Review of CCAFS Scaling Activities

Final Report

CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change,
Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)

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Contents

Abstract

This review was commissioned by CCAFS Learning Platform for Partnerships and Capacity Building for Scaling Climate Smart Agriculture, with the aim to reflect on CCAFS project portfolio to highlight good practices and gaps in implementation of CCAFS Scaling Activities.

The review was undertaken with a systemic approach, using the concepts of design thinking and system thinking throughout its methodology and analysis. 21 practitioners throughout CCAFS regional, flagship and learning platform portfolios were interviewed between March and May 2019. The results are presented in a way that allows CCAFS to identify areas to deepen systematically upon; areas for CCAFS's further strategic or conceptual support, and areas that require more research by CCAFS. The systemic analysis shows that CCAFS has the potential to consciously transform into a learning organization and an innovation environment, thereby fostering and increasing its performance, relevance and overall impact in changing and challenging circumstances.

The results were discussed and validated with the CCAFS Core Team (CT) in the frame of a CCAFS CT Workshop on Scaling on 15th May in Madrid. In open learning formats, the CT prioritized its next step. The review report further contains a set of recommendations, derived from both the review and the CT Workshop on Scaling, which shall help CCAFS to transform into both a learning organization and an innovation environment.

Acknowledgements

This review would not have been possible without the support of CCAFS project leaders and implementers. The author would like to thank the interviewees for participating and for sharing their insights about their impressive work and their inspiring experiences; these are the foundations of this review.

Furthermore, the author would like to thank the CCAFS Core Team for their active participation and contributions in the CCAFS Core Team Scaling Workshop in May 2019, and the LP6 for their continuous support.

1. Introduction

Review concept

Within CCAFS, scaling is understood as the set of processes required to go beyond pilot projects to bring more quality solutions, in the context of climate variability, climate change and uncertainty about future climate conditions, to millions of farmers in a fast, equitable and lastingly manner, through the following four areas of action: (1) building evidence; (2) developing capacity of institutions and services; (3) coordinating climate and agricultural policies; and (4) stable, strategic investment (working definition of the CCAFS Learning Platform Partnerships and Capacity Building for Scaling Climate Smart Agriculture, LP6).

The premise of the Review was that scaling processes are already happening and are being reported on within CCAFS. Based on this premise, this Review was commissioned by LP6 to reflect upon CCAFS scaling activities, highlighting good practices and gaps, and to enable institutional learning and improvement from the implementation perspective. Differently to an evaluation or impact assessment, the aim of the review was not to assess the impacts of the program, but rather the most promising ways (including approaches, pathways, tools …) to achieve the projected impacts. The targeted outputs of the review were:

- Information on needs from "the ground",
- Information on structural needs for change within the organization,
- Management input from involved staff,
- Clear demand orientated mandate for LP6 activities,
- Learning and exchange format as "service product" for LP6,
- Implementation of LP6 learning and exchange format.

Review of CCAFS Scaling Activities – a systemic approach

Scaling is a complex process that happens in complex environments. Therefore, it requires a holistic approach and an adaptive systemic management. Further, scaling is a highly user-centric process that can benefit from a business perspective, in terms of usability, added value to both the users and providers, access and distribution, and sustainability. This will require research organizations and projects to respond with changes at a systemic level, including the areas of project design and implementation, M&E, finance, management and organization.

The Review therefore used the concepts of design thinking and system thinking with the aim to draw organizational learnings. These concepts were applied throughout the Reviews process, from the design of the interviews, to the analysis and finally, as concept for a connected Scaling Workshop with the CCAFS Core Team, validating the results and prioritizing next steps.

Interview selection

During the Review, 21 active practitioners within CCAFS ongoing projects were interviewed during March to May 2019. Criteria for selection were:

- Good or excellent results of the outcome evaluation 2017 (6 interviews)
- Leading/participating in a CCAFS Learning Platform (3 interviews)
- Recommendation of CT members, referring to "promising projects that did not scale (yet)", "development of tools", "innovative finance sector engagement" (6 interviews)
- Contributed to LP6 as from MARLO report 2018, selected for "innovative partnerships", "potentially disruptive technologies", "innovative private sector engagement" (3 projects)
- Selected for balanced CGIAR-Center representation (2 projects).

A balanced representation of projects among the five CCAFS Regions was another criterion, including global projects, as well as a balanced representation of Flagships 1-4 plus the Learning Platform on Gender and Social Inclusion.

The interviews were semi-structured, with open lead-questions in order to draw on the practitioners´ experience and perspectives. Interview topics were based on the main findings of the multi-stakeholder CCAFS SEA and cross-CRP Conference on Scaling in Hanoi 2018 (Koerner et al. 2019). Gender, youth and social inclusion were added as additional topic as specified in the Review's terms of reference.

2. Learnings from the interviews

This chapter summarizes the main learnings from the interviews with CCAFS staff and participants that are already engaged in scaling activities. These main points were mentioned by the interviewees across the different topics, be it as lesson learnt, challenge or wish for support, and are presented in a way that allows CCAFS to identify further areas to deepen on systematically, areas for strategic or conceptual support, and areas that need further research and input of the CCAFS.

Areas for CCAFS to deepen on systematically

The following findings reflect what CCAFS' projects identified as key issues for successful scaling. CCAFS would benefit from drawing on this existing practical knowledge and experience, and facilitate learning and exchange throughout its portfolio. Learning formats should also allow for external input and participation.

- Active stakeholder/end-user engagement across all levels throughout the projects with a focus on their respective needs.

The active engagement of all stakeholders from end-users to private and public sector partners was mentioned as an important lesson learnt, as well as a key success factor. The strong focus on stakeholder needs allowed projects to find effective ways of implementation, embedded in the contexts of both the

partner and the end-user levels. Projects applied different approaches from continuous stakeholder workshops to active lobbying.

- Using iterative user-centric project and product design and implementation approaches.

Projects are partly already using user-centric design and implementation approaches, which they design and plan individually. These approaches were identified a key success factor for scaling. At the same time, they require a lot of resources and an own learning process by each project.

- Inviting other sciences into the implementation process and working with an entrepreneurial spirit.

Scaling itself involves many components and is itself a complex process. Therefore, practitioners strongly recommended to use the experience and knowledge of other scientific fields, especially of social sciences, to address the challenges of implementation, which lay outside of their own scientific realm.

