



TOMAK
To'os ba Moris Di'ak
Farming for Prosperity



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Disclaimer

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Watch TOMAK’s documentary



Foreword from Australian Government

For a decade, Australia has been proud to stand alongside the Government of Timor-Leste through TOMAK, working together to strengthen food security, nutrition, and rural livelihoods. This booklet highlights the progress made by farming families, community leaders, private sector and government partners who have driven change across the food system in Baucau, Viqueque and Bobonaro. These stories show what collaboration can achieve: healthier diets, stronger markets, and more resilient communities. Australia remains committed to supporting Timor-Leste’s journey towards a more sustainable and inclusive future for all.

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Strong Roots
for the Future



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01



Program Snapshot



Program Snapshot

For ten years, To’os ba Moris Di’ak – or TOMAK (meaning ‘whole’ in Tetun) – has been supporting farmers and strengthening farming for prosperity in rural Timor-Leste. This is TOMAK’s story – featuring the inspiring people, places,

produce and partnerships that have defined this flagship agricultural program supported by the Australian Government and delivered together with the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) from 2016 to 2026.

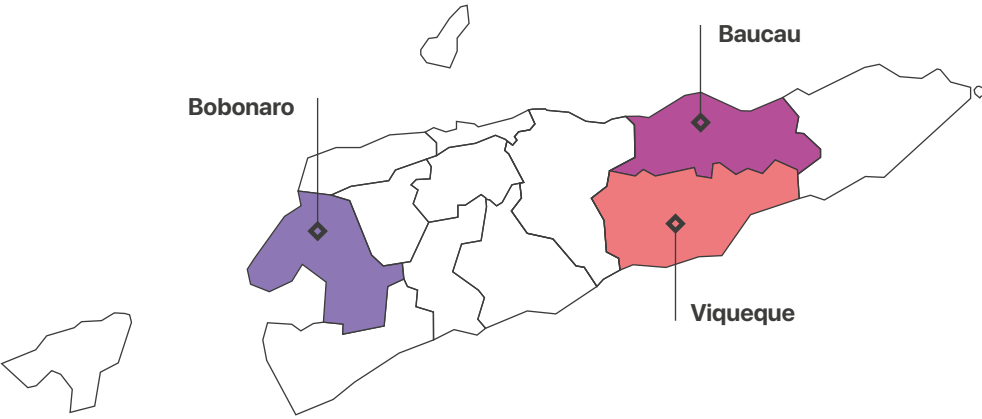
10
YEARS

50
MILLION (AUD)

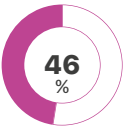
03
MUNICIPALITIES

124
SUKU

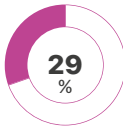
02
PHASES



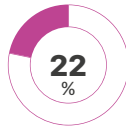
54,000
Beneficiaries
30,995 Direct | 23,607 Indirect



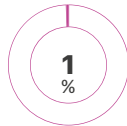
25,117
Baucau



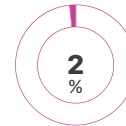
15,999
Bobonaro



12,095
Viqueque



480
In Dili



911
Service providers

Phase 2 Direct Beneficiaries



52%
Women



48%
Men



19%
Youth



0.8%
PwD

229 Organisations supported in Phase 2



7
National Government,
Academia & Research



2
Civil
Society



124
Private
Sector



97
Community Based
Organisations

Phase 1

TOMAK’s story began in 2016 , working with partners and farming families across Baucau, Bobonaro and Viqueque. In those early years, the focus was simple but ambitious: create the conditions for farming to thrive - enhancing food security, nutrition and economic opportunities for rural communities. The first phase was all about testing ideas, learning what worked and refinement through approaches such as Farmer Field Schools (FFS), Non-Government Organisation (NGO)-led implementation for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture (NSA), and direct implementation for Market Systems Development. These approaches were grounded in needs assessments, extensive consultation and reiterated Australia and Timor-Leste’s shared development goals.

In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Forestry (MALFF) and other key partners, TOMAK delivered, listened and learned. A clear message emerged: nutrition, farming, markets, and climate resilience couldn’t be treated as separate. They were parts of a greater **whole – one integrated food system.**

Phase 1
(2016 – 2021)



17,208 Direct beneficiaries



10,622 Indirect beneficiaries



911 Service providers



217% Growth in household economic value



42% Growth in consumption of Vitamin-A rich foods



75% annual increase in yields



In partnership with the MALFF, TOMAK developed the country’s first NSA curriculum. Through Farmer Field Schools and community sessions, more than 2,080 farmers and 150 health workers have learned how to grow and prioritise nutritious foods. The impact is clear: knowledge gains are translating into better diets - egg consumption from households’ own production rose from 35% to 46%. Families are prioritising nutrition where it matters most with 98% correctly identifying nutrient-dense foods like eggs as a priority food for pregnant women and young children. Improved housing coupled with high vaccination uptake is driving production, 58 coops housing 1,044 hens are estimated to produce 78,300 eggs annually under better management.

Phase 2

This insight guided TOMAK’s transition period in 2022. Through monitoring, reflection and consultation, TOMAK adapted its second phase to become a cohesive food system – bringing nutrition and livelihoods together, while embedding climate resilience and sustainable management of land and water resources as foundational elements. The program prepared to widen its focus to include more crops and livestock, stronger private sector engagement, and deeper collaboration with government and community partners for sustainability.

TOMAK’s second phase marked a shift to strengthening and sustaining. TOMAK prioritised efforts to deepen impact, worked more closely with government institutions, and focused on long-term systems change. Nutrition activities were woven directly into production and gaps in linking to markets were addressed. Support for women, youth, and people with disabilities (PwD) became more targeted and intentional while

responding to climate change became a cross-cutting priority embedded throughout the program.



▲
Mana Marcelina has become a driving force for change in Uani Uma. As leader of the Woihau group, she has brought women and men together to improve local production, build a collection centre and turn crops like red rice and orange-fleshed sweet potato into marketable food.

Phase 2
(2022 - 2026)

-  **13,787** Direct beneficiaries
-  **12,985** Indirect beneficiaries
-  **229** Organisations supported
-  **97** Active savings and loans groups (SLGs)
-  **72%** SLGs led by women
-  **88%** Overall resilience (up from 55%)
-  **95%** Empowerment level among SLG women
-  **130%** Improvement in food security
-  **82%** Annual average growth in production (2018 - 2025)

After ten years, there is much to share on TOMAK’s achievements.

Farmers are producing, consuming and selling more nutritious and diverse foods – better health, greater food security and more resilient communities.

Farming communities have worked together to support one another and learn together, improving farming practice and increasing investment opportunities, productivity and financial stability.

Women, youth and PwD are more empowered, actively involved in farming and decision-making - more equitable communities are more resilient.

National institutions, systems and policies are strengthened, and modernised – strong roots to continue growing the agricultural sector in Timor-Leste.



