

The True Cost Accounting Action Agenda

A Roadmap to Healthier, More Equitable,
and Sustainable Agrifood Systems

FEBRUARY 2026



TCA | Accelerator

About the TCA Accelerator

The TCA Accelerator is a global network advocating for the transition to a just, sustainable, and healthy food system through widespread adoption of True Cost Accounting.

As a hub for the vibrant TCA community, the TCA Accelerator facilitates knowledge sharing, encourages convergence across methods and strategies, and builds awareness and support for this holistic approach to food system decision-making. In addition, the TCA Accelerator serves as the steward of the TCA Action Agenda, a living guide meant to unlock greater collaboration and collective impact by diverse stakeholders.

The TCA Accelerator is an Allied Initiative of the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, governed by a steering committee of representatives from the TCA community.

Learn more about the TCA Accelerator at tcaaccelerator.org.

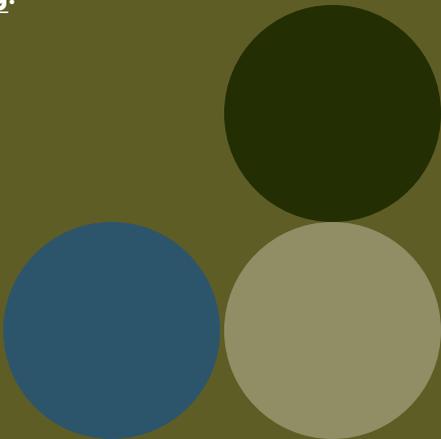
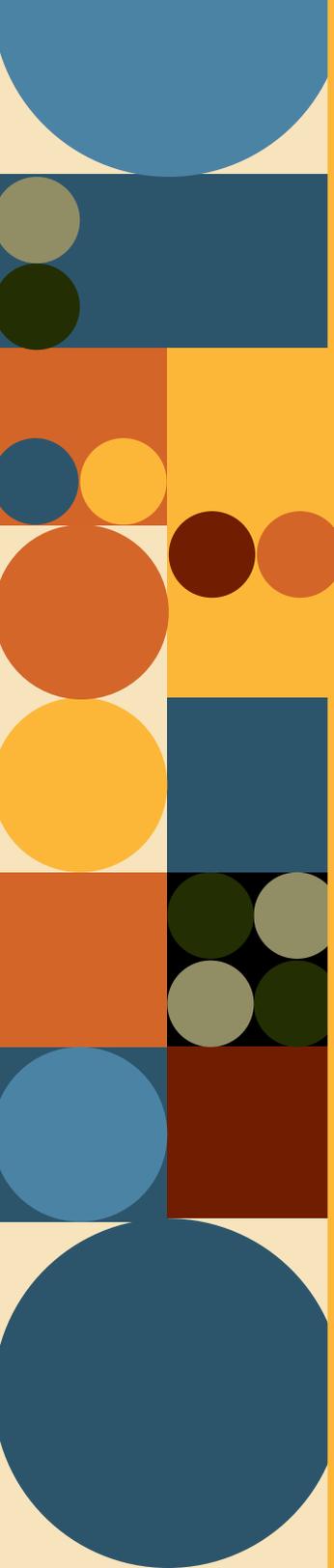


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Foreword

I'm delighted to share the True Cost Accounting (TCA) Action Agenda – the culmination of more than a year of collaboration with the TCA community and stakeholders working to advance agrifood systems transformation.

Through 11 virtual dialogues, a two-day in-person summit, numerous meetings, and a final round of stakeholder consultation, the TCA Accelerator gathered a wide range of ideas, insights, and perspectives on how to mainstream TCA. This diversity of experience and expertise has shaped the Action Agenda you are reading, informing its structure, principles, themes, and priority actions.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this process – whether by participating in dialogues, attending the summit, or responding to stakeholder consultations. The depth and thoughtfulness of the input reflect the care and commitment across this community. While it was not possible to incorporate every idea into this document, the full body of input will inform how each action is implemented.

My sincere thanks go to the funders and organizational partners who supported this journey, and to the TCA Accelerator Steering Committee and Secretariat. I am deeply grateful to colleagues who reviewed drafts and consultation feedback, strengthening the Action Agenda through their insight and guidance.

This Action Agenda is not simply a document; it is a commitment to act. As we turn toward implementation, we do so on strong foundations built by the advocates, practitioners, and researchers who have advanced TCA to date. Delivering on this agenda will require alignment with existing initiatives, new strategic partnerships, and funding where it can have the greatest impact. These efforts are inherently interconnected and depend on intentional collaboration and shared learning.

Everyone plays a role in bringing the TCA Action Agenda to life. How actions take shape will vary across regions and contexts – and that diversity is one of the community's greatest strengths.

I look forward to the work ahead.

Jenn Yates

Director, TCA Accelerator

TCA Vision and Principles

Stakeholders in the TCA Dialogue Series and Summit highlighted the need for a clear, shared articulation of core TCA vision and principles to support clarity, consistency, and impact across initiatives. In response, the TCA Accelerator commissioned a review of existing literature and, following extensive stakeholder consultation, developed this resource to guide practitioners and define and differentiate the TCA approach.

Vision Statement

TCA fosters transparent, systemic analyses of agrifood systems to guide decisions that uphold human rights and the well-being of people, animals, and the planet.

Principles

In accordance with the United Nations Environment Programme’s landmark TCA framework – the TEEBAgriFood Evaluation Framework¹ – TCA evaluations must be:

1. Comprehensive and Systemic

TCA must look holistically at how food systems impact and are dependent on people, communities, nature, and economies. A TCA analysis must consider both the positive and negative impacts across four “capital” areas – human, social, natural, produced – and account for the relationships between them to provide the full picture of the true value of food and farming.

2. Inclusive and Collaborative

TCA ensures that everyone affected has a voice. It must be a collaborative process involving actors at all four evaluation stages²: Framing, Describing and Scoping, Measuring and Valuing, and Taking Action.

3. Based on Robust Information and Data

Data sources and assessment methods may vary between TCA analyses, but stakeholders should rely on the most robust and appropriate approaches suitable and available to their context, acknowledging any limitations. TCA evaluations should seek to build upon relevant bodies of work and reference emerging consensus on best practices and common language.

4. Transparent

To foster trust and prevent misleading claims, the process, decisions, methods, and results of TCA evaluations must be thoroughly documented and disclosed.

