



# **CABI Medium Term Strategy**

**2020 – 2022  
Summary**

**KNOWLEDGE FOR LIFE**

## Introduction

**CABI's Medium-Term Strategy 2020–2022 sets our strategic goals for the period and the activities we will carry out within six thematic areas to achieve them, alongside our specific objectives.** By implementing this strategy, CABI aims to bring about sustainable economic development, improved livelihoods and better nutrition through greater market access for climate-resilient agriculture in healthy ecosystems.

Successful implementation of the strategy is expected to contribute to a number of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including No Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), Climate Action (SDG 13), Life on Land (SDG 15) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

## Progress against the previous Medium-Term Strategy 2017–2019

CABI looks ahead to this new Medium-Term Strategy from a position of strength. We have either met, or are on track to meet, over 90% of the 116 milestones from our previous strategy and scientific output has been high, beating our target of 100 publications per year. We have also made good progress in winning significant new projects; conclusively demonstrated the positive impacts of Plantwise; gained recognition for our central role in the fight against fall armyworm; re-energized our publishing business; and commenced the Wallingford office redevelopment in the UK, which will significantly reduce our carbon footprint.

## Context

CABI's Medium-Term Strategy 2020–2022 has been developed to respond to the general context in our fields of activity, as well as to our Member Countries' priorities. In a context where the negative effects of climate change on agriculture (including by the increased prevalence and geographic spread of pests and diseases) and the challenge of increasing the participation of women and youth in the sector remain key issues. Our Member Countries have highlighted a number of priority areas they want us to focus on, specifically improving value chains and market access; applying climate-smart agriculture in practice; considering the social and environmental impact of projects for women and youth; applying integrated approaches to crop and livestock production, protection and processing; and investigating and tackling invasives pathways and implementing proactive, early warning and rapid response, rather than reactive defence.

## Strategic goals

To address these challenges, we have set the following strategic goals for this period.

### **GOAL 1** Improve market access for smallholders to sustainable value chains

- Strengthen small and medium agri-enterprises (including women and youth-based business organizations) through building capacity in business awareness and skills for better access to inputs (including seed and affordable credit) and output markets
- Build the capacity of public and private sector technical experts through public–private partnerships on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures to ensure compliance with market requirements
- Facilitate linkages among value chain actors and strengthen standards compliance
- Support climate adaptation and reduce the environmental impact of farmers growing cash crops (e.g. coffee, cocoa, cotton, coconut, spices) through the adoption of improved varieties and good agricultural practices

## GOAL 2 Improve capacity for the delivery of climate-resilient food and nutrition security

- Promote the global diversification of agriculture to improve the nutritional value and climate resilience of the crops grown, with a particular emphasis on fruits, nuts, vegetables, pulses and indigenous crops
- Provide direct support to countries to enhance institutional capacities and facilitate implementation of climate-responsive interventions
- Facilitate access to climate financing through increased linkages and interactions (e.g. among country governments, donors, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) focal points)
- Ensure best practice information on the nutritional value of crops, climate adaptation and the mitigation of emissions is findable, accessible and relevant

## GOAL 3 Help women and young people gain new opportunities from access to targeted, context-specific agricultural information and technology

- Empower women and youth through deliberate gender-focused interventions to be agricultural entrepreneurs both on the farm and in off-farm roles (e.g. seed multiplication; biocontrol agent rearing; advisory service providers; providers of pesticide application services; agro-input suppliers and; food aggregators, processors or sellers)
- Build partnerships to facilitate the provision of services to women, youth and marginalized groups in agricultural communities
- Identify and develop deliberate gender-focused interventions to build non-farm rural employment opportunities for women and youth, e.g. in sustainable tourism
- Promote the integration of existing knowledge, priorities, needs and constraints in relation to different age and gender groups in research plans to maximize quality and impact
- Provide tailored information to address the technical needs of women, youth and marginalized groups through appropriate communication channels and digital tools

## GOAL 4 Promote balanced utilization and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems

- Improve the understanding and forecasting of climate change impacts on pests and crop/landscape management strategies (especially in developing countries) to inform the development of context-specific adaptation and mitigation strategies
- Support national and regional prioritization of risks and threats from invasive species
- Strengthen the capacity of national agricultural and environment organizations in prevention, early detection and rapid response, while spreading best practices in the use of safer pest management strategies

## Thematic areas and objectives

**Gender** will be a key consideration across all of our thematic areas. Achieving our strategic goal of empowering and employing women and youth will require us to take a gendered approach across all of our development work from the very outset of project planning. We will manage our projects with the aim of achieving gendered results wherever possible, ensuring measurement of outcomes and impact can take place on a gender-disaggregated basis, with careful analysis to understand the drivers of difference between groups.

**Climate-Smart Agriculture** will be similarly cross-cutting as we develop our plans and programmes. Together with partners, CABI will help smallholder farmers face the challenges of climate change with confidence through Climate-Smart Plant Health systems to increase incomes and the supply of safe and nutritious food within sustainable farming systems. We will seek to build resilience and adaptation to climate change, while mitigating greenhouse gas emissions where possible.

