



BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



*Credit: Photo provided by the Palma Futuro project. Palm fruit collection. 2022.*

# FINAL EVALUATION

## Phase 1 of Palma Futuro: Preventing and Reducing Child Labor and Forced Labor in Palm Oil Supply Chains, Colombia and Ecuador November 2023

**Grantee:** Partners of the Americas (POA)

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This report presents the findings of the phase one final evaluation of the *Palma Futuro: Preventing and Reducing Child Labor and Forced Labor in Palm Oil Supply Chains*' project in Colombia and Ecuador. Fieldwork for this evaluation was conducted in April and May of 2023. Integra Government Services, LLC, supported by Dexis Consulting Group, conducted this independent evaluation in collaboration with Partners of the Americas, the project team and project stakeholders. The evaluation report is structured according to the terms specified in its contract with the United States Department of Labor. The Evaluation Team would like to express sincere thanks to all the parties involved for their support and valuable contributions.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACW	Acceptable Conditions of Work
ANCUPA	National Association of Palm Oil Growers of Ecuador (Asociación Nacional de Cultivadores de Palma Aceitera)
CL	Child Labor
CMEP	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ET	Evaluation Team
FEDEPALMA	National Federation of Palm Oil Growers of Colombia (Federación Nacional de Cultivadores de Palma de Aceite)
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FOA	Funding Opportunity Announcement
FL	Forced Labor
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labor Organization
JAA	J.E. Austin Associates
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOL	Ministry of Labor (Ministerio del Trabajo)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OTC	Outcome
PF	Palma Futuro project
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
POA	Partners of the Americas
PROPALMA	National Federation of Palm Oil Growers of Ecuador (Federación Nacional de la Cadena Productiva del Aceite de Palma)
PSA	Pre-situational Analysis
PSP	Private Sector Partner

RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
RDQA	Routine Data Quality Assessment
SAI	Social Accountability International
SCS	Social Compliance System
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
TPR	Technical Progress Report
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USDOL	United States Department of Labor



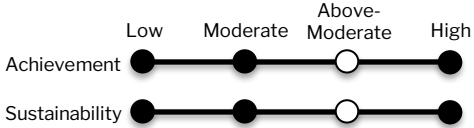
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

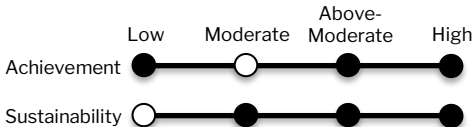
### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) awarded Partners of the Americas (POA) a four-year (2019-2023), six million U.S. dollar (USD) cooperative agreement to implement *Palma Futuro* (PF), a multi-country project in Latin America. PF's main objective is to improve the implementation of social compliance systems (SCSs) that promote acceptable conditions of work (ACW) and reduce child labor (CL) and forced labor (FL) in the palm oil supply chains in Colombia and Ecuador. The project expanded activities to disseminate and share best practices in the region by including Peru and Brazil. Implementation for PF is ongoing through July 2024. The palm oil sectors in Colombia and Ecuador operate under different structures resulting in diverse challenges that necessitate unique implementation approaches.

### KEY EVALUATION RESULTS

**Table 1. Performance Summary of Achievements**

Performance Summary	Rating
<b>OTC 1: Strengthened capacity of private sector partners in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors to implement a robust and sustainable social compliance system.</b>	
<p>The private sector partners and farmers involved in the project have acknowledged the value of the training they received. In Colombia, the project's methodology was successfully integrated into the industry, particularly due to the country's industry structure, where processing factories act as hubs for small suppliers. This structure facilitated the dissemination of information and allowed for easy mainstreaming of the project's methodology and content to the farmers. The existing technical teams and resources within the processing plants played a significant role in supporting this process. Still, a stronger relationship with other stakeholders in the sector could have benefited the project, enhancing knowledge sharing and leveraging additional resources, which influences the achievement rating of above moderate.</p> <p>In Colombia, smaller-scale partners benefited from linkages to larger anchor companies. In Ecuador, the project encountered difficulties because a few partners dropped out of the project for various reasons, and this caused delays. Moreover, Ecuador's challenging economic situation caused industry guilds and companies to prioritize profitability over focusing solely on Social Compliance Systems (SCSs). The project demonstrates visible progress after successfully engaging with more experienced and knowledgeable regional and local partners. The indications for longer-term sustainability in Ecuador are less clear but there is about one year remaining to consolidate learnings, so the rating is above moderate.</p>	

Performance Summary	Rating
<p><b>OTC 2: Increased understanding at regional and global level, of promising practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains.</b></p>	
<p>Local partners and stakeholders benefited from their participation in project webinars and study tours. Farmers, in particular, said the study tours were informative because of the peer-to-peer learning opportunities and first-hand observations of operations. This hand-on approach was preferable to more traditional training methods conducted in a conventional classroom-style format. The partnership with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) enhanced project visibility and its impact within the sector. There were delays in the project’s development of a comprehensive communication strategy that affected its achievements and resulted in a rate of moderate achievements to date.</p> <p>Numerous stakeholders, including workers in mills, farmers, and representatives of international organizations and trade associations, were not aware of how to access key end-of-project deliverables, such as handbooks and toolkits. Many of these same stakeholders said they did not know about learning resources that would be made available to them. According to the project work plan, these learning outputs and planned research documents should be published, including qualitative studies on CL and FL in the palm oil sector. As long as these materials remain unfinished or inaccessible, there is a scarcity of learning resources, which is the reason for the low rating of sustainability.</p>	

**LESSONS LEARNED**

- Aligning approaches and interventions to the unique country-specific context of the palm oil industries is best done early through country-specific analyses to inform technical assistance and selection of private sector partners.
- Engaging local stakeholders who are experienced and connected to established in-country networks in the different countries and value chains is important throughout all phases of the project.
- Establishing a robust network of stakeholders, including trade union representatives, international NGOs, and international brands could enhance the visibility of social compliance issues. Local networks are important for reaching scale and replication.
- Incorporating a strong knowledge management component in the project’s activities is important for disseminating early learnings to a wider range of stakeholders, including small-scale suppliers and farmers. Disseminating resource materials needs to consider some stakeholders’ limited access to electronic communications and platforms.

## PROMISING PRACTICES

- Stakeholders valued learning about best practices and adaptive management strategies from their peers across the region. Case studies of successful practices and study tours are effective learning approaches. presentation of information and knowledge that highlighted cases from analogous contexts, showcasing the skills and best practices adopted by colleagues within the industry.
- Localization approaches used in Ecuador prioritized collaboration with local partners in the palm oil sector to understand the needs of small producers, especially when working directly with farmers. This approach shared essential knowledge, built trust in communities, and engaged farmers effectively through customized activities.
- The Training of Trainers (ToT) strategy utilized in Colombian mills strengthened capacity of private sector partners to better support their suppliers in implementing and improving compliance with social standards within the sector.
- The study tours facilitated a valuable exchange of knowledge and best practices among representatives of mills and small producers from the four selected countries, fostering a collaborative learning environment and promoting industry-wide improvements.
- The partnership established with the RSPO played a pivotal role in increasing the project's visibility within the private sector partners and facilitating greater adoption among small suppliers and farmers. The collaboration helped these stakeholders recognize the importance of strengthening SCSs for both their own interests and the broader sector.

## CONCLUSIONS

PF activities increased the awareness of incentives for adapting social compliance metrics that increased the number of SCS certifications for producers and associated processing and extraction factories. Stakeholders acknowledged the project's **relevance** in implementing SCSs and raising awareness about child labor and other forced labor practices. Local partners stated their satisfaction with the **effectiveness** of PF technical assistance and training components delivered by international and local trainers certified by Social Accountability International (SAI); these trainers effectively described the benefits of socially responsible workplaces and how to establish SCSs. PF's long-term outcomes primarily involve private sector partners, especially larger processing mills that have sufficient financial resources and personnel to implement SCSs. Notably, the project has fostered **effective** collaboration with communities and women's empowerment programs. Through its alliance with the ProAmazonia Program and its specific focus on supporting women-owned farms, PF has accelerated the visibility of women in an industry traditionally dominated by men. (See "Project Spotlights" in Annex I).

Meanwhile, engagement with other pertinent stakeholders, such as employer associations, multilateral organizations, and labor rights-focused NGOs was limited in scope and **somewhat less effective**. These stakeholders conveyed a marginal understanding of project activities and outcomes. Small-scale suppliers found the SCS instruction to be



complex and hard to implement without significant support from processing factories or other larger-scale business operators in the industry. Small-scale farmers often face various challenges, including limited resources, lack of technical knowledge, and reliance on informal labor. Simplifying the course material and offering tailored SCS support to small-scale farmers may reduce their barriers to adopting SCSs.

As noted earlier, the project implementation would likely have been more **efficient** if country-specific industrial and market analyses had been conducted and informed the design of activities and selection of local partners. Some delays in project implementation can be attributed to the disruptions in the palm oil sector and surrounding communities caused by COVID-19. The potential for **sustainability** is strong among private sector partners, especially in Colombia, where mills have the requisite resources and incentives. In Ecuador, the project's enduring influence on small guilds, partnerships with other initiatives, and collaboration with international NGOs are key to ensuring sustainability. Moreover, the establishment of a well-structured knowledge platform administered by a key partner, along with the development of materials that are closely aligned with the language and specific needs of the target audience, are essential elements for long-term success. These measures contribute to knowledge sharing and effective communication, ultimately fostering the continued adoption and implementation of sustainable practices beyond the lifespan of the project.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### FOR THE PROJECT TEAM

- Engage more local staff, consultants, or subgrantees to leverage localization approaches, promising practices and lessons learned regarding labor issues that are specific to farmers and processors in each country of the region.
- Invest in developing information exchange platforms that can disseminate curated information about SCSs and provide access to training materials that are relevant to characteristics of different stakeholder groups; identify local partners who can host these platforms in the future.
- Promote sustainability by expanding relationships with critical stakeholders, such as employers' associations, NGOs, and international organizations relevant to the palm oil sector and labor rights topics.
- Integrate the obtainment global certifications and other industry standards into technical approaches because this will incentivize palm oil producers, processors and key actors in supply chains to adapt SCSs into their business practices.
- Consider conducting country-level stakeholder mappings that illustrate specific stakeholder technical and information needs at the project close to capture critical information for follow-on activities.

#### FOR ILAB

- Conduct learning events for new partners and grantees to explain the significance of certain performance monitoring indicators, setting targets and reporting results. These indicators should align with the overarching goals and priorities of USDOL/ Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB).
- Orient partners to new administration priorities, such as the United States Executive Order for Advancing Equity and Racial Justice Through the Federal Government, that are relevant to USDOL/ILAB programs and projects.
- Develop and curate information tools that capture promising practices and lessons learned in supporting SCSs and disseminate these tools to new and current partners and grantees.
- Prioritize the inclusion of local partners and implementers from established networks) to boost strengthening local capacity, sustainability, and reducing costs.

## 1. EVALUATION PURPOSE, PROJECT CONTEXT, AND DESCRIPTION

This section summarizes the purpose of the evaluation, intended audience of the report, evaluation questions, methodology, and presents the results, outputs, and outcomes. Annex D presents the detailed methodology with sampling approach, sample description, methods used, challenges encountered during data collection, and limitations.

### 1.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE

This phase 1 final performance evaluation aims to:

- Evaluate if the project met its goals, identify challenges, and report findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Review both the intended and unintended effects of the project.
- Identify and assess any approaches to increasing equity in small producers' groups, local partners and communities, and women producers.
- Draw lessons and identify emerging practices from the project that could be applied to current or future projects in similar sectors or conditions.
- Assess the likelihood of sustainability of the project's OTCs or outputs.

This evaluation is not a comprehensive catalog of all project activities. While the ET reviewed all project documentation for the literature review, only select activities are discussed throughout the evaluation report. For a comprehensive list of activities please refer to the POA Annual Report.

#### 1.1.1 INTENDED USERS

This evaluation provides ILAB, POA, participants, and other project stakeholders who have a concern for, interest in, or influence the labor rights challenges that the projects are intended to address. The evaluation results, conclusions, and recommendations may serve to guide any required project adjustments and to inform ILAB stakeholders in the design and implementation of subsequent phases or future labor rights projects as appropriate. This evaluation report will be published on the USDOL website and be disseminated to targeted stakeholders as described in *Communications and Dissemination Plan* prepared for ILAB by the evaluation team (ET).

#### 1.1.2 METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This evaluation applied a mixed-methods, participatory approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data. The ET drew upon various data and documents, including project documents, technical progress reports, previous assessments, and performance monitoring data for secondary information. The ET collected primary data through interviews, focus group discussions with industry-relevant stakeholders, surveys, and performance scorecards.

The ET conducted fieldwork from April 24th to May 12th, visiting six cities in Colombia and three cities in Ecuador to conduct interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Virtual interviews were carried out post-fieldwork with additional stakeholders. The ET

interacted both in-person and virtually with 74 stakeholders, including partners, government officials, international organization representatives, and workers. Annex E shows a summary table of respondents by type of stakeholder. The ET carried out a local survey during fieldwork activities. By the end of data collection, the ET had surveyed 98 workers and 16 managers in Colombia and Ecuador.



**Credit:** Picture taken by the ET in processing factory/mill “El Roble”, Colombia

The ET analyzed data collected from various sources, such as monitoring data, progress reports, interviews,<sup>1</sup> focus group discussions, and quantitative surveys. Qualitative data was cleaned and coded using NVivo, a software enabling robust qualitative analysis. The ET triangulated quantitative performance monitoring data and qualitative data to assess achievements, sustainability, and equity issues, such as access to project interventions. To further illustrate findings and themes that emerged during data analysis, the ET leveraged respondent quotes where appropriate. For a detailed description of the methodology, refer to Annex D.

Data collection and analysis efforts were limited by several factors including stakeholder availability and/or knowledge of activities and the availability of baseline data. One stakeholder group, primarily farmers, was unresponsive or unavailable during the fieldwork period, because of scheduling or they believed they had insufficient understanding or engagement with the project activities. The ET tried to mitigate this issue by conducting additional virtual interviews to expand stakeholder perceptions. Another data collection challenge arose because of some stakeholders’ limited knowledge of project’s objectives and activities; these respondents did not fully complete the rapid scorecard quantitative survey. The survey sample of workers was quasi-purposive and represented the views of both workers who directly and indirectly benefited from the project. Thus, the surveyed workers are not a representative sample, and this is a somewhat limiting factor in the data analysis of workers’ perceptions. Finally, the monitoring and evaluation plan did not have a baseline, making it challenging to assess project achievements.

### 1.1.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONS (EQS)

In consultation with the ILAB/USDOL and POA teams, the ET created a set of evaluation questions aligned with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) methodology<sup>2</sup> criteria. The table

<sup>1</sup> Following the completion of the interview process, the ET proceeded to create relevant themes within each of the five OECD-DAC criteria. The content of each interview was then analyzed using these themes, and frequencies were computed. It is worth noting that the unit of analysis for these frequencies is the number and percentage of interviews, rather than individual interviewees. This is because certain interviews involved the participation of multiple individuals.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

below (Table 2) shows five refined questions the ET modified to fit the evaluation scope of work.

**Table 2. Evaluation Questions**

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
<b>Relevance</b>	To what extent did the Palma Futuro project design and implementation reflect the needs and priorities of diverse stakeholders, workers, and community members within the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors, including those from underserved populations?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	To what extent did project interventions contribute towards the achievement of project outcomes? Are there some interventions that have made more progress than others?
<b>Efficiency</b>	To what extent have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve project outcomes?
<b>Impact</b>	What are the outcomes at this stage in the period of performance?
<b>Sustainability</b>	To what extent are the Palma Futuro interventions likely to yield sustained results?

Annex B (Evaluation Design Matrix) includes sub-questions for each evaluation question and identifies appropriate data sources intended to answer these questions.

## 1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

### 1.2.1 PF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The United States Department of Labor (USDOL) awarded Partners of the Americas (POA) a six million U.S. dollars (USD) cooperative agreement to carry out Palma Futuro (PF), a multi-country project in Latin America from 2019-2023, which was extended to July 2024. PF's primary goals are to improve the implementation of social compliance systems (SCSs) that promote acceptable conditions of work (ACW) and reduce child labor (CL) and forced labor (FL) in the palm oil supply chains in Colombia and Ecuador, and disseminating best practices in social compliance throughout the region. The project also extended its activities to include the dissemination and sharing of best practices in two additional countries, Peru and Brazil. Implementation for PF is ongoing due to two extensions to complete tasks that had been significantly delayed: the first extension was a no-cost extension through June 2023, and the second one had additional funding, taking the implementation of the project now to July 2024.



Partners of the Americas (POA) worked with two partner organizations, J.E. Austin Associates (JAA) and Social Accountability International (SAI).<sup>3</sup> JAA was responsible for research and developing three case studies in the palm oil sector. The first case study in Colombia focused on the palm oil extraction and processing factory, Palmas del Cesar, and the second case study intended to look at the National Federation of Palm Oil Growers in Colombia (FEDEPALMA). Only the Palmas del Cesar case study was published; this study provided valuable insights into a key potential partner and operation within the palm oil sector. The FEDEPALMA study did not secure approval from USDOL due to concerns regarding the insufficient exploration of labor-related matters within the sector as well as other aspects concerning the technical execution of the studies. A parallel situation unfolded with the third case study, which aimed to evaluate Danec, a company in Ecuador; however, it too was not concluded and published.

POA engaged SAI to lead all activities related to promoting and strengthening the capacities of the private sector partners in implementing sustainable SCSs using a combined adaptation from the U.S. Department of Labor's Comply Chain tool<sup>4</sup> and SAI's Social Fingerprint program.<sup>5</sup> The latter program relates to the SA8000

Standard framework and methodology<sup>6</sup> an international social certification created by SAI in 1997. The SA800 Standard serves as a guide for organizations across industries to conduct business fairly and decently for workers, adhering to social standards. Furthermore, the Social Fingerprint rating system, the goal is to assess companies beyond norms and code violations, and evaluate processes related to social performance.



**Credit:** Picture taken by the ET in processing factory/ mill "PalmAgro", Colombia

<sup>3</sup> JAA is a consultancy firm focused on facilitation and local capacity-building projects. SAI is a global non-governmental organization focusing on human rights at work projects.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Labor webpage: <https://www.dol.gov/general/apps/ilab-comply-chain>

<sup>5</sup> SAI's Social Fingerprint: <https://sa-intl.org/services/social-fingerprint/>

<sup>6</sup> More information about the SA8000 Standard can be found in their webpage: <https://sa-intl.org/programs/sa8000/>



PF identified several active private sector partners in Colombia and Ecuador's palm oil supply chains to implement SCS activities.<sup>7</sup>

The project selected two regions in Colombia, Magdalena and Cesar, and five palm oil extracting companies as private sector partners: *Palmagro S.A.*, *Aceites S.A.*, *Palmaceite S.A.*, *Extractora El Roble S.A.S* – these four palm oil extractive and processing factories/mills were members of the former BioCosta Holding<sup>8</sup> – and *Palmas del Cesar*.

In the case of Ecuador, the project has provided technical assistance through two industry partners, the National Association of Palm Oil Growers (ANCUPA), which is the national association for small palm oil producers/growers in the country, and Amazonian Integral Forest Conservation and Sustainable Production Program (*PROAmazonía*), an initiative led by the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock with support from the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP,<sup>9</sup> to develop robust SCSs using the components of Comply Chain.<sup>10</sup>

OTC 1 is composed of two sub-outcomes:

- 1.1. Increased understanding of labor practices and risks of child labor and forced labor in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors.*
- 1.2. Increased application of social compliance processes at all levels of private sector partner supply chains.*

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<sup>7</sup> According to the project's Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), for the purpose project, a "private sector partner" (PSP) may be, but is not limited to 1) a company that delivers a palm oil or palm kernel oil-based product to the marketplace using inputs from either third party suppliers or a vertically integrated supply chain; or 2) an industrial palm oil estate or mill that contracts with smallholder farmers and/or other third party suppliers; or 3) a palm oil or agricultural industry association or community cluster of growers. In the early stages of the project, the grantee proposed to select mills and palm oil extractive plants as the PSP for both countries. That approach remained true for Colombia but changed for Ecuador during the project implementation.

<sup>8</sup> PF initially selected Biocosta and Palmas del Cesar as the project's private sector partners in Colombia based on their track record on social compliance issues, capabilities to implement the methodology, and the fact that they belong to nearby palm nuclei. However, based on interview information during this evaluation, stakeholders mentioned that Biocosta faced economic problems during the COVID-19 pandemic disintegrating the holding company and pausing their operations as Biocosta group and the processing factories members now operate separately. As a result, Biocosta did not continue to be involved as a consolidated group with Palma Futuro. Still, four of the five processing factories that were part of Biocosta kept their engagement with the project. This signified changes in planning and execution, as it was necessary now to split and allocate resources and coordinate separately with each of the four mills (Palmaceite, Aceites, Extractora el Roble, and Palmagro). Furthermore, in the year 2022, Aceites and Palmaceites notified the project about their ongoing merger process.

<sup>9</sup> PROAmazonía is a national government program that links national efforts to reduce deforestation with the priority agendas and policies of the country's economic sectors. It also promotes sustainable and integrated management of natural resources by contributing to poverty eradication and sustainable human development. For more information about the program, refer to: <https://www.proamazonia.org/en/inicio/que-es-proamazonia/>

<sup>10</sup> In Ecuador, the project initially tried to engage with several organizations and processing factories as its leading private sector partner in the project. The project attempted to consolidate a partnership with Oleana, Propalma Ecuador, Danec, Natural Habitat, and Organic Supply. However, all these potential partners didn't align with the level of commitment and resources needed to be part of the project and were dismissed as partners.

The second outcome of the project is centered around advocating, disseminating, and sharing successful practices among private sector entities and other significant stakeholders in the palm oil industry in Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, and Peru. The project also partnered with national palm oil trade associations, researchers, workers' organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs) with the goal of enhancing private sector partners (PSP) capacities to support social compliance.

The project also considered the engagement of other relevant stakeholders such as guilds, worker unions, public entities, CSOs, cooperatives, universities, and international organizations (such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), among others. The aim was to gather additional insights and foster meaningful conversations with these stakeholders to gain a better understanding of palm oil supply chains and the institutional framework in the project's targeted geographic areas in Colombia and Ecuador.

### 1.2.2 PROJECT CONTEXT

The Latin American palm oil industry has more than doubled its output since 2000 due to increased international demand for palm oil and reduced production in Southeast Asia, which is currently the global leader. Today, the region contains four of the top 20 producing nations in the world: Colombia (4th), Ecuador (6th), Brazil (11th), and Peru (16th).<sup>11</sup> While this growth has provided rural employment and reduced poverty, it has drawn criticism for its unsustainable practices and impacts on local and indigenous communities. The sector primarily consists of small and medium producers that have significantly increased employment opportunities. This rapid expansion of the sector in Latin America has increased the need for raising awareness of effective social compliance practices to protect workers and reduce risks for vulnerable groups. The SCSs are designed to protect children, workers, and communities within palm oil-producing areas. A significant difference in the palm oil sector in Colombia vis-à-vis Ecuador is how the industry is organized and operates commercially. Colombia's palm oil sector is organized around palm nuclei (*núcleos palmeros*), which are essentially hubs or clusters of palm oil production, typically featuring a dominant extraction and processing factory. In contrast, the palm oil industry in Ecuador is relatively nascent and less organized, so the concept of palm oil nuclei does not exist. Most palm oil planters in Ecuador are small farmers who sell their produce to various extractive and processing factories.

**Palm Oil Sector in Colombia.** Colombia is the leading nation in South American palm oil production and fourth in the world, only behind Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The Southeast Asia region dominates global production with 87 percent of total output; Colombia supplies two percent.<sup>12</sup> Colombian palm oil growers collaborate through a robust and active industry association, the National Federation of Palm Oil Growers (FEDEPALMA), which plays an active role as a primary stakeholder in the sector.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Leslie Potte, *Managing palm oil landscapes: A seven-country survey of the modern palm oil industry in South-Asia, Latin America and West Africa*, 2015, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Occasional Paper 122, Bogor, Indonesia.

<sup>12</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, "Palm Oil World Production" Updated May 2021. <https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/cropexplorer/cropview/commodityView.aspx?cropid=4243000>

<sup>13</sup> Interim Performance Evaluation Report of Palma Futuro Project.

**Palm Oil Sector in Ecuador:** Ecuador, Latin America's second largest and the world's sixth largest palm oil producer, has around 6,568 palm oil fruit growers. Notably, 87 percent of these are small producers with plantations under 50 hectares.<sup>14</sup> Bud rot<sup>15</sup> disease has severely impacted the sector since 2017, causing a loss of nearly 30 percent of the cultivated area. In 2020, a bill introduced regulations for palm oil cultivation, production, and commercialization, which mandates consultation with indigenous communities before commencing or expanding palm oil cultivation in ancestral territories and enforces national labor regulations.<sup>16</sup>

The most prominent certification in the sector is the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). In April 2020, POA entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with RSPO to reinforce SCSs in the palm oil supply chains of Colombia and Ecuador. RSPO certifies the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of palm oil production, setting the industry's standard for certification. Producers attaining RSPO certification can command a premium on the final price of a ton of palm oil.<sup>17</sup> Historically, RSPO certification was aimed at processing factories. However, a new RSPO certification for small producers was introduced in 2019, creating an opportunity for the PF project to involve private sector partners in enhancing SCSs in both countries. In Colombia, this involvement includes extractive factories and their small-scale suppliers, while in Ecuador, PF directly engages with independent producers, aided by other key stakeholders.

### 1.2.3 COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the project implementation due to social distancing mandates introduced in both countries in March 2020. During the pandemic, the Government of Colombia granted an exemption to workplace safety protocols in the palm oil sector so that operations could continue while the private sector adapted its own industry-specific protocols.<sup>18</sup> The PF had planned numerous in-person capacity development activities that needed to be adjusted. This caused delays and especially affected small-scale suppliers and farmers who could not participate in capacity development activities.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, "Palmicultores pueden beneficiarse de simplificación tributaria y BPA para el sector." August 2020. <https://www.agricultura.gob.ec/palmicultores-pueden-beneficiarse-de-simplificacion-tributaria-y-bpa-para-fortalecer-el-sector/#:~:text=En%20Ecuador%20existen%206.568%20palmicultores,Los%20R%C3%ADos%2C%20Guayas%20y%20Manab%C3%AD>

<sup>15</sup> Bud rot is a fungal disease that can affect palm oil trees, causing the buds to rot and the leaves to turn brown and attacking the heart of the palm oil tree and its fruit.

