Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Evaluation of the project "Building Resilience of Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Türkiye through Supporting Socio-Economic Integration and Creating Livelihood Opportunities"

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Abstract

This report presents the final evaluation of the project "Building Resilience of Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Türkiye through Supporting Socio-Economic Integration and Creating Livelihood Opportunities". Implemented between 2019 and 2024, the project aimed to enhance vocational skills, improve agricultural productivity and facilitate employment in the agrifood sector. The evaluation was conducted to assess the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and scalability, with the aim of determining the extent to which the project achieved its intended objectives. Additionally, the evaluation sought to provide actionable recommendations for future initiatives, particularly in similar crisis-affected contexts.

The evaluation found that the project was well-aligned with Türkiye's development priorities and with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO's) strategic objectives, demonstrating responsiveness to emerging challenges. It successfully supported Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTPs) and host communities by addressing labour market needs, strengthening agricultural practices, and expanding economic opportunities for women. However, the project was ambitious. While it facilitated short-term employment opportunities, long-term employability remained a challenge due to structural barriers such as land ownership restrictions, low wages and employer reluctance.

The project demonstrated adaptability to external shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 earthquake, by adjusting its training delivery methods and expanding livelihood support. Its institutional partnerships with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry helped embed vocational training and agricultural knowledge-sharing initiatives within national structures, increasing their potential for sustainability and scale-up. However, gaps in governance made the project implementation heavily reliable on bilateral agreements rather than an integrated steering framework.

While the project made important strides in capacity building and provided short-term livelihood support to vulnerable communities and empowerment initiatives for women, challenges persisted in ensuring long-term income generation and market integration. The evaluation recommends a more holistic approach to combining policy incentives to render the contribution of the Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR) employment desks effective in supporting the employability of SuTPs; and a continued investment in capacity building through complementing it with elements of Farmer Business School (FBS), supporting the Farmer Field School (FFS) digital platform, and further strengthening women-led cooperatives.

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Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

ASDP	Agricultural Skills Development Programme
ESSN	Emergency and Social Safety Net (Programme)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer Field School
ISKUR	Turkish Employment Agency
SuTP	Syrians under temporary protection

Executive summary

Introduction

1. The final evaluation of the project "Building Resilience of Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Türkiye through Supporting Socio-Economic Integration and Creating Livelihood Opportunities" assesses the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of project interventions implemented between November 2019 and September 2024. The project aimed to support Syrian refugees and host communities in Türkiye by enhancing vocational skills, improving agricultural productivity and facilitating job placement in the agrifood sector. The evaluation was conducted to assess the extent to which the project addressed the socioeconomic needs of Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTPs) and host communities, contributed to resilience-building, and achieved its planned outputs and outcomes.

2. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. It involved a review of key project documents, assessments and studies, key informant interviews (KIIs) and group discussions with government counterparts, focus group discussions (FGDs) with the beneficiaries (host communities and refugees) and field observations of project activities in four selected provinces. The evaluation also conducted a household survey. Data were triangulated across multiple sources to ensure the reliability and validity of findings. The evaluation was structured around key evaluation questions that assessed the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and scalability. Several challenges impacted the evaluation process, including constraints in reaching all targeted beneficiaries due to geographical spread. To mitigate these challenges, the evaluation adopted convenience sampling, phone surveys, and facilitated discussions in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Main findings

3. The project was designed in alignment with Türkiye's 11th Development Plan (2019–2023) and the Exit Strategy from the ESSN Programme (2018), emphasizing agricultural production and job creation for refugees. It built on the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO's) longstanding collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and leveraged previous vocational training and livelihood projects implemented in host communities. The intervention aimed to fill labour gaps in the agriculture sector by equipping SuTPs and Turkish host communities with agrifood skills to support their economic integration. The project was relevant, particularly in capacitating both Syrian refugees (SuTP) and host communities in Türkiye with skills needed to engage in the agro-industry labour market and resources to improve their contribution in the market in the targeted provinces where labour gap prevails.

4. The project effectively prioritized the agriculture sector to meet the demand for seasonal labour in 13 targeted provinces, aligning with local economic priorities. It exceeded its original target by 21.2 percent, reaching 7 869 beneficiaries, while ensuring a balanced representation between SuTPs (49.8 percent) and Turkish host community members. However, the rationale behind the target setting was unclear, and a more comprehensive needs assessment could have provided a stronger foundation for defining outreach scope. Additionally, the project successfully promoted gender-balanced participation, with 3 677 women (51 percent) benefitting from various interventions, most of whom were previously unemployed. This emphasis on female participation was particularly relevant, given that a significant proportion of targeted women (82.7 percent) were unemployed before joining the programme.

5. While the project was highly relevant to the immediate needs of the beneficiaries, more considerations could have been given for limitations such as informal employment in the agriculture sector and the limitation of SuTP in owning lands. Given the informal nature of the sector, the Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR) registration desks had limited effectiveness beyond project-facilitated placements. The evaluation found that formalizing agriculture employment required a broader policy approach, involving multiple stakeholders and farmer incentives. Additionally, the project was challenged with the wage disparities that emerged between agriculture and other informal sectors like construction, which attracted SuTP workers due to higher pay rates. Furthermore, land ownership restrictions prevented many SuTPs from fully benefiting from Farmer Field Schools (FFS).

6. The project successfully focused on improving employment opportunities within the agrifood sector, demonstrating a clear commitment to addressing a critical dimension of livelihoods. However, the evaluation noted that the project's approach was somewhat narrow in scope, emphasizing outputs related to employment while missing opportunities to adopt a broader and more inclusive understanding of "livelihoods."

7. The project demonstrated strong adaptability by modifying training delivery methods and expanding support mechanisms in response to external shocks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, vocational training and FFS training-of-trainers transitioned to online platforms, while a digital FFS platform was introduced to facilitate remote learning. Following the 2023 earthquake, the project expanded the Agricultural Skills Development Programme (ASDP) interventions to include Turkish citizens in affected areas, helping mitigate rising social tensions and fostering cohesion between host communities and refugees. Moreover, budget surpluses from currency devaluation were redirected to support women-led cooperatives, strengthening their production capacity and market access. These adjustments highlight the project's adaptability to changing socioeconomic conditions and evolving beneficiary needs.

8. The project has likely contributed to enhancing the livelihood conditions of SuTPs and Turkish host communities by providing income-generating opportunities through vocational training and employment schemes such as ASDP and cash for work plus (CFW+). Although the livelihood coping mechanisms used by these communities remained consistent, their severity decreased over the course of the project. Findings from the July 2024 survey indicated that income earned from project-related employment was primarily spent on food, followed by housing, healthcare, and children's education, underscoring the project efforts to provide temporary relief to address essential household needs. Despite improvements, beneficiaries continued to rely on coping mechanisms such as spending savings, purchasing food on credit, and cutting non-food expenses, though their severity decreased over time. The evaluation found a notable decline in the use of negative coping strategies, particularly in spending savings to buy food, which dropped among Turkish beneficiaries and SuTPs. However, some coping strategies persisted, with slight increases in reliance on less preferred food, borrowing money, and cutting essential non-food expenses, signalling ongoing financial challenges that require long-term, sustainable interventions beyond short-term employment opportunities.

9. Vocational training and ASDP activities have contributed to improving the beneficiaries' agrifood knowledge and skills. While training created short-term job opportunities for ASDP beneficiaries, the evaluation could not confirm the length of employment for vocational training beneficiaries, nor the extent to which the work opportunities could have been sustained over time. While SuTPs valued the training and temporary employment facilitated through ASDP, they expressed frustration over the short job duration and low wages in the agriculture sector. Many transitioned to other sectors, particularly construction, due to higher wages and reluctance among agriculture

employers to cover social security costs. Cultural considerations were also observed, with childcare facilities and transportation provided for SuTP women, making participation more accessible. These findings indicate that while the project successfully built technical capacity, structural labour market challenges limited long-term employment retention among SuTPs.

10. The project successfully promoted sustainable agriculture practices by enhancing the capacity of Turkish smallholder farmers in climate-smart agriculture and good agricultural practices through the FFS model. However, the participation of SuTPs in FFS remained significantly low due to their limited legal access to land and agriculture assets, which was a prerequisite for FFS enrolment. Despite this limitation, the intervention effectively improved agricultural productivity and sustainable farming knowledge among Turkish beneficiaries.

11. Survey results demonstrated the effectiveness of FFS training. Respondents reported an increase in harvest/livestock production, improvements in farming practices and adoption of new agriculture techniques. These reported results are aligned with findings from focus group discussions and the third-party impact assessment of FFS. Farmers reported shifting to climate-smart tools, such as solar-powered drip irrigation in Kahramanmaraş, and adopting better irrigation, grafting and pruning techniques. Others noted significant knowledge gains in animal husbandry, particularly in hygiene, disease prevention and pesticide handling. Female farmers, who constituted 30 percent of total FFS participants, expressed appreciation for the training, acknowledging the practical application of newly acquired techniques in their daily farming activities.

12. The technical capacity of FFS trainers, updated curricula and the success of the programme led the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to express interest in scaling up the FFS model nationwide through Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry facilitation. The project also launched an FFS digital platform to support e-learning, training and webinars. While beneficiary engagement with the platform remained low, it has 1 842 registered members, 1 300 Tarla.in App users, and over 104 816 total visitors, reflecting its potential as a long-term knowledge-sharing tool. However, consultations with beneficiaries highlighted the need to complement FFS with financial management, business growth and marketing module to enhance their skills.

13. The project made considerable efforts to raise awareness among employers and stakeholders about labour registration and work permit exemptions for seasonal SuTP workers. However, these efforts were hindered by the informal nature of the sector, difficulties in transitioning to formal employment, and the limited effectiveness of ISKUR employment desks. The vocational training beneficiaries worked for an average of seven and a half months, while the majority of the SuTPs sought alternative means to sustain their livelihoods. While 86 percent of SuTPs received work permit exemption documents, only 13 actual work permits were issued, underscoring the challenges in transitioning to formal employment. Many SuTPs remained unaware of the exemption process, limiting its impact on job stability and long-term employability. Additionally, many SuTPs hesitated to transition to formal jobs due to fears of losing Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) assistance.

14. The project support to the women-led cooperatives proved very pertinent and effective. It demonstrated strong potential for sustainability and scalability, offering significant opportunities to enhance women's capacity in the agriculture sector. The evaluation highlighted the positive socioeconomic impact of the project, as cooperative members reported increased self-confidence, motivation and awareness of their roles in the sector. However, none of the consulted cooperatives registered any SuTP members. This highlights challenges in achieving the project's SuTP membership targets and suggests the need for a reassessment of SuTP representation within

cooperatives. The project incorporated both conventional and digital marketing strategies to enhance cooperative visibility and sales, including the HepYerinden.coop platform, designed as a collective marketplace for regional women-led cooperatives. However, long-term success depends on strengthening cooperatives' capacity in sales and marketing. Overall, the intervention demonstrated strong potential for sustainability, provided that cooperatives receive continued business development and digital marketing support.

15. The project grant scheme proved effective in fostering business growth, particularly when integrated with other components of the project. It was widely appreciated by beneficiaries acknowledging its role in business growth. Participation of SuTPs was very modest, largely due to legal documentation barriers and concerns about losing Emergency Social Safety Net assistance. Findings revealed that greater flexibility in the process could help avoid unnecessary delays, improve overall efficiency and maximize its long-term impact.

16. The project's steering governance structure could have been more robust to better support strategic implementation. The FAO project intended to harness inter-ministerial collaboration through the project steering committee, but that this attempt was largely hindered by central-level bureaucratic barriers. It turned for a pragmatic approach, coordinating bilaterally with each of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Directorates to manage project implementation. The partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry significantly enhanced the sustainability and scalability of key project interventions by embedding vocational training and FFS within the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry structures and strengthening the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's technical capacity to promote Climate Change Adaptation and Good Agricultural Practices. The evaluation confirmed the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's commitment to leveraging project achievements to further improve agricultural practices in Türkiye.

Conclusions and recommendations

17. The project was well aligned with the priorities of the Turkish Government and FAO, demonstrating responsiveness and adaptability to evolving contextual challenges. It effectively contributed to improving immediate livelihoods for vulnerable SuTPs and Turkish host communities, particularly by expanding income-generating opportunities for women in the agrifood sector. While the project successfully focused on improving employment opportunities within the agrifood sector, the design could have benefited from a more holistic approach. Although the project provided short-term employment opportunities, its impact on sustainable livelihood improvements was limited, as many SuTPs transitioned to higher-paying sectors due to low wages and structural employment barriers in agriculture.

