

Theory of change and impact evaluation

Ottar Mæstad, Chr. Michelsen Institute

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The basic impact evaluation question

What is the **impact** of an **intervention** on desired **outcome**[s]?





In this session

- Use the Theory of Change as a **guide** towards interesting **impact evaluation questions**.
- **Step 1: Formulate** a useful ToC for impact evaluation
- **Step 2: Use** the ToC to guide the research

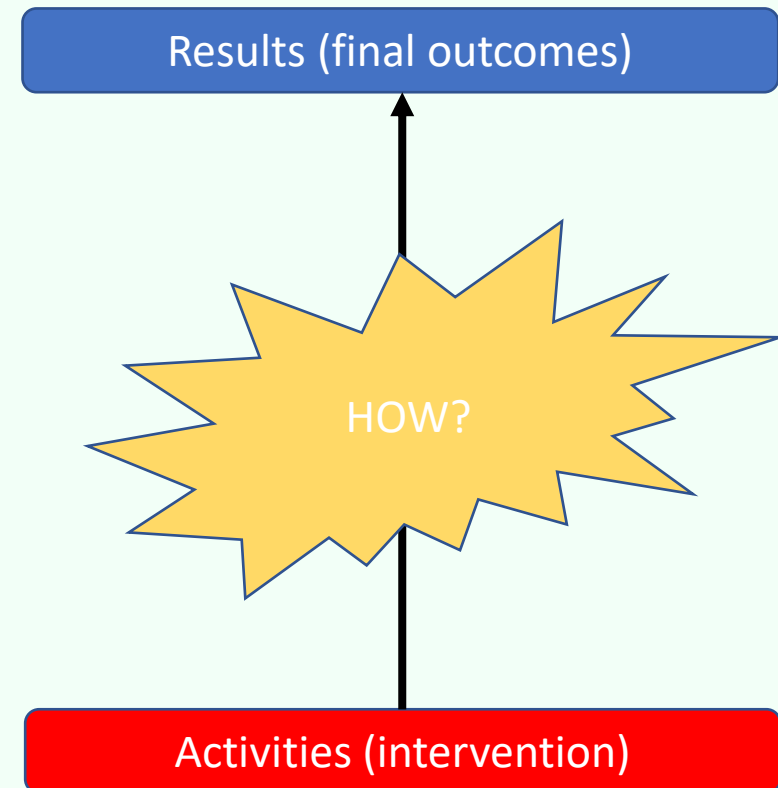


Formulating a useful Theory of Change



A Theory of Change is...

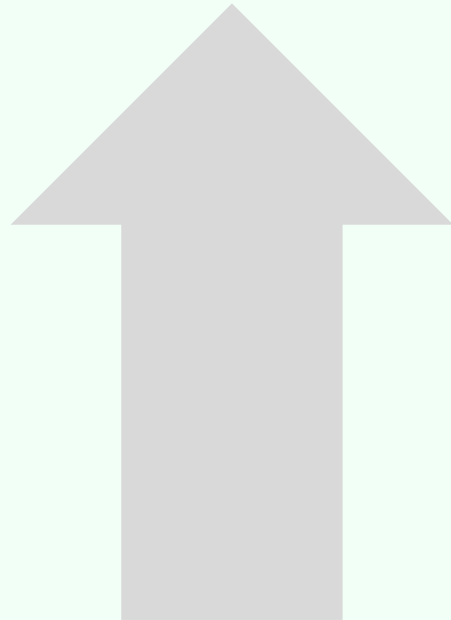
An **explanation** of
how project **activities**
are supposed to deliver
desired results





A useful Theory of Change

Final outcome / impact



→ Describes the full results chain from activities to final outcome.

