

Join CIFOR-ICRAF and make a difference!



Consultant - Independent evaluation and strategic review of the Food, Agriculture, and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue (2021 – 2026) (Ref. No. 2465)

Climate Change, Energy and low carbon development (CCE) Team & Quality for Impact (Q4I)

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and World Agroforestry (ICRAF) envision a more equitable world where trees in all landscapes, from drylands to the humid tropics, enhance the environment and well-being for all. CIFOR and ICRAF are non-profit science institutions that build and apply evidence to today's most pressing challenges, including energy insecurity and the climate and biodiversity crises. Over a combined total of 65 years, we have built vast knowledge on forests and trees outside of forests in agricultural landscapes (agroforestry). Using a multidisciplinary approach, we seek to improve lives and to protect and restore ecosystems. Our work focuses on innovative research, partnering for impact, and engaging with stakeholders on policies and practices to benefit people and the planet. Founded in 1993 and 1978, CIFOR and ICRAF are members of CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food secure future dedicated to reducing poverty, enhancing food and nutrition security, and improving natural resources.

CIFOR-ICRAF is looking for a:

Consultant - Independent evaluation and strategic review of the Food, Agriculture, and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue (2021 – 2026)

Overview

The Forest, Agriculture, and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue was initiated in response to escalating global challenges such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change, which are deeply intertwined with unsustainable commodity production and trade. Launched by the UK Prime Minister and Indonesian President at the COP26 World Leaders Summit on Forests and Land Use in November 2021, the FACT Dialogue aims to foster collaborative efforts among major producer and consumer countries of internationally traded agricultural and forest commodities. The initiative seeks to promote sustainable practices by facilitating the sharing of best practices, developing policy actions, and encouraging the use of innovative technologies and voluntary approaches.

FACT was originally envisioned to be a five-year dialogue process, culminating at COP30 and finishing up in Spring 2026. This initiative primarily focused on establishing a collaborative platform that brought together 28 key producer and consumer countries to address the systemic challenges hindering the transition to sustainable commodity production and trade. These challenges included divergent perspectives across the commodity value chain, limited market access for smallholder farmers, insufficient research and development collaboration, fragmented governance, and a lack of data transparency and traceability in sustainable production systems. To address these issues, the FACT Roadmap of Action was developed, targeting four key thematic areas: Trade & Markets, Support for Smallholders, Traceability & Transparency, and Research Development & Innovation.

Early on, the FACT Dialogue successfully established an independent secretariat to coordinate the initiative's activities, support the implementation of the roadmap, and facilitate engagement among member countries. This phase saw increasing levels of country engagement, alignment, and trust, culminating in a significant political momentum observed at the FACT Forum held in Ubud, Bali, in March

2024. The progress made in the first years of the initiative emphasized the importance of continued collaboration to achieve the long-term goals of the initiative.

The overarching goal of the FACT Dialogue is to ensure that globally traded commodities increasingly originate from sustainable sources, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Therefore, it emphasizes the need for greater alignment, trust, and international collaboration, with specific outcomes aimed at enhancing political salience, participation diversity, and coherence within the global sustainable commodity policy agenda. By 2026, the initiative seeks to contribute to a more coherent international system, characterized by neutral facilitation, open and constructive dialogue, knowledge exchange, and the identification of common priorities among FACT members.

To achieve these outcomes, the FACT Dialogue focuses on several key objectives, including the provision of a structured and neutral space for collaboration, transparent dissemination of relevant information, promotion of best practices, and the collaboration with transnational multi-stakeholder coalitions and platforms. These efforts aim to build trust, facilitate knowledge sharing, and drive collective action towards the sustainable production, trade, and consumption of commodities, ultimately contributing to a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable global economy.

