

Forest Certification: Involvement And Role Of Government Of The Republic Of Congo, For Sustainable Forest Management

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Abstract: this research presents firstly the forest activity in Congo and secondly, some forest certification schemes exerted in Africa and in Congo, and explain how the Congolese government and these systems work together for a sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Congo. To do that we put the action on the involvement and the role of the Congolese government in this relationship. Congo is one of the countries that have always shown their will to sustainably manage their forest resources. The first forest management in Congo started in the early 1970s with the development of management plans focused on annual timber harvesting in 1974, the new Forest Code (Law No. 004/74 of 4 January 1974) transformed the Congolese forest legislation. Considered at the time of its promulgation as one of the most modern forest code in Central Africa, it defined the forest management unit (UFA), the maximum annual cut (VMA), the promotion of local processing, Atlas Forestier Interactif du Congo[2]. At present, the use of the forest domain is governed by Law No. 16/2000 of 20 November 2000 on the Forest Code [4]. It takes into consideration that, on one hand, developments related to forest management and conservation of the environment occurred in recent years at the international level and, on the other hand, the new socio-political context of the Congo. The Forest Code confirms the policy of sustainable management of forest ecosystems, which guarantees sustained forest products production and ensures the conservation of biological diversity. In addition, the law stipulates that the transformation of the country's production should reach 85 percent. Despite those efforts granted by the Congolese government, Congo still lacks sufficient operational schemes certification, so it is still an exclusive business to northern markets. The Congolese government has the merit to generate debate involving in the forest sector regarding the certification.

1 INTRODUCTION

THIS territory of the Republic of Congo has been estimated to be 2,471,271 hectares, and about 65% of the country is covered by forests. These forests are full of immense wealth that contributes to economic and social development. Although logging for timber is not in absolute terms a major resource in terms of foreign exchange for the country, with a contribution of 5.6% of national GDP, it is right after the oil sector, the second largest contributor and it is the primary source of job positions in private sector in the country. The Republic of Congo has been a pioneer in forest management, with, in 1974, a law on forest management. But this first frame, weakly applied, did not prevent the degradation of forest ecosystems and the life of local communities, including preventing indigenous, highly dependent peoples from exploiting natural resources.

Faced with this situation, Congo in sustainable management of forests by establishing a new forest code [2]. In 2000, a major project to strengthen the regulatory frame of forest management was launched. The management of such concessions falls within the competence of government and is conducted jointly with the operating companies as part of conventions. Concessions are granted by the government through the Ministry of Forest Economy and Sustainable Development. There are 32 private companies operating concessions granted. Once the agreement is signed with the MEFDD, management of this concession is ceded to the company for a limited period of up to 30 years. Despite this large number of concessions awarded, only 7 have forest concession management plans adopted by the regulator, and only 4 were certified, ACTED [1]. The government's commitment to sustainably manage forest concessions to logging a pillar of economic and social development comes up against many constraints, especially

1. Lack of credible certification scheme which can ensure the market of wood products.
2. A poor political will to enforce the law rigorously for forest managers.
3. Lack of national forest and competent personnel to conduct field missions

2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to examine the role that the Congolese government plays via the forest administration i.e. the role that the ministry in charge of Forests plays in the process of forest certification. It is in effect:

- 1) To study some forest certification schemes in the sub-region, particularly in Congo.
- 2) Analyze the quality of relationship between certification schemes and the Congolese government.
- 3) Define or explain the role of the Congolese government in the process of forest certification.

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3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study consists on surveys of certified forest companies in Congo and the large literature. They were conducted with the departments of the Ministry of Forest Economy and Sustainable Development.

4 SOME CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

4.1 Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The FSC was established in 1993 with support from WWF, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. It displayed as objective the promotion of forest management that is adapted environmentally, socially beneficial and viable plan economically. The conception of this forest management, that the FSC calls himself responsible, is based on 10 principles and criteria that should respect those who wish to obtain the certificate or the FSC logo. Further the certificates of sustainable forest management, FSC awards certificates of traceability of timber products from forests managed and operated in accordance with the recommendations of FSC [6]. Recent data from the FSC (dated August 2012) indicates that this organization has certified altogether 157 million hectares of forests among which 66 million ha are Europe, 64 million ha are in North America, 11 million ha South America, 2 million ha in Oceania, 4 million ha in Asia and 7 million ha in Africa and 80 countries in total are involved [5].

