

EVALUATION PARTNERSHIP RABOBANK – WWF NL

FINAL REPORT



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SUMMARY

Introduction

Rabobank and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have been working together to establish sustainable business in food and agro chains for over 10 years. The ambition of their collaboration is to create shared value – for nature and local residents as well as for the business and financiers operating in food and agro chains. In 2011, Rabobank and WWF decided to formally start a ‘transformational partnership on international and national level’ aimed at creating value by combining nature conservation and economic development. To this end, they started 6 catalyst projects in 5 countries to demonstrate how a successful transition towards sustainable production and operations can be achieved. Now, after 6 years, Rabobank and WWF want to know what their partnership has achieved and what we can learn from it. These questions are answered in this report.

Purpose

In this evaluation study, we focus on the value the partnership between Rabobank and WWF has generated, both in terms of effects on the partners and stakeholders as well as in terms of insights for those who are involved in similar transformational partnerships. The key research questions are: 1) what has this partnership achieved? And 2) what can we learn from it? An overarching question relates to the *additionality* of the partnership: What would have happened if both partners had not collaborated? This question is very difficult to answer. However, given the many sensitivities concerning CSO’s collaborating with the private sector, we felt this issue was too significant to leave out.

Approach

We used two conceptual frameworks to map the results of the catalyst projects to date and to understand them in the context of the transformational ambition of the partnership. The first is the Theory of Change (ToC), which is a description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. A ToC specifies what activities are being carried out and how they are expected to lead to the desired end goal. The second framework we used is the Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP) framework. KAP is based on behavioral change theory and explains what is needed to make change possible. It assumes that change starts with knowledge or awareness of an issue, which causes a change in attitudes, ultimately leading to a change in behavior.

Methods

We started by doing desk research, where we’ve reviewed more than 250 partnership and project documents. Then we built ToCs, both on project and partnership level, to understand the logic of the partnership. Next, we developed questionnaires measuring elements of the KAP framework. We also did (on line) interviews with involved local Rabobank and WWF employees and, where possible, with

other stakeholders. We presented our preliminary findings in a sense-making workshop with the programme managers of the partnership. A draft version of this report was written based on the received input and jointly formulated insights. This was sent to local Rabobank and WWF offices to validate the findings and resulted in this final version. In addition, we presented the main findings during the conference *Sustainable Development Goal 17: what makes a partnership successful?* organized by Rabobank and WWF on July 5, 2017.

Findings

The overall objective of the partnership was formulated as: ‘testing innovative sustainable (agricultural) systems focused on improving production in terms of better (1) sustainability, (2) increase in yield, (3) cost efficiency, (4) profitability and (5) governance & business operations’. This is, of course, a very long-term goal, and it should come as no surprise that the catalyst projects are not on that level yet. However, the project studies show that significant and necessary steps have been taken on the road towards sustainable economic development. In Chile 13% of the salmon sector has been ASC certified in the scope of 1.5 years. In India, the partnership led to the development of a decision support tool for sustainable water management and a future water availability risk assessment tool. In the Netherlands a biodiversity monitor for dairy farmers has been developed. In Brazil studies regarding Integrated Crop-Livestock Systems, executed within the partnership, changed the mindset of farmers. In addition, in Indonesia one company became RSPO certified and a successful seminar regarding sustainable aquaculture took place.

As said, the purpose of this study was not only to report on the partnerships’ results, but also on the collaboration process. It was both about accountability and learning. Many of the learnings pointed to the importance of the quality of the relationship, the need of true involvement of partners, managing expectations about who does what, and other communication issues. In addition, we were able to identify the most common challenges:

Tension between global ambition and local execution: this partnership was initiated at the global level, whereas the projects were supposed to be carried out by local branches. The sense of urgency at local level didn’t always seem as obvious as thought at global level.

Trust building: the aim was to have an equal relationship, but this was not easy to achieve between organizations that are fundamentally different.

Client commitment: it proved not to be easy to get businesses involved, although participation of producers was considered to be a key success factor.

Upscaling: resources were sometimes lacking to enable further development.

Governance: there was a gap between HQ level coordination and monitoring and local level implementation and priorities.

We conclude that the partnership delivered value: It created knowledge, built expertise, raised awareness, and changed attitudes. However, to extrapolate these findings to impact level is not yet possible. This is mainly due to time constraints: the envisaged change takes time, perhaps even more than originally thought. Moreover, most achievements have been realized on project level. Returning

to the question of additionality, we can ask what would have happened if both partners had not collaborated. As said, this is not a question we can answer with certainty; after all, there is no parallel world in which this partnership does not exist. The only way to come up with an answer is to ask those directly involved. In this case, all interviewees indicated that the partnership had been vital in accelerating developments.

Insights

Based on our study, we are able to formulate a few lessons. Some of them pertain to implementation and scaling up of activities specifically for the Rabobank-WWF partnership, and others are relevant for everyone interested in working with and improving cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development. Examples include realizing that people make the difference, that the 'spark' between partners is vital for the relationship and the partnership to work and that there needs to be a readiness to collaborate. Another lesson lies in taking proper time and resources to build the partnership, having an entrepreneurial mind-set and understanding that promoting sustainability is a shared responsibility. Finally, we consider some key issues when partnering for change. They include: being sensitive to context, being committed, having a focus on the process of collaboration, and creating a learning environment to improve.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ICE	Impact Centre Erasmus University
HQ	Headquarters
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude, Practice
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M4C	Marker for Change
MNE	Multinational Enterprise
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-Term Reflection (of the partnership)
PA	Partnership Agreement
PrC	Partnerships Resource Centre
SC	Steering Committee (of the partnership)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WWF NL	World Wildlife Fund the Netherlands

1 INTRODUCTION

We live in challenging times. Climate change, loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem services are undermining economic development. Contamination of water supplies, the loss of productive land through soil erosion and drought, and disruption to supply chains caused by deforestation and overfishing all pose a great social and business risk. Moreover, the United Nations predicts that by 2050 there will be 9.7 billion people, and in 2100 that number will have grown to 11.2 billion¹. To feed them we need really smart agricultural solutions instead of reduced productivity and polluted land.

Nowadays, the general consensus amongst leading CEOs of globally operating firms is that addressing socio-economic challenges is good for business². Moreover, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³ could create up to \$ 12 trillion of market opportunities for companies⁴.

At the same time, mobilisation of business investment, innovation and expertise is needed to meet the scale of ambition of the SDGs. To stimulate this agenda – and to bridge the funding gap – cross-sector collaboration is essential to accelerate the required transformation.

For quite some years and increasingly, Dutch companies have been active partners in numerous transformational partnerships⁵ with government and civil society organisations (CSOs), recognising – above and beyond business opportunities – that there is a pressure on companies to demonstrate a positive contribution to the restoration of ecosystems and to society. The most powerful driver for companies to contribute to this challenge is a clear business case.

1.1 Sustainable business cases

For more than 10 years – long before the United Nations accepted the SDGs in September 2015 – Rabobank and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have been working together to establish sustainable business in food and agro chains. When they started their collaboration, it was the first time in the Netherlands that a finance institution and a conservation organisation joined forces, shared ideas, knowledge and resources to change the way of doing business.

Rabobank is a cooperative, established in 1972, and one of the largest Dutch banks, operating worldwide.

Mission: Rabobank wants to make a substantial contribution to welfare and prosperity in the Netherlands and to feeding the world sustainably.



¹ Source: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/world-population-prospects-2017.html>.

² *Agenda 2030: A Window of Opportunity*, the UN Global Compact – Accenture CEO Study, 2016.

³ Reference for the SDGs: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>.

⁴ *Better Business. Better World*, Business and Sustainable Development Commission, 2017.

⁵ *Sustainability through partnerships. Capitalizing on Collaboration*, Barbara Grey and Jenna P. Stites, Network for Business Sustainability (2013).

Key figures:

- 103 local banks with 475 branches and 1,9 million members
- Worldwide 382 foreign places of business
- 8,7 million customers, of which 7,5 million Dutch and 1,2 million international
- Strong client focus in the food and agricultural sector
- 45,567 fte's worldwide

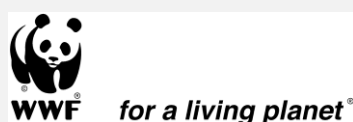
Box 1: Fact sheet Rabobank

WWF, established in 1961 in the Netherlands, is one of world's largest conservation organizations.

Mission: WWF wants to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature. We're striving to safeguard the natural world, helping people live more sustainably and take action against climate change.

Key figures:

- Works in > 100 countries on 6 continents
- Has more than 5 million supporters
- Has 5,000 staff members worldwide



Box 2: Fact sheet World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

The ambition of their collaboration is to create shared value – for nature and local residents as well as for the business and financiers operating in food and agro chains. As a leading international food and agriculture bank, Rabobank contributes its access to clients in those sectors and its financial knowhow; WWF provides expertise on biodiversity, ecosystems and their restoration. Through so called catalyst projects (see Box 3) both partners aim to demonstrate how a successful transition to sustainable production and operations can be achieved.

The motives for both organizations to enter this partnership links closely to their respective business strategies (or 'Theory of Change'; see also Section 2.2 of this report).

1.2 Rationale for partnering

WWF calculated that of the world's 1 billion producers, approximately 300-400 companies – retailers, brands, manufactures, traders, and processors – could make a difference. By trying to convince them to change their way of doing business the transformation to a more sustainable world would go much faster.

For WWF, deciding to work together with companies⁶ as an important and strategic way to advance its mission wasn't easy;

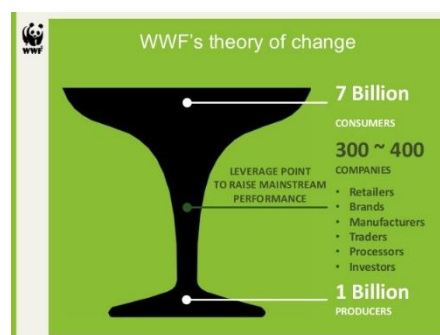


Figure 1: WWF's Theory of Change

⁶ See: <https://www.slideshare.net/sudscor/wwf-davos-commsforumfinal-32310252>.

it was against the general sentiment. So they made transparency a key issue of their strategy, constantly demonstrating the results of their work.

The collaboration with Rabobank is one of WWF's 'flagship' partnerships, as Rabobank is considered to be a key financial influencer of food and agro companies.

Rabobank labels its vision on global food security 'Banking for Food'. Rabobank's strategy focuses on four dimensions (or 'building blocks'): (1) increasing the availability of food, (2) improving access to food, (3) promoting balanced nutrition and (4) increasing stability. To realize this vision, Rabobank provides access to finance, knowledge and networks.

Rabobank states explicitly that they are not 'just' a bank that finances food and agribusiness. They emphasize that we need to collaborate: 'working together is our heritage and our vision'⁷.



Figure 2: Rabobank's strategy 'Banking for Food'

In 2011, Rabobank and WWF decided to formally start a 'transformational partnership on international and national level'⁸ aimed at creating value by combining nature conservation and economic development. They wanted to develop an equal partnership⁹, proving that together they can realise more value than alone. Both partners knew upfront that it wouldn't be easy ('it was a bumpy road'), but also that if they would succeed, they would have laid a strong, valid basis for a sustainable and profitable future. They also formulated an explicit objective to make their experiences and insights available so other organizations can benefit.

Rabobank and WWF started 6 catalyst projects in 5 countries (see Box 3) to demonstrate how a successful transition towards sustainable production and operations can be achieved. The catalyst projects should provide best practices or at least indicators for sound sustainable business cases.

1. **Chile** – Responsible production in the **salmon industry**
2. **Brazil** – Sustainability in **agribusiness**: from risk mitigation to value generation
3. **Indonesia** – Sustainable **aquaculture**
4. **Indonesia** – Sustainable **palm oil**
5. **India** – Sustainable water management in **sugarcane** production
6. **The Netherlands** – Biodiversity monitor **dairy farm**

Box 3: Catalyst projects of Rabobank and WWF

⁷ See: <https://www.rabobank.com/en/about-rabobank/food-agribusiness/vision-banking-for-food/index.html>.

⁸ See: Partnership Agreement between Rabobank and WWF, 2011.

⁹ Even anno 2017, people still believe that relationships between companies and NGOs are mostly based on the provision of funding, as for example Accenture Strategy writes in their report about the Barclays-GSK partnership (a business to business relationship). And then they continue: 'the dynamic between corporates is often far more complex' and then describes the exact same challenges Rabobank and WWF faced (such as 'need to identify and explore clear shared objectives and develop effective governance and operating models'). Source: *Sharing The Path Ahead: Insights From the Barclays GSK Partnership*, page 7 (2017).

1.3 Envisaged benefits and intended results

For WWF it was utterly important that the partnership would show how sustainable business and production generates benefits for biodiversity and ecosystems by applying new clean technologies and production methods that increase soil quality, slow down climate change and promote sustainable water management. Collaborating with a large bank financing large multinationals was key for WWF. This included imbedding WWF approved standards in the bank's food and agro policies and leverage the sustainability performance of Rabobank's clients. Finally WWF wanted to use the learnings of the partnership in their network to upscale their efforts.

Key envisaged results for Rabobank included supporting their clients in their transition towards more sustainable business, better financial risk management related to sustainability issues, giving their account managers and credit analysts the required know how, tools and skills to engage in a dialogue on sustainable business with (potential) clients, achieving a stronger and more profitable client database, and stronger client relationships.

Clients of Rabobank, especially producers in food and agricultural sectors, would get access to innovative tools to improve their agricultural practice, develop action plans to meet sustainable sector standards (certification), and strengthen their purchasing or market position.

Next to the value created for WWF, Rabobank and its clients, the learnings of this partnership would also inform the wider financial community, other sectors and countries and government to support them in promoting and adopting sustainable practice.

After 6 years of collaboration, Rabobank and WWF want to know what the impact of their joint efforts is¹⁰. They want to know what their partnership has achieved and what can be learned from it. These questions lie at the heart of this report.

¹⁰ See section 2.2 for an explanation of the terms results, impact and value.

1.4 About this report

In this evaluation study we focus on the value the partnership between Rabobank and WWF has generated both in terms of effects on the partners and stakeholders as well as in terms of insights and lessons for those who are involved or are becoming involved in similar transformational partnerships.

In this first introductory chapter we describe the purpose of and rationale behind the partnership. For more insight into when and how the partnership started we refer to the 3rd chapter in which a description of the design of the partnership, including the collaboration agreement, vision and strategy, the selection of the catalyst projects, and the governance structure can be found. The results of the Mid-term Reflection (2013) are also summarized.

In Chapter 2 we elaborate on the purpose of the evaluation. It includes the key evaluation questions, explains the evaluation frameworks and describes the evaluation approach (methodology) we have used.

