

Voices
that
Count

The Inclusive Business Scan

Powered by SenseMaker®



Introduction

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What is SenseMaker?

The Inclusive Business Scan is a SenseMaker®-based approach to gain insights into inclusive business principles within a smallholder supply chain. By collecting the experiences of many smallholder farmers on the inclusivity of a supply chain, self-interpreted at the point of origin, the Inclusive Business Scan offers a practical tool for organising real-time feedback from smallholder farmers in formal markets.

The IB Scan offers companies, producer organisations, NGOs, and service providers a fast and efficient monitoring tool to measure the inclusivity of a particular business model as it is perceived by smallholder farmers. The IB Scan gives a voice to those who are often not reached or heard during monitoring, analysis, decision-making, or action planning.

As a tool, the Inclusive Business Scan relies on the collection of micro-narratives from smallholder farmers, their organisations, and their leaders. Based on five main inclusive business principles, Rikolto (formerly known as VECO) designed a set of questions for the storytellers to signify their own stories.

When used in implementing a new business model or in monitoring existing trading relationships, the IB Scan offers real-time feedback on key issues, and complements conventional data collection methods. It also provides valuable information for impact measurement and assists chain actors and supporters in gaining insights into people's perceptions and in guiding future interventions.

The IB Scan is based on the principles and practices of SenseMaker®, a narrative-based research tool that comes with software packages for collection and analysis.

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Our people in the field know the farmers well, but for our clients and investors they're often just a statistic. The IB Scan allows us to share the farmers' stories and concerns, and offers a wealth of material to start a real dialogue.

*Joris Van Mol,
Sustainable Business
Advisor, Durabilis
(Belgium)*

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Key features

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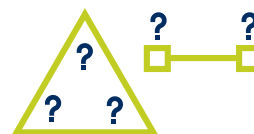
Collecting micro-narratives

The Inclusive Business Scan is based on the collection of hundreds of micro-narratives from smallholder producers, through tablets, smartphones, or on paper. Prompted by a question, respondents share real-life experiences, positive or negative, related to the value chain in which they are involved as suppliers.



Self-interpretation

Immediately after sharing their story, respondents are asked to answer a set of questions about the story. These questions are framed around the topic of inclusive business. Through the signifier questions, the storytellers assess their own stories, thereby adding a deeper layer of meaning to them. A tailor-made app for tablets and smartphones (SenseMaker COLLECTOR®) is used to capture the stories and facilitate this self-signification process.



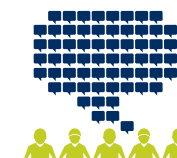
The signification framework

For the Inclusive Business Scan, Rikolto designed a generic set of signifier questions framed around five principles of inclusive business. This signification framework has been tested in different smallholder supply chains. It can be applied to any programme or intervention that focuses on inclusive business in formal markets.



From stories to visualising patterns

The micro-narratives are analysed using pattern detection software (SenseMaker EXPLORER® and TABLEAU®), which renders the original qualitative data into visual patterns and basic statistical data, offering insights into real-time issues and emerging changes in inclusive business. With the help of the software, patterns can be manually constructed, then presented through predefined dashboards and manipulated with different filters. The user can thus zoom out to detect overall patterns and trends, or zoom in to analyse specific stories, keeping the human perspective in the picture.



Fast feedback loops

The Inclusive Business Scan facilitates real-time feedback and short learning cycles. If organised well, data can be collected, analysed, fed back, and put to use in a time span of approximately 3 to 4 weeks. Depending on the purpose and the end users, the analysis is followed by, or embedded in, a participatory feedback workshop with the respondents and main users. The workshop adds a layer of human sense-making, with participants discussing the patterns and creating a common understanding of the changes, challenges and opportunities as highlighted by the respondents, and with the purpose of informing future practice and actions.

Five Inclusive Business principles

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View examples of the IB Scan's signifier questions per principle on pages 8 - 10

The Inclusive Business Scan is framed around a set of key principles for inclusive business, characterising the trading relationship between buyers and smallholder suppliers.

Four key principles draw from the New Business Model principles used in the LINK methodology (<http://rikol.to/linkme2b1>) developed by CIAT.

1. Chain-wide collaboration

- Shared goals? Shared problem-solving? Shared decision-making?
- Level of collaboration? Is the collaboration beneficial?
- Who is taking the lead in the chain?
- Information exchange across the chain?
- Capacity of farmer organisations and companies to engage with each other?

2. Effective market linkages

- How are sellers linked to buyers? Are linkages stable or constantly changing?
- Do buyers know where their end product comes from (traceability)?
- Do farmers know where their product is consumed?
- Loyalty versus dependency towards buyer
- Are trading relationships profitable?
- Anticipation of market changes/opportunities

3. Fair & transparent governance

- Price setting, payment terms and schedules?
- Clear and consistent quality standards?
- Are volumes and prices clearly communicated?
- Type of contracts and agreements (formal/informal, stable/unpredictable, ...)
- Are the production, financial, and commercial risks understood and shared proportionally in the chain?

The fifth principle was added during the pilot testing of the Inclusive Business Scan and focuses on the performance of the farmer organisations or cooperatives involved in the smallholder supply chain. For each principle, a set of questions was developed to signify the stories.*

4. Equitable access to services

- Do producers have timely access to market information?
- Do producers have access to financial and technical support services?
- Where do farmers get working capital (buyers, family, bank, investors etc.)?
- What is the role of buyers in supporting access to finance, technical services, and market information?

5. Farmer organisation performance

- Loyalty versus dependency members farmer organisations
- Services provided by the farmer organisation?
- Governance and decision-making?
- Capacity of the farmer organisation to engage in business?
- Benefits of memberships?
- Access to (new) markets?

