



Management Response

Mid-term and Impact Evaluation (MTE) of the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO) and SECO's Support Programme

by Como Consult and CDE

December 2025

Background

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO has mandated Como Consult GmbH with a Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) of SECO's support to the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO). In parallel, SWISSCO has mandated the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern (CDE) for an evaluation of the impact of the Platform. It was decided that these two parts of the evaluation should be conducted jointly by Como Consult and CDE under the lead of Como Consult.

The purpose of the evaluation was (a) to examine the extent to which SECO's support has enabled SWISSCO to create added value for the various stakeholder groups in Switzerland, but above all but also for the actors in the producer countries, and (b) to generate evidence on the mechanisms of action of SWISSCO's multi-stakeholder approach and to identify good practices and potential for improvement in this regard.

The assignment took place between November 2024 and June 2025.

Appreciation of the Report: Structure, Methodology & Process

The evaluation team included two people from Como (Thomas Finkel, Piera Waibel) and three people of the CDE (Christoph Oberlack, David Bugmann, Markus Giger), which complemented each other well in terms of topical and methodological expertise. The coordination of the assignment was straightforward, and the team showed a high degree of responsiveness. With the CDE, a SWISSCO member and board representative was part of the evaluation team, which undermines its independence. In retrospect, it might have been sensible to clarify the advantages and disadvantages of the CDE playing a critical role in the evaluation more explicitly before the evaluation and to address them openly with the team.

The methodology, consisting of an extensive document review, stakeholder interviews (n=33), a field visit to Ghana, and an online member survey (N=51 completed responses), was adequate. Triangulation was used to corroborate findings from different data sources.

The evaluation report is clear and well-written. Unusual is however the inclusion of a substantial number of recommendations under each chapter. SECO and SWISSCO therefore requested an Executive Summary, which presents the findings and key recommendations in a more condensed form. Although generally valid, the very high number of specific recommendations in the main text makes it difficult to distil the most meaningful ones. In our opinion, a substantial number of recommendations point to measures that were already being

implemented or planned¹. In addition, some recommendations are repeated with somewhat different wording². As repeatedly observed to the evaluators, we would have appreciated a clearer prioritisation and bundling of recommendations, which would also be in line with the recommendations received from the Parliamentary Control Committee in 2023³. For the follow-up to the recommendations, we therefore foresee to group measures and not report on them individually. Also, we have undertaken a certain prioritization of recommendations ourselves, where we have put those for which we do not foresee a specific follow-up in the annex.

In hindsight, it might have been useful to foresee intermediate meetings between SECO, SWISSCO and the evaluation team to discuss preliminary findings, clarify important questions and align expectations.

Key Findings and Lessons learnt

The evaluation finds that SWISSCO is regarded by its members as a positive and valuable platform for advancing sustainability in the cocoa sector. It has carved out a strong role, complementing existing initiatives, though limitations typical of multi-stakeholder platforms remain. The evaluation highlights both achievements and areas for improvement across six dimensions:

1. Accountability & Transparency

Over two thirds of stakeholders agree SWISSCO strengthens accountability through joint target-setting and transparency. It fosters peer support and shared commitments, yet concerns exist about “free riding”. Reporting requirements are considered too lenient.

2. Networking & Knowledge Exchange

SWISSCO effectively promotes collaboration and trust, with a majority of stakeholders noting increased partnerships. Events, especially in-person ones, are well-received. Members call for deeper case studies, stronger engagement with producing-country stakeholders, and greater harmonization of reporting standards with EU and the World Cocoa Foundation.

3. International Collaboration & Policy Dialogue

SWISSCO enhances Switzerland’s reputation, particularly in Ghana through partnerships key government partners. Policy dialogue is recognized as a powerful but underused tool, with members expecting stronger influence from Swiss embassies and coordination with actors like the World Bank and ISCOs. Current ISCO working groups are considered too fragmented and need streamlining.

4. Financing Windows

SWISSCO’s co-funding mechanism is highly valued (90% approval). However, increased clarity on funding criteria is required, and additionality is sometime questioned. Landscape projects are considered a promising approach but suffer from limited member willingness to invest beyond supply chains. Innovation projects sometimes lean toward business

¹ e.g. recommendations 3, 4, 6, 14, 16, 17, 20, 23, 34, 37, 49

² e.g. recommendations 18, 28, 39 and 45 on access to finance; or 22, 27 and 32 on promoting bottom-up approaches

³ The Federal Council is requested to ensure that the recommendations in external evaluation reports are always addressed to specific recipients, that external evaluators propose a prioritization of these recommendations, and that they always define a time frame for their implementation.

development rather than true innovation. The peer-learning window is underutilized but offers strong potential, particularly for SMEs needing joint impact studies.

5. Intervention Mix & Sustainability Transformation

Most stakeholders find SWISSCO's interventions coherent and impactful. Gaps remain in consumer-country activities, transition finance, and in scaling proven approaches. Effective transformation will require bridging project silos, context-specific tailoring, deeper local engagement, and expanded policy dialogue.

6. Institutional Governance

SWISSCO is seen as effective and responsive, though representation of producer-country voices is limited, and board members often reflect organizational rather than sector-wide interests. It relies on membership fees and SECO funding but could diversify financing via green/impact investment, especially for landscape projects. The evaluation finds that strengthening governance, expectations, and accountability would enhance SWISSCO's credibility as a convener.



Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
Recommendation 1 To SWISSCO: Develop and enforce stricter procedures for non-reporting companies, NGO and research members and make reporting mandatory to remain a member of the platform, as is the case with GISCO. IDH has a procedure for this which could be used. As a minimum, companies receiving SECO funding should be required to provide MEL data. Consider informing members about non-reporting companies.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Focus on supporting non-reporting companies instead of taking them out of the network.				
	<u>Measures:</u> The Accountability Framework has been further strengthened and clarified through the revised Roadmap 2030. However, effective implementation is crucial to harnessing its full potential. To that end, the following follow-up activities are foreseen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored & Business-Friendly Communication of Roadmap Commitments: Ensure accessibility, relevance, and understanding of Roadmap targets across all business units and regions. • Increased Positive Messaging of Roadmap Progress: Build momentum and confidence by regularly showcasing achievements and efforts. 			SWISSCO	2026/Q2 onwards
Recommendation 2 To SWISSCO: Consider individual public disclosure of indicators reported by companies and other sector	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> While NGO rating initiatives such as the Chocolate Scorecard play an important role in promoting transparency around corporate sustainability performance, the SWISSCO/ISCO monitoring system should serve a complementary function, one that enables				

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members to SWISSCO. A softer solution would be to require only the members getting PPP funds to report publicly. This would not entail a higher reporting burden, as they already report these numbers to SWISSCO anyway.	<p>companies to share data openly without risking unintended public disclosure. Only then, will companies fully share their data.</p> <p>The second option can be applied to the project monitoring and sharing of experiences, but cannot be extended to general reporting as it would disincentivise companies to invest in PPPs</p>				
	<u>Measures:</u> -				
Recommendation 3 To SWISSCO: Continue 1:1 engagement with underperforming companies. Potentially develop additional measures to encourage them to progress/move. As a first step, understand why they are not reporting and whether they need support (especially for SMEs).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> 1:1 engagements are indeed planned to be continued.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Regular reporting to Board on activities undertaken (e.g. 1:1 engagements): Maintain Board alignment, support, and governance over Roadmap progress. We will increase the number of 1:1 engagement particularly in the context of the baseline survey (levelling in along the 6 Roadmap Ambitions) and the progress reviews foreseen.			SWISSCO	2026/Q1 onwards Annual Board Reporting in Q2
Recommendation 4 To SWISSCO: Consider enhanced reporting of outcome indicators, potentially linked to collective impact assessments.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> The revised Roadmap 2030 anchors all new ambitions in measurable outcome targets, and the planned MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning) activities prioritise outcome-level reporting wherever feasible. E.g. CHIS studies have been integrated into company commitments under Ambition 1 to provide farmer-level outcome data. In addition to continuing to report outputs, SWISSCO will enhance outcome reporting by aligning Roadmap indicators with sector				

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	and international frameworks and promote collaborative impact assessments.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Roadmap 2030 indicators explicitly cover outputs, outcomes and impact. SWISSCO will provide members with an indicator matrix that makes outcome indicators and data sources explicit.			SWISSCO	Ongoing
Recommendation 5 To SWISSCO: Consider plausibility checks on the reported indicators to ensure data quality.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> In the revised Roadmap 2030 MEL set-up, SWISSCO will introduce structured plausibility checks for reported indicators, focusing in particular on outcome and impact level indicators. This includes systematic outlier checks, consistency checks across data sources, and transparent documentation of methods and assumptions. Where inconsistencies occur, SWISSCO will initiate clarification with members.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Apply plausibility checks to all Roadmap indicators before publication and flag anomalies to reporting members for clarification. Where possible, cross-check outcome indicators against independent data sources (CHIS, national statistics etc). Document and report data caveats alongside reported indicators.			SWISSCO	2026/Q2 onwards
Recommendation 6 To SWISSCO: Maintain and ensure continued quality of the widely appreciated offerings for networking and knowledge exchange. Continue to prioritize in-person events over virtual meetings.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> The element of networking and peer learning is one of the four key pillars of action of SWISSCO, which shows the relevance of such spaces. In-person events are prioritized in selected moments of the year to ensure connection among members, while virtual meetings focus on snippets of knowledge sharing more spread around the year and can more easily be open for an audience beyond SWISSCO membership.				

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	<u>Measures:</u> Continuously evaluate events for their usefulness and get feedback from members on what their needs and wishes are in terms of content.			SWISSCO	Ongoing
Recommendation 7 To <u>SWISSCO</u> : Encourage members to share more detailed case studies of solutions that work as well as of failures or encountered difficulties and how they were addressed.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Members are already encouraged to share their experiences in the various formats that SWISSCO proposes, but case studies are often not yet deepened and often failures or difficulties are not openly shared.				
	<u>Measure:</u> Reflect on how to share case studies, supporting members sharing (with little effort) rich, practice-based insights through formats such as Interactive Case Study Labs. Place greater emphasis on safe spaces to share what has worked and what hasn't in which context.			SWISSCO	2026/Q3
Recommendation 8 To <u>SWISSCO</u> : Foster exchange/learning through origin/project visits. Create smaller, focused meeting opportunities for the co-creation of solutions.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Learning Journeys to origin countries can be organized depending on member interest. In fact, in some cases, such visits have already been organized in the past (e.g. Peru 2024).				
	<u>Measures:</u> Organize learning journeys if and where sufficient member interest exists. Low-barrier formats (e.g. story circles or digital diaries) can be piloted to amplify farmer voices. Through the enhanced MEL Community of Practice (CoP), we plan to create lively Living Labs to address key challenges and questions in a dynamic, flexible and trust-based manner, working in small groups, among others.			SWISSCO	November 2025 (afterwards every second year)
Recommendation 9	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		

