



Driving Change Across Agricultural Systems

Impact Evaluation Report



Executive Summary of
Impact Analysis by BSD
Consulting



Background & Methodology

Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) retained BSD Consulting to assess the impacts of the EFI Program as defined by our Theory of Change:

If the workforce is properly trained and incentivized to collaborate with management in developing a safe, stable and dignified working environment, then new value is created for growers and buyers.



Study Design

The study was designed with a holistic approach to evaluate the impact of EFI on certified farms and include the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to construct a comprehensive assessment of changes brought about through implementation of the EFI Program.



9
Farm Visits
254 Interviews



23
Multistakeholder
Engagements

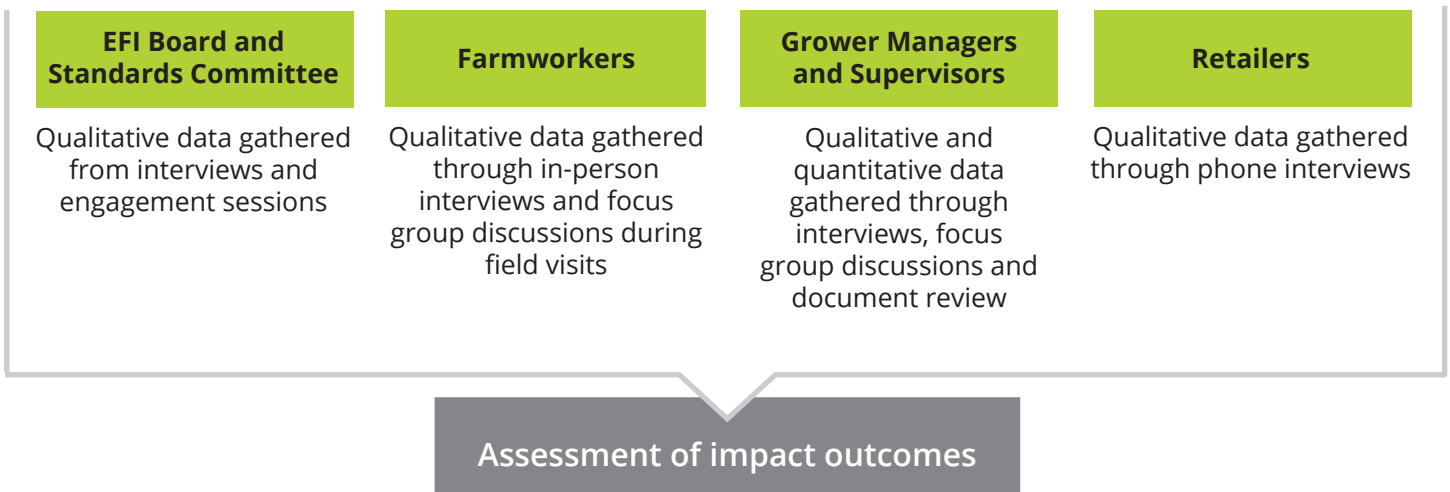


Audit Report
Analysis

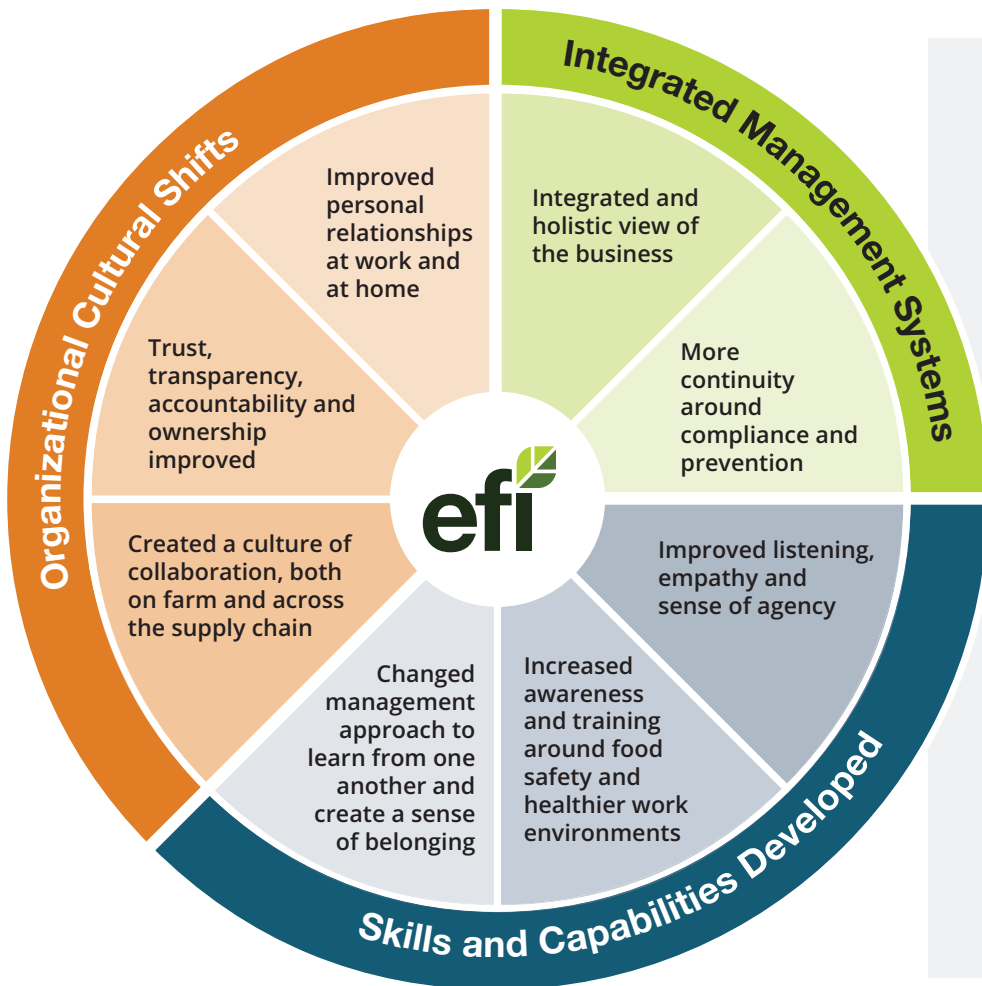


Review of Farm
Management
Data Systems

Study Participants



Program Outcomes



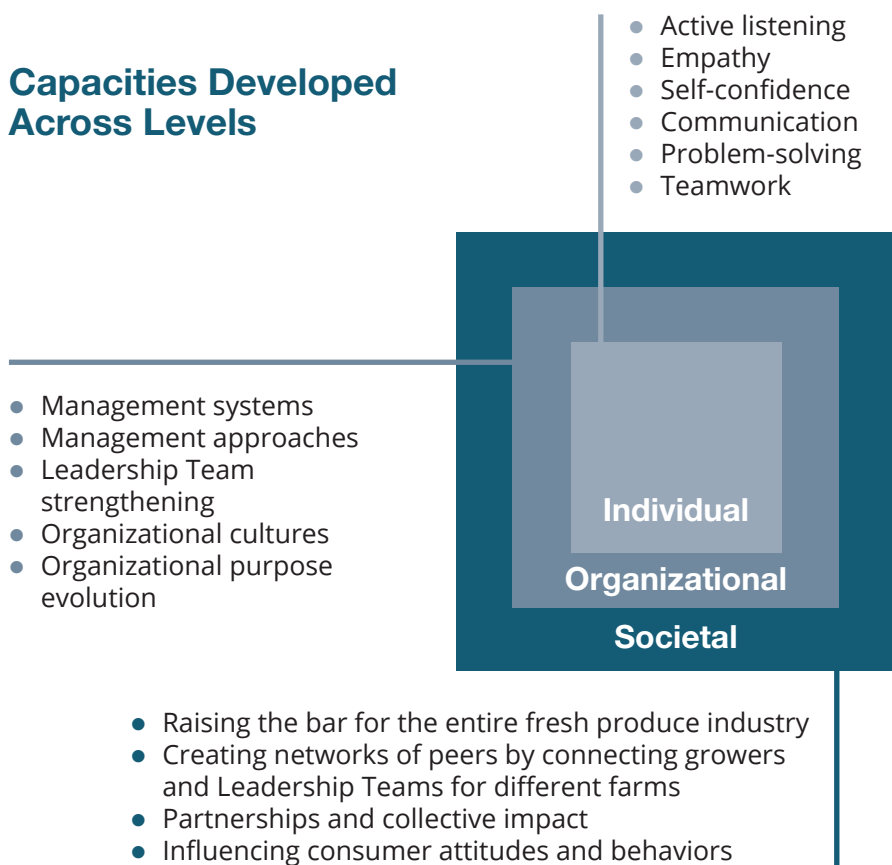
Investing in Human Capital Is at the Center of the EFI Model

