Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
ÇEVRE, ŞEHİRCİLİK VE İKLİM DEĞİŞİKLİĞİ BAKANLIĞI

T.C. TARIM VE ORMAN BAKANLIĞI

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ARAZİ TAHRİBATININ DENGELENMESİ
YUKARI SAKARYA HAVZASI PROJESİ

Mid Term Review of the Project "Contributing to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting by Demonstrating the LDN Approach"

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Mid-Term Review Report

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Acknowledgements

The MTR team comprised an independent national and international consultant, with Francis Hurst as lead consultant covering sustainable land management and project evaluation, and national consultant, Ufuk Kirmizi who covered sustainable agriculture, extension and rural development.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BMES	Basin Monitoring and Evaluation System
BE	Better Environment
BL	Better Life
BP	Better Production
CEM	General Directorate of Combatting Desertification and Erosion
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Conference of the Parties
DSS	Decision Support System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAO GEF CU	FAO GEF Coordination Unit
FFS	Farmer Field School
FSP	Full-Sized Project
GEF	Global Environmental facility
GEE	Google Earth Engine
GHG	Green House Gas
GoT	Government of Türkiye
IT	Information Technology
LFA	Lead Farmers Association
LD	Land Degradation
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MD	Ministry of Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEU	Ministry of Environment and Urbanization
MI	Ministry of Interior
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC	National Project Coordinator
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
OGM	General Directorate of Forestry
OPIM	Operational Partners Implementation Modality
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PPA	Programme Priority Area
PPR	Project Progress Report
PRC	Project Risk Certificate
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RAPTA	Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SOC	Soil Organic Carbon

SO	Strategic Objectives
STAP	Scientific and technical Advisory Group (GEF)
TAGEM	General Directorate of Agricultural Researches and Policies
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TRGM	General Directorate of Agricultural Reform
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Executive Summary

Introduction:

1. The Mid Term Review (MTR) is primarily a monitoring and adaptive management tool to identify challenges and outline corrective actions to ensure that a project is on track at the mid-term of the project cycle to achieve maximum results by its completion. The Global Environmental Facility Evaluation Policy states that a MTR is mandatory for all full-sized projects[1] (FSP). The primary output/deliverable of this MTR process is the MTR report.
2. The MTR report provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful and is intended to be used by the Implementing Agency/ Partner, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and the Implementing Partner, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), in order to make practical adjustments to the project's implementation framework, operational management, activities and internal budget allocations wherever necessary in order to achieve its stated objective.
3. The MTR team reviewed and assessed the following four categories of project progress towards results as outlined in the project's strategic results framework (SRF) and according to the Guide for Planning and Conducting Midterm Reviews of FAO-GEF Projects and Programmes[2]:
    i. Project strategy including the project's design and the results framework (log frame).
    ii. Progress towards results using the indicators selected during the project's design and observations made during the field mission and desk work.
    iii. Project implementation and adaptive management including the management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, social and environmental standards (safeguards), reporting and, communication and knowledge management.
    iv. Sustainability of the project's outputs and outcomes[3] including an assessment of the financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional frameworks and governance, and the environmental risks to sustainability.
4. The MTR has three primary purposes:
    i. To assess progress made towards achievement of a project's planned results in terms of its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, sustainability and impact. Key questions include: "What results, intended and unintended, has the project achieved to date?" and "Is the project on track to achieve its planned results?"
    ii. To identify any problems or challenges the project is encountering, understand the causes of any underperformance and leverage project strengths and good practices to overcome them. The MTR makes recommendations for corrective measures, if needed, to overcome challenges and ensure the expected deliverables and results are achieved by the end of the project. Key questions include: "What can be done to improve project delivery and to increase the likelihood of longer-term sustainability of project results?"
    iii. To identify/highlight any success stories, key contributions, good practices and areas with the potential for upscaling and replication, and to promote knowledge-sharing and learning between FAO and project stakeholders, including the identification of lessons to improve future project formulation and implementation.
5. The MTR was carried out by a two-person team consisting of a National and International Consultant between 15th November 2022 and the 22nd of February 2023. Due to budget

[1] GEF-financed projects with budgets of USD 2 million or more are classified as FSPs.
[2] https://www.fao.org/3/ca7788en/ca7788en.pdf
[3] The interchangeability of the terms "outcome" and "component" is a feature of many GEF project SRF/LFs. For the avoidance of doubt, the LDN Project has 4 Outcomes and 4 Components and there is equivalence.

restrictions the international Consultant was unable to visit Tükiye and the field missions were carried out by the National Consultant (NC) between the 12th – 16th December, 2022.

6. The MTR utilized three sources of primary data and information:
   - **Desk review:** the documentation covering project design, implementation progress reports, project reports, monitoring and review studies, local and national development plans, policies and regulatory instruments.
   - **Interviews, stakeholder consultations and field missions:** additional information collection and validation took place through remote and (where possible) face-to-face consultations with a range of stakeholders (see Annex 8), using "semi-structured interviews" with a key set of questions in a conversational format.
   - **Direct observations of project results and activities:** wherever possible from the project area including consultations with local government and local agencies, local community representatives, project partners, service providers and participants in field activities.
   - Gender equality and women's empowerment were assessed through collecting gender-disaggregated results arising from project activities, inclusion of women participants and relevant women's groups in the MTR interviews and specific questions regarding the extent to which they were included in project implementation and/or benefited from the project.
   - **Analysis:** following the data collection phase, the MTR team analysed the information according to the MTR guidelines and the Terms of Reference (ToR) in order to draw conclusions and propose any recommendations.
7. The MTR assessed the project's progress against the five OECD DAC4 criteria, including in the Guide for planning and conducting mid-term reviews of FAO–GEF projects and programmes (FAO, 2020):
   - Relevance - are the project outcomes congruent with the GEF focal areas/operational program strategies, country priorities, FAO Country Programing Framework and beneficiaries needs?
   - Effectiveness - the delivery of results, to what extent has the project delivered on its outputs, outcomes, and objectives? what, if any, wider results has the project had at regional and global levels to date? Were there any unintended results? To what extent can the attainment of results be attributed to the GEF-funded component?
   - Efficiency - to what extent has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and management been able to adapt to any changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
   - Impact - the Likelihood of impact at the mid-term, are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards and the achievement of the project's longer-term objectives? What can be done to increase the likelihood of positive impacts from the project?); progress towards outcomes?
   - Sustainability - what is the likelihood that the project results will continue to be useful or will remain after the end of the project? What are the key risks that may affect the sustainability of the project results and benefits (financial, socio-economic, institutional and governance, and environmental)?
   - The MTR considers factors affecting progress including: project design, project execution and management, financial management and co-financing, implementation role, partnerships and stakeholder engagement, M&E design and implementation, and communication and knowledge management.
   - Cross-cutting issues are considered mainly in terms of gender, minority groups, and environmental and social safeguards.

[4] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee.

8. The final MTR report will be circulated to the project stakeholders, including the PMU, FAO GEF Coordination Unit (FAO GEF CU), Project Steering Committee (PSC) members, project partners, the country's GEF Operational Focal Point, relevant national agencies and local stakeholder groups and the GEF Secretariat.
9. Provincial-level partners such as the OGM and TRGM[5] may utilise those MTR findings and recommendations appropriate to their role and position in the project management hierarchy.
10. Participating farmers, women and farmer groups should also be provided with a briefing of the MTR findings as an important component of their participation in the project and in the interests of accountability and transparency.

Main findings:

11. Relevance – the project relevance is **Highly Satisfactory**. The project is broadly aligned with a raft of national policy and regulatory framework demonstrating consistency with the various strategies, programs and action plans promulgated by the Government of Turkey (GoT) relating to its commitments under the relevant international environmental conventions, as well as with the relevant national development plans adopted by the GoT.
12. The project is consistent with the UNCCD and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) contributing significantly to implementation of Türkiye's National Action Program on Combating Desertification (2006), the National Action Plan (NAP, 2015 - 2023), the National Climate Change Strategy (2010) and the Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2023 (2011).
13. The project is relevant to the GEF Focal Area LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources by managing competing land uses in broader landscapes and Program 4: Scaling up sustainable land management through the landscape approach.
14. The Project was aligned with FAO's Strategic Objectives (SOs) that provide the overall direction, goals and targets for the organization until 2018, specifically: SO2: Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner; and SO5: Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises. The project is also consistent with FAO's regional initiative 3 (RI3) on Sustainable use of natural resources, adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management. The project results remain consistent with FAO's current Strategic Framework[6] (2022 – 2031) in the Programme Priority Areas (PPAs): PPA: Better Production, PPA: Better Environment and PPA: Better Life.
15. Effectiveness – the project is considered **Satisfactory**. However, the Covid-19 pandemic and necessary restrictions on movement and gatherings occurred at a crucial point in the implementation of the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) project resulting in unavoidable delays beyond the control of the PIU, Implementing Agency and project partners.
16. Outcome 1.1 (**Satisfactory**) is hard to assess due to the challenging SRF definition of the outcome. Outcome 1.1 will in all likelihood produce a set of good quality normative documents to support the "enabling environment", however, it is less clear to what extent it will affect the informal aspects of the "enabling environment", especially as the facilitation process is dependent upon the PIU which is an artefact of the project and therefore timebound[7].
17. Outcome 2.1 (**Highly Satisfactory**) is achieved and producing high quality outputs in relation to the Decision Support System (DSS), due in large part to the project's willingness to be adaptive, the engagement of good national and international technical assistance, partnering

[5] CEM is not represented at the provincial level.
[6] https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf
[7] The MTR makes a specific recommendation to address this weakness (see section 6, Recommendations).

with technical institutions and the practical utility, versatility and cost-effectiveness of the DSS itself.

18. Outcome 2.2 (**Satisfactory**) is on track and will likely be achieved by the end of the project. A number of high-quality monitoring systems for various aspects of LD were developed prior to the project's start up as well as during the project's implementation. These are being successfully incorporated into the DSS.
19. Outcome 3.1 (**Moderately Satisfactory**) the project has made good progress post pandemic restrictions partnering with a very capable service provider to drive the field activities. However, the MTR has concerns that the outcome is not on track due to the impact of the pandemic restrictions which have disproportionately affected the field activities.
20. Outcome 3.2 (**Satisfactory**) The project has engaged well with stakeholders in the project area and has introduced a number of successful livelihood activities and is demonstrating a good approach which is transformative in the way that state agencies and none-state actors interact with each other. The targeted and transformational engagement of women in the project activities and benefits is contributing to this outcome's achievements. However, this outcome is at risk due to the delays resulting from the pandemic restrictions in the first half of the project.
21. Outcome 4.1 (**Highly Satisfactory**) the LDN DSS application covers the whole country and is exceeding the target, it is extended to 17 FAO region countries. In Türkiye a Google Earth Engine (GEE) App has been incorporated which will makes it very cost effective and reduces the chance of future obsolescence and redundancy. The achievement has been exceeded. However, the wider uptake and day to day use of the DSS still needs to be promoted by the project.
22. Outcome 4.2 presents challenges in evaluating their progress and achievement. It is more difficult to access because it includes elements of project management which do not provide a measure of impact as well as the activities under this outcome reinforcing outcome 4.1 (lessons learned and dissemination).

23. **Efficiency** – the efficiency in carrying out activities and producing outputs is rated **Moderately Satisfactory** despite the constraints imposed upon the project by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project intervention and the manner in which the project has been implemented (e.g. strong partnerships, high-quality technical assistance, utilisation of service providers, preparedness to be adaptable when faced with a change in circumstances, etc.) have been cost effective and efficient. Although the MTR speculates that had the PIU been in place during the inception phase a budget revision might have been possible in components 2 and 4 and changes to the SRF might have been made. There was no way to predict the impact of the pandemic on component 3 which has impacted on the delivery of results.
24. **Impact** - the MTR is not required to rate the impact. However, it is required to rate the project's progress towards achieving the project's development objective, the overall progress on implementation and provide an overall risk rating for the project.
25. Based on the Theory of Change and the "pathway position" of the project at mid-term, the MTR assesses the project to be broadly on target (**Satisfactory**) **towards achieving the project objective.**
26. The **overall progress on implementation** is **Satisfactory** based on the project's cost effective and efficient delivery of outputs and the way it has carried out activities. However, the project does have concerns that many of the field activities and associated outputs will need additional time due to delays incurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in 2020/21.

27. Therefore, the MTR rates the **projects risk** as **High**, but notes that this can be effectively mitigated by extending the project for a minimum of twelve months to encompass a whole agricultural season without making available additional financial and material resources.
28. Two **barriers** are identified:
    i. The time remaining to implement the field activities and promote the wide uptake and use of the DSS.
    ii. The development of the informal aspects of the enabling environment. The facilitation providing the impetus for the collaboration and collective action between the different state and non-state actors is in large part coming from the energy and drive of the FAO PIU. It is important that this focus, urgency and coalition building is transferred to all of the project partners and stakeholders who may have very different priorities and agendas, means of measuring success and planning processes, yet all addressing aspects of LD.
29. The most critical barrier being **the remaining time available** for the project. The remaining barriers are less critical and can be easily overcome by aggressively promoting the DSS amongst beneficiaries and focusing on developing the informal elements of the enabling environment.
30. **Sustainability** – the socio-political, financial, institutional and governance and environmental sustainability of the outputs, outcomes and objective are **Likely**.

Factors affecting progress:

31. The design, as set out in the Project Document is broadly characterised as strengthening the enabling environment and human resource capacities at all levels (national, provincial and site-levels), developing a support tool to inform decision-making (the DSS) and allow a broad range of stakeholders to participate in decision-making. Interventions at the site level would introduce SLM approaches to farmers. A fourth outcome was essentially related to upscaling the results of the DSS to the national level and even the regional and global level.
32. Of particular importance was the Decision Support System (DSS) which although the Project Document provided a very detailed description, was largely conceptual in nature at the start of the project and needed to be developed without the benefit of a "blueprint".
33. Overall, the design was satisfactory, however the strategic nature of the intervention was not well-translated into the project's strategic results framework (SRF).
34. The project was originally intended to be an Operational Partner Implementation Modality (OPIM). However, when the project started a decision was made to change implementation to direct GEF Agency (FAO) implementation modality because of institutional changes that had taken place between the design phase and the project's starting. This suggests that the project partners were not completely ready[8] and it caused a 4 – 5 months delay in putting in place a Project Implementation Unit (PIU). However, once the PIU was in place project management has been very effective and efficient. The other factor affecting project performance has been the Covid-19 pandemic which occurred at a crucial point in the project's cycle and has impacted on the project's likelihood of achieving its outcomes, particularly in relation to component 3.
35. The actual management arrangements work well and may have contributed to the DSS being widely adopted in 17 other countries and across other FAO regions. However, it does raise a concern about continuity once the GEF-financed project ends. The PIU plays an active role in facilitating partnerships and communication between partners and stakeholders which is a

[8] This is supported by the fact that the FAO had already carried out financial due diligence on the planned Execution Agency.

critical aspect of the enabling environment and the MTR questions whether this will continue without the focus of the project and PIU in place.

36. Work planning is realistic and effective, during the pandemic the PIU and project partners were able to switch to remote means to continue those activities transferable to the internet, however, component 3 did suffer setbacks due to the necessity for field work and group activities.
37. Risk management is good. The MTR has raised the risk rating of the project to High in relation to component 3 and the field activities because of the need to complete at least one agricultural season. However, the MTR is quick to stress that this risk can be effectively mitigated by agreeing a project extension for at least one year.
38. Project oversight is satisfactory by both FAO and responsible high-level Partners. The Steering Committee (SC) meets once a year and has high-level representation. The MTR notes that there is an absence of non-state membership on the SC and recommends that the PIU attends SC meetings in a non-executive capacity and this is clearly indicated in the minutes of meetings.
39. Financial management is good and there has been an effective and sufficient delivery of co-financing commitments. There is a budget surplus in component 2 largely due to the Government of Türkiye carrying out activities related to establishing LD monitoring systems prior to the project's start-up. Budget execution at December 2022 is US$ 1,084,000, approximately 45% and co-financing is US$ 17,108,642 exceeding the US$ 13,600,000 committed in the Project Document.
40. Project partnerships effective and stakeholder engagement is high, notwithstanding the MTR's comments on the role of the PIU as a facilitator and the absence of non-state participation in the SC.
41. Project monitoring and evaluation at design had a number of weaknesses in the expression of the objective, outcomes and indicators in the logical hierarchy of the SRF. During the inception phase no actions were taken to improve the quality of the SRF. As a result, there is a heavy and confusing M&E burden on the PIU. It is difficult to assess progress towards results because the outcomes are expressed as outputs and in some cases, activities. Furthermore, the use of output indicators which essentially belong in the work plan and not the SRF, make reporting repetitive across a range of outcomes and it is recommended that the project reviews the SRF and rationalises it to better reflect the projects progress towards its objective and reduce the M&E reporting burden on the PIU.
42. Despite the shortcomings in the SRF the reporting has been diligent, timely and realistic in its assessment of performance and impact and the MTR is broadly in agreement with assessments in the PPRs and PIRs.

Progress, challenges and outcomes of stakeholder engagement:

43. The original stakeholder engagement plan was based upon an OPIM modal. Stakeholder engagement is complex because the project is working at a highly technical level in relation to the DSS and at a broader and more inclusive level with direct support to farmers. As stated, stakeholder engagement is high, largely due to the PIU as a catalyst. However, it does appear that this culture of inclusiveness is being internalised within the agencies through their interactions with the project and this could prove transformative and act as a multiplier. There is a lack of civil society representation on the SC.
44. The Environmental and Social Safeguards assessment accompanying the Project Document (the Project Risk Certification (PRC)[9]) did not identify gender as a critical risk and likely overestimated the environmental (protected areas) risks. However, the MTR is confident that

[9] PRC, June 23 2017

the project recognises the gender related risks and is addressing them through the LDN gender strategy.

Progress on gender-responsive measures, indicators and intermediate results:

45. As noted, the Project Document had a strong gender analysis which was integrated into the project's overall strategy due to the inclusion of a gender team from the FAO CO during the design phase. However, this was not followed through to the SRF and indicators. There are no gender indicators at the outcome level (objective-level indicators *per se* are absent). The MTR bases its assessment on gender-responsive measures using the output indicators and an assessment of the inclusion of women in project activities as well as the overall actual project approach and working practices. There are a number of specific women-targeted interventions, the project is currently producing a gender report and strategy related to LDN and this has raised awareness of the role and position of women in the agricultural sector as well as highlighting the disparities, inequalities and inefficiencies as a result of gender inequality. Working with women's groups and expanding the activities to include process interventions (e.g. support with empowerment and involvement in establishing cooperatives, etc.) will likely increase the impact. However, this is not reflected in the SRF and gender markers should be included as outcome and objective-level indicators in any revision of the SRF.

Knowledge activities/products and lessons learned:

46. Communications and knowledge management were mostly addressed through component 4 although the two indicators for this outcome Indicator 10: M&E system is in place Indicator 11: Lessons learned disseminated) are not able to be assessed because they relate to project operational performance and not the impact.
47. That said, the project has a high visibility and communications are very good. It has produced a number of good quality knowledge products (Monitoring of LDN Indicators and LDN DSS, June 2021; etc.) and the has been considerable training and awareness events.
48. National and FAO support (and enthusiasm) has been very effective in promoting the DSS at both the regional level and in other FAO regions through the UNCCD as evidenced by the adoption of the DSS in 17 other countries in which FAO is involved.

6th February 2023 earthquake in southern and central Türkiye and western Syria:

49. On the 6th February 2023 an earthquake of magnitude M_w 7.8 occurred in southern and central Türkiye and western Syria. The initial earthquake was followed by subsequent and significant earthquakes and 2,100 aftershocks. The area affected extends to 350,000 km^2, affecting an estimated 14 million people (approximately 16% of Türkiye's population and the UN estimates 1.5 million people are homeless as a result of the destruction.
50. The MTR recognises the enormity of this natural disaster, its dreadful human impact, the destruction of infrastructure, disruption of services and the sheer magnitude of the necessary recovery efforts including the human costs which cannot be overstated.
51. Projects, invariably, are the sum of their human resources. Therefore, it is inevitable that the 6th February earthquake will have a profound impact on the project even though the epicentre and most of its structural devastation was not within the project area. The MTR therefore takes note of this and recognises that:
    - It will be necessary to direct government resources towards the recovery effect for a considerable time to come. This will affect the level of national partner contributions including co-financing and national partner's activities during the remainder of the project.

- Naturally, the motivation and commitment to the project's outcomes and objective will be secondary to the earthquake recovery efforts. The human impact of the earthquake will have touched everyone working within the project, at a very tragic and sometimes personal level. Therefore, it is important that the external expectations of the project should be tempered by compassion.
- Natural disasters such as the recent earthquake will create challenges (displacement of people, interruption of natural processes, increased dependency on vulnerable resources, etc.) that will need to be tackled from a LDN perspective and approach and it might would be reasonable for the project to provide technical and intellectual resources to meeting these challenges.

Conclusions:

52. **Conclusion 1 (relevance): The LDN project aims and objectives are closely aligned with the existing policy and planning framework and contributes to national, regional, Convention, FAO and GEF objectives.** The DSS which has been developed under the project has broad applications in monitoring and evaluating LD at different spatial and institutional scales. It is adaptable for different data sets and M&E protocols such that it appears to have a universality and is already being adopted by other countries and in other regions and should inform the target setting process.
53. **Conclusion 2 (Progress towards outcomes): The LDN project is an important project and at the point of the MTR is found to be satisfactory. It is performing well and some components are largely on track (the DSS has been achieved to high standard and upscaled to the national level already) despite having encountered delays at the start and the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, these restrictions have not equally impacted the components.** While the technical (DSS) and the enabling environment components are likely to be completed by the close of the project (August 2023), the field base component and outcomes will be incomplete and will benefit from additional time because these activities required field visits and face to face consultations with project partners and stakeholders. A situation which was severely impeded due to the pandemic restrictions.
54. The DSS is technically highly regarded and has already been adopted in 17 other countries in other FAO regions.
55. Field activities are showing early signs of success and are broadly and enthusiastically supported by stakeholders. However, it is important to stress that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions has been felt most in outcome 3 because of the need to have field-based activities and face to face meetings.
56. The informal aspects of the enabling environment are only partially addressed in the project strategy and a tool or exercise to support these informal networks, coalitions, etc., necessary for collaborative governance to address the collective action challenge of LD would strengthen the strategy.
57. **Conclusion 3 (efficiency): The project strategy (enabling environment, DSS, LDN related field activities and knowledge management) represents a cost-effective strategy for achieving the objective. Project activities have been implemented with a high degree of efficiency and project partnerships and a broad coalition amongst partners creates a degree of efficiency in the project's implementation.** Despite a hiatus between project design/ CEO signature and the project start-up, the GoT still went ahead with developing various monitoring systems for elements of LD which were to be carried out under component 2. The projects willingness to identify and engage with high quality national and international technical assistance alongside the way in which the project partners have been prepared to work with the technical assistance has greatly facilitated the development of the DSS and the elements of the LD monitoring

systems (e.g. SOC, etc.). The use of an experienced service provider to work with agencies and communities in the delivery of services to farmers and communities in the body of component 3 has been very effective. Monitoring, reporting, statutory project meetings, and financial management, etc., have been executed in a timely and efficient manner.

58. Component 2 currently has a surplus due to the pre-project development of a number of the elements of the LD monitoring system.
59. Components 3 and 4 show a below expected burn rate attributable to the pandemic restrictions (component 3) and the switch in implementation modality which appears to have lowered the project management expenditure. There is also a multiplier in these figures due to a beneficial exchange rate which is also likely to appear as an underspend.
60. The MTR also speculates that, had the PIU been in place at this time, these revisions might have taken place.
61. **Conclusion 4 (sustainability): There is strong political support as well as from civil society because LD is a real and present issue.** The DSS has sufficient political capital behind it as a nationally developed system being adopted internationally. The approach taken by the project including the strong gender equality and sensitivity support to women in the agricultural sector suggest sustainability in this sphere.
62. The GoT has already shown a wiliness to invest in LDN and the co-financing has been forthcoming. The utility of the DSS and the livelihood benefits from the field activities and the introduction of SLM and LDN agriculture have real economic benefits.
63. DSS and the development of the GEE App suggests that, given adequate training, institutions and agencies will utilize the DSS to good effect in their planning and operational processes. The DSS, for the same reasons, is socially inclusive providing a good platform for civil society access and inclusion, adding to the good governance aspects of transparency and accountability. The DSS is also broadly liked and admired by technical and academic institutions.
64. There are no significant risks to environmental sustainability.
65. **Conclusion 5 (factors affecting progress – design and strategy): The rationale behind the project was well-founded and very relevant at a number of levels including the national and regional level and is well supported by the policy framework. It is also closely aligned with the broader UNCCD objectives and the FAO global programme, country and thematic objectives.**
66. The project design provided a reasonable and effective strategy in order to achieve the objective. That is, components addressing the enabling environment, the technical challenges of developing a DSS, rolling out LDN-orientated approaches to agriculture and land management at the project (demonstration) site and sharing and promoting the experience as well as promoting the broad uptake of the DSS to inform decision-making at multiple levels and across multiple LDN actors.
67. **Conclusion 6 (factors affecting progress – DSS): The development of the DSS, despite the very precise instructions in the Project Document, was still conceptual in many ways at the start-up of the project.** That is, a DSS was still untried and untested and would require a highly technical and adaptive approach in developing the system so that it was fit for function (i.e. it would be technically functional, cost-effective, adaptable, accessible across a broad constituency of end users, adaptable for different stakeholder interests and will not become obsolete).
68. **Conclusion 7 (factors affecting progress – management arrangements): The project was originally designed with the intention of an OPIM implementation. However, this was changed during the inception phase to a direct implementation modality with an FAO CO PIU. This appears to have caused a delay in implementation of approximately 4 – 5 months in putting in place a PIU.** The direct implementation modality works well, it is likely that it has also facilitated the upscaling of the DSS to other countries and regions. However, the MTR has concerns that

the role that the PIU performs with regard facilitation, promoting participation, building collaborative networks, etc., may not be sustained following the closure of the project.

69. **Conclusion 8 (project implementation): The delays experienced during the start-up phase and resulting from the change in implementation modality resulted in the PIU only being established four to five months after the project's official start-up date and after the inception phase, workshop and report was produced. Since the PIU was installed project management has been efficient and cost-effective in achieving the outputs with a high rate timeliness and effective implementation of activities.** This has included establishing a good rapport and communications with project partners and stakeholders and a close monitoring and realistic evaluation of project progress and performance. This is more remarkable given the functional weaknesses in the project's M&E framework, the SRF, which were not addressed during the inception phase and workshop.
70. **Conclusion 9 (M&E and project SRF): The good design characteristics in the Project Document were not transferred across to the project's SRF in terms of a logical hierarchy of activities, inputs/outputs, outcomes and an objective.** This makes it challenging for the project and any review process to determine the critical causal pathways from intervention through to the long-term impacts as well as identifying the key drivers shaping the system. The project will benefit greatly from revising the elements of the SRF within its scope. That is; objective-level indicators (including a capacity development scorecard index measure) should be added, output indicators should be rationalised and either included in the annual work planning or elevated to the level of outcome (there are too few outcome indicators), the outputs should rationalised (coalesced) and reduced in number.
71. **Conclusion 10 (stakeholder engagement): The project is working well in terms of inclusiveness and participation of partners and stakeholders.** However, the PIU is, naturally given the broad cross-section of partners and stakeholders, the catalyst behind this and the MTR has concerns that these developments and benefits which are leading towards increased intersectoral communication, greater participation and inclusive approaches to problem solving may not be fully embedded within the key actors in the project by the time the project ends.
72. The PIU should attend the SC in a non-executive role and this should be clearly articulated in the SC minutes of meetings.
73. **Conclusion 11 (overall performance and outlook): The early project delays would still have allowed the project to be completed on time. However, the unavoidable and necessary constraints resulting from the pandemic restrictions do not allow important transformations in the enabling environment (the embedding of informal networks, collaborative governance across sector interests, etc.) and the implementation and scaling up of field activities over the period of an agricultural season to be completed satisfactorily by the scheduled close of the project in August 2023.**
74. Notwithstanding the challenges of evaluating progress towards outcomes as a result of the weak project SRF the MTR finds that progress is satisfactory. Several outcomes have been largely achieved (e.g. the DSS and upscaling to the national level, replication to other regions) to a highly satisfactory level with evidence of upscaling at a national level and replication at a regional and global level already evident.
75. However, those outcomes related to field activities, although judged to be of high quality are behind schedule due to the pandemic. Without additional time, this poses a significant risk to the project achieving its objectives.

76. **Recommendations**

Rec. no.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time/dates for actions
Strategic relevance				
1.	Component 3 activities were severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions due to the nature of the field work and need for fact to face meetings. The FFS and other site-based activities are progressing well, however, for their full impact and increased likelihood of sustainability at least one full agricultural season is needed before the end of project support in order to address issues as they arise and build confidence amongst stakeholders. This should be resolved urgently to ensure clarity in work planning and budgeting.	**Request a project extension of a minimum of one year, ideally 18 months.**	To be implemented by: FAO & approved by SC.	Timeline: Immediate. Priority: High, decision to be made at the next PSC meeting and submission to be prepared within 2 months of SC meeting. An *ad hoc* meeting of the SC should be called to approve final draft of submission.
2.	The SRF and the logical hierarchy of outputs, indicators and outcomes create a considerable M&E burden. Furthermore, they do not provide a clear and accurate metric by which to measure project progress and achievements, nor to comprehensively understand the causal pathways necessary to achieve the objective. The project cannot change the objective or outcomes (despite their lack of utility). However, reorganising the number of outputs and indicators and rationalising the number of indicators (there are 49 at present) including consolidating some to the level of the outcomes and the objective should reduce this confusion and lessen the M&E burden on the PIU.	**Review the SRF outputs and indicators and revise the SRF. For clarity this exercise should:** **i. Reduce the number of outputs and output indicators – outputs currently include elements of activities and fine-grained detail of deliverables. Many of these outputs can be coalesced into a single situational output. Currently there are 24 outputs, arguably too many to track and resulting in reporting on activities and deliverables multiple times within the SRF.** **ii. Remove output indicators from the PIR.** **iii. Ensure that there is a clearly articulated indicator, baseline and target.** **iv. Remove or rephrase indicators that are activities or re-stating the output or indicator.**	To be implemented by: PIU & project Partners & approved by SC.	Timeline: Immediate. Priority: High and revised SRF and TOC should be submitted with any extension request.

		v. **Provide additional and clearer outcome indicators.** vi. **Provide a set of objective-level indicators.** vii. **Overall it should seek to reduce the number of indicators in the SRF.** viii. **Use index or proxy indicators (e.g. Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA – see Annex 10) tool[10] and Capacity Development Assessment Scorecard).**		
Effectiveness				
3.	There should be a firewall between the project's highest executive and the PIU. The PIU can attend meetings but there needs to be a clear distinction between SC membership (the project executive) and the PIU.	**PIU attendance in SC meetings should be separated from SC members with clear terms of reference and non-executive status**	To be implemented by: FAO to draft ToR & SC to approve new arrangements should be clearly reflected in the minutes of meetings.	Timeline: Immediate. Priority: High, this should be completed before the next SC meeting.
4.	The DSS is well-received amongst technicians and there is considerable interest from others involved in the planning processes associated with LD. However, the DSS should be more widely promoted to gain traction as the "go to" support tool for decision-making and planning, especially in those organisations and institutions which would not normally consider LD as aligned with their core business. The real value of the DSS is its accessibility and utility for a wide range of organisations, many of whom may not necessarily consider LD when formulating sector plans.	**Dedicated activity to target institutions and organisations to raise awareness of the DSS and its usefulness in supporting the planning process. This would include identifying target audiences (e.g. MoAF, OGM, TRGM, but also other organisations which would not normally consider LD within their planning remit) and tailoring the awareness and any training to their needs under component 3. Awareness and basic training workshops should be run and tailored to the specificities of their institutional remit.**	To be implemented by: PIU and project Technical Consultants with support of project Partners. The project should consider engaging a communications expert to assist with this activity.	Timeline: Q3 2023 to project close. Priority: Medium.

[10] Is Our Project Succeeding? A Guide to Threat Reduction Assessment for Conservation. Richard Margoluis and Nick Salafsky, Biodiversity Support Programme, Washington DC.

5.	The DSS will need to constantly evolve and is likely to take on uses additional to those that it was intended for. The drivers for this, LD and climate change, will make this increasingly useful across a range of end users and for additional decision-support tasks, many of which may not be recognised yet.	**Technical training for CEM IT experts to continue to develop the DSS (particularly with coding) and respond to emerging technical issues and challenges.**	To be implemented by: PIU & Technical (DSS) Consultants.	Timeline: Q1 2023 or Q2 if project is extended. Priority: High.
Factors affecting performance				
6.	The Lead Farmer Association's role as Service Providers is well-received by project Partners and beneficiaries largely due to their experience and technical proficiency. There is an opportunity to expand this service provision to a wider range of subjects and activities than the ones they are currently involved in, they have potential to become involve other project (LDN-related) activities such as participatory rural appraisals, training needs assessments, facilitation of micro basin planning, cooperative formation, providing consultancy services in technical matters and impact analysis.	**Expand the range of LDN-related activities currently being delivered through the service providers in the field to include process related activities such as establishing cooperatives and supporting women's participation in their governance.**	To be implemented by: PIU.	Timeline: Q1 2023 to end of project, or Q2 if project is extended. Priority: Medium.
7.	In conjunction with recommendation 6, the FFS approach has been very successful and is a tried and tested approach. Given that it is showing very positive indications already there is an opportunity to increase the number and range of crops and other farmer support based on the very clear interest and willingness of beneficiaries to engage with the intervention. Annex 6 has a range of specific site-based recommendations which can be considered to expand the scope and diversity of the FFS prior to the next planting season.	**Expand the range of crops and technologies currently included in the FFSs. This should be accompanied by a set of agreed performance and impact indicators (including financial data for farmers) for participatory evaluation by farmers.**	To be implemented by: PIU and Lead Farmers Association.	Timeline: Q1 2023 to end of project, this should be instigated before planting begins in 2023. Priority: Medium.
Efficiency				
8.	Co-financing is currently disaggregated in the reporting as "cash" and "in-kind". The guidelines on co-financing are not very clear on what qualifies as	**Monies currently being reported by the project as "cash" co-financing are re-assessed as either "in-kind" or "grants".**	To be implemented by: PIU.	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: Medium – next reporting period.