Areas for CCAFS strategic or conceptual support

The following findings reflect what CCAFS' projects identified as topics critical for successful scaling, where CCAFS' strategic or conceptual support would be helpful for improving the projects' performance. CCAFS would benefit from addressing these issues at the management level together with funding stakeholders and donors.

- Creating evidence on scaling, for different purposes and at the different stages of the innovation development and scaling processes.

Practitioners identified the lack of evidence on scaling as a crucial point, both as proof for donors, as also for learnings across projects. The needed evidence might be different, or occur at different times, for the diverse types and at the different stages of innovation and scaling processes. Developing and applying key questions, milestones and process indicators for scaling can help projects to better track their own processes, to generate evidence and learning along the different phases of innovation development and scaling, and to engage in knowledge management and sharing in a more meaningful way.

- Working on the time difference between project durations and reaching impact at scale.

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the duration of project implementation and the time of massive adoption were not the same. In many cases, reaching impact would lay outside the projects' duration. This allows the conclusion that both project design and project measurements need to be adapted, either for measuring scale beyond the project implementation, or by designing hand-over points or phases for each project solutions, with agreements of the partners on the responsibilities of further impact evaluations.

- Creating (CGIAR or CCAFS) strategic level coherence resulting in consistent and coherent funding structures.

Practitioners found that there is little coherence at the strategic level of the CG-system, resulting in a competition for small funds with small projects. It is questioned whether this is the adequate environment

to reach the impact at scale that is asked for by the donor side. It was suggested that joint advocacy could lead to a more coherent negotiation position towards donors to improve funding structures regarding consistency and coherence, which would in turn help to improve both project design and implementation.

Areas for CCAFS for further research

The following findings reflect what CCAFS' projects identified as topics that need further research, discussion and input in order to provide stronger operational orientation. It is recommended that CCAFS involves the entire scaling community (beyond the CGIAR) in addressing these topics.

- Discussing risk and unintended negative consequences within the scaling community to increase awareness and identify possible approaches.

Scaling also includes scaling potential risks and unintended consequences. So far, only few projects addressed the topic of risk, and if so rather regarding the risks of a specific technology. Unintended negative consequences, whether at the technological, social, economic or broader environmental levels, were considered explicitly only in one project, using a "do-no-harm" approach. Therefore, there is the need for risk monitor processes accompanying each project. This approach should take into account that no implementation can be planned to its full complexity and therefore offer spaces to monitor and quickly react to risks and potential unintended negative consequences.

- Creating strategies on how to involve women and youth in scaling.

Gender, youth and social inclusion was found relevant by most projects, though the integration of these concepts in the projects was highly diverse, given the different contexts the projects were working in, and their different foci. Some projects mentioned also the potential leverage of women and youth in scaling different solutions. So far, projects did not have a strategy that would help projects to analyze, identify and in the end leverage this potential.

- Building learning and exchange formats for the scaling community and providing strategic advice on scaling.

Interviewees found that it would be highly beneficial to have exchange formats where different experiences on scaling could be shared and elaborated on. As scaling itself is not a mechanical science, practitioners felt that the knowledge around it could not be captured at the theoretical level alone. Learning and exchange would require circular systems and process approaches, which would allow practitioners to work on and through their experiences without the predetermination of a theory that describes a potentially "right" way. At the same time, participants emphasized the need for strategic guidance on scaling.

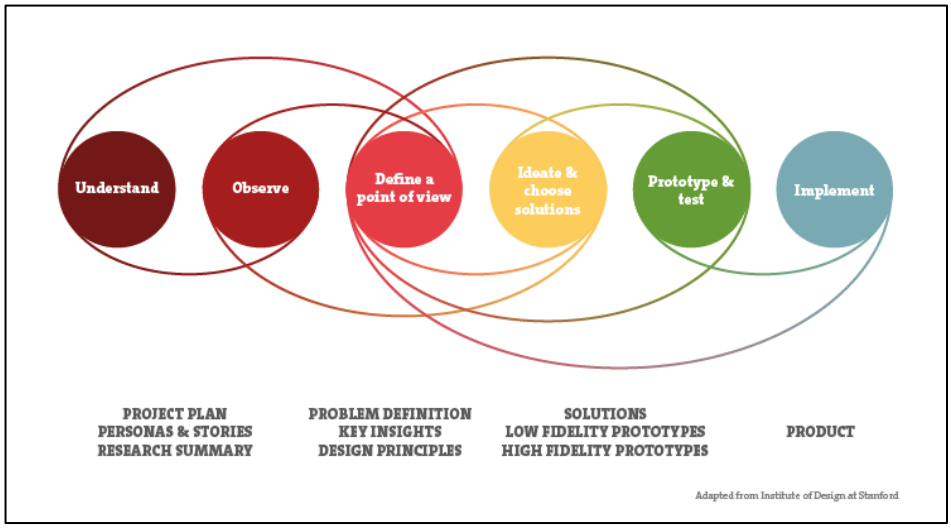
3. Analysis with the perspectives of design- and systems thinking

Design thinking

The concept

The methodology of "Design Thinking" (Conway, 2017) belongs to the concepts of user- or human-centered designs. It involves the user as integral part in the development of a product or service and therewith ensures its relevance, applicability and up-take by users. As an agile system, it uses iterative steps to gradually develop, test and adapt the product or service, until it is finally released. As shown in the graphic below, there is a first phase of understanding and observing (also called "empathizing" (d. School, 2014)), followed by a problem definition phase. Already here, iterations can take place to profoundly understand the context and the users' (and partners) needs. Only in the next phase, ideas are generated and pre-selected, based on which prototypes are developed and tested. Prototypes can be of the full products/solutions, or focus on key aspects and/or assumptions. Iterations happen throughout the whole process, also when a product is already released, which happens during the last phase of the process, and about to be adapted to another or wider context (scaling).

Figure 1: The design thinking process



Source: https://inchoo.net/ux-ui-design/practical-value-of-design-thinking/

Findings

The review used the design-thinking concept to gain an understanding how projects of the CCAFS portfolio engaged users and stakeholder within their scaling processes. The review found strong similarities of the CCAFS scaling approaches to the core principles of user- or human centered design. These were mainly:

- Strong user-centration and concentration on stakeholder needs;
- Iterative steps in "product" development, project adaption and implementation.