The IB Scan process

The Inclusive Business Scan is applied in three phases:

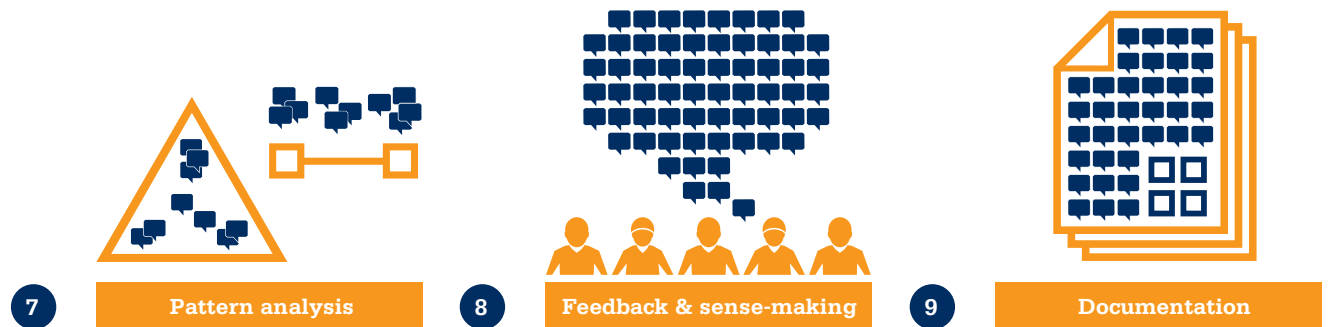
Phase 1: Designing the IB Scan



Phase 2: Narrative collection



Phase 3: Analysis & use



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Phase 1: Designing the IB Scan

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What is SenseMaker?

Rikolto developed a specific set of signifier questions around five key principles of inclusive business. For each of these principles, a set of signifier questions has been developed and tested in five pilot cases. This set can be used to compile a contextualized signification framework that suits the needs of the assessment.



1 Purpose of the IB Scan

In this stage, the overall purpose of the Inclusive Business Scan is defined:

- Why do we want to use the Inclusive Business Scan?
- Will the IB Scan be used for project design, monitoring or evaluation purposes?
- Who will be the end-users of the IB Scan and what will they eventually do with the results?
- Which other actors need to be involved during the design stage and/or analysis?

Users also need to be clear on the type of information and insights the Inclusive Business Scan generates. The IB Scan is developed as a stand-alone tool but can also be used in combination with other existing monitoring tools.

These design decisions are crucial since they will influence the configuration of the signification framework as well as the timing and frequency of the narrative collection and analysis process.



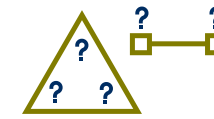
2 Whose voices do we want to hear?

A tailor-made sampling strategy needs to be developed in line with the purpose and the specific context of the smallholder supply chain. SenseMaker® reveals patterns from a large collection of narrative fragments (micro-narratives). Experience has shown that an average of 500 respondent stories is a good-sized sample, with the minimum necessary being about 300. The more stories there are, the stronger the patterns that are revealed. A maximum of 1000 stories would give optimal results in most situations.

Critical questions affecting respondent size:

- Which farmers do we want to include in the narrative collection?
- Does the assessment require an analysis of a particular subgroup (male/female, age, different districts, size of land, certified/uncertified etc.)? A minimum of 80 to 100 stories for each subgroup is recommended.
- Do we need a comparison group?
- Oversampling of particular subgroups – such as female or young farmers – might be necessary to guarantee that their voices are included, and to make analyses based on comparable numbers.

Although it would be interesting to capture the voices of all chain actors, supporters, and influencers, the total number of such actors for a particular value chain is usually limited and would not exceed 20 to 30 respondents. Rikolto thus decided to focus only on the collection of stories from smallholder farmers.



3 The signification framework

The signification framework is the main instrument of the IB Scan for collecting the micro-narratives and facilitating the self-signification. The design is entirely framed around the principles of inclusive business.

The signification framework consists of three parts:

1. The prompting question: A single question that triggers respondents to share an event, moment, or anecdote that they find meaningful. We are not eliciting an opinion from the storyteller, but a real experience.

2. The signifier questions: These are questions used to gather additional information and insights about the experience that has been shared. Through the set of questions – which can be seen as ‘indices’ or ‘tags’ – we are able to reveal additional layers of meaning in the set of micro-narratives; meanings we would not see in the stories, or that could not be filtered out just by reading the stories.

3. Demographic questions: A limited set of demographic questions is configured to suit the context of the assessment (gender, age, district, role in the farmer organisation, amount of land, fraction of income from crop selling, etc.), and can be used as filters when analysing the data.

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The IB Scan usually includes approximately 30 questions consisting of 6 to 8 triads, 6 dyads, 1 or 2 stones and 10 to 14 multiple-choice questions (including demographic questions).

1. The prompting question

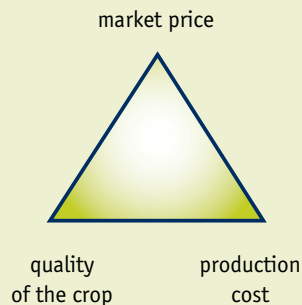
Think about a specific recent moment or event when you felt particularly encouraged or concerned about being a producer and selling your produce to the company.

2. Four types of signifier questions

1. Triads

A triad refers to a triangular question with three labels that are not mutually exclusive (all worded in positive, negative, or neutral terms). Respondents answer the question by positioning a dot anywhere inside the triangle. By doing so, they can provide a nuanced answer and avoid oversimplification in answering the questions. Basically, respondents indicate how the story 'sits' against the three labels.

In your story, the price paid for your crop was based on ...



allow to invest in the future



lead to financial loss

In your story, prices paid ...

3. Demographic questions

How old are you?

- < 35 years old
- > 35 years old

Size of crop land?

- < 1 Ha
- > 1 Ha

3. Stones

The 'stones' question is one where respondents can position different elements or perspectives (stones) in a 'field' or picture that represents a variety of answers. By doing so, respondents make a comparative assessment of these different elements or perspectives.

In case of [type of risk], how is risk distributed?



- M** Low market prices
- P** Production loss (climate/diseases)
- T** Transport/storage problems

4. Multiple-choice questions

Multiple-choice questions allow respondents to provide an additional tagging to the stories. These questions are often related to the topics at hand (for example, 'the story is about ...') and provide additional insights into the general nature of the stories.

This story is about ...

