



INCEPTION MEETING FOR THE EAST AFRICAN DRYLAND AGROFORESTRY EXPERT GROUP



Photo of expert group members meeting at the Agroforestry symposium in Musoma, Tanzania, November 2024. From left to right: Dr Anthony Kimaro, Dr Siima Bakengesa, Dr John Recha, Thaddeus Mbowe, Elizabeth Githendu, Kezia Sarah Nambalirwa, Dr Deusdeddit Peter Mlay.
Photo by: David Maeri

Funded by the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative.



Table of content

1. Executive summary	2
2. Introduction.....	3
3. Attendees	3
4. Orientation to what being a SIANI Expert Group entails.....	4
5. Discussion on the expected impact, outcome, outputs, activities, workplan and budget.....	4
6. Activities to engage farmers and decision-makers at the Symposium	5
7. Annex	6

1. Executive summary

The East African Agroforestry Dryland Expert Group, led by Thaddeus Mbowe and Dr. Monica Nderitu, brings together 15 experts from civil society, ministries, academia, practitioners, and youth organizations. The group’s primary objective is to highlight the challenges of rural communities in drylands and provide concrete suggestions on how sustainable land management can improve food systems and enhance biodiversity conservation. It is funded by the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) and operates until the end of 2025.

The expert group held its inception meeting at the Agroforestry Symposium in Musoma, Tanzania, in November 2024. This meeting marked the beginning of a collaborative effort to address the challenges faced by rural communities in East African drylands through sustainable land management and agroforestry practices. Five of the 15 group members were present on site, and the remainder will be engaged to contribute their input digitally afterwards.

During the inception meeting, the assembled discussed the purpose, rationale, and scope of the initiative. They emphasized the importance of commitment to the ambitious set of activities planned for the coming year, including workshops, webinars, presentations, radio broadcasts, and a policy brief. The group also went through the work plan, budget and plans for monitoring and evaluation, preparing for how best to work together.

In all, the inception meeting signalled strong commitment from all present to work collaboratively towards achieving the group’s objectives and contributing to the sustainable development of East African drylands.

2. Introduction

SIANI expert groups are cross-sector working groups established by the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) to promote sustainable, rights-based, and inclusive food systems. These groups bring together participants from diverse sectors to support dialogues and communicate knowledge on emerging issues in low-income contexts.

This document reports on the inception meeting of a newly started expert group, the SIANI Expert Group on East African Dryland Agroforestry. The group consists of 15 experts from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda engaging in various activities until the end of 2025.

The inception meeting was held in connection to the 9th Annual Agroforestry Symposium by Vi Agroforestry 14-16 November 2024 in Musoma, Tanzania, where five of the expert group's members were present on site. For practical reasons, the experts physically present were entrusted to carry out the inception meeting. The project leaders will engage the remaining ten members over email to add their input on what is presented in this report.

The aim of the inception meeting was twofold: getting to know each other and getting acquainted with the task ahead. It allowed for in-depth discussions on the outputs and outcomes of the initiative.

3. Attendees

From the expert group and advisory committee

- Thaddeus Mbowe | Vi Agroforestry | Project leader/group coordinator
- Dr. John Recha | International Livestock Research Institute | Expert group member
- Dr. Anthony Kimaro | ICRAF Tanzania | Expert group member
- Dr. Deusdedit Peter Mlay | Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute | Expert group member
- Elizabeth Githendu | University of Nairobi | Expert group member
- Kezia Sarah Nambalirwa | Women for Climate Change Uganda | Expert group member
- Dr. Siima Bakengesa | Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism in Tanzania | Expert group advisory committee member

Supporting and reporting

- David Maeri | Vi Agroforestry | Communication officer
- Leah Ngungu | Vi Agroforestry | Communication officer
- Mabere Makubi | ZBC Television | Journalist
- Alex Gwido | ZBC Television | Journalist

In addition to the group members, two communication officers from the host organisation Vi Agroforestry supported the meeting with photography and report writing. Also, two journalists from Zanzibar Broadcasting corporation (Television) in Tanzania who documented activities during the Symposium were invited to attend the inception meeting. The journalists also helped with filming the experts for a coming informative film, see point 6 below.

