

Day 1 GAFSP Knowledge Forum

Sessions Notes on Takeaways

Session 8: Breaking Silos — Coordinating GAFSP Projects for Greater Impact

Format: Framing presentation followed by four lightning talks and facilitated discussion | **Moderator:** Shijie Yang, Agriculture Economist, GAFSP Coordination Unit | **Speakers:** Sarah Nyiramutangwa (Government of Rwanda/SAIP II, WB); Zanele Hlatshwayo (IFC, Rwanda Advisory Project); Frank Rubio (IFAD, BIFT Rwanda Farmers' Organization Financing Program); François Mbabazi (CEO, Ingabo Farmers Syndicate, IFAD PO-led SCORE project)

Overview

Day 2 opened under the theme of public-private partnership, and this first session set the frame for the whole day: Rwanda was chosen as a live case study precisely because it is the only country in the current portfolio where all three GAFSP financing tracks — the Grant-Based Financing Track (country-led and PO-led), the Business Investment Financing Track (BIFT), and the Private Sector Window — are simultaneously active. The question the session posed was direct: given that all the ingredients for coordination exist in one place, do GAFSP's windows actually work together in practice? The honest answer that emerged was: sometimes, partially, and usually only when people made deliberate effort to make it happen rather than when any system required it.

GAFSP's Financing Architecture: The Coordination Opportunity

Shijie Yang's framing slide made the opportunity visible in a way that often goes unnoticed at the project level. Across the Africa, Asia, and Latin America portfolios, multiple countries have two or more financing tracks active simultaneously. In some, multiple supervising entities are operating in the same country at the same time. The visual was deliberately provocative: the pieces for coordination are already on the board in many countries. The question is why the coordination rarely happens by design.

The three tracks serve different recipient types at different stages of readiness and need: country-led grants go to governments to invest in public goods; PO-led grants build farmer cooperative capacity and market linkages; BIFT provides concessional finance and technical assistance to financial ecosystems and platforms connecting agribusiness MSMEs and POs to private capital; and the Private Sector Window (IFC) deploys blended finance and advisory services for agribusiness investment and mid-cap companies. The theory is that these are complementary — one builds the public infrastructure, another strengthens the organizational layer, another connects both to private capital. The practice is more fragmented.

Rwanda: Four Perspectives on the Same Portfolio

Sarah Nyiramutangwa — Country-led project (SAIP II, World Bank): The Rwanda country-led investment project built agricultural infrastructure, farmer cooperatives, and quality standards in key value chains. Sarah's perspective was that coordination worked best when it happened within a single supervising entity relationship: the World Bank reached across to IFC — within the same institution — to bring in advisory services that supported the private sector actors that the country-led project had been building capacity with. That link was easy to make because the relationship already existed. Coordination with IFAD's BIFT and PO-led work was less straightforward and more ad hoc. Her observation was that for coordination to work, you need similar interests and a shared understanding of what each window is trying to achieve — and that is not automatic across supervising entities.

Zanele Hlatshwayo — IFC Rwanda Advisory Project (Private Sector Window): The IFC Rwanda engagement was built around an explicit multi-partner design from the outset, bringing together the private sector, producer organizations, financial institutions, and government around specific value chain transactions. The key lesson from the IFC side was the importance of intentionality in aligning partnership timelines and objectives from the design stage. Where IFC's engagement was most effective, it was because the investment case was structured around a concrete transaction need — a specific agribusiness that wanted to expand, a cooperative that needed to become bankable — rather than around an abstract coordination objective. IFC's work functions on different timelines and approval processes than GBFT grants, and where those differences were not planned for from the beginning, they created friction that undermined the coordination.

Frank Rubio — BIFT Rwanda (IFAD): The BIFT Rwanda project — the Farmers' Organization Financing Program — had not yet been rolled out at the time of the Forum, making it a forward-looking rather than retrospective case study. The BIFT model is designed to sit between the capacity-building work of PO-led grants and the market-facing work of the Private Sector Window: it provides concessional finance and technical assistance to financial intermediaries (such as cooperatives and rural banks) to de-risk investment in smallholder-linked agribusinesses. Frank's contribution highlighted that for BIFT to work, the earlier-stage investments — in cooperative governance, quality systems, and production aggregation — need to already be in place. BIFT is not an entry point; it is a graduation mechanism for POs that have been built up through the grant-based track. This sequencing insight has implications for portfolio design: BIFT can only be activated usefully after the foundational work is done, and that foundational work needs to be planned with BIFT in mind from the start.

