

## AMEA CONVENING 2023

JUNE 21 – 22, 2023

### RECONNECTING AND REFLECTION ON SELF INTEREST AND SHARED INTEREST

Over 30 members, partners, and staff from AMEA, IFAD, and FAO gathered in Rome to meet together for the first time in person since April 2019. Our aim was to strengthen the Network by fostering new partnerships and collaborations, as well as collectively strategizing on learning initiatives, resource development and AMEA's potential to deliver on your self-interest and our shared interest.



We reflected on our journey from being an Alliance to becoming a Network; and on our common vision to transform the fragmented, inefficient and

unaccountable BDS ecosystem which still exists in most countries we work in. Discussions were framed around AMEA's aim by 2030 to enable 50 million farmers to receive improved, coordinated business development services which enables their Farmer Organizations and Agri-SMEs to create added value for them.

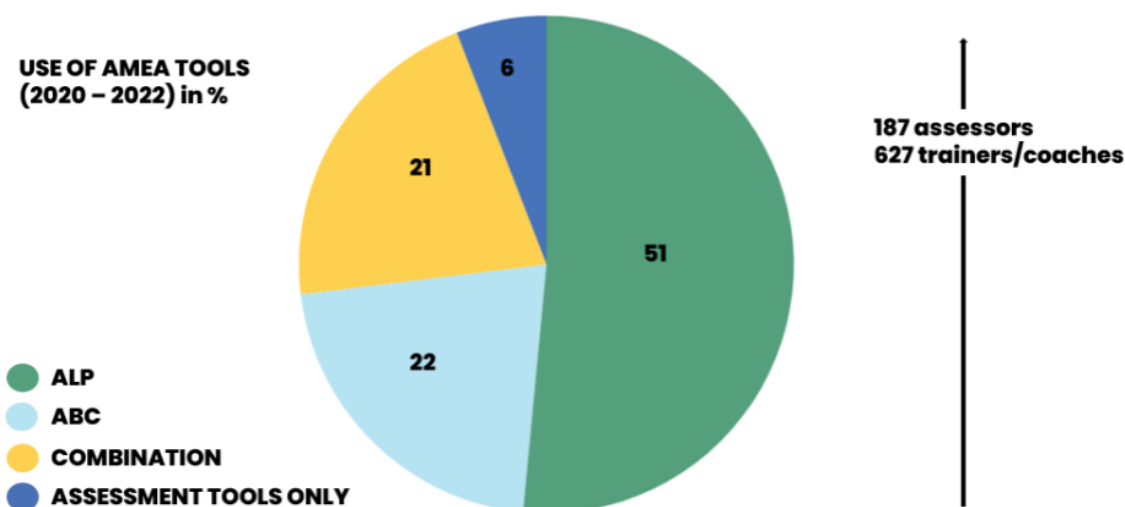
This exponential growth is expected to be driven by two factors:

1. Demand for the most cost-effective, scalable BDS models. We explored this in our **Scaling Strategies session** (below)
2. An expansion in AMEA's network with 100 members and partners delivering collaborative system change strategies in 20 Local Networks by 2030. This would provide the enablers for the growth and we explored this in our **BDS Roadmap session** (page 5)

## SCALING STRATEGIES

We first reflected on the current scale. AMEA promotes a [Toolbox](#) which contains peer reviewed tools that have a strong evidence base for effectiveness across different Regions of the World and in different value chains. The chart below shows that these tools have benefitted 2.25 million farmers over the last 3 years. This represents growth of up to 25% in use of these tools over the last 3 years but also the increased use of an integrated (assessments and curricula) approach.