Chapter 3 includes the research findings of the 6 catalyst projects. We provide a short introduction, and describe the main elements of the case descriptions (with a link to the evaluation frameworks). We then give a short overview of the set-up of the global partnership, and afterwards we focus on the 6 projects. We describe sectors and interventions as well as planned and achieved results. We provide insight into the envisaged added value of the collaboration on project level. Finally, we formulate challenges and lessons as indicated by people involved.

Our analysis of the research findings can be found in Chapter 4. We try to answer the evaluation questions, including the overall question of the added value of the partnership.

Chapter 5 provides insights: What can we learn from this partnership? This final chapter includes lessons learned for both partners, Rabobank and WWF, for business sectors and the clients of Rabobank and also for 'society at large': All who are involved or will become involved in cross sector collaboration. We provide a future outlook: what are key questions to consider?

2 EVALUATION

2.1 Evaluation questions¹¹

Before the expiration date of the current partnership (March 2017), both Rabobank and WWF wanted to know what the impact is of their joint efforts. According to the *Terms of Reference* (ToR) of this evaluation study¹², both partners want to gain in depth insight into the achievements to date and possible leads for follow up. Based on these insights they want to show the outcomes of the partnership, in terms of successes but also in terms of lessons. These lessons serve to inspire: what is the added value of a partnership between a financial institution and a CSO focusing on nature restoration and conservation?

The evaluation should assess if the catalyst projects have delivered value for four stakeholders involved: both partners Rabobank and WWF, the Rabobank clients in the agro and food business and ‘society at large’ –, and why and how this is the case.

In other words: does the partnership (as a mean) contribute to the individual business strategies of WWF (biodiversity and ecosystems) and Rabobank (sustainable and economic benefits)? The results of the evaluation should not only inform its direct stakeholders (WWF, Rabobank and its clients) but also others involved in similar transformational cross sector partnerships.

Summarizing, the key research question can be formulated as follows: **what has this partnership achieved? And what can we learn from it?** We will look at what the catalyst projects achieved for the partners involved, including the Rabobank clients. We will specify what kind of increased knowledge, changed attitudes, improved practices of the stakeholders involved was generated. And, last but not least: which insights did the partnership provide to benefit others (‘society at large’)?

Additionality

An overarching question relates to the *additionality* of the partnership to the issue at hand: what would have happened if both partners hadn’t collaborated? Would the same results have been achieved? Answering this question ideally requires a counterfactual or control group assessment of what the world would have looked like without the partnership and its projects. In some cases, the same activities would probably have been performed in the same way but through another mechanism or in a different timeframe. In other cases, the partnership was crucial to the way activities were performed and the results are larger than the individual partners could have achieved by themselves. In yet other cases the activities would not have taken place at all if not for the partnership. However, in most cases, it is not possible to say with certainty which of these scenarios relates to which of the partnerships’ actual activities. Furthermore, the partnership might also have had

¹¹ Please note that in this section (2.1) the terms ‘impact’, ‘effect’, ‘result’ and ‘value’ are used almost interchangeable. We find it is really important to make a clear distinction between these concepts, in order to understand what has been achieved. In the next section (2.2) we will elaborate on these concepts and indicate what we measured in this evaluation study.

¹² *Terms of Reference Evaluation Partnership Rabobank – WWF (2011-2017)*, June 2016.

unintended consequences, that can be positive as well as negative. Consequently, the rigor with which the question of attribution of any partnerships' impact can be answered is challenged greatly.

Although the additionality question wasn't included in the ToR, we acknowledge it to be a significant question. There is a critical attitude towards collaboration between the private sector – especially finance institutions – and CSO's. Sometimes this attitude is related to the 'general sentiment' WWF referred to when they changed their strategy towards working with corporates (see 1.2), in other cases the criticism is correct, for instance when companies 'use' CSO's mainly to 'greenwash' their operations.

Based on the interviews and conversations we have had with people involved and based on our own research on impact of partnerships¹³ we believe we are able to make a statement about the additionality of this partnership. We will come back to this in our analysis chapter (see 4.3).

2.2 Evaluation framework

We used two conceptual frameworks to map the results of the catalyst projects to date and to better understand them in the context of the transformational ambition of the partnership.

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change / transformation is expected to happen in a particular context. A ToC consists usually of five levels: input, activities, output, outcome and impact.

First of all, the ToC is about the desired impact one tries to realize. That is why we also call this an *impact pathway*. Every partnership strives for a particular impact. In this case Rabobank and WWF wanted a transformation: Initiating a development towards sustainable agribusiness in the production of aquaculture, sugar cane, palm oil and dairy. What did they actually invest to contribute to the achievement of the desired outcomes? This is about the input level.

In this partnership the partners invested resources such as time, funding, and they invested in contacts with business (clients of Rabobank). Which activities were undertaken with the inputs? What did the partners actually do to achieve the desired change? Various activities – such as research, meetings, workshops, training – were executed to start working on knowledge building, awareness raising and changing attitudes.

Next is the output level. What were the direct results of the undertaken activities? Some examples are: farmers have participated in workshops and are trained on the importance of biodiversity for their production, indicators of biodiversity performance measurement have been identified and employees of Rabobank have learned how they can take risks related to biodiversity and ecosystems into account.

¹³ Reference: Tulder, R., Seitanidi, M. M., Crane, A., & Brammer, S. (2016). Enhancing the impact of cross-sector partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 135(1), pp. 1-17.

At the outcome level it is about all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place for the impact to occur. For instance, Rabobank commercial teams are increasingly including sustainability (both environmental as well as social aspects) in conversations with prospects and clients. WWF is organizing sector dialogues on sustainability inviting all relevant stakeholders (including government). Together with clients they develop practical tools that enabled producers to measure their current practice against sustainability standards and guide them towards more responsible production.

We call these output and outcomes (employee engagement, sector dialogue, tool development) markers for change (M4C)¹⁴: necessary conditions or enablers to achieve impact.

To measure impact, one can assess to which extent the key performance indicators (KPIs) have been achieved. For Rabobank – WWF the KPI was the level of certified producers (%) in a particular sector.

KAP

The second framework we used is the Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP) framework.¹⁵ KAP is based on behavioral change theory and explains what is needed to make change possible. It distinguishes three stages that more or less run parallel with the ToC levels: knowledge (output), attitude (output → outcome) and practice (outcome → impact).

Researchers assume that these stages are related and that knowledge and attitude directly influence practice. First you have to become aware of the issue (for instance: chemical fertilizers or antibiotics), do research, and develop knowledge and insights (chemical fertilizers and antibiotics have disastrous effect on the environment) that may change your attitude (we shouldn't use these fertilizers and antibiotics or at least significantly reduce usage and look for sustainable alternatives) which will influence your actual behavior (stop using chemical fertilizers and antibiotics and start using sustainable alternatives if available).

So, in evaluating the Rabobank – WWF catalyst projects, we mapped what has been provided in terms of input, what activities have been undertaken and what has been achieved in terms of output and outcomes to finally achieve the impact. We then used the KAP framework to be able to further untangle, explain and value what has been done and achieved.

¹⁴ Markers for Change (M4C) is a concept of our colleagues Sietze Vellema and Greetje Schouten.

¹⁵ In the medical sector the KAP framework is used for a representative study of a specific population to collect information on what is known, believed and done in relation to a particular topic. KAP stands for Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices. We have slightly adapted the abbreviation into: Knowledge, Awareness, Attitude, and changed the P into Performance. See for instance: Cabana, M. D., Rand, C. S., Powe, N. R., Wu, A. W., Wilson, M. H., Abboud, P. A. C., & Rubin, H. R. (1999). Why don't physicians follow clinical practice guidelines? A framework for improvement. *Journal of American Medical Association*, 282(15), 1458-1465

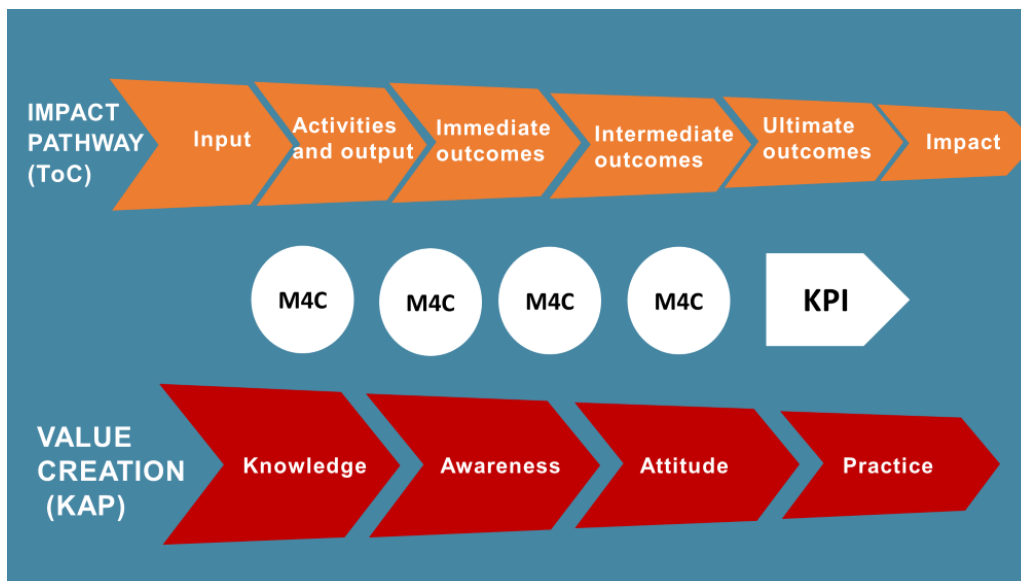


Figure 3: ToR and KAP framework

Difference between results, effect, impact and value

With the support of the above explained two frameworks we can make a clear distinction between the meaning of result, effect, impact and value.

Results are outcomes of an intervention. For example: research or training can result into knowledge or awareness. Certain knowledge or awareness can lead to a particular effect, for instance a change in attitude. When a changed attitude is reflected in a specific practice (changed business production, for example) we say that impact is achieved. Usually the impact is valued as a positive or negative, intended or unintended change.

2.3 Evaluation approach

The focus of this evaluation study is a systematic mapping of the added value of this partnership on different levels (effect and relationship) and dimensions (Rabobank, WWF, clients and society). Programme and project managers from Rabobank and WWF were asked to provide input and feedback both about the content and the process of evaluation. It became apparent that *learning* was an important element. This is also reflected in the research questions (see 2.1): which insights and lessons could be extracted? Therefore, this evaluation not only focused on accountability (what has been achieved), but also on learning (what can we change and/or improve)¹⁶. In this section we describe and explain the phases of our research process.

Inception phase

We started by doing desk research. We reviewed more than 250 partnership and project documents. This was a diverse set of documents ranging from proposals, to progress reports, to MoUs, planning sheets and email threads. We used these documents to identify the logic ('impact pathways') behind

¹⁶ The implications of the combined evaluation objectives will be further explained in section 4.1.

the partnership itself and the catalyst projects. Next, we built ToC's both on project and partnership level based on the analyzed information.

Data collection¹⁷

We developed questionnaires based on the KAP framework for local Rabobank and for WWF staff (project level). In the case of India, Chile and the Netherlands, similar questions were sent to involved companies. Respondents were asked to describe the sector in which the projects operate, to indicate its challenges and some practical information regarding the project. Furthermore, they had the opportunity to voice their opinion regarding the added value, difficulties and learnings of this collaboration. In addition, they were asked to indicate which of the proposed activities had been developed and executed and which didn't and why this was the case. The surveys were analyzed carefully and answers were double checked when its meaning were not clear to the evaluators. Sometimes extra questions were asked to get a more in-depth understanding of the situation.

In order to obtain more information on the progress and learnings of the projects, (on line) interviews were held with involved local Rabobank and WWF employees and, if possible, with other involved stakeholders. For example, in Chile and India, research institutes had been engaged in the partnership project. Furthermore, we had a meeting with the local Rabobank project managers of each project. This was a great opportunity for the evaluators to get to know more about the local Rabobank perspectives in the respective countries. With the aim of obtaining information for the overall partnership narrative, different members of the Steering Committee (SC) were interviewed. In addition, a dual interview took place with the global project managers of Rabobank and WWF.

Sense making

All the relevant information that had been collected in the previous phases was grouped per project and on the overall level. The main preliminary findings were presented during a sense-making workshop with the programme managers of the partnership. Jointly we interpreted and assessed the preliminary findings. Moreover, we formulated some first key learnings and insights.

Synthesizing, reporting and debrief

Based on the preliminary analysis, received input and jointly formulated insights we wrote a draft version of the final report. This document was sent to the local Rabobank and WWF offices in order to check and validate the findings. The feedback has been processed in this final version. In addition, we presented the main findings of the evaluation during the conference *Sustainable Development Goal 17: what makes a partnership successful?* organized by Rabobank and WWF on July 5, 2017 to celebrate their partnership.

¹⁷ See the appendix for an overview of interviewees.

3 FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings of the case study research are presented. We start with a short description of the partnership on global level as the collaboration was initiated by Rabobank and WWF the Netherlands. In 3.1 we provide insight into the set-up of the partnership: its history, the shared vision and strategy, the selection of projects, and the governance structure of the partnership. We also mention the results of the mid-term reflection (MTR) that was carried out by the PrC in 2013.

3.1 Set-up and development of the partnership

Rabobank and WWF have been partners since 2006¹⁸. During the first years several successful activities were undertaken¹⁹. The collaboration resulted in a joint willingness to establish a formal partnership. The first milestone was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 10 October 2010. At the core of this MoU was an examination whether Rabobank and WWF could extend their collaboration to a so called 'Transformational Partnership' on national and international level.

In March 2011 they signed a Partnership Agreement (PA) in order to 'enable Rabobank to support clients in their transformation towards more profitable business in a sustainable way and provide an opportunity to differentiate the bank in the market, through better risk management and taking advantage of new commercial opportunities'. For WWF Netherlands, the partnership would 'support the goal of 'freezing the footprint' of agribusiness through increased production efficiency, protecting biodiversity and addressing climate change and water security concerns'.²⁰

The Partnering Agreement (2011)

The PA is a document of 9 pages, with 24 pages of annexes, including a very detailed communication manual with a well described story line, core message and tone of voice. The PA contains not only the usual legal obligations (such as confidentiality, liability, intellectual property) but also provisions regarding exclusivity, financial arrangements and crisis communication. Especially these 3 provisions are worth paying attention to.

In the *exclusivity* statement parties agreed to not enter a similar partnership without the prory approval of the other partner during the PA. In 2017, Rabobank states they will never agree to such an exclusivity clause as it limits their possibilities too much.

Although both partners aimed for an equal partnership, Rabobank still financially supported WWF whereas WWF agrees to start a primary banking relationship with Rabobank. During the MTR in 2013 WWF admits that this *financial relationship* hampers their independency towards realising their strategic objectives.

