

**REPORT OF THE JOINT MID-TERM EVALUATION OF
THE FAO PROJECT “TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO
THE FORESTRY PROJECT” IN ALBANIA**

(GCP/ALB/004/ITA)

by:

**Prof. Gérard BUTTOUD (FAO), mission leader
Dr. Benedetto CAVALCASELLE (Government of Italy)
Mr. Arben MOLLA (Government of Albania)**

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Acronyms used in the report

APO: Agriculture Policy Office, MAF
ASPBM: Albanian Society for Protection of Birds and Mammals
AUT-FF: Agricultural University of Tirana, Faculty of Forestry
DF: District Forest
DGFP: General Directorate for Forests and Pastures, MAF
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO-TA: FAO Technical Assistance
FD: Forest District
FMP: forest management plan
FP: Forestry Project
FPRI: Forests and Pastures Research Institute
IC: Italian Co-operation
MAF: Ministry of Agriculture and Food
NEA: National Environmental Agency
NGO: non-governmental agency
TAAP: Technical Assistance Assessment Panel
US-Aid: United States Agency for International Development
WB: World Bank

I - Executive Summary

Main findings and recommendations

Since October 1997, FAO has been implementing in Albania the GCP/ALB/004/ITA project for "Technical Assistance to the Forestry Project".

The Forestry Project (FP), jointly funded by The Government of Italy (grant) and the WB (loan), provides financial support to the Government of Albania in its efforts to move towards market economy and in implementing a new forest strategy for sustainable development of the forests and pastures. The FP is managed by a Project Management Unit (PMU). The General Directorate for Forestry and Pastures (DGFP) into the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) is responsible for carrying out the FP's State forest management, forest road rehabilitation (this component has been rolled into the forest management component in Nov. 1999), communal forests and pastures management, and protected areas management components, under contractual arrangements with PMU.

The **FAO Technical Assistance Project (FAO-TA)** has been originally established to support the technical and managerial aspects for the implementation of the FP. The overall objective of FAO-TA project is to promote long-term sustainable development. This has been achieved through supporting the FP management, and providing expert advice and training for institutional development and improved State forest management.

During the course of the FAO-TA project, expert advice has been progressively extended to the other fields as recommended by the supervision missions of the World Bank and the Government of Italy. In the meantime, DGFP has been progressively considered as the main Albanian counterpart of the activities developed into the FAO-TA project.

Justification

The project has a wide economic and social significance. The institutional capacity improvement of the forestry sector is an essential component of the project, as well as the involvement of the communes in the integrated and sustainable management of the forest and pasture resources. For the mission, there is no doubt that a technical assistance is needed in order to solve these problems.

Objectives and design

As mentioned in the project document, the FAO-TA project has the development objective “to promote long term sustainable forest management”. The immediate objectives are the following: Institutional capacity strengthening; Achievement of improved forest management and reduction of forest degradation; Promotion of nature conservation and establishment of environmental management monitoring and assessment capacities.

The objectives of the FAO- TA project have been set up based on a retranscription of the FP objectives, creating during the first year some confusion on what are the specific aspects of these objectives to be achieved through the technical assistance. The immediate objective (i) on institutional capacity strengthening is of an utmost importance, which derives from the transformation being implemented or to be implemented in Albania forest sector.

The mission considers that formulated as such, the FAO-TA objectives are clear, but seem very broad ones. It is almost certain that so broad objectives will not be achieved considering the period of implementing the FAO- TA project.

The mission has noticed that the immediate objectives and their related expected outputs and derived activities were defined separately from each other, with no reference to their possible links and connections, with as a result, the impression of a catalogue of actions to be made. The mission thinks that it has possibly led to a situation where the juxtaposition of activities was automatically promoted instead of a strategy of TA based on a sequence of intervention.

The FAO-TA project has been established for assisting another project (FP). This original status has since the very beginning generated some problems that the project has not always been able to solve completely. The mission appreciated very much the important efforts made by the FAO-TA CTA, PMU and DGFP for a better co-ordination of the project activities and for the implementation of the work plan. However a clearly defined strategy for selecting the priorities and outputs to be achieved, as well as a stronger support to the institutional development process is needed for a better coherence of the activities in the project.

Implementation

The rate of implementation of the funds is satisfactory, considering the constraints and the lower rate of implementation of the PMU budget.

Most of the activities in the project are based on international consultancies. Some of these reports do contain useful and very important recommendations, especially in the field of financial management, institutional and human resource development, and public information and communication. The mission thinks that in order to be really effective, the consultancies need to be based on both:

- a) a strong linkage between international and national consultants, the latter being trained by the former; in the technical fields where is possible to get the same technical impact and where local capacities exist based on international evaluation standards, international expertise should be substituted with national one;
- b) a strong linkage between consultancies (national and international) with counterparts members in the DGFP staff in charge of following the whole process of technical assistance.

Results

The mission noticed that the FAO-TA project had a good image in the country, and that many persons met were expressing the need for more TA. But most of the international consultancies suffer from the lack of counterparts from DGFP.

The mission considers the consultancies more as inputs brought into a capacity building process, than as a list of advices and/or technical expertise which should be followed afterwards. The actions in training are of utmost importance and they need to be increased significantly in the future.

Major factors influencing the project

The major factors affecting the project results are considered by the mission as the following:

- 1- **The FAO-TA project design** considered as IN ASSISTANCE TO ANOTHER PROJECT AND BASED ON PROVIDING TA PROPOSALS FROM INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANTS has avoided from considering TA as a **PROCESS** to be brought in partnership with national beneficiaries. This design has finally constituted a basic bottleneck for bringing TA in a so difficult issues as **INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT** which cannot be assisted in this way with sufficient results and effectiveness.
- 2- **The PMU management** makes a kind of **SCREEN BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND THE FINAL BENEFICIARIES** of the TA: the outputs of FAO-TA project are destined to national final users of proposals such as DGFP, FD and communes. The possible conflicts of competence and complicated formal and informal links between PMU and DGFP makes the procedure of bringing the TA towards the final beneficiaries very long and difficult. The mission noticed that there were significant improvements since the end of 1999 in the definition of the respective role of each body. But some problems remain for a better implementation of the project proposals.

Conclusions

In terms of project management, these factors may have negative impact on the three steps of the procedure of providing TA:

- a) There is a lack of clear and formal expression of the demand of TA from Albanian part;
- b) The present concept of TA does not facilitate the implementation of TA proposals;
- c) There is no clear validation mechanism of TA proposals made so far in order to have an effective implementation:

Recommendations

1- The need for a clear expression and formal expression of the demand of TA from Albanian part.

- Institution of a **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ASSESSMENT PANEL (TAAP) EVERY FOUR MONTHS** with report from the FAO-TA CTA on the work done so far, and proposals for actions in the future four months (discussion of ToRs, comments on CV for experts, etc).
- In case there would be a need for a continuation of the FAO-TA project after the initial period of duration, this should be considered only in case the Minister of Agriculture and Food would present an official request and statement documented with the results of an **EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE** by DGFP of the TA provided at the end of the initial period of duration of the project.

2- The need for a re-definition of TA as a process, with a strategy for establishment/dissemination of proposals and defined procedures based on partnership with national bodies.

The mission thinks that the following actions are needed:

- Reconsideration of the fields of TA to be covered, WITH **FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT** as the main expected result, and **RE-CONCENTRATION** of TA on the most initial fields of expertise (institutional capacity strengthening, forest management);
- Elaboration of a **revised workplan** for 2001 and 2002 based on a **strategy** for TA with definition of a **step-by-step sequence** and **participatory approach** and procedures; this revision should be very short, but it should lead to a strategic document and not only a catalogue of consultancies.
- **Re-consideration of expertise ToRs for each field of TA** to be covered associating systematically the following components: one international expert for methodology and training of national experts, several national experts to be trained by the former for carrying study, one counterpart in DGFP in charge of permanent follow-up of the progress in the field of TA; the international experts should be called only in case such a framework is to be effective.
- Establishment for each field of TA expertise of a **global budget, including a component from the budget managed by the FP**, in order to implement the training activities for the national staff requested by the international experts and other activities such as workshops, dissemination procedures, etc.

3- The need for an official validation mechanism of TA proposals for concrete implementation.

- The **pilot region** should be the region where the TA proposals are to be implemented in priority; the mission calls for the recruitment by PMU of a **special officer/facilitator in charge for the follow-up of the implementation of TA proposals in the pilot region**;
- The **Technical Assistance Assessment Panel** should be in charge of giving a statement as a proposal to the MAF in order to implement some of the TA proposals which are considered as relevant by all participants.

- A **national workshop on TA** will be held at the middle of the year 2002, around 6 months before the expected end of duration period of the project, associating all stakeholders and beneficiaries (including FD and communes);

Lessons learnt

As a general message to the host country, donors and FAO, the mission would finally like to recommend : to consider TA as a process, which may be long and to be planned on more than 5 years; to consider TA as a partnership, which needs to be built as such and in which the international consultancies are only one component; to avoid from designing projects as in assistance to other projects.