18. The attempt to formalize SuTP employment within the agriculture sector was ambitious and required a more phased, adaptable approach that accounted for sectoral informality, wage competitiveness and SuTP employment restrictions. As a result, the employability component was less effective than anticipated, with many beneficiaries opting for alternative livelihoods outside agriculture. Despite these challenges, the project demonstrated strong scalability potential, particularly through institutional partnerships and digital tools, such as the FFS digital platform. Further investment in market access, business growth and capacity-building, especially for women-led cooperatives, will be essential to sustain and expand the project's outcomes across Türkiye.

19. Additionally, while the pragmatic, bilateral coordination approach ensured effective implementation, the project lacked a robust, inclusive governance framework to facilitate strategic oversight and multistakeholder collaboration. The reliance on ad hoc coordination mechanisms,

rather than a well-integrated steering structure, highlighted gaps in governance and institutional engagement, which could have further strengthened the project's long-term impact. Addressing these structural and design limitations will be crucial for future interventions aiming to more effectively integrate SuTPs into Türkiye's labour market, while ensuring sustainable livelihood improvements for both refugees and host communities.

Recommendation 1. Ensure that projects of similar scope give more attention to the SuTP livelihood needs and resilience opportunities, particularly in relation to employability of SuTPs, through a more comprehensive and gradual transitioning approach combining policy incentives to render the contribution of ISKUR employment desks effective. (*To FAO*)

Recommendation 2. Ensure that future projects of similar scope rest on a solid theory of change to guide design, define outcomes and integrate a broad understanding of "livelihood" and "socioeconomic resilience" in dynamic and challenging contexts. (*To FAO*)

Recommendation 3. Continue FAO's efforts to leverage stakeholders' interests that would serve future projects, specifically the donor's priority to strengthen women-led cooperatives and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's commitment to advancing the FFS modality, through complementing it with elements of Farmer Business Schools and supporting the FFS digital platform. (*To FAO*)

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

1. The final evaluation serves a dual purpose of learning and accountability. It assesses the extent to which the project objectives were achieved, its outputs and activities were effectively implemented, and identifies design and implementation aspects to be addressed for the potential scaling-up of the project model.

1.2 Intended users

2. The primary users of the evaluation are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Türkiye Country Office, the government counterparts (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services), the European commission, as well as implementing partners (Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry). Secondary users are the FAO Regional Office, FAO Office of Emergencies and Resilience and other partners in the region seeking lessons learned from similar project scope and experience.

1.3 Scope and objective of the evaluation

3. The scope of the evaluation is the implementation period of the project from November 2019 to September 2024. The main objectives of the evaluation are to assess: i) relevance of the project in responding to the country's needs and priorities; ii) contribution of the project to the Syrian refugee and host communities' resilience; iii) achievements of the project at outputs and outcomes levels; and iv) good practices and lessons learned that could be scaled up. The evaluation also examines the extent to which aspects related to gender were integrated into the project design and implementation. In doing, so the evaluation examined the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of project results. More specifically, the evaluation sought to answer the following key evaluation questions, as elaborated in Appendix 2:

   i. *EQ 1*: To what extent were the project interventions relevant and appropriate in responding to the needs of Syrian refugees and the host communities in Türkiye?

   ii. *EQ 2*: To what extent have the project planned outputs and expected outcomes been achieved? How sustainable are the project results?

   iii. *EQ 3*: To what extent were the project management and partnership arrangements appropriate?

1.4 Methodology

4. The evaluation relied on a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) approach to ensure adequate triangulation of the findings distilled from the different data sources. Data triangulation across different sources and methods was carried out to validate findings and avoid biases in the evaluative judgement. Throughout the evaluation process, the Evaluation Team ensured that different aspects of the evaluation, where applicable, are gender sensitive and in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.

5. The evaluation consisted of five phases: inception, data collection and consultation, data analysis, drafting, and report finalization. During the inception phase, a series of exploratory meetings were held with the FAO Country Office Team to better understand project design and implementation on one hand, and to discuss the evaluation approach and consultation plan on the other. The

meetings shed light on the different aspects of project implementation, the role of partners and the challenges in delivering the different outputs. The evaluation took stock of the various project documents,[1] including the labour market assessment, the socio-economic impact assessment on the implementation of the Agricultural Skills Development Programme (ASDP), cooperative impact assessment, Farmer Field School (FFS) impact assessment, and a series of quarterly information notes (QIN), that were useful in framing the evaluation and triangulation purposes.

6. As part of the data collection phase, the team conducted a field mission over a period of two weeks in July 2024, and covered four out of the 13 provinces targeted by the project, as illustrated in Figure 1 (red dot [1]: Adana, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaras and Bursa). These four provinces were selected based on the following criteria identified in consultation with the Project Team: i) geographical coverage and representation (East, West and South); ii) presence of beneficiaries from both target groups (Turkish host communities and Syrians under Temporary Protection [SuTP]); and iii) coverage of the various project activities (FFS, grants, vocational training, Agricultural Skills Development Programme and cooperatives support).

Figure 1. Project and evaluation coverage

Note: Refer to the disclaimer on copyright page for the names and boundaries used in this map.

Source: FAO Office of Evaluation Communication Team's elaboration based on Bing maps.

7. The Evaluation Team conducted a total of 25 key informant interviews (KIIs) and group interviews with stakeholders from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry at central and provincial levels (Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry). The Team also consulted other service providers[2] and conducted a series of consultation meetings with the Project Teams, both remote and in-person. During the field mission, 19 focus group discussions (FGD) were held with women and men from both target groups (Turkish host communities and SuTP) and five field observations to the cooperatives. The Evaluation Team developed semistructured KII and FGDs tools used during consultations. The list of consulted stakeholders is provided in Appendix 1. Concurrently, a phone survey was conducted in July 2024 to complement the consultation with the project beneficiaries and provide another source of data for triangulation purposes. The survey was

[1] The project final report was not ready by the time the evaluation report was drafted.

[2] ISKUR stands for "Is ve Isci Bulma Kurumu", the national employment agency in Türkiye, whose mandate is to provide employment support services by registering job seekers and facilitating their matching with potential employers.

conducted in both languages (Arabic and Turkish), targeting 350 beneficiaries in total[3] from both target groups in the four provinces visited by the Evaluation Team. Appendix 3 presents a description of the sampling methodology and the survey tool.

8. Data collected from different sources, identified above, were transcribed and analysed while ensuring triangulation of the findings from multiple data sources using the evaluation matrix, to overcome any potential bias and to ensure findings are evidence-based. Following the data collection phase, the Evaluation Team held a debriefing meeting with the Project Team to discuss the preliminary findings that emerged from the field visits.

1.5 Limitations

9. The below table presents limitations faced by the Evaluation Team, and the mitigations measures taken.

Table 1. Evaluation limitations and mitigation

Limitations	Description and mitigation
Representation	Project implementation is spread across 13 provinces targeting more than 6 000 beneficiaries, with many activities implemented throughout the project lifecycle. To that end, the Evaluation Team has undergone a selection process to ensure representation across the provinces, nationalities, gender and project outputs.
Availability of the beneficiaries	Due to the time lag between completed activities and the evaluation, many of the selected beneficiaries were not present for consultation during the field mission. They were either preoccupied with their bread-winning activities or did not commit to showing up in the scheduled consultation sessions. To mitigate the challenge in getting beneficiaries for the consultation, the evaluation relied on i) a convenience approach suggested by the Project Team and partners (getting those who made themselves available); as well as ii) the phone survey to widen the pool of consulted beneficiaries.
Recall bias	Since most of the activities were implemented long before the data collection kicked off, the consultations could be challenged by a recall bias. To that end, the evaluation probed during the consultation with beneficiaries (FGDs), and triangulated the findings with the survey and the project progress reports, among other documentation.
Language	Almost half of the consulted beneficiaries were Syrians who do not speak Turkish. To ensure inclusivity, the Evaluation Team included team members fluent in either Turkish or Arabic. The survey was also conducted in both languages.
Tensions between the different target groups	Tensions that erupted during the riots and clashes between the SuTPs and the Turkish communities in Kayseri region (South Türkiye) on 30 June 2024 were felt vividly during the field mission. They have since spread to areas in Hatay, Gaziantep, Urfa, Adana and others. The Evaluation Team had to allow some safe space for members of both communities to express their frustrations and concerns separately, before shifting the focus to project-specific interventions. In some cases, FGDs had to be shortened when discussions became very tense.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

[3] Sampled from the 2 456 beneficiaries targeted by the project in these provinces.

2. Background and context of the project

2.1 Context

10. Türkiye has a vast agricultural landscape, with 23.2 million hectares of agricultural land and 5.1 million hectares of arable land. It's noteworthy for being the second-largest agricultural economy among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (erai, 2020). The country ranks as one of the world's top ten agricultural producers, with agriculture being an important sector contributing annually over USD 50 billion to the country's revenue. Agriculture accounts for about 6.5 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 and 10 percent of its exports in 2020. Moreover, agriculture is one of the main sources of income and employment for local Turkish communities who host Syrians, particularly in southeastern provinces such as Adana, Gaziantep, Kilis and Şanlıurfa. In commercial and industrial urban areas, such as İzmir and Mersin, the food processing and food transportation sectors employ both Syrian and Turkish workers (FAO, 2022).

11. Türkiye has been also classified as the host country with the largest refugee population in the world, including Syrians under temporary protection, as well as international protection applicants and status holders (IPASH).[4] Following the Syrian crisis that erupted in 2011, Türkiye hosts a total of 3.7 million (FAO, 2022) Syrian refugees, living amongst Turkish host communities and in refugees' temporary accommodation centres throughout the country. Recent literature reveals that SuTPs have been facing high levels of protection risks as well as economic insecurity, leaving them vulnerable and forced to resort to negative coping mechanisms, most commonly reduced food expenditure and increased borrowing (3RP, 2023). The majority of Syrian refugees have access to employment only in the informal sector, generally receive wages lower than the national minimum wage and rely on daily and temporary or seasonal employment opportunities. The government has introduced programmes aiming at enhancing the competencies and skills of the refugees, in an effort to promote economic integration through engaging in the labour market.[5]

12. Despite these efforts, challenges related to social cohesion and economic integration persist, exacerbated by differing conditions of social assistance for Turkish nationals and refugees, triggered by misconceptions from both Syrian refugees and employers' side. As per the Syrian Refugee Resilience Plan (SRRP) (FAO, 2022) refugee concerns emerged related to: i) potentially losing regular assistance from the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) assistance[6] in case they are granted other types of assistance; ii) Turkish language barrier; iii) limited/weak registration and access to temporary work (with low wages); and iv) lack of knowledge about work permits. From the employer's perspective, difficulties in employing Syrian refugees were associated with: i) high cost of formal employment when considering the financial obligations (i.e. social security, insurances) compared to the legal liabilities and financial risks of unregistered employment; ii) insufficient information about incentives; iii) insufficient information about work permits and exemptions; iv) language barriers; and v) incompatibility with work culture (FAO, 2022).

[4] Other group of refugees, namely the international protection applicants and status holders, were considered in the project, but they constituted a minimal percent of the beneficiaries and mostly in the Easter province of Van.
[5] Türkiye Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services Exit Strategy from UNHCR, 2018.
[6] The Emergency Social Safety Net aims to allow refugees living outside of the camps across Türkiye to cover their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothes, etc. It is funded by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

2.2 Project

13. The project "Building Resilience of Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Türkiye through Supporting Socio-Economic Integration and Creating Livelihood Opportunities" was designed in response to the influx of Syrian refugees. The project aimed to strengthen the resilience and socioeconomic integration of SuTP and vulnerable host communities of Türkiye through support to agricultural livelihoods and access to employment in the agrifood sector. The main target groups are vulnerable seasonal agricultural workers made up of refugees (predominately Syrian), Turkish host communities (vulnerable Turkish communities working in the agri and agro-industry),[7] and small-scale producers/entrepreneurs in the agriculture sector, with a proportion of 50 percent Turkish and 50 percent Syrian (FAO, 2019). The project was implemented over a wide geographical area covering 13 provinces, selected based primarily on the concentration of the SuTPs: i) the west (İzmir, Manisa, Bursa and Çanakkale); ii) the east (Van); and iii) the south (Adana, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Şanlıurfa and Adiyaman).

