

Reshaping the terrain

Forest landscape restoration efforts in Ghana

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Introduction

In 2011, the global aspiration to restore 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded lands by 2020 was established as the Bonn Challenge. Subsequently, during the U.N. Climate Summit in 2014, this target was extended by adding another 200 million hectares to be restored by 2030 under the New York Declaration on Forests, bringing the global target to 350 million hectares by 2030. The goal drives many of the reforestation efforts ongoing today.

During the 2015 U.N. climate conference in Paris, African countries, under the auspices of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), launched the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), to restore 100 million hectares of the continent's deforested and degraded landscapes by 2030. AFR100 is Africa's contribution to the 350 million hectare global target under the extended Bonn Challenge.

At the Bonn Challenge Ministerial Roundtable in Rwanda in July 2016, African countries were given the opportunity to announce new commitments, and affirm or revise existing commitments. Ghana revised its earlier communicated commitment of 1 million hectares by 2030, made in December 2015, to 2 million hectares by 2030.

Reforestation efforts

Plantation strategy Ghana's Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) efforts predate these broader initiatives. For example, approximately 190,450 hectares of forest plantations were established between 2002 and 2015, comprising about 142,401 hectares by the public sector and 48,049 hectares by the private sector. These were established under the National Forest Plantation Development Programme, which included a Modified Taungya System, Community Forestry Management Project and Private Commercial Plantation Development in degraded forest reserves.

Global FLR aspirations re-energized Ghana's efforts demonstrated by the country's pledge to restore 2 million hectares of its fragmented and degraded forestlands by 2030 in support of AFR100 and the Bonn Challenge. The pledge falls within Ghana's Forest Plantation Strategy, which aims to reverse the trend of deforestation and forest degradation at the landscape level.

1. Approaches to forest landscape restoration

At the heart of the plantation strategy, which drives restoration efforts, is the forest landscape restoration (FLR) approach, aiming to restore ecological integrity, while improving human well-being and livelihoods

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through multi-functional landscapes. It has a strong focus on community and private sector involvement, and is made up of the following components:

- 250,000 hectares of forest plantations, including wood fuel/energy plantations
- 50,000 hectares in enrichment planting within degraded forest reserves
- 1.7 million hectares through the planting of trees in agricultural landscapes (trees-on-farm or agrisilviculture/climate smart agriculture).

Currently, two projects funded by the World Bank and African Development Bank under the Forest Investment Programme of the Climate Investment Fund have catalyzed these restoration efforts, viz:

- Engaging Local Community Involvement in REDD+ (ELCIR+) Project, under which 5,000 hectares of tree plantations are being established, along with 16,000 hectares of climate-smart cocoa-agroforestry (trees-on-farm or agrisilviculture) and 1,200 hectares of fuel woodlots
- Enhancing Natural Forest and Agroforest Landscapes (ENFAL) Project, under which approximately 40,000 hectares are being established through enrichment planting)



Both projects are being implemented in the High Forest Zone, spanning the moist semi-deciduous and wet evergreen forest sub-types of the country. They aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and to reduce poverty and conserve biodiversity. They also seek to improve forest and cocoa management practices of farmers, Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) communities and forest managers to reduce forest degradation in the selected landscapes.

Since 2015, about 249,255 hectares of native species have been established by involving about 159 forest fringe communities. Indeed, these projects have successfully enhanced landscape level tree growing in the cocoa landscape, including agroforest corridors, with active community involvement to increase tree cover in degraded forest reserves. In addition, about 5,564 families have been supported with the supply of 1.6 million seedlings of native species to plant on their farm boundaries and in their farms.

Outside the gazetted forest reserves, about 28,571 hectares of a mosaic cocoa landscape have been established with native tree species on farms. Also, approximately 8,543 hectares of native species have been established through enrichment planting in degraded forest reserves.

