

# Promotion of sustainable food systems and improved ecosystems services in Northern Kazakhstan Landscape

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

## Basic project information

**GEF ID**

10265

**Countries**

Kazakhstan

**Project Name**

Promotion of sustainable food systems and improved ecosystems services in Northern Kazakhstan Landscape

**Agencies**

UNDP

**Date received by PM**

12/1/2020

**Review completed by PM**

4/19/2021

**Program Manager**

Ulrich Apel

**Focal Area**

Multi Focal Area

**Project Type**

FSP

**PIF**   
**CEO Endorsement**

**Part I ? Project Information**

**Focal area elements**

**1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

04/19/2021: ADDITIONAL COMMENT:

The expected implementation start entered into the portal (April 2021) cannot be met ? please amend for a more realistic start date, otherwise the reports generated in the portal will not be accurate.

05/04/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

**Agency Response**

**UNDP Agency response to comment of 04/19/2021:**

Noted. The starting date corrected to 1 July 2021, the ending date corrected accordingly.

**Project description summary**

**2. Is the project structure/design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a

Agency Response

**Co-financing**

**4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Not fully

The co-financing of GEF PMC (as indicated in Table B) is not proportional to the overall co-financing. There are sufficient sources of co-financing listed in Table C that can serve a PMC co-financing. Please adjust the PMC co-financing.

04/19/2021: DISCREPANCY ENCOUNTERED:

Letter from the Ministry of Agriculture only confirms co-financing of US\$ 5.5 M (not \$27.5 M) - please adjust Table C accordingly, and subsequently co-financing figures in Table A.

05/04/2021: Addressed as per agency explanation below.

Cleared

## Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/19/2021:

The Letter from the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) states that "The co-financing under the State Program in 2021 will amount to 5.5 million US dollars (at the exchange rate of the National Bank of the Republic of Kazakhstan of July 8, 2020). Financing of the 2021 State Program will end in 2022 **but we expect co-financing under the new State Program in annual amounts not less than that of 2021**".

Based on the government procedures, the MoA could not indicate concrete amounts for years from 2022, but with that phrasing confirmed with certainty that the annual co-financing is going to be available, and that that amount annually would be at least equal to the 2021 level, that is 5.5 mln USD (at the indicated exchange rate). This translates into the total co-financing from MoA as 5.5x5 years = 27.5 mln in total.

UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021

CEO ER Table B revised accordingly. The PMC co-financing sources are the Ministry of Agriculture (both cash parallel and in-kind) and NASEC. Prodoc Annex 26 (Project Co-financing Commitments) has been amended accordingly.

## GEF Resource Availability

**5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

## Agency Response

### Project Preparation Grant

**6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

However, the total resources utilized and committed do not add up to \$150,000. It is recommended to fully commit the remaining resources so that they can be utilized for PPG activities within the first year of project implementation.

Please revise table accordingly.

04/19/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

#### Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021

Back at the first submission, the balance of \$6,289.11 was unspent; as of April 13, 2020, all PPG resources have been spent.

CEO ER Annex C has been revised accordingly.

#### Core indicators

**7. Are there changes/adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?**

#### Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Clarification requested:

The number of beneficiaries is comparably low for the large area coverage and scope of the project. Please briefly explain how the number of beneficiaries has been derived at and whether it is in line with the large area coverage and scope.

04/19/2021: Comment above addressed.

#### ADDITIONAL COMMENT:

METT score baselines are required at CEO endorsement for the PAs under sub-indicator 1.2. Based on the information on WDPA (some of these PAs already have management plans in place).

05/04/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

#### Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response to the GEF Sec comment of 04/19/2021:

Noted. The METT scores have been entered in the Core Indicators Sheet previously, but missing in Portal. This has been corrected now.

UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021

The following approach was suggested for the preliminary assessment of the number of direct beneficiaries. At the CEO ER stage, the most conservative assessment was applied: project developers qualified and quantified the direct beneficiaries of those project activities that are 100% spatially and technically defined in the Prodoc and are not likely to be amended in the course of the project adaptive management. The following categories were included in the assessment:

1. Number of public sector employees involved in project activities aimed at integrated landscape planning. Three rural okrugs: Karamendinsky rural okrug of Naurzum district of Kostanay Oblast, Belovsky rural okrug of Mamlyutskiy district of North Kazakhstan Oblast, and Makinskiy rural okrug of Birzhansalskiy district of Akmola Oblast. Individuals directly involved in development of a design (scheme) of functional zoning. Members of and consultants to the district-level land use revision commissions in the Naurzum district of the Kostanay Oblast, the Mamlyutskiy district of the North Kazakhstan Oblast and the Birzhansalskiy district of the Akmola Oblast: representatives of land management units, agricultural and environmental units of district and rural okrug akimats, representatives of other relevant government organizations and institutions (e.g. protected areas, forestries, fisheries, river basin organizations), oblast-level Kazhydromet offices, members of councils for sustainable economic development under rural akimats, associations or unions of farmers, herders, hunting associations.
2. The stakeholders representatives that will benefit from capacity building activities under Outcome 1: regional inspections of the Land Management Committee of the Ministry of National Economy, River Basin Organizations (RBOs) of the Water Resources Committee of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of RK, district-level environmental regulation authorities and agricultural land users. Specifically, the participants of training and development programs for raising key competencies of current akimat staff of land relations, agricultural, natural resources & environmental management departments.
3. Kazhydromet staff directly benefiting from capacity building activities under Outcome 1
4. Number of staff employed in private sector companies directly engaged by the project through implementation of demonstration projects in Akmola, Kostanai, North Kazakhstan and Pavlodar Oblasts to test agro-environmental financial instruments for diversification and improved management of productive croplands (Output 2.2) and perennial crop systems (Output 2.3), and sustainable livestock management (Output 2.4).
5. Direct beneficiaries for Output 2.5: personnel of 15 extension centers that will be trained; potential users of the extension services. Please assess the number
6. Direct beneficiaries of the National Green Wheat Platform
7. Staff of pilot PAs, both existing and planned, hunting management areas, forestry and fishery managers, along with land user groups (livestock breeders, fishermen, agriculturalists, women, etc.), eco-tourism operators, NGOs participating in trainings under Outcome 3 (including those on HCVFs management)
8. Pilot hunting concession beneficiaries (Output 3.1)
9. Forestry specialists and protected areas staff to be trained in the methods of organizing logging of broad-leaved trees, reforestation, biological protection to control pests and forest diseases.
10. Beneficiaries for Output 3.4. fire prevention capacity building
11. Direct beneficiaries of reforestation activities
12. Beneficiaries of lake and wetland restoration activities
13. Staff employed at PAs targeted by the project and directly engaged in PA management capacity building activities under Outcome 3 (as per METT)

#### 14. Participants of KM activities under Output 4.3

The GEF Secretariat comment is particularly appreciated as it urged the PPG experts to re-consider the approach to the assessment: a less conservative methodology has been applied to the assessment the direct beneficiaries associated with the demo-projects on agro-environmental financial instruments. As a result, an assumption was made that approx. 2000 SME farms that employ an estimated 80,000 people (permanent and seasonal staff) will be directly targeted by the agroincentives planned under the Outcome 2.

The Project Results Framework and the Core Indicator Worksheet were revised following the re-newed assessment as of April 2021. The target value for the Core Indicator 11 is 106,000 people as direct beneficiaries.

#### Part II ? Project Justification

**1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?**

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**4. Is there further elaboration on how the project is aligned with focal area/impact program strategies?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared



Agency Response  
**Project Map and Coordinates**

**Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response  
**Child Project**

**If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request  
04/08/2021: Not fully adequate.

While there is a good description in the agency's project document in section 3.3, what is lacking is the following:

- a mention that the project is part of FOLUR in the summary description page of the prodoc;
- a paragraph early in the GEF endorsement template that makes clear on how the child project contributes to FOLUR with a reference to the prodoc section 3.3;
- a paragraph on the coordination with the FOLUR platform in the 6. Coordination section with a reference to the prodoc table in section 3.3.

04/19/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

**UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021**

**The project summary description on the Prodoc coverpage, the CEO ER sub-section 1a, and the CEO ER Section 6 ?Coordination? have been amended accordingly**

**Stakeholders**

**Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase?  
Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the  
implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of  
engagement, and dissemination of information?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

**Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender  
differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities? If so,  
does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators  
and expected results?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**Private Sector Engagement**

**If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier  
and/or as a stakeholder?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**Risks to Achieving Project Objectives**

**Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Not fully.

- While there is a reference to the prodoc in the risk section in the GEF endorsement template, at least the risk table should be copied into the portal in this section.
- Further, while there is a brief risk assessment with regard to COVID-19, please also include under the risk table an assessment of the opportunities for green recovery, including government measures to achieve this.
- In this context, the discussion of COVID-19 implications and opportunities should be done throughout the GEF template and the prodoc, where ever relevant and appropriate. So far COVID-19 pandemic is only mentioned sporadically in the document(s).

