STAP SCREENING TEMPLATE

GEF ID	**12063**
Project title	**Mexico's first national policy for deforestation-free and low-emission: transforming the livestock sector**
Date of screen	**28 Nov 2025**
STAP Panel Member	**Mark Stafford Smith**
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1. Summary of STAP's views of the project

STAP acknowledges Mexico's policy coherence proposal around the livestock sector, with FAO as GEF agency. The proposal is well-written and logically explained, with a good problem statement that tackles an important issue for Mexico and the world in a context where there could be real progress and a valuable model for others. It is good to see the intent to leverage the rest of the policy coherence window (clause 65) to assist scaling.

STAP's comments focus mostly on some additions to the theory of change and the assessment of risks that could strengthen the project, as well as some other more specific points.

Note to STAP screeners: a summary of STAP's view of the project (not of the project itself), covering both strengths and weaknesses.

STAP's assessment*

- □ Concur - STAP acknowledges that the concept has scientific and technical merit
- □ **Minor** - STAP has identified some scientific and technical points to be addressed in project design
- □ Major - STAP has identified significant concerns to be addressed in project design

Please contact the STAP Secretariat if you would like to discuss.

2. Project rationale, and project description – are they sound?

See annex on STAP's screening guidelines.

This project is funded by the policy coherence competitive window and, as such, in STAP's view, should show relevance and innovation in tackling policy coherence. Improving the alignment of agricultural, environmental and financial frameworks in Mexico is an important goal, especially given the importance of livestock in driving deforestation, and the past failure to align development and environmental policies in this regard. The project targets a manageable set of priority States, and identifies 5 components (including M&E) that are important to be implemented in coordination. It will be crucial to ensure that the staff who end up implementing the project understand the full project logic and why various elements need to be strongly linked in order that this good design is not lost in implementation silos, and it would help to note the need for strong induction of project staff in this regard. Such induction would be helped by some strengthening of the theory of change.

A related issue is to ensure good adaptive management of the project during delivery – the prospects for this could be strengthened by linking residual risks to the assumptions identified (but little discussed) in the theory of change and ensuring these are a specific target for monitoring and learning.

The project framing would benefit from a simple future narratives approach to the emerging drivers acknowledged in clause 49 – market shifts, governance transitions and climate impact. These are outside the control of the project but will happen, in most cases with trajectories which are relatively uncertain. STAP recommends a quick effort to outline a range of futures in which these play out differently, to ensure that the

approaches adopted (and the monitoring and learning being carried out) are as robust to uncertainty as possible.

STAP provides recommendations below to address these issues.

Note: provide a general appraisal, asking whether relevant screening guideline questions have been addressed adequately – not all the questions will be relevant to all proposals; no need to comment on every question, only those needing more attention, noting any done very well, but ensure that all are considered. Comments should be helpful, evaluative, and qualitative, rather than yes/no.

3. Specific points to be addressed, and suggestions

STAP recommends addressing these points during the project design to strengthen it technically.

