Republic of Rwanda
Ministry of Agriculture & Animal Resources

LUXEMBOURG AID & DEVELOPMENT

Enabel
Implementing on behalf of #TEAMEUROPE

"Transformation to sustainable food systems – KWIHAZA"

CRIS Number (EU): NDICI/2022/437-658

Codes (Enabel): RWA 20001 11

Rwanda

Technopolis Group

Final report

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Agence belge de développement

enabel.be

This evaluation was carried out as part of the cooperation between Rwanda and Belgium.

The report was drawn up by independent external experts.

The opinions expressed in this document represent the views of the authors and are not necessarily shared by Enabel, the Belgian Cooperation or the authorities of Rwanda.

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Acronyms

ADA	*Appui au Développement Autonome*
AfDB	African Development Bank Group
AFR	Access to Finance Rwanda
BDS	Business Development Service
BRD	Rwanda Development Bank
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CICA	Agricultural Information and Communication Center
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	OECD's Development Assistance Committee
EAC	East African Community
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDA	Rwanda Food and Drugs Authority
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
HoReCo	Horticulture in Reality Corporation
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IP	Implementing Partner
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KWMFP	Kigali Wholesale Market for Fresh Produce
LuxDev	Luxembourg agency for Development cooperation
MARKUP	EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade (Luxembourg)
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MINICOM	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSMEs	Micro, small-, medium-sized enterprises
MTR	Mid-term Review
NABEP	National Aquatic Biosecurity and Environmental Plan for the Aquaculture Sector
NAEB	National Agricultural Export Development Board
NASR	National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NST	National Strategy for Transformation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAIGELAC	Inland Lakes Integrated Development and Management Project
PRISM	Partnership for Resilient and Inclusive Small stock Market
PSAC	Promoting Smallholder Agro-Export Competitiveness Project
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PSTA	Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation

RAB	Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board
RARICO	Rwanda Animal Resources Improvement Cooperative
RCA	Rwanda Cooperative Agency
RICA	Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Authority
RSB	Rwanda Standards Board
S-Mark	Standardisation Mark
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of Change
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UR	University of Rwanda
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Cooperation project/programme sheet

Title	Transformation towards sustainable food systems (KWIHAZA)
Project code	CRIS Number (EU): NDICI/2022/437-658 Codes (Enabel): RWA 20001 11
Project zone	15 districts throughout Rwanda
Priority sector(s) **Global challenge(s)**	Climate change and environment → climate resilient and smart agriculture
Partner country	Rwanda
Partner institutions	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources of Rwanda (MINAGRI)
Total budget	**Total: 17.500.000 €** • Contribution European Union (EU): 10.000.000 € • Contribution Luxembourg Cooperation (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade (MFA) via LuxDev): 7.500.000 €
Start date & end date of the specific agreement	**01/01/2023 to 31/12/2027 (60 months)**
Value chains	**Aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture (passion fruits, onions, avocadoes, tomatoes)**
Impact	To contribute to the transition towards socially and environmentally inclusive food systems with the development of the value chains in the aquaculture, fisheries and horticultural sectors
Outcome	To increase in a sustainable way the production, per capita consumption and income generated by fish, aquaculture and horticulture quality products, with a focus on women and youth.
Outputs	**Expected Output 1:** The capacities of smallholder organisations, active in the targeted value chains, are enhanced to efficiently improve quality and quantity of produce, minimise post-harvest losses and improve access to local and regional markets. **Expected Output 2:** SMEs and aspiring young entrepreneurs active at the different levels of the targeted value chains are strengthened to operative in an inclusive and sustainable way, create decent jobs and contribute to more sustainable food systems. **Expected Output 3:** A conducive environment for inclusive value chain development and sustainable food systems is strengthened.
Beneficiaries and partners	• Cooperatives and producer organisations of smallholders active in the horticulture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors, with a focus on those producing commodities for the regional and domestic market

	• SMEs active in these value chains at different levels (inputs, production, processing, logistics and transport, distribution, …) with a special focus on women and youth-led businesses • Consumers • Sector organisations, federations and farmer unions • Key public institutions (MINAGRI, RAB, NAEB, RCA, RICA, RSB, University of Rwanda, District authorities) Private service providers and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs)
Period covered by the evaluation	01/01/2023 – June 2025

Acknowledgements

Evaluation team

- Francie Sadeski (Team leader)
- Julia Prenzel (Food systems and evaluation expert)
- Landouard Semukera (Local food systems and evaluation expert)
- Anne Lefeuvre (Aquaculture & fisheries expert)
- Asuka Heltmann (Evaluation expert)

1 Background and context

Rwanda's recent history has shown great progress and development in its economy and society with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 7% per year, and a demographic dividend with a young population (with a median age of 19.9 year) that is expected to grow up to 26 million in 2050[1]. With these trends, the government aims to transform Rwanda into a middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050[2], also by seizing on the **development of the agricultural sector** which employs around 70% of the population[3]. Rwanda's strategic vision for economic transformation places agriculture at the heart of inclusive growth, with particular emphasis on high-potential sectors such as horticulture, aquaculture, and fisheries. These sectors are recognized for their capacity to generate employment, improve nutrition, and expand export revenues.

Yet, **low productivity and lacking value addition along the value chain** illustrate the need for the **transformation of food systems to ensure sustainable and sufficient production of high-quality nutrition** for the Rwandan population. The contribution of the agricultural sector to the national GDP is at 27%, demonstrating the substantial role it has in contributing to GDP[4]. Further developments such as the impacts of climate change, soil erosion and land degradation further increase the need to transform the national food system.

In this context, the **KWIHAZA project was launched in January 2023 funded by the EU and the Government of Luxembourg**, together with the Government of Rwanda through its Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI). KWIHAZA project aligns with the national agenda by addressing systemic challenges—such as low production, weak value chain linkages, and limited access to finance—while promoting sustainable food systems and empowering smallholder producers. This mid-term evaluation assesses the project's progress at its halfway mark, to provide insights for the steering of the second half of the implementation period.

1.1 Key elements of the project strategy

KWIHAZA aims to foster Rwanda's agricultural transition to socially and environmentally inclusive food systems with the development of valuer chains in aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture by increasing the sustainable way of production, per capita consumption and income generated by fish and horticulture products with a focus on women and youth involvement. For each of three result areas, one **outputs** is pursued:

1) Smallholder organisations have their capacities enhanced to improve quality and quantity of food by minimising post-harvest losses and improving access to local and regional markets,
2) Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and aspiring young entrepreneurs in the different value chains are strengthened in an inclusive and sustainable way for decent job creation and sustainable food systems, and

[1] *Rwanda - The World Factbook*. (n.d.). https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda/
[2] *Overview - Rwanda*. (n.d.). World Bank. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview
[3] *Rwanda - Market Overview*. (2024, May 1). International Trade Administration | Trade.gov. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/rwanda-market-overview
[4] *Rwanda - The World Factbook*. (n.d.). https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda/

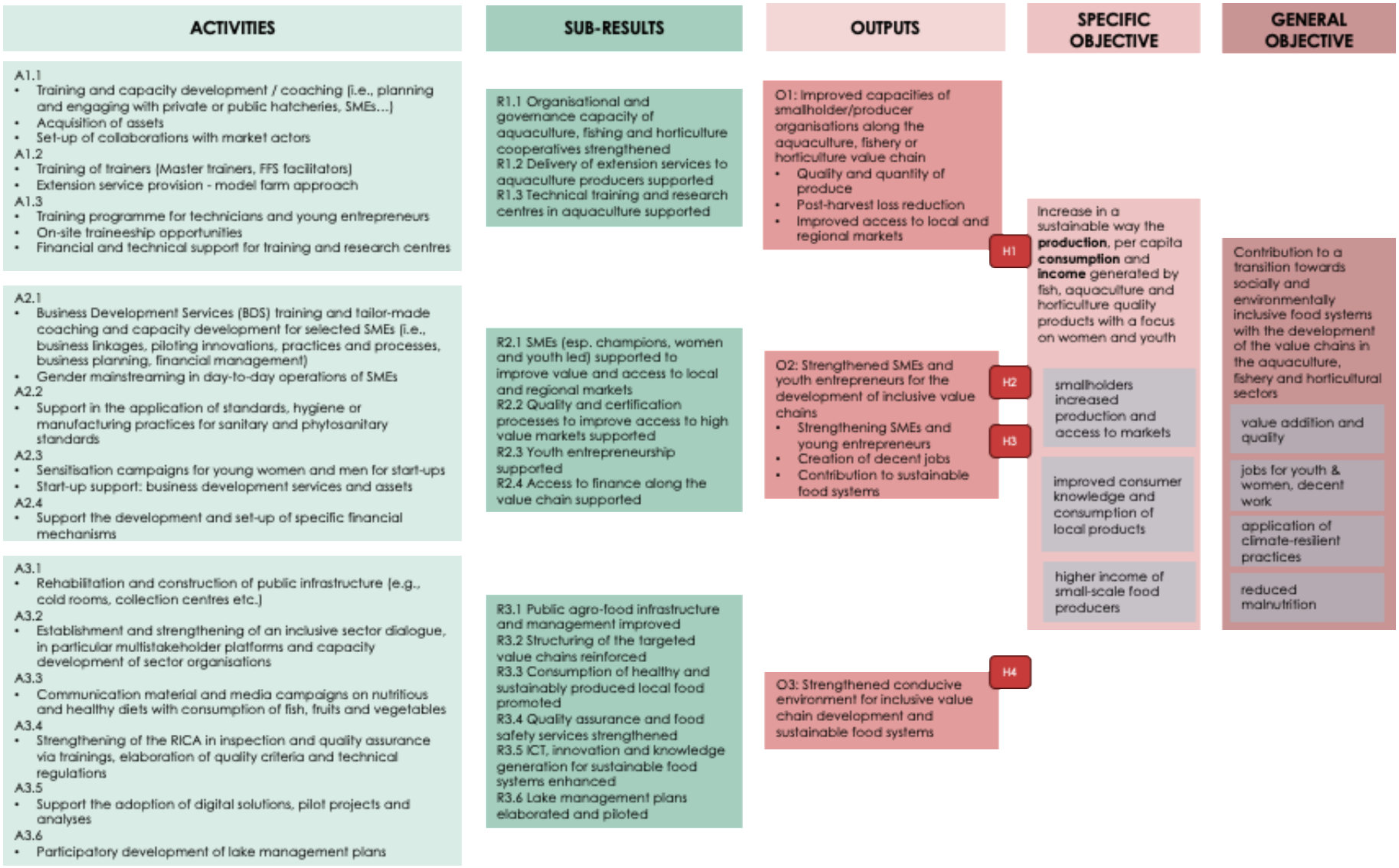
3) A conducive environment is built for inclusive value chains. These outputs are targeted equally towards aquaculture, fisheries, and horticulture, though the specificity/activity varies.

The results (R1-R3) and their specific activities (R1.1-R3.6) together form the Results Framework produced by the KWIHAZA team. For this evaluation, Technopolis had produced a revised version with a clearer visualisation of impact pathways along result areas (see overleaf), also outlining underlying hypotheses as featured hereafter:

Formed hypotheses (H) included:

1. **H1:** Strengthening the technical capacities of producers through improved extension services, training opportunities and the purchase of assets, will increase organisational capacities and thus lead to a higher productivity and higher income of small-scale producers.
2. **H2:** Providing tailor-made coaching and business development services (BDS) for SMEs along with the establishment of food safety standards will improve the level of food safety and thus food producers' access to local and regional markets.
3. **H3:** Specific support for female and young entrepreneurs in the areas of business development and access to finance will strengthen their activity in the aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture value chains, contributing to inclusive value chains that provide jobs for women and youth.
4. **H4:** Establishing the right public infrastructure and promoting an institutionalised sector dialogue, will help to professionalise the management along the aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture value chain, thereby improving their inclusiveness and the transformation towards sustainable food systems.

Figure 1 Results Framework as produced by the evaluation team



1.2 Governance of the project: implementation methods, organisational structure and institutional anchoring

KWIHAZA, co-funded by the EU and the Government of Luxembourg through LuxDev, is being implemented by Enabel and its Rwandan counterparts. Its main partner institution are MINAGRI, and beneficiaries and partners include other ministries and public bodies such as the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB), National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Authority (RICA), Rwanda Standards Board (RSB), district authorities and stakeholders such as cooperative and producer organisations, SMEs involved in these value chains, consumers, private service providers, NGOs (*Appui au Développement Autonome*-ADA, UGAMA) and Not-for-Profit Organisations (Access to Finance Rwanda, AFR). The project therefore engages a wide range of actors while also anchoring itself in local counterparts to ensure co-ownership and a sustainability. These have been summarised into **Error! Reference source not found.** in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

KWIHAZA is being implemented through direct grants to government institutions, tenders to private service providers, and cooperation and operational agreements with non-Rwandan public institutions, all of which have implemented activities or delivered services along the activity lines as per the Results Framework.

The project is being **delivered by a Project Management Unit (PMU, here KWIHAZA team) in country**, set up by Enabel to oversee the project. The team was also foreseen to share resources and good practises alongside key sister projects operating under Enabel (such as the Partnership for Resilient and Inclusive Small stock Market/PRISM). The KWIHAZA team includes a combination of international and national staff with expertise in agriculture, aquaculture, food processing and quality, private sector development as well as administrative and overall project support staff (accountants, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL), financial controllers, grant procurement officers, administrators, drivers, etc.).

Moreover, the project is being accompanied by a Project Steering Committee (PSC) which ensures the strategic overview of the project to monitor the project's direction. The PSC supports the main project management unit in the overall supervision of the activities and its actors; it is also in charge of following up recommendations suggested in this mid-term review. The PSC consists of MINAGRI as chair, the EU as co-chair, and representatives of key institutions such as Rwandan Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning and Ministry of Environment, LuxDev, and Enabel. The PSC has met four times across the project period so far: 22 June 2023, 26 June 2024, 11 September 2024, and 5 February 2025. Co-chairing of the PSC is rotational on an annual basis between the EU and the Embassy of Luxembourg.

2 Objectives and methodology

2.1 Evaluation purpose and objectives

This **mid-term review** (MTR) of the "Transformation towards sustainable food systems – KWIHAZA" project in Rwanda follows **two specific objectives of learning and accountability**. It is therefore both *summative* and *formative* with a general purpose to assess the project overall performance. It serves to identify project achievements and drivers and challenges in achieving results and provides learnings for the next phase.

More specifically, the evaluation mission was mandated to a) identify and substantiate the achievements and added values in the project; b) identify lessons learned (i.e. strategies, approaches, successes, obstacles and failures) and define which are the best practices that can be adopted and scaled up; c) understand whether it is necessary to reorient future actions and guide the remaining implementation period and eventually a second phase of the project.

The evaluation was conducted in line with OECD DAC evaluation criteria and in accordance with the ToR, the focus was put on analysing **effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability**. In addition, the evaluation covered the question of **unintended effects** as well as **cross-cutting themes** (here: environment and gender & inclusion). The evaluation matrix with the defined evaluation questions and sub-questions can be found in **Error! Reference source not found.**. In line with the requirements and evaluation questions stipulated in the MTR Terms of Reference, impact as an OECD DAC criterion is not addressed in this MTR but will be relevant for the final evaluation, as impact refers to long-term, broader changes that usually occur after or towards the end of an action that was implemented and sustained for some time. Nevertheless, current chances for impact are assessed in section 3.2.4.

2.2 Evaluation users

Main users of this evaluation are the KWIHAZA project team, the Rwandan implementing partners (IPs) particularly MINAGRI, RAB, RICA, RSB, AFR, ADA, UGAMA and NAEB as they are actively involved in the implementation, development partners and donors (i.e., EU and MFA), the Team Europe representation and Enabel headquarters (such as portfolio developers, evaluation department). This report has also been prepared ahead of the PSC meeting in December 2025. Secondary users are the direct beneficiaries of the project, i.e. cooperatives, producers' organisations, federations, private service providers, SMEs, civil society organisations, as well as the indirect ones, namely consumers of products.

