Sustainability is a journey. Farms for the Future can support you every step of the way.
Innovation to face unprecedented challenges

In a world where climate change, poverty, child labor, deforestation, pesticide overuse, nutrition and soil and water conservation are key issues, sustainable agriculture represents the main opportunity to generate change on the ground and deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), we are committed to use our global and local experience to provide the best tools for farmers and brands to transform agriculture into a positive activity for people and the environment.

We recognize the important advances in sustainable farming achieved by different programs and systems over the last decades, but we know there is still much more to do if we want agriculture to truly be a force for good in the world. Solutions from the past remain valuable, but they are not enough. Current challenges require a smart combination of verification systems, technical support, capacity development on the ground, technology, data management and efficient monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

The world needs new ways of engaging farmers in journeys that will lead them to sustainability, and we are committed to provide them.

“By 2050, the agriculture sector will face an unprecedented confluence of pressures. With a projected 30% growth in the global population, competition for increasingly scarce land, water and energy resources will intensify, and production will have to increase to feed the world and adjust to changes in dietary patterns. Achieving higher levels of production in the face of the threat of climate change, with an already seriously depleted natural resource base, is impossible without significant changes in food systems and the way that agriculture is done (FAO, 2015a).”
### Future of sustainability initiatives

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Farms for the Future: a new approach

**Farms for the Future is a program designed to deliver positive impact on the ground by supporting farmers to achieve specific sustainability goals and by providing transparency regarding their performance.**

The program is coordinated by SAN and implemented through our network of local partners and technicians. Its aim is to work with farmers and buyers through a continuous improvement approach, providing support to tackle the key challenges faced by agriculture and livestock producers worldwide, and transparency on progress and outcomes.

At SAN, we have learned that sustainability approaches need to be adapted to each context, as different supply chains and regions will have different priorities, and also must take advantage of technology to enhance transparency and accelerate change.

Farms for the Future is underpinned by our Sustainable Agriculture Framework (SAN-SAF) and supported by our unique technological platform, the SAN Intelligence Hub (iHub).

* More information about SAN-SAF and the iHub later in this document.
Who can participate and what are the advantages?

Farms for the Future is open to farms and groups of farms from any supply chain around the world and has a simple and customizable structure that can accommodate the wide range of conditions and complexity levels faced by agricultural and livestock operations.

Our program is an effective way to deliver on specific sustainability goals by providing a customized tool that integrates capacity development, assurance, impact monitoring, data management and local implementation to improve sustainability performance and demonstrate impact. It also allows brands to make reliable claims supported by data on what is going on at farm level.

Farms for the Future is the right tool for:

- Risk management.
- Delivering on sustainability commitments.
- Improving farmers’ performance on key issues.
- Making reliable claims on outcomes and impacts.
- Supply chain mapping and scaling up sustainability work.
- Preparing farmers for certification.
- Getting easily accessible and analyzable data on the sustainability performance of producers in a supply chain.
How does the program work?

Priorities and desired outcomes

Farmers and buyers, supported by SAN, define their sustainability priorities and related outcomes.

Diagnostic

An assessment of the priorities identified is conducted at the relevant level (farm, groups of farms, landscape).

Farmer support

Based on a root cause analysis of the results of the diagnostic, customized action plans are designed, approved and implemented to support farmers improve and achieve the outcomes.

Monitoring

A monitoring system provides transparency with regards to the progress towards the desired outcomes.

Claims

Farmers and buyers can make reliable claims about the outcomes achieved.

After three years, all participating farms will have gone through a detailed diagnostic phase, the implementation process (including technical support and capacity building), and verification activities to evaluate progress towards sustainability outcomes. Additionally, participant organizations can request to include complementary features such as traceability and group management support.

*More details about every step of the process on page 12.
Technical framework based on global and local experience

The SAN Sustainable Agriculture Framework (SAN-SAF) is the technical base of Farms for the Future.

Participants can pick the specific impact areas and sustainability goals that fit their priorities, and then, the right set of indicators to achieve those goals. As the program is flexible, additional indicators can be added and customized for different supply chains.

The SAN-SAF consolidates our technical and scientific approach on sustainable agriculture taking into account sustainability as an integral element of agricultural management, but also allowing the necessary flexibility to meet the needs of each crop in its context.

The SAN-SAF is a modular and outcome-based framework that offers multiple advantages for the sustainable management of productive systems, as it is designed to easily assess progress towards positive impact.

The framework covers the 10 areas of impact in which SAN works.

Each area includes various sustainability goals, which are composed of expected outcomes and performance indicators. As part of the Farms for the Future program, each organization or supply chain can choose the set of topics or indicators to work on.

