External Mid-Term Review of SIANI

Final report

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Executive Summary

This mid-term review (MTR) assesses the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability of the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) Phase 4 (2022–2027). The review draws on document analysis, 31 key informant interviews, an online survey with 113 respondents, and participatory workshops. It examines progress against SIANI's Theory of Change (ToC), alignment with global and Swedish priorities, and provides forward-looking recommendations.

SIANI remains highly relevant as a neutral, multi-sector platform bridging research, policy, and practice on sustainable food systems. Stakeholders value its convening power and thematic alignment with global agendas such as Agenda 2030 and Swedish development priorities. However, alignment with Sweden's latest reform agenda and bilateral strategies is less clear. Representation of youth, actors from the Global South, and Indigenous groups has improved but remains limited. The current membership model, based on newsletter subscriptions, is inclusive but lacks clarity between active and passive members, suggesting a need for a more structured engagement approach.

SIANI is broadly effective in delivering outputs across its four areas: inclusive dialogue, amplification and awareness, community building, and knowledge management. Expert groups are central to generating thematic knowledge and fostering collaboration, though performance varies and links to policy impact are uneven. The ToC and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system have improved significantly since 2021, providing clearer indicators and embedding learning in practice. However, MEL remains focused on operational adjustments rather than strategic decision-making, and attribution of outcomes to SIANI is challenging. Outputs such as events and publications are delivered as planned, but dissemination and uptake of knowledge products are limited.

SIANI complements other programmes and networks by offering a unique space for cross-sector dialogue and connecting Swedish actors to global processes. Some overlaps exist with networks such as Focali and the Agroforestry Network, but these are generally productive.

Phase 4 demonstrates strong continuity with previous activities, indicating lasting relevance of expert groups and regional collaborations. However, visibility and accessibility of outputs need improvement, and youth engagement requires a more structured approach. Long-term sustainability beyond 2027 is uncertain due to reliance on Sida funding and limited progress in diversifying resources. Stakeholders strongly support SIANI's continuation, but future funding will likely depend on closer alignment with Swedish strategies and a clearer business model.

Overall, SIANI remains a valued and legitimate actor in food systems transformation, with strong alignment to global priorities and recognised convening power. To maximise impact and ensure sustainability, strategic adjustments are needed in engagement models, MEL practices, and resource mobilisation.

Recommendations include:

- **Clarify SIANI's multi-level contributions:** Clearly define and communicate SIANI's contributions to policy and practice at the Swedish, global, regional, and local levels.

- **Develop a long-term funding strategy:** Create a long-term fundraising strategy, including diversifying funding sources and engaging Sida early regarding future support, to reduce reliance on the current primary donor.

- **Strengthen succession planning:** Enhance succession and continuity planning to preserve institutional memory and ensure smooth leadership transitions for sustained organisational resilience.

- **Streamline the MEL system:** Focus on tracking core strategic goals, emphasise learning and contribution (vs. attribution) in monitoring, and fully integrate *SLU Global* and *Focali* into outcome reporting for a more efficient, insightful MEL process.

- **Enhance engagement with target groups:** Deepen engagement with key target groups (especially youth). Define clear strategies for reaching each audience and ensure that the outcomes of these engagements are captured and reflected in annual reporting.

- **Clarify the membership structure:** Distinguish between active and passive individual members, include institutional membership options, and consider tiered engagement levels with clearly defined benefits for each category to strengthen the member community.

- **Improve output visibility:** Consider adding functionality to the website to better showcase SIANI's knowledge products and make publications easier to find for target audiences.

1 Introduction

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the External Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) Phase 4. The evaluation was conducted during the period June to November 2025 by Johanna Lindström, Viktor Tagesson, Sofia Karlsson-Ahrén, Per Rudebjer and Sandra Johansson.

1.1 Evaluation objective and scope

The objective of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) has been to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability of the SIANI Phase 4 programme (2023–2027), with a focus on the progress made since the start of the phase and the potential for strategic adjustments in its remaining years. The review has examined how well the programme is delivering against its Theory of Change, including its four outcome areas. The MTR has also considered the programme's alignment with global agendas, Swedish development priorities, and Sweden's reform agenda for development assistance. In addition to backward-looking assessment, the MTR provides forward-looking recommendations to inform the final two years of implementation and the potential design of a future programme phase.

The scope of the evaluation includes SIANI's governance and hosting arrangements, its collaboration with strategic partners (SLU Global and Focali – the Forest, Climate, and Livelihood research network), the role and performance of SIANI Expert Groups, and the effectiveness of its Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system. The review has covered both Swedish and international dimensions of the network and makes assessments on the programme's ability to engage and support key stakeholder groups, including smallholder farmers, Indigenous communities, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and youth.

1.2 Evaluation criteria and questions

The ToRs of this MTR (see Annex 1) identify evaluation questions organised under four of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria as noted in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Evaluation questions for the SIANI mid-term review

1.	Relevance
1.1	To what extent and how is SIANI perceived as relevant by its members and partners, in Sweden and globally? Are there any changes of perceived relevance compared to the analysis of this question conducted in previous evaluations?
1.2	To what extent and how is SIANI relevant to global agendas, processes and Swedish political priorities related to sustainable food systems and development cooperation, such as the Swedish government's reform agenda 'Development assistance for a new era – freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth'; Agenda 2030; and Sida's 'multi-dimensional poverty analysis' conceptual framework approach?
1.3	Is the current concept of "members" relevant to SIANI's implementation, and how can the concept of membership for both individual and institutions of the network be adjusted to align with SIANI's networking platform structure?
2.	Effectiveness
2.1	Is SIANI fulfilling its mission effectively, including working with its stipulated enablers?

2.2	To what extent and how has the programme contributed to intended outputs, outcomes and impacts as stipulated in the ToC? Is the ToC a helpful tool in this regard?	
2.3	To what extent and how do the SEI hosting arrangement and collaboration with its strategic partners (SLU Global and Focali) support the fulfilment of SIANI's mission and vision? How can these arrangements be improved?	
2.4	To what extent does the current monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting procedures deliver robust and useful information that is used to assess progress towards outcomes?	
2.5	How is SIANI's expert groups contributing to SIANI's overall outcomes, and in which ways can the partnership with expert groups be improved?	
3.	**Sustainability**	
3.1	How can methods and approaches for the programme implementation be improved for benefits to last?	
3.2	To what extent is SIANI sustainable beyond 2027?	
3.3	To what extent is SIANI's activities from its previous phases (1-3) sustainable in the current phase?	
4.	**Coherence**	
4.1	Is SIANI complementing and finding synergies to other programmes/networks with similar methods, and if so in what way?	
4.2	How can the complementarity of SIANI be improved?	

The report is structured to answer the evaluation questions given and findings are presented under the evaluation criteria headings. There has been some reorganisation to improve the flow of the text.

2 Methodology

2.1 Overall approach

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of SIANI Phase 4 used a theory-based, mixed-methods approach, guided by the programme's Theory of Change. This included both qualitative and quantitative data collection, a focus on learning and adaptation, and a Human Rights-Based Approach to ensure inclusivity and equity. The methodology aimed to assess progress, support internal reflection, and inform future improvements.

2.2 Data collection methods

To ensure triangulation and depth, we used both qualitative and quantitative methods:

Review of documents (listed in Annex 5)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Semi-structured interviews with 31 key stakeholders, through a total of 27 interviews, were conducted. Most interviews were conducted online, with some face-to-face interviews conducted during the Agri4D conference, which the MTR team attended. In some cases, complementary written questions were also sent out to key stakeholders.

The sampling approach was purposeful, designed to ensure a diversity of perspectives by including stakeholders from various types of organisations and geographic regions. The list of interviewees was developed based on key contacts identified and provided to the MTR team by SIANI. Individuals were selected for their specific knowledge of SIANI, providing an inside perspective from the Secretariat and Steering Committee, but also from an outside perspective on the validity of SIANI's reported results. The sampling strategy was discussed and refined in consultation with SIANI during the inception phase. Additional interviewees were identified during the review process, to gain more outside perspectives. See Table 2 for the number of stakeholders interviewed for each category.

Table 2. List of persons interviewed as part of the KIIs

Organisation/type	Number (of persons)	Description
SIANI secretariat staff	6	Staff from SEI, Focali and SLU Global
SIANI Steering Committee	2	Not including Secretariat staff and ex-officio members
Close contacts	11	Representatives of Swedish and international universities and research centres, multilaterals, private companies and NGOs
Network members	2	Representatives of academic institutions and NGOs
Expert groups	5	Representatives of groups based in Asia, Latin America, West Africa, and United States
Strategic partners/host	3	Representatives of SEI and SLU Global
Swedish government/ governmental agencies	3	Representatives of Department of Rural Affairs and Sida
Total	**31**	

An **online survey** was conducted to assess the evaluation questions on relevance, as seen by the SIANI members/followers/partners. The survey also collected data on some, but not all, the other evaluation questions. It drew on the survey conducted in the previous evaluation in 2021, adapted to this TOR to assess progress and development over time. The survey was distributed through the SIANI newsletter and through SIANI social media channels, meaning that we reached out to all those that are seen as members of SIANI. See Table 3 for information on the profile of the 113 respondents of the survey. The response rate by sector affiliation is similar to that of the previous evaluation.

Table 3. Survey respondents' profiles

	Category	Percent (n=113)
Sector affiliation	Research / Academia / Foundation / Programme	45%
	NGO / Not for profit / Civil society	27%
	UN / International development organisation	4%
	Public sector / Government	8%
	Private sector	14%
	Prefer not to answer	1%
Age	< 18 - 34	16%
	35 years or older	84%
Country	Africa	34%
	Europe	55%
	Asia	8%
	North America	3%
	South America	1%
	Sweden	47%
	Other (not Sweden)	53%

Two **participatory workshops** involving SIANI's Steering Committee and Secretariat staff were used for collecting data, testing assumptions, validating findings, and co-developing recommendations. The first was conducted as an Outcomes Harvesting workshop to gather evidence on SIANI's outcomes. The second workshop was focused on validating findings and conclusions and co-creating recommendations.

2.3 Analysis methods

The evaluation applied **thematic analysis** to interview transcripts, survey responses, and workshop notes to identify patterns related to relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and coherence. This approach combined inductive insights with deductive coding aligned to predefined evaluation questions, enabling nuanced interpretation of stakeholder perspectives (see Table 4). Outcome Harvesting was applied to gather evidence in a selected number of SIANI's outcomes (see Annex 3). A specific focus was placed on **SIANI's network growth**, reflecting Outcome 4 in the updated Theory of Change. Data included survey questions on membership and engagement, and interviews with key informants exploring connectivity, vibrancy, and perceptions of network expansion.

Rubrics: RAG rating scale for Strength of Evidence

To assess the strength of evidence from interviews, we applied a structured rubric using a simple RAG (Red-Amber-Green) rating system. This framework clarifies how robust the interview findings are for each evaluation criterion, supporting transparent conclusions and recommendations.

High scores indicate strong, consistent evidence that can be confidently used, while low scores signal gaps that limit certainty. These gaps do not prevent conclusions but require cautious interpretation and explicit acknowledgement of limitations. Conducted interviews were rated using the following scale: **Red** (numbers 0-1) = this interview offers no/weak evidence towards this evaluation question/this interview contains some tangential evidence towards this evaluation question (supporting evidence), **Amber** (number 2) = this interview contains applicable evidence towards this evaluation question, **Green** (number 3) = this interview contains strong evidence (direct evidence, typically quotable). See the RAG rating for conducted interviews in Table 4, with the exception of two conducted during revisions of the draft final report.

As can be seen from the table, the strongest evidence from interviews relates to SIANI's relevance, and effectiveness, whereas there is less evidence on coherence and sustainability. All evidence from interviews has been triangulated with findings from the survey and/or documentation. Where

evidence from interviews was weak, the MTR is careful to draw strong conclusions, or have made specific efforts to seek out additional evidence from other sources including surveys and documentation.

Table 4. RAG rating for conducted interviews

	Total	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	I8	I9	I10	I11	I12	I13	I14	I15	I16	I17	I18	I19	I20	I21	I22	I23	I24	I25
EQ 1.1	68	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
EQ 1.2	53	1	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	2
EQ 1.3	45	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	3	2	1	3	2	3	2	3
EQ 2.1	62	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	1	3
EQ 2.2	53	3	2	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
EQ 2.3	40	3	2	0	2	0	3	2	0	1	2	2	3	1	3	3	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	2	1	1
EQ 2.4	41	2	2	0	3	1	3	2	1	1	1	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	0	2	2	1	1	1
EQ 2.5	54	2	3	2	3	1	3	3	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	1	3	3	2	2	2
EQ 3.1	47	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	2
EQ 3.2	42	2	2	0	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
EQ 3.3	32	1	1	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1
EQ 4.1	49	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
EQ 4.2	40	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

2.4 Limitations

Findings should be interpreted with caution due to several constraints. Most evidence is **self-reported** through surveys and interviews, reflecting perceptions rather than verifiable outcomes and subject to recall bias or social desirability. In addition, **attribution is challenging** in a network setting: SIANI acts as a convenor, and outcomes are co-produced with multiple actors, making it difficult to isolate SIANI's contribution. However, for a number of outcomes, we have gone further to try to validate results by speaking to persons external to SIANI to tease out SIANI's contribution. The **sample of survey respondents and interviewees is not fully representative**, skewing toward academics and Swedish-based actors, while voices from the Global South, youth, and grassroots organisations are underrepresented. Finally, the **observation window is short**; many intended changes, such as policy uptake or systemic shifts, require years to materialise and fall outside the mid-term review timeframe.

3 The Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI)

3.1 The overall programme

The Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) was formed in 2009 with the goal of enhancing agriculture in the development assistance contexts. The crucial role of agriculture in addressing poverty alleviation in low-income countries needed to regain attention among Swedish actors. After an inception phase the SIANI secretariat has been operational since August 2009. SIANI is s a Swedish-based global multisector network platform that promotes multisector dialogue and action around sustainable food systems. It aims to support transformation toward food systems that are **sustainable, rights-based, and inclusive** of smallholder farmers, SMEs, and marginalised groups.

SIANI has operated in four phases; SIANI 1 (2009–2012), SIANI 2 (2013–2016), SIANI 3 (2016-2022) and the current phase, SIANI 4 (2023-2027). All three previous phases have been evaluated, and a Mid-Term Review was also conducted in 2018, for SIANI phase 3 [3.]

SIANI operates with strategic partners SLU Global, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU and the Forest, Climate and Livelihood research network (Focali, Gothenburg University[1], and in partnership with a wide array of stakeholders across academia, civil society, government, international organisations, and the private sector.

3.2 The SIANI Theory of Change (ToC)

SIANI's ToC (Figure 1) was developed through a participatory process as part of the last evaluation of SIANI phase 3 and is structured around four interconnected components[2]:

Inputs and enablers

- Context: Swedish and global development policies, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and biodiversity conventions and protocols.

- Resources: Core funding from Sida, in-kind and other support (e.g.venues) from Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI), Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Gothenburg Centre for Sustainable Development (GMV)/Wexus, and network members.

- Tools: Digital SIANI and partner platforms, human rights-based approach (HRBA) guidelines, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems.

- Structure: Governance via a Steering Committee, the SIANI Secretariat, and SEI as host and ex-officio member; the three forming an Executive Committee. Strategic partnerships are ex-officio members. Expert groups are supported regularly.

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[1] Focali's secretariat is hosted by Wexsus – West Sweden nexus for Sustainable Development, that has replaced Gothenburg Centre for Sustainable Development, the former host of Focali.
[2] Bo Tengnäs and Kristina Mastroianni. 2012. Evaluation of the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI); Bo Tengnäs, Mats Denninger and Anna Tengnäs. 2016. Evaluation of Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative, Phase II 2013-2016 (SIANI II); Bo Tengnäs and Mats Denninger. 2018. Mid-term review of the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative Phase 3 December 2016–March 2019 (SIANI 3); Johanna Lindström, Torbjörn Öckerman, Kajsa Österberg Åström. 2021. Evaluation of the SIANI programme (phase 3).

- Boundary partners and intermediate actors: Global and Swedish actors within the private sector, government agencies, civil society, faith-based organisations, UN agencies, academia and research institutes.

Activities and outputs

Activities and outputs are grouped into four categories[3]:

1. Inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue – Facilitating learning and action across sectors.
2. Amplification and awareness-raising – Elevating marginalised voices and extending reach.
3. Community building – Strengthening trust and coherence among network members.
4. Knowledge management and communication – Sharing evidence-based insights and mitigating information overload.

Accordingly, SIANI activities are presented under these categories in Annual Work Plans and Annual Reports. The budget (Table 5) shows that output 1 is the most prioritised[4]. A list of examples of SIANI activities is provided in Annex 2. SIANI also receives some funding from IFAD, 300 0000 SEK.

Table 5. SIANI resources spent by output area.

Output	2023	2024
Output 1: Multisector dialogue	4 012 008	5 655 199
Output 2: Knowledge management and communication	1 879 355	2 022 814
Output 3: Amplification and awareness raising	1 801 255	3 185 405
Output 4: Community building	626 178	848 530
Total	**8 318 797**	**11 711 948**

Source: SIANI Annual Financial Reports, 2023 and 2024.

Outcomes

By the end of Phase 4, SIANI aims to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Actualised topics and changed agendas and practices.
2. Enhanced capacities and knowledge for rights-based food systems transformation.
3. Joint actions among diverse stakeholders.
4. Strengthened connectivity and vibrancy within the SIANI network.

Impact

SIANI contributes to the transformation of food systems in three fundamental areas:

- People: Nourishing everyone for health and well-being.
- Planet: Producing in harmony with nature.
- Prosperity: Inclusive, transformative, and equitable recovery for the 2030 Agenda.

The overarching impact statement is: "Food systems are more sustainable, rights-based and inclusive of smallholder farmers and marginalised groups."

SIANI's work is guided by three sub-impact statements:

1. Recognition of rural youths' agency and rights.

[3] The order of these categories varies across SIANI governance documents and reporting.
[4] The collaboration with strategic partners, SLU-Global and Focali are entirely budgeted under output 1.

2. Recognition of smallholders' and SMEs' prosperity in local value chains.
3. Recognition of livelihoods and rights of forest communities, Indigenous peoples, and natural resource-dependent poor.

Assumptions

SIANI's Theory of Change is grounded in the belief that sustainable, rights-based food systems can be achieved through inclusive, knowledge-driven collaboration. This relies on several key assumptions: that resources and partnerships will be delivered and managed effectively; that activities will be well-coordinated and responsive; and that stakeholders will remain engaged, willing to contribute, and aligned with SIANI's goals. It also assumes a supportive digital and policy environment, and that change agents, particularly those representing marginalised groups, will be accessible and motivated to act. These assumptions reflect the complexity of food systems transformation and the importance of trust, timing, and shared purpose across all levels of engagement.

Figure 1. SIANI's Theory of Change
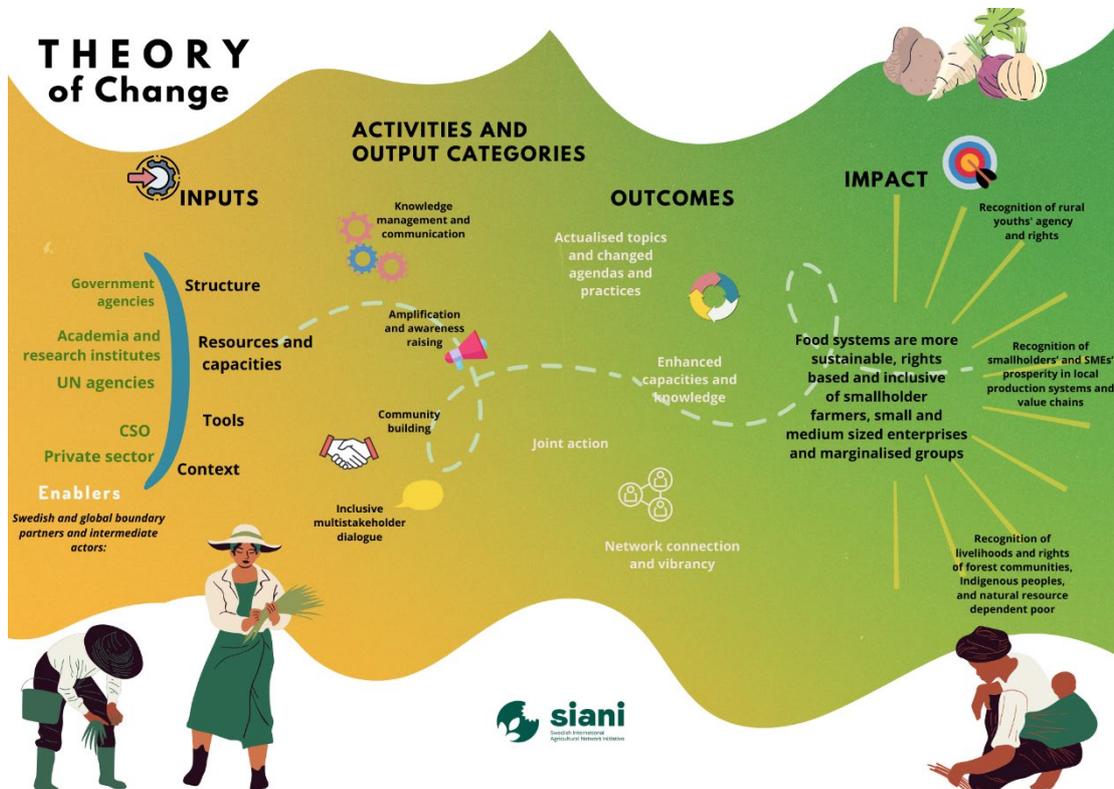
3.3   Guiding documents

Beyond its ToC and programme document, SIANI has three crosscutting guidance documents: a SIANI Youth Strategy 2021-2024; Rights-based Approaches in SIANI, a guidance document for SIANI and SEI's Rights & Equity Teams collaboration developed in October 2023; and a SIANI Communications Strategy from 2023.

4 Findings

This section presents the findings of the evaluation, structured largely according to the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

The relevance section covers three evaluation questions:

- To what extent and how is SIANI perceived as relevant by its members and partners, in Sweden and globally? Are there any changes of perceived relevance compared to the analysis of this question conducted in previous evaluations?
- To what extent and how is SIANI relevant to global agendas, processes and Swedish political priorities related to sustainable food systems and development cooperation, such as the Swedish government's reform agenda 'Development assistance for a new era – freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth'; Agenda 2030; and Sida's 'multi-dimensional poverty analysis' conceptual framework approach?
- Is the current concept of "members" relevant to SIANI's implementation, and how can the concept of membership for both individual and institutions of the network be adjusted to align with SIANI's networking platform structure?

