



THE LEADING AUTHORITY ON TROPICAL TIMBER

# ACTIVITY REPORT

# 2023

[www.atibt.org](http://www.atibt.org)

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# ACRONYMS

**AEAFFB:** Agence d'exécution des activités de la filière forêt-bois (Forestry and timber industry implementation agency)

**AEIM:** Asociacion Española de Importadores de Madera (Spanish Association of Timber Importers)

**AFD:** Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)

**AHEC:** American Hardwood Export Council

**ANAFOR:** Agence Nationale d'Appui au Développement Forestier (National Agency for Forest Development Support)

**ATIBT:** Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux (International Tropical Timber Technical Association)

**CAFI:** Central African Forest Initiative

**CBFP-PFBC:** Congo Basin Forest Partnership – Partenariat pour les Forêts du Bassin du Congo

**CDO:** Comité de Décision et d'Orientation (Decision and Orientation Committee - PPECF)

**CEI bois:** The European Confederation of Woodworking Industries

**CEMAC:** Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa)

**CEPF:** Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers Privés (European Confederation of Private Forest Owners)

**CEPI:** Confédération des Industries du Papier d'Europe (Confederation of European Paper Industries)

**CFT:** Compagnie Forestière De Transformation (Forestry Processing Company)

**CIB:** Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (Congolese Industrial Timber Company)

**CIRAD:** Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (International Centre of Agricultural Research for Development)

**CITES:** Convention On International Trade In Endangered Species Of Wild Fauna And Flora

**COMIFAC:** Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (Central African Forestry Commission)

**CST-AFD:** Comité Scientifique et technique (Scientific and Technical Committee - AFD)

**CTWPDA:** China Timber & Wood Production Distribution Association

**DEVCO:** Direction générale de la coopération internationale et du développement (Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (EU))

**DGENV:** Direction générale pour l'environnement (Directorate-General for the Environment (EU))

**DUE:** Délégation de l'Union Européenne (Delegation of the European Union)

**EFI:** European Forest Institute

**EFIC:** European Furniture Industries Confederation

**EFIR:** Exploitation Forestière à Impact Réduit (Reduced Impact Logging)

**ENFE:** École National des Eaux et Forêts (National School of Water and Forests)

**EOS:** European Organisation for Sawmill Industry

**ETTF:** European Timber Trade Federation

**EUSTAFOR:** European State Forest Association

**EUTR - RBUE:** European Union Timber Regulation – Règlement Bois de l'Union Européenne

**FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

**FEP - EPF:** Fédération Européenne du Parquet – European Panel Federation

**FFAG:** Focus Forest Advisory Group

**FFEM:** Fonds Français pour L'environnement Mondial (French Global Environment Facility)

**FIB:** Fédération des industries du Bois (RDC) (Federation of Woodworking Industries (DRC))

**FLEGT:** Forests Law Enforcement Governance and Trade

**FSC:** Forest Stewardship Council

**GFBC:** Groupement De La Filière Bois Du Cameroun (Cameroon Timber Sector Group)

**GGSC:** Global Green Supply Chain

**GNFT:** Groupe National des Forêts Tropicales (National Tropical Forest Group)

**GPEEC:** Gestion Prévisionnelle des Emplois et des Compétences ((Job and Skills Planning Management))

**GTI:** Global Timber Index

**IDH:** Sustainable Trade Initiative

**IFL:** Intact Forest Landscape

**ITTO - OIBT:** International Tropical Timber Organization – Organisation Internationale des Bois Tropicaux

**IUCN:** International Union for Conservation of Nature

**KFW:** Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau

**LCB:** Le Commerce du Bois (The Timber Trade)

**LKTS:** Lesser Known Timber Species

**MEF:** Ministère de l'Économie Forestière (Ministry of Forest Economy (Republic of Congo))

**MINEF:** Ministère des Eaux et Forêts (Ministry of Water and Forests (Gabon))

**MINFOP:** Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune (Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (Cameroon))

**MINEPAT:** Ministère de l'économie de la planification et de l'aménagement du territoire (Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development)

**MO:** Maitrise d'ouvrage (Project Ownership)

**MOD:** Maitrise d'ouvrage déléguée (Delegated Project Management)

**OMD:** Organisation Mondiale des Douanes ((World Customs Organisation))

**ONFI:** Office National Des Forêts International (National Office for International Forests)

**ONG:** Organisation Non Gouvernementale (NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation)

**PAFC:** Panafrican Forest Certification

**PEFC:** Programme for the Endorsment Of Forest Certification

**PES:** Payments for Environmental Services

**PFBC:** Partenariat pour les Forêts du Bassin du Congo (CBFP - Congo Basin Forest Partnership)

**PME:** Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (Small and Mid-sized Enterprises)

**PPECF:** Programme de Promotion de l'Exploitation Certifiée des Forêts (Programme for the Pro-motion of Certified Logging)

**RDC:** République Démocratique du Congo (DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo)

**RIFFEAC:** Réseau des Institutions de Formation Forestière et Environnementale de l'Afrique Centrale (Network of Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions of Central Africa)

**SPIB:** Syndicat Des Producteurs Industriels Du Bois – (Union of Industrial Timber Producers)

**SPIB:** Syndicat des Industries du Bois (Timber Industry Syndicate - Côte d'Ivoire)

**STTC:** Sustainable Tropical Timber Coalition

**SVL:** Système de Vérification de la Légalité – LVS (Legality Verification System)

**SW4SW:** Sustainable Wood For Sustainable World (FAO)

**TTF:** Timber Trade Federation (UK)

**TPE:** Très petites entreprises (Very Small Enterprises - craftsmen)

**UE:** Union Européenne (EU - European Union)

**UFIGA:** Union des Forestiers et Industriels du bois du Gabon (Union of Foresters and Timber Industries of Gabon)

**ULG:** Université de Liège (Liège University)

**UNICONGO:** Union des Industriels et Commerçants du Congo (Union of Industrialists and Traders of Congo)

**VVNH:** Vereniging Van Nederlandse Houtondernemingen (Dutch Timber Federation)

**WRI:** World Resources Institute



1

**ATIBT, THE ASSOCIATION  
DEDICATED TO TIMBER AND  
TO SUSTAINABLE TROPICAL  
FOREST MANAGEMENT**



# EDITORIAL

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**FRANÇOISE VAN DE VEN** - PRESIDENT OF ATIBT  
**BENOÎT JOBBÉ-DUVAL** - MANAGING DIRECTOR

With over 160 members today, ATIBT represents a diverse range of stakeholders, from certified forestry companies to civil society organisations, as well as donors, research firms, timber processors and trade professionals. These members share a common vision: that of a future in which tropical forests are preserved and harvested responsibly for the well-being of future generations.

One of the major challenges that ATIBT will continue to face in 2024 will be the preservation of both biodiversity and the fragile ecosystems of tropical forests. As a technical body, ATIBT develops standards and best practices to ensure that forestry operations respect the principles of both sustainability and preservation. By encouraging the adoption of certifications such as FSC and PAFC, ATIBT strives to always promote responsible practices that preserve the biological richness of tropical forests while ensuring the economic viability of forest industries. Our Fair&Precious community, which brings together forestry operators and companies involved in the processing and distribution of tropical timber, is an illustration of this commitment.

Another crucial issue that ATIBT will be tackling even more in 2024 will be the combat against deforestation as well as damage inflicted to tropical forests. At a time when both economic and demographic pressures on natural resources are

greater than ever, it is key that we find innovative solutions to reconcile economic development and environmental preservation. ATIBT works closely with its members and the governments of forest economy countries to develop sustainable forest management strategies that promote preservation while stimulating economic growth and improving the livelihoods of local populations. The implementation of the EUDR (European Anti-Deforestation Regulation) at the end of 2024 will be a major challenge for our industry.

Various producer countries have been very active with our association during 2023. Accompanying several delegations that signed FLEGT agreements (Guyana, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire) enabled us to organise productive meetings with the private sector. ATIBT also provided strong support to Gabon following the risks raised in relation to the EUTR, demonstrating that field audits could continue without difficulty.

With the support of donors, ATIBT set up a genuine CITES programme at the beginning of 2023. As such, the association gathers valuable information and data to assess the impact of trade on populations of protected species and to help identify trends and challenges. Our association also raises awareness of CITES regulations among forestry sector stakeholders and enhances their capacity to comply with these requirements, and it also interacts with public authorities to facilitate



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the implementation of appropriate control measures and capacity building. In addition, the ATIBT team now participates in all CITES Plants Committee meetings, and an FAQ is continuously updated on our website [www.atibt.org](http://www.atibt.org).

The development of the timber processing industry in the Congo Basin countries, with the gradual end of log exports and the development of special economic zones (SEZs), means that vocational training is more necessary than ever to safeguard jobs in this sector, which is particularly important from a social point of view. Domestic markets need to shift towards sustainable timber consumption. Despite the progress that has been made, many challenges remain. The pressures exerted on tropical forests by agricultural expansion, mining and urbanisation, not to mention illegal activities, continue to threaten their integrity and biodiversity. In addition, the effects of climate change, including forest fires, exacerbate these threats.

Faced with these obstacles, it is imperative that ATIBT strengthen its collaboration with national and international partners to develop effective and sustainable solutions. By encouraging cooperation between governments, industries and civil society organisations, ATIBT can play a key role in preserving tropical forests for future generations. The close ties established with Latin American and Asian countries will continue in 2024 to further promote the importance of certified sustainable management of tropical forests.

With its committed members and innovative initiatives, ATIBT is well positioned to meet these challenges.

This new annual report from our association aims to be as comprehensive as possible. We would like to thank all the members, partners and sponsors who have helped us in our work, and we apologise to those who may have been omitted.

# ATIBT GOVERNANCE

ATIBT consists of a Board of Directors, a General Meeting and an Executive Board. ATIBT's objectives and strategy are decided by the Board of Directors and approved during the General Meeting.

## Board of Directors | \* Executive board | \*\* Member States

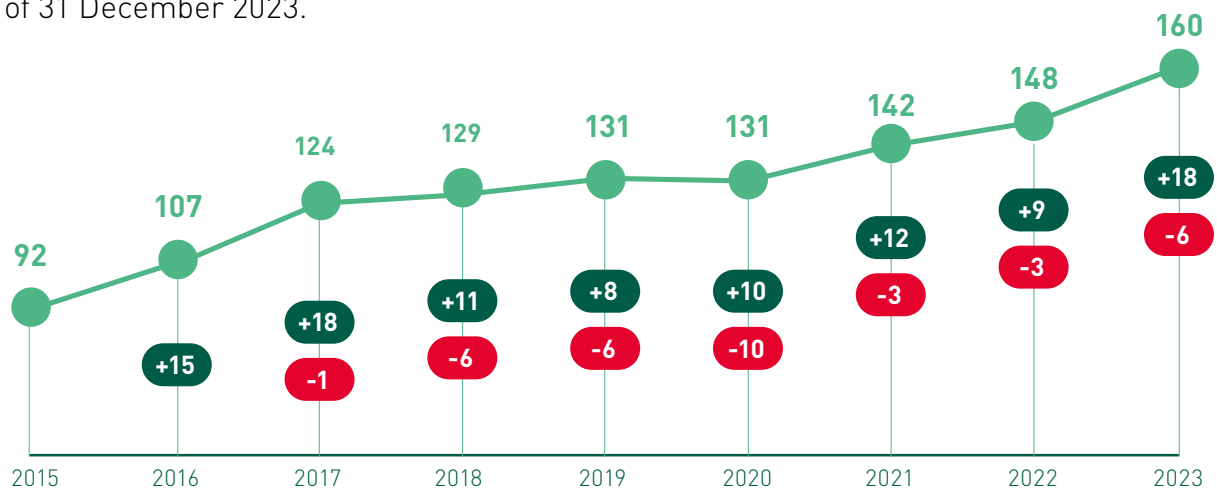
	POSITION	NAME	ORGANISATION		EMAIL ADDRESS	SECTOR - WEBSITE
1	President*	<b>VAN DE VEN</b> Françoise [28/01/22]	Individual	GA	francoise.vandeven@atibt.org	Individual
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3	Admin*	<b>RIVAIN</b> Stéphane [31/05/22]	OREADE BRECHE	FR	s.rivain@oreade-breche.fr	Research firm <a href="http://www.oreade-breche.fr/">http://www.oreade-breche.fr/</a>
4	Admin*	<b>GRAUERT</b> Ulrich [31/05/22]	INTERHOLCO	CH	ulrich.grauert@interholco.com	Producer <a href="https://www.interholco.com/fr/">https://www.interholco.com/fr/</a>
5	Admin*	<b>MOHR</b> Dominik [25/06/20]	CID	FR	dominikmohr@cid-bois.fr	Importer <a href="https://www.cid-bois.fr/accueil/">https://www.cid-bois.fr/accueil/</a>
6	Admin**	<b>TATY</b> Pierre 26/05/2021	CONGO	CG	pierretaty2@yahoo.com pierretaty2020@gmail.com	State <a href="http://www.mefdd.cg/">http://www.mefdd.cg/</a>
7	Admin**	<b>WANAYOMBO-BRACHKA</b> Dieudonné Bruno [02/06/23]	REP. CENTRA- FRIQUE	CA	brunobrachka2005@yahoo.fr	State +236 7571 1905 / 7208 0358
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11	Admin	<b>CASSAGNE</b> Bernard [25/06/20]	FRM	FR	bcassagne@frm-france.com	Research firm <a href="https://frm-ingenierie.com">https://frm-ingenierie.com</a>
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13	Admin	<b>DE BOER</b> André [02/06/23]	ETTF	NL	aideboer50@gmail.com	Professional association <a href="https://www.ettf.info/ettf_news">https://www.ettf.info/ettf_news</a>
14	Admin	<b>DE HAAN</b> John [25/06/20]	SOMIVAB-RAIL EU- ROPE-DUUR- ZAAM	NL BE GA	Dh@duurzaam-hout.com	Producer - Industry <a href="https://www.rail-europe-solutions.com/groupe">https://www.rail-europe-solutions.com/groupe</a> <a href="http://somivab.com/">http://somivab.com/</a>
15	Admin	<b>DEMARQUEZ</b> Benoit [02/06/23]	TEREA	FR	b.demarquez@terea.net	Research firm <a href="http://terea.net/fr/">http://terea.net/fr/</a>
16	Admin	<b>DOUCET</b> Jean Louis [25/06/20]	UNIV. GEM- BLOUX	BE	jloucet@uliege.be	Univ. - Research centre <a href="https://www.terra.uliege.be/cms/c_4082846/en/terra-forest-is-life">https://www.terra.uliege.be/cms/c_4082846/en/terra-forest-is-life</a>
17	Admin	<b>GROUDEL</b> Emmanuel [02/06/23]	WALE	FR	emmanuel.groudel@gmail.com	Individual member <a href="https://www.woodexpert.fr/r%C3%A9%C3%A9rences/">https://www.woodexpert.fr/r%C3%A9%C3%A9rences/</a>
18	Admin	<b>HETROIT</b> Arnaud [02/06/23]	LCB	FR	direction@lecommercedubois.fr	Association <a href="http://www.lecommercedubois.org">www.lecommercedubois.org</a>
19	Admin	<b>HUNINK</b> JanWillem 26/05/2021	CIB-OLAM	CH	Janwillem.hunink@olamagri.com	Producer <a href="https://www.olamgroup.com/locations/west-and-central-africa/republic-of-congo.html">https://www.olamgroup.com/locations/west-and-central-africa/republic-of-congo.html</a>
20	Admin	<b>JULVE</b> Cecilia [9/12/22]	NATURE+	BE	direction@natureplus.be	NGO / Research firm <a href="http://www.natureplus.be">www.natureplus.be</a>
21	Admin	<b>KARSENTY</b> Alain [02/06/23]	CIRAD	FR	alain.karsenty@cirad.fr	Univ. - Research centre <a href="http://www.cirad.fr">www.cirad.fr</a>
22	Admin	<b>LATHAM</b> Peter [31/05/22]	LATHAM / PEFC	UK	peter.latham@zoho.com	NGO <a href="https://pefc.org/">https://pefc.org/</a>
23	Admin	<b>NTOUTOUME</b> Jean-Marie [25/06/20]	UFIGA	GA	jm.ntoutoume@ufiga.org	Professional association <a href="http://www.ufiga.org">www.ufiga.org</a>
24	Admin	<b>PFANKKUCH</b> Markus [02/06/23]	CEB - Precious Woods	CH	markus.pfankkuch@preciouswoods.com	Producer <a href="https://www.preciouswoods.com">https://www.preciouswoods.com</a>
25	Admin	<b>VAN DE PUT</b> Ted [02/06/23]	PFF	SW	tvd2805@gmail.com	Foundation / NGO <a href="http://www.precious-forests.foundation">www.precious-forests.foundation</a>
26	Admin	<b>WALTER</b> Sven [Obs] [02/06/23]	FAO	IT	Sven.Walter@fao.org	Donor - International org. <a href="http://www.fao.org">www.fao.org</a>

