



# CASA Technical Assistance Facility Thematic Case Study

## Gender

---

**Theme:** Gender

**Companies:** Farmerline  
Coscharis  
Kennemer

**Date:** March 2024

---





Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness

## Our approach

The Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusinesses (CASA) Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) supports agribusinesses that source from smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Our approach involves working closely with agribusiness management teams to develop an Inclusive Business Plan (IBP) – a roadmap for the agribusiness to deepen, broaden or strengthen supply chains in a way that delivers value to both smallholders and shareholders.

### **An Inclusive Business Plan ( IBP) is a piece of thorough analysis produced over 3-6 months that:**

- Diagnoses smallholder supply chain challenges;
- Identifies or validates the inclusive business growth opportunity, aligned to commercial objectives, identifying opportunities for greater commercial and smallholder impact;
- Quantifies the opportunity in terms of commercial value for the business and impact for smallholder farmers;
- Lays out a strategy to access the opportunity including investment and any partners required;
- Maps out an implementation plan; a linked package of technical assistance and blended finance structure, including required partnerships to support the inclusive business model.

Following the creation of an In IBP, CASA TAF places a significant emphasis on gender inclusivity as a cornerstone of our work with agribusinesses. Recognising the pivotal role women play in agriculture and agribusiness, both as smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs, we are committed to fostering an environment where women's contributions are acknowledged and enhanced. Our overarching goals extend to ensuring that agriculture serves as a lever for economic empowerment, especially for women, in the context of smallholders and agribusinesses across Africa and Asia.

The purpose of this case study is to delve into the gender-focused approaches adopted by CASA TAF and to showcase our experiences. By emphasising gender inclusivity, we aim to highlight the dual benefits of such strategies: driving commercial success for agribusinesses while advancing the economic and social standing of women within these communities.

This case study presents an in-depth look at our methods, outcomes, and lessons learned from integrating gender-responsive practices into our work, exemplified through our collaboration with three companies: Farmerline in Ghana, DeHaat in India, and Kennemer in the Philippines. Herein, we capture our progress to date, illustrating how gender inclusivity not only aligns with but also amplifies our mission to support sustainable and inclusive growth in agriculture.

# A Principle-based Approach

## Guiding Principles Overview

At CASA TAF, when engaging with a business to identify opportunities to drive greater gender inclusion, a principles-based approach is used to ensure initiatives are flexible, contextually appropriate, and operationally sustainable. This approach enables responsiveness to the unique needs and contexts of agribusinesses, avoiding rigidity while fostering adaptability.

By recognising the integral role of women in agriculture and agribusiness, we aim to drive both commercial success and social impact, embedding gender inclusivity as a growth lever within our partners' business models.

## Key Principles

CASA TAF's Principles of Gender Integration into Business Models includes:



Frame gender initiatives within the context of the business problem or opportunity



Recognise businesses have different starting points and right-size technical assistance accordingly



Embed gender practices in business operations to boost chances of sustained adoption and scale



Tailor gender performance indicators to reflect the unique circumstances and goals of each business

## Overview of Guiding Principles

1

Focus on aligning gender strategies with tangible business opportunities. By framing gender inclusion as a growth lever, we overcome barriers and emphasise its commercial value, specific to the sector.

2

Businesses vary in their awareness and commitment to gender inclusion. The approach considers cultural norms, gender dynamics, and organisational capacity, tailoring TA to each business's needs. A "gender equality spectrum" is used to identify starting points and design interventions that are appropriate and effective.

3

Long-term success hinges on integrating gender practices into daily business operations. Focus on building internal capacity and ensuring that gender strategies are aligned with core business incentives, fostering ownership and a pathway to scale.

4

Work with businesses to co-create customised gender indicators that align with their specific objectives and operational realities, enhancing relevance and promoting meaningful engagement.

# CASA TAF's Gender Approach

## Strategy Overview

CASA TAF helps agribusinesses introduce gender-responsive practices, increasing economic opportunities for women suppliers, including SMEs and farmers. This strategy aims for gender inclusion across all business operations.



## Implementation Framework

1

The approach starts by identifying the commercial benefits of adopting gender-responsive practices, considering the vital roles women play in the value chain. This assessment, ideally performed during the inclusive business planning stage, sets the foundation for pilot activities with the company.