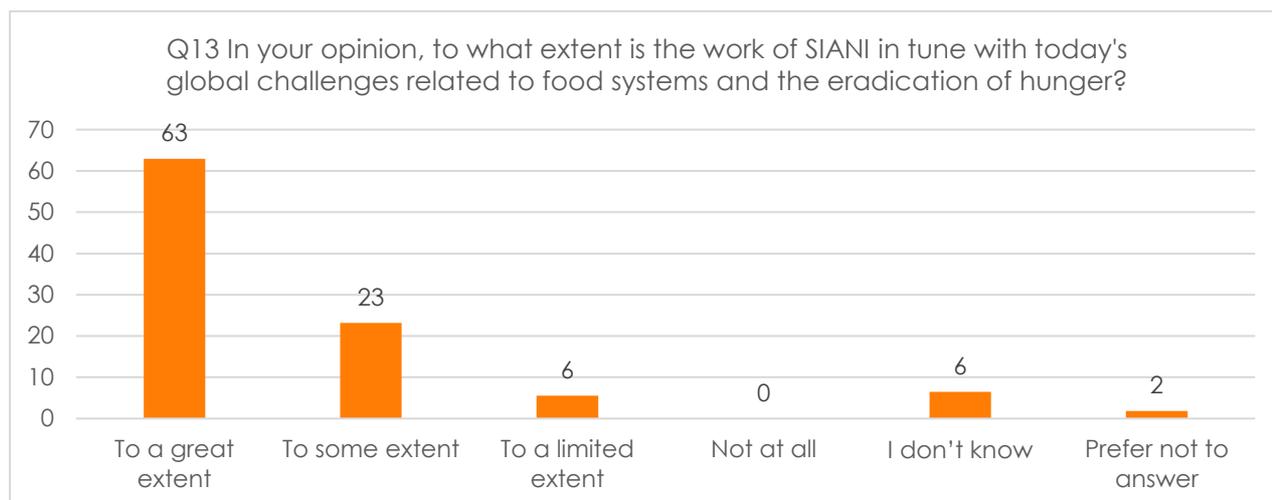### Relevance according to the members

SIANI is consistently perceived as highly relevant by its members and partners, both in Sweden and globally. It is recognised as a neutral, multi-sector platform that bridges research, policy, and practice, enabling dialogue among actors who might not otherwise interact. Its professionalism in event organisation and communications recognised, as is its ability to connect Swedish expertise to global processes. Compared to previous evaluations, relevance remains stable, but there are now also greater expectations that SIANI should have a stronger visibility outside Sweden, and deeper engagement with underrepresented groups such as youth and actors from the Global South. These are not fully met.

SIANI's relevance is affirmed across interviews, surveys, and document reviews. Swedish stakeholders, interviewed as part of the mid-term review, describe SIANI as a unique and neutral convening platform that bridges research, policy, and practice in sustainable food systems. Its ability to bring together diverse actors, academia, government, civil society and private sector is seen as a core strength and unique selling point, enabling dialogue that might not otherwise occur. International partners value SIANI's role in facilitating knowledge exchange and connecting Swedish expertise to global processes. Professionalism in event organisation and communications reinforces this perception.

Among those surveyed, there is a strong perception that SIANI's efforts are in tune with global priorities related to food systems and the eradication of hunger (see Figure 2). The results show that 63% of respondents believe SIANI's work is aligned "to a great extent", while 23.1% say it aligns "to some extent" with today's global challenges. This is also verified by SIANI's own monitoring through annual surveys where SIANI's thematic priorities are seen as relevant[5].

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[5] SIANI Annual member surveys 2023 and 2024.

Figure 2. Alignment to global challenges

Q13 In your opinion, to what extent is the work of SIANI in tune with today's global challenges related to food systems and the eradication of hunger?

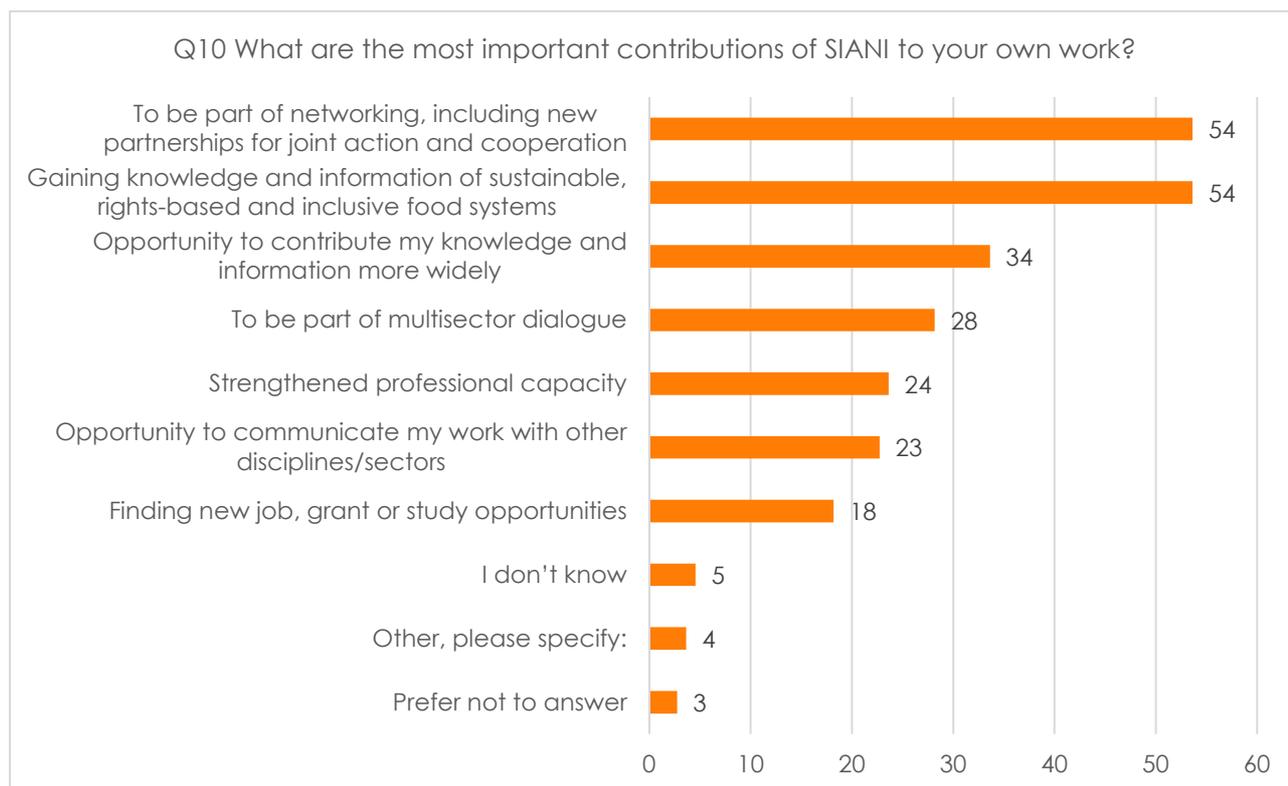| To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all	I don't know	Prefer not to answer
63	23	6	0	6	2

Sample size: N=108

Open comments to the survey[6] highlight appreciation for SIANI's inclusive approach and its role in promoting rights-based practices. Respondents describe SIANI as "a good initiative" and "a trusted source of knowledge," while also calling for greater visibility in Africa and more opportunities for collaboration.

At individual level, SIANI demonstrated relevance and value-addition to respondents' professional activities. Ninety-two percent of survey respondents confirmed that SIANI made important contributions to their own work (Figure 3). The most frequent contributions were 'gaining knowledge and information on sustainable, rights-based, and inclusive food systems', and 'being part of networking, including forming new partnerships for joint action', each cited by 54% of respondents. Finding new job, grant or study opportunities was important to the younger age group, whereas the 35+ age group valued the opportunity to contribute knowledge and information more widely, and opportunity to communicate their work with other disciplines/sectors.

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[6] Responses to Q22 *Do you want to add anything?*

Figure 3. Contributions of SIANI network to respondents own work, percentage

Q10 What are the most important contributions of SIANI to your own work?

Category	Value
To be part of networking, including new partnerships for joint action and cooperation	54
Gaining knowledge and information of sustainable, rights-based and inclusive food systems	54
Opportunity to contribute my knowledge and information more widely	34
To be part of multisector dialogue	28
Strengthened professional capacity	24
Opportunity to communicate my work with other disciplines/sectors	23
Finding new job, grant or study opportunities	18
I don't know	5
Other, please specify:	4
Prefer not to answer	3

Sample size: N=110

SIANI's own annual surveys (2022–2024) confirm that newsletters, webinars, and social media posts are consistently rated as the most relevant activities. For example, the 2023 survey identified newsletters (57.4%), social media posts (35.2%), and webinars (33.3%) as the top three activities contributing to relevance[7]. Regional meetings in Nairobi (2023) and Bangkok (2024) underline SIANI's global relevance by facilitating multi-stakeholder collaboration and knowledge exchange. These meetings brought together actors from academia, civil society, government, private sector actors and farmer associations, creating opportunities for new connections and collaborations at regional scale[8].

The SIANI phase 4 programme document to some degree, and the annual reports in particular, reinforce these findings, noting that SIANI's communication outputs, but also expert group activities are widely regarded as informative and accessible. The reports highlight the network's ability to amplify voices from diverse sectors and geographies, contributing to inclusive dialogue on sustainable food systems. Thematic priorities such as climate change, gender equality, health and nutrition, and agroforestry are consistently cited as areas of relevance[9].

Compared to previous evaluations, interviewees suggest that the relevance of SIANI has remained stable, with incremental improvements noted in network management and strategic

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[7] SIANI annual report 2023; SIANI annual report 2024
[8] SIANI regional network meeting Nairobi 2023: Collaborations for food systems; SIANI regional network meeting 2024 – Bangkok
[9] SIANI Programme Document Phase 4; SIANI annual report 2023; SIANI annual report 2024

communications[10]. There is evidence, from interviews, that SIANI has become more deliberate in articulating its network function, and fostering a sense of vibrancy and connectedness among participants. While inclusivity and the vibrancy of the network is praised, some stakeholders call for deeper engagement beyond information sharing and a need for stronger visibility outside of Sweden. There is also a perceived need for more targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, such as youth and actors from the Global South. These findings suggest that while SIANI's role as a convening platform remains unchanged, its perceived value is now more closely linked to its ability to reach certain groups and engage those already in the network.

Critical points raised include concerns about strategic focus. Whilst some note that a broad focus on sustainable food systems is strategic and that SIANI's strategic focus has improved in Phase 4, partly aided by the new ToC, several interviewees note that SIANI's broad engagement risks diluting its strategic focus, echoing feedback from previous evaluations[11]. The challenge for SIANI moving forward is to maintain its inclusivity and convening power while sharpening its strategic priorities to ensure continued relevance in a rapidly evolving policy and research landscape.

Relevance to global and Swedish agendas and priorities

Whilst the majority of the evidence gathered and analysed reveal a strong alignment between SIANI's activities and major global agendas, such as Agenda 2030, as well as Swedish political priorities related to sustainable food systems and development cooperation, there is some question with regards to SIANI's alignment to the Swedish reform agenda for development cooperation and the future alignment to the new strategy for Strategy for Sustainable Growth, Green Transition and Education 2025–2029.

Interviewees generally agree that SIANI's work aligns well with global agendas such as Agenda 2030 and Swedish political priorities related to sustainable food systems and development cooperation. This is also verified by key SIANI strategic documents and reporting.

When it comes to global agendas, SIANI is highly relevant to Agenda 2030, which is recognised by survey respondents, and verified by a comparison between the SIANI programme document and Agenda 2030. SIANI's core focus on transforming food systems aligns directly with several Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, notably SDG 2 (ending hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture), SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 15 (biodiversity conservation). The programme also overlaps with SDGs on poverty, gender equality, reduced inequalities, health, education, clean water, economic growth, and life below water, reflecting its emphasis on smallholder farmers, marginalised groups, and multi-stakeholder partnerships for collaborative action[12].

According to documents reviewed and interviews with stakeholders, SIANI's work is also seen as directly supporting Sweden's development priorities, particularly in areas such as food security, multi-sector dialogue, and the inclusion of marginalised groups[13]. SIANI also notes that they contribute to

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[10] Bo Tengnäs and Kristina Mastroianni. 2012 Evaluation of the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI); Bo Tengnäs, Mats Denninger and Anna Tengnäs. 2016. Evaluation of Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative, Phase II 2013-2016 (SIANI II); Bo Tengnäs and Mats Denninger. 2018. Mid-term review of the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative Phase 3 December 2016–March 2019 (SIANI 3); Johanna Lindström, Torbjörn Öckerman, Kajsa Österberg Åström. 2021. Evaluation of the SIANI programme (phase 3).

[12] SIANI programme Document Phase 4; Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
[13] SIANI Programme Document Phase 4

various Swedish strategies for development cooperation, including on capacity development[14] beyond the Strategy for Sweden's global development cooperation on sustainable economic development 2022–2026 (the previous strategy). SIANI's approach also aligns closely with Sida's multidimensional poverty analysis (MDPA), emphasising context, inclusion, and evidence. Its focus on food security, rural livelihoods, and nutrition directly supports MDPA's resource dimension, while rights-based methods empower marginalised groups and promote economic inclusion[15]. The network's emphasis on rights-based approaches and its capacity to interpret and communicate the implications of global processes for Swedish stakeholders are viewed as particularly valuable by interviewed stakeholders, but also its ability to keep attention focused on issues that are central to Sweden's international development commitments. Multiple interviewees explicitly stated that SIANI plays a unique and necessary role in connecting actors across sectors and geographies, especially in Sweden's development cooperation landscape.

> *"SIANI is one of the few platforms that really connects Swedish actors with global food system discussions. Without it, there would be a gap in how Sweden contributes to these debates." (SIANI stakeholder interviewed)*

This goes beyond development cooperation, with SIANI supporting the alignment between Sweden's international commitments with domestic priorities on sustainability, climate resilience, and food security, particularly through its strong connections to the Swedish FAO committee.

However, there are some differences between the perception of alignment to global vs Swedish priorities. In the survey, respondents were asked to assess SIANI's alignment with Swedish and global agendas and processes. Figure 4 presents the results showing a perception of closer alignment with global agendas and priorities, in comparison to Swedish priorities, even when comparing those based in Sweden vs elsewhere[16]. For example, a higher proportion of respondents, both within and outside Sweden, rate SIANI's alignment with Agenda 2030 as "to a great extent" compared to its alignment with the Swedish reform agenda. This trend is consistent across both respondent groups, though those based in Sweden tend to rate alignment with Swedish priorities slightly higher than those outside Sweden. However, a greater percentage also state that they are uncertain of the alignment of SIANI to Swedish priorities.

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[14] SIANI Programme Document Phase 4

[15] Sida's 'multi-dimensional poverty analysis' conceptual framework approach; SIANI programme document Phase 4

[16] When looking at all respondents together, for Agenda 2030, 58.3% of respondents indicated that SIANI's work is aligned it "to a great extent." There is also a perception of closer alignment to the UN Food systems agenda (were 48.1% rate alignment "to a great extent"), in comparison to alignment to Swedish development priorities and more notably the Swedish reform agenda (44.4% and 31.6 respectively answer to a great extent, respectively).

Figure 4. Alignment to global and Swedish priorities, comparison between respondents based in Sweden vs outside Sweden, percentage
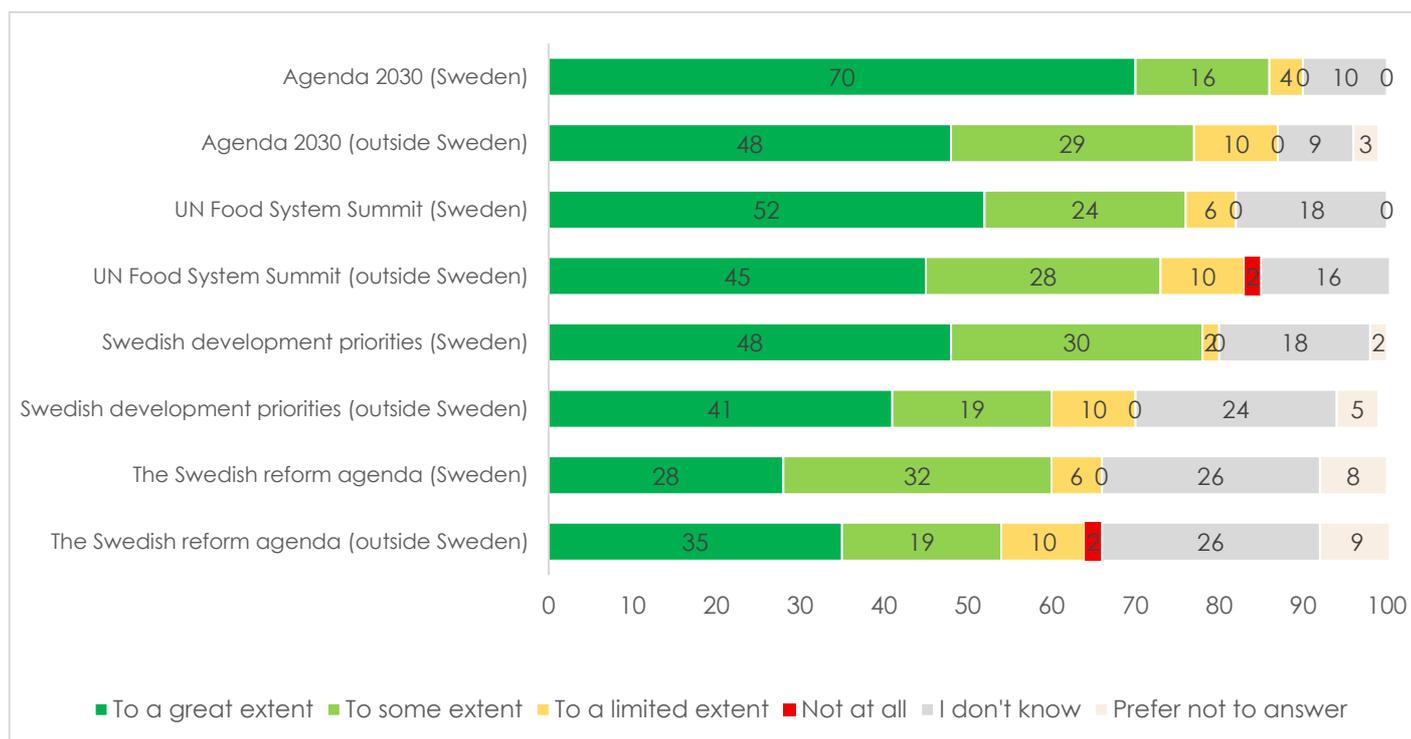
Sample size: N=108

There are some limits to SIANI's relevance to Swedish development priorities, particularly in relation to the more recent Strategy for Sustainable Growth, Green Transition and Education 2025–2029, which was only launched in August 2025, so not relevant for the initial period of SIANI's fourth phase. [17] While SIANI's thematic focus aligns well with the strategy's goals, especially in areas like sustainable agriculture, climate adaptation, and education, the implementation modalities differ. The strategy is primarily designed with a country and regional focus. SIANI's global reach and networked approach may complement the country/regional focus of the strategy but is not directly mirrored in how SIANI operates. Some also noted that Agenda 2030 itself is less visible in current Swedish discourse and that there is a general de-prioritisation of support to activities that focus on influencing policy discourse at the global level. As such, which was also noted by some interviewees, SIANI will need to consider what this means for the future, including the potential for further funding from Sida. Actively monitoring alignment in future annual work plans might therefore be needed. This is further discussed under section 4.4.

Relevance of current membership concept

The MTR finds that SIANI's current membership model, based mainly on newsletter subscription, is inclusive and broad but lacks clarity between active and passive members. It also does not align fully to how SIANI's network describes itself, suggesting a need for a more nuanced approach to engagement and participation.
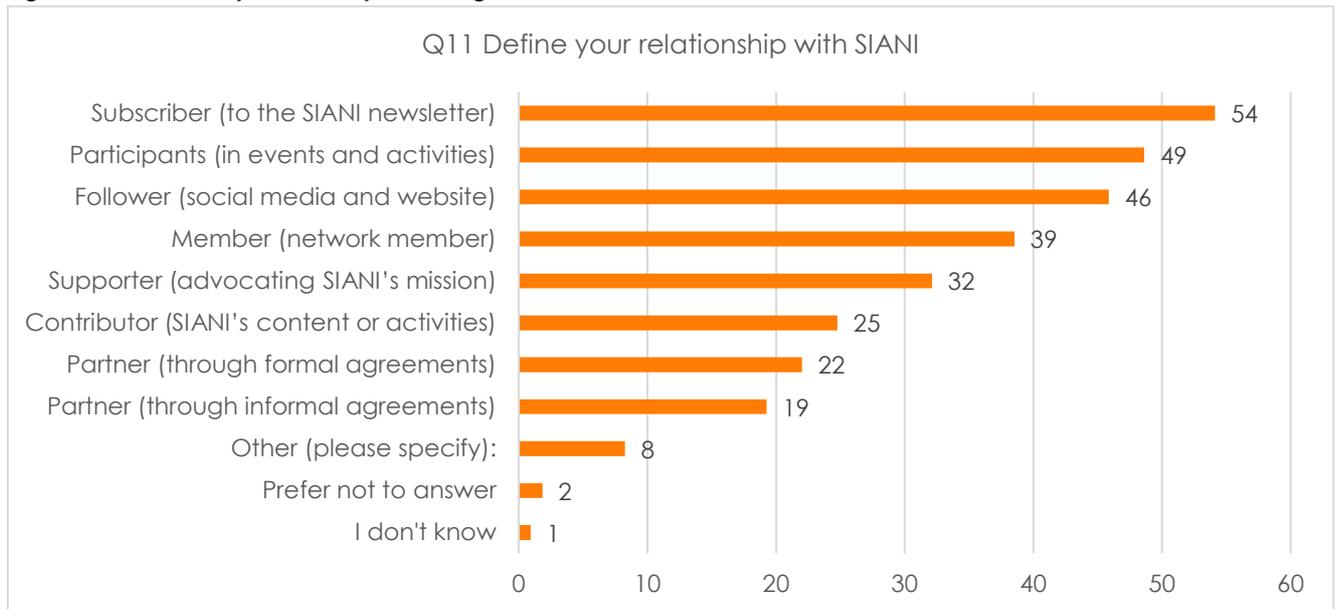
The current operational definition of membership, which is primarily based on newsletter subscription, is viewed as inclusive and administratively efficient. This approach has enabled SIANI to maintain a

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[17] Swedish Government 2025. Strategy for Sustainable Growth, Green Transition and Education 2025-2029. Available at: strategi-for-hallbar-tillvaxt-gron-omstallning-och-utbildning.pdf (accessed December 2025)

broad and engaged contact base, lowering barriers to entry and facilitating wide participation in network activities. However, conducted interviews indicate that this model may blur the distinction between passive followers and actively engaged members, potentially complicating governance and decision-making processes.

