

# Rikolto Global Strategy 2022-2026

A glimpse into the future



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## Our new mission:

**A sustainable income for farmers and nutritious, affordable food for everyone:** this is what Rikolto works for.

We reach our goals by **building bridges** between smallholder farmer organisations, companies, authorities and other actors across rural and urban areas. Together, we create innovative ways of accessing, distributing and producing nutritious, quality food, so no one is left behind.

Through our global network, we wish to inspire others to tackle with us **the inter-related challenges of food insecurity, climate change, and economic inequality.**

Because **a better world starts on our plate.**

**rikolto**  
VECO



## Toward sustainable food systems

Development experts have fostered a global consensus in recent years around the need for fundamental change in our food systems to boost sustainability and equity. This is the message of the 2019 EAT-Lancet Commission Report and the 2020 Global Nutrition Report. The COVID-19 pandemic, causing massive social and economic dislocations, has left little doubt about the fragility of food systems around the world.

With more than 40 years of experience, Rikolto is well prepared to tackle the challenge. Particularly in the last few years, we have moved quickly from a focus on agricultural value chains to a broader food systems approach.<sup>1</sup>

Based on this approach, our new strategy for the period 2021-2026 charts a clear and unifying path toward sustainable food systems by focusing on interventions that can reshape the roles of multiple food system actors, from the global to local level.



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<sup>1</sup> Rikolto has adopted the [food systems framework](#) developed by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

## Inclusive business is Rikolto's core business

**Inclusive business is Rikolto's core business** – Building on decades of work in rural development and on our well-established expertise in creating inclusive business relationships, the strategy sets out our systems approach for working with diverse partners to strengthen selected commodity sectors (rice, fresh fruits and vegetables, pulses, cocoa and coffee) and to address the wider food system challenges of cities. Our **global Rice, Cocoa, Coffee and Food Smart Cities programmes**, will seek change in three key food system domains where Rikolto has particular strength in 17 countries around the world:

1. Sustainable production
2. Inclusive markets
3. Enabling environments

The programmes will test innovations in those domains and build evidence on their performance and leverage this with the help of key partners to convince others, either governments, companies or investors, who have sufficient influence to scale up the innovations that we promote. In this process, we see inclusive business as a key condition for overcoming the challenges that food systems pose. By creating incentives for change throughout the value chain, inclusive business facilitation can lead ultimately to a shift towards sustainable food systems. Partnerships with the private sector, including companies and farmer organisations, are critical to make this happen.

Across our programmes, we will ensure a strong emphasis on gender and youth, and we will integrate digital tools into key operations for increased efficiency and to build trust. The programmes will also make concerted efforts to reduce environmental damage, address climate change impacts, preserve biodiversity, and enhance food system resilience in the face of shocks and crises.

**Cities at the centre** – In the period covered by this strategy, we anticipate that the Food Smart Cities programme will become the central component of Rikolto's work, contributing strategically to the achievement of sustainable food systems. These systems must allow **consumers to access affordable and nutritious food that is produced sustainably by smallholder farmers**, earning incomes that enable them to **achieve dignified livelihoods** and build **resilience** into farming, whilst regenerating their farms and the natural resources on which these rely.

**Measurable outcomes** – We have set measurable targets for the programmes, which are summarised in their respective sections below. Globally, we will enable consumers in at least **30 major and intermediate cities** to access affordable and nutritious food, produced sustainably by **more than 300,000 smallholders**, belonging to **more than 250 farmer organisations** or related groups. We will also affect changes in the economic relations of food systems that boost gender inclusion and youth engagement.



## Food Smart Cities At the centre of food system change

By 2050, it is expected that 80% of all food will be consumed in cities. Already, they are hotspots of malnutrition – hit by a double whammy of inadequate supplies of quality food for some and too much food for others, with dire consequences for health and well-being. At the same time, however, cities command major resources, and thus offer critical opportunities to trial food system innovations.

