



# CIFOR-ICRAF COUNTRY PROFILE

## Cameroon

2024

### About Cameroon

Astoundingly diverse, Cameroon is often called “Africa in miniature.” Almost every type of climate and vegetation of the continent is represented in its mountains, desert, rainforest, savanna grasslands, and coastlands. With 292 languages, Cameroon is also the world’s seventh most linguistically diverse country.

Stable for many decades and with low rates of deforestation, Cameroon now suffers from insurgencies in its English-speaking regions and from insecurity caused by Boko Haram in the north. The country lost more than 1.5 million ha of forests from 2001 to 2020.

Cameroon’s rich ecosystems are threatened by climate change and unsustainable agricultural practices. Poverty reduction lags population growth, according to the World Bank. About 2 million people live in drought-affected areas. In the far north, land degradation and droughts exacerbate conflict over dwindling water, grass and trees.

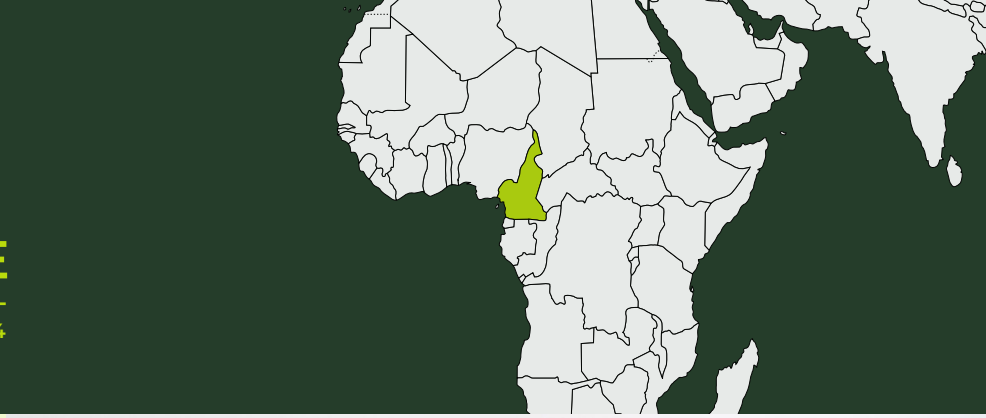
According to the Convention on Biological Diversity, direct drivers of biodiversity loss in Cameroon include ecosystem degradation; forest conversion; the poaching of large mammals; and an economic system reliant on natural resources. Indirect drivers include urbanization and weak institutional responses.

CIFOR-ICRAF is at the forefront of responding to these and other downward trends and has a combined 64 years’ experience in improving peoples’ livelihoods while safeguarding Cameroon’s forests.

“ We are proud to have reduced pressure on natural resources through community and small-scale private tree nurseries, integrating trees in farming, and developing sustainable woodfuel options and tree product value chains. ”

– Ann Degrande

CIFOR-ICRAF country coordinator



Cameroon accounts for 22 million ha of the Congo Basin forest ecosystem (M Edliadi/CIFOR-ICRAF).

### CIFOR-ICRAF in Cameroon

ICRAF and CIFOR opened their doors in Cameroon in 1987 and 1995, respectively. Together, they support its strategic objectives of poverty alleviation, adaptation to climate change, and reducing deforestation and forest degradation. CIFOR-ICRAF’s country agreements are with the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation (MINRESI) and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). CIFOR-ICRAF’s office is also a hub for the humid forests of Central Africa and assists the Republic of Congo’s Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

Today, CIFOR-ICRAF contributes to every key government target for its rural sphere and natural estate. For example, Cameroon seeks to triple cocoa production by 2030. CIFOR-ICRAF is pursuing solutions that would allow that to happen without clearing forest, falling foul of the new European Union

Deforestation Regulation and eroding the country’s historically more environmentally friendly way of growing cocoa.

“We typically grow complex multifunctional cocoa systems with a high diversity of tree species and 40%–50% shade,” says Denis Sonwa, a senior scientist at CIFOR-ICRAF in Cameroon. “For new areas, we are developing context-specific cocoa agroforests. The goal is to diversify production, reduce cocoa price volatility, conserve biodiversity and soil health, and sequester carbon.”

In another target, Cameroon aims to restore 12 million ha of degraded land under the Bonn Challenge by 2030. Pressing questions include how to prioritize this goal; which restoration options are suitable under which conditions; which tree species are appropriate for what purpose; how to involve minority groups; and what land reforms are needed.

In response, CIFOR-ICRAF has developed a training manual on restoration; championed innovations to generate and diffuse sustainable agro-sylvo-pastoral practices in the north; and defined restoration approaches for the escalating numbers of displaced people.

In the six years since its first project with refugees, CIFOR-ICRAF Cameroon had established itself as a leader in “greening the humanitarian response.” As a result, in 2023, the UN refugee agency in Cameroon signed a direct memorandum of understanding with CIFOR-ICRAF.

“CIFOR-ICRAF brings ready expertise to existing and emerging crises.”