1. Whilst the theory of change (ToC) diagram and the associated description are generally excellent, it could be critically enhanced in 3 ways.
   i. The cross linkages between the 4 impact pathways in the ToC diagrams are mentioned in the descriptive text and lead to the need, for example, to ensure policy developments under component 1 are relevant to the specific priorities that the target States may need to pursue in the other pathways. It would help to emphasize this more, partly with a few judicious cross-links in the diagram perhaps, but definitely by making a strong point that these cross-linkages will need to be understood and actioned by those who eventually lead the components in implementation (ie not just assuming they will occur, clause 48).
   ii. The ToC diagram proficiently documents a series of thoughtful assumptions behind the ToC logic, these assumptions are not greatly addressed in the surrounding text, are not explicitly linked to monitoring priorities, and in fact should form a more substantial part of the Risk Table assessment of residual risk. Many of the assumptions constitute risks to achieving the project outcomes if they are not met, so that the risk mitigation actions should be to monitor them to ensure they are on-track, and regularly assess whether any adaptive management is needed if they are not. It would be good to revisit the risk table to ensure all key assumptions are represented there, and monitoring (or other appropriate action) is identified within component 5. For example, the project will fail if political will is not maintained (first assumption in the ToC diagram); hopefully the design of the project minimizes the chance of this by demonstrating the benefits to both the ag sector and to policy makers, but a regular, explicit review of any signs of the will flagging by the project team could be a mitigating action in the risk table. This sort of issue could be noted in clause 55.
   iii. The description of the ToC does not explicitly address whether and why these 4 pathways are both necessary AND *sufficient* to achieve the policy coherence goals. It is likely that there are other actions that are needed, and that some of these are occurring among the list of on-going initiatives provided at clause 66. A ToC should identify any vital contributions from other projects that are necessary to achieve the project's success; some reflection on this around the ToC would help to prioritize any other initiatives that are particularly important for the project of to form a strong link with, and hence make clause 66 more meaningful than a shopping list.
   iv. (For more on these aspects of ToC and risk, see STAP's ToC Primer[1] and Risk Management paper[2]).
2. STAP recommends that the project undertake a short exercise to develop some simple future narratives of key extrinsic and uncertain drivers of the future social-ecological context in which the project will be implemented – these can build on the brief mention of emerging drivers at clause 14; STAP's Simple Future Narratives paper[3] provides the approach. Clause 49 identifies market shifts, governance transitions,

[1] https://www.stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/theory-change-primer
[2] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-05/EN_GEF.STAP_.C.62.Inf_.07_Risk_Appetite_and_the_GEF.pdf
[3] https://www.stapgef.org/resources/advisory-documents/simple-future-narratives-brief-and-primer

and climate impacts as key emerging drivers, and these could form the basis for describing 3 or 4 possible futures that could result, to ensure the project approach is robust in any of these futures.

3. Project indicators and targets: STAP notes that some of these are strong indicators of outcome relevant performance, even when they are lead indicators (e.g. #5 "number of livestock producers benefitting"; or #7 "…with formal agreements". Some others are much weaker, however – for example, it is not obvious that #4 "number of expenditure scenarios developed and used…" is a meaningful indicator of potential outcomes – why not target the policy decisions themselves? STAP recommends a critical review of the proposed indicators before measurement starts, including considering whether the assumptions in the ToC suggest any different ones.
4. One health approach: The proponents include One Health approach across several sections such as climate-smart livestock models, capacity-building programs, policy coherence, and risk management. However, the approach remains high level and could be strengthened by incorporating the following elements:
   - **i)** Better integration in the ToC with measurable outcomes for zoonotic disease reduction and AMR control.
   - **ii)** Specific indicators and monitoring systems to track One Health impacts.
   - **iii)** Detailed governance mechanisms for cross-sector coordination between agriculture, health, and environment ministries.
   - **iv)** Financing strategies for One Health interventions and capacity-building beyond training.
   - **v)** Stakeholder mapping that fully incorporates health authorities, veterinary services, and environmental agencies.
   - **vi)** Behavior change strategies for producers to adopt One Health practices at scale.

   Embedding these elements would transform One Health from a conceptual reference into a practical framework that strengthens resilience, compliance with global standards, and long-term sustainability.
5. STAP notes a few other specific issues for consideration:
   i. Youth are clearly important in Mexico, so it is good to see youth as well as women mentioned fairly systematically through the proposal. There are a few places where youth could be explicitly included in governance arrangements to strengthen this (e.g. clause 51, roundtable).
   ii. Clause 53 – what does 'publicly governed' mean in practice?
   iii. Clause 66 – why do these particular initiatives matter?? (see point 1(iii) above).
   iv. Risk table: climate – there are 2 timeframes mixed up in here – in the longer term climate change is certain to occur albeit with some uncertain impacts – this should simply be addressed in the project design as it is, though it could be helped by simple future narratives (see above); in the shorter-term the implementation of the project could be upset by climate extremes – e.g. a long drought might mean that industry and policy makers cannot focus on strategic issues and are concerned with surviving a few years – this might be a difficult time to institute new policies. How will this implementation risk be addressed?
   v. Risk table more generally – some of the assumptions in the ToC figure are addressed here (e.g. political will), but it would be good to do so systematically, and to ask what should be monitored to allow adaptive action to reduce the residual risk.

