



SAFE PLATFORM: A Multi-Stakeholder Initiative for Scaling Climate Actions



INDEX

	1 INTRODUCTION	page 03
	2 CONTEXT	page 04
	3 SAFE STRUCTURE	page 05
	4 THE ROUTE TO BECOMING SAFE	page 12
	5 LESSONS LEARNED	page 15
	6 MAIN FINDINGS	page 16

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment (SAFE) Platform was a regional intervention founded by IDB Lab, a member of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Group, private sector partners of the coffee and cocoa industries, and executed by Hivos, a Dutch NGO. The SAFE Platform supported coffee and cocoa sectors in Latin America through a set of actions performed by various stakeholders, all brought together in a single collaborative effort.

This document summarizes SAFE Platform as a model, framed in its particular structure and form of intervention. It is a document that covers the main milestones of SAFE's intervention and highlights the importance of SAFE as a multi-stakeholder platform in the region, from its learnings and from its particular collaboration structure of multiple allies, project implementers, and partner organizations.

The document is structured into six chapters: 1) introduction, 2) context, 3) SAFE Structure, 4) the route to becoming SAFE, 5) lessons learned, 6) main findings. The intention of the document is to synthesize SAFE, so that it works as a possible model for similar programs in the future.



2. CONTEXT

Coffee and cocoa: beyond the value chains

Both sectors, coffee and cocoa, are utterly important for worldwide economies. Over 50 countries produce them or export them, with around 129.5 million bags of coffee exported in the last year (2020)¹, representing around 30 billion US\$, and 9.5 billion US\$ for Cocoa . Around 58% of the mentioned coffee exports and 10% of cocoa come from Latin American and Caribbean countries, where agriculture as a whole, represents a key pathway to fostering social security, reducing poverty and promoting development, especially in rural areas. Behind these figures, there are more than 30 million producers for both commodities (25 million for coffee and 5 million for cocoa). This is not the end of the story; coffee and cocoa sectors are also relevant for producer's livelihoods, where around 100 million people are dependent on coffee and cocoa-related income. Even though multiple efforts are directed towards agricultural support initiatives in the region, and particularly to coffee and cocoa because of their importance to local and national economies, there is still a persistent pattern across Latin America in the agricultural landscape that shows us:

1.	Unequal power relations	4.	High exposure to market volatility
2.	Gender disparities	5.	Lack of access to applied technology (AgTech)
3.	Increasing climate vulnerability	6.	Investment capital with lack of incentives for new generations to engage in agricultural activities.

Besides this context, a large portion of smallholder coffee and cocoa producers in Latin America and the Caribbean are: a) affected by poverty or extreme poverty, b) completely dependent on coffee or cocoa income, or c) are not able to diversify their production to improve their income. Some reasons for this context include insufficient expertise to adapt to climate change or implementation of sustainable production systems, weak links to large-scale markets, lack of access to key market information, deficient financial and business skills, among others. Nevertheless, it is important to note there are also numerous farmers who are part of commercialization agreements, in which they address some of the above mentioned issues by voluntarily becoming certified in sustainable production standards which will help them, not only to get better commercial conditions and more inclusive agreements in the supply chain, but also improve their livelihoods.

Over the years, many public and private organizations have realized they play a key role in sustainable development of coffee and cocoa sectors. In this matter, a multi-stakeholder alliance is associated with actions aimed at achieving progress in negotiations and actions in different areas of the value chain, having a significant impact on its different links. As an integral solution to some of the most aching problems of the sector, the SAFE Platform, started in 2015, promoted the much-needed connection and exchange space between different actors (food and beverage companies, industrial partners, professional and knowledge organizations) with the key support and impulse from the IDB Lab.



In Latin America and the Caribbean, agriculture is key to promoting social security, reducing poverty and promoting development



1. International Coffee Organization, Coffee Market Report April 2021. Available at: <https://www.ico.org/documents/cy2020-21/cmr-0421-e.pdf>
2. Observatory of Economic Complexity OEC, 2019. Available at: <https://oec.world/en/profile/hs92/cocoa-beans>

3. SAFE STRUCTURE

History

It all began with the questions and discussions of a small group of professionals on the challenges of coffee and the World Coffee Platform (2013 – 2014), highlighting issues associated with Climate Change (climate resilience) and power imbalances faced daily by small producers in the value chain. During these discussions, it was central that most small producer support programs focus on improvements at the farm level, in many cases isolated or without connection. Also, some lessons learned were brought to the table: 1) that time and experience has shown it is truly important to create and implement solutions to promote climate-smart agriculture, and to strengthen the management and decision-making capacity of small producers within the food system, and 2) for these efforts to be sustainable they'll necessarily imply the establishment of solid associations and the joint and coordinated collaboration of different stakeholders of the agri-food system-chain (private companies, government institutions, NGOs, research and training centers, donors, financiers, etc.).