### 2.25 MILLION FARMERS REACHED:



AMEA invited six organizations to present their BDS models and their plans to increase demand for these services, including the enablers of growth and AMEA's role to support the growth. These models were chosen from within the AMEA Toolbox and outside of the Toolbox as it is clear there remains room for improvement in the AMEA Tools and we need to be looking at other BDS models which may have potential to be included in the Toolbox. The following BDS models were presented and the links to the presentations are included below:

ORGANIZATIONS	APPROACHES AND LINKS TO PRESENTATION
IFC	<a href="#">Agribusiness Leadership Program (ALP)</a>
iCRA	<a href="#">AgriBusiness Clusters (ABC)</a>
Farm Africa	<a href="#">Cultivate</a>
Aceli Africa	<a href="#">TA Program</a>
IDH Farmfit	<a href="#">Farmfit Insights Hub</a>
SCOPEinsight	<a href="#">AgriGRADE</a>

Participants identified **five cross cutting enablers** for scaling BDS models:

1. Improving cost-effectiveness by **segmenting and tailoring** BDS according to the specific needs of the agri-SME. Most BDS models were adopting a **modular approach**.
2. Most BDS models were also **adopting a blended approach**, combining digital delivery of training with coaches/mentors to support implementation of the learning. This was considered to be a more effective way of delivering BDS but it was not yet clear whether BDS cost would be reduced.
3. Developing **strategic collaborations** between financiers or commissioners of BDS and the Tool Owners. There is not a functional BDS market where clients pay fully for services. Therefore this approach is considered necessary to grow the use of the Tools and have strong

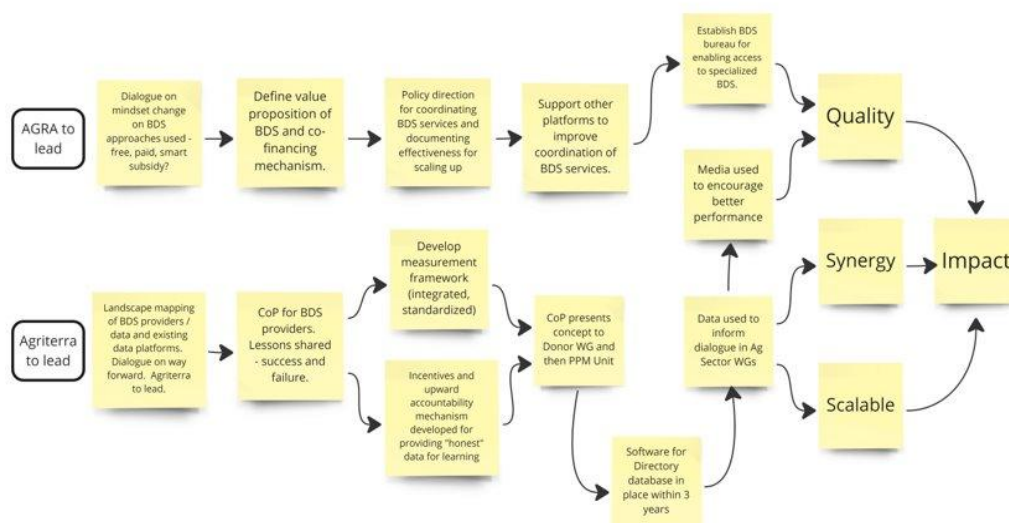
learning loops to drive further improvement. AMEA's role would be to provide the platform for members and partners to advocate for donors and governments support for BDS ecosystem development.

4. The potential for strategic collaborations to emerge would be enhanced if there were some **market signals** to show that these BDS models were the best. This is where the BDS provider **certification** is considered important. Currently this is performed by some Tool Owners and is likely to be complemented by national accreditation processes.
5. The **strongest market signal would be proven performance** which can be benchmarked. This requires **standardized data** which can be used for other purposes, such as investors/financiers' pre due diligence work. AMEA's role is to provide the platform to advocate for standardized data and use of that data to **generate meaningful learning**.