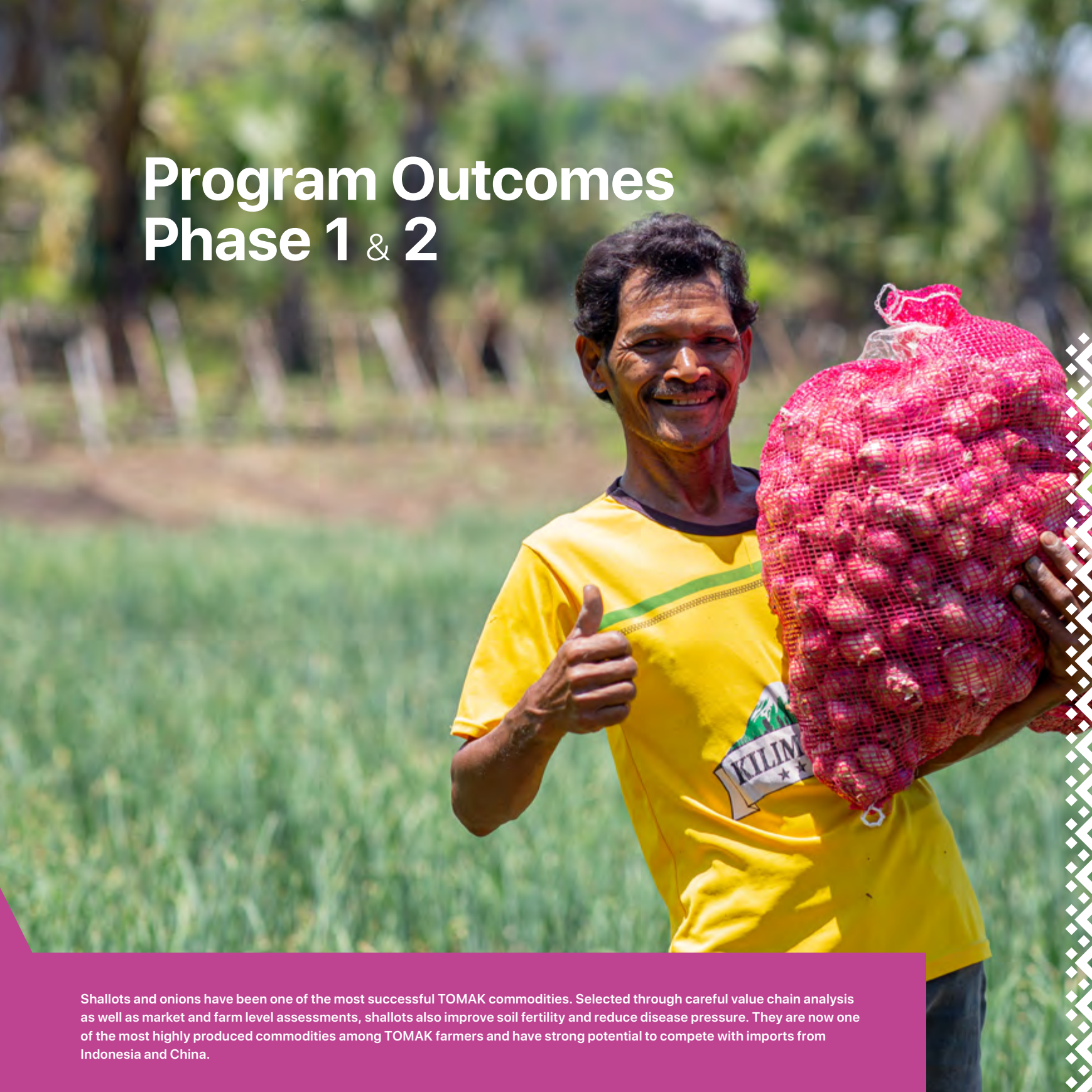


TOMAK Partners

Apoio Husi



Ra'és Hadomi Timor Oan (RHTO) | Asosiasaun Halibur Defisiensia Regiaun Oeste (AHDRO) | ADTL (Timor-Leste Disability Association) | The University of Timor-Leste | Dili Development Company/Jape Kong Su Foundation Leader Supermarket | Centro Supermercado | Seara | Lita Store | Agi Agrikultura | Vinod Patel | Acelda | Graca Farm | World Vision | Mercy Corps | Instituto de Apoio ao Dezenvolvimento Emprezarial (IADE) | Rede Feto HIAM Health | Care International | UN WOMEN | Market Development Facility | TOSKA | CRS | CDB | Centro Fresco Mart | Leader Mart | Meimart



Program Outcomes

Phase 1 & 2

Shallots and onions have been one of the most successful TOMAK commodities. Selected through careful value chain analysis as well as market and farm level assessments, shallots also improve soil fertility and reduce disease pressure. They are now one of the most highly produced commodities among TOMAK farmers and have strong potential to compete with imports from Indonesia and China.

TOMAK’s main objective was that rural households have **improved food security** and **nutrition** and **resilient agriculture-based livelihoods** that are productive and profitable across Baucau, Bobonaro, and Viqueque.

Phase 1

End of Program Outcomes (EOPOs)



EOPO 1

Households have year-round access to sufficient and nutritious food



EOPO 2

Households consume more nutritious foods



EOPO 3

Farmers improve productivity, production and post-harvest management



EOPO 4

Farmers increase sales and incomes

Phase 2

End of Investment Outcomes (EOIOs)



EOIO1

Lead Government of Timor-Leste agencies improve and sustain selected enabling policies, programs and services



EOIO2

Farming women, men and youth in target areas have more resilient agriculture-based livelihoods and improved economic empowerment



EOIO3

Households in target areas have improved food security and dietary diversity

2016

2021

2022

2026

02



Why it Matters



Agriculture has long been the backbone of rural life in Timor-Leste – employing more than 70 per cent of the working population. Despite this, the sector faces interconnected challenges that undermine productivity and resilience.



Farming systems face deep structural barriers, including limited land governance, inadequate irrigation, heavy reliance on rainfed agriculture, persistently low yields and high post-harvest losses.



Rural households are highly vulnerable, with many living below the poverty line, relying on food imports, and struggling to cope with rising prices, limited finance, climate shocks, and persistent gender, youth, and disability inequalities.



Long-term underinvestment in rural infrastructure and services – from limited mechanisation, access to credit and extension services – restricts growth.



Vulnerable groups have fewer opportunities to build a secure future. Women in agriculture are 30% less productive due to reduced access to resources and training. Disability prevalence in rural areas is twice that of urban areas and 30% of youth are disengaged from work, training or education, reflecting a declining interest in agriculture.



Agricultural markets remain underdeveloped, with limited private sector engagement and ongoing financing and input constraints.



Climate shocks, animal diseases, and the COVID-19 pandemic made life even harder. Food imports filled the gaps, prices rose.

Against this backdrop, TOMAK forged a path towards a **stronger whole food system** in its target regions. By working with government, community groups, partners and the private sector to support sustainable service delivery. TOMAK helped farmers build skills that opened new possibilities, grow more resilient crops, improve family nutrition, create more inclusive and equitable households and access better markets.

TOMAK’s collaborative, systems-focused approach supported broader efforts to strengthen agriculture, boost rural livelihoods, and create a more food secure future for Timor-Leste.



▲ SALT from above: Sloping Agricultural Land Technology – or SALT – involves contour planting, hedgerows, and terracing on steep slopes to prevent erosion, improve water retention and stabilise soils. This technique was used to great effect through TOMAK in rural areas with hilly terrain, such as Baguia in Baucau to increase arable land for farming.



BUT CHANGE HAPPENS SLOWLY,
IT MUST BE NURTURED.
IT BEGINS WITH LEARNING
—PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR CHANGE,
IN THE FIELDS
IN WORKSHOPS
IN SHARED SPACES WHERE EXPERIENCE
MEETS NEW KNOWLEDGE,
FARMERS, PARTNERS AND FACILITATORS
WORKING SIDE—BY—SIDE TESTING,
ADAPTING, PREPARING.

