



CAFI Executive Board Decision

Selection of implementing organisations for the development of payments for environmental services (PES) projects under CAFI's PES Programme No. 1 (multi-country)

Adopted by email on 20 May 2026
EB.2026.14

Considering:

- [The CAFI Declaration](#) and the persistent challenge of forest loss and food security in Central Africa.
- The national roadmaps for PES deployment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo (Rep. of Congo), and the Central African Republic (CAR) developed during the International Interministerial Conference on PES Deployment in Central Africa, held in Kinshasa from 27 to 29 January 2025.
- The launch of the planning (*Ground Impact*) and PES management (*CAFI-PES*) tools at the International Interministerial Conference on the Deployment of PES in Central Africa, held in Kinshasa from 27 to 29 January 2025.
- The shared commitment of CAFI and the governments of the DRC, the Rep. of Congo, and the CAR to continue developing and financing an ambitious portfolio of PES projects that fully integrate the PES approach and tools developed by CAFI at the regional level.
- Decision [EB.2024.33](#) on the independent verification of projects.
- Decision [EB.2025.26](#) adopting CAFI's policy on performance-based programming in agriculture, forestry, and land use (AFAT) sector projects.
- Decision [EB.2025.52](#) on the launch of [Call for Expressions of Interest](#) (Eol) No. 2026/01/Regional to select organisations responsible for developing projects under CAFI's PES Programme No. 1 in the DRC, the Rep. of Congo, and the CAR.
- The Expressions of Interest received and the evaluation report on the Eol.
- The importance of national entities' involvement in the roll-out of the PES, the challenges observed during the compliance review stage, and the outlook arising from the preliminary technical review of expressions of interest submitted by National Non-Governmental Organisations (NNGOs).

The Executive Board:

1. **Approves** the selection of (i) *African Parks Network (APN)*, (ii) *International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)*, (iii) *Enabel (Belgian Development Agency)*, (iv) *Virunga Foundation*, (v) *International Tropical Timber Technical Association (ITTA)*, (vi) *Common Fund for Commodities (CFC)* and (vii) *World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)* as implementing organisations for the formulation of a project document; **requests** the inclusion of (viii) *the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)* among the entities selected for the development of a project document, given the unique strategic value of the Church structure in the DRC; **specifies** that this selection is part of a competitive process and does not constitute a guarantee of funding.
 - 1.i. **Requests** that *APN* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to US\$15 million (fifteen million US dollars) and the other up to US\$10 million (ten million US dollars).
 - 1.ii. **Requests** that *IITA* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to USD 20 million (twenty million US dollars) and the other up to USD 10 million (ten million US dollars).
 - 1.iii. **Requests** that *Enabel* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to USD 15 million (fifteen million US dollars) and the other up to USD 10 million (ten million US dollars).
 - 1.iv. **Request** that *the Virunga Foundation* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to USD 20 million (twenty million US dollars) and the other up to USD 10 million (ten million US dollars).
 - 1.v. **Requests** that *ATIBT* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to USD 15 million (fifteen million US dollars) and the other up to USD 10 million (ten million US dollars).
 - 1.vi. **Requests** that *CFC* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to USD 25 million (twenty-five million US dollars) and the other up to USD 10 million (ten million US dollars).
 - 1.vii. **Requests** that *WWF* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to US\$25 million (twenty-five million US dollars) and the other up to US\$10 million (ten million US dollars).
 - 1.viii. **Requests** that *CAFOD* prepare a project document considering two budget options, one up to US\$15 million (fifteen million US dollars) and the other up to US\$10 million (ten million US dollars).
2. **Requests** the CAFI Secretariat to organise scoping meetings with the implementing organisations to examine, amongst other things, (i) the geographical and budgetary allocation arrangements, (ii) explicit coordination with other CAFI-funded projects, (iii) the balance between ‘production’ and ‘conservation’ PES activities, and (iv) the arrangements relating to the sustainability of interventions.
3. **Requests** that organisations invited to prepare full project documents (PRODOCs) submit their PRODOCs within four months of the date of notification of this decision.
4. **Encourages** organisations not accredited with the CAFI Fund, which have been invited to prepare PRODOCs, to undertake the CAFI accreditation process in parallel, and specifies that

the status of the accreditation, as well as the effectiveness of the implementation chain, may be considered in the final funding decisions.

