

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title

Adaptive management and restoration of degraded Aleppo pine forest in the Kasserine governorate (Tunisia) to strengthen resilience to climate change, conserve biodiversity, improve productivity and food security

Region

Tunisia

GEF Project ID

11389

Country(ies)

Tunisia

Type of Project

FSP

GEF Agency(ies):

FAO

GEF Agency ID

748248

Executing Partner

Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Maritime Fishing

Executing Partner Type

Government

GEF Focal Area (s)

Land Degradation

Submission Date

10/17/2023

Project Sector (CCM Only)

AFOLU

Taxonomy

Focal Areas, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Restoration and Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands, Sustainable Fire Management, Sustainable Forest, Influencing models, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Stakeholders, Private Sector, Financial intermediaries and market facilitators, Communications, Education, Behavior change, Awareness Raising, Civil Society, Community Based Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, Gender Equality, Gender results areas, Access to benefits and services, Participation and leadership, Access and control over natural resources, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender-sensitive indicators, Sex-disaggregated indicators, Women groups, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Capacity Development, Knowledge Exchange, Field Visit, Learning, Adaptive management

Type of Trust Fund

GET

Project Duration (Months)

48

GEF Project Grant: (a)

2,639,726.00

GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)

0.00

Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)

250,774.00

Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)

0.00

Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)

2,890,500.00

Total Co-financing

29,300,000.00

PPG Amount: (e)

PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)

100,000.00	9,500.00
PPG total amount: (e+f)	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)
109,500.00	3,000,000.00

Project Tags

CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? (iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. The explanation and justification of the project should be in section B “project description”. (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

The Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis* Mill.) natural forest ecosystem of Kasserine, the southernmost in the species' range, plays a vital ecological, socio-economic and environmental role. However, this ecosystem is strongly threatened by the effects of climate change (CC), and lacks informed and adapted management. Recent episodes of drought and recurrent fires, together with inadequate resource management, have weakened the ecosystem, resulting in the rapid and large-scale spread of pests (bark beetles), which have caused a severe dieback of the Aleppo pine on 30,000 ha (19% of the forest in the region). This degradation has led to a sharp reduction in the goods and services provided at ecological level (conservation of biodiversity, soil and water, protection of agricultural areas against desertification and siltation), at environmental (carbon sequestration) and socio-economic level (source of income and food security) in one of the country's poorest regions. The absence of an adaptive, integrated, and participatory management plan exacerbates the risk of the disappearance of a unique natural ecosystem.

The aim of the project is to restore and sustainably manage these forest ecosystems with adaptive, integrated, and participatory management plans to strengthen resilience to CC, conserve biodiversity, halt and reverse a degradation process already underway and maintain productivity. The project's paradigm hinges upon management approaches adapted to CC, nature-based solutions, and the participation of all stakeholders in decision-making and management. These approaches will leverage the achievements of local partners, scientific research, and the private sector. The technical and financial capacities of key partners will be integrated into the management process, and particular attention will be paid to local populations to improve and develop NWFP value chains. The ecosystem services thus restored will contribute to improve the incomes of the rural societies in this unique forest and improve a currently unstable local economy.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

Restore and manage degraded Aleppo pine forest ecosystems in the Kasserine region with the development and implementation of adaptive, integrated and participatory management plans to strengthen resilience to CC, conserve biodiversity, halt and reverse a degradation process and maintain productivity

Project Components

Promoting an enabling environment for adaptive, integrated, and participatory sustainable management of forest ecosystems

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
380,000.00	5,000,000.00

Outcome:

- 1.1 Improving stakeholders' knowledge and capacities on the impacts of CC on forest ecosystems
- 1.2 Review of the process to develop adaptive, integrated, and participatory forest landscape management plans and improvement of knowledge sharing on methods, tools and information needed
- 1.3 Strengthening the involvement of local population and civil society in the management of forest landscapes

Output:

- 1.1.1 Enhancing public institutions capacities to integrate CC and promote an adaptive, integrated, and participatory approach in forest ecosystem management plans
- 1.1.2 Capacity building for forest managers at local, regional, and national levels, ensuring full participation of women in the forestry sector
- 1.1.3 Capacity building for local actors, ensuring 50% of female participants: population, civil society, and the private sector on forest ecosystem monitoring (included forest health)
- 1.2.1 Strengthening the participatory and gender-responsive nature of forest ecosystem assessment (information production) and monitoring systems including forest health
- 1.2.3 Production and revision of procedural guides that include the concepts of CC, adaptive, integrated, participatory and gender-sensitive management, including restoration of degraded forest ecosystems
- 1.2.3 Update / development of management plans with restoration, adaptive, integrated and participatory silvicultural activities
- 1.3.1 Improving the capacity for action of local groups and cooperatives, especially women and young people, even outside the forest ecosystem (agricultural sector), to diversify sources of income and reduce pressure on forests

1.3.2 Support for the creation of micro-businesses (mainly services, special attention to women and youth)

1.3.3 Capacity building for the creation and improvement of NWFP/ agroforestry value chains (50% female) participants

Adaptive, integrated and participatory management of forest ecosystems to restore or avoid, and halt and reverse land degradation and improve livelihoods

Component Type	Trust Fund
Investment	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
1,800,000.00	14,000,000.00

Outcome:

2.1 Implementation of measures to restore or avoid, and halt and reverse degradation through revised/updated forest ecosystem management plans

2.2 Development and enhancement of nature-positive value chains to improve livelihoods, strengthen the local economy and reduce pressure on the forest

Output:

2.1.1 Creation of a seed bank and renewal of the nursery stock of multipurpose native species seeds

2.1.2 Rehabilitation of an inactive local nursery and production of seedlings

2.1.3 Implementation of silvicultural work identified in management plans (treatment, felling, delimiting, phytosanitary treatment, etc.) in areas impacted by extreme events (biotic and abiotic)

2.1.4 Restoration of degraded ecosystems is adopted and scaled up through water and soil conservation works, reforestation/ afforestation, assisted natural regeneration (ANR), rangeland rotation

2.2.1 Building users' capacity to develop competitive investment plans for value chains, with special attention paid to women and youth participation (alfa, cactus, pistachio, ecotourism, Zgougou, beekeeping)

2.2.2 Sharing of best practices to improve gender-sensitive value chains

2.2.3 Supporting women and youth to access micro-financing opportunities

Knowledge management

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
250,000.00	4,000,000.00

Outcome:

3.1 Establishment of public-private partnerships and collaborations to promote adaptive, integrated and participatory sustainable management of forest ecosystems

3.2 Good practices from the project and other complementary projects are identified and disseminated

Output:

