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“Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives”

Kazakhstan



Mid-Term Review Final Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	II
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
1. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	1
1.1. BACKGROUND - INTRODUCTION	1
1.2. CONCLUSIONS.....	3
1.3. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	6
1.4. MTR RATINGS AND ACHIEVEMENT SUMMARY TABLE	9
2. CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT.....	10
3. REVIEW FRAMEWORK.....	13
3.1. OBJECTIVES	13
3.2. SCOPE	13
3.3. METHODOLOGY	14
3.3.1. <i>Overall Approach</i>	14
3.3.2. <i>Review Instruments</i>	15
3.4. LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS.....	16
4. EVALUATION FINDINGS	17
4.1. PROJECT STRATEGY.....	17
4.1.1. <i>Project Design</i>	17
4.1.2. <i>Results Framework / Log-frame</i>	22
4.2. PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS.....	24
4.2.1. <i>Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis</i>	24
4.2.2. <i>Remaining Barriers to Achieve the Project Objective</i>	37
4.3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT	37
4.3.1. <i>Management Arrangements</i>	37
4.3.2. <i>Stakeholder Engagement</i>	39
4.3.3. <i>Work Planning</i>	42
4.3.4. <i>Finance and Co-finance</i>	43
4.3.5. <i>Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems</i>	45
4.3.6. <i>Reporting</i>	49
4.3.7. <i>Communications</i>	50
4.4. SUSTAINABILITY	50
4.4.1. <i>Financial risk to Sustainability</i>	52
4.4.2. <i>Socio-economic risk to Sustainability</i>	52
4.4.3. <i>Institutional framework and governance risk to Sustainability</i>	53
4.4.4. <i>Environmental risk to Sustainability</i>	53
ANNEX 1: PROJECT EXPECTED RESULTS AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES	54
ANNEX 2: MTR TERMS OF REFERENCE	57
ANNEX 3: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EVALUATORS AND AGREEMENT FORM.....	69
ANNEX 4: REVIEW MATRIX	70
ANNEX 5: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	77
ANNEX 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	79
ANNEX 7: REVIEW MISSION AGENDA.....	81
ANNEX 8: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED.....	82
ANNEX 9: MTR RATING SCALES.....	83
ANNEX 10: INDICATORS TO MEASURE THE PERFORMANCE OF DEMONSTRATION PLOTS.....	84
ANNEX 11: AUDIT TRAIL	85
ANNEX 12: EVALUATION REPORT CLEARANCE FORM.....	86

List of Tables

Table 1: Project Information Table	2
Table 2: MRT Ratings and Achievement Summary Table	9
Table 3: Steps Used to Conduct the Evaluation.....	15
Table 4: Project Logic Model.....	23
Table 5: List of Delivered Results.....	26
Table 6: Initial Stakeholders Involvement Plan	39
Table 7: Annual Work Plans versus Actual Expenditures (GEF grant)	42
Table 8: UNDP-GEF Project Funds Disbursement Status (in USD)	43
Table 9: Co-financing Status	45
Table 10: List of Performance Indicators.....	46
Table 11: List of Risks and Mitigation Measures Identified at the Formulation Phase	50

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACEPAS	Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agriculture Sector
APR	Annual Progress Report
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CDR	Combined Delivery Report
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPS	Direct Project Service
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOK	Government of Kazakhstan
ILUP	Integrated Land Use Plan
KazFOAM	Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement
KZT	Kazakhstani Tenge
LD	Land Degradation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPD	National Project Director
NRM	Natural Resource Management
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PB	Project Board
PFD	Partnership Framework for Development
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PM	Project Manager
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPG	Project Preparation Grant
RBM	Results Based Management
RCU	Regional Coordination Unit
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
USD	United States Dollar

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DISCLAIMER

This report is the work of an independent Reviewer and does not necessarily represent the views, or policies, or intentions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and/or of the Government of Kazakhstan.

1. Main Conclusions and Recommendations¹

1.1. Background - Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDP-supported-GEF-Financed-Government of Kazakhstan Project “*Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives*”. This MTR was performed by an Independent Evaluator, Mr. Jean-Joseph Bellamy on behalf of UNDP.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is the largest land-locked country in Central Asia. It is the ninth largest country in the world in terms of land area, spanning 271.73 million hectares. Dryland ecosystems cover most of the country with annual average precipitation of 100-200 millimeters. Land area used in agriculture totals 222.6 million hectares, 10.8 percent of which is covered by field crops, 2.2 percent by hayfields, and 85 percent by pastures.

An estimated 82% of all land types in the country is subject to erosion. The main economic consequences of desertification and land degradation are reduced agricultural yields and crop production; decreased cattle and camel stocks and declining profitability of animal husbandry; decreased export capacity of agriculture; stagnation of the agribusiness sector; and a sharp decrease in tax revenue from the agricultural and food processing sectors. The total annual economic loss due to a mixture of land degradation and poor agriculture management in Kazakhstan is estimated to be around \$700,000,000, with poor households paying the highest price.

The southern arid regions and the northern steppe zones of Kazakhstan, which are the focus of this UNDP-GEF project are no exception. The southern arid regions of Kazakhstan are particularly prone to desertification with about 75% of arable and pasturelands ranked with a desertification index of high to very high. Areas of land subject to wind erosion occupy 25.5 million ha, and those subject to water erosion more than 5 million ha, of which 1 million ha are arable land. The largest areas of land affected by water erosion can be observed in the southern regions of Kazakhstan – 958.7 thousand ha in total – of which eroded arable land makes up 223.6 thousand ha. The processes of erosion on irrigated fields and pastures in southern regions of Kazakhstan have developed rapidly in recent years: every year 19 million tons of soil are washed off with 400 thousand tons of humus. The northern steppe zone lands are also highly susceptible to wind and water erosion due to loss of humus and vegetation cover resulting from the massive conversion of steppe to grain farming and ongoing unsustainable farming and pastoral practices in these already marginal lands. Soil erosion processes show high intensity in the Akmola, southern regions (Kyzylorda, Southern Kazakhstan and Almaty).

In the meantime, it is estimated that up to 15% of agricultural lands are managed in unsustainable ways. The main issues in the crop production sector include monoculture cropping and poor diversification of agricultural crops that result in decreased land fertility, water and wind erosion; disunity of farms and small plots of lands that make it harder to apply crop rotation and use modern resource-saving technologies; obsolete state of irrigation networks resulting in salinization of irrigated arable lands and decrease in crop yields; low percentage of the use of water saving technologies (e.g., drip irrigation, moistening, overhead irrigation); insufficient dissemination of knowledge on new and more efficient technologies and lack of farmer training; limited access to low cost credits for medium and small holders; and imperfect legislation concerning sustainable land management requirements and agrochemical monitoring. On the livestock side, pasturelands in Kazakhstan are affected by uneven use, but including over used pastures, mostly located around settlements that are highly degraded.

From a legislation point of view, sustainable land management (SLM) is not specified in national legislation. Instead, the notion of the “*rational use*” of land resources is widely used. Unlike SLM, social and ecosystem dimensions of land use and management are not applied in the rational use principle. Currently, almost all

¹ Conclusions and Recommendations are in Chapter 1 with a brief background section. It is structured as an Executive Summary but also a stand-alone section presenting the highlights of this final evaluation. When finalizing the document, if there is translation available, it is proposed to translate this chapter and include it in the report.

pieces of legislation that regulates land use and management in Kazakhstan refer to the rational use principle.

The long-term solution for sustainable land management of agricultural systems in the steppe, semi-arid, and arid zones of Kazakhstan involves the development of a highly strategic landscape- and ecosystem-based approach to territorial planning that is backed by a well-designed agro-environmental incentives scheme, and by an adequate policy and legal framework. However, in order to achieve this long-term solution, four main barriers to SLM in agricultural systems of the steppe, semi-arid and arid zones of Kazakhstan were identified:

- Weaknesses in territorial planning system
- Inadequate policy and legal framework to support a transformation to SLM
- Perverse financial incentives in agriculture
- Inadequate capacity and awareness levels for SLM implementation and advocacy

This project has been developed to overcome these existing barriers. Its objective is “*To transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods*”. This objective will be achieved through two outcomes (and 6 outputs):

1. Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives
2. Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives

Table 1: Project Information Table

Project Title:	Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5358	PIF Approval Date:	February 21, 2014
GEF Project ID (PMIS #):	5699	CEO Endorsement Date:	April 7, 2015
Award ID:	00088403	Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):	June 1, 2015
Country(ies):	Kazakhstan	Date project manager hired:	August 15, 2015
Region:	CIS	Inception Workshop date:	September 29-30, 2015
Focal Area:	Land Degradation	Midterm Review date:	August-September 2017
GEF-5 Strategic Programs:	LD-3 Integrated Landscapes	Planned closing date:	June 1, 2020
Trust Fund:	GEF	If revised, proposed closing date:	
Executing Agency:	Analytical Center for Economic Research in Agro-Industrial Complex under the Ministry of Agriculture		
Other Execution Partners:			
Project Financing	at CEO endorsement (USD)	at Midterm Review (USD)	
(1) GEF financing (LDCF):	1,900,000	1,900,000	
(2) UNDP contribution:	700,000	700,000	
(3) Government:	4,653,220	4,653,220	
(4) Other Partners:	4,146,239	4,146,239	
(5) Total cofinancing [2+3+4]:	9,499,459	9,499,459	
Project Total Cost [1+5]:	11,399,459	11,399,459	

This mid-term review report documents the achievements of the project and includes four chapters. Chapter 1 presents the main conclusions and recommendations; chapter 2 presents an overview of the project; chapter 3 briefly describes the objective, scope, methodology, evaluation users and limitations of the evaluation; chapter 4 presents the findings of the evaluation and relevant annexes are found at the back end of the report.

1.2. Conclusions

Project Strategy

a) The project is relevant to Kazakhstan.

The SLM project is a direct response to national priorities and needs to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan. It is well aligned with relevant national strategies and programmes. The agricultural sector is an important economic sector for the government of Kazakhstan but also a sector that is facing land degradation issues that are affecting productivity. The government has been well engaged in the design and implementation of this project. This project is one response supported by the government to sustainably expand the agricultural sector. It is also an important project to demonstrate/test innovative agro-environmental incentive payments, which, once tested, should be scaled-up nation-wide. This is the first time in Kazakhstan and in the CIS region that agro-environmental incentive payments are being implemented as an incentive mechanism to promote investments in sustainable land management practices.

b) The project is part of a programme implemented by UNDP to support development priorities of Kazakhstan.

Within the context of the Partnership Framework for Development 2016-2020, the SLM project is part of a long-term programme implemented by UNDP to support Kazakhstan in adapting to climate change, changing the existing patterns of land use and improving land conditions by strengthening agricultural financial mechanisms and the current land-use planning system. By addressing the basic financial and administrative drivers of land use, the programme seeks to address land degradation problems in the long term. This is not an isolated project but it is part of an overall multi-year strategy of UNDP to support the government of Kazakhstan to improve the sustainable land management of agricultural systems in the steppe, semi-arid, and arid zones of Kazakhstan. The project was developed upon achievements from previous projects implemented by UNDP, including the lessons learned and best practices.

c) The project could be more ambitious in its expected outcomes.

The Project Results Framework is coherent and provide a good results-chain logic: outputs, outcomes and objectives. The project aims to reach its objective through the demonstration of investments in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives; and by enabling a policy and legislation environment required for the implementation of these measures nation-wide. Nevertheless, a strong focus of this project is on the implementation of demonstration sites using innovative techniques and schemes for increasing the effectiveness of land use planning and management in the steppe, arid and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan, which ultimately should enhance the conservation-friendliness and sustainability of productive agricultural landscapes. Despite the good logic model of this project, it is somewhat too focused on the demonstration sites and the success of the project, measured by a set of indicators and targets, depends mostly on succeeding in implementing these demonstrations. So far, the project has been excellent in creating dialogues and exchanging information between researchers from the agricultural research institutes located in the demonstrations sites, the extension agents from the extension services and the farmers located in the demonstration sites.

However, the project design is somewhat limited in providing the necessary resources to mainstream and replicate the results from the demonstration sites to other parts of Kazakhstan. Outcome 2 could have been more ambitious in replicating and scaling-up the lessons learned and best practices identified under outcome 1 focusing for instance on developing/strengthening the SLM capacity of agriculture extension services throughout Kazakhstan and institutionalizing the ILUP process nation-wide. These services are key to scale-up the project results.

Progress Towards Results

d) The progress made by the project to date is highly satisfactory.

The project is progressing well towards its targets and it still has three more years of implementation to go. The project has already an impressive record to support the government in upgrading its policy and

legislation frameworks. To date, the project has provided technical and professional expertise on 6 policies, rules and regulations, which are now approved by the government. It has also made good progress with 8 demonstration sites, demonstrating and strengthening the link between agricultural research institutes (new technologies, new practices), their extension services (knowledge dissemination) and farmers (application of new knowledge in their production systems). These demonstration sites cover a wide variety of techniques and investments adapted to each site located in 6 different regions of Kazakhstan. It is noted that the focus is much on agro-environmental techniques and not a lot on the economics and marketing of these best practices. Nevertheless, this SLM project is on track to be a successful project by June 2020.

e) Four areas need some attention during the remaining period of implementation.

It includes:

- Implementing the 9th demonstration plot: The plan detailed in the project document includes 9 demonstration sites. Eight of them are being implemented and making good progress. An attempt was made to select the 9th site but no agreement was found. When considering the time remaining for implementing this last site – a maximum of 2 farming seasons – and the good results already achieved by the other 8 demonstration sites, the Project Board needs to review if the available resources would be better used to implement the 9th demonstration site or to use these resources to scale-up project achievements in the respective Oblasts and nation-wide.
- Institutionalizing the piloted ILUPs: The project was to devise planning frameworks focusing on the economic potentials of safeguarding and maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices. It was tasked to pilot integrated land use planning (ILUP) in the demonstration areas, integrating green technologies to promote greener farming operations, including the use of organic fertilizers. This innovative approach needs to be assessed, documented and ultimately institutionalized – including possibly manuals, templates, etc. - within the relevant government entities.
- The case of organic farming: Organic farming is becoming one national priority in the agriculture/food production systems in Kazakhstan; it is a priority in the “Kazakhstan 2050” strategy. The project supported the development of the Law on organic farming, the state certification program on export of organic honey to China, and the marking and branding rules for organic products. There is a need to develop standards, possibly a certification process, and the government is willing to move on this topic, aligned with international standards, in collaboration with CIS countries and China.
- Agro-Environmental Incentives – Agricultural Subsidies: The project is to demonstrate innovative agro-environmental incentives/subsidies; that are financing environmentally friendly, yet economically profitable, agricultural practices, including subsidies more accessible by small and medium size farms. As the project will reach its last year of implementation, a review will be needed to assess the effectiveness of these new measures and identify a range of policy options for rayon and oblast level authorities – and national government level - to encourage the desired conservation-friendly farming practices for SLM.

Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

f) The management arrangements are conducive for a good implementation of the project.

The project is implemented by a strong technical team of professionals bringing together a broad range of skills and knowledge in the agriculture, water, pasture and capacity building areas. The project also benefits from a strong partnership between the government – the Ministry of Agriculture as the implementing partner of the project and also other government stakeholders – and UNDP, which was recognized as a partner of choice by the government based on its timely and significant contributions to the fast-paced development agenda of the government. This partnership is also reinforced by the fact that several Officers have UNDP experience and work in government entities and vice versa facilitating the communications between these partners. The result of these arrangements is a project implemented in close collaboration between entities such as research institutes, agriculture extension services and other agencies.

g) The project uses “Open Farmers’ Days”, an innovative approach to keep Stakeholders engaged.

One innovative activity used by the project to keep stakeholders engaged is the organization of “*Open Farmers’ Days*”. Using the demonstration sites, which provide local information-exchange platforms to disseminate knowledge, “*Open Farmers’ Days*” have created opportunities for participants to meet, observe, discuss and disseminate knowledge on SLM practices. It is an excellent initiative bringing national State Representatives, Researchers, Extension Agents, Farmers and Processors together to exchange information and disseminate results/best practices identified through the demonstration sites.

h) The project is on budget and the GEF grant should be expended by the end of the project.

As of August 2017, the project has used about 48% (USD 903,351) of the total GEF grant (USD 1,900,000) versus an elapsed time of 45% (27 months out of 60). To date, a large portion (81%) was spent on outcome 1, 7% on outcome 2 and the rest 12% was spent on project management. Expenditures under outcome 1 are slightly high but are justified by disbursements made to initiate demonstration sites. Under outcome 2, activities took place but it is also expected that more activities will take place during the remaining period of implementation. Finally, project management expenditures to date are somewhat high at 12% versus the approved budget of 9%. It is expected that this number will come down over time with a percentage closer to 9% at the project end. After reviewing the expenditures to date, the GEF grant should be expended by the end of the project in June 2020.

i) The M&E plan to measure the performance of the project is moderately satisfactory.

The M&E function of the project is moderately satisfactory with too much emphasis on quantitative indicators. The set of indicators is not fully relevant for measuring progress toward achieving the expected outcomes and particularly the objective of the project. They do not measure enough how effective the project is in developing the capacity of stakeholders in identifying and implementing agro-environmental incentives through an integrated land use planning approach. The M&E framework is too focused on surface areas to be covered by the project (number of ha) and on the number of participants involved in information/training events and not enough on the development of new knowledge and on increasing the skills and knowledge of stakeholders/beneficiaries, who should be able to replicate and scale-up project achievements. Additionally, some target values need to be revised to reflect feasible achievements over the lifetime of the project.

j) Communication activities have been limited to date but as demonstration sites started to produce knowledge, communications should increase to disseminate this knowledge.

To date, the project produced a 1-page factsheet at the beginning of its implementation to present the project. Information/knowledge have also been disseminated mostly through awareness and training events and the project has a good visibility at the regional and local levels where the demonstration sites are located. Finally, the project was highlighted as a success story in a recent UNDP, GEF and Government of Namibia publication titled “*Listening to our Land: Stories of Resilience*”, which was launched at the UNCCD 13th Conference of Parties in Ordos, China. The chapter on Kazakhstan “*Kazakhstan – Pushing back the shifting sands*” highlights the benefits of promoting SLM through agriculture extension centers. However, as the demonstration sites started to produce knowledge on SLM practices, more communication activities are expected in the next three years to disseminate this knowledge beyond the current stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project, to reach relevant stakeholders nation-wide and in the CIS region.

Sustainability

k) Project achievements should be sustained over the long-term.

The basic strategy stated at the outset of the project to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements is to “*dovetail the proposed agro-environmental scheme into the existing process to ensure that it is mainstreamed*”. The idea was to use the same procedures and mechanisms that were in place for other subsidies. This approach has facilitated the implementation of demonstration sites and should also contribute to the sustainability of project achievements. The sustainability of project achievements is also ensured through the institutionalization of project achievements. It already happened with the support to the development of 6 policies, rules and regulations. These documents were approved by the government and are

now part of the government policy and legislative instruments to implement sustainable land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones in Kazakhstan. However, at this point, the sustainability of a few initiatives is less certain such as the ILUP process, which needs to be assessed, documented and institutionalized with the relevant government entities. It is also the case for the training modules, the geo-portal and the e-commerce website. An exit strategy emphasizing sustainability and replicability of project achievements should address these issues.

1.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this mid-term review, the following recommendations are suggested.

Recommendation 1: It is recommended to review the decision to implement the 9th demonstration site.

Issue to Address

The plan detailed in the project document includes 9 demonstration sites. Eight of them are being implemented and making good progress “producing” useful SLM best practices for expanding sustainable agriculture in Kazakhstan. An attempt was made to select the 9th plot but no agreement was found. When considering the time remaining for implementing this last plot – a maximum of 2 farming seasons – and the good results already achieved by the other 8 demonstration sites, it is recommended to review the need to implement the 9th site in the context of the overall project resources allocation and decide if the allocation of resources would provide a greater value invested in the implementation of an additional demonstration site than be invested in extra activities to replicate, document and scale-up project achievements in the respective Oblasts and nation-wide.

Recommendation 2: It is recommended to assess, document and ultimately institutionalize the innovative ILUP approach.

Issue to Address

The ongoing trend in Kazakhstan of gradual transfer of planning and development of local policies and plans from the center to oblast and district authorities resulted with a land use planning process that fails to take a comprehensive approach to planning and to involve land-users and stakeholders during the planning and the implementation of land-use plans. To improve these plans, the project was to devise planning frameworks focusing on the economic potentials of safeguarding and maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices. It was tasked to pilot integrated land use planning (ILUP) in the demonstration areas, integrating green technologies to promote greener farming operations, including the use of organic fertilizers. The project document listed eight steps to pilot ILUPs. So far, this participative approach has been used in all demonstration sites. To measure the performance of this innovative approach, it is recommended to assess, document and institutionalize this approach within the relevant government entities; including possibly the production of manuals, guidelines, templates, training activities, etc.

Recommendation 3: It is recommended to further support the development of organic farming in Kazakhstan.

Issue to Address

Organic farming is becoming a national priority in the agriculture/food production systems in Kazakhstan; it is a priority in the “Kazakhstan 2050” strategy. As it is part of national priorities, there is a need to develop standards, possibly a certification process, in collaboration with CIS countries and China and aligned with international standards. Additionally, as the supply of organic products is increasing, there is also the need to explore international markets, particularly those in China and Europe. It is recommended that the project continues its support to this initiative within the context of its remaining resources; including analyses of the viability of the organic farming business model, assessment of export markets, analyses of international certification models and development of organic farming standards.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended to organize a project retreat with the Project Team and key Stakeholders to review project progress to date and develop a roadmap for the remaining three years of implementation.

Issue to Address

The project has made excellent progress so far and it still has three more years of implementation. So far, it focused much on implementing 8 demonstration sites using agro-environmental techniques and integrated land use planning as innovative ways to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods. It is recommended to organize a project retreat with the Project Team and key Stakeholders to review the progress made to date and develop a roadmap for the remaining years of implementation. Based on the good progress made to date, the project should explore:

- The economics and marketing aspect – including exports - of these best SLM practices, particularly from a farmer's point of view (“*what in it for me!*”). It is a topic of great interest for farmers and it could be a major incentive for the appropriation of these best practices by farmers;
- How to strengthen the capacity of Agriculture Extension Services as key point to replicate/scale-up project achievements to other areas/regions in KZ, including an institutionalized training programme;
- Measures to reinforce the institutionalization of project achievements and the replicability and scaling-up of these achievements nation-wide; and
- How to advice MOA on agro-environmental incentives and subsidy schemes, using the lessons learned from the demonstrations.

Note that this recommendation could also be the base to address other recommendations made in this report such as the decision to implement the 9th demonstration site, the institutionalization of the ILUP process, further support to organic farming, etc.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended to review the set of indicators to measure the performance of the project.

Issue to Address

The M&E function is mostly based on quantitative indicators, which do not fully measure progress toward achieving the expected outcomes and particularly the objective of the project. They do not measure well how effective the project is in developing the capacity of stakeholders in identifying and implementing agro-environmental incentives through an integrated land use planning approach. The M&E framework is too focused on surface areas to be covered by the project (number of ha) and on the number of participants involved in information/training events and not enough on the development of new knowledge and on increasing the skills and knowledge of stakeholders/beneficiaries, who should be able to replicate and scale-up project achievements. Additionally, some target values need to be revised to reflect feasible achievements over the lifetime of the project. It is recommended to add a qualitative (capacity-based) indicator to measure the development of capacities and revised three targets as follows:

- Add a capacity-based indicator to measure the institutionalization of the ILUP process: Measuring this process would contribute to better measure the achievement of the project's objective. The project is piloting a new approach for land use planning that is integrating SLM principles. It is important that the project measures the institutionalization of this innovative planning process.
- Review the target for the first indicator currently set at 750,000ha: This figure corresponds to the combined area of the five rural okrugs selected as pilots for integrated land use planning. It was based on the assumptions that ILUPs would be developed for the entire area of the 5 okrugs. However, the project has developed ILUPs at the local level on areas covered by the demonstration sites; hence the total area covered by the ILUPs developed with the support of the project will not reach 750,000ha. As it stands today, the demonstration sites including the counterpart areas committed by the beneficiaries cover a total area of 234,200ha. The target needs to be reviewed and aligned with the project plan.
- Review the target of the second indicator currently set at 8 to 10% in % of soil humus content in areas where ILUPs are in place: Experts agree that the targeted humus content for soil in these areas is not attainable and needs to be revised. Additionally, the targeted percentage content of humus in soil should vary according to soil conditions in each region. Based on consultations with agronomists, the project is proposing the following targets, which are recommended by the MTR:
 - Akmola – currently 3.5-3.9% target 3.8-4.1%

- North Kazakhstan - currently 3.3-3.7% target 3.7-3.9%
- Almaty – currently 2.2-2.3 % target 2.7-2.9%
- Kyzylorda – currently 2.1-2.3% target 2.7-3.5%
- Kostanay – currently 2.8-3.1% target 3.8-4.1%
- East Kazakhstan Regions – currently 1.8-2.2% target 2.7-3.2%
- *Review the target of the third indicator currently set at 20% weight gain of livestock:* Based on initial baseline work conducted at the beginning of the project, the results showed a large difference with the baseline figure identified during the design phase (136kg vs. 320kg). Currently (June 2017), the result is 329kg that is +142% weight gain when compared with the project baseline (136kg) and +3% when compared to the baseline from the design phase (320kg). The target needs to be reviewed with input from livestock experts and identify a new target based on the project baseline figure.

