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# MANUAL

## Strategic and operational planning for improving farmers' income and livelihoods

This manual is linked to the guide 'Optimising the Performance of Producers and their Organisations'

Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation  
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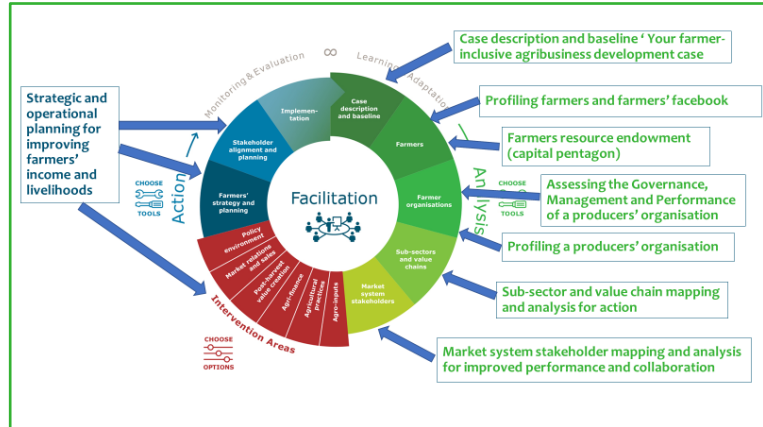


# Strategic and operational planning for improving farmers' income and livelihoods

## About the tool

This tool explains how to move from analysis to action. It helps to define priorities for action that are based on the results of the analyses that were done with different OPPO tools. The planning process leads to the planning of practical activities, structured according to the six intervention areas.

You are ready to use this tool once you have analysed your case by using different, complementary different OPPO tools, which allowed to look from different angles. Identified challenges and opportunities are the basis for developing a strategic plan and operational work plans.



Strategic and operational planning is preferable an effort that strongly involves producers and their organisations, as well as other stakeholders that are directly or indirectly involved in the agribusiness development case. The tool is important for:

- Farmers and farmers' organisations: to take well-informed strategic decisions for improving their performance, with the aim to improve revenues from farming, processing and marketing.
- SME's, companies, processors and/or traders: to work together with farmers and their organisations.
- Other stakeholders: to orient their activities in support of farmers' livelihood improvement and rural-economic development in general.

## Aims of the tool:

- ❖ **To make an overview of challenges and opportunities according to six intervention areas, based on the results of different tools.**
- ❖ **Select key issues to address.**
- ❖ **To define outcomes and plan activities for the key issues that are retained.**

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# 1 OPPO approach and principles

The OPPO process and analysis starts with framing and describing a specific case for farmer-inclusive aquaculture development. Thereafter, the stepwise approach goes into more depth by zooming in on: farmers, farmers' organisation(s), sub-sectors and value chains and market system stakeholders (as illustrated in the green part of the OPPO figure on the first page). The results of the different analyses and assessments are input for reflecting on strategies and actions. Strong emphasis is put on the involvement of farmers in the design, implementation and adaptation of agro-economic development programmes. This starts with farmers setting their priorities and planning their actions, and continues with stakeholder alignment and subsequent implementation of planned activities (see the blue part of the OPPO figure). Monitoring and evaluation and learning and adaptation are on-going processes, as the agricultural sector is continuously changing. This requires constant attention in order to tailor actions to new realities.

## Why a farmer-inclusive approach?

Worldwide, 500 million farms (90% of all farms) are family farms, of which the vast majority has less than 2 hectares. These farms host 1/3 of the world population. Family farms provide 80% of the world's food. For these reasons, the United Nations (FAO) launched the decade of family farming (2019-2028). Family farms are small enterprises; they make up the largest part of the private sector and the world's SME's. Smallholder farmers are key actors for agri-food sector development, for feeding rural areas and growing cities. Family farms are (and will be) crucial for food and nutrition security. Poverty is largely rural; 65% of poor working adults make a living through agriculture. Inclusive agricultural growth is two to four times more effective in raising incomes among the poorest. To arrive at farmer-inclusive development, small farmers need to take collective action to improve their position and performance. In short: there are dozens of reasons to really make agro-economic development farmer-inclusive.

## Five important principles for approaching agricultural development differently

Although inclusive and participatory approaches in (agricultural) development are common, smallholder farmers are still only partially involved in the design and implementation of agricultural development programmes. Government, company and donor efforts to listen to, and learn from farmers are remarkably limited. The habit to treat farmers as target groups or beneficiaries of development programs is persistent. Effective and inclusive agro-economic development requires a different approach. This requires putting farmers first and adhering to five important principles.

1. **Treat farmers as entrepreneurs** - Do not perceive and treat farmers as target groups or beneficiaries of external interventions. That will keep them in a dependent position.
2. **Ensure ownership of change processes right from the start.** Build on farmers' agency (= farmers' own ideas and initiatives, priorities, and own organisations and resources).
3. **Walk the talk - Work on practical cases.** Preferably, these cases are significant size in terms of: the number of farmers involved; production volume; sales; contribution to food and nutrition and/or farmer income improvement.
4. **Organise agricultural development as a team sport.** Promote genuine collaboration between farmers and stakeholders from the private and public sector, as partners for sustainable development and inclusive agribusiness.
5. **Align external support.** Ensure that development programmes/projects complement farmers' and other stakeholders' own plans and resources, for sustainable results and continuity.

