



Sustainable Forest management in Central Africa: Yesterday, today and tomorrow

A science and policy conference

22-23 May 2013
Hilton Hotel, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Concept Note

DRAFT



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CIFOR advances human wellbeing, environmental conservation and equity by conducting research to inform policies and practices that affect forests in developing countries. CIFOR is one of 15 centres within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). CIFOR's headquarters are in Bogor, Indonesia. It also has offices in Asia, Africa and South America.

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Introduction

Forest management in Central Africa has come a long way since 1992. At that time there was only one Ministry of Forestry in Gabon; in other countries forestry issues were tucked away inside the various ministries of agriculture. There was little discussion of the role of forests in mitigating climate change and no mention of it in the laws of Central African countries. Laws and policies did not provide for the role of communities or women in forest management and access. Forest concession management plans, the first step in sustainable forest management, were almost unheard of and rarely in use. The importance of forests in ensuring food security and nutrition for tens of millions of people was taken for granted. China had not yet arrived in Africa. Biofuels were still in research labs and there were few oil palm plantations. The idea that forests transcended national borders and should be managed collectively remained a long way off.

But vast changes swept across the region shortly after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – or Rio Summit. Suddenly the environment moved to the forefront of the global agenda and four major agreements concerning forests emerged: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Forest Principles for sustainable management of forest resources.

The Forest Principles, while not legally binding, were perhaps the most important for Central African forests as they captured the general international understanding of sustainable forest management (SFM). They included criteria and indicators to evaluate the achievement of SFM at both the country and management unit level and they attempted to codify and provide for independent assessment of the degree to which the broader objectives of sustainable forest management were achieved in practice¹.

The Rio Summit, and subsequent summits (Earth Summit 2002 and Rio+20?), spurred many more changes. Ministries governing forests alone were introduced in country after country, along with supporting institutions. Officers went to work drafting new and extensive legal frameworks for forests. Policy makers introduced laws recognizing the roles of community groups and women in sustainable forest management. The role of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change came into focus and to be enshrined in REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) policies and projects that appeared across the region. The Forest Stewardship Council was born in 1993 and the first certified forests appeared in Africa in 2005. The European Union launched the FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) Action Plan in 2003. The nearly 50 percent increase in population across the region put

¹ Nasi, R., Cassagne, B., & Billand, A. "Forest Management in Central Africa: Where Are We?". *International Forestry Review*, Vol 8. (1). 2006

a spotlight on the critical link between forests and food security and nutrition. And the Yaoundé process launched in 1999 led to the birth of regional institutions, such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) in 2002, the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) in 2005 and the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) in 2008.

Sustainable forest management in Central Africa has certainly moved forward. But what has been achieved? What has been the impact of these changes? Where are we today? And what are the challenges of tomorrow? What are the priorities for researchers, policy makers and practitioners? Finding answers to these questions is central to the objectives of this proposed conference and the subject of this concept note.

The Proposed Conference

CIFOR and its partners are now proposing a two-day policy and science conference entitled “**Sustainable Forest management in Central Africa: Yesterday, today and tomorrow.**” Designed as a science and policy conference it is to be held from May 7-8 2013 at the Hilton Hotel in Yaoundé, Cameroon. It is intended to bring together the region’s leading policy makers, donors, media, researchers and forest experts to provide a forum for an open discussion of the most critical issues and challenges facing the sustainable management of Central Africa’s forests, the biodiversity they embrace and the people who depend on them. Participants will collaborate to identify the most important lessons from the past, the most critical research questions and the most strategic policy approaches for sustainable management of the region’s forest resources now and in the future.

Why Central Africa?

Central Africa is home to the second largest continuous block of rainforest on the planet after the Amazon Basin. Although disturbed in places, forest cover is relatively well preserved. While annual deforestation rates have been comparatively low, between zero and one percent, there are strong indications that Central African forests are at a critical turning point.

This area hosts a wealth of biodiversity, including more than 10,000 species of plants, 1,000 species of birds, 400 species of mammals, and three of the world's four species of great apes.

Covering 162 million ha in six countries, the Congo basin forests not only play a critical role in biodiversity conservation, they also provide vital regional and global ecological services as a carbon sink and catchment basin. When tier two countries are included, Rwanda, Sao Tome And Principe, Chad, and Burundi , that area is expanded to nearly a 1 million sq miles (ck this).



The Congo basin forests are spread across the ten countries that make up COMIFAC (marked in dark green on the map): Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic Of Congo, Democratic Republic Of Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome And Principe, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and Burundi.

The forests are home to more than 40 million people and if current rates of demographic growth remain constant, the population of the Congo Basin will double in the next 25 to 30 years. According to key socio-economic indicators, the population is characterized by a high level of poverty and under-development, with subsistence farming and the use of forest products often representing the only means of livelihood for households. For most of the population, forest resources keep them above the survival threshold. CIFOR's own research has shown that forest dependent communities can receive up to 25% of their income from forests.

