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The French Global Environment Facility: an original instrument



From combating climate change and land degradation to protecting biodiversity, reducing the pollution of international waters and eliminating persistent organic pollutants: all these challenges, which concern the entire planet, are part of the strategy of intervention of the French Global Environment Facility, which funds innovative actions that reconcile environmental preservation with economic and social development, particularly in Africa and the Mediterranean region.

The rational use of forests, measured urban development and creating sustainable industrial processes are among the campaigns conducted by the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) in partnership with the public and private sectors and civil society.

The Facility was established as a result of the Rio Agreements of 1992. In order to implement the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change, various countries undertook to finance a body, the Global Environment Facility (GEF or FEM in French) which would itself fund projects targeting these issues. Two further conventions were then established to combat land degradation and eliminate persistent organic products, and a convention is in the process of being drawn up for better management of international waters.

“France, which has joined in with these commitments, has confirmed its strong motivation by adding the creation of a specific instrument to its contribution to the GEF,” explains Christophe du Castel, a representative of the FFEM. *“Specifically, it has given priority to African countries. Moreover, the funding anticipated by the Rio Agreements was destined for environmental protection only, whereas it is the policy of the FFEM to structure this aim around developmental actions”.*

The steering committee is chaired by the Ministry of the Economy and includes the Ministries of Foreign and European Affairs, of Ecology and of Research, as well as the French Development Agency. The projects submitted by each of these members are examined by a scientific and technical committee composed of 12 high-level individuals from various research bodies.

The initial applications come variously from members of the steering committee, governments, NGOs and so on. To be eligible, a project must include actions that involve a country’s socio-



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economic development, deal with the global environment and are based on co-financing, with the FFEM contributing only about 30%. The FFEM receives around 20 million euros per year from the French state, which enables it to subsidise some 20 projects each year.

The beneficiaries of its interventions are governments, NGOs and private enterprises. Two thirds are located in Africa and the Mediterranean region, with the other third targeted at Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.

Partnerships have been set up with public- and private-sector French businesses, with the international services of the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME) and the French National Forest Office, as well as with research institutions (such as CIRAD, Muséum, ANR, ARD and the Conservatoire du Littoral – the public body for coastal protection.).

Around 75% of the FFEM's resources go into projects concerning climate and biodiversity, followed by those related to international waters, and finally those concerned with land degradation and harmful substances.

Among the pilot operations in the fight against climate change are improving housing in China in order to make it more ecological, the energy efficiency of industries in Morocco, and programmes for sustainable urban development in Hanoi and Cairo. The FFEM also supports the controlled use of biofuels and the development of alternative renewable energy sources.

In terms of biodiversity, the FFEM promotes environmentally friendly activities, such as ecotourism, the production of staple foodstuffs and of genetic resources. *“An important objective is economic development,”* stresses Christophe du Castel. *“For instance, we support many projects to help logging companies, notably in the Congo basin, to develop timber certifying processes and logging methods that enable the renewal of these resources.”*

In the area of international waters (in which the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is heavily involved), eligible projects concern cross-border river basins: *“We are assisting with the creation of joint management schemes involving the countries concerned,”* points out Christophe du Castel. *“For the Senegal River for example, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal have built a single dam supplying electricity to all three countries.”*

Another of today's major challenges is the new agreement on forests, following the Copenhagen summit. France, like other countries, committed itself to setting up specific activities to curb deforestation in developing countries. This involves, among other things, implementing control and management mechanisms for large areas of forest as well as the development of an efficient system of financial support for developing countries, all with the support of the FFEM. It's quite a programme!

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