

TAP Review of the R-Package submitted by El Salvador

Independent TAP-Expert Review on the Self-Assessment Process of El Salvador's R-Package – September 2018

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1. Objectives

This document has the following objectives:

- To present the TAP Review for the Self Assessment Process of El Salvador's R-Package, undertaken through a participatory multi-stakeholder consultation. The review assesses REDD+ readiness progress and remaining challenges to be addressed when transitioning from Readiness to implementation of performance based REDD+ activities.
- To assist PC on its decision to endorse the R-Package, which is a prerequisite for accepting the submission of El Salvador's Emissions Reduction Program Document (ER-PD).

2. Methodological Approach

This section presents the scope of the work performed for the TAP review, as per the following Terms of Reference required activities:

- To review of El Salvador's progress and the self-assessment report, based on guidelines in the R-Package Assessment Framework
- Review El Salvador's documentation of stakeholders' self-assessment, including the process that was used for the self-assessment and the reported outcome.
- Review key outputs and documents that underpin, and are referenced in, the R-Package, including documents pertaining to the national REDD strategy and ESMF, reference levels and forest monitoring, and national institutional structures. Provide constructive and targeted feedback, as required to align the processes used for self-assessment and reported outcome, comparing with the R-Package Assessment Framework guidance

Also, to review completeness of the R-Package, including:

- i. A summary of the readiness preparation process;
- ii. A report of the multi-stakeholder self-assessment process;
- iii. The results of the national multi-stakeholder assessment;
- iv. References to documentation pertinent to the nine subcomponents, prepared during the readiness preparation process

As a main deliverable, this Report, according to the TOR, must address:

- Self-assessment process and documentation submitted by El Salvador, and
- Progress on REDD+ readiness with emphasis on strengths and weaknesses of each subcomponent as per the TAP perception (without judging the content of the self assessment report).

To carry out the required tasks, the assessment will be presented on 3 main sections:

- Section 1: Review self-assessment process and documentation, based on El Salvador's R-Readiness package
- Section 2: Review progress on REDD+ readiness based on the submitted reports and background documents and information
- Section 3: Summary Assessment and Recommendations

The TAP review does not have the intention of second-guessing the country's self assessment, which is based on a comprehensive multi-stakeholder process guided by FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. The review rather focus on the due process and approach while performing the self assessment, and provides feedback to the FCPF Participants Committee (PC).

The Ministry of Environment and National Resources of El Salvador (MARN) has prepared a R-Package Report, where Annex 2 corresponds to the Stakeholders Self-Assessment Report. The main body of the report presents the Summary of the Readiness Process, and the country's progress and approach with reference to the 4 REDD Readiness components. The following box presents El Salvador's R-Package Report's outline

Box 1 - Outline of El Salvador's R-Package Report

Summary of the Readiness Process for the REDD+ National Strategy according to the Adaption-based Mitigation Approach: Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes (REDD+ AbM: REP)

1. Component 1. Readiness Organization and Consultation
 - 1.1. Subcomponent 1.A National REDD+ AbM Management Arrangements
 - 1.2. Subcomponent 1.B Consultation, Participation and Outreach
2. Component 2. REDD+ AbM Strategy Preparation
 - 2.1. Subcomponent 2.A Assessment of Land Use, Land Use Change Drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Governance
 - 2.2. Subcomponent 2.B REDD+ Strategy Options
 - 2.3. Subcomponent 2.C Implementation Framework
 - 2.4. Subcomponent 2. D Social and Environmental Impacts
3. Component 3: Reference Emission Levels/Forest Reference Levels (FREL(FRL))
4. Component 4: Monitoring Systems for Forests and Safeguards
 - 4.1. Subcomponent 4a. National Forest Monitoring System
5. Annexes
 - 5.1. Annex 1. Policies and Instruments to support the REDD+ AbM Strategy
 - 5.2. Annex 2. Self-Assessment Process

3. TAP Review

a. Section 1: Review of Self-Assessment Process and Documentation

This section addresses the process followed by El Salvador to conduct its self-assessment, based on the documentation provided in the R-PP. It presents the TAP Review of institutional arrangements for preparing and carrying out the assessment; the documentation prepared and used for the assessment; the process for selecting and conveying stakeholders, and the process for capturing the participants' points of view and how these will be considered in future REDD+ decisions making in El Salvador.

Before engaging in the specific Readiness self-assessment process review, it is worth acknowledging the already comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultation process that has characterized El Salvador's REDD+ process. Since 2012, the participation of local communities, farmers, indigenous peoples, women groups, NGOs, academia, government officers, plus civil society has allowed the National Strategy on REDD+ to be built, and to keep it continuously shaped and modeled according to the new information obtained and discussed. El Salvador has maintained an open dialogue and consultation process with a wide variety of stakeholders. There has been a total of 63 activities involving the participation of 206 entities from all over the country, and engaging 2,204 people, 34% being women.

