

The Food Security
Standard in Context:

How the Food Security Standard works: expected changes and benefits

February 2023

In order to change agricultural production in a way that meets basic human rights standards, it is crucial to build a theory of change for the instruments used. The FSS theory of change describes the necessary steps, assumptions and consequences to achieve its goals and describes the impacts that can be expected. Knowing and using it helps with the clarification of key stakeholders, expected short- and long-term benefits, and serves for internal and external communication, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The toolbox: Goods, services, strategies and activities of the FSS

The Food Security Standard (FSS) aims at further integrating food security in existing sustainability certification systems. It provides a set of practical and measurable criteria and audit tools that can be fully incorporated or used as an add-on in additional certification system. FSS predominantly serves to fulfil corporate social responsibilities on the supply side and can be used as a risk-management strategy and/or to prove compliance with Human Rights Due Diligence.

The FSS Toolbox contains food security-based criteria and indicators, a checklist with verification guidance, a handbook, field questionnaires to assess the local food security situation, an assessment tool to analyze the Right to Food at national level and training materials.

The FOSSEM Program was developed as a complement to FSS certification. It is designed to progressively build the capacity of companies in challenging contexts or without existing sustainability certification. The FOSSEM Program consists of two levels prior to certification. In the very first level (FOSSEM Basic) the operator develops capacities, in FOSSEM Advanced, behavior (farm management practices) gradually changes, and from FSS certification onwards the Right to Food is fully respected and food security ensured.

Target groups and beneficiaries

On the supply side, the most promising target groups for FSS certification are value chain actors who are directly involved in export agriculture and take decisions about farm management or business development. These business owners are very heterogeneous in relation to their resource endowments and production systems. The FSS distinguishes between medium and large size business owners, who often employ farm managers but may also be family businesses, and smallholders who typically are certified as groups. These might be cooperatives, associations or farmers organized and managed by other agents such as plantations with outgrower schemes, first buyers (e.g. a processor or a trader), social businesses or civil society organizations (CSOs). Smallholders are a very heterogeneous group in respect to farm size, poverty and food security levels. Therefore, the FSS categorizes smallholders according to their asset endowment and socioenvironmental context.

The main beneficiaries are all types of workers and the communities in the surrounding areas, the so-called area of influence, including resettled communities. Workers covered by the FSS may be full-time, permanent, casual, temporary and seasonal workers, including migrant, indigenous workers, or child and young workers. Illegal (non-registered) workers and child labor are not permitted in the FSS. Smallholders are both target group as well as beneficiaries.

Applying the FSS has a direct impact on casual and temporary workers (including the workers employed by smallholders), as they are often paid extremely low wages, denied contracts and labor rights, or, in some countries, not even covered by national labor rights. Young workers are covered within other categories but receive some special protection such as not to handle hazardous chemicals or heavy workloads.

Households and communities in the area of influence may also benefit from the certification as negative impacts originating from the agricultural export businesses may be constrained, stopped, mitigated or even rectified during the certification process while practices that have the potential to stimulate local development are adopted. In the long term, these add up to additional development impacts such as jobs, access to health care and education. Following the ‘Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security’, the FSS considers the rights of resettled communities that lie within the area of influence of farms and enterprises that undergo certification. These were added as a group of special concern as they often live under very precarious conditions.

FSS theory of change

To achieve the desired outcome, the FSS theory of change defines four major steps that roughly represent the timeline of the certification process and the resulting development. The first step deals with enhancing capacity, the second with changing people’s behavior. If an enterprise is successfully certified, direct and indirect benefits can be expected:

Step 1: Capacity change

Once a company, farm, plantation or promising smallholder group has become aware of the FSS, it needs to acquire more knowledge about the Right to Food, food security and its legal responsibilities. An attitude change may be also necessary. Market opportunities must be perceived to become an incentive for compliance with the FSS.

Step 2: Behavioral change

A change in capacity and awareness is a necessary condition for changing one’s behavior; the participating actors need to assess their food security situation or that of their workers and identify the gaps regarding the FSS. They may have to change their farm and management practices

and take action to ensure food security and the Right to Food. This may, for example, require a change in meals provided to workers, an improvement in housing infrastructure or providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to increase workers’ safety. Additionally, farmers and workers need to be trained e.g., regarding human rights and related policies, health and safety issues, diets, and food preparation. Furthermore, awareness is built through elaboration and communication of respective policies (e.g. regarding human rights) and strategies.

Step 3: Expected direct benefits of certification

- Smallholders and farm or plantation workers are food secure and their Right to Food is fulfilled.
- The food security situation in the area of influence does not deteriorate due to agricultural production.

These benefits are assessed during the audit to certify compliance with the FSS.



Expected benefits to workers:

The food availability and access to food of workers is improved. Their utilization of food is also enhanced. Diets improve and food security is ensured while employment conditions and social safety nets are ameliorated. Wages increase as the payment of minimum living wages is required. Working conditions progress due to the introduction of decent working hours and regular breaks, accident and health care/insurance, pension schemes, minimum hygiene measures, use

of adequate Personal Protection Equipment and other safety measures. Worker rights are respected through obligatory contracts, pay slips, and non-discrimination policies. Workers are more knowledgeable due to obligatory trainings (e.g. regarding good practices, health and safety, food and nutrition, existing laws and rights including human and women's rights). Access to drinking water has become stable and housing conditions fulfil basic standards.