¹⁸ To be specific: this partnership concerns the Dutch offices of both entities, i.e. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Netherlands and Rabobank Nederland.

¹⁹ Both parties participated in the Dutch Greentech Fund, Rabobank exploited a credit card that contributed to environmental awareness with endorsement of WWF and experts of both organizations jointly developed a set of Food and Agri Business Principles and accompanying supply-chain policies.

²⁰ Quote from the Partnership Agreement.

Partners were aware of the *reputation risk* on both sides. Others ('social interest groups or the media') might be critical towards their collaboration and will watch them closely (see also 1.2). When they will raise an issue or lodge a complaint related to the partnership, partners agree to a process approach. First, they will inform each other, set up a joint press and communication strategy, then they will start a dialogue with the journalist. We consider this an effective solution for an anticipated but not predictable situation: not determining upfront *what* exactly will do or expect from your partners but instead agreeing on *how* to deal in case such a situation occurs.

Finally, another statement in the PA is also remarkable. In the MoU signed in 2010 partners agreed to 'examine' whether to extend their collaboration. In the PA, it is concluded that this examination resulted in the decision to actually partner, in a transformative way. In 2017, during the evaluation, the programme managers of both partners agree they should have done a much more throughout 'due diligence' so that they could have better responded to differences between the organisations, especially regarding deviations in working culture.

Initially, the partnership was meant to last for 4 years (from 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2015). In 2013, a mid-term reflection was executed (mainly on the *process* of the collaboration) and as a result it was decided to extend the collaboration with 2 years. The effective end date of the partnership was became 31 March 2017.

Shared vision and strategy

In the International and National Action Plan for the partnership it was stated that 'Rabobank and WWF believe that valuable natural areas and biodiversity can be better protected and strengthened by reducing the environmental pressures caused by agricultural production and processing'²¹. They wanted to combine the reduction of the ecological footprint of food and agricultural business with the safeguarding of their long term business success by stimulating sustainable production and to reduce the business risks simultaneously.

Their strategy to achieve successful sustainable business cases was based on a selection procedure of catalyst projects. In short: Such projects had to take place in countries designated by Rabobank and WWF: Australia, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, the Netherlands and China. The local branches of both partners needed to be convinced that it was important to set up a project: 'local offices must be 100% supportive to the project and conversely count on 100% backing of the core team in NL'²². Projects had to be set up in regions where the greatest tensions between agricultural activities and nature conservation was visible. Before the start, sufficient capacity at local level had to be in place, with clear definition of roles, responsibilities and timelines. Projects had to aim at the development and application of products and tools to achieve the defined KPIs. In the Action Plan, the overall KPIs were defined as: 'more efficient use or re-use of raw materials and resources and protection of ecosystems'²³.

²¹ Page 3 of the Action Plan (2011).

²² Page 6 of the Action Plan (2011).

²³ Page 6 of the Action Plan (2011).

During the first years of collaboration, the Australian project didn't flourish, because in the end local partners couldn't agree on the joint objective and focus of their collaboration. Although the partnership started in 2011, not every project made a flying start (see the case descriptions for details) and the Chinese project didn't even start at all.

Governance

The Action Plan included an annex on the governance of the partnership. It included a description of roles and responsibilities and 'ground rules of the game'. Both CEO's were supposed to be 'account holders' to ensure support and endorsement of management at the highest level. A Steering Committee (SC) was initiated to approve and monitor partnership and projects developments. The SC was also responsible for client relationships and approval of activities and budget. Both partners appointed a programme manager for the day-to-day implementation and coordination on global and local level.

The main agreed rules of the game included: responsibility ('clear agreements and projects plans guide who is responsible for what'), on time delivery ('changes must be reported to the SC'), and transparency ('everyone who is involved will be informed')²⁴.

Mid-term reflection (2013)

The MTR in 2013 revealed that this 'promising partnership' had a well thought out formation phase (2011-2012), a shared ToC and commitment on all levels. There was a recognition of dealing with partners who came from different starting points and had different core values. There was a clear understanding of mutual benefits with clarity of roles, responsibilities, goals and 'ground rules'. The PA foresaw in transparency in decision-making process and financial contributions.

However, in the implementation phase (2012-2013) there was insufficient attention for the time and effort needed to start-up, both on partnership and project level. Partners also lacked respect for differences in approaches, time-frames, and competences. Also, clear communication and shared planning was missing. In short, differences in organizational structure and culture were insufficiently recognized. Partners didn't agree on accurate and appropriate indicators to monitor successful outcomes and progress on partnership level²⁵.

Progress

Each catalyst project was supposed to have a written proposal including a planning and budget. In some cases, MoUs between local branches were signed. Usually every 6 months progress reports were send to the SC. Each partner also reported on progress within their own organization. Because of adjustments made along the way – it is impossible to anticipate on unexpected developments during a multi-year period – it isn't always possible to assess progress against plans. During the first years it became clear that the transformational objective of the partnership (stimulate sustainable business assessed on the basis of certification as the core KPI) was way too ambitious. As one of the programme managers said: 'it was a little naive to assume that we would be able to change business production

²⁴ Annex 1, page 14 of the Action Plan (2011).

²⁵ *Findings of the Mid-Term Reflection of the Rabobank-WWF Partnership*, PrC (2013).

in a few years'. Indeed, partners had set an ambitious goal and started working on it. However, they had paid too little attention to what it requires to actually transform a business sector. Besides that, it was the first time two not very like-minded organizations from different sectors tried to achieve a major shift together. It was a journey in itself, a learning experiment with very high expectations – the risk of deterioration was high as well, on multiple levels.

The catalyst projects

Where the MTR focused mainly on the global partnership level, the current report study also takes the partnership projects into account. In the continuation of this chapter (3.2 – 3.6) we provide short descriptions of each catalyst project. We indicate what has been done (interventions), what has been achieved so far (results) and what insights have been generated. We will focus both on the process of collaboration (relationship building) and on the actual achievements. None of the catalysts projects has reached the overall objective of the partnership: 'testing innovative sustainable (agricultural) systems focused on improving production in terms of better (1) sustainability, (2) increase in yield, (3) cost efficiency, (4) profitability and (5) governance & business operations'²⁶.

Of course, this is a long term goal which requires at least 20 years. However, the project studies show that significant and necessary steps have been taken on the road towards sustainable economic development. We consider these steps as conditional: they are the enablers for change (M4C, see 2.2). Without these accomplishments, it is expected that impact won't be achieved. They are tipping points that accelerate the process. In the case studies we highlight these M4Cs and we get back to them in our concluding chapters (4 and 5).

3.2 Chile: responsible production in the salmon industry

The sector²⁷

Salmon farming started in the late 1970's in Chile and is still a fast growing business. The production is located in the southern regions of the country. The sector employs more than 30.000 people and has a yearly turnover of \$ 2 billion. Chile is the world's second largest producer of *salmo salar* (Atlantic salmon). After copper and fruit, salmon is Chile's largest export product.

The industry faced major environmental crises that had a significant impact on their production. In 2008, the sector was affected by an outbreak of the infectious salmonemia virus (ISA) and only a year later Chile camped with a massive fish mortality (25 billion salmons died, which equals a loss of \$ 800 million) due to an algae eruption. According to experts, the algae eruption was caused by the weather phenomenon El Niño. El Niño was unusually strong and lead to a higher water temperature. This is an ideal condition for algal growth. The reduction in supply resulted in a huge price cut for producers which affected the business directly. Fish farmers were forced to restructure their business. The sector

²⁶ Page 7 of the Action Plan (2011).

²⁷ Facts and figures are based on reports and briefs found on www.salmonchile.cl and www.aquaculturealliance.org.

authority imposed restrictions and limitations in order to drive supply growth discipline and to bring more biological stability and lower costs.

In general, the Chilean salmon farming industry recognizes it will take more than regulations to prevent another crisis. The values and attitudes of stakeholders are also a crucial component to improve practice.

The partnership

Rabobank Chile – being the 2nd largest financier of the Chilean farmed salmon industry – and WWF Chile started to work together in the end of 2011. They focused on the transition to sustainable production, both in terms of ecological and social issues, based on ASC certification. The key challenge for salmon producers was to reach a balance between sustainability and growth as they have come to understand that sustainability drives profits. One of the objectives was to accomplish higher biodiversity conservation impact in Southern Chile.

Interventions and results

The partnership started with both partners writing a white paper together. In this paper both Rabobank Chile and WWF Chile explored their respective positions regarding key issues in the industry. This included issues like habitat destruction and pollution but also social issues such as the negative impact of aquaculture production on surrounding local communities, including people in poverty, indigenous peoples, and local fishermen. Partners explicitly formulated their joint ambition in the white paper as well. For example regarding the social issues: They recognized the growing concern and therefore stated they want to work together with salmon producers to develop tools to identify best practices for dealing with social issues in the salmon industry. This white paper has proven to be a marker for change (M4C), a conditional output of the collaboration. Consequently, it guided the various projects they started to work on.

Rabobank and WWF in Chile both reported differently on their collaboration. Rabobank Chile reports focused on three groups of activities. They aimed at developing tools and instruments to address key issues like biodiversity, social issues and risk sharing. Accompanying practical studies should be carried out on production and market development. They started activities to scale up their efforts, such as the development of a risk assessment for clients, outreach activities during (internal) workshops, and conferences and events.

WWF Chile recognized that they were strategic partners with Rabobank Chile in working together on sustainable food (farmed salmon) supply chains. They formulated the following three objectives. They wanted to support Rabobank Chile and engage with their clients to convert their business operations into sustainable operations and to create a sustainable value chain based on ASC standards. They wanted to ensure that committed farmed salmon producers and other stakeholders had the capacity to address sustainable and social challenges and negotiate under equitable conditions during the certification process of ASC salmon certification.

Theory of Change

Over the years, envisaged interventions and activities changed, due to new insights or lack of interest amongst companies or stakeholders. Table 1 provides an overview of the main deliverables. Most of these have been focused on knowledge creation, awareness raising and change of attitude of Rabobank employees, companies and their stakeholders. Deliverables are linked to output and outcome level of the ToC. The tools and studies Rabobank and WWF jointly produced in Chile are what we call ‘markers for change’ (M4Cs) (see also Section 2.2 on the conceptual frameworks of ToC and KAP).

Planned activities	Deliverables (M4C)	Explanation
<p><i>Products:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Questionnaire / Environmental and Social Risk Assessment • Social Toolkit • Financial Risk Sharing Instrument / Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>White paper</i> with positions of Rabobank and WWF on important issues and joint responsibilities formulated (M4C) • <i>Questionnaire</i> for Rabobank's commercial team developed by WWF Chile to make an initial evaluation of a company's sustainable practices (M4C) • <i>Social Toolkit</i> developed including assessment, guidelines, frameworks and references (M4C). • Salmon companies happened to not be interested in a <i>fund</i> (financing wasn't a key issue) so this project didn't proceed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White paper functioned as fundament for collaboration. • Part of Rabobank's regular CSR policy is assessment of (potential) clients on sustainability issues. • The Social Toolkit received lot of interest, already acting as catalyst to convene coordination between companies on social issues. Needed: validation and alignment with ASC certification. In addition, further research should be focusing on if and how the toolkit is being used.
<p><i>Studies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dolphin Monitoring Study and Blue Whale Tagging • TEEB study/ecosystem services review • CESSO study • Markets analysis to create links with buyers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dolphin Monitoring, Blue Whale and TEEB studies</i> finished. • The <i>CESSO technical report</i> on social issues finished. • Two retail companies were invited to meet salmon companies and discuss importance of ASC (M4C). • Biggest client of Rabobank (Los Fiordos) about to close deals with two large buyers to provide ASC certified salmon (M4C). 	<p>Besides knowledge creation these studies have been used in workshops and meetings with producers. However it is not clear yet what has been or will be done in terms of application / implementation. The engagement with retail companies and Los Fiordos created 'movement' in the sector; start of putting sustainability on the agenda.</p>
<p><i>Engagement / outreach:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings for Rabobank employees • Workshops for companies • Sounding Board • Masterclasses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Employee engagement:</i> workshops with Rabobank's commercial staff to (1) explain ASC as a catalyst for sustainability, (2) use a questionnaire developed by WWF Chile to evaluate a company's sustainable practices. • <i>Workshop</i> with CSR managers of 10 salmon producers to present social toolkit and how to work with it. • <i>Sounding Board</i> is replaced with a road show in which Rabobank had individual meetings 	<p>Outreach activities changed during the years based on new insights (for example the master classes didn't start) or opportunities (such as the GSI initiative supported by both partners). It is not possible to determine if all potential opportunities</p>

	<p>with CEOs and CSR managers of 10 main salmon producers (clients and prospects).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Master classes</i> for small producers wasn't organized because Rabobank doesn't have these in her portfolio. • Six salmon companies signed the <i>Clean Production Agreement</i> Salmon Industry. • Outreach: contribution to the <i>Global Salmon Industry</i> (and jointly withhold the Chilean industry to leave GSI in 2015) • <i>MoUs</i> with 2 companies are signed to develop a pathway to achieve ASC certification. 	<p>have been used but the activities that have been performed received significant resonance according to participants.</p>
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Table 1: Planned and achieved MACs in Chile

Value added of the collaboration

Partners

By working together with WWF Chile, **Rabobank Chile** obtained a better understanding of its client situations with regard to social and environmental challenges. This increased their client intimacy. Moreover, Rabobank reinforced their market position by gaining a social and environmental responsibility reputation. Next to that, Rabobank staff, especially the account and relationship managers, gained knowledge on sustainability; they learned of its urgency and also how to start a dialogue about the issue with their clients.

By working with Rabobank staff, **WWF Chile** was able to promote sustainability and put strategic socio-environmental problems on the agenda. Because of their own expertise and performance WWF Chile was able to gain a leverage position to work on key issues with the industry. They also have become an indispensable actor in the ongoing sector sustainability dialogue.

Together WWF and Rabobank gave ASC certification a huge push in Chile: in 1.5 year 13% of the business has been certified (for comparison: The wood sector needed 10 years to reach 15-20% FSC certification). Next to that they contributed to the development of new markets and to the Global Salmon Initiative. **Salmon producers**, both clients and prospects of Rabobank, highly appreciated the activities of the partnership. They called the partnership a 'highly intelligent mechanism'. Moreover, they valued the influence on sector development. The crises the sector has faced made the need for tools to improve responsible production evident. Hence, the focus of the partnership on developing studies and tools paid off.

Process

Rabobank and WWF Chile were able to put sustainability on the agenda in a country where salmon producers weren't even used to sitting at the table together, let alone with other stakeholders. In generic terms the collaboration between 'unusual suspects' has built trust between both partners as well as with the salmon industry. As the WWF Chile Director put it: 'At the start it was scary and uncomfortable but the collaboration lasts already for more than 5 years and we still work together, that is an achievement in itself'.