General director of the association : Benoit **JOBBIÉ-DUVAL** (15/03/2016)



# ATIBT'S MEMBERS | IN 2023

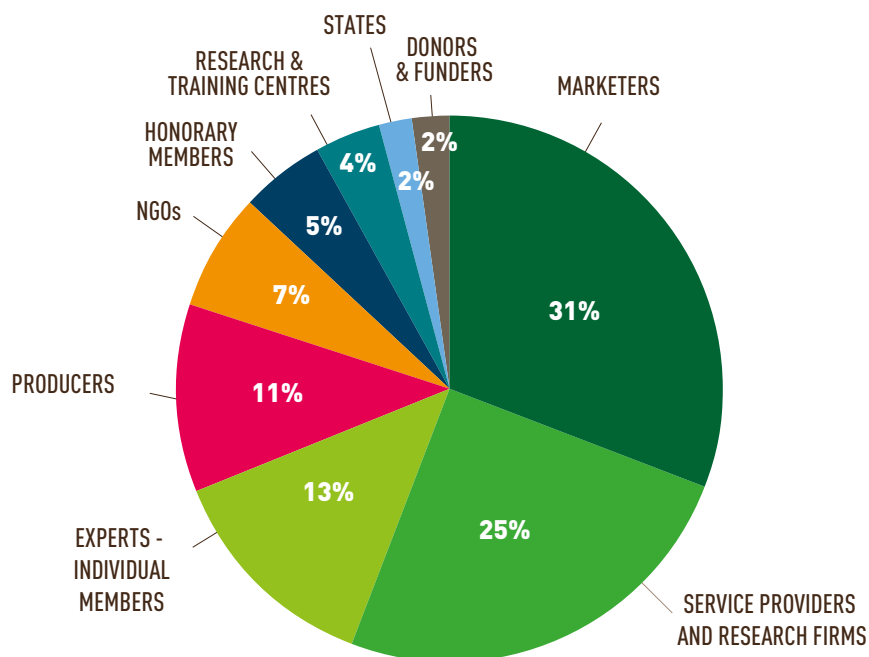
In 2023, six members left ATIBT and 18 new members joined the association. In December 2023, the number of registered members was therefore 160. In addition to these contributing members, there are also honorary members, who play an important role. Including those honorary members, our association consisted of 168 members as of 31 December 2023.



L'arrivée des nouveaux membres est toujours saluée au travers de notre newsletter. L'annuaire des adhérents est disponible sur notre site internet



## Types of members



## THE 18 MEMBERS THAT JOINED US IN 2023

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# ATIBT'S REPRESENTATION IN THE TROPICAL TIMBER SECTOR



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By the end of 2023, with nearly 168 members and honorary members, ATIBT will have effectively represented stakeholders involved in the sustainable management of tropical forests, mainly from the private sector. In particular, it brings together a large number of forestry companies certified for either sustainable management or for legality, totalling around 12 million hectares of tropical forests, of which over six million are FSC and PAFC certified.

These forestry companies are located in Latin America (Brazil, Peru), the Congo Basin and West Africa. Downstream of the supply chain, many industrial and commercial members are based in approximately 15 other countries, although a growing number of them are now based in the producing countries.

The commitment of ATIBT's members also testifies to their representation, as many of them make their vision and needs heard. Institutional recognition reinforces this representation. The various member

countries (Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire), donors, professional bodies (14 associations of both timber producers and importers), as well as training and research centres (six institutions) all contribute to its credibility and legitimacy. ATIBT is regularly asked to give its opinion on public policies pertaining to the sustainable management of tropical forests.

Today, ATIBT is an association that is regularly called on by both donors and various major organisations. For example, the association is part of the only advisory group associating the private sector with the FAO, as ATIBT's President has joined the international organisation's Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries.

In addition, ATIBT also sits on the Board of Directors of the ETTF (European Timber Trade Federation) and the ETIC (European Timber Industries Coalition) associations, and on the Board of the Precious Forests Foundation.

# A TEAM DEDICATED TO THE SECTOR

L'équipe de l'ATIBT est composée de personnels permanents chargés de la gestion de l'Association, ainsi que d'experts chargés de projets ou d'études spécifiques. Ces experts entretiennent souvent des liens à long terme avec l'Association et portent des actions qui s'inscrivent dans une relation durable. Certains experts, reconnus pour leurs connaissances, sont mandatés par l'ATIBT pour des études spécifiques.

Notre équipe, constituée de seize personnes en 2023, est répartie entre la France, la Belgique, le Congo, le Gabon et le Cameroun. Une représentante est installée aux USA. Composée de salariés et d'experts sous contrat, toute l'équipe partage les mêmes valeurs d'engagement et de convivialité et agit avant tout dans l'intérêt des membres de l'Association et des partenaires.



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## **BENOÎT JOBBÉ-DUVAL**

*Managing Director*

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Benoît Jobbé-Duval has 15 years of experience in tropical research and development, in Cambodia, Guatemala, Mexico and especially in Africa, with eight years spent between Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire. During all these years, he worked with the CIRAD's Perennial Crops Unit.

Prior to joining ATIBT, Benoît worked for 13 years within Spain's timber industry.

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### **JACQUELINE LARDIT-VAN DE POL**

*ADEFAC Project Coordinator  
Forest-Timber Sector Expert*

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Jacqueline Lardit-Van de Pol joined ATIBT in early 2016 to take over the FLEGT-IP project. With over 20 years of experience in the sub-region, notably in Cameroon and in Gabon, and thanks to her successive positions as coordinator of an independent observer pilot project for an NGO, as head of legality certification for private companies, and as a consultant in the evaluation of the FLEGT-VPA process for donors, she understands the interests, difficulties and capabilities of the various stakeholders. Jacqueline has been coordinating the ADEFAC project since 2020 and is secretary of ATIBT's Forest-Industry Commission.

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### **CAROLINE DUHESME**

*Director of innovation and strategy – certification expert*

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Caroline Duhesme is an ESB timber engineer with over 20 years of experience in the tropical forest-timber industry, mainly in the Congo Basin. As an independent consultant for the past 10 years and a certification specialist, she has broadened her areas of expertise to include forest governance (FLEGT action plan), assessment and funding mechanisms for environmental and social services, etc. Since 2017, Caroline Duhesme has joined ATIBT to support the implementation of a FLEGT-REDD certification project. She is now in charge of coordinating ATIBT's strategic actions, and she is also the secretary of ATIBT's certification commission.

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### **MARION VAQUIN**

*Administrative and Financial Manager*

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After obtaining her Master's degree in Finance from the Sorbonne Business School (IAE Paris), Marion worked for five years in an accounting and auditing firm. She then spent 10 years in various positions within the AFD's finance department, where she headed the "Regulatory, consolidation and accounting" department and was a member of the ethics committee, prior to joining ATIBT.



### **HORTENSE ELLA-MENYE BATINDEK**

*Communications and Monitoring  
Evaluation Manager of the ADEFAC project*

Hortense is a sociologist who has been working since 2010 as a consultant in project engineering, training engineering and gender issues for various organisations in the Congo Basin countries. She has been a Technical Assistant at ATIBT since April 2020 within the framework of the ADEFAC project, and as of June 2022 she has been Vice-President of the Cameroon Development Evaluation Association (CaDEA). Her scientific research fields are: education and training, socialisation and gender dynamics in the workplace.



### **ALAIN TIOTSOP**

*ATIBT Congo Representative/ Project Coordinator/  
Forestry planner and auditor*

Alain Tiotsop is a forestry engineer based in Brazzaville. He is in charge of ATIBT's Congo office, and as such manages and co-coordinates the various projects implemented in Congo (ASP Congo - Private Sector Support, ADEFAC and the Open Timber Portal in 2022). Alain is an FM/COC auditor for Bureau Veritas and has solid experience in various fields: forest mapping, forest inventories, forest inventory data processing, forest legislation, the drafting and implementation of forest management plans, among others. Alain has a solid background in the private sector.



### **GERMAIN YÉNÉ**

*PAFC Congo Basin Project Manager*

Germain is a water and forestry engineer. He has been working on forestry and agro-industrial management issues in Central and West Africa for the past 20 years, during which time he worked mainly with the private sector. From 2019 to 2023, Germain coordinated the PAFC Project for the Congo Basin. In 2023, Germain took over management of the ASP PACTE VERT project (ASP GREEN PACT - support to the private forestry sector and the timber industry for the Green Pact) in Cameroon as part of the PAMFOR programme to improve governance in the forestry sector.



### **YANICK NKOULOU**

*UFA-reforest Project Manager*

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Yanick Serge Nkoulou holds a professional Master's degree in Forestry Sciences (with an Agroforestry emphasis) from the University of Yaoundé I, which he obtained in 2011. His career started at Absl Nature Plus in the framework of community forestry in Cameroon, followed by a position at the PALLISCO forestry company until January 2022, where he was in charge of reforestation aspects and the monitoring of scientific systems installed in the Forest Management Units. He developed extensive expertise in nursery management, in forest species silviculture and in their ecologies. As of February 2022, he is the new UFA-REFOREST project manager.

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### **DONATIEN NZALA**

*Forest governance expert for the ASP Congo project*

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Professor Donatien Nzala holds a degree in forestry engineering. Along with his 35-year career as a teacher-researcher at the Marien Ngouabi University (Brazzaville - Congo), he was also Managing Director of the Forest Economy (2008-2014), and then Inspector General of the Republic of Congo's Forestry Economy Services (2014-2017).

In 2022, he worked on the OTP project, as well as on the ASP Congo project as a technical assistant.

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### **ÉLISE MAZEYRAC**

*Headquarters ADEFAC project coordinator  
training project management specialist*

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Elise Mazeyrac has a Master's degree in professional education sciences and a Master's degree in political science, as well as a CAS (Certificate of Advanced Studies) in adult education. She is specialised in training project management and training engineering. Elise joined ATIBT as its ADEFAC project manager at the association's headquarters in France, after over 10 years of experience in regional training projects and in various central African countries.



### **FRANCK MONTHÉ**

*Coordinator of the CITES action plan*

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Franck holds a PhD in genetics and tropical forest ecology from the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in Belgium. He has over six years of experience in fields relating to the sustainable management of African tropical ecosystems. His scientific experience, his knowledge of the field, his ability to communicate with the sub-regional institutional sector and his understanding of the issues involved in the sustainable management of Central Africa's forests are all major strengths that he will capitalise on to successfully carry out his activities.

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### **JOSÉPHA COACHE**

*Communications and project coordination support  
CSR officer*

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Josépha Coache holds a master's degree in "Agricultural Development and Economic Policies" from the Sorbonne University's Institute of Development Studies. She is currently the assistant of ATIBT's Fair&Precious marketing programme, as well as of the Themis project, as of February 2020.

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### **ALESSANDRA NEGRI**

*Coordinator of timber promotion actions*

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Holding a degree in political science and from AgroParis-Tech, Alessandra has solid knowledge of environmental issues at both the political and technical levels. She has become a specialist in environmental strategy and negotiation. Within the framework of a partnership between LCB and ATIBT, Alessandra's mission is to promote all timber materials and she's involved in ATIBT's marketing project, in particular the "Dryades" project (creation of environmental data sheets for tropical timber materials), as well as monitoring new European regulations against deforestation.





