

## Towards a Land Degradation-Neutral Azerbaijan

### Part I: Project Information

**GEF ID**  
10708

**Project Type**  
FSP

**Type of Trust Fund**  
GET

**CBIT/NGI**  
☐ CBIT  
☐ NGI

**Project Title**  
Towards a Land Degradation-Neutral Azerbaijan

**Countries**  
Azerbaijan

**Agency(ies)**  
FAO

**Other Executing Partner(s)**  
Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan

**Executing Partner Type**  
Government

**GEF Focal Area**

Land Degradation

**Taxonomy**

Focal Areas, Land Degradation, Land Degradation Neutrality, Land Productivity, Carbon stocks above or below ground, Land Cover and Land cover change, Sustainable Land Management, Income Generating Activities, Sustainable Forest, Integrated and Cross-sectoral approach, Sustainable Agriculture, Ecosystem Approach, Sustainable Pasture Management, Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands, Improved Soil and Water Management Techniques, Community-Based Natural Resource Management, Sustainable Livelihoods, Influencing models, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Demonstrate innovative approach, Transform policy and regulatory environments, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Private Sector, Individuals/Entrepreneurs, Type of Engagement, Consultation, Participation, Information Dissemination, Partnership, Communications, Awareness Raising, Behavior change, Public Campaigns, Strategic Communications, Local Communities, Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organization, Community Based Organization, Academia, Gender Equality, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Capacity Development, Learning, Indicators to measure change, Knowledge Generation, Training, Workshop

**Rio Markers****Climate Change Mitigation**

Climate Change Mitigation 1

**Climate Change Adaptation**

Climate Change Adaptation 1

**Duration**

36 In Months

**Agency Fee(\$)**

198,719.00

**Submission Date**

9/28/2020

A. Indicative Focal/Non-Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
LD-1-1	GET	1,270,000.00	14,200,000.00
LD-2-5	GET	821,781.00	2,740,000.00
Total Project Cost (\$)		2,091,781.00	16,940,000.00

## B. Indicative Project description summary

### Project Objective

Support the national efforts to develop and implement LDN national targets, and demonstration of SLM in Absheron Peninsula peninsula, contributing to rehabilitation of degraded lands and improved and improved livelihood resilience.

Project Component	Financing Type	Project Outcomes	Project Outputs	Trust Fund	GEF Amount(\$)	Co-Fin Amount(\$)
1. Strengthening the enabling environment for LDN	Technical Assistance	<p>1.1 Enhanced LDN policy and institutional framework and LDN target setting</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthening of at least 2 policies in support of LDN</li> <li>- Intersectoral coordination mechanisms in place on SLM and DLDD in support of LDN</li> </ul> <p>1.2 Monitoring system and related capacity for LDN monitoring, assessment and reporting in place, supporting LDN target setting</p> <p>Targets:</p>	<p>1.1.1. Revised LDN-related policies/legislations and relevant instruments based on a gap analysis</p> <p>1.1.2. Vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms established and strengthened for integrating LDN in land use planning frameworks</p> <p>1.2.1. Setting the LDN baseline and national target based on the three global LDN indicators (Land cover, Land productivity, SOC), national LD indicators using a site-specific methodology to assess degradation trends</p>	GET	550,000.00	1,500,000.00

- LDN baseline based on the three voluntary LDN indicators set

- National LDN targets set agreed by the Government

1.3 LDN principles inform land-use planning frameworks, and integrated into national decision-making processes related to management of natural capital

Target:

- LDN oriented land use planning framework developed

- Decision-support system (DSS) for LDN target setting and planning established

- Amount of funding mobilized for LDN implementation (approximately 15,000,000 USD)

1.3.1. National DLDD monitoring system assessed and linked to monitoring of the three global LDN indicators and land-use planning processes

1.3.2. National LDN targets time frame and funding required for their achievement identified

1.3.3. LDN knowledge platform and DSS established in line with the LDN response hierarchy, and supported by the Ministry of Ecology and other key Ministries and institutions

1.4.1. Capacity development and awareness raising program in place targeting stakeholders including policy makers, local administrations, and farmer organizations for mainstreaming of LDN targets

1.4.2. Capacity building program for the government officers to assist in reporting to UNCCD

<p>1.4. Enhanced capacity at national and sub-national levels to support the achievement of LDN targets</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- at least 40 staff at the central and local government, and 200 farmers trained on LDN (at least 30% women)</li> </ul>
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2. Demonstrating the LDN approach in salt-affected landscapes in the Absheron Peninsula	Investment	<p>2.1. Valuation of ecosystem services informs land-use planning and behavioral change in support of LDN</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 200 local stakeholders trained on valuation of ecosystem services using the ELD approach (at least 30% women)</li> </ul>	GET	1,270,000.00	14,150,000.00
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2.2. Improved land and water management, land cover, and increased soil organic carbon at salt-affected sites of the Absheron peninsula contribute to the national LDN targets

Targets:

- Land-use plans supporting achievement of the LDN target on 34,000 ha of land
- LD avoided on 31,300 ha of land
- LD reduced through tree planting at 2,000 ha degraded forest lands
- Reversal of LD on saline land through SLM: demonstration plots of 500 ha horticulture, 200 ha saline land reclamation
- 486,125 tCO<sub>2</sub>eq of avoided emissions or carbon sequestration [1]

2.1.1. Assessment of the current natural capital and ecosystem services of the targeted lands using the ELD approach under the LDN framework

2.1.2. Assessment of the socio-economic effects of action vs. inaction for SLM practices using Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) methodology and scenarios for upscaling

2.1.3. Training program on ELD for regional authorities, farmers, and other related organizations

2.1.4. Participatory integrated gender-sensitive land-use plans developed and priorities identified by the LDN Decision Support System (DSS)

2.2.1. Integrated sustainable and gender sensitive Land/Water Management practices and technologies adopted on the demonstration landscapes to reduce land degradation, restore degraded land, and enhance land productivity

- 1,300 direct beneficiaries/ farmers and members of their families (around 50% women) through direct involvement at demonstration plots

- 21,700 indirect beneficiaries families (around 50% women) through increase of their land productivity

[1] Annex D: the EX-ACT calculations

3. Monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management/ lessons-learned	Technical Assistance	<p>3.1. Knowledge management and lessons learned disseminated at national level</p> <p>Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Best practices and lessons learned summarized and organized in a framework for scaling-up at regional and national level</li> <li>- At least 3 gender sensitive LDN knowledge products developed and disseminated</li> </ul>	<p>3.1.1. Experience sharing on Project-related "lessons-learned" and a national LDN guidelines published</p> <p>3.1.2 Gender-sensitive communication strategy developed and implemented to support the LDN targets and mainstreaming of lessons learned</p>	GET	172,172.00	1,050,000.00
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- Lessons learned on SLM and LDN mainstreamed in the national and regional development plans;

3.2. Monitoring and evaluation

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Targets:

- Functioning monitoring system for GEBs and co-benefits established

- Functioning system for reporting the status of LDN to the UNCCD

3.2.1 Project mid-term and final evaluation conducted

3.2.2 Global Environment Benefits, co-benefits and costs of SLM monitored, and lessons analyzed

3.2.2. LDN target-setting reporting mechanism in place

Sub Total (\$)	1,992,172.00	16,700,000.00
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Project Management Cost (PMC)

GET	99,609.00	240,000.00
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Sub Total(\$)	99,609.00	240,000.00
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Total Project Cost(\$)

2,091,781.00

16,940,000.00

**C. Indicative sources of Co-financing for the Project by name and by type**

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
GEF Agency	FAO	In-kind	Investment mobilized	750,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3,550,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Amelioration and Water Farms JSC	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	5,000,000.00
Private Sector	Azersun	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,000,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	Grant	Investment mobilized	2,640,000.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture	Grant	Investment mobilized	1,000,000.00
<b>Total Project Cost(\$)</b>				<b>16,940,000.00</b>

**Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified**

FAO co-financing: Potential con-finance sources would be pipeline projects as TCP Facility on Apiculture Beekeeping, TCP Facility on Water Governance and Management, FAO-Turkey Partnership Projects on Forest Restoration, Conservation of Forest Biodiversity and Improved Forest Management. MENR con-financing: Co-finance source of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources would be from the Join Action Program on support to "Green Aagriculture" between MENR and Ministry of Agriculture Ministry of Agriculture co-financing: Co-finance source of the Ministry of Agriculture would be from the Strategic Roadmap on Agricultural Production and Processing

D. Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
FAO	GET	Azerbaijan	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	2,091,781	198,719	2,290,500.00
Total GEF Resources(\$)					2,091,781.00	198,719.00	2,290,500.00

E. Project Preparation Grant (PPG)  
PPG Required



PPG Amount (\$)				PPG Agency Fee (\$)			
100,000				9,500			
Agency	Trust Fund	Country	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Amount(\$)	Fee(\$)	Total(\$)
FAO	GET	Azerbaijan	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	100,000	9,500	109,500.00
Total Project Costs(\$)					100,000.00	9,500.00	109,500.00

Core Indicators

Indicator 3 Area of land restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
2700.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural land restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
2,700.00			

Indicator 3.2 Area of Forest and Forest Land restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and shrublands restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (incl. estuaries, mangroves) restored

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4 Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
34000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Indicator 4.1 Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares, qualitative assessment, non-certified)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes that meets national or international third party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations (hectares)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Type/Name of Third Party Certification

Indicator 4.3 Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
34,000.00			

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Please upload document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title	Submitted

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)	486125	0	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)	0	0	0	0

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)	486,125			

Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)	
Anticipated start year of accounting	2021
Duration of accounting	11

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
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Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)
Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)
Anticipated start year of accounting
Duration of accounting

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
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Target Energy Saved (MJ)
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Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 11 Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	12,000			
Male	11,000			
Total	23000	0	0	0

## Part II. Project Justification

### 1a. Project Description

#### 1) The Global Environmental Problem, its causes and remaining barriers

Azerbaijan has a population of 10,067 million inhabitants, 4,755 million of whom live in rural areas ([www.stat.gov.az](http://www.stat.gov.az)). It is an Upper Middle Income economy with a GDP of USD around 40 billion (2019, World Bank data). The GDP per capita in 2019 was 5,880 USD, the equivalent to 47% of the world's average. The macroeconomic indicators strongly depend on the global oil market prices: between 2014 and 2016, the GDP was reduced by half from USD 75.25 to USD 37.87 billion due to decrease in oil prices. One of the main goals of Azerbaijan today is to lessen its economy's dependence on the oil sector and ensure expansion of economic development to rural areas. To ensure the sustainability of economic policies and reforms, in 2016 the Government adopted *Strategic Road Maps on National Economic Development* covering 11 sectors. These Strategic Road Maps include economic development strategies and action plans with the long-term outlook to 2025 and beyond. Two overarching strategic documents guide the development of agriculture: *"Azerbaijan-2020: Vision for the future"* and *"Strategic Roadmap on Agricultural production and processing"*. The recently updated agricultural strategy provides a vision for 2020, 2025, and post-2025.