Activity

Activity

Activity



A useful Theory of Change

Final outcome / impact

Outcome

Outcome

Output

Output

Activity

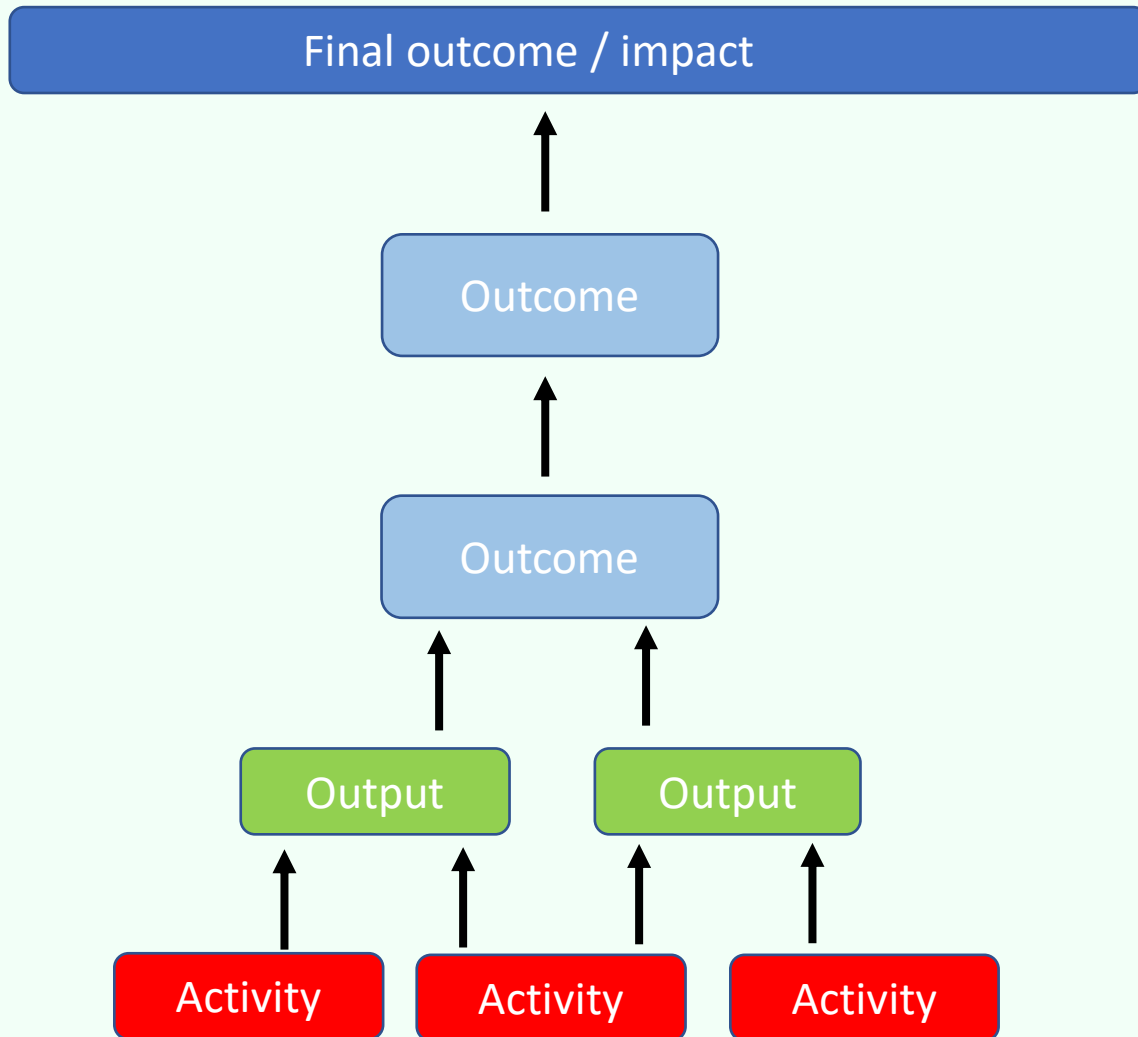
Activity

Activity

- Describes the full results chain from activities to final outcome.
- Breaks the results chain down. Specifies each step.