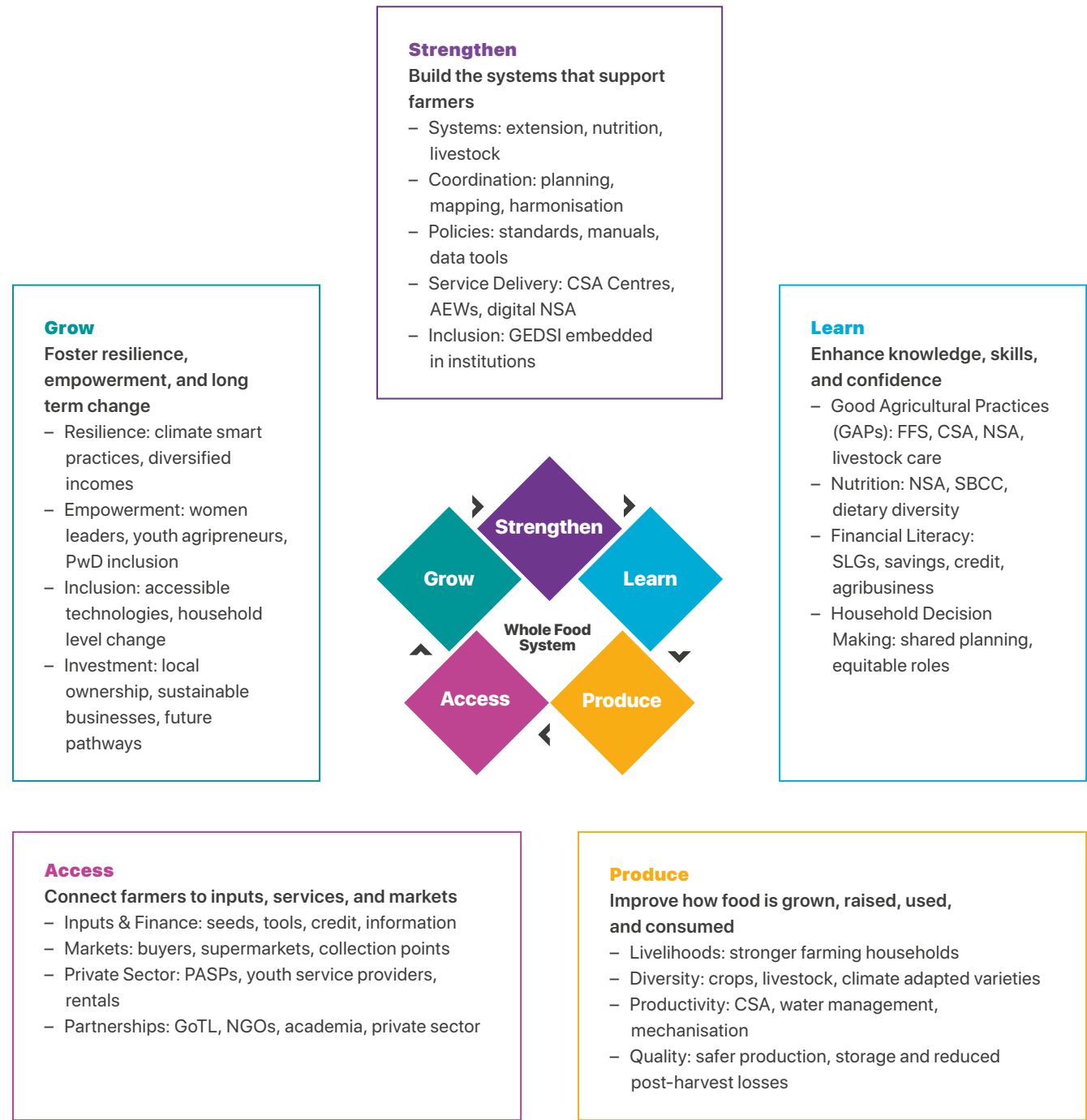
THIS IS WHERE TRUST IS BUILT...

03



How TOMAK Worked





TOMAK helped build the foundations of a stronger food system by supporting government leadership, improving coordination, and embedding inclusive policies

and tools across agriculture and health. These systems now sit firmly within Timorese institutions, ensuring farmers continue to receive consistent, climate smart, nutrition sensitive support.



TOMAK expanded access to inputs, finance, information, and markets – linking farmers, including vulnerable groups (women, youth, PwD) to buyers, service providers, and financial tools that strengthened their economic opportunities. These connections ensured local produce reached consumers while helping households earn more stable incomes.



Through practical training, household decision making sessions, and financial literacy support, TOMAK helped farmers and families build the skills

and confidence to make better choices. This learning strengthened knowledge across agriculture, nutrition, and money management, enabling households to plan together and improve farming and wellbeing.



Households are now better able to manage shocks and fluctuations, make empowered decisions, and invest in their futures, with women, youth, and people

with disabilities playing stronger roles in agriculture and community leadership. This marks the beginning of a more resilient, inclusive, and self-reliant food system for Timor-Leste.



Farmers used their new skills to diversify production, improve soil and water management, and strengthen livestock systems. These changes helped households

grow healthier food, reduce losses, and build a more secure foundation for their livelihoods.



01

Strengthen

WHOLE FOOD SYSTEM

Strengthen

TOMAK WORKED ALONGSIDE KEY GOVERNMENT PARTNERS
TO STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT FARMERS.

HOW TOMAK WORKED

A foundation of TOMAK's story is how the program helped strengthen the systems that support farmers every day. Working closely with government partners, TOMAK helped put in place the policies, tools, and services needed for long-term change.



TOMAK supported the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock, Fisheries, and Forestry (MALFF) to reactivate national coordination through regular Development Partner Harmonisation meetings - now formalised under a new ministerial diploma with dedicated government funding.

The program also helped progress key national policies and standards, including the National Seeds Policy and the Agricultural Extension Manual, ensuring gender, disability, and social inclusion were embedded from the start.

◀ Maun Domingos, an entrepreneur farmer from Bobonaro, explains the shallot production cycle at TOMAK's very first demonstration plot (demplot) in 2017

Nutrition systems were also strengthened. TOMAK supported creation of Timor-Leste's first national NSA curriculum, now used across the country by both agriculture and health staff.

Digital tools developed with the National Institute of Public Health (INSP-TL) and MALFF now help extension workers, veterinary teams, and health providers track their work and improve services, reaching more farmers with better information.



▲ A Training of Trainer (ToT) session on hydroponics with Department of Horticulture, MALFF staff in Maubara

Together, these achievements have created a stronger, more coordinated system - one that will continue supporting farmers, improving services, and guiding agricultural development in the years to come.



▲ Working together: TOMAK staff with employees from the National Directorate of Veterinary Services (DNV)



▲ An Agricultural Extension Worker (AEW) checks on some seedlings with a protective covering



Mana Felicidade worked as a nutritionist at the Atabae Health Centre. She strengthened her skills through TOMAK’s Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture training delivered with the Ministry of Health (MoH) through the National Institute of Public Health to over 300 health workers. Mana Felicidade used TOMAK-developed tools like the food availability calendar and the three food group system to help families plan nutritious diets year round.

Strengthen Achievements



5 CSA centres operational under MALFF as permanent government-owned training hubs



National Seeds Policy validated



Development Partner harmonisation meetings revived



154 Health workers trained (GAP and NSA)



9 databases/digital tools developed to support service delivery



229 Supported organisations



NSA curriculum institutionalised



129 Agricultural Extension Workers (AEW) trained



Newcastle disease vaccination rate* from 7% (2017) to 96% (2025) = 90,672 chickens vaccinated

*of mapped producers

////

I am grateful for working with TOMAK for almost 10 years, I received a lot of training and learned a lot to improve my knowledge and improve my professional skills. With the knowledge I have, I was promoted and now can sit in the position of “Head of Extension Department” MALFF Bobonaro.

Joaninha, Chief of the Department of Extension, MALFF Bobonaro

02

Learn

WHOLE FOOD SYSTEM

Learn

TOMAK BROUGHT FARMING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER TO SUPPORT CONNECTION, LEARNING AND BETTER BUSINESS, FARMING AND NUTRITION PRACTICES – BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE.

Learning has been at the core of TOMAK's work. The program helped farmers, families, and frontline workers build the practical skills they need to make better decisions, improve their farms, and nourish their households.

A key approach was the formation of local Savings and Loans Groups (SLGs) as a means of improving farming practice, food security and resilience.

Farmers learned good agricultural practices through hands-on training, demonstrations, and peer learning in SLGs through FFS and CSA Centres. These sessions helped farmers adopt simple techniques – like mulching, composting, crop diversification, and improved livestock care – that boosted quality and productivity. While targeted training on agribusiness supported more accessible information and improved management of outputs among farmers and farming groups.

HOW TOMAK WORKED



////

SLGs function as a community savings and lending group... established to support groups of farmers to access savings and loans services to meet their needs... such as investing in farming by purchasing agricultural inputs such as seeds, materials and equipment.

Joaninha Guterres
Market Systems Specialist, TOMAK

TOMAK also strengthened learning within households. Through the Household Decision-making curriculum, couples gained tools to plan together, share responsibilities, and make joint decisions about money, farming, and food – improving wellbeing for the whole family.