3.1.1 Supporting innovation and research through partnerships between public institutions, private sector and universities /research institutes, as well as local communities (including women's associations) for the full integration of traditional knowledge

3.1.2 Support young women and men to access education and training in adaptive, integrated and participatory management of forest ecosystems and CC (internship programs in local, regional, national and international institutions)

3.2.1 Setting up a platform to share data and products, project achievements and best practices, including lessons on local community, women and youth engagement in forest ecosystem restoration and management

3.2.2 Development and implementation of a communication strategy tailored to various communication objectives and target audiences, with particular attention to local communities, women and youth

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
84,026.00	4,300,000.00

Outcome:

4.1 Monitoring and evaluation of project impacts and results

Output:

4.1.1 Development and implementation of project monitoring and evaluation methods/ tools on improving resilience of natural ecosystems to CC

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
Promoting an enabling environment for adaptive, integrated, and participatory sustainable management of forest ecosystems	380,000.00	5,000,000.00
Adaptive, integrated and participatory management of forest ecosystems to restore or avoid, and halt and reverse land degradation and improve livelihoods	1,800,000.00	14,000,000.00
Knowledge management	250,000.00	4,000,000.00
M&E	84,026.00	4,300,000.00
Subtotal	2,514,026.00	27,300,000.00
Project Management Cost	125,700.00	2,000,000.00
Total Project Cost (\$)	2,639,726.00	29,300,000.00

Please provide justification

N/A

PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Briefly describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

With 5.7 million hectares, or 35% of the national territory, forest and pastoral ecosystems are vital to sustainable development in Tunisia. They constitute an effective resource base for poverty reduction and play a key role in terms of ecosystem services such as soil protection and biodiversity. The World Bank estimated that in 2012 they generated benefits worth 1.4 billion TDN per year, and contributed 21% of agricultural GDP, or around 2% of the country's GDP. In Tunisia forests are home to around 750,000 persons (DGF/GIZ/FAO, 2012), considered among the poorest in the country. This is almost 8% of the country's total population (INS national census 2014) with a high density of 80 inhabitants/km².

The governorate of Kasserine, where the proposed project is located, is considered one of the most forested in the country in terms of surface area. It has 158,587 ha of forest (DGF-IFPN 2010), i.e. 19% of the governorate's total area, 20% of the country's total forest area, and 36% of Tunisia's forests of Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis* Mill.).

From an ecological point of view, the forest formations of the Kasserine governorate are composed by Aleppo pine with wooded and non-wooded scrubland: rosemary, juniper, Diss (*Ampelodesmos mauritanicus*) and alfa (*Stipa tenacissima*).

Kasserine's forests play an important role in socio-economic development. Among the many goods and services provided by the forest are Aleppo pine seeds (called 'Zgougou' in Tunisia and typical of the Kasserine area), firewood products, grazing and forestry employment. Currently, the average consumption of Aleppo pine seeds is around 1.5 kg per family per year. In recent years, Tunisian seed consumption has risen to 2 kg/family/year (Taghouti *et al.* 2021).

Studies (FAO-DGF-NF Facility, 2012) carried out on the Siliana Watershed, a territory dominated by Aleppo pine and quite comparable to that of Kasserine, have estimated that the total economic value of the goods and services produced was around 4,630 million DT in 2010, or 197 DT/ha on average (equivalent to 61 USD in November 2022). This value is made up of direct use benefits (68%), indirect use benefits (30%), non-use benefits (4%), and externalities costs (-3%). Fodder is the main benefit of the forest (57%) in terms of economic value, followed by soil protection against erosion (26%). The value of the goods and services provided by the forest benefits the local population (63%), Tunisian society (25%), the State budget (4%) and the international community (8%). The average benefit per household is between 250 and 1,000 DT/year (equivalent to 90USD and 330USD), i.e. twice the guaranteed minimum wage. Recent publications (Taghouti *et al.*, 2021), carried out in the same Siliana region, confirm these results, and indicate that 20% of households surveyed derive between 25% and 50% of their total income from the sale of NWFPs, while 30% declare that NWFP sales represent between 50% and 75% of their income. Seo and Yeo-Chang (2019) noted that among the sampled households, those with lower levels of education, less farmland, less income from non-agricultural activities, and those living below the poverty line, as well as those using only charcoal, were more dependent on NWFPs. In addition, NWFPs could be an important source of cash income for vulnerable households, helping to ensure a year-round food supply. Such an income stream can act as a safety net in times of hardship or other emergencies, particularly for those who do not own farmland, but also for women and young people, who find it a means of empowerment that the project will seek to further consolidate.

The project area covers 30,000 ha (see Annex C), most of which is occupied by Aleppo pine forest, either pure or mixed with various deciduous species. On adjacent land, local populations practice mainly rain-fed subsistence agriculture based on olive trees and cereals. The dominant crop in small areas where water resources allow irrigation is the apple tree.

The forest area of the proposed project is fragile (see Annex C) due to a combination of environmental and anthropogenic factors, more specifically: the level of degradation of the land supporting the stands, the monospecificity of the forest, forest management methods and techniques that are little to not adapted to recent and projected climate changes, the susceptibility of softwood stands to fire, and the over-exploitation of available resources by local populations who, given their limited economic means, make continuous and intense use of them. Indeed, on a national level, the governorate of Kasserine is one of the least developed, among the poorest in the country, with the highest poverty rates and an intense migratory flow that mainly affects youth, including graduates. Moreover, forest-dependent populations are the poorest of the governorate's rural population, which explains the very high pressure exerted on these ecosystems and the advanced level of degradation that characterizes them.

A study relating to the characterization of Tunisia's forest population, carried out in 2012, estimates the number of forest users in Kasserine at 74,325 people for 14,020 households (FAO-DGF-NFP, 2012). 77% of this forest population are young people aged between 15 and 40. The average income of these households is around 1,033 DT/year/household (equivalent to 300 USD/year), with less than 1 USD/day.

In terms of climate, extreme phenomena such as prolonged drought, heat waves and their direct impacts such as dieback, proliferation of diseases and pests, and fires are becoming increasingly recurrent. Prolonged drought, repeated fires and the absence of an appropriate management and silvicultural approach have affected the capacity of these natural formations, which were considered resilient, to adapt. This has triggered a progressive decline phenomenon which, in the most aggressive cases, has encouraged the proliferation of pests, particularly Aleppo pine bark beetles. Up to March 2022, the General Directorate of Forests (DGF) estimates that 25,000 ha of Aleppo pine forests in Kasserine have been affected by this phenomenon, with degrees of dieback ranging from 20% to 80% depending on the plot (see Annex C). The Institut National de Recherche en Génie Rural, Eaux et Forêts (INRGREF) (National Institute for Research in Rural Engineering, Water and Forests), believes that immediate sanitary cutting (removal of trees carrying Scolyte larvae) is essential to prevent the spread of pests and dieback in other neighbouring pine forests still spared. A restoration plan for the worst-affected areas, with short- and long-term action, is therefore urgently needed.