The agricultural sector is the third biggest sector (8.7% of the total GDP) in Azerbaijan's economy after oil and construction, with the biggest share of the country's workforce (37% of working population) ([www.stat.gov.az](http://www.stat.gov.az)). This sector is closely linked with poverty and poverty reduction strategies in rural areas. Azerbaijan has limited land resources. The total area of agricultural land is 4,777,500 ha, with 0.48 ha/capita land under agriculture, including 0.21 ha of arable lands. Around 57% (2,327,000 ha) of agricultural lands in Azerbaijan are pasturelands. Land degradation in Azerbaijan affects the natural capital, food security, well-being and health of the inhabitants. Local contamination of water and soils, intensification of agricultural production make an increasing contribution to land degradation compounded by climate change.

Azerbaijan is a mountainous country with extremely diverse ecosystems that vary from alpine meadows in high mountains and mountainous temperate forest of the Greater and Lesser Caucasus to wet subtropical forest in the extreme south-east of the country. However, the major area of importance for agriculture has dry subtropical climate, and the natural vegetation is scrublands or dry steppe. The main processes of land degradation vary depending on the biophysical environment and corresponding land use. In the mountains with cooler and moister climate, land degradation is caused by overgrazing that leads to the decline in productivity and water erosion, which in turn results in the loss of soil organic carbon. The mountain slopes are subject to uncontrolled logging that leads to deforestation and replacement of productive beech and oak forests with secondary hornbeam and hornbeam-linden arboreal vegetation. In the dry Kur-Araz depression, land degradation is driven by the dry and warm climate that causes water scarcity and high mineralization, which in turn leads to soil salinization and sodification, resulting in low productivity of the natural vegetation and pastures, invasion of specific halophytic plants and low crop yields. Even though the decline in productivity has been detected in forested areas and grasslands (see Maps 1-2), farming is the main cause of land degradation and pressure on natural capital.

In Azerbaijan land degradation has a gender-related impact as it affects men and women differently, mainly due to unequal access to land, water, credit, extension services, and technology. Women account for around 22.9% [\[\[1\]\]](#) of the official employment statistics in agriculture, however official labour force statistics does not provide a complete picture of gender differences in the informal economy and sex-disaggregated data on family farming and status of women in rural areas. The study of the Asian Development Bank indicates that agriculture is the main sector where women are involved in comparison to other leading sectors of the economy (oil and gas, construction).

The water resources of Azerbaijan - with most of them located in the arid zone - are also limited. The surface water resources amount to 32.2 billion m<sup>3</sup>, of which 22.6 million m<sup>3</sup> are in dry years. Around 70% of the surface water resources are generated outside of the country. The volume of groundwater resources is 5.2 billion m<sup>3</sup>. Agriculture accounts for 60-70% of used water. The calculated water deficit in the country is 3.7 billion m<sup>3</sup> in years with normal precipitation, and 4.7-5 billion m<sup>3</sup> in years with insufficient precipitation. Since over 90% of irrigation and collector-drainage schemes consist of open-type earth channels, water losses are high, mineralized phreatic water rise to the cultivation layer and surrounding areas become salinized. Moreover, the most common irrigation used in farming is traditional surface irrigation. Utilization of water-saving techniques such as drip-irrigation or sprinkler irrigation is limited. Accordingly, some of the suitable for irrigated agriculture lands are exposed to salinization. Around 17% of irrigated lands are slightly saline, 8.4% moderately saline, and 3.3% highly saline. Currently 495,166 hectares of irrigated lands - or 5.9% of the territory of the country - require ameliorative measures. The saline soils are located mainly on the coastal plains of the Caspian Sea, including on the Absheron peninsula, in the Kur-Araz depression, and at the Salyan, Mugan, and Mil plains.

Based on the dry bioclimatic conditions, strong anthropogenic pressure and importance for the population of the country, one of the priority areas for combating land degradation is the Absheron peninsula, which is the most densely populated part of Azerbaijan with a total area of 2,110 km<sup>2</sup>. Over 80% of the industrial potential of Azerbaijan and more than 60% of the country's population are concentrated in this region, which shares only 6.6% of the total territory. Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan and the biggest city in the country with a population of 2.3 million inhabitants, and Sumagayit, an important industrial center with a population of 345,3000, are also located in this area. In the beginning of 2020, the urban population of the peninsula, excluding the capital, was 527,900, and the rural population was only 46,800. People move to these areas in search of employment and improvement of the quality of life.

The Absheron peninsula is strongly affected by desertification processes. The climate is hot and dry, and the major part of the peninsula is a semi-desert with ephemeral vegetation. Only 6% of the total area of the Absheron peninsula has satisfactory environmental conditions. The soils are poor in organic carbon, most of them have high level of salinity; in closed depressions one can find Solonchaks and lakes with saline water. Strong winds and poor vegetative cover result in intensive wind erosion. Northern winds are found on the Absheron peninsula in all seasons, sometimes reach hurricane force (Baku Nord or "Khazri"). The main agricultural activities of the local population include irrigation-based viticulture and recently resurgent sheep farming; these activities are affected by progressing desertification of the area. In brief, the main issues related to land degradation include water scarcity and high mineralization, soil salinity, and wind erosion. Over-population of the peninsula and climate change are the main drivers of the growing problems of land degradation. The pressure associated with water scarcity and soil salinization is compounded by urbanization that reduces the area available for farming and thus increases the pressure on the land used in agriculture.

The Third National Communication to the UNFCCC (2015) provides detailed information about climate change and forecasts for Azerbaijan and particularly for Absheron peninsula. The used HadCM3 model forecasts a 1.5 °C increase of temperature in comparison with the 1961-90 average values in all the regions of Azerbaijan during the period of 2011-2040. It forecasts an increase of temperature in a range of 3.5-5.0 °C in comparison with the 1961-90 average values, in most regions of Azerbaijan during the period of 2071-2100. The forecasts do not project any significant changes in precipitation for the period 2011-2040, but prediction for the period of 2041-2070 is a 0-5% increase, particularly for the Abeshron peninsula.

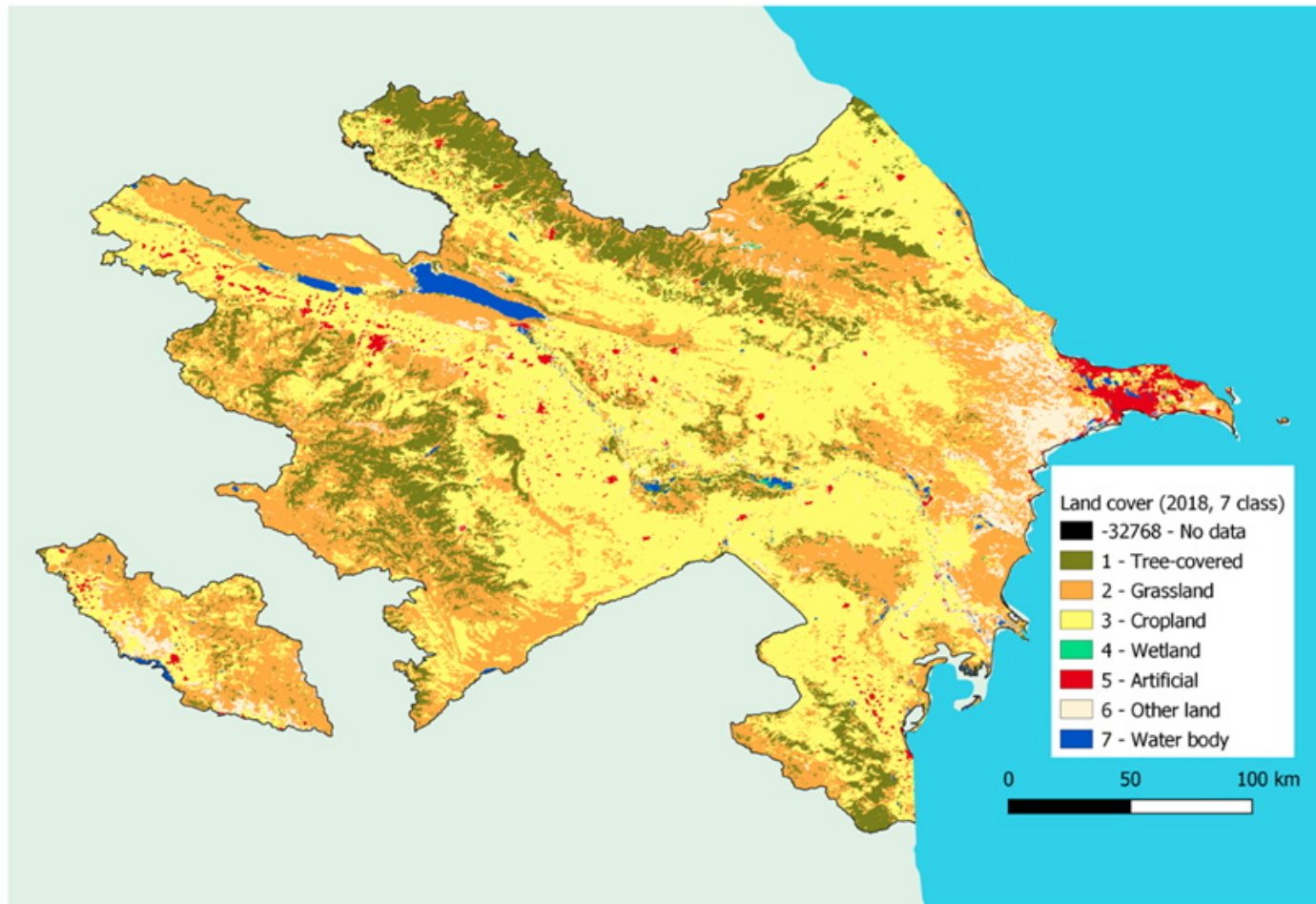
The climate risk of the project is rated as moderate on a scale of low, moderate, substantial, and high. Exposure to severe land degradation makes the agricultural productivity low in the agricultural lands of the peninsula. Since irrigation is one of the key factors in the development of agricultural crop production, it results in vulnerability of the agriculture sector. The increasing temperature will bring losses due to evaporation and will cause water shortages. The climate change scenarios forecast the intensive evaporation that will activate the movement of the groundwater in the unsaturated zone exacerbating the salinization of soil, its degradation and decrease in productivity in the future. Details of the risks related to climate change is described in the relevant section below, and in Annex E, along with the climate change screening of the project. In general the mentioned predictions show the importance of capacity development to strengthen climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Agricultural lands occupy 42,027 ha of the peninsula. The main specialization of the area is olive growing, and the major part of olive groves under drip irrigation in the country are concentrated in Baku city (46.8%) and the Absheron peninsula (42.8%). In terms of agricultural land use, 3,280 ha are used for orchards, including olive trees, 1,300 ha for grapes, and around 1,202 ha for vegetables. Around 2,500 ha of agricultural land is managed by small landowners. One hundred and fourteen registered producers are involved in the production of agricultural products in the peninsula, most of which are engaged in the production of almonds, olives, and vegetables. It should be noted that the number of unregistered producers is much higher as the registration process was only recently launched. Olive, almond, and fodder crops are the main crops of the producers. This is due to the fact that these plants are suitable for the soil and climatic conditions of the region.

