

Evaluation summary

Agroforestry Technical Assistance Facility (ATAF)

Countries : **Benin, Belize, Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nicaragua, Togo**

Themes : Sustainable management of agricultural and forestry territories

Evaluators : **Lucie Royer et Clara Lapeyre (Oréade-Brèche)**

Evaluation led from January to April 2022

Key data regarding FFEM support

Project name: Agroforestry Technical Assistance Facility (ATAF)

Numéro de projet : CZZ1915

FFEM funding amount : 1 200 000 €

Grant date: 22/07/2016

Duration : 7,5 years (2016 – 2023)

Context

Created in 2010, the Moringa fund's objective was to invest in companies committed to developing sustainable, resilient and profitable agricultural projects. The fund deployed its capital to 10 companies in 8 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, with strong potential for deploying agroforestry models within inclusive socio-economic schemes.

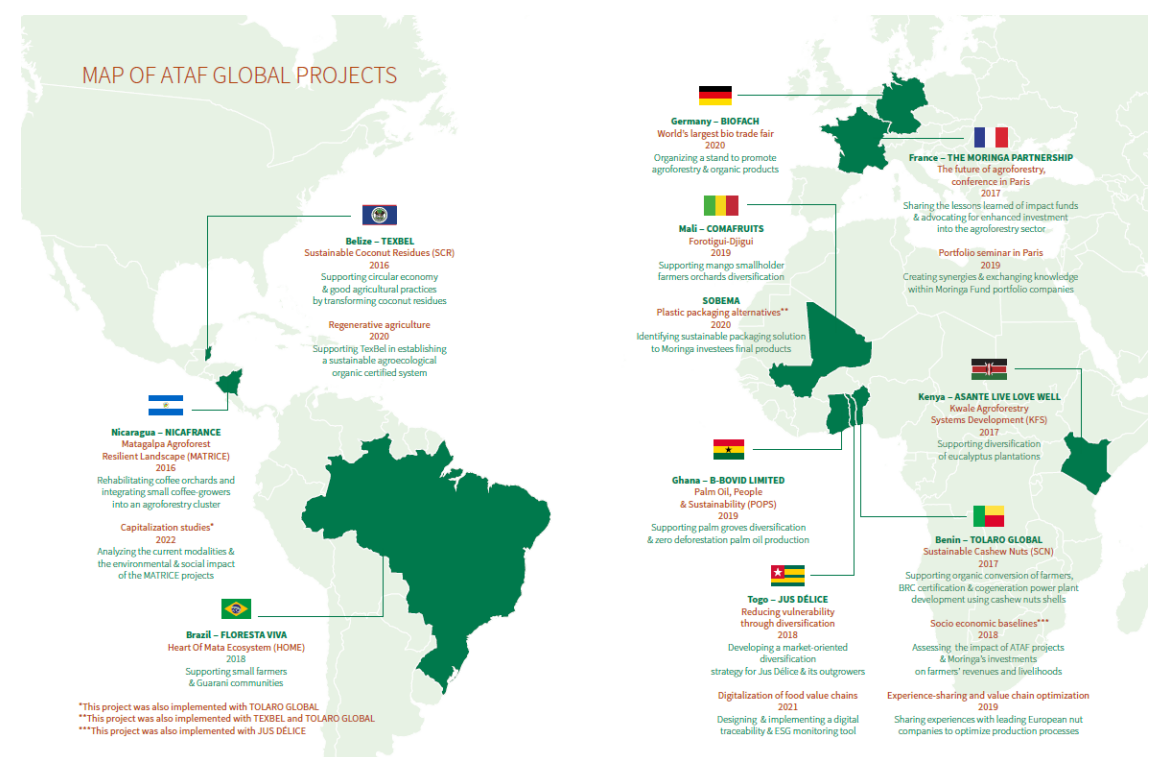
ATAF was launched in 2016, as a complement to the Moringa Fund, to provide technical assistance to invested companies and the small-scale farmers supplying them, to meet various support needs (studies, assessments, diagnostics, training, pilot implementation, etc.). ATAF supported 18 projects involving the 10 companies invested by the Moringa fund, in a wide variety of sectors (palm oil, coconut, cocoa, cashew nuts, coffee, etc.).

Stakeholders and modus operandi

ATAF operated on the basis of grants paid by donors (FFEM; FISEA – AFD Proparco group; FAPA – BAD) under bilateral agreements between Moringa Partnership and each donor.

The Commun Fund for Commodities (CFC) acted as manager of the ATAF, however with supervision from the Moringa Partnership.

A steering committee was set up to ensure the strategic direction of the Facility.



Objectives

The aim of the Agroforestry Technical Assistance Facility (ATAF), launched in 2016 to complement the Moringa Fund, was to provide the technical assistance needed to:

- Amplify and leverage the positive environmental and social (E&S) impacts generated via Moringa Fund investments
- Support private companies in developing community-based agroforestry projects, while improving rural incomes and living conditions and preserving the environment and biodiversity.

