Republic of Rwanda
Ministry of Agriculture & Animal Resources

LUXEMBOURG AID & DEVELOPMENT

Enabel
Implementing on behalf of #TEAMEUROPE

Executive summary

Mid-term Evaluation on the project "Transformation to sustainable food systems – KWIHAZA"

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

Codes (Enabel): RWA 20001 11

Rwanda

Technopolis Group

November 2025

Presentation of the evaluation

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 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.

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).

Primary users include the KWIHAZA project team, Rwandan implementing partners (MINAGRI, RAB, RICA, AFR, ADA, UGAMA, NAEB), development partners and donors (EU, LuxDev), Team Europe, and Enabel headquarters. Secondary users are direct beneficiaries (cooperatives, producer organizations, SMEs, civil society) and indirect beneficiaries (consumers).

In terms of scope, the evaluation covered all result areas and sectors of the project—horticulture, aquaculture, and fisheries—across the period from January 2023 to June 2025, with interviews extending to September 2025. A purposive sampling approach was used to ensure representativity. across seven out of 15 KWIHAZA target districts and all value chains. The core of the evaluation was a ten days field mission in Rwanda at the end of September.

The evaluation applied a theory-based framework, using a Theory of Change to explain its intervention logic. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining the following methods:

- Desk research and analysis of available documentation including M&E documentation, annual reports, technical reports, partnership agreements etc.;
- Scoping interviews with the Kwihaza project team at the technical briefing stage;
- 29 Key informant Interviews (KII) with beneficiaries, implementing partners and the donor community;
- 3 Focus Group Discussions (3 total) with SMEs and cooperatives.

Data triangulation was conducted using an evaluation matrix aligned with the DAC criteria. While primarily qualitative, the evaluation incorporated available quantitative data from the MEL framework. Limitations included incomplete indicator data and restricted district coverage, mitigated through purposive sampling and stakeholder representation.

Findings and conclusions

Relevance	A	KWIHAZA is highly relevant to the Rwandan context and aligns closely with the country's sectoral and national development strategies. The project's focus on transforming food systems in aquaculture, horticulture, and fisheries directly addresses national priorities such as food and nutrition security, employment creation, and the economic empowerment of women and youth. Stakeholders confirm the project's relevance as it addresses cooperative governance, technical capacity, and market access. The project's gender and youth inclusion strategies are particularly relevant, given the systemic barriers these groups face in accessing resources and opportunities.
Effectiveness	B	KWIHAZA has made tangible progress in strengthening smallholder capacities, especially through cooperative training and extension services. Delays in access to finance and horticulture activities have hindered effectiveness but are expected to improve soon. Women and youth engagement is strong. Although measurable increases in income and productivity are not yet evident, early signs of behavioural change and improved financial literacy indicate potential for long-term impact However, improved market access and infrastructure remain critical for achieving full impact.
Coherence	B	KWIHAZA is built into an environment that is strongly aligned with key national and international policies and programmes, cohering to priorities within agriculture and aquaculture. Areas for improvement include the creation and maintenance of synergies with other key projects such as the 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.
Efficiency	B	KWIHAZA has delivered results economically, though spending has varied across result areas due to delays in the access to finance component. Budget distribution aligns with planned activities, and committed funds (97%) suggest readiness for accelerated implementation. The multi-level partnership enhances ownership and contextual fit, despite some challenges related to procurement and contracting. Strong coordination by the KWIHAZA team has been key to managing procurement and stakeholder engagement effectively.
Sustainability	B	KWIHAZA shows strong potential for sustainability through cooperative ownership, digital tool adoption, and peer learning models. Coaching and certification efforts support long-term capacity. 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 products.

The project's progress toward achieving its results and desired changes (Q1): The KWIHAZA project has made notable progress toward its intended results, particularly in strengthening smallholder

capacities through cooperative training and aquaculture extension services. While delays in access to finance and horticulture activities have affected implementation pace, recent finalisation of financial mechanisms and tendering procedures suggest acceleration is imminent. Gender and youth inclusion is effectively mainstreamed, with tailored support and active participation in capacity-building efforts.