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<p><u>To SWISSCO:</u> Envisage further reporting alignment beyond ISCOs and ICI, i.e. with the WCF and the current regulatory requirements.</p>	<p><u>Response:</u> The revised reporting for the Roadmap 2030 will already strengthen alignment with the ISCOs and ICI indicator definitions as we recognise that consistent reporting beyond these platforms is crucial to reduce fragmentation and reporting burden for companies. SWISSCO will explore further alignment with the WCF approach to monitoring and evaluation and with current regulatory requirements (in particular EUDR and CSDDD) wherever feasible.</p>				
	<p><u>Measures:</u> Map Roadmap 2030 indicator set against WCF indicator taxonomy and key regulatory indicators (EUDR and CSDDD) to identify equivalences, near-equivalences and gaps.</p>			SWISSCO	2026/Q1-Q2
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p><u>To SWISSCO:</u> Explore ways to enhance the representation of producer country/farmer views in learning events.</p>	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<p><u>Response:</u> Being a member-driven platform, SWISSCO learning events naturally reflect the perspectives of our immediate network, which can sometimes result in limited representation from producer countries or farmers. To enhance the inclusion of these important voices, we will actively seek ways to integrate perspectives from producers and farmers whenever relevant and feasible.</p> <p>We will rely on our members to help identify whose voices are most pertinent to each topic and encourage them to involve colleagues or partners directly based in producing countries who can contribute their on-the-ground experiences. This approach will help ensure that learning events are more balanced, representative, and reflective of the realities across the cocoa value chain.</p>				
	<p><u>Measures:</u> Compile a list of experts from cocoa producing countries to form an expert pool we can regularly consult and invite into our learning spaces to ensure diverse, grounded perspectives.</p>			SWISSCO	Ongoing

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	We could also improve the coordination in key producer countries with colleagues from other ISCO countries.				
Recommendation 11 <u>To SWISSCO:</u> To tackle the challenge of a comfort zone/bubble, actively invite critical perspectives e.g. to Annual Reports or events, in addition to enhanced accountability mechanisms (Section 4.1).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> In the Annual Progress Report to SECO as well as the Learning Report developed in 2022, we started to include critical and/or failed experiences. We seek to deepen this practice.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Explore alternative knowledge-sharing approaches, e.g. a Critical Friends Panel at selected events to challenge assumptions.			SWISSCO	Ongoing
Recommendation 12 <u>To SWISSCO and SECO:</u> Strengthen policy dialogue in other origin countries besides Ghana, where appropriate together with other ISCOs, multilateral organizations and Swiss embassies/EDA.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Policy dialogue could theoretically be extended to other countries besides Ghana. However, there are practical limits, since for a meaningful policy dialogue with partner governments, Switzerland needs to have a sufficient “footprint” in a given country. Moreover, the Swiss embassy needs to have the human resources and capacities to conduct this dialogue, which is not the case in all producing countries.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Replicate, in an adapted version, the “Ghana”-Model only to Peru, by strengthening the collaboration primarily with stakeholders in the private sector, as foreseen e.g. in the framework of the SWISSCO Board Mission to Peru, including signing of MOU. The possibility of having a SWISSCO LAC representative in Peru (in collaboration with SSCP) will be explored. Engaging in a policy dialogue with Côte d’Ivoire in close collaboration with other ISCOs and involving the Swiss embassy, can be explored at a later stage and provided additional resources are available.			SECO/SWISSCO	2026 onwards
Recommendation 13	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		

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To SWISSCO: Foster a lean and fit-for-purpose ISCO structure, facilitating alignment, collaboration and complementarity between the ISCOs in consumer and origin countries.	<u>Response:</u> SWISSCO has actively participated in the joint development of the ISCO Alliance 2.0 strategic framework and revised MoU, which define a leaner and more purpose-driven structure focused on four areas of collaboration (Monitoring and Accountability, Procurement Practices, Learning Network and One Voice).				
	<u>Measures:</u> Focus is one ISCO 2.0 to make collaboration more efficient and agile: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced coordination to engage large companies (e.g. on the topic of sourcing practices). Develop harmonised Monitoring & Accountability processes Implement lean Learning Network format (replacing previous Working Group structure with curated thematic sessions) 			SWISSCO	Upon signature of the new MOU (foreseen for 2026/Q1)
Recommendation 14	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
To SWISSCO: Continue to rethink working group approach together with other ISCOs, and, if maintained, align on purpose of these and handle/resource adequately.	<u>Response:</u> Joint efforts among ISCOs have shown benefits such as avoiding duplication, expanding outreach, optimizing resources, and fostering broader exchange across networks. However, the past experience revealed that fixed working groups sometimes became obligation-driven rather than demand-driven, offering limited added value to our community. For this reason, we have maintained a structured working group only where it has proven effective: the Monitoring working group. For other areas, we propose a more flexible and demand-driven approach. A lighter and more responsive model will help ensure collaboration remains meaningful, efficient, and aligned with members' needs.				

