

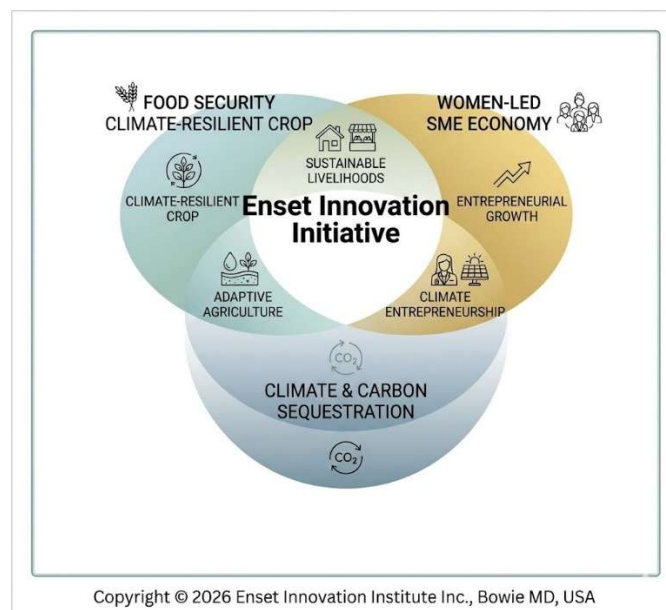
GLOBAL FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY FOR THE ENSET INNOVATION INITIATIVE

Transforming Enset into a Global Model for Climate-Resilient Food Systems and Women-Led Enterprise

Prepared by

Enset Innovation Institute (EII)

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Enset Innovation Institute Inc.

Advancing climate-resilient food systems through indigenous crops and women-led enterprise.

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The Global Context

Problem

Global food systems remain heavily dependent on a small number of annual crops that are increasingly vulnerable to climate variability, drought, and soil degradation. At the same time, millions of smallholder farmers—particularly women—face limited market access, labor-intensive production systems, and insufficient investment in climate-resilient crops.

Opportunity

Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*), a perennial crop cultivated for centuries in Ethiopia, represents one of the world's most resilient yet under-recognized food systems. Supporting more than 40 million people and deeply embedded in local knowledge systems, Enset offers a powerful opportunity to strengthen climate resilience, enhance food security, and support women-led economic development.

Action

The Enset Innovation Initiative brings together research institutions, enterprise ecosystems, and digital agriculture tools to scale this biocultural food system into a globally recognized model for climate-resilient agriculture.

Call to Action: Building a Global Partnership for Climate-Resilient Food Systems

The Enset Innovation Initiative invites collaboration from philanthropic foundations, research institutions, development partners, and impact investors committed to strengthening climate-resilient food systems and inclusive rural economies. Through coordinated research partnerships, women-led enterprise development, and digital agricultural innovation, the initiative seeks to unlock the full potential of Enset as a scalable model for climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable rural development.

Early philanthropic engagement will play a catalytic role in advancing research partnerships, strengthening existing enterprise ecosystems, and scaling proven innovations in Enset processing and market development. Building on the foundation of **37 already functioning SMEs**, the Enset Innovation Institute (EII) is working to secure catalytic funding to expand the network by **an additional 163 women-led SMEs**, creating an initial ecosystem of **200 enterprises** that can demonstrate scalable models for hygienic processing, enterprise development, and rural value-chain innovation.

This **\$3–5 million expansion phase** will deepen research collaboration, improve processing technologies, and strengthen enterprise hubs while generating the evidence and institutional partnerships needed to mobilize a broader **\$50 million global climate innovation program** designed to scale Enset-based food systems and women-led enterprises across climate-vulnerable highland regions.

Supporting the Enset Innovation Initiative therefore means investing not only in a climate-resilient crop, but also in the preservation and modernization of a unique **biocultural food system** that sustains millions of people. We invite partners to join the initiative in transforming one of the world's most resilient crops into a global model for climate-resilient agriculture and women-led enterprise development.

Pillar	The Specific Call to Action (The "Ask")
North America: Legacy Donors	Anchor Investment: Seeking long-term capital to establish the foundational infrastructure and global food-security validation.
Europe & Nordics: Partner Funds	Gender & Climate Alignment: Seeking "Gender-Lens" funding to empower women-led processing hubs and climate-resilient value chains.
Impact Investors	Venture Philanthropy: Seeking patient capital and blended finance to bridge the gap for emerging Enset-based SMEs.
Strategic Partners (Academia)	Technical Moat: Seeking ongoing R&D collaboration to ensure the agronomy and digital monitoring systems remain world-class.
Canada & Australia	Regional Partnership: Seeking bilateral cooperation for knowledge exchange and regional food systems resilience.

Global Enset Innovation Initiative at a Glance

The Enset Innovation Initiative seeks to unlock the global potential of **Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*)**, one of the world’s most resilient yet under-recognized staple crops. Through partnerships with universities, research institutions, philanthropic foundations, and enterprise ecosystems, the initiative aims to strengthen climate-resilient food systems while advancing women-led economic development across Enset-producing regions.

The Opportunity

- Enset supports **40+ million people in Ethiopia**
- One of the **most climate-resilient staple crops**
- Significant potential for expansion across **tropical highland regions**

The Challenge

- Limited global research investment
- Labor-intensive traditional processing systems

- Limited market access for women processors
- Weak agricultural data and advisory systems

The Initiative Model

Research and Innovation

- Climate-resilient crop research
- Disease surveillance and agronomic innovation

Women-Led Enterprise Ecosystem

- Processing innovation
- SME hub development
- Market expansion

AI-Enabled Agricultural Systems

- Crop monitoring and analytics
- Climate intelligence
- Digital advisory systems for farmers

Partnership Platform

Key partners may include:

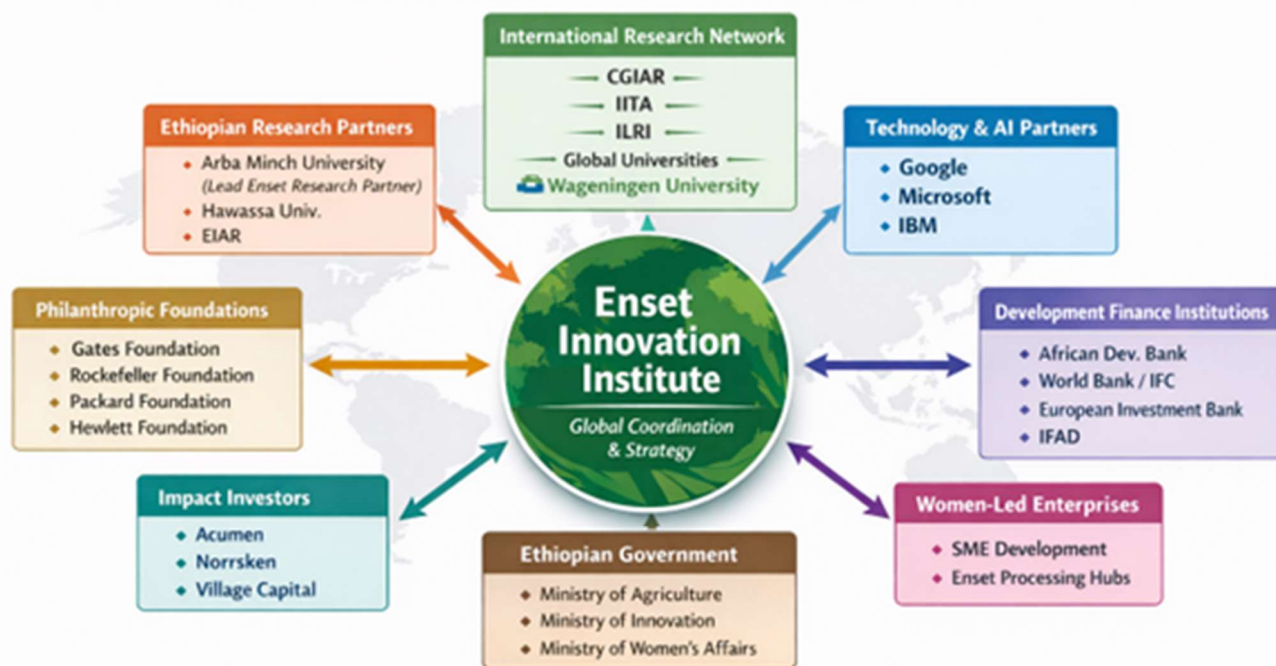
- **Arba Minch University** (*Lead Enset Research Partner*)
- Global universities and research institutions
- Philanthropic foundations
- Impact investors
- Local and International organizations (SOS Sahel Ethiopia and ACTED Ethiopia)
- Development finance institutions

Long-Term Vision

By **2035**, the initiative aims to:

- Support **1 million farmers**
- Enable **10,000 women-led SMEs**
- Establish Enset as a **globally recognized climate-resilient crop**

Global Enset Innovation Initiative



Enset: The World's Most Underinvested Climate-Resilient Staple Crop.