Expected benefits to medium-sized and large-sized farm owners as well as smallholder groups:

Accidents are less likely to occur, as adequate Personal Protection Equipment is used, and farms comply with basic safety measures. Potentially negative impacts caused by man-made and natural disasters are addressed and mitigated by an appropriate risk management system. Farming methods become more sustainable, often resulting in increased yields and/or productivity and, eventually also profitability through higher crop prices or a market advantage.



Smallholders are empowered to claim and protect their Right to Food – e.g. through establishing linkages with external support structures – and are able to access basic health care as well as an

accident insurance. The FSS incentivizes companies to cooperate with local governments and smallholders are increasingly linked up with governmental programs (like agricultural extension services), CSOs, or other support mechanisms.

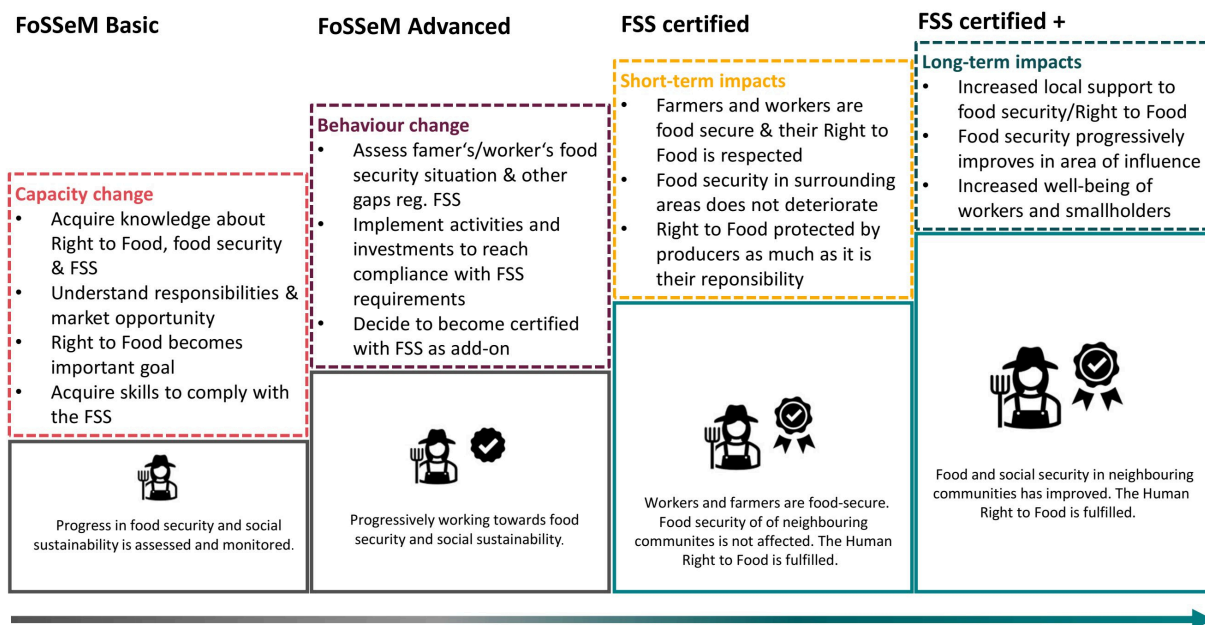


Expected benefits for communities in the area of influence:

Their food security situation and environment in the surrounding communities does not deteriorate because of certified export agriculture. Communities may benefit from local value creation and measures to close income gaps. The access of communities to drinking and/or irrigation water and respect of their water rights is maintained, and water is not polluted. Roads to markets and transitory land use is still available and land rights, also customary and traditional ones are assured. The established complaint mechanisms enable conflict resolution and, ultimately, lead to less offences of the Right to Food.

Step 4: Expected long-term benefits of certification

In the long term, the FSS is expected to contribute to development at the community level as it incentivizes measures that strengthen local value creation. Progressively, the well-being of workers and smallholders improves beyond the basic needs covered by the FSS. Rising incomes enable better housing, better schooling and raise demand for non-agricultural goods and services (transport, telecommunication etc.). Additional joint projects and infrastructure may be established such as health stations or schools, roads, telecom etc.



Graphic: From FOSSEM to full FSS certification

Health conditions improve in the area of influence due to improved diets and better access to medical care. Overall, there is less income fluctuation for temporary or casual workers and resource-constrained smallholders. Workers may gain access to pension schemes and smallholders may be able to set aside funds for retirement. Disaster risk management plans are in place in the area of influence.

situation in the area of influence does not deteriorate due to their activities. FOSSEM, as a step prior to certification, is a valuable program for corporate due diligence systems – as required by supply chain laws and initiative

FOOD SECURITY IS EXPECTED TO PROGRESSIVELY IMPROVE AS A RESULT OF THE COOPERATION BETWEEN FARMERS AND GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS.

In a nutshell: the FSS serves as an important reference and orientation for how to improve food security and promote local development in an agricultural business context. FSS certification proves that the agricultural operator respects the Right to Food of the farmers and workers as much as it is their responsibility and that the food security

Sources:

Beuchelt, T. et al: Integrating the right to food in sustainability standards: A theory of change to move global supply chains from responsibilities to impacts, 2022.

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