
SRP Theory of Change



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About the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)

The Sustainable Rice Platform e.V. (SRP) is a global multi-stakeholder alliance comprising over 100 institutional members from public, private, research, civil society and the financial sector. Originally co-convened by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and private sector partners, SRP is an independent member association, working together with its partners to transform the global rice sector by improving smallholder livelihoods, reducing the social, environmental and climate footprint of rice production, and by offering the global rice market an assured supply of sustainably produced rice.

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Contents

Towards Transformative Change	3
Vision, Mission and Value Proposition	3
Elements of the Theory of Change	5
Assumptions.....	8
Unintended Effects.....	8
Contact Information	9
List of Figures	
Figure 1: SRP Theory of Change Framework	6

Towards Transformative Change

Rice is key to global food security since it is the main staple of half of the world's population. It is highly sensitive to climate change and thus a key factor to social stability. Rice also has a large environmental footprint in water usage (40% of world's irrigation water) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It has the highest GHG emissions per calorie of any staple crop and emits around 10% of global methane emissions.

Most rice farmers are considered smallholders; many live below the poverty line, with only 40% able to access markets and 60% with limited access to financial, knowledge, and other resources.¹ Moreover, most of production are for local consumption or subsistence. There is also insufficient investment in irrigation and infrastructure leading to sub-optimal yields and wastage. Women farmers also have unequal access over inputs. Lastly, there is limited government engagement in key producing countries on enabling policies for smallholders and regulatory requirements of companies in GHG targets. Fostering a viable business environment for sustainable rice farmers, while also driving domestic and export demand for sustainable rice, is expected to lead to SRP's ultimate intended impacts,

Vision, Mission and Value Proposition

SRP's **Vision** is '***A world in which rice farming is sustainable, resilient, low emission and contributes to the well-being of people and the environment.***'

SRP's **Mission** is to '***Catalyze rice sector transformation through value chain action and multi-stakeholder partnerships to empower rice smallholders by fostering wide-scale uptake of sustainable, low-emission rice farming under the SRP Standard.***'

SRP plays three key **Roles** to leverage SRP's assets to achieve transformative change within the global rice sector: (1) Scheme owner (Standard and Assurance), (2) Convenor/Project partner, and (3) Policy influencer.

Realizing SRP's vision and mission requires a cross-cutting, collaborative approach to leverage resources across the stakeholder community and drive transformative change. With interventions needed from farm to policy level, SRP's three **Strategic Pillars** provide an overarching framework for action:

- (1) serve as a knowledge hub,
- (2) develop sustainable value chains, and
- (3) create partnerships.

SRP aims to increase adoption of climate smart sustainable practices lowering soil, water, and land usage as well as reduced energy and greenhouse gas emissions among smallholders and supported by a viable economic model of production and trade, which

¹ based on SRP 2018 Visioning Workshop @Rogers MacJohn LLC

provides food security and livelihoods. Public programs incentivize farmer adoption of sustainable management practices and protection of biodiversity in rice landscapes and is committed in reducing GHG emissions from rice paddies, contributing to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). In addition, women are empowered, climate change resilience achieved, and consumers recognize and reward sustainable rice.

From the above, SRP has articulated an overarching Value Proposition for its members that aligns with the Vision and Mission:

'We help our members realize their own sustainability goals while pursuing a shared ambition for sustainable rice farming through value chain and development approaches including standards, quantitative tools and opportunities for innovative partnerships.'

Theory of Change Framework

The SRP Theory of Change (ToC) describes the intervention logic towards achieving SRP's aspiration to catalyze transformation towards a sustainable global rice sector. It aims to foster strategic thinking, serve as a communication tool, and a basis for monitoring, evaluation and risk management.

The ToC provides a guiding framework for the SRP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System to provide insights into the effectiveness of strategies, supporting activities, and underlying assumptions. Based causal chains, indicators are identified to monitor and evaluate progress from outputs, outcomes, and impacts on critical pathways, as well as develop key evaluation questions. The indicators also use reference points such as the ISEAL common core indicators and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through monitoring and evaluation, SRP can assess progress, performance, and impact, including learnings and evidence to substantiate claims.

