
Republic of Zimbabwe

Country strategy and programme evaluation

Agreement at completion point

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Action: The Evaluation Committee is invited to review the agreement at completion point of the country strategy and programme evaluation for the Republic of Zimbabwe.

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Contents

Agreement at completion point	1
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Agreement at Completion Point

A. Introduction

1. In line with its Evaluation Policy, and as approved by the 143rd session of the Executive Board in December 2024, the Independent Evaluation Office (IOE) of IFAD conducted a Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation (CSPE) in the Republic of Zimbabwe. This marks the first evaluation undertaken by IOE in Zimbabwe. The CSPE assessed IFAD's engagement in the country over the period 2016–2025, covering both the 2016 Country Strategic Note (CSN) and the 2020 Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP). It encompassed three projects with total financing of US\$187.7 million, of which IFAD contributed US\$98.3 million.
2. This Agreement at Completion Point (ACP) contains the recommendations made in the CSPE report, which were accepted by IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe, as well as the proposed follow-up actions agreed on. The ACP is signed by the Government of Zimbabwe, represented by the IFAD Governor, and by the IFAD Management, represented by the Associate Vice-President of the Department for Country Operations (DCO). The signed ACP is an integral part of the CSPE report, in which the evaluation recommendations are presented in detail and submitted to the IFAD Executive Board as an annex to the new COSOP. The implementation of the recommendations agreed upon will be tracked through the President's Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA), which is presented to the IFAD Executive Board on an annual basis by IFAD's Management.

B. Recommendations and follow-up actions

Recommendation 1. IFAD and the GoZ should pursue prioritising, in the next strategy, strengthening the resilience of smallholders but in a more holistic manner.

3. This strategic theme should be embraced considering the complexity of the social, economic, environmental and climate-related challenges faced by smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe and considering the appropriateness of production systems in line with the agroecological zones and the needs of smallholder farmers.
4. IFAD's supports to approaches – such as VBUs, management of revitalised irrigation schemes and their IMCs, CSA practices, environmental committees in the villages and ISALs – must be underpinned by robust and holistic feasibility analyses that adequately capture the interlinkages among the multiple and interdependent constraints affecting smallholders, including cost-recovery mechanisms and governance arrangements for irrigation systems and other project-supported investments. Such analyses should be complemented by targeted thematic and technical studies, as appropriate, notably in relation to ground and surface water resources for irrigation purposes, which warrant dedicated strategic assessments and master plans to avoid over-extraction.

5. Strategic orientation should also prioritize multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement – including government institutions, development partners, producers' organisations, NGOs and the private sector – at both national and subnational levels. This requires the establishment and effective functioning of government coordination mechanisms within the agricultural sector (see Recommendation 2).

Agreed.

Proposed follow-up actions

IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe acknowledge the importance of strengthening smallholder resilience through a holistic approach that addresses climate, environmental, economic and social vulnerabilities. The next COSOP and future investments will integrate resilience-building measures that combine climate adaptation, sustainable water governance, irrigation sustainability, natural resource management, financial inclusion, market access, nutrition and livelihood diversification, while ensuring that interventions are tailored to agroecological conditions and informed by robust technical, environmental and financial analyses. Alignment with Zimbabwe Agriculture, Food Systems and Rural Transformation Strategy 2 (2026–2030) is reflected in the new COSOP and will continue to guide the design of future investments.

This strategic orientation is already being reflected in the design of the forthcoming Zimbabwe Innovative Livestock Adaptation Programme (ZILA), which seeks to strengthen the resilience of livestock-based production systems through an integrated approach combining climate adaptation, natural resource management, water resource development, market access and livelihood strengthening.

Particular attention will be given to strengthening the sustainability of irrigation schemes, Village Business Units, producer organizations and local government structures, while supporting strategic assessments and planning for groundwater and surface water resources. Feasibility analyses for irrigation and other capital investments will assess cost-recovery mechanisms, tariff structures and the governance of Irrigation Management Committees. All such investments will be supported by agreed operation and maintenance (O&M) arrangements. With IFAD support, the Government will also promote stronger coordination among public institutions, development partners, private-sector actors and farmer organizations to enhance complementarities and address the interconnected challenges affecting rural households.

Responsibility. IFAD and Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanization and Water Resources Development (MAMWRD).¹

Timeframe. During design and implementation of the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP), the Horticulture Enterprise Enhancement Project (HEEP) and future investment projects such as ZILA (2026 onwards).

