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Scaling up forest and
landscape restoration in
the Mediterranean region

Introduction

The Mediterranean region holds over 80 million hectares of degraded land. More than 400,000 hectares of forests are burned each year, and **at least 16 animal and plant species in Mediterranean forests are at risk of extinction**, due to environmental threats such as climate change.

Forests play a key role in providing and protecting ecosystem services and biodiversity. The maintenance of healthy forested landscapes is essential for reducing the impacts of climate change. Effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of large-scale programmes mainstreaming Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) and promoting joint mitigation and adaptation approaches are critical to achieving climate and restoration goals in the Mediterranean region.

What is Forest and Landscape Restoration?

According to the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR), FLR is “an active process that brings people together to identify, negotiate, and implement practices that restore an agreed optimal balance of the ecological, social, and economic benefits of forests and trees within a broader pattern of land uses.”

FLR seeks to achieve a balance between restoring ecosystem services related to wildlife habitats, biodiversity, water regulation, carbon storage, and supporting the productive functions of land for agriculture and other related uses. It refers to an approach that proactively involves stakeholders in all of the affected land-use sectors while applying participatory decision-making processes.

The project is funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Ministry of the Environment. **“The Paris Agreement in action: upscaling forest and landscape restoration to achieve nationally determined contributions”** (2018-2022) is building regional and national capacity in three designated regions. This also includes the Mediterranean region, with Lebanon and Morocco as key focus countries.

The IKI-funded project aims at increasing restoration efforts through the creation of an enabling environment focused on pilot activities that apply suitable FLR approaches on how best to contribute to the achievement of national and global restoration targets, as set out by the National Determined Contributions (NDCs), the Bonn Challenge, Aichi Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Both Lebanon and Morocco demonstrate significant potential to increase the provision and pro-

tection of ecosystem services via large-scale FLR programmes. The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM) that promotes the project, was established by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in 2014 to support the implementation, as well as the monitoring and reporting, of FLR at both country and regional levels.

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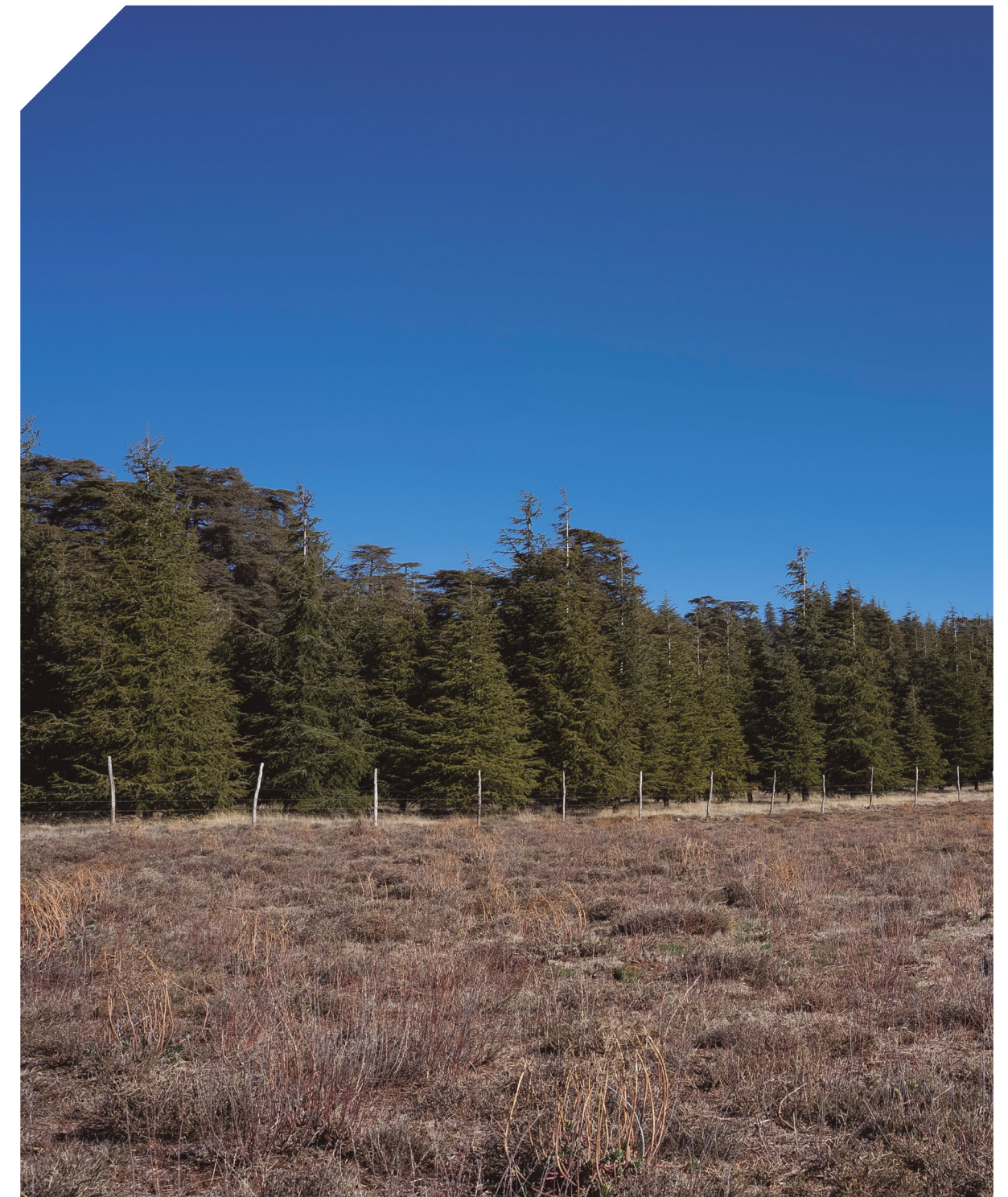
For its relevance at the Mediterranean level, the project was labelled by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), as it directly contributes to the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the UfM on environmental and climate action which was adopted by the 42 countries of the UfM in Cairo on 4 October 2021. In particular, and as part of its operational tool, the Thematic Axis 3 of the GreenerMed Agenda, it aims at protecting, preserving, managing, and restoring the natural resources of the Mediterranean region through an integrated ecosystem approach.

