



AgrEcoNUS+

Enhancing value chains and markets of Neglected and Underutilized crop Species to contribute to Agroecological transition in Africa



OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of AgrEcoNUS+ is to enhance food security and nutrition by ensuring access to diverse and nutrient-rich diets while promoting resilient and sustainable agri-food systems in Africa.

The specific objective is to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of local agri-food systems in partner countries by promoting agroecological principles and the valorisation of neglected and underutilised species (NUS), with a focus on climate change adaptation and socio-economic shocks.



LOGIC OF INTERVENTION

The initiative responds to persistent structural challenges of food insecurity and malnutrition in Africa, where stunting and undernutrition rates remain alarmingly high. By leveraging agroecology and agricultural biodiversity, the project will transform food systems towards inclusivity, resilience, and sustainability. Agroecological practices enhance productivity, restore soil fertility, and reduce chemical dependency, while NUS contribute to nutritional diversity, climate resilience, and local economic empowerment.

Through integrated value chains, from production to consumption, the project strengthens market opportunities and consumer demand for nutritious, locally adapted crops.

The action contributes to food system transformation through three main areas:

- **Research and innovation:** strengthening national institutions and advisory services to generate and apply knowledge on agroecology and NUS.
- **Policy and governance:** supporting civil society and authorities to integrate agroecology, agrobiodiversity, and inclusive seed systems into strategies and regulations.
- **Value chains and markets:** developing inclusive, sustainable NUS-based value chains that enhance market access, consumer demand, and income generation.

Its expected impact spans multiple levels—local, national, regional, and interregional—through a systemic approach that integrates value chains, food environments, and consumer behaviours. This systemic approach aligns with and deepens the six pillars of food security (availability, access, utilisation, stability, sustainability and agency) while fostering equity, local knowledge, and ecological integrity.



MAIN INTERVENTIONS/COMPONENTS

Result 1 – Increased adoption of NUS and agroecological practices. Focuses on the production side, promoting the adoption of NUS and agroecological practices by smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth. This includes combining scientific and local knowledge, participatory varietal selection, farmer field schools, and support for community seed systems to strengthen climate adaptation and improve local nutrition.

Result 2 – Enabling a favorable political and institutional environment for adoption and promotion of NUS, agroecology, and farmer-managed seed systems. Activities include policy mapping and analysis, advocacy,

coalition-building, and knowledge-sharing to influence national and regional frameworks.

Result 3 – Expanding markets and consumption of NUS value chains by promoting inclusive business models, supporting MSMEs, increasing consumer awareness, and scaling demand for NUS-based and agroecological products.



STATE OF PLAY OF THE PROJECT

The description of action and financial plan are finalised.

Partners have been identified and mobilized.

Discussions with EC/DG INTPA to finalise the agreement and among main implementers are at their final phase.

The project is expected to begin in the first few months of 2026.



BASIC INFORMATION

Contracting entities: AICS (Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development).

Implementing partners: AICS, IFAD, CIHEAM-Bari (Centre International de Hautes Études Agronomiques Méditerranéennes – Institut Agronomique Méditerranéen de Bari), and SWISSAID.

Other partners are:

– Development and International Agencies: Alliance Bioversity International– CIAT (ABC), FiBL;
– Regional Organisations: CORAF, ROPPA, 3AO alliance, AFSA;
– African Universities & Research Institutes: UJKZ (Burkina Faso), UAM (Niger), UG (Ghana), UPGC (Côte d'Ivoire), ISRA (Senegal), TARI (Tanzania), SUA (Tanzania), Bio-Innovation Zimbabwe, etc.

Countries: Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe.

Start: February 2026 (expected starting date).

Duration: 4 years.

Funding: The 16M€ project is co-funded by the European Union (10M€) and AICS (2M€), and Switzerland SDC (SWISSAID's CROPS4HD programme).