	"cash" co-financing. However, the MTR understands that "cash" co-financing should be taken to mean non-GEF monies that are included in the total budget and work plan in the Project Document and are accounted for by the PIU. While the MTR is confident that the co-financing committed prior to the project's start-up is being spent by project partners and supporting the achievement of agreed project outputs, outcomes and the objective, this does not constitute "cash" co-financing.			
9.	There has been a significant change between original budget allocated in the Project Document and the circumstances at the project's start-up (e.g. a switch in implementation modality, GOT completing many of the component 2 activities ahead of the start-up, etc.).	**There should be a significant budget revision take place to i) agree on where any surplus can be spent and, ii) agree activities that can be financed with budget allocations which have not yet been dispersed, this might include increasing the scope of the FFS, etc.** **Going forwards, a simple "dashboard" budget for use by the SC should show the budget by component for easy understanding and to identify any bottlenecks at an early stage.** **This revision can take account of any extension expected.**	To be implemented by: PIU and FAO CO, SC to meet and agree budget revisions.	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: High (for budget revision).
10	The "enabling environment" is complex and at times, hard to define. The formal and informal aspects of the enabling environment are not adequately reflected in the SRF and better measures of capacity development, training and awareness need to be developed. This can be achieved through a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey, but these are time consuming and expensive. Other measures can be utilised, such as a scorecard approach which are quicker and cheaper.	**Any revision to the SRF should include a capacity indicator at the outcome level or objective level (ideal). Ideally this should be based upon a scorecard approach[11].**	To be implemented by: PIU and assisted by FAO M&E team.	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: High.
Sustainability & catalytic effect/replication				

[11] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Capacity_Development_Indicators.pdf

11.	There is an assumption in the project's design that the behavioural changes (institutional, community, individual) will take place without an activity specifically driving this process[12]. Although this will occur passively as a result of the project's intervention, it will be a much slower and uncoordinated process. Therefore, the project should undertake a specific exercise to support a collective action change across all stakeholders with regards LDN.	**The project should become more proactive in ensuring that the four components are mutually supporting. This can be achieved by utilising a process exercise, the MTR suggests Scenario Planning (see Annex 8) although other "tools" are also useful. The purpose of such an exercise is to supplement existing planning tools (including the DSS) to address issues of scale, complexity and uncertainty and to facilitate broad participation (also at different scales and hierarchies) and to support LDN target setting exercises. The process should be essentially a cognitive exercise to bridge the gap between conventional planning tools and processes, training and capacity building and the "behavioural changes" identified in the original project TOC.**	To be implemented by: PIU with support of project Partners. Identify procedures for exercise, draft ToR for technical assistance/ facilitator, procurement.	Timeline: Q2 2023 & repeated prior to project close. Priority: Medium, only if there is a project extension.
Cross-cutting dimensions				
12.	There are a number of specific women-targeted interventions, the project is currently producing a gender report and strategy related to LDN and this has raised awareness of the role and position of women in the agricultural sector as well as highlighting the disparities, inequalities and inefficiencies as a result of gender inequality. Working with women's groups and expanding the activities to include process interventions (e.g. support with empowerment and involvement in establishing cooperatives, etc.) will likely increase the impact. However, this is not reflected in the SRF and gender markers should be included as outcome and objective-level indicators in any revision of the SRF.	**Specific gender indicators should be included at the outcome and objective level in the SRF.**	To be implemented by: PIU and assisted by FAO Gender and M&E team.	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: High.
13.	The February 6th earthquake is likely to place considerable strains on project partners as they strive to respond to the tragedy. Natural disasters such as the earthquake will have effects that both create LD	**Convene a workshop with project stakeholders to determine the best way for the project to contribute technical expertise and material resources to the recovery efforts and to ensure that any LD issues**	To be implemented by: PIU and assisted by FAO CO with	Timeline: Q2 2023 Priority: High.

[12] See section 3 of this report.

	challenges that need to be responded to through LDN approaches	**related to recovery effort and future risks are correctly identified and addressed.**	participation of project partners.	

77. MTR Ratings and achievements summary table

GEF criteria/ sub-criteria	Rating	Summary comments
A Strategic relevance		
A1 Overall Strategic Relevance	HS	The DSS is of significant strategic value to Türkiye and the UNCCD.
A1.1 Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS	The DSS and the field activities are closely aligned with the GEF DL Operational Programme and the FAO's current Strategic Framework13 (2022 – 2031) in the Programme Priority Areas (PPAs): PPA Better Production, PPS Better Environment and PPA Better Life.
A1.2 Relevance to national, regional and global beneficiary needs	HS	The DSS has functions beyond LDN target setting which will have relevance to planning, implementation and M&E. It has already been upscaled nationally and replicated in 18 other countries and one other region.
A1.3 Complementarity with existing interventions	HS	The DSS has wide functionality which will have application across other interventions.
B Effectiveness		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	S	The project is yielding good results but it is behind in delivering these largely due the pandemic restrictions.
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	S	There have been delays in the delivery of outputs largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Delivery is not uniform across the project. It has produced some high-quality outputs (e.g. the DSS and FFSs), however the delay in establishing the PIU and more critically the pandemic restrictions put some of these behind schedule.
B1.2 Progress towards outcomes and project objective	S	This is hard to assess based on the confusing SRF and indicators. Based on the quality of the DSS (including the rapid replication in other countries and regions), the broad participation, attention to gender issues and the early successes of the FFSs the MTR considers this satisfactory.
- Outcome 1.1 Enhanced enabling environment for LDN.	S	There is clear commitment to LDN and the project is acting as a focus for coordination of the different monitoring systems and other initiatives. Much of this work was carried out prior to the project's start-up because it was nationally driven and is being reinforced by initiatives currently underway in the project: an introductory film on LDN and combatting desertification, a gap analysis of the regulatory framework is ongoing, participatory workshops and meetings and facilitating the building of networks (e.g. "Workshop on the Development of the Project for Combating Land Degradation and Desertification in the ECO Region") a project proposal focusing on technology transfer in scope of the LDN DSS is under discussion, the LDN working group (Committee Meetings on National Action Plan to Combat Desertification) has been meeting for IDR reporting every year, a participatory micro basin planning that considers LDN has been initiated and under preparation, the National Action Plan and Strategy on Combatting Desertification was prepared considering the LDN target setting program (2015-2030) and the new UNCCD strategy (2018-2030), a draft circular was prepared to establish a "Desertification Coordination Board".

[13] https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf

- Outcome 2.1 Decision-support system for LDN target setting and planning established.	HS	Achieved. The LDN DSS is developed and integrates already existing models/systems produced with national data. The system is cost-effective, simple and capable of expansion to include other data sets and systems as needed. The LDN DSS is now functioning as an interactive tool which allows any user to select a particular area of interest. One of its key functionalities is to make multi criteria analysis and show areas that meet certain criteria. Calibrated data on land cover, SOC and productivity are now available for the whole of Türkiye. The production of LULC data is continued in scope of the national UASIS project through which Ministry partners are conducting a national project to collect additional data. A Google Earth Engine (GEE) application[14] (as software) on LDN was developed to combine national tools, by FAO. The system first prepared for Upper Sakarya was up-scaled at national level and has been extended to 17 FAO Region countries. The LDN DSS validation was carried out by FAO experts with a high accuracy and ground-truthed in the project area where it has already been used to identify hot and cold spots with a high level of accuracy.
- Outcome 2.2 Monitoring system and related capacity for LDN in place	S	GoT had already established a number of land variable monitoring systems prior to the project's start up. The LDN DSS is established and is capable to monitor changes on LDN indicators. The LDN DSS results are now being used for LDN reporting to UNCCD (PRAIS). The existing national targets are going to be revised using LDN DSS. The LDN DSS now enables users to identify hot and cold spots for gains and losses using LPD and has been demonstrated in the project area. Türkiye has developed a model for SOC and a national SOC model (the Total Carbon Model (TCM)) is used as a baseline and subsequent monitoring in DSS. In addition to this process a potential carbon sequestration map is produced for whole country by FAO. Besides SOC samples were taken in the project area pilot sites for assessing the maximum and minimum SOC levels in different land covers that can be associated with different SLMs. The TCM Model has been calibrated by MAF before the inception of the project and the DSS now allows comparison of TCM and LPD, and both can be used for multi criteria analysis in the DSS. Prior to the project's start up GoT developed a web-based Evaluation and Reporting System (IDR) was developed and operationalised and more than 150 people have been trained through on-line training courses. Calibration of the models for climate variability is ongoing and supported by the project technical Consultants. The Land Productivity Dynamic Map produced by FAO is integrated with the SOC Model and a framework for the effective use of the SOC monitoring system under the SLM and SFM practices applied is being developed.
- Outcome 3.1 Improved land management, land cover, and increased soil organic carbon in the Upper Sakarya basin	MS	On track however, the MTR has concerns. The indicator relates largely to the co-financed activities largely carried out by the OGM. Activities financed through the GEF grant are more vulnerable due to the impact of the pandemic. Total area with improved land management as reported in the 2022 PIR states that has improved land management on 36,690 ha: 20,372 ha of cultivated land, 1,062 ha of rangeland and 15,256 ha of forest land. This is further defined as 64.4 ha of organic farming, 199 ha soil analysis, 9,542 ha of fertilization in agricultural lands, 1,235 ha of weed control in agricultural

[14] Google Earth Engine (GEE) is a cloud-based platform that delivers a multi-petabyte catalogue of satellite imagery for planetary-scale analysis. It allows the user to gain access to remote sensing data from satellites, airborne, digital elevation models, and others. The platform allows users to turn geospatial data into actionable insights through the platform's fast computations and 1000+ types of operators for analysis (source: https://gisgeography.com/google-earth-engine/).

		lands, and the establishment of rangeland facilities in 1,062 ha of rangelands, fruit seedlings distributed for 15.1 ha of land and the provision of alfalfa seeds for 10 ha of land. Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are an innovative approach and have proved very successful both with state agencies and farmers. The selection of the Lead Farmer Association as a service provider to the project especially in implementing the FFS appears to be a good choice as the organisation is well-established and technically proficient. Training has been carried out with the agency staff and there is considerable appreciation of the training and facilitation by the project. The project appears to have had a considerable catalytic effect introducing a more informal participatory approach to problem solving alongside the introduction of new farming techniques, approaches and crops. A range of new approaches have been introduced: no/reduced tillage planting, alfalfa, drip irrigation, bee keeping, greenhouse production, chickpea (50% yield increase with Leonhardite application), Leonhardite soil additive, manure spreader(s), fodder crops (vetch), Atriplex (salt bush) for fodder and erosion control as well as some assistance with post-harvest processing (e.g. driers) and marketing (e.g. construction of wooden huts for sales) have all been introduced by the project. The forestry sector has made considerable investment in LDN through co-financing. These interventions are largely SLM approaches that are in use at a national scale already, namely: reforestation (350 ha), afforestation (50 ha) and erosion control (300 ha). The DSS and the new LDN approaches have also been incorporated into one micro-basin plan. A national SOC expert with an agricultural background is preparing a report on best practices to be implemented to avoid climate change effects and increase SOC.
- Outcome 3.2 Land productivity increased by 10% and livelihoods for local communities strengthened	MS	Not on track due to pandemic restrictions. The project is developing a Gender Action Plan for the Upper Sakarya Basin. 5 activities were implemented in scope of introducing soil and land management practices, crop and pasture management practices and alternative practices. Honeybee Colonies, Beehives and Bee Kits, as well as training was provided for 5 women farmers. Rangeland rehabilitation was carried out in 10 ha of land with salt bushes, to provide forage for farmers whose main source of income is animal husbandry. Drip irrigation systems have been applied in 200 da of land in onion, sugar beet and maize fields have had their tender process finalized. Crop rotation plots were formed for 300 da with Hungarian vetch (implemented with direct seedling) and 500 da with oats. Organic soil conditioner (leonhardite) was applied in 300 da, and local chickpea applied in 300 da. Small scale biogas systems are planned to be established to prevent uncontrolled manure storage and point pollution events providing heating as well as reducing CO2 emissions and providing compost residues for soil improvement. 65 women were trained on beekeeping under Farmer Field Schools. Under the project 5,485 ha of afforestation, 4,389 ha of rehabilitation and 5,357 ha of erosion control was implemented in Upper Sakarya Basin. 25 ha of forest areas was established with species that is used for honey production. Much of this has occurred through the OGM co-financing.
- Outcome 4.1 Upscaling of the LDN DSS to national level covering all of Turkey (78.4 million ha)	HS	Achieved to high standard. LDN DSS application covers whole country and by exceeding the target, it is extended to 17 FAO region countries. In Türkiye a GEE App has been incorporated making it technically and functionally very resilient.
- Outcome 4.2 Monitoring of project results, lessons learned and dissemination	Not Assessed	Indicators are operational.

- Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/ outcomes	S	The project will achieve the objective, in particular the DSS to a high standard. Despite the delayed implementation of the field activities, these are progressing well and even if the project closes on time the introduction of the FFS and the effect on gender awareness in the agricultural sector will persist beyond the project. However, these gains can be consolidated and increased given additional implementation time.
B1.3 Likelihood of impact	Not rated at MTR	
C. Efficiency		
C1. Efficiency	MS	The strategy is efficient and the most cost-effective means to achieve the outcomes and objective. However, there are considerable unspent funds at this late stage of the project and an extension will be needed to spend these to the greatest effect. There was a delay in instituting a PIU and revisions to the budget and SRF could have been made during the Inception Phase increasing efficiency.
D. Sustainability of Project Outcomes		
D1. Overall likelihood of or risks to sustainability	L	There are no significant risks to sustainability.
D1.1 Financial risks	L	As above, there is clear GOT support.
D1.2 Socio-political risks	L	As above, there is both political and civil society support and the project is tackling gender issues in the agricultural sector.
D1.3 Institutional and governance risks	L	As above, these can be further reduced by focusing on the informal elements of the enabling environment.
D1.4 Environmental risks	L	No risks identified
D2 Catalyst and replication	L	This is already evident with the DSS and there is national recognition and support for continuing the FFSs.
E. Factors affecting performance		
E1. Project design and readiness	MS	The design was very reasonable allowing flexibility in the development of the DSS. However, the issue of implementation modality could have been addressed prior to the project's start-up.
E2. Quality of project implementation	S	Apart from the delay in putting in place a PIU no significant issues were found.
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, PTF, etc.)	S	There is strong support especially with promoting and expanding the DSS.
E2.2 Project oversight (PSC)	S	The PSC meets regularly and provides guidance for the project implementation. Civil society representation on the PSC might enhance its effectiveness.
E3. Quality of project execution	S	Once in place, the PIU and direct implementation modality and partnerships have been very effective.
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU, partner performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	HS	The PIU is very effective and highly motivated, partnerships are strong and effective, there has been wise selection of national and international technical assistance and teaming with local service providers is very innovative. It is not possible to disaggregate project management costs but it would appear that the FAO implementation has made savings over the original budgeted OPIM and FAO has absorbed many of these costs.
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MS	There are considerable budget surpluses in 3 of the 4 components.
E5. Project partnership and stakeholder engagement	S	Partnerships are working well. It may be prudent to include civil society representation on the SC. There is clear support for the project objective and outcomes at all levels within the project.
E6. Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products	S	The project is generating very pertinent and useful knowledge products, in particular, the flexibility and utility of the DSS as a versatile planning tool. However, this needs to be prompted vigorously both at a national and international scale and through the formal meetings of the UNCCD.

E7. Overall quality of M&E	S	M&E is realistic and responsive, with the exception of the inception phase. PPRs and PIRs are realistic. The financial reporting makes it hard to track performance by component. Budget execution is one way (not the only way) of tracking performance and progress and a means to identify issues early. Budget reporting by component in the PIR would provide a simple dashboard to identify emerging issues.
E7.1 M&E design	MU	However, the weaknesses in the SRF make M&E reporting cumbersome and the confusing and inappropriate descriptions of outcome, outputs and indicators create a situation where it is hard to understand exactly where the project is in terms of critical pathways.
E7.2 M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	S	The project has a standard GEF M&E plan that is followed to good effect. It is hard to determine M&E costs as many of these appear to be absorbed by FAO. Simplifying the SRF and tracking budget execution by component would streamline this.
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	S	Notwithstanding the initial delay in instituting a PIU the project is performing well. It has faced some significant challenges (e.g. pandemic restrictions at a critical time) and overcome these. However, the inevitable outcome of the pandemic has been a delay and the project now needs to respond with a rapid budget revision and revised SRF.
F. Cross-cutting concerns		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	S	The inclusion of a gender team in the project design has resulted in the role of women being integrated into the project to a high level. The FFS provides an important link between state agencies and farmers and communities. The project should build on this "infrastructure" to engage with project partners in further promoting gender equality and empowerment and promoting informal enabling processes such as establishing co-operatives and other collective support activities.
F2. Human rights issues	S (n/a)	No human rights issues identified in the social and Environmental Screening process (SES).
F3. Environmental and social safeguards	S	Environmental risks were probably over-estimated in the SES and can are likely Low. Gender should have been identified in the original SES and should be added now as Low (due to the project's effective gender strategy and engagement with women.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and scope of the MTR

78. The Mid Term Review (MTR) is primarily a monitoring and adaptive management tool to identify challenges and outline corrective actions to ensure that a project is on track at the mid-term of the project cycle to achieve maximum results by its completion. The Global Environmental Facility Evaluation Policy states that a MTR is mandatory for all full-sized projects[15] (FSP). The primary output/deliverable of this process is the MTR report. The MTR report will provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful and is intended to be used by the Implementing Agency/ Partner, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and the Executing Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), in order to make practical adjustments to the project's implementation framework, operational management, activities and internal budget allocations wherever necessary in order to achieve its stated objective. Once accepted by the Implementing Agency the MTR Report becomes an integral part of the overall adaptive project cycle management.
79. The MTR team reviewed all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. Project Identification Form, Project Document, Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel review, etc.). Project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review. The MTR team reviewed the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool (the GEF Land Degradation tracking Tool) submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement, and the midterm GEF focal area Tracking Tool (the GEF 6 Core Indicators Tracking Tool)[16].
80. The MTR team reviewed and assessed the following four categories of project progress towards results as outlined in the project's results framework and according to the Guide for Planning and Conducting Midterm Reviews of FAO-GEF Projects and Programmes[17]:
    i. Project strategy including the project's design and the results framework (log frame).
    ii. Progress towards results using the indicators selected during the project's design and observations made during the field mission and desk work.
    iii. Project implementation and adaptive management including the management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, social and environmental standards (safeguards), reporting and, communication and knowledge management.
    iv. Sustainability of the project's outputs and outcomes[18] including an assessment of the financial risks, socio-economic risks, institutional frameworks and governance, and the environmental risks to sustainability.
81. Additionally, the MTR reviewed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall project management, implementation and results (including on indicators and targets) and assessed

[15] GEF-financed projects with budgets of USD 2 million or more are classified as FSPs.
[16] The revised results framework for GEF-7 (July 2018 to June 2022) (largely replaces the formerly used tracking tools with core indicators, comprising 11 main indicators, most of which have several sub-indicators. For most projects approved under GEF-6, the tracking tools are also no longer required when the mid-term or the terminal evaluation point is reached (whichever comes first). Instead, core indicators from the GEF-7 need to be identified and agreed and baselines retrofitted. The GEF indicators should then be scored.
[17] https://www.fao.org/3/ca7788en/ca7788en.pdf
[18] The interchangeability of the terms "outcome" and "component" is a feature of many GEF project SRF/LFs. For the avoidance of doubt, the LDN Project has 4 Outcomes and 4 Components and there is equivalence.

the project's response including and not limited to responses related to stakeholder engagement, management arrangements, work planning and adaptive management actions.

1.2. Objective of the MTR

82. The MTR has three primary purposes:
    i. To assess progress made towards achievement of a project's planned results in terms of its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, sustainability and impact. Key questions include: "What results, intended and unintended, has the project achieved to date?" and "Is the project on track to achieve its planned results?"
    ii. To identify any problems or challenges the project is encountering, understand the causes of any underperformance and leverage project strengths and good practices to overcome them. The MTR makes recommendations for corrective measures, if needed, to overcome challenges and ensure the expected deliverables and results are achieved by the end of the project. Key questions include: "What can be done to improve project delivery and to increase the likelihood of longer-term sustainability of project results?"
    iii. To identify/highlight any success stories, key contributions, good practices and areas with the potential for upscaling and replication, and to promote knowledge-sharing and learning between FAO and project stakeholders, including the identification of lessons to improve future project formulation and implementation.

1.3. Intended users

83. The Budget Holder (BH), circulates the final MTR report to the project stakeholders, including the PMU, FAO GEF Coordination Unit (FAO GEF CU), Project Steering Committee (PSC) members, project partners, the country's GEF Operational Focal Point, relevant national agencies and local stakeholder groups and the GEF Secretariat.
84. The key respondents interviewed during the MTR selected during the Inception Phase and based on the Project Document and MTR analysis of stakeholders should be sensitised to the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the MTR appropriate to their level of involvement. This should be the task of the Project Coordination Unit (PIU) to communicate the MTR findings at the national management level (e.g. through the SC, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the Directorate General of Combating Desertification and Erosion (CEM), the General Directorate of Forestry (OGM) and the General Directorate of Agrarian Reform (TRGM) and General Directorate of Agricultural Researches and Policies (TAGEM).
85. Provincial-level partners such as the OGM and TRGM[19] may utilise those MTR findings and recommendations appropriate to their role and position in the project management hierarchy.
86. Technical Consultants and Service providers (e.g. Lead Farmer Association (LFA)) should be sensitised to the findings and recommendations as part of the adaptive management process.
87. Participating farmers, women and farmer groups should also be provided with a briefing of the MTR findings as an important component of their participation in the project and in the interests of accountability and transparency.

1.4. Methodology

88. The MTR was carried out by a two-person team consisting of a National and International Consultant between 15th November 2022 and the 22nd of February 2023. Due to budget

[19] CEM is not represented at the provincial level.

restrictions the international Consultant was unable to visit Tükiye and the field missions were carried out by the National Consultant between the 12th – 16th December, 2022.

89. The MTR utilized three sources of primary data and information:
    - **Desk review:** the documentation covering project design, implementation progress reports, project reports, monitoring and review studies, local and national development plans, policies and regulatory instruments. This covered, and elaborated, on the documents listed in the UNDP TOR, a working list of which is presented in Annex 11.
    - **Interviews, stakeholder consultations and field missions:** additional information collection and validation took place through remote and (where possible) face-to-face consultations with a range of stakeholders, using "semi-structured interviews" with a key set of questions in a conversational format. The questions asked aimed to provide answers to the points listed in the evaluation matrix in Annex 3 and the specific questions raised in the MTR TOR. An initial list of generic questions is provided in Annex 3, which was refined according to specific stakeholder interviews during the field mission and by follow up communication through internet virtual tools and platforms and telephone calls as necessary. Interviews were confidential and the information is used discreetly without attribution. Information from interviews was triangulated and validated, where necessary, before inclusion in the analysis and reporting. Interviews started with an introduction about the aims and nature of the review and informing the interviewee that they have the right not to respond if they so wish.
      Interviews[20] and the information collected has been disaggregated to reflect the different stakeholders (e.g. Implementing Agency – Project Implementation Unit (PIU) – implementing partners – beneficiaries). These are provided in Annex 3 as an interview guide and not a rigid questionnaire form. Information from the interviews was collated and analyzed to provide evidence-based conclusions on the overall performance and impact of the project.
    - **Direct observations of project results and activities:** wherever possible from the project area including consultations with local government and local agencies, local community representatives, project partners, service providers and participants in field activities.
90. Gender equality and women's empowerment were assessed through collecting gender-disaggregated results arising from project activities, inclusion of women participants and relevant women's groups in the MTR interviews and specific questions regarding the extent to which they were included in project implementation and/or benefited from the project. Specific attention was given to analyzing examples, best practices and lessons learned regarding women's empowerment arising through the project's scope of activities.
91. **Analysis:** following the data collection phase, the MTR team analyzed the information according to the MTR guidelines and the Terms of Reference (ToR) in order to draw conclusions and propose any recommendations.
92. In addition to the five OECD DAC[21] criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, the MTR will seek to provide the fine detail to provide answers to the specific questions posed in the MTR TOR. These have been included in section 5.1 Conclusions.
93. A draft MTR Report will subsequently be circulated to key stakeholders for comment and feedback. The final MTR Report is submitted including an audit trail documenting the feedback from stakeholders as a separate Annex.

[20] 38 individuals individual institutional respondents were interviewed either individually or in small groups, 15 women from the Women Cooperative in Eskisehir Sivrihisar, 10 farmers (5 women and 5 men) from Kutahya Yaylababa, 2 farmers (men) from Kocas Village and 7 farmers (men) from Polatil Village, 72 individuals in total.
[21] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee.

1.5. Limitations of the MTR

94. The MTR recognizes a number of limitations and will seek to minimize the impact of these constraints on aspects such as the scope, participation, and utility of any recommendations. These constraints are:
    - Time and resource constraints prevented the International Consultant (IC) from visiting Türkiye. While all practicable interviews and consultations were joined by the IC using information technology (IT), it imposed limits on the interaction between the IC and NC which is important for the jointly assimilating experience and perceptions. In order to mitigate this the International and National Consultant worked closely together during the field missions, analysis and writing up in order to jointly formulate the findings, conclusions and recommendations utilizing the breadth of their combined experience.
    - Geographical coverage of the project and the MTR budget was constrained (due to time limitations) during the visit to all the zones and stakeholders where the project impacted (included at regional level). In order to mitigate this, all efforts were made to organise the most efficient itinerary for field visits. Where site visits and face to face interviews were not possible, all efforts were made to contact stakeholders by other means such as telephone, WhatsApp, Zoom, etc.
    - There are weaknesses in the project's strategic results framework[22] (SRF) in as much as it contains twenty-three indicators, and most indicators appear to be at the output level and not the outcome level as well as outputs that are essentially activities, making it difficult to determine impact.

1.6 Structure of the MTR report

95. This report is structured in line with the guidance given on conducting MTRs of FAO - GEF projects and in accordance with the MTR Terms of Reference (ToR) provided in Annex 1:

    Section 1 provides an executive summary which gives basic information on the project, a brief description of the project and its progress to date, the MTR ratings and achievement table, summary of conclusions and recommendations.

    Section 2 provides a description of the review process and methodology.

    Section 3 describes the background and context of the FAO-GEF LDN project including the problems that the project sought to address, the objectives, outcomes and means of monitoring and evaluation, the implementation arrangements, a timeline and key milestones as well as a summary of project stakeholders.

    Section 4 presents the main findings of the MTR on all aspects including the project's design, strategy, its progress towards results, the performance of its implementation and efficiency of adaptive management as well as assessing the sustainability of the project outcomes

    Section 5 presents the conclusions, recommendations and lessons derived from analysing the implementation of the project.

[22] Also referred to as the Logical framework or log frame

2. Project background and context

2.1 Environmental context

96. Türkiye's geographical location, climate, topography and soil conditions together with the country's rapid socio-economic development, increases its sensitivity to desertification and drought. The total arable land area of Türkiye is about 28 million ha out of a total area of more than 78 million ha. The main source of income of the country is agriculture and agriculture-based industry. However, the prime soils with high productivity and high organic carbon content cover only 17.5 % of the total land surface and the productivity of the rest of the soils is limited by topographical, chemical (e.g. high calcium carbonate content, alkalinity and low organic matter), and physical (e.g. water logging, texture) attributes. Plains from sea level to 250 m altitude cover only one tenth of the country, whereas places higher than 800 m cover two thirds, and half of the country is higher than 1000 m. Most mountain ranges extend from west to east and great ranges appear in the form of arches like the Taurus Mountains in the south, with development of topographically almost identical highlands and basins between the ranges. Because of these conditions, erosion is one of the most severe environmental problems affecting 81 % of the total land surface in varying degrees of severity (about 73 % of the cultivated land and 68 % of the prime agricultural land). Stream bank erosion affects 57.1 million ha while wind erosion degrades another 466,000 ha. As a result, about 168 million tons of soil is transported to the sea every year[23].

2.2 Development context

97. The Project "Contributing to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting by Demonstrating the LDN Approach[24]" (GCP/TUR/065/GFF) is financed by the GEF Trust Fund and implemented through the FAO in partnership with the Government of Türkiye MAF.
98. In 2015, Türkiye hosted the UNCCD Conference of Parties (COP) 12, where the Ankara Initiative was launched to leverage the national expertise in combating land degradation to provide practical support to other countries in the region for the achievement of LDN.
99. According to the Project Document, at the time of design, and within the context of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), Türkiye aimed to maintain and increase the amount of healthy and productive land resources in line with the national development priorities. Turkey has actively been combating land degradation for many years. In this context Turkey had already established the Basin Monitoring and Evaluation System (BMES) which acts as a key infrastructure for LDN and informs the decision-making system for LDN target setting as well as monitoring the status of land degradation/desertification and the success of basin wide sustainable land and forest management (SLM/SFM) activities. Türkiye is thus well prepared to develop and implement the LDN approach in a coherent and consist way across sectors and land uses and to effectively demonstrate it and mainstream LDN into the planning processes.

2.3 Policy and institutional context

100. The aims and objective of the project were aligned with the national policy framework and supporting regulatory. The main policy instruments supporting the project were, *inter alia*:
    - Tükiye's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2010-2023)

[23] Source, Project Document.
[24] This report will use the short name "LDN project" throughout.

- National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Desertification (2015-2023)
- National Biological Diversity Strategy and Action Plan (2007)
- National Watershed Management Strategy (2014-2023)
- National Drought Management Strategy Document and Action Plan (2017-2023)
- Strategy and Action Plan for Combating Drought (2017-2023)
- EU Integrated Environmental Adaptation Strategy (2007-2023)
- Water Quality Management Strategy Document and Action Plan (2015-2023)
- National Rural Development Strategy (2014-2020)

101. Institutionally, the project is framed within a broad cross-section of institutional stakeholders, the most relevant being within the Ministry of Agriculture and forestry (MAF) and its subordinate General Directorates: Combating desertification and Erosion (CEM), Forestry (OGM) and Agrarian Reform (TRGM) and General Directorate of Agricultural Researches and Policies (TAGEM).

2.4 Project objective and scope

102. With the stated objective "*to develop a model for LDN target setting, planning and decision-making at national level and for demonstration in the Upper Sakarya basin*", the Project set out to develop a model for LDN target setting, planning and implementation in the Sakarya basin (Figure 1) north western Türkiye for upscaling at the national level in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Target 15.3. It takes a phased approach; first strengthening the enabling environment for LDN and multi-sectoral land-use planning processes in Turkey, followed by the development of a Decision Support System (DSS) for LDN that will initially be applied in the Sakarya basin. The final phase involves achieving land degradation neutrality on the ground in the Sakarya basin with associated global benefits generated according to the three UNCCD indicators[25] for land degradation: land cover, enhanced soil carbon and enhanced land productivity. This last part was to be achieved through targeted assistance to farmers to transform farming practices and introduce sustainable land management (SLM) at the district-level. The LDN-DSS is to be integrated into existing land-use planning and will be upscaled to set targets at the national level.

2.4.1 Threats and barriers to land degradation neutrality

103. The Project Document outlined the following threats to land degradation neutrality specifically in the project area, although in one form or another, these threats are experienced in many regions of Türkiye; "*due to the steep topography and inappropriate land management, the Upper Sakarya Basin faces serious degradation. Due to the existing poverty level, local people heavily utilize the forest, pastures and agricultural resources. This has resulted in reduced land productivity and reduction of soil organic carbon. Some of the forests in the basin are degraded or lost due to land clearing for the opening of new farmlands, overgrazing and high demand for fuelwood. Although livestock is one of the main sources of income, the pressure on pastures is also increasing as grazing is conducted in an unplanned way. This degradation of natural resources is compounded by climatic conditions such as irregular and heavy precipitation which results in floods and economic losses in the region*"[26].

104. The document went on to further state that while the Government of Türkiye had carried out significant efforts to raise awareness and disseminate best practices and technologies to address land degradation, monitoring systems still needed to be strengthened to integrate

[25] https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-01/Framework%20and%20Guiding%20Principles%20for%20a%20Land%20Degradation%20Indicator.pdf
[26] Project Document, p. 14.

LDN indicators and metrics to enable LDN target setting at landscape and national scales and summarised the following remaining barriers:

i. **Inadequate enabling environment**: One of the key barriers to addressing land degradation effectively is the inadequate enabling environment, both from a policy/planning perspective and a capacity perspective. This was further defined as:
    i. Miss-matches in the policy and planning processes: in particular, miss-matches in sector plans and river basin plans which resulted in conflicts between institutional plans and ecological functional efficiency with a need to focus on greater institutional coordination in the planning process.
    ii. A lack of adequate capacity to mainstream and implement LDN: while there was increasing awareness of combatting LD, LDN and SLM in institutions, there was a focus on erosion control and decreased productivity in production landscapes. Therefore, knowledge of how to implement LDN concepts needed to be built at the institutional (central and local government) and the grassroots level (local communities, co-operatives, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Farmers Unions) to mainstream and implement LDN.

ii. **Limited data, knowledge and experience to support decision-making processes on LDN**: identified as a larger global challenge amongst countries trying to implement LDN and the conduct necessary target setting, LDN mainstreaming and monitoring/reporting of results are not fully applied by the countries yet due to knowledge and capacity constraints. While Türkiye has a long track record of soil inventory, the reports were not complete and often unavailable to end users. Furthermore, a national pilot UNCCD-supported LDN pilot project in the Gediz basin in southwestern Turkey showed the usefulness of land productivity maps as a base layer for analysing land cover and organic carbon and had already made recommendations for categorizing land use using the LDN indicator framework. This needed to be imbedded into the organisational and working practices of the various institutions and land users.

