

Central African Republic

Last updated: September 2013

Forest Management

The CAR Government is the main custodian and owner of all national forests. As such, it has the sole responsibility for allocating temporary or permanent use rights to undeveloped lands and forest resources. Forests are divided into either Permanent Forest Estates (PFE) or Non-Permanent Forest Estates (NPFE) (Article 5, Forest Code). NPFE are unclassified forests and may be destined for uses other than forestry (Article 124, Forest Code). Although it is thought as the framework for communal, community and private forests, no allocation of NPFEs have yet been recorded in CAR. This is due mainly to the absence of appropriate implementation legislation. Conversely, PFEs are classified use forests and include production forests, conservation forests and plantation forests. These cover about 5.8 million hectares, divided into 5.2 million hectares of production forests, 520,000 hectares of protection forest and 3000 hectares of planted forests.

Production forests are divided into Forest Management Units (FMUs or Unités Forestières de Gestion, in French), which are also subdivided into specific Cutting Areas. Logging operations take place in the production forests and cutting areas, and may be conducted by individual artisanal loggers or concessionaires. To log, artisanal loggers must obtain a one year renewable permit (permis artisanal) and their operation areas should not exceed 10 hectares. This permit is awarded mainly to CAR citizens.

Concessionaires, on the other hand, must hold a Forest Management Permit (Permis d'Exploitation et d'Aménagement - PEA). It is awarded for 30 years, which is equivalent to one harvesting rotation (Article 32, Forest Code). The surface area of these concession varies between 156,000 and 475,000 hectares. In order to harvest, concessionaires must also submit a management plan to the forest administration, a five year investment/industrialization plan, and an annual operation plan. Management plans are prepared with the assistance of PARPAF (Projet d'appui à la réalisation des plans d'aménagement forestier).

In 2010, approximately 3.1 million hectares of PFE were allocated as forest concessions and operated by only 15 companies. Only eight of these companies finalized the preparation of their management plans, corresponding to a total area of 2.4 million hectares.

[Click here to view the interactive Forest Atlas of CAR, which shows the spatial distribution of concessions.](#)

Unfortunately, no area of CAR forest can currently be classified as under sustainable management due to the country's lack of capacity to monitor and fully implement the required forest management plans. The problem continues to grow as management plan numbers have risen over the last decade. The prevailing political uncertainty and the subsequent difficulties in enforcing forestry laws constitute additional obstacles hampering the efforts to improve forest governance in CAR.

However, CAR is engaging in various regional and international initiatives committed to improving forest governance and protecting forest ecosystems. For example: CAR has participated in REDD

projects since 2010 and has seen its preparation document validated. CAR has also finalized its Voluntary Partnership Agreement under FLEGT with the EU, and became a signatory to several international treaties and conventions, including: CITES (1980); Treaty on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Central African forests (establishing the Central African Forest Commission - COMIFAC); Convention on Biodiversity (1995); African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (1970), among others. CAR is also a member of ITTO, African Timber Organization, IUCN and is making efforts towards a forest certification system.

Transparency

Transparency in the CAR forest sector remains a challenge. Citizens' abilities to hold the forest authorities accountable or to fully participate in the management of forest resources is hampered by the lack of clarity of tenure rights for communities and limited access to information. Transparency is not clearly dealt with in the existing legislation, and legal inconsistencies, weak implementation, weak capacity continue to feed the problem.

According to [Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index](#), which measures perceived levels of public-sector corruption, on a scale of 0-100 (0 = 100% corruption and 100 = no corruption), CAR scored 25/100, which indicates a high level of corruption. It's ranked 144 out of 177 countries assessed in 2013. [Access the 2013 Corruption Index for CAR](#).

The World Bank compiles a set of Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) for all world economies. These indicators are important barometer in terms of risk assessment. The WGI country reports are based on the six following aggregate governance indicators: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. Countries are ranked (percentile rank model) for each of the six governance indicators on a scale from 0 to 100 where 0 corresponds to lowest rank and 100 corresponds to highest rank (better governance). [Access the CAR Governance Indicator Data Report \('96-'12\)](#).

Laws and Regulations

Forestry Laws

The Central African Republic (CAR) has a number of laws and regulations pertaining to forest management, wood harvesting, processing and trade.