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	<u>Measures:</u> Sharing calendars among ISCOs to coordinate planning, and inviting each other’s members to selected existing events when relevant.			SWISSCO	Ongoing
Recommendation 15 <u>To SWISSCO:</u> Consider creating smaller working groups—or integrating into existing formats like the Cacao Tertulia approach—that enable genuine dialogue and exchange.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> We recognize the value of creating spaces for genuine dialogue and exchange and will prioritize smaller, more interactive group formats to achieve this. This is the reason why design formats which embed small group work within events and learning sessions to encourage active participation and peer learning.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Rather than establishing new standalone working groups, we will focus on using Living Labs as natural spaces for more focused and collaborative working groups on specific themes or challenges.			SWISSCO	Ongoing
Recommendation 16 <u>To SWISSCO:</u> Ensure that CH SME, NGO and research organizations also have a place and voice there to leverage Swiss expertise in these sectors (other ISCOs are more focused on large companies only).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> SWISSCOs USP lies clearly in its ability to respond to domestic dynamics and needs of all stakeholders, most of which are SME, NGO and research organizations.				
	<u>Measures:</u> We plan to strengthen the current USP even further in the future. Besides, close, trust-based interactions with MNC staff based in Switzerland is import too to foster the relevance of SWISSCO.			SWISSCO	As of 2026/Q1
Recommendation 18 <u>To SWISSCO and SECO:</u> Build partnerships with financial institutions and design blended-financing instruments that lower the	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> SWISSCO and SECO agree there is a need to better harness the potential of the finance sector to increase investment into smallholder farming and reduce the dependence on project and CSR finance. Different SWISSCO members count with solid experience in this field. Still, we admit that in project work, collaboration with the				

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risk for the private sector to upscale sustainability efforts like DAF.	finance sector should be strengthened. Rather than designing new blended finance instruments, we would however suggest capitalizing on already existing mechanisms and expertise in our respective networks. This can be fostered by investing in targeted studies and learning exchange. Also, we would prefer not to limit the topic too much by only focusing on DAF or other agroforestry systems.			
	<u>Measures:</u> Foster mutual learning and exchange among the membership around smallholder finance. A call for proposals with remaining funds of the Innovation Call (300-500K) could be organized in 2026 already to develop concrete project experience. Preparing for the new SECO funding (2027-2030), the agrifinance dimension will be strengthened, including targeted budget lines to continue and accelerate needed learning within the SWISSCO community and beyond.		SWISSCO/SECO	Q1 2026
			SECO/SWISSCO	Q2/3 2026
Recommendation 19	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree	
<u>To SWISSCO and SECO:</u> Remain with the SWISSCO motto “tackling challenges together” in project funding, focusing fully on beyond supply chain activities and ensuring additionality is demonstrated in project proposals.	<u>Response:</u> The focus on beyond supply chain has been the underlying logic of the SWISSCO landscape initiatives. The results are however mixed because the appetite of companies to invest outside the supply chain has been limited (in part due to the context of high prices and regulatory pressures). Besides, collaborative approaches are more time consuming and ask for additional engagement by SWISSCO staff. Still, SECO and SWISSCO are open to consider continued engagement at least in a part of the ongoing landscape initiatives beyond the current funding cycle, acknowledging that these are long-term efforts.			
	<u>Measures:</u> SWISSCO and SECO will strive to strike the right balance between innovation and beyond supply chain initiatives in the forthcoming cooperation period. While landscape approaches and other beyond supply chain intervention will remain relevant, strong		SECO/SWISSCO	Q2/3 2026

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	stakeholder and in particular private sector commitment has to be ensured.				
Recommendation 21 <u>To SWISSCO:</u> Ensure projects per country are coordinated with each other, enabling mutual learning, complementarity, leverage and impact. Maybe consolidate and reduce the number of projects per origin where needed (i.e. Ghana).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> We strive for a coherent country portfolio particularly in priority countries such as Ghana and Peru. However, proper coordination and in-country exchange are resource intense and require additional HR. Besides, small, innovative projects can add a lot of value in terms of learning and potential scaling up but increase the number of projects per country.				
	<u>Measures:</u> In selected countries, SWISSCO seeks to foster the domestic learning agenda and the overall coordination of its projects. In the LAC region we plan to hire a regional advisor with similar ToR than Joseph Bandanaa in Ghana.			SWISSCO	As of 2026 (for LAC/Peru)
Recommendation 23 <u>To SECO and SWISSCO:</u> Efforts could be made to further foster project applications by SME, maybe even together. There could also be a % of funds set aside for SME. However, Chocosuisse (or its foundation) could also play a stronger role here and maybe even co-fund in this area.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> The Innovation Window is already primarily targeting SMEs. For the next phase, we will think of additional ways to engage SMEs and foster collaboration among them. The potential for closer collaboration with Chocosuisse will be explored.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Under the next support phase, think of financing windows that cater more specifically to SME needs. In 2026/Q1, we will engage (again) more closely with Chocosuisse to increase the reach of associated SMEs.			SECO/SWISSCO	Q2 2026
Recommendation 24	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		