Recent climate projections by Tunisia's National Meteorological Institute (INM 2015), then refined as part of the National Adaptation Plan (MARHP/AFD 2021), confirm these results and predict by 2050: i) an increase in mean annual temperature varying between 1.6°C (RCP 4.5) and 1.9°C (RCP 8.5); ii) a reduction in precipitation ranging from -14 mm/year (RCP 4.5) to -22 mm/year (RCP 8.5); iii) an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme drought events. Water stress has led to an increase in fire frequency by a factor of 10 (2011-2021) (see Annex C).

Cumulative precipitation, which was around 950 mm in 1990, has been severely disrupted up to 2020, and is likely to fall sharply by 2100 to as little as 750 mm. On the other hand, the number of consecutive dry days, which stood at 140 days in 1990 (around 5 months), is set to rise steadily, and could reach 200 days by 2100 (around 7 months).

Faced with these multiple current and projected risks, which are combined in Kasserine with recurrent fires and lack of management, these forests seem to be reaching the limit of their intrinsic capacity to adapt. They have weakened and become easy targets for various diseases and pests, both native and introduced.

In the face of these climatic changes, economic estimates show that the impact on the forestry sector alone by 2030 could reach 11.52 million dollars per year, while estimates of job losses in the same sector vary between 8,250 and 16,500 jobs - rising to 37,000 jobs in the case of a major drought (Vivi Economics, 2021).

If the forestry administration does not have tools and capacities to manage the crisis and implement an integrated, adaptive and participatory management strategy, the risk of losing the Kasserine forest altogether is inevitable, with significant ecological and socio-economic consequences.

It is therefore of vital interest to the country and the international community to restore and conserve this ecosystem for its ecological characteristics. This ecosystem occupies the ecological and geographical limit of the distribution of the Aleppo pine species, and its genetic resources are unique for adapting to the challenges of climate change. It is also the range of the Cuvier gazelle (IUCN Red List, Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and Appendix 1 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species), which transits between these pine forests, the Châambi National Park to the east and Algeria to the west.

This project represents a unique opportunity to restore a severely degraded area and a unique ecosystem that is in danger of disappearing. Its disappearance threatens the rural societies that exploit its resources (75,000 people), the regional and local economy that depends on it, and the environment, since it constitutes the last natural corridor (forest) in central Tunisia, protecting the agricultural areas of the north from desertification and silting. This is a unique opportunity to put in place new tools and methods for the long-term management and enhancement of available resources, in a sustainable and concerted manner with all stakeholders. The project will enable cross-sectoral coordination, fostering dialogue between decision-makers, operators and resource partners. The systematic involvement of all stakeholders will enable transformational restoration/conservation policies and approaches to reverse degradation.

The project will work with the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries to ensure better integration of ecosystem restoration into sector strategies, action plans and the mobilization of public, private, and cooperative funds. It will also support effective engagement, inclusive and meaningful consultation of all stakeholders, systematically integrating them into the restoration and monitoring of degraded lands.

The project aims to restore, conserve, and manage the degraded Kasserine Aleppo pine forest in a sustainable, adaptive, and participatory way. The project will support the preparation of sustainable, adaptive and participatory management plans, taking into account the forest's multifunctionality, through:

- updating assessment and monitoring systems for forest ecosystems;
- revising management plans to better integrate the impacts of climate change, the multiple services provided and restoration options to promote ecosystem resilience;
- systematic public participation in the management and monitoring of forest resources;
- equitable sharing of environmental and economic benefits;
- awareness-raising and training of the local population and technicians in procedures for integrating climate change and other extreme phenomena into the planning and management of the area's spaces and resources;
- sharing and communicating the results obtained at local/national and international level, with particular attention to transnational exchanges on innovative planning and management methods, including the management of the risk of propagation of diseases and pests, as well as control methods.

The objectives of restoration, conservation and sustainable management can be of great interest to the private sector, which will be involved in technical assistance and capacity building, seed banks, nursery improvement and the management of ecosystems to be restored. Support for investments will also be

considered, including forestry works and plantations, domestication of medicinal and aromatic plants and agroforestry; arboriculture and agroecology; and capacity-building for private landowners. The project will enable the private sector to assess the economic benefits of investing in a sustainably managed landscape.

Particular attention will be devoted to capacity building and the development of value chains for the various products derived from restoration (medicinal and aromatic plants, beekeeping, Zgougou, ecotourism...) targeting i) young people (29% of the population in the project area, high unemployment rate with risk of radicalization) and ii) women, who represent particularly vulnerable social groups but are already active in the governorate with 16 Groupements de Développement Agricoles (GDA).

This GEF funding would therefore enable the development of a long-term adaptive and participative sustainable management strategy with a strong restoration component, through multifunctional and transformative management plans. This project will build on several existing core investments, such as the FAO-funded emergency program (2022-2023) to intervene in the areas most affected by bark beetles and limit their spread and any economic losses (TCPE 'Appui à la lutte contre la propagation des scolytes du pin d'Alep à Kasserine' (0.3 M USD)).

Furthermore, the activities planned by the project will be selected and prioritized with all stakeholders to overcome the barriers that could hinder or delay the achievement of the objectives of limiting the degradation underway, reversing the trend in favour of the restoration and resilience of natural resources, societies, and local economies. These barriers include:

- insufficient institutional capacity to organize and promote evidence-based, multi-stakeholder, participatory decision-making at landscape and local levels;
- a lack of technical capacity to deal with the impacts of extreme phenomena linked, among other things, to CC, and their integration into planning;
- widespread land degradation and vulnerable livelihoods;
- an environment not conducive to integrating adaptation into planning and budgeting;
- management tools not adapted to a fragile environment, and the rate at which planning studies are updated out of sync with the rate at which current and projected changes are/will be produced; and
- high social vulnerability, with a very high unemployment rate among young people and women, and insufficient financial resources to invest in sustainable and resilient solutions.

From an institutional point of view, the sustainable management and restoration of forest landscapes are managed in a coordinated manner through Tunisian legislation and the attributions granted to the following structures:

- 1988, 2005 Forestry Code: institutes a forestry regime that ensures the preservation and restoration of plant formations;
- 1993 National Commission for Sustainable Development; and
- 2014 Tunisian Constitution stipulates that the State guarantees the protection and restoration of a healthy environment.