14. The project intended to achieve its outcome through three main outputs and their respective activities:

Outcome: *Improved self-reliance and livelihoods for 6 200 vulnerable SuTP and Turkish (host community) households living in the target provinces (i.e. Adana, Bursa, Gaziantep, Hatay, İzmir, Kahramanmaras, Kilis, Konya, Manisa and Sanlıurfa).*

Output 1: Agrifood vocational skills of vulnerable SuTP, international protection applicants and status holders and unemployed Turkish host community men and women improved *(3 000 vulnerable SuTP, international protection applicants and status holders and unemployed Turkish men, women and youth are awarded vocational training certificates by concerned bodies in order to increase their chances of gaining employment in the future).*

Output 2: Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and good agricultural practice (GAP) knowledge and skills of Turkish smallholder producers, SuTP and international protection applicants and status holders farmers (with legal access to land) improved (*1 500 smallholder SuTP, international protection applicants and status holders and Turkish men and women producers adopt climate-smart agriculture technologies and practices and good agricultural practice principles*).

Output 3: Formal employability of male and female SuTP, international protection applicants and status holders and Turkish host community agrifood workers enhanced, and short-term employment created for male and female seasonal workers among the local refugee population (*1 400 vulnerable male and female SuTP, international protection applicants and status holders and Turkish host community agrifood workers formerly employed by the private sector[8] and 1 500 SuTP benefit from short-term jobs and training through community-based cash for work+ (CFW+) schemes*).

15. The project was designed in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Türkiye. It was funded by the European Union, through the European Union Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis, Madad, with a total budget of EUR 10 million. The initial implementation period was between October 2019 and December 2021. It was then extended until October 2024. The first months of implementation were marked by delays mainly due to the slow process of obtaining government authorizations and subsequently the restrictive measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was then subject to four addenda.

[7] In line with the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in Response to the Syria Crisis

[8] I.e. 1 200 workers under the project (*Outputs 1 and 2*) and 200 workers from previous FAO-implemented vocational training programmes.

1st addendum: August 2020

i. extended the project duration by nine months;

ii. replaced three provinces with new ones (Konya, Mersin, Mardin were replaced with Bursa, Manisa and Van);

iii. included the international protection applicants and status holders (Iraqi, Afghani refugees) as beneficiaries;

iv. extended social security premium support from three to six months;

v. removed the Union of Turkish Chambers of Agriculture (TZOB) from the Department of Associations;

vi. updated FFS modality'

2nd addendum: September 2021

i. added the women cooperative support programme component.

3rd addendum: September 2022

i. extended the project duration for another 18 months;

ii. depicted the addition of the cash for work plus and the ASDP activities;

iii. added new cooperatives;

iv. introduced the digital FFS platform;

v. added two additional provinces (Tekirdağ and Çanakkale).

4th addendum: November 2023 and as a result of the earthquake

i. included Turkish citizens in the cash for work plus and the ASDP in order to support cohesion among host communities and refugees.[9]

5th addendum: April 2024

i. extended the project duration for another 3 months.

[9] Based on project document review and discussions with the project team.

3. Evaluation findings

EQ 1: To what extent were the project interventions relevant and appropriate in responding to the needs of Syrian refugees and the host communities in Türkiye?

Finding 1. The project was found to be aligned with the government, donor and FAO priorities aiming at responding to the immediate needs of SuTPs and Turkish host communities and improving their agrifood skills to fill labour gaps in the targeted provinces.

16. The project was designed in alignment with Turkish government priorities stipulated in Türkiye 11th Development Plan (2019–2023). The project support to agricultural livelihoods and access to employment in the agrifood sector is in line with the Development Plan objective whereby agricultural production is to be increased to ensure adequate and balanced nutrition of all vulnerable communities through improving agricultural practices and production capacity. It was also in line with the purpose of the Government of Türkiye's Exit Strategy from the ESSN Programme (2018), particularly, two strategic objectives of the Exit Strategy, namely: i) supporting the graduation from ESSN and adaptation to the labour market of SuTP; and ii) ensuring and increasing formal employment and job creation. The project capitalized on FAO long-standing collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and other relevant government institutions on agricultural and rural development, in the context of the Syrian Refugee Resilience Plan. The project built on the learning and experience of earlier FAO projects (FAO, 2017; UNDP, FAO and UNHCR, 2018) related to vocational training and livelihood in host communities of southern Türkiye.

17. The project was relevant, particularly in capacitating both Syrian refugees (SuTP) and host communities in Türkiye with skills needed to engage in the agro-industry labour market and resources to improve their contribution in the market. Given that Türkiye hosts the largest number of refugees globally, including more than 3.2 million SuTPs, the country saw an opportunity to fill its labour gap in agriculture while maintaining the market, known for being informal, viable (UNHCR Türkiye, n.d.). The evaluation found that the project responded to the needs for capacitated seasonal workers, from both nationalities, through interventions aimed at improving their skills in the targeted provinces where labour gap prevails. Various research studies (FAO and Sociological Association, 2018; FAO and Ankara University, 2018) have highlighted a shortage of skilled and semiskilled labour in several agriculture-related fields, such as livestock management, orchard and plantation management, harvesting (such as citrus and olive), greenhouse operation and maintenance (for cut flowers and vegetables) as well as post-harvest processing and packaging. These studies also emphasized the potential of the SuTP's, noting that the majority remain reliant on informal, low-wage, and unstable seasonal jobs, particularly in agriculture, due to their limited skills and lack of formal qualifications. Given this context, the project focused on agricultural vocational training and skills building that were both timely and essential. In addition, the project tailored different interventions targeting host communities given their access to land and agribusiness ownership, aiming at enhancing their agricultural practices and improving their production. Accordingly, the project was designed around three outputs:

    i. Agrifood vocation training component (Output 1) was envisioned to build the capacity of both SuTPs and Turkish host communities along two offerings: a full-fledged vocational training (Output 1) and an abridged short one (referred to as ASDP).

    ii. FFS component (Output 2) was mostly tailored to improve the host communities' skill and knowledge of good agricultural practice.

    iii. Employability component (Output 3) was implemented along

- a grant scheme – mostly targeting the host communities;
- provision of seasonal job placement of the SuTPs through the ASDP;[10]
- employment registration at the Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR) desks (implanted at the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry) and various job-matching initiatives to link the beneficiaries with potential employers;[11]
- supporting host-communities women-led agricultural cooperatives.

18. The evaluation confirmed a coherent linkage between the employability component (Output 3) and the other two outputs. In fact, the job creation culminated all the project efforts in improving the farmers skills and knowledge of good and environment-friendly agricultural practices (Output 2), building the capacity of both the SuTPs and Turkish farmers with the vocational training (Output 1) to bring them up to speed to match the market needs. The implemented job placement components (known as the cash for work) was associated with the ASDP granted the SuTP with short/seasonal income generating opportunities; and the grant-scheme offered the grantees (mostly Turkish nationals) with opportunities to improve their production, while also offering some SuTPs with employment opportunities.

Finding 2. The project's targeting approach was reasonably suitable, addressing both sector-specific and geographic priorities. The focus on the agriculture sector reflected the need for more seasonal labour in this sector. The project aimed to equip unskilled SuTPs with the skills needed to meet labour demands within the agriculture sector in the targeted provinces.

19. By concentrating on the agrifood sector, the project focused on a key economic driver in rural areas of Türkiye, aligning with labour market demands in the identified 13 provinces (as detailed in section 2.2). The geographic focus was selected based on the need to prioritize regions with the largest refugee populations, where the agricultural labour market could effectively absorb and benefit from an influx of skilled workers.

20. The evaluation noted the project has exceeded its target of 6 200 by 21.2 percent, successfully engaging 7 869 beneficiaries[12] in different activities. It also maintained a balanced representation between nationalities, with 49.8 percent SuTPs, targeting vulnerable Turkish and SuTP beneficiaries, the majority of whom were engaged in agriculture (FAO, 2019). It could not, however, establish the rationale for setting the target, other than the project's consideration for aspects of social cohesion.[13] It was unclear what proportion this target represented in relation to the broader vulnerable community (SuTP and Turks) in the provinces, as there was no evidence to indicate the scale of the target within the larger potential beneficiary pool.

21. The Project Team made significant efforts to ensure gender-balanced targeting and the need to address the gender gap in the agriculture sector. The project engaged 3 677 women (out of the total of 7 169 beneficiaries), representing 51 percent of all beneficiaries, the majority of whom had no previous experience in agriculture activities. In fact, findings from the baseline study indicated that a significant proportion of the targeted women (82.7 percent of the targeted women) were unemployed a year before participating in project activities.

[10] Formerly referred to as the cash-for-work plus (CFW+)

[11] Introduced after the withdrawal of the Union of Turkish Chambers of Agriculture (TZOB) from the project due to conflicts in Northern Syria.

[12] Reported by the project (December 2024).

[13] The Project Team, however, reported that the ratio was set taking into consideration aspects of social cohesion and the "do no harm" approach considering the risks of social tensions (FAO, 2019).

22. Moreover, consultations with the various stakeholders and beneficiaries confirmed that different channels were used to reach out to beneficiaries. The Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry led the outreach process for the different activities by i) relying on the existing Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry databases of vulnerable SuTPs in the provinces; ii) disseminating announcements through the camp authorities in which SuTPs are hosted, religious and cultural centres and via social media channels; and iii) relying on the national farmers registry to target the vulnerable Turkish farmers.

Finding 3. While the project was relevant to the immediate needs of the beneficiaries, more considerations could have been given for limitations such as informal employment in the agriculture sector, and the limitation of SuTP in owning lands.

23. The evaluation findings revealed that the project's attempts to formalize the sector were ambitious, making it less effective in matching beneficiaries with employers. It acknowledged the contextual shifts in the government's priorities, such as the decision to maintain the Emergency Social Safety Net contrary to initial policies during project design and noted that the project did not address these changes in the various addenda introduced during implementation. The ISKUR registration desks established within the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry premises were largely used for registering project beneficiaries in the database. SuTPs' had limited opportunities to secure jobs outside of those directly facilitated by the project as discussed later in the report. (developed further in Finding 9).

24. When closely examining the sector dynamics, the evaluation recognized the "informality" within the sector and questioned the ambition to address the challenge of formalizing employment in an informal sector such as the Turkish agriculture sector. The evaluation acknowledged the project attempting to pilot such a transition and concluded it was a challenging undertaking for it would have required a different, yet holistic and gradual approach with diverse policy and programmatic tools. Formalizing agricultural work proved to be a stretch that would require not only incentivizing the landlord farmers, but also unpacking and reshaping the traditional *"ustabasi"*[14]-based modality. From a policy perspective, it necessitates influencing the national ESSN policy targeting the SuTPs, pulling them out of it and encouraging them to register for work permits, while extending the coverage of ISKUR to cover the sector. Evidently, such a holistic approach would need serious engagement from different stakeholders; government institutions and ministries (primarily agriculture and labour), farmers associations and cooperatives, among others. Moreover, consultations with the Project Team and other stakeholders highlighted that the project's employment efforts could not address SuTP concerns about losing access to the ESSN, precisely losing assistance from the latter in case of employment.

25. Additionally, the initial SuTPs target was ambitious. The project did not fully account for the limitation faced by many SuTPs, precisely the requirement to own land to participate and benefit from the project's FFS activities. It seems that the project could have benefited from a closer look at the baseline data, which indicated that land ownership among SuTPs was at 6 percent, with an additional 8 percent holding tenant status.

Finding 4. The project successfully focused on improving employment opportunities within the agrifood sector, demonstrating a clear commitment to addressing a critical dimension of livelihoods. However, the evaluation noted that the project's approach was somewhat narrow in scope, emphasizing outputs related

[14] *Ustabasi* is the middleman who are the key interlocutors managing daily agricultural works. They are contracted by landlords to provide agriculture labour to the fields. *Ustabasi* manage the transportation and payments between the employer and the seasonal (mostly daily) workers (ISKUR, n.d.).

to employment while missing opportunities to adopt a broader and more inclusive understanding of "livelihoods".

