

ISC workshop with FP leaders – 28-29 June 2017

PAPER NO. 2

FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

DRAFT, 20 JUNE 2017

Subject: Mechanism for vetting/mapping bilateral projects to the within the CGIAR Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA)

Summary

ISC approved in 2016 a general **approach for vetting bilateral projects into FTA (see Annex 2)**. How is it working, does it need improvements to ensure alignment of the vetting process with the priority setting mechanism?

This note proposes, for discussion, a revised “mapping” process by:

- Adding transparent “mapping” criteria, and clarifying the information needed to be submitted (see Annex 1)
- Delineating a set of clear stages for decision
- Adding a stage for interaction at the “pipeline” phase of projects, to incentivize partners to engage with FTA at the project writing elaboration level
- Adding stages to minimize financial data discrepancies.

1) Current situation

FTA, as a program, comprises at 1st January 2017 142 time-bound, issues-bound and results-bound projects. Each project is managed by a FTA partner, often with implication of other FTA partners. They constitute the bulk of FTA research (90 percent of the FTA resource in its 2017 POWB comes from such projects), and are an increasingly important source of resources for implementing FTA’s agenda and achieving FTA’s outcomes and targets. Therefore, understanding how these projects contribute to the program is part of the very essence of FTA. But what does it take for a project to be “mapped to” FTA?

The ISC, during its meeting in February 2016, approved a general approach for “vetting” bilateral projects into FTA that are managed by different participating partners. The process describes the mechanism when the FTA Director decides whether the project belongs to FTA portfolio, by clicking “yes/no” in the FTA database (see Annex 1).

Currently, the following problems are identified:

- This process misses clear criteria for such “mapping” decisions (see Box 1).
- There is not any shared understanding of what “mapping” a project means and of what this operation brings to the program, and the partners of a project (both at project pipeline stage, or at project implementation stage).
- The “mapping” process in the FTA database operates in parallel to a financial mapping process, through which the lead center requests information to the participating partners on the financial values of projects that partners declare mapped to FTA’s flagships. This finance-led operation does not necessarily lead to the same results.
- There is no clarity about what it brings to a partner -outside the set of strategic partners- to consider “mapping” a project to FTA.
- A mapped project does not bring any contribution to FTA leadership and management costs (but for mapped projects by CGIAR partners, to the CG system costs).
- Bilateral donors are not even informed that their project will be part of FTA, no case is made towards them of the additional results or outputs they/the project could benefit from, as a result of their project being “mapped” to FTA and the whole is not used as a positive incentive for increased bilateral contributions

Other symptoms of the imperfection of the current system are:

- FP Leaders and the MSU are not aware (or aware too late) of which projects are mapped to their FPs, as they were not consulted by the Centers early enough, during the pipeline or in the first stages of the project lifetime. There are cases when project submission information arrives only when the project is well advanced in its implementation.
- The submission of projects currently comes with little information on the substance (often only the title and the donor), and there is a need to streamline compulsory information.
- There is a lack of compliance by project holders to enter data in the FTA project database.
- Research directions followed by bilateral projects that end up being mapped to FTA do not always strategically contribute to FTA’s objectives.

Nota bene: for the POWB 2017, the allocation of W1+2 to partners and FP has been decoupled from the amount of mapped bilateral projects. This was done on purpose to enhance the margins of manoeuver for strategic allocation of W1+2 across FTA (see paper 1).

2) Areas proposed for improvement

Given the above, it is proposed that the mapping process be revised in order to:

- **Enable pipeline-stage engagement and interaction with the program:** the partner should engage with the FTA MSU during the proposal writing phase and before finalizing the agreement with the Donor (knowing that partners will retain flexibility to decide of at which stage of the project pipeline the project proposal is submitted to FTA’s mapping process). In case a project is submitted before the grant stage, FTA MELIA team could provide support to project designers. This aims at leveraging FTA’s programmatic learning and experience to add value to the very elaboration of projects proposals, so that they maximize their contribution to the objectives of the program, and increase their intrinsic quality.