The Central African Forest Code was passed in October 2008 (Law No 08.022) and is the main legal text governing the forest sector in CAR. The term "legality of timber and timber products" is defined by the law as: all timber produced according to several components of CAR legislation and regulations. The Forest Code is consistent with other CAR land legislation, stating that all forests are state-owned. It provides the authority for the licensing of traditional timber production and community forests. This provides that timber extracted from community forests or via licenses for traditional production may be lawfully exported. The Forest Code also determines the forest categories, the legal status of forest, the modalities of extraction of forest resources by different stakeholders, and the preservation of forest ecosystems. This law is supplemented by various legal texts such as:

- [CAR Forest Code 2008 \(in French\)](#)

- [Database of CAR Forest Code Titles \(in French\)](#)
- [Forest Code Implementing Decree of April 2009](#)
- [Environmental Code, No 07.018 of 28 December 2007 \(in French\)](#)
- [Decree No 91.018](#) laying down the procedures for granting permits, operating, and developing forests.
- **Ministerial Decree No 019 MEFCPE of 5 July 2006** validating national norms for preparing management plans.
- **Order No 09-026 of 28 July 2009** describing the final stages of the development of forest management plans.
- **Law on National Estate of 9 January 1964** (currently under revision) governing all national lands and land-based resources, like forests.
- **Law on Public Lands and Private Property of May 1960** governing all public and private property land.
- **Ministerial Decree of May 2006** canceling special cutting permits to end difficult tracking and unsustainable system.

Under the current laws, land ownership can be gained only through land titling and formal registration. These laws recognize the customary ownership and local communities' use rights over land and natural resources. Community forest is given a legal existence under the 2008 Forest Code for non-permanent forest estates (NPFE). The Code also provides the legal provisions for private forests and communal forests in the permanent forest estates (PFE). Private forests can also be acquired through plantations. Companies and small timber producers (artisanal loggers) must obtain an official authorization from the services of the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fishing (Ministère des Eaux, Forêts, Chasse et Pêche - MEFCP) prior to logging in a PFE. Companies must abide by the environmental protection regulations and respect social clauses as specified in the Forest Code and the Environmental Code of 28 December 2007. They should also pay relevant taxes as stated in the Forest Code, such as surface tax, felling tax, reforestation tax, and export tax.

Lack of harmonization and inconsistencies within and between relevant legal texts, the persisting conflict between the statutory and customary tenure regimes, the lack of capacity, and political instability are among the major governance problems preventing CAR from effectively implementing its laws and eliminating illegal conduct.

Processing/Manufacturing Laws

All companies involved in timber processing must hold a valid permit (Permis d'Exploitation et d'Aménagement - PEA), respect the authorized minimum processing quotas (70%) and pay relevant Customs duties for processed products to be exported (Forest Code, Article 39, 44, 170-198).

For more information on CAR timber processing requirements, see the [Global Forest & Trade Network \(GFTN\) Country Profile for CAR](#).

Transport Laws

The circulation of forest products in CAR is regulated by the Forest Code (Article 73-74),

transportation and tax laws. Truck operators must hold valid documentation (transport licenses registration licenses and number), records of transported products, and proof of payment of annual transportation fees. Company vehicles should not transport illegal wildlife products (Fauna Code, Article 31, Annex II). Stumps and timber must be marked according to regulations.

Article 47 of the Forest Code states that wood and logs cannot move from harvest without being stamped with the appropriate operator brand. The unique mark must also be registered with the Registry of the High Court and the CAR Forest Service. Similarly, transported wood must also be accompanied by a roadmap detailing place of origin and destination. See [Article 47 of CAR Forest Code \(in French\)](#).

For more information on CAR timber transport requirements, see the [Global Forest & Trade Network \(GFTN\) Country Profile for CAR](#).

Tax Laws

Companies must pay all forestry taxes and related fees. These include: surface tax, felling tax, reforestation tax and customs duties for exported logs and timber products. To allow an appropriate calculation of their tax rates companies should submit a monthly report highlighting the volume of timber harvested and processed to the forest administration and BIVAC (Bureau Inspection Valuation Assessment Control), an entity commissioned by CAR (Forest Code, Section 3, Tax Law Article 37). Under BIVAC, fees are the responsibility of the exporter and amount to 1% of the "free on truck" (FOT) value (i.e. the value of goods at departure). This is a semi- fixed value agreed to by joint order of the Ministers responsible for forests and finance. In addition, a VAT of 19% is also imposed at export. The minimum fee is one hundred and forty thousand francs (140,000 F CFA).

