

# BENCHMARKING PERFORMANCE IN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION (BPAT) TOOL

*A new tool for measuring organizational contribution to sustainable agricultural policy reform systems*

## Introduction

To create systemic impact, capacity development interventions often target key actors due to the roles they perform. For example, agriculture policy reform projects are frequently designed to build the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture as well as non-state actor (NSA) coalitions. However, existing assessment tools for organizational development, such as an organizational capacity assessment (OCA) or the organizational performance index (OPI), lack a mechanism to measure organizational contribution to broader systemic change. In addition, the traditional tools to assess capacity are often resource intensive, costly and expend significant social capital on behalf of the organization being assessed. While OCAs can be useful to help identify capacity gaps, they are ineffective as a monitoring tool to assess change over time. For example, a recent study by USAID's E3 bureau discourages comparisons of repeat OCA scores to monitor and evaluate capacity development activities, as this approach can jeopardize the willingness of client organizations to discuss weaknesses.

To better understand how our partners were fulfilling their roles in policy reform systems and assess change at the organizational level, Africa Lead created a new Benchmarking Performance in Agricultural Transformation (BPAT) tool. The BPAT tool evaluates organizational contribution to M&E, evidence-based adaptation, investment attraction, inclusiveness, and coordination in agricultural transformation. These five themes are grounded in an extensive literature review of the existing research, and the available evidence of critical factors that contribute to sustainable food security policy reform systems. In fact, many theories, tools and indicators already exist for assessing policy systems and evaluating change. For example, the Africa Lead team reviewed the CAADP Results Framework, the USAID Global Food Security Strategy, the IFPRI Kaleidoscope Model, methodologies of BFS technical partners such as FSP and AGRA, and the Institutional Architecture Framework developed by Africa Lead. Given these existing sets of tools, the Africa Lead team piloted the BPAT as a tool to assess organizational and network capacity to influence change at the system-level, based on concepts prioritized in the Malabo commitments and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

## Purpose of the BPAT

The BPAT is a facilitated, self-assessment tool that helps key governmental and non-state actors assess their performance in implementing CAADP commitments. The BPAT simplifies complicated concepts into easy to understand terms that resonate at the organizational level. In the process, it allows

organizations to reflect upon their performance compared to their goals, and orients organizations to their roles in the policy system. The five themes of agricultural transformation are summarized as follows:

1. **Inclusivity:** Inclusive and constructive dialogue supports two-way information flow at scale to increase transparency, accountability, and trust.
2. **Coordination:** Purposeful collaboration and coordination with internal and external actors leads to more efficiency, and better alignment to implement food security priorities.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Data-driven and results-based M&E of food security programs/policies are generated and analyzed to ensure accountability for food security-related commitments.
4. **Evidence-based adaptation:** Evidence-based analysis and learning is used to inform planning and improve implementation of food security policies and programs.
5. **Resource and investment attraction:** A credible and realistic national agricultural investment strategy and work plan attracts increased resources, investments, and commercial activity into the agriculture sector.

This tool was piloted as part of Africa Lead’s internal program review in 2017, with 10 USAID Missions: Senegal, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, DRC, Guinea, East Africa Regional, BFS, and West Africa Regional. During key informant interviews and small group discussions, the Africa Lead team asked beneficiaries to benchmark their organization or network’s performance in the themes of agricultural transformation, describe the changes observed in each theme, and explain if Africa Lead had influenced this change. During the internal assessment, the themes offered a reliable framework for facilitating discussion and self-assessment around the effectiveness of an organization’s role in and contribution to system-wide functions. Taking time to distill and understand how organizations contribute to CAADP and Malabo commitments, agricultural transformation, and system-level processes such as mutual accountability proved to be beneficial— as no concept seemed foreign to key informants.

## **Other Applications**

Piloting the new BPAT tool provided important learning for the program and future Africa Lead projects. Benchmarking performance tools are more feasible and effective to monitor organizations working on agricultural transformation programs, and to help new partners establish a baseline. This is because more practical, resource-efficient approaches are necessary for assessing the impact of capacity development interventions targeting key systems, such as Ministries of Agriculture, apex civil society networks, and regional intergovernmental organizations. Since the BPAT is a self-assessment tool, participants can also benefit from the process to better understand and contextualize how improved organizational and network performance at their own institutions can contribute to system-level change. Africa Lead may also explore piloting the BPAT tool in combination with CAADP sensitization to help organizations contextualize how CAADP implementation can translate to improved organizational performance, and drive organizational change.