Challenges

Both Rabobank Chile and WWF Chile reported that building trust wasn't easy. This was an often experienced challenge. They stated that it was time consuming to learn to work together and to develop a common language. It also took time to trust experts on both sides to make the right decisions and to find the right moments for company involvement, communication and outreach. Especially when team members leave, one almost has to start all over again with getting to know each other. This happened for example when a coordinator left which caused a major delay in delivering promised results.

A potential future challenge is the adoption of tools and instruments by the industry. It will be crucial to share successful experiences. Therefore, a well-thought-out communication strategy is needed to showcase good practices, to share lessons and to promote the partnerships' approach. It is important to convince stakeholders what is in it for them.

Partners are doing new things and they are doing things differently. That requires the capacity to see opportunities (a key element of entrepreneurship) and to build skills to think and act 'out of the box'. Moreover, potential for upscaling the experiences of this partnership requires a network (other regions, countries, other commodities) and resources (time, capacity and funding) to carry this out. Potentially partners do have access to the necessary networks and resources. It requires strategic prioritizing on management level in order to actually apply these.

Learnings

Partners indicated that, in their view, people make the difference. Both Rabobank Chile and WWF Chile said they were lucky to have employees who really believed their collaboration could support and help address the environmental and social issues at hand. They understood that key stakeholders, especially producers, need to know what it means to be certified and how this brings about change in their business. These producers have to be supported in capitalizing on the positive effects they can achieve on the environmental and social level. For example, salmon producer Los Fiordos realized their dependency on ecosystem services. Through participation in the workshops that were executed as part of the TEEB study they came to understand that they not only have an effect on the ecosystem that surrounds them, but that they also heavily depend on the well-functioning of this system.

WWF Chile learned that pushing their agenda never works; one has to look for a compromise. Furthermore, they emphasized the need to be ready to handle the responsibility. Promoting a sustainability agenda means they have to have the capacity and leadership to lead the process.

Rabobank Chile emphasized the importance of involvement of clients from the beginning. When you are able to link to a competitive advantage and/or link with market needs you will receive significant resonance from the clients. At the same time WWF Chile highlighted the importance to involve local communities. They need help to voice and negotiate their interests and their long-term needs regarding social and environmental challenges. This includes the development of their territory.

3.2 Brazil: sustainability in agribusiness: from risk mitigation to value generation

The sector

Agribusiness is a very important sector in the Brazilian economy, since it represents >25% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and 35% of jobs in the country. Moreover, the OECD and the FAO indicate that by 2025, Brazil will possess the largest food surplus in the world and South America will lead the world in regional food surplus²⁸.

However, Brazilian agriculture experiences alarming deforestation rates. There has been a deceleration in the rate of deforestation in Brazil, but 78,564 km² of forest cover was lost in the last decade (MMA, 2013)²⁹. Moreover, the sector is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the country³⁰ with an increase between 2005 and 2010. In addition, some regions of Brazil are facing significant water crises.

Agribusiness is important for the Brazilian economy, therefore the transition from the current model of production to a low-carbon model is urgent. Moreover, food production is an absolute priority for society. The agricultural sector is one of the most vulnerable sectors to climate change. Hence, in order to promote food security, the mitigation of climate change presents a strategic interest.

The partnership

Rabobank Brazil is known for incorporating sustainability into its business model. This partnership project with WWF Brazil offers tools to Rabobank, especially to the commercial department, to incentivize adoption of good practices in the field. To be specific, greater awareness and adoption of best practices by farmers contributes to improving their risk mitigation. Moreover, this will result in increased natural resources conservation, which is one of WWF's targets. In addition, WWF Brazil is eager to create opportunities for dialogue with the bank to emphasize the necessity of integrating sustainability into the core business of the bank.

The initial objective of this project was to bring a positive agenda of sustainability for agriculture. WWF Brazil and Rabobank Brazil planned to present and defend sustainability as a good business strategy for farmers and agribusiness companies. The project intended to demonstrate, from real cases of success, that the sustainability agenda can produce positive results both for the environment and for business. Its aim was to use an integrated approach to influence land-use decision-making processes in order to secure food, fiber and energy production. Moreover, it was intended to improve social welfare, water security and ecosystem conservation. Farmers would be encouraged to change

²⁸ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5778e.pdf>

²⁹ MMA (2013). Sistema Nacional de Unidades de Conservação, SNUC. Database, Ministério do Meio Ambiente

³⁰ Third National Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2015).

practices. This was supposed to happen by boosting knowledge through sharing experiences. Rabobank clients would be encouraged to adopt good practices (based on success stories and visits of demonstration units) and they would learn via an internal training about the benefits and opportunities that good social and environmental practices offer.

Interventions and results

At first instance, there were some differences between WWF the Netherlands and WWF Brazil regarding the aspirations for this partnership project. WWF Brazil didn't immediately feel the need to work with Rabobank because they already had a collaboration with Banco do Brasil. So, the responsible sustainability manager at that time at Rabobank decided to go for the 'low hanging fruit': Focusing on substantiating the bank's CSR policy through showcasing best practices and conducting a study about integrated livestock-crop-forestry models as a strategy to address sustainability issues. WWF Brazil only had to provide their expertise so no substantial capacity from their side was needed in the beginning. Nevertheless, because of reorganizations in both organizations it took two years to really get started. The fact that the project was able to take off in the end was mainly due to the newly hired people that were keen to work on these topics.

It was decided that the project would focus on three courses of action: (1) farm level best management practices; (2) peer-to-peer showcases "when sustainability truly worked" and (3) crop-pasture-forest integration: the new "green-revolution" of tropical agriculture.

Planned activities / products	Achievements	Notes
<p><i>CSR (showcases):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New chapter in the Rabobank CSR manual about good (innovative) practices on the farm. • Internal training Rabobank on the benefits and opportunities that good social and environmental practices offer. • Joint sessions at Rabobank Sustainable Field Days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New chapter in the Rabobank CSR manual has been realized including best practice case studies and an explanatory section about Brazilian Forest Code (law). It's available on the website and 2000 copies were printed of which 1640 have been distributed (M4C). • Internal training: in 2016, 95% of Rabobank's employees were trained. In 2017, already 25% have been trained • The first Sustainable Field Day took place on November 17, 2016 in Itajaí city (Goiás State) where 103 clients/prospects and 27 Rabobank employees were present. • The second Sustainable Field Day took place on April 25, 2017 in Piauí state. 	<p>The expertise of WWF Brazil was highly valued. The bank's CSR policy was deepened and strengthened by WWF Brazil's contribution.</p>
<p><i>Best (management) practices:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing successful cases of innovative action by Rabobank clients in the soy and sugarcane value chain. • Sustainable Farm Award: the farm that has good social and environmental practices in the field is rewarded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Farm Award. The review of the methodology was supported and speeches were delivered by Rabobank and WWF Brazil. Four videos were produced: one regarding the Sustainable Farm Award Prize and 3 videos with each winner of the prize telling their best practices (among the winners were a sugarcane and soy farmer). • Three infographics were printed in Globo Rural Magazine. WWF Brazil produced the infographic on the Brazilian Forest Code. They also supported Rabobank in the production of the other infographics about sustainability. This magazine has approximately 70.000 monthly printed copies and 1 million of virtual access per month. 	<p>The products focused on the stories of successful practices and not, for example, on conditions or crucial factors of sustainable practices. So the aim was mainly to showcase ('it is possible') and to inspire ('look what it can bring you') instead of replicating.</p>
<p><i>Studies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study on the financials of CPF integration: identification of most promising models. • Study on the environmental and agronomic benefits of the most promising CPF integration models. • Event to promote the results of both studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPF infographic was published in Globo Rural Magazin in May 2016; • Rabobank's FAR study regarding ICL (Crop-Livestock Integration) -not considering Forest Integration. The study was released for customers and press and was quoted at the newspaper (M4C). • Study on Integrated livestock-Pasture-Crop Systems (M4C). WWF Brazil developed a study of environmental benefits of the models indicated by Rabobank. Study was presented at the first Sustainable Field Day in 2016 	<p>Results of the study were presented partly in Portuguese and partly in English. Both Rabobank and WWF employees are happy that intercropping as strategy received attention. They wonder whether this would have been achieved without the partnership</p>

Theory of Change

Overall, the provided information was more general of nature, applicable to all the rural clients of the Rabobank and potentially to all the Brazilian farmers. Most of the knowledge and awareness raising activities have been accomplished, although no extensive attention has been paid to the soy and sugar cane sector. This seemed to be a discussion point since both organizations insist there was not a preselection of chains. However, in the final proposal of this partnership project it is explicitly mentioned that attention is going to be paid to both chains. Regarding sugarcane the focus was supposed to be on “sustainability as a tool for better management”, aiming for a more sophisticated audience (managers, entrepreneurs, businessmen). Regarding soy, the focus would be on better practices aiming for the producer audience (farmers). Nevertheless, some winners of the Sustainable Farm Award happened to be farmers of soy and sugarcane. Therefore, they featured in the videos that were produced as follow-up of this award show. In this way some attention was directed towards these crops.

Looking at the Theory of Change we observe that the project is now ‘located’ at the output level. All the proposed products have been delivered: farmers have been informed and motivated to change their practices. Probably these products are conditional for the desired. Nothing can be said yet about the outcome and impact level since this will require more time and more implementing activities.

Added value of collaboration

Partners

Through the partnership, **WWF Brazil** obtained access to Rabobank’s clients, a target group they normally have less interactions with. Rabobank is well embedded in Brazilian agribusiness which increased the opportunities for WWF Brazil to stress the urgency of conservation in this target group. **Rabobank** valued WWF Brazil’s expertise. Together they could spread the concepts of sustainability. In addition, Rabobank noticed that it increased the morale of some of its members who saw the partnership as an enriching experience.

We didn’t have the opportunity to contact the **clients**. However, based on what has been produced we would say that the added value for the involved farmers is access to knowledge. Clients received information about the benefits of integrating sustainability into their practices via studies, infographics, videos and events. Both Field Days took place on the premises of farmers who showed how they apply sustainability within their own business. Moreover, these demonstration units, the infographics and the CSR manual were specifically designed in accessible language. The assumption is that when they integrate sustainability into their business, clients have potential access to new markets, better management techniques, and efficiency gains in operations and higher profitability in the long term.

Process

Together Rabobank and WWF Brazil put sustainability on the agenda of their clients. They increased the sustainability knowledge of farmers through the products that were the output of the partnership (manual, studies, infographics, etc.). In addition, knowledge within the Rabobank team increased as well. The CSR manual is a good example of a true collaborative approach where both organizations invested time, expertise and other resources.

Rabobank and WWF Brazil shared information and opinions in order to bring the best quality of information to the rural producers. Because of this partnership, more people were reached than otherwise would have been the case. Furthermore, by working together they could break some of the existing prejudices that farmers had regarding NGOs. NGOs are often seen by farmers as critical actors that only point out the failures of their production system. However, due to the trust the farmers had in Rabobank and the proven expertise of WWF Brazil these perceptions changed which even led to some farmers requesting WWF Brazil to visit their property. This was seen as a huge accomplishment.

Challenges

The contacted employees, of both organizations, all emphasized that the main experienced challenge in Brazil was alignment. Internally, between WWF the Netherlands and WWF Brazil regarding the ambition of the partnership, but also external alignment between WWF Brazil and Rabobank Brazil. The organizations had different interests and understandings. This directly influenced the sense of urgency and the availability of resources. A great appeal was made on the adaptive competences of the staff involved: With limited (managerial) support, budget and capacity they managed to create a substantial outreach. Especially the publicity and public events helped to get sustainability on the Rabobank agenda and helped WWF Brazil to realise that access to clients is a major precondition for pursuing their agenda.

Learnings

As was stressed in the section about challenges, WWF Brazil realized that internal alignment is key. The projects are often multi-disciplinary between the different WWF Brazil programs which means that people from different departments need to collaborate. This requires consultation and alignment from the beginning.

Rabobank also emphasized the need for proper internal communication. During the time span of this partnership project, most Rabobank employees were not aware of the partnership between Rabobank and WWF and of its output. At a later stage, when the involved CSR team noticed this lack of awareness, information was sent to inform the employees. Moreover, attention should be paid to better communication between HQ and local offices. According to an employee we contacted it is now unclear to the involved Rabobank staff who's involved in decision making regarding the partnership, its budget and future focus. There are many ideas of how to contribute in the future, but it's not clear where to bring them in.

In general we can state that this project shows that a certain 'readiness' is needed to reach results. Both the partner organizations and the farmers need to have an open attitude to make this work.

3.3 Indonesia: sustainable palm oil

The sector

Indonesia is the world's biggest producer of palm oil. In 2016 its annual production was 32 million tons which represents 60% of world production. Palm oil cultivation has become an important livelihood strategy in rural Indonesia. The industry provides employment opportunities and since the majority of palm oil is being exported it is also an important foreign exchange earner. In Indonesia, palm oil is cultivated both on large-scale plantations and on smallholdings. Big private companies are dominant, producing slightly more than half of total production in 2016, but the smallholder farmers also account for a large production number, namely 40 % of total Indonesian production³¹.

Since 2000, the area of smallholder palm oil cultivation more than tripled. However, smallholders underperformed both in terms of yield and sustainable production practices. These lower yields may arise from underinvestment in smallholder production. Their way of production is generally based on inadequate agricultural practices. In general, palm oil companies face criticism regarding environmental issues such as deforestation, loss of biodiversity, degradation of peat lands, greenhouse gas emissions and social issues such as land rights problems and forced labour. Changing this requires a long-term view, education in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and integration into more formal supply chains. Farmers are also faced with external challenges that are related to conflicting regulation (e.g. ISPO mandatory by Indonesian government vs RSPO as the international certification standard), price fluctuation and the complexity of the supply chain.

The partnership

Financial institutions have a big role to play in driving sustainable business in the palm oil industry particularly when distributing loans. These institutions need to understand what the challenges and implications are for long-term investments. Rabobank is an active player in the palm oil sector and also a member of RSPO. Therefore Rabobank has an interest to make the palm oil supply chain more sustainable by supporting their clients. WWF Indonesia envisions a fundamental transformation in unlocking the barriers faced by independent smallholders. In order to do so, Rabobank and WWF agreed to do pilot projects that should improve the sustainability of the industry.

The project proposal departed from a twofold idea: (1) supporting prospects and clients who weren't RSPO-compliant yet to obtain RSPO certification and (2) reinforcing the position of small holders is key to achieving a sustainable palm oil chain. This would be possible by enabling them to use sustainable agricultural practices and to get access to adequate financial services to incentivize/ support their investments. The initial project was developed with the idea of working closely with one of the palm oil producers, the company Tiga Pilar Sejahtera (TPS) - a Rabobank client in Indonesia.