Projects found that using these principles allowed them to gain strong acceptance, buy in and commitment of the users and stakeholders from the beginning. Some projects used approaches with embedded human-centered design principles explicitly as a format for engaging partners and end-users. It further helped to ensure the usability of the designed solutions, both for the partners and end-users. Working along the users', partners´ and stakeholders' needs finally led to more sustainability of the solutions by embedding these in the respective contexts on individual, community and policy levels as well as in economic and public policy frameworks. Several interviewees recommended to apply these engagement activities across all projects, and strongly advocated for overall more circular project designs.

Especially for the latter point, projects found that an overall orientation from CCAFS side with regard to human-centric, iterative scaling was missing. Each project had to come up with its own solution to manage its scaling approach, encompassing product-development, stakeholder engagement and the implementation. Projects identified these as time and resource-consuming efforts, where support and orientation by the organization would be highly valued.

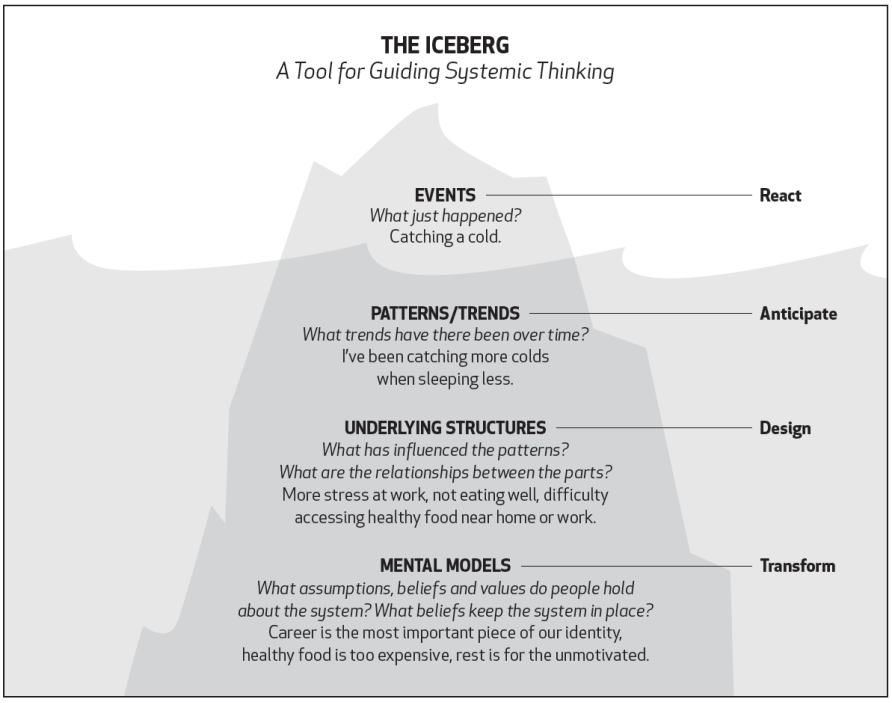
Systems thinking

The concept

The concept of systems thinking is useful when working with complex dynamic systems and problems. It works on the presumption that wicked problems defy the classical logic of problem and solution, but are rather a (momentary or reoccurring) symptom of an underlying system at work. A system is here seen as an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that produced outcomes (Meadows, 2008). As a discipline, system thinking can be used a framework for seeing interrelationships and patterns of change, rather than "static snapshots" of situations (Senge, 1990).

For its systemic analysis, the review used the systemic tool of the Iceberg-Modell. This model works with the hypothesis that only the smallest part of an issue is visible at the first sight. We see only the outcome at the event level. The patterns that lead to these events are underneath. These are themselves supported by structural phenomena, which are generated from or hold in place by certain mindsets.

Figure 2: The Iceberg Model



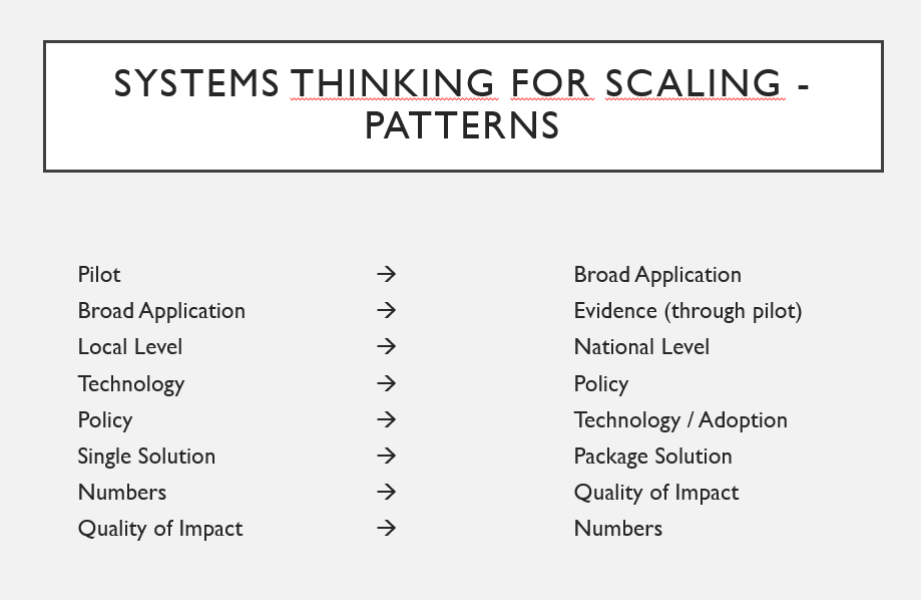
Source: https://nwei.org/iceberg/

Findings

Using this systemic perspective on the CCAFS portfolio, it became evident that there was a lack of clarity regarding scaling and a lack of consensus about the definition of scaling among the different projects. Some projects even distanced themselves from "scaling" since it was perceived as pressure from donor side to reach a defined number of end-users with technologies, regardless the quality or optimum scale of the solutions.

At the pattern level, it was observed that most projects started with a certain premise, defined by their or their centers' core disciplines and the challenges that they faced on the ground, but had to adapt their approach and to incorporate other disciples (mainly of social sciences), throughout the increasingly complex process of scaling. The graphic below shows a summary of the entry points of the projects that participated in the review, and the topics that they had to incorporate in order to reach a sustainable scale. Looking closely at this pattern reveals that both sides are complementary:

Figure 3: Patterns of CCAFS Scaling Projects



Source: A. H. Theissen 2019

At the level of mental models, interviewees found that they had started as experts in their respective scientific research fields, often times unaware of the complexities and demands of scaling. This linear mental model explains the limitations at the structural level of all parties involved (including scientists, donors, etc.). During the interviews, the interviewees described their own changes in their mental models, which had made them more dynamic, flexible and resilient in order to answer to the challenges of scaling. This change of the researchers' mental model is ground breaking and creates a unique fertile environment for successful scaling, which can be leveraged across the CCAFS program.