To test the concept of membership, survey respondents were asked to define their relationship with SIANI. Figure 5 presents the results from this multiple-choice question, where the top answers are newsletter subscribers, event participants and social media followers, and 39% see themselves as members (network members).

Figure 5. Relationship to SIANI, percentage

Q11 Define your relationship with SIANI

Relationship	Value
Subscriber (to the SIANI newsletter)	54
Participants (in events and activities)	49
Follower (social media and website)	46
Member (network member)	39
Supporter (advocating SIANI's mission)	32
Contributor (SIANI's content or activities)	25
Partner (through formal agreements)	22
Partner (through informal agreements)	19
Other (please specify):	8
Prefer not to answer	2
I don't know	1

Sample Size: N=109

Further analysis of this data shows that 27% state that they are both member and subscriber, 11% see themselves as members but not subscribers, 27% not subscriber nor member and 35% state that they are neither member nor subscriber (see Figure 6). This suggests that the current definition does not align very well with how "members" view themselves. This is also confirmed in interviews, where some individuals identify as members or followers, whereas others perceive their role primarily through strategic collaborations or participation in expert groups.

Figure 6. Perceived membership, percentage

Percieved membership

Category	Value
Not subscriber nor member	35
Member and subscriber	27
Subscriber, not member	27
Member, not subscriber	11

Sample size: N=109

Evidence from interviews suggests that expert groups are a key mechanism for engagement, serving as hubs for multidisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange. However, for those not

involved in expert groups, active participation remains uneven, which is natural for membership online communities and social networks[18].

Several interviewees suggest that SIANI could benefit from a more nuanced approach to membership, distinguishing between different levels of engagement and participation, and as seen above, this approach is supported by the evidence presented here. This is also part of ongoing discussions in SIANI[19], which include discussions of institutional membership and with this membership fees. Several challenges were identified, including the absence of a platform for member visibility, unclear benefits of membership, and limited opportunities for direct networking. Those interviewed expressed a desire for a system that allows identification of key people and facilitates conversations. When asked what would enhance their sense of inclusion or engagement in SIANI, survey respondents highlighted in person engagement, networking and collaboration, more concrete fundings opportunities and closer follow-up.

> *"I really missed a place where I could identify key people… a platform where we could… facilitate these conversations." (SIANI stakeholder interviewed)*

This has been attempted by SIANI before, when the website had a member's page, which allowed for specific content for members only. However, this was removed due to lack of interest and use. However, there may be scope to consider alternative ways to stimulate membership.

The MTR finds that concept of SIANI membership is not fully clear to SIANI stakeholders and is not well communicated. Since it is subject to an internal discussion, this should take into account not only the issue of institutional membership, but also a more structured approach to individual membership, which could strengthen engagement, improve sustainability, and align membership with SIANI's networking platform structure.

4.2 Effectiveness

The effectiveness section considers the following evaluation questions:

- Is SIANI fulfilling its mission effectively, including working with its stipulated enablers?
- To what extent and how has the programme contributed to intended outputs, outcomes and impacts as stipulated in the ToC? Is the ToC a helpful tool in this regard?
- To what extent and how do the SEI hosting arrangement and collaboration with its strategic partners (SLU Global and Focali) support the fulfilment of SIANI's mission and vision? How can these arrangements be improved?
- To what extent does the current monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting procedures deliver robust and useful information that is used to assess progress towards outcomes?
- How is SIANI's expert groups contributing to SIANI's overall outcomes, and in which ways can the partnership with expert groups be improved?

SIANI's mission

SIANI is broadly perceived as effective in supporting and promoting multisector dialogue and action around food systems transformation. It successfully convenes diverse stakeholders, supports expert

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[18] Often referred to as the 90-9-1 rule, where 90% are passive (so called lurkers), 9% users contribute a little, and 1% of users account for almost all the action. https://www.nngroup.com/articles/participation-inequality/#:~:text=The%2090%2D9%2D1%20Rule%20for%20Participation%20Inequality%20in%20Social,other%20priorities%20dominate%20their%20time.

[19] The MTR team participated in a meeting where the membership issues were discussed with a smaller group of Steering Group members.

groups, and maintains professional standards in communication. Enablers such as expert groups, communication channels, and partnerships with SEI, SLU Global, and Focali, and with Swedish and global boundary partners are mostly functioning as intended.

SIANI's mission is to support and promote multisector dialogue and action around food systems transformation, while the vision is a future where "food systems are more sustainable, rights-based and inclusive of smallholder farmers and marginalised groups"[20]. Evidence from interviews and document reviews indicates that SIANI is largely fulfilling this mission effectively. Stakeholders consistently highlight SIANI's ability to convene diverse actors from academia, civil society, government, and the private sector, creating spaces for dialogue that might not otherwise occur. This convening power is reinforced by SIANI's reputation for neutrality and inclusivity, which enables engagement across sectors and geographies.

Regarding SIANI's vision, 56% of respondents believed that SIANI contributes to its vision "to a great extent," while 30% indicated "to some extent" (Figure 7). (The survey did not ask how well SIANI has fulfilled its mission).

Figure 7. Contribution to Overall vision, percentage
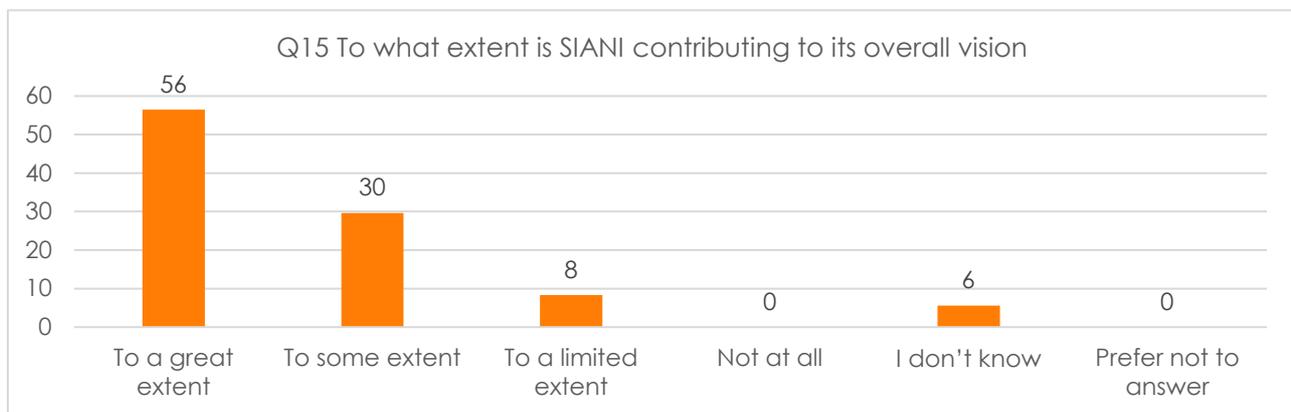
Sample size: N=108

Open comments to this question emphasised SIANI's role in promoting practices rooted in local realities, fostering multi-stakeholder dialogue, and supporting evidence-based policy advocacy. Respondents describe SIANI as contribution as "[…] indirect and limited but still significant," noting that its small but strategic investments in networking and collaboration have long-term influence, even if indirect.

> *"SIANI's focus on knowledge sharing, multi-stakeholder dialogue, and evidence-based policy advocacy directly supports the transformation of food systems toward sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience"*

Documentation, including the annual reports, confirm that stipulated inputs and enablers, including SIANI structure, the global context, and the resources, capacities, tools, and partnerships with Swedish and global boundary partners, are functioning mostly as intended, but with specific strengths and weaknesses across[21]. These are discussed in the following sections, which delve further into the effectiveness of SIANI.

The Theory of Change and the MEL framework

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20 SIANI Annual Report 2024
21 SIANI Annual Report 2023; SIANI Annual Report 2024

The ToC and MEL system has improved since 2021. It now reflects best practice for networks, focused on monitoring outcomes, and provides a strong foundation for adaptive management. However, there are some weaknesses: some are operational (monitoring is not consistent), some strategic (it remains difficult to directly link MEL data to strategic changes) and some inherent to SIANI (ultimately the net effect of SIANI is difficult to assess). However, with some improvements, the ToC and MEL can become better strategic assets for steering SIANI's work, without taking additional resources.

When the phase-3 evaluation was completed in 2021, one of the most consistent criticisms was that SIANI's results architecture was unfinished. The Theory of Change (ToC) existed but was only partly useful: links between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact were unclear; baselines and indicators were missing; targets and responsibilities were undefined; and data collection was ad hoc. The evaluators recommended clarifying the ToC (and supported the development of an initial draft for SIANI to further develop), defining indicators and baselines, embedding data capture into activities, and focusing further on regular reflection and course correction[22].

Since then, SIANI has made significant progress. The current ToC is clearer and network-appropriate: it sets out the vision, identifies influence, and defines four intermediate outcomes. The MEL Plan (updated April 2025) lists indicators for each outcome, specifies means of verification (surveys, activity logs, narrative feedback), and anticipates use of results for quarterly monitoring and annual reporting. Supporting tools include activity logs for 2023–2025, follow-up logs, monthly website statistics, "Most Significant Contribution" surveys, Outcome Harvesting, Impact Stories, and provision for external evaluation. Roles are partly assigned (MEL officer, activity leads) and learning events and annual reviews are documented.

Evidence shows that MEL is embedded in daily practice. The ToC is generally viewed as a useful framework for guiding SIANI's work, providing a clear rationale for the network's activities and helping to align efforts with desired outcomes; activity logs are maintained, even if some activities are not reported on; surveys are used after events, even if response rates are described by staff as low; and website and communication metrics are tracked monthly. Annual reports draw on these sources, and learning sessions are scheduled. The system reflects network logic, focusing on contribution rather than attribution, using multiple methods, and prioritising outcome.

However, some weaknesses are evident in the overall system and its application:

- **The ToC as a planning tool.** Some interviewees find the ToC too complex for day-to-day decision-making, and the output and outcomes areas are too broad to really guide forward planning. This is also reflected in the fact that many of SIANI's activities cover more than one output and outcome area, making it difficult to distinguish between them. There is a call for an approach that can help prioritise activities and track progress more effectively on an annual basis. This also applies to strategic partners SLU Global and Focali (which cover 24.3 percent of SIANI Phase 4 budget), which operate with flexibility under their general agreements with SEI and guided by SIANI annual work plan. The recommendation from the previous evaluation that SIANI interrogate each activity in terms of how it supports identified target groups has only been partly realised when reviewing annual work plans. Whilst all

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[22] Note that as the current ToC was partly developed by members of the current MTR team, the assessments of its quality is not objective from an evaluation perspective, even if the ToC proposed was developed in a participatory manner together with SIANI, and based on evidence around what is appropriate for networks. The assessment therefore draws heavily on interviews with SIANI Secretariat staff and close collaborators.

activities are motivated for their contribution to specific outcome areas, only some include details on how they benefit specific target groups[23].

- **Learning and strategic decision-making.** It is difficult to trace exactly how the MEL system supports learning and strategic decision-making. The monitoring system collects a lot of data, after-action reviews are conducted after key events and staff note that learning does takes place regularly. However, some describe learning as mostly operational rather than strategic (e.g. how to improve event organisation, rather than what type of activities to focus on to maximise outputs and outcomes). This is also evident in the list of activities that SIANI undertake, many of which have lived on from previous phases (see section 4.4 for further discussion). The annual work planning process is also described as rushed, without enough time to consider what to prioritise in the coming year. The deadline for the draft annual work plan is set in the contract with Sida.
- **Assessing the relative effectiveness of SIANI's activities**. The MEL framework, perhaps understandably due to the nature of SIANI, does not include targets against identified indicators, making the assessment of achievement of intended outputs and outcomes is difficult. This also makes the relative effectiveness of different types of activities very difficult to assess. As a result, the MTR's assessment is based primarily on evidence of perceptions by interviewees and survey respondents. This links back to the previous point around learning. Without clear evidence of what works best, it is difficult to make course corrections and work more strategically.
- **Identifying the specific contribution of SIANI to outcomes.** Interviewees highlight the importance of focusing on a smaller number of well-evidenced contribution cases, rather than attempting to document every activity. There is also support for involving partners more closely in MEL processes, ensuring that findings and claims are co-owned and grounded in joint evidence. Strategic partners have access to the MEL-log, where contributions are assessed, but this involvement and the use of the log by the partners can be strengthened further, to ensure that their contributions are more visible, for instance in impact stories on the SIANI website. Interviewees suggest being clearer with regards to the specific contributions of SIANI and to reflect the distributed nature of change processes, rather than implying direct causality from SIANI's activities to outcomes.

The challenge for SIANI is to continue refining its MEL procedures, balancing the need for comprehensive documentation and learning with the practicalities of resource allocation and stakeholder engagement.

Achievement of outputs

SIANI's activities and outputs are well-aligned with its Theory of Change, demonstrating consistent delivery of planned events, publications, and engagement initiatives. While stakeholder satisfaction is generally high, some weaknesses emerge across the four output areas.

Overall, workplans and programme documents illustrate alignment with the Theory of Change, which structures activities around inclusive dialogue, amplification and awareness-raising, community building, and knowledge management.[24] In comparing the workplans and the annual reports, there is strong alignment between planned and delivered activities and outputs.[25] Surveys

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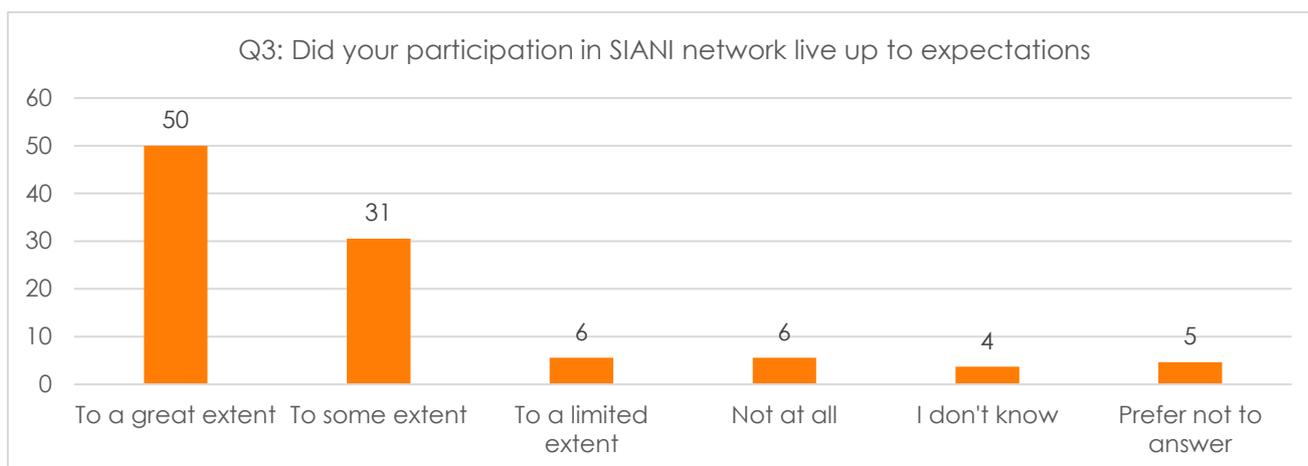[23] SIANI Annual Workplans 2023, 2024, 2025.
[24] SIANI Programme Document Phase 4; Work plan January-December 2023; Workplan January-December 2024; Workplan January-December 2025
[25] SIANI workplans for 2023 and 2024; SIANI annual reports from 2023 and 2024.

conducted by SIANI (annual surveys and event specific surveys), show general appreciation with activities conducted[26].

The survey conducted for this MTR suggests that while half of the respondents are highly satisfied with their SIANI engagement, a proportion experienced only partial fulfilment of expectations (Figure 8). Open-ended responses highlight information and communication gaps, such as *"There were unclear follow-ups after attending those engagements."* In addition, there remains a question the extent to which members are able to influence the work of SIANI. Despite annual member surveys and annual meetings, which provide members and opportunity to feed into the coming annual work plan, similar activities are undertaken year on year[27]. SIANI staff recognise the difficulty in getting meaningful feedback on past activities to guide future work.

Figure 8. Participation satisfaction, percentage

Q3: Did your participation in SIANI network live up to expectations

To a great extent	50
To some extent	31
To a limited extent	6
Not at all	6
I don't know	4
Prefer not to answer	5

Sample size: N=108

A few key points can be made for each output area:

Output 1: Inclusive multisector dialogue (SIANI builds social capital through bridging; stimulating discourse, collective learning and action among heterogeneous actors)

In 2023, SIANI participated in Järvaveckan with over 1,100 visitors and co-organised the Agri4D conference with 455 participants from 58 countries[28]. The Almedalen seminar and World Food Day events raised awareness of hunger and food systems. In 2024, over 30 events were organised or co-organised, including Agroecology Day and World Food Day. The annual survey indicated increased participation from civil society, UN agencies, and the private sector, aligning with the planned objective to diversify stakeholder engagement[29].

In 2025, further outputs under this area include the Agri4D conference, held on 23-26 September; survey results show positive results with regards to participant satisfaction with the event[30].

The evaluation team attended two key events during the period of the MTR. Reflections are presented in boxes 1 and 2 below. This shows that even if events are rated highly, at times events

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[26] Annual surveys 2023 and 2024; All responses_13th Oct_final_for_Johanna (shared by SIANI).
[27] SIANI Programme Document Phase 4; Work plan January-December 2023; Workplan January-December 2024; Workplan January-December 2025; SIANI annual reports from 2023 and 2024; Final report SIANI 3, 30 May 2023.
[28] Agri4D 2023 Report.
[29] SIANI Annual Report 2024.
[30] All responses_13th Oct_final_for_Johanna (shared by SIANI).

may be less engaging, often related to salience of a particular topic, a fact also confirmed in interviews.

Box 1: Reflections from the Agri4D conference held in 2025

The conference was a well-attended event, with around 200 in person and 200 online (800 registered online, but many did not log on). Although the majority are from the academic community, it was a multi-stakeholder event, with representatives from the NGO community and other practitioners and policy makers. For instance, the conference was opened by the State Secretary for the Minister for Rural Affairs of Sweden, the director General of Sida also made introductory remarks and the Head of the Unit for economic Development at Sida gave closing remarks and a team from Sida were present.

The conference was designed as a hybrid event, which significantly increased accessibility for participants from the Global South and those unable to travel. There were plenty of opportunities for participants to network, even if the time for discussion in each parallel session was more limited.

The programme features some of SIANI key areas, including a focus on agroecology across different sessions, and an emphasis on supporting young researchers, offering them opportunities to present their work and network with senior professionals.

Based on survey feedback shared with the evaluation team, the conference was highly appreciated for its organisation, inclusivity, and quality content, with participants valuing the hybrid format and networking opportunities. Key suggestions for the future include increasing regional focus on specific regions, broadening topics to cover livestock and business perspectives, and improving session allocation and discussion time. Participants emphasised the need for greater inclusivity through scholarships for low-income countries, certificates of participation, and better networking tools. Online engagement could be enhanced by sharing more sessions, extending content access, and redesigning poster sessions. Overall, participants expressed strong interest in continued collaboration and future events.

Box 2. Reflections on SIANI meeting in Rome

In October 2025, SIANI organised a one-day meeting in Rome, 'Resilient food systems in turbulent times' the weekend between the World Food Forum and the Commission on World Food Security (CFS) when many SIANI members and 'followers' were expected to be in Rome. In spite of an interesting programme only about 20 persons attended, SIANI staff and speakers included. The meeting had rather limited reach outside the core SIANI group and its effectiveness is questionable. However, SIANI staff noted that these types of events had had more interest in previous years, for instance when school meals were discussed.

Output 2: Amplification and awareness raising (SIANI extends the reach, uptake, and influence of constituent parts – members, ideas, initiatives)

In 2023, SIANI launched four expert groups and produced four publications and over 100 online items. The Nairobi regional meeting had 151 participants[31].

In 2024, another six expert groups were launched. Expert groups focused on ONE health, WASH, land rights, agrobiologicals, and pollination developed concrete outputs such as policy briefs, workshops, and Living Labs. A Bangkok regional meeting was also held.[32] Annual reports show that the number of collaborators increased between 2023 and 2024 and the amplification of youth voices and

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[32] SIANI regional network meeting 2024 – Bangkok. Food, markets, and urbanisation – connecting urban and rural food systems. 13 November 2024.

marginalised groups was evident in both years[33]. According to reporting and interviews, the regional in-person meetings and youth-focused events were particularly effective in supporting the output's goal of fostering inclusive dialogue. However, whilst a lot of outputs are produced, there is limited evidence about uptake of these (shared, liked and taken up by a wider community according to the indicator for this output). Whilst the SIANI website is active, with many page views (see below), there is more limited downloads of publications (the top publication had 37 downloads in 2024[34]). More than 200 publications, going back to 2012, feature on the 'Publications' section of the SIANI website. The browsing design is ineffective for such a large number of items leading to few downloads of publications[35]. This is also verified by the survey, see Figure 9 below. Introducing filtering options by, e.g. by kind of publication, topic, geography, year would greatly help professionalise dissemination and exploitation of SIANI outputs (many of which are the result of expert groups) as opposed to just communicating them as 'news' (even if news items remain on the SIANI website indefinitely). (See for example https://www.wri.org/resources/type/research-65)

Output 3: Community building (SIANI builds social capital through bonding, building relationships of trust; consensus and coherence; collective learning and action among homogeneous actors)

In 2023, SIANI's network grew from 4,800 in 2022 to 5,233 members across 55 countries. The annual meetings were held as planned, with strong participation and feedback. In 2024, the number of members remained stable at 5,234, following the removal of the membership sign-up option from the website in September 2023. This change was part of a broader website revamp that shifted the concept of membership toward newsletter subscriptions and event participation. As a result, the distinction between members and subscribers has become less clear, and SIANI is now reflecting on how to redefine and communicate the purpose and benefits of membership (see section 4.1). SIANI continued to support youth engagement, including funding participation in World Food Forum and organising the Young Researchers' Workshop, with 18 early-career researchers. Partnerships were maintained and expanded, with joint events and publications. The emphasis on youth engagement and regional collaboration was maintained across both years, contributing to network cohesion and expansion[36]. The MTR observed that SIANI reported a range of organisational partnerships under 'Community Building' in 2024, while the same engagements were reported under 'Amplification and Awareness' in 2023, indicating a certain ambiguity in SIANI's activity and output categories, even if this was described as a mistake by SIANI, rather than ambiguity between different categories.

