

MID-TERM EVALUATION

NATIONAL PLAN FOR INTEGRATED RURAL FIRE MANAGEMENT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

2024

CONTENTS

Scope and approach	3
Evaluation goal and dimensions	5
Methodology.....	12
Workplan and deliverables	13
Payment.....	14

SCOPE AND APPROACH

These are the terms of reference (ToR) for the mid-term evaluation of the National Plan for Integrated Rural Fire Management (NPIRFM). This mid-term evaluation includes interventions carried out under the NPIRFM since 2020 and responds to what the plan itself has determined to be its mid-term evaluation at the 5th year of implementation, as per Resolution of the Council of Ministers n. 45-A/2020, of June 16th.

Based on a national plan, this evaluation should consider the vision and context of the plan, under a public demand for change after the severe wildfires of 2017, in all the action principles, governance framework, strategic axis and guidelines, process and value chains, projects, targets and expected outcomes, into a country protected against severe wildfires.

As this evaluation is carried out at a halfway point it is expected to focus on implementation issues and to facilitate mid-course corrective actions. As opposed to what would be expected from a final evaluation, the purpose is not to reach conclusions about long term impacts or the overall reach of the NPIRFM, but to point out the main difficulties and strengths, weighing what was thus far expected versus what was achieved in terms of results and outcomes, and the relevance and coherence of the NPIRFM.

As such, one of the deliverables of this evaluation should be an assessment of what has been achieved thus far and how are the stakeholders advancing the NPIRFM's programmes, so that all players can be held accountable and to know what corrective measures have to be taken, if any. Good practices are also to be identified and returned, as well as recommendations for programme revisions, since the NPIRFM and the IRFM system has established a dynamic planning cycle with revision intervals.

The evaluation to conduct under these ToR serves not only the set obligations, as per the already mentioned resolution, but it also constitutes a mechanism for assessing the state of play of the IRFM, through key performance indicators regularly monitored.

For this evaluation, these components are to be considered:

- Strategy 2020-2030;
- Value Chain and its enablers;
- National Action Programme (NAP);
- Regional Action Programmes (RAP).

It should be noted that the evaluation pertains to the NPIRFM, which, in turn, includes an action programme and regional programmes. It is therefore expected that all references henceforth to the "plan" be understood as including the programmes. The NAP contains 97 projects, of which many are also translated into the regional programmes, and, in some cases, additional projects can be defined at the regional level.

The **strategic relevance of this evaluation exercise and final product for the NAP's revision**, from the outputs produced in this process, must be highlighted. It will be an opportunity to actively

involve IRFM's entities, gathering critical views about their responsibilities and assignments and, at the same time, keeping them committed as agents of change.

Since the NPIRFM is developed at several administrative levels, but also in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, this evaluation should target:

- Parliament
- Government
- Sectoral Areas of Government – 11 Ministries
- Integrated Rural Fire Management System - IRFMS's Entities

In addition, highest level stakeholders, but also those at other levels of governance, such as municipalities and private entities, should be called to participate in the evaluation, as they all are relevant stakeholders, data providers, and/or have a proactive role in the implementation of the NPIRFM. In this sense, they are an integral part of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process, having an active voice throughout the process.

In geographical terms, the evaluation shall consider mainland Portugal and its 5 planning regions (roughly equivalent to NUTSII).

As for organization procedures, the AGENCY FOR INTEGRATED RURAL FIRE MANAGEMENT (AGIF), as coordinating authority of the IRFM and accountable for the NPIRFM evaluation and its M&E, will host the Evaluation Team, facilitating all the desk research and analysis, and the contacts with the relevant entities. This work will be guided by criteria of impartiality, ethics, and quality.

AGIF will also review and approve the draft and final reports for terminology and conceptual accuracy. Findings and recommendations will not be limited, constrained, or modified by AGIF.

AGIF expects a proposal for a governance model of this evaluation to be presented, and the working team on OECD's side is also expected to include Portuguese nationals, preferably having resided in mainland Portugal for the past 10 years.

