



Joint Programme 2023 Annual Progress Report

SDG Financing Portfolio - Component 2

Cover page

UNCT/MCO: Suriname

Reporting Period: 1 January - 31 December 2023

JP title: SDG Financing- Catalytic Investments

Thematic SDG Areas: Food systems transformation;

Gender Marker: Gender-responsive (for example, the JP aimed to respond to specific gender needs, such as linking social assistance with GBV response services or maternal health support)

Engine Room Activities: Devising a market-ready pipeline; Developing the 'deal room' (financing mix) ; Building capacity at scale;

Total estimated expenditures: USD \$546,897.80

Total estimated commitments (including expenditures): \$123,120.00

Executive Summary

During 2023 the ASTA project has made substantial progress in achieving its goals, including raising awareness about the potential of the pineapple sector, creating partnerships, conducting capacity-building activities, and introducing advanced production models.

In terms of contribution to CF outcome(s) and national/regional development plans, the project has supported to the development of Suriname's agricultural sector by addressing challenges related to time, budget, changing attitudes towards the project, and learning new agricultural practices.

Contributions to the 6 key SDG transition and related SDG targets: The ASTA project has directly addressed SDG 2, SDG 5, and SDG 8.all. To do so, the project developed and submitted its official proposal to the Suriname Government to establish the legal entity which will be responsible for providing key services to organic producers, as well as ensuring the sustainability of the activities currently carried out by ASTA, the Horticulture Innovation Hub. This accelerates transitions towards SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

- In terms of gender equality (SDG 5) the project provided targeted year-round trainings in good agricultural practices and organic production empowering farmers. The ASTA project is in finalization stage with IsDB about receiving \$300.000 to support the ASTA activities in Suriname. This funding will support the project to increase the collateral support facility that provides access to collateral to farmers and project beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the team continues its resource mobilization efforts for additional funding from various potential donors, e.g., Caribbean Development Bank and establishing synergies with existing financial mechanisms and facilities in Suriname, including UN projects, NOB, IDB, LVV NOFA fund, the World Bank SURGE program.

- Under the ASTA project over 233 people were trained in 2023, from which 114 females. In total 17 training courses were conducted under the ASTA project.

- The project supported pineapple farmers improve their farming methods. Training enabled farmers to increase their knowledge on soil management and fertilizers and organic materials usage for improved crops. Together with the farmers, the ASTA project's team selected four varieties in the districts Para and Marowijne for field testing. In the Para district, a trial was implemented to demonstrate innovative production methods for organic pineapples, including demonstrations on modern technique and Good Agriculture Practices (GAP). During the last mission of the international agronomist of ASTA, Mr. Freddy Gamboa, in Suriname a workshop was conducted for government officials. The aim of the workshop was to train government officials on GAP used in pineapple production in the Caribbean and northern and southern America. In total 24 people participated in the workshop, from which 14 females.

- The project team, in partnership with FairFood International, an international NGO, and Tradin Organic, an exporting company, endeavored to cooperate in the development of a traceability platform and submitted a joint grant application to the RVO, the Government of the Netherlands, but unfortunately, proposal did not make it through the selection process for this year. Nevertheless, this setback has forged a strong partnership that holds promise for fruitful collaboration in 2024, as ASTA team will continue these partnerships to work towards the development and implementation of a platform designed to trace production and delivery for buyers.

Annual Progress

Main results achieved by the joint programme in 2023:

The ASTA Suriname JP made significant progress in developing market-ready pipelines, financing mixes, and building capacities. Key outcomes and outputs include:

Market-Ready Pipeline Development: The JP facilitated connections between stakeholders, fostering partnerships and market access for pineapple producers. This effort was instrumental in creating a more structured and efficient value chain for the pineapple industry in Suriname. Team organized several meetings between farmers, factories, exporters to discuss contract farming, requirements for cooperation, terms of financing, quality, and volumes. These meetings led to raised awareness about demand and farmers get informed about required volumes.