2.5 Project strategy: objective, outcomes and expected results

Table 1 Objective, outcomes and expected results

Objective: To develop a model for LDN target setting, planning and decision-making at national level and for demonstration in the Upper Sakarya basin.	Indicator No indicators given
Component 1: Strengthening the enabling environment for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)	
Outcome 1.1: Enhanced enabling Environment for LDN	**Indicator 1:** Integration of LDN into strategic planning processes **Indicator 2:** Investment programme for LDN
Output 1.1.1: Capacity development program in place on LDN target setting and its implementation for local and central government staff	Output indicator: Number of institutional training courses that integrate LDN Output indicator: Number of people trained at local and central level Output indicator: National and international symposia Output indicator: International LDN exchange
Output 1.1.2: Creation of a national online Information Sharing Forum on LDN for stakeholder engagement	Output indicator: National Online Information Sharing Forum on LDN
Output 1.1.3: Capacity development program in place for farmers, herders and forest villages in the Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: Number of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) established on modern and sustainable production methods Output indicator: Number of local people trained, including how many women Output indicator: Mass media campaigns on LDN
Output 1.1.4: Identification of needs for new legislation and/or revisions of existing legislation based on project findings and targeted stakeholder consultations	New and/or revised legislation that operationalise the LDN approach
Output 1.1.5: Integration of the LDN approach and priorities into strategic planning processes at sub-national and national levels	Output indicator: Integration of LDN into strategic planning processes Output indicator: Strengthening of the LDN intersectoral working group
Component 2: Decision-Support System (DSS) for LDN	
Outcome 2.1: Decision-support system for LDN target setting and planning established	**Indicator 3:** DSS established with calibrated metrics for LDN indicators
Output 2.1.1: Metrics for LDN indicators (i.e. land cover, soil organic carbon and land productivity) identified, tested and calibrated	Output indicator: Calibrated metrics for LDN indicators available
Output 2.1.2: DSS integrated and tested	Output indicator: Integration for LDN DSS
Output 2.1.3: Land cover classes and land degradation levels in demonstration area in the Upper Sakarya basin identified	Output indicator: Land cover classes and land degradation levels in the Upper Sakarya Basin verified
Outcome 2.2: Monitoring system and related capacity for LDN in place	**Indicator 4:** LDN monitoring system in place with target setting agreed

Output 2.2.1: LDN target setting based on current and existing monitoring infrastructure and metrics agreed	Output indicator: Target setting and hot spots and cold spots for gains and losses identified
Output 2.2.2: Effective and economic approach for soil organic carbon monitoring identified and disseminated	Output indicator: Agreed soil Output indicator: Organic carbon monitoring approach
Output 2.2.3: Turkey's existing land degradation monitoring system calibrated to monitor LDN indicators and for testing in the Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: TCM and LPD Models tested
Output 2.2.4: LDN-related reporting capacity improved	Output indicator: Web-based Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (IDR) operationalized Output indicator: Training of decision-makers and technical staff
Output 2.2.5: Climate variability integrated into the LDN DSS and tested in the Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: Sub-indicators of climate variability tested in the Upper Samaria Basin for the TCM and soil organic carbon (SOC) Models
Component 3: Demonstration of the LDN approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin	
Outcome 3.1: Improved land management, land cover, and increased soil organic carbon in the Upper Sakarya basin	**Indicator 5:** Area with improved land management **Indicator 6:** Area with improved land cover **Indicator 7:** % increase in SOC
Output 3.1.1: Participatory landscape-specific improvement plans based on priorities identified by the DSS covering 4,313,827 ha of land	Output indicator: Ha of land covered by landscape- specific improvement plans
Output 3.1.2: Demonstrations of SLM and SFM best practices in forests, rangelands and croplands that provide carbon benefits on 14,000 ha of land	Output indicator: Area with demonstrations of SLM and SFM best practices Output indicator: % increase in SOC in area covered by BPs
Output 3.1.3: Measures and approaches for reducing the impacts of climate variability integrated into SLM and SFM practices	Output indicator: Number of climate-smart measures and approaches integrated into SLM/SFM
Output 3.1.4: Preparation of an implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the whole Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: Implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the Upper Sakarya Basin
Outcome 3.2: Land productivity increased by 10% and livelihoods for local communities strengthened	**Indicator 8:** Increase in land productivity
Output 3.2.1: Introduction of gender sensitive sustainable livelihood strategies	Output indicator: Gender Action Plan for the Upper Sakarya Basin
Output 3.2.2: Introduction of gender- sensitive climate resilient practices to enhance land productivity	Output indicator: Number of gender sensitive climate resilient practices targeting women Output indicator: Area covered Output indicator: Number of households with improved living conditions Output indicator: Number of women trained
Component 4: Upscaling of LDN experiences, monitoring and evaluation	
Outcome 4.1: Upscaling of the LDN DSS to national level covering all of Turkey (78.4 million ha).	**Indicator 9:** Area covered by the LDN DSS

Output 4.1.1: LDN metrics for the whole of Turkey entered into the LDN DSS and land cover classes and land degradation levels identified	Output indicator: LDN metrics for the whole of Turkey available in DSS
Output 4.1.2: LDN target setting at national scale in place	Output indicator: LDN target setting in place
Output 4.1.3: Development of bankable projects for the LDN fund (at least 1)	Output indicator: Number of bankable projects for the LDN fund
Outcome 4.2: Monitoring of project results, lessons learned and dissemination.	**Indicator 10:** M&E system is in place **Indicator 11:** Lessons learned disseminated
Output 4.2.1: Global Environmental Benefits monitored and assessed	Output indicator: Baseline and targets for GEB indicators refined
Output 4.2.2: Mid- term and final evaluation conducted	Output indicator: Mid-term and final evaluation reports
Output 4.3: Experience sharing on Project- related “lessons-learned” and a national LDN guideline published	Output indicator: National LDN Guideline

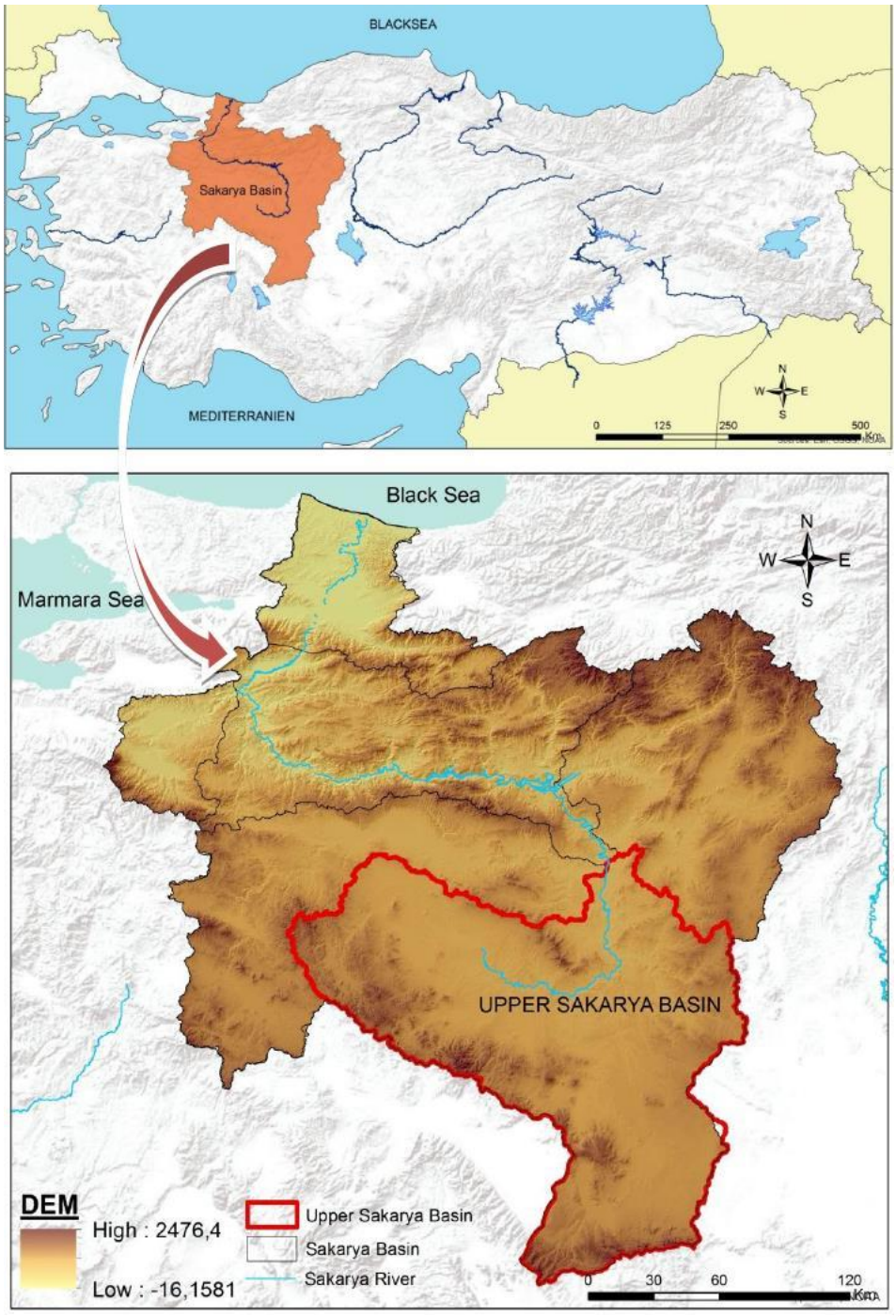
2.6 Project site

105. The LDN project focuses on the Upper Sakarya Basin, a sub-basin of the Sakarya Basin, which includes the provinces of Afyon, Ankara, Bilecik, Bolu, Cankırı, Eskişehir, Konya, Kütahya and Uşak (Figure 1). The Sakarya basin is located between 4198159-45334009 m North and 178492-535438 m East (UTM - WGS-84) coordinates and is about 63,300 km^2. Although Sakarya Basin is heavily industrialized and the pace of industrialization is increasing, it is still one of the well-established agricultural basins of Turkey. The lower parts of the basin and plains at higher altitudes are mainly used for agricultural purposes. Almost half of the land in the Sakarya Basin are agricultural lands. The main agricultural products are wheat, barley, rye, corn, sesame, sunflower and sugar beets as well as vegetables. Animal husbandry is predominant in some parts of the basin with mostly cattle breeding around Ankara and sheep and goat breeding in Ankara and Eskişehir regions. The Upper Sakarya Basin covers an area of 4,899,302 ha with 3,169,588 of cropland, 980 179 ha of forest and 164 060 ha of pastures/grasslands, the remainder being classed as water bodies and urban areas. According to the analyses made by the Basin Monitoring and Evaluation System (BMES), 2,227,401 ha of land are under high or very high desertification risk.

106. The altitude of the northern parts of the Sakarya Basin near the Black Sea is about 200 m from sea level, but it rises up to 1,000 m in the south reaching approximately 2,400 m in the mountains on the north-eastern and south-western borders of the basin. In the Upper Sakarya Basin the altitude ranges from 1,000 m to 2,400 m. Slope gradient in the north-eastern parts of the basin changes between 30 and 50%, whereas in the Upper Sakarya Lower Basin, it ranges mostly between 0 and 20% excluding the mountainous area in the southwest. The northern part of the basin is mostly covered by forest, and dry or irrigated agriculture, while the southern and central parts of the basin, in which the Upper Sakarya sub-basin is located, is mostly used for rain-fed agriculture and pasture. Brown Forest Soils and Non-Calcareous Brown Forest Soils are widely distributed in northern part of the basin, whereas Brown Soils and Reddish Brown Soils are distributed in the area including the Upper Sakarya lower basin. In terms of soil organic carbon (SOC), it mostly ranges between 20 to 40 tons/ha and reaches up to 70 tons/ha only in a small part of the western region of the Upper Sakarya basin[27].

[27] Source: Project Document.

Figure 1 Map of project area



2.7 Implementation arrangements

107. The institutional arrangements set out in the Project Document[28] are complex, reflecting the multiplicity of institutional players involved in land management *per se.* The Project Document set out that, the Project would be implemented and managed by the MAF (the executing partner) in corporation with three other ministries; the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (MEU), the Ministry of Interior (MI) and the Ministry of Development (MD). This

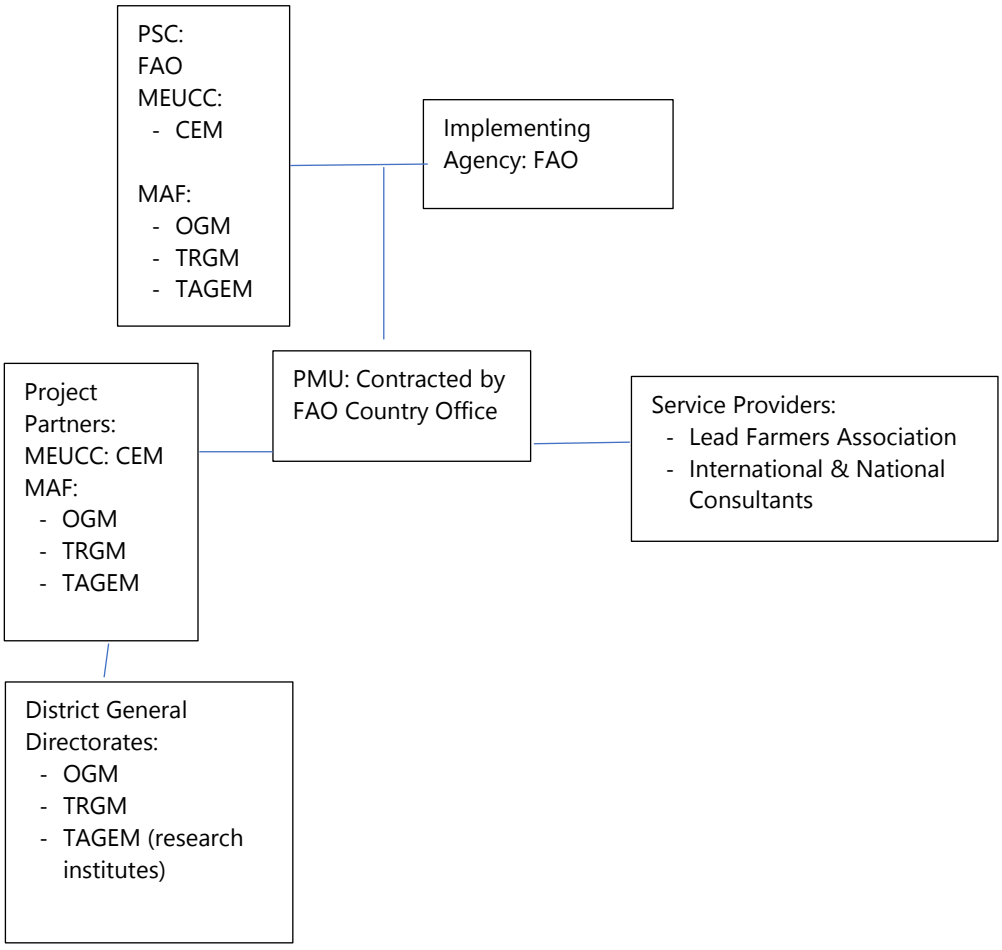
[28] Project Document, pp. 54 – 61.

would be stepped down to the district level DGs and in coordination with regional and relevant universities, private sector and NGOs (Chambers of Agriculture, Irrigation Associations, Farmer Organizations, National Foundations, Provincial Representatives of Associations, Village Development Cooperatives) will be undertaken during the implementation of the project. The FAO Country Office would be the implementing agency.

108. Therefore, the project was designed to be executed under the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM), with the MAF as the executing partner. It was established the DG CEM of the MAF would act as national coordinator institution of the project. However, during the first Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting, the PSC members suggested to change the implement modality under direct execution by FAO[29]. The implementation responsibility was subsequently transferred to the FAO Country Office, direct implementation modality, with a PIU contracted by FAO.

109. No justification was provided by the SC minutes of meeting or the Inception Report[30]. However, it is understood, from discussions with senior key respondents interviewed, that the this change in implementation modality was due to institutional restructuring that had taken place between the project preparation phase, the fact that CEM, as the Project Coordinator, did not have regional directorates, and concerns about the familiarity with GEF project implementation procedures and experience of key project partners to implement a GEF project, especially at the district level.

Figure 2 Actual project implementation



[29] PSC Minutes of Meetings, 10/12/2019.
[30] LDN project Inception Report 10/12/2019.

110. The project SC has much the same composition as that described in the Project Document with the key General Directorates under the MAF and representation from the FAO Country Office:
    - General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion (lately transferred under the Ministry of Environment Urbanization and Climate Change),
    - General Directorate of Forestry,
    - General Directorate of Agricultural Researches and Policies,
    - General Directorate of Agricultural Reform,
    - FAO Representation in Turkey.

111. The responsibilities of the FAO as Implementing Agency are outlined in the Project Document as:
    - Administer funds from GEF in accordance with the rules and procedures of FAO;
    - Oversee project implementation in accordance with the project document, work plans, budgets, agreements with co-financiers and the rules and procedures of FAO;
    - Provide technical guidance to ensure that appropriate technical quality is applied to all activities concerned;
    - Conduct at least one supervision mission per year; and
    - Report to the GEF Secretariat and Evaluation Office, through the annual Project Implementation
    - Review, on project progress and provide financial reports to the GEF Trustee.

112. The PSC responsibilities are:
    - Oversight and assurance of technical quality of outputs;
    - Close linkages between the project and other ongoing projects and programmes relevant to the project;
    - Timely availability and effectiveness of co-financing support;
    - Sustainability of key project outcomes, including up-scaling and replication;
    - Effective coordination of government partner work under this project; and
    - Approval of the six-monthly Project Progress and Financial Reports, the Annual Work Plan and Budget.

113. The PIU within the FAO Country Office took on the responsibilities of Project Coordination Unit (PIU) as outlined in the Project Document[31], namely to; The main function of the PCU, following the guidelines of the PSC, was to ensure the coordination and execution of the project through the effective implementation of the annual work plans and budgets (AWP/B). The PIU consists of a National Project Coordinator (NPC) who works full-time for the project lifetime. In addition, the PIU included (administrative and financial manager, administrative assistant, procurement assistant, technical experts).

114. In reality, the PIU provided a much more strategic function in project planning and management with considerable internal intellectual and facilitation capacities.

[31] Project Document, p. 58

2.8 Project timing and milestones

Table 2 Key project events and milestones

Preparation	
Received by GEF	25 July 2016
GEF Grant approved	1 May 2017
CEO approval of Project Document	24 January 2019
Implementation	
Project Document signature & official start-up	28 March 2019 signature - 15 August 2019 EOD of the project
Inception workshop	10 December 2019
Appointment of Project Manager	20 January 2020
COVID pandemic lockdown	12 March 2020
Midterm Review	November 2022 – February 2023
Terminal Evaluation (planned)	31 December 2021
Planned project end	23 August 2023

2.9 Main stakeholders

115. The Project Document provides a comprehensive list of stakeholders[32] (Table 3) and it would appear that, during the design phase, a broad range of stakeholders were identified, although it does not describe any mechanism to coordinate the multiplicity and diversity of stakeholder interests. It is worth noting that this is a frequent feature of GEF Project Documents; casting a wide and inclusive net to identify stakeholders and then omitting to describe a mechanism for their engagement. Consequently, human, material and financial resources are not assigned for this purpose and there is an assumption that stakeholder involvement will naturally take place. In reality, this places a considerable burden, in terms of effort and time spent, on the PIU and in particular, the Project Coordinator.

116. Lastly, the Project Document did not identify the FAO itself as a stakeholder. The FAO actually has a considerable interest in the project's success, in particular in relation to the DSS and its regional and global utility.

Table 3 Summary of project stakeholders

Stakeholder	Interest
The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) & Ministry of Environment Urbanization and Climate Change	
The General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion (CEM) -MEUCC	CEM is the competent authority in terms of the coordination of land degradation issues in Turkey and it is also the focal point of the UNCCD.
The General Directorate of Forestry (OGM)	It is responsible for the management and the operation of the country's forests. The OGM, which has a very strong organization locally, carries out a lot of works in the field for preventing desertification/land degradation.
The General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI)	The DSI is responsible for the planning, management, development and operation of national water resources. The DSI is one of the key institutions in the field of desertification/land degradation from the perspective of soil erosion, flood control, management of surface and ground waters.
The General Directorate of Water Management (SYMM):	The SYMM is responsible for making policies and studies regarding the protection, improvement and utilization of water resources.
The General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (DKMP):	The General Directorate of DKMP is an important institution for LDN with the task of managing and improving the protected areas in terms of rational and sustainability principles in order to ensure the preservation and continuity of biological diversity, and all natural-related resources.

[32] Project Document, pp. 42 - 44

Stakeholder	Interest
The General Directorate of Meteorology (MGM):	This organization provides meteorological support for many institutions and organizations, including agriculture and forestry.
The General Directorate of Crop Production (BÜGEM):	Within the scope of combating desertification/land degradation, the BUGEM is responsible for developing and disseminating organic agriculture and good agricultural practices for agricultural basins, and for implementing activities related to water, soil, environment and climate change etc.
General Directorate of Agricultural Reform (TRGM):	It plays an important role in desertification/land degradation with activities such as preparation of land use plans, protection of agricultural land, changes in land use and preparation of soil maps.
General Directorate of Agricultural Researches and Policies (TAGEM):	This organization conducts studies on desertification, erosion, combating drought, salinity, protection and development of soil and water resources.
Ministry of Environment and Urbanism (CŞB)	
The General Directorate of Spatial Planning (MPGM):	It is very important that the MPGM is actively involved in combating to desertification/land degradation. This organization directs the upper-scale spatial planning system, provides planned development, and provides technical guidance to local administrations.
The General Directorate of Environmental Management (CYGM):	It is the institution that prepares and coordinates the national environmental strategy and action plans.
General Directorate of Environmental Impact Assessment, Authorization and Auditing (CED):	It conducts environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment.
Regional-Government Institutions	
Regional Directorates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	The Regional Directorates will be a member of the project implementation unit and will support the sharing of information and monitoring the success of the target.
The Regional Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSI)	DSI will be a member of the project implementation unit and will support the sharing of information and monitoring the success of the target.
The Regional Directorate of Forestry (OGM)	The OGM will obtain all necessary data during the planning and implementation of the project. As a member of the project implementation unit, the OGM will provide coordination and implementation of the project at the provincial level (including all project sites) and will support sharing of information and monitoring of target success.
Regional Directorate of Meteorology (MBM)	The MBM will provide all the climatic data required during the planning and implementation of the project. The MBM will be a member of the project implementation unit and will support the sharing of information and monitoring of the target success.
Provincial Government Agencies - Stakeholders	
Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (PDAs)	The PDAs as a member of the project implementation unit will support monitoring the impact and progress of the project in rural areas.
Provincial Directorates (Towns) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	These Government Agencies will be responsible for transferring information on conservation and sustainability of natural resources and cooperating with farmers, farmers' associations, universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
Academic and Scientific Organizations	
TÜBITAK	Cooperation in research management, financing and applications with the TUBITAK will be possible.
Universities	Coordination with relevant universities will be undertaken during the implementation of the project.
Water Institute of Turkey	Synergies will be established with this institution
Forest Soil and Ecology Research Institute	Synergies will be established with this institution
Forest Trees and Seed Breeding Research Institute	Synergies will be established with this institution
Soil, Fertilizer and Water Resources Central Research Institute	Synergies will be established with this institution
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	

Stakeholder	Interest
Farmers and animal producers	Hundreds of farmers and animal producers in the region will be included into the project. These farmers are in the most important category of stakeholders.
Irrigation Union Cooperatives	A strong relation will be established with the Irrigation Union Cooperatives in the region
Sofca Fishery Cooperative	A strong relation will be established with the Sofca Fishery Cooperative in the region
Agriculture Associations	A strong relation will be established with the Agriculture Associations in the region
Private Sector	
NG Kütahya Ceramic	A strong relation will be established with the private sectors in the region
KÜMAŞ Mining	A strong relation will be established with the private sectors in the region
ETI Biscuits	A strong relation will be established with the private sectors in the region

2.10 Project finance

117. This project has a financing from the GEF of US$ 2,388,584 and a total expected co-financing (considering cash and in-kind) of US$ 13,600,000 (see Table 5).

Table 4 Project financing and expected co-financing

Source & type	Amount (US$)
GEF financing (Including Project Management Cost US$ 113 742):	US$ 2,388,584
Co-financing MAF	US$ 13,200,000
Co-financing FAO	US$ 400,000
Sub-total co financing:	US$ 13,600,000
Total Budget:	**US$ 15,988,584**

3. Project Theory of Change

118. According to the Project Document, the Project theory of change (TOC)[33] is based on the scientific conceptual framework for LDN and derived from the programme level TOC[34].

119. The essential distinctive elements of a ToC compared to other approaches in project planning and management[35] are to:

- identify specific causal links among outputs and outcomes, with evidence;
- describe the causal pathways by which interventions are expected to have effect, and identify indicators to test their validity over time, and;
- be explicit about assumptions about these causal pathways, which includes an analysis of barriers and enablers as well as indicators of success.

120. The TOC is useful, in this sense, because it sets out the causal pathways from intervention through to the long-term impacts as well as identifying the key drivers shaping the system. A more detailed account of its use is given in the GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) guidelines.

121. There are a number of weaknesses and inconsistencies in the TOC (figure 3) provided in the Project Document. These largely stem from the weaknesses in the project's strategic results framework (SRF). The SRF does not follow a logical hierarchy of outputs and outcomes resulting in the objective. Outcomes described in the SRF are essentially a mix of poorly worded

[33] Project Document p. 22

[34] Cowie, A.L., Orr, B.J., Castillo Sanchez, V.M., Chasek, P., Crossman, N.D., Erlewein, A., Louwagie, G., Maron, M., Metternicht, G.I., Minelli, S., Tengberg, A.E., Walter, S., Welton, S. 2018. Land in balance: The scientific conceptual framework for Land Degradation Neutrality, p. 66, https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2018-09/LDN_CF_report_web-english.pdf, p. 66.

[35] Theory of Change Primer A STAP document, December 2019

outcomes (3.1, 3.2), outputs (1.1, 2.1), targets (4.1) and activities (4.2). This makes it challenging to follow a logical flow from inputs[36], outputs, and outcomes leading to achieving the long-term objective.

122. Furthermore, it does not identify the key drivers, barriers and assumptions which might interdict with the smooth implementation of the project, such as the sequential nature of the components which would need to build upon each other and the adaptive challenges which might need to be overcome for the technical aspects to be successful (for an explanation of technical and adaptive challenges see Annex 7).

123. The GEF Secretariat Review (13/12/2018) suggests that a Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) was used to develop the TOC during the project preparation and recommends that a similar exercise is carried out during the MTR. Notwithstanding the difficulty in constructing a TOC based upon the logical hierarchy of the SRF, the Project Document includes a critical assumption which is repeated in the revised (MTR) TOC on the basis that it is not possible to identify any project activities, outputs or outcomes which would justify an assumption that the project will produce the "behavioural changes" within a sufficient timeframe which is the single critical intermediary state necessary to achieve the longer-term impacts. This is the "soft" or "informal" aspects of the "enabling environment" necessary to drive or mainstream LDN objectives and policy and operational cultures within a diverse group of stakeholders. To be clear, this is happening to some extent with the project acting as a catalyst to produce the collaborative governance necessary to address a collective action challenge, but much of this is due to the project creating a present focus and it is important to embed this focus within the key players before the end of the project.

124. To some extent, this has been identified in the projects risk identification and rating[37] in terms of a "lack of close and collaborative cooperation between key institutional stakeholders" and "unclear responsibilities of institutions at national and local level", although these two risks, both rated as being low, are related more closely to the project's implementation and not the impact pathways.

125. Limitations to any TOC is the possibility that aspects of the system are not included due to the complexity (and to some extent, the need to fit a complex and unpredictable system into the confines of an A4 sheet). In this instance there are issues related adaptive challenges which might need to be overcome in order to achieve a collaborative governance approach to land management across a range of different stakeholders with different, but legitimate, priorities and agendas, but are not fully addressed in the project design.

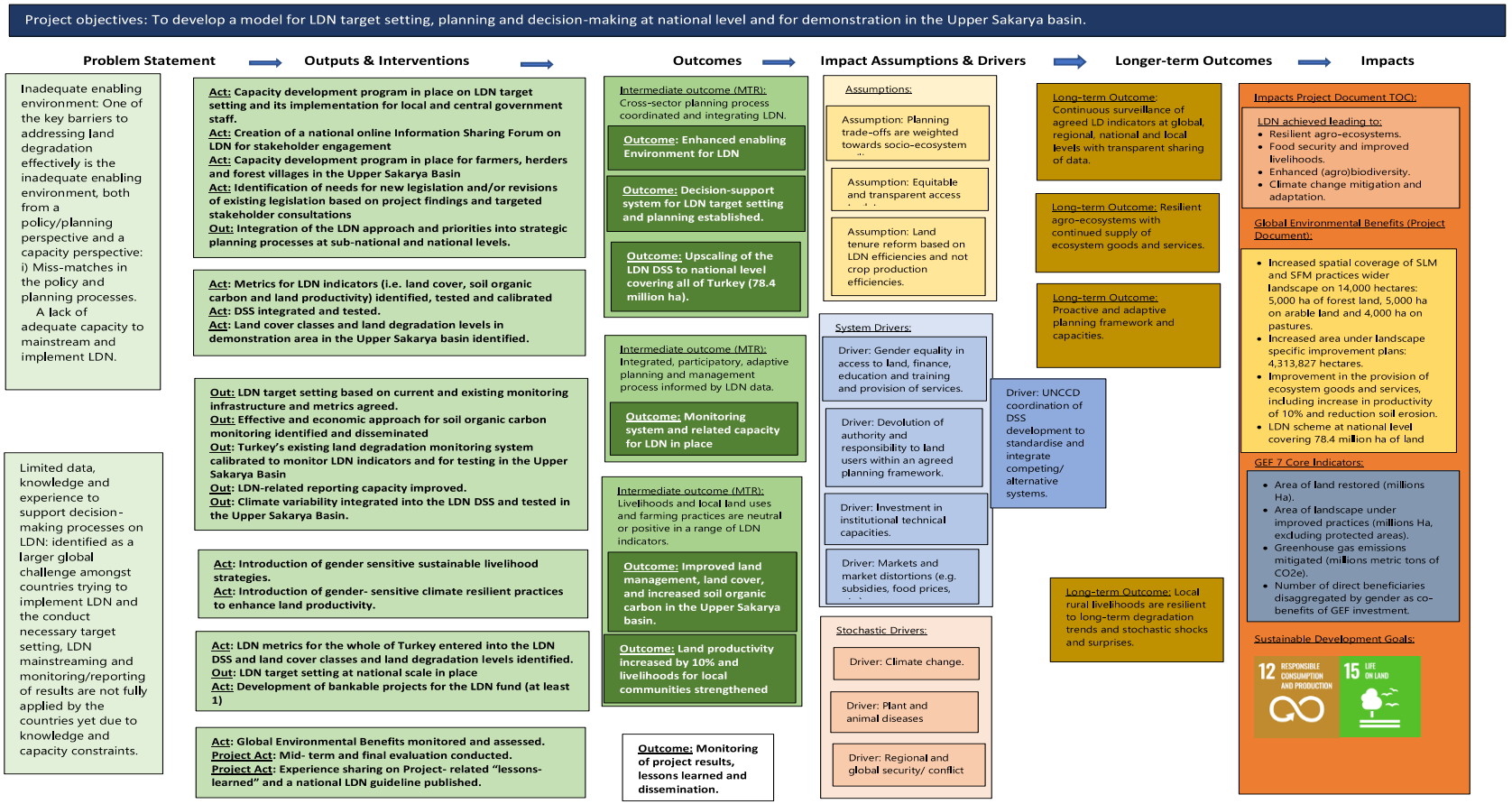
126. Additionally, it does not easily identify those high impact less predictable drivers, the "shocks and surprises" which can dramatically influence a system at different systemic and temporal scales; for instance, the Covid-19 pandemic.

127. The MTR has revised the project's TOC to show the theoretical causal pathways from inputs (outputs in the SRF) through intermediate stages to outcomes and the objective. The issues related to the project's SRF will be discussed in detail in section 4.5.7 and recommendations are made for the project to streamline the monitoring framework during the remaining lifetime of the project (section 5.2). This should make it easier to use the TOC and the MTR will recommend introducing a tool to assist the PIU and project stakeholders to jointly address the adaptive challenge (the intermediary "behavioural changes" listed in the Project Document TOC).

[36] The terminology can be confusing and in a TOC outputs are often referred to as inputs.
[37] Project Document, pp. 50 – 51.

Figure 3 Theory of change (Project Document)

Figure 4 Revised Theory of Change (MTR)



4. Key findings and MTR questions

4.1 Relevance

Gef criteria/ sub-criteria	MTR Rating
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE	
A1 Overall Strategic Relevance	HS
A1.1Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS
A1.2 Relevance to national, regional and global beneficiary needs	HS
A1.3 Complementarity with existing interventions	HS

128. According to the Project Document, the project objective is well-supported by a raft of regulatory instruments, policies, plans and regional programmes. The Project Document lists 33 normative documents and programmes[38] with which the project is broadly aligned (see section 2.3 of this report) demonstrating consistency with the various strategies, programs and action plans promulgated by the Government of Turkey (GoT) relating to its commitments under the relevant international environmental conventions, as well as with the relevant national development plans adopted by the GoT.

129. The project is consistent with the UNCCD and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) contributing significantly to implementation of the National Action Program on Combating Desertification (2006) including (i) mismanagement of agricultural lands and inappropriate agricultural practices; (ii) unplanned, uncontrolled over-grazing of rangelands and pastures; (iii) the lack of due regard for botanical, cultural and physical soil conservation measures; and (iv) soil degradation from wind and water erosion which are being addressed under the National Action Plan (NAP, 2015 - 2023) which coordinates all relevant organizations' approaches and plans regarding the desertification with a key emphasis on biodiversity and climate change mainstreaming.

130. Within regards the UNFCCC, the GoT has a National Climate Change Strategy (2010), which specifically addresses land use, agriculture and forestry strategies in its chapter on greenhouse gas (GHG) emission control with project alignment with the GoT's Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2023 (2011), such as increasing the sink capacity of and decreasing GHG emissions from the agricultural sector, as well as increasing carbon sequestered in forests and reducing deforestation and forest damage.

131. The project is relevant to the GEF Focal Area LD-3: Reduce pressures on natural resources by managing competing land uses in broader landscapes and Program 4: Scaling up sustainable land management through the landscape approach.

132. At the time of its design the Project was aligned with FAO's Strategic Objectives (SOs) that provide the overall direction, goals and targets for the organization until 2018, specifically: SO2: Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner; and SO5: Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises. The project is also consistent with FAO's regional initiative 3 (RI3) on Sustainable use of natural resources, adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management.

FAO Strategic Objective/Organizational Result:

SO2: Increase and improve provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner

SO5: Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises

b. Regional Result/Priority Areas:

[38] Project Document, p. 33

RI3: Sustainable use of natural resources, adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management

133. FAO's Country Programming Framework for Türkiye 2016-2020[39] contributing to the following objectives/priorities of the organization:

c. Country Programming Framework Outcome:

1. Food and nutrition security and food safety – the project will contribute to the sustainable usage of agricultural and ecological resources

2. Sustainable forest and natural resources management including fisheries – the project will contribute to sustainable use of natural resources and forests and to adapt and mitigate climate change impacts in the agricultural and forestry sectors

3. Institutional capacity enhancement and of public and private sectors – the project will contribute to the strengthening of farmers' organisations, development of training programmes for public institutions, and development of data and analytical systems for monitoring and more effective decision making.

134. The project results remain consistent with FAO's current Strategic Framework[40] (2022 – 2031) in the Programme Priority Areas (PPAs):

PPA: Better Production

BP1: Innovation for sustainable agriculture production

BP4: Small-scale producers' equitable access to resources

BP5: Digital agriculture

PPA: Better Environment

BE1: Climate change mitigating and adapted agri-food systems

BE2: Bio-economy for sustainable food and agriculture

BE3: Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture

PPA: Better Life

BL1: Gender equality and rural women's empowerment

BL2: Inclusive rural transformation

135. Further, it adds to the four cross-cutting sectional accelerators identified as: innovation, technology, data and complementary accelerators (governance, human capital and institutions).

