Communication on the Global Monitoring & Evaluation Framework of the EU-funded initiative "Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture" (DeSIRA)

November 2022 - ASRAFS (Advisory Services for Resilient Agri-Food Systems)

The DeSIRA Initiative contributes to climate-relevant, productive and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems in low and middle-income countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America

The EU-funded « Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture » (DeSIRA) initiative aims at contributing to climate-relevant, productive and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems in low and middle-income countries. The initiative supports research and innovation projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America and strengthens research capacities and governance, involving key actors at national and international levels. It was launched in 2017 in the One Planet Summit. Three Calls for Proposals (CfPs) were launched (2018, 2019, 2020). The first contracts were signed in 2019. The total number of projects is 80 for around 340 million euros of EU funds. Information on the DeSIRA initiative and projects already started can be found at https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/desira. There are three categories of DeSIRA projects: 1/ Pillar I - Research and innovation in agricultural and food systems; 2/ Pillar II - Research infrastructure conducive to Innovation; 3/ Pillar III - Knowledge and evidence to feed policies design.

Pillar I - Research and innovation in agricultural and food systems (Source INTPA/F3)

Pillar I encompasses projects focused on research and innovation in agricultural and food systems. These projects target a variety of productions (crop and animal productions, agroforestry), associated services (innovation support services, advisory services) and agroecological systems, often with a value chain perspective and a concern for both agroecology and natural resources management, in the context of climate change. In line with the principles of the DeSIRA initiative, these projects have common characteristics: they strive to address major social and environment-related challenges with a view to promote Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA); they mobilise academic research and participatory action research and valorise local knowledge to produce knowledge useful for action; they co-design and promote innovation processes via various multi-stakeholder approaches that build on science and bring together communities of farmers, the private sector, research institutions, technical and development bodies, grass-root organisations; they aim at strengthening the technical and functional capacities of actors to innovate at individual and organisational level; finally, they aim at increasing knowledge, changing behaviours, improving skills as well as technical and management practices, and contributing to policy decision. Such approaches are expected to impact food system transformation at various levels: farm, landscape, value chain, and policy environment.

Pillar II - Research infrastructure conducive to Innovation (Source INTPA/F3)

Pillar II projects focus on strengthening the capacities of regional and international organizations, which play a key role in research and extension and research, especially in Africa: Conférence des Responsables de Recherche Agronomique Africains (CORAF), Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS). Some projects contribute to the capitalization and sharing of experiences related to Agricultural Innovation Systems (Tropical Agriculture Platform -TAP- and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research -GFAR-) through support to networks and capacities strengthening of organisations. One project builds research capacities through the training and mentoring of young African researchers (One Planet Fellowships).

Pillar III - Knowledge and evidence to feed policy design (Source DeSIRA LIFT)

Pillar III is comprised of one project, DeSIRA LIFT "Leveraging the DeSIRA Initiative for Agri-Food Systems Transformation". It provides services to the DeSIRA Initiative under three service areas:

Service Area 1 - Support to the country-based DeSIRA projects to enhance their impacts by promoting Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) thinking and the use of developmental evaluation approaches.

Service Area 2 - Support to African apex organisations for research on agricultural development, extension and higher education and add value to global initiatives TAP and GFAR.

Service Area 3 - Support to co-create knowledge and evidence to feed policy dialogues and programming on agri-food systems in the Global South.

A global Monitoring and Evaluation framework, to measure progress at initiative level and to communicate on new approaches to agricultural innovation and research

The Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission (DG INTPA) has designed and is implementing a global Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to steer and monitor the DeSIRA initiative, to determine the extent to which its overarching objectives are being achieved, and to report and communicate more efficiently, internally and externally, on new approaches to agricultural research and innovation. The global M&E framework is a tool to identify and inform initiative-level indicators. It cannot reflect the diversity of projects or the complexity of innovation processes. Not mandatory at project level, initiative-level indicators are not meant to substitute project indicators or to support project-level monitoring processes.
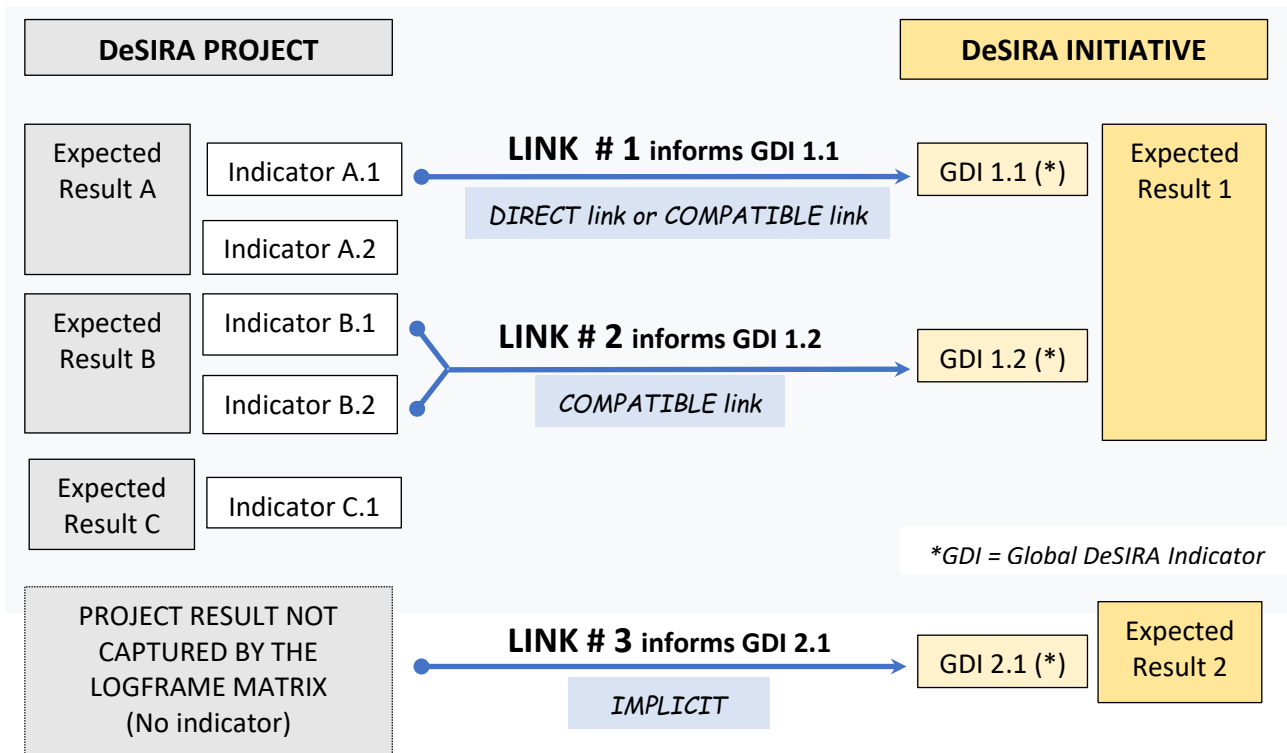
Global DeSIRA Indicators, the cornerstone of the global Monitoring & Evaluation framework

The global M&E framework is underpinned by a LogFrame Matrix (LFM) and initiative-level indicators called Global DeSIRA Indicators (GDIs). Most GDIs build on existing and approved DeSIRA project indicators. They were selected on the basis of their relevance to the DeSIRA initiative, as a whole, and of data availability at project level. Formulating and defining a GDI entails a bottom-up process of comparison, analysis and synthesis of project indicators, leading to a simple, consensual, global indicator which several projects -but not necessarily all projects- can relate to and inform, without additional data collection by the Implementing Partner (IP). Besides, GDIs have been designed in a way that minimizes the amount of calculation and consolidation needed to inform and update them.