26. Good practice, as outlined in recent FAO resources (FAO and ILO, 2009), advocates for a comprehensive perspective on livelihoods that encompasses economic stability, food security, social protection, access to resources, long-term well-being and institutional enablers. While the project's emphasis on employment and its inclusion of social outcome indicators[15] are positive, the design could have benefited from a more holistic approach. This might have included additional indicators to measure higher-level outcomes, such as improved food security, increased income, resilience and other facets of sustainable livelihoods. Expanding the project's logical framework in this way could have enhanced its overall impact and alignment with FAO good practices.

Finding 5. The project demonstrated strong adaptability in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 earthquakes by adjusting training delivery methods and expanding support to affected provinces.

27. The evaluation acknowledged the project adaptability in response to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the earthquakes that hit the southern provinces in February 2023. During the COVID-19 pandemic, while the delivery of key project activities was postponed, the Project Team made the necessary modification on the planned vocational training and the FFS training of trainers turned into online modality and accounted for the required health and safety protocols in delivering them. Additionally, the project introduced the digital FFS platform (Uygulamalı Çiftçi Okulları. n.d.) (intended to facilitate e-learning, training and knowledge sharing among FFS graduates and facilitators) in the second addendum as a tool for knowledge sharing and training in anticipation for any possible distance and self-paced learning, as elaborated during the consultation.

28. Following the earthquake that struck the southern provinces in February 2023, the project adapted some of its activities to address the urgent emerging needs in the affected provinces. This aimed to strengthen the affected communities' capacity to cope with the devastating effects of the earthquakes and to ensure immediate recovery of agriculture production capacities. To this end, it established new FFS groups in the impacted provinces, including Hatay, Gaziantep, and Kahramanmaraş. It also extended the Agricultural Skills Development Programme to engage 2 025 vulnerable Turkish nationals (10.7 percent of the total reported ASDP beneficiaries). The latter was pursued in addendum four as a mitigation measure to minimize the potential implication of the rising tensions that erupted in those provinces following implementing the ASDP targeting the SuTPs only.[16] On the other hand, the evaluation acknowledged the contextual shifts in the government's priorities, such as the decision to maintain the Emergency Social Safety Net contrary to initial policies during project design. It noted, however, that the project did not address these changes in the various addenda introduced during implementation.

29. Another example of the project adaptability – though not related to either crisis – was the introduction of support interventions for women-led cooperatives in the targeted provinces, using the budget surplus generated by currency devaluation.[17] The evaluation asserted that this amendment was core to amplify the project's efforts to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment, as further elaborated in Finding 9). It was deemed very relevant to the project

[15] To evaluate its outcome of "improving self-reliance of livelihoods for vulnerable SuTPs and Turkish communities", the project relied on two quantitative indicators: i) the number of people with improved agricultural production; and ii) the number of additional people employed in agriculture.

[16] Based on project document review and discussions with the Project Team.

[17] Addendum 3 dated January 2023.

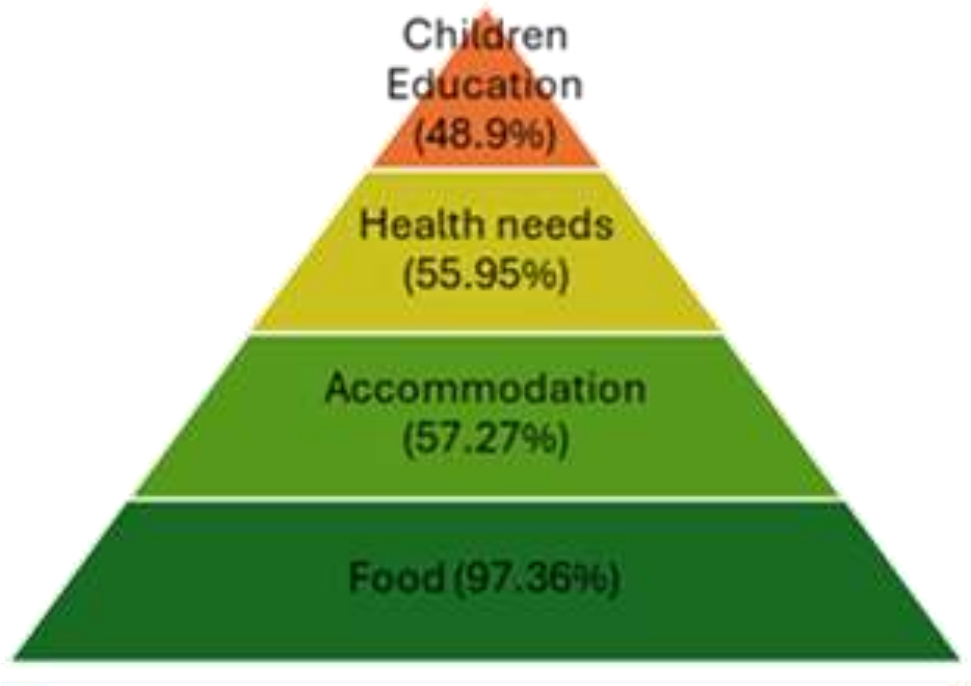
scope by strengthening the capacity of the women-led cooperative to improving their production facilities and enhancing their sales capacity.

EQ 2: To what extent have the project planned outputs and expected outcomes been achieved? How sustainable are the project results?

Finding 6. The project has likely contributed to improving the livelihood conditions of the target vulnerable communities. Although the coping mechanisms used by these communities remained consistent, their severity decreased over the course of the project.

30. The evaluation observed that the project's narrow approach to measuring "livelihood" among vulnerable communities focused solely on job opportunities, as indicated in the project documents and logframe. Consequently, it introduced the livelihood coping strategy measure to better reflect the communities' coping capacity and enable comparability with the baseline assessment. Findings from the survey conducted by the Evaluation Team in July 2024 suggested that beneficiaries spent their income earned from the employment opportunities since engaging in the project activities (precisely the vocational training and ASDP), primarily on food (97.36 percent of the respondents), followed by accommodation, health and children education, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Hierarchy of spending income incurred from employment by beneficiaries



Source: Author's own elaboration based on the survey respondents ranking of their spending.

31. Data from the survey shows that following the project, SuTPs and host Turkish communities continued to rely on the same coping strategies for meeting basic food needs as they did at baseline. These strategies include: i) spending savings; ii) reducing essential non-food expenditure; iii) relying on less preferred and less expensive food; and iv) purchasing food on credit or borrowing. However, the use of these strategies was observed to lessen over time, as shown in Table 2.[18] External factors such as significant inflation and worsening purchasing power between 2020 and 2024 that might persist would lead to compounded vulnerabilities.[19]

[18] In the absence of contrafactual, this is considered a contribution of the project and can't be directly attributed to it.
[19] CPI increase from October 2020 (baseline date) to November 2024: 525 percent; and food CPI increase is 666 percent.

32. Among Turkish and SuTP beneficiaries, the use of negative coping strategies has decreased across eight strategies compared to the baseline. Notably, there was a significant reduction in the strategy of spending savings to buy food, dropping from 71 percent to 46 percent among Turkish beneficiaries, and from 83 percent to 27 percent among SuTP beneficiaries. This decline is likely linked to the depletion of savings in both groups over time, as confirmed during consultations. However, a slight increase was observed in three specific strategies: i) relying on less preferred or cheaper food; ii) borrowing money to buy food; and iii) reducing essential non-food expenditures.

Table 2. Negative coping strategies adopted by the survey respondents

Negative strategy used	Overall		Turkish community		SuTPs	
	Baseline survey	Evaluation Survey	Baseline survey	Evaluation Survey	Baseline Survey	Evaluation Survey
Rely on less preferred and less expensive food	**52%**	**54%**	29%	44%	78%	63%
Borrow food or rely on help from relative(s) or friend(s)	21%	20%	17%	20%	28%	21%
Reduce number of meals eaten in a day	29%	27%	14%	3%	47%	49%
Limit portion size at mealtime	30%	11%	17%	2%	47%	20%
Restrict consumption by adults for little children to eat	29%	9%	21%	3%	44%	14%
Spent savings	**71%**	**46%**	65%	68%	**83%**	**27%**
Bought food on credit or borrowed money to purchase food	**47%**	**45%**	34%	29%	67%	61%
Reduced essential non-food expenditures	**45%**	**57%**	41%	76%	53%	51%
Sell household goods	23%	15%	15%	1%	38%	22%
Sell productive assets or means of transport	26%	15%	26%	5%	50%	25%
Send adult household members to beg	1%	4%	1%	1%	1%	6%
Had school-age children (under 16) involved in income generation	25%	8%	27%	1%	37%	19%

Note: Disaggregated by nationality

Source: Author's own elaboration (July 2024).

Finding 7. Vocational training and ASDP activities have contributed to improving beneficiaries' agrifood knowledge and skills. While training provided short-term job opportunities for ASDP beneficiaries, the evaluation could not confirm the duration of employment for vocational training beneficiaries or the extent to which these job opportunities could have been sustained over time. Moreover, SuTPs retention in the market was not sustained, leading most o seek livelihood in other sectors.

33. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the project fulfilled its target of providing 2 947 beneficiaries[20] (62.3 percent are women and 49.5 percent are SuTPs) with vocational training in the agrifood sector, as illustrated in Figure 3. The project delivered two types of training to the beneficiaries: a vocational training package targeting both Turkish communities and SuTPs, and a short training coupled with short-term job placement under the cash for work component, targeted the SuTPs, called the Agricultural Skills Development Programme.[21]

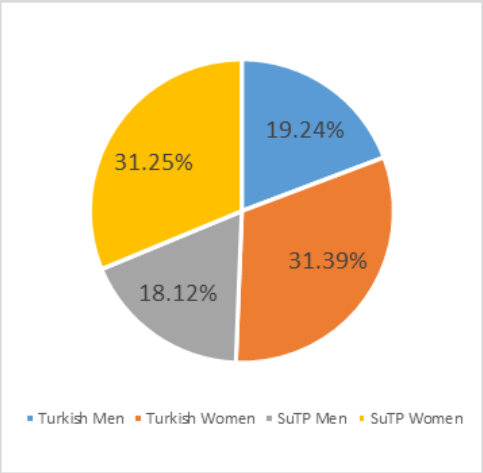
34. The vocational training curricula was originally designed by the Public Education Center of the Ministry of National Education. The training materials and curricula were reviewed and enhanced by FAO and Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry s trainers to ensure they are up-to-

[20] With 53 dropouts.

[21] The ASDP was specifically designed to provide short-term employment to the SuTPs (then extended to vulnerable Turkish citizens), while contributing to the development and rehabilitation of community assets, as outlined in the ASDP Manual. Vocational training aims to enhance long-term employability through skills development.

date and address the emerging needs of both groups of beneficiaries and market demands, identified during the assessments conducted by the project. Most of the consulted beneficiaries confirmed that their knowledge and skills in agriculture improved following the training. Many of those who had previous experience in the sector also expressed their satisfaction with the knowledge they acquired. This aligns with findings from the labour market assessment commissioned by the Project Team in 2024, as well as the evaluation survey results, which showed that 77.5 percent respondents recognized the usefulness of vocational training in improving their farming practices.

Figure 3. Distribution of vocational training beneficiaries by nationality and gender



Source: Author's own elaboration (July 2024).

35. Overall, the project records showed that 45.57 percent of the vocational training trainees from both the host communities and SuTPs (1 344 out of 2 947) were employed at some point during project implementation, with women representing 57.3 percent of them. However, the evaluation could not confirm the length of their employment, nor the extent to which the work opportunities could have been sustained over time. This is particularly relevant given that the survey findings revealed that 63.2 percent of respondents were not employed, representing an increase of approximately 9 percent compared to the 54.5 percent reported in FAO (2024).[22]

36. Similarly, the consulted SuTPs recognized the usefulness of the training and seasonal work opportunities offered through the cash for work modality. They expressed their frustration, however, with the limited opportunities, the short period of work, and the low wages earned in the agriculture sector. During focus group discussions, ASDP beneficiaries raised concerns over the usefulness of the training in supporting them to get employed, beyond the short-term job placement facilitated by the project.[23] They strongly stated that the training and the job placement were both short in duration and the wages could not sustain their daily living. They further explained that they opted to grab job opportunities beyond the agriculture sector because i) potential employers were not willing to cover for their social security expenses; and ii) there has

[22] This figure resonates with the findings from FAO (2024) reporting that "138 (45.5 percent), of the 303 project beneficiaries interviewed for the assessment, declared that they were employed in the agriculture sector in 2022" (p.9) – i.e. 54.5 percent were not employed then; and that 78 out of 138 beneficiaries (56.5 percent) employed in agriculture acknowledged that the project helped them to find a job (p. 21)

[23] The job placement was done through the integrated micro-catchment rehabilitation plans (IMCRPs) serving the community and government institutions. This component covers agroforestry slope stabilization, soil and water conservation, contour terrace, water harvesting, irrigation channel and fishpond repair and improvement and irrigated land levelling interventions, through Agricultural Skills Development Programme.

been increased demand for labour in the construction sector that pays better, even for irregular jobs. These observations are in line with findings from the Labour Market Assessment. Based on discussion with the beneficiaries, the evaluation noted variance across two age groups among the SuTPs. Younger age male SuTPs revealed that the construction and other industrial sectors were more attractive given the better financial returns they gain even on seasonal basis, while the older generation (males and female) SuTPs were very appreciative and look forward to more sustained working conditions and opportunities in the agrifood sector.