4.2 Effectiveness

Gef criteria/ sub-criteria	MTR Rating
B Effectiveness	
B1. Overall assessment of project results	S
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	S
B1.2 Progress towards outcomes and project objective	S
- Outcome 1.1	S
- Outcome 2.1	HS
- Outcome 2.2	S
- Outcome 3.1	MS
- Outcome 3.2	MS
- Outcome 4.1	HS
- Outcome 4.2	Not Assessed
- Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/ outcomes	S
B1.3 Likelihood of impact	Not rated at MTR

[39] https://www.fao.org/3/br876e/br876e.pdf
[40] https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf

4.2.1 Progress towards outcomes

136. It is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic and necessary restrictions on movement and gatherings occurred at a crucial point in the implementation of the LDN project. This has resulted in unavoidable delays beyond the control of the PIU, Implementing Agency and project partners. Therefore, the progress towards results at the mid-term of the project should be viewed against this background. Normally this section would include an account of the outputs under their appropriate outcome. However, due to the unique way that the SRF is set out, the output results are reported in the outcome progress (this is a weakness mentioned in the previous section) which results in double reporting on activities. A detailed account of the outputs is provided in Annex 4 and section 6 of this report provides a number of recommendations to address any shortcomings.

137. Outcome 1.1 is hard to assess due to the challenging SRF definition of the outcome. Outcome 1.1 will in all likelihood produce a set of good quality normative documents to support the "enabling environment", however, it is less clear to what extent it will affect the informal aspects of the "enabling environment", especially as the facilitation process is dependent upon the PIU which is an artefact of the project and therefore timebound[41].

138. Overall, the project is producing high quality outputs in relation to outcomes 2.1 and 2.2, the DSS, due in large part to the project's willingness to be adaptive, the engagement of good national and international technical assistance, partnering with technical institutions and other partnerships.

139. Outcome 3.1 and 3.2 are progressing well and show clear signs of producing good quality outputs, however, these activities have been particularly impacted by the pandemic restrictions due to the nature of the field work and the necessary face to face interactions with stakeholders and it is unlikely that these can be fully realised within the remaining time period of the project.

140. Outcome 4.1 and 4.2 also present challenges in evaluating their progress and achievement. Outcome 4.1 has been successfully achieved according to the indicator. Outcome 4.2 is more difficult to access because it includes elements of project management which do not provide a measure of impact as well as the activities under this outcome reinforcing outcome 4.1 (lessons learned and dissemination). While there is a broad and enthusiastic acceptance of the DSS and a wide recognition of its technical quality and utility, this needs to be further expanded and embedded throughout the end users (agencies, technical institutions, NGOs/ service providers, civil society, etc.) through a targeted communications and training programme. One of the key benefits of the DSS is its flexibility as a single system which can be adopted and adapted for the specificities and utility of the multiplicity of users.

141. This review has highlighted the weakness in the SRF and the TOC prepared during the design phase. Further, the review has sought to define and disaggregate the "behavioural changes" identified in the Project Document TOC and currently creating a bottleneck in the outcomes to impact pathway(s) which will likely reduce the impact of the project's achievements. This relates to those "behavioural" or adaptive changes necessary for a collective action supported by the DSS.

142. The GEF-7 Core Indicators have been recorded by the project according to the FAO Guidelines using the PIF values as the retrofitted baseline. Anecdotally, the MTR Team has encountered other GEF projects that have found this process challenging and the LDN appears to have encountered the same challenges. While the baseline and MTR comparison show considerable improvement, the MTR is cautious about the empirical quality of the baselines.

[41] The MTR makes a specific recommendation to address this weakness (see section 6, Recommendations).

Table 5 GEF-7 Core indicators

Core Indicator 4	**Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)**			**(Hectares)**
	PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Area under improved land management	14,000	14,000	39,388	
Indicator 4.3	Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems			Hectares
	PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Area under improved land management (Demonstrations of SLM and SFM best practices in forests, rangelands and croplands that provide carbon benefits on 14,000 ha of land)	14,000	14,000	39,388	
Core Indicator 6	**Greenhouse gas emission mitigated**			(Metric tons of CO_2e)
	PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Expected CO2e (direct)	74,000 (4 years)	74,000 (4 years)	3,065,414	
Indicator 6.1	Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector			Hectares
	PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Expected CO2e (direct)		74,000	3,065,414	
Anticipated start year of accounting		2022		
Core Indicator 11	**Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment**			**(Number)**
	PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Female		925	609	
Male		1,000	635	
Total		1,925	1214	

143. The Project Document (pp. 47 – 48) lists global benefits which the project would be assessed against. The MTR assumes that these were may have been used to calculate the original PIF baselines. However, it is not clear which calculations have been used to develop these, neither does it seem particularly accurate and therefore, the MTR has not assessed progress towards achievements and global benefits based upon this specific data. An important point to be made here is that data sets along with the protocols used at the time of measurement, should accompany a project throughout its lifetime if they are to have any utility in the M&E framework. The responsibility for a project is handed along a chain from PIF to TE and it is important that the PIU who inevitably have the final responsibility for M&E, at least in making sense of it, are provided with clear instructions as to sources of the original data and the means by which it was collected and can be periodically updated. If data sets are used from previous projects in developing the M&E protocols, then it may not be possible, due to resources, time or specific expertise, to repeat these in another project, placing an difficult challenge on the PIU.

Table 6 Outcomes progress towards results

Objective/ Outcome indicator	Baseline	MTR target	End of project target	MTR assessment	MTR rating
Objective: to develop a model for LDN target setting, planning and decision-making at national level and for demonstration in the Upper Sakarya basin					
Objective Rating					**Not rated**
Objective indicator: No indicators given	No baseline	No target(s)	No target(s)	MTR comment: while the MTR considers that there is significant progress towards achieving the stated objective there are no objective-level indicators and therefore any assessment is subjective and based on the evidence that the outcomes are largely on track with the national level and project site-level (the larger global UNCCD functionality of the DSS in LDN target setting is not reflected in the objective) with regards the DSS, there remains some concerns about the field based activities, although these will likely be achieved if the project has more time.	Not assessed
Component 1: Strengthening the enabling environment for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)					
Outcome 1.1: Enhanced enabling environment for LDN					**Satisfactory**
Indicator 1: Integration of LDN into strategic planning processes	LDN is not integrated into any process for e.g. watershed management, drought management	LDN integrated into at least one strategic planning process.	LDN integrated into at least 3 strategic planning processes. Investment programme for LDN developed. At least 50 people participate in international exchange programmes on LDN (at least 20 women).	LD is clearly a high priority amongst project partners. There is considerable support and interest in LDN. Considerable investments had already been made in monitoring and surveillance programmes prior to the project's start up. There has been considerable publicity and awareness raising with high-level managers from Ministry partners participating in events, interviews and posting on official social media accounts and an introductory film was prepared on LDN and combatting desertification. A gap analysis of the regulatory framework is ongoing. The project has been very active working with project partners in both participatory workshops and meetings and facilitating the building of networks. Notably a "Workshop on the Development of the Project for Combating Land Degradation and Desertification in the ECO Region" was held in Turkiye between 14-16 December 2021 and a project proposal focusing on technology transfer in scope of the LDN DSS was discussed. The LDN working group (Committee Meetings on National Action Plan to Combat Desertification) has been meeting for IDR reporting every year. A participatory micro basin planning that considers LDN has been initiated and under preparation. A National Action Plan and Strategy on Combatting Desertification was prepared considering the LDN target setting program (2015-2030) and the new UNCCD strategy (2018-2030). A draft circular is prepared to establish a "Desertification Coordination Board" because there is a need identified for a platform consisting of relevant public institutions, academia, professional organizations, non-governmental and private sector institutions and organizations in order to ensure effective coordination, monitoring and evaluation on land degradation. MTR comment: this outcome is poorly defined in the SRF both in its wording and in terms of indicators. A more useful wording might have been "sectoral and spatial planning underpinned by supportive enabling environment". Even then the term "enabling environment", while very useful in development, covers a wide range of formal and informal, regulatory and policy, economic, social, communication networks and	S On target
Indicator 2: Investment programme for LDN	LDN is not integrated into any process for e.g. watershed management, drought management	LDN integrated into at least one strategic planning process.			S On target

Objective/ Outcome indicator	Baseline	MTR target	End of project target	MTR assessment	MTR rating
				interactions, capacities, and issues of governance, etc. It is very similar to the term "mainstreaming" in that sense. However, the project is acting as a catalyst or facilitator in this process of addressing the collective action challenge of LD. An assumption is that capacity building and training will drive this process, which it likely will, but it can be made much more efficient if there is a specific tool or exercise to support it.	
Component 2: Decision-Support System (DSS) for LDN					
Outcome 2.1: Decision-support system for LDN target setting and planning established					**Highly Satisfactory**
Indicator 3: DSS established with calibrated metrics for LDN indicators	There are many DSS for NRM in Turkey, but none that focuses on LDN.	DSS for LDN in place with calibrated metrics for LDN indicators.	DSS for LDN in place with calibrated metrics for LDN indicators.	Achieved. The LDN DSS is developed and integrates already existing models/systems produced with national data. The system is cost-effective, simple and capable of expansion to include other data sets and systems as needed. The LDN DSS is now functioning as an interactive tool which allows any user to select a particular area of interest (e.g. a water catchment) and obtain summary statistics, charts and tables integrating the available data. One of its key functionalities is to make multi criteria analysis and show areas that meet certain criteria. Calibrated data on land cover, SOC and productivity are now available for the whole of Türkiye. The production of LULC data is continued in scope of the national UASIS project through which Ministry partners are conducting a national project to collect additional data. A Google Earth Engine (GEE) application[42] (as software) on LDN was developed to combine national tools, by FAO. The system first prepared for Upper Sakarya was up-scaled at national level and has been extended to 17 FAO Region countries The LDN DSS validation was carried out by FAO experts with a high accuracy and ground-truthed in the project area where it has already been used to identify hot and cold spots with a high level of accuracy. MTR comment: the project has engaged high quality experienced national and international technical expertise and, in collaboration with Ministry partners, particularly CEM, developed the DSS to a very high standard. There are already examples of its adoption and use, however, the MTR has concerns that the DSS needs to be promoted more vigorously and innovatively (e.g. interactive workshops, etc.) in order to ensure that it is utilised and integrated into all levels of planning as well as with civil society.	HS Largely achieved
Outcome 2.2: Monitoring system and related capacity for LDN in place					**Satisfactory**
Indicator 4: LDN monitoring system in place with target setting agreed	Many monitoring approaches have been tested in Turkey that	LDN monitoring system in place with target setting agreed.	LDN monitoring system in place with target setting agreed	GoT had already established a number of land variable monitoring systems prior to the project's start up. The LDN DSS is established and is capable to monitor changes on LDN indicators. The LDN DSS results are now being used for LDN reporting to UNCCD (PRAIS). The existing national targets are going to be revised using LDN DSS. The LDN DSS now enables users to identify hot and cold spots for gains and losses using LPD and has been demonstrated in the project area. Türkiye has developed a model for SOC and a national SOC model (the Total Carbon Model (TCM)) is used as a baseline and subsequent monitoring in DSS. As part of this process a potential carbon sequestration map is produced for whole country (additional samples were taken in the	S On target and largely achieved

[42] Google Earth Engine (GEE) is a cloud-based platform that delivers a multi-petabyte catalogue of satellite imagery for planetary-scale analysis. It allows the user to gain access to remote sensing data from satellites, airborne, digital elevation models, and others. The platform allows users to turn geospatial data into actionable insights through the platform's fast computations and 1000+ types of operators for analysis (source: https://gisgeography.com/google-earth-engine/).

Objective/ Outcome indicator	Baseline	MTR target	End of project target	MTR assessment	MTR rating
	will provide the baseline.			project area pilot sites for validation. The TCM Model has been calibrated by MAF before the inception of the project and the DSS now allows comparison of TCM and LPD, and both can be used for multi criteria analysis in the DSS. Prior to the project's start up GoT developed a web-based Evaluation and Reporting System (IDR) was developed and operationalised and more than 150 people have been trained through on-line training courses. Calibration of the models for climate variability is ongoing and supported by the project technical Consultants. The Land Productivity Dynamic Map produced by FAO is integrated with the SOC Model and a framework for the effective use of the SOC monitoring system under the SLM and SFM practices applied is being developed. MTR comments: This outcome has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions because of its reliance on field visits for validation and training exercises. The project did successfully switch to web-based training and planning meetings, however, many of the activities in this outcome could not be transferred to an online modality. A number of activities and outputs in the original design (Project Document) had been completed prior to the project's start up showing an apparent under spend in this budget line, but this is in fact a surplus. However, this outcome would benefit from a targeted up-scaling with further training linked to the DSS.	
Component 3: Demonstration of the LDN approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin					
Outcome 3.1: Improved land management, land cover, and increased soil organic carbon in the Upper Sakarya basin					**Moderately Satisfactory**
Indicator 5: Area with improved land management	0	7,000	14,000	The total area with improved land management as reported in the 2022 PIR states that has improved land management on 36,690 ha: 20,372 ha of cultivated land, 1,062 ha of rangeland and 15,256 ha of forest land. This is further defined as 64.4 ha of organic farming, 199 ha soil analysis, 9,542 ha of fertilization in agricultural lands, 1,235 ha of weed control in agricultural lands, and the establishment of rangeland facilities in 1,062 ha of rangelands, fruit seedlings distributed for 15.1 ha of land and the provision of alfalfa seeds for 10 ha of land. The Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are an innovative approach and have proved very successful both with state agencies and farmers. On the whole, the project interventions have been well-received both by the Provincial Directorate's of Agriculture and the farmers. A wide variety of options are provided to farmers and it is worth noting that there is significant difference between the more fertile Kütahya and Polatlı province and Eskişehir province which faces a greater challenge in terms of LD. The selection of the Lead Farmer Association as a service provider to the project especially in implementing the FFS appears to be a good choice as the organisation is well-established and technically proficient. The project works through the provincial Directorate (agriculture and forestry) and regional Directorates of Forestry. Training has been carried out with the agency staff and there appears to be considerable appreciation of the training and facilitation by the project. In this context, the project appears to have had a considerable catalytic effect introducing a more informal participatory approach to problem solving alongside the introduction of new farming techniques, approaches and crops. The forestry sector appears to have made considerable investment in LDN through co-financing. These interventions are largely SLM approaches that are in use at a national scale already, namely: reforestation (350 ha), afforestation (50 ha) and erosion control (300 ha). The OGM is only able to support Forest Villages (communities on land under the OGM responsibility).	MS There are vulnerabilities in the GEF-funded activities due to the pandemic restrictions

Objective/ Outcome indicator	Baseline	MTR target	End of project target	MTR assessment	MTR rating
				A national SOC expert with an agricultural background is preparing a report on best practices to be implemented to avoid climate change effects and increase SOC. MTR comment: performance in this outcome has largely been achieved according to indicator 6 through the OGM co-financed activities. However, this component and particularly the GEF-financed activities, largely due to the need for field missions and face to face contact with agencies and farmers has been significantly impacted (delayed) by the Covid-19 pandemic. The FFS have been extremely successful, the project is very appreciated by both agencies and farmers. Support is being given, especially targeted at women and women's groups to involve them more in value-added activities such as crop processing, greenhouse production and organisation (e.g. establishing cooperatives). The project has done considerable work and is clearly well-received by both state and non-state partners and stakeholders. However, many of the interventions need to have a least one agricultural season to bed in and more time is needed to embed the results and further upscale.	
Indicator 6: Increase in land cover	0	2,000,000	4,313,827	Under the project 5,485 ha of afforestation, 4,389 ha of rehabilitation and 5,357 ha of erosion control was implemented in Upper Sakarya Basin. 25 ha of forest areas was established with species that is used for honey production. Much of this has occurred through the OGM co-financing. The baseline and the target are not realistic. It is not feasible that there was zero cover over 2,000,000 ha at the start of the project and it is equally unfeasible that the project would increase the land cover across 2,000,000 ha. MTR comment: these activities are largely through co-financing. This should be measured based on the 6 land cover classes recommended by the IPPC (2006) using the UASIS DSS. The MTR also questions whether the baseline for land cover would have been 0 over 2,000,000 ha. The MTR recommends that both the baseline and the target (end of project) are revised.	S Baseline should be revised up and the target realistically revised down for clarity.
Indicator 7: % increase in SOC	41.7 tons C ha^{-1} 30 cm^{-1}	20% increase in SOC	20% increase in SOC	MTR recommendation: this indicator while relevant lacks utility within the time frame of the project. Largely driven by biological processes which operate at timeframes in excess of the time available for the project. This indicator should be removed or replaced with a more realistic and sensitive indicator.	Not assessed.
Outcome 3.2: Land productivity increased by 10% and livelihoods for local communities strengthened					**Moderately Satisfactory**
Indicator 8: Increase in land productivity	Land productivity and incomes are low in the Upper Sakarya basin due to outdated SLM and SFM practices	5% increase in land productivity	10% increase in land productivity. 300 households with improved living conditions. 300 women trained in	Notwithstanding the issues related to the baseline which combines biological and economic aspects, the project, despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic, has made significant progress. These are measured by a number of output indicators which mix governance and activities but lacks the empirical rigour necessary to accurately judge the progress towards the outcome. The project is developing a Gender Action Plan for the Upper Sakarya Basin. 5 activities were implemented in scope of introducing soil and land management practices, crop and pasture management practices and alternative practices. Honeybee Colonies, Beehives and Bee Kits, as well as training was provided for 5 women farmers. Rangeland rehabilitation was carried out in 10 ha of land with salt bushes, to provide forage for farmers whose main source of income is animal husbandry. Drip irrigation systems have been applied in 200 da of land in onion, sugar beet and maize fields have had their tender process finalized. Crop rotation plots were formed for 300 da with Hungarian vetch (implemented with direct seedling) and 500 da with oats. Organic soil conditioner (leonhardite) was applied in 300 da, and local chickpea applied in 300 da.	MS The achievements of this outcome need to be expanded in area and numerically amongst farmers to really embed

Objective/ Outcome indicator	Baseline	MTR target	End of project target	MTR assessment	MTR rating
			entrepreneurs-hip	Small scale biogas systems are planned to be established to prevent uncontrolled manure storage and point pollution events providing heating as well as reducing CO2 emissions and providing compost residues for soil improvement. A range of new approaches have been introduced: no/reduced tillage planting, alfalfa, drip irrigation, bee keeping, greenhouse production, chickpea (50% yield increase with Leonhardite application), Leonhardite soil additive, manure spreader(s), fodder crops (vetch), Atriplex (salt bush) for fodder and erosion control as well as some assistance with post-harvest processing (e.g. driers) and marketing (e.g. construction of wooden huts for sales) have all been introduced by the project. The DSS and the new LDN approaches have also been incorporated into one micro-basin plan 65 women were trained on beekeeping under Farmer Field Schools. MTR comment: This outcome is further defined with output indicators which are included here as a measure of the outcome indicator. However, this is less than satisfactory from an M&E standpoint and it may be more accurate to calculate land productivity using the method and metric used for the LDN target setting and retrofitted to the baseline. The issue here is that there is an assumption that all of these things will increase productivity and incomes (most likely they do), therefore, the MTR makes the judgement that the project intervention has positively affected land productivity and strengthened local livelihoods. However, the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have seriously impacted this outcome due to the necessary face to face and field activities and it would need more time than is available remaining in the project to embed a sustained impact. Thought should be given to the selection of proxy indicators to measure livelihoods noting that incomes are often hard to determine.	and ensure sustainability.
Component 4: Upscaling of LDN experiences, monitoring and evaluation					
Outcome 4.1: Upscaling of the LDN DSS to national level covering all of Turkey (78.4 million ha)					**Highly Satisfactory**
Indicator 9: Area covered by the LDN DSS	No national LDN DSS is in place	Land cover classes for the whole of Turkey identified based on the 6 IPCC classes	National LDN DSS covers the national territory of 78.4 million ha	LDN DSS application covers whole country and by exceeding the target, it is extended to 17 FAO region countries. In Türkiye a GEE App has been incorporated (see indicator 3). MTR comment: the indicator has been achieved to a high standard. However, the wider uptake and day to day use of the DSS still needs to be promoted by the project (see recommendation 9).	HS Achieved.
Outcome 4.2: Monitoring of project results, lessons learned and dissemination					**Not Assessed**
Indicator 10: M&E system is in place	No system in place.	Implementation of project based on adaptive results based-management	Project delivers expected results and shares lessons learned.	Not assessed.	Not assessed
Indicator 11: Lessons	No system in place.				Not assessed

Objective/ Outcome indicator	Baseline	MTR target	End of project target	MTR assessment	MTR rating
learned disseminated		Implementation of project based on adaptive results based-management.			

4.2.2 Remaining barriers to achieving results

144. At the mid-term the project has faced a number of challenges (delayed start-up, change in implementation modality, Covid-19 pandemic) which it has overcome. However, there are a number of barriers which need to be overcome or addressed to improve the quality of the final outcomes. These are:

i. Component 3 requires at least one complete agricultural season. However, the delays resulting from the pandemic have resulted in a delayed roll out of the field pilots, FFS and other agricultural interventions. While there is evidence that these are doing well, the introduction of these new approaches and crops requires a degree of project support until they are embedded in the agricultural operations and practices. Simply put, the project is running out of time.

ii. The DSS still does not have a high enough profile for its broader and regular usage amongst stakeholders. More technicians need to be trained and the DSS needs to be supported by a significant communications campaign including with non-state actors. Furthermore, the lessons and experience need to be documented and promoted. As with component 3, this will take time, which currently the project doesn't have.

iii. There is an assumption that training and capacity building will produce the necessary collective action change amongst the key actors affecting LD. To some extent this assumption is correct. However, it will occur as a largely passive process in which each player uses the DSS for their own sector, organisational or individual interest. The critical collaborative governance between these different players (state, non-state, individuals and the private sector) necessary to address the collective action challenge that LD presents will take much longer to occur and the key drivers and actors in LD will remain compartmentalised. Apart from the training and capacity building activities, there is nothing in the project to facilitate this necessary change.

4.3 Efficiency

Gef criteria/ sub-criteria	MTR Rating
C. Efficiency	
C1. Efficiency	MS

145. The project design, although somewhat confusing in the Project Document, developing the enabling environment, building the DSS as a planning support tool, promoting LDN/SLM activities in the project area and promoting the DSS to create and share knowledge, provides an efficient strategy towards achieving the objective. This would be the most effective way to achieve this.

146. However, the manner in which the strategy is set out in the project's SRF (e.g. 24 granular outputs, activities set out as outputs, weakly articulated outcomes, and poorly stated indicators) mitigates against the inherent efficiency amongst the PIU and project partners.

147. This has been compensated for by the good communication and partnerships within the project, procurement of high-quality national and international technical assistance and a willingness by the PIU to allow flexibility in the development of the DSS has meant that it can be taken from a broad concept in the Project Document to an effective, flexible, cost efficient LDN support tool.

148. The use of FFSs and the selection of an experienced service provider has been very effective, particularly given the unavoidable delays in component 3 due to the pandemic restrictions. It is unlikely that the reach and speed of mobilisation of these activities would have been possible without this combination.

149. However, the MTR notes that the changes in implementation modality could have been arranged before the project start-up. Further, the inception phase was not used to good effect and had there been a PIU in place during the project inception the weaknesses in the SRF, budget revisions resulting from changes in circumstances could have been implemented earlier increasing effectiveness.

150. Recommendations are made to address these early project issues and the MTR has confidence that if granted an extension and with a reduced M&E reporting burden, the project will increase efficiency and the delivery and achievement of the outcomes.

4.4 Sustainability

Gef criteria/ sub-criteria	MTR Rating
D. Sustainability of Project Outcomes	
D1. Overall likelihood of or risks to sustainability	L
D1.1 Financial risks	L
D1.2 Socio-political risks	L
D1.3 Institutional and governance risks	L
D1.4 Environmental risks	L
D2 Catalyst and replication	L

4.4.1 Socio-political

151. The MTR broadly agrees with the Project Document statement[43] on the socio-economic aspects of sustainability. Namely, that the project will contribute to socio-economic sustainability in the project *area where LDN will be implemented to balance gains and losses from land management. Demonstrations of SLM and SFM will contribute to income-generation for local communities.* The project pays *special attention to identifying and supporting the special needs of rural women to ensure that their important role in SLM and agriculture is recognized and that they reap the benefits of investments in LDN. A long-term impact of the project also includes improved food security and nutrition in the pilot area, with a particular focus on provision of ecosystem services supporting agricultural production.*

152. Furthermore, LD is a real and present challenge and appears to be high on the political agenda as well as impacting the livelihoods of local communities. The DSS provides a powerful, accessible, tool to support this internalisation and mainstreaming process within the political agenda. The LDN Socio-economic Analysis and Gender Strategy[44] produced by the project is an important step forward in gender equality and inclusion.

153. Innovations such as leonhardite, crop rotation, pasture improvement, supporting women farmers and cooperatives, manuring and appropriate machinery, etc., have real and positive benefits and are delivered through the FFS and experienced extension service providers which will likely endure post project.

154. The benefits of inclusion and participation encouraged by the project also appears to be broadly accepted by project partners and feedback from key informants suggests that these are recognised and incorporated into operational practices.

155. However, this should be viewed against the time remaining for the project to implement the field activities.

4.4.2 Financial

156. The MTR validates and agrees with the statement on financial and economic sustainability in the Project Document. *The LDN approach will be effectively mainstreamed into key sectors, especially environment, forestry, agriculture and livestock. Moreover, monitoring of LDN will*

[43] Project Document, p. 71
[44] LDN Project, in draft 2022.

capitalize of Türkiye's many existing monitoring and modelling systems for land cover, productivity and soil organic carbon, soil erosion, etc. This will contribute to the financial and economic sustainability of the LDN approach and monitoring and decision-support system (DSS). In addition, an investment programme for LDN will be developed and capacity to develop bankable projects will be built and at least one new LDN project developed.

157. The GoT investment of co-financing prior to the project's start-up as well as the continued high rate of delivery of co-financing is a strong indicator of sustainability.

158. The FAO will likely continue to promote the DSS at a regional level and within other FAO regions because it is closely aligned with its core programme objectives.

4.4.3 Institutional & governance

159. The MTR found good evidence (co-financing realised, interest in the FFS approach, use of the DSS in micro-basin planning, especially from feedback from key informant interviews, that the project's results will be institutionally sustained following the end of the project. The DSS is also broadly supported and includes existing land-related monitoring systems. Furthermore, the DSS and the development of the GEE App suggests that, given adequate training, institutions and agencies will utilize the DSS to good effect in their planning and operational processes. The DSS, for the same reasons, is socially inclusive providing a good platform for civil society access and inclusion, adding to the good governance aspects of transparency and accountability. The DSS is also broadly liked and admired by technical and academic institutions. The likelihood of the DSS's sustainability can be increased if the project invests in further training and raising the profile of the DSS and its utility to a broad and diverse range of interests.

160. Innovations such as the FFS and the use of service providers for aspects of extension and state to non-state interactions appears to be widely recognised and accepted and will likely continue post project.

4.4.4 Environmental

161. The MTR broadly agrees with the Project Document that states that the project is piloting *a scheme for LDN and supporting demonstration and scaling up of best practices on SLM and SFM in the production landscape essential for controlling land degradation and improving land productivity.* It is strengthening *institutional, legal and policy enabling conditions for LDN that will also enhance environmental sustainability and contribute to strengthen the capacity of Türkiye to plan and manage these resources successfully under an LDN approach.*

4.4.5 Risks to sustainability

162. The MTR identifies two risks to sustainability (see Table 8 for further explanation):

i. The time remaining to implement the field activities and promote the wide uptake and use of the DSS.

ii. The development of the informal aspects of the enabling environment. The facilitation providing the impetus for the collaboration and collective action between the different state and non-state actors is in large part coming from the energy and drive of the FAO PIU. It is important that this focus, urgency and coalition building is transferred to all of the project partners and stakeholders who may have very different priorities and agendas, means of measuring success and planning processes, yet all addressing aspects of LD.

4.4.6 Replication and catalytic effects

163. The DSS lends itself to replication. The DSS has been adopted at the national level and will be used during the micro-basin planning exercises as well as having a broad range of useful applications for different aspects of the LDN planning and management processes. The GEE App makes it a cheap and accessible tool as well as its capacity for evolving with and for new developments in LDN *per se*.

164. It has already been adopted in seventeen countries, both regionally and in other FAO regions (e.g. Latin America).

165. The accessibility and flexibility of the tool suggests that users will continue to expand the application to address specific aspects of LDN in the future.

166. The DSS's utility in reporting to the UNCCD and target setting at the national level will likely contribute to its uptake and broad usage within the framework of the UNCCD.

167. The MTR does have concerns that, due to the direct implementation modality, the clear benefits (facilitation, inclusion, coalition building, etc.) that the FAO PIU have brought to the project need to be transferred to the national framework because there is an expectation that this will be a passive and inevitable process. This may be the case, but the assumption and concurrent risks could be removed through a project extension and targeted activities to support collaborative governance.

4.5 Factors effecting performance

Gef criteria/ sub-criteria	MTR Rating
E. Factors affecting performance	
E1. Project design and readiness	MS
E2. Quality of project implementation	S
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, PTF, etc.)	S
E2.2 Project oversight (PSC)	S
E3. Quality of project execution	S
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU, partner performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	HS
E4. Financial management and co-financing	MS
E5. Project partnership and stakeholder engagement	S
E6. Communications, knowledge management and knowledge products	S
E7. Overall quality of M&E	S
E7.1 M&E design	MU
E7.2M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	S
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	S

4.5.1 Project design & readiness

168. The project strategy has been described in sections 2 and 3. It can be broadly characterised as strengthening the enabling environment and human resource capacities at all levels (national, provincial and site-levels), developing a support tool to inform decision-making (the DSS) and allow a broad range of stakeholders to participate in decision-making. Interventions at the site level would introduce SLM approaches to farmers. A fourth outcome was essentially related to upscaling the results of the DSS to the national level and even the regional and global level.

169. The strategy is underpinned by the assumption that land use can be positive in terms of a number of characteristics of land degradation, providing that there are sufficient capacities within land users and land management agencies and critically, there is a tool to monitor and support decision-making related to land use.

170. The project design has its basis in the need for a tool to set LDN targets and support decision-making amongst the multiplicity of players, identified during the UNCCD COP in 2015.

171. While LDN aims to maintain and increase the amount of healthy and productive land resources, in line with national development priorities. It was recognised that land degradation neutrality is a flexible target that can be implemented at local, regional or national scales. The consensus was that any LDN scheme should be introduced in phases. Phase 1 should focus on restoring degraded lands, improving national land use planning systems, and establishing

international and national monitoring capacities. Phase 2 should reduce desertification rates with the help of fully integrated land use planning and monitoring systems. Phase 3 should set a target year for realizing an LDN goal, based on experiences in Phases 1 and 2. All three phases should be informed by existing scientific knowledge and generating new knowledge by launching a scientific LDN process that will evolve in parallel with the political process. This received major impetus following the 12th COP to UNCCD in Turkey during October 2015 and the launch of the 'Ankara Initiative" by the GoT. The COP decided to make LDN a guiding principle for implementing the convention. However, the knowledge base for the LDN concept is still evolving and frameworks which could serve as a common point of reference for LDN target setting, particularly with regard to the balance between "gains" (improvements) and "losses" (degradation)[45] and scale of neutrality have not yet been tested in the field[46].

172. Therefore, the project was, on many levels, setting out to test this approach. In order to achieve this through a project, the design set out the four components, broadly characterised as:

- Addressing the enabling environment.
- Developing the DSS, essentially an information management system.
- Encouraging the use of SLM in agricultural and forestry practices in the project area while developing land use plans incorporating LDN.
- Upscaling and disseminating the experience and the use of the DSS.

173. It is apparent that these were both national requirements and aspirations as well as requirements of the UNCCD, that is, a DSS was also a Convention aspiration and expectation.

174. The project design, therefore, combined components that were intended to address a technical challenge (e.g. the DSS) with components which were addressing an adaptive and collective challenge (e.g. the enabling environment). This technical approach, to some extent is also present in outcome 3 through a range of technical SLM interventions including planning.

175. Notwithstanding the issues with the project's SRF outlined in the next section, the MTR makes the following observations:

- The project design was reasonable in its strategic approach by covering the key for aspects (four components) necessary to achieve the objective as stated in the SRF. However, it was overly complicated including considerable technical detail which might easily have made the design overly-prescriptive and constrained the opportunities for adaptive management and changing circumstances.
- Component 1 relates to the "enabling environment". The design is correct in identifying the enabling environment as a key component of the system to be addressed. However, it does not go far enough in explaining the enabling environment in terms of both the "hard" and "soft" elements. The enabling environment includes both the formal elements, which might include: public policies, governance structures, regulatory frameworks, investment plans, policy frameworks, etc. Informal elements are less easy to define, but might include: social, cultural and economic norms, broadly accepted social rules, social and professional networks and other aspects which might make a system function. While the component provides sufficient provision for the "hard" or formal aspects of the enabling environment, this is not provided for the "soft" or informal aspects. Without this, the necessary material, financial and human resources will not be reflected in the project's support. Without resource allocation, the role of facilitation, communication, building coalitions, persuading and enthusing…, falls largely on the shoulders of the PIU, most often, on the Project Manager.

[45] Measured against land productivity, land cover and soil organic carbon.
[46] Source: Project Document, p. 8

For the avoidance of doubt, the PIU has been filling this role to very great effect, however, it places a considerable burden of responsibility and workload on the PIU. Arguably, the project design overlooks the collective, adaptive nature of the challenge (see Annex 7) and emphasises the technical aspects.

- The technical detail included in components 2 and 3 are very specific. In component 2 there is an impressive amount of very technical detail, however, the DSS still remained a loose concept[47] regarding how it would work as a system at the start of the project. In component 3 there is a similarly impressive technical detail regarding SLM approaches and techniques with an accompanying risk of being too prescriptive. The detail relates to the actual techniques of agriculture, but does not extend to the, often more challenging and complex interaction of other drivers such as cultural norms and practices, tenurial issues, etc., although this is alluded to in component 1 as "the enabling environment".
- Component 4 is less well defined, including aspects of project management (e.g. MTR and project reporting) which are not relevant to the project's strategy (see next section on the SRF). It is likely that this component was included to reflect the need to develop a tool, the DSS, which was explicitly useful to the UNCCD at regional and global scale.

