Terminal Evaluation Report

UNDP-GEF Project: Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives

GEF Project ID: 5699 UNDP Project ID: 5358

Country:	Kazakhstan
Region:	Europe and Central Asia
Focal Area:	Land Degradation (GEF-5)
GEF Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Agriculture

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26 April 2021	01	First draft
30 April 2021	Final	Final version

Opening Page

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Name:	Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives	
Project ID:	GEF Project ID: 5699	UNDP PIMS ID: 5358
Country:	Kazakhstan	
Region:	Europe and Central Asia	
Focal Area:	Land Degradation	
Funding Source:	GEF Trust Fund (GEF-5 replenishment cycle)	
GEF Focal Area Objective:	**LD-3: Integrated Landscapes:** Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in wider landscapes	
Implementing Agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	
Implementation Modality:	National Implementation Modality	
Executing Agency:	Ministry of Agriculture	
Responsible Partners:	N/A	

FINANCIALS:

Project Preparation Grant:	USD 100,000
GEF Project Grant:	USD 1,900,000
Cofinancing Total:	USD 9,499,459
GEF Agency Fees:	USD 180,500
Total Cost:	USD 11,499,459

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Received by GEF:	06 February 2014
Concept Approved:	21 February 2014
Project Approved for Implementation:	06 April 2015
Start Date:	01 June 2015
Project Closed (revised):	01 July 2020

TERMINAL EVALUATION DETAILS:

TE Timeframe:	January-April 2021
TE Team	James Lenoci, International Consultant / Team Leader Gulzhamal Issayeva, National Consultant
Reporting Language:	English

The terminal evaluation (TE) team would like to acknowledge the informative feedback and logistical support provided by the project stakeholders, including government officials, project implementation stakeholders, project partners, project beneficiaries, , the UNDP CO staff, and project team members.

Table of Contents

List of Tables:

List of Figures:

Executive Summary

The land degradation focal area project was implemented under the GEF-5 replenishment cycle through a national implementation modality with the Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ACEPAS) of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) as the Executing Agency (Implementing Partner), supported by the UNDP as the GEF agency. Basic project information and finances are summarized below in **Table 1**.

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**		
Project Details:		**Project Milestones:**	
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	5358	**PIF Approval Date:**	21 Feb 2014
GEF Project ID:	5699	**CEO Endorsement Date:**	06 Apr 2015
UNDP Atlas Business Unit, Award ID, Project ID:	Atlas Award ID: 88403 Project ID: 95082	**ProDoc Signature Date (project start):**	01 Jun 2015
Country/Countries:	Kazakhstan	**Date Project Manager hired:**	Prior to start
Region:	Europe and Central Asia	**Inception Workshop date**	Sep 2015
Focal Area:	Land Degradation	**Midterm Review Completion date:**	Sep 2017
GEF Operational Programme or Strategic Priorities/Objectives	GEF-5 LD-3	**Terminal Evaluation Completion date:**	Apr 2021
		Operational Closure date	01 Jul 2020
Trust Fund:	GEF Trust Fund		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	Ministry of Agriculture, Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector		
NGOs/CBOs involvement:	Co-financing partners, represented farmers, participated in international learning exchanges and exhibitions, delivered contracted support		
Private sector involvement:	Co-financing partners, engaged in pilot site activities, knowledge management		
Geospatial coordinates of project sites:	76°48'19.5"E, 44°38'03.4"N	77°12'34.2"E, 43°27'20.5"N	71°44'16.0"E, 52°19'31.2"N
	71°30'50.9"E, 52°08'26.1"N	78°02'15.9"E, 48°25'27.0"N	62°27'27.7"E, 53°22'31.8"N
	63°51'40.5"E, 53°18'26.4"N	65°28'41.9"E, 44°56'24.6"N	69°28'36.8"E, 54°11'01.7"N

Financial Information:		
PPG:	**at approval (USD)**	**at PPG completion (USD)**
GEF grant for preparation:	100,000	100,000
Co-financing for preparation:	0	0
Project:	**at CEO Endorsement (USD)**	**at TE* (USD)**
[1] UNDP contribution:	700,000	700,000
[2] Government:	4,653,220	4,653,220
[3] Others:	2,500,000	2,500,000
[4] Private sector:	426,537	426,537
[5] NGOs:	1,219,702	2,476,467
[6] Total co-financing [1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5]:	**9,499,459**	**10,756,224**
[7] Total GEF funding:	1,900,000	1,870,709
[8] Total project funding [6 + 7]:	**11,399,459**	**12,626,933**

Notes: *Actual expenditures reported through the end of 2020.

TERMINAL EVALUATION PURPOSE

The TE has the following complementary purposes:

- To promote accountability and transparency.

- To synthesize lessons that can help to improve the selection, design, and implementation of future UNDP-supported GEF-financed initiatives; and to improve the sustainability of benefits and aid in overall enhancement of UNDP programming.
- To assess and document project results, and the contribution of these results towards achieving GEF strategic objectives aimed at global environmental benefits.
- To gauge the extent of project convergence with other development priorities, including poverty alleviation, strengthening resilience to the impacts of climate change, reducing disaster risk and vulnerability, as well as cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, women's empowerment, and supporting human rights.

METHODOLOGY

The TE was an evidence-based assessment, relying on feedback from individuals who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, review of available documents, and findings of online stakeholder surveys. The overall approach and methodology of the evaluation followed GEF and UNDP.

The timing of the TE coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic as the new coronavirus rapidly spread to all regions of the world. International travel to Kazakhstan was restricted during this timeframe. Domestic travel restrictions were lifted during the timeframe of the TE and, hence, the national TE consultant carried out a field mission in March 2021 to project demonstration sites in Kyzylorda and Kostanay provinces.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 5-year duration project was designed 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. Building upon the past experiences and lessons learned, the project aimed 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. Best practices and approaches were designed to be replicated at a wider scale within selected representative oblasts namely 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.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS GENERATED

Substantive global environmental benefits have been generated through the interventions implemented under the project.

Improved provision of agro-ecosystem goods and services

Sustainable land management (SLM) practices have improved across 145,503 ha of agricultural lands managed by the farms participating in the demonstration activities at the project pilot sites. Improvements achieved include more efficient use of irrigation water resources, restoration of abandoned and fallow lands resulting in increased coverage of forage crops, increased number of pastures under seasonal rotation, expanded area of re-seeded pastures, increased yields of wheat, rice, and hay, and improved soil management.

Reduced GHG emissions from agriculture and increased carbon sequestration

Improved land management practices and increased adoption of good agricultural practices substantively contribute to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increasing carbon sequestration. Demonstrated agro-ecological approaches included zero-tillage, minimum tillage, combined tillage, snow retention, mulching, green manure application, oasis irrigation, recirculating water systems, laser leveling, sub-soiling, artificial seeding and pollination, intercropping, bio-fortification, short-term rotated systems, etc. Project reporting document mitigation benefits among the 145,503 ha where the pilot areas are located: (i) Sustainable management of 103,377 ha plough land and 19,630 ha pasturelands; (ii) Vegetative cover maintained or increased across 17,300 ha of pastures under improved land use management plans; (iii) 5,000 ha of agroforestry lands under improved multifunctional joint management system; (iv) avoiding emissions from pasture degradation; (v) Improved pasture management and pasture restoration resulting increased carbon sequestration; (vi) Restoration of 17,300 ha of degraded pastures leading to an enhancement of carbon stocks. Using the FAO Ex-Ante Carbon Balance Tool (EX-ACT), cumulative mitigation benefits over a 20-year lifetime (5-year implementation phase, and 15-year capitalization phase) were estimated by the project team at more than 5 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (a more precise estimate was not made because the baseline business-as-usual scenario was not fully described).

Reduced vulnerability of agro-ecosystems to climate change and other human-induced impacts

The results achieved through implementation of SLM practices reduce the vulnerability of agro-ecosystems in the pilot areas to climate change. For example, increased vegetation cover helps to regulate diurnal and seasonal fluctuations in temperature, as well as increasing soil moisture levels, which helps to strengthen root systems and increase humus levels, thus creating more resilient and productive ecosystems.

Rehabilitation of drainage courses and more rational and efficient use of irrigation water contribute further towards reducing vulnerabilities to climate change, i.e., conserving scarce water resources strengthens the durability of agro-ecosystems.

Benefits to biodiversity

Adoption of SLM practices across the agro-ecosystems in the project pilot areas have also generated co-benefits to biodiversity. Rehabilitation of drainage courses and more efficient use of irrigation water resources have contributed towards improving habitat integrity and resilience. Increased vegetation cover over previously abandoned and fallow lands provide further habitat improvements. Decreased use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides through promotion of organic agriculture reduces pollution related pressures on biodiversity and helps facilitate more favourable conditions for pollinating insects and other terrestrial and aquatic organisms.

SOCIOECONOMIC BENEFITS GENERATED

Important socioeconomic benefits have also been generated, including the following.

Sustained livelihoods for people dependent on the use and management of natural resources (agro-ecosystems)

More than 2,000 farmers in the nine pilot sites located in six regions (oblasts) in the country received training in sustainable land management and good agricultural practices. At the household level, direct beneficiaries are estimated to be roughly 78%-22% among men and women, respectively.

Reduced vulnerability to impacts of climate change of people dependent on the use and management of natural resources in agricultural ecosystems

Based on a survey carried out by the project team in 2017 through interviewing 161 farmers in twelve communities from the six target regions, the following vulnerability factors were reported as most significant on the well-being of local people: salinity, drought, flooding, and waterlogging.

Implementation of SLM practices and good agricultural practices reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. For example, improved vegetation cover reduces risks associated with climate and disaster hazards. Diversified farming systems increases food security, and reduces vulnerability connected with mono-cropping. The improved early warning systems, including the forecasting tools developed by Kazhydromet enable farmers to make adjustments in the field.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The focus of the project design was primarily on the demonstration activities at the pilot sites. And the project has successfully facilitated demonstration of sustainable land management (SLM) and good agricultural practices through implementation of nine pilot sites located in six regions of the country, comprising a cumulative area of 145,503 ha.

Development of rayon-wide integrated land use plans (ILUPs), which was an integral part of the project strategy is consistent with the strategic direction of the GEF-5 LD-3 Objective ("Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape"). However, the scope of the ILUPs described in the Project Document did not match the resources budgeted for this medium-sized project. It would have been more appropriate to align the project under the GEF-5 LD-1 Objective, "Agriculture and Rangeland Systems: Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem services sustaining the livelihoods of local communities".

The rayon level ILUPs were not developed as planned. The project shifted towards promoting integrated management at the farm and pasture levels. Farm management manuals were prepared and trainings delivered to farmers in the pilot areas; however, the aim of reducing pressures from competing land uses through land use planning was not realized.

The project objective remains highly relevant and consistent with national priorities to strengthen and enhance the sustainability of the agricultural sector. The project made direct contributions towards achievement of the 2018 national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Program and the 2017-2021 State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex, specifically:

- 830 ha of land under irrigation (in the Baikonur District, Almaty region)
- 64,081 ha of fallow and abandoned lands restored (31,780 ha in the Almaty region and 32,301 ha in the Kyzylorda region).
- 14,978 ha of collector-drainage systems restored.
- Strengthened institutional capacities in soil testing (e.g., the extension services in Kostanay region).

The project was aligned with the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) outcomes, the UNDP Country Program Action Plan (CPAP) outputs, and Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG targets 2.4 and 15.3.

The project has worked with stakeholders in recommending mainstreaming agro-environmental incentives into government programmes and schemes, such as the State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026; the Sectoral Program of Sheep Breeding Development in Kazakhstan for 2021-2030; National Export Strategy; the Subsidizing rule for partial reimbursement of costs incurred by an agribusiness entity in the course of investment; and the National Livestock Development Program 2018-2027.

Approximately USD 10.75 million of co-financing materialized in support of the project, exceeding the USD 9.5 million sum committed at project entry. Co-financing contributions were made by 17 different partners, including governmental, GEF agency (UNDP), research institutes, NGOs, and private enterprises/associations. Some of the project deliverables reflect additional partners, including EU, Coca-Cola and IsDB; however, these organizations were not included among the co-financing records.

Country ownership, particularly the agricultural sector, was consistent during project implementation. Local governments (akimats) were actively engaged in the demonstration activities at the pilot sites, but there was weak participation of akimat representatives in the steering committee meetings.

Capacity building was an important aspect of the project's replication approach. Institutional and individual capacities were strengthened through learning-by-doing and skills development as part of the demonstration activities, as well as delivery of trainings, and strengthening partnerships, including through participation of agricultural exhibitions in some European and Central Asian countries. The project worked closely 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. Training covered topics related to good farming and livestock raising practices, land and livestock productivity enhancing technologies. Totally more than 18 training modules were developed and 2,000 participants took part in the capacity building events of the project.

During the TE field mission, evidence was shared regarding replication by local farmers of the demonstrated. SLM practices and technologies. For instance, in Kyzylorda region, nearly 40 separate farmers have purchased laser guide land levelers, to increase the productivity of rice fields, as well as for the rational use of water resources.

Three agricultural universities have strengthened their curriculums: (1) Astana Agrarian University; (2) Kostanay Agrarian University; (3) Kyzylorda Agrarian University. And the project delivered training to local extension centers in the districts where the pilot sites are located.

The project produced a number of knowledge products, including technical publications (360 publications on different topics and themes), contributions to Internet-based information systems (Meteo portal, Geoportal, e-trade, and e-logistic, e-market, wheat and oil crops stock market), and twelve SLM best practice documents uploaded to the WOCAT platform (WOCAT is the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies). The TE team found that several of the project deliverables appeared to be in draft form, e.g., lacking reference to the project and without proper branding, etc. There was no dedicated website for the project and the MoA website(s) contain limited information about the project.

Financial delivery was consistently high throughout the implementation time period. The project benefitted from effective and consistent project management and technical assistance delivered by a team of qualified professionals, as well as strategic and administrative support from the UNDP country office and regional bureau.

There were some shortcomings regarding monitoring & evaluation design and implementation, e.g., some of the indicators in the project results framework were unclear and the means of verification were not specifically defined. And there were inconsistencies in screening social and environmental risks, with no risks at all identified in the SESP prepared at the project preparation phase.

EVALUATION RATINGS:

Evaluation ratings are summarized below in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Evaluation ratings

Criteria	Rating	Comments
1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)		
M&E design at entry	**Moderately satisfactory**	The M&E plan and budget was developed using the standard UNDP template for GEF-financed projects. The M&E budget was USD 65,000, approx. 3.4% of the GEF grant, which is a bit lower than current UNDP-GEF guidance of 5% for projects up to USD 5 million. Some of the indicators and end targets in the project results framework, including at the objective level, were not achievable, including developing district wide integrated land use plans, achieving verifiable improvements in soil humus content and livestock weight across broad landscapes totaling 750,000 ha. Some of the other indicators were unclear, e.g., SLM-related subsidies, with means of verification not specifically defined. And there were inconsistencies in screening social and environmental risks, with no risks identified in the SESP, although gender equality issues were described in the Project Document and land use planning involve inherent risks associated with potential access restrictions, tenure arrangements, etc.
M&E plan implementation	**Satisfactory**	Some revisions were recommended to the results framework in response to midterm review. Considering that the revisions were recommended at the objective level, the TE team understands that such revisions require approval by the GEF Secretariat. The status of the revisions is, therefore, unclear The project had difficulties in monitoring several of the indicators there were statistics were unavailable, such as the number of small and medium size farms in the pilot areas, SLM related subsidies, agro-environmental incentives, etc. An incomplete gender analysis and action plan were completed in 2020; in general, there was limited attention to social and environmental risks.
Overall quality of M&E	**Satisfactory**	The overall quality of M&E is rated as satisfactory. Project progress reports were informative, internal ratings were similar to the ratings of the midterm review, and adaptive approaches were taken to report progress against some of the indicators in the results framework. There were, however, shortcomings in screening and M&E of social and environmental risks.
2. Implementing Agency (IA) Implementation & Executing Agency (EA) Execution		
Quality of UNDP Implementation / Oversight	**Satisfactory**	UNDP provided technical, strategic, and administrative support throughout the entire project life cycle, from the concept stage, project preparation, and during implementation. Execution support services were provided according to the agreement with the Government of Kazakhstan for UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects. UNDP representatives participated in each of the Project Board committee meetings, reporting was timely and informative, and strategic guidance was consistently provided by the UNDP Country Office and Regional Bureau.
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	**Satisfactory**	Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the MOA entity selected as the Lead Implementing Partner were closely involved in the project, including chairing the Project Board committee. The MOA chairperson of the steering committee participated in each of the meetings convened. The project management team was comprised of qualified professionals, providing effective and proactive technical and administrative assistance. Financial delivery was satisfactory throughout the implementation timeframe, resources were efficiently utilized, and the project was completed within the agreed time period.
Overall quality of Implementation / Execution	**Satisfactory**	The overall quality of implementation and execution is rated as satisfactory. Country ownership was consistent throughout, specifically with respect to the agricultural sector. The UNDP utilized country and regional experience in sustainable land management projects in the development and execution support of the project. Local governments (akimats) were actively involved in the pilot activities; however, there was inconsistent participation of akimat representatives in the steering committee meetings. Management of social and environmental risks was inconsistent, including no risks at all identified in the screening carried out at the project preparation phase. A GEN-1 gender marker was described in the Project Document and a GEN-0 marker later mentioned in

Criteria	Rating	Comments
		progress reports; an incomplete gender analysis and gender action plan were completed in the last year of the project implementation, in 2020.
3. Assessment of Outcomes		
Relevance	**Highly satisfactory**	The project's objective was highly relevant with national development priorities, including the Government's focus on import substitution, export development, expanding sustainable land management practices, and incentivizing productive utilization of unused land. The project was also directly aligned with the national LDN Target Setting Programme, including restoring fallow and abandoned land, rehabilitating irrigation infrastructure, and promoting water efficient irrigation technologies. Moreover, the project was in line with the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) outcomes, the UNDP Country Program Action Plan (CPAP), and Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG targets 2.4 and 15.3. Agricultural sector stakeholders, including governmental, research, NGOs, and private enterprises, actively participated in the project. And lessons from other GEF-financed projects on sustainable land management and from other donor projects were considered in the project design.
Effectiveness	**Satisfactory**	SLM practices improved across agro-ecosystem managed by the farms participating in the demonstration activities at the pilot sites, covering a cumulative area of 145,503 ha.
Component 1: Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives		
Outcome 1: Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives Project monitoring reports indicate achievement of the end targets regarding crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, irrigation efficiency, etc. Access of small and medium farmers in the pilot sites to agro-environmental incentives has increased, although governmental information systems do not differentiate small and medium farmers. Farmers and extension officers working and serving the pilot sites received training on SLM best practices. Three universities have strengthened their curricula on SLM practices and distant range management: Astana Agrarian University, Kostanay Agrarian University, and Kyzylorda Agrarian University.	**Satisfactory**	
Component 2: Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives		
Outcome 2: Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives The Government has consistently increased funding of agricultural subsidy schemes, and some of the agro-environmental incentives demonstrated on the project have been reflected in the proposed State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026 (the program is not yet approved). Current Governmental information management systems do not distinguish financing for SLM practices; based on assumptions regarding "innovative agro technologies" and "green" subsidies, there is indirect indication that financing for agro-environmental incentives have increased compared to the project baseline scenario. There was no documentary evidence available indicating that the Inter-Agency Working Group has been institutionalized, but testimonial feedback during the TE indicated that the group periodically meets on an informal basis.	**Moderately satisfactory**	
Efficiency	**Satisfactory**	The project efficiently utilized financial and human resources, satisfactorily achieving the objective and outcomes within the designed 5-year timeframe.
Overall project outcome rating	**Satisfactory**	The overall project outcome rating is satisfactory. The project objective remains highly relevant at closure, and there was consistent stakeholder ownership throughout. Co-financing exceeded the commitments made at project entry, with contributions delivered by 17 different partners, including governmental, GEF agency (UNDP), research institutes, NGOs, and private enterprises/associations. Although the integrated land use plans were not developed as planned, largely because of an overly ambitious design strategy, particularly for a medium sized project, the key strength of the project was demonstration of SLM best practices at 9 pilot sites in 6 oblasts (regions) in the country, capacity building of producers and extension services, and substantive contributions towards integrating agro-environmental considerations into the governmental incentive frameworks.
4. Sustainability		
Financial sustainability	**Likely**	One of the underlying aims of the project was to strengthen the agricultural incentive framework in the country through demonstration of approaches designed to incentivize

Criteria	Rating	Comments
		sustainable land management practices. Proposals for introducing and improving agro-environmental incentives have been included in the State Program on the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026 and other national programs and schemes. Moreover, the Government has consistently increased investments in agricultural subsidies, and strengthening the sustainability of the agricultural sector remains a primary development priority. International donors also continue to provide technical and financial assistance, including from the European Union and the GEF, e.g., results and lessons from this project were incorporated into the design of the GEF-7 project on sustainable food systems. On a macro level, government subsidies for chemical fertilizers and pesticides remain.
Socio-political sustainability	**Likely**	Stakeholder ownership was satisfactory throughout the project's lifespan, and there is evidence that there is sustained interest among governmental entities, NGOs, research institutes, and private sector stakeholders. Key agricultural extension and knowledge sharing centers, including KazAgroInnovation and KazAgroMarketing have developed training modules based on the demonstrated SLM practices implemented at the project pilot sites. Knowledge generated on the project through the pilot demonstration activities has been transferred to 12 extension centers, 6 research institutes, NGOs, farmer associations, and individual farmers who participated in the pilot activities.
Institutional framework and governance sustainability	**Likely**	The Inter-Agency Working Group established by the project has contributed towards improved cross-sectoral coordination on SLM issues. The project also provided inputs into several policies and legal frameworks, including the Pilot Program on export-oriented organic agriculture, the National Export Strategy, Law on Organic Farming, Amended Law on Pastures, and the State Program on the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex. Law on organic agriculture has been adopted 27 November 2015 (amended in 2018 and 2019), derivative legislation and standards approved in 2017, as well as certification and labeling regulations (approved in 2017).
Environmental sustainability	**Likely**	The demonstrated best practices in implementing SLM approaches at the farm level enhances resilience of the agro-ecosystems across the pilot areas, and provides a practical framework for upscaling to other regions in the country. Forecasting and early warning capabilities, e.g., the drought forecasting tools of the Kazakhstani Hydromet, have also been strengthened. Climate and disaster risks remain relevant to the sustainability of environmental benefits generated on the project, but the project has made important contributions towards reducing vulnerabilities through uptake of SLM approaches, and increasing mitigation benefits, e.g., through improved vegetative cover in the agro-ecosystems in the steppe and semi-arid zones of the country. The project made important contributions towards that national climate change adaption measures. Agriculture is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in the country, following the energy sector, but there specific commitments to reducing agricultural emissions have not yet been set. Agriculture is also the largest user of water resources, consuming about two-thirds of water abstracted. Obsolete irrigation infrastructure and inefficient tariff schemes continue to result in significant losses and a lack of incentives for water conservation.
Overall likelihood of sustainability	**Likely**	Overall, the project has facilitated a number of sustainability structures and systems to help ensure the durability of the global environmental benefits and socio-economic benefits generated.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

TE recommendations are presented below in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Recommendations table

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
Corrective actions and actions to follow up initial benefits from the project:			
1.	There have been a number of reports, technical guidance documents, and other publications produced during the project. However, many of the deliverables do not seem to be in final form. The key reports, technical guidelines, and other publications should be finalized, branded, disseminated to relevant stakeholders, and stored on an accessible platform.	Project team	3-6 months
2.	The records of equipment purchased and facilities constructed as part of the pilot activities should be documented in more detail, including the amount financed through the GEF project funds, co-financing contributions, and funding from other projects. The documentation should include signed asset transfer records.	Project team	3-6 months
3.	Several different types of agro-environmental incentives were demonstrated during the project and are available through various governmental programmes. An information sheet should be prepared and disseminated, specifically oriented towards small and medium size farmers, that provides details of available agro-environmental incentives.	Project team	3-6 months
4.	Pilot models implemented by the project should be documented and published (each separately) in open sources of information. The publication should include descriptions of the technologies introduces, their economic characteristics (payback period, etc.), as well as energy and resources efficiency potential. Documenting and disseminating the experiences and lessons from the pilots would increase the replication potential.	Project team	3-6 months
Future directions towards achievement of strategic objectives:			
5.	Local extension offices are the primary source of information for many farmers. Specific training modules on implementation of sustainable land and water management practices and access to agro-environmental incentives should be developed, regularly updated by Ministry of Agriculture entities through partnerships with research and academic institutes.	MoA	6 months – 1 year
6.	The sustainability of the Inter-Agency Working Group is unclear. Formalizing this working group should be considered, for example, operating as multi-stakeholder advisory group for other projects, and serving as the national working group for implementation of the national action program (UNCCD) and the national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Programme.	MoA	6 months – 1 year
7.	There is a need for strengthening flow and access of information for qualified small and medium size farmers to be linked up with opportunities to participate in green value chains. The feasibility of expanding the existing margin.kz platform or developing a separate mechanism should be investigated, and feasible options should be operationalized.	MoA, research institutes, NGOs	6 months – 1 year
8.	The statistics maintained by the MoA do not provide information on incentive mechanisms that promote sustainable land management, and there are no available statistics on differentiating small and medium size farmers from large farmers who receive incentives. Understanding the significant differences in farm size and structure across Kazakhstan, it would still be advisable to provide more informative breakdowns of delivered incentives, e.g., possibly on a regional basis.	MoA	6 months – 1 year
9.	The capacities of the Kazhydromet and the Center for Space Research should be further utilized and developed in creating tools for identifying and monitoring LDN hotspots in the country, e.g., using Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) imagery tools or similar.	MoA, Kazhydromet	1-2 years
10.	Consistent with the 2018 national LDN Target Setting Programme, the identified LDN hotspots should be integrated into national land use planning and provide scientific based guidance for prioritizing funding allocation for implementing sustainable land management interventions.	MoA	3-5 years

LESSONS

Good practices and lessons learned on the project are presented below.

Good Practices:

- Multi-stakeholder engagement was facilitated through establishing and strengthening an Inter-Agency Working Group at the national level and promoting cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms at the local government level where the pilot interventions were implemented.
- Involving multiple NGOs, research institutes, and private sector stakeholders at the project development phase resulted in a broad base of co-financing and helped ensure that key stakeholders involved in development and implementation of best practices were engaged in the project implementation.
- Participating on legislative working groups was a proactive approach for promoting mainstreaming of sustainable land management principles and advocating for mainstreaming of agro-environmental incentives.
- Locations of pilot projects were appropriately identified, covering major food producing areas of the country. This approach make it possible to demonstrate SLM practices in various sized farms (bigger ones in the north and smaller ones in south) with different type of crops.

Lessons Learned:

- Designing integrated land use planning activities require clear buy-in of relevant stakeholders, as well as sufficient budget and time allocated.
- It would have been advisable to develop (and implement) a knowledge management strategy and action plan, identifying target audiences/groups, agreeing upon key messages, designing appropriate tools and methodologies, etc.
- The results framework should have better reflected the multiple benefits generated by the project, e.g., conservation of globally significant biodiversity, avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequestration of carbon, and the number of direct beneficiaries (gender disaggregated).
- Social and environmental screening should have addressed risks associated with potential conflicts associated with land use planning (e.g., restricted access, land tenure, conflicting use, etc.), risks associated with climate and disaster hazards, risks associated with implementing activities close to environmentally sensitive areas, etc.
- Engagement with the large number of co-financing partners was a key strength of the project, but there seems to have been missed opportunities to mobilize co-financing contributions from other partners, including but not limited to the EU, Coca-Cola, and IsDB.
- There was limited involvement of local governments (akimats) in the Project Board meetings. It might have been advisable to have used hybrid meeting approaches, allowing the akimat stakeholders to join online.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACEPAS	Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAP	Good agricultural practice
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
ILUP	Integrated land use plan
KZT	Kazakhstani tenge
LD	Land degradation
LDN	Land degradation neutrality
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MTR	Midterm review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIF	Project Identification Form
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PIR	Project Implementation Report
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SESP	Social and environmental screening procedure
SLM	Sustainable land management
TE	Terminal evaluation
TOR	Terms of reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WOCAT	World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Evaluation

The TE has the following complementary purposes:

- ✓ To promote accountability and transparency.
- ✓ To synthesize lessons that can help to improve the selection, design, and implementation of future UNDP-supported GEF-financed initiatives; and to improve the sustainability of benefits and aid in overall enhancement of UNDP programming.
- ✓ To assess and document project results, and the contribution of these results towards achieving GEF strategic objectives aimed at global environmental benefits.
- ✓ To gauge the extent of project convergence with other development priorities, including poverty alleviation, strengthening resilience to the impacts of climate change, reducing disaster risk and vulnerability, as well as cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, women's empowerment, and supporting human rights.

1.2 Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The overall approach and methodology of the evaluation follows the guidelines outlined in the following guidance documents:

- UNDP Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects, 2020
- Guidelines for GEF Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluation for Full-sized Projects, Approved by the GEF IEO Director on 11th of April 2017

The TE was an evidence-based assessment, relying on feedback from individuals who have been involved in the design, implementation, and supervision of the project, review of available documents, findings of online stakeholder surveys, and findings of field visits to a representative number of project demonstration sites.