## 2 Analysis for action

### Analysis for action

**Analysis.** The right side of the OPPO figure (green) is about analysis with and for farmers. It starts with the selection and description of a specific case for farmer-inclusive agro-economic development. It then goes into more depth by zooming in on farmers, farmers' organisation(s), the sub-sectors, value chains and stakeholders of the selected case.

**Action.** The left side of the OPPO figure (blue) is the action side. OPPO emphasises the importance of farmers' involvement in the design, implementation and adaptation of agro-economic development programmes. For the case at hand, the action starts with visioning and defining strategic orientations and continues with operational planning, stakeholder alignment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and learning and adaptation.

### Intervention areas

The red part in the middle indicates six intervention areas for farmer-inclusive development:

1. Production factors and agro-inputs
2. Agricultural practices
3. Agri-finance
4. Post-harvest value creation
5. Market relations and sales
6. Enabling environment

OPPO suggests to use these intervention areas for making the transition from analysis to action. Most often, action is needed in several, if not all six intervention areas.

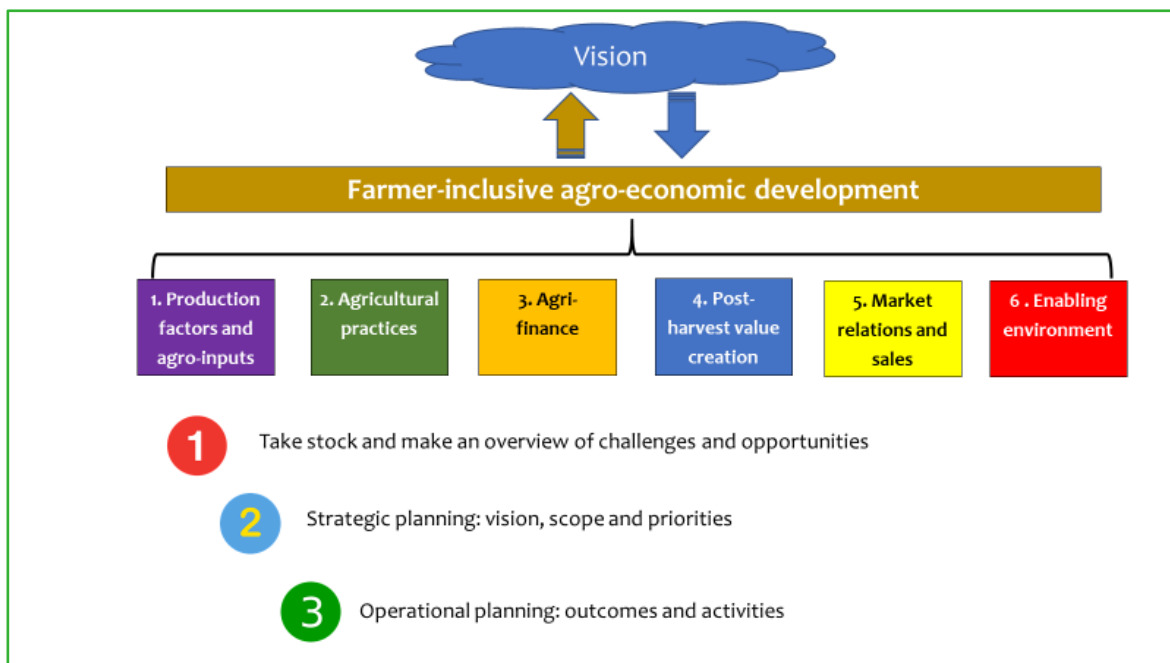


The collective action of farmers' organisations can also be structured according to these six intervention areas. Improving the 'Governance and Management of farmers' organisations' is generally important and a precondition for good performance. This is suggested as a specific point of attention under the sixth intervention area (Enabling environment).

### Process for moving to action

1. **Take stock and make an overview of the identified challenges and opportunities.** In this first step, you take stock of the challenges and opportunities identified with the OPPO tools and you structure these according to the six intervention areas.
2. **Planning.** After overviewing all challenges and opportunities, you formulate the long-term vision, you define the scope of the programme/project for farmer-inclusive agro-economic development and you set priorities.
3. **Action.** In this step, you define the primary and intermediary outcomes and you plan for conducting operational activities.

The challenges and opportunities, the selected priorities, the outcomes and the activities are generally across the different intervention areas. The combined effect of actions in these areas are expected to lead to farmer-inclusive agro-economic development, as shown in the figure below.



## Step 1 – Take stock and make an overview of identified challenges and opportunities

### Take stock of challenges and opportunities identified with different tools

Different complementary OPPO tools can be used for analysing your case. For each of these tools we explain how to take stock and structure the identified challenges and opportunities.

### Results of your farmer-inclusive aquaculture development case description

Based on the third OPPO principle – walk the talk by working on practical cases – you were invited to use the tool ‘Your farmer-inclusive agro-economic development case’ for defining, exploring and describing your case.