Interventions and results

In the first phase, WWF Indonesia and Rabobank agreed to engage Tiga Pilar Sejahtera (TPS)—a Rabobank client in Indonesia—in obtaining RSPO certification for their palm oil plantations. WWF Indonesia developed a roadmap for the client (see below). In the second phase, Rabobank and WWF Indonesia offered a proposal to TPS aiming for three goals: (1) supporting smallholders in adopting

³¹ Source: <https://www.indonesia-investments.com/business/commodities/palm-oil/item166>

and implementing good agricultural practices to increase their palm oil yield in accordance with the RSPO standard, (2) supporting smallholders in obtaining improved or adequate access to finance and (3) tracking and tracing the palm oil that TPS sources from other palm oil suppliers for its food processing facilities.

In the first phase WWF Indonesia visited Bumiraya Investindo (BRI), a subsidiary of TPS to do a rapid gap analysis (baseline) against RSPO Principles of the BRI plantation and mill. A roadmap was developed and BRI submitted their registration to the RSPO secretariat in 2014. It was successfully listed as a member of RSPO in December 2016. This was seen as a relatively easy and successful achievement, but it soon became clear that it was to be the only concrete output of this partnership project.

The intention existed to convert this into a business case or best practice in order to be able to upscale the results of the project to other clients in other regions and countries. In fact, during the project there had been conversations with other companies such as Sinar Mas. Sinar Mas, as member of the PISAgro network, was approached for a possible collaboration. The objective was to establish a Memorandum of Understanding to start a pilot project based on a feasibility study of the business case for implementing RSPO and GAP for independent smallholders that supply to the company. Some meetings took place, but no further progress was reached. A WWF employee indicated that this also had to do with the fact that PT Smart, one of Sinar Mas' subsidiaries, felt uncomfortable about working together with a bank and an NGO. However, a Rabobank employee stressed that this lack of progress merely had to do with the risks involved and the related question who can and wants to carry that risk.

It turned out that it was somewhat wishful thinking that the local WWF office and local Rabobank would easily build a (strong) working relationship and would find each other to discuss issues openly. Both organisations worked mostly on their own priorities. An example of this is the proposal submitted by WWF Indonesia regarding the consumer campaign *Beli yang Baik*. The idea was to work together with prominent retail brands in Indonesia to produce campaign materials that would increase the awareness about consumption. This was also included in the MoU that WWF Indonesia and Rabobank signed, but later it became apparent that Rabobank didn't back this idea and that they were not willing to spend resources. In hindsight, Rabobank states this objective should never have reached the MoU. In Indonesia, Rabobank doesn't have a direct client relation with the consumers. In fact, Rabobank is relatively unknown among the Indonesian population.

In addition, reputation-wise palm oil is a really sensitive issue for both organizations. In the past, several NGOs had pointed out that Rabobank had financed palm oil companies that were conducting unsustainable practices. WWF had similar negative experiences with international media about their engagement with palm oil companies so they were as reluctant as Rabobank to share information about the project.

Planned Activities / products	Achievements	Notes
<p>TPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support TPS in implementing sustainable standard based on RSPO scheme • Facilitate TPS in identifying RSPO certified suppliers • Opportunity to make TPS into a business case model of a complete sustainable value chain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoU between Rabobank and WWF Indonesia was signed in 2015 (M4C) • BRI, subsidiary of TPS, became RSPO member in December 2016 (M4C) • Not carried out • Not carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWF and a consultant conducted a baseline study and provided a gap analysis and roadmap for obtaining the RSPO certification. BRI applied for the membership in 2014 and was accepted as member in 2016. However, the initial idea was that the partnership would assist BRI in the process of complying with RSPO principles. In addition, the idea was to develop the first RSPO-certified food product, but both ideas were not realized or continued due to a lack of interest from the client. • TPS was not interested in the last mentioned activities
<p>Support smallholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in sustainable agriculture practice • in improving access to finance 	<p>Not carried out</p>	<p>Resources were allocated to the Asia Pacific Aquaculture event.</p>
<p>Sinar Mas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bankable and scalable smallholder finance model for sustainable palm oil supply • Roundtable on financing of independent smallholder development in oil palm 	<p>Desk research and a field visit took place in May 2016. However, implementation is not yet executed due to the commercial viability. Rabobank assessed the possibility of providing a financial scheme for replanting purpose of independent smallholders. The bank analysed and designed a proposal of suitable financing structure. This involved a cooperation with a government agency (CPO Fund) for obtaining and distributing the access to finance, especially for the compensation costs of living during the construction period. The roundtable took place on April 21, 2016 at the office of Sinar Mas. Rabobank was represented by 7 employees, Sinar Mas by 6 and WWF Indonesia sent one employee.</p>	<p>This assessment is considered a valuable output by other stakeholders as well. Rabobank will probably continue looking for other parties that can join the bank in further developing this financial scheme based on the assessment that has been carried out as part of this partnership. For Rabobank, the financing of the scheme is challenging because it assumes a 5 year grace period (i.e. no repayment</p>

		during construction period) followed by an 8 year repayment period giving a total tenor of 13 year.
Consumer campaign <i>Beli yang Baik</i> directed at Indonesian consumers	Not carried out	Rabobank didn't see added value in this project. Moreover, within WWF Indonesia opinions differed about the usefulness to do this within this partnership.

Theory of change

The first phase of the project was successful: BRI has become a RSPO member. This means that the company has absorbed the received technical knowledge provided by WWF, has become aware of the necessity to incorporate this into its production and has changed its practices accordingly. This is a significant output with a huge potential to create effect on the outcome and impact level. The other actions that have taken place got stuck at the activity and output level. The project has now officially ended which means that no further activities will take place.

Added value of collaboration

Partners

Initially, according to **Rabobank** the added value of this partnership project was seen especially in the increased opportunities for clients. Their performance would be enhanced through transforming conventional business models into more sustainable ones. Moreover, they would receive support in obtaining a certification of an international voluntary standard that delivers new commercial opportunities in order to gain a competitive edge. In addition, Rabobank would leverage client's sustainability performance from the use of Rabobank's capital. Since only one subsidiary of one client became RSPO member this added value has not entirely been realized. **WWF Indonesia** stressed the importance of having access to Rabobank's network in order to influence the business sector to become more sustainable. Its ambition was to serve as a true example of collective ambition of all parties to leverage markets and generate large scale change. That did not occur. The biggest setback was the reluctance of the companies to participate. This was not entirely anticipated.

Process

Both parties have brought distinct yet complementary roles and contributions to the project. They emphasized the usefulness of combining different perspectives and pooling from different resources. Together WWF and Rabobank made the RSPO membership of BRI possible. Rabobank proposed to spend the remaining resources into the aquaculture project. In this way they continued their collaboration with WWF.

Challenges

WWF Indonesia indicated that the main experienced challenge was related to finding a common tipping point to satisfy interests of both parties. This was shown best in drawing up the MoU where both organisations focused predominantly on their own objectives. They even wrote an own version of the MoU instead of coming together to jointly formulate this agreement. Rabobank stressed

communication as being the main challenge. Moreover, they indicated that the commercial viability of the project was a huge challenge as well. The project to improve access to finance for smallholders was discontinued because of the enormous risks of this financing scheme which is not balanced with the expected commercial gain. In addition, the commitment of the clients to get on board or to continue the project was not easy to realize.

Learnings

Overall, we can state that both organisations didn't speak the same language, and had different expectations about what needed to be done and how this was supposed to be executed. In addition, they interpreted the MoU differently. Furthermore, it became clear that trust is something that needs to be built locally. This can't be managed by HQ in the Netherlands where the tension is not as real as in the field. In the end it was decided to stop this project and to use the remaining resources for the aquaculture project.

Both Rabobank and WWF Indonesia argued that it was necessary to spend more time on joint program development and to stick to the official program planning. This would benefit both organizations. Moreover, the aim should be to focus on impactful objectives and not just on supporting activities. According to Rabobank both logos should be used for joint branding in order to enhance the partnership visibility. In addition, it was claimed by local employees that the partnership could be strengthened if it was developed as a more long-term program with a larger funding scale.

3.4 Indonesia: sustainable aquaculture

The sector

Aquaculture is an important component of Indonesian fisheries and as such it contributes to national food security, income and employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. In 2014 the total production was 14.3 million tons, involving a total of 3.8 million people and its monetary value was 18 billion USD³². Therefore, aquaculture is considered important in supporting rural economic development in Indonesia³³.

Although the country only utilizes less than 10 % of its potential area for aquaculture, it ranks among the most productive countries in aquaculture production. Its wide coastline and the warm tropical climate contribute to this productivity. This top position is quite remarkable since more than 80 % of Indonesia's fishery enterprises still use traditional practices and thus minimal technology. However, this sector is highly susceptible to weather patterns and climate change which stresses the need of including sustainability practices. The most material sustainability issues with which companies in the aquaculture industry are confronted with are pollution of surface water, loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction, social conflicts and poor working conditions.

The partnership

In this partnership, the aim was to assist Rabobank clients to mitigate the negative environmental and social risks of their operations and to contribute to a sustainable and viable aquaculture production chain. The specific objective was to strengthen and protect the Indonesian aquaculture sector regarding environmental, societal and economic matters. For Rabobank, it was about promoting sustainable practices which should minimize Rabobank's exposure to risks associated with unsustainable practices. The bank is committed to enhancing aquaculture and to meet the requirements towards global responsible practices standards such as the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) standard. For WWF it was important to implement sustainable practices which should reduce the burden on biodiversity and ecosystems.

Interventions and results

This partnership aimed to address the transition of unsustainable aquaculture practices deployed by fish farmers to good sustainable aqua cultural practices. The first step as originally proposed was to organise three regional workshops to train fish farmers (clients of Rabobank) in good sustainable aqua cultural practices in order to have them implement these in their businesses. The workshops were then supposed to be followed by a general seminar for all stakeholders in the Indonesian aquaculture sector. The purpose of the seminar was focussed on discussing actions with all relevant stakeholders to solve sustainability issues in the sector and transform the supply chain into a sustainable value chain.

However, it turned out that it was quite complicated to work together. So far, the partnership didn't achieve what was planned. This was mainly because the local offices of both organisations found it difficult to collaborate. Proposals were written individually, not together. As one interviewee put it 'there was contact, but no real communication'. Both parties clearly had their own agenda. This was

³² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5555e.pdf>

³³ http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/naso_indonesia/en

especially obvious when the Asia Pacific Conference was organised and Rabobank took the lead. During the event WWF and Rabobank even had separate booths. Moreover, expectations regarding what a partnership looks like and entails differed, just like the way of working. This was probably exacerbated by the general perception of this type of collaboration. When asked about the perception of NGOs in their country one of the interviewees indicated that NGOs are sometimes perceived as counterproductive since they are thought to strongly focus on their own benefit. In addition, it was emphasized that in Indonesian society a partnership between a financial institution and NGO is quite rare.

There has been an attempt to welcome input from Chile where the partnership also focused on aquaculture, but it became clear that this was too context-specific. Overall, some progress has been realized, but the question is whether there's sufficient common ground to continue. The table below shows what was planned and what was achieved

Planned Activities / products	Achievements	Notes
<p><i>Awareness raising</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jointly organizing seminar at Asia Pacific Aquaculture (APA) Conference April 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoU was signed in 2015 between local Rabobank and local WWF in which the objectives were formulated (M4C) Between 6000-15.000 people attended the conference. WWF representatives organized a seminar during this conference where 150 participants were present. They became more aware on what Rabobank and WWF could contribute in terms of responsible aquaculture business practices. This was also supported by the numbers of guests who visited booths in exhibition hall. 	<p>In the end it was not really a collaborative approach, but predominantly done by Rabobank who saw this as a commercial opportunity</p>
<p><i>Supporting farmers in good practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop/training good environmental aquaculture practices; Workshop/training good social aquacultural practices; Workshop good financial management practices 	<p>These would have been arranged in one workshop. Target participants of 30 medium fish/shrimp farmers.</p>	<p>The workshops did not take place yet. The question is whether it will be possible to tackle these complicated issues in only one workshop.</p>
<p><i>Follow up</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General seminar for all stakeholders in the Indonesian aquaculture sector to discuss actions with all relevant players to solve sustainability issues in the sector and transform the supply chain in a sustainable value chain; Good and effective assessment tools for Rabobank staff to exercise 	<p>The seminar is under preparation. It is planned to be held by end of July 2017. The expected outcome will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant issues in responsible aquaculture production will be identified and proposed solutions will be introduced; Roles of relevant institutions 	<p>No assessment tools were developed and no report was produced. The partnership didn't enter this phase yet.</p>

<p>influence on sustainability issues relevant to aquaculture;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report with evaluation and conclusions 		
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Theory of change

This partnership project is still in its infancy. Some input has been invested, few activities have taken place, but no real output and therefore no outcome or impact has been realized yet. However, the fact that Rabobank Indonesia proposed to invest the remaining resources of the palm oil project in this project is positive. It shows their commitment and motivation which are essential preconditions for making this project into a success.

Added value of collaboration

Partners

Since this partnership project is still in its initial phase, the added value relates at this point to the knowledge building and awareness creation phase. **Rabobank Indonesia** indicated that they will have more exposure to sustainability practices because of their cooperation with WWF. This might also result in better sustainability branding for some of their clients. **WWF Indonesia** stressed that the partnership will help them to better understand the financial institutions. They hope that their collaboration will set a good example for others to also focus on sustainability in their business portfolio.

Process

Both organizations share the collective ambition to leverage markets and generate large scale change in order to transform current practices into more sustainable ones. It is clear what each partner could bring to the table; however, since the collaboration didn't really start yet, this ambition to date is highly potential.

Challenges

Rabobank indicated that the main experienced challenge so far is communication. WWF staff are often in remote areas which made it more complicated to get in touch. Moreover, another challenge was the commercial viability of the project, just like in the palm oil project. A scalable project will need to have a strong business case. In addition, getting clients on board is far from easy either and once they're on board it might be difficult to keep their commitment and interest. Some companies indicated that they don't feel comfortable when engaging with an NGO. In addition, there was also some misunderstanding about the concept partnership. In essence, a partnership is about sharing the same goal. Usually there's a horizontal accountability, instead of a vertical accountability, through hierarchy. A partnership supposedly consists of a more equal relationship among partners. However, WWF Indonesia approached this partnership project more like a sponsoring by Rabobank of their activities.

WWF pointed out that their main future challenge will be choosing the type of clients that can be approached for this project by Rabobank. So far, WWF has not been involved in the selection process

of companies. WWF understands that Rabobank, due to its core business, probably focuses on the 'bankable' clients. On the other hand WWF-Indonesia works in the aquaculture sector with two types of 'clients' which they call partners: *small-medium sized enterprise producers (SME)* and *industrial scale producers*. The SMEs dominate this sector and they are also in most need of financial support in order to improve their practices. However, these SMEs might be of less interest for Rabobank. In addition, they might also be less ready since they tend to focus on increasing productivity (in order to survive) and don't bother about sustainability issues. This further complicates the process. WWF Indonesia suggested to conduct a market event, in order for producers, buyers, and financials institutions to meet, and discuss potential collaboration or business engagement.