– Richard Eba'a Atyi

*CIFOR-ICRAF forest management expert, Cameroon*

**Quick guide**

- 44 staff – 20 in Yaoundé and 24 in Garoua
- In the past three years, supervised 49 master's and PhD students

**Major achievements**

- Three decades of participatory tree domestication and on-farm tree diversity conservation, improving livelihoods via increased incomes and other benefits from indigenous trees and shrubs. “Villages are helped to develop nurseries, taught skills of vegetative propagation, and assisted with the technicalities of selecting superior trees for cultivar development that meet specific market-oriented ideotypes,” according to a 2006 paper by the team. <https://apps.worldagroforestry.org/downloads/Publications/PDFS/ja06003.pdf>
- Contributed to economic growth and poverty reduction through support for communal and community forests.
- Pioneered Rural Resource Centres, which have been scaled across the Global South as a vital extension mechanism. “In a rapidly changing world, farmers need a package of innovations and services, in addition to continuous access to knowledge and information,” says one info brief. “Having all this under one roof and in a rural setting can greatly accelerate adoption of innovations and increase benefits to farmers”. Agroforestry requires specific attention from extension because it is

knowledge intensive, highly context-specific, and provides benefits in the long term, it says. <https://www.g-fras.org/en/good-practice-notes/rural-resource-centres.html>

- Engaged in the Global Comparative Study on REDD+, contributing to Cameroon’s readiness proposal, and focusing on mitigation choices that exhibit high co-benefits.
- Has co-led the Central Africa Forest Observatory (OFAC) since 2007, enabling national and regional tracking of performance on climate commitments, including Cameroon’s INDC target to reduce GHG emissions by 32%. RIOFAC – Renforcement et Institutionnalisation de l’Observatoire des Forêts d’Afrique Centrale ([cifor-icraf.org](http://cifor-icraf.org))
- Advanced Zero-Deforestation Cocoa and the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFRI00) with national and international partners. *Au Cameroun, quand cacao et préservation des forêts tentent de faire bon ménage* ([lemonde.fr](http://lemonde.fr))
- Pioneered criteria and indicators widely adopted in Central Africa to determine whether forests are managed sustainably and contributed to certification process.

L–R: Experimental plot in North Cameroon testing effect of planting dates on sorghum yields, and rural women ‘embracing equity’ during International Women’s Day celebrations in Douroum (A Degrande/CIFOR-ICRAF). Cameroon coordinator in the field with Swiss Ambassador (CIFOR-ICRAF).





L-R: A meeting about land use planning in North Cameroon (A Degrande/CIFOR-ICRAF). A Baka returning from hunting, Odoumou village, South Cameroon (L Mefan/CIFOR-ICRAF). Assessing cocoa agroforests in Central Africa (CIFOR-ICRAF).

## Select projects

Funded by DFID (UK), the **Financing Sustainable Community Forest Enterprise (DRYAD) project (2015–2020)** developed and tested innovative performance-based public finance and mechanisms to enhance community forest enterprises (CFEs). Earlier progressive legal policy in Cameroon had enabled the creation of hundreds of new community forests, with the pledge that communities would become involved in determining how the forest is managed. But CFEs' potential to improve livelihoods and enhance forest management at the same time was not realized. DRYAD provided capital and business training: 34 CFEs were formed, employing 487 people. In a sign of success, cases of illegal logging fell from 113 in 2017 to 17 in 2020, and the number of hectares of forest cleared for agriculture declined from 1,042 in 2017 to less than 20 in 2020. <https://www.worldagroforestry.org/output/new-innovative-application-performance-based-financing-community-forest-management-transform>

Funded by the French Facility for Global Environment, **PROFEAAC (2019–2023)** addressed the issue that artisanal logging in Central Africa uses more timber than industrial logging and is set to grow further with urbanization. The project also sought to move regulation of artisanal logging away from the model of industrial logging concessions and to bring about recognition of the domestic market and to formalize artisanal wood harvesting. Monitoring of local consumption has been adopted; the project has helped reduce rural forest

degradation. <https://www.cifor.org/fr/profeaac/>

Funded by the EU, **Applied research in ecology and social sciences in support of sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa (RESSAC) (2022–2025)** backs applied research to strengthen knowledge in social sciences and ecology on the management and enhancement of natural resources in Central African forest ecosystems. It also supports Central African universities to produce science and build their capacity so they can meet high international standards in partnership with European universities and organizations managing forests on the ground. <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/ressac/fr/>

Funded by the EU, the **Innovation for Adaptation to Climate Change (INNOVACC) project (2022–2025)** is improving resilience to climate change in the north and far north by improving the productivity of agroforestry systems and the incomes of rural households while reducing vulnerability. It is developing models to quantify the effects of climate change on cropping systems; promoting practices for climate-smart villages, including a participatory climate information system and climate-smart value chains; and evaluating the feasibility of alternative renewable energy sources. [INNOVACC Cameroon | Capacity4dev \(europa.eu\)](https://www.innovacc.europa.eu/)