- Make sure that FTA partners and FTA research leaders understand and leverage the full potential of value addition that FTA mapping should procure (and how to increase it) for both parties (program and project partners). This will be done by involving the FP leaders and MELIA in the process early on.
- Enhance the quality of information submitted by project holders to understand what the “mapping” brings to FTA, in particular in relation of the position of the project within FTA’s Theory of Change. This will be done by requesting submission of a form.
- Clarify mapping criteria and ensure consistency with those used for priority setting.
- Ensure consistency between programmatic and financial information flows, by organizing information flows between the partner, FTA MSU and CIFOR finance.

Criteria for mapping:

The criteria should reflect the issue related to ex-ante quality of research, **as per the CGIAR frame of reference of QoR4D:**

Relevance: the a project candidate for mapping would need to demonstrates its alignment with the phase 2 proposal and to FTA’s ToC¹ (description of how a project contribute to the Theory of Change of FTA).

Scientific credibility: The proposal should explain the scientific rationale, research question(s) and methods, giving confidence that research findings will be novel, robust and scientifically trustworthy.

Legitimacy: The research in the proposal includes methods to ensure outputs reflect stakeholders’ perspectives and values

Potential Effectiveness: The proposal demonstrates that the work is deliberately and convincingly positioned to contribute to significant outcomes, with high potential to contribute to FTA IDOs and CGIAR SLOs.

To reduce the various transaction costs linked to small projects it is proposed to set a **minimum size** for projects to be subject to this process (USD 100,000/year)

3) Steps for the proposed process:

1. The project principal investigator submits, through the partner focal point, to the FP leader a draft **project mapping sheet (See Annex 1) ideally at an early enough stage of the project elaboration pipeline. The stage at which this is submitted remains at the discretion of the project holder, but early enough to enable interaction.** The project mapping sheet identifies the projects’ objectives, the

¹ Projects are generally first and foremost designed to meet donor priorities and requirements and therefore may not always be optimally designed to implement FTA’s priorities and ToC. In this case, they can nevertheless be considered for mapping if it can be demonstrated that they can be considered important or strategic to explore new lines of research or to enable spillover beyond the CRP priority countries.

science intended to contribute to FTA, the reason for mapping the project to FTA, an Impact Pathway for the project, positioning it in FTA ToC. It specifies if the project is submitted for mapping to other CRPs, if there are any risks of overlapping, or of opportunities for collaboration with other CRPs. It also includes an engagement that the project will comply with the Program Participant Agreement (PPA), FTA Communication and Branding guidelines and Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures.

2. The FP leader finalizes the draft project mapping sheet with the project principal investigator, and submits it to MELIA, and copy to the MSU, with a recommendation on mapping.
3. MELIA assesses whether the mapping to FTA is advisable or not, whether the way it is proposed for mapping is correct, and advises the FTA Director for decision.
4. If the proposal is submitted at a pipeline stage, and if MELIA is advising for an FTA mapping: MELIA emits the case being recommendations to the project holder to increase the quality of the proposal and its alignment to FTA. The project mapping sheet might be revised in consequence. When the project is approved (funded), the partner hosting the project confirms the intention to map it to FTA, providing information about final funding source and budget.
5. FTA/ Director takes final decision on mapping and informs MT of decisions, assignment to a Flagship/CoA, any relevant comments for the eventual fine tuning/ OR reason for the decision not to map the grant to FTA.
6. The project receives a unique FTA project identification number.
7. MSU transmits the information on the mapping decision to the partner leading the project, and to CIFOR's finance. The partner leading the project transmits to the CIFOR finance the financial information necessary. In case the Partner Center is already mapping the project (or part of it) to another CRP, the Partner Center cannot map the same financial resources/outputs to FTA. In case of co-mapping, the project holder must inform FTA. CIFOR finance transmits, at reception, financial information to the FTA/MSU in an organized way (template to be prepared jointly by the MSU and CIFOR finance).
8. FTA MSU informs the principal investigator on FTA Program Document, PPA, Communication and Branding Guidelines, Monitoring and Evaluation procedures. The bilateral Program Manager together with the Center Focal point will be responsible for the timely achievement of the results committed and promote the objectives of FTA.
9. The project investigator enters project data into the FTA online database as per the instructions from FTA MSU.