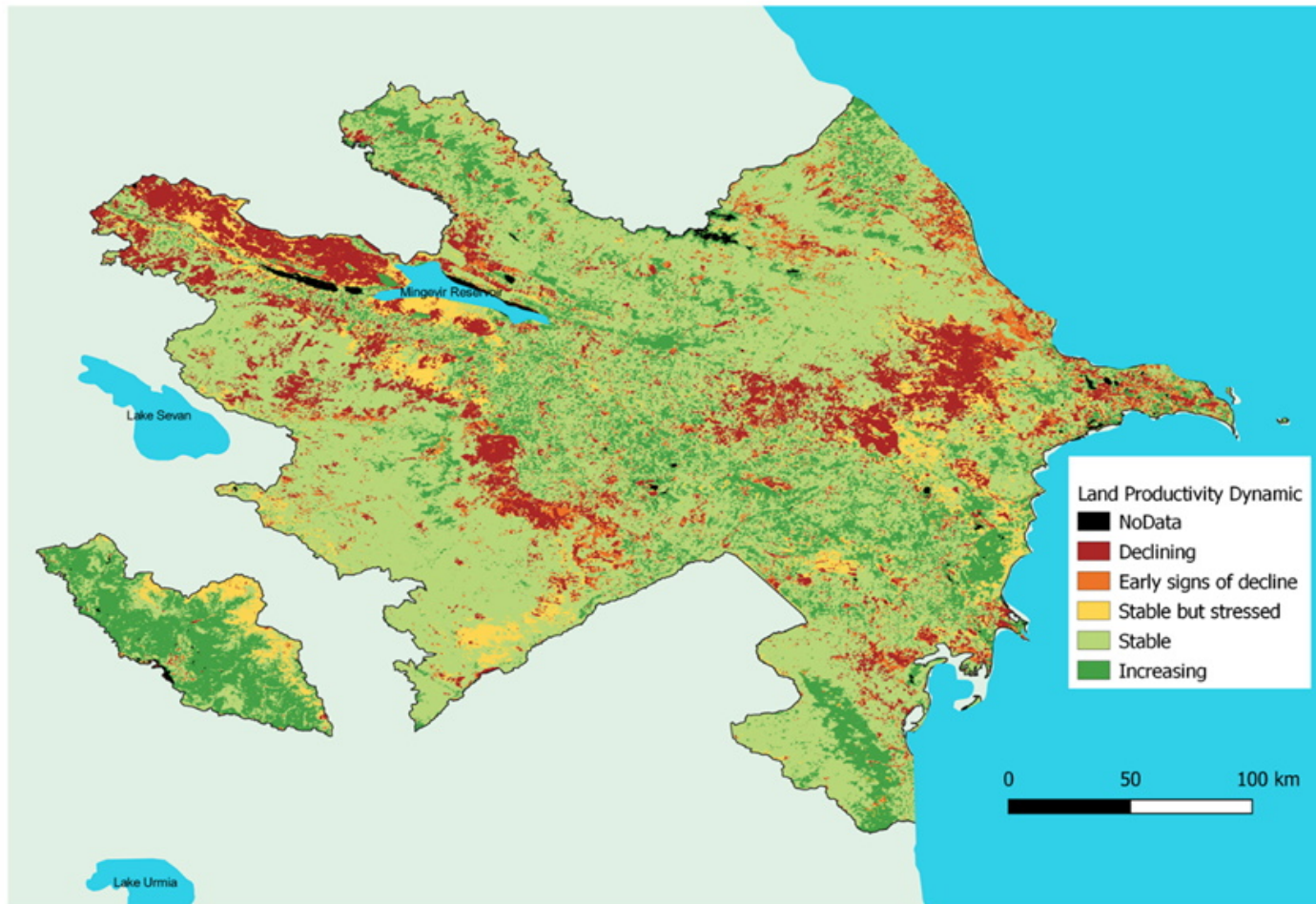
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[1] The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2020. Gender Indicators. Women and men in Azerbaijan.

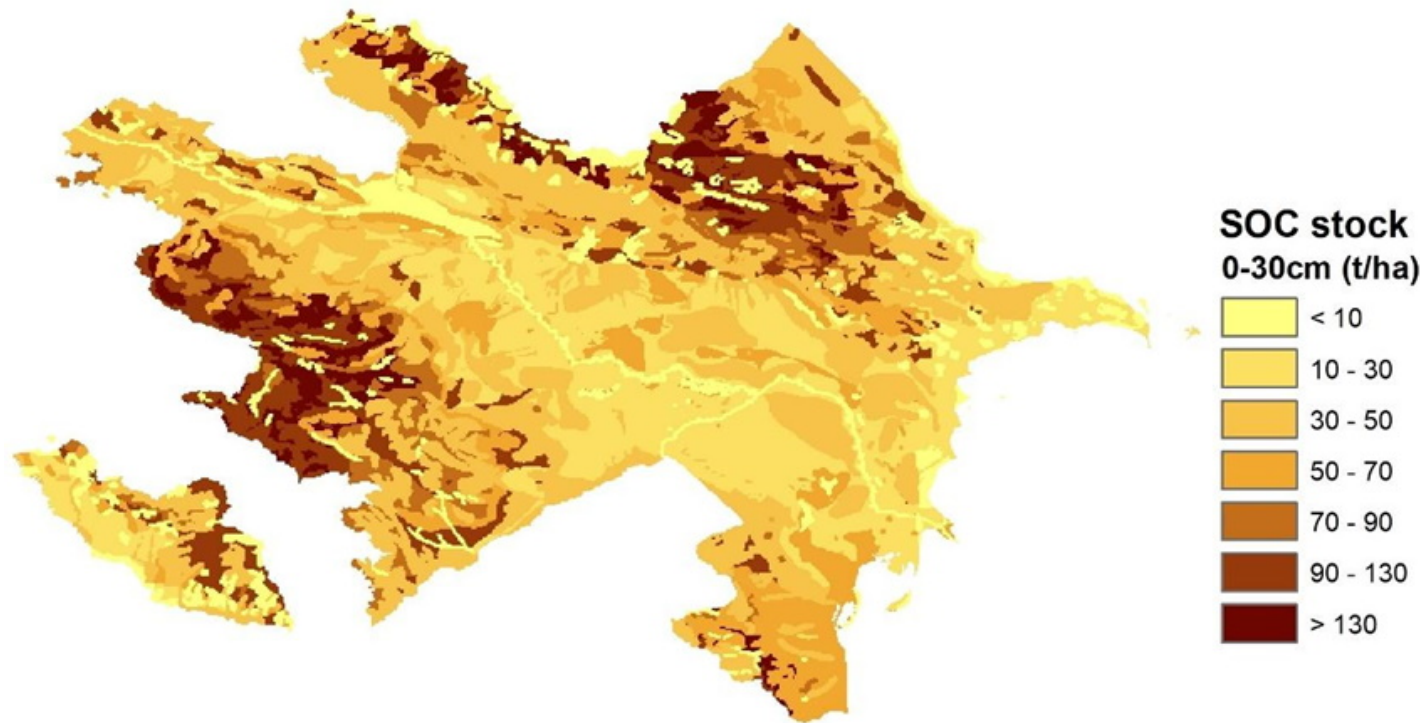
*Map 1. Land Cover in Azerbaijan. Source: <https://www.esa-landcover-cci.org/?q=node/175>*



Map 2. Land Productivity dynamics in Azerbaijan 2001-2019 (simplified JRC methodology)



Map 3. Soil Organic Carbon in Azerbaijan. Source: GSP, 2018.



To date, only limited research has been done to date on the Absheron peninsula of where land degradation is occurring, and with what intensity, including soil salinization processes, which has led to a lack of proper maps in general. Therefore, at the PIF stage, it was not possible to find a suitable map including a detailed analysis of the problem, but it was proposed to conduct the needed mapping during the PPG phase.

Soil salinity triggers other degradation processes: organic carbon loss due to low productivity, wind and water erosion due to sparse vegetative cover, etc. Salinization has a direct effect on soil productivity, and thus extensive areas of the land potentially suitable for agricultural production, grazing and agroforestry are not used. In the context of natural capital, the high levels of salts and pesticides on the soil surface negatively affects other ecosystem services, not only agricultural land productivity. Salt and pesticides particles are easily transported by the wind, and thus salinity and contamination have a direct negative effect on human health, because salt particles are windblown and can get into the respiratory organs. Dust particles at the Absheron peninsula are commonly present in the air due to strong winds. Apart from a direct effect on land productivity and land vegetative cover, salinization decreases the indirect value of the land. Combating wind erosion may be an important tool for controlling air quality by reducing the amount of windblown salts and pesticides, and it may have a significant economic benefit. Different SLM practices, such as afforestation, can be considered as land management solutions for small farmers who live at the Absheron peninsula. SLM practices such as agroforestry would be beneficial for the farmers to increase productivity (and produce other by-products from the forest) parallel to decreasing land degradation. The potential global benefits of SLM practices (e.g. afforestation combined with drip irrigation and application of organic fertilizers) includes carbon sequestration in soils, in forest biomass, in increased land productivity, and in support of biological diversity in the land and forest ecosystems.

## **Barriers to Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality**

### **Barrier 1: Lack of institutional coordination and governance frameworks**

Although Azerbaijan actively invests in environmental sustainability at the national and regional level, a lot remains to be done to coordinate these activities within the LDN framework. Until now the country does not have a Working Group on LDN, target setting was not done, and national LDN indicators supporting the three global indicators were not identified. Different Ministries and institutions share the responsibility for combating desertification that complicates the exchange of information and planning of joint activities. The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR), which plays the lead role in SLM related activities, has no direct contact with the farmers and agricultural enterprises. In some specific cases, e.g. related to the need for forest fire prevention, the MENR works together with the Ministry of Agriculture (MA), but the cooperation is not permanent. Additional difficulties exist with the access to maps and other information required for monitoring of natural resources. The State Committee on Land and Cartography was abolished in 2016, and its functions were shared between the State Committee on Property and the MENR, hence some important documents and data are difficult to access.