Analysis

Using the concepts of design thinking and system thinking as basis for analysis in this review allowed for the following observations and conclusions:

- Interviewees described how their work for reaching impact at scale would benefit greatly from using circular, non-linear project designs, which take into account complex implementation processes and – environments, and provide concepts, lessons learnt and knowledge exchange.
- Interviewees described their transformation from scientist to implementers and solution providers as highly exciting and motivating. This change in mental model has a huge potential to create a major change towards sustainable impact within the CCAFS portfolio.
- Scaling can be seen as a meta-concept that gives projects the possibility to create holistic implementation approaches. Additionally, it allows to change mental models at their core. Instead of merely reacting to an event ("need to achieve scale"), CCAFS can build on and foster the development of a scaling mindset among its participants, which enables these to work in, around,

or even on the structures, that projects often perceived as being limiting the scaling processes. CCAFS can let itself be guided by the question "How can we improve our work *through* scaling?"

4. Organizational Learnings

As a people-based organization, CCAFS has the opportunity to tap into its potential by inspiring and motivating the entire organization to learn and openly exchange knowledge and experiences.

CCAFS as learning organization

CCAFS has the potential to become a learning organization that remains efficient and competitive in a changing and challenging environment. A constantly learning organization has a strong narrative about facing challenges and using them to improve its work, thus fundamentally enhancing the objective of true sustainable impact.

At the moment, there is not much clarity on what scaling means for CCAFS as an organization and on how to handle demand from the donor side regarding impact at scale. This leads to reactions such as the questioning the demand itself, which might be justified, but need to be taken up in a way that they will lead to productive solutions. The above-mentioned guiding question will provide the framework for continuous discussions that are needed to develop a strong and shared narrative on scaling, which also accommodates the balancing of perceived dichotomies. This strong narrative will help CCAFS projects to improve their scaling activities, and help CCAFS to increase and sustain its relevance for its clients.

CCAFS as an innovation environment

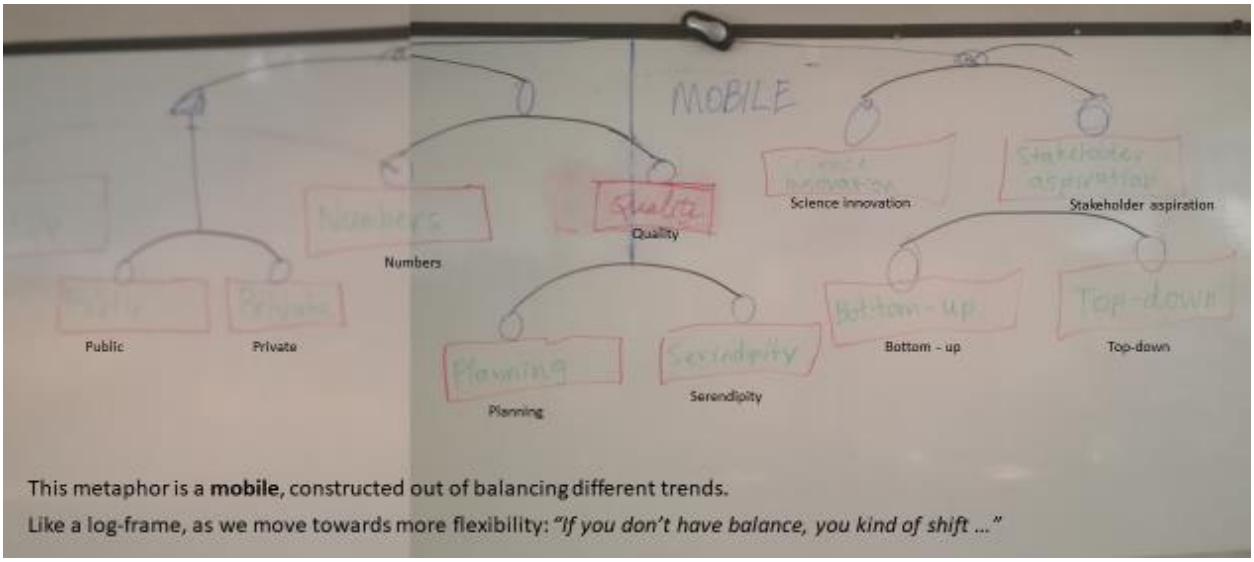
CCAFS was already perceived by some projects as an innovation environment. This related mainly to being flexible, for "listening to what we are doing" and in some cases, for having given uncomplicated seed funding for prototyping. CCAFS is further characterized by its highly motivated people working on a diverse set of highly relevant technologies. It has access to own or leveraged resources and excellent communication with and recognition of powerful actors across all levels.

This puts CCAFS in a great position to transform consciously into an innovation environment, developing and testing new approaches and solutions that could serve as example and be leveraged across the CGIAR and the entire development community. This would include establishing a space for deconstructing classical project designs, and innovating and testing new and newly combined formats. Thus, different approaches to achieve sustainable impact at scale can be developed, tested and implemented, within the CCAFS or in partnerships, inside or outside the CGIAR system.

5. CCAFS Core Team Workshop on Scaling

The results of the Review of CCAFS Scaling Activities were presented and validated in the frame of a Scaling Workshop for and with the CCAFS Core Team. This workshop was designed as an interactive format to engage the CCAFS community in active learning processes. In open learning formats, the group reflected and exchanged upon the findings of the review, and gave management input, e.g. by illustrating further dichotomies, which need to be balanced:

Picture 1: Group output of "metaphor" session, different dichotomies



Source: CCAFS CT Scaling Workshop, 15th May, Madrid.

The Workshop's key results in terms of next steps prioritized by the CCAFS Core Team were:

Table 1: Summary of CCAFS CT prioritized next steps.