Recommendation 6: It is recommended to develop a concept paper to scale-up the implementation of SLM practices through ILUPs and agro-environmental incentives.

Issue to Address

Implementing ILUPs and agro-environmental incentives are part of national priorities to sustainably develop the agricultural sector. The progress made by this project is well accepted by the relevant government entities. Through the demonstration sites, the project provides useful knowledge on how these initiatives can help in transforming land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods. Using the lessons learned and the best practices identified by the project, it is recommended to develop a concept paper for a project to scale-up these results nation-wide focusing particularly on developing the capacity of Agriculture Extension Services throughout Kazakhstan as key entities to link research with farmers and promote/bring SLM knowledge to farmers.

Recommendation 7: It is recommended to increase communication activities to disseminate the accumulated knowledge, particularly lessons learned and best practices for SLM, reaching out to stakeholders nation-wide and in the CIS region.

Issue to Address

To date, information/knowledge have been disseminated mostly through awareness and training events. However, as the demonstration sites started to produce a large amount of knowledge on SLM practices, more communication activities are needed in the next three years to disseminate this knowledge beyond the current stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project, to reach relevant stakeholders nation-wide and in the CIS regions. Different ways of communicating should be used such as partners' websites, videos, newsletters/bulletins, factsheets, social media, articles and also participate to/organize seminars, workshops and conferences, including participation to events in the CIS region.

Recommendation 8: It is recommended to produce a short document and a video to document the ILUP process and agro-environmental incentives.

Issue to Address

In addition to the recommendation to increase communication activities above, it is particularly recommended to produce a short document and video detailing the lessons learned and best practices identified through the demonstration sites. This material should be developed in a layman way to be used by the general public, libraries, schools, universities, etc. to promote SLM practices. Considering the expected success of these local initiatives, it is important to document them well.

The publication should document the technological and methodological approaches that have been applied by the project and the impact of these measures on steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan as well as capturing the knowledge built, documenting best practices and extracting key lessons learned. The short video should document these lessons learned and best practices on SLM practices and be disseminated to the public at large and schools through national and international media, particularly in CIS countries and with English sub-titles for international viewing. Both communication products would provide a good legacy of the project.

Recommendation 9: It is recommended to prepare an exit strategy for the project to ensure an orderly disengagement of project support and maximize the sustainability of project achievements.

Issue to Address

The basic strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of demonstrated agro-environmental incentives has been to use the same procedures and mechanisms that were in place for other subsidies. Sustainability of project achievements is also ensured through the institutionalization of these achievements. It already happened with development of 6 policies, rules and regulations, which are now approved and are part of the government policy and legislative instruments to implement sustainable land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones in Kazakhstan. However, at this point, the sustainability of a few initiatives is less certain such as the ILUP process, which needs to be assessed, documented and institutionalized with the relevant government entities. It is also the case for the training modules, the geo-portal and the e-commerce website. An exit strategy should be developed at the beginning of the last year of implementation, emphasizing sustainability, replicability and scaling-up project achievements to ensure a proper disengagement of project support and maximize the long-term sustainability of project achievements.

1.4. MTR Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Below is the rating table as requested in the TORs. It includes the required performance criteria rated as per the rating scales presented in Annex 9 of this report. Supportive information is also provided throughout this report in the respective sections.

Table 2: MRT Ratings and Achievement Summary Table

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results		
Objective Achievement:	S	The objective is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
Outcome 1 Achievement:	HS	The outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
Outcome 2 Achievement:	HS	The outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as “good practice”.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	S	Implementation of most of the seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
Sustainability	L	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project’s closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future

2. CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT²

1. The Republic of Kazakhstan is the largest land-locked country in Central Asia. It is the ninth largest country in the world in terms of land area, spanning 271.73 million hectares. It extends almost 2,000 km from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of China in the east and nearly 1,300 km from central Siberia in the north to eastern Uzbekistan in the south. Dryland ecosystems (i.e., desert, desertified and dryland steppe ecosystems) cover most of the country (99 percent of its territory) with annual average precipitation of 100-200 millimeters. Land area used in agriculture totals 222.6 million hectares, 10.8 percent of which is covered by field crops, 2.2 percent by hayfields, and 85 percent by pastures.

2. An estimated 82% of all land types in the country, of which about 80% is agricultural land, is subject to erosion. Wind and water erosion affect over 67% of rain-fed areas, resulting in loss of humus content in topsoil (20% in the past 30 years). The main economic consequences of desertification and land degradation are reduced agricultural yields and crop production; decreased cattle and camel stocks and declining profitability of animal husbandry; decreased export capacity of agriculture; stagnation of the agribusiness sector; and a sharp decrease in tax revenue from the agricultural and food processing sectors. The total annual economic loss due to a mixture of land degradation and poor agricultural management in Kazakhstan is estimated to be around \$700,000,000, with poor households paying the highest price.

3. The southern arid regions and the northern steppe zones of Kazakhstan, which are the focus of this UNDP-GEF project are no exception. The southern arid regions of Kazakhstan are particularly prone to desertification with about 75% of arable and pasturelands ranked with a desertification index of high to very high. Areas of land subject to wind erosion occupy 25.5 million ha, and those subject to water erosion more than 5 million ha, of which 1 million ha are arable land. The largest areas of land affected by water erosion can be observed in the southern regions of Kazakhstan – 958.7 thousand ha in total – of which eroded arable land makes up 223.6 thousand ha. The processes of erosion on irrigated fields and pastures in southern regions of Kazakhstan have developed rapidly in recent years: every year 19 million tons of soil are washed off with 400 thousand tons of humus. This means that about 2.5–2.6 million tons of manure would be needed annually to cover these losses. The northern steppe zone lands are also highly susceptible to wind and water erosion due to loss of humus and vegetation cover resulting from the massive conversion of steppe to grain farming and ongoing unsustainable farming and pastoral practices in these already marginal lands. Soil erosion processes show high intensity in the Akmola, southern regions (Kyzylorda, Southern Kazakhstan and Almaty).

4. It is estimated that up to 15% of agricultural lands are managed in unsustainable ways. Some of the main issues in the crop production sector include monoculture cropping and poor diversification of agricultural crops that result in decreased land fertility, water and wind erosion; disunity of farms and small plots of lands that make it harder to apply crop rotation and use modern resource-saving technologies; obsolete state of irrigation networks resulting in salinization of irrigated arable lands and decrease in crop yields; low percentage of the use of water saving technologies (e.g., drip irrigation, moistening, overhead irrigation); insufficient dissemination of knowledge on new and more efficient technologies and lack of farmer training; limited access to low cost credits for medium and small holders; and imperfect legislation concerning sustainable land management requirements and agrochemical monitoring. On the livestock side, pasturelands in Kazakhstan are affected by uneven use, but including over used pastures, mostly located around settlements that are highly degraded.

5. From a legislation side, sustainable land management (SLM) is not specified in national legislation. Instead, the notion of the rational use of land resources is widely used. Unlike SLM, social and ecosystem dimensions of land use and management are not applied in the rational use principle. Currently, almost all legislation that regulates land use and management in Kazakhstan refers to the rational use principle.

6. Assessments conducted before this project, indicate that land degradation on agricultural lands remains a persistent problem in Kazakhstan. If the crop and livestock management processes continue as is, it will compromise all efforts at securing the continued flow of ecosystem goods and services from the

² Information in this section has been summarized from the project document.

critical productive landscapes of the steppe, arid and semi-arid zones covering Akmola, Kostanai, North and East Kazakhstan Oblasts (northern steppe zone: forest steppe, meadow steppe and dry steppe ecosystems), and Almaty and Kzyl Orda Oblasts (southern arid zone: desert and steppe semi-desert ecosystems).

7. The long-term solution for sustainable land management of agricultural systems in the steppe, semi-arid, and arid zones of Kazakhstan involves the development of a highly strategic landscape- and ecosystem-based approach to territorial planning that is backed by a well-designed agro-environmental incentives scheme, and by an adequate policy and legal framework. However, in order to achieve this long-term solution, four main barriers to SLM in agricultural systems of the steppe, semi-arid and arid zones of Kazakhstan were identified:

- *Weaknesses in territorial planning system:* Despite past efforts to improve the enabling environment (policy and legislation) for SLM in Kazakhstan, systemic barriers relating to practices and procedures continue to exist at the local, regional and national levels that hamper the development of integrated land use planning and management.
- *Inadequate policy and legal framework to support a transformation to SLM:* Unless the requirement to account for natural resource values and functions in territorial planning and financial flows is fixed in policies and regulations, and land users are made to comply, there is unlikely to be a change from the baseline situation to integrated land use. In order to make a shift to environmentally-friendly land use and management, a number of changes in the current land use policy and legal framework are needed.
- *Perverse financial incentives in agriculture:* According to the MOA, subsidies to the agricultural sector over the period 2009-2013 constituted 30% of total government funding for agricultural development. These subsidies were supposed to stimulate better cultivation practices and promote crop diversification and rotation. With subsidies in animal husbandry, it was supposed to contribute to improve the ecological status of lands, and largely support the expansion of livestock numbers. However, this subsidy policy has several shortcomings such as the complex process involving substantial delays in the transfer of payments; the poor responsiveness of farmers to low subsidy rates for crop production; the lack of direct mechanisms for encouraging crop rotation systems; and the government payments decoupled from the production with limited effect on increasing “yield per ha” and/or expansion of livestock numbers.
- *Inadequate capacity and awareness levels for SLM implementation and advocacy:* (i) Kazakhstan has declared a transformation to a “green economy”, but in the area of agro-environmental incentives for SLM the country has neither the know-how nor professionals with relevant SLM and public finance knowledge and skills for the design and application of a scheme of agro-environmental incentives; (ii) Crop and livestock subsidy programs have faulty designs with heavy administration costs and inadequate enforcement; (iii) The poor design and enforcement of land use planning also stem from inadequate institutional and individual capacities at oblast and rayon levels that still need to catch up with the pace of decentralization in the country; (iv) Lack of knowledge in marketing organic agriculture represents a challenge primarily for the emerging Organic Agriculture Movement in Kazakhstan; (v) In Kazakhstan, there is a system of knowledge sharing and advance training (enhancement of skills and capabilities) in land management with several actors involved. Agricultural extension services, however, are characterized by a segregation of the involved organizations’ activities. Furthermore, there is a lack of standards and a common platform for sharing information and experience; (vi) undergraduate and graduate level institutions are producing limited number of professionals who can be employed in the agricultural sector. The unpopularity of agricultural professions among prospective students (particularly college-level qualifications) largely stems from the agricultural sector being considered as a low-prestige employer.

8. This project has been developed to overcome these existing barriers. Its objective is “***to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods***”. It will be achieved through the delivery of two expected outcomes (see more detailed about the project strategy in Annex I):

- ***Outcome 1:*** Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives

- **Outcome 2:** Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives

9. This is a project supported by UNDP, GEF, and the Government of Kazakhstan. It is funded by a grant from the GEF of USD 1,900,000, a cash contribution from UNDP of USD 700,000 and an in-kind contribution of USD 8,799,459 from various ministries and agencies from the Government of Kazakhstan. The project started in July 2015 and its duration is 5 years to June 2020. It is implemented under the “*National Implementation Modality (NIM)*”. The implementing partner is the Analytical Center for Economic Research in Agro-Industrial Complex of the Ministry of Agriculture. The project has been implementing pilots in selected Oblasts: Akmola, Kostanay, North and East Kazakhstan Oblasts (i.e., the northern steppe zone: forest steppe, meadow steppe and dry steppe ecosystems), and Almaty and Kyzylorda Oblasts (i.e., the southern arid zone: desert and steppe semi-desert ecosystems) of the country.

3. REVIEW FRAMEWORK

10. This mid-term review - a requirement of UNDP and GEF procedures - has been initiated by UNDP Kazakhstan the Commissioning Unit and the GEF Implementing Agency for this project. This review provides an in-depth assessment of project achievements and progress towards its objectives and outcomes.

3.1. Objectives

11. The objective of the MTR was to assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document and Project Inception Report, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying possible changes to be made in order to keep/set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTR also reviewed the project's strategy and its risks to sustainability.

3.2. Scope

12. As indicated in the TORs for this MTR (*see Annex 2*), the scope of this review covered four categories of project progress, in accordance with the "*Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*". A summary of the scope of this MTR is presented below:

A. Project Strategy:

Project Design

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions;
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results;
- Review how the project addresses country priorities.
- Review country ownership;
- Review decision-making processes;
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design;

Results Framework/Log-frame:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's log-frame indicators and targets;
- Review the project's objectives and outcomes or components and how feasible they can be reached within the project's time frame;
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis;
- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively.

B. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the log-frame indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix presented in the TORs and following the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*;
- Compare and analyse the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the MTR;
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project;
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

C. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document;
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement;

- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation;
- Review how Results-Based Management is being implemented;
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ log-frame as a management tool.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, including cost-effectiveness;
- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used;
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget.
- Review all the project pilots and evaluate the proposals made under each pilot projects.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Review project partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders;
- Review stakeholder participation and country-driven project implementation processes;
- Review public awareness.

Reporting:

- Assess the concepts and strategies of the pilot plots being implemented in six targeted regions;
- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.
- Assess the project progress reporting function and how well it fulfils GEF reporting requirements;
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders;
- Review external project communication;

D. Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date;
- Assess risks to sustainability in term of financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks.

3.3. Methodology

13. The methodology that was used to conduct this mid-term review complies with international criteria and professional norms and standards; including the norms and standards adopted by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG).

3.3.1. Overall Approach

14. The review was conducted in accordance with the guidance, rules and procedures established by UNDP and GEF as reflected in the UNDP “*Guidance for Conducting Mid-Term Reviews of UNDP-*

supported, *GEF-Financed Projects*³”, and the UNEG Standards and Norms for Evaluation in the UN System. The review was undertaken in-line with GEF principles which are: *independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies/capacities, credibility* and *utility*. The process promoted accountability for the achievement of project objectives and promoted learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the project’s partners and beyond.

15. The Evaluator developed review tools in accordance with UNDP and GEF policies and guidelines to ensure an effective project review. The review was conducted and findings are structured around the GEF five major evaluation criteria; which are also the five internationally accepted evaluation criteria set out by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). There are:

- *Relevance* relates to an overall assessment of whether the project is in keeping with donors and partner policies, with national and local needs and priorities as well as with its design.
- *Effectiveness* is a measure of the extent to which formally agreed expected project results (outcomes) have been achieved, or can be expected to be achieved.
- *Efficiency* is a measure of the productivity of the project intervention process, i.e. to what degree the outcomes achieved derive from efficient use of financial, human and material resources. In principle, it means comparing outcomes and outputs against inputs.
- *Impacts* are the long-term results of the project and include both positive and negative consequences, whether these are foreseen and expected, or not.
- *Sustainability* is an indication of whether the outcomes (end of project results) and the positive impacts (long term results) are likely to continue after the project ends.

16. In addition to the UNDP and GEF guidance for reviewing projects, the Evaluator applied to this mandate his knowledge of review methodologies and approaches and his expertise in sustainable land management and more generally in environmental management issues. He also applied several methodological principles such as (i) *Validity of information*: multiple measures and sources were sought out to ensure that the results are accurate and valid; (ii) *Integrity*: Any issue with respect to conflict of interest, lack of professional conduct or misrepresentation were immediately referred to the client if needed; and (iii) *Respect and anonymity*: All participants had the right to provide information in confidence.

17. The evaluation was conducted following a set of steps presented in the table below:

Table 3: Steps Used to Conduct the Evaluation

<u>I. Review Documents and Prepare Mission</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start-up teleconference/finalize assignment work plan ▪ Collect and review project documents ▪ Draft and submit <u>Inception Report</u> ▪ Prepare mission: agenda and logistic 	<u>III. Analyze Information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In-depth analysis and interpretation of data collected ▪ Follow-up interviews (where necessary) ▪ Draft and submit <u>draft evaluation report</u>
<u>II. Mission / Collect Information</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fact-findings mission to Kazakhstan for the Evaluator ▪ Interview key Stakeholders and conduct field visits ▪ Further collect project related documents ▪ Mission debriefings / <u>Presentation of key findings</u> 	<u>IV. Finalize Review Report</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Circulate draft report to UNDP-GEF and relevant stakeholders ▪ Integrate comments and submit <u>final Review Report</u>

18. Finally, the Evaluator signed and applied the “*Code of Conduct*” for Review Consultants (*see Annex 3*). The Evaluator conducted review activities, which were *independent, impartial* and *rigorous*. This MTR clearly contributed to learning and accountability and the Evaluator has personal and professional integrity and was guided by propriety in the conduct of his business.

3.3.2. Review Instruments

19. The review provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. Findings were triangulated through the concept of “*multiple lines of evidence*” using several review tools and gathering

3 UNDP Evaluation Office, 2012, *Project-Level Evaluation – Guidance for Conducting Mid-Term Review of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*.

information from different types of stakeholders and different levels of management. To conduct this review the following review instruments were used:

Review Matrix: A review matrix was developed based on the review scope presented in the TOR, the project log-frame and the review of key project documents (*see Annex 4*). This matrix is structured along the five evaluation criteria and includes all review questions; including the scope presented in the guidance. The matrix provided overall directions for the review and was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents.

Documentation Review: The Evaluator conducted a documentation review in Canada and in Kazakhstan (*see Annex 5*). In addition to being a main source of information, documents were also used to prepare the fact-findings mission in Kazakhstan. A list of documents was identified during the start-up phase and further searches were done through the web and contacts. The list of documents was completed during the fact-findings mission.

Interview Guide: Based on the review matrix, an interview guide was developed (*see Annex 6*) to solicit information from stakeholders. As part of the participatory approach, the Evaluator ensured that all parties viewed this tool as balanced, unbiased, and structured.

Mission Agenda: An agenda for the fact-findings mission of the Evaluator in Kazakhstan was developed during the preparatory phase (*see Annex 7*). The list of Stakeholders to be interviewed was reviewed, ensuring it represents all project Stakeholders. Then, interviews were planned in advance of the mission with the objective to have a well-organized and planned mission to ensure a broad scan of Stakeholders' views during the limited time allocated to the fact-findings mission.

Interviews: Stakeholders were interviewed (*see Annex 8*). The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide adapted for each interview. All interviews were conducted in person with some follow up using emails when needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings were incorporated in the final report.

Field Visits: As per the TORs, visits to project sites were conducted during the mission of the Evaluator in Kazakhstan; including project sites in Akmola, Kyzylorda, Kostanay and Almaty regions. It ensured that the Evaluator had direct primary sources of information from the field and project end-users (beneficiaries). It gave opportunities to the Evaluator to observe project achievements and obtain views from stakeholders and beneficiaries at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels.

Achievement Rating: The Evaluator rated achievements according to the guidance provided in the TORs. It included a six-point rating scale to measure progress towards results, project implementation and adaptive management and a four-point rating scale for sustainability (*see Annex 9*).

3.4. Limitations and Constraints

20. The approach for this mid-term review is based on a planned level of effort of 25 days. It comprised a 7-day mission to Kazakhstan to interview key stakeholders, collect evaluative evidence; including visits to project sites. Four demonstration sites were visited out of a total of 8 being implemented with the support of the project: one in Akmola and one in Kostanay Oblasts (both representing the northern steppe zone: forest steppe, meadow steppe and dry steppe ecosystems), and one in Almaty and one in Kyzylorda Oblasts (representing the southern arid zone: desert and steppe semi-desert ecosystems) of Kazakhstan.

21. These visits provided a good overview about how the project is expected to reach its objective. Based on the information collected during the mission, including the visits, the Independent Evaluator was able to conduct a detailed assessment of actual results against expected results and successfully ascertains whether the project will meet its main objective - as laid down in the project document - and whether the project initiatives are, or are likely to be, sustainable after completion of the project. The Evaluator also made recommendations for any necessary corrections and adjustments to the overall project work plan and timetable and also for reinforcing the long-term sustainability of project achievements.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

22. This section presents the findings of this MTR adhering to the basic structure proposed in the TOR and as reflected in the UNDP project review guidance.

4.1. Project Strategy

23. This section discusses the assessment of the project strategy – including its relevance - and its overall design in the context of Kazakhstan.

4.1.1. Project Design

24. As discussed in Section 2 above, an estimated 82% of all land types in the country, of which about 80% is agricultural land, is subject to erosion; moreover, 67% of rain-fed areas in Kazakhstan is subject to wind and/or water erosion. The southern arid regions of Kazakhstan are particularly prone to desertification with about 75% of arable and pasturelands ranked with a desertification index of high to very high. Areas of land subject to wind erosion occupy 25.5 million ha, and those subject to water erosion more than 5 million ha, of which 1 million ha are arable land. The processes of erosion on irrigated fields and pastures in southern regions of Kazakhstan have developed rapidly in recent years: every year 19 million tons of soil are washed off with 400,000 tons of humus. This means that about 2.5–2.6 million tons of manure would be needed annually to cover these losses. The northern steppe zone lands are also highly susceptible to wind and water erosion due to loss of humus and vegetation cover resulting from the massive conversion of steppe to grain farming and ongoing unsustainable farming and pastoral practices in these already marginal lands.

25. Poor agricultural practices are also contributing to land degradation in Kazakhstan. The main issues in the crop production sector include monoculture cropping and poor diversification of agricultural crops that result in decreased land fertility, water and wind erosion; disunity of farms and small plots of lands that make it harder to apply crop rotation and use modern resource-saving technologies; obsolete state of irrigation networks resulting in salinization of irrigated arable lands and decrease in crop yields; low percentage of the use of water saving technologies; insufficient dissemination of knowledge on new and more efficient technologies and lack of farmer training; limited access to low cost credits for medium and small holders; and imperfect legislation concerning sustainable land management requirements and agrochemical monitoring. On the livestock side, pasturelands in Kazakhstan are affected by uneven use, but including over used pastures, mostly located around settlements that are highly degraded.

26. The main economic consequences of desertification and land degradation are reduced agricultural yields and crop production; decreased cattle and camel stocks and declining profitability of animal husbandry; decreased export capacity of agriculture; stagnation of the agribusiness sector; and a sharp decrease in tax revenue from the agricultural and food processing sectors. The total annual economic loss due to a mixture of land degradation and poor agricultural practices in Kazakhstan is estimated to be around \$700,000,000 with poor households paying the highest price.

27. The long-term solution for sustainable land management of agricultural systems in the steppe, semi-arid, and arid zones of Kazakhstan involves the development of a highly strategic landscape- and ecosystem-based approach to territorial planning that is backed by a well-designed, agro-environmental incentives scheme, and by an adequate policy and legal framework. However, in order to achieve this long-term solution, four main barriers to SLM in agricultural systems of the steppe, semi-arid and arid zones of Kazakhstan were identified:

- Weaknesses in territorial planning system;
- Inadequate policy and legal framework to support a transformation to SLM;
- Perverse financial incentives in agriculture;
- Inadequate capacity and awareness levels for SLM implementation and advocacy.

28. This SLM project has been developed by the Government of Kazakhstan (GoK) and UNDP with the financial support of the GEF to address these barriers by “*transforming land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods*”. The review confirms that the project is a direct response to these barriers by focusing on the removal of these

barriers through a ‘two-pronged’ approach: (a) by investing in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives; and (b) by enabling a policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives.