Figure 1. Global Enset Innovation Initiative Platform Architecture.

The Enset Innovation Initiative connects climate-resilient agriculture research, women-led enterprise ecosystems, digital agriculture systems, and global funding partnerships to transform Enset into a scalable model for climate-resilient food systems.

Global Funding and Partnership Strategy for the Enset Innovation Initiative

A strategic partnership framework for scaling climate-resilient food systems, women-led enterprise, and AI-enabled agricultural learning

1. Executive Summary

At a time when global food systems are increasingly threatened by climate change, there is growing recognition that resilient agricultural futures will depend not only on improving major staple crops, but also on investing in underutilized indigenous crops that have sustained communities for generations. Enset represents one of the most promising examples of such a crop.

With its exceptional drought tolerance, perennial growth cycle, and central role in the livelihoods of more than 40 million Ethiopians, Enset represents one of the world's most resilient yet under-recognized food systems. More than an agricultural crop, Enset functions as a biocultural system deeply embedded in the social, economic, and ecological fabric of Ethiopian highland communities, where women serve as custodians of cultivation, processing knowledge, and value-chain traditions. By combining scientific research, enterprise innovation, and modern digital and processing technologies within a coordinated partnership platform, the Enset Innovation Initiative aims

to transform this traditional system into a globally recognized model for climate-resilient food systems—one that integrates indigenous knowledge, women-led enterprise, and sustainable agricultural development.

In addition, Enset cultivation offers emerging opportunities for **nature-based carbon sequestration and climate finance**, while improved processing technologies aim to reduce the severe physical health burdens currently experienced by millions of women engaged in traditional Enset processing.

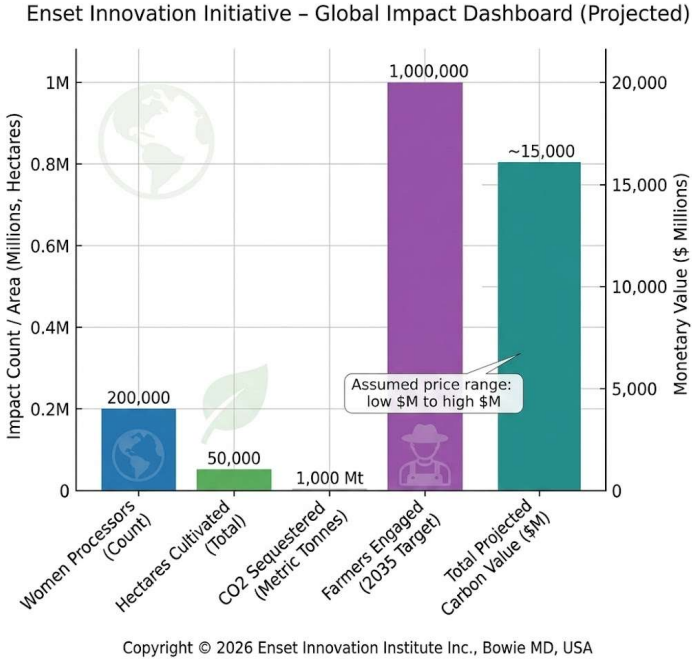


Figure 2. Enset Innovation Initiative – Global Impact Dashboard
Projected outcomes of the Enset Innovation Initiative demonstrate the potential to strengthen climate-resilient food systems while supporting women-led enterprise ecosystems. Over a five-year period, the initiative aims to support more than 200,000 women processors across 50,000 hectares of cultivation, potentially sequestering over 42 million tons of CO₂ while generating significant rural income opportunities and scaling to 1 million farmers by 2035.

Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*), often called the “**tree against hunger,**” sustains the food security and livelihoods of more than **40 million people in Ethiopia**, yet remains one of the most **under-researched and under-invested crops in global agriculture.**

Despite its resilience, the Enset economy faces several structural challenges:

- labor-intensive traditional processing
- limited access to finance for women processors
- weak market systems
- lack of digital advisory and data systems & decision-support tools
- insufficient agricultural research investment

The Enset Innovation Initiative aims to position Enset as a flagship example of how indigenous crops, women-led enterprise systems, and modern digital technologies can together shape the next generation of climate-resilient food through a coordinated global effort combining:

- climate-resilient agriculture research
- women-led enterprise development
- digital agriculture tools and AI-enabled learning systems
- global partnerships and blended finance

The Enset Innovation Institute (EII) serves as a global platform for advancing Enset as a strategic crop for food security, climate resilience, and women-led rural enterprise in Africa. EII convenes partnerships among universities, philanthropic foundations, investors, development institutions, and government stakeholders to mobilize research, innovation, and investment around the Enset ecosystem.

In addition to partnership development, the institute plays a key role in advocacy, knowledge sharing, and policy engagement by documenting and disseminating best practices, facilitating learning and exchange among communities and development partners, and promoting stronger policy recognition and investment in Enset as a climate-resilient crop capable of strengthening food systems across Africa.

The long-term goal is to build a **\$50 million global initiative** that strengthens climate-resilient food systems while expanding women-led enterprise ecosystems across Enset-producing regions.

The Enset Innovation Initiative: Transforming an Indigenous Crop into a Global Climate Solution

Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*), often called the “*tree against hunger*,” is a perennial staple crop domesticated in the Ethiopian highlands that plays a central role in food security and rural livelihoods. It currently provides the staple or co-staple food for **about 20–25 million people** in southern and southwestern Ethiopia, helping households buffer against drought and seasonal food shortages (Borrell *et al.*, 2019; Yemata, 2020). Despite its resilience and economic importance, Enset has historically received limited global research investment.

The **Enset Innovation Initiative**, coordinated by the Enset Innovation Institute (EII), aims to unlock the full global potential of Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*), one of the world’s most resilient yet under-recognized staple crops. Through partnerships with universities, research institutions, philanthropic foundations, and enterprise ecosystems, the initiative aims to strengthen climate-resilient food systems while advancing women-led economic development across Enset-producing regions.

1.1. A Climate-Resilient Crop for the Future

As climate change threatens global food systems, drought-tolerant and resilient crops are increasingly vital. Enset’s perennial growth and climate resilience make it a key crop for food security in vulnerable regions (Chase *et al.*, 2023; Sherka & Tsehay, 2025). The initiative seeks to elevate Enset into the global conversation on climate-resilient agriculture and food systems transformation.

1.2. A Women-Led Rural Economy

Women play a central role in the Enset economy. Across southern Ethiopia, women are responsible for most processing activities that transform Enset into staple foods. However, these activities remain largely informal and

labor-intensive. By supporting improved processing technologies and enterprise development, the initiative aims to transform traditional processing systems into **women-led SME ecosystems**.