The Self-Assessment comes as a new consultation process about the whole set of REDD+ activities, which have already been incorporated during consultations for developing each of the key R-package pieces (ie, National REDD+ MbA Strategy, SESA, Reference Level, Safeguards, and MRV). Moreover, the Self-Assessment ratings compares to a MTR assessment previously carried out.

Consultations for the self assessment process took place through 2 different workshops, with different type of stakeholders, who participated in the different workshops according to their interest and knowledge of the topics to be discussed.

- **WORKSHOP 1.** This workshop was designed to evaluate Components 1 and 2. It included participants from civil society and NGO (ie, CCM Morazán, ACUGOLFO, CORDES, FUNSALPRODESE, FIAES, ACOLCHI, MICSUR, CONFRAS), private sector (ie, Berlín Production, CSC), indigenous communities (ie, Mesa Indígena Medio Ambiente -MNIMA, ACOLGUA, CCNIS), international cooperation (ie, GIZ, CCAD), government (ie, MARN). Participants had already taken part of the previous workshops about the National Safeguards Approach, about the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment -SESA, and about the REDD+ AbM Strategy. The group was divided in three: women, indigenous communities, and other.

- WORKSHOP 2. This workshop was designed to evaluate Components 3 and 4. It included participants from the private sector (ie, Coffee Salvadorian Council -CSC), international cooperation (ie, GIZ), government (ie, Ministry of Agriculture, MARN-Climate Change, REDD, Restoration, Environmental Observatory), research and academy (ie, El Salvador Natural History Museum, El Salvador University).

Total participants in the 2 groups totaled 42, with a majority from government (33%), followed by NGOs (21.4%), international cooperation (14%), indigenous communities (14%), and private sector (0.7%).

For an easier understanding of the whole set of documents and underpinning information, MARN prepared the questions according to the FCPF Guidelines and distributed them to all self-assessment participants. Also, in the case of Workshop 2, concept notes about each of the processes undertaken as part of the REDD+-Readiness were prepared and handed over to the participants.

The methodology at the actual workshops consisted on a presentation on the achieved progress regarding each of the sub-components. The sessions included a section of questions and answers to ensure an adequate understanding about REDD+ Readiness in El Salvador. Participants were to express their own perception of the progress to date, and to indicate the topics on which work was pending or progress was required.

Next, each group would work on the progress rating, following a color code, further aided by corresponding numbers, as per the figure below.

0	1	2	3
No progress shown as yet	More development needed Good progress but needs to be	progress but needs to be developed further	Considerable progress made

The self-assessment also compared to the ratings obtained at a previous MTR self-assessment exercise, this former one made by the government. It is worth noticing that there were only three areas where the participants assigned a poorer rating comparing to the MTR's. These were the Accountability and transparency, Fund Management capacity, and the benefit-sharing mechanism. In the first criterion, the participants required greater disclosure. With relation to the fund management, participants do not perceive good progress, although the government claims a good management and report to donors. As per the benefit sharing, there are concerns from the local communities that would like to see payments for emission reductions, rather than direct investment in productive activities and ecosystems restoration. The participants agreed in that there should be a better effort in clarifying the real benefits to the stakeholders, so that expectations get aligned. No progress has been reported with relation to the action plans to address natural resources rights, land tenure, and governance.

In general, the self-assessment places good progress with relation to the consultation, participation and outreach, to the assessment of the problem, identification of drivers,

identification of barriers, adoption of regulation and legislation, and on the management of social and environmental impacts.

Table 1 – Average ratings from the Self-Assessment process (source: R-PP)