<sup>16</sup> Registro Oficial No. 255, "Ley para el fortalecimiento y desarrollo de la producción, comercialización, extracción, exportación e industrialización de la palma aceitera y sus derivados", 28 July 2020. <https://www.derechoecuador.com/registro-oficial/2020/07/registro-oficial-no255-martes-28-de-julio-de-2020-segundo-suplemento->

<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that some of the palm oil extractive factories selected by PF in Colombia were already certified in RSPO before they participated in the project, such as Palmas del Cesar, which even has a group of certified small producers and others that are in the certification process, such as Palmagro (see Annex 1).

<sup>18</sup> Giancarlo Delgado, Laura Cartagena Benítez, "La crisis económica de la producción de palma de aceite en Colombia es un mito", Escuela Nacional Sindical, September 4th, 2020. <https://ail.ens.org.co/opinion/la-crisis-economica-de-la-produccion-de-palma-de-aceite-en-colombia-es-un-mito/>

## 2. EVALUATION RESULTS

In this section, the ET presents the results, lessons learned, and conclusions for each of the five evaluation questions organized around the five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the PF project. The report presents the evaluation questions and their corresponding sub-questions at the start of each sub-section.

### 2.1 RELEVANCE

This section addresses the evaluation questions related to relevance.

#### 2.1.1 RESULTS

**Result 1: Private sector partners operating in the palm oil sector in Colombia and Ecuador employ a wide range of workers who have unique challenges so it was important for PF to develop relevant approaches and tools for different stakeholder groups.**

By educating the SPTs at this stage of the production chain, the project will be able to cascade compliance principles and drive improvements in meeting labor standards upstream in the supply chain. Larger private sector extractor plants in Colombia employ skilled and educated workers, such as chemical engineers, who garner professional salaries and benefits so there is little need or advantage to use underage or forced labor. The palm oil extraction and processing industry is heavily regulated and workers' rights are generally enforced, therefore PF developed relevant approaches and tools to focus on increasing awareness and understanding of CL and FL issues in these work sites. The customized toolkits and the ToT approach are two examples of how PF developed relevant approaches.

A few smaller-scale suppliers and farmers in both Colombia and Ecuador underlined the importance of understanding the nuances and customary labor practices found in small family-owned farms and communities where there are gaps in enforcement of labor protections. assisting with family-run plantations or farms. In contrast, there is a shortage of rural labor and the cost of hiring employees in Ecuador makes many small-scale businesses and farms heavily reliant upon family workers or occasional labor. Stakeholders noted that children often have chores on the family farm, such as collecting fallen fruit from the ground ("pepiar" in Spanish), particularly in the case of palm oil cultivation.

“[The project] contributes to the extent that we always do prevention, and not mitigation because we do not have the problem of child labor. [...] There is a "thin line", which is in family plantations, what happens is that children help in the plantation as it happens in other rural activities. But since palm is a demanding physical labor, children do not lift, do not cut, but sometimes they can help "lift the fruits (pepitas) that fall.”

- Employer Association Representative

The remaining challenge lies in conveying the knowledge and approaching the participants with differentiated information in content and format. Throughout the project's progression, it accumulated valuable insights and feedback from both (PSPs) and farmers. These learnings, which were not initially foreseen at the project's outset, have informed the adjustments made by the implementing partner over the course of the project. The project's communications specialist, hired in March 2020 during the second year of implementation, has met the challenge of managing activities related to promoting knowledge and best practices in Latin America and globally.

**Result 2: PF addresses technical knowledge gaps in the SCSs, though expertise is still largely concentrated among larger firms with pre-existing capabilities.**

PF capacity building activities were largely concentrated on supporting larger-scale companies that had already made progress in adopting SCSs in their business model, according to some respondents. These larger companies understood the advantages of obtaining SCS certifications that showed adherence to environmentally sound and socially responsible practices throughout the supply chain. For example, Palmas del Cesar was more advanced in its establishment of a SCS, so it quickly completed the process.

“The project only focuses on some actors. There’s an additional critique from other actors, about the project only working with four leading partners, with companies that were already “strong” [in their SCSs. [...] The goal setting was not ambitious enough. [Even though] the project does not exclusively focus on child/forced work. [There is] a broader labor rights conversation happening in Colombia, in which the project could have had a more prominent role, more connected with better conditions of labor: health, hours, and wages. That was a way for the project to connect better with other stakeholders in Colombia in the broader labor conversations in the country.”

- International Entity/Organization Representative

The main disadvantage to this local partnering approach is that when larger private sector partners stopped cooperating with the project, which happened several times in Ecuador, there was limited capacity and resources of local partners, including worker organizations, community-based organizations, and CSOs to lead SCS initiatives on their own without larger businesses or anchor firms as in Colombia.

**Result 3: PF established its relevance primarily by strengthening existing capabilities (particularly in Colombia), rather than piloting approaches with less experienced private sector partners.**

In Colombia, PF supported SCS capacity building in individual firms through the establishment of “social performance teams” (SPT) that included new staff: social compliance team members (EDS, equipos de desempeño social) responsible for SCS implementation, and ToT teams of managers and mid-level workers charged with spreading knowledge among workers and small suppliers.



“[This project helped us to] learn and organize our actions around international standards. When they conducted our baseline, we observed that we did everything but were not organized. They trained us in ToT, which was another contribution to capacity building.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representative

Processing factories already familiar with international certifications like RSPO appreciated the project’s robust layer of focus on social compliance, which is typically overshadowed by environmental and sustainability concerns. This focus was a value added, particularly with the emphasis on improved technical knowledge and specific activity organization. Smaller producers were less familiar with SCSs, processes, international certification requirements in detail, and how to implement them, and therefore required more significant onboarding and support, such as simplified information, templates, and relatable examples.

“When they (PF) came to do the first assessment, we had to spend some time adapting the language [all concepts to our Colombian reality]. We applied [the baseline] to the first group, which did not show anything, producers did not understand it, it was tangled, and it was designed for large companies. There was a need to adapt the tool. [...] It reinforced our knowledge, but nothing was new for the processing factory... we recognized the need for better and new tools and other methodologies.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representative

PF primarily focused on a narrow set of private sector partners in Colombia that had made substantial progress with adopting SCS business models. Though the value added of selecting partners with genuine, proven interest in improving social compliance issues and financial stability is clear, the project may have benefitted from piloting its approaches with a firm that was less advanced in its pursuit of SCS in order to learn how build from scratch SCS capacity in addition to accelerating already existing capacity found in larger firms in Colombia.

In Ecuador, PF needed to adjust its technical approach to bottom-up capacity strengthening because there are few medium or large-sized palm oil processing companies. The palm oil industry in Ecuador is dominated by small-scale farmers with limited technical capacity so it was important to partner with industry guilds such as the ANCUPA and community partners like ProAmazonía to identify potential small-scale suppliers and farmers interested in adopting SCSs.

“In Ecuador, the strategy was to strengthen the ANCUPA network, leaving installed capacity, based on the methodology of social compliance. It is [...] a very rural focused association.”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative



**Result 4: The technical themes, topics, and curricula used in the PF methodology are relevant for contributions towards equity and labor rights of workers.**

PF's core objective, by design, is not to attend to workers directly but rather to work in the entire labor ecosystem. In that regard, it is challenging to pinpoint the project's contributions towards including different voices and marginalized groups, as the closest direct effort towards that is the inclusion of community groups. The project employed the "community circles"<sup>19</sup> methodology to bolster relationships between plantation representatives, processing factories, and nearby communities.

The PF project trained community leaders to execute locally led development projects and access funding from various sources, strengthening their ability to negotiate and interact with supply chain stakeholders. In Colombia, it backed Community Action Boards<sup>20</sup>, and in Ecuador, it engaged leaders from communities surrounding plantations. The SAI's local community expert in each country was responsible for reaching out to the communities and training them, as well as helping to formulate projects in which the communities accessed income generation training and the construction or improvement of public goods. In Colombia, PF supported Community Action Boards (*Juntas de Acción Comunal*, in Spanish), and in Ecuador, it engaged leaders from communities surrounding plantations through Parish Councils (*Juntas Parroquiales*).

“Palma Futuro was a bridge between companies and communities. [...] The participation of PF was relevant to improving this relationship.”

- Community Leader

This community approach is a well-known best practice to foster locally-led development, particularly among other USG and USAID development programs.<sup>21</sup> PF has likewise adapted this approach to enhance local capacity in targeted palm-growing regions. Prior to the project, relationships with communities and locally-led community development were reliant on processing factories' corporate responsibility efforts and grants in-kind to support one-off initiatives.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In the context of the project, community circles serve as discussion groups composed of community leaders and other relevant community members, often including workers from mills, plantations, or small farmers. The purpose of these community circles is to promote interaction and dialogue between community representatives and stakeholders such as processing plants or government representatives. By facilitating communication, community circles aim to enhance collaboration, address concerns, and foster a participatory approach in decision-making processes.

<sup>20</sup> Community action boards and precincts are the most important forms of political association at the community level. These boards represent the interests of the communities and can request local governments to finance development projects and endowment of public goods.

<sup>21</sup> USAID, *Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development*, April 2014.

<sup>22</sup> SAI's community leader for Colombia was a former employee of Biocosta's corporate responsibility area, which facilitated the relationship with the communities.

“Before the pandemic, we had a foundation, Fundepalma, and we did social impact projects (corporate responsibility) with the communities where we have production, educational projects, and others, but we stopped operating with the pandemic. There was a rift with those communities for a year. This project with POA allowed us to reactivate the relationship with the communities (with these community circles).”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representative

In addition to community-led development efforts, the project supported advancements in gender equality, primarily by collaborating with ProAmazonia in Ecuador and their *Botas Violeta* program (Purple Boots).<sup>23</sup> This initiative seeks to promote the co-responsibility of different actors to close gender gaps in the country through processes of visibility, awareness, and training.<sup>24</sup> Hence, following the guidance from ProAmazonia (UNDP), an initiative that was already working with women in agriculture – and not only palm oil, but also coffee, cocoa and livestock – PF has supported some small palm oil plantation women owners in the Ecuadorian Amazonian region, known as “*Palmas Arriba*.” Annex I, “Project Spotlights,” provides further information on the design and relevance of this initiative.

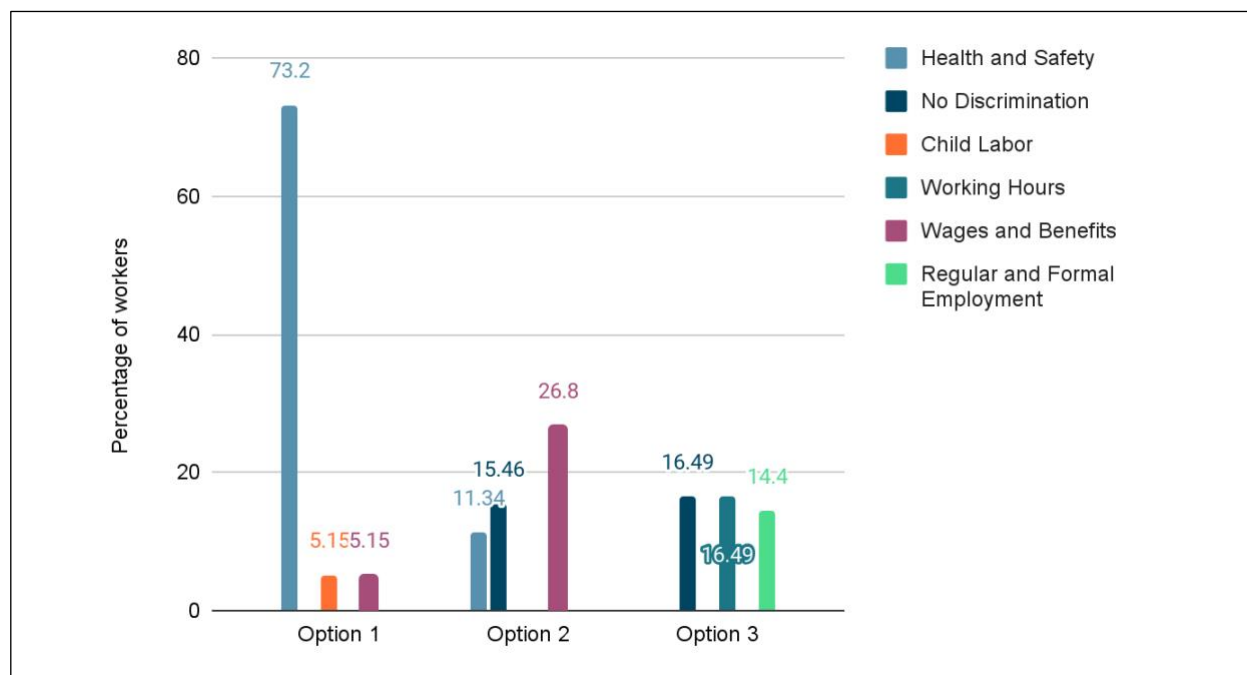
The ET explored the relevance of training topics by surveying workers in the palm oil sector at several private sector partner processing plants.<sup>25</sup> The survey asked workers in both Colombia and Ecuador for their opinions regarding the type of labor topics they would find the most useful or relevant to know, and their responses show there is clear alignment with the SAI training curriculum. As figure 3 shows, health and safety was the primary topic of interest and relevance for workers (73 percent of workers selected it as their first choice). (See Figure 3 on next page).

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<sup>23</sup> UNDP Ecuador, “PNUD y Ministerio de Ambiente presentaron la iniciativa Botas Violeta, una propuesta para caminar hacia la igualdad de género”, March 27th, 2023. Link: <https://www.undp.org/es/ecuador/noticias/pnud-y-ministerio-de-ambiente-presentaron-la-iniciativa-botas-violeta-una-propuesta-para-caminar-hacia-la-igualdad-de-genero>

<sup>24</sup> This program, led by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Ecuador together with the Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition of Ecuador (MAATE), became iconic in the country for giving visibility to the women working in cattle farms by giving them purple-colored boots as protective gear for their activities, a tool that female workers regularly lack unlike their male co-workers or family members when it’s a family-owned farm.

<sup>25</sup> It is relevant to note that the ET found no evidence of PF activities with unions or low-ranking workers, and the only workers’ association involved in the project did not respond to the interview call for this evaluation.

**Figure 3. Relevant social compliance issues for workers**

**Source:** ET's elaboration based on information from workers' survey.

Note: The total number of workers surveyed from both Colombia and Ecuador is 98. The figure shows answers to the question: "What are the top three (3) topics that you find the most useful related to labor topics?" The answer options come from the PF SAI's curriculum.

## 2.1.2 LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

### *Lesson Learned:*

- Technical approaches need to be flexible and adaptive to unpredictable external risks and opportunities.** Prior to project start-up, PF conducted a qualitative, descriptive study on the nature of CL in the sector. It was not conceived as a precursor to the project strategy, but that it would complement information acquired through project implementation. Respondents shared that PF initially adopted SAI's standard company-oriented methodology in both countries. The unforeseen pandemic and a phytosanitary emergency highlighted the need for contingency plans and deep local sectoral expertise for adaptive management. This led to mid-implementation adaptations to meet each country's social compliance needs, given the complex and varying labor laws. Local partners supported and informed these methodological changes.
- Utilizing the ToT approach was positively accepted by participants** as a good way to increase peer-to-peer learning and potentially reach more local partners from employer's associations, NGOs, and international organizations. Local partner Fedpalma facilitated the dissemination of communications products and messages directly to workers. Earlier engagement of these types of local partners

in the development of a communications strategy may have increased knowledge of the PF activities and the importance of SCSs.

### *Promising Practices:*

- **Knowledge products such as case studies and study tours were effective learning tools.** Palmas de Cesar is a leading Colombian company that has developed a SCS model that could be replicated in the region for other larger producers and modified as a case study for other smaller-scale partners. Participants said that study tours provided unique opportunities for observing first-hand best practices. , could be further leveraged to assist other companies and palm oil growers.
- **Linking SCSs and RSPO certification, which is exclusively for the palm oil industry, is a stronger incentive for the industry.** The link with this certification was a good strategy given the project's robust and specialized approach to social compliance, which improves the readiness of participating stakeholders seeking other certifications like RSPO. The incentive is effective, as receiving such certifications often comes with a price premium for processing factories and small producers.

### 2.1.3 CONCLUSIONS

- Larger private sector partners in Colombia especially benefited from capacity straightening activities and tools that strengthened their skills and knowledge of Social Compliance Systems (SCSs) and RSPO certification. Stakeholders in Ecuador required more of a bottom-up approach for small-scale suppliers and farmers.
- PF stakeholders who were already familiar with the SCS processes are on track to identify and close knowledge gaps regarding SCSs.
- Technical themes and curricula in the PF methodology are relevant for advancing awareness of the labor rights of workers.

## 2.2 EFFECTIVENESS

This section addresses the evaluation questions related to effectiveness.

### 2.2.1 RESULTS

**Result 5: External factors such as COVID-19 and the widespread bud rot disease led to delays in project implementation and reaching targets for results and outcomes, which required adjustments to the work plan.**

The project's Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) includes 26 indicators. The TPRs show that, as of April 2023 (Project's Period Five), eight indicators (30 percent) have achieved or surpassed their targets, while 13 indicators (50 percent) are making progress towards targets. Five indicators will not be reported until the end of the project cycle. Three areas where the project has far exceeded the targets are training, technical assistance, and communities reached by PF, which have tripled their

targets (OTP 1.2.3.1, OTP 1.2.3.2, and OTP 1.2.3.3). (Annex B includes a detailed analysis of the PF performance monitoring reporting).

The effects of COVID-19 and bud rot disease made field visits impractical for PF project staff. Small-scale suppliers were not accessible remotely through virtual internet-hosted meetings due to limited connectivity. These same suppliers prioritized financial sustainability during this period rather than investing in SCSs. (See indicators SOTC 1.2.1, SOTC 1.2.2, and OTP 1.2.2.1)

**Result 6: Target setting and selection of partners was affected by external factors that limited the convening of stakeholders for in-person consultation and discussions and different in-country characteristics of the sector.**

Some private sector partners expressed opinions regarding the process of identifying project outcomes and setting realistic targets. A few respondents said they would have preferred to be more actively involved in early discussions regarding project targets because they know their own value chains and the number of potential suppliers (local partners) capable of meeting project requirements. Private sector partners in Colombia shared their experiences in trying to conduct operations during COVID-19. During the pandemic, it was not feasible to organize in-person meetings and make field visits to consult with multiple stakeholders involved in the value chains. A few respondents observed that not all stakeholders were able to participate in the project's early consultative meetings due to restrictions on convening meetings. Private sector partners did, however, participate in the first CMEP workshop and subsequent annual workshops, which included revisions to target setting.

“At the beginning, [the project] was virtual, the palm oil growers suffered [with that approach], and it was a traumatic experience. We stopped the training and activities, and then resumed when face-to-face was possible, that got better.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representative

“Because they (PF) defined some indicators of the project, which they reviewed among themselves (POA and SAI), it would have been important to have landed them with us, which we know better, and therefore not set targets that could not be met, that later they had to adjust, but better from the beginning.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representative

The palm oil sectors in Colombia and Ecuador operate under different structures that present diverse challenges. In Colombia, the industry is dominated by large extraction and processing plants that employ skilled workers and trade globally. The PF approach in Colombia prioritizes partnering with large firms and links small-scale suppliers and farmers to a large anchor company. In Ecuador, the agricultural sector is composed primarily of small-scale farmers and processors who are more vulnerable to economic

fluctuations, which influences the partner selection criteria. In interviews with these stakeholders in Ecuador, they shared their perceptions that private firms and industry guilds must prioritize financial viability over full adoption of social compliance systems. As noted, several partners withdrew from the PF partnership due to economic duress, which affects the overall results and outcomes of PF. Despite these set-backs, PF demonstrated results in 2022 by establishing crucial partnerships with ANCUPA and ProAmazonia to reach small-scale farmers directly and improve their technical capacity and access to learning resources.

**Result 7: PF has not met its targets for learning outputs and the publication of research documents, including qualitative studies on CL and FL in the palm oil sector but has made this a priority in the remaining period of performance.**

OTC 2 of the project focuses on knowledge generation and dissemination and includes seven indicators. Stakeholders noted the value-added of regional study tours and the use of knowledge sharing spaces to disseminate information. The indicator that has shown the highest progress is OTC 2.2, which measures the percentage of participants in regional study tours who have displayed an improved understanding of SCS promising practices. PF has surpassed its target by 10 percent, and when interviewees were asked about the overall effectiveness of OTC 2.2, they emphasized the positive reception of study tours, which have created valuable opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and best practices. Some stakeholders also referred to the effectiveness of sharing information related to preventing and reducing CL in knowledge exchange spaces (e.g., webinars), reflected in its related indicators, which have already met their targets (OTP 2.2.1 and OTP 2.2.2).



On the other hand, the project has also faced significant challenges on the knowledge generation front. Indicators like OTP 2.1.2 – the number of instances in which a project generates material shared at international or regional forums or published in reports – show less than 50 percent progress.

There were delays in the development of case studies due to misunderstandings among parties that expanded the timelines and necessitated changes to the implementation strategy. A few interviewees shared their opinions about the perceived narrow scope of the case studies prepared by partner JAA.

The communications strategy and team were operational in the second year of project implementation in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, which contributed to a tight timeline for the creation, approval, and dissemination of key materials. In hindsight, the communications component would likely have generated more results if it had been in place during the first year of implementation. The project introduced its knowledge sharing platform in October 2022<sup>26</sup>; however, it is unclear which local entity will continue to host the platform after the project ends. Moreover, learning resources like the handbook and toolkit are pending USDOL approval (indicator OTP 2.1.2) at the time of this evaluation.



**Credit:** Palmagro Processing Mill, May 2023 provided by the Evaluation Team.

“Not much information has yet been released on the project's social compliance guidelines and practices for the palm oil sector.”

- INGO Representative

### **Result 8: Localization approaches and engagement of local partners amplified results beyond the private sector.**

The majority of those interviewed shared their perceptions that inclusive approaches that engage diverse local partners increases effectiveness. The project, by design, has a clear path of engagement with the private sector partners; however, as the stakeholder networks get more expansive, horizontally, with other actors in the labor rights and palm oil industry, as well as vertically with actors in the supply chain, the localization efforts are more challenging to manage. The technical approach in Colombia is to engage private sector partners and link other local partners to these firms. In Ecuador, PF has been more

<sup>26</sup> The content available on the platform can be found in <https://palmafuturo.com/>. This platform contains materials, videos and other resources generated by the project.

proactive in diversifying its local partnerships. . ANCUPA provides important contextual understanding and informs the PF approach to working directly with local farmers who are not linked to processing factories. ProAmazonia is an important partner that helps to identify which regions and farmers are potentially effective partners. The selection of the areas and farmers participating in the training has relied heavily on ProAmazonia's expertise in the Amazonian region and its pre-existing network. For example, through this alliance in Ecuador, PF achieved links with female farmers like the group *Botas Violeta/Palmas Arriba*.<sup>27</sup>

The OTP indicator 2.2.3 measures stakeholder engagement, which consists of participation in forums, workshops, and formalizing partnerships through memorandums of understanding. In interviews with stakeholders from local organizations (not private sector firms), many of them reported they were unfamiliar with how the project was being implemented and which types of resources may be available. A couple stakeholders in Colombia speculated that local NGOs, such as FEDEPALMA and other international NGOs may have been able to play a stronger bridging role between the private sector partners and other local stakeholders involved in the palm oil sector. Enhanced engagement with diverse local partners may have heightened visibility of PF, according to these same stakeholders. PF did, however, work with FEDEPALMA to disseminate project information to local stakeholders.

“[...]the project lacked greater coordination with other stakeholders to implement activities, they did not necessarily include other actors and did not participate in all spaces. [For example] in 2021 there was a FEDEPALMA event and POA did not participate, it was an important opportunity to include a social compliance module.”

- International Organization or NGO

**Result 9: Larger private sector partners expressed greater satisfaction with the PF capacity development approaches to adopting SCSs than smaller-scale suppliers and farmers.**

The stakeholders who participated in the SAI-delivered training acknowledged the usefulness of the training and noted their appreciation of the trainers' expertise and their role in advancing SCSs in both extraction plants and supplier plantations. The interviewees also highlighted the clarity with which trainers explained technical labor concepts, such as CL and FL. In Colombia, partners noted that the ToT and STP teams have been beneficial not only for the mills but also for small suppliers.

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<sup>27</sup> Exact numbers/percentages of female participants are unavailable. PF project indicators are not disaggregated by gender.

“With the theme of the ToT, we trained staff from the extractor, but also people from the farms. So, with that, we already have an extended arm of operation in the plantations, of how to review and audit [labor issues].”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representative

Linking and integrating SCSs within the RSPO certification processes were viewed by stakeholders as a practical approach. While some mills were already certified, it was important for other mills and some of their suppliers to access tools for their ongoing application process. It has also been an effective approach to use support for the social component as an incentive to achieve RSPO certification for small-scale palm oil growers. The private sector partners who were interviewed in Colombia highlighted the PF approach to optimizing and streamlining their existing social compliance tasks.

“In the mill, we already had many elements, and we were certified in RSPO. We identify elements that reinforce and nurture social elements. Also, to certify small producers in RSPO (next week we have the internal audits on compliance for the first phase of eligibility for 21 producers) [...] During the studio tours, we saw what happened in Brazil and in San Alberto (Cesar), we learned... that we are failing in some aspects, and that we can do better. We have been able to talk to the producers and employees of these extractor plants.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representative

Smaller-scale suppliers and farmers shared that PF approaches in Colombia were effective in promoting the adoption and benefits of SCSs. In Ecuador, a few stakeholders, including farmers, said that the direct support of a processing factory was essential. Such relationships provide critical technical support for palm oil growing techniques and maintenance, other administrative topics, regulations, and more. The PF approach is predicated on having strong linkages between smaller local partners and larger extraction or processing factories. Without an intermediary, the PF approach was less tailored to the daily realities of small-scale farmers. For example, a farmer in Colombia stated that implementing such complex improvements would have been impossible without the support from a large mill.