François Mbabazi — Ingabo Farmers Syndicate / SCORE PO-led project (IFAD): François brought the producer organization's direct perspective. The Ingabo Farmers Syndicate is a cooperative network that has been supported through the PO-led track. His contribution named something that slides and frameworks tend to obscure: from the cooperative's point of view, the different GAFSP windows are invisible. What farmers experience is a project — and what the project delivers either fits their needs or it doesn't. The silos that practitioners discuss exist at an institutional level that beneficiaries rarely perceive and cannot influence. This reframe was a useful corrective: the coordination problem is not the farmers' problem. It is the problem of the institutions above them, and solving it requires those institutions to behave differently, not the farmers.

Key Challenges Identified

Coordination is relationship-dependent, not structural. The most cited challenge across all four Rwanda perspectives was that cross-window coordination happened when specific people made it happen — a World Bank task team that knew their IFC colleagues, a CU staff member who happened to be aware of a BIFT opportunity — and did not happen when those relationships were absent. There is no formal mechanism requiring projects operating in the same country to communicate, share workplans, or avoid duplication. The result is that coordination is the exception, not the rule, even in Rwanda where the conditions are as favorable as they get.

Different tracks operate on incompatible timelines. Country-led grants are approved through competitive calls and take twelve to twenty-four months to prepare and approve. BIFT is demand-driven and transaction-structured. IFC advisory and investment projects follow IFC's internal processes. These timelines do not synchronize naturally, which means that by the time one window is active, another may have already locked in its design with no room to incorporate coordination.

The BIFT track is not yet well understood. Multiple participants across the day's discussions revealed that the BIFT mechanism remains opaque to many project teams. Basic questions were raised — what is it exactly, who can apply, how does it relate to existing country-led investments, how is it structured differently from the PO-led track? This knowledge gap is a practical barrier to coordination: you cannot actively plan to use a window you do not understand.

Dueling supervising entities. Where multiple SEs operate in the same country — and Rwanda has WB, IFAD, and IFC — each operates under its own governance, approval process, reporting system, and institutional culture. There is no shared country-level coordination mechanism under GAFSP. Information about what each SE is doing, with which value chains, targeting which farmer cooperatives, reaches the others only by chance or through deliberate relationship-building.

Competition for the same POs and value chain actors. A structural risk that was named but not fully resolved: multiple GAFSP windows operating in the same country can inadvertently compete for the same farmer cooperatives, the same local leaders, and the same value chains. Where this happens, it inflates expectations among POs, creates confusion about which project is responsible for what, and can damage the social capital that all the investments depend on. Gabriel Ferrero named this explicitly in the closing synthesis: competing projects can degrade social capital faster than they build it by poaching leaders with salaries.

What Worked

The session also surfaced what made coordination work when it did.

Shared problem definition. The most effective coordination cases in Rwanda were those where the different actors had a concrete, shared understanding of the problem they were solving together — not "coordination" as an abstraction, but a specific value chain bottleneck, a specific financing gap, a specific set of farmers who needed to transition from grant-supported to market-connected. When the shared problem was clear, roles were easier to define, timelines could be negotiated, and the motivation to coordinate was tangible.

Complementary, non-duplicative roles. The IFC Rwanda model worked when the different partners were genuinely doing different things: the country-led project building physical infrastructure and cooperative capacity; IFC bringing investment and private sector networks; the PO-led project strengthening governance and business skills. Coordination does not mean everyone doing the same thing together — it means each actor doing what they do best in a way that adds up to something coherent.

Within-SE coordination is easier and should be exploited. The World Bank/IFC example — where SAIP II and the IFC advisory project aligned because the same institutional umbrella made communication natural — shows that within-SE coordination is the most tractable version of the problem. GAFSP could deliberately design for this: where a country-led WB project and an IFC investment project are both active, structuring their interaction explicitly into both designs at the approval stage.