II – Introduction

Since October 1997, FAO has been implementing in Albania the GCP/ALB/004/ITA project for “Technical Assistance to the Forestry Project”.

As required under the terms of the agreement between the FAO and the Government of Albania and planned in the project document, a tripartite mission was intended to review the progress of the project at the mid-point of the third year. This evaluation mission has been finally postponed to November 2000, for material reasons and in order to coincide with the World Bank and FAO supervision missions planned to take place at that moment.

This mission firstly evaluates the performance and current implementation of the project, and it identifies some shortcomings in the current technical assistance. It provides recommendations to the Government of Albania, to the Government of Italy and to the FAO on the further steps necessary to consolidate progress and ensure achievement of objectives. It also makes recommendations for changes in the overall design and orientation of the project and makes detailed recommendations on the workplan changes for the remainder of the project (*see Annex n°1: Terms of reference of the mission*).

The evaluation mission included Prof. Gérard BUTTOUD, team-leader nominated by the FAO, Dr. Benedetto CAVALCASELLE for the Government of Italy, and Mr. Arben MOLLA, APO director as for the Government of Albania.

The evaluation mission spent a little more than two weeks in Albania (14-30 November 2000), meeting with most of the key persons in the forestry sector, including people at the communal level, forestry officers at various levels (districts, DGFP Headquarters) and other experts and high level decision makers (*see Annex n°2: List of places visited and key-persons met by the mission*), with as a goal to try to assess as much as possible the needs from the Albanian partners.

The mission also had access to the required documentation as basis information (*see Annex n°3: List of documents and other reference materials consulted by the mission*).

During this mission, the evaluation team got the chance to appreciate the warm, friendly hospitality of Albanian colleagues, and the fully collaborative engagement of all DGFP, PMU and FAO-TA staff members in assisting and facilitating its task.

To all staff members of these institutions, the mission is deeply indebted for their active participation, professional commitment, and kindness and helpful attitude in assisting and helping to carry out the given tasks.

The mission is particularly grateful to Prof. Lufter XHUVELI, Minister of Agriculture and Food (MAF) for giving to the mission a lot of his precious time and for actively participating into the preliminary debriefing workshop, and to Mr. Kolë MALAJ, General Director of DGFP and Mr. Haki KOLA Director of PMU, for the clear support it received from them. To the personnel of FAO-TA project, and especially to Mr. Hilmar FOELMI (CTA) and Mr. Agron HETOJA

(agricultural economist), special regards are expressed for their permanent assistance, kind hospitality and very effective logistical support. The presence in Albania at the same time of the mission of Mr. Gerhard DIETERLE (The World Bank) and of Mr. DUBE (FAO Headquarters) and Prof. Giovanni ARRU (FAO - Italy Technical Monitoring Panel), has been of a certain benefit to the mission.

The mission is also grateful to all executives of institutions, colleagues and personnel met during its visit, for their collaboration in delivering information and data about their activities and for their assistance, advice and support.

III – **B**ackground and Context

Because of a lack of domestic resources, the forestry sector in Albania requires substantial foreign financial and technical assistance.

The owners and users of forests and pastures do not succeed easily in achieving sustainable forest management, because they meet many technical, economical, social and political constraints. The forestry sector problems to be addressed have been described since 1992 and can be summarised as follows:

- unsustainable wood harvesting due to high level of illegal activities;
- degradation of the forests and pastures resources, due partly to the concentration of wood harvesting in accessible areas, but also to conflicting land-use, mainly for livestock grazing;
- under-utilised potential of revenue generation, due to inefficient organisational, infrastructure, market, processing and financial arrangements;
- ill-adapted human resource base, for adequate implementation of policies and programmes, due to the past economic history and inadequate facilities, training and research;
- environmental issues have not yet gained significant recognition, and measures on how to deal with these aspects are not established yet.

The Forestry Project (FP), jointly funded by The Government of Italy (grant) and the WB (loan), provides financial support to the Government of Albania in its efforts to move towards market economy and in implementing a new forest strategy for sustainable development of the forests and pastures.

The funds allocated are shared among five FP components:

- (i) institutional development: US\$ 5.1 million base cost;
- (ii) improved State forest management: US\$ 8.1million base cost;
- (iii) forest road rehabilitation and maintenance: US\$ 2.4 million base cost;
- (iv) management of communal forest and pasture land: US\$ 2.2 million base cost;
- (v) protected areas management: US\$ 0.4 million base cost.

As recommended by the World Bank, the FP is managed by a Project Management Unit (PMU) headed by a project director who is reporting to a Steering Committee (SC). Both PMU and SC are temporary management mechanisms established for the implementation of the FP.

The General Directorate for Forestry and Pastures (DGFP) into the MAF is responsible for carrying out the State forest management, forest road rehabilitation, communal forests and

pastures management, and protected areas management components, under contractual arrangements with PMU.

The FAO Technical Assistance Project (FAO-TA) has been originally established to support the technical and managerial aspects for the implementation of the FP, mainly through its components (i) and (ii). In the project document GCP/ALB/004/ITA signed officially by the Government of Albania in December 1996, it has been defined as a project in assistance to the FP: "Technical Assistance to the Forestry Project".

The overall objective of FAO-TA project is to promote long-term sustainable development. This has been achieved through supporting the FP management and providing expert advice and training for institutional development and improved State forest management.

During the course of the FAO-TA project, expert advice has been progressively extended to the other investment components as recommended by the supervision missions of the World Bank and the Government of Italy. In the meantime, DGFP has been progressively considered as the main Albanian counterpart of the activities developed into the FAO-TA project.

IV – **A**ssessment of Project Objectives and Design

Justification and Relevance of the Project to National Needs

The project has a wide economic and social significance.

A sound, rationale and sustainable management of forest and pasture lands resources is needed, not only for increasing the wood production perspectives in the country, but also for the improvement of the living conditions of the communities surrounding the forest areas.

However, the Government of Albania must be supported in the reforms towards market economy and particularly in establishing a revised forest strategy for a long term and sustainable management of forests and range areas.

In this framework, the *institutional capacity improvement of the forestry sector* is an essential component of the project, as well as the *involvement of the communes in the integrated and sustainable management of the forest resources*.

The forestry sector problems to be addressed are largely described in the project document, where the FAO-TA project was designed specifically to address the following issues:

- 1- lack of co-ordination between agencies/institutions involved in forestry related disciplines (environment, wood industry and trade);
- 2- weakness of the institutions related to forestry and environmental activities monitoring and evaluation;
- 3- lack of in-service training, outdated education curricula, weakness of research and training facilities;
- 4- unsuitable institutional and financial arrangements related to the forestry sector (forest revenues not reinvested into the sector, centralised functions of forest control, protection and management, etc);
- 5- reduced knowledge of multifunctional forest management planning and reduced contacts with foreign experiences in forest management planning.

For the mission, there is no doubt that a technical assistance is needed in order to solve these problems.

Objectives

Development Objective

As mentioned in the project document, the FAO-TA project has the development objective “to promote long term sustainable forest management”.

This general objective should be achieved through supporting the overall FP management, the policy and institutional development, the environmental monitoring and management, and through providing expert advice and training under components of (i) institutional development, and (ii) improved State forest management.

The mission has noticed that this development objective had been directly replicated from the development objective of the FP itself.

Immediate Objectives

The immediate objectives are the following:

- 1- Institutional capacity strengthening;
- 2- Achievement of improved forest management and reduction of forest degradation;
- 3- Promotion of nature conservation and establishment of environmental management monitoring and assessment capacities.

The mission also noticed that these formulations were directly derived from those establishing the FP immediate objectives.

The mission considers that the retranscription of the FP objectives for the FAO- TA project can have created some confusions on what are the specific aspects of these objectives to be achieved through the technical assistance. The links with the FP are not clear: who is doing what ?

The immediate objective (i) on institutional capacity strengthening is of an utmost importance, which derives from the transformation being implemented or to be implemented in Albania forest sector.

Such objectives, considering the 5 years project duration and the general situation of the forestry sector in Albania, seem to be very ambitious, and even hardly can be achieved in the scheduled period.

In particular, one of the topics foreseen in immediate objective 2 (reduction of forest degradation) is to be considered as a very long term perspective.

The mission considers that formulated as such, the FAO-TA objectives are clear, but seem very broad ones. It is almost certain that so broad objectives will not be achieved considering the period of implementing the FAO- TA project.

