

Yangambi Engagement Landscape

*A science, conservation and
development hub in the
heart of the Congo Basin*



YANGAMBI
RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO

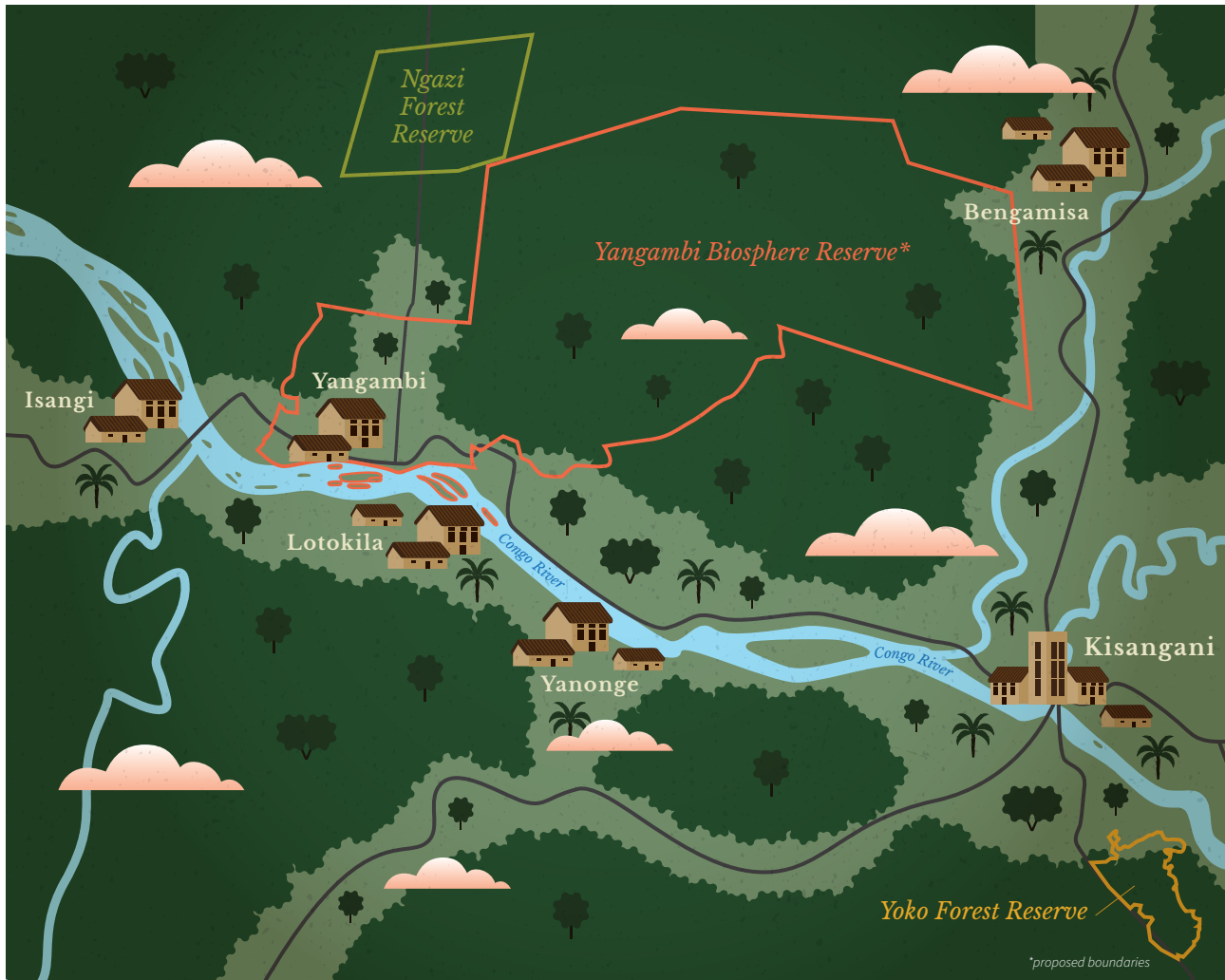


Funded by
the European Union

An aerial photograph showing a landscape with a large, cleared area in the foreground and middle ground, and a dense forest in the background. The cleared area appears to be a field or a plantation, with some small trees scattered throughout. The forest in the background is lush and green, with a clear boundary between the cleared area and the forest. The overall scene suggests a transition from a natural forest to a managed landscape, likely for agroforestry or sustainable agriculture.