In the first part of this tool you defined the scope of your case with the help of three P’s: (1) Place: geographic focus, e.g. the farmers’ production zone; (2) Product: commodity focus; and (3) Producers: the farmers and farmers’ organisations involved in the case. In the subsequent chapters, you were invited to collect and analyse information related to different subjects. Very regularly, at the end of paragraphs or chapters, you were asked to identify the main challenges and opportunities.

Chapters 8 and 9 were on the enabling environment and stakeholder collaboration, which are likely to be important for all intervention areas. In the last chapter there was space to summarise the most important challenges and opportunities, to indicate the top priorities with tentative formulation of objectives, and to reflect on the role for your organisation and yourself.

Now that we are coming to the end of the analytical process, we suggest that you return to your case description, that you review and update the information, and that you identify the main challenges and opportunities.

This is how the contents of the case description are related to the six intervention areas:

Intervention areas	Related chapters and paragraphs	Cross-cutting
Agro-inputs	5.1. Seeds 5.2. Agro-inputs 5.3. Challenges and opportunities	9.1. Stakeholder inventory  9.2. Stakeholder roles  9.3. Stakeholder collaboration
Agricultural practices	1.2. Agro-ecological conditions and environmental change 1.3. Farming systems 4.1. Production cycle 4.2. Production and productivity 4.3. Yield gap and production risks 4.4. Challenges and opportunities	
Agri-finance	5.4. Financing the production season 5.5. Challenges and opportunities	
Post-harvest value creation	6.1. First post-harvest operations 6.2. Storage and conservation 6.3. Transport 6.4. Processing 6.5. Preparing agricultural products for marketing 6.6. By-products 6.7. Challenges and opportunities	
Market relations and sales	7.1. Current markets 7.2. Market demand and market potential 7.3. Quality and food safety 7.4. Prices 7.5. Challenges and opportunities	
Enabling environment	8.1. Policy environment 8.2. Business environment	
<i>FO Governance &amp; Management</i>	2.1. Farmer population 2.2. Farmer categories 2.3. Role of men, women and youth 2.4. Socio-economic conditions 2.5. Informal organization of farmers 2.6. Formal organization of farmers	

You can use the following table to record the challenges and opportunities you already identified in your case description and structure these according to the six intervention areas:

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AS IDENTIFIED IN THE CASE DESCRIPTION		
Intervention areas	Challenges	Opportunities
Production factors and agro-inputs	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agricultural practices	- .... - ....	- ... - ...
Agri-finance	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Post-harvest value creation	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Market relations and sales	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Enabling environment	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
<i>FO Governance and management</i>	- ... - ...	- ... - ...

## Results of Farmer profiling

Acting on the first and second principles – treating farmers as entrepreneurs and ensuring ownership of change processes by building on farmers’ agency - this tool urged and helped you to listen to farmers and to get insights about their daily realities, achievements, challenges and ambitions.

For facilitators to promote farmer-inclusive agro-economic development, seeing realities from farmers’ perspectives is a precondition. When you have different farmer profiles and/or life histories, you surely heard farmers indicating the challenges they face and you have probably collected several ideas for improving farmer livelihoods.

The challenges and opportunities that were collected during the farmer profiling can be organised according to the following format:

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AS IDENTIFIED DURING FARMER PROFILING		
Intervention areas	Challenges	Opportunities
Production factors and agro-inputs	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agricultural practices	- .... - ....	- ... - ...
Agri-finance	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Post-harvest value creation	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Market relations and sales	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Enabling environment	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
<i>FO Governance and management</i>	- ... - ...	- ... - ...

Farmers’ ideas, ambitions and needs, as collected during farmer profiling, can be translated in strategic orientations for project or programme design and for identifying subjects for lobby and advocacy. Farmers’ stories can be included as boxes or as annexes in project/programme proposals.

## Results of Farmers’ resource endowment analysis (capital pentagon)

This tool, also oriented at farmers’ realities, zoomed in on five capitals (human, natural, physical, financial and social), which are important for farmers’ livelihoods. After analysing the current farmers’ resource endowment and drawing the capital pentagon, the third step of the tool invited you to reflect on the possibilities to strengthen farmers’ resources (cf. table to the right).

Resources ('5 Capitals')	Options to strengthen farmers’ resources
<i>Human capital</i>	
<i>Natural capital</i>	
<i>Physical capital</i>	
<i>Financial capital</i>	
<i>Social capital</i>	



The availability and use of resources (five capitals) are the starting point for farmer entrepreneurship. For farmer-inclusive agribusiness development, the strengthening of farmers' resources and capacities is very important. Generally, specific attention is required for the resources and capacities of small, female and young farmers.

The analysis of the farmers' resource endowment ('Capital pentagon') leads to the identification of challenges and opportunities and options to strengthen farmers' resources. These can be structured according the five capitals (1<sup>st</sup> table below), and according to the six intervention areas (2<sup>nd</sup> table below). For using the first table to get to the second table, you need to link the five capitals to the six intervention areas. Some examples are the following:

- Human capital: the challenge of insufficient farmers' knowledge and skills to control pests and diseases can be linked to the intervention area 'Agricultural practices'
- Natural capital: the challenge that farmers do not have secure land rights can be linked to either ' production factors and agro-inputs', 'Enabling environment' or both
- Financial capital: challenges and opportunities can generally be linked to 'Agri-finance'
- Physical capital: challenges and opportunities most often link to 'Production factors and agro-inputs'
- Social capital: the challenge that farmers sell individually and the opportunity of collective marketing can be linked to 'Market relations and sales'
- Social capital: the challenge of weak governance and management of the farmers' organisation can be linked to 'FO Governance and management', which is suggested to be put under 'Enabling environment'.