The timing of the TE coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 11 March 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic as the new coronavirus rapidly spread to all regions of the world. International travel to Kazakhstan was restricted during this timeframe. As an adaptive management measure, stakeholder interviews were made on virtual platforms and an online survey was conducted to obtain direct feedback from key stakeholders. Domestic travel restrictions were lifted during the timeframe of the TE and, hence, the national TE consultant carried out a field mission in March 2021 to project Kyzylorda and Kostanay provinces.

The evaluation included following activities:

- ✓ As a data collection and analysis guidance tool, the evaluation matrix included as **Annex 1** was used to guide the evaluation. Evidence gathered during the evaluation was cross-checked among as many sources as practicable, to validate the findings.
- ✓ The TE team interviewed key project stakeholders. A list of interviewed people is included in **Annex 2.**
- ✓ A desk review was made of available reports and other documents, listed in **Annex 3**.
- ✓ The national consultant carried out a field mission to project demonstration sites in March 2021. The findings of the field mission are summarized in **Annex 4**.
- ✓ An online questionnaire survey was designed and carried out to obtain feedback from key stakeholders. A total of 25 out of the 39 invited stakeholders responded to the online survey; the questions and results of the survey are reported in **Annex 5** and interpreted throughout the main narrative sections of the TE report.
- ✓ The project results framework was used as an evaluation tool, in assessing attainment of the project objective and outcomes against indicators (see **Annex 6**).
- ✓ The TE team reviewed information regarding cofinancing realized throughout the duration of the project; the filled in cofinancing table is compiled in **Annex 7**.

1.3 Structure of the TE report

The TE report starts out with a description of the project, indicating the duration, main stakeholders, and the immediate and development objectives. The findings of the evaluation are broken down into the following three sections:

- Assessment of Project Design
- Assessment of Project Implementation
- Assessment of Project Results and Impacts

The assessment of project design focuses on how clear and practicable the project's objectives and components were formulated, and whether project outcomes were designed according to SMART criteria:

- **S: Specific**: Outcomes must use "change language", i.e., describing a specific end-of-project condition
- **M: Measurable**: Results, whether quantitative or qualitative, must have measurable indicators, making it possible to assess whether they were achieved or not
- **A: Achievable**: Results must be within the capacity of the partners to achieve
- **R: Relevant**: Results musts make contributions to selected priorities of the national development framework
- **T: Time-bound**: Results are never open-ended. There should be an expected date of accomplishment.

The project design assessment covers whether capacities of the implementation partners were sufficiently considered when designing the project, and if partnership arrangements were identified and negotiated prior to project approval. An assessment of how assumptions and risks were considered in the development phase is also included.

The quality of project implementation and execution is evaluated and rated. This assessment considers whether there was adequate focus on results, looks at the level of support provided, quality of risk management, and the candor and realism represented in the annual reports.

In GEF terms, project results include direct project outputs, short- to medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact, including global environmental benefits, replication efforts, and local effects. Project results were evaluated and rated according to effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and progress towards impacts. Effectiveness refers to the extent to which the project objective and outcomes have been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved by project closure. The assessment of relevance looks at the extent to which the activity is suited to local and national development priorities and organizational policies, including changes over time. Relevance also considers the extent to which the project is in line with GEF operational programs and strategic priorities under which the project was funded. Efficiency is a measure of the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible; also called cost effectiveness or efficacy. The efficiency assessment also examines compliance with respect to the incremental cost concept, i.e., the GEF funds were allocated for activities not supported under baseline conditions, with the goal of generating global environmental benefits.

Assessment of the sustainability addresses the likelihood that project results will be sustained after GEF funding ceases, with respect to financial resources, institutional frameworks and governance, socioeconomic considerations and environmental factors. Progress towards impact is an assessment of the project theory of change, i.e., how project results will lead to long-term impact, according to the assumptions made and estimated intermediate states.

The assessment of project M&E systems includes an evaluation of the appropriateness of the M&E plan, as well as a review of how the plan was implemented, e.g., compliance with progress and financial reporting requirements, how were adaptive measures taken in line with M&E findings, and management response to the recommendations from the midterm review.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations for reinforcing and following up on initial project benefits and a discussion of good practices and lessons learned which should be considered for development and implementation of other UNDP supported, GEF financed projects.

1.4 Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluators, and the TE team members have signed the Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct Agreement form (see **Annex 8**).

1.5 Evaluation Ratings

The findings of the evaluation are compared against the targets set forth in the logical results framework and analyzed according to developments that occurred over the course of the project. The effectiveness and efficiency of project outcomes are rated according to the 6-point GEF scale, ranging from Highly Satisfactory (no shortcomings) to Highly Unsatisfactory (severe shortcomings). Monitoring & evaluation and execution of the implementing and executing

agencies were also rated according to this scale. Relevance is evaluated to be either relevant or not relevant. Sustainability is rated according to the 4-point scale, ranging from Likely (negligible risks to the likelihood of continued benefits after the project ends) to Unlikely (severe risks that project outcomes will not be sustained). More detailed descriptions of the rating scales are compiled in **Annex 9**.

1.6 Audit Trail

After submitting the draft TE report, a debriefing was held with the project team and the TE team to discuss stakeholder review comments. There were no factual errors indicated and the recommendations were accepted. The final TE report was then issued.

1.7 Limitations

The TE was carried out according to the Terms of Reference (**Annex 10**) and UNDP and GEF guidelines for terminal evaluations of GEF-financed projects. The methodology of the TE was adjusted in response to the international travel restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were no significant limitations associated with language. The TE team consisted of an international consultant/team leader and a national consultant. Moreover, independent interpretation was provided to support the interviews.

Overall, the TE team concludes that the information and feedback obtained sufficiently captured the results achieved by the project and prospects for sustaining results after GEF funding ceases

2 Project Description

2.1 Project start and duration

Key project dates are listed below:

Preparation Grant Approved:	21 February 2014
Project approved for implementation by GEF Secretariat:	06 April 2015
Project start (project document signed by Government):	01 June 2015
Project inception workshop:	September 2015
Midterm review (report):	October 2017
Terminal evaluation (report):	April 2021
Project completion:	01 July 2020

The project preparation grant was approved on 21 February 2014, and the project was approved for implementation by the GEF Secretariat on 06 April 2015. The Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP signed the project document, on 01 June 2015, which marks the official start of the project. The project inception workshop was held in September 2015. The midterm review was carried out in 2017, with the final report delivered in September of that year. The project completion date was 01 July 2020, consistent with the original closure date, 5 years following the start date. The terminal evaluation was completed from January to April 2021.

2.2 Development context

As described in the Project Document, dryland ecosystems (i.e., desert, desertified and dryland steppe ecosystems) cover most of the country (99% of its territory) with annual average precipitation of 100-200 millimeters. Land area used in agriculture totals 222.6 million hectares, 10.8% of which is covered by field crops, 2.2% by hayfields, and 85% by pastures.[1] The availability of arable land per inhabitant (1.5 hectares) is the second highest in the world.[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)[3]. 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. At the time the project was developed, the total annual economic loss due to a mixture of land degradation and poor agricultural management in Kazakhstan was estimated to be around USD 700 million, with poor households paying the highest price[4].

2.3 Problems that the project sought to address

The problem description in the Project Document outlines the risks associated with unsustainable crop and livestock management processes, compromising efforts at securing the flow of ecosystem goods and services from the critical productive landscapes of the steppe, arid and semi-arid zones covering Akmola, Kostanay, North and East Kazakhstan Oblasts (northern steppe zone: forest steppe, meadow steppe and dry steppe ecosystems), and Almaty and Kyzylorda Oblasts (southern arid zone: desert and steppe semi-desert ecosystems).

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. Governmental programs served as a foundation for the Project's planned interventions and as co-financing. However, without GEF support, under the business-as-usual scenario, these programs were considered insufficient to enable a shift towards integrated territorial planning of agricultural systems in Kazakhstan, nor to launch agro-environmental incentive payments for sustainable land use. The main barriers impeding broad uptake of sustainable

[1] Ministry of Agriculture (2013)

[2] OECD (2013), OECD Review of Agricultural Policies: Kazakhstan 2013, OECD Publishing.

[3] The Fourth National Report of Kazakhstan on Implementation of the UNCCD (with comments and additions). 2012. Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

[4] CACILM Multicountry Partnership Framework Project Document, 2006, Asian Development Bank

land management (SLM) in agro-ecological systems of the steppe, semi-arid and arid zones of Kazakhstan are described below.

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

2.4 Immediate and development objectives of the project

The project aimed to redirect current agricultural subsidies to finance environmentally friendly, yet economically profitable, agricultural practices via a system of agro-environmental incentives. On-the-ground demonstration-scale investments were planned 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 activities at the selected pilot sites were expected to translate to direct economic benefits in terms of improved productivity of arable land and pastures, improved food availability and security, and an overall improvement of living standards of the rural population. Productivity of fodder and cereal crops was expected to increase over the baseline in pilot sites (level of increase varies by pilot site. Revitalizing local institutions for pastureland and arable land management and governance would increase social capital and improve empowerment. Local farmers and communities would be encouraged to share benefits and experience creating a positive environment for add-on investments from landowners and users. Additional financial instruments such as tax and loan windows for investments in sustainable land use would be assessed and tested. Further, SLM demonstration activities would be supported by various capacity building activities (Output 1.4) and changes in the policy environment to make it more supportive of SLM practices, which, in turn, would ensure sustainability of socio-economic benefits over the long term.

Support to organic agriculture by expanding the existing system of distant and mobile consulting services for agricultural producers to include experts in agricultural marketing was designed to ensure more farmers participate in organic markets, thus increasing household incomes. The access to markets (both domestic and foreign) and sales of products have been recognized as a major hurdle for development of organic agriculture in Kazakhstan.

The project covers a geographic region with an estimated population of nearly 200,000 people (at the time when the project was developed). UNDP-GEF's annual reporting on its in-situ conservation and SLM projects (for example, conservation of agro-biodiversity or wetland ecosystems, sustainable rangelands management) revealed that women have become key partners 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 described in the Project Document, the project was designed to place particular emphasis on ensuring that women are well represented in project implementation and that the impact of project activities on women are considered.

The project was aligned with the following outcomes and outputs of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and UNDP Country Program Action Plan for Kazakhstan:

- UNDAF Outcome for 2010-2015: Environmental Sustainability. By 2015, communities, national and local authorities use more effective mechanisms and partnerships that promote environmental sustainability and enable them to prepare, respond and recover from natural and man-made disasters.
- CPAP Outcome: Government, educators, communities, civil society and the academic community practice an integrated approach to natural resources management in national and transboundary perspectives.
- CPAP Output: Land authorities and stakeholders have the capacity to implement models for land-use planning and management and landscape conservation in steppe and rangeland areas.

2.5 Expected results

The project was designed to build 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 past experience of GEF funded projects' efforts, the project was envisaged 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. Under a strengthened enabling environment, best practices and approaches could be replicated at a wider scale within selected representative oblasts and other parts of the country.

2.6 Management arrangements

The project was nationally executed (NEX[5]), with the "Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agriculture Sector" LLC of the Ministry of Agriculture (ACEPAS MOA) as the Lead Implementing Partner. Execution support was provided by the UNDP Country Office.

The project organization presented in the Project Document is copied below in **Figure 1**.

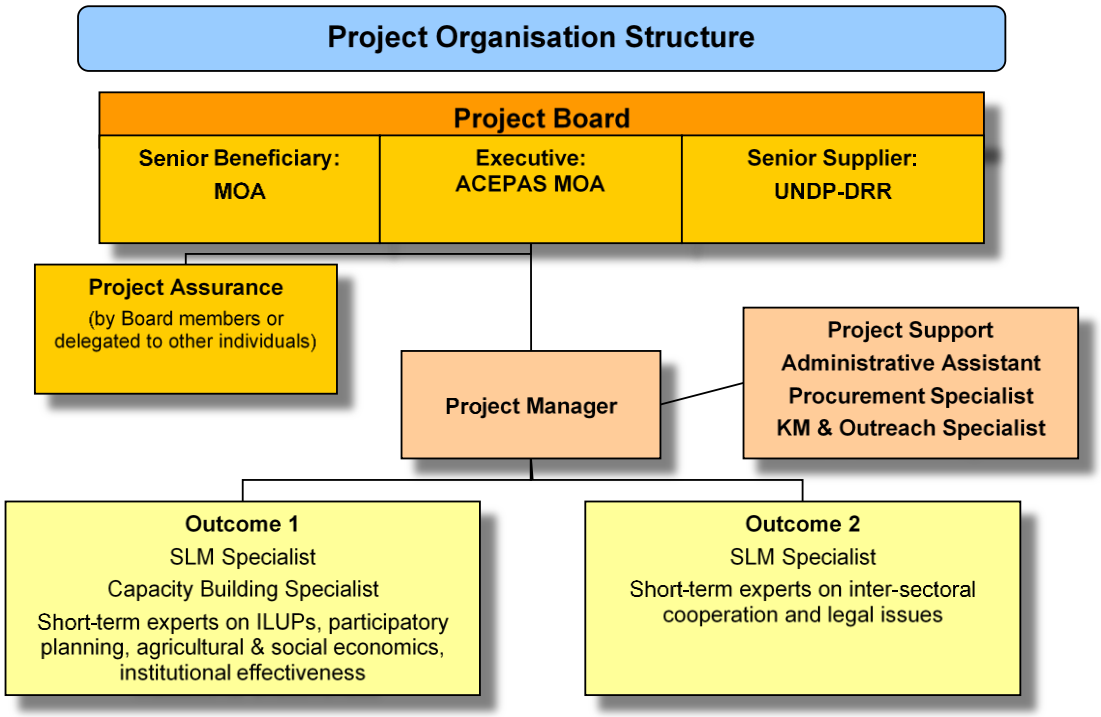


Figure 1: Organizational structure (extracted from the ProDoc)

The Project Board (PB) was the executive decision making body for the project, providing guidance based upon project progress assessments and related recommendations from the Project Manager. The Project Board was set up to provide strategic oversight of the project, and ensure coordination with key baseline initiatives and national investment programs, as well are related activities.

According to the September 2015 project inception report, the Project Board members are listed below:

1. Chairman of the PMC, Managing Director of the Analytical Center for Economic Policy in the Agro-Industrial Complex
2. Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program in the Republic of Kazakhstan
3. Deputy Director of the Agro Trade and logistics Department of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan
4. Director Department production and processing of animal products Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan

[5] In line with standing GEF and UNDP policies, the project will be nationally executed by the Government (referred to as 'national implementation' in UNDP terminology). The Government has key control functions related to all aspects of project leadership, management and implementation (e.g. provides the National Project Director, heads and manages the Steering Committee/Project Board, considers and approves key milestones within its jurisdiction – 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, UNDP can render direct project services on request of Governments. 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.

5. Director of the Department of Production and Processing of Crop Products of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan
6. Akimat of Akmola region
7. Akimat of Kostanay region
8. Akimat of Almaty region
9. Akimat of Kyzylorda region
10. Akimat of East Kazakhstan region
11. Akimat of North Kazakhstan region
12. Director of the Executive Directorate of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
13. National Coordinator of the Small Grants Program of the Global Environment Facility
14. President of the RPO " Union of Farmers of Kazakhstan "

2.7 Main stakeholders

The national, oblast, rayon, and rural okrug level stakeholders and their envisaged roles on the project are listed below in **Table 4.**

Table 4: Involvement of stakeholders in project design and implementation *(Table 2 of the ProDoc)*

Stakeholder group	Roles and responsibilities in the project
Government	
Ministry of Agriculture: - Department of production and processing of livestock products - Department of production and processing of crop products	Mandate: This is the key government institution responsible for regulating the agricultural sector. It develops and implements state policy and programs on agriculture including the Agribusiness 2020 program. Role in project: 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	Mandate of JSC KazAgroInnovation: It has been established to consolidate results & findings of the agricultural science to accelerate development of agriculture in Kazakhstan. In that sense, the knowledge sharing and agricultural system of KazAgroInnovation aims at broadening the use of latest scientifically tested practices and measures by agricultural producers and farmers is implemented by 11 extension centers under scientific research institutions (SRI) as its branches. Mandate of JSC KazAgroMarketing: It has been established to promote competitiveness of agricultural production through provision of marketing and information-related services. KazAgroMarketing has 160 rural information & consulting centers, of which 71 centers are located in 5 oblasts covered by the project. These rural information & consulting centers are established to provide access to information, technologies and consulting services in rural areas including market analysis, logistical support for seminars and workshops, and production of information bulletins. Role in project: 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, etc. Support and coordinate implementation of SLM related demonstration projects in six pilot oblasts under Output 1.2. Support in the analysis and review of agro-environmental incentive scheme as proposed by the project under Output 1.3.

Stakeholder group	Roles and responsibilities in 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 under Output 1.4. 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 under Output 2.2.
Committee of Water Resources and its territorial organizations (RBOs) of the Ministry of Agriculture	Mandate: This Committee and its territorial organizations – Balkhash -Alakol, Ishim, Tobol-Turgai, Irtysh and Aral-Syr Darya River Basin Organizations (RBOs) –are responsible for management of water resources to meet the needs of water users of different sectors of the economy in an environmentally sustainable and economically optimal way. Role in project: 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: Committee on Land Management	Mandate: At the national level, the Committee for Land Resources Management is responsible for development and implementation of state policy and programs on land use planning and land management, geodesies and cartography. Oblast branches of the Committee are responsible for key decisions related to zoning and allocation of land use permits for agriculture, mining, etc., at the oblast level. Role in project: One of the key players in development of integrated land use planning frameworks in the five pilot rural okrugs under Output 1.1. Its representative will sit on the inter-agency Working Group to review policies, rules and regulations under Output 2.2.
Ministry of National Economy: Budget Planning Department	Mandate: Budget Planning Department oversees state budget planning in the short and long-term and ensures budget planning of government ministries and agencies as well as oblast akimats are in line with approved government programs and action plans. Role in project: 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: Department of Green Economy, Department of Environmental Monitoring & Control	Mandate: The Department of Green Economy implements state policies on green growth and development, mainly the adopted green growth strategy. Role in project: Both departments will sit on the inter-agency WG to review policies, rules and regulations under Output 2.2.
Ministry of Energy: Committee of Environmental Regulation & Control	Mandate: The Committee and its oblast branches are responsible for Environmental Impact Assessments. Role in project: One of the key players in development of integrated land use planning frameworks in the five pilot rural okrugs under Output 1.1.
Akmola, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Kyzylorda and North Kazakhstan Oblast Akimats	Mandate: Oblast akimats represent the executive branch of the government and in charge of promoting government polices at the local level considering specifics of each region (i.e. region specific policies and programs). Role in project: 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 under Outputs 1.1 and 1.2. Assist with development of proposals for agro-environmental subsidies (Output 1.3). 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	Mandate: District and rural okrug akimats represent lower levels of the government's executive branch. They implement policies and programs adopted at oblast level. Role in project: Lead the development and implementation of the landscape-level land use plans by providing coordinating inputs of all stakeholders under Output 1.1. Co-finance demonstration projects under Output 1.2 in selected rural okrugs related to sustainable land and pasture management. In particular, the district akimats will

Stakeholder group	Roles and responsibilities in the project
	provide subsidies for green fallow and forage production to complement GEF financing. Assist with development of proposals for agro-environmental subsidies (Output 1.3). 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.
Public Associations, NGOs and community-based organizations	
Zher-Ana Astana Public Association	Mandate: It is a women's rural organization that includes 45 women of the Karabulak village as its members. It aims at expanding the engagement of women in local decision-making. Role in project: Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts under Output 1.1. Co-finance a demonstration project under Output 1.2 related to sustainable landscape management in Karabulak rural okrug of Akmola oblast. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Republican association of farmer public associations and organizations "Agrosoyuz of Kazakhstan"	Mandate: Its main goal is to consolidate interests of farmers and farming organizations and promote cooperation in the agricultural sector. Role in project: Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts under Output 1.1. Co-finance a demonstration project under Output 1.2 related to restoration and sustainable management of irrigated lands in Balkhash district of Almaty oblast. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Public Union "Farmer of Kazakhstan"	Mandate: It has been created with the purpose to enhance skills and knowledge of farmers through provision of consultations and assistance with development and implementation of projects to increase productivity of farms. Role in project: Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts under Output 1.1. Co-finance a demonstration project under Output 1.2 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 under Output 1.4. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Organic Agricultural Association	Mandate: This association was established to unite and protect interests & rights of organic farmers in Kazakhstan. Role in project: Participate in consultations and provide inputs to the development of the landscape-level land use plans in five target districts under Output 1.1. Coordinate implementation a demonstration project under Output 1.2 related to organic agriculture in Fedorovsky district of Kostanai oblast. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (KazFOAM)	Mandate: Established in 2013, the Federation actively promotes development of organic agriculture in Kazakhstan thus targeting both demand for and supply of organic products, and establishment of adequate legal framework. Role in project: Provide inputs to the design of agro-environmental schemes under Output 1.3. Lobby for SLM related policies including the law on organic agriculture.
Farmers Union of Kazakhstan	Mandate: This nationwide union was established with the purpose of uniting farmers for protection of their rights and interests, assistance in development and implementation of programs related to agricultural entrepreneurship. Role in project: Lobby for SLM related changes to government policies, awareness-raising among agricultural producers, farmers, government officials and parliament members.
Private Sector	
"Saryagash" Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)	Description: Saryagash is a privately owned agricultural production enterprise with the total farmland area of 43,896 ha in the Denisovsky district of Kostanai oblast. Role in project: 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 under Output 1.2.

Stakeholder group	Roles and responsibilities in the project
	Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Eska-Food Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)	Description: Eska-Food is a privately owned farming organization with a total farmland area of 24,000 ha. Role in project: Co-finance a demonstration project under Output 1.2 related to sustainable landscape management in Karabulak rural okrug of Akmola oblast. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Rural consumer cooperatives, agricultural production societies, farmer associations, country farms, individual farmers and local communities	Description: These are various community-based organizations designed to serve the needs of their members. Role in project: Actively engaged in land use planning development in respective districts and rural okrugs under Output 1.1. Actively engaged in sustainable use demonstrations at pilot sites under Output 1.2 and will contribute labor and other inputs to implementation of demonstration projects. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Academia and Research Institutions	
Kostanai State University	Description: This is a regional multidisciplinary university that is an educational, scientific and cultural center for innovations and advancing competence in social and economic development in the northern region of Kazakhstan. Role in project: 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	Description: This research institute is one of the largest scientific and methodological centers in Kazakhstan for research works related to cattle breeding, aviculture and crop production and practical implementation of research findings. Role in project: Support project activities related to implementation of demonstration projects on sustainable rangeland management, and monitoring land degradation under Output 1.2. 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 under Output 1.4. 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) under Output 2.2.
Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Cultivation named after I. Zhakhayev, LLP	Description: This research institute aims at addressing the needs of agricultural producers in new high-yield rice varieties and water saving technologies in rice production. Role in project: Implement and co-finance a demonstration project related to the use of soil and water saving technologies in rice production in Kyzylorda oblast under Output 1.2. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
North Kazakhstan Agricultural Experimental Station	Description: This experimental station or enterprise is a large producer of agricultural products; it has a scientific department that deals with seed breeding and research on climate related changes in crop yields. Role in project: 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 under Output 1.2. Participate in capacity building training of the project under Output 1.4.
Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ASEPAS)	Description: The center conducts research and analytical works related to agriculture economics and its aims at development of the agricultural sector through provision of high quality information and analytical products. Role in project: Contribute to the analysis of existing agricultural subsidies and design of agro-environmental schemes under Output 1.3.

2.8 Theory of change

For the purposes of contextualizing and orienting the TE, the TE team constructed a generalized theory of change for the project (see **Figure 2**).

The interventions designed under Component 1 addressed the barriers of weaknesses in territorial planning systems and inadequate capacity and awareness levels for SLM implementation and advocacy. The following outputs were formulated in response:

- Integrated land use plans (ILUPs) employ landscape management approach in the agricultural landscapes in the target districts
- Demonstration of sustainable land use and management of agricultural landscapes
- Piloting agro-incentive schemes to promote SLM investments
- Capacity building and awareness raising for SLM advocacy and implementation

These outputs were envisaged to achieve Outcome 1, i.e., investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro environmental incentives.

Component 2 addressed the other two barriers identified in the baseline analysis, i.e., inadequate policy and legal framework to support a transformation to SLM and perverse financial incentives in agriculture. The outputs designed to address these barriers are listed below:

- Inter-agency workshop group established to coordinate integrated land use planning
- New or amended polices developed for adoption by government

The outputs under Component 2 were designed to lead to Outcome 2, i.e., enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives.

As shown in the Theory of Change diagram, the longer-term outcomes include the following:

- Improved management of agricultural systems through availability of technologies and good practices
- Enabling environment supports sustainable provision of diverse sources for investments to farmers for maintaining or upscaling the application of SLM technologies and practices

Achievement of these outcomes are dependent on a number of assumptions, e.g., sufficient incentives for producers to implement SLM technologies and practices are available, and that sustainable options are attractive to farmers. The attractiveness to farmers is connected to how markets reliably reward sustainable production. Sustained inter-sectoral collaboration in participatory decision-making is an important assumption for achieving durable implementation of SLM at scale.

The ultimate impacts described in the Theory of Change include:

- Functionality and cover of agro-ecosystems maintained
- Durable socio-ecological resilience of steppe and semi-arid zones

Multiple benefits associated with these impacts include land degradation neutrality, conservation of globally significant biodiversity, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector and increased carbon sequestration, and improved well-being of local communities dependent on the use and management of the agro-ecosystems in the target regions.

These impacts are in line with the national Land Degradation Neutrality target setting program, as well as other national priorities, and contribute toward achievement of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 5 (Life on Land).

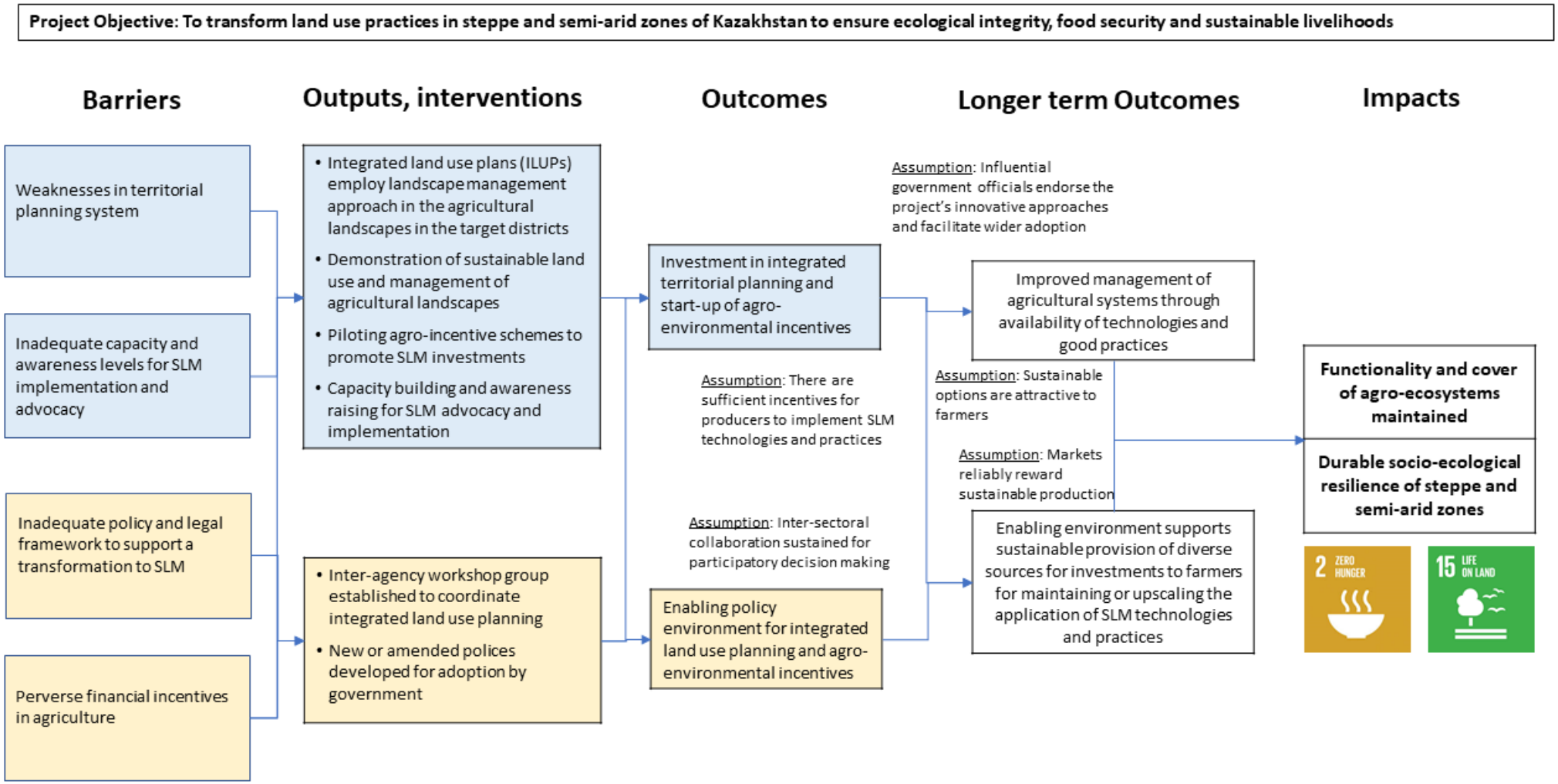


Figure 2: Project theory of change

3 Findings

3.1 Project design / formulation

3.1.1 Project strategy

The project strategy was aligned with the GEF-5 Land Degradation LD-3 Objective, "Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape". The situation analysis was comprehensive and the baseline scenario and descriptions of the proposed pilot sites were well developed.

