

**VALIDATION OF THE ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION DOCUMENT (ADD)
FOR THE PROJECT:
DEPLOYING SUSTAINABLE AGROFORESTRY PRACTICES IN COCOA
PLANTATIONS INCLUDING THE PLANTING OF SHADE TREES,
INTERCROPPING, AND THE APPLICATION OF RESCUE IRRIGATION
(MICRO IRRIGATION) IN COTE D'IVOIRE UNDER THE ADAPTATION
BENEFITS MECHANISM (ABM) OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

SUMMARY VALIDATION REPORT

For:

Fonds Interprofessionnel pour la Recherche et le Conseil Agricoles (FIRCA) and Center for
International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF)

Submitted to:

ADAPTATION BENEFITS MECHANISM SECRETARIAT

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Contents

LIST OF TABLES.....	2
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	5
Objectives.....	6
Scope of Assessment, Methods, and Standards Used	7
Types of Compliance Rating.....	8
VALIDATION ASSESSMENT	8
Summary of Validation Findings	9
Stakeholder Consultation	12
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	12

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Details of the Project.....	5
Table 2: Criteria and Conclusions of the Validation Assessment.....	10

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Adaptation Benefit
ABM	Adaptation Benefits Mechanism
ADD	Activity Description Document
CAB	Certified Adaptation Benefit
CAR	Corrective Action Request
CIFOR-ICRAF	Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry
CL	Request for Clarification
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
FIRCA	Fonds Interprofessionnel pour la Recherche et le Conseil Agricoles
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
LoA	Letter of Approval

MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
SCR	Sustainable and Climate Resilient
SP	Submitting Party
VAST	Validation/Verification Activity Specific Team of Experts

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a summary of the findings from the validation assessment of the Activity Description Document (ADD) developed by Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) for Fonds Interprofessionnel pour la Recherche et le Conseil Agricoles (FIRCA) against the Adaptation Benefits Mechanism's (ABM) Methodology for Cocoa Resilience and the ABM validation requirements¹ for a project in the Vavoua and Soubre regions of Cote d'Ivoire. The project's title is "Deploying sustainable agroforestry practices in cocoa plantations including the planting of shade trees, intercropping, and the application of rescue irrigation (micro irrigation)". Intended to be completed within a few days, the validation process for the ABM pilot phase commenced in mid-October 2025. However, the process could not be completed as intended as the ADD and its accompanying attachments were determined by the ABM Validation Activity Specific Team (VAST) to be inadequate and required improvements in order to fully conform to the ABM requirements. In the subsequent three weeks, the Submitting Party (SP) submitted several updated iterations of the ADD and its accompanying documents in response to Corrective Action Requests (CARs) and Requests for Clarifications (CLs) issued by the VAST. The responses and the submitted documents were reviewed and feedback sent to the SP for further action. In May 2026, the SP resubmitted updated documents, which were found to conform to the ABM validation requirements leading to the closure of all CARs and CLs. See details in the Matrix of CARs/CLs and the Excel Report Template attached to this report. The final submissions by the SP were found by the VAST to be compliant with the ABM requirements. Following the final review, the ADD was published on the ABM website² from July 7 to August 7, 2026, for stakeholder consultation. However, no comments were received from the hundreds of stakeholders who viewed the publication. Given that no negative comments were received from stakeholders, coupled with the positive findings from the review, the VAST has recommended that the ADD and its accompanying documents be approved by the ABM Executive Committee.

¹ The express language of the Corrective Action Requests and associated non-conformities as well as the Requests for Clarification are presented in the Validation Checklist and Matrix of Corrective Action Requests and Clarification Requests, to which this Summary Report is adjunct.

² <https://abmechanism.org/community/main-category-main-forum/deploying-sustainable-agroforestry-practices-in-cocoa-plantations-including-shading-trees-planting-intercropping-application-of-rescue-irrigation-micro-irrigation-in-soubre-and-vavoua-co-2/>

