

Management response to the Mid-Term Review of the

**Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient
development in Serbia**

Project Symbol GCP /SRB/002/GFF

GEFID 9089

Overall response to the evaluation

In this section, Management presents its overall views on the evaluation, the report and its conclusions.

Response by recommendation

In this section, Management should address each recommendation, discussing them in the order presented in the executive summary of the evaluation report. This should be done in the format of the Management Response matrix below (see Box 1) and include:

- a. The recommendation number and text copied from the evaluation report;
- b. Indication of whether the recommendation is accepted fully, partially, or rejected;
- c. Description of the actions to be taken, with comments as required on the conditions to be met during implementation, or on reasons leading to a partial acceptance or rejection of a recommendation;
- d. The responsible party or FAO unit for implementing the action/s;
- e. The time-frame for implementation and/or an implementation schedule, if required;
- f. Indication if further funding from FAO or a resource partner is required for implementing the recommendation.

Box 1. Management response matrix¹

Management response to the (Evaluation Title)					Date
Evaluation Recommendation (a)	Management response (b) Accepted, partially accepted or rejected	Management plan			Further funding required (Y or N) (f)
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection (c)	Responsible unit (d)	Timeframe (e)	
Recommendation 1 - Increase focus on CCM activities in project					
R1.1. Undertake a review of likely impacts of CC on the forest estate in Serbia with a view to developing more detailed guidance on forest management for CCM aims. This would help determine how to manage forests to improve forest carbon sequestration and guide managers in deciding which forest types should be planted to improve CCM in afforestation schemes (highlighted as an action in the National Climate Change Strategy) or following clear-cutting. Activities could include assessment of the potential of different forest types for CCM under different harvesting regimes and different climate change scenarios, with production of maps of potential CC impact and CCM suitability for the project's two target regions. If possible, additional field sampling should be undertaken to improve estimation of below-ground forest carbon stocks.	Rejected	What is suggested under R1.1. in support of the relevant action in the National CC Strategy goes far beyond the suggested LoA, both in scope and duration. Furthermore, this recommended activities under the LoA would substantially overlap with the forthcoming GEF7 project recently submitted to the GEF Secretariat, as well as with the envisaged GCF project which is currently under preparation. Therefore, this recommendation has been rejected.			
R1.2. Ensure that the project's forestry strategy and policy work (under Output 1.1.5), Forest Development Programmes (Output 2.1.2) and Forest Management Plans (2.1.3) are aligned with and reflect recommended measures in the draft National Climate Strategy and Action Plan (2019).	Accepted	National consultant with experience of national climate change strategy, plans and actions will be hired to implement R1.2.	FAO and DF to organise a contract with a national consultant with experience of national climate change strategy, plans and actions	April - July 2021	
R1.3. Prepare follow-up plan to ensure the recommendations from the project's MRV review (Output 1.1.4) are integrated into the project's forestry strategy and policy review work (under Output 1.1.5), and data collection and monitoring systems into Forest Development Programmes (Output 2.1.2) and Forest Management Plans (2.1.3) as relevant	Accepted	National consultant with MRV experience will be hired to implement R1.3.	National consultant with MRV experience	April - July 2021	
R1.4. Expand the Guidelines on managing forests for CCM and CCA following international best practice, where possible for each forest type, and utilizing results from recommendations (i), (ii) and (iii) above, and consider a separate Addendum on 'climate smart forest management'. It is expected that the Guidelines will be incorporated into forestry regulations governing forest management planning in Serbia (under Output 1.1.5). Consequently, it is important that the Addendum is updated as soon as possible.	Partially accepted	Project FMP team in cooperation with International CCM specialist will review the Guidelines. Upon the result of the review the FMP team will decide on possibly expanding the Guidelines which would then be incorporated in the forestry regulatory framework.	Component 2 team / International CCM specialist	Draft CCM Guidelines developed June 2021 – December 2021, updated after forest carbon data and analysis from recommendations (i) and (ii) become available	
R1.5. Develop an awareness-raising/outreach programme on likely impacts of CC on forests and management for CCM (and CCA) measures targeted at forest forestry sector stakeholders (state and commercial) and rural communities (including PFOs/PFOAs)	Accepted	The Communication expert of the FAO Project Office in Belgrade will engaged to develop with support of the Project team (component 1 & 2) the awareness-raising/outreach programme suggested under R1.5.	Communication consultant with support of project teams for Components 1 and 2	June – December 2021	
R1.6. Establish project Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) to serve as advisory forum on CC issues to the project, to help support project activities relating to CCM (and CCA), coordinate deliverables from recommendations i-v above, and raise the profile of the project. Given the Ministry of Environmental Protection has the principle responsibility for CCM issues within Government it is important that they are invited to participate in the proposed CCM WG. Consideration should be given to formulising and integrating the CCWG within the DF (which currently lacks specialist technical expertise on addressing CC/CCM/CCA issues) at the end of the project as part of the Final Evaluation).	Partially accepted	The Project Management Team is neither in a position to decide on the establishment of a CCWG at MAFWM-DF nor at the Institute of Lowland Forestry and Environment in Novi Sad. However, the Project will discuss with SC members on how to best address R1.6.	MAFWM-DF as the project's executing partner, with membership to include wide group of stakeholders, including PFOAs, Institutes of Nature Conservation, Rural Development and Agriculture, Water Management, Government Units involved in climate change issues. Alternatively, the project CCWG could be hosted and led by the Institute of Lowland Forestry and Environment in Novi Sad as it has the	Established July 2021, with 3-monthly meetings for duration of project	