The focus of the design and the budget allocation was on demonstration activities at the pilot sites. Development of rayon-wide integrated land use plans (ILUPs), which is an integral part of the project strategy is consistent with the strategic direction of the GEF-5 LD-3 Objective; however, the scope of the ILUPs described in the project did not match the resources budgeted for this medium-sized project. For example, 3 weeks for an international expert on landscape-level land use planning were allocated, another 3 weeks for an international participatory land use planning expert, and 8 weeks for a local expert on inter-sectoral cooperation and land use planning.

It would have been more appropriate to align the project under the GEF-5 LD-1 Objective, "Agriculture and Rangeland Systems: Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem services sustaining the livelihoods of local communities", specifically", specifically the following outcomes and outputs:

- Outcome 1.3: Sustained flow of services in agro-ecosystems
    - Suitable SL/WM interventions to increase vegetative cover in agro-ecosystems
- Outcome 1.4: Increased investments in SLM
    - Output 1.4: Appropriate actions to diversity the financial resource base
    - Information on SLM technologies and good practice guidelines disseminated

The project design was also described to be consistent with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) outcome on "Environmental Sustainability. By 2015, communities, national and local authorities use more effective mechanisms and partnerships that promote environmental sustainability and enable them to prepare, respond and recover from natural and man-made disasters", and UNDP Country Program Action Plan (CPAP) output on "Land authorities and stakeholders have the capacity to implement models for land-use planning and management and landscape conservation in steppe and rangeland areas". Land use planning was also reflected in the CPAP output; however, it seems overly ambitious for a medium-sized project to address shortcomings with respect to agro-ecological incentives, as well as integrated land use plans covering a cumulative area of 750,000 ha.

3.1.2 Analysis of results framework

As part of the TE, the project results framework for the project was assessed against "SMART" criteria, to evaluate whether the indicators and targets were sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. With respect to the time-bound criterion, all targets are assumed compliant, as they are set as end-of-project performance metrics. The project results framework was found to be generally SMART-compliant, apart from the issues outlined below in **Table 5**.

Table 5: SMART analysis of project results framework

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
Objective: to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods								
1. Area of productive landscapes (pasturelands, crop and fodder production lands) in steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs that include a focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural	Zero	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)	Y	Q	N	Y	Y	Developing and implementing integrated land use plans (ILUPs) across 750,000 ha is an unrealistic target considering the level of resources allocated.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
landscapes through SLM practices								
2. Improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place	2% on average	8 to 10% on average	Y	Q	N	Y	Y	Realizing improvements in soil humus content across a cumulative area of 750,000 ha is an unrealistic target considering the available resources and timeframe.
3. Area of productive landscapes (pasturelands, crop and fodder production lands) in steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs that include a focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices	Average live weight in degraded pastures/ rangelands is 320 kg	20% weight gain over baseline	Y	Q	N	Y	Y	Achieving 20% weight gain of livestock across a cumulative area of 750,000 ha is an unrealistic target considering the available resources and timeframe.
Outcome 1: Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives								
4. Indicators of on-the-ground improvements in crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, efficiency in water use, etc. (indicators vary by pilot site)	See separate table in Annex 6 to the TE report	See separate table in Annex 6 to the TE report	Y	Y	Q	Y	Y	Mostly SMART compliant; achieving verifiable improvements on the ground can be difficult beyond demonstration plots within the allocated timeframe.
5. Access of small and medium farmers in pilot sites to agro-environmental incentives	At present, the nature of agricultural subsidies is such that they are mostly accessible only to large-scale farms	At least 40% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives have access to them by project end	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	The baseline number of small and medium farms is unclear, rendering measurability and achievability questionable.
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	Training does not adequately cover needs of small and medium farms	At least 75% of small and medium farms in areas where training is delivered send representatives to attend sessions by project end	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	Similarly, the baseline is unclear regarding the number of small and medium farms.
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[6]	No such targeted training program	80% of target audience attend sessions by project end	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
8. Higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management	Current national and regional higher education institutions are producing limited number of professionals with such training and skills	At least 2 institutions[7] have strengthened curriculums by project end	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.

[6] Balkhash and Enbekshikazakh districts of Almaty Oblast, Karabulak rural okrug and Akkol district of Akmola Oblast, Ayyagoz district of East-Kazakhstan Oblast, Denisovsky and Fedorovsky districts of Kostanai Oblast, Kyzylorda City of Kyzylorda Oblast, Akkaiyn district of North Kazakhstan Oblast

[7] Kostanai State University (KSU) and Kazakh National Agriculture University (KazNAU)

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	MTR SMART analysis					Comments / analysis
			S	M	A	R	T	
Outcome 2: Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives								
9. Inter-agency mechanism for ensuring coordination of integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives operating effectively	Does not exist	Inter-agency Working Group has a clear mandate and method of operation to ensure coordination of different land use sectors by project end	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SMART compliant.
10. Inclusion of agro-environmental subsidies in State programs	Agro-environmental subsidies do not exist	Agribusiness 2020 program includes such subsidies	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	The means of verification for this indicator are unclear, as the State programmes do not use the term "agro-environmental subsidies".
11. Increase in government financing for SLM practices	No existing subsidies that are 100% SLM related	20% of total agricultural subsidies are agro-environmental or green subsidies, 10 years after the agro-environmental scheme is up and running	Q	Q	Q	Y	Y	The means of verification for this indicator are unclear, i.e., there was no clear definition of SLM practices or agro-environmental subsidies or green subsidies in the government system.
12. Amendments to existing polices, regulations, and rules such that the support for SLM is stronger	There are weaknesses in a number of existing policies, rules and regulations	At least 7 types[8] of amendments are developed	Y	Y	Q	Y	Y	The limited budget allocated for development of policies, regulations, and rules render the achievability of the end target questionable.
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria compliant (Y); Yellow: observation (Q) noted regarding SMART criteria; Red: not (N) compliant with SMART criteria								

3.1.3 Assumptions and risks

Six risks were assessed in the Risk Analysis (Annex 3 to the Project Document) carried out during project preparation; five assigned a Medium level and one a Low level:

Risk	Risk level
Political support for integrating SLM principles into the agricultural sector becomes weak, jeopardizing further replication of SLM practices on the ground	Medium
Central and local governments are not willing to engage local stakeholders in land use planning	Medium
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
Building of sufficient capacity and practical know-how within essential state institutions and local authorities will take too long to allow project sustainability	Medium
Current political commitment to agro-environmental incentives stalls or declines	Medium
Legislative changes required to realize the project objective are not agreed to nor carried through in a timely manner	Low

[8] (1) 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; (2) amendments to the Land Code on regulating rangelands and pastures, including ownership rights for pastures and hayfields around settlements; (3) amendments to the Land Code on land use planning; (4) changes to by-laws regulating land use issues to include the definition of rational use and its criteria; (5) 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; (6) 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; (7) proposals to the draft Law on Organic Agriculture.

The identified risks addressed the key challenges and risk mitigation measures were elaborated in the Project Document, for example, one reason stated for allocating 5 years for project implementation, even though the project is medium-sized, was to allow more time for capacity building and mainstreaming of demonstrated approaches.

3.1.4 Gender responsiveness and social and environmental safeguards

Gender considerations were include in the Project Document, as well as the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) included as Annex 6 to the Project Document. A gender marker of GEN-1 was indicated in the Project Document, which contradicts the information in the Project Implementation Review (PIR) reports stating the following: "Despite the project being marked as gender blind with no noticeable contribution to gender equality, the project completed a gender analysis of the target regions".

The description of participation of women in project implementation that is included in the Project Document include specific measures aimed at contributing towards gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, encouraging and supporting participation of women in demonstration activities (Outputs 1.1 and 1.2), ensuring equal representation of men and women in the project's capacity building and awareness raising activities in Output 1.4, assisting cooperation of women in rural districts on fund raising and development of small businesses (Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 1.4), organizing training courses of women on production of folk crafts and food products (Output 1.4), and engaging women in monitoring and evaluation of pilot projects and dissemination of good practices (Output 1.2).

The majority of the questions in the SESP checklist were answered "No". The SESP should be completed with the perspective that no safeguards are in place, identifying potential risks that could then be addressed in the design of the project. For instance, the project strategy includes information regarding shortcomings with respect to gender equality, particularly in rural areas of the country. However, there were no gender risks identified in the SESP.

The project design included development of integrated land use plans (ILUPs) covering the entire districts where the pilot sites are located, representing a cumulative area of 750,000 ha. There are critical habitats and other environmentally sensitive areas within these vast landscapes – but this risk was also not considered.

The Risk Analysis (Annex 3 to the Project Document) includes a medium rated risk associated with climate change induced extreme seasonal variations that could undermine the successes of the demonstration activities. Conversely, the SESP concluded that there is "No" risk that the potential outcomes of the project would be sensitive or vulnerable to potential impacts of climate change.

The SESP also did not indicate any risks associated with potential access restrictions to land resources. Land use planning inherently includes such risks – which is one reason why realization of land use plans typically takes a long time, following extensive stakeholder consultations and socialization with communities.

The SESP completed during the project preparation phase categorized the project as "Low" risk.

3.1.5 Planned stakeholder participation

The stakeholder analysis includes an extensive list of project stakeholders, with roles and responsibilities formulated for each. As the Ministry of Agriculture as the Lead Implementing Partner, and the project objective focused on strengthening agro-ecological incentives, the stakeholder engagement plan was understandably centered on the agricultural sector. Cross-sectoral stakeholder involvement was designed through the establishment of the Inter-Agency Working Group at the national level, and to have the Oblast akimats facilitate cooperation of all involved parties through the development and implementation of land use planning schemes.

There was an impressive number of civil society, as well as private sector and research institutional partners committing co-financing at project entry. And the involvement of these stakeholders was articulated in the stakeholder analysis included in the Project Document. The involvement of these non-governmental stakeholders as co-financing partners was one of the key strengths of the project.

3.1.6 Lessons from other relevant projects

The project design includes a comprehensive description of how the strategy builds upon lessons from other relevant projects, particularly UNDP-GEF biodiversity and land management projects aimed at strengthening the mountain and wetland protected area systems, demonstrating in-situ conservation of agro-biodiversity, good practice in livestock management, and landscape approaches to steppe conservation and management that promote both the ecological integrity of ecosystems and rural livelihoods. The lessons learned from the steppe conservation project reportedly contributed valuable knowledge on landscape approaches to territorial planning and stakeholder engagement.

The project also considered experiences and lessons from the following World Bank (WB)-GEF projects: "Biodiversity Conservation in Western Tian-Shan", "Drylands Management Project" and "Forest Protection & Rehabilitation" vis-à-vis participatory land and rangelands management (e.g. herder agreements on restoration and development of degraded rangelands, community management of grazing pressure, and provision of water resources for associated rangelands).

And important lessons from the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) programme influenced the project design. The UNDP and GIZ have had a long-standing partnership through the CACILM programme.

3.1.7 Linkages between project and other interventions

A number of linkages with other interventions were described in the Project Document, including the UNDP-GEF project on improving sustainability of Protected Areas in desert ecosystems (GEF ID 4584, GEF-5).

The project was also designed to complement and benefit from the adaptation and capacity building work of the UNDP-GEF Special Climate Change Fund project in Kazakhstan. The project was planned to be implemented and closely coordinated with the initiative of UNDP, USAID and KazAgroInnovation on "Improving the Climate Resiliency of Kazakhstan Wheat and Central Asian Food Security", particularly on monitoring and information sharing and implementation of demonstration projects that in addition to being SLM-focused include many of climate adaptation measures in agriculture.

The project was also expected to coordinate with the WB-Ministry of Environment & Water Resources (MEWR) project in revising the legal framework for promoting more sustainable pasture use and protection of biodiversity and development of one rayon-level territorial plan. The Project Document includes a footnote indicating that MEWR was disbanded after government restructuring, the Ministry of Agriculture was expected to be the government counterpart for the WB project.

3.1.8 Replication approach

The project design had a strong replication approach. The concept of agro-environmental incentives were envisaged to be mainstreamed into the governmental programmes, thus incentivizing the implementation of sustainable land management practices, something that was not in place under the baseline scenario.

The pilot demonstrations of SLM best practices were envisaged to feed into long-term technical and vocational training, and the field experiences were expected to be considered and reflected into legal, institutional, and policy frameworks, as well as implementation of the proposed integrated land use plans.

3.2 Project implementation

3.2.1 Adaptive management

The project implemented several adaptive management measures over the course of the 5-year timeframe. As the rayon level integrated land use plans (ILUPs) were not developed as planned, there was an increased focus on the pilot activities in the field. The number of pilot sites increased the six described in the Project Document to nine. Additional resources were allocated for agricultural equipment and inputs.

The project also delivered incremental support in the development of early warning tools and services. For instance, USD 38,170 in technical and financial assistance was provided for developing improved forecasting tools by Kazhydromet. This assistance included the purchase of three software packages: (1) GIS Meteo, (2) Synoptic long term forecaster, (3) Standard Precipitation Index for drought modeling and forecast. Also, technical assistance was provided by two experts, hired to guide Kazhydromet on the use of the SPI and Synoptic software. A climate data expert was hired to improve the information flow from Kazhydromet to farmers through regional and local akimats, Farmer's Union, and other NGOs. An example of a drought and crop yield forecast developed by Hydromet is shown below in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Drought and crop yield forecast map August 2021, prepared by Kazhydromet

Technical assistance (USD 19,890) was also provided for continued development of the geoportal based at the Space Research Institute (SRI). The project provided a geoportal designer, and two specialists from the institute were trained on portal design software and to redesign the SRI geoportal. The project experts had several follow-up workshops to design or redesign geoportals for displaying remote sensing, meteorological and hydrological data, and forecasting products.

The project also provided technical assistance (USD 9,600) for the further development of the agricultural marketplace website: https://margin.kz. A trade and logistic expert and marketing expert were hired to collect data/synthesize from all Central Asian countries and passed over to Margin. IT experts and agricultural extension experts recruited by Margin utilized these inputs for establishing an e-trade platform at the Margin bases. A screenshot of the Margin website is shown below in **Figure 4**.

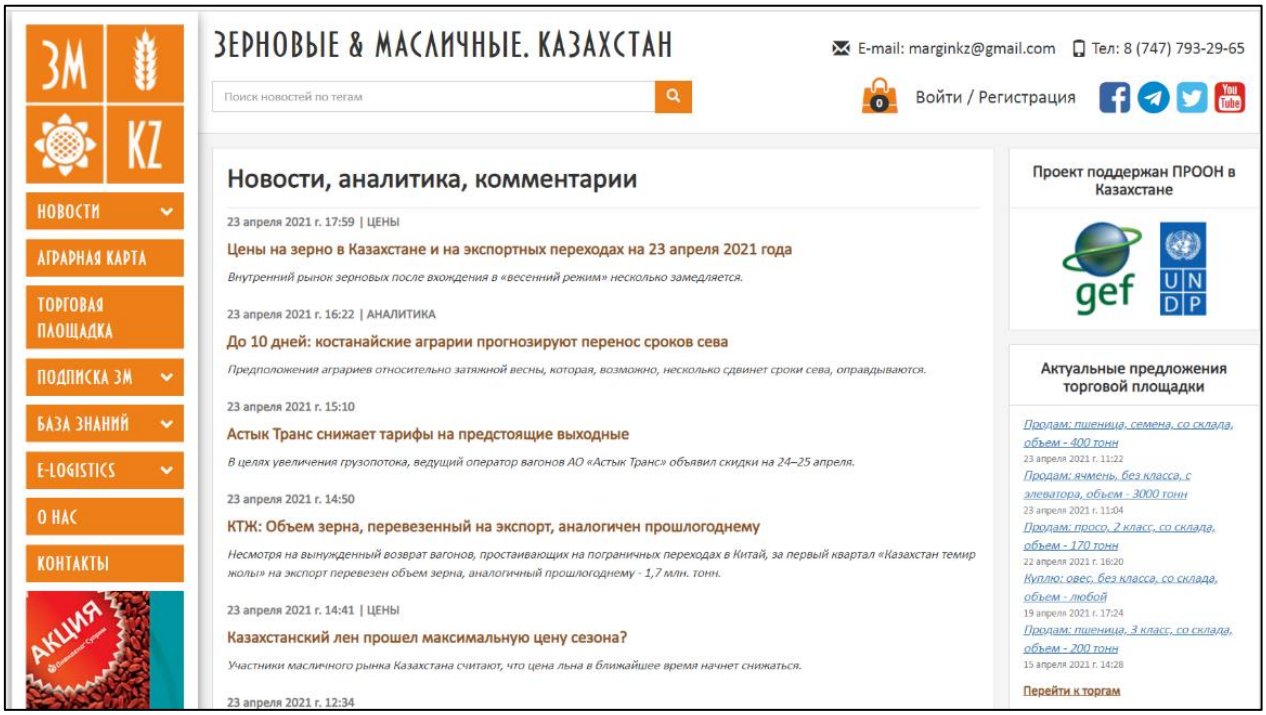


Figure 4: Screenshot of https://margin.kz website (25 Apr 2021)

The majority of project activities were completed by the time the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020. Some adjustments were made, e.g., holding trainings, seminars, and communications with project stakeholders

virtually. The timing of the TE was also pushed back, as there were travel and other operational restrictions at the height of the pandemic in mid-2020.

3.2.2 Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements

Stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements were among the key strengths of the project. Co-financing was contributed by 17 different partners, including the Ministry of Agriculture, research institutes, local governments, NGOs, and private sector enterprises. Partners were actively involved in the project activities, providing technical as well as financial assistance to the demonstrations at the pilot sites, facilitating engagement by farmers and agricultural producers, and supporting dissemination of best practices and knowledge generated.

Through a centralized project coordination unit for UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects in Kazakhstan, projects benefit from having experienced colleagues building upon experiences and lessons from earlier and complementary projects, including projects focused on sustainable land management. Certain synergies, however, did not seem to have materialized. For example, the UNDP-GEF project on improving sustainability of protected areas in desert ecosystems (GEF ID 4584), which was also a GEF-5 project, worked with local governments on development of integrated land use plans, including in the Almaty and Kyzylorda regions. The subject agro-environmental incentives project could have better cooperated with the land use planning carried out in the desert ecosystems project.

Some of the project deliverables include logos of partners not included among the list of co-financing partners; such as EU, Coca-Cola, and IsDB.

3.2.3 Project finance and co-finance

Project Finance:

Based on expenditure reports (combined delivery reports) provided by UNDP, a cumulative total of USD 1,870,709 of the USD 1,900,000 GEF grant had been expended through the end of 2020 (see **Table 6**). The remaining balance presumably will cover the cost of the terminal evaluation.

Table 6: Planned and actual expenditures, 2015-2020

Outcome	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total	Indicative ProDoc budget
Activity 0	108	1,282	4,543	11,509	3,624	4,130	25,196	0
Component 1	36,477	253,371	607,451	203,464	307,362	55,352	1,463,478	1,461,137
Component 2	9,771	4,864	34,972	47,265	76,564	26,981	200,417	266,136
Sub-total	**46,356**	**259,517**	**646,966**	**262,238**	**387,550**	**86,463**	**1,689,091**	**1,727,273**
Project Management	10,980	76,475	46,933	45,952	(2,640)	3,919	181,618	172,727
TOTAL expenditure	**57,336**	**335,992**	**693,899**	**308,191**	**384,910**	**90,382**	**1,870,709**	**1,900,000**

Figures in USD
Source of budget figures: approved Project Document
Source of expenditures: Combined Delivery Reports (CDR), provided by UNDP

Spending across the two project components was very much aligned with the indicative budget in the Project Document.

Project management costs are reported at USD 181,618, which is 10.8% of the sub-total of the two technical components, slightly exceeding the 10% threshold. The amount of project management costs reached the 10% mark in the year 2018, a negative charge USD 2,640 was booked to project management in 2019 and only USD 3,919 was accounted in 2020. The maximum annual amount booked to project management was USD 76,475 in 2016, which is about 44% of the total amount allocated in the indicative budget. (lesson learned)

Inflation and currency exchange fluctuations

Most of the project costs were incurred in local currency, thus inflation and fluctuations in the exchange rate between the Kazakhstani tenge and USD are relevant.

The rate of inflation (consumer price index) over the course of the 5-year project, from 2015-2020, ranged between 4% and >15% (see **Figure 5)**.

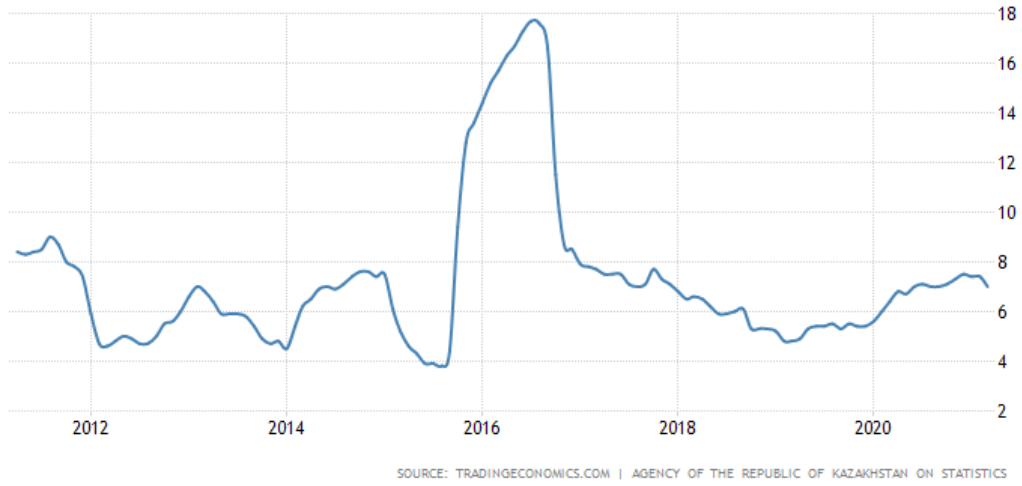


Figure 5: Rate of inflation, 2011-2021

The KZT was significantly devalued in 2015. At the project start, on 01 June 2015, the KZT:USD exchange rate was 180.51, by the end of December 2015 the rate was 382.46 and at project closure the rate was at a similar level, at 379.01 (see **Figure 6**).

Figure 6: KZT:USD exchange rate 2013-2021

Overall the efficiency gains realized through the devaluation of the KZT probably outweigh the impact of inflation during the course of the project's implementation lifespan.

Project Assets:

The project team provided records office furniture and equipment, having a combined purchase value of KZT 2,895,106 (approx. USD 16,000 at 31 Dec 2014 exchange rate). These have been reportedly transferred to Information and Analytical Center for Economic Policy in the Agro-industrial Complex of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Project funds were also utilized for the purchase of agricultural equipment and services, as part of the pilot demonstration activities. The equipment included a tractor, automatic irrigation system, water regulation system, etc. The combined value of the equipment purchased for the pilot activities was KZT 55,180,500 (approx. USD 145,000 at a typical exchange rate of 380, as the equipment was purchased in 2017 and 2018. The Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Cultivation named after I. Zhakhayev, LLP was the recipient of most of the equipment purchased, according to available project records.

Some of the equipment in the list provided by the project team was indicated to have been partially funded by another project, an EU-UNDP project. And a laser guided land leveler observed by the TE National Consultant during the field mission was not included on the list. Also, the breakdown of equipment and supplies purchased and transferred to project partners shows that approximately 30% of the value of these assets were delivered to one of the nine pilot sites, the one in Kyzylorda. It would be prudent to prepare a final list of equipment and other assets purchased and constructed under the project. (recommendation)

Co-finance:

Co-financing was materialized through contributions from 17 different co-financing partners, totaling USD 10,756,224, which exceeds the USD 9,499,459 committed at project entry (see **Annex 7**).

Considering that the co-financing letters were issued prior to the steep devaluation of the KZT in 2015, the fact that materialized co-financing exceeds the amount committed at project entry indicates that the contributions were considerably greater. Apart from the UNDP, which contributed USD 700,000 in grant co-financing, the other 16 partners are Kazakhstani ministries, local governments, research institutes, NGOs, and private sector organizations.

Contributions from three (3) of the 17 co-financing partners were raised during project implementation: the Rural Consumer's Cooperatives of AZAT (USD 290,765), the Union of Haymakers (USD 418,000), and the Union of Organic Producers of Kazakhstan (USD 548,000).

3.2.4 Monitoring & evaluation

M&E design at entry

M&E design at entry is rated as: Moderately Satisfactory

The M&E plan and budget was developed using the standard UNDP template for GEF-financed projects. The M&E budget was USD 65,000, approx. 3.4% of the GEF grant, which is a bit lower than current UNDP-GEF guidance of 5% for projects up to USD 5 million. Some of the indicators and end targets in the project results framework, including at the objective level, were not achievable, including developing district wide integrated land use plans, achieving verifiable improvements in soil humus content and livestock weight across broad landscapes totaling 750,000 ha. Some of the other indicators were unclear, e.g., SLM-related subsidies, with means of verification not specifically defined. And there were inconsistencies in screening social and environmental risks, with no risks identified in the SESP, although gender equality issues were described in the Project Document and land use planning involve inherent risks associated with potential access restrictions, tenure arrangements, etc.

M&E implementation

M&E implementation is rated as: Satisfactory

The project had difficulties in monitoring several of the indicators there were statistics were unavailable, such as the number of small and medium size farms in the pilot areas, SLM related subsidies, agro-environmental incentives, etc. An incomplete gender analysis and action plan were completed in 2020; in general, there was limited attention to social and environmental risks.

Tracking tools:

As required for GEF-5 land degradation projects, the Land Degradation Focal Area Portfolio Monitoring and Tracking Tool (PMAT) was filled in at the project preparation phase (baseline) and assessed at project midterm and at closure.

The PMAT contains useful details regarding the results achieved. The TE team considers some of the entries to be over-estimated, for example:

- "The project successfully implemented a pilot project restoring abandoned distant pastures. Instead of 111,300 ha the project restored 418,800 ha of distant rangeland areas." The TE team suggests to focus analysis of results on the activities completed at the pilot sites.
- It is unclear what business-as-usual (BAU) scenarios were considered in estimating reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and carbon sequestration. The TE team suggests using the unconditional target of 15% reduction in GHG emissions by 31 December 2030 compared to the base year (this is the unconditional target described in the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution) as the BAU scenario.
- "124,100 ha of lands were certified by the Russian, Lithuanian, USDA and EU organic certification companies." Evidence was not available to the TE team to validate actual certification.

Responses to midterm review recommendations:

The recommendations from the midterm review have been addressed by the project during the second half of the implementation timeframe, as summarized below in **Table 7**, based on findings of the TE and management responses documented by the project team.

Table 7: Summary of management responses to MTR recommendations

Midterm review recommendation	Status at terminal evaluation
1. It is recommended to review the decision to implement the 9th demonstration site.	Consideration to add the 9th demonstration site was analyzed and a decision made to proceed with the additional pilot.
2. It is recommended to assess, document and ultimately institutionalize the innovative ILUP approach.	The management response to the MTR recommendation indicates that all six ILUPs have been streamlined into district development plans. The TE team recognizes that a different approach was promoted by the project; however, the envisaged ILUPs were not developed as planned. A manual on farm level management was prepared; the manual provides guidance on improving on-farm management, but does not address competing land uses at the landscape scale.
3. It is recommended to further support the development of organic farming in Kazakhstan.	The project did support organic producers, e.g., sponsored trips to exhibitions in Europe and learning exchanges to neighboring countries. Project team members also participated on the legislative working group developing an amendment to the Law on Organic Farming.
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.	The management response to this recommendation provides a comprehensive summary of the key issues to address in a retreat – or study.
5. It is recommended to review the set of indicators to measure the performance of the project.	The management response indicates that recommended revisions to the results framework were approved by the Project Board. Considering that the revisions were recommended at the objective level, the TE team understands that such revisions require approval by the GEF Secretariat. The status of the revisions is, therefore, unclear.
6. It is recommended to develop a concept paper to scale-up the implementation of SLM practices through ILUPs and agro-environmental incentives.	The management response indicates that concept of scaling up the implementation of SLM practices was developed in 2019 and is mainstreamed into ILUPs in the six regions. This response is unclear to the TE team.
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.	In response to this recommendation, the project took steps to improve knowledge management, including producing brochures, factsheets, organizing seminars, and making social media posts. The TE team observed some shortcomings in terms of visibility, i.e., limited content online, and incomplete branding and finalization of certain project deliverables.
8. It is recommended to produce a short document and a video to document the ILUP process and agro-environmental incentives.	A short film was produced and mainstreamed into the learning curriculum of the national extension center.
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	The project developed an exit strategy, providing a means to ensure completion of activities and enhance the likelihood that results will be sustained.