“[...] to insist to the other producers that we have to be in a nucleus, because it is easier. [...]. Without the support of our extractor, which is impossible [to implement SCS]. Producers who are not in palm circles cannot.”

- Small producer

Farmers who were interviewed shared they encounter a high opportunity cost to participate in SCS training because they are unable to replace their own labor. These stakeholders expressed more satisfaction when the capacity development training

curriculum included practical tips, templates for signs, forms for administrative recordkeeping, and other related topics such as the pollination technique workshop. These same stakeholders shared their appreciation for the study tours, which had high impact because they could interact with peers facing similar challenges, and share best practices.

“The process [...] has helped to have knowledge that was not available before, such as the palm growing process [referring to a pollination workshop], and it supports the improvement of the farm's profitability. [...] Palm as a business, if it is not profitable, it closes and that's it.”

- Small farmer (Palmicultor)

The timing and scheduling of some training sessions presented participation challenges, as partners had to conform to the SAI team's availability. A few farmer interviewees indicated a preference for more frequent training opportunities.

“In terms of time [for the training], such as full-time, or sometimes two days, it is difficult to get operations people out of their assignments to take the training, but that's how it works with these training sessions, it's complex.”

- Mills and Processing Factories representative

## 2.2.2 LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

### *Lessons Learned:*

- Adapting the capacity development approaches and training curriculum to the needs of diverse audiences and adapting to external challenges is a continuous process.
- Localization approaches that leverage the expertise and established networks of local partners amplify results.

### *Promising Practices:*

- The SCS training was more effective when additional practical skills development and exposure to best practices were integrated into the curriculum, which made the training more beneficial for small-scale suppliers and farmers. In Ecuador, the PF model effectively engaged local partners who provided important contextual understanding regarding the needs of diverse stakeholders.

## 2.2.3 CONCLUSIONS

- Stakeholders shared their opinions regarding the high quality of PF approaches and technical expertise of the SAI-led SCS training, although participants from larger private sector firms expressed greater satisfaction. The study tours were especially impactful for small-scale farmers because of the peer-to-peer learning and sharing of best practices.

## 2.3 EFFICIENCY

This section addresses the evaluation questions related to efficiency.

### 2.3.1 RESULTS

**Result 10: The ET identified three efficiency-related challenges in the project regarding project management and resource allocation including a) resource distribution across the project’s activities, b) balancing the number of international and local staff and consultants supporting the project, and c) finalizing and approval of project deliverables.**

Based on a desk review, performance monitoring metrics and qualitative data,<sup>28</sup> the ET assesses the overall management was rated satisfactory and the project team made appropriate and necessary adaptations in response to the pandemic and subsequent implementation delays. The increased USD currency exchange rate against the Colombian peso increased the value of overall funding and was used to hire an in-house communications specialist, who led activities under OTC 2.

A few private sector partners interviewed in Colombia expressed satisfaction and said the technical support, exceeded their expectations. Through PF, these partners were able to meet their goals by establishing in-house SCS experts, who collaborated with the ToTs to support their small-scale suppliers.

Project staff, funding and other resources were allocated in a 2:1 ratio between Colombia and Ecuador, based on the expected participation of two large processing plants in Colombia and only one in Ecuador. Implementation of activities advanced more rapidly in Colombia than in Ecuador due to differences in labor force, partners, and economies. A few stakeholders in Ecuador suggested that POA should have considered allocating more staff and resources to activities in Ecuador given the scope of challenges. These same stakeholders shared a perception that engaging with smaller-scale producers produced a “higher return on investment” but there is no evidence to validate this opinion. The POA project team said they followed recommendations from the interim evaluation report and adapted the implementation strategy to leverage alliances with local partners ANCUPA and ProAmazonia to reach small-scale producers.

The POA team was composed of international, regional and local staff and consultants who managed the project and provided technical expertise. The core team also was supported by local NGOs and guilds that provided sector-specific and knowledge of the workers and their communities. The international SAI experts were well regarded by all stakeholder groups that participated in interviews. Local labor specialists were hired in the third year of implementation.

“The project focused more on international consultants and their inputs[...].”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative

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<sup>28</sup> It is relevant to note that this evaluation does not include a budgetary analysis and deep review of based on the project's budget and financial documentation, and this section is solely based on the qualitative and quantitative data resources used for the other report sections.



The PF team has not met its targets in publishing and disseminating communications products that have been finalized and approved by POA and USDOL/ILAB. Various stakeholders suggested that being able to access technical resource materials, including studies and toolkits is valuable. According to interviews with the POA team and other stakeholders, about one-half of the technical studies expected under OTC 1 are still in draft form and have not been disseminated. PF has developed training materials, a handbook and toolkit under OTC 2 activities but the knowledge sharing platform is incomplete and has not been widely publicized until now. The COVID-19 disruptions are partially to blame for some delays but the implementation of the strategic communications strategy is also related to the efficiency of project management.

“POA has something incredibly positive which is the best practices documentation, they document it and consolidate it. I think they were developing a platform, [...] but I understand it is not yet finished, so we do not know well about that.”

- INGO Representative

**Result 11: PF investments in local community development delivered results in fostering trust between palm oil extractors and processors and local communities through targeted activities that also increased women’s empowerment.**

The ET found that PF activities promote dialogue between processing mills and local communities through the efficient deployment of staff and funding. Through PF, SAI hired a female community development expert in both Colombia and Ecuador to create "community circles" that foster trust among local partners. Several stakeholders expressed high levels of satisfaction with the SAI-led community development specialists’ engagement and their support in leveraging investments for local development projects. As of April 2023, PF had reached 98 percent of its target number of community circles formed to cascade learnings from training (Indicator OTP 1.2.3.4).

In addition, PF engaged community leaders to help secure investments in community-specific projects in partnership with established local and national organizations. For example, PF facilitated an introductory discussion between community leaders and the Ecuadorian Professional Training Service Center (SECAP), which provides training to marginalized communities. PF led participatory rural diagnoses in targeted communities in Ecuador to identify key characteristics and local needs.

“The community engagement strategy itself has empowered people a lot. Communities have been supported to write proposals or request resources from local governments for communities such as access to clean water. [...] In other industries, it has also had positive effects, such as the synergies between palm and banana producers, which have been achieved thanks to the project. ProAmazonia also works with coffee and cocoa producers. Communities are also more aware of their labor rights.”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative



According to interviewed stakeholders in Ecuador, the PF community engagement strategy and its local development specialists assisted community leaders in partnering with local governments to obtain funding for improvements such as access to clean water. The ET heard from stakeholders about numerous examples of PF-led activities to support community development, including drafting a funding proposal for a corporate social responsibility initiative, creating CI training curriculum in schools under the Ministry of Education, first aid training, and income-generation proposals. The POA team said it is documenting its community circle approach and its impact on local community development.

PF activities in Ecuador promoted the visibility and empowerment of female workers in the palm oil sector, which is dominated by males. With ProAmazonia's support, PF targeted female palm oil growers, providing them with technical assistance in social compliance and farm management. The ET focus group discussions revealed that local perceptions about female leadership in palm oil farming were changing among both men and women. The involvement of women in this sector has become socialized in the targeted communities, resulting in the creation of a women's network called "Palmas Arriba" that shares information on pricing, transportation costs, and best practices in farm administration. For example, male farmers brought their female relatives to training sessions because their wives or daughters often are responsible for administrative activities such as payroll. Women are increasingly perceived as relevant stakeholders in the sector by their communities, according to 10 stakeholders.

“I see it as a beautiful integration school, it teaches financial aspects of farms that were not so visible, and now I am more suited to these actions. The women currently participate in managing the farms by helping to know the income vs. sales output.”

- Project Participants and Beneficiaries/Farmers and Suppliers

“For example, some women from the group would come with their children, so we had to make adaptations to provide care for the children and infants, allowing them to participate in the training sessions.”

- Project Participants and Beneficiaries/Farmers and Suppliers

### 2.3.2 LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

#### *Lessons Learned*

- Resource allocation in multi-country projects is an important consideration when the in-country opportunities and risks vary significantly. Risk mitigation and contingency planning is essential prior to implementation.
- A diverse project management team composed of international and local staff improves understanding of local contextual factors and risks throughout the project cycles.

- PF approaches to local community development and demonstrated results and outcomes are important to document and make accessible as valuable lessons learned and promising practices.

#### *Promising Practices:*

- Colombian private sector partners' investments in establishing internal capacity for adoption of SCSs and utilizing the TOT approach streamlined the overall SCS processes and implementation. Small-scale suppliers also benefited from this increased local capacity and support.

### 2.3.3 CONCLUSIONS

- The distribution of project management and funding resources across PF activities in two countries favored Colombia by 2:1 ratio due to its more and larger private sector partners and efficiency of scaling. The PF technical approach utilized in Colombia required significant adaptation in Ecuador to reach smaller-scale processors and farmers but eventually yielded strong results in local community development. The POA project management team practiced adaptive management in responding to external risks such as COVID-19, economic shocks and plant diseases as well pivoting when confronting implementation challenges in Ecuador. The POA technical expertise and deployment of specialists evolved over time.
- POA has not completed the publication and dissemination of communications products due to the pending approval of some research studies and launching of its knowledge sharing platform. POA should prioritize the full implementation of its communication strategy and making learning resources accessible to all partners.

## 2.4 IMPACT

This section addresses the evaluation questions related to impact.

### 2.4.1 FINDINGS AND RESULTS

#### **Result 12: PF facilitated the adoption of SCSs in participating processing factories and with small-scale producers.**

Private sector partners and small-scale suppliers who participated in PF activities made improvements, modifications or established fully functioning SCSs.<sup>29</sup> In Colombia, factories mostly strengthened or completed pre-existing SCS processes. PF technical assistance established a social performance team with defined roles for capacity building specialists and ToTs to draft training manuals, capture best practices and align corporate frameworks and processes with national regulations or international certification and brand audits.

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<sup>29</sup> It is relevant to mention that the impact information comes from the sources used by the evaluation methodology (KII, FGD, scorecards, etc.), and this evaluation does not focus on comparing the results of farmers and private sector partners from their baseline and endline evaluation. As part of the SAI methodology, the project collected a baseline evaluation from each beneficiary before starting the training, and the project is currently collecting and compiling the endline evaluations.

“Firstly, an improvement in the labor and social standards of the private sector partners. We have not reached the final line, but we are sure of the progress and that it goes beyond the number of the project goals, the score we must achieve for USDOL.”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative

A subset of small-scale suppliers in Colombia, guided by factory teams and ToTs helped small-scale producers obtain RSPO certifications, which creates compliance mechanisms and contributes to a more socially compliant and sustainable industry.

“The documentary tools, the audit tools, the checklist, and an action plan were delivered to us. We have 140 fruit suppliers; and work with 13 of them plantations; there are 13 large ones, and the rest are small. First, we started with the big ones for RSPO, but the ToTs are going down to the small-scale supplier.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representatives

According to stakeholders interviewed in Ecuador, they encountered more challenges than they perceived to be present in Colombia. The farmers who participated in interviews stated that as a consequence of PF activities, they have made improvements in keeping payroll records, understanding the risks of underaged family members' involvement, and maintaining first-aid kits on farms.

**Result 13: Different PF learning approaches were perceived as successful according to private sector partners and small-scale suppliers and farmers.**

Larger private sector stakeholders said they benefited from building internal capacity to establish and maintain SCSs within their firms. Participants expressed great satisfaction with peer-to-peer learning in study tours that exposed them to best practices in factories and plantations across Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil. Interviewees noted that the inclusion of small farmers on these tours, which occurred in some cases, was particularly beneficial. Several stakeholders expressed their interest in being able to repeatedly access technical information now and after the project ends.

“When the study tours came, the small producers showed their organized folders with payroll, and the producers proudly showed their achievements, their internal regulations, and workers of their endowment.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representatives

“I was in Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil, we were the ones who presented in Peru the improvement of the social compliance system, and we learned from other companies about how to handle PQRs [claims and grievances] (peticiones, quejas, reclamos y sugerencias). In Ecuador, we learned on the

field [with the study tours], how to comply with simple things about social compliance at the legal labor level and certifications. And in Brazil, we learned how they handle documenting issues and health at work topics.”

- Farmers and Suppliers

“On the platform, we are disseminating a lot of materials. We hope to include the toolkit and handbook to give them a lot of visibility. It is also worth noting that we created webinars to disseminate the project's results.”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative

“The information is not yet on the platform, the idea was that it will remain in the Federation, but we did not know about that, the platform is still very new.”

- Employer Association Representative

POA has an ongoing MOU with RSPO, which potentially provides PF regional and global channels for sharing best practices in social compliance practices and benefits within the palm oil sector. This partnership potentially allows PF to gain global visibility and to broadcast the PF technical approaches project as viable stepping stones for millers and farmers to achieve international certifications.

“Their reports have been input for RSPO working groups, and it has been important to participate in the project. These results have benefited us and helped generate interest.”

- INGO representative

**Result 14: PF contributed to notable advances in locally-led development, gender equity, and strengthening host government capacity, especially in Ecuador.**

PF activities contributed to demonstrable improvements in locally-led development, gender equity, and host government capacity, according to stakeholder interviews, performance monitoring data, and quantitative data. PF project team members and technical specialists emphasized the role of local communities in driving development projects, according to stakeholders who shared their perceptions. PF activities, such as forming community circles and providing awareness training on social compliance issues like CL and FL, improved partnerships among communities, mills, and plantations in Colombia and Ecuador. They also strengthened the social fabric among small-scale farmers and boosted economic empowerment initiatives for female palm producers in Ecuador, according to the stakeholders who were interviewed.

“The model with community circles: Not everyone in the circle works in the company, some are just community leaders. It is to give voice to the community, focusing on co-creation. Nor is it intended to be a substitute for government, it is something more like management.”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative

“Various groups within the organization have been empowered.... The emergence of new leadership, especially within the women's group, has been observed, representing fresh and different voices from the usual ones.”

- INGO representative

As mentioned in results 8 and 11, PF has contributed to gender equality, notably through its partnership with ProAmazonia, which supports women in community leadership and promotes income-generating activities. Stakeholders perceived PF activities as contributing to broader awareness and acceptance of gender equity in the workforce. PF activities were said to increase visibility of women farmers in the Amazonian region. (See Annex I for additional information about this promising practice).

Though PF has limited capacity strengthening interactions with the host government labor agencies, it did provide technical assistance, training programs, and institutional support that enhanced the governments' ability to conduct labor inspections in target zones. PF trained labor inspectors from Colombia's Ministry of Labor who are in charge of labor inspections in the target regions to adjust their traditionally punitive approaches to be more constructive and preventative. This capacity strengthening has been highlighted in Colombia by public officials as an important first step in strengthening long-term labor inspection capacities in the palm oil sector.

“The results are that there is a group of inspectors of the Ministry with strengthened knowledge in the Palma sector in the jurisdiction areas of Cesar and Magdalena. Expanding this type of training to other country regions would help to give a greater impact.”

- Host Government Official

“The Ministry also has significant resource challenges to implementing labor inspections in all economic sectors. There are not enough staff to carry out rural inspections, there is only one inspector in many territories, and he/she does not have sufficient availability. Support with resources would also be relevant. [...] Working as a team with other stakeholders takes a broader look at the issue of compliance with labor standards. When working with donors, the Ministry's inspector has a broader view,

to verify crucial aspects (not only focused on sanctioning) so that the sector is socially efficient.”

#### - Host Government Official

PF enhanced the national government's capacity regarding social compliance, particularly in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) audits but the longer-term impact is uncertain. Both Colombia and Ecuador have limited resources dedicated to educating and retaining an adequate number of labor inspectors and provide support to private sector employers. For example, PF's target areas are somewhat isolated and few public officials perform labor inspections. Many municipalities or regional governments do not have the facilities to register employees in the social security system. Moreover, many small-scale palm oil growers lack the knowledge and internet access to register workers virtually, and there are no places to do occupational health medical examinations. Additionally, labor regulations and procedures are complex, making it difficult to implement social compliance systems among small-scale farmers. PF supported training workshops on child labor issues for public officials in Ecuador but the Ministry of Labor did not have the capacity or resources for further action, according to stakeholders who were interviewed.

“Palma Futuro contributed to training the inspectors of the Ministry at the regional level (Magdalena and Cesar) so that they know what to focus on in OSH good practices and compliance with labor regulations according to the palm sector requirements, which the inspectors should supervise. This training and strengthening of the Ministry's inspectors were focused on inspecting palm producers (agricultural sector). It can be applied to the entire chain.”

#### - Host-Country Government Representatives

### 2.4.2 LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

#### *Lessons Learned*

- Different learning approaches were preferred by different groups of stakeholders, but peer-to-peer learning via study tours and sharing best practices were rated the most highly.
- Partnering with governments and public sector employees produces positive results in the short-term, but without dedicated resources for labor enforcement and internal capacity building, the longer-term impact is uncertain.

#### *Promising Practices*

- Peer-to-peer learning through study tours and sharing best practices were rated most highly by participants and facilitated knowledge exchanges among private sector partners. from the four target countries.
- The partnership established with the RSPO played a pivotal role in increasing the project's visibility with private sector partners and facilitating greater adoption



among small-scale suppliers and farmers. The collaboration helped these stakeholders recognize the benefits of strengthening SCSs for their own interests and the broader sector.

### 2.4.3 CONCLUSIONS

- PF utilized a diverse range of technical approaches to increase the adoption of social compliance measures that improved work sites for larger factories as well as family-owned businesses and farms. The technical approaches included internal capacity building, partnering with local NGOs, deploying community development specialists, facilitating peer-to-peer learning, training government labor inspectors, and producing technical guides and resources. The overall impact could potentially be increased through the full implementation of its communications strategy.

## 2.5 SUSTAINABILITY

This section addresses the evaluation questions related to sustainability.

### 2.5.1 RESULTS

**Result 15: PF activities considered private sector partners most compelling incentives to fully adopt and maintain SCSs within their corporate structure because it raises their international standing and increases profits through access to more markets.**

PF technical approaches that linked the obtainment of international certificates such as RSPO with adopting SCSs within companies increased the incentives for overall social compliance of business practices. These certifications also enable factories to ask for premium pricing. International buyers demand that oils be certified, and there is a growing interest from domestic buyers to purchase certified oils. For example, Cargill buys certified oils and carries out due diligence and audits as a requirement for signing purchase contracts. According to research, “26 percent of palm oil is produced under Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSSs) and 98 percent of exports to the European Union have sustainable certification.”<sup>30</sup> If there is a greater local demand for certified oils, this will also encourage processing factories to continue certification processes.

“Within the [beneficiary] companies, I do not have any concerns about it; they have made investments, and it is very encouraging to make those changes. This [all that the companies have done within the project] is not strictly a cost; it has benefits, i.e., employee retention. Sell their products at a more premium price (incentives for these companies).”

- USG Official

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<sup>30</sup>Portafolio, “Colombia compra aceite de palma sostenible, transformación del mercado”, September 26th, 2022. Link: <https://www.portafolio.co/contenido-patrocinado/colombia-compra-aceite-de-palma-sostenible-transformacion-del-mercado-571708>

“Certifications like the RSPO can be sustainable because it generates a sale premium, and that is an incentive for the anchor companies (empresas núcleo) to get certified and want to promote the certification among their producers. When it is something business, to be sustainable it has to have economic returns to be sustainable.”

- INGO Representative

Focusing efforts on international certifications and buyers' requirements is vital to the sector. For example, in 2017, pivotal international brands developed a methodology called "Meeting No Deforestation, No Expansion, No Peat and No Exploitation" (NDPE)<sup>31</sup>, born from the necessity of the brands to monitor social, environmental, and sustainable elements across their suppliers. This approach is an interesting complement to the RSPO certification since it allows brands to compare some of their standards with other brands and market competitors.

“[When we start a commercial relationship] We collect information about policies to ensure that the company has minimum compliances. When the company is certified in RSPO, we apply a fast forward process, because it means that the company has already gone through some verification processes, and for us is the minimum secure standard for us to make an initial purchase. [...] We make verification visits (audits), to sign long-term contracts. But we do not have a clear methodology to measure social or occupational risk.”

- Brands Representative

Additionally, the processing factories' staff in charge of occupational health, safety, and labor rights, consider this knowledge key to fulfilling their work. The processing factories are generally located in remote areas. They are the primary provider of formal employment in the regions, so they have a high permanence of employees, which means that the knowledge imparted by PF is more easily institutionalized.

“The social compliance system is sustainable, the knowledge generated in this subject, now the whole team knows it, and they also know well the concepts of child labor and forced labor.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representatives

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<sup>31</sup> This methodology includes key players in the demand side of the palm oil supply chain such as PepsiCo, Cargill, Musim Mas and Proforest. More information about the NDPE methodology can be found in <https://www.ndpe-irf.net/>

**Result 16: Localization approaches encourage the transfer of knowledge to anchor companies, unions, associations, and NGOs.**

In the case of Colombia, the processing factories act as anchor companies, so the implementation of SCSs to their associated small-scale producers may continue to cascade because of the incentive to access new markets and better prices. This is possible if the palm oil has total traceability along each step of the production chain. PF activities supported anchor companies that can serve as a protective umbrella to smaller-scale suppliers and farmers when they encounter price changes or phytosanitary diseases that affect their economic capacity to implement SCSs. In Colombia, the processing factory serves on many occasions as a shield for those adversities, with financial resources, social and sustainability training, and technical training, but when that protective umbrella does not exist, the improvements and systems in place at the small-scale firms tend to fall apart. In the case of Ecuador, sustainability is more challenging because mills do not act as anchor companies, so small producers must do the process practically by themselves. PF interventions may be sustainable in this area with the active engagement of guilds and international NGOs.

“The most sustainable is the use of the methodology to access other certifications. It is how to access certifications and comply with social compliance that helps access other markets. At the guild level [in Ecuador], there is a lot of undergoing communication, and it is expected that there will be a ToT in ANCUPA to support those who want to commit to meeting the standards[...].”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative

“[...] they will be able to obtain certifications, and that is the future: to obtain certification to be able to sell. Otherwise, they will be excluded from the market.”

- INGO representative

Similarly, small producers have found benefits in improving farm management and the potential to make their businesses more profitable and protect their interests by fully or partially implementing SCSs. Leaving behind materials with concise language and practical approaches is critical for ensuring they can be used directly by the farmers, with minor guidance from other organizations, at least when talking about the key and foundational elements of the methodology.

“The training we have received has allowed us to better manage our farms. Improved maintenance of palm crops. [...] Topics such as washing, safety, signage, spill kits, and the provision of a bathroom for workers. A new area is being set up for an additional shower, and proposals for tables

and chairs. Keeping a record of everything, even water bottles, to ensure they don't get mixed up among the workers.”

- Farmers and Suppliers

Interviewees highlighted that many small producers have incorporated elements of the SCS since it is part of the labor regulation and helps them comply with the regulations. For example, small suppliers in both countries have created and published their policies on billboards, signage, and record books. Policy examples include having a designated resting area for workers (when they hire someone during harvesting season) and having a first aid kit, among other formal elements.

“Small producers have already published their policies, but people forget, so a reinforcement mechanism is required.”

- Mills and Processing Factories' representative

**Result 17: The scalability and replicability of the PF technical approaches are being tested, but many stakeholders will need to continue their involvement, which makes the ongoing knowledge-sharing activities a key element for long-term sustainability.**

The stakeholders have stated that the social compliance model implemented by PF has the potential to be scaled and adopted throughout the entire palm industry. This means that the practices and systems put in place by PF could be replicated by other palm nuclei operating in Colombia. PF's implementation of a social compliance model could serve as a blueprint for other palm nuclei to follow, enabling them to align with industry standards, meet stakeholder expectations, and contribute to a more sustainable palm oil sector.

According to stakeholders who were interviewed, the PF model can help Colombian firms improve their social compliance systems and meet standards to gain access to or maintain international certifications like RSPO. The certification process along palm nuclei may include improving reputation, increasing market access, and the ability to cater to the growing demand for sustainable palm oil.

“This model of accompanying the largest [processing] companies could be replicated.”

- Mills and Processing Factories Representatives

“PF has not mapped other palm oil companies that could implement the RSPO (since there is, for example, the incentive to receive the market premium for having this certification). It was necessary to map other companies in more complex areas of the country, such as Catatumbo. And share the knowledge about how to make it replicable or scalable.”

- INGO representative

Furthermore, stakeholders have suggested that these SCSs can be replicated in both countries' other agricultural sectors, including coffee, cocoa, and bananas. Such replication would improve social and environmental practices, facilitating sustainable and responsible operations throughout the farming industry. It may lead to enhanced social practices within these industries, including fair wages, safe working conditions, and eradicating forced and child labor practices.

“And also, that this same thing can potentially be replicated in other crops, cocoa, and bananas. But with USDOL, you have to be aware of previous studies of country, community, and crop differences.”

- Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative

“There are people interested in continuing this project, and also expanding it to other crops (cocoa - coffee). Expand it to other crops, because in cacao, there is more child labor there. It is identified that the interventions have been free for the beneficiaries, but by the time we seek resources for new stages, it will be complicated. For example, how can we have a field technician, in-house, to follow up with the palm oil growers.”

- Employer Association Representative

PF recently developed user-friendly materials, including a handbook and two toolkits, one for small-scale producers and the other for the processing plant. PF also produced a pocket-sized booklet that is useful for reaching audiences with limited access to technology and low educational levels. This type of booklet is a good practice that has been used in the past by partners, including actors such as FEDEPALMA, ILO, and ProAmazonia, as evidenced in the examples below. These publications are available online and in hard copies.

## 2.5.2 LESSONS LEARNED AND PROMISING PRACTICES

### *Lessons Learned*

- PF technical approaches that linked the obtainment of international certificates such as RSPO with adopting SCSs within companies increased the incentives for overall social compliance of business practices.
- PF technical approaches were rated most highly when they were in alignment with the partners' internal capacity and business model. Farmers are more likely to implement and maintain SCSs when they are part of a núcleo palmero, like in Colombia, versus when that structure does not exist, which is the case of small farmers in Ecuador.

### *Promising Practices*

- In the absence of a strong anchor private sector partner, it is important to forge partnerships with local guilds and NGOs, which proved effective and possibly

sustainable in Ecuador. PF can learn from ILO and FEDEPALMA experiences in producing accessible and easy-to-understand publications targeted for local stakeholders, which is likely to increase the value of the information products.