Evaluation purpose and expected use

This evaluation considers the entirety of FACT's 5-year commitment period (2021-2026). The primary objective of this evaluation is to assess the relevance and effectiveness of FACT's focus and to explore potential future directions for the initiative beyond its original commitment period. The findings and recommendations will determine whether FACT should continue after 2026, including funding and hosting considerations. Specifically, the evaluation / strategic review will aim to:

- Determine whether FACT's current focus areas align with the evolving needs and priorities of key stakeholders, including member countries, governmental bodies, international partners and local communities. This will involve evaluating the relevance of FACT's interventions in the context of changing environmental, socio-economic, and policy landscapes.
- Analyze the outcomes and impacts of FACT's activities to date, with particular attention to whether the initiative has achieved its intended objectives, including member countries' buy-in and support for FACT, and how these have contributed to broader goals related to forestry, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and community development.
- Identify any gaps in FACT's current approach and explore opportunities for innovation, expansion, or adjustment to better address emerging challenges and opportunities in the field of forestry and climate action.
- Analyze how FACT fits within the broader context of international initiatives focused on sustainable commodity trade and whether there are opportunities for deeper collaboration.
- Provide strategic recommendations whether FACT should continue after its current phase and, if so, potential future directions of FACT, including suggestions for new focus areas, partnerships, approaches and changes in its hosting structure (a non-governmental Secretariat, currently with CIFOR and Rationale Advisors) that could enhance the initiative's impact in subsequent phases.

Possible key evaluation questions include **(to be finalized during the evaluation's inception phase liaising closely with FACT key stakeholders)**:

1. How well do FACT's focus areas align with the needs and priorities of member countries, local communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders?

2. To what extent has FACT achieved its intended outcomes, such as increased collaboration, trust, and policy alignment among stakeholders, and were there any unintended positive or negative effects?
3. How effective has FACT been in promoting gender equality and inclusion, and what improvements or strategies can be made to enhance these areas?
4. Did FACT contribute to shifts in global or regional policies as well as investments towards more sustainable and equitable commodity trade, and what role has it played in shaping policy changes?
5. To what extent are the partnerships, trust, and collaborations established through FACT likely to be sustained beyond 2026, and what factors will support or hinder their longevity? How does the level of commitment and buy-in from member countries influence the sustainability of partnerships and collaborations? Are other member countries interested in taking on leadership roles?
6. What would producer/consumer countries have done in the absence of FACT, and how does FACT compare to alternative platforms or dialogue mechanisms? What role has the UK leadership and facilitation played in FACT's effectiveness, and how would the absence of such leadership affect the outcomes?
7. To what extent does the evidence suggest a continued need for FACT's role and contributions in the sustainable commodity trade landscape?
8. Is there a strong case for FACT to continue beyond 2026? If not, why? If so, what are the key areas it should focus on, evolve, or invest more in, and what alternative models or structures could enhance FACT's effectiveness? How does the current hosting structure (CIFOR) contribute to or hinder FACT's objectives, and what implications does this have for the future? How does FACT relate to other international initiatives focused on sustainable commodity trade, and where can synergies or collaboration be enhanced?

The findings will be used to inform FACT Dialogue stakeholders—co-chairs, member countries and partners—about the initiative's progress, achievements, and areas for improvement. These insights will guide decision-making for future phases of the FACT Dialogue, contributing to its strategic direction and long-term sustainability.

Summary of responsibilities

The evaluation team will be required to conduct an externally-led, summative evaluative and strategic review of the FACT-Dialogue (2021-2026). The evaluation will examine the extent to which FACT effectively achieved its outcomes as well as determine and assess factors, enabling conditions, and lessons learnt in achieving these goals (cf. supra).

The evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, the following four phases: planning, data collection, analysis and reporting. In the section below is an outline of the specific responsibilities of the evaluation team in each phase. These 4 phases break into two large blocks:

Inception block (planning of the evaluation). The review team will work independently to design an evaluation plan, data collection tools and analytic frameworks, and present it to FACT-Secretariat (CIFOR, RA), the FACT-Dialogue co-chairs (UK, Malaysia [tbc]) for feedback before its finalization (inception phase).