4.2 Program for endorsement of forest certification (PEFC)

The Program of the Endorsement of Forest Certification" (PEFC) is an international non-governmental and non-profit program dedicated to promoting sustainable forest management through certifying by an independent third party. PEFC works throughout the supply chain of forest products to promote good practices in forest management and to ensure that timber and non-timber forest products are harvested in compliance with the most advanced environmental, social and ethical standards [15]. PEFC is an organization that works by recognizing national forest certification schemes. Different stakeholders' national territory cooperates for the development of the national scheme. It is well adapted to local priorities and conditions. To be recognized by PEFC, each national forest certification system is subjected to a rigorous evaluation by a third party according to the sustainability criteria defined by PEFC. This process provides assurance that all national schemes recognized by PEFC recognized by PEFC meet the same stringent requirements [15]. At present, nearly 249 million hectares of forests are certified by PEFC worldwide.

5 EXPLOITATION OF WOOD RESOURCES IN THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The vast majority (more than 80% of the forests of in Congo) is part of the permanent forest estate, owned by the government. Among all of these forests, 20 million ha are production forests, 13 million hectares are productive forest and 7,000,000 hectares are flooded or floodplain forests. The national potential of timber is estimated to be 150 million m³, with the possibility of annual production estimated to be 2,000,000 m³ capacity without compromising the natural forest regeneration [14]. These forests are under exploitation since

colonial times currently have an almost negligible annual deforestation rate is estimated to be 0.07%. The concessions granted are placed under exploitation of timber by more than thirty forestry companies which exploit an area equivalent to more than 12 million hectares. The exploitation of a concession requires above all the signing of agreements between the administration in charge of forests and society which have been granted by the Forest Management Unit (UFA) or Logging Unit (UFE). There are various logging titles:

- 1) Conventions Industrial's Transformation (CTI) which guarantees holders the right to levy a limited amount of annual species in a forest unit and ensure industrial processing of logs in an industrial unit owned, over a period of 15 years renewable.
- 2) Conventions management's and Transformation (CAT) which have the same stipulations as CTI, but with a development of up to 25 years renewable obligation.
- 3) The special permits that give holders the right to exploit forest products accessories, and allow them to use the products for commercial purposes. The duration is one month non-renewable.
- 4) Permits timber plantation which give holders the right to harvest trees in forest plantations forming part of the forest domain government. Their duration should not exceed six months.

6 FOREST EXPLOITATION AND CERTIFICATION

Congo has many advantages in favor of certification. The legislative and regulatory policy, laws, has been updated (Law 16/2000 and its implementing regulations). Political will is constantly reaffirmed and the participation of all stakeholders in sustainable forest management is required. So far, four (4) forest units belonging to two logging companies have been certified by FSC: Kabo UFA with an area of 296,000 ha (certified on May 22, 2006), the UFA Pokola with an area of 377,530 (certified on May 19, 2008), the UFA-Loundoungou Toukoulaka with an area of 552.6761 ha (certified on September 2010), all belonging to the <Congolese Industrial du Bois> (CIB), and UFA Ngombé (certified on February 26, 2009) belonging to the Forest Industry of Ouessou (IFO) with an area of 1,218,080 ha[14]. In the Congo, there is also another type of certification based on legality. At the base is the FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade) of the European Union, whose interventions in the forestry sector are largely guided by the objectives of good governance and protection of biodiversity. Thus, after 10 months of negotiations, it was finally on May 9, 2009 that the commission of the European Union and the Republic of Congo has concluded negotiations for a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (APV) on forest law enforcement, governance and trade in timber and timber products (FLEGT), to fight against illegal logging and illegal timber trade from Congo [1] Note however that this agreement is the first APV in Central Africa and the second in the world, after the agreement with the GHANA in September 2008. As we can see, this is the FSC certification scheme, which embodies in itself the monopoly of the timber market in the Republic of Congo.