- inputs
- production issues
- processing
- trading & commercialisation

Sample signifier questions

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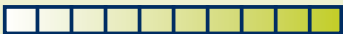
1. Chain-wide collaboration

In your story, the capacities of the farmer organisation to engage in business with the company are ...

insufficient  sufficient

N/A

In your story, the benefits of collaboration with the buyer are ...

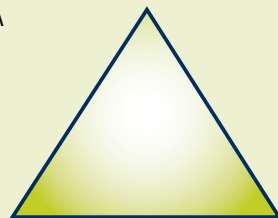
not worth the effort  worth the effort

N/A

In your story, companies and farmers ...

consider each other's needs

N/A



don't know each other's needs

think only of themselves

2. Effective market linkages

In your story, prices paid ...

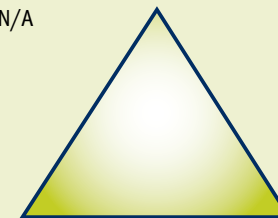
allow to invest in the future  lead to financial loss

N/A

In your story, farmer organisations ...

sell to anybody

N/A



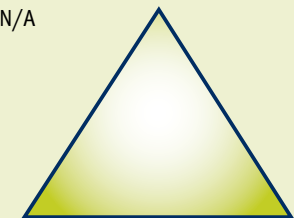
sell to only one company based on loyalty

sell to only one company based on dependency

In your story, the income from selling the crop is spent on ...

preparing for the next season/harvest

N/A



your farm/business

covering family needs

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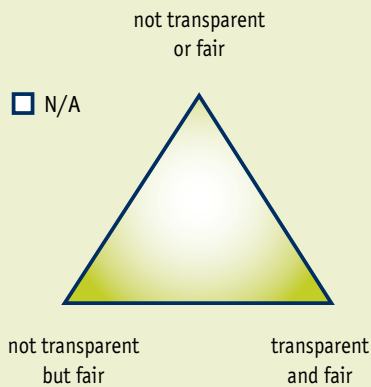
3. Fair & transparent governance

In your story, in case of [type of risk], how is risk distributed?

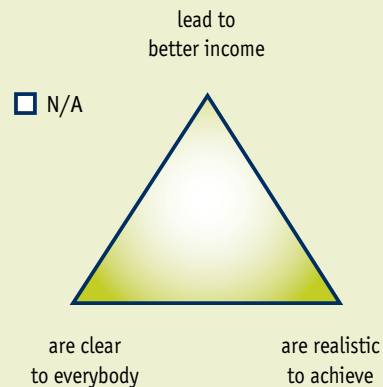


- M Low market prices
- P Production loss (climate/diseases)
- T Transport/storage problems

In your story, price setting is ...



In your story, the quality standards ...

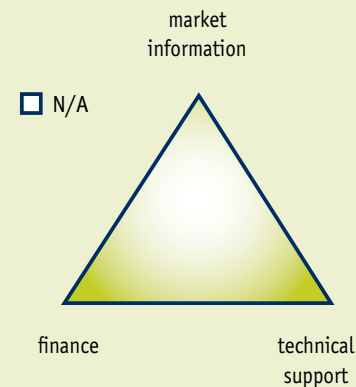


4. Equitable access to services

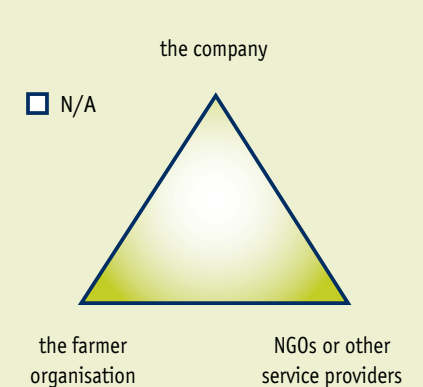
In the context of your story, where do farmers/ farmer organisations get their work capital from?

- own means
- family
- cooperative
- buyers
- bank
- investors
- micro-finance institutions
- NGOs
- other, please specify ...

To improve the outcome of your story, people need access to ...



In your story, support to farmers is mostly provided by ...



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5. Farmer organisation performance

In the context of your story, the main services provided by the farmer organisation are ...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> market access | <input type="checkbox"/> infrastructure & logistical support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> information | <input type="checkbox"/> price negotiations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> credits | <input type="checkbox"/> collective marketing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> training on good agricultural practices | <input type="checkbox"/> other, please specify ... |

In the context of your story,

the FO takes the lead and decides there is shared decision-making between farmers and the FO

N/A

In your story, the direct benefits of FO membership are mainly ...

N/A

General questions

This story is mainly about ...

- inputs
- production issues
- processing
- trading & commercialisation

My story ...

- happens all the time
- is quite common
- happens sometimes
- is quite rare
- never happened before

The story makes you feel ... (pick up to 2)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> proud | <input type="checkbox"/> encouraged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> angry | <input type="checkbox"/> sad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated/disappointed | <input type="checkbox"/> worried |
| <input type="checkbox"/> happy | <input type="checkbox"/> satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> indifferent | <input type="checkbox"/> other, please specify |

Demographic questions

Your role in the value chain is ... (pick 1)

- farmer/producer
- farmer leader
- farmer organisation staff

How old are you?

- < 35 years old
- > 35 years old

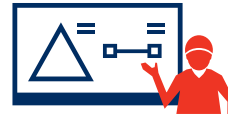
You live in ...

country
district
village

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During the narrative collection process, the story collectors (enumerators) gather the experiences of the farmers and facilitate the self-signification process. **Collection is done through individual 'interviews' or during group-facilitated sessions using paper, tablets, or smartphones.**



4 Training of the story collectors

The thorough training of the story collectors (enumerators) requires sufficient time in order to guarantee quality narrative collection. Because SenseMaker® is different to conventional survey questionnaires, it requires a proper introduction.

A typical training programme for enumerators covers:

- The purpose and contents of the Inclusive Business Scan
- The basics of the SenseMaker® methodology
- A good understanding of all the signifier questions
- How to introduce the collection and prompt for good micro-narratives (including role play)
- How to facilitate the self-signification process (including role play)
- The use of the tablet application
- Supervised narrative collection with a small respondent group

The training of enumerators takes 2 to 3 days (including supervised test collection) followed by feedback sessions during the first few days of the narrative collection process. A senior coordinator supervises the enumerator team throughout the entire collection period.