## MAYLIS BORELLI

*Project manager*

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Maylis Borelli is an agricultural, forestry and environmental engineer and a graduate of the Purpan engineering school of Toulouse (Master's degree). Maylis also obtained Natura-Dis training in "management of natural areas". Prior to joining the ATIBT team in September 2019, Maylis was a climate change adaptation consultant with the World Food Programme, in charge of forest, agriculture, climate and NGO monitoring projects with the AFD (French Development Agency) in the Republic of Congo, and in charge of community preservation actions with ESI Congo. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, Maylis participated in the completion of the FLEGT projects and helped ATIBT management its social networks as a consultant. At the same time, she carried out work with ONFi, Kinomé, Smartcert, WCS and the WFP. In September 2023, Maylis returned to the ATIBT team to help set up and monitor projects.

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## NATHALIE BOUVILLE

*Nathalie Bouville is a French-Central African multicultural communications specialist.*

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With over 20 years of experience in the NGO and corporate sectors, she excels in stakeholder relations management. After 15 years working for communications agencies as Head of Branding and Public Relations, she shifted her focus to Environmental Communications and Partnership Management.

Nathalie worked as Interim Congo Basin Coordinator for the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), and then took on the role of Africa Communications Manager for the FSC. After moving to the US, she worked as a consultant for World Forest ID, the US Forest Service, the EIA (Environmental Investigation Agency) and now for ATIBT (International Tropical Timber Technical Association), where she is in charge of the association's growth and development in the US.

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### **JESSICA DELEKIAN**

*Accounting And Administrative Assistant (Main Office)*

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Jessica holds a professional certificate in human resources (with an emphasis in accounting).

Jessica joined ATIBT at the beginning of 2023 as the association's administrative and accounting assistant.

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### **RUTH PRUDENCE KOUSSINGOUNINA FLORA AMBOULOU**

*Administrative, Accounting and Logistics Assistant  
at the Brazzaville Atibt Office*

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Ruth Prudence holds a vocational training certificate in international trade. Ruth Prudence joined ATIBT in 2023 as an administrative, accounting and logistics assistant for ATIBT Congo, and also provides logistical and accounting support for the implementation of project-related activities.



Having obtained a 2-year Master's degree in financial management from the ESGAE (École Supérieure de Gestion et d'Administration des Entreprises), where she pursued all of her higher education studies, Flora Amboulou, in addition to her position as Administrative, Accounting and Logistics Assistant for ATIBT Congo, supported the team in all activities relating to the planning and management of both facilities and equipment. *Flora was replaced by Ruth Prudence KOUSSINGOUNINA at the beginning of 2023.*

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### **PAUL CUVEILLIER**

*Technical documentation manager*

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Paul CUVEILLIER joined ATIBT in March 2023 as part of an end-of-study internship to overhaul ATIBT's technical documentation. Holding a master's degree in timber science (obtained in Montpellier), Paul supports the sharing of technical knowledge in the field of tropical timber science.

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### **ELISE CAMBIER**

*Project assistant intern*

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Elise Cambier joined the ATIBT in November 2023 as part of a two-year work-study programme. Pursuing a double AgroParisTech-Gembloux Agro Bio Tech (ULiège) degree in Forest Management, she aims to gain practical experience at ATIBT. She is currently working on a consultation project to revise the management plans for second rotations.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SITE



ATIBT's main office is based within the [Sustainable Development Site](#) (*Cité du Développement Durable*) in Paris. The Site is a unique cluster that brings together organisations that represent the diversity of players involved in sustainable development and the ecological transition: research and training bodies, research firms, endowment funds, consultation groups, social economy companies, etc.

Together, these players and their international partners are working to produce and widely disseminate knowledge about the challenges facing sustainable development and to share innovative solutions.

Faced with the need to initiate new development pathways linking territories here and elsewhere, which call into question our ways of life and our organisational methods, the members of the Site are committed to decompartmentalising both their expertise and their research so that unprecedented collaborations can emerge.

ATIBT's agroforestry and plantations commission works with the members of the Site. ATIBT is also involved in the master's programme of the IEDES (*Institut d'Etudes du Développement de la Sorbonne - Sorbonne Institute of Development Studies*), which is based in the site.

## ATIBT'S VISIBILITY AND THE SHARING OF INFORMATION

### ATIBT'S WEBSITES



Marketing & Markets) are the anchor points of the document resources relayed by ATIBT and play a key role in the actions that the association carries out.

As a result of our reflections during 2023, we have proposed a completely new tree structure for our technical documentation. It is now organised around the association's commissions. The commissions' themes (Agroforestry & Plantations, Timber & Standardisation, Carbon & Biodiversity, Certification & Regulation, Forestry & Industry, Training,

The structure of the document resources has therefore been defined on the basis of knowledge of the timber sector, of the documents already in the database and of the subjects addressed by each commission. The titles of the categories have been carefully chosen to avoid confusion in terms of their contents. With this new tree structure, the association's website has adopted a new layout for the "technical publications" section.

Based on the changes made internally, the website was rebuilt in the same manner. With assistance from the 6LAB company, structural changes were made to facilitate navigation and understanding of the various sections' contents. A video was produced on this subject, which you can watch at this link. This reorganisation is based on ATIBT's commissions; you will find 9 groups, 7 of which are linked to the committees. The other 2 groups are used to centralise documents that ATIBT wishes to highlight, as well as general documents on the timber industry. Beneath each document presented on the ATIBT website, brief summaries will be included to help readers easily find their way around when looking for documents.

The resources available still vary from one commission to another. The "Training" and "Agroforestry & Plantations" topics are not as well represented as others such as "Certification", "Forest & Industry" or "Timber Materials & Standardisation". Given that the majority of members are either producers or merchants, this could explain why the "Training" and "Agroforestry & Plantations" topics, although crucial, are less developed than "Certification" or "Forestry & Industry", which play a decisive role in the export of timber products.

In addition, the "Carbon & Biodiversity" topic often came up as an area requiring further examination. The commission is a recent addition to the association. The documentation could be expanded as the commission's projects progress.

According to the questionnaire, "Marketing & Markets" is not an area requiring in-depth documentation. However, key figures on the tropical timber market should be added.

Lastly, many respondents mentioned other more specific topics that are important to follow up on, such as CITES and the EUDR.

This work has led to a number of suggestions in terms of ways of facilitating access to the scientific information needed to raise awareness regarding environmental issues. On this basis, the media library will now be easier to update.



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## SOCIAL NETWORK PRESENCE

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During the first four months of 2023, ATIBT and its Fair&Precious programme's social networks were managed by Maylis BORELLI MANACH, and then by the ATIBT team until the networks were taken over on a rotating basis by ATIBT's member consultancies. BF Consult began managing the networks in September, followed by Eticwood in November, with plans for TEREÀ to take over in early 2024. The objective of this method is to give the floor to members of the association with multidisciplinary expertise in the subjects that we cover.

### THE INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT



The Fair&Precious programme has an Instagram page.

#### Key figures:

- 4,670 subscribers as of 31 December 2022
- Accounts reached in 2023: 512,596

### LINKEDIN PAGES



ATIBT's LinkedIn page (3,600 subscribers as of 31 December 2023) was managed throughout 2023 by the ATIBT team to relay the association's news and key events. During the first four months of 2023, the Fair&Precious page was managed by Maylis BORELLI MANACH.

The number of subscribers and the audience both continued to grow in 2023 on both accounts.

#### Key figures of the Fair&Precious page:

- 1,900 subscribers as of 31 December 2023
- 57,768 impressions (audience)
- 1,441 reactions
- 15.5% engagement rate

## ATIBT'S NEWSLETTERS

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In 2023, 53 newsletters and news flashes were sent out. The weekly newsletter is sent out every Friday afternoon. In the event of urgent information, it is supplemented by a news flash, generally on a single subject.

These newsletters and news flashes enabled 249 articles to be widely shared, including 92 articles on ATIBT members.

### Regarding the projects:

- 4 articles were dedicated to ASP Cameroun
- 5 articles to FMU Reforest
- 4 articles to ASP Congo
- Approximately 10 articles to the EUDR
- 8 articles to CITES
- 2 articles to the Themis and Dryades projects

## 2023 PUBLICATIONS

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ATIBT's technical data sheets have again begun to be shared again in the newsletter. The main objective of this initiative was to include bibliographical references to provide additional information on a specific subject related to timber science. During the various reviews of the data sheets, it became apparent that some of them needed to be updated. A new annex document has therefore been drafted to reflect the various items of information that needed updating. This document is the starting point for a future update of the association's data sheets.

2023 also saw the publication of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final part of the Fair&Precious documentary series. For the record, this series of videos is divided into 3 episodes:

### Episode 1: Towards responsible harvesting

### Episode 2: Protecting ecosystems

### Episode 3: For the well-being of the populations

Episode 2 was presented at the CIB 2022 trade fair in Nantes during the ATIBT Forum, and Episode 1 was shown for the first time to participants during the December 2022 Think Tank. This 3<sup>rd</sup> episode was finalised and shared in January 2023. A shorter, more versatile clip was also produced in 2023.

**All of these episodes and the Fair&Precious clip are available in the "Videos" section of the ATIBT website's media library.**

# THE YEAR 2023

## AT A GLANCE

### JANUARY

- **20 January:** WWF France webinar: Review of the COP 15 decisions
- **25 January:** Preferred by Nature webinar: New EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) - Navigating through the requirements
- **26 January:** Preferred by Nature webinar: New EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) - Navigating through the requirements

### FEBRUARY

- **9 February:** Timber trade fair in Bulle, Switzerland
- **10 February:** Alliance for the Preservation of Forests webinar "Toward zero deforestation".
- **10 February:** Introduction to the CoPalCam strategy game at the *Cité du Développement Durable* (Sustainable Development Site)
- **24 February:** Workshop to launch the ASP-Green Pact project in Cameroon

### MARCH

- **1-2 March:** One Forest Summit in Gabon
- **6-8 March:** 18<sup>th</sup> Dubai WoodShow 2023
- **21 March:** International Day of Forests
- **23 March:** FSC Webinar "Wood you find it?" on the EUDR and FSC
- **29-31 March:** IWPA Wood Convention in Savannah (USA)



## APRIL

- **13 April:** Preferred by Nature seminar on "The new European regulation on imported deforestation EUDR: going through the requirements".
- **20 April:** SNDI Webinar - Presentation of the European deforestation regulation
- **20 April:** PEFC Webinar - Introduction to the new EU deforestation regulation
- **25 April:** FSC workshop in Brussels "Wood you find it?" on EUDR and geolocation
- **27 April:** Preferred by Nature webinar: How to navigate the new Sourcing Hub and contribute as a player?

## MAY

- **5 May:** ATIBT Board meeting
- **8 - 18 May:** ATIBT / Rainforest Alliance Mission in Central America
- **9 - 12 May:** Interzum trade fair in Cologne 2023

## JUNE

- **2 June:** ATIBT Board of Directors meeting and General Meeting
- **5 - 9 June:** CITES Plants Committee
- **5 June:** Deadline to apply to join the Focus Forest Advisory Group
- **7 June:** ETTF General Assembly
- **8 June:** Carbon Market Summit
- **8 - 9 June:** ERAIFT trade fair in Kinshasa
- **12 - 13 June:** Congo Basin PAFC chain of custody auditor training course
- **13 June:** FGEF round table on 2 new capitalisations from the FFEM "innovate - experiment - share" collection
- **14 June:** Preferred by Nature seminar in Berlin - Get ready for the EU Deforestation Regulation
- **24 June - 4 July:** Furniture Fair in Yaoundé
- **29 June:** FSC France General Meeting

## JULY

- **29 June - 14 July:** "States, companies and certifications: What will the European regulation on imported deforestation change?"
- **18 July:** CoC training by PAFC

## SEPTEMBER

- **6- 7 September:** FSC: Meeting of the members of the Africa 2023 region
- **19 September:** A delegation from Ghana will meet private sector stakeholders in Brussels on Tuesday 19 September
- **20 September:** FSC Webinar on Motion 23 (Postponed - Date to be announced)
- **27 - 28 September:** Colloquium at the Sorbonne University on forest protection

## OCTOBER

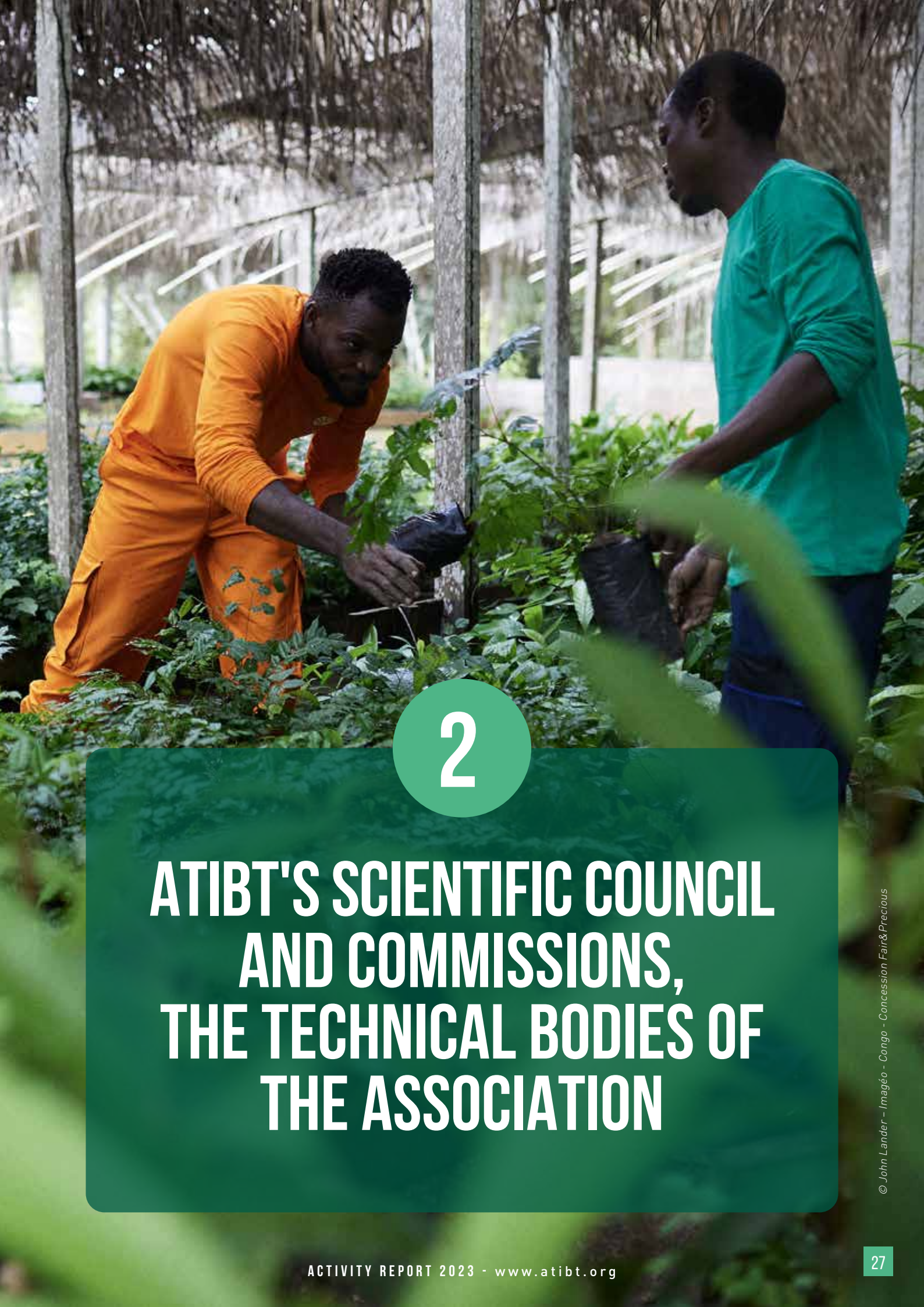
- **11- 12 October:** International Softwood Conference in Vienna
- **13 October:** ETTF General Assembly
- **17-20 October:** International Woodrise congress in Bordeaux
- **23-25 October:** Climate Chance Africa 2023 Summit
- **23-25 October:** Timber as a sustainable resource: Franco-Japanese Colloquium – ENSP Mobility and Landscape Chair in Versailles
- **25 October:** FSC Webinar on the EUDR
- **26-28 October:** Three Basins Summit in Brazzaville