Despite limited quantitative data, qualitative evidence from interviews and reports confirms early signs of behavioural change and a contribution to the project's objective via improved financial literacy, cooperative governance structures and processes, and enhanced business professionalisation. Certification support has enabled some SMEs to secure contracts and expand operations. However, challenges remain, including delays in financial access, infrastructure gaps, and socio-cultural barriers limiting full engagement of women and youth. Overall, the project is on track, with its Theory of Change still valid and its contribution to sustainable production and inclusion becoming increasingly visible.

Synergies and complementarities between KWIHAZA and other programmes and actors (Q2): KWIHAZA is strongly aligned with Rwanda's national strategies (NST2, PSTA 5, NASR) and international policy frameworks, enhancing its potential to achieve results. Its focus on aquaculture and fisheries fills a gap in existing (donor-funded) programmes, with timely support acknowledged by stakeholders. Synergies are most of all evident in collaborations with GATSBY Africa, including harmonised lake assessments and joint policy contributions. Planned resource-sharing with the PRISM project was disrupted due to diplomatic issues, creating gaps in skills development and affecting efficiency. While donor landscape changes have affected coordination platforms, KWIHAZA remains well-positioned within Rwanda's policy ecosystem. Further synergies, especially with KWMFP, could be pursued more actively in the remaining implementation period.

The multi-level partnership approach and its contribution to achieving results and ensuring sustainability (Q3): KWIHAZA's multi-level partnership—engaging government agencies, research institutions, and field actors—has significantly contributed to achieving results and fostering sustainability. Despite some delays due to contract amendments and tendering procedures, the model has enabled complementarity of expertise and strengthened national ownership. Overall, KWIHAZA has delivered its intermediate results economically, though spending has varied across result areas in line with the delays in some result areas. Budget distribution aligns with planned activities, and committed funds (97%) suggest readiness for accelerated implementation.

The multi-level partnership enhances ownership and contextual fit, despite some challenges related to procurement and contracting. Some coordination issues and overlapping roles among service providers have occasionally reduced efficiency. Strong coordination by the KWIHAZA team has been key to managing procurement and stakeholder engagement effectively. Continued stakeholder coordination and integration of lessons learned will be key to sustaining outcomes beyond the project's duration. The long-term sustainability of the project results can be further supported by clarifying the long-term affordability of both, digital solutions and fingerlings provided, as well as the long-term availability of inclusive financial products.

Grants, tenders and public-public agreements and their effectiveness for the implementation (Q4): Grants, tenders, and public-public agreements have proven to be generally effective tools for achieving KWIHAZA's objectives in Rwanda's context. They foster national ownership, enable the involvement of tailored technical expertise, and support sustainability. The flexibility to adapt agreements—such as using MoUs instead of grants—has helped overcome procedural delays in

individual cases. However, lengthy tendering processes, slow public entity procedures, and overlapping responsibilities among partners have occasionally hindered timely implementation and created confusion at the beneficiary level. Despite these challenges, strong coordination by the KWIHAZA team, regular committee meetings, and responsive support have ensured progress. The approach remains contextually appropriate, though further harmonisation and streamlined processes could enhance efficiency.

Unintended effects (Q5): The KWIHAZA project has generated several positive unintended effects that reinforce its objectives. The cooperative governance software introduced has the potential to drive systemic change in cooperative governance beyond the project scope. Financial institutions reduced loan interest rates further than planned, improving the affordability of the financial tools offered in the context of the project. Institutional partners gained valuable project management skills, and early signs of vertical integration emerged through SME-cooperative collaborations. Youth mobilisation has led to generational renewal in some cooperatives, enhancing sustainability. No negative unintended effects were identified. To amplify these benefits, the project could further promote inter-beneficiary linkages, tailor capacity-building to implementing partners' needs, and expand youth engagement efforts.