Development of the 'Deal Room' (Financing Mix): The JP played a crucial role in structuring innovative financial mechanisms. It engaged with financial entities like Trust Bank Amanah (TBA) and National Development Bank

(NOB), National Agribusiness Fund (NOFA), Credit Guarantee Fund to offer tailored concessional loan instruments and microfinance programs. After establishment of the Hub and setting up the Collateral Support Facility, it is expected to have a loan mechanism that could be developed with engagement of the NOFA fund providing 5,5% loans to farmers, providing collateral support of 50% by Credit Guarantee Fund of Suriname and 50% of ASTA Collateral Support Facility. This initiative will help in 2024 in leveraging additional financial resources, thus contributing significantly to the CF outcomes.

Capacity Building at Scale: The JP successfully conducted training programs for 233 farmers, focusing on pineapple production, gender equality, and participatory decision-making. This training was a part of the broader effort to mainstream human rights, gender equality, women's empowerment, and youth inclusion in the JP's activities.

Also, ASTA JP:

- Established legal framework and governance structures for supporting institutions - the Innovation Hub, Producer Cooperative, and Collateral Support Facility. This provides long-term mechanisms for continued services and support to farmers and enterprises beyond the programme duration.
- Introduced modern organic pineapple practices especially related to soil health. Healthy soil means healthy plants and good production. Farmers learned to produce microorganisms by collecting organic matter from nearby forests. The project also introduced new equipment's such as a subsoiler to combat soil compaction. This soil health enhancing practices can benefit more than 300 farmers and increase their production in a sustainable way. These modern techniques and good agriculture practices were demonstrated during land preparation and planting of pineapples in the trial field. The implemented trial plot functions as a demonstration and trainings plot for farmers.
- Developed 1 assessment report of the main options for digital traceability platforms to support pineapple producers in Suriname, identifying the most appropriate innovations available to increase knowledge, market access and visibility of small organic farmers.
- 4 potential buyers identified and assessed to establish formal contractual agreements with organic farmers supported by ASTA.
- Organized a webinar on Gender-sensitive value chains in action within the FAO Technical Network on Sustainable Food Value Chains - Development & Finance (SFVC D&F) to bring visibility on the project's activities, with focus on gender inclusion, at international level.
- For visibility activities, one project flyer was developed, banners, roll ups including the donor's logo and various PR developed together with the UN Suriname.
- Held inclusive multi-stakeholder partnership meetings, aligning 62 public, private and civil society actors on a shared vision for the sector. Deepened collaboration and coherence.
- Conducted targeted training for 114 indigenous and tribal women and youth on business skills and financial literacy.

Main Challenges, adjustments and lessons:

- Significant cash flow challenge: While FAO successfully utilized the full amount of its first envelope, other PUNOs did not expend as much, mainly since the Hub registration faced significant delay, which resulted in UNIDO not being able to set up the collateral facility as this facility will run through the Hub. An agreement was eventually reached with the Fund, allowing the JP to regain momentum and resume activities at full speed.
- Delay in establishment of Hub: It is pivotal initiative for Suriname's agricultural sector and experienced a delay due to the intricate process of ensuring alignment with government recommendations and stakeholder expectations. The initial proposal for a fully independent foundation model, was reconsidered following the government's suggestion to emulate the structure of the VKI fishery foundation and UNIDO's experience in other countries. This model, which integrates government involvement while retaining a multi-stakeholder approach, was identified as more suitable for our context. Consultations with government bodies, stakeholders, and international experts, including ASTA team leads, were necessary to refine this concept. These discussions were pivotal in finalizing the Hub's governance structure and operational modalities. The agreement reached required the drafting of detailed statutes for the Hub, which are to be submitted for presidential approval. This meticulous process, though causing a delay, was essential to ensure the Hub's establishment, and is in line with national policies and

stakeholder interests, thereby laying a strong foundation for its long-term effectiveness in enhancing Suriname's horticulture sector.

- **Struggles to find suitable partners and lengthy procurement procedures:** The procurement actions remained complex. The shipment of high-quality organic inputs and equipment from Costa Rica to Suriname experienced months of delays due to missing exporting codes, and the complexities involved in registering suppliers. This issue was resolved in June, indicating that the equipment and inputs were delivered in September 2023. Another challenge arose with procurement of legal services essential for structuring and establishing the Hub in compliance with Surinamese laws, which, in turn, would enable the set-up of collateral facility. Despite launching 2 RFQs in Q4 2022 and Q1 2023, and targeted communications with 2 law firms in March 2023, no qualifying proposals were received. To address this situation, the project explored individual consultancy options with alternative law firms and identified a skilled partner.