With this premise, the MIF (Multilateral Investment Fund) convened a meeting in 2014 with key players in the global coffee industry, in order to conduct research on strategies and professional advice to find ways to support smallholder coffee producers and their cooperatives. During this process, the problems faced by stakeholders in the coffee and cocoa industry were discussed, referring to production systems and sustainable supply chains that allow better commercial conditions for smallholder farmers.

SAFE grew out from this discussion, from the vision of representatives from the private and not-for-profit sectors who wanted to improve business practices and include smallholder farmers in global (sustainable) value chains. SAFE focused on cocoa and coffee to create an inclusive space where smallholders and their partners can broaden the scope of cooperation, improve capacities at the farm level, make better decisions, and increase the power of producers.

Structure

SAFE was a multi stakeholder platform, created under the IDB Lab initiative, and joined by private and public sector partners sharing the common objective to change Latin American productive landscapes. The platform and its partners helped design and implement meaningful projects and interventions that responded to the challenges of smallholder farmers in global value chains.

SAFE's core structure was balanced between three key supporting actors: the IDB Lab, Hivos, and COSA (Committee on Sustainability Assessment).



The IDB Lab played a key role, not only as the lead financing partner, but also a convener, bringing over other interesting allies to the Platform. SAFE started with a financial leverage of the IDB Lab; which then grew from significant private-sector support.



SAFE was managed by Hivos, with its technical and administrative team for all projects located at the Latin America and Caribbean Hub in Costa Rica.



COSA was in charge of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework & guidance for SAFE Platform's interventions and supported projects to incorporate tools for credible reporting.

Governance

SAFE was built as a public-private partnership type of intervention, supervised by a Steering Committee of 22 Stakeholders that collaborated, not only towards the platform's goals and content, but also as investors in the projects or the Platform, whether financial or in-kind.

PARTNERS



Under this partnership, SAFE enabled its allies to understand the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, and to co-innovate, co-create, learn, experiment, and scale the interventions' outcomes. The technical and administrative team of the SAFE Platform, working from Hivos, worked in close coordination with the Steering Committee, particularly when selecting newly awarded projects, and also coordinated closely with COSA to develop and monitor the metrics framework and tool for activity reporting, performance monitoring, and Producer Organization Assessment.

As part of its awarding process, the SAFE Platform looked for projects with a relevant focus (financial literacy, climate-smart practices, gender and youth and sustainable sourcing) and with potential to scale. In total, the SAFE Team and Steering Committee evaluated over 30 project proposals during the five years of the program's execution, from which 22 interventions were carried out. After being awarded, each project was implemented by a network of organizations tailored to each project's needs.