29. This SLM project is fully relevant for Kazakhstan, supporting the government to change existing patterns of land use and improve land conditions by strengthening agricultural financial mechanisms and the current land-use planning system, which are the basic financial and administrative drivers of land use, thus addressing land degradation problems in the long term. It facilitates integrated land use planning, with the emphasis being on decentralization and bottom-up planning, as opposed to the existing highly centralized, top-down system. Building upon the past experience of GEF funded projects’ efforts in Kazakhstan, the project has created a more conducive policy and legal framework for the establishment of agro-environmental incentives for sustainable integrated land use planning and management, and has developed national and local capacities for the practical implementation of this new planning and management approach. It is then expected that this approach and these best practices will be replicated at a wider scale throughout Kazakhstan.

30. The project is well aligned with the following national priorities:

State Programme Agro–Industry 2017-2021

31. This state programme to support the agricultural sector is a follow-up to nine previous programmes, which were developed since the independence of Kazakhstan in order to develop this sector. This programme was a direct continuation of the “*Agro-business 2017*” and of the state programme for water resources management in Kazakhstan. It was adopted by the government on February 14, 2017. The main goal of the programme is to increase agricultural production and facilitate the export of agricultural products that are in demand. This increase in profitability will be achieved through the introduction of a new state grants distribution scheme, development of new organic standards and incentives to shift the production from wheat to corn, rapeseed, other oilseeds and soybeans. Under this programme, the government will significantly increase funding for agriculture research such as land fertility and phytosanitary aspects of key crops. Finally, this programme will also seek to increase irrigated land areas in Kazakhstan, seeking to increase the average crop yield. Overall, this state programme is an ambitious programme focusing on increasing agricultural production, including the aim for Kazakhstan to become one of the world’s top five grain exporters, primarily focusing on organic grain production.

32. The state programme is being implemented through a series of eight tasks:

- Strengthen small and medium-sized farms;
- Supply the domestic market and develop the export potential of agriculture products;
- Use financial measures effectively to support agricultural production;
- Use water resources (irrigation) effectively;
- Create conditions for an effective use of land resources;
- Increase mechanization and use of chemicals for agriculture production;
- Develop trade and logistics infrastructure;
- Provide scientific and technological expertise to the agricultural sector, including information access and marketing support.

33. This state programme was developed with an indicative budget of \$7.2B (KZT 2,374.2 billion) over five years. It is monitored through a series of eight target indicators to be achieved by 2021. They include the growth of agricultural products (and services) by 30% over 2015, the increase of agriculture products exports by \$600M, decrease of agriculture products by \$400M and reduction of irrigation water consumption by 20%.

34. The SLM project is directly aligned to this state programme 2017-2021. As discussed above, the project has been addressing four main barriers, which prevent a more sustainable management of steppe, semi-arid and arid zones of Kazakhstan. The project will also contribute to improving some weaknesses identified in the state programme such as a low share in the country’s GDP (4.8%) despite employing 18% of the active population (through higher productivity); low level of research and development (through better research information flows to farmers); undeveloped export; and highly dependent on climate conditions

(through better knowledge on climate change and climate change adaptation). The aim of the project is to support the change of existing patterns of land use and improve land conditions by strengthening agricultural financial mechanisms and the current land-use planning system, which are the basic financial and administrative drivers of land use. Over the long-term, the project seeks to address land degradation problems, which, in turn, will contribute to an increase of agricultural production.

Presidential Strategy 2030 and now Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy

35. The "Kazakhstan-2030" Strategy was developed in October 1997 under the leadership of the President of Kazakhstan as a "*Prosperity, Security, and Welfare Improvement of all Kazakhstanis*" strategy to set the long-term development path of the country. It defined seven long-term priorities: national security; internal political stability and consolidation of society; economic growth, based on an open market economy with a high level of foreign investment and domestic savings; health, education and well-being of citizens of Kazakhstan; energetic resources; infrastructure, especially transport and communications; professional state. These priorities became the basis for the development of concrete strategic development plans for the development of Kazakhstan (*see below*).

36. In December 2012, the President of Kazakhstan announced the "*Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy*". This strategy calls for widespread economic, social and political reforms to position Kazakhstan among the top 30 global economies by 2050. It includes seven priorities:

1. Economic policy of the new course – all around economic pragmatism based on the principles of profitability, return on investment and competitiveness;
2. Comprehensive support of entrepreneurship – leading force in the national economy;
3. New principles of social policy – social guarantees and personal responsibility;
4. Knowledge and professional skills are key landmarks of the modern education, training and retraining system;
5. Further strengthening of the statehood and development of the Kazakhstan democracy;
6. Consistent and predictable foreign policy is promotion of national interests and strengthening of regional and global security;
7. New Kazakhstan patriotism is basis for success of our multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society.

37. This strategy does not specifically address any environmental concerns. However, in the Presidential Strategy 2030, it is recognized that effective environmental policies are needed for sustained "*economic growth with a high level of foreign investments*" and that a polluted environment has a direct negative effect on the health of Kazakhstanis. No mention of climate change is made in this Presidential Strategy 2030. However, among the ten top projects to be implemented under these strategies, two of these projects are related to the environment. The first one is to create an effective land market through transparent pricing policy; in order to lease croplands out on the condition that new advanced technologies are introduced, which will increase competitiveness of the agricultural sector. The second project is about increasing the production of natural products, and start the development of rain-fed genetically modified crops.

Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2020

38. In February 2010, through the Decree no. 922 the President of Kazakhstan approved the Strategic Development Plan 2020 to guide development activities of all government bodies/entities. It follows the Strategic Development Plan to 2010 and was developed during the global crisis of 2008-2009, which seriously impacted the economy of Kazakhstan. Within the context of the global crisis, this 2020 plan focused on priority measures to create conditions for the post-crisis development of the country seeking to improve the business and investment climate, strengthening the country's financial system and improving the efficiency of public administration.

39. The 2020 strategic development plan focuses on the modernization of physical infrastructure, the development of human resources and the strengthening of the institutional base that will contribute to the accelerated industrial and innovative development of the country. The goal of this plan is to transform Kazakhstan to be among the fifty most competitive countries in the world with a favorable business climate that attracts significant foreign investments in non-primary sectors of the country's economy. It also focuses on the expected negative impact of climate change on water availability and quality and on the need to control emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere.

40. This strategic development plan 2020 sets five priority key areas: prepare for post-crisis development; ensure sustainable economic growth by accelerating diversification through industrialization and infrastructure development; invest in the future - enhancing the competitiveness of human capital to achieve sustainable economic growth, prosperity and social well-being of Kazakhstanis; provide the population with quality social and housing and communal services; and strengthen interethnic relations, security, and stability of international relations.

41. The SLM project is particularly aligned with the section of the plan that focuses on developing the “*agro-industrial complex and processing of agricultural products*”. The strategy is to continue to develop the agrarian sector as a key factor in improving the quality of life of the rural population through the development of the social and engineering infrastructure of villages. The plan states that Kazakhstan, with its huge land resources, has a long-term comparative advantage in the development of agricultural production. The strategic plan is to continue to improve agricultural productivity and increase value added in agricultural processing. It also states the need to increase the efficiency of water use in agriculture and implement measures to adapt crop production to the possible consequences of global warming.

Gender Considerations

42. The Evaluator found that gender considerations were well included in the design of the project. There is a full section discussing gender aspects in the project document under the section “2.5- *Socio-economic Benefits*”. Previous UNDP-GEF projects revealed that “*women have become a key partner in rural communities, as they are more receptive to new concepts and more willing to shift to ecosystem-friendly practices, provided that they generate enough income for a household*”. As a result, this project has emphasized the representation of women in project implementation and a particular focus has been on the impact of project activities on women.

43. During the design phase, the representation of women in institutions was reviewed as well as their participation in decisions related to natural resource management (NRM). In villages and overall in rural districts, it found that 95% of the staff in state-funded organizations – such as schools, health centers - are women, including in agricultural products processing plants. This representation is about 40% among farmers. However, despite this good representation, it was also assessed that women at the local level are not much engaged in women’s councils operating at the village and district levels. Furthermore, it found that women are not sufficiently engaged in resolving issues on sustainable use of land and water resources; mostly due to the fact that no local mechanism had yet been set up to ensure the active participation of women in decision-making for sustainable management of land, pasture and water resources.

44. Based on the assessment conducted during the design phase, it was anticipated that the project would provide equal opportunities to both men and women. It includes the encouragement for women to participate in demonstration activities as implementers or consultants; ensuring the equal representation of men and women in seminars, workshops, training-of-trainers and other educational and awareness raising events supported by the project; improving the cooperation of women with local CSOs emphasizing the need to raise additional funds for the development of small businesses run by women; organizing training events for women on the production of folk craft (carpets, clothes, embroidery, etc.), food products (horse milk, camel milk, cheese, etc.); engage women in monitoring and evaluating demonstration projects, and in disseminating good practices in neighboring rural districts; and finally to develop a gender disaggregated M&E system to measure the performance of the project.

45. During the implementation, the project follows the UNDP’s Gender Policy and has designed gender-specific criteria to mainstream principles of gender outcomes at the activity level such as demonstration plots where women-led demonstration plots were given a priority. The project has disaggregated the visitor database for its implementation activities which included demonstration plots and training to understand the extent of participation by gender (such as participation of female residents and trainings to be conducted by female trainers), and the potential influence it has on the project’s efficiency. The project has explored gender-differential access to and participation in the project at multiple points. The project ensures that all survey questionnaires are gender-disaggregated to identify gender differences with respect to results and benefits, and lessons learned. 2 pilot plots out of 8 are managed and led by women.

UNDP Strategy in Kazakhstan

46. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is the result of a continuous consultative process intended to analyze how the United Nations (UN) can most effectively respond to Kazakhstan's national priorities and needs. It is guided by the goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration, which has been endorsed by the Government, as well as the national development goals as enshrined in the Development Strategy of Kazakhstan till 2050. The current UNDAF, also called the Partnership Framework for Development (PFD) is a common operational framework for development activities upon which individual UN agencies formulate their action plans.

47. The PFD 2016-2020 overall vision is to develop a new pathway for strategic partnership with Kazakhstan, to achieve the '*Kazakhstan 2050*' vision, by building a prosperous, equitable and inclusive society, strengthening the accountability and effectiveness of public institutions, and facilitating the country's regional and international co-operation. This framework includes four pillars: (1) diversification of the economy and provision of decent work opportunities for the underemployed and socially vulnerable people; (2) sustainable human settlements, and natural resources management; (3) accountable and effective institutions accessible; and (4) regional cooperation and development. A particular attention is on assisting Kazakhstan in offering development models for the region and for the world, while addressing the critical human development challenges that remain in spite of the country's middle-income status.

48. Based on the previous UNDAF 2010-2015, UNDP develop its "*Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2010-2015*". The aim of this programme was to assist Kazakhstan in achieving its national competitiveness agenda with a focus on human development for all. It was composed of three priority programmes areas: (1) Economic and Social Well-Being for All; (2) Environmental Sustainability; and (3) Effective Governance. Under environmental sustainability, the focus was on improved and enhanced government capacities for integrated natural resources management, including the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, as well as an increase in the capacity of the government and communities to deal with natural disasters and other emergency situations.

49. The review and the lessons learned of this programme have been used as the basis for the new CPAP 2016-2020. During the last five years, UNDP has been recognized as a partner of choice for the Government through its timely and significant contributions to fast paced development agendas of partner ministries, agencies and akimats of municipalities and regions. As an example, more than 80 percent of UNDP projects funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) proved their self-sustainability beyond their programmatic cycles (*GEF workshop, Astana, June 2016*). Models and best practices of sustainability can also be traced to UNDP initiatives in energy efficiency (in housing and municipal sectors); livelihoods support to communities living in and around national parks and bio-reserves, support to local self-governance institutions, water-saving and soil-enriching practices in the agricultural sector. These best practices are now being replicated by the Government, and mainstreamed in existing/new national and local programmes and budgets.

50. As a result of this partnership, there has been a steady increase in the Government cost-sharing projects: the ratio of the Government cost-sharing has increased from 4 per cent in 2010 to more than 50 per cent in 2015. Three main lessons were learned during this period, which have informed the new programmatic cycle:

- Connecting local level pilot initiatives with ongoing national reform processes to ensure that local level priorities and needs are captured in national dialogues, plans, budgets and legislations;
- Ensuring institutional back up arrangements to achieve sustainability of the Government-UNDP interventions at the outset of project and programme cycles;
- Jointly seeking out and advocating for innovative practices and approaches to advance the national reform agendas, with a specific focus on persistent gaps and bottlenecks.

51. The current CPAP 2016-2020 focuses on contributing to key outcomes outlined in the PFD 2016-2020 (*see above*). UNDP is a key partner in expanding opportunities for greening the economy and protecting the environment. UNDP, together with partners, will seek to develop green financing instruments and mechanisms, including through building partnerships with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other funds

and banks. The main interventions of UNDP in the environmental sector under this programme are:

- Supporting the development and implementation of the national mitigation and adaptation proposals focused on developing sustainable energy strategies;
- Transforming mono- and industrial cities to more sustainable urbanization patterns with primary focus on reducing CO2 emissions and other pollutants;
- Strengthening rural-urban connectivity through lowering carbon footprints in food supply chains and agriculture; and
- Introducing adaptation measures.

52. The SLM project is part of this programme supporting the government of Kazakhstan in adapting to climate change, changing the existing patterns of land use and improving land conditions by strengthening agricultural financial mechanisms and the current land-use planning system, which are the basic financial and administrative drivers of land use, thus addressing land degradation problems in the long term. As summarized above, the review also found that the project is not an isolated project but is part of an overall multi-year strategy of UNDP to support the government of Kazakhstan to improve the sustainable land management of agricultural systems in the steppe, semi-arid, and arid zones of Kazakhstan. The project has been built upon achievements from previous projects implemented by UNDP, including the lessons learned.

GEF Focal Area Strategy

53. The project was developed (and is funded) under the GEF-5 cycle. As discussed in the project document, it is fully consistent with the *GEF-5 - Land Degradation* focal area strategy. The project is aligned with the objective 3 of this strategy that is “LD-3: Reducing pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape”. By promoting integrated territorial planning at the rayon level, and engineering a shift from unsustainable land use practices to sustainable land management, the project has been introducing the concept of integrated land use planning with adequate investments to demonstrate the new concept. It is anticipated that once this concept will be demonstrated, it will be scaled up throughout the country in similar areas, which is being highly affected by climate change.

54. As per the project document, for the first time in Kazakhstan and in post-Soviet regions, the project has been introducing the concept of agro-environmental incentive payments as an innovative funding mechanism supporting SLM measures, which help to prevent soil erosion, loss of productivity and other ecosystem services in the steppe zone in Kazakhstan.

55. In conclusion, the SLM project is well aligned with national strategies and programmes as well as the GEF-5 land degradation focal area strategy. It is a direct response to national priorities and needs to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan. It is part of a UNDP programme to support the government in adapting to climate change, changing the existing patterns of land use and improving land conditions by strengthening agricultural financial mechanisms and the current land-use planning system, which are the basic financial and administrative drivers of land use, thus addressing land degradation problems in the long term. The Evaluator also found that the project was designed through a good participative approach – including many consultations conducted during the PPG phase - and that a good gender perspective was integrated in the project design.

4.1.2. Results Framework / Log-frame

56. The Strategic Results Framework identified during the design phase of this project presents a good set of expected results. No changes were made to the *Project Results Framework* during the inception phase. The review of the objective and outcomes indicates a satisfactory and logical “chain of results” – Activities ➔ Outputs ➔ Outcomes ➔ Objective. Project resources have been used to implement planned activities to reach a set of expected outputs (6), which would contribute in achieving a set of expected outcomes (2), which together should contribute to achieve the overall objective of the project. This framework also includes - for each outcome - a set of indicators and targets to be achieved at the end of the project and that are used to monitor the performance of the project.

57. The aim of the project is to transform land use practices in critical, productive, steppe, arid and semi-arid landscapes of Kazakhstan, which constitute the vast majority of its territory, thus ensuring ecological

integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods. The project was built upon the experience of past GEF funded projects. It has been creating a more conducive policy and legal framework for the establishment of agro-environmental incentives for sustainable and better integrated pasture and land use planning and management. Through demonstrations it is building national and local capacities for practical implementation of such planning in the field. As reviewed in the previous section the Strategic Results Framework indicates that this project is well aligned with national priorities and its logic is appropriate to address clear national needs/priorities.

58. The logic model of the project presented in the *Project Results Framework* is summarized in table 3 below. It includes one objective, two outcomes and six outputs. For each expected outcome, targets to be achieved at the end of the project were identified.

Table 4: Project Logic Model

Expected Results	Targets at End of Project
Project Objective: To transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 750,000 hectares by project end (the indirect area of influence of the project is the entire agricultural landscape of the country – pasture and other agricultural lands – which totals 222.6 million ha) 2. 8 to 10% on average improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place 3. 20% weight gain over baseline improving livestock productivity (as measured by weight gain) in area where ILUPs are in place
Outcome 1 - Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 1.1: Integrated Land Use Plans (ILUPs) employ the landscape management approach to inform decision-making, restore and conserve ecological functions and processes of agricultural landscapes in pilot districts of the target steppe and desert ecosystems • Output 1.2: Demonstration of sustainable land use and management of agricultural landscapes of steppe and desert ecosystems in Akmola, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Kyzylorda and North Kazakhstan oblasts • Output 1.3: Piloting agro-environmental incentive schemes to promote SLM investments • Output 1.4: Capacity building and awareness raising for SLM advocacy and implementation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Numerous numerical values to measure the performance of demonstration plots – see list in Annex 10 5. At least 40% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives have access to agro-environmental incentives by project end 6. At least 75% of small and medium farms in areas where training is delivered send representatives to attend sessions by project end 7. 80% of target audience attend sessions on SLM run by KazAgroInnovation for Akimat staff from land relations and agricultural departments in areas where pilot projects are to take place by project end 8. At least 2 higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management have strengthened curriculums by project end
Outcome 2 – Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 2.1: Inter-agency working group established to coordinate integrated land use planning • Output 2.2: New or amended policies developed for adoption by government 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Inter-agency Working Group has a clear mandate and method of operation to ensure coordination of different land use sectors by project end 10. Agribusiness 2020 program includes such subsidies 11. 20% of total agricultural subsidies are agro-environmental or green subsidies, 10 years after the agro-environmental scheme is up and running 12. At least 7 types of amendments to existing policies, regulations and rules are developed

Source: project document

59. This strategy or “*logic model*” was confirmed during the inception phase of the project, including at the inception workshop held in Astana on September 29-30, 2015. No changes were made to the Project Results Framework during the inception phase, including its set of indicators and targets. The inception workshop enabled both national and sub-national participants to review the aim of the project, its management arrangements and to discuss and identify potential complementarities and synergies between government agencies and explore joint and coordinated activities at the sub-national levels. National partners also discussed/identified the possible legal documents to be reviewed and in which it is necessary to mainstream SLM principles and “green agriculture”. Extensive discussions also took place on the status of agricultural extension services and organic farming issues.

60. The review of the *Project Results Framework* indicates a good coherence and logic among its expected results: outputs, outcomes and objectives. As stated in its objective, it is a project seeking to “transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods”. Using a two-pronged approach, the project aims to reach its objective through investments in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives; and by enabling a policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives.

61. The project has been demonstrating in 8 demonstration plots the overall approach, techniques and schemes for increasing the effectiveness of land use planning and management in the steppe, arid and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan by enhancing the conservation-friendliness and sustainability of productive agricultural landscapes. The project has also been facilitating the conditions necessary for the development and successful implementation of the integrated land use plans and the replication of the demonstration activities through new or amended policies/laws in support of SLM and through an improved inter-agency coordination on land use planning and management.

62. However, despite the good logic model of this project, the detailed review conducted for this MTR indicates that the project logic model is somewhat too focused on the demonstration areas. The project’s success depends mostly on succeeding to implement these demonstrations. One particular aspect of this design that could be strengthened is the need to develop the SLM capacity of agriculture extension services throughout Kazakhstan. These services are key to scale-up the project results.

63. So far, the project has been excellent in creating dialogues and exchanging information between researchers from the agricultural research institutes located in the demonstrations plots, the extension agents from the extension services and the farmers located in the demonstration plots. However, the project design is somewhat limited in providing the necessary resources to mainstream and replicate the results from the demonstration plots to other parts of Kazakhstan. The Evaluator acknowledges the provision for supporting training activities for farmers and extension agents (output 1.4), including training-of-trainers (ToT); however, no provisions were made to expand this approach nationally. This is also confirmed by the targets identified for this project, which are measuring the performance of the project mostly through results in demonstration areas.

64. In conclusion, the review of the project strategy and the national context for this project indicates that this strategy is a direct response to national priorities. Within the context of the *State Programme Agro-Industry 2017-2021*, and of the “Kazakhstan 2050”, the project also benefited from an excellent timing. The agricultural sector is in full expansion in Kazakhstan with the government - recognizing its value and its contribution to the national economy - setting up priority programmes with the goal to increase the supply of agricultural products to the domestic market but also increasing exports of agricultural products. The project has been contributing to the effort of the government to increase its agricultural productivity sustainably in steppe, arid and semi-arid landscapes of Kazakhstan. This design was also well documented in the project document. As a result, this document has provided a very useful “blue print” for the project team to guide the implementation of the project.

4.2. Progress Towards Results




65. This section discusses the assessment of project results; how effective the project is to deliver its expected results and what are the remaining barriers limiting the effectiveness of the project.

4.2.1. Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis

66. As presented in Sections 4.1, the project has been implemented through two (2) outcomes. The implementation progress is measured through a set of 12 indicators and 12 targets⁴. On the next page is a table listing key deliverables achieved so far by the project against each outcome and their corresponding

⁴ The fourth target in table 4 is a long list of numerical indicators to measure the performance of the demonstration plots. A copy of this list is in Annex 10.

targets. Additionally, a color “*traffic light system*” code was used to represent the level of progress achieved so far by the project, as well as a justification for the given rating (color code)⁵.

	Target achieved
	On target to be achieved
	Not on target to be achieved

⁵ The analysis and ratings presented in this Section have been conducted with the assumption that the project will terminate in July 2020 as per its current official ending date.

Table 5: List of Delivered Results

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
<p>Project Objective: To transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 750,000 hectares by project end (the indirect area of influence of the project is the entire agricultural landscape of the country – pasture and other agricultural lands – which totals 222.6 million ha) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> So far, the project has been implementing 8 pilot projects (out of 9 planned) in six target regions, together covering an area of 145,503 hectares, to demonstrate sustainable land management practices and integrated land use planning. When considering the scaling up effect of the demonstration of those best practices, the actual area positively affected by the project is estimated at 234,200ha by other farmers and land users. There are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Almaty region: two pilot plots with a total area of 14,978ha. Rehabilitated 5 km of irrigation channel, which irrigate 32,800 ha of lands. Farmers contributed 32,800 ha for a total area of 47,778 ha. Akmola district: two pilot plots on 28,725ha to expand the area of forage crops such as wheat grass, sainfoin as well as cultivated perennial grasses such as lucerne, sweet clover, vetch, winter rye. Farmers contributed 29,630 ha for a total area of 58,335ha. East Kazakhstan region: one pilot plot covering 17,300ha to procure the seed of wheat grass, sainfoin, lucerne, sweet clover, vetch, winter rye. Farmers contributed 22,100ha for a total area of 39,400ha. Kyzylorda: one pilot project covering 1,300ha to introduce rice crop diversification and expansion of the area of lucerne and forage crops (corn, oats, barley). Moreover, the project has installed an automated system for delivery and accounting of irrigation water in inundated fields covering an area of 500ha. Farmers contributed 11,200ha for a total area of 13,000ha. North Kazakhstan region: one pilot project covering 21,000ha to introduce small scale forage crop rotation. Farmers contributed 21,630ha for a total area of 42,630ha. Kostanay: one pilot project covering 18,304ha. Farmers contributed 14,733ha for a total area of 33,037ha 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project is progressing well toward its objective that is “<i>to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods</i>”; 8 demonstration sites are under implementation for a total coverage of 234,200ha. Good participation of stakeholders and excellent pilots to test / demonstrate agro-environmental incentives; These demonstration sites will produce a large amount of knowledge that will need to be documented and made accessible by all.

