CALL FOR PROJECTS CLOSED BY THE END OF MAY

In March 2023, APFNet launched a call for new projects seeking submissions for regular demonstration projects from member economies. This was APFNet's first project call since the outbreak of the pandemic. The call was open for two months, closed on May 31.

A preliminary screening of the Concept Notes has been conducted to assist the project appraisal. The CN appraisal process will begin in July and is expected to be completed by PAP at the end of August.

A TOTAL OF **32** REGULAR PROJECT CONCEPT NOTES WERE RECEIVED FROM **16** MEMBER ECONOMIES, INCLUDING NINE THAT WERE RECEIVED IN 2021 AND 2022.

Project appraisal is a comprehensive process used to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of a proposed project before its implementation. This process helps APFNet make informed decisions about whether to proceed with a project proposal. APFNet has updated its Criteria, Indicators, and Processes for Appraising APFNet Projects, to ensure a closer alignment with the APFNet Strategic Plan and more concentration on increasing the impact of the demonstration projects.

In this issue

THE SEVENTH MEETINGS OF THE APFNET BOARD OF DIRECTORS & COUNCIL

The Seventh Meeting of the APFNet Council was held on 26-27 April 2023 in Manila, the Philippines, in conjunction with the Seventh Meeting of the APFNet Board of Directors held on 28 April 2023. It was the first face-to-face gathering for the Board and Council members after the COVID-19 pandemic, organized in a hybrid format.

Group photo of the Council meeting participants

Representatives from 18 member economies and organizations attended the Council meeting and heard APFNet's work, the progress made in 2022, the planned activities, and the budget for 2023. The Council agreed to initiate modification of the APFNet Operational Framework and the selection process to appoint the members of the Project Appraisal Panel.

During the Board of Directors meeting, Dr John Innes was appointed Vice-Chair, Mr W.T.B. Dissanayake's term was extended, and the Board reviewed and approved the proposed APFNet work plan and budget for 2023.

Group photo of the Board members

Upon the offer from Thailand, the Eighth Meetings of the Council and the Board of Directors will be held in 2024, to be hosted by the Royal Forestry Department.

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Council representatives visited in Makiling Rainforest Park and Botanic garden, the Philippines

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A SMALL RESEARCH PROJECT INITIATED WITH SANFRI FUNDING

A one-year research project entitled "Tree Seed Supply Management Model and Policy for Supporting Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) in Indonesia" received APFNet funds and started recently. It aims to analyze baseline data to improve tree seed production and supply management for supporting FLR in Indonesia.

This project is one of the three proposals already approved for funding in 2023 and the second project that has officially started. 3 As one of the main actions of the Sino-ASEAN Network of Forestry Research Institutes (SANFRI), the APFNet Small Research Grant supports young forestry research professionals from ASEAN and China to translate their innovative ideas into concrete research activities. The joint project "Research on Policies to Promote Natural Forest Restoration towards Sustainability in Vietnam and Lao PDR" was launched earlier this year.

#APFNet Project site

ELEVATING ROLES OF WOMEN IN ANTI-DESERTIFICATION INITIATIVES

In many developing economies in the Asia and Pacific region, the migration of men away from rural settings means that more responsibilities of managing lands and related resources are being shifted to women and other marginalized groups.

To showcase land restoration and desertification control through sustainable forest management in arid and semi-arid regions, APFNet has consecutively invested 2 phases of a demonstration project of Vegetation Restoration and Management and Utilization of Forest Resources in Greater Central Asia.

Noteworthy is the project phase 2, started in 2020, that focused on expanding women's involvement in climate change mitigation efforts in their own area.

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Women this time play a key role in the execution of project field activities, traditionally done by men, such as tree planting, pruning, weed control and watering. As a result, in 230 ha women have helped to establish demonstration forest plots to demonstrate vegetation restoration and an exhibition room showcasing achievements in desertification prevention and control of the previous decades.

Women have even participated in project planning, monitoring, overall project management and impacted forest farm-level forest strategy development. The success of the project isn't limited to remarkable results on desertification control, but also a significant contribution towards promoting gender equality at grassroots levels, highlighting the transformative power of inclusive practices in environmental initiatives.