Review block (data collection, analysis and reporting). The review team will be required to collect and synthesize existing information against the key evaluation questions, assess the need for then further remote or face-to-face data collection to address information gaps as needed before compiling the

evaluation report, as well as generate a learning process based on sharing preliminary findings and obtaining feedback from others. CIFOR's project team, members of CIFOR's Quality for Impact team (Q4I) and core partners will support the evaluation team to understand the structure of the FACT-Dialogue and assist with the collection of all data needed. It is expected that key representatives of FACT member countries will be interviewed by the evaluation team.

Phase 1: Design and Planning

In this initial phase, the focus will be on developing a comprehensive evaluation plan that outlines the scope, objectives, methodology, and timeline of the evaluation. This will require consultations with the evaluation's key stakeholders, i.e., FACT-Secretariat, co-chairs. This phase will involve:

1. Conduct a (remote) inception meeting
2. Undertake an initial document review. Key documents to be provided include:
 - FACT proposal and design documents (including annual implementation plans, results frameworks, ToC)
 - Key deliverables produced, e.g., publications, tailored communication products and press releases
 - Regular progress reports
 - High-level events' reports
 - Documented best practices, impact stories, FACT outcome stories, Feedback survey results (if available)
3. Lead evaluation design and planning consultations. This will involve:
 - Remote consultations with FACT-Secretariat and the co-chairs (phase 1 and 2) regarding the history and evolution of the FACT-Dialogue
 - Developing an approach to address key evaluation questions, including a review of the FACT's theory of change and progress markers
 - Identify data sources required to address the questions (including identifying how existing information can be utilized in addressing the evaluation questions)
4. Develop an evaluation plan and data collection instruments

Phase 2: Data collection

This phase will involve gathering the data needed to answer the evaluation questions. It will include:

1. Conducting interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions to collect firsthand information from key stakeholders, including the FACT co-chairs, FACT Secretariat, member countries, local communities, governmental agencies, and other FACT partners.
2. Analyzing existing reports, project documentation, and other relevant sources to supplement primary data.
3. Ensuring that all collected data is systematically recorded, stored, and organized for ease of analysis

Phase 3: Analysis and sense-making

In this phase, the collected data will be analyzed to identify patterns, insights, and answers to the evaluation questions. The team will present a summary of findings in reference to supporting evidence. Key activities will include:

1. Undertaking data analysis in line with agreed plans and frameworks
2. Designing and facilitating a remote sense-making process to engage relevant stakeholders, validate findings and gain additional insights

3. Integrating the findings into a coherent narrative that addresses the evaluation objectives and provides clear answers to the evaluation questions.

Phase 4: Reporting

The evaluation team will lead the writing of the report in consultation with the FACT-Secretariat. This phase will focus on documenting and disseminating the evaluation findings and strategic recommendations. This will include:

1. Compiling the analysis into a comprehensive report (kept within 30 pages, excluding annexes) that includes an executive summary (not exceeding 5 pages), detailed findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.
2. Sharing the draft report with FACT-Secretariat and the co-chairs for feedback and incorporating their input to refine the final document.
3. Presenting the final report to the broader group of FACT stakeholders, e.g., member countries, and making the findings accessible through various channels to inform future decision-making and planning.

At this stage, any input from programme leads (e.g., FACT Secretariat) are to correct factual inaccuracies only or clarify things that are unclear. This is to preserve the independence of the evaluation.

Methodology and evaluation approach

The evaluation of the FACT Dialogue will use a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive assessment of the initiative's outcomes, contribution to impacts, and strategic relevance. Key methodologies to consider by the evaluation team during the evaluation design phase include, among others:

1. Theory-based evaluation

This approach will assess the FACT Dialogue's Theory of Change (ToC) to determine whether its activities, outputs, and outcomes align with its broader goals. The evaluation will map the ToC against achieved results; test causal links between interventions and outcomes; identify gaps and validate assumptions guiding FACT's strategy.

2. Utilization-focused evaluation

This method prioritizes the practical use of evaluation findings by key stakeholders, such as the FACT Secretariat, member countries, and partners. By focusing on delivering actionable recommendations, the evaluation ensures that the findings inform future decision-making. Stakeholder engagement is central to this process, with participatory methods used for validating preliminary findings.

