



Partnering with
COSA
for sustainability
research

Introduction to
purpose and
key steps

Partnering with COSA

Committee On
Sustainability Assessment

COSA is a global consortium of institutions dedicated to accelerating the social, economic, and environmental elements of agricultural sustainability.

Driven by the conviction that reliable data enables better decision-making and greater accountability, we develop pragmatic indicators and assessment systems to better measure and manage sustainability.

Our Purpose

We are results-oriented. We want to know clearly what is having an impact and what is not. We collaborate with a diverse set of partners – from research institutes and development agencies to private companies and foundations. Our goal is to provide access to reliable information that will permit stakeholders to make better and more informed choices, so that they can be drivers of sustainability.

“Decisions to help ensure long-term sustainability can only be as robust as the information upon which they are based.”

Daniele Giovannucci, COSA President and co-founder

Global Collaborations

The Committee on Sustainability Assessment is a neutral consortium whose global networks and non-profit status facilitate our commitment to public service. COSA partners with dozens of leading institutions (see partial list below) that are applying advanced methods to measure projects and investments worldwide.



What We Do

COSA develops and applies measurement tools and then makes the information available to diverse stakeholders and in different formats from policy briefs to data. We use three main components:



Define the Pathway

We develop a realistic understanding and practical pathway to sustainability by:

- Aligning with international norms
- Using SMART standardized indicators
- Applying a multi-dimensional framework: environmental, social and economic
- Project designs using best practices



Gather the Facts

We ensure you have the right information at the right time by:

- Vetted Surveys
- Digital data capture and geospatial mapping
- Building local capacity and global standardization
- Performance Monitoring
- Understanding and Working with Producer Organizations



Answer and Advise

We work with you to get the most out of the data through:

- Credible Scientific Analysis
- Customized KPI management dashboards
- Knowledge base and benchmarking
- Better informed decisions and policies

Who Uses COSA

Our clients are diverse. They come to us for answers and advice about the sustainability challenges they face. By applying our systematic approach, we deliver customized solutions to meet their needs in reliable ways.



Our Scientific Process

With the advice of global partner institutions and our distinguished International Scientific Committee, COSA has established a sound balance between credible scientific process and business-like practicality. An outline of our scientific processes includes:

Globally relevant Indicators: Years of diligent processes have resulted in a uniquely functional set of indicators that are validated with dozens of international accords and multilateral agreements ranging from the Rio Declaration to the ILO Core 8 Labor Standards.

Representative samples: Balance the need to contain costs with the need for advanced analysis that detects, with good levels of confidence, the differences in the performance between target and control farms.

Focus on quality and cost: COSATech™ advanced digital technology minimizes field time and increases accuracy by reducing data collection and entry errors.

Managing bias: Sampling and analytic techniques such as Propensity Score Matching¹ help minimize important biases of contagion or spill-over effects, self-selection bias, and institutional differences.

Long-term observation: Impacts are understood when measured over time because important factors (e.g. environmental ones) can be slow to register significant change.

Measuring complex field outcomes and producer perception: COSA uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to more accurately assess farms and farm households.

Performance Monitoring: managerial tools for real-time understanding of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and their linkage to impacts.

Smart Analysis: We respect neutral, multi-criteria approaches that can be applied to most forms of analysis, ranging from simple cost-benefit and correlations to supply chain analysis, lifecycle assessment, difference in differences techniques, and regression analyses.

¹PSM is a statistical approach used to improve accurate comparison (reduce potential selection bias) and potentially increase confidence in attribution. There can be differences between target and control group farmers in both observable characteristics like the demographics of the household and unobservable characteristics like farmer ability, preferences, and motivations. PSM can improve comparisons by controlling for key observable covariates that explain the likelihood of selecting into a particular intervention, such as a certification, lending, or training scheme.

Why partner with us?

“**C**OSA’s experience with surveys and electronic data capture systems helps navigate the complexities and the challenging realities of sustainability in tough situations.”