Overall assessment of M&E

Overall quality of M&E is rated as: Satisfactory

The overall quality of M&E is rated as satisfactory. Project progress reports were informative, internal ratings were similar to the ratings of the midterm review, and adaptive approaches were taken to report progress against some of the indicators in the results framework. There were, however, shortcomings in screening and M&E of social and environmental risks.

3.2.5 Project implementation and execution

UNDP implementation oversight

Quality of UNDP implementation / oversight is rated: satisfactory

The UNDP provided technical, strategic, and administrative support throughout the entire project life cycle, from the concept stage, project preparation, and during implementation. Execution support services were provided according to the agreement with the Government of Kazakhstan for UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects.

UNDP representatives participated in each of the Project Board committee meetings, reporting was timely and informative, and strategic guidance was consistently provided by the UNDP Country Office and Regional Bureau.

Implementing Partner execution

Quality of Implementing Partner execution is rated: Satisfactory

The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the MOA entity selected as the Lead Implementing Partner were closely involved in the project, including chairing the Project Board committee. The MOA chairperson of the steering committee participated in each of the meetings convened.

The project management team was comprised of qualified professionals, providing effective and proactive technical and administrative assistance.

Financial delivery was satisfactory throughout the implementation timeframe, resources were efficiently utilized, and the project was completed within the agreed time period.

Overall implementation execution

Overall quality of implementation / execution is rated: Satisfactory

The overall quality of implementation and execution is rated as satisfactory. Country ownership was consistent throughout, specifically with respect to the agricultural sector. The UNDP utilized country and regional experience in sustainable land management projects in the development and execution support of the project.

Local governments (akimats) were actively involved in the pilot activities; however, there was inconsistent participation of akimat representatives in the steering committee meetings (see **Table 8**).

Table 8: Participation in Project Board Committee meetings

Member, representation		Members indicated in inception report	Project Board meeting participation						
			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	MOA, Chairperson	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2	UNDP	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3	MoA, Agro Trade and logistics Department	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
4	MoA, Department production and processing of animal products	x	x		x	x			
5	MoA, Department of Production and Processing of Crop Products	x							
6	Akimat of Akmola region	x							
7	Akimat of Kostanay region	x		x	x	x	x		
8	Akimat of Almaty region	x							
9	Akimat of Kyzylorda region	x							
10	Akimat of East Kazakhstan region	x							
11	Akimat of North Kazakhstan region	x							
12	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea	x			x				
13	GEF SGP	x			x				
14	Union of Farmers of Kazakhstan	x		x	x	x	x	x	

Member, representation		Members indicated in inception report	Project Board meeting participation						
			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	Extension Centre Kyzylorda region		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Extension Centre Akmola region								x
	Portal Margin.kz				x		x		
	KazHydromet							x	
	Center of Competence " NPP Atameken								x

3.2.6 Risk management

Management of social and environmental risks was inconsistent, including no risks at all identified in the screening carried out at the project preparation phase. A GEN-1 gender marker was described in the Project Document and a GEN-0 marker later mentioned in progress reports; an incomplete gender analysis and gender action plan were completed in the last year of the project implementation, in 2020.

3.3 Project results and impacts

3.3.1 Progress towards objective and expected outcomes (effectiveness)

Objective: to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods	
Achievement rating:	**Satisfactory**

Achievement of the project objective is rated as satisfactory. The project objective remains highly relevant at closure, and there was consistent stakeholder ownership throughout. Co-financing exceeded the commitments made at project entry, with contributions delivered by 17 different partners, including governmental, GEF agency (UNDP), research institutes, NGOs, and private enterprises/associations. Although the integrated land use plans were not developed as planned, largely because of an overly ambitious design strategy, particularly for a medium sized project, the key strength of the project was demonstration of SLM best practices at 9 pilot sites in 6 oblasts (regions) in the country (see **Figure 7** and **Table 9**), capacity building of producers and extension services, and substantive contributions towards integrating agro-environmental considerations into the governmental incentive frameworks.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
	2015	Jul 2020	Mar 2021	
1. Area of productive landscapes (pasturelands, crop and fodder production lands) in steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs that include a focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices	Zero	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)	SLM practices improved across agricultural lands managed by the farms participating in the demonstration activities, covering a cumulative area of 145,503 ha (see table below). The ILUPs were not developed as planned; the 750,000 ha end target is based upon SLM practices adopted across the steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs.	**Partially achieved**
2. Improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place	2% on average	8 to 10% on average	Project monitoring reports indicate improvements in one of the six pilot regions, namely Kyzylorda, where % soil humus content increased from 2.9-3.8% at the baseline year in 2015 to 3.1-4.9% by the end of the project in 2020. Similar to Indicator 1, the results of the project are reported for farms participating in the demonstration activities, not across the entire rayons.	**Partially achieved**

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
	2015	Jul 2020	Mar 2021	
3. Area of productive landscapes (pasturelands, crop and fodder production lands) in steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs that include a focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices	Average live weight in degraded pastures/ rangelands is 320 kg	20% weight gain over baseline	Project monitoring reports indicate a 5.1% weight gain, increasing 19.3 kg, from 320 kg at the baseline to 339.3 kg at the end of the project. The results are relevant for one or more farms participating in the demonstration activities, not across the entire rayons.	**Partially achieved**

Figure 7: Map showing locations of pilot sites

Table 9: Pilot site details

Pilot Site	Oblast	District / City	Village	Midpoint georeferenced coordinates		Project direct impact (ha)
				Longitude	Latitude	
1	Almaty	Balkhash	Birlik	76°48'19.5"E	44°38'03.4"N	10,000
2	Almaty	Enbekshikazakh	Bayterek	77°12'34.2"E	43°27'20.5"N	4,978
3	Akmola	Stepnagorsk	Karabulak	71°44'16.0"E	52°19'31.2"N	18,725
4	Akmola	Akkol	Azat	71°30'50.9"E	52°08'26.1"N	10,000
5	East Kazakhstan	Ayagoz	Ayagoz	78°02'15.9"E	48°25'27.0"N	5,600
	East Kazakhstan		Malgeldin	80°20'12.6"E	47°59'21.1"N	4,400
	East Kazakhstan		Kosagash	80°19'49.4"E	47°59'57.2"N	3,100
	East Kazakhstan		Saryarkin	80°16'54.6"E	47°59'47.6"N	4,200
9	Kostanay	Feodorovsky	Fedorovka	62°27'27.7"E	53°22'31.8"N	18,304
6	Kostanay	Kostanay	Zarechnoe	63°51'40.5"E	53°18'26.4"N	43,896
8	Kyzylorda	Kyzylorda city	Syrdarya-Aral districts	65°28'41.9"E	44°56'24.6"N	1,300
7	North Kazakhstan	Akkaiyn	Shagalaly	69°28'36.8"E	54°11'01.7"N	21,000
Total:						**145,503**

Note: details provided by the project team.

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

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

Project monitoring reports indicate achievement of the end targets regarding crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, irrigation efficiency, etc. (see **Table 10)**. Access of small and medium farmers in the pilot sites to agro-environmental incentives has increased, although governmental information systems do not differentiate small and medium farmers. Farmers and extension officers working and serving the pilot sites received training on SLM best practices. Three universities have strengthened their curricula on SLM practices and distant range management: Astana Agrarian University, Kostanay Agrarian University, and Kyzylorda Agrarian University.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
	2015	Jul 2020	Mar 2021	
4. Indicators of on-the-ground improvements in crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, efficiency in water use, etc. (indicators vary by pilot site)	See table below	See table below	Project monitoring reports indicate achievement of the end targets regarding crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, irrigation efficiency, etc.	**Achieved**
5. Access of small and medium farmers in pilot sites to agro-environmental incentives	At present, the nature of agricultural subsidies is such that they are mostly accessible only to large-scale farms	At least 40% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives have access to them by project end	Project self-assessment indicates 61% small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives. The figure was based on the value of subsidies for small and medium farms provided in 2020 compared to 2015. The baseline number of small and medium farms in the project pilots was not reported, and the government systems are not distinguishing small and medium farmers.	**Mostly achieved**
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	Training does not adequately cover needs of small and medium farms	At least 75% of small and medium farms in areas where training is delivered send representatives to attend sessions by project end	Project self-assessment reports 86% of small and medium farms sent representatives to project sponsored SLM trainings. The baseline number of small and medium farms in the project pilot areas unclear.	**Achieved**
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[9]	No such targeted training program	80% of target audience attend sessions by project end	The project self-assessment reports 91% of the target audit audience in the project pilot areas – calculated based on the number of Extension Service Officers in the pilot areas.	**Achieved**
8. Higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management	Current national and regional higher education institutions are producing limited number of professionals with such training and skills	At least 2 institutions[10] have strengthened curriculums by project end	Curricular improvement on organic agriculture and diversification confirmed for the Astana Agrarian University, Kostanay Agrarian University, and Kyzylorda Agrarian University.	**Achieved**

[9] Balkhash and Enbekshikazakh districts of Almaty Oblast, Karabulak rural okrug and Akkol district of Akmola Oblast, Ayyagoz district of East-Kazakhstan Oblast, Denisovsky and Fedorovsky districts of Kostanai Oblast, Kyzylorda City of Kyzylorda Oblast, Akkaiyn district of North Kazakhstan Oblast

[10] Kostanai State University (KSU) and Kazakh National Agriculture University (KazNAU)

Table 10: Results achieved at the pilot sites

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
Pilot 1:	Consumption of irrigation water	29,000 m3/ha	24,000 m3/ha	11,587 m3/ha	Kyzylorda Research Institute's report Expert's reports
	Rice yield	46-52 hwt/ha	56-62 hwt/ha	57-63 hwt/ha	
	Lucerne share in crop rotation	29%	35%	47%	
	Salt content in inundated rice paddies	1.0 %	0.3 %	0.27 %	
	% of soil humus in monoculture fields	0.7%	1.2 %[11]	1-1.2 %	
	Crop products output	45-60 hwt/ha	80 hwt/ha	69-83 hwt/ha	Expert's reports
Pilot 2:	Area of irrigated arable land	3,558 ha	4,978 ha	6,910 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Area of restored wastelands	0 ha	1,420 ha	3,383 ha	
	Number of water collectors	0	3	3	
	Volume of water collected	0 m3	1.5 mln. m3	1.5 mln. m3	
	Restored irrigation network	0 km	5 km	9 km	
Pilot 3	Area under forage crops	0 ha	700 ha	1,029 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Green fallow land area	0 ha	360 ha	391 ha	
	Humus content of arable land		incr. by 2%	2.1%	
	Wheat yield growth	8-10 hwt/ha	12-15 hwt/ ha	28-31 hwt/ha	
	Amount of hay stocked	500 tons	1,200 tons	2,012 tons	
	Agricultural areas managed sustainably	0 ha	18,725 ha	113,686 ha	
Pilot 4	Area under monoculture	3,100 ha	3,100 ha	903 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Restored area of degraded arable land	0 ha	160 ha	391 ha	
	Meadows created in sown pastures	0 ha	200 ha	219 ha	
	Forage crop areas	0 ha	360 ha	409 ha	
	Increased humus content in soil	-	by 8 %	8.5 %.	
	Forage crop yield	8 hwt/ha	20 hwt/ha	22 hwt/ha	
Pilot 5	Area of distant pastures that are in use	0 ha	17,300 ha	94,012 ha	Contracted companies' reports BTOR report
	Pasture productivity	2 hwt/ ha	8 hwt/ ha	121 kg	
	Area of restored hayfields	0 ha	900 ha	13,000 ha	
Pilot 6	Area under monoculture	15,979 ha	11,979 ha	10,113 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Area under forage crops	7,906 ha	11,906 ha	13,101 ha	
	Area under green fallow	0 ha	4,000 ha	6,700 ha	
	Increased humus content in soil	2%	Incr. by 10%	14%	
	Wheat yield	8.9 hwt/ ha	12 hwt/ ha	22 hwt/ ha	
	Ameliorated pasture, hayfields	0 ha	2,000 ha	3,201 ha	
	Pastures under seasonal rotation	0 ha	10,000 ha	11,000 ha	
Pilot 7	Area under green fallow	0 ha	500 ha	1,021ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Area of re-seeded pastures	0 ha	100 ha	81,110 ha	
	Humus content of arable land	Tbd at start	Incr. by 8%	8.7%	
	Increase in wheat yield	10 hwt/ha	12 hwt/ha;	21 hwt/ha	
	Increase in hay yield	8 hwt/ha	20 hwt/ha	26 hwt/ha	
Pilot 8	Restored area of degraded arable land	0 ha	200 ha	467 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Areas under lucerne and other forage crops	300 ha	500 ha	901 ha	
	Increased humus content in soil	Tbd at start	by 10 %	10.7%	
	Rice yield	40 hwt/ha	45 hwt/ha	57- 61 hwt/ha	
	Installed equipment for water delivery to inundated rice fields and its accounting	0 units	200 units	200 water meters	
	Installed equipment for water discharge from inundated rice fields and its accounting	0 units	200 units	200 water meters	
	Consumption of irrigated water	29,500 m3/ ha	23,000 m3/ ha	17,201 m3/ha	
Pilot 9	Monoculture (wheat crop) areas	10,590 ha	10,190 ha	5,101 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Forage crop areas	1,800 ha	2,200 ha	6,135 ha	
	Improvement of soil fertility	-	by 0.5%	1.9%	
	Increase in forage crop yield	-	by 2 hwt/ ha	2,6 hwt/ha	
	Reduced costs of forage procurement	-	by 20%	20%	

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

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

[11] After introducing salt-resistant crops

The Government has consistently increased funding of agricultural subsidy schemes, and some of the agro-environmental incentives demonstrated on the project have been reflected in the proposed State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026 (the program is not yet approved). Current Governmental information management systems do not distinguish financing for SLM practices; based on assumptions regarding "innovative agro technologies" and "green" subsidies, there is indirect indication that financing for agro-environmental incentives have increased compared to the project baseline scenario. There was no documentary evidence available indicating that the Inter-Agency Working Group has been institutionalized, but testimonial feedback during the TE indicated that the group periodically meets on an informal basis.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
	2015	Jul 2020	Mar 2021	
9. Inter-agency mechanism for ensuring coordination of integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives operating effectively	Does not exist	Inter-agency Working Group has a clear mandate and method of operation to ensure coordination of different land use sectors by project end	Terms of reference developed for the Working Group. The Working Group was formed to support project implementation; there is no evidence that the mechanism will continue after project closure.	**Partially achieved**
10. Inclusion of agro-environmental subsidies in State programs	Agro-environmental subsidies do not exist	Agribusiness 2020 program includes such subsidies	Subsidies are included in the following programs: (1) State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2021; (2) Sectoral Program of Sheep Breeding Development in Kazakhstan for 2021-2030; and (3) Subsidizing rule for partial reimbursement of costs incurred by an agribusiness entity in the course of investment. There is no clear definition of "agro-environmental" subsidies in the governmental programs.	**Mostly achieved**
11. Increase in government financing for SLM practices	No existing subsidies that are 100% SLM related	20% of total agricultural subsidies are agro-environmental or green subsidies, 10 years after the agro-environmental scheme is up and running	Estimations by the project team conclude that subsidies for "innovative agro technologies" were 93% higher in 2020 compared to 2015. There is no definition of "agro-environmental" or "green" subsidies, thus it is difficult to measure achievement of this end target.	**Partially achieved**
12. Amendments to existing polices, regulations, and rules such that the support for SLM is stronger	There are weaknesses in a number of existing policies, rules and regulations	At least 7 types[12] of amendments are developed	The project provided inputs and participated in policy working groups for the following: • Pilot program on export-oriented organic agriculture for the Almaty and Zhambyl regions (Nov 2019). Government has allocated financial support in 2021. • Government program on National Export Strategy (No 511, Aug 2017). • Recommendations regarding export of honey products. • Livestock breeding program "Sybagha". • State programme on the development of the Agro-Industrial sector 2022-2026. Consultations are ongoing; program is not yet approved. • State program on the development of sheet husbandry (No. 108, Mar 2015).	**Mostly achieved**

[12] (1) 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; (2) amendments to the Land Code on regulating rangelands and pastures, including ownership rights for pastures and hayfields around settlements; (3) amendments to the Land Code on land use planning; (4) changes to by-laws regulating land use issues to include the definition of rational use and its criteria; (5) 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; (6) 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; (7) proposals to the draft Law on Organic Agriculture.

Indicator	Baseline	End-of-Project target	Status at TE	TE Assessment
	2015	Jul 2020	Mar 2021	
			• Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 27, 2015 No. 423-V "On the production of organic products" (with amendments and additions as of 28 October 2019. • Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 20, 2017 No. 47-VI "On pastures".	

3.3.2 Relevance

Relevance is rated as: Highly satisfactory

The project's objective was highly relevant with national development priorities, including the Government's focus on import substitution, export development, expanding sustainable land management practices, and incentivizing productive utilization of unused land. The project was also directly aligned with the national LDN Target Setting Programme, including restoring fallow and abandoned land, rehabilitating irrigation infrastructure, and promoting water efficient irrigation technologies, as described below in **Table 11**.

Table 11: Contributions towards national LDN targets

LDN targets	Project contributions
Irrigated land increased by 40%, brought up to 2 million ha	830 ha (Baikonur district, Almaty region)
State program for the development of the agro-industrial complex for 2017-2021 provides the following specific measures to achieve the LDN target:	
Include fallow and abandoned lands in the turnover: Restore 610,000 ha of irrigated land	64,081 ha (31,780 ha - Almaty region, 32,301 ha - Kyzylorda region)
Create woody and shrub plantations to protect land from water and wind erosion, create a microclimate, improve soil fertility, snow and moisture retention	n/a
Increase the water fund to maintain water bodies in proper condition and the woodedness of adjacent lands	n/a
Restore collector-drainage systems	14,978 ha
Restore the land of Liman irrigation with a total of 368,000 ha	n/a
Soil surveys on 33 million ha of agricultural land	Strengthened institutional capacities in soil testing (e.g., extension services in Kostanay)
Geobotanical surveys on 33 million ha of pasture land	n/a
Determining the soil bonitet on 30 million ha of agri. land	n/a

The project was in line with the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) outcomes, the UNDP Country Program Action Plan (CPAP):

- **NATIONAL PRIORITY OR GOAL**: Kazakhstan 2050: A diversified knowledge-based economy in which competitive entrepreneurs make effective and sustainable use of the country's natural resources
- **UNDAF (OR EQUIVALENT) OUTCOME INVOLVING UNDP 1**: Outcome 1.3: Ecosystems and natural resources are protected, and sustainably used, and human settlements are resilient to natural and human-induced disasters and climate change
- **CPD Output 3**. Natural resources are protected, accounted for and integrated in national and/or sub-national development planning

Agricultural sector stakeholders, including governmental, research, NGOs, and private enterprises, actively participated in the project. And lessons from other GEF-financed projects on sustainable land management and from other donor projects were considered in the project design.

3.3.3 Efficiency

Efficiency is rated as: Satisfactory

The project efficiently utilized financial and human resources, satisfactorily achieving the objective and outcomes within the designed 5-year timeframe.

3.3.4 Sustainability

Sustainability is generally considered to be the likelihood of continued benefits after the GEF funding ends. Under GEF criteria each sustainability dimension is critical, and the overall ranking, therefore, cannot be higher than the lowest one.

Overall:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

Overall, the project has facilitated a number of sustainability structures and systems to help ensure the durability of the global environmental benefits and socio-economic benefits generated.

Financial dimension:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

One of the underlying aims of the project was to strengthen the agricultural incentive framework in the country through demonstration of approaches designed to incentivize sustainable land management practices. Proposals for introducing and improving agro-environmental incentives have been included in the State Program on the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026 and other national programs and schemes. Moreover, the Government has consistently increased investments in agricultural subsidies, and strengthening the sustainability of the agricultural sector remains a primary development priority. International donors also continue to provide technical and financial assistance, including from the European Union and the GEF, e.g., results and lessons from this project were incorporated into the design of the GEF-7 project on sustainable food systems.

On a macro level, government subsidies for chemical fertilizers and pesticides remain.

Socio-political dimension
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

Stakeholder ownership was satisfactory throughout the project's lifespan, and there is evidence that there is sustained interest among governmental entities, NGOs, research institutes, and private sector stakeholders. Key agricultural extension and knowledge sharing centers, including KazAgroInnovation and KazAgroMarketing have developed training modules based on the demonstrated SLM practices implemented at the project pilot sites. Knowledge generated on the project through the pilot demonstration activities has been transferred to 12 extension centers, 6 research institutes, NGOs, farmer associations, and individual farmers who participated in the pilot activities.

Institutional framework and governance dimension:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

The Inter-Agency Working Group established by the project has contributed towards improved cross-sectoral coordination on SLM issues. The project also provided inputs into several policies and legal frameworks, including the Pilot Program on export-oriented organic agriculture, the National Export Strategy, Law on Organic Farming, Amended Law on Pastures, and the State Program on the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex.

With regard to organic agriculture, the Law on organic agriculture was adopted 27 November 2015, derivative legislation and standards approved in 2017, as well as certification and labeling regulations (approved in 2017).

Environmental dimension:
Likelihood that benefits will continue to be delivered after project closure: Likely

The demonstrated best practices in implementing SLM approaches at the farm level enhances resilience of the agro-ecosystems across the pilot areas, and provides a practical framework for upscaling to other regions in the country. Forecasting and early warning capabilities, e.g., the drought forecasting tools of the Kazakhstani Hydromet, have also been strengthened. Climate and disaster risks remain relevant to the sustainability of environmental benefits generated on the project, but the project has made important contributions towards reducing vulnerabilities through uptake of SLM approaches, and increasing mitigation benefits, e.g., through improved vegetative cover in the agro-ecosystems in the steppe and semi-arid zones of the country.

The project made important contributions towards that national climate change adaption measures. Agriculture is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in the country, following the energy sector, but there specific commitments to reducing agricultural emissions have not yet been set.

Agriculture is also the largest user of water resources, consuming about two-thirds of water abstracted. Obsolete irrigation infrastructure and inefficient tariff schemes continue to result in significant losses and a lack of incentives for water conservation.

3.3.5 Country ownership

Country ownership, particularly the agricultural sector, was consistent during project implementation. Local governments (akimats) were actively engaged in the demonstration activities at the pilot sites, but there was weak participation of akimat representatives in the steering committee meetings.

3.3.6 Gender equality and women's empowerment and cross-cutting issues

The project had a fairly weak gender mainstreaming focus. On the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)[13], the TE team considers the project was "Gender Blind". The Project Document includes a separate sub-section on gender and mentions a GEN-1 gender marker. Progress reports prepared during implementation, on the other hand, describe the project as gender blind. A gender analysis and gender action plan was prepared in 2020; the document provided to the TE team was undated and incomplete, i.e., combined an energy efficiency project with the subject one.

Engaging 2,000 local farmers in capacity building on innovative SLM approaches provides multiple co-benefits, including increased well-being through improved productivity and diversification of farming systems. Implementation of SLM practices also helps farmers and local communities cope with climate and disaster hazards.

The project facilitated Triangular and South-South Cooperation, including sharing experiences and building partnerships across the Central Asian region, and sponsoring participation of Kazakh producers in exhibitions held in Europe.

3.3.7 GEF additionality

GEF additionality was primarily through innovation, specifically the SLM practices and good agricultural practices demonstrated at the pilot sites. For example, demonstrating how incentivizing farmers to rehabilitate distant pastures, by subsidizing the capital cost for drilling borehole wells (for irrigation water supply) and for purchasing solar photovoltaic units to power pumping and other pasture management actions.

3.3.8 Catalytic / replication effects

The strong demonstration emphasis on the project has had a number of catalytic/replication effects:

Demonstration

The project implemented demonstration activities at nine (9) pilot sites, where innovative techniques and approaches were trialed for enhancing the conservation-friendliness and sustainability of productive agricultural landscapes.

During the TE field mission, evidence was shared regarding replication by local farmers of the demonstrated. SLM practices and technologies. For instance, in Kyzylorda region, nearly 40 separate farmers have purchased laser guide land levelers, to increase the productivity of rice fields, as well as for the rational use of water resources.

Replication

A strong focus of this project was 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. The project design was somewhat limited in providing the necessary resources to mainstream and replicate the results from the demonstration sites to other parts of Kazakhstan. The replication and scaling-up of the tested SLM practices took place mostly in unsystematic manner, neither were driven by specific activities.

Scaling up

The project jointly with local municipalities developed proposals for agro-environmental subsidies and submitted to MOA for consideration and approval. List of the proposed approaches and measures, were included to strategic documents such State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026; Sectoral Program of Sheep Breeding Development in Kazakhstan for 2021-2030; National Export Strategy;

[13] The GRES offers a five-point scale showing different levels of effectiveness, both positive and negative, moving towards transformational. More information is provided in the Evaluation of UNDP's Contribution to Gender Equality, 2015, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).

Subsidizing rule for partial reimbursement of costs incurred by an agribusiness entity in the course of investment; National Livestock Development Program 2018-2027 etc.

Knowledge transfer

Three institutions such the following have strengthened their curriculums: (1) Astana Agrarian University; (2) Kostanay Agrarian University; (3) Kyzylorda Agrarian University.

The project also worked closely with local extension centers, which provide practical trainings for farmers.

The project has produced a number of knowledge products, including the following:

- Publications (360 publications on different topics and themes in SLM sectors).
- Internet-based information systems (Meteo portal, Geoportal, e-trade, and e-logistic, e-market, wheat and oil crops stock market).
- SLM best practices, 12 best practices are documented and uploaded into the WOCAT.
- 8 Lessons learned

Capacity building

The project worked closely 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. Training covered topics related to good farming and livestock rearing practices, land and livestock productivity enhancing technologies. Totally more than 18 training modules were developed and 2,000 participants took part in the capacity building events of the project.

Exit strategy

The project prepared an exit strategy, which focused on the following:

- The project has thoroughly evaluated its impacts, identified lessons learned, and disseminated relevant experience and materials prepared during the 12 extension centers and six research institutes.
- The project has already withdrawn from ongoing activities that best facilitate their continuation through 12 extension centers and six research institutes.
- The FAO and the USAID are continually supporting the initiative that was jointly supported during the project implementation phases.

3.3.9 Progress to impact

Global environmental benefits generated

The following global environmental benefits have been generated through the Phase II project:

Substantive global environmental benefits have been generated through the interventions implemented under the project.

Improved provision of agro-ecosystem goods and services

Sustainable land management (SLM) practices have improved across 145,503 ha of agricultural lands managed by the farms participating in the demonstration activities at the project pilot sites. Improvements achieved include more efficient use of irrigation water resources, restoration of abandoned and fallow lands resulting in increased coverage of forage crops, increased number of pastures under seasonal rotation, expanded area of re-seeded pastures, increased yields of wheat, rice, and hay, and improved soil management.

Reduced GHG emissions from agriculture and increased carbon sequestration

Improved land management practices and increased adoption of good agricultural practices substantively contribute to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increasing carbon sequestration. Demonstrated agro-ecological approaches included zero-tillage, minimum tillage, combined tillage, snow retention, mulching, green manure application, oasis irrigation, recirculating water systems, laser leveling, sub-soiling, artificial seeding and pollination, intercropping, bio-fortification, short-term rotated systems, etc. Project reporting document mitigation benefits among the 145,503 ha where the pilot areas are located: (i) Sustainable management of 103,377 ha plough land and 19,630 ha pasturelands; (ii) Vegetative cover maintained or increased across 17,300 ha of pastures under improved land use management plans; (iii) 5,000 ha of agroforestry lands under improved multifunctional joint management system; (iv)

avoiding emissions from pasture degradation; (v) Improved pasture management and pasture restoration resulting increased carbon sequestration; (vi) Restoration of 17,300 ha of degraded pastures leading to an enhancement of carbon stocks. Using the FAO Ex-Ante Carbon Balance Tool (EX-ACT), cumulative mitigation benefits over a 20-year lifetime (5-year implementation phase, and 15-year capitalization phase) were estimated by the project team at more than 5 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (a more precise estimate was not made because the baseline business-as-usual scenario was not fully described).

Reduced vulnerability of agro-ecosystems to climate change and other human-induced impacts

The results achieved through implementation of SLM practices reduce the vulnerability of agro-ecosystems in the pilot areas to climate change. For example, increased vegetation cover helps to regulate diurnal and seasonal fluctuations in temperature, as well as increasing soil moisture levels, which helps to strengthen root systems and increase humus levels, thus creating more resilient and productive ecosystems.

Rehabilitation of drainage courses and more rational and efficient use of irrigation water contribute further towards reducing vulnerabilities to climate change, i.e., conserving scarce water resources strengthens the durability of agro-ecosystems.