2.3 Evaluation scope

The evaluation considered all pillars of the project and its diversity in activities, while taking a sampling approach for data collection. It covered the period from January 2023 to June 2025 (interviews covered the whole period until September 2025). Thematically, the MTR covers all project action areas (3 pillars, 3 sectors – aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture) and outcomes.

2.4 Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation followed a theory-based framework. With input from the evaluation reference group (representatives from IPs and donors) the methodology presented here was finalised with the KWIHAZA team during the inception phase and has been developed to consider the needs of the primary users of the evaluation to orient key choices and prioritisation.

2.4.1 Principles

This mid-term evaluation was conducted based on the combination of core principles:

- **Working with a theory-based framework (see Figure 1)**: This approach was applied as it is appropriate for a formative evaluation, since it assesses the process through which the project has produced its effects and tests the assumptions that underpin its design. A Theory of Change (ToC) is used to explain this project logic, as was developed with its hypotheses in the inception phase. This approach allows not only to assess whether expected changes have occurred but also to judge whether the design and assumptions underpinning the project were appropriate.
- We used a **mixed methods approach** to conduct this evaluation, using a variety of tools to collect and generate credible evidence and respond to the evaluation questions. We gathered existing data from multiple sources, including proprietary data and documents from the KWIHAZA team, but also from secondary literature (for example, for evaluating coherence to other policies and projects); we collected **primary information mainly qualitative, through a ten-days field visit of two consultants,** ensuring that the evaluation takes stock of what has been achieved and identifies lessons learned.

2.4.2 Data collection and analysis methods

Data collection methods included desk research and analysis of key project documents as well as sector strategies, scoping interviews with the KWIHAZA project team, Key Informant Interviews (KII) with project partners and beneficiaries as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

The **desk review** i) informed the inception stage of the evaluation to design the scoping interviews guidelines and draft contextual analysis, ii) was used in the data collection phase to corroborate the feedback from the KIIs and FGDs. Concerning primary data collection i.e. **key informant and semi structured interviews**, the **ten-days field visit** in Rwanda was a backbone, allowing to carry out 29 interviews (instead of 25 initially foreseen, 8 of them remote) as well as 3 FGD (instead of 4 foreseen[5]).

[5] One FGD (Rwamagana) was converted into a KII as only one stakeholder was present.

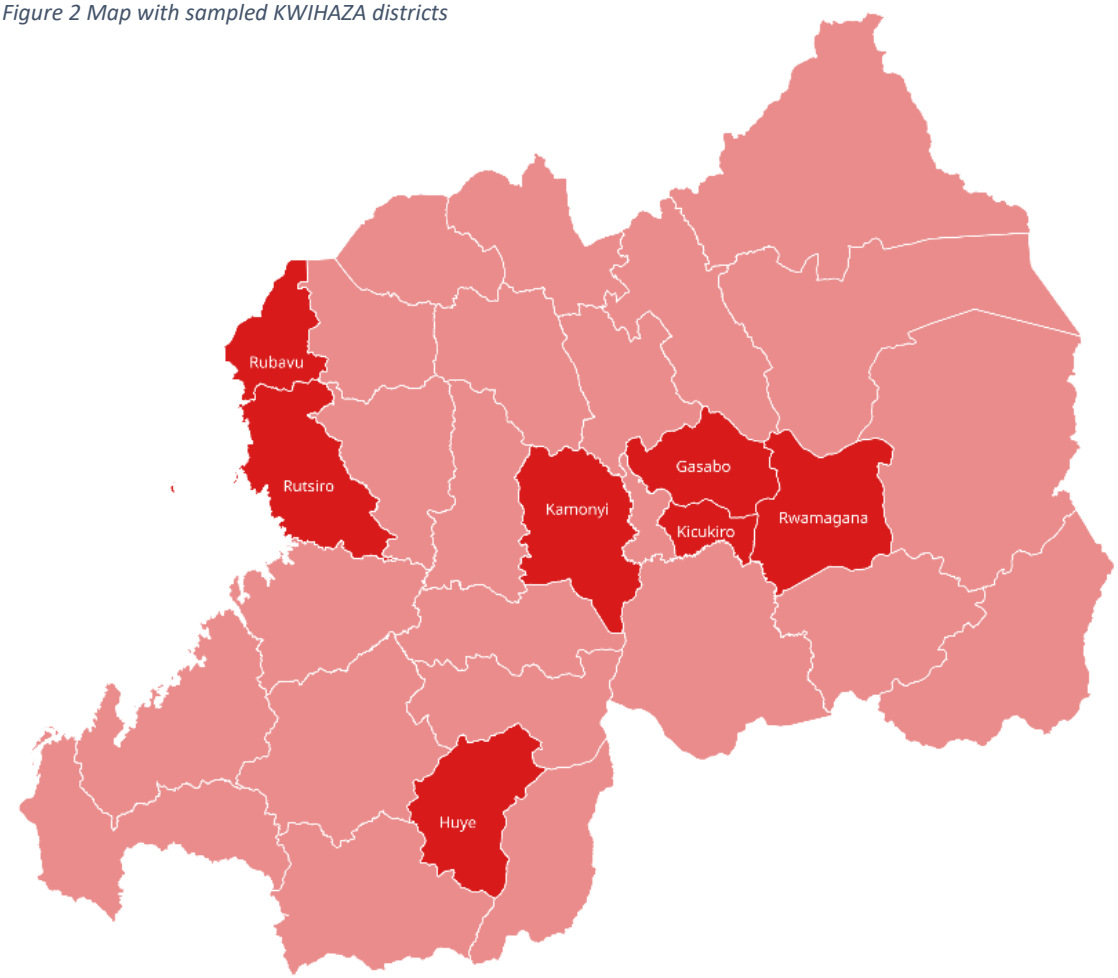
Table 1 Overview of data collection methods

Data collection	Brief overview	Objectives and added value
Theory of Change	• Reconstruction of impact pathways and formulation of hypotheses	• Guiding the development of the overall MTR methodology and interview guidelines, trying to capture the mechanisms behind behavioural changes and results observed in the field and shared by the respondents • Assessment of the evaluation questions against the ToC
Desk research	• Collect, review and analyse available documentation (M&E documentation, annual reports, progress and technical reports, donors and grant documents, partnership agreements…)	• Understand project objectives, various activities, and governance structure; become acquainted with MEL framework and procedures; fine tune the methodology and the engagement approach • Assessment of the project's intended and achieved results so far; investigation of weaknesses/challenges to be focused on (i.e. as part of evaluation questions) • Identification of the project's key stakeholders also for the selection of interviewees.
Scoping interviews at technical briefing stage (4)	• Technical briefing: Interviews with programme management to understand the objectives, modes of implementation • Interviews with KWIHAZA project team	• Develop a detailed understanding of programme intended ToC and concrete implementation • Gain a first-hand understanding of past and current stakes of the programme, strengths and weaknesses of the different activities, results and achievements thus far as perceived by stakeholders, issues encountered and recommendations for the future of the project • Identify any latest developments to inform the field visit and further data collection strategies
KII (29)	• Individual interviews of beneficiaries, especially with SMEs, entrepreneurs, smallholder organisations, cooperatives, farmers unions, etc. • Interviews with key public institutions, in particular grant recipients (MINAGRI, RAB, NAEB, etc.) and further service providers (Horticulture in Reality Corporation /HoReCo, University of Liège, etc.) • Supplementary remote interview	• Gain a deep understanding of past and current stakes of the programme, strengths and weaknesses of the different activities, results and achievements thus far as perceived by stakeholders, issues encountered and recommendations for the future of the project • Provide depth to the analysis, looking at relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and recommendations • Collect perception of beneficiaries, local partners and authorities on changes, improvements, attitudes and values, self-sustaining effects and other remaining expectations.
FGD (3)	• Focus groups with SMEs and cooperatives	• Triangulation of individual interviews to serve as a restitution at the district level and consolidation of interview findings in a group format

2.4.3 Sampling approach

Both for the selection of districts as well as individual interviewees, the evaluation followed a purposive sampling approach. For the selection of districts, criteria included a) representativity of the different Rwandan provinces, b) covering all three value chains, c) considering the security situation.

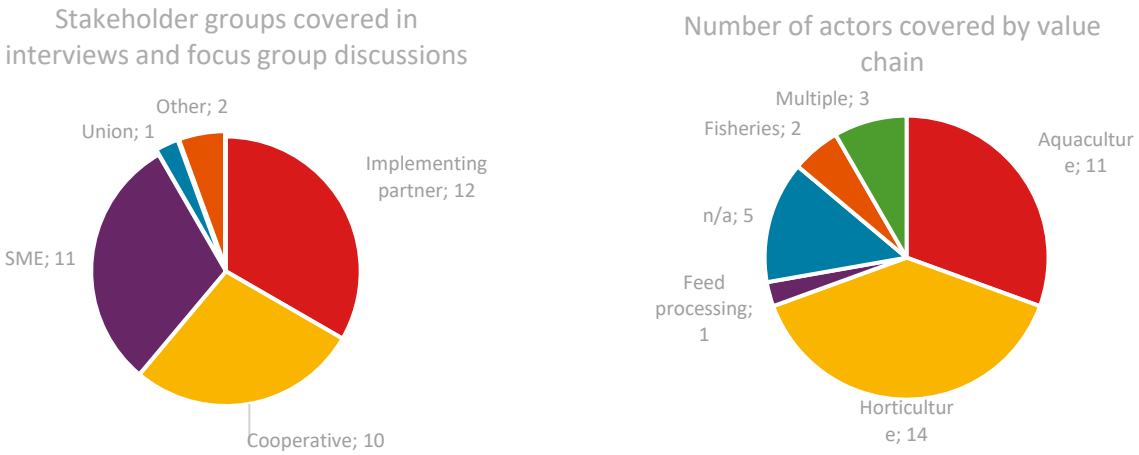
Figure 2 Map with sampled KWIHAZA districts



In total, stakeholders from **seven out of 15 project districts were covered**: two in the Western Province (Rubavu, Rutsiro), two in the Southern Province (Huye, Kamonyi), two in Kigali (Gasabo, Kicukiro) and one in the Eastern Province (Rwamagana).

Together with the KWIHAZA team, a list of interviewees was compiled that ensured a) logistic feasibility, b) representation of the different value chains, c) representation of the different stakeholder groups and d) the coverage of the specific target groups of the project, namely women and youth. In total, **29 KII and 3 FGD were conducted with a total of 55 interviewees**. The three following figures show the share of the different stakeholder groups among the interviewees and focus group participants and the number of stakeholders covered per value chain. Moreover, 41% of the interviewees were women and 59% were men.

Figure 3 Stakeholder groups and actors per value chain covered in the interviews and focus group discussions



2.4.4 Analysis and triangulation

An evaluation matrix was established based off the main questions and their sub-questions along the criteria, including their data collection methods (desk review including the MEL system, scoping interviews, KIIs, and FGDs). As most of the data collected was qualitative in nature, analysis was focused in using this matrix for tabulation and triangulation. In this process, the validity of the ToC has also been explored (as elaborated in the Conclusions). Results are summarised in the Performance Analysis according to the evaluation criteria. Preliminary findings were shared in a debriefing at the end of the field visit with the KWIHAZA team and partners at the beginning of October (see Annex).

2.5 Constraints and limitations

This evaluation approach aimed to provide a comprehensive review of the current stand of the KWIHAZA project, also taking into consideration constraints in the methodology and resources made available.

The MTR is in line with the methodological plan, **primarily based on qualitative data**. While qualitative data may not be representative, the sampling approach of the MTR and quantity of interviews reduce the limitations of this approach. Where possible, quantitative data from the project MEL framework was used. However, this was severely limited as most of the indicators only present the baseline values from 2024, no current values yet. Planned updates of values for June 2025 were only available for 14 out of 75 indicators. The current status of results (criterion Effectiveness, section 3.2.2) is therefore mostly assessed qualitatively, based on the reports and insights from the interviews. Quantitative data on all of the (output) indicators would have provided additional evidence for the evaluation, especially with regards to effectiveness. The regular gathering and updating of this data is key for a successful results-based management. It should be prioritised to close the data gaps as soon as possible and not only in June 2026 as stated for most of the indicators.

While not all of the KWIHAZA districts could be visited in the context of the mission, sampling and identification of districts were based off key criteria in cooperation with the KWIHAZA team and evaluation unit to ensure representation of different result areas, while also maintaining feasibility for the planned ten days. The field visit overlapped with the Union Cycliste International Road World Championship, limiting the mobility within Kigali for meetings. This was largely overcome by scheduling meetings in other districts during that week and otherwise moving to remote interviews where necessary for counterparts in Kigali.

The majority of interviews with stakeholders based in Kigali were conducted in the second week of the field visit.

In terms of language, many interviews and all of the FGDs had to be conducted in Kinyarwanda which was not known at the proposal stage. However, the team did adapt and the two consultants who were in the field conducted most of the interviews together, with the Rwandan consultant providing translation for the international consultant.

Due to the fluctuating diplomatic ties between Rwanda and Belgium the overall timeframe of the evaluation was shifted with the kick-off in August instead of May. Yet, for the actual conduction of the MTR, this did not have any repercussions.

3 Analysis and findings

3.1 Performance analysis

RELEVANCE	A	B	C	D

The relevance of the KWIHAZA intervention can be evaluated very positively. The project demonstrates **strong relevance to the Rwandan context and aligns closely with Rwanda's sectoral and national development strategies**, including the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2), the Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 5), and the National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda (NASR) 2023-2035. The project's focus on transforming food systems through aquaculture, horticulture, and fisheries directly addresses national priorities such as food and nutrition security, employment creation, and the economic empowerment of women and youth. Its objectives are also consistent with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By targeting underdeveloped value chains and aiming to reduce reliance on fish imports, KWIHAZA **contributes to strengthening local production and income generation**.

Stakeholders across all levels—beneficiaries, service providers, SMEs, cooperatives, and technical experts—affirm the project's relevance in addressing real and persistent challenges. These include gaps in cooperative governance, technical capacity, market access, and compliance with food safety standards. The project's emphasis on crops like onions and its support for aquaculture infrastructure and extension services fill existing thematic gaps. While a minority of stakeholders question the scalability of smallholder pond farming in meeting national fish production goals, the overall approach of supporting smallholders and promoting inclusive, market-oriented production is widely seen as appropriate and impactful. The project's **gender and youth inclusion strategies are particularly relevant**, given the systemic barriers these groups face in accessing resources and opportunities[6].

EFFECTIVENESS	A	B	C	D

The KWIHAZA project has made **tangible progress toward achieving its intended results, particularly in strengthening the capacities of smallholder organisations (result 1)**, which includes training of cooperatives and the improvement of extension services. Notable **delays have occurred regarding the access to finance (result 2) and the horticulture activities (results 1 and 3)**. These delays have impacted the project's effectiveness as the access to the financial mechanisms is essential for SMEs and cooperatives to procure essential equipment and implement new skills from technical trainings. Despite these setbacks, recent finalisation of the financial mechanisms and tendering procedures at the level of NAEB suggests that implementation and thus effectiveness may accelerate in the near future[7].

The project has **successfully engaged women and youth, especially in post-harvest and marketing roles**, and has begun to foster generational shifts in cooperative membership. Although measurable increases in income and productivity are not yet evident due to the early stage of implementation, early **signs of behavioural change and improved financial literacy indicate potential for long-term impact[8]**. Beneficiaries have expressed appreciation for the support received, particularly in certification and business development, but also highlighted the need for stronger market access and infrastructure support to fully realise the project's objectives – which is partially expected to be delivered in the context of the access to finance component.