Design-stage commitment, not implementation-stage aspiration. The clearest lesson from the morning — repeated in multiple forms across the session and captured explicitly in Kunda's closing synthesis — was that coordination cannot be retrofitted. It has to be designed in from the beginning, with all relevant parties at the table, shared objectives agreed, and complementary roles defined before implementation begins.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

For the GAFSP CU:

- Develop a formal country portfolio mapping process that identifies all active GAFSP tracks and SEs in each country, shared with all relevant actors at the point of a new approval
- Build a coordination requirement into project design guidelines for countries with multiple simultaneous tracks: where two or more tracks are active, a joint country coordination mechanism — even a simple annual joint review — should be standard, not optional
- Invest in BIFT literacy across the portfolio: the track exists, has been approved and budgeted, but is not yet widely understood by the project teams who could be designing toward it

For supervising entities and task teams:

- Identify other GAFSP-funded actors in your country at project design stage — not as an afterthought during implementation
- Build explicit coordination activities, shared workplans, and joint review mechanisms into project design when multiple windows are active in the same country
- Avoid competing for the same PO leaders, value chains, or farmer networks; map coverage at design stage and agree on division of roles

For Vision 2030: The session reinforced a core Vision 2030 ambition: GAFSP's value as a connector and de-risker is only realized when the tracks work as a system. The Rwanda case shows that the pieces are in place but the connective architecture is not. Making Vision 2030's integrated impact aspiration real requires institutionalizing what is currently left to chance.

Session 9: Mobilizing Private Capital for Smallholder Agriculture

Format: Framing and lightning talks followed by roundtable discussion | **Moderator:** Gabriel Ferrero, GAFSP Senior Strategy Advisor | **Speakers:** Amit Sagar (Pearl Dairy, Uganda / IFC Private Sector Window); Chanthou Hem (ADB, Cambodia Rice SDP); Beatrice Githinji (FAO Investment Centre); Donaldo Zuniga (Red COMAL, Honduras / IDB)

Overview

This session brought together four very different models for mobilizing private capital in smallholder-linked agrifood systems — a private dairy processor in Uganda, a national rice commercialization program in Cambodia, a rural finance specialist from FAO's investment practice, and a producer organization network in Honduras — to explore what works, what doesn't, and what conditions are required for private investment to reach the smallholder level sustainably.

The discussion was deliberately practical: rather than the theory of blended finance, the session focused on what specific interventions and design choices had made private capital flow where it otherwise would not. The thread that ran through all four contributions, and was drawn out by Gabriel Ferrero in his closing synthesis, was that markets and patience are the two non-negotiable ingredients — and that GAFSP's multi-track architecture is, in principle, well-equipped to provide both.

Lightning Talk Highlights

Pearl Dairy, Uganda (Amit Sagar — IFC Private Sector Window): Pearl Dairy is a dairy processing company that received IFC Private Sector Window investment and advisory support to expand its milk collection network in rural Uganda, reaching smallholder dairy farmers who had no reliable buyer before the company's expansion. The model works through a deliberately constructed ecosystem: Pearl Dairy provides floor pricing guarantees to its farmer network, ensuring price predictability that makes investment in herd quality and milk hygiene rational for individual smallholders. It also operates a milk chilling infrastructure that aggregates supply and reduces spoilage losses. The IFC de-risking instruments — concessional financing and first-loss guarantees — made the company's rural expansion financially viable when it would otherwise have been too risky for a commercial lender to support. The lesson: private sector engagement at the smallholder level requires removing the specific risk that is blocking investment, not generic development support. For Pearl Dairy, the binding constraint was off-take risk and rural logistics — and the design addressed both.

ADB Rice SDP, Cambodia (Chanthou Hem — ADB): The Cambodia Climate Resilience Rice Commercialization Sector Development Program operates at national scale, working through the government to create the conditions for private sector investment in the rice value chain: export quality standards, climate-resilient varieties, collective marketing through cooperatives, and post-harvest infrastructure. The Cambodia model illustrates a different pathway to private capital: not direct de-risking of a specific company, but creating the national enabling environment — regulatory standards, market infrastructure, cooperative aggregation capacity — within which private investment becomes predictable and scalable. ADB's investment SE role is central here: concessional sovereign lending funds the public

goods (research, standards, infrastructure) that private actors cannot justify funding alone and that make the whole system investable.

