore the extent and manner in which scaling has been mainstreamed, and the major drivers and obstacles. The case studies also aim to derive lessons to be learned from each donor's experience, and, where they exist, their plans and/or recommendations for further strengthening the scaling focus.

Introduction

This case study is on the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture's (SFSA) scaling journey. As SFSA has itself evolved, so too has its work on scaling. The Foundation has become more intentional in scaling solutions and incorporating thinking on scaling into its strategies and ways of working. This case study captures SFSA's scaling experience, lessons to date, learning for others, and future areas to explore.

The case study is independently written. It primarily draws on 14 interviews with SFSA staff and six with partners and external actors, as well as using SFSA reports and strategy documents. The interviews and document reviews took place within about four weeks. The case study seeks to surface issues, ideas and learning rather than provide an in-depth analysis of the issues raised. There has been no formal process to triangulate the interview insights. The study reflects a variety of opinions and observations rather than an official SFSA position.

About Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA)

SFSA's mission is to strengthen smallholder farming and food systems. It catalyzes market development and delivery of innovations while building capacity across the public and private sectors. It describes its role as follows:

> "The Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA) is an implementing foundation that bridges the gap between research for innovations and their delivery for use by smallholders. We help innovations reach scale through entrepreneurship and enterprise models. We combine the best of scientific, non-profit, and private sector thinking and doing."

About SFSA

- Operating since 2001
- Non-profit organization
- Established by Syngenta under Swiss law
- Headquartered in Basel
- Local presence in Africa and Asia
- Approximately 180 staff and contractors

Key elements of operationalizing the mission today include

Systems
SFSA looks beyond individual farms, businesses, or projects, towards overall transformation in the way that agriculture works and is supported at scale.

Markets
SFSA believes that sustainable improvement in smallholders’ livelihoods is only possible through properly functioning markets. In this way, entrepreneurship plays a central role.

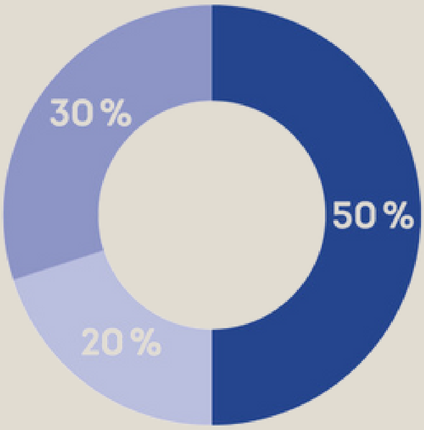
Delivery
SFSA wants farmers to access affordable, appropriate, value-adding technologies and innovations, and to use them productively.

Building Capacity
SFSA wants to create a legacy of institutions supporting the agriculture sector.

Public and Private Sector
SFSA believes that partnerships with public and private sector actors are essential: typically, companies deliver innovation, but the public sector often creates it, as well as being a regulator and potential enabler. SFSA actively uses research evidence gathered from its programs and capacity-building to influence policy and regulatory changes to improve the enabling environment for its solutions.

SFSA is both a funder and an implementing organization.

SFSA Funding Sources (2022)



- 50% Syngenta contribution
- 20% Donor contributions to SFSA
- 30% Contributions direct to SFSA programs

SFSA receives annual funding from Syngenta as well as grants from other donors. It also calculates the funding from third-party donors directly into its programs. In total the Foundation estimates it raised $39 million in funding in 2022.
SFSA funds are used to hire staff who provide technical expertise and accompany partners, and to contract service providers who provide consulting services and train partners. SFSA also provides joint funding or contributions directly to projects. SFSA has made some loans to partners (see example of ACRE in pg.32) and in the past has sometimes used equity investments and guarantees.

SFSA's Commitment to Scaling

SFSA has a vision of impact at scale. Although the Foundation uses for-profit market mechanisms to achieve scale, it remains a non-profit. *Impact and sustainability are at the heart of the Foundation's work.* Through its current goals (2020-2025) it seeks to achieve at least:

- 20% net income increase for five million smallholder families
- greater gender equality and youth opportunities across the agricultural sector (including a target that 50% of smallholders supported are women)
- better nutrition, health, and food security
- smallholder farms coping with climate change in a climate-smart and resilient way
- 20,000 SFSA-supported enterprises
- $250 million in annual value from the use of SFSA-supported products and services.

In 2022, SFSA

- Supported 2.7 million smallholders (29% of whom are women)
- Accounted for $142m sales of SFSA-supported products & services
- Delivered capacity-building on climate-smart resilient agriculture to 800,000 farmers
- Supported 15,000 enterprises
- Contributed to the creation of 16,000 jobs (over half of them for young people).

SFSA believes in scaling, and it has been a part of the Foundation's thinking for well over a decade. Over the years there have been some significant successes in scaling as well as important learning. As the scaling journey is ongoing, new tools and processes are being introduced and lessons are being continuously learned.

SFSA recognizes that it lacks the resources to achieve scale on its own. It also acknowledges that it is not the best entity to manage innovations that are scaling or at scale. It doesn't have the resources, capacity, or know-how to do so, nor should that be its role if it believes in the power of markets and the public sector to best deliver solutions at scale. *The Foundation sees its role as:*

(i) identifying the most appropriate, demand-led solutions that have proof of concept,
(ii) working on viable and scalable business models for these solutions,
(iii) influencing and crowding-in the right public and private sector actors to support and deliver the solution,
(iv) supporting the transition of these solutions into a commercially viable market- based model, and
(v) handing-off the solution to the right partner(s) at the right time and in the right way.