176. The project design incorporated the following features based on FAO's previous experience[48]:

i. The project should include a broad and diverse number of stakeholders with representatives of line ministries, the private sector and civil society, and when relevant, regional and international institutions;
ii. Flexibility should be integrated into project design to allow for changing conditions that may occur between the design phase and actual implementation;
iii. Projects supporting SLM and integrated natural resources management should adopt a holistic landscape and ecosystem-based approach and address the main barriers and associated economic and regulatory issues at the design stage;
iv. A phased approach to the testing and upscaling of new technologies is required (e.g. for SLM and SFM) to inform the formulation of relevant policies and legislation;
v. Overly ambitious project design should be avoided and assumptions critically verified;
vi. The use of business models for sustained action beyond the project cycle;
vii. Given the significant differences between men and women involved in agricultural production and farming in terms of access to resources, knowledge and decision-making, a gender- sensitive approach that aims to mitigate historical inequalities is required in project design, implementation and M&E; and
viii. Participatory design of an agreement on specific M&E plan elements and indicators is advisable.

177. Assessing the design as set out in the Project Document it is apparent that, although the document is sometimes overly wordy and complicated, these were considered in the design as evidenced in this section and that the critical analysis of the SRF (see section 4.5.7) was likely due to an inexperience in translating the project strategy into the SRF and the change in implementational modality (see section 4.5.2) largely due to a change in circumstances at the project start-up.

178. In summary, the project design was reasonable, it presented a reasonable strategy in order to achieve the objective. However, it was overly complicated with details, some of which could have interfered with the future adaptive management approach once the project started up.

[47] Responses from key technical informant interviews.
[48] Project Document, p. 49

Furthermore, it approaches the issue of LDN as a largely technical challenge and could have given more attention (and therefore project resources) to the adaptive nature of the challenge.

4.5.2 Readiness

179. At the start-up of the project delays were incurred during the start-up period. The project's official start-up was August 2019. However, an effective PIU was not in place until January 2020 after the Project's inception period, including the Inception Workshop and Report (December 2019). It is likely that these delays were incurred due to the changes taking place in the project execution modality was agreed at the SC meeting and Inception Workshop in December 2019. However, it should be noted that the decision to change the execution modality and the speed with which it took place, when benchmarked against similar projects, was relatively quick[49] and efficient and suggests that there was a high degree of cooperation and alignment between GoT and FAO. However, it still means that an effective PIU was not in place to guide and manage the project until four to five months into the project, at which point the PIU would still need time to establish itself. Arguably, these implementation arrangements could have been addressed in advance of the start-up lowering the rating to Moderately Satisfactory.

4.5.3 Quality of project execution & management effectiveness (including risk assessment)

4.5.3.1 Management arrangements

180. The Project Document describes an OPIM execution modality with MAF acting as the Executing Agency. As noted in section 2.7, this was changed to a direct implementation modality with a PIU contracted by and located in the FAO Country Office during the project inception phase and reported in the Inception Report[50], although no justification was provided. However, the MTR understands from senior key respondents interviewed, that this change in implementation modality was due to institutional restructuring that had taken place between the project preparation phase. To be clear, the switch in the execution modality was at the request of the government. The FAO had already carried out the necessary fiduciary assessment[51] and submitted an Operational Partner Agreement when a decision was made and a request sent to the FAO that the project should be implemented directly by the agency due to the reasons outlined above.

181. The PIU consists of a National Project Coordinator (NPC), and Operational Specialist and a Project Assistant (PA). The PIU is supported by finance, procurement, travel, communication teams/units in the Country Office.

182. National and international technical expertise is provided through external Consultants.

183. Project Focal Points (PFP) at the central and provincial level (Ministry experts, Directors, managers, Engineers and researchers) provide a link between the PIU and the project partners to ensure communication and smooth implementation. The PFP attend meetings and workshops and are often involved in field visits where appropriate. High-level participation from the General Directorates of the Ministry takes place through the PSC.

184. The PIU has considerable technical and organisational skills and plays an important role in facilitating communication and interactions between the complex network of stakeholders. While this is very effective, the PIU is carrying out a function, facilitation, between stakeholders, that will need to be continued when the project ends. Furthermore, the PIU internal culture of inclusion and participation appears to be well-received by the project partners and should be recognised as a catalytic effect of the project.

185. The project has identified and engaged high quality national and international technical assistance which has been greatly appreciated by the project partners. The experience and

[49] Based upon the MTR's experience with similar projects.
[50] LDN project Inception Report 10/12/2019.
[51] Project Document, p. 51

working practices of the technical assistance is demonstrated in large part by the successful development of the DSS including the adaptive approach taken by the technical experts, the engagement of local stakeholders in developing the system and the FFS. An important aspect of this has been the ability of the external Consultants to integrate and embed their work in the partner agencies which creates a shared purpose and national ownership of the results.

186. However, it is important to note that the reason that the operational modality was changed to direct implementation and the coordination role that the PIU now performs between different stakeholder groups, will need to be continued after the end of the project in order to get the different interest groups to continue to collaborate towards a collective goal. The PIU has a catalytic effect between the different agencies and non-state actors. While the DSS will support decision-making in the future, the collective action nature of those decisions is given focus by the project itself. While this is an important function of the PIU, it is important that any legacy plan includes arrangements to carry on this collaborative approach towards decision-making in the future.

4.5.3.2 Work planning

187. Work planning largely occurs in the PIU in collaboration with the lead partners and is shared and approved through the SC. Work planning has been realistic and pragmatic and during the pandemic it was adaptive to meet the constraints and circumstances.

4.5.3.3 Adaptive management

188. The project has been adaptive in its management. Examples of this are seen in the change from OPIM to direct implementation, the manner in which the project responded to the pandemic restrictions and way in which the DSS has been developed. The latter example is important because the Project Document was quite prescriptive in describing the DSS, however, there was no real "blueprint" to follow. Changes in circumstances between the project design and project start up needed to be accommodated in the work planning and budgeting, but more importantly, the flexible approach towards design and development allowed the project to take the DSS from a broad concept to a working tool designed and developed in large part by the people who would need to use it.

189. However, the logical hierarchy has remained relatively intact from the Project Identification Form (PIF) despite the weakness (for instance a capacity development programme is not an output, it is a project activity[52]). It is clear that the PIU has struggled with the SRF and the reporting burden this imposes on the project. The MTR is sympathetic, there are 26 outputs and 49 indicators (however, there are no objective indicators) which is a daunting reporting task. There have been a number of points in the project's development and implementation cycle when this could have been addressed, the inception phase would have been one such, however, the project strategy and SRF have remained largely unchanged. It is important to stress that this is not just a theoretical or administrative issue, there is a risk that a project produce all the outputs, meet all the targets but not necessarily have an impact. To be clear, this is not the case with the LDN project, however, it does remain a risk which could have been addressed during the inception phase.

190. In summary, the project strategy in the SRF has remained fairly rigid since the PIF was developed and the adaptive measures have been taken up in the project and in particular, by the PIU which has had the confidence to allow the development of the DSS, in particular, the space to evolve. However, this has placed a considerable and confusing monitoring burden on the PIU.

4.5.3.4 Financial management

191. The Project Document sets out the GEF budget against components (see Table 8 below).

[52] See outputs 1.1.1 & 1.1.3

Table 7 Project budget by component in Project Document

Component	GEF funds	Co-financing	Total
1 Strengthening the enabling environment for (LDN)	$411,061	$3,000,000	$3,411,061
2 Decision-Support System (DSS) for LDN	$350,000	$2,000,000	$2,350,000
3 Demonstration of the LDN approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin	$1,184,800	$6,000,000	$7,184,800
4 Upscaling of LDN experiences, monitoring and evaluation	$325,123	$1,600,000	$1,924,123
5 Project management	$117,600	$1,000,000	$1,117,600
Total	$2,388,584	$13,600,000	$15,988,584

192. Co-financing committed at the CEO approval stage was US$ 13,600,000 giving a ration of GEF finance to co-financing of 1:5.7 which is approximately in line with the required GEF-6 1:6 ratio.

193. The MTR notes that co-financing is being reported as "in-kind" and "cash" both in the Project Document and project reporting. The guidelines on co-financing are not very clear on what qualifies as "cash" co-financing. However, the MTR understands that "cash" co-financing should be taken to mean non-GEF monies that are included in the total budget and work plan in the Project Document and are accounted for by the PIU. Therefore, the MTR has reported the co-financing as aggregated (GoT) and disaggregated (FAO) but notes that the cash component of the FAO co-financing did not pass through the GEF-fund total budget in the Project Document and therefore, may not necessarily be recorded as "cash" despite the monies being spent on actual activities directly related to the project implementation.

194. While the MTR is confident that the co-financing committed in the Project Document is being spent by project partners and supporting the achievement of agreed project outputs (for instance the SFM activities are entirely financed through co-financing, many of the component activities related to LD monitoring were carried out and completed between the project's design and signing of the Project Document actually resulting in a surplus in component 2), outcomes and the objective, this does not constitute "cash" co-financing and should be reported as "in-kind".

195. The Project Document budget and work plan do not report on expenditure by component (Table 9) which makes it hard to assess the expenditure comparatively across outcomes by project year, although there is a gross breakdown by components[53]. Therefore, it is not possible to compare forecasted expenditure with actual by component, except as a gross figure at the MTR. The MTR has also not been able to disaggregate project management costs from general expenditure on outcome activities. This is due to the accounting which is reported in the PPR format and not the PIR format. For the avoidance of doubt, the MTR does not suggest there is any discrepancy in the accounting, simply it is not easy to quickly assess expenditure by component.

Table 8 Budget execution

Component	Actual Year	YR 1 2019	YR 2 2020	YR 3 2021	YR 4 2022	Total	Total Budget (ProDoc)	% Execution (MTR)
Component 1								
Strengthening the enabling environment for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).	Actual	$17,836	$96,346	$81,643	$155,338	$351,164	$411,061	85.4%
Component 2								

[53] Project Document, p. 63.

Decision-Support System (DSS) for LDN.	Actual	$0.00	$25,536	$26,484	$38,619	$90,638	$350,000	25.9%
Component 3								
Demonstration of the LDN approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin.	Actual	$0	$4,470	$17,760	$363,241	$385,470	$1,184,800	32.5%
Component 4								
Upscaling of LDN experiences, monitoring and evaluation.	Actual	$0.00	$12,421	$19,758	$22,472	$54,652	$325,123	16.8%
Project Management								
	Actual	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$117,600	0.0%
Totals		$17,836	$138,773	$145,645	$579,670	$881,924	$2,388,584	37%

** Note: Project management costs are not included as a separate budget line in the Table 8. These seem to be distributed between the components and are not easily disaggregated. However, project management costs are estimated at US$ 25,489 approximately 28% of the amount allocated in the Project Document and 1% of the total GEF budget.*

196. Budget execution at December 2022 (MTR) is 37% according to the figures in Table 9 analysis of budget expenditure by component shows that budget execution across all four components has been low. However, the gross project expenditure reported in the last (December 2022 PPR) shows the overall budget execution as US$ 1,084,000, approximately 45.4% by the close of project. The difference is attributed to committed costs for 2023. Table 8 is included only to illustrate the relative different burn rates by component. The MTR identifies a combination of contributory factors which suggest this is not entirely an efficiency challenge, but is in large part due to other factors:

i. Exchange rates have been very favourable against nationally expended costs due to favourable exchange rate variation in the US$ against the Türkiye Lira which shows as a lower rate of execution in US$.
ii. A number of GEF-budgeted activities under component 2 were carried out prior to the Project Document being signed resulting in a budget surplus under this component.
iii. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected component 3 activities in particular. These have only got underway in the latter half of 2022. Component 3 is the largest portion of the overall budget.
iv. The switch between the planned OPIM to direct FAO implementation modality has reduced the need to finance project M&E activities through this component, they are now carried out by the PIU.

197. Based on this it is reasonable to state that, although budget expenditure is low, the project strategy and implementation are efficient with one qualification. The inception phase and workshop could have been more proactive in identifying these issues and making significant revisions in the budget at that time. With the low budget expenditure, the MTR rates efficiency as Moderately Satisfactory and notes that the pandemic has been a major contribution to this particularly in component 3. The component 2 and 4 surpluses could have been reassigned through a budget revision during the inception phase. The MTR also speculates that, had the PIU been in place at this time, these revisions might have taken place.

198. Project management costs are not easily extracted from the budget. These are put at US$ 25,489 approximately 28% of what was forecast in the Project Document.

Table 9 Co-financing

Sources of co-financing	Name of co-financer	Type of co-financing	Amount confirmed at CEO endorsement/ approval		Actual amount materialized as of (December 2022 MTR)	Expected total disbursement by the end of the project
			In-kind	Cash	In-kind	
National Government	MAF (CEM)	Cash		6,800,000	3,932,797	6,800,000
	MAF (OGM)	In-kind	6,400,000		10,400,620	6,400,000
	MAF (TRGM,)				1,641,051	
	MAF (TAGEM)				876,746	
GEF Agency	FAO	In-kind	150,000		29,796	150,000
GEF Agency	FAO	Cash		250,000	227,632	250,000
Totals			6,550,000	7,050,000	17,108,642	13,600,000

4.5.3.5 Risk management

199. Five risks[54] were identified in the Project Document, none were considered high or critical risks. A sixth risk (the Covid-19 pandemic) has correctly been added to the risk register. The PIU and FAO CO have correctly monitored risks throughout the project's lifetime. The MTR considers that the time available to complete field activities should be raised to a critical (High), emergent due to the pandemic, risk and mitigated by a project extension.

200. The Project Risk Certification (PRC)[55] identified two risks, both rated Moderate: 3.4 – Would this project establish or manage planted forests and 4.7 – Would this project be located in or near an internationally recognised conservation area e.g. Ramsar or World Heritage Site, or other nationally important habitat, e.g. national park or high nature value farmland?

201. The latter risk required a "brief environmental impact assessment" (EIA). However, the MTR believes that this would have probably been unnecessary and it (the EIA) does not appear to have been carried out. The MTR considers these risks to be Low. And in all likelihood, they were Low at the start of the project.

202. However, the PRC did not identify any gender risks which is surprising because it should have been expected that any project involved in agriculture would have gender equality aspects due to inequalities in the agricultural workforce, access to markets, cultural aspects, access to credit, etc.

203. If these gender-related risks were retrofitted to the project's risk register it is reasonable to suggest that they might have been Moderate prior to the project's start-up due to the disparities in the agriculture between men and women. However, given the project's gender strategy and the attention paid to gender within the project, these risks could also be downgraded to Low.

204. The MTR has raised the rating of two risks: *Lack of close and collaborative cooperation between key institutional stakeholders* from Low to Medium and *Natural Disasters* from Low to High. The latter is raised to this level temporarily due to the time remaining to complete field activities. However, the MTR stresses that the risks can be lowered with some confidence (from High to Low) by putting in place mitigation measures such as extending the project over at least one agricultural season.

[54] Project Document, pp. 50 – 51.
[55] PRC, June 23 2017

Table 10 Project risk assessment

	Risk	Rating	Mitigation	Mitigation reported (PIR 2022)	MTR assessment
1	Lack of close and collaborative cooperation between key institutional stakeholders	**Low**	Close and collaborative cooperation between many institutional stakeholders will be essential for the project to achieve its stated goal and objectives. This will be achieved through involvement of all stakeholders from the early beginning of the project, preparation of project document and through establishment of working group for the project implementation as well as the project steering committee. Promotional materials and communication strategy will be developed and, regular meetings and presentation of project results in different phases of the project implementation will be organized.	Regular meetings, stakeholder workshops, trainings and field visits (after the end of the covid-19) were held to enhance the collaboration between stakeholders.	Project Document risk. This risk is both a project implementation and an impact risk. The project has taken steps to mitigate the risk and the MTR commends the efforts by the PIU to facilitate collaborative actions between different stakeholders and partners. However, the PIU is driving this collaboration and it is important that these linkages and the networks in place are strengthened for a time when the FAO PIU will no longer be the link between project partners and stakeholders in order to achieve the longer-term impacts. MTR assessment: **Medium.** Recommended mitigation action would be to include an activity to proactively reinforce the collaborative governance and collective actions.
2	Unclear responsibilities of institutions at national and local level	**Low**	Clearly defined and legally prescribed responsibilities of different institutions as well as involvement of all of responsible institutions are the main project goals. Moreover, the project will support improvement of institutional framework and through that ensure sustainability of the project results after its finalization.	Not applicable	Project Document risk. As above, this risk is being reduced by the efforts of the PIU and project partners. However, it is not clear whether this will survive once the focus of the project has ended. Therefore, it is important that the project develops mechanisms to embed these networks, post project.
3	Low technical capacity at local national level	**Medium**	Capacity and technical expertise of stakeholders are weak. To mitigate this risk, the project will support a capacity building through development of program for trainings during the project, taking into account specific needs of stakeholders. It will also support a national Information Sharing Forum.	Capacity building activities including technical workshop and trainings were conducted. Project team supported project partners in terms of producing technical documents such as maps, reports and DSS and carried our capacity building activities.	Project Document risk. The project has delivered a number of technical trainings. However, this needs to be increased, possibly with a wider communications exercise to raise the profile of the DSS amongst a broader range of state and non-state stakeholders. MTR assessment: Medium. Recommended mitigation action would be to expand technical training and communications programme in relation to the DSS.
4	Natural disasters	**Low**	Natural disasters, such as drought and floods, may impede the adoption of new technologies. The project is designed as a multi-year intervention, where demonstrations can be run over several seasons. The project will also be linked to the drought early warning services of the MAF.	Not applicable	Project Document risk. To some extent the outcome of this impact has been realised where the project finds, due to the pandemic, effectively a natural disaster, with insufficient time to complete the field activities over at least one agricultural season.

					MTR assessment: **High.** Recommended mitigation action would be a project extension to complete these activities over at least one agricultural season.
5	Climate change	**Low**	The MAF, with support of FAO technical expertise, are in a good position to adopt new research results on how to enhance resilience of SLM and SFM practices to climate change and, when necessary, adapt local livelihood strategies, which is supported under output 2.2.1 of the project.	Not applicable	Project Document risk. Agreed, the project activities, outputs and outcomes are contributing to mitigating this risk.
6	COVID-19 pandemic	**Medium**	The Covid-19 pandemic broke out short after the inception of the project. The effects of pandemic may result by weak engagement of stakeholders and delayed implementation of the field activities. In this regards, close monitoring of project activities and negotiations with key partners to revise the work plan was implemented.	During the Covid-19 restrictions, project team established close communication through online stakeholder meetings, trainings and mails. Stakeholders were informed about any delay or revision on the work plan. Soon after the pandemic circumstances end, in person meetings, workshops and training were conducted. Field implementations initiated immediately and project team conducted field missions to project sites to strengthen the stakeholder engagement and monitor field work.	This risk has been added to the risk log. See MTR assessment of natural disasters risk. MTR assessment: **Medium.** Recommended mitigation action would be a project extension to complete these activities over at least one season.

4.5.4 Project oversight by FAO as the GEF Agency & national partners

205. The SC meets once a year. It is not clear whether the SC has a permanent Chairperson and it would appear that the PIU are members of the SC. While the SC has functioned to good effect thus far it is important that the project follows the guidelines set out in the Project Document[56], namely: *"The PSC will be chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MAF). Other PSC members with the right to vote include FAO BH, LTO and the Project Coordinator will also be represented on the PSC, in ex-officio capacity. The Project Coordinator will be the Secretary to the PSC. Other active institutions, including representatives of implementing partners, may be invited or requested to participate as observers"*. These arrangements should still work even with the direct implementation modality. However, it is necessary to make a separation on the SC between execution and implementation with regards the GEF Agency project assurance responsibilities.

206. The Project Document sets out the FAO's project assurance role[57] as:

- Administrate funds from GEF in accordance with the rules and procedures of FAO;
- Oversee project implementation in accordance with the project document, work plans, budgets, agreements with co-financiers and the rules and procedures of FAO;
- Provide technical guidance to ensure that appropriate technical quality is applied to all activities concerned;
- Conduct at least one supervision mission per year; and
- Report to the GEF Secretariat and Evaluation Office, through the annual Project Implementation
- Review, on project progress and provide financial reports to the GEF Trustee.

207. Therefore, the key issue is that, the PIU should not be included as SC members unless as *ex officio* and non-executive positions in the interest of good governance and transparency[58].

Text box 1 Steering Committee membership 2021

FAO

1. Assistant Representative in Turkey
2. FAO Monitoring Specialist
3. GEF Portfolio Coordinator
4. National Operations Specialist
5. Communication Specialist
6. Project Assistant
7. National Project Coordinator

PSC Members

8. TRGM, Study Group Manager
9. OGM, Head of Soil Conservation and Basin Improvement Department
10. CEM, Branch Manager
11. CEM, Head of Combating Desertification Department
12. TAGEM, Coordinator
13. TRGM, Engineer
14. CEM, Expert

[56] Project Document, p. 110
[57] Project Document, p. 56
[58] For the avoidance of doubt, the MTR does not find any issue with the work of the SC, however, these arrangements need to be formalised as a matter of protocol.

4.5.5 Project partnerships & stakeholder engagement

208. Notwithstanding the change in execution modality, stakeholder participation has been high. The stakeholder situation is complex and hierarchal with central state, provincial and district institutions as well as non-state actors and academic and technical institutions, local communities and individual farmers.
209. The CEM were closely involved during the project's design phase resulting in a good fit between project activities and national expectations, although this is less so with the OGM and all the forestry activities are undertaken using co-financing.
210. High-level stakeholders (governmental) from the central, provincial and district levels are represented on the project SC which meets annually.
211. Stakeholder engagement is high, despite the impacts of the pandemic restrictions. In particular, the approach taken by the project to engage a service provider (the Lead farmer Association), which was already well-established with operational procedures, working practices and experience and to use the FFS approach has been very successful, allowing the project's activities at the site-level to proceed much faster than anticipated following the lifting of the pandemic restrictions.
212. During the pandemic, the project took every possible measure to continue stakeholder engagement developing "virtual presence", however, there is only so much that can be done before the limitations of stakeholder internet accessibility constrain project activities, although this was less pronounced with technocratic and agency stakeholders with which the project was able to continue a more effective engagement and online training exercises.
213. The Project Document identified a very wide group of stakeholders including a number of private sector actors. However, during implementation it emerges that the main focus of non-state involvement has been farmers, agricultural associations, women groups and cooperatives.

4.5.6 Communications, visibility, knowledge management & knowledge products

214. This has been hard to assess because of the weaknesses in the SRF indicators. Based on a subjective evaluation the MTR is satisfied with the progress and performance of the project in communication and knowledge management. However, this is not possible to measure using the SRF indicators.
215. The project set out the following strategy: general aspects that were mostly to be implemented by the PIU and promote the project at every opportunity, basic visibility in the field including sign boards, operational publications, and materials, supplies and equipment, printed publications including brochures, leaflets and project publications, website, webpages and social network pages including partnership links and project objective, outcomes and outputs, audio-visuals including a film for distribution, television and internet and informational films and programmes, and public events including press releases and media events.
216. Communications and knowledge management were mostly addressed through component 4 although the two indicators for this outcome are not able to be assessed because they relate to project operational performance and not the impact.
217. That said, the project has a high visibility and communications are very good. It has produced a number of good quality knowledge products (Monitoring of LDN Indicators and LDN DSS, June 2021; etc.) and the has been considerable training and awareness events.
218. National and FAO support (and enthusiasm) has been very effective in promoting the DSS at both the regional level and in other FAO regions through the UNCCD as evidenced by the adoption of the DSS in 17 other countries in which FAO is involved.

219. However, the visibility of the DSS, although widely supported by national agendas and enthusiastically supported by many technicians, still needs to be vigorously promoted both nationally and at the district level., in part due to the earlier pandemic restrictions.

4.5.7 Monitoring & evaluation, including M&E budget & design

4.5.7.1 Strategic Results framework & indicators

220. The purpose of the project's SRF is to provide a concise and measurable description of the project intervention towards the agreed objective through a hierarchy of inputs, outputs, outcomes and an objective. It is critical for the monitoring and evaluation as well as the adaptive management process, necessary for any project intervention in a complex and unpredictable system. It sets out the logical thinking in discreet and hierarchical steps towards an agreed objective.

221. The project's SRF is confusing and creates a weakness in the monitoring and evaluation at all parts of the project cycle (implementation, MTR and Terminal Evaluation). This raises a number of issues:

- The lack of objective-level indicators means that there is no "bigger picture" of progress towards results/ achievement.
- It places a considerable, and unnecessary, burden on the PIU in terms of reporting.
- Weaknesses in the logical hierarchy of outcomes and outputs (e.g. many of the outcomes are in fact outputs or even activities) may lead to an over-focus on specific component parts of the project and a failure to bring them all together to achieve the objective. This is particularly so when there are project partners and stakeholders at different administrative levels and geographical locations.
- Indicators in the SRF are in many cases either re-stating the outcome, outputs, targets (or deliverables) or in some instances, activities.
- If the output indicators are included, there are 49 indicators, regardless of their quality and utility, this is an extremely high number of indicators to track.

222. The GEF review process utilises outcome-level indicators which reduces the number of indicators to 11 in this case (accepting that there are no objective-level indicators). However, these indicators, as discussed already, lack utility for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. One alternative would be to include the output indicators under the appropriate outcome. However, a review of the output indicators shows that they suffer from the same weaknesses. For example; Output 4.1.2: LDN target setting at national scale in place, and; Output indicator: LDN target setting in place[59].

223. The weaknesses in the SRF may be due to the prominence of the DSS, in a large part a technical challenge, in the project with a number of discrete, technical steps. However, if it is presented this way, it misses the achievements of developing the system and does not capture the adaptive systemic measures which need to take place in order for it to be effective in the future.

224. Furthermore, it overly-complicates the project for stakeholders and makes it hard to determine how far along the causal pathways the project has advanced when compared against the TOC.

225. That said, the SRF is what it is and the inherent weaknesses in both the hierarchical relationship between outputs and outcomes as well as the weaknesses in the indicators is fairly typical to see a spill-over of workplan activities and deliverables repeated in the SRF. However, as mentioned, this places a considerable, and often confusing, burden of reporting on the PIU as well as a tendency to use the same information repeatedly to report on indicators, which is not an efficient means of monitoring and evaluating.

[59] One example is provided here, however, this is typical of the indicators (outcome and output) in the SRF.

4.5.7.2 Project level M&E systems

226. The Project Document sets out a standard M&E framework[60] for a GEF project with a budget of US$ 131,500 approximately 5.5% of the total budget, which is consistent with what might be expected of a GEF FSP. The M&E plan specifies an inception workshop and report, twice-yearly Project Progress Reports (PPR – a FAO requirement) and annual Project Implementation Reports (PIR – a GEF requirement), field visits by the PIU, a MTR and a Terminal Evaluation (TE) as well as monitoring the co-financing.

227. It is noted that at the time of the inception phase, workshop and report the PIU was not in place. The inception report, documenting the findings of the inception phase and workshop, is an important stage in the project cycle's M&E. It is a point in the project cycle when adaptive changes can be made to the project in light of changes in circumstances and experience. In the LDN project the inception phase was not effective, the report appears to validate and expand on the technical issues of the proposed DSS but it does not include the critical analysis (including a review of the TOC) of the project design and strategy necessary to align the project implementation with the changes in circumstances and the weaknesses in the project's SRF.

228. The PIU has actively monitored the project with frequent field visits, maintaining good relations and an information flow with stakeholders. Two PIRs (12/2019–06/2021[61] & 07/2021–06/2022) have been developed which is broadly in line with the PIR reporting expected[62]. There have been five PPRs (08/2019-12/2019, 01/2020-06/2020, 07/2020-12/2020, 07/2021-12/2021 & 07/2022-12/2022). The PIR replaces the January to July reporting period to reduce the amount of reporting.

229. Reporting and assessments and ratings are realistic and accurate although component 3 progress, as reported in the PIR, reflects the efforts and early achievements but is probably over-optimistic in terms of outcomes achieved before the end of the project.

230. In summary, the PIU is carrying out diligent and periodic monitoring and evaluation providing a realistic and pragmatic assessment of the project's performance and achievements as well as taking timely and adaptive actions when necessary to keep the project on track. However, it is doing this using an SRF (the primary M&E tool in a GEF project) which is confusing, functionally weak and lacks the robust utility to accurately monitor and assess the project's performance and impact. This places an undue burden on the PIU and may underestimate the project's achievements in the TE and carries the risk that the project could produce all the outputs but they do not necessarily create the conditions necessary for the outcome. This risk is low because the PIU has a good understanding of the project strategy.

[60] Project Document, pp. 68-69.
[61] The first PIR covered an 18-month period, which is reasonable given that the PIU was only in place at the end of 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted project activities early on in 2020.
[62] The third PIR is expected in July 2023.

Table 11 Indicator analysis

Description	Indicator	Mid-term-of-Project Target	MTR SMART Analysis					MRT comments
			S	M	A	R	T	
	Indicators							
	Objective indicators							
Objective: To develop a model for LDN target setting, planning and decision-making at national level and for demonstration in the Upper Sakarya basin.	None	None	X	X	X	X	X	Normally a project would be expected to have objective-level indicators. The absence of indicators at this level makes M&E challenging.
Component 1: Strengthening the enabling environment for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)	Outcome 1 Indicators		**S**	**M**	**A**	**R**	**T**	
Outcome 1.1: Enhanced enabling environment for LDN	**Indicator 1:** Integration of LDN into strategic planning processes	LDN integrated into at least one strategic planning process	Q	Q	✓	✓	✓	Indicator is essentially an activity. The term "integration" lacks the clarity necessary for objective measurement. The indicator and target are essentially the same thing. Both indicators appear to share baselines, mid-term and end of project (EOP) targets.
	Indicator 2: Investment programme for LDN	LDN integrated into at least one strategic planning process	✓	✓	Q	Q	Q	Target is not related to indicator. Some measure of budget allocation, private sector investment, etc., would be more appropriate.
Component 2: Decision-Support System (DSS) for LDN	Outcome 2 Indicators		**S**	**M**	**A**	**R**	**T**	
Outcome 2.1: Decision-support system for LDN target setting and planning established	**Indicator 3:** DSS established with calibrated metrics for LDN indicators	DSS for LDN in place with calibrated metrics for LDN indicators	Q	Q	✓	✓	✓	Indicator and target re-state outcome. Outcome is more suitable as an output and not an outcome, arguably it could be considered an activity. Indicator is the equivalent of "full" or "empty", there is no calibration.
Outcome 2.2: Monitoring system and related capacity for LDN in place	**Indicator 4:** LDN monitoring system in place with target setting agreed	LDN monitoring system in place with target setting agreed	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	As above.
Component 3: Demonstration of the LDN approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin	Outcome 3 Indicators		S	M	A	R	T	

Description	Indicator	Mid-term-of-Project Target	MTR SMART Analysis					MRT comments
			S	M	A	R	T	
	Indicators							
Outcome 3.1: Improved land management, land cover, and increased soil organic carbon in the Upper Sakarya basin	**Indicator 5:** Area with improved land management	7,000 (ha)	Q	Q	Q	✓	✓	Indicator is weakly defined as to what constitutes "improved land management".
	Indicator 6: Area with improved land cover	2,000,000 (ha)	✓	✓	Q	✓	✓	As above. Baseline is given as zero. Target should relate a measure of the increase in land cover x area to reduce ambiguity. The increase needs to be calibrated, it is not clear how the term "improved" should be measured. The PIU has to some extent tried to define this indicator in the PIR. It is also questionable whether this indicator would have sufficient sensitivity in a 4-year project (discounting the effect of the pandemic). A project would only reasonably be expected to see changes in biological indicators after several years and even then, a correlation between project intervention and variable change would need to dismiss other variables such as rainfall patterns, etc. As a project timeframe indicator it lacks utility. Presumably this would also include land use planning (e.g. micro-basin plans) which would be an unrealistic target for the project's material resources and timeframe and would be better expressed as the number of plans (e.g. 1 to 2 plans by end of project).
	Indicator 7: % increase in SOC	20% increase in SOC	✓	X	X	✓	X	The MTR questions whether this indicator is sensitive enough to measure the variable within the time period of the project.
Outcome 3.2: Land productivity increased by 10% and livelihoods for local communities strengthened	**Indicator 8:** Increase in land productivity	5% increase in land productivity	Q	Q	Q	✓	✓	Baseline is stated as "Land productivity and incomes are low in the Upper Sakarya basin due to outdated SLM and SFM practices". A 5% increase is not measurable without an objective, empirical measurement. Further issues include: defining the spatial area, there is no indicator for livelihoods, would this be an amalgamation of different land use types, etc. It is not possible to calculate % of "low". Land productivity and income should be disaggregated into two separate indicators if the indicator is to provide a

Description	Indicator	Mid-term-of-Project Target	MTR SMART Analysis					MRT comments
			S	M	A	R	T	
	Indicators							
								reasonable metric of impact because they are amalgamated in the baseline and outputs.
Component 4: Upscaling of LDN experiences, monitoring and evaluation	Outcome 4 Indicators		S	M	A	R	T	
Outcome 4.1: Upscaling of the LDN DSS to national level covering all of Turkey (78.4 million ha)	**Indicator 9:** Area covered by the LDN DSS	Land cover classes for the whole of Turkey identified based on the 6 IPCC classes	Q	✓	✓	✓	✓	Outcome is an output or even a target. Indicator re-states "outcome"
Outcome 4.2: Monitoring of project results, lessons learned and dissemination	**Indicator 10:** M&E system is in place	Implementation of project based on adaptive results based- management				X		This is a work planning issue and does not belong in the SRF.
	Indicator 11: Lessons learned disseminated	Implementation of project based on adaptive results based- management				X		This is a work planning issue and does not belong in the SRF.
	SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound Green: SMART criteria complaint; Yellow: questionably compliant with SMART criteria; Red: not compliant with SMART criteria							
Q Questionable	× Not SMART	✓ SMART						

4.6 Cross-cutting issues

Gef criteria/ sub-criteria	MTR Rating
F. Cross-cutting concerns	
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	S
F2. Human rights issues	S (n/a)
F3. Environmental and social safeguards	S

231. The MTR identifies two cross-cutting issues in the LDN project: gender and participation. Although gender was not identified in the Project Document's risk rating, nor the accompanying PRC, the Project Document has a comprehensive and high-quality assessment of the gender issues[63] related to agriculture in the project area identifying some of the inequalities and disparities between men and women in the agricultural sector, in particular, their low participation in decision-making and inequalities as a consequence. It sets out a number of important project interventions as well as proposing gender specific and transformational activities and indicators in particular: increasing women's income, making a (women's) profession (e.g. targeting women to encourage women producers' associations, establishing women as professional agricultural producers, etc.) and training. While there are strong activities directed to achieve this within the project, it is not reflected in the project's SRF indicators at the outcome and objective levels.

232. It should be noted that at the time of the project's development the GEF and GEF Agencies were reviewing and improving social and environmental screening procedures and implementation commitments. As part of this process FAO included a gender expert in drafting the Project Document and has continued to provide backstopping to gender aspects of the project from the Country Office.