In terms of thematic anchoring, the project's objectives are in line with almost all the cross-cutting and sectoral strategies of Tunisia's sustainable management and ecosystem restoration programs. In Tunisia, sustainable management and restoration of forest landscapes are managed in a coordinated manner through:

- National Development Plan 2035 includes green economy, CC and natural resources;
- Priority 5 of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) aims to protect and restore biodiversity, improve the resilience of ecosystems and strengthen their ecosystem services;

- The National Action Plan to Combat Desertification (PANLCD 2018-2030) aims to neutralize land degradation on 2.3 million ha by 2030 (NDT/LDN), with various actions and measures to limit land degradation and mitigate the effects of prolonged drought;
- The climate strategy (CDN 2030, Stratégie Nationale de développement Neutre en Carbone et résilient aux CC (SNBRC) 2050, Plan d'Action National - Tunisie (PAN) 2100), deals with the restoration of degraded ecosystems. The LDN target setting report aims to intervene on 2.2 million hectares by 2030, including:
 - Stop forest conversion [...] by restoring 738,600 ha;
 - Improve forest productivity [...] on 1.45 million ha; and
 - Improve the proportion of carbon sequestered on 177,200 ha through various techniques (reforestation, sustainable agriculture, addition of organic matter, etc.).
- The UNCCD NAP is the national vision for combating desertification and combating the degradation of land and natural ecosystems, also through land restoration.

In terms of involvement in global or regional fora linked to the restoration and sustainable management of resources, such as the United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration and the Bonn Challenge, the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Tunisia has the following objectives:

- In 2023, the Mediterranean region was recognized as one of the world flagships of restoration for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. This initiative highlights the region's significant advances in restoration and could act as a lever of funds for countries in the basin.
- In 2017, the Agadir Commitment was endorsed, aiming to restore 8 million ha of degraded land in the Mediterranean by 2030 (regional contribution to the Bonn Challenge).
- Tunisia is an active member and vice-chair of the Mediterranean Forestry Issues Committee - *Silva Mediterranea*, which also works on forest ecosystem restoration.
- Tunisia is a member of the Middle East Green Initiative (2021), which includes the restoration of 200 million ha of degraded land.

All these strategic orientations, objectives and targets defined at national level are perfectly aligned with the expected results of the project. They benefit from legal and regulatory frameworks that are favorable to the restoration of natural ecosystems, biodiversity and the resilience of production systems and rural societies and can also take advantage of cooperation initiatives established at regional and international levels, with which Tunisia has associated itself with the aim of sharing its achievements and benefiting from the successes achieved by these partners.

The achievements expected from this project will help to meet national targets and Tunisia's international commitments under the Rio conventions. Indeed, the effort to neutralize land degradation that will be made in the 30,000 ha project area will be counted towards the national effort of 2.3 million ha and the international effort of 450 million hectares of degraded land.

In addition, efforts in reforestation, densification, land restoration and improving the resilience of ecosystems and societies to the amplifying effects of climate are likely to contribute to Tunisia's climate objectives and commitments in terms of mitigation (45% energy efficiency by 2030 at national level and a global target of 2°C, or even 1.5°C above pre-industrial revolution temperatures) and adaptation (water, food, economic and social resilience at national level, and international targets aimed at building resilience and increasing adaptive capacity for low-carbon development).

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the PIF guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

The objective of the project is to manage the Aleppo pine forest of the Kasserine governorate in Tunisia in an adaptive, integrated, and participatory manner to restore and conserve the essential ecosystem services that it provides either from an ecological or socio-economic point of view. These ecosystem services include the fight against siltation and desertification, the protection of soil, water and biodiversity, the food security of an estimated 75,000 inhabitants (and beyond, for certain unique forest products marketed outside the area, such as Aleppo pine seeds, Zgougou).

The Kasserine forest represents a unique ecosystem for Tunisia and the Mediterranean region as the southernmost natural Aleppo pine forest in the species' distribution area which acts as an important barrier against the risk of desertification and the effects of climate change.

Although the Aleppo pine is one of the species most adapted to Mediterranean climate, prolonged drought, increased temperatures, and repeated fires, combined with a lack of adaptive management and restoration strategies of the areas degraded, affected the capacity of adaptation of these natural formations considered resilient, which triggered a phenomenon of progressive dieback and favored the uncontrolled proliferation of pests such as Aleppo pine bark beetles. Without urgent intervention that improves current management methods in the short and long term to deal with the impacts of CC, ecosystem services and the very survival of this forest ecosystem are at risk.

The current management of forests and associated landscapes at all levels does not sufficiently integrate the principles and practices of CC adaptation/mitigation and systematic participation of the local population who can play a key role for its conservation.

The project is designed to directly address each of the obstacles that stand between the current situation and the objective of sustainable, adaptive, and participatory management of these resources:

1. Limited experience in integrating CC impacts into forest ecosystem management plans;
2. Limited institutional capacities to organize and promote integrated and participatory multi-stakeholder decision-making and lack of tools for producing evidence at the landscape and local level on which to base these actions; and
3. Insufficient development of monitoring systems and knowledge sharing necessary to inform decision-making and support adaptive management that integrates CC considerations, restoration of degraded ecosystems and participatory approaches.

As part of **component 1**, the project will establish a capacity building system on the importance of integrating the impacts of CC, the methodical restoration of degraded ecosystems and the monitoring of the state of resources in Kasserine forest ecosystem management plans for all stakeholders: public institutions, managers, local population and civil society. This will allow an upgrade of knowledge and skills regarding the impacts of CC on ecosystems which will facilitate decision-making and collaboration between managers and users at different scales. The project will support the review of the system of information production, monitoring and evaluation of forest ecosystems to guarantee the production of evidence. This will be the backbone of an integrated and participatory multi-stakeholder decision-making process. Specific attention will be given to the establishment of a monitoring system to evaluate forest health, given the impacts of the spread of pests (bark beetles in particular).

Capacity building and improved baseline data production will be used to revise procedural guides and include the concepts of CC, adaptive, integrated, and participatory management. This revision will also include indications on the restoration of degraded ecosystems (*e.g.* post-fire restoration).

The investment planned by **component 2** of the project will implement the revised and updated management plans, with, as a priority action, measures to restore degraded areas to avoid further degradation and economic/ecological losses and promote CC adaptation actions. The creation of a seed bank will facilitate reforestation interventions with native species. It will also provide a further source of income for local populations and opportunities for collaboration with the research sector on forest genetic resources and adaptive silviculture. An inactive pilot nursery will be rehabilitated to produce plants at local level and small local businesses will be systematically engaged in silvicultural and restoration work (sanitary cuts, water and soil conservation, reforestation, assisted natural regeneration (ANR), etc.). A participatory approach will also be put in place to improve grazing rotation to reduce overgrazing.

