Vision and Plan

This strategic overview describes ICCO’s plan and program focus for 2018 - 2022. It outlines the rationale for our work and explains how, and where, we will place our efforts in the coming five years in order to achieve our goals.

The World Around Us
Despite the promise of high economic growth rates in developing and emerging economies and the fall in the number of people living in extreme poverty in the past two decades, poverty remains pervasive and social and economic inequalities continue to increase. The livelihoods of millions of people are fragile and insecure, and many are unable to realize their full potential.

1) According to the World Bank nearly 1.1 billion fewer people are living in extreme poverty than in 1990. In 2015, 736 million people lived on less than $1.90 a day, down from 1.85 billion in 1990.

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Photo cover: Farmer in Malawi. Photo: ACT/Paul Jeffrey

Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2018

Harvest of salt tolerant crops in coastal Bangladesh. Salt Solution is a project of Salt Farm Texel and ICCO to improve food security and income of farmers. Photo: FrameIn

Half of the world’s working population is employed in the agricultural sector, with 75% of all farmers estimated to be living in poverty (New Foresight, 2017). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) an estimated 821 million people worldwide experienced hunger in 2017, reflecting a rise since 2015. In addition, two billion people suffer from “hidden hunger” - or micronutrient deficiencies – due to inadequate access to nutritious food.
These problems are likely to become more pressing in the coming decades in light of the projected significant increase of the world population (expected to reach 10 billion in 2050) as well as the impact of climate change, insecurity and other threats to human development.

**Our overarching objective is:**

*Empowered people that build sustainable livelihoods within a society that upholds their rights*

“Leave no one behind” is the overarching vision of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It seeks to ensure that by 2030 every citizen of the world will have access to adequate and healthy food, a living wage and decent work. ICCO is ready to contribute to the realization of the SDG Agenda 2030, and especially SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

**Towards Sustainable Solutions**

Current systems of agricultural production are neither sustainable nor sufficiently efficient to ensure food and nutrition security for present and future generations.

To achieve access and utilization of diverse, safe and nutritious food for all, it is imperative that more effective mechanisms are put in place to grow, harvest, store, process, package, transport, market and consume food, as well as dispose of food waste.

The dire need for transformative agricultural systems extends to the way that agri-food value chains and markets are organized. Farmers need to be assured of fair payment for their produce, which requires organizing initial processing and packaging as close as possible to the producing regions. When markets are inclusive, as well as environmentally and financially sustainable, they become important channels for social change.

ICCO works to promote sustainable solutions to these challenges and trigger positive changes in the market system to benefit those who have been left behind. We seek to build the capacities and resilience of the people and communities we work with so they are better prepared to face future challenges. But we are also prepared to step in when natural or man-made disasters occur. Through our response programs, we aim to promote long-term resilience through combining emergency relief with disaster risk reduction and other sustainable solutions.

ICCO's choice of focal areas is informed by a number of global trends that have profound implications for the world:
**Partnering for Transformation**

The world of development cooperation continues to experience a shift from government-based interventions to market-focused approaches. Both public and private are turning their attention to organizations that actively contribute to change through markets.

This calls for systemic transformation in the way development programs are designed and implemented, which includes: a different mix of financial support; increased use of evidence in informing program choices; a focus on capacity building, knowledge sharing, and technology transfer; and well-targeted lobbying and advocacy campaigns.

With more than five decades experience as a development organization, we believe we have a lot to offer our public and private partners. This strategic plan explains how we will continue to build on this work in the coming five years.

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**ICCO, The Enterprising Development Organization**

ICCO is a global development organization, that adopts inclusive social change, as well as business-oriented approaches to its work. The combination of our business entities (ICCO Group B.V.) and not-for-profit entities (ICCO Foundation) represents a contemporary model that uses the market system to yield positive social change and environmental outcomes.

ICCO was established in 1964 in the Netherlands, as the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation. The aims set by our founding father, Jo Verkuyl, were to fight poverty and injustice. We remain true to the fundamental values of justice, compassion and stewardship, while continuing to explore new ways to confront contemporary challenges.

We enable individuals to contribute to the development of their society and secure the livelihoods of their families and communities. But we also focus on strengthening civil society organizations, as they play a critical role in keeping both public and private actors accountable.