The Mediterranean regional component

At regional level, Mediterranean countries can benefit from specialised technical assistance to integrate FLR into the investment frameworks of their NDCs, and to build capacity on the preparation of concept notes and project proposals for dedicated land degradation and climate financing instruments. Capacity building workshops and online events have been organised to capitalise and share in depth

expertise on key FLR/NDCs related issues: Mediterranean countries have participated in webinars and activities organised by the FAO's FLRM.

For more details on the events organised please click on the following link:



Activities in Lebanon and Morocco

Lebanon

Grazing and rangeland management in Tannourine and Manara municipalities

Despite the ongoing economic and political fallout in Lebanon, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Agriculture continues with its mission together with the FAO to establish a rangeland management plan through pilot studies in the municipalities of Tannourine and Manara.

These regions have been used for centuries for grazing and agricultural purposes, and concerted efforts deployed by key stakeholders are now paving the way for an efficient national system of rangeland management. Field visits aimed at capturing the variability of the sites in terms of biodiversity and productive capacity have been undertaken in Tannourine since the middle of 2020. Nine rangeland management units have been identified comprising a total land area of 2345 hectares and data have been analysed to determine the carrying capacity of each unit. The carrying capacity is used as a measure that reflects the capacity of land to accommodate a specific number of grazing animals beyond which significant degradation or loss of biodiversity can occur.

Several meetings were held with the municipality to present the results and to facilitate the collection of additional data, in order to better understand the impact of the recent economic crisis, to propose management activities and raise awareness around the importance of rangeland management. Detailed plant assessments were undertaken to determine the carrying capacity at both locations. Relevant socioeconomic data have also been col-

lected so that all the pieces of a complicated puzzle could be analysed to catalyse the development of a holistic and solid rangeland management plan.

Revision of the Lebanese Forest Law (1949).

The Ministry of Agriculture is currently finalising an update to the current law with the goal of tackling all aspects related to forest preservation and management to include rangeland management as an important component of FLR. It is hoped that the updated law will also integrate rangeland priorities so that a comprehensive legal framework is created to manage Lebanon's rich mosaic of landscapes.

Support for the development of technical tools for national reporting

Two technical tools have been developed for the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment for the purposes of:

- i) supporting the inclusion of FLR into the NDCs;
- ii) estimating greenhouse gases (GHG) capture through these FLR projects.