Trade Laws

Companies must obtain an agreement to conduct commercial activities in CAR from the Ministry of Trade. They must also show proof of their tax payment to the customs authorities and their contribution to the social security agency. Exporting and importing companies must also possess a license from the Ministry of Commerce, and complete an export/import sheet. They are also required to respect their export quotas, maintain a registry that specifies species and the volume exported, submit monthly reports to the Forestry Ministry, ensure that products exported are not restricted under the CITES convention or the stipulations of the management plan.

CAR is also a signee to the following conventions concerning biodiversity: The African Convention of Algiers; the World heritage Convention (UNESCO); the Berne Convention, the Bonn Convention, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

CITES

[CITES \(Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora\)](#) is an international agreement among governments whose purpose is to ensure that international trade in wild animal and plant species does not threaten the survival of these species. A total of 180 countries have agreed to the CITES regulations, which is a legally binding agreement. It is up to each CITES Party to draft its own domestic legislation in order to comply with its CITES obligations.

[See current list of member countries here.](#)

CAR acceded to CITES Convention in 1980. There are 30 plant species from CAR listed in CITES. In Appendix I there is one non-tree species listed, and in Appendix II, CAR has , including one overly exploited timber species (*Pericopsis elata*). Although *Pericopsis elata* grows in CAR, the knowledge regarding the extent of its presence and industry use are limited do to poor research.

For more information, refer to these CITES websites:

- [CITES Species Checklist: CAR](#)
- [CITES National Contacts: CAR](#)

Forest Resources

Despite being small, the forested area in the Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the richest, yet underdeveloped, forests in Central Africa. CAR forests once covered about 60% of the country, but today contiguous forest have been reduced to only 15%. Now, the annual deforestation rate is fairly low, estimated at only 0.19%. However, CAR has a remarkably high forest degradation rate, and as a result very little contiguous forest is left.

The small but dense CAR forest expands across the southeastern and southwestern regions of the country, and these areas contain numerous high value species, such as Limba tree (*Terminalia superba*), Sapelli (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) and Ayous (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*). The total standing volume of timber in the southwestern forests is estimated to be more than 127 million m³.

Despite the country's political instability, efforts are being made to enhance the management of forest resources since they are critical to the country's efforts to alleviate widespread poverty (CAR is among the poorest countries in the world). Forestry in CAR contributes approximately 6% of GDP, 14% to government revenues, and provides direct employment to about 4000 people. Currently, forests are primarily exploited for export by foreign companies, and artisanal producers supplying the domestic markets.

Forest Products

Production Status

The timber industry in CAR is the smallest in the Congo Basin by volume. However, it does account for 16% of CAR's export earnings. This number might be higher if CAR's landlocked location were not further limited by a poor transportation infrastructure. Having to transport timber via road to Cameroon or by river and rail to Pointe Noire in the Republic of the Congo in order to export material has been estimated to add 60% in production costs. These high costs keeps investment low.

Due to the landlocked location of CAR and high cost of getting wood out, there is a local incentive to process materials in country, and not export. Concern for CAR's national development led the legislature to introduce a requirement in the Forest Code for converting much of the felled timber in-country while encouraging export. To help business, the government was incentivized to introduce a simplified taxation system to offset the adverse effects of isolation and remoteness on producers. This trend is reinforced by the Finance Act 1990, which removes much of the export taxes.

CAR both produces and processes forest products. Of the 300 potential timber species found in the closed forest area, only 34 are typically harvested. The five most harvested species produced 85% of all timber production between 2005 and 2008. These five species include: Sapelli (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*), Ayous (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*), Aniegré (*Aningeria* spp.), Sipo (*Entandrophragma utile*) and Iroko (*Milicia excelsa*). Other species increasingly harvested are: Kossipo (*Entandrophragma candollei*), Bossé (*Guarea cedrata*), Tiama (*E angolense*), Padouk (*Pterocarpus* spp) and Dibétou Bibolo (*Lovoa trichilioides*).

In 2008, the total roundwood production was estimated at 3 million m³, with only 533,000 m³ of industrial roundwood and 2.5 million m³ of fuelwood. About 80% of this industrial roundwood production was provided by companies that were four ninths foreign-owned. The informal logging sector is also an important contributor to production. In 2009, its overall production of wood products for both domestic markets and exports was estimated at 108,000 m³. Plantations are under developed (about 3000 hectares), and sometimes experimental, particularly with some hardwood species like *Tectona grandis* and *Gmelina arborea*. There are also small community-based fuelwood plantations of eucalypts, *Acacia mangium* and *Cassia siamea*, especially in non-forested areas.

