

PROPOSED PROJECT ACTIVITY ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT

LT-010-POR-072023, MONTEMOR-O-NOVO, PORTUGAL



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ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROJECT SUBMITTED BY LIFE TERRA FOUNDATION, QUINTA DAS ABELHAS, WITH AOCIP IDENTIFIER LT-010-POR-072023, MONTEMOR-O-NOVO, PORTUGAL.

CONTEXT

As part of the process for the certification of nature-positive projects and the consequent issuance of Verified Nature-Positive Credits (VNPCs) under the ASES on-chain protocol, the Project developer “Life Terra Foundation” submitted the project “Quinta das Abelhas”, in Montemor-O-Novo, Portugal. This Project activity is in the onboarding stage with the aOCP identification code LT-010-POR-072023. A planting at a semi-forested area in the Montemor-o-Novo municipality, in the Alentejo Region (Portugal), was done from November 2022 to March 2023. Since Project activities have been implemented before the start of the onboarding process, it participates as a project of Modality B. According to the aOCP rules and procedures, Modality B projects shall go through the following process in order to be registered:

1. Application via the Project Submission Form (PSF), done by Project proponent.
2. Documentation review and alignment assessment, done by aOCP Operations Team.
3. Payment of onboarding fee by the project proponent.
4. Project pre-registration, done by aOCP Operations Team.
5. On-site Validate of the implemented Project activities, done by aOCP Operations Team.
6. Elaboration of Baseline report, Monitoring plan, Contingent table of credits issuance, done by aOCP Operations Team.
7. Project proponent agreement.
8. Project Verification by an external, independent, 3rd-party Verifier, delivering a Project Verification Report.
9. Project registration letter and first credits issuance, done by aOCP Operations Team.

This report corresponds to step 2, alignment assessment. The methodology and data gathered on-site are presented here.

ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT

The aOCP is founded on robust principles aimed at ensuring that Project activities seeking registration and accreditation with Verified Nature Positive Credits (VNPCs) demonstrably and positively impact ecosystems in a real, measurable, permanent and additional manner, while avoiding any harm to ecosystems and/or society.

Conformity with the aOCP's principles, values, rules, and requirements is a fundamental prerequisite for participation in the program. This evaluation occurs during the onboarding phase, prior to the registration of Project activities. This mandate is stipulated in the aOCP Procedures document, which outlines all the stages a Project undergoes from its inception to the issuance, trading, and retirement of VNPCs.

A positive result of the alignment assessment with aOCP's principles, values, rules, and requirements confirms that the proposed Project activity:

1. Falls into one of the following project types:

- a. Forest management, including ARR
 - b. Regenerative agriculture
 - c. Silvopastoral management
 - d. Urban forests / individual tree climate action
 - e. Biochar
2. Adheres to the environmental and social no-harm prerequisites,
 3. Is anticipated to yield positive impacts on biodiversity,
 4. The Project was developed less than 24 months ago;
 5. Conforms to the additionality criteria for the requested VNPCs,
 6. Possesses documentation substantiating land ownership or an agreement for the project's duration,
 7. The Project area has not been degraded, deforested or burned in the last 24 months;

Certain circumstances may result in an unfavorable assessment and, if not rectified or clarified satisfactorily, could lead to the rejection of the Project activity's registration within the aOCP.

These circumstances include:

- Non-compliance with aOCP's principles, values, rules, and requirements,
- Issuance of contradictory and/or false declarations by the Project proponent or Project developer,
- Diminished confidence in the Project activity's ability to yield anticipated ecosystem and/or social benefits due to an inadequate risk management plan, which encompasses a comprehensive assessment of internal, external, and natural risks, as well as risk mitigation and contingency planning.

According to the information provided by the Project proponent in the Project Submission Form (PSF), the proposed Project activity belongs to the aOCP category of *Forest management* and consists of the planting of 21284 trees from 30 species native to the region and adapted to the local conditions. These species include trees, shrubs and herbs, some of them are: *Olea europaea*, *Pistacia lentiscus*, *Pistacia terebinthus*, *Cupressus sempervirens*, *Taxus baccata*, *Ulex europaeus*, *Cytisus scoparius*, *Lonicera etrusca*, *Rhamnus alaternus*, *Laurus nobilis*, *Morus nigra* and *Spartium junceum*. All species are native to the region and are adapted to the local conditions. A professional planting was carried out, including application of mulch to increase the survival rate of the saplings. Project location is shown in figure 1.