SenseMaker in DR Congo

Our trip started with a 2 day training session of 14 students, followed by a 7 day field trip to collect stories from 14 different Micro-Washing Stations (MWS) of the cooperative Kawa Kabuya. At a MWS, affiliated farmers bring their coffee beans to wash, ferment and dry, after which the beans are transported to a central factory for final treatment before export. Around 1100 farmers use the 14 washing stations. We had set our goal high and wanted to gather at least 800 stories.

We encountered some logistical difficulties as the roads were often really bad because of the rain, land slides etc. Several times we had to leave the car behind and hike to the MWS. These were long and difficult hikes. Sometimes we arrived late, or farmers arrived late because of difficult road conditions.

The stories were either told in French or in the local language (directly translated and captured on paper or tablet). In the end, we gathered 751 stories from 14 MWS.

Caroline Huyghe, Rikolto

Phase 2: Narrative collection



5 Story collection

Farmers are invited to share a recent experience, anecdote, moment or event. These stories are triggered by a prompting question – a single, open question that invites a spontaneous answer:

‘Think about a specific recent moment or event when you felt particularly encouraged or concerned as a producer, selling your produce to the company’.

Each farmer is free to decide which experience he wants to share. The story collectors do not suggest or drop hints about any topic, issue or event. The farmer writes the story on paper or the story collector takes direct notes in the COLLECTOR[®] application. The aim is to capture a real experience from the storyteller, not an opinion on a particular issue. It is shared as a personal anecdote as if it were shared with a friend or a relative.

As the number of stories to be collected is rather large, it is important to investigate the most efficient approach: story collectors can invite farmers to a central location or can attend existing farmer gatherings to collect stories. In some cases, story collectors visit the producers on their farms.



6 Self-signification

The self-signification process needs to be well facilitated, as the signifier questions are different from conventional survey questions. It is important that farmers fully understand the logic of the triad, dyad, and stones questions. If necessary, some simple examples can be used to make the farmers familiar with the type of questions used. Experience shows that the signifiers invite intuitive answers (if explained well), even for illiterate people. The self-signification process usually takes no more than 20 minutes per farmer. The data entered through COLLECTOR[®] is saved on a secure external server and can be easily accessed.



A guided individual collection takes about 25 to 40 minutes, while a group-facilitated approach (still collecting individual stories) with 5 to 20 respondents takes an hour to an hour-and-a-half. The collection can be done on paper (followed by data entry in COLLECTOR[®]) or directly with the tailor-made tablet and smartphone COLLECTOR[®] application. Experience from pilot cases shows that a single enumerator can collect an average of 6 to 10 stories per day, depending on the availability and accessibility of the respondent groups. In all pilot cases, an average of 500 stories was reached in 5 to 8 days of narrative collection with 10-12 enumerators supported by 1 or 2 coordinators.

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The data analysis can be organised in various ways and may involve different layers of complexity and sense-making, depending on the purpose, use and users of the Inclusive Business Scan.

A standard analysis process consists of:

- a) **Analysing patterns** with end users.
- b) **Reading stories:** based on the pattern analysis, particular groups of stories (story packs) can be easily accessed and read to gain further insights about the patterns and issues at hand.
- c) **Participatory feedback** and sense-making with farmers, other chain actors and end users.
- d) **Documenting key patterns,** insights, and actions taken.

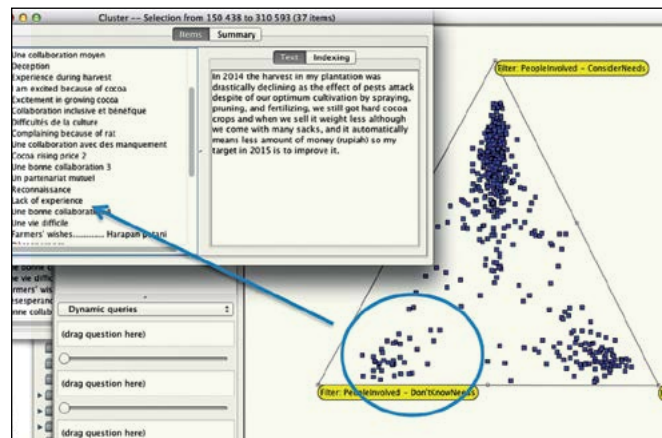


The pattern-detection software SenseMaker EXPLORER® and the data visualisation software TABLEAU® are used to analyse the story patterns. Based on the signification (tagging) of the stories by the respondents, these software applications turn the original qualitative data into aggregated visual patterns and basic statistical data on the inclusive business topics present in the signifier questions.

Patterns can be visualised for each signifier in order to understand the overall perceptions of farmers of the core principles of inclusive business. In addition,

both demographic (age, gender, district, etc.) and story-related multiple-choice questions (topic, emotional intensity, etc.) can be used as filters in order to compare the patterns of particular groups of stories. The patterns of the multiple-choice questions also reveal the general nature of the stories.

Analysis focuses on detecting and investigating dominant patterns, interesting outliers, and correlations as well as comparing groups of interest. It is usually a mix of systematic analysis combined with an open exploration of the data, which can reveal patterns that confirm or surprise. The visual patterns often give an indication of the percentages, highlighting the differences in the observed patterns. Further statistical analysis can be applied if required.



Story packs

Based on the pattern analysis, particular groups of stories (story packs) can be easily accessed and read to gain further insights into the patterns and issues at hand. While stories were initially signified and indexed by the storytellers in order to visualise patterns, the patterns in return inform the selection of potentially interesting ‘topical’ story packs; and by doing so, they bring the qualitative data back to the table. This filtering, based on patterns, allows the experiences of the farmers to be read and analysed in a structured and digestible way. The content of the stories often reveals further insights into the particular trends or issues at hand.

