

# Monitoring, evaluation and learning within the CGIAR Initiative Sustainable Animal Productivity for Livelihoods, Nutrition and Gender Inclusion (SAPLING)

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This brief gives an overview of the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approach being applied by the CGIAR Initiative on Sustainable Animal Productivity or for Livelihoods, Nutrition and Gender Inclusion (SAPLING).



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## Acknowledgements

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# The CGIAR Initiative Sustainable Animal Productivity for Livelihoods, Nutrition and Gender Inclusion (SAPLING)

SAPLING is a CGIAR initiative focusing on sustainable animal productivity. See [here](#) and [here](#) for more on the initiative. This initiative aims to contribute to transforming livestock sectors in target countries to make them more productive, resilient, equitable and sustainable. See Box 1 on how this objective will be achieved.

The initiative is working in seven countries located in East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda), West Africa (Mali), Southeast Asia (Vietnam) and South Asia (Nepal), on 15 livestock value chains in total (see Figure 1).

Within the one CGIAR, SAPLING is mapped to the action area termed Resilient Agrifood Systems. See [here](#) for a description of the Resilient Agrifood Systems action area, as well as its anticipated outcomes and impacts.

# Use of a theory of change-based approach within SAPLING

SAPLING is implementing a theory of change-based approach to its implementation, with nested theories of changes at different levels: livestock value chain, work-package and initiative, as described below and shown in Figure 2. For more information on the theory of change-based MEL, see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

## Box 1. SAPLING's objective will be achieved through

- Technologies and practices for sustainable livestock productivity: developing, adapting and testing new and existing productivity- and resilience-enhancing, low-emission, scalable technologies and practices across the three main pillars of livestock productivity: improved feeds, animal health products and genetics (Work package 1).
- Innovations and practices for safe consumption of livestock-derived foods as part of diverse diets: co-creating innovative models and approaches for social and behaviour change communication, and testing and evaluating approaches for incentivizing market actors to enhance the supply of safe, nutritious and affordable livestock-derived foods (Work package 2).
- Sustainable livestock productivity for gender equity and social inclusion: understanding constraints and opportunities, identifying best-bet entry points, addressing constraints and developing tools to measure progress (Work package 3).
- Competitive and inclusive livestock value chains: generating evidence on institutional arrangements and technical interventions to transition towards more profitable, inclusive and sustainable livestock value chains (Work package 4).
- Evidence, decisions and scaling: generating and consolidating evidence, models and tools to support public and private decision-making for a sustainable and inclusive livestock sector (Work package 5).

Figure 1. SAPLING's focal livestock value-chains, which number 15 in total, across 7 countries (Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Mali, Nepal and Vietnam) and 6 livestock types (beef cattle, chicken, dairy buffalo, dairy cattle, pigs and small ruminants).

