



3RD REPORT OF THE NATIONAL GROUP ON TROPICAL FORESTS

Tropical forests: taking stock and new challenges

**WHAT GUIDANCE FOR FRENCH
STAKEHOLDERS?**

REPORT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The National Group on Tropical Forests (French abbreviation: GNFT) is an informal advisory body whose purpose is to debate French doctrine and policy stances on tropical forests. Set up in April 2002 in the wake of the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in The Hague, commonly known as the “Ancient Forest Summit”, this Group is led jointly by representatives of the main concerned Ministries. The Group’s stakeholders are actors in the private sector (timber industries, retail, finance), environmental and development NGOs, representatives of consumer organisations and elected officials, government departments, government agencies and research centres.

The Group’s initial mandate was to “define a French action plan in favour of sustainability criteria for timber harvesting and against illegal logging” (government press release, 10 April 2002). Concretely, the Group was tasked to collect appraisal information, identify points subject to controversy and requirements for further information, and to put forward practical proposals for action on a number of issues: the state of forests, sustainable management, illegal logging and related trade activities, timber traceability, certification systems, French timber imports and environmental conditionality for public procurement.

Following an initial report entitled “*Tropical forests: how can France contribute to their sustainable management?*”, in 2006 the Group published a White Paper on tropical rainforests, which constitutes a reference for required policies to ensure the conservation and the sustainable management of tropical rainforests, in terms of government action, official development aid and private sector initiatives. It

contains over a hundred recommendations on a range of key topics and reflects the consensus established within the GNFT following several years of discussion among French stakeholders.

In 2007 and 2008, an ad-hoc group on tropical forests contributed to the work of the French Grenelle consultation process on the environment, which led to a number of commitments and a recommendation to reconvene the GNFT.

Commitments on tropical forests from the Grenelle consultation process

Commitment no. 221: French Presidency [of the European Union in 2008] to promote forest/biodiversity as one of the pillars of post-Kyoto measures. In this context, active support for the implementation of innovative financing mechanisms to avoid deforestation.

Commitment no. 222: illegal logging to be combated and alternatives to destructive logging practices to be developed through the management of forest areas. Particular attention is to be devoted to the Congo basin.

The Group’s mandate was then updated to include global warming and dry tropical forests issues. The Group’s work is now structured by three themes, namely trade in forest products, avoiding deforestation and development aid in the forest-environment sector. Furthermore, the Group attaches particular importance to the activities of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP).

In 2011, the Group decided to assess the implementation of the White Paper’s recommendations and to update its policy guidance on tropical forests taking into account new developments. To achieve this, the GNFT commissioned a study aimed at obtaining objective evaluation

data on the state of application of the 2006 White Paper's practical recommendations. This study served as a basis for a second phase that involved the organisation of a conference of French stakeholders on the tropical forests in Paris on 11-12 January 2012.

The Conference attracted over 300 participants from various backgrounds: government departments, local government authorities, research and academia, civil society and the private sector, as well as a number of important international observers.

The new report is largely drafted on the basis of the proceedings of the Conference, on various recent sources, especially assessments conducted on AFD and FGEF programmes in Congo basin forests, and on further exchanges of views among GNFT members. Its ultimate goal is to update French stakeholders viewpoints on tropical forests and to draw up a new roadmap and French doctrine on tropical forests, especially in the run-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 (Rio+20).

Without seeking to minimise problems or to hide differences in concerns, the GNFT reports have gradually built up a vision broadly shared by French stakeholders involved in the conservation and development domains. They propose policy and strategy guidance for French actors and contribute specifically to a gradual refocusing of the priorities and approaches adopted by French Ministries and government agencies, not only in French overseas territories but also through diplomacy on global public goods and bilateral, European and multilateral aid.

In its first part, the report briefly recalls major tropical forests issues and goes on to review the main lines of action taken by French stakeholders with regard to tropical forests since the White Paper was issued



Guadeloupe National Park. © Jonathan Saulnier,
ministère de l'agriculture et de l'agroalimentaire

in 2006. It presents the main themes and approaches of France's intervention in relation to tropical forests, along with the lessons that can be drawn from the implementation of the recommendations put forward in 2006.