5. Concerning the involvement and scaling up of national entities, **decides** to mobilise an additional USD 20 million (twenty million US dollars) for the selection of NGOs and **requests** the CAFI Secretariat to:
 - 3.i. **Carry out** the detailed technical evaluation (stage 2 of the evaluation process) of non-compliant expressions of interest (stage 1 of the evaluation process) submitted by NGOs under RFP No. 2026/01/Regional.
 - 3.ii. **Recommend**, via the submission of an Annex to the regional RFP evaluation report, the selection of 5 (five) NGOs.
 - 3.iii. **Support**, subject to the partner countries raising no objections, the shortlisted NGOs in submitting compliant expressions of interest.
 - 3.iv. **Submit**, subject to compliant expressions of interest, a draft decision to the Executive Board for approval regarding the selection of non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) as implementing organisations for the formulation of a project document.
6. In accordance with the CAFI Regional Technical Assistance Facility's 2026 Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB), requests UNOPS to mobilise up to USD 1 million (one million US dollars) to strengthen the capacities of the shortlisted NGOs; **requests** the CAFI Secretariat to develop the terms of reference for this technical assistance with the following objectives:
 - Strengthening skills in fiduciary management, administration, and the management of environmental and social safeguards (objective: preparation for the CAFI fund accreditation process).
 - Strengthening programme management skills (objective: development of technical and financial proposals in line with CAFI's policies, standards, and quality requirements).
 - Strengthening of skills related to the management of CAFI-funded PES projects (objective: to master the various stages of the PES cycle (from contracting to payment) and the PES tools developed by CAFI).
7. **Requests** the CAFI Secretariat to monitor, via the *CAFI-PES* tool, the performance of the NGOs within the consortia in order to prepare for their scaling up and the gradual transition from the role of 'aggregator' to that of 'implementing organisation'.
8. **Approves** the selection of *the Antwerp Zoo Foundation* (AZF) to design the methodological framework and lead the integration of 'biodiversity' PES initiatives into the CAFI PES Programme; in line with the DRC government's priorities to test different models within the framework of the Kivu–Kinshasa Green Corridor (a flagship landscape-scale vision promoted at the highest political level by the DRC Presidency), AZF is invited to develop a small-scale experimental pilot project; the proposal will focus on piloting 'biodiversity bonuses' integrated into conservation PES as framed by the CAFI PES Programme and fully compliant with CAFI's relevant guidelines; the main objective is methodological and programmatic (quality criteria, MRV approaches, calibration of bonuses), with significant learning value for CAFI; in accordance with the approved 2026 PTBA of the CAFI Regional Technical Assistance Facility, requests UNOPS to provide financial support of up to USD 700,000 (seven hundred thousand US dollars) to AZF for the implementation of the activities mentioned above;

requests the CAFI Secretariat to work in collaboration with AZF and UNOPS to prepare the terms of reference for the activities mentioned above;

9. **Requests** the CAFI Secretariat to build on the decision taken under the PROBAK programme to select J-PAL (*Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab*) as a specialist research partner, and to examine the modalities for a phased extension of the experimental action research (randomised controlled trials – RCTs) initially developed under PROBAK, in order to contribute to the learning and optimisation of the entire CAFI PES Regional Programme.
10. **Emphases** that projects funded by CAFI are implemented by implementing organisations on behalf of the governments of partner countries, and that these organisations must draw up their proposals in close coordination and synergy with the relevant national and local government authorities.
11. **Requests** that implementing organisations, when preparing project documents, should:
 - a) Use the updated project document template provided by the CAFI Secretariat.
 - b) Comply with CAFI's programming policies (e.g. project budgeting policy, monitoring and evaluation guidelines, independent verification, performance-based programming policy for AFAT projects, etc.).
 - c) Ensure concrete synergies with existing projects and programmes in the target areas (funded by CAFI or other partners).
12. **Recalls** that implementing organisations will be required to report on progress made against the indicators in the CAFI results framework, in accordance with CAFI guidelines. Furthermore, they must provide CAFI with all reports and data (raw and analysed) from household surveys and other field studies, including spatial information (i.e. GPS coordinates) as well as information on how their activities take into account and comply with CAFI's social and environmental safeguards.
13. **Recalls** that project design must pay particular attention to: (i) gender inclusion, including in terms of sex-disaggregated data, (ii) human rights and non-discrimination, (iii) conflict prevention and resolution (particularly regarding land tenure), (iv) monitoring and learning (whilst ensuring strong alignment with the CAFI results framework), (v) analysis of the link to forest conservation, (vi) analysis of opportunities for scaling up and the means to achieve this, (vii) analysis of risks of corruption and conflicts of interest (as well as stakeholders likely to benefit or lose out as a result of the initiative), (viii) use of local references and analyses regarding potential beneficiaries, market and income opportunities for smallholders, as well as economic viability, constraints and risks, (ix) clear integration and linkages between the various proposed interventions, (x) a clear exit/sustainability strategy, and (xi) robust risk analysis and management (e.g. land tenure and fire risks).
14. **Recalls** that it is essential for all PRODOCs to include clear, realistic and operational exit strategies from the design phase onwards, including arrangements for the gradual integration of market revenues or other sustainable financing mechanisms, where applicable; **calls** on shortlisted organisations to demonstrate, from the PRODOC design phase onwards, how agroforestry production supported by the PES will continue beyond the project cycle (e.g. credible access to remunerative markets and/or value chains; clearly identified partnerships with relevant public or private stakeholders (e.g. marketing agreements, value chain operators); emphasises that exit strategies constitute a fundamental quality criterion in the evaluation of PRODOCs.

15. **Recalls** that, whilst adhering to their rules and procedures, implementing organisations undertake to apply a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation and abuse; to protect whistleblowers; to inform the public; to promote gender equality and social inclusion; and to use appropriate grievance mechanisms. Furthermore, implementing organisations undertake to manage carefully all other contextual and programmatic risks identified by the Board, and must act proactively by reporting these risks to the CAFI Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, in accordance with the CAFI Trust Fund Terms of Reference.
16. **Emphasises** that this decision does not constitute a funding allocation decision. Funding will be approved based on submissions from implementing organisations and in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Trust Fund.
17. **Recalls** that the initial allocation for CAFI's PES Programme No. 1 is USD 100 million (one hundred million US dollars) and **emphasises** that the final amounts for each project will be determined based on: (i) the presence of duly identified environmental service providers meeting the PES prerequisites, (ii) a justified spatial prioritisation, (iii) demonstrated economies of scale, (iv) overall efficiency and value for money (including unit costs per hectare) and (v) potential co-financing (for which it is encouraged to use the policy on performance-based programming in AFAT projects, adopted by Decision [EB.2025.26](#)).
18. **Recalls** that this decision is subject to the non-objection of the governments of the DRC, the Republic of Congo, and the CAR.