[6] For more information, see Section 3.2.1 and Section 3.2.5
[7] For more information, see Section 3.2.2 in Section 3.2.1
[8] For more information, see under Q1.2

COHERENCE A B C D

KWIHAZA is built into an **environment that is strongly aligned with key national and international actions**, cohering to priorities within agriculture. This is particularly pronounced for horticulture and still nascent in aquaculture as a relatively underdeveloped sector. KWIHAZA's activities in aquaculture are therefore important in their pioneering effect. **Areas for improvement include the creation and maintenance of synergies with other key projects** such as PRISM (funded by Belgium) and Kigali Wholesale Market for Fresh Produce (KWMFP, multi-donor funded/Team Europe Initiative). The KWIHAZA team may also reflect further on its coherence to other projects in a changing political environment with funding cuts to other key players such as USAID[9].

EFFICIENCY A B C D

The KWIHAZA project has so far **delivered results in a generally economic and timely manner**, although implementation and thus spending has been uneven across the three result areas, with less expenditures in result 2 due to the delay of the access to finance component. The envisioned **distribution of 83% of operational costs across the three result areas and 17% of costs for general means including administrative fees to Enabel headquarter appears reasonable**. The distribution of budget across the three result areas is in line with the envisioned activities.

Current shares of administrative and general costs are higher than anticipated but are expected to normalise by the end of the project as expenses are continuous. After 55% of the implementation period, overall **budget execution stands at 21%**, which appears to be rather low but typical for projects with complex start-up phase, tendering procedures and a slow-down of activities in 2025 due to political changes. Importantly, **committed funds reached 97% by February 2025**, indicating that the groundwork has been laid for accelerated spending and delivery.

While the **multi-level partnership structure has overall contributed positively to KWIHAZA by leveraging the expertise of diverse stakeholders, enhancing ownership and contextual responsiveness**, it does generate inherent coordination challenges and delays in procurement. Despite these challenges, grants, tenders, and public-public agreements have overall proven effective and contextually appropriate, fostering national ownership. The **high quality of coordination by the KWIHAZA team** has been a key factor to ensure the multi-level partnership contributes to the project success[10].

SUSTAINABILITY A B C D

The KWIHAZA project demonstrates **promising potential for generating sustainable outcomes at both the beneficiary and systemic levels**. At the target group level, cooperatives and SMEs show strong ownership and motivation, actively applying acquired skills, adopting digital tools like financial software, and leveraging certifications to access new markets. Peer-to-peer learning models such as farmer field schools and the model farm approach foster local expertise and knowledge-sharing, reinforcing long-term capacity. **Coaching has proven essential for translating training into practice**, although its limited duration in some components may affect sustainability[11]. Systemically, the introduction of CoopsDMS and UGAMA's engagement with the Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA) suggest potential for institutional change in cooperative governance and data management. **Youth mobilisation efforts are also laying the groundwork for generational renewal in cooperative structures[12]**. In aquaculture, investments in infrastructure like the

[9] See Q2.2 in Section 3.2.3 for more information
[10] See Section 3.2.5 for more information
[11] See Q3.4 under Section 3.2.4 for more information
[12] See Q5 under Section 3.2.6 for more information

UR hatchery and the shift toward more cost-effective catfish production support long-term viability, though the actual demand by consumers remains uncertain and needs to be created, e.g. through awareness-raising about the nutrition value of catfish as people currently mostly consume Tilapia.
However, several risks could undermine sustainability such as limited coaching periods in some training activities, affordability concerns around digital tools, and the short-term availability of financial mechanisms.

3.2 In-depth analysis

3.2.1 Relevance: Is the project doing the right thing? Are the action's measured deemed relevant by the target groups? (Q3.1)

The KWIHAZA project is **relevant for the Rwandan context and aligned with several of Rwanda's sectoral and development strategies**, as confirmed by in depth desk review of major national policy and strategic documents and by KII.

Notably, the use of aquatic resources in the **transformation of food systems, addressing food scarcity, and strengthening of food and nutrition security** is relevant for the Rwandan public: all three addressed value chains – namely, aquaculture, horticulture, and fisheries – are key in a healthy and quality diet and have thus the potential to contribute to an improved nutrition.[13]

KWIHAZA project objectives addressing **increased productivity, employment creation and the targeted involvement of women and youth are also in line with the Rwandan development priorities**. Major alignment can be identified with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 5 (Gender Equality), and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)[14] as well as key national strategy documents such as the National Strategy for Transformation (NST2 2024-2029)[15] and the 5th Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 5) (see also Table 5 in section 3.2.3).[16] Following the project documents, up until the start of KWIHAZA, Rwandan fish production levels, primarily happening in Lake Kivu were rather low and demand for fish met with imports from neighbouring countries or the region (e.g., Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Namibia). By trying to increase production levels, the project is working towards meeting the fish demand with local production while fostering income generation. Fish farms used to struggle with organisational capacities and low economic viability of their activities as well as a lack of access to sustainable extension services which are further aspects being addressed by KWIHAZA.[17]

In horticulture, the project documents summarise that producers struggle to meet market demands in terms of quality and consistent supply, many times due to lack of technical skills or infrastructure such as drying facilities. In addition, post-harvest losses of up to 40% have a devastating effect on the income of producers. These challenges are also addressed by KWIHAZA.[18]

In the interviews, the IPs equally confirm the project's relevance and alignment with Rwanda's national development strategies, including the RSB strategic Plan 2021-2025[19], the Made in Rwanda Policy[20], PSTA

[13] Enabel.- NDICI/2022/437-658. (2024). Description of the Action. Annex 1 of the contribution agreement of the European Union. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[14] United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). The 17 Goals. https://sdgs.un.org/goals, last access 29 October 2025.
[15] Office of the Prime Minister, Rwanda. (2025, August 12). Second National Strategy for Transformation (NST2: 2024–2029).
[16] Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (Minecofin). (2024/25-2028/29). Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 5).
[17] Enabel.- NDICI/2022/437-658. (2024). Description of the Action. Annex 1 of the contribution agreement of the European Union. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[18] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[19] Rwanda Standards Board. (2021). Strategic Plan 2021–2025. Rwanda Standards Board. Rwanda.
[20] Ministry of Trade and Industry. (2017). Made in Rwanda Policy. Rwanda.

5 (2024-2029), and the National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda (NASR) 2023-2035)[21]. A minority of stakeholders do question whether the project fully aligns with the production goals of the NASR. They argue that smallholder pond farming may not sufficiently contribute to national fish production and nutrition security, advocating instead for more intensive cage farming approaches. However, the focus on smallholder farmers, aiming to transform subsistence-based production to a market-driven approach while increasing rural outcomes proves to be in line with the EU-Rwandan Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027.[22]

In addition to the alignment with Rwandan development and sector strategies, all the interviewees – be it **beneficiaries, service providers, grant recipients or development partners – confirm that the KWIHAZA project is relevant**. According to them, KWIHAZA addresses real needs in the sectors of horticulture, aquaculture, and fisheries. These needs span several thematic areas, including cooperative governance and staff management, business development, access to finance, technical capacity building, and gender and youth inclusion.

Thematically, stakeholders also indicate that the project fills important gaps. In horticulture, for instance, crops such as onions had not received much attention in earlier or different programmes, leaving producers without adequate skills and market access. Similarly, interviewees and project documents show that the aquaculture sector had been largely neglected since the conclusion of the African Development Bank (AfDB)-funded Inland Lakes Integrated Development and Management Project (PAIGELAC) in 2012. The focus of KWIHAZA on these areas is therefore welcomed by stakeholders. Activities that support cooperative governance and promote compliance with food quality standards and certification or regulations for cooperative governance are also seen as highly relevant, as they help actors align with national laws and regulations. This is particularly the case for the new cooperative law which has established higher standards regarding asset management and transparency and cooperative governance (e.g., presidential asset transparency, need for a manager)[23].

SMEs have equally underlined the relevance of KWIHAZA, as it addresses their need for improved management practices, particularly in record keeping, human resource management, and navigating certification procedures. Cooperatives, on the other hand, emphasise the importance of better governance structures, especially considering the abovementioned cooperative law (2024) and the introduction of digital management tools. They also highlighted the need for improved market access, increased production, and the value of extension services provided by the Rwanda Animal Resources Improvement Cooperative (RARICO) for aquaculture and HoReCo for horticulture.

Technical experts, including training institutions, also validate the relevance of the project, particularly in terms of building technical capacities and improving infrastructure such as fingerling production facilities. Finally, the project's focus on gender and inclusion is broadly supported, especially given the persistent barriers many women and marginalised groups face in accessing finance, land, education, and skills development.

[21] MINAGRI. (2023). National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda 2023-2035 (NASR).
[22] European Commission. (2022). Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 for Rwanda – annex. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/countries/republic-rwanda_en, last access 29 October 2025
[23] Government of Rwanda (GoR). (2024). Law n° 057/2024 of 20/06/2024 governing cooperatives in Rwanda. Official Gazette n° 28 Bis of 08/07/2024.

3.2.2 Effectiveness/Gender & Inclusion: To what extent has the project progressed toward achieving its results and desired changes? (Q1)

The effectiveness of KWIHAZA can overall be assessed positively. Actions are in line with the envisioned activities and already contribute to the realisation of the outputs and partially also the outcome (specific objective) of the project's ToC. Delays in some of the activities (notably access to finance and horticulture) are expected to be corrected in the coming months. Equally, the inclusion of gender and youth is implemented successfully through targeted activities.

Status of achievement regarding the project's outputs and outcomes (Q1.1)

The project has made tangible progress towards achieving its intended outputs, although the pace and depth of implementation vary across result areas. Project reports and Minutes of the Steering Committee highlight that **key progress has been made in result area 1 (training of cooperatives, aquaculture extension services, establishment of model pond farms) with delays in result area 2 (access to finance) and some delays in result area 3 (infrastructure component).**[24] Since the MEL framework only includes current values for very few of the indicators, most effects are only captured qualitatively, not quantitatively.

The following table summarises the progress for each of the three KWIHAZA result areas.

Table 2 Summary of progress per result area

Result 1: Improved capacities of smallholder farmers/producer organisations along the aquaculture, fisheries or horticulture value chain			
Updates from the MEL framework (where available)[25]			
Indicator	**Baseline Value (03/2024)**	**Current Value (06/2025)**	**Target value (06/2026)**
1.1.1 % increase in fish production (ponds)	1.30 kg	1.30 kg	1.40 kg
1.1.4 Upgraded professionalism of aquaculture cooperatives	cooperatives (Cat C: 75.8%; CatB:24.2%; Cat A: 0.0%);	65%	Min. 92%
1.1.4 Upgraded professionalism of horticulture cooperatives	cooperatives (Cat C: 25.0%; Cat B: 56.3%; Cat A: 18.8%).	83%	Min. 80%
1.1.5 Number of producers accessing quality extension services – aquaculture	0	93	90
1.1.5 Number of producers accessing quality extension services – horticulture	0	120	n/a
1.1.6 Number of people who benefitted from technical training – aquaculture	0	100	270
1.1.6 Number of people who benefitted from technical training - horticulture	0	120	80
The latest annual report and the interviews show that significant progress was made in **strengthening cooperative governance (result 1.1).** 45 aquaculture cooperatives and 15 horticulture cooperatives received targeted training and continue to benefit from ongoing coaching. For a subset of 21 cooperatives, the introduction of the CoopsDMS software by the grant recipient UGAMA has significantly enhanced management practices, particularly in member administration and financial reporting. According to UGAMA, beneficiary knowledge is steadily improving, and cooperatives are becoming more professional			

[24] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda. Enabel/Kwihaza team. (2024). Minutes of the Fourth Steering Committee meeting – February 5th 2025. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

[25] Enabel/Kwihaza team. (2025). Kwihaza Indicator Matrix. Updated to June 2025. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

in their operations. This is underlined by several cooperatives already graduating to higher performance categories.[26] According to the UGAMA project report from June 2025, the 13% of the cooperatives graduated from Category B to A, 35% of the cooperatives graduated from C to B, which corresponds to overall 48% of the targeted cooperatives graduating to a higher category, while 86% is intended.[27] Feedback from the cooperatives themselves confirms that their skills, organisational structures, and governance capacities have improved. Notably, they report better member management, fewer errors in financial reporting, and more strategic planning around profit generation.

Progress related to the **improved delivery of extension services (result 1.2)** is more uneven. In horticulture, the establishment of demonstration plots by HoReCo has only recently begun, delayed by lengthy tendering procedures at NAEB. As a result, respondents were not yet able to assess the effectiveness of this activity. However, foundational steps such as site selection and identification of lead farmers have been completed.

In aquaculture, the project has advanced further. Cooperation with 19 Model Pond Farms for the demonstration on Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) was established during one production cycle during which cooperatives received two out of three batches of subsidised inputs, including quality feed and fingerlings. The last batch could not be provided and had to be procured by the farms independently.[28] RARICO and the model farmers jointly received a training on BAP delivered by ThinkAqua. Subsequently and in line with the model farm approach, RARICO officers started providing further training to the model farmers and the cluster farmers. In the interviews, respondents were aware of the presence and role of these extension officers but the interest in using them was mixed. Related to these activities, updated MEL data confirms that the numbers of producers accessing quality extension services has increase compared to the baseline value (0). Regarding the envisioned increase in pond fish production (indicator 1.1.1) values from June 2025 are equal to the baseline value, i.e., no increase in production is visible yet. If this target will be achieved is questionable since the project is planning to implement a new production approach in the second half of implementation (catfish instead of tilapia). The indicator may thus need to be revised.

Progress has also been made in **strengthening technical training and research infrastructures (result 1.3).** The construction of the Tilapia hatchery at the University of Rwanda (UR) has been completed, while the greenhouse for indoor fingerling production is still pending, delayed by approximately eight months. Design corrections may be necessary, particularly regarding pond communication and wastewater flow. On the training side, TVET school teachers have received a two-week training of trainers facilitated by the University of Liège, contributing to capacity building in aquaculture education.

Result 2: Strengthened SMEs and youth entrepreneurs for the development of more inclusive value chains

Updates from the MEL framework (where available)

Indicator	Baseline Value (03/2024)	Current Value (06/2025)	Target value (06/2026)
1.2.4 Number of SMEs, youth entrepreneurs and cooperatives, that obtained a certification or proof of GMP/GHP, in line with the market demand - horticulture	0	8	10

[26] Cooperatives in Rwanda are classified in different performance categories depending on their level of professionalisation, with A being the strongest and C being the weakest category.
[27] UGAMA. (2025). Interim Narrative Report. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[28] RAB. (2025). Narrative Report for RAB Grant Kwihaza Project (Semester 1) 2025. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

1.2.4 Number of SMEs, youth entrepreneurs and cooperatives, that obtained a certification or proof of GMP/GHP, in line with the market demand - aquaculture	0	6	5

The interviews confirm that KWIHAZA has already contributed meaningfully to strengthening SMEs and youth entrepreneurs, particularly through targeted support aimed at improving business development and market access. In terms of support to **improve value creation and high value market access (result 2.1)**, value chain analyses and an avocado value chain mapping will help to develop an aggregation model and implementation strategy which aims to scale up avocado production and establish efficient aggregation hubs in key production zones.[29] In addition, **SMEs received tailored training and coaching** from IRONA, focusing on BDS. In the interviews, both SMEs and their trainers confirm that this led to tangible capacity improvements, especially in areas such as bookkeeping, financial management, and human resource management. One SME notably reported the introduction of a software solution for human resources and enterprise resource planning, which has helped professionalise their operations. Furthermore, some SMEs report that they could establish new market linkages, including access to premium and export markets, facilitated through project-supported activities such as agro exhibitions and certification processes.