1.3. Research and Innovation Opportunity

Despite its importance for food security and rural livelihoods, enset (*Ensete ventricosum*) remains one of the least studied major staple crops in Africa, with limited research on its genetics, agronomy, pests and diseases, and climate resilience (Borrell *et al.*, 2019; Yemata, 2020). To address these knowledge gaps, research partnerships led by Arba Minch University, in collaboration with international agricultural research institutions, will advance understanding in key areas such as

- crop disease resilience
- climate adaptation
- sustainable cultivation practices.

Strengthening the scientific foundation for Enset will support long-term agricultural innovation and unlock its potential as a resilient staple crop (Borrell *et al.*, 2019).

1.4. Digital Agriculture and AI Systems

Advances in digital agriculture create opportunities to support farmers through real-time data and decision-support systems.

The initiative will explore AI-enabled tools to support:

- climate risk monitoring
- crop health surveillance
- farmer advisory systems
- agricultural data integration

These tools will enable adaptive learning across the Enset ecosystem.

1.5. A Global Partnership Platform

The Enset Innovation Institute serves as a **global convening platform** bringing together:

- universities and research institutes
- philanthropic foundations
- impact investors
- development finance institutions
- technology partners

This partnership model ensures that scientific research, enterprise development, and financial investment are coordinated effectively.

1.6. A Pathway to a \$50M Global Initiative

The initiative follows a phased investment model:

Catalytic Philanthropy (\$3–5M)

Supports research partnerships and the expansion of the existing SME network from 37 enterprises to an initial ecosystem of 200 women-led SMEs.

System Builders (\$15–20M)

Strengthens the 200-SME ecosystem through digital agriculture systems, enterprise support platforms, and climate-resilient value chain infrastructure.

Scaling Finance (\$30M+)

Mobilizes development finance and large-scale investment to expand the Enset ecosystem, scaling the 200-SME model across climate-vulnerable highland regions.

This staged funding approach mirrors the structure used by major agricultural initiatives such as those supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation in previous African agricultural transformation programs.

Strategic Vision

The long-term goal of the Enset Innovation Initiative is to:

- strengthen climate-resilient food systems
- support women-led rural enterprises
- advance agricultural research and innovation
- position Enset as a globally recognized climate-resilient crop.

By connecting scientific research, enterprise development, and global partnerships, the initiative offers a new model for sustainable agricultural transformation.

2. Why Enset Matters for Global Food Systems

Global food systems are increasingly vulnerable to multiple environmental stressors, including climate change, soil degradation, and water scarcity. Many contemporary agricultural systems are heavily reliant on a limited range of staple crops, which exacerbates their susceptibility to these challenges (FAO, 2019; Godfray et al., 2010). Key factors contributing to this vulnerability include:

- **Climate change** – altering temperature and precipitation patterns, increasing the frequency of extreme weather events, and impacting crop yields (IPCC, 2022).
- **Soil degradation** – resulting from erosion, nutrient depletion, and unsustainable land management practices, reducing agricultural productivity (Lal, 2020).
- **Water scarcity** – driven by over-extraction, pollution, and changing rainfall patterns, limiting water availability for crops (FAO, 2021).
- **Dependence on a narrow set of staple crops** – which reduces genetic diversity and resilience, making food systems more prone to pests, diseases, and climate shocks (Tilman et al., 2011).

Enset as a Biocultural Food System

Unlike many globally traded crops, Enset is deeply rooted in local knowledge systems. Cultivation practices, processing techniques, and varietal selection have been developed and preserved by farming communities over generations. Women in particular serve as custodians of this knowledge, managing complex processing techniques that transform the plant into staple foods.

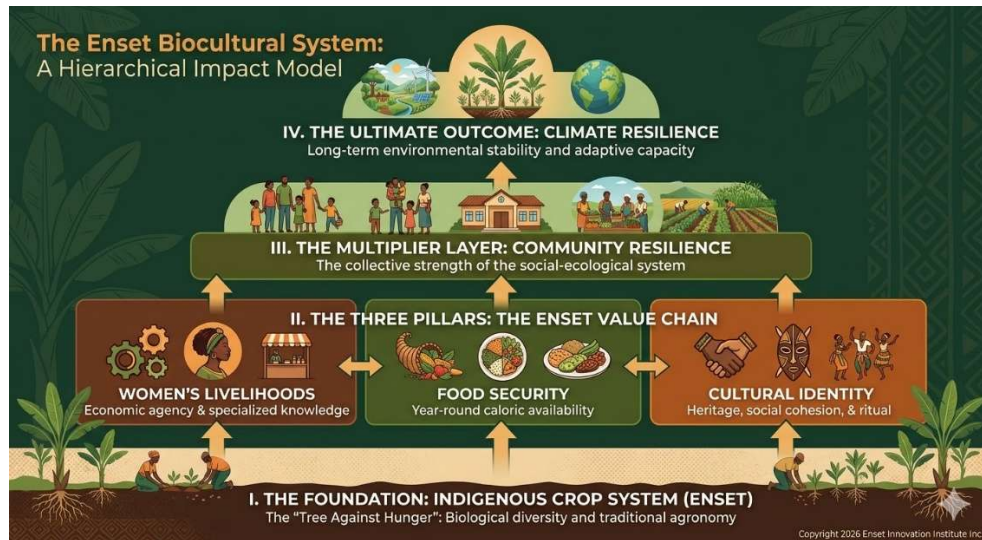


Figure 3. The Enset Biocultural System – Hierarchical Impact Model

This framework illustrates how Enset functions as a biocultural system linking indigenous agricultural knowledge, women’s livelihoods, food security, and cultural identity. Together these pillars strengthen community resilience and contribute to long-term climate adaptation in Ethiopian highland ecosystems.

Recognizing Enset as a **biocultural food system** highlights the importance of preserving indigenous agricultural knowledge while modernizing production and enterprise systems.

As part of global food systems, **Enset** offers a highly resilient alternative due to its unique agronomic and ecological traits:

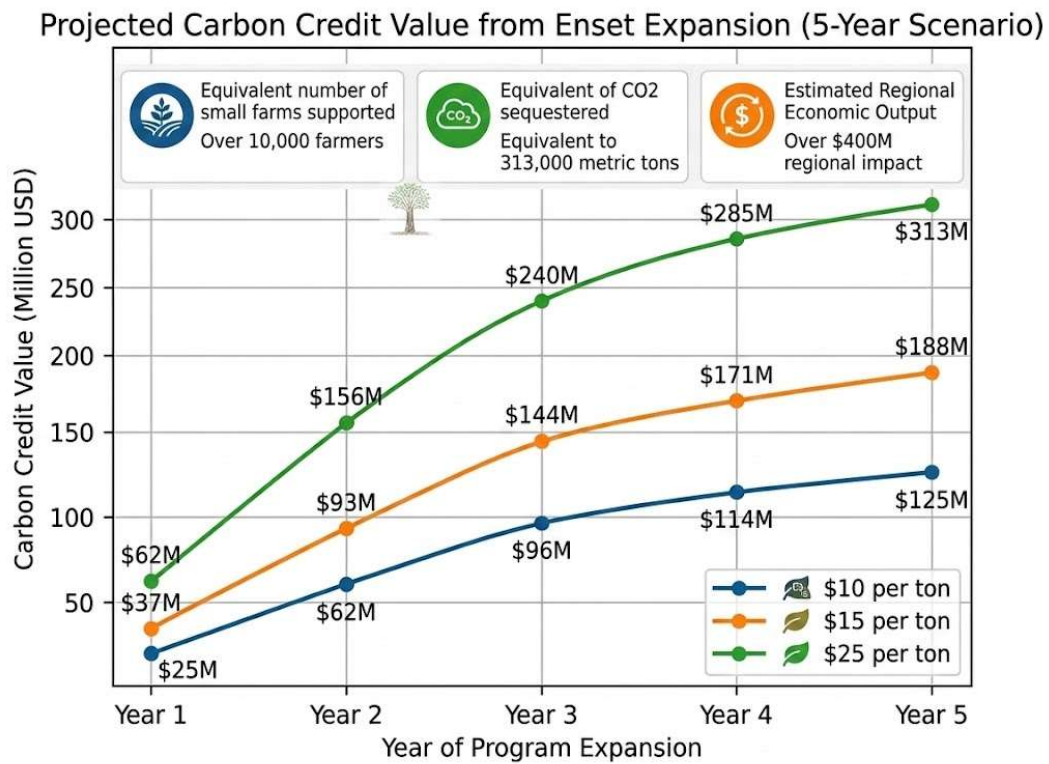
- **Perennial crop with high climate resilience** – Enset can withstand variable environmental conditions, reducing the risk of total crop failure (Borrell et al., 2019).
- **Strong drought tolerance** – capable of surviving extended dry periods, making it suitable for marginal and drought-prone areas (Yemataw et al., 2018).
- **Flexible harvest timing** – the crop can be harvested at different times according to food demand, providing a buffer against seasonal food insecurity (Borrell et al., 2020).
- **High productivity** – yields substantial biomass and food per hectare, contributing to food security (Shigeta, 2001).
- **Role as a living food reserve** – Enset serves as a “food bank in the field,” allowing households to access food during periods of scarcity (Yemataw et al., 2016).
- **Long-term soil stabilization** – its extensive root system prevents erosion and maintains soil fertility (Tesfaye et al., 2015). **High caloric yield per hectare** – provides significant energy per unit area, supporting dense populations in the African highlands (Borrell et al., 2019).