The related expected outputs are precisely defined in the project document:

- 1- improved financial and administrative management expertise of the DGFP; forestry related financial activities are: preparation of DGFP's regular budget; the operations of the revenue account; the financial provisions of the FP.
- 2- formulation of a strategy for environmentally sound development and sustainable utilisation of forests and pastures taking into consideration socio-economic aspects.
- 3- improved financial management expertise of the communes with respect to forest and pasture management.
- 4- adequate legislation to include relevant market economy, sustainable forestry and nature conservation aspects.
- 5- upgraded capacity of the Forest Technicians School of Shkodra in training future forestry technicians in market economy, environment and biodiversity conservation.
- 6- improved organisation structure of forest agencies involved in forest management planning and enhanced capacity for more efficiency in forest and pasture management.
- 7- improved forest management planning capacity to establish and implement multipurpose forest management plans.
- 8- Increased awareness on forest management methods and possible public participation.
- 9- Established institutional structure and capacity to implement mitigation measures and to monitor the environment.
- 10- Nature conservation in forest areas promoted in accordance with a sustainable forest management.
- 11- Socio-economic and environmental monitoring system established for communal forests and pastures that are managed through a participatory process on a multi-purpose basis.

The project outputs are not always clearly stated. Some of the immediate objectives should be rather considered as long-term objectives or mid-term objectives, and some of the outputs are in fact mid-term objectives.

The mission has also noticed that the immediate objectives and their related expected outputs and derived activities were defined in a systematic way and independently one from the others, without reference to their possible links and connections, with as a result, the impression of a catalogue of actions to be carried out.

The mission thinks that this has possibly led to a situation where the juxtaposition of activities was automatically promoted, instead of a strategy of TA based on a sequence of intervention.

The mission also noticed that a general implementation workplan was not attached to the project document, as it is usually done for the FAO projects and this probably affected the project implementation during the first year.

During the tripartite review of the project, carried out at the end of 1999, some adjustments of the future activities were decided, based on the conclusions of the FP Mid Term Review as follows:

- 1- In accordance with the project activities proposed in the original document, continue general management support to PMU and PEMU and technical support to the DGFP, including: data management, forest management planning, policy and institutional development, legal aspects, marketing strategies and pricing policies, forest and pasture sector strategies, support the development of technical competence at the Forest Technical School of Shkodra, public education and media campaign, monitoring and evaluation.
- 2- Support the DGFP, and the forest sector in general, in the transfer of State forests to communal forests; this activity could also include the co-ordination of extension services.
- 3- Support the development of a comprehensive human resources development plan in relation to the implementation of the new institutional organisation and forestry sector strategy.
- 4- Provide support to the forest management and road rehabilitation components and incorporate environmental expertise as required.
- 5- Intensify input into the design and execution of the public education component.
- 6- Provide increased input and co-ordination support into the training component, budget permitting.
- 7- Assist the FPRI in the development of a research programme responsive to the needs of the FP.

Accordingly, the FAO-TA CTA, PMU and DGFP discussed together and prepared a new workplan covering the period from 1st February 2000 to 30th September 2002.

The workplan started to be implemented and many of the field activities and consultancies planned for the year 2000 (i.e. support to FPRI, forest management plans, forestry sector strategy study, environmental monitoring, institutions and human resources development, GIS development, communication/public awareness campaign, Forestry school improvement) were based on it.

The proposed activities reflect project requirements until its scheduled completion. These project needs have been discussed and agreed upon with the stakeholders of the FP. The mission recognises that the workplan is consistent with the overall FP objectives and increasingly involves national experts and encourages the development of national capacities and expertises.

As far as the implementation of the workplan is concerned, it seems to the mission that both the institutional strengthening process and the improved State management component are going on but very slowly and not accordingly to the schedule foreseen in this workplan.

THE MISSION APPRECIATED VERY MUCH THE IMPORTANT EFFORTS MADE BY THE FAO-TA CTA, PMU AND DGFP FOR A BETTER CO-ORDINATION OF THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PLAN.

However a clearly defined strategy for selecting the priorities and outputs to be achieved, as well as a stronger support to the institutional development process is needed for a better coherence of the activities in the project.

Quality of Project Formulation and Design

The FAO-TA project has been established for assisting another project (FP). This original status has since the very beginning generated some problems that are not yet completely solved.

A major problem is the existence in the forestry field of two public bodies, DGFP and PMU, whose responsibilities may be clearly defined in principle, but which carry out some actions in competition.

Certainly, DGFP is the major correspondent in the activities of FAO-TA project, because DGFP is the implementing administrative structure of the Government of Albania, and most of the advices from FAO-TA project have to be directed to it. The mission has noticed that the FAO-TA CTA was playing the role of special adviser of the general director of DGFP, with a consensus of the effectiveness of this task.

But the FAO-TA project needs also to report to PMU, and the implementation of TA proposals need to be funded by PMU.

The lack of effectiveness of PMU in the way the decision making for funding activities is developed, has been one of the bottlenecks in the process of transfer of TA in Albania forest sector.

Since December 1999, some progress have been made in order to co-ordinate the role of the various bodies (PMU, DGFP, FAO-TA), but the mission considers that the situation is far from being completely clarified. For instance PMU carries out TA actions separately from FAO-TA project. This situation does not contribute to a coherent strategy in the forestry sector.

As a second consequence of this status of assistance to another project, the mission pointed out a restricted view of what the beneficiaries of the project are.

The beneficiaries of the FAO-TA project are defined in the project document as mainly State institutions.

At the moment the project document was prepared, there was no clear identification of the effective role that the communities living around the forests areas can play for a sustainable forest management. Such communities are considered in the project document as only indirect beneficiaries of the project.

As a consequence, there was a lack of strategy in identifying the actions needed for getting them involved in the activities foreseen for implementing the project (i.e. participation not only in planting trees in the communal forests, but also in thinning and pruning the State forests in order to get more benefits from the forestry activities).

The project should give more direct response to the socio-economic problems to be addressed, that were very much stressed as objectives, but taken into consideration in a rather marginal way in the rest of the project document.

Considering the project design, the mission wonders in addition whether the large core of international consultancies planned for a rather short period is the right way to address the issue of TA, especially when difficult fields of expertise such as institutional development are considered.

These consultancies might have been more appropriately spread over a longer period (8-10 years), linking the presence of the international expert to the presence of national consultants and facilitators working in the same respect for a longer period.

The mission is convinced that if TA had been considered as a process based on evolution of human resources development, this solution would have provided a more sustainable and also cost-effective answer to the country needs.

V – **A**ssessment of Project Implementation, Efficiency and Management

Project Budget and Expenditures

According to the last statements (22 November 2000), the project expenditures and commitments up to now are about 36% less than foreseen in the project document at the end of the third activity year (1,808,848 US\$).

This is due to many reasons, including the followings:

- three CTAs were hired during the last three years;
- some of the consultancies (i.e. institutional development) were delayed due to the unavailability of the consultant initially selected;
- the delay occurred in the implementation of the field activities, strictly linked to the slow and time consuming implementation of the activities foreseen in the FP;
- constraints related to the unclear communication lines established during the first two years of activity between the CTA, the PMU and DGFP directors; in particular the delivery rate for the components equipment, supply and training in September 1998 was about 40% less than foreseen in the project document, but was adequately increased during the period October 1998-November 1999. The component “experts and international consultants” (including expenditures and commitment) up to November 2000 is reaching a level which is about 30% less than initially foreseen in the project budget at the end of the third year of activity.

Activities and Outputs

Most of the activities in the project are based on international consultancies.

The progress made so far by FAO-TA consultancy fields are summarised as follows (*see also Annex n°4: Progress made so far in achieving expected consultancies outputs*):

Financial management principles and procedures:

About five persons-months during six periods were carried out for this project component from August 1998 to October 2000, the last mission (Oct. 2000) being considered as a backstopping mission on the financial management of the FP and TA project. The total period devoted to such consultancy (six months) is shorter than foreseen in the TA project document (ten months), but in line with the implementation rate and with the needs of the FP.

The mission noticed that the financial management and principles were clearly identified (especially for the financial management of the DGFP revenue account, information flow and the agreement between DGFP and PMU for the implementation of FP), and that the recommendations issued have been implemented (except the recommendation dealing with the revision of the Revenue Account law), but that the implementation of regulation concerning the communal forests and pastures is suspended due to the decision of DGFP to create a specific directorate in charge of this sector.

The mission thinks that the lack of economic justification and data to support the establishment of a forest corporation makes it logic and technically acceptable to drop such an idea, proceeding however in DGFP restructuring in such a way that in the future, in case the circumstances will justify it, it will be possible to extrapolate the commercial part and create a market-oriented organisation.

DGFP Financial and Marketing Directorate showed remarkable improvement in co-operating with the international consultant in implementing the recommendations and is fully participating into the restructuring exercise.

The mission suggests that the next mission of the international financial expert takes place only after the new organisational structure will be in place and effectively functioning according to the international organisational standard.

Institutional development consultancies:

In this field, a large amount of expertise (more than five persons-months) was carried out and relevant proposals have been made so far, especially for institutional management approaches and the duties and responsibilities of three different hierarchy levels of forest administration with relevant job descriptions, and for human resources development and enhancing the role of Forest and Pasture Research Institute.