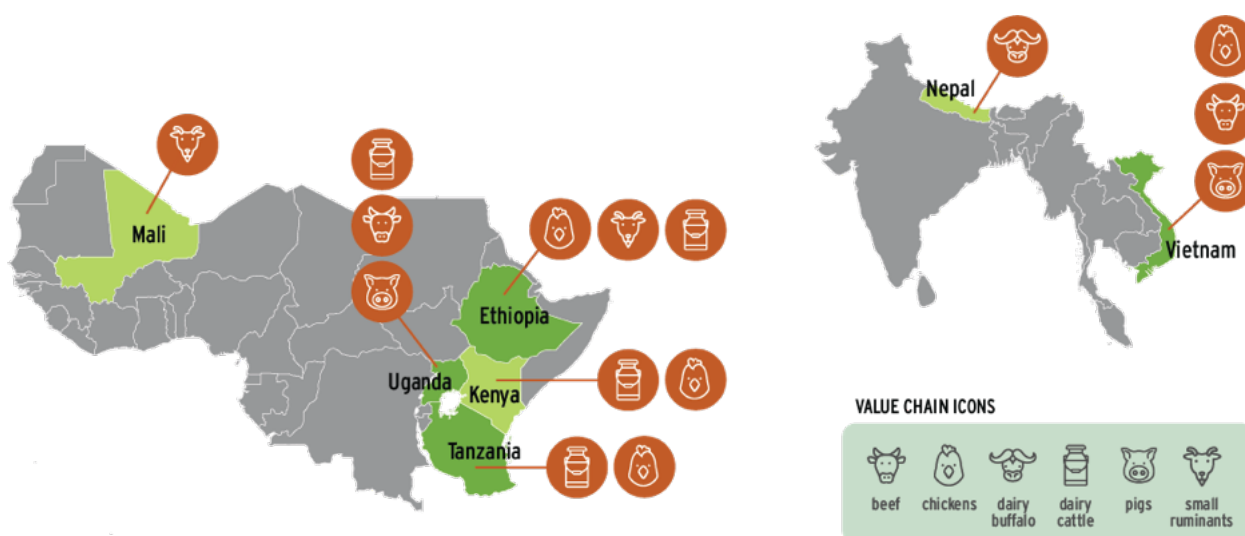
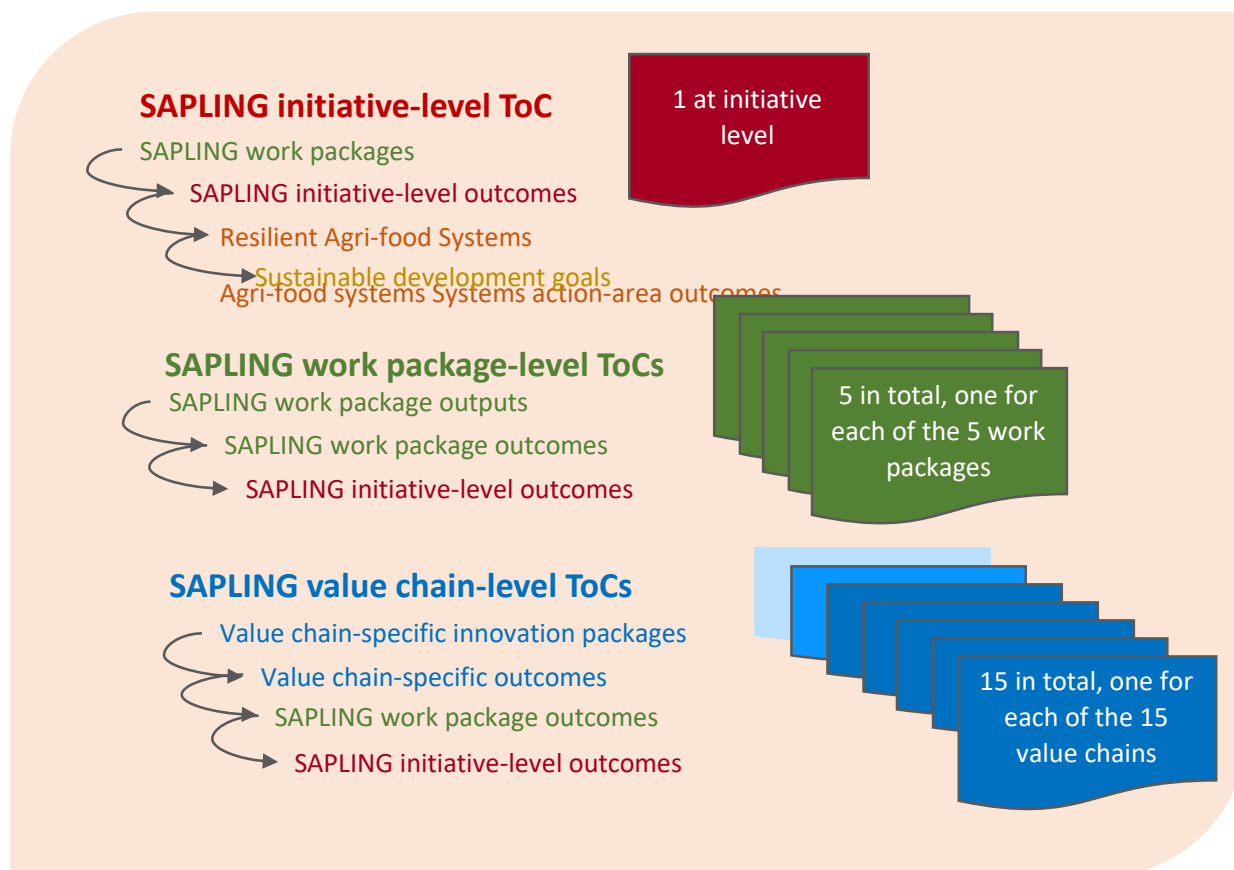


Figure 2. Nesting of the SAPLING theory of changes (ToC). Linkages are shown by colour.



**Livestock value chain-level theory of changes.** Working at the livestock value chain level is an important concept to SAPLING, as is the use of a co-design approach to match the needs and preferences of the value chain actors and stakeholders to SAPLING’s solutions (see [here](#)). Given this, the first step in the design of the value chain-level theories of changes were workshops with the value chain actors and stakeholders, where initial theories of changes were developed in a participatory process (see Box 2 for information on the events in each of the 7 SAPLING countries). The participatory process started with defining the visions for the value chains, and from there the long-term (10-year) outcomes, short-term (3-year) outcomes, innovation packages, actors and assumptions. See [here](#) for an overview of the process.