Unlike annual crops, Enset can remain in the ground for several years, allowing farmers to harvest during periods of food scarcity. This resilience makes Enset a **strategic crop for climate-adapted food systems**, particularly in the African highlands.

Carbon Sequestration and Climate Finance Potential

Beyond its role in food security and rural livelihoods, Enset cultivation also offers significant climate mitigation benefits. As a large perennial crop with extensive biomass and deep root systems, Enset contributes to long-term carbon storage within agroforestry landscapes and smallholder farming systems. Preliminary modeling conducted for the Enset Innovation Initiative suggests that scaling improved Enset cultivation across approximately **50,000 hectares could sequester more than 42 million metric tons of CO₂ over a five-year period**, creating a potential carbon credit value ranging from **\$422 million to more than \$1 billion depending on carbon market prices**.

These climate co-benefits position Enset as a promising candidate for integration into emerging **nature-based carbon finance mechanisms**, potentially creating additional revenue streams that can support women-led enterprise development and sustainable agricultural expansion.



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Figure 4. Projected Carbon Credit Value from Enset Landscape Expansion
 Modeled carbon sequestration from 50,100 hectares of improved Enset cultivation suggests cumulative sequestration of approximately 42.2 million metric tons of CO₂ over five years. Depending on voluntary carbon market prices, this represents a potential carbon credit value between \$422 million and \$1.05 billion, highlighting the climate mitigation potential of perennial food systems.



Figure 5. Global Enset Opportunity Map.

*Current Enset cultivation zones in Ethiopia and potential expansion areas in similar climate regions. Enset already supports more than **40 million people in Ethiopia**, and its climate resilience suggests significant potential for broader use in tropical highland regions facing climate stress.*

However, global agricultural investment has historically focused on crops such as wheat, rice, and maize. As a result, Enset remains one of the **most under-invested climate-resilient crops in the world.**

3. Women and the Enset Economy

Women are the primary actors in the Enset processing economy. Women are the primary custodians of Enset processing knowledge. Their role extends beyond labor; it includes the preservation of cultural knowledge, culinary traditions, and seed diversity within the Enset biocultural system.

Across southern Ethiopia, millions of women are responsible for:

- harvesting
- processing
- fermentation
- food preparation
- local market sales

Despite their central role, women processors face major constraints:

- physically demanding processing systems
- limited access to improved technology
- lack of financial products designed for rural processors
- weak market linkages

As a result, women processors often operate within **informal economic structures**, even though their work supports entire food systems.

Health Burden of Traditional Processing

Traditional Enset processing methods are highly labor-intensive and physically demanding. Women often spend long hours bending over fermentation pits and manually scraping plant material, activities that have been associated with chronic musculoskeletal strain, spinal deformation, kidney complications linked to prolonged physical stress, and increased risk of uterine prolapse in rural communities. Addressing these health burdens is a key motivation for introducing improved hygienic processing technologies and women-led SME processing hubs. By reducing physical drudgery while improving productivity and food safety, technological innovation in the Enset value chain can generate both economic and health benefits for rural women (*Separate Women Health Annex can be provided*).

Transforming Enset processing into a **women-led SME ecosystem** represents one of the largest untapped livelihood opportunities in Ethiopia.

4. Climate Resilience of Enset

Enset has unique characteristics that make it exceptionally resilient to climate stress. The resilience of Enset is not only biological but also cultural. Traditional farming systems have developed adaptive management practices that help communities withstand drought, crop disease, and climate variability.

These include:

- perennial growth cycle
- drought tolerance
- ability to store carbohydrates in the plant stem
- resistance to seasonal crop failure

Because Enset can remain in the ground for several years, it acts as a **living food reserve**.

This resilience has historically helped communities survive droughts and food shortages.

With increasing climate volatility, crops like Enset will become increasingly important for global food system stability.

5. The Enset Innovation Initiative

The **Enset Innovation Initiative** aims to transform Enset from a traditional subsistence crop into a **modern climate-resilient food system platform**.

The initiative focuses on three integrated pillars:

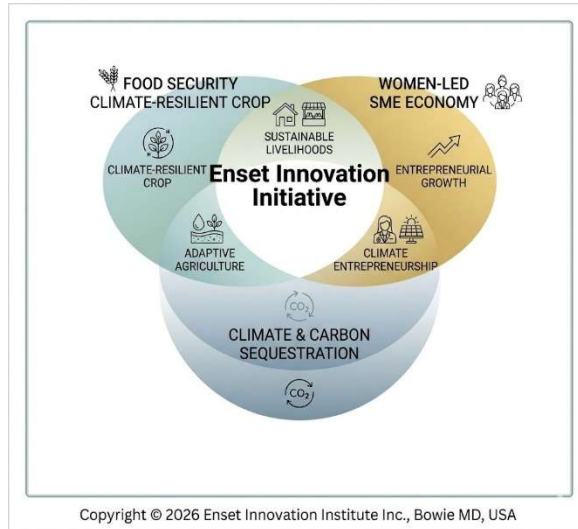


Figure 6. Integrated Impact Model of the Enset Innovation Initiative

The Enset Innovation Initiative integrates women-led enterprise development, rural income growth, and climate mitigation through carbon sequestration. Together these dimensions form a mutually reinforcing system that supports inclusive economic development while strengthening climate-resilient food systems.

5.1. Climate-Resilient Crop Research

Research priorities include:

- disease surveillance and management
- improved agronomic practices
- soil and water management
- climate adaptation strategies

5.2. Women-Led Enterprise Development

The initiative will support the emergence of:

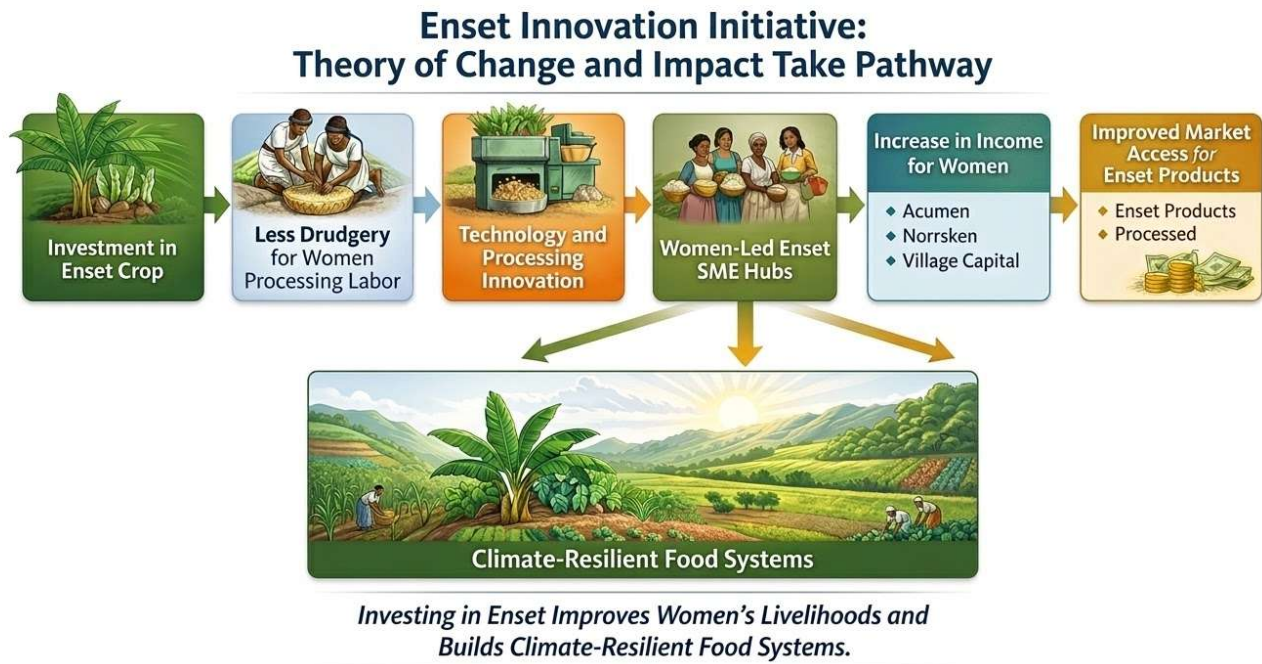
- women-led Enset processing SMEs
- hygienic processing technologies
- value-added Enset products
- rural enterprise networks

5.3. AI-Enabled Agricultural Learning Systems

Digital tools can support:

- climate risk monitoring
- crop disease detection
- farmer advisory services
- data-driven decision support

Together, these components create a **scalable model for resilient food systems innovation**.



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Figure 7. Theory of Change for the Enset Innovation Initiative.

The initiative integrates climate-resilient agriculture, women-led enterprise development, and AI-enabled agricultural learning systems to strengthen food security and rural livelihoods.

6. Role of the Enset Innovation Institute Inc.

The **Enset Innovation Institute (EIII)** serves as a global coordination and advocacy platform rather than a traditional direct implementing agency.

Its functions include:

- convening research and implementation partnerships
- mobilizing philanthropic and blended finance

- coordinating global research collaboration
- developing learning and monitoring systems
- supporting policy engagement and knowledge dissemination
- facilitating global advocacy for Enset innovation

Through this platform model, EII ensures that:

- research institutions lead scientific work
- implementation partners deliver field programs
- investors and donors support scalable innovation

7. Research and Academic Partnerships

Strong academic partnerships are central to the initiative.

Key Ethiopian partners include:

- **Arba Minch University (Lead Enset Research Partner)**
- Hawassa University
- AREKA Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
- University of Maryland School of Agriculture (Concept note submitted)
- Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health (partnership discussion on going)

International research networks may include:

- CGIAR institutions
- Wageningen University
- International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
- International Livestock Research Institute

These partnerships support:

- crop science research
- climate resilience studies
- agricultural innovation systems

8. Enterprise and SME Ecosystem

The initiative will support the development of **women-led Enset processing enterprises**.

Key areas of focus include:

- improved processing technologies
- hygienic food systems
- enterprise training programs
- cooperative and aggregation models
- market access for value-added products

By strengthening SME ecosystems, the initiative aims to create **new income pathways for rural women**.

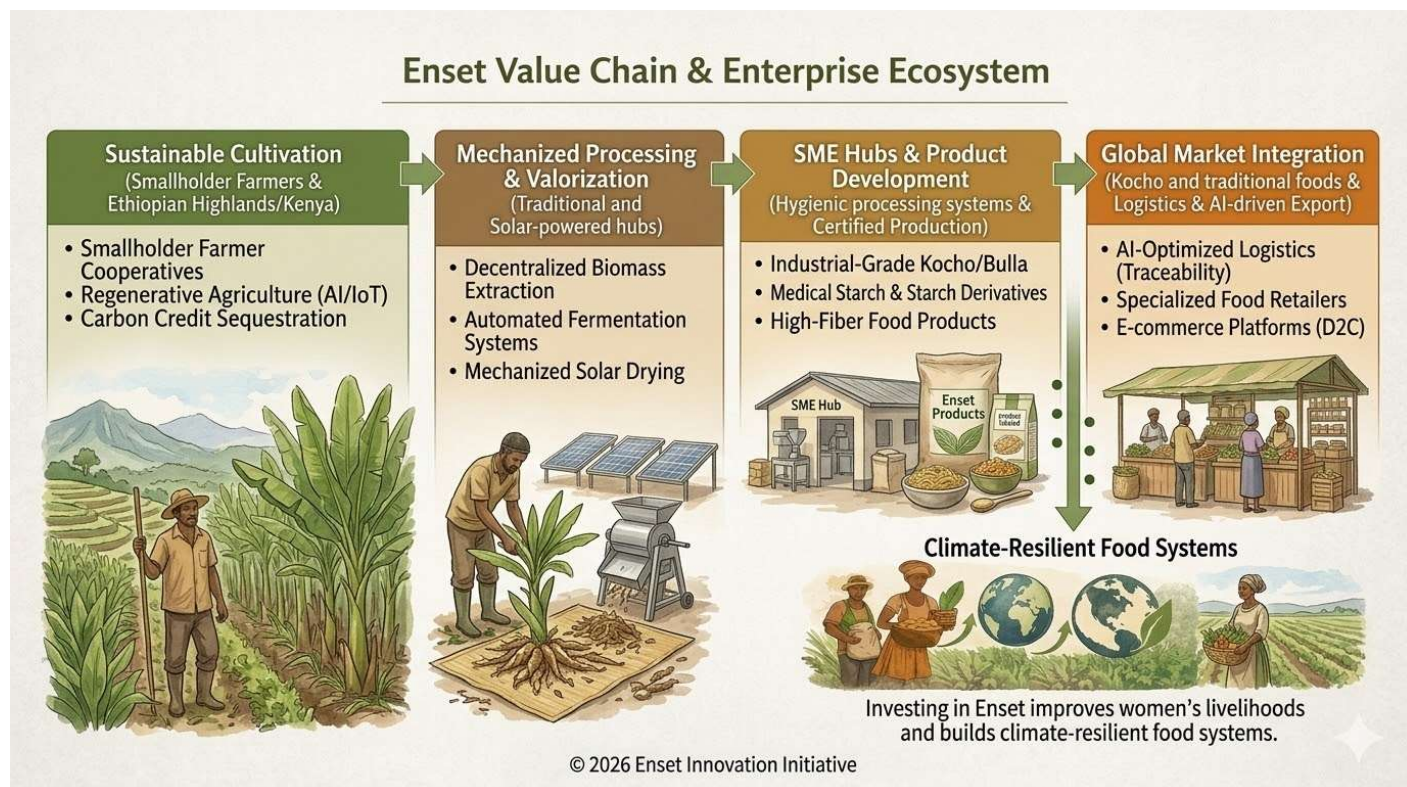


Figure 8. Enset Value Chain and Women-Led Enterprise Ecosystem.

The Enset value chain spans climate-resilient cultivation, harvesting, women-led processing activities, SME innovation hubs, value-added food products, and expanding market systems. Strengthening these stages can generate rural income growth and scalable enterprise development.