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**Strategy**

Strong and sustainable agricultural systems enable farmers, agripreneurs, and small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to become more resilient and better equipped to challenge the dominant forces in their society and create food security, decent jobs, especially for women and youth.

**Viable small-farm economies**

Our objective is to empower the diverse actors at every level of the value chain to play their part in transforming agricultural systems. We want to ensure the viability of small-farm economies as a contribution to fighting poverty and undernourishment in developing countries. We do this by improving production skills and livelihoods at the farmer household level and creating employment and sustainable income for thousands of people through well-functioning SMEs, cooperatives and other agricultural enterprises.

**Focus on Women and Youth**

We mainly focus on women and youth, with the aim of empowering them and increasing their entrepreneurship skills and nutrition awareness. Women make up 43% of the overall agricultural workforce, and in many societies they have the primary responsibility for agricultural production, processing and food preparation. In spite of their contribution, women and youth have significantly less access to productive resources, services, supplies and markets as men.

Young people are critical to future economic development. However, the potential is currently not being realized. Across many developing countries and emerging economies, the majority of youth are unemployed, or do not earn a living wage, and hence they cannot lift them-
SMEs, Engine of Economy

70% of the workforce in developing and emerging economies works for a SME. These companies occupy critical positions along the value chain, serve as conduits of technology and finance to farmers, and support the formation of viable farmers’ organizations. SMEs can be the engine of an economy and transform societies, but until now that engine has not been fully exploited. In many developing countries, agricultural SMEs are in a pre-growth phase characterized by low productivity and value creation. Most SMEs find it difficult to access investment capital, which leads to reduced purchasing from farmers upstream and reduced food availability downstream.

Sustainable Agricultural Systems

We work to give farmers and producers access to local and national markets and the opportunity to build sustainable agricultural systems. With the right knowledge and skills as well as access to productive resources, farmers and producers have the tools they need to become more productive, improve their food and nutrition security, make connections to viable and sustainable value chains, and enhance their resilience to disaster risk and climate change.
Our Goals

In line with our theory of change, the five-year strategic plan focuses on three goals:

- **Food and Nutrition Security for Smallholder Farmers and Their Households**
- **Economic Empowerment of Smallholder Farmers and Small and Medium Enterprises**
- **Resilient and Disaster-Prepared Communities**

The first two goals are interlinked and form the backbone of our work. We recognize, however, that the bulk of our work takes place in fragile contexts. This is the reason why we also focus on strengthening the resilience of communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change and to cope with threats from natural disasters and conflict. Taken together, the three themes form a humanitarian-development nexus, in which we connect our emergency response to our two core goals: Food and Nutrition Security and Economic Empowerment.

**Cross-Cutting Principles**

To achieve these interlinked goals our work is guided by two cross-cutting principles:

1. Business and human rights in value chains and creating social impact (SDG 8).
2. Inclusive development by applying the ‘ACAP’ framework (SDG 10).

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**Sustainable Development Goals**

In 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the global community agreed on a “road map” for collectively working towards a more sustainable and inclusive world, as set out in the United Nations document: *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

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▲ Ana Villegas from Colombia processes cacao to make chocolate treats. She gets support from ICCO’s company Truvalu. Photo: Truvalu
Our three overall thematic goals, as well as the cross-cutting principles are closely aligned to the SDG framework. Our goal Food and Nutrition Security associates with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 and our goal Economic Empowerment with SDG 8.

**SDG 2**: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”  
This goal focuses on ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. This would be accomplished by progressively improving land and soil quality and ensuring sustainable food production systems, thus doubling agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers (especially women, youth and indigenous people).

**SDG 8**: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”  
Achieving higher productivity will require diversity and upgraded technology along with innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of SMEs.

In order to address the multiple linkages across these goals, we also take into account **SDGs 10, 12 and 17**.
Priority Topics

As we continue to mature as an enterprising development organization, our focus in the coming five years will center on the following four topics that combine our thematic knowledge on Food and Nutrition Security, and Economic Empowerment, with a greater focus on the markets in which we work.

1. Blending Finance

To achieve our dual objectives of building inclusive markets and businesses, ICCO works with a wide range of market actors, organized in bilateral partnerships or broader consortia. One of the roles that ICCO takes in such partnerships is that of a strategic financier. ICCO designs tailor-made and flexible funding mechanisms that allow for the combined use of grants, microfinance, loans, equity and guarantees as needed and when appropriate. In this way, ICCO is able to mobilize public funds and private capital to flow to emerging market economies thereby producing positive results for both investors and communities.