Ranking: 12 Digits
• Changing criteria for success • Project differentiation to capture scaling opportunities –large, small, prize-based • Longer-term commitments with stage-gates
Ranking: 12 Digits
• Changing the tone of the dialogue of all users • Social movement around scaling … How? • Engage with the right partners with the know-how on how to scale
Ranking: 7 Digits
• Increasing risk appetite • Strategic risk-taking and willingness to fail • Encourage innovations.

Ranking: 6 Digits
• M&E + learning cycle from projects & among ourselves –use lessons better! • Broaden learning process and knowledge management
Ranking: 4 Digits
• Conceptualizing and mainstreaming scaling elements in the project cycles • Articulate principles of outcome 2.0 to CCAFS community • Use System & design thinking

Source: CCAFS CT Scaling Workshop, Madrid, 15th May 2019

6. Recommendations from the review and the CCAFS CT workshop on scaling

The following recommendations broadly follow the identified priorities of CCAFS Core Team, though not necessarily sequenced by its ranking. They are based on the insights gained from the Review of CCAFS Scaling Activities and enriched with further inputs of the systemic consultant.

Some recommendations refer to facilitating discussions and syntheses in the frame of workshops, conferences and meetings. Other recommendations rather aim at exploring the wide range of existing innovative processes happening already in the CCAFS or beyond, by using mixed approaches of desk studies, interviews and dialogue events.

Use scaling as a catalyst to improve project design and implementation

- Hold open discussions, conferences, workshops and internal meetings around the question of how the external pressure for scaling can improve and enrich CCAFS´ work towards achieving sustainable impact at scale.

Change the tone of the dialogue of all stakeholders

- Facilitate the space for developing strong narratives about scaling that accommodate dichotomies, and orients from fixed to process solutions. These narratives need to be revisited and evolve continuously.
- Put more attention to youth, gender and social inclusion in the scaling processes, e.g. by open sharing formats to analyze, identify and in the end leverage the potential of women and youth to promote impact in the context of scaling.

Change criteria for success

- Engage staff and address new roles for scaling to unlock staff's potentials and leverage their existing capabilities.
- Redefine ways to measure and reward success, e.g. by using challenges and competitions to incentivize entrepreneurial thinking, attracting innovative funding and strategic partnerships.

Seize scaling opportunities

- Establish a shared language of innovation to understand the different stages and types of innovation, development and scaling, e.g. by testing and socializing different indicators for technological and market readiness.
- Build on CCAFS and CGIAR's existing examples of innovative formats that support and/or fund innovation and scaling processes and use the evidence and learnings to engage with private and public donors/actors to further co-develop and test these/new formats.
- Support formats and opportunities that facilitate the flow of information among CCAFS participants and with the wider scaling community to make use of quick and pragmatic learnings.

Conceptualize and mainstream scaling elements in the project cycles / project design

- Explore, test and socialize iterative user-centric principles at the various stages and levels of scaling projects (design, implementation, M&E), to provide evidence and learnings on its different potential applications (also, when does it not work).
- Explore successful business and investment cases for scaling within CCAFS portfolio (and beyond) to generate learnings about approaches, tools (e.g. economic assessments) and operational implications that can feed into guidance for implementing projects.
- Explore existing innovative partnerships within the CCAFS and beyond, to provide learnings for engaging with additional strategic partners that can fill existing gaps in developing technological applications, business solutions and incubation or impact investment, e.g. start-ups, consultancy firms, impact investors and others.
- Explore how hand-over processes and ex-post impact assessments currently happen in the CCAFS portfolio, and use learnings to feed into project design.
- Explore new forms of evaluation and impact assessments, e.g. by engaging with stakeholders that either explore new ways of doing innovations themselves, look for interesting settings to apply and test new innovation formats, or would fund evaluations for the sake of informing their own investments in innovations better (e.g. innovation funds, impact investors).

Introduce longer term commitments with stage gates

- Use CCAFS' leverage with high level donors and policy institutions to develop a shared understanding on the innovation development and scaling processes, and the evidence needed to develop long-term formats with stage-gates.

Support strategic risk taking and willingness to fail, encourage innovation

- Explore spaces and funding formats that explicitly allow for trying out new and higher-risk ideas (e.g. seed funding, competitive calls), setting a frame for "cutting losses" and providing learnings.
- Increase awareness of potential risks and unintended consequences that come with scaling, e.g. by exploring and socializing concepts of "responsible scaling" or "do no harm".
- Connect to existing multi-stakeholder or sectoral networks and communities of practices to provide fresh inputs on scaling, potential synergetic new technologies and innovative partnerships.

Broaden process of M&E and knowledge management – use lessons better

- Develop a set of key questions, milestones and process indicators for the different stages of innovation development and scaling for all different formats.
- Explore and test different formats for learning, open sharing and documentation of the learnings, which serve for both building up expertise on the different learning formats, as well as building the stock of learnings on scaling.