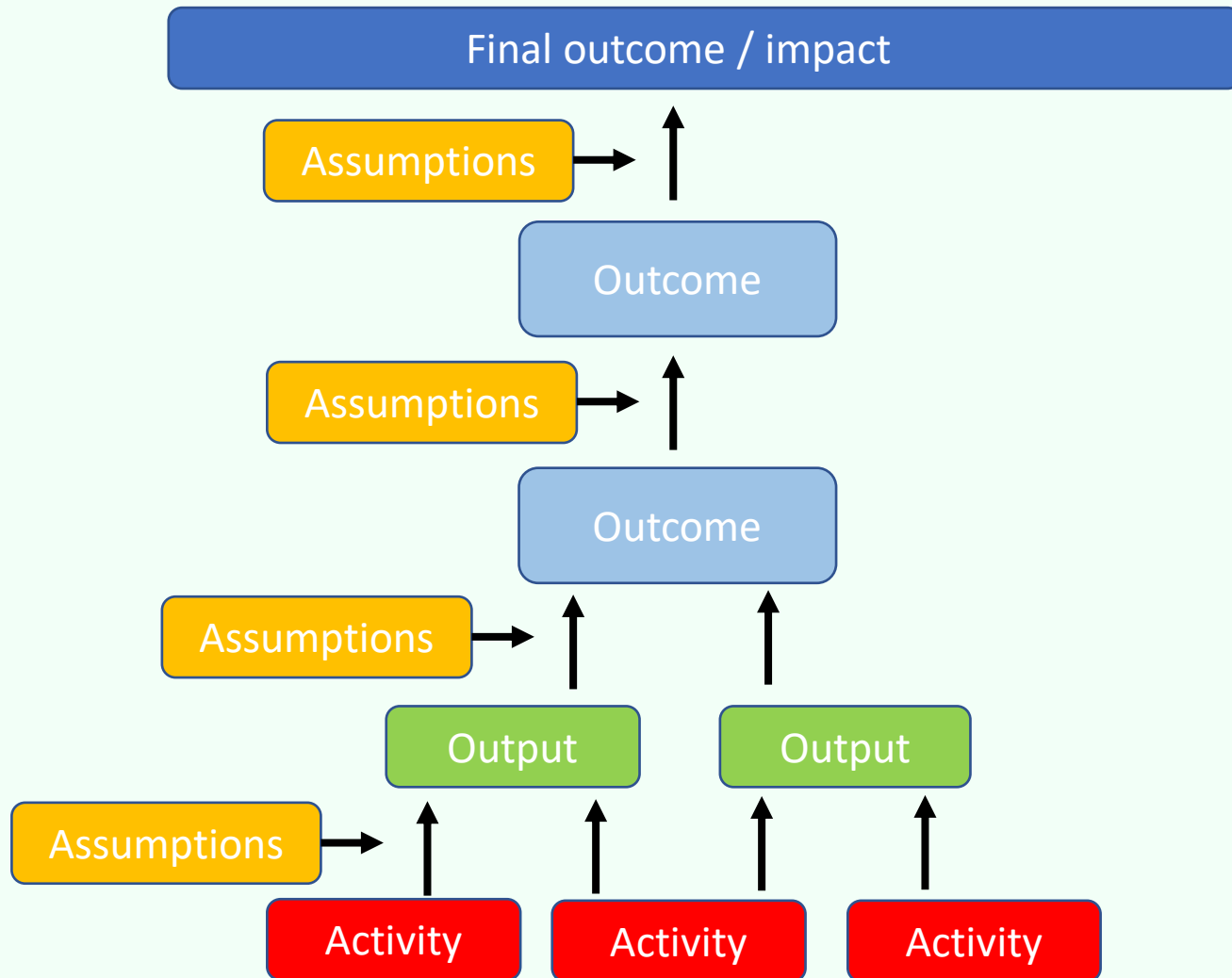
A useful Theory of Change



- Describes the full results chain from activities to final outcome
- Breaks the results chain down. Specifies each step.
- Specifies all causal relations [the arrows].