FAO Investment Centre (Beatrice Githinji): Beatrice's contribution zoomed out from specific projects to the enabling conditions for agricultural finance more broadly. The key diagnostic: financial institutions in low-income countries lack the agricultural risk assessment tools to price smallholder lending accurately. This is not a resource problem; it is a capacity and product problem. Credit guarantee mechanisms and concessional first-loss instruments — of the kind GAFSP deploys through BIFT and the Private Sector Window — help, but they do not resolve the underlying gap in financial institutions' ability to evaluate agricultural risk. Technical assistance to banks and rural financial institutions on agricultural lending methodology is therefore as important as the financial instruments themselves — and is frequently absent from project designs that prioritize investment over capacity building in the financial sector.

Red COMAL, Honduras (Donaldo Zuniga — IDB): Red COMAL is a network of smallholder producer cooperatives in Honduras's Dry Corridor supported through the IDB Climate Resilience and Economic Empowerment project. Donaldo's contribution spoke from the PO perspective: the network's ability to access private finance has depended entirely on building trust with buyers and financial institutions over time, through demonstrated reliability in volume, quality, and contract adherence. The model is slow by commercial standards — building that trust takes years, not months — and requires sustained investment in cooperative governance and business management that most financing timelines do not accommodate. He also raised a point that resonated widely: the bureaucratic burden of accessing finance (paperwork, collateral requirements, compliance procedures) is as significant a barrier as the interest rate or the availability of capital. Simplifying access mechanisms matters as much as the financial instruments themselves.

Key Themes from the Roundtable Discussion

Markets first, then finance. The most consistent message across all four presentations and the roundtable was that finance without a market destination produces no lasting impact. Farmers and cooperatives need a reliable buyer — at a fair price, with reasonable contract terms — before investment in production capacity makes sense. The sequencing matters: market linkage first, then production investment, then financing for scaling. Projects that invert this sequence — building production capacity before markets are secured — create surpluses that cannot be sold, undermine farmer confidence in the whole system, and ultimately cannot attract private capital because there is no revenue stream to service debt.

The importance of patience — and instruments designed for it. Luis Pereira from the FAO Investment Centre offered the framing that resonated most widely in the room: markets require patience, and development programs — with their three-to-five year implementation horizons and quarterly reporting cycles — are structurally misaligned with the time it takes to build the institutional, organizational, and market infrastructure for smallholder agriculture to thrive. Building a cooperative that a bank will lend to takes years. Developing a product to export quality standards takes a cropping cycle or more. GAFSP's multi-window architecture is, in principle, designed to provide patient capital across different stages of a value chain's development — but this only works if projects are designed with that developmental arc in mind, not as standalone interventions.

Segmenting farmers and markets. A strong practical insight from Luis Pereira's reflection: not all farmers are at the same stage of market readiness, and not all markets require the same level of sophistication or scale. Effective programs segment their farmer population — identifying those ready for global or national markets, those ready for institutional markets (school feeding, hospital procurement), and those who can only yet serve local markets — and sequence their support accordingly. The failure mode is treating all farmers as homogeneous and designing a single intervention for all of them, which leaves the most advanced underserved and overwhelms the least advanced.

Floor pricing and price risk management. Price volatility was identified as the most significant barrier to private investment from the farmer side: without price predictability, investment in inputs, equipment, or quality management is irrational for a smallholder. The Pearl Dairy floor pricing model — and analogous models from other contexts — was cited as one of the most practical mechanisms for managing this risk. School feeding programs were cited alongside this as a powerful institutional anchor: they provide guaranteed demand at a predictable price, creating the off-take certainty that makes cooperatives creditworthy and private investment rational.

Crop insurance as an underexplored opportunity. The 10B breakout session (discussed further in Session 11) identified crop insurance as an important but underdeveloped product in the GAFSP context. A pilot in Lesotho was cited as showing strong farmer interest and good ecosystem collaboration. The argument was straightforward: if weather and pest risk can be partly transferred through insurance, the residual risk profile of smallholder lending becomes manageable for financial institutions. GAFSP's instruments — particularly technical assistance — could play a meaningful role in supporting crop insurance product development and farmer uptake.

Bureaucracy as a binding constraint. Multiple participants, from GAIN (Bangladesh) and from the Malawi project, raised a point that is often overlooked in discussions of agricultural finance: the paperwork and compliance burden associated with formal financing is prohibitive for many smallholder cooperatives. Bangladesh Bank's agricultural credit products were cited as an example — the funds exist, but cooperatives are not accessing them because the application and compliance procedures exceed their administrative capacity. Gabriel Ferrero noted that this is not unique to Bangladesh: Spanish farmers have protested government bureaucracy for the same reasons. Simplifying access mechanisms — lighter documentation requirements, digital application processes, graduated compliance standards for smaller loans — is as important as the interest rate or the availability of capital, and is something GAFSP's technical assistance can directly support.