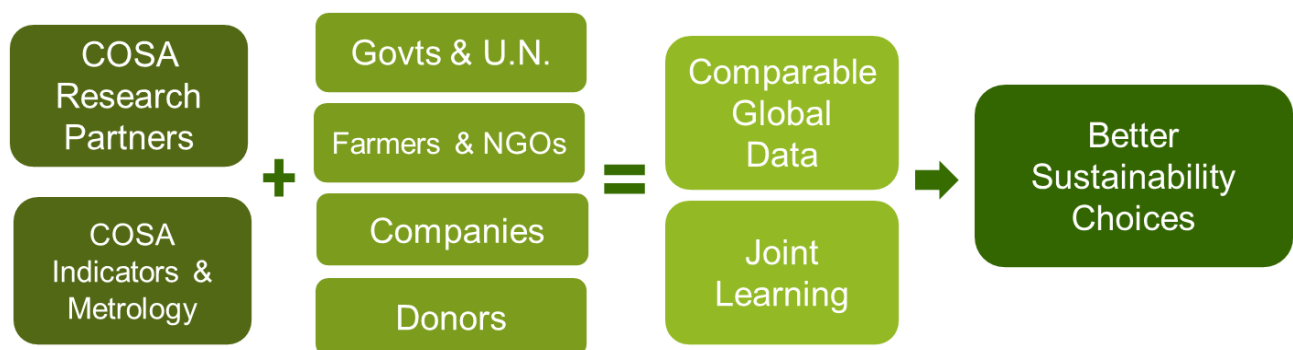
“**P**ractical...they help to understand processes and how things work so we can focus our time and resources.”

“**C**OSA Indicators optimize our planning and management offering results that are comparable across countries.”

“**T**hey partner with quality local institutions and that demonstrates a real commitment to sustainability.”

“**I**ntegrity and credibility are embedded in every part of their work.”

Our Research Partners apply COSA approaches to secure, reliable, and contextually relevant data about what is sustainable in agriculture. Using comparable methods, we can jointly facilitate learning for clients and among the COSA Research Partners. Building on the experiences of many, we can see trends and determine what is working in order to facilitate better sustainability choices in both policies and investments. This helps to design better supply chains and better projects. The drive toward levels of standardization and efficiency reduces costs and eliminates the fatigue of repeated or overlapping studies for farmers and funders alike.



Roles in a Research Partnership

While each arrangement is different, here is a brief summary of the respective roles of typical COSA research partnerships.

1. An initial **Memorandum of Understanding** is a pre-requisite that can lead to contractual relations for specific research that commonly expands to multiple projects and extends to at least three years.

2. Typical Roles of COSA

- a. Provides data collection technology and tested instruments (e.g. indicators & surveys)
- b. May secure initial and future funding for the field work
- c. Shares COSA intellectual property and trains Partner on COSA Impact Assessment and Performance Monitoring methods
- d. Supports Partner to identify research sampling plan & quality controls
- e. Coordinates analysis and reporting with Partner
- f. Maintains global database
- g. Share best practices and the links to COSA network of research and development organizations, companies, and donors as appropriate

3. Typical Roles of Research Partner

- a. Provides dedicated and competent manager with time available
- b. May secure some funding
- c. Provides basic country-sector background and identifies research plan and budget
- d. Recruits surveyors and conducts surveyor training (initially with COSA support)
- e. Plans and manages field data collection with producers and organizations
- f. Conducts data cleaning and analysis in collaboration with COSA
- g. Contributes to reporting
- h. Eventually takes over the COSA research independently and continues to share new research data with COSA

COSA builds strong global partnerships

Some COSA Research Partners



CATIE (Central America) – The leading applied research institution in the region trains PhD researchers in applied methods and offers a cross country focus operating in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, El Salvador, and Panama.



CIRAD (global) - The leading French institution for international agricultural research operates with local partners in dozens of countries.



CRECE (Colombia) – Decades of advanced rural studies grant the Center for Regional Coffee and Enterprise Research a well-recognized advantage that is now being developed beyond its traditional areas into cocoa and other sectors.



ESRF (Tanzania) - The Economic and Social Research Foundation strengthens capabilities in policy analysis and decision making, and articulates and improves the understanding of policy options in the public and private sectors and in the donor community.



IAMB (North Africa & Mediterranean region) – The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute, with five decades of multi-country experience, is a leader in post-graduate training, applied scientific research and regional partnership activities.



ICCRI (Indonesia) - The Indonesian Coffee and Cocoa Research Institute was established in 1911 under the auspices of Indonesian Agency for Agricultural Research & Development.



ICRAF – The World Agroforestry Centre is one of the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR) and has a broad mandate to understand the social and economic ecology of market-based agriculture and forestry systems.



IEP (Peru) – Five decades of experience and respected scholarship make the Institute of Peruvian Studies one of the country's leading centers for quality research.



IFPRI (West and Central Africa Office) –The International Food Policy Research Institute is dedicated to understanding policies that promote the adoption of innovations in agricultural technology.



The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is one of the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers and a leading research partners for solutions to hunger, malnutrition, and poverty in dozens of countries.



INA (Papua New Guinea) - For more than three decades, the Institute of National Affairs has carried out research with world-class academic institutions to facilitate public-private dialogue.



University of Ghana ISSER - Since 1962, the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research has been one of the country's most respected teaching institutions, generating solutions for national development.



WASI (Vietnam) The Western Highlands Agroforestry Scientific and Technical Institute is one of Vietnam's leading agricultural research bodies.