In June 1999, a first mission proposed a framework for strengthening forestry institutions and suggested a preliminary set of training activities. In 2000, two missions conclude to a complete revised framework of activities for a better involvement of FPRI in playing a direct advisory role in forestry development, especially for the implementation of FMP. Four missions have been also devoted to the assistance to the Forest Technical School of Shkodra, resulting in the proposal for a new design of the forest programme which is not yet implemented. Two additional consultancies related to the implementation of the Albanian Forestry and Pasture Sector Strategy identified the strategical needs and priorities. A last consultancy took place in Oct-Nov 2000 on reorganisation of DGFP in the framework of the decentralisation process and related needs in human resources. A series of additional missions is planned in this field.

The evaluation mission considers this field as of utmost importance, which should have been covered earlier and in a more coherent way, better linking the steps of strategy, the planning of DGFP activities and the reorganisation of structure and information/formation.

A complete comprehensive and concrete programme should be developed in this respect.

In order to benefit in the most efficient way of the suggestions given by the consultants according to the needs of the country, the mission proposes as a first step that a joint seminar/workshop will be organised with DGFP and PMU staff on this field, with the aim of giving a coherent view of what is to be done in this field in the next years, and clarifying the actions to be implemented in priority as concern forest policy and institutional reforms. This should lead to plan a more relevant set of future consultancies shifted to more specified identified needs (i.e. community forestry, decentralisation, gender issues, etc.).

Monitoring and evaluation consultancies:

Three missions of international consultants were organised on such a field in 1999, with a first expert in charge of designing the management information system and the workplan for the PMU staff. But the implementation of the related proposals were delayed by PMU, and a third mission with a new expert brought different conclusions, which have not been implemented so far. Finally the staff recruited is not operational yet.

The mission considers that it is urgent to get out of this confusion, and to state definitively what will be the procedure for monitoring and evaluation of the FP. A clear statement from PMU is rapidly needed in order to define clear ToRs for a new -and final- consultancy which should conclude on the whole monitoring system and workplan.

Forest management planning consultancies:

Seven international consultancies were carried out during the period 1997-November 2000 for a total of about six persons/months. The main outputs up to now are:

- preparation (in English and Albanian) of a manual for forest management plan (FMP) implementation,
- set-up of a data processing system at the project management unit,
- set-up of reporting systems for the technicians and the private companies which are implementing the FMP,
- training of the national staff concerned with the implementation of the FMP at central and peripheral levels (including also the staff of the private companies involved in the FMP preparation).

A total of 56 FMP was planned for all the State forest economies: the process of FMP preparation and implementation is much longer than foreseen and at the moment for 13 of them the field work is completed (with the final data set-up checked in the project processing system), while the final data for 11 additional ones are going to be completed shortly. However, the implementation process is slower than initially foreseen and only two are now in the process to be approved, while for ten of them a contract was signed between DGFP and the contractor companies but a final approval is still needed from the PMU.

The mission considers that the implementation process is too long and needs to be improved. Especially the design of the improved guidelines for FMP is a too much prolonged exercise.

The mission wonders whether it is useful at this step to continue the missions if there is no strong message from DGFP in implementing the process more actively.

Data management consultancies:

Four international consultancies were organised from Nov. 1998 to May 1999 for a total amount of 3.5 persons-months. Standard forms were prepared as well as a practical guide for draft map production. The forms are now used in FMP design and the processing of field forms data is computerised with the assistance of FAO-TA national consultant. Additional expertise was carried out on GIS from May to Oct. 2000.

These missions resulted in a proposal of the design for a global approach of MIS and GIS which is still to be implemented by the forest sector stakeholders.

Public education and communication consultancies:

The international expertise on public education campaign has started with some delay, at the end of 1999. In opposition to what had been proposed initially in accordance with DGFP, the expert did not have for the work a counterpart in DGFP. The related specialist proposed at the end of the first mission: a) the setting-up of a Communication/information Unit into DGFP, b) the preparation of a national communication strategy, and c) the implementation of an information/communication workplan. As none of these proposal were implemented so far, the second mission was devoted to the direct elaboration by the international expert of the strategy and the related workplan.

The third mission, developed in November 2000, has been concerned with the production of basic documents for information/communication, including training module, special information letter and mediatisation of the DGFP activities.

As a consequence, the mission realised that in the field of communication/information, a lot of material and proposals have been already prepared by the international expert (especially for the public information and communication strategy and national plan for public awareness campaign), but the lack of counterpart from DGFP in such a strategic and also symbolic field, is really problematic. During the period the mission was in Albania, the decision has been taken by DGFP for the funding of the related activities of producing the related material.

As far as there is no decisive involvement of DGFP in the field of communication, the mission expresses some doubts on the possibilities to reach the objectives of the ToR for a complete public awareness campaign (schools and media). The mission wants to stress the particular relevance and quality of this expertise, but the mission got the impression of a rather passive role of PMU in promoting this project component. The mission was informed of the willingness of the World Bank and Government of Italy to strongly support this component with adequate funding.

Legal consultancies:

Two international consultancies were carried out in 1998 and 1999, for a total amount of one person-month. Legal recommendations and advises have been made in drafting the

agreement between PMU and DGFP for FP implementation. This agreement has been confirmed and signed. The legal expert also reviewed the problems related to the forest legislation in Albania, and made some proposals in order to improve the situation. DGFP is now evaluating the institutional and legal needs of the future administration.

The mission wonders whether it would not have been more relevant to address legal issues in coherence with a general framework of institutional development and as a following consequence of the elaboration of the national strategy for forest and pastures, after some analysis of the institutional changes required by the processes of decentralisation and transfer of use management to forest communes.

As general comments on the issue of these consultancies, the mission would emphasise the following points:

- since the beginning of the project, 74 persons-months in international expertise on 120 planned (the initial input of 132 persons-months of international expertise was revised to 120 in response to the mid-term review of the FP), have been used in the project. It is necessary to bring consultancies from abroad in giving some directions and methodologies to be discussed for the implementation at the level of Albanian forestry.

Some of these reports do contain useful and very important recommendations, especially in the field of financial management, institutional and human resource development, and public information and communication.

In the other fields, some reports are just continuation and reproduction with minor adjustments of the previous missions reports, or also prolongation of their assignments without providing an end to the process. Some missions were not always based on a strong co-operation with national experts.

The planning of these consultancies should better take into account the following:

- a) There should be a better balance between the consultancies and the other activities of the project (especially training); in this respect, more strict contacts with PMU would allow probably to allocate the resources needed for the implementation of in-service training courses on specific subject matters (i.e.: forest management, forest protection, pasture land improvement) both at central and peripheral level.***
- b) A better balance should be found between national and international consultants, in order to bring national specialists more in line with the new methods and approaches to be developed in the sector.***

In addition to the international consultants, some national experts and consultants have also been engaged. Some of them did a real good job, especially for economic and silviculture studies, natural resources management, and also for training and data base structuring. But some of the national inputs were not implemented at a satisfactory level.

Some missions suffered from a lack of counterpart from the Albanian part. As an example of this situation, the last two missions on monitoring and evaluation were overlapping with each other, because of a confusing position from PMU.

Most of these international consultancies suffer from the lack of counterparts from DGFP.

In many cases, the international experts carry out their work seriously, and the mission would like to recognise the high level of expertise which has been provided this way.

But the fact that this work is done separately from the Albanian staff and institutions may lead to advices which can be unknown (lack of transfer), or at least misunderstood by the DGFP staff or/and unadapted to the local situation (too complicated tools and methods).

The mission thinks that in order to be really effective, the consultancies need to be based on both:

- a) a strong linkage between international and national consultants, the latter being trained by the former; in the technical fields where is possible to get the same technical impact and where local capacities exist based on the international evaluation standards, international expertise should be substituted with national one;***
- b) a strong linkage between consultancies (national and international) with counterparts members in the DGFP staff in charge of following the whole process of technical assistance.***

Other activities

The FAO-TA project has carried out other activities such as training.

Except for the management plan expertise, the mission did not see clearly the link between these activities and the consultancies.

The mission considers the difficulties to implement a training process for various aspects of the foresters' activities. But the mission thinks that these actions in training are of utmost importance which needs to be increased significantly in the future.

Process

As it was planned in the project document, the project implemented various consultancies on different fields which required special expertise.

The mission did not see clearly, in the implementation of the project, the link existing between these various expertises which have been carried out separately.

Each of these consultancies is defined with a strong immediate specific rationale, but there is an apparent lack of global concern about the way each of them is linked to the other ones.

In addition, the mission expresses its concern about the delay with which the issue of the institutional capacity strengthening has been addressed in the project.

The mission recognises that this process is important but very difficult to be managed, as it is under the control of the Government of Albania only.

But this issue is a real central one, which should not be addressed separately from the other project components, but as the basic logical frame linking all of them. As carried out so far the mission does not see this frame taken into consideration adequately in the project process. The issue of institutional development needs to be addressed by the project in a more comprehensive and concrete way.