Benefits to biodiversity

Adoption of SLM practices across the agro-ecosystems in the project pilot areas have also generated co-benefits to biodiversity. Rehabilitation of drainage courses and more efficient use of irrigation water resources have contributed towards improving habitat integrity and resilience. Increased vegetation cover over previously abandoned and fallow lands provide further habitat improvements. Decreased use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides through promotion of organic agriculture reduces pollution related pressures on biodiversity and helps facilitate more favourable conditions for pollinating insects and other terrestrial and aquatic organisms

3.3.10 Contributions towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The project has made contributions toward achievement of **SDG 2** (Zero Hunger) and **SDG 15** (Life on Land), specifically the following targets:

- **Target 2.4.** By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.
- **Target 15.3**. By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

4 Conclusions, recommendations, and lessons

Summary of Conclusions

The focus of the project design was primarily on the demonstration activities at the pilot sites. And the project has successfully facilitated demonstration of sustainable land management (SLM) and good agricultural practices through implementation of nine pilot sites located in six regions of the country, comprising a cumulative area of 145,503 ha.

Development of rayon-wide integrated land use plans (ILUPs), which was an integral part of the project strategy is consistent with the strategic direction of the GEF-5 LD-3 Objective (“Integrated Landscapes: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape”). However, the scope of the ILUPs described in the Project Document did not match the resources budgeted for this medium-sized project. It would have been more appropriate to align the project under the GEF-5 LD-1 Objective, “Agriculture and Rangeland Systems: Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem services sustaining the livelihoods of local communities”.

The rayon level ILUPs were not developed as planned. The project shifted towards promoting integrated management at the farm and pasture levels. Farm management manuals were prepared and trainings delivered to farmers in the pilot areas; however, the aim of reducing pressures from competing land uses through land use planning was not realized.

The project objective remains highly relevant and consistent with national priorities to strengthen and enhance the sustainability of the agricultural sector. The project made direct contributions towards achievement of the 2018 national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Program and the 2017-2021 State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex, specifically:

- 830 ha of land under irrigation (in the Baikonur District, Almaty region)
- 64,081 ha of fallow and abandoned lands restored (31,780 ha in the Almaty region and 32,301 ha in the Kyzylorda region).
- 14,978 ha of collector-drainage systems restored.
- Strengthened institutional capacities in soil testing (e.g., the extension services in Kostanay region).

The project was aligned with the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) outcomes, the UNDP Country Program Action Plan (CPAP) outputs, and Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG targets 2.4 and 15.3.

The project has worked with stakeholders in recommending mainstreaming agro-environmental incentives into government programmes and schemes, such as the State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026; the Sectoral Program of Sheep Breeding Development in Kazakhstan for 2021-2030; National Export Strategy; the Subsidizing rule for partial reimbursement of costs incurred by an agribusiness entity in the course of investment; and the National Livestock Development Program 2018-2027.

Approximately USD 10.75 million of co-financing materialized in support of the project, exceeding the USD 9.5 million sum committed at project entry. Co-financing contributions were made by 17 different partners, including governmental, GEF agency (UNDP), research institutes, NGOs, and private enterprises/associations. Some of the project deliverables reflect additional partners, including EU, Coca-Cola and IsDB; however, these organizations were not included among the co-financing records.

Country ownership, particularly the agricultural sector, was consistent during project implementation. Local governments (akimats) were actively engaged in the demonstration activities at the pilot sites, but there was weak participation of akimat representatives in the steering committee meetings.

Capacity building was an important aspect of the project's replication approach. Institutional and individual capacities were strengthened through learning-by-doing and skills development as part of the demonstration activities, as well as delivery of trainings, and strengthening partnerships, including through participation of agricultural exhibitions in some European and Central Asian countries. The project worked closely 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. Training covered topics related to good farming and livestock raising practices, land and livestock productivity enhancing technologies. Totally more than 18 training modules were developed and 2,000 participants took part in the capacity building events of the project.

During the TE field mission, evidence was shared regarding replication by local farmers of the demonstrated. SLM practices and technologies. For instance, in Kyzylorda region, nearly 40 separate farmers have purchased laser guide land levelers, to increase the productivity of rice fields, as well as for the rational use of water resources.

Three agricultural universities have strengthened their curriculums: (1) Astana Agrarian University; (2) Kostanay Agrarian University; (3) Kyzylorda Agrarian University. And the project delivered training to local extension centers in the districts where the pilot sites are located.

The project produced a number of knowledge products, including technical publications (360 publications on different topics and themes), contributions to Internet-based information systems (Meteo portal, Geoportal, e-trade, and e-logistic, e-market, wheat and oil crops stock market), and twelve SLM best practice documents uploaded to the WOCAT platform (WOCAT is the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies). The TE team found that several of the project deliverables appeared to be in draft form, e.g., lacking reference to the project and without proper branding, etc. There was no dedicated website for the project and the MoA website(s) contain limited information about the project.

Financial delivery was consistently high throughout the implementation time period. The project benefitted from effective and consistent project management and technical assistance delivered by a team of qualified professionals, as well as strategic and administrative support from the UNDP country office and regional bureau.

There were some shortcomings regarding monitoring & evaluation design and implementation, e.g., some of the indicators in the project results framework were unclear and the means of verification were not specifically defined. And there were inconsistencies in screening social and environmental risks, with no risks at all identified in the SESP prepared at the project preparation phase.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based upon the findings of the TE.

No.	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeframe
Corrective actions and actions to follow up initial benefits from the project:			
1.	There have been a number of reports, technical guidance documents, and other publications produced during the project. However, many of the deliverables do not seem to be in final form. The key reports, technical guidelines, and other publications should be finalized, branded, disseminated to relevant stakeholders, and stored on an accessible platform.	Project team	3-6 months
2.	The records of equipment purchased and facilities constructed as part of the pilot activities should be documented in more detail, including the amount financed through the GEF project funds, co-financing contributions, and funding from other projects. The documentation should include signed asset transfer records.	Project team	3-6 months
3.	Several different types of agro-environmental incentives were demonstrated during the project and are available through various governmental programmes. An information sheet should be prepared and disseminated, specifically oriented towards small and medium size farmers, that provides details of available agro-environmental incentives.	Project team	3-6 months
4.	Pilot models implemented by the project should be documented and published (each separately) in open sources of information. The publication should include descriptions of the technologies introduces, their economic characteristics (payback period, etc.), as well as energy and resources efficiency potential. Documenting and disseminating the experiences and lessons from the pilots would increase the replication potential.	Project team	3-6 months
Future directions towards achievement of strategic objectives:			
5.	Local extension offices are the primary source of information for many farmers. Specific training modules on implementation of sustainable land and water management practices and access to agro-environmental incentives should be developed, regularly updated by Ministry of Agriculture entities through partnerships with research and academic institutes.	MoA	6 months – 1 year
6.	The sustainability of the Inter-Agency Working Group is unclear. Formalizing this working group should be considered, for example, operating as multi-stakeholder advisory group for other projects, and serving as the national working group for implementation of the national action program (UNCCD) and the national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Programme.	MoA	6 months – 1 year
7.	There is a need for strengthening flow and access of information for qualified small and medium size farmers to be linked up with opportunities to participate in green value chains. The feasibility of expanding the existing margin.kz platform or developing a separate mechanism should be investigated, and feasible options should be operationalized.	MoA, research institutes, NGOs	6 months – 1 year
8.	The statistics maintained by the MoA do not provide information on incentive mechanisms that promote sustainable land management, and there are no available statistics on differentiating small and medium size farmers from large farmers who receive incentives. Understanding the significant differences in farm size and structure across Kazakhstan, it would still be advisable to provide more informative breakdowns of delivered incentives, e.g., possibly on a regional basis.	MoA	6 months – 1 year
9.	The capacities of the Kazhydromet and the Center for Space Research should be further utilized and developed in creating tools for identifying and monitoring LDN hotspots in the country, e.g., using Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) imagery tools or similar.	MoA, Kazhydromet	1-2 years
10.	Consistent with the 2018 national LDN Target Setting Programme, the identified LDN hotspots should be integrated into national land use planning and provide scientific based guidance for prioritizing funding allocation for implementing sustainable land management interventions.	MoA,	3-5 years

LESSONS

Good practices and lessons learned on the project are presented below.

Good Practices:

- Multi-stakeholder engagement was facilitated through establishing and strengthening an Inter-Agency Working Group at the national level and promoting cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms at the local government level where the pilot interventions were implemented.
- Involving multiple NGOs, research institutes, and private sector stakeholders at the project development phase resulted in a broad base of co-financing and helped ensure that key stakeholders involved in development and implementation of best practices were engaged in the project implementation.
- Participating on legislative working groups was a proactive approach for promoting mainstreaming of sustainable land management principles and advocating for mainstreaming of agro-environmental incentives.
- Locations of pilot projects were appropriately identified, covering major food producing areas of the country. This approach make it possible to demonstrate SLM practices in various sized farms (bigger ones in the north and smaller ones in south) with different type of crops.

Lessons Learned:

- Designing integrated land use planning activities require clear buy-in of relevant stakeholders, as well as sufficient budget and time allocated.
- It would have been advisable to develop (and implement) a knowledge management strategy and action plan, identifying target audiences/groups, agreeing upon key messages, designing appropriate tools and methodologies, etc.
- The results framework should have better reflected the multiple benefits generated by the project, e.g., conservation of globally significant biodiversity, avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequestration of carbon, and the number of direct beneficiaries (gender disaggregated).
- Social and environmental screening should have addressed risks associated with potential conflicts associated with land use planning (e.g., restricted access, land tenure, conflicting use, etc.), risks associated with climate and disaster hazards, risks associated with implementing activities close to environmentally sensitive areas, etc.
- Engagement with the large number of co-financing partners was a key strength of the project, but there seems to have been missed opportunities to mobilize co-financing contributions from other partners, including but not limited to the EU, Coca-Cola, and IsDB.
- There was limited involvement of local governments (akimats) in the Project Board meetings. It might have been advisable to have used hybrid meeting approaches, allowing the akimat stakeholders to join online.

Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
Relevance: Is the project relevant with respect to the environmental and development priorities at the local, regional and national levels?			
To what extent is the principle of the project in line with regional and national priorities?	Level of participation of the concerned agencies in project activities. Consistency with relevant strategies and policies.	Minutes of meetings, Project progress reports, national and regional strategy and policy documents	Desk review, interviews
To what extent is the project aligned to the main objectives of the GEF focal area?	Consistency with GEF strategic objectives	GEF Strategy documents, PIRs, Tracking Tools	Desk review, interview with UNDP-GEF RTA
To what extent is the project aligned to the strategic objectives of UNDP?	Consistency with UNDP strategic objectives	UNDP Strategic Plan, Country Programme Document	Desk review, interview
Effectiveness: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?			
Assessment of progress made toward achieving the indicator targets agreed upon in the logical results framework			
Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, social-economic, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?			
What evidence is available showing sufficient funding has been secured to sustain project results?	Financial risks	Progress reports, sectoral plans, budget allocation reports, testimonial evidence	Desk review, interviews
How have individual and institutional capacities been strengthened, and are governance structures capacitated and in place to sustain project results?	Institutional and individual capacities	Progress reports, testimonial evidence, training records	Desk review, interviews
What social or political risks threaten the sustainability of project results?	Socio-economic risks	Socio-economic studies, macroeconomic information	Desk review, interviews
Which ongoing circumstances and/or activities pose threats to the sustainability of project results?	Risks to sustainability	Sectoral plans, progress reports, macroeconomic information	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Have delays affected project outcomes and/or sustainability, and, if so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?	Impact of project delays	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
Impact: Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward long lasting desired changes?			
What verifiable environmental improvements have been made?	Verifiable environmental improvements	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
What verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems have been made?	Verifiable reductions in stress on environmental systems	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
How has the project demonstrated progress towards these impact achievements?	Progress toward impact achievements	Progress reports, sectoral plans, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews, theory of change analysis
Efficiency: Was the project implemented efficiently, in-line with international and national norms and standards?			
How was the project efficient with respect to incremental cost criteria?	Incremental cost	National strategies and plans, progress reports	Desk review, interviews

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
To what extent were the project objective and outcomes realized according to the proposed budget and timeline?	Efficient utilization of project resources	Progress reports, financial records	Desk review, interviews
Country Ownership:			
How are project results contributing to regional, national, and subnational development plans and priorities?	Development planning	Government approved plans and policies	Desk review, interviews
Which governments policies or regulatory frameworks were approved in line with the project objective?	Policy reform	Government approved plans and policies	Desk review, interviews
How have governmental and other cofinancing partners maintained their financial commitment to the project?	Committed cofinancing realized	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Stakeholder Involvement and Partnership Arrangements:			
How has the project consulted with and made use of the skills, experience, and knowledge of the appropriate government entities, NGOs, community groups, private sector entities, local governments, and academic institutions?	Effective stakeholder involvement	Meeting minutes, reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How were partnership arrangements properly identified and roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to project approval?	Partnership arrangements	Memorandums of understanding, agreements	Desk review, interviews
How have partnerships influenced the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation?	Effective partnerships	Progress reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How have relevant vulnerable groups and powerful supporters and opponents of the processes been properly involved?	Inclusive stakeholder involvement	Meeting minutes, reports, interview records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How has the project sought participation from stakeholders in (1) project design, (2) implementation, and (3) monitoring & evaluation?	Stakeholder involvement	Plans, reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Catalytic Role:			
How has the project had a catalytic or replication effect in the country?	Catalytic effect	Interview records, municipal development plans	Desk review, interviews
Synergy with Other Projects/Programs			
How were synergies with other projects/programs incorporated in the design and/or implementation of the project?	Collaboration with other projects/programs	Plans, reports, meeting minutes	Desk review, interviews
Preparation and Readiness			
Were project objective and components clear, practicable, and feasible within its time frame?	Project coherence	Logical results framework	Desk review, interviews

Evaluation Criteria Questions	Indicators	Sources	Methodology
How were the capacities of the executing institution(s) and its counterparts properly considered when the project was designed?	Execution capacity	Progress reports, audit results	Desk review, interviews
Were counterpart resources, enabling legislation, and adequate project management arrangements in place at Project entry?	Readiness	Interview records, progress reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Financial Planning			
Did the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allowed management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allowed for timely flow of funds?	Financial control	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Has there been due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits?	Financial management	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Has promised cofinancing materialized?	Realization of cofinancing	Audit reports, project accounting records	Desk review, interviews
Supervision and Backstopping			
How have GEF agency staff members identified problems in a timely fashion and accurately estimate their seriousness?	Supervision effectiveness	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
How have GEF agency staff members provided quality support, approved modifications in time, and restructured the project when needed?	Project oversight	Progress reports	Desk review, interviews
How has the implementing agency provided the right staffing levels, continuity, skill mix, and frequency of field visits for the project?	Project backstopping	Progress reports, back-to-office reports, internal appraisals	Desk review, interviews, field visits
Monitoring & Evaluation			
Were intended results (outputs, outcomes) adequately defined, appropriate and stated in measurable terms, and were the results verifiable?	Monitoring and evaluation plan at entry	Project document, inception report	Desk review, interviews
How has the project monitoring & evaluation plan been implemented?	Effective monitoring and evaluation	Progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews
How has there been focus on results-based management?	Results based management	Progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews
Cross-cutting issues			
How were gender issues integrated in project design and implementation?	Greater consideration of gender aspects.	Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits
How were effects on local populations considered in project design and implementation?	Positive or negative effects of the project on local populations.	Project document, progress reports, monitoring reports	Desk review, interviews, field visits

Annex 2: List of People Interviewed

Name	Position	Organization
Mr. Aidos Mukashbekov	Director (National Project Director)	Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ASEPAS), Ministry of Agriculture
Ms. Saule Zhuryniva	Director of the Department of Agrofood Markets, Organic Products and Technical Regulation	Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. Samat Kairbekov	Former Director of Department of Strategic Planning and Analysis	Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. Adilkhan Sagimbayev	Expert, promotion of organic products under the "Qazaq Organic Food" and "kazmay" .	Competence Center of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Atameken"
Mr. Yerkanat Iskakov	Head of Agrometeo department	Republican state enterprise «Kazhydromet» of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources
Mr. Sabakbayev Zubaida	Head of Seed Production and Grain Inspection Department	Kyzylorda regional Akimat (municipality)
Mr. Bakhtiyar Sadyk	Senior Researcher	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Appazov Nurbol	Chairman	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Baymanov Zhanuzak	Deputy Director	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Bigaliyev Kanagat	Head of the Department of Potato and Vegetable and Melon Crops	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Aimukhamedov Umirzak	Senior Researcher, Feed Crops Sector	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Ms. Baimbetova Gulsim	Scientific secretary	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Koishibayev Aidarkhan	Agronomist	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Levin Vladimir Gennadievich	Director	Public Union “Farmer of Kazakhstan”
Mr. Arsen Kerimbekov	Head of the Organization	Union of Organic Producers "Qazaqstan Organic Producer Union"
Mr. Evgeniy Klimov	Head	Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture KAZFOAM
Ms. Tatyana Gontarenko	Head	Extension centre Shortandy
Mr. Vadim Lopukhin	President	Association of organic agriculture, Kostanay
Mr. Almabek Nugmanov	Head of the Digital Hub "Parasat". (Exc head of Kostanay Extension Centre)	Kostanai State University
Mr. Uzhinov Marat	Head	Farm "Abil"
Mr. Tulayev Erik	Head	Farm "Aman"
Mr. Chernenko Vladimir	Agronomist	Farm "Zarechnaya"
Mr. Kutc Vasiliy	Head	Farm "Altyn Emel"

Annex 3: List of Information Reviewed

This annex presents a list of information reviewed by the TE team.

1. Project Identification Form
2. UNDP Project Document
3. CEO Endorsement Request, including review sheets
4. UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results
5. Project Inception Report
6. Project Implementation Reports (PIR's)
7. Minutes of Project Board meetings
8. Progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams
9. Expenditure reports (Combined Delivery Reports)
10. Co-financing records
11. UNDP Country Programme Document
12. Project Mid-Term Review Final Report
13. Project success stories
14. Minutes of the Local Program Advisory Committee (LPAC)
15. Experts reports:
    a. Analysis of agricultural subsidies in the Republic of Kazakhstan
    b. Adaptation of the dynamic model by A.N. Field for forecasting the yield of spring wheat by administrative districts Kostanay region
    c. Guide to sustainable pasture management
    d. Training manual: Organic rural economy
    e. Guidelines for the restoration of degraded irrigated lands withdrawn from agricultural use due to secondary salinization and waterlogging
    f. Final report on the work done to develop guidelines for sustainable pasture management and irrigated agriculture
    g. Training Guide "Fundamentals of Weather Data Interpretation for Successful Agriculture"
16. State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2021
17. Sectoral Program of Sheep Breeding Development in Kazakhstan for 2021-2030
18. Pilot program to promote environmentally friendly and export-oriented agriculture in Almaty and Zhambyl oblasts
19. National Export Strategy
20. Subsidizing rule for partial reimbursement of costs incurred by an agribusiness entity in the course of investment
21. National Livestock Development Program 2018-2027
22. Kyzylorda Region Development Program for 2016-2020
23. East Kazakhstan Region Development Program for 2016-2020
24. Kostanay Region Development Program for 2016-2020
25. Almaty Region Development Program for 2016-2020

Annex 4: Summary of TE field mission

This annex presents a summary of TE field missions. The field missions were done by National TE Consultant, due to the pandemic situation and restriction to international travel for International TE Consultant. An agenda for the TE field mission was developed and agreed jointly with TE team and the project management team. The list of stakeholders to be interviewed was reviewed, ensuring it represents a wide range of 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.

Stakeholders were interviewed according to the interview guide adapted for each interview by the TE team. All interviews were conducted in person with some follow up using telephone, email etc., needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings were incorporated in the final report.

As per the terms of reference, visits were conducted to project sites located in Kyzylorda and Kostanay regions. Additionally, a trip to Nur-Sultan was conducted to create an opportunity for face-to-face meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture. The field mission provided the National TE Consultant the opportunity to observe project achievements and obtain views from stakeholders and beneficiaries at the national, oblast, rayon, and rural levels.

Mission to Kyzylorda. The mission takes place from 17 to 20 March 2021. During the field visit, the National TE Consultant was able to meet representatives of the local municipality – Akimat of Kyzylorda region, the co-financing partner of the project Rice Research Institute and Agro-Extension Center, as well as direct beneficiaries of the project – farmers.

AGENDA of the MISSION to KYZYLORDA

Kyzylorda		
Day	**Time**	**Activity**
17 March	13:45 – 14:30	Flight from Almaty to Kyzylorda
18 March	09:30 – 11:00	Meeting with administration of the Rice Research Institute and Agro-Extension Center.
	11:00 – 13:00	Meeting with Head of the Agriculture Department of the Kyzylorda local akimat
	14:00 – 18:00	Meeting with key Experts at the Rice Research Institute.
19 March	09:00 – 10:00	Travel to the pilot sites
	10:00 – 18:30	Meeting with beneficiaries and pilot sites visits. (Bio-compost pit, fields with crops of forage grasses, fields with diversification, fields with water saving technology, farms using technological agricultural machinery and equipment and laser guided land leveler).
	18:30 – 19:30	Travel back to city
20 March	14:30 – 16:20	Flight from Kyzylorda to Almaty

LIST OF THE STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Name	**Position**	**Organization**
Mr. Sabakbayev Zubaida	Head of Seed Production and Grain Inspection Department	Kyzylorda regional Akimat (municipality)
Mr. Bakhtiyar Sadyk	Senior Researcher	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Appazov Nurbol	Chairman	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Baymanov Zhanuzak	Deputy Director	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Bigaliyev Kanagat	Head of the Department of Potato and Vegetable and Melon Crops	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Aimukhamedov Umirzak	Senior Researcher, Feed Crops Sector	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Ms. Baimbetova Gulsim	Scientific secretary	Kazakh Research Institute of Livestock Breeding and Fodder Production
Mr. Koishibayev Aidarkhan	Agronomist, farmer	Local farm

Meeting with Representative of Regional Akimat of Kyzylorda oblast

Rice, vegetables, forage crops samples (diversification of the crops)

Equipment purchased during the project

Mission to Nur-Sultan. The mission took place on 25 March. During the field visit the National TE Consultant was able to meet a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as a representative of co-financing partner of the project Extension Centre Shortandy.

AGENDA of the MISSION to NUR-SULTAN

Nur-Sultan		
Day	**Time**	**Activity**
25 March	07:00 – 08:45	Flight from Almaty to Nur-Sultan
	13:00 – 14:00	Meeting with Ms. Tatyana Gontarenko, Extension centre Shortandy
	15:00 – 16:00	Meeting with Ms. Saule Zhurynova, Department Director, Ministry of Agriculture

LIST OF THE STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Name	**Position**	**Organization**
Ms. Saule Zhuryniva	Director of the Department of Agrofood Markets, Organic Products and Technical Regulation	Ministry of Agriculture
Ms. Tatyana Gontarenko	Head	Extension centre Shortandy

Mission to Kostanay. The mission took place on 26 to 27 March. During the field visit, a meeting with National Project Director was organized due to his business trip to Kostanay in same days. The National TE Consultant also had meetings with local partners of the project in organic agriculture direction and co-financing partner Extension Centre.

AGENDA of the MISSION to KOSTANAY

Kostanay		
Day	**Time**	**Activity**
26 March	10:25 – 11:45	Flight from Nur-Sultan to Kostanay
	13:30 – 14:30	Meeting with administration and experts of the Digital Hub Parasat of the Kostanay State Institute and
	15:30 – 16:30	Meeting with Head of NGO "Association of Organic Farming"
27 March	11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with Project Director, Mr. Aidos Mukashbekov, Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ASEPAS), Ministry of Agriculture
	14:00 – 14:30	Travel to the pilot sites LLP "Agricultural Experimental Station "Zarechnoe"
	14:30 – 16:30	Visit Meeting with farmers.
	18:20 – 20:35	Flight from Kostanay to Almaty

LIST OF THE STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Name	**Position**	**Organization**
Mr. Aidos Mukashbekov	Director (National Project Director)	Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ASEPAS), Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. Vadim Lopukhin	President	Association of organic agriculture, Kostanay
Mr. Almabek Nugmanov	Head of the Digital Hub "Parasat". (Exc head of Kostanay Extension Centre)	Kostanai State University
Mr. Uzhinov Marat	Head	Farm "Abil"
Mr. Tulayev Erik	Head	Farm "Aman"
Mr. Chernenko Vladimir	Agronomist	Farm "Zarechnaya"
Mr. Kutc Vasiliy	Head	Farm "Altyn Emel"

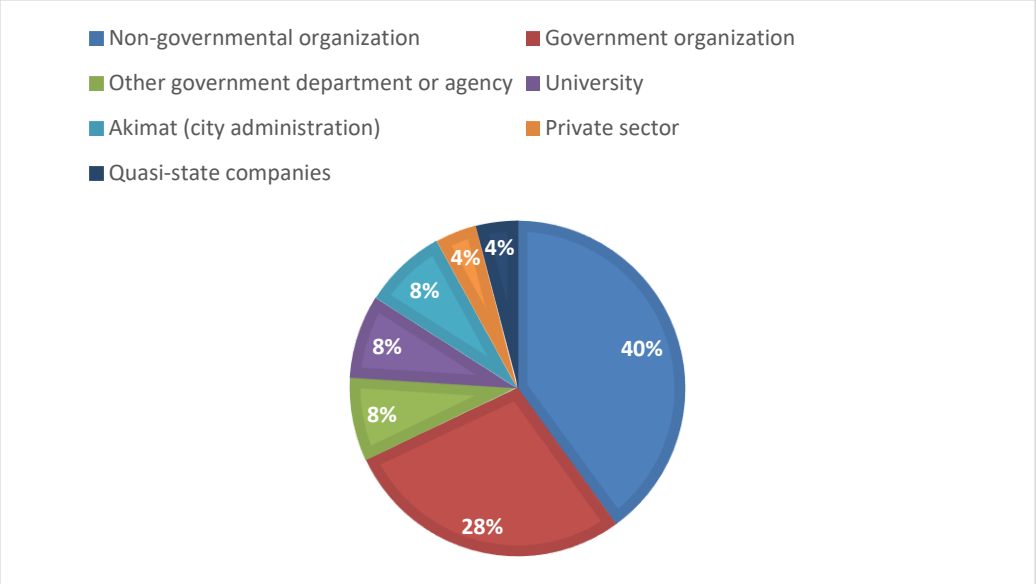
Meeting with Farmers in Kostanay Extension Centre

Exhibition in Kostanay extension Centre

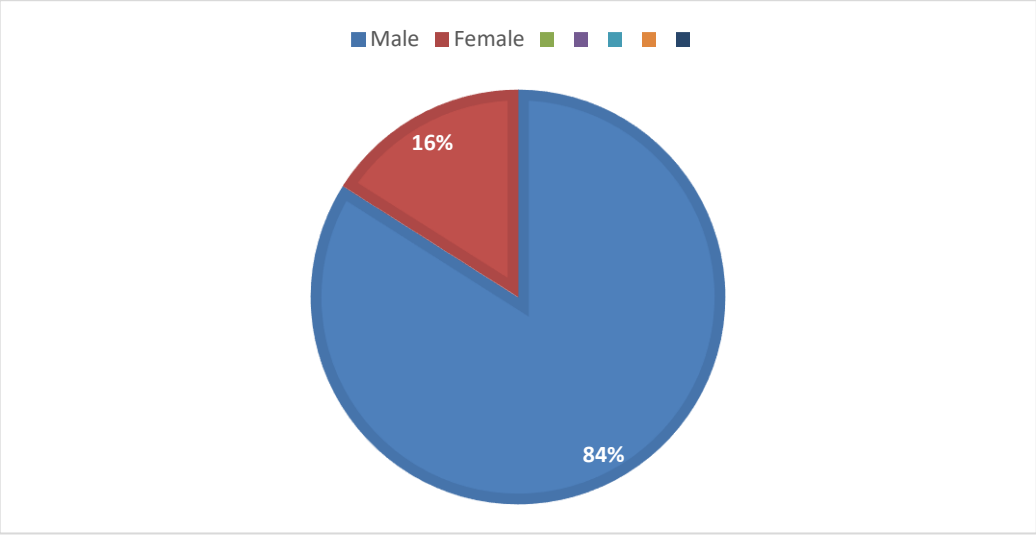
Annex 5: Summary of online survey

This annex presents a summary of an online survey made as part of the TE. A Google Forms based questionnaire was sent to 39 project stakeholder organizations, of which 25 provided responses. The response to the questionnaire survey are presented below.