A useful Theory of Change



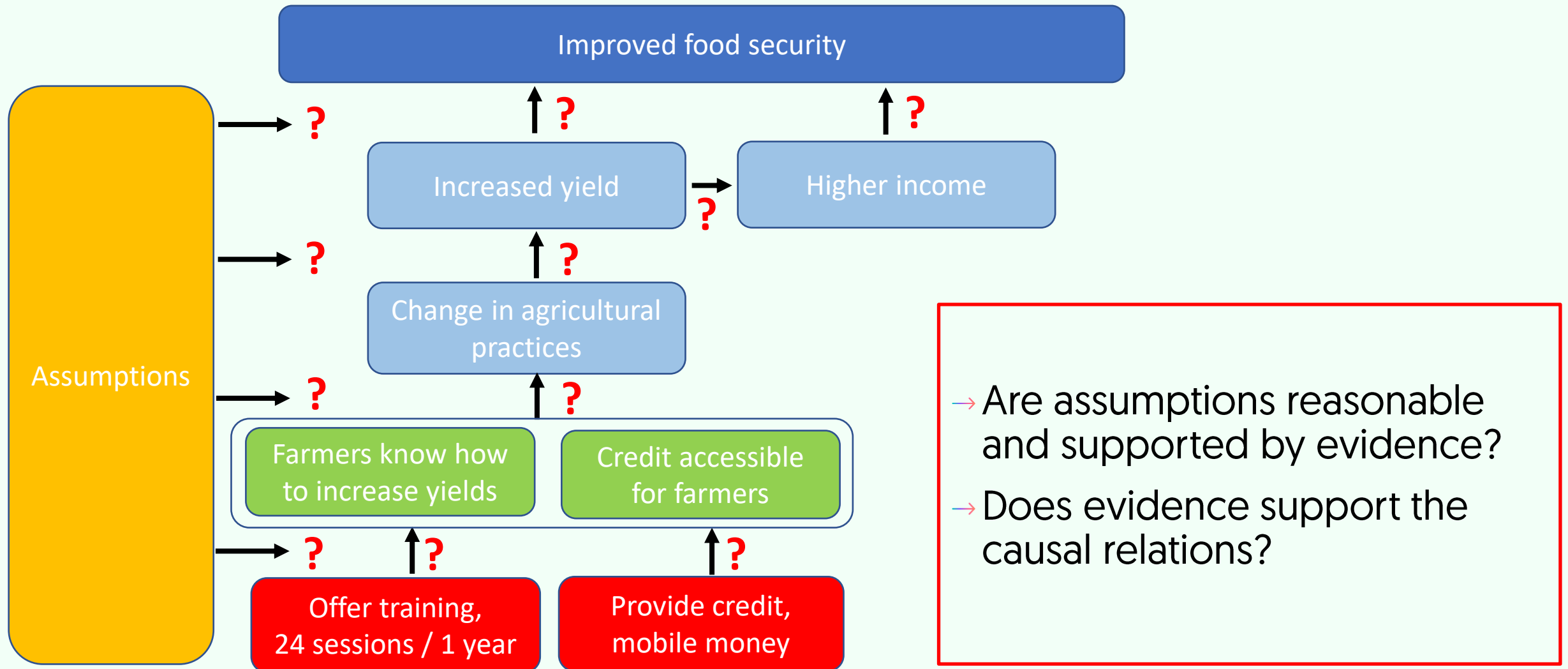
- Describes the full results chain from activities to final outcome.
- Breaks the results chain down. Specifies each step.
- Specifies all causal relations [the arrows].
- Clarifies assumptions for each step [explains all arrows].