As a final general issue to be addressed, the mission considers the consultancies more as inputs brought into a capacity building process, than as a list of advises and/or technical expertises which should be followed afterwards.

Government Support

The support to be provided by the Albanian Government was mainly in respect to the office space allocation and meeting room facilities for conferences and workshops as well as appointing counterpart staff to the international and national experts/consultants.

The new Government authorities did allocate in early February 1999 the required office space in the same building where both DGFP and PMU were shortly to be transferred. With regard to the arrangements for the meeting room facilities, the authorities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food always were and are willing to put at disposal of the FAO-TA project, whenever they need, the conference room and other facilities that the Ministry itself has.

During the mission:

- the General Director of DGFP has expressed several times to the mission a very clear statement on the need for a TA in the forestry field;
- the mission has experimented for itself a very strong support from the MAF, especially from the Minister himself who participated very actively in some part of the mission, at a moment when his agenda was fully busy.

Project Management

During the two first years, the project management was affected from the changes of the CTAs, and from the unclear links foreseen in the project document between the CTA, PMU and DGFP Directors.

The co-operation between the project and some other situations dealing with the forestry sector (i.e. the Faculty of Forestry Sciences, at Tirana University, the Forest and Pasture Research Institute, USAID Project on private forests) were quite satisfactory since the very beginning.

At the end of the second year of activity, a tripartite review took place and following its recommendations, the project management was improved, as better institutional relationship and links were established with PMU and DGFP.

A good example of this joint preparation of the workplan from February 2000 to September 2002, carried out by the CTA working in strict co-operation with both PMU and DGFP.

The recipient government authorities (APO which is the governmental body within MAP responsible for the co-ordination of the projects and programmes in the agriculture field) is to be provided periodically by the CTA of FAO-TA project with six months progress reports, annual reports and other technical reports. So far, APO has been provided only with missions reports of some international experts/consultants, and with the workplan 2000.

According to the modalities of the project document of FAO-TA project as well as following subsequent missions from the FAO Headquarters and the tri-partite meeting of Nov. 1999, the beneficiary of the TA to be provided is DGFP while APO within the MAF is the co-ordinating body at ministerial level.

FAO-TA project adjusted its technical assistance to the needs of the Albanian forest sector, but APO has not been made aware of these adjustments. Different international and national consultants were engaged under FAO-TA project and no previous agreement or opinion has been asked from APO.

The link between the project and APO should be consolidated in the future.

The mission thinks that there was during the last year a significant progress in solving the problems of competition between DGFP and PMU, from which a TA strategy should benefit in the future. APO could play in the future a key and essential role for further progress in this respect.

Technical and Operational Backstopping

The mission states that the backstopping of the project as defined has brought good results and allowed good progress in project evolution. The supervision missions have been carried out regularly and effectively, and they all can be considered as an effective concrete support to CTA's activities.

The mission noticed the effectiveness of FAO-TA project in taking into consideration the results of the supervision and mid-term review missions carried out for the PMU activities.

As an example of this, the new workplan for 2000-02 has been established for implementing the proposals for TA included into the mid-term review of FP.

This shows the dynamism of the FAO-TA management which tries to adhere as much as possible to real needs and recommendations.

VI – **A**ssessment of Results and Effectiveness

Effects and Impact

The mission noticed that the FAO-TA project had a good image in the country, and that many persons met were expressing the need for more TA.

Certainly, various ideas may differ on the issue of how to proceed to bring and disseminate TA, but there is a large consensus for attributing a huge role to technical assistance.

Three years is not a long enough period of time to deeply analyse which are the concrete effects of a project dealing with changes in mentalities, which usually are slow and difficult to measure through objective criteria and indicators. The mission however is convinced that the actions carried out through FAO-TA project will have effects and impacts that cannot be evaluated precisely at the present.

During the three years of implementation of the FAO-TA project, the activities of the project were mainly based on the production of consultants' reports.

The mission noticed that only few of the findings and recommendations from TA consultants were followed with implementation, and some of them were not taken into consideration for action at all.

The analysis of the causes of such a situation is rather difficult to be carried out considering the short time allocated to the mission, because the persons asked by the mission members have opposite opinions on such a topic.

A better understanding of the existence of the bottlenecks should make more differences between the cases when:

- the expertise was not correctly expressed for a concrete implementation by the beneficiaries;
- the results of the expertise were not accepted by the beneficiaries for reasons related to their content or external (side) reasons;
- the results of the expertise were not able to be taken into account by the beneficiaries.

But this statement should be considered as the major one of this report on which base further improvements in the project development.

Sustainability and Environmental Impacts of Results

Environmental impacts of the project are positive, in the sense that all the actions are carried out with as a basic idea to increase the awareness of the beneficiaries in the necessity of implementation of a sustainable forest management.

Considering the sustainability of the project itself, the mission is convinced that this topic should be more considered in the future actions, through development of training activities and co-operation with national experts/consultants and counterparts.

Gender Equity in Project Implementation and Results

As formulated and implemented so far, the issue of gender equity has not been considered at all in the project.

This is probably due to the fact that the beneficiaries were defined as institutions only.

The mission would like to emphasis this issue, expressing the view that institutions such as DGFP should work in order to serve local people surrounding forests which are the forest users; this gender issue should be taken into more consideration, especially in case the decentralisation and the promotion of communal development through forest uses management and forestry activity would play a more important role in the future.

Cost – Effectiveness

Up to now, FAO-TA project is carrying out the actions planned in the project document and its revised workplan, in conformity with the financial requirements.

One issue may be raised by the mission in this respect.

Considering the slow implementation of the TA proposals, the mission is convinced that a better cost-effectiveness in the future should proceed from a more strict evaluation of some expertises and their complement and even substitution with national consultancies.

Major Factors Affecting the Projects Results

The major factors affecting the project results are considered by the mission as the following ones:

A) INTERNAL FACTOR:

The FAO-TA project design considered as IN ASSISTANCE TO ANOTHER PROJECT AND BASED ON PROVIDING TA PROPOSALS FROM INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANTS has avoided from considering TA as a **PROCESS** to be brought in partnership with national beneficiaries. This design has finally constituted a basic bottleneck for bringing TA in a so difficult issue as **INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT** which cannot be assisted this way with sufficient results and effectiveness.

B) EXTERNAL FACTOR:

The PMU management makes a kind of **SCREEN** BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND THE FINAL BENEFICIARIES of the TA: the outputs of FAO-TA project are destined to national final users of proposals such as DGFP, FD and communes. The possible conflicts of competence and complicated formal and informal links between PMU and DGFP make the procedure of bringing the TA towards the final beneficiaries very long and difficult.

VII – **C**onclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

a) There is a lack of clear and formal expression of the demand of TA from Albanian part:

During the first years of the project, there was no clear demand for TA expressed by national bodies, and the mission got the feeling that most of the consultancies defined were based on external assumptions on what was needed in Albania. Since the end of 1999, the situation has been improved and it is more clear now who is in position to express some needs in terms of TA. This is now mainly the role of DGFP. DGFP expresses during the evaluation mission its views on the procedures to be carried out for a better elaboration of TA proposals which could be more in line with national needs: DGFP asks for a better involvement of national consultants and for a motivation procedure in order to promote the work of national counterparts in DGFP. But DGFP does not express so far a real concern on how to implement concretely such proposals.

b) The present concept of TA does not facilitate the implementation of TA proposals:

The elaboration of most of the proposals by international consultancies only does not contribute to an easy implementation at the local level. Any TA message needs to be translated in terms compatible with the local culture and background, at the national first, but then at the district and communes level. At each step of the process, the TA proposals need to be re-transcribed and re-formulated in order to reach common understanding, and so effectiveness in concrete implementation. The FAO-TA project proposals as they have been elaborated so far cannot reach easily the beneficiaries without organising a real process of dissemination which is part of the process to be established.

c) There is no clear validation mechanism of TA proposals made so far in order to have an effective implementation:

As a result of this bottleneck, there is no clear decision taken by any structure on the implementation of the conclusions of the international consultants' expertise. The recommendations from the experts are received just as proposals by various bodies (DGFP, PMU) and not disseminated correctly to the actors who could be the final beneficiaries of

these (i.e. FD, communes). Without any mechanism for validation of these proposals, they stay at the level of reports, and the immediate objective of providing proposals is achieved, but without any chance to result at the final step in an effective TA useful for forestry development action.

Recommendations

The mission general recommendations are directly derived from the former conclusions.

1- ***The need for a clear and formal expression of the demand of TA from Albanian part.***

The mission has taken into consideration the progress made so far in this respect, and proposes the following:

- institution of a **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ASSESSMENT PANEL (TAAP) EVERY 4 MONTHS** (3 times a year) with report from the FAO-TA CTA on the work done so far, and proposals for precise actions in the future 4 months (discussion of ToR, comments on CV for experts, etc.); the TAAP should include: General Director of DGFP, DGFP counterparts as advisers, Director of forestry regional office of the pilot region, APO Director, PMU Director, FAO-TA CTA and facilitator. Minutes should be formally established in both languages under the responsibility of the FAO-TA CTA and conclusions submitted to the Minister of Agriculture and Food for ratification (for those that ask for support from the World Bank/Italy-financed FP) or approval (for those that stand on the side of Albanian government authorities). The panel will also be in charge of taking care for the diffusion and dissemination of the mission reports in the regional and districts levels of forest administration.