Each project is related to the global M&E framework through a number of links, aimed at capturing those of its results -explicit or implicit- that contribute to expected results at initiative level. A link is a relationship that connects a project result to a GDI. It may be based on one (or more) project indicators. A link is "direct" when the project LFM captures an explicit result via an indicator, which is similar to the GDI (definition, measurement unit): in this case, attributing a value to the GDI is a straightforward process. A link is "compatible" when the project indicator is not strictly identical to the GDI, but nevertheless characterizes a project result similar to the expected result to which the GDI is attached at initiative level. In this case, attributing a value to the GDI requires further analysis and calculation. A link can also be established between a project result and a GDI in the absence of a project indicator, as long as the IP confirms that project activities contribute to the global-level result to which this GDI is attached: in this case, the result is implicit, thus the link is "implicit". Project indicators that do not inform any GDI are not involved in any link. The number of links between a specified project and the set of GDIs is an indication of the extent to which a particular project aligns with the global M&E framework. As and when project logframe matrices and indicators are improved, links can be modified, added or cancelled.

As at November 2022, 28 key (or core) GDIs have been developed. Each project informs several GDIs and each GDI is informed by several projects. Some GDIs are disaggregated to better capture the diversity of results at project level and to allow for more detailed analysis at global level. For instance, the "Number of

organisations increasing their capacity to innovate in the area of agriculture and food systems" is disaggregated into: (i) International, (ii) National/Research, (iii) National/Technical, (iv) National Farmers' Organisations, NGOs, Civil Society Organisations. Including disaggregation criteria (except sex), there are currently 44 lines (rows) of GDIs. Several indicators can be further disaggregated by sex. The full definition of each GDI, the description of each link for each project and GDI values are included in an Excel document, which is updated on a yearly basis and underpins the annual global reporting for the DeSIRA initiative.

Annual data collection process, step by step, to feed the Annual Global Report of the DeSIRA initiative

- IPs share their annual progress report and an updated version of the LFM (as appropriate) with the expert in charge of collecting data for the global M&E framework. If the LFM has been modified, the links between the project results and the GDIs are updated.

- The expert looks for information in the annual progress report to clarify the links and inform the GDIs. If the link is direct, the GDI value can be found in the progress report. However, in the case of compatible or implicit links, attributing a value to a GDI requires a discussion with the IP.

- The meeting with the IP aims to confirm the relevance of the links, the values of the GDIs, and to update information on organisations and researchers involved in implementation. This working session may last up to 2.5 hours. The EU Delegation is informed and may join the session.

- Collected information is edited and a summary of the working session is sent to the IP and the EU Delegation. The IP follows up and provides additional information, if required.

- Collected information is analysed and incorporated in the Annual Global Report of the DeSIRA Initiative.

The global LFM includes cumulative values for GDIs, for a given reporting period, defined as the time elapsed between the start of the various DeSIRA projects and the end of implementation period covered by the latest project reports available when data was collected for the global annual report. The reporting period varies from project to project. For the first Annual Global Report 2021, data was collected for 25 projects from 2019, up to December 2021, when data was available. The reporting period encompasses two years of implementation for 17 projects, one year for 7 projects and three years for one project.