INTRODUCTION

The Cocoa Livelihood Resilience activity titled, “Deploying sustainable agroforestry practices in cocoa plantations including the planting of shade trees, intercropping, and the application of rescue irrigation (micro irrigation)”, seeks to establish cocoa plantations under sustainable and climate resilient practices (SCR) with the aim of obtaining Certified Adaptation Benefits (CABs) toward financing the activity. It aims at sustainable agroforestry practices with rescue irrigation to enhance the resilience of smallholder farmers against the effects of heat waves and drought in cocoa production systems in the Vavoua and Soubre regions of Côte d’Ivoire. The overarching goal is to enhance smallholder cocoa farmers’ resilience in a deforestation-free cocoa landscape. These precepts align with Côte d’Ivoire’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which aim to reduce vulnerability in the agriculture, livestock, and aquaculture sectors. By applying an ABM methodology, the project advances Article 6.8 of the Paris Agreement, which promotes non-market approaches for adaptation and sustainable development. It is expected that verified adaptation benefits will be generated to enhance Côte d’Ivoire’s capacity to mobilize additional finance for adaptation in the cocoa sector. The details of the project are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Details of the Project

Project type	Deploying sustainable agroforestry practices in cocoa plantations including shading trees planting, intercropping, application of rescue irrigation (micro irrigation)
Sector/sub-sector/type	Agriculture/Agroforestry/Cocoa production
Climate risks occurrence	Sudden extreme events and slow onset events
Climate change parameters	Precipitation and temperature
Climate change hazards	Drought and heat wave
Type of adaptation and resilience measures	Application of sustainable agroforestry practices in cocoa plantations including: - shade trees planting, - intercropping for income diversification - rescue irrigation
Adaptation benefits	The overarching adaptation benefit (AB) is measured at output level: - 1 AB = 1 hectare (ha) of Cocoa plantation under Sustainable and Climate-Resilient practices (SCR) The detailed benefits are also measured: - Improved survival rate of cocoa saplings at farm establishment (percentage of planted seedlings)/ha - Complementary farm output (USD/ha) - Enhanced productivity of cocoa farm (kg of cocoa beans/ha)

Implementation area	Targeted implementation area = 3,000 ha meaning 3,000 ABs to be generated A total of 3,000 farmers is expected to benefit from the project, as only one hectare of farm is supported per farmer.
Cost of implementation (USD)	The incremental cost of 1 AB is three thousand two hundred and fourteen US dollars and fifty cents (USD 3,214.50) The total cost of implementation is Nine million six hundred and forty-three thousand five hundred US dollars (USD 9,643,500)
Applied Methodology	ABM Methodology Cocoa Resilience Version 1
Project technical partner	Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF)
Contacts (Legal entity to receive the payments)	Fonds Interprofessionnel pour la Recherche et le Conseil Agricoles (FIRCA) www.firca.ci OR https://www.greenclimate.fund/ae/firca Mr. KOUADIO Kouacou Fidèle, kouadiokf@firca.ci Mr. NDIAYE Oumar, Executive Director, ndiayeo@firca.ci

As presented in the table, two options of benefits are envisaged.

1. Adaptation benefits (ABs) are calculated as hectares of sustainably managed cocoa plantation after 3 years upon establishment of the farm and application of the sustainable agroforestry package of measures. The number of hectares of sustainably managed cocoa farms due to the project is calculated by subtracting the total area of such farms under the baseline scenario from the one under the project activity.
2. In each area, adaptation benefits are calculated as the combined benefits per hectare of sustainably managed cocoa plantation after 7-10 years upon establishment of the farm and application of the sustainable agroforestry package of measures.

Objectives

The overarching AB is equal to 1 hectare of cocoa plantation under Sustainable and Climate-Resilient practices (SCR) (ha). The detailed benefits to be measured are:

- Improved survival rate of cocoa saplings at farm establishment (percentage of planted seedlings)/ha;
- Complementary farm output (USD/ha);
- Enhanced productivity of cocoa farm (kg of cocoa beans/ha).

The project is specifically designed to:

- Train smallholder cocoa farmers on agroforestry and rescue irrigation;
- Distribute agroforestry planting materials and equipment for rescue irrigation; and
- Evaluate and report on the adaptation benefits associated with cocoa plantation areas managed under sustainable and climate resilient practices.

Scope of Assessment, Methods, and Standards Used

The assessment was conducted according to the ABM requirements, principles and criteria. Using a streamlined Excel Checklist, the ABM pilot phase assessment employed a “limited assurance” approach, ensuring plausibility, coherence, and transparency — not necessarily perfection. The assessment entailed the:

- Ex-ante review of the Activity Description Document;
- Confirmation of eligibility, plausibility, and alignment with ABM principles;
- Focus on safeguards, baseline, MRV logic, and the financial model/logic.