## BDS ROADMAPS

These enablers connect strongly with the BDS Roadmaps. The design of local BDS Roadmaps are being spearheaded by AMEA local networks in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Honduras, Ethiopia, and Uganda. These *draft* Roadmaps have a clear purpose of promoting coordinated action and fostering synergy within the network to improve the national BDS ecosystems.

### AN EXAMPLE FROM GHANA:



As the roadmaps facilitate dialogue by identifying the best entry points, such as [UFAAS](#) in Uganda and [EBASPA](#) in Ethiopia, participants in the AMEA Convening were invited to learn more about these efforts and contribute to the strategies with feedback and inputs. Moving forward, the focus of BDS Roadmaps is to achieve one or two milestones per Roadmap this year, creating momentum and driving progress to achieve tangible outcomes and serves as a catalyst for further development. The Roadmaps will serve as a guide for the Local Networks, outlining key actions, priorities, and areas of collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of BDS.

The Roadmap processes have already had significant interest and input from a variety of experienced stakeholders. The success of these Roadmaps will be determined by sustained engagement and action by these stakeholders, which includes the AMEA members. We therefore **encourage all members and partners to find entry points into these Roadmap processes** as this is a **significant opportunity to take program learning into high level strategic dialogue**. If you or your staff want to engage in Roadmap processes please contact the respective Network Facilitator.

## **ACCESS TO FINANCE WORKING GROUP**

The AMEA Working Groups have progressed well during the last 3 years. The Global Guidelines Working Group has now become the ISO Technical Working Group with the IWA29 likely to become a full international Standard in 2024. The Toolbox Working Group has delivered Tool Peer Reviews, Case Studies and the Tool Improvement Facility (TIF). The AgTech Working Group has evolved from working on a pilot AgTech Roadmap process in Kenya, which might be replicated in other Local Networks, whilst continuing to deliver webinars on the latest innovations.

However we have struggled to deliver meaningful results in the Access to Finance Working Group beyond promoting member and partner innovations. After discussion it was clear there remains energy to continue the Working Group, however AMEA's learning agenda around graduation and bridging needs to be more carefully defined through discussions with Aceli Africa, SAFIN and their partners. This learning agenda potentially would look at generating evidence around: 1) understanding agri-SME graduation better; 2) strategies to enable those who are nearly bankable to obtain finance. This learning would also look at

a range of financing facilities from VSLAs to Impact Investors; as opportunities for access to commercial bank finance still appear relatively limited.

## LEARNING AGENDA

On Day 1 we reflected on our 2023–25 learning agenda and then in the other sessions we expanded upon this. We reaffirmed that we will continue to focus on drawing learning around the use of **cost-effective, scalable** approaches to deliver **inclusive, sustainable** agricultural growth. However we agreed that in order to deliver meaningful knowledge and learnings to the Network, it **is** critical that this is backed by credible data. Therefore, AMEA will look for programs that capture **credible data/information** about how an **integrated approach** works and its impact. Impact should be demonstrated through data on:

**GROWTH:** revenue, profit, capital, jobs

**INCLUSIVITY:** impact on smallholders disaggregated by gender, youth and other groups

**SUSTAINABILITY:** including environmental impacts

We also will examine the **cost** of BDS delivery and consider whether different approaches can be more cost-effective. The learning agenda now also includes a range of questions which arise from the Scaling Strategy and BDS Roadmap questions. AMEA is looking for members and partners to collaborate on generating learning around all these questions over the next 3 years.

The AMEA Toolbox Working Group will continue to lead these efforts. It will promote tools that have been peer reviewed and therefore have proven their effectiveness across a number of value chains and countries.

## NETWORK PERFORMANCE, COMMITMENTS AND FINANCING

We also spent time with IFAD and FAO colleagues to reflect on AMEA's performance. Highlights included the progress towards an International Standard, the Tool Improvement Facility innovations, the BDS Roadmaps and



AMEA's Knowledge Management, which was rated as 5/5 by IFAD. AMEA's success is reflected in the network health statistics which show 6 out of 7 networks scoring above 4/5 on surveys and the Social Network Analysis which shows the intensity of collaborations in the network.