In terms of **quality and certification (result 2.2),** based on an initial screening, SMEs were selected for the support under this result area. SMEs received customised training from RSB on production and processing standards, documentation of Standard Operating Procedures and others. Some of them are further assisted by a dedicated post-harvest consultant during the certification process. Processing SMEs confirmed receiving support by the consultant in navigating certification procedures, including Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), Rwanda Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), and Standardisation-Mark (S-Mark) product certification. According to the latest MEL framework (see above), 14 SMEs have already been certified – eight in horticulture and six in aquaculture. Out of the seven SMEs accompanied by the post-harvest consultant, two SMEs dropped out of the process. The technical support provided linked with the certification procedure is reported by the SMEs to have enhanced their ability to meet market requirements and improve product quality.

KWIHAZA also made progress in explicitly **supporting youth entrepreneurship (result 2.3)**. Careful needs assessments ensure that women- and youth-led SMEs are specifically targeted, allowing for more inclusive participation in the value chains. This targeted approach has helped address structural barriers and promote equitable access to resources and opportunities.

The key delay which was already highlighted in the project reports is related to **result 2.4 – access to finance** which was also raised in most of the interviews – by beneficiaries but also by several IPs. The delay was caused due to the unavailability of the Rwanda Development Bank (BRD) as a collaboration partner following which the project needed to identify another service provider (AFR). Progress of the AFR grant agreement is now under way and the financial mechanisms—an Interest Rate Subsidy and a Matching Grant—are expected to be launched in the weeks after the field visit, with a duration of up to 24 months. Beneficiaries, including SMEs and cooperatives, are eagerly awaiting these instruments, which are seen as critical for implementing the knowledge gained during training sessions. These financial mechanisms are expected to support key investments such as procurement of equipment and tools, thereby enabling business growth and sustainability.

[29] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

Result 3: Strengthened conducive environment for inclusive value chain development and sustainable food systems

Updates from the MEL framework (where available)

Indicator	Baseline Value (03/2024)	Current Value (06/2025)	Target value (06/2026)
1.3.5 No. of food inspectors capacitated and equipped for fish inspection	0	10	10
1.3.6 Number and type of infrastructure supported	0	1	3
1.3.7 Functionality of supported value chain platforms	0	1	2
1.3.8 Number of research and innovation initiatives supported	0	1	2

Progress under result 3 reflects a growing effort to build an enabling environment for inclusive value chain development and sustainable food systems. In terms of **public agrofood infrastructure (result 3.1)**, the rehabilitation of the NAEB packhouse—an important facility for horticultural value chains—has faced delays but is now set to begin following the contracting of a service provider.[30] This marks a key step toward improving post-harvest handling and market readiness. The research station at the UR, linked to Result 1, also contributes to infrastructure development and knowledge generation.

Regarding the **structuring of the value chains (result 3.2)**, the horticulture value chain analysis conducted by KWIHAZA highlighted challenges stemming from the seasonal nature of produce, particularly onions and tomatoes. Seasonal oversupply, compounded by limited access to market information, often leads to low prices, reducing incomes for smallholder farmers. This has also been confirmed by three horticulture cooperatives through FGDs and KIIs. According to the 2024 KWIHAZA annual report, NAEB hired a market facilitator who will use value chain analysis findings to help farmers adopt a market-oriented approach and move beyond farm-gate sales.[31] Additionally, a consulting firm was recruited to conduct an avocado value chain mapping for creating a database of avocado plantations and farmers, assessing existing aggregation models, and updating relevant data. The findings will guide the development of an improved aggregation model and its implementation strategy. This was also confirmed by the KWIHAZA Value Chain Development Expert during the scoping interview.

In aquaculture, reports mention that a platform for fish farmers was created to bring different actors such as cage farmers, pond farmers and traders to the table and strengthen governance structures and coordination.

Efforts to promote **healthy and sustainable food consumption (result 3.3)** have been visible through communication campaigns led by MINAGRI Agricultural Information and Communication Center (CICA). Activities such as World Food Day 2024 celebrations, radio interviews, and TV shows helped raise awareness about healthy diets and the importance of animal-sourced proteins.

Significant progress has been made in **quality assurance and food safety services (result 3.4).** The RSB has developed a total of 44 (planned: 35) standards—covering horticulture (standards across 5 commodities), aquaculture, and fisheries. Two of these standards have already been published, with the remainder in progress, indicating an overachievement in this area and a strong institutional commitment to improving food safety and market compliance.

[30] NAEB. (2025). INTERIM NARRATIVE REPORT (January-June 2025). Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[31] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

Under **result 3.5, the use of ICT and innovation** is being promoted through tools such as the CommsDMS, introduced by UGAMA, which supports digital communication and data management at the cooperative level. Additionally, two SMEs report that they adopted software solutions like QuickBooks to enhance financial management and operational efficiency. In addition, MINAGRI has conducted trainings on its e-commerce platform e-Soko and is increasing its social media presence.

Finally, **result 3.6 focuses on supporting lake management plans.** Among others, KWIHAZA supported the development of the National Aquatic Biosecurity and Environmental Plan for the Aquaculture Sector (NABEP) and conducted a lake assessment at Lake Muhazi to inform production decisions. Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MSC) task forces have been established, including actors such as the Rubavu Fishing Union. These groups are actively involved in surveillance and inspection activities aimed at curbing illegal fishing practices, thereby contributing to the sustainable management of aquatic resources.

The progress described in the project reports is confirmed by KII, particularly for result 1. Delays are most evident regarding the access to finance (result 2.4) and the implementation of horticulture activities via NAEB subcontractors (result 1.2 and 3.4). Yet, it is expected that these activities will soon speed up as the key **financial mechanisms were finalised during the process of this evaluation and NAEB finalised all its tendering procedures**. Only very few activities address the fisheries value chain. One beneficiary questioned the effectiveness of the support provided by the project.

While capacity development efforts related to a) technical skills and b) governance and management skills have been positively received, several challenges do affect the effectiveness of the KWIHAZA project to some extent. A major concern among SMEs and cooperatives is the **delay in accessing financial mechanisms, which has prevented them from procuring essential infrastructure and equipment**—such as drying facilities for onions or tools needed to meet certification standards. Additionally, some SMEs report frustration over the slow review process of their business plans by IRONA, which is a prerequisite for effectively utilising the loan. Communication around the matching grant conditions was also claimed to be insufficient; at least one SME had to adjust their loan size unexpectedly due to unclear requirements. In aquaculture, cooperatives lacking computers or the financial means to purchase them have been excluded from digitisation efforts, and some face staffing shortages, particularly in recruiting youth to manage digital tools. Moreover, limited financial resources have led some SMEs to prioritise investments in technical equipment and fish feed over IT solutions, which in turn restricts the practical use of knowledge gained during training sessions.

Overall, feedback on the project's activities has been positive, with beneficiaries acknowledging improvements in business development, certification, and technical capacities. While the project has so far placed a strong emphasis on production, many **respondents expressed a desire for more support in market access and linkages**. This includes improved access to infrastructure such as drying and washing facilities, which are essential to meet market demands.

Contribution to the overall objective (Q1.2)

While current values for the indicators at outcome level are not available in the KWIHAZA MEL framework, the interviews provided some insights regarding potential contributions to the overall objective of the project, i.e., to increase in a sustainable way the production, per capita consumption and income generated by fish, aquaculture and horticulture quality products with a focus on women and youth. **Through targeted support to women- and youth-led businesses and cooperatives, the project has successfully fostered their involvement in the value chains**. While most beneficiaries have not yet reported about measurable

increase in income, significant improvements are evident. At the production level, the introduction of financial management tools and enhanced financial literacy are laying the groundwork for future profitability. In the processing sector, certification support has already enabled some SMEs to secure new contracts, increase profits, and expand their workforce.

Although productivity gains are not yet observable—largely due to the early stage of implementation—there are early signs of behavioural change. For instance, members of one horticulture cooperative reported a shift in consumption habits, choosing to retain a portion of their vegetable production for household use. This suggests a positive trend toward improved dietary diversity and food security, aligning with the project's broader goals.

Going back to the ToC of the project, the **assumed impact pathways between the results and the specific objective can therefore be maintained**. Regarding the hypotheses developed, the following observations can be made:

Table 3 Hypotheses and related observations

Hypothesis	Observation
H1: strengthening the technical capacities of producers through improved extension services, training opportunities and the purchase of assets, will increase organisational capacities and thus lead to a higher productivity and higher income of small-scale producers.	• Preliminary results at this stage of the project suggest that training opportunities related to BDS and cooperative governance do in fact increase organisational capacities • The extent to which extension services and the purchase of assets (access to finance) contribute to higher productivity and income, remains to be confirmed as some of these activities are yet to be implemented
H2: providing tailor-made coaching and BDS for SMEs along with the establishment of food safety standards will improve the level of food safety and thus food producers' access to local and regional markets	• Intermediate results do confirm this hypothesis: the certification support for SMEs already helped to increase food standards and helped processing SMEs to access new markets or clients
H3: specific support for female and young entrepreneurs in the area of business development and access to finance will strengthen their activity in the aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture value chains, contributing to inclusive value chains that provide jobs for women and youth.	• Current findings do support this hypothesis. Dedicated for women and youth-led businesses is already helping their activities along the value chain, with some limitations (see Q1.3). Yet, this can only be confirmed for horticulture and aquaculture where this dedicated support is actually provided. • It remains to be confirmed towards the end of the project what is the effect of the access to finance component.
H4: establishing the right public infrastructure and promoting an institutionalised sector dialogue, will help to professionalise the management along the aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture value chain, thereby improving their inclusiveness and the transformation towards sustainable food systems.	• Sector dialogues do help to promote exchange between the actors involved along the value chains. It remains to be confirmed whether this promotes the inclusiveness and transformation towards sustainable food systems.

Engagement and benefits of women and youth in the project activities (Q1.3)

According to the project documents and interviews, women are mostly involved in the post-harvesting processes and marketing of products. Due to limited access to land, women and youth are more involved in sorting and grading of horticulture produce, selling the produce at selling points established across the country and in rural periodic markets. The KWIHAZA baseline study highlighted that women and youth face more difficulties to access finance due to lack of collateral. Additionally, the baseline study recommended

a middle management training course tailored to women's empowerment, equipping them with the skills to access higher level opportunities in agricultural value chains.[32]

The interviews confirm what is outlined in the project documents, i.e., that **KWIHAZA is mainstreaming an approach that specifically targets gender and youth with its activities**. Careful needs assessments at the outset ensure that projects are well-targeted, allowing for tailored support to women- and youth-led SMEs and cooperatives. In some cases, youth- or women-led organisations are prioritised, for instance by granting women additional score points in the loan application assessments under result 2. Equally, RAB and NAEB successfully **recruited youth-led service providers with RARICO and HoReCo** based on a restricted tendering approach. Additionally, project beneficiaries confirmed that youth and women are well represented in all capacity building activities with active participation. This supports that the youth-oriented approach is really at the core of the KWIHAZA project.

In the case of one horticulture cooperative, project efforts have started to yield results as youth interest has increased due to an unintended but positive effect of UGAMA's mobilisation work. Elders in the cooperative have chosen not to reclaim their shares but instead transfer them—along with land—to their children, enabling them to become active members. This generational shift is seen as a sign of growing youth involvement in cooperative structures.

Remaining challenges for women and youth to fully engage in the project and the value chains (Q1.4)

Interviewees underline several challenges that still limit a stronger engagement of women and youth in the value chains:

- **Fisheries**: Despite targeted mobilisation efforts, fisheries cooperatives struggle to retain youth members, many of whom return to illegal fishing due to a lack of financial means to acquire proper equipment. This points to a gap in support mechanisms (e.g. a subsidised infrastructure starter kit) that could enable sustainable engagement of youth in legal and productive activities.
- **Aquaculture**: Aquaculture cooperatives often have managers of older generations and struggle to mobilise youth who do not seem to perceive aquaculture to be a financially lucrative activity. The project is already launching measures such as a mobilisation campaign conducted by UGAMA to attract more youth to join cooperatives.
- **Horticulture:** In horticulture, women and youth face the problem of access to land and finance that can keep them from becoming engaged in the activities.

Across the value chains, interviewees mention socio-cultural factors such as limited education, traditional norms, and family responsibilities which are difficult to be changed by a project. E.g. fish need to be fed at night which is the time when women are fulfilling family duties at home. Women further face a struggle to access financial means due to lack of collateral – needed for the whole variety of economic activities, which is considered by AFR under result 2, granting women additional score points in the loan application assessments. These factors highlight the need for complementary social interventions and long-term strategies to foster inclusive participation in value chains.

[32] Enabel / MINAGRI (2024). Kwihaza Project – Baseline Report. Horticulture and Aquaculture. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

Involvement of cooperatives and SMEs and identified strengths and weaknesses (Q1.5)

As previously elaborated, SMEs and cooperatives have been actively involved in the project activities – primarily via the cooperative governance strengthening programme, standardisation / certification training and support, as well as via technical support in the form of extension services and technical trainings. The availability and interest of both SMEs and cooperatives is key for KWIHAZA to be able to implement its activities as conducted. Up to this point, most SMEs and cooperatives appear to be eager to collaborate with the project and are applying the skills they acquired through the different activities.

In the particular case of SME certification (result 2), two SMEs out of seven SMEs accompanied by the post-harvest consultant showed reluctance to fully get engaged in the project activities and deliver and eventually they dropped out of the project as they seemed to be too focused on "hard" support in terms of infrastructure.

The following table summarises some of the strengths and weaknesses raised during the interviews:

Table 4 Identification of strengths and weaknesses of SMEs and cooperatives

	Cooperatives	SMEs
Strengths	• Supporting large numbers of people • Sharing of infrastructure	• Business orientation • Focus on value addition • Willingness to learn and improve
Weaknesses	• Often less business orientated • Weaker capacities and need for support starting from the basics • Management capacities especially if owned by older people • Struggles to adapt new technologies, especially if owned by older people	• Lacking equipment • Business management skills → lack of investment readiness • Record keeping • Marketing / visibility • Financial means • Reliance on few key persons to run the business, weak structures

Potential drivers of change and challenges in the implementation (Q1.6)

While identifying individual drivers of change has been complicated, a few factors stood out. These include **easily accessible technologies/software**, which have allowed for easy adoption and engagement by cooperatives and SMEs, in particular when involving youth. Moreover, a **strong enabling environment** established by different policies with a focus on developing value chains, mitigating post-harvest losses, women and youth inclusion, have set fertile conditions for KWIHAZA's projects to be effective (elaborated further under coherence). **Coaching** was moreover identified as a very successful mechanism for the implementation, as it was well received by different and multiple beneficiaries and lays the basis for the internalisation of new practices and thus sustainability.

On the other hand, challenges also persist in the implementation: gender roles and the roles of youth in horticulture and aquaculture requires a long-term approach, especially as **barriers to occupy production roles for women** still exist. These normative barriers underpin challenges for meaningful change, where youth and women may only take on limited roles in production. The **interdependence of actors and multi-level partnerships** additionally presents challenges. While fostering co-ownership between partners and sustainability of the project, these processes also affect duration and the time by when end-user beneficiaries are reached. Finally, and exceptionally, 2025 was a year of international political changes

which affected diplomatic ties and the funding of development schemes also in the Rwandan agriculture sector.

3.2.3 Coherence: To what extent have the synergies and complementarities between KWIHAZA and ongoing programmes, projects, or policies led by Team Europe or other partners/stakeholders enhanced the project's potential to achieve its results? (Q2)

Alignment and integration of the KWIHAZA project with other initiatives (internal, external) (Q2.1)

KWIHAZA is **highly aligned with many international and national policies and projects, and is therefore placed in a rich policy environment that enables its success**. Synergies on KWIHAZA's the three expected outputs (enhanced capacities of smallholder organisations to minimise harvest losses and improve access, and SMEs and entrepreneurs empowered to operating in more sustainable food systems, and the development of a conducive environment are well reflected across programmes and policies) are well reflected and mirrored in these policies and projects. Broadly, KWIHAZA coheres with all key international and national policies around agriculture, with special attention being placed for the increasing priority of aquaculture, as identified in NASR. This section breaks down an overview of key policies and programmes: Table 5 looks at the alignment to policies, whereas Table 6 contextualises KWIHAZA to other projects. Further conclusions on coherence are summarised following the tables.