Phase 3: Analysis & use



8 Participatory feedback & sense-making

The analysis is followed by participatory feedback and sense-making with relevant stakeholders, such as buyers, farmers, farmer organisations, government, government agencies, and service providers. This can be organised as a single event or as a sequence of events in which different stakeholders participate. During these sense-making workshops, participants have a chance to interpret the patterns that emerge from the data, read stories, provide feedback, and bring new ideas and insights to the table. Feedback sessions help provide validation as well as an opportunity for further discussion on emerging issues within the smallholder supply chain. The pattern discussion and story reading have proven to be quite powerful and disarming ways of facilitating dialogue between chain actors – especially smallholder farmers and companies – around key issues in the trading relationship. Facilitation is required to ensure that the discussions are action-oriented and result in a concrete set of propositions to improve business inclusivity and sustainability in the value chain.



9 Documenting results

A standard report is generated based on the main outputs and insights of the (participatory) analysis process. The pattern analysis and the participatory sense-making workshops usually generate rather detailed reports. A final summary report is compiled with the demographic information of the storytellers (farmers), an overview of the general nature of the stories (based on the multiple-choice questions), the most important patterns, conclusions, and recommended actions for each of the key principles of inclusive business.

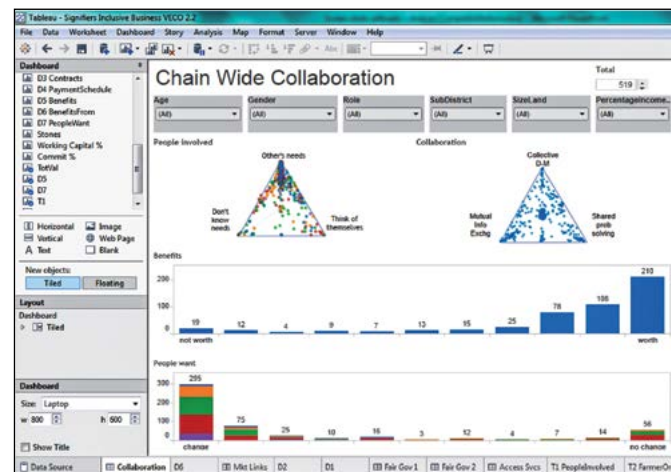


The SenseMaker IB Scan is a powerful tool, not only for better understanding the perspective of the farmers, but also because the information it generates can be used to trigger deeper discussion even on sensitive issues in a constructive way with all stakeholders in the cocoa chain.

*Utami Catur Dewi:
M&E manager Rikolto
in Indonesia*



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Dashboard application

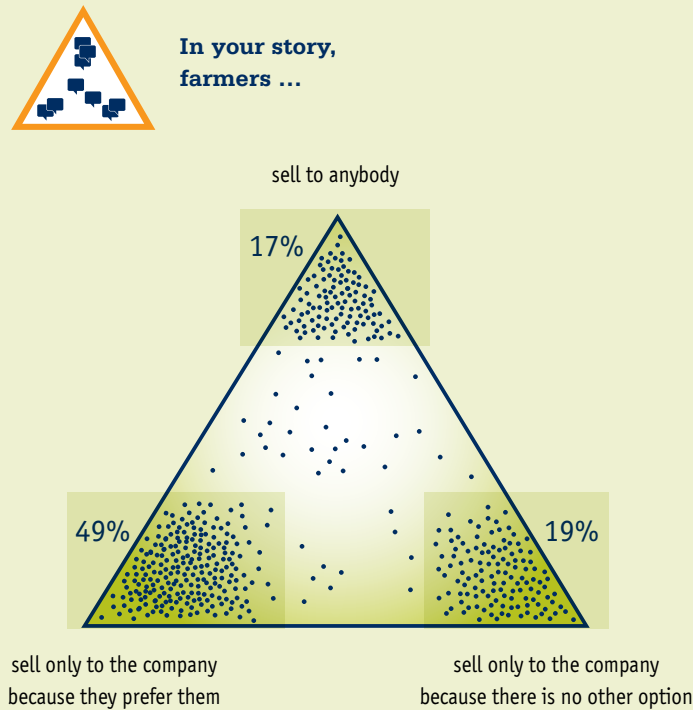
To facilitate analysis with project teams and end users, a dashboard application was developed in TABLEAU® and structured around the core principles of inclusive business, thereby allowing for quick topical pattern analysis.

Pattern analysis examples

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Triads

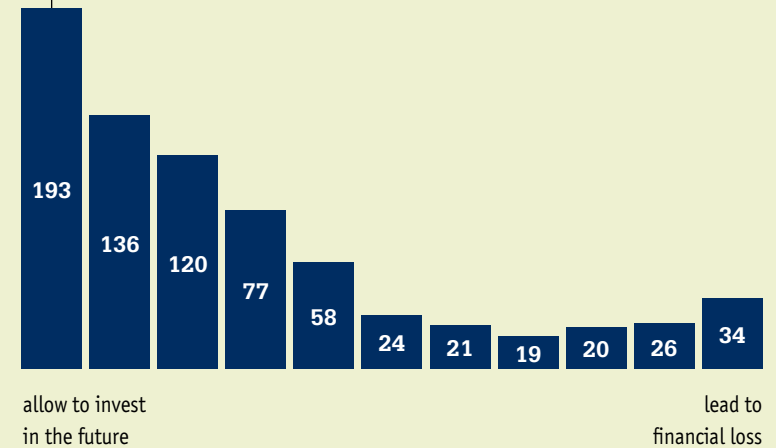
A pattern is generated for triad questions. In this case it is filtered only by negative and extremely negative stories across all districts.



Rice chain in Senegal (total of 327 stories)

We can conclude that there is a relatively high level of loyalty to the buyer (49%). Some farmers feel there is no other choice for them (dependency) but to sell to the buyer (19%), and 17% of the producers sell to anybody. A deeper look into these stories reveals that the majority of them come from one particular farmer group where there are issues related to quality of the rice and trust with the buyer.

Dyads



One of the 193 stories:

“I am proud and happy to be a member of Kawa Kabuya. I was able to buy a plot of land and am constructing a house there. My son has been able to marry easily, without getting into any debt, unlike others before.”

