

**Project Evaluation Series**  
[18/2024](#)

**Terminal evaluation of the project  
“Contribution of sustainable forest  
management to a low emission and resilient  
development in Serbia”**

Project code: GCP/SRB/002/GFF  
GEF project ID: 9089

**Management response**

Terminal evaluation of the project “Contribution of sustainable forest management to a low emission and resilient development in Serbia” – Management response					10/2024
Evaluation recommendation	Management response Accepted, Partially accepted or Rejected	Management plan			
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Responsible unit	Time frame	Further funding required (Y or N)
<p><b>Recommendation 1.</b></p> <p><i>To FAO-REU/FAO project team:</i></p> <p>In future, similar projects, issues related to the institutionalisation of project results (such as new legislation) should already be considered during the project planning phase and the required time and steps accordingly planned. Identified political risks and potentially adverse effects of political decisions regarding the achievement of project outcomes should be highlighted and addressed. Adequate resources and accurate planning for specific policy support could positively contribute to influence political commitments.</p> <p>While the project has been successful regarding the development of methodologies, technologies, and capacity building, following requirements to ensure the institutionalisation of results should be included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The institutional home for NFI within the National Forest Research Institute (and possibly the Institute of Lowland Forestry) should be identified.</li> <li>ii. The establishment of a permanent institution or sustainable interinstitutional mechanisms for capacity building within the forest sector, including the required infrastructure, should be envisaged.</li> <li>iii. The formal enactment of bylaws to institutionalise new guidelines and methods should be enforced.</li> </ol> <p>Future projects should consider the time and resources required for such efforts (for instance, at least the question of an institutional home for the NFI could have already been initiated at project start). In this light, potential administrative and political issues related to such steps are well known (e.g. other than in many other countries, the Institute for Forest Research in Belgrade is not under the remit of the FD).</p>	Partially accepted	Institutionalization of results is being considered in project planning, however Project Task Force or Head of country office have only limited influence related to this. Funding cannot be made conditional since FAO is not providing funding but technical assistance.	Formulator/Budget Holder	N/A	No

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<p><b>Recommendation 2.</b> <i>To FAO GEF project formulators.</i></p> <p>In future projects, the “field-reality” of Serbia should already be considered during the project identification (PIF) phase. This includes the realistic estimation of PFOs to be engaged for proper planning and sustainability purposes. A more thorough engagement of experts with solid country field-experience could reveal predictable issues already at the project’s onset (e.g. problems related to: the acquisition of software via direct purchase order instead of a public tender; or the timely enactment of bylaws to facilitate the institutionalisation of project results within the project lifetime). The same applies to national actors from the fields of politics, administration, public and private forest owners, and NGOs; their early involvement should ensure a thorough participatory approach to define project objectives, thus significantly contributing to the improvement of project buy-in.</p> <p>The project has only been able to engage with a very small number of forest owners. This was an important finding already during the project’s midterm. Forest sector actors cannot access PFOs, unless these come forward with e.g. grant requests. The issue of absent PFOs is a problem not just in Serbia, but increasingly in countries with well-established extension service programmes, such as in Central Europe. In addition, country-specific sensitivities such as e.g. reluctance to engage in communal management organisations (either voluntarily or mandatorily), represents another problem which requires appropriate consideration and concrete actions.</p>	<b>Accepted</b>	TORs of the Project Design Expert will include a more thorough engagement with experts with field-experience in the country during design phase, completely taking into account the relevant participatory tools and methods developed by FAO.	Formulator and LTO	Q2 2024	Yes
<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b> <i>To FAO-REU/FAO project team.</i></p> <p>The main project outputs (such as the NFI which was completed only during the last project phases), should be planned and finalised at an early stage of implementation, leaving enough space for the promotion and publication of</p>	<b>Partially accepted</b>	The project planned the completion of the NFI in the second half of project implementation, but it was completed in the very last phase due to Covid-19 related NFI field work delays. Every effort will be	Formulator and LTO	N/A	No

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<p>important project results, including the possibilities for timely and substantial debates in the public or scientific community.</p> <p>The project work plan should envisage and ensure the delivery of main project outputs during an early implementation phase. The first draft of the document should be promoted to all interested stakeholders, listing the important information such as: location of the database, potential users, usage potentials, importance for the forestry development in the country at national and local level, etc.</p>		made for future projects to be designed with longer periods dedicated to the publication and promotion of final results.			
<p><b>Recommendation 4.</b> <i>To FAO-REU/FAO project team.</i></p> <p>For the elaboration of new methodologies in future projects, FAO should reconsider monitoring efforts and provide scientific support at an early stage of implementation to significantly improve the professional level of scientific innovation (given the fact that this well-grounded scientific methodology was applied for the first time in the local context of Serbia).</p> <p>The development of the NFI was based on a scientific methodology that was applied for the first time, with some of the professionals remaining sceptical about the obtained results. However, the project positively benefitted from using FAO external resources.</p> <p>The engagement of experienced experts to monitor the project progress in terms of conducting research activities would have positive impact on the overall project success if capacity strengthening of local staff and experts would be introduced at an early implementation stage. This would favourably contribute to resolving potential conflicts and opposite views regarding new methodologies.</p>	Partially accepted	International experts were engaged from the inception phase of the project and additional FAO resources from the relevant HQ technical unit were involved at a later stage. Projects with new or complex scientific dimensions will include in the planning external scientific support and relevant HQ technical unit, from the beginning.	Formulator and LTO	N/A	Yes

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