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 to 10% on average improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with agronomists indicate that 8-10% is too high and that this target should be revised. Additionally, a target needs to be set for each demonstration plot taking into account local soil conditions (<i>see Section 4.3.5</i>) • A concept for integrated land use plan (ILUP) has been developed. It includes the integration of best agro technologies in terms of enhancing content of soil humus and pasture lands productivity as well as other environmental issues of sustainable land management practices. This new ILUP concept is being considered by the Ministry of Agriculture. Once this concept is approved by MOA, there ILUPs will be developed at the farm level and at the region level in the 9 demonstration areas. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 demonstration sites are under implementation for a total coverage of 234,200ha. Good participation of stakeholders and excellent pilots to test / demonstrate agro-environmental incentives; • These demonstration sites will produce a large amount of knowledge that will need to be documented and made accessible by all.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% weight gain over baseline improving livestock productivity (as measured by weight gain) in area where ILUPs are in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% (329kg) weight gain compared with baseline. The demonstration is through rehabilitation and cultivation of mixed crops (legume and cereals) to increase the nutrition units of the main fodder crops and consequently to increase the weight of livestock. This target needs also to be revised (<i>see Section 4.3.5</i>) • Based on documented best practices and new results achieved, the project plans to form an internal departmental task force within the Ministry of agriculture to update the Master Plan on Livestock Breeding Sector. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 demonstration sites are under implementation for a total coverage of 234,200ha. Good participation of stakeholders and excellent pilots to test / demonstrate agro-environmental incentives; • These demonstration sites will produce a large amount of knowledge that will need to be documented and made accessible by all.
<p>Outcome 1 - Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 1.1: Integrated Land Use Plans (ILUPs) employ the landscape management approach to inform decision-making, restore and conserve ecological functions and processes of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Numerous numerical values to measure the performance of demonstration plots – see list in Annex 10</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has set up eight pilot plots out of targeted nine demonstration plots in all six targeted regions in steppe and semi-arid zones within the targeted areas covering an area of 234,200ha focusing on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through application of SLM agro-technologies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Birlik village, Balkhash district, Almaty Oblast: Total area 10,000ha. Restoration of degraded irrigated lands not used in agriculture due to secondary salinization and bogging to a level suitable for agricultural production (rice cultivation). Demonstrated how to improve soil structure and ecosystem services of lands leading to increased 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 demonstration sites are under implementation for a total coverage of 234,200ha. Good participation of stakeholders and excellent pilots to test / demonstrate agro-environmental incentives; • These demonstration sites will produce a large amount of knowledge that will need to be documented and made accessible by all.

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
<p>agricultural landscapes in pilot districts of the target steppe and desert ecosystems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 1.2: Demonstration of sustainable land use and management of agricultural landscapes of steppe and desert ecosystems in Akmola, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Kyzylorda and North Kazakhstan oblasts • Output 1.3: Piloting agro-environmental incentive schemes to promote SLM investments • Output 1.4: Capacity building and awareness raising for SLM advocacy and implementation 		<p>productivity of degraded lands per ha. Reconstructed 3 head canals to increase the capacity from 1,200 to 2,500 liter/sec. Cleaned and repaired and expanded the main canal on 5 km. Construction of 3 water collectors are underway</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Bayterek rural district, Enbekshikazakh district of Almaty Oblast: Total area 6,370ha. Restoration of abandoned irrigated lands by securing water supply through rehabilitation of an irrigation network and establishment of water collectors. Reconstructed 3 head canals and increased the water carrying capacity of these 3 head canals to 3,400 liter/sec 3. Karabulak village Akmola Oblast: Total area 18,725ha. Sustainable landscape management by sowing perennial grasses and substituting wheat as monoculture with barley. Introduced green fallow into a grain crop rotation system. Green fallow includes planting perennial grasses such as lucerne, sweet clover, vetch, winter rye. Purchased seeds to expand the area of forage crops up to 1,060 ha 4. Azat village, Akkol district of Akmola Oblast: Total area 10,000ha of which 3,500 ha is arable land and 6,500 ha agricultural lands including pastures, cultivated pastures, hayfields, and abandoned lands. Procured 8,100T of fertilizers to cover 3,500ha and provided sweet clover, lucerne, and Agropyron seeds for 6,500ha. Used deep soil cutting and application of mineral fertilizers 5. Ayagoz district, Malgeldin rural district, Kosagash rural district, Saryarkin rural district in East Kazakhstan Oblast: Total area 18,800ha. Restoration and transfer of wastelands to arable lands by planting forage grasses, creation of meadows and fundamental improvement of pastures. Reduced load on pastures around 3 settlements through restoration of 18,800ha of abandoned pasture lands and increase vegetative cover. Made distant pastures accessible to the 4,300 heads of domestic cattle, 18,210 heads of sheep and 		

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
		<p>goats, and 967 horses</p> <p>6. Feodorovsky district in Kostanay Oblast: Total area 18,304ha. Development of integrated land use planning and management for agricultural lands in the dry steppe zone. Procured 10T of organic fertilizer called “Riverm” to promote organic farming and production system in Kazakhstan. Organized spring tillage and sowing of forage crops (mixing sweet clover, lucerne and agropýron) for green fallow on 500ha. Promoted green plough and will plough crops into soil as green manure (expected audience is 12,000 farmers)</p> <p>7. Kyzylorda city in Kyzylorda region: In close partnership with Rice Research Institute, total area 1,300ha. Combating degradation of irrigated arable lands under rice production systems through introduction of soil and water saving technologies in Kyzylorda oblast. Installed 150 units of automated system for delivery and accounting of irrigation water in inundated fields covering an area of 500ha; expanded the area under lucerne and forage crop (oats, barley, corn) in the area effected by secondary salinization; and reduced rice monoculture</p> <p>8. Shagalaly village in Akkaiyn district of North Kazakhstan Oblast: Total area 21,000ha. Conservation and improvement of soil fertility and expansion of forage supply through cultivation of grain legume and forage crops in the steppe zone. Set a crop rotation system through cultivation of sweet clover plus oat with sequent cultivation of barley on 10,590ha. Purchased modern high-performance forage equipment: pickup press and self-loading cart for hay bales</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 40% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives have access to agro-environmental incentives by project end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has conducted a situational analysis on the existing agro-environmental incentives including, land code, tax code, law on agricultural subsidies, law on organic farming. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the demonstration sites, the project has access to lots of knowledge on SLM, lessons learned, best practices, etc.

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project conducted several activities to make the state subsidy programmes accessible to small and medium size farms. 28% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives participated in project activities and accessed materials. • Using project knowledge, MOA cut 11 types of subsidies out of 65 in total which were mostly favoring the need of large scale farms. 40 remaining subsidy schemes were also revised. A new state programme on state subsidies were endorsed by the Government in February 2017 for a total of KZT 25B (USD 78.1M) • In 2015, the total number of applications for state subsidies by SME was 310; in 2017 480 SMEs applied for state subsidies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a good participative approach, farmers are well engaged in project activities and observations made during the mission indicate that there is “<i>something in it for them</i>”, i.e. farmers are interested in getting these new practices to improve their operations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 75% of small and medium farms in areas where training is delivered send representatives to attend training program run by affiliates of KazAgroMarketing and KazAgroInnovation for small and medium farms on sustainable crop and forage production and livestock breeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% percent of small and medium farms in project areas have send representatives to attend training sessions. So far, 560 farmers in the 6 targeted regions participated in training activities supported by the project. • Capacity development activities has been conducted in close cooperation and partnership with the following research institutes and agricultural extension centers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State Unitary Enterprise of “national agricultural educational center” 2. Republican State Enterprise “Kazhydromet” 3. National Space Research Institute 4. Ministry of Agriculture 5. Scientific and Production Grain Institute named after A. I. Baraev. 6. Kostanay research Institute of Agriculture 7. North Kazakhstan Research Institute of livestock breeding and crop husbandry 8. Union of Farmers associations of Kazakhstan 9. Agricultural extension center “Shortandy” 10. Agricultural extension center “Kostanay” 11. Agricultural extension center “Kyzylorda” • So far, 8 new training modules have been developed. There 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a good participative approach, farmers are well engaged in project activities and observations made during the mission indicate that there is “<i>something in it for them</i>”, i.e. farmers are interested in getting these new practices to improve their operations.

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
		<p>were successfully integrated into the education programs of the three targeted extension centers.:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organic farming 2. Crop diversification and small scale rotation system 3. Pastoral livestock management system 4. Reseeding and rehabilitation of degraded pastures 5. Weight growing in livestock breeding system 6. Rain-fed area management 7. Water conservation and management 8. Green technological conveyers in pasture resource management 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of target audience attend sessions on SLM run by KazAgroInnovation for Akimat staff from land relations and agricultural departments in areas where pilot projects are to take place by project end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An estimated 51 percent of the target audience have taken part in sessions organized with the support of the project • Conducted field days in Akmola, Kyzylorda, Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions with the collaboration of the National Extension Institute and the participation of about 1,200 participants, including 44 state representatives. 44 best practices were introduced. • The project has established a favorable cooperation mechanism with the national agricultural educational center and its subordinated substructures such as Agricultural extension center “Shortandy”, Agricultural extension center “Kostanay” and Agricultural extension center “Kyzylorda” • In close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Astana Agricultural University a national wide conference was conducted on organic food production with participation of 41 decision makers, 111 farmers and 87 researchers from different institutional background. • A practical training workshop was conducted in close partnership with Kostanay research institute with participation of international experts from the international organic foundation. More than 67 farmers from SME and 41 local decision makers have improved their professional expertise in organic agriculture; including theories and practices in advanced organic food production systems. • Conducted three exchange experience study tours and one 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a good participative approach, farmers are well engaged in project activities and observations made during the mission indicate that there is “<i>something in it for them</i>”, i.e. farmers are interested in getting these new practices to improve their operations.

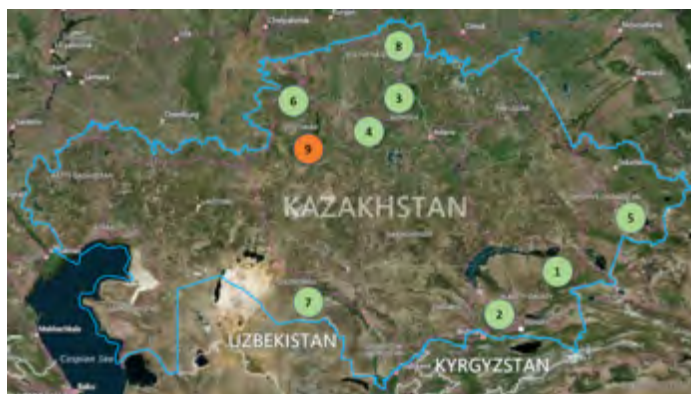
Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
		<p>field days lasted for 7 days with participation of farmers. A total of 840 people was involved in these events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established an electronic market platform providing buyers and sellers a market place to buy or sell agricultural commodities targeting the domestic market but also the Central Asia markets. It provides a market for producers and dealers. So far, sales through this electronic marketplace total KZT 1.6M (USD 5,000) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2 higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management have strengthened curriculums by project end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed 3 advanced pasture and rangeland management practices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Green pastoral livestock breeding technologies (carbon neutrality models) for cultivation of fodder crops (<i>possible audience: 18,400 farmers</i>) Setting up green conveyors in irrigated and rain-fed areas to ensure a stable production of high nutrition units' fodder crops. Kazakh model of sustainable pasture management system with pocket version of distant pasture management for the East Kazakhstan region with possible replication to all other regions selected by the project. 3 targeted universities strengthened their curriculums with these management practices and used them for open lectures conducted in Kostanay Agrarian University (86 students), Astana Agrarian University (111 students) and Kyzylorda Agrarian University (71 students) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to farmers, local university, research institutes, extension services are very interested by the approach implemented by the project. As a result, they are also very interested in getting these new SLM practices in their curriculum and training programmes.
<p>Outcome 2 – Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output 2.1: Inter-agency working group established to coordinate integrated land use planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-agency Working Group has a clear mandate and method of operation to ensure coordination of different land use sectors by project end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed terms of reference for an inter-ministerial task force. A Task Force was created on November 16, 2015 by Ministerial Decree The task force ensures the coordination of integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives activities at the national level. So far, it provided technical review/advice to several state programs, which were then endorsed by the government. It includes: state strategy on Agro-business 2017-2021; State programme on subsidies; law on organic farming; state certification program on 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group was created by a ministerial order. It exists and already has performed well in supporting the development or amendments of policies, rules, regulations and laws. It is expected that this group will play a bigger role near the end of the project by recommending the government to improve their incentive schemes in place.

Expected Results	Project Targets	Results (Deliverables)	MTE Assess.	Justification for rating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Output 2.2: New or amended policies developed for adoption by government 		export of organic honey to China; and master plan on livestock breeding sector		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agribusiness 2020 program includes such subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With the support of the project, the government has enacted a new “<i>State Programme on Agro-Industrial Sector Development 2017-2021</i>” which was endorsed in December 2016; it has a clear mechanism on subsidies ● Developed a comprehensive guideline on how to access different subsidy programmes for farmers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With the support of the Task Force, it is expected that as lessons learned accumulates and SLM practices are identified, more change to the policy framework is expected.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 20% of total agricultural subsidies are agro-environmental or green subsidies, 10 years after the agro-environmental scheme is up and running 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As per the new agro-industrial sector development strategy 2017-2021 the subsidies to the agricultural sector was increased from KZT 173,314B in 2015 to KZT 178,083B in 2016; an increase of 2.8% over 2015 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With the support of the Task Force, it is expected that as lessons learned accumulates and SLM practices are identified, more change to the policy framework is expected.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least 7 types of amendments to existing policies, regulations and rules are developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Task Force has provided technical and professional expertise on 6 policies, rules and regulations, which are now approved by the government: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State strategy on Agribusiness 2017-2021; 2. Law on organic farming; 3. Law of pastures 4. State certification program on export of organic honey to China 5. Master plan on livestock breeding sector. 6. Marking and branding rules for organic products 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With the support of the Task Force, it is expected that as lessons learned accumulates and SLM practices are identified, more change to the policy framework is expected.

Source: Adapted from project progress reports, mostly from PIR 2016 and PIR 2017.

67. Overall, the project is progressing well towards its targets and it has three more years of implementation to go. The project has already an impressive record to support the government in upgrading its policy and legislation frameworks. As detailed in table 5 above, the project has provided technical and professional expertise on 6 policies, rules and regulations, which are now approved by the government. It has also made good progress with 8 demonstration plots in 6 regions, demonstrating and strengthening the link between agricultural research institutes (new technologies, new practices), their extension services (knowledge dissemination) and farmers (application of new knowledge in their production systems). This SLM project is on track to be a successful project by June 2020.

68. Under Outcome 1 (*GEF budget USD 1,461,137 – Used USD 729,953 or 50%*), the project has been demonstrating sustainable agricultural practices in 8 pilot sites located in 6 regions of Kazakhstan. These pilot sites are located in steppe and semi-arid zones within the targeted areas covering a total area of 234,200ha; they focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through application of SLM agro-technologies. A ninth pilot site was planned to be implemented (Perelesky village, Denisovsky district in Kostanay Oblast). However, the application for this site was rejected by the organization implementing the demonstration due mostly to the fact that the selected farm was finally not willing to contribute its own resources to the demonstration. A search for another farm is underway and the current plan is to have this last demonstration site ready to start in the spring of 2018.



69. As detailed in the table above, the demonstration sites cover a wide variety of techniques and investments adapted to each site. They include:

- Technology developed for restoring abandoned agricultural lands affected by secondary salinization and bogging;
- Crop rotation system for rice production developed and applied to improve management of degraded agricultural lands;
- Water saving technology tested for crop cultivation on degraded lands to ensure 3.5 kg of crop yield per cubic meter of water delivered;
- Land users and local communities trained in restoring degraded lands, using efficient irrigation, improving low-fertile takyr lands⁶, and increasing water productivity in semi-desert areas with sharp continental arid climate;
- Sustainable management of irrigated lands by introducing water saving practices, reconstruction of the irrigation network and creation of flood water collectors;
- Improvement of moisture supply in arable lands and mitigation of soil erosion processes;
- Expansion of irrigated arable land area by 30% through inclusion of abandoned lands;
- Plant perennial grasses as a measure for land ‘nourishment’ and protection from adverse impacts;
- Secure the productivity and sustainability of farmlands and agricultural landscapes and contribute to improving soil fertility and reducing land degradation;
- Organization of a system of mobile pasturing in 3 rural okrugs;
- Restoration of 900 ha of old hayfields by over-seeding with *Agropyron*;
- Local communities more aware of and trained in distant livestock breeding practices;
- Reduced agricultural areas with monoculture cultivation;
- Expansion of land areas under forage crops;
- Introduction of green fallow in crop rotation, includes planting perennial grasses such as

⁶ Takyr is a type of relief occurring in the deserts of Central Asia, similar to a salt flat in the south-western United States. It is a type of soil that forms in flat, clayey depressions in deserts and semi-deserts. There are two distinct levels in the soil: an upper layer that is up to 8-10 cm thick and consists of a thick, stratified clay crust that contains no salts, and an underlying layer consisting of slightly altered saline soil-forming rock.

lucerne, sweet clover, vetch, winter rye.

- Development and use of seasonal pasture rotation schemes;
- Improved soil fertility and reduced degradation of agricultural landscapes;
- Expansion of forage crop rotation;
- Development and deployment of an automated system for supply and accounting of irrigation water in inundated rice fields;
- Conservation and improvement of soil fertility through sowing grain legume;
- Increase of forage production through the reduction of wheat crop areas;
- Efficiency assessment of forage crop rotation (compared to wheat crop and fallow land rotation vs wheat monoculture) based on yield data, change in the density of a root soil layer, content of nutrients and dynamics of the nutrition process.
- Expanded area under lucerne and forage crop (oats, barley, corn) in the area effected by secondary salinization; and reduced rice monoculture
- Promote green plough and will plough crops into soil as green manure

70. In addition to being areas to demonstrate new agricultural techniques, these 8 demonstration sites provide local knowledge exchange platforms for researchers, extension agents, farmers and processors to exchange and disseminate knowledge. They have created opportunities for these groups to meet, discuss and disseminate knowledge to farmers on best practices that have been tested on these demonstration plots. The project also used these sites to organize “*Open Farmers’ Days*”, an excellent initiative to bring national State Representatives, Researchers, Extension Agents, Farmers and Processors together to exchange information and particularly to disseminate results/best practices identified through the demonstration sites. It is also an excellent opportunity for people from national level to meet farmers and exchange notes/views on the development of agriculture in Kazakhstan.

71. In addition, under this outcome the project has also supported the documentation of best practices on pasture and rangeland management; material that has been used by local universities to conduct lectures on the topic. In close collaboration with 3 agricultural extension services, the project has also supported the development of 8 training modules on various topics related to the demonstration plots and a total of almost 600 farmers have been involved in training events using this material. The project has made good progress under this outcome and should achieve its targets set at the outset.

72. Under Outcome 2 (*GEF budget USD 266,136 – Used USD 61,265 or 23%*), the project has been successful in setting up a national Task Force to ensure the coordination of activities to strengthen land use planning in rural areas and improve agro-environmental incentives at national level. This Task Force was created by Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture in November 2015. Since, its creation, this Task Force has been active in reviewing and advising the Ministry on several legal documents, which are now approved/endorsed by the government. They include: the state strategy on Agribusiness 2017-2021; the Law on organic farming; the Law of pastures; the state certification program on export of organic honey to China; the master plan on livestock breeding sector; and the marking and branding rules for organic products.

73. In addition to improving the enabling environment for agro-environmental incentives, the Task Force was also able to mobilize the government in increasing its state subsidies to the agricultural sector; a 2.8% increase between 2015 and 2016. Finally, the project has also been supporting the Task Force to provide expertise to amend two legal documents: Instructions on rules for providing subsidies; and the State Programme for Pasture Sector Development. These documents will then be presented to the government for final approval. Under this outcome, the project achievements so far are satisfactory and the project is well underway to meet and probably surpass its expected results planned at its outset under this component.

74. The assessment of progress made so far conducted for this MTR reveals four areas that need a particular attention during the remaining period of implementation:

- **Implementing the 9th demonstration plot:** The plan detailed in the project document includes 9 demonstration plots. Eight of them are being implemented and making progress “producing” useful best practices for expanding sustainable agriculture in Kazakhstan. An attempt was made to select the 9th plot but no agreement was found. When considering the time remaining for implementing this last plot – a maximum of 2 farming seasons – and the good results already

achieved by the other 8 demonstration plots, it needs to be reviewed if it would better to invest the project resources allocated to this 9th plot in the implementation of an additional demonstration or to use these resources to scale-up project achievements in the respective Oblasts and possibly nation-wide.

- ***Institutionalizing the piloted ILUPs:*** As detailed in the project document, the ongoing trend in Kazakhstan of gradual transfer of planning and development of local policies and plans from the center to oblast and district authorities resulted with a land use planning process that fails to take a comprehensive approach to planning and to involve land-users and stakeholders during the planning and the implementation of land-use plans. To improve these plans, the project was to devise planning frameworks focusing on the economic potentials of safeguarding and maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices. It was tasked to pilot integrated land use planning (ILUP) in the demonstration areas, integrating green technologies to promote greener farming operations, including the use of organic fertilizers. The project document listed eight steps to pilot ILUPs. So far, this participative approach has been used in all demonstrations; however, no indicators were identified in this project to measure the performance of the project in this area. Nevertheless, this innovative approach needs to be assessed, documented and ultimately institutionalized – including possibly manuals, templates, etc. - within the relevant government entities.
- ***The case of organic farming:*** Organic farming is becoming one national priority in the agriculture/food production systems in Kazakhstan; it is a priority in the “*Kazakhstan 2050*” strategy. The project supported the development of the Law on organic farming, the state certification program on export of organic honey to China, and the marking and branding rules for organic products. Additionally, the government is “pushing” for more in this area. There is a need to develop standards, possibly a certification process, and the government is willing to move on this topic in collaboration with CIS countries and China and aligned with international standards. The project needs to pursue its support to this initiative within the context of its remaining resources; including analyses of the viability of the business model, assessment of export markets of organic products and analyses of international organic certification models.
- ***Agro-Environmental Incentives – Agricultural Subsidies:*** One aim of the project is to test the effectiveness of innovative agro-environmental incentives/subsidies; that is to finance environmentally friendly, yet economically profitable, agricultural practices, including subsidies more accessible by small and medium size farms. The project conducted analyses of technologies used, economic parameters and effectiveness of land use practices to determine the best options for incentives. These incentives are now being tested through the 8 demonstration sites through the implementation of ILUPs. As the project will reach its last year of implementation, a review will be needed to assess the effectiveness of these new measures and identify a range of policy options for rayon and oblast level authorities – and national government level - to encourage the desired conservation-friendly farming practices. It will include the review of the “*State Programme on Agro-Industry 2017-2021*” to assess how the recommendations based on the experience from the demonstration sites are aligned with this state programme and what policy changes would be needed for the implementation of these new measures nation-wide and support farmers to switch to more sustainable and environmental friendly land use practices. Based on this assessment, it may include possible recommendations, which will be submitted to MOA for consideration to amend the existing state subsidy program and include green subsidies into the existing system of agricultural subsidies.

75. In conclusion, the project has made excellent progress so far and it has three more years of implementation. So far, it focused much on agro-environmental techniques and not a lot on the economics and marketing of these best practices. It is recommended that during the remaining years of implementation the project also support activities looking into the economics and marketing of these best practices. As observed by the Evaluator during the field mission, it is a topic of great interest for farmers and it could be a major incentive for the appropriation of these best practices by farmers. Additionally, benefiting from the body of knowledge accumulated by the project since its outset, it is expected that the project will focus more and more on advising MOA on agro-environmental incentives and subsidy schemes, using the lessons learned from the demonstrations. Finally, the project should also focus on scaling-up the results at national level, including the development of capacities of extension services throughout Kazakhstan.

4.2.2. Remaining Barriers to Achieve the Project Objective

76. The project started in June 2015 and will end in May 2020. At the time of this review, the project is in its 27th month of implementation with 33 more months to go before it ends. At this point, there is no critical barriers limiting its implementation/effectiveness over the remaining implementation period. There is only the question of the 9th demonstration plot but as discussed in the previous section, it is still possible to implement this demonstration starting next spring (2018). Considering the timeline of the project and the good results already achieved through the other 8 demonstration sites, the question is to decide if the project should implement its 9th demonstration sites or invest the equivalent resources in replicability and scaling-up activities in the regions and nation-wide.