## NOVEMBER

- **13 November:** ITTO: 59<sup>th</sup> session of the International Tropical Timber Council and associated Committee sessions
- **21 November:** Global legal & sustainable timber forum (GLSTF) in Macao
- **22 November:** Webinar on the implementation of the EUDR (General commission for sustainable development)
- **22 November:** PEFC webinar on the EUDR
- **24 November:** FSC Amazonia business meeting
- **30 November - 12 December:** COP28 UAE in Dubai

## DECEMBER

- **8 December:** ATIBT Board of Directors meeting
- **14 December:** Completion of the "*Référentiel Empreinte Forêt France*" (France Forest Footprint Standard) project
- **14 December:** Webinar - Launch of the WWF risk assessment tool
- **20 December:** 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gabon's National School of Water and Forests



## 2

# ATIBT'S SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL AND COMMISSIONS, THE TECHNICAL BODIES OF THE ASSOCIATION

In order to be as close as possible to the realities in the field and to the challenges facing the sector, ATIBT is surrounded by **thematic working groups**: ATIBT's Commissions bring together Members of the Association who wish to contribute to **discussions on the main issues facing the tropical timber sector**, sometimes with external contributors.

Thanks to the commitment of the members who are active in the various commissions, ATIBT actively contributes to international debates on the tropical timber and forestry sector. These collective efforts are essential if we are to maintain a sector that is innovative, compliant with international standards and economically viable.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the members who keep our commissions alive!

## THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

**President:** Jean-Louis Doucet  
(Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech University)

**Secretary:** Franck Monthé

ATIBT's Scientific Council is an essential resource, providing critical and independent advice within ATIBT's framework. It is able to provide ATIBT with consultations and to be called upon by the association to formulate opinions on specific scientific issues deemed to be priorities. The diversity of its experts, who have varied backgrounds, guarantees both neutral and independent diagnoses.

In 2023, ATIBT's Scientific Council continued to support efforts to integrate the DYNFAC collective's research results. Work to develop a methodology to analyse the vulnerability status of tree species also continued. This work resulted in the finalisation and submission to the IUCN of conservation status update sheets for approximately 10 species.

In the coming year, the Council plans to focus on issues relating to an assessment

of the vulnerability of harvested species, both in the context of the IUCN and from an ecological point of view.

We are delighted to welcome [Adeline Fayolle](#), a tropical forest ecologist from the CIRAD's Forest and Societies research unit, who will share her expertise with the Scientific Council's activities



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# THE COMMISSIONS

## | THE MARKETING COMMISSION

**In 2023, two marketing commissions were held in April and November.**

**On 9 April**, the commission discussed in particular the commercial situation, overall and by market, as well as relations with the authorities in the Congo Basin, the EUDR and the Cites.

**The commission meeting on 7 November** provided an opportunity to conduct an in-depth review of the latest news, with a presentation of the three new forest operators joining the Fair&Precious collective in 2023: Mil Madeiras in Brazil, Alpicam-Gru-

mcam in Cameroon, and Maderacre in Peru. These three new members represent an increase of 1,270,000 ha. The arrival of South American companies broadens the scope of influence and the number of tree species to be promoted, and provides an opportunity to discuss issues common to and specific to both the Congo and Amazon forest basins. Two projects were also presented to the Commission's members: the "Contracts and practices" project, funded by the ITTO, and the second project, "Special technical specifications", funded by the PPECF.

## | THE CERTIFICATION COMMISSION AND ITS WORKING GROUPS



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There was no shortage of topics related to the Certification Commission in 2023, due to a busy news agenda. With the adoption of the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) in June 2023, the commission changed its name to the Certification & Regulation Commission.

### **Two meetings were held in 2023:**

- In April 2023: this meeting was largely devoted to the presentation and explanation of the draft text of the Deforestation Regulation (which was awaiting adoption by the EU Council) on the basis of the EUTR/EUDR brochure just drawn

up by ATIBT. Other points were covered, such as the certification situation in the Congo Basin, the follow-up to the implementation of motion 23 on the management of IFLs (FSC), and the expansion of the Congo Basin PAFC;

- In December 2023: The Commission reported progress in the certification of Congo Basin forests, noting the granting of an FSC certificate to Alpicam-Grumcam in Cameroon and an increase in FSC and CW/FM certifications in Gabon. As far as PAFC/PEFC certification is concerned, approximately 890,000 hectares are now certified for sustainable management. Training has been provided on the Chain of Custody standard, and a cooperation group for natural tropical forests will be established

in 2024. The partnership with ATIBT is ongoing, with the development of an FAQ for both auditors and companies. In terms of the FSC, new coordinators and project managers were welcomed in the Congo Basin, and work on the EUDR and Motion 23 was discussed, with a focus on Gabon. The Commission also reviewed progress on the EUDR, stressing the importance that PEFC and FSC communicate the regulation to their members. ATIBT highlighted its efforts to improve the sector's understanding of the EUDR and its representation at the European level.

**The IFL sub-group continued to meet in order to monitor the implementation of Motion 23 (see section on "Support for certification").**

## | THE TRAINING COMMISSION



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At the end of 2022, the training commission's action plan focused on the commission's 4 strategic areas: ensuring that the industry's professions are both visible and attractive; better identifying the needs of

companies and professionals to develop appropriate training courses; promoting the training packages offered by ATIBT's members; and, meeting the industry's technical and recurring training needs. However, in 2023, the commission's activities were put on hold. Nevertheless, ATIBT has been able to work on these areas, in particular through the ADEFAC project. Identifying and clarifying the needs of professionals in the sector; producing communication tools highlighting the trades ([video clips](#)); supporting the trainers that were trained by the project so that they can deploy a training offer that meets current needs; finalising a local user guide for Central African timber, which is to be published in 2024 to promote timber species and their uses, and to provide useful technical information for both professionals and trainers; etc. For more information on the ADEFAC project, please consult the "vocational training" chapter of this activity report.

## THE TIMBER MATERIAL & NORMALISATION COMMISSION

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In 2023, CIRAD's BioWooEB Unit contributed to the 5 cooperation actions defined as part of the partnership agreement signed with ATIBT for the current year.

### 1. Technical support for ATIBT and its members, and responses to their technical information requests within the scope of CIRAD's "tropical timber" expertise

Numerous answers were given to questions raised by ATIBT members regarding technical issues. These included (1) termite resistance in *Guarea cedrata*; (2) South American timber species currently used by North American plywood manufacturers that can be substituted by species from the Congo Basin, such as Okoumé; (3) Musical Quality Factors (MQF) in tropical timber species; (4) specific uses for timber from the Selva Maya forests; (5) timber drying using CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration technology; (6) information on *Ficus variifolia*; (7) natural durability class against timber-destroying fungi vs. usage classes; (8) LKTS and reconstitution of tropical timber by gluing; (9) limits to the use of Azobé in tropical marine waters; (10) proposals for technical topics to be discussed within the *Timber Materials & Standardisation Commission*; (11) technical information on Pucte and Manchiche

(South American species); (12) Cumaru extractives causing stains on facades; (13) differences between Sapelli and Mahogany; (14) bamboos and the EUTR; (15) prices and markets for Cameroonian tropical veneers; (16) drying issues with Kanda; (17) questions regarding *Macrlobium pendulum*; advantage of Mengkulang over Fir in joinery; (18) thermal conductivity of Kanda; (19) mechanical resistance classes of heat-treated Tauari timber; (20) durability of Sapelli; (21) technical information on *Acacia brevipes* (*Tamarin des Hauts*, from La Réunion); (22) density of Niové in the green state; (23) woodworming of Azobé; (24) density of *Pinus kesiya* in the green state; (25) dimensional tolerances as a function of the level of drying, and grading rules for African sawn timber; (26) colouring of Bossé parquet; (27) Allergenic nature of African timber species; (28) Janka hardness of Niové and Ovengkol; (29) *Swietenia* and CITES; (30) insect attacks on Hevea timber; (31) technical information on Robinia.

### Other actions and activities:

- The inclusion of glued-laminated 3-ply strips in the CITES appendices in relation to the HS relevant codes.
- Participation in the 2023 General Assembly and Congress of the European Parquet Federation, presentation of a slide show entitled "A Wide Range of Tropical Timber Species suitable for wood flooring" (Barcelona)
- Co-supervision of Paul Cuveillier, an intern in the second year of the Master's programme (Timber Sciences) at ATIBT.
- Prospect: Gluing applied to solid timber: a technological tool at the service of African tropical timber. Valorisation of LKTS and co-products of the production-processing chain, and improvement of material yields.

## **World Customs Organization (WCO): Update and revision of the Annex to the Explanatory Notes of Chapter 44 "Naming of certain tropical timber species".**

In mid-2023, ATIBT and CIRAD's BioWooEB Unit were asked by the World Customs Organization (WCO) to participate in a small working group in collaboration with the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).

A roadmap drawn up by the WCO for this working group defined the actions needed to update the annex to the explanatory notes of chapter 44 of the Harmonised System (HS), which lists tropical timber species.

These explanatory notes play a key role in helping customs agents and players in the international tropical timber trade understand the scope of the HS classifications.

ATIBT's General Nomenclature of Tropical Timber (2016) was used as a benchmark and reference for this update of the Annex to the Explanatory Notes to Chapter 44 of the Harmonised System.

At the end of January 2024, a work meeting in Rome - attended by representatives of the five member institutions of the working group - finalised this update of the Explanatory Notes to Chapter 44. Each point of this update was studied in detail to ensure of its future acceptance by all of the Contracting Parties in relation to the WCO Harmonised System Commission.

The document update was both examined and validated by the HS Committee, which was held in Brussels in March 2024

## **2 - Coordination of ATIBT's Timber Materials and Standardisation Commission, and occasional interaction with other commissions, such as the Marketing Commission, the Forest & Industry Commission and the Training Commission.**

- CITES meeting - ATIBT Forestry and Industry Commission (13 January)
- Organisation of a [videoconference meeting of the Materials and Standardisation Commission \(May 2023\)](#).
- Delivery of the study "[Guidelines and recommendations on contracts and practices for the international trade in tropical timber](#)" to ATIBT.
- Participation in the 2023 Marketing Commission meetings by videoconference (23 March and 7 November).
- Study entitled "*Guidelines and recommendations on contracts and practices for the international trade in tropical timber*" (ATIBT / ITTO contract): contribution to the drafting of the 12 corresponding booklets (below).

## **3 - Publication of technical documents drawn up by the Technical Commission**

12 booklets of the study entitled "Guidelines and recommendations on contracts and practices for the international trade in tropical timber" (French and English versions): Timber names and designations; Terminology applied to timber and timber products; Main grading rules for tropical sawn timber; Timber moisture rates and drying levels; Measurement, dimensions and "oversizes" of planed tropical lumber; Eco-certifications, legality certifications and regulations related to the international timber trade; Recommendations for the commercialisation of species listed in the CITES appendices; Containerisation, container characteristics and the SOLAS convention; 2020 Incoterms; Marine insurance policies; The documentary bundle; General recommendations on contract terms.



**4 - Participation in the French standardisation commissions (BNBA/BF 035) "Durability and environment for timber" and the European standardisation committee (Cen/TC 38) Durability of Wood and Derived Materials (8 working groups) (Marie-France Thévenon).**

**5 - Other actions, contracted or not, completed or in progress:**

- Preparation of Tropix Tamarindo and Abiurana vermelha sheets for Vandecasteele Hout import

- Supply of timber photos from 100 African species for the book entitled "Guide d'utilisation locale des bois d'Afrique central" (Guide for the Local Use of Central African Timbers) (ADEFAC project)
- Progress on the service contract between ATIBT and the CIRAD for the PAFFB project (training in the identification of forest species on processed products (sawn timber, veneers, etc.), and in the measurement and grading of sawn timber): training was scheduled for the second half of April 2024.

## | THE FOREST & INDUSTRY COMMISSION



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**President:** Nicolas Bayol (FRMi)

**Secretary:** Jacqueline Lardit

In 2023, the Forestry & Industry Commission worked on two main issues: the preparation of management plans for a second rotation, and the implementation of CITES in Central Africa. The commission met 4 times (in the months of January, May, October and November) by videoconference.