The EFI model places human capital at the center. Training and workforce development require initial investment and commitment, but produce growers are already reaping the benefits through worker engagement and motivation, as well as prevention, compliance and innovation.

Skills & Capacities Developed

The EFI Program has been shown to build capacities at the individual, organizational and societal levels.

Capacities Developed Across Levels



“EFI trainings are very dynamic, very practical. We learn to let go of our fear. We work on topics like stress, dignity and respect. I evolved as a manager — I used to be colder, more direct. They encourage more sensitivity, empathy, listening to others, putting yourself in their shoes.”

Male Manager



“Before I didn’t dare to speak up. Now I can, without being afraid. I don’t feel embarrassed any more. I didn’t have confidence in myself. I learn from the trainings. The committee gives me the opportunity to grow, with more challenges. When we first arrived from Veracruz I felt strange. We speak a dialect and Spanish. In the committee, I started getting to know my coworkers — we felt welcome.”

Male Farmworker

Empathy & Active Listening

Two fundamental capacities that result from the EFI training and active Leadership Team participation are active listening and empathy. These abilities are driving profound cultural shifts on farms as management styles evolve and perspectives are shared and respected. Members of EFI Leadership Teams also cite these capacities as improving their family and community relationships beyond the workplace.

Self-Esteem & Agency

Workers participating in EFI Leadership Team training report personal transformations. They move from a fear of speaking in public and lack of confidence in their own abilities to acting as agents of change with the ability and assertiveness to raise issues, share ideas, work in teams and serve as effective leaders.

Members of EFI Leadership Teams report that the skills learned through the EFI training have catalyzed their roles in leadership beyond the farm — as teachers, community leaders, entrepreneurs and civic agents.

Organizational Culture Shifts

EFI brings profound cultural shifts to farms, leading to a collaborative and respectful work environment, an engaged workforce and strong relationships based on trust and transparency.

Managers and workers have an increased sense of belonging and commitment to the organization and are more open to collaboration around a shared purpose.

Certified farms develop a deeper understanding of worker rights. Worker voices and knowledge are more valued, which leads to an increase in workers' self-esteem.

Farmworkers feel an increased sense of motivation to be part of a team, and the "us versus them" mentality is replaced with a continuous improvement approach.

Staff on EFI-certified farms are found to have more trust in one another and toward management and are open to sharing information to make informed decisions.



"The EFI Program is important — at the beginning it seemed incredible to me, like it must be a dream. I didn't believe we could personally approach and speak to any part of the administration — before only forepersons did that. Now they lend us their ear, they come to us to listen."

Male Farmworker



"Before it was hard for us to speak in public. Now... we're more independent. EFI has made us grow as a team. We've acquired skills, we've learned how to channel the problems that come up. We're a two-way channel."

Female Farmworker



Integrated Management Systems

As farms adopt the EFI model and the organizational culture shifts to one of collaboration, managers create a more integrated management approach from their previously fragmented systems. Growers recognize new connections among business performance, compliance and workforce development.

Workers at every level are engaged, leading to stronger internal controls, monitoring and prevention — and eventually to increases in productivity, safety and quality.

EFI Leadership Teams skillfully identify areas where formal procedures were non-existent, and they enact robust policies and processes to improve labor conditions, food safety and pest management.

Managers recognize the importance of learning more about other areas of the operation and begin making links across different practices and disciplines.

Workers and managers embrace continuous improvement and adopt proactive rather than reactive practices.

Managers have access to more information sooner and can act with a deeper understanding of the challenges and possibilities enriched by worker perspectives.