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<p><u>To SECO:</u> Acknowledge long-term nature of (high quality) landscape projects and avoid funding gaps to keep momentum and commitments.</p>	<p><u>Response:</u> SECO agrees that landscape projects are long-term endeavours and consequently need investments over a longer period. SECO sees its role as a funder of foundational elements of landscape initiatives, such as the establishment of governance structure, action plans or M&E systems. However, funding cannot solely depend on SECO. Over time, other investors, incl. the national and/or local governments, private sector stakeholders, impact investors, etc. need to increasingly play their part too.</p>				
	<p><u>Measures:</u> SECO plans to continue its engagement in selected landscape approaches through its support to SWISSCO. SECO contributions will focus on activities of public good character which should establish the basis for other actors, both public and private, to invest too.</p>			SECO	Ongoing
<p>Recommendation 25</p> <p><u>To SWISSCO:</u> To ensure companies actually start co-investing into landscape approaches beyond their already existing supply chain activities, more efforts need to be made by SWISSCO to make them understand their importance for tackling the root causes of unsustainability in the focal landscapes and related problems in the supply chains. This could happen</p>	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<p><u>Response:</u> By organizing the Landscape Week, SWISSCO already made a serious effort to distil the lessons learnt from landscape projects and to identify key factors for a closer relationship with the private sector.</p>				
	<p><u>Measures:</u> We will closely monitor the further development and develop selected cases studies to distil key findings. Most probably, we will undertake a systematization of the landscape work in 2027 when most landscape projects end its current phase.</p>			SWISSCO	2026/Q2 and 2027 (second landscape week)

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through events, business cases or studies.				
Recommendation 26 <u>To SECO:</u> Review 25% co-funding offer and increase percentage if partners actually contribute their funding to the “beyond supply chain” activities. Generally, review what type of co-funding is acceptable and what not (i.e. farmer premiums).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree	
	<u>Response:</u> SECO agrees that the limit of 25% co-funding might have refrained some actors to engage in landscape approaches. Also, it might have led to somewhat where the additionality of the counterpart funding was not always certain. Still, the discussion around this requirement seems at least in part also be due to a misunderstanding of the underlying logic. Only when a critical mass of landscape actors is indeed willing to engage and coordinate, we may speak of a true landscape initiative. SECO’s interest was to make clear from the very beginning that landscape initiatives are different than its traditional “project funding” and that sustainability of such initiatives will first and foremost need to be ensured by the landscape actors themselves. However, this requirement could be implemented in an easier, more understandable manner.			
	<u>Measures:</u> In the new SWISSCO support phase, think of other means to ensure concrete and long-term stakeholder engagement, e.g. by limiting SECO support even more explicitly to the public good elements of landscape initiatives (e.g. governance, stakeholder engagement, M&E).		SECO	Q2/3 2026
Recommendation 27 <u>To SWISSCO:</u> Require project developers/leads to work more according to bottom-up approaches together with local government entities and environmental organizations and request exit strategies for handing over full	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree	
	<u>Response:</u> The need for stronger local alignment in the development and implementation of landscape initiatives has been recognized and widely discussed with project partners and in the scope of the landscape week.			
	<u>Measures:</u> Follow-up on the actions identified before and during the landscape week.		SWISSCO	Ongoing

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responsibility to local organizations.					
Recommendation 28 To SECO and SWISSCO: Establish partnerships with financing institutions/ climate and biodiversity funding sources as key elements of landscape projects to finance the sustainability efforts.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> As mentioned already, we fully agree that the links to the finance sector should be strengthened. We also agree that there is hitherto unused potential for synergies to the climate, carbon and biodiversity funding sectors. SWISSCO counts with different members with solid experience in these areas. Despite different efforts, it has so far been difficult to realize the existing potential through impactful initiatives beyond smaller pilots.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Additional ways to mobilize climate, carbon and/or biodiversity finance in the framework of concrete projects will be assessed in the development of the new SECO support phase to SWISSCO.			SECO/SWISSCO	Q2/3 2026
Recommendation 29 To SWISSCO: Continue broadly respected work on agroforestry in Ghana, including peer-learning and exchange/dialogue platforms. This is highly appreciated and considered a game changer, as currently most is done top down and at small scale, and CRIG has no overview. Be open for different approaches (not only Halba's DAF), aligning closely with CRIG/CHED	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Scaling DAF and other agroforestry approaches is a priority as outlined in the reviewed SWISSCO Roadmap. In Ghana, we develop a broad-based partnership focussed on knowledge and skills development as part of extension proposal of SANKOFA, including Swisscontact, HALBA, Lindt, ETHZ, FIBL and local and international partners				
	<u>Measures:</u> Finetuning and Kick-start of Extension program Sankofa as per 2026			SWISSCO and members (SWISSCONTACT, Halba, Lindt, others)	2026/Q1

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needs. Accordingly, the planned Center of Excellence needs to accommodate different systems and views, and further foster exchange, including farmer/bottom-up involvement for contextualisation.					
Recommendation 30 To SECO and SWISSCO: Develop clear and transparent criteria to decide about business development funding, and require (mandatory) in-depth results sharing.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> We agree that the criteria for project funding need to be as clear as possible. It is clear that public funds should not finance business development activities but rather focus on public goods. This principle has already been applied in the current phase. However, the differentiation between the two is not always straightforward, since the development of a new businesses might bring about great benefits to the cocoa sector and/or smallholders well beyond a specific supply chain.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Under the next support phase, develop funding criteria that is more clearly focused on project elements which have a clear public good character (especially under the innovations window). Also, the requirement of sharing results will be more prominently addressed as a contractual obligation.			SECO/SWISSCO	2027 onwards
				SECO/SWISSCO	immediately
Recommendation 32 To SWISSCO: Ensure innovation projects are aligned with other projects in origin countries for mutual acceleration and	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Exchange and coordination between innovation projects and other initiatives in origin countries have so far been more informal. Going forward, a more structured alignment could create synergies, avoid duplication, and accelerate mutual impact.				

