

Info Note

‘CSA Plan’: A guide to scaling climate-smart agriculture

Concepts and lessons from designing CSA programs and policies in sub-Saharan Africa
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Key messages

- State and non-state actors are taking significant steps to scale up CSA in Africa and globally
- ‘CSA Plan’ provides a flexible and concrete approach to support participatory and evidence-based CSA programs and policies
- Within only two years, CSA Plan has already contributed to informing CSA programming in more than 20 countries

The CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) has developed ‘CSA Plan’, a guide for scaling climate-smart agriculture (CSA), in response to demand from partners for practical approaches to support evidence-based planning, programming, and policy. CSA Plan consists of four components: (1) Situation Analysis; (2) Targeting and Prioritizing; (3) Program Support; and (4) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (Figure 1). Within each component of CSA Plan are information, tools, and techniques to enable action. CSA Plan components can be and are being applied both independently and as a package across levels of decision making from subnational to continental scales globally. Here we describe the concepts underpinning the four-step approach derived from lessons learned during last two years of working with state and non-state actors to scale-up CSA.

Why do we need CSA Plan?

CSA is rapidly gaining traction in Africa. Governments are integrating CSA into National Agriculture Investment Plans and other policies, regional and continental entities are forming alliances to develop CSA implementation programs and policies, and large-scale investments are being planned to support CSA activities through global funds, international finance institutions, national governments, bilateral donors, and foundations.

CSA, however, is an approach to resilient and productive agriculture that can include actions ranging from improving field management to changing policies. Furthermore, CSA is context-specific, with many interventions likely

being climate-smart somewhere, but none being CSA everywhere. And what is climate-smart also changes with time. This means that when initiating new activities, restructuring existing agricultural programs to enhance CSA goals, or scaling up ongoing projects, decision-makers must think creatively and cross-sectorally in terms of both scope and implementation. So, how can CSA planning and implementation be operationalized and mainstreamed with these complex decision making contexts?

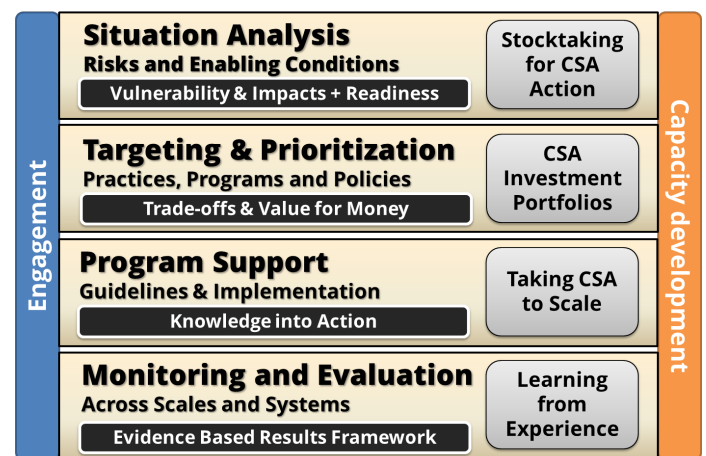


Figure 1: Major components of CSA Plan. Under each component are information, tools, and approaches to enable action.

Steps in CSA Plan

Situation analysis

The first step in establishing a CSA program is to conduct a situation analysis, capturing the current status of CSA initiatives, current and future climate vulnerabilities, as well as the enabling environment across sectors at multiple levels. The agricultural, political, social, environmental, and economic contexts in which the CSA approach is being applied are explored, highlighting the entry points for investing in priority CSA initiatives. Content of the situation analysis is usually based on existing global and national data sources, as well as expert input and surveys of both farmers and technical experts, and can also incorporate more localized data if available. It answers key questions about (i) the importance of agriculture in society, (ii) risks and vulnerabilities of agricultural sector, (iii) existing and

promising practices and services, (iv) institutional and policy environment—both barriers and enabling conditions, and (v) financing opportunities to identify potential entry points for CSA action.