A Sustainable management of agricultural and livestock operations
B Conservation and management of biodiversity
C Conservation and management of natural resources
D Integrated Pest Management
E Protection of workers’ rights
F Occupational Health & Safety
G Wellbeing of workers and their families
H Wellbeing of rural communities
I Sustainable livestock production
J Climate change mitigation and adaptation
As part of the Farms for the Future program, the SAN-SAF helps guide the process of identifying and defining sustainability goals and outcomes.

As participants describe their desired impacts, SAN matches them to the related SAF sustainability goals and outcomes; this facilitates the design of efficient workplans that combine elements of verification and support in order to achieve specific goals.

Another key feature of the Farms for the Future program is that it can add and tailor as many indicators as needed to complement the ones already in the SAN-SAF.

An additional benefit of linking participants sustainability targets to the SAN-SAF is that those sustainability goals and outcomes are already embedded in SAN's digital monitoring, evaluation and reporting platform: the iHub.
There are three possible technical approaches for designing outcomes as part of Farms for the Future

**Using the SAN Sustainable Agriculture Framework**

By default SAN uses the SAF as a framework within which it accommodates the participants' sustainability targets. For each target, we will recommend one or more outcomes and best practices, which are in turn represented by specific sustainability metrics. Participants can pick and choose the outcomes that are of interest to them, or go with SAN recommendations to ensure the most efficient route to achieving sustainability impacts.

**New outcomes, practices and a modified SAF**

If the participants want to include topics or indicators that are not yet covered by SAF, the SAN can work with them to craft new outcomes and best practices, or to modify SAF outcomes and practices to better fit their needs.

**Using an existing sustainability framework**

If an organization has invested substantial time and effort in developing its own sustainability framework, or has a very clear vision about the best agriculture practices to be implemented, or has a long term goal of achieving a specific certification, SAN can work with it to build a customized sustainability framework that will deliver to their needs.
Transparency and efficiency enabled by technology

At SAN, we know data management is a great asset towards sustainable productive systems. It allows the compilation and analysis of the increasingly available information on the environmental, biological, social and economic elements associated to food production.

The Intelligence Hub (iHub) gives SAN, and participants, a mechanism to identify best practices that farmers need help with, and then helps tailor that support to the right farmer audiences. Organizations can monitor progress towards outcomes and impacts on the iHub dashboard, and can design their own analysis and reporting features.

Farms for the Future relies on data analysis to keep track of farms’ progress. The iHub is an information management solution specifically designed for agricultural and livestock operations and supply chains to simplify decision making process and add value to the program’s participants.

Data management can be a key driver in major shifts within food production systems: Having useful and accurate data can help producers and other actors in the food supply chain. It can be used to provide insights, drive real-time decisions and redesign entire systems to meet both market and sustainability demands.
The iHub includes many features such as customized baseline assessments and performance checklists, progress dashboards, geographical location and maps of farms, group management, charts and reports that facilitate the overview and real time monitoring of farms and supply chains.

The SAN-SAF indicators are embedded in the iHub, but other frameworks, including certification standards, can be uploaded into the system to facilitate tracking, analysis and reporting.

SAN can adapt existing reporting and tracking dashboards to the participants’ frameworks, or develop new dashboards and dashboard elements as needed.
Farms for the Future step by step

**STEP 01: Design of priorities and desired outcomes**

During the initial phase of the program, buyers and producers, supported by SAN, decide the desired outcomes and analyze the challenges over which the final structure of the program will be decided.

Additionally, participants can choose from a wide range of particular sustainability goals and outcomes to match their own priorities, interests and capabilities, in order to ensure that any sustainability claim can be supported by true and accurate data.

SAN and the participants will have initial discussions to identify and understand the priorities and desired outcomes to accommodate them to the SAN Sustainable Agriculture Framework (SAN-SAF) and its best agriculture practices, as well as about the advantages and disadvantages of developing new outcomes and practices.

With this information, SAN will present a proposal package composed by concepts of outcomes and practices, the diagnostic design, and proposed budget scenarios. This proposal can be adjusted according to the organization's needs.

**STEP 02: Diagnostic**

The Farms for the Future diagnostic is designed and carried out once farmers, buyers and SAN identify and define the priorities and outcomes to be evaluated, and agree on the sustainability framework to be used.

The diagnostic objective is to capture the context of the selected supply chains and identify the root causes of sustainability gaps with respect to selected outcomes. Root cause analysis is an important tool used by SAN to identify why there are gaps in the sustainability performance of farms in a supply chain.