Output 4: Knowledge management and communication (SIANI identifies, filters and shares important people, events, facts and stories, stimulates learning, mitigates information overload and identifies knowledge gaps)

In 2023, SIANI updated its MEL framework, trained staff in impact assessment, and conducted internal reviews. The website was revamped, and communication outputs were consistently rated as relevant by survey respondents. In 2024, SIANI continued monthly analytics reviews, launched a newsletter strategy, and planned a Rights-Based Dialogue Toolkit with SEI's Rights & Equity Team. The work plans were implemented as intended, apart from the work on HRBA (see below), with improvements in communication infrastructure and strategy.

SIANI's website has demonstrated steady growth in traffic and engagement, with improved metrics across key indicators from 2023 to 2024. The platform's strategic alignment with SIANI's communication goals and its responsiveness to user behaviour (e.g., content peaks during events)

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[33] SIANI annual reports 2023 and 2024.
[34] There are no statistics on downloads before 2024.
[35] SIANI Annual Report 2024.
[36] SIANI annual reports 2023 and 2024.

indicate that it is a valuable tool for communicating news items, stories, events and opportunities within SIANI's field of interest[37]. However, it functions less well as a repository of SIANI's accumulated knowledge products (noted above). There is also limited information about SIANI 4 process and progress; the website provides access to the programme document but does not detail how the programme of work is implemented, the Expert Groups being an exception. Sida's financing of SIANI 4 is acknowledged through displaying Sida's logo on the SIANI website. SIANI strategic partners SLU Global and Focali are mentioned under Our Team/presentation of the SIANI Secretariat but are otherwise not specifically presented.

SIANI's overall social media engagement has increased, particularly through LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube, while other platforms like X have seen declining engagement. The organisation has demonstrated adaptability by diversifying its digital presence and aligning content strategies with evolving user preferences. These efforts have contributed to broader visibility, increased website traffic, and deeper engagement with members and stakeholders.

Figure 9 presents survey respondents' assessments of SIANI's communicated content across four channels: website, social media, newsletter, and publications. Respondents rated each channel on attributes such as high quality, usefulness, relevant geographic focus, relevant topics, and ease of access. Even if there is limited difference in the perception of these communication channels, SIANI's website and newsletter do seem to be its strongest communication channels, valued for their quality, usefulness, and topical relevance. Social media is useful for outreach but may need improvement in content relevance and accessibility. As noted above, publications are less visible or accessible to the audience, suggesting a need for better dissemination or user-friendly access. The relatively high "I don't know" responses for some channels highlight opportunities to increase awareness and engagement, particularly with publications and social media.

Figure 9. Assessment regarding SIANI communicated content based on categories, percentage
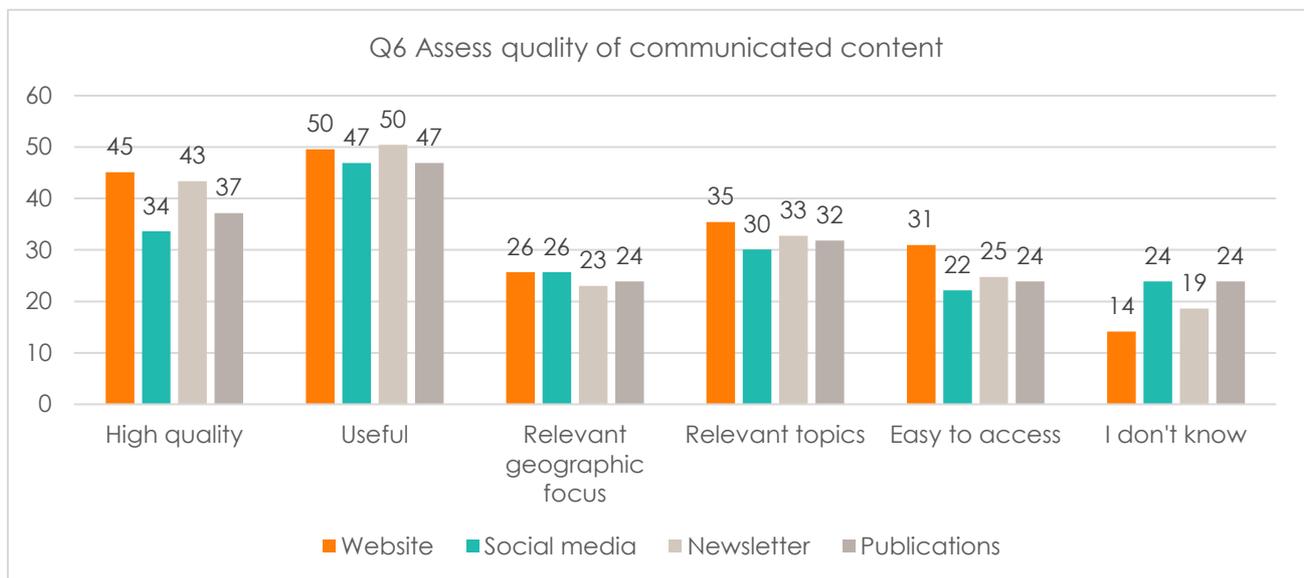
Sample size: N=113

This output also includes an internal arrangement with SEIs Rights & Equity team on strengthening rights-based approaches in SIANI. A concept note (dated October 2023) was prepared for a 2-year process (Jan 2024 – Dec 2025) budgeted at 592 400 SEK. Key deliverables are support of SIANI's Expert group process, a framework for rights-based dialogue, and a rights-based dialogue toolkit for

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[37] SIANI annual reports 2023 and 2024 (Annex F).

external audiences, and external webinar and a joint journal paper. The work started in 2024 with HRBA analysis of SIANI's documents, interview with the staff and SC members, an overview of HRBA in food systems projects, development of a framework for SIANI, and a workshop with the Steering Committee and one with expert groups. In 2025 the HRBA work has been limited, as one key person had to prioritise other commitments. Overall, the work on documenting the integration of the HRBA in SIANI is behind schedule. Nevertheless, as detailed elsewhere in this report, SIANI aims to enhance the representation of marginalised voices in their activities, even if there are limits to the extent to which this happens.

Achievement of outcomes

The evaluation finds that SIANI's outcomes range from concrete policy changes and new research directions to increased skills and knowledge, stronger collaborations, and more vibrant, connected communities. The MTR finds that SIANI has made validated contributions to the Swedish resource base and to youth engagement. These outcomes are either directly or indirectly linked to the SIANI's overall envisaged impact of food systems being more sustainable, rights-based and inclusive of smallholder farmers and marginalised groups, even if actual impacts cannot be evidenced. However, the exact net effect of these outcomes and SIANI's specific contribution is difficult to disentangle.
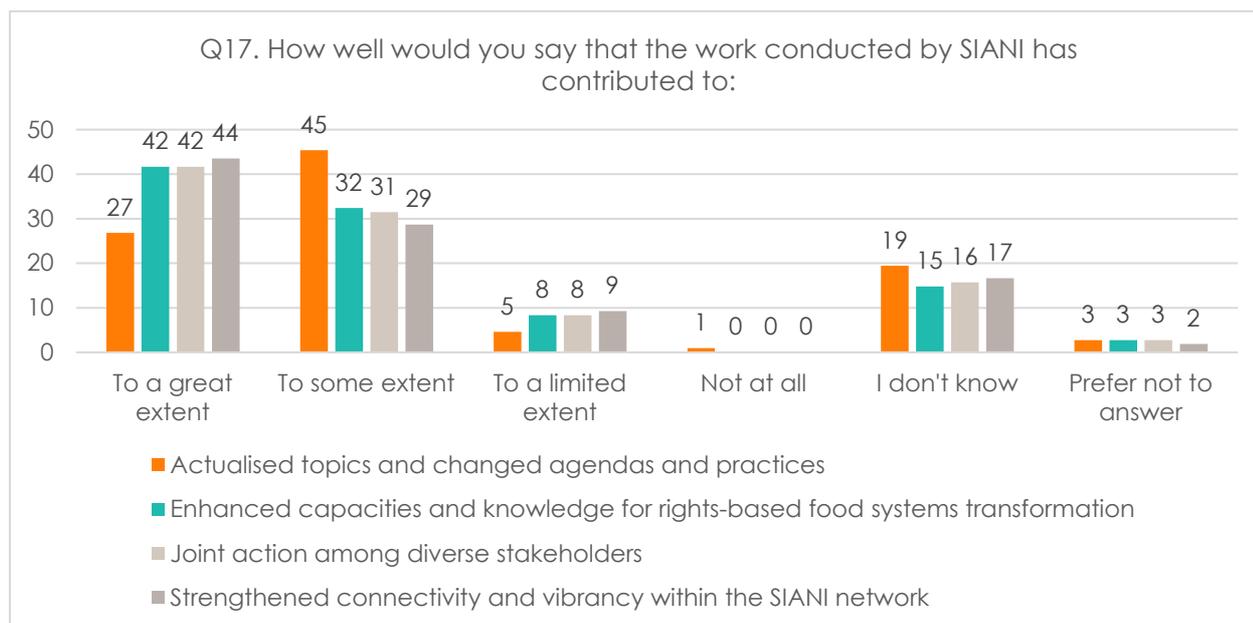
The assessment of SIANI achievement outcomes is drawn from review of SIANI reporting, the survey and interviews. Based on SIANI reporting, the MTR conducted an Outcome Harvesting workshop, which considered a number of Impact Stories (from the SIANI website) and from SIANI's own Outcome Harvest[38]. Many are connected to expert groups, including ones from previous phases. Two areas were selected for further validation: SIANI's contributions to the Swedish Resource Base and SIANI's work on Youth Engagement. Annex 3 provides a full account of these outcomes that are summarised below[39].

The survey responses (Q17) indicate that SIANI's work has contributed positively across all four outcome areas, with the majority of respondents rating contributions as "to a great extent" or "to some extent", but with the responses for actualised topics and changed agendas and practices more varied, indicating a greater uncertainty about SIANI contribution to changed agendas and practice (Figure 10).

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[38] SIANI Annual Report 2024.
[39] Note that the MTR cannot capture all of SIANI's detailed outcomes, e,g. the Amplifying Stories of Agroecology Practices and Principles (ASAPP) project was mentioned as a key achievement, not captured by this MTR.

Figure 10. Contribution to SIANI outcome areas, percentage

Q17. How well would you say that the work conducted by SIANI has contributed to:

Legend:
- Actualised topics and changed agendas and practices
- Enhanced capacities and knowledge for rights-based food systems transformation
- Joint action among diverse stakeholders
- Strengthened connectivity and vibrancy within the SIANI network

Values:
- To a great extent: 27, 42, 42, 44
- To some extent: 45, 32, 31, 29
- To a limited extent: 5, 8, 8, 9
- Not at all: 1, 0, 0, 0
- I don't know: 19, 15, 16, 17
- Prefer not to answer: 3, 3, 3, 2

Sample size: N=108

Common across the outcome areas is that:

- SIANI acts as a catalyst, connector, and knowledge broker, enabling new collaborations, visibility, and capacity building.
- SIANI continues to strengthen this by mainstreaming a human-rights based approach (HRBA), and focusing on equity and inclusion, with increasing emphasis on youth and underrepresented groups. However, this work has been hindered by visa restrictions, making it difficult to enhance the representation of marginalised groups at events in Europe. The documentation of the work on HRBA is behind schedule. It is unclear if this has also acted as a bottle neck for further integration of marginalised voices.
- Scalability varies across outcomes; some are highly replicable; others are context specific.
- Critical points for improvement include formalising collaboration frameworks, investing in structured capacity-building..

Outcome 1: Actualised topics and changed agendas and practices

In this outcome, SIANI should contribute to "*Duty bearers and intermediate actors actualise the importance of smallholders, SMEs, youth, and Indigenous communities in food systems, and change their agendas and practices affecting these groups.*" A number of outcomes related to this area were discussed in the Outcome Harvesting workshop:

- **Policy influence:** SIANI's expert groups and convenings have contributed to changes in policy, such as the adoption of new guidelines for sustainable agriculture by ASEAN and the inclusion of expert input in Swedish policy processes (e.g., CBD negotiations; agroecology and nutrition), but also more international and global agendas (e.g. school meals).
- **Research prioritisation:** SIANI has helped shift research agendas, for example, by catalysing interdisciplinary food systems research in Addis Ababa and promoting agrobiodiversity in Nepal.

Outcome 2: Enhanced capacities and knowledge for rights-based food systems

In this outcome, SIANI should contribute to "*Duty bearers obtain, strengthen, and maintain their capacity to protect the rights of smallholders, SMEs, youth, and Indigenous communities in food systems, and are more aware about these groups' rights, agency and role in sustainable food*

systems." A number of outcomes related to this area were discussed in the Outcome Harvesting workshop:

- **Capacity building:** Through workshops, learning hubs, and expert groups, SIANI has increased the skills and knowledge of researchers, students, and practitioners (e.g., Alnarp farm, early-career researcher workshops).
- **Knowledge sharing:** SIANI has facilitated the creation and dissemination of new knowledge, such as recipe books, videos, and policy studies in Nepal.

Outcome 3: Joint action among stakeholders

In this outcome, *SIANI collaborates with, supports and is supported by different stakeholder actors within and beyond SIANI's network working towards the same vision.* A number of outcomes related to this area were discussed in the Outcome Harvesting workshop:

- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** SIANI has enabled joint actions among diverse groups, farmers, researchers, policymakers, youth, and private sector, leading to new partnerships, research projects, and collective initiatives (e.g., East African bioeconomy, youth engagement in Ethiopia).
- **Community engagement:** SIANI has supported local and regional dialogues, bringing together stakeholders to address shared challenges and opportunities.

Two areas were considered in the depth. These are presented in the boxes below.

Box 3. Contribution to the strengthening of the Swedish Resource Base

SIANI contributes significantly to strengthening the Swedish resource base by acting as a neutral, multi-sector platform that connects academia, public sector, CSOs, private sector, and youth to global processes. This connectivity builds domestic capacity and collaboration pathways, enabling Swedish actors to engage meaningfully in international dialogues on sustainable food systems and development cooperation and contributes to raising students and young professional's interest in global agrifood systems issues. Documentation from the Annual Reports highlights SIANI's role in convening Swedish stakeholders for thematic events and expert group activities, which have resulted in joint publications and policy briefs that inform both Swedish and global agendas [40].

The SIANI Communication Strategy underscores the importance of visibility and continuity, noting that SIANI's newsletters, webinars, and social media outreach have facilitated knowledge sharing and strengthened Sweden's position in global sustainability dialogues. These communication efforts are credited with creating trusted relationships and repeated engagement opportunities, which stakeholders identify as critical for capacity development [41].

Interview findings reinforce that SIANI provides access and continuity for researchers and practitioners, enabling participation in policy fora and collaborative projects. Stakeholders emphasise the network's role in translating global processes for Swedish audiences and supporting early-career professionals, including SLU Global's young researcher workshop that developed capacities in key areas such as communication and systems thinking. Furthermore, several other SIANI activities, such as the Agri4D conference, contributes to developing and strengthening the Swedish Resource Base through connecting Swedish and international researchers within the field. SIANI does not however, make any clear mention of these activities as actively strengthening the Swedish Resource Base in their reporting. The cumulative impact of these engagements is seen as a key factor in strengthening the resource base. While this is positive, one should recognise scale limitations as just 18 persons attended the biennial workshop.

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[40] Annual Report 2023; Annual Report 2024.
[41] SIANI Communication Strategy, 2023.

The Expert Group Guidelines further illustrate how expert groups serve as vehicles for Swedish expertise to influence global policy discussions. Groups such as One Health and Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries have produced thematic outputs that enhance Sweden's knowledge contribution internationally[42].

Critical points include the need for more systematic engagement with private sector actors and municipalities, which remain underrepresented. While SIANI has successfully created pathways for engagement, formalising collaboration frameworks and investing in structured capacity-building programmes would deepen impact and sustainability.

Box 4. Contribution to youth engagement

Youth engagement is recognised as a strategic priority in the current phase. Documentation from Annual Reports and the programme document for SIANI phase 4 notes targeted programming and expert group activities designed to involve younger practitioners and students, including webinars and thematic events that provide entry points into research and policy dialogues. This focus is considered essential for renewing the talent pipeline and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the network[43]. Examples of such youth focused initiatives are SIANI's engagement in Ethiopia, with Beta Blockers, a start-up run by a young entrepreneur working with nutrition, as well engagement through the World Food Forum (WFF), where SIANI organises side events and supports the Young Scientists Group[44]. The World Food Forum flagship event is a global platform that drives action to transform agrifood systems through the power of youth, science and innovation, and investment, and has been chosen by SIANI as a strategic arena inclusive multisector dialogue. Other events co-organised with youth in 2024 included Agroecology Day in Alnarp more than 100 participants, World Food Day with Reformaten in Husby Gård.

SIANI's Youth Strategy (2021–2024) provides a framework to mainstream youth engagement in sustainable agriculture and food security. It defines a set of objectives to promote youth voices, enable intergenerational dialogues, and connect youth in Sweden and low-income countries through four pillars: engagement, dialogues, and online communication[45]. The strategy underwent an internal assessment in 2024, which concluded that SIANI is successful in highlighting and promoting the role of youth in food systems, creating an enabling environment for youth, and generate youth-relevant content – and have been doing so by lifting this theme in events and communication. However, SIANI has been less successful enabling dialogue between youth in Sweden and low-income countries, partly related to visa restrictions, hindering young people from travelling to Europe[46].

We note that the strategy is out of date. A decision was taken in the Steering Committee not to renew it as the new ToC included youth as a key target group. The SIANI Communication Strategy highlights efforts to reach youth through social media campaigns and accessible content formats, aiming to make global food system issues relatable and actionable for younger audiences.

There is evidence that the strategy and related efforts have increased the visibility of youth as change agents and the participation of youth, through young people as speakers and as participants in events. As can be seen in the section below, there are signs that social media engagement and newsletter subscriptions are ways of engaging with younger people. However, stakeholders note that engagement remains largely ad hoc and lacks a structured approach to sustained involvement[47].

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[42] Expert Group Guidelines, 2024.
[43] Annual Report 2023; Annual Report 2024; SIANI Programme Document Phase 4.
[44] SIANI's long-term engagement with youth: The case of Ethiopia: https://www.siani.se/impact-story/sianis-long-term-engagement-with-youth-the-case-of/; Ebba Engström: "Digital technologies can provide a means for youth to engage in agrifood systems transformation": https://www.siani.se/news-story/ebba-engstrom-digital-technologies-can-provide-a-means-for-youth-to-engage-in-agrifood-systems-transformation/.
[45] SIANI's Youth Strategy 2021-2024.
[46] Annual Report 2024
[47] SIANI Communication Strategy, 2023.

Interview findings showcase the challenge in attributing a causal contribution for SIANI's efforts on youth engagement, while also highlighting the different perceived contribution of SIANI in practice. One interviewee (within the younger age group) made clear that SIANI, through providing a platform, a network and the opportunity to travel to conferences gave their project much needed visibility and legitimacy. This in turn led to new financing opportunities and further engagement both locally and globally through the SIANI network. Another young network member highlighted their engagement with SIANI as having been positive and insightful but had a harder time making a casual or even tangential relation between their success and SIANI's contribution.

Critical points mentioned by interviews include the need for innovative approaches that empower young people to contribute meaningfully and benefit from the network's activities. Without structured pathways and leadership opportunities, youth engagement risks remaining episodic rather than transformative.

This suggests that even if the ToC includes youth as a target group, it may be useful to renew the Youth Strategy, with details for how to continue to amplify youth voices and to report against this strategy, across SIANI's outcome areas.

Outcome 4: Strengthen connectivity within the SIANI network

The SIANI network has made progress in diversifying its membership and increasing sectoral balance, with more engagement from NGOs and the private sector, though research and academia still dominate. Efforts to include youth and Indigenous voices are ongoing, but their representation remains limited, partly due to logistical barriers. Overall, while the network is expanding and becoming more diverse, challenges remain in achieving meaningful participation and capturing comprehensive data on member involvement.

In this outcome, the goal is for the SIANI network to be characterised as "*SIANI members are diverse, from different parts of the world and with different backgrounds. SIANI members interact and the members base expands*".

As noted above, efforts are being made to make to grow the network and make it more diverse, and there are signs that this is happening. Overall, compared to the previous phase[48], SIANI has made progress in diversifying its stakeholder base to ensure more inclusive multistakeholder dialogue, particularly in balancing the participation across sectors and engaging youth[49]. However, challenges remain in consistently capturing data across all events and in increasing the participation of Indigenous and youth voices, both as speakers and as participants. Research and academia still represent the largest stakeholder group and the young still form a relatively small part of participants and speakers, even if the data on youth participants is likely under reported. Interviewees verify the difficulty in diversifying stakeholder engagement. For instance, the private sector might not be interested in certain types of events and getting visas for members of local communities, youths or indigenous groups has become more difficult.

When it comes to the broader membership, it is difficult to assess their make-up due to lack of data, but there are indications that this is becoming **more diverse**:

- Newsletter subscribers are 33% aged 34 and below and the professional background shows research/academic/Foundations/Programmes at 37%, where as 30% CSO/not for profit/ NGO, 13% private sector, 9 % student, and 5% public sector. However, this data relates to new newsletter subscriptions (since end of 2023).
- Followers on social media: A significant skew towards the 18-34 age group with 6722 active users (62%) in 2024, compared to 4109 active users (38%) within the 35+ age group. Women

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[48] Johanna Lindström, Torbjörn Öckerman, Kajsa Österberg Åström. 2021. Evaluation of the SIANI programme (phase 3).
[49] SIANI annual reports 2023 and 2024 (Annex C).

are a larger share of the active users (6928), compared to men (4610), with the largest group being designated as "unknown" (18 351). Sweden constitutes the largest group of active users, with 3599 active users. This is followed by Kenya (3111), United States (1828) and Nigeria (1740)[50]. The total amount of active users has seemingly increased during 2024 compared to 2023, from 12 002 in 2023, to 29 126 in 2024[51].

- The survey conducted for this evaluation shows that 45% of the 113 respondents were from Research / Academia / Foundation / Programme (which is similar to the last evaluation) and the age group 18-34 represent 16% of respondents.

Although there has been a steady growth in the number of members, the very inclusive definition of membership means that it is difficult to assess what these numbers mean in terms of **meaningful member engagement**. Some data suggest that the there is still a lot of passive membership of SIANI (which as stated above is relatively normal for online communities and social networks):

- Survey respondents were asked about the frequency of their engagement with SIANI. Figure 11 shows that among both the older and younger age groups, the most common is monthly engagement. After that there are some differences between age groups, with younger respondents more likely to engage with SIANI more frequently than the 35+ group, but these are difficult to interpret, particularly as the younger age group are many fewer (16%).