Targeting and prioritizing

A range of technological, institutional, and policy options for climate-smart interventions exist that have varying environmental and economic impacts and costs. Identifying the most appropriate interventions needs to account for both stakeholder preferences and potential tradeoffs across CSA outcomes. CSA Plan's targeting and prioritizing step builds on this premise by using advanced analytical techniques nested within participatory processes to narrow an extensive list of possible practices, services, and policies down to a range of best-fit options that provide value for money and can be scaled out, which may serve to attract investment and funding. The outcome of this step is a stakeholder-selected and evidence-based portfolio of CSA investments including ex-ante assessments of benefits and costs.

Program support

Moving from a set of priorities to on-the-ground implementation requires well-designed and informed programs. Step 3 in the cycle of CSA Plan, Program Support concentrates on developing tangible materials and plans to help actors implement CSA interventions on the ground. We deliver tangible co-generated and demand-driven products—extension materials, business models, implementation plans, etc.—for a diverse constituency of end-users that enable the delivery of information and services. Products created through Program Support describe the 'how to' to help actors implement CSA interventions on the ground effectively.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (ME&L)

CSA Plan's monitoring, evaluation, and learning component develops strategies and tools to track progress of implementation, evaluate impact, as well as facilitate iterative learning to improve CSA planning and implementation. The primary audience of the monitoring, evaluation and learning component of CSA Plan is program and project designers and managers. CSA Plan's monitoring, evaluation and learning approach helps select which type of metrics (e.g., readiness, process or outcome), indicators, and monitoring approaches are suitable for a given situation. The objective of this approach is to provide practical solutions to track progress, monitor impact, and align with other monitoring frameworks such as national agricultural statistics, the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program, Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition, and Sustainable Development Goals.

Effectiveness of CSA Plan

Steps of CSA Plan have been implemented in more than 25 countries globally and 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa with partners including AU-NEPAD, Regional Economic Communities, national governments and NGOs. In this short two years, these activities have yielded:

- Situation analysis (CSA Country Profiles) for 14 countries including 7 African countries
- Targeting and prioritization using the CIAT-CCAFS CSA Prioritization Framework with 7 countries globally (3 in Africa) and has supported the development of 5 additional CSA Country Framework Programs in Africa.
- Program support has supported AU-NEPAD and the Alliance for CSA in Africa to develop a practical guide for CSA implementation and the ICRAF's CSA X-ray analysis of what CSA interventions work where.
- ME&L has led to the participatory selection of indicators to monitor CSA in 3 countries and input into the global discussion on monitoring CSA through the Knowledge Action Group of the Global CSA Alliance.

The true benchmark of impact for CSA Plan will be changes in farmers' livelihoods. However, momentum around CSA is just now accelerating and action on CSA is in the planning stage in most locations. Thus CSA Plan currently aims to inform plans and policies. Since inception, there have been several notable successes in national planning, in part due to CSA Plan activities, including the Government of Kenya integrating CSA as a goal in its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, the Government of Tanzania developing a CSA Implementation Guide, and multiple donors stating that they will align priorities with outcome of the Government of Mali's CSA prioritization process.

Conclusions and implications

Governments and development partners implementing CSA face many challenges due to the complex and dynamic nature of agriculture, food security, and climate change issues. CSA Plan offers a flexible and concrete approach to help operationalize CSA in efficient and effective ways. Though relative short since its inception, CSA Plan has already shown potential to yield outcomes for improved participatory and evidence-based planning. Future efforts need to both scale up the planning processes and transition to documenting impact of informed decision making for farmers on the ground.

*This brief reports on the lessons learned from the CCAFS' Flagship Project 'Partnerships for Scaling Climate-Smart Agriculture' (P4S). CCAFS provided catalytic support for P4S. Supplemental funding has been provided by USAID, DFID-IMMANA, the World Bank and USDA. **Todd Rosenstock** is an Environmental Scientist at ICRAF in Nairobi, Kenya (t.rosenstock@cgiar.org). **Evan Girvetz** leads the Decision and Policy Analysis Group at CIAT-Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. **Caitlin Corner-Dolloff** was an Adaptation Scientist with CIAT and is now a CSA Specialist with USDA in Washington DC, USA. **Christine Lamanna** is a Climate Change Decision Scientist at ICRAF in Nairobi, Kenya.*