2

Next, CASA TAF uses a diagnostic tool to evaluate the company's current practices, identifying opportunities to enhance women's involvement in supply chains, service delivery, contracting, payments, and organisational equity. This involves discussions with company staff at various levels to pinpoint areas for improvement.

3

Based on these findings, the next step is to design a plan outlining specific collaborations between the business and CASA TAF.

*It's important to note that CASA TAF's approach is flexible. In some instances, pilot activities were launched based on field opportunities to benefit women in the value chain without a detailed diagnostic process.*

## Key Components

CASA TAF's gender support includes:



Facilitating gender awareness discussions or workshops



Helping understand women customers and suppliers better



Implementing pilots to test the business case for engaging women



Building business capacity to target women effectively



Assisting businesses in scaling gender-inclusive practices



Co-developing a gender action plan with clear targets.

## CASA TAF's Gender Approach cont.

To date, CASA TAF has collaborated with 6 agribusiness partners to implement gender-focused initiatives within their business models.

Initially, CASA TAF conducts gender diagnostics, which typically involve extensive discussions with company staff. A critical element of this process is identifying opportunities for gender integration within the business model and securing the agribusinesses' commitment to explore the commercial benefits of these gender inclusion strategies.

Once the benefits are recognised and the strategic entry points are established, CASA TAF and the agribusinesses collaboratively develop a gender action plan, committing resources from both parties. The approach and time required to complete the diagnostics, raise awareness about gender inclusion, and engage agribusinesses on this issue vary.

Typically, agribusinesses can engage women in the supply chain through two types of business practices:



Practices that ensure the selection and capacity building of women as aggregators or agents for the products in question.



Practices that promote the inclusion of women farmers as producers in the supply chain, tailored to the specific roles and contexts of women in the relevant value chains.

The consultation process involves various exchanges and workshops with multiple departments of the agribusiness, including operations, technical, communications, and human resources. This multidisciplinary approach ensures that the company staff's critical perspectives are integrated into the planning of subsequent steps. The gender-focused actions are then implemented, monitored, and steered regularly by the respective teams.

In all instances, gender-responsive support that leads to practical, sustainable practices with scalability potential for the company is prioritised.

The subsequent case studies of three companies illustrate how CASA TAF has strategised gender inclusion in each instance.



# FARMERLINE

## Farmerline

---

**Company:** Farmerline  
**Sector:** AgTech  
**Country:** Ghana  
**Investor partners:** ARAF, FMO  
**Project date:** 2023 – 2026

**Description:** Farmerline is an agri-tech company based in Ghana, focused on enhancing the agricultural value chain by facilitating access to markets, quality inputs, and training for farmers.

**Background:** With a goal to create a more inclusive and sustainable agricultural ecosystem, Farmerline partnered with CASA TAF to develop and implement an enhanced aggregator model offering bundled services to farmers in the soybean and maize value chains. This model aims to create commercial benefits for Farmerline through revenues from inputs and crop sourcing, while also increasing farmers incomes and yields.

Noting the important contribution that women play in agricultural value chains and the specific barriers they face, it is crucial that Farmerline has a specific strategy to include more women farmers and aggregators in its overall business model to develop a reliable and stable supplier base.

**Approach:** The collaboration between Farmerline and CASA TAF began with the development of an Inclusive Business Plan that defined a shared value strategy, and identified initiatives that will contribute to overall business growth. This plan served as a roadmap ensuring that the benefits were equitably distributed among the company, aggregators, and farmers.

Following the endorsement of this plan, CASA TAF conducted the Gender Diagnostic using the GRBP (Gender Responsive Business Practices) tool. This diagnostic assessed the current state of gender inclusivity within Farmerline's operations and identified opportunities for enhancing women's participation in the supply chain.

Despite integrating gender-focused ideas into the pilot, initial efforts faced challenges in implementing specific strategies tailored to gender inclusivity. To overcome these challenges, CASA TAF facilitated a workshop with Farmerline's management and field teams. The workshop aimed to:

- Enhance the team's understanding of gender considerations in business practices.
- Share successful gender inclusion strategies from similar contexts.
- Identify obstacles to engaging women in the aggregator model.
- Brainstorm gender-targeted field strategies.