Table 5 KWIHAZA's alignment to policies

	Strategy	KWIHAZA alignment
International	SDGs/2030 Agenda	KWIHAZA contributes to SDG 1 on No Poverty with emphasis on Target 1.1, T1.1 on eradicating extreme poverty, Target 1.2 on reducing poverty by at least 50%, and Target 1.6 on mobilising resources to implement policies to end poverty. It also contributes to SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, with emphasis on Target 2.3 on increasing the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, with its special focus on women and youth[33]. KWIHAZA also aligns to a smaller extent with SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth (through its Target 8.3 on promoting development-oriented policies that support job creation and the growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including through access to finance), SDG 14 on Life Below Water (Target 14.4 on regulating harvesting/ending overfishing), and SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production (Target 12.2 on sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources).[34][35]
	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) 2026-2035	KWIHAZA is broadly aligned with the CAADP, as a relatively new policy adopted in 2025. The CAADP places a new emphasis on agri-food systems, which encompass the whole network of activities from the production to the distribution and consumption/disposal of food and agricultural products. KWIHAZA's activities aligns with these policy goals with regards to the value chains, and overall contribution to more sustainable food systems. Both the CAADP and KWIHAZA also place emphasis on smallholder farmers, women, and youth. CAADP as a policy focuses slightly more on land-based agriculture, though aquaculture and fisheries are included as projects for feed and fodder systems which align with KWIHAZA[36].

[33] *UN SDG: Goal 2 | department of economic and social affairs*. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 October 2025, from https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2#targets_and_indicators
[34] *UN SDG: Goal 8 | department of economic and social affairs*. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 October 2025, from https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8#targets_and_indicators
[35] *UN SDG: Goal 14 | department of economic and social affairs*. (n.d.). Retrieved 29 October 2025, from https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14#targets_and_indicators
[36] African Union. (2024). *CAADP Strategy and Action Plan: 2026-2035*. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/44344-doc-3._EN_CAADP_Strategy_and_Action_Plan_-_2026-2035_September_15_2024_Final.pdf

	ILO Decent Work Agenda	The International Labour Organisations' (ILO) Decent Work Agenda has four pillars, on job creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue[37]. KWIHAZA's activities mostly align with the pillar on job creation through its engagement of public-private partnerships, education and training, and green/sustainable jobs. Social protection and rights at work are less reflected in KWIHAZA's activities.
	Transformational Climate-Smart and inclusive agriculture in Rwanda (2021-2023)	This EU Action document[38] which has informed this project has an Overall Objective 'to consolidate the sustainable agricultural transformation in Rwanda' and as specific objectives to: 1) foster Rwanda's agricultural transition to socially and environmentally inclusive food systems and 2) ensure Rwanda's environmental and climate sustainability. KWIHAZA contributes directly to specific objective 1 and indirectly specific objective 2.
National	Rwanda Vision 2050	Published in 2020, the Rwanda Vision 2050 sets out the long-term directions for economic growth and prosperity and a high quality and standards of life for Rwandans. Agriculture for wealth creation is set as one of the first priorities, led by women and men, for the development of global value chains[39]. The Rwanda Vision 2050 is set to be further detailed by the National Strategy for Transformation, as set out below.
	National Strategy for Transformation (NST2 2024-2029)	The NST2 (2024-2029)'s Economic Transformation Pillar focuses on the development of climate-resilient and productive agri-food systems and industrial growth and export promotion. KWIHAZA's activities here also align with this policy, especially with regards to value chain development. NST2 explicitly refers to aquaculture as part of its push to increase animal resources alongside other livestock. Horticultural products are seen as key for developing Rwanda's exports. NST2 moreover continues to address unemployment, especially among youth and women under its Economic Transformation Pillar, and therefore places KWIHAZAs activities centrally to the Strategy[40].
	National Strategy for Transformation (NST1 2017-2024)	The NST1 (2017-2024)'s Economic Transformation Pillar sets as priority areas the modernisation and increasing of the productivity of agriculture and livestock, and the promotion of sustainable management of the environment/natural resources. KWIHAZA is explicitly and clearly aligned with this policy as it stresses the need to develop post-harvest handling including storage and processing. Moreover, the policy also prioritises investments in the livestock subsector, demonstrating synergies with KWIHAZA, as it also includes modern fish farming. [41]
	5th Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 5 2024/2025 – 2028/2029)	The PSTA 5 prioritises modernisation of agricultural and animal products for resilient food systems for the development of inclusive markets and post-harvest management systems, for effective and efficient delivery[42]. KWIHAZA coheres to this policy by integrating climate smart practises, and PSTA 5 recognises the need for substantial resources and capacities to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Output 1.2.5 also references the development of fisheries and aquaculture, addressing cost of fish-feed and fish-fingerlings with strategic projects including the National Aquaculture Research centre (among others)..
	4th Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 4, 2018-2024):	The predecessor to PSTA 5, the PSTA 4 places priority on the development of the markets and value chains for agricultural transformation, shifting to food systems approach, diversified higher value agriculture products, including horticulture, fisheries; role of the private sector, focus on productivity and value addition. Under the general framework of NST1, PSTA 4 sets out the priority areas that provide strategic direction for achieving transformation of Rwandan agriculture and recognises that aquaculture has the potential

[37] *Four pillars of decent work | Decent Work Toolbox*. (n.d.). Decent Work Toolbox. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.decentworktoolbox.be/knowledge-resources/four-pillars-of-decent-work

[38] European Commission. (2021). Action Document for Transformational climate-smart and inclusive agriculture in Rwanda. NDICI AFRICA/2021/043-213

[39] Vision 2050. (2015). In *Republic of Rwanda*. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.minecofin.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Minecofin/Publications/REPORTS/National_Development_Planning_and_Research/Vision_2050/English-Vision_2050_Abridged_version_WEB_Final.pdf

[40] Office of the Prime Minister, Rwanda. (2025). Second National Strategy for Transformation (NST2: 2024–2029).

[41] Republic of Rwanda. (2017). 7 Years Government Programme: National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) 2017-2024.

[42] Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (Minecofin). (2024/25-2028/29). Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 5).

		to make a significant contribution to the agriculture sector.[43] The PSTA 4 has also informed the development of a Climate Smart Agriculture investment plan. KWIHAZA's activities in addressing food value chains including fisheries and private sector development therefore cohere with this policy document.
	National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda (NASR, 2023-2035):	This strategy document was initiated under PSTA 4, supported by Gatsby Africa and Poseidon Aquatic Resources Management, demonstrating the growing priority of aquaculture within Rwanda and the cohesion of these actors in moving initiatives like KWIHAZA forward. This document sets out plans on how aquaculture can develop from subsistence to a profit-generating industries. The NASR suggests that 106,000 t of fish could be produced by Rwanda by 2035, of which around 80,620t will be from aquaculture (the 2023 annual production is 4,900t), with an estimated 26,000t from wild fisheries.[44]KWIHAZA coheres well to this strategy as its activities address incorporates biosecurity components, the regulation of cage farms for the mitigation of aquaculture intensification, technical training and easing access to finance.
	Gender and Youth Mainstreaming Strategy in Agriculture (2019)	This policy was enacted alongside PSTA 4 and highlights the key areas of gender inequality and youth underrepresentation by focusing on low levels of financial inclusion among women and youth, low participation rates in agri-value chains, limited access to extension support and other services, and limited control over resources and decision-making[45]. KWIHAZA has targeted women and youth across all activities ensuring alignment with this strategy.
	Made in Rwanda Policy (2017)	Implemented by the Rwandan Ministry of Trade and Industry, this policy works closely with key government agencies including the RSB and other bodies and the private sector to develop high potential value chains to improve quality and competitiveness. With regards to alignment to KWIHAZA, Made in Rwanda targeted horticulture as well as agro processing[46].

Table 6 KWIHAZA's alignment to other programmes

	Programme Name	KWIHAZA alignment
Enabel-led	Belgium Bilateral programme (2019-2024)	Enabels' Cooperation Programme in Rwanda (2024-2029) includes agriculture as a key priority with PRISM (see below) and KWIHAZA listed as flagship projects financed by the EU and the Luxembourg government. Other key initiatives focus in agroforestry in cooperation with other development partners.
	Partnership for Resilient and Inclusive Small stock Market 1 + 2 (PRISM)	Funded by Belgium, PRISM 1 was implemented from 2019 to 2024, and its successor PRISM 2 launched in July 2024 with an original end date in 2026. The Enabel-funded PRISM activities were part of a broader International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded PRISM approach which had a larger scope in the livestock sector. Both PRISMs worked in parallel to KWIHAZA, though with a focus on pork, poultry and animal feeds, also with the aim to attract private investments for the transformation of the livestock sector. The methodology and stakeholders engaged were similar to KWIHAZA, with a different focus on products/value chains. PRISM2 was expected to also cover animal feeds and had more training budget for skills development, which could have served as potential synergies to KWIHAZA. There were project resources shared across PRISM and KWIHAZA, demonstrating the clear synergies and overlaps within the projects

[43] Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (Minecofin). (2018-2024). Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (PSTA 4).
[44] MINAGRI. (2023). National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda 2023-2035 (NASR).
[45] MINAGRI. (2019). Gender and Youth Mainstreaming Strategy in Agriculture.
[46] Ministry of Trade and Industry. (2017). Made in Rwanda Policy. Rwanda

		(elaborated below). Coherence between PRISM2 and KWIHAZA was abrupted, as PRISM2 had stopped its activities due to the geopolitical situation in 2025.
	Kigali Wholesale Market for Fresh Produce (KWMFP)	The KWMFP is a Team Europe Initiative under the Global Gateway to develop East Africa's first wholesale market and centralise Rwanda as a distribution hub for fresh produce[47]. Working with NAEB, the initiative provides the infrastructure to address issues of post-harvest losses, in line with KWIHAZA's goals. KWMFP is also an integral part to KWIHAZA as it has been included in the Results Framework (**Error! Not a valid result for table.** in the chapter on Background and context), and referenced as a flagship project in the Description of the Action.
EU-Level	EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II)	MARKUP II is a regional project working with the East African Community (EAC) for private sector development and export promotion, funded by the EU, working on sectors such as coffee, tea, cocoa, gum, French beans, leather, among others. In Rwanda, its focus on avocados also coheres with KWIHAZA's, though there are no overlaps with aquaculture/fisheries[48]. Both MARKUP and KWIHAZA focus on value chain development and integration for export purposes, working with Rwandan ministries and private institutions.
	Kungahara	Kungahara was a 3-year project funded by the EU and implemented by Rikolto in partnership with Kilimo Trust Rwanda and Rwanda Consumer Rights Protection Organisation for the development of Rwandan food production systems, working with farmer cooperatives and SMEs[49]. It ended in April 2025. KWIHAZA's expected output 1 on the capacities of smallholder organisations for minimising post-harvest losses and the specific objective on the focus on youth cohere with the policy's focus on postharvest losses and BDS, with a focus on youth and women inclusion. Kungahara's geographic focus is in Musanze and Nyabihu, overlapping with KWIHAZA.
	Promoting Smallholder Agro-Export Competitiveness Project (PSAC) (2022-2029)	PSAC is co-funded by the IFAD and the Government of Rwanda, improving value chains by promoting climate smart productivity and climate resilient agricultural practices, reducing post-harvest losses, developing infrastructure and market linkages, and providing access to financial services. PSAC focuses on export-driven value chains, namely coffee and tea, which deviate from KWIHAZA's sectors. Broad synergies exist as they both work towards developing value chains and market infrastructure. Institutional synergies may also exist as IFAD also funded PRISM, though this remains unclear from the documents analysed.
Other international/bilateral donors	GATSBY Africa	GATSBY Africa is a foundation based in Kenya, implementing a diverse portfolio of activities across aquaculture, commercial forestry, livestock, tea, and other sectors. GATSBY has been actively involved also in Rwanda's aquaculture sector by developing the National Aquaculture Strategy and setting key targets for the Rwandan government's intervention. As a key player in the regions, synergies with them have been important – and the project provides more opportunities for synergising as KWIHAZA and GATSBY fill each other's gaps in developing aquaculture in Rwanda and regularly exchange information. GATSBY sees capacity building and skill development an issue for farm management in Rwanda, creating clear synergies with KWIHAZA's activities (expected output 1 on smallholder organisations' enhanced capacities).
	USAID	The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was a key player in the development of aquaculture projects in Rwanda until 2025. USAID, among other development agencies, were part of the Development Partners in Aquaculture for coordination and cohesion of the different and few aquaculture projects in Rwanda. The changing geopolitics of 2025, including the closure of USAID has reduced this group's activities.

[47] *Team Europe Initiative on Kigali Wholesale market for fresh produce*. (2024, January 12). EEAS. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/rwanda/team-europe-initiative-kigali-wholesale-market-fresh-produce_en?s=115
[48] *Rwanda: Profile*. (n.d.). MARKUP II. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.eacmarkup.org/partner-states/rwanda
[49] *Kungahara Project*. (2024, December 11). Rikolto. Retrieved October 29, 2025, from https://www.rikolto.org/projects/kungahara-project-to-boost-the-production-and-consumption-of-healthy-sustainable-and-nutritious-food-in-rwanda

Overall, the KWIHAZA project **coheres well with key international and national policy priorities**, which is also reflected by similar sister projects in the area. Besides the policy review in Table 5, this was also confirmed in interviews with IPs, who stated that KWIHAZA is contributing to the NST2, PSTA 5, as well as the RSB Strategy 2020-2025 and the Made in Rwanda Policy.

A **unique aspect is KWIHAZA's emphasis on aquaculture and fisheries, which is relatively underdeveloped in policies and projects, in comparison to horticulture and agriculture**. Yet, the National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda is also a key roadmap, also citing environmental factors and climate smart approaches. As aquaculture and fisheries are a relatively smaller sector and used to be of a smaller relative priority, coherence in this regard is less pronounced, though an interview with the EUD stated that KWIHAZA's activities came at a timely moment to support this sector – in particular aquaculture.

Synergies created and capitalisation to enhance project effectiveness and reduce duplication (Q2.2)

The most positive example for synergies of the KWIHAZA project is the exchange with GATSBY Africa. The two organisations have regular exchange about their activities and have actively bundled their resources. For instance, they have exchange regarding the lake assessments at Lake Kivu (conducted by GATSBY Africa) and at Lake Muhazi (conducted by KWIHAZA), harmonising their methodologies. They have equally worked together with the Rwandan government on several policy documents such as the NABEP. Activities of the two actors are **complementary in a way that GATSBY Africa mostly focuses on the enabling environment, while KWIHAZA is more active in the field and in terms of capacity development**. Up until the end of 2024, the KWIHAZA team had an active role in forming an exchange platform for Development Partners in Aquaculture, chaired by MINAGRI, with the aim to identify synergies, share lessons learned and maximise impact. Actors represented included the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Gatsby, USAID, SWISS Contact and KWIHAZA with regular meetings in 2023 and 2024

The planning for KWIHAZA envisioned to share some of the resources between the PRISM project and the KWIHAZA project, e.g., jointly using facilities, staff (including the project manager, private sector development expert, MEL officer, accountant, and financial controller).[50] Also in technical terms, the two projects planned to jointly address the challenge of feed supply in different value chains, working with the same target stakeholders /feed factories, as stated by the KWIHAZA project team. The interruption of diplomatic ties between Belgium and Rwanda has led to the halt of the PRISM project, abruptly ending the potential for synergies in this regard.[51] Since the KWIHAZA project also was planning to benefit from the skills development component of the PRISM project and their Rwanda TVET Board agreement, the project is now affected by a gap that is not yet filled.[52]

While an enabling environment has been created in both the policy and project level within Rwanda around the development of horticulture and aquaculture, **2025 saw changes in policy environments which poses a challenge for the coherence and potential synergies of KWIHAZA**. The overall changing donor landscape with large budget cuts from USAID as well as many European countries has affected previously initiated exchange formats between the KWIHAZA project and other donors, such as the above-mentioned

[50] Enabel.- NDICI/2022/437-658. (2024). Description of the Action. Annex 1 of the contribution agreement of the European Union. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[51] Some of the project activities of PRISM continue with the support of IFAD. Yet, the direct exchange between the KWIHAZA and PRISM team nevertheless appears to be affected as stated by the interviewees.
[52] For the skills development, an aquaculture curriculum and corresponding training manuals were developed by RTB with support of the Uganda Fisheries Training Institute through the framework of an operational agreement. A pilot (instead of full scale roll out) shall be implemented through working with commercial farms to host students for a 6-months Industrial based training. The plan was to fully rollout the training course in the framework of the PRISMII project, within their RTB grant- that was since been halted.