¹ Each column is cross-referenced to the bullet letters above.

			required technical expertise and experience in climate change impacts on forests.		
Recommendation 2 - Optimise involvement of PFOs and PFOAs in project					
R2.1. Ensure a minimum number of representatives from selected PFOAs attend training and awareness-raising events (so they can reach more PFOs than just inviting individual PFOs) and provide funding to cover costs of their participation to ensure no one is excluded due to financial barrier. A special effort should be made to ensure full representation by women.	Accepted	R2.1. is already incorporated in the existing FMP training plan of the Project.	PMU	For project duration	
R2.2. Set up demonstrations to promote the sustainable management of NTFPs to PFOs/PFOAs in a selection of the 16 SFM demonstration plots under Component 2. It is suggested that at least some the demonstration sites chosen should be close to areas where a PFOA is registered ² . Several PFOAs are known to be active in Western Serbia and Vojvodina and resources need to be made available to ensure they can participate in training opportunities offered through the demonstration plots. In addition, the project should aim to develop at least one FMP that includes forest under a PFOA.	Partially accepted	The selection of the site of demonstration plots follows the purpose clearly outlined in the project document, namely to demonstrate the new forest management planning approaches responding to CC and BD challenges. PFOAs will be trained on the demonstration plots closest to their operating areas. However, if there is a chance to address NTFPs management issues the Project will accommodate.	PMU and Component 2 team	June 2021 – May 2022	
R2.3. Given importance of wood for fuel security and the local economy in communities in and around forest areas in Serbia, undertake a study on wood fuel demand and supply in the two target regions of Serbia to define sustainable biomass production (covering different forest types, sized patches, etc).	Accepted	Biomass expert has already been identified and National wood supply and demand study (following WISDOM methodology) under preparation for the two target regions by the Project.	Biomass consultant (national but probably also involve international)	August - November 2021	
R2.4. Design proposal for separate follow on funding project for promoting SFM focused only on PFOs/PFOAs. This should build on information collected through the current project (Djordjevic-Milosevic (2019) study), seeking to extend the surveys of PFOs/PFOAs to gain a better understanding of needs and incentives to encourage greater sustainability in the use and management of forest resources by private forest owners and users.	Partially accepted	Instead of designing a full project proposal without having a source of financing, a Concept Note for a follow on project promoting SFM with a component specifically focusing on PFOs/PFOAs will be developed in 2021 and presented to potential donors hereafter.	National consultant with experience of community level development and use of forests, PMU, FAO	September – December 2021	
Recommendation 3 - Improve partner participation in project activities and decision-making					
R3.1. Develop a partnership and stakeholder strategy and plan which sets out who will be involved for the remainder of project, with roles and responsibilities, specific commitments/deliverables and timeline, budgets and co-financing contributions, agreed and clearly identified. This should include re-examining the list of partners, stakeholders and co-financiers given in the Project Document and identify those that now need to be involved. Given the project objective is to 'promote multifunctional SFM' that considers (among other things) socio-economic concerns, the project needs to consider representation/inputs from stakeholders from the agriculture and rural development sectors, as well as private sector (non-state forestry) actors particularly the involvement of PFOs/PFOAs.	Partially accepted	Given the remaining time scale for the Project the development of a formal partnership and stakeholder strategy and plan seems unrealistic. However, the SC will re-examine the list of partners, stakeholders and co-financiers and consider expanding the representation as well as seek inputs from stakeholders from the agriculture and rural development sectors, as well as private sector (non-state forestry) actors particularly the involvement of PFOs/PFOAs	PMU, MAFWM-DF and FAO-REU	July 2021 - August 2021 (to be reported in next PIR/PPR)	
R3.2. Expand membership of the project's Steering Committee and 'Working Groups' to reflect the new partnership arrangements, e.g. with representatives from PFOAs and commercial forest sector, technical experts on biodiversity (from NCI), climate change mitigation (from Ministry of Environmental Protection, Department of Climate Change) and Statistical Office included on the SC, as well as the main project co-financiers including the Institute of Lowland Forestry and Environment and the Forest Technical High School Kraljevo. It is important that the Working Group addressing issues relating to forest management planning fully includes PE Vojvodinasume and PE Srbijasume, and an additional Working Group to address the integration of the	Partially accepted	The membership at SC is defined in the project document. Therefore, FAO can only suggest to the other SC members the possible involvement of new members in SC. The existing WGs will be expanded to new members as suggested and to the extent possible.	PMU, MAFWM-DF and FAO	July 2021 - August 2021 (to be reported in next PIR/PPR)	