**Box 2. Information on the workshops for co-creation of the SAPLING theories of changes at the livestock value chain level**

- Ethiopia [here](#)
- Kenya [here](#)
- Mali [here](#)
- Nepal [here](#)
- Tanzania [here](#)
- Uganda [here](#)
- Vietnam [here](#)

Outputs from these workshops were reviewed by the SAPLING teams and the working theories of changes developed. These show the value chain-specific innovation packages and outcomes, as well how these contribute to the work package and initiative-level outcomes (see below). Assumptions, which then feed into value chain-specific research questions, are also given.

An example of a theory of change diagram for a SAPLING livestock value chain, namely dairy cattle in Tanzania, is given in Figure 3. Assumptions inform the key result questions; for example, Assumption 1 will be examined by providing incubation and mentorship support to women and men agripreneurs in the dairy value chain. The intent is for the theories of changes for the livestock value chains (inclusive of both the diagrams and narratives) to be published as a series of theory of change briefs.

**Initiative and work package-level theory of changes.** See [here](#) for full details of the initiative and work package-level theories of changes, including the theory of change diagrams as well as narratives on causal process, assumptions, partners, and interdependencies and synergies.

The initiative-level theory of change gives a high-level overview of the SAPLING work packages and initiative-level outcomes, as well as how these contribute to the Resilient Agrifood Systems action area outcomes and impacts, in turn contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (Figure 2). Linkages with CGIAR initiatives are also given. There is a continual movement from SAPLING's sphere of influence to sphere of interest from the SAPLING outcomes (sphere of influence only), through the action area outcomes and impacts, and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (sphere of interest only).

Nested under the initiative-level theory of change are theories of changes for the five SAPLING work packages. These give work package-level outputs and outcomes, and linkages of the latter to the initiative-level outcomes. Linkages, at the output level, to other SAPLING work packages as well as other initiatives, are described.

Both the work package and initiative-level theory of changes were developed during the SAPLING proposal development stage, where stakeholder feedback was obtained through a series of country-level virtual workshops. The level of co-design (with stakeholders) of these theories of changes was, however, not as strong as that for the theories of changes at livestock value chain-level. The value chain-level ToCs will inform the revision of the work package and initiative-level theory of changes from 2023.



## Monitoring, evaluation and learning

An overview of SAPLING's monitoring, evaluation and learning processes are given below. In addition, impact assessments around specific research questions (four in total), are being undertaken. These are not described further in this brief but are outlined here. For more information on monitoring, evaluation and learning in general, see [here](#) and [here](#).

**SAPLING results framework.** The SAPLING results framework is [here](#). There are 4 initiative-level outcomes and 14 work package-level outcomes, as well as 29 work package-level outputs. These are directly derived from the initiative-level and work package-level theory of changes. For each outcome or output, the results framework also gives the linked indicator, means of collecting data on the indicator, and targets. The process of target-setting is summarized [here](#).

**Tracking SAPLING outcomes.** In the first phase of SAPLING, outcome indicators will be minimally collected at baseline (2022) and then endline (end-2024). A variety of approaches are being used to collect the data, including both quantitative and qualitative surveys, as well as use of secondary data sources. Most commonly, data will be collected at the livestock value chain level and then aggregated. Output indicators will be continuously monitored (see [here](#) for the current collection of SAPLING outputs).