### 2.5.3 CONCLUSIONS

- Sustainability of SCSs is more likely if the partners have high incentives to adopt and maintain them. s potentially high among the private sector partners. In Colombia, mills have the necessary resources and price premium incentives This model could be scaled to other palm centers in the country with the support of stakeholders. In Ecuador, sustainability is linked to creating some legacy of ownership with local partners.



### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section lists recommendations for the project team, future implementers, and USDOL.

#### 3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT TEAM

- Engage more local staff, consultants, or subgrantees to leverage localization approaches, promising practices and lessons learned regarding labor issues that are specific to farmers and processors in each country of the region.
- Invest in developing information exchange platforms that can disseminate curated information about SCSs and provide access to training materials that are relevant to characteristics of different stakeholder groups; identify local partners who can host these platforms in the future.
- Establish relationships with more organizations in the stakeholder groups to through employers' associations, NGOs, and international organizations relevant to the palm oil sector and labor rights topics.
- Integrate the obtainment global certifications and other industry standards into technical approaches because this will incentivize palm oil producers, processors and key actors in supply chains to adapt SCSs into their business practices.
- Consider conducting country-level stakeholder mappings that illustrate specific stakeholder technical and information needs at the project close to capture critical information for follow-on activities.

#### 3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ILAB

- Conduct learning events for new partners and grantees to explain the significance of certain performance monitoring indicators, setting targets and reporting results. These indicators should align with the overarching goals and priorities of USDOL/ Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB).
- Orient partners to new administration priorities, such as the United States Executive Order for Advancing Equity and Racial Justice Through the Federal Government, that are relevant to USDOL/ILAB programs and projects.
- Develop and curate information tools that capture promising practices and lessons learned in supporting SCSs and disseminate these tools to new and current partners and grantees.
- Prioritize the inclusion of local partners and implementers from established networks in the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) to boost strengthening local capacity, sustainability, and reducing costs.

**Table 4. Recommendations and Supporting Evidence**

Recommendation	Evidence	Page Numbers
1. Hire local staff, consultants, or subgrantees to leverage local technical expertise in the palm oil sector and labor issues to speed up implementation	Result 2, 3, 5 & 6	17, 22-23
2. Accelerate the implementation of the knowledge management and increase dissemination by strengthening the communications component.	Result 1 & 7	16, 24
3. Generate materials and resources that could be easily distributed among stakeholders and workers on SCSs' emblematic cases, as well as best practices, such as spillovers in locally-led development and gender equity project's contributions.	Result 11 & 14	30, 34
4. Promote sustainability by increasing relationships with critical stakeholders and linking SCSs with palm oil certifications and other efforts already happening in the industry.	Result 8, 13, 15, 16 & 17	25, 33, 37-40
5. Include national-level technical expertise and local knowledge, covering all main fronts essential to the project's implementation to adapt the methodology and optimize performance.	Result 9, 10 & 12	26-29, 32
6. Conduct stakeholder mapping to identify the interests of intended audiences.	Result 8	25
7. Design and implement a knowledge management strategy from the project beginning.	Result 13	33
8. Engage in future projects brands or buyers who are a critical link of the supply chain to ensure sustainability and access to markets.	Result 15	37
9. The PF methodology for small farmers will be better received if combining the SCSs training with other technical elements or small grants in kind that help them in their economic activity.	Result 9	26
10. Request differentiated intervention strategies to eliminate and prevent CL and FL by type of stakeholder included but not limited to workers, small producers and union members.	Result 4	19

Recommendation	Evidence	Page Numbers
11. Request the inclusion of local partners, or implementers that have already identified network or in-country partners, in the FOA to boost building local capacity, sustainability, and reducing costs.	Result 3	17
12. In the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), include exemplar or reference performance indicators at both output and outcome levels that correspond to the anticipated results of implementing a contract or a grant. These indicators should be designed to conveniently feed into the overarching goals of USDOL/ILAB.	Result 7	24

**ANNEX A. LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

#	Type of Document	Doc Title	Author	Date / Date Range
1	Funding Opportunity Announcement	FOA-ILAB-18-09. Notice of Availability of Funds and Funding Opportunity Announcement for Reducing Child Labor and Forced Labor in Palm Oil Supply Chains.	USDOL	2018
2	Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) Palma Futuro Reducing Child Labor and Forced Labor in Palm Oil Supply Chains	Partners of Americas and USDOL	November 2019
3	Pre-Contract Project Order Authorization Form	Project Order Authorization Form	USDOL, Bureau of International Labor Affairs	January 1, 2019
4	Pre-Contract Funding Opportunity	Notice of Availability of Funds and Funding Opportunity Announcement for Reducing Child Labor and Forced Labor in Palm Oil Supply Chains.	ILAB/USDOL	August, 2018
5	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 10.31.2023	Partners of the Americas	October 2023
6	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 04.29.2023	Partners of the Americas	April 2023
7	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 10.31.2022	Partners of the Americas	October 2022
8	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 04.29.2022	Partners of the Americas	April 2022
9	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 10.29.2021	Partners of the Americas	October 2021
10	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 04.30.2021	Partners of the Americas	April 2021
11	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 10.30.2020	Partners of the Americas	October 2020
12	Technical Progress Report	Technical Progress Report 04.29.2020	Partners of the Americas	April 2020
13	Data Reporting	Annex A – Data Reporting Form Palma Futuro – October 2022	Partners of the Americas	October 2022

#	Type of Document	Doc Title	Author	Date / Date Range
14	Data Reporting	Annex A – Data Reporting Form Palma Futuro – April 2022	Partners of the Americas	April 2022
15	Data Reporting	Annex A – Data Reporting Form Palma Futuro --October 2021	Partners of the Americas	October 2021
16	Data Reporting	Annex A – Data Reporting Form Palma Futuro – April 2021	Partners of the Americas	April 2021
17	Data Reporting	Annex A –Data Reporting Form Palma Futuro – October 2020	Partners of the Americas	October 2020
18	Data Reporting	Annex A – Data Reporting Form Palma Futuro – April 2020	Partners of the Americas	April 2020
19	Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	ILAB’s Theory of Sustained Change	ILAB	April 2023
20	Pre-Situational Analysis / Research Document	Palma Futuro Project: Reducing Child Labor and Forced Labor in Palm Oil Supply Chains	Partners of the Americas	January 17th, 2020
21	Technical Document/ Research Document	Case Study: Palmas del Cesar	Partners of the Americas and J.E. Austin Associates	December 2021
22	Technical Document/ Research Document	Colombian and Ecuadorian Palm Oil Market and Value Chain Analysis	Partners of the Americas and J.E. Austin Associates	August 2022
23	Performance Evaluation	Interim Performance Evaluation: Palma Futuro Project	Michele González Arroyo, Gloria Vela Mantilla	July 2021
24	Technical Document/ Research Document	Labor Conditions in the Palm Oil Sector: Risks and Proposals in the Context of COVID-19 in Colombia and Ecuador	Partners of the Americas and Social Accountability International	July 2022
25	Project Document	Palma Futuro_Project Document_March 2021_with Ecuador changes (Draft)	Partners of the Americas	2018
26	Technical Document Handbook	Social Compliance systems for the palm oil industry: A handbook for implementation in Latin America	Partners of the Americas and Social Accountability International	2022
27	Toolkit	Social Compliance systems for the palm oil industry: A toolkit for implementation by palm oil extractor plants in Latin America	Partners of the Americas and Social Accountability International	2022

#	Type of Document	Doc Title	Author	Date / Date Range
28	Toolkit	Social Compliance systems for the palm oil industry: A toolkit for implementation by smallholder palm oil farms in Latin America	Partners of the Americas and Social Accountability International	2022
29	Booklet (comic)	The secret of Palmeritas Town, for job training and safety, and greeting at work ( <i>El secreto del pueblo palmeritas, para la formación laboral y seguridad, y saludo en el trabajo</i> )	International Labor Organization -ILO	2020
30	Booklet	Rapid Identification in Safety and health at work in the palm oil, palm kernel oil and palm kernel flour processing factory in Colombia ( <i>Identificación Rápida en Seguridad y salud en el trabajo en la planta extractora de aceite de palma, aceite de palmiste y harina de palmiste en Colombia</i> )	International Labor Organization -ILO	2020
31	Technical Document	El sistema de cumplimiento social: Guía de Bolsillo - Palma Futuro	Partners of the Americas and Social Accountability International	2022



## ANNEX B. PROJECT TECHNICAL PROGRESS REPORTS (TPRS) ANALYSIS

### OVERVIEW

In summary, PF reports on 26 indicators. The following describes the status of these indicators by Period 5 (April 2023):

All indicators report the target and actual values as of April 2023.

8 indicators have reached or surpassed the target.

18 indicators did not reach their target by April 2023.

- Of these 18 indicators, 5 reported no progress towards reaching the target, whereas the other 14 indicators showed progress towards reaching the target.

### SUMMARY OF INDICATORS

Indicator	Type of Indicator	Status	Target	Results
<b>Overall project objective: To improve the implementation of social compliance systems that promote acceptable conditions of work and reduce child labor and forced labor in the palm oil supply chains</b>				
PO1: Number of organizations in Latin America that promote social compliance system practices in the palm oil sector	Annual	Have not reached target	5	2
PO 2: Number of palm oil entities with improved Social Fingerprint® performance scores	Life of Project	Have not reached target	105	0
<b>OUTCOME 1: Strengthened capacity of private sector partners in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors to implement a robust and sustainable social compliance</b>				
OTC 1.1.: Number of palm oil entities with improved Social Fingerprint® management systems scores	Life of Project	Have not reached target	105	0
<b>SUB-OUTCOME 1.1 Increased understanding of labor practices and risks of child labor and forced labor in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors</b>				
SOTC 1.1.1: Percentage of key stakeholders who attend annual sectoral workshops who demonstrate a change in their understanding of labor practices and risks in supply chain	Annual	Have not reached target	80%	76.4%
<b>OUTPUT 1.1.1: Evidence compiled on labor practices and risks of CL and FL in palm oil supply chain</b>				
Final research report on CL and FL and labor conditions completed	Life of project	Have not reached target	1	0

Indicator	Type of Indicator	Status	Target	Results
<b>OUTPUT 1.1.2: Evidence compiled on promising practices in social compliance and benefits of social compliance systems to economic performance of companies.</b>				
Number of reports on promising practices and benefits of social compliance and benefits completed	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	4	3
<b>OUTPUT 1.1.3: Evidence disseminated to relevant public and private stakeholders on labor conditions, promising practices in social compliance and benefits of social compliance systems to economic performance of companies.</b>				
Number of stakeholders reached with the findings of the project's research	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	100	68
<b>SUB-OUTCOME 1.2 Increased application of social compliance processes at all levels of the private sector partners supply chains</b>				
SOTC 1.2.1 Number of suppliers trained by private sector partners	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	340	171
SOTC 1.2.2 Number of private sector partners' suppliers that complete assessment process	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	350	281
SOTC 1.2.3 Number of private sector partners' suppliers that develop an improvement plan	Life of Project	Have not reached target	170	133
<b>OUTPUT 1.2.1 Social compliance tools identified, enhanced and/or adapted for local context</b>				
OTP 1.2.1.1 Social compliance toolkits completed	Semi-Annually	Have not reached target	1	0
<b>OUTPUT 1.2.2 Technical assistance delivered to private sector partners, their supply chain and workers</b>				
OTP 1.2.2.1 Number of private sector partners and suppliers provided technical assistance	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	347	292
OTP 1.2.2.2 Number of people from private sector partners provided technical assistance	Semi-annually	Surpassed target	70	151
OTP 1.2.2.3 Percentage of surveyed supply chain workshop participants who demonstrate a change in understanding of labor practices and risks of child labor and forced labor	Life of Project	Have not reached target	80%	0%

Indicator	Type of Indicator	Status	Target	Results
<b>OUTPUT 1.2.2 Technical assistance delivered to private sector partners, their supply chain and workers</b>				
OTP 1.2.2.1 Number of private sector partners and suppliers provided technical assistance	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	347	292
OTP 1.2.2.2 Number of people from private sector partners provided technical assistance	Semi-annually	Surpassed target	70	151
OTP 1.2.2.3 Percentage of surveyed supply chain workshop participants who demonstrate a change in understanding of labor practices and risks of child labor and forced labor	Life of Project	Have not reached target	80%	0%
<b>OUTPUT 1.2.3 Technical assistance provided to external stakeholders to support SCS implemented by private sector partners</b>				
OTP 1.2.3.1 Number of stakeholder organizations provided training directly by the project	Semi-annually	Reached target	22	22
OTP 1.2.3.2 Number of people from external stakeholder groups provided training directly by the project	Semi-annually	Surpassed target	70	272
OTP 1.2.3.3 Number of communities reached through outreach events	Semi-annually	Surpassed target	21	66
OTP 1.2.3.4 Number of community circles formed to cascade learnings from trainings	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	60	59
OTP 1.2.3.5 Number of actions taken by community circles to cascade learning	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	60	47
<b>OUTCOME 2: Increased understanding, at regional and global levels, of promising practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains.</b>				
OTC 2.1 Number of organizations that participate in forums where the project presents promising practices and lessons learned	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	100	12
OTC 2.2 Percentage of surveyed regional study tour participants who demonstrate an increased understanding of SCS promising practices	Semi-annually	Surpassed target	80%	90%
<b>OUTPUT 2.1: Promising practices disseminated to palm oil stakeholders regionally and globally</b>				
OTP 2.1.1 Number of regional discussion forums organized in region	Semi-annually	Reached target	2	2
OTP 2.1.2 Number of instances in which project generated material is shared at international or regional forums, or published in reports	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	12	5

Indicator	Type of Indicator	Status	Target	Results
<b>OUTPUT 2.2: A Knowledge and learning network operational across the region and globally, of stakeholders in the palm oil sector</b>				
OTP 2.2.1 Number of webinars hosted by the project	Semi-annually	Reached target	6	6
OTP 2.2.2 Number of organizations that participate in webinars hosted or supported by the project	Semi-annually	Surpassed target	50	57
OTP 2.2.3 Number of organizations with formal agreements to participate in the network	Semi-annually	Have not reached target	12	8

## ANNEX C. EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Relevance</b>	To what extent did the Palma Futuro project design reflect the needs and priorities of diverse stakeholders, workers and community members within the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors, including those from underserved populations? To what extent did the project implementation reflect the needs and priorities of these stakeholders?	<p>What factors limited or facilitated these results?</p> <p>To what extent did the project design assess and account for differences in capacity between stakeholders?</p> <p>How did the project consider nuances and heterogeneity of the social compliance systems in Ecuador and Colombia to have an optimal intervention progression?</p> <p>To what extent is the project contributing to the USG policy objective of advancing equity for all, including groups who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality?</p>	Descriptive	Qualitative	KIs and Desk Review	Content analysis Thematic analysis



Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Effectiveness</b>	To what extent did project interventions contribute towards the achievement of project outcomes? Are there some interventions that have made more progress than others?	<p>What are the factors driving or hindering achievement of project results (in the context of the pandemic and other challenges)?</p> <p>How have the approaches been adapted?</p> <p>To what extent was Palma Futuro effectively reached target organizations and engaged with each stakeholder group involved in intervention approaches?</p> <p>Which approaches are perceived to be the most effective for achieving the project’s objectives?</p> <p>Which approaches are perceived to be the least effective for achieving the project’s objectives?</p> <p>What are the best practices and lessons learned for ILAB and its grantees to ensure technical assistance reaches and benefits target populations, including underserved populations?</p>	<p>Descriptive</p> <p>Statistical (from data project reporting, when available)</p>	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>Quantitative (secondary data)</p>	<p>KIIs, FGDs, Desk Review, and Performance Data</p>	<p>Content analysis</p> <p>Thematic analysis</p> <p>Descriptive statistical analysis (depending on data available)</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Efficiency</b>	To what extent have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve project outcomes?	Are any other groups indirectly (as a spill-over effect) impacted by Palma Futuro, and how?	Descriptive  Statistical (from data project reporting, when available)	Qualitative  Quantitative (secondary data)	KIIs, FGDs, Desk Review, and Performance Data	Content analysis  Thematic analysis  Descriptive statistical analysis (depending on data available)
		To what extent did the project encounter implementation or contextual challenges that impacted the project's ability to target any specific groups?				
		What can ILAB and POA, as implementing partners, learn about the level of change (outcomes) that can realistically be achieved within a given project timeframe, budget, and operating context?				

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Impact*</b>	What are the tangible/observed outcomes and impacts on project stakeholders, according to the target ones established by the project?	To what extent did the intervention make contributions toward the knowledge of labor practices in the palm oil sector?	Descriptive Statistical (from data project reporting, when available)	Qualitative Quantitative (secondary data)	KIIs, FGDs, Desk Review, and Performance Data	Content analysis
		To what extent did the intervention contribute to the increased application of social compliance processes in the private sector partners' supply chains?				Thematic analysis
		What are the demonstrated changes in increasing regional and global-level understanding of best practices in social compliance systems in the palm oil sector among stakeholders?				Descriptive statistical analysis (depending on data available)

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Sustainability</b>	To what extent are the Palma Futuro interventions likely to yield sustained results?	What elements and strategies were considered during implementation to assure the project's sustainability?	Descriptive	Qualitative	KIs and Desk Review	Content analysis  Thematic analysis
		What elements of the intervention have the most potential to be adopted long-term by stakeholders? Have main stakeholders already formally included any intervention elements in their statutes or norms?				
		How did the project account for scalability within the countries already involved (Colombia and Ecuador) and potentially at the regional level?				

**Note:** The impact category\* will be understood in this evaluation in terms of the outcomes established by the Palma Futuro Project design, the limitations of the available data, the absence of baseline data, and that this assessment relies mainly on secondary data.

## ANNEX D. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The evaluation methodology consisted of the following activities and approaches:

### EVALUATION APPROACH

This evaluation used a mixed-methods – using quantitative and qualitative data – approach and was participatory in nature. The ET used a diverse set of data and documents to inform the analysis, such as project documents, including performance monitoring data, technical progress reports, project support documents, and previous assessments, when available, as sources for secondary data. In addition, this evaluation also collected primary qualitative and quantitative information through field visits to relevant in-country stakeholders<sup>32</sup> (selected by the ET and in coordination with the implementing partners and local coordinators) to do a series of interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with crucial industry/topic related to project's stakeholders, and performance scorecards as appropriate. Also, when possible, the ET administered surveys to workers and managers in the palm oil sector.

This evaluation also aligns with the OECD-DAC methodology criteria, focusing on five of the six criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Since this is a final evaluation, the analysis does not consider the coherence criteria since that was more relevant to the interim assessment.

When available, quantitative data was drawn from the PF project's performance data reporting and project reports and incorporated into the analysis. In particular, the evaluation triangulated project monitoring data with qualitative data collected during fieldwork to objectively rate the level of achievement of each of the project's significant outcomes on a four-point scale (low, medium, above-average, and high). Opinions and scorecard ratings from stakeholders and project participants collected during the interviews and FGDs helped to improve and clarify the quantitative analysis from the performance monitoring data.

In addition, the workers' and managers' surveys provided additional qualitative information about the opinions and context of labor issues beyond the direct project's participants but about what workers think and experience in the palm oil industry in Ecuador and Colombia.

This evaluation considered a participatory approach at every step, from the design of the TOR, the planning and logistics for fieldwork and data collection, and during the process of putting together preliminary results, including the grantee, implementing partners, donor, and project participants in discussion workshops. The participatory nature of the evaluation contributed to the sense of ownership among stakeholders and project participants.

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<sup>32</sup> Even though most of the interviews and FGDs happened in a face-to-face format, the ET did some of them virtually due to geographical location limitations (i.e., stakeholders in Brazil, Peru, etc.), the interviewee preference, or some additional ones that happened when the ET was no longer in-country doing data collection.

It is also relevant to highlight that, throughout the entire process, the evaluation approach was independent in terms of the membership of the ET. POA and other implementing partners (IPs) were only in meetings with stakeholders, communities, and participants to facilitate introductions and inputs for logistics planning, as well as when they needed context and additional information about this evaluation by the ET.

The following additional principles were applied during the evaluation process:

1. Methods of data collection and stakeholder perspectives were triangulated for each of the evaluation questions.

Gender and cultural sensitivity, and ‘Do No Harm’ approaches were integrated into the evaluation approach.

Consultation incorporated a degree of flexibility to maintain a sense of ownership of the stakeholders and participants, allowing additional questions to be posed that are not included in the TOR, while ensuring that key information requirements are met.

As far as possible, the ET followed a consistent approach in each project site, with adjustments made for the different actors involved, activities conducted, and the progress of implementation in each locality or institution.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY**

### **DOCUMENT REVIEW**

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the PF project design and implementation, the ET conducted a desk review, considering the programmatic and background documents available for the project and provided by ILAB, as well as previously available evaluations and reports. A complete list of reviewed documents is listed in Annex A.

This part of the evaluation process also considered reviewing the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) outcomes and OCFT Standard Output indicators, including the indicator definitions in the CMEP’s Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and the reported values and project progress in the Technical Progress Reports (TPRs). Annex B includes a TPR analysis, considering the most recent reported values – until April 2023 – for the PF project at the time of this report. The analysis highlights the target, the current progress, and the status of each project’s outcome, sub-outcomes, and outputs.

### **EVALUATION MATRIX**

After the desk review and kick-off meeting for the team, the ET developed an evaluation matrix as a guiding document for this final evaluation. Annex A of this document contains the complete evaluation matrix with one central evaluation question aligned to each of the five elements of the OECD-DAC methodology used for this evaluation: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The matrix also included a set of sub-questions, data methods, and identifying collection methods for each evaluation question. This matrix informed and guided the ET as they made decisions about allocating time for KIIs and FGD and the stakeholder groups needed to reach out. It also



helped the ET ensure that they are exploring all possible avenues for data triangulation and noting where the evaluation results are coming from.

After collaborative discussion with USDOL and POA to reach a final version of the evaluation matrix, the ET moved forward with planning fieldwork. The ET worked to develop tailored data collection instruments for each type of stakeholder group, with interview guides and FGD questionnaires aligned to the evaluation matrix evaluation and sub-evaluation questions. Before data collection, the ET submitted evaluation instruments for approval, including the interview questionnaires for each respondent type.

## FIELD VISITS

The ET visited a selection of project sites including six cities/towns in Colombia and three cities/towns in Ecuador. The final selection of field sites visited was made by the ET in coordination with the implementing partner and the local ET support.

The ET made every effort to include different types of sites across other geographical locations, to account for the potential variation and diversity of the stakeholders involved in the project and their differences in experiences, considering time constraints and transportation time and logistics between field sites. The ET coordinated with POA team members throughout the process for ground transportation and other logistics. During the visits, the ET interviewed key stakeholders, held focus group discussions, and implemented surveys. These visits also served as an opportunity to observe and document outputs developed by the project.

## INTERVIEWS AND FGDS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

During the fieldwork data collection period – from April 24th to May 5th in Colombia and from May 6th to 12 in Ecuador – the ET visited six cities/towns in Colombia and three cities/towns in Ecuador for three weeks of interviews, FGDs, and survey implementation. After the end of in-country data collection, the ET did additional virtual interviews with stakeholders that were not possible to reach out to during that period.

During the official data collection period, the ET interviewed 69 stakeholders – including implementing partners, US government officials, international organization representatives, private sector partners, and workers – in a combination of individual interviews and FGDs in various face-to-face and virtual formats, depending on the circumstances, logistics and the interviewee's preferences. The ET targeted different types of stakeholders, which are, by this project definition, all those who have an interest in a project, such as implementers, partners, direct and indirect participants, community leaders, donors, and government officials. (Annex E shows a summary table of the stakeholders interviewed by type of stakeholder.)

After that period, the ET did one additional virtual interview and one added FGD with stakeholders unavailable during the official data collection period<sup>33</sup> (For a detailed fieldwork itinerary, see Annex F.) With those additional interviews, the total number of stakeholders reached out for this evaluation is 74 people.

Even though the inputs from the five people interviewed after the data collection period were considered for additional context and qualitative information, the ET did not collect their scorecard information, and the interview notes were not included in the frequency analysis.

A summary of the interviews and FGDs is as follows:

The ET did a total of 40 individual interviews: 19 in Colombia, 18 in Ecuador, one virtual with a person in Peru, and one virtual with a stakeholder in Brazil. Plus, one additional virtual interview with a stakeholder in Colombia after the fieldwork period.

The ET conducted **one** combined interview with **three** people in Ecuador from the same organization.

The ET conducted **six** focus group discussions (FGDs):

- **One** FGD in Santa Marta (Colombia) with **three** community leaders.
- **One** FGD in Palmagro processing factory (Colombia) with **six** workers.
- **One** FGD in Palmas del Cesar processing factory (Colombia) with **five** workers.
- **One** FGD in Shushufindi (Ecuador) with **six** small plantation owners.
- **One** FGD in Joyas de los Sachas (Ecuador) with **seven** small plantations' women owners.
- **One** virtual FGD with **four** small farmers/suppliers in Colombia.

The ET attempted to interview an equal distribution of female and male respondents to identify emblematic cases or gender equity practices to highlight, especially for a traditionally male-dominated industry like the palm oil one. In the final sample, 60 percent of the interviewees are female, and 40 percent are male.

## SCORECARDS

At the end of each interview – whether individual or group – the ET asked the stakeholders to answer a scorecard to evaluate different aspects of the PF project. The scorecard was programmed by the ET to be answered on a mobile device. The scorecard served as a quantitative complementary tool to the qualitative data collected by the interviews of the FGDs. These cards compiled questions in which interviewees and focus group participants could assign a performance score to each of the two main project's outcomes in four different criteria: general performance, effectiveness, equity, and sustainability. The performance score was on a scale from 1 to 4 (Low, Medium, Above-average, and High), with an additional option of not answering due to insufficient information about the project or part of the assignment to assign a score.

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<sup>33</sup> The additional interview was with a representative for an international brand (Cargill) in Colombia, and the focus group was with small suppliers in Colombia.

Some stakeholders expressed that they had little information about the project to respond to certain sections of the interview, or even to respond to the scorecard (either in full or in part). For example, 10 percent of the stakeholders interviewed decided not to answer the scorecard due to lack of information or involvement in the project.