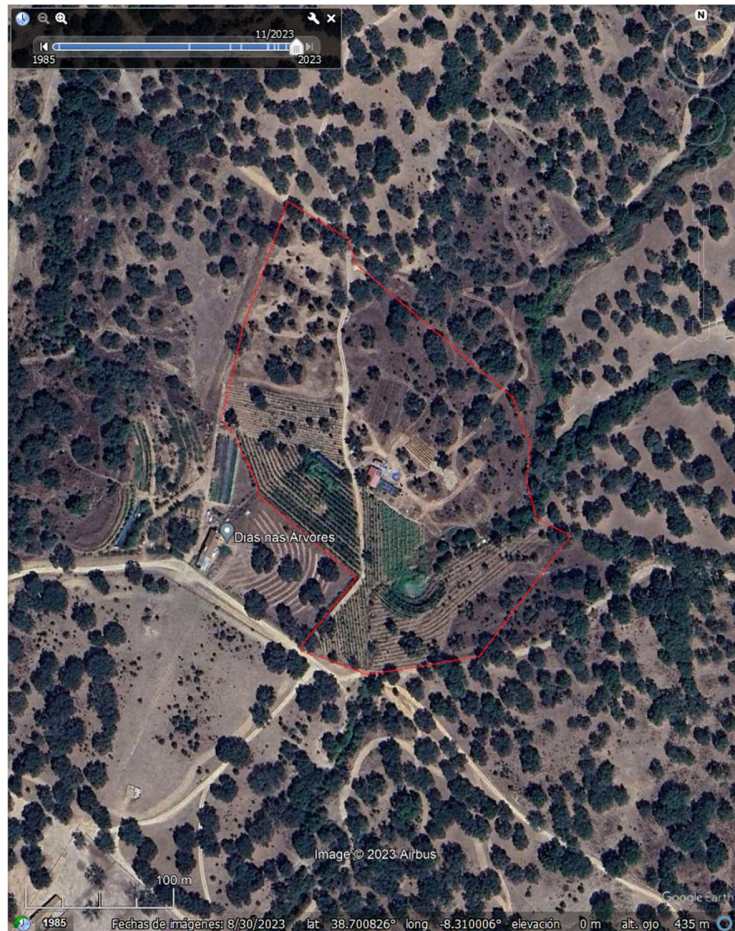


Figure 1. Project area consisting in 1 polygon.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The proposed Project activity was assessed for its alignment with the aOCP rules and requirements, using the following checklist.

Alignment criteria	Yes	No
Does the project belong to one of the following types: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest management, including ARR • Regenerative agriculture • Silvopastoral management • Urban forests / individual climate action • Biochar 	Y	
Does the project comply with the environmental and social no-harm requirement?	Y	
Is the project expected to have positive impacts on biodiversity?	Y	
If the project has already started, is it less than 5 years old?	Y	
Do the requested VNPCs comply with the additionality criteria?	Y	
Has documentation establishing land ownership or an agreement for the project's duration been provided?	Y	
Have any trees or shrubs been cleared in the project area in the last 2 years?		N

Historical land cover dynamics was analyzed using Google Earth high-resolution images as well as NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) analysis. The NDVI is a widely used remote sensing metric that provides information about the density and health of vegetation in a specific area. It is calculated from the difference between near-infrared and red light reflectance from the Earth's surface.

When analyzing historic land cover, NDVI can be used to track changes in vegetation over time. By examining archived NDVI data, researchers can observe trends in vegetation density, identify shifts in land use patterns, and monitor the effects of factors like urbanization, deforestation, or natural disasters.

RESULTS

Satellite images (figure 2) shows that no trees have been removed in the Project area has remained unchanged between March 2021 and August 2023. The areas where trees were planted are visible in the image from August 2023.



Figure 2. Sentinel-2 images from different dates from 2021 and 2023 in polygon 1.

NDVI analysis (figures 4 and 5) shows that the highest NDVI values are reached between the months of November and May, following the rainy season. Since January 2019, yearly mean NDVI has remained stable between 0.58 and 0.65, indicating no vegetation loss. This value is expected to increase, as the planted trees, shrubs and herbs grow.