A vision of landscape-level transformation is at the heart of activities led by the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) and partners in the Yangambi Engagement Landscape. Advances in forestry and agroforestry research, biodiversity conservation, and support for local entrepreneurs are putting Yangambi at the forefront of bioeconomic innovation.

Aiming to become a global reference on how sustainably managed forests and agroecological innovation can support and drive local development, the Yangambi Engagement Landscape is the premier example of CIFOR-ICRAF's 'engagement landscapes' approach, in which we work actively with national and local stakeholders over the long term to deliver outcomes that favour both people and the environment.



About the landscape

The Yangambi Engagement Landscape covers 16,000 square kilometres in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Tshopo Province, spanning the right and left banks of the Congo River. It is characterized by a wide range of land uses and tenures, including biosphere and forest reserves, off-reserve forests, logging concessions, and customary land used mostly for small-scale agriculture.

The Yangambi Biosphere Reserve, declared by UNESCO in 1976, includes around 235,000 hectares of tropical forest. In and around the reserve live more than 220,000 people who depend entirely on the exploitation of land and natural resources for their livelihoods, including logging, shifting cultivation, hunting, and fishing. Local value chains primarily serve the markets of Kisangani, a thriving city of around 2 million people.

Strategic focus areas

We focus on the following priorities while looking to achieve a broader, long-term vision that encompasses all areas of the landscape.

Capacity improvement: Together with the University of Kisangani, local primary, secondary and technical schools, and the *Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomique* (INERA) we train postgraduate students, researchers, staff of local private and public institutions, and households to understand, assess, and better manage resources and livelihoods through social and natural sciences.

Livelihood improvement and local entrepreneurship: Together with local small- and medium-enterprises and associations, we are creating green jobs and promoting more sustainable value chains to relaunch the local economy. This enables us to support public and private stakeholders in conservation action to benefit from the direct and indirect effects of the green/circular economy.

Biodiversity protection and conservation: Together with R&D partners, local and regional governments, and logging companies, we work with resource users to promote behavioural change, improved governance, and sustainable practices, ensuring that Yangambi's local flora and fauna are managed better and ultimately protected.

Research for development: We support and conduct innovative research that envisions Yangambi as a scientific hub for the study of the impacts that forestry, agroforestry, and agricultural activities have on the environment, the climate and the people.

Awareness-raising: Together with local communities, national and international media, local radio stations and journalists, we work to raise awareness and influence behaviour that can positively impact forests and contribute to people's well-being.



Our impacts

Since 2007, our partnership with the University of Kisangani has allowed us to train close to **270 Master's and PhD students**, among which 11% are women, in sustainable forest management. Our graduates now work in academia, research institutions, the private sector, and government. We have also carried out infrastructural development through the construction of Kisangani's first green building at the Faculty of Science of the University of Kisangani, thanks to our long-term partnership with Resources & Synergies Development (R&SD). In total, we have so far supported the construction and rehabilitation of approximately **5,500 m² of buildings** at the University of Kisangani and close to 3,000 m² of renovations at the INERA building in Yangambi.

Since 2017, we have supported over 1,500 women and men farmers and entrepreneurs – individually and through 63 associations – working across value chains including timber, charcoal, wild meat, fish, agricultural products, honey, and others. We have created over **3,600 hectares of agroforestry plantations**, with a mix of skills improvement, seed-capital, mentoring, improved food crops and useful trees. Several thousand jobs have thus been supported, and numerous associations and artisans work with our teams to improve the added value of their products. We have also succeeded in improving local entrepreneurs' access to capital from micro-finance institutions.