Finally, the project will identify the most promising value chains, in the forest and outside the forest (*e.g.* alfa, cactus, pistachio, Zgougou, beekeeping, ecotourism) and strengthen user capacities for the development of investment plans to involve the population in the conservation of forest ecosystems and both support livelihoods and reduce pressure on more degraded areas/areas under restoration. Specific support will be dedicated to women and young people, who represent the most vulnerable categories and with the highest unemployment rate in the region, for access to micro-credit initiatives. The sharing of good practices will be guaranteed throughout the duration of the project to facilitate the improvement of skills in value chain development.

As part of **component 3**, the project will plan and maintain the sharing of project achievements. Partnerships between public institutions and the private sector (farmers, local businesses, etc.) and with the research sector will improve cross-sector collaboration and represent support for innovation. Young people's access to education and training in adaptive management and CC will be facilitated through the creation of internship programs within national and international institutions. This initiative will increase the production and sharing of knowledge by facilitating innovation through research.

The project will support the creation of a platform for sharing data, products, achievements, and good practices. This will increase the dissemination of project results and promote collaboration between sectors.

To complete the work of disseminating knowledge, the investment made by this component of the project will take care of drafting a diversified communication strategy for the different groups of beneficiaries and partners.

The last **component 4** will take care of developing and implementing a project monitoring and evaluation strategy. It will determine how adaptive, integrated, and participatory management actions effectively support the conservation and restoration of Kasserine's forest ecosystems and have an impact on its ecological and socio-economic value. This will ensure that the management strategy developed by the project achieves short and long-term conservation objectives while maintaining the ecological value and production levels necessary for the well-being of local populations.

At the end of the project, at least 15,000 hectares of Aleppo pine forest will be under restoration and included in improved land management and planning regimes that prioritize the restoration of degraded lands, degradation avoided, adaptive silviculture and integrated and participatory management practices. More specifically, at least 20,000 beneficiaries, including 50% women, between private farmers, breeders and users of wood and non-wood forest products will have access to production practices demonstrating the ecological, social, and economic benefits of adopting restoration practices and adaptive management. A comprehensive forest ecosystem monitoring program, including health, and a knowledge management regime will provide government, public institutions, local populations, and private actors with the information needed to make informed decisions so that their actions support actively achieving the objectives of restoration, conservation, and adaptive management of Aleppo pine forest ecosystems at the landscape level.

Therefore, the project is due to considerably contribute to the achievement of critical KMGBF targets, including target 1 (spatial planning), target 2 (restoration) and target 11 (ecosystem services), while also supporting the attainment of many of the other KMGBF targets as they are highly integrated and mutually re-enforcing. In particular, thanks to promoted people-centered approach, the project is poised to help deliver on the social inclusion agenda of the KMGBF. Lessons will be developed and disseminated.

At the same time, the objectives of the project, which relate to the transformation and adaptation of the management system of a highly degraded monospecific forest ecosystem, are part of almost all national transversal and sectoral strategies. Adaptive, integrated and participatory management with a strong focus on forest restoration is managed in a coordinated manner through:

- the forest code which in 1988 and 2005 established a forest regime which ensures the preservation and restoration of plant formations;
- the responsibilities of the National Commission for Sustainable Development created in 1993 to design the overall approach to sustainable development, to outline the country's strategic orientations in this area and to ensure the implementation of the various resulting programs;
- the Tunisian Constitution which in 2014 stipulates that the State guarantees the protection, therefore restoration, of a healthy environment;
- the National Development Plan for 2035 which includes green economy, climate change and natural resources among its objectives;
- the three-year economic and social development plan 2023-2025.

The entire program will be designed to ensure that at the end of the GEF investment period, the financial, political, and human capacities are in place to continue and amplify the success of the project using principles and practices adaptive management.



Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?

If so, please describe that role here. Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing

The GEF agency will not cover an execution role.

Coordination and Cooperation:

The project will closely work with and coordinate with the Integrated Agricultural Development Project in Kef and Kasserine Governorates, which operates in the same geography. This project is a multi-donor investment which aims to promote sustainable agricultural development and economic growth and improve the welfare of the rural population in the most depressed rural areas of the governorates of Kef and Kasserine. It particularly focuses on improved land and water resources management for increase and sustainable agricultural production and productivity and better access to rural infrastructure. The overall project investment includes a USD43.57 million IsDB investment, IDB financing, and USD9 million inputs from the Government of Tunisia. The proposed project will build on this initiative by filling the gaps that currently exist in integrating forest management at landscape and local levels, and facilitating the multi-stakeholder information systems on forest management and restoration that can be enhanced, monitored and measured, and supporting restoration of degraded forest areas. It will also seek to promote improved participation of local populations so that restoring and sustainably managing degraded forest resources becomes a systematic step in natural resource management. This baseline project will complement Components 1 & 3.

The Emergency Response Project to Combat the Pine Bark Beetle Outbreaks in the Kasserine Region (Tunisia) – though not mobilised as co-financing, but critical for successful GEF investment - is equipping all relevant actors from local to regional to cope with the spread of pine bark beetles, contributing to the restoration of 2,000 ha of the Kasserine forest. It is particularly working with local communities, engaged in forest surveillance to reduce the economic losses resulting from its degradation. The Emergency Response Project is equipping the Ministry of Agriculture to deal with a forest health issue that will be recurrent due to climate change. Despite limited to years 2022 and 2023 the machinery and capacity building provided will be used by the CRDA also on following years.

The following initiatives are not considered as potential co-financing, but they provide important lessons learned and opportunities to establish synergies with the project:

- The Emergency Response Project to Combat the Pine Bark Beetle Outbreaks in the Kasserine Region (Tunisia) is not considered a co-financing of the proposed project because it is ending in 2024. Nevertheless the emergency project is currently equipping relevant actors from local to regional to cope with the spread of pine bark beetles, contributing to the restoration of 2,000 ha of the Kasserine forest. It is particularly working with local communities, engaged in forest surveillance to reduce the economic losses resulting from its degradation. The Emergency Response Project is equipping the Ministry of Agriculture to deal with a forest health issue that will be recurrent due to climate change. Therefore, despite limited to years 2022, 2023 and the machinery and capacity building provided will be used by the CRDA also on following years.