The main outcome of the management plan meetings is a joint proposal to draw up a full review of the implementation of the first Central African management plans, including technical aspects (assessment of timber resources, development of management methods, etc.), social aspects (diversification of income-generating activities for local populations, etc.), environmental aspects (role in protecting biodiversity, etc.), economic aspects (such as new sources of income for forestry companies), etc., in order to assess the relevance of these plans. With this aim in mind, the commission would like to see a working group of forest managers from the private sector, government departments, universities and research centres to carry out a full review of the situation and then propose any changes to the legislation needed to draw up new management plans, while also taking into account the results of research pertaining to Congo Basin forest dynamics. This working group will report to COMIFAC. This examination of changes in forest concession management approaches could be complemented by a broader examination of changes in concession contracts, the obligations of concessionaires, the rights

conferred by concessions and the consideration of local stakeholders.

The CITES meetings led to the creation of a CITES Taskforce, which led to an enhanced mobilisation of Central African countries at Convention meetings, namely the 26<sup>th</sup> Plants Committee meeting in Geneva in June, the 77<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting in Geneva in November and the December meeting in Nairobi on the future Guide for the development of NDFs. The taskforce was also very active in terms of helping

Cameroon and Gabon drafting NDFs. The commission's involvement in CITES issues was made possible thanks to the ASP Cameroon project's financial support.

In 2024, the implementation of CITES and the new generation of management plans will remain the commission's main issues, along with industrialisation, within the context of the decision by the CEMAC countries (which now includes the DRC) to ban the export of logs and to develop the timber processing industry.

## THE AGROFORESTRY & PLANTATIONS COMMISSION



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The Agroforestry & Plantations Commission met at the end of 2023 to launch a series of meetings aimed at reinvigorating the group. In terms of governance, the principle of a shared secretariat rotating annually between Kinomé (currently), TERE, ETICWOOD and others to come was decided. In addition, a **monthly technical committee** (CIRAD, KINOME, ETICWOOD, TERE, ERAIFT) will meet to monitor the implementation of the commission's action plan. The results

will be presented more broadly twice a year. Several projects were discussed, including a biodiversity and agroforestry project that was under discussion at the FFEM level, and an applied research project to assess the market for timber sourced from agroforestry in several countries. This research would be carried out by students. An article on the situation of Côte d'Ivoire agroforestry programmes was also produced to inform members of the dynamics at work in this country.

## | THE CARBON & BIODIVERSITY COMMISSION



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In 2023, the Carbon and Biodiversity Commission, established in January 2022, began its second year of providing information and support to foresters, and more broadly to the tropical forest-timber sector, to better understand the opportunities offered by the carbon and biodiversity markets, in order to obtain economic opportunities in exchange for the ecosystem services linked to sustainable forest management.

This year, and once again, the commission was managed and led by a secretariat made up of two research firms: TEREA and Eticwood.

The commission, which originally consisted of approximately 30 members, now supports over 80 players in the sector (loggers, researchers, research firms, donors, etc.) on carbon and biodiversity issues.

In this context, the schedule for this second year of the commission has been quite full, with the completion of the following activities:

- Hosting of 2 thematic meetings with the core members of the commission:
  - Meeting on 04/06/2023, structured in three parts: the first part summarised the conclusions of the One Forest Summit, the second focused on the status of carbon projects in *Côte d'Ivoire*, and the third presented the progress of the OBC (Organization for Biodiversity Certificates).
  - Meeting on 11/09/2023, structured in two parts: the first part summarised the conclusions of the Three Basins Summit and the second presented new initiatives that could become opportunities for the forestry sector, namely the ERS standard and the IAPB (International Advisory Panel on Biodiversity Credits).
- Periodic distribution of three newsletters throughout the year, covering carbon and biodiversity news affecting all commission members.
- Participation in several events and meetings related to the OBC (Organization for Biodiversity Certificates) consor-

tium. The aim of this consortium is to bring together various stakeholders to develop new tools and a methodological approach to generate "biodiversity certificates" aimed at remunerating project developers who have a positive impact on this ecosystem service. ATIBT, represented by the CC&B, participated as follows:

- Presence at the Paris meeting on 28 November 2023 to launch the research programme on biodiversity certificates, where debates were held on the certification process and the definition of a market framework for the exchange and use of these certificates

- Various Board meetings
- Various meetings of the "Market" working group
- Various meetings to set up technical groups by ecosystem, in particular "Temperate Forest", "Temperate Agriculture" and "Tropical Forest", and initial technical meetings.

- Participation in the COP28 in Dubai from 4-8 December 2023 and presentation on the COMIFAC "Central Africa Initiatives" pavilion during a side-event on "The sustainable management of tropical forests through the prism of carbon and green finance: towards a new paradigm?".



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# KEY FIGURES REGARDING ATIBT AND THE SECTOR

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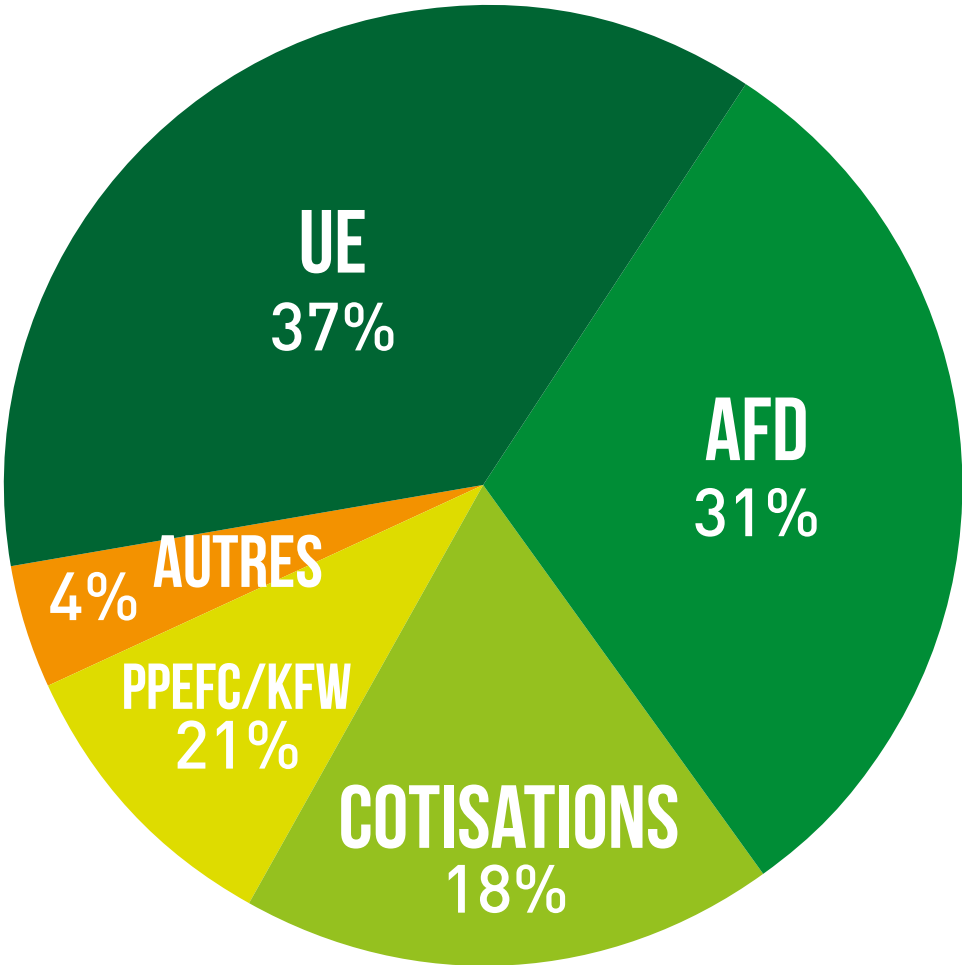


# THE ORIGIN OF ATIBT'S RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR 2023

The ATIBT's budget for 2023 is €1,475K, a slight decrease of €70K compared with 2022. The resources for 2023 have been increased following the launch of new projects funded by the European Union and have been reduced by projects that have ended, in particular with the FFEM and the PPECF.

The share of contributions is stable at 18% in 2023. In value terms, the amount is lower than in 2022 because of the exceptional call for subscriptions that took place that year for the organisation of the ATIBT Forum.

The shares of the various donors are illustrated in the below chart.



# WHAT ARE YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEES USED FOR?



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Each year, membership fees represent around 18-20% of the Association's budget, including some exceptional contributions from members, in particular special Fair&Precious fees from certified loggers, and some other occasional co-funding calls. They are important because our Association must cover the actions necessary for its proper governance, and respond to the needs of members, which are not always linked to the projects.

## **We can therefore mention, in particular:**

- Fixed costs that cannot be funded by donors, notably in relation to governance and accounting, but also to information destined for members, in the form of answers to regularly asked questions, newsletters, etc.
- The agreement signed with the CIRAD for its technical support for ATIBT's "timber technology" topics, which is one of ATIBT's historic commitments to its members.
- Leading the ATIBT Commissions, which is a tool to bring together all ATIBT members to discuss important issues: standardisation, timber knowledge, certification, training, agroforestry and plantations, marketing, the forest industry, carbon and biodiversity, as well as ATIBT Scientific Council.
- Project assessments, which are then used to implement actions in the field or strong institutional actions. Although the actions are indeed funded by the donors, the entire preparatory phase is at our expense and this period can require months of efforts.
- The co-funding required for actions funded by certain donors, which can be quite substantial, in the neighbourhood of 15-20%.
- Some specific advocacy actions following political decisions, for example: production sharing in Congo, the export of CEMAC logs, European regulation.
- Certain recurring issues for which ATIBT is responsible: tropical timber nomenclature, project mapping, the monitoring of certified areas, etc.

# ATIBT'S FINANCIAL SITUATION AT THE END OF 2023

Operating income consists of membership fees and grants received for projects and used in 2023. They remain constant between 2022 and 2023, as are the project implementation costs.

It is worth mentioning that there will be a significant reduction in the "Missions" item linked to events in 2022, in particular the ATIBT Forum, which takes place every two years.

In terms of payroll expenses, the 2023 figure reflects a year with full staffing, with an increase linked to the addition of two temporary staff members.

Resources in €K	2023	2022	Variation	Variation %
Membership fees and private partnerships	268	298	(30)	-10%
Grants	1207	1247	(40)	-3%
Miscellaneous and exceptional items		5	(5)	-100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 475</b>	<b>1 550</b>	<b>(75)</b>	

Expenses in K€	2023	2022	Variation	Variation %
Project implementation and consultancy	753	732	21	10%
Project implementation missions	161	276	(115)	452%
Salaries	376	323	53	28%
Operating expenses/miscellaneous	258	217	41	71%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1 471</b>	<b>1 548</b>	<b>-</b>	

<b>Net income</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	
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# A FEW FIGURES ON THE SECTOR WITHIN THE CONGO BASIN

## ATIBT summary table of the main data for the Congo Basin's forestry and timber sector

Updated with contribution by OFAC-COMIFAC

Elements of comparison	Cameroon	Gabon	Congo	DRC	CAR	Regional total
<b>Forêt et exploitation</b>						
<b>Area of dense rainforest</b>	20,3 million ha <sup>[11]</sup> 22 million ha (OFAC 2020)	23,5 million ha <sup>[11]</sup> 23,6 million ha (OFAC 2020)	21,9 million ha <sup>[11]</sup> 24 million ha (OFAC 2020)	126,1 million ha <sup>[11]</sup> 150 million ha (OFAC 2018)	22,3 million ha <sup>[11]</sup> 22,3 million ha (OFAC 2022)	214,1 million ha (FAO) 246,5 million ha (OFAC)
<b>Area allocated to industrial forestry, excluding communal forests<sup>[2]</sup></b>	7,8 million ha (OFAC 2022)	16,4 million ha <sup>[2]</sup>	14,8 million ha (OFAC 2020)	9,3 million ha <sup>[25]</sup> (MEDD 2024)	3,7 million ha (OFAC 2020)	52 million ha
<b>Total certified areas<sup>[3]</sup> of which</b>	2 403 620 ha	4 098 499 ha	4 505 059 ha	263 637 ha	0 ha	11 270 815 ha
Sustainable management (FSC FM, PAFC/PEFC) <sup>[4]</sup>	695 254 ha	2 535 880 ha	2 989 168 ha	0 ha	0 ha	6 220 302 ha
Legality+ (OLB, LS, TLV) <sup>[4]</sup>	2 403 620 ha	1 562 619 ha	2 625 772 ha	263 637 ha	0 ha	6 855 648 ha
<b>Number of companies with concession titles</b>	Around 60	Around 40	Around 30	Around 10	Around 10	Around 150
Formal log production (m <sup>3</sup> ) <sup>[5]</sup>	2,9 million (2021)	3,5 million (2021)	1,7 million (2020)	0,3 million (2020)	0,64 million (2022)	9 million
Of which FSC (m <sup>3</sup> )	176 000 (7%)	707 000 (23%)	517 000 (30%)	0	0	1,4 million
Top 4 producers' share of log production <sup>[6]</sup>	29% (export share 2018)	40% (2018)	58% (2018)	58% (2020)	70% (2019)	43%
Estimated informal artisanal production (log equivalent) <sup>[7]</sup>	2,4 million	0,3 Million	0,3 Million	3,4 Million	0,1 Million	6,5 million
<b>Main species harvested by the industry</b>	Tali, Okan, Béti, Azobé, Naga, Dabéma, Bilinga, Nieu, Ayous,	Okoumé (approx. 60%), Azobé, Béti, Okan, Padouk,	Sapelli, Okoumé, Okan, Tali, Kosipo, Padouk, Wenge, Iroko	Wenge, Afrormosia, Tali, Sapelli, Acajou	Sapelli, Mukulungu, Ayous, Iroko, Doussié, Tali	-
Share of top 3 species in terms of production <sup>10</sup>	19% (2018)	68% (2020)	57% (2018)	37% (2020)	68% (2019)	50%
<b>Artisanally harvested species<sup>7</sup></b>	Ayous, Movingui, Iroko, Sapelli, Bilinga, Moabi	Okoumé, Bilinga, Izombé	Okoumé, Limba (South) Sapelli, Sipo (North)	Afrormosia, Wenge, Sapelli	Ayous (90%) et Sapelli (10%)	-
Log exports <sup>[8]</sup> in m <sup>3</sup>	588 587 (2020)	0	707 270 (2019)	131 986 (2021)	277 873 (2022)	1,7 million
Log exports to China <sup>[9]</sup> in m <sup>3</sup>	419 535 (2021)	0	462 200 (2018)	41% (Congolesse Control Office, 2021)	Just under 40% in 2021 (CIFOR, 2021 <sup>[10]</sup> )	983
Contribution of the forestry-timber sector to GDP <sup>[11]</sup>	5,0% (2021)	3,6% (2020)	4,9% (2014)	0,15% (2016)	2,7% (2020)	-
<b>Timber processing</b>						
Number of industrial processing plants (1 <sup>st</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> transformation) <sup>[12]</sup>	227 (2021)	166 (2020)	29 (2018)	5 (2018)	5 (2018)	432
<b>Production (m<sup>3</sup>)<sup>[13]</sup></b>		(2020)	(MEF, 2020)	ND	(2021)	
• of sawn timber	984 412 (2021)	763	320		51	2
• of plywood	121 024 (2017)	46	7		0	174
• of veneers	8 000 (2017)	362	15		0	385
<b>Exports (m<sup>3</sup>)<sup>[14]</sup></b>	(2021)	(2019)	(2019)	(2021)	(2021)	
• of sawn timber	737	515	254	26	26	1
• of plywood	71	32 484	ND	0	0	103
• of veneers	9	393 660	25	0	0	428
Sawnwood exports to China <sup>[15]</sup> en m <sup>3</sup>	87 613 (2021)	524 700 (2018)	38 600 (2018)	41% (Congolesse Control Office, 2021)	Just over 20% in 2021 (CIFOR, 2021 <sup>[16]</sup> )	667
Artisanal processing sawn timber <sup>[17]</sup>	715 000 m <sup>3</sup> (2010)	50 000 m <sup>3</sup> (2010)	Approx. 100 000 m <sup>3</sup> (2011)	Approx. 1 million m <sup>3</sup> (2014)	33 à 34 000 m <sup>3</sup> consumed per year in Bangui and nearly 5 000 m <sup>3</sup> exported to Chad (CIFOR, 2014)	Approx. 1,8 million m <sup>3</sup>
<b>Other information</b>	Domestic timber market is slow to formalise	Nkok SEZ Over 50 timber processing units Over 1 million m <sup>3</sup> of logs processed/year (2022) <sup>[18]</sup>	Consideration underway regarding creation of an SEZ and the introduction of a production-sharing mechanism is planned	Resources are still largely undervalued		-