Recommendation 2. IFAD and the GoZ should systematically leverage non-lending activities and address institutional capacity gaps.

6. This would contribute to enhanced programme performance, particularly in terms of impact and sustainability of results. Strategic orientations should be provided in the next strategy on these aspects, to address challenges of insufficient learning and weak implementation capacities, especially at provincial and district level. To that end, institutional strengthening (both physical and non-physical) should be prioritized, targeting government institutions as well as farmers' organizations and other relevant institutions, with due consideration to challenges related to the sustainability of benefits.

¹ MAMWRD is a new name to the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development (MLAFWRD) referred to in the CSPE report.

7. Leveraging partnerships with other international partners (e.g. UNDP, WFP, FAO, NORAD, and JICA) and its subnational presence, IFAD should contribute to establishing and strengthening robust and effective monitoring and evaluation systems under the MLAFWRD, to which all sector projects are linked. This system should enable the aggregation of data, consolidation of information and reporting on national rural development indicators and avoid the current mismatches.
8. In parallel, IFAD should also contribute to fast-track the operationalization and use of the Resilience Platform (currently under development), as well to facilitate the functionality of agriculture sector working groups. Both mechanisms should enable (i) systematic exchange of experiences, (ii) cross-learning, and (iii) contributions to informed policy and decision-making.

Agreed.

Proposed follow-up actions

Building on the experience and results achieved under the 2020-2026 COSOP, IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe will continue to leverage non-lending activities, including policy engagement, partnership development, knowledge management, and South-South and Triangular Cooperation, as strategic instruments to enhance programme effectiveness, sustainability and scaling up. IFAD has already mobilized a range of complementary initiatives, including DeSIRA+, FARM P3, AgrEco NUS+ and SPARK II², which contribute to institutional strengthening, innovation, knowledge exchange and cross-learning across the agricultural sector. Future interventions will build on these efforts to further strengthen institutional capacities and foster collaboration, learning and innovation at national, provincial and district levels.

Priority will be given to strengthening agricultural sector coordination and evidence-based decision-making through support to the Resilience Platform, agricultural sector working groups and harmonized M&E systems. Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture will be supported in strengthening sector-wide monitoring systems to ensure that results and lessons from IFAD-supported projects contribute to national reporting, learning and policy processes. Work in this area has already commenced and will be further strengthened during the implementation of the new COSOP. Existing and future partnerships, including grant-funded and climate-finance initiatives, will continue to be leveraged to promote innovation, institutional strengthening, policy dialogue and learning. A key point will be to ensure that lessons and evidence generated through IFAD-supported operations systematically inform sector policies, strategies and future programme design.

Responsibility. IFAD, MAMWRD, MoFEDIP, implementing agencies and development partners.

Timeframe. 2027–2029 Work in this area commenced in 2026.

Recommendation 3. IFAD to strengthen its presence in Zimbabwe, and to support the government to improve strategic and operational coordination within the agricultural sector.

9. Given the size of the Zimbabwe portfolio, its growing complexity, and the challenging macroeconomic and institutional context, IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe should explore options to strengthen IFAD's in-country presence, building on the current successful model of a long-term consultant. The objective is to enhance strategic and operational harmonization, and learning among development partners in the agricultural sector, thereby addressing the coordination gaps identified by the CSPE. This would also contribute to ensuring more timely responses by IFAD to the

² DeSIRA+, FARM P3, Agr Eco NUS+ and SPARK II are complementary initiatives supporting agricultural innovation, private-sector engagement, agroecological and nutrition-sensitive food systems, and disability-inclusive rural development within IFAD-supported programmes.

volatility of the operating environment and to seizing opportunities for partnership development. Finally, this should aim to leveraging the upscale of successful models by other development partners at national level, as well as across the region, through South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) activities for instance.

Agreed.

Proposed follow-up actions

Given the growing size and complexity of the country programme, IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe will explore options to strengthen IFAD's in-country presence and enhance strategic engagement within the agricultural sector. Efforts will focus on improving coordination with government institutions, development partners, financial institutions, research organizations and private-sector actors, while enabling more timely responses to implementation challenges and emerging opportunities.