Degrading social capital: a risk that must be designed against. Gabriel Ferrero's closing reflection introduced a less-discussed risk: competing projects and institutions can destroy social capital faster than they build it by competing for the same cooperative leaders, offering salary premiums that pull skilled people out of their organizations, and creating confusion about who farmers are supposed to be working with. This is a GAFSP-specific vulnerability in countries where multiple tracks and SEs are operating simultaneously: good intentions at the project level can add up to a destructive dynamic at the system level if no one is managing the overall picture.

Solutions and Recommendations

On market sequencing:

- Require evidence of market linkages or off-take arrangements as a precondition for production-scaling investments
- Build institutional market connections (school feeding, government procurement) into project design as an early-stage anchor market that builds cooperative reliability before the move to more demanding commercial markets
- Use floor pricing mechanisms and price information systems to reduce the price volatility that deters both farmers and investors

On patient capital and instruments:

- Design projects with explicit developmental arcs that recognize the multi-year nature of cooperative and market development — three-year timelines are insufficient for sustainable impact
- Use BIFT and PSW instruments not as standalone entry points but as graduation mechanisms that activate after the foundational work of the GBFT track has established institutional readiness
- Develop explicit hand-off protocols between financing tracks so that a cooperative supported by a PO-led grant can seamlessly access BIFT or PSW instruments when it reaches the right stage

On financial sector capacity:

- Invest in technical assistance to financial institutions on agricultural risk assessment, not just in the financial instruments themselves
- Support crop insurance product development and farmer uptake as an underused risk management mechanism that can unlock agricultural lending
- Simplify access mechanisms for smallholder cooperatives: lighter documentation, digital processes, graduated compliance requirements

On coordination:

- The coordination challenge raised in Session 8 is directly relevant here: private investment is most catalyzable when public goods investments (country-led), organizational investments (PO-led), and financial de-risking (BIFT/PSW) are working in the same geography on the same value chains. This does not happen without deliberate design.

Sessions 10A, 10B, 10C — Parallel Breakout Sessions

Session 10A: Role of Producer Organizations | Moderator: Shijie Yang | Case studies: Bangladesh ACCESS (FAO), Malawi MFSRP (WB), Côte d'Ivoire IFC Cargill Dairy project

Session 10B: Role of Agribusinesses and Financial Intermediaries | Moderator: Zanele Hlatshwayo

Session 10C: Role of Governments in Creating an Enabling Environment | Moderator: Kunda Ng'andwe | Case studies: Bangladesh RAINS (IFAD), Haiti PAPAIR (IDB), Madagascar HGSF (WB)

Overview

The three parallel breakout sessions explored the same underlying question from three different entry points: what does each major actor in the agricultural system — producer organizations, agribusinesses and financial intermediaries, and governments — need to do, and what does each need to receive, for smallholder agriculture to thrive? The outputs were reported back in plenary in Session 11; this section synthesizes the key findings from each room.

10A: Producer Organizations

What worked:

- Training of trainers with prior needs assessment to identify actual capacity gaps — starting from what POs do not know, not from what programs want to teach
- Single-commodity anchoring: building trust with a buyer around one reliable commodity first, then using that trust to expand into other commodities and markets
- Aggregation at both commodity and PO level, creating the scale that makes buyers and financial institutions interested
- Long-term relationship building with buyers and financial institutions: sustainability comes from relationships that outlast the project, not from relationships created by it
- Co-financing requirements: Malawi's experience showed that POs which invested their own resources maintained assets better and were more accountable than those who received grants without contribution requirements
- Farmer-to-farmer learning (PO internships, exchange visits, business olympiads) as a more effective and cost-efficient peer learning mechanism than formal training

Key challenges:

- Training-to-practice gap: the classic failure mode where trainers are trained but funds run out before farmers are trained, or farmers are trained but have no capital to put the training into practice
- Knowledge without capital is wasted: skills acquisition without access to inputs, equipment, or working capital cannot translate into productivity or income gains
- Government interference degrading PO professionalism: in multiple contexts, government political interference in cooperative structures had damaged governance, forced leadership changes, or led to PO dissolution
- Skills drain: PO members who develop strong capabilities through project training are recruited away from the organization by better-paying employers — a version of the social capital degradation problem raised in Session 9
- Inadequate post-harvest infrastructure: sorting, grading, storage, and cold chain facilities are prerequisites for market access, and their absence undermines all the capacity building invested at the production level
- Side selling and weak contract enforcement: farmers side-sell to informal traders for immediate cash when aggregators cannot pay promptly at the farm gate; weak

contract enforcement allows both sides to defect, making sustained commercial relationships fragile

- Government minimum price setting that does not reflect actual production costs, creating perverse incentives and unsustainable market dynamics
- Gender bias within PO governance structures limiting women's advancement despite formal inclusion commitments

Recommendations from the group:

- Shift from training events to continuous coaching, mentorship, and hand-holding — sustained accompaniment rather than episodic instruction
- Tailor support to the heterogeneous nature of POs: different cooperatives are at different stages of market readiness and need differentiated support accordingly
- Invest in market information systems and price transparency — farmers who understand market prices are better positioned to negotiate and less likely to side-sell
- Build market-adjusted price clauses into contracts (e.g., price floors within 20–30% of market price) to balance farmer incentives against cooperative cash flow constraints
- Scale up proven PO models cost-effectively rather than continuously inventing new approaches
- Provide pre-exit lump-sum grants based on business plans to support sustainability beyond project closure
- Allocate adequate time for PO assessment before project design

10B: Agribusinesses and Financial Intermediaries

What worked:

- Floor pricing mechanisms provided by aggregators to guarantee minimum prices for their farmer networks — a practical risk management tool for price volatility that does not require government intervention
- Crop insurance: early pilots (notably in Lesotho) showing strong farmer interest, good ecosystem collaboration, and credible risk transfer; identified as underutilized across the GAFSP portfolio
- Market linkage integration into technical assistance design: successful TA programs build market connectivity into the model from the start, rather than adding it at the end
- School feeding programs and institutional procurement as anchor markets that provide predictable demand and introduce cooperatives to quality standards and contract discipline without the full complexity of commercial export markets
- CSO engagement in building the ecosystem: CSOs serve as trusted intermediaries that help cooperatives interact with buyers more effectively, reducing transaction costs and information asymmetries
- Aggregators as large off-takers: when aggregators are themselves commercially scaled, they can absorb supply at scale while guaranteeing uptake, reducing the off-take uncertainty that makes commercial buyers cautious

Key challenges:

- Tenor mismatch: banks offer two-year loans, but many crops (including tree crops like coffee and certain fruit) take three years or more to produce their first commercial harvest; no standard solution has been found for this structural misalignment
- Logistics and physical connectivity: in Liberia and similar contexts, getting produce from farm to market is itself a prohibitive cost that no amount of financial engineering can solve; rural road and transport infrastructure is a prerequisite for market participation
- Trust deficits between farmers and private sector actors: accumulated experience of exploitation — middlemen who paid below market, processors who rejected produce after harvest — creates deep skepticism that is slow to overcome even with genuinely fair commercial offers
- Access to finance remains the most fundamental barrier: identified unanimously as the primary impediment to farmers thriving, not merely surviving

Recommendations:

- Explore longer-tenor financial products for crops with extended maturity periods, potentially using value chain structures (warehouse receipts, forward contracts) to securitize the harvest
- Invest in crop insurance product development and ecosystem building as a genuine complement to other financing tools
- Design market linkage as a requirement, not an aspiration: TA programs should not close unless off-take relationships are in place
- Build ecosystems, not transactions: off-take risk is reduced when aggregators are at scale, when buyers have diversified supply, and when producers have diversified markets — individual transactions are fragile, systems are resilient

10C: Governments in Creating an Enabling Environment

Note: This session report-back was delivered in French, and the full detail was not captured in the available transcripts. The summary below reflects the key themes that came through.