Annex 1 FTA Project Mapping Summary sheet

Project Name:	
Objectives	<i>Specify the objective(s) of this project in max 500 characters.</i>
Problem statement or challenge this project is addressing	
Period of Implementation:	
Type (Bilateral/W3):	
Donor(s):	
Principal Investigator (Project Manager):	
Email:	
Total Budget:	
Budget x Year (2017/2018/2019/...):	<i>Indicate the budget for each year of the project</i>
Country(ies) of Implementation:	<i>Specify one or more Country that this project is working on</i>
FTA strategic partners involved in the implementation	<i>Choose from CIFOR, ICRAF, Bioversity, CATIE, Cirad, Tropenbos, INBAR</i>
Bilateral Budget allocation for the Strategic Partners	<i>Specify the budget you expect to allocate to the partner during the entire project life. In case of multiple partners, please provide the break-up budget.</i>
Matching funds from Strategic Partner(s), if any:	<i>Specify the budget you expect the partner will match during the entire project life. In case of multiple partners, please provide the break-up budget.</i>
W1+2 co-funding request (no guarantee on W1+2 allocation from FTA can be given at the stage of mapping, even in case of a positive mapping decision).	<i>Specify if you would request W1+2 co-funding (and if yes how much) for this project. W1+2 co-funding request would need to be channeled separately through the FTA prioritization process</i>
Other Partner(s) involved in the implementation:	<i>Specify the budget you expect to allocate to the partner during the entire project life. In case of multiple partners, please provide the break-up budget.</i>
Budget allocation for other Partner(s):	<i>Specify the budget you expect the partner will match during the entire project life. In case of multiple partners, please provide the break-up budget.</i>
Research questions	<i>What are the research question(s) this project is going to address</i>
Research methods	<i>Specify which methods are going to be used and</i>
Contribution to IPG:	<i>Specify if the proposed work is aiming at developing methods and/or new knowledge that will have international public goods value.</i>
Contribution to FTA's ToC	<i>Description of how the project contribute to the Theory of Change of FTA</i>
Sub-Intermediate Development Outcomes (IDOs):	<i>List the sub-IDOs the project contributes to</i>
Outputs:	<i>Specify the expected Outputs from the research activities, if possible quantified and with the year you expect to achieve these</i>
Outcomes:	<i>Specify the expected Outcomes</i>
CapDev Dimension:	
Gender Dimension:	
Expected Impact	<i>Briefly describe the impact this project will have on the beneficiaries</i>

Legitimacy and Stakeholders engagement	<i>Specify how the project is going to engage the stakeholders, how it work will take account of and reflect stakeholders' perspectives and values</i>
Justification for mapping (1)	<i>Specify related inputs you will provide to and you expect from the CRP as a program, specify value addition</i>
Suggested FTA FPs/CoAs to which the project is proposed to be mapped to	<i>Specify FP this project is proposed to be mapped to</i>
Suggested share of FTA mapping:	<i>Specify the % you suggest your project should be mapped into FTA</i>
If suggested share is not 100%, please specify other CRP(s), and if possible FPs, to which the project will be mapped, and if the mapping has already been accepted by the CRP	<i>Eg. CRPXX (xx %), CRP XX (xx %)</i>
The project will comply with FTA PPA, Communication and Branding Guidelines, and Monitoring and Evaluation procedures.	<i>Yes/No</i>

Attachment to the submission for mapping : Project Proposal or concept note for the project including budget information