A more sector-wide challenge that influences this partnership has to do with the current number of related standards with which companies can comply. The global sustainability standard Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) has been introduced in Indonesia. This standard is the result of a multi-stakeholder partnership in which WWF participated. The Indonesian government also introduced a standard for aquaculture named Cara Budidaya Ikan yang Baik (CBIB) which translates to Good Aquaculture Practices in English. At the moment it is voluntary, but it is expected to become mandatory³⁴. However, enforcement of this standard is difficult. This is a general problem in Indonesia due to the fact that the country consists of thousands of islands. In general, Rabobank Indonesia emphasized that the regulator or government should take a more proactive role. For instance, by defining a commodity focus in certain areas and through establishing and reinforcing the environmental regulations. However, besides this implementation and monitoring problem, there's overlap and gaps between both standards which causes confusion. Thus, there exists a tension between globally defined standards and national standards.

Learnings

In general, trust in the other partner and in the partnership as such was low. At some point according to one of the organizations there was uncertainty about the commitment of the other. Rabobank stated that there should be a better proposition of how this collaboration will benefit both parties. Moreover, Rabobank and WWF should be allowed to use both logos for joint branding. This will enhance visibility of the cooperation. In general, communication at the office level should be improved which also boils down to a (more) clear assignment from both parties. Rabobank and WWF should spend more time discussing the possibility of future projects which should result in a joint project proposal with clear objectives, results and timelines in order to work towards that dot on the horizon. A similar product like the white paper in Chile could be a useful end result.

WWF also indicated that communication needs to be improved. Furthermore, they stressed that more stakeholders should be involved in this project, especially from the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Affairs (MMAF) who are concerned about sustainability in this sector. If they're involved it might provide legitimacy and this will ensure that more companies go on board as well.

In general, both organizations focused too much on their own objective without realizing fully the extent of complementarity that they had within reach. Moreover, due diligence was not properly carried out. Unchecked and perhaps biased expectations about the other party troubled the vision of

³⁴ Schouten, G., Vellema, S., & Wijk, J. V. (2016). Diffusion of global sustainability standards: The institutional fit of the ASC-Shrimp standard in Indonesia. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, 56(4), pp. 411-423.

collaboration which complicated joint working. In addition, the fact that this partnership was decided upon by headquarters didn't provide a sound basis. Local offices needed to be convinced to see the benefit which delayed their buy-in.

3.5 India: sustainable water management in sugarcane production

The sector

India is the second largest producer of sugarcane worldwide. About 45 million farmers are involved in producing sugarcane which provides raw material to more than 450 sugar mills for the production of sugar and by-products. Due to climate variety there is a wide gap in the sugarcane productivity of tropical and sub-tropical zones in India. India is also the largest consumer of sugar; by 2030 the sugar demand in India is projected to reach 52 million tons.

Sugarcane is a highly water-intensive crop and its cultivation has significant impact on the hydrology of the area where it is grown. In some parts of India, about 60 per cent of the irrigation water is dedicated to sugarcane cultivation, which constitutes only 3-4 per cent of the agriculture land. In areas where sugarcane is grown the average water withdrawal to water availability ratio is high at 40 to 50%. In some areas (Western & Southern India) the water condition is alarming. Data shows that there is a rapid depletion of groundwater stocks in India, especially in tropical sugarcane growing areas³⁵.

The partnership

In this partnership Rabobank and WWF works together to get better insights into the water and carbon footprint in sugarcane production systems and to identify the carbon reduction potential of sugarcane cultivation practices. Based on this knowledge and insights a decision support tool for sustainable water management can help sugar cane farmers to improve their performance and in the end to have a positive impact on biodiversity and sustainable sugar cane production. The project aimed to build knowledge and provide advisory services for the sugar mills. Specifically, it wanted to address two issues related to sugarcane production: water sustainability and carbon footprint. The idea was to measure the water and carbon footprint in the sugarcane production system. Moreover, the partners aimed to identify carbon reduction potential of sugarcane cultivation practices. In addition, the partners hoped to address water availability through risk assessment and to promote efficient use of available water by developing acceptable metrics that could be implemented widely. EID Parry is also involved in the partnership and contributes their practical knowledge and coordination skills.

Interventions and results

The intervention sought to develop/use appropriate tools to measure the water and the carbon footprint of the sugarcane production. The partners started to develop and test a Decision Support Tool (DST) for sustainable water management. Furthermore, they aimed at applying the 'Cool Farm Tool' in the sugarcane production which is an online greenhouse gas (GHG) calculator that helps farmers to identify their productivity as well as the impact of their various operations on the environment.

The partnership led to the development of the DST for sustainable water management and a future water availability risk assessment tool. Three different study areas have been chosen based on the geological terrain and climate variations to develop the DST for sustainable groundwater management. The areas are (1) Sankili, Srikakulam district, (2) Haliyal study area, Dharwad region, and

³⁵ WWF India (2016). Sustainability in sugarcane industries in India. Powerpoint WWF India for Steering Committee.

(3) Kolhapur study area, Maharashtra. The three study areas are selected on the watershed basis considering maximum number of sugarcane farms provided by the EID Parry, Sankili.

The developed decision support tool builds upon the previous work of the National Geophysical Research Institute (CSIR). EID Parry has provided data on the locations of the sugarcane farming villages, on irrigation sources and on climate. WWF India provided mainly technical knowledge and took care of the coordination of the project. They sustained the project in terms of rolling out the concept with the help of technical partners coordinated by EID Parry. Besides this roll-out and the coordination WWF India brought in the Water Footprint method to calculate the water use of the farmers. Rabobank contributed with their financial knowledge. Rabobank expects to use the knowledge gained by this project to incorporate this in their knowledge and risk management approach for the sugar sector.

Also several workshops and meetings were organized. WWF organized 27 sessions of training on sustainable sugarcane cultivation. Conservation of HCV zones through Bonsucro awareness program was carried out for 320 farmers and the entire cane staff of Haliyal mill. Moreover, 4 training sessions for 117 farmers of Sankili mill on sustainable sugarcane cultivation was conducted. The workshops and meetings had a positive effect on the knowledge and awareness of water irrigation solutions, sustainable sugarcane production and more generally on sustainable natural resource use among staff of WWF, Rabobank and EID Parry.

Planned Activities / products	Achievements	Notes
The concept of water and carbon footprint and the importance of water availability has been integrated in the decision making process of EID Parry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several workshops and meetings are organized that increased the awareness among staff of WWF, Rabobank and EID Parry. • WWF organized 27 sessions of training on sustainable sugarcane cultivation. • Conservation of HCV (High Conservation Value) zones through Bonsucro awareness program was carried out for 320 farmers and the entire cane staff of Haliyal mill. • 4 training sessions for 117 farmers of Sankili mill on sustainable sugarcane cultivation was conducted. 	Many activities are undertaken to increase the knowledge and awareness of all partners involved and the individual farmers. It cannot be said yet if this new knowledge and awareness actually leads to different decision making.
<p>A decision support tool for sustainable water resource management is available enabling efficient and timely management of ground water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sugarcane water footprint assessment • Water footprint response formulation strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decision support tool (DST) for sustainable water management and a future water availability risk assessment tool has been developed (M4C). • The project completed data collection on carbon and water footprint in the Haliyal sugar mill. Data was collected from a total of 134 observation plots spread over different zones of Haliyal sugar command area. In Shankli, data collection of 100 observation plots is in the process. 	The next step will be that the farmers actually use the tools to get insight into their current water use and carbon footprint and the potential to improve their practice of water management and carbon footprint reduction.
<p>The greenhouse gas emission/Carbon footprint for sugarcane production system is estimated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A response strategy to redefine SMART and low carbon practices for sugarcane cultivation • Improve the ratio of cane productivity/(waterfootprint + emission) 		
<p>Results of the project can be scaled up within sugar industry in India and global sugar industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling up the results of the project • EID Parry provides leadership in implementing sustainable water practices 	<p>Stakeholders are identified to disseminate project results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian Sugar Mill Association (ISMA)³⁶ • Financial Institutions – Rabobank and its lending institutions, National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development • BONSUCRO 	Dissemination and upscaling of the results will be executed in the next year(s).

³⁶ An industrial association consisting of more than 650 public and private sector sugar mills. ISMA typically lobbies with the Government of India and local state government for the benefits and interests of sugar manufacturers

Theory of Change

On output level assessment tools have been developed and trainings and workshops are held among staff of WWF India, Rabobank India and EID Parry. However, the assessment tools are not implemented yet. So we do not know yet if they will increase the awareness and knowledge of farmers, resulting in sustainable water management practices, which should lead to financial and environmental benefits. The next step would be that the farmers actually use the tools to get insight into their current water use and carbon footprint. This in turn has the potential to improve their practice of water management and to reduce their carbon footprint.

Added value of collaboration

Partners

According to **Rabobank** India, the added value of the collaboration with WWF India lies in access to key knowledge which enables the bank to position itself better and to enhance its network. The partnership improved Rabobank's client contact related to sustainability issues. Furthermore, it has provided Rabobank India with the opportunity to position itself as a 'sustainability leader' in the field. The added value for **WWF India** was the engagement with the sector, gained knowledge about potential solutions for the sugarcane sector. **EID Parry** mentioned that in their opinion the optimization of water use is a successful output of this partnership. Furthermore, they considered the availability of quality data such as maps providing detailed information of watersheds, run-offs and potential areas for development of sugarcane as beneficial and of added value. It is believed that the tools that are the result of this partnership will certainly change the practice of irrigation.

Process

The alignment between the different parties involved was good. All parties were very enthusiastic about the added value of the other organizations involved. According to CSIR and EID Parry, the added value of collaboration with Rabobank India and WWF India was related to the ease of approach. Moreover, they valued the transparent and clear communication by the officials of WWF India and Rabobank India. The project was implemented without any difficulties. This was predominantly because of the good relationship between Rabobank India and WWF India. Moreover, engagement with EID Parry and their participation in the process of method development and modelling was also very valuable for the project.

Overall, the involved partners see this as a good partnership. According to them, it is important to move on to the level of implementation. In addition, EID Parry is in favor of widely propagating the findings among other relevant stakeholders within the bank and in the wider sector.

Challenges

One of the main experienced challenges was the geographical positioning of the different study areas, as the sector is located in the tropical as well as in the subtropical regions of India. Thus, it was a challenge to develop a tool that would be useful for all sugarcane producers in India, independent of the area they are located in. Another challenge was to acquire field data. Moreover, discussing and presenting the hydrogeological models to all the parties involved in the project was a challenge as well. Lastly, there were some logistical challenges, such as moving the gadgets from one place to the other which took several days and covered many kilometers.

Learnings

It turned out that the involvement of all participants during the entire process was an essential precondition for turning the project into a success. Next to that, partners confirmed that the good relationship between Rabobank India and WWF India was crucial for the success of the project. This helped in accepting different opinions and suggestions throughout the project process. Furthermore, this made it easier to meet the expectations. In addition, partners concluded that it is important to align the difficulties and to build a joint solution that satisfies everyone. Related to this is the importance of learning loops. Time should be allocated for periodic reflection and potential adjustment when needed.

3.6 The Netherlands: biodiversity monitor dairy farm

The sector

The agricultural area in The Netherlands covers two-third of total land area and provides the main habitat for plants and animals (WNF, 2014). The diversity of plants and animals is called biodiversity and is also determined by the landscape diversity. This biodiversity, in turn, provides important services for agriculture. In this way, biodiversity is relevant for dairy farming and dairy farming is relevant for biodiversity (Melk, 2016)³⁷. The dairy farm covers two thirds of the agricultural area and is thus the largest land user in the Netherlands¹. This implies that the way in which dairy farms interact with landscapes highly influences the livelihoods of animals, plants and thus their image and hence the license to produce of the dairy farming sector.

The income of dairy farmers is strongly influenced by a volatile market while costs continually rise. For dairy farming, it is a challenge to meet the environmental objectives, including a reduction of phosphates, nitrogen and greenhouse gas emissions. Biodiversity on agricultural land still shows a steady decline. This is evidenced by a decrease of the population size of breeding birds, mammals and butterflies in the agricultural area between 1990 and 2013 by 40 percent³⁸. Important causes of the decline in biodiversity agricultural land are scale increase, desiccation, soil degradation, eutrophication and the disappearance of small-scale landscape elements (such as hedgerows). In addition, grassland is used more intensively: the grass is mowed more often and the diversity of grasses and herbs in the grassland decreases (EEA, 2015).

The partnership

Rabobank wanted to initiate a movement to increase knowledge and awareness of biodiversity decline impacting the license to operate of the Dutch dairy business. WWF Netherlands aimed to enhance biodiversity on agricultural land and beyond and reduce the environmental pressure of the dairy farms by rewarding farmers for their results on enhancing biodiversity. FrieslandCampina, a large Dutch cooperative of dairy farmers, joined the partnership. The partners are seeking to help restore biodiversity by promoting new revenue models in the supply chain that incentivize dairy farmers to contribute to biodiversity restoration

Interventions and results

To help dairy farmers to get more knowledge and insights into sustainable land use and biodiversity and to be able to reward farmers for their results a biodiversity monitor has been developed. This innovative approach has resulted in a biodiversity monitor that includes KPI's to quantify biodiversity and environmental results. The KPIs constitute an integrated set which collectively reflect biodiversity performance on a landscape level. This means that KPIs are not applied individually; they balance each other out. The scores on the KPIs can be assessed against target values and/or an optimum at landscape level to ensure impact and continuous improvement. The 3 partners together with scientific partners developed the integrated set of KPIs. The monitor is ready to be tested in the next half year (autumn and winter 2017/2018). On the long term, the idea is that the monitor will be an independent, open source instrument that can be used to provide incentives (rewarding system) to improve the

³⁷ Melk, 2016. Hart voor Natuur en landschap. Tijdschrift Melk Nr. 26.

³⁸ WNF, 2015 en Compendium voor de Leefomgeving, 2016. <http://www.clo.nl/indicatoren/nl0061-bodemgebruikskaatvoor-nederland>.

performance of the farmers while at the same time safeguarding the long-term profitability and public support for the dairy sector.