The assessment was conducted within the framework of the following normative standards:

- ABM Cocoa Resilience Methodology;
- ABM Activity Cycle Guidelines (EC/2021/8/5rev);
- ABM Guidelines on Validation & Verification (EC/2022/16/14);
- ABM Guidelines on Additionality (EC/2022/15/13);
- ABM Guidelines on Registration & Issuance (EC/2022/16/15);
- ABM Methodology Guidelines Rev.2 (EC/2024/21/6);
- ABM Guidelines on Principles, Criteria & Indicators (EC/2022/14/6);
- ABM Guidelines on Social & Environmental Safeguards (EC/2022/15/14);
- ABM Grievance and Redress Mechanism (EC/2021/12/5);
- ABM Glossary of Terms (EC/2021/10/5);
- ABM Methodology Procedure (EC/2022/15/16);
- ABM Guidebook 2025 (AfDB, 2025).

Types of Compliance Rating

The following four classifications were used to grade validation findings:

1. **Compliant:** Compliant ratings fully meet the ABM requirements. Evidence is sufficient and traceable, and no further action is required from the SP.
2. **Partially Compliant:** The requirements that are largely met, but with incomplete or ambiguous evidence are Partially Compliant and are rated as Request for Clarification (CL). All CLs are required to be closed before report submission. Subsequently, all CLs were closed before the submission of this report.
3. **Not Compliant:** The requirements that are not met or have missing evidence are designated as Not Compliant. Non-compliant findings trigger the issuance of Corrective Action Requests (CARs). All the Corrective Action Requests are required to be closed before report submission. Subsequently, all CARs were closed before the submission of this report.
4. **Not Applicable:** A few of the requirements are Not Applicable in this pilot phase of the ABM. Such requirements and the ratings have been identified appropriately in the Excel Checklist.

VALIDATION ASSESSMENT

Using the Validation Excel Report Template as the data collection/recording tool, the validation exercise was undertaken against the Cocoa Resilience Methodology and the ABM standards through desk review. Documents received from the SP for assessment are:

1. The Cocoa Resilience Methodology.
2. The Cocoa Resilience Activity Description Document (ADD).
3. The Environmental and Social Safeguards Document (ESS).
4. The Financial Model.

The ABM validation was conducted against seven criteria. The assessment criteria are:

1. General Compliance and document review.
2. Methodology Compliance.

3. Information on Project Activity.
4. Monitoring and Reporting.
5. Safeguards and Risk Mitigation (ESAF/SES).
6. Information on Project Implementation (AB Quantification & CAB Reporting).
7. Financial and Risk Management.

The VAST, having been assigned responsibilities across these criteria with annotated validation questions, conducted detailed reviews and drew conclusions on each indicator. While some were adjudged compliant, others were non-compliant, triggering the issuance of CARs. Those that needed additional information or clarification triggered requests for clarification.

All validation findings and evidence were recorded in the Excel Validation Checklist, which can be found in the annexes attached to this summary report. All CARs and CLs with their responses are recorded in the CAR/CL Matrix as well as the Validation Checklist.

Summary of Validation Findings

The initial validation documents (ADD, ESS, Financial Model) submitted by the SP were not eligible for validation as some key requirements were missing. After several updates by the SP in response to the 26 CARs and 32 CLs issued by the VAST, the validation documents were found to be significantly improved.

On May 12, 2026, the SP submitted another updated ADD, ESS, and Financial Model in response to the CARs and CLs issued by the VAST. After a review, the VAST found the documents to be in compliance with the ABM requirements and recommended that the ADD be accepted for validation. **Table 2** presents a summary of the thematic areas that were assessed. The findings and analyses are reported in the Excel Validation Checklist and the CAR/CL Form/Matrix attached to this report. The table also provides the validation assessment areas, the number of questions for each area, the focus areas, and the compliance status of each criterion. The information in **Table 2** is based on the analyses of validation findings, particularly the non-conformances and CLs found, and the conformances observed.