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
evaluate opportunities to support origin-based organizations' innovations.	<p>It is not clear what <i>support</i> means in terms of origin-based organizations' innovation. Support could take the form of sharing relevant information—such as the SECO Startup Fund or other financing and partnership opportunities—but also relies on our members to identify and lead such collaborations, as they are the ones implementing SWISSCO-funded projects on the ground.</p> <p>For SECO, the support to SWISSCO is also a mechanism to engage and collaborate with the Swiss private sector. It is not foreseen to expand the scope to more traditional cooperation with origin-based organizations.</p>			
	<p><u>Measures:</u></p> <p>Share information on ongoing projects and direct new project leads to the SWISSCO website to review what already exists in their region before initiating new activities.</p> <p>Create learning rounds or groups per country or region (in English, Spanish, and French) to facilitate exchange among SWISSCO-funded projects, ideally using existing spaces such as the AGM or other events.</p> <p>Engage the experts panel (see Recommendation 10) to provide guidance on innovation alignment and help connect projects with relevant expertise and actors in producing countries.</p>		SWISSCO	Gradual implementation as of 2026 onwards
Recommendation 33 To SWISSCO: Ensure that project proposals contain a scaling up plan in case the innovation proves successful.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree	
	<p><u>Response:</u> Innovation projects are, by definition, spaces for testing and prototyping new ideas, where outcomes and lessons cannot be predetermined. While it is important that project proposals include an initial reflection or vision of how an innovation could potentially be scaled if successful, a concrete scaling-up plan cannot realistically be defined at the proposal stage.</p>			

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
	<u>Measures:</u> To address this in a balanced way, SWISSCO will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include a question in the project proposal template inviting applicants to describe their vision for potential scaling, rather than requiring a full plan.• Develop a follow-up process towards the end of projects to identify promising innovations and explore options for continuation, replication, or scale-up together with relevant partners.			SWISSCO	As of 2027 (latest), when new SECO project funding is deployed
Recommendation 34 To SWISSCO: Engage with Swiss Food Research's Cocoa Innovation Group (funded by members and Innosuisse) to see if there are overlaps and opportunities to sharpen each organizations' role and maybe even benefit from (co-)funding.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> SWISSCO is already actively engaged with the Swiss Food Research Cocoa Innovation Group as a member of its Steering Committee, meeting at least twice a year. This engagement began after the drafting of the assessment and ensures continuous exchange and coordination between both initiatives. We have also prepared and presented to our members a comparative overview of Swiss Food Research, SWISSCO, and Chocosuisse to clarify respective roles and identify areas of complementarity. Building on this, we are now in ongoing dialogue to explore potential overlaps, collaboration opportunities, and options for (co-)funding where relevant.				
	<u>Measures:</u> See response			SWISSCO	Ongoing
Recommendation 35 To SWISSCO: Explain members better what these projects are for and why they are/have been supported.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> The need for more and better communication to members has been fully recognized. Thus, a several measures have been identified, as you see below.				
	<u>Measures:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual Progress Report to SECO is shared also with members			SWISSCO	As of 2026, mainly from Q3

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One member event to showcase the progress and challenges in ongoing and finished projects. More systemic sharing of lessons learnt from virtually all ongoing and/or closed projects. 			when Report is ready
Recommendation 36 <u>To SWISSCO:</u> Ensure peer-learning and exchange can actually happen with all projects under this window, for example by facilitating project ideation, improved methodologies for transdisciplinary peer-learning and enhancing project communication beyond the CHIS.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree	
	<u>Response:</u> The projects under this window are, by definition, Peer Learning and Collaboration (PLC) projects. While this may not always be immediately visible from the outside, the design and content of these projects inherently aim to foster exchange and learning among diverse actors. For example, we have already facilitated several peer-learning and exchange activities, such as webinars on applied research topics (e.g. CDE's "Exploring Pricing Models in Cocoa Value Chain"), South-South exchanges on agroforestry practices. and Peer learning and collaboration through the CSOs in ISCOs Platform.			
	<u>Measures:</u> -			
Recommendation 38 <u>To SECO and SWISSCO:</u> Shift project funding even more towards creating systemic change and facilitating sustainability transformation in the cocoa sector.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree	
	<u>Response:</u> In principle, SECO fully agrees that funding should primarily aim to bring about systemic change and sector transformation. This is also why in the current second phase of the support programme, the bulk of SECO's funding goes into landscape initiatives rather than value chain projects. Although limited to a determined geographic space, the idea is to foster systemic change in terms of local governance, stakeholder collaboration and sector sustainability. However, as mentioned earlier, SWISSCO is also a means for SECO to collaborate directly with the Swiss private sector. The focus of the work therefore lies primarily on the field rather than on specific policy issues. Based on the concrete field			