Planned Activities / products	Achievements	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up knowledge about biodiversity and sustainable land use in the case of dairy farmers Translate the general issue of biodiversity to a practical company level approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rabobank, WWF Netherlands and FC specified and developed KPI's to measure and assess the status of biodiversity and sustainable land use. The KPI's will be included in the biodiversity monitor. 	<p>The specification of a well-defined and practical set of KPI's took a lot of effort. The KPI's have been selected based on their integrated approach and measurability.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a practical tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Biodiversity monitor has been developed (M4C). The monitor provides insight into the status quo of sustainable land use and biodiversity for the specific situation of individual dairy farmers. Next to that the monitor provides information about what measures can be taken by the farmers to improve their sustainable land use. The first version of the monitor is ready and will be tested in the next year. 	<p>The partnership partners expect that because of the monitor, dairy farmers achieve more insights into the impact of their practices. This knowledge will increase the awareness of the influence of environmental quality and habitat/land management related to biodiversity among the dairy farmers. WWF Netherlands, FrieslandCampina and Rabobank hope that the farmers will change their practice because of this awareness and based on financial incentives to be designed using the monitor</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of biodiversity monitor by stakeholders and production chain partners of the dairy sector with the objective to support the farmers to enhance biodiversity and sustainable land use performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this stage the current situation at the stakeholders, the potential and willingness to use the monitoring tools and mechanism to able further application of the monitoring tools are assessed. The first results show good options for inclusion of the monitor in the <i>Focus Planet</i> monitoring program of FrieslandCampina. Also, useful financing mechanism to increase the uptake of the monitor are being explored. The next phase is further development of an independent governance structure for the biodiversity monitor 	<p>There is not much to say until now about the actual application and results of the biodiversity monitor.</p>

Theory of Change

The partners expect that because of the monitor, dairy farmers achieve more insights into the impact of their practices. This knowledge will increase the awareness of the importance of environmental problems related to biodiversity among the dairy farmers. WWF Netherlands, FrieslandCampina and Rabobank hope that the farmers will change their practice because of this awareness and because of the incentives that can be linked to the monitor. The standardized monitor, already endorsed by three large partners is likely to be picked up on a wider scale. The Ministry of Agriculture, Provinces, land owners and nature organizations already expressed interest in using the tool in their environmental assessments and reward schemes. Consequently, it is expected that this will lead to a more sustainable earnings model and a new business model for farmers. This will reduce the environmental pressure and enhance biodiversity, while strengthening the financial position of the farmers (because farmers are less dependent on subsidies or on external resources).

Added value

Partners

Until recently, WWF did not cooperate and did not have a focus on Dutch sectors to improve sustainability. For **WWF**, this project increased their awareness that also local sectors can play an important role to reduce the pressure on biodiversity. Next to that, it provided WWF a better understanding of the dairy sector and the role cattle farmers can play related to biodiversity issues. For **FrieslandCampina**, the developed biodiversity monitor is the main added value of this project. It can help their member dairy farmers to improve their biodiversity and sustainable land use. For **Rabobank**, this project led to increased knowledge about the importance of biodiversity and the risks related to biodiversity. It gave Rabobank more insights into the opportunities to include the issue of biodiversity in conversations with the client. Moreover, it offered Rabobank an opportunity to improve their sustainability branding towards their clients.

Process

All partners agree that it was an unexpected partnership. The project showed that seemingly very different organisations can cooperate very well when it is clear how the ambitions align.

Challenges

One of the experienced challenges was the availability of financial resources. Time and money was needed to develop the KPI's and the biodiversity monitor. However, the main challenge was to translate such a broad issue of biodiversity to a practical company level approach. It seemed to have worked out well since the partners are all very proud of the current version of biodiversity monitor. The monitor makes biodiversity tangible and practical for individual dairy farmers.

After the pilot of the monitor, the ambition is that the monitor will be widely applied by dairy farmers in the Netherlands. To realize good and widespread application, a future challenge therefore is to find an independent institution or organization that adopts the monitor. The partners are aiming at setting up an independent foundation in 2018 that takes care of the application of the monitor and that will support further developments. The partners envisage potential to use this monitor, after the needed adaptations, in other sectors and countries. Therefore, in the coming years the potential for wider application will be investigated by the partners.

Learnings

It takes time to build trust and a good relation. That's the main lesson learned in this project. It seemed helpful that the organizations of WWF Netherlands, Rabobank and FrieslandCampina are comparable since they all have a membership/cooperative structure. A second lesson learned is that it is not easy to translate a general issue like biodiversity into measurable indicators and practical tools.

The development of the biodiversity monitor is the main achievement of this project. It is the first practical tool available for farms to assess their performance on biodiversity and to provide practical suggestions to improve the current situation. To capitalize on the efforts, implementation of the biodiversity monitor is needed. It is expected that this will take at least two more years. The requirements for an effective implementation boils down to the following needs: (1) capacity and resources; (2) concrete, tangible roles and contributions of Rabobank, WWF Netherlands, Friesland Campina and (3) one of the partners has to make sure that someone takes ownership to actually realize implementation of the monitor.

4 ANALYSIS

The partnership between Rabobank and WWF can be characterized as a multi-layered relation. A financial institution and a nature conservation organisation – a collaboration initiated at global level, implemented at local level, within 5 different sectors and industries, focusing on 6 different commodities in 5 different countries. Aiming at business transformation, combining sustainability and profit, building knowledge and skills, working on awareness raising and behavioural influence, promoting sustainable practices – clearly, there was no lack of aspirations. The ambition was to make the case for sustainable business, to prove that it was possible, and at the same time partners had to learn along the way how to do it: ‘We build the ship while sailing it’, as one of the programme managers said.

The evaluation study was also layered. It was about proving the partnership worked, and about showing the value added. At the same time partners wanted to learn about *how* it had worked. By looking back and through systematic reflecting on outcomes to date, they wanted to distract learnings, not only for themselves and their clients, but also for those who are involved in similar endeavours and might benefit or be inspired by the experiences of Rabobank and WWF.

In this chapter we first dive a little bit deeper into the multiple purpose of the evaluation: accountability (to prove) and learning (to improve). Then we analyse the challenges partners faced on various partnership dimensions. Finally we come back to the original evaluation question (see 2.1) and formulate answers.

4.1 Accountability and learning

The purpose of the evaluation wasn’t quite clear from the beginning. Sure, partners wanted to know what they had achieved but was it because they wanted to know if it has been worth the effort – a cost-benefit analysis? Or did they want to know how they could move on and improve – to increase or accelerate the chance of change? In other words: was the evaluation about accountability or about learning? Of course it is possible and perhaps even eligible to combine these two evaluation perspectives. However, it is important to be *clear* about its purpose in order to provide meaningful answers.

Traditionally, when evaluating a project one looks for the impact of the projects’ interventions. This impact has to do with the desired transformation: In this case, initiating a development towards sustainable agri-business in the production of aquaculture, sugar cane, palm oil and dairy. However, exactly because it is a *transformational* partnership³⁹ measuring the impact is quite challenging. Usually the impact has to do with fundamental change or innovation of standard practices, or even

³⁹ A transformational partnership is intentionally created to challenge and change mainstreams systems and mindsets. Based on the definition used by the Partnership Brokers Association (PBA), see <http://www.partnershipbrokers.org/>.

aims at societal (systemic) change. This kind of change requires a long-term perspective, a phased approach and thus a considerable amount of time.

Next to that, the longer the time frame involved, the harder it gets to rule out all external effects. In other words, it is complicated to attribute an achieved impact to specific activities. Transformational change is influenced by many factors; how do you prove that it was your contribution that has made the difference?

Besides these difficulties of impact measurement, evaluating a partnership for transformational change implies also to look at the collaboration itself. After all, partners involved considered it necessary, for some reason, to work together to achieve the desired change. For a good and useful evaluation study – meaning: balancing the accountability and learning purpose – it is not sufficient to focus on measuring *results* alone, you should also dig into the collaboration *process* to figure out why things are or aren't working and what to do about it. One also has to take into account the value of the vehicle, the partnership, as an enabler for achieving impact.

So, when seeking to answer the key evaluation question, one has to look at the partnership accomplishments in terms of both measuring results (impact), assessing the collaboration process (added value for the individual partners and stakeholders) *and* identifying enablers and obstacles to achieve impact and realize added value (markers for change). In that way, one is entitled to assess key aspects of a partnerships: the efforts provided, the results obtained and learning to be extracted from the findings.

In the evaluation questions of Rabobank and WWF (see 2.1) it was clear they intercepted two thoughts: they asked for an impact measurement of and at the same time wanted to know the added value the partnership has had for partners involved.

As may be clear, in the evaluation of this partnership we have used both evaluation perspectives. In fact, what we actually say and what this partnership made really clear, is that a learning perspective is conditional for achieving – and thus measuring – impact. Especially in the case of a transformational partnership, where you aim for change and do things differently, learning is key. This implies active participation of partners involved. They are the ones who can best appreciate the collaboration (in light of the ambition and the aspirations of partners) and distract lessons from experiences. Jointly formulating the learnings of your partnering endeavor helps to assess the results (prove the efforts were worthwhile) and strategically prioritize activities (improve and move on).

4.2 Challenges

The overall challenge was clear: climate change, loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystems undermined economic growth. As was the destination: finding a balance between nature conservation and economic development.

The corporate strategies hold commonalities in their visions and ambitions. This recognition created the partnership between the bank and the conservation organization. The partnership launched 6

catalyst projects. Considerable work was done, new ways of working were tested, some of them succeeded, others couldn't be brought to life. Along the way people involved experienced difficulties, encountered resistance and overcame barriers. Blending ecological, social and financial sustainability required to tackle particular challenges⁴⁰.

Global versus local

As already made clear, the partnership was initiated at global level. The underlying assumption at global headquarters in the Netherlands was that local branches of the partners would be interested in the collaboration without a doubt: 'such an opportunity!' But also on global level it took time to get to know each other. To learn to work together, to develop a common working style and a common language.

Programme managers had to work hard to get their organizations internally aligned (for example: local branches had their own strategic priorities). The sense of urgency at local level didn't always seem as obvious as thought at global level.

Moreover, within certain countries, the collaboration between a bank and a CSO wasn't as obvious either. Such collaborations are perceived with a lot of skepticism. Companies were hesitant to work with a CSO, and WWF staff had trouble to work with a financial institution. Partners struggled with very divergent assumptions and expectations.

In countries where the local staff did start a dialogue, it appeared difficult to find common ground, a shared ambition and the necessary resources (time, capacity, and priorities). To find the common tipping point that satisfied both partners' interests wasn't easy and was time consuming.

Trust building

The partnership was set up as an equal relationship. Moving away from traditional philanthropy towards a transformational partnership almost seemed a bridge too far. 'For an equal relationship money is not leading', as one of the project managers said. However, it was difficult to find out how to really work together. WWF had to get used to a partner who didn't only provide the funding but seriously wanted to jointly decide on project objectives and activities. Rabobank, in turn, had trouble to be an equal conversation partner.

Both organizations struggled with pushback from their employees. Rabobank commercial staff turned out to be hesitant to address sustainability issues with prospects and clients. They knew all about finance; sustainability was not their expertise. As mentioned, WWF team members found it difficult to collaborate with business. Staff turnover was a major challenge when developing a trustful relationship and a language both can understand. And yet this is exactly what is needed to make it work: 'you have to know each other, really understand where the other comes from before you can develop a good working relationship', as one of the staff members of WWF Chile pointed out.

⁴⁰ The following challenges are derived from the questionnaires filled in by local CEOs and project managers of both partners.

Client commitment

Participation of producers, companies who were prospects and clients of Rabobank, was considered to be a key success factor. WWF Chile even stated that the access to salmon producers Rabobank provided, was an important objective: 'if the client wants it, the bank moves'. And yet it proved not to be easy to get business committed – and not just because of the sentiment of business not wanting to engage with a CSO. In some cases there was a discussion about the type of companies who should become involved (SMEs or MNEs, for instance). In other cases, the challenge was around the translation of the broad issue of sustainability into something concrete and tangible for a practical company level approach. Sometimes, the industry faced difficulties with the adoption and application of tools developed by the partnerships. Apart from (for the time being unprecedented) conversations, not in all cases active engagement of clients has been realized yet.

Upscaling

To scale experiences and tools of the partnership requires a network (other regions, countries, other commodities) and resources (time, capacity and funding). Especially the availability of financial resources appeared to be a challenge. But also other contextual issues played a role: Differences in geographical areas jeopardized a 'one fits all' tool approach, for example. Another challenge had to do with to decide to find other suitable partners, to expand or to move on. In the Netherlands, for example, it appeared not easy to find an independent institution to roll out the Biodiversity Monitor. That is why partners now aiming at setting up an independent foundation that will monitor the application of the Monitor and support its further developments.

Governance

As stated before, local priorities and strategies have not been sufficiently taken into account at the set-up of the partnership, probably due to the fact that it was accomplished at HQ level. This was also visible in the composition of the Steering Committee: Only global managers were members, the local level wasn't represented in the decision making process. This caused a gap between HQ level coordination and local level implementation. In addition, SC's focus was mostly on achieving KPIs as formulated on HQ level which weren't appropriate aligned with local priorities or possibilities.

It was a collaboration process that wasn't easy, and sometimes even 'scary and uncomfortable' to quote the WWF Chile Director. It was a quite complex collaboration, which only worked because people involved respected each other professionally, shared the same values and were highly committed. These and other lessons learned will be brought up in the final chapter (5).

4.3 Answering the evaluation question

In Chapter 2 we formulated the key research question and we raised the issue of additionality of the partnership. Based on the research findings (Chapter 3) and the main challenges (section 4.2) of the partnership, in this section we provide some (multi-layered) answers.

Value added of the partnership for partners involved

The ambition of this partnership was really promising and at the same time highly challenging⁴¹. Both Rabobank and WWF aimed at a fundamental change of doing business in the agro/food sector. The catalyst projects intended to demonstrate how a successful transition to sustainable production and operations could be achieved. Indeed, they were set up in order to showcase that through sustainable food and agro production it is possible to conserve and restore biodiversity and ecosystems while still generating economic benefits for corporates. The ultimate aim was to bring at least four business cases to a successful conclusion in 2017.

At the same time the partnership can be characterized as pragmatic: the criteria used for selection of countries, involved clients and other stakeholders and the decision about what kind of interventions would be implemented were mainly based on what was already there. In other words: as the partnership itself aimed to be very transformative (intentionally challenging and changing mainstream systems), its interventions (the projects) were rather adaptive (delivering within a framework of the existing status quo)⁴². This has implications for the scope of the interventions, the feasibility and realisation of the overall ambition through these specific interventions.

In building the ToCs it appeared that projects have delivered and achieved quite some remarkable results, mainly on input, output and outcome level. This resonates with the logic of the KAP framework: Before change can happen you have to work on knowledge creation, awareness raising and attitude change. So before it is even possible achieving a KPI (certification), specific M4Cs are necessary. The catalyst projects certainly came up with some significant M4Cs (see Tables 1 – 6).

However, **to extrapolate these findings to impact level is not possible**. This mainly due to time constraints: the envisaged change takes time, perhaps even more than originally thought. Necessary follow up activities to measure an actual impact on biodiversity and sustainable water and land use, the practical tools – the Social Toolkit in Chile, the CSR Manual in Brazil, the Decision Support Tool in India and the Dutch Biodiversity Monitor – need to be implemented. They need to be put in practice. We think it will take probably another two years before we can see any effect on business performance and ultimately on ecosystems.