77. At the project strategic level, the rationale of the project for improving the SLM of agricultural systems in the steppe, semi-arid and arid zones of Kazakhstan is to remove critical barriers preventing the long-term solution that is the development of a highly strategic landscape- and ecosystem-based approach to territorial planning that is backed by a well-designed agro-environmental incentives scheme, and that requires an adequate policy and legal framework. Four main barriers were identified at the outset of the project: (i) weaknesses in territorial planning system; (ii) inadequate policy and legal framework to support a transformation to SLM; (iii) perverse financial incentives in agriculture; and (iv) inadequate capacity and awareness levels for SLM implementation and advocacy, particularly the extension services, which are key for the dissemination of knowledge to farmers. The review of the progress made by the SLM project indicates a clear contribution toward the removal of these barriers.

78. The project has been strengthening land use planning at the farm level but also at the District level. A new comprehensive planning approach, involving land-users and stakeholders, and focusing on the economic potentials of safeguarding and maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices. These integrated land use plans (ILUPs) are directly addressing the first barrier. The project has also supported a Task Force to review and advice the government on several legal documents (6 so far), all related to improving SLM practices. They directly address the second barrier. Through the project contribution to develop the recently approved “*State strategy on Agribusiness 2017-2021*”, agro-environmental incentives and subsidies that are part of this state programme were improved. The new schemes are less perverse and do not contribute to land degradation; there are now focusing more on SLM principles, in effect addressing the third barrier. Finally, through activities implemented in the 8 demonstration sites and the development of training modules, the project has already been accumulating a lot of knowledge in SLM practices. This knowledge has also been disseminated through training events, lectures in universities, and “*Open Farmers’ Days*”, an excellent initiative to bring stakeholders together in a field setting to share knowledge. All these activities to share knowledge definitely address the fourth barrier that is about the last of awareness for SLM and the capacity to implement SLM practices.

79. The implementation of the project is going well and, at this point, no obvious barriers exist to hamper the project’s performance. On the contrary, the project is in a position of strength to demonstrate SLM best practices, including the demonstration of the good agro-environmental incentives and subsidies. As concluded in the previous section, the project should review its current status and its work plan for the remaining period of implementation and focus more and more in replicability of best practices, institutionalization of achievements and scaling-up these achievements to the regions but also nation-wide. Based on this review, it is envisaged that this project will make a great contribution in removing the four barriers, which existed at the outset of the project.

4.3. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

80. This section discusses the assessment of how the project has been implemented. It assessed how efficient the management of the project has been and how conducive it is to contribute to a successful project implementation.

4.3.1. Management Arrangements

81. The management arrangements of the SLM project is as follows:

- The *GEF Agency* for this project is UNDP. At the request of the Government of Kazakhstan, UNDP provides *Direct Project Services (DPS)*, including procurement and contracting, human resources management, and financial services;
- The *Implementing Partner* of the project is the Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agriculture Sector - LLC of the Ministry of Agriculture (ACEPAS-MOA). It is responsible for overall project management, including the facilitation of all project activities such as international consultant missions, staff training, ensuring appropriate access to project sites, relevant data, records, agencies and authorities.
- The project is guided by a *Project Board (PB)* as the executive decision making body of the project. It provides strategic oversight and guidance based upon project progress assessments and related recommendations from the Project Manager (PM). It ensures coordination with key baseline initiatives and national investment programs, as well as related activities. The Board is co-chaired by UNDP and ACEPAS-MOA. Members of this Board include national stakeholders but also representatives from Akimats of Almaty, Akmola, East-Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Kyzylorda and North Kazakhstan Oblasts, and a representative from the Farmers Union of Kazakhstan. The PB reviews and approves annual project reviews and annual work plans, technical documents, budgets and financial reports. It meets annually, and make decisions by consensus. It ensures that required resources are committed and arbitrates on any conflicts within the project or negotiates a solution to any problems with external bodies. In addition, it approves the appointment and responsibilities of the Project Manager and any delegation of its Project Assurance responsibilities. Decisions made by the PB are made in accordance to UNDP standards, ensuring UNDP's ultimate accountability for project results. The PB met three times since the inception of the project: September 29, 2015 (a short meeting in parallel to the inception workshop held on September 29-30, 2015), March 10, 2016; and March 3, 2017.
- A *National Project Director (NPD)* was appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture as the Managing Director of the Center for Economic Policy in the Agroindustry sector of MOA (*This function is funded by the government*).
- A *Project Manager (PM)* was hired by UNDP and approved by the PB. He is tasked with the day-to-day management of project activities, as well as with financial and administrative reporting. He is responsible for project implementation and will be guided by Annual Work Plans, following UNDP Results Based Management (RBM) standards. The Project Manager prepares Annual Work Plans (AWPs) in advance of each successive year and submit them to the Project Board for approval (*This function is funded by the GEF funds*).
- A *Chief Technical Advisor (CTA)* was appointed by UNDP and was confirmed by the Project Board. The CTA's prime responsibility is to provide effective oversight and coordination of all technical aspects of the project and contribute to the capacity development of the lead managers of the project, including from the national implementing partners and other key stakeholders in all technical and management aspects of the project (*This function is funded by the GEF funds*).
- A *Project Management Unit (PMU)* was established at the beginning of the project; it is located on the premises of UNDP in Astana. It is headed by the PM and provides project administration, management and technical support as required by the needs of day-to-day operations. The unit is composed of the following staff (*all funded by the GEF funds*):
 - i. Project Manager (PM) – Full time
 - ii. Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) – Part time (20%)
 - iii. Finance & Administration Officer – Full time
 - iv. Procurement Officer – Full time
 - v. Capacity Building Expert – Part time (20%)
 - vi. Water Expert – Part time (20%)
 - vii. Agricultural Expert – Part time (20%)
 - viii. Driver – Full time

82. The implementation modality of the project to allocate, administer and report on project resources is the “*UNDP Country Office Support to NIM*” approach; that is project activities are carried out by the Project Team in partnership with MOA and reporting to UNDP as per the guidelines. Overall, roles and responsibilities were clearly identified and accepted, including the need to follow administrative procedures from UNDP.

83. The review indicates that the management arrangements as planned at the outset of the project are adequate in the context of Kazakhstan for the implementation of the project. The project is implemented by a strong technical team of professionals bringing together a broad range of skills and knowledge in the agriculture, water, pasture and capacity building areas. The project also benefits from a strong partnership between the government – in this case the Ministry of Agriculture as the implementing partner of the project but also other government stakeholders – and UNDP, which was recognized as a partner of choice by the government based on its timely and significant contributions to the fast-paced development agenda of the government. This partnership is also translated by several cases of Officers who have UNDP experience and work in government entities and vice versa facilitating the communications between these partners. The result is a project that is implemented in close collaboration with entities such as research institutes, agriculture extension services and other agencies. The agenda of the project is very much integrated in the strategies of these entities, which corresponds to national priorities.

4.3.2. Stakeholder Engagement

84. As discussed in section 4.1.1, the project is highly relevant to national priorities. According to the project document, it was developed through stakeholders' consultations during the PPG phase, including workshops, field trips, surveys and one-to-one meetings. These consultations were held with government institutions, development partners, academic institutions, NGOs and members of potential target communities (farmers). The table below is a summary of the plan to involve stakeholders developed at the outset of the project.

Table 6: Initial Stakeholders Involvement Plan

Stakeholder	Role in Project
Ministry of Agriculture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of production and processing of livestock products Department of production and processing of crop products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives from MOA will sit on the Project's Board and will oversee the implementation of comprehensive land use planning frameworks and SLM demonstration projects in productive agricultural landscapes. The Ministry will contribute actively to the development of landscape-level land use plans and implementation of SLM demonstration projects. Its representatives will sit on the inter-agency WG and seek approval of amendments to the Land Code and its by-laws on land-use planning and rational use of land resources, on regulating pastures and rangelands; the Agribusiness 2020 program related to agro-environmental measures; draft laws on organic agriculture and rangelands.
JSC KazAgroInnovation and JSC KazAgroMarketing of MOA, including oblast and district level affiliates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JSC KazAgroInnovation is the national executing agency of the project. The Deputy Chair of its Board of Directors will head Project Board meetings. Its representatives will sit on the inter-agency WG. KazAgroInnovation and KazAgroMarketing will provide capacity building training to agricultural producers and farmers on new and adapted agricultural practices and technologies (including land management), marketing services, access to markets, business planning Support and coordinate implementation of SLM related demonstration projects in six pilot oblasts Support in the analysis and review of agro-environmental incentive scheme as proposed by the project Support in the design of training modules on sustainable crop and forage production and livestock breeding for agricultural land users in target oblasts Provide training facilities for the project's capacity building activities. Ensure relevant staff from KazAgroInnovation and KazAgroMarketing participates in the project's capacity building efforts. Lead the exercise on expanding a system of distant and mobile consulting services for agricultural producers by including agricultural marketing. Contribute to development of SLM related policies and laws

Stakeholder	Role in Project
Committee of Water Resources and its territorial organizations (RBOs) of the Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee and its five territorial RBOs will contribute to the development of landscape-level planning frameworks, specifically contributing to discussions on efficiency in water use in agriculture. Its representatives are expected to sit on the inter-agency Working Group.
Ministry of National Economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee on Land Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the key players in development of integrated land use planning frameworks in the five pilot rural okrugs Its representative will sit on the inter-agency Working Group to review policies, rules and regulations
Ministry of National Economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Planning Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Its representative will sit on the inter-agency Working Group and contribute to discussions on feasibility of agro-environmental subsidies vis-à-vis budget planning processes and requirements.
Ministry of Energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Green Economy, Department of Environmental Monitoring & Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both departments will sit on the inter-agency WG to review policies, rules and regulations
Ministry of Energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee of Environmental Regulation & Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the key players in development of integrated land use planning frameworks in the five pilots in rural okrugs
Akmola, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Kzyl Orda and North Kazakhstan Oblast Akimats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant official endorsement of pilot land use planning and SLM demonstration projects. Facilitate cooperation of all involved parties in implementation of land use planning schemes and SLM demonstration projects Assist with development of proposals for agro-environmental subsidies Disseminate the project's lessons learned related to landscape-level planning, SLM practices and agro-environmental schemes and advocate for their replication throughout respective oblasts.
District and rural okrug akimats in six target oblasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the development and implementation of the landscape-level land use plans by providing coordinating inputs of all stakeholders Co-finance demonstration projects in selected rural okrugs related to sustainable land and pasture management. In particular, the district akimats will provide subsidies for green fallow and forage production to complement GEF financing. Assist with development of proposals for agro-environmental subsidies Disseminate the project's lessons learned related to landscape-level planning, SLM practices and agro-environmental schemes and advocate for their replication throughout respective districts and rural okrugs.
Zher-Ana Astana Public Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts Co-finance a demonstration project related to sustainable landscape management in Karabulak rural okrug of Akmola oblast. Participate in capacity building training of the project
Republican association of farmer public associations and organizations "Agrosoyuz of Kazakhstan"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts. Co-finance a demonstration project related to restoration and sustainable management of irrigated lands in Balkhash district of Almaty oblast. Participate in capacity building training of the project
Public Union "Farmer of Kazakhstan"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts

Stakeholder	Role in Project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-finance a demonstration project related to sustainable management of irrigated lands in Bayterek rural okrug of Almaty oblast. • Assist with the design of a college-level training module on distant rangeland management that will cover such topics as pasture herbage, norms and estimation of carrying capacities of pastures in different climatic zones of Kazakhstan and rangeland management • Participate in capacity building training of the project
Organic Agricultural Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts • Coordinate implementation a demonstration project related to organic agriculture in Fedorovsky district of Kostanay oblast. • Participate in capacity building training of the project
Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (KazFOAM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide inputs to the design of agro-environmental schemes • Lobby for SLM related policies including the law on organic agriculture.
Farmers Union of Kazakhstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for SLM related changes to government policies, awareness-raising among agricultural producers, farmers, government officials and parliament members.
“Saryagash” Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and co-finance a demonstration project related development of integrated land use planning and management for agricultural lands in the Denisovsky district of Kostanay region • Participate in capacity building training of the project
Eska-Food Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-finance a demonstration project related to sustainable landscape management in Karabulak rural okrug of Akmola oblast. • Participate in capacity building training of the project
Rural consumer cooperatives, agricultural production societies, farmer associations, country farms, individual farmers and local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively engaged in land use planning development in respective districts and rural okrugs • Actively engaged in sustainable use demonstrations at pilot sites and will contribute labor and other inputs to implementation of demonstration projects. • Participate in capacity building training of the project
Kostanay State University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update undergraduate and graduate training modules for agriculture-related professions based on current and future needs of the agricultural sector in Kazakhstan covering SLM issues. • Assist in development of case studies based on the experience, results, and lessons learned from the demonstration projects and land use planning exercises in pilot rural okrugs.
Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support project activities related to implementation of demonstration projects on sustainable rangeland management, and monitoring land degradation • Assist with the design of a college-level training module on distant rangeland management that will cover such topics as pasture herbage, norms and estimation of carrying capacities of pastures in different climatic zones of Kazakhstan and rangeland management • Its representatives will participate in some meetings of the inter-agency Working Group to review policies, rules and regulations (particular those related to pastures and rangeland management)
Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Cultivation named after I. Zhakhayev, LLP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and co-finance a demonstration project related to the use of soil and water saving technologies in rice production in Kyzylorda oblast • Participate in capacity building training of the project

Stakeholder	Role in Project
North Kazakhstan Agricultural Experimental Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and co-finance a demonstration project related to conservation and improvement of soil fertility and expansion of forage supply through cultivation of grain legume and forage crops in Akkaiyn district of North Kazakhstan oblast • Participate in capacity building training of the project
Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ASEPAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the analysis of existing agricultural subsidies and design of agro-environmental schemes.

Source: project document

85. As per the project document, a good consultation and engagement of stakeholders happened during the design/formulation of this project. The process ensured that this project respond well to national priorities (see also Section 4.1.1). As presented in the table above, the consultation process was concluded with the identification of stakeholders to the project and clear roles from each partner in implementing/participating in the various components of the project.

86. This good consultation and engagement of stakeholders continued during the implementation. Since the implementation began, stakeholders have also been engaged through project activities including the two PB meetings. One innovative approach that the project has been implementing is “cross-fertilization” between people for various backgrounds such as government officials in MOA based in Astana, researchers in the regions, extension agents, farmers, processors, etc. It allows exchange of ideas and is a good way to disseminate knowledge on SLM, including best practices. Activities to facilitate this “cross-fertilization” include study tours, field days, and workshops.

87. One activity to keep stakeholders engaged that is particularly worthwhile to mention is the organization of “Open Farmers’ Days”, using the demonstration sites as bases. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, the 8 demonstration sites provide local knowledge exchange platforms to disseminate knowledge. They have created opportunities for organizing “Open Farmers’ Days” to meet, observe, discuss and disseminate knowledge. This is an excellent initiative to bring national State Representatives, Researchers, Extension Agents, Farmers and Processors together to exchange information and particularly to disseminate results/best practices identified through the demonstration sites to farmers and processors. It is also an excellent opportunity for people from national level to meet farmers and exchange notes/views on the development of agriculture in Kazakhstan.

4.3.3. Work Planning

88. Project Annual Work Plans (AWPs) were produced every year from 2015. These AWP were developed following UNDP project management guidelines, including the calendar year cycle (January to December for each year). Once finalized, these AWP were reviewed and endorsed by the PB and approved by UNDP. These AWP details the list of main activities to be conducted during the coming year following the structure of the log frame (objective, outcomes, and outputs) of the project. For each activity, they include a tentative schedule (per month) when each activity will be implemented and a corresponding budget from the GEF grant.

89. Based on the information collected, the Evaluator compared the budgeted annual work plans with the actual annual disbursements, the results are presented in the table below:

Table 7: Annual Work Plans versus Actual Expenditures (GEF grant)

Years	AWP Budgets	Actual Expenditures	% Spent
2015	46,500	57,465	124%
2016	868,303	333,783	38%

Years	AWP Budgets	Actual Expenditures	% Spent
2017	738,503	502,411	68%

Sources: Project AWP and UNDP-Atlas CDR Reports

90. Numbers presented in the table above reveal that for the first part of the project, work planning has not been too efficient. In 2015, project expenditures surpassed the work-plan budget established for 3 months by 24%; in 2016, the expenditures were under budget, representing only 38% of the approved AWP-2016 budget. Finally, in 2017, the financial management of the project has been getting more efficient; expenditures to end of July 2017 represent 68% of the AWP-2017 budget versus 58% of the time (7 months out of 12). As the project is now in full implementation, it is expected that the work planning will continue to be more efficient. Most demonstration sites (8 out of 9) are now in full implementation; as a consequence, it is now easier to predict expenditures for the coming year. Additionally, as discussed in the next section, the project is pretty much on budget; it, therefore, requires good financial management for the project to have sufficient financial resources to fund the project until its end, while at the same time, ensuring that the GEF grant be expanded by the end of the project.

4.3.4. Finance and Co-finance

91. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, the implementation modality of the project to allocate, administer and report on project resources is the National Implementation Modality (NIM); that is project activities are carried out by the Project Team in partnership with MOA and reporting to UNDP as per the guidelines. Under this approach, the government has key control functions related to all aspects of project leadership, management and implementation (nominates the National Project Director, co-chairs the Project Board, considers and approves key milestones, such as annual work plans, budgets, management responses to mid-term and final evaluations, participates in monitoring, etc., as further described in the Management Arrangements). At the same time, under the National Implementation Modality, the government of Kazakhstan has requested such services from UNDP since the national legislation does not allow for direct project execution of international technical assistance by government entities. A letter of agreement was signed between UNDP and the government of Kazakhstan at the outset of this project to list the services to be rendered by UNDP during the implementation of the project.

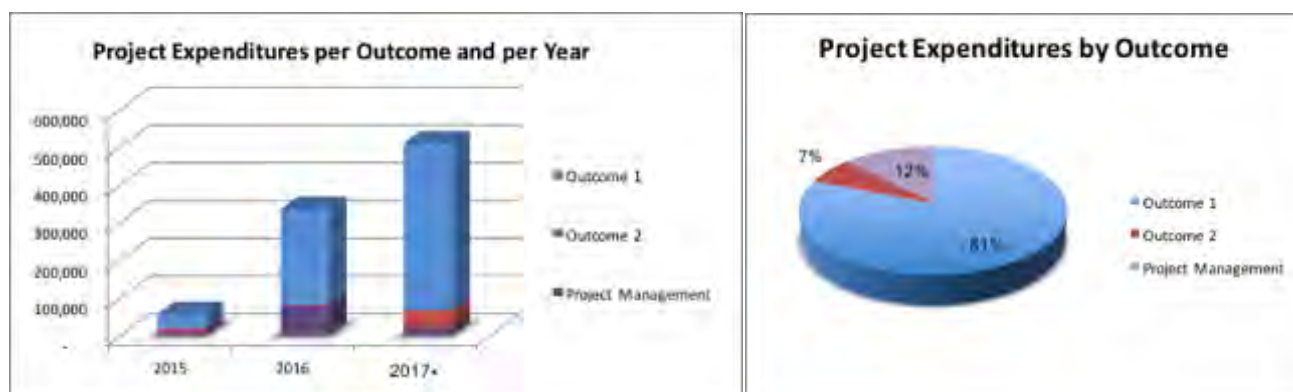
92. At the time of this evaluation, the review of financial records as recorded in the UNDP Atlas system indicates that the actual expenditures allocated against the GEF project grant for the years 2015 to August 2017 represent about 48% (USD 903,351) of the approved budget of USD 1,900,000 versus an elapsed time of 45% (27 months out of 60). The breakdown of project expenditures by outcome and by year is presented in the table below.

Table 8: UNDP-GEF Project Funds Disbursement Status (in USD)

Component	Budget (USD)	2015	2016	2017 ⁷	Total (USD)	Total/Budget
Outcome 1	1,461,137	36,477	253,371	440,105	729,953	50%
Outcome 2	266,136	9,771	4,864	46,630	61,265	23%
Project Management	172,727	11,088	77,757	23,288	112,133	65%
TOTAL	1,900,000	57,336	335,992	510,023	903,351	48%

Sources: UNDP Atlas Financial Reports (CDRs) and information collected from the Project Team.

⁷ Figures for 2017 at from January to August 2017.



93. These financial figures indicate disbursements that are much aligned with the implementation timeline (48% vs. 45%). The diagram showing the expenditures per year indicates that the project was somewhat slow during an initial phase of one year (end of 2015 to mid-2016); however, activities picked up in 2016. Regarding 2017, according to the financial figures it was a “busy” year for the project with expenditures of USD 510,023. It corresponds to the launch of the 8 demonstration sites, including the procurement of some goods such as reconstruction of canals, purchase of seeds and fertilizers, water irrigation management systems, and forage equipment.

94. The monthly spending average since the inception of the project is USD 33,457 or USD 401,489. Using this basic analysis as a benchmark, the remaining budget of the GEF grant of USD 996,649 represents a monthly budget of USD 30,201 or USD 362,418 annually. It is a lower average for the remaining period of implementation when compared to the implementation period prior to the MTR. However, it is in line with expectation and this remaining budget is sufficient to terminate the project as planned. It also illustrates that the GEF grant should be expended by the end of the project in June 2020.

95. When reviewing the expenditures per outcome, it confirms the approved budget as documented in the project document; that is 77% of the approved budget was planned to be spent on activities under outcome 1. To date, a large portion (81%) was spent on outcome 1, 7% on outcome 2 and the rest 12% was spent on project management. At this point in the implementation, it was expected that expenditures under outcome 1 be high, since a lot of disbursements were made for the demonstration sites – which is under outcome 1 – during their initial stage. Under outcome 2, activities took place but it is also expected that more activities will take place during the remaining period of implementation to review lessons learned, identify best practices demonstrated under outcome 1 and make recommendation to the government to improve the enabling environment and replicate/scale-up the achievements. Finally, the project management expenditures to date are somewhat high at 12% versus the approved budget of 9%. It is expected that this number will come down slightly over time with a percentage closer to 9% at the project end.

96. When comparing the outcome expenditures versus the outcome budgets, it shows that 50% of the budget for outcome 1 has already been expended, only 23% for outcome 2 and 65% for project management. These figures confirm the analysis presented in the paragraph above.



Co-financing

97. Co-financing commitments at the outset of the project totaled the amount of USD 9,499,459 (*see table below*), which represented about 83% of the total amount of the financial resources required in the project document of USD 11,399,459 (GEF grant + co-financing) for the implementation of the project.

Table 9: Co-financing Status

Partner	Type	Commitments (USD)
Government of Kazakhstan	In-kind	6,500,000
UNDP	Parallel	700,000
Regional/Local Entities	In-kind	579,757
Federation/Union/Association/Foundation	In-kind	1,719,702
Total (USD)		9,499,459

Source: Project Document

98. A large amount of this co-financing (68%) was to come from the government of Kazakhstan as in-kind contribution, UNDP was to provide 7%. The rest was to come from regional and local entities as well as non-governmental organizations. The full list of these entities, which made commitments at the outset of this project is provided below:

Government of Kazakhstan

- Ministry of Agriculture, JSC KazAgroInnovation, JSC KazAgroMarketing
- Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ASEPAS)

UNDP

- UNDP Country Office Astana

Regional/Local Entities

- Akimats of Ayagoz district (rayon), Malgeldin, Kosagash and Saryarkin rural okrugs, East Kazakhstan Oblast
- Akimat of Karabulak rural okrug, Akmola Oblast
- Agricultural Department of Kyzylorda Oblast Akimat
- Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Cultivation named after I. Zhakhayev, LLP
- North Kazakhstan Agricultural Experimental Station LLP

Federation/Union/Association/Foundation

- Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (KazFOAM)
- Farmers Union of Kazakhstan
- Agrosoyuz of Kazakhstan
- Public Foundation "Farmer of Kazakhstan"
- Zher-Ana Astana Public Association
- Organic Agricultural Association (Public Union)

99. At the time of the MTR, no reporting has been made on the co-financing contributions. However, despite no accounting and no reporting on these co-financing commitments, the Evaluator confirmed that partners have contributed critical resources to the implementation of this project. As discussed in section 4.1.1, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, the project benefits from a strong partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and its subordinate entities, including regional and local entities such as the regional research institutes located in the demonstration areas, as well as with farmers, the beneficiaries of this project.