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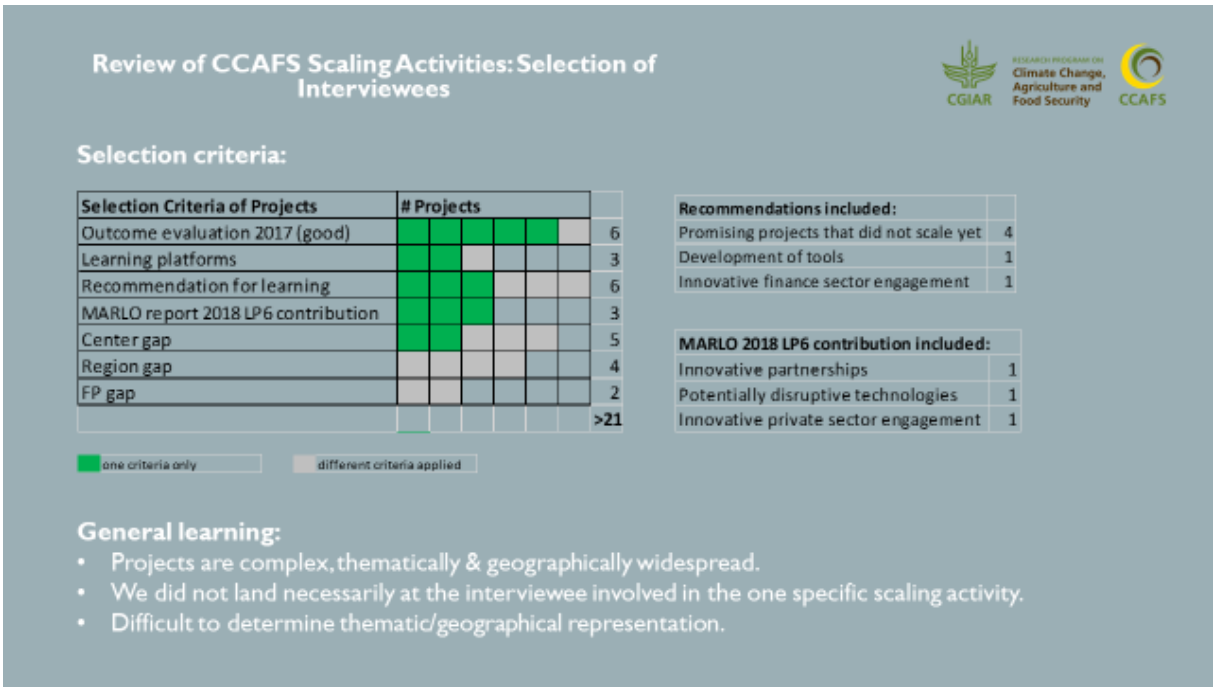
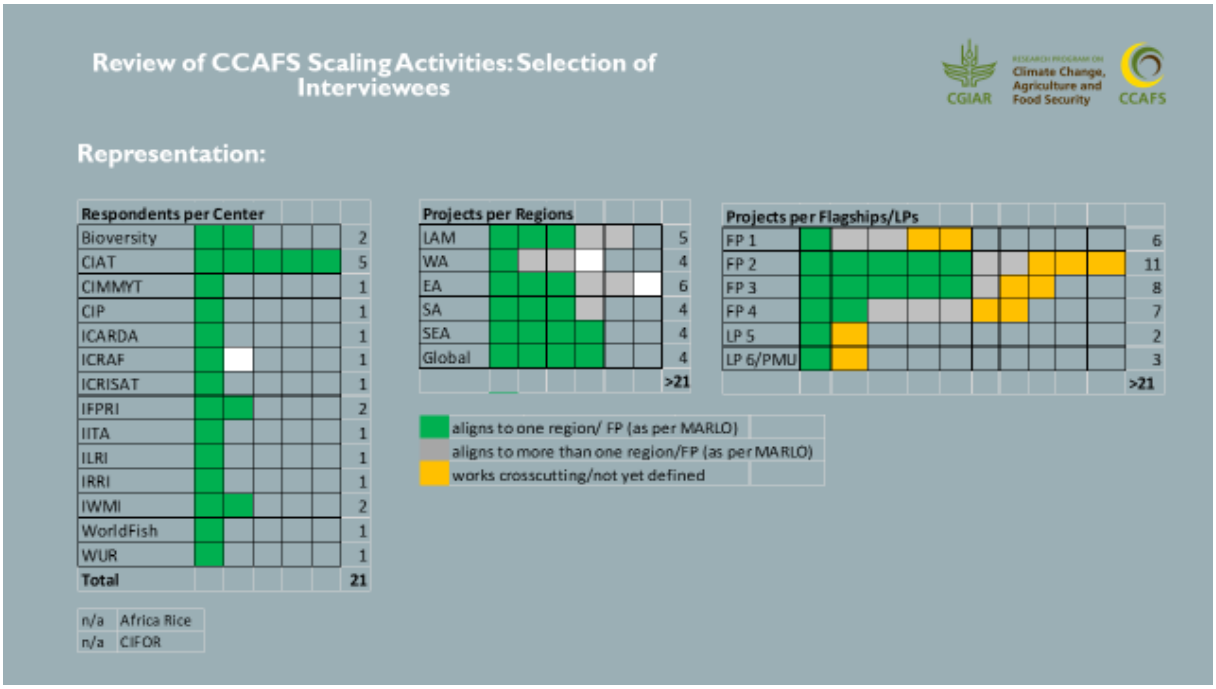
Appendix

Annex 1: Representation of Projects





Review of CCAFS Scaling Activities: Selection of Interviewees

Functions of interviewees within CCAFS:

Functions	# of interviewees	
Project leader		9
Project implementer		10
CoA leader		1
CCAFS contact points		3
Science officer		1
LP leader/PMU		2
		>21

one function within CCAFS more than one function within CCAFS

Comment: People play different roles in the different projects.

General finding: Apart from LP/Regional projects, only 1 project leader was female (and she never responded).

Annex 2: Questionnaire for entire CCAFS Project Portfolio

Questionnaire on Scaling / CCAFS

1. What are you scaling (please select one of the below)?
   a) Technology
   b) Tool
   c) Service
   d) Solution (Combination of products and or services)
   e) Methodology
   f) Approach
   g) Model
   h) Mechanism
   i) Framework
   j) Data management
   k) Training/ Capacity Building
   l) Advice / Advocacy
   m) Communication
   n) Other: _____
   o) None!

2. What are the biggest challenges regarding scaling towards sustainable impact?

3. Where would you rank your project regarding sustainable impact at scale (1= low, 10= very high)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. What are your most important lessons learnt regarding scaling?

5. How can CCAFS best support you in your scaling efforts?

6. What are the ingredients for a project design that supports scaling?

7. How can the impulse for the creation of impact at scale improve your work?

8. Which topics need to be addressed more in the context of scaling?

9. What role do youth and gender play in your scaling context?

10. How comfortable do you feel with the way the risks that come with scaling are handled in your project context (1= not at all, 10= very much)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

11. What evidence for scaling should be measured, when and how?

12. How competent do you feel regarding scaling (1= not at all, 10= very much)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Annex 3: Detailed findings from the interviews

Lessons Learnt about Scaling

- Stakeholder Engagement from the beginning

Interviewees point out the importance of the active engagement of all stakeholders during the entire process of the project without interruption and strong participation in each step of the project. This is not limited to potential end-users but entails governmental and implementation partners as well.

- Linking all levels (local, national, international)

Regarding the level of engagement, interviewees find that regardless of their level of engagement (local, regional or national), it is imperative to engage the other levels and to create forums for exchange among them, thus providing a coherent vertical link between all levels.

- Providing evidence and pilots

Providing evidence on scaling is a key factor for engaging stakeholders and therefore reaching scale. In many cases the evidence itself is established together with a first group of end-users and stakeholders to improve the reliability of the evidence. Interviewees find that they have a strong position to address and to convey to stakeholders if the evidence is well founded and established.