Information generated during the diagnostic is critical to the design, planning and execution of subsequent monitoring, evaluation and farm support processes.
The diagnostic process includes the following steps:

**Design**
- Evaluation methodology
- Sample design
- iHub preparation

**Planning**
- Local field team selection
- Work timeline

**Budget**
- Iterations and clarifications
- Approval

**Implementation**
- Evaluation of the best practices linked to selected sustainability outcomes
- Data collection and upload to the iHub

**Analysis and Reporting**
- Identification of sustainability gaps and performance trends
- Identification of the root causes of those gaps and specific support strategies

**Results’ presentation**
- Explanation of sustainability gaps and root causes
- Recommendations
- Preliminary framework for future M&E and support processes

**SAN Sustainability is a journey. Farms for the Future can support you every step of the way.**
Farmer support

Based on a root analysis of the issues identified in the diagnostic, a work plan to support the necessary improvements is developed. Once approved, we proceed to the implementation of technical support and capacity development interventions oriented to fill the gap between the current state of the farms and the desired outcomes.

The farmer support within the Farms for the Future program is implemented by the technical experts of our local members and partners, but always conducted under the SAN coordination and guidance. SAN can visit farms and accompany support experts during their work at any moment during the support process. These quality control visits will be combined with periodic in-country meetings between SAN lead technical experts and local partners to review progress, discuss challenges, and agree on major adjustment to the program and delivery mechanisms and techniques.

Farmer support can include trainings, coaching, field schools with model farms, pictorial guides of best practices, access to documents, demonstration events, webinars and blended interventions to optimize farm management and improve practices towards the defined goals and impacts.

The vast majority of farmer capacity building and training techniques are well known. The crucial factor is employing the right ones in combination with the most appropriate support materials and targeting these at the right farmer audiences. In this sense, SAN believes that farmer support efforts are unique for each Farms for the Future project, and may often be modified for different supply chains within each project.

SAN and local partners continually review and adjust the support program after analyzing the results from the monitoring system. SAN will carry out formal reviews of the support program results at least every semester, focused on support program implementation, and adjustments to improve its success.
The Farms for the Future monitoring element is designed and developed at the same time as the farmer support program. Like the support program, it is implemented in the field by local partners with SAN guidance and oversight, but the monitoring system focuses on the outcomes and metrics that participants want and that can be measured through evaluating sustainability best practices on farms.

The monitoring system, and the analysis of the data it collects, is crucial to the continual decision-making process that drives the achievement of sustainability outcomes through farmer support. While data is collected in the field by local partners, and in some cases provided directly by farmers, SAN is responsible for:

- Ensuring the quality and integrity of the data;
- Analyzing the data to detect challenges for achieving sustainability outcomes, and improvements in the support program; and
- Reporting and explaining results to participants so they can make the desired claims about sustainability impacts and outcomes.

The Farms for Future monitoring system includes definition of KPIs and their assessment method, decision of sample size, structure and frequency, and information management.

Data and results feed iHub dashboards that participants can access. These dashboards have some query and reporting capabilities that allow participants to examine different combinations of results on sustainability best practices, gaps, and outcomes, by farm types and other criteria.

SAN carries out major formal reviews of monitoring results at least every six months and explains to participants the results and the ramifications of any changes or improvement on the project sustainability framework, outcomes, timeline or budget.

A key feature of Farms for the Future is that the support program and monitoring system are a combined effort, with each process supporting each other.

Better KPIs adhere to SMART criteria:

- **Specific** purpose for the business and farmers;
- **Measurable**, and ideally linked to a desired metric;
- **Achievable** by farmers and within the context and scope of the project;
- **Relevant** to the success of the organization, the project, and to participating farmers; and
- **Time phased**, that is, linked to a specific time period.
Farms for the Future participants can make claims regarding their participation in the program. As transparency is one of the pillars of the program, the SAN will disclose who is participating and what are their general goals and commitments. This SAN claim will use the same format for all participants.

In addition, the outcome focused approach of Farms for the Future allows participants to make specific claims about the results being achieved on the ground.

To ensure accuracy, specific claims about results and impacts need to be approved by SAN. This customized approach better enables farmers and companies to tell their own sustainability stories, focusing on what matters most to them and their clients, with the technical backing of SAN.

**Investment**

As Farms for the Future is a fully customized program, the final budget is determined per work plan, based on the scope of the organization and its particular characteristics, such as production area, total area, geographic location and number of farms included in the scope.

**Main elements affecting pricing include:**
- Complexity and type of impacts and desired outcomes.
- Simplicity and practicality of metrics.
- Supply chain characteristics and complexity.
- Customization of the program elements (including additional indicators and metrics, modified forms and tools, and access to the iHub);
- Verification and technical assistance activities regularity
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