04/19/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

**UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021**  
Risk table copied in CEO ER as Annex I. For the COVID-19 implications, a green recovery dimension has been added as requested (please refer to Prodoc paras 134-137)

**Coordination**

**Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Not fully.

- Please copy and paste a brief summary description of the project implementation/execution arrangement as described in the prodoc in this section.
- As mentioned above, please also briefly describe the coordination with FOLUR (and other GEF initiative as appropriate) and reference the relevant section in the prodoc here as well.

04/19/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

[UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021](#)  
[CEO ER Section 6 revised as requested](#)

**Consistency with National Priorities**

**Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**Knowledge Management**

**Is the proposed Knowledge Management Approach for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Not fully

While the M&E plan is described in the prodoc, please at least copy and paste the summary table (indicating the total budget of \$164,900) here in this section 9.

04/19/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

[UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021](#)

Done

**Benefits**

**Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**Annexes**

**Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Not fully.

Annex E - what is requested here is a budget table as per GEF budget template (see GEF guidelines). The UNDP budget table is appropriate for the project document, however, for GEF review purposes, the project budget also needs to be presented along the categories defined in the GEF budget template.

Please note that comments on the budget can only be provided after the submission of this table. As a reminder, please make sure that no PMC are charged to GEF component budgets and that sufficient PMC co-financing is available to cover all management costs of the project. Further, miscellaneous costs can not be included in the PMC. For some international and national expert positions we may require TOR in case there is an overlap between management and technical assistance tasks.

04/19/2021: The following clarification and correction requests are made:

(i) Project Manager is partially charged to the Project's components ? he/she must be charged to the Project Management Costs from both ?the GEF portion and the co-financing portion? (see Guidelines paragraph 5 ? page 49) ? please amend or provide clear TOR that justify that Program Manager is charged to project components for the reviewers consideration.

(ii) M&E budget under Section 9. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Portal entry indicates a total \$164,900 budget cost while the budget table under Annex E \$541,600. Note that the M&E budget in the budget table of \$541,600 is at 5% of the total project budget, which is higher than the recommended threshold of 2% for projects over \$10 million as per the Project Cycle Guidelines. Please clarify the difference and if applicable, provide justification for higher than recommended amount.

(iii) In context with (ii) above: design of training & professional development programs on sustainable land & pasture management, crop rotation, green production, etc. (15 modules, \$48,700 each); Design of 6 modules for undergraduate/graduate courses on sustainable land & pasture management, green production, etc. (\$19,300); a campaign to stimulate demand for sustainable agricultural products (\$20,000); these items totaling \$88,000 are charged to the M&E but are not related to Monitoring or Evaluation. Please revise.

05/04/2021: Addressed. Agency has provided clarification on the budget in the responses below. TOR for Project Manager and Principal Technical Advisor has been revised.

Cleared

### Agency Response

UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment 04/19/2021:

(i) Thank you. The post of the *Project Manager and Principal Technical Coordinator* has been devised as an overall leader of the project, seeking a person capable of leading project technically on the four technical outcomes (60% of time) as well as main management functions (40% of time). Such positioning allows for most effective project leadership, in UNDP experience. The Terms of Reference for the post of the Project Manager and Principal Technical Coordinator has been edited to make a clear the technical vis-?-vis the management roles of this function (Project Document, Annex 10, p.129). Co-financing for project management, including for servicing managerial positions has been duly made available.

(ii) Indeed, the GEF budget table under Annex E has an entry of USD 541,600, tagged ?M&E?. We would like to clarify that this GEF Budget component reflects the UNDP TBWP Component ?Knowledge management, FOLUR global coordination and M&E?, which includes the M&E budget of \$107,800 (as presented in the Project Document

Section V 'M&E Plan' and the corresponding section of the Portal) plus substantial funding envisaged for knowledge production, exchanges and coordination under the FOLUR Global Program, which was one of the requirements for the child projects under FOLUR IP. We will rename the GEF budget component from 'M&E' to 'M&E, knowledge management and global FOLUR coordination' which accurately represents its meaning under the FOLUR IP guidance.

(iii) Please kindly refer to the explanation above in (ii). The named categories are falling under the knowledge management and global exchange guidance under the Global FOLUR IP, and therefore have been bundled here with M&E. As mentioned the accurate title for this GEF budget component would be 'M&E, knowledge management and global FOLUR coordination'.

[UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021](#)

Please note that CEO ER Annex E refers to project maps.