SAFE total investment was around

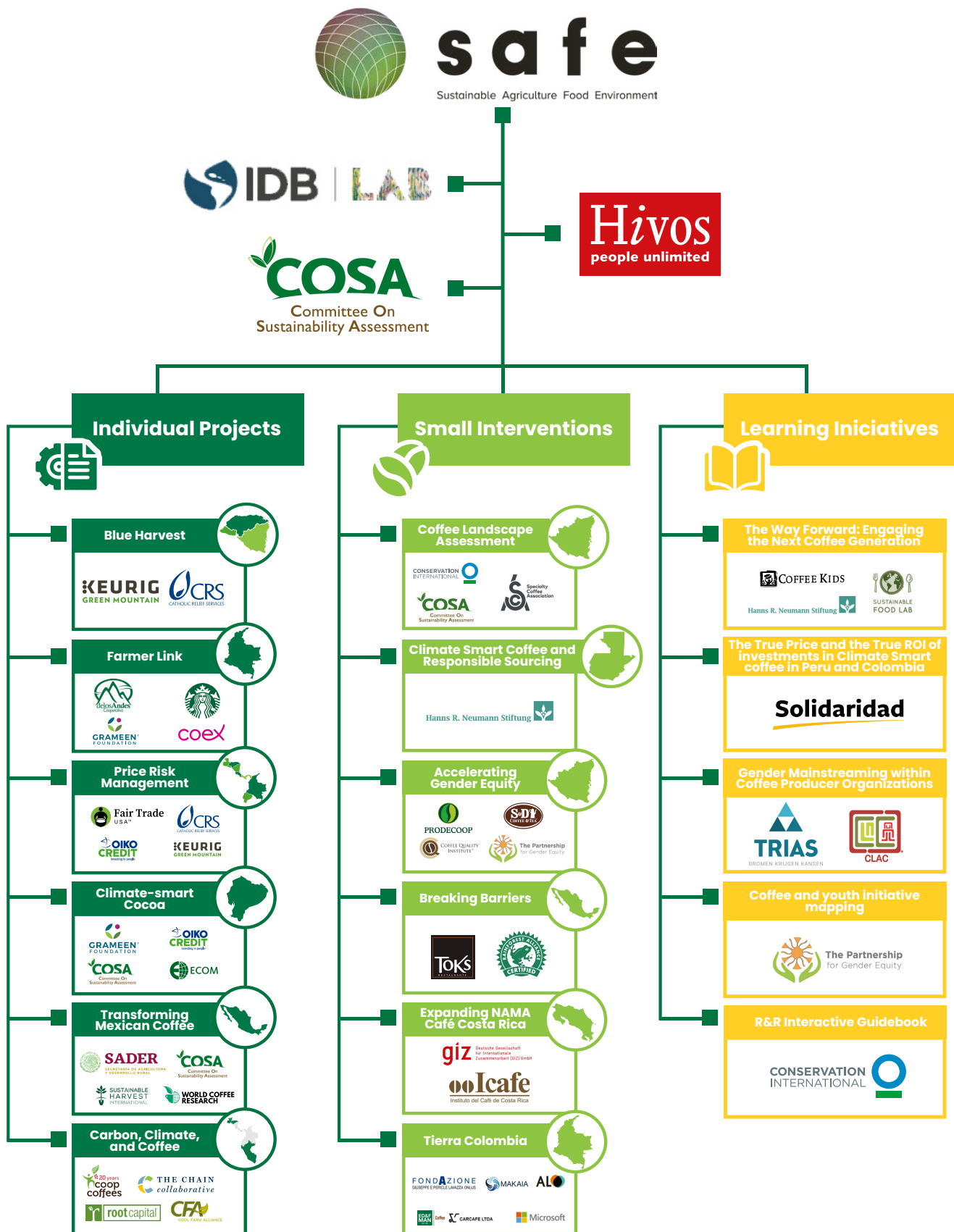
US\$21.6 million

in funds for projects cross learning and data analysis. From the total investment, around

was provided by partners, project implementors or counterparts, the rest was financed by the IDB Lab.

60%

SAFE interventions and collaborators



Other projects and key studies executed under SAFE intervention were: Data Management Systems (COSA; Aldea Global), Domestic Markets Systems (SCA) and Coffee and Cocoa Barometers.

SAFE and its allies have been pioneers and leaders in carrying out actions and proposing relevant opinions related to agri-food systems sustainability. With this community of stakeholders, SAFE generated sufficient evidence that influenced policies and practices that led to changes, in an urgent and sustainable approach.



One important asset of the platform was its flexibility and openness when trying to impulse improvement in the ways of collaboration between industry leaders; while at the same time, coordinated with other networks and multi-stakeholder initiatives to communicate and create an active and actionable community

These five years of experience could be adapted to other sectors of the food system, recognizing that new investments in multi-stakeholder projects could leverage more knowledge and influence on a broader scale. Consistent support and demonstrating value of learning enabled improvements, buy-in and even a spirit of collaboration among partners.

Interventions and MEL approach

SAFE carried out three different kinds of interventions:

- | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | Individual Projects: large scale projects with around 1US\$ million funding by the IDB Lab. |
| 2. | Small interventions: projects with up to US\$70 K in funding, overseen by Hivos. |
| 3. | Learning initiatives: short duration interventions, with low-budget and administered by Hivos. |



By 2020, SAFE has launched **6 individual projects**, **8 small interventions**, and **8 learning initiatives**. The focus of its work was in: Climate-Smart agriculture, smallholder farmers’ financial access, and literacy, value chain development, and gender and youth inclusion.

In terms of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning, it was important to have a set of common indicators and metrics created and established for all projects, to facilitate a consistent and coherent data submission and data monitoring of projects progress. COSA provided tools (activity reporting tool, performance monitoring survey, producer organization assessment tool, guidance documents) and a space on the web (Partner Zone) where partners could have a central hub for all SAFE-related data, documents tools, and a data uploader.

All 22 interventions under the SAFE platform brought together more than 109 participants from the private sector, including anchor companies, international non-governmental organizations, ethical investment banks, producer organizations, and national umbrella institutions and certification agencies.