No.	Criteria	Indicador	
		MTR (government)	ACTUAL/PACKAGE (stakeholders)
Component 1: Organization and konsultation for the prepration period			
Subcomponent 1a: National management mechanisms of the REDD + MbA program for the National Strategy for the Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes (EN-REP)			
1.	Accountability and Transparency		
2.	Operating mandate and budget		
3.	Mechanisms for multisectoral coordination and intersectoral collaboration		
4.	Capacity for Technical supervision		
5.	Capacity for Financial Administration		
6.	Mechanisms for knowledge exchange and compensation for claims		
Subcomponent 1b: consultation, participation y social difusion			
7.	Participation and intervention of the principla stalkholders		
8.	Consultation processes		
9.	Knowledge exchange and access to information		
10.	Execution and public disclosure of the results for the consultations.		
Component 2: formulation of a REDD+ Strategy			
Subcomponent: 2a. Evalutaion on Land-use, and causes for changes in land-use, forest sector laws, politics and administration.			
11.	Evaluation and Analysis		
12.	Establishing Priority Factors that cause direct and indirect barriers to the increase in researves of carbon in forests		
13.	Relationship between causes/barriers and activities related to REDD+MbA.		
14.	Action Plans made to analyze Access and Rights assooiated with Natural Reources, land rights and administration		
15.	Implications laws and policies have on forests		
Subcomponent: 2b. Options for REDD+ Strategies			
16.	Establishing Priority Options for REDD+MbA strategies		
17.	Evaluación de la viability		
18.	Implications strategy options have on sectoral policies that already exist		
Subcomponent: 2c. Execution Framework			
19.	Adoption e implementation for legislations/ rules		
20.	Guidelines for implementation		
21.	Benefit-sharing mechanisms		
22.	National registry of REDD + MbA and activities of the REDD + monitoring system		
Subcomponent: 2d. Social and Environmental Impacts			
23.	Analysis of issues related to social and environmental safeguards		
24.	Design of the REDD + MbA strategy with respect to impacts		
25.	Framework for environmnetal and social administration		
Component 3 reference levels for emissions.			
26.	Showing adequate methodology		
27.	Historical data, adjusted to national circumstances		
28.	Technical viability with a methodological focus, congruent to the overall direction of CMNUCC/ Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Climate Change		
Componente 4 sistema de evaluación sugerido en el marco de evaluación del paquete de preparación			
Subcomponent: 4a. national forest monitoring system			
29.	Documentation of the tracking approach		
30.	Demonstration of early system execution		
31.	Mechanisms and institutional capacities		
Subcomponent: 4b. Information system for multiple benefits, other Impacts, management and safeguards			
32.	Identification of relevant aspects not related to carbon and social and environmental issues		
33.	Monitoring, reporting and information exchange		
34.	Mechanisms and institutional capacities		

- **TAP Assessment.** *The participative Self-Assessment Process in El Salvador followed the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. The R-Package Report, which includes sections on the Self Assessment Process, includes all required elements, and links and references to the necessary complementary information and background documents. However, the TAP Review would have been easier, had the ratings on the assessment criteria been supported with specific feedback from the consulted working groups; rather it had a compiled report summarizing all comments received per criteria. So it was difficult to determine the different perceptions from the different interest groups.*
- *For future reference, it will be interesting to register the different views from the different types of stakeholders, in particular when entering the implementation phase. Other element to address in the future is the relatively weak participation from the private sector. The larger representation resulted from government, NGOs, and cooperants (73%). This organizational setting could be assessed as a weakness of the process. So, for the next ER phase, one of the TAP recommendations is to incorporate the participation of private sector and local communities in a much stronger way. This is particularly important for next phase, as it will help leverage private capital to the REDD+ implementation objectives.*

b. Section 2: Review of Progress on REDD+ Readiness

This section evaluates the progress on REDD+ readiness, as per the four Readiness Components that are: (i) Readiness Arrangements and Organization; (ii) National REDD+ Strategy Preparation; (iii) Reference Emissions Level; and (iv) Monitoring System and Safeguards. The evaluation is based on the criteria used by El Salvador in its self-assessment, following the FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework Guidelines. In this section the TAP evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of each subcomponent.

The review was based on the REDD+ R-Package Document prepared by MARN for FCPF. Also, the National REDD+ MbA Strategy, the Reference Emissions Level, and SESA. In addition, further documents were consulted, regarding each of the readiness components (see section 6 below).

Component 1: Readiness, Organization and Consultation

Sub-Component 1a: National REDD+ Management Arrangements (Criteria 1-6)

Institutional Arrangements (Criteria 1,2,3,5: Yellow; criterion 4: green). El Salvador has approached climate change from an adaptation perspective, with the aim of restoring the environmental capacity of ecosystems nationwide, to improve resilience to climate change, protect livelihoods, enhance production, generate economic opportunities in the rural areas, and protect and sustainably use its natural resources. This approach has helped shape the National

REDD+ Adaptation-based Mitigation-AbM Strategy, oriented to the restoration of ecosystems and landscapes. The Ministry of Environment and National Resources (MARN) is the government agency leading the REDD+ readiness process, and with coordination recourse to the Cabinet on Environmental Sustainability and Vulnerability, formed by the Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency, the Ministries of Environment, Government, Defense, Public Works and Transport, Tourism, Agriculture and Cattle Ranching, Foreign Affairs, the Vulnerability Secretariat, the Administration of Water and Sewage, and the Lema River Hydroelectric Commission. Also, MARN has also used the CONASAV platform to discuss the National REDD+ AbM Strategy. The National Council on Environmental Sustainability and Vulnerability (CONASAV), created by Presidential Decree, and integrated by the government ministries, international cooperation agencies, thinktanks, NGOs, and civil society representatives, is a dialogue and general advisory platform, created to monitor the strategy.

