

Independent Technical Review: Argentina R-PP document

UN-REDD PROGRAMME

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General comments to R-PP Document of [insert country name] (maximum 200 words):

Compared to other countries in the region, the Argentine forestry sector has grown at a much slower rate and is less important in terms of formal participation in the economy. Forests are located far from the large urban centers and the cultural identity of the country is much more related to the perception of Argentina as an agricultural and rancher country than with a forest vocation country.

All points of the format were addressed and the document was presented by the federal government.

The activities to be performed are not clearly presented, reflecting REDD+ is in early stages in Argentina.

Social benefits are poorly addressed and not included in the definition of REDD+ activities.

There is a lack of clarity in the role played by natural protected areas in REDD+ readiness phase, although they represent about 10% of its territory.

There is room for improvement in the overall organization of the document. The last two components are confusing and do not match with the index.

The literature cited is limited and there is no list of references.

Assessing the draft R-PP against review criteria

(Please refer to the TORs and supporting documents)

1. Ownership of the Programme (maximum 150 words):

The RPP was done and presented by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

The country has created cross sectorial platforms such as the Governmental Commission on Climate Change, represented by 28 governmental agencies.

The “National Climate Change Strategy” was done within the before mentioned committee and an enlarged group of stakeholders including academy, private sector, NGOs and workers’ organizations. Further information on the National Climate Change Strategy is needed in the document.

Argentina has a strong frame on indigenous participation through a Consult Protocol for indigenous groups: ENOTPO, represented by 45 organizations and 27 indigenous groups with more than 1000 communities in 20 provinces. REDD+ Implementation in the country will use the before mentioned Consult Protocol.

Argentina Government is designating 2.582 million USD representing approximately 25 % of the funding planned, the rest of the budget is planned from UN-REDD program and the FCPF.

2. Level of consultation, participation and engagement (maximum 150 words):

The document describes the planned organization and arrangement mechanisms for REDD+ national readiness and implementation, defining roles and responsibilities: a directive committee, an Operational Unit for REDD+ preparation and an Advisory Committee (CAR), formed by academia, NGOs, unions, indigenous groups and private sectors. It also states that this structure will be linked to existing structured in the government.

Consultation regarding social and environmental safeguards was held in 6 regional workshops since 2012, and there is a participation and outreach plan for RPP in 2014. One workshop to present the RPP was held on May 2014; however it is not clear if further efforts have been done to disseminate the RPP.

The country aims to build a “participation and consultation plan” in different stages, with the help of an advisory committee (CAR). This process will allow mapping the actors involved in the REDD+ process, however it is not clear how they will do it.

3. Programme effectiveness and cost efficiency (maximum 100 words):

This effort represents an important step taken by the Argentina Government, nevertheless since REDD+ in Argentina is still at early stages further studies need to be done to fill information gaps that are crucial, such as land tenure, references levels and potential REDD+ specific activities.

In order to effectively implement REDD+ in Argentina a more in-depth estimation of opportunity costs for various drivers of deforestation should be conducted. Not addressing these issues may limit the effectiveness of the effort.

Most of the program's budget is allocated in components 1 and 2, in order to accomplish institutional arrangements and consultation and outreach process.

4. Management of risks and likelihood of success (maximum 150 words):

Policy challenges to decrease deforestation are identified; however plans on how to address these negative issues are not included in the RPP:

- Lack of solid coordination and alignment of public policies,
- Few state control over land interventions,
- Forest issues are divided into two agencies (commercial plantations and native forest), coordination has been difficult but has increased in the last years.
- Native forests are managed by more than one agency (federal, provincial and local).

The document does not include an idea of how to align agencies and policies, in order to overcome this difficulty.

Risks are poorly identified.

Risk of domestic leakage should be address more extensively in the document.

5. Consistency with the UN-REDD Programme Strategy (maximum 150 words):

The R PP prepared by Argentina is consistent with the UN-REDD Program Strategy and contemplates social and environmental safeguards.

Argentina is planning to develop transparent and accountable safeguards, monitoring and financial systems for REDD+.

Argentina is also integrating actions in this initiative to meet certain requirements they have under other conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The following three challenges identified by UN-REDD Program Strategy should have special attention and should carefully be addressed:

- 1.) Strengthening national governance structures so that REDD+ policies and regulatory frameworks can work effectively.
- 2.) Ensuring equitable and efficient benefit distribution mechanisms.
- 3.) Ability to secure effective, sustainable and predictable fast-start financing for REDD+

Furthermore, the proposal should elaborate more in the "plus" components of REDD+.