37. Findings emerging from focus group discussions indicate that cultural norms were observed during the implementation of the vocational training component and the associated job placement initiatives. SuTP women were offered childcare facilities and transportation to ensure accessibility and child safety. Upon job placement, they were asked to do less physically demanding tasks. In general, women reported having acquired new farming and agrifood production knowledge. Many of the consulted Turkish women acknowledged the benefit of the training has enhanced their work within the cooperatives they belong to (further elaborated in Finding 10).

Finding 8. The project contributed to improving the climate-smart agriculture and good agricultural practice knowledge and skills of 2 985[24] vulnerable Turkish smallholder, while also exceeding its set target. The FFS has the potential for sustainability and scaling up at the national level, leveraging the qualified Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry facilitators and the FFS digital platform.

38. The project promoted sustainable agricultural practices, by building the capacity of host communities on climate-smart agriculture and good agricultural practices through FFS (Output 2). The evaluation reviewed the project databases[25] and found that 2 985 beneficiaries (compared to the set target of 1 500) have participated in the FFS, the large majority of whom are Turkish (97 percent). The number of SuTP FFS trainees turned out to be low (69 compared to the target of 400) primarily because SuTPs lack legal access to land and agrifood production assets – a prerequisite to benefit from the FFS (as mentioned under relevance Finding 3).

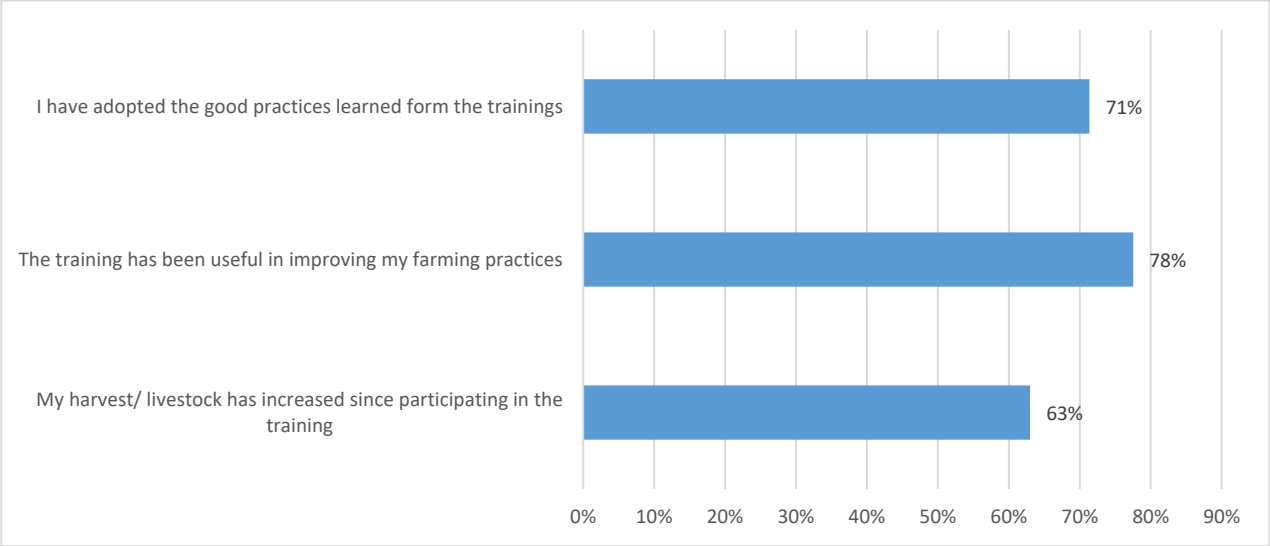
39. As illustrated in Figure 4 below, the majority of the survey respondents confirmed that after engaging in the FFS activities, their harvest/livestock production increased (63 percent), and the training was useful in improving their farming practices (78 percent). The majority of the consulted beneficiaries confirmed their skills in climate-smart agriculture and good agricultural practices improved as a result of the training provided by the project. Over 70 percent of the survey respondents reported they adopted good farming practices. This is in line with emerging anecdotal findings from the focus group discussions, where some beneficiaries confirmed shifting to solar panels (Kahramanmaraş) to pump water into the drip irrigation system, reflecting adoption of climate-smart tools. The majority also recognized that their irrigation and grafting/pruning methods have changed because of the learning from the FFS. During consultations, farmers elaborated on their experience and acknowledged that FFS corrected some prevailing misconception related to irrigation, mostly related to pistachio and olive irrigation practices. Others expressed that their technical knowledge in animal husbandry improved, particularly in areas like hygiene, disease prevention, as well as handling chemicals and pesticides. The findings are also in line with findings from the FFS impact assessment conducted by the project through a third-party contractor, indicating a significant increase in participants' knowledge in agriculture, resulting in improving animal productivity, positive impact of

[24] The figure is based on the update provided by the project. The latest reported figure was 2 286 (QIN, April 2024).
[25] The database shared by the project lacks data on Tekirdağ, Tohum Association, Çanakkale and Adiyaman. Nevertheless, the distribution remains almost the same.

introduced innovative and sustainable agricultural techniques, and adoption of water-conserving irrigation methods, among other benefits.[26]

40. Women constituted 30 percent of the total FFS beneficiaries, as originally targeted.[27] During the consultation, female participants in the FFS expressed their appreciation to have acquired new agricultural techniques and practices, applicable to their farming activities.

Figure 4. Satisfaction of Farmer Field Schools beneficiaries (agree and strongly agree)



Source: Author's own elaboration.

41. Both the capacity of the FFS trainers and facilitators[28] and the improved curricula were a stepping stone for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to express interest in replicating and scaling up the FFS model throughout the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry. Key informants from the Directorate were very satisfied with the results and confirmed having leveraged the results to showcase and further promote the improved good agricultural practices through the national media/news channels. While the agricultural technical content of the FFS was highly useful, beneficiaries noted during the consultation their needs to enhance financial management, marketing and business growth that would allow them to better manage their farming businesses. This observation is in line with findings from the FFS impact assessment. The latter identified the need to address these topics in order to maximize the long-term impact of FFS training. Introducing elements of the Farmers Business School modality developed by FAO would have catered for the farmers' needs to render their farm operations profitable and able to respond to market demands. The evaluation acknowledged the establishment of FFS digital platform (Uygulamalı Çiftçi Okulları, n.d.)[29] intended to share knowledge and facilitate e-learning, training and webinars among the FFS graduates and facilitators. Even though very few among the consulted beneficiaries were aware of the platform and engaging on it, the project team reported that the platform has 1 842 registered members, 1 300 users of the Tarla.in application, in addition to 104 816 total visitors.[30] This clearly indicates that the FFS digital platform remains a tool to capitalize on, along with the trusted technical expertise of Provincial Directorate of Agriculture

[26] FFS Impact assessment conducted by Tekirdağ Leader Farmers' Association in 2024.
[27] Project Record (QIN, report dated 31 March 2024) setting a target of 450 women out of 1 500 FFS beneficiaries.
[28] Recognized by the FFS participants for their knowledge, experience, communication and responsiveness.
[29] Developed under the LOA with Tekirdağ Leader Farmers' Association (ÖÇP).
[30] As reported by the Project Team (as of July 2024).

and Forestry facilitators and trainers and the up-to date curricula, to ensure the sustainability of this intervention and its potential for national scale up.

Finding 9. The project employability efforts were hindered by the informal nature of the sector, difficulties in transitioning to formal employment, and the limited effectiveness of ISKUR employment desks. The vocational training beneficiaries worked for an average of seven and a half months, while the majority of the SuTPs sought alternative means to sustain their livelihoods.

42. The evaluation acknowledged the project's considerable efforts to address informal employment, and challenges to transition to formal one, along with limited functionality of the ISKUR leading to the issue of SuTPs' reliance on informal employment, which is characterized by low wages and a lack of social protection. These efforts included raising awareness among stakeholders and potential employers about registering agricultural labourers and issuing work permits or exemptions[31] for seasonal SuTP workers through ISKUR. As part of this, ISKUR service desks were established within the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry [32] to register project beneficiaries and facilitate employment by serving as a contact point between workers and local agrifood producers and industries. At the time of project closure, 4 643 beneficiaries were registered, including vocational training beneficiaries (2 947) and ASDP beneficiaries (1 696).

43. During the evaluation mission, none of the ISKUR service desks were operational. Although the project registered beneficiaries with ISKUR, none of the interviewed ones reported receiving any follow-up from ISKUR regarding employment or job-matching opportunity. The survey findings showed that more than one-third of respondents (38.33 percent) were unaware of ISKUR, and almost the same percentage (32.6 percent) did not understand the benefit of registering with ISKUR. This limited utility of ISKUR in the project can be attributed to several factors, including limited leverage on ISKUR digital platform, weak digitalization[33] and a reliance on traditional work setups. Unlike other sectors in Türkiye, the agriculture sector relies heavily on informal recruitment methods, with intermediaries *(Ustabasi or Cavus)* managing daily labour (ISKUR, n.d.; Türk Pamuk Sektöründe Çalışma Koşullarının İyileştirilmesi, 2019). These intermediaries are responsible for hiring, transportation and payments between employers and workers, bypassing formal employment platforms. While the project aimed to introduce a digital registration system through ISKUR desks, all consulted stakeholders recognized the difficulties for ISKUR's digital platform to replace this existing informal system. The ISKUR service desks, established by the project, turned out to be of limited effectiveness and use beyond being registration desks of the project beneficiaries.[34]

[31] Under the Regulation on Work Permits for Foreigners who have been granted Temporary Protection (No. 2016/8375), which was published in the Official Gazette and came into force on 15 January 2016, those foreigners who have been given temporary protection and who wish to work in seasonal jobs in agriculture and animal husbandry may be exempted from the need to obtain a work permit. Applications for exemption are to be handled by provincial governorates in accordance with the quotas which they are to set. The Regulation also stipulates that the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services can establish limits on employment of SuTP by province and by quota, and that they can be employed by applying to the provincial İŞKUR Directorates.

[32] The project managed to establish those ISKUR registration desks at the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry and manned them by Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry staff to register the project beneficiaries into ISKUR database.

[33] Recent research shows that only 2 percent of food producers in Türkiye use smartphone applications for their agricultural production. Forty-four percent of farmers use smartphones; of those, 33 percent have access to social media, 2 percent use agriculture-oriented apps, and 3 percent use banking services (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry & COMCEC. n.d.).

[34] While The ISKUR service points were initially tasked to register and provide employment facilitation services to vocational trainees, ASDP beneficiaries were requested to register in the service desks database.

44. While 86 percent of SuTPs received work permit exemption documents, only 13 work permits were issued, reflecting the challenges posed by the seasonal and informal nature of the agriculture sector. Despite the project's efforts, the majority of SuTP beneficiaries were unfamiliar with the exemption process and its implications. As such, despite the exemptions being a critical step towards the formalization of seasonal agricultural labour, their long-term impact on facilitating more stable and sustainable employment opportunities remains uncertain.

45. The evaluation acknowledged the findings of the Labour Market Assessment, showing that vocational trainees were found to have worked for an average of seven and a half months in agriculture (ranging between one and 12 months).[35] It noted, however, some constraints hindering SuTP's from transitioning into formal employment, despite the efforts made by the project. Many consulted SuTPs expressed concerns about losing their Emergency Social Safety Net assistance if they transitioned to formal work. Additionally, young male refugees noted that agricultural employment offered lower wages compared to other sectors, such as construction. Survey findings supported this trend, with 77 percent of SuTPs employed outside the agriculture sector, (up from 66 percent at baseline) reflecting a growing preference for non-agricultural employment over time (Table 3). Evidence from consultations highlighted the higher demand for both skilled and unskilled labour in the construction sector, especially in the aftermath of the earthquake. As one SuTP beneficiary remarked, "*Working in the construction sector pays better. I can earn TRY 700 a day – non-comparable to the agriculture sector*."