Following the proposal of a governance model, roles and a meeting calendar are also to be presented.

EVALUATION GOAL AND DIMENSIONS

The main goal of the evaluation is to focus on the state of play of the initiatives and goals set forth in the NPIRFM, considering the major objective of protecting mainland Portugal from severe wildfires. As a strategy has been defined, translated into action programmes at national and regional levels, subjected to regular monitoring, the resulting data is to be considered in the evaluation, hinting at corrections or redefinition of performance indicators or objectives, as needed.

As a mid-term evaluation exercise, its scope of analysis and focus should be delimited in relation to the main objectives.

The dimensions for evaluation designed to this exercise, related to criteria proposed by FAO Office of Evaluation¹, are as follows:

- Programming and Design
- Strategic Alignment - Relevance and Coherence
- Implementation – Effectiveness and Efficiency
- Results and Effects
- Expected impacts based on the achieved results.

Additional goals of the evaluation are a measure of the results of the plan and the timeliness of achievement, identifying success factors but also constraints and risks that may affect plan implementation, or suggesting improvements to ensure that the overarching goals of the NPIRFM are achieved.

It is therefore important to consider:

- Changes in the context
- Relevance of objectives in the face of possible changes in the context
- Confirmation of internal and external coherence
- Achievements made and planned (including deviations, but also the targets achieved and in progress)
- Budget execution and possible deviations
- Internal workings of the project: coordination, team, decision-making, administrative and financial aspects

¹ Template for Terms of Reference: Evaluations of projects/programmes funded by voluntary contributions from resource partners. FAO Office of Evaluation, Project evaluation report outline, June 2011; OED Evaluation Manual, April 2015.

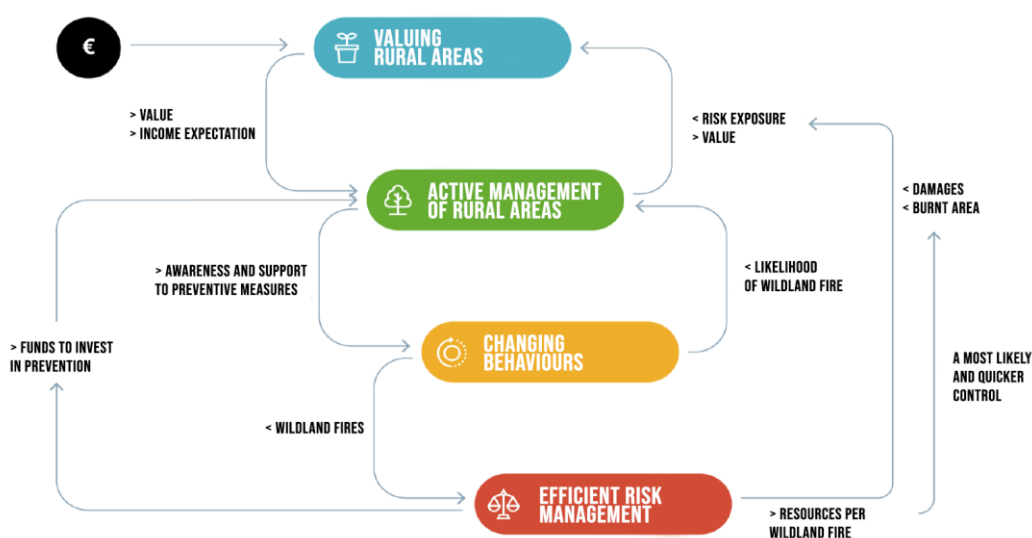
- Decision making, administrative and financial aspects.