Figure 11. How frequently respondents interact within SIANI network based on age, percentage
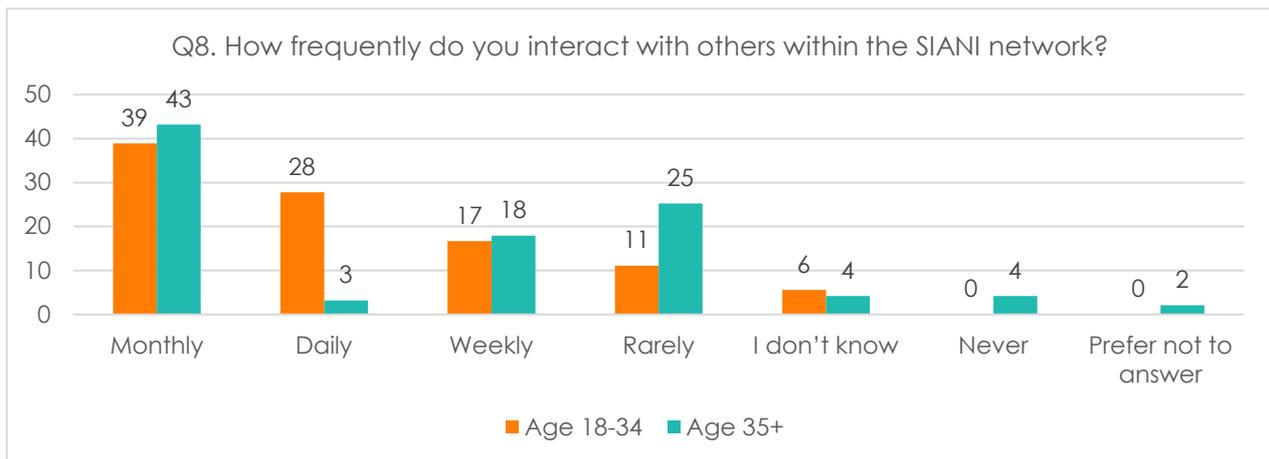
Sample size: N=113

- The survey also considered types of engagement. Responses from "Q2 How have you participated in SIANI" reveals that the most common engagement is subscription to the newsletter (51%), accessing content on the SIANI website (49%), participating in online events (42%) or accessing content on social media (35%), whereas participating in in-person events 28% or attending the annual meeting 22%, suggesting that the majority of respondents were more passive members.
- Data on pageviews and the most-viewed contents on the website from the newsletter shows that engagement is focused opportunities, rather than on core content. Among the top 20 content in the SIANI website during 2024, a clear majority fall within the category of "Job and opportunity", with 12 out of 20 falling within that category. This compared to News stories, with 4 listing on the top 20, and Events, with 4 listings. This can be seen mirrored in the most popular newsletter content, where job opportunities, expert groups and other open calls

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[50] SIANI annual report 2024 (Annex F)
[51] SIANI annual report 2024 (Annex F); SIANI annual report 2023 (Annex E)

consistently outperform other types of content. This calls into question the level of meaningful engagement, as a much smaller segment of the active users seem to engage with SIANI's core contents on food systems, food system transformation, smallholder farmers, indigenous communities and youth.

- The survey also asked respondents to list up to three individuals or organisations within the SIANI network with whom they had collaborated in the past two years, if any. The results are presented in a word cloud in Figure 12, which underlines collaboration with Focali and SLU, other organisations such as Vi skogen, We Effect, Expert group, Biovison, KSLA, Sida, FUF, Alnarp's Agroecolgy Farm and Voices. Individuals were also highlighted, such as Madeleine Fogde, Alice Tunfjord. This data suggested that the centre of the network is Sweden, and there is little evidence of horizontal network connections (between members not at the secretariat or in Sweden). However, the MTR could not do a full network analysis, so this data could be interpreted with caution.

Figure 12. Individuals or organisations respondents have collaborated with in the last two years

Sample size: N=112

Expert groups

Expert groups are a key part of SIANI's delivery model, generating thematic knowledge, fostering collaboration, and influencing policy through activities like consultations, workshops, and policy briefs. They align with SIANI's Theory of Change by addressing areas such as topic development, capacity building, and joint action. While communication with SIANI is seen as an enabler, some groups find meeting frequency and administrative demands disproportionate to funding, suggesting a need for tailored approaches. Challenges include performance variability, reliance on voluntary participation, and weak links between outputs and policy impact.

Expert groups are "multisector teams running projects to help make food systems more sustainable, rights-based and inclusive. Focused on low- and middle-income contexts, the expert groups contribute to a holistic understanding of emerging issues and foster action and collaboration, regionally and between SIANI members in different parts of the world"[52].

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[52] SIANI website: Expert Groups https://www.siani.se/expert-groups/.

SIANI Phase 4 Expert group budget is SEK 6 250 000: or 10.4% of total project budget, with each group receiving 500 000 SEK. Ten SIANI expert groups are currently active, of which four were approved by the Steering Committee in Sept 2023 and six in Sept 2024. Successful expert groups are invited to develop a MEL-plan, work plan, communication plan and, if needed, a revised budget, with the support of the SIANI secretariat. Disbursements for expert groups started in 2024; the 2023 budget was carried forward[53].

Table 6. SIANI expert group selection

Year	No. of applications	Meeting minimum requirements	Shortlisted (scoring by review committee)	Selected by Steering Committee
2023	137	39	14	4
2024	112	34	13	6

The ten expert groups are distributed geographically as follows: East Africa (3, including a national project in Madagascar); West Africa (1, a national project in Burkina Faso); Latin America (2); Central Asia (1); South and Southeast Asia (2); and Global (1). Leadership of the expert groups is dominated by Sweden: six of the ten groups have a contact person in a Swedish organisation, while two have their contact person in Asia and two in Africa[54]. Thematically, Expert groups have a wide variety of topics; all ten topics are unique, and all are relevant to sustainable agrifood systems. While the geographical distribution is broad, SIANI has had to align to shifting Swedish development priorities, meaning that some countries where Swedish funding had been phased out could not be covered.

A selection of four projects, from the project periods of 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, were analysed as part of the evaluation to grasp the contents and extent of the partnerships between SIANI and the Expert groups. These were (1) Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group, (2) Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries Expert Group, (3) One Health Expert Group and (4) Wild Foods, Biodiversity, Livelihood Expert Group. They are presented in Annex 3.

Expert groups remain a cornerstone of SIANI's delivery model and contribute significantly to its overall outcomes by generating thematic knowledge, organising events, and fostering dialogue among diverse stakeholders. Many of the outputs on the website originate in expert groups. Interviews describe how small grants and secretariat support have enabled the production of knowledge products, advocacy materials, and new partnerships. Expert groups are credited with fostering collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and with generating tangible impacts in their respective fields.

Annual reports and proposals show alignment with SIANI's Theory of Change, addressing impact areas such as actualised topics, strengthened capacities, and joint action. For example, the One Health group's work on WaSH and zoonoses in Burkina Faso produced policy briefs and technical reports, while the fisheries group mobilised communities of practice across Latin America. The Tropical Fruits Liaison group focused on market access and sustainability for small-scale farmers[55].

Survey data show that only a small minority of the respondents of the survey were leading (7%) or participating (8,8%) in an Expert Group over the past two and a half years. Open comments

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[53] SIANI Financial Report 2023; SIANI Financial Report 2024.

[54] SIANI 2025. Expert groups. https://www.siani.se/expert-groups/

[55] SIANI Annual Report 2023; SIANI Annual Report 2024; Proposal: One Health Expert Group; Proposal: Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries Expert Group; Proposal: Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group

highlight a general satisfaction within the Expert groups, while providing a more nuanced and in-parts a more critical view of the collaboration between SIANI and the Expert Groups and the Expert group selection process. With respondents raising concerns about fairness in selection and limited funding and calling for greater regional representation and inclusion of expert groups in SIANI's position papers and advocacy efforts.

> *"Exceeded my expectations because SIANI expert group was a small investment but had large impact."*

> *"I think SIANI Expert Group selection process is rigged in favour certain countries and regions".*

> *(translated from French) "Partially met my expectations. However, I would have liked SIANI to consult me to help strengthen projects or skills as a consultant and expert in agricultural economics […]"*

> *"would like to see us as Expert Group engaged /and included in any position paper or statement that SIANI puts out to comment on food systems and SDG agenda"*

Expert groups are widely recognised as a key mechanism for achieving SIANI's outcomes, also evidenced by the outcomes described above and in Annex 3; many of which originate from expert groups. The interviewees describe how small grants and secretariat support have enabled the production of knowledge products, advocacy materials, and new partnerships. Expert groups are credited with fostering collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and with generating tangible impacts in their respective fields.

The extent of the communication between expert groups and SIANI is highlighted by some groups as an essential part of their collaboration, and as a boon to their work and capacities, while others bring up the number of meetings and administrative work as a limiting factor in their day-to-day work, not least when put in relation to the extent of the funding received[56]. The differences in how communication is perceived by different partners suggest a need for a more tailored approach, where the extent of the communication is decided in dialogue with the expert group to a larger extent than it is today.

Challenges identified include limited funding, and the need to balance Swedish linkages with locally led design. Some interviewees suggest that SIANI could improve the effectiveness of expert groups by aligning calls more closely with strategic priorities. On the other hand, others note that the openness of the expert group calls is a key strength, enabling organic and bottom-up development of proposals, and allowing for modest risk-taking. This reveals a key dilemma with regards to expert groups, at the moment they are very fragmented in terms of topics and geographical spread. However, based on previous experience, it is also very difficult to know which expert groups will contribute to important results. For instance, the work with ASEAN was very successful[57], at a time when SIANI did not have a lot of collaborations with partners in Asia.

Interviewees suggest that SIANI should provide additional support for communications and policy engagement and enhancing monitoring and evaluation of expert group activities, however such investment should be based on individual need, rather than provided as routine. Expert groups are a valuable component of SIANI's work, provide anchoring 'on-the-ground' and produce a significant

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[56] Interview – Expert Groups
[57] Expert group 'Higher Education for Sustainable Agriculture (HESA) in Southeast Asia', supported in 2018

share of SIANI's knowledge products; and continued investment in their development and support will be important for achieving the network's objectives in the long-term.

SEI hosting arrangements

The SEI hosting arrangement gives SIANI strong institutional support, administrative stability and technical expertise. The hosting arrangement have improved since the last evaluation, and SIANI is now better integrated into SEI's strategy and operations.

The SEI hosting arrangement provides a strong institutional foundation for SIANI, ensuring administrative stability, financial management, and access to technical expertise. Whilst previous evaluations has surfaced some frictions in these arrangement, close stakeholders now note that the situation has much improved, partly related to the fact that secretariat staff are more integrated into SEI. In earlier phases, SIANI operated largely in isolation within SEI, which led to inefficiencies and unclear lines of responsibility. A key development has been the closer integration of the programme within SEI's organisational structure, with leadership now combining responsibility for the programme and a thematic group focused on agriculture, land, and bioeconomy. This arrangement has strengthened alignment, ensuring clearer accountability and better access to resources. It has also helped resolve previous tensions between programme management and governance structures.

SEI researchers also regularly contribute to SIANI and can draw on SIANI to expand their own networks. SEI's reputation and global networks enhance SIANI's credibility and visibility, particularly in international dialogues on sustainable food systems and climate-related issues. Stakeholders interviewed consistently highlight SEI's role in enabling SIANI to maintain operational efficiency and strategic alignment with global sustainability agendas. There does however seem to be room for expanding on joint initiatives that link research to policy and practice and leveraging SEI's regional offices, particularly in Nairobi and Bangkok, for closer engagement with boundary partners outside of Sweden.

Collaboration with strategic partners

Strategic partnerships with SLU Global and Focali significantly enhance SIANI's thematic depth and outreach, leveraging academic and sector-specific expertise to strengthen food systems dialogue. However, governance and reporting frameworks lack clarity and integration, making it difficult to track contributions and results, and creating reliance on informal, person-dependent collaboration rather than strategic planning.

Collaboration with SLU Global and Focali adds complementary strengths. SLU Global contributes academic expertise and links to Swedish and international research communities, while Focali brings specialised knowledge on forestry, climate, and land-use issues. These partnerships have supported thematic depth in SIANI's activities, including expert group outputs and policy dialogues[58]. Joint events and shared communication channels have amplified outreach and fostered cross-sector engagement, which aligns with SIANI's mission to "support and promote multisector dialogue and action around food systems transformation". As seen in Figure 12, SLU and Focali are both prominent among mentions by survey respondents, when asked what "Individuals or organisations respondents have collaborated with in the last two years". Showcasing the value and visibility of the collaboration within the SIANI network. As illustrated in the outcomes above and in Annex 3, SLU and Focali activities demonstrate the value of partnerships in strengthening SIANI's thematic reach and connecting Swedish expertise to global processes.

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[58] SIANI Programme Document Phase 4; Collaborative agreement between Focali and SIANI; Collaborative agreement between SLU and SIANI.

These partnerships are governed by collaborative agreements with SEI covering the period 2023–2027 and are intended to support staff costs for knowledge management, dialogue, and communication, and both organisations participate in joint planning and strategic development as part of the SIANI secretariat. The combined budget for SLU Global and Focali amounts to SEK 14.6 million; 24.3 percent of the Phase 4 budget. The largest budget share is allocated to knowledge management and dialogue, which accounts for 52 percent of SLU's budget and 84 percent of Focali's[59]. The agreements do not specify activities or expected results; instead, SIANI's annual work plans, decided by the Steering Committee (in which SLU Global and Focali are ex-officio members), are followed up in quarterly meetings between the SIANI director and SLU Global and Focali directors and guide implementation. While these work plans include limited detail on activities and measurable results, including financial tracking, strategic partners note that more detailed documentation exists. However, Focali and SLU Global's annual reporting is not fully integrated into SIANI Annual reports, with limited mention in the body of reports and full reporting in Annexes. These reports follow up on annual work plans but whilst they detail concrete activities from these collaborations, such as Agri4D, young researchers' workshops, and policy dialogues on climate and food systems[60], the focus is more on activities than on outcome reporting, and deviations from plans are not explained[61]. This is also evident from the SIANI website, where Focali receives less visibility, e.g. few Impact Stories relates to Focali's contributions. SLU Global is better represented, but this is also related to the size of the SLU Global part of SIANI. Taken together, this makes the joint contribution of SIANI's strategic partners towards SIANI ToC challenging to track.

This relatively large flexibility in the governance and reporting suggest that these agreements rely heavily on trust and the commitment of individuals in key positions. At the same time, interviewees note certain challenges in the person-dependent nature of the partnerships, with roles and responsibilities not always clearly defined. Collaboration is described as focused on day-to-day management of activities rather than strategic planning. On the other hand, this reflects how SIANI is managed more broadly, with a large amount of flexibility and a tendency to focus on the day-to-day, as detailed above. Nevertheless, the MTR finds that more results-oriented planning and reporting and better integration into SIANI reporting, is needed to improve accountability and to understand the contribution of these strategic partnerships.

4.3 Coherence and complementarity

The findings related to the Coherence criterion, covers the following evaluation questions:

- Is SIANI complementing and finding synergies to other programmes/networks with similar methods, and if so in what way?
- How can the complementarity of SIANI be improved?

SIANI complementarity with other programmes and networks

SIANI is generally viewed as complementary to other programmes and networks in Sweden and internationally. The network's ability to convene cross-sector dialogues, maintain neutrality, and connect Swedish actors to global policy processes is seen as a unique contribution. There is

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[59] Collaborative agreement between Focali and SIANI; Collaborative agreement between SLU and SIANI; SIANI Financial Report 2023; SIANI Financial Report 2024.
[60] SIANI Annual report 2024; SIANI Annual Report 2024.
[61] Work plan January-December 2023; Workplan January-December 2024; Workplan January-December 2025; Report from the Focali – SIANI collaboration 2023; Report from the Focali – SIANI collaboration 2024; Narrative report: SLU Global – SIANI collaboration January – December 2023; Narrative report: SLU Global – SIANI collaboration January – December 2024.

evidence of productive collaborations with networks focused on agriculture, agroforestry, biodiversity and development, as well as with international partners, and overlaps are not significant.

The MTR confirmed that SIANI complements other programmes and networks well, in particular in the Swedish institutional landscape while also contributing to international processes around sustainable agrifood systems. SIANI is a space for doing things together in a broad thematic spectrum: "we otherwise work a lot in silos" was mentioned by several persons interviewed. Interviewees pointed out 'an openness that other networks perhaps do not have', and 'bringing Swedish point of view to international discussion', to mention a few examples. SIANI's communication, including the websites' events and blog and news sections, often goes beyond SIANI's own activities, giving visibility to other related organisations and initiatives.

The MTR also found that the network space in Sweden is a bit crowded and some overlaps were noted between, for example, SIANI, Focali and the Agroforestry Network. This can be seen in SIANI annual reports as Focali's core work and its SIANI-related work tend to blur, flecting that a major part of Focali's financing is through SIANI.

SIANI contributes to interdisciplinary dialogue, providing a space for programmes and networks with a narrower focus to connect within the wider agrifood system. "The multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach that SIANI has is actually pretty impressive", was a point shared by several interviewees. SIANI's communication gives good visibility to such dialogue as well.

SIANI's role in amplifying the reach of other networks and facilitating knowledge exchange is repeatedly highlighted.

Suggested improvement to complementarity

To further enhance complementarity, the MTR suggest further clarifying SIANI's niche, as well as conducting joint planning with networks with a similar focus to avoid overlaps.

The challenge for SIANI is to continue identifying opportunities for synergy, avoiding duplication of effort, and ensuring that its activities add distinctive value to the broader ecosystem of programmes and networks.

According to interviewees, the key area for improving SIANI's complementarity is thematic focus and clearer strategic positioning and engagement, mentioned by more than 50% of the persons the MTR team talked to. This should also cover expert groups, according to several respondents, indicating that expert group topics could be guided more strategically by SIANI. Several interviewees also asked for more critical debate and policy work and for a greater focus on specific themes, such a youth. Some persons also asked for more region-specific presence, e.g. in Nigeria and Kenya. Some viewed the regional balance as important: "We could perhaps move a little outside the Anglophone world."

Another option is systematic joint planning with strategic partners and selected external networks is seen as a way to reduce duplication and align efforts with policy windows. The challenge for SIANI is to balance its role as a connector and amplifier with the need to maintain a clear identity and strategic focus.

4.4 Sustainability

The findings of the evaluation related to the sustainability criterion considers the following EQs:

- To what extent is SIANI's activities from its previous phases (1-3) sustainable in the current phase?

- How can methods and approaches for the programme implementation be improved for benefits to last?
- To what extent is SIANI sustainable beyond 2027?

The sustainability of previous activities and suggestions for improvements

SIANI Phase 4 demonstrates strong continuity with previous activities, indicating that many initiatives and partnerships have lasting impact and remain relevant. Expert groups and regional collaborations continue to drive results, and the network's knowledge base is steadily growing. However, there are clear opportunities to enhance the visibility and accessibility of SIANI's outputs, especially publications and expert group insights, so that their value can be fully realised by a wider audience. There are also opportunities to consider a more regional focus of SIANI, to align better to Swedish development priorities.

The MTR finds that SIANI Phase 4 demonstrates a high degree of continuity as many activities in previous phase are also present in the current phase; many recurring activities are listed in SIANI Annual reports for 2023 and 2024[62]. However, this may also be interpreted as a tendency to conduct 'business as usual'. Nevertheless, when it comes to results, there are examples of activities, outputs and even outcomes that have continued in the current period, showing signs of sustainability. These findings, along with the assessment of effectiveness in section 4.2 provide some considerations for improvements in activities in order to maximise sustainability. These will be further discussed during the workshop with SIANI on 5 December 2025.

The methods and approaches for **Inclusive multistakeholder dialogue** covers an array of events in Sweden and internationally to which SIANI contributes or, sometimes, co-organiser. SIANI's long-term engagement has placed it in a good position to organise or contribute to high-profile events in Sweden and internationally. SIANI, with support from Sida, has been a co-organiser of the biennial Agri4D conference for more than a decade, supporting SLU in organising the conference in partnership with other universities and organisation, and has convened side events in high-level international fora including at the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. SIANI's effort to involve SIANI's youth partners in such events was acclaimed. The Swedish Embassy in Rome appreciates SIANI's contribution to Sweden's relations to FAO, noting 'a very high quality of their inputs'.

Regarding **Amplification and awareness raising,** SIANI uses two main approaches: Expert groups, and regional network meetings. The MTR found good evidence that the value of expert groups is carrying over into the current phase; a number of SIANI outcomes are linked to previous expert groups (see Annex 3). One example is the expert group that was led by the Agripreneurship Alliance, a Switzerland-based non-profit, which benefitted from two rounds of funding, and is launching a training course 'Entrepreneurship in African Agribusiness' in 2025 to be freely available to individuals, organisations, and universities across the continent. This training evolves from a course piloted by the expert group, which was reported on in the last evaluation[63]. One of the current expert groups interviewed for the MTR, Wild foods in Asia, led by the Non-timber Forest Products Exchange Programme, is currently running their second expert group, having also been supported in 2021/22. As mentioned above, previous expert groups have produced a significant share of SIANI publications, still relevant today. As reported in more detail elsewhere in this report, factors to consider for improvement include thematic focus, more tailored communication, better visibility of

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[62] SIANI annal report 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023; SIANI annal report 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024; Final report SIANI 3, 30 May 2023.
[63] Johanna Lindström, Torbjörn Öckerman, Kajsa Österberg Åström. 2021. Evaluation of the SIANI programme (phase 3). Annex 4 presents findings from the Outcome Harvest.

current expert groups and their projects, members and expertise, and better access to previous expert group outputs.

When it comes to regional meetings, they were highly appreciated, and a useful way for SIANI to come closer to target groups, and possibly also to align better with the newer Swedish development priorities by moving toward a more regional focus.

In terms of **Community building,** the network membership has remained ready and the 2024 SIANI Annual report, but not 2023, lists a large number of collaborations under this item, for example with FAO, IFAD and GFAiR[64]. Three thematic areas for SIANI continuing engagement stand out: anti-microbial resistance (organised a seminar on anti-microbial resistance at the World Water Week, together with Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and FAO), agroecology (member of the Agroecology Coalition, among others) and agroforestry (for example with the strategic partnership with Focali and as member of the Agroforestry Network)[65]. It is however noted that SIANI is only one of many actors in these partnerships and that SIANI's contribution to outputs and outcomes should not be overstated.

SIANI has an on-going discussion on the membership process, with discussions around institutional membership. This would be one way to formalising some of the collaborations. Some interviewees also suggested that SIANI might develop collaborations with institutions based in the Global South as a way to getting closer to their targe groups. This may also be a way to align better with the Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Growth, Green Transition and Education 2025–2029. The fact that SEI has regional offices in Bangkok and Nairobi might also be better exploited by SIANI.

