

Executive Summary

Better government regulatory policies can encourage transformative change to benefit agribusiness and informal smallholders

The ultimate goal of Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA) is to provide governments with clearly defined good practices that can inform policymaking and trigger regulatory reforms based on the tested examples set by other countries. This report presents the findings and recommendations of the first external review of the EBA.

Headline findings



Relevance & use

The flagship EBA Annual Report is by far the most important product the EBA has produced so far: although a range of more user friendly and customised products would have encouraged wider engagement



Engagement

The selection of engagement events by the EBA team has been more opportunistic than strategic. However, there is little evidence that developing a comprehensive strategy early on would have improved the outcomes of engagement.



Uptake

The EBA is producing a high quality, rigorous set of comparable indices and analytical products, but so far complementary downstream policy engagement by other organisations (including DFID) and parts of the World Bank has been somewhat limited and ad hoc.



Use of reform agendas

The effectiveness of EBA data in framing and supporting reform relies on locally present actors to identify and use government reform agendas, whether that is a World Bank country office, a donor or a coalition of domestic participants.



Contribution to reform

After only three years of operation, EBA has delivered a set of high quality global reports and a series of country profiles in line with its deliverables. Impact on reforms is at an early stage. Where the country context is receptive, EBA has played a complementary role to existing reform processes, such as in Tanzania, and EBA products have been used as part of policy dialogue in 19 countries. Where the country context is less receptive, stronger engagement efforts and local champions may be needed.

About EBA

Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA) aims to promote smart regulations that ensure safety and quality control as well as efficient regulatory processes that support thriving agribusinesses. Specifically, the project identifies and analyses legal barriers to conducting the business of agriculture and quantifies the transaction costs related to dealing with government regulations.

The EBA was piloted in 2013-14 in 10 countries. In 2015, data collection was scaled up to 40 countries. At the end of 2016, EBA developed 12 indicator topic areas to assess the enabling environment for agriculture across 62 countries. The third annual EBA report was released in February 2017. The project is expected to scale up data collection to 80 countries in 2019 as part of a second phase. Data will be published on a biennial basis, reducing costs and enabling the EBA team to devote more time to improvement and dissemination of the indicators.

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About the review

The review was commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to learn lessons from the first phase of the EBA project (2013-2016) and to provide recommendations for the follow-up phase (2017-2021).

The purpose of the review is to assess how well the EBA engagement, dissemination and influencing (EDI) activities have promoted uptake of EBA-identified good practice, under what circumstances and how they can improve further in the future.

The overall purpose of the review is to strengthen the EBA so that it successfully drives reforms in agribusiness-related policies and regulations, and so deliver greater agricultural growth in developing countries. Evidence was gathered using the following data collection methods: interviews, online surveys, web analysis, document review and citations analysis.

The review also used country case studies in Tanzania and Sudan to explore stories of change to capture how EBA engagements have led to uptake, reform and impact. A revised Theory of Change (TOC) has guided the design of the review, see next page.

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Evidence sources for the review



Citation analysis

36 documents

(i.e. grey literature, journal articles, etc.)

26 online and press articles.