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
	experience, SECO and the Swiss embassies are better equipped for a meaningful policy dialogue with national government partners.			
	<u>Measures</u> : Think about ways in which systemic change and sector transformation can be further strengthened in the future SECO support phase to SWISSCO.		SECO/SWISSCO	Q2/3 2026
Recommendation 39 <u>To SECO and SWISSCO</u> : Put more emphasis on the topic of transition by e.g. building a Transition Finance Taskforce within SWISSCO to design finance instruments and mobilization strategies to enable members to tap into impact investing and green finance funds.	Fully agree	Partially agree		
	<u>Response</u> : While we fully agree with the relevance of the topic, we are not yet sure the proposed Transition Finance Taskforce is indeed the most appropriate way forward. This needs to be explored and discussed further.			
	<u>Measures</u> : To be discussed in the SWISSCO Board and then taken forward under the new SECO support programme.		SWISSCO Board/SECO	Q1/2 2026
Recommendation 40 <u>To SWISSCO</u> : Facilitate quantitative studies on the business case for sustainability approaches. This would help to gain the ear of sourcing people, not just sustainability people, by proving that these approaches make supply chains more resilient and less risky.	Fully agree	Partially agree		
	<u>Response</u> : There is already a considerable body of scientific literature and case studies examining the “business case” for private sector investments in sustainability within the cocoa value chain (and comparable commodity chains such as coffee, palm oil, and soy). However, the evidence is mixed: while there are many case studies and reviews pointing to real benefits (e.g., higher productivity, risk reduction, brand/reputation advantages, price premiums), the clear, generalizable quantification of financial returns (ROI) across entire supply chains often remains incomplete or dependent on the context.			
	<u>Measures</u> : Further conversations with ISEAL/Evidensia might be insightful to distil key findings.		SWISSCO	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
Recommendation 41 To SWISSCO: Add activities to make Switzerland a more sustainable consumer country of cocoa (procurement rules, consumer sensitization, margins).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> We continue to support existing sensitization efforts led by our members and network, e.g. Schoggifestival. In addition, we are increasing our visibility in events that reach beyond the cocoa sector, like Building Bridges on impact investment, the Green Symposium, and Zurich Climate Week (from 2026 onward), as well as supporting academic lectures and university partnerships to foster broader awareness among potential consumers. Moreover, we are collaborating with the ISCOs on sustainable procurement practices.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Expanding activities in this area would require additional resources or a clear mandate from the Board. Any further direct outreach to consumers should be discussed and ideally coordinated with Chocosuisse, to ensure alignment and maximize impact.			SWISSCO	2026 onwards (e.g. Climate Week in May)
Recommendation 43 To SWISSCO: Continue fostering the emerging closer dialogue between Chocosuisse and SWISSCO, try establishing a Reward & Recognition agreement or MoU between SWISSCO and Chocosuisse. Aim for Chocosuisse to, step by step, play a bigger role (or contribute to SWISSCO for playing their role).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> This recommendation merits first bilateral discussion with CHOCOSUISSE. However, the intensity and quality of interactions with Chocosuisse have been substantially improved of the past years, paving the grounds for a further deepening of working relations building on mutual trust.				
	<u>Measures:</u> SWISSCO has a permanent guest seat in Chocosuisse's Sustainability Commission.			SWISSCO	2026 onwards
Recommendation 44	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
To SWISSCO: Consider establishing a new member category “Service Providers & Consultants” (without board seat and possibly higher membership fees).	Response: The recommendation has its value, but proper implementation requires a differentiated approach (the diversity among service providers and consultants is considerable).				
	Measures: We will assess the feasibility of this recommendation in the current revision of the bylaws.			SWISSCO	2026/Q2-Q3
Recommendation 45 To SWISSCO: Foster membership (in the new category “Service Providers & Consultants”) / participation of organizations from the finance sector that would potentially be important partners for scaling sustainability initiatives and approaches.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	Response: We have already reached out to numerous stakeholders in the finance sector and see to broaden our membership in this sector.				
	Measures: Continue targeted outreach activities to finance sector.			SWISSCO	2026 onwards
Recommendation 46 To SWISSCO: Seek to increase the representation and engagement of retailers. For that to happen, topics might have to be expanded to issues located in CH in alignment with the Global Cocoa Agenda.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	Response: The retail sector is already well represented in SWISSCO, involving the key corporate actors. However, further efforts could be undertaken to foster proactive behaviours and further alignment among retailers.				
	Measures: The Board representation should lead to more sector internal coordination and alignment. The foreseen revision of Bylaws could lead to a further strengthening of the Retailers representation in the Board (e.g. by strengthening the sector internal consultation when proposing and electing Board candidates).			SWISSCO Board	2026/Q3 (after AGM)

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
Recommendation 47 To SWISSCO: Taking the example of the NGOs and the research sector, motivate (or if possible, request) board members to establish processes for better representation of their whole sectors.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> This recommendation needs to be responded by the Board first.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Bylaws discussion ongoing, see also response to previous recommendation			SWISSCO Board	2026/Q1-Q2
Recommendation 49 To SWISSCO: Increase transparency of the Board's work (e.g. by sharing meeting minutes more proactively).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Board minutes are already made available to all members in a timely manner, and we remain committed to ensuring that relevant decisions and rationales are accessible. At the same time, we believe that transparency also depends on members using the information that is already provided. We will therefore continue to proactively publish Board minutes while maintaining the expectation that members consult the available materials as needed.				
	<u>Measures:</u> The minutes of Board meetings are currently available to all members in our shared filing system and will continue to be made available. Members could be informed about the latest Board meeting through the quarterly newsletter shared with members.			SWISSCO	Ongoing
Recommendation 50 To SWISSCO: Consider a dedicated representation of SME (manufacturers and traders).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> This recommendation is difficult to implement since Chocosuisse is considered as the representative of the whole manufacturing sector. SME voices are strongly represented herein. The trading sector is differently organized, but there seems to be no compelling case for a dedicated SME representative.				

RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE			RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
	<u>Measures:</u> -				
Recommendation 51 <u>To SWISSCO:</u> Consider the creation of an Origin Sounding Board, similar to the Swiss Sustainable Coffee Platform (SSCP), to represent perspectives of cocoa producers on strategic matters in a structured way.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> This recommendation can be discussed at the SWISSCO Board level. In fact, a proposal is made in the forthcoming Board Meeting to think of a combined Sounding Board for SSCP and SWISSCO (fyi: the SSCP Sounding Board has still to be created first)				
	<u>Measures:</u> Discuss the proposal at Board (SSCP and SWISSCO)			SWISSCO Board	Dec. 2025

Place, Date



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09.12.2025

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Name
Function

Place, Date

CHRISTIAN ROBIN

15. Dezember 2025

Qualified Electronic Signature by  SwissSign

Name
Function

Annex: Recommendations where no specific follow-up is considered necessary:

Recommendation 17 <u>To SECO:</u> Continue project funding, also beyond the current credit note.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> SECO foresees to continue its support to SWISSCO with different project financing windows beyond 2026. The details of this support will be defined in the course of 2026.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Prepare a credit proposal to be approved by SECO Management.			SECO	Q4 2026
Recommendation 20 <u>To SECO and SWISSCO:</u> Ensure project funding is linked to overarching objectives (dialogue, peer-learning, scaling, fostering an enabling environment etc.).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> SECO and SWISSCO fully agree with the recommendation but have the impression that is by and far implemented already. We will make sure that the links are made more explicit.				
	<u>Measures:</u> Ensure the link between overarching objectives and projects is made more explicit, e.g. by adapting funding criteria accordingly.			SECO/SWISSCO	Q4 2026
Recommendation 22 <u>To SECO and SWISSCO:</u> Drive at least some project development by SWISSCO itself, together with CH embassies in origin countries where feasible, with ISCOs and locally emerging platforms for projects to become more	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> While we see the value of this recommendation, an important element of the multi-stakeholder collaboration under SWISSCO is its demand-drivenness and the co-financing structure. Moreover, the local coordination of a design phase is demanding both in terms of time and HR needs. Therefore, we propose to consider implementation of this recommendation only in selected cases and in countries where we can rely of competent field staff from the Embassy and SWISSCO.				

bottom-up driven (-> Link to Governance).	<u>Measures:</u> Continue close engagement in selected pilots in Ghana, such as the agroforestry skills network (Swisscontact, Halba, Lindt Foundation, etc.) and possibly in one landscape intervention. Further cases in LAC depend on the recruitment of a regional advisor foreseen in 2026/Q1.			SWISSCO/SECO	2026 onwards
Recommendation 31 <u>To SECO and SWISSCO:</u> Think about other methods than grants to support these innovations (e.g. “accredited by SWISSCO/SECO” or a revolving credit fund), based on clear criteria. Potentially work together with others that are very experienced in these processes (e.g. Elea Foundation).	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> Nor SECO nor SWISSCO have the capacities or to endorse projects with a “seal of approval” if they are not directly involved. Endorsement always brings about a certain responsibility, which we are not able to take on without the corresponding M&E mechanisms.				
	<u>Measures:</u> -				
Recommendation 37 <u>To SWISSCO and SECO:</u> Further foster studies/assessments initiated collectively by SWISSCO members. Ideally with local partners in the (co-)lead and with SWISSCO member examples being assessed/included (increases relevance). Resources for rather costly baseline/impact	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response:</u> SWISSCO already actively fosters and supports collective studies and assessments. Examples include the Cocoa Household Income Study (CHIS) in Ghana and Peru, developed through collective member engagement. These initiatives show how pooling resources through SWISSCO enables more comprehensive and impactful assessments than individual members could achieve alone. These opportunities are particularly relevant for SMEs, as joint initiatives and potential co-funding with SECO can help ensure that smaller actors are also covered and able to contribute to and benefit from such collective learning efforts.				

assessments can be pooled through SWISSCO. SECO could co-fund, particularly for SME to be covered as well.	<u>Measures</u> : Continue to foresee a funding window for assessments and studies in the next phase of SECO support to SWISSCO.			SECO/SWISSCO	Q2/3 2026
Recommendation 42 <u>To SWISSCO and SECO</u> : Expand policy dialogue to include broader rural development issues in cocoa-growing regions which would help secure long-term sourcing opportunities for members and improve livelihoods of farmers, their families and communities	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response</u> : In the framework of the project work, broader development issues such as access to education or health services can be addressed if there is sufficient member interest, and there are good examples where this is already done. Also, in the framework of joint CHIS studies for instance, the issue of rural poverty can be looked at more broadly. Still, Swiss embassies need to have access to meaningful and concrete experiences in these areas to systematically integrate them into the policy dialogue.				
	<u>Measures</u> : Where feasible, integrate broader rural development issues into the policy dialogue.			SECO/SWISSCO	ongoing
Recommendation 48 <u>To SWISSCO and SECO</u> : Think about similar position/role like that of Ghana Country Lead in other key origins, i.e. CIV and Ecuador. This would allow anchoring SWISSCO in key origin countries and build more collaborative links with multi-stakeholder groups in origin countries.	Fully agree	Partially agree	Not agree		
	<u>Response</u> : See response to recommendation 12				
	<u>Measures</u> : See proposed measure under recommendation 12			SWISSCO	See response to recommendation 12