7 BRIEF COMMENT ON THE FSC SYSTEM AS A MODEL IN CONGO

Concerned about the acceleration of deforestation, environmental degradation and social exclusion, a wood users group, traders and representatives of environmental organizations and human rights met in California in 1990. This group has stressed the need for a system that would be credible to identify well-managed forests and to ensure that wood comes from sources that are sustainably managed. It is at this meeting appears the FSC concept. The Earth Summit did not produce legally binding commitments on forest management, but nevertheless provided a forum for many non-governmental organizations to meet and bring together support for the innovative idea of a system of independent forest certification. Before being transferred to Bonn, Germany in 2003, the FSC Secretariat was opened in Oaxaca, Mexico and the FSC was established as a legal entity in Mexico in February 1994. Indeed FSC works for environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

7.2 TYPES AND STAGES OF THE FSC CERTIFICATION

7.2.1 Types

FSC emits three kinds of certificates: forest management, chain of custody of timber and 'timber control. The different types of certificates are the different origins of forest products, production stages and advanced forest products through the value chain. Forest management certification is awarded to forest managers or owners whose management practices meet the requirements of the FSC Principles and Criteria. The chain of custody certification applies to manufacturers, processors and traders of forest products that FSC certified. It checks FSC certified materials and products along the production chain.

7.2.2 Stages

The FSC does not issue certificates itself. The certification process is carried out by independent organizations called certification organization. These certification organizations assess forest management and operations along the production chain in terms of standards for forest types. To obtain the certificate need three steps:

- 1) Contact one or more certification organization accredited by FSC.

The organization gives a first estimation of the cost and time required for certification and it will need some basic information about your operating system. Then, it can provide information on the requirements of FSC certification.

- 2) Getting Audited

A certification audit takes place to assess the qualifications of your company for certification. Get the Certificate. The certificate is awarded after an appended work with the accreditation organization in accordance with the requirements of the FSC certification scheme [8].

Table1. The situation of FSC in Africa

Africa	Total area (ha)	N.
Cameroon	639.560	4
Congo, the Republic of	2.478.943	4
Gabon	1.873.505	3
Ghana	1.566	1
Kenya	628	1
Madagascar	1.000	1
Mozambique	51.550	2
Namibie	275.173	3
South Africa	1.539.752	21
Swaziland	110.897	3
Tanzania	51.274	2
Uganda	106.954	4

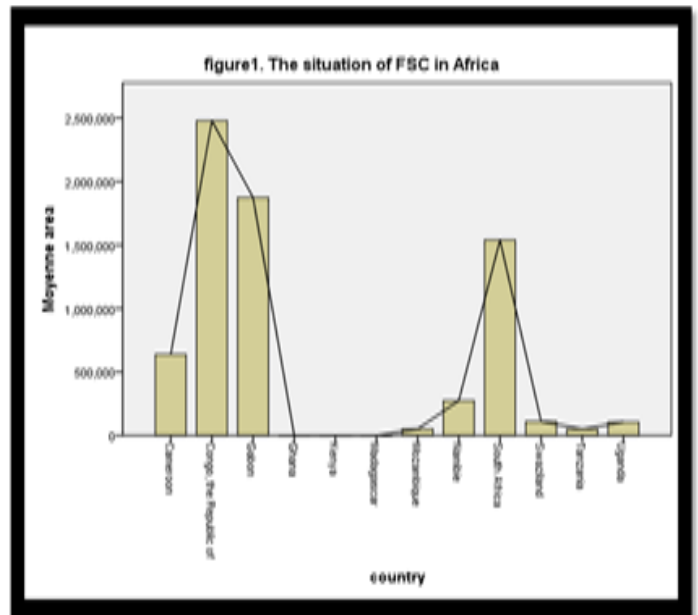
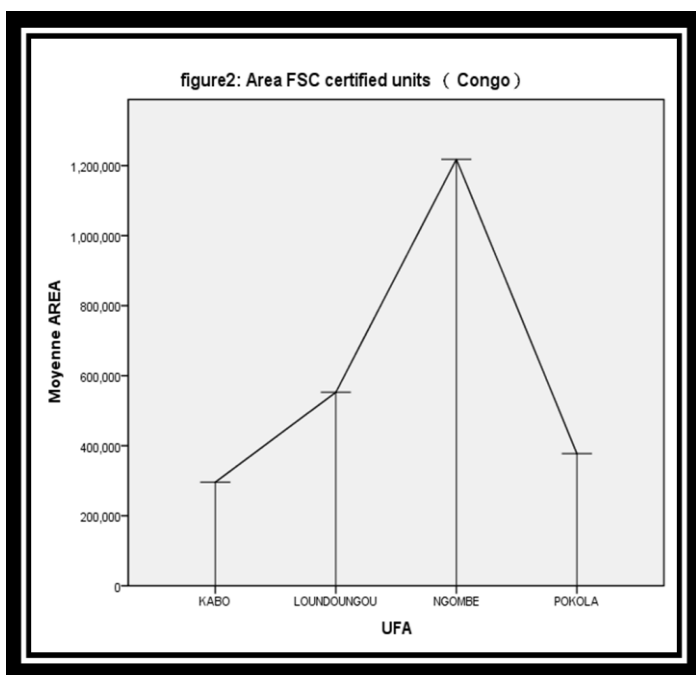


