

9. Turkey - Conservation and Sustainable Management of the Steppe Ecosystems – FAO - GEF ID = 5657

☐ Germany's Comments

Germany has objections against the following PIFs in their current form and requests that certain requirements are fulfilled before PIF approval:

The subject of the project is highly relevant and deserves attention at the highest level. Although steppes constitute a key element of Turkey's rich biodiversity heritage and Turkey has a global responsibility for them, this habitat type has been badly neglected in the Turkish Protected Area System. The very recent finding of a Leopard in the Karacadağ area (one of the two proposed intervention sites) underlines the significance of the proposal. It is very encouraging that the project intends to work with the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MFAL) as one of the two execution partners.

Comment 1

The PIF should be resubmitted with a much clearer focus on concrete and realistic conservation outcomes, and with a clear implementation structure which ensures that the institutional, technical and managerial experiences in protected area management in Turkey are harnessed to the full advantage of the project.

FAO Response

The project as proposed by the Government of Turkey is based on concrete and realistic conservation outcomes, such as the establishment of a new protected area in Karacadag and the enhanced management of the Kizilkiyu Wildlife Development Area, as well as a series of conservation actions in the Karacadag area.

Regarding implementation structure, two main institutions mentioned in the PIF: The MFWA (General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks- GDNCNP) and the MFAL (General Directorate of Plant Production-GDPP). While GDNCNP is responsible for protected areas management and biodiversity conservation, GDPP is responsible for the management of pastures (in Turkey all steppes are considered as pastures, which is mentioned in the PIF). National and local level universities/NGOs will also take part in the project management.

We can add PIF (section A.2): (i) national level Steering Committee, (ii) project implementation unit and (iii) national advisory committee for technical and scientific advice

Comment 2

The comparative advantage of FAO is not convincing, as FAO has little track record in protected area management. There is a risk that FAO will not sufficiently build onto the previous experiences made with PA management in Turkey (where three GEF-funded PA management projects have already been completed) and elsewhere. Regarding "community based approaches" as an innovative tool, this is outdated, as it already corresponds to the minimum standard for such activities.

FAO Response

The project is aiming to conserve steppe biodiversity through protected areas and streamlining of biodiversity conservation into production landscape (pasture in our case). As Mentioned in the PIF, FAO has completed one project in Kure area, on which one of the GEF projects (mentioned above) built. On the other hand FAO has strong comparative advantage in land, specifically pasture management. FAO/GEF SLM project in Konya closed basin (including pasture management component and biodiversity conservation) will be operational this year. FAO is also supporting Turkey to align its

national UNCCD NAP with UNCCD 10-year strategy including all aspects of land management, monitoring and reporting. FAO is also supporting several land and biodiversity conservation projects through FAO Turkey Partnership Program, which includes (i) conservation of globally important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIHAS) in Turkey and Azerbaijan, (ii) conservation agriculture in Turkey and Central Asia; and (iii) Protection and cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants in West Mediterranean region in Turkey.

In Turkey, steppe ecosystems are particularly highly threatened by unsustainable human activities which include ongoing expansion of agricultural development, resulting in (i) the conversion of steppes to arable lands; (ii) increase in the number of human settlement; (iii) increased use of pesticides and fertilizers, (iv) afforestation, and (v) over-grazing. This requires community based management of the target areas in order to prevent the pressures from grazing and unsustainable land use practices. It is also necessary to improve the enabling environment for scaling up pilot activities and for better management strategies and incentives. Taking into account threats, it can be concluded that community based model is the only way to sustainably manage steppe areas. Moreover, STAP commented that community-based conservation models and tools are good instruments for conservation and realization of GEBs

Comment 3

Further, Germany requests the following being taken into account:

- The project proposal at this stage could benefit from a clearer vision on how to manage steppe areas, and what goes beyond a classical PA Management approach. The “reconciliation of land use activities with steppe biodiversity conservation” remains ineffective unless the proposal shows the incentives for local farmers to pursue such an approach. Land tenure is surely one of the most critical aspects in steppe management, but is not even mentioned here.

FAO Response

One of the main focuses of the project is to integrate steppe area into land management (pasture management). On the one hand, the project is aiming to conserve biodiversity through protected areas establishment/management. On the other hand, one component of the project is dedicated to mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation into production landscape (pasture management). Therefore, the project goes beyond the classical PA approach and addresses the issues in broad scale. For example, the two outputs below directly deal with land management issues under component 2.

Output 2.2 Prepare community based agricultural and pasture land use plan(s) for the buffer zones to secure production activities for local livelihoods while conserving steppe biodiversity

Output 2.4 Implement pilot demonstration activities on sustainable use of pasture and arable lands

As mentioned in the PIF, there are incentives for good agricultural practices, but these are typically not specifically designed for Steppe (pasture) management. This project will help to develop appropriate incentives for local farmers to pursue such an approach

It is true that land tenure is a key issue. All steppe areas in Turkey are owned by the state and local people have certain utilization rights like grazing of animals in surrounding areas. During full project preparation, FAO will provide technical backstopping and assistance based on the voluntary guidelines as applicable to the Turkish context.

Comment 4

The outputs of the project are mainly described as assessments, action plans, strategies, program preparations, analyses (e.g., gap analyses), plans, institutional mappings, etc., but little is said about how all this will be translated into conservation on the ground. There is a clear need for shifting project

activities from conducting studies and developing strategies to implementing concrete conservation action.

FAO Response

As proposed in the PIF, Component 1 is mainly focused on improving the enabling environment, but this is necessary to ensure the long term sustainability of the project. However, the two main components (component 2 and 3) of the project are focusing on concrete outputs with following indicators :

- *Establishment of a Steppe protected area established in Karacadağ, with a target of 10.000 ha.*
- *Enhanced management effectiveness of the 20,000 ha. of the Kızılkuyu Wildlife Development Area (existing protected area) as recorded by the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool*
- *Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into at least 50,000 ha. steppe area (declared as buffer zone) around Karacadağ Protected Area, as measured by the GEF tracking tool*
- *Number of pilot sustainable resource use activities implemented and disseminated*

The project introduces right balance between studies/strategy development at national level and concrete conservation actions in pilot area.