Public procurement	Decree signed on 15/12/2020: obligation to use timber of a legal origin in public contracts	N/A	Consideration underway	N/A	-	
<b>Socio-economic data</b>						
<b>Number of jobs in the industrial forestry sector</b>	Approx. 15 000 <sup>[9]</sup> (9,000 in logging and 6,000 in the processing industry)	13,182 jobs in timber industries <sup>[20]</sup>	7,500 (4,250 in logging and 3,250 in the processing industry)	4 523 <sup>[21]</sup>	8000 in 2010 (CIFOR, 2014 <sup>[22]</sup> )	Nearly 50 000
<b>Nombre d'emplois dans le sciage artisanal</b>	40 000	1000 <sup>[23]</sup>	2 000	9 000 à 15 000 <sup>[24]</sup> but probably many more (50,000 jobs according to Lescuyer in 2014)	1,600 regular jobs around Bangui and 420 in urban markets (CIFOR, 2014)	Nearly 60 000
<b>Indirect jobs</b>	150 000	Between 2 000 and 5 000	N/A	N/A	N/A	> 750 000
<b>Associations professionnelles de la filière forêt-bois</b>	<p><b>GFBC</b> (12 forestry and industrial companies)</p> <p><b>FECAPROBOIS</b> (200 SMEs and craftsmen)</p> <p><b>ANCOVA</b> (450 SMEs and craftsmen in Yaoundé) Inter-union encountering implementation difficulties</p>	<p><b>UFIGA</b> (15 forestry and/or industrial companies)</p> <p><b>SIAG</b> (6 forestry and/or industrial companies)</p> <p><b>UFIAG</b> (11 forestry and/or industrial companies)</p> <p><b>FGBSP</b> (approx. 70 SMEs and craftsmen)</p> <p><b>UAMEES</b> (25 SMEs and craftsmen in Libreville)</p> <p><b>CAMMA</b> (20 SMEs and craftsmen in Franceville)</p> <p><b>KOUMU</b> (18 craftsmen in Lastoursville and Koulamoutou)</p> <p><b>L'UFIGA</b> provides the permanent secretariat for the Inter-union</p>	<p><b>UNICONGO</b> (6 forestry and industrial companies)</p> <p><b>UNIBOIS</b> (15 SMEs, 6 of which are active)</p> <p><b>ACM</b> (approx. 100 SMEs and craftsmen, 15 of which are active)</p> <p><b>AMC</b> (500 SMEs and craftsmen, including 300 in Pointe Noire)</p> <p><b>FBET</b> (17 SMEs and craftsmen)</p>	<p><b>FIB</b> (5 forestry and industrial companies)</p> <p><b>ACEFA</b> (1,400 SMEs and craftsmen)</p> <p>Many SMEs and VSEs are not members of trade unions. An enormous role and potential for both FIB and ACEFA</p>		
<b>Commitment to FLEGT</b>	<p>VPA signed in 2010</p> <p>renewal currently under discussion</p> <p>Slow implementation</p> <p>SIGIF II currently being deployed and Cameroon is currently improving the regulatory framework</p>	<p>VPA not signed</p> <p>National traceability system currently being deployed</p> <p>Gabon has committed to mandatory certification for forestry companies starting in 2024</p>	<p>VPA signed in 2010</p> <p>Preparation for implementation currently underway</p> <p>Deployment of the computerised legality verification system underway</p>	<p>VPA not signed</p> <p>Negotiations slow since September 2011</p>	<p>VPA signed on 28 November 2011</p> <p>Slow implementation since 2012</p>	

- [1] FAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020.
- [2] Cameroon: MINFOF 2021; Gabon: MEFMEPCPAT Sept 2020; DRC: BD FRMi
- [3] Surfaces with double certification (example legality + sustainably managed) are counted once
- [4] Surfaces with double certification (FSC FM and PAFC/PEFC or TLV, OLB and FSC CW) are counted once
- [5] Congo: MEF; Cameroon: MINFOF; Gabon: Economic Dashboard, 2021; DRC: MEFDD; CAR: CDF
- [6] BAD/FRMi report - Strategic vision and industrialisation of the timber sector in Central Africa, 2018, except Cameroon, DRC and CAR: OFAC 2023
- [7] Various CIFOR reports
- [8] OFAC except CAR: CDF and DRC: Congolese Control Office
- [9] Cameroon: MINFOF 2021, Gabon and Congo: 2018 CTWPDA data. Note that log exports from Equatorial Guinea to China totalled 1,114,700 m<sup>3</sup> in 2018.
- [10] State of the forestry and timber sector in CAR (2021): <https://flegtvpafacility.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Rapport-Etat-du-secteur-foret-bois-en-Republique-Centrafricaine-2021.pdf>

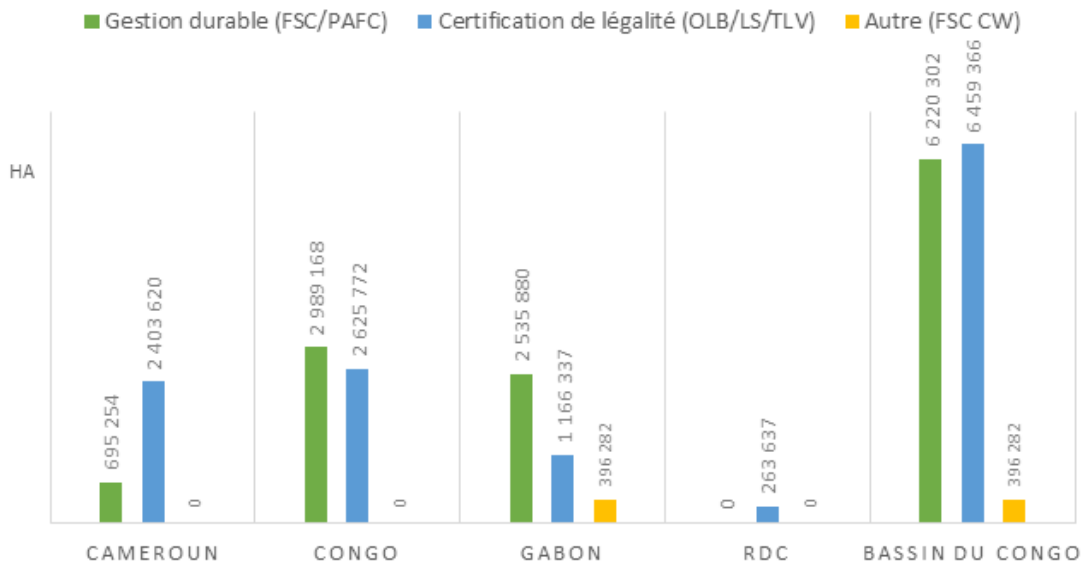
- [11] OFAC data, except for CAR: CIFOR et al., 2021 (State of the forest-timber sector in CAR)
- [12] OFAC data (MINFOF, 2021 Stat Directory Stat for Cameroon), for some countries, only for primary processing companies.
- [13] OFAC data
- [14] OFAC – CAR data: CDF
- [15] 2018 CTWPDA data
- [16] State of the forest-timber sector in CAR (2021)
- [17] Various CIFOR reports
- [18] 2022 Annual activity report Tracer Nkok
- [19] BAD 2018
- [20] 2019 Economic dashboard, Ministry of the Economy and Recovery
- [21] Source: FIB
- [22] The domestic artisanal sawn timber market in CAR (CIFOR, 2014)
- [23] CIFOR, 2011
- [24] Nguinguiriri et al., 2006
- [25] MEDD 2024: <https://medd.gouv.cd/wp-content/plugins/download-attachments/includes/download.php?id=7808>

## MONITORING OF CERTIFICATION DATA IN THE CONGO BASIN

### CERTIFIED AREAS<sup>1</sup> STABLE IN 2023

As of the end of 2023, there were **11,270,815 ha** of legally (OLB, LS, TLV) and/or sustainably managed (FSC, PAFC/PEFC) or other (FSC CW) **certified forests** in the Congo Basin, representing a slight decrease of 3% compared with 2022.

#### Certified areas in the Congo Basin - 31/12/2023



The Congo Basin has **6,220,302 hectares of forest certified as sustainably managed** under the FSC and/or PAFC schemes, which represents a 6% increase. The Grumcam (Alpicam) company obtained its FSC certificate in March 2023 for an area of 353,546 ha. These certifications are still present in three countries: Congo (2,989,168 ha), Gabon (2,535,880 ha) and Cameroon (now at 695,254 ha).

**Legality certifications<sup>2</sup>** (OLB, Legal Source and TLV) represent 6,459,366 ha, a 14% decline (over 1,000,000 hectares) since 2022. No new legal certificates were issued in 2023. These figures mark a step back in the certification dynamic observed last year.

Lastly, we note the presence of three new FSC Controlled Wood (FSC CW forest) certificates in Gabon.

Type of Certification	Cameroon	Congo	Gabon	DRC	Congo Basin	Côte d'Ivoire
Sustainable management (FSC/PAFC)	695 254	2 989 168	2 535 880	0	<b>6 220 302</b>	<b>0</b>
Certification of legality (OLB/LS/TLV)	2 403 620	2 625 772	1 166 337	263 637	<b>6 459 366</b>	<b>1 129 506</b>
Other (FSC CW)	0	0	396 282	0	<b>396 282</b>	<b>0</b>

*Certified areas in the Congo Basin (and Côte d'Ivoire) in hectares, by type of certification, in 2023<sup>3</sup>*

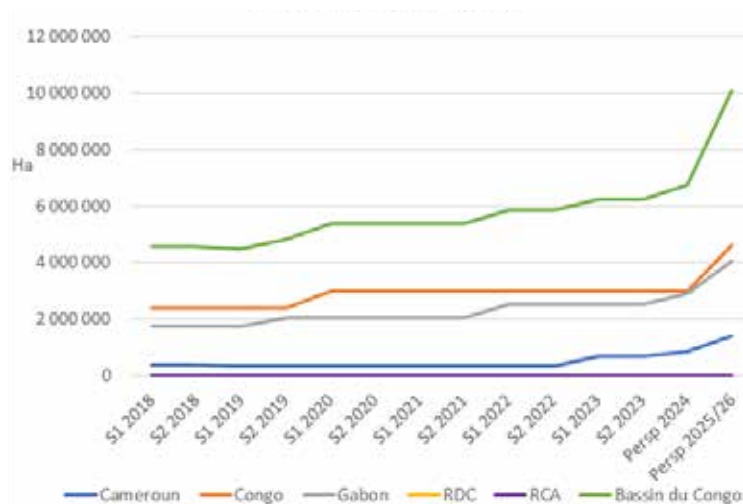
## Will the threshold of 10 million hectares certified as sustainable be reached in 2026?

Last year, we announced that the threshold of 10 million hectares certified as sustainably managed should be reached in 2025. After analysing this year's data, it appears that this threshold will be reached in 2026.

In fact, the outlook data<sup>3</sup> for the Congo Basin collected by the Certification Commission shows that **an additional 4.2 million ha** that are FSC or PAFC/PEFC certified by 2026 is still conceivable, bringing the total area of **sustainably managed forests to 10 million ha**.

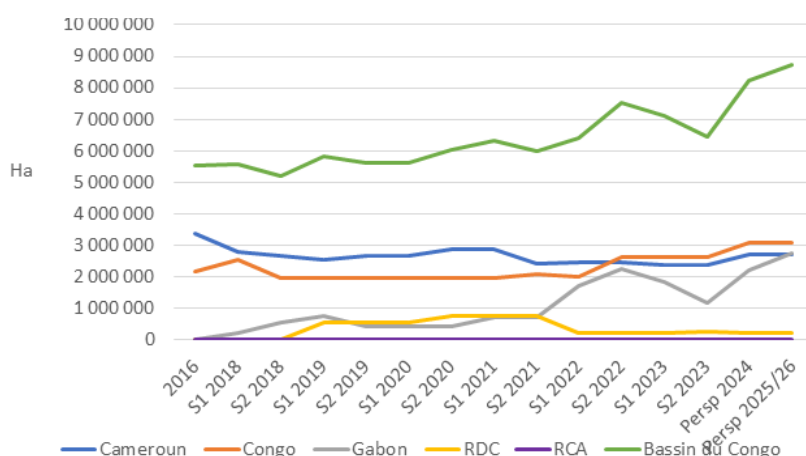
With these prospects in mind, a forecast of 2.6 million ha certified PAFC/PEFC should be expected, which would consolidate the position of this new sustainable management certification system.