There is a lack of both horizontal and vertical coordination related to land degradation monitoring and implementation of SLM. The contact between central ministries and local authorities is not always successful, hence the need to strengthen vertical coordination. The absence of mechanisms for knowledge sharing in the Ministries and Committees also contributes to the inefficiency of some activities related to the implementation of SLM practices. As a result, the perspectives, concerns, and interests of various underrepresented farmer groups, including female farmers are not integrated into SLM policies.

### **Barrier 2: Poor motivation and incentives for farmers and other stakeholders, and lack of investments to implement the LDN approach**

Although sustainable management of natural resources is a priority for the government of Azerbaijan, on the level of land users the awareness of the need for SLM is still low. To a great extent, the situation depends on economic reasons: the cost of additional effort should be covered by farmers themselves, while the benefits are received by the entire society. The Government invests in projects aimed at afforestation, contaminated sites reclamation, and land improvement, but so far has not created the environment that allows maintaining LDN by the farmers themselves. As the Head of Environmental Policy Department at MENR said, 60-70% of land degradation in the country is due to improper land use and not due to biophysical factors. The use of saline water for irrigation is also a practice that leads to the loss of land productivity, but it is still widely used in the absence of other sources of water. The role of the government institutions together with the representatives of NGOs is to raise farmers and land users awareness of the importance of SLM practices, to promote the LDN concept and guide the farmers towards behavioral change.

Gender analysis should be integrated into the LDN with the focus on women's and men's access to and control over land and water resources, labour practices in agricultural production, specifically irrigation and land management, and decision-making over assets, income and resources. The gender analysis will also assess women's knowledge on innovative technologies and information sharing channels. The analysis will help in designing tailor-made communication strategies and trainings that cater to the responsibilities of women and men involved in various types of farming.

A sustainable behavioral change requires a well-developed investment plan, in particular private sector investment, and also incentive planning for farmers and stakeholders. Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) approach represents an important tool, which connects land degradation to cost and benefit analysis of action and inaction. This approach has proved its efficiency for environmental education of land users.

### **Barrier 3: Limited data, knowledge and experience to support decision-making processes on LDN**

Azerbaijan possesses good baseline information on the natural resources of the country, including physiographic and thematic maps of various scales. However, some of the maps are outdated and require adjustment to the current situation. Land use and land cover maps currently are based completely on remote sensing data with no or little ground truthing. The abolishment of the State Committee on Land and Cartography had a negative impact on the availability of the cartographic information and progress in the inventory of the country's natural resources.. Knowledge among the female and male land users and even decision-makers of LDN principles is also insufficient. For the majority of the population, LDN means a balance between the area of contaminated and reclaimed land. If land degrades due to improper land management in combination with climate change, land users do not feel responsible for land degradation and thus do not have motivation for improved and sustainable land management. Concerted efforts are required to make female and male farmers, administrators, and representatives of civil society accept the responsibility for achieving the LDN targets. Even after raising the awareness of LDN policies, most people do not have experience and incentives for implementation of these policies. Practical training and case studies are required to increase the capacity of local administrations and in particular land users to support decision-making processes on LDN.

#### **2) The baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects**

Land degradation in the Republic of Azerbaijan occurs mainly as a result of a wide range of human activities, including agricultural activities such as overgrazing, exacerbated by geo-morphological characteristics of soils, erosion processes, salinization, and climate change, including floods and droughts. Land degradation directly affects the level of rural poverty. Extensive agriculture, overgrazing, resulting from use of nomadic and semi-animal husbandry methods, and the use of outdated irrigation techniques, inadequate introduction of modern agricultural technologies, and etc. lead to erosion, salinization and land degradation problems. In addition, contamination problems on the Absheron is a high priority for the Government and many projects have been implemented and are currently also ongoing to address this issue. With regards to future contamination, it should be noted that the oil industry in Azerbaijan currently focuses on the off-shore production. The Absheron area has very few oil extraction sites that are still used by the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic - SOCAR. SOCAR developed its own environment policy to mitigate the negative impacts of its operations on the surrounding areas under the strict control of MENR. Therefore, future contamination risks are expected to be minimal.

The government of Azerbaijan has a number of national strategies and legislative/regulatory frameworks addressing land degradation-related issues. *The Strategic Road Map of Azerbaijan on Agricultural Production and Processing* (2016) defines overall priorities related to restoration and rehabilitation of degraded lands for short, medium and long term periods. Also, some aspects of agricultural developments are described in the *"National Strategy for the Protection and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2017-2020"* and the *"Strategic roadmap for the prospects of the national economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan"*. Other legal documents such as Land Code, Forest Code, Water Code, and other relevant laws and supporting regulations stipulate the responsible bodies for management of resources, their protection, and sustainable use. There are several regulations related to creating the national framework on land degradation and land-related issues. The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Economy are key decision makers on the LDN-related issues.

Azerbaijan ratified the UNCCD on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1998, and has since made significant progress in combating desertification. The Government of Azerbaijan (GoA) is committed to provide an effective response across sectors and at various government levels to meet the global commitments on LDN, contributing to target 15.3 of the SDGs to achieve LDN by 2030.

The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources is acting as focal point for UNCCD and is responsible for the LDN target setting process. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Economy are also key national stakeholders as they are responsible for economic and social results of land degradation. In this regard, LDN is always on top of their agenda. The Ministry of Finance is the main body deciding on financial allocations. The National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan is involved in research and scientific matters with the overall goal to improve the quality of lands suitable for agriculture use and to restore degraded lands due to poor land management. It highlights the importance of melioration and re-cultivation of high salinity lands and contaminated lands. Establishment of a database, including GIS data on degraded lands is another priority of the Government in order to have reliable inventory and baseline information for informed decision-making.

In addition, there are currently several related projects receiving international support:

#### **GIZ/Ministry of Agriculture**

"Management of natural resources and safeguarding of ecosystem services for sustainable rural development in the South Caucasus (ECOserve)". Budget: Euro 13.1 million. Project aims to improve conditions for the sustainable and biodiversity-friendly use of natural resources in the dominant land-use systems (grazing, agriculture, and forest) in the South Caucasus. The focus is on the dominant land-use systems. Lessons learned and the collected data will be used to strengthen the proposed project.

#### **UNDP/ Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources**

"Adaptation planning support for Azerbaijan". Budget: US\$ 3 million. In its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2017, the Government of Azerbaijan (GoA) has embarked on the preparation and implementation of a National Adaptation Plan (NAP). This GCF readiness project supports the GoA to facilitate the development of the NAP and improve climate change adaptation (CCA) actions in three priority sectors identified by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) through stakeholder consultations: water, agriculture, and coastal areas. The NAP readiness support objective is to increase capacity on climate resilience and adaptation in those three sectors through the implementation of actions and activities that will reduce or eliminate barriers to an effective adaptation process at both the national and local levels. Related climate change assessments in the agricultural sector and collected data will be used to strengthen the proposed project. Additionally, the project will contribute to the national adaptation plans by providing relevant data on the effective methods to avoid land degradation on the agricultural lands.

**FAO** together with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources is going to start the project (currently at PPG phase with possible start in 2021) "*Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: Strengthening network of protected areas through improved governance and management*" funded in the GEF-7 cycle. The main objective of the project is to strengthen the effectiveness of the Azerbaijan's protected area system using a landscape approach to governance and management. One of the project outputs is related to the restoration of the degraded lands through application of the Integrated Landscape Approach that can be linked with the current project. The project will be used for coordination purposes and not be cited as co-financing.

The above-mentioned projects will support implementation of the proposed project in terms of baseline information on policy, institutional and technical capacities, beneficiaries, and sharing of the relevant landscape approaches. The current situation indicates that a tremendous effort is required to achieve SDG 15 and to ensure that the national 15.3 LDN target will be in line with the national target set in the Strategic Roadmaps. However, despite the previous

efforts in the recent years, there is still a need to support the Government of Azerbaijan to carry out the necessary procedures for LDN target setting. Therefore, Azerbaijan needs technical support for all the steps involved in the target setting process. The proposed project is thus designed to assist Azerbaijan in taking the steps required to finalize the LDN target setting process and set up a sustainable LDN governance and monitoring systems.

### 3) The proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project

The project will support the national efforts to develop and implement LDN national targets through SLM leading to sustainable dryland agriculture and rangeland system management. This will contribute to implementation of SDGs 15.2 and 15.3 and bring co-benefits for climate change adaptation and mitigation, and biodiversity conservation. Under the LDN framework, land degradation can be avoided, reduced and reversed at scales from individual farms to big natural areas and administrative units. The project will take a phased approach following STAP's guidelines for the application of the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN. The theory of change is designed as follows:

- Strengthening the enabling environment for LDN - this involves strengthening of the policy and institutional framework in support of LDN, establishment of LDN monitoring and reporting systems, support to the multi-sectoral land-use planning processes in Azerbaijan, as well as capacity development of institutions and individuals to move forward achieving the LDN commitments of Azerbaijan.
- Implementation of SLM and demonstration of the LDN approach at the Absheron peninsula - this is the most degraded area in the entire country, but with great agricultural potential. The demonstrations of SLM are aimed at improved productivity of saline and eroded land for improved livelihoods and will thus promote SLM and landscapes restoration to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation according to the LDN response hierarchy.
- Upscaling of LDN experiences through monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and sharing of lessons learned to move forward with achieving the LDN commitments of Azerbaijan.

The project Theory of Change (ToC) will be built on the LDN ToC developed by the UNCCD (below figure).