Additional important consultation platforms include the Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes Round Table, the National Indigenous Round Table on the Environment (MNIMA), the Local Advisory Committees on Protected Natural Areas (COAL), the Local Plan for Sustainable Use (PLAS), the RAMSAR Local Committee, and the Biosphere Reserve Local Committee.

The process has been participative, and has relied on a dialogue and consultation process initiated since the beginning of the readiness phase, including the SESA, the construction of the National Safeguards System. At the subnational level it has engaged local communities in a variety of workshops, securing the participation of indigenous communities. Also, municipality governments have also been engaged in the dialogue. At the national government level, the participation of the Ministry of Agriculture has been relevant, as much of the implementation falls under its scope.

As per Funds Management, MARN has already finalized the investment of FCPF's \$3.2 million, executed in the period 2015-2018. Complementary technical financial cooperation from GIZ, USA, Spain and UNDP have been important in the development of methodologies for landscape planning, forest inventory, and the MRV system. Pilot programs have been financed, and additional investments related to water management, and risk management have taken place or are being implemented.

Self Assessment. The self-assessment concluded that with relation to the Institutional Arrangement and Coordination there is progress but still there is room for improvement. The technical capacity of the government to supervise progress and manage the strategy has been recognized as showing good progress. Particularly perceived as weak by stakeholders is the Fund Management Capacity, although the government self-assessment does not share this appreciation. In fact, the government has expressed that the international cooperation has flown due to the platform solidity, while stake holders expect that resources are made available at the local level.

- *[TAP Review](#). A good and open consultation process has been taking place, under a strong leadership by MARN. Information on Institutional and organizational setup for REDD+ is*

clear and the overall coordination seems to be working both at national and subnational levels. It is clear that the government is engaged on adaptation when it comes to climate change, and when setting national and international agreements. The widely adopted Adaptation-based Mitigation is a novel approach to REDD+, and has identified ecosystems restoration as a priority. MARN has managed to coordinate efforts behind a common AbM understanding at all levels. Regarding the discrepancy about the perception of funds management, it seems that the local communities are still expecting a more direct retribution or payment for environmental services, which may be solved by further dissemination about the use of funds, and the type of benefits that local communities and ecosystems can attain in the mid to long term.

Feedback and grievance redress mechanism (criterion 6: Green). El Salvador's MARN has set a strong grievance system, where people can easily denounce or bring attention to elements of ecosystem restoration or degradation. A hotline, supported by email, and social media, has been established, and three points of attention have been set in the country. Recent regulation established environmental courts to participate and resolve disputes, which adds stronger capacity to the system.

Self Assessment. The rating given to the Complaints and Grievance Redress Mechanisms (CGRM) is very positive, as there is a recognition of the system and its usability. Both government and stakeholders coincide on the good rating.

- *TAP Review. CRGM is in place, and it's being used to denounce all types of environmental damages. It is a good mechanism for the community to express their concerns about specific damages being made to the environment. However, it is not clear that the system may help address other REDD+ related concerns such as the tenure issues, carbon rights, or benefit distribution. For the future ER phases, the system should be ready to provide specific feedback on any information requests or concerns about the REDD+ AbM strategy.*

Sub-Component 1b: Consultation, Participation and Outreach (Criteria 7-10)

Participation of key stakeholders (criterion 7: green), and Consultation Process (criterion 8: green). As presented in the above section on REDD+ institutional coordination, El Salvador has been participative and all relevant stakeholders have been involved in the different development stages, following a Participation and Consultation Plan, designed for the consultation of the REDD+ AbM Strategy. The objective is to ensure a broad participation of citizens and stakeholders, with special attention to including different sectors, as well as a good representation of society (ie, indigenous communities, women's organizations, trade unions, producer associations, agricultural cooperatives, environmental organizations, academia and research, and the civil society). CONASAV's participation has been useful, as it already represents a broad variety of stakeholders. The strategy has then been oriented to identify and convey the participation of all stakeholders in a variety of consultation processes regarding the REDD+ AbM strategy.