4.3.5. Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

100. A good M&E plan was developed during the formulation of the project – including sex disaggregated data, information and indicators - in accordance with standard UNDP and GEF procedures. A budget of USD 65,000 was allocated to M&E, representing about 3.4% of the GEF grant. No changes were made during the inception phase.

101. This plan listed monitoring and evaluation activities that were to be implemented during the lifetime of the project, including a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation. For each M&E activity, the responsible party(ies) was/were identified, as well as a budget and schedule. The plan was based on the logical framework matrix that included a set of performance monitoring indicators along with their

corresponding targets and means of verification.

102. The M&E plan was reviewed during the inception phase and no changes were made to the plan. A summary of the operating modalities of the M&E plan are as follows:

- Performance indicators: A set of 12 indicators with their respective baselines and targets at the end of the project were identified and documented in the *Project Results Framework*.
- Inception workshop: It was conducted on September 29-30, 2015 in Astana. The project design was explained in detail, as well as the results and resources framework. Discussions were facilitated on roles and responsibilities of the Implementing Agency, other partners/stakeholders and the Project Team and the first year work plan was reviewed. No changes were made to the project design as documented in the project document; no inception report was written.
- Quarterly Progress Reports: Quarterly progress were planned to monitor the progress and record it in the UNDP Enhanced Results Based Management Platform. Risks are also reviewed quarterly and updated in the Atlas system when needed.
- Annual Project Review/Project Implementation Review (APR/PIR): These annual progress reports, combining both UNDP and GEF annual reporting requirements, are submitted by the Project Manager to the PB, using the UNDP standards for project progress reporting, including a summary of results achieved against the overall targets identified in the project document. They are following the GEF annual cycle of July 1st to June 30th.
- Periodic Monitoring through Site Visits: UNDP Country Office and the UNDP Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) have been conducting visits to project sites to assess first hand project progress. Field Visit Reports were prepared and circulated to the Project Team.
- External mid-term and final evaluations: The mid-term evaluation (MTR) is underway (this report); a final evaluation will take place three months prior to the final PB meeting and will follow UNDP and GEF evaluation guidelines. The GEF's Land Degradation Tracking Tool was completed during the mid-term evaluation cycle and will be updated during the final evaluation.
- Project Terminal Report: This comprehensive report will summarize the results achieved (objectives, outcomes, outputs), lessons learned, problems met and areas where results may not have been achieved. It will also lay out recommendations for any further steps that may need to be taken to ensure sustainability and replicability of project's results.
- Learning and Knowledge Sharing: Results from the project are to be disseminated within and beyond the project intervention zone through existing information sharing networks and forums. The project is due to identify and participate, as relevant and appropriate, in scientific, policy-based and/or any other networks, which may be of benefit to project implementation though lessons learned. The project is to identify, analyze, and share lessons learned that might be beneficial in the design and implementation of similar future projects. A two-way flow of information between this project and other projects with a similar focus is also encouraged.
- Communications and visibility requirements: Full compliance is required with UNDP's Branding Guidelines and the GEF's Communication and Visibility Guidelines, including the use of the UNDP and GEF logos. For other agencies and project partners that provide support through co-financing, their branding policies and requirements should be similarly applied.
- Audits: Audits are conducted in accordance with UNDP Financial Regulations and Rules and applicable audit policies on UNDP projects.

103. The set of indicators presented in the *Project Results Framework* was reviewed during this review. It includes a set of 12 indicators – each one with a baseline and a target by the end of the project - to monitor the performance of the project at the objective and outcome level. The list of indicators and targets is presented in the table below:

Table 10: List of Performance Indicators

Project Outcomes	Indicators	Targets
Objective - To transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security	1. Area of productive landscapes (pasturelands, crop and fodder production lands) in steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 750,000 hectares by project end (the indirect area of influence of the project is the entire agricultural landscape of the country – pasture

Project Outcomes	Indicators	Targets
and sustainable livelihoods.	include a focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices	and other agricultural lands – which totals 222.6 million ha)
	2. Improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place	• 8 to 10% on average improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place
	3. Improvement in livestock productivity (as measured by weight gain) in area where ILUPs are in place	• 20% weight gain over baseline improving livestock productivity (as measured by weight gain) in area where ILUPs are in place
Outcome 1 - Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 1.1: Integrated Land Use Plans (ILUPs) employ the landscape management approach to inform decision-making, restore and conserve ecological functions and processes of agricultural landscapes in pilot districts of the target steppe and desert ecosystems • Output 1.2: Demonstration of sustainable land use and management of agricultural landscapes of steppe and desert ecosystems in Akmola, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Kyzylorda and North Kazakhstan oblasts • Output 1.3: Piloting agro-environmental incentive schemes to promote SLM investments • Output 1.4: Capacity building and awareness raising for SLM advocacy and implementation 	4. Indicators of on-the-ground improvements in crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, efficiency in water use, etc.	• <i>Numerous numerical values to measure the performance of demonstration plots – see list in Annex 10</i>
	5. Access of small and medium farmers in pilot sites to agro-environmental incentives	• At least 40% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives have access to agro-environmental incentives by project end
	6. Successful training program run by affiliates of KazAgroMarketing and KazAgroInnovation for small and medium farms on sustainable crop and forage production and livestock breeding	• At least 75% of small and medium farms in areas where training is delivered send representatives to attend sessions by project end
	7. Successful training program on SLM run by KazAgroInnovation for akimat staff from land relations and agricultural departments in areas where pilot projects are to take place	• 80% of target audience attend sessions on SLM run by KazAgroInnovation for Akimat staff from land relations and agricultural departments in areas where pilot projects are to take place by project end
	8. Higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management	• At least 2 higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management have strengthened curriculums by project end
Outcome 2 – Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 2.1: Inter-agency working group established to coordinate integrated land use planning • Output 2.2: New or amended policies developed for adoption by government 	9. Inter-agency mechanism for ensuring coordination of integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives operating effectively	• Inter-agency Working Group has a clear mandate and method of operation to ensure coordination of different land use sectors by project end
	10. Inclusion of agro-environmental subsidies in State programs	• Agribusiness 2020 program includes such subsidies
	11. Increase in government financing for SLM practices	• 20% of total agricultural subsidies are agro-environmental or green subsidies, 10 years after the agro-environmental scheme is up and running
	12. Amendments to existing policies, regulations, and rules such that the support for SLM is stronger	• At least 7 types of amendments to existing policies, regulations and rules are developed

Source: Project Document and PIRs

104. This set of 12 indicators and their respective targets did not change since the formulation of the

project. These indicators have been used yearly to report progress made in the APRs/PIRs. The review of these indicators and their respective targets reveals that these indicators are mostly quantitative indicators, focusing much on percentages of targeted areas or targeted audiences such as “80% of target audience attend sessions on SLM run by KazAgroInnovation for Akimat staff from land relations and agricultural departments in areas where pilot projects are to take place by project end”; as opposed to more quality-based indicators.

105. Quantitative indicators give a very clear measure of things and are numerically comparable. They also provide an easy comparison of a project progress over time and are easy to monitor and do not require too much resources to collect data. However, quantitative indicators also do not depict the status of something in more qualitative terms. Degree of capacity developed are often better captured by qualitative indicators. For example, what is the increased capacity of targeted institutions to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods, may not be measurable in strict quantitative terms, but it can be graded based on qualitative findings.

106. In the case of capacity development initiatives such as this project that is “to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods”, using quantitative and qualitative indicators would allow the Project Team to better measure this transformation. A mix of both types of indicators would be more suited for the measurement of the performance of this project offering quantity and quality information about project achievements.

107. The review of the M&E framework, and the observations made and discussions during the mission of the Evaluator in Kazakhstan indicate that there is a need to revise some of these indicators:

- Add a capacity-based indicator to measure the introduction of ILUPs in Kazakhstan: Measuring the achievement of the project’s objective is to be done through 3 indicators. The project would succeed if 750,000ha in steppe and semi-arid zones are under ILUPs that SLM practices; the humus content of soil under ILUPs would be between 8 to 10%; and livestock weight gain would be 20% over the baseline. Another indicator is needed to measure the institutionalization of the ILUP process. The project is piloting a new approach for land use planning that is integrating SLM principles. As the demonstrations are now underway, the project should also focus on the ILUP process, develop a “how to” manual, a training programme for planners, and a recommendation to the government to institutionalize this process; hence rendering it sustainable over the long-term.
- Review the target for the first indicator currently set at 750,000ha: As per the project document, this figure corresponds to the combined area of the five pilot rural okrugs⁸ selected as pilots for integrated land use planning. It was based on the assumptions that ILUPs would be developed for this area. Since the beginning of the project, ILUPs were developed but not at the regional level but more at the local level on areas covered by the demonstration sites; hence the total area covered by the ILUPs developed with the support of the project will not reach 750,000ha. As it stands today, the demonstration sites including the counterpart areas committed by the beneficiaries cover a total area of 234,200ha. This number needs to be review and aligned with the project plan, including the decision of implementing or not the 9th demonstration plot (see Section 4.2.1).
- Review the target of the second indicator currently set at 8 to 10% in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place: Discussion with experts during the mission of the Evaluator reveals that the targeted humus content for soil in these areas is not possible and needs to be revised. Additionally, as the percentage content of humus in soil varies according to soil conditions in each region, a target for humus content should be set for each region. Based on consultations with agronomists, the project is proposing the following targets:

○ Akmola –	from 3.5-3.9% currently to 3.8-4.1%
○ North Kazakhstan -	from 3.3-3.7% currently to 3.7-3.9%
○ Almaty –	from 2.2-2.3 % currently to 2.7-2.9%
○ Kyzylorda –	from 2.1-2.3% currently to 2.7-3.5%.

⁸ Akkol district of Akmola oblast (northern & southern steppe), Enbekshikazakh district of Almaty oblast (mountain steppe, semi-desert), Aygoz district of East Kazakhstan oblast (semi-desert, northern & southern desert, southern steppe), Fedorovskiy district of Kostanay oblast (forest steppe), and Zhalygashsky district of Kyzylorda oblast (southern & northern desert).

- Kostanay – from 2.8-3.1% currently to 3.8-4.1%
- East Kazakhstan Regions – from 1.8-2.2% currently to 2.7-3.2%

Following the review of the above, the Evaluator recommends changing the current target of 8-10% to these figures above.

- Review the target of the third indicator currently set at 20% weight gain of livestock: Based on initial baseline work conducted at the beginning of the project, the results showed a large difference with the baseline figure identified during the design phase and documented in the project document (136kg vs. 320kg). Currently (June 2017), the result is 329kg that is +142% weight gain when compared with the project baseline (136kg) and +3% when compared to the baseline from the design phase (320kg). The target needs to be reviewed with input from livestock experts and identify a new target based on the project baseline figure.

108. Finally, when considering the good progress made so far by the project, particularly with the demonstration sites, it will be important to emphasize the monitoring of outcome 2 during the remaining period of implementation. The existing set of indicators under this outcome measures the existence of an inter-agency mechanism for coordinating the ILUP process and the implementation of agro-environmental friendly incentives as well as measures the enabling environment in place (policies and legislation) to support this new approach. Overall, these indicators are measuring how enable is the policy and legislation environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives.

109. It is critical that this outcome is carefully monitored in the years to come to end the project with the required agro-environmental incentives “embedded” in the related policies and legislation and that lessons learned and best practices are identified and disseminated. Ultimately, the project is about testing new agro-environmental incentives promoting the use of SLM practices and applying them through a new integrated land use planning approach in order “to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods”. The project needs to measure how transformative the project is to implement a sustainable land management approach.

110. Based on this review of the M&E function of the project, it is rated as moderately satisfactory. It found that the set of indicators is not fully SMART⁹. Most indicators are specific, easily measurable, attainable and time-bound. However, they are not totally relevant for measuring progress toward achieving the expected outcomes and the objective of the project. They do not measure enough how effective the project is in developing the capacity of stakeholders. The M&E framework is much focused on surface areas to be covered by the project (number of ha) and on the number of participants involved in information/training events as opposed to focusing more on the development of new knowledge and on increasing the capacity of stakeholders/beneficiaries. The project may meet its targets but ultimately the expected long-term impact of the project is with the government to set the proper enabling environment for SLM practices and with farmers using better technologies and practices throughout steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan. The project should monitor its performance at a more strategic level.

4.3.6. Reporting

111. Management reports have been produced according to UNDP project management guidelines. They include AWP that when finalized are endorsed by the PB; quarterly progress reports; and annual APRs/PIRs. The Evaluator was able to collect the 2015, 2016 and 2017 AWP, 4 quarterly reports for 2015, 2 for 2016 and 1 for 2017, and the APR/PIRs for 2016 and 2017. Overall, progress made by the project is being satisfactorily reported, following UNDP project progress reporting guidelines. The quarterly reports summarize the progress made during the past quarters and the APRs/PIRs document the progress made against the project objective and outcomes on a yearly basis using the set of indicators reviewed in the previous section. These annual reports include also a review and update of the risks identified at the outset of the project and the steps taken to mitigate these risks when rated as critical.

112. The ratings given in APRs/PIRs were also reviewed. The progress made against the overall development objective and outcomes has been rated as satisfactory in the 2017 APR/PIR (no ratings were provided in the 2016 APR/PIR), and no ratings were provided for the implementation progress in both

⁹ SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.

progress reports. The Review Team found that these ratings were well justified, particularly when considering the progress made so far (see Section 4.2.1).

4.3.7. Communications

113. Communication is not “embedded” in the project design (Project Results Framework); it is not part of the expected results/deliverables. As a result, it is not part of the performance monitoring of the project; no indicators are tracking communication activities. However, it is part of the M&E plan whereby under learning and knowledge sharing “*results from the project are to be disseminated within and beyond the project intervention zone through existing information sharing networks and forums*”. The project is also due to identify and participate, as relevant and appropriate, in scientific, policy-based and/or any other networks, which may be of benefit to project implementation through lessons learned. As per the M&E plan, the project also needs to identify, analyze, and share lessons learned that might be beneficial in the design and implementation of similar future projects. A two-way flow of information between this project and other projects with a similar focus is also encouraged. The Evaluator noted that no budget was planned for this activity in the M&E plan.

114. The project produced a 1-page factsheet at the beginning of its implementation to present the project. However, so far, not many communication activities have been conducted to disseminate information/knowledge. For the most part, information/knowledge were disseminated mostly through awareness and training events. In the meantime, the Evaluator also found that the project has a good visibility at the regional and local levels where the demonstration sites are located¹⁰. More efforts are needed to communicate lessons learned and best practices beyond the current stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project. It is recommended that during the remaining period of implementation, the Project Team increases its communications to all regions in Kazakhstan and nationally.

4.4. Sustainability

115. This section discusses how sustainable project achievements should be over the long-term. It includes a review of the management of risks and specific risks such as financial risk, socio-economic risks, institutional framework and governance risks, and environmental risks.

116. Project risks were identified at the formulation stage and documented in the project document; including the risk mitigation strategy for each identified risk. It is a list of 6 anticipated risks, which are presented in the table below as well as their respective management responses. The Project Team has been monitoring these risks and no risks have been reported as critical in the annual APRs/PIRs 2016 and 2017.

Table 11: List of Risks and Mitigation Measures Identified at the Formulation Phase

Project Risks	Rating	Mitigation Measures
1. Political support for integrating SLM principles into the agricultural sector becomes weak, jeopardizing further replication of SLM practices on the ground	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has been initiated with active support, strong commitment and good understanding of the needed changes on the part of national and local authorities. A stated objective of the government is to boost the agricultural sector as part of the strategy for economic diversification. To realize this objective, the government needs to strengthen long-term competitiveness of the agricultural sector, which, in turn, needs to be grounded in SLM principles and practices. In its capacity building and awareness-raising activities, the project will continue to emphasize this link, while show-casing the successes of the demonstration projects as a means to realizing the objective of sustainable, long-term agricultural competitiveness.
2. Central and local governments are not willing to engage local	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an ongoing process of decentralization in the country such that the responsibility for land use planning rests increasingly with local authorities. Thus conceptual support for the greater involvement of local stakeholders in land use planning is there. However, the problem has been one of local capacities

¹⁰ It was also noted that the project was part of a recent publication by UNDP, GEF and the Government of Namibia titled “*Listening to our Land: Stories of Resilience*”, which was launched at the UNCCD 13th Conference of Parties in Ordos, China. The chapter on Kazakhstan was titled “Kazakhstan – Pushing back the shifting sands”. It highlights the benefits of promoting SLM through agriculture extension centers. More at <http://www.thegef.org/news/listening-our-land-stories-resilience>.

Project Risks	Rating	Mitigation Measures
stakeholders in land use planning		(institutional and individual) keeping up with the pace of decentralization. The project strategy is grounded in decentralization and bottom-up planning. Under Output 1.1, the project will set up rayon-level, inter-sectoral committees consisting of land management, agricultural and environmental units of oblast, district and rural okrug akimats, relevant government organizations and institutions, and associations or unions of farmers. The committee will represent a platform to facilitate and engage in stakeholder consultations during the pilot process of integrated land use planning. Output 1.4 will specifically develop capacities and awareness of agricultural land users, the general public, akimats and training agents in SLM principles and practices. Through these measures, the project will minimize this risk.
3. Climate change-induced extreme seasonal variations or emerging new threats affect pilot projects/ sites in ways that undermine the successes of the demonstration activities	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The emphasis of the project on developing ILUPs whose core focus is maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes and demonstrating SLM practices is a means to improving resilience and the ability to apply adaptive management. While it is possible that some seasonal variations or new threats could impact short term progress at demonstration sites, the processes and capacities put in place by the project will enable stakeholders to adapt land use practices to the changing situation on the ground. Farmers applying SLM methods are likely to be better prepared for seasonal variations. The project will build the adaptability of all levels (from land users, local authorities, up to national institutions) to respond to changing circumstances and threats.
4. Building of sufficient capacity and practical know-how within essential state institutions and local authorities will take too long to allow project sustainability	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the main lessons learned by UNDP and other development partners in Central Asia in the last 15 years is that to change and reform existing institutions and mind-sets is an extremely time consuming process if it is to be achieved effectively. Bearing this in mind, the project has chosen a 5 year time-frame for the systematic implementation of the various project activities, even though this is a medium size project.
5. Current political commitment to agro-environmental incentives stalls or declines	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While agro-environmental incentives are terra nova for the government, small steps have been taken such as the limited subsidies/incentives to motivate farmers to shift to less intensive agricultural practices and to protect land resources (e.g. crop rotation, forage production, watering points at distant pastures) in the Agribusiness 2020 program. Thus, the intention is there but the problem lies in the design and actual implementation of such subsidies. And these are the issues that the project will address during implementation. Furthermore, to ensure that the proposed agro-environmental incentive scheme does not develop as a parallel process, but rather is mainstreamed into the existing process and procedures for regular agricultural subsidies, under Output 1.3, the project—jointly with rayon and oblast akimats—will devise proposals for agro-environmental subsidies as part of the regular exercise performed by local authorities and submit to MOA for consideration and approval. Further, measures implemented at the pilot sites will demonstrate the feasibility of SLM measures that simultaneously improve productivity and reduce adverse environmental impacts creating a demand from such subsidies among agricultural land users.
6. Legislative changes required to realize the project objective are not agreed to nor carried through in a timely manner	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output 2.1 of the project will set up a high-level inter-agency Working Group with expected members to include representatives from Departments of Green Economy, and Environmental Monitoring & Information of the Ministry of Energy, Land Management Committee and Budget Planning Department of the Ministry of National Economy, Crop and Livestock Production Departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Committees for Water Resources, and for Veterinary Control & Oversight of the Ministry of Agriculture, JSC KazAgroInnovation, JSC KazAgroMarketing. This Working Group will oversee the introduction of legislative changes. The mandate and membership of the Working Group will help ensure that relevant government institutions are active participants and champions of necessary legislative changes.

Source: Project Document and UNDP-Atlas Risk Log.

117. The review of these risks reveals that there are comprehensive, covering most aspects of a project where issues can arise. Risks are to be reported as critical when the impact and probability are high. As

indicated in the table above, most risks were rated medium risk and one low risk. Since the beginning of the implementation, risks are monitored and recorded in the Atlas system. No risks were reported in the 2016 and 2017 PIRs, indicating that no risks were assessed as critical.

118. In the meantime, despite these identified risks, the review conducted for this MTR indicates that the project is progressing well with strong partnerships in place; hence decreasing the chance that some of these risks would materialized. It is the case for those risks linked to lack of willingness from key stakeholders. The Evaluator observed clearly that all stakeholders are engaged/participate in the implementation of project activities; consequently, most risks are mitigated as a result of this participation. Finally, the fact that the project is also a direct response to national priorities is a contributing factor in mitigating some of these risks. The government of Kazakhstan wants to develop its agriculture sector and better use its agricultural lands, including abandoned lands; the project is one instrument to do that.

119. The sustainability strategy detailed in the project document is succinct but satisfactory. The basic strategy stated at the outset of the project to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements was to *“dovetail the proposed agro-environmental scheme into the existing process to ensure that it is mainstreamed”*. The idea was to implement the proposed incentive scheme that is piloted by the project, the same way as the existing subsidy schemes in place at the outset of the project; hence using the same procedures and mechanisms that were in place for other subsidies and also having the government support/commitment to transition to better agro-environmental incentives integrating SLM principles. Based on the review, it was a good strategy; it has facilitated the implementation of demonstrations and should also contribute to the sustainability of project achievements.

120. The sustainability of project achievements is also ensured through the institutionalization of these results. It is already happening with the support provided to the government to amend and develop policies and legislation on mainstreaming SLM principles. As detailed in section 4.2.1, the project has already supported the development of 6 policies, rules and regulations. These documents were approved by the government and are now part of the government policy and legislative instruments to implement sustainable land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones in Kazakhstan. However, regarding the ILUP process, the sustainability of this new planning approach is, so far, less certain. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, it needs to be assessed, documented and institutionalized with the relevant government entities. It is also the case for the training modules, the geo-portal and the e-commerce website. In order to address this type of issues, it is recommended that the project developed an exit strategy emphasizing sustainability and replicability of project achievements.

4.4.1. Financial risk to Sustainability

121. When reviewing the sustainability of project achievements, financial risk is an area where some questions related to the long-term sustainability of project achievements need some discussions. The project is piloting new agro-environmental incentives promoting SLM principles to improve the use of lands in steppe and semi-arid zones. These incentives require a government budget to fund them. As discussed in other sections of this report, this review confirms the government’s commitment in this area. It is a priority for the government and so far, it has been making the required investments in this area. Agriculture is an important economic sector for Kazakhstan and it is expected that the government will continue to implement this priority and support it with the necessary budget, including the scaling-up to other parts of Kazakhstan.

4.4.2. Socio-economic risk to Sustainability

122. The review indicates that there is no socio-economic risk to sustainability. In the worst-case scenario, if the project has very limited impact, it should not affect negatively the project beneficiaries and the “business as usual” scenario should continue. Nevertheless, the project is progressing well and it is expected that the implementation of these new SLM measures should have a positive socio-economic impact on the livelihood of farmers, particularly small and medium-size farms. With the introduction of new agricultural practices, yields are expected to increase and as a result, the revenue of farmers is also expected to increase. Furthermore, the development of organic farming, should open new markets for farmers and lead to better economic viability of farming.

4.4.3. Institutional framework and governance risk to Sustainability

123. As discussed previously in this report, the project is a direct response to the government agenda to sustainably develop its agricultural sector. The project is “rooted” in national priorities, including the state programme agro-industry 2017-2021; it is supporting the implementation of identified policy measures. It is anticipated that the government will continue to implement these SLM-friendly agro-environmental incentives in the foreseeable future. Project achievements are already partially institutionalized; they should be sustained in the medium-term and used as demonstrations to be replicated throughout Kazakhstan.

124. One area that requires some attention from the Project Team during the remaining period of implementation is the development of an integrated approach to land use through the development of a ILUPs. As discussed in section 4.2.1, this process is critical for the implementation of these agro-environmental incentives. The implementation of demonstration sites goes well. However, this new planning approach will need to be assessed, documented and institutionalized to be sustainable in the long-term. There is sufficient time remaining to institutionalize this ILUP process.

4.4.4. Environmental risk to Sustainability

125. The review did not find any environmental risks to the sustainability of project outcomes. The project supports the implementation of measures to increase SLM practices, including the development of capacities of national, and sub-national stakeholders to implement these measures. Ultimately, the achievements of the project that is *to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods*, should have a medium and long-term positive environmental impacts over the natural resources in the project area. The implementation of SLM practices should render the management of these ecosystems more sustainable over the long-term, including the reclaim of abandoned lands.