Its second part is devoted to the outlook and policy directions proposed by the GNFT to guide French stakeholders' actions with respect to tropical forests over the next few years. This second part comprises six chapters corresponding to the themes of the six workshops of the Conference held in January 2012, plus an additional chapter on research issues and the improvement of the knowledge base.

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I. CONTEXT: TROPICAL FOREST ISSUES AND ACTION TAKEN BY FRENCH STAKEHOLDERS

A. Tropical forests: current situation and main issues

Tropical deforestation, although declining, is still a cause of considerable concern. Forest degradation is also highly worrying, notably with regard to its consequences for the climate and biodiversity.

The importance of France and the EU in tropical timber markets is declining as compared to the demand from emerging countries.

B. The broad lines of French action on tropical forests

France continues to be highly committed to tropical forests and the level of aid provided by France has increased substantially in recent years.

Until recently French forestry cooperation was closely targeted on supporting forest management planning in Central Africa; it is now diversifying in terms of its thematic and geographical focuses.

The sustainable management and conservation of tropical forests in French overseas territories has made progress in recent years.

II. FUTURE OUTLOOK: GUIDANCE FOR A FRENCH APPROACH TO TROPICAL FORESTS

A. Sustainable management of tropical forests designated for timber production

Management planning for productive tropical forests is a major development of the last twenty years.

The model needs to be perfected if it is to produce enhanced social and environmental benefits.

Models other than managed concessions must also be encouraged.

B. Tropical forests designated for protection: where do conservation and restoration models stand today?

The fundamental role of protected areas is reaffirmed. They must be extended to cover 17% of land area in accordance with the Aichi biodiversity targets, with particular attention to tropical forest biomes; their management must also be improved.

Biodiversity outside protected areas also plays a very important ecological role. Other conservation arrangements must supplement networks of protected area, following a logic of ecological continuity.

The restoration of degraded forest ecosystems, in partnership with local communities, is an emerging issue of considerable importance.

C. The rise in global demand for energy, food and mined resources as a driver of deforestation

Global demand for energy, food and mined resources is placing tropical forests under increasing pressure.

The main focuses for effort, especially in agrifood supply chains, are demand-side management, certification, environmentally-sound intensification of production and reduction of wastage.

The siting of extractive industry activities must be more effectively controlled with a view to sparing forest land, especially in protected areas.

Bioenergies are renewable yet limited resources. There is a need to prioritise uses and to encourage the emergence of sustainable supply chains.

The "Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe" initiative offers interesting prospects for the future in terms of limiting the impacts of European consumption on deforestation.

D. Trade in tropical timber: legality, sustainability

Efforts on the FLEGT Action Plan and forest management certification must continue to overcome the challenges of responsible production and consumption, for the future of tropical forests.

Most harvested tropical timber is consumed in the region or exported to emerging countries. Our next task is to maintain active dialogue with the players in this South-South trade in order to forestall risks of overexploitation of natural resources.

E. Investing in tropical forests and financing environmental externalities

Sustainable management and conservation of tropical forests cost a lot and public, private, national and international actors – French and European cooperation in particular – should mobilise resources to address this.

Scaling-up REDD+ offers good prospects for funding environmental externalities provided by tropical forests.

The lessons learned on aid effectiveness must be fully applied, especially the alignment on national strategies based on a participatory approach in tropical countries.

The experience gained from trust funds and payments for ecosystem services are of great interest for financing sustainable management in general and REDD+ in particular.

F. Governance of forest territories, from local to global

Effective protection of forest land requires renewed investment in clarifying land tenure rights and consideration for the plurality of values and interests involved.

A dedicated UN agency for the environment could help improve the global forest governance by strengthening the environmental pillar and, in tandem with the FAO, by fostering dialogue among major organisations and institutions dealing with forest-related issues.

G. Research and improvement of the knowledge base

Tropical forest systems are particularly complex and much less well known than their temperate and Mediterranean counterparts.

Recent international analysis provides a robust basis for identification of knowledge gaps and research priorities.

France has a world-class network of laboratories and expertise, as well as solid experience of collaboration with scientific teams in tropical countries.

