



Results Review Workshop

Assessment of Time- and Wage-Monitoring-Systems on Banana Farms and Mapping against Salary Matrix & Recommendations for Improvement

February 7, 2024



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development





Agenda

1. Scope and objectives of the research
2. Research framework
3. Data collection
4. Main results
5. Conclusions and recommendations

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Scope and objectives

Background: In 2023 the German Retailers Working Group implemented piloting activities on various farms in collaboration with their supply chain partners and the Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade collecting wage data with the IDH Salary Matrix (SM) and verifying that data, calculating a Voluntary Contribution and paying this Voluntary Contribution to the farms and finally workers. The group also conducted a wage analysis using the SM in Ecuador 2022 and for all banana sourcing countries in 2023. Several challenges were identified:

- Inadequate tracking of working time
- Common weaknesses in wage monitoring systems
- Challenges of integrating farm data in the SM
- Lack of records of overtime and weekend work.

Scope: Based on these findings, our task focused on:

- Study of time and wage monitoring systems on banana farms in Colombia, Costa Rica and Ecuador.
- Study of the compatibility of banana farm monitoring systems with the Wage Matrix.

Objectives

- Generate information on **best practices**
- Provide recommendations for **improving data collection and monitoring systems.**
- Providing suggestions to **further develop the Salary Matrix**
- Foster **support to banana farms provided by actors** such as GIZ, retailers, WBF, etc.

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Research framework



Data and alignment with the salary matrix	Skills, tools and processes	Strategy and Coordination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data availability and alignment with the Salary Matrix • Quality of data management systems • Challenges and potential for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities • Data knowledge and skills • Training • Characteristics of monitoring systems • Data quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National communication strategies • International collaboration • Barriers and facilitators • Roles • Potential for improvement

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Data collection methods

1. **Document review:** Evaluation of key documentation and gray literature (institutional publications) to extract key information.
2. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders, both during visits to farms in rural areas and in offices in the city.
3. **Observation:** Knowledge gathered during our visits to the three countries.



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Ecuador



No. of interviewees	Type of farms	Regions	Certifications	Use of SM
18	L (>100 ha): 2 M (30-100h ha): 2 S (<30ha): 2	Guayas Santa Elena Los Rios El Oro	Global G.A.P Fairtrade Rainforest Alliance	4 (6)

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Colombia



No. of interviewees	Type of farms	Regions	Certifications	Use of SM
11	L (>100 ha): 5 S (<30ha): 1	Urabá Magdalena	Global G.A.P Rainforest Alliance	6(6)

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Costa Rica



No. of interviewees	Type of farms	Regions	Certifications	Use of SM
21	L (>100 ha): 4	Limón	Global G.A.P Rainforest Alliance Carbon Neutral Fairtrade SMETA	4(4)

!! Limitations

- The results presented below are based on a limited sample of farms and interviews in 3 countries. Therefore, it is not a representative sample (convenience sampling).
- It is recommended to consider the research context and to take precautions when extrapolating or generalizing the results.



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Research Area 1: Data and alignment with SM

1

Data availability and alignment with SM:

Salaries are calculated based on performance and hours worked:

- ± Contrary to the wage record in the SM, most of the work is paid on a piece work basis (field, contract) or by piece rate (administration, plant)*
- ± Wage generation: In case of a negative wage (wage below the minimum wage per regular hour/overtime defined by law), a wage adjustment is made towards the minimum wage.

Data and alignment with the salary matrix

1. Availability of data and alignment with the Salary Matrix
2. Quality of data management systems
3. Challenges and potential for improvement

Color coding:

+ Positive result

± Mixed or neutral result

- Negative result

**Please consider that in cases where the results apply only to one or more countries, these have been explicitly named in the result.*

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Research Area 1: Data and alignment with SM

1

Data availability and alignment with SM

In general, there is a good alignment between the data available at the farms and those required by the SM:

- + The same raw data is required by IDH (SM) and by official regulatory bodies, so the farms **have most of the data** required to fill out the SM.
- ± Data **collection and structuring** are **varied** and often require reprocessing and/or digitization for use in the SM.
- ± In Ecuador and Colombia, it was observed in large producers that group several farms that, although the raw data are collected and consolidated by farm, the analysis is done at the aggregate level of the entire production.
→ The MS, however, is designed to be filled by farm.