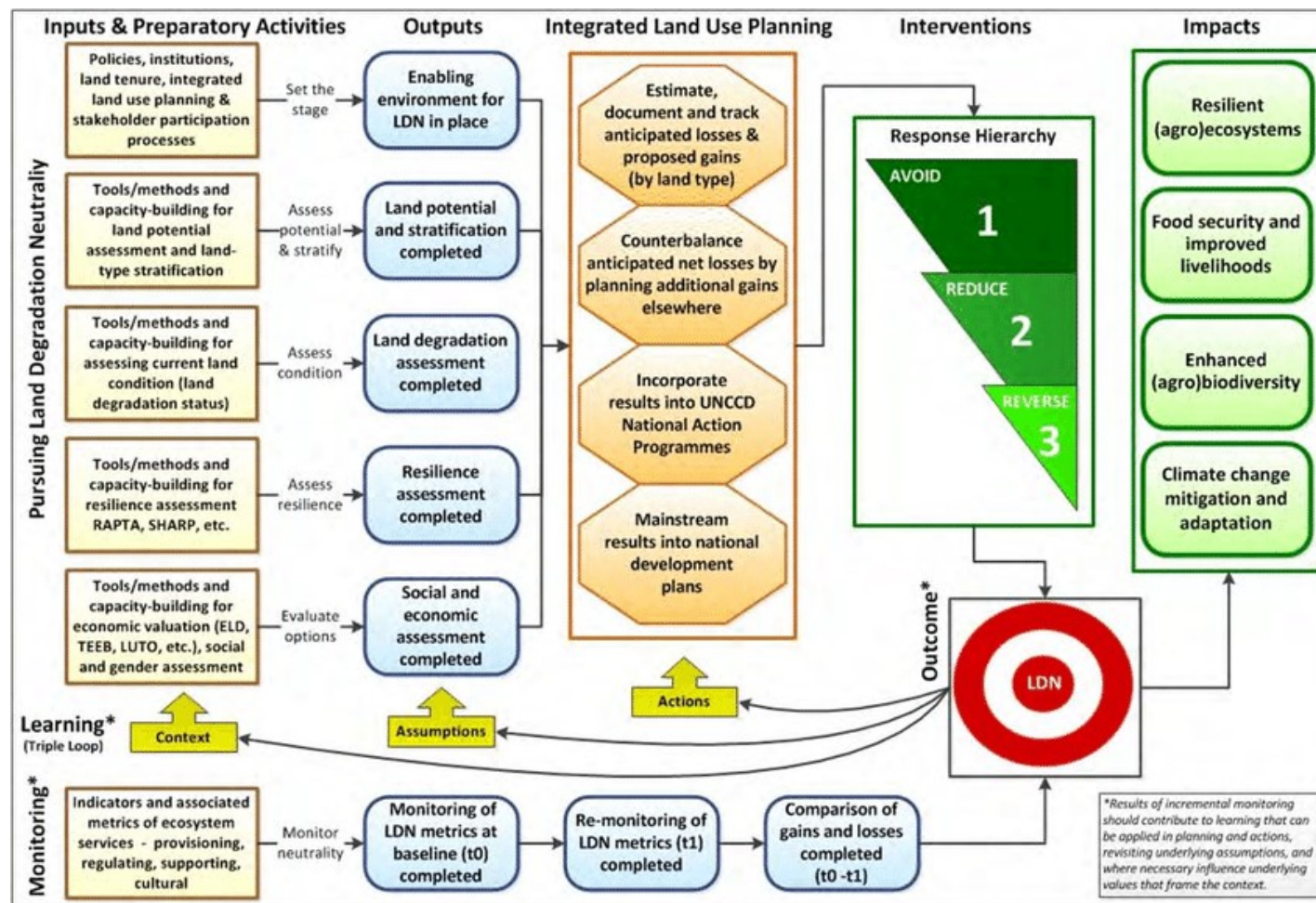


Figure 1: Logic model for the effective implementation of LDN (source: UNCCD, 2017)<sup>[2]</sup>

### Component 1: Strengthening the enabling environment for LDN

Integration of LDN into strategic planning process will strengthen the enabling environment for LDN implementation at the national level on the basis of the multi-sectoral planning process in Azerbaijan. The targets include strengthening of inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms on SLM, DLDD and LDN through the establishment of the Working Group on LDN that should include the representatives of the interested Ministries and Committees (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, etc.), the representatives of big industrial and agricultural companies, farmers organizations, representatives from the research sector, NGOs and other institutions of civil society. The Working Group should strive to establish gender-balance in the ratio of its members, with at least 30% of them being women. This Working Group supported by the external experts will assess and fill, where possible, LDN policy gaps, the existing policies will be revised based on the gap analysis of the field survey and secondary data, including mainstreaming gender considerations. The existing policies

will be revised based on the outcomes of a gap analysis, including the gender considerations. Since the lack of cooperation between the administrative units and between the ministries, business, and civil society were identified as one of the main barriers for the development of relevant policies in support to LDN, vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms will be established and strengthened.

The status and trends of the three voluntary indicators should be assessed using remote sensing and field survey data. The field survey will produce sex-disaggregated data on the land ownership, female-led entrepreneurship, water-use practices, as well as farming responsibilities and decision-making. The linkage between land condition, degradation and its impact on livelihoods will be identified from the gender lens, i.e. how land degradation affects women and men differently, assess their perception on the impact of land degradation, their perception of responsibilities and mitigation practices. The status of land use and land cover, productivity, and the soil carbon pool should be obtained from the existing national databases. The data will be complimented with the recently obtained updates, including the FAO project on LULUCF in Azerbaijan. Full assessment of Land Degradation status and trends within each land use system will be done. In support of the three global indicators, the Working Group on LDN will propose national indicators, which may be used for complementing the global ones. The national indicators may reflect short-term trends in land degradation or improvement, and include e.g. salinity measures such as electric conductivity of soil and water, the percentage area of saline soils, etc. The national indicators will be used for fine-tuning the evaluation of the baseline status of land degradation and existing trends in land quality. The land degradation baseline and LDN principles will be used to inform land-use planning frameworks and be integrated into national decision-making processes about management of natural capital. Targets include development of an LDN-oriented land-use planning framework and a decision-support system (DSS) for LDN target setting and planning. This is expected to lead to mobilization of funding for LDN and implementation of SLM, in the order of USD15 million by the end of the project, through mainstreaming into sector budgets and private sector priorities.

A capacity development program will be put in place on LDN target setting for local and central government staff. The project will seek to develop capacity both at the institutional (central and local government) and grassroots level. Gender sensitive capacity development and awareness raising programs will be prepared and proposed, targeting stakeholders including policy makers, local administrations, and farmer organizations. In the context of this program, special workshops will be organized, and at least 40 staff of central/local government, as well as selected 200 farmers will be trained on LDN, with at least 30% participation of women. The workshops will be organized by international and national experts on SLM and LDN issues, with a focus on the national policies, and on farm practices. All the policy processes will go through gender screening and relevant actions will be taken when appropriate, and women's participation in the decision-making process will be promoted at both, national and local levels. The trainings will always include specific content on gender issues. Gender analysis will be conducted with the focus on women's access to and control over lands, to what extent women own lands and decide production on it. The analysis will produce sex-disaggregated data of participants of owned lands, constraints, barriers faced by women (legal, traditional) in securing land rights, awareness of men and project stakeholders on these barriers.

## **Component 2. Demonstrating the LDN approach and SLM practices and approaches in salt-affected landscapes in the Absheron peninsula**

The second component includes land use planning to support achievement of LDN targets on 34,000 ha of land according to the LDN response hierarchy of avoiding, reducing and reversing degradation, and field application and demonstration of advanced SLM practices on 2,700 ha to reduce and reverse degradation. The project aims to restore areas previously used as agricultural lands through olive cultivation (planting of the trees/orchards). The experimental plots will be used as demonstration sites for local farmers, land users and authorities, and will serve both for training and dissemination. At least 200 producers, 30% of which are women, will be trained at these demonstration sites. Five hundred hectares of land will be used for demonstration of agroforestry, for instance, olive groves; 100 ha of the demonstration unit will be done at low level salinized sites, while 300 ha will be at medium-salinized, and 100 ha at highlysalinized sites located around Surakhani and Binagadi areas of the Absheron peninsula. A smaller plot of 200 ha will be established apart from the bigger field for more intensive field activities to reverse land degradation. Apart from planting trees, this plot will receive green manure and other organic fertilizers. Green manure will consist of salt-tolerant herbs. To increase the value of ecosystem services of the forested land, it is also recommended to

introduce specific medicinal plants in the vegetative community. The resulting approach is recommended for upscaling at the Absheron peninsula for moderately saline land. The benefits will include the reduction in the toxicity of salts and thus the increase in productivity, the reduction in wind erosion, and carbon sequestration in soils. Thus, integrated sustainable and gender sensitive land/water management practices and technologies will be adopted at demonstration sites to enhance productivity, reduce water scarcity and salinity and restore saline lands. Gender consideration will be mainstreamed into the planning processes of the activities to ensure equal opportunity for men and women to equally benefit from the project. When selecting the sustainable land and water management practices and technologies that will be promoted by the project, gender analysis will be made to ensure that practices and technologies are gender inclusive and can benefit men and women equally.

The socio-economic effect of the project in the field will be assessed using the concept of natural capital, ecosystem services, and economics of land degradation (ELD)[1]. The core concepts of this model are the natural capital and ecosystem services under different scenarios: “action” and “inaction”. Action means sustainable land management (SLM), and inaction means “business as usual”. Though action commonly has higher direct cost than inaction, the resulting benefit of SLM application is much higher than inaction for sustaining natural capital and ecosystem services. The critical step will be assessment of the monetary value of indirect costs of ecosystem services, which should be included in the overall assessment of the costs and benefits of SLM to inform decision-making and trigger behavioral change. A training program on ELD for regional authorities, farmers and other interested organizations and individuals will be established and taught on the Absheron peninsula. Women’s and men’s knowledge and practice in land management practices will be assessed to identify what practices they apply to reduce land degradation. This will help to identify the reason for the differences between why men and women of different socio-economic backgrounds apply different techniques, the livelihood strategies, priorities of women and men, how SLM will contribute to it and how the gaps can be reduced during the project implementation.

This component will lead to the improvement of the socio-economic situation contributing to food security in the region. Also, COVID - 19 crisis revealed that there is urgent need to rehabilitate degraded agricultural land to strengthen resilience to a potential food crises. This project will evaluate the natural capital and ecosystem services and their role in creating more resilient agriculture, while promoting ecosystem services leading to more stable food systems. The project also has the potential to assess the specific impacts in the Baku surroundings. Effective SLM practices will be replicated at other areas of the peninsula for forestation with salt-tolerant species in medium level saline lands. Growing trees on saline degraded lands provide a unique opportunity to produce timber, biomaterials, and biomass for energy on land that is of little economic value for food production, thus avoiding competition for food resources. The positive effects of forestation also includes soil protection from wind erosion, as well as carbon sequestration.

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[1] Nkonya E., Mirzabaev A., Von Braun J. Economics of land degradation and improvement—a global assessment for sustainable development. Springer Nature, 2016. 686 p.

### **Component 3. Monitoring, Evaluation and lesson learned**

Components 1 and 2 will target LDN neutrality that is assessed by monitoring the LDN indicators, relative to a fixed baseline. The neutrality will be maintained over time, through land use planning that anticipates losses and plans gains through implementation of SLM. Component 3 applies adaptive learning by knowledge management and tracking impacts to enable mid-course adjustments and ensure that neutrality is maintained in the future. Knowledge management and lessons learned will be disseminated at national level. At least 3 gender sensitive LDN knowledge products will be developed and disseminated and lessons learned on SLM and LDN will be mainstreamed in the national and regional development plans.