The impact of the research system could be enhanced by improving access to the results for civil society, forest managers, private enterprise and decision-makers in tropical countries.

CONCLUSION

This third GNFT report enables us to assess how far we have come and to clarify core French convictions along with gradual adjustments and emerging priorities. In the Rio+20 context, it provides a positive, although nuanced, assessment of the achievements in terms of sustainable management of tropical forests since 1992, identifying gaps that need to be remedied without changing course. It also proposes a vision capable of mobilising energies over the next decade.

Core French convictions

The commitment to a **multifunctional approach to forests** has not wavered. This approach allows adjustments to how environmental, economic and social issues are factored in, according to local circumstances. At the same time, a growing awareness of practical problems and the encumbrances of history have led to better understanding the need, firstly, to support the creation and management of protected areas and, secondly, to give greater consideration to the interests of local populations through suitable forms of governance.

Forest management planning, as a tool to bring environmental, economic and social factors together, has been traditionally promoted by France, putting its centuries of experience and its expertise to good use. However, the tropical forest context requires that close attention be paid to the design of ecological and dendrometric inventories before management planning is undertaken, to forward-looking identification of pressures and threats, and to local social, economic and cultural dynamics. The promotion of forest management planning for small forestry operators and local communities is necessary, but it requires the tool to be adjusted to fit this new context. Ultimately,

management planning is a helpful tool of proven worth, but is still only a tool: the results depend also – and primarily – on the long term goodwill of managers and public authorities.

In populated areas, there is no point in considering forest protection and sustainable management issues as abstract concepts without working at the same time on addressing food and energy needs of relevant communities. **Land planning** must reach beyond forest land alone and consider issues other than those that relate specifically to forestry and ecology. It must include an integrated, multi-stakeholder approach that goes beyond the forest dimension alone to promote land use zoning with local communities. Agriculture and the satisfaction of energy requirements are as much part of the solutions to forest problems, as they are a cause of these problems.

The definition and clarification of tenure rights on forest land has a long history in France, one marked not only by conflict but also by innovative solutions. This experience has led in particular to the emergence of major municipal forest estates in certain regions, reflecting the rights of the local communities, alongside nationally owned forests inherited from sovereign power and private forests. This explains the particular French focus on the promotion of structured collaboration between the public authorities in charge of guiding, controlling and, more rarely, performing, and the other stakeholders, active and grouped together in representative organisations to defend their interests. The protection and sustainable management model proposed by France emphasises the need for a well-organised state authority that cooperates actively with private- and public-sector actors within a structured framework in which each partner does what it can do most efficiently. Generating momentum with both public



Colonization of the forest area by agriculture in the Bolivian Amazon Rainforest. ©CNES 2009 - Distribution Astrium Services/Spot Image

and private sectors stakeholders is thus necessary and total reliance on any one family of actors is doomed to fail: **parallel reinforcement of civil society and State is indispensable, and efforts to counter corruption imperative.**

Finally, France has been involved for over a century in strengthening the knowledge base required for inventories and sustainable management of resources in tropical forest areas, through life and social sciences. French research on tropical forests has world-class capacities and also benefits from a solid experience in partnering with scientific teams from the South. This is a key advantage since, given the broad range of current and emerging issues, **higher education and research** have a crucial role to play in improving stakeholders' technical and social knowledge.

Ongoing adjustments

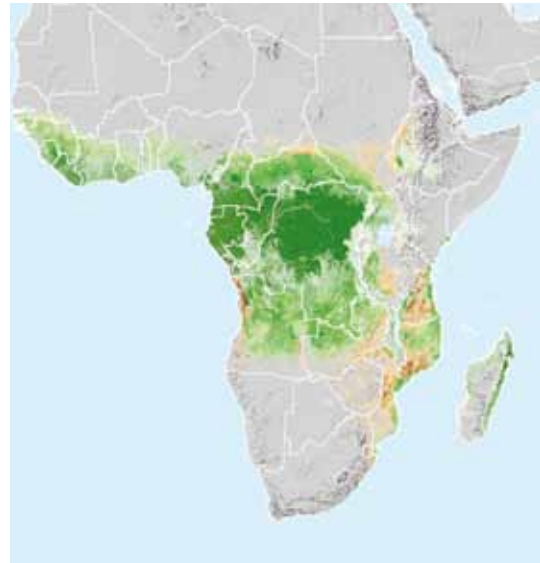
It is more than ever justified for French and European development aid to target major effort in coming years on tropical forest issues, and in particular climate, biodiversity, food security, green and inclusive economy and local communities livelihoods.