Another major restoration effort in the country is the public-private partnership arrangement between the Forestry Commission of Ghana and the timber industry; under which 5,000 hectares of degraded forest reserves have been earmarked for reforestation. Since 2010, this effort has been ongoing in Mankrang, Opro, Afram headwaters, Tain II, Pra Anum and Esen-Epam Forest Reserves, which traverse different ecological zones / forest types in the country. These model plantations are being established and managed by the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana and a total of approximately 2,300 hectares of degraded forest reserves have so far been planted to native species. The species include *Terminalia superba*, *Nauclea diderrichii*, *Ceiba pentandra*, *Triplochiton scleroxylon*, *Mansonia altissima*, *Pycnanthus angolense* and *Khaya ivorensis*, although some proven exotics such as *Cedrela odorata* and *Tectona grandis* have also been planted to satisfy the future needs of the timber industry.

Ghana's flagship REDD+ Project, the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Project (GCFRP), which has been accepted into the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility



(FCPF) pipeline, is another major restoration effort that is likely to take off in about a year. This will supplement the above projects and other restoration efforts not mentioned here, in addition to other targets planned under Ghana's Forest Plantation Strategy 2016 – 2040.

2. Constraints to the forest landscape restoration efforts in Ghana

About 85% (1.7 million hectares) of Ghana's total commitment to the Bonn Challenge and AFR100 is expected from trees on farm (agri-silviculture), much of which will be on customary land, with a focus on community and private sector involvement. However, the key challenge to the achievement of this target relates to land tenure and access to land.

In Ghana, individuals and traditional authorities control land-ownership, and access to land is fraught with problems, notably land tenure, multiple registration and bureaucratic delays in land registration, etc. This is exacerbated by multiple issuances of land title certificates, and inadequate capital and incentives for tree planting.

Policy revisions are currently underway, including those on land and tree tenure, and until they come into effect with legislative backing to facilitate access to land and ensure tenure security, most restoration efforts will continue to be concentrated in degraded forest reserves where security of tenure is assured. Much of the success achieved so far has been in these degraded forest reserves.

3. Enabling conditions for forest landscape restoration in Ghana

Ghana is committed to meeting her obligation of restoring 2 million hectares of deforested and degraded landscapes by 2030 as her contribution to the global restoration effort under the Bonn Challenge and other initiatives. The policy and regulatory frameworks support the process, exemplified inter alia by: (a) the National Land Policy (1999), which provides guidance and direction on land ownership, security of tenure, land use, etc.; (b) the Timber Resources Management (Amendment) Act, 2002 (Act 617), which prevents government from allocating timber from private forest plantations under its Timber Utilization Contracts; (c) the Forest Plantation Development Fund Act, 2000 (Act 583), which provides financial

support for plantation development; (d) Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy, 2012, which has an objective to promote implementation of the National Forest Plantation Strategy. Even so, some reforms to the National Land Policy are still required to harmonize customary and statutory laws to enable Ghana to achieve her targets. In particular, land access and tree tenure security remain critical constraint elements that must be dealt with by policy makers to promote effective private sector and community engagement.

A growing interest by private sector actors has helped advance Ghana's restoration effort. As mentioned earlier the private sector established more than 100,000 hectares between 2012 and 2015, which far exceeds the total area established by government during the same period. Moreover, under the public-private partnership arrangement between Ghana's forestry commission and the timber industry, the timber industry is financing the establishment of 5000 ha of indigenous tree plantations in degraded forest reserves. This is in addition to purely private sector investments in forest plantation development, which is on the increase.

The government's commitment to a green economy and its endorsement of several international agreements including REDD+, Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and the U.N Sustainable Development Goals, is expected to improve enforcement and compliance.

Conclusion

By and large, success and scaling up of current restoration efforts will depend on improvement in governance through participatory forest management and monitoring, as well as compliance and effective enforcement of forest legislation related to land and tree tenure. Financial support and other incentives will also engender stronger and more effective private sector engagement to ensure success in achieving the goals and targets of AFR 100.



About the photos: Mostly of mixed indigenous tree species planted in degraded forest reserves by the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana under the public-private partnership initiative. They show how farmers are involved in the process by allowing them to grow food crops (mostly plantain) along with the tree crops until canopy closure. Under such an arrangement, the farmers benefit from access to farming land in the degraded forest reserves, and also appropriate to themselves the full proceeds from the food crops.

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led multi-sectoral platform for integrated land use, bringing together world leaders, scientists, private sector representatives, farmers and community leaders and civil society to accelerate action towards the creation of more resilient, equitable, profitable, and climate-friendly landscapes.



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