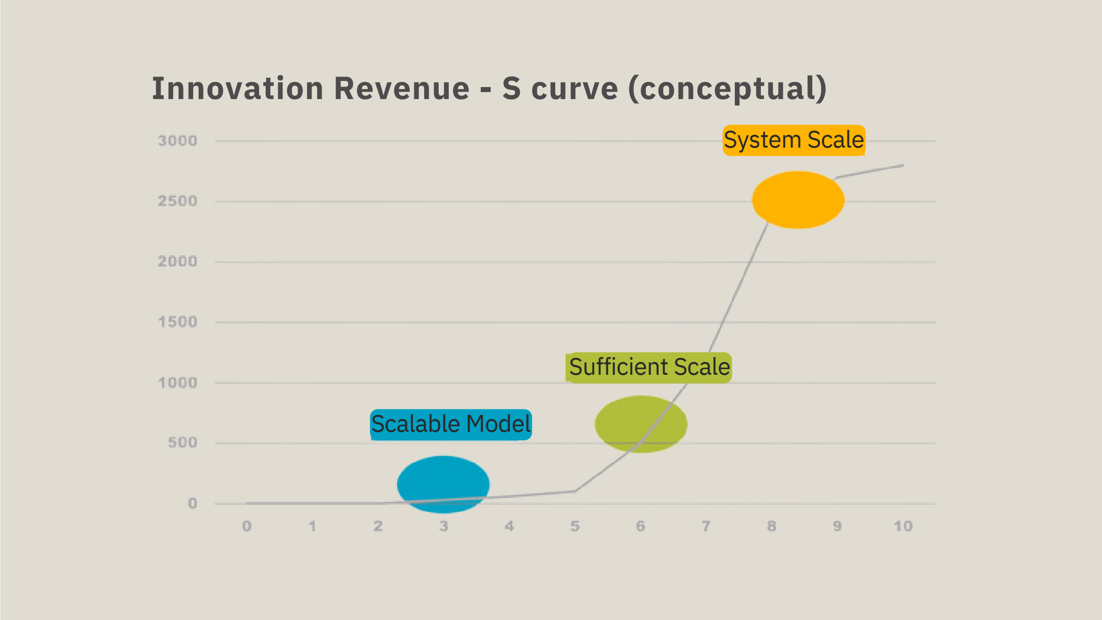
SFSA's Scaling Model

Scaling has been part of SFSA's approach since around 2008. *In 2021 SFSA articulated and formalized its scaling approach* in its publicly available paper, "Progressing innovations towards scale-up: From learning to action". (For this and other documents, see the Annex). The launch of this paper marked a deliberate shift in the scaling journey from the "why" to the "what" and "how."

In the paper, SFSA lays out its theory for scaling. This considers scale through the S-curve innovation revenue model shown here. There are three key stages:

- **Scalable Model -** Proof that innovation can make money for smallholders and businesses and that there will be a positive Return on Investment (ROI).
- **Sufficient Scale -** Reach critical mass in meeting addressable needs; market players continue to invest; positive ROI for market players, including commercializing smallholders.
- **System Scale -** Industry players see smallholder potential. They accelerate investment into smallholder-relevant innovations with more appropriate business models and a supportive enabling environment.

The paper also uses the term "catalytic intermediaries". These are organizations, institutions, or initiatives that can be used to disseminate innovation. Examples include NGOs, social enterprises, public institutions, foundations, and multi-stakeholder platforms. *Catalytic intermediaries are often SFSA's choice of scaling entity and/or handoff partner.*



Areas of Focus

SFSA has focused on three areas of work over the past 10 to 15 years. It has chosen these areas based on its core competencies and the belief that in these three areas there are *both a need and opportunities for scaling.* The work in these areas is underpinned and complemented by SFSA's technical research (including seed development), broader research initiatives, and policy work.

Agri-services Development

Work on various agri-services began in the 1980s and 1990s. Today's Foundation has developed commercially viable business models to facilitate access to a range of agricultural services from production to market, including input and output agri-services centers and tech solutions. The services also cover training on agronomy, input buying, compliance with the quality standards required for access to more lucrative markets, and output sales.

Agricultural Insurance Services

SFSA has been working on agricultural insurance since 2009. It started by developing innovative and affordable insurance tailored to smallholders in East Africa. SFSA aims to build a bridge between demand and supply in the agriculture insurance market, and to align the various organizations involved. SFSA monitors and assesses risk and develops insurance products specifically for smallholders. The products cover a range of crops against weather risks like drought, storms, flooding, and erratic rains.

Seeds and seeds-related technologies

'Seeds2B' was launched in 2012 with the goal of helping smallholders improve their access to good seeds of the varieties they need. Seeds2B follows a market-oriented approach. Its key features are catalyzing public-private partnerships along the seed and grain value chains, building the capacity of key seed stakeholders, identifying bottlenecks and solutions, and improving the policy environment.

Work in the focus areas is interlinked. The Foundation primarily *distinguishes between innovation* (developing the product/service and business model) *and delivery* (finding the partners and the model to get the innovation to market in mass).

SFSA is now looking at scalable solutions in smallholder climate adaptation from the three focus areas, as well as new areas where innovations could be scaled in the future (with a particular focus on soil health related innovations).

Drivers of Mainstreaming Scaling

The Foundation was created in 2001 largely as a philanthropic organization fully funded by Syngenta. During its early years, it had a relatively modest yearly budget of around $5 million based on the donations from Syngenta. Projects were small-scale and without clear thematic priorities.

Beyond a desire to have positive impact, it was often hard to identify a clear mission or vision. This began to change in the late ‘00s. There is a *clear link between the evolution of the organization and its scaling journey*. The section below highlights some key drivers of the scaling journey.

Leadership

The Foundation has had two CEOs since 2008. They have both been *critical drivers of scaling*, in different ways. The first of these two, whose tenure ran from 2008 to 2017, moved the organization from small-scale philanthropic projects to "bigger picture thinking" and greater ambitions. This shift also led to a larger contribution from Syngenta. The Foundation began to work with a wider range of partners—with them came new sources of funding and momentum, as well as greater pressure on scaling. During this CEO's tenure, "market systems" approaches were encouraged as well as thinking beyond traditional international development project cycles. This CEO defined the target group of "pre- commercial" farmers and identified today's three focus areas. He *framed the contours of the "why scale?" and the initial thinking on "what to scale".*

The current CEO was appointed in 2017. He has defined his tenure thus far in *building the organizational infrastructure and culture of "how to scale" and bringing greater clarity to the organization's role in scaling*. His work to articulate and drive the "how" has made mainstreaming of scaling more visible and palpable. Interviewees for the study generally noted that while the Foundation had previously thought about scaling, the current CEO's emphasis is on operationali-zing it and managing towards scaling targets. Staff are now taking more deliberate actions to make scaling a reality.

The current CEO has also expanded the Foundation's thinking on what role it should play in scaling. Previously, it focused mainly on proof of concept and the creation of models to crowd in large public or private sector partners and investors. The CEO has placed greater *emphasis on the need for SFSA to build partnerships, identify and support catalytic intermediaries, and work on policy and regulatory changes*. The aim is to curate the scaling process and strengthen the enabling environment for scaling of innovation more directly.