Key themes:

- The enabling environment for smallholder agriculture is determined by land tenure security, price discovery mechanisms, market information systems, rural infrastructure (roads, storage, cold chain), agricultural credit policy, and trade policy (including import competition) — most of which are government responsibilities
- Land insecurity emerged as a central concern across multiple countries (Bangladesh, Madagascar, others): smallholders without secure tenure cannot use land as collateral, cannot justify long-term investment in soil health or perennial crops, and are vulnerable to displacement when their plots become valuable
- School feeding and institutional procurement programs were cited as powerful policy instruments available to governments to create structured domestic demand that rewards quality and supports PO market graduation
- Coordination between public and private actors requires government will and institutional capacity that is frequently absent — not because governments are unwilling in principle, but because public institutions often lack the data, analytical capacity, and incentive structures to design policies that actually reflect smallholder needs

- Agricultural credit policy reform — as illustrated by Bangladesh Bank's rural credit policies being shaped in part through the ACCESS project's advocacy — shows that GAFSP investments can have policy influence beyond their direct scope when POs have the voice and evidence to engage in policy dialogue

The shared challenge across all three rooms: every breakout group converged on some version of the same point, regardless of entry angle. Whether discussing PO capacity, financial intermediaries, or government enabling environment, the conclusion was identical: no single actor in the system can fix the problem alone, and no intervention that optimizes one part of the system without attending to the others is sustainable. The market access problem is simultaneously a logistics problem, a finance problem, a governance problem, a standards problem, and a policy problem. Addressing it requires all actors to be working in the same direction.

Session 11: Cross-Window and Cross-Sector Collaboration — Key Takeaways

Format: Breakout report-backs, keynote reflections, audience Q&A, Day 2 synthesis | **Moderator:** Francesca D'Emidio | **Report-backs:** Shijie Yang (10A), Zanele Hlatshwayo (10B), Jean-Denis [10C] | **Keynote reflections:** Luis Pereira (FAO Investment Centre), Gabriel Ferrero (GAFSP Senior Strategy Advisor) | **Synthesis:** Kunda Ng'andwe (GAFSP Deputy Program Manager)

Breakout report-backs

The three groups reported back in sequence (as summarized in Sessions 10A/10B/10C above). The session's function was integrative — finding the common threads across three entry points into the same underlying challenge.

Keynote Reflection: Luis Pereira (FAO Investment Centre)

Luis Pereira positioned himself as an outside observer — not a GAFSP practitioner — offering the perspective of someone who has spent a career working on agricultural value chains. His reflection distilled the day into four words: **market, market, market, patience.**

The first three words were intentionally provocative: the emphasis throughout the day on capacity building, financing instruments, and coordination mechanisms was legitimate, but ultimately all of it exists to connect farmers to markets. Without a market, nothing else matters. The fourth word — patience — captured the core structural tension: markets, particularly at the global scale that smallholders are increasingly being asked to compete in, move at a pace that development programs rarely match. Building the institutional and organizational infrastructure for smallholder market participation takes years; development project cycles run to three or five. The misalignment is fundamental and not easily resolved by better project management.

His practical insight on market segmentation was widely noted: not all farmers are ready for the same markets, and not all markets are the same. Effective programs segment their farmer population and sequence their market integration — local markets first, then institutional markets, then regional or global markets — rather than targeting the most ambitious endpoint

for all participants simultaneously. The projects that tried to get everyone into export markets at once tended to fail; those that worked with the realistic market capabilities of different cooperative groups tended to succeed.

His closing observation about GAFSP: the multi-window architecture is, in principle, very well designed for the patient, sequential, multi-stage investment that agricultural transformation requires. The calls for proposals allow targeting. The different windows serve different stages. The combination of grant, concessional, and blended finance provides instruments for different risk profiles. The challenge is activating this potential in a coordinated way rather than letting each window operate as if the others did not exist.

Keynote Reflection: Gabriel Ferrero (GAFSP Senior Strategy Advisor)

Gabriel drew five themes from the breakout sessions and added his own conclusion.

The five themes from the room: the importance of aggregation and collective action for market power; information and power asymmetries along value chains that disadvantage farmers; the centrality of capacity — individual, organizational, and institutional — across all three breakout contexts; institutionality and trust as prerequisites for both market function and policy influence; and the role of public sector programs (school feeding, social protection, rural infrastructure) as market anchors and enabling conditions.

To these five he added his own observation about a risk that was present but under-discussed: the degradation of social capital through competing projects and institutions. When multiple projects and donors compete for the same cooperative leaders — offering salary premiums, conflicting mandates, and divided loyalties — they can unravel in months what took years to build. This is particularly acute in countries with multiple GAFSP windows and other donor programs operating simultaneously. Gabriel named this as a design responsibility: project teams must map who else is operating in their space and design their engagement to complement rather than compete.