Population growth and global trade have led to increasing deforestation. Agriculture is a chief threat to forests since farming is primarily carried out through unproductive traditional techniques and slash-and-burn cropping practices that can occupy significant forest area. The potential development of agro-industry, palm oil, and biofuels is another rising concern.

While extensive logging in the sub-region has not generally led to significant loss of forest cover, and may not compromise forest sustainability directly, forest roads associated with logging penetrate previously untouched forest areas, increasing accessibility and opening up forests to more indirect threats.

In this context, the sustainable utilization and economic development of forest resources, and the role of forests in landscape planning, have become integral to the sustainable development of the region. With the increase in demand for livelihoods, maintaining forest cover in both production and conservation forests will be a major challenge in the coming decades. ²

For all these reasons it is essential that, 20 years after the Rio Earth Summit first placed forestry on the international agenda, a conference be held to address the issues facing sustainable forest management and livelihoods in Africa.

² De Wassiege, C., et al, "The Forests and the Congo: State of the Forest 2008", European Union, 2008



Forest Day 5 in Durban South Africa brought together 1,300 participants from more than 100 countries

Why CIFOR?

CIFOR itself is a product of the Rio Earth Summit and this year it will celebrate its 20th Anniversary in 2013. Since its founding in 1993, CIFOR has maintained a presence in Africa and Central Africa³ working closely with universities and partners throughout the region. Today it has regional and project offices in Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zambia. Since its inception, CIFOR has carried out collaborative research to inform policy on every aspect of forestry in the region as each new issue arose.

CIFOR is a member of the consortium of 15 research centers that form the CGIAR. Our multidisciplinary approach considers the underlying drivers of deforestation and degradation that often lie outside the forestry sector: forces such as agriculture, infrastructure development, trade and investment policies and law enforcement.

(Scientists to check this para and add or subtract) For example, CIFOR's research, with its partners, on bush meat is widely cited as pioneer work. The center's scientists were among the first to research the importance of non-timber forest products and the involvement of local communities in sustainable forest management in the region. Our research on the forest certification process in Central Africa informed the evolution of the FSC. CIFOR research, with the WWF, on the expansion of oil palm development is already informing policy in

³ CIFOR, "Forests and Africa's Development: CIFOR in Sub-Saharan Africa". 2005

Cameroon and other countries. Work to track the relationship between demand from China and other emerging economies? and deforestation is well under way. The three publications in the Analyzing REDD series, products of CIFOR's Global Comparative Study (GCS) on REDD+, have been downloaded more than one million times.

CIFOR has a strong reputation as an independent voice and its role in convening national, regional and global conferences is well established. On behalf of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, many of whom will join in the current conference, CIFOR has coordinated six Forest Days alongside the UNFCCC COP beginning in Bali, Indonesia. Designed to inform the COP discussions and raise awareness, Forest Day is now widely regarded as one of the world's most influential forestry events, and one regularly generating more news coverage than any other.

Objectives

The “**Sustainable Forest management in Central Africa: Yesterday, today and tomorrow**” conference has the following specific objectives:

1. Evaluate the impact of research, forest laws and policy development on sustainable forest management in Africa in the 20 years since the Rio Earth Summit.
2. Review and coalesce existing knowledge on forestry research and forest policy on sustainable forest management to identify research gaps and possible opportunities and constraints.
3. Provide a platform for sustained collaboration among research institutions, partners and policy makers in Central Africa to ensure generation of new ideas, which will engender sustainable development in the region.
4. Reinforce and clarify the position of Central African forests as key to the emerging regional and global climate change strategy.
5. Provide a forum where a wide range of stakeholders and regional leaders can discuss new challenges and issues arising from the implementation of REDD+, forest certification, and other initiatives.
6. Highlight the many policy successes of the region.

We will accomplish these objectives by:

1. Inviting key forest stakeholders, including private sector representatives, from Central Africa to either attend or speak at the conference while ensuring a diversity of opinion and participation.
2. Structuring the agenda to promote open debate and discussion.
3. Committing resources for travel grants to ensure varied and diverse stakeholders can attend.
4. Providing a platform for the presentation and discussion of new science relevant to sustainable forest management policy and practice.

5. Providing a platform for stakeholders to engage and network with each other.
6. Engaging international and local media on critical issues of forests, forest policy and climate change.
7. Developing and implementing a framework/road map for integrating the outcomes of this event into the agendas of research, policy and development institutions active in sustainable forest management and livelihoods in Africa.

Timing and Location

This event will be held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 22-23 May 2013 at the Hilton Hotel. CIFOR proposes to convene the conference with the active participation of its partners in the region. A potential list, many of whom have expressed their enthusiasm to participate include: COMIFAC, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Bioversity International, Centre de Cooperation international en Recherche agronomique pour le Developpement (CIRAD), Institut de Recherche pour le Developpement, (IRD), the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), as well as other key research partners.