5. Relevant to Real-World Decision-Making

A TCA evaluation should start with an actionable question or problem to solve. It should compare multiple options and show the trade-offs of each, so decision-makers can choose solutions that maximize positive outcomes for people and the planet.

¹ TEEB (2018). TEEB for Agriculture & Food: Scientific and Economic Foundations. Geneva: UN Environment. Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/207334bf-9de0-4927-a680-06bbbfe1c16f/content>

² Global Alliance for the Future of Food, IDEEA Group (2020). Applying the TEEBAgriFood Evaluation Framework: Overarching Implementation Guidance. Available at: https://futureoffood.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/GA_TEEBAgriFood_Guidance.pdf

Executive Summary

The True Cost Accounting (TCA) Action Agenda is a community-built plan to mainstream the TCA approach by 2030. It builds on nearly a decade of applied research, policy engagement, and real-world experience to outline practical next steps that governments, businesses, investors, producers, civil society, and researchers can enact together.

Today's agrifood systems deliver essential goods but also generate vast, hidden costs to people and nature. TCA brings those full costs and benefits into view, enabling fairer and more sustainable outcomes across the value chain. The Action Agenda translates the TCA vision into 22 coordinated and interconnected actions that drive real-world impact. It also invites the TCA community to participate in:

1. Sharpening communications and advocacy

2. Building the business and investment case

3. Activating TCA in national and international policy

4. Broadening the TCA coalition

5. Providing accessible guidance and research capacity

Implementation will be shared across sectors and regions, with the TCA Accelerator supporting alignment, learning, and momentum. The Action Agenda is an open invitation to join a movement that is transforming how the world values and governs its agrifood systems.



Introduction

Why a New Way of Valuing Agrifood Systems Matters Now

Farmers, fishers, and ranchers keep the world fed and clothed. The fruits of their labor are probably within your eyesight right now – the cup of coffee on your desk, the cotton shirt on your back, the salmon in your freezer. These producers are already advancing solutions to some of the world's toughest challenges, and their role will grow more important in the years ahead. Food, fiber, and fuel producers are critical to solving long-standing, intractable global challenges.

Over the past 50 years, crop yields and livestock production have increased exponentially. However, these gains have also delivered enormous – and often hidden – costs to people and nature. These costs are largely excluded from assessments and decision-making processes, as are the myriad unseen benefits of competing approaches.

To solve global challenges, society must rethink how it values food, fiber, and fuel production – moving beyond metrics that focus only on how much and how cheaply agrifoods are produced. Shortsighted metrics have driven misguided conclusions and further entrenched harmful systems while overlooking opportunities to address global needs more sustainably and equitably.

TCA offers a pragmatic alternative. It brings both the positive and negative impacts of agrifood systems into focus, revealing solutions that can maximize benefits for both people and nature. See **Figure 1** on the following page.

Over the past decade, United Nations (UN) agencies, national governments, producers, and private-sector leaders have adopted TCA, demonstrating its real-world applicability across countries, regions, and sectors. Yet barriers remain.

TCA brings both the positive and negative impacts of agrifood systems into focus, revealing solutions that can maximize benefits for both people and nature.



Agrifood encompasses more than food. It includes biofuels, fibers, wood, and raw materials that influence ecosystems, livelihoods, and economic development.



Figure 1. Why True Cost Accounting Matters

The TCA Accelerator collected input from stakeholders across global agrifood systems to document what stands in the way and how the sector can advance as one. This report identifies strategic actions needed to push TCA firmly into the mainstream and accelerate the transition toward healthier, more equitable, and sustainable agrifood systems. It builds on a substantial body of existing work – not a blank slate – reflecting nearly a decade of applied research, policy engagement, and practice.



A Brief History of TCA

For decades, decision-makers have been guided by economic approaches that emphasize productivity and profit, where important trade-offs are not fully captured. TCA establishes a structured process for engaging stakeholders and analyzing potential outcomes, helping leaders make the best all-around decisions for people and nature.

The TCA movement gained momentum in 2016, when the Global Alliance for the Future of Food formed a TCA Community of Practice. Stakeholders from philanthropy, civil society, policy, business, finance, and academia convened to harmonize principles, identify knowledge gaps, and accelerate adoption across sectors.

In 2018, the UN Environment Programme published the Economics of the Environment and Biodiversity for Agriculture and Food Systems (TEEBAgriFood) Evaluation Framework, developed with 150 scholars from 33 countries. The framework is now widely used to guide how the true costs and benefits of agrifood systems are assessed. Governments, businesses, and civil society leaders around the world have adapted and applied this framework in a wide range of contexts.

In 2020, the TCA community established the TCA Accelerator as a hub for coordination, advocacy, and shared learning. It has also built momentum for TCA. In 2021, the UN Food Systems Summit elevated TCA on the global stage. And in 2023 and 2024, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) devoted

The TCA Community of Practice is a diverse, global coalition committed to transforming how the world values food. Participants share a common goal: to advance and scale TCA through shared learning, practical implementation, and strategic collaboration across sectors.

TCA measures and values the environmental, social, health, and economic impacts of agrifood systems to help policymakers, businesses, farmers, investors, and consumers make better decisions.

(Adapted from UNEP, Capitals Coalition, and Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2021)

consecutive editions of its flagship State of Food and Agriculture report to the topic, quantifying hidden costs and recommending national assessments to guide policy action.

These milestones reflect nearly a decade of progress and a strong, coordinated movement to make TCA a central element of agrifood systems decision-making worldwide.

Publications and Guidance

Applying the TEEBAgriFood Evaluation Framework: Overarching Implementation Guidance

Step-by-step guidance on how to apply the TEEBAgriFood Evaluation Framework from the Global Alliance for the Future of Food.

True Price Assessment Method for Agrifood Products

A handbook for calculating the "true price" of agrifood products from the True Price Foundation.

TCA AgriFood Handbook

TCA methodology for agrifood businesses, published by the TMG Think Tank for Sustainability.

Global Farm Metric

A holistic framework for understanding and measuring whole-farm sustainability created by the Sustainable Food Trust.

Major Milestones in the History of TCA

2013

Convening of an International Meeting on True Cost Accounting

The Sustainable Food Trust convened leaders to explore why our economic system incentivizes harmful food production methods over more beneficial approaches.