Nutrition learning reached deep into communities, through specific sessions for community groups and backed by the newly developed and institutionalised NSA curriculum, helping both agriculture and health workers deliver consistent, practical messages that improved nutrition understanding and consumption of local, nutrient-rich foods – leading to healthier diets for the whole family.

Youth and people with disabilities were supported through tailored training pathways, from climate-smart agribusiness to accessible hydroponics, opening new opportunities for learning and leadership.



I am happy to participate in this group and attend trainings such as this household decision making. I am learning that open and good communication with respect is key for households to live in peace and harmony. A calm stable environment is important for our children to grow and be emotionally healthy.

Mana Aguerfina da Silva Correia
from SLG Moris Foun

Together, these efforts helped thousands of people gain the knowledge, confidence, and skills to grow healthier food, manage their resources, and build stronger, more resilient livelihoods.





As a farmer, I used to think there were no more opportunities to improve my life. But after joining the TOMAK — supported group, everything changed! I’ve learned so much — especially from the collector training, which helped me understand how to become a successful collector.

Mana Josefina, Farmer and Collector,
Baucau

Mana Josefina is one of the many rural women in Timor-Leste turning knowledge into opportunity. After connecting with TOMAK, she joined climate-smart agriculture and food-processing training delivered with the MALFF and MoH. Today, Josefina grows a range of nutritious crops, including orange sweet potato (OSP). Her farm provides food for her household and fresh produce for her community.



TOMAK supported rural women to build skills and confidence in food processing, helping households reduce waste, improve nutrition, and strengthen their role in local food systems. Through women-focused training delivered by TOMAK and the MALFF, participants learned practical techniques for safely storing, preserving, and new ways of preparing nutritious crops like orange sweet potato — creating new opportunities for income, better diets, and stronger food security for their families and communities.

Learn

Achievements



97 Active SLG groups

Baucau 34%, Viqueque 22%,
Bobonaro 44%



72% Women SLG leaders



2,000+ Individuals attended FFS training sessions:

- 303 CSA Practices
- 2,084 NSA
- 1,078 Food safety and Security / Disability Inclusion
- 1,931 Agribusiness
- 1,859 HHDM



Food Group Diversity Score up from 4.5 (2022) to 5.1 (2025)



Minimum Dietary Diversity (MDD) for Women of Reproductive Age (WRA) 16% (2016) > 50% (2025)



1860+ Active members



633 Youth trained



Food insecurity reduced

- Severe from 11% (2022) to 3% (2025)
- Moderate & Severe from 39% (2022) to 22% (2025)



9 Farm cross-visits with 266 participants



Nutrition knowledge from 33% (2022) to 74% (2025)



MDD for WRA w disabilities up to 84% (2025)

03

Produce

WHOLE FOOD SYSTEM

Produce

STRONGER HARVESTS, HEALTHIER DIETS,
MORE RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS.

TOMAK helped farming families translate improved knowledge and skills into better, more reliable production. Across the three municipalities, farmers began using improved crop and livestock practices that made their farms more productive, their crops more diverse, and better able to withstand climate-related pressures. These changes led to healthier soils, stronger crops, and more secure food supplies throughout the year for consumption and sale.



Farmers also diversified what they grew and raised, adding nutrient-rich crops, fruit trees, and small livestock alongside staples. Improved livestock housing and management, including vaccination, helped families keep animals healthier and boosted access to eggs and meat. New technologies - such as terracing, climate-adapted seedlings and accessible hydroponics - opened opportunities for farmers to expand production and reduce their dependence on rain-fed systems.

HOW TOMAK WORKED



As production strengthened, households saw meaningful improvements in their diets. Families grew and consumed a wider range of foods, including more vitamin- A and protein-rich options, and many shifted towards more balanced diets. Food insecurity declined, with families better able to manage seasonal shortages and endure unexpected shocks.



These gains also translated into stronger livelihoods. With better access to information, inputs, services, and markets, farmers increased their sales and built up savings – giving households more stability and the confidence to invest further in growing their business. Importantly, these improvements were inclusive: women, youth, and PwD all experienced significant growth in empowerment, participation, and economic opportunity.

Together, these changes show how stronger production – more diverse, more resilient, and more nutritious – can transform household wellbeing and build a more secure rural economy for the long term.

◀ As a dedicated pig farmer, Egas knows how important it is to take good care of your livestock. With support from TOMAK, Egas was able to improve his pig pens and he also attended training on raising pigs where he learnt how to prepare nutritious local feed from ingredients like wheat, corn, cassava and jamal leaves. Equipped with this new knowledge, Egas is raising healthier pigs with confidence and shares what he has learnt with other local farmers.



Terracing has completely changed my farm. My soil stays moist, my crops are thriving, and harvesting is so much easier!

Mana Luciana from Baguia, Baucau

Mana Luciana is a TOMAK success story, as a youth farmer from Baucau, she participated in TOMAK's Climate-Smart Agriculture training in Raihun where she learnt about good agricultural practices such as terrace farming, compost preparation, food processing and much more.



Produce

Achievements



Crop diversification 13.1 (vs 11.5 non TOMAK)



572,729kg Cumulated production (2018 – 2025)



58 Crop demplots



23 Animal demplots



4 Nutrition Omission Trials



700 Expansion farmers, 73% adopting GAPs (Phase 2)



Livestock ownership up 65% (2024 > 2025)



1,044 hens producing 78,300 eggs annually



133% Increase in sales per farmer



60 Active Private Agricultural Service Providers (PASPs)



82% Average annual growth in crop production (2018 – 2025)



10 Commodities



Expansion farmers adopting TOMAK GAPs

- Crops from 23% (2016) > 83% (2025) (vs 35% non TOMAK)
- Animals 78% (vs 32% non-TOMAK)



203% Increase in crop sales



Post-harvest losses declined from 16% (2024) to 13% (2025)



32 Youth-led businesses

WHOLE FOOD SYSTEM

TOMAK CONNECTED FARMERS TO MARKETS, ENSURING ACCESS TO FRESH, QUALITY PRODUCE FOR CONSUMERS, STABLE LIVELIHOODS FOR FARMERS, AND GREATER FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL.





▲ Local produce on its way to bigger markets thanks to these collectors in Viqueque!

Access to finance also improved. Savings and Loans Groups gave families a safe way to save, borrow, and invest – supporting everything from school fees to new farming inputs. Financial literacy training helped households plan better and make informed decisions, while agribusiness coaching, delivered with private sector partners, strengthened farmers' ability to manage costs, negotiate, and grow their enterprises.



▲ Lita supermarket staff show off some locally grown produce on their shelves

Nutrition access expanded too. With closer links between agriculture and health services, communities received consistent messages about healthy diets, and families were better able to grow or purchase diverse, nutritious foods to eat.

Together, these improvements created a more connected food system – one where farmers can reach markets, families can access local produce, and communities have the financial tools and knowledge they need to thrive.



The cooperation between TOMAK, Leader Supermarket and farmers, which began in 2018, has brought very positive results for us... product quantities have increased significantly, and the quality has also improved... As a result, consumers are buying more and increasingly prefer local products because they see local products as fresh and organic.

Maun Teofillo, Manager, Leader Supermarket



“It is important to consume local products, not imported ones. If we eat local products... we can support our community to grow stronger. Our local products are better than imported ones.” Maun Filipe has become a vital link between farmers in Pomanu and markets and is a champion of locally grown foods. With support from TOMAK, he learned how to organise together with local producers, improve soil fertility for better harvests and reduce losses by collecting produce – such as rice, wheat and mung beans - in a warehouse ready to sell to larger buyers that TOMAK helped connect him to.