Topics	Challenges related to current farmers' resource endowment	Opportunities and options to strengthen farmers' resources
Human capital	- .... - ....	- .... - ....
Natural capital	- .... - ....	- .... - ....
Financial capital	- .... - ....	- .... - ....
Physical capital	- .... - ....	- .... - ....
Social capital	- .... - ....	- .... - ....

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED WITH CAPITAL PENTAGON		
Intervention areas	Challenges	Opportunities
Production factors and agro-inputs	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agricultural practices	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agri-finance	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Post-harvest value creation	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Market relations and sales	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Enabling environment	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
<i>FO Governance and management</i>	- ... - ...	- ... - ...

## Assessment of the Governance, Management and Performance of farmers' organisations

This tool ('GMP') was about the systematic assessment and mapping of the governance, management and performance of a farmers' organisation, with the aim to identify possibilities to improve these. It is particularly useful when farmers are organised in a (formal or informal) organisation, which can take collective action to the benefit of the members.

By assessing different dimensions of governance and management you have identified quite some challenges and opportunities for the internal organisation of a farmers' organisation. We propose that you put these under 'Enabling environment'. The assessment of the Performance of the farmers' organisation is already structured according to the six intervention areas.

GOVERNANCE		
Dimensions	Conclusions	What can/should be done to improve the current situation
Legal status and compliance with legislation		▪ ....
Cooperation among producers' organisations		▪ ....
Democratic member control		▪ ....
Member economic participation		▪ ....
Independence		▪ ....
Financial autonomy		▪ ....

MANAGEMENT		
Dimensions	Conclusions	What can/should be done to improve the current situation
Staffing		▪ ....
Financial management		▪ ....
Planning		▪ ....
Implementation, monitoring & evaluation		▪ ....

PERFORMANCE		
Intervention areas	Conclusions	What can/should be done to improve the current situation
Production factors and agro-inputs		▪ ....
Agricultural practices		▪ ....
Agri-finance		▪ ....
Post-harvest value creation		▪ ....
Market relations and sales		▪ ....
Enabling environment		▪ ....

After the GMP scoring and the mapping of the scores for all assessment domains, the last step of the tool explicitly concentrated on summarizing the main conclusions of the assessment, and on identifying what can be done to improve the current situation (cf. figures to the right).

You can put the challenges and opportunities identified with the GMP assessment tool in the table below:

<b>CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED WITH THE GMP ASSESSMENT</b>		
<b>Intervention areas</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Production factors and agro-inputs	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agricultural practices	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agri-finance	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Post-harvest value creation	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Market relations and sales	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Enabling environment	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
<i>FO Governance and management</i>	- ... - ...	- ... - ...

### **Results of Sub-sector and value chain mapping and analysis**

With this tool you systematically mapped the value chains of the particular commodity sub-sector of your case (first part of the exercise). After that, you identified challenges, opportunities and strategies for farmers and farmers' organisations (second part of the exercise). The output of this tool is a subsector map with value chains and a flipchart with challenges and opportunities. The inventory of challenges and opportunities can be put in the following table. Most challenges and opportunities will relate to 'Post-harvest value creation' and 'Market relations and sales', as this was the focus of the tool. Challenges and opportunities in other intervention areas are however also possible, think for instance of the need for primary produce of sufficient volume and quality, finance requirements, institutional challenges or necessary levels of internal governance and management.

<b>CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED WITH SUB-SECTOR AND VALUE CHAIN MAPPING AND ANALYSIS</b>		
<b>Intervention areas</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Production factors and agro-inputs	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agricultural practices	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agri-finance	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Post-harvest value creation	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Market relations and sales	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Enabling environment	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
<i>FO Governance and management</i>	- ... - ...	- ... - ...

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## Results of Market system stakeholder mapping and analysis

Building on the fourth OPPO principle (organise agro-economic development as a team sport), the tool 'Market system stakeholder mapping and analysis' helped to map and analyse the broad range of stakeholders that are important for your case. In addition to value chain operators, this analysis also included the value chain supporters, value chain enablers and externally funded facilitators.

The first output of the tool was an inventory of all private and public sector stakeholders and a drawing that resembles to a 'burger'. The second output was an overview of the stakeholders in the four distinguished stakeholder groups, with an analysis of the current situation and suggestions for change (what role should different stakeholders preferably play and how could/should they improve their collaboration with other stakeholders). The results of this analysis were capitalized in tables that had the following format:

Value chain operators	Importance	Current roles and performance	What can improve / what should change

Value chain supporters	Importance	Current roles and performance	What can improve / what should change

Enablers	Importance	Current roles and performance	What can improve / what should change

Externally funded facilitators	Importance	Current roles and performance	What can improve / what should change

For the different stakeholders, it is important to reflect for which intervention areas they are most important. Certain stakeholder related challenges may feature in different intervention areas.