The process of consultation and participation started in 2013, with the identification of a stakeholders' map, and continued through a series of workshops at all levels to socialize and receive feedback on topics such as the impacts of climate change, the analysis of deforestation drivers, the components of the REDD+ AbM Strategy, the REDD Communications Strategy, and the analysis of restoration techniques for ecosystems and landscapes, efforts that concluded in the first draft of the REDD+ AbM strategy. Also, the SESA took place, and the Social and Environmental Assessment System got collectively built.

Information sharing and accessibility of information and implementation and public disclosure of consultation outcomes (criterion 9: yellow; criterion 10: green). Information packages have been produced at all levels, according to the guidelines established by the REDD+ Communications strategy. A first line of information dissemination is through the different governance levels (i.e., Cabinet, CONASAV, Restoration Roundtable, Subnational Roundtables). Specific websites were created such as www.AbM.sv, which presents progress on the readiness process, and the website www.restauracion.AbM.sv, which presents various restoration techniques and helps engage the people on restoration processes. A national survey to evaluate the results of the communications strategy was performed to ensure that early feedback was incorporated in the communications strategy.

The implementation process follows a logical framework of (i) raising awareness about the problem, the ecosystems being degraded, and the benefits associated to their restoration; (ii) identifying and assigning priority to specific areas to be restored; (iii) elaborating local restoration/reforestation/protection plans addressed to the specific drivers identified; (iv) coordinating mechanisms for implementation of restoration activities in the territory, and (v) monitoring and evaluating the actions and impacts, and how these can provide feedback to the system. El Salvador also established an observatory for environmental and social conflicts within MARN, to further engage stakeholders in providing feedback on the REDD+ AbM strategy and other environmental issues.

Self Assessment. In general, in the self assessment process, the rating for the entire consultation, participation and outreach sub-component indicated good progress, with the exception of Information sharing and access to information, which shows some progress but still needing further improvement. Of particular importance is the creation of political spaces through CONASAV, that has allowed for a multi-stakeholder participation, that has helped add legitimacy to the process. Also, the different consultation processes steered by MARN have been provided with guidelines which have been allowed for an orderly participation. The communications strategy has been recognized and has helped dissemination and publication of reports. Better spaces for indigenous participation have been identified, through the use of culturally appropriate material, and further engagement processes.

- *TAP Review. As indicated in the previous section of the report, public consultation seems to be strong, if not the strongest, feature of El Salvador REDD+ Readiness process. All interest groups have been involved, and particular emphasis has been placed on those stakeholders representing minorities such as indigenous peoples, farmers, and women.*

The self assessment process has been done in accordance to guidelines. Nonetheless, the TAP recommendation is to further strengthen the feedback part of the consultation process. It will help gain additional support and participation, if the comments and suggestions could be better registered, and traced back. Also, it seems that the information to the indigenous communities should be better conveyed, using culturally appropriated materials and means.

Component 2: REDD+ Strategy Preparation

Sub-component 2a: Assessment of Land Use, Land-use change drivers, Forest Law, Policy and Government (criteria 11-15)

Legal Framework and Governance (criterion 11: green; criterion 14: orange; criterion 15: green). In El Salvador there is a comprehensive legal framework consistent with the REDD+ AbM Strategy, including the set of relevant safeguards consistent with the UNFCCC's Cancun Agreements.

Land use change drivers and REDD+ (criteria 12-13: green). Land use in El Salvador is primarily concentrated in basic grain crops (18.16%), coffee crops (10.57%), mosaic of crops with grass (8.08%, mosaic of crops with grass and shrub vegetation (12.23%), natural and cultivated pastures (12%), and forests (15.46%). This status reflects the main deforestation driver, which is the agricultural activity. The main causes of ecosystem degradation are the over exploitation of natural resources, the unsustainable management of agriculture, and the impact of external events such as fires. Other main drivers are logging for firewood, urban growth, plagues and diseases.

Self Assessment. The rating from the Self-Assessment process for this sub-component acknowledging good progress, with the exception of plans to address natural resource rights, land tenure and governance, where no progress is reported. Analysis has been done to identify degradation and deforestation drivers, and to identify degraded landscapes that offer restoration opportunities. Stakeholders have agreed that there is still work to be done with respect to land rights, use, and management of natural resources, due to structural barriers present in the country, such as the situation of the land partition.