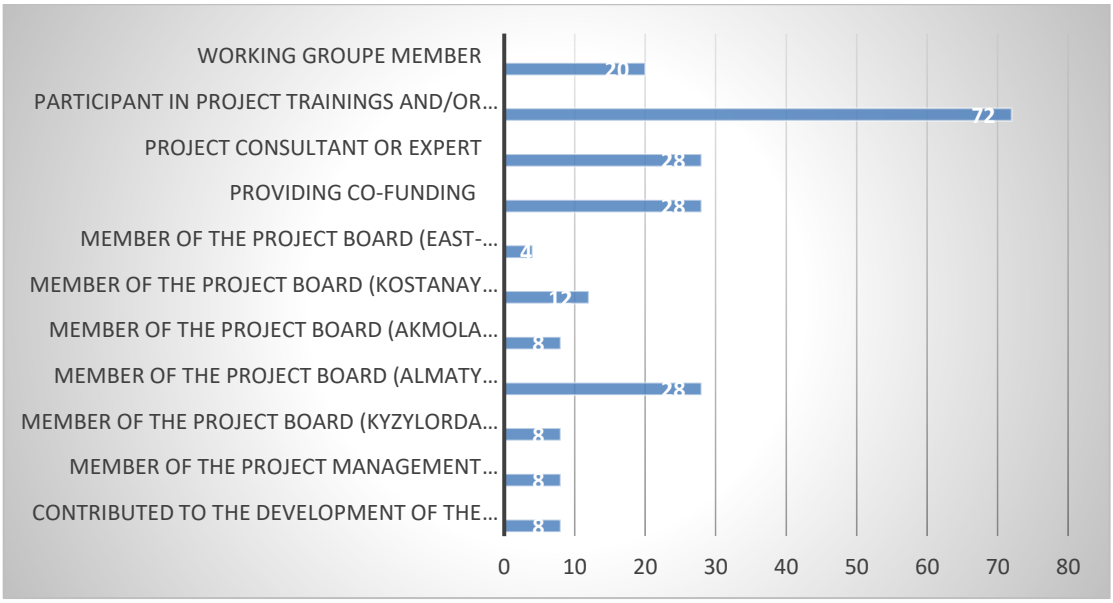
1) Please indicate the type of organization you belong to:



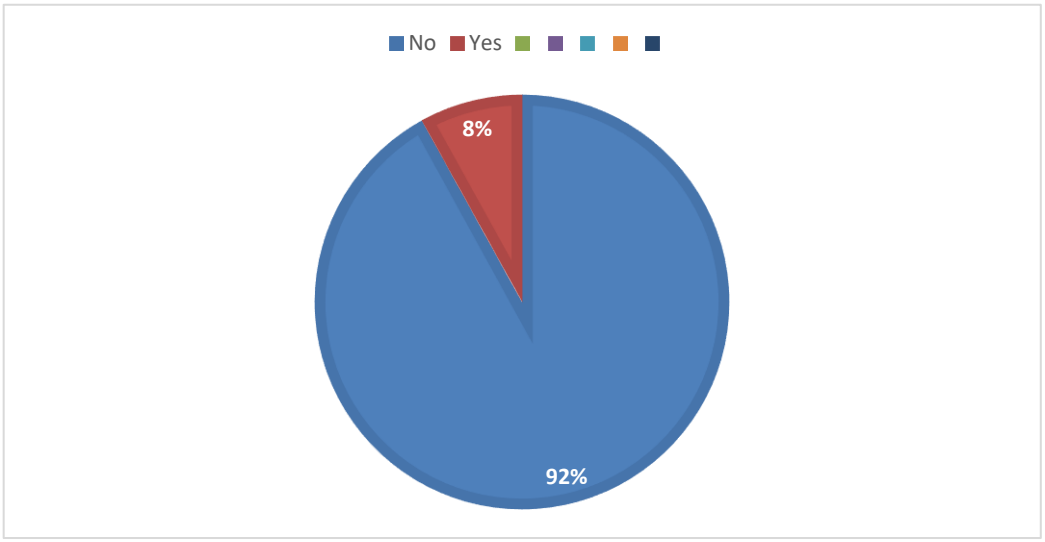
2) Gender:



3) Which of the following describe your role in the Agro-incentives project (tick all that apply):



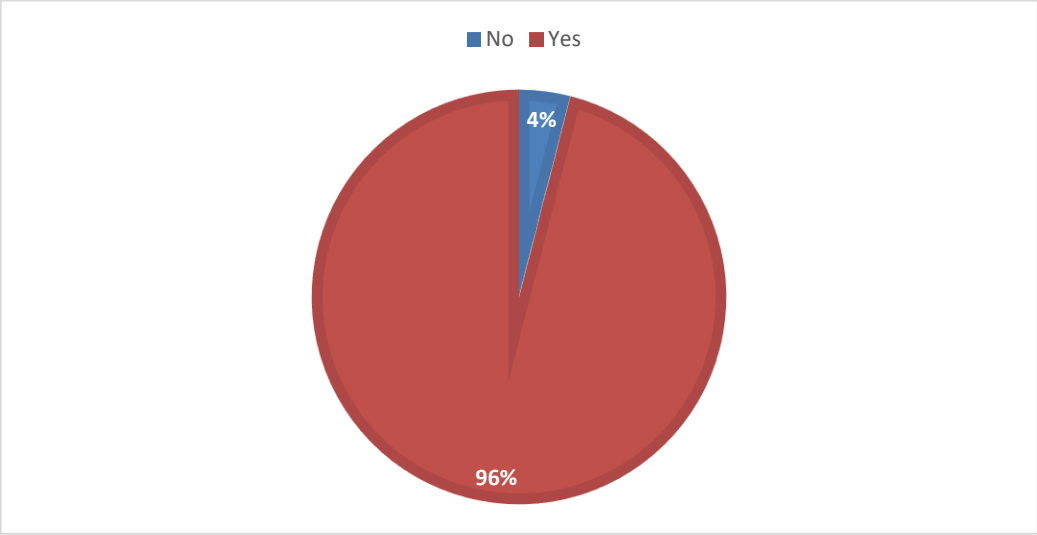
4) Have you experienced any barriers or challenges to participating effectively in the project?



5) If yes, please describe the barriers/challenges and provide any suggestions as to how these might be overcome for the following projects.

- During the implementation of the subproject "Sustainable management of degraded irrigated lands in the semi-desert zone in the Balkhash district, Almaty region" we had to face some misunderstanding on the part of the final beneficiaries on the goals and objectives of the project, weak interest of local executive bodies. However, in the course of the practical implementation of the subproject and the conduct of an information campaign, it was possible to reach mutual understanding and achieve the planned results.

6) Please indicate, whether innovations on sustainable land management, have been introduced within the Agro-incentives project.

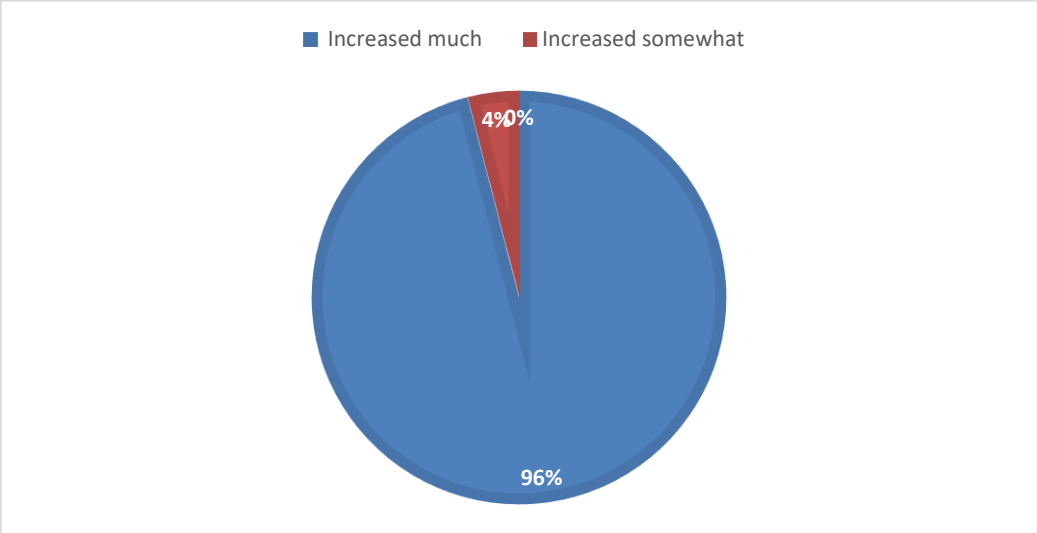


7) If the answer to the previous question was "yes", then please describe which innovations have been introduced within the framework of the project.

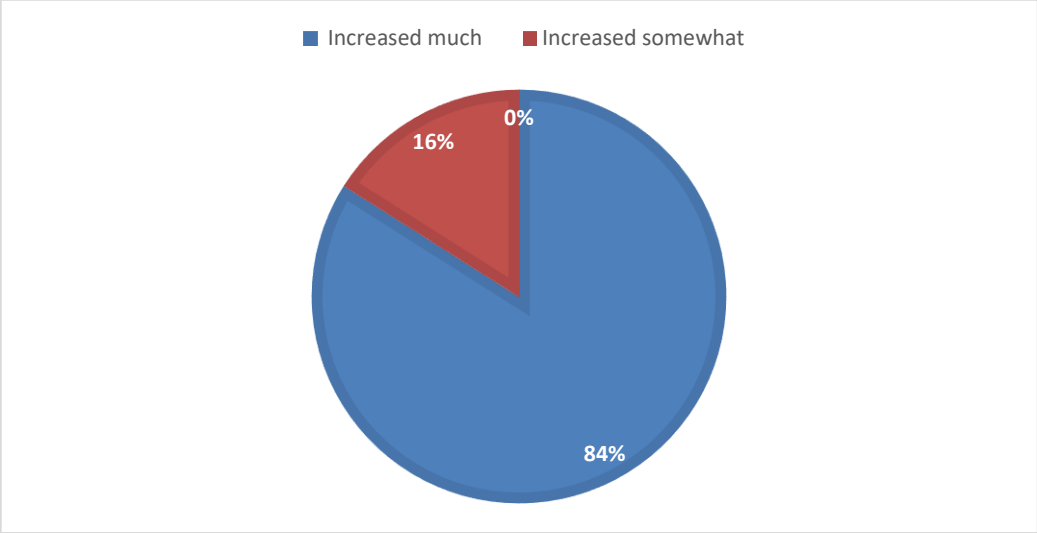
- The green fallows technology was successfully implemented, and it is still being applied today
- Expansion of bee yards became additional economic impact.
- Support of pastoralism and seed production
- Water-saving technologies have been introduced achieving actual water savings, and fallow lands have been put into circulation
- Green finance in the crop sector
- Proposals were made for the Law on Organic Products and the Green Economy Concept.
- Within the framework of the subproject in Balkhash district, Almaty region, an improved technology for degraded irrigated land reclamation of the Akdala rice irrigation systems was implemented.
- As part of implementation of a subproject, an improved technology for degraded irrigated land reclamation of rice systems was introduced and implemented in Balkhash district, Almaty region.
- Green approaches to sustainable land, pasture and water resources management with minimal and gentle tillage, sowing of locally adapted crops and varieties, watering of pastures with the use of alternative energy sources (sun, wind), drip irrigation on irrigated lands, anti-erosion pasture rotations in distant pastures, development of a Pasture Management Plan in accordance with the new Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Pastures", etc.
- Digital technologies, precision farming system, diversification in crop production
  bylaws to the Law "On Pastures", subsidizing farmers
- Subsidies for the development of animal production, development of pond farms, and solar panels have been introduced!
- Introduction of melliferous conveyors,
- Assistance to Kazakh beekeeping companies in certification with AQSIQ, China, exchange of experience with China and the United Arab Emirates
- Increased share of pasture rotation in natural pasture lands (forage crop rotation) through the introduction of innovative methods of breeding and accelerated reproduction in animal husbandry, establishment and development of modern infrastructure in the livestock industry.
- Application of forecasting methods and crops selection depending on climatic conditions
- RSE Kazhydromet installed the "Long-term weather forecaster" software that facilitates long-term weather forecasting and identification of the analogue year, which was previously done manually, and now this process is automated. Moreover, within the framework of the project, the following was implemented in the Department of Agrometeorological Forecasting: "Forecast of sugar beet and grain maize yield for the southern regions of Kazakhstan". The above-mentioned forecast has been in demand among farmers in the southern regions. The employees of the Department were trained in the geographic information system "Q-gis", which significantly facilitates data visualization.

- As part of the project, Kazhydromet has installed the "Long-term Weather Forecaster" software for making weather forecasts using analog maps; previously, the selection of maps used to be done manually and took a lot of time. During the project, the Agrometeorological Forecasting Department developed and implemented two forecasts: Sugar Beet Yield Forecast and Grain Maize Yield Forecast for the southern regions of Kazakhstan. These forecasts are important for farmers in the south. During the project, the Department's employees were trained in the geographic information software Q-gis for data visualization.
- Arrangement of melliferous-plant conveyors, utilization of pheromone traps and disorientation devices safe for pollinating insects in fruit orchards, strengthening ties with representatives of China, the United Arab Emirates, assisting beekeeping companies to obtain accreditation in the AQSIQ of the People's Republic of China

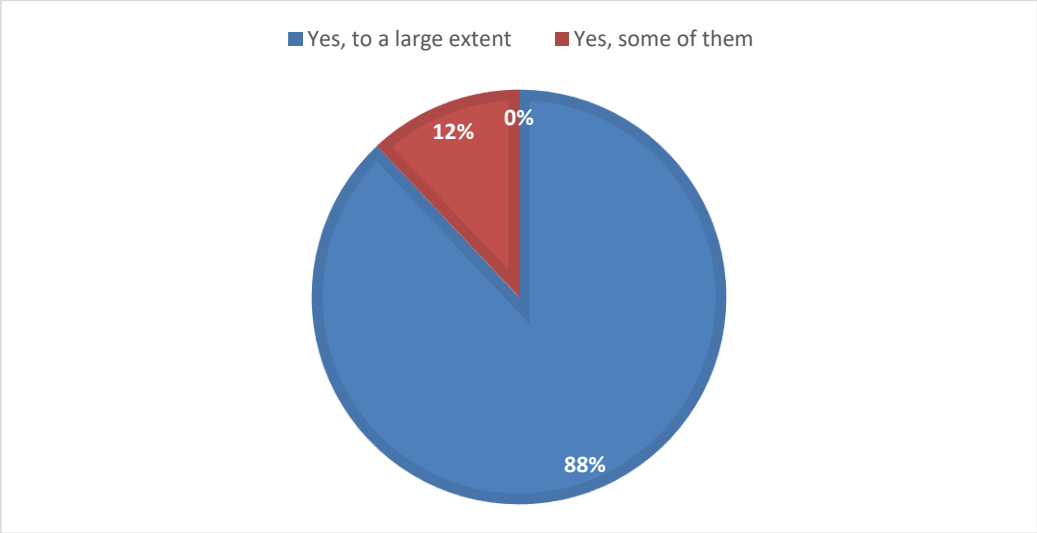
8) As a result of the Agro-incentives project, my own capacity for innovative land management practices has:



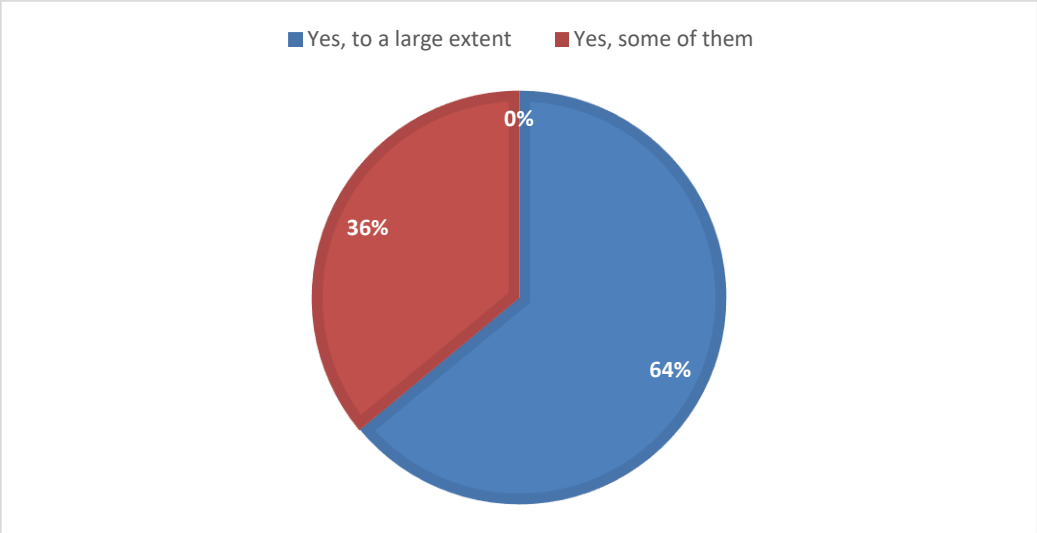
9) As a result of the Agro-incentives project, the capacity of my organization/community for innovative land management practices has:



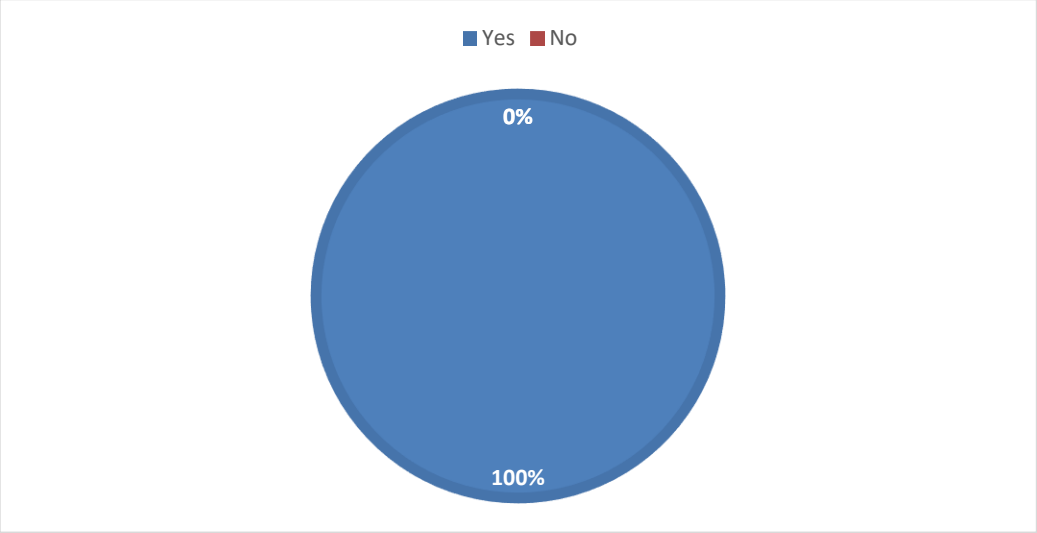
10) Do you think the project targets the main threats or problems related to sustainable land management of agricultural systems?



11) Do you think the project targets the main problems or challenges faced by your organization or community?

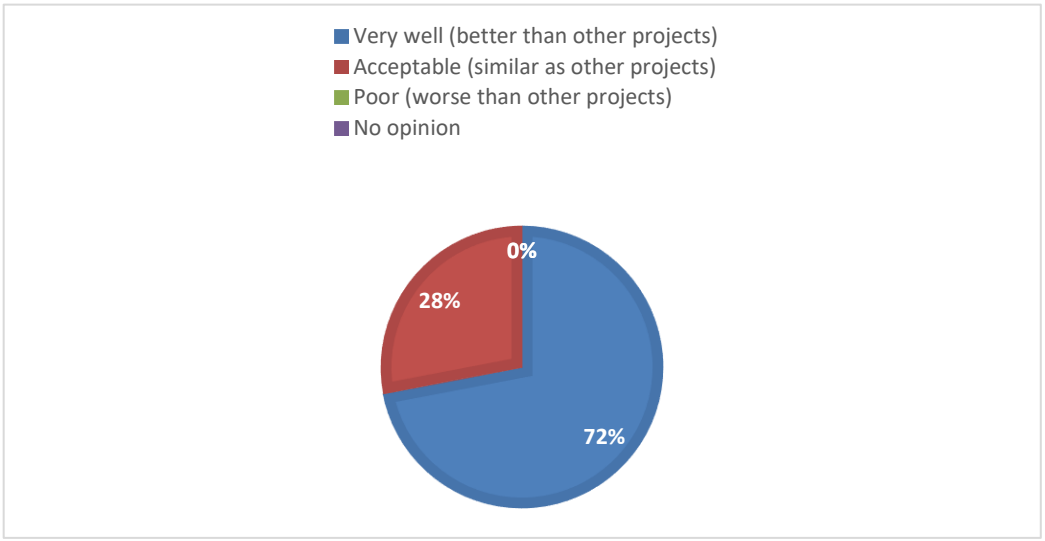


12) Do you think that the project has achieved its intended results (or the results you expected from the project?)

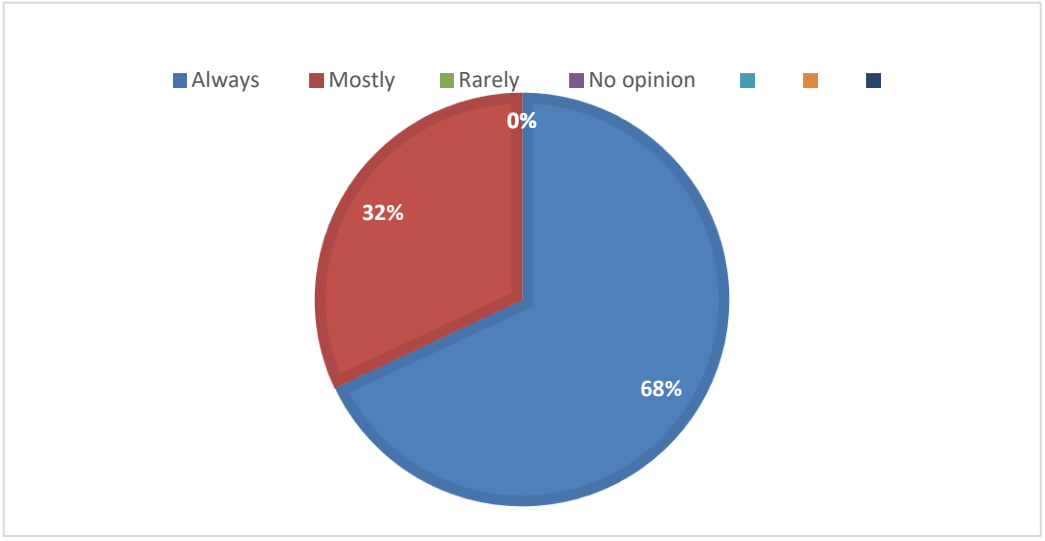


13) What were the main benefits for your organization / community from participating in the project (pick whichever applies)?

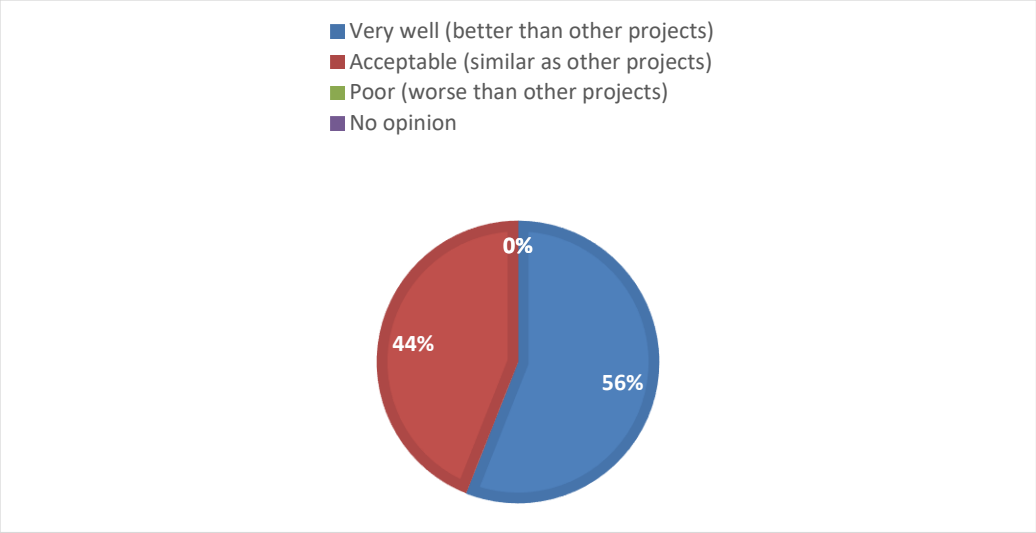
14) Do you think the project was managed by well-trained and adequately experienced staff?



15) Do you think that the project was well monitored: are lessons identified and applied accordingly and timely?



16) Do think that Agro-incentives is a well-known initiative? (do you read/hear about it through newsletters, media releases, website, blogs etc.)?



Annex 6: Matrix of Rating Achievement of Project Objective and Outcomes

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification	TE comments	TE assessment
Objective: to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods					**Rating: Satisfactory**	
1. Area of productive landscapes (pasturelands, crop and fodder production lands) in steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs that include a focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices	Zero	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)	814 926 hectares of productive landscapes under ILUPs in targets ecosystems as direct project impact areas.	Annual reports from the target Akimats of Almaty, Kyzylorda, Akmola, Kostanay, North and East Kazakhstan.	SLM practices improved across agricultural lands managed by the farms participating in the demonstration activities, covering a cumulative area of 145,503 ha (see table below). The ILUPs were not developed as planned; the 750,000 ha end target is based upon SLM practices adopted across the steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs.	**Partially achieved**
2. Improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place	2% on average	8 to 10% on average	-Akmola region: Before - 3.8-4.1%, After – 3.8-4.1% -North Kazakhstan region: Before – 3.7-3.9%, After – 3.7-3.9% -Almaty region: Before – 2.7-2.9%, After 2.7-2.9% -Kyzylorda region: Before - 2.9-3.8, After – 3.1-4.9%. -Kostanay region: Before – 3.8-4.1% After – 3.8-4.1% -East Kazakhstan region: Before – 3.0 - 3.3%, After – 3.0 - 3.3%	Expert's reports Reports of the Research Institutes	Project monitoring reports indicate improvements in one of the six pilot regions, namely Kyzylorda, where % soil humus content increased from 2.9-3.8% at the baseline year in 2015 to 3.1-4.9% by the end of the project in 2020. Similar to Indicator 1, the results of the project are reported for farms participating in the demonstration activities, not across the entire rayons.	**Partially achieved**
3. Improvement in livestock productivity (as measured by weight gain) in area where ILUPs are in place	Average live weight in degraded pastures/ rangelands is 320 kg	20% weight gain over baseline	5.1% (339.3kg) weight gain. The pure gain weight is 19.3kg of live weight of cattle.	Expert's reports Reports of the Research Institutes	Project monitoring reports indicate a 5.1% weight gain, increasing 19.3 kg, from 320 kg at the baseline to 339.3 kg at the end of the project. The results are relevant for one or more farms participating in the demonstration activities, not across the entire rayons.	**Partially achieved**
Outcome 1: Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives					**Rating: Satisfactory**	
4. Indicators of on-the-ground improvements in crop and	See table below	See table below	Implemented 9 demonstration plots with total 360,340 ha of productive landscapes under	Project PIR and contracted	Project monitoring reports indicate achievement of the	**Achieved**

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification	TE comments	TE assessment
fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, efficiency in water use, etc. (indicators vary by pilot site)			ILUPs in targets ecosystems as direct project impact areas.	companies' reports.	end targets regarding crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, irrigation efficiency, etc.	
5. Access of small and medium farmers in pilot sites to agro-environmental incentives	At present, the nature of agricultural subsidies is such that they are mostly accessible only to large-scale farms	At least 40% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives have access to them by project end	61% of small and medium farms are now eligible for agro-environmental incentives through access to the state subsidy programmes.	Ministry's annual report State subsidy programme	Project self-assessment indicates 61% small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives. The figure was based on the value of subsidies for small and medium farms provided in 2020 compared to 2015. The baseline number of small and medium farms in the project pilots was not reported, and the government systems are not distinguishing small and medium farmers.	**Mostly achieved**
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	Training does not adequately cover needs of small and medium farms	At least 75% of small and medium farms in areas where training is delivered send representatives to attend sessions by project end	86% of small and medium farms in project areas have send representatives to attend SLM related training sessions.	Expert's reports Reports of the Extension centers Reports contracted companies	Project self-assessment reports 86% of small and medium farms sent representatives to project sponsored SLM trainings. The baseline number of small and medium farms in the project pilot areas unclear.	**Achieved**
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[14]	No such targeted training program	80% of target audience attend sessions by project end	The project was able to cover all 91% of the target audience in pilot project areas by trainings and other project's upgrade qualification and mobilization events.	Expert's reports Reports of the Extension centers Reports contracted companies	The project self-assessment reports 91% of the target audit audience in the project pilot areas – calculated based on the number of Extension Service Officers in the pilot areas.	**Achieved**

[14] Balkhash and Enbekshikazakh districts of Almaty Oblast, Karabulak rural okrug and Akkol district of Akmola Oblast, Ayyagoz district of East-Kazakhstan Oblast, Denisovsky and Fedorovsky districts of Kostanay Oblast, Kyzylorda City of Kyzylorda Oblast, Akkaiyn district of North Kazakhstan Oblast

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification	TE comments	TE assessment
8. Higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management	Current national and regional higher education institutions are producing limited number of professionals with such training and skills	At least 2 institutions[15] have strengthened curriculums by project end	Three institutions such the following have strengthened their curriculums. 1. Astana Agrarian University 2. Kostanay Agrarian University 3. Kyzylorda Agrarian University	Expert's reports Reports of the Extension centers Reports contracted companies	Curricular improvement on organic agriculture and diversification confirmed for the Astana Agrarian University, Kostanay Agrarian University, and Kyzylorda Agrarian University.	**Achieved**
Outcome 2: Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives					**Rating: Moderately satisfactory**	
9. Inter-agency mechanism for ensuring coordination of integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives operating effectively	Does not exist	Inter-agency Working Group has a clear mandate and method of operation to ensure coordination of different land use sectors by project end	Interagency working group was established involving the experts from the Ministry of Agriculture, committee on Forestry, regional and local akimats including the representatives the regional maslikhats were brought together to form a working group for the project.	Minutes of the Meeting, TOR for the working Group approved by the MOA.	Terms of reference developed for the Working Group. The Working Group was formed to support project implementation; there is no evidence that the mechanism will continue after project closure.	**Partially achieved**
10. Inclusion of agro-environmental subsidies in State programs	Agro-environmental subsidies do not exist	Agribusiness 2020 program includes such subsidies	- Subsidy for the mobile trailers - Subsidy for the solar panels - Acquisition of selection and seed-growing machinery and equipment Creation of infrastructure for pasture irrigation and providing water for livestock farms (wells, wells, a pump for lifting water, a mobile trailer / trailer for a shepherd, solar panels with a battery). - Creation of an artificial reservoir (digging) for collecting melt water. - Creation and expansion of irrigation systems and drip irrigation. - Acquisition of agricultural machinery and equipment (round baler).	Approved state subsidy programmes by the MOA	Subsidies are included in the following programs: (1) State Program for the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2021; (2) Sectoral Program of Sheep Breeding Development in Kazakhstan for 2021-2030; and (3) Subsidizing rule for partial reimbursement of costs incurred by an agribusiness entity in the course of investment. There is no clear definition of "agro-environmental" subsidies in the governmental programs.	**Mostly achieved**
11. Increase in government financing for SLM practices	No existing subsidies that are 100% SLM related	20% of total agricultural subsidies are agro-environmental or green subsidies, 10 years after the agro-environmental scheme is up and running	93% of increase over the baseline year in 2019 - 2020 attributable to changes in the state priorities in regard to SLM related subsidies only.	State programme to develop Agro-industrial sector of the Republic of Kazakhstan.	Estimations by the project team conclude that subsidies for "innovative agro technologies" were 93% higher in 2020 compared to 2015.	**Partially achieved**

[15] Kostanay State University (KSU) and Kazakh National Agriculture University (KazNAU)

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification	TE comments	TE assessment
					There is no definition of "agro-environmental" or "green" subsidies, thus it is difficult to measure achievement of this end target.	
12. Amendments to existing polices, regulations, and rules such that the support for SLM is stronger	There are weaknesses in a number of existing policies, rules and regulations	At least 7 types[16] of amendments are developed		A Road map for development of Organic farming	Pilot program on export-oriented organic agriculture for the Almaty and Zhambyl regions (Nov 2019). Government has allocated financial support in 2021.	**Mostly Achieved**
				A government programme on National export strategy	Government program on National Export Strategy (No 511, Aug 2017).	
				A government instruction to enhance the export potential of honey production	Recommendations regarding export of honey products.	
				- State programme on development of the livestock breeding system "Sybagha"	Livestock breeding program "Sybagha" (TE team found reference of this program, but could not access the documentation).	
				State programme on development of Agro-industrial sector 2021-2026	State programme on the development of the Agro-Industrial sector 2022-2026. Consultations are ongoing; program is not yet approved.	