The SFSA Board has *empowered SFSA's leaders* to make scaling a central pillar of the Foundation's success and impact. The current CEO was hired with a mandate to increase impact and depth of engagement through partnerships. Focusing on scaling and how to scale has been a key part of fulfilling this mandate. The Board's mix of commercially minded, public sector and third sector leadership provides oversight, and the CEO's thinking on scaling theory, sustainability and partnerships is understood and encouraged.

Sustainability

SFSA has embraced the idea of building sustainable solutions with partners and/or catalytic intermediaries that will deliver and sustain solutions for the long term. Almost every staff member interviewed explained how *long-term sustainability is built into the ethos of their work*. This is with the intention to eventually hand over to private sector actors, public-private partnerships and/or multistakeholder organizations. For SFSA, *scaling requires sustainable solutions and sustainable solutions require scaling*.

The private and/or public sector needs to see the scaling potential to get involved. Everything that the Foundation does should have a sustainability model. SFSA is clear on two guiding principles of sustainability: (a) the amount of capital that SFSA puts in should shrink over time and its investment should be surpassed by others; and (b) the solution should be viable long-term without SFSA's continued investment. Handing off to scaling partners is essential.

Size of the Challenge

SFSA works in a range of countries in Africa and Asia. They include the *world's most populous nations* (India and China) as well as smaller ones such as Senegal. In India alone there are around 120 million smallholders. With 200 million people, Nigeria has a larger population that the other 14 West African countries put together. It is expected to be the world's third most populous country by mid-century. Interviews with Bangladesh, Nigeria, and India program managers indicate that they aim to account for a substantial share of the numbers in the Foundation's overall targets. Scaling is embedded into their thinking.

The country managers are all ambitious to continue to raise the local profile of SFSA. This is in line with SFSA's desire to crowd-in government organizations and influence their policy agenda. Scaling or scaling potential is important for *SFSA to be seen as an organization that can provide relevant solutions worthy of governments' interest and attention.*

Enablers of Scaling

Vision of Scaling and Theory of Change

SFSA *has a vision and theory of change for scaling and its role* in the scaling process. These have been fundamental to the development of the Foundation's 2021-2025 strategy. While SFSA's role may vary depending on the thematic area, staff can always refer to the overarching strategy and scaling paper. Interviews indicated that "Theory of Change thinking" has been mainstreamed across the organization. However, staff admit that in practice there are some difficulties in applying the vision, as outlined in *Challenges* in pg.27.

Defining a Target Audience

Early in its history the organization clearly *defined its target group as pre-commercial smallholders.* These are farmers who "typically lack a stable income, but they have land and can make decisions on its use. These farmers usually have limited access to reliable markets and to the resources to purchase agricultural inputs, technologies, and most services. SFSA typically works with smallholders farming on less than two hectares". This *focus allowed the Foundation to be "demand-led".* It knew that it had to find innovations and delivery models that could reach and be adopted by this segment. How to ensure innovations are available to large numbers of pre-commercial farmers became central to the Foundation's theory of change on scaling, and to how it defines its role in the scaling process.

Systems Thinking

In its paper "Progressing innovations towards scale-up: From learning to action" SFSA emphasizes that *scaling is an implicit requirement for comprehensive system change.* A systems-thinking approach analyses the role of different actors in the market. It allows organizations to move away from a notion of scaling linked to simply becoming a bigger organization or creating larger programs. A systems-thinking approach allows smaller organizations such as SFSA to understand the potentially catalytic role they could play in a market system. SFSA views itself not just as a thought leadership organization but also as an "action-learning" organization which tests ideas. As a result, *SFSA has positioned itself in systems as a catalyzer and facilitator*, as opposed to an embedded actor. It thinks of itself as a co-creator of market-based solutions, as opposed to a funder and implementer of livelihoods projects. Its advocacy of key policy and regulatory change means that SFSA also looks at the wider enabling environment that helps actors to scale.

- In its Seeds2B work, the Foundation works both with public sector partners on researching improved seed varieties and with commercial actors to ensure the varieties can be made commercially available at scale. It has also worked with partners such as New Markets Lab to analyze the regulatory context for seed commercialization and make *actionable recommendations for policymakers*.

- Since 2009, the Foundation has used systems thinking in its approach to how it positions itself in insurance. It *plays the role of a convener, bringing different partners and stakeholders together to create solutions.*

- Interviewees working on agri-services highlight that around 2013/2014 the organization began to look more thoroughly at how to link farmers to markets, *diagnose how the market systems work*, and examine the Foundation's role in developing viable demand-led commercial solutions.

Focus Areas

The Foundation has clearly defined *three main areas of work and built up corresponding technical expertise*. The focus allows country offices to dig deeply into these areas. SFSA has continued with these three areas over a long period. This continuity has allowed it to *build a reputation and contacts, and to acquire a depth of experience* which has obvious advantages when seeking partners to crowd in.

SFSA seeks to optimize scaling potential through the *integration of the focus areas*. This includes examining how combining certain products and services can deliver greater impact, return on investment and/or incentives for adoption. An example of this is that the networks built by the agri-enterprise work in countries such as India or Bangladesh can be used to scale the distribution of innovations in seeds or insurance.

Cross-organizational Learning

In all three focus areas, there has been significant cross-organizational learning between country programs. *Innovations pioneered in one country or region have then been exported to others.* Interviewees highlighted the importance of country team visits to other countries.

The Foundation's matrix structure with country program staff also in thematic teams facilitates exchange of learning. SFSA stimulates this exchange through communities of practice and theme-specific workshops.

Funding

SFSA has benefitted from *stable funding from Syngenta over recent years.* Financial stability has allowed some countries to commit to areas for a longer period needed to experiment, fail, pivot, and learn. For example: From 2014 the India country office had a stable financial commitment from the Foundation of around $1.5 million dollars per year for several years. Staff could therefore focus India's work on Agri-Entrepreneurship, building up expertise and experience in this area rather than moving from project to project in line with external donor cycles.

As SFSA is both an implementer and funder, it has over time *crowded-in other partners and funders to support its work* beyond the contribution of Syngenta. By 2022 the Foundation was able to more than double Syngenta's donation through external funding, much of which flows directly to programs and local partners. For example, after the initial commitment of the Foundation's own funds to the India program, the India country team successfully accessed external funding; SFSA's own funds now account for approximately only 20% of spending on the India program. The India team's largest donor, interviewed for this case study, highlights that scalability was a central criterion in the decision to invest.