- *TAP review. Land tenure and rights on natural resources are key elements of a sound REDD+ strategy, so this is an element of the REDD+ AbM Strategy that deserves special attention when advancing to the ER phase. This, because as it will be seen later in the report, benefits sharing lacks clarity, and the incentives to protect and enhance forests may be washed away.*

Sub-component 2b. REDD+ Strategy Options (criteria 16-18: yellow)

El Salvador has set a REDD+ strategic framework oriented to enhance and protect ecosystems in order to allow for a sustainable and enhanced resiliency to climate change, to benefit from the

environmental services to be attained through better forests and natural resources, and to positively impact people's quality of life, productivity and competitiveness. The strategy guarantees full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders in the definition and implementation of the REDD+ Strategy. The REDD+ AbM strategy framework is oriented to address the main deforestation and forest degradation drivers; to develop environmental zoning for protecting affected key ecosystems; to maintain forests and increase tree cover in critical areas; design and incentives program and offsetting mechanism; and to monitor and evaluate the restoration of ecosystems and landscapes. Through the process of dialogue with relevant stakeholders MARN has been able to advance to the first REDD+ AbM Strategy version, including rules, roles and responsibilities with reference to regulatory and political support, strategy implementation, and operation. Due to the strategy's adaptation-based approach, the interventions are at a landscape's scale, and require a high level of participation. To address the main land use drivers, the strategy includes environmental zoning and guidelines for land use and ecosystem restoration. The REDD+ strategy has also been complemented with a comprehensive forest fire prevention and management strategy. The R-PP indicates that an inter institutional dialogue between the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture has begun to identify and deal with the potential inconsistencies between different sector development goals (e.g. agriculture vs environment).

Self Assessment. The self-assessment indicates that there is progress, but there is still work to be done. It recognizes progress with respect to the general political validation and public acceptance of the strategy, the complement with the already operational Restoration Plan, and the set of technical, economic and working instruments that make the REDD+ AbM strategy. The challenge ahead remains in the promotion and dissemination of the instruments, and about the advantages for the private sector and local communities.

- *TAP Review. The Self Assessment process was clear in what refers to reflect the cause-effect approach to develop the REDD+ AbM Strategy, directly addressing the main drivers. It also refers to the overall stakeholder endorsement, and political acceptance, which is essential to make a landscape-oriented strategy viable. There are still some information gaps that could be filled, as the assessment about potential leakage, the issues about land tenure and potential carbon rights or rights for environmental performance payments. These topics should be addressed as they are key for determining ER implementation risks.*

Sub-component 2c: Implementation Framework (criteria 19-20: green; criterion 21: orange; criterion 22: yellow)

El Salvador counts with a complete legal framework that is consistent with the REDD+ AbM Strategy. The country has also started implementation of its comprehensive REDD+ AbM strategy through the launching of MRN's Action Plan for Landscape and Ecosystem Restoration with an AbM Approach (2018-2022). The plan follows the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) and it considers the different restoration options according to social, biophysical and economic criteria. In addition, the Restoration Fund has been established under the Initiative for the Americas Fund of El Salvador (FIAES), which channels resources to local

actors from the private sector, communities, small farmers, local governments, and indigenous communities. A cost benefit analysis has been carried out to demonstrate that the REDD+ AbM Strategy: National Program for the Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes is profitable and economically viable.

Self Assessment. This sub-component indicated good progress for what relates to the Adoption and implementation of regulation/legislation, and for the Guidelines for Implementation. The benefit sharing mechanism indicator did not show much progress, and the National REDD+ registry and system for monitoring activities indicated some progress but still needs additional work. The strategy implementation framework has been defined, and endorsed by stakeholders, which manifests that they are ready for implementation. Stakeholders need to be engaged in actual implementation, for which funding is needed. Private sector engagement can be triggered when the benefits over costs are better understood, and when the specific investment opportunities are identified. The Registry of REDD+ activities is conceptually and structurally defined, but still needs that the MRV gets in place, which is depending on the new FCPF funding phase. The orange rating for the benefit distribution is to be changed once the beneficiaries understand the benefits, which will be depending on further dissemination about the arrangements.

- *TAP Review. El Salvador has developed a framework for implementation, consisting of a REDD+ AbM Strategy, an Action Plan for Landscape and Ecosystem Restoration, a legal framework, and the stakeholders' validation. The REDD+ AbM Strategy has identified priority areas where potential land restoration could take place, and has modelled the potential impact of restoring 1 million hectares using 9 different techniques, applicable to 7 target land uses. Nonetheless, it is recommended that a specific work plan can be developed, including potential organizational arrangements to implement the ER activities and related transactions. Also, there is missing information regarding steps to cope with pending issues, such as the land ownership and carbon rights assessment for potential REDD+ activities and lands.*

Sub-component 2d: Social and Environmental Impacts (criterion 23: yellow; criteria 24-25: green)

In line with the UNFCCC's Cancun Agreements, and as part of the process of R-Readiness, El Salvador has carried out a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment – SESA, which has helped define the Environmental and Social Management Framework -ESMF in accordance with the World Bank's social and environmental safeguard policies. SESA involved the participation of all relevant stakeholders: Public Sector, Indigenous Peoples, Rural Women, Agricultural Cooperatives, Community Development Associations (ADESCO), Universities and Research Centers, NGOs aimed at the Environment and Sustainable Agriculture, the Forestry Sector, the Coffee Agroindustry, the Sugar Agroindustry, and International Cooperation. Potential impacts for each strategic guideline, activity and restoration technique was assessed, considering the all of the REDD+ safeguard policies. MGAS considered the SESA outcomes, and defined the mitigation measures for each of the risks identified.