In recent years, headline issues relating to tropical rainforests have tended to mask those of **tropical dry forests**. The new report marks the beginning of an expansion of the scope to this second group of tropical forests. Although less media-friendly, we should not forget their environmental and social importance.

Conceptual, legislative and practical advances in the thinking on protected areas in France and its overseas territories in the last few years is leading quite logically to an adjustment of the **conception of**

Tropical forest types

Source: From FAO world's forests map 2010



biodiversity conservation in tropical forests. This report places more emphasis than its predecessors on the need to inter-connect protected areas to form networks and on the necessity of taking an active interest in peripheral zones, as well as on the relevance of enhancing **biodiversity outside protected areas**, including secondary forests, considering that anthropised spaces contain a substantial and growing share of forest biodiversity.

In this respect, the **restoration of degraded ecosystems** must also be an increasingly important focus for action.

Public- and private-sector actors in France remain convinced that a strong French and European commitment to **timber legality assurance and the certification of sustainable management** can generate real leverage, even though not all countries abide by such approaches, including some large importers of tropical

timber. Given this, such efforts must continue if we are to achieve the goals of the FLEGT Action Plan, EU's response to the challenges of illegal logging and related timber trade. In particular, there is a need to improve the interface between, on the one hand, monitoring logging activities on the ground by public authorities, private certification and independent observers and, on the other, the implementation of legality assurance systems for international trade. And lastly, public and private buyers and specifiers must be made more aware of ways in which their demand for tropical timber can be redirected towards products from certified sustainable management. The implementing modalities of the regulation on public timber procurement must be improved.

Beyond this, tropical forests conservation, sustainable management and value-addition issues can no longer be addressed



- Tropical rainforest
- Tropical moist deciduous forest
- Tropical mountain system
- Tropical dry forest
- Tropical shrubland
- Other land
- Water

without considering **drivers beyond forests**: other activity sectors, decision-makers/stakeholders, priorities and land use conflicts.

Compared with conventional support with project-based subsidies, **trust funds** and **payment for ecosystem services** offer greater potential for aid efficiency and the mobilisation of national actors, notably in order to help resolve difficult issues linked to protected areas policies. But going down this road also requires shaping up local contributions, reducing transaction costs and preventing risks of misuse of funds.

Neither policy statements, nor the mobilisation of proper skills and adequate resources, nor good intentions will be enough to guarantee that the results are commensurate with the hope invested in a project. That is why the **environmental assessment methodology** must be tested experimentally ex-ante, ex-post and also

at reasonable frequency, and adjusted to fit the specific features of tropical forests and local social and economic contexts.

Emerging priorities

Given the sheer scale of **local trade and South-South trade in tropical timber**, it is clear that our current market-based instruments based on North/South trade in tropical timber offer only a partial solution. **The global food situation, the expansion of farmed land area, the demand for bioenergy and mined resources** can be a source of further pressure on tropical forest ecosystems, made worse still by the risks arising from **climate change**. The report identifies these major challenges for all protection and sustainable management policies as well as the next task for our collective action, which must involve consideration of zoning and integrated land management, supply chains, and

controlling the effects of global demand. It will be necessary to reassess recommended policy directions in the light of the best available knowledge on all these issues.

Growth in demand also requires emphasis on technical pathways and socio-economic models for **agroforestry** and **forest plantations**.

The creation of new protected areas is essential, as is acknowledged in the **Aichi Biodiversity Targets**, but this must be accompanied by **improved surveillance and management of existing protected areas**. The design, application and long-term funding of effective management methods constitute an emerging issue for biodiversity conservation.