### **SURVEY WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

The ET conducted a locally administered survey throughout the fieldwork activities. The ET designed and programmed two different types of surveys, one for workers and a second for managers. Each survey was 15 to 20 questions long on average and asked workers and managers their opinions and experiences on labor matters. At the end of the data collection period, the ET surveyed 98 workers and 16 managers across both countries – Colombia and Ecuador – that have participated in project Outcome 1.

PF, being a project that focuses primarily on developing private sector capacities, the universe of workers that the ET could potentially survey was not a piece of information that the implementing partners and the grantees had as part of their regular M&E activities. Given that limitation, and to reach the TOR estimated sample, the ET approached the sample with a mix of workers and managers at the processing plants where the field visits happened, but also some other workers that, in coordination with other stakeholders and local partners in the region, the team could gather at central locations along the fieldwork, but that not necessarily have been part of the PF activities.

The survey was tablet-administered, in Spanish, allowing workers and managers to answer the questionnaire by themselves in a private and confidential setting. However, if a respondent didn't feel comfortable using the technology or needed assistance to answer the survey, someone from the ET served as an enumerator. The ET used a software called SurveyCTO, which allows users to collect information on the tablet while being offline, and to account for the potential limited connectivity while being on the field; when the ET reached a location in which internet connectivity was available again, usually at the end of the day, surveys were uploaded directly into the server. The survey didn't ask for personal information, such as name or contact information. However, it did ask about gender and type of job. Also, no remuneration was offered for completing the survey.

The survey's purpose was to amplify the voices of workers and management/owners, validate qualitative findings, triangulate stakeholder perceptions, and reveal broad-based trends.

### **DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

#### **KII AND FGD GUIDES**

The interviews had two formats: face-to-face and virtual. Depending on the interviewee's preference and geographical location limitations (i.e., stakeholders in Brazil, Peru, etc.) The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions aligned to the five evaluation criteria from the OECD-DAC methodology. Like the interviews, the FGDs were guided by a set of semi-structured interview open-ended questions. 5 to 7 participants per session, on average.

## SURVEYS

The quantitative survey included limited questions specific to workers and managers. Each survey consisted of approximately 15 to 20 questions designed to capture perceptions regarding worker representation, workplace safety, awareness of rights, recruitment/hiring of underrepresented workers, equity, and workers' empowerment. The survey questions are close-ended and utilize a Likert scale (4-point rating scale). Based on the desk review and consultations with the implementing partner, the ET designed the survey questions according to the participants' anticipated knowledge and with a generic approach, considering that PF is not a project that targets activities with workers directly.

After instrument approval from the ILAB/USDOL team approved data collection instruments, the ET proceeded to translate approved data collection instruments into Spanish, to be used both in Ecuador and Colombia. The ET members – all native Spanish speakers – served as the enumerators for the survey, thus mitigating any literacy issues, or questions regarding specific concepts on the survey, which could hinder any beneficiary's ability to complete the survey.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis used all resources gathered during the desktop review, fieldwork, and field visits, such as monitoring data, progress reports, interviews, FGDs notes, and surveys.

Secondary data consisted of available monitoring data and, where relevant, technical progress reports, data reporting forms, previous assessments of the project, and other relevant administrative data. The ET worked with USDOL/ILAB to secure prompt access to secondary data from POA and any other relevant external sources. After gaining access to the data, the ET assessed their quality and relevance in answering the research questions. The ET's analysis of these data informed the validation of findings from the evaluation fieldwork/data collection. The ET analyzed project monitoring data to assess the performance of activities relative to expected results and equity considerations.

For primary qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the ET used three different sources of data: interviews/FGDs notes, scorecards, and surveys. After finalizing fieldwork, the ET cleaned the Spanish versions of the interviews and FGDs notes; and translated them into Spanish. The interview notes were taken almost in a transcript to gather as much information and insights as possible from each interviewee. For the analysis, the LE created key themes relevant to the evaluation based on the knowledge gathered from the desktop review and the fieldwork and aligned to the five evaluation criteria of the OECD-DAC methodology.

Using NVIVO, the notes were processed and analyzed to extract relevant quotes and frequencies according to the key themes. The extracted analysis from the notes matched the general information of the list of stakeholders interviewed – the type of stakeholder, country, etc. – which allowed the ET to disaggregate for this report. Simple averages were computed from the total scorecards collected and each country's average. When relevant and possible, without compromising the anonymity of a stakeholder group, the ET presented in the analysis the average for that subgroup.

Also, the compiled survey data was downloaded from the server, and basic descriptive statistics were computed per question, such as counts, tabulated proportions, and means.

The ET used project monitoring data and quantitative data collected during evaluation fieldwork, triangulated with relevant qualitative data collected during interviews and FGDs, to develop summary achievement and sustainability ratings, as well as an assessment of equity in relation to access to project interventions, with particular attention, when related information is available, to underserved populations or historically marginalized groups or communities.<sup>34</sup> The ET highlighted all the potential limitations to the analysis given the constraint of a small sample size. Elements such as high variability, under coverage bias, and voluntary response bias may inhibit the ET's capability to assess some parts of the evaluation.

### OUTCOME ACHIEVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY RATINGS

After the data analysis and based on the consolidated data of the scorecards' findings from secondary data, interviews, and FGDs, the ET objectively rated each of the project's outcomes according to three factors, including 1) level of achievement, and 2) potential for sustainability on a four-point scale (low, moderate, above-moderate, and high). This evaluation does not include outcome equity ratings due to lack of relevant outcomes and data sources for the project.

#### *Achievement*

"Achievement" measures the extent to which a development intervention or project attains its objectives/outcomes, as described in its PMP. For assessing the achievement of program or project outcomes, the ET considered the extent to which the objectives/outcomes were achieved and identified the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the outcomes. For this final evaluation, the ET considered to what extent the project is likely to meet or exceed its targets by project end. Specifically for PF, the ET made an educated estimation as best as possible, considering the process of extension in the execution of the project while this evaluation was undergoing.

Project achievement ratings were determined through triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. The ET collected qualitative data from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and scorecards through a structured data collection process, such as interview questionnaires and focus group discussion protocols. Interviews and focus groups can also provide context for the results reflected in the Data Reporting Form submitted with the TPR. The ET also analyzed quantitative data collected by the project on key performance indicators defined in the PMP and reported on in the TPR Data Reporting Form. The ET considered the reliability and validity of the performance indicators and the completeness and accuracy of the data collected. The assessment of

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<sup>34</sup> "Underserved communities" refers to populations who have been historically underserved, marginalized, or denied equitable treatment on the basis of disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, migration status, and persons or groups otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. In accordance with Executive Order 13985 of January 20, 2021, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, the term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, which have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

quantitative data considered the extent to which the project achieved its targets, whether these targets were sufficiently ambitious and achievable within the period evaluated and contextual factors (external to the project) during the period of execution.

The ET using qualitative and quantitative data assessed each of the project's outcome(s) according to the following scale:

**High:** met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

**Above-moderate:** met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, **but** with neutral or mixed feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

**Moderate:** missed most targets for the period evaluated, **but** with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

**Low:** missed most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

The ET's objective opinion and independent judgment (from the scorecards) were also integrated to further balance/triangulate the perspectives of key stakeholders and participants.

### *Sustainability*

**"Sustainability"** is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. When evaluating the sustainability of a project, it is useful to consider the likelihood that the benefits or effects of a particular output or outcome will continue after donor funding ends. It is also important to reflect on the extent to which the project considers the actors, factors, and institutions that are likely to have the strongest influence over, capacity, and willingness to sustain the desired outcomes and impacts. Indicators of sustainability could include agreements/linkages with local partners, stakeholder engagement in project sustainability planning, and successful handover of project activities or key outputs to local partners before the project ends, among others.

The team reviewed the annual TPR report, published April 30, 2023, but did not find references to a standalone sustainability plan, which informed our rationale for rating achievements to-date and sustainability based on the following range:

**High:** strong likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and the necessary resources<sup>35</sup> are in place to ensure sustainability.

**Above-moderate:** above average likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and the necessary resources are identified but not yet committed.

**Moderate:** some likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and some of the necessary resources are identified.

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<sup>35</sup> Resources can include financial resources (i.e., non-donor replacement resources), as well as organization capacity, institutional linkages, motivation and ownership, and political will, among others.



**Low:** weak likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and the necessary resources are not identified.

In determining the rating above, the ET also considered the extent to which sustainability risks were adequately identified and mitigated through the project's risk management and stakeholder engagement activities. The ET assessed the risk environment and its expected effects on the project outcomes after the project exits and the capacity/motivation/resources/linkages of the local actors/stakeholders to sustain the outcomes produced by the project.

## LIMITATIONS

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this evaluation are based on information collected by the ET through various sources. These include project performance reports, documents, key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), completed scorecards, and surveys completed by workers, small producers, and managers. It is important to note that the primary information gathered is based on the perceptions, experiences and opinions of the interviewees. The ET made efforts to have a diverse sample of key stakeholders, but logistical restrictions and stakeholder availability posed challenges at times. However, these limitations do not undermine the validity of the analysis when considered in the appropriate context and triangulated with other sources.

The absence of a project baseline evaluation source poses a notable limitation to this final evaluation, as it impairs the analysis of quantitative data and measuring direct impact. Establishing a baseline for targets and indicators is crucial for assessing project effectiveness. Although the interim evaluation provided some contextual reference, it did not fully address this limitation. Furthermore, it is important to note that this evaluation does not include any analysis from performance evaluations conducted as part of the project's activities with beneficiaries.

During the evaluation, the team conducted field visits for a duration of three weeks, aiming to cover a diverse range of interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions (FGDs) in both urban and rural areas of the project countries. The ET had flexibility in conducting interviews, including virtual interviews when necessary. However, it is worth noting that despite efforts to engage with relevant stakeholders, some of them were unresponsive and did not participate in the interviews within the fieldwork timeframe. This limited the representation of certain stakeholders in the evaluation process.

As a result, certain stakeholder groups, such as US government representatives in Ecuador and representatives from the host-country governments, particularly at the local levels, were underrepresented in the sample of stakeholders to be interviewed. Additionally, due to contextual constraints, the ET was unable to engage in discussions with workers' associations or unions in both countries. These limitations in stakeholder representation affected the breadth and diversity of perspectives in the evaluation, highlighting the need for further engagement with these specific stakeholder groups in future assessments.

Collecting scorecard information after the interviews presented another challenge during the evaluation. Some stakeholders mentioned that they had limited knowledge about the project, which hindered their ability to provide responses to certain sections of the interview or the scorecard itself. As a result, approximately 10 percent of the stakeholders interviewed chose not to answer the scorecard entirely due to lack of information or involvement in the project. It's important to recognize that this selection bias could potentially lead to an overestimation of the scores obtained, as those less informed about the project may not have been included in the assessment. This limitation underscores the need for comprehensive and accurate information dissemination to stakeholders throughout the project's implementation to ensure a more balanced evaluation.

Due to the nature of PF's focus on developing private sector capacities, information regarding the entire universe of workers was not readily available to the ET. The implementing partners and grantees did not routinely gather such information as part of their monitoring and evaluation activities. Considering this limitation, the ET approached the sample selection by including a combination of workers and managers from processing plants visited during the fieldwork. Additionally, the team coordinated with other stakeholders and local partners to gather additional workers from central locations during the fieldwork, even if they were not directly involved in PF activities. This approach aimed to achieve the estimated sample size as outlined in the terms of reference (TOR) for the evaluation.

Hence, the survey sample is quasi-purposive and not representative; for example, the workers in Colombia are not direct beneficiaries of PF since those who receive the training are usually mid-level or managerial personnel from the private sector partners. Therefore, the survey answers and analysis cannot capture the direct effect of PF on this population.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The ET observed utmost confidentiality regarding sensitive information and feedback elicited during the individual and group interviews. To mitigate bias during the data collection process and ensure maximum freedom of expression of the implementing partners, stakeholders, communities, and project participants, implementing partner staff was generally not present during interviews. Even though implementing partner staff may have accompanied the ET to make introductions virtually whenever necessary, to facilitate the evaluation process, or to make respondents feel comfortable, and allow the ET to observe the interaction between the implementing partner staff and the interviewees, when the data collection activities happened, such as interviews and surveys, it was only an interaction between the ET and the respondents and the interviewees.

The ET respected the rights and safety of participants in this evaluation. During this study, the ET took several precautions to ensure the protection of respondents' rights:

- No interview began without receipt of informed consent from each respondent.
- The ET conducted KIIs and FGDs in a confidential setting, so no one else could hear the respondent's answers.
- COVID-19 precautions and social distancing implemented during face-to-face interviews and FGDs.
- The ET was in control of its written notes at all times.
- The ET was in control of the audio materials and recordings collected, if any, during interviews and FGDs.<sup>36</sup>
- The ET transmitted data electronically using secure measures.
- The ET talked with respondents to assess their ability to make autonomous decisions and their understanding of informed consent. Participants understood that they have the right to skip any question with which they are not comfortable or to stop at any time.

#### **STAKEHOLDER MEETING AND DEBRIEF SESSION**

Following the field visits, a series of stakeholder discussion meetings and a debrief session with USDOL were organized by the project and led by the ET. The ET held two stakeholder meetings in Spanish, one with the POA and implementing partners teams and a second with the universe of the project's relevant stakeholders, such as host government representatives, private sector partners, employer's associations, international organizations, and host government representatives. Those meetings were intended to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to inform about the fieldwork and discuss the evaluation of partial preliminary results. The ET drafted the list of participants to be invited and confirmed in consultation with project staff. Given the different locations of stakeholders, these virtual meetings facilitated the participation of stakeholders from the other countries involved in the project. The ET determined the agenda of the meeting, and some specific questions for stakeholders were prepared to guide the discussion. After each session, the stakeholders were allowed to email additional feedback related to the project to the ET.

In addition, the ET held a debrief meeting for the USDOL team providing details on the fieldwork and field visit, the final sample of the data collection, challenges and limitations encountered by the ET during the field visits, and to present some partial preliminary results and solicit feedback as needed in preparation for the final report. The details on the agenda and participants for all the meetings can be found in Annex G.

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<sup>36</sup> The ET did not record any of the KII or FGD sessions.

**ANNEX E. SUMMARY TABLE OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED**

Type of Stakeholder	Method	Colombia	Ecuador	Other	Total
US Government	KII	1	0	1	2
Grantee and Implementing Partners	KII	6	4	NA	10
Host-Country Government	KII	1	1	NA	2
Community Members	KII, FGD	3	4	NA	7
Project Participants / Processing factories or mills	KII, FGD	17	2	NA	19
Project Participants / Farmers and suppliers	KII, FGD	4	15	NA	19
Employers' Associations	KII	2	4	2	8
Workers' Organizations	KII	0	0	NA	0
International NGOs & other relevant local or national organizations	KII	2	4	NA	6
International Brand Representatives	KII	1	0	NA	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>74</b>

**Note:** This table summarizes the stakeholders interviewed according to the categories stated by the evaluation TOR. The total number of people interviewed by the ET (74 stakeholders) surpassed the initial target number (60 stakeholders); however, for some categories, some deviations happened versus the numbers planned when the TOR was developed. For the stakeholder category of "workers' organization," in both countries – Colombia and Ecuador – that type of organization does not exist specifically for the palm oil industry; the leading players in labor organizations are the employers' associations. For the international brand representatives, since the PF activities did not engage that type of stakeholder, the ET encountered challenges in establishing communication with stakeholders in that category.

## **ANNEX F. EVALUATION ITINERARY**

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## **ANNEX G. STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP AGENDA AND PARTICIPANTS**

### **PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

Debrief about fieldwork and final sample during data collection, and present preliminary analysis of the surveys of workers, as well as some initial findings of the emerging themes derived from the interviews.

### **AGENDA**

Welcome and participants' introductions

Project recap

Methodology and evaluation details

Fieldwork and sample

Preliminary results

Discussion (only for the stakeholder meetings)

Questions and comments

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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## **ANNEX H. PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNER AND RSPO CERTIFICATION**

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## ANNEX I. PROMISING PRACTICES SPOTLIGHTS CASES

### PARTNERSHIP WITH PROAMAZONIA AND “PALMAS ARRIBA”



#### Promising Practice Spotlight

The group of women farmers in the palm oil sector called "Palmas Arriba" was a remarkable synergy between PF and ProAmazonia. It is a best practice developing synergies with emblematic projects contributing to gender equality, in a sector that traditionally favors decision-making and male work. This has served to create a palm growers' women network.

When implementing international programs, to ensure optimal execution of them, relying on experience, network, and the trust built within the communities by other programs and organizations is critical to accessing the target population successfully.

Now that the PF has supported the creation of these new networks, giving them visibility in the region and the country is relevant so other people can join or follow this example as a best practice in the industry. PF could



mimic the proven strategy that ProAmazonia has followed with Botas Violetas, which is giving women a token (usually a purple security gear or garment) that identifies them as project beneficiaries; for the case of the palm oil sector, which could be gloves, for example “guantes violetas”. Strategies like this could also add to the communication campaign for the PF project by socializing the program's results by amplifying workers-voices.

“It would be beneficial for us, as female palm oil growers, to be recognized as a reference group and role models. People should know that here in Joya de Los Sachas, there is a group of women who have model farms. We want to demonstrate that women are capable of doing things well.”

- Small Producer

“The husbands of the "Palmas Arriba" women say that they have learned and changed the way they manage their farms. In the case of the "Palmas Arriba" women, technical assistance included having a "nanny" to take care of the children. During field technical assistance, they were the main recipients of training, and the facilitator adapted to their schedules and needs. Meetings usually took place before lunch.

- Small Producer

## POCKET-SIZE PALMA FUTURO BOOKLET

### Promising Practice Spotlight



This booklet has an approach to show small farmers of Colombia and Ecuador the steps and requirements in a practical way how to implement the SCS eight elements.

“There is a pocket guide, which summarizes the SCS guide, it applies to both countries [...] We try to get materials that are useful...”

-Grantee/Implementing Partner Representative

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## ANNEX J. SCORECARD RESULTS

Table J.1 Scorecards Result by Country

Outcome/ Category	General Performance		Effectiveness		Equity		Sustainability	
	Colombia	Ecuador	Colombia	Ecuador	Colombia	Ecuador	Colombia	Ecuador
<b>Outcome 1:</b>								
Number of Respondents	29	32	29	32	29	32	29	32
No Response	1	1	2		4	2	2	1
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>3.26</b>
<b>Outcome 2:</b>								
Number of Respondents	29	32	29	32	29	32	29	32
No Response	2	2	3	2	5	2	2	2
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>2.92</b>

Table J.2 Scorecards Result by Stakeholders

Category	Stakeholder Type	Outcome 1			Outcome 2		
		Number of Respondents	No Response	Average Score	Number of Respondents	No Response	Average Score
<b>General Performance</b>	Direct participants	30	2	3.43	30	2	3.37
	All other stakeholders	32	0	3.47	32	2	2.84
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.11</b>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Direct participants	30	1	3.35	30	2	3.53
	All other stakeholders	32	1	3.52	32	3	2.98
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.27</b>
<b>Equity</b>	Direct participants	30	2	3.47	30	3	3.38
	All other stakeholders	32	5	3.64	32	5	3.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3.34</b>
<b>Sustainability</b>	Direct participants	30	2	3.4	30	2	3.27
	All other stakeholders	32	1	3.34	32	2	2.95
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.11</b>

## ANNEX K. TERMS OF REFERENCE

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

Final Version | April 18, 2023

## **FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF PALMA FUTURO: REDUCING AND PREVENTING CHILD LABOR AND FORCED LABOR IN PALM OIL SUPPLY CHAIN PROGRAM, COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR**

### SUBMITTED TO

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

The Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) is an office within the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) that provides a wide range of technical assistance around the world. ILAB's mission is to promote a fair global playing field for workers in the United States and around the world by enforcing trade commitments among trading partners, strengthening global labor standards, promoting racial and gender equity, and combating international child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking.

OCFT works to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking around the world through international research, policy engagement, technical cooperation, and awareness-raising. OCFT supports technical cooperation projects in more than 90 countries around the world. Technical cooperation projects funded by OCFT support sustained efforts that address child labor and forced labor's underlying causes, including poverty and lack of access to education.

This evaluation approach will be in accordance with DOL's Evaluation Policy.<sup>37</sup> ILAB is committed to using the most rigorous methods applicable for this performance evaluation and to learning from the evaluation results. The evaluation will be conducted by an independent third party in an ethical manner and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and privacy of participants. The evaluation criteria generally guiding evaluations of ILAB technical assistance programming are: Relevance, Coherence/Alignment (to the extent possible), Effectiveness, Efficiency/Resource Use, Impact (to the extent possible), and Sustainability.<sup>38</sup> A broader set of evaluative criteria or domains may also be considered depending on the learning objectives for this evaluation, including themes of design, equity, replicability, consequence, unintended effects, among others.<sup>39</sup> In conducting this evaluation, the ET will strive to uphold the American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators.<sup>40</sup> ILAB will make the evaluation report available and accessible on its website.

ILAB has contracted with Integra, LLC under order number GS-10F-083CA / 1605C2-22-F-00045 to conduct performance evaluations of technical assistance projects. Integra is an independent third party experienced in conducting evaluations in an ethical manner that safeguard the dignity, right, safety, and privacy of participants. Integra will ensure the evaluation aligns with the OECD-DAC<sup>41</sup> evaluation criteria assessing programming comprehensively based on relevance, coherence/alignment (to the extent possible), effectiveness, efficiency/resource use, impact (to the extent possible), and sustainability.

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<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Labor Evaluation Policy.

<sup>38</sup> These criteria stem from Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use by the Organization for Economic Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Network on Development Evaluation. DOL determined these criteria are in accordance with the OMB Guidance M-20-12.

<sup>39</sup> Evaluative Criteria: An Integrated Model of Domains and Sources, American Journal of Evaluation, Rebecca M. Teasdale, 2021, Vol. 42(3) 354-376.

<sup>40</sup> American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles.

<sup>41</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee

The present terms of reference (TOR) pertain to the final performance evaluation of the Palma Futuro: Reducing and Preventing Child Labor and Forced Labor in Palm Oil Supply Chains in Colombia and Ecuador project implemented by Partners of the Americas (POA). This document serves as the framework and guidelines for the evaluation. It is organized into the following sections:

2. Background and Justification
3. Purpose and Scope of Evaluation
4. Evaluation Questions
5. Evaluation Methodology and Timeframe
6. Limitations
7. Roles and Responsibilities
8. Evaluation Timeline
9. Expected Outputs and Deliverables
10. Annexes

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

In November 2018, the USDOL awarded Partners of the Americas (POA) a four-year, USD \$6 million cooperative agreement to complete Palma Futuro (PF), a multi-country project. PF's main project objective is to promote acceptable conditions of work (ACW) and reduce child labor (CL) and forced labor (FL) in palm oil supply chains in Colombia and Ecuador by improving the implementation of social compliance systems (SCS) and disseminating best practices in social compliance in the region, specifically in Peru and Brazil.

Working with implementing partners JE Austin Associates (JAA) and Social Accountability International (SAI), POA aims to achieve the following project outcomes (OTCs):

### **Outcome 1: Strengthened capacity of private sector partners in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors to implement a robust and sustainable social compliance system.**

- 1.1. Increased understanding of labor practices and risks of child labor and forced labor in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors.
- 1.2. Increased application of social compliance processes at all levels of private sector partner supply chains.

### **Outcome 2: Increased understanding, at a regional and global level, of promising practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains.**

Specifically, PF provides technical assistance to two palm oil companies in Colombia (BioCosta and Palmas del Cesar) and two industry partners in Ecuador (industry association ANCUPA and PROAmazonia) to develop robust SCSs using the components of ComplyChain.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> ComplyChain is USDOL's eight-step approach to a social compliance system to help businesses address CL and FL within their supply chains.

The project also works collaboratively with national palm oil business associations, researchers, worker organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to build capacity to support social compliance.

The project also considers the engagement of other relevant stakeholders such as guilds, worker unions, public entities, CSOs, cooperatives, universities, and international organizations (such as International Labor Organization (ILO)), among others, to obtain more inputs to have a better understanding of palm oil supply chains and its institutional arrangement in the geographic areas targeted by the project in Colombia and Ecuador.

## PROJECT CONTEXT

The Latin American palm oil industry has increased due to the increased international demand for palm oil and the limited availability of land in Southeast Asia, a region that leads global production. Latin America has more than doubled its output since 2000. Between 2001 and 2014, palm oil production increased by 7 percent per annum, and land cover under palm oil expanded by 9 percent per annum.<sup>43</sup> Today, the region contains four of the top ten producing nations in the world: Colombia (4th), Ecuador (6th), Brazil (11th), and Peru (16th).<sup>44</sup>

While palm oil has been a critical driver for economic development in the tropics, like in the Latin American countries mentioned before as leading the palm oil production in the region, through the creation of rural employment and reduction of poverty, the rapid growth of the industry to meet the increasing demand for palm oil for both food and non-food uses has met with criticisms over practices deemed unsustainable and detrimental to nature and local/indigenous communities.<sup>45</sup>

In addition, the palm oil sector comprises primarily small and medium producers in the South American region. Nevertheless, the sector's contribution to employment has increased in the last decade. For example, in Colombia, the palm oil economic activity of direct jobs grew from 90,154 employees in 2014 to 107,549 employees in 2018, according to the First Survey of Employment in the Palm Oil Sector done by the Colombian Government.<sup>46</sup>

According to the same survey for 2018, 82.4 percent of direct employment is classified as formal jobs, while the remaining 17.6 percent are informal jobs (day laborers), consolidating the palm sector's importance for Colombia's economic development.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Richard Furumo and T Mitchell Aide, "Characterizing commercial oil palm expansion in Latin America: land use change and trade" in *Environmental Research Letters*, Volume 12, Number 2, 2017. DOI 10.1088/1748-9326/aa5892

<sup>44</sup> Leslie Potte, *Managing oil palm landscapes: A seven-country survey of the modern palm oil industry in South-Asia, Latin America and West Africa, 2015*, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Occasional Paper 122, Bogor, Indonesia.