2016

Formation of the TCA Community of Practice

The Global Alliance for the Future of Food formed the TCA Community of Practice to build a shared foundation for TCA practices.

2018

Publication of the TEEBAgriFood Evaluation Framework

The UN Environment Programme published the TEEBAgriFood Evaluation Framework, establishing a foundational approach for assessing food system impacts.

2020

Launch of the TCA Accelerator

Members of the Community of Practice launched the TCA Accelerator to strengthen alignment across frameworks, tools, advocacy efforts, communication, and stakeholder engagement.

Development of TEEBAgriFood Business Tools

The Capitals Coalition developed operational guidelines to help organizations manage risks, supporting implementations in seven countries.

2021

Assembly of the UN Food Systems Summit

Global leaders recognized TCA as an essential tool for transitioning to sustainable food systems.

2022

Publication of State of Food and Agriculture Reports

The 2023 and 2024 editions of SOFA were dedicated to TCA.

2024

Launch of the Scaling Implementation Initiative

The TCA Accelerator launched a coordinated, multi-year initiative to overcome adoption barriers and mainstream TCA by 2030.

2025

Convening of the Global TCA Summit at FAO Headquarters

As part of the Scaling Implementation Initiative, 172 leaders from over 60 countries explored how TCA can enable agrifood systems transformation.

2026 Publication of the TCA Action Agenda

The TCA Accelerator published the first comprehensive strategy for the whole TCA community, outlining actions to mainstream TCA by 2030.

The Next Phase for TCA: Scaling Implementation

In 2024, the TCA Accelerator launched Scaling Implementation: An Initiative to Mainstream True Cost Accounting by 2030, a multiphase effort to gather lessons learned, identify barriers, and accelerate adoption. The first phase focused on collecting feedback and building shared priorities through a monthslong dialogue series and in-person summit at FAO headquarters in April 2025.

That process produced the TCA Action Agenda — **a plan created by and for the TCA community** to drive real-world agrifood systems transformation. It reflects the vision and shared priorities from public- and private-sector stakeholders and lays out concrete steps to mainstream TCA globally.

This report summarizes stakeholder input and existing literature on agrifood systems into five thematic areas:

1. Sharpen Communications and Advocacy Strategies

2. Build the Business and Investment Case for TCA

3. Activate TCA in National and International Policy

4. Broaden the TCA Coalition

5. Provide Accessible TCA Guidance and Increased Research Capacity

The Action Agenda is grounded in the collective knowledge and expertise of a diverse network of organizations, sectors, and disciplines. It also recognizes that success depends on collaboration beyond the TCA community itself, including working alongside partners whose efforts intersect with and influence agrifood systems worldwide.

This could be seen as a daunting or overly ambitious proposal of work. But this is not a work plan for any single organization or sector. The scope is broad by design, and its implementation will be a shared endeavor — as collaborative as its development.

The TCA Action Agenda is the first community-built plan focused on mainstreaming TCA to help build a food system that is healthier, more equitable, and sustainable for all.

The Goal: To Mainstream TCA by 2030

Decades of efforts to address food system challenges have proven that “business as usual” and siloed methods cannot solve deeply interconnected problems. The TCA community has built a strong body of evidence, supported by case studies around the world, showing that an alternative approach is needed – and that TCA is a powerful and practical tool for driving change.

Transforming complex agrifood systems requires strategies that bridge sectors and sociopolitical contexts, from grassroots efforts to institutional systems. Therefore, the TCA Action Agenda spans sectors, proposes cross-cutting actions, and offers strategies to align decisions and multiply outcomes for people, nature, and economies.

This initiative focuses on actionable solutions and clear pathways, not just on producing more alarming statistics and figures on hidden costs. It reflects a shared, positive vision for the future and a pragmatic path to achieve it.

The plan also strengthens the scientific foundation of TCA and expands its accessibility as a decision-making tool. It focuses on building movements among diverse stakeholders, communicating TCA’s value through compelling stories, and advancing advocacy campaigns grounded in cultural and political awareness.

Above all, the Action Agenda calls for urgent action based on what is understood today while continuing to expand and refine bodies of knowledge. See **Figure 2** on the following page for a summary of TCA case studies.

Beyond narrative change and political advocacy, this plan aims to empower changemakers with tools they can use today – pricing instruments, procurement frameworks, and sector-specific methodologies – that translate knowledge into measurable impact.

Every action in the plan is interconnected, with many building or depending on the success of others. Progress requires close collaboration within the TCA community and strong alliances with other movements, as well as sustained and coordinated funding.

Thankfully, the TCA community is already anchored by diverse allies across grassroots organizations, civil society, academia, impact investing, corporations, philanthropy, multilateral institutions, and governments. Working together, this global network can achieve the goal of dramatically mainstreaming TCA by 2030.



Figure 2. TCA Case Studies to Date

TCA Case Studies Demonstrate Real-World Potential

The TCA community has built a strong body of evidence

67+
case studies
since 2015



Conducted in **36+** countries

Strong representation in:



Notable TCA projects also conducted in:
Europe, North America, and Australia

Across dozens of agrifood products

Cash Crops

- Coffee
- Cocoa
- Cotton
- Palm oil
- Bananas
- Tea
- Roses
- Chocolate

Mixed Systems

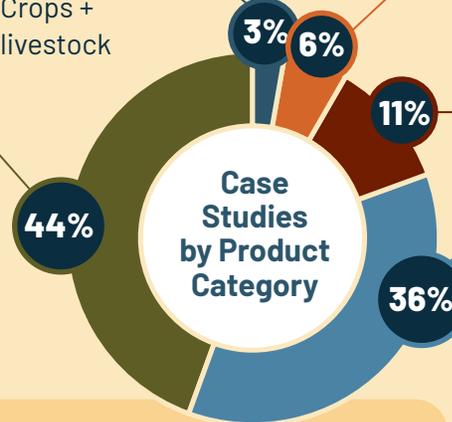
- Crops + livestock

Fisheries

Livestock Systems

Staple Crops

- Rice
- Maize/corn
- Wheat
- Millets
- Bread (processed staple)



Coffee is the most frequently studied product

With the support of

44+
global partners
including:

Multilateral Organizations and National Government Agencies

Research and Academic Institutions

NGOs and Philanthropy

Private Sector and Market Actors

The TCA Action Agenda

There is growing evidence for TCA as a powerful tool for uncovering and comparing hidden environmental and social impacts of food system approaches and decisions. Yet the method is underused – and often misunderstood.