2. Climate-Resilient Food Systems

Climate change poses a growing threat to the future of agriculture and food systems globally. ICCO strives for the promotion of “Climate-Resilient Food Systems” for smallholder farmers, which we use to describe our three-pronged approach to achieve:
1) Sustainable growth in agricultural productivity, food security and incomes
2) Increased adaptation and resilience to climate change
3) The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

G4AW / SMARTseeds: Indonesia

Geodata for Agriculture and Water (G4AW) is a program funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and executed by the Netherlands Space Office. G4AW improves food security in developing countries by using satellite data and by implementation through public-private partnerships.

ICCO is the leading consortium member in three G4AW projects in Vietnam (GREENcoffee), Cambodia (Angkor SALAD) and Indonesia (SMARTseeds). Furthermore, we are a consortium partner in three other G4AW projects: Common Sense (Ethiopia), SpiceUp (Indonesia) and Geopatato (Bangladesh).
3. New Technologies

Our mission is to advance the productivity and profitability of smallholder farmers and the agri-food industry at large through scalable and digital new technologies. These digital technologies allow resource-poor farming communities, especially youth, to solve some of the main challenges they face, as well as access a range of services and inputs that were unattainable before. We aim to use the multiplying effect of innovative technology and data to increase economic and social impact in climate-resilient food systems and supply chains. Furthermore, ICCO is increasingly looking at using mobile phone services as a means to transform agribusiness and to foster greater accountability.

SMARTseeds
The changing climate makes it increasingly difficult for Indonesian farmers to develop and consistently use crop plans. SMARTseeds has designed advanced feature information services based on location-specific data within a mobile application known as SIPINDO. This application supports 100,000 vegetable farmers (growing chili, tomato and cucumber) in three provinces to increase their production, income, food security and reduces the inputs of water, fertilizer and pesticides. Weather information, fertilizer recommendations and guidance on the selection of crops that are most suitable to the farmers’ soil conditions are distributed via interactive SMS and a mobile phone platform. The SMARTseeds features is also useful for agriculture extension officers and traders. Since the SIPINDO app was launched in 2017, it has been used by approximately 15,000 farmers. The first outcomes showed initial positive results from using the SMARTseeds fertilizer advice.

ICCO guides and supports the consortium in implementing the program, financial management and compliance with the NSO subsidy criteria.

Manq’a: Bolivia and Colombia

After 3 years of joint programmatic work Melting Pot Bolivia and ICCO made Manq’a an independent social enterprise in 2017. Its mission is to initiate ‘good food’ movements in low-income countries that inspire people to eat healthy food, while stimulating responsible food production by smallholder farmers and boosting youth employment and entrepreneurship at the local level. Manq’a offers training and employment opportunities in the gastronomy sector for vulnerable and unemployed youth in Bolivia as well as victims of the armed conflict in Colombia. The recent business models of Manq’ provide services in three lines: catering, restaurant and gastronomic tourism. In 2018 Manq’a Bolivia earned almost EUR 20,000 for the schools. Manq’a enhances links between the public and private sector and in turn generate jobs for vulnerable youth.

The achievements of Manq’a in Bolivia and Colombia so far are:
- 3,000 young people trained
- 58% of trained youths offered attachments in restaurants or food enterprise
- Inauguration of 14 Manq’a schools in 2018 (12 in Bolivia and two in Colombia)
- 165 smallholder producers supply Manq’a schools with responsible produce stocks
- A Manq’a educational program is approved by the Bolivian Ministry of Education.

Manq’a is an initiative of Melting Pot Bolivia and ICCO and has received financial support from different donors (e.g. Inter-American Development Bank and the Dutch Postcode Lottery).
4. Youth Entrepreneurship

Young people equipped with entrepreneurship-, social, life and technical skills are better able to navigate the challenges of today’s rapidly changing job market. Particularly also in the agrifood sector. The convergence of the digital revolution and agribusinesses can work as a catalyst for economic growth, thereby creating jobs and business opportunities for youth, also outside of primary production. ICCO supports young people to start or grow a business by delivering a range of entrepreneurship support services, from training and mentoring to access to finance and other business development services.