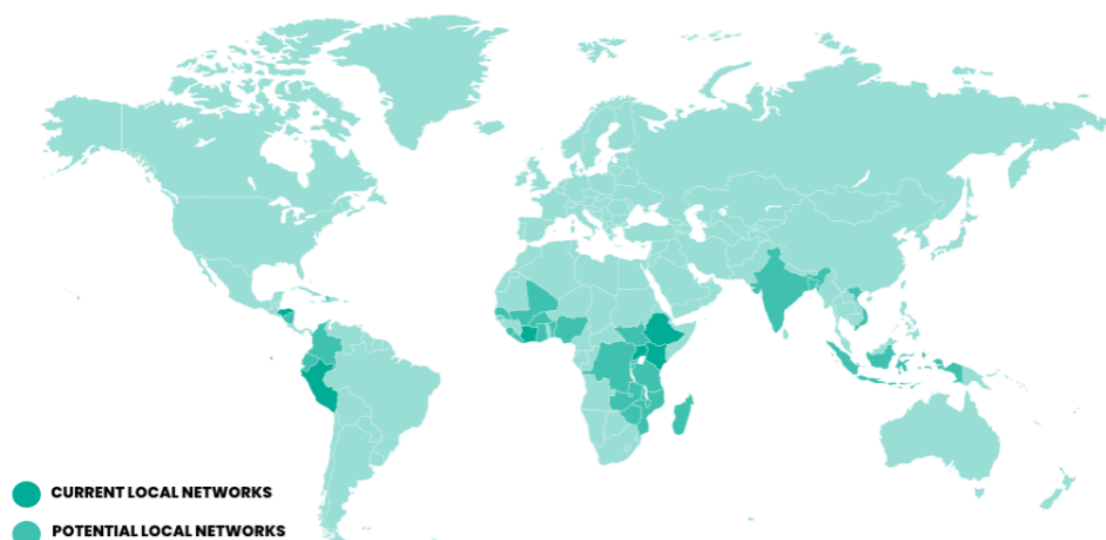
**In order to continue to deliver as a Network there are two critical and related elements:**

1. Member belief in and commitment to the Network
2. Financing for the work we want to do

AMEA and members will attract financing for network activities where there is a **strong belief and commitment** therefore we considered how to commit to our next phase of work. A number of members want to **invest again in deepening** the understanding and use of the AMEA network in their organization. Some members offered to **bring in their networks/partners**, especially with regard to expanding membership and supporting access to finance dialogue. Others have interest in the **Roadmap processes** and want to bring their teams into this initiative. Finally there was a lot of interest in **partnering with others to learn** from each other and **test out some of the innovations**, such as the digital training tools.

The foundation of our work is the Network and the expansion of the Local Networks (shown below) requires a modest investment of Euro 20,000 p.a. Members were asked to **consider opportunities to integrate BDS system change targets into their proposals and include financing for AMEA Local Network activities.**

## LOCAL NETWORK EXPANSION: 20 BY 2030



AMEA also needs financing for new Innovation Facilities and investment in scalable BDS models. We will work with members and partners to advocate for the financing needed for this work.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

We could not doubt our members' commitment based on this Convening. It was an explosion of energy and ideas as people finally had the chance to meet again in person. It was also very enjoyable!

The following day the AMEA Board met and we agreed we will hold the **next Convening in Africa in 2024**. This will also give an opportunity to bring in the nearby Local Networks.

We want to thank all of you for making this a great event and look forward to seeing you next year. We also want to express our deepest gratitude to the IFAD team (Bettina, Maria Luisa and Cynthia) for going beyond the call of duty. Finally



a big thank you to our AMEA team (Filipe, Marlayne, Harrison, Gregoire, Desta, Hileena and Merciline) for striving and persevering!