Table 3. Snapshot of the beneficiaries' employment status over the project time frame

Employment status and sector	Baseline (%)	Final evaluation (%)
Employment	24.70	36.84
Unemployed	75.30	63.16
Employment in non-agrifood sector	66	77.10
Employment in the agrifood sector	34	22.80

Source: Author's own elaboration.

46. In addition, the project provided 1 901 ASDP beneficiaries, of whom 89 percent were SuTPs (including 965 women), with short-term cash for work opportunities through the community-based integrated micro-catchment rehabilitation plans, identified by the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry in collaboration with other government institutions. However, these opportunities were limited in duration to three months, with an average working duration of 63 days, and a daily incentive that started with TRY 100 in 2021 and reached TRY 700 in 2024.[36] Evidently, many of the consulted beneficiaries also sought employment outside of agriculture, after the three months cash for work, particularly in the construction sector, which offered better pay.

Finding 10. The project support to the women-led cooperatives proved very pertinent and effective. It demonstrated strong potential for sustainability and scalability, offering significant opportunities to enhance women's capacity in the agriculture sector. However, none of the consulted cooperatives registered any SuTP members.

47. The project support to the cooperatives was tailored to the needs of each, ranging from procuring equipment, renovating kitchen set-ups and provision of raw material. Newly established cooperatives were entitled to get grants and have their constituents joining the vocational training

[35] Vocational training beneficiaries' work duration ranged between one and 12 months with an average of 7.5 months during the five-year project implementation.

[36] Project records confirm that the average CFW working duration was 63 days, and the daily incentives were progressively increased during the project's implementation, starting at TRY 100 in 2021 and reaching TRY 700 in 2024. As a result, the monthly wage per CFW beneficiary ranged between USD 270 and USD 460.

and FFS training activities. In addition, they received management, legal and registration support. The established cooperatives received marketing support (such as engaging in fairs, developing a digital marketing platform) to widen their pools of clients given the limited sales points for the cooperatives' products.

48. The project support to the cooperatives had a positive impact on women by strengthening their participation in social activities and boosting their self-confidence. During consultations across the visited provinces, women (including cooperative leaders and members) demonstrated confidence, motivation, and a clear awareness of their needs and roles. The evaluation highlighted the cooperatives' effective use of the project-provided equipment or material procured to strengthen production lines. These findings align with the ones from the Cooperative Impact Assessment Study (CIAS) conducted in 2024, which noted the project's positive influence on members' socioeconomic status, decision-making and leadership abilities, as well as the increased public recognition of cooperatives within their communities and beyond. However, the CIAS also found that income generation was modest, describing it as "low and irregular" in some cooperatives. This challenge affects their capacity to pay wages to seasonal and daily workers or to hire administrative support. This is in line with anecdotal evidence emerging from the evaluation focus group discussions.

49. Consultations during the evaluation field mission with seven of the 13 cooperatives indicated positive effect, in line with findings reported by the project. Thanks to the project technical and financial support, the cooperatives were able to develop implementation plans and production lines. However, they faced difficulties in registering SuTPs as cooperative members due to legislative restrictions. Consequently, none of the consulted cooperatives registered any SuTP member, which raises concerns over the validity of the ratio reported by the project and its ambitious target.[37]

50. The evaluation noted the project supported both conventional and digital marketing tools to maximize their promotion beyond their catchment areas. The former was illustrated by establishing the HepYerinden.coop platform that would serve as a collective marketplace, to promote the regional products crafted by women and provide them with access to a broader customer base. The online platform, however, faced challenges rendering it inactive for months, as reported by the consulted cooperatives, in addition to issues related to some administrative and financial responsibility over managing its domain and maintaining its backend. To overcome this challenge, the project has devised a more sustainable solution by partnering with a national digital platform which manages a large online retailer called Pazarama.[38] The evaluation confirmed that HepYerinden.coop operates currently through Pazarama to widen the cooperatives outreach strategy and market their products. Overall, such intervention has a potential impact in the long-term if the cooperatives' capacity, particularly in sales and marketing, is strengthened.

Finding 11. The project grant scheme proved effective in fostering business growth, particularly when integrated with other components of the project. However, greater flexibility in the process could help avoid unnecessary delays and improve overall efficiency.

51. The grant scheme was a key intervention designed in collaboration with the General Directorate of Agricultural Reform (GDAR) at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to promote self-reliance among vulnerable populations, primarily within host communities. The scheme followed GDAR's modality, requiring grantee contributions of 10 percent for micro-enterprises (under USD 2 313)

[37] The QIN (2024) reported the ratio of SuTP members for each cooperative to be 21 percent.

[38] Pazarama is one of Turkiye's leading e-commerce platforms, established in 2021. It has a diverse and extensive product ecosystem including online shopping, car rental, lottery applications, etc.

and 20 percent for small agribusinesses (around USD 11 565). GDAR managed the application and selection process, with applications collected at the provincial level. The grant scheme was strategically integrated with other project components. Applicants were required to have participated in either vocational training (Output 1) or FFS (Output 2) to be eligible. Additionally, several grantees were leaders of women-led cooperatives, reflecting the project's focus on fostering inclusive growth and empowerment.

52. Of the 523 grant applicants, 60 percent (312 applicants) met the criteria, resulting in 51 small agribusiness and 261 micro agrifood input grants, including nine SuTPs applicants. The relatively low number of SuTP applicants was attributed to their lack of legal documentation or concerns about losing eligibility for Emergency Social Safety Net assistance when registering for a different programme, such as the grant scheme. Ultimately, 297 applicants received grants, including five women-led cooperatives and two SuTP-owned businesses. Notably, 57.5 percent of grant recipients were Turkish women, highlighting the programme's commitment to gender inclusion. However, the evaluation identified challenges related to the grant requirement for hiring SuTPs, which was particularly difficult in remote areas with little or no SuTP presence.

53. The grant's effectiveness was confirmed through evaluation surveys, with 91 percent of respondents expressing satisfaction with the support provided. Additionally, 87 percent found the grant useful for business growth and 91.3 percent reported that it positively impacted income generation. Field consultations echoed these positive findings, with grantees reporting that the grants enabled them to purchase agro-industry and farming equipment, upgrade kitchens to industrial capacity, and acquire machinery to diversify or expand agrifood production. Despite these benefits, some grantees reported slow processing times for equipment procurement and difficulties in meeting the SuTP employment requirement. Delays were attributed to the grant approval process and the need to submit equipment invoices for FAO approval. Exchange rate fluctuations also led to budget discrepancies, requiring additional verification steps. In the consultation, grantees recommended increased flexibility and more streamlined procurement procedures from FAO to avoid unnecessary delays and improve efficiency.

EQ 3: To what extent were the project management and partnership arrangements appropriate?

Finding 12. The project's steering governance structure could have been more robust to better support strategic implementation. The FAO project intended to harness interministerial collaboration through the Project Steering Committee (PSC), but that this attempt was largely hindered by central-level bureaucratic barriers. It turned to a pragmatic approach, coordinating bilaterally with each of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Directorates to manage project implementation.

54. The evaluation reviewed the designed governance set-up of the project but could not trace the extent to which such set-up was operationalized through a Project Steering Committee and a Project Implementation Unit (PIU). Consultations with project partners and stakeholders suggested that the envisaged governance structure was not functional. The PSC's membership had been reduced to primarily include only the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Directorates, following the modest engagement of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and limited involvement from the Ministry of National Education. The PIU appeared largely driven by the FAO Project Team, which, as the primary implementing partner and budget holder, played a dominant role, while the National Project Coordinator (NPC) appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry had minimal engagement.

55. Despite these challenges, the project management team adopted a pragmatic approach to ensure effective implementation. The Project Team actively coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's implementing counterparts to keep the various letters of agreement (LOAs) on

schedule, specifically with Department of Training and Extension, General Directorate of Agricultural Reform, and Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry at the provincial level. This approach was essential for navigating the complex, multi-layered, and multi-partner implementation framework at the provincial level. The Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry in each province acted as a key liaison between beneficiaries and the multiple Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry stakeholders, such as the Department of Training and Extension for vocational and FFS training and General Directorate of Agricultural Reform for grant scheme management. FAO's Project Team led coordination efforts across the 13 provinces, working with a range of stakeholders, including municipalities, to ensure LOAs were managed and deliverables met. However, the involvement of the NPC and other Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Central Directorates was found to be suboptimal. Although the General Directorate of Agricultural Reform had a significant role in designing and selecting the grant scheme, its ongoing involvement in implementation and follow-up was limited, primarily occurring at the provincial level. Stakeholders at the provincial level expressed concerns about the effectiveness of coordination and follow-up, describing the communication with the Project Team as adequate but unsystematic, providing just enough information on project progress.

Finding 13. The partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has enhanced prospects for sustainability and scaling up the project's interventions by institutionally embedding the delivery of vocational training and FFS within the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry, and supporting it with a digital learning platform.

56. The evaluation confirmed the commitment of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to leveraging the project achievement and continuing to deliver core interventions aiming at improving the agricultural practices in the country. The technical capacity of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry staff was strengthened, particularly in scaling up the vocational training and FFS approaches, as they have been capacitated to promote climate change adaptation (CCA) and good agricultural practices among farmers.

57. The evaluation further highlighted that collaboration with key stakeholders was essential for sustaining and potentially scaling the project's outcome. The collaboration with Tekirdağ Leader Farmers' Association on good agricultural practices through the FFS modality was seen as crucial for continuing beyond the project lifecycle, through the established platform. The latter is believed to serve as a comprehensive resource for FFS participants and provide a digital space to enhance and exchange their learning experiences. Its effectiveness and scalability depend on the farmers' digital adoption. Similarly, the project collaboration with Pazarama to develop a web-portal for the cooperatives was crucial in expanding their market reach. By anchoring this platform with a prominent e-commerce portal in Türkiye, the project has enhanced the sustainability and scalability potential of its interventions with women-led cooperatives. However, it is evident that additional support is necessary for these cooperatives to build robust branding and marketing strategies, as well as to improve and diversify their product offerings.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The project is well aligned with the priorities of the Turkish Government and FAO, reflecting responsiveness and adaptability to emerging contextual challenges. While the project successfully focused on improving employment opportunities within the agrifood sector, the design could have benefited from a more holistic approach.

58. The project effectively addressed immediate livelihood challenges faced by both Syrian refugees (SuTPs) and Turkish host communities, by enhancing their agrifood skills and providing them with short-term job opportunities. This aligned well with the priorities of the Turkish government and FAO's global objectives to support the immediate livelihood needs of the vulnerable populations. The expectation that SuTPs could fill the labour gap in agriculture overlooked key factors: most participants lacked agricultural experience and contextual dynamics – such as low wages in the sector which significantly undermined the project's effectiveness beyond the short-term monetary benefits.

59. The project demonstrated significant adaptability in responding to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 earthquakes, ensuring continuity through adjustments in delivery methods and an expanded focus on affected provinces. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift to online training for vocational and FFS programmes showed proactive planning, allowing participants to continue their skills development despite restrictions. The project further adapted after the 2023 earthquakes by extending programmes like the ASDP to impacted Turkish citizens, thereby addressing emerging needs.

60. In line with a more holistic approach, the project could have included additional indicators to measure higher-level outcomes, placing more emphasis on sustaining income-generating opportunities, influencing institutional or policy enablers, providing social support and ensuring workers remained in the agriculture sector for longer

Conclusion 2. The attempt to formalize employment would have required a more phased and flexible approach better suited to retaining SuTPs within the sector. This has limited the effectiveness of the employability component.

61. The project was based on assumptions that employment opportunities could be increased by guiding SuTPs and Turkish beneficiaries to register at ISKUR desks. However, this strategy overlooked key factors, such as the sector's reliance on temporary, low-wage jobs, the modest involvement of critical stakeholders like the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, and the absence of other intermediary stakeholders, which highlighted the structural challenges of formalizing a predominantly informal sector. The uptake of ISKUR services among SuTPs remained low. Many beneficiaries were unaware of the benefits of ISKUR registration, and most were reluctant to formalize their employment due to concerns about losing financial support like the Emergency Social Safety Net.