We have restored close to **3,500 hectares** of degraded land and planted over **3 million trees**. Since 2018, we have been transforming degraded land into agroforestry fields with fast-growing tree species that can be used for woodfuel and biomass energy generation. We have also supported local communities in establishing community forests with the aim of ensuring sustainable management through the practice of logging, agriculture and agroforestry within a legal geographical framework that helps to reduce deforestation and generate income for the community. A major achievement is the state allocation of forest concessions covering an area of **11,396 hectares** to the Yainongo local community in the Isangi territory to be used to expand income-generating activities for the locals.

We work with local hunters through a participatory process to implement wildlife conservation programmes and monitor animal populations using camera traps, leading to the discovery of emblematic species like the **Endangered Common Chimpanzee** (*Pan troglodytes*), the **Forest Buffalo** (*Syncerus caffer nanus*), and three species of **pangolins**. To protect these species and reduce human pressure from overhunting, a five-year wildlife management action plan has been prepared and adopted together with local communities, which have been grouped into wildlife monitoring committees.

Supported by the Kingdom of Belgium, and jointly with INERA, R&SD, the Regional Post-Graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Lands (ERAIFT), and Ghent University in 2020, we inaugurated the Congo Basin's first **Edy Covariance tower**. Located at the heart of the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve, the structure, which is now part of the Integrated Carbon Observation System (ICOS), measures greenhouse gas exchanges between the forest and the atmosphere – crucial knowledge to support climate change research.

Since 2007, Meise Botanic Garden and INERA have been working to modernize Yangambi's **herbarium**, which we continue to support. With **150,000 specimens**, it is the largest collection of dried plants in Central Africa. Ongoing activities include infrastructure renovations, digitalization of archives, and research on various coffee species.

Our partnership with the Africa Museum has supported the establishment of a modern **Wood Anatomy Lab** in Yangambi, and the scientific collaboration with the Africa Museum, the Universities of Kisangani and Gent, and ERAIFT has helped increase the number of **Congolese scientists and specialists** dedicated to improve the knowledge and raise international awareness on the importance of protecting endangered species, such as *Afromosia* (*Pericopsis elata*) and other high-value timber species that are found in the Yangambi landscape and across sub-Saharan Africa.



We have raised awareness of environmental issues and carried out behaviour-change campaigns, reaching close to **12,000 people** in the landscape including local populations, national and local authorities, and private institutions. Our environmental education programmes have reached close to **5,000 children** and have helped schools renovate structures and procure pedagogic materials with income generated from complementary activities such as the establishment of school nurseries, orchards, and agroforestry farms.

We are also actively engaged with the media, organizing and hosting environmental journalism trainings while securing extensive and positive media coverage of our programmes. Since 2012, we have trained over **50 journalists** to specialize in covering environmental

issues. Their work helps us create awareness among the Congolese public on the importance of sustainably managing the country's vast forest resources.

Since 2019, together with INERA and the group of private companies STAR, we have been working on the establishment of a **public-private partnership** for the sustainable development of the Yangambi landscape (PPP-DDPY). The PPP-DDPY aims to foster collaboration and coordination of partners within the landscape; promote innovation and R&D at INERA; and modernize the relevant infrastructures and research programmes at INERA Yangambi. It was officially signed in June 2023 and validated by HE the Minister of *Recherche Scientifique et Innovation Technologique* (MRSIT) in October 2023.



Our partners

The successful implementation of our mission and vision for the Yangambi Engagement Landscape is being driven by the long-term commitment of the European Union, our donors, and international, national and local partners over the course of several projects. Yangambi is betting on a green future, and these long-standing partnerships are essential to realizing its transformation.

For more details on projects implemented in the Yangambi Engagement Landscape, see <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/yangambi-engagement-landscape/our-projects/>.



Funded by
the European Union



For more information, visit:

www.cifor-icraf.org/yangambi-engagement-landscape/
www.yangambi.org/en

@CIFOR_ICRAF_WCA // CIFOR-ICRAF West and Central Africa

Contact:

Noella Ngunyam, Communications Specialist: N.Ngunyam@cifor-icraf.org

Photos: Axel Fassio/CIFOR-ICRAF