- **FPIC Progress:** The JP encountered delays in the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. In the initial phase of the project, which involved value chain analysis, design, and facilitation proposals, the umbrella organization of traditional Indigenous village leaders, VIDS, collaborated with ASTA and agreed that the project would be passed on to OSIP, the VIDS organization for regions of Para, Wanica and Commewijne. Since then, ASTA worked closely with OSIP, and an FPIC agreement template was developed between OSIP and ASTA. However, an internal reorganization within VIDS led to a change in management, resulting in VIDS taking over the follow-up of the ASTA project. As a result, the team had to retrace some of the previously accomplished FPIC steps. To make progress, the project conducted several meetings with VIDS to re-establish a solid foundation. Presently, the project came to agreement with VIDS to work in 4 indigenous villages and is still awaiting VIDS' approval to proceed with its activities in the 7 other villages in Para and Matta region. Meanwhile, the project is operating in 4 villages of Para and in all of Marowijne, where it has obtained clearance from KAMPOS, the umbrella organization of traditional Tribal village leaders, to collaborate with Maroon communities. Meeting with VIDS and 11 village leaders and farmers planned in Q1 2024.

Priority Cross-cutting Issues

Cross-cutting results/issues

ASTA has made significant contributions to cross-cutting issues and principles, particularly in the areas of gender equality, women's empowerment, and youth inclusion. Here are some key aspects of these contributions:

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) plays a crucial role in advancing gender equality, equity, and the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV). The ASTA project aligns with this mandate, focusing on engaging women, youth, and other vulnerable groups through gender-responsive and transformative strategies. The project emphasizes community engagement and capacity building, ensuring the inclusion of both female and male farmers in its programs.

- A comprehensive plan has been developed to enhance the capacities of female farmers and other vulnerable groups. This plan, implemented throughout the project's lifetime, aims to increase awareness of gender roles and gender equality, strengthen the capacities of community leaders, and improve the business knowledge and skills of farmers. The plan includes training on business and financial-administrative skills, coaching, and participatory decision-making methods.

- Workshops on gender concepts such as Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) are conducted, targeting women and youth empowerment. These sessions aim to train participants in becoming financially independent and aware of relevant gender issues.

- The project conducts training and workshops to empower female farmers, youth, and traditional village leaders. These sessions focus on gender roles, equality and equity, cultural identity, and spirituality, as well as business management skills and corporate participation. Such efforts are essential in promoting gender equality and meaningful participation in the pineapple value chain.

- The project has conducted a workshop to enhance understanding and capacity in FPIC (Free Prior and Informed Consent) and gender issues. This workshop aimed to promote collective and community-centered approaches, influence gender equality, and empower women within the context of sexual and reproductive health. It also sought to prevent social tensions arising from changes in gender roles and socioeconomic status due to the project.

- The UNFPA's intervention in the project emphasizes promoting gender equality and equity, combating gender-based violence, and improving information about Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. The 2023 workplan, developed with input from various stakeholders, includes a gender capacity strengthening plan focusing on empowering women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in the pineapple value chain.

ASTA has effectively contributed to cross-cutting issues and principles, particularly through gender-responsive strategies, capacity-building initiatives, and focused workshops and training sessions. These efforts aim to ensure inclusivity, empowerment, and the advancement of human rights, targeting discrimination, inequality, and marginalization.

How did the JP apply the Gender Marker

The JP is Gender-responsive (for example, the JP aimed to respond to specific gender needs, such as linking social assistance with GBV response services or maternal health support).

SDG Transitions Acceleration

The ASTA Suriname JP has contributed significantly towards accelerating SDG transitions. Key aspects include:

1. Policy Integration and Action: The programme has facilitated effective policy integration by aligning its objectives with national development plans. It has actively engaged with government entities and financial institutions to ensure that its initiatives complement existing policies and frameworks.

- Aligned project activities with national agricultural policies and strategies. For example, collaboration with SITA on pineapple export promotion.
- Forged partnerships between public, private and civil society actors through multi-stakeholder engagements.