Duration and Phasing

The review is expected to **start by the end of February 2025**, with all final deliverables expected by **early of June 2025**. A workplan will be proposed by the evaluation bidders that will include the following key steps and deliverables:

Design and planning.

Tasks:

1. Conduct an inception meeting

2. Undertake an initial document review.
3. Conduct an evaluation design and planning consultations.
Develop an evaluation plan, with a final list of key evaluation questions, and data collection instruments focusing on the tools needed.

Outputs:

- Inception meeting report
- Detailed Review/Evaluation plan, including final list of key evaluation questions and data collection instruments

Due date: 20 March 2025

Data Collection

Tasks:

1. Compile all existing data related to the evaluation questions
2. Administer additional survey tools to address evaluation questions as required.
3. Collect data related to global debates and processes facilitated by FACT
4. Interviews with key respondents (remote) identified at design phase to fill evidence gaps.

Outputs:

- Interview summaries, survey results

Due date: 15 April 2025

Analysis and sense-making

Tasks:

1. Undertake data analysis in line with agreed plans and frameworks
2. Design and facilitate a remote sense-making process to engage FACT-Secretariat, past and current co-chairs, relevant member countries
3. Present preliminary results and incorporate comments

Outputs:

- Summary of findings and supporting evidence

Due date: 7 May 2025

Reporting

Tasks:

1. Lead report writing based on findings
2. Incorporate comments of reviewers

Output:

- Draft 5-page standalone executive summary
- Draft full report with annexes
- Final 5-page standalone executive summary
- Final full report with annexes

Final Due date: 9 June 2025

Data availability and collection

The evaluation will utilize existing data collected by the FACT Secretariat, including:

- FACT Roadmap of Action and Theory of Change documents.

- Annual reports, engagement logs, workshops, meetings and events’ documentation, surveys feedback.
- Publications, newsletters, press releases, and reports on best practices and impacts.
- FACT Outcome stories, when available

To address data gaps, additional data will be collected through:

- Interviews (expected to be remote) with key stakeholders such as co-chairs, Secretariat staff, and FACT member countries’ representatives.
- Surveys and focus groups targeting member countries and partners to assess FACT’s impact on sustainable commodity trade, inclusion, and gender equality.
- Analysis of policy shifts to track FACT’s influence on governance changes.

The evaluation team will determine the scope of additional data collection during the inception phase, with support from the FACT Secretariat in gathering relevant monitoring data.

Requirements

Team composition and level of effort

The evaluation is expected to be carried out by a team of two experts with complementary skill sets, ensuring that all relevant competencies—such as qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, subject matter expertise in the relevant sector, strong analytical and reporting skills, as well as English/French/Spanish languages proficiency —are represented. The evaluation should be completed within an estimated three-month period.

As a guide, the anticipated level of effort for this assignment is approximately 63 working days per expert, including desk reviews, data collection, analysis, and reporting. However, this is an indicative estimate, and offerors are encouraged to propose a team composition and distribution of days that they believe will best achieve the intended evaluation objectives and deliverables.

The evaluation team should collectively possess a robust combination of strategic evaluation expertise and specialized sector knowledge, ensuring both high-level analytical rigor and deep subject-matter expertise. Proposed team members should demonstrate:

Educational background:

- A Master’s degree minimum in fields such as International Development, Public Policy, Environmental Studies, Forestry, Environmental Science, Climate, Trade, Biodiversity Conservation, or related disciplines.

Evaluation and strategic review expertise:

- At least 10 years of proven experience leading and conducting strategic reviews and evaluations of complex international development, environmental conservation, trade, and/or climate-related programs.
- Demonstrated capacity to apply theory-based and participatory evaluation approaches, ensuring strategic alignment of findings with broader organizational goals.
- Experience assessing multi-phase, interdisciplinary initiatives, with a focus on sustainability, impact, and future strategic directions.

Sector-specific knowledge and experience:

- In-depth understanding of the thematic areas relevant to FACT, including forestry, climate adaptation and mitigation, trade-related environmental issues, biodiversity conservation, and gender-inclusive approaches to environmental management.
- Familiarity with the policy and operational landscape within which FACT operates, including key stakeholders, beneficiaries, and governance structures.
- Proven track record of integrating nature-based solutions, climate governance considerations, and community-level insights into strategic evaluations.