<sup>45</sup> Jan Kees Vis, Cheng Hai Teoh, Mavath R. Chandran, Matthias Diemer, Simon Lord, Ian McIntosh, "25 - Sustainable Development of Palm Oil Industry" in Editor(s): Oi-Ming Lai, Chin-Ping Tan, Casimir C. Akoh, *Palm Oil: Production, Processing, Characterization, and Uses*, AOCS Press, 2012, Pages 737-783, ISBN 9780981893693.

<sup>46</sup> Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, "Palma de Aceite, Indicadores de Producción y de Mercado," 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, "Palma de Aceite, Indicadores de Producción y de Mercado," 2019.

Given the rapid expansion of the palm oil sector in the region and the related increase in vulnerabilities and risks this represents to laborers, it is critical to increase the awareness and understanding of promising practices in social compliance systems across supply chains to support the adoption of systems and practices protecting children, workers and communities in palm oil producing communities.<sup>48</sup>

**Palm Oil Sector in Colombia:** Colombia is the leading nation in South American palm oil production and fourth in the world, only behind Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The Southeast Asia region dominates global production with 87 percent of total output; Colombia supplies 2 percent.<sup>49</sup>

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Colombia has more than 6,000 palm oil producers, of which 4,200 are small-scale palm growers (with less than 50 hectares each).<sup>50</sup> Colombian palm oil growers are united through a robust and active industry association, the National Federation of Palm Oil Growers (FEDEPALMA), which plays an active role as a primary stakeholder in the PF project.<sup>51</sup>

**Palm Oil Sector in Ecuador:** Ecuador is the second largest palm oil producer in Latin America and sixth in world rankings. Ecuador's Ministry of Agriculture reports 6,568 palm oil growers, of which 87 percent are small producers with plantations of less than 50 hectares.<sup>52</sup> The National Federation of Palm Oil Growers of Ecuador (PROPALMA), one of three industry associations in Ecuador, estimates that small producers make up nearly 96 percent of palm oil production.<sup>53</sup> The palm oil sector in Ecuador has been severely affected since 2017 by bud rot, which has caused a loss of around 90,000 planted hectares (about 30 percent of the cultivated area).<sup>54</sup>

In June 2020, Ecuador's National Assembly approved a bill that regulates the cultivation, production, and commercialization of palm oil and its derivatives and that includes measures to stimulate production, commercialization, and industrialization. The new legislation requires consultation with Indigenous communities so that producers obtain authorization prior to starting or extending the cultivation of oil palm trees in ancestral territories and that palm growers comply with national labor regulations.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> DOL/ILAB, Palma Futuro Project Document.

<sup>49</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, "Palm Oil World Production" Updated May 2021. <https://ipad.fas.usda.gov/cropexplorer/cropview/commodityView.aspx?cropid=4243000>

<sup>50</sup> Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, "Palma de Aceite, Indicadores de Producción y de Mercado," 2019. <https://sioc.minagricultura.gov.co/Palma/Documentos/2019-09-30%20Cifras%20Sectoriales.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Interim Performance Evaluation Report of Palma Futuro Project

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, "Palmicultores pueden beneficiarse de simplificación tributaria y BPA para el sector." August 2020. <https://www.agricultura.gob.ec/palmicultores-pueden-beneficiarse-de-simplificacion-tributaria-y-bpa-para-fortalecer-el-sector/#:~:text=En%20Ecuador%20existen%206.568%20palmicultores,Los%20R%C3%ADos%2C%20Guayas%20y%20Manab%C3%AD>

<sup>53</sup> PROPALMA, "Importancia del Cultivo de Palma Aceitera en el Ecuador." <https://propalmaec.com/perfil-del-sector-palmicultor/>

<sup>54</sup> Reyes, Jorge, "El alto precio del aceite crudo de palma impacta en producción de comestibles y artículos de limpieza," El Universo, March 6, 2021. <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/economia/el-alto-precio-del-aceite-crudo-de-palma-impacta-en-produccion-de-comestibles-y-articulos-de-limpieza-nota/>

<sup>55</sup> Registro Oficial No. 255, "Ley para el fortalecimiento y desarrollo de la producción, comercialización, extracción, exportación e industrialización de la palma aceitera y sus derivados", 28 July 2020. <https://www.derechoecuador.com/registro-oficial/2020/07/registro-oficial-no255-martes-28-de-julio-de-2020-segundo-suplemento->

### **PROJECT SPECIFIC INFORMATION - COVID19**

The Covid-19 pandemic directly affected the execution of the project, which faced challenges when both countries implemented social distancing mandates in March 2020. As a result, some of the project's activities were suspended, rescheduled, or adapted to achieve the project's goals.

According to the 2021 interim performance evaluation of the project, most of the Covid-19 related changes affected the series of activities that were planned and designed to be carried out in person, such as the SCS training and the baseline assessments of participating palm oil companies and their supply chains.<sup>56</sup>

This context and the subsequent adjustments are relevant to consider during the implementation of this final evaluation of the project.

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<sup>56</sup> Interim Performance Evaluation: Palma Futuro Project.

## 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF EVALUATION

### EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this final performance evaluation is as follows:

Assessing whether the project has achieved its objectives and outcomes, identifying the challenges encountered in doing so, and analyzing the driving factors for these challenges (with particular attention to equity and inclusion, where relevant, such as with).

Through evaluation planning consultations with ILAB and the Grantee, (groups or populations/communities will be identified confirmed for targeted equity, such as supply chain of small producers' partners. Other minorities or underserved groups may be identified by the ET during the course of the evaluation through analysis of the project context and interventions.

Assessing the intended and unintended effects of the project.

Assessing lessons learned and emerging practices from the project (e.g., strategies and models of intervention) and experiences in implementation that can be applied in current or future projects in the focus counties) and in projects designed under similar conditions or target sectors; and

Assessing which outcomes or outputs are likely to be sustained.

### INTENDED USERS

The evaluation will provide ILAB, the grantee, participants and other project stakeholders or actors who have a concern, interest and/or influence on the labor rights problem the project is intended to address, an assessment of the project's performance, its effects on project participants, and an understanding of the factors driving the project results. The evaluation results, conclusions and recommendations will serve to inform any project adjustments that may need to be made, and to inform stakeholders in the design and implementation of subsequent phases or future labor rights projects as appropriate. The evaluation report will be published on the USDOL website and will be written by the ET as a standalone document, providing the necessary background information for readers who are unfamiliar with the details of the project.

### 3. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

After a kick-off meeting and desk review of several projects' supporting documentation, aligning with the OECD-DAC methodology, the ET made some revisions to the proposed evaluation questions. The table below shows five refined questions the ET agreed on, which will better lead this final evaluation process to fit the evaluation scope of work. Workers' rights perspectives and an equity and inclusion lens shall be applied to all evaluation questions. While not an objective included during the project design, this information will contribute to the learning agenda stemming from Executive Order 13985.<sup>57</sup>

The evaluation questions will guide the ET in defining probing questions and lines of inquiry during the development and testing of the instruments and adjustments to methodology.

**Table 1. Evaluation Questions for PF Project in Colombia and Ecuador**

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
<b>Relevance</b>	To what extent did the PF project design and implementation reflect the needs and priorities of diverse stakeholders, workers, and community members within the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors, including those from underserved populations?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	To what extent did project interventions contribute towards the achievement of project outcomes? Are there some interventions that have made more progress than others?
<b>Efficiency</b>	To what extent have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve project outcomes?
<b>Impact*</b>	What are the tangible/observed outcomes and impacts on project stakeholders, according to the target ones established by the project?
<b>Sustainability</b>	To what extent are the PF interventions likely to yield sustained results?

*\*The impact category will be understood in this evaluation in terms of the outcomes established by the PF Project design, the limitations of the available data, the absence of baseline data, and that this assessment relies mainly on secondary data.*

Annex A (Evaluation Matrix) includes sub-questions for each evaluation question and identifies appropriate data sources intended to answer these questions.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/equity>



## 4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND TIMEFRAME

The evaluation methodology will consist of the following activities and approaches:

### APPROACH

The evaluation approach will be mixed-methods and participatory in nature and use project documents, including performance monitoring data, to provide quantitative information. The final evaluation of the PF Project will rely on secondary quantitative and qualitative data sourced from program performance data, technical progress reports, project support documents, and previous assessments (if available). Additional qualitative information will be obtained through field visits to relevant in-country stakeholders (selected by the ET and in coordination with the implementing partners and local coordinators), interviews, and focus groups as appropriate. Opinions from stakeholders and project participants will improve and clarify the use of quantitative analysis from the performance monitoring data. The participatory nature of the evaluation will contribute to the sense of ownership among stakeholders and project participants.

To the extent that it is available, quantitative data will be drawn from the PF project's performance data reporting and project reports and incorporated into the analysis. In particular, the evaluation will triangulate project monitoring data with qualitative data collected during fieldwork to objectively rate the level of achievement of each of the project's significant outcomes on a four-point scale (low, moderate, above-moderate, and high).

The evaluation approach will be independent, throughout the entire process, in terms of the membership of the ET. POA and other implementing partners (IPs) will only be in meetings with stakeholders, communities, and participants to facilitate introductions and provide context to them about this evaluation.

The following additional principles will be applied during the evaluation process:

1. Methods of data collection and stakeholder perspectives will be triangulated for each of the evaluation questions.
2. Efforts will be made to include parents' and children's voices and beneficiary participation generally, using child-sensitive approaches to interviewing children following the ILO-IPEC guidelines on research with children on the worst forms of child labor<sup>58</sup> and UNICEF Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children.<sup>59</sup>
3. Gender and cultural sensitivity, and 'Do No Harm' approaches will be integrated in the evaluation approach.
4. Consultations will incorporate a degree of flexibility to maintain a sense of ownership of the stakeholders and participants, allowing additional questions to be posed that are not included in the TOR, whilst ensuring that key information requirements are met.

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<sup>58</sup> Ethical Considerations When Conducting Research on Children in the Worst Forms of Child Labour (TBP MAP Paper III-02). ISBN 92-2-115165-4. Geneva: December 1, 2003.

<sup>59</sup> UNICEF Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children.

5. As far as possible, a consistent approach will be followed in each project site, with adjustments made for the different actors involved, activities conducted, and the progress of implementation in each locality or institution.

## **EVALUATION TEAM**

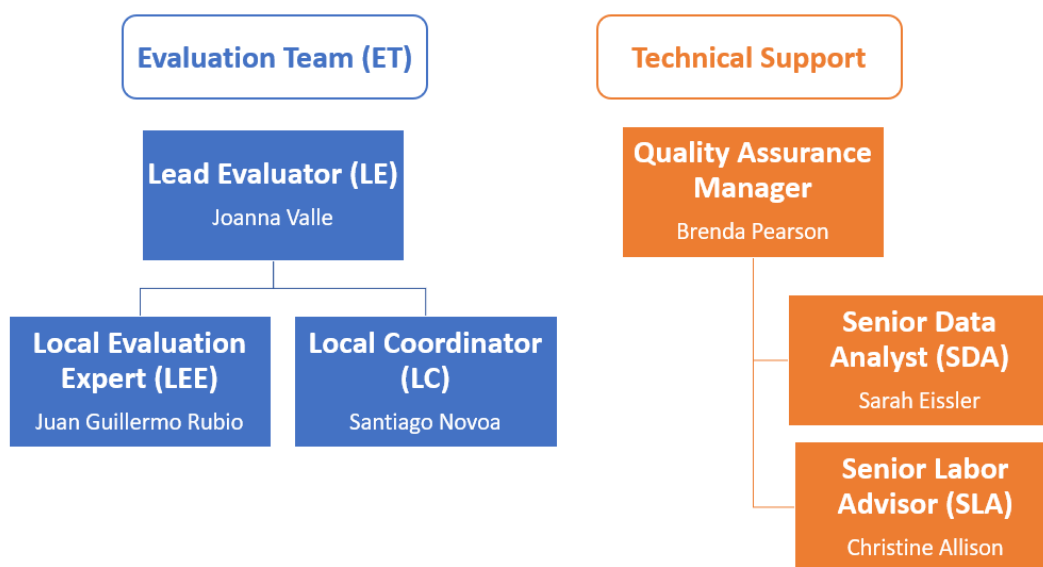
The ET will consist of the following members:

A Lead Evaluator who will manage each phase of the PF evaluation (design, data collection, analysis and validation, final reporting, and dissemination), overseeing the ET and providing regular updates on deliverables status and timelines.

A Local Evaluation Expert who will support the finalization of evaluation design, oversee logistics coordination for remote data collection, conduct primary data collection, and provide analysis and report writing support. This person will also double as Local Coordinator for Colombia's field data collection efforts.

A Local Coordinator for Ecuador will lead stakeholder interviews and scheduling of interviews for primary data collection in the country.

A team of technical experts will support the ET through the course of the evaluation study, including a Senior Labor Advisor to provide subject matter expertise on labor rights programming and USDOL Evaluation Policy and a Senior Data Analyst to guide a robust methodological approach with triangulated evidence. The Project Contract Manager and the Quality Assurance Manager will provide quality assurance and oversee technical progress and deliverable quality. See Figure 1 below for the ET and technical support organizational chart.

**Figure 1. ET Organizational Structure**

## DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

### A. DOCUMENT REVIEW

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the PF project design and implementation, the ET will conduct a desk review, considering the programmatic and background documents available for the project and provided by ILAB, as well as previous possible evaluations and reports. The ET will conduct a content analysis of the critical documents. A summary of the findings and a complete list of reviewed documents will be included as an Annex to the final report.

This part of the evaluation process will also consider reviewing key Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) outcomes and OCFT Standard Output indicators with the grantee. This will also include reviewing the indicator definitions in the CMEP's Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and the reported values in the Technical Progress Report (TPR) Annex A to ensure the reporting is accurate and complete.

Documents may include:

- Funding Opportunity Announcement
- CMEP documents and data reported in Annex A of the TPR,
- Routine Data Quality Assessment (RDQA) form as appropriate
- Baseline and endline survey reports or pre-situational analyses,
- Project document and revisions,
- Project budget and revisions,
- Cooperative Agreement and project modifications,
- Technical Progress and Status Reports,

Project Results Frameworks and Monitoring Plans,  
Work plans,  
Correspondence related to Technical Progress Reports,  
Management Procedures and Guidelines,  
Research or other reports undertaken (KAP studies, etc.), and,  
Project files as appropriate.

## B. EVALUATION MATRIX

After the desk review and kick-off meeting for the team, the ET developed an evaluation matrix as a guiding document for this final evaluation. Annex A of this document contains the complete evaluation matrix, with a main evaluation question aligned to five elements of the OECD-DAC methodology relevant to this evaluation – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability –, sub-questions, data methods, and identifying collection methods for each evaluation question. This matrix will inform the ET as they make decisions about allocating time for KIIs. It will also help the ET ensure that they are exploring all possible avenues for data triangulation and to clearly note where their evaluation results are coming from.

As the ET moves forward with planning fieldwork, the ET will work to develop tailored data collection instruments for each type of stakeholder group and to ensure all evaluation questions and sub-evaluation questions will be answered. Before the commencement of data collection, the ET will submit evaluation instruments for approval, including the interview questionnaires for each respondent type.

## C. INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The ET will conduct data collection with approximately 60 respondents (30 in each country) using Key Informant Interviews (KII)/ Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) over 3 weeks of field work (one week in Ecuador and two weeks in Colombia) with project stakeholders in Colombia and Ecuador and/or remotely by video or phone calls, as appropriate. The ET will attempt to interview an equal distribution of male and female respondents and will assess the number of male and females as the interviews are being conducted. The ET will conduct a KII/FGD with the ILAB Project Managers and M&E specialists (former and current) and with representatives of the following organizations; however, the number of KIIs and participants for each organization will depend on availability.

**Table 2. KII / FGD Data Collection Strategy**

<b>Stakeholder Type</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Estimated Sample Size (Colombia)</b>	<b>Estimated Sample Size (Ecuador)</b>	<b>Estimated Sample size (Peru &amp; Brazil)</b>	<b>Potential Respondents</b>
<b>USG</b>	KII	2	2	NA	Representatives from ILAB and DOL might be the same for both countries. Embassy reps in Colombia and Ecuador
<b>Grantee and Implementing Partners</b>	KII		5		POA, JAA, and SAI
<b>Host-Country Government</b>	KII	3	3	NA	Representatives from governmental institutions in Ecuador and Colombia, at a local and national level)
<b>Community Members</b>	KII, FGD	3	2	NA	Community Circles members in the palm oil growing/manufacturing areas impacted by the operations of the private sector partners
<b>Project Participants / Extractor plants</b>	KII, FGD	9	NA	NA	Representatives from the Palm oil companies participating in project activities, but also workers from those companies, whether management or staff. For the FGD with workers, management and staff will not participate in the same group.
<b>Project Participants / Farmers and suppliers</b>	KII, FGD	9	5	1	Representatives from the Palm oil companies participating in project activities, but also workers from those companies, whether management or staff. For the FGD with workers, management and staff will not participate in the same group.

Stakeholder Type	Method	Estimated Sample Size (Colombia)	Estimated Sample Size (Ecuador)	Estimated Sample size (Peru & Brazil)	Potential Respondents
<b>Employers' Associations</b>	KII	1	1	2	Palm oil industry associations in Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil and Peru (Representatives from FEDEPALMA in Colombia; ANCUPA in Ecuador; and if possible, JUNPALMA in Peru; ABRAPALMA in Brazil)
<b>Workers' Organizations</b>	KII	1	1	NA	Saintrainagro in Colombia
<b>International NGOs &amp; other relevant local or national organizations</b>	KII	2	2	4	National and local NGOs either related to the palm oil industry or to labor rights in the countries; and representatives of relevant international organizations such as ILO
<b>International Brand Representatives</b>	KII	2	2	NA	RSPO, Thomson Reuters Foundation
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	

**NOTE:** The unit of the estimated sample sizes are in “number of interviews”. If the sample universe and logistics based on geographical location allows it, for some stakeholder groups individual interviews will be converted into focus groups discussions. Depending on the circumstances, these meetings will be one-on-one or group interviews. The ET will target different types of stakeholders, which are, by this project definition, all those who have an interest in a project, such as implementers, partners, direct and indirect participants, community leaders, donors, and government officials.

#### D. SURVEY WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The ET will conduct a locally administered survey over the course of several days with a sample of stakeholders listed below in Table 3. The ultimate number of participants will depend on availability and interest in participating in the survey (no remuneration will be offered for completing surveys).

**Table 3: Survey Data Collection Strategy**

Stakeholder Type	Method	Estimated #	Potential Respondents
Managers; Supervisors	Survey	15	Staff that have management and oversight responsibilities
Workers	Survey	100	Workers that are part of program participants

The ET will work with the PF program team to determine an appropriate survey administration plan, which will include a hybrid approach- paper and tablet-administered surveys. The ET will adopt a quasi-purposive sampling approach for this data collection effort narrowing the audience to primarily worker voices. Questions will be targeted to the appropriate stakeholder group using separate surveys for each. The survey seeks to amplify the voices of workers and management/owners, validate qualitative findings, triangulate stakeholder perceptions, and reveal broad based trends.

Understanding the limitations with the utilization of online survey tools, the ET will leverage SurveyCTO which allows the team to collect survey responses offline. This tool has been used previously by our enumerators in similar settings; it is a reliable and secure platform that can be used with smartphone apps and is supported by a 24/7 help desk. The LE will collect survey responses on-site at the factory locations using a tablet. Survey responses will be uploaded to the server in batches, pending internet availability. The ET will attempt to survey more women respondents than men and will assess the number of men and women as the surveys are being conducted to make changes to increase female representation, as needed.

#### *Data Collection Instruments*

The quantitative survey includes a limited number of questions that are specific to workers and manager/owners. Each survey consists of eight questions that are designed to capture perceptions regarding worker representation, workplace safety, awareness of rights, recruitment/hiring of underrepresented workers, equity, and workers empowerment. (See Annex B). The survey questions are closed and utilize a Likert scale (using a 4-point rating scale). Based on the desk review and consultations with the implementing partner, the ET has designed the survey questions according to anticipated knowledge and awareness levels of the participants regarding programmatic activities.

Once approval is secured from the ILAB/USDOL team, the ET will proceed to translate approved data collection instruments into Spanish to represent local language for the survey in the target locations. The translation process shall be completed prior to pilot testing in the field with a select set of respondents (PF program participants or stakeholders). The ET members will serve as the enumerators for the survey thus mitigating any literacy issues, which could hinder any beneficiary's ability to complete the survey.

#### *Risk Mitigation Protocols*

The ET will coordinate closely with DOL, ILO partners, and Team Integra's Security Director to remain informed of potential risks before and during the survey administration process. The team will travel to site locations to collect survey data. If



available, the ET will also leverage available worker contact information to collect survey data remotely. In order to provide a robust and significant analysis of survey data, the team is leveraging multiple strategies to enhance the response rate ensuring a sufficient sample size of 100 respondents.

### *Data Collection Plan*

The ET will serve as the primary enumerators for the PF survey. Using a tablet or smartphone with SurveyCTO installed, the ET will travel to site locations to collect survey responses. In order to maximize the number of responses, the ET will remain on-site over the course of several days in a central location. Pending DOL/ILAB and Implementer approval, the ET will offer refreshments that workers could benefit from while completing the survey. Respondents would have the option of completing the survey directly on the provided tablet, with the assistance of the ET as the primary enumerators (oral survey administration), or via a paper copy of the survey. All survey data will be collected offline and uploaded at the end of each day pending internet availability.

### *Data Quality and Survey Debrief Sessions*

The LE will provide technical oversight and organize routine feedback debriefing sessions with the PF program to limit field disruptions during the data collection exercise. Regular data quality checks will be conducted by the SDA to review and confirm the quality, consistency, and completeness of survey data submitted by the LE in a timely manner and to make any corrective actions to address identified data errors. Throughout the data collection period, regular virtual check-in meetings will be conducted, including sequenced debrief sessions. At the end of each day during the survey period, the LE will perform quality assurance and adjust the administration plan accordingly.

### *Quantitative Survey Data included in Synthesis Report*

The Senior Data Analyst, Dr. Sarah Eissler, will provide overall technical oversight and quality assurance. The relevant findings related to equity, worker empowerment and agency from this quantitative survey will be integrated into a Synthesis Report that includes this final evaluation and three other evaluations.

### *Quantitative Analysis of Secondary Data*

The ET will analyze project monitoring data to assess the performance of activities relative to expected results, and equity considerations. The ET's analysis, which will rely on descriptive statistics such as counts, tabulated proportions, and means, will identify common trends, patterns, and any changes in stakeholders' motivation, behavior, capacity, practices, policies, programs, relationships, or resource allocation as result of project activities to the extent these data are available and of sufficient quality. The ET will use project monitoring data triangulated with relevant qualitative data collected during interviews, to develop summary achievement and sustainability ratings, as well as an assessment of equity in relation to access to project interventions as well as outcomes for target participants. The ET anticipates receiving access to the October 1, 2022 – March 30, 2023, semi-annual report with requisite performance monitoring reporting in May 2023 for incorporation into the final report.

## E. FIELD VISITS

The ET will visit a selection of project sites. The final selection of field sites to be visited will be made by the ET in coordination with the implementing partner and the local support ET. The ET will make every effort to include some sites where the project experienced successes and others that encountered challenges, as well as a good cross section of sites across targeted sectors, all that considering time constraints and transportation time and logistics between field sites. The ET will coordinate with POA team members throughout the process for ground transportation and other logistics.

During the visits, the ET will observe the activities and outputs developed by the project and document the available information through interviews with key stakeholders, holding focus groups with project participants and participants, as relevant.

## F. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data will consist of available monitoring data, and, where relevant, technical progress reports, data reporting forms, previous assessments of the project, and other relevant administrative data.<sup>60</sup> The ET will work with ILAB to secure prompt access to secondary data from POA, relevant government bodies, and external sources. After gaining access to the data, the ET will assess their quality and relevance in answering the research questions and develop a list of key indicators. The ET's analysis of these data will inform the correlation and validation of findings from the evaluation fieldwork/data collection.

The ET will analyze project monitoring data to assess the performance of activities relative to expected results, and equity considerations. The analysis will rely on descriptive statistics such as counts, tabulated proportions, and means, and will identify common trends, patterns, and any changes in stakeholders' motivation, behavior, capacity, practices, policies, programs, relationships, or resource allocation as result of project activities. The ET will use project monitoring data and quantitative data collected during evaluation fieldwork, triangulated with relevant qualitative data collected during interviews and FGDs, to develop summary achievement and sustainability ratings, as well as an assessment of equity in relation to access to project interventions as well as outcomes for target participants (if requested), with particular attention to underserved populations or historically marginalized groups or communities.<sup>61</sup> Note the quantitative data findings related to equity will only be used as part of a broader thematic analysis to synthesize learning across ILAB-funded programs in response to USG priorities in advancing equity.

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<sup>60</sup> Information can be provided in general statistical terms, not individual, following report models that the system can provide, especially according to the availability of the data collected and processed by each entity.

<sup>61</sup> "Underserved communities" refers to populations who have been historically underserved, marginalized, or denied equitable treatment on the basis of disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, migration status, and persons or groups otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. In accordance with Executive Order 13985 of January 20, 2021, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, the term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

The ET will highlight all the potential limitations to the analysis given the constraint of a small sample size. Elements such as high variability, undercoverage bias, and voluntary response bias may inhibit the ET's capability to assess some parts of the evaluation.

### G. OUTCOME ACHIEVEMENT, EQUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY RATINGS

After the data analysis, and based on the consolidated findings from secondary data, interviews and FGDs, the ET will objectively rate each of the project's outcomes according to three factors, including: 1) level of achievement, 2) level of equity with respect to access to project interventions and/or targets achieved, and 3) potential for sustainability on a four-point scale (low, moderate, above-moderate, and high). This evaluation will not include outcome equity ratings due to lack of relevant outcomes and data sources for the project. The ET will work directly with ILAB and the Grantee to identify target groups and assign relevant outcome indicators.

#### *Achievement*

**"Achievement"** measures the extent to which a development intervention or project attains its objectives/outcomes, as described in its PMP.

For assessing the achievement of program or project outcomes, the ET will consider the extent to which the objectives/outcomes were achieved and identify the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the outcomes. **For final evaluations**, the ET will consider to what extent the project is likely to meet or exceed its targets by project end.