4. Orientation to what being a SIANI Expert Group entails

The meeting started with the project leader giving an overview of the project application to the members by outlining the purpose, rationale, group aims, scope, and motivation. The group was also introduced to the key themes of the initiative, including sustainability, resilience to crises, and preparedness. It was noted that the target group for the expert group spans from local farmers inhabiting the drylands to CSOs, academia, researchers, and policymakers.

The group delved into assessing the strength and experiences of the group on dealing with agroforestry in the drylands. It became evident that the group members have been carefully selected to rise to the task. Together they have vast knowledge and experience in drylands, including semi-arid agroforestry systems and inclusion of marginalized groups in semi-arid areas. Some are part of global groups for sustainable land use systems. There was an air of excitement to get the SIANI Expert Group on East African Dryland Agroforestry going.

5. Discussion on the expected impact, outcome, outputs, activities, workplan and budget

The proposed impact, outcomes and outputs drafted by Vi Agroforestry for the expert group were discussed in relation to SIANI's vision, mission, and sub-impact areas. The group also discussed more broadly how the outputs and outcome align with a human rights-based approach and their ambition to impact policy processes and poverty.

All present shared the notion that the expert group initiative is indeed well positioned to contribute to important SIANI sub-impact areas, including the recognition of rural youths' agency and rights, the recognition of smallholders' and SMEs' prosperity in local production systems and value chains, and the recognition of livelihoods and rights of forest communities, indigenous peoples, and natural resource-dependent poor.

The draft plan for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL), the workplan and the budget were reviewed, and those present expressed their support for the documents.* A concern was raised that the budget is small in comparison to the level of ambition. But if group members help make sure outputs are useful to their work outside the group too, then the time invested will be worthwhile. Hence, the meeting agreed that the success of the initiative is based on the vested interests of the experts and their commitment to the initiative. It was furthermore emphasized that smart, cost-efficient communication efforts will be important to successfully raise awareness, support dialogues, and share knowledge and innovations in dryland agroforestry through the planned activities.

To help the experts prepare their availability during the appropriate time and dates, a timeline was shared. There were also discussions on how best to working remotely as a group of 15 members.

**See the annex for a summary of the expected impact, outcome, outputs, activities, workplan, timeline and budget.*

6. Activities to engage farmers and decision-makers at the Symposium

The expert group project started during October 2024 with project leaders Thaddeus Mbowe and Dr. Moncia Nderitu making preparations. The November 2024 Agroforestry Symposium was used for both the inception meeting and for activities to engage farmers and decision-makers. Concretely, the aforementioned experts on site at the Symposium interacted with farmers and decision-makers at various agenda points. Some of them gave presentations and participated in panel discussions.

The experts on site also discussed and agreed on a relevant topic to share with a broader community of practice. The communication team from Vi Agroforestry with support from the journalists filmed the experts on site in a documentary style. In the recordings, the experts elaborated on the following:

With climate change, drylands are adversely affected, yet they have great potential in contributing to food security:

- a. What potential and challenges do you foresee for drylands livelihood systems and sustainability?
- b. Are we doing enough to build the food systems for pastoralists and agropastoral/indigenous people who are mostly the inhabitants in the drylands?
- c. Are there adequate resources and policies supporting sustainable land management in the drylands?

The raw film material will be edited and turned into an informative film during 2025.



From left: Dr Deusdedit Peter Mlay, Kezia Sarah Nambalirwa, Thaddeus Mbowe, Elizabeth Githendu, Dr Anthony Kimaro, Dr Siima Bakengesa, Dr John Recha. Photo David Maeri

7. Annex

Impact: Transform food system in drylands to lay the ground for sustainable communities who can feed themselves with nutritious food without depending on handouts from humanitarian aid, adapt to climate change, reduce vulnerability, increase resilience to crises, and increase yields and incomes.

Outcome 1. Enhanced understanding among policymakers and practitioners of dryland agroforestry as a viable, sustainable strategy for food systems and biodiversity conservation.

Output 1.1. Exchange experiences within the group and generate a more holistic understanding of dryland agroforestry.

Activities

- 1.1.1. Inception workshop
- 1.1.2. Experts will seek opportunities to give presentations of their work, the policy brief and the video for colleagues at their respective workplaces
- 1.1.3. Offer web texts on agroforestry to each org. in the group

Output 1.2 Advance policies, principles and practices to promote agroforestry for drylands communities to tackle food insecurity, loss of biodiversity, climate change and environmental degradation.