To achieve our strategic goals, we will carry out activities within six thematic areas with the aim of achieving specific objectives (listed as bullets under each paragraph below).

## Crop health

The proposed programme will build upon the brand, networks and governance mechanisms established by the Plantwise programme which has helped over 30 million farmers in 34 countries since it was launched in 2011. The Plantwise programme used a reactive approach to **diagnose and treat** any problem in any crop with a focus on output **quantity** (lose less, feed more). The new programme will seek to use the power of modern ICTs to provide advisory services at scale with the intention to **predict and prevent** threats to plant health and provide climate-smart solutions to farmers, enabling them to deliver increased quality (as well as quantity) of safe and nutritious food. We will:

- evolve current core programmes to promote the sustainability and climate resilience of agricultural systems
- develop data-driven pest prioritization, monitoring and management systems using new technologies and processes (**predict and prevent**)
- promote the uptake of diverse crops and good agricultural practices to increase the supply of safe and nutritious food
- reduce and remove greenhouse gas emissions where possible

## Value chains and trade

We will increase the sustainability of value chains and promote trade through applying our expertise in the identification of challenges in the value chain through stakeholder participatory analysis, strengthening producer organizations and building the capacities of value chain actors (producers, intermediaries, input suppliers, regulators, etc.). This work will be facilitated by our Member Country linkages and by our established partnerships with national governments, regional economic blocs and international bodies. We will:

- sustainably increase agricultural productivity and incomes
- develop vibrant value chains and trade linkages to support economic development in target countries
- enable equitable and inclusive agribusiness growth through activities specifically focused on women and youth

## Invasive species management

We will continue our work in this core area of our expertise (including the integrated management of invasive species) in both developed and developing countries. We will continue to implement our Action on Invasives project ([www.cabi.org/action-on-invasives](http://www.cabi.org/action-on-invasives)) to protect and improve the livelihoods of over 50m poor rural households impacted by invasive species. We will:

- strengthen policies, plans and capabilities to enable more effective country responses to the threat of invasive species
- increase awareness of the risks and costs of invasive species, leading to greater investment in their control
- promote more effective prevention and management of invasive species incursions

## Development, Communication and Extension

We will carry out our cross-cutting development communication activities to transform agriculture and related sectors. We will leverage our complementary activities (publishing, marketing, extension service provision, science journalism—through SciDev.Net—and digital development) to deliver research communication activities using a wide range and blend of channels. We will:

- expand the evidence base to support projects that build on prior learning and experience
- design innovative blended communication campaigns to optimize reach and impact with target audiences
- improve access to knowledge, information and evidence on nutrition plus climate change adaptation and mitigation
- use participatory content development by working with local, national and regional partners who have the skills and knowledge to inform the development of audience-focused materials

## Digital development

We will apply international best practice and work in close partnership to deliver relevant, locally-owned solutions. We will draw on Member Country relationships and project partnerships to guide digital interventions, ensuring that solutions are embedded within national systems. We will:

- develop decision support tools to help users translate data and information into positive action and impact on crop health
- co-develop solutions with end users that are context-appropriate and meet their needs
- maximize the reach and impact of digital solutions by designing them for inclusivity, interoperability, sustainability and scale

## Science publishing and journalism

We will position CABI at the heart of open, evidence-based agriculture, providing solutions around the workflow of scientists. We will aim to be a publisher of choice and a valued partner for research funders and donors seeking to maximize the impact of their outputs. We will also develop our activities in the area of e-learning. Finally, we will take advantage of the merger of CABI with SciDev.Net to support the wider development agenda through the continued production of accurate and innovative science-based news stories and media content. We will:

- provide products, analytics and tools to support open science, increase research productivity and promote evidence-based agriculture
- build an e-learning curriculum to help practitioners and students acquire vital knowledge and skills
- develop practical tools and services based on reliable research and data



## Regional strategies

- In **Africa**, we will develop new opportunities for the existing/mature markets and expand our current work into fragile/new markets like South Sudan and Burundi, as well as appointing a Deputy Director Strategic Partnerships to form partnerships with the national agricultural research systems in Member Countries
- In **Asia**, we will develop new public–private sector partnerships around value chains and trade, focusing on helping farmers access higher-value market opportunities and adopt integrated crop management approaches. We will also add value in China and India by exploring opportunities related to putting local research into use more effectively
- In **Europe**, we will focus investment on broadening and improving the technology base of our current centres in line with the recommendations of CABI’s science strategy
- In the **Americas and the Caribbean**, we will continue current successful project activities (invasive species management, Plantwise implementation, agro-ecology and integrated crop management). We will also seek support from Member Countries to develop new opportunities in their identified priority areas, with potential funding from regional/national donors and private sector partners, and we will step up project development efforts

## Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The critical milestones of the Medium-Term Strategy 2020–2022 will be monitored and reported on a quarterly basis using information obtained from across CABI centres, functions and projects. This will allow us to assess thematic area outcomes and impact against the strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals, generating understanding of change and informing learning within CABI. During the period, we also aim to invest in at least one significant impact evaluation per year and one to two smaller mixed-method impact case studies, with the following objectives: measuring and optimizing the results of our interventions; ensuring relevance and efficiency in their implementation; and learning about what works, what doesn’t and why.