Project achievement ratings will be determined through triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. The ET will collect **qualitative data** from key informant interviews and focus group discussions through a structured data collection process, such as interview questionnaires and focus group discussions protocols. Interviews and focus groups can also provide context for the results reflected in the Data Reporting Form submitted with the TPR. The ET will also analyze **quantitative data** collected by the project on key performance indicators defined in the PMP and reported on in the TPR Data Reporting Form. The ET will consider the reliability and validity of the performance indicators and the completeness and accuracy of the data collected. The assessment of quantitative data will consider the extent to which the project achieved its targets, whether these targets were sufficiently ambitious and achievable within the period evaluated and contextual factors (external to the project) during the period of execution. **The ET will assess each of the project's outcome(s) according to the following scale:**

**High:** met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

**Above-moderate:** met or exceeded most targets for the period evaluated, **but** with neutral or mixed feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

**Moderate:** missed most targets for the period evaluated, **but** with mostly positive feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

**Low:** missed most targets for the period evaluated, with mostly neutral or negative feedback from key stakeholders and participants.

The ET's objective opinion and independent judgment will also be integrated to further balance/triangulate the perspectives of key stakeholders and participants.

### *Equity*

**“Equity”** assesses the extent to which a development intervention or project provides for equitable access to project interventions or services, as well as the extent to which the project contributes to equitable outcomes for all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.

For assessing the equity of program or project outcomes, the ET will consider who has/has not been reached, served, engaged, or affected by the project’s interventions, in positive, negative, or undetermined ways. The ET will review the project’s overall output and outcome data and its disaggregated data (when available) for specific groups to identify trends and patterns with respect to equitable access and outcomes. **For final evaluations**, the ET will consider to what extent the project is likely to achieve targets for specific underserved target groups and those populations that are hardest to reach by project end. The ET will work directly with ILAB and the Grantee to identify target groups and assign relevant outcome indicators.

Project equity ratings will be determined through triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. The ET will collect **qualitative data** from key informant interviews and focus group discussions through a structured data collection process, such as interview questionnaires and focus group discussions protocols. Interviews and focus groups can also provide context for the results reflected in the Data Reporting Form submitted with the TPR. The ET will also analyze aggregated and, when available, disaggregated **quantitative data** collected by the project on key performance indicators defined in the PMP and reported on in the TPR Data Reporting Form. The ET will consider the reliability and validity of the performance indicators and the completeness, representativeness and accuracy of the data collected. The assessment of quantitative data will consider the extent to which the project achieved targets in an equitable manner and whether the targets for specific underserved groups were appropriate and sufficiently ambitious and achievable within the period evaluated. **The ET will assess each of the project’s outcome(s) according to the following scale:**

**High:** reported outcome data reflect tangible benefits for most or all underserved groups during the period evaluated, with mostly positive feedback from representatives of each of the relevant underserved groups.

**Above-moderate:** reported outcome data reflect tangible benefits for most or some of the underserved groups during the period evaluated, **but** with mixed or neutral feedback from representatives of one or more of the relevant underserved groups.

**Moderate:** reported outcome data reflect limited or no tangible benefits for underserved groups during the period evaluated, **but** with mostly positive feedback from representatives of those groups.

**Low:** reported outcome data do not reflect tangible benefits for underserved groups during the period evaluated (or the project lacks disaggregated data to

demonstrate), with mostly neutral or negative feedback from representatives of those groups.

The ET's objective opinion and independent judgment will also be integrated to further balance/triangulate the perspectives of key stakeholders and participants.

### *Sustainability*

“**Sustainability**” is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. When evaluating the sustainability of a project, it is useful to consider the likelihood that the benefits or effects of a particular output or outcome will continue after donor funding ends. It is also important to consider the extent to which the project takes into account the actors, factors, and institutions that are likely to have the strongest influence over, capacity, and willingness to sustain the desired outcomes and impacts. Indicators of sustainability could include agreements/linkages with local partners, stakeholder engagement in project sustainability planning, and successful handover of project activities or key outputs to local partners before project end, among others.

The project’s Sustainability Plan (including the associated indicators) and TPRs (including the attachments) are key (but not the only) sources for determining its rating. **The ET will assess each of the project’s objective(s) and outcome(s) according to the following scale:**

**High:** strong likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and the necessary resources<sup>62</sup> are in place to ensure sustainability;

**Above-moderate:** above average likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and the necessary resources are identified but not yet committed;

**Moderate:** some likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and some of the necessary resources are identified;

**Low:** weak likelihood that the benefits of project activities will continue after donor funding is withdrawn and the necessary resources are not identified.

In determining the rating above, the ET will also consider the extent to which sustainability risks were adequately identified and mitigated through the project’s risk management and stakeholder engagement activities. The ET will assess the risk environment and its expected effects on the project outcomes after the project exits and the capacity/motivation/resources/linkages of the local actors/stakeholders to sustain the outcomes produced by the project.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The ET will observe utmost confidentiality related to sensitive information and feedback elicited during the individual and group interviews. To mitigate bias during the data

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<sup>62</sup> Resources can include financial resources (i.e. non-donor replacement resources), as well as organization capacity, institutional linkages, motivation and ownership, and political will, among others.

collection process and ensure maximum freedom of expression of the implementing partners, stakeholders, communities, and project participants, implementing partner staff will generally not be present during interviews. However, implementing partner staff may accompany the ET to make introductions whenever necessary, to facilitate the evaluation process, make respondents feel comfortable, and to allow the ET to observe the interaction between the implementing partner staff and the interviewees.

The ET will respect the rights and safety of participants in this evaluation. During this study, the ET will take several precautions to ensure the protection of respondents' rights:

No interview will begin without receipt of informed consent from each respondent.

The ET will conduct KIIs and FGDs in a confidential setting, so no one else can hear the respondent's answers.

COVID-19 precautions and social distancing will be implemented during face-to-face interviews and FGDs.

The ET will be in control of its written notes at all times.

The ET will be in control of the audio materials and recordings collected, if any, during interviews and FGDs.<sup>63</sup>

The ET will transmit data electronically using secure measures.

The ET will talk with respondents to assess their ability to make autonomous decisions and their understanding of informed consent. Participants will understand that they have the right to skip any question with which they are not comfortable or to stop at any time.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Following the field visits, a stakeholder meeting will be organized by the project and led by the ET to bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including the implementing partners and other interested parties to discuss the evaluation results. The list of participants to be invited will be drafted prior to the evaluator's visit and confirmed in consultation with project staff during fieldwork. The ET will share this list in advance with the DOL/ILAB team for review and input as appropriate. This meeting will be virtual, given the different locations of stakeholders, and facilitate the participation of stakeholders from Colombia, Ecuador, and the DOL/ILAB team members.

This meeting shall provide an opportunity for a close examination of emerging trends and spotlighting of key intervention opportunities for future design iterations and adaptive programming options. The following sessions are proposed for the meeting, i.e., Big Picture Reflection and Way Forward. The ET will discuss the content of each session with ILAB and the project team to ensure each is focused and useful to the project.

**Session 1. Big Picture Reflection:** The big picture reflection session will be an introductory presentation on the PF evaluation findings, a review of key findings

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<sup>63</sup> The availability of recordings from KIIs and FGDs will entirely depend on the respondents' agreement to be recorded by the ET.



and unmet targets (study limitations) and learning from what works and from what did not work. The ET will also engage participants on learning questions related to relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency for improved programing, such as “How can ILAB and its Grantees better **respond to needs of** workers, workers’ organizations, and historically **underserved populations (specifically among women)?”**

**Session 2. Way Forward (commitments):** The way forward session will serve to co-design an action plan for adoption by the PF program team, i.e., how to sustain best practices and transition successful models to local ownership, highlight innovative approaches in behavior change models, and incorporate stakeholder feedback and program delivery design (follow-on considerations). The ET will also engage participants on these learning questions: The ET will also engage participants on learning questions related to coherence and sustainability, such as “Has the PF program generated key collaboration opportunities to advance female workers’ economic opportunities? Which **strategic opportunities** should be considered for **future iterations** or adaptations of the PF program?”

The agenda of the meeting will be determined by the ET in consultation with project staff. Some specific questions for stakeholders may be prepared to guide the discussion and possibly a brief written feedback form. The agenda is expected to include some of the following items:

- Presentation by the ET of the preliminary main results

- Feedback and questions from stakeholders on the results

- Opportunity for implementing partners not met to present their views on progress and challenges in their locality.

- Learning and reflecting on what worked and what did not work.

- Discussion of recommendations to improve the implementation and ensure sustainability. Consideration will be given to the value of distributing a feedback form for participants to nominate their “action priorities” for the remainder of the project.

A debrief call will be held with the ET and USDOL after the stakeholder workshop to provide USDOL with preliminary results and solicit feedback as needed.



## 5. LIMITATIONS

Fieldwork for the evaluation will last three weeks, on average, and the ET will not have enough time to visit all project sites. As a result, the ET will not be able to take all sites into consideration when formulating their results. All efforts will be made to ensure that the ET is visiting a representative sample of sites, including some that have performed well and some that have experienced challenges. With the limited sample size, the ET will highlight any limitations to the data collected from interviews and FGDs, as well as to the answers to the EQ in the final report.

Several factors may impact the collection of quantitative data including security concerns, the Internet and telephone infrastructure and availability, worker availability and interest, and stakeholder buy-in to the data collection process. The ET will work with the implementers and factory management to develop a communication plan for the administration of the survey to ensure workers are informed in advance and understand the goals and confidentiality of the data collection exercise. All communications will include ILAB representatives.

This is not a formal impact assessment. Results for the evaluation will be based on information collected from background documents and in interviews with stakeholders, project staff, and project participants. The accuracy of the evaluation results will be determined by the integrity of information provided to the ET from these sources.

Furthermore, the ability of the ET to determine efficiency will be limited by the amount of financial data available. A cost-efficiency analysis is not included because it would require impact data which is not available.

## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### **The Contractor is responsible for accomplishing the following items:**

- Providing all evaluation management and logistical support for evaluation deliverables within the timelines specified in the contract and TOR;
- Providing all logistical support for travel associated with the evaluation;
- Providing quality control over all deliverables submitted to ILAB;
- Ensuring the ET conducts the evaluation according to the TOR;

### **The ET will conduct the evaluation according to the TOR. The ET is responsible for accomplishing the following items:**

- Receiving and responding to or incorporating input from the grantees and ILAB on the initial TOR draft;
- Finalizing and submitting the TOR and sharing concurrently with the grantees and ILAB;
- Reviewing project background documents;
- Reviewing the evaluation questions and refining them as necessary;
- Developing and implementing an evaluation methodology, including document review, KIIs and FGDs, and secondary data analysis, to answer the evaluation questions;
- Conducting planning meetings or calls, including developing a field itinerary, as necessary, with ILAB and grantees;
- Deciding the composition of field visit KII and FGD participants to ensure the objectivity of the evaluation;
- Developing an evaluation question matrix for ILAB;
- Presenting preliminary results verbally to project field staff and other stakeholders as determined in consultation with ILAB and grantees;
- Preparing an initial draft of the evaluation report for ILAB and grantee review;
- Incorporating comments from ILAB and the grantee/other stakeholders into the final report, as appropriate.
- Developing a comment matrix addressing the disposition of all of the comments provided;
- Preparing and submitting the final report;

**ILAB is responsible for the following items:**

- Launching the contract;
- Reviewing the TOR, providing input to the ET as necessary, and agreeing on final draft;
- Providing project background documents to the ET, in collaboration with the grantees;
- Obtaining country clearance from U.S. Embassy in fieldwork country;
- Briefing grantees on the upcoming field visit and working with them to coordinate and prepare for the visit;
- Reviewing and providing comments on the draft evaluation report;
- Approving the final draft of the evaluation report;
- Participating in the pre- and post-trip debriefing and interviews;
- Including the ILAB evaluation contracting officer's representative on all communication with the ET;

**The grantee is responsible for the following items:**

- Reviewing the TOR, providing input to the ET as necessary, and agreeing on the final draft;
- Providing project background materials to the ET, in collaboration with ILAB;
- Preparing a list of recommended interviewees with feedback on the draft TOR;
- Participating in planning meetings or calls, including developing a field itinerary, as necessary, with ILAB and evaluator;
- Scheduling meetings during the field visit and coordinating all logistical arrangements;
- Helping the ET to identify and arrange for interpreters as needed to facilitate worker interviews;
- Reviewing and providing comments on the draft evaluation reports;
- Organizing, financing, and participating in the stakeholder debriefing meeting;
- Providing in-country ground transportation to meetings and interviews;
- Including the ILAB program office on all written communication with the ET.

## 7. EVALUATION TIMELINE

The tentative timetable is as follows. Actual dates may be adjusted as needs arise.

Task	Responsible Party	Date
Contract technical kickoff call	Contractor, DOL/ILAB	Sep 28, 2022
PF Evaluation launch call	Contractor, DOL/ILAB	Nov 30, 2022
TOR Template submitted to Contractor	DOL/ILAB	Oct 20, 2022
Background project documents sent to Contractor	DOL/ILAB	Dec 8-21, 2022
Background document and follow up data availability call	Contractor, DOL/ILAB	Feb 1, 2022
Draft TOR sent to DOL/ILAB and Grantee	Contractor	Feb 3, 2023
DOL/ILAB and Grantee provide comments on draft TOR	DOL/ILAB and Grantee	Feb 17, 2023
Logistics call - Discuss logistics and field itinerary	Contractor and Grantee (DOL/ILAB as needed)	Feb 24, 2023
Contractor sends minutes from logistics call	Contractor	Feb 28, 2023
Contractor and Grantee work to develop draft itinerary and stakeholder list	Contractor and Grantee	Mar 1-22, 2023
Revise and finalize field itinerary, TOR and stakeholder list based on comments	DOL/ILAB, Contractor, and Grantee	Mar 9-19, 2023
Final TOR submitted to DOL/ILAB and Grantee for approval	Contractor	Mar 22, 2023
Question matrix submitted to DOL/ILAB for review	Contractor	Mar 22, 2023
Final approval of TOR by DOL/ILAB	DOL/ILAB	Mar 24, 2023
Submit finalized TOR to DOL/ILAB and Grantee	Contractor	Mar 24, 2023
Interview call with DOL/ILAB	Contractor	Mar 27-28, 2023
Interview call with Grantee HQ staff	Contractor	Mar 27-28, 2023
Fieldwork / Data collection	Contractor	Apr 17-May 5, 2023
Post-fieldwork debrief call	Contractor	May 12, 2023 (within 1 week of data collection)
Stakeholder Validation Workshop	Contractor	June 1-2, 2023
Initial draft report for review submitted to ILAB and Grantee	Contractor	June 5, 2023 (within 4 weeks of data collection)
1 <sup>st</sup> round of review comments due to Contractor	ILAB and Grantee	June 14, 2023

<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Date</b>
Revised report submitted to DOL/ILAB and Grantee	Contractor	June 21, 2023
DOL/ILAB and Grantee/key stakeholder comments due to contractor after 2 <sup>nd</sup> round of review	DOL/ILAB and Grantee	June 28, 2023
Revised report in redline submitted to DOL/ILAB and Grantee demonstrating how all comments were addressed either via a comment matrix or other format	Contractor	July 7, 2023
DOL/ILAB and Grantee provide concurrence that comments were addressed	DOL/ILAB and Grantee	July 12, 2023
Final report submitted to DOL/ILAB and Grantee	Contractor	July 14, 2023
Final approval of report by DOL/ILAB	DOL/ILAB	July 19, 2023
Draft infographic/brief document submitted to DOL/ILAB	Contractor	July 21, 2023
DOL/ILAB comments on draft infographic/brief	DOL/ILAB	July 26, 2023
Editing and Section 508 compliance by contractor	Contractor	July 26-Aug 9, 2023
Final infographic/brief submitted to DOL/ILAB (508 compliant)	Contractor	Aug 9, 2023
Final approval of infographic/brief by DOL/ILAB (508 compliant)	DOL/ILAB	Aug 16, 2023
Final edited report submitted to COR (508 compliant)	Contractor	Aug 23, 2023
Final edited approved report and infographic/brief shared with grantee (508 compliant)	Contractor	Aug 25, 2023
Learning Event for ILAB staff, Grantees and other stakeholders as requested (usually virtual)	Contractor	September 2023(pending)

## 8. EXPECTED OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES

Four weeks after completion of data collection in the respective countries, a first draft evaluation report will be submitted by the Contractor. The report will have the following structure and content:

1. Table of Contents
2. List of Acronyms
3. Executive Summary (no more than **five pages** providing an overview of the evaluation, summary of main results/lessons learned/emerging good practices, and key recommendations)
4. Evaluation Objectives
5. Project Description
6. Listing of Evaluation Questions
7. Results
  - a. The results section includes the facts, analysis, and supporting evidence. The results section of the evaluation report will address the evaluation questions. It does not have to be in a question-response format, but will be responsive to each evaluation question.
  - b. This section will include results from both quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts.
2. Conclusions and Recommendations
  - a. Conclusions – interpretation of the facts, including criteria for judgments
  - b. Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices<sup>64</sup>
  - c. Key Recommendations - critical for successfully meeting project objectives and/or judgments on what changes need to be made for sustainability or future programming
3. Annexes
  - a. List of documents reviewed;
  - b. Interviews (including list of stakeholder groups; without PII in web version)/meetings/site visits;
  - c. Stakeholder workshop agenda and participants;
  - d. Survey results (cleaned datasets)
  - e. TOR, Evaluation Methodology and Limitations;

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<sup>64</sup> An emerging good practice is a process, practice, or system highlighted in the evaluation reports as having improved the performance and efficiency of the program in specific areas. They are activities or systems that are recommended to others for use in similar situations. A lesson learned documents the experience gained during a program. They may identify a process, practice, or systems to avoid in specific situations.

- f. Summary of Recommendations (citing page numbers for evidence in the body of the report, listing out the supporting evidence for each recommendation, and identifying party that the recommendation is directed toward.)

The key recommendations will be **action-oriented and implementable**. The recommendations will be clearly linked to results and directed to a specific party to be implemented. The rapport will contain no more than 10 recommendations, but other suggestions may be incorporated in the report in other ways.

The total length of the report will be approximately 30 pages for single project/country evaluations and 45 pages for multi-project/multi-country evaluations for the main report, excluding the executive summary and annexes.

The first draft of the report will be circulated to ILAB and the grantee individually for their review. The ET will demonstrate how they incorporate or addressed comments from ILAB and the grantee/other key stakeholders into the final reports as appropriate, and the ET will show what changes have been made and provide a response as to why any comments might not have been incorporated or addressed.

While the substantive content of the results, conclusions, and recommendations of the report shall be determined by the ET, the report is subject to final approval by ILAB in terms of whether or not the report meets the conditions of the TOR.

The electronic submissions of any deliverables intended for publication, including the evaluation report and infographics, or other communication products will include two versions: one version, including personally identifiable information (PII) that is not Section-508 compliant, and a second version for publication that is Section-508 compliant and does not include PII such as names and/or titles of individuals interviewed.



## TOR ANNEX A: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Relevance</b>	To what extent did the Palma Futuro project design reflect the needs and priorities of diverse stakeholders, workers and community members within the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors, including those from underserved populations? To what extent did the project implementation reflect the needs and priorities of these stakeholders?	<p>What factors limited or facilitated these results?</p> <p>To what extent did the project design assess and account for differences in capacity between stakeholders?</p> <p>How did the project consider nuances and heterogeneity of the social compliance systems in Ecuador and Colombia to have an optimal intervention progression?</p> <p>To what extent is the project contributing to the USG policy objective of advancing equity for all, including groups who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality?</p>	Descriptive	Qualitative	KIIs and Desk Review	<p>Content analysis</p> <p>Thematic analysis</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Effectiveness</b>	To what extent did project interventions contribute towards the achievement of project outcomes? Are there some interventions that have made more progress than others?	<p>What are the factors driving or hindering achievement of project results (in the context of the pandemic and other challenges)?</p> <p>How have the approaches been adapted?</p> <p>To what extent was Palma Futuro effectively reached target organizations and engaged with each stakeholder group involved in intervention approaches?</p> <p>Which approaches are perceived to be the most effective for achieving the project's objectives?</p> <p>Which approaches are perceived to be the least effective for achieving the project's objectives?</p> <p>What are the best practices and lessons learned for ILAB and its grantees to ensure technical assistance reaches and benefits target populations, including underserved populations?</p>	<p>Descriptive</p> <p>Statistical (from data project reporting, when available)</p>	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>Quantitative (secondary data)</p>	KIs, FGDs, Desk Review, and Performance Data	<p>Content analysis</p> <p>Thematic analysis</p> <p>Descriptive statistical analysis (depending on data available)</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Efficiency</b>	To what extent have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve project outcomes?	<p>Are any other groups indirectly (as a spill-over effect) impacted by Palma Futuro, and how?</p> <p>To what extent did the project encounter implementation or contextual challenges that impacted the project's ability to target any specific groups?</p> <p>What can ILAB and POA, as implementing partners, learn about the level of change (outcomes) that can realistically be achieved within a given project timeframe, budget, and operating context?</p>	Descriptive Statistical (from data project reporting, when available)	Qualitative Quantitative (secondary data)	KIIs, FGDs, Desk Review, and Performance Data	Content analysis Thematic analysis Descriptive statistical analysis (depending on data available)
<b>Impact*</b>	What are the tangible/observed outcomes and impacts on project stakeholders, according to the target ones established by the project?	<p>To what extent did the intervention make contributions toward the knowledge of labor practices in the palm oil sector?</p> <p>To what extent did the intervention contribute to the increased application of social compliance processes in the private sector partners' supply chains?</p> <p>What are the demonstrated changes in increasing regional and global-level understanding of best practices in social compliance systems in the palm oil sector among stakeholders?</p>	Descriptive Statistical (from data project reporting, when available)	Qualitative Quantitative (secondary data)	KIIs, FGDs, Desk Review, and Performance Data	Content analysis Thematic analysis Descriptive statistical analysis (depending on data available)

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Sub Evaluation Questions	Type of Responses	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods	Method of Data Analysis
<b>Sustainability</b>	To what extent are the Palma Futuro interventions likely to yield sustained results?	What elements and strategies were considered during implementation to assure the project's sustainability?	Descriptive	Qualitative	KIIs and Desk Review	Content analysis Thematic analysis
		What elements of the intervention have the most potential to be adopted long-term by stakeholders? Have main stakeholders already formally included any intervention elements in their statutes or norms?				
		How did the project account for scalability within the countries already involved (Colombia and Ecuador) and potentially at the regional level?				

*\*The impact category will be understood in this evaluation in terms of the outcomes established by the Palma Futuro Project design, the limitations of the available data, the absence of baseline data, and that this assessment relies mainly on secondary data.*

## TOR ANNEX B: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY QUESTIONS

**Introduction:** Welcome to the [name of the project] Survey.

Please swipe forward or click on the arrow at the bottom to go to the next page of the survey. After answering each question, please click forward to move to the next one.

### Consent:

*Dear Respondent,*

[XXX] is conducting an independent external evaluation of the working conditions in Colombia and Ecuador's palm oil supply chains. This survey is designed to identify the perceptions and experiences of workers in the sector. Your response will help us better understand the current situation in the palm oil sector and provide USDOL with input for future DOL technical assistance.

The survey is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. Our research team will use aggregate-level results for the final reporting.

Thank you in advance for your support!

### THE ET

Demographics
1. Sex: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Male</li><li>b. Female</li><li>c. Chose not to answer</li></ul>
2. Age: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Under the age of 18 (<i>SKIP: Exit the survey</i>)</li><li>b. 18 to 24</li><li>c. 25 to 39</li><li>d. 40 to 60</li><li>e. Over the age of 60</li></ul>
3. How long have you worked in this position? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Less than 1 year</li><li>b. 2-3 years</li><li>c. More than 3 years</li></ul>

### Factory Managers/Plantation and Farm Owners

**How much do you agree with the following statements:**

4. How has worker representation in the workplace changed over the past two to three years?  
*Understanding worker representation as all employees' voices being heard, in good faith and without discrimination, for the purpose of negotiating with management and other authorities on topics such as wages, hours, benefits and working conditions.*

- a. worse
- b. unchanged
- c. better
- d. I don't know/I'm not sure

5. Is there a formal group at this factory for managers and workers to discuss problems in the workplace and jointly find solutions to those problems? These groups can be called unions, employee associations, or employee-management committees.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know / I'm not sure

6. How effective is the group (union, employee association, or employee-management committee) in helping improve the workers' rights at this facility/site?

- a. Very effective
- b. Somewhat effective
- c. Somewhat ineffective
- d. Very ineffective
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

7. How would you describe factory management's general attitude towards these types of groups (union, employee association, or employee management committee)?

- a. Management is in favor of manager-worker groups.
- b. Management is NOT in favor of manager-worker groups
- c. Management is neutral about manager-worker groups
- d. I don't know / I'm not sure

8. "In the past two to three years, safety has improved and been prioritized in this facility/site"

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

9. "Over the past two years to three years, the factory's welfare provisions/services to workers have improved."

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

10. Factory management and policies have improved awareness of workers' rights in the past two to three years.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

11. How effectively does your organization recruit and retain underrepresented or disadvantaged workers? \*Enumerators define these terms for the respondent.

- a. Very effective
- b. Somewhat effective
- c. Somewhat ineffective
- d. Very ineffective
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

12. To what extent does the government support change to improve working conditions in the country?

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes/inconsistently,
- c. Frequently/consistently
- d. All the time
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

13. To what extent does the private sector support change to improve working conditions in the country?

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes/inconsistently,
- c. Frequently/consistently
- d. All the time
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure



**Workers**

**How much do you agree with the following statements:**

4. "In the past two to three years, safety has improved and been prioritized in my workplace."

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

5. "Over the past two to three years, my workplace's welfare provisions/services have improved."

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

6. "Compared to two to three years ago, I am more aware of my work rights."

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

7. "Comparing now to two to three years ago, employees sense changes they are treated fairer."

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

8. How often do you see or experience inequities\* in the workplace? \*Enumerator: define inequity.

- a. Every week
- b. Every month
- c. About every year
- d. Never
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

9. Comparing now to two years ago, how often do workers have difficulty accessing benefits and services?

- a. Every week
- b. Every month
- c. About every year
- d. Never
- e. I don't know/ I'm not sure

10. In the last 12 months, how often have you felt that people TREATED YOU BADLY at work because of...

- a. Your gender
- b. Your age
- c. Your race /ethnicity
- d. Your religion
  - o 0 - I do not feel this at all
  - o 1
  - o 2
  - o 3
  - o 4
  - o 5
  - o 6 - I feel like this all the time

11. Is there a formal group at this factory for managers and workers to discuss problems in the workplace and jointly find solutions to those problems? These groups can be called unions, employee associations, or employee-management committees.