6. Compliance with UN-REDD Programme Rules of Procedure and Operational Guidance (maximum 150 words):

The RPP is consistent with the UN-REDD Program Rules of Procedure and Operational Guidance:

- It engages indigenous communities, forest depend communities and civil society in its preparation process. Workshops were performed and a "participatory and consultation plan" is planned to be created in the near future.
- The document was done and validated by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development before submitted to the Secretariat.

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- The document was presented to civil society and community representatives in May 2014 in a workshop in Buenos Aires.
 - The document was submitted by the UNDP representative in the country.

Assessing the draft R-PP by component

Component 1: Organize and consult (maximum 300 words):

1a. National Readiness Management Arrangements

Political willingness of Argentinian Government to address climate change: creation of cross sectorial platforms such as the Governmental Commission on Climate Change, represented by 28 governmental agencies. This commission has met for 37 times since its creation in 2009, proving to be a strong institutional arrangement that will strength REDD+ implementation in the country. The “National REDD+ Strategy” was done within the committee.

One of the strength of the Argentinian process is that since the beginning has involved provinces governments.

There is little information on feedback grievance redress mechanisms. Using email address, phone numbers, or requests during meetings and workshops, won't be useful to communities without internet or phone access.

1b. Information Sharing and Early Dialogue with Key Stakeholder Groups

Access to information will be managed according to the Environment General Law Nº 25.675 and CAR will be responsible to manage and give information. It is crucial to specify how this would be done and to consider if an advisory group (CAR) should have those attributions.

There is a participation and outreach plan for RPP in 2014, however the document only states one workshop, held in May 2014, to disseminate the RPP. Further efforts could be included.

There is a lack of information regarding gender issues.

1c. Consultation and Participation Process

Regarding indigenous communities, Argentina has a strong frame on indigenous participation through a Consult Protocol for indigenous groups that resulted from a workshop in 2009: ENOTPO a coordination space with indigenous groups from all the country. Nowadays it's represented by 45 organizations and 27 indigenous groups with more than 1000 communities in 20 provinces. REDD+ Implementation in the country will use the before mentioned Consult protocol for indigenous groups.

Component 2: Prepare the REDD-plus Strategy (maximum 300 words):

2a. Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance

Direct causes of deforestation and degradation are clearly documented for the country and for each forest region; however there is room for improvement in description of subjacent drivers.

The most important driver of deforestation is expansion of soybean crop. Argentina is the third worldwide exporter of soybean and agriculture is a key factor in the country's economy. In order to reduce deforestation in Argentina, there is a need to address this reality; the document is not making an effort in doing so.

Policy challenges to decrease deforestation are identified; however plans on how to address these negative issues should be included in the RPP.

It is not specific about how land tenure is organized in native forest and rural areas. Moreover, land tenure is not described according to ethnicity.

Access to land and forests is not included.

2b. REDD-plus Strategy Options

There is little progress in developing policies and programs for REDD+. However the RPP states that Law N° 26.331 represents a cornerstone to develop programs and policies for REDD+.

Risks are poorly identified.

2c. REDD-plus Implementation Framework

There is a clear legal framework regarding the financial management by the National Fund for Native Forest Conservation. Weaknesses of this fund are identified.

It is stated that direct payments for REDD+ could be based in the CDM experience and the Argentinian Carbon Fund. It is important to include lessons learned from MDL and the fund in the country, and include more information about it.

There is no information regarding the REDD+ Registry or early idea on it.

2d. Social and Environmental Impacts during Readiness Preparation and REDD-plus Implementation

A SESA will be organized by the UOP and the CAR, the last one will guarantee the broad participation.

SESA will be incorporated in the consultation and participation plan mentioned earlier.

There is little information regarding SIS and very few budget and time for the SESA process, and there is no match from the government.

Component 3: Develop a National Forest Reference Emission Level and/or a Forest Reference Level (maximum 200 words):

Due to the fact that establishment of reference level is in very early stages, the country proposes to follow a “step by step” approach, using historic data on deforestation and the forest inventories available.

Argentina has established a monitoring system of the native forest surface, in order to identify land use change. Therefore information on deforestation from 1990 to 2005 is reliable, but uncertainty comes in historic deforestation before 1990 in some areas. This could complicate the establishment of a reference level. Possible solutions to tackle this deficiency should be addressed.