• **Projet de promotion des filières pour le développement territorial de Siliana (PROFITS) (2016-2025)** funded by IFAD, is based on a sector-development approach, as a lever for sustainable regional territorial development, actively involving public, socio-professional and private players, either through private and public initiatives to create basic infrastructures and institutional and financial conditions conducive to private initiative. The project is structured around two main components: i) promotion and enhancement of value chains, and ii) creation and reinforcement of favorable conditions for the development of value chains, backed up by a management/coordination system. This project will be a source of knowledge and lessons learnt to develop NWFP value chains in the Kasserine government.

• The « Bureau d'appui à la femme rurale » (BARF), funded in 2001, is attached to the Minister's cabinet of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Maritime Fishing (MARHPM) has a specific strategy and action plan in favor of rural women and girls and plays a key role in monitoring statistics of women employment. Its missions are to (1) coordinate with the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Seniors in implementing the action plan for rural women, (2) support the various agricultural structures and institutions and help them integrate rural women into the agricultural production sectors, (3) collect information and make it available to the various stakeholders, and (4) train and supervise rural women and executives working to promote rural women in agriculture and fishing. The BAFR is represented in the 24 CRDAs by coordinators. This project will fully collaborate with this initiative to capitalize on lessons learnt and information produced on women and youth to fully integrate since the initial phases of the activities.

Core Indicators

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
15000	0	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

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

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
15,000.00			

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

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

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

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)
30000	0	0	0

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)
30,000.00			

Indicator 4.2 Area of landscapes under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

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)

Indicator 4.4 Area of High Conservation Value or other forest loss avoided

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

Indicator 4.5 Terrestrial OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Documents (Document(s) that justifies the HCVF)

Title

Indicator 5 Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excluding protected areas)

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

Indicator 5.1 Fisheries under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

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

Type/name of the third-party certification

Indicator 5.2 Large Marine Ecosystems with reduced pollution and hypoxia

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

LME at PIF	LME at CEO Endorsement	LME at MTR	LME at TE

Indicator 5.3 Marine OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)	4422715	0	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (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 CO₂e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

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)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)	4,422,715			
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting	2025			
Duration of accounting	20			

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)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

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)

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	10,000			
Male	10,000			
Total	20,000	0	0	0

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

The indicators are estimated based on biophysical characteristics, land cover and use and socio-economic characteristics of the target areas. National statistics and knowledge of the distribution of communities in the project area plus the experience and lessons learned from the activities implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Maritime Fishing (in particular the General Directorate of Forests and the Regional Agricultural Development Center (CRDA)) made it possible to make estimates.

The number of direct beneficiaries is estimated based on censuses of the population of the governorate and activities which currently involve the local population. The rural population will directly benefit from improvements in forest ecosystem adaptation measures and given the poverty rate in the governorate, it is likely that livelihoods will improve. The local population will benefit from the paid workdays provided by the project as part of the forest-health related and restoration activities, new income-generating activities thanks to capacity building events and access to training and microfinancing.

Risks to Project Preparation and Implementation

Summarize risks that might affect the project preparation and implementation phases and what are the mitigation strategies the project preparation process will undertake to address these (e.g. what alternatives may be considered during project preparation—such as in terms of consultations, role and choice of counterparts, delivery mechanisms, locations in country, flexible design elements, etc.). Identify any of the risks listed below that would call in question the viability of the project during its implementation. Please describe any possible mitigation measures needed. (The risks associated with project design and Theory of Change should be described in the “Project description” section above). The risk rating should reflect the overall risk to project outcomes considering the country setting and ambition of the project. The rating scale is: High, Substantial, Moderate, Low.

Risk Categories	Rating	Comments
Climate	High	As shown in the project description, Kasserine forest already show the impacts of CC in terms of prolonged drought which facilitates the spread of fires, weakening of trees and a spread of pests normally endemic to the forest ecosystem. The project aims to provide management tools adapted to the impacts of CC and propose adaptive and participatory management that can improve the resilience of the ecosystem. The

		<p>project will also invest in strengthening the capacities of different actors at the institutional, local, and private sector levels who, in a participatory approach, are intended to support the longer-term adaptation process. The project fully meets the needs linked to climate risk.</p>
Environment and Social	Substantial	<p>The high poverty rate (estimated at 33.6%), high unemployment rate (especially among youth, estimated at 20.6% and higher than the national rate of 15.6% in 2014) and migration constitute challenges for the governorate of Kasserine. The project will target participation, and capacity building and skills development of local stakeholders, with specific attention to youth and women. The project will also collaborate with universities and research institutes to improve the practical experience of young people in government institutions.</p>
Political and Governance	Substantial	<p>The project depends on the Tunisian government to take measures and decisions within a specified time frame. The project addresses this risk by providing firm deadlines for the completion of activities and strong collaboration between sectors. The project will report progress against these deadlines throughout the implementation period. The Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Maritime Fishing (in particular, the CRDA) has technicians on site who will be activated wherever possible to facilitate the advancement of all activities and support the resolution of conflicts.</p>
Macro-economic	Substantial	<p>After the COVID 19 pandemic, Tunisia is experiencing an unstable period from an economic point of</p>

		<p>view, with social tensions linked to the unemployment rate, disparities between governorates and illegal emigration. There is also political uncertainty, and the public and private sectors are still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is taking place in one of the most fragile governorates in the country and in addition to strengthening the capacities of the public administration, it will offer local communities the opportunity to participate in the benefits that adaptive and participatory management of forest resources will provide.</p>
Strategies and Policies	Low	<p>Tunisia has adopted several strategies and policies to support adaptation to climate change and the restoration of degraded lands. These strategies and policies create an enabling environment for this project, which will seek to extend adaptive reasoning to integrated natural resource management by improving dialogue between different sectors.</p>
Technical design of project or program	Low	<p>The project was designed to complement the country's priorities in terms of restoration of degraded areas and adaptive and participatory management of forest resources. The project objectives are aligned with national targets and strategies (NBSAP, NAPCD 2018-2030, NDC 2030, Carbon Neutral and Climate Change Resilient Development Strategy 2050, NAP 2100) and other projects implemented in the region (emergency program financed by FAO 2022- 23). The project aims to plan interventions, share knowledge and lessons learned and support a participatory approach that facilitates</p>

		the creation of a resilient forest landscape adapted to CC.
Institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability	Low	The project partner already collaborates with FAO in the framework of other projects (emergency program financed by FAO 2022-23, Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Issues - Silva Mediterranea, Mediterranean flagship of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration). In addition, the project will facilitate training and capacity building/development of technical staff. The project invests in strengthening collaboration between the public sector and the world of research to increase the production and sharing of information and knowledge which will contribute to the successful execution of the project and its sustainability.
Fiduciary: Financial Management and Procurement	Moderate	In the current economically unstable environment of the country, financial management policies can be slow and delay the implementation of activities. It may be difficult to obtain services in a timely manner. The project will alleviate this problem by including a procurement list to meet deadlines.
Stakeholder Engagement	Low	The interest and engagement of local communities will be ensured through the provision of incentives such as capacity building, knowledge sharing opportunities and concrete demonstrations of project initiatives. The project will promote cohesion and dialogue between sectors and at community level and promote positive social opportunities.
Other	Low	Covid-19 and other pandemics: The project aims to improve the living conditions of local populations and conserve a unique forest landscape

		which, if lost, can cause an increase in food insecurity. The project therefore supports the recovery after the last pandemic, and will be based on the lessons learned by the government during the difficulties experienced in 2020-2021
Financial Risks for NGI projects		
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Describe how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