Data and alignment with the salary matrix

1. Data availability and alignment with the Salary Matrix
2. Quality of data management systems
3. Challenges and potential for improvement

Color coding:

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Research area 1: Data and alignment with SM

1

Data availability and alignment with SM

Variety in labor categories among farms:

- + Each farm has its own system of **labor categories**, on which wage and payment calculations are based. The matrix allows producers to disaggregate according to their individual categories, providing **flexibility and increasing farm usability**.

Data and alignment with the salary matrix

1. Data availability and alignment with the Salary Matrix
2. Quality of data management systems
3. Challenges and potential for improvement

Color coding:

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± Mixed or neutral result

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Research Area 1: Data and alignment with SM

2

Quality of data management systems

There has been a process of transition towards administrative and accounting improvements in the sector, which has enhanced the quality and availability of information on internal farm processes:

- + It is mentioned that **international export requirements** have been a positive factor in this process.

Each farm has a data collection and management system. The level of professionalization depends on the size of the farm or production:

- ± Large farms have more structured and accessible collection processes, prioritizing the collection and proper management of data related to productivity and payroll payments.
- ± Small and medium-sized farms collect information in a simpler way, with typically less structured information, especially data related to extraordinary bonuses, contracts, payment roles, etc.

Large farms usually have well-developed monitoring systems:

- + Options for adaptations to new requirements.
- ± Most have not because SM keeps changing.

Data and alignment with the salary matrix

1. Availability of data and alignment with the Salary Matrix
2. Quality of data management systems
3. Challenges and potential for improvement

Color coding:

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Research Area 1: Data and alignment with SM

3

Challenges and potential for improvement

Different ways of completing the SM may generate errors:

- While there are guidelines on how the different indicators should be entered into the SM, users do so based on their own criteria. **Each farm follows a slightly different process** for completing the SM, with individual formulas and interpretations → may result in errors.
- In several cases, data pre-processing was identified before migrating them to SM, with the purpose of verifying and/or adjusting their compatibility with the platform requirements. According to the interviews, this is done in order to better understand where discrepancies may arise between the internal calculations and the matrix results.
- **Not all workers** are necessarily included in the SM calculations - cases have been observed where only formal workers or those who work with the farm for a full year are recorded.

Data and alignment with the salary matrix

1. Availability of data and alignment with the Salary Matrix
2. Quality of data management systems
3. Challenges and potential for improvement

Color coding:

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Research Area 1: Data and alignment with SM

3

Challenges and potential for improvement

Report data per individual worker vs. per labor (annual average):

- ± Reporting challenge per worker: **weeks actually worked** required (requires good monitoring of absences, e.g. due to incapacitation) → a lot of work.
- ± Challenge of reporting by labor (average): leaves out **individual differences between workers within the** same labor → does not give room to "explain" outliers.

The implementation of the SM has not taken into account the administrative costs associated with the data collection and structuring process:

- ± Although there is a general alignment between data and SM requirements, implementation has not adequately addressed the need for restructuring, digitization and recalculations.
- + One (large) farm in Costa Rica is already in the process of adapting its systems so that the data required by the SM is calculated automatically.

Data and alignment with the salary matrix

1. Data availability and alignment with the Salary Matrix
2. Quality of data management systems
3. Challenges and potential for improvement

Color coding:

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Research Area 2: Skills, Tools and Processes

1

Roles and responsibilities

The process of internal data collection and verification involves different profiles from the field to management

- ± Profiles such as field or farm managers are in charge of distributing activities and recording attendance and progress control. Assistants and/or administrative staff on farms collect personal information from workers and consolidate information. Depending on the size of the farm, owners/producers, HR or accounting staff use the data to process pay role information and information on farm productivity.
- ± Organically, the data collection process integrates a verification process that involves managers at all levels, including workers at the time of payment. However, this only applies to data related to progress and attendance.