- in case there would be a need for a continuation of the FAO-TA project after the initial period of duration, this should be considered only in case the Minister of Agriculture and Food would present an **official request and statement documented with the results of an evaluation of the implementation procedure by DGFP** of the TA provided at the end of the initial period of duration of the project.

In this framework, the FAO-TA CTA is encouraged:

- a) to improve the communication process among the project stakeholders at central and peripheral levels in order to get them more deeply involved in the project activities, and ensure a closer co-operation with APO.

- b) to base the engagement of international expertise on specific demands expressed officially by DGFP, rather than considering them as a simple result from the workplan that usually does not foresee all subsequent changes;

- c) to carry out in the Technical Assistance Assessment Panel a strict evaluation/validation of national and international consultancies, which should be suspended for not complying with the expertise's technical requirements and with initial expected results;

- d) to consolidate in the future the link between the project and APO.

2- The need for a re-definition of TA as a process, with a strategy for establishment/dissemination of proposals and defined procedures based on partnership with national bodies.

The mission thinks that the following actions are needed:

- reconsideration of the fields of TA to be covered, WITH **FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT** as the main expected result, and **RE-CONCENTRATION** of TA on the most initial fields of expertise (institutional capacity building and forest management); the mission realises that this proposal may be seen as opposite to the recommendations made so far by the FP mid-term review in 1999, but the mission considers that no significant progress has been made in PMU management, so that it is impossible to get a better effectiveness and efficiency of TA in continuing such a way.

- elaboration of a **revised workplan** for 2001 and 2002 based on a **strategy** for TA with definition of a **step-by-step sequence** and **participatory approach** and procedures; this revision should be very short, but it should lead to a strategic document and not only a catalogue of consultancies.

- **re-consideration of expertise ToR for each field of TA** to be covered associating systematically the following components: 1 international expert for methodology and training of national experts, several national experts to be trained by the former for carrying study, 1 counterpart in DGFP in charge of permanent follow-up of the progress in the field of TA; the international experts should be called only in case such a framework is to be effective. The FAO-TA CTA should play an active role in achieving this objective in co-operation with DGFP staff.

- establishment for each field of TA expertise of a **global budget, including a component from the budget managed by the FP**, in order to implement the training activities for the national staff requested by the international experts and other activities such as workshops, dissemination procedures, etc.

In this framework, the FAO-TA CTA is encouraged to:

a) revise the workplan 2000 in order to give more importance and coherence to the TA on institutional capacity strengthening;

b) insist with the governmental agency that counterparts should be available and ready to co-operate with the international experts during all their consultancy period, and responsible for the follow-up of the activities suggested and agreed upon during the consultancies;

c) participate directly in the selection process of the national counterparts (ask for their curricula, make short interviews, etc) dealing with the project activities;

d) in co-ordination with DGFP and APO, promote and strengthen the national professional capacities by increasing the amount of national consultancies and expertise, considering when it is possible and after training and evaluation, the national resource persons as substitutes of international ones, for a better cost-effectiveness in the future;

- e) keep more frequent contacts with the field reality as the project is now implementing many activities in the pilot area, and try to get more feed-back from the stakeholders implementing the project at the peripheral level;
- f) plan the next mission of the international financial expert only after the new organisational structure will be in place and effectively functioning according to the international organisational standard;
- g) set up a complete comprehensive and concrete programme of TA on institutional capacity strengthening with as a first step a joint seminar/workshop to be organised with DGFP and PMU staff.

3 - The need for an official validation mechanism of TA proposals for concrete implementation.

The mission recommends the following actions:

- the **pilot region** should be the region where the AT proposals are to be implemented in priority; ; the mission calls for the recruitment by PMU of a **special officer/facilitator in charge of follow-up of the implementation of TA proposals in the pilot region.**
- the **Technical Assistance Assessment Panel** should be in charge of formulating and presenting a proposal to the MAF in order to implement some of the TA proposals which are considered as relevant by all participants; this proposal should include the procedural arrangements by DGFP and the funding requirements addressed to PMU.
- a **national workshop on TA** will be held at the middle of the year 2002, around 6 months before the expected end of duration period of the project, associating all stakeholders and beneficiaries (including FD and communes);

In this framework, the FAO-TA CTA is encouraged to:

- a) ask DGFP for an effective active support to the proposals presented by the communication expert and to the forest management expert, and insist for the concrete implementation and follow-up of these proposals.
- b) intensify the input in the institutional development and professional capacity building such as human resource management, further training and qualification, public information and communication, and submit to the Technical Assistance Assessment Panel all related proposals for its review and approval.
- c) ask for the recruitment by PMU of a special forest officer/facilitator in charge of follow-up of the implementation of TA proposals in the pilot region.

General recommendations to the Albanian Government

As the Albanian side is involved in the project implementation through three bodies (DGFP, APO, PMU), unexpected side effects may be observed.

In order to reduce such effects, which are reducing the effectiveness of the project implementation process, it is strongly recommended to the Government of Albania to:

- a) improve the co-ordination within the above-mentioned organisations and persons; clearly defining the respective tasks and roles; especially clarify the procedures for monitoring of PMU;
- b) accelerate the implementation of the project at the central level;
- c) implement more rapidly the decentralisation process;
- d) organise in a more coherent way at peripheral level both the State forest and the communal forests components with the project support;
- e) create as soon as possible a replicable model of sustainable forest and pasture land management in the pilot area;
- f) pay a special attention to gender issues, especially in the process of transfer of forestry uses to communes.

General recommendations to FAO Headquarters

The mission recommends to the FAO Headquarters to:

- a) insist for a better consideration of gender issues in the process of institutional reform in the forestry sector of Albania;
- b) take all initiatives in order to promote the creation of the Technical Assistance Assessment Panel;
- c) assist the FAO-TA project for promoting all actions related to training which need to be increased significantly in the future.

General recommendation to the Government of Italy

As concerns the donor, it can be wondered whether the results achieved up to now by both projects are in line with the expectations of the Italian Government that fully supported the FAO component of the project and contributed also with a grant of US\$ 8.5 millions to the World Bank Forestry Project.

Several reasons were probably limiting the effectiveness of the Italian grants:

- the unclear identification of the TA project objectives, priorities, expected outputs and links between the actions needed to reach such objectives;
- the under-estimation of some major components for rural development in the country, such as for instance the communal forests and the needs for a direct assistance to the local population in sustainable forest use and management;
- the difficulties related to a clear definition of tasks and management roles inside the two projects, and their difficult co-ordination.

Based on these considerations, it is recommended to the donor to state whether the solution adopted (funding two projects aiming at supporting Albanian forest sector and implemented by two agencies acting independently) is a way to proceed which is both effective for the

implementation of the projects, and coherent with the strategy of the donor for the co-operation activities in the forestry sector.

VIII – **L**essons learned

As a general message to the host country, the donor and the FAO, the mission would finally like to recommend :

- a) to consider TA as a process, which may be long and to be planned on more than five years;**
- b) to consider TA as a partnership, which needs to be built as such and in which the international consultancies are only one component;**
- c) when funding future projects of this kind, the donor should avoid from designing projects as in assistance to other projects.**

Most of the bottlenecks created in the related project seem to be derived from such situations.

Annexes

<i>Annex n°1: Terms of References</i>	<i>p. 31</i>
<i>Annex n°2: List of places visited and key-persons met by the mission</i>	<i>p. 37</i>
<i>Annex n°3: List of documents and other reference materials consulted by the mission..</i>	<i>p. 40</i>
<i>Annex n°4. Progress made so far in achieving expected consultancies outputs</i>	<i>p. 41</i>

Annex n° 1

Terms of Reference

09 October 2000

Terms of Reference for a Joint Mid-Term Evaluation Mission by Government of Italy (Donor), FAO and (Host) Government of Albania

1. Background

The project document GCP/ALB/004/ITA – Technical Assistance to the Albanian Forestry Project (TA) was officially signed by the host government in December 1996. The Albanian Forestry Project, jointly financed by the World Bank and the Italian Government, entails the five following investment components:

- A - Institutional Development* (\$5.1 million base cost including \$2.95 million in grant funded technical assistance).
- B - Improved State Forest Management* (\$8.1 million base cost).
- C – Forest Road Rehabilitation and Maintenance* (\$2.4 million base cost).
- D - Management of Communal Forest and Pasture Areas* (\$2.2 million base cost).
- E - Protected Areas Management* (\$0.4 million base cost).