Co-created by a global community, this plan aims to build the awareness and momentum needed to mainstream TCA by 2030. It summarizes the community insights gained through stakeholder engagement and literature reviews, then offers concrete actions to dramatically accelerate the TCA movement.



Action Area 1

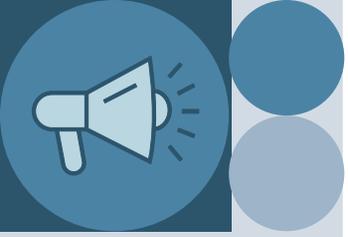
Sharpen Communications and Advocacy Strategies

The TCA community will identify strategic advocacy goals and influential messages to organize coalitions for change.

Community Insights

Communication challenges are a key barrier to broader TCA adoption. Stakeholders called for clearer articulation of TCA's benefits and localized narratives to mobilize support. They noted:

- » Fragmented communication and unclear messaging limit understanding of TCA.
- » Robust communications strategies can shift perceptions about agrifood systems and build momentum for local and global transformations.
- » TCA advocates must reach beyond the current practitioner community and address a wider set of audiences than they do today, including policymakers, business and financial decision-makers, producers, and citizens.
- » Messaging must be tailored to persuade policymakers, business leaders, and others to apply TCA and act on its evidence.
- » Communications too often focus on risks or alarming statistics, not success stories or opportunities.



ACTION AREA 1:

Sharpen
Communications
and Advocacy
Strategies

Priority Actions

Action 1.1: Form National and Regional Working Groups to Advance Locally Tailored Strategies

To scale TCA, its principles and practices must be embedded in national and regional policy frameworks. Local stakeholders can drive approaches that take into consideration the varying priorities, capacities, and constraints of individual countries or regions.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

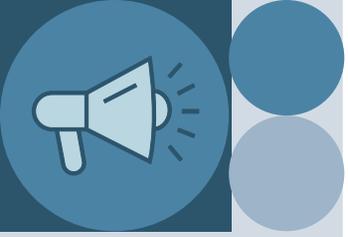
- Identify countries with strong TCA awareness and support capacity building for stakeholders in developing local assessments and tailored action plans.
- Map local action plans to policy entry points, partners, and clear advocacy goals.
- Connect local advocates with transnational platforms and encourage collaboration with UN agencies and programs to ensure local insights inform global efforts.
- Facilitate knowledge exchange between TCA advocates from different countries.
- Create targeted media and speaking opportunities to elevate case studies and build demand for TCA-aligned policy reform.

Action 1.2: Synthesize and Showcase TCA Case Studies to Demonstrate Proof of Concept

TCA case studies demonstrate the real-world potential of this approach, but many are underused, buried in dense technical documents, or scattered across platforms. This effort will elevate existing evidence and make it accessible, actionable, and engaging for decision-makers.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Collaborate with case study authors and experts to analyze outcomes and extract key lessons and calls to action.
- Create a user-friendly, online repository of TCA case studies that audiences can explore by region, sector, or impact area.
- Share TCA findings through blogs, op-eds, testimonials, and multimedia content to bring TCA's impact to life and inspire adoption.



ACTION AREA 1:

Sharpen Communications and Advocacy Strategies

Action 1.3: Conduct TCA Messaging Research

Stakeholders agree that scaling TCA requires clear, audience-specific communications that are grounded in evidence. This effort would refine how to communicate TCA's purpose, benefits, and urgency — especially at the national and regional levels — and help TCA reach target audiences.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Design research to identify messaging and proof points that motivate action across audiences.
- Explore how accountability messages influence corporate engagement.
- Address common critiques of TCA.
- Engage diverse stakeholders in co-creation to ensure messaging is inclusive and locally relevant.

Action 1.4: Develop and Distribute Tailored TCA Communications Toolkits

To ensure consistent and compelling engagement across sectors and regions, the TCA community must equip advocates with clear, audience-specific materials. TCA communications toolkits will include tested messages tailored for key audiences to highlight the benefits of TCA and pathways for navigating the agrifood systems transition.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Develop toolkits of tested messages, frequently asked questions, and responses to common TCA critiques, using collaborative methods that engage a diverse range of potential users.
- Tailor messages to reflect the needs and priorities of specific audiences, including policymakers, investors, practitioners, and stakeholders working across the value chain. Work with leaders of national/regional working groups to ensure messages are available in local languages and suited to local contexts.
- Share toolkits with partner networks to promote consistent messaging and broad uptake.



Action Area 2

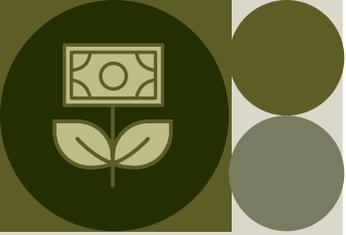
Build the Business and Investment Case for TCA

The business and investment cases must be clearer and more consistent to mainstream TCA.

Community Insights

Despite years of progress, TCA's relevance to financial performance and risk management remains under-recognized. Companies and investors often view impact assessments as compliance exercises rather than strategic tools for long-term value creation. Resource constraints, data limitations, and unclear alignment with existing frameworks also hinder adoption. Other issues and suggestions included:

- » The business and financial sectors need a clear, shared language to understand TCA's value and its relevance to risk management, reputation, and performance.
- » Efforts related to sustainability or social welfare are often siloed within sustainability teams or a particular fund or portfolio. As a result, they lack leadership buy-in and cross-functional integration for enterprise-wide adoption.
- » Stronger alignment between TCA and existing accounting, disclosure, and impact frameworks could ease integration and drive uptake.
- » Perceived cost and complexity deter some companies from piloting TCA assessments. In addition, companies don't perceive strong consumer demand.
- » Some actors fear exposing negative externalities they aren't ready to address.