Using the Theory of Change to guide the research

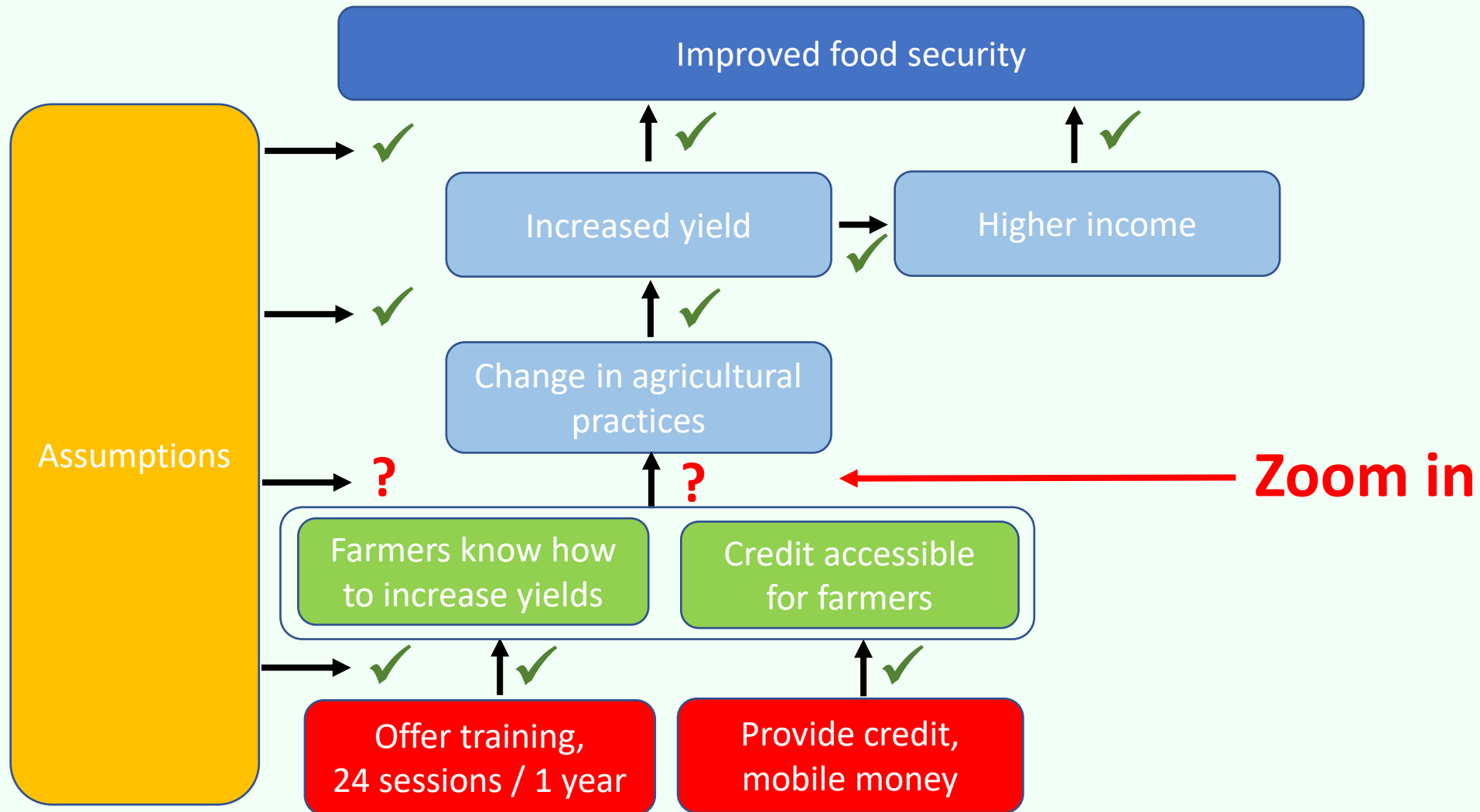


Critically assess causal pathways





Zoom in where evidence is weak





The Theory of Change helps to

- **Zoom in** on impact evaluations questions that bring new insights.
 - **Ask also:** Which new insights **matter most for policy or practice?**
- Do a “**health check**” of the project.
- Guide research on **why** there is an impact (or not).



Development Learning Lab

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Group work

- **Outline the Theory of Change (graphically)**
 - Specify the main outcomes
 - Specify all activities
 - Specify all causal relations (activities – intermediary outcomes – final outcomes)
 - Specify assumptions/conditions for each causal relation
- **Assess your Theory of Change**
 - Are assumptions reasonable?
 - How strong is the evidence for each causal relation?
 - What new evidence will be most useful?