Table 2: Criteria and Conclusions of the Validation Assessment

Section	Validation Assessment Area	Number of Validation Questions	Focus Areas	Compliance Status
1	General Compliance and document review	15	ABM format, Article 6.8 compliance, host-country LoA, legal ownership, ADD completeness, and boundaries.	Compliant NB: LoA from the Cote d'Ivoire Government is required for the registration of the ADD/Activity.
2	Methodology Compliance	20	Baseline, metrics, theory of change, assumptions and quantification methods.	Compliant
3	Information on Project Activity	7	Eligibility, adaptation need, stakeholder consultation, and barriers.	Compliant
4	Monitoring and Reporting	9	MRV design, QA/QC, data traceability, monitoring plan and CAB calculation.	Compliant
5	Safeguards and Risk Mitigation (ESAF/ESS)	27	Environmental and social safeguards application, risk and vulnerability assessment, FPIC & grievance, risk mitigation, residual risks, updates.	Compliant
6	Information on Project Implementation (AB Quantification & CAB Reporting)	11	AB estimates, CAB consistency, aggregation, recalculations, reporting.	Compliant
7	Financial and Risk Management	10	Financial model, additionality, integrity, funding, reporting, and audit trail.	Compliant

Some of the compliant findings of the initial ADD/ESS and the Financial Model before further improvements include:

- Theory of change linked with outputs;
- Boundaries defined and clear assumptions specified in the ADD;
- Metrics linked to the theory of change;
- The ADD identifies a climate adaptation problem and impacts;
- The baseline is evidence based;
- The monitoring plan specifies indicators and data for calculating the CAB;
- Environmental and social risks identified;
- Measures to avoid maladaptation and adverse environmental impacts specified;
- Procedures described for reconciling financial and verified CAB data before issuance;
- The ADD specifies a reporting and audit framework covering the entire benefitting period, including responsibilities and audit frequency.

A few examples of the 26 CARs issued during the assessment are shown below:

- The ADD is incomplete and lacks the mandatory quantitative data and the complete financial model required to assess financial additionality and confirm that the proposed CAB price is sufficient to overcome the identified financial barrier of USD 2,547/ha **(closed)**;
- The methodology does not justify the chosen discount rate nor clarify whether values are real or nominal **(closed)**;
- Only one yield scenario was evaluated. The robustness of financial results against variations in yield and price assumptions has not been demonstrated. Conduct a sensitivity analysis for at least $\pm 10\%$ changes in key parameters (yield, price, and cost inputs) and present summary results **(closed)**;
- A legally established project participant/activity owner with evidence of existence and solvency is not confirmed on the ADD **(closed)**;
- Lack of quantified adaptation baseline values; it appears that only the narrative baseline is provided; no numeric shade %, seedling survival, yields per zone.

CAR: Submit baseline data tables per zone including: shade %, survival %, seedlings/ha, baseline yields; attach raw field measurements; Add quantified baseline data for:

- Cocoa survival rate baseline (%);
- Baseline replanting rate (saplings/ha);
- Baseline cocoa yields (kg/ha at 0-30 yrs.);
- Baseline shade coverage (%) (**closed**).

All the CARs (**closed**) and CLs (**closed**) are documented in the Validation Excel Report and the Matrix of CAR/CL Responses attached to this report.

Stakeholder Consultation

As stipulated in the ABM principles, this final report was produced after the draft report and the ADD were made publicly available on the ABM website for a period of 30 days, i.e., from July 7 to August 7, 2026, for stakeholder consultation and comments. During the publication, there were over 900 views but no comments were received from stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the assessment of the ADD, the response of the activity proponent/submitting party to CLs and CARs raised by the VAST and the outcome of the stakeholder consultations, the VAST concludes that the proposed activity, “Deploying sustainable agroforestry practices in cocoa plantations including the planting of shade trees, intercropping, and the application of rescue irrigation (micro irrigation)” in Cote d’Ivoire, fully complies with all applicable ABM guidelines. Concerning the assessed ADD:

- (a) the approved ABM methodology has been applied correctly;
- (b) the baseline scenario is appropriate and accurate;
- (c) the calculations of the adaptation benefits and the monitoring plan are mathematically sound and verifiable;
- (d) all local stakeholder comments and environmental impacts have been properly addressed;
- (e) despite the attraction of over 900 views, no comments from international stakeholders were received during the stakeholder consultation period from 7 July to 7 August 2026.

Hence, the activity is recommended for approval by the ABM Executive Committee, subject to receipt of a Letter of Approval or similar from the host country’s government.