2 online surveys

Global survey

28 responses from
13 countries

Events survey

103 responses from
26 countries



40 stakeholders

interviewed from 11 countries



2

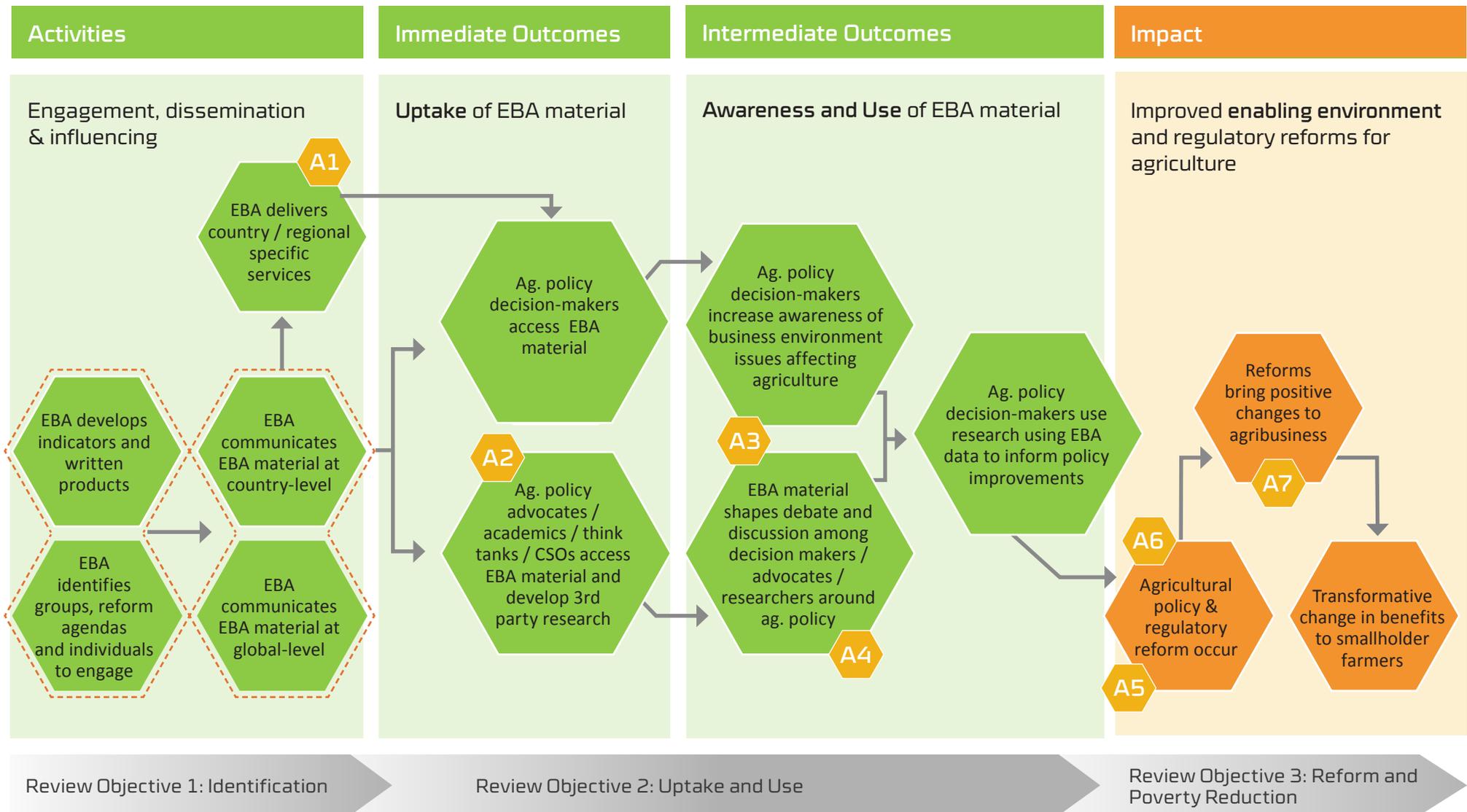
country case studies

Tanzania and
Sudan



Review of
background
literature

Figure 1. Revised Theory of Change for Enabling the Business of Agriculture



Assumptions

- A1** Support provided by donor country offices
- A2** EBA products and indicators are well received by stakeholders
- A3** Policy decision makers and other users are receptive to EBA approach
- A4** Political climate is conducive to ag. reform
- A5** The process of agreeing to policy changes is inclusive and consultative
- A6** Reforms are implemented and sustained
- A7** Private sector responds to incentives

Six main review questions structured the evidence gathering and analysis

Identification & Relevance

- 1 How **relevant** are current EBA products and subject areas in terms of promoting uptake for improving the enabling environment for agriculture?
- 2 How **effective** has the EBA been in identifying and prioritising individuals and organisations that are influential with respect to the enabling environment for agriculture?

Uptake & Use

- 3 How **effective** and **efficient** are EBA's country / regional / global EDI activities at **promoting uptake** of EBA products?
- 4 How **effective** are the EBA team at identifying and utilising reform agendas within governments to promote uptake?

Reform & Poverty Reduction

- 5 How **effective** are EBA's country / regional / global products at influencing **changes in policy, legislation or regulation and improving government processes**?
- 6 Where changes to policy, legislation or regulation been influenced by EBA, how does this reform **impact on the poor**?

Findings



Relevance & use

The flagship Annual Report is by far the most important product the EBA has produced so far; it takes a great deal of time to produce and is downloaded much more often than other EBA products. It is widely perceived to be of high technical quality.

There is a demand for more short, technically simple products in future and also for more translations of materials into the main languages of countries covered by the index.

The web presence of the EBA is not rising as fast as expected, with page views and report downloads both falling slightly in 2017. However, the geographic dispersion of visitors is encouraging, with substantial interest from across Africa, Asia and Latin America.



Engagement

The selection of engagement events by the EBA team has been more opportunistic than strategic. However, there is little evidence that developing a comprehensive strategy early on would have improved the outcomes of engagement. The exception is that reputational risks may have been mitigated if predictable INGO criticism, based on Doing Business criticism, had been anticipated.