Male farmer leader (over 60) from Vukumba

Coffee chain in East-Congo (total of 728 stories)

The majority of the coffee farmers consider that the prices paid by the buyer allow to invest in the future. However, further analysis shows substantial differences in perceptions between the members of the different washing stations.

Pattern analysis examples

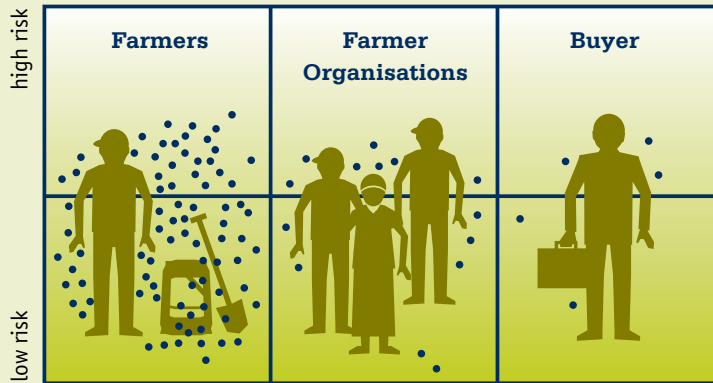
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Stones

In the pattern generated for stones questions, each dot refers to a particular story.



In the case of low market prices, how is risk distributed?



- M** Low market prices
- P** Production loss (climate/diseases)
- T** Transport/storage problems

Risk distribution

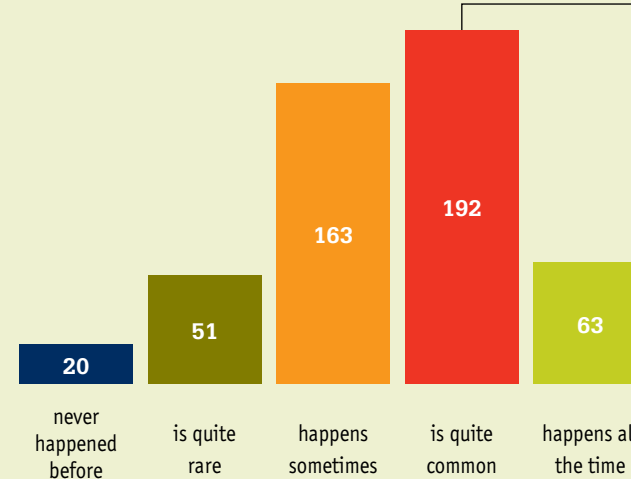
The risks associated with low market prices are clearly borne by the producers, but are considered to be low.

Multiple-choice questions

Using multiple-choice questions to compare the general nature of stories shared by farmers.



Your story ...



Stories counted

These 20 stories potentially illustrate new emerging issues or opportunities in the chain.

One of the 192 stories:

“The spraying and other cultivation activities are sometimes easy and sometimes difficult. So far it has been good at times and difficult at other times but we are trying to do the best we can. The advantage of the partnership with Amanah and Mars has been in getting paid immediately. No matter whether the amount is large or small, they still send it.”

Male cocoa farmer (46–60) from Mapili, Indonesia

The IB Scan in practice

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To implement the IB Scan, you can contact Rikolto for tailor-made support: info@rikolto.org

Timeframe

If organised well, an Inclusive Business Scan can be performed within two months. This involves customising the IB Scan to the specific context and needs of the end users, which can take up to one month. A narrative collection of 500 - 800 stories can take two weeks, using 10 - 12 story collectors. Pattern analysis of the data can start within a week of the data collection and takes up to a week to complete. Participatory feedback and sense-making workshops can vary from one to three days, and are usually organised shortly after the first analysis.

Estimated budget

The estimated budget for carrying out the IB Scan varies from EUR 25 to 45 per story, over an average of 500 collected stories. The cost varies according to the narrative collection approach, the accessibility of the farmers, the analysis tools used, the approach taken for the analysis and sense-making process, and the internal capacity for implementing SenseMaker®.

The Inclusive Business Scan includes:

- **A set of signifier questions** for each of the inclusive business principles. From this set, a contextualised signification framework can be configured.
- **A participatory 2 or 3-day training programme** for story collectors (enumerators), tailored to the realities of facilitating narrative collection with smallholders in rural areas.
- **An online data-entry application** and a tablet and smartphone application for data collection. The SenseMaker COLLECTOR® software (developed by Cognitive Edge) is customised to the questions of the IB Scan.
- **The pattern detection and data visualisation software** SenseMaker EXPLORER® (developed by Cognitive Edge) and the customised TABLEAU® dashboard application are available for pattern analysis.
- **A step-by-step plan for pattern analysis** in collaboration with the end users.
- **Facilitation of a participatory feedback and sense-making workshop** with chain actors. The workshop facilitates collaborative analysis and stimulates debate among chain actors towards actionable insights.
- **A standard summary report template** to document the most important results and insights from the scan.



Indonesia

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Story collectors:

12 trained students
+ 2 coordinators in
different groups
in the respective
sub-districts
Training: 3 days
Collection period:
7 days

Value chain

Cocoa (export), Indonesia
Amanah (farmer coop), Mars (buyer)

Respondents

517 stories (January 2015) from members of the cocoa farmer cooperative Amanah in the district of Polman, Sulawesi. Collection was carried out in five of the sub-districts where Amanah operates.

Narrative collection

The narrative collection was organised through an individual and group-facilitated approach using pen and paper. Stories were collected in Indonesian and later translated into English. The final data entry was done in both languages in the online COLLECTOR® site, so both languages could be used during analysis.

Analysis & use

The analysis was carried out by Rikolto Head Office staff using SenseMaker EXPLORER® combined with TABLEAU®. The results of the analysis were fed back to Rikolto in Indonesia staff and a participatory feedback and sense-making workshop was organised with farmers, the cooperative and the main service provider.

Value chain

Cocoa (export), Indonesia
Amanah (farmer coop), Mars (buyer)

Respondents

519 stories (February 2016) from members of the cocoa farmer cooperative Amanah in the district of Polman, Sulawesi. Collection was carried out in four of the sub-districts where Amanah operates.