Special attention will be given to strengthening policy dialogue, partnership development, knowledge sharing and South-South and Triangular Cooperation, as well as to scaling up successful approaches and innovations from IFAD-supported operations within Zimbabwe and across the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region. The new COSOP will include a dedicated focus on SSTC as a strategic instrument to support achievement of its objectives through learning routes, policy dialogue, exchange visits, technology transfer and knowledge-sharing partnerships. Priority areas for SSTC will include climate resilience and adaptation, irrigation development and governance, livestock development, digital agriculture and ICT4D, inclusive rural finance, value chain development, the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and youth entrepreneurship and employment.

Responsibility. IFAD and GoZ.

Timeframe. From 2027 onwards.

Recommendation 4. IFAD and the GoZ to roll out sound thematic approaches (i.e. on inclusive financial services, value chain development and access to markets), aligned with the Zimbabwean context, that further strengthen rural resilience strategies.

10. There is an urgent need to identify solutions that remove barriers to deploying line-of-credit mechanisms for matching grants and to expand smallholders' access to inclusive financial services, which are essential for successful value chain development. To that end, it is essential to pilot inclusive finance mechanisms in selected value chains, reinforcing specific institutional functions, introducing risk sharing instruments, and improving digital and process efficiencies within financial institutions.
11. In parallel, the programme should develop an explicit operational plan to expand and sustain partnerships between smallholders and private actors, through the development of contractual and partnership agreements with private actors, for sustained access to profitable markets. Additionally, by leveraging the programme's strong subnational presence and established relationships with decentralized structures, the role of the Joint Management Unit (JMU) should be reinforced to foster vertical and horizontal synergies within the programme and with external partners, thereby strengthening results across the above thematic areas.

Agreed.

Proposed follow-up actions

IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe recognize the importance of inclusive rural finance, value chain development and market access as critical pillars of rural resilience and agricultural transformation. Under the ongoing SACP and HEEP, increased attention has already been given to strengthening engagement with

financial institutions, promoting financial inclusion, providing technical assistance and supporting the institutional capacities required to expand access to sustainable rural financial services.

Under HEEP, collaboration with private-sector partners, including the Horticulture Development Council (HDC), to develop public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps) is already underway. Experience to date confirms the potential of these arrangements to strengthen market access and investment opportunities for smallholders, while also highlighting the importance of clear governance structures, transparent contractual arrangements and equitable risk-sharing mechanisms among partners. Ongoing and future IFAD-supported investments will promote robust contractual and partnership arrangements between private-sector actors and smallholder producers to strengthen market linkages, improve accountability and foster sustainable commercial relationships.

IFAD, MoFEDIP and MAMWRD have already agreed on the modalities for the deployment of line-of-credit mechanisms and matching grants under IFAD-supported operations to facilitate efficient implementation and improve access to finance. Future interventions will continue to strengthen and scale up these efforts through the promotion of innovative financing mechanisms, including lines of credit, blended finance, risk-sharing instruments and tailored financial products, while fostering stronger partnerships between financial institutions, producer organizations and private-sector actors. Particular emphasis will be placed on expanding sustainable public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps), strengthening value chain governance and market linkages, and enhancing coordination across projects and stakeholders to support resilient and inclusive agricultural growth.

Cross-cutting functions within the Joint Management Unit (JMU) will be strengthened to enhance coordination, technical support, knowledge management, learning and synergies across IFAD-supported operations. These functions will facilitate the sharing of expertise and services across Programme Management Units, promote efficiency and harmonized implementation approaches, and contribute to improved programme effectiveness, scaling up and sustainability.

Responsibility. IFAD, MAMWRD, MoFEDIP, financial institutions and private sector partners.

Timeframe. 2027–2032. The terms of reference for the joint function within the JMU will be revised by December 2026.

Recommendation 5. IFAD and the GoZ, building on positive experiences of gender transformative interventions, should strengthen social inclusion through context-relevant interventions for youth and other marginalised groups.

12. The next country strategy should include a context-responsive social inclusion approach that addresses in a comprehensive manner, the involvement of youth, PWD and landless people in IFAD-supported interventions. Embedding these measures within the future strategy and project designs would strengthen equity, improve programme sustainability, and enhance resilience outcomes by broadening participation, while remaining aligned with Zimbabwe's socio-economic and agro-ecological realities.

13. Approach of youth economic empowerment should include: (i) Diversified livelihood pathways beyond irrigated crop production, such as climate-appropriate off-farm and non-land-based activities (e.g. agro-processing), explicitly tailored to youth capabilities and interest; (ii) targeted skills development and mentorship, linked to realistic local economic opportunities and supported by continued extension and business development services; and (iii) conduct diagnostics to better understand youth aspirations and constraints, and target areas where alternative industries (such as mining) are not prevalent to reach youth with few income-generating opportunities.