- Focusing on needs and solutions for all stakeholders

The strong focus on the needs of both end-users and stakeholders allows projects not only to improve their solutions but also the chances for their up-take and sustainable use. Many interviewees hold the view that their success was due to their rigorous focus on needs, which lead them also to successfully adjust and grow their solutions.

- Embedding in existing frameworks and approaches

Linked to the point above it is seen as highly beneficial to link the project approach to existing frameworks in order to reach scale (e.g. international treaties or national / regional development plans). This ensures the sustainability of the approach and an implementation at scale partly beyond the project timeframe.

- Scaling as an open process involving other sciences

Another important lesson learnt is that scaling by itself is not a mechanic concept but an open process that depends on many variables. Therefore, it cannot be successfully reached by executing a predesigned plan. It is regarded by all interviewees as a process during which adaptation, pragmatism and even luck is needed in order to reach the goal. As scaling entails many perspectives apart from the traditional agricultural one (social, economic etc.) interviewees regard the integration of other sciences as crucial for success.

- Entrepreneurial mindset

Mindset plays a very important role in successful scaling. Interviewees describe their own change in mindset into one that is entrepreneurial, excited to reach the end-user and to provide far-reaching solutions. They portray their success as a turbulent and unpredictable journey that requires them to readjust their mindset into being resilient, goal orientated and finding the right timing.

Challenges for Scaling

- Time difference between project duration and impact at scale

The time of project duration and reaching impact at scale. Whereas projects are designed to last often no longer than three years, the actual up-take / reaching scale often times happens after the projects have already reached their end. This leads to extreme challenges regarding the measurement and evaluation of both the project and the impact achieved.

- Risk & unintended negative consequences

Risk and unintended negative consequences are considered only at the technical level but hardly when it comes to scaling. As the number of users increases exponentially so does the potential risk. Interviewees see this as a very important point that should be addressed by the community at a structural level in order to handle risk at scale appropriately on the basis of existing Do-no-harm approaches.

- Lack of overall strategy in the engagement of donors

Interviewees find that currently there is a lack of an overall donor engagement strategy that leads to unclear and partly contradicting engagement, competition for funding within the CG-system and the composition of an incoherent overall project portfolio with comparatively small projects. This is a difficult environment for both the design and implementation of scaling projects.

- Integration of Gender & Youth

The integration of Gender and Youth is perceived very diversely throughout the interview process. Whereas it is regarded as highly important, there is still difficulty in translating it into the project design due to the respective local contexts. Studies are being conducted to incorporate the topic and leverage it for the project, integrating it as a component of the respective do-no-harm approach.

- Reputational risk

At the organizational level the interpretation of scaling as “only going after high numbers” is regarded to have a high potential risk for the CG community. While the conceptual focus of scaling as reaching impact at large scale is found to be highly desirable, the fear exists that the strong pressure to reach high numbers results in a marketing approach imperiling the scientific one.

- Creating evidence on scaling

There seems to be a substantial lack of evidence on scaling. In line with the difficult measuring preconditions for scaling established previously, the conceptual approach to scaling seems to not be enough and requires backing up by evidence that has not yet been created.

- Lack of Integral Knowledge Management in the CG-System

The CG-System has a wealth of knowledge and experience that is not shared or efficiently used without an integral system of knowledge management. Whereas this might not be essential for highly specific technical and scientific knowledge, sharing knowledge and experiences in the context of scaling is highly important for implementation, to coordinate stakeholder networks and to ensure collaboration among different scientific fields. Therefore, the lack of an integral knowledge management system hinders the CG System to leverage its wealth of knowledge in the endeavor of scaling.

- Conceptual difference between pilot and scaling project

With regards to the step between a pilot project and a scaling project there are two lines of comments: a) there is a general lack of previous experience on going from pilot phase to scaling, b) the pilot phase has not been designed to anticipate scaling.

- Stability of funding / budget for implementation

The funding for scaling projects is perceived to be unstable endangering the impact of the respective projects.

- Changes in the political system

Another major challenge for projects is changes in the political landscape. Interviewees identify this as a critical factor that they try to mitigate by increasing stakeholder engagement, enhancing communication and lobby work. Changes in the political context can lead to program failure but is hardly addressed or budgeted for in the project designs.

Project Design

- Theory of Change must lead to circular project design and understanding of connectedness

It is recommended to build re-iterative feedback loops into the project design in order to allow constant learning and adjustment. This approach would also allow to learn more about the connections within the environment of the project.

- Adapted design process: Design Thinking and strong user and stakeholder engagement

Adding to the previous point interviewees point out that it would benefit the project itself to apply ongoing cooperative design processes (based on e.g. Design Thinking) in order to ensure strong user and stakeholder engagement, which is seen as crucial to reach scale.

- Inter-center coordination

Inter-center coordination and collaboration at the design stage is regarded as beneficial to project implementation as it allows to provide solutions rather than stand-alone technologies or services. Furthermore, it is pointed out that present competition for funding between centers occasionally leads to inefficient approaches lowering chances of scaling.

- Create strong connection between project and stakeholder

Adding to points regarding stakeholder engagement above, it is seen as crucial to create a strong connection with all stakeholders from the beginning, including the design process of a project.

- Design hand-over at the end of the project

Interviewees view that sustainable scaling outlasts the project timeframe itself. Therefore, it is seen as crucial to design the handover to partners and stakeholders at the end of a project. Currently, this is hardly the case.

On M&E

- Need for attribution adjustment between scaling and impact

There is an attribution gap between scaling and impact. This point is additionally supported by the fact that the impact of scaling is outside of the project timeline itself in many cases.

- Measuring is highly difficult due to lack of time and budget after the end of project

The concrete measurement of scaling is difficult due to structural challenges regarding time and budget especially after the end of a project.

- Building a body of evidence, combining qualitative and quantitative

Regarding scaling, interviewees stress that the body of evidence that is lacking at the moment requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

- MARLO lacks field perspective

MARLO (the current M&E system) is partly seen as lacking the field perspective leading to a limited awareness of the challenges and accomplishments of projects by the management and the donors.

- Different ways of measuring each “product”

The CCAFS-Program has different areas of intervention and work that result in different “products”. From the interviews the following groups of products came to light: Technologies, Services, Advisory, Solution / Package, Advocacy. All of these “products” need to have different measuring metrics.