Originally developed in 2017, the current version was approved in 2022 via a consultative process with extensive stakeholder engagement, led by the SRP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) team, following the ISEAL Impacts Code 2.0². The ToC highlights three inter-dependent dimensions of change that contribute towards SRP's desired impacts, based on SRP's differentiated roles as scheme owner, convener, and policy influencer, and the synergies across these roles. It visualizes pathways to deliver impacts on markets and sector transformation. This framework is intended for use as part of best practice, to support SRP's engagement with internal and external stakeholders and foster alignment towards defining and realizing shared goals.

² [ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems](#), now integrated into the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems ('the ISEAL Code').

Elements of the Theory of Change

As a roadmap to visualize the path towards sector transformation, the ToC framework (Figure 1) illustrates the logical flow, specifying **activities**, **outputs**, **outcomes** and **impacts** as well as the underlying **assumptions**.

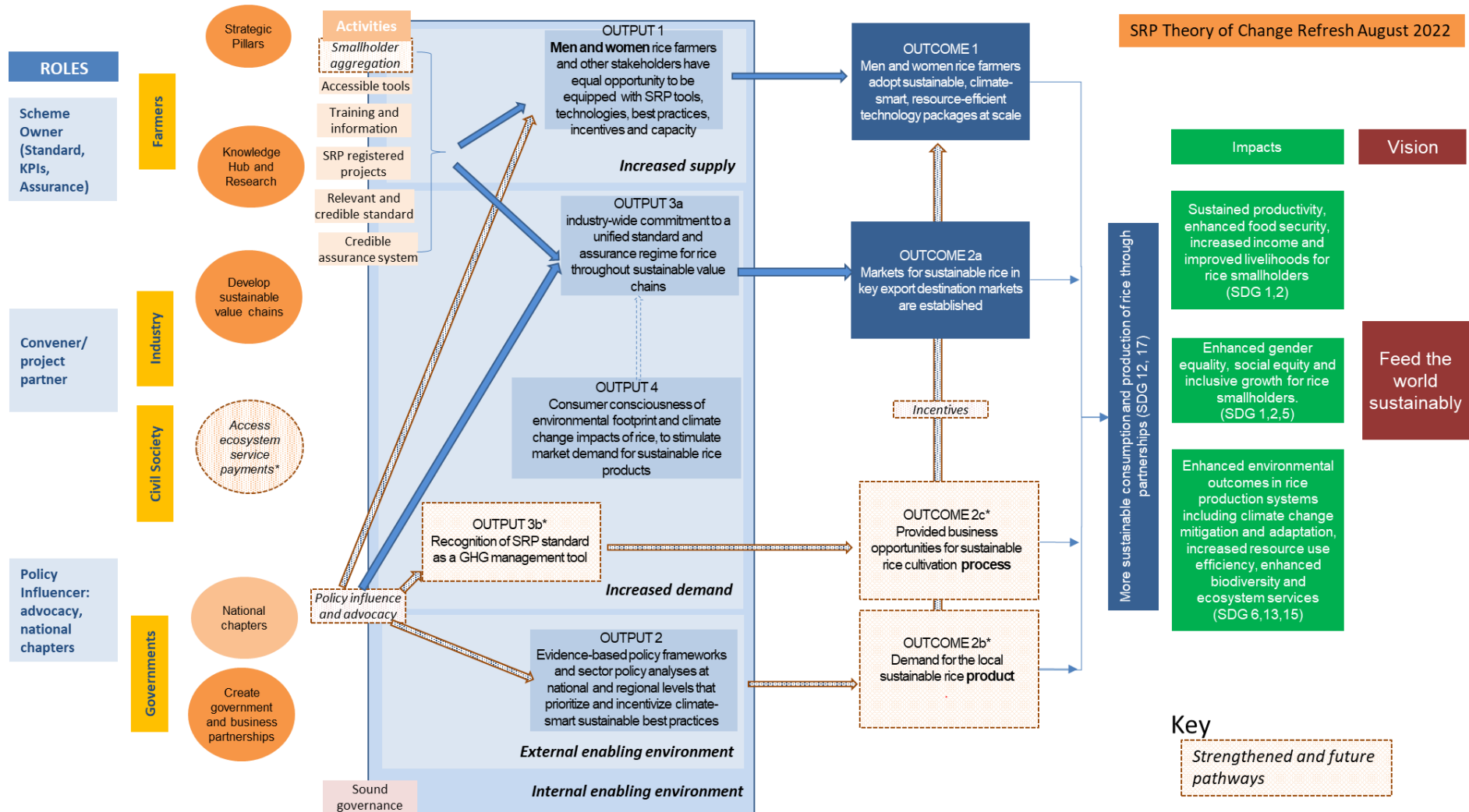


Figure 1: SRP Theory of Change Framework

Members, partners and other stakeholders implement a wide range of interventions and investments (**Activities**) to drive local and systemic change. These include, but are not limited to, smallholder aggregation, access to tools, training and information, market access, SRP registered projects, the SRP Assurance Scheme and SRP-Verified label, policy and advocacy engagement, all grounded in the principles of good governance.