Examples:

- Challenges and opportunities of banks can relate to the financing of production factors and agro-inputs, but also to the financing of value creation activities or marketing.
- Challenges and opportunities of research institutes may be important for 'Agro-inputs (e.g. breeding and variety development) and/or for 'Market relations and sales (e.g. market surveys).
- Government food safety regulations could be relevant for 'Post-harvest value creation', 'Market relations and sales' and/or for 'Enabling environment'.

The challenges and opportunities related to stakeholder roles and collaboration can be put in the following table according to the intervention areas:

<b>CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED WITH MARKET SYSTEM STAKEHOLDER MAPPING AND ANALYSIS</b>		
<b>Intervention areas</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Production factors and agro-inputs	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agricultural practices	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Agri-finance	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Post-harvest value creation	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Market relations and sales	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
Enabling environment	- ... - ...	- ... - ...
<i>FO Governance and management</i>	- ... - ...	- ... - ...

### **Other sources for identifying challenges and opportunities**

In addition to the shared OPPO tools, there are of course other sources for identifying challenges and opportunities, these could be for instance:

- Experiences with current and ongoing efforts for farmer-inclusive development, for instance genetic improvement (breeding), demonstration of fish ponds, farmer-company relations and contract farming, set-up of processing units, lobby and advocacy (etc.);
- Existing strategic orientations of farmer communities and farmers' organisations;
- Results of other tools that you may have applied earlier, for instance problem and solution trees, SWOT analysis, most significant change, transect walks (to mention but a few).

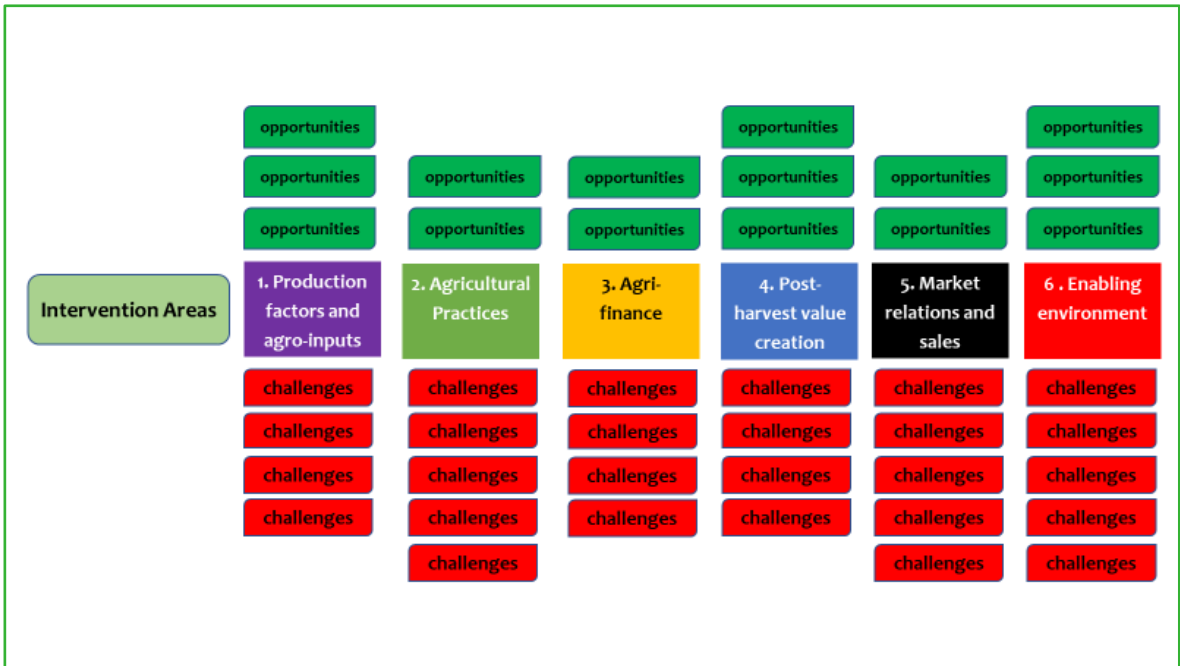
### **Make an overview of all identified challenges and opportunities**

In the previous section, you have compiled the challenges and opportunities as identified by different analytical tools and you linked these to the 6 intervention areas. This allowed you to assess your farmer-inclusive agribusiness case with different tools and from different angles and to have a robust analysis that can guide the strategizing process.

All challenges and opportunities can be brought together in one table, as shown on the next page. Without doubt, there will be overlap in the challenges and opportunities identified with different tools. Check this carefully; the frequent mentioning of certain challenges and/or opportunities is a first indication of their perceived importance.

### **Debrief farmers and stakeholders about the identified challenges and opportunities**

The overview of challenges and opportunities leads to a 'rich 'harvest'. It is recommended to share the overview of challenges and opportunities with the farmers, farmers' group(s) and stakeholders involved in your case, For this purpose, you can prepare and present an overview(PowerPoint, flip chart). After writing the challenges on red cards and opportunities on green cards, you can make an overview that looks like the figure below.