Priority Actions

ACTION AREA 2:

Build the Business and Investment Case for TCA

Action 2.1: Articulate the Business Case for TCA

Scaling TCA requires a clear, consistent, and evidence-based explanation of how it generates business and investor value. The community needs to demonstrate how TCA enhances decision-making, risk management, and value creation.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

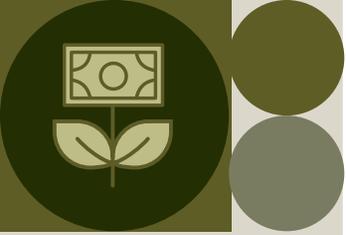
- Analyze potential target audiences to inform segmentation and messaging strategies.
- Create audience-specific engagement strategies and tailored messages for businesses working across the value chain.
- Connect TCA to business objectives and reporting requirements, including existing social, climate, and nature disclosure frameworks and initiatives.
- Provide clear evidence for TCA as a strategic tool and clarify benefits, costs, and use cases.
- Distill existing TCA business guides into clear, concise, and accessible communications that lower barriers for entry and spark entry-level conversations.

Action 2.2: Launch a TCA Business Champions Group

Building relationships with business leaders is essential to strengthening the case for TCA. A dedicated TCA Business Champions Group would engage private-sector leaders and advocate for TCA as a rigorous, strategic decision-making tool with real business benefits.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Identify and convene business leaders who are already engaged in TCA-related initiatives.
- Empower these leaders to serve as peer advocates who share practical examples and drive awareness across industry networks and associations.
- Integrate business champions into the TCA Community of Practice to strengthen cross-sector collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Establish dedicated discussions or standing working groups for champions to exchange insights, identify barriers, and accelerate adoption.



ACTION AREA 2:

Build the Business and Investment Case for TCA

Action 2.3: Establish TCA Pilot Projects for Value Chain Decision-Making

Stakeholders recommend launching additional targeted test projects with companies and investors to demonstrate TCA's practical value across the agrifood value chain.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

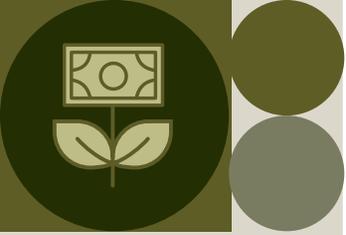
- Leverage existing relationships with private-sector leaders to identify companies and investors to conduct TCA assessments.
- Design pilot projects that demonstrate how TCA informs investment and operational decisions across the value chain.
- Secure strategic partners to co-design and launch pilots.

Action 2.4: Create a TCA Producer and SMEs Incentives Fund

Stakeholders emphasized that meaningful agrifood systems transformation requires direct support for those on the front lines – and at every point in the value chain, from farmers and fishers to processors, distributors, and retailers. Many producers and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) already use practices that benefit people and nature but lack the resources to measure and communicate their value. Those abilities are essential for influencing policy debates, making credible consumer-facing claims, and accessing compensation from public and private programs. A TCA Incentives Fund would expand access to TCA tools and analysis, and create opportunities for these key actors to quantify their impact and lead the agrifood system transition.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Establish a TCA Incentives Fund to help producers and SMEs offset costs for data collection, assessments, and implementation.



ACTION AREA 2:

Build the Business and Investment Case for TCA

Action 2.5: Launch a TCA Funding Screening Pilot Program

Access to finance is a major barrier for producers and SMEs working to build profitable and sustainable agrifood systems. Stakeholders noted the urgent need for more funding to accelerate this transition – with some partners calling for a tenfold increase by 2040 (Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2023). A funding screening pilot can help investors and funders recognize both the hidden risks and unrealized opportunities within agrifood systems.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Partner with investors, development banks, and philanthropic institutions to identify high-impact and best-impact investment opportunities.
- Use TCA assessments to reveal overlooked risks in traditional financial models and highlight unrealized opportunities to deliver strong social, environmental, and financial returns.
- Build on existing initiatives to refine methods and share results.

Action 2.6: Create a TCA Investor Engagement Program

Many agrifood investors underestimate their exposure to social, health, environmental, and economic risks. At the same time, opportunities that can generate positive returns alongside social and environmental benefits are often overlooked. An investor engagement program would demonstrate how to harness TCA for investment strategies and risk management.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Identify key entry points for engagement with the investment community (e.g., by demonstrating how to use TCA to anticipate regulatory trends or manage potential stranded assets).
- Demonstrate how TCA supports sustainability credentials, financial performance, and broader benefits for people and nature.
- Work with investors to enhance stewardship policies and strengthen decision-making.



Action Area 3

Activate TCA in National and International Policy

Embedding TCA into national and international policy is essential to aligning agrifood systems reform with related goals and shifting from isolated responses to systemic change.

Community Insights

Government leadership is critical to scaling TCA. Despite growing interest, policy integration remains limited due to institutional fragmentation, competing priorities, and short-term political incentives.

TCA offers a framework for more cohesive planning and decision-making, but this type of long-term, systemic thinking is often overlooked in planning and budgeting cycles that prioritize short-term gains. Policymakers need support to mount sweeping changes.

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of inclusive policymaking to ensure food system reforms are practical, equitable, and responsive to local realities. They said broader citizen engagement and collaboration across the public, private, and civil sectors can build momentum for adoption. They noted:

- » Integrating TCA into government planning and budget processes can improve policy coherence across issue areas and strengthen impact.
- » Policymakers need clear, credible evidence of TCA's benefits – supported by robust data and real-world examples – to identify where and how to apply it effectively.



ACTION AREA 3:

Activate TCA in National and International Policy

- » Entry points for adoption exist at every level of governance. National and subnational governments can embed TCA into planning, procurement, and subsidy reform, while multilateral institutions can align global commitments and standards.
- » Treasury and finance ministries may be particularly receptive to TCA's value in improving efficiency and return on public investment.
- » Fragmented institutional structures and competing mandates impede adoption. Stronger coordination across ministries and multilateral institutions is essential to scale implementation.
- » Political cycles and competing interests often discourage long-term or sweeping reforms. Connecting TCA to near-term wins can build momentum.
- » Policymakers may be unduly influenced by powerful interests and disconnected from the on-the-ground realities of producers, consumers, and others who disproportionately bear the burdens of the agrifood system.
- » Inclusive conversations are essential to ensuring transformation plans are equitable and grounded in real-world perspectives.

Priority Actions

Action 3.1: Conduct National TCA Assessments to Establish Coherent National and International Policy Priorities

With access to national data, civil service capacity, and the power to convene civil society, researchers, producers, and other critical stakeholders, national governments are strongly positioned to lead TCA assessments. They also have the most incentive to do so. TCA can identify cost-effective interventions, improve spending efficiency, and strengthen coherence between departments to achieve national and international policy goals.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Support governments in undertaking in-depth TCA assessments, building on FAO's findings and recommendations in the 2023 State of Food and Agriculture report.
- Use assessment results to help governments identify where public spending generates unintended costs so they can redirect investments toward integrated, long-term priorities with stronger returns.
- Align with advocacy efforts to build political will for whole-of-government approaches to food system challenges.