His conclusion reframed the day's theme: the session had been positioned around public-private partnerships — three Ps. But what had emerged from the discussions was actually six Ps: **Public**, **Private**, **People** (communities, civil society, farmer organizations as equal partners rather than beneficiaries), **Principles** (shared values and goals, not just shared interests), and **Patience** (the time horizon required to do this well). The sixth P he arrived at late: patient capital, and the institutional structures that enable it.

Audience Discussion

On human-centered design and capacity building in the digital era (GAIN, Bangladesh): A participant raised the concern that the development sector has been talking about capacity building for twenty years without asking what it means in a world of social media, digital connectivity, and rapidly changing market information. The challenge is not that we don't know capacity building is important — it is that we haven't updated our models for what it looks like. Three specific points: the need for human-centered design that starts from what farmers and cooperatives are actually experiencing; the need for policy influence that removes bureaucratic barriers to financial access (Bangladesh Bank as the example); and the need for foresight exercises that help farmers and POs anticipate and navigate uncertainty rather than just respond to it.

On building on existing knowledge rather than imposing new frameworks (CSO perspective, Angeline Mwangi-Mugo): One of the most well-received observations of the day came from Angeline: the development sector's tendency to treat farmers and cooperatives as blank slates — arriving with training packages designed elsewhere, for other contexts — misses and sometimes actively undermines the knowledge, practices, and systems that already exist. Effective capacity building starts from what POs are already doing well, identifies the specific gaps, and builds from there. The worst outcome is training people in skills they cannot use in their context, leaving them neither better at what they were doing before nor capable of what the training intended.

Luis Pereira responded by describing a model he had encountered that addressed this directly: a project that built a menu of service providers, categorized by service type and PO readiness level, and then worked with each cooperative to identify which services matched their actual priorities and needs. The PIU acted as a matchmaker rather than a trainer — a more expensive investment upfront but one that produced dramatically more targeted and sustainable outcomes.

On holistic capacity — not just technical but business skills (participant from Lesotho): A participant from Lesotho synthesized the afternoon's discussion: training that covers only technical agricultural skills (how to grow a crop) without business skills (how to manage a farm as a business — record keeping, cash flow, pricing, contracting) leaves cooperatives technically capable but commercially illiterate. And training without follow-up infrastructure — facilities, equipment, access to markets — leaves skills unused. Capacity building must be holistic, continuous, and accompanied by the material conditions needed to put knowledge into practice. This is not a new insight; it was the first thing everyone agreed on. The question is why projects keep repeating the mistake.

Kunda's Day 2 Synthesis

Kunda closed the day with a synthesis that was both a practical summary and a strategic reframe.

On the morning session: coordination in Rwanda worked when it happened within a single SE relationship (WB-IFC), was intentional about complementary roles, was grounded in shared problem definition, and was built in at the design stage. The BIFT case showed that coordination requires sequencing — you cannot activate BIFT without the foundation that PO-led work provides. And the key lesson: **coordination must be designed in from the start. It cannot be retrofitted.**

On the afternoon sessions: the three breakout rooms — POs, agribusinesses, governments — arrived at recommendations that mapped directly onto GAFSP's different financing tracks. This was not planned: it emerged organically from the discussions. Capacity building for POs? The PO-led track handles that. Climate resilience and infrastructure? Country-led. Farmers not yet bankable but needing financial support? BIFT was designed for exactly that. The implication Kunda drew was direct: **GAFSP already has the architecture to respond to most of what was raised. The challenge is activating all tracks simultaneously in the same country — which is the Vision 2030 ambition — rather than letting each track operate in isolation.**

Her final message, tying the day to Vision 2030: the biggest bang for GAFSP's resources comes from the activation of all tracks together. That is what maximizing co-benefits, empowering smallholders, and catalyzing private finance look like in practice — not three parallel programs but one integrated response, designed from the beginning with all the pieces in view.

M&E Parking Lot Follow-up (Yurie Tanimichi Hoberg)

At the close of Day 2, Yurie returned briefly to respond to questions that had accumulated in the parking lot from Day 1's M&E session. She announced two follow-up actions: the questions in the parking lot had been reviewed and responses were being prepared; and in response to the strong appetite in the room for continued engagement on M&E, the CU would host a webinar before the July SMR cycle, structured as an open Q&A rather than a formal presentation — a direct response to the call from multiple participants for a sustained M&E learning community between forums.