For all these reasons, cities are key entry points for speeding up the transition to sustainable food systems. Focusing on key supply chains and the wider urban food environment, Rikolto's Food Smart Cities programme will catalyse collective action amongst local actors, pursuing diverse interventions, shaped to the needs of target cities:

- 1. Sustainable production** of healthy, nutritious food, such as fruits, vegetables and pulses, for local markets. In working toward this end, we will focus on preserving landscapes, promoting regenerative agriculture and enhancing resilience to climate change and other shocks.
- 2. Inclusive food markets** that cater to smallholder producers and vulnerable urban consumers. To help develop such markets, we will professionalise farmer organisations, facilitate their access to finance and business development services, promote inclusive business relations in food chains and facilitate sustainable food entrepreneurship. We will also strive for more efficient and inclusive distribution of locally produced, safe and healthy food, using innovative business models and digital tools. In addition, we will facilitate the design of circular business models that foster sustainable food waste management by transforming food surpluses into new products.
- 3. Enabling environments** that incentivise sustainable and healthy diets through policies and partnerships, with aims that include improving urban food governance, engaging citizens in collective action, incentivising investments in sustainable food innovation and promoting peer-to-peer learning. Rikolto's role will be to generate evidence that informs the search for solutions to chronic food system problems and that helps mainstream these solutions for impact.



Rikolto and its partners expect to have an active presence in more than **30 major and intermediate cities** in 2026. By that time, we expect that the local food coalitions that we support will have enabled at least **1.2 million consumers** to access affordable healthy, sustainable and nutritious food through innovations in food production, transformation and distribution. About **50,000 smallholders**, participating in **60 farmer organisations** and **local food distribution initiatives**, will have benefitted from supplying quality food to cities, thanks to more inclusive business relationships.



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## Rice A food system mainstay

Rice is the staple food of 3.5 billion people and provides a living for roughly 20% of the global population. Given sharply rising demand for this crop (driven by population growth and urbanisation) as well as its sizeable environmental footprint, change in the rice sector is vital for making the transition to sustainable food systems. The sector must not only reduce the environmental impact of rice cultivation but also provide decent profits and working conditions for all actors along the value chain, especially smallholder farmers.

To help drive this transition, Rikolto's Rice programme, working from the national to global levels, will pursue a wide array of interventions in our priority domains:

- 1. Sustainable rice cultivation:** Farmers will adopt practices that raise rice productivity sustainably to optimal levels, whilst reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use, fertiliser loss and pesticide application; increasing biodiversity; and enhancing resilience to cope with climate change impacts. In promoting such practices, we will use as a common framework the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation.
- 2. Market inclusion for both consumers and producers:** Retailers will offer consumers rice that is affordable, safe, healthy and nutritious, based on agreed standards, , whilst smallholder producers will benefit from inclusive business relations with millers and wholesalers, who assure market access through formal contracts or binding agreements. In helping make farmers organisations more professional, we will also assist them in obtaining loans and credit for business growth.
- 3. Enabling environment:** Policy and legal frameworks will provide a solid basis for contract farming and for scaling out the SRP Standard.

By 2026, the Rice programme expects to enable **2 million consumers** in **20 major and intermediate cities** of Asia and Africa to access **100,000 tons** of quality rice produced sustainably on **40,000 hectares** by **100,000 smallholders** organised in **100 farmer organisations** and engaged with **40 retailers or institutional buyers**.



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## Cocoa

### Iconic status and economic clout

The cocoa sector involves some 6 million smallholder farmers (accounting for about 90% of global production), provides livelihoods for 40-50 million people, and wields considerable economic clout by supplying a key ingredient for a wide variety of industrial products. Yet, this iconic global commodity is beset by numerous problems – such as low incomes for smallholders, child labour, declining productivity, and deforestation – which undercut its potential contribution to food systems change.

To release this potential requires ground-breaking innovations in the sector that make it sustainable and inclusive as well as competitive. The Cocoa programme will work toward these ends through multiple interventions in Rikolto’s priority domains:

1. **Sustainable cocoa production:** With increased support from more professional farmer organisations, smallholders will raise productivity on land already under cultivation (thus lessening pressure on forests), and they will enhance quality through centralised fermentation and drying. The Cocoa programme will also promote agroforestry systems as well as diversification of income and food sources, whilst helping reduce ecological footprints.
2. **Market inclusion:** Smallholders will link to markets for other crops being produced in the cocoa landscape, take part in sustainability programmes developed with supermarkets and chocolate companies, and form inclusive business relationships with other actors in the cocoa market. So that farmers organisations as well as small and medium-sized enterprises can improve their access to finance, Rikolto’s support will provide a forum that enables financial institutions to lower the risk of investment.
3. **Enabling environment:** Producers, governments, civil society, companies and others will enter into national dialogues on policy alternatives aimed at mainstreaming sustainability and inclusion in the cocoa sector; regional multi-stakeholder platforms will be established to shape national policy agendas; and Rikolto will exert global policy influence through diverse platforms.