9. AI and Digital Agriculture Systems

Digital technologies offer significant potential to enhance the resilience and efficiency of Enset-based agriculture (Wolfert et al., 2017; Kamilaris & Prenafeta-Boldú, 2018). Key tools include:

- Satellite-based climate monitoring for informed planting and irrigation decisions (Li et al., 2020).
- AI-driven crop disease detection to identify pests and diseases early (Mohanty et al., 2016).
- Mobile advisory platforms delivering localized guidance to farmers (Aker, 2011).
- Agricultural data dashboards integrating multiple data sources to optimize management, harvest timing, and market access (Rose & Chilvers, 2018).

These technologies enable farmers to make data-driven decisions, improving productivity, reducing risk, and strengthening climate resilience in Enset food systems

10. Global Funding Ecosystem

Achieving large-scale impact requires coordination across multiple funding sources, including:

- philanthropic foundations
- impact investors
- development finance institutions
- research funding organizations

Together, these actors form a **global funding ecosystem for agricultural innovation**.

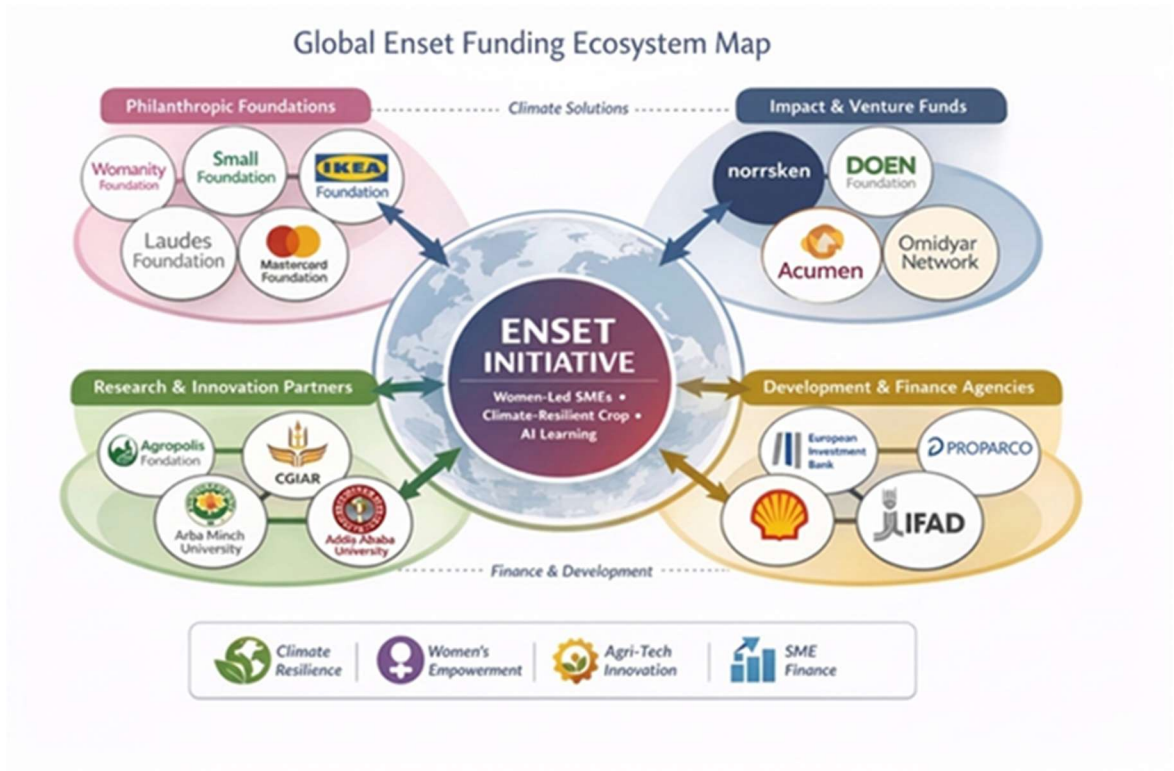


Figure 9. Global Enset Innovation Ecosystem.

The initiative connects research institutions, philanthropic foundations, impact investors, technology partners, and development finance institutions to accelerate innovation in climate-resilient agriculture and women-led enterprises.

11. Philanthropic Foundations

Philanthropic foundations play a critical role in funding early-stage innovation.

Potential catalytic partners include:

- Womanity Foundation
- Small Foundation

- Agropolis Foundation
- BNP Paribas Foundation
- Packard Foundation
- Rockefeller Foundation

These organizations support early-stage research, enterprise innovation, and learning systems.

12. Impact Investors and Venture Philanthropy

Impact investors can help scale successful innovations.

Potential partners include:

- Acumen
- Norrsken
- Village Capital
- climate agriculture investment funds

These actors can support the growth of **women-led enterprise ecosystems**.

13. Development Finance Pathways

Large-scale expansion will require collaboration with development finance institutions such as:

- African Development Bank
- International Finance Corporation
- European Investment Bank
- IFAD

These institutions can provide financing for agricultural infrastructure and SME growth and regional agricultural investment programs

14. Fundraising Strategy

Large-scale agricultural transformation initiatives have historically required a combination of philanthropic catalytic capital and development finance. A useful precedent is the establishment of Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, which was launched through major commitments from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. These philanthropic investments enabled the creation of a continent-wide agricultural transformation platform that later attracted substantial support from governments and development finance institutions.

The Enset Innovation Initiative follows a similar logic. Early catalytic funding from philanthropic foundations will support pilot research, enterprise experimentation, and learning systems. As the model demonstrates measurable impact—particularly in strengthening women-led enterprises and climate-resilient agriculture—it can

attract larger-scale financing from development banks and global foundations to support regional expansion and long-term system transformation.

The initiative proposes a three-layer funding model.

Layer 1 – Catalytic Philanthropy (\$3–5M)

Supports:

- pilot research
- SME experiments
- learning systems

Potential donors:

- Womanity Foundation
- Small Foundation
- Agropolis Foundation
- BNP Paribas Foundation
- Packard Foundation
- Rockefeller Foundation

Layer 2 – System Builders (\$15–20M)

Supports:

- SME networks
- digital agriculture platforms
- climate research programs

Potential partners:

- IKEA Foundation

- Laudes Foundation
- Mastercard Foundation
- Norrsken Foundation

Layer 3 – Scaling Finance (\$30M+)

Global program expansion and agricultural system transformation:

- agricultural infrastructure
- enterprise finance system
- regional expansion
- global research scaling

Partners may include:

- Gates Foundation
- Rockefeller Foundation
- African Development Bank
- European Investment Bank
- International Finance Corporation