The GEF Budget (a separate worksheet in the TBWP MSEXcel file) was revised, copied to GEF Portal and attached as a new Annex H to CEO ER.

#### **Project Results Framework**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared

Agency Response

**GEF Secretariat comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Upstream GEF Secretariat comments have been addressed.

Agency Response

**Council comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request will be responded to after circulation, if any.

Agency Response

**STAP comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request no specific STAP comments for this child project

Agency Response

**Convention Secretariat comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

**Other Agencies comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

**CSOs comments**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request none received

Agency Response

**Status of PPG utilization**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: There is a small amount of PPG resources that still needs to be committed (see above comments).

04/19/2021: Addressed.

Cleared

Agency Response

[UNDP Agency Response to GEF Sec comment: 04/08/2021](#)  
Utilized in early 2021, PPG balance is zero

**Project maps and coordinates**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

04/08/2021: Yes.

Cleared



Agency Response

**Does the termsheet in Annex F provide finalized financial terms and conditions? Does the termsheet and financial structure address concerns raised at PIF stage and that were pending to be resolved ahead of CEO endorsement? (For NGI Only)**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

n/a

Agency Response

**Do the Reflow Table Annex G and the Trustee Excel Sheet for reflows provide accurate reflow expectations of the project submitted? Assumptions for Reflows can be submitted to explain expected reflows. (For NGI Only)**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a

Agency Response

**Did the agency Annex H provided with information to assess the Agency Capacity to generate and manage reflows? (For NGI Only)**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request n/a

Agency Response

**GEFSEC DECISION**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Is CEO endorsement recommended? (applies only to projects and child projects)**

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

01/04/2021: Please resubmit and include the agreed Checklist for CEO Endorsement Template duly filled out for this project.

04/08/2021: The checklist has been submitted and has been found in order.

- Please address comments made in this review.

- Please submit a budget table in GEF format.

04/19/2021: No. Please address outstanding comments on budget, core indicators, co-financing, and implementation start date.

05/04/2021: Yes. Program Manager recommends CEO endorsement.

**Review Dates**

	<b>Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement</b>	<b>Response to Secretariat comments</b>
<b>First Review</b>	<b>1/4/2021</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	<b>4/8/2021</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	<b>4/19/2021</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>	<b>5/4/2021</b>	
<b>Additional Review (as necessary)</b>		

**CEO Recommendation**

**Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations**

This child project in Kazakhstan is part of the the global GEF Impact Program on Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration (FOLUR), with the objective to trigger wide-scale adoption of efficient land management technologies and promote green value chains to reduce degradation of productive agricultural land and associated high value ecosystems in the Northern Kazakhstan Landscape. The project will support Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) policies, capacities and incentives, thus ensuring the enabling environment for transformation of land use practices to avoid ecosystem and land degradation. The project will support diversification and improved management of productive croplands, introduce agro-environmental incentives for sustainable food production, restore pasture land and introduce sustainable pasture management techniques.

The project will generate multiple global environmental benefits GEBs, as well as local socio-economic benefits, by demonstrating improved protection, restoration, and sustainable management of degraded agricultural lands, forests, forest-steppes, meadows, lakes, wetlands and associated corridors within the Northern Kazakhstan

Landscape. It will address unsustainable commodity production and associated land degradation, in line with the programmatic objectives of FOLUR. The project will contribute to the GEF's Land Degradation focal area Objective 1 Support on the ground implementation of SLM to achieve LDN. It will restore 150,000 ha of degraded agricultural land, 5,000 ha of HCVE, 4,600 ha of wetlands and lakes important for agriculture, and promote integrated management for 22,000,000 ha within a wider landscape. It will also reduce pressures on High Conservation Value areas stemming from unsustainable practices by catalyzing a shift from a sectoral to multi-stakeholder land use planning approaches.

The risks stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic have been duly assessed. The Government of Kazakhstan is implementing a COVID-19 anti-crisis package (\$13 billion or 9 percent of GDP) since March 2020. The sustainable economic recovery, targeted support to vulnerable businesses affected by the pandemic in the short and long run, revitalization of import and trade, restoring supply chains and supporting SMEs are all elements of the green recovery path that Kazakhstan is following through this package. The specific elements were the FOLUR Northern Kazakhstan Project will integrate with the green recovery agenda of the country includes support to SMEs in the agricultural sector, capacity building for extension services in crop production, ?greening? of wheat production in the NKL region, increased opportunities of green jobs, knowledge and capacity building.