The project will support GEF programming strategies in several ways:

- To promote adaptive and participatory management of the forest in the governorate of Kasserine, the project goes beyond the strictly forestry domain (to put an end to traditional silo thinking) and endorses the systemic integration of different land uses (forestry, agricultural, pastoral) and local actors at landscape level. The economic, social, and environmental benefits that the project aims to maintain and enhance are the result of improving the management of forest resources in terms of instruments available to managers and strengthening/developing the capacities of the various stakeholders, local populations included. The new approach for the management of the Aleppo pine forest and the ecological restoration of degraded areas therefore considers the social dimension to support rural development.
- The project aims to significantly reduce and avoid land degradation, with integrated and coherent management of natural resources adapted to the impacts of CC. The project specifically targets degraded areas of the Kasserine forest, with high levels of unemployment, to reduce pressure on natural resources. Restoration interventions, investments for the development of value chains and for building the capacities of stakeholders endorse the “healthy people, healthy planet” scope.
- The project promotes systemic integration of restoration into forest resource management plans, therefore with the promotion of nature-based solutions and ecosystem services as a basis for the transformation of targeted systems.
- The transformation levers planned in the GEF-8 strategy are targets of the project: multi-stakeholder dialogue, governance and the transformation of the traditional resource management system. Component 1 targets the institutional level to improve capacity building, cross-sectoral coordination of managers and governance; component 2 supports the review and updating of natural resource management through nature-based solutions (e.g. restoration), the creation and development of sustainable and resilient value chains; and component 3 supports and organizes knowledge management for stakeholders (public institutions, local communities, research institutes and universities, NGOs and private sector).

National instruments

The Tunisian government has developed the 'National Strategy for the Development and Sustainable Management of Forests and Rangelands 2015-2024', with the aim of supporting the forestry and livestock

sectors, ensuring sustainable local development that generates jobs and income for the 800,000 people residing in these ecosystems (Saadani, 2015). Among the steps involved in implementing this strategy, a 2016-2020 development plan focusing on the forestry and pastoral sector has been drawn up. Then, starting in 2020, the DGF initiated the 'Inventaire Forestier, Pastoral et Oléicole (IFPON)' to gather up-to-date and reliable data and statistics on forest and pastoral resources. In addition, the DGF has drawn up an action plan for the implementation of a forest governance framework adapted to the restoration of forests and landscapes and the neutrality of land degradation. This plan includes the revision of the legal and institutional framework relating to forest resources and the implementation of a land clarification program.

Multilateral agreements

Tunisia has acceded to all the international conventions prepared or revised in the light of Agenda 21, and more specifically the country has ratified: i) the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1993, the Framework Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993 and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in 1995. As a restoration target by 2030, Tunisia has committed to conserving and restoring 2,000,000 ha of land by 2030 in its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2018-2030 (Boussaid & Kraiem, 2017).

This project aligns with the current national strategy for which forest and pastoral plantations are considered one of the main activities for restoring forest and pastoral ecosystems in Tunisia, but it goes beyond plantation as unique silvicultural strategy. From 2017 to 2021, Tunisia planted 13,200 ha of forest species in burnt, degraded and logged forests, and 18,590 ha of pastoral tree and shrub species for rangeland conservation, improved fodder production and restoration of degraded ecosystems. The project aims to systemically integrate restoration and participatory and adaptive management of forest resources into current management methods, with the aim of transforming and making the current approach more adapted to the speed of CC and the demands of the local population.

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes and plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector:

Provide a brief summary and list of names and dates of consultations

FAO conducted a series of on-site missions to the Kasserine governorate and consultations in 2022 and 2023 to identify the governorate's priorities in terms of managing the degraded Kasserine forest, identify activities and projects already underway, and assess the project's alignment with national objectives and strategies. The FAO has also launched an emergency program in 2022-2023 to intervene in the short term in the areas most affected by the bark beetles and limit their spread and any economic losses (TCPE ' Support for the fight against the spread of Aleppo pine bark beetles in Kasserine ' (0.3 M USD)). The preparation of the emergency program enabled us to obtain an overview of the situation of the Kasserine forest and identify the stakeholders who were consulted. The FAO headquarters in Rome, which hosts the secretariat of the Mediterranean Forestry Issues Committee - Silva Mediterranea, of which Tunisia is vice-president, works in strict collaboration with Tunisia, which is actively involved in the regional dynamic. Tunisia officially supported the Mediterranean region's submission as one of the world's flagship restoration projects for the United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration. The FAO office in Tunis is playing a key role in setting up the emergency program in Kasserine. FAO in general collaborates with a permanent base in Tunisia with the Ministry of the Environment, the DGF, the CRDA of Kasserine, the INERGREF, NGOs such as the Association Internationale de Forêts Méditerranéennes which has a Tunisian presidency. The local and national stakeholders are well known and have participated in various events organized by the FAO focusing on sustainable management of Mediterranean forests and restoration of degraded land.

Many stakeholders in the Kasserine governorate are involved in the ongoing FAO emergency program. This program shows the need to work in the longer term with actions that transform current management modes and better integrate the impacts of CC and the role of local stakeholders. Meetings with local stakeholders, informative capacity-building on the impacts of CC or more practical capacity-building for the development of NWFP value chains will be organized, with a specific focus on women and young people.