² Establishing permanent plots in private forests without incentives/subsidies is likely to be difficult, so plots should be on state-owned land but with easy access by PFOs.

new multi-functional SFM approach (and findings of the project) into forest policy and legislation (addressing Output 1.1.5) should be established.					
R3.3. Recalculate co-financing contributions from partners, based on their <u>actual</u> involvement in, and contributions to, the project, and collect updated statements of co-financing contributions (these have been missing). Also, there are other potential sources of co-financing that have been identified since the project was endorsed (leveraged co-financing), which should be considered, and included in co-financing reporting.	Accepted		PMU, MAFWM-DF and FAO	July 2021 - November 2021 (to be reported in next PIR/PPR)	
Recommendation 4 - Improve communications and knowledge management on the project					
R4.1. Contract a communications consultant for the remainder of project to lead on the design and production of project communication/outreach materials, guided by FAO REU and FAO HQ communications experts, and to lead on the review of any project reports, guidelines, etc to ensure effective communication to target audiences. The Communications Consultant is likely to be needed initially for 2 months to design the Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy and Plan and preliminary awareness-raising and outreach materials then on a regular (1-day /week?) basis until the final 3 months of the project when a greater input will be required for final workshop, presentation of results, and publications/reports, etc.	Accepted	The Communication expert of the FAO Project Office in Belgrade - in addition to R1.5 – will be engaged to develop R4.1	PMU and FAO REU	Contract to begin latest June 2021	
R4.2. Develop a project Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy and Plan that sets out key messages to be communicated (aims and activities of the project, target regions, stakeholders involved, progress on results, etc) and identifies the target audiences and appropriate media (social media, radio/TV, brochures/publications, press packs, 3-monthly project newsletter, etc) as well as roles and responsibilities of key individuals and partners, budgets and timeline. The Plan should also establish a knowledge management system for the project to ensure effective use, storage, sharing and dissemination of project-generated results and knowledge and lessons learned (following GEF guidance and progress on addressing Knowledge Management). Support and guidance for project Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy and Plan ³ and more generally on effective media outreach and development of communications materials should be sought from the communications specialists in FAO HQ (initially from the team in the FAO-GEF Coordination Unit).	Accepted	The Communication expert of the FAO Project Office in Belgrade in cooperation and communication with FAO REU or HQ – in addition to R1.5 and R4.1 - will be engaged to develop R4.2.	Communications Consultant and PMU, with guidance from Communications team at FAO HQ	July 2021 – October 2021	
R4.3. Establish project website and social media programme and design and distribute project communications/outreach materials as identified in the Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy and Plan. All project reports need to have a Serbian/English executive summary. An immediate product should be an attractive 2-page brochure on the project setting out its aims key aims, results, partners, funding, etc targeted at the general public.	Accepted	Web page of the Project will be developed and hosted by DF where all project materials will be available.	MAFWM, Communications Consultant and PMU, with support from Communications team at FAO HQ to promote project globally. The website should be established and hosted by MAFWM with the cost of the website being met from MAFWM-DF co-financing. This is important to ensure effective scaling up of project results and their sustainability once the project ends.	July 2021 – End of Project	
R4.4. Host final national workshop on 'multifunctional SFM including BD conservation, CCM and promoting socio-economic benefits' in final 3 months of project to present project results to partners, stakeholders and wider public	Accepted		Communications Consultant and PMU	Last 3 months of the project	

