



CRP Review 2020: Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA)



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The CGIAR Advisory Services (CAS) Secretariat is conducting independent reviews of 12 CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), including Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA).

CRP Background

FTA's aims to enhance the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in sustainable development and food security and to address climate change. This CRP has been led by the merger of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), together with Bioversity International, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), the Agricultural Research Center for International Development (CIRAD), the International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation (INBAR), and Tropenbos International.

FTA has five flagship programs (FPs): Tree Genetic Resources (FP1); Livelihood Systems (FP2); Sustainable Value Chains and Investments (FP3); Landscape Dynamics, Productivity and Resilience (FP4); and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (FP5).

FTA CRP Review

Phase I of FTA was implemented during 2011–14, with an extension through the end of 2016, and Phase II (2017–21). The first phase of the CRP was [evaluated in 2014](#). This review focuses on the extent to which during 2017–19 FTA delivered quality of science (QoS) and demonstrated effectiveness in relation to its theories of change (ToC), with a view to identifying lessons for future research modalities. Additionally, the review analyzed how the program had dealt with prioritization in an environment of limited W1/W2 funding.

The review used qualitative and quantitative methods. An extensive desk-based review was conducted, on documents and online resources, including annual reports, Plan of Work and Budgets, evaluations, reviews, studies, meeting minutes from FTA's Independent Steering Committee and Management, and a range of external publications and reports. Primary qualitative data were collected through 32 interviews and 2 targeted email surveys with a detailed self-assessment of progress made along the ToC. A simple descriptive analysis was conducted for all 1625 scientific publications produced by FTA. Review team carried out two deep dives on Outcome Impact Case Reports (OICRs) and participated in the [FTA 2020 Science Conference \(14–25 Sep 2020\)](#).

Q1: To What Extent Does FTA Deliver Quality of Science (2017–2019)?

FTA demonstrated high QoS: Research inputs, process and outputs. FTA draws on a large number of expert researchers and associates/fellows (126) from several disciplines, spread across the world. The number of female Full-time Equivalent staff varied widely across FPs (from 18% to 57%).

FTA reported a total of 1625 publications and research outputs, of which 70% are available in open access sources and about 50% are journal articles from ISI and non-ISI sources on topics ranging from agroforestry, to value chains, and germplasm management. FTA publications informed a range of global, regional, national, and subnational decisions, policy design, and implementation processes. 675 ISI peer-reviewed articles, published in 253 journals, were considered for the bibliometric analysis (10.5-1.4 impact factor). A strong scientific collaboration across FPs and priorities among the seven partners is

Photo: Women transport acacia seedlings. Fiston Wasanga/CIFOR

exemplary. FTA articles have been co-authored by experts in 55 countries, demonstrating a high level of international scientific collaboration and partnership within the FTA program.

Q2: What Outputs and Outcomes Have Been Achieved, and What is the Importance of Those Identified Results?

From 2017–19, FTA has exhibited strong implementation performance and is likely to make significant contributions to most planned end-of-program targets by year-end of 2021. In the period under review, FTA completed 59 milestones (84%). Of 54 reported innovations, 42 (78%) were linked to research and communication methodologies and tools, followed by six linked to social science, five to production systems and management practices and one to biophysical research.

FTA innovations were spread over all four innovation stages—degrees of adoption. FTA contributions to 48 policies were mostly at advanced stages. The majority (40) were actual policies or strategies; others around curricula (3), legal instruments (3), and budgets and investments (2). FTA recorded 16 OICRs by end of 2019. Both OICRs under deep dives described significant FTA contributions to national policy and innovation processes.

Cross-Cutting Themes

FTA invested in **capacity development** of 71,703 short-term trainees (38% women) and 695 long-term trainees (44% women), plus 75 PhD male and female students in 2018 and 2019. Since 2018 FTA has dedicated one operational priority to **gender**. Beyond W1/W2-funded activities, FTA reported 70 milestones in 2017–19, 91% with significant gender objectives. FTA designed and applied the [Gender Equality in Research Scale](#) framework as a systematic process for ensuring gender input in the design phase of projects and across portfolio.

Youth is managed as part of the gender priority and has remained a cross-cutting issue without much dedicated institutional or financial support. In contrast to gender/youth and capacity development, FTA staff considers climate change know-how to be mainstreamed. FTA's FP5 is dedicated to **climate change**; and 3 of 16 OICRs reported significantly targeting climate change.

Q3: Future Orientation

Preserving the value-add of FTA will be needed to continue future contributions to the SDGs. Until 2030, FTA's activities and partnerships will continue to center around the SDGs with a focus on climate change, food security, improved livelihood opportunities, landscape management, and inequality. Impact pathways for FTA should continue to aim influencing government and

international policy processes. At the CGIAR level, areas of focus should include improving tenure rights and access to natural resources as well as strengthening or creating locally appropriate financial instruments to finance different landscape activities.

Key Lessons

- Closer collaboration between FTA partners, an independent and efficient governance, and effective prioritization and management of W1/W2 resources at the program (rather than the flagship) level facilitated the present level of programmatic value-added.
- Strong partnerships between universities and research institutions, and informal collaboration between scientists strengthened the CRP.



Photo 1. Acacia tree being planted in Yangambi - DRC.
Credit: Axel Fassio/CIFOR.

Recommendations for CGIAR

- The CGIAR System should support FTA partners to conserve and protect FTA's added value.
- Future program-level CGIAR funding should be strategically invested (1) to strengthen programmatic collaboration between and beyond CGIAR Centers, and (2) to leverage, influence, and complement bilateral work.
- Use a two-step approach to improve planning and reporting when developing ToCs for future CGIAR programs "system ToCs" to describe policy and innovation systems, and "desired-change ToCs" to explain how the program will influence these systems.
- Balance benefits and transactional costs associated with system-level planning and reporting, and develop a lean and efficient results-informed management system.

Read the full report:

<https://cas.cgiar.org/evaluation/crp-2020-fts>