The completion of the SM is the responsibility or personnel related to the following departments

- ± Human Resources
- ± Accounting
- ± Certifications

Skills, tools and processes

1. Roles and responsibilities
2. Data knowledge and skills
3. Training
4. Characteristics of monitoring systems
5. Data quality

Color coding:

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Research Area 2: Skills, Tools and Processes

2

Data knowledge and skills

The SM was intended as a simple, easily accessible tool for use by people of different levels of digital literacy.

± Current users are profiles with higher levels of education and digital knowledge. The people responsible for filling out the SM have responsibilities related to human resources, accounting, and certifications.

According to interviewees, key skills for good data management and effective use of SM in the context of banana production include

- + (General) Good command and knowledge of tools such as Excel to prepare and manage data in general.
- + (General) Digital affinity, including openness to gain new digital skills.
- + (SM) Good knowledge of the legal situation and country context, the IDH guidelines on filling out the tool and Anker's methodology.

Skills, tools and processes

1. Roles and responsibilities
2. Data knowledge and skills
3. Training
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Research Area 2: Skills, Tools and Processes

3

Training

Internal training processes and initiatives related to improved data management and monitoring systems are limited and vary greatly between farms.

- ± Some farms reported training initiatives as new digital technologies were integrated to replace raw data collection. However, results have been mixed as field staff have had a strong preference for maintaining analog collection.
- In general, there is no structured and constant training process for middle management (responsible for collecting the raw data and the first data verification process) that would lead to better information management and promote a generalized understanding of the value of data quality beyond productivity-related records.

Opinions on SM-related training (mainly provided by IDH) are mixed.

- + There are those who recognize IDH's role in providing information on the completion of the SM, as well as their willingness to provide technical support.
- However, there are those who emphasize that the training has not been timely and has had a very general content that does not necessarily apply to the specific needs of each country.

Skills, tools and processes

1. Roles and responsibilities
2. Data knowledge and skills
3. Training
4. Characteristics of monitoring systems
5. Data quality

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Research Area 2: Skills, Tools and Processes

3

Training

- Also, many interviewees in Ecuador and Colombia reported that they were not aware of the offer of training and coaching, which shows that the communication channels for these tools have not been sufficiently adequate.
- + IDH is currently updating its support offerings so that each country has access to contextualized information and answers frequently asked questions that farms and producers in each country have (e.g., censantía in Colombia).
- ± Many stakeholders have opted for a self-taught process when filling out the SM, which may explain the high variability in how different indicators are being recorded.
- + In the case of Colombia, a process of trade union organization was reported to exchange knowledge and good practices on the filling of the SM through Augura. The motivation was to generate a unified process at the country level, not only in terms of the SM, but also with respect to the international dialogue on living wages and the corresponding commercial requirements.
- While knowledge sharing efforts are valuable, the information and best practices for filling out the matrix are not aligned with the methodological definitions of the living wage calculation.
- There is little knowledge and training on the methodological basis of the living wage.

Skills, tools and processes

1. Roles and responsibilities
2. Data knowledge and skills
3. **Training**
4. Characteristics of monitoring systems
5. Data quality

Color coding:

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Research Area 2: Skills, Tools and Processes

4

Characteristics of monitoring systems

Semi-digitized monitoring systems are observed in all three countries.

- ± Raw data records, especially attendance and progress records, are usually kept on paper.
- ± There is a correlation between farm size/production and the level of digitalization and automation of processes related to payroll and accounting, with small farms having simple record keeping and data management and medium to large farms already implementing payroll software, biometric technology and other digital solutions.