Global Enset Innovation Funding Stack

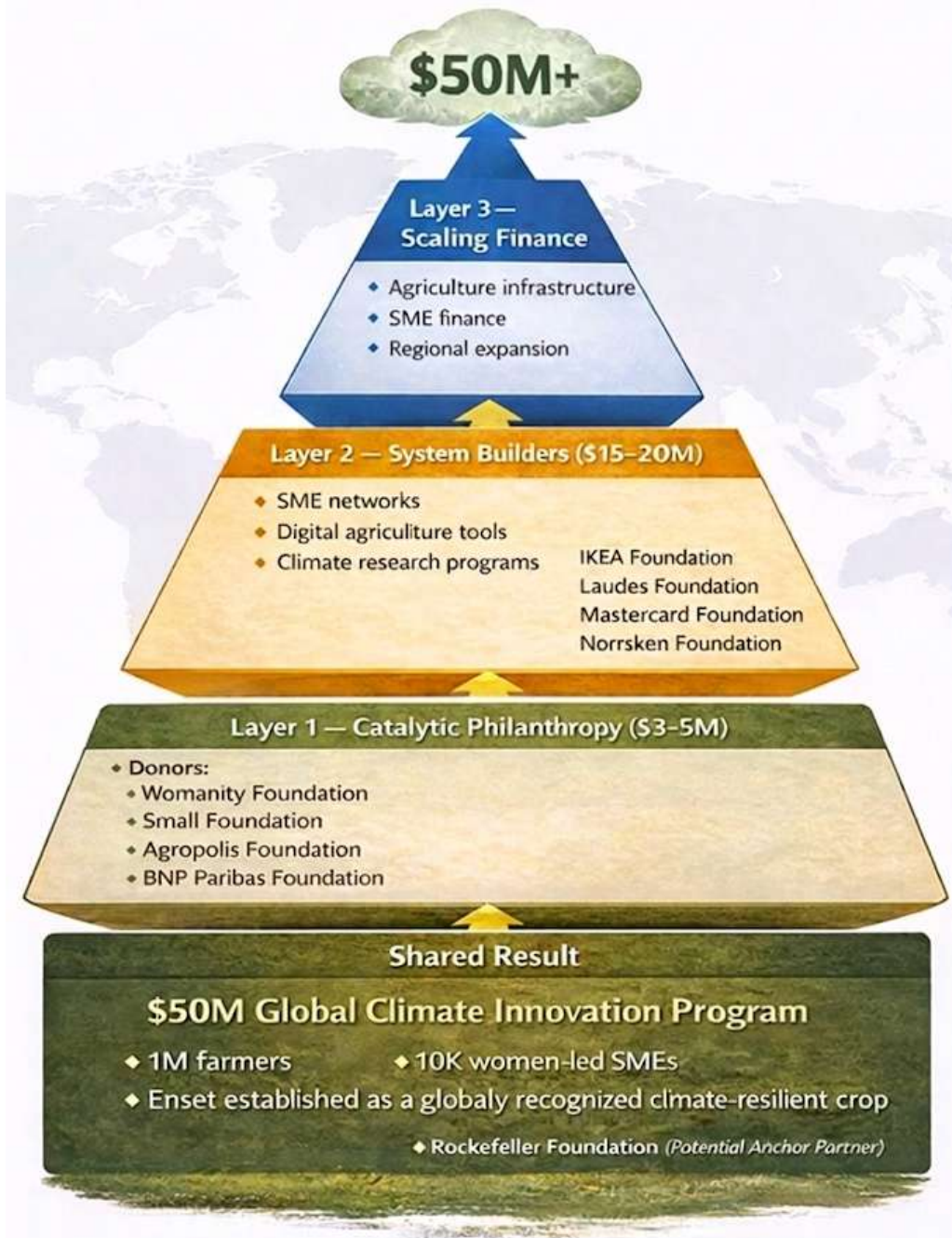


Figure 10. Funding Architecture for the Enset Innovation Initiative.

The initiative follows a staged financing model beginning with catalytic philanthropy to support research and enterprise pilots, followed by ecosystem development funding, and ultimately large-scale investment from development finance institutions and global philanthropic partners.

15. Roadmap to a \$50M Global Initiative

The Enset Innovation Initiative aims to build a **\$50 million global program** over the next decade.

Key milestones include:

Phase 1 – Scale and Evidence Generation

- establish research partnerships
- launch SME demonstration hubs
- develop digital agriculture tools

Phase 2 – System Development

- expand enterprise networks
- strengthen value chains
- integrate AI-enabled learning systems

Phase 3 – Global Scaling

- mobilize development finance
- expand across Enset-growing regions
- position Enset as a global climate-resilient crop

Long-Term Impact Vision

By 2035, the initiative aims to:

- support **1 million farmers**
- create **10,000 women-led SMEs**
- establish Enset as a **globally recognized climate-resilient crop**
- strengthen food security across climate-vulnerable regions.

Future Agro-Climatic Expansion Potential Across Africa

While the Enset Innovation Initiative is rooted in Ethiopia, agroecological analysis indicates that similar humid tropical highland conditions exist in several regions across Africa. Countries such as **Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Tanzania** possess high-elevation environments with rainfall patterns, soil profiles, and smallholder farming systems similar to Ethiopia's Enset belt.

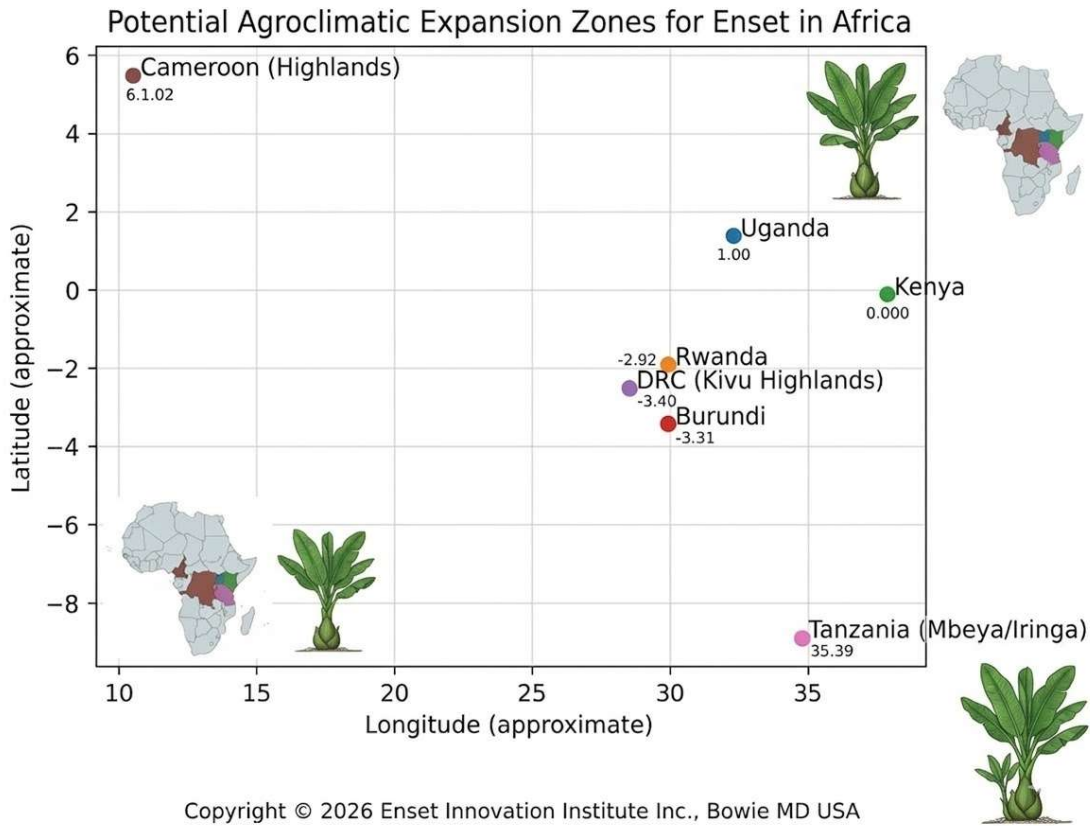


Figure 11. Potential Agro-Climatic Expansion Zones for Enset in Africa.