Analytical and communication skills:

- Strong analytical capabilities, including the ability to handle complex, multi-source data sets and synthesize insights into actionable recommendations.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with a demonstrated ability to engage effectively with high-level stakeholders, present findings clearly and concisely, and produce high-quality, coherent reports.
- Advanced proficiency in English (required), with French, Spanish and/or Portuguese language skills considered an asset.

Complementary skill sets:

Bidders should propose a team composition that collectively meets the above criteria, ensuring a balance of strategic evaluation expertise and in-depth sector knowledge. This combination will enable the evaluation team to deliver methodologically sound, contextually informed, and forward-looking insights.

Evaluation management and quality assurance process

The FACT Secretariat and a representative of the UK Government will manage the evaluation from start to finish, providing strategic oversight and ensuring an independent and robust process. The Secretariat will serve as the primary contact between the evaluation team and stakeholders; offer logistical support if needed, including access to documentation, interview scheduling, and data coordination; ensure timelines and deliverables are met as per the Terms of Reference (ToR); facilitate communication between the evaluation team, member countries, co-chairs, and partners. A designated Evaluation manager within the Secretariat will oversee operations.

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will provide high-level guidance, ensuring the evaluation remains relevant to FACT's goals. The ERG will include the FACT co-chairs, the FACT Secretariat, UK (as project funders) and partners (Rationale Advisors, RA).

The ERG will validate the evaluation framework, review deliverables, and ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation process. It will also review the final report in a timely manner.

Several quality assurance mechanisms will be in place, from inception review to evaluation standards, internal peer review, to feedback loops.

Reporting Requirements

For the Evaluation report, the evaluation team will produce editable, digital copies of the following:

1. Inception meeting report
2. Evaluation plan
3. Data collection instruments
4. Initial summary of findings
5. Draft evaluation report
6. Final evaluation report

Minimum requirements for technical and financial proposals and proposal evaluation process

The **technical proposal** must demonstrate the applicant's expertise, methodology, and ability to deliver the evaluation. It should include:

- Executive Summary
- Understanding of the assignment
- Evaluation methodology
- Work Plan and Timeline
- Team composition and qualifications, including CVs highlighting relevant experiences and expertise
- Quality assurance and risk mitigation
- Previous experience and references

The **financial proposal** should include:

- Detailed budget, with a breakdown of costs,
- Justification of costs
- Proposed payment schedule:

Proposals will be **evaluated based on a 70/30 split** between the technical and financial proposals.

- Technical proposal (70%):
 - Understanding of the assignment (15%)
 - Methodology and approach (30%)
 - Work Plan and timeline (10%)
 - Team composition and expertise (15%)
- Financial Proposal (30%):
 - Cost effectiveness (20%)
 - Budget clarity and transparency (10%)

The final selection will be based on the combined technical and financial scores, with the highest-scoring proposal selected. If the two proposals score similarly, interviews may be conducted.

Terms and conditions

- This is a consultancy position.
- Period of the consultancy in total is 3 months.
- Work location: Home-based

Application process

- The application deadline is **31 January 2025**.
- Please submit a letter of interest, technical and financial proposal of no more than 15 pages (annexes can include company profile, CVs of the proposed technical expert(s), workplan, etc.) including contact information to cifor-icraf-pmu@cifor-icraf.org
- Any clarifying questions can be directed to: j.rouge@cifor-icraf.org
- We will acknowledge all applications but will only contact short-listed candidates.

To apply, please visit our career site at:

<https://www.cifor-icraf.org/about/work-with-us/>

To learn more about CIFOR-ICRAF, please visit our websites at:

<https://www.cifor-icraf.org>

CIFOR-ICRAF promotes Gender Diversity – Applications from women professionals are encouraged.

CIFOR-ICRAF is an equal opportunity employer. It fosters a multicultural work environment that values gender equality, teamwork, and respect for diversity.