Outputs are the products, capital goods, and services that result directly from activities and investments of SRP, SRP members and partners. The TOC lists the following key outputs:

- Men and women rice farmers and other stakeholders have equal opportunity to be equipped with SRP tools, technologies, best practices, incentives and capacity.
- Industry-wide commitment to a unified Standard and Assurance Scheme for rice throughout sustainable value chains.
- Consumer consciousness of the environmental footprint and climate change impacts of rice, to boost market demand for sustainable rice products.
- Suitable partnerships with GHG certification systems and recognition of the SRP Standard as a carbon management tool.
- Evidence-based policy frameworks and sector policy analyses at national and regional levels that prioritize and incentivize climate-smart sustainable best practices.

These outputs together lead to **Outcomes**, as a set of broader 'external' or indirect changes triggered or catalyzed by outputs directly delivered by SRP activities. Outcomes are the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term results from SRP interventions/activities (ISEAL, adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002). These include changes in social, environmental, and farm productivity outcomes, as well as policies/business practices. More specifically:

- More sustainable consumption and production of rice through partnerships (SDG 12, 17).
- Men and women rice farmers adopt sustainable, climate-smart, resource-efficient technology packages at scale.
- Markets for sustainable rice in key export destinations are established.
- Increased demand for the local sustainable rice product.
- More business opportunities for sustainable rice cultivation process.

Impacts are defined as positive and negative long-term effects resulting from SRP interventions, either directly or indirectly, intended or unintended (ISEAL, adapted from OECD Glossary, 2002). SRP's intended impacts can be categorized in three domains:

- *Economic*: Sustained productivity, enhanced food security, increased incomes and improved livelihoods for rice smallholders (SDG 1,2).

- *Social:* Enhanced gender equality, social equity and inclusive growth for rice smallholders (SDG 1,2,5).
- *Environmental:* Enhanced environmental outcomes in rice production systems including climate change mitigation and adaptation, increased resource use efficiency, enhanced biodiversity and ecosystem services (SDG 6,13,).

Assumptions

Between and among the different components reflect underlying **assumptions** on which the ToC is based, which need explicit consideration for ISEAL Code compliance. Some key assumptions include:

- Adequate organization of smallholders for the delivery of inputs, services and connection to markets including eliminating barriers for women.
- Incentives for a balanced number male and female membership of farmer organization.
- Sufficient incentives for smallholders.
- Suitable partnerships with GHG certification systems.
- Evidence based decision-making for companies and policy makers.
- Quality assured data for market-based incentive mechanisms including GHG accounting.

Figure 1 outlines the basic framework, starting on the left with the SRP roles and strategic pillars as outlined in the [Sustainable Rice Platform 2021-2025 Strategy](#). Interventions are the set of activities and investments by SRP, SRP members, and partners. Outputs are the short-term direct results of SRP activities and investments. Over time and as more actors are involved, these lead to intermediate results, also known as outcomes. SRP can influence these but there are other factors that affect the outcomes. There are also preconditions affecting changes, which are identified as key assumptions. These changes are multiplied (scaled) and supported by other enabling factors, leading to ultimate impacts. It is important to note that the framework does not capture all the details or nuances of the change theory.

Unintended Effects

SRP operates in a complex environment, and while the ToC outlines the anticipated changes, it is important to identify and monitor both positive and negative unintended effects. These can be spillover effects, the result of SRP direct actions or indirect effects that SRP has limited control. Positive unintended effects can be opportunities for learning and duplicating while negative unintended effects need to be mitigated and be included in the risk management plan.

To identify the unintended effects of SRP interventions, SRP collects feedback from stakeholders on unintended effects as part of Standard setting process and oversight. These are monitored for learning and improvement to mitigate negative unintended effects.

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