Preliminary list of stakeholders

- Government: Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries, Ministry of the Environment, CRDA, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Women, the Family and the Elderly, West Central Development Office, Ministry of Economy and Planning, Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, Ministry of Higher Education, Regional Development Council - Partners and beneficiaries Components 1,2,3,4

Civil society/NGO/OPA (professional agricultural organizations) :

- 25 Agricultural Development Groups (including 16 women),
- 22 active mutual agricultural service companies, Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity, Partners and beneficiaries Components 1,2
- National Coordination Unit on Climate Change: support to meet the country's national commitments to the Rio Conventions (MoE)
- Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries: technical support for the development of NTFP value chains

- Tunisian Union of Industry, Commerce and Handicrafts: technical support to promote and boost private sector involvement

- Research institutes: INRGREF, Institut Sylvo-Pastoral de Tabarka, Partners components 1,3

- Private sector: cooperatives, service units, producers/breeders - Component 2,3

More specifically, the PPG phase will provide more detailed answers to the following questions:

- o Management: Will the private sector be part of the project steering committee?

- o Research and development: will the private sector exploit research data? Will it support value chains and timber harvesting?

- o Partnerships: the private sector will support internship opportunities for young people and women?

- o Communications: the private sector will share information and knowledge? Be part of the online knowledge-sharing platform?

- o Financing: investments and identification of potential sources of sustainable financing?

- o International organizations: FAO, GIZ, OSS, WB, WWF, International Labor Organizations - Partners Components 1, 3,4.

Most recent consultation during project preparation workshop in Tunisia:

Name of the organization	Focal point
June 2023	
Ministry of the Environment	Mohamed Ali Dridi
Ministry of the Environment	Sabria Bnoui
Ministry of Agriculture - General Directorate of Forests	Sihem Hadj Aneur
Ministry of Agriculture - General Directorate of Forests	Ezzedine Taghouti
Ministry of Agriculture - General Directorate of Forests	Mohamed Boufaroua
Ministry of Agriculture - General Directorate of Forests	Sana Smida
Ministry of Agriculture - General Directorate of Forests	Zouhair Ben Salem
Chef arrondissement, Kasserine Governorate	Yamen Haggui
CRDA Kasserine	Trablesi Ahmed
Institut National de Recherches en Génie Rural, Eaux et Forêts (National Institute for Research in Rural Engineering, Water and Forestry)	Olfa Ezzine
Sylvo-Pastoral Institute of Tabarka	Kamel Tounsi
International Association for Mediterranean Forests	Abdelhamid Khaldi

FAO	Ahmed Bougacha
FAO	Philippe Ankers

Annex I provides further information on stakeholder engagement. Please, also note Annex H on gender equality and women's empowerment.

(Please upload to the portal documents tab any stakeholder engagement plan or assessments that have been done during the PIF development phase.)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

We confirm that we have provided indicative information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program and any measures to address such risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex D).

Yes

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
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Medium/Moderate

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

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

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	GEF Project Grant(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total GEF Financing (\$)
FAO	GET	Tunisia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-2	Grant	2,639,726.00	250,774.00	2,890,500.00
Total GEF Resources (\$)						2,639,726.00	250,774.00	2,890,500.00

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount (\$)

100000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)

9500

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non- Grant	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
FAO	GET	Tunisia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation: LD-2	Grant	100,000.00	9,500.00	109,500.00
Total PPG Amount (\$)						100,000.00	9,500.00	109,500.00

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total(\$)
FAO	GET	Tunisia	Land Degradation	LD STAR Allocation	3,000,000.00
Total GEF Resources					3,000,000.00

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)

LD-2	GET	2,639,726.00	29300000
Total Project Cost		2,639,726.00	29,300,000.00

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
Recipient Country Government	DGF	Public Investment	Recurrent expenditures	9000000
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Maritime Fishing	Grant	Investment mobilized	20000000
GEF Agency	FAO	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	300000
Total Co-financing				29,300,000.00

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

The mobilized investment includes the Integrated Agricultural Development Project in Kef and Kasserine Governorates (2023-2028), a multi-donor investment which aims to promote sustainable agricultural development and economic growth and improve the welfare of the rural population in the most depressed rural areas of the governorates of Kef and Kasserine. It particularly focuses on improved land and water resources management for increase and sustainable agricultural production and productivity and better access to rural infrastructure. The overall project investment includes a USD43.57 million ISDB investment, IDB financing, and USD9 million inputs from the Government of Tunisia. The proposed project will build on this initiative by filling the gaps that currently exist in integrating forest management and landscape and local levels, and facilitating the multi-stakeholder information systems on forest management and restoration that can be enhances, monitored, and measured, and supporting restoration of degraded forest areas. It will also seek to promote improved participation of local populations so that restoring and sustainably manage degraded forest resources become a systematic step in natural resources management. This baseline project will complement Components 1 & 3.

Other investments are provided too (not characterized as mobilized investment), including:

The expenditure from the recipient country's government mentioned as co-financing refers to the financing of "Program 4: Forestry and agricultural land management", one of the 5 operational programs from the government of Tunisia which has as main objectives i) improving the forestry sector's contribution to socio-economic development and ii) reducing land threatened by erosion and conserving soil resources. The investment is allocated over 5 years and the General Directorate of Forests is responsible for the implementation and execution of the activities, distributed among regional authorities like the CRDA Kasserine.

FAO will provide in kind contribution through technical staff that will support the executing agency in the implementation of the project. FAO technical staff will provide technical support on forest restoration and health in all the components of the proposed project. A key role will also play in facilitating communication at regional and global level through existing networks like communities of practices and international events (e.g. Mediterranean Forest Weeks)

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
GEF Agency Coordinator	Jeffrey Griffin	10/17/2023	Maude Veyret-Picot	+39 320 888 3251	maude.veyretpicot@fao.org

Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Mrs. Sabria Bnoui Ben Ammar	OFP	Director General for External Relations, Ministry of Local Affairs and Environment	11/16/2023

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

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



Figure 1 : Location of the project area and Kasserine governorate.

Please, note that Annex C (attached as separate document) has many more maps and pictures.

GPS coordinates of some landmarks in the project area and surrounding areas. These coordinates are provided in WGS84/UTM North 32, which can be easily positioned on Google Earth

Landmarks	Coordinates in Degrees, Minutes, Seconds	
POINT CENTRAL DANS LA ZONE DU PROJET	N	35°11'15.16"
	E	8°30'19.75"
KASSERINE	N	35°9'51.50"
	E	8°50'26.19"
CHAAMBI	N	35°11'40.46"
	E	8°39'33.53"
KHCHEM EL KELB	N	35°6'43.91"
	E	8°37'45.04"

In this territory, interventions will be localized in micro-zones which will be chosen following a detailed diagnosis carried out during the PPG phase.

ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

(PIF level) Attach agency safeguard screen form including rating of risk types and overall risk rating.

Title

ESS checklist and certificate PIF stage

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
Significant Objective 1	Significant Objective 1	Significant Objective 1	Principal Objective 2

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Taxonomy uploaded directly in the Portal