Funded by the EU, **Strengthening innovation systems in the North region of Cameroon (ReSi-NoC) (2022–2024)** operates between Garoua and the Adamawa Plateau in the north, a region that includes national parks and hunting zones, and experiences tension over land

and natural resources. The project is strengthening the capacities of actors in the project area to innovate. While the landscape work is important, most ReSi-NoC interventions take place in “innovation niches,” areas for learning, experimentation, and micro-transformation. Agroecological practices (e.g., soil fertility improvement) and land use planning are helping preserve the remaining tree savanna, while sustaining cattle farming and the production of cotton and food crops. <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/resi-noc/>

Funded by IDRC, **Land restoration for post-Covid rural and Indigenous women empowerment and poverty reduction in Cameroon (LRIWEP) (2022–2024)** aims to encourage the participation of women and minority groups in land restoration initiatives.

Funded by IDH and Telcar, the **Ascokyb project (2022–2025)** is bringing good agricultural practices, including the integration of indigenous trees, to cocoa farms in Ntui.

Funded by the EU with co-funding from the French Facility for Global Environment and AFD, **Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme (2023–2026)** is a 15-country initiative to improve wildlife conservation and food security in forest, savanna, and wetland ecosystems. The project agreement between the government of Cameroon and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization was signed in September 2023. CIFOR-ICRAF is coordinating the country project and fieldwork. (Programme Launch: Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme in Cameroon | CIFOR-ICRAF).



Typical village setting in North of Cameroon (A Degrande/CIFOR-ICRAF).

## Resources

*The Forests of the Congo Basin: State of the Forests, 2021.* About 75% of Cameroon's forest lies within the Congo Basin. This volume of a periodic report on the larger Congo Basin Forest addresses issues such as the relationship between biodiversity management and the emergence or re-emergence of zoonotic diseases. It concludes that management must contribute to the livelihoods of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/8700/>

*Rural resource centre, 2023.* This useful brief describes what constitutes a rural resource centre (RRC), what services it offers, the minimum requirements for an RRC, how an RRC is governed, and whether an RRC helps build capacity. <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/35703/>

*Food consumption and nutritional status of sedentarized Baka Pygmies in Southern Cameroon, 2024.* Twenty-four-hour dietary recalls in 10 villages of this community in southeastern Cameroon found that 91% of food consumed was agricultural produce, locally produced or purchased, and just 9% sourced from the wild. Further, 78% of respondents fell below WHO/FAO recommendations for 21 nutrients. The profound shift away from wild collection and the high prevalence of insufficient nutrient intake underscore the

urgent need for targeted interventions. <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/9158/>

*Soil organic carbon pools following conversion of savannah to cocoa agroforestry systems in the Centre region of Cameroon, 2024.* Farmers in Cameroon commonly afforest savanna with cocoa agroforestry systems (CAFS). Comparing savanna, secondary forest patches, annual cropland, cocoa monoculture, and 20–60-year-old CAFS with shade trees such as *Albizia adianthifolia*, *Canarium schweinfurthii* and *Milicia excelsa*, this study showed that savanna afforestation with cAFS is valuable for topsoil carbon. <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/36057/>

*Prioritizing enablers for effective community forestry in Cameroon, 2018.* In its Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Law of 1994, the Central African nation helped local communities to manage and benefit from forests economically and environmentally. In an examination of the enabling factors, the content of 41 documents on community forests in Cameroon was analyzed. Benefit generation, partnership, monitoring, and policy support were the most frequently mentioned enablers. These can be critical leveraging points for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of community forests. <https://ecologyandsociety.org/vol23/iss3/art1/>

## Ambition of CIFOR-ICRAF in Cameroon

CIFOR-ICRAF Cameroon aims to continue generating knowledge and innovations while engaging with stakeholders where trees make a difference.

With its long-standing presence and extensive network, the team will embrace new challenges.

To lift farmers' incomes and prevent further conversion of forests for cocoa, CIFOR-ICRAF will promote environmentally-friendly agroforestry systems.

In fragile landscapes, CIFOR-ICRAF will strive to make land-use zoning and management decisions more informed, inclusive, transparent, and respected.

A final ambition is to develop participatory management approaches for hunting, fishing, and – more broadly – wildlife.

“ The goal is ensuring rural stakeholders' subsistence without compromising biodiversity ”

– Ann Degrande  
CIFOR-ICRAF country coordinator

Thanks to all our donors and partners in Cameroon and Central Africa, among others European Union, BMZ, IDRC, the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), CAFI, l'Agence française de Développement, IRAD, CIRAD, Observatoire des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (OFAC), CARE, FAO, GIZ, WWF, Telcar, ECOM · This profile was written by Cathy Watson

### CIFOR-ICRAF

The Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF) harnesses the power of trees, forests and agroforestry landscapes to address the most pressing global challenges of our time – biodiversity loss, climate change, food security, livelihoods and inequality. CIFOR and ICRAF are CGIAR Research Centers.



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