Activities

- 1.2.1. Activities to engage with decisionmakers at Tanzania Agroforestry Symposium
- 1.2.2. Activities to engage with decisionmakers at Kenya Agroforestry Open Learning Week
- 1.2.3. Write, translate, layout and print a policy brief
- 1.2.4. Online public seminar to launch the policy brief"

Output 1.3. Push for greater recognition of sustainable methods, of rural youths' agency and rights, and of smallholders' and SMEs' prosperity in value chains.

Activities

- 1.3.1. Newspaper article or op.ed.
- 1.3.2. Online public seminar on agroforestry in drylands from a gender and youth perspective
- 1.3.3. Apply for being part of a side-event at the FAO Committee on World Food Security
- 1.3.4. Tentatively online engagement in FAO Committee on World Food Security side event
- 1.3.5. Selected experts attend an international event in Nairobi
- 1.3.6. Contribute input to the FAO Family Farming Platform, the FSN Forum, Agroforestry Network, ICRAF and SIANI
- 1.3.7. Seek for newspapers & the experts' own organisations' communication channels to feature our work"

Outcome 2. Increase farmers, agropastoralists and their organisations' knowledge on how to adopt sustainable land management practices.

Output 2.1. Engage with practitioners to share knowledge, insights and best practices."

Activities

- 2.1.1. Activities to engage with farmers at Agroforestry Symposium Tanzania

- 2.1.2. Activities to engage with farmers at Agroforestry Open Learning Week in Kenya
- 2.1.3. Filming interviews with experts in the group
- 2.1.4. Edit and finalize film on dryland agroforestry
- 2.1.5. Develop communication materials
- 2.1.6. Record and broadcast community radio

Envisaged Workplan with Timeline & Budget (15 months)

Month 1, October: Group coordinators start preparing info and activities.

Month 2, November: Inception workshop and activities to engage with farmers and decision-makers, filming interviews with experts in the group (all happening at Vi Agroforestry's annual symposium in Tanzania, co-funded by Vi Agroforestry) – 100,000 SEK.

Month 3, December: One newspaper article or op-ed – 0 SEK.

Month 4, January: No activities (holiday season in East Africa) – 0 SEK.

Month 5, February: Edit and finalize film on dryland agroforestry – 25,000 SEK.

Month 6, March (Women's Day?): Online public seminar on agroforestry in drylands from a gender and youth perspective – 7,000 SEK.

Month 7, April: Write, translate, layout, and print a policy brief (co-funded by Vi Agroforestry if needed) – 50,000 SEK.

Month 8, May: Online evaluation meeting and mid-term report – 2,000 SEK.

Month 9, June: Online public seminar to launch the policy brief, apply for being part of a side-event at the FAO Committee on World Food Security in October (online participation or co-funded by Vi Agroforestry) – 7,000 SEK.

Month 10, July (flexible): Experts will seek opportunities to give presentations of their work, the policy brief, and the video for colleagues at their respective workplaces, selected experts attend an international event (will look for suitable opportunities in Nairobi) – 10,000 SEK.

Month 11, August (flexible): Develop communication materials and offer web texts on agroforestry to each organization in the group (co-funded by Vi Agroforestry) – 9,000 SEK.

Month 12, September: Contribute input to the FAO Family Farming Platform, the FSN Forum, Agroforestry Network, ICRAF, and SIANI – 0 SEK.

Month 13, October: Activities to engage with farmers and decision-makers at Vi Agroforestry's annual Agroforestry Open Learning Week in Kenya (co-funded by Vi Agroforestry), community radio record during the learning week, tentatively online engagement in FAO Committee on World Food Security side event – 100,000 SEK.

Month 14, November: Activities to engage with farmers and decision-makers at Vi Agroforestry's annual agroforestry symposium in Tanzania (co-funded by Vi Agroforestry), record community radio, broadcast, seek for newspapers and the experts' own organizations' communication channels to feature our work – 100,000 SEK.

Month 15, December: Evaluation, final narrative report, financial report – 5,000 SEK.

Month 15, December: Audit – 10,000 SEK.

Coordination costs (15 months): Group coordinators' time and office supplies (co-funded by Vi Agroforestry) – 75,000 SEK.

Total Budget from the donor SINAI: 500,000 SEK