The project site is located in the state-owned Sanyijing Forest Farm, established in 1985, at the southern edge of the semi-arid Kerqin sand land of Aohan Banner in Chifeng Municipality, Inner Mongolia of China. Click here to find out more about project.

Women nurture the seedlings

REVITALIZING PERU'S ARID LANDS: A JOURNEY TOWARDS VALUE CREATION THROUGH RESTORATION AND AGROFORESTRY

The first APFNet-funded project in South America, the Rehabilitation of Arid Ecosystems and Barren Lands through Agroforestry Systems on the Southern Coast of Peru [2022P1-PER], has seen a smooth implementation since its initiation in October 2022. With a total funding of USD 520,294 including APFNet funding of USD 348,540, the project's primary objective is to restore the degraded landscape while also adding values through productive agroforestry systems for the improvement of the livelihoods of poor rural families in a participatory way.

The project is on track to achieve its objectives during its first half-year, which spanned from October 2022 to April 2023. In particular, the project updated existing information on the restoration of barren lands and degraded ecosystems in the southern arid zone of Peru. In a cutting-edge report titled Socioeconomic Diagnosis of Stakeholders in Managing Caesalpinia Spinose Ecosystems Using Rural Rapid Appraisal (RRA) and Ecosystem Services Approach (ESA), based on the stakeholders' perceptions, conflicts between ecosystem services and social needs, and potential drivers of degradation were identified.

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The production of seedlings has been initiated in the agroforestry nurseries and seedlings will be ready for planting in the mid of August 2023. Other preparations for the recovery of degraded and uncultivated lands were also successfully initiated and attracted excellent participation from beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders. These parties consistently displayed their interest and enthusiasm, and some even made significant investments into their plots by installing a dripping irrigation system to reverse land degradation.

Establishment of agroforestry nurseries

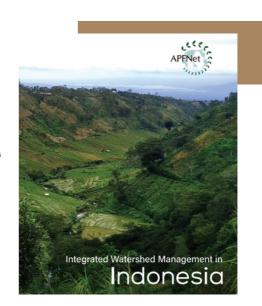Establishment of agroforestry nurseries

The drip irrigation system at project site in Camaná

The Peruvian coast, particularly its southern part, is plagued by severe water scarcity affecting not only nature but also human consumption, industry, and agriculture. Therefore, it is essential to look for alternatives that result in significant water savings, especially for irrigation. These reforestation activities in the project are expected to show that plant species adapted to the local dry environment (i.e. Caesalpinia spinose) not only have the potential to revitalize the soil itself in a comparatively short amount of time, but restore entire landscapes or significantly improve local livelihoods in the case of establishing commercial plantations.

The project activities have already sparked the interest of neighboring landowners to undertake similar initiatives despite their previous focus on crops, such as the cacti-derived dragon fruit or Pitahaya. Thus, these neighboring owners made several investments in irrigation infrastructure and planting new species. As a result, lands are currently being intensively cultivated with large investments, following the project models and experiences. Relevant stakeholders of the project, including public bodies such as the project supervisory agency SERFOR, local governments, and farmers' associations, are very attentive to the work and results of the project.

INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT IN INDONESIA

NEW PUBLICATION

A summary report is now available to share the findings of APFNet funded watershed management project in Indonesia. The project, covering 2 phases and with a time span from 2017-2022, was successfully implemented in the Naruan Microcatchment on the Indonesian island of Java. Under the guiding principle of participatory management, the project closely collaborated with 129 field partners who established a total of 90 ha of demonstration plots for agroforestry. In the challenging terrain of one of Java's main watersheds, combining agriculture with timber and fruit trees is a sustainable way of addressing erosion without compromising the livelihood of local farmers. In addition, to prevent the enlargement of some of the most severe erosion gullies in the watershed, 58 erosion control structures were built. Besides training on how to build these erosion dams, further skill-sharing training on self-chosen topics was provided to farmers to offer non-land-based livelihood alternatives and skills in the value-adding processing of agricultural goods.

The summary report has two parts: Firstly, it provides detailed background knowledge about watershed management in Indonesia, including insights into laws and regulations. Secondly, the local conditions of the project and the project measures are described comprehensively. That gives both a step-by-step description of how activities were successfully carried out, as well as a good analysis of the lessons learnt from this project, and can hopefully serve as a reference for future projects with a similar focus. Find the full report here.