Under its interventions, SAFE covered more than 143,000 indirect beneficiaries and around 14,961 people as direct beneficiaries, with 12,546 farms in 10 countries. This was done under tested and scaled initiatives that increased adoption of climate-smart agriculture, and took full advantage of the impact on vulnerable rural populations. The SAFE projects have achieved an adoption rate of more than 71% of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices and have achieved sustainable improvements in soil management, climate-smart practices, water conservation, and general quality of life of producers.

Areas of work

Although interventions under SAFE scope were broader and included a diverse list of topics, SAFE focused its efforts on encouraging food system frontrunners to reorient dialogue and narrative related to productive landscapes towards two areas of interest: a) inclusive growth and b) climate action.

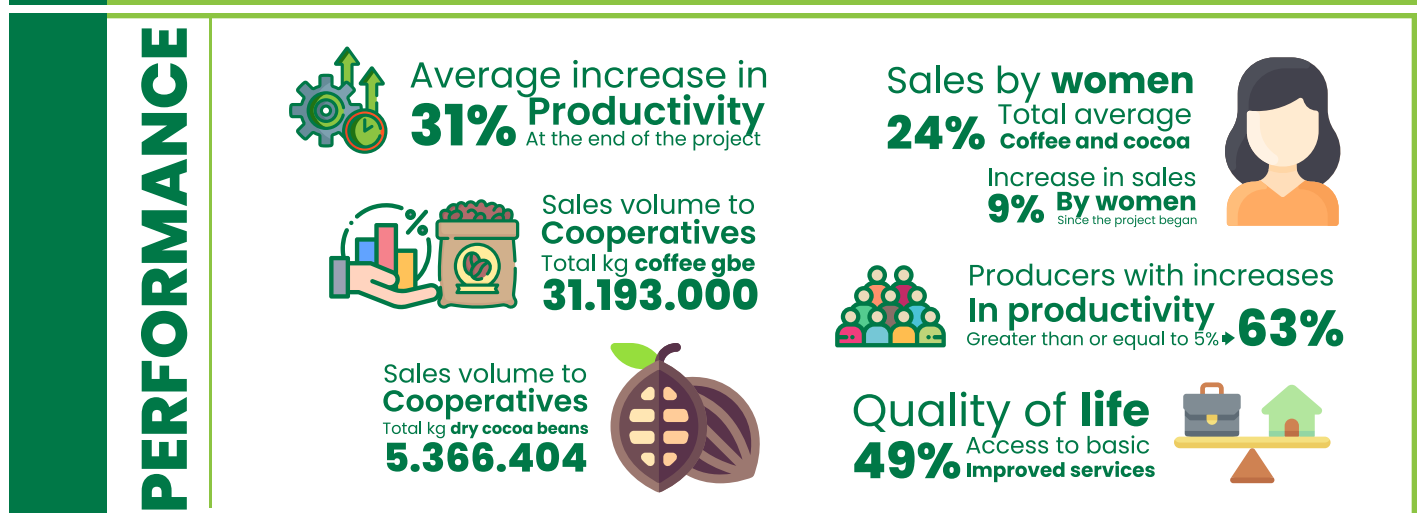
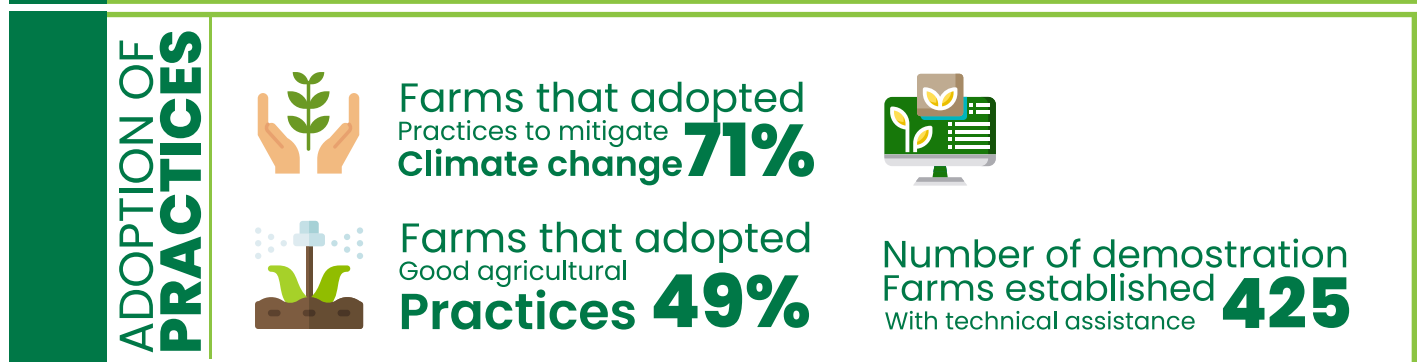
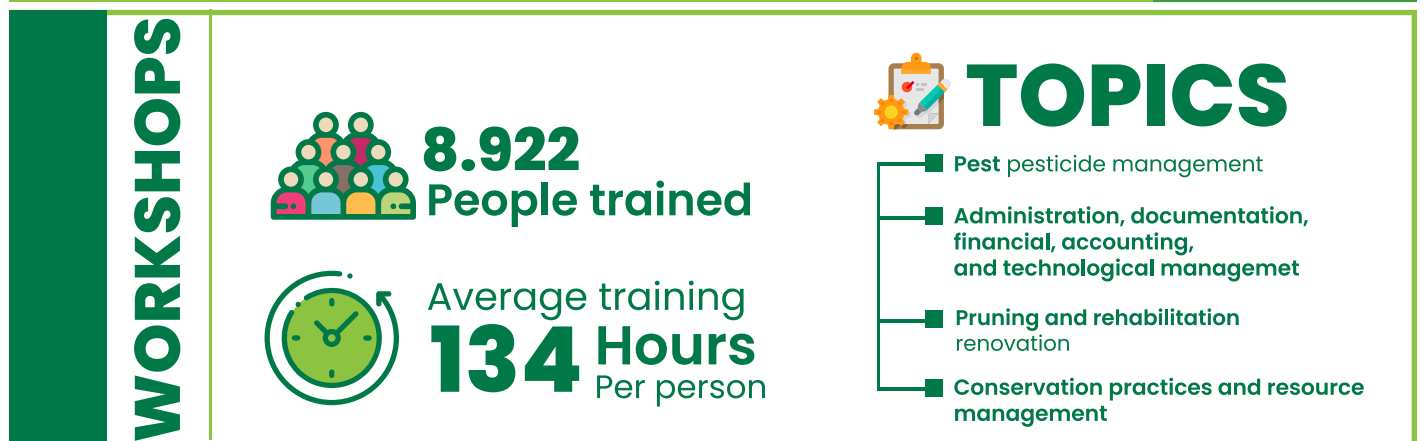
In terms of inclusive growth, SAFE believed that improving stakeholders interconnections and transparency for a better information flow and decision-making process at farmers level, would drive to a more inclusive growth in a sustainable and effective manner. On the Climate action side, support organizations and umbrella institutions at national level played a key role to provide climate information and to include it as a transversal part of business plans and related public policies discussions; this supported by an integrated approach from the financial institutions that could boost greener and climate-proof food system investments.