Access Achievements



Finance mobilised by SLGs (2022-2026):

- USD\$674,000 in savings
- USD\$533,000 in loans



Financial literacy increased from 34% to 60% (vs 42% non-TOMAK) in Phase 2 (2022-2025)



Market partnerships expanded from 27 (Phase 1) > 145 (Phase 2) actors (437% growth)



Farmers connected to 22 collectors, 17 supermarkets, 46 other buyers (local markets, school feeding programs, other consumers)



In Phase 2, 93,537 kg of produce sold



49% Farmers reported higher profits



Most popular



Onions



Red rice



Green leafy vegetables



31 PwD investing in hydroponics/ hydroponic systems - with 90% satisfaction reported

- 62% reported improved access to vegetables for household consumption
- 76% reporting reduced labour demands
- 83% plan to continue or expand production



62% Farmers reported higher sales



84% Youth with improved access to credit (vs 37% non-TOMAK)

05

Grow

WHOLE FOOD SYSTEM

Grow

A STRONGER, MORE INCLUSIVE FOOD SYSTEM
— FIT FOR THE FUTURE.

TOMAK's greatest legacy is the confidence and capability it leaves behind - people, communities and institutions equipped to continue building a food system that is resilient, inclusive, and locally led. Over ten years, farming households strengthened their ability to withstand shocks, grew production, built reliable livelihoods, and nourished their families. Many now keep an adequate share of their harvests for home consumption or bartering, contributing directly to household food security and nutrition outcomes, while setting aside the rest for seeds and sales. This balance reflects a shift towards more secure, self-reliant farming at the local level.

Mana Arminda is a young farmer and a member of the Hadia Moris savings and loans group in Irabin de Baixo, Viqueque. She runs a chicken farming business and receives strong support from her husband. After attending Climate-Smart Agriculture training for youth farmers organised by TOMAK and Dili Development Company at Rai Hun, she improved her poultry production by raising chickens using better management practices and preparing nutritious feed according to recommended agricultural standards. ➤

HOW TOMAK WORKED





Hydroponics is a completely new activity for us. Before, we planted in soil, but now we've learned how to cultivate crops without soil, which reduces physical strain and uses only a small amount of water. This method is efficient and accessible for us.



Inclusion and empowerment have become defining features of this growth. Women, youth, and PwD are now more active participants and confident leaders in agriculture and community leadership. Women's leadership within SLGs has continued to inspire and improve outcomes for members. Youth are equipped with the knowledge, tools and techniques to actively build a career in agriculture.

These changes signal a deeper transformation: households are more equitable – making decisions on life and business together, communities are more connected, and local systems are better equipped to support long-term progress. With stronger institutions, more capable farmers, and a clearer national vision for food security, TOMAK's partners are well placed to continue growing these achievements.

▲
Maun Antonio Barreto, Program Manager, Asosiasaun Halibur Defisiensi Regiaun Oeste (AHDRO) and training participant



“Our message to all the people of Timor-Leste, especially women living in rural areas, is this: we, as women, are capable. We can work, create and carry out agricultural activities... to progress and improve our families’ lives.”

Marcelina
Group Leader of SLG Ukawai
Uatu Carbau, Viqueque



Five Savings and Loan Groups (SLGs) — Hakiak Osan Rasik, Lahamesa, Woukaiwai, Utabailale, and Malawai — jointly built a collection centre in Suku Uani Uma, Uatucarbau, Viqueque. The centre benefits 77 members and the wider community by expanding market access and will also serve as a hub for group and community activities.



I feel relieved in helping my family with my hydroponics system. I am able to actively grow and sell vegetables, including traveling to the local market with my new assistive device,' says Tui who's spinal injury had limited his mobility. With support from TOMAK and the National Rehabilitation Centre, he received a new wheelchair which has enabled him to build a business with his hydroponics, selling the vegetables he grows to his local community.

Tiu Rogerio Pinto
Farmer, Viqueque

After a spinal injury in 2002 left him unable to walk, Tiu Rogerio Pinto used his creativity to design his own three-wheeled mobility aid. With support from TOMAK, RHTO, and the National Rehabilitation Centre, he received a new wheelchair and walking sticks to help with his mobility. This change also enabled him to expand his business.

Grow Achievements

	Empowered women in agriculture 95% (vs 81% non-TOMAK)*		Overall resilience 55% (2022) > 88% (2025)
	Empowered women with disabilities 91% (vs 77% non-TOMAK)		Disability inclusion mainstreamed in SLGs with 50 (2.7%) PwD reached across the three municipalities
	Targeted interventions: 31 PwD trained and using hydroponics systems		51 PwD supported with access to public services (assistive devices, subsidies, referrals)
	15% Youth membership of SLGs		23 UNTL agriculture students with professional experience placements
	43 Youth entrepreneurs supported to establish new businesses using CSA technologies		80% Youth PASPs reporting their business as very profitable
	12,000 Seedlings distributed (42% perennial, climate-resilient fruit and forestry species)		44% Adoption of CSA practices – with adoption among PwD reaching 47%
	91 New animal houses		1,270+ Animals protected

*A-WEAI (Abbreviated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index)



Inclusion at the Heart of Change



▲
A successful hydroponics harvest in Saburai

For women



From the beginning, TOMAK recognised that women, young people, and people with disabilities faced the greatest barriers in Timor-Leste's food system - and held enormous potential to drive change. Over two phases, the program steadily strengthened its approach to Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI), moving from early gains in women's participation to deeper, systemic shifts in empowerment, access and opportunity.

TOMAK addressed the risks of overburdening women through labour saving technologies and a household-based approach. The program helped improve nutrition, strengthen decision-making in households, and expand access to tools, credit, training, and leadership roles. By the end of Phase 2, women held most leadership positions in SLGs, accessed credit at far higher rates than non-TOMAK farmers, and reported stronger control over income, production decisions, and workload balance. Many women also stepped into new economic roles - from food processing to equipment rental - supported by targeted training and market linkages.



▲
A SLG activity with members takes place in Lahamesa, Viqueque

For people with disabilities



TOMAK partnered with the National disabled people's organisation Ra'es Hadomi Timor Oan (RHTO) to break down barriers that kept many excluded from agricultural opportunities. Through accessible training, peer mentoring, sign language support, and an innovative hydroponics pilot, PwD gained greater control over income, stronger group membership, better access to extension services, improving empowerment, food security and nutrition outcomes. These efforts also helped position RHTO as a national leader in disability inclusion in agriculture.



▲ TOMAK signs a Memorandum of Understanding with RHTO in 2023. This long running partnership prioritised inclusion, mutual capacity building, continuous communication, safeguards, Do No Harm adjustments and joint research and MEL.

For youth



TOMAK created pathways into modern CSA practices and technology. Young people received hands-on training, mentorship, and support to start new agribusinesses - from commercial production to equipment maintenance. In partnership with UNTL's Faculty of Agriculture, TOMAK helped give students professional experience and entrepreneurship opportunities. Many gained confidence, skills and a renewed sense that agriculture could offer a viable future for them.

Across all groups, TOMAK strengthened inclusive systems by partnering with government, embedding GEDSI guidance into extension services, improving measurement tools, and ensuring that inclusion was woven through every part of the program. The result was a more equitable, resilient food system where more people could participate, lead, and benefit.

Mana Dominica, a young single mother from Venilale, joined her local TOMAK Savings and Loans Group to build a more secure future for her family. Through the group's training and support, she gained the confidence to start a small trading business — buying vegetables from nearby farmers and reselling them in her community. With her first loan,

she expanded her product range, strengthened her financial skills, and began earning a steady income. Today, she manages her business independently, reinvesting her profits, supporting her children, and showing how women and young people can drive local enterprise and opportunity when given the tools to lead.



I've improved my financial management; I track my expenses to calculate profits and set money aside for family needs and savings. I have paid back my initial loan and now simply reinvest my profits to keep my business going forward.

Mana Dominica, Small Business Owner, Venilale





Growing Climate Resilience

Climate change is already reshaping life in rural Timor-Leste – less predictable rain, harsher dry seasons, new pests and diseases, and greater pressure on land and water. TOMAK helped farming families adapt by making CSA a practical, everyday part of how communities grow food.

Farmers learned simple techniques – like terracing, mulching, organic fertiliser and pest control – that improved yields while protecting their land. Adoption was strong, especially for low-cost practices that families could continue on their own.