Overview of Challenges and opportunities for different intervention areas		
Intervention areas	Challenges	Opportunities
Production factors and agro-inputs		
Agricultural practices		
Agri-finance		
Post-harvest value creation		
Market relations and sales		
Enabling environment		
<i>FO Governance and management</i>		

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## Step 2 - Strategic planning: vision, scope and priorities

Through diverse tools, we aimed at facilitating your understanding of your farmer-inclusive agro-economic development case. While the different tools support analyses from diverse perspectives, they all aim at generating pertinent information and the identification of challenges and opportunities. This is evidence and input for strategizing, with the aim to get you closer to a vision that you will define for your farmer-inclusive agribusiness development case.

At some point, the information, challenges and opportunities generated through the use of different tools should come together to pave the way towards acting. In this part, we explain how you can move to strategic planning plan.

### Describing the desired situation (Vision)

With the different tools, you have analysed the current situation of the farmer-inclusive agro-economic development case. It is now important to define the desired situation. This is an essential step when preparing a strategic plan.



**A Vision** is a succinct statement (maximum two sentences) that describes the ideal situation, a programme or project (of farmers, of government or other actors) seeks to contribute to. A vision is ambitious, visionary and aligned to important values or long-term goals (such as the sustainable development goals). It should be inspiring and motivational to partners and investors. A vision is stated in clear language without technical jargon.

*Example: 'Entrepreneurial fish farmers organised in professional organisations earn decent incomes and provide healthy and nutritious food products to rural communities and urban markets in X' (X being the name of the area /country your case refers to)*

A vision that describes the desired situation to reach in the future, is like a point on the horizon or a direction on the compass you want to move to. A vision represents the changes in farmers' livelihoods, activities, environment, conditions and relationships in society that we wish to see occurring in the future. The formulation of a vision is preferably done in close collaboration with the farmers and their partners.

### Defining the scope of the strategic plan

Three P's define the scope of your strategic plan for farmer-inclusive agribusiness development:

- Place / Production zone: what is the geographical scope of your plan? What is the location of the production zone and what are key characteristics (acreage, agro-ecological conditions, farming systems and environmental change)?
- Product and sub-sector: What commodity is central to the case? What is the importance of this commodity in the farming system and for farmers' livelihoods (food and income)?
- Producers: who are the producers for and with whom the plan is developed? What is the number of farmer households? What are farmer categories and the conditions of the farmer households? What are the roles of men, women and youth? Are farmers organised in formal and/or informal organisations?



When working on the description of your case, you already set some boundaries and defined the scope of your case the 3 P's. Geographical boundaries and commodity orientation are important for the focus of your case, which is important for the next steps of strategic and operational planning. It is also important for determining the stakeholders that need to be involved and for efficient use of resources.

### Setting the time frame of the strategic plan

Without doubt, the table 'Overview of Challenges and opportunities for different intervention areas' has a considerable number of opportunities and challenges. A point of attention is the time frame of the strategic planning. Because contexts usually change quickly, it is advised to consider a period of 3 to 5 years for strategic planning. This time frame is also the most common time horizon for strategic plans of farmers' organisations, government programs and donor-funded projects.

### Setting priorities

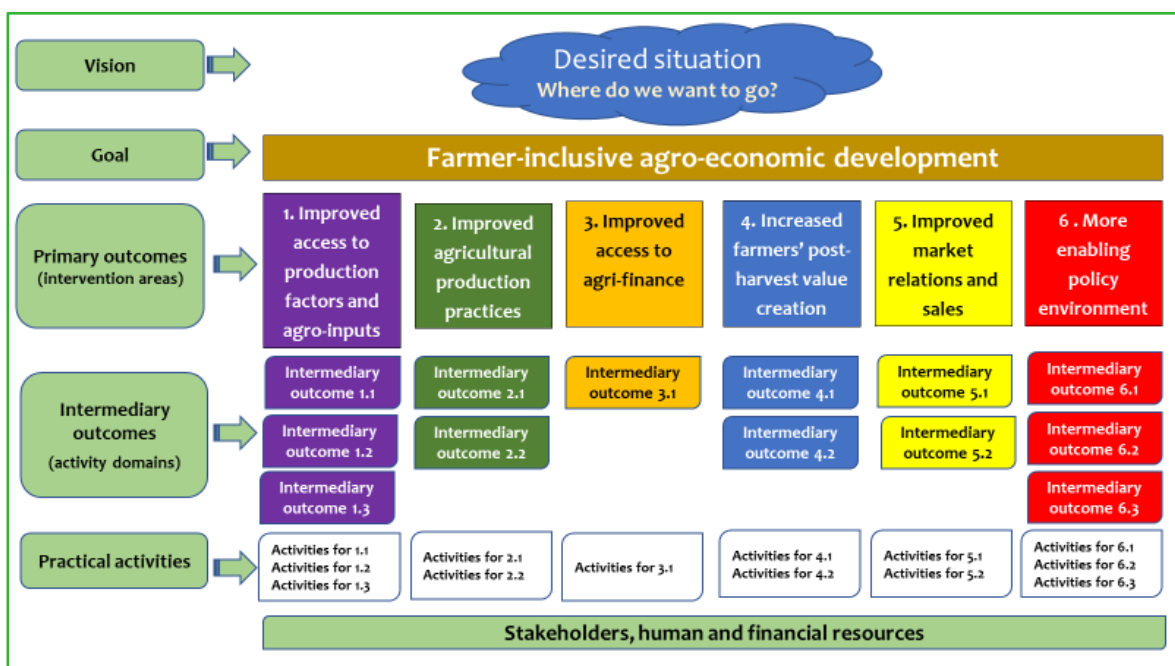
It's obvious that not all challenges and opportunities can be addressed during the time span of the strategic plan. It is even better to focus on a few issues first, rather to try to do everything at the same time. That's why you have to set priorities, e.g. selecting the most important challenges and opportunities.