The TA has the objective to promote long term sustainable forest management. This is being achieved through supporting the overall Forestry Project management, the policy and institutional development, the environmental monitoring and management, and through providing expert advice and training under the above-mentioned investment components of (A) institutional development and (B) improved State Forest management, but progressively extending expert advice to the other investment components as recommended by supervision missions of the World Bank and the Government of Italy. The immediate objectives and outputs are:

Immediate Objectives:

1. Institutional Capacity Strengthening.
2. Achievement of improved forest management and reduction of forest degradation.
3. Promotion of nature conservation and establishment of environmental management monitoring, and assessment capacities.

Expected Outputs:

Technical support for the WB Albanian Forestry project, in particular:

1. Improved financial and administrative management expertise of the DGFP. Forestry related financial activities are (i) preparation of DGFP's regular budget; (ii) the operations of the Revenue Account; and (iii) the financial provisions of the Forestry Project.
2. Formulation of a strategy for environmentally sound development and sustainable utilization of forests and pastures taking into consideration socio-economic aspects.
3. Improved financial management expertise of the communes with respect to forest and pasture management.
4. Adequate legislation to include relevant market economy, sustainable forestry, and nature conservation aspects.
5. Upgraded capacity of the Forest Technicians School of Shkodra in training future forestry technicians in market economy, environment, and biodiversity conservation.
6. Improved organizational structure of forest agencies involved in forest management planning and enhanced capacity for more efficiency in forest and pasture management.
7. Improved forest management planning capacity to establish and implement multipurpose forest management plans.
8. Increased public awareness on forest management methods and possible public participation
9. Established institutional structure and capacity to implement mitigation measures and to monitor the environment.
10. Nature conservation in forest areas promoted in accordance with a sustainable forest management.
11. Socio-economic and environmental monitoring system established for communal forests and pastures that are managed through a participatory process on a multi-purpose basis.

Implementation Arrangements

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) is responsible for the overall implementation and coordination of the TA project. The Forestry Project is managed by the Project Management Unit (PMU) headed by a Project Director who is reporting to a Steering Committee (SC). Both the PMU and the SC are temporary management mechanisms established for the implementation of the Forestry Project. The Directorate General of Forests and Pastures (DGFP) is responsible for carrying out the Forestry Project's State forest management, forest roads rehabilitation, communal forest and pasture management, and protected areas management components, under contractual arrangements with PMU. DGFP is implementing most of the activities through its own functional and regional dependencies, but could also, as appropriate, contract specific services directly with specialized agencies, such as the Agriculture University or the Forest and Pasture Research Institute (FPRI), or private sector enterprises, which it would supervise. The Project Environmental Management Unit (PEMU) is a new permanent unit established as part of MAF's Agricultural Program Office (APO), in order to avoid conflict of interest with project implementing agencies on sensitive environmental matters. One of the major tasks of PEMU is to carry out environmental impact assessments, provide assistance for and check the implementation of mitigation measures.

Major Activities and Outputs to Date

The project started to be operational with the effective appointment of a Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) in September 1997. It is a five-year project expected to end in October 2002. The inputs are worth some US\$ 2.6 million and are broken down into personal (75.5%), duty travel & missions (1.9%), general operation expenses (3.1%), supplies (0.38%), equipment (4.3%), fellowships & training (3.2), and support costs (11.5%). International personal staff inputs originally total 132 person-months of which 60 are for a full time Chief Technical Adviser. The remaining person-months are allocated for experts in financial management, institutions, forest management, data management, monitoring and evaluation, public education campaign, legal aspects, training, environment, sector strategy and evaluation.

The contract of the CTA was terminated in December 1998. During the period of September 1997 to December 1998, the TA concentrated on establishing working relationship with Albanian counterpart institutions, buying equipment and office supplies, and assisting preparations for new offices for the Project Management Unit (PMU), the TA and the Directorate General for Forests and Pastures (DGFP), and initiating international consultancies in the second half of 1998 on financial management, legal aspects, marketing and pricing, data management, silviculture, forest management, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as external training in environmental impact assessment for the Director of the PEMU.

Pending recruitment of a new CTA, the silviculture consultant acted as CTA a.i. and was instrumental in developing and promoting good working relationships with immediate project team members, donors and other development partners.

A new full-fledged CTA took office in October 1999. His arrival coincided with preparations for the mid-term review of the Albanian Forestry Project in November – December 1999. As a result of the mid-term review conclusions and recommendations of the Forestry Project, the TA prepared a detailed workplan for the year 2000 and beyond, increasing the inputs from national experts and consultants and addressing the following recommendations:

- (i) support the DGFP and the Forest Sector in general, in the transfer of state forests to communal forests;
- (ii) support the development of a comprehensive Human Resource Development Plan in relation to the implementation of the new forestry sector strategy and the required institutional organization;
- (iii) provide support to the forest management and road rehabilitation components and incorporate environmental expertise as required;
- (iv) intensify input into the design and execution of the public education component;
- (v) provide increased input and coordination support into the training component;
- (vi) assist the FPRI in the development of a research programme responsive to the needs of the Forestry Project.

During the mid-term review, the Bank and the Italian Cooperation voiced their concern over the ongoing problem of illegal harvesting and requested the assistance of the FAO technical assistance program in the design and implementation of such a review.

The major activities and outputs of the TA to date have in the main concentrated on the preparation of new forest management plans including the preparation of new guidelines, GIS-based maps, and associated training and electronic data management, and financial management including the establishment of the revenue account. However, activities have been initiated in almost all other subject areas.

During the first half of 2000, the TA assisted the preparation of an Albanian Strategy to fight illegal logging and preparations for an the implementation of an independent study on it. Assistance was provided to start silviculture works in the Gjinar Commune and some forest road rehabilitation. New consultancies were launched for the public education campaign, sector strategy implementation, research programme of the FPRI, training programme, cooperation agreement between the School of Edolo and the School of Skodra, institutions and human resource development. Studies on marketing and illegal logging were also launched.

The major problems identified by management are:

- the lack of short term training or transfer of results and knowledge during international experts visits;
- the limited impact of the TA or the limited number of stakeholders involved;

- the difficulty sometime of sustaining the interest or the involvement of national counterparts;
- the lack of mechanisms to insure follow up to recommendations in terms of responsible agencies or individuals and specific deadlines for action;
- the need to improve communication, cooperation and transparency among all stakeholders with a view to developing team work and accountability;
- the need to better identify existing bottlenecks in management decision processes in order to identify potential supporting actions by the TA.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation is foreseen in the project document at mid-point of the project life. It is intended to provide recommendations to the Government, FAO and the donor on the further steps necessary to consolidate progress and ensure achievement of objectives. It is also intended to make recommendations for any necessary changes in the overall design and orientation of the project and make detailed recommendations on the work-plan for the remainder of the project.

3. Scope of the Evaluation

The mission will assess the:

- a) Relevance of the project to development priorities and needs, in particular the attainment of the objectives established for the World Bank project.
- b) Clarity, and realism of the project's development and immediate objectives, including specification of targets and identification of beneficiaries and prospects for sustainability.
- c) Adequacy of project design including:
 - consistency between, inputs, activities, outputs and progress towards achievement of objectives (quality, quantity and time-frame) and the link to the WB project;
 - realism and clarity in the specification of prior obligations and prerequisites (assumptions and risks), including those in relation to the WB project;
 - realism and clarity of external institutional relationships, and in the managerial and institutional framework for implementation and the work plan;
 - cost-effectiveness of the project design.
- d) Efficiency and adequacy of project implementation including: availability of funds as compared to activities; the quality and timeliness of input delivery by both FAO and the Government; managerial and work efficiency; implementation difficulties; adequacy of monitoring and reporting; the extent of national support and commitment and the quality and quantity of administrative and technical support by FAO.
- e) Project results, including a full and systematic assessment of outputs produced to date (quantity and quality as compared with workplan and progress towards achieving the immediate objectives). The mission will especially review the overall technical support provided for implementation of the WB project, including the status and quality of work on :
 - forest project management including coordination of the implementation of forestry project components;
 - institutional development including sector strategy and human resource development;
 - environmental monitoring and management;
 - forest management plans including GIS-based maps and data management;

- financial management;
 - public education campaign;
 - training program;
 - gender aspects wherever applicable.
- f) The prospects for sustaining the project's results by the beneficiaries and the host institutions after the termination of the project. The mission should examine in particular:
- transfer of results or knowledge to the beneficiaries;
 - follow up actions by national institutions;
 - the number of stakeholders involved;
 - the (actual and planned future) allocation of public resources to the sector.
- g) The cost-effectiveness of the project.

Based on the above analysis the mission will draw specific conclusions and make proposals for any necessary further action by Government and/or FAO/donor to ensure sustainable development, including any need for additional assistance and activities of the project prior to its completion. The mission will draw attention to any lessons of general interest in particular with regard to institutions strengthening, capacity building and human resources development.