EFI helps workers drive innovation by sharing their valuable experience, knowledge and perspective.



“When they train us together, we meet allies. We learn something about each topic — from planting to the final product. And we observe things that happen that we didn’t notice before. Now we ask, why is this happening?”

Male Supervisor



“Improvements in communication allow the workers, who spend their entire day in the field, to provide important inputs to the management team. This helps to improve the whole operation.”

Manager

Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Systemic Change

Mission:

Equitable Food Initiative brings together stakeholders from across the food supply chain to transform agriculture and improve the lives of farmworkers.

Growers who have participated in EFI to date took an innovative bet on developing human competencies to drive worker engagement. Their investment is paying off as they affirm improvements in their management systems, performance indicators and organizational cultures.

Farmworker

organizations, including unions and labor rights advocates participate actively in EFI and provide the credibility and ethical fiber of the EFI Program and its rigorous standards.



Retailers participating in EFI do so to minimize supply chain risk and develop assurance in ethical sourcing. They credit EFI with providing innovative approaches and early results and believe the EFI model is differentiated by its focus on worker capacity and engagement, and on the role of thriving Leadership Teams.

Civil society organizations including food safety and pesticide advocates also shape the EFI Program. EFI has not yet generated data on the impact of its program on consumers.

Active EFI stakeholders share purpose and a long-term strategic commitment to transforming agricultural systems and addressing labor practices, food safety and pest management issues in the fresh produce industry.



“EFI advances human rights through increased worker engagement and awareness. It gives them confidence to communicate with management without fear of punishment or retaliation, and opens the door to drive improvements. Retailers feel there is more assurance regarding human rights as workers engage.”

Current EFI Retail Partner

Improved Working Conditions

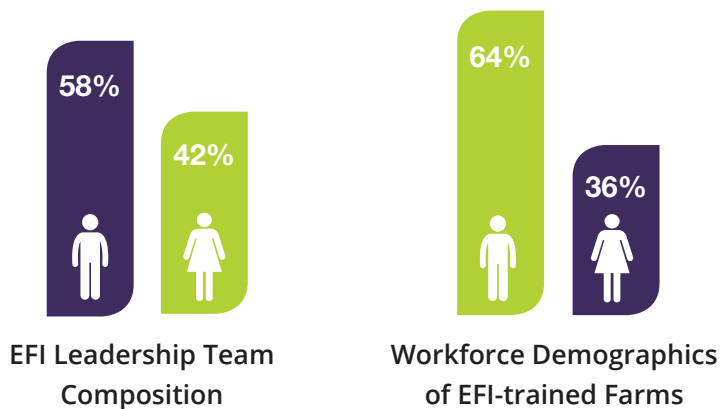
EFI Enhances Protection Against Discrimination & Sexual Harassment

In addition to the cultural shifts around trust, communication and collaboration, overall working conditions are improved as Leadership Teams address specific issues, and more resources are dedicated to address and prevent workplace incidents and accidents. In addition, EFI-certified farms are working with agencies to improve transparency around recruitment practices.

Women, members of ethnic groups and elderly workers appreciate the respect that has been cemented among workers, supervisors and managers. Study respondents report a working environment where derogatory terms are increasingly uncommon, and everyone thinks twice before reinforcing discriminatory attitudes.

Women are experiencing a greater sense of respect and feel safer and better supported by management. The sense of inclusiveness goes beyond gender and applies also to minority groups, who experience less discrimination based on language and ethnicity.

Women Are Well-represented on EFI Leadership Teams



Diverse representation on Leadership Teams provides a trusted channel for peers across job areas to start conversations, address grievances and identify risks.



“When we first started, there was a lack of communication with the workers. They are no longer afraid. Now the representatives share information. Respect, equality, and trust have been developed.”

Male Leadership Team Member

“The program has been very helpful for those of us who speak a native language. We come from different indigenous areas. It was hard before — some people barely speak Spanish and don’t understand it very well.”

Male Farmworker

“It feels comfortable. They’re no longer afraid to speak up. Before, the foreman would walk by and there’d be fear of approaching that person. [The Leadership Team helps] a bilingual person understand the information. Women are more engaged.”

Female Farmworker