Self Assessment. This sub-component indicates some progress but needing further development with regards to the analysis of environmental and social safeguards issues, which is to be done once specific activities are to be implemented; and good progress with respect to the REDD+ strategy design with respect to impacts, and to the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). The participatory process, which started with a good and comprehensive capacity building process has been important to engage stakeholders in the analysis of the social and environmental safeguards, and in setting the REDD+ strategy safeguards.

- *TAP Review. The extensive, comprehensive, and participatory approach to identifying and defining the social and environmental safeguards for the REDD+ AbM Strategy is recognized. There is a SESA already implemented, and an Environmental and Social Management Framework in place, consistent with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Safeguards.*

Component 3: Reference Emissions Level/Reference Levels (criteria 26-28: yellow)

El Salvador is developing a National Reference Emissions Level based on deforestation, according to the UNFCCC and IPCC guidelines. Activity Data (AD) were analyzed according to the IPCC classification; forests were stratified, and classification and image correction was made using high resolution images and sampling. Emission factors are being determined at national and regional levels, and IPCC default values are used. There is a calculation of emissions associated to deforestation activities and conservation of stocks. A preliminary mapping of carbon stocks has been completed. The calculation of historical and projected changes in each deforestation activity is pending, as well as the incorporation of national circumstances. The process is estimated to be complete by 2019. The emission reduction potential due to avoided deforestation was estimated for a pilot area (Imposible-Barra de Santiago) amounting to 931 ha.

Self Assessment. The rating for this component indicates some progress but still needing work to be done. The methodology to define the national or subnational reference level has been developed, and is aligned with IPCC guidelines. Stakeholders still consider that the process should be more transparent. There are forest management areas that need to be removed from potential emission levels.

- *TAP Review. As with most of the REDD Readiness Components and Sub-components, participants seem to recognize and acknowledge progress. There is a methodological approach and work plan to develop the reference level of deforestation. Also, the R-PP includes considerations about uncertainty and about degradation. There are linkages to drivers taken into account (i.e. Consideration of projected crop area expansion). The TAP recommendation regarding degradation is to abide by the IPCC definitions. This component is ready for ER approval.*

Component 4: Monitoring Systems for Forests, and Safeguards

Sub-component 4a: National Forest Monitoring System (criteria 29-31: yellow)

The National Forest Monitoring System (SNMFS) is being designed and is using methodological approaches and inputs from other relevant work such as the National Forest Inventory, or the methodology for devising the Forest Reference Level of Emissions, forest maps using RapidEye images (2011 and 2016), Landsat based maps, and other high-resolution images and multi-spectra data available. Considering the clouds interference, MARN is considering other technological tools such as the use of different sensors like Sentinel. An inter institutional committee has been formed to develop SNMF, including institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Museum of Natural History, or the University of El Salvador. These and other institutions have participated in capacity building activities, which will continue in the future, and will incorporate further training on remote sensing, applying emission factors to REDD+ activities, gathering data from local observers, and tracking and verifying changes.

Self Assessment. Progress has been reflected in the documentation about the monitoring approach, which has been made available to stakeholders and technical reviewers. Tests and demonstration have taken place with the participation of stakeholders. There are considerations on how to tackle the challenges ahead, such as the presence of clouds, the legal foothold for the monitoring system, the mechanisms to capture data, the setting of different emission factors for different forest types, or the need for higher resolution due to the small forest minimal area of 0.5 ha.