2. Speed of Reaching SDGs: The programme has expedited progress towards SDGs by implementing targeted interventions in the pineapple value chain. These interventions have not only enhanced productivity and sustainability but also contributed to economic growth and environmental conservation.

- Introduced modern production practices and technology, increasing yields and incomes for farmers. Contributes to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

3. Scale of Progress: The programme has achieved a substantial scale of progress, positively impacting many smallholder farmers and other stakeholders in the pineapple industry. This includes training in sustainable agricultural practices and business skills, leading to improved livelihoods and community development.

- Reached 62 stakeholders across government, private sector, and civil society in the multi-stakeholder pineapple sector meeting.
- Trained over 233 farmers and beneficiaries, conducted meetings and awareness raising events to engage more farmers, communities, inputs suppliers, factories in contract farming, doing business and value addition.

4. Sustainability of Transitions: Long-term policy changes and additional financing have been unlocked through the program's collaborations. This includes establishing financial models and partnerships with banks for farmer support, ensuring the sustainability of the transitions.

- Developed statutes and governance frameworks for farmer Cooperatives, Innovation Hub and financing facilities that provide long-term support structures.

5. Context-Specific Financial Solutions: Conducted research and identified financial solutions that are tailored to the specific needs of the Surinamese pineapple industry. This includes concessional loans and microfinance programs designed to support smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs in the value chain.

- Designed project activities based on assessments of pineapple sector needs, socio-cultural dynamics, and national priorities.

Annual Reporting on Results

Exit strategy, scaling, sustainability and next steps

To ensure the mid- to long-term sustainability, scaling, and eventual 'exit' of the JP, several actions have been undertaken:

- The establishment of the innovation hub, which was designed to be self-sustainable at institutional level and at operational level by providing key services to organic producers, is the main strategy to ensure the sustainability of the activities currently carried out by ASTA.
- A key focus has been on identifying and engaging the appropriate organizations and entities as founders, members of the supervisory board, and board of directors.
- The team is dedicatedly working on formulating a business plan for the Innovation Hub. This plan aims to outline the strategic direction for the hub over the next three years and establish long-term goals until 2032.
- Furthermore, the establishment of a guarantee facility will create a proof of concept to further invest in the sector by de-risking initial investments into low-collateralized farmers.

Measuring and reporting on impact

NA

Overview of progress toward Financial Instrument(s)

The JP engaged with entities and existing financial mechanisms within country like Trust Bank Amanah (TBA), National Development Bank (NOB), National Agribusiness Fund (NOFA), and Credit Guarantee Fund. The collaboration aims to offer tailored concessional loan instruments and microfinance programs. The plan involves developing a loan mechanism in 2024 with the engagement of the NOFA fund, offering 5.5% loans to farmers, and providing collateral support of 50% by the Credit Guarantee Fund of Suriname and 50% by the ASTA Collateral Support Facility. In the new year, these initiatives are expected to help leverage additional financial resources, significantly contributing to the outcomes of the Collateral Facility.

Completed transactions

NA

Strategic Partnerships, Documents and Communications

Multi-stakeholder engagement

National government; Sub-national Governments; Civil Society Organizations; IFIs/DFIs; Commercial banks; Bilateral aid organizations;