There are several tools for priority setting, some more complex and sophisticated than others. We will not dive into these but strongly suggest that you first consider the priorities of the farmers themselves. This is essential for farmer ownership and own efforts and investments. Consider also the priorities that are set by other key stakeholders (Ministries, local government, processing plants, financial institutions, ...). This is essential for policy alignment and active involvement and participation of public and private sector actors and stakeholders.

We suggest that you indicate the most important challenges and opportunities by highlighting these in the overview table (see preceding section) As a facilitator who is working together with farmers and other stakeholders, you can ask participants: what are short term and what are long term challenges? What are low hanging fruits? What will happen if a particular challenge is not addressed or a certain opportunity is not seized? This allows to consider feasibility, relevance and urgency. It is important to keep track of the reasons brought forward for prioritizing the main issues.

### Step 3 – Formulate outcomes and define activities

You are now ready to sketch out your strategic plan, which will have the following structure:



## Formulating the goal of the strategic plan

In the preceding section you have stated the vision, defined the scope and time frame of the strategic plan, set priorities and updated the title. The vision is the long-term goal. The scope, time frame and priorities are input for formulating the goal of the strategic plan.

When you started to work on your case, you were asked to develop a first attractive title for your case. You now need to check if the title of your case is still valid. If it is too vague or out of sync with the vision, the goal and the identified priorities, it is important to update and focus the title.

## Formulating the primary outcomes

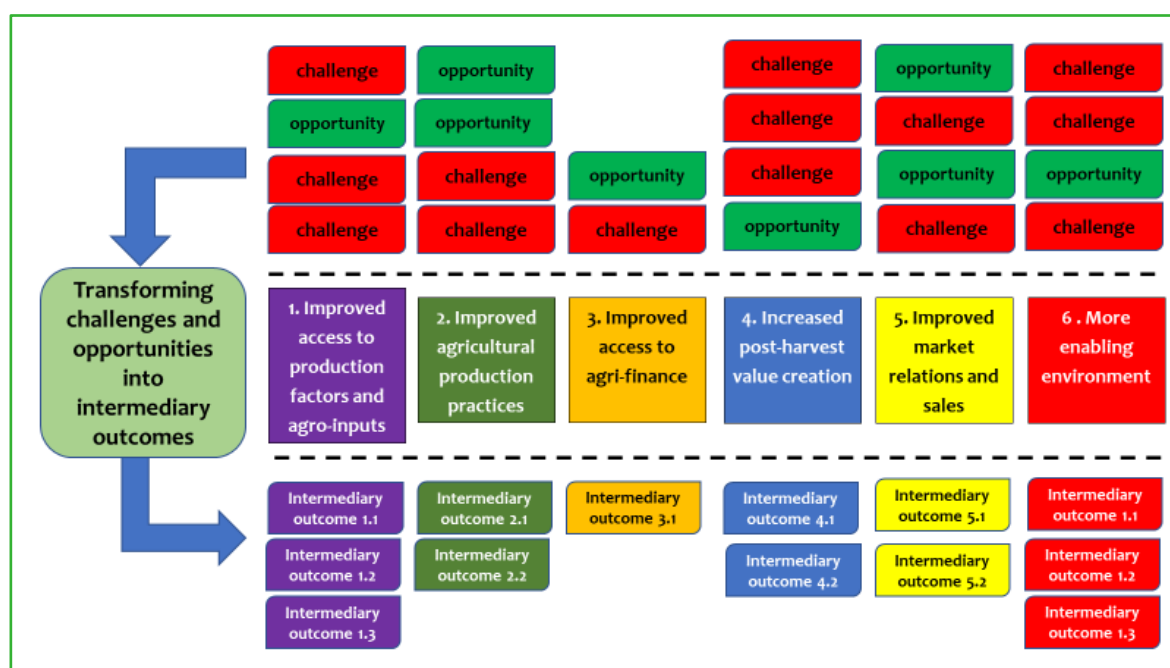
For the formulation of primary outcomes, we suggest that the six intervention zones are used to structure the planning. The primary outcomes are then basically the following:

- Improving access to production factors and agro-inputs
- Improved agricultural production practices
- Improved access to agri-finance
- Increased post-harvest value creation
- Improved market relations and sales
- More enabling policy environment

Primary objectives are still quite generic. The formulation of primary outcomes should however be more specific than the basic formulations above, and reflect the realities and priorities of your case.

## Formulating the intermediary outcomes

By addressing the challenges and harnessing opportunities, the primary outcomes, formulated for the different intervention areas, can be achieved. The next step is to transform the prioritized challenges and opportunities in intermediary outcomes. This is visualised in the figure below.