Alignment of the project activities with an ecosystem approach to aquaculture and horticulture development (Q6): KWIHAZA's activities are well aligned with an ecosystem approach, particularly in aquaculture. The project supports sustainable pond operations through policy coherence and has contributed to the NABEP, which promotes aquatic health and environmental safeguards. Mapping of fishponds and lake zones, coordinated with GATSBY Africa, reflects ecosystem-based planning. Capacity-building efforts in aquaculture and horticulture integrate sustainable practices, promoting the use of good agricultural practices, post-harvest loss management, or organic pond fertilisation. Field evidence shows improved stakeholder practices, such as hatchery water treatment and seasonal fishing bans. These efforts collectively support environmentally responsible production and long-term resource stewardship.

Mainstreaming climate smart practices in the project activities (Q7): While climate-smart practices are not a central focus of KWIHAZA, several activities contribute to climate change adaptation and resilience. Beneficiaries demonstrate awareness of techniques such as agroforestry, composting, and efficient water use. HoReCo's training promotes sustainable farming through model plots, improved seedling production, and irrigation planning. In aquaculture, climate-smart solutions include solar-powered hatcheries, greenhouse fingerling production, and water management to mitigate flood risks. Despite limited strategic framing, these practices support resilience. However, broader adoption is constrained by limited access to equipment and materials. Strengthening climate-smart integration could enhance long-term sustainability of project outcomes.

After this MTR, the impact pathways of KWIHAZA can overall be confirmed. Equally, the preliminary results do suggest a contribution to the project's objective.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Targeted actor	Level	Priority
Strategic recommendations			
Rec.1: Develop a Sustainability Strategy for Financial Mechanisms and Follow-up for Inclusive Financing to maintain long-term financial access to beneficiaries	KWIHAZA team in collaboration with EUD, AFR, MINAGRI, ADA, LuxDev	2	Medium-term
Rec.2: Develop a Long-Term Sustainability Strategy and Handover of the MEL Framework for Continuity after the Project End	KWIHAZA/Enabel Rwanda in collaboration with EUD, MINAGRI, RAB, NAEB	2	Medium-term
Rec.3: Streamlining Service Providers for Efficiency, to reduce time losses and confusion among beneficiaries	Enabel in collaboration with EUD	2	Long-term
Rec.4: Improve Coherent Communication and Dissemination of the KWIHAZA Project to ensure being perceived as one action among all stakeholders involved	KWIHAZA team in collaboration withall IPs	1	Medium-term
Rec.5: Prioritise and Streamline Access to Market in all project activities to ensure covering all parts of the value chain	KWIHAZA team in collaboration with RAB, NAEB	1	Medium-term
Operational recommendations			
Rec.6: Ensure clear communication to 19 model farms about the recent shift to catfish production	RAB in collaboration with MINAGRI, KWIHAZA team	1	Short-term
Rec.7: Ensure Affordability and Promotion of CoopsDMS Software to ensure financial accessibility beyond the project	KWIHAZA team in collaboration with UGAMA	1	Medium-term
Rec.8: Ensure Knowledge and Skill Transfer from lead facilitators to cooperative members to secure yet wider effects	NAEB in collaboration with HoReCo with follow-up through the KWIHAZA team	1	Short-term
Rec.9: Further Develop Feed and Fingerlings Supply to enable production of high quality fish and access to premium markets	KWIHAZA team in collaboration with UR, MINAGRI, RAB	1	Medium-term
Rec.10: Ensure Complementarity of Activities to maximise impact at beneficiary level	KWIHAZA team	1	Medium-term

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 CoopsDMS 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 for 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.

Lesson 2: Coaching is key for sustainability

- Coaching provided after training facilitation lay the basis for internalisation of new knowledge and 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 and creates a basis for ownership and continuation of activities beyond project duration.
- Long-term mechanisms for coordination after a project also need to be thought of.

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.