▲
A cross-visit to a terrace farm in Baucau

A major achievement was the strengthening of five Climate-Smart Agriculture Centres, now fully run by government partners. These hubs train farmers in water-efficient production, soil management, crop diversification, and new technologies such as hydroponics, helping communities prepare for a hotter, less predictable climate and opening new, inclusive opportunities for income and nutrition among target farmers. TOMAK also strengthened livestock systems by supporting safer, cleaner animal housing. These structures improved animal health, reduced disease risks for families, and boosted egg and meat production – making households more resilient to seasonal scarcity, climate shocks and market fluctuation.

To support long-term resilience, TOMAK distributed 12,000 climate-adapted seedlings, including perennial, resilient fruit and forestry species that improve soil health, protect water sources, and store carbon.

Over the past decade, TOMAK has worked to embed Climate Smart Agriculture across Timor Leste's farming systems – helping extension workers and farmers adopt practical techniques that protect soil, conserve water, and strengthen resilience. Through hands on training and demonstration plots, AEWs have learned how to support farmers with improved water management, homemade compost

and fertiliser, agroforestry, and terracing approaches such as SALT (Sloping Agriculture Land Technology). These practices are now part of a wider shift toward more sustainable, productive farming that helps households increase yields, safeguard natural resources, and contribute to stronger national food security.



There is always room to improve and learn new skills. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to improve my own knowledge and skills on adopting new technologies and practices to better support my community.

Jorge, Agricultural Extension Worker from Uaimori, Viqueque



Climate-smart agriculture training with AEWs in Hera

04

TOMAK in the Field:
Practices and Technologies



How Did it Work?

Savings and Loans Groups



Savings and Loans Groups are simple, community run financial systems that help rural households save money, access small loans, and build confidence in managing their finances. Members meet regularly to contribute to a shared fund, which is then used to provide loans for farming, small businesses, school fees, or urgent family needs. A small social fund also supports members during emergencies, strengthening solidarity and reducing reliance on high risk lenders.

Savings and Loans Groups are governed by the members themselves, who elect leaders, set rules, and make decisions together. This structure builds trust, transparency, and accountability. Because the groups are inclusive - welcoming women, youth, and people with disabilities - they also create safe spaces for learning, leadership, and participation.

The benefits go far beyond finance. SLGs became platforms for agricultural training, nutrition learning, disability inclusion and household decision making discussions. Members gain financial literacy, improve their planning skills, and feel more confident investing in their farms and families. Over time, these groups help households grow their savings, strengthen resilience, and create new economic opportunities - making them one of the most effective community-based tools for improving livelihoods in rural Timor Leste.

TOMAK's SLGs are 72% women led!



I feel very happy, because during this time we have been able to save money and now we withdraw our savings to buy fertilizer, purchase food for our household and pay for our children's school fees.

Aquilina, Farmer and SLG Member, Limanaro, Bobonaro



Feto Forte, Nasaun Forte! Before TOMAK, Mana Margarida, Mana Aquilina and Mana Tomásia and their families would often struggle to earn enough income to cover their family needs. With support from TOMAK, they learned how to diversify their crops and grow more nutritious foods year-round for their own consumption and to sell.

How Did it Work?

TOMAK Commodities and Nutrition

TOMAK commodities for Phase 1 and 2 were selected through a value chain analysis and structured market and farm-level assessment process, prioritising products with strong domestic or import-replacement demand, high nutritional value, broad participation potential, alignment with existing farming systems, and clear opportunities to strengthen market linkages and private entrepreneurship in line with GoTL priorities.

Priority was given to commodities that fit within existing rice-based and mixed farming systems, allowing poorer and resource-constrained households to participate without major shifts in risk or high investment requirements.

Phase 1 Commodities

	Red Rice
	Shallot/ Onion
	Mung Bean
	Peanuts

Phase 2 Commodities

Legumes	 4 Cowpea	 4 Common bean	 3 Mung bean
Staple and Root Crops	 11 Red rice	 5 Orange fleshed/ sweet potato	
Horticulture	 7 Shallot /onion	 23 Green leafy vegetables	
Livestock	 19 Chickens	 9 Pigs	

Accessible Nutrition Information

Nutrition from Foods

Proteins

Essential for physical and mental growth and development.

Foods high in protein include:

Fore-keli, Fore-rai, Fore-mungu, Fore-metan, and Koto mean.

Vitamin A

Vital for eye health and disease prevention.

Foods rich in Vitamin A include:

Senoura, Fehuk midar kór kinur, Kangkung, Lakeru kór kinur, and Ai-dila tasak.

Iron

Important for blood health and disease prevention.

Foods high in iron include:

Fore-metan, Koto mean, Fore-keli, Fore-rai, and Bayam.

Zinc

Crucial for preventing diseases and supporting cognitive function.

Foods high in zinc include:

Lakeru musan, Fore-metan, Fore-keli, Fore-mungu, and Fore-rai.

TOMAK also worked to strengthen systems, train health workers and support families to create understanding and action for better nutrition outcomes. TOMAK created practical guidance and tools to help both health workers and families learn about, produce and eat more diverse, nutritious foods year-round.



After this training, I feel very confident to deliver NSA training to health workers, and I am ready to share the knowledge I gained and support future NSA training for health workers.

Mana António Pereira, Nutrition Coordinator at Vemasse Health Centre – participant of NSA Training of Trainers workshop



▲
A nutritious meal made from local foods – including TOMAK commodities – provides everything the body needs

The three food groups

Growth foods

Proteins - Haburas

Which help the body grow and repair

Energy foods

Carbohydrates - Fo Forsa

Which provide strength and energy for daily activities

Protective foods

Fruit and vegetables - Fo Protesaun

Which help protect the body from illness and support overall health

How Did it Work?

Farmer Field Schools

Farmer Field Schools (FFS) were one of TOMAK's most effective ways of helping farmers build practical, lasting skills. Instead of classroom lectures, FFS used demonstration plots – demplots - where farmers learned directly in the field, observing changes week by week and testing new practices together. This hands on approach strengthens understanding, builds confidence, and helps farmers make better decisions based on what they see and experience.

Delivered jointly by MALFF extension workers and local partners, FFS created a space for farmers to explore improved soil and water management, crop diversification, organic fertilisers, pest control, and climate smart techniques. Farmers learned to analyse problems, compare results, and adapt practices to their own land. Because the sessions were group based, they also encouraged discussion, peer learning, and shared problem solving.

By grounding training in real plots and real conditions, FFS helped farmers adopt new practices more quickly and sustainably. They helped turned abstract ideas into practical skills, strengthening community knowledge, and supporting more resilient, productive farming across the food system.

Demplot
▼



Demplot
▼



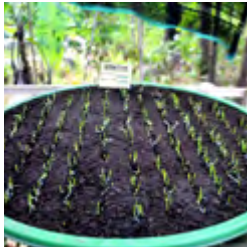
▲
Water harvesting



▲
Nutrition Omission Trial (N.O.T.)

Farmer Field Schools delivered season-long, field-based learning that integrated improved farming practices.

Seedlings
▼



Intercropping
▼



▲
Rice harvest



▲
A first harvest



FFS: Crops

- FFS1 Land Preparation and Nurseries
- FFS2 Transplanting and Planting
- FFS3 Fertilizing and Irrigation
- FFS4 Pest and Diseases Control
- FFS5 Harvest preparation, postharvest and storage



FFS: Livestock

- FFS1 (L) Animal feed, nutrition
- FFS2 (L) Animal Housing
- FFS3 (L) Animal diseases identification

How Did it Work?

Climate-Smart Agriculture



Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) is an approach that helps farmers manage climate variability while keeping their farms productive, resilient, and sustainable. It focuses on three things: improving yields, strengthening resilience to shocks like drought and irregular rainfall, and reducing the environmental footprint of farming. CSA is not a single technique - it's a set of practical, low cost methods that protect soil, conserve water, diversify production, and support long term food security.