Agreed.

Proposed follow-up actions

Building on the results and positive experience of gender-transformative approaches implemented under the country programme, IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe will continue to strengthen the inclusion of youth, women, persons with disabilities, landless households and other vulnerable groups in IFAD-supported interventions. Future programmes will promote diversified livelihood opportunities that respond to the aspirations and constraints of different groups, including agribusiness, agro-processing, digital agriculture, climate-smart services and other off-farm rural enterprises, supported through skills development, entrepreneurship promotion, mentorship, business development services, access to finance and market linkages.

A youth aspirations and constraints diagnostic will be undertaken during the design and early implementation of future investments to inform targeting approaches and the identification of appropriate livelihood pathways. Particular attention will be given to areas where alternative income-generating opportunities are limited, ensuring that interventions effectively reach underserved youth and respond to local economic realities. Findings will inform project implementation, learning and future programme design.

In addition, a key priority will be strengthening youth economic empowerment through targeted skills development, employment creation and enterprise development opportunities aligned with local economic potential. Drawing on non-lending initiatives, including SPARK II, the programme will also strengthen disability inclusion and accessibility measures and continue scaling up proven methodologies such as Gender Action Learning System (GALS) and other household approaches to address structural barriers to participation, decision-making and economic empowerment.

Monitoring and knowledge-management systems will be further strengthened to systematically track participation, benefits and outcomes for women, youth, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups through sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data, ensuring that lessons generated inform future programme design and policy engagement.

Responsibility. IFAD, MAMWRD, MoFEDIP, relevant line ministries and implementing partners.

Timeframe. 2027–2032. Youth diagnostic will be completed during the early implementation phase of the next investment project, by 2028.

Recommendation 6. IFAD and the GoZ to identify and implement appropriate solutions to remove bottlenecks that prevent achieving efficiency gains.

14. Considering the volatility of macroeconomic indicators of the country, IFAD and the GoZ must identify sound mechanisms to adapt processes and procedures, to facilitate further efficiency gains in the implementation of the country program. This also entails simplifying and streamlining management procedures and for approvals. Additionally, the GoZ should take action to eliminate or resolve issues that trigger

recurring delays of government approval processes and in disbursing the counterpart funds. strengthening procurement and financial management capacities should be prioritized, given their central role in past delays.

15. Policy-level dialogue should be undertaken with the ministry in charge of finance on the application of tax waivers under sovereign loans, or the establishment of an interim mechanism to prevent VAT-related liquidity constraints from undermining project performance. Furthermore, the programme shall pursue deploying skilled service providers in areas where they are critical capacity gaps within the PMUs.
16. All these actions shall be undertaken with the aim of improving the overall portfolio efficiency and enable better use of the resources mobilized for agricultural transformation.

Agreed.

Proposed follow-up actions

IFAD and the Government of Zimbabwe recognize that improving implementation efficiency requires strengthened institutional capacities, enhanced implementation readiness and effective coordination among all stakeholders. Future interventions will continue to strengthen project management, procurement, financial management, contract management and technical capacities at national, provincial and district levels, while ensuring timely staffing, targeted technical assistance and adequate implementation support.

Particular attention will be given to streamlining implementation processes, improving start-up readiness and promoting adaptive programme management through regular portfolio reviews, risk monitoring and evidence-based course correction. IFAD and the Government have already discussed measures to address recurring bottlenecks affecting programme delivery, including delays in approvals, counterpart funding and VAT-related implementation constraints, through strengthened coordination with relevant government institutions. MoFEDIP has committed to ensuring the timely disbursement of government counterpart funds, and progress in this area will be jointly monitored to facilitate the efficient implementation of IFAD-supported operations.

Where critical capacity gaps are identified, skilled service providers and targeted technical assistance will be mobilized in a timely manner to strengthen implementation capacity and support effective programme delivery. IFAD and the Government will continue to work together to address implementation bottlenecks and improve operational efficiency through strengthened coordination, problem-solving and continuous learning across the portfolio.

Responsibility. IFAD, MAMWRD, MoFEDIP and implementing partners.

Timeframe. 2027–2032; VAT/tax compensation and counterpart funds timely disbursement modalities agreed by December 2026.