Table2. The situation of FSC in Congo

UFA	EREA (ha)	SO CIE TY
KABO	296.000	CIB
NGOMBE	1.218.080	IFO
POKOLA	377.530	CIB
LOUNDOUNGOU	552.676	CIB



8 SOME FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Participation of Congo (Minister DGEF DF DVRF ...) in forums related to certification (Madrid, Barcelona, Brazzaville Pokola); UFA large area of land granted to the exploitation

Acceleration since 2006 in the validation process of forest management plans (2-3 per year)

Encourage companies to move towards certification;

Existence of a fund for community development in the context of the implementation of the Forest Management Plan Support of the people, sharing of revenues from the exploitation of UFA with local population.

• Government involvement.

The government owns the forest, so it requires managers to demonstrate the sustainable management of the concession on the basis of a credible and recognized standard. Managers thus choose a certification system that is credible.

Table 3: Elaboration and implementation of development plans: Status, results and perspectives

UFA	EREA (ha)	SOCIETY
KABO	296.000	CIB
NGOMBE	1.218.080	IFO
POKOLA	377.530	CIB
LOPOLA	199.900	BPL
MOKABI	583.000	ROUGIER
LOUNDOUNGOU	552.676	CIB
MISSA	225.500	LT

9 Benefit of the certification seen by the government

Certification is complementary to forest controls to the extent that it facilitates the controls. It allows the government to save funds by reducing the duration and number of mission; it helps the government in carrying out its tasks; it reinforces good governance by eliminating corruption risks during missions; Certification also encourages the systematic execution of tender documents; it provides a proven and sustainable management encourages managers to nobody can pay a tax system regularly and on time; it indeed gives a positive image of the company and the country on the international market.

10 CONCLUSION

In summary, the government must create favorable conditions for success of the certification (good governance, appropriate laws, forest monitoring, commercial links for certified timber, introduction of certification modules in forestry education).

- Can and should legislate to require proof of sustainable management of its forests to its dealers because the government is the owner of timeless forests;
- Certification of forest concessions can and should become a legal requirement;
- The logging company is free to choose a credible system of internationally recognized certification (Yaoundé Declaration);
- There is a policy basis of the revolution:
 - Yaoundé Declaration (1999) of Heads of State of Central Africa;
 - Declaration No 54/214 of the United Nations;
 - The Brazzaville Declaration, February 2005;
 - COMIFAC Treaty on the sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests;
 - The statement of President Chirac in Brazzaville, February 2005
- The need to revise the current Forest Code (Laws and Regulations) which in terms of the certification is old;
- The right price for certified wood is the foundation of forest certification system;
- The need to strengthen the capacity of African NGOs and forest administrations (Auditing and Certification);
- Maintain level of funding for the sustainable management despite international crises.

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