Limitations and reporting challenges

Results and data reported in the global M&E framework must be interpreted with some degree of caution because the quality of data at initiative level depends on the quality of data at project level. DeSIRA LIFT is supporting DeSIRA projects to improve their Monitoring and Evaluation Learning System, in order to enhance the relevance and quality of the data collection process. In some areas, the quantitative results of a large Pillar II project overshadow those of the other projects. This is mitigated by highlighting the results of Pillar I and of Pillar II projects separately. Therefore a single LFM can be used to report on the achievements of both institutional and research-oriented DeSIRA projects.
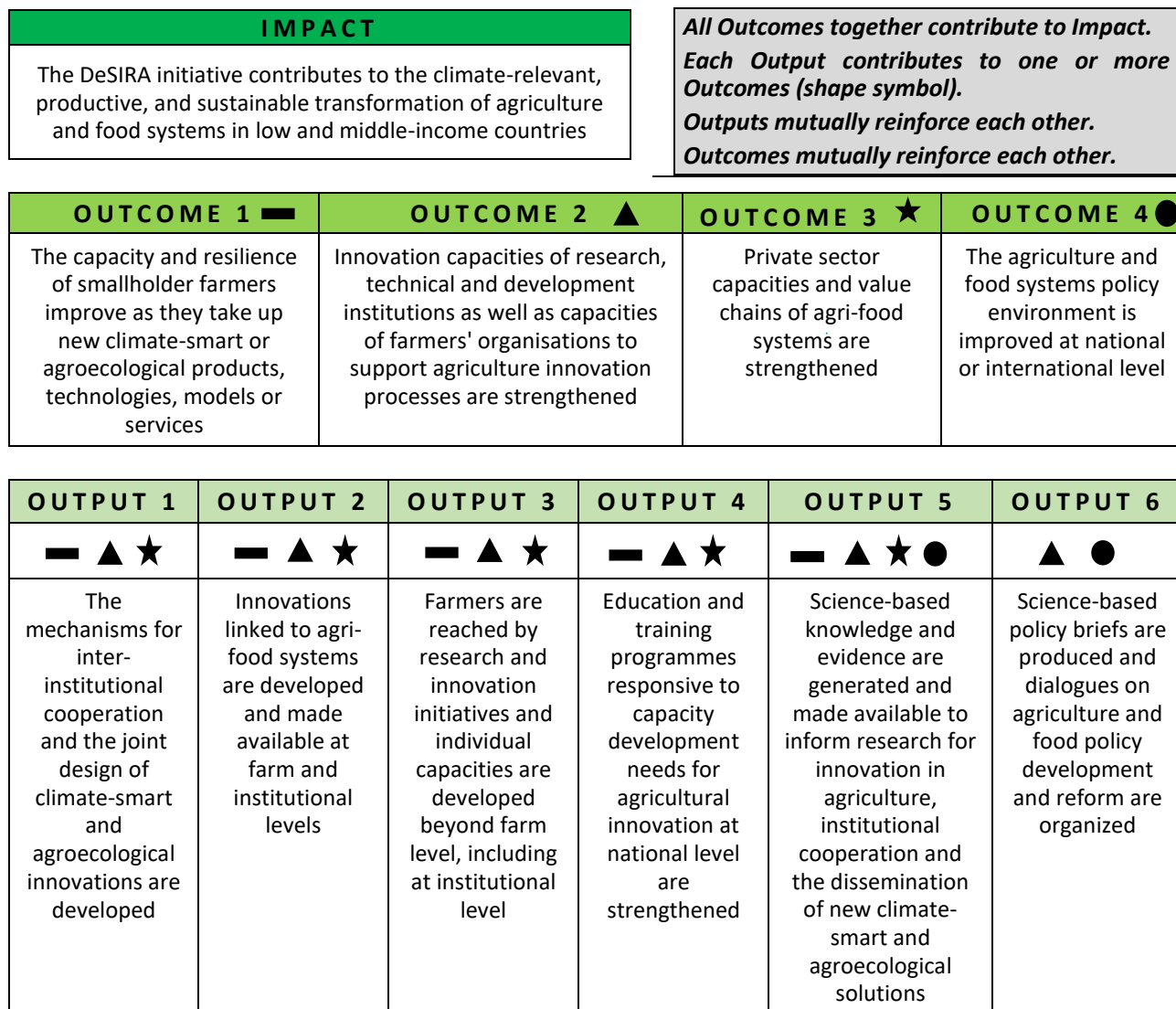
The results chain at DeSIRA initiative level

In spite of an unusual development process, focused on developing GDIs, the global LFM strives to propose a coherent results chain in which GDIs are hierarchized and relevant to the result they intend to capture. However, the formulation of GDIs based on the identification of common project-level results and attached indicators leaves gaps in the global results chain, especially at impact level. This was mitigated by developing impact GDIs aimed at better reflecting and encouraging projects to pursue the long-term, higher and wider objectives of the DeSIRA initiative. Besides, meta-indicators -counting DeSIRA projects having achieved a specified result, explicit or implicit- have been developed to capture strictly qualitative or more complex quantitative project data and information.

Capturing complex quantitative data or strictly qualitative information: Meta-indicators in the global M&E framework of the DeSIRA initiative

- Number of DeSIRA projects claiming a positive, documented **impact on agroecosystems at farm level**

- Number of DeSIRA projects claiming a positive, documented contribution to the **status and role of smallholder female farmers or female food entrepreneurs**

- Number of DeSIRA projects for which the **expected rate of implementation of innovations by targeted farmers** has been met

- Number of DeSIRA projects having at least one documented **strategy to disseminate or scale up innovations beyond the projects' target groups** of smallholder farmers

The figure shows the chain of expected results at initiative level and how outputs articulate with outcomes.

I M P A C T
The DeSIRA initiative contributes to the climate-relevant, productive, and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems in low and middle-income countries

All Outcomes together contribute to Impact.
Each Output contributes to one or more Outcomes (shape symbol).
Outputs mutually reinforce each other.
Outcomes mutually reinforce each other.

OUTCOME 1 ▬	**OUTCOME 2** ▲	**OUTCOME 3** ★	**OUTCOME 4** ●
The capacity and resilience of smallholder farmers improve as they take up new climate-smart or agroecological products, technologies, models or services	Innovation capacities of research, technical and development institutions as well as capacities of farmers' organisations to support agriculture innovation processes are strengthened	Private sector capacities and value chains of agri-food systems are strengthened	The agriculture and food systems policy environment is improved at national or international level

OUTPUT 1	**OUTPUT 2**	**OUTPUT 3**	**OUTPUT 4**	**OUTPUT 5**	**OUTPUT 6**
▬ ▲ ★	▬ ▲ ★	▬ ▲ ★	▬ ▲ ★	▬ ▲ ★ ●	▲ ●
The mechanisms for inter-institutional cooperation and the joint design of climate-smart and agroecological innovations are developed	Innovations linked to agri-food systems are developed and made available at farm and institutional levels	Farmers are reached by research and innovation initiatives and individual capacities are developed beyond farm level, including at institutional level	Education and training programmes responsive to capacity development needs for agricultural innovation at national level are strengthened	Science-based knowledge and evidence are generated and made available to inform research for innovation in agriculture, institutional cooperation and the dissemination of new climate-smart and agroecological solutions	Science-based policy briefs are produced and dialogues on agriculture and food policy development and reform are organized

The Global DeSIRA Logframe Matrix (Version 1 - November 2022)

This is the first version of the global LFM, approved by DG INTPA. It comprises 28 key (or core) GDIs: 7 impact indicators, 13 indicators attached to 4 outcomes and 8 indicators attached to 6 outputs. The full definition of each GDI is in the Excel file attached to the global M&E framework. The potential correspondence with EU Results Framework (EURF) indicators is provided, as and when relevant.

RESULT STATEMENT			INDICATOR NUMBER AND TITLE[1] → Potential correspondence with an EURF indicator
IMPACT	The DeSIRA initiative contributes to the climate-relevant, productive, and sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems in low and middle-income countries	1	Number of smallholder farmers who claim socio-economic gains, a positive impact on agroecosystems and/or feel better equipped to cope with climate change-related shocks
		2	Number of smallholder farmers expected to benefit from innovations disseminated beyond the projects' target groups
		3A	Number of hectares of agricultural or pastoral land where sustainable innovative climate-smart or agroecological practices have been introduced (Target groups) → **EURF 2.4**
		3B	Number of hectares of agricultural or pastoral land where sustainable innovative climate-smart or agroecological practices have been introduced (Indirect beneficiaries) → **EURF 2.4**
		4	Number of DeSIRA projects claiming a positive, documented impact on agroecosystems at farm level
		5	Number of DeSIRA projects claiming a positive, documented contribution to the status and role of smallholder female farmers or female food entrepreneurs
		6	Number of organisations strengthened by DeSIRA projects, able to document a positive impact of the project on the transformation of agriculture and food systems at national or international level
		7	Number of endorsed policies, strategies or plans supported by DeSIRA projects and demonstrating a positive impact on the transformation of agriculture and food systems at national or international level
OUTCOME 1	The capacity and the resilience of smallholder farmers improve as they take up new climate-smart or agroecological products, technologies, models or services	8A	Number of climate-smart or agroecological innovations taken up by smallholder farmers (Products, technologies, models, systems, strategies) → **EURF 2.14**
		8B	Number of climate-smart or agroecological innovations taken up by smallholder farmers (Services, decision making tools, governance mechanisms)
		9	Number of smallholder farmers who have taken up at least one climate-smart or agroecological innovation
		10	Number of DeSIRA projects for which the expected rate of implementation of innovations by targeted farmers has been met
		11	Number of DeSIRA projects having at least one documented strategy to disseminate or scale up innovations beyond the projects' target groups of smallholder farmers
OUTCOME 2	Innovation capacities of research, technical and development institutions as well as capacities of farmers' organisations to support agriculture innovation processes are strengthened	12A	Number of organisations increasing their capacity to innovate in the area of agriculture and food systems (International)
		12B	Number of organisations increasing their capacity to innovate in the area of agriculture and food systems (National or subnational research institutions)
		12C	Number of organisations increasing their capacity to innovate in the area of agriculture and food systems (National or subnational technical/development institutions)
		12D	Number of organisations increasing their capacity to innovate in the area of agriculture and food systems (National or subnational FOs, NGOs, CSOs)
		13	Number of new institutional partnerships on agriculture and foods systems triggered by DeSIRA projects

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[1] The full definition of each Global DeSIRA Indicator is available in the Excel file attached to the global M&E framework.

OUTCOME 3	Private sector capacities and value chains of agri-food systems are strengthened	14	Number of sustainable or climate-smart innovations taken up by agriculture and food-related MSMEs → **EURF 2.14**
		15	Number of agriculture and food-related MSMEs which have taken up at least one sustainable innovation → **EURF 2.20**
		16	Number of agriculture and food-related MSMEs strengthened or created
		17	Number of food value chains strengthened
		18	Number of full-time food industry-related jobs created → **EURF 2.11**
OUTCOME 4	The agriculture and food systems policy environment is improved at national or international level	19	Number of policies, strategies or plans, fostered by multi-stakeholder processes, under development or endorsed by the relevant authorities → **EURF 2.25**
		20	Number of countries or international organisations developing or having endorsed a policy, strategy or plan which increases their ability to sustainably transform agriculture and food systems and/or adapt to climate change → **EURF 2.19**
OUTPUT 1	The mechanisms for inter-institutional cooperation and the joint design of climate-smart and agroecological innovations are developed	21A	Number of multi-stakeholder innovation platforms/mechanisms developed or strengthened (International level)
		21B	Number of multi-stakeholder innovation platforms/mechanisms developed or strengthened (National level)
		21C	Number of multi-stakeholder innovation platforms/mechanisms developed or strengthened (Subnational level)
OUTPUT 2	Innovations linked to agri-food systems are developed and made available at farm and institutional levels	22A	Number of climate-smart or agroecological innovations under development (At farm level: products, technologies, models, systems, strategies)
		22B	Number of climate-smart or agroecological innovations under development (At farm level: services, decision making tools, governance mechanisms)
		22C	Number of innovations under development (Beyond farm level, including at institutional level)
OUTPUT 3	Farmers are reached by research and innovation initiatives and individual capacities are developed beyond farm level, including at institutional level	23	Number of smallholder farmers reached by research & innovation-smart initiatives → **EURF 2.3**
		24A	Number of individuals whose capacities are developed (Researchers)
		24B	Number of individuals whose capacities are developed (Technical or Development Staff) → **EURF 2.15**
		25A	Number of individuals supported to earn a post-graduate diploma (Master)
		25B	Number of individuals supported to earn a post-graduate diploma (PhD / Doctorate)
OUTPUT 4	Education and training programmes responsive to capacity development needs for agricultural innovation at national level are strengthened	26	Number of curricula or training packages developed or upgraded

OUTPUT 5	Science-based knowledge and evidence are generated and made available to inform research for innovation in agriculture, institutional cooperation and the dissemination of new climate-smart and agroecological solutions	27A	Number of knowledge and communication products developed (Communications products)
		27B	Number of knowledge and communication products developed (Technical reports)
		27C	Number of knowledge and communication products developed (Guidance manuals)
		27D	Number of knowledge and communication products developed (Databases)
		27E	Number of knowledge and communication products developed (Scientific Publications)
OUTPUT 6	Science-based policy briefs are produced and dialogues on agriculture and food policy development and reform are organized	28A	Number of policy-related outputs (Documents)
		28B	Number of policy-related outputs (Dialogues)

(Source: Global DeSIRA M&E framework)

Which information we have with Global Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

The global LFM underpins the structure of the Annual Global Report of the DeSIRA Initiative. This is a result-oriented report, which -for each result (outputs, outcomes, impacts)- provides:
- a summary table of the values for the GDIs attached to this result (see below);
- an overview of the contribution of each DeSIRA project to the result;
- an analysis of achievements and progress towards the expected result.

Format of a summary table presenting the values of a GDI, illustrated for GDI #21B "Number of multi-stakeholder innovation platforms/mechanisms developed or strengthened (National level)"

Number of projects contributing to the GDI value		GDI #	Global DeSIRA Indicator	Total Value	Value P-I	Value P-II
Linked to GDI	20XX-20XX				*Blue (empty) cells: no expected contribution*	
Number of **projects expected to contribute a value** for this GDI, as per their current design and when data is available	Number of **projects which have contributed a positive value** for this GDI, **for the reporting period**	GDI number	GDI Title	Value Pillar I + Value Pillar II	Sum of values attributed to this GDI for each Pillar I project contributing to the GDI	Sum of values attributed to this GDI for each Pillar II project contributing to the GDI
12	5	21B	**Number of multi-stakeholder innovation platforms/mechanisms developed or strengthened (National level)**	**76**	12	64

Overview of the contribution of each DeSIRA project to a specified result at initiative level. Each section or sub-section of the global annual report incorporates a table showing, for each project, its contribution to the GDIs attached to the result the section covers, as per the following format. In case a project has produced outputs but is unable to provide robust data for the reporting period, the value "0+" is reported in the corresponding cell and the project is not counted among projects having contributed a positive value. A blue-shaded cell with no content indicates that the project is not expected to contribute to the GDI during this reporting period, because it has no link with the corresponding GDI, as established during a discussion with its implementing partner.

Format for the overview of a DeSIRA project's contribution to a specified result at initiative level

OUTPUT X - Contribution 2019-2021 of DeSIRA projects					
GDI #X1 Title of the GDI GDI #X2 Title of the GDI GDI #X3 Title of the GDI					
Project ID	Contract CRIS #	DeSIRA Project Short Title	GDI #X1	GDI #X2	GDI #X3
			0(+) Positive contribution but value not available		
			Blue (empty) cells: no expected contribution		
1	XXXXXX	**PROJECT A**		2	0
2	XXXXXX	**PROJECT B**	1	3	0(+)
…	….	**….**	…	…	…
Pillar II	XXXXXX	**PROJECT Y**	2	0	
TOTAL Cumulative Values (All interventions, Pillar I & II)			**1**	**5**	**0**

Conclusion

Developed when a third of all DeSIRA projects were already at least two years into implementation, the global M&E framework pragmatically adjusts to and builds on existing project-level indicators, rather than imposing theoretical indicators, which many projects may not be able to inform. It strives to identify project-level results -explicit or implicit- that are relevant to the DeSIRA initiative in a coherent and systematic manner with a view to assess progress on an annual basis through regular data collection. This exercise is expected to allow for comparison from one year to the next and to identify gradual changes at a global level, that are more significant than absolute quantitative values. However, limitations inherent to the concept of "logframe" apply to the global M&E framework, which cannot reflect complex and sophisticated innovation processes and the full diversity of changes they may produce. The main user of the global M&E framework is DG INTPA for steering, monitoring and communication purposes. There is a plan to include the Global DeSIRA Indicators of the DeSIRA Initiative in OPSYS, the information system used by the European Commission for external actions. Implementing partners may use them as a source of inspiration, though it should be clear that they are under no obligation to use them for their project.