## Our people

Key elements of our human resources strategy during the period include making sure that the salary, incentives and benefits packages offered by CABI are competitive; continuing the growth of skills, experience and capabilities among our existing staff; recruiting new staff where specific skills, experience and capabilities are required (e.g. gender and climate change); encouraging staff to achieve a good work/life balance; and maintaining (and regularly reviewing) succession and talent management plans covering all senior-level and operationally critical roles. The search for a new CEO will commence at the beginning of 2020. Additional areas of activity during the period will include stimulating dialogue about what “One CABI” means; what gets in the way of putting that message into practice and how we can improve; developing a CABI standard for managers and introducing 360-degree feedback for management; replacing the SAGE timesheet system; and reviewing the format of the quarterly CEO Town Hall and the content of the monthly Executive Management Team Brief to explain decisions and their rationale more clearly, as well as to encourage feedback.

## Financial plan

As a self-sustaining, not-for-profit organization, CABI must finance its activities through the sale of its products and services. During the period of the Medium-Term Strategy 2020–2022, we will build upon existing relationships with key donors and core academic customers while at the same time broadening our funding base with foundations and the private sector. Our objective is to maintain a modest operating surplus whilst investing in new product development, technology and staff training, while supporting the deficit recovery payments related to historic pension commitments. Some highlights of our financial strategy for the period include the following.

- In Publishing, seeking to conclude negotiations for additional or alternative sales partnerships for our core database and book products to free up our sales team to pursue business development opportunities for income growth
- Re-positioning CABI and key projects to address donor priorities (i.e. climate change, youth employment and female empowerment)

- Locating Key Account Management support in regions to engage with donors/partners and secure additional funding
- More tightly integrating our regional efforts with the objectives of Regional and Global Theme Directors
- Pursuing partnerships with the private sector by applying a highly targeted approach that takes into account how this will benefit our partners' bottom line
- Pursuing partnerships with foundations and private trusts in relation to agriculture as a driver of economic development, as well as aligning with their focus on youth, gender or climate change targets

Overall, a 4% growth in revenue is budgeted in 2020, the primary driver of this being the additional donor funding in International Development, most of which has been secured (or is close to being secured) for Plantwise, Action on Invasives and the new Crop Health Programme. For Knowledge Business, there is some growth anticipated in project income, with Publishing sales in total staying relatively flat (continuing the recent pattern) and new products like PestSmart budgeted to have only a relatively modest sales impact over the next three years.

Revenue (£'000)	Actual 2018	Forecast 2019	Budget 2020	Plan 2021	Plan 2022
Knowledge Business	14,049	12,266	12,605	12,956	13,225
International Development	18,002	17,307	18,906	19,302	19,733
Corporate	3,081	3,878	3,346	3,505	3,694
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>35,132</b>	<b>33,450</b>	<b>34,857</b>	<b>35,763</b>	<b>36,652</b>
<b>Growth % p.a.</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>(5)%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>

Against this backdrop, the budget/plan for 2020–2022 assumes a relatively modest growth in operating surplus from a forecast of £51,000 in 2019 to £305,000 in 2022. This is despite a number of negative factors, most notably the increase in deficit funding for the UK Defined Benefit Scheme. To compensate for this, expenditure will be reviewed to ensure that indirect costs remain relatively flat year on year.

Operating Surplus (£'000)	Actual 2018	Forecast 2019	Budget 2020	Plan 2021	Plan 2022
Knowledge Business	4522	4025	4236	4290	4379
International Development	136	565	880	885	892
Corporate	(4228)	(4538)	(4912)	(4918)	(4966)
<b>Operating Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>Growth % p.a.</b>	<b>(6)%</b>	<b>(88)%</b>	<b>300%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>19%</b>

## Risk management

Relative to the previous Medium-Term Strategy 2017–2019, our key risks are now more likely to occur and have a greater potential impact. These include our pension fund, publishing income and property. The most significant risk is the increased deficit in the UK Defined Benefit pension scheme. A recovery plan has been agreed with the Scheme Trustee and submitted to the UK Pensions Regulator. The implementation of plans to obtain greater financial support from Member Countries will be a high priority for the Board and EMT during the coming period.

Property risks have been significantly reduced by the commencement of the redevelopment at Wallingford in the UK. The risk in publishing revenues remains stable, as these have continued to grow slowly, and the operating surplus has increased by 10% as a result of efficiency improvements. The threat of cybersecurity breaches is being addressed by the IT team's software defences work, as well as by making sure that staff have a high level of awareness about cybersecurity risks, reinforced through annual staff training.

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