



Enhancing the Contribution of Non-Wood Forest Products to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security in Central African Countries (GCP/RAF/441/GER)

1. Introduction

The Congo Basin is among the world's major reservoirs of biological diversity and is the home of some 100 million inhabitants, many of whose livelihoods depend on the forest. Large areas in Central Africa have been attributed to commercial timber exploitation or set aside as protected areas while non-wood forest products (NWFP) are of major importance for subsistence or income generation of forest dependent people with small-scale forest based enterprises playing a key role in commercialisation. Major NWFP in the region are edible and medicinal plants, bush meat, insects, honey, rattan and other fibers for building shelter or tools.

Despite their importance and significant potential in the fight against poverty, NWFP are hardly visible in national economic statistics. In addition, the NWFP sector is mostly informal, generally characterised by an inappropriate legal, institutional and organisational framework.

2. FAO and NWFP in Central Africa

FAO has long standing experience on providing technical advice on NWFP management and related policy formulation in Central Africa. The Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) is FAO's main regional counterpart organization in Central Africa. Various field projects in support to its Executive Secretariat and its Convergence Plan have been implemented in conjunction with Central African Governments. The current project benefits from this institutional stronghold, the well-established networking, the profound commitment within FAO, COMIFAC and concerned Governments. The map shows past and ongoing FAO projects for enhancing the contribution of NWFP to poverty alleviation and food security in Central Africa.

Strategic Alliance

Project financed by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, *Germany*;

Regional level: Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) and the Regional Project Coordination based in Yaoundé, Cameroon;

National level: *Central African Republic* (Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries), *Gabon* (Ministry for Forest Economy, Water and Fisheries) and *Republic of Congo* (Ministry of Sustainable Development, Forestry Economics and Environment);

Executing Agency: FAO;

Duration: 1 October 2009 - 30 Sept. 2012 (3 years).

3. Project Activities

The project contributes to poverty alleviation and sustainable forest management in Central Africa in general and specifically in Gabon, the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo through the valorization of non-wood forest products by local people.

The priority of the project is to promote at local, national and sub regional levels a policy and institutional framework that govern the access of local people to resources and markets for NWFP.



Regional level: COMIFAC member countries

- Act as a regional NWFP information point;
- Policy support to develop a sustainable forest management concept;
- Consolidation of technical knowledge and best practices in the NWFP sector;
- Capacity building and training.

National level: Gabon, Congo, CAR

- Advice on national policy formulation and review based on the *Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food and the Sub regional directives for a sustainable use of NWFP of plant origin in Central Africa*;
- Support to the development of products, markets and small and medium forest based enterprises;

Local level: Pilot sites in Gabon, Congo and CAR

- Create and strengthening capacities of small and medium forest based enterprises to improve their organization, processing, commercialization and marketing of more value added NWFP;
- Consolidate and disseminate harvesting and processing methods for a sustainable and participatory management of NWFP.