Development Partners in Aquaculture Platform which has not been realising meetings since 2025. This influences the exchange of expertise and harmonisation of efforts in the sector.

In the Description of the Action of KWIHAZA as well as in its Inception Report, the KWMFP was mentioned as a flagship initiative for KWIHAZA to synergise with. Moreover, as a large project with similar implementing partners and Rwandan public institutions addressing the same challenges (post-harvest losses, increasing domestic sales and exports for SMEs, the potential is clear, yet it was only mentioned in one KII with the EUD and other stakeholders did not seem to identify them. This may be because KWIHAZA is still only at its mid-term, and that more synergies will be sought in the second half.

3.2.4 Relevance / Effectiveness / Efficiency / Sustainability: To what extent has the multi-level partnership approach – including government agencies, research centers, and field actors such as cooperatives – contributed to achieving results and ensuring sustainability? (Q3)[53]

Suitability of the implementation measures chosen for this action (Q3.2)

The **implementation measures chosen for this action appear largely appropriate from an administrative standpoint** despite some pitfalls. Delays have occurred due to subcontracting procedures at NAEB and RAB, highlighting the importance of initiating tendering and contracting processes early and integrating them into the overall project timeline. Additionally, NAEB and RAB were not initially included as key partners in the project design, necessitating a later approval by the PSC —an avoidable step had they been considered during the planning phase. Nevertheless, the multi-level partnership model and the use of grants and service contracts fosters both complementarity of expertise and ownership among Rwandan stakeholders, which, in view of the evaluation team, outweighs its negative aspects.

Technically, the measures are relevant and responsive to the needs of the target group, already contributing to tangible improvements. Nonetheless, challenges persist, particularly regarding access to quality fingerlings. A change in the feed provision strategy—where only two of the three planned batches were delivered—resulted in suboptimal fish sizes. In response, the project will shift in the next cycle from subsidised Tilapia feed to Catfish and fingerlings only, without feed subsidies. This adjustment reflects a learning process and a proactive approach to overcoming implementation hurdles.

Relation between budget and project results achieved (Q3.3)

The KWIHAZA project has a total budget of 17.5 Mio € available. A budgetary increase of 2 Mio € was granted during the first year of implementation in 2023 through a top-up by the Government of Luxembourg.[54] In 2024, the project was granted a one year no-cost extension of project implementation time, increasing the duration of the project from 48 to 60 months (January 2023 until December 2027).[55][56] By the end of September 2025, 33 months of implementation, i.e., 55% of the time have passed.

[53] Question 3.1 was answered in section 3.2.1, criterion "Relevance"
[54] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (March 2024). Annual Report 2023. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[55] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[56] Enabel/Kwihaza team. 2024. Minutes of the Third Steering Committee meeting – September 11th 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

Table 7 Summary of KWIHAZA project budget execution September 2025

	Costs Type		Budget (planned)	Planned share of total budget	Actuals	Share of budget spent (actuals)	Variance	Execution rate
A	**Total Operational Costs**		**14.513.610**	**83%**	**2.627.355**	**64%**	**11.886.255**	**18%**
	Operational	Result 1	5.156.238	29%	1.295.417	31%	3.860.820	25%
	Operational	Result 2	5.963.004	34%	467.859	11%	5.495.144	8%
	Operational	Result 3	3.394.369	19%	864.079	21%	2.530.290	25%
B	**General Means**		**1.761.390**	**10%**	**827.105**	**20%**	**934.285**	**47%**
	General Means	Administrative costs	1.300.537	7%	536.568	13%	763.969	41%
	General Means	Running costs	165.853	1%	117.717	3%	48.136	71%
	General Means	M&E	295.000	2%	172.819	4%	122.181	59%
C=A+B	**Total budget excl. 7% structure costs**		**16.275.000**		**3.454.460**	**84%**	**12.820.540**	**21%**
	Administration Fee	7% Structure costs	1.225.000	7%	673.750	16%		
	Total Budget		**17.500.000**	**100%**	**4.128.210**			

gives an overview of the planned and current use of the KWIHAZA budget. Operational costs (planned: 83%) include all technical activities as well as the technical project staff (project manager, aquaculture expert, horticulture expert, private sector development expert, grant officer), while the part for general means (planned: 10%) includes administrative costs (office administrator, drivers, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), procurement, accountants, etc.), running costs for the office, and M&E expenditures. In addition, the project pays a 7% administration fee to the Enabel headquarter, resulting in a total of 17% planned administrative expenditures.

The **envisioned distribution of 83% for operational costs across the three result areas can be evaluated to be reasonable**. The distribution of these operational costs across the three different result areas are in line with the inputs required. Envisioned budgets for result area 1 and 2 are higher, as they demand higher input in terms of human resources but also for technical trainings, intensive coaching and the subsidies of the financial tools. Activities in result area 3 (e.g., elaboration of policy documents, support of exchange platforms in horticulture and aquaculture, MSC task forces), are less resource intensive.

Operational expenses for result 1 and 3 are at 25% execution rates, while those for result 2, in line with the aforementioned delays, are only at 8% execution rate. Since not linked to specific results but mostly covered by continuous contracts with regular expenses, the administrative costs and overall general means are at a higher execution rate with 41% and 47% respectively. Due to the slower pick-up of some of the project activities, this also results in a currently higher share of administrative costs (13% actual vs. 7% planned) which is likely to even out until the end of the project implementation. The overall administrative costs with the administration costs at project office and the administration fee to Enabel headquarters amount to 17% of the overall project value are reasonable.**Total execution of the project budget after more than half of the implementation period is only at 21%.** Explanatory factors include a) a generally later pick-up of technical activities in projects as the first months consume time and resources to recruit a team, establish communication structures, plan activities and similar, b) the time needed for tendering or procurement procedures and several changes linked to it (e.g., BRD availability under result 2), and c) the political situation in the beginning of 2025 which affected overall project and hence also financial execution[57].

[57] Enabel/Kwihaza team. 2025. Minutes of the Kwihaza Technical Committee Meeting held 5th August 2025. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

It is important to mention that the numbers for "variance" include amounts already committed in grant agreements with IPs and running tenders for which payments are done based on a structured payment schedule. According to the latest Technical Committee meeting, **commitments were at 97% (February 2025), indicating that the basis was laid for a higher use of means moving onwards**.[58] Overall, there are no indications that the project is run inefficiently or that expenses are spread unsound between operations and administration or across the different result areas.

Chances for long-lasting results and changes at target group and systemic level (Q3.4)

The project shows promising potential for generating sustainable results both at the target group and systemic levels. At the target group level, **cooperatives and SMEs demonstrate strong ownership and intrinsic motivation, applying newly acquired skills,** using digital tools such as financial software, and leveraging certifications to access new markets. Many beneficiaries state that they are already sharing their knowledge within their organisations, which supports internal capacity building and continuity beyond the project's duration. Coaching has emerged as a key success factor, with beneficiaries consistently affirming its importance for translating training contents into practice.

Implementation methods such as the model farm approach or farmer field schools which **focus on peer-to-peer learning also provide the basis for long-lasting results**, having individuals become experts in their field and known for this expertise in their environment. Incentive structures such as the potential for cluster farms under the model farm approach to graduate to model farms lay the basis for performance and ownership among the beneficiaries.

At systemic level, the introduction of the CoopsDMS tool holds potential for broader institutional change. UGAMA's efforts to engage the Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA) in adopting the tool for cooperative monitoring—regardless of the value chain—could lead to long-term improvements in cooperative governance and data management. Similarly, the **mobilisation of youth to join cooperatives lays a foundation for generational renewal and sustained engagement in value chains**.

In aquaculture, investments in research infrastructure and capacity building, such as the UR hatchery, are expected to support sustainable fingerling production. Plans to use this infrastructure for future training programmes further reinforce its long-term utility. Additionally, the shift toward catfish production, which requires lower feed quality, may enhance sustainability by reducing input costs. Yet, it remains to be seen if consumers are open to consume a different, and less known fish species and thus create the necessary demand.

However, several factors may limit the durability of these outcomes:

- At the moment of the evaluation, some training activities (still) lacked a coaching component—particularly those delivered by ThinkAqua and the University of Liège—which could reduce their long-term impact. According to Kwihaza staff, the training conducted by the University of Liège will be complemented with a follow-up activity on curricula development and testing with the RTB.[59] The coaching period of about one year provided by HoReCo is considered short by a few stakeholders compared to other farmer field school models.

[58] Enabel/Kwihaza team. 2025. Minutes of the Kwihaza Technical Committee Meeting held 5th August 2025. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[59] According to the KWIHAZA team, a regional actor was chosen on purpose for the curriculum development to develop more contextualised solutions.

- For cooperative management, the affordability of digital tools like CoopsDMS will be critical to ensure continued use. Beneficiaries generally stated that they would be willing to pay for the software in the future if the price was reasonable.
- The financial mechanisms developed in the context of KWIHAZA will only be available for a limited duration (24 months) and with the subsidies of interest rate provided by the project, which is why the sustainable provision of access to finance and thus long-lasting change remains a concern. The AFR indicated that they are currently conducting a study investigating the long-term possibilities for inclusive financial mechanisms, in the context of which they would like to bring on board different development partners. The goal would be to create something which is also financially supported by the Rwandan Government which would be key to sustainability.
- Past experiences suggest that subsidised inputs such as feed and fingerlings do not foster lasting ownership. Moreover, limited availability and accessibility of high-quality fish feed do remain an issue, posing a risk to aquaculture productivity and/or the nutrition value of the produce. The issue is addressed by KWIHAZA at small scale through the hatchery construction at the UR Rwasave Fish Farming and Research Station, but more high-quality feed factories would still be necessary. The UR plans to have its private arm, UR Holding, use the hatchery premises and sell the fingerlings and feed to producers. The envisioned prices are not known at this stage.
- Some aquaculture cooperatives also express reluctance to pay for extension services, preferring to rely on trained members or occasional support from RAB. This raises some uncertainty regarding the long-lasting results of the project activities related to aquaculture extension service provision (result 1).

Multi-level partnerships facilitating or impeding implementation and/or enhancing/hindering outcomes (Q3.5)

The multi-level partnership structure of the project has played a significant role in advancing results and fostering sustainability. In the interviews, **the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders—including government institutions, service providers, and IPs—has been widely appreciated for its complementarity and its contribution to ownership**. For example, NAEB and RAB were actively involved in the development of standards by RSB, alongside MINAGRI's role in awareness-raising, which helped ensure that technical and regulatory aspects are well-integrated and locally anchored. Similarly, UGAMA and IRONA will be involved in the AFR investment committee which makes sure that they can contribute their knowledge of the target beneficiaries in the process. Among the grant recipients, roles seem to be clearly defined, and each partner is recognised for their specific expertise.

Despite these strengths, some challenges have emerged. A few partners expressed concern that the involvement of too many actors can lead to confusion at the beneficiary level, especially when different service providers target the same group. This concern could partially be confirmed during the interviews in the field where confusion seemed to exist between Enabel, Kwihaza, and the different service providers. This indicates a **need to establish a more coherent visibility as one project**. One IP also noted a lack of harmonisation between activities—for instance, not all SMEs being supported by RSB for certification were included in the business development training provided by IRONA, and there was a partial overlap between ThinkAqua and RARICO in aquaculture support at the level of the model farms.[60] These issues have, in some cases, reduced the efficiency of implementation. It could not be fully clarified in the context of the evaluation if and to what extent, SMEs that are targeted for technical support are also targeted for BDS

[60] In addition to this training, ThinkAqua covered several other trainings, e.g. training of feed manufacturers (conducted) and training on post-harvest handling (fish value addition and product development, planned).

support by IRONA. Equally, the overlap between cooperatives that receive governance support by UGAMA and those that receive technical training either through RARICO or HoReCo remains unclear.

Due to the intertwined nature of the activities, the **delays in access to finance have had a sort of domino effect on other partners' activities, slowing down other activities such as infrastructure procurement** and certification processes. This illustrates the downside of a multi-level partnership as different service providers and their activities are dependent on each other to a certain extent.

Local actors showing ownership in the implementation of the action (Q3.6)

The interviews revealed that Rwandan public counterparts generally show significant ownership since they are actively involved in the project activities and have clear responsibilities under their grant agreements. IPs appreciate their visibility and direct engagement with beneficiaries and service providers and perceive it to be essential for ensuring continuity beyond the project's duration. However, a minority of IPs suggest that this ownership could be further strengthened to enhance long-term impact. The question was raised who would take over the stakeholder coordination after the KWIHAZA implementation and once the KWIHAZA team will not be present anymore. It was argued that the creation of a coordination structure located at one of the IPs, e.g. MINAGRI, could further increase the level of ownership and chances for sustainability.

At the beneficiary level, cooperatives and SMEs generally also show a level of ownership as outlined in question Q3.4. Nevertheless, in some cases ownership is somewhat limited as a minority of stakeholders indicate that they prefer to use their limited financial means for the investment in technical equipment and feed instead of the procurement of IT equipment. Without the latter, the use of knowledge and skills acquired during the IRONA training are limited in scope.

Institutional capacity strengthening and creating the basis for sustained outcomes/impact beyond the project's duration (Q3.7)

At the level of IPs, it was highlighted by one institution that they acquired valuable project planning and management as well as budget planning skills which they will make use of for future projects.

At beneficiary level, the trainers of SMEs and cooperatives on cooperative governance and BDS confirmed that through the introduction of new management procedures, institutions are set up to function more effectively and efficiently, compliant with overall regulations. In some cases, management structures were also established, such as an executive and/or supervisor committee in the case of cooperatives. These structures can be expected to strengthen the capacities of the target institutions, support them in the fulfilment of their mandate and hence create the basis for sustainable impacts also beyond KWIHAZA activities.