Some of the guiding questions are:

- Have there been any context developments affecting the plan's implementation?
- Are the NPIRFM's objectives still relevant?
 - Are they coherent?
- Are there any deviations between the planned actions and those carried out?
 - Which ones?
 - Why?
 - What are the consequences for the plan?
- Are there any budget deviations?
 - Why?
 - Do they represent a constraint to the plan's conclusion?
- How has the planning and control/monitoring worked in terms of quality results?
- Is coordination adequate?
- Is there enough shared information about the plan?
- Are the stakeholders properly engaged in the activities and plan's development?
- What conclusions and recommendations can be made for next stages?

Based on the principles of the IRFMS and the plan's value chain, to solve the weaknesses and take stock of the opportunities, four strategic vectors have been established: **Value**, **Care**, **Change** and **Manage**, which, due to their interdependence, can generate cycles of positive reinforcement between them, which are summarized in the **Theory of Change** illustrated below:

THEORY OF CHANGE – NATIONAL RURAL FIRE PLAN 2020-2030



Source: NPIRFM 2020-2030, AGIF.I.P.

The four strategic vectors outlined in the NPIRFM translate to several other strategic objectives that try to build upon opportunities, while reducing vulnerabilities and mitigating, as far as possible, the threats to the territory.

The **strategic objectives** (SO) are developed in the **National Action Programme (NAP)** where the corresponding targets and indicators are quantified.

SO1. Enhancing rural areas

- OB1.1 Knowing how the territory is occupied and resizing forest management.
- OB1.2 Reforming the forest management model.
- OB1.3 Provide legal and financial incentives to enhance the value of rural land.

SO2. Caring for rural areas

- OB2.1 Plan and promote a diverse landscape.
- OB2.2 Reduce the fuel load on a landscape scale.
- OB2.3 Increase the effectiveness of protecting populations and the built environment.

SO3. Change behavior

- OB3.1 Reduce high-risk ignitions.
- OB3.2 Specialize risk communication.

SO4. Manage risk efficiently

- OB4.1 Implement integrated planning incorporating risk assessment.
- OB4.2 Implement an empowered risk governance model.
- OB4.3 Redesign resource management
- OB4.4 Increase the qualifications of IRFMS agents.

These SOs will contribute to achieving the **targets** proposed in the NPIRFM and must be assessed in the mid-term evaluation. For Portugal to be considered protected from severe rural fires, these findings must occur, despite the foreseeable fire risk:

- The loss of human life attributable to fire, although possible, is a rare phenomenon;
- The percentage of fires with more than 500ha is below 0.3% of total fires;
- The accumulated burnt area over the decade is less than 660.000 ha (to be updated with 2023 data, accounting for losses of goods and services).

Considering the dimensions for evaluation, there is an ample flexibility in the way the questions can be organized and presented, expanded, or summarized. Under the scope of these ToR, the questions presented in this section should be considered as suggestions.

Dimension: Programming and Design

When evaluating the design and planning of a National Strategy, particularly for wildfires, it is essential to assess various aspects to ensure its effectiveness and suitability for addressing the challenges posed by wildfires and at the same time, how those aspects contribute towards the intended change.

Question suggestions:

- At what level does the NPIRFM respond to the need for a paradigm shift in terms of preventing and suppressing rural fires based on a complex integrated rural fire management model?
- How well does the national strategy in the NPIRFM align with the overarching goals and objectives of integrated rural fire management at local, regional, and national levels?
- Are the priorities outlined in the strategy reflective of the current wildfire risk landscape and potential future trends?

Dimension: Strategic alignment – Relevance and Coherence

In the context of designing and planning, NPIRFM's strategic alignment refers to the degree to which the goals, objectives, priorities, and actions outlined in the strategy are relevant and coherent with the overarching objectives of wildfire management at various levels, including local, regional, and national levels.

Relevance - The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, government, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. It requires analyzing any changes in the context to assess the extent to which the intervention can be (or has been) adapted to remain relevant.

Coherence – In this context, we assume internal coherence as the dimension assessing the linkages and level of integration between the parts of the intervention, particularly the objectives (global and specific), the measures, the projects, the actions and the indicators; and how they contribute to achieve the global targets. External coherence considers the consistency of the intervention with national requirements in terms of public policies and the government's program in the current and previous legislatures.