STARS: Senegal, Burkina Faso, Rwanda and Ethiopia

Strengthening African Rural Smallholders (STARS) is a five-year (2016 - 2020) program implemented by ICCO in partnership with Mastercard Foundation. Through a market systems development approach the program focuses on improving access to finance and markets for 210,000 smallholder farmers in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Rwanda and Ethiopia.

STARS addresses some common challenges faced by smallholder farmers, such as limited skills, minimal access to markets and lack of suitable financial products. All interventions are carefully designed based on market analyses, with special attention being paid to ensure equal participation of women to enhance opportunities to increase income in agriculture and the value chain.

The achievements of STARS are:

- More than 80,000 smallholder farmers gain access to diverse financial products
- Specialized value chain finance products developed for eight agricultural value chains
- Individual and group credit products developed for more than 10 different crops
- Product development with 19 micro-finance institutions who also receive training and support
- More than 60 producer organizations supported and linked to markets
- Eight baseline studies conducted in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Rwanda and Ethiopia
- Linkages established to private sector actors

Alphonsine from Rutsiro in Rwanda doubled her onion production with a credit from the STARS program. Photo: ICCO
Some Facts and Figures

1964
ICCO was established by protestant churches and organizations in the Netherlands as the interchurch foundation for development cooperation.

2005 - 2010
Decentralization of the organization into regional offices in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Increasing privatization of working parts in the holding ICCO Group B.V. to enable for-profit activities.

2018
ICCO is better positioned as an enterprising development organization. In cooperation with other stakeholders we develop, implement, and advocate for sustainable agricultural systems for smallholders and SMEs.

ICCO Cooperation is composed of:
- ICCO Foundation
- ICCO Group B.V. with the companies
  - Truvalu
  - FairClimateFund and
  - Fair & Sustainable Consulting

The organizational structure consists of:
- A global office in Utrecht
- 5 regional offices
- 20 country offices
- 342 staff, of which 42% female and 80% of non-Dutch nationality

1965 - 2005
Steady growth of programs, network, partnerships, grants and investments to eradicate poverty and injustice and achieve self-reliance for vulnerable groups in developing and emerging countries.

2011 - 2017
Continued refining of our core themes and expertise. Strong growth of public-private partnerships. In 2017 ICCO Foundation implemented 108 projects, the ICCO Group invested in 52 companies. Altogether 1.4 million people were reached in 50 countries. Some achievements during this period included:
- improved food security for 769,931 households
- improved income for 757,068 smallholder producers

Together with private partners and cooperatives, ICCO provides better income opportunities for women in the shea value chain in Burkina Faso and Mali. Photo: Tiécoura N’Daou.
How We Stand Out

ICCO is a global development organization, that adopts inclusive social change, as well as business-oriented approaches to its work. The following are some of unique selling points of our organization.

**We Focus on SMEs, Women and Youth**

Each of our interventions is based on a problem analysis, an assessment of the needs as well as opportunities for women, youth or enterprise supported, and an overarching Theory of Change. We strive to support smallholder producers and their households, SMEs and agricultural cooperatives in their efforts to build sustainable livelihoods. For this reason, our interventions always include an exit strategy for phasing out our support. Where necessary, we also provide support to self-help groups and other civil society organizations.

**We Are a Data-Informed Organization**

ICCO generates high quality evidence to underpin program implementation and impact. Data is collected on the ground by rolling out various surveys, such as the internationally accepted Household Food Insecurity

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**Different Roles. Depending on the Situation**

ICCO takes on different roles and functions depending on the program context:

- **Developer**: ICCO develops concepts, programs, business cases and initiates partnerships and business deals.
- **Implementer**: ICCO manages and implements comprehensive donor-funded programs, together with other partners.
- **Entrepreneur**: We invest our resources together with others, based on sustainable business models, in order to increase our impact.
- **Advocate**: At the global level, we draw on our advocacy networks to highlight a range of issues that impact on our work, including in the areas of business ethics, human rights, and the shrinking political space.

While our role will depend the context and type of intervention, we favor projects where we serve as the lead agency, which enables us to take responsibility for the end result.

▲ The SIPINDO application in the G4AW program SMARTseeds supports the progress of the agricultural sector in Indonesia. Photo: EWINDO
Access Scale (HFIAS), the Dietary Diversity Score (DDS) and the Women Empowerment Index. Cross-sections of data and data visualizations during the execution of a program drive our development agenda.