National level uptake requires locally present organisations with an understanding of the reform landscape to promote the EBA with stakeholders, and to find ways to incorporate it into existing dialogue mechanisms. So far, these organisations have usually been donor or multilateral offices. The loss of engagement from 'collaborative' INGOs should be a serious concern (especially for DFID) because of the loss of a robust independent challenge and help in understanding likely impacts on smallholder farmers.

Private sector engagement has been particularly effective in reaching out to global level industry associations and the largest national firms. The engagement with medium and smaller scale businesses has been more indirect (through trade associations for example) but this group, not having the lobbying strength or access to government of larger firms, has more to gain from the EBA data.

Smallholder farmers are usually not influential in reform processes but are an important group for different forms of engagement, since one of DFID's intentions in funding the EBA is to 'encourage transformative change' to benefit this group.



Uptake

The EBA is producing a high quality, rigorous set of comparable indices and analytical products, but so far complementary downstream policy engagement by other organisations (including DFID) and parts of the World Bank has been somewhat limited and ad hoc.

As the scale of interest in the EBA increases, it would be expected that there would be a broad shift from uptake strategies with high variable costs (face-to-face engagement) to those with very low variable costs (web engagement, written analytical products). Static web engagement suggests that it may not yet be time for this shift to take place and that web-based products could be improved and made easier to access.

The EBA team's lack of specific expertise in knowledge management has meant that less evidence has been collected about what works than could have been.

Co-creation of products can be an important step in encouraging adoption and ownership, but the EBA team is less well placed than locally present actors to co-produce materials in partnership with national actors such as governments, the private sector or media.

Findings



Use of reform agendas

The effectiveness of EBA data in framing and supporting reform relies on locally present actors to identify and use government reform agendas, whether that is a World Bank country office, a donor or a coalition of domestic participants.

During engagement, governments sometimes request help in the form of concrete proposals for means to resolve problems identified by EBA data. This was evident in both Sudan and Tanzania. In some cases, the World Bank is able to capitalise on this by delivering operational projects to answer these questions; in other cases, other donors may offer support where this fits with their programming priorities. However, this would be a good opportunity for EBA donors to offer a systematic roadmap for governments to follow in order for them to access the support they may need to diagnose problems and develop locally appropriate solutions.



Contribution to reform

After only three years of operation, EBA has delivered a set of high quality global reports and a series of country profiles in line with its planned deliverables. Impact on reforms is at an early stage. Where the country context is receptive, EBA has played a complementary role to existing reform processes, such as in Tanzania, and EBA products have been used as part of policy dialogue in 19 countries. Where the country context is less receptive, stronger engagement efforts and local champions may be needed.

With the support of donor country offices and actors such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution (AGRA), there are a growing number of examples of where policy dialogue work around EBA evidence is linking to policy reforms. The importance of the comparative power of EBA findings, especially in regional contexts, is also widely recognised as a separate way to influence reform processes.

Because EBA provides a neutral assessment and does not make reform recommendations, there is a need for greater country-level analysis that can lead to a road map for action. The conclusion is that EBA alone is not sufficient to achieve reform and will require complementary work by actors within the World Bank, the supporting donor system and independent actors such as think tanks and CSOs.