NDVI TIMELINE IN QUINTA DAS ABELHAS (LT-010-POR-072023) PROJECT AREA, MONTEMOR-O-NOVO, PORTUGAL. N=75

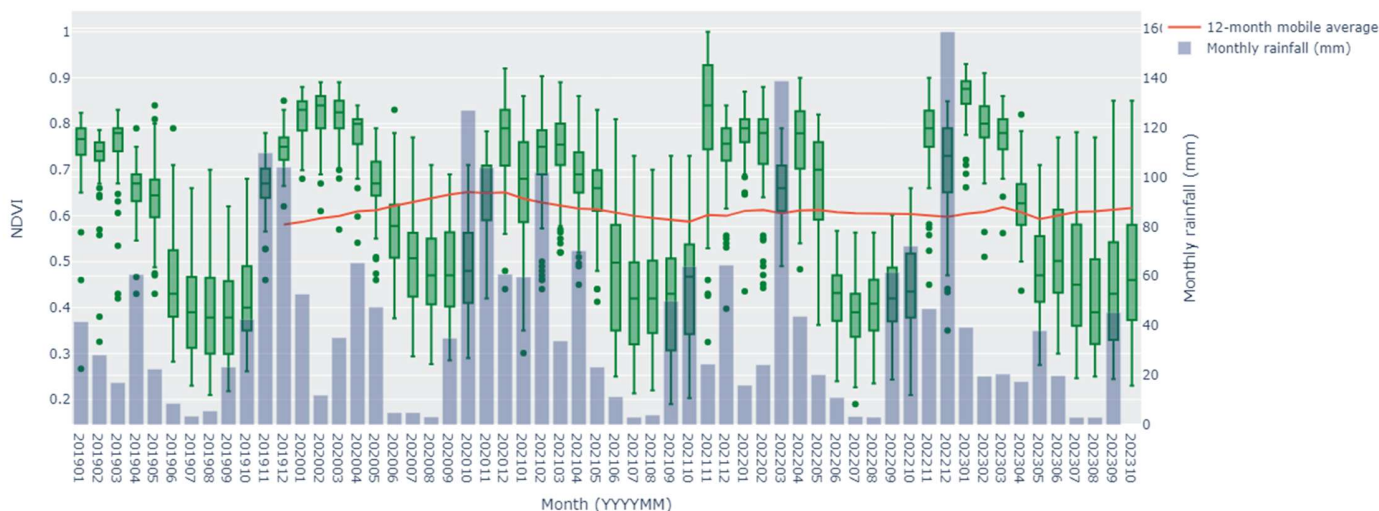


Figure 4. Monthly NDVI and rainfall since January 2019.

The plantation was settled in areas where vegetation was absent (figure 2), accordingly with the site's restoration needs. The implemented Project activities are, therefore, an important contribution to increasing forest cover in the Project area at the same time it keeps providing important economic and social benefits to the local community.

CONCLUSIONS

- The Project activities, consisting in the plantation of 30 native species, are aligned with the aOCP's principles and criteria. Furthermore, in addition to capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, by increasing vegetation cover, the project is likely to positively impact biodiversity, protect the soil from erosion and sustain rainfall water infiltration.
- The Project activities have not caused net-harm to ecosystems or society, on the contrary, they are expected to create ecological, social and economic benefits, being a driver of sustainable development. Labelling of VNPCs for their contribution to SDGs will be subject to the assessment of SDG-specific indicators.
- The Project area has not experienced deforestation and soil degradation within the 12 months preceding the commencement of Project activities.
- The proposed Project activity is in alignment with aOCP rules and requirements and is therefore eligible for registration as a Modality B aOCP Project.
- The PSF states that the Project is of type "Silvopastoral management". This project type involves presence and management of feedstock in the Project area. However, due to the activities mentioned, it seems to fit better as a *Forest management* or *Regenerative agriculture* project. In order to accurately define the type the project belongs to, it is required that the Project proponent provides additional information regarding the number of individuals of each species that were planted, specifying for each species if it is tree, shrub or herbaceous, as well as a description of the activities that will take place as part of the project, aside of the planting activity.

UPDATES IN VERSION 2 OF THE ALIGNMENT ASSESSMENT

The Project proponent provided the full list of species and number of individuals of each one and specified additional activities towards the goal of recovering the land and soils from a point where exhaustion of nutrients was almost irreversible, thanks to the principles of Syntropic Agriculture.

Based on the information provided, the proposed Project activity is deemed eligible to be registered as a Modality B, *Regenerative agriculture* project.