As of 2010, no forest was certified in CAR, but the country is working its way through the process. In 2007, one company (OLB) obtained a certificate of timber origin and legality.

Recently, CAR has been faced with significant civil unrest and violence. Despite this, the Ministry of Forestry still launched a bidding process for five forest concessions in October 2013. These plots cover more than one million hectares of CAR's forested land. Questions of transparency in the absence of a well functioning institutional structure to oversee the auction raises concerns whether the present instability is masking further illegal conduct and opening doors for special interests to gain control of CAR's forest resources. [View FERN's January 2014 Report.](#)

Contacts

Industry Associations

Although no specific CAR forest industry association has been recorded, many forest operators are members of the [Inter African Forest Industries Association \(IFIA\)](#). The IFIA units more than 300 companies through various trade and industry associations. Since 1996, IFIA has been promoting African timber while focusing on sustainable forest management. Along with the U.S. Forest Service, the Forest Legality of Alliance, the Central African Forest Commission, and the European Forest Institute, the IFIA is collaborating to highlight technologies and systems designed to improve transparency in Central Africa's forestry sector. These groups are trying to improve forest governance to help countries meet demands legally and sustainably. They are working on new methods of monitoring, verification, and determining wood origin through genetic testing.

Civil Society Organizations

CAR has many national NGOs that are active in local development, sustainable forest management, and communities' rights issues. Most lack adequate resources and do not possess or maintain websites. An abbreviated list of the most prominent of these organizations is provided below:

National CAR NGOS - Amis de la Nature: They work to enhance livelihoods and teach sustainable forest management.

- Organisation Centrafricaine pour le Développement rural (OCDR): OCDR works locally to improve environmental protections and address issues associated with afforestation.
- Comité pour le Développement intégré des Communautés de base (CODICOM): CODICOM is dedicated to sustainable agriculture and reforestation in CAR.
- animateurs pour le Développement Durable (ADD): ADD works on issues related to agroforestry and fighting deforestation.
- Organisation Centrafricaine de la Défense de la Nature (OCDN): OCDN builds income generating activities, tackles issues related to climate change and works to improve community-based conservation. OCDN's General Secretary has also chaired the National Forum of the Conference on Central African Moist-Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC), and is heavily involved in the FLEGT process.
- Maison de l'Enfant et de la Femme Pygmée (MEFP): MEFP is committed to alternative income generating activities, and working to ensure sustainable management of forest resources. It has contributed to REDD+ project development in the area. It is also a key member of the NGO community and partner's with FERN.
- Centre d'Information Environnemental pour le Développement Durable (CIEDD): CIEDD is an active NGO within the environmental sector. It may also become the official Independent Monitor linked to the FLEGT-VPA process in CAR. In face of the current conflicts in CAR, CIEDD has applied for, and obtained, a position as independent observer on the commission that will meet shortly to decide on the timber concession permits.
- Protection Environnementale et le Développement Durable (APEDD): The main roles of APEDD are to improve management and environmental protection, support grassroots initiatives in environmental protection, and lobby decision-makers to take initiatives to protect the environment. APEDD is a part of the NGO Network for Environment and Sustainable Development (RONGEDD). APEDD also participates in the resolution of national, regional and global issues on climate change, desertification, preservation of biodiversity and the fight against poverty.
- Forêts et Développement Rural (FODER): FODER is a non-profit environmental organization based in Cameroon. It was established in 2002 by a group of students and professors who were all part of a nature conservation club at the same university. They have over 10 years of experience on issues of forestry and environmental governance in Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

Most of the listed NGOs are part of a CAR environmental platform known as Réseau des ONG de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable (RONGEDD). **Regional list of Congo Basin NGOs, including CAR groups are accessible here:**

- [Congo Basin Forest Fund: NGO member list](#)
- [Central African Civil Society on REDD Readiness in CAR](#)

International NGOS working in CAR Several international NGOs collaborate with the MEFCP to enhance forest management and biodiversity conservation as well as build the capacity of local NGO. The most prominent are:

[World Resources Institute \(WRI\)](#) WRI assists the CAR government agencies with monitoring of commercial forestry operations through its [Interactive Forest Atlas](#).