Moreover, to date, most achievements are realized on project level. It would be interesting to see if they have the potential to be scaled up, in other countries, with other commodities. And last but not least: to implement the tools, to try to scale them up, Rabobank and WWF need to put their own learnings into practice (see Chapter 5).

⁴¹ The MTR of the partnership (2013) mentions this tension as well as a key challenge. In the final report is stated that insufficient attention has been paid to the meaning of a transformational partnership including recognition of the consequences for implementation (Findings of Mid Term Reflection, July 2013, slide 19-20).

⁴² Terminology alleging the work of the Partnership Brokers Association (2016).

However, that doesn't imply we cannot say anything about the value created through this partnership.

For most of the projects, in the end, the partners developed a trust based collaboration. They were able to balance roles and positions. They managed to develop a joint agenda and connected expertise and networks. They were able to engage with companies / producers, and they realized employee engagement. Moreover, the development of practical, concrete tools, like a certification scheme (Brazil), a social toolkit (Chile), water management tools (India) or a biodiversity monitor (the Netherlands), was successful. These tools enable companies to measure their current practice and develop their pathways for improvement towards responsible, sustainable business. These are practical, tangible products of the partnership companies can apply directly in their day-to-day business.

We can conclude that **the partnership delivered value: it created knowledge, built expertise, raised awareness, and changed attitudes**. Not only within the clients of Rabobank but also within both partner organizations. WWF staff members are now used to work with companies and Rabobank commercial staff is more secure in their conversations with clients.

Rabobank and WWF promoted sustainable practices in various sectors and industries and are driving forces behind sector sustainability initiatives. Together they put sustainability on the agenda in countries where it wasn't a topic at all.

The experiences of Rabobank and WWF in setting up and executing their partnership, the positive results and the challenges, and the significant markers for change on the ground have taught them valuable lessons about what it takes to make a partnership successful. Certainly, **these insights may benefit others**. To guide them we devote a separate chapter to lessons formulated by project managers themselves. In this final Chapter (5) we include important key questions to consider when building sustainable and profitable partnerships.

The additionality of the partnership

Of course it is interesting to investigate the additionality of the partnership. Additionality is closely related to the causality question (what is the causal relation between the development of the tools and the partnership). Looking at additionality we ask the question if these achievements would have happened if there had been no partnership between Rabobank and WWF or another partnership aiming at the same impacts. Evaluating additionality in case of a transformative partnership is always difficult, because there is no comparable situation (e.g. development of similar tools without this partnership or a similar partnership with the same size and activities). Therefore, the only way to gather insights related to the additionality can be done in a qualitative way asking the partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders about their opinion and perspectives on the additionality question. According to all interviewed people the partnership did at least one thing: It accelerated the developments. In some countries – Chile, Brazil – it has put sustainability on the agenda, in other countries – India, The Netherlands – it stimulated companies to work together on pre-competitive issues. In all countries it encouraged the dialogue between stakeholders, and supported sector initiatives.

5 INSIGHTS

Based on the analysis of the findings we have identified some necessary follow up activities. These are needed to create the desired actual impact on biodiversity and ecosystems, and to move faster together. In the first section of this chapter we indicate how to move this partnership forward, to speed up to more sustainable business.

To support cross sector partnerships, including their own, to move on, to expand, to scale up, and to help shape new promising partnerships, Rabobank and WWF wanted to formulate comprehensive lessons. In Section 5.2 we provide the most important lessons based on what Rabobank and WWF staff and other interviewees told us being significant eye openers for them.

The final overall question is: How to create and make long term cross sector collaboration effective and mutually beneficial for all stakeholders? The 6 years of collaboration between Rabobank and WWF enables us to distract some guidance for the future. In the last section of this report we share some key issues to consider when exploring cross sector partnership opportunities.

5.1 To move on

‘It was a fabulous journey, with a bumpy road’, one project officer told us. Rabobank and WWF have achieved a lot results with this partnership. The foundation to in the end have an impact on biodiversity and ecosystems is constructed. At this point in time we can conclude that the partnership has delivered value for change and has certainly potential to realize sustainable practice. This partnership was an enabler for the results so far.

For the next phase it is important to actually implement the developed tools for change, assess their uptake, changed results in practice and finally the impact, and to address the learning process that allows for this change to happen. Because we believe that learning what works and what doesn’t, provides you with insights on how to move fast(er) together.

As said, the tools developed still need to be implemented, in the sectors of agro business and food in Chile, Brazil, Indonesia, India and the Netherlands. We expect huge potential to also adapt and implement some of the tools also in other sectors and in other countries. For example, countries like Australia or Norway have a large dairy sector; they might be very interested in the Biodiversity monitor.

We expect that Implementation will approximately take at least another two years. When companies actually work with the tools, we can say more about the actual impact they might generate. Then we will have tangible results showing sustainable practice that have an impact on biodiversity and ecosystems.

This requires Rabobank and WWF to think strategically about the continuation of their partnership. They need to think about ownership and resources. The same goes for activities on sector level, to

advocate for more sustainability, and to build a movement. They should learn from their own experiences (see Chapter 3), take their lessons (see 5.2) into account and address the key issues (see 5.3).

Rabobank and WWF should move on to capitalize on their position as front runner. When they take their aspiration to be an example for other financial institutions and for other business seriously, they may need to think about making the tools and approaches open source. In that way, others don't have to reinvent the wheel. This would be a way to really accelerate the joint speed to more sustainable business.

5.2 Lessons learned

In our conversations with staff of Rabobank and WWF we asked them about the most important lessons they have learned while partnering. What you are about to read are their own words: We merely clustered their answers in a way that made sense to us.

People make the difference

In the end, it is about the chemistry between people ('the spark'). The human element seemed to be a crucial condition for the relationship to work. A good relationship starts with acknowledging a low level of trust. That is not exceptional between two not very like-minded organisations who normally wouldn't collaborate.

By growing to understand each other motives and starting to work together, respect grows and trust is build. Partnering is about bringing people together and creating a working environment where you feel safe and confident enough to share dilemma's, instead of ensuring your own position and interests. The moment partners dare to be open about difficulties they face they notice a willingness to work on a joint solution that satisfies everyone.

Readiness to collaborate

Pushing your own agenda never works, you always have to look for a compromise that leads to the win-win situation. Partnering is not about 'what is in it for me?' It is about: 'what is in it for us?' It helps when there is a sense of urgency in the sector. Los Fiordos in Chile, for example, came to understand their dependency in ecosystem services. The long-term outlook of Rabobank also helped, as did the persistence of WWF. But it is also about internal alignment, and a sense of readiness within the partner organisations. Sometimes creating internal support is more important than communicating results to the outside world.

Involvement of all stakeholders from the beginning

Ensuring local ownership is conditional to implement a sustainable approach. Therefore, all relevant stakeholders should be engaged. Rabobank emphasized the importance of engaging clients from the start. Companies will only adopt tools when they are adapted to their business and therefor they need to have a voice in tool development. WWF emphasized the importance of involving local communities as they often are suffering from negative effects that businesses have on their environment.

Certification towards sustainable business is a chain approach, so as the collaboration developed, the need to engage others – colleague businesses, but also sector organizations, local governments and knowledge institutions – grew.

It really helped that both organizations have a membership / cooperative structure. That meant they are familiar with certain approaches, such as dialogues and participation processes.

Promoting sustainability is a shared responsibility

Promoting a sustainability agenda means you have to have the capacity and leadership to lead the process. When you promote that agenda collaboratively, you also share that responsibility. Once you have raised awareness and changed attitudes, you have to continue because expectations have risen and commitments are made. In the Netherlands, for example, partners have to make sure someone takes ownership to actually realize the implementation of the Biodiversity Monitor.

Partnering takes time and resources

It takes quite some time to build a proposition that benefits both partners and to build a trustful relationship; usually more time than previously thought. The set-up of the global partnership in 2011 was based on a history of collaboration between the partners and went reasonably smooth. When it turned out that the local partnerships weren't that easy to start, people were surprised and disappointed ('it feels like we have to start all over again'). In the end, it pays off to invest in the 'conception phase', or, perhaps even more true: It backfires if you don't. Time is needed to discuss possibilities and proposals, to carry out a proper 'due diligence'. The jointly developed Chilean white paper is a good example: It still guides the partnership.

As said before, it takes time to build trust and a good working relationship and these are conditional for a successful collaboration. Because it was the first time, periodic reflection to make adjustments was important. This not only took time, but also required capacity and resources.

Be naive and entrepreneurial

The partnership had an ambitious goal. People, not least in both partner organisations, had high expectations. The risk of deterioration was high. As one of the programme managers said: 'you have to be passionate but also a little naïve to enter such a partnership'. Boldness is a good quality as long as it is linked to a pioneering mentality. When you are able to change challenges into opportunities and you can deal with setbacks, you are persuasive and you believe in what you do, then you might have the right skills. 'It was amazing that it worked' one of the interviewees said.

5.3 Partnership guidance: key issues to consider

This partnership aimed for transformation and wanted to do things differently. Although we can't say much about the ultimate impact yet, we can confirm the partnership generated some significant outputs and outcomes: practical tools companies can implement, enhanced relationships between not very like-minded organisations, new routes to sustainable practices, and continuous sector-wide dialogues to share dilemma's and work on collaborative solutions.

The experiences of Rabobank and WWF on both global and local level may serve as a guidance for other transformational partnerships. What do you need to take into account to become successful? What are the key issues to consider when partnering for change?

Partnering for change is about knowing the context and take it into account

There has to be a certain level of readiness to collaborate. If there isn't a strong sense of urgency yet to work together, you need to build momentum. This starts with understanding the wider setting (such as local economic development and political dynamics), the specific context (social conditions, such as local opportunities and willingness for business and CSOs to engage) and the organizational context of the partners. In the end, Rabobank and WWF are in the core very different organisations. Of course they both were highly convinced of and committed to their joint ambition, but their working culture and structure varied heavily. Rabobank is a quite hierarchical organization with clear top-down management style. WWF on the other hand, could be characterized as a 'network of knowledge experts', connected by the same passion about nature conservation.

We call this 'context orientation': You have to be aware of and deal with the external and internal dynamics that influences your partnership. A throughout due diligence process might be helpful here. This goes beyond the usual financial, legal and fiscal issues. It has a particular focus on 'soft elements' like organizational culture specifics: organizational values, way of working, and leadership, for instance. It answers the question of how to work effectively together as a team, based on mutual respect and ownership.

Such partnerships take full account of local priorities right from the start and engage actively with all relevant stakeholders, including people affected by partnership activities in any way.

Partnering for change is about unrelenting and passionate commitment

Ideally, a partnership complements corporate strategic objectives. In that sense, entering a partnership should be a strategic choice. Not only management should be explicitly engaged with the collaboration; this commitment should also be translated into a strategic policy plan, governance arrangements, including decision making processes, and availability of significant (human) resources.

The development of the collaboration between Rabobank and WWF wasn't an easy process, and sometimes even 'scary and uncomfortable' to quote the Director of WWF Chile. Nevertheless, all people we spoke to emphasized that the quality of the relationship was crucial in achieving results. The human element is essential in complex partnering processes. People involved are not only great listeners and smart negotiators, they are persistent, entrepreneurial and innovative thinkers as well. Partnering is about people who are passionate, with strong values and perspectives. It is also about human interaction.

The 'spark' between partners seems to be a crucial condition. This is what is sometimes called 'people orientation'; to be able to make a success of your partnership you have to pay strategically attention to your HR development. Partnering requires particular skills and capabilities. That implies you need to invest in individual and organizational capacity development for partnering.

Partnering for change is about attention for the process of collaboration

Often an inspiring and shared vision is said to be necessary to steer the partnership, to help identify the appropriate activities and focus on the right results. In reality however, an ambitious vision is not that hard to formulate. Most partners can quickly find themselves agreeing with a usually abstract formulated dot on the horizon. Much more important is a joint understanding of what is needed to realize that ambition and what is achievable.

A jointly undertaken collaborative planning process will ensure the partnership to have a strong and shared sense of purpose. Please be aware that the emphasis here is not on the shared purpose but on the high quality collaboration that is required to achieve it. This implies investing in so-called soft issues like trust building, power balance and strong relationships. In other words, it is also the collaboration process itself that needs attention, and resourcing.

Partnering for change is about learning to improve

Rabobank and WWF wanted to prove the business case for sustainability. Therefore they initiated catalysts projects. They had never done that before, and they learned along the way. That was not always easy either. Learning occurs at two levels: partnering process and partnering activity outcomes. Regarding the process the most important learning is that partnering requires adaptive programming and continuous improvement. This is only possible with what is called a learning orientation: creating an environment – a safe space – where people can share, experiment and learn from mistakes. A safe learning environment enables a transparent and open discussion of what hasn't worked.

APPENDIX

List of interviewees

Claar van den Bergh	Programme manager of the Partnership for WWF NL
Richard Piechocki	Programme manager of the Partnership for Rabobank NL
Gilles Bouwmeester	Global Head Food and Agri research Rabobank NL (member of SC)
Bas Rüter	Director of Sustainability Rabobank NL (member of SC)
Richard Holland	Director of Market Transformation Initiative WWF NL (member of SC)
Monique Grooten	Chief Footprint and Markets (member of SC)
Brenda de Swart	Sustainability manager Rabobank Chile
Carlos Urzua	Manager Rabobank Chile
Ricardo Bosshard	Director WWF Chile
Cristina Torres	Marine Program Coordinator WWF Chile
Viviana Lujan	Partner at Wolfscompany
Thais Zylbersztajn Fontes	CSR Team leader Rabobank Brazil
Aline Aguiar	CSR analyst Rabobank Brazil
Edegar de Oliveira Rosa	Head of Food and Agriculture Programme WWF Brazil
Ronny Iswara	Head of Sustainability and Business Development Rabobank Indonesia
Arnold Sitompul	Conservation Director WWF Indonesia
Arindom Datta	Asia Head Sustainability Banking Rabobank India
Murli Dhar	Director WWF India
Sejal Worah, Sumit Roy, P. Vamshi Krishna Mukesh Tripathi	WWF India
Nagaseshreddy, M. Bharathi, S. Raghunath and K. Appa	EID Parry
V.M. Tiwari Shakeel Ahmed Sahebrao Sonekamle	CSIR National Geophysical research institute
Riek van der Harst	Afdelingsdirecteur Food & Agri Rabobank NL
Jeen Nijboer	Projectmanager Food & Agri Rabobank NL
Natasja Oerlemans	Head of Food & Agriculture WWF NL
Guus van Laarhoven	Programmaleider Biodiversiteit Friesland Campina
Petra Kock	Manager Sustainable Dairy Development and Quality Affairs Friesland Campina