- Difficulty to measure “next user” uptake of “products”

Interviewees find that the project success is difficult to measure when they are working with “next users” or partners to scale their product. It is not clear how to measure if and how the end-user applies the “products”.

- Financial and Business approach helps measuring

Business approaches help to reach scale as they address the end-users as customers. They also allow a consistent measurement of demand of the product. Interviewees described that they were able to successfully provide “products” at cost level to the end-user meeting their demand with useful products. The result is that solutions based on these type of products are financially self-sustaining.

Youth and Gender

- Involvement of women depends on context

The importance of the gender topic differs throughout the projects that were interviewed, ranging from being an integral leverage point for scaling to hardly being addressed due to the context of the project.

- Most decision makers are still men

It is reported that the key partners especially at the end-user level are in many cases men since they are the decision makers at the household level. In those cases, efforts to increase the participation of women is sometimes met by strong irritation at the end-user level.

- Issue of Youth is still open; needs future work and engagement strategy

Due to the intense labor conditions in the agricultural sector, young people leave the sector in order to find work in other areas. An overall strategy to improve engagement is needed.

- Youth as carrier of innovation

Young people function as carriers of innovation thus playing an important role in scaling efforts at the local level by helping to introduce and access technological services and new agricultural technologies and approaches.

- Integration of Youth & Gender in the overall project design is sometimes missing

Gender and Youth are not integrated at the overall project design level throughout the portfolio, due to missing knowledge about adequate approaches to do so.

- Unclear how to measure and integrate Gender and Youth for scaling

Interviewees find that Gender and Youth are difficult parameters to measure and to integrate particularly in the context of scaling.

Opportunities for Support

- Long-term monitoring of impact of projects

As the impact of scaling projects often times lies outside of the project timeline, the long-term monitoring of such impact is identified as a very important action where support by the organization is needed.

- Improvement of learning and interaction between centers

As the CG-system is based on knowledge, sharing experience and collaboration is one of the most important factors to advance the system, as well as its relevance and its impact.

- Create learning formats, environments and open spaces

Adding to the point above, learning formats should be established where practitioners can exchange and learn from colleagues as well as receive input from other fields outside of the CG-system. This is seen as very important due to the current lack of these spaces and formats.

- Evidence of scaling

Interviewees identified the lack of scaling evidence as a major issue and thus saw a large opportunity for support by the organization in building and providing such evidence.

- Inclusion of donor community

During the interviews the distance to the donor community especially regarding the topic of scaling is identified as a difficulty. It is recommended to include and engage the donor community at the organizational level and integrate them into exchange and learning formats.

- Provide access to various established stakeholder networks of different projects

Another point mentioned is to help projects access stakeholder networks of other already established projects. In many cases, it is perceived that the efforts and resources for establishing stakeholder networks could have been simply avoided by accessing these through preexisting channels.

- Global map of stakeholder needs

Furthermore, interviewees suggest the creation of a global stakeholder needs map, which would make all the needs of stakeholders visible. This would then lead to an entirely new and advanced understanding of how to design development solutions and how to successfully implement them.

- Create learning platforms for farmers

It is suggested by interviewees to establish a learning platform for farmers and end-users themselves, as well as providing exchange programs for farmers.

- Social & economic evaluations

In some cases, the key challenges of projects do not lie within their area of expertise of a project but rather in other fields, such as social studies or economy, for example. In these cases, it is recommended to provide support or leads in these other fields.

- Testing new formats for Scaling

Another suggestion is to test different project formats for scaling, such as challenges or seed funding. These formats start from the stakeholder needs and then create solutions using the ample scientific knowledge of the CG-system. Furthermore, they include the integration into public planning and the planning of the hand-over of the project from the very beginning.

- Strategic advice on Scaling

There is a high demand for strategic advice regarding scaling. This is mentioned by practitioners that have had a strong exposure to scaling as well as those with little. In this context “strategic” is often described as providing a narrative that allows a broader understanding of the process and mindset of scaling.

- Find leverage points for scaling

It is recommended to also work on finding leverage points for scaling for projects, in other words, finding the key crucial points that could be changed or affected in order to impact the whole project. Finding these points would help the field personnel of a project to advance their implementation significantly in an efficient manner.

- Conceptual integration of Scaling and Impact

At a conceptual level interviewees see the need for an overarching institution to provide a framework that links and integrates scaling and impact. The interviewees felt that so far this had not been established.

Risk Management

- At the technical level risks are known

At the “product” level risks are mostly known and the general feeling is that they are managed well and in a transparent way. The interaction with the next- and end-user provides valuable input as to how to manage the risk and therefore improve the “product”.

- In scaling risks are amplified and underrepresented in budgeting

Along with scaling, risks associated to the implementation of the products are also amplified. Interviewees feel that there is a lack of specific approaches to manage these risks and that the risk topic is underrepresented in the budgets.

- Unintended negative consequences: risks unclear

Regarding the risk of unintended negative consequences, interviewees perceive that these are not known and are not considered in the project management system. “Do-no-harm” approaches are mentioned in some cases as a potential way to manage risks. These are regarded as essential in order to achieve positive impact and avoid project failure. A strong demand is expressed for exchange on the topic and further learning.

- Project failure due to political changes: risks unclear

The political landscape in the implementation environment is stressed as another key risk. This lies outside of the projects´ control yet it has a major impact on the projects themselves. The time and resources needed to manage this through stakeholder engagement are often lacking and underestimated in the project planning phase.

- Reputational risk regarding quality of research

The strong focus on numbers as a result of donor´s demands for scaling is regarded to come with a high potential for reputational and professional risk if this would lead to exaggeration of output or outcome. A focus on a “marketing” approach could jeopardize the “sanctity” of the scientific research.

Motivation (“What are you excited about?”)

- Create output with large impact

Practitioners involved in scaling are highly excited because their work is having a large impact due to the focus on scaling and everything it entails. Practitioners describe a move from being a scientist to becoming a practitioner, which they find highly rewarding and thrilling.

- Linking topics

Interviewees regard the linking of different topics, scientific and non-scientific, as highly interesting and inspiring.

- Creating Solutions

The creation of solutions for the end-user is seen as another strong point of motivation. Interviewees regard this as a fundamental change in their mindset.

- CCAFS as an environment for innovation

In many cases interviewees also expressed excitement about CCAFS creating an environment where they were given the freedom to experiment and innovate. This is mentioned as another strong source for personal motivation.