Question suggestions:

- To what measure are the objectives (global and specific), the measures, the projects, the actions and the indicators contributing to achieve the global targets?
- To what measure are the objectives of the NPIRFM aligned with the public policies, and particularly, with the political strategy for the environment and forestry/rural territory/territorial cohesion?
- Does the NPIRFM contribute to the pursuit of public policies, and does it respond to the needs of the country and regions and the original challenge?
- Is it consistent with community and national policy guidance?
- Are the stakeholders well identified, is the plan adequate and does it carry out institutional capacity?
- Are most of the problems being solved and are they properly detailed and explicit in the planning?
- Does the NPIRFM incorporate the results of other good practices/experiences and similar experiences and the results of assessments of previous programmes/projects?

Dimension: Implementation

Implementation refers to the degree to which the plan has been put into practice as intended. It focuses on assessing how effectively and efficiently the planned activities, strategies, and interventions have been carried out to achieve the desired objectives and outcomes.

Question suggestions:

- To what extent has the IRFM system reduced the occurrence and severity of rural fires in Portugal?
- How has the NPIRFM and the creation of IRFM system contributed to enhancing the coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders involved in rural fire management?
- What evidence exists to demonstrate the effectiveness of community engagement and public awareness campaigns in preventing rural fires?
- What is the level of implementation of NPIRFM's value chain processes and what can we read as outputs for the system?
- Are the current KPI's and the monitoring process implementation adequate? What improvement measures should be developed?
- How efficiently has the NPIRFM allocated financial resources towards fire prevention, mitigation, and response activities?
- What improvements can be made in the IRFM system, and what remain weak points?
- How has the NPIRFM improved the training and capacity-building of personnel involved in rural fire management, and what impact has this had on overall efficiency?

Dimension: Results and Effects

Results and Effects are related to the tangible and intangible outcomes, impacts, and changes brought about by the plan. This evaluation criterion focuses on assessing the extent to which the intended goals and objectives of the plan have been achieved, as well as the broader effects on individuals, communities, organizations, and systems.

Question suggestions:

- What measurable outcomes have been achieved as results of the NPIRFM?
- How has the implementation of the NPIRFM impacted the frequency and extent of damage to natural habitats, agricultural lands, and rural infrastructure caused by fires/burnt area?
- What evidence exists to demonstrate the effectiveness of the NPIRFM in enhancing the resilience of rural communities to fire-related risks and emergencies (aspects related to the protection against rural fires – PCIR)?
- How has the NPIRFM influenced public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding fire prevention, preparedness, and response in rural communities – impacts on risk communication and from national campaign “Portugal Calls” (Portugal Chama)
- What data and methodologies have been used to evaluate the economic impacts of rural fires, including direct costs (e.g., firefighting expenses, property damage) and indirect costs (e.g., lost productivity, ecosystem services) under the principles of loss and damage evaluation best practices?
- What are the key success factors and challenges identified in the evaluation of the results and effects of the NPIRFM, and how can these inform future policy decisions and program improvements?

Dimension: Expected impacts based on the achieved results

Expected impacts refer to the anticipated outcomes, effects, and changes that are projected to occur because of the plan's implementation. It focuses on assessing the likelihood or probability of achieving specific goals, objectives, and expected results based on the planned activities, strategies, and interventions outlined in the strategic plan.

