

Objectives of the project

The general objective is to promote the transition toward sustainable and climate-resilient agro-food systems in Burkina Faso and Niger through the enhancement of local agro-biodiversity to ensure food security and improve the livelihoods of rural communities.



The specific objective is to strengthen the research and innovation capacities of AKIS actors in the value chains of neglected and underutilized crops (NUS) in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Background

Agriculture is an important economic sector in Burkina Faso and Niger. However, there are concerns about the sustainability and resilience of agro-food systems, which are vulnerable to stresses such as climate change. Meanwhile, poverty and malnutrition are widespread, especially in rural areas. As dominant crops fail to meet the nutritional needs of local communities, a holistic approach is essential not only to expand the portfolio of resilient crops in support of food systems but also to promote new crops that respond more effectively to the changing markets and trends in the local value chains. Indeed, there is a wide range of local stress-tolerant species that are often overlooked compared to the more well-known major staple, commodity crops. However, the enhancement of conservation and use of the neglected and underutilized species (NUS) requires the strengthening of the agricultural knowledge and innovation system (AKIS) in both countries. In fact, agricultural research and extension services in both countries are insufficient due to inadequate institutional framework and resources (financial, human). Therefore, SUSTLIVES aims to strengthen the capacities of research, innovation, and development of actors in the AKIS system and value chains on the NUS of vegetables, legumes, and roots/tubers.

The theory of change to achieve the objectives:

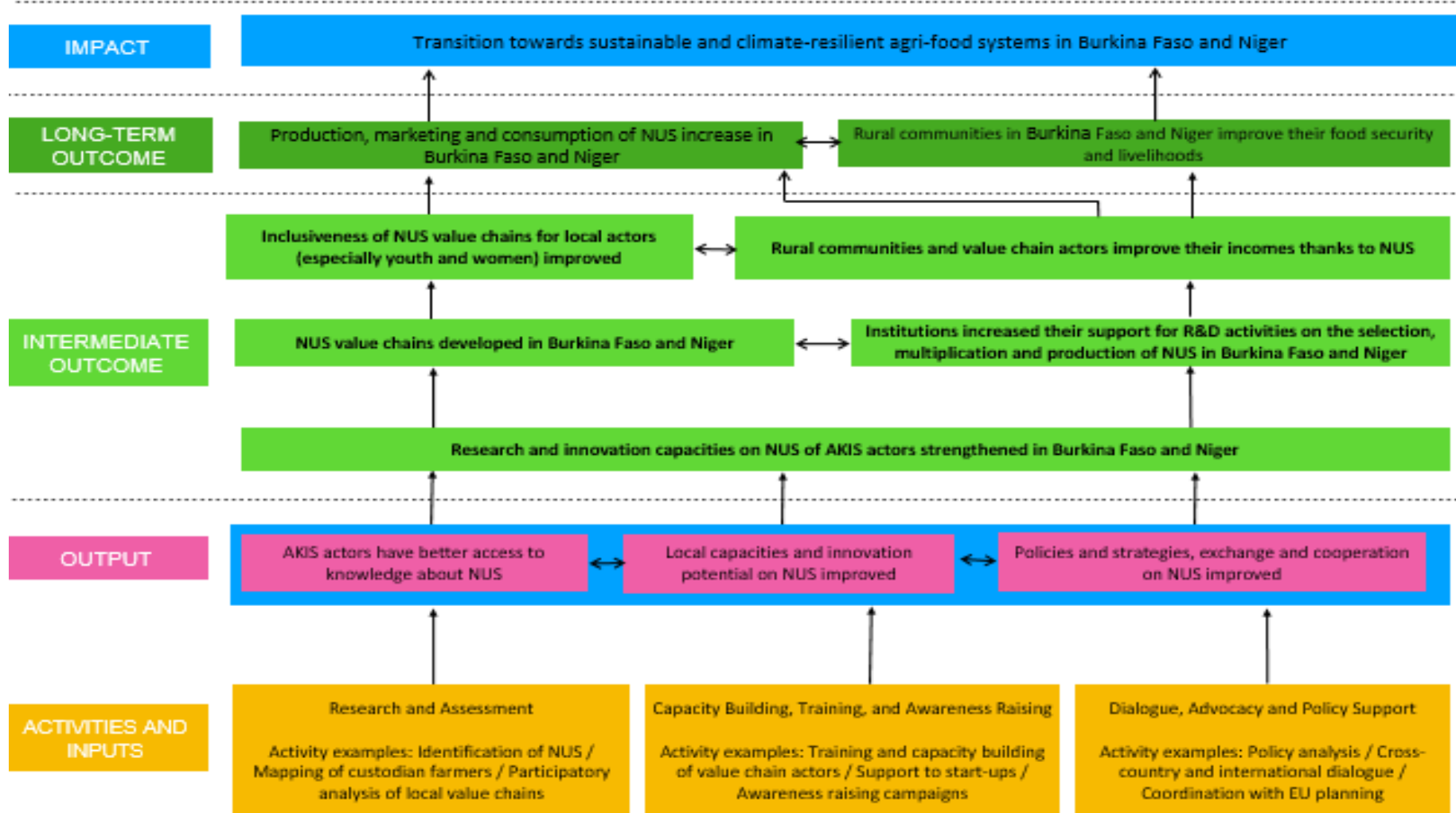
The rationale behind SUSTLIVES is that strengthening the research and innovation capacities of AKIS actors and improving the exchange of knowledge and information on NUS are central elements to promote the transition towards sustainable and climate-resilient agro-food systems in Burkina Faso and Niger. SUSTLIVES postulates that the low development of the NUS value chains is mainly due to the weak capacities of research, development, and innovation. From this perspective, participatory processes, directly involving stakeholders, are at the heart of SUSTLIVES and aim to promote project buy-in and ownership. Overall, the project is seen as a learning process, a 'living lab' that allows for a continuous exchange and cross-fertilisation of knowledge (traditional vs. scientific/modern) whose objective is to increase resilience in a constantly changing environment and climate. SUSTLIVES activities can therefore be grouped around three main axes linked to the theory of change: (i) scientific research and knowledge exchange, which leads (ii) to put innovation in the hands of value chain actors and rural communities, thus making it possible (iii) to produce an impact on a larger scale.