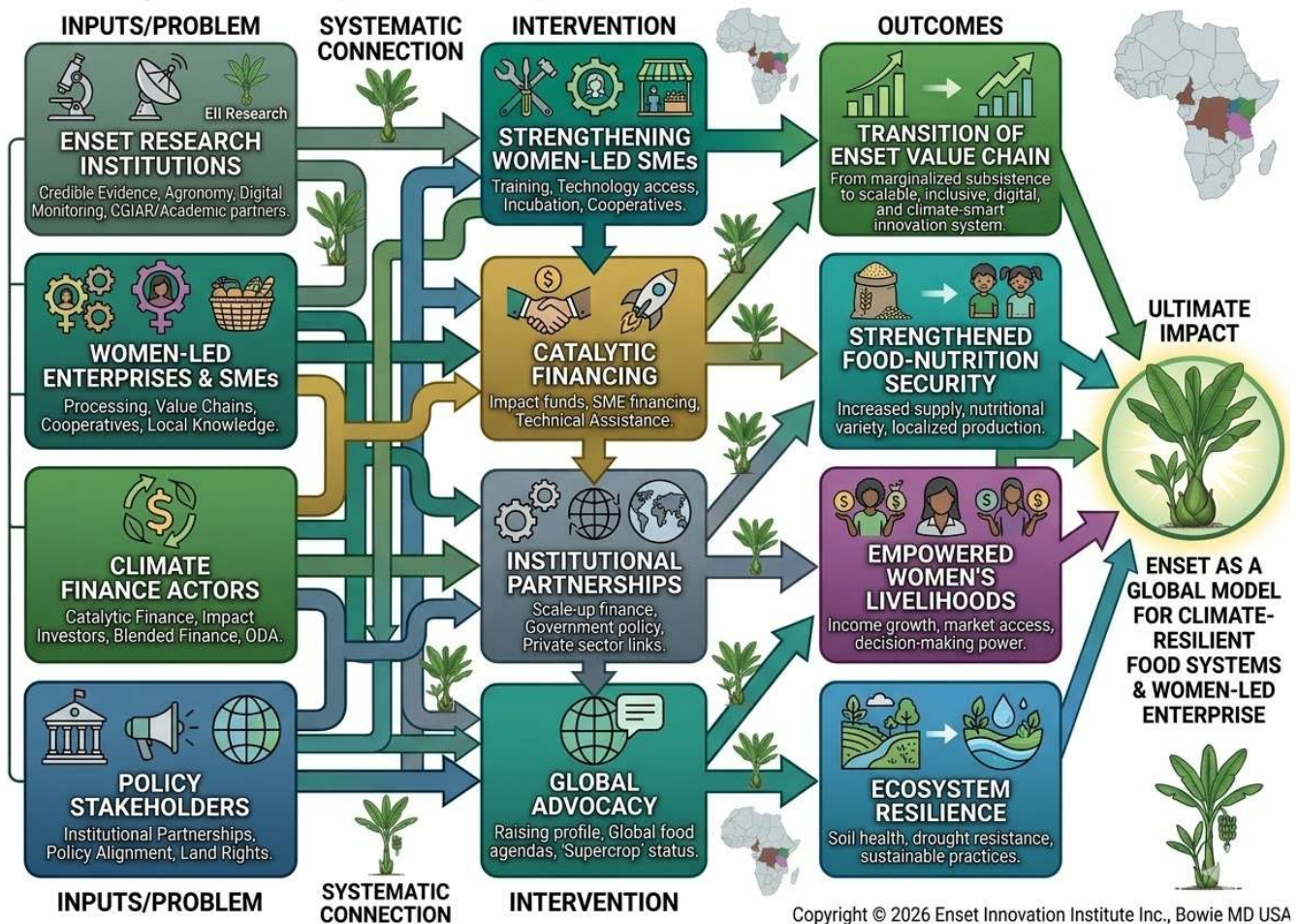
Agroecological analysis suggests that several tropical highland regions across Africa possess environmental conditions similar to Ethiopia's Enset belt. Countries including Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Tanzania may provide suitable environments for future research collaboration and climate-resilient crop diversification.

Beginning in **Phase 3 of the initiative**, the program will explore collaborative research trials and farmer-led innovation partnerships with agricultural institutes in these regions. These efforts may support:

- cross-border knowledge exchange on Enset cultivation
- agroforestry diversification strategies for climate adaptation
- nutrition-sensitive farming systems for women-led enterprises
- regional food sovereignty initiatives in highland agro-ecosystems

Regional institutions such as the **African Union, IGAD, and CAADP platforms** may play an important role in facilitating research collaboration, policy alignment, and phytosanitary frameworks necessary for responsible expansion.

Theory of Change: Scaling Enset for Climate & Gender Justice

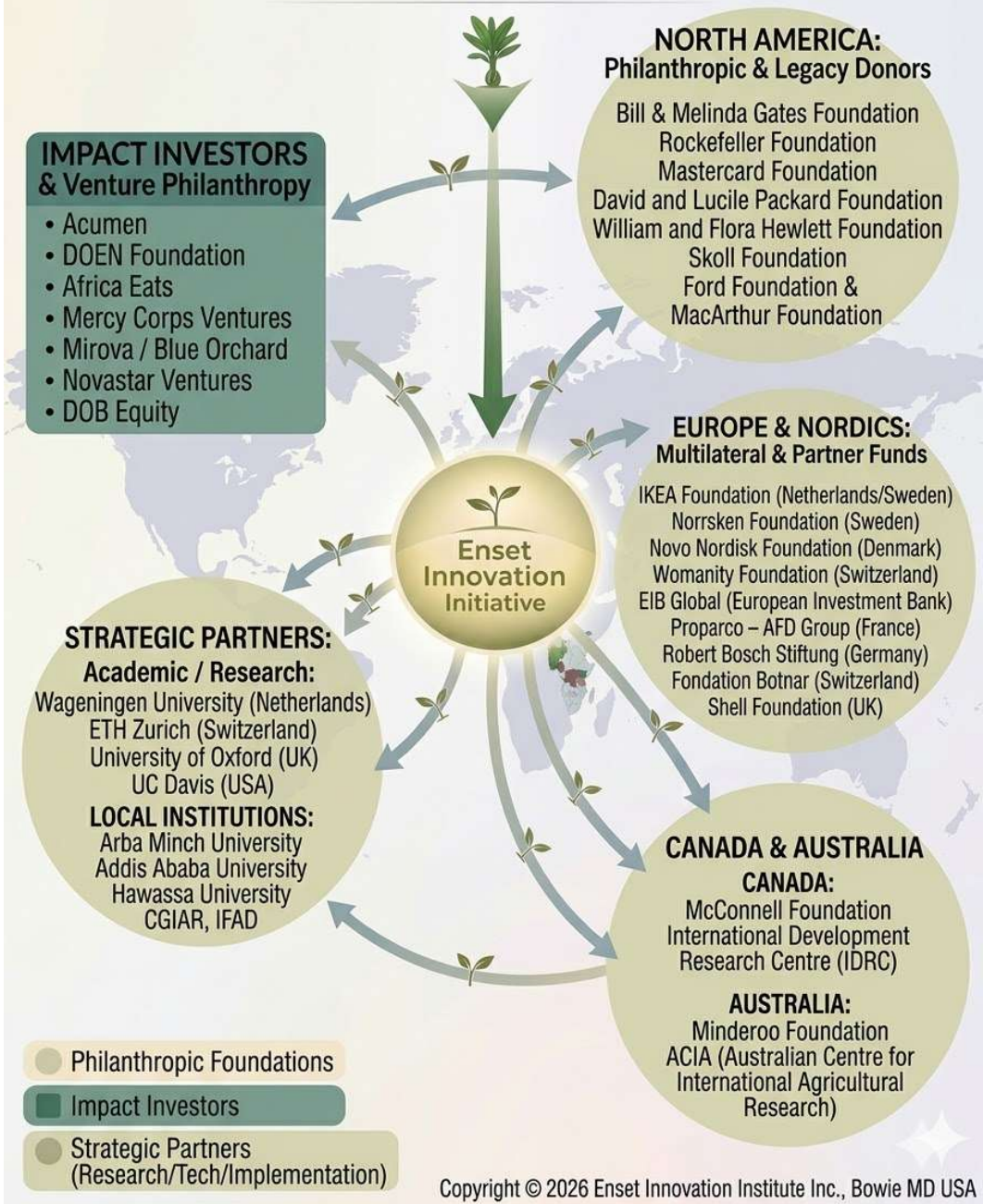


If Enset research institutions, women-led enterprises, climate finance actors, and policy stakeholders are systematically connected through credible evidence, strengthened support for women-led Enset-dependent SMEs, catalytic financing, institutional partnerships, and global advocacy, then Enset can transition from a marginalized subsistence crop into a scalable, inclusive, and climate-smart and women-centered innovation ecosystem.

“Enset is not just a crop — it is a biocultural system linking climate resilience, women’s livelihoods, and cultural identity.”
 — Asratie A. Teferra

Strategic Funder Ecosystem for Enset Innovation Initiative

Enset Innovation Initiative



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Advancing climate-resilient food systems through indigenous crops and women-led enterprise.

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