With support from the Ford Foundation, ISEAL is commissioning three impact evaluations to study the emerging long-term impacts of different sustainability standards in the agriculture sector from the pre-certification stage to three years after certification.

ISEAL’s interest is to add to the growing body of knowledge on the impact of sustainability standards and to address questions that are important but still not well studied in existing literature.

Three evaluations underway – what we are studying

**Western Kenya**
Smallholder coffee farmers
- UTZ and Fairtrade
- Research partner: Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA), with IITA

**Andhra Pradesh, India**
Cotton
- Better Cotton Initiative
- Research partner: Natural Resources Institute, the University of Greenwich.

**South Sumatra, Indonesia**
Smallholder coffee farmers
- 4C and Rainforest Alliance
- Research partner: University of Sydney, with J-PAL (Poverty Action Lab) and collaboration with SurveyMETER

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Photo © Better Cotton Initiative
Photo © David Bonilla, © Rainforest Alliance
Status:
All three have completed the baseline stage of data collection and analysis, using ISEAL common core indicators and other measures to understand the current incomes and farm revenue of the targeted farmers and their households. The baseline studies also examine the regional context and process through which farmers become involved with standards systems in order to better understand the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in these programmes.

Methods:
All three studies are mixed method designs – combining analysis of quantitative household survey data with qualitative study elements such as ‘blind’ household panel surveys, participatory rural appraisals, focus groups and key informant interviews. Two of the three studies (India and Indonesia) employed a randomised control trial research design. The third is a comparative case study design involving 6 cooperatives and representative samples of farmers within each cooperative.

Common angles in the three studies

› To look at regions not previously reached by certification, where market players are intervening to move certification from niche to mainstream, and, in some cases, leading to certification by multiple standards.

› To assess the pre-certification status of households and farms, so that the studies capture changes happening during early preparation for certification and the process of becoming certified.

› To evaluate the contribution that sustainability standards make to improving the well-being of poor farmers.

› To better understand how certification may add value to capacity building programmes.

All evaluations examine the extent to which the interventions:

› Target small holders

› Increase the amount of and the stability of net farm income

› Result in any change in household income and/or the development of assets

› Produce a feeling in farmers of increased choice, influence and/or control

They are also all looking at what contextual factors significantly influence the effect of certification