5

Data quality

There is an organic process of internal verification of information linked to productivity issues.

- ± There is a constant process of verifying the veracity of the data collected daily and weekly based on the number of boxes dispatched and hectareage worked, as these are the basic metrics for the payment of workers.
- It is observed that, especially on small and medium-sized farms, other indicators are given less importance and are collected in a less structured and easily accessible manner, e.g. extraordinary bonuses, contracts, individual payment roles, etc.

Skills, tools and processes

1. Roles and responsibilities
2. Data knowledge and skills
3. Training
4. Characteristics of monitoring systems
5. Data quality

Color coding:

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Research Area 2: Skills, Tools and Processes

5

Data quality

External verification of SM data (audits) does not follow a standardized process.

- ± Respondents report having been audited at the request of their clients or as part of Rainforest Alliance certification.
- Different levels of rigor in the audit process are reported, with different interpretations of how indicators should be measured and integrated, demonstrating different levels of auditor knowledge of the SM and the Anker methodology.
- In Costa Rica, it was reported that the audit process did not review the raw data.
- There is a certification process for SM auditors. However, according to the information collected, not all currently active auditors have participated in the certification process.

Skills, tools and processes

1. Roles and responsibilities
2. Data knowledge and skills
3. Training
4. Characteristics of monitoring systems
5. **Data quality**

Color coding:

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Research area 3: Strategy and coordination

1 National communication strategies / international collaboration

The channels and mechanisms of communication about the SM focus on issues related to banana exports, not necessarily the living wage:

- At the national level, there are **various channels and mechanisms for communicating** about the MS.
 - They focus on conversations with clients, being more **unilateral than collaborative**, as expressed by interviewees.
- In general, there is a **perceived lack of transparent communication** about the living wage.
 - An initial **lack of knowledge about the living wage basis** (Anker methodology) created resistance among producers in several countries.
 - Among the producers interviewed, the impression prevails of an **imposition of a living wage**, and an **inconsistency with the minimum wage** defined by country (CR). Producers interviewed indicated that their observations on the calculation (Anker) have been expressed for years but have not been received.
 - Many stakeholders expressed that while they recognize the social value of a living wage its current definition and implementation ideas feel imposing.

Strategy and coordination

1. National communication strategies and international collaboration
2. Barriers and facilitators
3. Stakeholder roles

Color coding:

+ Positive result

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- Negative result

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Research area 3: Strategy and coordination

2

Barriers and facilitators

The lack of a concrete strategy to close gaps creates pressure on producers:

- Among producers, there is perceived to be **pressure from European supermarkets** to close the gap between the paid wage and the living wage. It is not perceived that clear closure/gap-bridging strategies have been developed nor that responsibility is shared.
 - Unintentional impact: It is perceived that supermarkets, through intermediaries, no longer want to buy from gap farms to avoid problems.
 - Perception of a lack of shared responsibility between producers and supermarkets, it is perceived that the responsibility for overcoming the gap lies with the producers.

In Costa Rica, the provision of benefits (in kind) has emerged as a possible strategy to close the gap:

- + According to interviewees, the provision of (in-kind) benefits is so far considered a good strategy to close the gap.
- ± It is not yet clear how to finance additional benefits.
- ± The cap (the limit up to which benefits are considered as part of the salary in the SM) complicates the application of this strategy.

Strategy and coordination

1. National communication strategies and international collaboration
2. **Barriers and facilitators**
3. Stakeholder roles

Color coding:

- + Positive result
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Research area 3: Strategy and coordination

2

Barriers and facilitators

Structural problems hinder the search for solutions (1/2):

- The current mechanisms **have not sufficiently taken into account the needs and capacities of the farms** in relation to the SM, especially in relation to the administrative costs involved in its use.
- It is noted that the mechanisms **have not been sufficiently participatory or localized** to adequately reflect the national context, especially in legal and economic terms.
 - Producer perception: Closing living wage gaps as currently being communicated is not considered realistic and prompts producers to seek demand in other types of markets (e.g. Asian market).
- The price of bananas paid by supermarkets is decreasing every year.
 - It is considered a barrier to living wage efforts and intentions that there is insufficient involvement of purchasing departments and a predominant focus on sustainability, limiting the **understanding of the relationship between the living wage and banana price** and market dynamics.
 - **Lack of transparency / openness to discuss budget implications** are perceived as significant obstacles.