ACTION AREA 3:

Activate TCA in National and International Policy

Action 3.2: Advocate for Public Purchasing for Public Benefit

Stakeholders explained that governments are not only policy-setters; they are also major buyers within agrifood systems. Public procurement decisions can either perpetuate hidden costs or redirect spending toward societal benefits. By applying TCA principles, governments can better understand the full impact of their purchasing power, align budgets across departments, and reduce future public costs.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Leverage complementary advocacy and communications initiatives to encourage policy coherence and create demand for TCA-aligned procurement guidelines.
- Equip governments with knowledge and tools to apply TCA in public procurement and spending decisions.

Action 3.3: Advocate for Smarter Subsidy Reform

Stakeholders highlighted that governments spend billions annually to support agrifood practices that undermine environmental and public health goals, even as they seek solutions for those same problems. By applying TCA, governments can repurpose subsidies and align spending with national and global priorities.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Leverage case studies in strategic communications and advocacy efforts to demonstrate the efficiency and impact of TCA-informed subsidy reform and create demand for reform.
- Conduct political economy analyses so advocacy efforts anticipate and manage resistance from vested interests.
- Identify opportunities for subsidy redirection toward positive societal outcomes, presenting governments with compelling evidence and pathways for change.
- Integrate TCA insights into fiscal policies, budget frameworks, and subsidy reform processes.



ACTION AREA 3:

Activate TCA in National and International Policy

Action 3.4: Integrate TCA into Multilateral Processes and Institutional Strategies and Decision-Making

To scale TCA, it must be embedded into strategies, programs, and funding priorities of international institutions and multilateral fora. Doing so ensures TCA informs high-level decision-making, resource allocation, and accountability frameworks.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Build alliances within institutions – including UN agencies, development banks, global partnerships, and regional bodies – through targeted outreach, relationship-building, and convenings.
- Collaborate with allied organizations, coalitions, and movements to integrate TCA into advocacy and evidence-building efforts, and strengthen capacity for TCA policy engagement.
- Leverage high-level events and global milestones to influence decision-makers, shift narratives, and position TCA as an enabling tool for sustainable development, climate, and health goals.
- Align TCA indicators and methodologies with international norms wherever possible.



Action Area 4

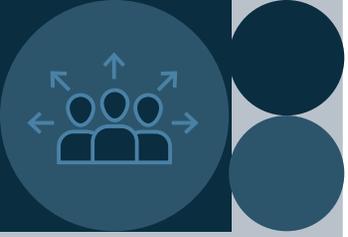
Broaden the TCA Coalition

Expanding and diversifying the TCA Community of Practice is essential to achieving mainstream adoption and ensuring agrifood systems transformation reflects the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders.

Community Insights

Stakeholders noted that scaling TCA is constrained by duplications of effort, fragmented initiatives, and a lack of a coherent shared narrative. While TCA has attracted strong participation from well-resourced institutions, many operate in isolation. Deeper connections between aligned initiatives can strengthen coordination, reduce inefficiencies, and amplify collective influence. The movement also needs to elevate regional leaders and frontline voices to ensure strategies are grounded in local realities. Other insights included:

- » Limited coordination and overlapping initiatives have slowed progress and created missed opportunities for systemic change.
- » Building stronger partnerships across related movements, such as public health, nutrition, climate resilience, and just transition, can expand TCA's reach and influence.
- » Bringing producers, consumers, and adjacent interest groups (e.g., insurance) into the conversation will add fresh perspectives, new avenues of influence, and additional capacity.
- » Frontline communities and local practitioners are essential partners. Their leadership and expertise should help shape strategies that are practical, equitable, and grounded in real-world needs.
- » Developing a shared narrative and unified voice can increase visibility and accelerate adoption.



Priority Actions

ACTION AREA 4:

Broaden the
TCA Coalition

Action 4.1: Center Producers as Co-Creators in the TCA Coalition

Stakeholders said an inclusive TCA movement requires authentic partnerships with producers – including farmers, ranchers, and fishers – who have direct influence over on-the-ground practices. The TCA community needs to invite producers and their organizations to co-create throughout the TCA process, from shaping assessments to implementing recommendations. Co-creation ensures the approach is rooted in lived experience and drives real impact.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

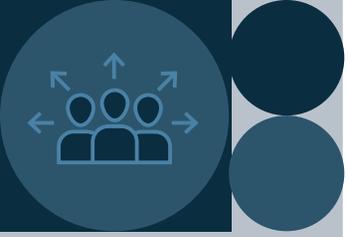
- Partner with producers and producer organizations in assessment design, data collection, and implementation.
- Compensate producers for their participation and support just transition pathways.
- Integrate producer input into coalition governance and decision-making.
- Establish long-term engagement structures to ensure producers continue to shape decision-making, implementation, and strategies over time.
- Explore opportunities to align with producer-led movements.

Action 4.2: Create a TCA Grassroots Support Fund

Stakeholders highlighted the need to support grassroots organizations working directly in farming, conservation, and local market systems to create tangible, community-level impact. A TCA Grassroots Support Fund would channel funding and technical resources to local partners, strengthening collective efforts to attract investment and recognition.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Coordinate with existing networks to identify high-impact grassroots partners to champion TCA.
- Provide grants, training, and tools to help grassroots actors apply TCA insights in their operations and advocacy.
- Translate TCA findings into accessible, advocacy-ready materials (e.g., toolkits, infographics, talking points) for local partners to use with policymakers, funders, and the public.
- Encourage value chain engagement by using producer data to inform retail and procurement practices that support fair returns and sustainable investments.