The insights from the workshop led to the development of a gender action plan, which outlined specific initiatives targeting gender inclusivity at the aggregator and farmer levels of the supply chain. These actions included specific mechanisms to identify and engage with women aggregators, targeted actions to reach women farmers for extension services, targeted training responding specifically to women's needs and contexts, as well as capacity development of Farmerline staff to adopt better gender-responsive practices in the field.

**Outcome:** CASA TAF supported the implementation of the gender action plan, with key achievements including:

- A significant increase in the percentage of women aggregators (**64% of the aggregators in 2024 are women compared to 29% in 2023**)
- **Incorporation of gender responsive practices** within Farmerline's business processes and targets, and an increased adoption of gender-responsive approaches by Farmerline field teams





## Coscharis

**Company:** Coscharis  
**Sector:** Rice  
**Country:** Nigeria  
**Investor partner:** BII  
**Project date:** 2022 – 2025

### Description:

Coscharis Farms, established in 2015, is a vertically integrated rice farm and milling business in Anambra State, Nigeria, with significant investments in land cultivation, a grain silo, and a rice mill.

**Background:** Coscharis sources paddy from its own operations, outgrower farmers, and the open market. However, it has historically struggled to achieve full utilisation of its mill due to structural supply-side challenges, such as severe flooding, which have disrupted local paddy production and affected farmer livelihoods. Recognising the need to address these challenges, Coscharis, with support from CASA TAF, initiated an ingrower seed multiplication programme to increase the availability of improved rice seed varieties. This programme provides local farmers with prepared plots, mechanised services, and guaranteed off-taking, helping to stabilise supply and build resilience among smallholders.

**Approach:** CASA TAF worked with Coscharis to develop an inclusive business model that leverages the company's vertically integrated rice value chain to benefit both the business and smallholder farmers. Key interventions included the design and implementation of an ingrower seed multiplication programme producing certified flood-tolerant and short-season seeds, the introduction of climate adaptation practices in extension services, and the establishment of a revolving fund for input pre-financing.

A critical element of this collaboration was the integration of gender-responsive practices to enhance inclusivity and strengthen women's participation in the supply chain. CASA TAF conducted a gender diagnostic to assess existing practices and identify opportunities for improvement. Based on these insights, CASA TAF collaborated with Coscharis' management and field teams to:

- Enhance the company's understanding of gender considerations in farmer engagement, service delivery, and how it links to commercial metrics such as volume of certified seeds produced, and paddy supply.
- Identify and overcome barriers to engaging women in the seed multiplication programme knowing the value that women can contribute to the Coscharis' supply chain.

These efforts led to the development of gender initiatives embedded in the technical assistance projects including:

- Adapting training sessions to suit women farmers' needs, including flexible scheduling and accessible locations.
- Refining the farmer selection process to include gender-inclusive criteria and targets.
- Revising field monitoring tools to collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data to validate the specific business case of engaging women farmers in the supply chain
- Strengthening staff capacity to implement gender-responsive practices effectively.

**Outcome:** The ingrower seed multiplication programme incorporated gender-sensitive approaches in its extension meetings, receiving positive feedback from women participants. They appreciated adjustments made to training schedules, locations, and the inclusion of child-care provisions. Analysis of gender-disaggregated data revealed that women farmers performed on par with, or better than, their male counterparts in several areas:

- **Women constituted 52% of participants** in the seed ingrower programme.
- **8% more women completed all training** sessions compared to men.
- **4% more women adopted recommended rice transplanting methods.**
- **Women farmers achieved slightly higher yields on average** (759 kg/0.25ha) compared to men (748 kg/0.25ha).



# Kennemer Foods

## Kennemer Foods

---

**Company:** Kennemer Foods

**Sector:** Cocoa

**Country:** Philippines

**Investor partner:** CFC

**Project date:** 2023 - 2026

**Description:** Kennemer Foods is ingrained in the cacao value chain in Davao, dedicated to enhancing the livelihoods of thousands of smallholders through sustainable agriculture.

**Background:** Kennemer, a leading cacao processing company in the Philippines, aims to strengthen its farmer sourcing strategy with the support of CASA TAF. The collaboration aims to implement the "cacaopreneur" model, designed to enhance the efficiency and quality of cacao sourcing from farmer clusters by empowering agents and intermediaries. Recognising the potential for integrating gender inclusivity at this stage, CASA TAF and Kennemer have prioritised gender diagnostics as a critical step in the Inclusive Business Plan process.