233. The FAO PIU has already stimulated a broad participation of stakeholders which by association, appears to be adopted by project partners and is changing the interactions between state and non-state actors in the project area according to the feedback from key informant interviews.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

234. **Conclusion 1 (relevance): The LDN project aims and objectives are closely aligned with the existing policy and planning framework and contributes to national, regional, Convention, FAO and GEF objectives.** The DSS which has been developed under the project has broad applications in monitoring and evaluating LD at different spatial and institutional scales. It is adaptable for different data sets and M&E protocols such that it appears to have a universality and is already being adopted by other countries and in other regions and should inform the target setting process.

235. **Conclusion 2 (Progress towards outcomes):**

236. The LDN is an important project and at the point of the MTR is found to be satisfactory. It is performing well and some components are largely on track (the DSS has been achieved to high standard and upscaled to the national level already) despite having encountered delays at the start and the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, these restrictions have not equally impacted the components. While the technical (DSS) and the enabling environment components are likely to be completed by the close of the project (August 2023), the field base

[63] Project Document, p. 44 - 46

component and outcomes will be incomplete and will benefit from additional time because these activities required field visits and face to face consultations with project partners and stakeholders. A situation which was severely impeded due to the pandemic restrictions.

237. The DSS is technically highly regarded and has already been adopted in 19 other countries in other FAO regions.

238. Field activities are showing early signs of success and are broadly and enthusiastically supported by stakeholders. However, it is important to stress that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions has been felt most in outcome 3 because of the need to have field-based activities and face to face meetings.

239. The informal aspects of the enabling environment are only partially addressed in the project strategy and a tool or exercise to support these informal networks, coalitions, etc., necessary for collaborative governance to address the collective action challenge of LD would strengthen the strategy.

240. **Conclusion 3 (efficiency):**

241. The project strategy (enabling environment, DSS, LDN related field activities and knowledge management) represents a cost-effective approach to achieving the objective. Project activities have been implemented with a high degree of efficiency and project partnerships and a broad coalition amongst partners creates a degree of efficiency in the project's implementation. Despite a hiatus between project design/ CEO signature and the project start-up, the GoT still went ahead with developing various monitoring systems for elements of LD which were to be carried out under component 2. The projects willingness to identify and engage with high quality national and international technical assistance alongside the way in which the project partners have been prepared to work with the technical assistance has greatly facilitated the development of the DSS and the elements of the LD monitoring systems (e.g. SOC, etc.). The use of an experienced service provider to work with agencies and communities in the delivery of services to farmers and communities in the body of component 3 has been very effective. Monitoring, reporting, statutory project meetings, and financial management, etc., have been executed in a timely and efficient manner.

242. Component 2 currently has a surplus due to the pre-project development of a number of the elements of the LD monitoring system.

243. Components 3 and 4 show a below expected burn rate attributable to the pandemic restrictions (component 3) and the switch in implementation modality which appears to have lowered the project management expenditure. There is also a multiplier in these figures due to a beneficial exchange rate which is also likely to appear as an underspend.

244. **Conclusion 4 (sustainability):**

245. There is strong political support as well as from civil society because LD is a real and present issue. The DSS has sufficient political capital behind it as a nationally developed system being adopted internationally. The approach taken by the project including the strong gender equality and sensitivity support to women in the agricultural sector suggest sustainability in this sphere.

246. The GoT has already shown a wiliness to invest in LDN and the co-financing has been forthcoming. The utility of the DSS and the livelihood benefits from the field activities and the introduction of SLM and LDN agriculture have real economic benefits.

247. DSS and the development of the GEE App suggests that, given adequate training, institutions and agencies will utilize the DSS to good effect in their planning and operational processes. The DSS, for the same reasons, is socially inclusive providing a good platform for civil society access and inclusion, adding to the good governance aspects of transparency and accountability. The DSS is also broadly liked and admired by technical and academic institutions.

248. There are no significant risks to environmental sustainability.

249. **Conclusion 5 (factors affecting progress – design and strategy):**

250. The rationale behind the project was well-founded and very relevant at a number of levels including the national and regional level and is well supported by the policy framework. It is also closely aligned with the broader UNCCD objectives and the FAO global programme, country and thematic objectives.

251. The project design provided a reasonable and effective strategy in order to achieve the objective. That is, components addressing the enabling environment, the technical challenges of developing a DSS, rolling out LDN-orientated approaches to agriculture and land management at the project (demonstration) site and sharing and promoting the experience as well as promoting the broad uptake of the DSS to inform decision-making at multiple levels and across multiple LDN actors.

252. **Conclusion 6 (factors affecting progress – DSS):**

253. The development of the DSS, despite the very precise instructions in the Project Document, was still conceptual in many ways at the start-up of the project. That is, a DSS was still untried and untested and would require a highly technical and adaptive approach in developing the system so that it was fit for function (i.e. it would be technically functional, cost-effective, adaptable, accessible across a broad constituency of end users, adaptable for different stakeholder interests and will not become obsolete).

254. **Conclusion 7 (factors affecting progress – management arrangements):**

255. The project was originally designed with the intention of an OPIM implementation. However, this was changed during the inception phase to a direct implementation modality with an FAO CO PIU. This appears to have caused a delay in implementation of approximately 4 – 5 months in putting in place a PIU. The direct implementation modality works well, it is likely that it has also facilitated the upscaling of the DSS to other countries and regions. However, the MTR has concerns that the role that the PIU performs with regard facilitation, promoting participation, building collaborative networks, etc., may not be sustained following the closure of the project.

256. **Conclusion 8 (project implementation):**

257. The delays experienced during the start-up phase and resulting from the change in implementation modality resulted in the PIU only being established four to five months after the project's official start-up date and after the inception phase, workshop and report was produced.

258. Since the PIU was installed project management has been efficient and cost-effective in achieving the outputs with a high rate timeliness and effective implementation of activities. This has included establishing a good rapport and communications with project partners and stakeholders and a close monitoring and realistic evaluation of project progress and performance. This is more remarkable given the functional weaknesses in the project's M&E framework, the SRF, which were not addressed during the inception phase and workshop.

259. **Conclusion 9 (M&E and project SRF):**

260. The good design characteristics in the Project Document were not transferred across to the project's SRF in terms of a logical hierarchy of activities, inputs/outputs, outcomes and an objective. This makes it challenging for the project and any review process to determine the critical causal pathways from intervention through to the long-term impacts as well as identifying the key drivers shaping the system. The project will benefit greatly from revising the elements of the SRF within its scope. That is; objective-level indicators (including a capacity development scorecard index measure) should be added, output indicators should be rationalised and either included in the annual work planning or elevated to the level of

outcome (there are too few outcome indicators), the outputs should rationalised (coalesced) and reduced in number.

261. **Conclusion 10 (stakeholder engagement):**

262. The project is working well in terms of inclusiveness and participation of partners and stakeholders. However, the PIU is, naturally given the broad cross-section of partners and stakeholders, the catalyst behind this and the MTR has concerns that these developments and benefits which are leading towards increased intersectoral communication, greater participation and inclusive approaches to problem solving may not be fully embedded within the key actors in the project by the time the project ends.

263. The PIU should attend the SC in a non-executive role and this should be clearly articulated in the SC minutes of meetings.

264. **Conclusion 11 (overall performance and outlook):**

265. The MTR believes that the early project delays would still have allowed the project to be completed on time. However, the unavoidable and necessary constraints resulting from the pandemic restrictions do not allow important transformations in the enabling environment (the embedding of informal networks, collaborative governance across sector interests, etc.) and the implementation and scaling up of field activities over the period of an agricultural season to be completed satisfactorily by the scheduled close of the project in August 2023.

266. Notwithstanding the challenges of evaluating progress towards outcomes as a result of the weak project SRF the MTR finds that progress is satisfactory. Several outcomes have been largely achieved (e.g. the DSS and upscaling to the national level, replication to other regions) to a highly satisfactory level with evidence of upscaling at a national level and replication at a regional and global level already evident.

267. However, those outcomes related to field activities, although judged to be of high quality are behind schedule due to the pandemic. Without additional time, this poses a significant risk to the project achieving its objectives.

268. **Conclusions to specific questions raised in the MTR TOR:**

Table 12 Detailed review questions

DAC criteria	Question
Relevance	• How is the project responding to the national needs on Land Degradation (LD), programs and priorities set by the Government of Tükiye (GoT) on LDN? ○ **Conclusion:** The project is nationally relevant at the site, provincial and central level. the objective and outcomes are well-aligned with the national priorities (see section 4.1 relevance). This includes developing a LD monitoring tool which is flexibility enough to include a multiplicity of LD-related data sets, the accessibility and adaptability allows the DSS to be used by a broad cross-section of stakeholder agencies and within civil society. The DSS supports national reporting and can be used to inform policy making. LD is gaining importance in the national planning process at the national level responding to the impact of historical land degradation. • How is the project clearly contributing to the achievement of FAO's commitments to the SDG target 15 and other related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? ○ **Conclusion:** The project was consistent the FAO's 2018 Strategic Objectives (2018) and remain consistent with the current Strategic framework (2022 – 2031) both of which are aligned with MDG15 as well as cross-cutting alignment (see section 4.1, para. 130). • To what extent the projects serves for the process Initiated with 12th Conference of Parties (COP) to United Nations Convention on Combatting Desertification (UNCCD), hosted by Türkiye? ○ **Conclusion:** Component 2, Outcome 2.1 has been achieved to good effect and is the specific indicator for the DSS (the end result of the process initiated at the 12th COP) is rated Highly Satisfactory. The DSS has high utility, cost effectiveness (GEE) and wide adaptability and flexibility as demonstrated by the proposed additional uses for the DSS in national planning processes, considerable support amongst technical experts and the adoption of the DSS in 19 countries and two other FAO regions.

Effectiveness	• What are the immediate effects as mid-point of the delivered outputs to the end-users? o **Conclusion:** The SRF contains too many outputs, some of which are deliverables or activities. The MTR singles out 5 outputs: • LDN supportive enabling environment – the project is contributing to this process, which was ongoing before the project's start up, this process is recognized in the Project Document and in the completion of many of the LD monitoring systems implemented prior to the project's start up. It has provided a focus for the multiplicity of agencies and in particular, by bringing collaborative, participatory approaches to land management. The MTR recommends a tool or exercise to further drive this process. • Planning process supported by appropriate tools – the DSS is a high-quality planning support tool which will have wide application across a broad cross-section of state and non-state actors engaged directly or indirectly in land use (LD) planning and management. It is accessible, adaptable and flexible and provides a degree of transparency in the M&E of policy and planning outcomes. • SLM (LDN) approaches in farming in the Upper Sakaraya basin – due to the impact of the pandemic it is too early to make empirical statements about the effect of the outputs on farmers. However, the FFS approach is a very positive introduction, there is agency interest and the farmers like it. There is considerable scope to use the Service Provider for this output (the Lead Farmer Association) to expand the scope of the FFS and in particular to diversify the support to process support in empowering farmers through cooperatives and in particular by supporting gender equality and women's empowerment in the agricultural sector. • Women supported in the agricultural sector – as above. • Knowledge management – the project is developing a broad awareness that LDN responses are both urgent and complex and require a collaborative approach across a range of stakeholders. The DSS has the flexibility to manage and present multiple data sets for different end users and agendas underpinned by LDN. However, this needs to be aggressively expanded in the remaining time available to the project through targeted capacity building and promoting LDN as a planning priority and the DSS as the "go to" tool for testing planning interventions. • What are the immediate effects of the capacity development activities as mid-point to the beneficiaries? o **Conclusion:** Capacity development with regards the DSS is highly technical and has been well-received. However, it needs to be upscaled considerably, especially at the district level. There is sufficient evidence that the project has acted as a catalyst in raising awareness regarding LDN at all institutional levels, which has been a process ongoing since the PIF stage. Capacity development through the FFS is well-received and appreciated by stakeholders. Currently the capacity development is focused on the technical aspects of SLM/LDN and it is important that there is capacity building which will enable a supportive environment (e.g. the capacity of women to self-organize, cooperatives, etc.). • How likely the DSS will contribute LDN planning and environmental stress reduction? o **Conclusion:** Highly likely. The DSS has already been used to predict LD hotspots with a high degree of accuracy. The utility in bringing a multiplicity of data sets together and represent these in an interactive way has many benefits in the planning process, for instance it enables planners and stakeholders with diverse interests and agendas to examine LD data sets graphically and predictively, increasing the accessibility and utility of LD data sets to non-GIS specialists. • How is the project contributing to the achievement Türkiye`s LDN targets? o **Conclusion:** The DSS is an extremely versatile and useful tool to support land use planning. There is early evidence that the DSS is being used to allocate resources and shape policies and plans to reduce LD, for instance by identifying hot spots and in at least one micro-basin plan. With additional promotion and capacity building this success can be easily scaled up. The SLM approaches introduced under component 3

	can only have a limited LDN impact in the Upper Sakaraya basin. The real benefits will be much farther reaching if these are widely promoted and there is a mix of both technical (e.g. no till agriculture, crop rotation, etc.) and process (empowerment and organization of women, cooperatives, etc.) capacity building delivered through the FFSs. It is not just the transfer of skills that is important but the demonstration of how these skills are delivered (e.g. utilizing service providers, participation, women inclusion, FFS, etc.) that are important achievements of the LDN project. • How is the project supporting to the project partners for achievement of their institutional targets related with the project outcomes? ○ **Conclusion:** This is not easy to access based on the project's SRF due to the weaknesses discussed in this report (see section 4.5.7.1). The DSS and capacity building enables institutional partners to access and interpret LD data sets which encourages a critical "plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and adapt" institutional approach. It makes reporting more dynamic and should reduce the time costs and increase accuracy and accountability. An interface on DSS allows users to compare 5 different LDP models (https://projectgeffao.users.earthengine.app/view/ldn-turkey-lpd).
Efficiency	• Is the project cost-effective? How does the project cost/time versus output/outcomes equation compare to that of similar projects? ○ **Conclusion:** It is not possible within the MTR to benchmark the project outcomes against those of other projects. The MTR can state that the costs assigned for each outcome are reasonable for the scale at which the project is operating and commensurate with the expected results. Although this is not reflected in the budget execution at the MTR. This is because the GOT carried out a number of activities planned to be financed by the project before the start-up of the project resulting in a surplus (component 2), the pandemic restrictions have limited activities in the field until recently (component 3) and the change in implementation modality have made cost savings in the project management activities (outcome 4). • To what extent has project management been efficient in terms of timely execution of activities and delivery of outputs? ○ **Conclusion:** The switch in implementation modality caused a delay in putting in place a PIU and resulted in a weak Inception Report, which has to some extent, created difficulties in managing the report, particularly with the lack of utility in the SRF and an overly burdensome M&E reporting. However, once the PIU was in place management has been very effective, adaptive and innovative with the procurement of high-quality technical assistance (international and national) and the effective use of experienced service providers for field activities. The pandemic restrictions have impacted components of the project and it will require an extension to complete the field activities and aggressively promote and familiarize a wide diversity of end users of the DSS. • Has the project management took some measures adapt changing conditions, ie. Covid-19 pandemic? ○ **Conclusion:** As above, the project was at a very critical stage at the point that there was a national lockdown instigated. All efforts were taken to switch activities to remote working, including some online training and stakeholder meetings, etc. However, many activities (e.g. the field activities) were not transferable and have been significantly impacted by the pandemic restrictions, although the project was able to carry out online training of TRGM staff to initiate them with the FFS approach. • How is the institutional set-up for the project allowing the timely and adequate delivery of technical and administrative support services by relevant FAO HQ, regional, sub-regional and country office units? ○ **Conclusion:** The project, under direct implementation modality is well supported. The PIU consists of a national Project Coordinator (NPC), and Operational Specialist and a Project Assistant (PA). The PIU is supported by finance, procurement, travel, communication teams/units in the Country Office. Regional support is provided in terms of backstopping and oversight and quality control. The FAO has been able to promoted the DSS at a regional and global level and it would appear that FAO's ability to procure high quality technical assistance with experience with participatory approaches has contributed to the achievements of the project. • How much has the project used FAO tools as well as national products like maps, monitoring systems, models etc.?

	○ **Conclusion:** A lot. The project has used and refined a broad cross-section of national monitoring systems to support the DSS including: Watershed Monitoring and Evaluation System (HIDS), National Land Cover Land Use Classification and Monitoring System (UASİS), Soil Organic Carbon Monitoring Model of Turkey (TOK), Assessment of Potential Forest Land Model (POS), Collect –Earth, Dynamic Erosion Model and Monitoring System (DEMİS) and Wind Monitoring System. • How is FAO's normative and knowledge products being used by the project, and how is the project contributing to the normative and knowledge function of the Organization? ○ **Conclusion:** The DSS is a powerful and versatile tool which has global applications within the framework of the UNCCD and LDN, this is demonstrated by the take up of the DSS in at least one other FAO region (Latin America) and 18 countries have adopted the system. • To what extent is the project making use of available technical, technological, financial and knowledge resources from stakeholders and other providers to achieve its purposes? ○ **Conclusion:** The project has catalyzed national LD spending and technical knowhow. The development of the DSS has utilized both international and national technical expertise and there is substantial national contribution through the co-financing and the aforementioned monitoring systems. The Lead farmer Association is a national service provider with considerable technical and facilitation skills and the project is imparting the LDN concept into their working practices and experience. • How can the quality of the products can be increased? ○ **Conclusion:** The quality of the project products can be achieved by providing more time for their development and embedding in the institutional framework. Emphasizing the informal aspects of the enabling environment by building coalitions necessary to address collective, adaptive challenges. This should also be extended to the FFSs emphasizing process such as building local governance, empowering women groups and establishing cooperatives.
Sustainability	• To what extent the project results and products will be sustainable? DSS, maps and models i.e.? ○ **Conclusion:** The is a high likelihood that the project achievements will be sustainable for the following reasons: the DSS is a very effective tool, it is unlikely to become obsolete because its functionality can be extended, nationally technicians can be trained to code for the DSS, the GEE makes it a powerful but cost-effective tool, it has real applications for agencies and non-state stakeholders. The FFSs are novel and the participants are highly impressed with the approach and the early results. Key respondents indicated that they were keen to continue the relationships with service providers. • How far the DSS will continue contributing to the UNCCD reporting on LDN? ○ **Conclusion:** The DSS lends itself to periodic monitoring using a range of monitoring systems allowing a broad set of data sets to be utilized with relative ease. All respondents indicated that the DSS was very useful and h=this appears to be reflected by the adoption of the tool in 18 other countries. • (Replication and catalysis) What project results, lessons and experiences generated by the project have been replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources), or are likely to be in the near future? ○ **Conclusion:** The DSS is now applied at the national level in Türkiye and has been adopted in 18 other countries and one other FAO region Latin America). This has been achieved without their own funds. • Does the project extend its results to the country level and/or other countries? Are there any products replicated by other countries? • To what extend project results will be used as an example?
Impact	• How likely will the project affect stakeholders and target groups` understanding on LDN? • What are the planned and unplanned (positive or negative) effects from the project activities?
Factors affecting progress	• To what extend the project results and products will be sustainable? DSS, maps and models i.e.? ○ As above • How far the DSS will continue contributing to the UNCCD reporting on LDN? ○ **Conclusion:** The DSS will continue contributing to the UNCCD reporting on LDN. The adoption of the DSS by so many countries provides a strong indication that this will continue. The versatility and cost-effectiveness of the tool makes this very likely.

	However, it is important that the project and FAO continue to "advertise" and promote the DSS especially through the formal structures of the UNCCD. • (Replication and catalysis) What project results, lessons and experiences generated by the project have been replicated (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in different geographic areas) or scaled up (experiences are repeated and lessons applied in the same geographic area but on a much larger scale and funded by other sources), or are likely to be in the near future? o **Conclusion:** The DSS has been replicated and upscaled in 18 countries and 2 FAO regions. The DSS has been upscaled at the national level in Türkiye. It is likely that, given sufficient promotion, the DSS will continue to be replicated. The FFS and recognition of the role of women in the agricultural sector are likely to be repeated in Türkiye and it is important that the project focuses on developing the process approaches within the FFS system so that future upscaling and replication incorporates issues such as gender, cooperatives and self-organization. During the MTR it was also suggested that the DSS should be used as an appraisal tool for micro-basin and regional plans, providing data and evaluation means. • Does the project extend its results to the country level and/or other countries? Are there any products replicated by other countries? • To what extend project results will be used as an example? o As above
Cross-cutting dimensions	Gender and minority groups • How does the project approaches with gender related activities? o **Conclusion:** the project has targeted women inclusion in the project design through a gender team and investment in ensuring that gender was built into the project's design (although this is not reflected to any great effect in the M&E framework). This has been important in ensuring that gender was integral to the project and not an "add on" at the end. The development of a gender strategy and raising the awareness of the role and disparities faced by women in the agricultural sector have been important factors in ensuring that the FFS incorporates activities specific to women. These can be further improved by focusing in building capacity with women's groups by supporting their ability to self-organize and participate in governance and agricultural enterprises. • Are the gender related targets realistic, considering the local conditions? o **Conclusion:** the SRF gender targets are reportedly unrealistic for the simple reason that they are too high compared with the number of women in the sector who are in a position to participate. The project should be allowed to revise these targets down according to the Gender Strategy Report in order to ensure that the outcomes are transformative and not just targeted. Environment and social safeguards • Does the project design consider local conditions as well as social structure? o **Conclusion:** the project covers a wide area and different socio-ecological systems. This results in considerable socio-cultural diversity which is reflected in the agricultural systems as well as the cultural norms and traditions. It is unrealistic to expect the design phase of a project to totally accommodate all these nuances in the design. Therefore, it is important for the project design to not be too prescriptive and to be flexible and adaptive in the implementation. When the project has a poorly thought through SRF this can be challenging which is why the outcomes should be broadly descriptive of the forecast situation, allowing the project sufficient headspace to be adaptive while still remaining within the broad parameters of the project's expectations.

5.2 Recommendations

269. Based on the findings and conclusions of the MTR the following recommendations are made:

Table 13 recommendations

Rec. no.	Rationale for recommendation	Recommendation	Responsibility	Time/dates for actions
Strategic relevance				
1.	Component 3 activities were severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions due to the nature of the field work and need for fact to face meetings. The FFS and other site-based activities are progressing well, however, for their full impact and increased likelihood of sustainability at least one full agricultural season is needed before the end of project support in order to address issues as they arise and build confidence amongst stakeholders. This should be resolved urgently to ensure clarity in work planning and budgeting.	**Request a project extension of a minimum of one year, ideally 18 months.**	To be implemented by: FAO & approved by SC.	Timeline: Immediate. Priority: High, decision to be made at the next PSC meeting and submission to be prepared within 2 months of SC meeting. An *ad hoc* meeting of the SC should be called to approve final draft of submission.
2.	The SRF and the logical hierarchy of outputs, indicators and outcomes create a considerable M&E burden. Furthermore, they do not provide a clear and accurate metric by which to measure project progress and achievements, nor to comprehensively understand the causal pathways necessary to achieve the objective. The project cannot change the objective or outcomes (despite their lack of utility). However, reorganising the number of outputs and indicators and rationalising the number of indicators (there are 49 at present) including consolidating some to the level of the outcomes and the objective should reduce this confusion and lessen the M&E burden on the PIU.	**Review the SRF outputs and indicators and revise the SRF. For clarity this exercise should:** **i. Reduce the number of outputs and output indicators – outputs currently include elements of activities and fine-grained detail of deliverables. Many of these outputs can be coalesced into a single situational output. Currently there are 24 outputs, arguably too many to track and resulting in reporting on activities and deliverables multiple times within the SRF.** **ii. Remove output indicators from the PIR.**	To be implemented by: PIU & project Partners & approved by SC.	Timeline: Immediate. Priority: High and revised SRF and TOC should be submitted with any extension request.

		iii. **Ensure that there is a clearly articulated indicator, baseline and target.** iv. **Remove or rephrase indicators that are activities or re-stating the output or indicator.** v. **Provide additional and clearer outcome indicators.** vi. **Provide a set of objective-level indicators.** vii. **Overall it should seek to reduce the number of indicators in the SRF.** viii. **Use index or proxy indicators (e.g. Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA – see Annex 10) tool[64] and Capacity Development Assessment Scorecard).**		
Effectiveness				
3.	There should be a firewall between the project's highest executive and the PIU. The PIU can attend meetings but there needs to be a clear distinction between SC membership (the project executive) and the PIU.	**PIU attendance in SC meetings should be separated from SC members with clear terms of reference and non-executive status**	To be implemented by: FAO to draft ToR & SC to approve new arrangements should be clearly reflected in the minutes of meetings.	Timeline: Immediate. Priority: High, this should be completed before the next SC meeting.
4.	The DSS is well-received amongst technicians and there is considerable interest from others involved in the planning processes associated with LD. However, the DSS should be more widely promoted to gain traction as the "go to" support tool for decision-making and planning, especially in those organisations and institutions which would not	**Dedicated activity to target institutions and organisations to raise awareness of the DSS and its usefulness in supporting the planning process. This would include identifying target audiences (e.g. MoAF, OGM, TRGM, but also other organisations which would not normally consider LD within their planning remit) and tailoring the awareness and any**	To be implemented by: PIU and project Technical Consultants with support of project Partners. The project should consider engaging a	Timeline: Q3 2023 to project close. Priority: Medium.

[64] Is Our Project Succeeding? A Guide to Threat Reduction Assessment for Conservation. Richard Margoluis and Nick Salafsky, Biodiversity Support Programme, Washington DC.

	normally consider LD as aligned with their core business. The real value of the DSS is its accessibility and utility for a wide range of organisations, many of whom may not necessarily consider LD when formulating sector plans.	**training to their needs under component 3. Awareness and basic training workshops should be run and tailored to the specificities of their institutional remit. 2 – 3-day workshop/s should be organized with the following purpose:** • **Introduction of DSS.** • **Analysis techniques in planning.** • **How to use DSS in micro basin analysis.** • **Developing a micro basin development plan.** **The expected output of this workshop is a "developed micro basin development plan by using DSS". Depending on the budget, two or more regional workshops could be organized.**	communications expert to assist with this activity.	
5.	The DSS will need to constantly evolve and is likely to take on uses additional to those that it was intended for. The drivers for this, LD and climate change, will make this increasingly useful across a range of end users and for additional decision-support tasks, many of which may not be recognised yet.	**Technical training for CEM IT experts to continue to develop the DSS (particularly with coding) and respond to emerging technical issues and challenges.**	To be implemented by: PIU & Technical (DSS) Consultants.	Timeline: Q1 2023 or Q2 if project is extended. Priority: High.
Factors affecting performance				
6.	The Lead Farmer Association's role as Service Providers is well-received by project Partners and beneficiaries largely due to their experience and technical proficiency. There is an opportunity to expand this service provision to a wider range of subjects and activities than the ones they are currently involved in, they have potential to become involve other project (LDN-related) activities such as participatory rural appraisals, training needs assessments, facilitation of micro basin planning, cooperative formation, providing consultancy services in technical matters and impact analysis.	**Expand the range of LDN-related activities currently being delivered through the service providers in the field to include process related activities such as establishing cooperatives and supporting women's participation in their governance.**	To be implemented by: PIU.	Timeline: Q1 2023 to end of project, or Q2 if project is extended. Priority: Medium.
7.	In conjunction with recommendation 6, the FFS approach has been very successful and is a tried and tested approach. Given that it is showing very	**Expand the range of crops and technologies currently included in the FFSs. This should be accompanied by a set of agreed performance and**	To be implemented by: PIU and Lead Farmers Association.	Timeline: Q1 2023 to end of project, this should be

	positive indications already there is an opportunity to increase the number and range of crops and other farmer support based on the very clear interest and willingness of beneficiaries to engage with the intervention. Annex 6 has a range of specific site-based recommendations which can be considered to expand the scope and diversity of the FFS prior to the next planting season.	**impact indicators (including financial data for farmers) for participatory evaluation by farmers.**		instigated before planting begins in 2023. Priority: Medium.
Efficiency				
8.	Co-financing is currently disaggregated in the reporting as "cash" and "in-kind". The guidelines on co-financing are not very clear on what qualifies as "cash" co-financing. However, the MTR understands that "cash" co-financing should be taken to mean non-GEF monies that are included in the total budget and work plan in the Project Document and are accounted for by the PIU. While the MTR is confident that the co-financing committed prior to the project's start-up is being spent by project partners and supporting the achievement of agreed project outputs, outcomes and the objective, this does not constitute "cash" co-financing.	**Monies currently being reported by the project as "cash" co-financing are re-assessed as either "in-kind" or "grants".**	To be implemented by: PIU.	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: Medium – next reporting period.
9.	There has been a significant change between original budget allocated in the Project Document and the circumstances at the project's start-up (e.g. a switch in implementation modality, GOT completing many of the component 2 activities ahead of the start-up, etc.).	**There should be a significant budget revision take place to i) agree on where any surplus can be spent and, ii) agree activities that can be financed with budget allocations which have not yet been dispersed, this might include increasing the scope of the FFS, etc.** **Going forwards, a simple "dashboard" budget for use by the SC should show the budget by component for easy understanding and to identify any bottlenecks at an early stage.** **This revision can take account of any extension expected.**	To be implemented by: PIU and FAO CO, SC to meet and agree budget revisions.	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: High (for budget revision).

10	The "enabling environment" is complex and at times, hard to define. The formal and informal aspects of the enabling environment are not adequately reflected in the SRF and better measures of capacity development, training and awareness need to be developed. This can be achieved through a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey, but these are time consuming and expensive. Other measures can be utilised, such as a scorecard approach which are quicker and cheaper.	**Any revision to the SRF should include a capacity indicator at the outcome level or objective level (ideal). Ideally this should be based upon a scorecard approach[65].**	To be implemented by: PIU and assisted by FAO M&E team.	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: High.
Sustainability & catalytic effect/replication				
11.	There is an assumption in the project's design that the behavioural changes (institutional, community, individual) will take place without an activity specifically driving this process[66]. Although this will occur passively as a result of the project's intervention, it will be a much slower and uncoordinated process. Therefore, the project should undertake a specific exercise to support a collective action change across all stakeholders with regards LDN.	**The project should become more proactive in ensuring that the four components are mutually supporting. This can be achieved by utilising a process exercise, the MTR suggests Scenario Planning (see Annex 8) although other "tools" are also useful. The purpose of such an exercise is to supplement existing planning tools (including the DSS) to address issues of scale, complexity and uncertainty and to facilitate broad participation (also at different scales and hierarchies) and to support LDN target setting exercises. The process should be essentially a cognitive exercise to bridge the gap between conventional planning tools and processes, training and capacity building and the "behavioural changes" identified in the original project TOC. This could include specific training in participation and extension (e.g. OGM) and management planning (TRGM).**	To be implemented by: PIU with support of project Partners. Identify procedures for exercise, draft ToR for technical assistance/ facilitator, procurement.	Timeline: Q2 2023 & repeated prior to project close. Priority: Medium, only if there is a project extension.
Cross-cutting dimensions				
12.	There are a number of specific women-targeted interventions, the project is currently producing a	**Specific gender indicators should be included at the outcome and objective level in the SRF.**	To be implemented by: PIU and assisted	Timeline: Q1 2023 Priority: High.

[65] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Capacity_Development_Indicators.pdf
[66] See section 3 of this report.

	gender report and strategy related to LDN and this has raised awareness of the role and position of women in the agricultural sector as well as highlighting the disparities, inequalities and inefficiencies as a result of gender inequality. Working with women's groups and expanding the activities to include process interventions (e.g. support with empowerment and involvement in establishing cooperatives, etc.) will likely increase the impact. However, this is not reflected in the SRF and gender markers should be included as outcome and objective-level indicators in any revision of the SRF.		by FAO Gender and M&E team.	
13.	The February 6th earthquake is likely to place considerable strains on project partners as they strive to respond to the tragedy. Natural disasters such as the earthquake will have effects that both create LD challenges that need to be responded to through LDN approaches	**Convene a workshop with project stakeholders to determine the best way for the project to contribute technical expertise and material resources to the recovery efforts and to ensure that any LD issues related to recovery effort and future risks are correctly identified and addressed.**	To be implemented by: PIU and assisted by FAO CO with participation of project partners.	Timeline: Q2 2023 Priority: High.

5.3 Lessons learned

270. The MTR draws XX lessons from this review process:

Demonstrative approaches work well especially in rural settings. The FFS approach, already well-tested in other settings is an effective means for transferring skills and knowledge to beneficiaries. The mix of a technical service provider and continuous in-the-field, on farm, support builds confidence and trust between project and beneficiary. The FFS have proved very effective in this way and it is likely that there will be pressure to expand the scale of the FFS to other districts. While this is beyond the scope and resources of the LDN project.

Achieving LDN is complex and unpredictable and beyond the capabilities of a single project, therefore, project approaches to achieving LDN should seek to put in place, or strengthen existing, components and tools which support a systemic approach. During the MTR it has been important to remain within the scope of the project as set out in the Project Document. However, land use, land degradation and achieving LDN is complex, long term, fraught with uncertainties and dynamic. Furthermore, issues of scale beyond the scope (the remit, resources and timeframe) of the project come in to play. While they cannot be ignored, neither can they be fixed by a project. Issues such as land tenure, markets and market distortions, larger global issues which might affect commodity prices, *ad infinitum,* will all impinge on the land use and thus on land degradation with positive and negative values. Such issues arose during the MTR, *inter alia,* the effect of consolidating and enlarging farms, energy and fertiliser prices and the role and place of women in the agricultural sector. The original Project Document TOC identified "behavioural change and learning lead(ing) to implementation of LDN in the Upper Sakaraya basin and scaling up to national level" as an intermediary state necessary for achieving LDN. This "behavioural change" implies more than a technical intervention is necessary, it implies a cognitive approach and lies within the component 1 "enabling environment" which was correctly identified during the project's design. However, it is the informal parts of the enabling environment which arguably have equal or greater impact on shaping the system because it is this grey area, the relationships, the confidence to make decisions and receive feedback, both positive and negative, the ability to participate in decision-making, the confidence to make decisions when faced with uncertainty because; "*resilience is determined not only by a systems ability to buffer or absorb shocks, but also by its capacity for learning and self-organisation to adapt to change*"[67]. This hard to define part of the enabling environment is the most challenging aspect of any project.

The social and environmental screening process is greatly improved when there is investment and specific technical capacity involved from the beginning of the design phase and this should be followed through to the project SRF. The Project Document has a very strong and well-prepared commitment to addressing gender issues as they relate to the broad remit of the project. This is likely due to the GEF Agency including gender experts and CO backstopping during the design phase[68].

[67] Gunderson, L.H. and Holling, C.S. Eds. (2002). Panarchy: Understanding transformations in human and natural systems. Washington, DC. Island Press.
[68] FAO, Pers. comm., 17-09-2023

However, this does not appear to have been carried through to the SRF which lacks meaningful gender markers and indicators.