³ Generic communication guidelines are also contained in the document '*Communication at Country Level - Guidelines for FAORs on preparing a Communication Strategy and Plan*' available from the FAO HQ and FAO REU communications teams.

R4.5. Establish a regular project lesson learning process (feeding into both Communications and M&E activities). This could form part of an annual project retreat led by an external facilitator	Accepted		PMU and Communications Consultant, with specialist input from international M&E consultant and FAO-GEF Coordination Unit	September 2021 – End of Project	
R4.6. Provide key project staff with a training course on ‘Effective communications’ to help improve the project team’s promotion of project results and key messages at national, regional and global levels. It is suggested that this includes the Project Coordinator (in Serbia), Operations Specialist (at FAO REU) and the Lead Technical Officer (also at FAO REU).	Accepted		Project Coordinator and Operations Specialist with training provided through FAO-GEF Coordination Unit	During the period September –December 2021	
R4.7. Host regular team meetings (all Component teams – BD, NFI, forest management planning, IFIS - should be involved) to brief project team members and partners on progress and challenges to improve internal project communications.	Accepted		PMU and Communications Consultant	September 2021 – End of Project	
Recommendation 5 – Grant project a 1-year No Cost Extension					
R5.1. Prepare proposal for 1-year NCE identifying key activity sets and outputs that cannot be, or are unlikely to be, completed by December 2021 , with a clear rationale and justification for an extension for each output/activity set where considered necessary. <u>The NCE proposal should include measure to address the above recommendations (1-4).</u>	Accepted	SC meeting will be organized to discuss revised WP and the budget.	PMU, MAFWM-DF and FAO REU	Proposal by end of July 2021	
R5.2. Present proposal for a NCE at the project’s April 2021 Steering Committee meeting for discussion and request formal approval by project partners⁴. <u>Approval of the NCE should be conditional on the above four recommendations being incorporated into the revised work plan for the NCE, and satisfactory progress being made according to agreed milestones and targets for recommendations 1-4 above (monitored and reported on in 3-monthly reports and included in GEF PIR and FAO PPR reports).</u>	Accepted	Extraordinary SC meeting preliminary accepted the idea of 1-year NCE, and regular SC meeting will be organized by the end of July 2021 where revised WP and the Budget will be presented. Formal approval from Project partners will be requested.	Project partners (co-financiers), MAFWM-DF and FAO REU/FAO HQ	Formal (written) approval by project partners FAO REU/FAO HQ by the end of September 2021	

⁴ Although a No Cost Extension allows the use of the remaining GEF funds to be extended the additional time requested will incur additional co-financing costs from project partners, which needs to be agreed.