The Bangladesh country team was established in 2011 using SFSA funds. Staff cite the 2018 grant from the Swiss government for weather-based climate insurance as a major scaling milestone. It was the team's first large external funding and enabled scale-up from a couple of hundred insured farmers in 2018 to more than 400,000 by 2022.

Team Capabilities

SFSA's work and its approach to scaling require *a combination of commercial, scientific and/or technical skills, as well as experience of working with farmers and rural communities.* The Foundation has recruited staff and/or built capacity to try to achieve this balance, but it is not always easy. Several interviewees highlighted the need to hire with this combination in mind, and to continually assess staff capacities.

It is unlikely that many staff members will have a perfect mix of all skills: the Foundation is working on mapping competencies and providing training in Ambassadorship, Communications & Partnerships, and Business Acumen & Entrepreneurship. Where there are gaps, the Foundation *hires expert consultants.* They provide not only capacity, but also legitimacy and third-party validation of ideas and plans.

Organizational Culture

The *positive organizational culture and high motivation* cited in interviews have contributed to low staff turnover. The organization thus retains expertise, experience, and contacts. In general, interviewees praised the *entrepreneurial organizational culture, risk-taking appetite, and enthusiasm for innovation and teamwork.* They also praise the absence of micromanagement by the head office, a style which country teams seek to replicate. Avoiding micromanagement is helpful for an organization seeking to be agile and innovative. It allows them to move fast and take advantage of opportunities.

Country teams feel a sense of freedom to work on ideas that have scaling potential suitable to their context. There was a lengthy and inclusive process to develop a global strategy in 2020-2021. The strategy outlines ambitious targets and how the organization will work in its three focus areas. But it is broad enough to allow teams to set context-specific scaling objectives. Country teams are expected to work on the three strategic priorities of scaling, climate-smart and resilient agriculture, and diversity and inclusion. They are not expected to work on all three focus areas but can *decide what works in their context and with their team expertise.* The India country team has focused very heavily on agri-services, with much less work on insurance and seeds. Going "all in" here has helped the program grow from training 29 agri-entrepreneurs (AE) in 2014 to 16,000 in the last four years. These AE currently reach approximately 1.3 million farmers.

Several country offices have been able to scale up work quickly. The Nigeria country office was established in 2018 in one state. It is now already working in nine of the country's 36 states. In 12 years, the Bangladesh country office has grown from working in four districts to 22 of the 64 total. Both teams have had the same country managers since their establishment.

Networks

SFSA has always recruited locally. Among other advantages, this provides *good local networks and contacts.* Senior staff has typically gathered many years of experience in relevant sectors before joining SFSA. The resulting networks and contacts help the Foundation to promote its work, influence, and attract new partners.

Foundation staff know the importance of continually building their networks, participating in roundtables and events, and using their wide range of contacts. Local networks help source local partners, build partnerships, and positively influence policy.

Building Capacity

SFSA invests in *capacity-building for its partners* to help them scale work. For instance, the Seeds2B team in Asia works with organizations to assess their needs and then subcontracts experts to work on capacity-building. An "employee engagement" program allows Syngenta experts to volunteer at the Foundation. SFSA hopes that this will help with further scaling in the years ahead.

The Foundation moves flexibly between its roles as implementer, funder, and technical advisor.

Although criticized by some organizations, this agility is a signature feature of the SFSA approach. It enables the Foundation to do what it believes is needed more easily than those entities with more restricted roles. In some cases, capacity-building is informal. There is then almost a coaching and mentoring relationship between SFSA and its partners to help them build scaling solutions. SFSA even goes so far as to *build the capacity and understanding of government to support and partner with SFSA innovations*.

Links to Syngenta

The *relationship between SFSA and Syngenta helps scaling*. Foundation teams work with the company in a variety of ways. Firstly, there is the exchange of agricultural and scientific knowledge and expertise; this is an obvious advantage of a foundation that shares the thematic focus of its corporate backer. In addition, sharing of budgets and coordination of activities at conferences help increase the Foundation's reach. SFSA also benefits from the skills of Syngenta's human resources colleagues. They help with recruitment, staff assessments and learning and development plans. The Foundation has also learned from the company's experience of portfolio management and using a stage gate process in product development. All interviewees see it as an advantage that the Foundation can access Syngenta's expertise. However, some note that certain stakeholders, e.g., government, may be wary of the Foundation's agenda. Outsiders sometimes assume that SFSA is simply trying to promote Syngenta's interests.

The Foundation remains independent in its choice of activities and partners; it furthermore works with pre-commercial farmers, as opposed to Syngenta customers. There is nonetheless some potential for the company to be a scaling partner. For example, off-takers who want to consolidate large volumes of smallholder produce may wish to incorporate non-commercial farmers into their supply chains. In such cases, the Foundation can *use Syngenta's digital tools, delivery models and channels*, such as the Modern Agriculture Platform model in China. SFSA is exploring ways to bring such models to support pre-commercial smallholders elsewhere.

The Importance of Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to the Foundation's theory of change on scaling. The commitment to partnerships is a clear recognition that *the Foundation cannot achieve scale on its own and does not want to.* Partnerships enable SFSA to tap not only into funding, but also into knowledge, experience, competencies, and networks, which also help to enable scaling. For example, an SFSA interviewee believes the link to Tata Trusts for AEGF (see Challenges in pg.27) increased its credibility with state governments.

It is inherent in SFSA's market systems-based approach that other actors must be involved in building and eventually owning the solution. SFSA uses the term "partnership" broadly, to define a range of relationships with different organizations. Partners can be funders, multistakeholder organizations, investors, businesses, NGOs, and/or government. SFSA can play different roles as a partner. It sometimes directly leads partnerships and sometimes brokers them, bringing government and commercial actors together in public-private partnerships.

Local partners are considered critical for SFSA's scaling work. They know the context, and should have legitimacy, be helpful in de-risking the solution, and be present for the long term. However, good local partners with a "scaling mentality" can be hard to find. SFSA often invests in helping build their capacity and capabilities.

There is some *level of ambiguity in how SFSA identifies and assesses potential partners, how it manages its partnerships, and how it monitors partnerships as they develop*. The diversity of partner types complicates the partnership management structures and processes. There is clarity on the importance of finding the "right" partners. *Partnership selection and engagement are critical to the success of scaling* and are one of the main challenges. The Foundation can and needs to do an even better job of vetting. Who the "right" partners are depends heavily on the solution, the country, and how far the solution has progressed on its path to scaling. In some cases, SFSA has needed several different partners: there is no "right" number. One interviewee commented that, in hindsight, having multiple partners complicated scaling. Other interviews suggest that a group of different partners is sometimes necessary, even if it creates complexities.