Question suggestions:

- How do achieved results of the NPIRFM align with the initially set objectives and expected impacts outlined in its strategic planning documents?
- What extrapolations can be made from the achieved results to predict future trends in rural fire occurrence, severity, and impacts in Portugal?
- What implications do the achieved results have on the allocation and prioritization of resources for rural fire management in Portugal in the coming years?
- How can the lessons learned from the achieved results inform the refinement and adaptation of strategies and interventions within the NPIRFM to maximize its effectiveness and efficiency?
- What changes or adjustments to policy frameworks, legislation, or institutional arrangements are warranted based on the observed impacts of the NPIRFM?
- How have the achieved results of the NPIRFM influenced public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards fire prevention, preparedness, and response in rural communities?
- What collaborations, partnerships, or international exchanges can be leveraged based on the demonstrated effectiveness of the NPIRFM to enhance knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in fire management practices?
- Which is the expected impact of the Landscape Fire Governance Framework's dissemination, and the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU's) Portugal has signed with other countries.

By addressing these evaluation questions, policymakers, professionals, and stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and overall effectiveness of the NPIRFM, enabling informed decision-making and continuous improvement in wildfire management efforts.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation should follow the methodology summarized below:

- (i) Desk research, involving analysis of a wide range of documents relevant to the NPIRFM Mid-term Assessment, processing regulatory, institutional, and technical information in various areas of the plan's intervention, and converging on the issues of integrated rural fire management.
- (ii) Analysis of quantitative and statistical information, which involves exploring and processing all the information made available on the physical and financial implementation of the actions included in the Plan, through the Monitoring and Control Activity Reports. It includes the IRFMS trimonthly reports, which provide information on operational results, level of execution by strategic guidance and critical projects, and status on the 97 projects of NAP, and, on the other hand, in the IRFMS Annual Activity Reports. As mentioned previously, besides the NAP, the methodological approach should cover the Value Chain, the Strategy and the RPA's, in terms of achieved goals vs. defined objectives, global indicators and KPI's. It is very important to attend to the relationship between objectives and indicators in all the NPIRFM components and demonstrate how they contribute to the goals achievement.
- (iii) Semi-directive interviews conducted with a wide range of stakeholders and privileged interlocutors with responsibilities in the major IRFMS processes and in the various management and implementation components of the NPIRFM.
- (iv) Observations and audits.
- (iv) Online survey applied to the members of the Regional Commissions for Integrated Rural Fire Management.
- (v) Case study/pilot project - in-depth analysis of the changes that have taken place based on the targets set, especially in terms of number of fires and area burnt.
- (vi) Coordination meetings might be held on a bi-monthly basis. These meetings between the Technical Evaluation Team and the AGIF should be a privileged space to discuss the design of the instruments mobilized by the Evaluation, to discuss perspectives for the development of the work and to adjust expectations regarding its results. Each of these meetings should anticipate a trimonthly report of evaluation.

The evaluation products can be considered reports, policy briefs, infographics, videos, data resulting from the empirical work, or the executive summary, which can be used in the dissemination process.

WORKPLAN AND DELIVERABLES

The Evaluation Team should present a comprehensive work plan, with the total duration of the evaluation activities and the detailed timetable for each stage of the evaluation process, with the respective deadlines and stakeholders involved in each activity.

Although this calendar may be adjusted by agreement between the parties, the following deliverables are expected:

2024		2025				
October/ mid-November	December	mid- January	March	June	October	December
Technical Proposal	Preliminary annual report		Quarterly Report*	Quarterly Report*	Preliminary annual report	Final Report and Executive Summary

**These quarterly reports are updated versions of the preliminary reports (not distinct outputs)*

The results, recommendations and lessons learned from evaluations need to be fed into subsequent strategic planning and reformulation processes. It is therefore desirable for the course of the evaluation to include specific joint or bilateral results analysis sessions between the evaluation team and stakeholders, ensuring that recommendations and lessons learned are constructed in co-creation. In this way, the evaluation function aligns positively with the continuous improvement dimension of the system.

In terms of dissemination, AGIF expects that the public presentation of the Final Report will take place at an international public event, to be held in Portugal.

PAYMENT

AGIF will contribute with the amount of 200.000,00€, to support the OECD work on the Mid-term evaluation of the Portuguese's National Plan for Integrated Rural Fire Management OECD work.

This contribution will be paid in full, upon acceptance.