General Sponsors (formatting)

Organisations are invited to support either in cash or kind (e.g. audiovisual equipment, cocktail, travel grants for speakers or participants) All general sponsors will be widely recognized over a three month period on event signage, videos, blog stories, relevant webpages, programme guide, mailings and through announcements at the event itself and on the website through 2013. Current and potential sponsors include DFID, NORAD, AUSAID (full spellings tc) and GIZ (ck).

Conference Structure and Content

Although modelled loosely on the annual Forest Day this conference is designed as a two-day event. The first day will begin with an opening session with keynotes from government, leaders and eminent guests, followed in the plenary by the first of three roundtable discussions. The first roundtable will focus on the development of forest laws and institutions since the Rio Summit.

In the afternoon, there will be three parallel discussion forums with different themes. Each session will be made up of a diversity of panellists and moderators to be selected by the conference's **Science Committee (composed of CIFOR and its partners)**. The forums will be designed to be highly interactive to ensure participation. A summary of key messages from the forums will feed into the

closing plenary . The first day will end with a second high-level roundtable discussion on the region's experience with REDD+.

The second day will commence with one or two science keynotes , to be followed by the second round of three parallel discussion forums.

The results of the discussion forum deliberations will be presented in the form of a declaration for action to be presented to the Heads of COMIFAC and the CBFP.

The conference will end with a cocktail reception and further networking.

Outline of Proposed Structure

The proposed structure with indicative timings is as follows:

Day One (7 May 2013)

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| | Morning Session | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome address (15 minutes) • Keynote speech by a leading scientist (20 minutes) • Keynote speech by host Minister (20 minutes) • Presidential speech (30 minutes) • |
| 12:00-13:00 | Round Table Discussion 1 | A critical review of key forest laws and institutions developed in the region since Rio Earth Summit. |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch/Networking | |
| 14:00-16:00 | Afternoon Session | Three parallel roundtable sessions on (a) climate change and forests (b) food security and nutrition (c) sustainable management of production forests. |
| 16:00-16:30 | Coffee Break | |
| 16:30-17:30 | Round Table Discussion 2 | Realising Redd+ in Central Africa Success or Failure |

Day Two (8 May 2013)

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 09:30-10:45 | Morning Session | Science keynotes |
| 10:45-11:00 | Coffee Break | |
| 11:00-13:00 | Parallel Roundtables | Three parallel round table sessions on (a) informal sectors (b) forests in sustainable landscapes (landgrabbing, sharing, or sparring) (c) a review of the role of regional and international instruments in forest management, e.g. COMIFAC, CPFP, etc. |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch/Networking | |
| 14:30-15:45 | Round Table Discussion 3 | Forest Financing: what works and what doesn't. (Discussion Forum teams will prepare declaration) |
| 15:45-16:15 | Coffee Break | |
| 16:15-17:45 | Plenary Session | |



Attendees at Forest Day 6, Doha, December 2012.

Communications

A world leader in development communication, CIFOR is recognized by [Google News](#) as a credible news provider and also has a content partnership agreement with international humanitarian news portal, [Reuters AlertNet](#)., and others.

CIFOR will leverage its extensive media channels and networks to bring international and regional attention to the conference presentations and speeches, highlighting the work of outstanding scientists and stakeholder groups. Through a comprehensive outreach and communication approach, CIFOR will not only generate momentum for the conference but also raise broader awareness of the critical issues facing the Congo Basin forests and the opportunities and challenges ahead.

The result will be a unique opportunity to reach national, regional and international audiences through a dynamic outreach strategy across multiple platforms. CIFOR has built a carefully managed mailing list of 2,500 environmental journalists around the world and has extensive engagement with the mainstream press as well as niche environmental and scientific news outlets.

Throughout the two-day event, speakers and scientists will meet the media individually and at press conferences. Dissemination will take place across a broad range of social media channels operated by CIFOR and its partners (including CIFOR's Africa Twitter and Facebook, Forest Blog and YouTube). Blogging of conference sessions will take place in both English and French. Broadcast interviews will be conducted throughout the conference and will be disseminated to media and shared on websites throughout the continent and globally.

At each major event, CIFOR dispatches a team of former journalists (TIME, Associated Press, Bloomberg News) to report for CIFOR [Forests News](#) blog, which currently has 35,000 readers worldwide each month. CIFOR's comprehensive coverage of major forestry events attracts even larger audiences – during the 2012 UNFCCC COP in Doha, monthly readership of the blog increased to 46,000. These blog posts – combined with outreach through traditional media, social media and websites – have not only created significant attention and momentum for each CIFOR convened event but have also broadened their impact far beyond the conferences to include tens of thousands of stakeholders.

Budget

The indicative budget for the conference is about 240,000 US Dollars based on a projected audience of 300-350 guests from Africa, Europe, and Asia.

A detailed budget will be presented by 15 January 2013 following the completion of contracting with vendors.