When it comes to individual members, the survey asked respondents: 'What, if anything, would make you feel more included or engaged in the SIANI network?' This question provides insight into potential gaps and weaknesses in SIANI's operations. Networking aspects received the highest number of comments as respondents asked for more and closer collaboration opportunities with network members, deeper understanding of who the members are, and a community page or help desk. Opportunities for jobs and grants, and regarding in-person engagement in events, workshops and trainings were also often mentioned as areas of improvement.
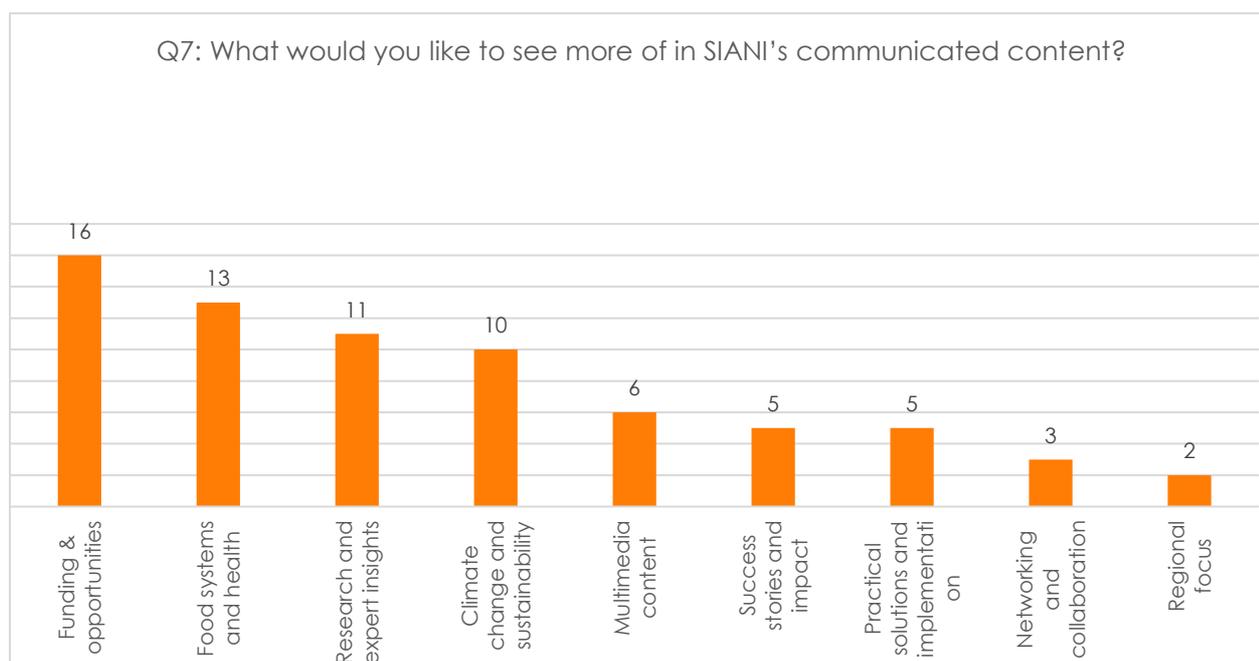
SIANI's **knowledge management and communication** is building on previous phases as the network's on-line repository of knowledge products keeps growing over time; a large proportion of SIANI publications were produced in previous phases. Similarly, expert groups supported in previous phases features prominently on the website, with a significant output of knowledge products. As noted above, these are difficult to easily access. In addition, the items 'Presentations' and 'Videos' are only accessed from the bottom panel, which most users would miss. A key area for increasing lasting benefits of SIANI publications and expert group insights is to significantly enhance their access via a modernised user interface and a better and more advanced search funtion..

In terms of communicated content, survey respondents' four most frequent requests were: funding & opportunities, food systems and health, research and expert insights and climate change and sustainability (Figure 13) thus advising SIANI on ways forward.

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[64] In the 2023 SIANI Annual report, these were instead reported under 'Amplification and awareness'.
[65] The work on ARM and Agroforestry was considered in the last evaluation, see Johanna Lindström, Torbjörn Öckerman, Kajsa Österberg Åström. 2021. Evaluation of the SIANI programme (phase 3). Annex 4 presents findings from the Outcome Harvest.

Figure 13. What communicated content from SIANI respondents would like to see more of, percentage

Q7: What would you like to see more of in SIANI's communicated content?

Bar values: Funding & opportunities: 16; Food systems and health: 13; Research and expert insights: 11; Climate change and sustainability: 10; Multimedia content: 6; Success stories and impact: 5; Practical solutions and implementation: 5; Networking and collaboration: 3; Regional focus: 2

Sample size: N=113

Overall, interviewees recommend that SIANI focus its efforts where its core methods, high-quality convening, careful curation, and professional communication, are most likely to generate lasting benefits. This includes being selective about topics, embedding continuity elements such as follow-up sessions and communities of practice, and designing outputs for reuse by national actors. The people interviewed emphasise the importance of institutionalising facilitation practices to reduce reliance on individual staff members and ensure consistency across activities. There is also a call for SIANI to invest in capacity-building and knowledge transfer, enabling stakeholders to apply lessons learned and sustain benefits beyond the immediate scope of network activities. The challenge for SIANI is to balance innovation with consolidation, ensuring that new approaches are tested and refined while maintaining the core strengths that have contributed to the network's success.

SIANI's **youth strategy** uses four approaches, engaging youth in Sweden, engaging youth in low-income countries, dialogue, and on-line communication. The MTR found these largely effective in increasing youth engagement in SIANI in comparison to Phase 3 (see Box 4). However, the engagement remains largely ad hoc and lacks a structured approach to sustained involvement. In order to maximise and scale the work on youth engagement, the strategy should be renewed or the approach to targeting youth should be furher detailed and more clearly represented in annual reporting.

The work in SEI on mainstreaming a **human rights-based approach** in SIANI is behind schedule. After preliminary work and planning in 2024, little progress has been made in 2025, which requires urgent attention to show impact, for example with the on-going expert groups. This is also important to ensure that SIANI continues its efforts to support further inclusion of marginalised groups.

Sustainability beyond 2027

SIANI's long-term sustainability depends on diversifying funding, reducing reliance on a few key staff, and aligning more closely with Swedish development strategies; while stakeholders strongly support its continuation, ongoing dependence on Sida funding and limited progress in securing alternative resources present significant risks.

Interviewees express cautious optimism about SIANI's sustainability beyond 2027, noting that long-term resilience will require diversification of funding sources and reduced reliance on individual staff members. Potential strategies include exploring institutional membership, fee-for-service activities, and targeted partnerships with public and philanthropic entities. There is an emphasis on the importance of maintaining neutrality and avoiding complex models that could compromise the network's integrity.

Clear documentation of processes and articulation of SIANI's public-good value are seen as essential for attracting support from new partners. The challenge for SIANI is to develop a sustainable business model that balances financial viability with the network's commitment to inclusivity, neutrality, and public benefit.

SIANI's sustainability beyond 2027 depends on several interlinked factors including the demand for and perceived utility of its services and products among stakeholders, the institutional strength of the network itself, the capacity and performance of the SIANI Secretariat, and financing for SIANI management and operations.

The demand for and utility of SIANI's services and products was confirmed by the MTR, as survey respondents strongly indicated that it is important that SIANI continues to another phase. Seventy-nine % of respondents considered it "very important" that SIANI continues, while 13% rated it as "somewhat important" (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Importance of SIANI continuation to another phase, percentage
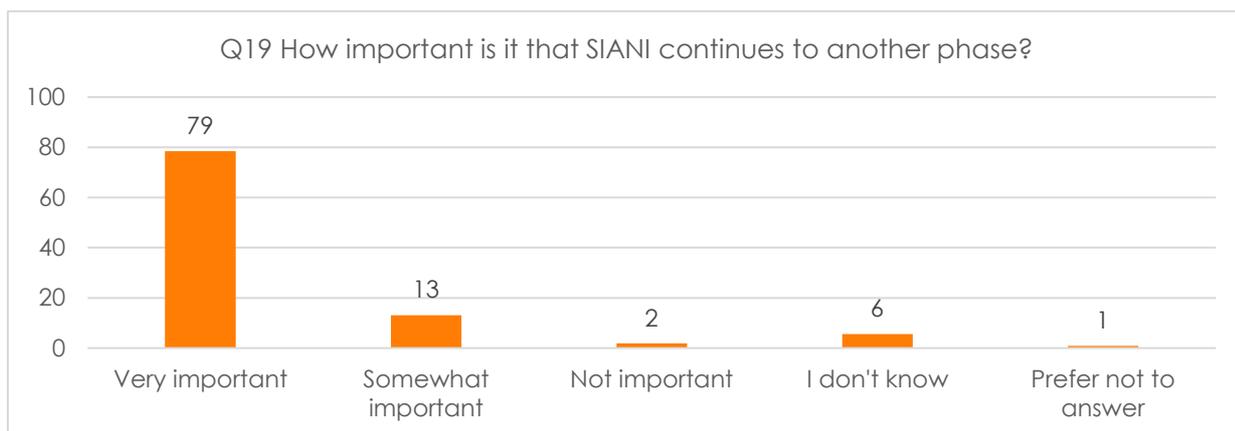
Sample size: N=107

A related open question aligned with these results, with mostly positive answers such as:

"It's important with an organisation in Sweden that coordinated between different actors."

"SIANI provides a unique opportunity to build friendships of mutual support to address some of the major, and seemingly intractable, challenges of our time in land-use sector. No other agency provides (this - sic)."

Other answers brought to light a perspective of the few respondents that did not think the continuation of SIANI is as important.

"My understanding is that SIANI does good work but as I have mentioned it does not interact with me."

The institutional strength of the SIANI network itself was not a specific evaluation question, but document review and interviews suggest that little has changed compared to the discussion on this

issue in the evaluation of SIANI Phase 3, which found that 'Firstly, a long-term vision for SIANI as an institution will need to be established'[66]. In Phase 4, SIANI conducts 'business-as-usual' institutionally, with its hosting at SEI and strategic partnerships with SLU Global and Focali. SIANI's Secretariat (jointly at SEI, SLU Global and Focali) was consistently praised by interviewees for its professionalism and hard work, and SIANI's communication function was frequently mentioned as a strength, as discussed in more detail in section (4.2) above.

The flip side of a strong secretariat with significant dependency on a few key individuals is that the network is to large extent driven from the centre. Interviewees expressed a concern about this dependency, and what the consequences for SIANI sustainability would be in case of staff changes; attention to succession planning is needed.

Sida, SIANI's only major donor, supports SIANI Phase 4 at a level of 60 mSEK for five years, or circa 11-12 mSEK per year until 2027, of which 24.3 percent is transferred to two strategic partners, SLU Global and Focali[67]. In 2024, an agreement was signed where IFAD supports SIANI financially with 30 000 USD[68], which IFAD may repeat. The Agri4D conference has introduced fees for participation which contribute towards the conference budget. There is also co-funding of certain activities, whereby SIANI co-organises events with partners. These additional financial sources are however at the margin.

Discussion on diversifying funding are on-going and there are examples of some opportunities and examples of small contributions from other funders[69] but has not yet led to significant action. As mentioned in section 4.1, discussion around institutional partnerships and connected membership fees are ongoing. Some people interviewed expressed a hope that SIANI might access philanthropy funding or work more on co-funding of activities with partners. Private-sector funding is also being discussed. Others feel that public funding is preferrable: *'I'm comfortable contributing to this because I see this more like a public network'*, observed one university researcher. There is a recognition that fundraising would be demanding in terms of Secretariat staff time, at the expense of network management.

Given the level of funds required and the unknown prospects for diversifying funding it is difficult to see that SIANI can be financially sustained in the medium term without continued support from Sida. An argument for continued support is the broad recognition of the value that SIANI adds in its focus area of food systems transformation: *"If SIANI was to stop... it would be very hard to replace it."* was a comment from several interviewees. However, for Sida funding to continue, SIANI would need to find a place and closer alignment to the reform agenda for development cooperation and the new strategy. This would most likely need to include a greater geographical focus in some way, to connect to the strategy's focus on regional and bilateral cooperation. Nevertheless, thematically, there is much closer alignment, even if it was noted that there may be a need for an even broader focus than food systems if the aim is to align better with Swedish priorities.

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[66] Johanna Lindström, Torbjörn Öckerman, Kajsa Österberg Åström. 2021. Evaluation of the SIANI programme (phase 3).
[67] SIANI Programme Document Phase 4.
[68] SIANI annual report 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024.
[69] The SIANI secretariat notes opportunties related to GFAIR collective actions for Agroecology; the ASAPP work generated funding support from SEI and Formas; and FAO funding of SIANI coworker for a publication launched at COP30.

5 Conclusions

The mid-term review confirms that SIANI remains a valued and relevant network, widely appreciated for its convening power, neutrality, and thematic focus on sustainable food systems, climate adaptation, and rights-based approaches. The network is valued for its ability to foster collaboration, build capacity, and connect Swedish and global actors. Membership is stable at over 5,000 across 55 countries; events are well-attended; and participants report learning, networking, and, in some cases, collaboration and policy influence. At the same time, the evaluation highlights persistent challenges with the membership concept, ability to measure SIANI effectiveness, uneven performance across expert groups, dissemination and exploitation of SIANI's knowledge product portfolio, and challenges in inclusion of more marginalised voices.

While stakeholders strongly support SIANI's continuation, its long-term sustainability will depend on diversifying funding, strengthening institutional resilience, and aligning more closely with evolving Swedish development strategies. Below is a synthesis against the evaluation criteria:

Relevance

SIANI's agenda continues to align strongly with global priorities and the Agenda 2030. Stakeholders value its neutrality and multi-sector dialogue. However, alignment with Sweden's latest development strategy is less clear, and whilst the representation of Global South actors, youth, and marginalised groups has improved, it needs further strengthening in practice. To maintain relevance, SIANI must tailor engagement models and strengthen its connection to evolving Swedish priorities. The membership concept is inclusive and broad but lacks clarity between active and passive members, as well as clear information on what SIANI membership entails, suggesting a need for a more nuanced approach to engagement and participation.

Effectiveness

SIANI is broadly perceived as effective in supporting and promoting multisector dialogue and action around food systems transformation. Outputs are delivered across the areas of inclusive multi-sector dialogue, amplification and awareness, community building, and knowledge management and communication. Qualitive evidence shows that SIANI contributes to learning and capacity development, agenda-setting, policy influence, community engagement and multi-stakeholder collaboration, with SIANI acting as a catalyst, connector and knowledge-broker. Yet effectiveness cannot be quantified; partly due to the networking nature of SIANI, but also due to fragmented data and challenges to disentangle SIANI's contribution, in a context with a multitude of actors.

Significant improvements have been made with regards to MEL: a clearer ToC, defined outcome areas, and a suite of MEL tools. The MTR shows that many of the assumptions in the ToC are realised or at least partially realised. The table below presented our final combined analysis. Note that the assumptions have been summarised from the ToC.

Assumption	Status	Supporting evidence and limitations
Operational efficiency & coordination	**Mostly realised**	- Secretariat and hosting (SEI, SLU Global, Focali) provide strong admin and technical support. - Annual work plans and financial reports show consistent delivery of activities and outputs but tend to be activities oriented.

		- Partner selection (e.g., expert groups) is competitive and transparent, but some concerns about regional representation and fairness. - Collaboration with strategic partners is flexible; roles/responsibilities not always clear and mostly activity-based reporting.
Governance & adaptive management	**Partially realised**	- Governance structure (Secretariat, Steering Committee, Executive Committee) is functional. - MEL system improved since 2021: clearer indicators, regular reporting, embedded in daily practice. - Theory of Change is used for planning but is seen as too broad. - Learning is mostly operational (event organisation), not strategic (activity prioritisation). - Feedback mechanisms could be strengthened.
Stakeholders/members engaged & aligned	**Partially realised**	- SIANI perceived as highly relevant by members/partners in Sweden and globally. - Network is growing and more diverse, but engagement patterns vary. - Expert groups are key for engagement and for achieving results - The membership model is inclusive yet lacks clarity between active/passive members. - Underrepresented groups (youth, Global South, Indigenous) remain less engaged due to logistical barriers. - Calls for more nuanced engagement and clearer benefits.
Market knowledge & avoidance of overlaps	**Mostly realised**	- SIANI is viewed as complementary to other programmes/networks, especially in Sweden. - Convening power and neutrality are unique features. - Some overlaps (e.g., with Focali, Agroforestry Network), but these are not significant and often reflect productive collaboration. - Need for clearer strategic positioning and joint planning with similar networks to further reduce duplication.
SIANI is legitimate	**Fully realised**	- SIANI is consistently described as a neutral, multi-sector platform bridging research, policy, and practice. - Professionalism and ability to connect Swedish expertise to global processes are recognised. - Stakeholders and survey respondents affirm SIANI's legitimacy and value-add.
Supportive digital environment	**Mostly realised**	- Website and digital platforms have grown in traffic and engagement. - Communication outputs (newsletters, webinars, social media) are valued by members. - Website functions well for news/events, but less so as a repository for knowledge products (publications are hard to find/download, as are previous expert group outputs). - Social media engagement increasing, especially LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube. - Need for improved knowledge management and user interface for publications, to enhance dissemination and exploitation.

Supportive policy environment	**Partially realised**	- SIANI's work aligns well with global agendas (Agenda 2030, UN Food System Summit) and Swedish development priorities. - Less alignment with latest Swedish reform agenda and new strategies. - Strong support for SIANI's continuation, but future funding may depend on closer alignment with Swedish policy shifts. - Need to strengthen regional focus to match new Swedish strategies.
Marginalised change agents accessible & motivated	**Partially realised**	- Progress in engaging youth and marginalised groups (targeted programming, expert group activities). - Engagement remains ad hoc and not fully structured. - Barriers (visa issues, limited resources, digital divide) limit access and sustained involvement. - Human rights-based approach is behind schedule, which may hinder further inclusion. - More structured pathways, innovative approaches, and removal of logistical barriers needed.

Coherence

SIANI adds distinctive value by bridging research, policy, and practice. Partnerships with SLU Global, Focali, and others foster synergy. Some overlaps were noted, but these are not significant. There is nevertheless a call for SIANI to further enhance its strategic positioning.

Sustainability

SIANI Phase 4 shows strong continuity and lasting partnerships, with expert groups and regional collaborations driving ongoing results. However, there is a need to improve the visibility and accessibility of outputs, clarify membership value, and strengthen regional focus to align with Swedish priorities. While institutional foundations are solid, long-term financing and hand-over protocols remain uncertain, highlighting the need for diversified funding and clear continuity plans.

6 Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions in the MTR and a validation workshop with the SIANI Secretariat and Steering Committee on the 5th of December. These are a mix of short-term and long-term recommendations but presented in order of priority.

- **Clarify SIANI's contribution to Swedish, global, regional and local policy and practice.** Since the last evaluation in 2021, SIANI has made efforts to maintain its relevance, clarify its identity, strategy and target groups, and to work more strategically. However, there is more work to be done to remain relevant and to maximise SIANI's influence, particularly in a rapidly changing funding landscape. The MTR recommends that SIANI' focuses on making its **actual and potential contributions** more visible in relation to Swedish domestic and international priorities and partners and target groups in the Global South. This could include the following:

    - **Team Sweden:** Work to position SIANI as a key platform for Team Sweden in food systems and related debates, integrating private sector, research and civil society actors while maintaining rights-based principles. This provides an opportunity to draw on and make SIANI's Swedish networks and contributions to the Swedish resource base more visible.

    - **The global level:** SIANI has a strong presence within global debates on food systems. This should not be discarded, but further resources could be focused on domestic, regional and local levels.

    - **The regional level:** Leverage SEI's regional offices in Nairobi and Bangkok for deeper engagement at the regional level. This could be done through organising more events at the regional level, seconding staff to these offices, or creating more established partnerships with organisations based in these regions/regional centres, and that represent SIANI's target groups.

    - **Local levels:** The expert groups are important for SIANI's contribution to policy and practice at the local level. However, these could be used as a tool to align more closely to Swedish strategies, for instance through an increased geographical focus. However, it is also important to maintain the inclusive nature of expert group calls to allow for innovation and risk-taking.

    - **Make hard decisions:** This approach would require making hard decsions about where to engage and how.

- **Develop a long-term fund-raising strategy for SIANI:** SIANI is very dependent on Sida funding and needs to explore how to raise funding after Phase 4. This should include:

    - **Initiate proactive dialogue with Sida** on future funding, and ways to align SIANI to Swedish development priorities. This may include a request to divert some of the current funding under Phase 4 to the development of a broader fundraising strategy for SIANI, as part of securing the sustainability of Sida's previous investments.

    - **Diversify funding sources:** The strategy should explore institutional partnerships, membership fees, philanthropic grants, co-funding opportunities and private sector engagement, while maintaining SIANI's neutrality.

- **Strengthen succession and continuity planning:** To secure institutional memory and sustainbility, SIANI should document key processes and responsibilities and share contacts

and networks within the Secretariat. This includes developing a succession plan for critical staff and leadership positions to ensure institutional resilience.

- **Strengthen and streamline the MEL system.** The ToC and MEL system have undergone major improvements since 2021, but some suggestions can make the MEL system even more fit for purpose:
    - o Reduce administrative burden by limiting reporting to activities and results that are directly linked to primary strategic goals. These can be decided on an annual basis.
    - o Review and clarify steps in the learning and planning cycle to prioritise strategic learning (not just operational adjustments). This includes more time in the annual planning process to allow for learning from the past year and horizon-scanning. Link planning more closely to the potential benefits of target groups.
    - o Incorporate contribution analysis to clarify SIANI's unique role in multi-actor outcomes and distinguish between contributions and attribution. This includes focusing more on processes and pathways to outcomes, not only end results, and considering key boundary partners to work with.
    - o Fully integrate SLU Global and Focali reporting into SIANI outcome reporting (on website and in reporting to Sida) and communication for a comprehensive, holistic view of SIANI. The long activity-based reports by SLU Global and Focali (presented as annexes to the SIANI Annual Report) could be shorted and more effort could be made to monitor and report on outcomes.

- **Enhance engagement with target groups:** Even if there are clear signs that SIANI has increased its focus on specific target groups, there is room to specify more closely how to engage with these, including youth. This could mean renewing the youth strategy, or at least making sure that work plans specify how target groups are reached and that the results of the engagement with target groups is more clearly represented in annual reporting.

- **Clarify membership structure:** Continue to clarify and communicate the membership model, distinguishing between active and passive members and instiutional members:
    - o Consider the introduction tiered membership or engagement levels, and clearly outline the benefits and expectations for each category. This could include consideration of membership fees for institutional members.
    - o To increase SIANI's added value to members, test the viability of different types of matchmaking tools (WhatsApp groups, networking events, community page, or database) to strengthen community building.