As a result, by 2026, **80,000 cocoa farmers**, aggregated in **100 farmer groups and cooperatives**, will produce cocoa sustainably and earn a living income.<sup>2</sup> In addition, inclusive business relationships will be brokered for 30,000 smallholder farmers. As producers bring to market food crops grown in diversified cocoa systems, consumers in **10 major and intermediate cities** will gain better access to affordable, nutritious and healthy food.

<sup>2</sup> This is a net income that permits all members of the household to afford a decent standard of living.



## Coffee

### A foundation for living incomes



The coffee sector generates about US\$100 billion in revenue each year – more than any other commodity except petroleum – whilst providing a livelihood for about 25 million farmers. There is much potential for more smallholder communities to earn living incomes from coffee by capturing a larger share of the benefits from its tremendous economic value and universal appeal. The key for realising this potential is to make the sector more sustainable and equitable as part of a wider food system transition.

To help achieve this aim, the Coffee programme will pursue strategies centred on capacity building, inclusive business, stronger governance and knowledge management. Capitalising on coffee's inherent strengths as an agroforestry system that provides ecosystem services, the programme will introduce multiple innovations in Rikolto's action domains:

- 1. Sustainable coffee production:** Smallholders will diversify production through intercropping with fruits, staple foods or spices to gain additional income sources, enhance family nutrition, and bolster resilience in the face of climate change; growers will also improve production practices and postharvest management to enhance coffee quality, thus facilitating certification for better incomes.
- 2. Market inclusion:** Farmer organisations will learn to manage their finances and business affairs more professionally. They will also cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit that enables them to gain increased value from specialty and commercial grade coffee through more inclusive business relationships. Traceability management and certification schemes will further strengthen growers' ability to capture value from sustainably produced and sourced coffee. These gains will better enable farmers organisations to improve their access to loans and credit
- 3. Enabling environment:** National institutions will strengthen coffee sector governance, as will the creation or strengthening of national and regional multi-stakeholder platforms; promotion of local coffee consumption in producing countries and emerging markets should expand the global coffee market.

As a result, by 2026, more than **55,000 coffee farmers**, aggregated in about **50 farmer groups and cooperatives**, will produce the crop sustainably and market it via inclusive business relations to earn a living income. As coffee growers diversify into the production of food crops, they will improve consumer access in **30 major and intermediate cities** to affordable, nutritious and healthy food.

All four programmes will prioritise key social and environmental issues.



## Cross-cutting commitments

**Youth engagement to vitalise food systems** – Food systems and individual supply chains face a major challenge in retaining young people, as increasing numbers, for lack of opportunities and support, head for the city in search of a better life. Whilst weakening rural communities (reflected in the rapidly increasing average age of farmers), this marked demographic shift drives up burgeoning urban food demand. Rikolto helps address the challenge by contributing to an enabling environment for youth engagement. Since this is central to inclusive business, all of our programmes will play a multi-faceted role in youth engagement:

- **Sustainable crop production:** Looking beyond farms to whole food systems in the search for meaningful youth employment opportunities, especially in linking urban consumption and nearby rural production
- **Market inclusion:** Supporting young entrepreneurs through agri-food incubators
- **Enabling environments:** Facilitating multi-stakeholder collaboration around youth engagement

As a key part of this work, we will build programmes to strengthen the skills of young entrepreneurs, encourage farmer organisations to cultivate an inclusive culture that allows young people to flourish, involve rural youth in the development of climate adaptation strategies, and empower them to incorporate the use of digital tools in family agriculture.

**Gender inclusion to speed up food system change** – Making up at least half of the agricultural workforce in many African and Asian countries and 43% globally, women generally achieve lower crop yields, even within the same households. This results from their more limited access to inputs, information and finance together with labour and mobility constraints. It would seem obvious that, as long as more than half the rural population remains seriously disadvantaged, the transition to sustainable food systems will be slow going.