ACTION AREA 4:

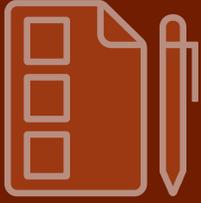
Broaden the TCA Coalition

Action 4.3: Strengthen Alliances with Aligned Initiatives and Interests

Stakeholders said the TCA community should thoroughly explore how to support and complement aligned initiatives and interests. By forming novel and strategic partnerships, the community can strengthen collaboration, streamline advocacy, and encourage broader uptake of TCA.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Conduct a review of stakeholder alignment and influence to identify mutually beneficial partnerships that can advance agrifood systems transformation goals.
- Seek opportunities for knowledge exchange with stakeholders that share complementary goals and strategic value (e.g., organizations countering misinformation campaigns or leading work on data sovereignty and data rights).
- Integrate insights on strategic partnerships into Action Agenda implementation plans, building on existing research and projects and identifying opportunities to contribute across and beyond the agrifood systems movement.
- Partner with citizen and consumer associations to help people understand how policy and industry decisions connect to their daily lives and choices, and to build demand for systemic reform.



Action Area 5

Provide Accessible TCA Guidance and Increased Research Capacity

To scale, TCA must become easier to understand and apply. Simplifying and driving convergence between approaches, improving access to data, and expanding research capacity will make TCA more inclusive, practical, and actionable.

Community Insights

Many organizations that could benefit the most from TCA lack the expertise, funding, data, or capacity to conduct and apply assessments. Confusion around definitions and inconsistent methodologies further undermine adoption and comparability, and expose TCA to potential greenwashing. The community called for continued dialogue to identify areas of agreement and potential standardization between TCA approaches and language. They made clear, however, that this dialogue should not hold up the delivery of urgently needed resources, including simpler tools and guidance, to make TCA usable for stakeholders across the food system. Stakeholders noted:

- » TCA is concentrated among elite, well-resourced institutions. Existing frameworks and methodologies are technical and complex, creating barriers for smaller organizations and community-based initiatives.
- » Challenges in collecting and accessing quality, contextually relevant data make assessments difficult to conduct and apply.
- » Confusion about what qualifies as TCA undermines credibility and comparability.



ACTION AREA 5:

Provide Accessible TCA Guidance and Increased Research Capacity

- » Guidance tends to be highly technical and relies on stakeholders to have robust data, institutional buy-in, and capacity for conducting and interpreting assessments.
- » New tools and refined research approaches would simplify processes, ensure consistency, and allow for contextual relevance.
- » Institutions would also benefit from greater access to advisors, relevant data sources, and peer learning exchanges.
- » Stronger alignment with adjacent methodologies (e.g., life cycle assessment) could enhance research quality, comparability, and application.
- » The degree to which it is necessary to harmonize TCA frameworks and methodologies remains an area of disagreement. Some members of the TCA community see establishing standards and harmonizing between approaches as essential for progress, while others see TCA's current flexibility as ensuring accessibility and contextual adaptation, particularly in the Global South.

Priority Actions

Action 5.1: Establish a Process to Identify Opportunities for TCA Methods Convergence and Standardization

Responding to a long-held concern within the TCA community, this action will explore opportunities for greater convergence across TCA methods and, where appropriate, standardization. Grounded in shared TCA principles, the process will strengthen rigor and address greenwashing concerns across TCA applications.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Identify appropriate organizations within the TCA community to lead this process, prioritizing organizational neutrality and representation that reflects the diversity of the field.
- Build on prior work undertaken by the TCA Accelerator's Harmonization Working Group to avoid duplication and accelerate progress.
- Encourage process leaders to balance convergence and standardization with continued attention to methodological accessibility and relevance across diverse and underserved contexts.



ACTION AREA 5:

Provide
Accessible
TCA Guidance
and Increased
Research
Capacity

Action 5.2: Create TCA Starter Kits to Ease Introduction to TCA Concepts and Methods for a Variety Of Users

Conducting a TCA analysis currently requires significant funding, technical expertise, and time – creating a barrier to entry for all but the most well-resourced users. TCA Starter Kits will provide a more accessible and interactive entry point for potential users, enabling wider understanding and adoption.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Develop TCA Starter Kits to introduce TCA basics, core principles, definitions, and methods.
- Create an interactive overview of the TCA process – from stakeholder engagement and problem identification to scenario setting, data collection, analysis, action, and monitoring.
- Build an interactive TCA assessment tool that distills the TEEBAgriFood Evaluation Framework and implementation guidance into a user-friendly interface.
- Collaborate with community experts to integrate available methodologies and data sets into TCA tools to help users understand food system choices and all their impacts.
- Use the Starter Kits as a pathway to more robust TCA analyses and services offered by the TCA community.

Action 5.3: Establish a TCA Data Commons

Reliable and accessible data are essential to understanding agrifood system costs and benefits. However, persistent challenges around data collection, data sovereignty, and access have limited TCA's reach and impact. A TCA Data Commons would aggregate primary data from TCA analyses and relevant public sources, creating shared infrastructure to support future projects and strengthen analytical capacity across the community.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Create a TCA Data Commons to aggregate primary data from TCA analyses to improve access and enable reuse.
- Review existing public sources of data for agrifood systems analysis.
- Develop guidance on data sovereignty, responsible use of AI and other technologies, and data sharing between companies.
- Engage with national data collection centers and statistical agencies to evaluate their capacity to meet TCA analytical needs and identify gaps.
- Develop policies for commercial data access and fair compensation for producers and others involved in primary data collection.
- Collaborate with TCA researchers to fill gaps and strengthen analytical capabilities.



ACTION AREA 5:

Provide Accessible TCA Guidance and Increased Research Capacity

Action 5.4: Launch a Train-the-Trainer Program

Stakeholders said that scaling TCA requires rapidly building capacity – especially in underserved countries and regions. A train-the-trainer program would build capacity through peer-to-peer learning and create a global network of practitioners. Peer trainers could localize TCA approaches and expand adoption while maintaining consistency through shared principles and tools.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Equip an initial cohort of practitioners with skills and resources to train others in their local contexts, combining technical instruction with training on facilitation techniques and data ethics.
- Localize TCA practices while harmonizing principles and practical tools to ensure global consistency.
- Develop university modules and free online courses to support delivery and make TCA more accessible.

Action 5.5: Establish TCA Research Centers and Fellowships

Stakeholders identified a clear need to expand research capacity and refine methodologies to address data gaps and encourage evidence-based decision-making. Dedicated TCA research and academic fellowships would broaden the field and deepen relevance for government, business, civil society, and multilateral bodies.