Narrative collection

The narrative collection was organised through an individual facilitated approach using pen and paper, and the COLLECTOR® tablet application. Farmers shared their story in Indonesian or in their local dialect, while the story collectors noted and saved the stories in Indonesian (after validation with the respondents). The collection took place at people's houses and at public places where farmers gathered.

Analysis & use

The analysis was carried out jointly by Rikolto's international office and staff in Indonesia using a customised dashboard application in TABLEAU®. The results were further analysed during a participatory feedback and sense-making workshop with farmers, the cooperative and the main service provider on the one hand, and then at a multistakeholder workshop with Mars and members of the Cocoa Sustainability Platform on the other.

“

The Inclusive Business Scan shows us critical issues in the production and selling of cocoa as they are perceived by the producers. This information is very useful for guiding the implementation of our programmes in the cocoa business.

*Rachmania, WASIAT,
Service Provider Cocoa in
Polman District, Sulawesi*

”



Senegal

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Story collectors:
10 trained University students + 2 coordinators collected as one group
Training: 3 days
Collection period: 7 days

Value chain

Rice (local market), Senegal

Respondents

328 stories (November 2014) were collected from individual rice farmers and producers of the farmer organisation Boundoum Barrage Union in the Senegal river valley (Ross Bethio), which sells to the company SFA (Société Sénégalaise des Filières Alimentaires).

Narrative collection

The collection of stories was organised using the COLLECTOR® tablet application using an individual collection approach. Farmers shared their story in Wolof, while the story collectors noted and saved the stories directly in French (after validation with the respondents). The collection took place at people's houses and at public places where farmers gathered.

Analysis & use

The analysis was organised with SenseMaker EXPLORER® in combination with QlikView, and carried out by the staff from SFA's mother company Durabilis (after training by Rikolto).

The results were compiled in an internal company report. Durabilis has since used the IB Scan in bean and fruit chains in Peru, Guatemala, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast, integrating the results of the IB Scan into the internal sustainability and impact reporting of the company.



Nicaragua

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Story

Collectors:

10 trained students
+ 1 coordinator in
different groups
in the respective
municipalities
Training: 2 days
Collection period:
7 days

Value chain

Cocoa (export), Nicaragua
La Campesina and Cacaonica (farmer coop)
Ritter Sport (buyer)

Respondents

415 stories (June 2015) from members of the cocoa cooperatives La Campesina and Cacaonica in the Southern and Northern Autonomous Atlantic regions respectively. Collection was carried out in the three municipalities where La Campesina and Cacaonica operate.

Narrative collection

The narrative collection was organised through an individual and group-facilitated approach using pen and paper, and also the COLLECTOR® tablet application. Farmers shared their stories in Spanish, which was subsequently entered by the story collectors and interpreted by the respondents. The collection took place at people's houses and at public places where farmers gathered.

Analysis & use

Analysis was carried out by Rikolto's international office staff with SenseMaker EXPLORER® combined with TABLEAU®. The results of the analysis were fed back to Rikolto's office in Nicaragua and two participatory feedback and sense-making workshops were organised with farmers and the cooperatives. A feedback session was also held with Ritter Sport. Furthermore, the results were used as an additional data source for Step 3 of the LINK methodology (negotiated scoring of the new business model).



“

As a cocoa farmer, I find it important that producing cocoa leads to proper rewards and incentives, both for the company and the producer. Producers and buyers help each other out not only through making money, but also through the provision of technical information to grow and upkeep the cocoa plants in order to get higher quality beans and a better production. This allows us to improve the quality of my life as a producer and that of my family.

Male farmer leader (21-30) from La Campesina

”

Pilot cases

Congo

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What is SenseMaker?

Story collectors:

14 trained students
+ 1 coordinator in
different groups in
the different micro-
washing stations
Training: 2 days
Collection period:
7 days

Value chain

Coffee (export), DR Congo
Kawa Kabuya (farmer coop), Phusys (exporter)

Respondents

751 stories (April 2015) from members of the coffee cooperative Kawa Kabuya in the North Kivu province. Collection was carried out in 14 microwashing stations in the Lubero and Beni territories where Kawa Kabuya operates.

Narrative collection

The narrative collection was organised through an individual facilitated approach using pen and paper, and the COLLECTOR® tablet application. Farmers shared their story in French or in their local dialect, while the story collectors noted and saved the stories in French (after validation with the respondents). The collection took place at the micro-washing stations where farmers gathered.

Analysis & use

The analysis was carried out by Rikolto Head Office staff, using SenseMaker EXPLORER® combined with TABLEAU®. The results of the analysis were fed back to Rikolto's staff in DR Congo staff and shared with the cooperative. Due to the bankruptcy of Phusys not long after the data collection, no collective sense-making session has taken place between the cooperative and the buyer.



“

I didn't realise it was feasible to collect the opinions of 740 coffee farmers separately in a short time span, to analyse them so quickly and to draw conclusions, both from individual positions and from the combination of them all together. What a strong tool for programme monitoring SenseMaker is! But it would be even stronger if the farmer cooperatives could own the tool to assess both the business relationships with their buyers and the appreciation of cooperative services by their members on a regular basis.

*Ivan Godfroid – Director
Rikolto RD Congo*

”

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Using SenseMaker to measure, learn and communicate about smallholder farmer inclusion (Deprez et al., 2012).

In 2011, Rikolto (previously known as VECO) piloted two (light) SenseMaker® projects to validate the application's feasibility in measuring the inclusivity of smallholder farmers in two value chains, specifically focusing on how ownership, voice, risk and rewards were shared among the different chain actors. These SenseMaker® cases took place in Ecuador and Vietnam with a limited number of respondents (80–120 storytellers).*

The main lessons and conclusions were that SenseMaker® indeed provides a unique way of revealing insights into the inclusion of smallholder farmers, particularly on issues that are less tangible, and therefore harder to measure. Stories were collected from smallholder producers, processors, buyers and chain supporters, such as NGOs.

This initial SenseMaker® pilot test showed that the signification framework needed to be better underpinned by inclusive business principles, and that further fine-tuning and development of the relevant signifiers was required. The narrative collection also needed to be organised more efficiently to allow more stories to be collected. Furthermore, alternative tools that could improve the analysis needed to be explored.