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know / I'm not sure

12. How effective is the group (union, employee association, or employee-management committee) in helping improve the workers' rights at this factory?

- a. Very effective
- b. Somewhat effective
- c. Somewhat ineffective
- d. Very ineffective
- e. I don't know / I'm not sure

13. How would you describe factory management's general attitude towards these types of groups (union, employee association, or employee management committee)?

- a. Management is in favor of manager-worker groups.
- b. Management is NOT in favor of manager-worker groups
- c. Management is neutral about manager-worker groups
- d. I don't know / I'm not sure

14. Compared to two to three years ago, do you believe it is harder or easier to advance worker rights?

- a. Harder,
- b. No difference,
- c. Easier
- d. I don't know / I'm not sure Workers

## TOR ANNEX C: INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT – KII/FGD

*Evaluators must review this form in detail with all informants before the interview and be sure that they understand it clearly before obtaining their signature. If the informant is illiterate or expresses discomfort signing the form but verbally consents to proceeding with the interview, the evaluator may sign the form to indicate that they received verbal consent.*

**Purpose:** Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is [NAME]. I am a researcher from an organization called [insert contractor name], a company that provides monitoring and evaluation services. I am here to conduct a study about the USDOL financed project [insert project title] implemented by the [insert Grantee name].

You have been asked to participate today so that we can learn more about the support you (or your organization) may have received from [insert the Grantee or Partner name]. We would like your honest impressions, opinions and thoughts about various issues related to (the implementation of activities of) this program. I am an independent consultant and have no affiliation with those who provided you with assistance. In addition, I do not represent the government, employers, employers' organizations, or workers' organizations.

**Procedures:** If you agree to participate, we ask you to discuss your experience and opinion of the activities and services implemented under this program. The interview will take about (xx minutes, hour) of your time. Although we will publish our results in a public report, all of your answers will be kept confidential. Nothing you tell us will be attributed to any individual person. Rather the report will include only a composite of all of the answers received by all of the individuals we interview. Although we may use quotes, none of the individuals interviewed will be named in the report.

**Risks/Benefits:** There is no risk or personal gain involved in your participation in this interview. You will not receive any direct benefit or compensation for participating in this evaluation. Although this study will not benefit you personally, we hope that our results will help improve support provided to [insert project purpose].

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this interview/FGD is completely voluntary. You do not have to agree to be in this study. You are free to end the interview/leave the FGD at any time or to decline to answer any question which you do not wish to answer. If you decline to participate in the interview, no one will be informed about this.

Do you have any questions at this time? [Interviewer should answer any questions]

Do I have your permission to proceed?

## TOR ANNEX D: RIGHT TO USE

Evaluators must translate this form to the local dialect of participant. Evaluators will ensure participants understand clearly before obtaining their signature. If the informant is illiterate or expresses discomfort signing the form but verbally consents to proceeding with the Interview being used for data collection, the evaluator may sign the form to indicate that they received verbal consent.

### United States Department of Labor Right to Use

I, \_\_\_\_\_, grant to the United States Department of Labor (including any of its officers, employees, and contractors), the right to use and publish photographic likenesses or pictures of me (or my child), as well as any attached document and any information contained within the document. I (or my child) may be included in the photographic likenesses or pictures in whole or in part, in conjunction with my own name (or my child's name), or reproductions thereof, made through any medium, including Internet, for the purpose of use, dissemination of, and related to USDOL publications.

I waive any right that I may have to inspect or approve the finished product or the advertising or other copy, or the above-referenced use of the portraits or photographic likenesses of pictures of me (or my child) and attached document and any information contained within the document.

Dated \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_

-----  
Signature

-----  
Name Printed

-----  
-----  
-----  
Address and phone number

Identifier (color of shirt, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

## TOR ANNEX E: PERFORMANCE SUMMARY AND RAPID SCORECARD TEMPLATES

Performance Summary	Rating
<b>Outcome 1: Strengthened capacity of private sector partners in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors to implement a robust and sustainable social compliance system.</b>	
Summary of overall assessment given	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Low      Moderate      Above-Moderate      High</p> <p>Achievement <input checked="" type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/> — <input type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> <p>Sustainability <input checked="" type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/> — <input type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> </div>
<b>Outcome 2: Increased understanding, at a regional and global level, of promising practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains.</b>	
Summary of overall assessment given	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Low      Moderate      Above-Moderate      High</p> <p>Achievement <input checked="" type="radio"/> — <input type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> <p>Sustainability <input type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/> — <input type="radio"/> — <input checked="" type="radio"/></p> </div>

From your perspective, rate how effectively (e.g., moving project toward its intended results) the project has been regarding each of its specific outcomes:				
Project Outcome (Circle one rating 1-5 for each element)				Comments
<b>Outcome 1:</b>				
1	2	3	4	
Low	Moderate	Above-Moderate	High	
<b>Outcome 2:</b>				
1	2	3	4	
Low	Moderate	Above-Moderate	High	

**From your perspective, rate how equitable (e.g., equitable opportunity and results for all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment) the project has been in pursuing each of its specific outcomes:**

Project Outcome (Circle one rating 1-5 for each element)	Comments							
<b>Outcome 1:</b>								
<table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>Moderate</td> <td>Above- Moderate</td> <td>High</td> </tr> </table>		1	2	3	4	Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate
1	2	3	4					
Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate	High					
<b>Outcome 2:</b>								
<table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>Moderate</td> <td>Above- Moderate</td> <td>High</td> </tr> </table>		1	2	3	4	Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate
1	2	3	4					
Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate	High					

**What outcomes, components or/and practices implemented by the project do you consider as being those more critical for the project to become sustainable in the long term? Currently, what is the likelihood that those outcomes/ components/ practices remain sustainable?**

Outcome/ Component/ Practice	Likelihood that it becomes sustainable								
1.	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>Moderate</td> <td>Above- Moderate</td> <td>High</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate	High
1	2	3	4						
Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate	High						
2.	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>Moderate</td> <td>Above- Moderate</td> <td>High</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate	High
1	2	3	4						
Low	Moderate	Above- Moderate	High						



## TOR ANNEX F: STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

### US Government, Grantee and Implementing Partners and Host-Country Government

<b>General Information (To be pre-filled by interviewer)</b>	
Name: _____	
Position: _____	
Institution/Organization: _____	
<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>NOTE: Interviewer to read the purpose of the evaluation and the informed consent form (Annex C). The estimated time per interview is 45 min.</b>	
1.	Can you briefly describe your role with the Palma Futuro project? Were you involved in the implementation of the project, and if so, in what activities were you involved in?
<b>Relevance</b>	
2.	In your opinion, how well has the Palma Futuro project aligned with the current needs of the palm oil industry in (Ecuador/Colombia)?
2.1.	<i>Ask respondents to elaborate on any needs discussed that were either addressed or missed by PF.</i>
3.	To what extent did the project contribute to the priorities of the Institution/Organization you represent?
3.1.	How so, or how not?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
4.	Now that the project is in its final stages, in your perspective, what factors contributed towards the achievement of project outcomes?
5.	Now thinking about the components of the Palma Futuro project, are there any that have been more beneficial than others? Could you share some examples?
5.1.	Did the project successfully engage with all necessary stakeholders? Did you feel your organization was sufficiently involved to contribute towards the intended outputs and outcomes of the project?
5.2.	What innovations does the project introduce to improve labor conditions in the sector, and how does their impact compare to what existed in (Ecuador/Colombia) before?
5.3.	How do these innovations affect how your organization approaches its activities related to the palm oil industry?

<b>Efficiency</b>	
6.	In your opinion, were the intended outputs and outcomes of the Palma Futuro project realistic and achievable, given the context? How so/not?
7.	To what extent have resources, such as funds, human resources, time, and expertise, been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve the project outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1. During the execution of the project and from the role of the organization you represent, what, if any, implementation or contextual challenges impacted the project's ability to target any specific groups? Please expand.</li> <li>7.2. Did your organization identify any other groups (aside from the target population) that have been indirectly impacted by Palma Futuro (as a spill-over effect), and how?</li> <li>7.3. Based on your experience with the Palma Futuro project, what lessons learned would you feel are important for future projects seeking to reach the same or similar outcomes?</li> <li>7.4. What information do you wish you would have known before the project started? If the project were at the design stage, what would you change?</li> <li>7.5. And, is there anything you would do differently during execution? Please provide some examples.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	
8.	In your opinion, what are the tangible outcomes in your organization? (Ask <i>only to implementing partners</i> )
9.	How have you seen the project impact the organizations you interact with or the participants your organization/institution serves? (Ask <i>only to implementing partners</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9.1. Do you feel that the project has contributed positively towards the knowledge of labor conditions in the palm oil sector? How so?</li> <li>9.2. Do you think the project has increased your organization's understanding of child and forced labor risks? If so, how?</li> <li>9.3. From your experience, has the project positively impacted the application of social compliance processes? If so, please give some examples.</li> </ul>
10.	To what extent has the project impacted, at the regional or global level, the understanding and communication of best practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10.1. In your opinion, what have been the optimal communication channels for this purpose?</li> <li>10.2. What are the synergies between stakeholders that the project has initiated?</li> </ul>

**Sustainability**

11. In your opinion, to what extent are the Palma Futuro interventions likely to yield sustained results in your organization?
  - 11.1. What elements of the project do you feel are most likely to be adopted long-term by your organization?
  - 11.2. Have any intervention elements already been formally included in organizational statutes, norms, or policies? If so, which ones and how?
  - 11.3. To what extent did the project make scalability of your organization's activities possible at the country or regional level? Please give some examples.

## Host-Country Government

<b>General Information (To be pre-filled by interviewer)</b>	
Name:	_____
Position:	_____
Institution/Organization:	_____
<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>NOTE: Interviewer to read the purpose of the evaluation and the informed consent form (Annex C). The estimated time per interview is 45 min.</b>	
12.	Can you briefly describe your role with the Palma Futuro project? Were you involved in the implementation of the project, and if so, in what activities were you involved in?
<b>Relevance</b>	
13.	In your opinion, how well did the Palma Futuro project align with the current needs of the palm oil industry in (Ecuador/Colombia)? 13.1. Ask respondents to elaborate on any needs discussed that were either addressed or missed by PF.
14.	To what extent did the project contribute to the priorities of the Institution/Organization you represent? 14.1. How so, or how not?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
15.	Now that the project is in its final stages, in your perspective, to what extent did the project contribute to strengthening the capacity of private sector partners in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors to implement a robust and sustainable social compliance? 15.1. What examples can you describe from your interactions with private sector partners or other stakeholders?
16.	Now thinking about the components of the Palma Futuro project, are there any that have been more beneficial than others? Could you share some examples? 16.1. Did the project successfully engage with all necessary stakeholders? Did you feel your organization/institution was sufficiently involved to contribute towards the intended outputs and outcomes of the project? 16.2. What innovations does the project introduce to improve labor conditions in the sector, and how does their impact compare to what existed in (Ecuador/Colombia) before? 16.3. How do these innovations affect how your organization approaches its activities related to the palm oil industry?

<b>Efficiency</b>	
17.	In your opinion, were the intended outputs and outcomes of the Palma Futuro project realistic and achievable, given the context? How so/not?
18.	To what extent have resources, such as funds, human resources, time, and expertise, been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve the project outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18.1. During the execution of the project and from the role of the organization you represent, what, if any, implementation or contextual challenges impacted the project's ability to target any specific groups? Please expand.</li> <li>18.2. Did your organization identify any other groups (aside from the target population) that have been indirectly impacted by Palma Futuro (as a spill-over effect), and how?</li> <li>18.3. Based on your experience with the Palma Futuro project, what lessons learned would you feel are important for future projects seeking to reach the same or similar outcomes?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	
19.	In your opinion, what are the tangible outcomes in your organization?
20.	How have you seen the project impact the organizations you interact with or the participants your organization/institution serves? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20.1. Do you feel that the project has contributed positively towards the knowledge of labor conditions in the palm oil sector? How so?</li> <li>20.2. Do you think the project has increased or expanded your organization's understanding of child and forced labor risks? If so, how?</li> <li>20.3. From your experience, has the project positively impacted the application of social compliance processes in the private sector? If so, please give some examples.</li> </ul>
21.	To what extent has the project impacted, at the regional or global level, the understanding and communication of best practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21.1. What are the synergies between stakeholders that the project has initiated?</li> <li>21.2. How has the project impacted the interaction with other regional and international stakeholders about sharing best practices on the topic?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	
22.	In your opinion, to what extent are the Palma Futuro interventions likely to yield sustained results in your organization? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22.1. What elements of the project do you feel are most likely to be adopted long-term by your organization?</li> <li>22.2. Have any intervention elements already been formally included in organizational statutes, norms, or policies? If so, which ones and how?</li> <li>22.3. What other institutional or norm changes, at the national level, have been impacted by the project? Please give some examples.</li> </ul>

## Employer’s Associations, Worker’s Organizations, Private Sector Representatives and Other Relevant Organizations.

<b>General Information (To be pre-filled by interviewer)</b>	
Name: _____	
Position: _____	
Institution/Organization: _____	
<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>NOTE: Interviewer to read the purpose of the evaluation and the informed consent form (Annex C). The estimated time per interview is 45 min.</b>	
23.	Can you briefly describe your role with the Palma Futuro project? Were you involved in the implementation of the project, and if so, in what activities were you involved in?
<b>Relevance</b>	
24.	In your opinion, how well has the Palma Futuro project aligned with the current needs of the palm oil industry and its workers in (Ecuador/Colombia)?
24.1.	<i>Ask respondents to elaborate on any needs discussed that were either addressed or missed by PF.</i>
25.	To what extent did the project contribute to the priorities of the Institution/Organization you represent?
25.1.	How so, or how not?
25.2.	What other elements should the project have considered to serve better the needs of the organization and the workers you represent?
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
26.	Now that the project is in its final stages, in your perspective, what factors contributed towards the achievement of project outcomes?
26.1.	What factors contributed to strengthening private sector partners' capacity in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors to implement robust and sustainable social compliance?
26.2.	Now, what about the contributing factors related to increasing the understanding of promising practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains at regional and global levels?
27.	Now thinking about the components of the Palma Futuro project, are there any that have been more beneficial than others? Could you share some examples?
27.1.	Did the project successfully engage with all necessary stakeholders? Did you feel your organization was sufficiently involved to contribute towards the intended outputs and outcomes of the project?
27.2.	What innovations does the project introduce to improve labor conditions in the sector, and how does their impact compare to what existed in (Ecuador/Colombia) before?
27.3.	How do these innovations affect the activities of the workers you represent?

<b>Efficiency</b>	
28.	In your opinion, were the intended outputs and outcomes of the Palma Futuro project realistic and achievable, given the context? How so/not?
29.	To what extent have resources, such as funds, human resources, time, and expertise, been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve the project outcomes?
29.1.	During the execution of the project and from the role of the organization you represent, what, if any, implementation or contextual challenges impacted the project's ability to target any specific groups? Please expand.
29.2.	Did your organization identify any other groups (aside from the target population) that have been indirectly impacted by Palma Futuro (as a spill-over effect), and how?
29.3.	Based on your experience with the Palma Futuro project, what lessons learned would you feel are important for future projects seeking to reach the same or similar outcomes?
29.4.	And, is there anything you think it could have been done would do differently by the implementing partners during execution? Why? Please provide some examples.
<b>Impact</b>	
30.	In your opinion, what are the tangible outcomes in your organization?
31.	How have you seen the project impact the organizations you interact with or the workers you represent?
31.1.	Do you feel that the project has contributed positively towards the knowledge of labor conditions in the palm oil sector? How so?
31.2.	Do you think the project has increased understanding of child and forced labor risks in the stakeholders involved? If so, how?
31.3.	From your experience, has the project positively impacted the application of social compliance processes? If so, please give some examples.
32.	To what extent has the project impacted, at the regional or global level, the understanding and communication of best practices in social compliance systems in palm oil supply chains?
32.1.	What are the synergies between stakeholders that the project has initiated?
32.2.	From these best practices interchange, what type of information has been proven to make the most impact on the workers and the organization you represent? Please give us some examples.
<b>Sustainability</b>	
33.	In your opinion, to what extent are the Palma Futuro interventions likely to yield sustained results in your organization?
33.1.	What elements of the project do you feel are most likely to be adopted long-term by your organization?
33.2.	Have any intervention elements already been formally included in organizational statutes, norms, or policies? If so, which ones and how?



## General Stakeholders (Not Direct Involvement)

<b>General Information (To be pre-filled by interviewer)</b>	
Name: _____	
Position: _____	
Institution/Organization: _____	
<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>NOTE: Interviewer to read the purpose of the evaluation and the informed consent form (Annex C). The estimated time per interview is 45 min.</b>	
1.	Can you briefly describe your role in the palm oil sector industry? What are the core activities of your organization?
2.	Have you heard about the “Palma Futuro Project”? If so, what information do you know about the project? Have you interacted with the stakeholders involved, even if it was outside of the project?
<b>Relevance</b>	
The Palma Futuro project’s main objective is to promote acceptable conditions of work (ACW) and reduce child labor (CL) and forced labor (FL) in palm oil supply chains in Colombia and Ecuador by improving the implementation of social compliance systems (SCS) and disseminating best practices in social compliance in the region, specifically in Peru and Brazil.	
3.	In your opinion, how well has the Palma Futuro project aligned with the current needs of the palm oil industry and its workers in (Ecuador/Colombia)? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1. <i>Ask respondents to elaborate on any needs discussed that were either addressed or missed by PF.</i></li> <li>3.2. <i>In your opinion, what needs are a priority in the sector, and should have been considered by the project.</i></li> </ol>
4.	Does a project like “Palma Futuro” align or contribute to the priorities of the Institution/Organization you represent? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1. How so, or how not?</li> <li>4.2. What other elements should the project have considered to better serve the organization’s need and the workers you represent?</li> </ol>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
5.	In your opinion, what factors are needed to strengthening private sector partners' capacity in the Colombian and Ecuadorian palm oil sectors to implement robust and sustainable social compliance?
6.	Are there any innovations in the sector that you know aim to improve labor conditions, and how does their impact compare to what existed in (Ecuador/Colombia) before?
7.	Based on your experience, what have been the main constraints to moving forward with the innovations and projects to improve the palm oil sector in the country?
<b>Efficiency</b>	
8.	In your opinion, what are the critical resources, such as funds, human resources, time, and expertise, needed to improve labor conditions for palm oil workers?

<b>Impact</b>	
9.	In your opinion, what are the tangible outcomes of the programs that your organization implements?
10.	What are the main lessons learned that you have identified?
<b>Sustainability</b>	
11.	Not thinking about what can be sustainable in the sector: 11.1. What project elements do you feel are most likely to be adopted long-term by your organization or other organizations in the sector? 11.2. Could you give an example of elements that have been already formally included in organizational statutes, norms, or policies? If so, which ones and how?

## GENERAL PROJECT PARTICIPANTS<sup>65</sup>

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon, my name is [NAME]. I am a researcher from an organization called Integra, a company that provides monitoring and evaluation services. We are here today to conduct a study about the USDOL financed project “Palma Futuro” implemented by Partners of the Americas in Colombia and Ecuador.

You have been asked to participate today so that we can learn more about the support you (or your organization) may have received from this project. We would like your honest impressions, opinions and thoughts about various issues related to (the implementation of activities of) this project. This is an external assessment, and I am an independent consultant with no affiliation with those who provided you with assistance. In addition, I do not represent the government, employers, employers’ organizations, or workers’ organizations.

Procedures: If you agree to participate, we ask you to discuss your experience and opinion of the activities and services implemented under this project. The interview will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour of your time. Although we will publish our results in a public report, all of your answers will be kept confidential. Nothing you tell us will be attributed to any individual person. Rather the report will include only a composite of all of the answers received by all of the individuals we interview. Although we may use quotes, none of the individuals interviewed will be named in the report.

Our research team will make notes and record the entire session's audio. Those notes and recordings will be kept under strict confidentiality and only under the custody of the research team.

Risks/Benefits: There is no risk or personal gain involved in your participation in this focus group discussion. You will not receive any direct benefit or compensation for participating in this evaluation. Although this study will not benefit you personally, we hope that our results will help to better understand the implementation of the project, the goals accomplished by it, but also some of the challenges.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this interview/FGD is completely voluntary. You do not have to agree to be in this study. You are free to end the interview/leave the FGD at any time or to decline to answer any question which you do not wish to answer. If you decline to participate in the interview, no one will be informed about this.

Do you have any questions at this time? *[Interviewer should answer any questions]*

Do I have your permission to proceed? *[Remind the participants that the session is being recorded]*

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<sup>65</sup> This protocol can be adapted to a one-on-one interview if necessary.

<b>Introduction</b>
1. Can you briefly describe your role with the Palma Futuro Project? To what extent were you involved in the implementation of the project, and in what activities were you involved in?
<b>General Information</b>
List of Participants with Name, Position and Organization
1.
2.
3.
4.
<b>Relevance</b>
2. In your opinion, how well did the design of the Palma Futuro project respond to the current needs of the palm oil industry in (Ecuador/Colombia)?
3. To what extent did the project address the challenges that you experience as an actor in the sector?
3.1. In your opinion, what type of activities/information from the project did you find the most useful? Please provide some examples.
3.2. Based on your experience, were there any components of the project that felt less relevant or useful for you? Why was that the case?
<b>Effectiveness</b>
4. Now that the project is in its final stages, in your perspective, to what extent did the project's interventions contribute towards a robust and sustainable social compliance system in the palm oil sector?
5. Based on your experience, was the training implemented effectively to reach the intended learning outcomes?
6. Was the structure of the training (timing and method) convenient for you?
7. What changes regarding labor conditions, if any, have you noticed as a result of the project?
7.1. How do they compare to what existed in (Ecuador/Colombia) before?
7.2. In your experience, how do these changes impact your daily activities within the palm oil industry?

<b>Efficiency</b>	
8.	Now we will discuss to what extent resources, such as funds, human resources, time, and expertise, have been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve the project outcomes. You might not be familiar with all the resources allocated, but we want to hear your perspective about the resources you have received: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8.1. How were you selected to participate in the project? How convenient was it for you to participate in this project?</li> <li>8.2. What information do you wish to have known before the project started? What would you change and what would you do differently during execution? Give some examples.</li> </ol>
9.	What parts of the project have been most useful to you, and why?
10.	What about those that have been the least helpful?
<b>Impact</b>	
11.	In your experience, what are the contributions you have received from participating in the Palma Futuro project? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11.1. Which ones have added the most value to you?</li> </ol>
12.	In your opinion, what are the tangible changes you have observed in the organization/institution you are part of? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12.1. To what extent did the project contribute to the knowledge of the labor conditions in the palm oil sector, and how does that affect your organization's activities?</li> <li>12.2. Did those changes affect any policies or activities within the organization's activities? Please give some examples.</li> </ol>
<b>Sustainability</b>	
13.	In your opinion, to what extent is the Palma Futuro project likely to yield sustained results in your organization? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13.1. What elements of the project have had the most potential to be adopted long-term by this organization?</li> <li>13.2. Have any project elements already been formally included in organizational statutes, norms, or policies? If so, which ones and how?</li> </ol>

## COMMUNITY LEADERS<sup>66</sup>

Note: The ET will use the same FGD introduction protocol as the one used for “General Project Beneficiaries”

<b>Introduction</b>
1. Can you briefly describe your role with the Palma Futuro Project? To what extent were you involved in the implementation of the project, and in what activities were you involved in?
<b>General Information</b>
List of Participants with Name, Position and Organization
1.
2.
3.
4.
<b>Relevance</b>
2. In your opinion, how well did the design of the Palma Futuro project respond to the current needs in your community (Ecuador/Colombia)?
3. To what extent did the project help make visible the challenges your community is facing?
4. To what extent did the project address the challenges you experienced as an actor in the palm oil sector?
4.1. In your opinion, what type of activities/information from the project did you find the most useful? Please provide some examples.
4.2. Based on your experience, were there any components of the project that felt less relevant or useful for you? Why was that the case?
4.3. In your opinion, did the project reaches and benefit target populations, including underserved populations?
4.3.1. In your opinion, what are the underserved populations in your community and why? Please give some examples.

<sup>66</sup> This protocol can be adapted to a one-on-one interview if necessary.

<b>Effectiveness</b>	
5.	Now that the project is in its final stages, in your perspective, to what extent did the project’s interventions contribute towards a robust and sustainable social compliance system in the palm oil sector?
6.	Based on your experience, did the project effectively reach the intended learning outcomes?
7.	Was the structure of the discussions enhanced by the project (timing and method) convenient for you?
8.	To what extent did the project helped to improve the relationship between the community members and other actors in the palm oil sector (i.e., extractor plant)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8.1. How do they compare to what existed in the community before?</li> <li>8.2. In your experience, how do these changes impact the daily activities within the community?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	
9.	Now we will discuss to what extent resources, such as funds, human resources, time, and expertise, have been allocated strategically and efficiently to achieve the project outcomes. You might not be familiar with all the resources allocated, but we want to hear your perspective about the resources you have received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9.1. How were you selected to participate in the project? How convenient was it for you to participate in this project?</li> <li>9.2. What information do you wish to have known before the project started? What would you change and what would you do differently during execution? Give some examples.</li> </ul>
10.	What parts of the project have been most useful to you, and why?
11.	What about those that have been the least helpful?



<b>Impact</b>	
12.	In your experience, what are the contributions you have received from participating in the Palma Futuro project?  12.1. Which ones have added the most value to you?
13.	In your opinion, what are the tangible changes you have observed in the community you are part of?  13.1. What are the main lessons learned from the project?  13.2. In your opinion, what are the missing pieces that you feel are still unattended in your community?
<b>Sustainability</b>	
14.	In your opinion, to what extent is the Palma Futuro project likely to yield sustained results in your community?  14.1. What elements of the project have had the most potential to be adopted long-term?  14.2. Have any project elements already been formally included in statutes, norms, or policies? If so, which ones and how?