Please note that:

- You may cluster challenges and opportunities and bring them under a specific intermediary outcome;
- You can have one, two, three or more intermediary outcomes under a primary outcome. It is advised not to have too many.
- Improved governance and management of the farmers' organisation(s) is recommended as an intermediary outcome under 'Enabling environment'.

- SMART formulation of intermediary outcomes is recommended. SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

The basic structure of primary and intermediary outcomes is the basic structure of your programme and can be used for operational planning, monitoring, evaluation and communication.

The table on the next page can be used to formulate the intermediary outcomes and to indicate the related challenges and opportunities.

Intermediary outcomes and related challenges and opportunities			
Primary outcomes (intervention areas)	Intermediary outcomes (activity domains)	Main challenges	Main opportunities
Improved access to production factors and agro-inputs			
Improved agricultural production practices			
Improved access to agri- finance			
Increased post-harvest value creation			
Improved market relations and sales			
More enabling environment	Improved Governance and management of farmers' organisation(s)		

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## Identifying practical activities and reflecting on stakeholder collaboration

Identifying and selecting practical activities for addressing the prioritized challenges and harnessing opportunities, which are now under different intermediary outcomes, is the next step of your operational planning process.

The identification of practical activities is generally done during brainstorming sessions during which options for action are brought forward. This can be internal to the farmers' organisation and/or it can be done during sessions that bring different stakeholders together. There are a number of issues and questions that need to be considered while brainstorming on the activities to undertake.

### Resources

Firstly, it is important to be realistic and to consider the resources that are available. Can the resources of farmers and other actors stakeholders be used? What are the human and financial resources of farmers' organisations and of other actors and stakeholders? The availability of resources determines whether the actors are able to perform the activities themselves (as a person, or an organisation) and/or whether additional resources have to be secured.

### Options for action

Secondly, it is important to think out of the box and to consider a broad array of options for action. Think for instance of the following types of activities:

- Capacity building activities (workshops & trainings, farmer visits, development of written material, apps, films, ...);
- Collective procurement, investment, marketing and other types of collective action of farmers organisations;
- Public infrastructure and investments;
- Business match making;
- Logistic and operational activities (purchase and distribution of inputs, transport/ marketing of products, ...);
- Communication activities (media campaigns and programmes, lobbying, ...);

### Complementary action

Thirdly, it is important to note that challenges can be addressed in several ways. For example a challenge like 'farmers use poor quality fish feed' can be addressed by: (i) making better quality commercial feed available; (ii) giving training about feed quality and feed formulation; (iii) convincing a local chicken feed producer to start fish feed production; etc.

It is not likely that one player can address all challenges and opportunities, nor that one actor will undertake all the activities that are required. It should therefore also be kept in mind that for addressing an issue, different actors should work together. For many activities, more than one stakeholder will have to work together to come to a good result. Any actor (farmers, governments, companies) has to realise that other stakeholders are often in a better position to undertake certain activities than themselves.

## Selection of activities

During brainstorming sessions, all ideas and suggestions for activities are welcomed and listed. This may result in an a long activity list, more than can be carried out during the implementation period. Last but not least, it is thus important to select the most important, promising or feasible activities. To select the activities that are retained for implementation, the following criteria can be considered:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ownership of the farmers and farmers' community or farmers' organisation</li> <li>- Attitude and motivation of other stakeholders (positive or negative)</li> <li>- Applicability with existing resources (natural, physical, financial, human and social capital)</li> <li>- Conformity with mission and orientations of farmers' organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relevance</li> <li>- Urgency</li> <li>- Cost-effectiveness</li> <li>- Productivity and efficiency</li> <li>- Practical / technical feasibility</li> <li>- Political feasibility</li> <li>- Natural resource management</li> <li>- Environmental impact</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contribution to key policies such as poverty reduction of economic integration</li> <li>- Complementarity to other programs/projects</li> <li>- Contribution to institutional capacity development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needs of poor and vulnerable groups</li> <li>- Social and cultural acceptability</li> <li>- Gender equality</li> <li>- Youth involvement</li> </ul>

With these considerations in mind, the operational planning is done in four steps:

- Put the primary objectives, which relate to the six intervention areas, in the first column of the table on the next page. Make these more specific and precise for your case.
- Put the intermediary objectives, which correlate to the main activity domains, in the second column of the table on the next page.
- Identify activities that address the priority challenges and/or harness the opportunities, with a maximum of 5 activities per activity domain and 10 activities per Intervention area. Write these in the third column.

NB: Use one row per activity. Add more lines when you have more activities than rows provided for in the table. Delete rows when you do not need these.

- Reflect which actor should take the lead and execute or coordinate the activity. Write the name of this 'main actor' in bold in the fourth column 4. Add the other actors that are required for the implementation of the activity (in normal font).

Activity planning				
Primary outcomes (intervention areas)	Intermediary outcomes (activity domains)	Practical activities (what to do?)	Main actor and collaborators (who)	
Improved access to production factors and agro-inputs				
Improved agricultural production practices				
Improved access to agri-finance				
Increased post-harvest value creation				
Improved market relations and sales				
More enabling environment	Improved FO governance and management			