Monitoring will be viewed as a vehicle for **learning** and provide opportunities for capacity building, basis for testing hypotheses that underpin the counter balancing of decisions and the interventions implemented. This includes a functioning project M&E system and mid-term and final evaluation. Global environmental benefits generated by the project will also be assessed together with co-benefits and costs of SLM, with a special focus on benefits for women.

A functioning system for reporting the status of LDN to the UNCCD will be put in place and a national LDN guideline published. A gender-sensitive communication strategy will be developed and implemented to support the LDN targets and mainstreaming of lessons learned.

Also, the project will constantly monitor opportunities to address impacts generated by the COVID-19 crises through SLM and landscape restoration, generating multiple GEBs and promoting livelihoods.

4) alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program strategies;

The project will contribute to the Land Degradation focal area objective one to Support on-the-ground implementation of SLM activities to achieve LDN and its priority LD-1-1 Maintain or improve flow of agro-ecosystem services to sustain food production and livelihoods through Sustainable Land Management, and LD-2-5 Create enabling environments to support scaling up and mainstreaming of SLM and LDN. This will be achieved through Project Component 2 Demonstrating the LDN approach and SLM practices and approaches in salt-affected landscapes in the Absheron Peninsula. The project will also contribute to GEF LD objective 2 on Creating and enabling environment to support voluntary LDN target implementation and its priority LD-2-5 on Create enabling environments to support scaling up and mainstreaming of SLM and LDN through Component 1 on Strengthening the enabling environment for LDN.

5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTE, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing;

Baseline scenario	Alternative scenario
<b>Enabling environment for LDN:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weak intersectoral coordination and absence of coordination mechanisms for both horizontal and vertical coordination and mainstreaming of LDN principles</li> <li>Setting of national LDN targets has not been done, as the State Committee on Land and Cartography was abolished in 2016, and its functions were shared between the State Committee on Property and the MENR, hence some important documents and data are difficult to access.</li> <li>The lead ministry (MENR) has no direct links to the field level and limited access to maps and data on DLDD, as well as to investments in SLM.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened capacities to set LDN targets and achieve LDN in Azerbaijan thanks to strengthened intersectoral coordination on land-related issues and improved monitoring systems that improve decision-making.</li> <li>Increasing the policy and institutional capacity to coordinate and monitor LDN issues, will enable the Ministry of Ecology to mobilize USD15 million across sectors for achieving SDG15.3 on LDN.</li> </ul>
<b>Scaling up of SLM to achieve LDN:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of the need for SLM in Azerbaijan is still low and farmers lack economic incentives for implementing SLM: the cost of additional effort are covered by farmers themselves, while the benefits are received by the entire society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resilient and sustainable land and water management practices, including agroforestry using salt tolerant plants, will be introduced at a salt-affected site at the Absheron Peninsula. This will help to improve ground cover and productivity while enhancing carbon stocks in landscapes amounting to 486,125 tCO<sub>2</sub>eq. Sustainable SLM</li> </ul>

<p>entire society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Use of saline water for irrigation is still widely used in the absence of other sources of water.</li> <li>· Incentives for investing in SLM are lacking due to lack of information of its economic benefits to farmers and society at large.</li> </ul>	<p>practices for tree planting will be upscaled to 2000 ha area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The project will also assess the natural capital of the lands under SLM practices, and the economic impacts of action vs. inaction for SLM practices on 34,000 ha of degraded land which will be put under improved land use planning for future scaling up and investments in SLM practices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Knowledge, data and experiences to support LDN implementation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Knowledge among the land users and even decision makers of LDN principles is insufficient. to support decision-making processes on LDN and reporting to the UNCCD.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· A functioning system for reporting the status of LDN to the UNCCD will be put in place and a national LDN guideline published. A gender-sensitive communication strategy will be developed and implemented to support the LDN targets and mainstreaming of lessons learned</li> <li>· Knowledge management and tracking impacts will inform adaptive learning to enable adjustments and ensure that neutrality is maintained in the future</li> </ul>

#### 6) global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCAF/SCCF)

The project will generate the following global environmental benefits in the Land Degradation focal area:

- 34,000 ha of landscape under improved SLM practices thanks to participatory land-use planning leading to enhanced ecosystem resilience. According to the UNCCD LDN response hierarchy, this can be divided into:
- 31,300 ha of avoided degradation through improved management.
- 2,000 ha with reduced degradation through afforestation, and
- 700 ha with reversed degradation on saline lands.
- Sequestration of 486,125 tCO<sub>2</sub>eq thanks to implementation of SLM on degraded land.

The project will also enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of 23,000 people in total (12,000 male/11,000 female) thanks to training, awareness raising and access to new knowledge on SLM and resilient landscape management practices. The project will strengthen the capacities of local farmers to put 2,700 ha of degraded lands, under sustainable agroforestry and horticulture management and allow them getting co-benefits from the forestry by-products

#### 7) innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up.

### *Innovation*

Landscapes in Azerbaijan are comprised of various land cover and use types, while their management is compartmentalized in various ministries and at various levels of administration. While forest lands and specially protected lands lie under management of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, pastures are managed by the local authorities, and agricultural lands are privately managed by the farmers. The Ministry of Agriculture is coordinating the activities related to the increase of productivity of the agricultural lands, but irrigation related matters are managed by the Amelioration and Water Farms Joint Stock Company.

The project will introduce new knowledge on innovative SLM practices that have not been widely demonstrated in Azerbaijan, targeting the land and water problems on the Absheron Peninsula and including practices such as afforestation of saline pastures which will allow different sectors and stakeholders to improve current unsustainable practices in the region. Another innovative aspect of the project is the assessment of the current natural capital of the land in the peninsula and the economic effect of action vs. inaction related to SLM, leading to identification of incentives of farmers and the private sector to engage in SLM and LDN schemes, and to development of decision-making tools for where and how to invest in SLM.

### *Sustainability*

The proposed LDN system will be integrated into national policies and programmes as well as monitoring systems that will ensure its sustainability from an institutional perspective. Inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms on SLM, DLDD and for LDN will be embedded in the mandate of MENR. Central and local government levels will be trained on LDN, and training programmes for LDN will be integrated into sector budgets for the members of the intersectoral coordination mechanism, to create long-term capacity to monitor LD and SLM to balance gains and losses of productive land within a given landscape. The project will sustainably improve land and water management in salt-affected sites at the Absheron Peninsula through integrating sustainable land and water management practices and technologies that will generate socio-economic benefits for farmers as well as environmental benefits. The project will support cooperation and collaboration among different sectors and existing stakeholders and will thus increase the national capacity in dealing with degraded landscapes issues through the application of the LDN concept and approach.

### *Scaling up*

Adoption of land-use planning frameworks at national level that integrate the LDN principles and targets will be the main vehicle for scaling up of LDN and SLM in Azerbaijan. The enabling environment will also be strengthened in terms of new laws and regulations supporting the implementation of the Land Code, the Forest Code and the Water Code and mainstreaming of LDN into these Codes, which will allow resource mobilization for LDN across sectors from not only public investments but also attract the private sector. The process of analyzing lessons learned from the implementation of SLM at the project site, as well the dissemination of the generated knowledge (such as training manuals) will support the scaling up process of actions in the field that ultimately supports the achievement of LDN at national level.

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[1] The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. 2020. Gender Indicators. Women and men in Azerbaijan.

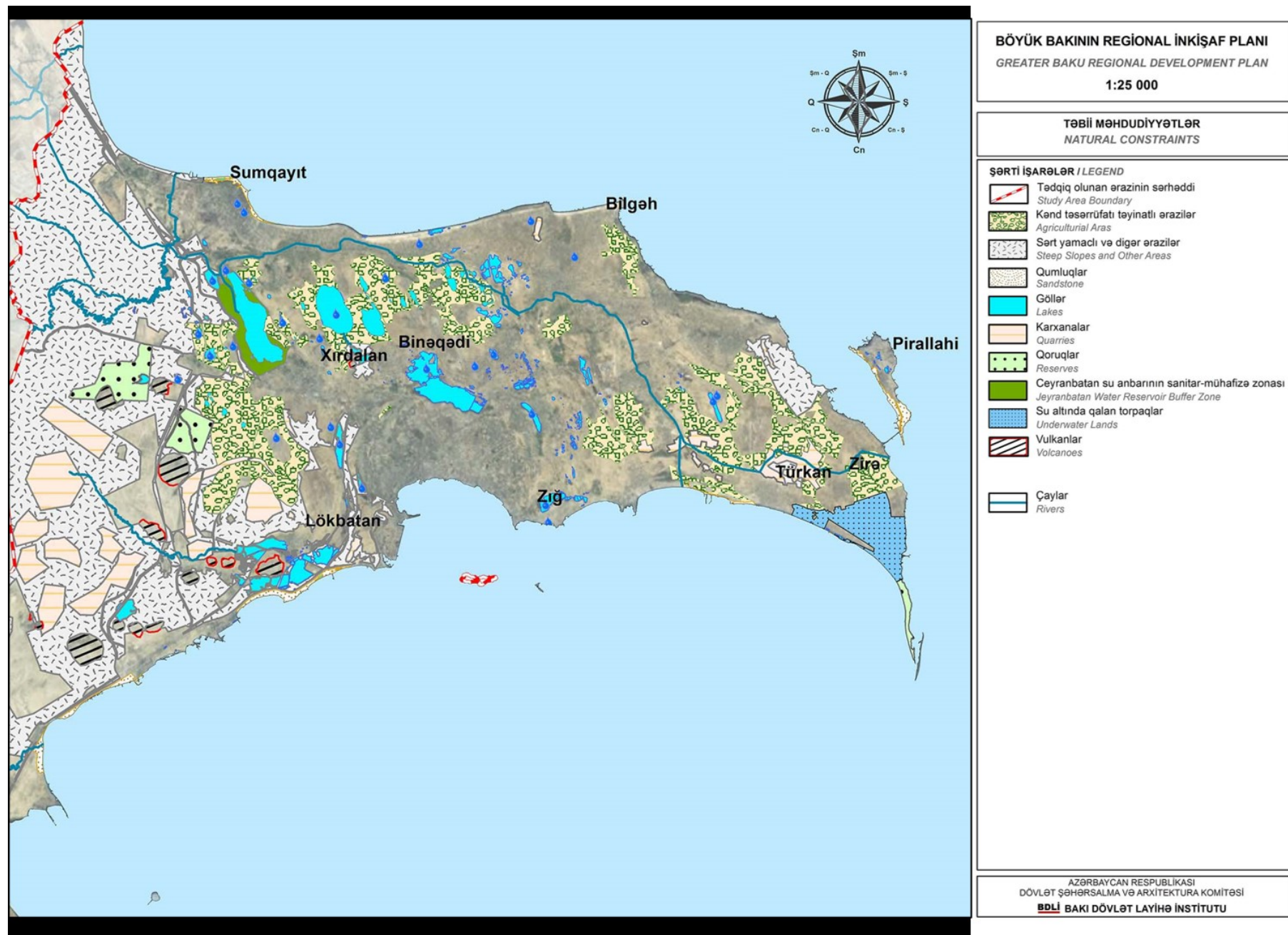
[2] SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY, Joseph Orr, 2017

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314939844\\_SCIENTIFIC\\_CONCEPTUAL\\_FRAMEWORK\\_FOR\\_LAND\\_DEGRADATION\\_NEUTRALITY](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314939844_SCIENTIFIC_CONCEPTUAL_FRAMEWORK_FOR_LAND_DEGRADATION_NEUTRALITY)

[3] Nkonya E., Mirzabaev A., Von Braun J. Economics of land degradation and improvement—a global assessment for sustainable development. Springer Nature, 2016. 686 p.