Note: number key points clearly and provide useful information or suggestions, including key literature where relevant. Completed screens should be no more than two or three pages in length.

ANNEX: STAP'S SCREENING GUIDELINES

1. How well does the proposal explain the problem and issues to be addressed in the context of the **system** within which the problem sits and its drivers (e.g. population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, and technological changes), including how the various components of the system interact?

2. Does the project indicate how **uncertain futures** could unfold (e.g. using simple **narratives)**, based on an understanding of the trends and interactions between the key elements of the system and its drivers?

3. Does the project describe the **baseline** problem and how it may evolve in the future in the absence of the project; and then identify the outcomes that the project seeks to achieve, how these outcomes will change the baseline, and what the key **barriers** and **enablers** are to achieving those outcomes?

4. Are the project's **objectives** well formulated and justified in relation to this system context? Is there a convincing explanation as to **why this particular project** has been selected in preference to other options, in the light of how the future may unfold?

5. How well does the **theory of change** provide an "explicit account of how and why the proposed interventions would achieve their intended outcomes and goal, based on outlining a set of key causal pathways arising from the activities and outputs of the interventions and the assumptions underlying these causal connections".

    - Does the project logic show how the project would ensure that expected outcomes are **enduring** and resilient to possible future changes identified in question 2 above, and to the effects of any conflicting policies (see question 9 below).
    - Is the theory of change grounded on a solid scientific foundation, and is it aligned with current scientific knowledge?
    - Does it explicitly consider how any necessary **institutional and behavioral** changes are to be achieved?
    - Does the theory of change diagram convincingly show the overall project logic, including causal pathways and outcomes?

6. Are the project **components** (interventions and activities) identified in the theory of change each described in sufficient detail to discern the main thrust and basis (including scientific) of the proposed solutions, how they address the problem, their justification as a robust solution, and the critical assumptions and risks to achieving them?

7. How likely is the project to generate global environmental benefits which would not have accrued without the GEF project (**additionality**)?

8. Does the project convincingly identify the relevant **stakeholders**, and their anticipated roles and responsibilities? is there an adequate explanation of how stakeholders will contribute to the development and implementation of the project, and how they will benefit from the project to ensure enduring global environmental benefits, e.g. through co-benefits?

9. Does the description adequately explain:

    - how the project will build on prior investments and complement current investments, both GEF and non-GEF,
    - how the project incorporates **lessons learned** from previous projects in the country and region, and more widely from projects addressing similar issues elsewhere; and
    - how country policies that are contradictory to the intended outcomes of the project (identified in section C) will be addressed (**policy coherence**)?

10. How adequate is the project's approach to generating, managing and exchanging **knowledge**, and how will lessons learned be captured for adaptive management and for the benefit of future projects?

11. **Innovation and transformation:**
    - If the project is intended to be **innovative:** to what degree is it innovative, how will this ambition be achieved, how will barriers and enablers be addressed, and how might scaling be achieved?
    - If the project is intended to be **transformative:** how well do the project's objectives contribute to transformative change, and are they sufficient to contribute to enduring, transformational change at a sufficient scale to deliver a step improvement in one or more GEBs? Is the proposed logic to achieve the goal credible, addressing necessary changes in institutions, social or cultural norms? Are barriers and enablers to scaling be addressed? And how will enduring scaling be achieved?

12. Have **risks** to the project design and implementation been identified appropriately in the risk table in section B, and have suitable mitigation measures been incorporated? (NB: risks to the durability of project outcomes from future changes in drivers should have been reflected in the theory of change and in project design, not in this table.)