Both areas of interest had also cross-cutting considerations inside SAFE interventions: the gender dynamics in different levels of the food system (household, farm, producer organizations, and the end market), the demographic change experience in the rural areas, such as the impact of more youth being incorporated as part of the farm work force; and the digital transformation, which has been proven to accelerate interventions approach and efficiency.

At the intervention level, SAFE aimed to transform coffee and cocoa landscapes, and to demonstrate that it is possible to produce sustainably, and improve livelihoods at the same time. Beside the cross-cutting considerations and the innovation scope required from the interventions, there were also at least five strategic areas covered by SAFE interventions:

	Access to financial services
	Value chain improvements and responsible sourcing
	Climate Smart Agriculture and resilient landscapes
	Women and youth inclusion
	Access to digital technologies

SAFE main results

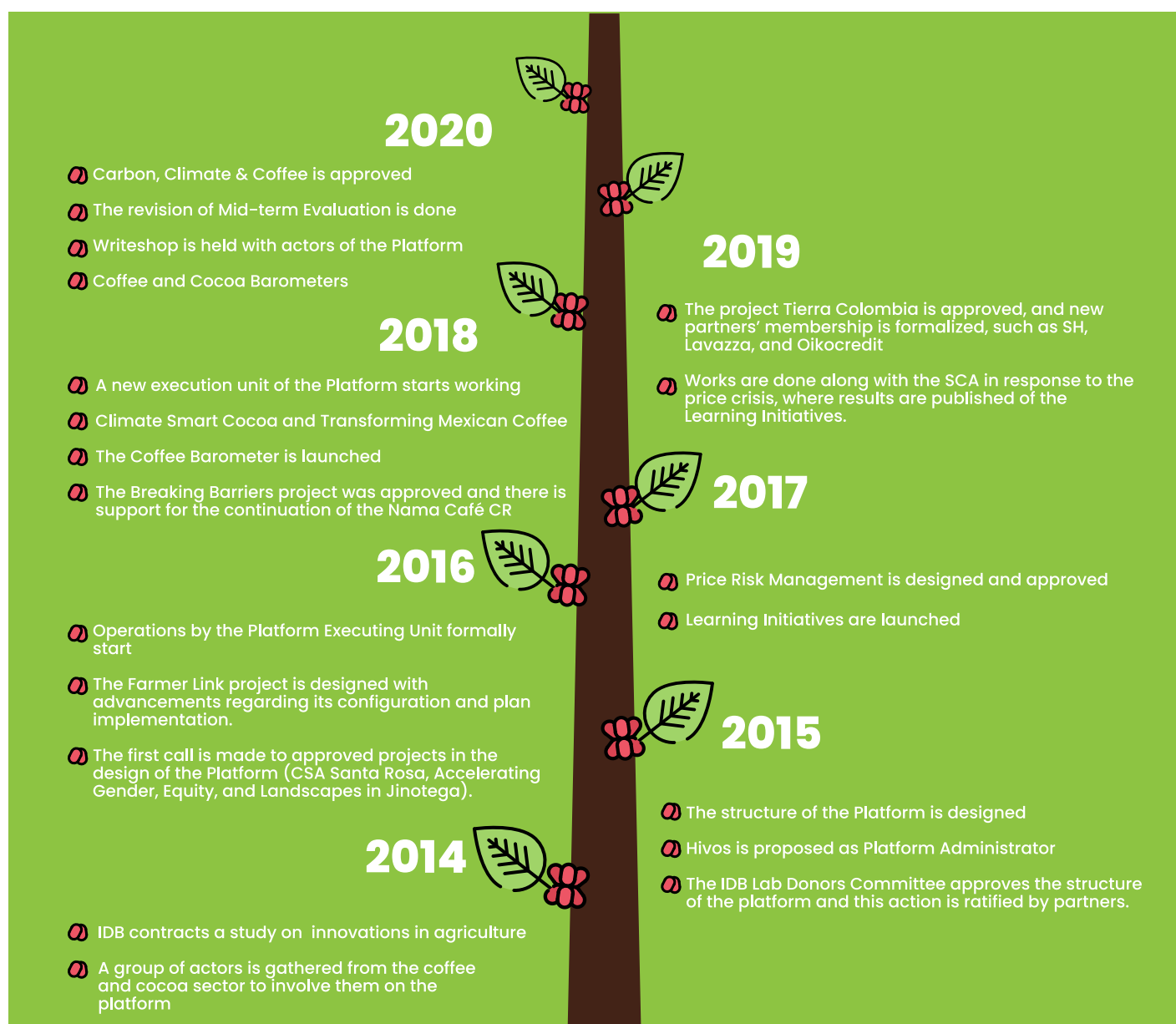


Timeline

The timeline for the SAFE Platform resembles the life of a plant, which starts with one single seed (ideas), and grows its roots and stem with water and soil nutrients (funding, ideas, and technical knowledge), starts growing leaves (partners and projects), until it is mature enough to produce flowers and fruits (results at different levels in the value chain and key information).

SAFE formally started in 2015, and along with the IDB Lab began a process of checking and prioritizing what type of innovations were being done in the coffee and cocoa sectors, including research on information, investors, companies, producer organizations, and other groups, which were recruited afterwards to verify how they could boost innovation in an initiative as part of SAFE.

During 2015, many interventions were added to the SAFE portfolio of projects and Initiatives, and with them, new partners and implementers, who brought learnings and practical knowledge to the Platform. By 2017, there were numerous individual stakeholders, financiers, implementers, and communities of practices involved in these projects, who also helped leverage the knowledge, expertise, and resources to innovate approaches in the value chain. This process continued until 2020, where the last projects were added to the portfolio.



4. THE ROUTE TO BECOME SAFE

Multi-stakeholder Platform for value chains – What is it?

Multi-stakeholder or Multi-actor platforms consist of flexible collaboration and articulation spaces, which are resilient and adaptable to the context they are in. They are a way of implementing good governance into common strategies between different stakeholders. In the context of value chains such as coffee and cocoa, SAFE Platform did not only consist of a common space to exchange and learn, but by also using co-investment and collaboration, it was capable of testing pilots and prototyping innovative ideas that could lead to change perception over production, value addition, and food consumption.



A key co-investor in all projects and initiatives in the SAFE Platform was the IDB Lab, not only by co-financing the interventions, but also by giving it all a vote of confidence for other supporters, potential allies and partners to come on board.