Rikolto has worked hard over the last 40 years to provide equal opportunities for women and men in its programmes. Nonetheless, the results show a significant gender gap, with women accounting for just 33% of those receiving our support. The time has come for bolder steps to mainstream gender inclusion by incorporating women's empowerment into each of the domains where Rikolto works:

1. **Sustainable crop production:** In our efforts to professionalise farmer organisations, differentiated training and targeted projects will take into account women's interests, resource access and role in making and implementing decisions.
2. **Market inclusion:** Women and men will have equal opportunities in agri-business development.
3. **Enabling environments:** Policy development will promote equal opportunities and resource access for women, and participation in multi-stakeholder platforms will reflect gender equality.

To keep gender mainstreaming on track in each domain, our new strategy provides a set of good practices and indicators for gauging progress.





**Coping with climate change and biodiversity loss** – Food systems play the role of both culprit and victim. On the one hand, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), they account for 21-37% of total greenhouse gas emissions (from crop production as well as food distribution and waste). On the other hand, they suffer tremendous damage from climate change impacts, such as worsening droughts and floods, and therefore have an important role to play in both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Enhancing the sustainability of these systems will at the same time help protect biodiversity by curbing ecosystem and habitat destruction.

Rikolto's work on ecological challenges, more generally, is highly relevant for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. We assign high priority to conserving the wealth of biodiversity on which food systems depend and to protecting the natural ecosystems that harbour biodiversity. We further emphasise the need for limiting the use of non-renewable farm inputs and favour cropping practices that encourage nutrient recycling to maintain soil fertility.

Each of our programmes has defined concrete steps to confront the enormous threats but also to realise the opportunities involved in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. The Rice programme, for example, gives particular attention to practices for sustainable management of water as well as straw and stubble that lead to lower methane emissions. Reduced straw burning will also lead to lower carbon dioxide emissions. The Cocoa and Coffee programmes will contribute chiefly through afforestation and reforestation. Such steps provide the building blocks of an overall strategy to address climate change and biodiversity loss, which we will develop in 2021.

**Sustainable development** – Food systems, whilst especially relevant to some of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – such as SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) – should rather be seen as a common thread running across the entire sustainability agenda. Any major effort to transform food systems therefore offers enormous potential to advance the agenda on numerous fronts, including (to cite just a few) zero poverty, gender equality as well as decent work and economic growth.

Rikolto's new strategy reflects this more holistic view, moving beyond our previous focus on SDG 1 (Zero Poverty) to pinpoint numerous opportunities for progress toward the SDGs. Precisely because food systems are directly relevant to many of the goals, we will ensure that collaboration (in line with SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals) occupies a central place in our efforts to advance the sustainability agenda.



## A revised structure that rises to the food systems challenge

Rikolto's work is guided by our six values



prioritising people



interconnectivity



innovation



open dialogue



sustainability



integrity

Rikolto will alter the coordination of its programmes from a regional to an international approach, with the aims of **facilitating collaboration between colleagues worldwide** and **increasing impact**. Our efforts to transform food systems will be further reinforced by a structural shift from regional offices to international programme teams, with implementation and support staff working in hubs distributed across the various regions where we work.

One such hub is currently already operating in Latin America, with more to follow in East and Central Africa, and plans foreseen for West Africa and Southeast Asia, based on lessons learnt from the Latin America hub. Our work in the hubs will be structured according to the four programmes outlined in this document. We expect that this new arrangement will provide greater flexibility in designing and implementing programmes in different countries to seize opportunities for major impact and fundraising.

New strategic directions and the accompanying structural shift will require that we mobilise increased funding for the organisation and for innovation in a smart and balanced way, relying on large and small grants as well as private finance. To this end, we have also set up **Rikolto Limited**, a social limited liability enterprise, to offer the knowledge and expertise as well as the tools and methodologies we have developed as a consultancy service. All of the proceeds are **reinvested to advance the social purpose of Rikolto**. Critical for success will be a convincing value proposition, strong partnerships, a convincing business case to attract private finance, and redoubled efforts to showcase our work, based on our unique selling proposition.

4 global programmes

17 countries





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## Charting new directions together

At Rikolto, creating strong partnerships is in our DNA, and we trust this is evident from our new strategy. We express our gratitude to all partners and stakeholders who have inspired us to keep improving our work and delivering meaningful outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable people in society.

With your help, we are charting the course for an exciting and productive journey, in which we will continue to innovate and push boundaries, in fulfilment of Rikolto's global mission.

We look forward to hearing from you, if you wish to join us in this journey.



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