

# Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel

The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, administered by UNEP, advises the Global Environment Facility  
(Version 5)

## STAP Scientific and Technical screening of the Project Identification Form (PIF)

Date of screening: March 14, 2016  
Screener: Sarah Lebel  
Panel member validation by: Ralph E. Sims; Annette Cowie  
Consultant(s):

### I. PIF Information (*Copied from the PIF*)

FULL SIZE PROJECT	GEF TRUST FUND
GEF PROJECT ID:	9190
PROJECT DURATION:	5
COUNTRIES:	Uzbekistan
PROJECT TITLE:	Sustainable Management of Forests in Mountain and Valley Areas
GEF AGENCIES:	FAO
OTHER EXECUTING PARTNERS:	Main Forest Department (MFD), Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources
GEF FOCAL AREA:	Multi Focal Area

### II. STAP Advisory Response (*see table below for explanation*)

Based on this PIF screening, STAP's advisory response to the GEF Secretariat and GEF Agency(ies):  
**Minor issues to be considered during project design**

### III. Further guidance from STAP

1. STAP welcomes the FAO proposal "Sustainable Management of Forests in Mountain and Valley Areas". The project seeks to build on a number of existing projects to introduce a wide range of measures aimed at sustainable forest managements in Uzbekistan. The climate change component is to promote conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, while developing a forest assessment and monitoring system is a key goal. The project seems ambitious, and the logic of the order of the project outcomes/outputs is not clear. STAP believes the PIF would require minor revisions to support its effective implementation, both scientifically and technically.

In order to strengthen the project, STAP makes the following recommendations:

2. Land use change from agricultural land producing wheat to high value pistachio production (output 2.2.) is expected to occur before addressing issues of land tenure (currently 10-year leases) or financial incentives for farmers to change production types. For instance, in paragraph 23, it is made clear that carbon financing will take time to establish as a viable option to incentivise an increase in forest cover.
3. It seems that the approach taken lacks a clear understanding of stakeholder preferences, particularly farmers, and may lead to significant conflicts preventing the implementation of the project. STAP encourages the project developers to apply a multi-stakeholder participatory process in evaluating options and developing an implementation plan for interventions.
4. Pistachio trees take between 5-8 years to begin producing nuts, and up to 15 years to reach full production. What financial mechanisms will be put in place to ensure those long timescales do not affect the livelihoods of the intended 250 "beneficiary" farmers? Are there measures in place to ensure the re-training for farmers usually involved in livestock rearing and wheat production?
5. Keeping in mind that pistachio trees take up to 15 years to reach full production, why are climate risks only considered for the time of project implementation? It is likely that temperature will increase significantly, and precipitation decrease significantly in the areas of intervention (see IPCC AR5) by the time pistachio

trees reach full production. The tree planting density might need to be reduced to ensure sufficient water availability under climate change.

6. Note that Uzbekistan is one of the few countries that has not submitted an INDC as part of the UNFCCC process prior to the Paris COP21

7. The target is to "improve forest management" over 121,700 ha of land. Is this "improvement" to include reforestation, afforestation or just to avoid degradation from grazing livestock (Section F)? It is claimed this will sequester 3.2 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-eq as a minimum. This equates to an increased carbon stock of around 7t C per hectare. Is this on an average annual basis or the final additional carbon stock once the forests have recovered or matured? This is not clear.

8. The proposal is also lacking in any explanation of the details used when calculating such numbers other than as shown in Annex 1, so they cannot be easily verified. Reforestation of foothills currently under pasture or low yielding wheat crops would sequester 118.1 tC/ha over 20 years if growing pistachio or almond crops (page 23). This equates to 5.9 tC/ha/yr. The juniper, pistachio, and poplar forests sequester 1.9, 3.33 and 3.92 tC/ha / yr respectfully (Table on page 24). So how do these assumptions relate to the overall 7tC/ha as calculated above? Making the assumption that because only about one third of Forest Fund areas are actually covered by forests, that the remaining two thirds can be covered by forests is simplistic and perhaps naive. Are there any biophysical and climatic barriers, such as poor soils and water availability, which may prevent the expansion of forests in those areas? This is not mentioned in Annex 1.

9. Has there been any analysis made of the age class distribution and likely harvesting profile of the forest estate, and hence the impacts on releasing stored carbon over time? If not, then this needs to be undertaken in order to provide a full assessment of the true mitigation potential over time.

10. "Industrial" plantations are planned on irrigated agricultural land (page 12). Other than carbon sequestration, the benefits are stated to be protection from soil erosion and land degradation. The impact on food production is not given but it would seem to be high producing land if worthy of irrigation.

11. Firewood will be one product from activities along the Amudarya river “ but where is this firewood supply sourced from now? Is firewood demand currently resulting in deforestation?

12. The proposal mentions a close linkage to the CACILM-2 project, that seeks to build resilience of agricultural production systems. STAP encourages the project developers to apply the Resilience Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment (RAPTA) framework, which has been proposed for use in CACILM-2, to integrate resilience thinking in the project design. RAPTA is available from the STAP web site [www.stapgef.org](http://www.stapgef.org).

<i>STAP advisory response</i>	<i>Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed</i>
<b>1. Concur</b>	In cases where STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal, a simple “Concur” response will be provided; the STAP may flag specific issues that should be pursued rigorously as the proposal is developed into a full project document. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design prior to submission for CEO endorsement.
<b>2. Minor issues to be considered during project design</b>	STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to:  (i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised. (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review.  The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.
<b>3. Major issues to be</b>	STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP

<b>considered during project design</b>	<p>provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to:</p> <p>(i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required.</p> <p>The GEF Secretariat may, based on this screening outcome, delay the proposal and refer the proposal back to the proponents with STAP's concerns.</p> <p>The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement.</p>
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