**1b. Project Map and Coordinates**

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.



Map 5: Map of Absheron Peninsula (source: State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture of the Republic of Azerbaijan)

## 2. Stakeholders

Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Civil Society Organizations Yes

Private Sector Entities Yes

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.

Stakeholder	Stakeholder engagement		
	How they are involved in the PIF preparation	How will they be engaged during the project preparation process?	Potential role in project
Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	Discussions and consultations at management and technical level; information and data sharing; Regular meetings and updates on progress; joint planning	Participate in consultation on LDN strategy development to be in-line with the governmental priorities, obtaining available data and information. They will organize a closer discussion of key issues and present their proposals on project activities and pilots	Key project beneficiary  Identification of the project priorities  Decision making during project implementation  Proposal drafting
Ministry of Agriculture	Face to face meetings; discussions and consultations at management and technical level; information and data sharing; joint planning	Participate in consultations for aligning project ideas with national priorities on land degradation, and contributed to the development of all project components related to agriculture and land degradations	Project Partner  Participate in project preparation and implementation
State Amelioration and Water Farm OJSC	Meetings and consultations and technical level; information sharing	Participate in consultation related to water and irrigation management	Key Project Stakeholder as a main institution in country responsible for the irrigation of agricultural lands;  Participate in project preparation and implementation

			on
State Service on Property Issues under the Ministry of Economy	Meetings at technical level; data exchange and information sharing	Participate in consultations related to property rights at pilot areas	Key project Stakeholder as a responsible organization for property rights and land distribution Participate in project preparation and implementation
Institute of Soil Science and Agro Chemistry under National Academy of Sciences	Expert's meetings and discussions; information exchange	Participate in consultation related to land degradation	Key Project Stakeholder as a main scientific institutions conducting soil samples and supporting decision makers at government level;  Participate in project preparation and implementation
National Parliament	Consultations on legal aspects at technical level	Participate in consultation related to policy review, legal and regulatory framework	Key project Stakeholder regarding works related to revision and amendments to legal; Participate in project preparation and implementation
Civil society and NGOs	Face to face meetings and consultations; information exchange	Participate in consultation for preparation of all project components	Consultations during project preparation and implementation
Private Sector Entities (AZERS UN company) (Pasha Holding)	Meetings and discussions at management level	Participate in consultation on land restoration and rehabilitation and identification of possible role in SLM implementation.	partners as well as Application and demonstration of the sustainable LDN practices in agricultural sector
Agrarian Research Center	Meetings and consultations; information exchange; joint planning	Participate in consultation mainly related to knowledge management and transfer	Close involvement to the project activities related to the assessment of the LDN frameworks, indicators and reflection of the L

			DN frameworks in land use planning
Universities (Baku State University, State Agrarian University etc)	-		Involvement in the awareness raising and capacity building activities

### 3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

**Briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis).**

Women living in rural areas in Azerbaijan still have limited access to productive and technical resources, and to the markets for the sale of their agricultural products. This ultimately limits their incomes and creates economic dependence. Gender stereotypes form the basis of these problems. Gender issues in agriculture in Azerbaijan also include the poor gender responsiveness of legislation in various spheres of agriculture and natural resources management and the fragmentation of statistical databases. Also, while the gender distribution in agriculture production and harvesting tends to be equally divided between women and men, sales of the products are still dominated by men, showing that men are more associated with the process of making money<sup>[1]</sup>.

The proposed project acknowledges that women still play the most important role in sustainable natural resource management, as home-makers, as farmers and land managers. In this context, the project will pay special attention to the involvement of women, especially in decision-making, policy planning activities, capacity building, and investments on the ground. Adequate gender screening of the project will take place in the preparation phase in order to ensure equal benefits for both men and women. The project will make every effort possible to ensure women participate in all project activities, including in data collection and analysis, policy development and planning, restoration, and awareness-raising activities. This includes

- The project will pursue a gender-sensitive approach whereby women's participation in training workshops, demonstration activities, farmer field schools, and management committees will be strongly promoted.
  - o If needed, special arrangements will be made to ensure their participation, for instance, setting up day-care assistance to ensure mothers can attend, creating a safe atmosphere to ensure women can voice their opinion, targeting women-only meetings
- In component 1, all the policy processes will go through gender expertise and relevant actions will be taken when appropriate, and women's participation in the decision-making process will be promoted at both, national and local levels.
- In component 2, gender consideration will be including from the planning process of the activities to assure equal opportunity for men and women to be equally benefited from the project. The trainings will always include a specific content on gender issues. Also, when selecting the sustainable land and water management practices and technologies that will be promoted by the project, gender analysis will be made to assure that practices and technologies are gender inclusive and can benefit men and women equally.

The project is fully in line with FAO's Policy on Gender Equality to achieve equality between women and men in sustainable agricultural production and rural development for the elimination of hunger and poverty. Women should be enabled to participate equally with men as decision-makers in rural institutions and in shaping laws, policies and programmes; both sexes should have equal access to and control over decent employment and income, land and other productive resources, women and men should have equal access to goods and services for agricultural development and to markets, and women's work burden should be reduced through improved technologies, services and infrastructure. Indicators to measure these gendered benefits will be developed more fully in the project preparation phase, when a gender action plan will be developed.

[1] R. Ibrahimbayova. 2016. Gender Issues in Agriculture in Azerbaijan. Gender Equality, Social Protection and Rural Development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia Insights from the Region. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

**Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes**

**closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources;**

**improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or Yes**

**generating socio-economic benefits or services for women.**

**Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators?**

Yes

#### 4. Private sector engagement

**Will there be private sector engagement in the project?**

Yes

**Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.**

Azerbaijan has made tremendous efforts in making broad-based reforms and institutional restructuring to ensure effective participation of the various stakeholders in the management of the natural resources. The private sector in Azerbaijan, specially oil companies, have invested in areas such as conducting ecological research and monitoring, land restoration and rehabilitation, environmental education, infrastructure development, law enforcement and others. However, the degree of private sector involvement has been limited to a few stakeholders and private investments have focused on specific individual projects according to the particular interest of the private investor.

Even though the government has put in place institutional arrangements, incentives and mechanisms to attract private investments these are still in their infancy. While there is high potential for private sector investments to support restoration of degraded land and converting them into valuable areas for agriculture or for other use, most private investors are trapped in a dilemma on how they can invest and to get profit from such areas. However, there are also good examples of the private sector involvement to the land restoration works at different regions of the country. Some private companies dealing with agricultural production are likely to invest to restore available lands in order to increase productivity. Lack of national capacity and non-availability of the relevant assessments seems to be as major obstacles in the private sector initiatives devoted to land degradation activities.

The project will create a suitable baseline for the private sector investments by applying and demonstrating effective land use practices to avoid land degradation. It will enable private sector partners to enhance their incentives to increase productivity of lands. Additionally, the private incentives in the awareness raising and capacity development will contribute to the behavioral change of the smallscale farmers in the region involved to the agricultural production cycle.

This project will also look into relevant legal and regulatory framework on this regard and as well as to identify the opportunities to involve the private sector to the project implementation cycle. The private sector is going to be a key player in the implementation of the pilot initiatives and demonstration of the effective practices. AZERSUN company and Pasha Holding are both involved to the agricultural production and interested in collaboration on the restoring degraded lands and improving land fertility. Currently, Memorandum of Understanding between FAO and the AZERSUN company is under development that will underline all areas of joint collaboration including the actions on the restoration of the degraded lands.

## 5. Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

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 (table format acceptable)

In line with FAO's Environmental and Social Safeguards, the project has been screened against Environmental and Social risks and rated as low risk (see certification in the respective annex). No FAO safeguards have been triggered. The risk level will be further re-confirmed during the following FAO's framework and stakeholder engagement processes. FAO will ensure that all mitigation measures vis-a-vis any potential adverse impact are duly considered in the CEO-endorsement package. The following risk matrix will be updated during the PPG, and be one of the tools for project monitoring.

Risk	Level*	Risk Mitigation Strategy
<b>Limited interest</b> by local communities to adopt SL M practices	M	The PPG study will cover many settlements and assure that the project would work with areas where the population is not only in need of support, but also motivated and well organized. A simple competitive model will be used for allocation of project funds on local level, based on community proposals.
<b>Insufficient cooperation</b> between many institutional stakeholders	H	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 and through establishment of working group for the project implementation as well as the project steering committee.
Low <b>technical capacity</b> at national and local level	L	Some stakeholders may have low experience and capacity in LDN issues. 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.
International and national <b>financial</b> situation and exchange rate could affect available project resources	M	This is a factor that is difficult to mitigate, however, the project management will continuously monitor the use of resources for each project component and main activities, and if necessary request to transfer funds between components to assure that no activity would be stuck without resources during the implementation period.
Climate Change	M	Activities will be implemented in close coordination with MENR's relevant departments to ensure the consideration of potential climate change impacts in planning and implementation  Climate change projections in Azerbaijan forecast changes in temperature and precipitation for the middle and end of the century.