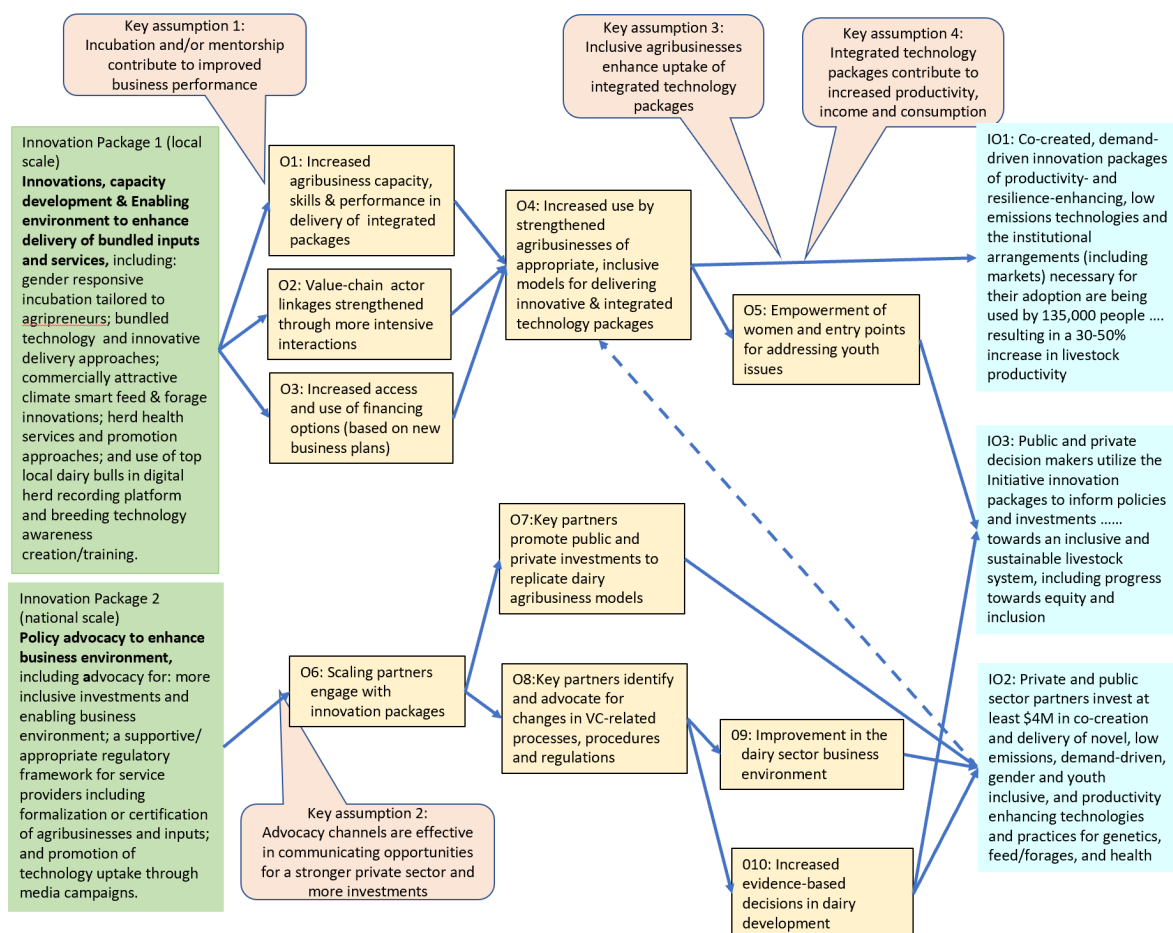
SAPLING undertook baseline data collection exercises for outcome indicators in 2022. Due to the heavy resources required for data collection, and to minimize the response time, a decision was made to use existing data when available. For example, some value chains were the focus of Livestock CGIAR Research Program (CRP) activities and had data relevant to the SAPLING indicators that were collected mid to late 2021 (at the end of the CRPs). In other cases, data was available from secondary sources. A data collection approach, based on qualitative and quantitative surveys, was designed to fill baseline data gaps. The protocol for SAPLING baseline data collection is [here](#).

**Regular ToC reflections.** For all levels, we will organize regular reflection events to discuss effectiveness of the SAPLING approach. In particular, at value chain level, this process will strengthen the relevance of our research to partners and stakeholders, assess and document progress towards outcomes, and allow us to decide on necessary adjustments. As a key part of this reflection, theory of change assumptions, which are generally considered the necessary conditions for change, will be reviewed based on collected evidence and/or other observations. The theories of changes, as well as project activities, will be updated based on these reflections. Reasons behind any changes to the theories of changes will be documented, with these changes reflected across value chain and country learnings.

## Concluding remarks

SAPLING considers investment in monitoring, evaluation and learning critical to its success and ensuring positive change. Besides the work package theories of changes that organize SAPLING's work within topics, SAPLING developed value chain theories of changes to strengthen the relevance of its work to stakeholders as well as enhance the coordination between work packages. Regular reflection events will support not only joint implementation with relevant actors but also timely adjustments to SAPLING's plans for higher and sustained outcomes.

Figure 3. Example of a SAPLING livestock value chain, for dairy cattle in Tanzania. Shown are the innovation packages (green), value chain-specific outcomes (yellow), end of initiative outcomes (blue) and assumptions (orange). Work package outcomes are not shown for clarity but link closely to the value chain-specific outcomes.





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CGIAR's Sustainable Animal Productivity for Livelihoods, Nutrition and Gender inclusion (SAPLING) is working in seven countries focusing on livestock value chains to package and scale out tried-and-tested, as well as new, innovations in livestock health, genetics, feed and market systems. SAPLING aims to demonstrate that improvements in livestock productivity can offer a triple win: generating improved livelihoods and nutritional outcomes; contributing to women's empowerment; and, reducing impacts on climate and the environment. Its seven focus countries are Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nepal, Tanzania, Uganda and Vietnam.