**Approach:** Women are heavily involved in the cacao sector as aggregators as well as producers. CASA TAF's approach was to strengthen the business case of targeting women producers and to ensure the company's business practices in the field are attuned to suit the needs of women farmers. The approach with Kennemer involved several key steps:

- *Initial Gender Diagnostics:* Conducted at the outset of the IBP process, this diagnostic exercise allowed Kennemer and CASA TAF to explore the gender dynamics within the cacao sourcing model and the broader organisational context. The diagnostics focused on identifying areas where gender-responsive practices could enhance both sourcing strategies and workplace equality.
- *Identification of Gender Action Plan Elements:* The early completion of gender diagnostics facilitated the identification of crucial elements for a gender action plan, outlining specific strategies for promoting gender inclusivity.
- *Anticipating TA Support:* Recognising potential areas for TA support from CASA TAF enabled Kennemer to strategically plan for integrating gender inclusivity into its operations and pilot initiatives.
- *Setting Preliminary Gender Targets:* The process also allowed for the integration of initial gender targets within the pilot's framework, ensuring a focused approach towards achieving gender balance and inclusivity from the start.

**Outcome:** By prioritising gender diagnostics and planning for gender-responsive practices early in the "cacaopreneur" model's development, Kennemer and CASA TAF are laying the groundwork for a supply chain that values diversity and inclusivity. This proactive approach is expected to:

- Enhance the quality, consistency, and sustainability of Kennemer's cacao sourcing operations by ensuring equitable participation and benefits for women and men farmers alike.
- Foster a gender-responsive organisational culture within Kennemer, promoting equality and inclusivity beyond the supply chain.
- Set a precedent for integrating gender inclusivity in agribusiness models, potentially influencing broader industry practices.





## Key takeaways from our approach

Our experience has provided us with the following lessons across our phases of technical assistance we provided to companies.

### Design Phase:

- 1. Diverse Commitment Levels:** Businesses vary in their commitment to gender inclusion. The gender diagnostic tool helps companies see the importance and potential impact of gender inclusion, guiding the project's gender strategy from the start.
- 2. Importance of Early Diagnostics:** It's beneficial to conduct gender diagnostics early, preferably during the IBP process, to lay a solid foundation. Even if detailed diagnostics are not feasible initially, a high level assessment with concrete gender entry points that is linked to the business case is valuable.
- 3. Stakeholder Engagement:** Sustainable gender-targeted actions require early and ongoing consultation with company staff, particularly those in the field. This ensures company buy-in and internalisation of gender-focused initiatives.

### Implementation Phase:

- 4. Customised gender action plans:** Developing pragmatic and action-oriented plans for each company is vital. These plans, created in collaboration with the company, outline clear, commitment-backed steps for gender inclusion.
- 5. Contextual Flexibility:** Recognising that each context is different, conducting assessments to identify specific challenges and opportunities for women is crucial. This ensures that gender inclusion strategies are relevant and based on real-world insights.
- 6. Focus on Scalability:** Actions should be designed for adaptability and scalability beyond initial pilot locations, with continuous monitoring and adjustments based on regional needs and feedback.



The FCDO-funded Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusinesses (CASA) Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) partners with investors with development interests to increase the smallholder impact of existing investments. We design, co-fund, and manage delivery of inclusive technical assistance (TA) projects at selected agribusinesses that can drive commercial and social impact by strengthening, deepening, or broadening inclusive supply chains.

Over its seven-year life cycle, the CASA TAF will collect data on the impact of inclusive technical assistance, not only at the farmer-level, but also at the portfolio company and investment fund level. The objective is to learn and to influence DFIs, impact investors, commercial investors, and TA providers on the significance of generating compelling evidence to track commercial and development impact metrics, thus demonstrating the value of inclusive TA.

<https://www.casaprogramme.com/technical-assistance/>

For further information:

Melanie Machingawuta  
TechnoServe Director, Inclusive Investment  
mmachingawuta@tns.org

Ana Herrera  
CASA TAF Team Lead  
aherrera@tns.org