STEPS TO ADVANCE THIS ACTION:

- Establish research centers and fellowships focused on advancing TCA methodologies and applications.
- Coordinate research efforts across regions and disciplines to broaden and deepen the field.
- Position research hubs as engines for applied research, technical innovation, and capacity building.
- Prioritize research needs identified during the TCA Dialogue Series and Summit, including assessments of specific agrifood systems, methodological innovations, comparative analyses, and alignment with related frameworks (e.g., life cycle assessment and agroecology).
- Use these priorities to guide future research investments and strengthen both the rigor and practical impact of TCA.

Implementing the TCA Action Agenda

The TCA Action Agenda was built with the wisdom and participation of a broad, diverse community. Its implementation must be equally collaborative. Implementation strategies will vary between different contexts, ensuring alignment with local priorities and capacity. Achieving the ambition of dramatically mainstreaming TCA by 2030 requires coordinated contributions from practitioners, researchers, policymakers, business leaders, civil society, and funders – each bringing their unique skill sets in complementary ways.

The TCA Community

The TCA community is at the heart of implementation. Every organization and individual has a role to play – applying, testing, and communicating TCA in contexts that reflect their mandates, audiences, and regions. Many actions in this plan depend on locally adapted approaches and collaborations across geographies and sectors.

Community members are encouraged to lead actions that are most relevant to their work while staying connected to the movement through shared learning, dialogue exchange, and alignment. Those wishing to contribute to specific action areas can contact the TCA Accelerator to be connected with partners and working groups.

Together, community members will:

- » Co-design and implement action-area projects.
- » Share lessons and tools to accelerate learning.
- » Build bridges across disciplines and regions.
- » Identify and fill knowledge or practice gaps that slow progress.

Funders

Philanthropic partners are indispensable to realizing this shared vision. The Action Agenda reflects the community's collective assessment of the most strategic opportunities to embed TCA in decision-making across public and private sectors. Achieving these outcomes will require sustained and coordinated funding.

Funders can catalyze change by:

- » Supporting organizations that are leading and contributing to specific actions.
- » Investing in cross-cutting efforts that strengthen the TCA ecosystem.
- » Encouraging collaboration and shared learning among grantees.
- » Partnering with the TCA Accelerator and community to develop funding mechanisms that match innovative ideas with resources.

By supporting this collaborative approach, funders help shift global decision-making toward systems that fully account for impacts on people, nature, and society.

The TCA Accelerator

The TCA Accelerator serves as a steward and connector of the Action Agenda. While it cannot implement all actions alone, it enables the ecosystem to thrive – providing coordination, strategic alignment, and progress tracking. Its role is to support and amplify the community, ensure coherence across efforts, and advance initiatives that fill gaps or benefit the field as a whole.

Specifically, the TCA Accelerator will:

- » Steward implementation by monitoring commitments and progress, convening partners, and helping maintain alignment across the Action Agenda.
- » Strengthen collaboration by connecting actors working on complementary efforts, facilitating working groups, and promoting shared learning across regions and sectors.
- » Advance community-wide priorities by leading initiatives that no single organization can take on alone, such as establishing shared principles, amplifying case studies, building awareness, and fostering convergence in methods and messaging.
- » Mobilize resources by working with funders and community partners to develop mechanisms that match promising ideas and implementers with funding opportunities.

The TCA Accelerator will help sustain momentum, uphold a shared sense of purpose, and maintain visibility for TCA as a transformative framework for decision-making.



Photo credit: DB Immagini



Photo credit: DB Immagini



Conclusion

The TCA Action Agenda is a global movement to build agrifood systems that work for people, nature, and economies alike. It is rooted in years of collective effort and designed to accelerate practical, coordinated action across sectors and regions.

The TCA Accelerator invites all stakeholders — practitioners, policymakers, funders, researchers, businesses, and communities — to join this shared endeavor. By working together, TCA can become a cornerstone of decision-making and help shape a more sustainable and equitable future.



For those ready to explore further, our website provides a deeper dive into the foundational research and collaborative process behind this Action Agenda.

Visit: tcaaccelerator.org/actionagenda

Acknowledgments

The TCA Accelerator is deeply grateful to the funders and organizational partners whose support of the Scaling Implementation initiative made this Action Agenda possible:

- » Agroecology Coalition
- » Capitals Coalition
- » IKEA Foundation
- » Global Alliance for the Future of Food
- » Global Alliance for a Sustainable Planet
- » GRACE Communications Foundation
- » Impact Institute
- » McKnight Foundation
- » Owsley Brown II Family Foundation
- » Sustainable Food Trust
- » Thread Fund
- » Transformational Investing in Food Systems
- » True Price
- » True Value of Food Initiative
- » UN Environment Program
- » World Benchmarking Alliance

The TCA Accelerator extends special thanks to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for hosting the TCA Summit in April 2024 and for its leadership elevating TCA as a critical tool for agrifood systems transformation. Through the 2023 and 2024 editions of the State of Food and Agriculture, FAO significantly advanced TCA research, strengthened collaboration and consensus across stakeholders, and raised this topic to new levels of global visibility and engagement.

We are also grateful to the TCA Accelerator Steering Committee — Lauren Baker, Claire van den Broek, Tim Crosby, Salman Hussain, Amanda Jekums, Adele Jones, Priya Motupalli, Urvashi Rangan, Olivia Riemer, and Martine van Weelden — whose guidance and leadership have been invaluable to the TCA Accelerator’s mission and to advancing a holistic understanding of agrifood systems costs and benefits.

In addition, the TCA Accelerator thanks its dedicated Secretariat team for bringing the Scaling Implementation initiative and this Action Agenda to life, including Rosanna Crawford, Teresa Gerner, April Leather, and Jenn Yates. We are also grateful for the partners who contributed their expertise in facilitation, branding, web design, research, editing, and communications strategy, including Maria Bustamante, Joanne Cheung, Diga Communications, Dragonfly Editorial, Out of Place Studio, and Jacob Waites.

Additional Resources

The TCA Action Agenda builds on decades of research, advocacy, and implementation by a wide array of organizations, networks, and initiatives. These efforts have laid critical groundwork — developing methodologies, advancing policy dialogues, demonstrating business applications, and expanding the evidence base for agrifood systems transformation.

The TCA Accelerator recognizes and values these contributions. Please visit tcaaccelerator.org for a list of resources that provide both the foundation and momentum for leveraging TCA as a practical and transformative tool.

TCA | Accelerator