The document recognizes that degradation is not incorporated but early ideas could be helpful.

Component 4: Design Systems for National Forest Monitoring and Information on Safeguards (maximum 300 words):

4a. National Forest Monitoring System

As part of the MRV system, the Argentinian Government is in early ideas of establishing a national framework.

In 2001 a Forest Assessment Unit was created to monitor native forest. The first National Forest Inventory was done in 2005. So by 2009 the Ministry of Environment proposes the creation of a permanent inventory system (SIP). The SIP will feed the MRV national system.

The document schematizes institutional arrangements for MRV.

Community participation in forest monitoring is incipient in Argentina, although there are pilot examples in Salta Communities that can be useful to include as lessons learned.

Report and verification is foreseen to be done by a subgroup of the CAR, although it will be important to review its attributions and technical capacity to perform this activity and comply with the CMNUCC requirements. It is important to clarify how the report and verification will be compatible with the MRV system.

4b. Designing an Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance, and Safeguards

Co-benefits are poorly address in the document.

Component 5: Schedule and Budget (maximum 300 words):

Each of the components has a schedule and a budget, however it is important to include a final schedule in order to look for overlaps and entire time to implement the REDD+ readiness phase.

An estimate of the required funding and sources of funding sources for each component has been made. However, there are inconsistencies regarding the budget computations. The total amount calculation of the budget synthesis does not match the components total computation, neither FCPF total contribution.

Component 6: Design a Program Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (maximum 300 words):

The purpose of the Program Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework is to encourage efficient and transparent management of resources and to help a country keep track of its progress towards readiness and identify and address gaps, shortfalls, and program underperformance as they emerge.

In the case of the Argentinian RPP, the M&E framework is very general, lacking details. Indicators can be improved and be more specific (e.g. number of workshops, communities, individuals participating, studies performed, people hired).

Suggestions for improving the technical design of the R-PP Document of [insert country name] (maximum 400 words):

Payment for Ecosystem Services:

The RPP briefly describes two important mechanisms: The *Program for Management and Conservation of Native Forest*, and *The National Fund for Native Forest Conservation* that is formed by the annual federal budget and 2% of the tax on agricultural export commodities. 70% of the fund should be directed to compensate owners of forest land for conservation activities and 30% to strengthen capacities of community members.

Both the Program and the Fund are very interesting mechanisms that currently allow the performance of incentive based conservation activities in Argentina; however, are not well describe in the RPP, since it does not specifies how it will be integrated to the REDD+ readiness phase and lessons learned from them are not included.

Moreover it is mentioned in the document that there is a pilot project on payments for ecosystem services, developed by the Ministry of Environment – GEF – PNUD - PNUMA, however neither the program is described and lessons learned are not included in the readiness phase.

Despite that little attention was given to these examples of incentive based conservation in the country, the activities stated in Component 2 to tackle deforestation and degradation include:

- Incentive programs for carbon stock enlargement.
- Incentives for conservation.

If incentives for conservation are considered in the RPP, it is important to consider the existing Program and Fund in order avoid overlap activities and to learn from programs that already exist. Moreover, issues such as benefit distributions, financial arrangements and monitoring, could be exported from the incentive based efforts already in place.

Safeguards

The country stated that a SESA process will be conducted as well as a SIS. CAR will guarantee broad participation along the RPP process in Argentina, and the UOP will support this process. Workshops will be held with private sector, NGOs, national and local governments, academy. These workshops will be coordinated in the process of the “Participatory and Consultation plan” and the SESA process will be incorporated. This outreach and consultation process will be during the preparation phase as well as during the implementation of REDD+ mechanisms, and will give feedback to the CAR and UOP on RPP activities. Previous consultancies will be held with communities.

A SESA working plan is included in the RPP. However there are many studies planned to be done before SESA, so in the schedule it is important to consider time for previous studies and SESA.

SESA process and the elaboration of the ESFM are processes that can take a long time and can be costly. The budget is considering little money for this.

Gender issues are not included in SESA plans.

Number of indigenous groups and languages are important to be included, in order to prepare adequate materials. According to the Ministry of the Environment, there is a translation of the Nagoya Protocol to indigenous languages such as Mapuche, Wichi and Qom. These existing materials can be useful to the readiness process and should be included in the RPP.