Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Sustainable Management of Kharga Oasis Agro-Ecosystems in the New Valley Governorate

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

BACKGROUND

The project's goal was to ensure sustainable food production and improve soil quality and agrobiodiversity in the oasis agroecosystems of Egypt's Western Desert.
It focused on three key components:

- Building an environment for sustainable land, water, and agrobiodiversity management;
- Demonstrating efficient practices for sustainable land and water management and agrobiodiversity conservation in three pilot sites;
- Managing knowledge to scale and expand project results.

The Desert Research Center led the project, with support from the FAO for project management and technical assistance.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The evaluators asked:

- How well were the project objectives aligned with local community needs and remained relevant over time?
- How successfully did the project strengthen institutional, functional, and technical capacities of key stakeholders at the governorate level for mainstreaming sustainable land, water, and agrobiodiversity management?
- To what extent did the project build national capacities and ensure long-term gains?
- How well did the project manage knowledge sharing and access to results and lessons?

EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation process was participatory and inclusive, involving diverse stakeholders through qualitative methods like in-depth interviews, focus groups, and site visits. Phases included inception, document review, field interviews, data processing, analysis, and report drafting.

PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT CODE
GCP/EGY/030/GFF

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE
Egyptian Western Desert

START/END DATE
November 2019/ July 2023

FUNDED BY
Global Environment Facility (GEF)

PRIORITY AREAS

- **BE1**: Climate change mitigating and adapted agri-food systems
- **BE3:** Biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture

PARTNERS
The Desert Research Center (DRC) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of Egypt

WHAT DID THE PROJECT ACHIEVE?

The project strengthened the capacities of the Agricultural and Irrigation Directorates, DRC, and NV Governorate through training in GIS and remote sensing for natural resource management. Beneficiaries reported significant skill improvements and high adoption of new practices. Efficient SLWM and agrobiodiversity conservation were demonstrated in 105 Farmer Field Schools (FFS), including one for farmers with disabilities, highlighting inclusivity. The project also supported six community-based start-ups and created new jobs, with half reserved for women.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Integrated approaches enhanced impact by combining SLWM, agrobiodiversity conservation, and capacity building for synergistic outcomes.
- Participatory methods, like FFS and community committees, improved engagement through hands-on learning and stakeholder involvement.
- Gender strategies are vital for equitable benefits, emphasizing the need for gender-responsive approaches that address socioeconomic gaps and include specific impact indicators.
- Partnerships with local governments and academic institutions were crucial for effective implementation and knowledge transfer.

Click **here** to find out more in the full report.

WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES?

One big challenge is the sustainability of project interventions in the absence of continued financial and technical support. While the project's exerted efforts for ensuring that local communities and institutions have the capacity to maintain and scale up these practices, the lack of a complementary effort at policy level lowers the potential for sustained impact. Another potential risk is the project's limited engagement with the private sector, which could have played a pivotal role in supporting value chains and marketing for agricultural products, thus enhancing the economic benefits of sustainable practices.

NEXT STEPS

Engage the private sector more deeply to support project interventions and boost partnerships with community groups, expanding market opportunities for agricultural products.

Support project partners, especially ASRT, in advancing collective branding and expanding the entrepreneurship program in Kharga Oasis.

Utilize DRC's presence in Kharga Oasis to regularly assess agrobiodiversity and sustain project outcomes, improving data for future projects.

Continue supporting and expanding the local seed bank and biocontrol lab at DRC. Involve community committees in seed bank management and establish smaller seed banks at local agricultural cooperatives to promote self-sufficiency.

Office of Evaluation
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CD5216EN/1/04.25

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