



# The Sustainable Trade Initiative IDH Phase III

## Driving sustainability from niche to norm

### Rationale

Agriculture is essential to human societies. It provides food, supports farmers and workers' livelihoods, and sustains industries. However, agricultural value chains face several complex and often interlinked challenges and the transition to more sustainable value chains remains slow. In many sectors, there is a need to simultaneously address social inequalities (living incomes, decent work, gender equity), environmental issues (deforestation, climate change), and the need for responsible, inclusive business practices and market transformation.

### Objectives and activities

The objective of the programme is to transform markets by supporting thriving worker and farmer communities and achieving net zero, regenerative agricultural systems. The focus is thereby set on the three impact areas better income, better jobs and better environment - with gender equality underpinning all efforts. IDH directly works on the enabling conditions for market system changes, acting in close partnership with other stakeholder groups, and particularly the private sector. This leads to improved market system performance and ultimately triggers market-led transformation in all three impact areas.

SECO joins forces with IDH to drive systemic, agricultural market transformation toward resilient, inclusive and resource-efficient trade in key commodity value chains, such as coffee and cocoa, amongst SECO partner countries, Switzerland and at the global level. IDH will scale its impact by mobilizing global private-sector investment and trade through tailored pilot and finance initiatives together with Swiss stakeholders, shifting core business models at the global scale, and providing expertise for policy reform to level the trade playing field both at local and global scale. IDH offers an on-the-ground testbed, the global convening power and the financial innovation tools useful for SECO and Swiss stakeholders to not just comply with, but support scaling up sustainable, inclusive and ecosystem-serving trade.

### Key Components of the programme

- Convening and Partnerships: Building strong multi-stakeholder platforms to align actors on shared strategies, commitments, and data for sector change.

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#### Country/region

Global

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#### Partner/National Facilitator

Stichting IDH, implementing the programme together with 1000+ public and private partners

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#### Duration

2026-2030

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#### Total budget

EUR 129,000,000

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#### SECO contribution

CHF 8,000,000

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- **Improved Business Practices:** Supporting businesses to embed sustainability into procurement, production, and labour standards, ensuring living wages and incomes.
- **Catalysed Investments:** Developing innovative blended finance models and investment hubs to de-risk and scale financing for smallholders and sustainable landscapes.
- **Sector Governance:** Driving policy reforms, regulatory compliance (e.g., EUDR), transparency, and equitable resource management through pre-competitive agreements.
- **Data and Insights:** Generating evidence on impact, market trends, and enabling adaptive management and accountability across all stakeholders.

### **Governance Structure of IDH**

IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative, is a foundation under Dutch law with headquarters in Utrecht. The non-profit, public benefit entity is governed by a supervisory board that appoints the executive board and ensures the foundation remains aligned with its public-interest mandate to drive sustainable and inclusive trade. As market-shaping organization, IDH uses catalytic capital and convening power to shift global commodity and food value chains toward more inclusive and environmentally sustainable equilibria.

SECO has been engaged with IDH since 2013. Jointly with the Dutch core donor, we can regularly provide strategic input during IDH multi-donor meetings.

### **Results from previous phases**

During the multi-year programme 2021-2025, the work of IDH was evaluated in the frame of a comprehensive mid-term evaluation of the entire corporate IDH portfolio. The external assessment on accountability and learning looked at IDH’s performance (OECD-DAC), possible additional measures of scalability and organizational performance. Findings confirm that IDH demonstrates strong relevance and additionality effectively addressing sectoral challenges and fostering innovation.


Most notable impacts achieved include: More than 70 new/improved policies or standards developed that are now effectively implemented and enforced. The programme has facilitated over 120 multi-stakeholder agreements that were signed and are now being implemented. More than one million farming households were able to increase their net income, and more than 1.6 million workers benefit from improved working conditions. More than 1,200 value chain actors have adopted/updated their sourcing and procurement policies and strategies to include sound social and environmental sustainability criteria and goals. Furthermore, the programme was able to leverage EUR 433M of other sources of public, private or blended finance investments over the past five years.

### **Further information**

Website IDH: [www.idh.org](http://www.idh.org)

**seco-cooperation.admin.ch**  
Integration in value chains



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