In 2014, through the support of the Grand Challenge Explorations Initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Rikolto was able to further fine-tune and develop the Inclusive Business Scan. The main purpose was to develop a generic SenseMaker® approach, specifically designed for smallholder supply-chain programmes in formal markets so as to organise systematic feedback on the inclusion of smallholders.

One crucial development necessary was a well-conceived generic signification framework based on the latest theory, practice and methods for inclusive business; and developed in cooperation with renowned expert practitioners and knowledge centres. This signification framework is vital, since it provides the lens through which the storytellers assess or 'signify' their own stories. A second component was the design of a cost-effective process for collecting a large number of stories (500 to 3000 per value chain) that would also offer pattern-seeking analysis and participatory debriefing as well as fast responsiveness and decision-making.

Rikolto wanted to use the Grand Challenge Explorations grant to develop an innovative and participatory method that would enable:

- value chain programmes to generate new and crucial insights on the inclusion of smallholders (by hearing their voices directly) to supplement the conventional (hard) agricultural data
- the provision of real-time data for faster and better informed decision-making and action
- the detection of weak initial signals in the stories that might provide early warning signs for programme implementers for informed decision-making

- enhancements in the accountability lines between chain supporters, farmers, companies and donors
- the provision of valuable information for outcome and impact measurement (including baseline data)
- the execution of the method at a low running cost once the initial generic signification framework had been developed

The newly developed framework was piloted in different value-chain programmes with a sufficient number of storytellers. The set of signifiers was developed with a small team, and was tested and validated in the field and in cooperation with one of the participating companies, which also brought in their perspective on inclusive business. During each of the pilot cases, the framework was further fine-tuned.

New questions were tested to fit the specific contexts and needs of the projects. For the IB Scan in DR Congo, for example, there was a particular interest in also including the less tangible relationship issues between the coffee producers and their cooperative, in addition to the trading relationship between the cooperative and the coffee buyer. A final review aiming for a more standardised generic framework was applied in the last pilot case in the cocoa chain in Indonesia (February 2016).

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SenseMaker® is a complexity-aware monitoring and evaluation approach that supports decision-making and action. It involves collecting large numbers of micro-narratives (experiences, anecdotes, events, moments, etc.) that are self-interpreted by the storyteller.

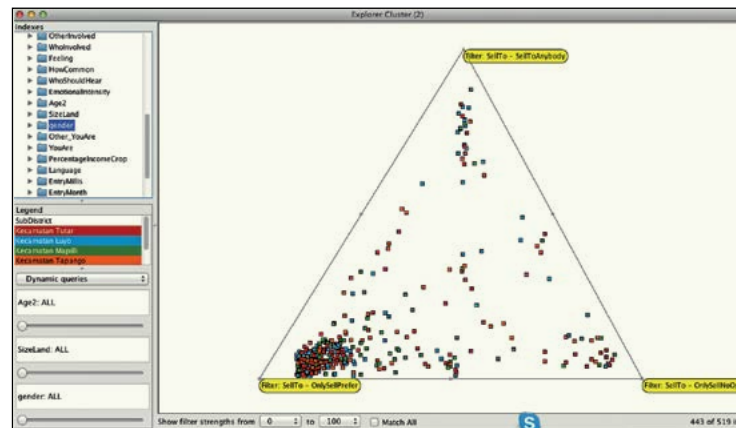
SenseMaker® captures the voices of large numbers of people, making primary assessments of their stories, adding a deeper layer of meaning to the stories and removing the potential bias of a third party interpreting the data. The approach is developed by Cognitive Edge (www.cognitive-edge.com), and provides a data-collection platform and application (COLLECTOR®) along with pattern detection software (EXPLORER®) that analyses the micro-narratives and turns the original qualitative data into aggregated statistical data and patterns, thus allowing the generation of insights into real-time issues and fast-response measures.

The respondents themselves make the primary assessment of their own stories. In other words, the person who provides the material decides what it means, resulting in so-called 'self-signified micro-narratives'. People not only interpret the content of their stories but also the context from which the stories emerged. Thus, SenseMaker® can be used as a method to reveal the world through the eyes of people in a particular environment, context or system (such as smallholder farmers). It provides a powerful and natural way of gaining access to multiple perspectives and new insights into complexities.

By using a large number of fragments from a diverse range of actors, SenseMaker® allows the identification of the patterns and trends affecting predefined topics of interest.

The main benefits of SenseMaker®:

- understanding change as it emerges and in making real-time adjustments (quick feedback loop)
- rapid analysis of qualitative material and sense-making of distributed (fragmented) information from multiple sources
- insights into the different perspectives, attitudes and values associated with a set of preidentified domains of interest
- weak signal detection in revealing hidden or emergent opportunities and threats
- generating evidence-based 'hard' and 'soft' data



SenseMaker EXPLORER® pattern detection software

“

As a farmer, I am not fully satisfied with the decisions made by Amanah or Mars. The reason is that they make nearly all of the decisions about things like price, quality, payment and terms etc. Also, in November and December 2015, Mars suspended the purchase of dried cocoa beans while we still have a considerable amount of beans unsold. We really do not know where to sell the remaining beans as our farmer organisation and Amanah have decided that they will collaborate with Mars.

*Female producer (31–45)
from Tutar*

”

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THE BELGIAN
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BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

Rikolto (previously known as Vredeseilanden/VECO) is an international NGO with more than 40 years of experience in partnering with farmer organisations and food chain actors across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

We enable and support smallholder farmers to take up their role in rural poverty alleviation and to contribute to feeding a growing world population sustainably.

Rikolto runs programmes in 14 countries worldwide through eight regional offices. Our main focus today is on developing sustainable agricultural chains from the local up to the international level. The organisation achieves its aims through its partnerships with organised farmer groups, private sector actors (traders, processors, retailers), NGOs, research institutions, and government agencies in 16 different countries.

Rikolto plays a facilitating role among the relevant stakeholders in developing common strategies for inclusive business models, aiming at economic business models that are economically, socially and ecologically sustainable. The goal is to increase benefits to all parties within each chain – and especially to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

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