Hydroponics: Soil-less cultivation using nutrient solutions instead of soil, enabling year-round production, highly efficient water use, and easier participation by PwD and youth, as systems can be raised, are light and easy to manage. Hydroponics is more climate-resilient because plants are grown in protected structures, production continues even during torrential rains, reducing losses and ensuring stable harvests when field crops may be damaged

CSA Practices Used in TOMAK



Soil & Water Management
Terracing & SALT: Contour planting and hedgerows that prevent erosion and stabilise steep slopes.
Water Harvesting: Simple systems like trenches, spring protection, mulching, and rooftop or ground collection to store water for dry periods.
Conservation Agriculture: Practices that keep soil covered, reduce disturbance, and retain moisture.



Crop & Farm Diversification
Crop Rotation: Alternating crops to restore soil nutrients, reduce pests, and stabilise yields.
Climate tolerant Varieties: Drought resistant vegetables and Orange Sweet Potato for reliable harvests.
Agroforestry: Integrating fruit and forest trees to improve soil health, provide shade, and protect water sources.



Organic & Locally Made Inputs
Compost & Bokashi: Homemade fertilisers that improve soil structure and reduce reliance on external inputs.
Biochar: A carbon rich soil amendment that boosts fertility, improves water retention, and stores carbon long term.
Organic Pest Management: Using biological and cultural methods to reduce chemical pesticide use.



Climate Smart Livestock
Improved Animal Housing: Cleaner, safer pig and poultry housing that reduces disease and improves manure management.
Bio-secure Poultry Practices: Better vaccination, hygiene, and management to reduce losses.

CSA Technologies Supported by TOMAK



Water & Soil Technologies
Water harvesting structures
Drip irrigation, sprinklers, and low cost fertigation
Storage pits, gully plugs, and plastic wells



Mechanisation & Tools
Small scale mechanisation through private rental services
Tools for soil preparation, composting, and land management



Locally Produced Inputs
Biochar
Compost and organic fertilisers
Natural pesticides

How Did it Work?

Produtu Lokal

Creating market demand

TOMAK has not only helped farmers reach new markets – it has also worked to strengthen demand for fresh, locally grown food across Timor Leste. By partnering with supermarkets, collectors, private buyers, and municipal authorities, the program has helped make local produce more visible, more trusted, and more consistently available to consumers. Campaigns like #HadomiLokal encouraged shoppers to choose Timorese fruits, vegetables, and grains, reinforcing the value of buying local and supporting rural livelihoods.



Orange-fleshed sweet potato was one of TOMAK's priority crops because it's naturally rich in beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A for strong immunity, healthy vision and growth – key to combating stunting and malnutrition in children. Just one cup can meet a person's daily vitamin A needs. It stores well, cooks well, and offers a low-cost way for families to improve diets, reduce malnutrition, and boost food security across Timor-Leste

Behind the scenes, TOMAK helped build the systems that make this demand possible. Collection points now act as local hubs where farmers can aggregate produce, meet quality standards, and sell to buyers with confidence. Private sector service providers, youth entrepreneurs, and supermarket partners play a growing role in sourcing, transporting, and promoting local foods. With more active market actors and stronger supply chains, farmers have better opportunities to sell their harvests – and consumers have better access to nutritious, home grown foods.

This combined push on both the supply and demand sides is helping to build a food system where local produce is valued, accessible, and central to a healthier future for Timor Leste.



Now we are able to increase production in larger quantities to supply supermarkets and TOMAK will help us to place our products there.

Filipe, Collector, Utalari, Viqueque Baucau



Locally grown brown and red onions find their way to supermarket shelves in Dili



Red rice harvested in Viqueque is stored safely at Filipe's warehouse, then packaged and ready to be transported to buyers in Dili



Locally grown white rice available at Leader supermarket in Dili – part of the 'Produtu Lokal' campaign

05



People and Impact



OVERTIME, THE TINY SEED THAT WAS
PLANTED BEGINS TO BEAR FRUIT.
WHAT WAS LEARNED IS PUT INTO PRACTICE
RURAL FAMILIES ARE HEALTHIER.
WHAT IS PRODUCED FINDS ITS WAY TO MARKETS.
RESILIENT FARMERS ARE WORKING TOGETHER.
OPPORTUNITIES OPEN, WHERE ONCE THEY FELT
OUT OF REACH AND NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.
THE FOOD SYSTEM IS WHOLE ...



FROM SUBSISTANCE TO SUSTAINABILITY

Learn



A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years

José

Farmer
Atabae, Bobonaro

As a member of the Hadomi To'os Savings and Loans Group, Maun José remembers the uncertainty farmers once faced, relying entirely on manual labour and with no buyers for their produce. Through TOMAK's cost-sharing support, his group accessed mechanisation for the first time - modernising their farming techniques, expanding cultivated areas, and boosting production. José has also experienced and seen how families making decisions together at home is benefitting households and farming alike.

José feels confident about his farming future, **"If I had not participated in the TOMAK program, I would have surely abandoned my land due to a lack of knowledge. Now, I can change my family life and, for my group, I can provide support. If this program no longer exists tomorrow, I will use the knowledge it has given me to continue and advance my life as a farmer."**

FROM LIMITATIONS TO POSSIBILITIES

Learn



A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years

Leónia & Maria

Hydroponic Farmers
Maliana, Bobonaro

For Leonia and Maria, hydroponics has opened up new opportunities in farming. As visually impaired women who have often faced discrimination, they are determined to move forward and build their own future, though many traditional methods of earning income in Atabae brought challenges for them.

Through TOMAK's hydroponics training, they have discovered a system they can manage independently and confidently - one that is easier to monitor, safer, and more accessible. Leonia hopes more people with disabilities can learn this method, proving that with the right opportunities, everyone can contribute, grow and inspire! As Maria says, **"my message to everyone in Timor-Leste is that they should not only focus on our capacities, but also recognise our skills and knowledge."**

FROM RISK TO RESILIENCE

Strengthen



A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years

André

Chicken Farmer
Uatu Carbao, Viqueque

André and his group, Hadia Moris, are building a stronger poultry flocks with support that reaches from the national level right down to their chicken housing. Before TOMAK, vaccination was irregular and knowledge was limited. But thanks to TOMAK's collaboration with the National Directorate of Veterinary Services, the group received training, vaccines, and hands-on support in the field.

With regular vaccination cycles, their chickens are healthier and far better protected from disease. Andre explains that the eye-drop method taught through the program has made the process simple and reliable. **"We are grateful... because now we can conduct vaccinations regularly,"** he says. By strengthening national systems and ensuring that local farmers can access them, TOMAK has helped Andre's group improve their flock health, reduce losses, and grow their confidence as poultry producers.

FROM LEARNING TO LEADING

Strengthen



A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years

Marcelina

Chief Group of SLG Ukawai
Uatu Carbao, Viqueque

Mana Marcelina has become a driving force for change in Uani Uma. As leader of the Woihau group, she has brought women and men together to improve local production, build a collection centre and turn crops like red wheat and potato into marketable foods. With TOMAK's training and support, the groups products are stronger, losses have been reduced and women's participation has flourished. Marcelina is excited for the future and strongly believes in the power of collective effort:

"Our message to all the people of Timor-Leste, especially women living in rural areas, is this: we, as women, are capable. We can work, create and carry out agricultural activities... to progress and improve our families' lives."

FROM BARRIERS TO NEW BEGINNINGS

Grow



A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years

Angelo

Hydroponic Farmer
Buruma, Baucau

When Angelo began experimenting with hydroponics after engaging with TOMAK, he was excited to find a way to grow vegetables without the heavy labour that soil farming demands. The system quickly proved its value. Using only water, his mustard greens mature in just two and a half weeks, and other varieties follow on a steady cycle. What once felt tiring is now simple: when the water level drops, he just tops it up and the system keeps working.

The reliability of his harvests has created its own local market. Neighbours come directly to his home on harvest days, buying fresh, healthy vegetables before he even considers taking them to the market. Angelo plants two or three times a year, keeping enough for his family and selling the rest to cover essentials like medicine and supplies. **Hydroponics has given him a lighter workload, a dependable income stream, and a way to meet the growing demand right at his doorstep — proof that small innovations can reshape what's possible for local farmers.**

FROM HARVEST TO WHOLESOME

Learn



A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years

Agnesia & Domingos

Farmers
Uatu Carbao, Viqueque

For Agnesia and her husband, Domingos Mateus da Costa Mendes, joining their local savings and loans group (SLG) Hadia Moris transformed how they work and make decisions as a family. “We support each other more and work together both on the farm and at home” says Agnesia. Once managing household, farm and livestock tasks separately, they now share responsibilities – from childcare and cooking to feeding chickens and planning farm work. Decisions about buying or selling livestock are made together, strengthening trust and communication.