3.2.5 Efficiency / Relevance: To what extent are grants, tenders and public-public agreements effective tools for achieving the project's objectives in the given context? (Q4)

The chosen implementing tools (grants, tenders, public-public agreements) as mechanism for the project implementation (Q4.1)

The KWIHAZA project implementation is done by the KWIHAZA team in country (PMU) set up by Enabel. The team oversees and coordinates the overall project while providing technical expertise to the actors involved. Key implementing tools for the project activities are

- Employment contracts of technical staff at the level of the KWIHAZA team / PMU,
- Direct grants to public institutions where KWIHAZA/Enabel fulfils the contracting authority role. This applies, for instance, to the cases of AFR, RAB, NAEB, MINAGRI, RSB, and RICA;
- Subcontracting via public contracts (services, works and supplies) and following official tender procedures. This applies, for instance, to IRONA, individual consultants or ThinkAqua;
- Use of existing framework contracts, e.g., with the University of Liège;
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), e.g., with the University of Rwanda.[61]

The agreements are summarised in the table below:

Table 8 Key implementation Partners

Granting Authority	Modality	Result Area	Start Date	End Date	Amount (EUR)
AFR	Direct grant	2	23. Dec 24	31. Dec 27	2,677,509
RAB	Direct grant	1, 3	05. Jan 24	30. Sep 26	2,280,929
NAEB	Direct grant	1, 3	20. Dec 23	30. Sep 26	1,512,500
ADA	Direct grant	2	25. Jul 24	31. Oct 26	612,261
UGAMA	Grant	1	17. Oct 24	31. Aug 26	555,997
MINAGRI	Direct grant	3	27. Dec 23	30. Sep 26	250,000
RICA	Direct grant	2, 3	11. Dec 23	30. Sep 26	199,843
RSB	Direct grant	2	19. Dec 23	30. Sep 26	198,820
University of Liège	FWC with Enabel	1	20. Nov 24	20. May 25	62,080
UR	MoU	1, 2	23. Nov 23	30. Jun 28	180,000
Tristoves Ltd (Baseline Study)	Tender		9. Nov 23	24. May 24	70,016
IRONA	Tender	2	05. Apr 24	05. Aug 25	350,290
AESA East Africa	Tender	3	26. Sep 23	18. Jun 24	98,925
Monitoring Consulting Group Ltd	Tender	3	-		74,694
Individual Consultant	Tender	2			48,000
VIRBAC	Tender	3	13. Nov 23	16. Dec 24	76,100
ThinkAqua	Tender	1	6. Feb 24	Ongoing	149,960
COFAD	Tender	3	10. Mar 24	Ongoing	54,500
SHER	FWC with Enabel	3	12. Oct 23	11. Nov 24	109,912
Fisheries Training Institute Uganda & Rwanda TVET Board	Operational Agreement	1, 2	21 Feb. 25	30. Aug 26	66,360

Source: Partnership Agreements and Annual Report 2024[62]

[61] Enabel.- NDICI/2022/437-658. (2024). Description of the Action. Annex 1 of the contribution agreement of the European Union. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.
[62] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

In addition to these direct agreements between the project and the institutions mentioned, the grant recipients contract further stakeholders such as HoReCo (contracted by NAEB) or RARICO (contracted by RAB).

While this set-up and multitude of partners come with several advantages such as higher ownership, increased chances for sustainability and a complementarity of expertise (see also section 3.2.4), it is also linked to several challenges:

- A few stakeholders mentioned that tendering procedures can be very lengthy. In some cases, contracts needed to be advertised twice as no suitable service provider could be identified. This directly affects the project's timely implementation since tendering procedures do take time and reduce time for the actual implementation. Repeated need for tendering could be linked to the highlighted challenge to identify the right profiles or expertise within Rwanda.
- At the level of public entities, slow procedures are an overall challenge and reason for delay.
- In the case of governmental partners, the project had to provide close assistance and explanations for calls for proposals which in turn is resource and time consuming.
- In the case of the UR, an MoU was signed instead of a grant agreement for the construction works of the hatchery. This was explicitly wished for by the UR to save time (as tendering procedures at the UR also are lengthy). While this setup has overall been appreciated by the UR, it also comes with a challenge that another entity (here: the KWIHAZA team) is responsible for a service provider acting at their premises. This has led to difficulties in communication with the service provider when the UR had comments on design and execution.

As soon as agreements are signed, implementation appears to be running more smoothly overall. In addition to financial reporting, partners provide biannual reports to the KWIHAZA team and report in the context of the Project Steering and Technical Committees as well as stakeholder workshops (see question below). Frequent follow-ups by the KWIHAZA team and catch-up plans in case of delays try to ensure a timely implementation.

However, further sub-contracting at the level of the partner institutions comes with further challenges and can, in some cases (here: NAEB) pose a challenge to the timely implementation of activities. What exactly may be differences in procedures between the different public entities (e.g., why NAEB is significantly delayed as opposed to RAB) involved could not be clarified in the context of this evaluation.

The implementation modality: its efficiency, responsiveness to the context of the action and effectiveness in delivering results (Q4.2)

Grants, tenders, and public-public agreements have proven to be generally effective tools for achieving the project's objectives and remain still responsive to the context of KWIHAZA and its changing environment. They foster ownership among national stakeholders compared to Technical Assistance delivery through a project team alone. Key to the modality's effectiveness is, according to all IPs, the **high quality of project coordination provided by the KWIHAZA team.** They particularly appreciated:

- The PSC which meets twice a year and discusses overall progress of the project and necessary corrective measures or catch-up plans if needed.

- The stakeholder workshops provide a forum for IPs to discuss technical activities and progress and ensure an exchange of expertise, while maintaining efficient deliberation at the Steering Committees[63].
- The responsiveness of the KWIHAZA team related to ad-hoc questions and provision of technical advice that further strengthens partner coordination and engagement as well as their support in the financial and technical reporting.
- The flexibility of the project to adjust depending on partner institutions' needs. E.g., in the case of UR, a Memorandum of Understanding as opposed to a grant agreement was preferred which was made possible by the project.

The efficiency and effectiveness of implementation is sometimes affected by procedural and coordination challenges linked to the nature of public bodies. **Lengthy tendering processes have caused delays in key activities**, such as those involving RAB (tender for RARICO) and NAEB. In some cases, the project tried to mitigate these delays by taking over tendering procedures (i.e., recruitment of ThinkAqua), which led to progress but also introduced issues of unclear accountability and overlapping responsibilities. In the case of the access to finance result area, the sudden non-availability of the BRD also shows a downside of this implementation modality as the project is to a certain extent dependent on the availability, collaboration and transparency of (potential) IPs.

A few partners have raised concerns about the complexity of the multi-actor setup, noting that overlapping roles and insufficient harmonisation—such as SMEs working with RSB not being included in IRONA's business development training, or partial overlaps between ThinkAqua and RARICO—can reduce efficiency and create confusion at the beneficiary level.

Identified challenges and opportunities in the use of these tools as well as their resource allocation efficiency (Q4.3)

The following table summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the chosen implementation modality for KWIHAZA with grants, tenders and public-public agreements.

Table 9 SWOT-analysis of the implementing tools applied

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Ownership and responsible involvement of partner institutions** • **Complementarity of technical expertise** • **Promotion of the dialogue and collaboration between the public and the private sector** • **Generally guaranteed funding after overall approval of project funds (no reductions during the project duration)**	• Delays due to lengthy tendering procedures esp. at public institutions • Limited influence/authority by the PMU on contract delivery pace after signature besides soft tools such as catch-up plans • Time-consuming follow-ups for the PMU • Potentially lacking alternatives in case of key public institutions for specific sectors
Opportunities	**Threats**
• **Provision of a basis for sustainability of project activities** • **Possibility to add cross-cutting issues such as climate-smart practices in the agreements and thereby set a focus of the planned activities** • **Replicability of the model for other public and/or private institutions**	• Unexpected dropouts of partners after time-consuming planning processes, time-consuming search for alternatives • Delayed contract delivery with limited means of influence or contract enforcement • Insecurity regarding finances and payments at the level of IPs in times of political uncertainty

[63] In addition to the stakeholder workshops, Technical Committees meetings are held at ad hoc with technical staff from EU, LuxDev, MINAGRI, RAB and other partners to ensure efficient Steering Committee updates on progress and resolutions.

3.2.6 Unintended effects: What unintended effects of the project (positive and/or negative) can be observed, and what consequences can be identified in relation to the project objectives? (Q5)

Generation of unexpected effects (positive or negative) (Q5.1 & 5.2)

While unintended effects on the local economy, marginalisation of the environment could not be identified during the field visit or the document analysis, several other unintended side effects did become evident, all of which are positive and in line with KWIHAZA's overarching objectives:

1. One of the most notable outcomes is the emergence of the CoopsDMS software through UGAMA's activities, as the software was programmed in the beginning of UGAMA's involvement in the project. Besides contributing to the professionalisation of the KWIHAZA target cooperatives, this tool has the potential to drive systemic change in cooperative management and monitoring, as UGAMA is planning to spread the tool outside of KWIHAZA and to eventually present it to the RCA for broader use beyond the project scope.
2. Similarly, the financial mechanisms to be introduced under the project have resulted in better-than-expected loan conditions for beneficiaries. For the loans, the project was planning to reduce the regular market interest rate of around 18% to 10%. In the end and following negotiations with the KWIHAZA team, the financial institutions involved decided to lower the interest rate even further to only 8%.
3. At the institutional level, one IP reports about capacity development benefits, by gaining valuable experience in project planning, budgeting, and alignment in collaboration with the KWIHAZA team.
4. On the ground, some SMEs have begun to establish business relationships with aquaculture cooperatives, indicating early signs of vertical integration within value chains. Additionally, a few processing SMEs have started to provide or intensify extension services to their supplying farmers, promoting conservation agriculture principles and contributing to knowledge transfer.
5. Youth mobilisation efforts have also led to unintended but positive effects. The modernisation of horticulture cooperatives is attracting younger members, which supports generational renewal and long-term sustainability of cooperative structures.

No negative unintended effects were identified during the evaluation.

Adjustments to be made to avoid / increase these unexpected effects for the remainder of the implementation (Q5.3)

The project could potentially try to further strengthen or increase the unintended effects 3-5 in the following ways:

- Further share knowledge and expertise with the IPs, potentially also depending on their preferences and learning needs in project management, planning, and budgeting;
- Actively promote the interlinkages between different target beneficiaries along the value chain while promoting their graduation and independence from UGAMAs support;
- In line with the overall priorities, implement further youth mobilisation efforts at cooperative level.

3.2.7 Cross-cutting theme environment/sustainability: To what extent are the project activities in line with an ecosystem approach to aquaculture and horticulture development? (Q6)

Implementation of a strategic approach for sustainable pond and aquaculture operations (Q6.1)

As outlined under Section 3.2.3 on Coherence, KWIHAZA is aligned well with the policy environments that drive sustainable pond and aquaculture operations, especially with regards to PSTA 5 and NST2, and National Aquaculture Strategy for Rwanda.

The NABEP, produced within the framework of the KWIHAZA project, considers in its guiding principles that "Improved aquatic health management measures should facilitate aquatic development in harmony with nature, manage and minimise transient environmental impacts and avoid significant, cumulative, long-term and irreversible changes to ecosystems, cultural remains or valued landscape and scenery." Indeed, the practical guidelines of the biosecurity plan propose practices to reduce the loss of aquatic biodiversity through environmental monitoring or adapted carrying capacities.

The mapping of fishponds and zones for lake cage farming, implementing an Ecosystem Approach to Aquaculture development has been completed by the KWIHAZA project for Lake Muhazi. This important work was coordinated with government authorities and GATSBY Africa who did similar work on Lake Kivu.

Contribution of capacity building, training and extension efforts to the dissemination of more sustainable production practices (Q6.2)

Through the document review and different interviews, the evaluators were able to see that several **KWIHAZA capacity building, training and extension actions considered an ecosystem approach to horticulture and aquaculture as a cross-cutting thematic** and thus contribute to the dissemination of more sustainable production practices.

While field activities in horticulture are only starting due to some delays, interviewees confirmed that activities planned will be/ are aligned with the country's sustainable strategic policies and strategic priorities. More specifically, trainings facilitated by HoReCo are **promoting the use of good agricultural practices and post-harvest loss management**. Besides the activities performed by HoReCo, actors such as SMEs who are also providing extension services to their providers, indicated to train them on conservation agriculture principles which is in line with the overall KWIHAZA priorities and contributes to the dissemination of sustainable production practices even beyond the expected scope of the project activities.

In aquaculture, the report of the theoretical and practical Training of Trainers (ToT) conducted by the University of Liège does not specifically mention ecosystems risks.[64] Yet, the trainers explained that the curriculum was produced in line with sustainable pond aquaculture. It covers the production with different fish species adapted to the environment, different systems for aquaculture with some of them being more sustainable (e.g. aquaponics, systems specially designed to save water), waste management. RARICO, in charge of training programme for the model farmers, highlighted that they include aspects such as pond fertilisation with organic manure in their trainings which is a recycling waste management and hence also in line with a dissemination of more sustainable production practices.

It became also visible during the field visit that some stakeholders' practices were improved in terms of an ecosystem approach to aquaculture or fisheries following the project activities:

[64] University of Liège. (2025). Theoretical and practical training to trainers in aquaculture. Final activities report. KWIHAZA. Rwanda.

- Aquahorts Exports Ltd took care of the good placement of the hatchery with a buffer zone for operations; they have a hatchery water treatment before it enters the ecosystem, and they follow recommendations on the use of environmentally friendly products.
- KOPPIKA, a fishing cooperative in Rwamagana uses appropriate fish nets and they respect two months per year without fishing from April to June to increase fish production.
- The Rubavu Fishing Union surveils and monitors illegal fishing activities in the Lake Kivu (using mosquito nets). Any illegal fishers who are interrupted are retrained as incentives to adhere to legal approaches.

3.2.8 Cross-cutting theme environment/sustainability: To what extent are the project activities intentional in mainstreaming climate smart practices/solutions to support climate change adaptation and resilience? (Q7)

Awareness of the implicated/involved actors about climate smart practices (Q7.1)

Through FGDs and KII, project beneficiaries reported to be aware of climate smart practices such as irrigation, composting, integrating trees in farms (agroforestry), timely planting/adjustment of the cropping calendar depending on the shifts of the season, using improved varieties well adapted to the climate and short-growing cycle varieties. While this awareness cannot necessarily contribute to the KWIHAZA activities, it nevertheless confirms that actors involved to have the topic of climate change in mind – also because their work and life realities do not allow to ignore it, as stated by some in the interviews.

Promotion of climate smart practices by the project (Q7.2)

Climate change adaptation and resilience are less visible in the KWIHAZA project than the ecosystem approach. The evaluation team could not identify a national strategic document that the project refers to. In consequence, it was noted that there are very **few references to climate smart practices and solutions in KWIHAZA documents**. Only the 2024 annual report mentions some actions where climate adaptation is considered: the project plans to launch a call for innovative, inclusive and climate-smart approaches to reduce post-harvest losses[65]. In terms of infrastructures, it is mentioned that the central packhouse at NAEB will be renovated to increase its capacity and make it more climate smart.

During the interviews, there were also various references to climate adaptation and resilience when talking to the partners, although it was not always identified as climate solutions as such, but for example ways to reduce the energy consumption.

In specific project activities, HoReCo through an agreement with NAEB focuses on coaching and building capacities of beneficiaries to promote the adoption of improved and sustainable farming practices. HoReCo started the implementation towards the end of May 2025 with the assessment of the status of knowledge, socio-economic aspects etc. of the cooperatives, identification of sites for demo plots and identification of lead farmers. At the time of evaluation, activities related to establishing nurseries were starting with a plan to establish 120 model plots focusing on four key crops (avocado, passion fruit, tomato, and onion) through which over 2,400 farmers will acquire practical knowledge and skills in modern agricultural techniques, post-harvest handling, and market linkage development to ensure quality production and improved incomes. HoReCo is promoting seedlings production techniques in shed nets using peatmoss and quality hybrid seeds to produce disease-free seedlings are likely to improve the availability of stronger seedlings

[65] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

which can stand harsh climatic conditions and give higher yields[66]. Given that most of horticulture crops especially vegetables are produced in dry season (season C), **climate smart practices such irrigation and conservation agriculture are very crucial for the success of the KWIHAZA project** actions in horticulture. HoReCo indicates to address these issues, integrating aspects such as timely adjustment of the agricultural (irrigation and cropping) calendar depending on the shifts of the seasons, using improved varieties adapted best to the chancing conditions, or efficient water management in their trainings.