Strategy and coordination

1. National communication strategies and international collaboration
2. **Barriers and facilitators**
3. Stakeholder roles

Color coding:

+ Positive result

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Research area 3: Strategy and coordination

2

Barriers and facilitators

Structural problems hinder the search for solutions (2/2):

- **The payment of the differential** (between minimum wage and living wage) by few supermarkets will not be enough.
 - Contracts with European supermarkets are normally for one year, salary obligations are long-term.
 - Other markets to which the fruit is currently supplied do not have the same requirements or social commitments.

Perceptions of the added value of the SM vary among interviewees:

- + The Matrix is currently the **most developed and represents a good basis** for further development.
- + It can contribute to the **administrative professionalization** of the sector.
- There are opinions that suggest little added value
 - Ecuador (there is already a living wage established in the constitution and the Matrix imposes additional administrative costs on producers).
 - Costa Rica (living wage calculation is not considered fair or realistic by producers due to lack of consideration of key contextual factors and the use of an allegedly erroneous family size average).

Strategy and coordination

1. National communication strategies and international collaboration
2. **Barriers and facilitators**
3. Stakeholder roles

Color coding:

- + Positive result
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- Negative result

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Research area 3: Strategy and coordination

3

Stakeholder roles

Lack of clarity on the compatibility of the matrix with certifications:

- Uncertainty about the acceptance of the IDH matrix by certifiers (RFA, Fairtrade) generates additional work.

Lack of clarity on the specific roles and objectives of certain actors:

- ± There are key and positive efforts to articulate living wage and SM-related dialogue such as the WBF. However, there are concerns about the **effectiveness and lack of clarity** in the objectives of mechanisms such as the **WBF** in terms of living wage. So far, no clear results are recognized from the dialogue in the forum.
- The **methodological decisions** made by the **Anker and IDH** researchers are considered to be not very transparent.
- An initial lack of knowledge about the **IDH-RFA relationship** was noted, which created resistance among producers in the countries.
- Among key actors such as IDH, certifiers and GIZ there are very different perceptions of the **role and responsibility that each organization should fulfill**. Perceptions are often contradictory.
- Although the **Anker Research Institute plays** an extremely important role as owners of the Anker methodology, its **role and participation is secondary**. Many of the criticisms expressed to IDH have nothing to do with their work, but rather with the Institute's methodological decisions.

Strategy and coordination

1. National communication strategies and international collaboration
2. Barriers and facilitators
3. Stakeholder roles

Color coding:

+ Positive result

± Mixed or neutral result

- Negative result

- 
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General remarks

- Although there are efforts to articulate the dialogues around the SM, **communication** about the use of the tool, the living wage, and therefore the commitment of the Working Group **has not been sufficiently effective** so far. There are **many actors** involved and **not all members of the supply chain have the same understanding** of the purposes and objectives of the SM.
- While **the commitment** of the retailer group is **well-defined** and clear, it is **lost** among the actions and requests of other international players.
- At the national level, there is a general feeling of a **lack of recognition of national efforts** to improve working conditions in the sector, which is accompanied by a fear of negative repercussions if significant gaps in the SM are identified.
- The **use of the SM** is **becoming more widespread in the** three countries. However, the lack of standardization and in some cases biases in the calculation of different indicators can lead to **misinterpretation or incorrect interpretation of the results**.



Overall results

1

The calculation of the living wage based on the Anker methodology requires greater consideration of contextual elements.