Annex 2

FTA Bilateral Projects Mapping Process approved by the ISC in February 2016

- At the beginning of the year “n”, the FTA database must contain all the active projects as of 31/12 of the previous year “n-1”. This constitute the baseline for bilateral in year “n”
- During the year, flagship leaders or focal points will enter newly submitted proposals into the database but these proposals will not be flagged to be assigned to FTA until they have been approved by FTA management team. This can be done during any of the regulars MT meeting based on the relevance of the objectives of the proposal to FTA’s objectives, the full-cost recovery or explicit co-financing by w1-2 and overall CRP budget considerations.
- Email notification will inform the FTA director when a new project is entered
- If the proposal doesn’t materialize into an actual project, it is removed from the database
- If the proposal becomes an actual project but:
 - is not assigned to FTA, it will be marked as invalid and disabled but remains in the database
 - is assigned to FTA, it will be flagged “active” for inclusion in the POWB of year “n”

This should allow us to have an updated bilateral database and a consultative across the board process to allocate bilateral projects to FTA.

Annex 3

Extract from Minutes of ISC meeting #3

5-6 February 2016

Mapping/Vetting/Allocating projects to FTA

Item 8: Proposed process for a transparent allocation of bilateral projects to FTA by the different participating partners

The decision to allocate a given bilateral project, obtained by different centre staff, to FTA has been based until now on ad hoc criteria. Debates on bilateral projects have evolved from the original emphasis on full-cost recovery – the *bête noire* of donors in the early years of the reform (2010-2011) - and the subsidiarity principle -close to the hearts of the centres- to the strategic role played by these projects today, given the low percentage of W1-2 funds in CRP budgets, and given the new role of bilateral funds in performance assessment. It is therefore important for FTA2 to have clear and effective rules for ‘wetting’ the bilateral projects allocated to FTA. The lack of such rules encompasses risks ranging from bilateral projects being ‘over allocated’ to FTA to artificially inflate financial leveraging of a FP/Centre to research directions being followed that do not strategically contribute to FTA’s objectives. Up to now, an issue common to most CRPs has been the difficulties for a CRP Director and its management team to have full information on allocated bilateral grants before the end of the financial year. The external review of FTA noted this risk when they referred to the lack of an active portfolio management by FTA.

The ISC discussed and approved the following set of rules for FTA to screen bilateral projects for their suitability to FTA’s objectives and their integration into FTA. These rules will allow FTA to better manage the risks potentially associated with the ad hoc allocation of bilateral projects to FTA.

Rules for allocation of bilateral projects to FTA

The independent evaluation team noted the lack of an active portfolio management in FTA and noted that, although none of the projects actually mapped to FTA seemed out of place, there was no active way or documentation related to the choice made to include (or not) a project in the FTA portfolio. FTA management agreed with this and with the related recommendation.

The issue was discussed during the 28/11/2014 MT meeting and the decision of the following steering committee was to have the issue of new projects (at proposal stage) and their mapping to FTA would be a standard agenda item for the monthly meeting of the management team. The FP leader will require information from partners in advance of the meeting and present to the MT for discussion and decision. This will allow information flow across Center and a meaningful discussion across the whole FTA family.

This has worked somewhat unevenly and with difficulty across-Centers. Now that the FTA database is fully operational, we have a way to overcome the institutional barriers and the ISC approved the following set of rules:

- At the beginning of the year “n”, the FTA database must contain all the active projects as of 31/12 of the previous year “n-1”. This constitute the baseline for bilateral in year “n”
- During the year, flagship leaders or focal points will enter newly submitted proposals into the database but these proposals will not be flagged to be assigned to FTA until they have been approved by FTA management team. This can be done during any of the regulars MT meeting based on the relevance of the objectives of the proposal to FTA’s objectives, the full-cost recovery or explicit co-financing by w1-2 and overall CRP budget considerations.
- Email notification will inform the FTA director when a new project is entered
- If the proposal doesn’t materialize into an actual project, it is removed from the database
- If the proposal becomes an actual project but:
 - is not assigned to FTA, it will be marked as invalid and disabled but remains in the database
 - is assigned to FTA, it will be flagged “active” for inclusion in the POWB of year “n”

This should allow us to have an updated bilateral database and a consultative across the board process to allocate bilateral projects to FTA.

We also suggest setting a minimum size for projects to be subject to this process (e.g. >100,000\$/year) to reduce the various transaction costs linked to small projects.