

# Empowering Smallholders, Boosting Food Security

## Sustainable practices enhance productivity and resilience in northern Nigeria

### AT A GLANCE

**Project Name:** Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in the Savanna Zones of Northern Nigeria (GEF ID 9143)

**Country:** Nigeria

**Program:** Food-IAP

**Agency:** UNDP

**GEF Financing:** \$8.0 million

**Co-financing:** \$57.0 million



### CHALLENGE

Northern Nigeria's agricultural sector supports the livelihoods of more than 70 percent of the population and contributes 23 percent to national GDP, yet it faces declining productivity due to environmental degradation, soil infertility, and low adoption of sustainable practices.

Rainfed smallholder systems dominate the region, and pressures from population growth, climate variability, and insecure land tenure exacerbate soil erosion, water scarcity, and land degradation. Unsustainable farming practices have undermined the natural resource base, limiting yields and threatening food security, while increasing reliance on food imports.

Women and youth, often managing smaller plots with limited access to inputs, are disproportionately affected. Farmer–herder conflicts and weak institutional coordination further compound vulnerability. Enhancing productivity while safeguarding ecosystem services requires integrated interventions that increase agricultural efficiency, strengthen resilience, and promote sustainability across landscapes. Addressing these gaps is critical to achieving national food security and supporting broader environmental and social development goals.

### RESULTS



**273,000 hectares of farmland brought under integrated sustainable land and water management and climate-smart agriculture practices**, including 44,800 seedlings planted under agroforestry, resulting in a 44 percent increase in standing tree cover.



**115,000 smallholder farmers reached**, of whom 45 percent women, improving soil fertility, crop yield, food security, and livelihoods.



**94,000 jobs supported on- and off-farm**, including 44,400 women, spanning agricultural production, and benefiting livelihoods.



**National and state-level policies harmonized** into the National Sustainable Food Security Resilience Framework.



**Soil erosion reduced on 36 hectares by 22 percent** through targeted interventions with 10,600 farmers trained in erosion control techniques.



**Crop production increased by 25 percent** for rice, groundnut, cassava, maize, and sorghum.



**Gender inclusion advanced** with 31,900 women and youth actively participating in agricultural production and value chains, surpassing the original target.

## APPROACH

Integrating sustainable land management, climate-smart agriculture, and value chain interventions enabled smallholders to increase productivity while protecting ecosystems. Targeted training and input support equipped farmers to adopt improved seeds, composting, erosion control, and agroforestry systems, enhancing soil fertility, water retention, and crop yields. Partnerships with private sector actors established off-take arrangements and market linkages, incentivizing investment and reinforcing economic gains.

Institutional strengthening through policy harmonization and multi-stakeholder platforms facilitated governance and knowledge sharing, while community-based extension workers catalyzed uptake of best practices. Demonstration plots and training centers provided hands-on learning, ensuring techniques were scalable and replicable. Gender-sensitive approaches integrated women and youth into production and decision making, improving equity and economic inclusion. By combining technical, financial, and institutional interventions, the initiative simultaneously enhanced resilience, increased adoption of sustainable practices, and created tangible socioeconomic and environmental benefits aligned with national food security goals and global sustainable goals.



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## LESSONS LEARNED

Integrating policy, institutional, and technical interventions ensures that smallholder farmers can adopt and maintain improved practices. Early engagement during inception and planning phases enabled realistic scheduling and adaptive management, critical in complex, resource-constrained contexts. Demonstration plots and community-based extension workers proved essential in translating training into tangible behavior change. Private sector partnerships strengthened value chain participation but require continued coordination to align commercial incentives with social objectives. Gender-sensitive approaches, including active inclusion of women and youth in production and decision making, enhanced resilience and amplified socioeconomic benefits.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Planned actions focus on scaling adoption of climate-smart and sustainable practices. Demonstration sites and agricultural training centers will continue serving as knowledge hubs, supporting farmer capacity building and peer learning. Strengthened national and state-level frameworks, including the National Sustainable Food Security Resilience Framework, will guide policy alignment and replication across regions. Partnerships with financial institutions and private sector actors will facilitate broader access to inputs, markets, and credit. Targeted engagement of women and youth will remain central, with operational measures to ensure equitable participation and uptake of resilient farming systems.