There should be greater investment in developing the SRF during the design phase of any project. The SRF is essentially a strategic tool and critical for the monitoring and adaptive management of a project. Greater care and arguably experience should be invested in the development of the SRF to ensure that the inputs/outputs, outcomes and objective follow a logical pathway and are articulated correctly as well as having functional indicators. For this to be effective and align with the project intervention TOC this should use specialist expertise of M&E experts to facilitate stakeholders and other subject matter expertise to develop the SRF.

The inception phase, workshop and report are critical stages in the GEF project management cycle, therefore, the PIU should be installed prior to this to lead the inception phase. The switch in implementation modality should not just have been instigated in the inception phase, the PIU should have been in place to make the substantive budget revisions resulting from this and other changes (e.g. outcome 2). Furthermore, the issues relating to the SRF should have been identified at this time and it is important that stakeholders have the confidence to challenge the SRF; if it seems complicated and doesn't seem to make sense then it is highly probable that it doesn't make sense and needs to be revised.

Keep it simple when designing complex projects. Although the Project Document strategy was sound, the document itself was overly complicated. There are limitations in time and resources in any project. GEF projects, by their very nature, are interacting with complex and unpredictable systems and at different scales (temporal, institutional and spatial). It is best to identify this complexity, recognise the uncertainty and distil the project intervention to a number of practical and achievable activities, outputs, outcomes and a clear description of the objective, where the project wants to be by the time it has expended its time and resources. The place to test this, "is our project simple enough", is in the SRF and the logical and hierarchical pathways from inputs, outputs and impact. In complex socio-ecological systems; designers shouldn't be afraid of developing a simple project.

6. Annexes

Annex 1 MTR Terms of Reference

Name:	Francis Hurst
Job Title:	Senior MTR Specialist/Team Leader
Division/Department:	**FAO Türkiye**
Programme/Project Number:	Mid-term Review of the Project "Contributing to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting by Demonstrating the LDN Approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin for Scaling up at National Level" GCP/TUR/065/GFF
Location:	Home-based (with possible missions to HQ and Turkiye)
Expected Start Date of Assignment:	asap **Duration:** 35 working days (until End of February 2023)
Reports to:	*Name:* ***Viorel Gutu*** ***Title:*** Budget Holder Sub-Regional Coordinator for Central Asia FAO Representative in Türkiye

* Please note: If this TOR is for Consultant / PSA.SBS contract, the minimum relevant experience required **for the assignment** is as follows:
1 year for a category C 5 years for a category B 12 years for a category A

** Please enter a short title (max 25 chars) for this assignment.

General Description of task(s) and objectives to be achieved

The Project document was submitted in November 2018 and the Project agreement was signed on March 2019 and endorsed by the GEF on May 2019. The project has a duration of 4 years (from August 2019 to August 2023).

The project sets out to develop a model for LDN target setting, planning and implementation in the Upper Sakarya basin for upscaling at national level in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Target 15.3. It takes a phased approach; Component 1 aims to strengthen the enabling environment for LDN and multi-sectoral land-use planning processes in Türkiye. It is followed by Component 2; Development of a Decision Support System (DSS) for LDN. The 3rd Component involves achieving land degradation neutrality on the ground in the Upper Sakarya basin with associated global benefits generated related to improved land cover, enhanced soil carbon and enhanced land productivity and under Component 4; the LDN-DSS will be integrated into existing land-use planning and will be up scaled to set targets at the national level.

Under the efforts related to strengthen the enabling environment for LDN, project seeks to develop capacity both at the institutional (central and local government) and local level. Under the development of DSS, central government institutions, particularly CEM, was involved in the process both to provide inputs and to have capacities enhanced, since most of the national products and monitoring systems were previously developed by them. In the following steps, all central and local level officers will be trained on DSS. In addition, local people, including women farmers, herders and forest villagers will benefit from the field demonstrations of the project.

The project is being implemented by FAO in Türkiye in partnership with the General Directorate of Combatting Desertification and Erosion (CEM), General Directorate of Forestry (OGM), General Directorate of Agricultural Reform (TRGM), General Directorate of Agricultural Researches and Policies (TAGEM). The estimated total project budget for the four-year period is 15,988,584 USD, which consists of co-funding from government partners and FAO, and a GEF contribution of 2,388,584 USD. The project is being governed by a Project Steering Committee comprised by stakeholders, led by CEM, and the operationalization of activities is being supervised by a National Project Implementation Unit comprised of project staff and consultants.

Under the direct supervision of the project's budget holder (BH), and of the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit (FAO GEF CU) MTR focal point, the Team Leader is responsible for coordinating the MTR team's contribution to the MTR of "the Project "Contributing to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting by Demonstrating the LDN Approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin for Scaling up at National Level" - GCP/TUR/065/GFF and has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the MTR report. His/her mandate is derived from and must fully comply with the overall terms of reference of the MTR. He/She reports to the BH and to the FAO GEF CU MTR focal point.

The Team Leader will coordinate the MTR team's activities, ensure that the methodology foreseen in the terms of reference is implemented and organize the division of labour within the MTR team according to areas of expertise.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Review relevant background documentation made available by the budget holder or designated MTR manager (RM) and project team, including the project document, the project's logframe, progress and final reports, workshop and technical reports, among others as listed in the MTR terms of reference;
- Review and complement (expand as appropriate) the methodology described in the terms of reference, contribute to the preparation of data-collection tools, including questionnaires, checklists and interview protocols as appropriate;
- Coordinate preparation, drafting and finalization of the MTR inception report, including an MTR matrix, theory of change and stakeholder table, and participate in the finalization of the team's work programme;
- Lead and coordinate the collection of primary data by the MTR team through interviews and meetings (virtual) with relevant FAO officers in headquarters, project coordination unit, FAO Decentralized Offices, among other things, and in the project country with key stakeholders including the government, FAO Representative, external partners, project teams, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, research institutes and ultimate beneficiaries, as appropriate, as described in the terms of reference of the MTR;
- Coordinate the collection of primary data by the MTR team during country visits and relevant secondary data, according to the methodology presented in the MTR terms of reference and detailed in the inception report;
- Lead the analysis and discussion of evidence collected within the MTR team to identify key findings and preliminary conclusions that respond to the MTR's issues and questions, and formulate preliminary recommendations in line with the findings and conclusions;
- Ensure that all the findings are sufficiently triangulated and validated;
- Present the preliminary MTR findings to key stakeholders, as required;
- Lead, coordinate and prepare all deliverables planned in the MTR terms of reference, according to specifications provided in the terms of reference and detailed in the FAO–GEF MTR Guide and annexes;
- Coordinate the participation and contribution of team members in all deliverables, as required;
- Lead the preparation of the first and second drafts of the MTR report, integrate comments received, as appropriate, from the BH, FAO GEF CU, other FAO and government agency staff, and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate;
- Lead the finalization of the MTR report and coordinate the inputs of other members of the MTR team into the final version, as needed.
- Prepare a Two pages summary on main findings and recommendations to disseminate MTR results

In terms of reporting, or if information, advice or guidance is required from FAO by the consultant, he/she should address requests to both the BH/RM and the FAO GEF CU focal point.

key performance indicators

Expected outputs:	Required completion date:
• Inception report, including MTR questions	November 30, 2022
• Briefing on preliminary findings of the MTR following the field mission(s)	December 15, 2022
• First draft of the report	December 22, 2022
• Second draft of the report	January 15, 2022
• Final MTR report, including comments matrix/audit trail	February 7, 2022
• Two pages summary on main findings and recommendations	February 7, 2022

Annex 2 MTR itinerary

Ankara – 12/12/2022-13/12/2022		
09.30-17.00	Meetings with FAO and Central Level Stakeholders	To introduce the MTR team and to brief on the MTR process; present and discuss the MTR objectives. To discuss technical outputs and achievements To discuss the relevance of the project with regard to national and institutional needs and priorities; To discuss the effectiveness of the project
Ankara 14/12/2022-1612/2022		
09:30-10.30	Meeting with Kutahya Provincial Director of MAF and Project Focal Points	To introduce the MTR team and to brief on the MTR process; present and discuss the MTR objectives. To discuss technical outputs and achievements. To discuss the relevance of the project with regard to national and institutional needs and priorities; To discuss the effectiveness of the project
11.00-12:00	Meeting with Kutahya Regional Director of Forestry and Project Focal Points	To introduce the MTR team and to brief on the MTR process; present and discuss the MTR objectives. To discuss technical outputs and achievements. To discuss the relevance of the project with regard to national and institutional needs and priorities; To discuss the effectiveness of the project
12:00-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-14:15	Travel to Yaylababa village	
14.15-15.30	Visiting Yaylababa village where participatory micro basin planning was carried out and FFS is being implemented	To discuss technical outputs and expected results. To discuss the relevance of the project with regard To local needs and priorities; To discuss the effectiveness of the project
15.30-16.30	Travel to Sofca village	
16.30 – 17.00	Visiting Yaylababa village and meeting with local people	To discuss the relevance of the project with regard to local needs and priorities;

17.00-17.45	Travel from Sofca to Eskisehir	
	Overnight in Eskisehir	
15/12/2022 Eskisehir TBC		
09.00-10.30	Meeting with Karaman Provincial Director of MAF and local project team	To introduce the MTR team and to brief on the MTR process; present and discuss the MTR objectives. To discuss technical outputs and achievements. To discuss the relevance of the project with regard to national and institutional needs and priorities; To discuss the effectiveness of the project
10.45-11.55	Meeting with Eskisehir Regional Director of Forestry and Project Focal Points	To introduce the MTR team and to brief on the MTR process; present and discuss the MTR objectives. To discuss technical outputs and achievements. To discuss the relevance of the project with regard to national and institutional needs and priorities; To discuss the effectiveness of the project
12.00-13.30	Lunch in Eskisehir	
13.30-15.00	Travel from Eskisehir to Sivrihisar	
15.00-16.30	Meeting with the chair and members of women-led cooperatives supported by the project and visiting the greenhouse established	To discuss the relevance of the project with regard to local needs and priorities and FFS
16.30-18.00	Travel from Sivrihisar to Eskisehir	
17.00-	Overnight Stay in Eskisehir	
16/12/2022 Eskisehir & Polatli TBC		
09.00-10.30	Travel from Eskisehir to Kertek village/Sivrihisar and meeting with district director of MAF	To see pasture rehabilitation works
10.30-11.00	Travel from Kertek to Kocas village	
11.00-12.00	Meeting with FFS Farmers in Kocas village	To discuss on field incentives (crop rotation etc.,) and Farmer Filed Schools
12.00-12.30	Arrival to Sivrihisar	
12.30-13.30	Lunch in Sivrihisar	

13.30-15.00	Travel from Sivrihisar to Ankara/Polatli	
15.00-16.00	Meeting with farmers and project local focal points	To discuss on field incentives (crop rotation etc.,) and Farmer Filed Schools
16.00-17.30	Travel from Polatli to Ankara	
	Overnight stay in Ankara	

Annex 3 MTR matrix

Evaluative question	Indicator	Sources	Methodology
Questions & sub-questions	Relationships established, coherence of project design and implementation approach, specific activities conducted, quality of risk mitigation strategies, etc.	Project documents, national policies or strategies, websites, project staff, project partners, data collected throughout the MTR mission, etc.	Document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.
1. Strategic relevance - How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF Focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national level?			
To what extent are the project's objectives consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, national priorities and policies, global priorities and partners' and GEF policies and priorities?	Adequacy of activities in relation to policies and stakeholders' needs Alignment of project objective and outcomes with policy objectives Alignment of projects strategy and theory of change with country situation and national priorities	National policies, GEF & UNCCD policies, FAO policies	Document analysis, interviews.
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?	Effectiveness of partnerships arrangements since inception, co-financing budget execution.	Project Document, Inception Report, PIRs, minutes of SC meetings, TOC.	Document review, interviews with government agency stakeholders and project partners, analysis.

How relevant is the project strategy to the situation in the project area/ national context and circumstances? Does it provide the most effective route towards expected/intended results?	Coherence between project design and implementation – what changes have had to be made. Should changes have been made? Level of project resources assigned to tasks.	Project Document, Inception Report, Consultant's studies and reports, minutes of SC minutes	Document review, interviews with government agency stakeholders and project partners, analysis.
What has been the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document?	Suitability of specific components of the project to address issues and achieve results areas. Changes to the strategy, changes to the interventions. Completeness of interventions by mid-term.	Project Document, Inception Report, Work Plans, PIR and SC minutes of meetings, Consultants reports.	Documents, interviews with stakeholders, project implementing partners, PMU and project Consultants.
To what degree is the project's implementation a participatory and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project? Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation? If so, how is this achieved?	Gender disaggregated data, level of co-financing commitment/ expenditure, workshop and meeting attendance, degree of ownership of project community-based/ civil society initiatives	Project reports, PIR, workshop reports, co-financing records	Documents, interviews with stakeholders, project implementing partners.
Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes	National policy priorities and strategies, as stated in official	National policy and regulatory framework documents	Document review, interviews with high-level project partners.

pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits?	documents. Approved policy and legislation related to agriculture, land use and land use planning, climate change, budgets, etc.		
2. Effectiveness – progress towards results, to what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?			
To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?	SRF indicators	Project Document, SRF, PIRs, results	Document review, analysis, interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries, verification in the field.
To what extent did the project contribute to the Country Programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the FAO Strategic Framework, Country Programming Framework Outcome, GEF strategic priorities, and national development priorities?	Alignment and synergies of outcomes	Project Document, CPAP, SDGs, GEF strategic priorities	Document review, high-level stakeholder interviews, analysis
What factors have contributed to the achieving or not achieving intended outcomes and outputs? Could the project include alternative strategies?	Progress towards results, efficiency of project strategy, adjustments to strategy Number of key priorities that have been met through the project Assumptions not met / unpredictable effects	SRF, Project Document, PIR, risk log	Document review, interviews, analysis
Has the project produced unintended results - positive or negative? If there are negative results, what mitigation activities are in place?	Progress towards results, efficiency of project strategy, adjustments to strategy Number of key priorities that have been met through the project Assumptions not met / unpredictable effects	SRF, Project Document, PIR, risk log	Document review, interviews, analysis
To what extent the project has demonstrated: a) scaling up, b)	Number of relevant initiatives not directly financed by the project, transfer of lessons learned,	PIR, other project reports	Document review, interview with FAO/PMU, SC, stakeholder, beneficiaries, government agencies

replication, c) demonstration, and/or d) production of public good?	utilisation of project-developed tools and methodologies		
What evidence is there to suggest that the project will achieve the outcomes and objective by the close of the GEF-fund?	Budget execution, realism of work plans, results to date, review of SRF	PMU, project documentation	Document review, interviews, field visits
3. Efficiency - Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?			
To what extent has 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?	Activity modifications (removal / adding) Budget revisions Circumstances for no-cost extension Functionality of M&E system Compliance with GEF & FAO rules	FAO finance & project staff Project Director interview Annual reports	Interviews, analysis, field visits
To what extent were project funds and activities delivered in a timely manner?	As above		
Are all the project outputs (in the Project Document) the most efficient means to achieve the project objective?	Project strategy alignment with project objective	Project SRF & strategy, PIR, SRF, project objective	Interviews, analysis
How did the project adapt to the new normality COVID-19? Did the project contribute to minimizing the socioeconomic effects of the Pandemic?	Implementation adjustments (e.g., remote training, more widespread use of technology for communication / decision-making	Interviews SC members Interviews of activity implementers Interviews of project team Covid-19 plan	Interviews, analysis
4. Factors affecting performance -			
Design			
Is there a logical hierarchy between activities, outputs, outcomes and objective?	Effectiveness and efficiency of proposed activities, outputs to achieving the outcomes and objective	Discussions with project staff, stakeholders, project partners, Project Document, SRF, PIRs.	Interviews & analysis.

Does the Project Document set out a clear and logical strategy to achieve the objective?	As above		
Are there changes in circumstances which affect the project's strategy?	As above		
Implementation arrangements			
Were the capacities of the implementing partners correctly identified in the project's design	Efficacy of proposed & present project institutional implementation arrangements	Project Document, PS minutes of meetings, FAO/PMU	Analysis, interviews
Is there sufficient representation of stakeholders in the implementation?	Stakeholder participation	Stakeholder plan, Social & Environmental Screening process	Interviews, analysis
Are the implementation arrangements to most effective and efficient to ensure ownership of project results and continuity?	As above		
Financing & co-financing			
Are there variances between planned and actual expenditures? What are the main reasons? To what extend did financial controls allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget?	Disbursement trends Follow-up and adjustments of procurement plan Co-financing complementarities / substitution M&E system updates and annual/intra-year budgetary adjustments	FAO finance & project staff Project Director interview Annual reports	Interviews, analysis
What extra resources has the project leveraged? How have they contributed to the project's ultimate objective?	Co-financing delivery	Financial reports	Analysis, interviews
Implementation, oversight & execution			
To what extent has FAO delivered effectively on activities related to project identification, concept	Changes in OPIM staff	Annual reports, PIR FAO, principle OPIM partners & project team interviews	Interviews, document review, analysis

preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion and evaluation?	Periodicity of technical meetings with project team & relevant support / timeliness of recruitments Changes in project team staff Activity / staff / service payment delays…	CDR	
What are the risks of the project not being under OPIM?	As above & sustainability issues listed below		
M&E, adaptive management			
How useful is the project's M&E framework?	Utility and ease of use of the SRF	SRF, PIR, PPR	Interviews, document review, analysis
Are all the risks correctly identified and tracked?	Review of project risks outlined in Project Document		
Are there regular M&E reviews?	Veracity of project M&E		
Are project partners and stakeholders included in the M&E activities?	Inclusion of OPIM in analysis & M&E		
Have any changes to the project been based on evidence?	As above		
5. Sustainability of project results			
How are risks monitored and managed?	Project risk log and management responses, communication with partners and stakeholders	Project Document, PPR/PIRs and the Risk Register, project communications strategy	Review, interviews, analysis
Financial risks to sustainability			
Have the co-financing commitments been met?	OPIM contributions, regional and global upscaling commitments	Co-financing reports, project communications	Document interviews, analysis
Are there examples of project results being funded through national budget allocation (upscaling)?	As above		
Socio-economic sustainability			
What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being	OPIM and other project partners, public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other	National policies and plans, local policies and plans, CSO feedback, private sector feedback, project exit	Review, interviews, analysis

available once the GEF assistance ends?	funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes	arrangements. Consultants and service providers reports	
Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability			
What are the long-term socio-political risks to the outcomes of the project?	Partner and stakeholder ownership, public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long-term objectives, sharing of information on risks, adjustments to interventions to address specific risks	National policies and plans, local policies and plans, CSO and farmer feedback, private sector feedback, project exit arrangements. Consultants and service providers reports	Review, interviews, analysis
What are the risks to post-project ownership because of the change in implementation arrangements?	As above		
Has the project developed a legacy plan?	As above		
Environmental risks to sustainability			
What are the environmental risks to the sustainability of the project's outcomes? How are these managed and mitigated?	Climate data and forecasts. National disaster risk reduction strategies and plans	National data, policies and plans	Review and analysis, field visits
6. Cross-cutting issues – equity issues			
How were gender and human rights considerations integrated in the project's design, including analysis, implementation plan, indicators, targets, budget, timeframe and responsible party? To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and	M&E system covering gender Activity adaptability as per gender and target beneficiaries' types Degree of project targeting of vulnerable people Number of women & vulnerable people that were direct beneficiaries from project's results	Gender-specific & marginalized group interviews (focus) Project team interview OPIM interviews Annual reports Social & environmental screening process	Documentation review, interviews, field visits, analysis

human rights of disadvantaged or marginalized groups? To what extent did women, poor, indigenous, persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged or marginalized groups participate and benefit from the project? Is there any potential negative impact on gender equality, women's empowerment, disadvantaged or marginalized groups? If so, what can be done to mitigate this? To what extent was the social and environmental screening process during the project's design realistic, followed and monitored. Were gender related/ affecting activities, gender-blind, -negative, -targeted, -responsive, -transformational?	Level of participation of vulnerable groups & women in activities' operationalization Safeguarding actions and activities FPIC		

Annex 4 Results matrix outputs

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
Output 1.1.1: Capacity development program in place on LDN target setting and its implementation for local and central government staff				
Number of institutional training courses that integrate LDN Number of people trained at local and central level National and international symposia International LDN exchange	Knowledge of LDN and how to operationalize it at local and national level is limited despite the earlier LDN pilot project	At least one institutional training programme that integrates LDN At least 30 people trained at central level and 15 at local National LDN symposium	At least two central-level training programmes and one local that integrates LDN At least 150 people trained (at least 50 women) International LDN Symposium	Satisfactory Stakeholder feedback indicated that partners and stakeholders were pleased with the capacity building. There is growing pressure to address LD and agency staff are welcoming of the technical training and capacity. 4 technical workshops, One online training on FFS

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
		At least 5 people participate in national symposium related to LDN At least 35 people participate in international LDN exchange programmes	At least 5 people participate in national and 2 in a international symposiums related to LDN At least 50 people participate in international LDN exchange programmes	Stakeholder meetings have taken place with numerous online meetings taking pace during the pandemic lockdown with the Ministry partners; 2 online trainings (due to Covid -19) on combatting desertification and land degradation were conducted with participation of 144 experts from African countries. "A Workshop on the Development of the Project for Combating Land Degradation and Desertification in the ECO Region" was held in Turkiye between 14-16 December 2021. A Project proposal focusing on technology transfer in scope of the LDN DSS is under discussion. LDN Regional Dialogue Workshop were attended by 20 individuals.
Output 1.1.2: Creation of a national online Information Sharing Forum on LDN for stakeholder engagement				
National Online Information Sharing Forum on LDN	No LDN platform exists	1 National Online Information Sharing Forum on LDN	1 National Online Information Sharing Forum on LDN	Satisfactory National Online Information Sharing Forum has been developed, but it is not yet online.
Output 1.1.3: Capacity development program in place for farmers, herders and forest villages in the Upper Sakarya Basin				
Number of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) established on modern and sustainable production methods. Number of local people trained, including how many. Mass media campaigns on LDN women.	Knowledge of modern and sustainable production methods is limited at local village level No mass media campaigns on LDN	At least 3 FFS established At least 30 local people trained of which 50% are women At least 1 mass media campaign	At least 3 FFS established At least 60 local people trained of which 50% are women At least 2 mass media campaign	Satisfactory Lead Farmers Association (the service provider) has been engaged with ToR and has established 6 FFS in project pilot sites. An introductory film was prepared on LDN and combatting desertification High level managers of the Ministry Partners presented LDN on TV programs, delivered interviews and published information on LDN On official social media accounts of the Ministry 3 public service announcements published on desertification Press statements announced on LDN and desertification.
Output 1.1.4: Identification of needs for new legislation and/or revisions of existing legislation based on project findings and targeted stakeholder consultations				

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
New and/or revised legislation that operationalise the LDN approach	LDN is not currently integrated into any legislation or regulations	Gap analysis of relevant legislation	New and/or revised legislation	Year 3 – 4 activity
Output 1.1.5: Integration of the LDN approach and priorities into strategic planning processes at sub-national and national levels				
Integration of LDN into strategic planning processes Strengthening of the LDN intersectoral working group	LDN is not integrated into any process for e.g. watershed management, drought management The LDN working Group lacks capacity	LDN integrated into at least one strategic planning process 4 meetings of the LDN working group	LDN integrated into at least 3 strategic planning processes 8 meetings of the LDN Working Group	Satisfactory. Decision makers and strategic planners are informed about LDN approach through technical meetings, stakeholder meetings and workshops. A participatory micro basin planning that considers LDN has been initiated and is under preparation The National action plan and strategy on combatting desertification was prepared considering; LDN target setting program (2015-2030), a new UNCCD strategy (2018-2030) for Türkiye. The LDN working group (Committee Meetings on National Action Plan to Combat Desertification) has been meeting for IDR reporting every year. A draft circular is prepared to establish a "Desertification Coordination Board" as a platform consisting of relevant public institutions, academia, professional organizations, non-governmental and private sector institutions and organizations in order to ensure effective coordination, monitoring and evaluation on land degradation.
Output 2.1.1: Metrics for LDN indicators (i.e. land cover, soil organic carbon and land productivity) identified, tested and calibrated				
Calibrated metrics for LDN indicators available	Information on the three LDN indicators – land cover, SOC and productivity – is	Calibrated data on land cover, SOC and productivity available for the Upper Sakarya Basin	Calibrated data on land cover, SOC and productivity available for the whole of Turkey	Satisfactory SOC and land productivity indicators are calibrated, Türkiye`s desertification model is calibrated,

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
	available but needs to be calibrated			Production of LULC data is continued in the scope of the national UASIS project.
Output 2.1.2: DSS integrated and tested				
Integration for LDN DSS	Software for other DSS exist that will be used to integrate the LDN DSS	LDN DSS available	LDN DSS integrated, tested and used	Highly Satisfactory The DSS software and applications make it a very flexible tool with a wide range of applications that can be utilized by different end-users according to their needs. With adequate training the software can be updated to and the platform built upon for future or emerging user needs. A GEE App (as software) on LDN was developed to combine national tools, by FAO. The system first prepared for Upper Sakarya, up-scaled at national level and extended 17 FAO Region countries. Currently it includes and integrates NPP, LPD and SOC seq maps
Output 2.1.3: Land cover classes and land degradation levels in demonstration area in the Upper Sakarya basin identified				
Land cover classes and land degradation levels in the Upper Sakarya Basin verified	Land cover classes and land degradation levels in the Upper Sakarya Basin have been determined, but need verification	Land cover classes and land degradation levels in the Upper Sakarya Basin verified	Land cover classes and land degradation levels in the Upper Sakarya Basin verified	SATISFACTORY Ministry partners are conducting a national project to produce this data (UASIS) LDN DSS validation is carried out by FAO experts with a high accuracy and has already identified hotspots. Ministry partners are conducting a national project to produce this data
Output 2.2.1: LDN target setting based on current and existing monitoring infrastructure and metrics agreed				
Target setting and hot spots and cold spots for gains and losses identified	Many monitoring approaches have been tested in Turkey, including the 'land productivity dynamics approach' that the target setting will build on	Target setting completed and hot spots and cold spots for gains and losses identified	Target setting completed and hot spots and cold spots for gains and losses identified	Satisfactory LDN DSS now enables users to identify hot and cold spots for gains and losses using LPD Land Productivity Dynamic map is produced by FAO. Trend in Land Productivity Dynamic due to biomass gains and losses in forest and pasture

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
				lands as well as the negative productivity trend in agricultural lands is determined.
Output 2.2.2: Effective and economic approach for soil organic carbon monitoring identified and disseminated				
Agreed soil organic carbon monitoring approach	The Soil Organic Carbon Monitoring Model and Mapping Project of Turkey will serve as the baseline	Agreed soil organic carbon monitoring approach	Agreed soil organic carbon monitoring approach disseminated	SATISFACTORY Türkiye has set a model for SOC and national SOC model is used as a base in DSS. In addition, a potential carbon sequestration map has been produced for whole country. For plot level SOC monitoring, soil samples were taken from pilot sites The Land Productivity Dynamic Map is integrated with the Soil Organic Carbon Model A framework for the use of effective SOC monitoring system under the SLM and SFM practices applied is under development.
Output 2.2.3: Turkey's existing land degradation monitoring system calibrated to monitor LDN indicators and for testing in the Upper Sakarya Basin				
TCM and LPD Models tested	The existing TCM model needs field calibration	TCM and LPD Models tested in the Upper Sakarya Basin	TCM and LPD Models compared on an area basis	SATISFACTORY The TCM Model was calibrated by MAF before the inception of the project (accounting for some of the budget surplus in component 2) and is currently being improved in line with project targets and activities. DSS now allows comparison of TCM and LPD, and both can be used for multi criteria analysis in the DSS The TCM Model has been calibrated by MAF. Sub indicators of TCM has been explored to be used for effective monitoring
Output 2.2.4: LDN-related reporting capacity improved				
Web-based Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (IDR) operationalized Training of decision-makers and technical staff	The IDR has been developed, but further capacity in using it is needed	The IDR operationalized and 20 decision- makers and 30 technical staff trained of which 50% are women	A total of 30 decision-makers and 50 technical staff trained	SATISFACTORY IDR system became operational before the inception of the project (accounting for some of the budget surplus in component 2). Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, 3 online trainings were carried out on IDR

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
				In excess 150 people have received training on the LDN and the IDR System Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (IDR) is in place
Output 2.2.5: Climate variability integrated into the LDN DSS and tested in the Upper Sakarya Basin				
Sub-indicators of climate variability tested in the Upper Samaria Basin for the TCM and SOC Models	The TCM and SOC models have not been calibrated for climate variability	Sub-indicators of climate variability tested in the Upper Samaria Basin for the TCM and SOC models	Sub-indicators of climate variability tested in the Upper Samaria Basin for the TCM and SOC models	Moderately Satisfactory Calibration of the models for climate variability is still ongoing. The Ministry Partners have requested the FAO technical team to support on climate variability, a budget was allocated in 2the 022 WP. MAF has not calibrated the models for climate variability
Output 3.1.1: Participatory landscape-specific improvement plans based on priorities identified by the DSS covering 4,313,827 ha of land				
Ha of land covered by landscape- specific improvement plans	0 covered, but the LDN planning will be integrated into the existing integrated watershed planning processes	2,000,000	4,313,827	Satisfactory LDN approach has been used for 4 new micro basin planning process
Output 3.1.2: Demonstrations of SLM and SFM best practices in forests, rangelands and croplands that provide carbon benefits on 14,000 ha of land				
Area with demonstrations of SLM and SFM best practices % increase in SOC in area covered by BPs	0 covered, but the project will build on BPs tested elsewhere in Turkey	7,000	14,000 20 % increase in SOC	Satisfactory (MTR is not reporting on SOC) 36,690 ha of lands in total; 71,2 ha of organic farming, 199 ha soil analysis, 10,000 ha of fertilization in agricultural lands, 10,077 ha of weed control in agricultural lands Establishment of rangeland facilities in 1,062 ha of rangelands, Fruit seedlings distributed for 15,1 ha of land Provision of alfalafa seeds for 10 ha of land 5,485 ha of afforestation, 4,389 ha of rehabilitation 5,357 ha of erosion control was implemented in Upper Sakarya Basin

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
				25 ha of forest areas was established with species that is used for honey production Incentives provided for dairy cow/cattle breeding
Output 3.1.3: Measures and approaches for reducing the impacts of climate variability integrated into SLM and SFM practices				
Number of climate-smart measures and approaches integrated into SLM/SFM	0	5	10	Moderately Satisfactory Pandemic restrictions have delayed these activities Direct seedling machines were provided under the project to introduce no till agricultural practices (Kutahya and Polatli) Solid manure spreaders were provided to introduce the use of manure instead of chemical fertilizers and avoided uncontrolled manure storage making use of farm wastes SOC expert with agricultural background was hired and prepared a report on best practices to be implemented to avoid climate change effects and increase SOC XX biogas digesters have been installed.
Output 3.1.4: Preparation of an implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the whole Upper Sakarya Basin				
Implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the Upper Sakarya Basin	No such plan exists	1 implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the whole Sakarya Basin	1 implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the whole Sakarya Basin	Satisfactory The Socio-economic and Gender Strategy has been produced (in draft). This output has been achieved in part through the micro-basin planning (4 prepared).
Output 3.2.1: Introduction of gender sensitive sustainable livelihood strategies				
Gender Action Plan for the Upper Sakarya Basin	No such plan exists	Gender Action Plan for the Upper Sakarya Basin	Gender Action Plan for the Upper Sakarya Basin	Satisfactory The Socio-economic and Gender Strategy has been produced (in draft).
Output 3.2.2: Introduction of gender- sensitive climate resilient practices to enhance land productivity				
Number of gender sensitive climate resilient practices targeting women Area covered	Existing practices are not climate resilient	5 practices/200 women 1 500 ha 150 households	10 practices/300 Women 2 000 ha	Moderately Satisfactory The output has considerable promise. However, the pandemic has delayed its implementation and the impact is only now being felt. It needs

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
Number of households with improved living conditions Number of women trained			300 households 300 women	additional time to achieve an impact on any significant scale. 5 Practices have been introduced for soil and land management practices, crop and pasture management practices and alternative practices. Honeybee Colonies, Beehives and Bee Kits, as well as trainings were provided for 60 women farmers Rangeland rehabilitation was carried out in 10 ha of land with salt bushes, to provide forage for farmers whose main source of income is animal husbandry Drip irrigation systems is going to be applied in 200 da of land in onion, sugar beet and maize fields – tender process finalized. Crop rotation plots were formed for; 300 da with Hungarian vetch (it was implemented with direct seedling), 500 da with oat. Organic soil conditioner (leonhardite) was applied in 300 da, and local chickpea applied in 300 da for crop rotation and soil nitrogen increase. In scope of the improvement of living conditions small scaled biogas systems are planned to be established to prevent uncontrolled manure storage, to provide heating as well as CO2 emissions. Gender sensitive and climate smart practices implemented will contribute local people`s income and living conditions, but this will need to be scaled up and promoted with a vigorous communications campaign for it to have impact at scale. The number of women trained target should be adjusted according to the information

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
				contained in the Socio-economic Report and Gender Strategy.
Output 4.1.1: LDN metrics for the whole of Turkey entered into the LDN DSS and land cover classes and land degradation levels identified				
LDN metrics for the whole of Turkey available in DSS	No national LDN DSS or metrics is in place	Land cover classes for the whole of Turkey identified based on the 6 IPCC classes	LDN metrics for the whole of Turkey available in DSS	Highly Satisfactory Achieved. LDN metrics are identified and LDN metrics are available under LDN DSS.
Output 4.1.2: LDN target setting at national scale in place				
LDN target setting in place	No LDN target setting at the national scale	Alternative indicators examined for use at the national scale (socio-economic)	National LDN target setting in place	Satisfactory Türkiye set national targets prior to the project inception. The work carried out in developing the DSS identified a need to revise these national LDN targets. For this purpose, a workshop was held with participation of many different stakeholders to define the roles and responsibilities of the institutions within the revised targets.
Output 4.1.3: Development of bankable projects for the LDN fund (at least 1)				
Number of bankable projects for the LDN fund	No projects for the LDN fund developed in Turkey	0	1 bankable project	This is a final year activity however a workshop was held (August 2022) in cooperation with UNCCD and Mirova, to invite NGOs, Private sector and all stakeholders and to discuss on how to benefit from LDN Fund.
Output 4.2.1: Global Environmental Benefits monitored and assessed				
Baseline and targets for GEB indicators refined	0	Project M&E system delivers expected reports and informs project management	Project M&E system delivers expected reports and informs project management	Not assessed
Output 4.2.2: Mid- term and final evaluation conducted				
Mid-term and final evaluation reports	0	Mid-project review recommendations implemented	Final evaluation	Not assessed
Output 4.3: Experience sharing on Project- related “lessons- learned” and a national LDN guideline published				
National LDN Guideline	0	2 Experience sharing notes	3 experience sharing notes	Satisfactory An LDN Publication was developed titled ``Monitoring the Land Degradation Neutrality

Indicator	Baseline	MTR target	EOP target	MTR assessment
				impact pathway across scales and sectors based on experiences from Türkiye``. This should be expanded to promote this experience more widely through the UNCCD.