The evolution of sustainable management certification from 2018-2023 and outlook for 2024-2026



In terms of **legality certification**, the outlook for 2026 shows a similar increase to last year, with an additional 2.2 million hectares.

The evolution of legality certification from 2018-2023 and outlook for 2024-2026



1. Certification data includes both valid and unsuspended certificates. Double-certified areas are counted only once.

2. The following are considered to be legality certificates: the Legality and Origin of Timber (OLB - Origine et Légalité du Bois) from Bureau Veritas, the Legal Source (LS) from Preferred by Nature, and the Timber Legality Verification (TLV) from Control Union. FSC/CW certification (FSC Controlled Wood at the forest level) is considered an intermediate level towards legality certification and is not counted within these statistics.

3. This outlook data is calculated on the basis of information provided by PPECF through its coaching activity, by certification bodies and, where applicable, by companies, and assumes that existing certificates remain valid.

# THE TROPICAL TIMBER MARKET IN 2023

AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL, 2023 WAS MARKED BY A DETERIORATION OF THE TROPICAL TIMBER MARKETS.

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From January 2023 on, the harvesting and production of tropical timber declined as a result of market uncertainty. The Republic of Congo banned the export of logs from natural forests and plantations. In Gabon, the derailment of the Transgabonais train seriously affected timber transport in the country. The drop in demand on the international market has affected all tropical timber-producing countries. Companies were quickly faced with problems related to increasing product inventories, sales prices below cost and excessively long customer payment periods. Also, China introduced a series of policies aimed at "stabilising the economy".

In February 2023, although there were signs of recovery in some countries, the global timber market remained sluggish, requiring continued efforts to stimulate demand and to sustain growth.

The Republic of Congo initiated the creation of special economic zones focused on

timber processing, while Malaysia focused on promoting its brands internationally. Indonesia has sought to further develop its exports to both UK and US markets.

In April 2023, Chinese domestic demand maintained a positive trend after three consecutive months. However, the timber markets in Brazil, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malaysia and Mexico contracted. As for Brazil, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mexico, they all experienced a continued deterioration of their timber industries.

A lack of demand on the international timber market persisted, and China saw a serious drop in imports in June. Transport problems, particularly in relation to roads and railways, also affected both Gabon and the Republic of Congo.

July 2023 showed signs of recovery thanks in part to policy stimulus measures in China, while producing countries faced a further reduction in exports due to the contraction of international demand, leading to both lay-offs and price cuts. Companies from various producer countries put forward suggestions to stimulate exports and boost the domestic market, such as increasing government spending on the construction of public buildings in Malaysia, or offering incentives for processed timber products from sustainably managed Indonesian forests. Companies expressed the hope that governments would introduce intervening measures to both regulate and support the timber market in the face of sluggish international markets.

The November 2023 GTI revealed a relative improvement in some producing countries following disruptions caused by bad weather in Brazil, high production costs in both Indonesia and Gabon due to high fuel oil prices, as well as logistical obstacles. The companies also emphasised the sustained demand for quality products and FSC-certified products, highlighting the need for incentives to promote both sustainable and legal forest management.

At the end of 2023, the downward trend continued for both the Republic of Congo and Gabon. Adverse weather conditions in key regions such as Africa, Latin America and Asia led to logistical disruptions and additional challenges for companies, particularly in Brazil, where lower Amazon

river water levels affected production. In addition, companies in Gabon had to contend with heavy rain, while companies in Malaysia and Mexico reported concerns about both global economic uncertainty and logistical obstacles. In terms of sea freight, the global market began to feel the effects of rising costs and reduced transport regularity.

In the context of the European Union regulation on deforestation (EUDR), Brazil's furniture industry expressed concerns regarding potential risks. In Malaysia, efforts were made to maximise the use of timber from planted forests, while the Sarawak government took steps to ensure a sustainable supply of raw materials for the timber industry.

#### SOURCE :

**Information on the global tropical timber market in 2023 can be obtained from the ITTO** at [https://www.itto.int/annual\\_review/](https://www.itto.int/annual_review/) or through the *Global Timber Index reports* <https://www.itto.int/gti/>.

**The monthly GTI (Global Timber Index) report**, <https://www.itto.int/gti/>, published for the first time in December 2022, is compiled from data and other information obtained from major timber companies in participating tropical timber pilot countries and from China, from surveys of manufacturers. In terms of producers, the report presents trends in timber production and the supply of logs, sawnwood, plywood and other products. In terms of manufacturers of processed products, the focus is on trends in the processing and manufacture of local timber, covering products such as flooring, doors and furniture. The indices are based on various factors, such as production levels, new orders, inventories of materials and products, quantities and buying/selling prices, employment levels and delivery times. Seven pilot countries - Brazil, Congo, Indonesia, Gabon, Malaysia, Mexico and China - and around 160 companies participated in the initial phase of the GTI platform.

## IN EUROPE (EU27+UK), 2023 WAS MARKED BY A DECLINE IN IMPORTS OF TROPICAL TIMBER PRODUCTS

More specifically, **European consumption of wooden furniture has fallen to its lowest level since 2015.** According to ITTO, during the first six months of 2023, the EU27 imported 838,900 tons of tropical timber and wooden furniture products for a total value of \$1.73 billion, 18% and 29% less, respectively, than in **the same period in 2022.** The extent of the drop in trade in the first six months of 2023 is partly due to the fact that imports reached historically high levels during the first half of 2022.

**In Germany,** the year-on-year (weighted) declines were: -26% for sawn timber, -11% for panels and -8% for building components. However, the German economy has seen a gradual recovery thanks to lower global energy prices, lower inflation and increased consumption.



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**In Belgium,** softwood demand and sales were weak in the last six months of 2023, resulting in low market prices. Sales figures fell by an average of 17% in the timber industry, and the increase in labour costs of around 15% was a penalising factor, as was the decline in building

permits for both residential and non-residential buildings, for both new constructions and renovations.

**In Denmark,** prices remained high in both the wholesale and retail trades, but the labour market is in dire need of staff, particularly in the construction sector.

**In Italy,** goods and services in particular showed signs of slowing due to weaker domestic demand and the impact of tighter financial conditions. Building permits were down due to high interest rates. In the medium term, companies remain fairly optimistic due to the EU policy on the renovation of existing buildings, with the gradual introduction of the EPBD directive on energy efficiency and the promotion of bio-sourced materials.

**In Spain,** a more favourable trend can be explained in part by the greater weight of services linked to hotels, restaurants and tourism. However, manufacturing accounts for a smaller share of the Spanish economy. Residential investment continued to be affected by the high cost of certain materials used in housing construction, shortages of building materials, labour shortages and the increasing tightening of financing conditions for housing construction.

**In the Netherlands,** the signs of a construction slowdown were also visible at the start of the construction value chain.

**In Austria,** due to the collapse of the construction sector, the timber industry is calling for active policy measures, such as investments in energy-efficient and cost-effective constructions, in order to tackle the energy, climate and economic crises.

In 2023, **France** recorded a 12% drop in imports of tropical sawn timber compared with the previous year. Although this figure exceeds the pre-pandemic level of 2019, a marked slowdown is being felt from both Brazil and Asia. Only African imports remain buoyant, supported by stable prices. This trend reflects general economic challenges, such as inflation, rising transport costs, and falling consumption in the construction sector.

Growth in the tropical sawn timber market is being held back by tighter environmental regulations, not just the above-mentioned economic challenges. With the inclusion of certain African species in Appendix II of CITES, and new export and import permit requirements, the market is under pressure. These regulatory changes require proof of responsible sourcing, which could translate into opportunities for a market that is increasingly concerned about its environmental and social impacts.

**All of these countries have announced a very cautious outlook for 2024.**

#### SOURCE :

*For Europe, information can be obtained from the ITTO [https://www.itto.int/annual\\_review/](https://www.itto.int/annual_review/), the ETTF [www.ettf.info](http://www.ettf.info) or from the main associations of tropical timber importers in Europe, such as Le Commerce du Bois ([www.lecommercedubois.org](http://www.lecommercedubois.org)), Fedustria ([www.fedustria.be](http://www.fedustria.be)), TTF (<https://tff.co.uk/>), GD Holdz ([www.gdholdz.de](http://www.gdholdz.de)), Fedecomlegno ([www.federlegnoarredo.it](http://www.federlegnoarredo.it)) and AEIM (<https://www.aeim.org>).*

## STABILITY IN THE UNITED STATES

According to ITTO, **in the United States** - and despite a 30% drop in imports from Brazil - **sawn tropical hardwood imports have increased compared to August 2022**, thanks to an increase in imports from Cameroon, Congo/Brazzaville, Indonesia and a 21% rise from Malaysia.

In addition, **Canadian imports of sawn tropical timber were up**, with notable increases from Ghana (38%) and Cameroon (25%), although **total imports into Canada remain down 12% year-to-date until August**.



# A REVIEW OF THE SECTOR BY COUNTRY IN 2023

## CONGO



The Republic of Congo's forestry and timber sector was marked by the process of drafting the texts implementing Law 33-2020 (8 July 2020) of the Forestry Code, in particular the draft law on the terms and conditions of the log production sharing regime and the draft regulatory text on the terms and conditions of exports of semi-finished or finished products and logs of heavy and hard

timber species whose machining requires a specific technology, following the October 2022 directive on the log export ban that was to be implemented in January 2023. The draft law setting out the terms and conditions of the log production sharing scheme was approved by the Council of Ministers in October 2023 and sent to Parliament for consideration and adoption. After consultation and discussion with the private sector, the decision to ban the export of logs was extended to August 2023.

## GABON



### Gauging the impact of Gabon's timber industry on the economy.

At the end of June, Gabon's Minister of Water, Forests, the Sea and the Environment was given a report on the contribution of the timber industry to Gabon's economy, produced by Ernst & Young and Mays Mouissi Consulting, with the aim of measuring the impact of the forestry sector on the nation's

economic, fiscal and social development. A summary of the main findings was reported by Alix-Ida Mussavu in the *Revue du Gabon*, where he states that between 2014 and 2022, the forestry sector's turnover increased from 28 billion CFA francs to 93 billion CFA francs. The turnover of the forestry industry (the veneer sector, in particular) increased by 455 billion CFA francs (+290%), reaching 611 billion CFA francs in 2022.

## DRC



In November 2023, a mission by the ATIBT President and the Managing Director was conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its main purpose was to meet the country's ATIBT members, as well as to support the FIB (Fédération des Industries du Bois) during its difficult development

(due to the difficulties encountered within the sector). The mission also provided an opportunity to meet with various donors and partners, and to find out more about current initiatives related to forestry issues.

**The FIB** experienced operational difficulties, its number of members fell sharply and its statutes didn't encourage new types of members to join. Following discussions

with both current and potential members, a change in the statutes was planned for early 2024, which would enable the FIB's operations to get back on track.

**The PGDF** (*Programme de Gestion Durable des Forêts - Sustainable Forest Management Programme*), funded by the French Development Agency, launched and is part of a broader framework aimed at providing the state with the means to successfully implement a programme to improve forest management governance. This is carried out within the framework of a forest policy approved in consultation with various stakeholders brought together in a National Forestry Advisory Council. The presented program includes, among other things, the development of a forest policy, the contribution to better governance of the sector, support for the development of sustainable forest management by communities and local authorities, the guarantee that the management of large forest concessions complies with Congolese forest legislation, and the strengthening in Territorial Entities of the capabilities of the local forest administration and the decentralised administration to supervise forest activities.

The re-examination of forestry permits, a report of which was published in February 2023, showed that of the 82 permits granted, 56 were for permanent production and 26 for conservation.

The report made recommendations on the validity of the permits and the decisions/ measures to be taken within a well-defined period. The proposed decisions related to the termination or suspension of contracts by the authorities, or the lifting of suspensions once the contracts had been made compliant by the authorities or the licence holder.

The final report was expected in early 2024, with recommendations regarding harvestable concessions that are in the process of being converted into conservation concessions. However, the regulatory texts still need to be completed in order to define the management of these concessions.

### **Visit to CONGO INDUSTRIAL PLATFORMS**

**- KIN-MALEBO (CIP):** The regulations governing investors are already in effect, and a partnership between the State (40%) and ARISE Integrated Platforms (60%) has also been signed. The infrastructures that were to be in place by early 2024 will enable the platform to be promoted to attract investors. Timber processing will certainly be one of the priority sectors, but other industries such as pharmaceuticals, plastics recycling and the processing of agricultural products will also be interested in investing there.

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## CAMEROON

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The changes that have been occurring in Cameroon's timber industry over the past few years continued in 2023. In fact, measures relating to the CEMAC process of halting the export of logs, which the country is part of, led to the 1 June 2023 signature of a note from the Minister in

charge of forests specifying the terms and conditions for the gradual cessation of log exports from Cameroon (see attached note from the Minister). It should be noted that around 20 species have been banned from export in log form since 1999, although special authorisations to export in log form are often granted to operators through a quota allocation mechanism. In addition to the log export ban, Cameroon's

timber industry is operating in an environment marked by new or unfavourable constraints and difficulties. These include:

- Constantly rising forestry taxes, which are becoming increasingly onerous and restrictive, with increases in taxes and charges already either in effect, announced or in the pipeline;
- Rising prices for various inputs (fuel, equipment, etc.);
- Fuel shortages;
- Outages and an inadequate supply of electricity;
- Increased wage and employer charges;
- Unproductive/ineffective dialogue between the government and the timber industry (tax breaks and other solutions that are not effective);
- Difficult markets (shrinking order books for logs, semi-finished and finished products, interest in promotional species in great difficulty).
- Inadequate co-ordination between the sector's professional associations (making it increasingly difficult to meet objectives when dealing with public authorities).
- Sustainable management certification (also leading to additional costs);

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE



The government of Côte d'Ivoire is committed to a number of initiatives aimed at combating deforestation and implementing

a vast plan to reclaim forested areas:

- **The REDD+ mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation**, with the development of a national strategy in 2017 and a pilot programme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the south-west zone.
  - The negotiation of a **Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) as part of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan** that was launched in 2013.
  - The 2017 signature of an agreement with Ghana and the biggest chocolate and cocoa producers as part of the Cacao-Forest Initiative to prevent any conversion of forest lands to cocoa production.
  - The adoption in 2018 and 2019 of the Forest Preservation, Rehabilitation and Extension Policy (PPREF – *Politique de Préservation, de Réhabilitation et d'Extension des Forêts*) and its Strategy (SPREF).
- The MINEF has initiated reforms aimed at reversing the trend to restore over 2.9 million hectares of forest by 2030. In particular, these reforms are based on:
- A new forestry policy implemented through a Strategy for the Preservation, Rehabilitation and Extension of Forests (SPREF – *Stratégie de Préservation, de Réhabilitation et d'Extension des Forêts*), which includes 27 projects for the years 2019-2030. This is the case with the Karidja project, which is conducted by aDryada.
  - An action plan for the Cocoa Forest Initiative (ICF – *Initiative Cacao-Forêt*) to reduce deforestation linked to cocoa farming by promoting best practices.
  - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) agreed to in 2015.
- In 2024, ATIBT intends to interact more with: its members in *Côte d'Ivoire*, the SPIB, and the AETS, Tranchivoire, Inprobois and NSDA companies.