Conclusion

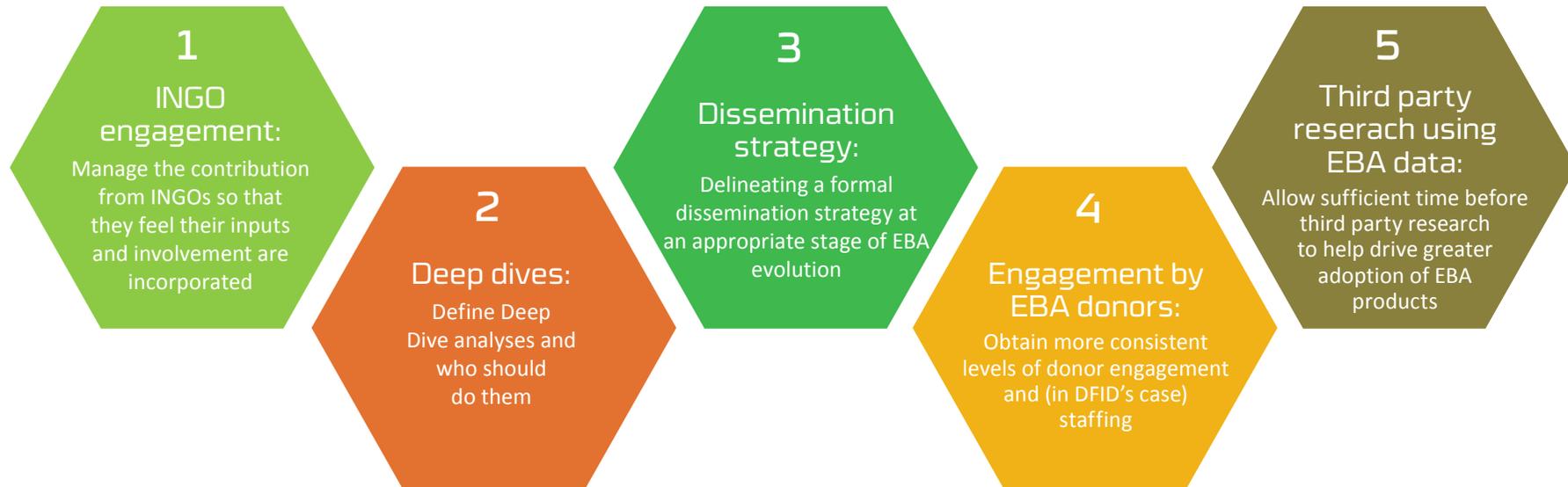
Overall, the EBA is a well-regarded, credible tool for measuring compliance with good practice in the agribusiness policy and regulatory environment. The EBA has developed new indicator topic areas and has also expanded to new countries. This represents a major accomplishment given the budget constraints and the limited scope for action outlined in the initial project concept note. The continuing refinement of indicators and methodology will help improve EBA's relevance and uptake, especially focusing on implementation and efficiency aspects of the regulatory environment including those most relevant to smallholder farmers.

EBA is at a watershed moment now where it should begin to achieve the expected impacts on policy reform and eventual poverty alleviation during the next phase (2018-21). Engagement in the past two years has expanded considerably, but EBA requires further complementary, country-level donor action in order to achieve its reform potential. For this, it needs to consider not just linkages to World Bank country offices and operations but to other development partners including local think tanks and private sector actors.

Stakeholders often want to move from dialogue to action, but when governments lack policy analysis capacity, the process may stall. Complementary donor efforts can provide support to building local capacity and help to translate EBA results into useful policy actions relevant to the context, particularly how they can be taken up at local government level or meet the needs of farmers, traders and others in the value chain.

There are also opportunities to facilitate and enhance other mechanisms within the wider agricultural enabling environment, including regional and continental mechanisms.

Five lessons are identified



Recommendations

A series of recommendations around EDI are presented that focus on the next phase of the EBA (and beyond).

Engagement strategy



Future engagement by the EBA team would benefit from a more strategic approach, while still responding to country and user needs. To be cost-effective, the EBA needs a clear vision of which EDI activities it should undertake and which are better suited to other organisations. Since legal and policy reform requires intensive effort at national level, the EBA team should favour a role of supporting local actors.

A new dissemination strategy should be drafted by the end of 2018 to articulate the approach of the EBA team to EDI and delineating the role of the team versus other actors. The strategy should contain the following elements (some of which are in the process of being addressed already): a focus on global and regional 'influencers' rather than on national level policymakers, selective demand-led national engagement, re-engagement with international NGOs including more open upstream engagement on indicator definition.

Engagement products



Expand the range of short, more accessible products, if necessary through outsourcing so as to make EBA results more widely understood and used. Involve other stakeholders in the co-creation of these products using a variety of collaborative methods. EBA donors can undertake some of this work as has already been demonstrated by AGRA and USAID.

Driving uptake among donors



EBA donors and particularly DFID should drive uptake of EBA within their organisations more strongly, especially at country level, through retreats and giving the EBA higher recognition.

The wider system



The EBA team must continue to learn how reform happens and what are its consequences, particularly for poor farmers and consumers, to ensure the index delivers on its potential. Several tools can be deployed, such as country diagnostics, and cost-benefit and business feasibility studies. The establishment of a global call-down facility, possibly as a parallel project, to produce these kinds of products is likely to improve dissemination by giving more concrete incentives for governments to use lessons.

Evaluating impact



Subsequent monitoring and evaluation should seek to address how EBA-guided reforms are implemented and deliver poverty impact. Selected country-level evaluations can look in detail at how reforms affect various types of agricultural businesses, including any differential impact on women and other disadvantaged groups. Techniques such as episode studies, after action reviews and outcome mapping could be useful. The global call-down facility may be used for this purpose.