[World Wildlife Fund\(WWF\)](#)

WWF works in CAR and the sub-region to promote wildlife conservation, sustainable forest management, timber certification, and capacity building. [View WWF's Global Forest & Trade Network in the Congo Basin.](#)

[Rainforest Foundation UK\(RF-UK\)](#)

CAR is now on RF-UK's areas of intervention. They are working closely with local people through participatory mapping, and advocating for more community forest and Indigenous people's rights. RF-UK is also tackling illegal logging in the area.

[Réseau des aires protégées d'Afrique central \(RAPAC\)](#)

RAPAC is a sub-regional association, non-profit, technical and scientific and environmental organization, consisting of government and non-government members. It is intended as a platform for harmonization, coordination, exchange and support between stakeholders invested in the management of protected areas and the development of natural resources.

[Réseau sur les Politiques Forestières dans le Bassin du Congo \(REPOFBAC\)](#)

The network on Forest Policy in the Congo Basin specializes in the forestry network and is dedicated to developing capacity and cooperation in the forest sector in the Congo Basin. The network brings together experts and resources in order to positively engage in promoting regional dialogue on development in the forestry sector, and promoting formal and structured trade level information and experiences.

[Réseau des Jeunes pour les Forêts d'Afrique Centrale \(REJEFAC\)](#)

[The Congo Basin Forest Partnership \(CBFP\)](#)

The CBFP is not a technical or financial partner to its members, but rather, It is an informal structure which includes sixty partners: COMIFAC countries, governments, non-governmental organizations, international and private sector entities. These parties have agreed to harmonize their support for the implementation of the Convergence Plan under COMIFAC. The objective of the partners is to improve the effectiveness of technical and financial contributions to conservation, sustainable management of forest ecosystems, and poverty reduction in the countries of Central Africa. PFBC is often described as a platform, a network, a space for dialogue. Launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

[Forestry Commission of Central Africa \(COMIFAC\)](#)

COMIFAC was organized to develop policy and technical guidance, coordination, harmonization and decision-making in conservation and sustainable management of forests and savannah ecosystems in Central Africa. It ensures the implementation of international conventions and forest development initiatives in Central Africa. CAR is an active participant in COMIFAC. The legal framework is the COMIFAC Treaty signed in 2005. The COMIFAC Convergence Plan defines common intervention strategies of states and development partners in Central Africa to achieve conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems and savannahs.

[International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#)

IUCN's West and Central Africa Programme (IUCN-PACO) and the CAR signed an agreement in 2010 to set up an IUCN office to support the implementation of the country's forestry and environmental policies. This agreement draws on existing IUCN-PACO work in the Dzanga-Sangha

Protected Area, among others. The IUCN opened an office in Bayanga, a city in the southwest of CAR. This partnership has helped links the PACO with the two CAR ministries in charge of sustainable natural resource management (i.e. MEFCP).

[University of Bangui & The Higher Institute for Rural Development of Mbaïki](#)

These are the two main public institutions in CAR that include forestry research and training in their curriculum.

[Central African Regional Program for the Environment \(CARPE\)](#)

CARPE aims to reduce the rate of forest degradation and loss of biodiversity in the Congo Basin by increasing local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity.

Government Ministries

Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fishing (MEFCP) This Ministry oversees all forest sector activities. It collaborates closely with the Ministry of Environment and Ecology (MEE) on issues related to environmental and social protection.

Contact information for MEFCP and other CAR government agencies can be found here:

- [Government Contacts: Central African Republic](#)
- [CAR Government Bodies and Contact Information](#)

Tools and Resources

- [Code Forestier](#)
- [AFD, 2011. Secteur forestiers dans les pays du Bassin du Congo : 20 ans d'intervention de l'AFD](#)
- [Blaser, J., Sarre, A., Poore D. & Johnson, S. 2011. Status of Tropical Forest Management 2011 ITTO Technical Series no 38. ITTO, Yokohama, Japan](#)
- [De Wasseige C. and al. 2012. Les Forêts du Bassin du Congo : Etat des forêts 2010. Office des publications de l'Union Européenne. Luxembourg](#)
- [De Wasseige C., Devers D., de Marcken P., Eba's Atyi R., Nasi R. and Mayaux Ph. \(ed.\), 2009. The Forest of the Congo Basin - State of the Forest 2008. Luxembourg. Publications Office of the European Union](#)
- [ITTO, 2005. Status of Tropical Forest Management 2005. ITTO Technical Series No 24](#)
- [WRI, MEFCP, 2010. Atlas Forestier Interactif de la République Centrafricaine. Version 1.0 : Document de synthèse, Washington DC. WRI](#)

Citations