Specific objectives

- Develop, adapt and transfer agroforestry techniques and best practices to local communities,
- Develop new value chains and strengthen producers' capacities
- Disseminate knowledge acquired on agroforestry models and promote their economic benefits to public and private players.

Performance assessment

Relevance

Although the ATAF's aim was to deploy agroforestry models, in reality, local needs were much more diverse, which led to the ATAF's fields of intervention being very widely opened. Overall, the projects supported proved to be relevant to the issues identified locally.

Coherence

The coherence of the mechanism was judged to be perfectible. ATAF financed a wide range of activities, but most of the support provided was in the form of studies and diagnostics. This enabled to mobilize in-depth expertise on a wide range of subjects. Nevertheless, in view of the ambitious objectives set and the fragility of some of the companies supported, a more substantial financial and human contribution would have been necessary, through longer-term, technical assistance. Indeed, the objectives announced seemed very ambitious given the financial amounts available (between €50,000 and €400,000 per company supported).

Effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of ATAF was satisfactory. Too few projects have focused on developing, adapting and transferring agroforestry techniques and best practices to local communities (OS1). Some projects have enabled the development of new value chains, but producers' capacities have not yet been sufficiently strengthened (OS2). The effective implementation of agroforestry models having been limited, the economic interest of these models has not yet been truly proven and disseminated to public and private stakeholders (SO3). While the results of ATAF have been rather mixed, it is important to remember that the effectiveness of ATAF has ultimately been highly correlated with the performance of the invested companies themselves (many of which are still very fragile from a technical and financial point of view, and operating in unstable contexts: high volatility of agricultural markets; political instability, governance not conducive to investments and asset sales, COVID period, etc.).

Efficiency

The ATAF Committee was globally flexible, particularly when it came to reallocating budgets, which was essential to the efficiency of the mechanism. Although the mobilization of several donors had a knock-on effect at the start of the ATAF project and enabled the mobilization of larger financial amounts, it also made procedures more complex and increased the number of interlocutors for the ATAF manager. In addition, the companies supported generally did not contribute to ATAF to the extent of the funding initially planned, which had an impact on the efficiency of the mechanism. Finally, the resources deployed to monitor individual projects - even if impacted by Covid-19, which restricts travel to the field - were insufficient.

Impact

ATAF played a catalytic role in mobilizing additional funding, towards the promotion of E&S practices, which would not have been mobilized internally by companies (or in smaller proportions or according to a different timetable). Thus, ATAF has helped to encourage supported companies to better take into account the E&S issues of their supply chains. For some companies, ATAF has enabled them to make progress on the certification of their network of producers or their own plots of land. Certain projects would also have led to an increase in the income of small producers. However, these results remain marginal.

Viability/sustainability

Overall, ATAF has not been able to ensure robust market access for small producers, and relations between small producers and companies have not really been stabilized during ATAF's lifetime. Finally, the financial viability and economic situation of the companies supported remains the main determinant of the sustainability and durability of ATAF's activities. On the other hand, Moringa's divestment strategy is crucial. The continuation of the new sustainable practices instilled by ATAF will depend on the strategic objectives of the new investors.

Added value of FFEM support

The FFEM was one of the first contributors mobilized by the Moringa Partnership to support the ATAF, and was ultimately the fund's largest contributor. Without the ATAF, it appears that companies would probably not have mobilized their own funds to finance activities aimed at increasing the E&S impacts generated by Moringa investments. Despite mixed results, this public-private partnership mechanism was highly innovative.

Recommendations & lessons learnt

Although ATAF is an original financial instrument, making it possible to work with private investors, this type of arrangement remains highly dependent on the goodwill, efficiency and management of the national private partner receiving the funding. It turned out that it was therefore crucial to properly target beneficiary companies and eligible projects, in particular by **strengthening the selection criteria for technical assistance projects**.

In terms of support modality, it would have been preferable to **mobilize longer-term support**, via technical assistance provided by a single consultant (rather than one-off interventions mobilizing a multitude of consultants). This would have allowed better support for small producers in the development of innovative agroforestry models.

It would have been interesting to have a **local representative to monitor project implementation more closely**, particularly in such unstable contexts. Moreover, mobilization of all local actors through participatory approaches would have allowed to better calibrate projects according to needs and local capacities.

Regarding the monitoring-evaluation mechanism of ATAF's achievements and impacts, it should have been strengthened from the start of the project.

More exchanges between companies would have been appreciated in order to **create a collective dynamic around common issues** faced by the supported companies.

Finally, certain reorientations could have been made during the life of the ATAF, if an interim evaluation of the facility had been carried out.



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