- **Improve output visibility:** Consider enhancing website functionality, beyond news generation, for dissemination of SIANI's knowledge products and improved search of and access to publications by target groups. Promote important content from the footer to the navigation bar.

Annex 1: ToR

Terms of Reference for SIANI 4 mid-term review

25 June 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction to SIANI

Background

The Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) was founded in 2008 to address two main issues; a lack of recognition of agriculture's crucial role for sustainable development, and the need for policy coherence across government departments and other sectors, as stipulated in Sweden's Policy for Global Development (2003). SIANI's original objectives were to establish a network for cross-sectoral knowledge exchange on agriculture and development and, through the network of Swedish partners, to organise activities to raise awareness of issues related to agriculture development and poverty alleviation. The expected outcomes from these activities were to expand the knowledge and best practices of members and partners that work in low-income countries.

Today, SIANI is an established, multi-sector network with a platform of 5000 members, 3500 subscribers and additional followers, offering an open and interactive platform for exchange on global issues around food systems, agriculture and poverty reduction. SIANI supports and promotes multisector dialogue and action around food systems transformation. SIANI's members are invited to support and contribute to the communication platform through direct contact, annual meetings, or online consultations.

SIANI is a programme hosted by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). The first phase of the programme, SIANI 1, stretched over the years 2009-2013, SIANI 2 between 2013–2016 and SIANI 3 between 2016-2021. Its fourth and current phase runs from 2022 to 2027, with a budget of 56 755 000 SEK and Sida as core funder (57 000 000 SEK).

Governance

SIANI governance structure consists of a Secretariat, Steering Committee (SC) and Executive Committee (EC). The Secretariat is responsible for the ongoing operations and financial management of SIANI. It involves staff from SEI and from the partner institutions - SLU Global at the Swedish University for Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and the Secretariat of the Focali network at Wexsus. The EC is composed of the SIANI Director, the SEI programme owner and the SIANI SC chair. It supports the Secretariat in resolving operational challenges if these arise. The SC is responsible for the strategic development of the SIANI network and makes decisions concerning the general direction, objectives, workplan and budget.

Programme history

SIANI 1, the first phase of the programme, began in 2009. The second phase, SIANI 2, set out to expand the dialogues initiated in SIANI 1, with an overarching vision to address sustainable food and nutrition security for all. During SIANI 2, the programme developed from a loose network into a platform. After 2.5 years of successful implementation, rapid expansion and structural development, an external evaluation in 2016 concluded that the network should no longer be an initiative but regarded as a long-term investment in tackling issues around poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Going forward during its third phase, SIANI aligned with the 2030 Agenda focusing on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 2 to end hunger, promote sustainable agriculture, achieve food security and improved nutrition. After a final evaluation of SIANI 3, SIANI developed a new programme phase with a new Theory of Change, where the impact statement, outcomes and activity & output categories were further defined to better reflect the network's goals and identity, emphasise its sub-impact statements, allow for better monitoring, evaluation and learning tools, and reflect the current global agendas on food systems transformation.

SIANI's vision and mission

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the roles of sustainable agriculture and natural resource management, while recognising that climate change, conflicts and inflation pose added threats to global food production. The current system is broken. In 2021, the UN Secretary General called for a Food System Summit where all participating members states were to present a pathway for transformation the food systems up to 2030. Sustainable, inclusive and more equitable food systems have the potential to deliver food and nutrition security and catalyse the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and address the goals in the Paris agreement.

SIANI's overall vision and impact statement is a future where "food systems are more sustainable, rights-based and inclusive of smallholder farmers and marginalised groups." SIANI's mission is to "support and promote multisector dialogue and action around food systems transformation", in Sweden and globally, with participation from academia, the private sector, UN and international organisations, Swedish authorities and civil society.

As defined in the programme document of SIANI 4, SIANI seeks to contribute to change through four activity & output categories:

- **Knowledge management and communication** to identify knowledge gaps, filter and share evidence-based information.
- **Amplification and awareness-raising** of marginalised perspectives to extend the reach, uptake and influence of members, ideas and initiatives. (ex ex grp)
- **Inclusive multisector dialogues** among key stakeholders and representatives to facilitate collective learning and action.
- **Community-building** among diverse members, followers and partners in the SIANI network.

To reach the desired impact, SIANI work towards four outcomes. These outcomes correspond to the immediate objectives to be achieved by the end of the proposed SIANI 4 project period.

- **Actualised topics, and changed agendas and practises** around food systems.

- **Enhanced capacities and knowledge** for rights-based and inclusive food systems transformation.
- **Joint actions** with and between different stakeholder actors within and beyond SIANI's network.
- **Strengthened connectivity and vibrancy** in the SIANI network between members, partners and followers working within food systems.

SIANI's activities, outputs and outcomes are steered towards the overall impact: Food systems are more sustainable, rights-based and inclusive of smallholder farmers and marginalised groups. With a unique position to work with and influence actors and duty-bearers in Sweden and globally, SIANI's role, capacity and power lie in strengthening the *recognition* of rights, roles and livelihoods of right-holders in food systems. This is reflected in three sub-impact statements. The sub-impact statements further define for whom and in which context SIANI will contribute towards food systems transformation, and guide SIANI's work towards ultimate beneficiaries and right-holders.

1. Recognition of rural youths' agency and rights
2. Recognition of smallholders' and SMEs' prosperity in value chains in local production systems
3. Recognition of livelihoods and rights of forest communities, Indigenous peoples and natural resource-dependent poor

Previous evaluations

SIANI has been assessed in two final evaluations and one midterm review since 2013. The SIANI midterm review of phase 3 in 2018 provided 16 recommendations related to areas including SIANI's scope, governance, organisation within SEI, the fragility of SIANI, and administrative streamlining. The final and latest evaluation in 2021 assessed SIANI's relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability, providing three recommendations:
- SIANI should clarify its identity relating to the content, ambitions and role of SIANI's Swedish connection; the network; the meaning of the "neutrality" of SIANI; and Sida's long term aims and ambitions with SIANI as an institution and network.
- SIANI should work more strategically.
- SIANI should develop a useful and coherent Theory of Change and simple Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system.

The scope and rationale of the evaluation

The aim of the mid-term review (MTR) is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability in the on-going phase SIANI 4 (2022 to 2025), incorporating learnings from previous phases, and formulate recommendations as an input on how implementation can be improved in

the last two years of the programme, as well as in the preparation for a possible fifth programme phase.

The beginning of 2025 marks halfway through the current programme phase. The MTR is expected to assess the programme progress against SIANI's Theory of Change and achieved results since the beginning of the programme phase. The MTR is further expected to provide recommendations to inform and guide improvement of SIANI 4 for the remainder of the programme phase, as well as sustainability beyond 2027. The intended users of the evaluation are the SIANI Secretariat, the SIANI Steering Committee, Sida and SEI.

In particular, the MTR should focus **on the relevance of the programme, the effectiveness of the programme design and implementation to date, the sustainability of the overall programme results and organisation, and coherence to similar programmes and processes.** The MTR will therefore:

Looking back:

- Assess SIANI's performance and progress against the expected outputs and outcomes, including relevant indicators and baselines as indicated in the MEL framework.
- Review and document the success and draw out lessons for deepening impact.
- Assess the effectiveness of SIANI's engagement with enablers, in particular key actors in academia, the public and private sectors, civil society, and international organisations. An assessment should particular involve how SIANI works with private sector actors and how its activities align with Sweden's reform agenda "Development assistance for a new era".
- Assess and provide recommendations for SIANI's collaboration with its strategic partners SLU Global and Focali, as well as the hosting arrangements at Stockholm Environment Institute.
- Review the concept of "members" in the network and provide input on what a membership for individuals or institutions may look like, in contrast to subscribers or followers.

Forward-looking:

- Outline recommendations, including potential realignments in scope and approach, to further support impact towards SIANI's sub-impact groups.
- Review the role of SIANI in enhancing the importance of and spaces (globally and in Sweden) for dialogues and action for food systems transformation, including its coherence and complement to similar networks or programmes.
- Review the sustainability of SIANI's interventions and the future of the programme after the end of its current phase.

Evaluation questions

The categorisation of the evaluation questions is based on the evaluation criteria of OECD-DAC. Final questions are expected to be developed by the review team.

1.	Relevance
1.1	To what extent and how is SIANI perceived as relevant by its members and partners, in Sweden and globally? Are there any changes of perceived relevance compared to the analysis of this question conducted in previous evaluations?
1.2	To what extent and how is SIANI relevant to global agendas, processes and Swedish political priorities related to sustainable food systems and development cooperation, such as the Swedish government's reform agenda 'Development assistance for a new era – freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth'; Agenda 2030; and Sida's 'multi-dimensional poverty analysis' conceptual framework approach?
1.3	Is the current concept of "members" relevant to SIANI's implementation, and how can the concept of membership for both individual and institutions of the network be adjusted to align with SIANI's networking platform structure?
2.	Effectiveness
2.1	Is SIANI fulfilling its mission effectively, including working with its stipulated enablers?
2.2	To what extent and how has the programme contributed to intended outputs, outcomes and impacts as stipulated in the ToC? Is the ToC a helpful tool in this regard?
2.3	To what extent and how do the SEI hosting arrangement and collaboration with its strategic partners (SLU Global and Focali) support the fulfilment of SIANI's mission and vision? How can these arrangements be improved?
2.4	To what extent does the current monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting procedures deliver robust and useful information that is used to assess progress towards outcomes?
2.5	How is SIANI's expert groups contributing to SIANI's overall outcomes, and in which ways can the partnership with expert groups be improved?
3.	Sustainability
3.1	How can methods and approaches for the programme implementation be improved for benefits to last?
3.2	To what extent is SIANI sustainable beyond 2027?
3.3	To what extent is SIANI's activities from its previous phases (1-3) sustainable in the current phase?
4.	Coherence
4.1	Is SIANI complementing and finding synergies to other programmes/networks with similar methods, and if so in what way?
4.2	How can the complementarity of SIANI be improved?

Evaluation approach and methods

The Secretariat suggests including the below documents and methods in the evaluation but welcomes, and expects, that the review team elaborates, describes and justifies appropriate evaluation methods for data collection in the tender. The review team should identify limitations and constraints with the chosen methods and, to the extent possible, present mitigation measures to address them.

Review of key documents

Key documents will be collected by the SIANI secretariat and be available for the review team in the beginning of the process. These documents include but are not limited to: SIANI's programme and governing documents, Theory of Change, communication strategy, previous external evaluations and midterm reviews, annual reports, monitoring tools and templates, SIANI website and newsletters.

Interviews

Interviews with SIANI's Secretariat and Steering Committee, expert group leads, Sida, the Swedish government and a selected number of network collaborators.

Survey

To assess how members and partners perceive the relevance of SIANI previous external evaluations have used a set of identical survey questions. The review team designs the survey, and the Secretariat recommends that some questions used in previous evaluations are used again to follow up on the baseline and analyse the perceived relevance of SIANI. Note that this does not exclude adding more questions that would serve the purpose of this evaluation.

A survey should be sent to all SIANI subscribers, as well as a selected number of respondents that are active in the activities.

Organisation

SIANI Secretariat is responsible for making documents and list with key contacts available to the evaluation team. The Secretariat will be responsible for the setup of workshops etc.

Inception report objectives

- Define the purpose, scope and intended use of the MTR, including limitations
- Define final evaluation questions
- Design methodology and approaches to data collection an analysis, including survey and interview questions and a description of how participants and stakeholders will be involved
- Define final work plan, outputs and timeline
- Elaborate on budget details

Timeline

The evaluation shall be carried out between June and December 2025. The timing of workshops, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the review team in dialogue with SIANI and when relevant the Steering Committee.

Date	Activity	Output and deliverables
June	Startup meeting	
Start of contract – 18 July	Inception phase	Inception report (submission 18 July, comments from SIANI provided by 22 July)
August-September	Data collection and analysis	Interviews Workshops Survey
23 September	SIANI Steering Committee meeting	Present initial findings
23-25 September	Attending part of the Agri4D conference in Uppsala	Participation and input to data collection
September-November	Data collection and analysis (continued) Revision of draft	Interviews Workshops Survey
5 December	SIANI Steering Committee meeting	Present final draft of MTR
6-19 December	Final edits if needed	Final mid-term review
31 December	End of contract	

Annex 2: Activity list

SIANI activities are linked to the four output areas and are organised as such in Annual Work Plans and Annual Reports. Examples of activities from 2023 to 2025 include the following:

Table 7. Key SIANI activities in 2023-2025

Output	Key activities 2023	Key activities 2024	Key activities 2025
Output 1: Multisector dialogue	- 2 annual members' meetings (Stockholm & online) - Regional network meeting in Nairobi - Agri4D conference with 455 participants from 58 countries - Participation in World Food Forum, CFS, World Water Week - Youth-focused events (e.g. Järvaveckan, COP28)	- Annual meeting in Stockholm (theme: urbanisation and food systems) - Regional network meeting in Bangkok - Side events at COP16, CFS52, World Food Day - Agroecology Day, Alnarp Harvest Fest - Young Researchers Workshop - Increased engagement with private sector actors (e.g. Danone, Norrsken)	- Annual meeting SIANI 12 th March -Agri4D conference 23-25th of September – World Food Forum in Rome, October - SIANI steering committee meeting - Focali annual meeting - SLU Student Conference -Sida annual meeting - Almedalen and Järva week -75 year anniversary of the Swedish FAO Committee, support to lead organiser -UN Food Summit Stocktaking Summit
Output 2: Knowledge management and communication	- Website revamp and new visual identity - 99,315 pageviews (+14%) - 3506 newsletter subscribers (+2%) - 100+ online items published - Social media growth (LinkedIn +140%) - Communication outputs included stories, interviews, blogs	- 103,183 pageviews - 3542 newsletter subscribers (+1%) - Monthly newsletters and 12 targeted campaigns - 169 website items - New branded newsletter format - Diversification of social media platforms (Bluesky, Threads) - 11 publications including ASAPP briefs and policy documents	World water week: Cool Forest Seminar - Webinar: Ecosystem Restoration for a Sustainable Development - Expert group exchange workshops -World agroforestry Congress Webinar - Midterm report of the expert groups 2024/2025 and an expert group webinar
Output 3: Amplification and awareness raising	- 137 expert group applications, 4 selected - Topics: land rights, One Health, agrobiologicals, pollination - Expert group support included MEL and communication plans - Engagement with Food Systems Coalitions - Youth featured in global events and publications	- 112 expert group applications, 6 selected - Topics: agroecology, pollination, land rights, wild foods - Expert group activities led to policy influence (e.g. ASEAN guidelines, Nepal roadmap) - ASAPP initiative launched - Expert group participation in COP16 and other global forums	- Expert group exchange workshop 2023/2024 - Webinar Agrobiologicals expert group - Visit from Naol Adugna (Beta Blockers) in Sweden and visit from Maximo Torrelio Cullen, Chief Economist of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
Output 4: Community building	- Membership grew to 5233 from 4800 - 55 countries represented - Sector diversity: academia, NGOs, private	- Membership stable at 5234 (sign-up removed) - Continued youth engagement (22% of participants, 14% of	- Launch of new expert groups 2024/2025. New story – announcement of the SIANI expert groups on

	sector - Youth engagement through events and expert groups - Collaboration with SLU Global, Focali, SEI	speakers) - New collaborations with Danone, Reformaten, CA4SH - Focali-SIANI dialogues expanded (e.g. IUFRO, COP16) - SLU Global and Focali contributed to regional and thematic events	website and social media - Monthly call with expert groups and community call for SLU research

Source: SIANI Annual Reports, 2023 and 2024. SIANI Activity Log. Note: activities for 2025 is based only on the activity log, and this does not provide very much evidence, beyond Agri4D and SIANI organised meeting at the World Food Forum, where the evaluation team participated.

Annex 3: Outcome Harvest

Workshop on Outcome Harvesting

The workshop aimed to discuss and evidence SIANI's outcomes and impact, focusing on what has changed, how SIANI contributed, for whom, and what to scale next. The outcomes were mapped to the SIANI's four outcome areas:

1. actualised topics and changed agendas/practices
2. enhanced capacities/knowledge
3. joint actions across stakeholders, and
4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

List of outcomes:

1. Media discourse on agrobiodiversity in Nepal

Context. Policymakers and the public in Nepal needed **accessible, mainstream channels** to understand how **agrobiodiversity links to nutrition and climate resilience**. The knowledge existed in research communities but seldom reached mass audiences.

What changed. The expert group **designed topics, syntheses and panels** for **Krishi TV** ("Krishi Sambad"), bringing specialists and officials into **nationally broadcast debates** on agrobiodiversity–nutrition–climate linkages.

SIANI's role. Funded and supported the Small-scale farmers & biodiversity in Nepal expert group, which programmed the TV series and mobilised subject experts.

Evidence & link.

- *Engaging media in policy discourse of agrobiodiversity* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/engaging-media-in-policy-discourse-of-agrobiodiversity/

Was left out from the workshop discussions because of time constraints.

2. Addis Ababa food systems research capacity

Context. Addis Ababa's rapid urban change required **interdisciplinary evidence** on diets, food environments and inequalities. Researchers across Sweden, Ethiopia and the UK sought a framework and partnerships to study these dynamics rigorously.

What changed. A 2014 SIANI/SLU/Lund/Afrint **young-researchers workshop** catalysed a consortium that won **Formas funding (EAT Addis)** and later **VR funding (EAT Choice, 2023–26)**, developing methods (e.g., non-Western **food-choice scales**) and durable collaboration.

SIANI's role. Initiating convenor for the 2014 workshop; **networking platform** that supported proposal formation and subsequent project visibility.

Evidence & link.

- *SIANI's network initiated new tool for food security by researchers in Sweden and Ethiopia* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/food-security-sweden-ethiopia/

Outcome area(s):

Led to an inclusion of more perspectives, resulting in more actualised topics.

1. actualised topics and changed agendas/practices

2. enhanced capacities/knowledge

Significance of change. Actual change in practices is hard to gauge as there is seldom a direct connection between research and direct effects.

SIANI's contribution. SIANI worked as a catalyser, enabling the first steps, making the topic more visible and providing space for the researchers. SIANI has also followed and kept track of the research over time. Furthermore, hosting workshops, enabling networking and amplifying work done by the researchers.

Equity. Beneficiaries are mainly the researchers themselves.

Evidence. *Not discussed*

Scalability: Low

3. Practice based learning hub at Alnarp

This outcome was selected as one of three most significant outcomes by group 1 in the workshop.

Context. Alnarp's Agroecology Farm needed recognition and resources to evolve from a student initiative into a **practice-based learning hub** that engages citizens, municipalities and partners.

What changed. Following **ASAPP** case work and SIANI visibility, the farm secured **new partnerships** (e.g., SLU Global, MiljöMatematik), **grants and opportunities** (NEB 2025, Menu for Change / IFT FIRST), and a stronger local profile.

SIANI's role. Launched **ASAPP**; featured the farm in **events and communications**; helped surface the farm's **social/community dimension**.

Evidence & links.

- *Annex A – SIANI annual report 2024*

- *Seeds for global change planted in the Swedish village of Alnarp —* https://www.siani.se/impact-story/seeds-for-global-change-planted-in-the-swedish-village-of-alnarp/

Outcome area(s):

Outcomes include continued engagement by students. New partnerships and grants through increased visibility, as well as international participation at the World Food Forum (WFF).

2. enhanced capacities/knowledge

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. Engaging and increasing the capacity of the youth leaders of tomorrow. Engaging communities in the region and collaboration with local municipalities.

SIANI's contribution. SIANI highlights Alnarps farm and documents their change over time.

Equity. Beneficiaries include students, in part through bridging the Swedish with the Global, which in turn has a positive effect on Swedish capacity building.

Evidence. *Not discussed*

Scalability: Low

4. Youth partners co-organise and influence at WFF

This outcome was selected as one of three most significant outcomes by group 1 in the workshop.

Context. Many youth networks lacked **bridges** into global policy fora where decisions and agendas form. The World Food Forum created such a venue, but participation pathways and support were critical.

What changed. SIANI partners **co-organised** and participated in WFF flagships; youth leaders (e.g., **Young Scientists Group**) referenced SIANI's role in **youth participation** and digital engagement discussions. The Swedish government has also recognised youth in the **National Pathway to Sustainable Food Systems** and is engaging more with youth at an international level.

SIANI's role. Supported youth travel/participation; created **intergenerational formats** with senior officials and agencies (FAO, IFAD, Swedish ministries).

Evidence & link.

- *SIANI's youth partners create meaningful impact internationally —* https://www.siani.se/impact-story/sianis-youth-partners-create-meaningful-impact-internationally/

Outcome area(s):

SIANI sought to identify eventual seminar organisers because of it's youth focus, which led to the establishment of a new forum for youths, connected to WFF. This also led to the Swedish government including young people in their delegations.

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. Engaging and bringing together the "change leaders of tomorrow".

SIANI's contribution. Enabled participation of youth through lending them credibility and through the use of their network. This was also expressed as being a part of SIANI's long-term commitment to work with marginalised groups, building a capital of trust over time.

Equity. Beneficiaries are the youth's themselves as well as the senior officials who now have access to new perspectives.

Evidence. *Not discussed*

Scalability: High

5. East African bioeconomy community of practice

Context. Bioeconomy actors across East Africa, such as smallholders, SMEs, researchers, investors, operated in **silos**, limiting value addition and market access. A **regional community** was emerging but needed coordination and connectors.

What changed. SIANI's network activities **boosted engagement and networking**; SEI teams in Nairobi/Stockholm began a **new research project** on **biobusiness opportunities** for Swedish–Kenyan collaboration.

SIANI's role. Regional convening (Nairobi 2023), supporting an expert group (2024-2025) and ongoing communications to connect private, public and research stakeholders.

Evidence & link.

- *SIANI boosted engagement and networking in the East African bioeconomy —* https://www.siani.se/impact-story/siani-boosted-engagement-and-networking-in-the-east-african-bioeconomy/

Outcome area(s):

SIANI enabled broader participation for small- and medium sized farmers as well as the private sector in a new region. This led to the creation of an increased understanding among involved groups.

1. actualised topics and changed agendas/practices

3. joint actions across stakeholders, and

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. Insights on how all actors must be included for a more sustainable forestry. Without enablers all actors don't have the time or the space to learn from each other. This inclusion leads to increased productivity and the creation of more jobs. Also leads to new perspectives on the global food system, a more holistic understanding.

SIANI's contribution. SIANI acted as an enabler through regional networks, in parts related to its agrobiological expert group. SIANI was a catalysator for the action.

Equity. Beneficiaries were those involved in the research project itself as well as actors in the regional network.

Evidence. Evidence through the financing of research projects.

Scalability: Medium

6. Community knowledge sharing in Nepal

This outcome was selected as one of three most significant outcomes by group 2 in the workshop.