62. The project's design and targeting approach did not fully consider the barriers to SuTPs' participation and retention in agriculture, leading to limited outcomes. The project succeeded in securing five amendments to address critical issues that emerged during implementation, but missed the opportunity of exploring alternative employment facilitation mechanisms.

Conclusion 3. The project contributed to improving the livelihoods of vulnerable SuTPs and Turkish host communities, including women, and reducing the severity of coping mechanisms needed to meet basic

needs. Although it created more opportunities for women to engage in income-generating activities in the agrifood sector, its narrow focus on short-term agricultural employment among SuTP limited the sustainability of these livelihood improvements.

63. Through targeted vocational training and the Agricultural Skills Development Programme, the project enhanced participants' agricultural knowledge and skills, enabling them to earn income to meet their immediate needs. This contributed to a reduction in the severity across the different coping mechanisms, with beneficiaries showing a slight decrease in negative coping strategies over time compared to the baseline. However, while short-term skills and job opportunities were created, these gains did not translate into long-term employment or retention within the agriculture sector for beneficiaries (beyond an average of seven and a half months for the vocational training and three months for the ASDP beneficiaries), affecting their ability to secure lasting improvements in their livelihood.

64. The project has ensured an equal representation of men and women in its activities, attended to women specific needs and capabilities by engaging them in the different project activities, and introducing a dedicated intervention for women-led cooperatives. Although women's participation in FFS was less than anticipated, their engagement in vocational training activities was well noticeable. This was further reinforced by the introduction of the women-led cooperatives component in a later phase, which contributed to creating more opportunities for them to engage in income-generating activities in the agrifood sector.

Conclusion 4. The project has demonstrated potential for scalability, particularly through its institutional partnerships and digital tools, such as the FFS digital platform. Further investment in market access, business growth and capacity-building, especially for women-led cooperatives, will be key to ensuring the project's outcomes can be sustained and expanded across Türkiye.

65. The sustainability and scalability of the project are promising, though contingent on several factors. The project successfully enhanced the skills and capacities of both SuTPs and host communities, particularly through its vocational training and FFS, respectively. These initiatives, combined with support for women-led cooperatives, have laid the foundation for continued agricultural and economic development in the targeted regions. The capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to continue in the training delivery and capacity-building efforts has further strengthened the likelihood of scaling up these interventions nationally, particularly in promoting climate-smart agriculture and good agricultural practices.

66. However, sustainability of the employment outcomes, particularly for SuTPs, remains a challenge due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work and competition from higher-paying sectors like construction. For sustainability, additional policy measures and programmatic support are required to create more stable job opportunities for refugees and vulnerable Turkish communities. The success of the grant scheme and cooperatives, while contributing to short-term productivity gains, will also need continued support to ensure these entities become self-sufficient and scalable beyond the life of the project.

Conclusion 5. This governance gap necessitated a pragmatic, bilateral coordination approach, which, while effective in maintaining implementation, underscored the absence of a robust, inclusive and well-integrated governance framework critical for strategic oversight and collaboration.

67. The project's governance structure encountered challenges and could not function as intended due to the limited operationalization of the Project Steering Committee and weak engagement from key stakeholders, such the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and the Ministry of National Education. The FAO Project Team succeeded in maintaining strong bilateral cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and other local institutions and was able to achieve

the project's objective. The project management demonstrated strong capacity and adaptability, successfully adjusting to external challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and the earthquake, while remaining relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of beneficiaries. The Project Team maintained close oversight through regular field visits and commissioned studies.

68. The partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was critical in anchoring key interventions, such as the FFS and vocational training, within institutional frameworks, thus enhancing the likelihood of sustainability. Similarly, the collaboration with other stakeholders, including local cooperatives and digital platforms, further strengthened the project's sustainability and outreach efforts.

4.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Ensure that projects of similar scope give more attention to the SuTP livelihood needs and resilience opportunities, particularly in relation to employability of SuTPs, through a more comprehensive and gradual transitioning approach combining policy incentives to render the contribution of ISKUR employment desks effective. (*To FAO*)

69. While the project created short-term employment for SuTPs, further efforts should focus on creating pathways for either long-term and stable or more frequent employment in the agrifood sector to address beneficiaries' needs beyond the immediate ones. This entails engaging in a more holistic policy-programme approach that brings key relevant stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental) to address the structural challenges of formal employment in agriculture beyond establishing ISKUR employment desks at the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry. This can be done by designing employment policy with i) incentives to the farmers/landowners to formally employ seasonal workers; ii) subsidies for agricultural businesses that hire registered labourers; and iii) reviewing the ESSN and social security coverage for SuTPs, among other forms of incentives.

Recommendation 2. Ensure that future projects of similar scope rest on a solid theory of change to guide design, define outcomes and integrate a broad understanding of "livelihood" and "socioeconomic resilience" in dynamic and challenging contexts. (*To FAO*)

70. FAO should establish a robust theory of change to define clear and appropriate outcomes, grounded in a detailed context analysis that identifies underlying assumptions and key influencing factors. This approach would ensure that livelihood concepts are broader and more inclusive. Collaborating with project partners to test the theory of change before implementation would provide a practical reality check, helping to foresee and address potential challenges.

Recommendation 3. Continue FAO's efforts to leverage stakeholders' interests that would serve future projects, specifically the donor's priority to strengthen women-led cooperatives and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's commitment to advancing the FFS modality, through complementing it with elements of Farmer Business Schools and supporting the FFS digital platform. (*To FAO*)

71. Complementing the FFS with elements of FAO Farmers Business School becomes eminent in order to cater for the emerging needs among beneficiaries. This model would enhance their financial literacy, management and entrepreneurial skills. The digital platform developed for FFS participants should be continuously updated with new resources, training materials and tools to support learning. It can serve as an ongoing resource for both farmers and facilitators, offering online courses, webinars and virtual farmer networks. Besides, leveraging digital tools to reach a broader audience of farmers, particularly in remote areas, and offering online or blended learning programmes can increase accessibility and scalability of FFS training.

72. Expanding support for women-led cooperatives by facilitating access to business training and market linkages would enhance women's economic empowerment. More effort should be directed towards building stronger collaboration between the cooperatives and the platform host Pazaram to expand market reach.

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Appendix 1. People interviewed

Last name	First name	Institution/Agency	Role
Ministries and local governmental institutions			
Akgun	Ugur	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	Labour expert
Aslan	Kenan	Directorate of Agriculture, Gaziantep	Vocational trainer
Atlı	Mustafa	Pistachio Research Institute, Gaziantep	Deputy director
Börekçi	Murat	Directorate of Agriculture, Kahramanmaras	Agriculture engineer, vocational trainer
Çağman	Mehmet	Directorate of Agriculture, Kahramanmaras	Food processing expert, vocational trainer
Deme	Mehmet	Gaziantep	Deputy Director
Doğan	Hüseyin	Directorate of Agriculture, Gaziantep	Vocational trainer
Ergun	Birsen	Directorate of Agriculture, Adana	Coordinator
Imamoglu	Ozge	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ankara	Head of international organisations department
İnan	Salih	Directorate of Agriculture, Kahramanmaras	FFS coordinator
Karayılan	Murat	Directorate of Agriculture, Gaziantep	Director
Kaya	Cigdem Ince	Directorate of Agriculture, Adana	FFS supervisor
Korlaelçi	Muhammet	Directorate of Agriculture, Kahramanmaras	Project coordinator
Kurum	Necdet	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ankara	Directorate General of Agricultural Reform
Parim	Ayşegül	Directorate of Agriculture, Gaziantep	Vocational trainer
Şahin	Halil	Directorate of Agriculture, Gaziantep	Expert in crop production
Topçu	Veli	Gaziantep	forest management Director
Yilmaz	Enes	Ministry of Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	Assistant labour expert
Yilmazoz	Ugur	Directorate of Agriculture, Adana	Vocational training supervisor
Civil society			
Bagimsiz	Guncel		Social Security Premium Payments
Balaban	Pinar		
Kaya	Musa	Seed Association	
Koydemir	Serap	Xsight	
Senyucel Gundogar	Sabiha	Centre for Public Policy and Democracy Studies	Researcher
FAO Project Team			
Bayrak	Fatih	FOA Türkiye	M&E officer
Cebi	Cagatay	FOA Türkiye	Project coordinator
Cinar	Halit	FOA Türkiye	Agricultural livelihood specialist
Demirel	Kerem	FOA Türkiye	Training coordinator
Ertan	Aktan	FOA Türkiye	Emergency and resilience portfolio coordinator
Ilyas	Emre	FOA Türkiye	Senior programme development specialist
Sayran	Nese Cakir	FOA Türkiye	Gender specialist
Yalcin	Ismet	FOA Türkiye	Senior field and cooperative coordinator
Donor			
Evitan Canbay	Feyhan	Delegation of the European Union in Türkiye	Socioeconomic Development Programme Manager

Focus group discussions with beneficiaries by province

Adana	Gaziantep	Kahramanmaras	Bursa
ASDP (SuTP /F)	ASDP (SuTP/mix)	ASDP (SuTP/mix)	FFS/ Grant
Vocational training (VT)/ Coop (T/F)	VT/ASDP (SuTP/F)	FFS/Grant (T/M)	FFS/1 Women Cooperative
ADSP - SuTP/mix	VT/FFS (T/M)	FFS/Grant (T/F)	VT/FSS
VT (SuTP/M)	FFS (T/F)	2 Women Cooperatives/grantees	ASDP
FFS / Grant (Micro) (T/mix)			
2 Women Cooperatives			
Grant (Small)			

Appendix 2. Key evaluation questions

EQ 1: To what extent were the project interventions relevant and appropriate in responding to the needs of Syrian refugees and the host communities in Türkiye?

i. To what extent was the project coherent in terms of synergies and complementarity between objectives, components, activities and outputs?

ii. To what extent has the project been able to adapt to any changing conditions (e.g. delays, COVID-19 pandemic, earthquake)?

iii. To what extent were the project interventions guided by a context sensitive approach?

iv. What was the project targeting approach and rationale? To what extent was it fit-for-purpose?

EQ 2: To what extent have the project planned outputs and expected outcomes been achieved? How sustainable are the project results?

i. What results have been achieved, and what is still outstanding?

ii. Is there a clear indication of government commitment (and of other project partners) after project completion to continue their support for the project activities?

iii. Which activities and outputs would ensure the sustainability of the project and its potential scaled-up?

EQ 3: To what extent were the project management and partnership arrangements appropriate?

i. What are the factors, including FAO's internal processes, that have facilitated or hindered the achievement of results and what learning can be applied to future programming in Türkiye?

ii. To what extent were the project management and partnership arrangements conducive to ensure effective project implementation?

Appendix 3. Survey methodology and sampling

Background

1. In 2020, the project conducted a baseline study that surveyed beneficiaries participating in the vocational training and Farmer Field Schools (FFS) interventions from ten provinces. However, the Project Team did not plan to conduct an endline survey to capture the effects and results of its interventions on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries.

2. The Evaluation Team is keen to follow a mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative) to evaluate the project implementation towards achieving its outcomes. To that end, the Evaluation Team complemented the qualitative assessment with a quantitative survey to examine the changes in livelihoods and implications on the beneficiaries' lives at the governorate level.

3. To a large extent, the proposed survey questionnaire builds on the questionnaire and data collection modality (phone survey) used in the baseline study conducted in 2020. Moreover, it included additional beneficiaries to address two activities not covered by the original survey. Overall, it targeted a sample of 350 beneficiaries from the four governorates covered by the evaluation field mission. The beneficiaries were identified following the selection rationale that accounted for their representation by geography, nationality and type of activity they engaged in. The evidence collected through the survey fed into the triangulation exercise and thus contributed to responding to the sub-evaluation questions.

4. The survey was administered by the Evaluation Team with the support of FAO Country Office in Türkiye. The latter hired four enumerators to conduct phone surveys with the beneficiaries. An evaluation analyst from the Office of Evaluation (with the support of the senior consultant) trained the enumerators and analysed the collected data. Like other data collection approaches, participants provided informed consent based on a standardized consent form covering key elements (scope, confidentiality, etc.), used in the baseline study (approved by the Project Team at the time of deploying it).