- *TAP Review. Similar to the Reference Emissions Level process, monitoring is perceived as progressing and constantly enhancing capacity. The R-PP provides a general set up for developing the monitoring and reporting system about changes in deforestation/forest growth. It includes ideas on capacity building and methodological approach, and on how to track REDD+ implementation. Also, it lays out potential problems and ideas on how to solve them (e.g., cloud presence). A TAP recommendation for future phases is to consider SAR imaging, combined with LIDAR and field data, for solving the cloud problem.*

Sub-component 4b: Information System for Multiple Benefits, Other Impacts, Governance and Safeguards (criteria 32-34: yellow)

El Salvador is aiming at having a comprehensive monitoring system that integrates data on co-benefits with data on the status of vegetation resources, including indicators to track performance. A list of co-benefits is being developed with key stakeholders, so that users can openly get access to the platform and verify historical status of each indicators. R-PP includes a concept for setting the monitoring system for the REDD+ AbM Strategy, including the type of information data required, and the type of data management platform. Also, it includes the type of indicators and how they relate with historical data and impact measurement. A web portal prototype has been developed, containing information about the National Safeguards System,

with reference to the REDD+ AbM strategy. Following recommendations from UNFCCC's Cancun Agreements, MARN would be the institution that should act as administrator of the SIS, which would also include the role of interacting with stakeholders. The R-PP also presents the challenges of handling such a complex set of information, and also lays out the SIS-REDD+ AbM Reporting Unit functions.

Self Assessment. The Self-Assessment rating from stakeholders is Yellow for all indicators, compared to the Orange rating given by the Government at MTR. This is a reflection of significant progress in this area, as the co-benefits indicators and contributing institutions have been identified. The need for further dissemination and awareness has been identified, as well as the need to define the mechanism for capacity building and for ensuring continuity of the process independent of the different government administrations.

- *TAP Review. A conceptual approach for monitoring the REDD+ AbM Strategy has already been designed, integrating information about resources, effects, landscapes and ecosystems, and activities. Also, there are ideas about capability and capacity building needs, and on the overall Safeguard Information System governance.*

4. Summary assessment and recommendations

a. Overall R-Readiness Progress

Based on the documents consulted, the TAP Reviewer considers that the Self-Assessment Report, together with the R-Package information confirms that El Salvador's progress on REDD+ readiness is enough to move to the next ER phase. El Salvador started its REDD+ strategy building process in 2012, and has progressively strengthened the participation of different stakeholders at all levels. Progress has also been achieved at the technical level, especially on safeguards, on the identification and estimation of forests' related carbon, and on the system of monitoring.

b. Self Assessment Process

As indicated above, the Self-Assessment process in El Salvador has been done in agreement with FCPF Readiness Assessment Framework, it has incorporated the participation of all stakeholders' representation, and has even made participatory consultations possible at the National, and Subnational Levels. Further, it has stressed the participation of civil society, farmers and indigenous peoples (In addition to the other groups long incorporated in the consultation processes).

El Salvador's REDD+ vision is novel, and mainly focused on adaptation through a comprehensive ecosystem restoration plan (Adaptation-based Mitigation -AbM). Under this approach, REDD+ is mainly focused to landscapes, involving a variety of regional stakeholders. The current land title

split, in ejidos (small land plots), makes it difficult to develop large landscape projects at once. Therefore, the consultation processes including the self-assessment have rightly targeted all relevant stakeholders to reflect the views of all interest groups starting with the local beneficiaries.

The information and document preparation for the Self-Assessment events clearly convey the on-going participatory process of REDD+ in El Salvador. The documentation integrated all required R-Package elements, with links to complementary and underpinning information. Additional documents such as the REDD+ AbM Strategy, or the Action Plan for Ecosystem and Landscape Restoration (2018-2022) were also consulted.

c. Overall Assessment and Recommendations

The self assessment ratings show a good level of acknowledgement of El Salvador's progress in REDD+ readiness, as indicated by the majority of Yellow and Green scores. El Salvador has placed important efforts to disseminate the REDD+ AbM Strategy at the central and local level, allowing public participation in its development process.

Local implementation of REDD+ seems to be a commonly accepted goal, which requires further capacity building and dissemination of information, especially regarding benefits distribution, as ER investments will most probably take place through productive and livelihood activities, as part of the Restoration Plan, as opposed to the traditional payment for environmental services.

During the next ER phase, it is recommended to evaluate how potential private investors in forest land restoration could be framed within the national REDD+ AbM Strategy, while applying REDD+ methodologies to produce carbon credits. This complementary approach could trigger important investments from private and public REDD+ investors, while achieving the national restoration goals. The R-PP already presents an interesting example of a REDD+ project oriented to restore and conserve agroforestry arrangements for coffee croplands.

Identification of co-benefits, and further work on the risks and economic feasibility of REDD+ activities at the local level will be important to incentivize forest conservation and restoration in certain areas.

Finally, it seems the legal and institutional process still represents a challenge that should be addressed as the first steps of the ER phase, in particular the gaps regarding land tenure, carbon rights and benefits distribution. Other areas to quickly address during the next phase are the development of the Reference Emission Levels for Deforestation, and the MRV System.

5. References

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