Context. Traditional food knowledge is a **connective tissue** in local food systems but is often under-documented, which weakens demand for **local crops** and erodes culinary heritage.

What changed. An expert group produced **ten recipe videos** and a **draft recipe book** in **Sudurpashchim Province**, raising visibility and appreciation for local ingredients and dishes. A policy study was published on interlinkage and institutional arrangement of agrobiodiversity with climate change, food and nutrition in Nepal. A dialogue on food system transformation in December 2022, gathering 63 participants from diverse stakeholder groups, shared expert group results widely.

SIANI's role. Supported the expert group through their expert group yearly call.

Evidence & link.

- *Traditional food recipes from Sudurpashchim Province* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/traditional-food-recipes-from-sudurpashchim-province/

- *Perceptive Study on Policy Interlinkage and Institutional Arrangement of Agrobiodiversity with Climate Change, Food and Nutrition* — https://www.siani.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Khanal-Et-al.-2022-The-Journal-of-Agriculture-and-Environment-Vol-23-JUNE-2022.pdf

- *Collective action for sustainable food systems in Nepal* — https://www.siani.se/news-story/collective-action-for-sustainable-food-systems-in-nepal/

Outcome area(s):

1. actualised topics and changed agendas/practices

2. enhanced capacities/knowledge

3. joint actions across stakeholders

Significance of change. *Not discussed/documented*

SIANI's contribution. This was connected to SIANI's more recent contributions in Nepal with the Nepal case on pollination and regional involvement.

Equity. Large focus on equity for this project. Content was created in local languages, spread through TV and Youtube, celebrating local often undocumented food. Highlighted and gave credit to the women involved.

Evidence. *Not discussed/documented*

Scalability: *Not discussed/documented*

7. ASEAN elevates universities in sustainable agriculture policy

Context. Across ASEAN, universities' roles in sustainable agriculture (research, extension, engagement) were important but weakly specified in regional policy.

What changed. ASEAN adopted **regional guidelines for sustainable agriculture** that draw on work initiated through SIANI's expert group, explicitly highlighting HEIs' roles. The initiative also resulted the creation of an **informal regional network** representing at least 250 people and over 50 partner universities, CSOs and government and international agency officials from at least eight countries. The collaborative work has resulted in a number of **academic articles** linking to the initial findings from the expert group.

SIANI's role. Supported and convened the **Higher Education for Sustainable Agriculture (HESA)** expert group (Feb 2015-Jan 2016); its briefs and reviews informed ASEAN processes.

Evidence & links.

- *Higher Education for Sustainable Agriculture (HESA) in Southeast Asia* — https://www.siani.se/expert-groups/past-expert-groups/higher-education-sustainable-agriculture-hesa-southeast-asia/

- Annex A - SIANI annual report 2024

- *Change beyond SIANI: Expert groups' impact in their regions* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/change-beyond-siani-expert-groups-impact-in-their-regions/

- *Former SIANI Expert Group contributes to policy processes in ASEAN* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/former-siani-expert-group-contributes-to-policy-processes-in-asean/

Outcome area(s):

Led to ASEAN policy. Has also resulted in continued academic articles and a regional meeting in 2024.

1. actualised topics and changed agendas/practices

2. enhanced capacities/knowledge

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. *Not discussed/documented*

SIANI's contribution. SIANI contributed to communication and dissemination of the expert groups' substantial outputs (40+ items published on SIANI website).

Equity. Targeted primarily at higher education, which is exclusive but at an institutional level others can benefit from the policy.

Evidence. *Not discussed/documented*

Scalability: *Not discussed/documented*

8. Early-career researchers (ECR) gain collaboration pathways

This outcome (combined with **outcome 10**) was selected as one of three most significant outcomes by group 2 in the workshop.

Context. Early-career researchers (ECR) often lack **exposure, mentorship and cross-institutional networks** to turn ideas into funded collaborations and publications. A neutral platform can accelerate **peer ties** and **senior-mentor links**.

What changed. SIANI/SLU-Global biennial young researcher workshops gave ECRs a **platform to present, interact and co-develop ideas**, leading to ongoing collaborations and researcher-led events noted in SIANI's outcome mapping. ECRs developed capacity to communicate research more widely, thus strengthening its relevance to policy and society.

SIANI's role. Provided **repeated, low-barrier convenings** and visibility for ECRs; connected them with senior researchers and policy actors; maintained **knowledge flows** that sustained relationships.

Evidence & links.

- Annex A - SIANI annual report 2024

- *Provided a platform for early career researchers to interact and develop collaborations for the future* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/provided-a-platform-for-early-career-researchers-to-interact-and-develop-collaborations-for-the-future/

Outcome area(s):

2. enhanced capacities/knowledge

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. ECRs valued insights on work across disciplines, and to see their own research in a multi-sector context.

SIANI's contribution. *Not discussed/documented*

Equity. *Not discussed/documented*

Evidence. *Not discussed/documented*

Scalability: *Not discussed/documented*

9. Long-term youth engagement in Ethiopia

This outcome was selected as by group 2 one of three most significant outcomes.

Context. SIANI has worked with youth in Ethiopia over several years to **open pathways** into entrepreneurship, policy fora and international platforms, moving beyond one-off scholarships or events toward **sustained accompaniment**.

What changed. Youth collaborators gained **visibility and opportunities** (e.g., participation in the World Food Forum (WFF); entrepreneurs showcased in regional SIANI meetings), with **follow-on traction in Ethiopia**, including business advances and engagement with officials.

SIANI's role. Curated youth slots at high-level events; connected young entrepreneurs/researchers to Swedish and UN counterparts, such as participation in a dialogue held in Almedalen together with the World Food Programme; **kept the relationship going** across multiple touchpoints (dialogues, regional meetings and exhibitions, side-events). This had both short-term and long-term outcomes. Short-term it led to the student entrepreneur showcases. On a longer-term basis it contributed to the

Beta Blockers, an upstart focused on nutritious food for children, and representation by youth in SIANI meetings in Nairobi 2023 and Almedalen 2022.

Evidence & links.

- Annex A - SIANI annual report 2024

- *SIANI's long-term engagement with youth: The case of Ethiopia* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/sianis-long-term-engagement-with-youth-the-case-of/

Outcome area(s):

2. enhanced capacities/knowledge

3. joint actions across stakeholders, and

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. *Not discussed/documented*

SIANI's contribution. *Not discussed/documented*

Equity. Was mostly discussed in relation to challenges in access as Visa-issues meant that stakeholders had limit access and couldn't attend events hosted in Rome.

Evidence. *Not discussed/documented*

Scalability: *Not discussed/documented*

10. SIANI strengthens the Swedish Resource Base

This outcome (combined with **outcome 8**) was selected as one of three most significant outcomes by group 2 in the workshop.

Context. Sweden's "Resource Base" (academia, CSOs, public sector, private sector, youth) needed a **neutral platform** to exchange knowledge with global processes and bring insights back home.

What changed. SIANI functioned as a **recognised multi-sector platform**, with evidence of **demand and reach** (e.g., **103k pageviews in 2024**, 169 web posts; **137 expert-group submissions in 2023**; increased private-sector collaboration).

SIANI's role. Ongoing **knowledge brokering and convening**; reporting back from FAO/IFAD and connecting Swedish expertise to international fora; raising interest among students in an international career.

Evidence & links.

- Annex A - SIANI annual report 2024

- *SIANI strengthens the Swedish Resource Base* — https://www.siani.se/impact-story/siani-strengthens-the-swedish-resource-base/

Outcome area(s):

2. enhanced capacities/knowledge

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. *Not discussed/documented*

SIANI's contribution. *Not discussed/documented*

Equity. *Not discussed/documented*

Evidence. *Not discussed/documented*

Scalability: *Not discussed/documented*

11. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) negotiation

This outcome was selected as one of three most significant outcomes by group 1 in the workshop.

This outcome was added as part of the workshop with the description being based on discussions in the group.

Context. A Policy-practice interface through a SIANI-Focali collaboration pilot. A series of dialogues that led to several outcomes related to the CBD.

What changed. Focali upheld dialogues with partners at COP 16, creating increased awareness raising. This involved close contact with the Swedish delegation during the CBD process, where Focali was invited to give input on the forest process during June 2025. The lead of the Swedish delegation also took part in Focali events, asking for policy support by Focali. This was seen as a win-win event where previously established relationships led to concrete policy influence. Seen through the policy, as several sections from Focali was pasted into the policy itself.

SIANI's role. Focali was the main actor for this action. Focali lent it's support throughout the process and enabled collaboration through it's events.

Outcome area(s):

The outcomes included dialogue with the delegation, input on the policy and discussions through Focali hosted events. Concrete evidence through the policy itself.

1. actualised topics and changed agendas/practices

4. strengthened connectivity and vibrancy.

Significance of change. A realisation on how increased connection is needed for sustainable forestry. A need for bridges instead of silos. It also led to an increased visibility of the topic in the Swedish policy.

SIANI's contribution. Built these connections up over time and through being an active member in Focali.

Equity. Relevant primarily for policy makers, researchers and Focali itself. Final or end-user impact is hard to gauge at this point in time.

Evidence. E-mails from the process between the parties of the DBD and the fact that text, authored by Focali, can be found in the policy.

Scalability: Medium

Clustering for further analysis

During the workshop and the follow-up discussions within the team, it became clear that several of the selected outcomes had significant similarities in either their target groups or the type of outcome that they resulted in. Instead of focusing purely on one or two specific outcomes, to enable deepened analysis in the mid-term evaluation, several outcomes were selected and clustered into certain thematic areas for further analysis. Each cluster covers all four outcome areas. These are presented below.

Cluster 1: Swedish resource base

What we mean by this cluster

This cluster captures how SIANI functions as a neutral, multi-sector Swedish platform that connects academia, public sector, CSOs, private sector and youth to global processes, and how that connectivity builds domestic capacity and collaboration pathways. Two central examples are:

- **2.10: Strengthening the Swedish Resource Base**: evidence of demand and reach (e.g., 103k pageviews in 2024, 169 web posts, 137 expert-group submissions in 2023, and increased private-sector collaboration). SIANI is building bridges among multiple Swedish organisations, confirmed in multiple interviews.

- **2.8: Early-career researcher (ECR) pathways**: repeated, low-barrier convenings (e.g., with SLU Global) that gave ECRs visibility and collaboration routes with senior researchers and policy actors.

What "Swedish resource base" means in evaluation terms: a set of outcomes where SIANI is a knowledge broker and convenor for Swedish actors, enabling skills, relationships, and opportunities (especially for ECRs) that carry back into Swedish practice and outward into international fora.

Persons consulted specifically for the cluster:

- SLU Global responsible for early career workshops.
- One participant in the early career workshop.

Note: Questions regarding the Swedish resource base have been asked during a majority of the KII's, not only for those interviewed as part of the cluster.

Findings

SIANI contributes significantly to strengthening the Swedish resource base by acting as a neutral, multi-sector platform that connects academia, public sector, CSOs, private sector, and youth to global processes. This connectivity builds domestic capacity and collaboration pathways, enabling Swedish actors to engage meaningfully in international dialogues on sustainable food systems and development cooperation and contributes to raising students and young professional's interest in global agrifood systems issues. Documentation from the Annual Reports highlights SIANI's role in convening Swedish stakeholders for thematic events and expert group activities, which have resulted in joint publications and policy briefs that inform both Swedish and global agendas[70].

The SIANI Communication Strategy underscores the importance of visibility and continuity, noting that SIANI's newsletters, webinars, and social media outreach have facilitated knowledge sharing and strengthened Sweden's position in global sustainability dialogues. These communication efforts

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[70] Annual Report 2023; Annual Report 2024

are credited with creating trusted relationships and repeated engagement opportunities, which stakeholders identify as critical for capacity development[71].

Interview findings reinforce that SIANI provides access and continuity for researchers and practitioners, enabling participation in policy fora and collaborative projects. Stakeholders emphasise the network's role in translating global processes for Swedish audiences and supporting early-career professionals, including SLU Global's young researcher workshop that developed capacities in key areas such as communication and systems thinking. The cumulative impact of these engagements is seen as a key factor in strengthening the resource base. While this is positive, one should recognise scale limitations as just 18 persons attended the biennial workshop.

The Expert Group Guidelines further illustrate how expert groups serve as vehicles for Swedish expertise to influence global policy discussions. Groups such as One Health and Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries have produced thematic outputs that enhance Sweden's knowledge contribution internationally[72].

Critical points include the need for more systematic engagement with private sector actors and municipalities, which remain underrepresented. While SIANI has successfully created pathways for engagement, formalising collaboration frameworks and investing in structured capacity-building programmes would deepen impact and sustainability.

Cluster 2: Youth engagement

What we mean by this cluster

This cluster covers how SIANI opens and sustains pathways for youth into research, entrepreneurship, and global policy fora, not as one-off participation but as an accompanied journey. Representative outcomes:

- **2.4: Youth partners at World Food Forum**: co-organising, participation in flagships (e.g., Young Scientists Group), intergenerational formats with FAO/IFAD/Swedish ministries; Swedish government recognition of youth in the National Pathway to Sustainable Food Systems. *Workshop report:* *https://www.siani.se/news-story/inspiring-youth-action-for-soil-health-and-sustainable-food-systems/*

- **2.9: Long-term youth engagement in Ethiopia**: curated youth slots; entrepreneurs showcased regionally; follow-on traction with officials and visibility in multiple SIANI touchpoints.

- **2.3: Practice-based learning hub at Alnarp**: youth-centred practice learning that built partnerships, small grants, and international exposure.

What this means in evaluation terms: assess whether SIANI lowers barriers and lends credibility for youth to access resources, platforms, and policy spaces — and whether those experiences translate into ongoing opportunities, networks, or ventures.

Persons consulted specifically for the cluster:

- Participant in WFF Young Scientists Group.
- Two representatives from Alnarps farm (were consulted over e-mail).
- Representative from Beta Blockers.

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[71] SIANI Communication Strategy, 2023
[72] Expert Group Guidelines, 2024

Note: Questions regarding youth engagement have been asked during a majority of the KII's, not only for those interviewed as part of the cluster.

Findings

Youth engagement is recognised as a strategic priority in the current phase. Documentation from Annual Reports and the programme document for SIANI phase 4 notes targeted programming and expert group activities designed to involve younger practitioners and students, including webinars and thematic events that provide entry points into research and policy dialogues. This focus is considered essential for renewing the talent pipeline and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the network[73].

The SIANI Communication Strategy highlights efforts to reach youth through social media campaigns and accessible content formats, aiming to make global food system issues relatable and actionable for younger audiences. These efforts have increased participation in events, but stakeholders note that engagement remains largely ad hoc and lacks a structured approach to sustained involvement[74]. As noted previously in the evaluation, respondents to the survey, conducted as part of this mid-term evaluation, had a significantly lower number of participants in the younger age group (16% of the total, 18 people in total), indicating some challenges in youth engagement.

Interview findings showcase the challenge in attributing a causal contribution for SIANI's efforts on youth engagement, while also highlighting the different perceived contribution of SIANI in practice. One interviewee (within the younger age group) made clear that SIANI, through providing a platform, a network and the opportunity to travel to conferences gave their project much needed visibility and legitimacy. This in turn led to new financing opportunities and further engagement both locally and globally through the SIANI network. Another young network member highlighted their engagement with SIANI as having been positive and insightful but had a harder time making a casual or even tangential relation between their success and SIANI's contribution.

SIANI's Youth Strategy (2021–2024) provides a framework to mainstream youth engagement in sustainable agriculture and food security. It defines a set of objectives to promote youth voices, enable intergenerational dialogues, and connect youth in Sweden and low-income countries through four pillars: engagement, dialogues, and online communication[75]. We note that the strategy is out of date, no new Youth Strategy has been provided to the evaluation team.

Critical points mentioned by interviews include the need for innovative approaches that empower young people to contribute meaningfully and benefit from the network's activities. Without structured pathways and leadership opportunities, youth engagement risks remaining episodic rather than transformative.

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[73] Annual Report 2023; Annual Report 2024; SIANI Programme Document Phase 4
[74] SIANI Communication Strategy, 2023
[75] SIANI's Youth Strategy 2021-2024

Annex 4: Expert groups

Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group

The Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group was established to address the lack of safe and effective pest control solutions for small-scale farmers in developing countries, where 99% of tropical fruit production originates. The group's overarching goal is to improve crop protection, enhance yields and quality, and reduce trade barriers caused by pesticide residue issues. Its work focuses on creating a global multi-stakeholder network involving growers, researchers, regulators, industry, and policymakers[76].

Key goals and methods:

- Identify and prioritise pest and disease challenges for tropical fruits through surveys and consultations.
- Develop a roadmap and model for priority setting, incorporating trade, economic significance, and growers' needs.
- Facilitate policy dialogue to accelerate registration of minor-use pesticides and adoption of Codex MRLs.
- Promote integrated pest management (IPM) and safer crop protection alternatives[77].

Activities:

- Virtual and in-person consultations to identify priorities.
- Development of a communication and outreach strategy, including infographics, videos, and policy briefs.
- Monthly virtual meetings and participation in regional and international conferences.
- Exchange visits to Swedish research institutes for technology transfer and learning.
- Publication of a policy paper on domestic and Codex MRL gaps[78].

Budget:

The total project cost is approximately SEK 779,400, including SEK 499,400 requested from SIANI and SEK 280,000 in-kind contributions from the Minor Use Foundation. Major cost items includes priority-setting workshops, exchange visits, communication products, and participation in conferences[79].

Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries Expert Group

This group aims to highlight the contributions of small-scale fisheries (SSF) to food security, livelihoods, and sustainable food systems in Latin America. It seeks to counter the marginalisation of SSF by producing evidence-based knowledge and fostering policy dialogue.

Key goals and methods:

- Promote recognition of SSF as central to sustainable seafood systems.
- Establish national hubs in five countries (Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina) to mobilise outreach and research.
- Produce five country-specific eBooks and one regional synthesis publication.

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[76] Proposal: Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group
[77] Proposal: Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group; Budget, MEL plan and workplan: Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group
[78] Communication and Outreach Strategy: Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group; Budget, MEL plan and workplan: Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group
[79] Budget, MEL plan and workplan: Tropical Fruits Liaison Expert Group

- Engage youth and women in fisheries governance and advocacy[80].

Activities:

- Inception meeting at the SSF Regional Symposium in Mexico.
- Multi-stakeholder workshops and training sessions on Blue Justice and sustainable seafood systems.
- Development and publication of eBooks showcasing SSF practices and policy recommendations.
- Dissemination of findings through social media, newsletters, and international fora.

Budget:

The total budget is SEK 500,000. Key allocations include inception meetings, workshops, translation and design of eBooks, and closure events[81].

One Health Expert Group

This group focuses on integrating zoonotic risk management and resource recovery into WaSH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) interventions in Burkina Faso. Its aim is to promote a One Health approach linking human, animal, and environmental health.

Key goals and methods:

- Capitalise on past experiences of integrated WaSH initiatives to reduce zoonotic risks and improve agricultural productivity.
- Identify stakeholder needs and constraints for adopting integrated interventions.
- Develop communication products and policy briefs to raise awareness[82].

Activities:

- Literature review and interviews to document existing initiatives.
- Two major reports: one on zoonotic risk reduction and another on excreta reuse for agriculture.
- Workshops with stakeholders to validate findings and discuss needs.
- Production of communication materials, including an infographic and a short film.
- Advocacy for integrating zoonotic risk management into national WaSH policies[83].

Budget:

Total budget is approximately SEK 442,333. Major cost items include inventories, needs assessments, workshops, communication activities, and audit[84].

Wild Foods, Biodiversity, Livelihood Expert Group

The WFBL Expert Group aims to strengthen food security and biodiversity conservation by promoting the use of wild foods and traditional crops among indigenous communities in Asia. It seeks to counter declining knowledge and practices related to wild foods.

Key goals and methods:

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[80] Proposal: Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries Expert Group
[81] MEL plan and workplan: Latin American Small-Scale Fisheries Expert Group
[82] Proposal: One Health Expert Group
[83] MEL plan and workplan: One Health Expert Group; Report: Technical report of the expert subgroup on the agricultural recovery of wastewater and human excreta; Report: Experiences in Managing Health Risks Related to Excreta to Strengthen Human and Animal Health through Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
[84] MEL plan and workplan: One Health Expert Group

- Document and restore threatened wild food species and traditional crops.
- Establish forest food field schools as hubs for learning and exchange.
- Promote sustainable harvest protocols and community seed banks.
- Engage youth and elders in revitalising traditional food systems[85].

<u>Activities:</u>

- Baseline surveys and research on species such as yams, Dioscorea, and millets.
- Field workshops in India and the Philippines on identification and processing of wild foods.
- Development of local curricula and communication products (videos, infographics).
- Organisation of village-level food festivals and regional dialogues.
- Documentation and dissemination of findings through wildfoodsasia.com and newsletters.

<u>Budget:</u>

Total budget is SEK 500,000. Key allocations include field workshops, research and documentation, communication products, curriculum development, and regional events[86].

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[85] Proposal: Wild Foods, Biodiversity, Livelihood Expert Group
[86] MEL plan and workplan: Wild Foods, Biodiversity, Livelihood Expert Group

Annex 5: Documents consulted

Activity log 2023-2025

Agreements SIANI and SLU/Focali

Agri4D. 2023 executive report, post conference evaluation Agri4D 2025

Communication analytics. KPI's 2024 and 2025, Dashboard analytics 2022 and 2023

Financial report. 2023 and 2024

After action reviews. This includes WFF event regeneration of soils, matskiftet event, expert group call first- and final action review 2024, and young researcher's workshop

Annual reports. 2023 and 2024 with related annexes

Annual surveys. 2022, 2023 and 2024 and survey, questions for 2025 survey

SIANI Communication material and strategy. Promotional Video and SIANI Communication strategy 2023

Event planning documentation. Guide — Registration and Zoom meetings

Expert group documentation 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. This includes call texts, application templates, expert group internal operating guidelines, terms of references for expert group proposals, expert group exchange meetings, selected groups etc.

Final report phase three. Including Expert Groups outcomes and impact 2025-2022

Previous evaluations. Evaluation of phase 1,2 and 3. Mid-term review of phase 3.

Human Rights Based approach. Training and workshop materials, workplan 2024-2025

Membership discussion

Organisation and contacts. E-mail contact list and governance documents

SIANI 4 MEL and programme documentation

Workplans. 2023, 2024 and 2025

Youth strategy documentation. SIANI's Youth Strategy 2021-2024, Youth strategy assessment ToR and Youth Strategy Review 2024

Steering Committee Meetings. Minutes and PowerPoint slides

SIANI regional network meeting. 2023 and 2024

Development assistance for a new era — Freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth

Strategy for Sustainable Growth, Green Transition and Education, 2025–2029

Sida's multi-dimensional poverty analysis' conceptual framework approach

Agenda 2030

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