Signed on date

Signed on date

24/08/2026

For the Government of Zimbabwe

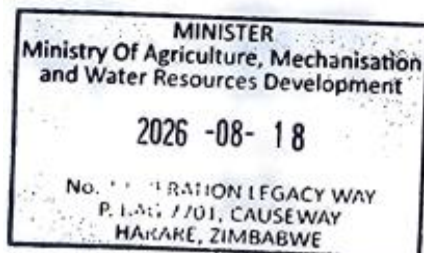
For the International Fund for Agricultural
Development (IFAD)



The Honourable
Dr Anxious Jongwe Masuka
Minister of Agriculture, Mechanisation,
and Water Resources Development



Mr Donal Brown
Associate Vice-President
Department for Country Operations



Annex — Summary of agreed actions for PRISMA tracking

This annex consolidates the dated deliverables set out in the follow-up actions above. It is provided to support annual reporting under PRISMA and does not create commitments additional to those in Section B.

Rec.	Agreed action / deliverable	Responsible	Due	✓
Recommendation 1 — Holistic resilience of smallholders				
1.1	Integrate resilience-building measures that combine climate adaptation, sustainable water governance, irrigation sustainability, natural resource management, financial inclusion, market access, nutrition and livelihood diversification	IFAD/ MAMWRD	2027 onward, starting with ZILA	
1.2	Feasibility analyses for irrigation and other capital investments to assess cost-recovery mechanisms, tariff structures and IMC governance, underpinned by an agreed O&M financing model	IFAD / MAMWRD	2027 onwards	
1.3	Strategic assessments of groundwater and surface water availability commissioned ahead of design of new irrigation investments	IFAD / MAMWRD	2027 onwards	
Recommendation 2 — Non-lending activities and institutional capacity				
2.1	Non-lending activities systematically leveraged to strengthen programme effectiveness, impact, sustainability and scaling up.	IFAD / MAMWRD	2027 onward	
2.2	Strengthening agricultural sector coordination through support to the Resilience Platform, agricultural sector working groups and harmonized M&E systems.	MAMWRD / IFAD	Dec 2027	
2.3	Ensure that lessons and evidence generated through IFAD-supported operations systematically inform sector policies, strategies and future programme design.	MAMWRD/IFAD	2027	
Recommendation 3 — IFAD in-country presence and sector coordination				
3.1	Explore options to strengthen IFAD's in-country presence and enhance strategic engagement within the agricultural sector	IFAD / GoZ	Dec 2027	

Rec.	Agreed action / deliverable	Responsible	Due	✓
3.2	South-South and Triangular Cooperation activities through learning routes, policy dialogue, exchange visits, technology transfer and knowledge-sharing partnerships in priority COSOP areas.	IFAD	From 2027	
Recommendation 4 – Inclusive finance, value chains and market access				
4.1	Innovative financing mechanisms, including lines of credit, blended finance, risk-sharing instruments, strengthened and expanded. Technical assistance to participating financial institutions provided.	IFAD / MoFEDIP	Dec 2027	
4.2	Sustainable public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps), value chain governance and market linkages strengthened; Clear contractual and partnership arrangements between private-sector actors and smallholder producers promoted under ongoing and future IFAD-supported investments.	MAMWRD / IFAD	Dec 2027	
4.3	Cross-cutting functions within the Joint Management Unit strengthened	IFAD / MAMWRD	Dec 2027	
Recommendation 5 – Social inclusion, youth and marginalised groups				
5.1	Social inclusion of youth, women, persons with disabilities, landless households and other vulnerable groups strengthened in COSOP and future designs	IFAD / MAMWRD	2027 onward	
5.2	Youth aspirations and constraints diagnostic undertaken during the design and early implementation of future investments to inform targeting and livelihood pathways.	IFAD / MAMWRD	2027 onward	
Recommendation 6 – Removing bottlenecks to efficiency				
6.1	Strengthened implementation readiness, project management capacities and operational support mechanisms across IFAD-supported operations.	IFAD / MoFEDIP	2027 Onward	
6.2	Continued coordination to address implementation bottlenecks, including approvals, counterpart	IFAD / MAMWRD/ MoFEDIP	2027 onward	

Rec.	Agreed action / deliverable	Responsible	Due	✓
	funding and VAT-related constraints.			
6.3	Review of internal approval and counterpart-funding disbursement steps.	GoZ / MoFEDIP	Dec 2027	
6.4	Qualified service providers and specialized technical assistance mobilized, as required, to address critical capacity gaps.	IFAD / MAMWRD	2027 onward	