In aquaculture, some climate smart solutions are also shared with the beneficiaries or already applied. The University of Liège presented during its training options of low-energy requirements for aquaculture production systems. The transformation of open earthen ponds at the UR Rwasave fish farms into an indoors (greenhouse) facility aimed to facilitate temperature regulation at the fingerling stage and intensify production by manipulating the production system. This is a climate smart adaptation measure to increase resilience and avoid uncertainties due to weather conditions. In addition, the UR uses a solar unit that provides renewable energy for the hatchery. RARICO trains fish farmers on the efficient use of water, knowing that there is a certain water use conflict in the marshland. Also, fishponds located in the marshland are prone to floods and erosion which are frequent in the rainy season. To deal with these challenges, farmers are mobilised to clean the water, remove sediment and mud to allow water to flow in the rivers and dams that are in the vicinity.

Actors' intention to continue to apply the adequate practices to support climate change adaptation (Q7.3)

Though HoReCo is only starting its field activities, some climate resilient practices were already discussed during mobilisation meetings. The lead facilitator approach has the potential to promote the long-term use of climate-smart practices since lead farmers will work with other cooperative members daily. Additionally, some beneficiary cooperatives already mobilise and train their members on compost production and use, planting fruit trees and water use efficiency by establishing water distribution plan to all cooperative members in different parts of the marshland as well as soil erosion control on the upper part of the marshland. It is anticipated that beneficiaries will continue to apply and streamline those practices when they will be promoted by HoReCo.

Yet, all these measures are low-cost adaptation techniques as the availability of irrigation and rainwater harvesting equipment as well as lack of materials to apply conservation agriculture practices like mulching at a larger scale.

[66] Enabel – NDICI/2022/437-658 Project team. (December 2024). Annual Report 2024. Transformation towards sustainable food systems – Kwihaza. Rwanda.

4 Conclusions

Kwihaza impact pathways can overall be confirmed at this stage:

Result level:

1) Trainings and coaching on cooperative governance, improved extension services and supported training and research centres do strengthen the capacities of smallholder organisations along the targeted value chains.
2) Trainings and coaching for SMEs on BDS, certification procedures, and supported youth entrepreneurship strengthen these actors active in the targeted value chains, lead to job creation / company growth and contribute to more sustainable (and safer) food systems.
3) Awareness-raising at the local level, strengthened quality standards for food safety and structuring of the targeted value chains mainly via exchange platforms, do support the environment for inclusive value chain development.

Objective level:

- The preliminary results of KWIHAZA do suggest that the above in turn contribute to higher income generation and more inclusivity of the targeted value chains.

The findings presented above further lead to the following key conclusions of this MTR:

Table 10 Conclusions of the MTR

No.	Description	Criteria
CO1	The KWIHAZA project is in line with Rwanda's priorities and policies. It addresses needs at sector and target group level, in particular related to cooperative governance, access to finance, certification, business development, and market access. The project lays a strong focus on production so far. Activities related to market access and market linkages are less prominent and yet highly demanded by different stakeholders.	Relevance
CO2	After 2,5 years of implementation, strongest progress can be registered in result 1 (capacity improvement of smallholder organisations) and result 3 (conducive policy environment), more specifically related to cooperative governance, SME business development and SME certification. Activities are significantly delayed in result 2 (access to finance) and across the horticulture value chain (result 1, 3), partially due to external factors such as the unavailability of project partners.	Effectiveness
CO3	While the KWIHAZA activities do address a bandwidth of challenges across the three value chains, some activities could be intensified. The fisheries sector is only addressed with a few sub-activities (e.g., MSC taskforces). While this is a good start more efforts are needed to create a real impact and added value for this value chain. A prioritisation of	Effectiveness

	fewer activities or value chains or addressing fisheries in a separate, dedicated project could potentially have increased impact.	
CO4	The focus on gender and youth is successfully mainstreamed throughout all project activities. Among others, this is ensured via careful needs assessments and purposive beneficiary selection. Nevertheless, in some areas gender or youth are difficult to mobilise, either due to a seeming unattractiveness of the sector (here: aquaculture) or socio-cultural issues which are difficult to be influenced by the project.	Cross-cutting theme Gender & Inclusion, Effectiveness
CO5	As part of the Team Europe Initiative, the KWIHAZA project is overall coherent with other actions and fills thematic gaps, in particular for a) aquaculture and b) selected value chains in horticulture. The project is actively looking for synergies with other actions, but successes were reduced due to the changing donor landscape.	Coherence, Efficiency
CO6	Capacity development provides a sound basis for the application of new knowledge and skills. It is, however, important that this is accompanied by a series of coaching sessions to ensure long-lasting results and increased ownership among the beneficiaries. Most activities of KWIHAZA do foresee a coaching component.	Effectiveness, Sustainability
CO7	For cooperative governance, the software CoopsDMS introduced by UGAMA is welcomed by the beneficiaries. The software has the chance to even create systemic change. Yet, some actors chose not to profit from this technology because they lack either the financial means to procure or the staff to manage the tool. There is therefore still room to increase the effectiveness of this activity. Long-term success chances will depend on the affordability of the tool after the KWIHAZA support.	Effectiveness, Sustainability
CO8	Low quality and accessibility of fish feeds remain a critical issue which are partially addressed by a) constructions at the UR (hatchery) and a b) focus on catfish which is less demanding in terms of feed. The planned transfer of the management of the hatchery to the UR Holding could pose a potential risk that fingerlings and feed produced at the UR hatchery may become more difficult to afford for smallholder producers if sold by a private entity.	Sustainability
CO9	While the access to finance component and subsidised loan mechanisms are highly demanded by the variety of stakeholders, the products will be only available for 24 months / the duration of KWIHAZA. The sustainability of these products and improvement of access to finance will therefore depend on a long-term solution – independent from specific project activities.	Relevance, Effectiveness, Sustainability
CO10	The multi-level partnership of KWIHAZA provides room for complementarity of expertise. Nevertheless, it also entails the challenge of interdependence of activities and has led to a certain confusion at the level of the beneficiaries. In this regard, KWIHAZA still has the potential to increase its harmonised visibility to be perceived as one project in the	Effectiveness /Efficiency

	field despite the amount of actors involved. The amount of partners, their coordination and support does consume time and resources at the level of the KWIHAZA team. The amount of partners to be involved need to be weighed against time and resources needed for granting and tendering procedures as well as follow-ups.	
CO11	Implementing tools such as grant agreements and tenders have the chance to involve a variety of stakeholders, lay the basis for ownership and intensify the exchange between public and private entities. A strong coordination is key as performed by the KWIHAZA team. However, tender procedures – in particular at public institutions – often create delays which can affect overall project delivery. Mitigating measures such as close follow-ups or catch-up plans can only try to strengthen the performance to a certain extent.	Efficiency/ Relevance
CO12	Already mid-way through the implementation, the KWIHAZA project can register several unintended, positive effects which are in line with its overall objective.	Unintended effects
CO13	The ecosystem approach to aquaculture, fisheries and horticulture is visible in the documents and actions of the project. This is well received and sustainable practices are implemented by the actors and seem to be sustainable. Climate adaptation and resilience practices are less visible although such practices are covered in the training courses and actors are also implementing it. The ecosystem approach and the climate adaptation and resilience should be mentioned in the service providers contracts.	Cross-cutting theme Environment
	The KWIHAZA MEL system is missing an update of indicator values in June 2025 for 61 out of 75 indicators. For most of them, an update is only planned for June 2026. This affects the possibility to efficiently perform results-based management and take corrective actions, adjust target values or similar. Monitoring (particularly in terms of indicator monitoring) needs to happen timely. If issues with data collection exist, they should be addressed as soon as possible.	Effectiveness

5 Recommendations

On the basis of the previous analysis and the main conclusions, the following recommendations were developed by the evaluation team:

Table 11 Recommendations from the evaluation team

Recommendation	Related conclusion(s)	Targeted actor(s)	Level	Priority	Type
Rec.1: Develop a Sustainability Strategy for Financial Mechanisms and Follow-up for Inclusive Financing Support the development of a sustainability strategy for the financial mechanisms to find a follow-up possibility for access to finance without reliance on donor projects in order to maintain long-term, local financial access/opportunities to beneficiaries. For this, the study currently being developed by AFR can build an entry point. Equally, it could be assessed if there is a possibility to integrate follow-up solutions for inclusive financing with existing EU or EIB credit lines.[67]	CO9 (main conclusion), CO4 (related conclusion)	KWIHAZA team in collaboraiton with EUD, AFR, MINAGRI, ADA, LuxDev	2	Medium-term	Strategic
Rec.2: Develop a Long-Term Sustainability Strategy and Handover of the MEL Framework for Continuity after the Project End Lay the basis for continuity after the end of the project and without the coordination through the KWIHAZA team to ensure long-term longevity with Rwandan ownership. This could include the development of a handing over strategy and the clarification of a coordination mechanism in the	CO11 (main conclusion), CO14 (related conclusion)	KWIHAZA team/Enabel Rwanda in collaboration with EUD, MINAGRI, RAB, NAEB, LuxDev	2	Medium-term	Strategic

[67] https://bk.rw/support-and-updates/news/28

future in the form of a Strategic Committee. This continuation should be discussed with the members of the current PSC. For an improved results-based management, MEL data should be gathered and updated regularly and be accompanied with a hand over to the partners at the end of the implementation.					
Rec.3: Streamlining Service Providers for Efficiency In future programming, consider a lower amount of service providers in order to facilitate timely delivery of activities and efficiency across the project, ultimately to reduce time for tendering procedures and confusion among beneficiaries. Before the decision to take a new service provider / IP on board, it should be assessed if current actors involved do have the necessary expertise to cover the respective tasks. In technical terms, a prioritisation of fewer activities or value chains or addressing fisheries in a separate, dedicated project could potentially increase impact.	CO10 (main conclusion), CO1, CO3, CO11 (related conclusions)	Enabel in collaboration with EUD	2	Long-term	Strategic
Rec.4: Improve Coherent Communication and Dissemination of the KWIHAZA Project Strengthen the visibility of KWIHAZA as one project – independent from the respective actor or service provider in the field – in order to be perceived as one project and to avoid confusion among beneficiaries and the wider public. Develop a communication strategy including a unified branding of documents and similar and share those with service providers and IPs as an	CO10 (main conclusion)	KWIHAZA team for the development in collaboration withall IPs for implementation	1	Medium-term	Strategic

annex to their contracts, ensuring that they adhere to the visibility guidelines.					
Rec.5: Prioritise and Streamline Access to Market To ensure covering all parts of the value chain, streamline the access to market throughout all project activities. This can include a) facilitating market linkages through B2B meetings, and/or b) connecting them to collaborate with other stakeholders implementing access to market projects/initiatives, such as KWMFP. This will improve impact of value chain development and strengthen local markets.	CO1 (main conclusion), CO3, CO5 (related conclusions)	KWIHAZA team in collaboration with RAB, NAEB	1	Medium-term	Strategic
Rec.6: Ensure clear communication to 19 model farms Ensure quick and targeted communication to the 19 targeted model farms about the recent shift to the catfish production model farm approach to ensure that beneficiaries are aware of this change and to manage expectations regarding the support to be expected (or not to be expected). If communication took place, verify if all the model farmers are aware of the change. Accompany this change with awareness campaigns on nutrition value of catfish.	CO8 (main conclusion), CO10 (related conclusion)	RAB in collaboration with MINAGRI, KWIHAZA team	1	Short-term	Operational
Rec.7: Ensure Affordability and Promotion of CoopsDMS Software For the long-term success of the software introduced for cooperative governance, discuss the pricing of the CoopsDMS software with UGAMA to set a fee that cooperatives can afford after the project ends (possibly gradually increasing the fee). This will ensure financial accessibility of the software and further ensure adoption and use of the software.	CO7 (main conclusion)	KWIHAZA team in collaboration with UGAMA	1	Medium-term	Operational

Equally, identify if there is a possibility to convince more cooperatives to use the software or purchase the necessary IT to use it to amplify the impact across the target beneficiaries.					
Rec.8: Ensure Knowledge and Skill Transfer Ensure that trained lead facilitators are effectively cascading the acquired knowledge and skills to other cooperative members, not only just through compensation for attendance to trainings but for the actual cascading work. This will contribute to longer-term sustainability of the project as it should have a ripple effect on the cooperative members and the wider community. Discuss with NAEB and the involved cooperatives if the cooperatives could provide monetary and/or non-monetary incentives to lead farmers to compensate for the time spent in training other farmers. Identify a possibility to monitor the cascading to follower farmers.	CO6 (main conclusion), CO2 (related conclusion)	NAEB in collaboration with HoReCo with follow-up through the KWIHAZA team	1	Short-term	Operational
Rec.9: Further Develop Feed and Fingerlings Supply Further strengthen farmers' access to quality feed and fingerlings for aquaculture, e.g. through mapping of feed processing plants and support to strengthen the distribution, e.g. by establishing selling points or by using the existing agrodealers network. This will give farmers the possibility to produce fish of higher quality that enables them to access premium markets. For sustainability, discuss with the University of Rwanda the long-term plan of seed and fingerling supply through the hatchery at affordable cost, even if managed through the UR holding.	CO8 (main conclusion)	KWIHAZA team in collaboration with UR, MINAGRI, RAB	1	Medium-term	Operational

Rec.10: Ensure Complementarity of Activities Strengthen the focus and complementarity of activities in order to create synergies and maximise possible impacts at beneficiary level where possible. For this, double check if recipients of technical training (horticulture or aquaculture) are in need of complementary training on cooperative governance or BDS and vice versa. If a need is identified, provide complementary training to enable a comprehensive support for the beneficiaries.	CO3 (main conclusion), CO2 (related conclusion)	KWIHAZA team	1	Medium-term	Operational

6 Lessons learned

Lesson 1: Accessible and low-cost technologies can introduce long-lasting change at the target group level.

- The introduction of easily accessible and low-cost technologies such as the CoopDMS software by UGAMA for targeted cooperatives in aquaculture and horticulture did bring about quick help for the cooperatives to comply with official regulations and improve their performance and professional level.
- The introduction was accompanied by dedicated training and coaching efforts. The latter turned out to be key for the cooperatives to address their difficulties with and questions about the use of the software.
- Chances long-term sustainability of this software is assessed to be high if a reasonable pricing with UGAMA is negotiated. Beneficiaries show a high willingness to keep using the software.
- It also entails the possibility for systemic change, as the software – developed in the context of KWIHAZA – has the potential to be applied also beyond the project scope by other cooperatives in other sectors and the RCA.

Lesson 2: Coaching is key for sustainability

- Coaching provided after training facilitation lay the basis for internalisation of new knowledge and thus long-term sustainability. In KWIHAZA, coaching was provided by the different experts in various areas including BDS, cooperative governance, and in the future also regarding horticulture production techniques.
- Coaching has been successful when trainers conducted site-visits and enabled one-on one sessions, where beneficiaries could ask specific questions for their use case.
- It further helps to establish a more thorough relationship between trainers and trainees, providing them with a resource that they could also contact in the future if need arises.
- The sustainability of trainings that are not followed up by a coaching component is likely to be much lower.

Lesson 3: Meaningful involvement of the counterparts

- Multi-level partnerships and various implementing tools including grants, service contracts, MoUs, and framework agreements lay the basis for real involvement of counterparts as opposed to mere Technical Assistance (TA) delivery.
- While this is linked to some delays and can also consume additional resources for coaching and auditing etc., it provides national counterparts the possibility to be more active in the implementation activities and thus creates a basis for ownership and continuation of activities beyond project duration.
- Nevertheless, long-term mechanisms for coordination after a project also need to be thought of in this type of setting.

Lesson 4: Involvement of gender and youth

- Careful needs assessments and purposive beneficiary selection lay the basis for involvement of gender and youth – in the case of KWIHAZA, this is done across all activities.
- Gender and youth actors generally do appreciate the opportunities that they are given.

- Nevertheless, foundational obstacles such as access to land cannot be tackled by individual projects. Equally, socio-cultural norms that assigns women and youth certain roles in society are deeply rooted.
- Still, targeted activities and recruitment (via mobilisation and/or awareness campaigns) can provide incentives to involve more women and youth.