

Evaluation summary

Experimental Platform for the Management of Rural Territories in the Legal Amazon

Country/Countries: Brasil

Topic: Land Degradation

Assessed by: TERE
Assessment date: Mars 2019

Key FFEM support data

Project name: PETRA

Project number: CBR 1044

Amount financed by the FFEM: 2 000 000 EUR

Project grant date: 23/11/2012

Duration: 5 ans (2013-2018)

Context

The Amazon basin is an area of major ecological importance. After 50 years of deforestation at a high rate, the policies of the Brazilian federal government and the governments of the Amazonian states have significantly reduced the deforestation rate in the state of Mato Grosso (MT).

The Fazenda Sao Nicolau (FSN), a site selected as part of the reforestation and carbon sink project (PCFPO), is committed to developing and promoting good practices for the sustainable management of rural properties.

The Fazenda serves as an original foundational tool on which the Experimental Platform for the Management of Rural Territories in the Legal Amazon (PETRA) project aims to build: a forested area, basic infrastructure, an economic entity fully dedicated to sustainable production systems, experiments related to forestry and agriculture, and strong local integration within municipal and federal stakeholder networks.

Participants and operating methods

Project ownership was entrusted to the Centro de Pesquisas do Pantanal (CPP) and project implementation to ONF Brasil, with support from ONF-I.



Objectives

Main objective

To develop a platform for support, exchange, and environmental, social, and economic monitoring for research and sustainable development in the northwest Mato Grosso region and the Brazilian Amazon region.

Specific objectives

- Promote economically and ecologically efficient production systems.
- Define and implement research and training programs closely linked to stakeholder needs.
- Contribute to capacity building for economic actors and public authorities.
- Establish an information management and territorial sustainable development monitoring system integrating social, economic, and ecological indicators and able to contribute to public policy evaluation.
- Support the financial sustainability of Fazenda Sao Nicolau and the institutional sustainability of the PETRA platform.

Performance appraisal

Relevance

The project addressed local and administrative issues effectively, providing relevant support to well-identified stakeholders. The thematic, geographic, and strategic choices of PETRA were appropriate given the project objectives and the context of the program's intervention area.

Coherence

PETRA was deemed coherent with national policies and sustainable development strategies in Mato Grosso. The project complemented the intervention strategies of local partners and was coordinated with other actors within the intervention context.

Effectiveness

PETRA's objectives were very ambitious relative to the available resources and project duration. The project execution faced several major constraints that hindered the monitoring of the planned schedule. Effectiveness regarding the achievement of PETRA's five components was judged low, and the project experienced delays from the outset due to administrative difficulties. However, objectives were revised toward the end of the project to focus resources and achieve results. Project management was reorganized, and activities were launched to meet nearly all of the newly defined outcomes.

Efficiency

Co-financing resources were difficult for PETRA to mobilize, due to (i) timing mismatches between planned activities and partner project completions, (ii) challenges in quantifying the financial contribution of parallel activities, and (iii) an initial poor assessment of the potential contribution of partners. The shortfall in expected co-financing was compensated by increased contributions from ONF and Peugeot, a result of the project extension.

Impact

Although the project's overall completion rate was low compared to initial goals, several activities deemed potentially drivers of positive results were carried out:

- The establishment of innovative, ecological, and economically viable production systems replicable by beneficiaries;
- Support for landowners and small local farmers to improve their practices;
- Practical research applicable to the local context;
- Use of the territorial observatory applied at the project scale.

Viability/Sustainability

A changing political context prevented ensuring the technical sustainability of interventions within administrations and financial viability. However, PETRA carried out activities that revitalized the Brazil nut sector, with long-term prospects, and the research activities conducted at Fazenda Sao Nicolau (FSN) are expected to continue over time. PETRA was integrated by partners into the FSN context, which is a long-established entity well-known and valued by local stakeholders.

Added value of FFEM support

FFEM's contribution enabled the initiation of activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of various stakeholders while addressing deforestation. The presence of FSN as the project's foundation and its activities around the carbon sink enabled the development of a long-term approach. Activities conducted at FSN on different production systems and environmental education were considered innovative in their approaches. Finally, the project's diversity of activities and targeted stakeholders provided good visibility for FSN and ONF-Brazil locally and with institutions.

Recommendations & learnings

PETRA is a project that showed great potential as a platform for support, exchange, and environmental, social, and economic monitoring for research and sustainable development of rural territories in the northwest Mato Grosso (MT) region. The project had very relevant support areas, although sometimes overly ambitious. It was based on Fazenda Sao Nicolau (FSN), located in a region representative of the ongoing dynamics in the Legal Amazon. FSN represents an important asset for the sustainable development of the northwest MT region, with the following key characteristics:

- A production system in the process of finding its financial balance;
- Infrastructure capable of hosting researchers, training sessions, and seminars;
- A partner network developed over more than 20 years.

The recommendations were as follows:

- Continue the approach with FSN as the project host (including development, research, and outreach activities) and make it financially autonomous;
- Continuously deploy a genuine Monitoring & Evaluation system for project results and implementation;
- Remain conservative and flexible regarding governance support aspects in MT (considering possible changes in the political context, legal framework, internal institutional issues, and complexity in defining needs); Plan for sufficiently flexible project execution able to adapt to changes in legal context and political shifts;
- Link strategy and support actions to concrete field realities to increase the chances of achieving impact.