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This paper was drafted by Africa Lead in January 2017. Learn more at [www.africleadftf.org](http://www.africleadftf.org)

# Benchmarking Performance for Agricultural Transformation Tool

## Introduction:

- The **purpose** of the BPAT is to evaluate organizational and network performance in supporting improved food security policies and programs. The five thematic areas were developed to serve as a framework to examine organizational performance across activities, partners, and geographies working to implement the CAADP program.
- If your organization or network score improves in a BPAT thematic area, please include a description of the **milestone**. A **milestone** is a 'positive change' in a country's food security policy IA. A change will be considered positive if it will lead to improved policy outcomes within the country's or region's GFSS plan.
- Since the meaning of **food security** can be subjective, for the purposes of the program review the interviewer may need to clarify the organization's definition of this term; responses may include policies, programs, and activities that drive greater productivity and more human and financial resources in the agricultural sector, as well as easier access to nutritious food.
- The term "**organization**" includes government institutions as well as non-state actor (NSA) networks.
- **Tips for probing:** An additional framework that helps interviewees think about examples of their performance in a particular thematic area in terms of **SWOT** – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- All five thematic areas **may not be relevant** to all institutions interviewed. If it is not relevant, please select "1 - Not doing or very poor" and move to the next area.

**Thematic Area #1:** Data-driven and results-based monitoring and evaluation (**M&E**) of food security programs/policies are generated and analyzed to ensure **accountability** for food security-related commitments.

## Examples:

- Organization is monitoring government spending in agriculture and highlighting gaps/shortcomings
- Organization has annual work plan, and monitors progress toward goals that relate to food security policies or programs
- Organization is participating in monitoring at joint sector review

a) On a scale of 1 (not doing or very poor) to 5 (excellent), how would you rate your organization's performance in this area?

1. Very poor	2. Poor	3. Average	4. Well	5. Excellent
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b) What is the evidence of this? E.g. What M&E data was produced, analyzed and/or shared? Has it informed decision-making or had an impact?

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c) In the past X years [start of reporting period], has there been any changes in the performance of your institution in this area? If so, when did it change, and to what do you attribute this change?

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- d) If the change noted above is a positive achievement, does this achievement contribute to the country's institutional architecture (policy reform system)? If yes, was there a specific **milestone** that indicates a positive change has taken place? Please describe the milestone, including the stakeholders involved and how it provides evidence that IA was improved.
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**Thematic Area # 2: Evidence-based analysis and learning is used to inform planning, and improve implementation of food security policies and programs.**

**Examples:**

- Organizations use evidence to inform food security advocacy, programming and/or services to constituents
  - Organizations are analyzing and utilizing existing research and data from their home country or elsewhere, for policy design/formulation and program recommendations
  - Organizations are producing and sharing research and studies that are relevant to agriculture and food security policy-making
  - Organizations are using evidence to evaluate, inform and review policy options
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- a) On a scale of 1 (not doing or very poor) to 5 (excellent), how would you rate your institution's performance in this area?

1. Very poor	2. Poor	3. Average	4. Well	5. Excellent
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- b) What is the evidence of this?

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- c) In the past X years [start of reporting period], has there been any changes in the performance of your institution in this area? If so, when did it change, and to what do you attribute this change?

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**Thematic Area #3: A credible and realistic national agricultural investment strategy and work plan attracts increased resources, investments and commercial activity into the agriculture sector.**

**Examples:**

- Government is analyzing, prioritizing opportunities, and planning for agriculture investment
- Government budgeted amount is allocated to the sector according to plan
- NSAs are prioritizing and analyzing agriculture investments that increase food security (vs. private sector prioritizing market opportunities)
- Resources (human and financial) are attracted into the agriculture sector, and more people are entering various parts of the agricultural value chain and ecosystem (e.g. traders, researchers, agriculture businesses, entrepreneurs, etc.)
- Donor and private sector investment attracted

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**Thematic Area #4. Inclusive and constructive dialogue** supports two-way information flow at scale to increase transparency and accountability.

**Examples:**

- Government and/or NSAs facilitate high levels of participation from marginalized groups such as women, youth, minorities, smallholders, and rural communities to understand their needs and priorities
- Government and NSAs listen to feedback from marginalized groups
- Various platforms (e.g. meetings, social media, publications) are used to communicate and share relevant information at scale
- Cascading – sharing knowledge, skills and/or services with network members in rural areas

a) On a scale of 1 (not doing or very poor) to 5 (excellent), how would you rate your institution's performance in this area?

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**Thematic Area #5. Purposeful collaboration/coordination** with internal and external actors leads to more **efficiency and better alignment** to implement food security priorities.

**Examples:**

- Different government agencies/units coordinate initiatives (e.g. via a functioning agriculture sector working group)
- NSAs and government interact at local and national levels to ensure alignment in agriculture and food security priorities
- NSAs are coordinated to provide a clear point of entry for government to engage
- NSAs coordinate with each other so that constituencies have a stronger voice in advocacy and avoid duplication

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a) On a scale of 1 (not doing or very poor) to 5 (excellent), how would you rate your institution's performance in this area?

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