Annex 1: Project Expected Results and Planned Activities

The table below was compiled from the list of expected results and planned activities as anticipated in the project document. It is a succinct summary of what is expected from this project.

Project Objective: To transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods.

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
Outcome 1 – Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives	Output 1.1: Integrated Land Use Plans (ILUPs) employ the landscape management approach to inform decision-making, restore and conserve ecological functions and processes of agricultural landscapes in pilot districts of the target steppe and desert ecosystems.	GEF: \$1,461,137 Co-financing: \$8,399,459	(i) Setting up rayon-level, inter-sectoral committees consisting of land management, agricultural and environmental units of oblast, district and rural okrug akimats, relevant government organizations and institutions, and associations or unions of farmers. The committee will represent a platform to facilitate and engage in stakeholder consultations during the pilot process of integrated land use planning; (ii) Identification of functional zones in pilot rural okrugs taking into consideration geo-climatic conditions, natural ecosystem (ecosystems, habitats, plant communities, species), natural and anthropogenic processes (areas vulnerable to/ impacted by degradation, water and wind erosion, loss of humus, etc.), and socio-economic data (population, settlements, current economic activities and agricultural land use practices, etc.) . (iii) Identification and spatial assignment of appropriate land use types and practices using participatory planning methods that consider the needs of stakeholders, local knowledge and development priorities of pilot rural okrugs. (iv) Matching identified functional zones with economic priorities of each rural okrug to determine appropriate economic activities and scale for each land unit in order to retain ecosystem integrity and ensure maximum productivity of agricultural lands in the long term. (v) Identification of existing and potential conflicts among different land-users, and between land-users and ecosystems, and development of measures to mitigate or eliminate such potential or existing conflicts, with proposed measures being agreed with stakeholders. (vi) Development of a GIS-based land use concept and its dissemination to relevant government bodies. The planning document will contain recommendations (including GIS-based maps) for different types of land use given development priorities of rural okrugs and the potential/ constraints of ecosystems. (vii) Integration of land-use planning results into the schemes for rational use of land resources of target rural okrugs. (viii) Assessment of environmental and social impacts of demonstration projects implemented under Output 1.2 below, and lessons learned summarized to inform the next cycle of land use planning in selected rural okrugs and districts.
	Output 1.2: Demonstration of sustainable land use and management of		(i) The project will demonstrate methods for restoration and sustainable land use in two types of agricultural landscapes in target ecosystems – arable lands (lands sown with wheat, grain, rice, fodder crops, fallow and abandoned lands) and grasslands (meadows, cultivated and distant pastures). The project has selected nine demonstration sites in six target oblasts covering an area of 145,503 hectares to demonstrate

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
	agricultural landscapes of steppe and desert ecosystems in Akmola, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Kyzylorda and North Kazakhstan oblasts		<p>(ii) sustainable land management practices and integrated land use planning.</p> <p>On-the-ground investments will be undertaken to introduce crop rotation systems and green fallow, resulting in enhanced soil quality and productivity of arable lands; efficient use of irrigated water in rice production; restoration of abandoned arable lands; expansion of forage areas; improvement of cultivated pastures through re-seeding; and increase the mobility of livestock to counterbalance livestock grazing pressures on rangelands in steppe and desert ecosystems. The demonstration work will be performed based on a 'learning-by-doing' format for adaptive implementation of demonstration projects.</p>
	Output 1.3: Piloting agro-environmental incentive schemes to promote SLM investments		<p>(i) These agro-environmental incentives are designed to encourage uptake of SLM measures demonstrated under Output 1.2 above. These agro-environmental schemes will be implemented by oblast and district administration, as the most viable and feasible given the existing institutional arrangements for the design and implementation of agricultural subsidy schemes in Kazakhstan;</p> <p>(ii) These schemes will be implemented in pilot districts and demonstration projects in Kostanay, Akmola, Almaty, Kyzylorda and East Kazakhstan;</p> <p>(iii) These pilot projects will be implement through four-phased approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First, the project will conclude MoUs with akimats of target oblasts and districts, and implementers ○ Second, the project will conduct an analysis of operational and economic activities of project implementers (farms, agricultural firms) that will include assessment of technologies used, economic parameters and effectiveness of land use practices before the start-up of demonstration projects. ○ Third, the project—jointly with rayon and oblast akimats—will devise proposals for agro-environmental subsidies as part of the regular exercise performed by local authorities and submit to MOA for consideration and approval. ○ Fourth, the project will review existing subsidy options under the Agribusiness 2020 program to generate a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis and recommendations on how existing policy options can be amended to support agricultural producers in switching to more sustainable and environmentally friendly land use practices. <p>(iv) The project will analyze the design, allocation, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of existing agricultural subsidies related to land and water resources management;</p> <p>(v) Oblast and/or rayon akimats have confirmed their interest in allocating funds for co-financing agro-environmental subsidies for the purpose of demonstration projects.</p>
	Output 1.4: Capacity building and awareness raising for SLM advocacy and implementation		<p>(i) The project will work with the existing agricultural extension and knowledge sharing centers of the MOA, namely KazAgroInnovation and KazAgroMarketing, to devise training modules and master classes on sustainable crop and forage production and livestock breeding for agricultural land users in target oblasts.</p> <p>(ii) Training or master classes will cover topics related to good farming and livestock raising practices, land and livestock productivity enhancing technologies.</p>

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
Outcome 2 – Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives	Output 2.1: Inter-agency working group established to coordinate integrated land use planning	GEF: \$266,136 Co-financing: \$1,100,000	(i) Set up an inter-agency Working Group with the mandate for institutional coordination and effective implementation of integrated land use planning and development of agro-environmental policies. (ii) The inter-agency Working Group will convene twice a year to review proposed amendments or new policies, regulations and rules. (iii) If needed, ad-hoc meetings can be held to review any pressing issues. The project's experts, as members of the Working Group, will perform an advisory role. (iv) Prior to Working Group meetings, the project will hold consultations at oblast, rayon and rural okrug levels to gather feedback from larger stakeholder groups on proposed changes to land use policies and legislation.
	Output 2.2: New or amended policies developed for adoption by government.		(i) The Working Group is expected to review the following policies, regulations and rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agro-environmental measures applicable to Kazakhstan: targeted biotopes, eligible beneficial land uses and associated regimes, subsidy rates per ha, administration of subsidies and monitoring checklists; ○ Amendments to the Land Code on regulating rangelands and pastures , including ownership rights for pastures and hayfields around settlements; ○ Amendments to the Land Code on land use planning; ○ Changes to by-laws regulating land use issues to include the definition of rational use and its criteria closely aligned with the concept of SLM; ○ Amendments to the Rules on Rational Land Use related to social and ecosystem dimensions of sustainable land use and non-compliance with the requirements of land use planning; ○ Amendments to the Tax Code on privileges for compliance with the SLM requirements for land users, and to the Administrative Code on non-compliance with the SLM requirements by land users and failure to enforce compliance on part of land monitoring authorities; ○ Proposals to the draft Law on Organic Agriculture.

Source: Project Document

Annex 2: MTR Terms of Reference



Terms of Reference

Country:	Kazakhstan
Position:	International Consultant to carry out Midterm Evaluation of
Project name:	Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and
Contract type:	Individual contract
Duty station:	Home based with once time travel to Kazakhstan (project sites)
Duration:	June – October 2017 (25 working days)

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the UNDP-GEF Midterm Review (MTR) of the mid - sized project titled **“Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives”** (PIMS #00088403) implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture of Republic of Kazakhstan.

The project started on the Project Document signature date and is in its third year of implementation. In line with the UNDP-GEF Guidance on MTRs, this MTR process was initiated before the submission of the second Project Implementation Report (PIR). This ToR sets out the expectations for this MTR. The MTR process must follow the guidance outlined in the document *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*:

http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/GEF/mid-term/Guidance_Midterm%20Review%20 EN_2014.pdf

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Building upon the experience of GEF funded projects' efforts, the project is designed to create a more conducive policy and legal framework for establishment of agro-environmental incentives for sustainable and better integrated pasture and land use planning and management, and build national and local capacity for practical implementation of such planning in the field.

The Government of Kazakhstan is requesting GEF incremental assistance to address the situation described above by focusing on sustainable land management in critical, productive, steppe, arid and semi-arid landscapes found in Akmola, Kostanay, North and East Kazakhstan Oblasts (i.e., the northern steppe zone: forest steppe, meadow steppe and dry steppe ecosystems), and Almaty and Kyzyl Orda Oblasts (i.e., the southern arid zone: desert and steppe semi-desert ecosystems)

of the country. Support is needed to change existing patterns of land use and improve land conditions by strengthening agricultural financial mechanisms and the current land-use planning system, which are the basic financial and administrative drivers of land use, thus addressing land degradation problems in the long term.

The project has built its implementation activities upon existing national subsidy programs in the agricultural sector, as well as on the national environmental development approach by facilitating integrated land use planning, with the emphasis being on decentralization and bottom-up planning, as opposed to the existing highly centralized, top-down system. This will include the wider application of a new financial mechanism in pasture and productive landscape management. Building upon the experience of GEF funded projects' efforts, the project will create a more conducive policy and legal framework for establishment of agro-environmental incentives for sustainable and better integrated pasture and land use planning and management, and build national and local capacity for practical implementation of such planning in the field. Existing best practices and approaches will be replicated at a wider scale within selected representative oblasts.

The project document was signed in August 2015, and its implementation started in October 2015. Total project budget is \$9,499,459 million, 1,9 million of which is a contribution from the GEF. Implementing Agency from the part of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the Analytical center for economic research in agro-industrial complex of the Ministry of Agriculture of RK.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE MTR

The MTR will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to set the project on the right track to achieve its intended results. The MTR will also review the project's strategy; pilots plots and its risks to sustainability.

4. MTR APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The MTR must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The MTR team will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool that must be completed before the MTR field mission begins.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach¹¹ ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office(s), UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful MTR¹². Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to *UNDP*

¹¹ For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see [UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results](#), 05 Nov 2013.

Mid-term Review of the UNDP-GEF-LDCF-Government of Kazakhstan Project "Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives" (PIMS 5358)

Kazakhstan, project team; executing agencies, senior officials and task team/ component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project stakeholders, Protected Areas employees, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the MTR team is expected to conduct field missions to Kazakhstan, including the following project sites Astana city, Kyzylorda region, Kostanay and East Kazakhstan regions.

The final MTR report should describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE MTR

The MTR team will assess the following four categories of project progress. See the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for extended descriptions.

i. Project Strategy

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, considered during project design processes?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design. See Annex 9 of *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for further guidelines.
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's log frame indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyze beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc.) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.

12 For more stakeholder engagement in the M&E process, see the [UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results](#), Chapter 3, pg. 93.

- Ensure broader development and gender aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART ‘development’ indicators, including sex-disaggregated indicators and indicators that capture development benefits.

ii. Progress Towards Results

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the log frame indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and following the *Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*; color code progress in a “traffic light system” based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as “Not on target to be achieved” (red).

Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)

Project Strategy	Indicator ¹³	Baseline Level ¹⁴	Level in 1 st PIR (self-reported)	Midterm Target ¹⁵	End- of project Target	Midterm Level & Assessment ¹⁶	Achievement Rating ¹⁷	Justification for Rating
Objective:	Indicator (if applicable):							
Outcome 1:	Indicator 1:							
	Indicator 2:							
Outcome 2:	Indicator 3:							
	Indicator 4:							
	Etc.							
Etc.								

Indicator Assessment Key

Green= Achieved	Yellow= On target to be achieved	Red= Not on target to be achieved
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In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Compare and analyze the GEF Tracking Tool at the Baseline with the one completed right before the Midterm Review.
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear?

¹³ Populate with data from the Log frame and scorecards

¹⁴ Populate with data from the Project Document

¹⁵ If available

¹⁶ Color code this column only

¹⁷ Use the 6-point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.

- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of support provided by the GEF Partner Agency (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ log frame as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations because of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?
- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used: Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems? Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?
- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget. Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?
- Review all the project pilots and evaluate the proposals made under each pilot projects. Are those pilots being consistent with the project objectives and goals. Are those pilots are being sufficiently implemented.

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?
- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?
- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Reporting:

- Assess the concepts and strategies of the pilot plots being implemented in six targeted regions
- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.

- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil GEF reporting requirements (i.e. how have they addressed poorly-rated PIRs, if applicable?)
- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?
- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)
- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as global environmental benefits.

Sustainability

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Annual Project Review/PIRs and the ATLAS Risk Management Module are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.
- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:
- Financial risks to sustainability:
- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the GEF assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

Environmental risks to sustainability:

- Are there any environmental risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project outcomes?

Conclusions & Recommendations

The MTR team will include a section of the report setting out the MTR's evidence-based conclusions, considering the findings¹⁸.

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. See the *Guidance For Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects* for guidance on a recommendation table.

The MTR team should make no more than 15 recommendations total.

Ratings

The MTR team will include its ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in a *MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the Executive Summary of the MTR report. See Annex E for ratings scales. No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.

Table. MTR Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for
(Improving sustainability of the protected areas system in desert ecosystems through promotion of biodiversity-compatible live-support sources in and around protected areas)

Measure	MTR Rating	Achievement Description
Project Strategy	N/A	
Progress Towards Results	Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale)	
	Etc.	
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	(rate 6 pt. scale)	
Sustainability	(rate 4 pt. scale)	

TIMEFRAME

The MTR consultancy will be for **25 days** over a period of approximately **15 weeks** starting June 17, 2017 and shall not exceed five months from when the consultant(s) are hired. The tentative MTR timeframe is as follows:

TIMEFRAME	ACTIVITY
12 May 2017	Application closes
Not later 02 June 2017	Select MTR Team

¹⁸ Alternatively, MTR conclusions may be integrated into the body of the report.

Not later 15 June 2017	Prep the MTR Team (handover of Project Documents)
Not later 23 June 2017, 2 days (1-2)	Document review and preparing MTR Inception Report
Not later 30 June 2017, 1 day (3)	Finalization and Validation of MTR Inception Report- latest start of MTR mission
Not later 05 July 2017, 5 days (4-8)	- MTR mission: stakeholder meetings, interviews, field visits (pls. see Mission agenda below); - mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings- earliest end of MTR
Not later 14 August 2017, 7 days (9-15)	Preparing draft report
Not later 04 September 2017, 7 days (16-22)	Incorporating audit trail from feedback on draft report/Finalization of MTR report
Not later 22 September 2017	Preparation & Issue of Management Response
Not later 10 October 2017, 3 days (23-25)	Expected date of full MTR completion

Options for site visits should be provided in the Inception Report.

Travel;

All envisaged travel costs including trip to Astana (3 days), Kyzylorda (1 day), Kostanay (1 day), Ayagoz East-Kazakhstan region (2 days) and per diem must be included in financial proposal (UNDP rate per diem for April, 2017 for Astana (\$177), Kyzylorda (\$113), Ayagoz East-Kazakhstan region (113). In general, UNDP should not accept travel costs exceeding those of an economy class ticket. Should the IC wish to travel on a higher class he/she should do so using their own resources.

In the case of unforeseeable travel, payment of travel costs including tickets, lodging and terminal expenses should be agreed upon, between the respective business unit and Individual Consultant, prior to travel and will be reimbursed.

MTR mission agenda

Day	Time	Activity
First day, Astana	TBC	Arrival to Astana
Second day, Astana	09.00 -13.00	Presentation of project team
	13.00 -14.00	Lunch
	14.00 – 15.00	Meeting in UNDP Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit and Deputy Resident Representative Mrs. Tuya Altangerel
	16.00 – 18.00	Meeting in the Ministry of Agriculture and Mr. Aidos Mukashbekov, acting director general, Center for economic research in the Agroindustry sector of the MOARK.
Third day, Kyzylorda oblast	9:30 – 10:30	Flight to Kyzylorda
	11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with the administration of the Rice Research Institute
	13:00 – 18:00	Visit Demonstration plots
Fourth day Kostanay oblast	07:30 – 12:00	Flight from Kyzylorda to Kostanay
	10:00 – 13:00	Meeting with administration of the Research Institute of Agriculture
	13:00 – 18:00	Visit Demonstration plots
Fifth day, Ayaghoz East Kazakhstan region	07:15 – 12:00	Flight from Kostanay to Ustkamenagorsk
	14:30 – 15:00	Departure to Ayaghoz region
	15:00 – 20:00	Meeting with local parliament of Ayaghoz region
Sixth day, Ayaghoz East Kazakhstan region	07:15 – 12:00	Visit Demo plot in Ayaghoz
	14:30 – 17:30	Flight to Astana
Seventh day	Whole day	Deskwork and finalization of the mission in the project office

MIDTERM REVIEW DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	MTR Inception Report	MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of Midterm Review	Not later 30 June, 3 days	MTR team submits to the Commissioning Unit and project management
2	Presentation	Initial Findings	Not later 21 July, 1 day	MTR Team presents to project management and the Commissioning Unit
3	Draft Final Report	Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with	Not later 14 August, within 2 weeks, 7 days	Sent to the Commissioning Unit, reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	Final Report*	Revised report with	Not later 10 October	Sent to the Commissioning

		audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR report	2017, within 4 weeks, 10 days	Unit
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*The final MTR report must be in English. If applicable, the Commissioning Unit may choose to arrange for a translation of the report into a language more widely shared by national stakeholders.

MTR ARRANGEMENTS

MTR is UNDP Kazakhstan *(In the case of single-country projects, the Commissioning Unit is the UNDP. The principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's Country Office. In the case of regional projects and jointly- implemented projects, typically the principal responsibility for managing this MTR resides with the country or agency or regional coordination body – please confirm with the UNDPGEF team in the region – that is receiving the larger proportion of GEF financing. For global projects, the Commissioning Unit can be the UNDP-GEF Directorate or the lead UNDP Country Office).*

The commissioning unit will contract the consultants and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the MTR team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the MTR team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

TEAM COMPOSITION

One independent consultant will conduct the MTR with the support of national translator. The consultant cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation, and/or implementation (including the writing of the Project Document) and should not have a conflict of interest with project's related activities.

The selection of consultant will be aimed at maximizing the overall “team” qualities in the following areas:

- Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies;
- Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to biodiversity conservation and land desertification protection;
- Experience working with the GEF or GEF-evaluations;
- Experience working in the CIS region is desirable (preferable Kazakhstan);
- Work experience in the water and sustainable land management or biodiversity area for at least 5 years;
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to Environmental Economics, Agriculture, Sustainable Land Management, Organic Farming, Biodiversity conservation; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis;
- Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;
- University degree in natural resources management, economics, environmental studies;
- Excellent communication skills;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Full proficiency in English both written and verbal including ability to review, draft guidelines and edit required project documentation.

PAYMENT MODALITIES AND SPECIFICATIONS

The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount, and payment terms around specific and measurable (qualitative and quantitative) deliverables (i.e. whether payments fall in installments or upon completion of the entire contract). Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR. In order to assist the requesting unit in the comparison of financial proposals, the financial proposal will include a breakdown of this lump sum amount (including travel, per diems, and number of anticipated working days).

10 % of payment upon approval of the final MTR Inception Report

30 % upon submission of the draft MTR report

60 % upon finalization of the MTR report

APPLICATION PROCESS⁴⁸ Recommended Presentation of Proposal:

- a) **Letter of Confirmation of Interest and Availability** using the [template](#)⁴⁹ provided by UNDP;
- b) **CV or a Personal History Form (P11 form**⁵⁰);
- c) **Financial Proposal** that indicates the all-inclusive fixed total contract price and all other travel related costs (such as flight ticket, per diem, etc), supported by a breakdown of costs, as per template attached to the Letter of Confirmation of Interest template. If an applicant is employed by an organization/company/institution, and he/she expects his/her employer to charge a management fee in the process of releasing him/her to UNDP under Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA), the applicant must indicate at this point, and ensure that all such costs are duly incorporated in the financial proposal submitted to UNDP.

⁴⁸ Engagement of the consultants should be done in line with guidelines for hiring consultants in the POPP:

<https://info.undp.org/global/popp/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴⁹

[https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/psa/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirma](https://intranet.undp.org/unit/bom/psa/Support%20documents%20on%20IC%20Guidelines/Template%20for%20Confirmation%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx)

<tion%20of%20Interest%20and%20Submission%20of%20Financial%20Proposal.docx>

50

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Careers/P11_Personal_history_form.doc

Criteria for Evaluation of Proposal:

Initially, individual consultants shall be short-listed on the following minimum qualification criteria:

- *University degree in natural resources management, economics, environmental studies;*
- *Work experience in the water and sustainable land management or biodiversity area for at least 5 years.*

The shortlisted candidates will be further evaluated based on Cumulative Scoring method – where the below indicated criteria (educational background and experience on similar assignments) will be weighted at 70% and the price proposal will weigh as 30% of the total scoring. The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP's General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

Criteria	Weight %	Max. points
<u>Academic background and skills</u>		
A Master's degree in natural resources management, economics, environmental studies or other closely related field:	20%	100
Full proficiency of English language, excellent communication skills; demonstrable analytical skills:	15%	75
<u>Experience:</u>		
Work experience in relevant technical areas for at least 10 years; Demonstrated understanding of issues related to Environmental Economics, Agriculture, Sustainable Land Management, Organic Farming, Biodiversity conservation; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis:	25%	125
Recent experience with result-based management evaluation methodologies:	15%	75
Experience working with the GEF or GEF-evaluations; Experience working in the CIS region is desirable; Project evaluation/review experiences within United Nations system will be considered an asset;	15%	75
Experience applying SMART indicators and reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios; Competence in adaptive management, as applied to biodiversity conservation and land desertification protection.	10%	50
TOTAL	100%	500

The applicant receiving the Highest Combined Score that has also accepted UNDP's General Terms and Conditions will be awarded the contract.

ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the MTR Team

ToR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Midterm Review Report⁹

ToR ANNEX C: Midterm Review Evaluative Matrix Template

ToR ANNEX D: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants¹⁰

ToR ANNEX E: MTR Ratings

ToR ANNEX F: MTR Report Clearance Form

Annex 3: Code of Conduct for Evaluators and Agreement Form

Evaluators / Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

Mid-Term Review Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed in Ottawa on July 20, 2017



Signature: _____

Name of Consultant: ***Jean-Joseph Bellamy***

Annex 4: Review Matrix

The evaluation matrix below served as a general guide for the review. It provided directions for the review; particularly for the collection of relevant data. It was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents. It also provided a basis for structuring the review report as a whole.