Annex 5 Rating criteria and ratings tables

GEF evaluation criteria rating table

The MTR team is required to rate the aforementioned MTR criteria for the purposes of reporting to GEF and FAO on progress to date. Ratings need to be well substantiated, based on evidence gathered from the MTR, and a summary description of this evidence should be presented in the MTR Ratings & Achievements Summary Table (Table A11.3).

The MTR team should compare their (independently derived) ratings with those of the most recent GEF project implementation review (PIR) and describe any significant discrepancies.

Most criteria will be rated on a six-point scale, as follows: highly satisfactory (HS); satisfactory (S); moderately satisfactory (MS); moderately unsatisfactory (MU); unsatisfactory (U); highly unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and the likelihood of impact are rated from likely (L) down to highly unlikely (HU). Explanations as to how to rate the criteria of effectiveness, sustainability and factors affecting performance can be found in the corresponding sections in Table A11.3.

Table A11.3 MTR ratings and achievements summary table

GEF criteria/sub-criteria	Rating[69]	Summary comments[70]
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE		
A1. Overall strategic relevance	HS→HU	
A1.1. Alignment with GEF and FAO strategic priorities	HS→HU	
A1.2. Relevance to national, regional and global priorities and beneficiary needs	HS→HU	
A1.3. Complementarity with existing interventions	HS→HU	
B. EFFECTIVENESS		
B1. Overall assessment of project results	HS→HU	
B1.1 Delivery of project outputs	HS→HU	
B1.2 Progress towards outcomes[71] and project objectives	HS→HU	
- Outcome 1	HS→HU	
- Outcome 2	HS→HU	
- Etc.	HS→HU	
- Overall rating of progress towards achieving objectives/ outcomes	HS→HU	
B1.3 Likelihood of impact	Not rated at MTR	
C. EFFICIENCY		
C1. Efficiency[72]	HS→HU	
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
D1. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	L→HU	
D1.1. Financial risks	L→HU	
D1.2. Sociopolitical risks	L→HU	

[69] See rating scheme at the end of the document.
[70] Include reference to the relevant sections in the report.
[71] Assessment and ratings by individual outcomes may be undertaken if there is added value.
[72] Includes cost efficiency and timeliness.

D1.3. Institutional and governance risks	L→HU	
D1.4. Environmental risks	L→HU	
D2. Catalysis and replication	HS→HU	
E. FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE		
E1. Project design and readiness[73]	HS→HU	
E2. Quality of project implementation	HS→HU	
E2.1 Quality of project implementation by FAO (BH, LTO, PTF, etc.)	HS→HU	
E2.1 Project oversight (PSC, project working group, etc.)	HS→HU	
E3. Quality of project execution	HS→HU	
E3.1 Project execution and management (PMU and executing partner performance, administration, staffing, etc.)	HS→HU	
E4. Financial management and co-financing	HS→HU	
E5. Project partnerships and stakeholder engagement	HS→HU	
E6. Communication, knowledge management and knowledge products	HS→HU	
E7. Overall quality of M&E	HS→HU	
E7.1 M&E design	HS→HU	
E7.2 M&E plan implementation (including financial and human resources)	HS→HU	
E8. Overall assessment of factors affecting performance	HS→HU	
F. CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS		
F1. Gender and other equity dimensions	HS→HU	
F2. Human rights issues	HS→HU	
F2. Environmental and social safeguards	HS→HU	
Overall project rating	**HS→HU**	

Rating scheme
Additional explanation on how to assess ratings for specific criteria, for example, whether they are highly satisfactory or moderately satisfactory, can be found in Tables A11.4 to A11.7.[74]

Overall outcome ratings
MTRs should use mid-term targets per the project's logframe to assess outcome delivery. If no mid-term indicator targets are available, the MTR should base outcome ratings on an assessment of the delivery of results to date against milestones in workplans and delivery compared with end-of-project targets.

Table A11.4 How to assess ratings for specific criteria

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	*Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no shortcomings*
Satisfactory (S)	*Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor shortcomings*
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	*Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate shortcomings*

[73] This refers to factors affecting the project's ability to start as expected, such as the presence of sufficient capacity among executing partners at project launch.
[74] See further information on GEF rating scales in Annex 2: Rating scales in GEF (2017c).

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 shortcomings*
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	*Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe shortcomings*
Unable to assess (UA)	*The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements*

Source: GEF (2017c)

In line with similar guidance on the assessment of ratings for GEF terminal evaluations (GEF, 2017c), the overall rating of the outcomes of the project should be based on performance on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. The calculation of the overall outcome rating will consider all three criteria, of which relevance and effectiveness are critical. The relevance rating will determine whether the overall outcome rating is in the unsatisfactory range (MU to HU = unsatisfactory range). If the relevance rating is unsatisfactory, the overall outcome will be unsatisfactory as well. However, where the relevance rating is satisfactory (HS to MS), the overall outcome rating could, depending on its effectiveness and efficiency rating, be either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Table A11.5 Factors affecting performance *(assess each element separately; M&E is treated differently)*

Rating	Description
Highly satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results meet expectations.
Moderately satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results more or less meet expectations.
Moderately unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results were somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management and results were substantially lower than expected.
Highly unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management.
Unable to assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of design and readiness/project implementation/project execution/co-financing/partnerships and stakeholder engagement/communication and knowledge management.

Table A11.6 Monitoring and evaluation design or implementation ratings *(Overall M&E design, design and implementation assessed separately)*

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

Table A11.7 Sustainability

Rating	Description
Likely (L)	There is little or no risk 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.

Annex 6 Field report

REPORT ON FIELD MISSION

12 – 16 December 2022
Kütahya, Eskişehir, Ankara

Leader Farmer Association:

Findings:

- They are the best choice for FFS as they are already an advisory body for farmers, operating in Tekirdağ province. It is an NGO and non-profit organization. They can provide both training and advice for farmers in the pilot area.
- They have the baseline information about the farmers in the pilot area. They used questionnaire and each question on different topics reflects an indicator.
- They identified that the farmers are hungry for knowledge and advice in pilot area.
- They are very well aware about their role, responsibility and importance for LDN project.
- They are highly motivated by FAO assignment and realized that they need to refresh themselves.
- They receive additional demands from other farmers in pilot area
- They receive more concrete feedback from women farmers
- They consider that the remaining project period is not enough to see the results from project activities.

- They are aware that every region has different priorities and thus needs different training programs.
- They have very limited knowledge about DSS and they would like to know more about it.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- They have potential to involve other project activities such as participatory rural appraisals, training needs assessments, facilitation of micro basin planning, providing consultancy services in technical matters and impact analysis. They can play a consultancy role when necessary, with some reinforcement.

GD of Combatting Desertification and Erosion –CEM

Findings:

- They provide co-financing and prepare micro basin plans
- Covid19 pandemic prevented them to implement field activities
- LDN project provided them with joint project preparations with other organizations in cooperation
- They contact with other involved organizations via focal points
- DSS can play an important role to determine the priorities in 25 basins and 4441 sub basins with appropriate parameters
- They consider to use DSS in other projects
- They are the coordinator organization of LDN project and they have the capacity to continue LDN concept after the project.
- Design and implementation are under different departments and this makes project implementation difficult.
- There should be enough time reserved for planning.
- They now include women in their projects after LDN
- DSS is a new system and it is an evolving system, they want to use DSS in 4441 sub-basin plannings, they need additional data to use DSS in a better way, it is an economic way to obtain data without going to field, their regional and provincial directorates can use it, there are very positive feedbacks from DSS users. DSS can be tested in one pilot area and some feedback can be obtained to revise or further develop DSS.
- The project period should be extended at least one agricultural season more.
- They use their own financial resources for the project.
- Forestry villagers are included in the project (8 million people live in forest area)
- They have very good relations with FAO and they speak the same language which is advantage.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- They can be the hub of LDN applications or implementation in the future. Although they have no manpower problem, some planning and managerial skills should be delivered to key personnel.
- Additionally, some key personnel should also be trained in coding for DSS development for the future.

GD of Agrarian Reform

Findings:

- The project has been implementing well albeit Covid pandemic
- They are in agriculture side of the project, a model is expected and FFS is supporting LDN on the field, women cooperatives are in place too.
- They are happy with project activities
- The training in Tekirdağ drew attention
- They are responsible for monitoring and ÇEM is coordinator organization in LDN project.
- If no field activities are in place, there could be some problems in motivation of farmers, they experienced such issue during pandemic. Central support would facilitate works on the field.
- They can implement different practices if more machines are purchased.
- The project can be extended, maybe 6 months.
- They demand reports every three months, especially co-financing tables.
- Demonstrations are important and they are the reflections of LDN on the field.
- Concrete activities like training in Tekirdağ draw more attention then activities in Ankara.
- DSS will be one of the output of the project and the usage of DSS should be expanded.
- DSS is used in field use planning.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- A workshop before closing of LDN project should be organized to share experiences of all stakeholders in the project, the experts on the field in particular should participate to this workshop.
- The use of DSS should be encouraged among experts of MoAF with some examples.

GD of Combatting Desertification and Erosion –CEM Technical Staff

Findings:

- They are the designer and the coordinator of the project and master mind behind LDN concept.
- They wanted to implement the project by their own but when the management changed, the new management rejected to implement it and handed over to FAO.
- DSS is a new approach and needs time to mature.
- They introduced DSS to other organizations and some positive demands received with a condition of adding some data on existing DSS.
- DSS is open to everyone who needs.
- There were some difficulties about involving other organizations at the beginning but it has been solved now.
- Covid pandemic affected the field applications on a negative direction.
- Leader Farmer Associations are very experienced in their field.

- Implementations on the field facilitated to understand the project better.
- The purpose of the system is to monitor the degradation so many organizations use it.
- DSS will evolve.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- Same as above (for ÇEM)

Kütahya Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry

Findings:

- They are very enthusiastic and ambitious; they have been working with the project for the last two years.
- They have young and eager engineers in the project team.
- DSS was presented to the team and they found it useful. But they have not used it yet.
- DSS outputs and data from the field match, so DSS is an accurate and reliable tool. It has potential to develop.
- They need a training to use DSS, especially at managerial level.
- Agricultural sustainability is important and such tools provide important data.
- The size of farms will get bigger due to land consolidation and this could trigger land degradation. Bigger farms in size brings intense farming, such as more tillage, more fertilizer use, more irrigation. Therefore, the degradation or pollution will increase. So, measures should be taken thanks to support systems like DSS.
- They have similar system like LDN but this project brought some new contributions or farming practices.
- LDN focuses some points and these points increased their awareness.
- The technical staff received 3 days training on "training of trainers".
- Apiculture was introduced and now the production is increasing.
- Fodder crops were introduced and implemented.
- Demands for similar implementations from other villages are constantly received.
- Awareness about effectiveness and efficiency have been raised thanks to this project.
- There will be some other trainings in cooperation with leader farmer association.
- They implement 32 projects in total and evaluate these projects ate the end of the year.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- New demonstrations and trials may be introduced to expand alternative crops, new crops may be introduced for better crop rotation.
- They can be used as a success story; they can also be used to export the experience to other areas in upper Sakarya basin within their area of responsibility.
- They may demand to replicate or copy the "lead farmer association" concept into the region but this is not LDN project's interest or responsibility. If this happens, LDN project should kindly refuse.

Kütahya Regional Forestry Directorate

Findings:

- They identified that they neglected the human aspect in LDN concept and tried to fix a wide range of area by using LDN project as an opportunity. They also identified that the demands of other stakeholders are different than theirs (forestation, rehabilitation etc). Other stakeholders like farmers do not think about forestation, their interests are different. (Conflict of interest). Farmers wanted greenhouse or similar supports but these demands are simply neglected.
- They cannot support private farms or property; they can only work on state property!
- Agriculture side was not agree with them in implementations in some areas. Coordination and consensus among stakeholders are the most wanted but most difficult aspect in LDN project implementation.
- Ex-ante or feasibility studies before any planning in the pilot area are missing or weak.
- The owner or manager of micro basin plans is not well known or clear.
- DSS has not been used yet by them but they have been informed about it.
- They are not sure whether DSS is a useful tool. They do analysis on the field with visits and observations.
- There is a criticism about not having enough support from other stakeholders.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- Training programs on analysis techniques, project design, strategic planning, participatory assessments, communication techniques etc. should be delivered. But before delivering such trainings, comprehensive training needs should be assessed.
- DSS should be re-introduced in detail and a training program covering how to use DSS in planning should be organized.

Yaylababa Village (Kütahya)

Findings:

- They are happy with the project activities and support; they want to continue working with the project.
- Animal husbandry (milk) is important for the village. A collector merchant collects the milk.
- Water for irrigation is available but very limited.
- Women are active in production and a cooperative idea creates motivation.
- Expectations from the project are high and they are waiting for trainings.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- A training program for animal husbandry (dairy production) should be delivered.
- A special training program for women regarding cooperatives should be organized (but not limited to women!).

Eskişehir Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry

Findings:

- The agricultural lands are intensively used and this creates a risk for sustainability and productivity. So, this project could be an example about how to save our lands.
- Leonhardite and atriplex (a plant for meadow areas) applications are very promising and successful. Drip irrigation systems are already in use by some farmers but project's support will certainly assist in expanding such systems in the area.
- The farmer trainings have not been started yet due to covid pandemic. The project period seems not enough to see the results from the field activities. Thus, the period should be extended at least one agricultural season.
- There is drying machine installed but has not been used yet.
- The agricultural demonstrations are implemented in Sivrihisar district (in Eskişehir) by district level directorate.
- Maximum 200/300 farmers are directly or indirectly benefitting from LDN project in Eskişehir province.
- The demonstration farmers were selected by taking into consideration of their ability to be a good example. The farmers who are dealing with farming only (as income generating activity only) have been selected.
- They were aware about the practices introduced by LDN project before but now they have better vision about how to solve those problems.
- 50% yield increase (chickpea) after leonhardite application created a massive impact among farmers.
- A greenhouse is installed ready to be used by for women.
- A manure spreader machine was purchased by the project and handed over to local authorities to be used by farmers when needed. It is used by farmers.
- They receive demands from other villages to join into project activities.
- They identified that their awareness about LDN has been increased.
- They have been working with lead farmer association in rapeseed production for a couple of years, long before LDN project. They have very good relation with them.
- They have heard leonhardite application thanks to this project.
- No economic or financial analysis was made.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- It is obvious that several training programs regarding greenhouse production, drying techniques, packaging, food processing, preventing post-harvest losses etc. should be organized.
- There should be a kind of "updating mechanisms" among all stakeholders working in the pilot area so that all stakeholders can be informed and updating on a regular basis.

Eskişehir Regional Forestry Directorate

Findings:

- The director has just been appointed and he has been updated and informed about the project.
- There is a demand for lavender sapling by villagers.
- DSS was introduced but is not known well. The analysis on the field is done through physical observations and measurements. They would like to know DSS in detail.
- The project period should be extended due to covid pandemic which caused delays in some activities.

- Coordination among related stakeholders is very important. Every stakeholder has different working styles, cultures and interests. Sometimes this creates conflicts which may delay, slow down or even complete stop of activities.
- Shepherds should be also supported.
- They do not want to narrow down the meadow areas, on the contrary.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- Same recommendations for Kütahya directorate.

Sivrihisar

Findings:

- Women deal with food processing, handicrafts; they are the shareholders of a cooperative
- Greenhouse is installed and ready to operate, drying equipment is ready to operate, waiting to start
- They are happy with the support of the project, there are demands from others for similar supports.
- Project period should be extended at least one year.
- They are excited to start of the trainings.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- Addition to pre-fixed technical trainings, cooperative training, marketing, food processing, hygiene, work safety, fund rising and project planning (for grant applications) trainings should also be considered.

Kertek Village

Findings:

- Atriplex (a plant for meadow areas) has been planted in a meadow on 10 ha area. The meadow will not be grazed during the next three years.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- If the meadow will not be grazed during the next three years, it would be a good opportunity to plant other meadow plants to enrich the meadow, not only atriplex.

Koçaş Village

Findings:

- Chickpea and livestock (small ruminant) production are important
- They need feed mixture machine (for pellet) with ration.

- Koçaş eggplant is famous but it has very limited consumers and limited selling period (fresh)
- They are happy to work with the project and its activities.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- If drying equipment is used efficiently, the selling period of different vegetables could be extended and thus these different vegetables can be grown in wide areas. Because the fresh vegetable areas are not that large due to obligation of selling the vegetables as fresh.

Polatlı District Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry

Findings:

- Mainly sprinkler irrigation systems are already used by farmers nearby Sakarya River
- Sunflower, sugar beet and onion are produced in irrigated areas.
- Hungarian vetch was planted and harvested
- Four villages are selected for drip irrigation and equipment were provided, ready to use.
- The performance between drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation will be measured and compared.
- A pneumatic seeder and manure spreading machine were purchased and handed over to local authority. The only concern about the seeder is its working width. Since it is quite wide, its with creates problems on the road. Another issue related to seeder is that at least 120 HP tractor is needed to operate it.
- The farmers are happy with the support of the project.

Recommendations for future actions in LDN project:

- The trainings in FFS should start before the irrigation season start

Annex 7 Adaptive and technical challenges

Technical and adaptive challenges

Technical challenges:

- A technical challenge is a challenge that can be addressed with existing expertise, protocols, and operations.
- Implementing solutions to technical challenges often falls to someone with the authority to address them.
- Technical training (i.e. using a manual and new equipment) can resolve the problem.

Adaptive challenges:

- Encounter situations for which solutions lie outside the current way of operation, and possibly, thinking.
- Applying existing procedures and understanding does not provide the solution needed.
- Stakeholders must be involved in developing and implementing solutions.
- Solutions lie not in the application of expertise, but rather from a process of learning and adapting.
- Addressing adaptive challenges requires trying solutions that are new and maybe quite different.
- Inherent in addressing adaptive challenges are the need to become comfortable with not knowing what the next move might be, dealing with uncertainty.
- It is necessary to think (institutionally, individually, collectively…) what we should continue to do, what we should start to do and, critically, what we might need to stop doing…
- Addressing adaptive challenges may require the transfer of power (the ability to make decisions and to influence future events) from one party to another.
- Normally require expert thinking, which is the ability to solve non-rule-based problems.
- Adaptive challenges require time for adaptive solutions to have an effect and stakeholders cannot expect to react too quickly because of the discomfort that comes with not knowing.

Adapted from: Heifetz, Ronald A.; Leadership Without Easy Answers (Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1994)

Annex 8 Scenario planning

This MTR has noted the absence of a cognitive tool or mechanism support the less-tangible elements of the enabling environment. The purpose of such a tool is to strengthen the process through which individual and institutions understand the system which they are managing. The TE recommends scenario planning. Scenario planning[75] is an approach which can be applied to complex situations and also as a means to affect the cognitive processes of participants, in other words, it can change the way people think about a problem.

Scenario planning is a planning methodology that has its origins in post-World War II military thinking where strategic military planners used scenarios to examine the threats posed to the Western Alliance by the Warsaw Pact countries. It was later applied to business planning by Pierre Wack at the multinational corporation, Shell Oil, to examine the threats and opportunities faced by Shell in the energy sector during the early 1970's. The use of scenarios greatly assisted Shell in its business operations during the 1973 "oil crisis" resulting in Shell considerably improving its own position in the oil industry during a period of great uncertainty.

Scenarios were also used as a tool for conflict resolution during South Africa's transition from Apartheid to a new democratic disposition in the early 1990's. In this instance, the use of scenarios firstly assisted in convincing senior policy makers in the (old) South African government of the inevitability of change and secondly assisted the range of political stakeholders in visioning the future of a democratic South Africa and the possible consequences of not accepting a peaceful and democratic transition to the "new" South Africa.

In the environmental sector the use of scenario planning is a relatively recent development. Scenario planning was used in the Millennium Assessment report to evaluate global environmental threats and highlight the need for alternative actions to prevent catastrophic environmental and ecological events.

The core of scenario planning is the identification of those elements that are shaping events or systems. These elements, known as "drivers", interact with each other often at different physical and temporal scales. Most conventional planning systems are based on the assumption that drivers are constant (or predictable) and yet, because of their interaction drivers are invariably in a state of change; and this is often unpredictable. Sometimes this change is quick and at other times the change may be slower.

Scenario planning is based on understanding what constitutes the current system drivers and the cause and effect relationship between the drivers. This understanding also helps to understand the scale (both physical and temporal) and impact that various drivers have on a system. Once the drivers are identified and their relationship understood, scenario planning provides a methodology for examining how the drivers might possibly interact in the future. Since driver interactions in socio-political, economic and environmental systems are complex, the scenario planning process attempts to analyse possible and plausible future driver relationships rather than creating predicted futures.

Scenario planning does not replace conventional planning. Rather it helps the participants to place their plans in the complex and unpredictable context of the system and project those plans into the future. For a country with numerous environment projects operational at any one time, scenario planning, as a donor-government initiative, could serve to bring these initiatives together.

[75] Scenario planning has already been successfully used in the UNDP-GEF MPCP in South Sinai to assist in the development of a CBNRM system and has also been used for protected areas policy development and management planning in the UNDP–GEF BCPAM project in Syria.

Annex 9 MTR revised Strategic Results Framework

Objective/ Outcome	Indicator	MTR notes
Objective: To develop a model for LDN target setting, planning and decision-making at national level and for demonstration in the Upper Sakarya basin (*Conformity and equivalence in LDN planning, forecasting, and monitoring and evaluation including target setting across different sectors and at different scales*)	**Obj. indicator 1:** Replication (number) of DSS (e.g. countries & regions) **Obj. indicator 2:** Different sectors (number) utilizing the DSS in planning (e.g. forestry, agriculture, urban planning, transport, infrastructure, health, etc…) **Obj. indicator 3:** Existing datasets and existing monitoring programmes included (number) in the DSS (nationally, globally) **Obj. indicator 4:** GEF 7 Core Indicators (Baseline, mid-term & EOP)	There are no objective-level indicators at present. Data should be readily available and easily collected. If the data can be easily extracted the indicator from Outcome 1.1 investment programme for LDN can be used here. But be aware that this might be hard to credibly disaggregate this data and any correlation with project intervention may be incidental over this time period and without analyzing national accounting.
Component 1: Strengthening the enabling environment for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)		
Outcome 1.1: Enhanced enabling Environment for LDN (*LDN integrated into policy, planning and monitoring and evaluation*)	**Indicator 1.1.1:** Number of training events **Indicator 1.1.2:** Number of people trained (gender disaggregated) **Indicator 1.1.3:** Number of sectors receiving training **Indicator 1.1.4:** GEF Capacity Development Assessment Scorecard (Index figure - use an "off the shelf" scorecard, retrofit to baseline and mid-term & EOP)	Scorecard provides an index figure or proxy measurement. This can be done for selected sectors/agencies to provide finer-grained information if necessary.
	~~**Indicator 1:** Integration of LDN into strategic planning processes~~ ~~**Indicator 2:** Investment programme for LDN~~	
Output 1.1.1: Capacity development program in place on LDN target setting and its implementation for local and central government staff	Output indicator: Number of institutional training courses that integrate LDN Output indicator: Number of people trained at local and central level Output indicator: National and international symposia Output indicator: International LDN exchange	
Output 1.1.2: Creation of a national online Information Sharing Forum on LDN for stakeholder engagement	Output indicator: National Online Information Sharing Forum on LDN	
Output 1.1.3: Capacity development program in place for farmers, herders and forest	Output indicator: Number of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) established on modern and sustainable production methods Output indicator: Number of local people trained, including how many women	

villages in the Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: Mass media campaigns on LDN	
Output 1.1.4: Identification of needs for new legislation and/or revisions of existing legislation based on project findings and targeted stakeholder consultations	New and/or revised legislation that operationalize the LDN approach	
Output 1.1.5: Integration of the LDN approach and priorities into strategic planning processes at sub-national and national levels	~~Output indicator: Integration of LDN into strategic planning processes~~ Output indicator: Strengthening of the LDN intersectoral working group	
Component 2: Decision-Support System (DSS) for LDN		
Outcome 2.1: Decision-support system for LDN target setting and planning established (Outcome does not need paraphrasing)	**Indicator 2.1.1:** LDN-supported planning process (e.g. micro-basin planning, number) **Indicator 2.1.2:** LDN Technical Team can propose one more technical (e.g. software or related to GEE App., etc.) indicator	It may be useful to ask the Technical Team working on the DSS to identify the key technical (IT) aspects of the DSS.
	~~**Indicator 3:** DSS established with calibrated metrics for LDN indicators~~	
Output 2.1.1: Metrics for LDN indicators (i.e. land cover, soil organic carbon and land productivity) identified, tested and calibrated	Output indicator: Calibrated metrics for LDN indicators available	
Output 2.1.2: DSS integrated and tested	Output indicator: Integration for LDN DSS	
Output 2.1.3: Land cover classes and land degradation levels in demonstration area in the Upper Sakarya basin identified	Output indicator: Land cover classes and land degradation levels in the Upper Sakarya Basin verified	
Outcome 2.2: Monitoring system and related capacity for LDN in place (*This is actually an output*)	**Indicator 2.2.1:** Metrics for LDN indicators (note this is an output in the existing SRF) **Indicator 2.2.2:** LDN generated exercises (e.g. hotspot identification, etc.) **Indicator 2.2.3:** Consider M&E focused capacity assessment scorecard	LDN generated exercises should be listed as targets (e.g. hotspots, assessing the situation in regional or micro-basin planning, etc…).

		An adapted scorecard/ the specific questions in the objective-level capacity development assessment scorecard can be included here for granular detail.
	~~**Indicator 4:** LDN monitoring system in place with target setting agreed~~	
Output 2.2.1: LDN target setting based on current and existing monitoring infrastructure and metrics agreed	Output indicator: Target setting and hot spots and cold spots for gains and losses identified	
Output 2.2.2: Effective and economic approach for soil organic carbon monitoring identified and disseminated	Output indicator: Agreed soil Output indicator: Organic carbon monitoring approach	
Output 2.2.3: Turkey's existing land degradation monitoring system calibrated to monitor LDN indicators and for testing in the Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: TCM and LPD Models tested	
Output 2.2.4: LDN-related reporting capacity improved	Output indicator: Web-based Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (IDR) operationalized Output indicator: Training of decision-makers and technical staff	
Output 2.2.5: Climate variability integrated into the LDN DSS and tested in the Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: Sub-indicators of climate variability tested in the Upper Samaria Basin for the TCM and soil organic carbon (SOC) Models	
Component 3: Demonstration of the LDN approach in the Upper Sakarya Basin		
Outcome 3.1: Improved land management, land cover, and increased soil organic carbon in the Upper Sakarya basin	**Indicator 3.1.1:** Land degradation threats (Consider using adapted Threat Reduction Assessment).	Given a 4-year project cycle any biological process indicators using a biological metric (e.g. soil SOC, land/vegetative cover) is not sensitive enough and could not be attributed to a project intervention against larger environmental cycles and processes.

		Proxy indicators and index figures should be used here. The Threat reduction Assessment Tool (TRA) is a useful "off the shelf" tool that is easily adapted and the identification of threats is a powerful cognitive exercise supporting Outcome 1. Gender targeted indicators can be integrated into the TRA.
	~~**Indicator 5:** Area with improved land management~~ ~~**Indicator 6:** Area with improved land cover~~ ~~**Indicator 7:** % increase in SOC~~	
Output 3.1.1: Participatory landscape-specific improvement plans based on priorities identified by the DSS covering 4,313,827 ha of land	Output indicator: Ha of land covered by landscape- specific improvement plans	
Output 3.1.2: Demonstrations of SLM and SFM best practices in forests, rangelands and croplands that provide carbon benefits on 14,000 ha of land	Output indicator: Area with demonstrations of SLM and SFM best practices Output indicator: ~~% increase in SOC in area covered by BPs~~	
Output 3.1.3: Measures and approaches for reducing the impacts of climate variability integrated into SLM and SFM practices	Output indicator: Number of climate-smart measures and approaches integrated into SLM/SFM	
Output 3.1.4: Preparation of an implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the whole Upper Sakarya Basin	Output indicator: Implementation plan for achieving LDN targets in the Upper Sakarya Basin	
Outcome 3.2: Land productivity increased by 10% and livelihoods for local communities strengthened	**Indicator 3.2.1:** Consider using specific livelihood threats (identified by local communities) from the TRA used in Outcome 3.1.	Inclusion of community identified threats to livelihoods in a threat reduction identification exercise. Threats can be disaggregated to

		provide 2 to 3 indicators but they are collected through a single process and therefore achievable and cost effective. Gender targeted indicators can be integrated into the TRA.
	~~**Indicator 8:** Increase in land productivity~~	
Output 3.2.1: Introduction of gender sensitive sustainable livelihood strategies	Output indicator: Gender Action Plan for the Upper Sakarya Basin	
Output 3.2.2: Introduction of gender- sensitive climate resilient practices to enhance land productivity	Output indicator: Number of gender sensitive climate resilient practices targeting women Output indicator: Area covered (da)[76] Output indicator: Number of households with improved living conditions Output indicator: Number of women trained[77]	
Component 4: Upscaling of LDN experiences, monitoring and evaluation		
Outcome 4.1: Upscaling of the LDN DSS to national level covering all of Turkey (78.4 million ha).	**Indicator 4.1.1:** Area covered by the LDN DSS – this indicator can remain the same **Indicator 4.1.2:** LDN DSS utilized in planning processes	Indicator 4.1.2 could include micro basin planning events, regional planning assessments, etc.
Output 4.1.1: LDN metrics for the whole of Turkey entered into the LDN DSS and land cover classes and land degradation levels identified	Output indicator: LDN metrics for the whole of Turkey available in DSS	
Output 4.1.2: LDN target setting at national scale in place	Output indicator: LDN target setting in place	
Output 4.1.3: Development of bankable projects for the LDN fund (at least 1)	Output indicator: Number of bankable projects for the LDN fund	

[76] The measure of ha should be converted to decares equivalent, so the targets should be set as midterm target of 150 ha and final target of 200 ha.
[77] The original target was 300 women. However, the PIU feels this should be revised downwards to reflect the actual number of women who are in a position (meet the criteria) for training in the project area.

Outcome 4.2: Monitoring of project results, lessons learned and dissemination.	Consider not reporting on the indicator or continue to report but treat the indicators with caution. OR: **Indicator 4.2.1:** DSS integrated with (number) other LDN decision support systems being developed. **Indicator 4.2.2:** UNCCD promotion of DSS (list evidence).	This outcome contains elements of project operations and does not equate to a project outcome as such the project should consider not reporting on this because it is largely captured in the objective and objective-level indicators. It should be noted that the weaknesses in the current SRF include reporting the same information for different outcomes and outputs, ideally this should not happen in an SRF, each indicator should report different (easily obtainable) information that builds towards the outcome and objective in a logical pathway.
	~~**Indicator 10:** M&E system is in place~~ ~~**Indicator 11:** Lessons learned disseminated~~	
Output 4.2.1: Global Environmental Benefits monitored and assessed	Output indicator: Baseline and targets for GEB indicators refined	
Output 4.2.2: Mid- term and final evaluation conducted	Output indicator: Mid-term and final evaluation reports	
Output 4.3: Experience sharing on Project- related “lessons-learned” and a national LDN guideline published	Output indicator: National LDN Guideline	

Annex 10 Threat reduction Assessment Tool

Threat Reduction Assessment[78]

The TRA is a tool developed by the Biodiversity Support Group. It is a simple tool designed to identify threats and quantify them in terms of their extent (area affected), intensity (the impact on biodiversity or land degradation) and the urgency (how immediate is the threat).

The exercise recognises that due to the constraints of time it is normally not possible to evaluate the impact of project or management interventions using biological indicators (e.g. SOC, land cover, etc..) because such indicators may take considerable periods to demonstrate significant changes.

However, it is possible to approximate the effectiveness of any intervention by measuring the amount by which it reduces a causative factor. In land degradation management we often refer to causative factors as "threats" and measuring how much a threat has been reduced will provide us with a robust approximation of whether any intervention is likely to have an impact.

Therefore, this will provide us with a reasonable assessment of management performance but it is important to bear in mind that reducing the threats is not an end in itself but more often a means to an end such as a reduction in grazing to allow vegetation to recover or reducing tillage to build soil structure. This is not the same as assessing the overall impact of an intervention which would be the recovery of vegetation as measured by species diversity, abundance and/or structure etc. Therefore, the assumptions (that over-grazing, as our example, is the root cause land degradation) should be explicitly recognised and reducing grazing intensity is not the same as the recovery of soil structure and vegetation communities.

100% Threat Reduction

A key component of the TRA exercise is to enable participants to describe what a complete reversal of a threat would look like. This part of the exercise is critical because it allows the participants to explore different scenarios. For instance, a 100% reduction in overgrazing might be a total ban on any grazing within an area.

On the other hand, it might also look like an agreed plan to reduce the intensity of grazing in areas that are vulnerable to a given number of livestock units per hectare, a programme to provide alternatives to grazing such as ecotourism or hunting, resource replacements such as fodder during critical periods, a programme to add value to livestock products such a cheese and carcase quality to absorb opportunity costs of reduced herd size, enclosure of critical areas, and an investigation into the levels of grazing necessary to maintain habitat diversity and a programme of monitoring to improve management effectiveness, etc.

The process of developing an intervention to address the threat is an important part of the exercise.

Adapted Threat Reduction Analysis Tool

Adaptation can be made to the standard TRA approach used by Margoluis and Salafsky.

For instance, the use of Rich Pictures to initially identify the threats allows a broader participation and understanding of systems at scale. Rich pictures are a cognitive approach that requires participants to use only drawing and symbols to describe a situation. There are a number of benefits in this approach the principle benefits being that it makes the participants think about issues, it allows for a broad participation and participants of differing capabilities and backgrounds to articulate difficult and controversial issues.

Other adaptations might involve the disaggregation of the percentage reduction into three parts:

- Enabling environment
- Enforcement/implementation
- Effectiveness

[78] Is Our Project Succeeding? A Guide to Threat Reduction Assessment for Conservation. Richard Margoluis and Nick Salafsky, Biodiversity Support Programme, Washington DC.

Each part being allocated 33% of the 100% Threat Reduction (the remaining nominal 1% may be allocated across the three parts or simply added to any total). The purpose of this is to allow participants to focus upon the reasonable steps necessary to address an issue.
Therefore, it is a highly flexible tool, easily adapted to the specific circumstances and provides a cost-effective means to acquire proxy indicators of impact on shorter (project scale) time frames.