The ambiguity partially arises from the difference between transactional and transformational partnerships. Transactional partnerships are usually characterized by clear contractual relationships, in which each partner has a clear role and deliverables. Transformational partnerships are often a more strategic form of collaboration to build on or combine capabilities, resources and/or influence to drive substantive change. *SFSA's theory of change on scaling is built around the notion of transformational partnerships* (notably with catalytic intermediaries). However, some partnerships thought to be transformational may, in fact, be transactional. This may only become apparent once SFSA ends its support and the partner is no longer interested in continuing working in the way originally planned.

Partners interviewed are positive about working with SFSA. A research partner receiving grant funding highlighted that SFSA has a good understanding of where it is needed in the project and focuses its efforts there. Linked to this is the hybrid nature of SFSA's work as both a funder and an implementer. Unlike non-implementing foundations which may employ technical advisors to assess proposals and reports, SFSA has an internal team of experts. Many of them work on a range of projects across the three focus areas. This influences the relationship with partners and helps the Foundation *identify where it can add value to partners.* It also enables SFSA to be an active partner in problem-solving and to co-create innovations and solutions. One interviewed partner feels that working with SFSA is helping his organization think more about scaling in their own work and how to emulate and embed SFSA's approach.

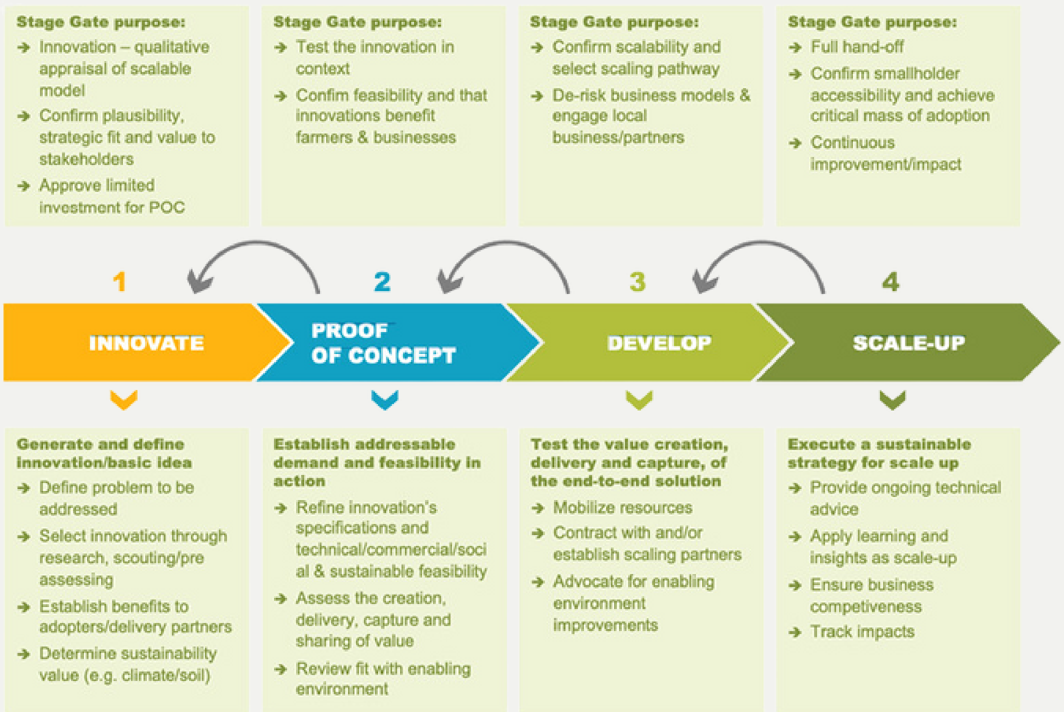
A partner organization co-funding an SFSA-led project praised the *Foundation's ability to take in learning.* It also praised the Foundation for engaging with project partners as equals and not dominating as the project lead. The Foundation was acknowledged for putting farmers first, e.g., for focusing on products and services best suited to smallholders' needs, rather than promoting Syngenta technologies (as some people might expect).

Tools and Processes for Mainstreaming Scaling

To address the "how" of mainstreaming scaling, SFSA applies various tools and processes. This included bringing in a *specialized scaling consultant* in 2018-2019 to assess the suitability of its projects for scaling and to suggest improvements.

One tool that SFSA has used is the *strategy paper on scaling* outlined in *Scaling Model* in p.9. This has not only provided the framing and the lexicon for scaling, but also helps staff to think more clearly about how scaling relates to their work and take greater accountability for scaling the Foundation's programs. It is fair to assume that this paper can also be a reference for partners to better understand SFSA's approach to scaling.

The scaling paper outlines a *Stage Gate* approach. SFSA teams are expected to use this approach and critically assess their work using the guidance around each of the *"gates"*. This includes terminating investment in any innovation where the pathway to scale-up is not clear or compelling. The *extent and rigor of stage gates use by teams for critical analysis are still in question. They are not yet fully mainstreamed in the organization,* but the intention is to use stage gates regularly and rigorously. The leadership team has also worked on embedding scaling into KPIs.



Interviewees highlighted the importance of developing project-specific *Standard Opera-ting Procedures* (SOPs). Those working with agri-entrepreneurs and agri-enterprise centers highlighted how SOPs had helped create a blueprint for scaling. However, it took several years of trialing and improving to finalize them with partners. The agri-entrepreneur approach is rooted in working with people with close ties within their communities. The resulting short feedback loops helped improve and finalize SOPs. *There is no SOP for scaling, however. The Foundation feels that scaling is context-specific and needs a level of flexibility that would contradict the idea of standardized procedure.*

SFSA has introduced a *portfolio management approach* to allow it to look across the organization at different innovations and where they are on their scaling journeys. This aims to help the prioritization of projects and thus create a portfolio with the greatest alignment to SFSA's strategy and to create maximum impact for smallholders. This approach seeks to help the Foundation answer the questions:

(i) Are we doing the right things?
(ii) Are we doing them the right way?
(iii) Are the investments making an impact?

A Portfolio Management Board composed of internal leaders is charged with deciding what to invest in and how to allocate resources to top priorities. They must answer the critical questions of what to start, what to stop and/or what is missing. Currently the potential scalability of work tends to be assessed by a project's own management team. However, the Founda-tion is in the process of building the scaling stage more clearly into the way projects are assessed and advanced to the next stage. The Foundation is looking to use the Portfolio Management Board to take a rigorous, higher-level view of work and assess how it fits into overall performance. *SFSA does not, however, believe that there can be one standardized assessment, as scaling potential is specific to the innovation and context.*

There is enthusiasm across the Foundation for *more structure and discipline to decision-making,* which it is hoped this approach will bring. There is a fear, however, of bias towards certain projects and that staff will adapt their tactics to get things approved. It has been suggested that there needs to be greater objectivity brought into the Board by including a member from outside SFSA. Questions also remain whether everything the Foundation does should be an official part of the portfolio, and whether everything in the portfolio must be on a path to scaling.

SFSA has also built *customized tools* for specific technical needs to help with scaling. These are both used within the Foundation and by partners to address scaling.

- **GATE** (Global Agricultural Technology Evaluator) is a web-based platform that validates climate-smart agricultural innovations. The aim is to develop new markets for innovators and deliver high value for smallholders and local businesses. GATE adopts a stage-gate model in validating innovations and ensures transparent governance systems in project management. Its focus is on delivering resilience and adaptive innovations to smallholders to improve their livelihoods in the context of climate change. Farmers' Hubs have delivered and validated agricultural innovations in digital tools, mechanization, irrigation, nursery farming and postharvest practices to more than two million smallholders in Bangladesh, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal.

- SFSA and its partners use **QuickTrials** for seed variety field testing in nine countries. The trials are part of the Seeds2B program, designed to provide farmers with a better choice of higher-performing varieties. Seed2B undertakes a wide range of trials. These cover agrono-my, adaptation, registration assess-ments, and marketing. All these types of trials run on the QuickTrials platform, developed in close colla-boration with SFSA.

- Seeds2B has developed a **toolkit** for seed commercialization practitio-ners in Africa and Asia. The toolkit covers pre-breeding analysis, seed production, marketing, commercial, and legal activities needed to deliver new varieties to smallholders. It follows the product life cycle pro-cess in 12 stages, and sets stan-dards for public and private project managers, research institutions, and local seed companies.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

M&E is seen as a critical tool for mainstreaming scaling. Interviewees noted that rigorous M&E processes help to create value: “What gets measured, gets managed”. Team members comment that good M&E is critical to assessing proof of concept, both in terms of impact and the business model. For instance, *repeat users* rather than just the *number of farmers reached* become a critical data point. M&E also helps to provide the evidence and credibility needed when engaging with the private and public sector. Independent M&E eliminates bias from decisions whether to continue investing in an innovation. Farmer impact studies examine whether an innovation is making a difference aligned with SFSA’s strategic impact goals.

Some team members note that the Foundation does not put enough investment or emphasis behind the costly but necessary work of M&E.

SFSA has been developing a new impact management methodology to address these challenges and to help it become a better learning organization. However, this is still at an early stage and needs more focus and resources. SFSA has not monitored and evaluated its own organizational progress on scaling. The Foundation therefore cannot yet compare progress on scaling across different program areas or assess the success of its efforts to mainstream scaling within the organization. Work on this continues.

Challenges in Scaling and Mainstreaming Thinking on Scaling

There is a recognition that *scaling is hard and takes time*. SFSA is working on many different dimensions. Each journey encounters different challenges.

- At a project level, scaling any innovation can be difficult. It is even harder for organizations such as SFSA working in failed market systems and trying to build sustainable solutions and deliver impactful innovations to pre-commercial farmers in challenging environments.
- SFSA is not just scaling innovations but also helping mainstream the concept of scaling in agriculture in the international development sector. This could be game-changing. The sector has traditionally been short-term in its thinking and investments. A project cycle mentality and linear and logical results-based frameworks are still commonplace.
- SFSA is trying to mainstream scaling in various countries, ecosystems, and focus areas. It therefore it needs to change hearts, minds, policies, and checkbooks.

An example of how difficult it can be to assess the time needed to scale an innovation is the Agri-Entrepreneur program in India. This has been delivered through the creation of the Agri-Entrepreneurs Growth Foundation. AEGF trains and supports young rural people to become self-employed Agri-Entrepreneurs (AE) delivering products and services to farmers. It has grown from training 29 AEs in 2014 to over 16,000 in the last four years. Its ambition is to have 100,000 trained and active AEs by 2030. This represents great progress, but an original funder and partner noted that it had initially thought there would already be 100,000 by now. This interviewee believes in the model and feels that the work is going well but highlighted how much time it had taken to get other organizations to invest, to find the right people on the ground to promote the model and the tech providers with the right products to meet farmers' needs.

There is no *"one-size-fits all" model.* The complexity of defining what scaling looks like in different contexts, when you have achieved it, and when you are going off track should be acknowledged. There will never be absolute certainty. There are also limits to proof of concept or demonstration effects. When small-scale projects expand, they do not necessarily work the same way or equally well in different contexts. Nor is it always easy to achieve scale by simply copying what worked well in one project. For instance, the Foundation had great success in spinning off a potato seed project at Kisima Farms in Kenya. SFSA hoped others would copy this model. However, it proved more difficult than expected to incentivize replication. Local regulations on importing potato germplasm limited the investment opportunities. The project thus had less impact than originally foreseen.

Project selection, evaluation, and exiting are difficult. Many staff members noted that *individuals become very attached to their innovations* and don't want to let go. There is always an opportunity to pivot, to innovate more, to take some more time or to try something else. An inherent part of innovation is failure. The Foundation is committed to innovating and accepting failure, but also knows not to give up at the first sign of problems. However, there is a temptation to keep trying to make things work which are difficult or may never scale. Doing so can take away focus and resources from other opportunities.

Knowing when to walk away and understanding why

An example of SFSA deciding to discontinue work is its effort to deliver an insurance solution in Indonesia. Starting in 2017, SFSA worked hard to export lessons from its insurance program in East Africa and collaborate with partners to deliver a solution for the Indonesian context. Despite best efforts, it became apparent that the solution would be difficult to scale. Firstly, SFSA struggled to bring on board enough local expertise, relying heavily on support from Bangladesh and Kenya. This made it hard to arrive at the right product for the local context. Delivering insurance products requires a large range of partners including regulators, tech partners, insurers, reinsurers, and distributors. SFSA found there was not enough interest or capacity amongst potential partners to create and scale a product that would satisfy client value and commercial profit. Investing in a large-scale program to gather enough data points to identify the right products and business models would have required significant external funding. This was not readily available. SFSA's insurance workstream decided it was not an efficient use of resources. The Foundation's senior management agreed. After five years of effort and learning, SFSA halted its Indonesian insurance work in 2022.

The Stage Gate process and Portfolio Management Board are intended to help inform decisions on selection, evaluation and exiting. However, both are still imperfect processes. Quite a lot of *subjectivity* remains. As one interviewee noted: “Walking away takes courage.” Another remarked that staying in takes courage, too: Patient investors help high-potential innovations to cross the “Valley of Death” and ideally come out of it stronger.

The rationale for exiting must be clear and clearly communicated. One interviewee couldn’t understand why, for instance, radio work in Kenya was stopped and further investment into developing a sustainable business model was not pursued. This program was a collaboration between county governments and local radio stations to provide advice efficiently to thousands of previously underserved farmers – on the face of it, enormously scalable. Another interviewee said that the Foundation should already have stopped putting money into ACRE (see below).

Most interviewees acknowledged that although thinking around scaling is mains-treamed in the organization, there are *still projects being authorized that resemble the unscalable philanthropic projects* of the Foundation’s early days. This may be due to individual interests, long-term relationships, or accepting donor money for projects that are not particularly scalable. One inter-viewee estimated that about 20% of what SFSA does is “old-fashioned philanthropy” and 80% is sustainable and scalable.

SFSA struggles to decide whether everything it works on must be scalable and *how scala-ble a program must be*. There is a clear commitment to scalability, but when and where there should be exceptions is not fully clear. A long-term project which exemplifies this dilemma is the Foundation’s work on tef in Ethiopia.

Committing to Scaling

Tef is an “orphan” crop: locally highly important, but largely ignored by international research. It is Ethiopia’s staple cereal. SFSA started investing in improving tef yields in 2006. Five new varieties resulted. Since 2017, SFSA has been concentrating on getting these into farmers’ hands. It works with the Ethiopian Institute for Agricultural Research and local seed companies. To date, the 17-year program has delivered 1600 tons of early-generation seed directly to more than 300,000 farmers. In 2022, SFSA attracted funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to increase investment in the Ethiopian tef seed sector.

The example of AAA Maize (corn) provides a strong contrast. (AAA =Affordable, Accessible and Asian). Since 2013, SFSA, Syngenta and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) have worked in a public-private partnership to develop drought-tolerant AAA Maize in India. Uptake by local seed companies and farmers has been rapid. The potential scale for a corn project is vast, and benefits are already being rolled out in India and elsewhere in Asia. Worldwide, however, there are many projects on corn improvement. Work on tef, by comparison, is rare. The private sector invests heavily in corn research; catalytic philanthropic investment therefore seems more appropriate for tef.

Finding the balance between the Foundation's impact aims and scaling goals can be difficult. SFSA has targets on increasing the use by farmers of climate-smart resilient agricultural practices. However, it also aims to be demand-driven and there may not always be a perfect match between the service farmers demand and improved climate-resilient agriculture practices. To try to meet both farmer and Foundation goals, SFSA is attempting to combine services in some of its agri-services offerings. Theoretically, this should ensure the uptake of climate-smart services alongside the more standard items.

However, including more services increases the overall cost. The higher unit cost per package may discourage long-term crowding-in of private sector service providers only interested in selling the most profitable elements. In addition, some farmers may turn elsewhere and save money by buying only the basic items. A partner with similar impact goals to SFSA and a similarly market-based approach highlighted that *if there isn't a win-win for the farmer and the private sector partner, market-based projects will not scale*.

There is no quick fix for this challenge. It needs to be worked on continuously to find the *right alignment of incentives.* SFSA needs to prove to farmers that buying the full package will bring them a higher return on investment than with single items. For example, a key step in adopting climate-smart resilient agriculture practices is soil testing. Pre-commercial farmers with scarce resources need to prioritize, and soil tests are not high on their list. In India, SFSA has used demonstration plots to show farmers how investing in soil testing helps them save money on fertilizer. Proof like this helps increase demand for a package that includes a service originally viewed as less important. However, such demonstrations require upfront funding for the plots as well as monitoring and evaluation.

SFSA works with innovative ideas at the *proof-of-concept stage, which requires rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E)*. Interviewees believe that SFSA runs high-quality M&E but needs to invest further in this area and be more systematic. In some projects, an external grant may cover M&E costs, but greater in-house capacity is needed. Head Office staff supports country programs but the team in Nigeria, for example, is eager to build its own M&E capacity as close to farmers as possible. Interviewees also felt that SFSA could do more to conti-nuously document its learning and to strengthen its knowledge management.

Engagement with policymakers and governments is critical but difficult. Several interviewees highlighted the public sector's potential to be a game-changing partner in scaling. This is particularly important in countries such as Bangladesh where governments are very proactive in setting policy. Challenges cited include building policymakers' "market solutions mindset".

As with M&E, interviewees felt that the Foundation was already doing good policy work but could support even more.

Whom to hand off to, when and how? Interviewees involved in handover processes recommend thinking about these dilemmas early and often. Handing off can be very painful and complicated if done too late or to the wrong partner. Creating a bridging organization or catalytic intermediary can be difficult to finance. To bring on partners, SFSA must be willing to let go of some control and ownership. Interviewees felt that in the past the organization has taken a lot upon itself when creating or growing catalytic intermediaries. This may have complicated the process of bringing in the right partners at the right time for sustainable scaling. SFSA also needs to consider its post-handover roles. Sometimes it stays connected with the program. For example, it is a minority shareholder in ACRE and an observer Board member with FarmForce.

The challenges of hand-offs

ACRE Africa, the brand name of Agriculture and Climate Risk Enterprise Ltd. (ACRE), links farmers to insurance products. Products include crop, livestock, and index insurance products to shield farmers against unpredictable weather conditions. ACRE Africa is not an insurance company but provides services to local insurers and other stakeholders. ACRE evolved in 2014 from Kilimo Salama, an agricultural insurance program launched in Kenya in 2008 and funded by the Foundation and investors such as International Finance Corporation. Kilimo Salama was a pioneering project introducing insurance products to farmers. The transition to become a viable business proved complicated.

Most Kilimo Salama staff had come from an NGO or donor background. During the transition, their lack of commercial know-how became apparent. The business case to transition into a commercial entity was based on the success of providing insurance to over 300,000 people. Kilimo Salama had been innovative and created the 300,000-strong customer base of farmers with no previous knowledge of the possibilities of insurance. However, ACRE now faced competition from new players who targeted these customers.

The new entity also faced regulatory complications which limited its profitability.

When ACRE was spun off, SFSA retained a majority shareholding. This brought with it the financial burden of keeping the new entity afloat. SFSA and ACRE struggled to attract investment from commercial partners. Even more than capital, ACRE needed strategic support from a commercial player that understood the African context and could refine the model to continue to scale. Eventually ZEP-RE, a leading reinsurer in Africa, purchased 56% of the company, with SFSA retaining 25% and a seat on the board.

The ACRE experience has reinforced SFSA's belief in the importance of not taking on too much risk and financial burden alone. The true scaling success of ACRE may be determined in the years ahead.Staff working on Kilimo Salama and ACRE highlighted how ground-breaking the work had been: it led the way in developing new insurance markets where other organizations were not willing to go. SFSA's greatest contribution to scaling may be that it developed a new market, rather than just establishing ACRE as a commercial entity.

Lessons from SFSA

Scaling – and mainstreaming scaling – is challenging, time-intensive and does not always produce the intended or desired result. Despite all the good things that SFSA is doing to mainstream scaling, it is not easy work. It requires patience and persistence. It is a journey full of compromises; failure can be hard to accept. Many SFSA innovations are still at an early scaling stage despite significant investment of time and resources. Saying "no" or ending a project is difficult but critical to focus on what is better suited for scaling and impact.

Organizational culture is critical. SFSA has a culture of innovation, entrepre-neurship, intrapreneurship, and long-term thinking. There is a strong propensity within the Foundation to tinker, pivot, and solve problems. Some staff also like to think about the "big picture". The Foundation's low staff attrition rates help retain knowledge and build networks.

Hire the right people and invest in their development – The importance of people in a scaling journey cannot be overstated. Organizations must ensure the right balance of staff skillsets. SFSA needs both the technical and commercial skills to assess interventions and build business models. Staff's networks are also valuable. As well as hiring the right people, SFSA also needs to develop their skills in partnership management, communications, and business acumen.

Visionary thinking and effective leadership are needed – as well as structure and discipline. SFSA has shifted from small-scale philanthropic projects to thinking about systems. Staff can refer to a theory of change and a scaling strategy as guidan-ce. However, they also need tools and clear processes, performance indicators and accountabi-lity to help them achieve the hard task of scaling. Effective leadership is critical to create the vision and manage its realization by mainstreaming the various elements of scaling into the organization.

Create a learning culture - There have been extensive efforts to promote cross-organizational learning at all levels. Exchange visits have helped country teams to learn from each other, and transplant tried and tested ideas. Staff want to learn; it is critical that SFSA continues to facilitate this process.

Think and work globally and locally - Scaling happens across different geographies and in different thematic areas in large country programs. SFSA is now also exploring global or multi-country programs. One example is the creation of an Entrepreneurship Academy to globalize the Foundation's experience in training agri-entrepreneurs. Another is an international network to deliver climate-smart agriculture innovations to smallholders at scale. A global strategy needs to consider the complexity of this variety of programs and geographies. Empowered local staff need flexibility to make things work. The most recent SFSA strategy was developed over 18 months in a manner which staff found inclusive. Country teams feel that they can create scalable projects that align to the global scaling strategy and match their local contexts.

Scaling is difficult without partnering and influencing - SFSA has a strong conviction and some evidence that partnering with the private and public sector is one of the key ingredients of scaling. There is a need to develop networks, create and manage strong partnerships, and build capacity. The importance of identifying partners early and vetting them thoroughly is a lesson learned.

Build the evidence base - Monitoring and evaluation are necessities for decision-making, internally and with partners, as are tools for influencing. Data and impartial insights are crucial for informed and objective decision-making. Evidence is an essential basis for scaling.

Looking to the Future

The following are recommendations and areas of exploration as SFSA continues its scaling journey.

Embed more structure and objectivity - Staff need to use the existing tools and processes. This includes better applying the portfolio management approach to move innovations through the scaling stage gates and sharing more lessons on this approach. Performance indicators are needed to help staff understand how to implement scale. Objective, rational decision-making is needed to decide on project scale-ups, exits and handoffs. There needs to be more discipline in saying "no" and moving on to something else.

Develop and implement partnership management strategies and tactics - More approaches and tools are needed. (Examples include those of the Partnering Initiative, Partnership Brokers Association, and other organizations). These will help staff to vet, structure, manage and evaluate partnerships and the partnering cycle better, especially for multistakeholder partnerships. Improved management would also mean identifying partners early and letting go of partnerships that are not serving their purpose.

Invest more in monitoring, evaluation, learning and knowledge management - Interviewees feel this is a critical area for objectivity and decision-making, strengthening the organization and future work.

Learn from external sources - Discussions relating to outside organizations tended to focus on how much SFSA could influence them. Less thought, it seems, goes into which organizations or networks SFSA could learn from. Identifying the organizations at the forefront of thinking on scaling may be easier than spotting the ones improving their back-end operations and processes to facilitate scaling.

Keep interrogating and learning about the process of handoffs - SFSA has some experience in handoffs and spinoffs. However, it plans to do more and will thus need to improve its lesson-learning in this area.

Seek an equilibrium between impact and commercial opportunities - The Foundation needs to think more about how best to balance its impact aims as a non-profit with its emphasis on commercial scaling.

Have patience - The entire scaling process takes time. It requires partnership and capacity-building as well as influencing and pivoting when necessary. Anticipating how long scaling will take at every part of the journey is hard — it always takes longer than anticipated. The Foundation's role as an early "engine" means that other organizations do the system scaling. The resulting delay in receiving long-term proof of success also requires patience.

Continue to let context drive decisions - Many organizations would like to standardize and structure scaling. However, the setting, the partners, and the solution itself greatly vary. These contextual factors always influence and sometimes drive the processes and tools needed. Mainstreaming scaling therefore always requires flexibility to allow the most appropriate approach to take shape.

Annex - Useful Links

- Partnership Brokers Association: Brokering Better Partnerships Handbook
- SFSA. Progressing innovations towards scale-up: From learning to action
- SFSA Strategy Paper 2021-25
- Syngenta Foundation | Sustainable Agriculture Report 2022

A Bright Future for Smallholder Farming

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