[16] (1) 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; (2) amendments to the Land Code on regulating rangelands and pastures, including ownership rights for pastures and hayfields around settlements; (3) amendments to the Land Code on land use planning; (4) changes to by-laws regulating land use issues to include the definition of rational use and its criteria; (5) 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; (6) 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; (7) proposals to the draft Law on Organic Agriculture.

Indicator	Baseline	End of Project target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification	TE comments	TE assessment
				- State programme to develop Sheep husbandry.	State program on the development of sheet husbandry (No. 108, Mar 2015).	
				Law on Organic Farming (project joined Working Group)	Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 27, 2015 No. 423-V "On the production of organic products" (with amendments and additions as of October 28, 2019)	
				Law on Pastures (project provided technical support on the Working Group)	Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 20, 2017 No. 47-VI "On pastures"	

Sub-table 1: Indicators of on-the-ground improvements in terms of crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, efficiency in water use, etc. (indicators vary by pilot site)

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
Pilot 1:	Consumption of irrigation water	29,000 m3/ha	24,000 m3/ha	11,587 m3/ha	Kyzylorda Research Institute's report Expert's reports
	Rice yield	46-52 hwt/ha	56-62 hwt/ha	57-63 hwt/ha	
	Lucerne share in crop rotation	29%	35%	47%	
	Salt content in inundated rice paddies	1.0 %	0.3 %	0.27 %	
	% of soil humus in monoculture fields	0.7%	1.2 %[17]	1-1.2 %	
	Crop products output	45-60 hwt/ha	80 hwt/ha	69-83 hwt/ha	Expert's reports
Pilot 2:	Area of irrigated arable land	3,558 ha	4,978 ha	6,910 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Area of restored wastelands	0 ha	1,420 ha	3383 ha	
	Number of water collectors	0	3	3	
	Volume of water collected	0 m3	1.5 mln. m3	1.5 mln. m3	
	Restored irrigation network	0 km	5 km	9 km	
Pilot 3	Area under forage crops	0 ha	700 ha	1,029 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Green fallow land area	0 ha	360 ha	391 ha	
	Humus content of arable land		incr. by 2%	2.1%	
	Wheat yield growth	8-10 hwt/ha	12-15 hwt/ ha	28-31 hwt/ha	
	Amount of hay stocked	500 tons	1,200 tons	2,012 tons	
	Agricultural areas managed sustainably	0 ha	18,725 ha	113,686 ha	
Pilot 4	Area under monoculture	3,100 ha	3,100 ha	903 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Restored area of degraded arable land	0 ha	160 ha	391 ha	
	Meadows created in sown pastures	0 ha	200 ha	219 ha	
	Forage crop areas	0 ha	360 ha	409 ha	
	Increased humus content in soil	-	by 8 %	8.5 %.	
	Forage crop yield	8 hwt/ha	20 hwt/ha	22 hwt/ha	
Pilot 5	Area of distant pastures that are in use	0 ha	17,300 ha	94012 ha	Contracted companies' reports BTOR report
	Pasture productivity	2 hwt/ ha	8 hwt/ ha	121 kg	
	Area of restored hayfields	0 ha	900 ha	13000 ha	
Pilot 6	Area under monoculture	15,979 ha	11,979 ha	10,113 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Area under forage crops	7,906 ha	11,906 ha	13,101 ha	
	Area under green fallow	0 ha	4,000 ha	6,700 ha	
	Increased humus content in soil	2%	Incr. by 10%	14%	
	Wheat yield	8.9 hwt/ ha	12 hwt/ ha	22 hwt/ ha	
	Ameliorated pasture, hayfields	0 ha	2,000 ha	3201 ha	
	Pastures under seasonal rotation	0 ha	10,000 ha	11,000 ha	
Pilot	Area under green fallow	0 ha	500 ha	1021ha	Expert's reports

[17] After introducing salt-resistant crops

	Indicator	Baseline	Target	TE self-assessment (Jan 2021)	Means of verification
	Area of re-seeded pastures	0 ha	100 ha	81,110 ha	Contracted companies' reports
	Humus content of arable land	Tbd at start	Incr. by 8%	8.7%	
	Increase in wheat yield	10 hwt/ha	12 hwt/ha;	21 hwt/ha	
	Increase in hay yield	8 hwt/ha	20 hwt/ha	26 hwt/ha	
Pilot 8	Restored area of degraded arable land	0 ha	200 ha	467 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Areas under lucerne and other forage crops	300 ha	500 ha	901 ha	
	Increased humus content in soil	Tbd at start	by 10 %	10.7%	
	Rice yield	40 hwt/ha	45 hwt/ha	57- 61 hwt/ha	
	Installed equipment for water delivery to inundated rice fields and its accounting	0 units	200 units	200 water meters	
	Installed equipment for water discharge from inundated rice fields and its accounting	0 units	200 units	200 water meters	
	Consumption of irrigated water	29,500 m3/ ha	23,000 m3/ ha	17,201 m3/ha	
Pilot 9	Monoculture (wheat crop) areas	10,590 ha	10,190 ha	5,101 ha	Expert's reports Contracted companies' reports
	Forage crop areas	1,800 ha	2,200 ha	6,135 ha	
	Improvement of soil fertility	-	by 0.5%	1.9%	
	Increase in forage crop yield	-	by 2 hwt/ ha	2,6 hwt/ha	
	Reduced costs of forage procurement	-	by 20%	20%	

Annex 7: Cofinancing Table

Note	Cofinancing Source	Type	GEF Agency		Recipient Government		Civil Society Organization		Private Sector		Other		Total Cofinancing	
			Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
GEF Agency:														
1	United Nations Development Programme	Grant	700,000	700,000									700,000	700,000
	Sub-total, UNDP		**700,000**	**700,000**									**700,000**	**700,000**
Recipient Country Government														
2	Ministry of Agriculture, JSC KazAgroInnovation, JSC KazAgroMarketing	Grant			4,350,000	4,350,000							4,350,000	4,350,000
		In-kind			150,000	150,000							150,000	150,000
3	Akimats of Ayagoz district (rayon), Malgeldin, Kosagash and Saryarkin rural okrugs, East Kazakhstan Oblast	Grant			95,000	95,000							95,000	95,000
4	Akimat of Karabulak rural okrug, Akmola Oblast	Grant			35,220	35,220							35,220	35,220
5	Agricultural Department of Kzyl Orda Oblast Akimat	Grant			23,000	23,000							23,000	23,000
	Sub-total, Recipient Country Government				**4,653,220**	**4,653,220**							**4,653,220**	**4,653,220**
Civil Society Organization														
6	Organic Agricultural Association (Public Union)	Grant					365,515	365,515					365,515	365,515
7	Agrosoyuz of Kazakhstan	Grant					211,914	211,914					211,914	211,914
8	Public Foundation "Farmer of Kazakhstan"	Grant					270,430	270,430					270,430	270,430
9	Zher-Ana Astana Public Association	Grant					371,843	371,843					371,843	371,843
10	Rural consumer's cooperatives of AZAT	Grant					0	290,765					0	290,765
	Union of hay makers	Grant					0	418,000					0	418,000
	The Union of Organic Producers of Kazakhstan	Grant					0	548,000					0	548,000
	Sub-total, National Government RK						**1,219,702**	**2,476,467**					**1,219,702**	**2,476,467**
Private Sector														
11	Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Cultivation named after I. Zhakhayev, LLP	Grant							141,427	141,427			141,427	141,427
12	North Kazakhstan Agricultural Experimental Station LLP	Grant							285,110	285,110			285,110	285,110
	Sub-total, Civil Society Organization								**426,537**	**426,537**			**426,537**	**426,537**
Other														
13	Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (KazFOAM)	Grant									180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000
		In-kind									20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
14	Farmers Union of Kazakhstan	Grant									300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000
15	Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ACEPAS)	Grant									1,900,000	1,900,000	1,900,000	1,900,000
		In-kind									100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
	Sub-total, Other										**2,500,000**	**2,500,000**	**2,500,000**	**2,500,000**
	Total cofinancing for project implementation:		**700,000**	**700,000**	**4,653,220**	**4,653,220**	**1,219,702**	**2,476,467**	**426,537**	**426,537**	**2,500,000**	**2,500,000**	**9,499,459**	**10,756,224**
Note:	All figures in United States dollars (USD)													

Unofficial English summaries of the co-financing reports from the project's co-financing partners:

Entity	Amount, USD	Activities
Agrosoyuz of Kazakhstan	211,914	Developed 11 sustainable agritechnologies, reclaimed over 8 thousand ha of 32 thousand ha of preciously reclaimed lands, which is 25 percent of the total Akdaly irrigable land mass Adaptation and water-saving structures developed for rice rotation improving land use in 7 thousand ha of degraded lands. Resulting water productivity is 3.8 kilos of crops per cubic meter Trained 111 water users and 278 local citizens to apply technologies for degraded land reclamation, increasing water and land use efficiency in semideserts with marginal takyr soils in dry continental climate Provided agricultural machinery and equipment, fuels and lubricants, conducted field visits, provided premises, logistics and invited partner organizations
Akimats of Ayagoz district (rayon), Malgeldin, Kosagash and Saryarkin rural okrugs, East Kazakhstan Oblast	95,000	Procured a drilling machine for arranging water wells in the distant pastures of Ayagoz district and wells in three remote demonstration sites for cultivated pastures. Ayagoz akimat conducted field workshops for 136 district farmers with further publications in the media. Implemented distant pasture management system in arid steppe and semi-desert Malgeldinskiy, Kasagashskiy and Saryarkynskiy counties amounting to 17300 ha. Seeded highly productive and adaptable wheat grass to improve 1500 ha of old hay lands. In this process, farm households allocated their own funds to cover seeding works, fuel, and equipment lease, shed construction.
Analytical Center of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector (ACEPAS)	2 million including 100,000 in kind	Implemented project activities to analyze the existing agricultural subsidies and develop agri-environmental schemes. Technical and political support to the Project: recommendations and amendments to current national programs and regulations.
Farmers Union of Kazakhstan	about 300,000	Advocacy for amendments in the national policy related to sustainable land management; development of learning materials; raising awareness of agricultural producers, farmers, public officials and parliament members
Kazakh Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (KazFOAM)	200,000, including 20,000 in kind	Developed training handbook; trained and consulted at least 750 farmers and producers in Kostanay and Almaty oblasts on transition to organic production, accreditation, certification and inspection based on organic standards. 1. Developed process chart for bio-product application. Provided bio-products for pilot plots. 2. Arranged several demo plots over 5 ha to develop organic fruit and vegetables. 3. Prepared four training aids: Tips for future organic farmers, Certification requirements and standards, Approaches and solutions for Kazakh national organic market, Pros and cons of organic farming. 4. Four articles on: Animal products and organic farming, Organic horticulture, Crop protection, Selection and seed production in organic farming 5. Two brand books for horticulturists and bee farmers. Engaged foreign experts, invited Andre Leu, IFOAM President, to Kazakhstan arranging a meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture.
Kazakh Research Institute of Rice Cultivation named after I. Zhakhayev, LLP	141,427 for Kyzylorda oblast, 23,000 to cofinance with the local akimat's agricultural department	Arranged demonstration plots, conducted trainings, procured feed crop seeds, new rice varieties; diversified agricultural production; produced flow meters for irrigation water and installed an automated water supply and accounting system at the Institute's rice bays; Field Days support
Ministry of Agriculture	4.5 million, including 150,000 in kind	Working Group support, promotion of amendments to the Land code and bylaws on land use planning and efficiency, pasture management, and updating the Agribusiness Complex development program for 2017-2021, introducing measures to implement international standards in the National Export Strategy for 2018-2022. Advocacy for laws, strategic measures and certification to support organic

Entity	Amount, USD	Activities
		production and pasture management. Revised and improved the investment subsidy rules in terms of agri-environmental incentives for farmers based on pilot plot experience. Support in developing and promoting land use plans at the landscape level, Ministry personnel participated in the Field Days.
North Kazakhstan Agricultural Experimental Station LLP	285,110	Demo plot works: Arranged crop rotation to transition from monoculture on a 10590-ha plot; agrochemical survey; seed preparation; fertilizer application; seeding. Complex works on crops protection and care Grass stand plowing to improve fertility and yield Complex works on barley cultivation Covered expenses for agricultural equipment, materials, fuel and personnel
Organic Agricultural Association (Public Union)	365,515	Pilot subproject 7: provided agricultural machinery for no-till, fuel and lubricants, fertilizer, seeding, agrichemical survey, personnel wages, Field Day support. Implemented new agricultural techniques of organic farming over 18304 ha and launched production of released varieties (wheat grass and melilot) over 1813 ha.
Public Foundation Farmer of Kazakhstan	270,430	20 workshops for the members of the 'Village consumer cooperative of water users and farmers' from nearest villages dedicated to the best water-saving and conservation techniques, operation of modern water gates, efficient consumption of irrigation water, floodwater harvesting to cover peak water consumption. Provided agricultural and construction equipment, fuels, personnel, expertise, premises, logistics, engaged partner entities. Arranged 16 field visits for exchange and project results demonstration. Reconstruction of canal head and ponds. 1420 ha of degraded land reclaimed, now irrigable. Reduced flood risks, updated standards for construction regulations, built capacities of 180 farms
Rural consumer's cooperatives of AZAT	290,765	Reclamation of orphan land in Akmolinskaya oblast, transition to pastures: fuel and lubricants, provision of spare parts for fertilizing and seeding machines, provision of farming machinery, agritechnological activities on a plot of 240 ha, personnel wages, support in data collection, consultancy and discussions of the draft integrated land use plan. Conducted Field Days in cooperation with the Azat village akimat, Akkol district. Prepared a manual on pasture and hay land improvement and sustainable management of arid lands.
Union of Hay producers	418,000	1. Field Day support across project plots. 2. Engagement of agri-producers in the project's training events. 3. Group conferences to explain norms and provisions of the Law On Pastures in Akmola, Almaty, Kostanay, North-Kazakhstan, East-Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda oblasts. 4. Arranged workshops for farmers and akimats on rational pasture use in accord with the pasture allocation conditions, pasture rotation and improvement. 5. Support to Ayagoz district akimat, East Kazakhstan, on the issues of flooding of pastures. 6. Knowledge sharing system capacity assessment. 7. Recommendations to develop the knowledge sharing system in Kazakh Agribusiness Complex. 8. Development and support of the green (eco) wheat platform
Zher-Ana Astana Public Association	371,843, plus 35,220 allocated by Akimat	Fuel and lubricants, land lease, farming machinery, seeding expenses, agrotechnical works, wages, data collection support, consultancy and discussion on the draft integrated land use plan. Field Days conducted jointly with akimat. Published a manual on green fallow, pasture and hay land improvement, and sustainable management of arid lands.

Annex 8: Evaluation Consultant Code of Conduct 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 limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

TE Consultant Agreement Form

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

Name of Consultants: James Lenoci, Gulzhamal Issayeva

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

Signatures:

Budapest, 26 April 2021

James Lenoci, Internatoinal Consultant / Team Leader

Almaty, 26 April 2021

Gulzhamal Issayeva, National Consultant

Annex 9: Rating Scales

Outcome Ratings

The overall ratings on the outcomes of the project are based on performance on the following criteria:

a. Relevance
b. Effectiveness
c. Efficiency

Project outcomes are rated based on the extent to which project objectives were achieved. A six-point rating scale is used to assess overall outcomes:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings.
- Satisfactory (S): Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate short comings.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
- Unsatisfactory (U): Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

The calculation of the overall outcomes rating of projects considers all the three criteria, of which relevance and effectiveness are critical. The rating on relevance determines whether the overall outcome rating will be in the unsatisfactory range (MU to HU = unsatisfactory range). If the relevance rating is in the unsatisfactory range then the overall outcome is in the unsatisfactory range as well. However, where the relevance rating is in the satisfactory range (HS to MS), the overall outcome rating could, depending on its effectiveness and efficiency rating, be either in the satisfactory range or in the unsatisfactory range.

The second constraint applied is that the overall outcome achievement rating may not be higher than the effectiveness rating.

During project implementation, the results framework of some projects may have been modified. In cases where modifications in the project impact, outcomes and outputs have not scaled down their overall scope, the evaluator should assess outcome achievements based on the revised results framework. In instances where the scope of the project objectives and outcomes has been scaled down, the magnitude of and necessity for downscaling is taken into account and despite achievement of results as per the revised results framework, where appropriate, a lower outcome effectiveness rating may be given.

Sustainability Ratings

The sustainability is assessed taking into account the risks related to financial, sociopolitical, institutional, and environmental sustainability of project outcomes. The evaluator may also take other risks into account that may affect sustainability. The overall sustainability is assessed using a four-point scale.

- Likely (L). There is little or no risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Likely (ML). There are moderate risks to sustainability.
- Moderately Unlikely (MU). There are significant risks to sustainability.
- Unlikely (U). There are severe risks to sustainability.
- Unable to Assess (UA). Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Project M&E Ratings

Quality of project M&E is assessed in terms of:

- Design
- Implementation

Quality of M&E on these two dimensions is assessed on a six point scale:

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of M&E design / implementation meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design / implementation somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of M&E design/implementation substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in M&E design/ implementation.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design / implementation.

Implementation and Execution Rating

Quality of implementation and of execution is rated separately. Quality of implementation pertains to the role and responsibilities discharged by the GEF Agencies that have direct access to GEF resources. Quality of Execution pertains to the roles and responsibilities discharged by the country or regional counterparts that received GEF funds from the GEF Agencies and executed the funded activities on ground. The performance is rated on a six-point scale.

- Highly satisfactory (HS): There were no short comings and quality of implementation / execution exceeded expectations.
- Satisfactory (S): There were no or minor short comings and quality of implementation / execution meets expectations.
- Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were some short comings and quality of implementation / execution more or less meets expectations.
- Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation / execution somewhat lower than expected.
- Unsatisfactory (U): There were major short comings and quality of implementation / execution substantially lower than expected.
- Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): There were severe short comings in quality of implementation / execution.
- Unable to Assess (UA): The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation / execution.

Annex 10: Terms of Reference for Terminal Evaluation

United Nations Development Programme

Terms of Reference

Position:	International Consultant (Team Leader) Terminal Evaluation of the GEF- UNDP project (Remotely).
Project title:	PIMS 5358- "Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives".
Type of Contract	IC – Individual Contract
Contract Duration:	14 December 2020 – 30 March 2021 (35 workdays)
Duty Station	Home based

1. Evaluation Background

In accordance with GEF-UNDP M&E policies and procedures, all regular and medium-sized projects supported by the GEF should undergo a final evaluation upon completion of implementation.

The Final Evaluation is intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global and national environmental goals. The Final Evaluation also identifies/documents lessons learned and makes recommendations that project partners and stakeholders might use to improve the design and implementation of other related projects and programs.

The evaluation is to be undertaken in accordance with the "GEF Evaluation Policy" (see http://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/ieo/evaluations/files/gef-me-policy-2019_2.pdf).

This Final Evaluation is initiated by UNDP Kazakhstan as the GEF Implementing Agency for the **"Supporting sustainable land management in steppe and semi-arid zones through integrated territorial planning and agro-environmental incentives"** project and it aims to provide managers (at the level of regulatory bodies of the Ministry of Agriculture, and GEF/UNDP) with a comprehensive overall assessment of the project and with a strategy for replicating the results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

COVID-19 related note:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a multidimensional crisis profoundly affecting health, and entire economies and societies. Its impacts are felt unequally, more severely impacting vulnerable groups, indigenous peoples, and women, amongst others. UNDP's response to the global COVID19 pandemic will also need to be multi-layered and the projects have to use an adaptive management approach to yet reach its milestones. While the impacts of COVID-19 continue to unfold and the context in each country continues to change, UNDP will work to assess the impacts of COVID-19 while continuing to support countries to recover and to 'build back better.

Many projects financed by the environmental and climate vertical funds are designed to address the root causes of such zoonotic pandemics. The current crisis takes its root in a number of human induced adverse impacts that are undermining the stability of critical ecosystems on which key economic sectors rest (e.g. deforestation, land use changes, expansion of agricultural land, intensification of livestock production, and trade in wildlife, climate change), all of which are compounded by the additional pressures of rising inequality amongst others. Thus, the project's support is, and will continue to be, focused on prevention so that this kind of situation, hopefully, does not happen again and countries can 'build back better'.

These adaptive management measures will be the focus of on-going discussions, including during the annual reporting process for GEF-financed projects. Finally, it is very important to follow country specific guidance by UNDP Country Office on travel and movement restriction and, particularly, refrain from visiting project sites and communities lacking access to medical care to avoid further spread of the virus.

Due to the current situation in Kazakhstan related to the spread of COVID-19 in the country and the recent decree of the government to reduce the in-country travel and ban gatherings of people, all the soft activities related to the training/seminars/meetings with beneficiaries were re-considered and the project has been conducting them online. Meantime, the project is enforcing some delivery parts related to the travel missions to get substituted through communication products as possible alternatives.

Following the GEF guidance issued on 31 of March 2020, such as below, the project has rescheduled its terminal evaluation due to conduct from November- December 2020.

Mid-term Reviews/Evaluations (MTRs/MTEs) and Terminal Evaluations (TEs) for projects financed by environmental Vertical Funds (GEF, GCF, AF)[1]

- As we enter the first phases of the global covid-19 pandemic, without clarity on when the crisis is going to end, it is expected that evaluations may need to be delayed (rather than cancelled).
- Based on the situation analysis of your individual country, planned evaluations can be rescheduled until there is clarity on the way forward in the implementation of your CPD.

Following the GEF recommendation, the project has rescheduled its TE for up to 2 months and per the consultation with the UNDP-GEF RTA has decided to conduct TE engaging remote international consultant + national consultant.

2. Project Background

The Government of Kazakhstan requested 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 includes 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 created 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 were 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 US$ 9,499,459 million, US$1,9 million of which is a contribution from 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.

The Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) 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. The Republic borders Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic in the south, Russia in the north, China in the east, and the Caspian Sea in the west. The country had an estimated population of 17,037,508 in 2013[2], with a low population density of six persons per square kilometer[3].

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 millimetres. 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.[4] The availability of arable land per inhabitant (1.5 hectares) is the second highest in the world.[5]

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)[6]. 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[7].

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[8].

[2] Data from http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx
[3] Data from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST
[4] Ministry of Agriculture (2013)
[5] OECD (2013), OECD Review of Agricultural Policies: Kazakhstan 2013, OECD Publishing.
[6] The Fourth National Report of Kazakhstan on Implementation of the UNCCD (with comments and additions). 2012. Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan
[7] CACILM Multicountry Partnership Framework Project Document, 2006, Asian Development Bank
[8] Saparov, A. 2014. Novel Measurement and Assessment Tools for Monitoring and Management of Land and Water Resources in Agricultural Landscapes of Central Asia. Soil Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan: Current status, problems and solutions.

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 (Kzyl Orda, Southern Kazakhstan and Almaty).

Today, over 62% of winter pastures and 71% of summer pastures are eroded and the quality of pastures has declined by 4-5 times compared to the 1980s[9]. Kazakhstan's rangelands are susceptible to droughts, inadequate natural regeneration, widespread aerial transportation of sand and salt (affecting some 30 million ha) and formation of salinized or "solonchak" lands (more than 93 million ha).[10] Between 1951 and 2011, the stocking rate of livestock increased 5 times over the carrying capacity of pastures. Just in the past decade, sheep grazing in Kazakhstan has nearly tripled. The pressure on pastures is intensified by the declining practice of moving livestock between summer and winter pastures, and increased livestock density, especially in areas around settlements, i.e. communal winter pastures[11]. Despite their low productivity, vast horizontal pasturelands[12] are being used increasingly for sheep grazing, leading to soil erosion and mudslides. The combined impact generates erosion, depleted soil carbon stocks, increased frequency of mudslides with significant economic and social costs downstream in the form of flooded villages and damaged infrastructure.

The Project is fully consistent with the GEF-5 Land Degradation Focal Area Strategy and addresses objective 3 of this strategy namely, "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 introduces the concept of Integrated Land Use Planning and implements investments to demonstrate its viability in six oblasts. 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. The project can potentially be scaled up to this area, which is the area with highest sensitivity to land degradation threats under impending climate change. These activities are in conformity with Outputs 3.1 and 3.2 of the GEF LD-3 strategic objective. For the first time in Kazakhstan and in post-Soviet regions, the project introduces the concept of agro-environmental incentive payments as an innovative funding mechanism supporting SLM measures. Through these LD-focused activities, the project helps to prevent soil erosion, loss of productivity and other ecosystem services in the steppe zone in Kazakhstan, contributing to carbon sequestration and avoidance of emissions in/ from the soil layer.

3. Objectives and Tasks of the Assignment

The objective of the Evaluation is to assess the achievement of project objective, the affecting factors, the broader project impact and the contribution to the general goal/strategy, and the project partnership strategy.

The international consultant will be working remotely, supported by a national consultant based in Kazakhstan who will facilitate the international consultant and provide necessary substantive and operational support in carrying out this evaluation.

Project success will be measured based on Revised Project Logical Framework (see Annex 1), which provides clear performance and impact indicators for project implementation along with their corresponding means of verification. The evaluation will assess the aspects as listed in evaluation report outline attached in Annex 2.

[9] According to the Committee of Land Resources of the Ministry of Regional Development of Kazakhstan
[10] National Programming Framework of Kazakhstan under CACILM. 2009
[11] Landscape and biological diversity in the Republic of Kazakhstan. UNDP (2005)
[12] Seasonal movements of livestock can be vertical (winter & summer pastures) or horizontal (moving the livestock along the same horizontal trail based on climate conditions -- such as temperature, moisture content – and forage availability during a day.