We **embrace digital technologies**, like geographic information systems (GIS), to reach our goals. Increased interconnectivity among many devices and systems, also referred to as the internet of things, can bring about multiple benefits, including increased agricultural production and access for credit for farmers. They also offer farmers the opportunity to empower themselves and hold governments as well as companies accountable.

We use all the **data we collect to continue to improve how we learn as an organization**. We invest in our people. We organize exchanges of best practices and knowledge using the latest IT solutions. Within our own learning communities, we combine corporate and local learning practices. Sharing best practices gives us valuable input for achieving results across all regions and program levels.

**We Specialize in Blending Nonprofit and For-Profit Services**

In order to arrive at the systemic transformation that we envisage, there is need to make use of a mix of services. A traditional development grant, for example, can leverage other financial instruments or be used as an incentive. From experience, we know that **financial support should be tailored** for each stage of a program or enterprise in order to achieve financial sustainability. ICCO Foundation and the ICCO Group B.V. therefore provide a **mix of financial instruments**, ranging from grants to non-grant based funding with return on investment. Specific tools include convertible grants, loans, guarantees, investment funds and tailor-made solutions. We also help communities to generate credits based on carbon, and to sell these on the international market on a pro-poor and fair-trade basis.

ervices ICCO Group B.V.

The ICCO Group has developed a variety of services and brands to achieve our mission and the SDGs:

- **Truvalu** develops fair and inclusive agro-food chains, by engaging in co-entrepreneurship projects with innovative and scalable SMEs in upcoming emerging markets. 
  [truvalu-group.com](http://truvalu-group.com)
- **FairClimateFund** provides poor households in developing countries with access to clean cooking that also helps reduce carbon emissions. By tapping into a market mechanism - commercial carbon credits - the company is able to attract funding for cookstove and biogas projects. 
  [fairclimatefund.nl](http://fairclimatefund.nl)
- **Fair & Sustainable Consulting** is a consultancy company that aims to strengthen and create economic opportunities within diverse value chains in developing countries.
  [fairandsustainable.nl](http://fairandsustainable.nl)

ICCO is also closely associated with **Capital 4 Development (C4D) Partners**, a company that finances and invests in growing and inclusive SMEs that create positive social and environmental impact. 
[c4dpartners.com](http://c4dpartners.com)
We Build Public-Private Partnerships, Embedded in Local Communities

We use a public-private partnership (PPP) approach, working with partner and donor organizations to formulate a joint strategy. PPPs can achieve more results than when you go it alone, through reaching more people, pooling more knowledge and experience and attracting more funds. ICCO’s long experience in working with the private sector is a strength when building PPPs, whose success largely depends on having a shared purpose and trusting each other’s roles.

In a PPP approach, ICCO works together with governments, businesses, civil society organizations and knowledge institutions. Our commitment to social inclusion and empowerment of our partners also means that our partnerships are embedded in local communities. Through this approach we have gained trust and goodwill with local stakeholders and businesses.

We Are Faith Literate and Understand the Impact of Religions

The world is becoming more religious. Various studies show that there has been a trend towards de-secularization over the past five decades. The amount of people worldwide who profess themselves to be atheist decreased from 10 percent in 1970 to 1.8 percent in 2018. Lots of people in the western world have grown up in secular environments, which makes it more difficult for them to understand the impact that religion has on the world.

At ICCO our roots are in ecumenical churches and organizations. In the Netherlands ICCO works closely with Kerk in Actie, a program of the Protestant Church of the Netherlands. We are value driven and faith literate. It helps us to understand the complexities surrounding people’s religious beliefs and the role of religion in today’s world.

ACT Alliance, Kerk in Actie and ICCO provide humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees near Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: ACT/Paul Jeffrey

3) In the Netherlands often called ‘The Dutch Diamond’
ICCO has a decentralized organizational structure with five regional offices. We are also represented in over 20 countries including the USA. This wide geographical coverage enables us to work, together with our partners and donors, in close consultation with our target groups. Our membership in the ACT Alliance helps us to achieve our emergency response goals. In the Netherlands, we are a member of PerspActive, a cooperative of 10 member organizations, that focuses on the “next generation perspective” for young people in developing and emerging economies.

Working together is in our DNA. Partnerships bring knowledge and energy to tackle complex issues. From our extensive network some partners are mentioned below:
We help farmers and small businesses grow.