The enhancement of local agrobiodiversity and NUS conservation and use is encouraged, not only to increase agro-food systems resilience in both countries but also to strengthen food and nutrition security, and rural livelihoods, by putting in place innovative and inclusive value chains (especially for youth and women) through the production and marketing of NUS.



A whole range of research and development activities will be undertaken to achieve these objectives, such as training for local research centers' staff, capacity building of farmers' organisations and women/youth-led agro-processing industries, the promotion of linkages among different actors along the selected value chains, the analysis and drafting of recommendations regarding agricultural policies at regional level and in the two countries, advocacy activities with regional and national policy makers.

This, SUSTLIVES offers an integrated and participatory research and innovation package whose achievements will help strengthening the AKIS system on NUS and, therefore, promote the inclusiveness of value chains, facilitate access, availability, and use of NUS and their products, strengthen the resilience of the agro-food system to climate change, provide support to rural communities for the production of stress-tolerant NUS, while raising the awareness of institutions and policy makers on NUS potential.



Main activities

The expected results (R) and activities (A) of SUSTLIVES are:

R1. Knowledge on selected NUS is available and access to NUS by AKIS actors in Burkina Faso and Niger improved: A1.1 Identification of target areas and stress-tolerant NUS; A1.2 Identification of custodian farmers, community gene banks and best practices; A1.3 Access, selection, multiplication and distribution of seeds; A1.4 Assessment of crop seasonal availability calendars and nutrition security; A1.5 Exchange of knowledge and information among stakeholders; A1.6 Communication and awareness-raising campaigns

R2. Research, professional and marketing capacities of AKIS actors improved and local innovation potential on NUS increased: A2.1 Participatory analysis of value chains and markets of priority NUS; A2.2 Training and capacity building of value chain actors; A2.3 Enhancing local markets and market information system to strengthen the demand-supply chain; A2.4 Strengthening local research institutions to support youth entrepreneurship; A2.5 Support to start-ups run by women and youth

R3. Policies and strategies, exchange and cooperation on NUS improved: A3.1 Analysis of current policy and legal frameworks; A3.2 Development of a sustainability assessment matrix and a transition framework; A3.3 Participatory institutional knowledge development on sustainable use of agrobiodiversity; A3.4 Strengthening cross-country and international dialogue, upscaling and building synergies; A3.5 Coordination and alignment with DeSIRA and EU planning and priorities

Organization

AICS (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation) is the executing agency that is contractually responsible to the EU. AICS is responsible for administrative and general coordination, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and relations with the EU. CIHEAM-Bari is the technical-scientific manager, supported by its own technical-scientific team. The Steering Committee is made up of a representative of each project partner as well as the ministries of agriculture in Burkina Faso and Niger, and the EU Delegation. Project research and field activities are carried out with the support of the various partners; each activity is performed by an EU-Africa 'work team' comprising the staff deployed by the project partners. The governance structure comprises as well a Stakeholder Forum, which will interact with AICS and CIHEAM-Bari, to ensure the best possible adaptation to the needs of local communities and the constantly evolving challenges in the project areas and West Africa/Sahel at large.

Implementing organizations

AICS is the Organisation and executive agency in charge of administrative and overall coordination, M&E, and relation with the EU. CIHEAM-Bari (*Centre International de Hautes Etudes Agronomiques Méditerranéennes*) is the Partner Organisation in charge of technical and scientific management.

Partners of the project

Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (Alliance Bioversity-CIAT, CGIAR); Italian National Research Council (CNR); University of Roma Tre; Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE); Joseph KI Zerbo University of Ouagadougou; Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey

Other main stakeholders

SUSTLIVES will interact and work with different actors of AKIS in Burkina Faso and Niger, from the public, civil society, and private sectors. Indeed, a wide range of actors will be represented in the Stakeholder Forum that will provide guidance to the project. SUSTLIVES will mobilize, among others,

local institutional counterparts such as extension services, CREAM-INERA in Burkina Faso, and DGRN-INRAN in Niger; CREAM and DGRN will also join the Stakeholder Forum. Furthermore, SUSTLIVES will collaborate with different local NGOs. In particular, the NGO Afrique Verte and its subsidiaries in Burkina Faso (APROSSA - Afrique Verte Burkina, *Association pour la Promotion de la Sécurité et de la Souveraineté Alimentaires au Burkina*) and in Niger (AcSSA - Afrique Verte Niger, *Actions pour la Sécurité et la Souveraineté Alimentaires au Niger*) will be involved in SUSTLIVES. Community-based organizations (CBOs), selected during the project start-up phase, will also be engaged in SUSTLIVES activities.

Localisation

Burkina Faso and Niger

Funding

UE	€ 6,000,000
AICS	€ 1,650,000
Total budget	€ 7,650,000

Duration

Four (4) years; August 2021 - July 2025



 Alliance