These tools will greatly assist ministries to record, monitor, and report on FLR projects. It is also envisioned that these tools will empower the building of functional databases for FLR projects; monitor and track progress and achievements; report on the progress of the 40 Million Tree Programme and the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets; and provide follow up on the development of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) within the forestry sector.



Morocco

A new participatory management plan for the Maâmora Forest and restoration activities in the Ifrane Model Forest

The Maâmora Forest is the largest cork oak forest in the world, located on the Moroccan Atlantic plain between Rabat and Kenitra. Since 1918, the Department of Water and Forests of the Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests of Morocco has put impressive efforts into the conservation and development of forestry in the region. However, despite these concerted efforts, an approximate area equalling 300,000 hectares of cork oak trees has been turned nowadays into a partially degraded forest as a result of climate change and unsustainable human activities. The systematic collection of acorns for human consumption, overgrazing, wood harvesting and aridity of the climate are exacerbating the overall degradation of the forested land area. The combination of these biotic and abiotic factors has led to severe deficiencies that has directly impacted the rate of natural regeneration for the ageing and biodiverse cork groves.

The Department of Forests and Water of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests of Morocco, with the support of FAO, is developing a management plan to include participatory approaches and a socio-economic development plan, so that the local population can play a central role in the restoration and conservation efforts to rehabilitate the Maâmora Forest.

The management plan includes the establishment of innovative contracts with local communities to guarantee compensation for the temporary grazing restrictions due to the implementation of restoration interventions. This will lead to the development of new value chains such as truffle harvesting to provide alternative economic revenue streams for the local communities dependent on the forests. Degraded areas for restoration have been identified through a comprehensive assessment of existing restoration best practices and a socio-economic study to assess the current impact of local populations on key forest resources. This management plan will consist of a pilot test on 3 423 hectares of land designated for restoration purposes with the involvement of local actors. Its implementa-

tion will be funded through IKI-project funds and domestic resources.

A similar process is being promoted by the project at a second pilot site, the Ifrane Model Forest. The goal is to implement the same participatory approaches but in a different context. The number of hectares to be restored will be confirmed in 2022 with restoration activities beginning in the course of the year.

Revision of National Determined Contributions (NDCs)

In June 2021, Morocco submitted its revised NDC to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), raising its ambition to reduce GHG emissions by 45.5 percent by 2030. In the review, the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes plays a key role in the forestry sector, which is positioned at the forefront of national efforts to combat climate change and promote the reduction of GHG emissions.

Technical studies to fine tune national reporting and submissions: Technical studies were undertaken and conducted by national experts (e.g., on the assessment of wood productivity, annual growth rates of forest species, and fuelwood removals) to produce data to integrate into the national GHG inventory. These inventories will be consolidated into the national communications and the biennial reports of Morocco.





***Would you like to know more about
The Paris Agreement in action: upscaling forest
and landscape restoration?
Visit the dedicated webpage:***



Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

The mission of the UfM is to enhance cooperation through the animation of regional dialogue and the implementation of concrete projects and initiatives addressing human development, stability and integration. The 42 UfM countries are committed to promoting a green, circular and socially inclusive economy: this means providing real-life opportunities for preserving natural resources, facilitating job creation, improving the quality of life for all, and ensuring a sustainable future for the whole Mediterranean region.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) established the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM) in 2014. The FLRM is built on the advantages of a UN Agency with expertise and experience in several of the land-use sectors and its extensive network of country, subregional and regional offices. The FLRM aims at scaling-up, monitoring and reporting on FLR activities. It helps to coordinate and facilitate the development and implementation of projects, programmes and related activities in FAO member countries, in full collaboration with other key actors. The FLRM operates globally by developing financial intelligence functions (raising awareness on FLR and fundraising actions towards key donors), preparing guidelines and standards for baselines and verification of successful efforts and contributing to more effective reporting to the Rio Conventions. For more information please visit www.fao.org/in-action/forest-landscape-restoration-mechanism/en

International Climate Initiative (IKI)

The International Climate Initiative (IKI) is the most important instrument utilised by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) to support international climate action and biodiversity. With the IKI, the BMU supports solution strategies in developing and emerging countries that seek to achieve sustainable change. Support is targeted precisely to the areas where needs and aspirations are the highest. IKI assists its partner countries to implement the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that lie at the heart of the Paris Agreement and to take an ambitious approach to their future development.



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