4. Composition of the Mission

The mission will comprise :

Team leader (FAO) with experience in forestry policy and institutions development and of evaluation;
 Specialist in forest management and conservation (Government of Albania);
 Specialist in forestry community development and environment monitoring and management (Government of Italy);

Mission members should be independent and thus have no previous direct involvement with the project either with regard to its formulation, implementation or backstopping. They should preferably have experience of evaluation.

5. Timetable and Itinerary of the Mission

The mission will last approximately 17 days:

Preliminary Program of Work

(to be finalized in Tirana with the support of the CTA of the Project)

13 November 2000:

Briefing in FAO Rome, at 14h30, Room (to be specified) of Mission Members (Team Leader and Gov. of Italy Representative. Gov. of Albania Representative will be briefed by Mission Team Leader upon his arrival in Tirana, Albania).

14 November 2000 :

Travel to Tirana and briefing meetings with FAO Project CTA, PMU Director, DGFP Director and APO Director/Minister of MAF;

15-17 November 2000:

General briefing meeting with main stakeholders (APO, DGFP, PMU, FPRI, Agriculture University, representative of donors, NGOs, Private Sector, etc.), individual meetings (exact schedule to be prepared with the support of the CTA) and consultation of the documentation of the project;

18-19 November 2000:

Field visits (Pilot Region and possibly another area for the sake of comparison);

20-23 November 2000:

Mission discuss and prepare its preliminary conclusions and recommendations;

24 November 2000:

Presentation to main stakeholders of Mission's preliminary conclusions & recommendations;

25-27 November 2000:

Preparation of draft final report;

28 November 2000:

Debriefing with Minister of Agriculture and Food;

29 November 2000:

Finalization of draft report;

30 November 2000:

Mission departs from Tirana.

6. Consultations

The mission will maintain close liaison with the Representatives of the donor and FAO and the concerned national agencies, as well as with national and international project staff. Although the mission should feel free to discuss with the authorities concerned anything relevant to its assignment, it is not authorized to make any commitments on behalf of the Government, the donor, or FAO.

7. Reporting

The mission is fully responsible for its independent report which may not necessarily reflect the views of the Government, the donor or FAO. The report will be written in conformity with the following headings:

- Executive Summary
- Summary of findings and Recommendations
- Relevance of the Project to National Needs
- Quality of Project Formulation and Design
- Project Implementation
- Project Results and Outcomes
 - Outputs
 - Process
 - Sustainable Effects and Impact
 - Cost-effectiveness
- Lessons Learned

The report will be completed, in the country and the findings and recommendations fully discussed with all concerned parties and wherever possible consensus achieved.

The mission will also complete the FAO Project Evaluation Questionnaire.

The mission leader bears responsibility for finalisation of the report, which will be submitted to FAO immediately after the mission completion. FAO will submit the report to the Government and the donor together with its comments.

Annex n° 2

List of places visited and key-persons met by the mission

- Planning of the mission

Monday 13 November: beginning of the mission; briefing meeting at the FAO Headquarters in Rome.

Tuesday 14 November: introduction to the FAO-TA project by CTA; arrangements for the mission.

Wednesday 15 November: meetings with General Director and Directors at DGFP, meeting with FAO-AT project consultant in forest management, meeting in Forestry Project PMU.

Thursday 16 November: meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, participation in the DGFP-USAid workshop on Private Forestry, meeting with the National Environment Agency.

Friday 17 November: team-work in the evaluation mission, meeting at the Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Trade, meeting with FAO-TA project consultant in information.

Saturday 18 November: meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Forestry, meeting with FAO-TA project CTA, team-work in the evaluation mission.

Sunday 19 November: team-work in the evaluation mission.

Monday 20 November: meeting with Parliament Commission for Agriculture, meeting at PMU, field-trip in the pilot region of Elbasan : visit to the commune of Cjinar.

Tuesday 21 November: field-trip in the pilot region of Elbasan (continuing): meetings at forest offices in Elbasan and Librazh, visit to the State forests of Librazh, visit of the sawmill in Elbasan.

Wednesday 22 November: team-work in the evaluation mission, meeting at the Italian Co-operation representative, meeting at US Aid office, meeting with GTZ consultant, team-work in the evaluation mission.

Thursday 23 November: meeting at PMU with The World Bank supervision mission, meeting with the FAO Headquarters mission, team-work in the evaluation mission.

Friday 24 November: team-work in the evaluation mission, preliminary debriefing workshop in presence of the Minister of Agriculture, team-work in the evaluation mission.

Saturday 25 November: team-work in the evaluation mission.

Sunday 26 November: meeting with the FAO Headquarters mission, team work in the evaluation mission.

Monday 27 November : team work in the evaluation mission, meeting with Director of FPRI, debriefing meeting with DGFP General Director, FAO Headquarters mission and FAO-TA CTA.

Tuesday 28 November: team-work in the evaluation mission.

Wednesday 29 November: team-work in the evaluation mission, end of the mission to Albania.

Thursday 30 November: travel from Tirana to Rome, debriefing in FAO headquarters in Rome.

Friday 1st December: departure from Rome, end of the mission.

- List of persons met during the mission

Ministry of Agriculture and Food:

Prof. Lufter XHUVELI, Minister of Agriculture and Food

Parliament, Commission for Agriculture:

Prof. Zyhdi PEPA, deputy, adviser of the Prime Minister

Mr. Hasan HOXHA, deputy

General Directorate for Forestry and Pastures (DGFP):

Mr. Kolë MALAJ, General Director

Dr. Genci KACORI, Director of the forest management department

Mr. Agim IDRIZI, Director of the financial and marketing department

Mr. Preng PRENGA, Director of the police department

Mrs. Zhaneta PRIFTI, chief of personnel

Forestry District of Elbasan:

Mr. Dede PREGNA, Director

Forestry District of Librazh:

Mr. Bajram KVIRONI, inspector

Mr. Dizayer BILLOSAMI, chief of the police

Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Trade (MBET):

Mrs Shqipe RRUMBULLAKU, member of Forestry Project steering committee

National Environment Agency:

Mr. Zamir DEDEJ, Director of nature protection

Agricultural University:

Prof. Mihallaq KOTRO, Dean of the Faculty of Forestry Sciences

Forest and Pasture Research Institute (IFPRI):

Dr. Maxhun DIDA, Director

LIBADECO Sawmill, Elbasan:

Mr. BALESTIERI, Director

Association for Protection of Birds and Mammals (ASPBM):

Mr. Ferdinand BEGO, biologist

Italian Embassy, Italian Co-operation Local Technical Unit:

Mr. Maurizio Di CALISTO, Director

Forestry Project Management Unit (PMU):

Mr. Haki KOLA, Director

Mr. Janaq MALEY, Deputy Director

The World Bank, supervision mission to PMU:

Mr. Gerhard DIETERLE, supervisor consultant from the World Bank

Mr. Ibrahim HACKAJ, project officer resident mission

FAO Headquarters supervision mission:

Prof. Giovanni ARRU, FAO/Italy Project Monitoring Panel

Mr. Yves DUBE, Forestry Department, Policy and Planning Division

US Aid Office, Albania Private Forestry Development Programme:

Dr. James SEYLER, chief technical adviser

GTZ Project in assistance to the Faculty of Forestry Sciences, Tirana:

Dr. Giovanni PRETO, consultant in forest inventory.

Project of Technical Assistance to the Forestry Project (FAO-TA):

Mr. Hilmar FOELLM, chief technical adviser

Mr. Daniel GREGOIRE, consultant in information

Mr. Agron HETOJA, agricultural economist

Dr. Franz-Werner HILLGARTER, consultant in forest management and all staff

Annex n° 3

List of Documents and other reference materials consulted by the mission

Documents from the FAO-TA project:

- Project Document, FAO-Government Cooperative Programme, project of the Government of Italy, 1996, 22 p. + ann.
- Institutional and legal issues (Bellogini & Cirelli), December 1999, 43 p.
- FAO-TA Workplan 2000, with projections to the end of year 2002, March 2000, 13 p.
- *(in collaboration with PMU Forestry Project)* Pilot Region, selection and establishment, prepared by DGFP working group, April 2000, 40 p.
- Marketing reform and pricing policy, assessment report (with contribution of DGFP's personnel), May 2000, 48 p.
- Project Information, Background paper for the project midterm review (reporting period: 29 Sept. 1997- 31 August 2000), November 2000, 17 p.
- Minutes of meetings and material from workshops
- International consultants' reports

Documents from the Forestry Project:

- Forestry Project Mid-Term Review, November 1999, 13 p.
- Forestry Project Aide-Memoire, March 2000, 29 p.

Other documents:

- DGFP, The Strategy for the Development of the Forestry and Pasture Sector in Albania, 17 p.

Annex n° 4

Progress made so far in achieving expected consultancies outputs

(documentation established by the project staff)

Financial management consultancy

Institutional development consultancy

Monitoring and evaluation consultancy

Forest management plan consultancy

Data management consultancy

Public education and communication consultancy

Legal consultancy