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Review criteria: Relevance - <i>How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF, UNDP and to the transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels in Kazakhstan?</i>				
<i>Is the Project relevant to GEF objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the Project support the related strategic priorities of the GEF? Were GEF criteria for project identification adequate in view of actual needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the GEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents GEF policies and strategies GEF web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners
<i>Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the objectives of UNDP in this sector? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between project objectives and country programme objectives of UNDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents UNDP strategies and programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners
<i>Is the Project relevant to Kazakhstan's transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones and development objectives in general?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project follow the government's stated priorities? How does the Project support the transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels in Kazakhstan? Does the project address the identified problem? How country-driven is the Project? Does the Project adequately take into account national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and programming, in its design and its implementation? To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the Project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which the project support transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels in Kazakhstan Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies; particularly related to land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities? Level of involvement of Government officials and other partners into the project Coherence between needs expressed by national stakeholders and UNDP criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents National policies, strategies and programmes Key government officials and other partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with government officials and other partners
<i>Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the needs of target beneficiaries? Is the implementation of the project been inclusive of all relevant Stakeholders? Are local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in project formulation and implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength of the link between project expected results and the needs of target beneficiaries Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in project design and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries and stakeholders Needs assessment studies Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>Is the Project internally coherent in its design?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the project sourced through a demand-driven approach? Is there a direct and strong link between project expected results (Result and Resources Framework) and the project design (in terms of project components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc.)? Is the length of the project conducive to achieve project outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of coherence between project expected results and internal project design logic Level of coherence between project design and project implementation approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program and project documents Key project stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Key Interviews
<i>How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regards to Kazakhstan, does the project remain relevant in terms of areas of focus and targeting of key activities? How does GEF help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are crucial but are not covered by other donors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which the project was coherent and complementary to other donor programming in Kazakhstan List of programs and funds in which future developments, ideas and partnerships of the project are eligible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Donors' policies and programming documents Other Donor representatives Project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analyses Interviews with other Donors
Future directions for similar Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment between the project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus? How could the project better target and address priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Review criteria: Effectiveness – To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?				
<i>How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the project being effective in achieving its expected outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New methodologies, skills and knowledge Change in capacity for information management: knowledge acquisition and sharing; effective data gathering, methods and procedures for reporting. Change in capacity for awareness raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder involvement and government awareness Change in local stakeholder behavior Change in capacity in policy making and planning to improve land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy reform Legislation/regulation change Development of national and local strategies and plans Change in capacity in implementation and enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implementation of risk assessments Implementation of national and local strategies and action plans through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance Monitoring, evaluation and promotion of pilots Change in capacity in mobilizing resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage of resources Human resources Appropriate practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key stakeholders including UNDP, Project Team, Representatives of Gov. and other Partners Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with main Project Partners Interviews with project beneficiaries

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mobilization of advisory services 		
<i>How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How well are risks and assumptions being managed? ▪ What is the quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Are they sufficient? ▪ Are there clear strategies for risk mitigation related with long-term sustainability of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completeness of risk identification and assumptions during project planning ▪ Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues? ▪ Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Atlas risk log ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, Project Staff and Project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
Future directions for similar Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What lessons have been learnt for the project to achieve its outcomes? ▪ What changes could have been made (if any) to the formulation of the project in order to improve the achievement of project's expected results? ▪ How could the project be more effective in achieving its results? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis
Review criteria: Efficiency – Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?				
<i>Is Project support channeled in an efficient way?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? ▪ Does the Project Results Framework and work plans and any changes made to them used as management tools during implementation? ▪ Are the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? ▪ How adequate is the M&E framework (indicators & targets)? ▪ Are progress reports produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? ▪ Is project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual) ▪ Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happened as planned? ▪ Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? ▪ How is RBM used during project implementation? ▪ Is the project decision-making effective? ▪ Does the government provide continuous strategic directions to the project's formulation and implementation? ▪ Have these directions provided by the government guided the activities and outcomes of the project? ▪ Are there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanisms to ensure that findings, lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability and quality of financial and progress reports ▪ Timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided ▪ Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures ▪ Planned vs. actual funds leveraged ▪ Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations ▪ Adequacy of project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost ▪ Quality of RBM reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation) ▪ Occurrence of change in project formulation/ implementation approach (i.e. restructuring) when needed to improve project efficiency ▪ Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation on effectiveness of project design. ▪ Cost associated with delivery mechanism and management structure compare to alternatives ▪ Gender disaggregated data in project documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, Representatives of Gov. and Project Staff ▪ Beneficiaries and Project partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Key Interviews

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
	<p>learned and recommendations pertaining to project formulation and implementation effectiveness were shared among project stakeholders, UNDP staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing project adjustment and improvement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation? 			
<i>How efficient are partnership arrangements for the Project?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the government engaged? How does the government demonstrate its ownership of the projects? Did the government provide a counterpart to the project? To what extent partnerships/linkages between institutions/organizations are encouraged and supported? Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable? What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP and relevant government entities) Which methods were successful or not and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners, Examples of supported partnerships Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Project Partners UNDP, Representatives of Gov. and Project Staff Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Does the Project efficiently utilize local capacity in implementation?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity? Does the project support mutual benefits through sharing of knowledge and experiences, training, technology transfer among developing countries? Did the Project take into account local capacity in formulation and implementation of the project? Was there an effective collaboration with scientific institutions with competence in land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of total expertise utilized taken from Kazakhstan Number/quality of analyses done to assess local capacity potential and absorptive capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, Project Team and Project partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
Future directions for similar Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons can be learnt from the project on efficiency? How could the project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc....)? What changes could have been made (if any) to the project in order to improve its efficiency? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis
Review criteria: Impacts - Are there indications that the project has contributed to the transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels in Kazakhstan?				
<i>How is the Project effective in</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the project achieve its objective that is to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To pool/mobilize resources To provide an enabling environment, For implementation of related strategies and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key Stakeholders Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with UNDP, Project Team and project Partners

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>achieving its long-term objectives?</i>		<p>through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes in use and implementation of sustainable alternatives ▪ Changes to the quantity and strength of barriers such as change in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Weaknesses in territorial planning system ○ Inadequate policy and legal framework to support a transformation to SLM ○ Perverse financial incentives in agriculture ○ Inadequate capacity and awareness levels for SLM implementation and advocacy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders
<i>How is the Project impacting the local environment?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the impacts or likely impacts of the project on? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local environment; ○ Poverty; and, ○ Other socio-economic issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide specific examples of impacts at those three levels, as relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents ▪ Key Stakeholders ▪ Research findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis ▪ Interviews with key stakeholders
Future directions for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How could the project build on its successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis
Review criteria: Sustainability - To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?				
<i>Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in Project design?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were sustainability issues integrated into the formulation and implementation of the project? ▪ Does the project employ government implementing and/or monitoring systems? ▪ Is the government involved in the sustainability strategy for project outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence/Quality of sustainability strategy ▪ Evidence/Quality of steps taken to address sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews
<i>Did the project adequately address financial and economic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level and source of future financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities after project end? ▪ Evidence of commitments from international partners, governments or other stakeholders to financially support relevant sectors of activities after project end ▪ Level of recurrent costs after completion of project and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNDP, project staff and project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
<i>sustainability issues?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the recurrent costs after project completion sustainable? 	funding sources for those recurrent costs		
<i>Organizations arrangements and continuation of activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are results of efforts made during the project implementation period well assimilated by organizations and their internal systems and procedures? Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support? Has there been a buy-in process, or was there no need to sell the project and buy support? What degree is there of local ownership of initiatives and results? Are appropriate ‘champions’ being identified and/or supported? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which project activities and results have been taken over by local counterparts or institutions/organizations Level of financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities by in-country actors after project end Number/quality of champions identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, project staff and project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Enabling Environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are laws, policies and frameworks addressed through the project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms? Are the necessary related capacities for lawmaking and enforcement built? What is the level of political commitment to build on the results of the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts to support the development of relevant laws and policies State of enforcement and law making capacity Evidence of commitment by the political class through speeches, enactment of laws and resource allocation to priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, project staff and project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Institutional and individual capacity building</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the capacity in place at the national, oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels adequate to ensure sustainability of results achieved to date? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements in place in those different management functions, at appropriate levels (national, oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels) in terms of adequate structures, strategies, systems, skills, incentives and interrelationships with other key actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, Project staff and project Partners Beneficiaries Capacity assessments available, if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review
<i>Social and political sustainability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability? Did the project contribute to local Stakeholders’ acceptance of the new practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example of contributions to sustainable political and social change with regard to land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNDP, project staff and project Partners Beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review
<i>Replication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were project activities and results replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up? What was the project contribution to replication or scaling up of innovative practices or mechanisms to improve land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones? Does the project has a catalytic role? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number/quality of replicated initiatives Number/quality of replicated innovative initiatives Volume of additional investment leveraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other donor programming documents Beneficiaries UNDP, project staff and project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews
<i>Challenges to sustainability of the Project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts? Have any of these been addressed through project management? What could be the possible measures to further contribute to the sustainability of efforts achieved with the project? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in view of building blocks of sustainability as presented above Recent changes which may present new challenges to the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Beneficiaries UNDP, project staff and project Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews

Reviewed Component	Sub-Question	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
Future directions for the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which areas/arrangements under the project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results? What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed? How can the experience and good project practices influence the strategies to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan? Are national decision-making institutions (Parliament, Government etc.) ready to improve their measures to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis

Annex 5: List of Documents Reviewed

ACEPAS, 2015, *Ministerial Order – Creation of Task Force*

Business Sweden, Kazakhstan, November 2016, *Opportunities within the Agriculture Sector - Kazakhstan*

FAO, GRIGORUK V.V, KLIMOV E.V., 2016, *Developing Organic Agriculture in Kazakhstan*

GEF, GEF-5 *Focal Area Strategies*

GEF, *Request for CEO Endorsement*

GEF, *SLM Project - CEO Endorsement Letter*

GEF, *SLM Project PIF*

GEF, *SLM Project Review Sheet*

GEF, UNDP, *Agricultural Technologies in Rice Cultivation Systems*

GEF, UNDP, GoK, *SLM Project - Project Document*

GEF, UNDP, *Reclaiming Abandoned Saline Land – Kyzylorda Region*

Government of Kazakhstan, *Program for the development of the agro-industrial complex in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2013-2020 "Agro-business 2020"*

Gulnara S. Abdrassilova, 2016, *Global Journal of Engineering Education: The agro-industrial sector as a perspective direction for the development of Kazakhstan architecture: an educational aspect*

Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, April 2017, *Economic Newsletter on Kazakhstan*

Kryukova V, August 2016, *Analytical report on the management of adaptation to climate change*

Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Strategy 2030 - Prosperity, Security, And Ever Growing Welfare, of all the Kazakhstanis*

Republic of Kazakhstan, 2017, *Presidential Decree – Government Program for the Development of Agro-Industrial Complex of Kazakhstan 2017-2021*

Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010, *Presidential Decree On the Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2020*

SGP, GEF, UNDP, *Climate change permanent land use: traditional knowledge and advanced practices*

SLM Project, *Annual Work Plan 2015*

SLM Project, *Annual Work Plan 2016*

SLM Project, *Annual Work Plan 2017*

SLM Project, *Factsheet*

SLM Project, *Project Board Meeting Minutes 2015*

SLM Project, *Project Board Meeting Minutes 2016*

SLM Project, *Project Board Meeting Minutes 2017*

SLM Project, *Project Implementation Review 2015*

SLM Project, *Project Implementation Review 2016*

SLM Project, *Project Implementation Review 2017*

SLM Project, *Quarterly Reports: Q1-2015, Q2-2015, Q3-2015, Q4-2015, Q1-2016, Q2-2016, Q1-2017*

UN, June 2015, *Country Programme Document for Kazakhstan 2015-2020*

UN, March 2009, *Country Programme Document for Kazakhstan 2010-2015*

UN, *Partnership Framework for Development, Kazakhstan, 2016-2020*

UN, 2016, *UNDAF Desk Review*

UN, *UNDAF for Kazakhstan 2010-2015*

UNDP, 2015, *Combined Delivery Report*

UNDP, 2016, *Combined Delivery Report*

UNDP, 2017, *Combined Delivery Report*

UNDP, 2015, *Combined Delivery Report by Activity*

UNDP, 2016, *Combined Delivery Report by Activity*

UNDP, 2017, *Combined Delivery Report by Activity*

UNDP, *CPAP 2016-2020*

UNDP, *CPAP 2010-2015*

UNDP, GEF, *Guidelines for Livestock Pastures and Fodder Production for Farming*

UNDP, GEF, *Guidelines for Green Fertilizers and their Application when Growing Wheat*

UNDP, GEF, *Intensive Beef Cattle fattening*

UNDP, GEF, September 30, 2015, *Minutes of Inception Workshop*

UNDP, GEF, *The First Veterinary Help for Farmers*

UNDP, GEF, *Training Manual: Organic Rural Economy*

UNDP, Government of Kazakhstan, *Agreement Between GOK and UNDP*

UNDP, *Initiation Plan for PPG 2014-2015*

UNDP, March 20, 2014, *PPG DOA*

UNV, *CTA Description of Assignment*

_____, 2017, *Analysis of agricultural subsidies in the Republic of Kazakhstan.*

_____, 2017, *E-commerce Presentation*

_____, *Analytical report on the discrepancy between the legislative and regulatory documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the regulation of adaptation to climate change*

_____, *Demonstration of Best Practices in Sustainable Land Resources Management in Steppe, Arid and Semi-Arid Landscapes of Aral Districts in Kyzylorda Region*

_____, *GEF Tracking Tool 2015*

_____, *Kazakhstan: Pushing Back the Shifting Sands*

_____, *LPAC Meeting Minutes*

_____, *PPG Reports*

_____, *Terms of Reference Agro-Economist, Capacity Development Specialist, Legal and Institutional Expert, SLM Expert, PPG Coordinator, SLM-LD National Expert*

_____, *The Project of Launching a Commercial Internet Site for Agricultural Products*

Annex 6: Interview Guide

Note: This is a guide for the Review Team (a simplified version of the review matrix). Not all questions will be asked to each interviewee; it is a reminder for the interviewers about the type of information required to complete the review exercise and a guide to prepare the semi-structured interviews. Confidentiality will be guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings once “triangulated” will be incorporated in the report.

I. RELEVANCE - *How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF, UNDP and to the transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels in Kazakhstan?*

- I.1. Is the Project relevant to GEF objectives?
- I.2. Is the Project relevant to UNDP objectives?
- I.3. Is the Project relevant to Kazakhstan’s transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones and development objectives in general?
- I.4. Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?
- I.5. Is the Project internally coherent in its design?
- I.6. How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?

Future directions for similar projects

- I.7. What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the project in order to strengthen the alignment between the project and the Partners’ priorities and areas of focus?
- I.8. How could the project better target and address priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?

II. EFFECTIVENESS – *To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?*

- II.1. How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?
 - Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives
 - Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives
- II.2. How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

Future directions for similar projects

- II.3. What lessons have been learnt for the project to achieve its outcomes?
- II.4. What changes could have been made (if any) to the formulation of the project in order to improve the achievement of project’s expected results?
- II.5. How could the project be more effective in achieving its results?

III. EFFICIENCY - *Was the project implemented efficiently, cost-effectively and in-line with international and national norms and standards?*

- III.1. Is adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
- III.2. Do the *Project Results Framework* and work plans and any changes made to them used as management tools during implementation?
- III.3. Are accounting and financial systems in place adequate for project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
- III.4. How adequate is the M&E framework (indicators & targets)?
- III.5. Are progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?
- III.6. Is project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)
- III.7. Is the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned?
- III.8. Are financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently?
- III.9. How is RBM used during project implementation?
- III.10. Are there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanism to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to project formulation and implementation effectiveness were shared among project stakeholders, UNDP Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing project adjustment and improvement?
- III.11. Does the project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation?

- III.12. Is the government engaged?
- III.13. To what extent are partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations encouraged and supported?
- III.14. Which partnerships/linkages are facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
- III.15. What is the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNDP, and relevant government entities)
- III.16. Is an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
- III.17. Did the project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the project?

Future directions for the project

- III.18. What lessons can be learnt from the project on efficiency?
- III.19. How could the project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements, etc., ...)?

IV. IMPACTS - *Are there indications that the project has contributed to the transformation of land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones at the oblast, rayon, and rural okrug levels in Kazakhstan?*

- IV.1. Will the project achieve its objective that is to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods?

Future directions for the project

- IV.2. How could the project build on its successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives?

V. SUSTAINABILITY - *To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?*

- V.1. Were sustainability issues adequately integrated in project formulation?
- V.2. Does the project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?
- V.3. Is there evidence that project partners will continue their activities beyond project support?
- V.4. Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms?
- V.5. Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of results achieved to date?
- V.6. Does the project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?
- V.7. Are project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up?
- V.8. What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts?

Future directions for the project

- V.9. Which areas/arrangements under the project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results?
- V.10. What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed?

Annex 7: Review Mission Agenda

MISSION ITINERARY for MID-TERM REVIEW 10-17 of August 2017, Astana, Almaty, Kyzylorda and Kostanay

Day	Time	Activity
09 of August 2017, Wednesday	22:55 on flight LH0646	Arrival to Astana
10 of August 2017, Thursday	09.00 -13.00	Presentation of project team Desk work with project
	13.00 -14.00	Lunch
	14.00 – 15.00	Meeting in UNDP with head of Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit – Mr. Rassul Rakhimov
	16.00 – 18.00	Meeting with Deputy General Director of Information Analytical Center of Environment Protection of the Ministry of Energy – Ms. Saule Zhurynova
11 of August 2017, Friday	10:00 – 11:00	Meeting with head of NGO “Biodiversity Trust Fund” – Mr. Assylkhan Assylbekov
	11:00 – 13:00	Meeting with Department of International Integration of the Ministry of Agriculture – Ms. Malika Sarsenbekova
	14:00 – 16:00	Meeting with national project director, Center for Economic Research in the Agroindustry sector of the MOA RK – Mr. Aidos Mukashbekov
	16.00 – 18.00	Desk work with project
	20:30 – 23:00	Flight from Astana to Almaty
12 of August 2017, Saturday	08:30 – 10:30	Visit demonstration plots
	11:00 – 20:00	Meeting with beneficiaries
13 of August 2017 Sunday	10:30 – 13:00	Meeting with the project experts and key informants
	16:55 – 18:40	Flight from Almaty to Kyzylorda, Astana
14 of August 2017 Monday	10:00 – 18:00	Field day and meeting with the project experts and key informants from Kyzylorda and East Kazakhstan regions
15 of August 2017 Tuesday	10:00– 11:30	Flight from Kyzylorda to Astana
	14:00 – 18:30	Meeting with Extension Center of Shortandy and visit demo plots to be merged with Field day
16 of August 2017 Wednesday	08:35 – 10:45	Flight from Astana to Kostanay
	12:00 – 13:00	Meeting with local Akimat and Administration of Research Institute and project’s demo plots implementations.
	14:00 – 19:30	Visit demo plots and meeting with key informants from Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions
17 of August 2017 Thursday	11:25 – 12:25	Flight from Kostanay to Astana
	14:00 – 15:00	Deskwork, meeting with programme personnel and finalization of MTE.
	16:00 – 17:00	Presentation of MTR
18 of August 2017 Friday	Flight LH0649 at 5:05am	MTE Consultant departs

Annex 8: List of People Interviewed

Name	Organization
Mr. Aidos Mukashbekov	National Project Director, Center for Economic Research in the Agroindustry sector of the MOA
Mr. Akshalov Kanat	Director, Agriculture Research Institute in Akmola
Mr. Assylkhan Assylbekov	Head of NGO “Biodiversity Trust Fund”
Dr. Azamat Kauazov	Water Expert
Mr. Bakhtiyar Sadik	Pasture Expert
Ms. Dinara Kamalova	Administrative and Financial Assistant
Mr. Evgeniy Klimov	Kazakhstan federation of organic agriculture movements - KAZFOAM
Dr. Firuz Ibrohimov	Chief Technical Advisor (CTA)
Mr. Kanat Akshalov	Shortandy Grain Research Institute named by A. Barayev, Kostanay
Ms. Malika Sarsenbekova	Department of International Integration of the Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. Maxim Vergeichik	UNDP Regional Technical Advisor (RTA) (skype)
Ms. Natalia Panchenko	UNDP Consultant
Mr. Rassul Rakhimov	UNDP with head of Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit
Ms. Saule Zhurynova	Deputy General Director, Information Analytical Center of Environment Protection of the Ministry of Energy
Mr. Umirzakov Serikbay	Director, Agriculture Research Institute in Kyzylorda
Mr. Vladimir Levin	Representative of "Farmer of Kazakhstan" Public Foundation
Mr. Yerlan Zhumabayev	Project Manager
Mr. Yurii Tulayev	Head, Crop Husbandry Laboratory, Kostanay Agricultural Research Institute
Mr. Zhanuzak Baimenov	Agriculture Research Institute in Kyzylorda
Ms. Zvoida Orazbakova	Chairwoman of "Margulan" RCCWU
Visit of pilot project: Restoration of abandoned irrigated lands by securing water supply through rehabilitation of an irrigation network and establishment of water collectors in <i>Almaty Oblast</i>	
Joint “Open Farmer’s Day” to visit the following pilot projects and meet key informants, experts, and administration officials	
Pilot project: Combating degradation of irrigated arable lands under rice production systems through introduction of soil and water saving technologies in <i>Kyzylorda oblast</i>	
Pilot project: Sustainable landscape management by sowing perennial grasses and substituting wheat as monoculture with barley in <i>Akmola Oblast</i>	
Pilot project: Sustainable management of agricultural landscapes by expanding organic agriculture in <i>Kostanay Oblast</i>	

Met 20 people (5 women and 15 men) plus numerous farmers, experts and local administration officials during the “Open Farmer’s Day” visiting project sites near Almaty, Kyzylorda, Akmola and Kostanay.

Annex 9: MTR Rating Scales

As per UNDP-GEF guidance, the MTR Reviewer used the following scales to rate the project:

- A 6-point scale to rate the project's progress towards the objective and each project outcome as well as the Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U), or Highly Unsatisfactory (HU).
- A 4-point scale to rate the sustainability of project achievements: Likely (L), Moderately Likely (ML), Moderately Unlikely (MU), and Unlikely (U).

Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets.

Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating)		
6	Highly Satisfactory (HS)	Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice".
5	Satisfactory (S)	Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action.
4	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action.
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action.
2	Unsatisfactory (U)	Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.
1	Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management.

Ratings for Sustainability: (one overall rating)		
4	Likely (L)	Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future
3	Moderately Likely (ML)	Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU)	Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on
1	Unlikely (U)	Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained

Annex 10: Indicators to Measure the Performance of Demonstration Plots

Indicator		Baseline	Target
Pilot 1:	Consumption of irrigation water	29,000 m3/ha	24,000 m3/ha
	Rice yield	46-52 hwt/ha	56-62 hwt/ha
	Lucerne share in crop rotation	29%	35%
	Salt content in inundated rice paddies	1.0 %	0.3 %
	% of soil humus in monoculture fields	0.7%	1.2 %
	Crop products output	45-60 hwt/ha	80 hwt/ha
Pilot 2:	Area of irrigated arable land	3,558 ha	4,978 ha
	Area of restored wastelands	0 ha	1,420 ha
	Number of water collectors	0	3
	Volume of water collected	0 m3	1.5 mln. m3
	Restored irrigation network	0 km	5 km
Pilot 3	Area under forage crops	0 ha	700 ha
	Green fallow land area	0 ha	360 ha
	Humus content of arable land		incr. by 2%
	Wheat yield growth	8-10 hwt/ha	12-15 hwt/ ha
	Amount of hay stocked	500 tons	1,200 tons
	Agricultural areas managed sustainably	0 ha	18,725 ha
Pilot 4	Area under monoculture	3,100 ha	3,100 ha
	Restored area of degraded arable land	0 ha	160 ha
	Meadows created in sown pastures	0 ha	200 ha
	Forage crop areas	0 ha	360 ha
	Increased humus content in soil	-	by 8 %
	Forage crop yield	8 hwt/ha	20 hwt/ha
Pilot 5	Area of distant pastures that are in use	0 ha	17,300 ha
	Pasture productivity	2 hwt/ ha	8 hwt/ ha
	Area of restored hayfields	0 ha	900 ha
Pilot 6	Area under monoculture	15,979 ha	11,979 ha
	Area under forage crops	7,906 ha	11,906 ha
	Area under green fallow	0 ha	4,000 ha
	Increased humus content in soil	2%	Incr. by 10%
	Wheat yield	8.9 hwt/ ha	12 hwt/ ha
	Ameliorated pasture, hayfields	0 ha	2,000 ha
	Pastures under seasonal rotation	0 ha	10,000 ha
Pilot 7	Area under green fallow	0 ha	500 ha
	Area of re-seeded pastures	0 ha	100 ha
	Humus content of arable land	Tbd at start	Incr. by 8%
	Increase in wheat yield	10 hwt/ha	12 hwt/ha;
	Increase in hay yield	8 hwt/ha	20 hwt/ha
Pilot 8	Restored area of degraded arable land	0 ha	200 ha
	Areas under lucerne and other forage crops	300 ha	500 ha
	Increased humus content in soil	Tbd at start	by 10 %
	Rice yield	40 hwt/ha	45 hwt/ha
	Installed equipment for water delivery to inundated rice fields and its accounting	0 units	200 units
	Installed equipment for water discharge from inundated rice fields and its accounting	0 units	200 units
	Consumption of irrigated water	29,500 m3/ ha	23,000 m3/ ha
Pilot 9	Monoculture (wheat crop) areas	10,590 ha	10,190 ha
	Forage crop areas	1,800 ha	2,200 ha
	Improvement of soil fertility	-	by 0.5%
	Increase in forage crop yield	-	by 2 hwt/ ha
	Reduced costs of forage procurement	-	by 20%

Annex 11: Audit Trail

The audit trail is presented in a separate file.

Annex 12: Evaluation Report Clearance Form

EVALUATION REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

for the Mid-Term Evaluation Report of the UNDP-GEF-Government of Kazakhstan Project:
"Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated
territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives"
(PIMS 5358)

Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared by

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