Part I: Project Information		Response
GEF ID		10191
Project Title		Moldova Agriculture Competitiveness Project GEF Additional Financing
Date of Screening		28-May-19
STAP member Screener		Graciela Metternicht
STAP secretariat screener		Guadalupe Duron
STAP Overall Assessment		STAP's Overall Assessment: Minor issues to be considered during the project design. STAP acknowledges the World Bank's project "Moldova Agriculture Competitiveness Project GEF Additional Financing". The project seeks to enhance the country's agro-food sector by increasing farmers' access to markets, improve land productivity through sustainable land management, and modernize the food safety system. Although the document provides an overview of the environmental and social challenges in Moldova, this analysis is missing at the project site level. Therefore, STAP recommends analyzing the problems, and their underlying drivers, for the target site(s). STAP welcomes the description of the theory of change. It encourages the World Bank to develop in full the theory of change by mapping the various impact pathways that lead to the project's objective. The assumptions described in the narrative need to be integrated into the theory of change. The theory of change also should identify the barriers to scaling (e.g. governance), and the strategies to overcome these obstacles. Accounting for these barriers is important because scaling is a key feature of the project. The risks were identified briefly in the project documentation, including environmental and social risks. When developing the project, STAP recommends that the World Bank describe the risks in greater detail, and determine a response to each of the risks. Furthermore, STAP recommends describing how climate change might affect the proposed activities and outcomes. The project documents highlight Moldova's "…substantial vulnerability to climate-related shocks…". It is therefore very important that climate change and climate scenarios be incorporated into the theory of change, and into the risk analysis. STAP supports the global environmental outcomes the project seeks to achieve, and encourages the World Bank to identify indicators and metrics to track progress. In this regard, STAP recommends that the World Bank strengthen the evidence that 2,000 hectares of land will be restored, and that a further 100,000 hectares of land (and biodiversity) will benefit from improved land management. Currently, the project documentation lacks scientific evidence to ascertain the feasibility of achieving these metrics, and outcomes. During the project design, STAP urges the project team to consider the LDN framework to establish the baseline, and determine land potential, i.e. define the interventions following the LDN hierarchy of avoid and reduce degradation, and restore land productivity. The LDN framework also contains elements of adaptive management and learning which could assist the project, thereby enhancing project effectiveness and the durability of outcomes. Furthermore, STAP recommends applying the checklist for Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Transformative Projects and Programmes (TPP). This tool has been devised to help project developers design effective interventions through the identification of the 'enabling environment for LDN' in the country. A proper characterization of the LDN enabling environment would greatly assist in programming the proposed gender-responsive interventions, e.g. "on a pilot basis, gender-sensitive training to loan officers from willing-to-participate private banks to ensure equal treatment for women in defining loan conditions".

		Below, STAP provides further details on how the project can be strengthened during its design.
Part I: Project Information	**What STAP looks for**	**Response**
B. Indicative Project Description Summary		
Project Objective	Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis?	Yes.
Project components	A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives?	Yes.
Outcomes	A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention.	Yes, the global environmental benefits are likely to be generated if the assumptions are identified and tested through the theory of change.
	Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits?	
	Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated?	
Outputs	A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes?	Yes – mainly in the form of knowledge management products.
Part II: Project justification	A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change.	
1. Project description. Briefly describe:		
1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description)	Is the problem statement well-defined?	The problem is well defined at the national level. STAP suggests revisiting the problem analysis, and describing the problem and its underlying drivers at the target site level. Additionally, STAP recommends referencing papers to support the problem analysis and contextual information provided in the project. The following paper can be useful to describe (in a general manner) the problem of land fragmentation that may characterize the project site: Van Holst, F. et al. (2018). "Land governance for development in central and eastern Europe: Land fragmentation and land consolidation as part of SDGs". Paper prepared for presentation at the "2018 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty". The World Bank - Washington DC, March 19-23, 2018.
	Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references?	
	For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs?	