There is genuine enthusiasm in many tropical countries for the **deforestation prevention mechanism envisaged in the Climate Convention (REDD+)**, which makes it possible to address concretely the societal causes of deforestation by promoting participatory approaches to analyse the issues and implement required

actions. This mechanism must keep scaling up, while bringing in the broad diversity of national and local contexts and addressing the many technical, economic and political challenges that arise, and without losing sight of the need for large-scale results in terms of forest protection.

While certainly not reducing forests to their environmental values alone, France has high hopes for the creation of a **dedicated United Nations agency for the environment**, based on the United Nations Environment Programme, that would work in synergy with the FAO on crucial issues for successful policy on the protection and sustainable management of tropical forests. The movement towards **stronger South-South cooperation among countries of the three main tropical forest biomes** in South America, Central Africa and Southeast Asia, the broad lines of which were sketched out at the Brazzaville Summit in June 2011, is also helping intensify exchanges of experience and encouraging the adoption of best practices.



**P. 1. Kaw Swamps Reserve in French Guiana,
France's largest wetland**

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**P. 4-5. Cloud forest, Choco-Andean Corredor,
Maquipucuna Reserve, Ecuador.**

© Léa Durant, www.envol-vert.org.

P. 11. Primary forest, Danum Valley, Bornéo

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Tropical forests: taking stock and new challenges

QUE WHAT GUIDANCE FOR FRENCH STAKEHOLDERS?



Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

MINISTÈRE
DE L'ÉCOLOGIE,
DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
DURABLE
ET DE L'ÉNERGIE

MINISTÈRE
DE L'AGRICULTURE
ET DE
L'AGROALIMENTAIRE

MINISTÈRE
DES OUTRE-MER



Fonds Français
pour l'
Environnement Mondial

The third report by the National Group on Tropical Forests (French abbreviation: GNFT), of which this is a summary, aims to take stock of tropical forests issues among concerned French actors – Ministries and government agencies, the private sector, the scientific community and non-governmental organisations – in order to define new policy guidance to address current challenges, not only in France's overseas territories but also with partner countries, notably in the lead up to Rio+20.

Why should the protection of tropical forests be a matter of interest?

First of all, taking into account French overseas *départements* and territories, approximately a third of French forests are tropical forests. Secondly, France imports substantial quantities of tropical timber and tropical forests provide global public goods such as climate stabilisation, biodiversity conservation, food security and public health. And lastly, tropical forests offer major potential for the development of the green economy, poverty reduction and the preservation of traditional livelihoods in partner countries of development aid.

Where does the protection of tropical forests stand today? Management planning and certification are making progress in the major tropical forest regions, although much remains to be done in terms of sustainable management. Deforestation, while decreasing since the 1990s and partially offset by reforestation, is still continuing at the rate of 13 million hectares a year according to the most recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). In recent years, the Climate Convention has established a REDD+ mechanism to incentivise and help finance efforts to hold back deforestation. In 2010, the Paris Conference on the Major Forest Basins raised over USD4 billion to prime the pump for the mechanism. The Conference on Biological Diversity in Nagoya defined the Aichi Targets for 2020. The European Union has adopted the *Timber Regulation* to prevent imports of illegal timber and is negotiating partnership agreements with a dozen tropical forest countries.

What topics are examined in this new report? They are: (i) the model for management planning and certification of the sustainable management of tropical forests designated for timber production purposes, its successes and its limitations with regard to protection of biodiversity and benefits for local populations; (ii) the models for conservation and restoration of tropical forests designated for protection purposes; (iii) the sharp rise in worldwide demand for energy, food and mined resources against the backdrop of population expansion, economic growth and globalised trade; (iv) instruments for the promotion of legality and sustainability through international trade in tropical timber, as well as the situation of local timber markets and the demand from emerging countries; (v) investing in tropical forests and financing environmental externalities, with particular attention to the REDD+ mechanism and trust funds for protected areas; (vi) governance issues relating to forest areas, from the local level – the role of local governments, representation of indigenous and local communities – to the global level, focusing on the opportunities offered by Rio+20 to address the current fragmentation of the international governance on forest-related issues; (vii) priorities in the area of higher education and research and the growing role of remote sensing tools for protecting tropical forests.