The collaboration mechanisms and the calculation of the living wage based on the Anker methodology have not been sufficiently participatory or localized to adequately reflect the national context, especially in legal and economic terms.

2

The implementation of the SM has not taken into account the administrative costs associated with the data collection process.

Although most of the payroll data needed to fill out the matrix is available from the farms visited, the collection and structuring of the data involves significant administrative costs.

3

Different ways of completing the SM leave room for errors and limit the interpretation of results.

While there are guidelines on how the different indicators should be entered into the SM, users do so at their own discretion. Each farm follows a slightly different process for completing the SM, with individual formulas and interpretations.



Overall results

4

There is potential for improvement in training activities

Although there are efforts to provide support and tools for a better use of the salary matrix. The training offer is still limited and could cover other topics and profiles beyond those related to or responsible for filling out the matrix.

5

Internal and, above all, external data verification requires standardized and clear processes.

At the farm level, data verification processes could be extended to other aspects that are not currently being considered, such as the compatibility of different data systems and the frequency of collection of certain indicators. At the level of external auditors, efforts are needed at the sector level to harmonize the SM audit process.

6

There is insufficient clarity on the strategy of shared responsibility between European producers and supermarkets.

A concrete strategy to close the identified gaps is still lacking. However, it was pointed out in the interviews that producers with a wage gap already feel negative repercussions since several supermarkets, through intermediaries, no longer want to buy from farms with a gap. Therefore, the responsibility for closing the gap currently lies with the producers.

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Recommendations

1

It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on contextual factors when implementing the SM and developing living wage initiatives.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on the particularities of each country context (e.g., mandatory social security, occupational risk insurance, solidarity associations, unemployment, household size).

2

More frequent training is recommended to ensure uniformity in the filling of the SM between farms.

It is recommended to implement more frequent trainings that are more aligned to the national banana reality, in order to clarify doubts and encourage learning among farms. It is recommended to design the format in a way that promotes participation, even when one has participated in previous trainings. In addition, it is proposed to include more detailed instructions in the MS/Excel to support the uniform interpretation of each box.

3

It is recommended to promote more transparent communication about the living wage.

More transparent communication is needed to explain more about the idea and context of the salary matrix, as well as the relationship between IDG, certifications, and supermarkets. Additionally, it is recommended to emphasize how the information provided through the SM is used and to clarify doubts about potential negative repercussions if gaps exist.

4

It is recommended to define and improve communication on gap closure strategies.

It is urgent to present a strategy for closing the gap that promotes shared responsibility so that there is a clear objective for all involved and avoids the feeling of imposition and sole responsibility that farms feel today as a result of European market requirements.

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Recommendations

5

It is recommended to consider technical support for the administrative area of the farms.

Criticisms were received highlighting the high administrative costs associated with the use of the MS, such as the generation of new calculations and the digitalization of information. It is proposed to offer technical support and training in administrative and accounting areas (especially to small and medium-sized farms) as practical measures to reduce barriers to access to the platform.

7

It is recommended to provide technical advice to farms on how to adapt their monitoring systems so that the use of the DM is simpler and more automated.

Gradually farms are preparing for the filling of the matrix so that the requirements can be met as efficiently as possible. This however happens predominantly on large farms. It is suggested to provide technical advice to medium and small farms.

6

It is recommended to promote MS methodological transparency more proactively.

External calculations before filling out the MS is a common practice, often motivated by what are considered inconsistencies in the tool's calculation and the real situation on the farms. It would be valuable to give users access to the base equations used by the MS to promote transparency, understanding of the calculations and thus interpretation of results.

8

The case of coordination in Colombia can be promoted in Ecuador and Costa Rica

Colombia has organically created a process of information exchange and best practices for the use of the MS. This in turn results in a more decentralized management of the tool and may generate a sense of ownership in different actors over time. Entities in Costa Rica and Ecuador can learn from this experience and generate their own support and information exchange processes.

Carried out on behalf of GIZ by



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