5. The team's approach was based on the following considerations:

    i. Consent and coordination with the Project Team to ensure the suitability of the questionnaire accounting for any possible sensitivity to questions and the survey's sampling frame.

    ii. Time commitment: The team recognizes a high risk for survey/assessment fatigue among potential respondents. Therefore, the survey is designed to be concise, taking 15-20 minutes to complete. A priority list of questions was established to optimize the trade-off between the survey's length and the scope of its contributions to the triangulation.

    iii. Language: To increase the reach and response rate of the survey, the Evaluation Team ensured a quality translation to both languages – Arabic and Turkish.

    iv. Confidentiality: All responses were treated confidentially. Respondents' names and identities were not reported. Only authorized members of the Evaluation Team have access to the raw data.

    v. Training: The enumerators received training on the questionnaire as well as survey methodology (including seeking consent and confidentiality) by the Evaluation Team prior to deploying the survey.

vi. Testing: The questionnaire was piloted by the Evaluation Team prior to deploying the survey to ensure it is valid (form; question formulation, including translation if relevant; overall structure and transitions between questions) and to address any potential challenges faced during the interview.

vii. Quality assurance: The Office of Evaluation evaluation analyst (survey focal point) reviewed the survey data on an ongoing basis while the survey was being conducted and consulted the enumerators on a daily basis to address any discrepancy.

Methodology

6. The following process was carried out to implement the survey:

i. A sampling frame of all 2 456 beneficiaries who engaged in the vocational training, the FFS, the grant scheme and the Agricultural Skills Development Programme (ASDP) in the identified four governorates covered by the evaluation field mission.

ii. A random sample of 350 beneficiaries was considered. It was doubled in order to account for possible non-response, as illustrated below. The sample was stratified[39] by type of activity to allow data to be analysed by activity, nationality and province independently, as per the sample size calculation elaborated below.

iii. Like the baseline survey, the endline survey consists mainly of close-ended questions with multiple choices to make it easier on the beneficiary to provide direct answers. It allows the Evaluation Team a more straightforward quantitative analysis.

iv. Skip-logics is inserted in a way that allows specific questions to be asked depending on inputs received and answers provided. The skip-logic is mostly used associated with the type of activity.

v. The phone survey was carried out using a digital system often used by the Office of Evaluation (SurveyMonkey).

vi. When contact is made, following consent and introductions, the interviewer read the questions posed on the computer or smartphone screen and recorded the respondent's answers directly into the computer or smartphone.

Sample size

7. A stratified random sampling approach was taken for the sample. Stratification was based on the type of activity the beneficiaries have engaged in/benefited from, namely vocational training, the FFS, the grant scheme and the ASDP, and their nationality (Turks or SuTP, when applicable). The overall sample size was calculated using the Slovin's formula where N=population size and e=margin of error.[40]

Sample Size= $N/(1+(N \times e^2))$

[39] Stratified random sampling is a widely used statistical technique in which a population is divided into different subgroups, or strata, based on some shared characteristics (for this study the shared characteristics are the type of assistance received or activity engaged in i.e. vocational training, the field farmer school, the grant scheme and the ASDP). The purpose of stratification is to ensure an adequate sample size so that the study is able to make inferences about these specific population subgroups.

[40] Sample Size= N/(1+(N x e2)) therefore the sample size calculation is Sample Size = $2,456/(1+2,456 \times 0.05^2) = 338$

Appendix table 1. Sample size of the total targeted population

Variable	Value
N (survey population size)	2 456
e (margin of error)	0.05
N (sample size)	≈344
N (sample size adjusted for response rate=0.5)	700 (rounded off to the nearest 100)

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Response rate

8. A critical consideration was accounted for, related to possible low response rate. Based on the project experience in the baseline and related literature in similar context, it seems that it is already optimistic to assume a 50 percent response rate. Therefore, the team has considered an oversampling approach (doubling the sample size to be 700) in order to ensure the study covered the calculated figure of 345.

9. Based on this calculation and the relative number of beneficiaries across vocational training, the FFS, the grant scheme and the ASDP – when compared to the overall beneficiaries – the sample stratification can be calculated using a disproportionate random sample stratification formula.[41] Table 2 outlines the required sample size by stratum (nh) to form the total sample size calculated above.

nh=(Nh/N) x n
Where
nh = sample size for h-th stratum
N=entire population
Nh=population size for h-th stratum
n=entire sample size

Appendix table 2. Sample size required by stratum (nh)

Variable	Grants[1]	Vocational training		FFS		ASDP
	Turks	Turks	SuTP	Turks	SuTP	SuTP
Nh	115	589	560	565	35	592
N	2 456					
N(adjusted for response rate=0.5)	700					
nh	33	167	160	162	10	168

Note: [1]The number of SuTP is too minimal (3).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

10. Accordingly, the following are the calculation of the stratified sample sizes. For example, the sample size of the beneficiaries from the grant scheme (all Turks) is calculated using the formula: sample size= nh = (115/2 456) x 700 = 33.

[41] nh=(Nh/N) x n, where nh= sample size for the h-th stratum, N= entire population, Nh=population size for h-th stratum, n= entire sample size

11. The distribution of the sample by the provinces is then calculated based on the beneficiaries' initial distribution, as illustrated in Table (3).

Appendix table 3. Distribution of the sample size by activity, nationality and provinces

	Grants		**Vocational training**				**FFS**				**ASDP**	
	Turks	Sample	Turks	Sample	SuTP	Sample	Turks	Sample	SuTP	Sample	SuTP	Sample
Adana	59	17	148	42	151	43	150	43	0	0	149	42
Bursa	8	2	169	48	144	41	117	34	33	10	149	42
Gaziantep	19	5	148	42	146	42	150	43	0	0	147	42
Kahramanmaras	29	9	124	35	119	34	148	42	2	0	147	42
Totals	**115**	**33**	**589**	**167**	**560**	**160**	**565**	**162**	**35**	**10**	**592**	**168**

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Data analysis

12. The descriptive analysis was based on frequency distributions and simple statistics such as average responses or rankings.

13. Data analysis was carried out by the evaluation analyst from the Office of Evaluation, overseen by the senior evaluation consultant. The assigned analyst was responsible for data cleaning and the initial descriptive analysis (both distribution frequency and tendency). The senior evaluation consultant further analysed the data, triangulated it with other sources, compared the findings with those of the baseline to infer key conclusions and integrate the findings into the report narrative.

Appendix 4. Project logframe

Outcome	Definition	Unit		Project record (QIN)	Percent	Target total
Improve self-reliance of livelihoods for 6 200 vulnerable SuTP and Turkish (host community) households living in the target provinces	Number of people with improved agricultural production (disaggregated by sex, age group and nationality)	Number (of smallholder producers)	**Total**	**2 285**		**1 500**
			Turkish	2 216	97%	733
			SuTP	69	3%	267
			men	1 589	70%	700
			women	696	30%	300
		% (of increase in farm production)	Overall	21%		20%
	Number of additional people employed in the agriculture sector (disaggregated by sex, age group and nationality)	Number of workers	**Total**	**1 344**		**1 200**
		Number (of Turkish workers)	Turkish	816	61%	600
		Number (of SuTP and other refugee workers)	SuTP	528	39%	
		Number (of seasonal SuTP and host communities' workers)	**Total**	**1 901**		**1 800**
			men	797	42%	1 200
			women	1 104	58%	600
	Breakdown of the project's direct beneficiaries	Number (of vocational trainees)	**Total**	**2 947**		**3 000**
			men	1 101	37%	1 500
			women	1 846	63%	1 500
		Number (of smallholder producers [FFS])	Total	2 285		1 500
			men	1 589	70%	1 050
			women	696	30%	450
		Number (of SuTP workers (ASDP-cash for work plus [CFW+])	Total	1 901		1 950
			SuTP	1 696	89%	
			men	731	43%	1 300
			women	965	57%	650
			Turkish	205	11%	N/A
			men	66	32%	N/A
			women	139	68%	N/A
			Total	7 169		6 200

Outcome	Definition	Unit		Project record (QIN)	Percent	Target total
		Number (of total direct project beneficiaries)	Turkish	3 945	55%	
			SuTP	3 224	45%	
			men	3 492	49%	3,700
			women	3 677	51%	2,500
OUTPUT 1. Agrifood vocational skills of vulnerable SuTP and unemployed Turkish host community men and women improved						
Vulnerable SuTP and Turkish trainees certified in agrifood vocational skills	Unemployed SuTP and Turkish workers benefit from vocational and Turkish language training and receive authorized certificates; and SuTPs issued with work permits	SuTP vocational trainees	**Total**	**1 455**		**1 500**
			Men	534	37%	750
			Women	921	63%	750
		Turkish vocational trainees	**Total**	**1 492**		**1 500**
			Men	567	38%	750
			Women	925	62%	750
		SuTP work permits and exemptions	**Total**	**1 458**		**100**
			permits	13	1%	200
			exemptions	1 445	99%	800
OUTPUT 2. Climate-smart agriculture and good agricultural practice knowledge and skills of vulnerable SuTP and Turkish smallholder producers improved						
Number of smallholder producers adopting new and improved climate-smart agriculture (CSA) technologies and practices and good agricultural practices (GAP) principles	Smallholder farmers, livestock owners and fishers participating in Farmer Field Schools (FFS) for testing, validating and practicing new and improved CSA technologies and practices GAP and principles	Number (of SuTP and Turkish producers participating fully in completed FFSs)	**Total**	**2 285**		**1 500**
			Men	1 589	70%	1 050
			Women	696	30%	450
			SuTP	69	3%	400
			Turkish	2 216	97%	1 100
		Number (of SuTP producers adopting CSA and GAP)	**Total**	**69**		**268**
			Men	43	62%	188
			Women	26	38%	80
		Number (of Turkish producers adopting CSA and GAP)	**Total**	**2 216**		**732**
			Men	1 546	70%	512
			Women	670	30%	220
OUTPUT 3. Formal employability of vulnerable men and women SuTP and Turkish host community agri-food workers enhanced, and short-term employment created for men and women SuTP seasonal workers						

Appendix 4. Project logframe

Outcome	Definition	Unit		Project record (QIN)	Percent	Target total
Number of SuTP and Turkish workers gaining employment in the agrifood sector	SuTP and Turkish vocational trainees gaining employment: in homestead and group-based micro and small enterprises developed; and larger producers and agro-industries expanding their production – all through investment grants and business training provided by the project	Number (of micro and small) enterprises creating self/additional employment)	**Total**	**248**		**250**
		Number (of private sector producers and agro-industries creating additional employment)	**Total**	**49**		**50**
		Number (of additional SuTP workers employed)	**Total**	**252**		**200**
			Men	110	44%	100
			Women	142	56%	100
Number of short-term employments created for SuTP agricultural workers through the implementation of community-based integrated micro-catchment rehabilitation plans (IMCRPs)	Short-term employment created and skills developed for SuTP agricultural workers through ASDP-cash for work plus schemes implemented for the rehabilitation and conservation of land and water resources	Number (of community-based IMCRPs implemented)	**Total**	**71**		**60**
		Number (of work-days created for unemployed men, women and youth SuTP workers)	Total workdays	97 901		99 000
			Men	41 045	42%	69 300
			Women	56 855	58%	29 700
		Number (of SuTP and host communities worker securing short-term employment)	**Total**	**1 901**		**1 800**
			Men	797	42%	1 200
			Women	1 104	58%	600
			SuTP	1 696	89%	N/A
			Turkish	205	11%	N/A
Number of women cooperatives (with at least 50 percent women members and committed to have at least 10 percent SuTP members) provided with technical support, guidance, mentorship and training for business development and their facilities for production, sales and marketing strengthened	The capacities of women cooperatives in the agrifood sector strengthened by providing technical support, guidance and mentorship in agrifood business development and marketing strategies. Women cooperatives, in line with the rules and regulations of Turkish	Number of supported women cooperatives	**Total**	**13**		**13**
		Percentage of women members for each cooperative	Percent	N/A	78.80%	50%
		Percentage of SuTP members for each cooperative	Percent	N/A	21%	10%

Outcome	Definition	Unit		Project record (QIN)	Percent	Target total
	Government, will be supported in project provinces in the area of agrifood business development to strengthen the self-resilience, create new employment opportunities and increase the income of the vulnerable SuTP, international protection applicants and status holders and host communities					

Source: Author's own elaboration based on data extracted and calculated from the QIN report (2024).

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