

Why CFI intervenes in DRC despite the challenging context?

Despite relatively low historical rates of deforestation between 2000- 2010 (0.44% per year¹) the DRC has experienced a sharp increase in deforestation in recent years, as high as 1.25% per year between 2010-2014.

In 2012 the Government of the DRC made their first steps toward establishing a REDD+ mechanism² aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Following this, the [2015-2020 DRC REDD+ Investment Plan](#) was adopted.

CAFI champions the belief that the prevention of forest loss demands a holistic approach - that all major drivers of deforestation must be addressed. This is imperative in the DRC, given the complicated development challenges faced. It's vital that we advocate for interventions that can ensure economic development alongside the preservation of the Central African Forest.



Figure 1: Wood used for fuelwood vs. timber in DRC

There is a scientific consensus that the expansion of subsistence activities (slash and burn agriculture and fuel wood collection) has been the main direct cause of deforestation and forest degradation in the DRC. The most important underlying cause of forest loss is an increasing population.

WHAT'S THE SITUATION?

Poor soil quality and a lack of access to alternatives have led Central African farmers to rely on shifting cultivation. After clearing the land and farming for a short period, they allow the forest to regenerate and soils regain productivity. This land is then cleared once more and crops replanted. The result? A system known as the "rural complex," a mosaic of forest patches, cleared land, active fields, fallow fields and land used for other purposes, such as logging.

If population densities are low and fallow periods are long, slash-and-burn agriculture does not necessarily impact forests negatively. Unfortunately, in reality, high population growth coupled with an increasing demand for food, means that fallow periods are not long enough and primary forest is gradually converted to agriculture and brought into the rural complex.

¹ DRC Presentation at COP 23 event in Bonn, 2017

² Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation + foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (defined by UNFCCC)

Since 1950, the DRC population almost quadrupled to over 80 million people³. And, with the World's 3rd largest population growth the DRC is expected to exceed 379 million people in 2100⁴. At the same time, chronic malnutrition affects 43% or nearly 7 million children under the age of 5. Unable to maintain this demand the need for **farming land will double every 25 years**, resulting in increased deforestation.

This agricultural practice is paired with fuelwood collection and charcoal production. In fact, in a country with virtually no access to energy, it is estimated that 96% of the total volume of wood harvested in DRC is for fuelwood⁵, the rest is for timber. Of this remaining 4%, only about 10% is harvested by logging concessions, which contribute the lowest timber harvest volumes amongst Central African countries.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

To address systemic destruction in the DRC's forests, CAFI interventions are designed to tackle ALL the direct and underlying causes of forest loss. CAFI intends to implement programs and support reform processes conducive to forest-friendly economic development, including land tenure reform, land use planning, civil society engagement, strengthened rights and capacities of indigenous peoples, agricultural development and access and use of energy.

One of the proposed programs in the forest sector is the Sustainable Forest Management Program, which seeks to support the development of a national forest policy, the revision of the forest code and associated regulatory frameworks. It also hopes to see the reinforcement and formalization of the artisanal sector – using pilot intervention sites, and make all forms of forestry (community based, artisanal or by logging concessions) more sustainable. For example, sustainable management plans would be used systematically to define no-take zones. This means no cutting of trees in certain highly sensitive areas such as peatlands.

Through this program, CAFI is also supporting DRC to meet the legal conditions needed to lift the 2002 logging moratorium – in line with both the DRC legislation and the [Letter of Intent](#) signed between CAFI and the DRC in 2016. More information on this program in the attached SFM programme factsheet.

On one hand, CAFI recognizes the many difficulties experienced within the DRC, on an institutional, economic, budgetary and social level. It also remains conscious of the many constraints in achieving the ambitions set out in the [Letter of Intent](#). Nevertheless, CAFI remains convinced that action cannot be delayed if forest loss is to be slowed down. However, it still remains that the modalities defined in the Letter of Intent and the national legislation have to be met for CAFI to intervene in DRC.

For more information on the CAFI position on interventions required in the DRC, see the working paper, [Complex & Nuanced](#).

³ https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_KeyFindings.pdf

⁴ According to the medium variant scenario of the updated UN population estimates

⁵ [FAO Stat](#), all data for 2015, except for artisanal logging, where it is based on [Lescuyer \(2014\)](#), CIFOR, for the years 2011 and 2012