		<p>While the project will seek to improve the livelihood resilience through encouraging the adoption of SLM practices, it will also improve the institutional memory of the SLM practices through national strategies, legislation recommendations, methodologies and knowledge platform development. The promotion of SLM practices into the national regulatory framework is especially important in order to reach the targets in NDC, NAPA and other commitments under Paris Agreement.</p> <p>The project will further invest in improving the understanding of the role of climate resilient crops and trees in mitigating the effects of land degradation, particularly erosion and salinization. The demonstration fields are chosen with high-salinized issues in order to address in practice the problematic areas, and the chosen trees for plantation will be more resilient to the effects of climate change in this area. Moreover, the SLM practices can be applicable for other regions in this country as well. Such, SLM and afforestation are universal tools to adapt and mitigate climate change via flood resistance and carbon sequestration.</p>
Potential negative impacts on project implementation due to <b>Covid 19</b>	M	<p>World Health Organization guidance will be followed throughout the project cycle. By the time of project implementation, the pandemic itself is foreseen to be over. However, the negative longterm impacts of the pandemic such as economic crisis will remain for the coming years.</p> <p>In case of Azerbaijan, the pandemic and lockdown measures have hit almost all sectors of the economy, including agricultural sector. In a short term perspective, the main highlighted challenges were a reduced demand for exports and hence of export opportunities, leading to lower selling prices in the crop and livestock sectors, as well the restrictions limiting public access to agro supply markets, which is located in big cities, presenting a major barrier for suppliers to deliver inputs to farmers. In a long term perspective, it may lead to shortcomings in the implementation of the agricultural activities, mostly in crop production. In addition, the lack of an adequate quality control mechanism to protect product quality in the export and domestic markets has created barriers to exports and to the sale of products by small farms in local markets. The challenges posed by the pandemic are further aggravated by the shortage of irrigation water due to global climate change, the improper use of water resources and the lack of adequate irrigation infrastructure. Both factors threaten small-scale producers, especially those who s</p>

		<p>ow less than 0.5 hectares of land, which are estimated to be 100,000 farmers.</p> <p>These negative impacts might shift the government priorities to other emerging issues, rather than conservation and restoration of land resources. However, FAO works closely with the government of Azerbaijan and during the course of the project will have steering committee meetings and updates of workplan based on emerging issues in a way to guarantee implementation of the project component, while also addressing other issues within the context of the project.</p> <p>Besides, the COVID 19 pandemic revealed that there is urgent need to rehabilitate degraded agricultural land to strengthen resilience to potential food crises. Therefore regular consultations and meetings with stakeholders will ensure the understanding of importance of the project by relevant government and non-government institutions and to support project activities considering the long term targets and strategies even during the potential pandemic situations.</p>
Low level of committed co-finance by the government due to escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict	L	<p>Escalation of the conflict may result in increased military costs that may cause decrease of the governmental investment other sectors, including agriculture and environment. It may lead to changes in the state budget plans with minimum focus on agricultural investments, particularly related to LDN.</p>

## 6. Coordination

**Outline the institutional structure of the project including monitoring and evaluation coordination at the project level. Describe possible coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.**

1. The project is planned to be implemented using OPIM modality through the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan. OPA assessment will be conducted during the PPG phase and respective implementation-execution arrangements will be set up accordingly. The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources will coordinate overall project implementation as a main project partner designated by Azerbaijan Government with the following institutions to guide delivery. First there is the Program Steering Committee (PSC) to advise on policy decisions and coordinating inter-ministerial support; members of the steering committee will be drawn from line ministries, other relevant government and non-government institutions and may include other representation as required. Secondly, the Programme Management unit (PMU) led by a Programme Coordinator will run the project on a day-to-day basis, oversees implementation, administration, and performance against implementation plan, budgeting, and reporting; coordinate the Working Group (WG) who can organize into the relevant thematic areas.
2. The project will hold quarterly EWG meetings to develop common work plans making sure that activities fit snugly with other initiative being delivered by the same team. Relevant NGOs, Research Institutions and Academia, International organizations and Government Agencies will provide data that is needed,

Coordination with other GEF-Financed Initiatives and other initiatives

3. FAO Azerbaijan together with the MENR is currently implementing the GEF/LDCF/SCCF Project ID: 9795 project on Forest Resources Assessment and Monitoring to Strengthen Forest Knowledge Framework in Azerbaijan. This project aims to introduce sustainable forest management system into Azerbaijan in order to increase social and economic benefits from forests, to improve quality of existing forest and increase carbon sequestration. 1st project component foresees establishment of the Forest Resource Information Management System. to provide country-wide reliable, up-to-date information on forest resources that also includes data on forest lands. The proposed project will coordinate activities to ensure that the experience and applied methodologies at the same landscape is taken into consideration in the implementation of Component 2 of the proposed project. This will be done to share and access knowledge, tools, research and assessments, and lessons learned to inform decision makers at all levels.
4. Under GEF-7 cycle, FAO Azerbaijan together with MENR is planning to implement Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: Strengthening Azerbaijan's system of protected areas through improved governance and management project. Currently the project is on PPG phase and it has components related to the strengthening the national and local enabling environment to support a landscape approach to conserving biodiversity and restoring, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services in target landscapes through application of the Integrated Landscape Approach. The similar tools applied for Protected Areas within the mentioned project could be considered for different type of degraded lands within the country.

5. FAO Azerbaijan together with MENR is currently implementing GCF Readiness project aiming to support NDC implementation in agriculture and LULUCF sectors. Within the project it is conducted analysis on current status of NDC implementation to identify main gaps and propose recommendations. Relevant technologies to cope with climate change impact in the agricultural and LULUCF sectors also being analyzed to be followed with the development of the investment plan and feasibility studies on the application. Results of the mentioned assessments related to the land sector could be used for the current project.

6. Finally, UNDP Azerbaijan together with MENR is currently implementing National Adaptation Plans project funded by GCF focusing on 3 sectors including agriculture, coastal areas and water sector. Collaboration with the NAP project will lead to share of effective adaptive practices and technologies applied for land and water sectors to minimize climate change related effects.

## 7. Consistency with National Priorities

**Is the Project consistent with the National Strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions**

Yes

**If yes, which ones and how: NAPAs, NAPs, ASGM NAPs, MIAs, NBSAPs, NCs, TNAs, NCSAs, NIPs, PRSPs, NPFE, BURs, INDCs, etc**

1. The project is fully in line with all three objectives and priorities of the National Action Programme (NAP) of the UNCCD.
    - Objective 1: To improve national awareness on DLDD and its impact on socio-economic development;
    - Objective 2: To promote consistent and participatory action to address the factors causing DLDD;
    - Objective 3: To develop local capacity to manage DLDD issues.
  
  2. The project is consistent with and will support the implementation of planned actions of the the country's Strategic Roadmap on Agricultural Production and Processing, particularly the following priority objectives:
    - PRIORITY 7.1. Develop mechanisms for reduction of negative impact of climate change and other natural factors on agriculture
    - PRIORITY 7.2. Improve mechanisms for environmental protection in agricultural sector
    - PRIORITY 7.3. Improve mechanisms for sustainable use of agricultural lands and water resources
  3. The project is consistent with and will support the implementation of the country's NBSAP<sup>[1]</sup>, particularly the following priority objectives:
    - 3.0.2. improving biodiversity monitoring systems, including the development and application of modern monitoring methods and maintaining accurate records of bioenergy resources
    - 3.0.4. developing and effectively managing the protected areas taking into account international best practices
    - 3.0.9. providing adequate resources for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity
    - 3.0.10. strengthening institutional capacities in the planning, management and use of biodiversity.
  
  4. The project is consistent with and will support the implementation of the country's NDC<sup>[2]</sup>, where the country committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (including LULUCF) by 35% in 2030 compared to the base year. The project will support activities to develop data and tools to plan processes that will help reduce losses in degradation in the long term throughout the effective land use monitoring system in Azerbaijan.
  
  5. The proposed project is also aligned with "Azerbaijan 2020: look to the future – development Concept", in particular with Section 11: Environmental protection and ecological issues.<sup>[3]</sup> This section states that in order to make effective use of land resources, measures will be implemented to prevent desertification, rehabilitate lands that have become unusable as a result of the activities of major industrial and mining enterprises, improve the system of using lands suitable for agriculture and strengthen the protection of lands from anthropogenic contamination.
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[1] <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/az/az-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>

[2] <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/az/az-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>

[3] [https://president.az/files/future\\_en.pdf](https://president.az/files/future_en.pdf)

8. Knowledge Management

Outline the Knowledge management approach for the Project, including, if any, plans for the Project to learn from other relevant Projects and initiatives, to assess and document in a user-friendly form, and share these experiences and expertise with relevant stakeholders.

Based on the previous experience of collaboration with the national counterparts within different projects it can be noted that there is not a specific knowledge management mechanism in place despite of the existing but limited knowledge on LDN related issues. Apart from this, there is not any unified mechanism for knowledge management and existing limited knowledge are divided among several governmental units. However, the project will work closely to support the formation of a unique knowledge management mechanism linked to LDN coordination and the intersectoral working group.

Knowledge management and dissemination of results is a key part of the project strategy. Component 1 on creating an enabling policy and institutional environment for LDN mainstreaming and component 2 on field testing the LDN approach will generate lessons and experiences that will be widely shared. The dissemination, monitoring and evaluation system to be created under component 3 will establish tools and mechanisms to systematically collect data and to document lessons learnt. Knowledge management activities are planned from the onset and will support replication and upscaling both at national and regional level. The project will establish tools and mechanism to collect and systematize information on land degradation and will improve the reporting mechanism on LDN. The information collected will feed into a mechanism for decision support for LDN schemes. More specifically, knowledge products on SLM and LDN that integrate forest management, agroforestry and cropland use will be prepared and shared (including national targets and gender action plan). These product will include brochures, flyers, videos and other materials.

9. Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

Provide information on the identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project/program based on your organization's ESS systems and procedures

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification\*

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Low			

**Measures to address identified risks and impacts**

Provide preliminary information on the types and levels of risk classifications/ratings of any identified environmental and social risks and potential impacts associated with the project (considering the GEF ESS Minimum Standards) and describe measures to address these risks during the project design.

In line with FAO's Environmental and Social Safeguards, the project has been screened against Environmental and Social risks and rated as **low risk** (see certification in annex) . No FAO safeguards were triggered. The risk level will be further re-confirmed at PPG in line following FAO's framework and stakeholder engagement processes. The Agency will make sure that all mitigation measures vis a vis any potential adverse impact are duly considered in the CEO-endorsement package.

**Supporting Documents**

Upload available ESS supporting documents.

**Title**

**Submitted**

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### Part III: Approval/Endorsement By GEF Operational Focal Point(S) And Gef Agency(ies)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S): (Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter with this template).

Name	Position	Ministry	Date
Mr. Mukhtar Babayev	Minister	MINISTRY OF ECOLOGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES	9/24/2020

#### **ANNEX A: Project Map and Geographic Coordinates**

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project intervention takes place