The SAFE Platform model goes from co-investing into different powerful initiatives for change, to creating practical learnings amongst stakeholders related to agricultural technologies, reducing climate vulnerability by promoting the introduction of relevant practices, and building capacities amongst smallholder producers to help them act in global food markets. It is relevant to mention that SAFE interventions also had a transversal youth and gender component to promote more participation by women and young people in the projects.

SAFE Platform: a multi stakeholder model of collaboration and change

SAFE PLATFORM

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION FLOW

1 Propose
Safe carries out a call for proposals for Innovative interventions

4 Communicate
Co-investors and key allies/stakeholders share knowledge to feed dialogues on food sustainability and Innovative



2 Co-invest
And collaborate between multiple actors across agrifood sectors

3 Learn
Creation of learning and capacity building at smallholder level

SAFE's goal was to scale innovative climate-smart practices and provide evidence to influence policies and practices

Collaboration flow

SAFE Platform's core actions were learning and linking. First, by promoting the creation of innovative interventions through a process of co-investment with the support of the IDB Lab, SAFE partners, and local counterparts. Then, by learning in the field, generating practical knowledge and practices through its partners, projects, and initiatives; and finally, inside dialogue spaces with policymakers and innovators, where SAFE partners played a key role as frontrunners and game changers.

In summary, this process not only generated change at a smallholder level in each intervention, but also, created more awareness and evidence over current challenges of the agri-food sector, and the urge to turn into practice policies to long-lasting transformation of the landscapes.



Practical knowledge and learning was one of the core activities the SAFE Platform promoted. Over 1261 training journeys within its projects and interventions, in which over **9,578 people received training** in different topics, with **16 common topics** available in all programs, and over **134 hours of training/advisory** in total per person.

How does a multi-stakeholder platform work?

Multi-stakeholder platforms should be dynamic and work in an integral way to cover most common key topics, using all actors' strengths, but also focused on concrete solutions or approaches to be more efficient. SAFE was efficient to focus on at least three key activities: 1) Linking and learning, 2) prototyping and experiment, and 3) creating a community of practice. Describing these activities as possible steps inside the Multi-stakeholder platform process, it's also possible to highlight enabling factors that made SAFE Platform particularly relevant.

1. Linking and Learning:

The core actions of SAFE Platform focused on engaging and articulating stakeholders, creating or promoting spaces for exchange and growth, and circulating learnings amongst its partners. In this way, SAFE is a model for how development funders can drive new levels of collective learning by emphasizing innovation and making efficient use of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning and Communication resources to track change and adoption.



All projects reported on the same aligned metrics, thanks to the early development of standardized tools and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning protocols. As an ongoing tool, this cost-efficient model delivered can continue to generate shared learning.

SAFE was equipped to analyze trends in food systems that could influence the why and how its members pushed for economic viability and climate actions.



The Coffee Barometer (latest 2020), is a biennial report published by **The Coffee Barometer Collective**, supported by SAFE, presenting an overview of sustainability and challenges in the **global coffee sector**.

Through its partnerships, SAFE cultivated knowledge that came from these processes, serving as a starting point to stimulate idea creation while designing prototypes and experimentation.



Partners' trust and agreements are key to measure important development outcomes in a consistent and standardized way. SAFE's works with varied partners and countries, required a systematized coordination of efforts, with a specific range of actions, and a standardized way of measurement of activities progress and performance.

2. Prototyping and experimenting

Through a process of Pilot, Refine and Scale, SAFE promoted the creation of work models for scalable solutions, which would also require a process of testing to adapt them to the chosen context. AgTech innovative interventions were on SAFE's scope, as possible modern agriculture cross-solutions for smallholders problems.



Each project monitored a set of common important indicators, which accelerated common learning by comparing data between crops, topics, and countries.

3. Community of practice

A community of practice is a space for interaction and mediation, where a group of stakeholders comes together with common goals and interests, and where they can reflect over their practices, support each other, and build products or processes that would help them grow.



During 2020 SAFE carried out a "Writeshop" with the project implementers, to generate a space for dialogue and collaborative knowledge construction. During this space, **35 participants** represented different projects and concluded that SAFE Platform interventions validated the necessity of integral approaches to complex challenges and solutions that could be exponential (replicable).

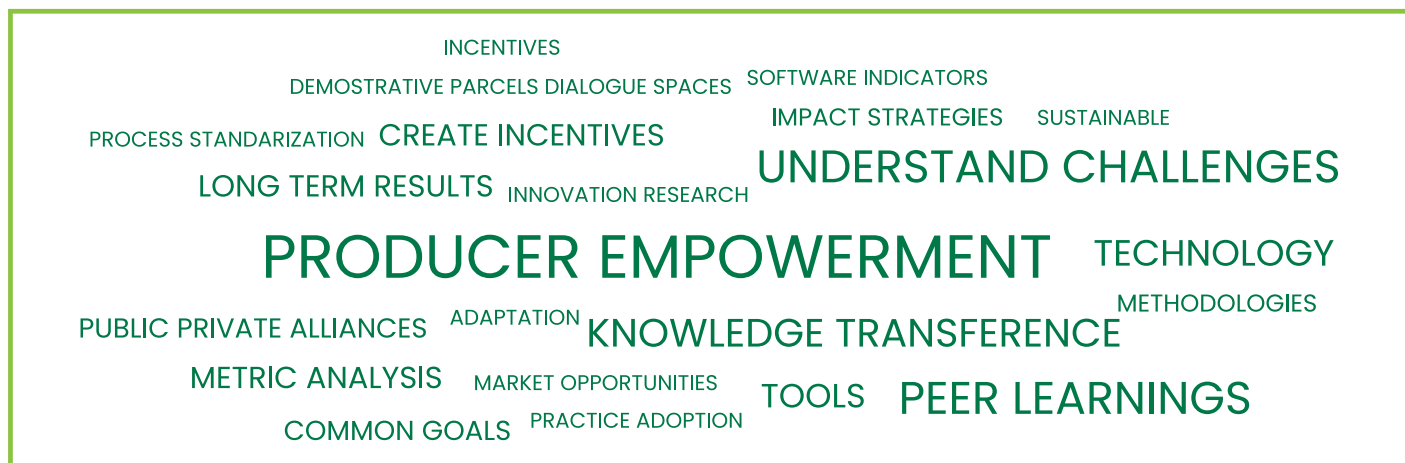
5. LESSONS LEARNED

From the investor's perspective:

- Empowering producers leads to change.
- Creating incentives to recognize externalities is a good business model.
- Demographic changes are here to stay.
- We have to build awareness on the importance of capturing data to make better decisions beyond just meeting donor requirements.
- Governance is key while defining multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- The complementarity of members increases the ability of scale.
- Institutional commitments should transcend temporary engagements.
- Communicating our results, projects, and struggles is fundamental.
- The assumption that funding availability will be enough to cover farmer investment need is too narrow.

From the perspective of project implementers:

Lessons learned from projects implementers perspective are diverse. The next word cloud analysis highlights the most common lessons across projects, coming from different feedback spaces provided during SAFE's execution. One of the most common lessons relies on the importance of producer empowerment to: 1) create, consolidate, and communicate knowledge, 2) provide sustainability to interventions, and 3) lead change. Other highlighted lessons include:



- Understand challenges producers are facing, to provide tailored solutions.
- Use of technology transference, not only to improve technical management of farms, but also to research innovative solutions, improve processes monitoring, and catalyze change.
- Use of peer learnings and demonstrations to spread and scale knowledge and learnings.
- Public and private alliances are important for sustainable intervention, and those must include spaces for dialogue to strengthen the value chains.
- Common goals must include common metrics and tools.
- Transition to new landscapes and adoption of new practices take time, even longer than an intervention.

6. MAIN FINDINGS

- There is a collaborative and non-competitive space of partners created from the SAFE Platform intervention. In this state, where usual competitors are working together as non-competitive partners towards a common goal, there is a bigger chance to create synergy and relevant collaboration.
- SAFE was created to dedicate funding for projects, to test and to learn what are best practices for more resilient value chains. The partnership created to do this, accelerated technology transfers, encouraged trust and accountability, and promoted pre-competitive models that combined the core competencies of different stakeholders, through partner engagement on different project levels. All of these interactions turned SAFE into a unique regional community of practice, that could keep going even after interventions have finished.
- Although SAFE actions were more into linking and learning processes, the results and effects observed at project level are relevant and incite positive outcomes of the overall intervention.
- Actions implemented by SAFE interventions, did not only contribute to solving the more technical productive issues in the field, but also created a framework to facilitate commercial relations. All SAFE projects had a technical and a market access component, to contribute to more integral solutions for a sustainable landscape.

The experience of the SAFE Platform provided all stakeholders involved with an opportunity to test and rethink the ways to invest and collaborate in finding solutions to existing problems in coffee and cocoa landscapes, value chains, and general business. These lessons and model can be adapted to other contexts or commodities, and even other fields or sectors.

A further exploration into models like the SAFE Platform may lead donors or organizations to find innovative ways to collaborate and overcome their challenges or individual limitations.