How did the JP facilitate collaboration with diverse stakeholders

- Trust Bank Amanah and National Development Bank: Financial institutions offering customized financial products for smallholder farmers. Developing loan products and financial mechanisms to support pineapple farmers.
- NOFA Fund and Guarantee Fund: Collaborating with ASTA to develop loan products of 5,5% annually with 50% coverage of collateral support from Guarantee Fund.
- Wageningen University: Assisted to develop approach on cooperative development, Hub establishment and developed plan for the packhouse facility.
- 5 factories (Michi, Melkcentrale, Carifruits, Asajaka Weno, Amea Pineapples), 2 retailers (Rossignol, Gopex) cooperated with ASTA, participated in meetings with farmers to explain contracting terms, quality and quantity requirements, are interested in supply of pineapple.
- Over 233 farmers (individual, cooperative members) involved in pineapple production, participated in workshops, events to showcase products, provided feedback on activities, supported implementation.
- Civil society (VIDS, KAMPOS) representing indigenous and maroon farmers were involved in project activities according to FPIC requirements. Strategic discussions with these organizations were crucial in addressing challenges and aligning objectives for inclusive VC development.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs has played a crucial role by providing advice and linking ASTA with opportunities, focusing on administrative and financial aspects. A notable contribution includes support in expediting the receipt of the second tranche of the grant. Also provided support in developing the Hub documents, governance structure, led JP Steering Committee.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries has supported storage of project inputs in a secure and certified facility at FAI N.V., collaborated to host a workshop on advancing the pineapple industry. Provided support in developing the Hub documents, governance structure, met with IsDB to facilitate additional funding for ASTA. 9 additional
- Other Ministries: A meeting with 9 ministries involved discussions on various project aspects, such as the establishment of a cooperative, hub, agronomy practices, and plans.
- Suriname Investment & Trade Agency (SITA): Estimated a significant latent export potential for agricultural products and hosted a workshop to develop and promote exports. SITA's initiatives are crucial in guiding businesses towards realizing their export potential.
- Suriname Standards Bureau: Key role in developing standards and certifications, particularly for organic pineapple farming sector. The bureau is developing various agricultural standards, including those for the pineapple sector, and is involved in the certification process, linking sectors to regional certification bodies.
- FAO SAMAP Project: Organized meetings under the Value Chain Platform for the export of fruits and vegetables. Focused on progress in export sector and plans for enhancing Suriname's market position.
- WB SURGE Project: Provided business development services, matching grants, and technical assistance to pineapple farmers and processors. This project aims to diversify the economy and increase nontraditional exports, promoting environmental sustainability and inclusivity.
- FairFood: Explored cooperation to promote sustainable and ethical. The collaboration aims to improve farmers' livelihoods through supply chain transparency, certification, and capacity building by introducing traceability platforms.
- Cooperation with CARIFORUM Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation: focused on registering local pineapple varieties as IP. This initiative acknowledges the role of indigenous and tribal peoples (ITPs) as custodians of traditional knowledge, allowing them to benefit economically from their pineapple varieties and promoting biodiversity and ecological balance.

- Dutch Embassy and WUR: A Soil Health Workshop was initiated, aiming to develop a framework for monitoring soil health in Suriname.

Financial leverage

\$0.00

Donor and Strategic events attended by JP in 2022

Kick-off meeting	JP steering committee/ programme board meeting	Strategic partners/ donors event
	Yes, in 2023	No, but planned in late 2024

Focus on LNOB cross cutting principles

Human Rights	Persons with disabilities	Youth	Environmental and social standards
No	No	No	No

Beneficiaries

Number of beneficiaries

\$233.00

Percentage (%) of women benefited among the total number	Percentage (%) of children & youth (0-24 years of age) benefited among the total number	Percentage (%) of older persons (age 60 and above) benefited among the total number	Percentage (%) of persons with disabilities benefited among the total number
49	0	1	0

Communications

Voices from the field

1) President of Suriname:

"We appreciate for the financial support of the Joint SDG Fund for an agri-food system transformation programme. Pineapple is a good source of vitamins and food security, but also pineapple value chain development creates jobs and income, especially for women and youth in rural areas."

<https://twitter.com/JointSDGFund/status/1713973667665707310>

<https://twitter.com/JointSDGFund/status/1703829017923559825>

2) Ms. Maitrie Jagroep, Deputy PS of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries:

"I believe ASTA Joint Programme for developing Suriname's pineapple sector is very important. By raising stakeholder awareness and sharing insights on production best sustainable practices tailored to Suriname's landscape, drawing on successful examples from Costa Rica, farmers can adopt techniques to increase yields and have a year-round production. By working together, we can build in Suriname an innovative, thriving industry that drives economic gains while protecting the environment".

Empowering Suriname's Pineapple Industry: ASTA Joint Programme Elevating Pineapple Farming | United Nations in Suriname

3) UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Joanna Kazana

"Innovation breaks the silos. Our program in Suriname is changing the dynamics in the UN country teams with the transformative power of the Joint SDG Fund —a catalyst for partnerships & momentum."

<https://twitter.com/JointSDGFund/status/1699452617431109770>

Declaration

We hereby confirm that the information provided in this update is duly reviewed and approved by the RC and all PUNOs involved in the Joint Programme.