The Evaluation will focus on the following aspects:

- Project design and its relevance in relation to:
  a) *Development priorities* at the national level;
  b) *Stakeholders* – assess if the specific needs were met;
  c) *Country ownership / drivenness* – participation and commitments of government, local authorities, public services, utilities, residents;
  d) *UNDP mission to promote sustainable human development (SHD)* by assisting the country to build its capacities in the focal area of integrated land management, environmental protection and management;

- Performance - look at the progress that has been made by the project relative to the achievement of its objective and outcomes;
  a) *Effectiveness* - extent to which the project has achieved its objectives and the desired outcomes, and the overall contribution of the project to national strategic objectives;
  b) *Efficiency* - assess efficiency against overall impact of the project for better projection of achievements and benefits resulting from project resources, including an assessment of the different implementation modalities and the cost effectiveness of the utilization of GEF resources and actual co-financing for the achievement of project results;
  c) *Timeliness* of results,

- Management arrangements focused on project implementation:
  a) *General implementation and management* - evaluate the adequacy of the project, implementation structure, including the effectiveness of the UNDP Country Office, the partnership strategy and stakeholder involvement from the aspect of compliance to UNDP/GEF requirements and also from the perspective of "good (or bad) practice model" that could be used for replication / learning useful lessons.
  b) *Financial accountability* – extent to which the sound financial management has been an integral part of achieving project results, with particular reference to adequate reporting, identification of problems and adjustment of activities, budgets and inputs
  c) *Monitoring and evaluation on project level* – assess the adoption of the monitoring and evaluation system during the project implementation, and its internalization by competent authorities and service providers after the completion of the project; focusing to relevance of the performance indicators, that are:
     - Specific: The system captures the essence of the desired result by clearly and directly relating to achieving an objective and only that objective.
     - Measurable: The monitoring system and indicators are unambiguously specified so that all parties agree on what it covers and there are practical ways to measure it.
     - Achievable and Attributable: The system identifies what changes are anticipated as a result of the intervention and whether the result(s) are realistic. Attribution requires that changes in the targeted developmental issue can be linked to the intervention.
     - Relevant and Realistic: The system establishes levels of performance that are likely to be achieved in a practical manner, and that reflect the expectations of stakeholders.
     - Time-bound, Timely, Trackable and Targeted: The system allows progress to be tracked in a cost-effective manner at desired frequency for a set period, with clear identification of particular stakeholders group to be impacted by the project.

- Overall success of the project with regards to the following criteria:
  a) *Impact* - assessment of results with reference to development objectives of the project and the achievement of sustainable land management in critical, productive, steppe, arid and semi-arid landscapes found in Akmola, Kostanai, 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;

b) *Sustainability* - assessment of the prospects for benefits/activities continuing after the end of the project, *static sustainability* which refers to the continuous flow of the same benefits to the same target groups; *dynamic sustainability* use and/or adaptation of the projects' results by original target groups and/or other target groups. It should include a comparison of the baseline assessment of the CD Scorecard with the terminal assessment, and make some inferences as to what contribution(s) the project has made towards institutionalizing the capacities developed;
c) *Contribution to capacity development* - extent to which the project has empowered target groups and have made possible for the government and local institutions (municipalities) to use the positive experiences; ownership of projects' results;
d) *Replication* – analysis of replication potential of the project positive results in country and in the region, outlining of possible funding sources; replication to date without direct intervention of the project;
e) *Synergies* with other similar projects, funded by the government or other donors.

Besides, the evaluation should also consider a below criteria for evaluations as stated in the latest GEF guidelines for TE:

At minimum:

i. Relevance
ii. Effectiveness
iii. Efficiency
iv. Gender and human rights
v. Additional cross-cutting issues, as relevant: persons with disabilities, vulnerable groups, poverty and environment nexus, disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation)
vi. Results Framework
vii. Progress to Impact
viii. M&E Design and Implementation
ix. UNDP oversight/implementation
x. Implementing Partner execution
xi. GEF additionality
xii. Adaptive Management
xiii. Stakeholder Engagement
xiv. Finance & materialization of co-financing
xv. Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

In addition to a descriptive assessment, criteria should be rated using the following divisions: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory with an explanation of the rating. Also, the Overall Rating of the project should be indicated. Criteria, which have to be rated are indicated in the evaluation report outline attached in Annex 2.

<u>Issues of special consideration:</u>

The Evaluation will review and assess changes in development conditions, by addressing the following questions, with a focus on the perception of change among stakeholders:

- 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 terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects.[13]
- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

The Evaluation Report will present recommendations and lessons of broader applicability for follow-up and future support of UNDP and/or the Government, highlighting the best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to the evaluation scope.

4. Products expected from the Evaluation

The key product expected from this final evaluation is a comprehensive analytical report in English that should follow minimum GEF requirements as indicated in Annex 2. The Report of the Final Evaluation will be a stand-alone document that substantiates its recommendations and conclusions. The report will have to provide to the UNDP and the GEF Secretariat complete and convincing evidence to support its findings/ratings. The Report will include a table of planned vs. actual project financial disbursements, and planned co-financing vs. actual co-financing in this project, according the table attached in Annex 3 of this TOR. The Report will be supplemented by Rate Tables, attached in Annex 4 of this TOR. The length of the final evaluation report shall not exceed 50 pages in total (not including annexes).

5. Evaluation Approach

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below; however, it should be made clear that the evaluation team may revise the approach as necessary in consultation with UNDP. Any changes should be in-line with best international criteria and professional norms and standards. Any modifications to the proposed approach should be explicitly approved by UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based approach, using information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood by project partners and stakeholders.

The evaluation should provide as much gender disaggregated data as possible.

The evaluation will be conducted through desk review and online consultations with stakeholders by the evaluation team. The evaluation team is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with the government counterparts, UNDP CO, Project Steering Committee, project team, and key stakeholders.

The Evaluation Team is expected to consult all relevant sources of information, such as the UNDP/GEF project document ("ProDoc"), project reports – including Annual Reports, project budget revisions, progress reports, project files, national strategic and legal documents, and any other material that may be considered useful for

[13] http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf

evidence-based assessment. The list of documentation to be reviewed is included in Annex 5 of this Terms of Reference.

With support from the national consultant, the international consultant shall follow the interviews as a means of collecting data on the relevance, performance and success of the project. Due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the international consultant is not expected to travel to Kazakhstan or the project sites but has to rely on the data to be provided by the national consultant who is expected to visit the project sites (following all COVID-19 related SOPs). Outmost effort should be made by the evaluation team to collect all credible information, consult all relevant stakeholders (via phone, online key informant interviews etc.) to make sure the conduct and outcomes of the evaluation are not impacted.

The methodology to be used by the Evaluation Team should be presented in the report in full detail. It shall include information on:

- Documentation reviewed;
- Interviews;
- Field visits (national consultant only);
- Questionnaires;
- GEF CD Scorecard completed at the time of FE (by the Evaluation Team)
- Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

Although the Evaluation Team should feel free to discuss with the authorities concerned, all matters relevant to its assignment, it is not authorized to make any commitment or statement on behalf of UNDP or GEF or the project management.

The Evaluation Team should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

6. Deliverables

№	Expected deliverables	Estimated duration to complete (in workdays)	Target due date	Responsible	Reviewers/ Approvers
1.	Desk review	3 workdays	25 December 2020	Project Manager, UNDP CO Evaluation Coordinator	UNDP CO DRR, GEF Portfolio Manager UNDP/GEF RTA IRH
2.	Online briefings for evaluation team by the Project team, UNDP CO, UNDP/GEF RTA IRH	2 workdays	15 January 2021		
3.	Interviews with stakeholders, data collection, field visits to select sites	11 workdays	30 January 2021		
4.	Presentation of preliminary findings	1 workday	5 February 2021		
5.	Submission of the draft Terminal Evaluation Report	5 workdays	20 February 2021		
6.	Validation of findings with stakeholders through circulation of the draft TE report for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms	8 workdays	5 March 2021		

7.	Submission of the Final Terminal Evaluation report and its acceptance by UNDP (incorporating comments received on first draft)	5 workdays	15 March 2021		
	Total effort:	**35 w/days**			

7. Institutional arrangements

UNDP will sign the contract with the International Consultant in accordance with the approved UNDP procurement procedures for an individual contract. Payment for services will be made from the Project funds with satisfactory discharge of duties and achievement of results. The results of the work shall be approved by the UNDP DRR through UNDP CO evaluation manager (TDM) and UNDP RMA and M&E Associate.

- The Consultant will work under the direct supervision of the UNDP CO Evaluation Coordinator (TDM), with support from UNDP RMA and M&E Associate and overall guidance of UNDP DRR;
- The Consultant is responsible for the quality and timely submission of the deliverables;
- The Consultant ensures timely and rational planning, implementation of activities and achievement of results in accordance with the Terms of Reference;
- The Consultant provides the results of work in accordance with Deliverables;
- The Consultant shall provide reports in electronic form in MS Word format in English.

Prior to approval of the final report, UNDP Project Manager, in close coordination with the UNDP CO evaluation coordinator (TDM) and UNDP DRR will circulate the draft for comments to government counterparts: Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, GEF-UNDP RTA. UNDP and the stakeholders will submit comments and suggestions within 10 working days after receiving the draft. The finalized Terminal Evaluation Report, addressing all comments received shall be submitted by 15 March 2021.

If any discrepancies have emerged between impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the aforementioned parties, these should be explained in an annex attached to the final report.

8. Duration of assignment

The Consultant is expected to devote a maximum of 35 working days over a period of 4 calendar months in December 2020 - March 2021. The assignment commences immediately after signing the contract.

9. Duty Station

Home-based, no travel is expected due to restrictions associated with COVID-19 pandemic.

10. Qualification requirements

- A Master's degree (PhD preferred) in natural resources management, economics, environmental studies or other closely related field;
- 7 years of working experience in Environmental Economics, Agriculture, Sustainable Land Management, Organic Farming, financial incentives; experience in gender sensitive evaluation and analysis;
- At least 5 years of experience in working with UNDP/GEF evaluations;
- Competence in adaptive management, as applied to land desertification protection;
- Recent knowledge of the GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy;

- Recent knowledge of UNDP's results-based management policies and procedures;
- Recognized expertise in the Agricultural extension and sustainable land management and stakeholder involvement fields;
- Familiarity with agricultural sector, extension, legislation, policies and management structures in CIS would be an asset;
- Fluent in English both written and spoken;
- Computer literacy.

11. Competencies

- Excellent analytical skills and ability to write in a concise and comprehensible manner;
- Ability to work with tight deadlines and prepare accurate and clear reports for policy makers, at a short notice;
- Ability to interact with high-level government officials; also, be able to work closely with technical experts on a day-to-day basis, as well as to provide hands-on technical assistance and knowledge transfer.

12. Scope of price proposal

This is a lump sum contract, paid upon completion and certification of deliverables. The interested candidate must submit his/her financial proposal in USD in a separate file (from other required documents to be submitted). The financial proposal should include all the expert's expenses, including daily fee and any other relevant expenses for the assignment and necessary for obtaining the above results within the Terms of Reference. Payment will be made in tranches after the approval of the report, based on the above results and the signing of the Certificate of payment for the result by the Portfolio Manager, GEF Portfolio Manager and UNDP CO DRR

13. Recommended Presentation of Offer

The following documents in PDF to be attached to the Offer:

a) A duly drafted Offeror's letter confirming interest and readiness for the assignment; Financial proposal, including the fixed total contract value, with a breakdown of costs in accordance with the UNDP template;
b) Detailed CV, where previous work experience in similar projects should be included, as well as contact details (email and phone number) of the Offeror;
c) Other documents certifying the work experience, expertise and skills (qualification improvement certificates\diplomas, awards, etc.)

Approved by

Signature Zhanetta Babasheva

Zhanetta Babasheva
UNDP Resource Mobilization Associate

Date 04-Dec-2020

Signature Abduvakkos Abdurahmanov

Abduvakkos Abdurahmanov
Programme Specialist and GEF Portfolio Manager

Date 04-Dec-2020

Annex 1. Project Results Framework

This project will contribute to achieving the following Country Programme Outcome as defined in the CPAP for 2010-2015: Government, educators, communities, civil society and the academic community practice an integrated approach to natural resources management in national and transboundary perspectives
Country Programme Outcome Indicators: Tools for landscape-level conservation and planning developed and integrated into the stakeholders' policies and practices
UNDP Strategic Plan Primary Outcome: Outcome 1: Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded
Applicable GEF Strategic Objective and Program: Main focus is LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land uses in the wider landscape
Applicable GEF Expected Outcomes: Outcome 3.1: Enhanced cross-sector enabling environment for integrated landscape management; Outcome 3.2: Integrated landscape management practices adopted by local communities
Applicable GEF Outcome Indicators: Indicator 3.1 Policies support integration of agriculture, rangeland, forest, and other land uses Indicator 3.2 Application of integrated natural resource management practices in wider landscapes

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions (details in Annex 3)
Objective: to transform land use practices in steppe and semi-arid zones of Kazakhstan to ensure ecological integrity, food security and sustainable livelihoods	Area of productive landscapes (pasturelands, crop and fodder production lands) in steppe and semi-arid zones under ILUPs that include a focus on maintaining ecosystem services of agricultural landscapes through SLM practices	Zero	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)	Project PIR, Independent Evaluation, periodic field surveys/ visits	Political support for integrating SLM principles into the agricultural sector remains strong, facilitating further replication of SLM practices on the ground
	Improvement in % of soil humus content in area where ILUPs are in place	2% on average	8 to 10% on average	Field surveys/ visits	

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions (details in Annex 3)
	Improvement in livestock productivity (as measured by weight gain) in area where ILUPs are in place	Average live weight in degraded pastures/ rangelands is 320 kg	20% weight gain over baseline	Field surveys/ visits	
Outcome 1: Investment in integrated territorial planning and start-up of agro-environmental incentives	Indicators of on-the-ground improvements in crop and fodder productivity, soil fertility, salt content, crop rotation, efficiency in water use, etc. (indicators vary by pilot site)	See table below	See table below	Field monitoring surveys	Central and local governments show willingness to engage local stakeholders in land use planning Climate change-induced extreme seasonal variations or emerging new threats do not affect pilot projects/ sites in ways that undermine the successes of the demonstration activities Building of sufficient capacity and practical know-how within essential state institutions and local authorities does not take too long allowing for project sustainability
	Access of small and medium farmers in pilot sites to agro-environmental incentives	At present, the nature of agricultural subsidies is such that they are mostly accessible only to large-scale farms	At least 40% of small and medium farms eligible for agro-environmental incentives have access to them by project end	Financial and administrative reports of akimats of target oblasts and districts	
	Successful training program run by affiliates of KazAgroMarketing and KazAgroInnovation for small and medium farms on sustainable crop and forage production and livestock breeding	Training does not adequately cover needs of small and medium farms	At least 75% of small and medium farms in areas where training is delivered send representatives to attend sessions by project end	Training records; training evaluations	
	Successful training program on SLM run by KazAgroInnovation for akimat staff from land relations and agricultural	No such targeted training program	80% of target audience attend sessions by project end	Training records; training evaluations	

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions (details in Annex 3)
	departments in areas where pilot projects are to take place[14]				
	Higher education institutions producing graduates with sound understanding of SLM practices in the agriculture sector and distant rangeland management	Current national and regional higher education institutions are producing limited number of professionals with such training and skills	At least 2 institutions[15] have strengthened curriculums by project end	Curriculums, survey of students and graduates, PIR, terminal report.	
Outcome 2: Enabling policy environment for integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives	Inter-agency mechanism for ensuring coordination of integrated land use planning and agro-environmental incentives operating effectively	Does not exist	Inter-agency Working Group has a clear mandate and method of operation to ensure coordination of different land use sectors by project end	Minutes of WG, Project PIRs, Terminal report	Current political commitment to agro-environmental incentives continues to grow Legislative changes required to realize the project objective are agreed to and carried through in a timely manner
	Inclusion of agro-environmental subsidies in State programs	Agro-environmental subsidies do not exist	Agribusiness 2020 program includes such subsidies	Government reports on Agribusiness 2020 program	
	Increase in government financing for SLM practices	No existing subsidies that are 100% SLM related	20% of total agricultural subsidies are agro-environmental or green subsidies, 10 years after the agro-environmental scheme is up and	Government budget (ag. subsidy budget line)	

[14] Balkhash and Enbekshikazakh districts of Almaty Oblast, Karabulak rural okrug and Akkol district of Akmola Oblast, Ayyagoz district of East-Kazakhstan Oblast, Denisovsky and Fedorovsky districts of Kostanai Oblast, Kzyl Orda City of Kzyl Orda Oblast, Akkaiyn district of North Kazakhstan Oblast

[15] Kostanai State University (KSU) and Kazakh National Agriculture University (KazNAU)

Project Strategy	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Sources of verification	Assumptions (details in Annex 3)
			running		
	Amendments to existing polices, regulations, and rules such that the support for SLM is stronger	There are weaknesses in a number of existing policies, rules and regulations	At least 7 types[16] of amendments are developed	Official ordinances (for new laws), approvals from designated ministries (for amendments)	

[16] (1) 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; (2) amendments to the Land Code on regulating rangelands and pastures, including ownership rights for pastures and hayfields around settlements; (3) amendments to the Land Code on land use planning; (4) changes to by-laws regulating land use issues to include the definition of rational use and its criteria; (5) 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; (6) 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; (7) proposals to the draft Law on Organic Agriculture.

Annex 2. Evaluation Report: Sample Outline

Minimum GEF requirements[1]

Executive summary

- ♣ Brief description of project
- ♣ Context and purpose of the evaluation
- ♣ Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

Introduction

- ♣ Purpose of the evaluation
- ♣ Key issues addressed
- ♣ Methodology of the evaluation
- ♣ Structure of the evaluation

The project(s) and its development context

- ♣ Project start and its duration
- ♣ Problems that the project seek to address
- ♣ Immediate and development objectives of the project
- ♣ Main stakeholders
- ♣ Results expected

Findings and Conclusions

(In addition to a descriptive assessment, all criteria marked with (*) should be rated[17])

- θ Project formulation
  - Implementation approach (*)(i)
  - Analysis of LFA (Project logic /strategy; Indicators)
  - Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project implementation
  - Country ownership/Driveness
  - Replication approach
  - Cost-effectiveness
  - UNDP comparative advantage
  - Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
  - Management arrangements

- θ Implementation
  - Implementation approach (*)(ii)
  - The logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool
  - Effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region
  - Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management
  - ♣ Financial Planning

[1] Please refer to GEF guidelines for explanation of Terminology
[17] The ratings will be: Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

- ♣ Monitoring and evaluation (*)
- ♣ Execution and implementation modalities
- ♣ Management by the UNDP country office
- ♣ Coordination and operational issues

θ Results
- ♣ Attainment of objectives (*)
- ♣ Sustainability (*)
- ♣ Contribution to upgrading skills of the national staff

Recommendations
- ♣ Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- ♣ Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- ♣ Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

Lessons learned
- ♣ Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

Annexes
- ♣ TE TOR
- ♣ Itinerary
- ♣ List of persons interviewed
- ♣ Summary of field visits
- ♣ List of documents reviewed
- ♣ TE evaluative matrix (evaluation criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, and methodology)
- ♣ Example Questionnaire or Interview Guide used for data collection
- ♣ Ratings Scales
- ♣ TE mission itinerary
- ♣ List of persons interviewed
- ♣ List of documents reviewed
- ♣ Co-financing table (if not previously included in the body of the report)
- ♣ Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form
- ♣ Signed TE final report clearance form
- ♣ Annexed in a separate file: Audit trail from received comments on draft TE report

Annex 2b. Explanation on Terminology Provided in the GEF Guidelines to Terminal Evaluations

Implementation Approach includes an analysis of the project's logical framework, adaptation to changing conditions (adaptive management), partnerships in implementation arrangements, changes in project design, and overall project management.

Some elements of an effective implementation approach may include:
- ♣ The logical framework used during implementation as a management and M&E tool
- ♣ Effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region
- ♣ Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project implementation

- ♣ Feedback from M&E activities used for adaptive management.

Country Ownership/Driveness is the relevance of the project to national development and environmental agendas, recipient country commitment, and regional and international agreements where applicable. Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans

Some elements of effective country ownership/driveness may include:

- ♣ Project Concept has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans
- ♣ Outcomes (or potential outcomes) from the project have been incorporated into the national sectoral and development plans
- ♣ Relevant country representatives (e.g., governmental official, civil society, etc.) are actively involved in project identification, planning and/or implementation
- ♣ The recipient government has maintained financial commitment to the project
- ♣ The government has approved policies and/or modified regulatory frameworks in line with the project's objectives
- ♣ Project's collaboration with industry associations

Stakeholder Participation/Public Involvement consists of three related and often overlapping processes: information dissemination, consultation, and "stakeholder" participation. Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, institutions, or other bodies that have an interest or stake in the outcome of the GEF-financed project. The term also applies to those potentially adversely affected by a project.

Examples of effective public involvement include:

Information dissemination

- ♣ Implementation of appropriate outreach/public awareness campaigns

<u>Consultation and stakeholder participation</u>

- ♣ Consulting and making use of the skills, experiences and knowledge of NGOs, community and local groups, the private and public sectors, and academic institutions in the design, implementation, and evaluation of project activities

<u>Stakeholder participation</u>

- ♣ Project institutional networks well placed within the overall national or community organizational structures, for example, by building on the local decision-making structures, incorporating local knowledge, and devolving project management responsibilities to the local organizations or communities as the project approaches closure
- ♣ Building partnerships among different project stakeholders
- ♣ Fulfilment of commitments to local stakeholders and stakeholders considered to be adequately involved.

Sustainability measures the extent to which benefits continue, within or outside the project domain, from a particular project or program after GEF assistance/external assistance has come to an end. Relevant factors to improve the sustainability of project outcomes include:

- ♣ Development and implementation of a sustainability strategy.
- ♣ Establishment of the financial and economic instruments and mechanisms to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the GEF assistance ends (from the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market transformations to promote the project's objectives).
- ♣ Development of suitable organizational arrangements by public and/or private sector.

- ♣ Development of policy and regulatory frameworks that further the project objectives.
- ♣ Incorporation of environmental and ecological factors affecting future flow of benefits.
- ♣ Development of appropriate institutional capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc.).
- ♣ Identification and involvement of champions (i.e. individuals in government and civil society who can promote sustainability of project outcomes).
- ♣ Achieving social sustainability, for example, by mainstreaming project activities into the economy or community production activities.
- ♣ Achieving stakeholder's consensus regarding courses of action on project activities.

Replication approach, in the context of GEF projects, is defined as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects. Replication can have two aspects, replication proper (lessons and experiences are replicated in different geographic area) or scaling up (lessons and experiences are replicated within the same geographic area but funded by other sources). Examples of replication approaches include:

- ♣ Knowledge transfer (i.e., dissemination of lessons through project result documents, training workshops, information exchange, a national and regional forum, etc).
- ♣ Expansion of demonstration projects.
- ♣ Capacity building and training of individuals, and institutions to expand the project's achievements in the country or other regions.
- ♣ Use of project-trained individuals, institutions or companies to replicate the project's outcomes in other regions.

Financial Planning includes actual project cost by activity, financial management (including disbursement issues), and co-financing. If a financial audit has been conducted the major findings should be presented in the TE.

Effective financial plans include:

- ♣ Identification of potential sources of co-financing as well as leveraged and associated financing[18].
- ♣ Strong financial controls, including reporting, and planning that allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget at any time, allows for a proper and timely flow of funds, and for the payment of satisfactory project deliverables
- ♣ Due diligence due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits.

Co-financing includes: Grants, Loans/Concessional (compared to market rate), Credits, Equity investments, In-kind support, other contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries. Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6.

Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO's, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector. Please briefly describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project's ultimate objective.

[18] Please refer to Council documents on co-financing for definitions, such as GEF/C.20/6. The following page presents a table to be used for reporting co-financing.

Cost-effectiveness assesses the achievement of the environmental and developmental objectives as well as the project's outputs in relation to the inputs, costs, and implementing time. It also examines the project's compliance with the application of the incremental cost concept. Cost-effective factors include:

- Compliance with the incremental cost criteria (e.g. GEF funds are used to finance a component of a project that would not have taken place without GEF funding.) and securing co-funding and associated funding.
- The project completed the planned activities and met or exceeded the expected outcomes in terms of achievement of Global Environmental and Development Objectives according to schedule, and as cost-effective as initially planned.
- The project used either a benchmark approach or a comparison approach (did not exceed the costs levels of similar projects in similar contexts)

Monitoring & Evaluation. Monitoring is the periodic oversight of a process, or the implementation of an activity, which seeks to establish the extent to which inputs, work schedules, other required actions and outputs are proceeding according to plan, so that timely action can be taken to correct the deficiencies detected. Evaluation is a process by which program inputs, activities and results are analyzed and judged explicitly against benchmarks or baseline conditions using performance indicators. This will allow project managers and planners to make decisions based on the evidence of information on the project implementation stage, performance indicators, level of funding still available, etc, building on the project's logical framework.

Monitoring and Evaluation includes activities to measure the project's achievements such as identification of performance indicators, measurement procedures, and determination of baseline conditions. Projects are required to implement plans for monitoring and evaluation with adequate funding and appropriate staff and include activities such as description of data sources and methods for data collection, collection of baseline data, and stakeholder participation. Given the long-term nature of many GEF projects, projects are also encouraged to include long-term monitoring plans that are sustainable after project completion.

Annex 3. Co-financing Table

Co financing (Type/ Source)	IA own Financing (mill US$)		Government (mill US$)		Other Sources* (mill US$)		Total Financing (mill US$)		Total Disbursement (mill US$)	
	Proposed	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**	**Proposed**	**Actual**
Grant										
Credits										
Loans										
Equity										
In-kind										
Non-grant Instruments *										
Other Types										
TOTAL										

- Other Sources refer to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector etc.
- "Proposed" co-financing refers to co-financing proposed at CEO endorsement.
- Describe "Non-grant Instruments" (such as guarantees, contingent grants, etc):
  - *Source/amount/in-kind or cash/purpose*.
- Explain "Other Sources of Co-financing":
  - *Source/amount/in-kind or cash*
  - …
  - …

Annex 4. Rate tables

Table 1 : Status of objective / outcome delivery as per measurable indicators

OBJECTIVE	MEASURABLE INDICATORS FROM PROJECT LOGFRAME	END-OF-PROJECT TARGET	STATUS OF DELIVERY*	RATING**
Objective :				
OUTCOMES		END-OF-PROJECT TARGET	STATUS OF DELIVERY	RATING
Outcome 1:				
Outcome 2:				
Outcome 3:				
Outcome 4:				
Outcome 5:				

* *Status of delivery colouring codes:*
Green / completed – indicator shows successful achievement
Yellow – indicator shows expected completion by the end of the project
Red – Indicator show poor achievement - unlikely to be complete by end of Project

** Rating:
Highly Satisfactory = HS
Satisfactory = S
Marginally Satisfactory = MS
Unsatisfactory = U

Table 2: Project ratings

PROJECT COMPONENT OR OBJECTIVE	RATING SCALE						RATING
	HU	U	MU	MS	S	HS	
PROJECT FORMULATION							
Conceptualization/Design							
Stakeholder participation							
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION							
Implementation Approach							
The use of the logical framework							
Adaptive management							
Use/establishment of information technologies							
Operational relationships between the institutions involved							
Technical capacities							
Monitoring and evaluation							
Stakeholder participation							
Production and dissemination of information							
Local resource users and NGOs participation							
Establishment of partnerships							
Involvement and support of governmental institutions							
PROJECT RESULTS							
Attainment of Outcomes/ Achievement of objectives							
Achievement of objective							
Outcome 1							
Outcome 2							
Outcome 3							
Outcome 4							
Outcome 5							
Outcome 6							
Outcome 7							
OVERALL PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT & IMPACT							

Annex 5. List of documents to be reviewed by the Evaluation Team

The following documents can be used as a basis for evaluation of the project:

Document	Description
Project document	Project Document
Project reports	PIF UNDP Initiation Plan UNDP Project Document UNDP Environmental and Social Screening results Quarterly progress reports and work plans of the various implementation task teams AWP's Consultant's reports and publications SC meeting minutes
Annual Project Reports to GEF	PIR 2016 PIR 2017, PIR 2018, PIR 2019.
Other relevant materials:	Project key document outputs Project operational guidelines, manuals and systems UNDP country/countries programme document(s) Minutes of the Project Board Meetings and other meetings (i.e. Project Appraisal Committee meetings) Project site location maps

Annex 6. Cost breakdown template

	Units*	Rate / USD	Total / USD
Work in home office			
Desk review			
Briefings by UNDP and PM			
Drafting of the evaluation report			
Validation of preliminary findings with stakeholders through circulation of draft reports for comments, meetings and other types of feedback mechanisms			
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating comments received on first draft)			
Work on mission			
Field visits, interviews, questionnaires, de-briefings			
Sub-total fee			
Travel costs			
International travel to and from Kazakhstan			
Local travel (to be arranged and covered by the project)	n/a	n/a	n/a
DSA (overnights)			
Sub-total travel costs			
TOTAL			

* Estimates are indicated in the TOR, the applicant is requested to review and revise, if applicable.

Annex 11: Signed TE Final Report Clearance Form

Terminal Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared By:	
UNDP Country Office	
Name: Vitalie Vremis, UNDP DRR	
Signature: 	Date: 20-May-2021
UNDP GEF Regional Technical Advisor	
Name: Adnan Kareem, RTA	
Signature: 	Date: 17-May-2021

Annex 11: Signed TE Final Report Clearance Form

Terminal Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared By:	
UNDP Country Office	
Name:	
Signature:	Date:
UNDP GEF Regional Technical Advisor	
Name:	
Signature:	Date: