

## Director's letter

Dear Reader,

The past year has been rich in initiatives related to our project and it is a pleasure to take a moment to reflect upon them!

Our library of studies and knowledge keeps increasing, with 57 studies between completed and ongoing. We touched almost 40 different partner countries and 30 different products, providing this community with an invaluable wealth of information in countries and value chains often chronically lacking it.

We keep working on improving the quality and usability of each study, which is an intricate job in a world of growing complexity; yet we believe that the policy-science interface remains one of the solutions to foster inclusiveness and sustainability in agri-based value chains and one worth promoting.

On the methodological toolkit, the project is currently reflecting on several avenues to better respond to the requests of EU Delegations: how to strengthen the discussions around the environmental sustainability of value chains; how to support the selection of which value chain to analyse; as well as, how to perform a 'simplified' VCA4D study in case of small or multiple value chains to be analysed.

Our streams of work in the past year related also to the set-up and launch of the VCA game (more on page 3). This is the first game of this kind! With the precious help of colleagues of DG INTPA and EUDs, we put ourselves in the shoes of a policy officer in an EU Delegation having to negotiate a new programme and having at their disposal information from a VCA4D study. We hope this is food for thought for your real-life situations and we invite you to take ownership of this game and provide us with some challenging feedback and ideas for future developments!

Moreover, the VCA4D Information and Knowledge Management

System is finalised and currently being populated. This will include information from the past studies, and it will be one more instrument for decision-makers to understand and seize findings from the studies and to cross-reference them with situations in other countries. Be attentive for its launch in the first quarter of 2025!

In 2024, VCA4D has been also very active in enlarging its offer in terms of capacity strengthening, on top of the VCA game. We strongly invite you to join us in the monthly 'Value Chain Knowledge Sharing for Action' sessions: the purpose of the activity is not only to discuss and share knowledge on value chains, but mostly to build a community of people in EU Delegations interested in exchanging, learning and reflecting together on value chains. We will propose an agenda for the first months, but we hope this space will be increasingly filled with your requests and with your case studies!

We have also enlarged the activities of capacity strengthening in partner countries, starting to embed more national experts in VCA4D studies with the aim of creating local pool of experts that EUDs can mobilise for new studies or updates. If this is of interest for your EUD, get in touch to learn more!

Last but not least, I would like to thank both the team in INTPA F3, the whole VCA4D Project Management Unit and our community of experts and Agrinatura for their tireless engagement, the endless curiosity, the inspiring discussion and the hard collective work!

We wish you a pleasant reading of the VCA4D newsletter, hoping this will tease you to discover the full reports, all available on [Capacity4Dev](#).

Olimpia Orlandoni  
VCA4D Project Director



**GRAINS**  
5



**FRUITS**  
8



**GREEN BEANS**  
1



**TUBERS & LEGUMES**  
3



**VANILLA**  
1



**MEAT AND DAIRY**  
6



**COTTON**  
4



**COFFEE**  
6



**COCOA**  
7



**PALM OIL**  
2



**FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**  
8



**NUTS**  
6

## Comoros study and workshop

In January 2023 VCA4D launched a study on the fisheries value chain in the Union of Comoros. The study was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team from Agrinatura members and international and national experts. Following the completion of the study a successful high-level stakeholder workshop was held in Moroni in June 2024 and was attended by over 100 participants. The workshop was opened by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, the Environment, Tourism and Handicrafts, Mr Houmed MSAÏDI. Presentations were also given by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry for the Economy, Industry, Investment and Regional Integration as well as a presentation of the VCA4D study results by the team of experts. Working groups were also organised around four specific issues:

1. How can fishing effort and catches be increased while minimising the risks to fish stocks?
2. How could the fisheries VC contribute more to improving food security in Comoros with a constant level of catches?
3. Is it possible to improve the contribution of the fisheries value chain to economic growth?
4. What information and systems are essential for better monitoring of value chain activities to support decision-making?

In light of this we spoke with Marie-Ange Bonnescuelle de Lespinois, Chargée de programmes – Acting office manager and Eulade Mboneye of the Delegation to Comoros to learn her thoughts on the implementation of the VCA4D study from a European Delegation's point view and the merits of a post-study stakeholder workshop.

### What did the VCA4D study allow you to learn about the fisheries value chain in Comoros?

The VCA4D study showed the complexity of the fish sector in Comoros and highlighted the opportunities offered the key challenges which need to be addressed based on a holistic approach through involvement of all actors: public institutions, development partners, private sector, and fishermen's organisations.

### VCA4D is a multi-disciplinary approach; did its application allow you to see how to balance the potentially competing priorities of the disciplines?

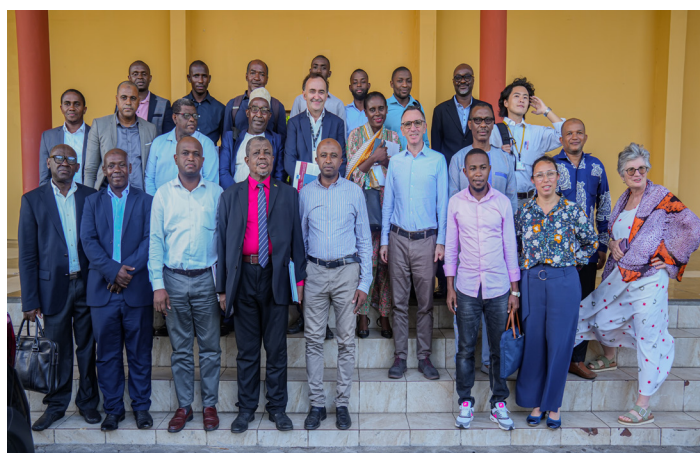
The application of VCA4D as a multi-disciplinary approach has identified different priorities, which require strategic decision from the Government of Comoros, notably in the framework of the "Plan Comores Emergent". At the level of European Delegation office in Comoros, the application of VCA4D approach allowed to prioritise actions to be funded in the framework of a blue economy approach with a focus on fishing and tourism.

### Was the stakeholder workshop that was convened after the study a good opportunity to discuss how to scale-up the findings and recommendations of the study?

The workshop offered to more than one hundred attendees (from different groups of fish sector' stakeholders) the opportunity to learn about the findings of the study. Moreover, the discussions in four sub-groups on specific topics related to the study, have contributed to enrich the findings and recommendations for concrete actions to be implemented.

### VCA4D launched a the VCA Game this year, which was presented to you after the event, what are your thoughts on this tool? Do you see potential to broaden this activity to other stakeholders for further follow up?

The VCA Game turned out to be a very interesting tool to reinforce participation and interaction among stakeholders for example along a planning process on a sector with an important complexity as the fish value chain in Comoros. Through initial and appropriate training of key stakeholders, the VCA Game could be used for follow up of recommendations and also for keeping the momentum launched by the VCA4D study.



## The VCA Game

We are pleased to announce that, in the framework of the project, we have developed an innovative tool to strengthen the capacity in using the VCA4D methodology for decision making: the VCA game!

### Purpose of the game

The purpose of the game is to contribute to making information and findings provided by the VCA studies understandable and clarify the way they can be integrated into development cooperation policy dialogue and project management activities.

### What is the game about?

The VCA game is based on a rice value chain in a fictitious partner country. The player is an EU official responsible for the agricultural portfolio. You are asked by your Head of Cooperation to build a new action on the rice value chain and to discuss this with the partner country. Will you be able to find the right arguments to convince all stakeholders to align with your development objectives?

### How can you play the game?

You can access the game at this link:

<https://value-chain-game.agrinatura.dev.seriousgames.net/#/>

A French version will be made available in early 2025 and translation in Spanish and Portuguese are foreseen.

### Audience

The VCA game primarily targets development practitioners, EU staff and policy makers in partner countries, working on the development of sustainable and inclusive agriculture and fishery based value chains. The game can also be used as a teaching tool in Universities and by VCA4D experts to better understand how the reports they produce will be used by decision-makers.

### Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes are to understand a VCA4D study, even for non technical practitioners in the agricultural or fishery sector and how to build a strategy and support it using evidence-based data. You will learn how to transform key data into policies and improve policy dialogue skills.

The game is designed to be flexible. It requires around two hours to be completed but you can play in different sessions and are free to take your time at each step. It will restart from the session where you left off.



## Podcast and seminar series

VCA4D has launched a seminar series 'Value Chain Knowledge Sharing for Action', designed to enhance the literacy on value chains for staff of the European Commission and the European Union Delegations dealing with agricultural portfolios. Understanding the benefits and limitations of the value chain approach will help EU staff to use results correctly to achieve their development objectives.

In our first session, we discussed the 'Concept of value chain: what are we talking about?'. We clarified the terminology and analytical references of what is meant by a VC with VCA4D Scientific Director Frédéric Lancon.

After each session we will release an episode of our new podcast: VCA4D Knowledge Pills! The podcast will capture the main themes discussed and will be available to all through our [Spotify](#) page.

Our next session will take place in January where we will look at how best to use a VCA4D study to improve policy dialogue and decision-making. To learn more please contact our training officer Laura: [laura.felisatti@agrinatura-eu.eu](mailto:laura.felisatti@agrinatura-eu.eu).



## Mongolia cashmere workshop

The aim of this stakeholder workshop held in Ulaanbaatar in September 2024, was an occasion to present the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the [VCA4D study](#) and to reflect around the challenges, as well as to share views on how to develop the opportunities for the promotion of a more inclusive and sustainable cashmere value chain.

The VCA4D team summarised the findings of the study confirming the strategic importance of this sector as the main source of rural livelihoods, high-grade urban employment and an important contributor to national economic growth and diversification of exports. The experts however stressed that the sector still suffers from significant financial and economic constraints, as the local cashmere manufacturers struggle to invest and need financial credits (at high interest rates) to finance the purchase of cashmere during the combing period. Herders face winter feed shortages, untransparent pricing, and an uncertain institutional framework for rangeland management. Environmental issues also exist (rangeland degradation, renewable energy use and water treatment in processing, GHG emissions from livestock, etc.). These findings revamped the discussion around the sustainable development of the cashmere sector.

There was a common feeling that Mongolia can enter a virtuous cycle of verifiable high quality, driving higher prices so that herders can obtain increased income from fewer goats, if the right enabling actions and policies are in place.

## VCA4D Update Studies

VCA4D offers the possibility to perform updates and monitoring of concluded studies. The updates are demand driven and will take place at least two/three years after the conclusion of the first VCA study.

This activity is strategic for learning. It will allow us to see if and how the indicators on the VC have evolved between the two analyses.

Our first update study was completed this year in Honduras looking at the coffee value chain analysis that was originally conducted in 2018. The methodological framework used for the update study is the same as for the previous study but focused on some particular points including:

- Updating the functional analysis to record any significant changes in the VC structure, such as new actors, changes in production and processing practices at any stage (technical innovation), changes in VC governance.
- Revising the social analysis with a particular focus on land tenure and social capital.
- Assessing the readiness of the country/region to provide an enabling framework for the due diligence requirements of the EU's Regulation on Deforestation-free Products (EUDR), including a review of the coordination processes (private and public) that could be mobilised to monitor coffee sourcing in the light of EU requirements.

You can read the report on our [Capacity4Dev page](#).

## The VCA4D PMU – Get in touch!

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## VCA4D Conference - Knowledge Briefs

We are continuing to build on the work done and to valorise the results of the VCA4D Conference held in 2023. During the Conference, 14 transversal analyses were presented. These analyses were done using data from over 40 VCA4D studies with the objective to attempt to gain cross-cutting lessons from the studies. These analyses along with presentations and videos from the Conference can be found [here](#).

In addition to the analyses, VCA4D is now also producing knowledge briefs to summarise the main findings presented at the conference. These briefs will contain the main messages and lessons learnt to be diffused to a wide audience of policy makers (EU staff and staff of partner countries), farmers organisations and value chain stakeholders.

You will find through the [link](#) two briefs already launched. The first is on women's role in agricultural value chains and explores lessons learnt from the gender equality analysis element of the VCA4D studies.

The second brief released looked at the role and importance of midstream actors (in processing, logistics, storage, packaging and handling) in agri-food VCs across a number of studies drawing on experiences from cash crops, fruits, vegetables, animal products and food staples.

Keep an eye on our [Linkedin](#) page for our next issue on agroecology and land tenure!

All of our VCA4D calls can be found on the Agrinatura website: <https://agrinatura-eu.eu/>

Follow us on: [Linkedin](#)

On our [Capacity4Dev](#) page you can find more information about the project, methodology and studies

You will also find a short video introduction to VCA4D on the [Agrinatura Youtube channel](#) as well as video explaining our methodology.

*Ongoing VCA4D studies:*

- Chad - Flour
- Tanzania - Coffee
- Guinea Bissau - Fisheries
- Moldova - Wheat, maize and sunflower
- Madagascar - Groundnuts