AMEA Learning Agenda 2023 - 2025

AMEA promotes the use of **cost-effective, scalable** approaches to deliver **inclusive, sustainable** agricultural growth. The AMEA Toolbox promotes tools that have been peer reviewed and therefore have proven their effectiveness across a number of value chains and countries. However, it is clear that this evidence base is not sufficiently compelling to support mass adoption of these tools. There remains skepticism. We therefore **need to build the evidence base** of what is working and how the more successful approaches can be scaled.

We believe it is critical that **"success"** is backed by credible data, therefore we are looking for programs that capture **credible data/information** on how the approach works and its' impact. This means we expect effectiveness to be demonstrated through credible data for:

- **growth** (revenue, profit, capital, jobs)
- **inclusivity** (impact on smallholders disaggregated by gender, youth and other groups)[1]
- **sustainability** (environmental impacts)

We also will examine **cost** of BDS delivery and consider whether different approaches could have been more cost-effective.

AMEA has also initiated **BDS roadmap processes** in 6 countries with draft Roadmaps created with the intention of **changing the BDS market system**. There are a number of proposed initiatives which rest upon various assumptions, and these **assumptions need to be tested**. The AMEA Learning Agenda therefore also reflects this.

Learning Questions

Overarching:

1. What are the most cost-effective and inclusive approaches for accelerating agri-SME performance at different stages of development? In connection with this, what are the most effective ways of segmenting the agri-SME market and tailoring delivery of BDS?
2. What are the conditions (strategies and mechanisms) that will enable the widespread adoption of proven cost-effective and inclusive approaches? This will consider how stakeholder mindsets can be transformed; and how the use of standards, regulation and data/evidence play a part in changing mindsets and practice.

Specific

Standardization and Regulation

1. What is the connection between standards and the effectiveness & impact of BDS service delivery?

[1] AMEA recognizes that inclusivity has many aspects and definitions. AMEA does not intend to limit the scope of learnings regarding inclusivity. However, AMEA strongly recommends the focus on inclusion as equality of opportunities and empowerment of target groups (smallholder farmers, women, youth, and local entrepreneurs, among others), in many forms (for example, voice, ownership, risk-sharing, rewards, etc.).

2. Based on the answer to the previous question, is there a case for governments or sector-wide platforms to agree upon and promote standards on BDS services? (Should regulation / accreditation be applied to whole BDS sector or should there be tailored approaches for agri-BDS? What value would there be for BDS provider databases?)

3. How should these standards be curated? (ie. regular feedback on their implementation and effectiveness, feeding back into updates). How can (inter)national standards be used to improve the quality of BDS delivered? Should this be Government-led or can value chain associations/platforms perform a role?

Effectiveness of Approaches

4. How can modular delivery of BDS enable clients to have more choice/control over the services provided? Will this enable us to understand the real demand for BDS in a market that appears to be predominantly supply-led? What does this mean for a "Toolbox"?

5. What are the most successful approaches to support agri-SMEs/FOs to create strong, sustainable and inclusive governance and management teams?

6. What are the different approaches to obtain contributions from clients to the cost of BDS and how do they enhance effectiveness e.g. pay in advance, pay at end, cost contribution? What do these different approaches tell us about how to use subsidies in the sector?

7. How will digital delivery change the BDS business model and will it be more inclusive and cost-effective?

8. If most agri-SMEs are at a basic level of development (level 1) what does this mean for the relative investments in BDS delivery?

9. What are the missed opportunities for collaboration in a value chain and how much does affect cost of BDS delivery and effectiveness?

10. What are the most effective approaches for supporting agri-SME growth in refugee targeted programs?

Access to Finance

11. What is the relative success of integrated programs where A2F is embedded compared to stand-alone accelerators? Do they have the same targeted clients and are the impacts the same for all groups (i.e. women, men, youth)?

12. How are online portals that support matchmaking performing e.g. BDS, A2F, deal rooms? Should there be more investment in these portals or in other approaches? Would Financial Service Providers pay for pipeline data?

13. Would a shared segmentation of the agri-SME market provide support greater coordination between BDS and A2F service providers e.g. bankability metrics? If so, what are the likely graduation routes for accessing finance e.g. VSLA/SACCO to MFI to Commercial Bank or Investor? How would this graduation be supported and who should provide the BDS?

Data Driven

14. What are the key metrics to support decision making in tighter and looser value chains aiming to create inclusive, sustainable agricultural growth? What is the cost of generating this data and the trade offs in terms of cost/quality? How can farmers and agri-SMEs be incentivized to produce credible data? If incentives are weak will this lead to more traceability but less inclusion?

15. What are the constraints and enablers for AMEA members to use a standardized approach? How can a core set of metrics be used access the Network in 2024?

16. What is the best interval for collecting data on cost-effectiveness in agri-SME growth initiatives e.g. cost and effectiveness measured 6-12 months after TA? This would also look at frequency of measuring progress against a baseline?

17. What data is useful and shareable for investor benchmarking?

Scaling / Mindset Change

18. How can donors be encouraged to invest in proven approaches and building local BDS ecosystems?