Through TOMAK’s support, including sessions on household decision-making, Agnesia and Domingos have built a more equal, cooperative household and a stronger foundation for their children’s future.

FROM PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTH

Grow

Ervina

**Coordinator for Agribusiness,
Food Security and Cooperation
Unit, MALFF**

Mana Ervina has helped guide TOMAK's direction with her insight, while staying closely connected to the realities in rural communities. Through joint field monitoring, she spent time with farmers, observed activities on the ground and offered clear, practical feedback that strengthened how the program was delivered.

Her leadership is grounded in collaboration. She co-chaired the TOMAK Reference Group meetings and actively supported the regular convening of MALFF's Development Partners Harmonisation Meetings, creating space for open discussion, shared problem-solving, and better alignment across programs, helping partners work together rather than in parallel, while keeping community needs at the centre of decision-making. Mana Ervina's commitment reflects the spirit of the TOMAK partnership: government-led, community-focused, and strengthened together.

A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years

FROM GRADUATE TO GROWING

Produce

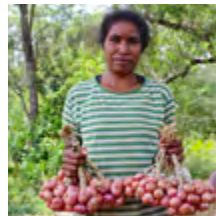
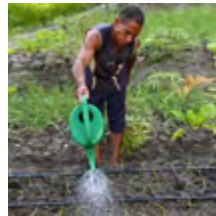
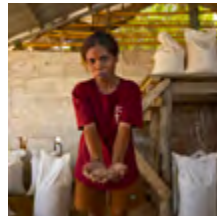
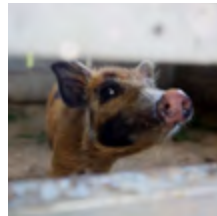
Carlos

Farmer
Meligo, Bobonaro

After graduating in agriculture from UNTL, Maun Carlos returned home determined to keep learning. Through TOMAK's trainings he adopted improved techniques that helped him expand his shallot plot from 100m² to 700m², recently harvesting around 2,000 kilograms. With TOMAK's support he connected to buyers in Dili and Maliana, strengthening his market links.

Proud of the partnership with MALFF extension workers, he plans to keep growing shallots while diversifying his crops. He has also registered a new agri-inputs business, increasing local access to quality inputs for farmers in his community.

A Portrait of Progress - TOMAK 10 Years



06



Strong Roots for the Future



THIS IS NOT THE END.
TRUE STORIES LIKE THIS CONTINUE,
THROUGH THE PEOPLE AND PLACES
SHAPED BY TOMAK.
TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR TIMOR-LESTE.



Sustainability



TOMAK leaves behind a lasting legacy – strong roots from which to continue growing. By working through national systems and local organisations, the program helped build the skills, structures, and partnerships needed for Timor-Leste to carry this work forward.

Government partners now lead many of the core functions the program helped strengthen. National extension standards are in place and being used across municipalities, nutrition tools are fully digitised and managed by INSP-TL, and livestock surveillance systems are operating independently with far higher coverage than before. The five CSA Centres are now permanent, operational government-owned hubs training farmers in resilient, modern agricultural techniques and practices.

▲ Sr. Felis leads the Halibur Agrikultor Builo SLG in Ossu with determination and passion. Living with a disability has not stopped him from championing innovation and inclusive agriculture, with a quarter of his SLG members also people with disabilities. Through TOMAK's Farmer Field School and training support, the group produced over 700kg of orange-fleshed sweet potato and leafy greens in 2025, boosting incomes and improving family nutrition. From inclusive leadership to resilient livelihoods — Sr. Felis is farming for prosperity!



▲ Members of SLG group Cafu in Viqueque

At the community level, SLGs, youth and women-led agribusinesses, and PASPs continue to grow, offering advice, inputs, and market connections without program support. These local networks keep knowledge and services accessible where they are needed most.

Partnerships with civil society and academia have also taken hold. Organisations like RHTO and The Secretary of State for Equality now deliver their own training on disability inclusion, HHDM, and hydroponics, while the National University of Timor-Leste and their Rai-Hun training centre (developed with TOMAK) have established ongoing pathways for student placements, research, and agripreneurship. making, and hydroponics, while UNTL and the Rai Hun training centre have established ongoing pathways for student placements, research, and agripreneurship.



▲ Shallot seedlings nurtured for growth

Together, these systems – public, private, and community – form a sustainable ecosystem that will continue to strengthen agriculture, nutrition, and resilience in Timor-Leste. TOMAK may be closing, but the work is firmly in local hands, and ready to continue delivering impact.



▲ A husband and wife team prepare the ground for a N.O.T. Equitable household decision making at home has also helped couples grow successful farming businesses together.

TOMAK is proud of the progress achieved alongside its partners since 2016. Through adaptive, responsive management and close alignment with government priorities, the program remained relevant and impactful – strengthening value chains, expanding market opportunities, and promoting climate – resilient farming. Strong collaboration with national and municipal actors created space for innovation, capacity building, and shared learning – nurturing a stronger agricultural sector for Timor-Leste.

Farmer Jaime handling shallot seedlings transplanting from a nursery in Venilale





Lessons for the future



TOMAK's decade of work offers clear insights for anyone working to strengthen agriculture, nutrition, and food systems in Timor-Leste and similar contexts. These lessons highlight what consistently made the biggest difference on the ground.

▲
Leafy greens transplanted and ready for planting

Strategy

Shaping a Stronger Food System

- **Integration amplifies impact:**
Nutrition, agriculture, markets, climate resilience, and inclusion work best when designed and delivered as one system.
- **Local institutions sustain progress:**
Strong policies, coordinated planning, and locally led services are the backbone of long-term change.
- **Collaboration improves alignment:**
Bringing government, private sector, academia, and development partners together reduces duplication and strengthens national priorities.
- **Local private sector actors drive change:**
When local service providers are empowered, they accelerate adoption, innovation, and sustainability.
- **Market systems matter:**
Reliable inputs, aggregation points, and service models help farmers commercialise and reduce losses.
- **Good governance keeps systems strong:**
Clear oversight, transparency, and accountability ensure programs stay on track and deliver responsibly.

Approach

Ways of Working That Deliver Results

- **Stay close to communities:**
Direct engagement strengthens learning, responsiveness, and program quality.
- **Invest in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning early:**
Strong data systems and participatory learning help programs understand what works and adapt quickly.
- **Inclusion is a driver, not an add on:**
When women, youth, and people with disabilities participate meaningfully, adoption and resilience improve across the system.
- **Embed Do No Harm:**
Gender and disability-related risks require whole-of-program attention.
- **Back young people:**
With skills and pathways, youth energise markets, services, and innovation.
- **Diversify to build resilience:**
A mix of crops, livestock, and income sources helps households manage and recover from shocks.
- **Pair knowledge with access:**
Nutrition improves when families can learn about, grow, and buy diverse foods.
- **Use community structures:**
Savings groups and local networks expand access to finance, strengthen confidence, and support peer learning.
- **Balance inclusion and commercialisation:**
Dual pathways allow programs to support both market-oriented farmers as well as remote, vulnerable households.

Interventions

What Works on the Ground

- **Engage households, not individuals:**
Joint decision-making strengthens outcomes and reduces burdens.
- **Equip frontline workers:**
Extension and veterinary staff need transport, tools, and operational support to reach communities.
- **Make climate-smart agriculture water-centred:**
Soil, water, and landscape management are essential for resilience – **smart agriculture water centred**.
- **Use private-sector models for mechanisation:**
Service based rental models are more sustainable and equitable than direct distribution – **sector models for mechanisation**.
- **Address persistent system gaps:**
Input quality, livestock health, irrigation, and energy access remain critical constraints shaping productivity and nutrition.