2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects	Is the baseline identified clearly?	A baseline narrative is not included in the project document. STAP recommends describing what projects (GEF and non-GEF projects) this initiative will build on.
	Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits?	
	Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project?	
	For multiple focal area projects:	
	are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators;	
	are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and	
	how did these lessons inform the design of this project?	
3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project	What is the theory of change?	STAP welcomes the narrative description of the theory of change, and the illustration of the activities, outputs and outcomes. To plan for the desired change the project seeks to achieve, it would be valuable to develop an illustration depicting the various impact pathways to reaching the project objective. STAP also suggests building in to the pathway the assumptions that were described in the narrative.
	What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes?	
	· What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives?	
	· Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions?	
	· Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes?	
5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing	GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits?	The proposed incremental activities have the potential to result in global environmental benefits. As previously recommended, STAP encourages the project team to develop a theory of change identifying the various impact pathways that can be pursued to meet the project objective. Also suggest defining indicators that measure the outcomes, and the benefits.
	LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change?	

6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF)	Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable?	STAP recommends applying the "Scientific conceptual framework for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)". The framework provides guidance on how to pursue LDN through land use planning. The framework is strongly based on multi-stakeholder engagement and governance, which are two important elements to embed in the project. The report can be accessed at: https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/guide-scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality STAP recommends identifying indicators that measure the proposed environmental variables on soil carbon and biodiversity. For soil management activities (component 3), the project developers may wish to draw from the following paper as it focuses on climate smart activities in semi-arid regions, including Moldova: Garcia-Franco, N., Hobley, E., Hübner, R., & Wiesmeier, M. (2018). Climate-Smart Soil Management in Semiarid Regions. In Soil Management and Climate Change (pp. 349-368). Academic Press.
	Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment?	
	Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined?	
	Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation?	
	What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change?	
7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up	Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning?	The project has the potential to be innovative in strengthening an enabling environment for LDN. This aspect comes through in component 1, but would require further development in terms of defining the gaps on LDN's enabling environment, and how the project proposes to address them. The LDN framework (link provided above) describes how to establish an enabling environment. In addition, a key focus of the project is to scale SLM activities successfully implemented since 2012 with GEF financing. STAP recommends identifying possible barriers to scaling (e.g. institutional arrangements, governance, vested interests among stakeholders) and strategies to overcome these obstacles when developing the proposal.
	Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors?	
	Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability?	
1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.		The map coordinates of the project site were not provided. The team should provide this information in the final document.

2. Stakeholders. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities.If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.	Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers?	Currently, the project document does not specify the stakeholders. STAP recommends for the project team to develop a stakeholder engagement plan that also assigns governance responsibilities.
	What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge?	
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/ tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd	Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences?	STAP recommends differentiating the risks by gender, and asking a gender specialist to advice on how to integrate gender in the project – and ideally throughout the theory of change.
	Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed?	

5. Risks. Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design	Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control?	The risks were identified briefly in the project documentation. These included environmental and social risks. When developing the project, STAP recommends for the World Bank to describe the risks in greater detail, and to determine a response for each of the risks. Furthermore, STAP recommends describing how climate will affect the activities and outcomes. In this regard, STAP recommends applying these questions during the project design: • How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately? • Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? • Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? • What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? Additionally, the project developers are recommended to consider climate change when developing the theory of change. This will ensure that climate risks (which are certain to happen) are considered from the start, rather than in a post-design risk assessment process. The World Bank's Climate Change Knowledge Portal is one tool that can be used to identify the temperature and precipitation projections for Moldova, and possiblythe target areas if this information is available in the portal: https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/moldova
	Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project?	
	For climate risk, and climate resilience measures:	
	· How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately?	
	· Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed?	
	· Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with?	
	· What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures?	
6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives	Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects?	This section is missing in the project documentation. Suggest specifying how the project will build on knowledge and learning generated from other initiatives in the region.
	Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them?	
	Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited?	

	How have these lessons informed the project's formulation?	
	Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects?	
8. Knowledge management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.	What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used?	STAP suggests elaborating further how knowledge and learning will be used, particularly to adapt the project if needed so that it remains on track to deliver its objective.
	What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience?	
STAP advisory response	**Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed**	
1. Concur	STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit. The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement.	
	* In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that ***"STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design."***	
2. Minor issues to be considered during project design	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:	
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised;	
	(ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.	
	The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.	

3. Major issues to be considered during project design	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:	
	(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.	