# MAIN ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN IN 2023

4

# THE MAIN TOPICS

## | THE EUDR REPLACES THE EUTR



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### PREPARING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUDR

The year 2023 was marked by the 29 June 2023 adoption and entry into force of the European Union's Regulation against Deforestation. The regulation will be fully implemented 18 months later, on 30 December 2024 (and 30 June 2025 for SMEs). The aim of this new regulation is to prohibit the distribution on the market or the export from the EU market of products that have contributed to deforestation or forest degradation after 31 December 2020.

Starting in 2013, loggers who introduce timber or timber products onto the market or import them have been required to comply with the EUTR, which aims to keep illegally harvested resources away from the EU market. With the EUDR, we are witnessing a change of scale, moving from the combat against illegality to the eradication of both deforestation and forest degradation. While the EUTR only related to timber, the EUDR covers beef, palm oil, soya, coffee, cocoa, rubber and timber, as well as some of their derivatives.

ATIBT welcomed the Commission's ambitious proposal and its objectives for forest preservation. Throughout 2023, ATIBT was involved in the discussions on its implementation and the interpretation of the text to ensure that the issues of concern to the forest-based industry were properly taken into account.

During the 18 months of preparation ahead of its implementation, the European Commission is planning the following developments:

- Running the **multi-stakeholder platform** on the protection and restoration of the world's forests, which sets the stage for ongoing dialogue between the EU Member States, interested stakeholders (mainly trade associations and NGOs), third-party countries and the European Commission. ATIBT interacts with its partners ETTF, FSC and PEFC, who participate in the platform to obtain information and to share messages, and is working to integrate it;

- Development of a [FAQ](#), which was updated in December 2023 and will be updated regularly;
- The development and deployment of an **information system** (Register): this information system will enable logging companies to submit their due diligence declarations and to check the declarations that they've already submitted. The register will be interconnected with the customs authorities, and will be accessible to the competent authorities for the purpose of carrying out their checks. An initial version was tested with a number of voluntary companies, and initial feedback revealed a number of problems related to usage, data entry, ergonomics and confidentiality.
- Definition and development of **guidelines** and tools to comply with the EUDR's requirements: the European Commission has decided to set up 2 working groups (including at least one representative from the timber industry):
  - The "Traceability" group (including due diligence requirements)
  - The "Small-scale operators" group
- **Country-specific risk assessments:** the European Commission will classify countries, or certain regions, as being either low, standard or high risk on the basis of an objective and transparent assessment within 18 months of the regulation going into effect. Products from low-risk countries will be subject to a simplified due diligence procedure, while the proportion of checks on loggers will depend on the country's level of risk. At the end of 2023, the work had not yet begun, suggesting a delay in the publication of the assessments.

Europe's tropical timber suppliers are confident about their ability to meet the EUDR's challenges. However, they are concerned about the lack of details on its implementation and how companies will have to provide data to demonstrate their compliance.

The EUDR requires suppliers of six forest-risk commodities - including timber and timber products - to conduct due diligence to demonstrate that their products are not linked to deforestation. Suppliers will have to provide precise data, including geo-location coordinates and information on the harvesting period.

**RBUE | RDUE**

**ON VOUS EN DIT PLUS !**

**RBUE**

Règlement Bois de l'Union européenne

**RDUE**

Règlement Déforestation de l'Union européenne

Règlement [UE] 2023/1115 du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 31 mai 2023 relatif à la mise à disposition sur le marché de l'Union et à l'exportation à partir de l'Union de certains produits de base et produits associés à la déforestation et à la dégradation des forêts, et abrogeant le règlement (UE) no 995/2010

Nous vous proposons ces éléments de décryptage et de comparaison avec le RBUE permettant d'appréhender les évolutions et de se préparer à celles-ci.

**RBUE : 10 ans déjà**

Depuis 2013, les opérateurs qui mettent sur le marché ou importent du bois et des produits dérivés sont tenus de respecter le RBUE, un texte qui vise à écarter du marché communautaire la ressource issue d'une récolte illégale. Selon la FAO, 420 millions d'hectares de forêts ont été perdues dans le monde entre 1990 et 2020 et il est estimé que la consommation de l'Union européenne représente environ 10 % de cette déforestation.

Avec le RDUE, nous assistons à un changement d'échelle en passant de la lutte contre l'illégalité à l'éradication de la déforestation et la dégradation des forêts.

Si le RBUE ne concernait que le bois, le RDUE porte lui sur la viande bovine, l'huile de palme, le soja, le café, le cacao, le caoutchouc et le bois auxquels il y a lieu d'ajouter certains de leurs dérivés.

Par Emmanuel Groutel, Wale et Caroline Duhesme, Secrétaire de la Commission certification ATIBT

The EUDR changes the status of FLEGT-licensed goods in the EU. Although the FLEGT licence will be accepted as proof of legality, suppliers will still have to carry out due diligence to prove that their products do not contribute to deforestation.

Suppliers also stress the importance of obtaining practical information on the implementation of the EUDR, particularly with regard to geolocation requirements and harvesting issues. Despite these challenges, they feel that their previous experience with the EUTR puts them in a good position to meet the requirements of the EUDR. In addition, new tools and initiatives, such as the Forest Data Partnership, could facilitate implementation, monitoring and compliance with the EUDR.

ATIBT is fully mobilised with its partners (European federations such as the ETTF, LCB, Fedustria, Etic, etc.) to participate in the preparatory work for implemen-

tation and to prepare the sector for the arrival of this new regulation. With this in mind, in April 2023 ATIBT produced [a brochure outlining the main provisions of the EUDR](#) in comparison with those of the EUTR, which has been widely distributed and used. A brochure on the level of preparation of certified sustainable management forest managers is currently being prepared. ATIBT also met with a Member of the European Parliament and the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment to present the responses provided by the tropical forest-timber sector to meet the EUDR, such as sustainable management, certification and traceability.

## EUTR: GABON REASSURES THE MARKETS

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In parallel with the implementation of the EUDR, the requirements of the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) are still applicable, and will remain so for 3 years after the date of application. It is in this context that the multi-stakeholder platform (which also monitors the application of the EUTR) has questioned the situation in Gabon following the 30 August 2023 coup d'état, suggesting that due diligence would no longer be applicable.

ATIBT and all of its members and partners, such as the ITTO, the EU Delegation in Gabon, the French Embassy in Gabon, the FDA, the trade unions (UFIGA, FEDUSTRIA, fedecomlegno, federlegnoArredo, VVNH, UIPC, ETTF, ETIC, CEIbois, etc.), the relevant ministries and authorities, sustainable forest management certification schemes (FSC, PEFC-PAFC), research firms and non-member companies have all worked together to provide reassurance to Member State experts.

Following a meeting with the Commission's Directorate-General for Environment, organised with ETIC, ATIBT was invited to present the situation in Gabon on 29 November at a EUTR expert group meeting. This group, which consists of representatives of the competent authorities of all the European Union member states, assesses the situation regarding the implementation of the EUTR on a monthly basis and makes recommendations. A communication from the European Delegation in Libreville and a presentation by ATIBT helped to mitigate the perceptions of Gabon after the *coup d'état* (commitment of the transitional government, free movement, open borders, absence of levies on the population, the conduct of certification audits, etc.). The expert group concluded that due diligence for timber from Gabon is now possible. However, as for all countries in the Congo Basin, they recommend applying due diligence in relation to the estimated non-negligible risk level.

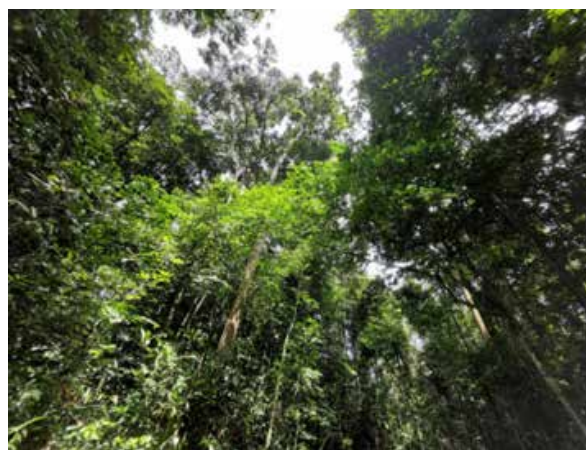
## THE PORT OF LA ROCHELLE PREPARES FOR THE EUDR

### **ATIBT aims to support the Port of La Rochelle in its efforts against the illegal timber trade.**

In anticipation of the application of the EUDR in December 2024, an enhanced collaboration has been initiated with the Port of La Rochelle, ATIBT, the *Agence Maritime de La Pallice* (AML - La Pallice Maritime Agency), WALE and LCB in order to introduce sustainable and transparent practices in timber imports. With the shift towards EUDR, which extends beyond timber to other products such as beef and palm oil, the port finds itself at the heart of a wider challenge: preventing deforestation and forest degradation linked to imported products.

During the LCB Tropical Timber Commission meeting in La Rochelle, where ATIBT was present, the Port of La Rochelle

set up a working group dedicated to the EUDR, including all the key port stakeholders. The meeting was characterised by strong commitment from participants and constructive discussions, continuing the dialogue that had begun the previous year to prepare for this new regulation. As France's biggest importer of tropical timber, the role of the Port of La Rochelle is all the more crucial.



© Wale

### **RDUE issues affecting the Port of La Rochelle**

The EUDR imposes strict standards to minimise the environmental impact of trade in agricultural commodities and timber, with penalties of up to 4% of annual sales for non-compliance. The Port must therefore not only make its partners aware of these regulations, but it must also promote effective risk mitigation tools such as traceability and sustainable forest management certifications. It is within this context that the Port has entrusted Emmanuel Groutel - a specialist in international timber flows - with a mission to support them.

#### **The main strategies under consideration:**

- 1. Awareness-raising and training:** a series of seminars and workshops is planned to inform stakeholders about the EUDR, due diligence, and sustainable management certifications (PEFC, FSC). These sessions aim to enhance understanding and implementation of the new requirements.
- 2. Strategic collaborations:** working closely with bodies such as the OCLAESP to integrate effective control mechanisms and to preserve the port's reputation.
- 3. Improving procedures:** establishing a list of suppliers certified in forest management and setting up an alert system for suspicious goods.



The Port of La Rochelle's commitment to combating deforestation demonstrates a proactive desire to comply with high standards of environmental responsibility. These efforts, which are crucial to anticipate the application of the EUDR, highlight the need for collective and coordinated action between all players in the timber value chain. By consolidating its commitment, the port is positioning itself not only as a leader in sustainable trade, but also as a key player in the preservation of the world's forest resources.

## | CITES



The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild Fauna and flora (CITES) aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants doesn't threaten the survival of the species that they belong to. Species covered by the CITES are listed in one of the three Appendices of the Convention depending on the degree of protection that they require. Of the more than 36,000 species of plants and animals listed in these Appendices, 97% are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.

In November 2022, during the CITES COP meeting in Panama, African species of the *Azelia*, *Khaya* and *Pterocarpus* genera were added to Appendix II of the Convention. Although this appendix does not prohibit trade of the listed species, it does require that a non-detriment finding (NDF) notice be delivered before any trade authorisation (export permit) is issued. Indeed, Appendix II includes species which - although not necessarily currently threatened with extinction - could become

so if trade in their specimens were not tightly controlled. It also includes species whose traded specimens resemble those of species listed for reasons related to their preservation.

Since the addition of these new species, ATIBT has launched the CITES Action Plan via its Forest and Industry Commission to address the concerns of its members. This action plan is based on the following four main components:

- I. **Scientific & Technical:** this component aims to assess the vulnerability status of harvested species and to propose an update of the preservation status of species on the IUCN's Red List. It also aims to improve knowledge of the rules and principles of forest management in Central Africa.
- II. **Capacity building:** this component aims to provide technical support for the effective implementation of the Convention in the various Central African countries, in particular by helping to draft NDFs and monitor the quotas established for each species.
- III. **Communication/Monitoring of CITES activities:** this component aims to ensure effective communication on African tropical timber and to monitor CITES activities such as notifications, classification proposals and country information.

**IV. Mobilisation of International Stakeholders:** this component aims to participate in the international CITES meetings and to create a framework for exchange between the Convention's various entities in Africa, America, Asia and Europe.

During the year, the activities carried out for each component can be summarised as follows:

#### **I. Scientific & Technical**

- Submission of sheets to the IUCN to update the preservation status of 7 harvested species.
- Scientific arguments against the sustainability criteria for tree species harvested under NDFs, proposed by the European Union.

#### **II. Capacity building**

- Support for the development of NDFs in Cameroon and follow-up in other countries.

- Enhancing sub-regional collaboration.

#### **III. Communication/Monitoring of CITES activities**

- Implementation and follow-up of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, answers to members, support for the follow-up of EU import permit applications.
- Follow-up of CITES information to countries.
- Dissemination of news via ATIBT News, RS, CEMACNEWS, ECHOSDUSUD, MEDIATERRE and CONJONCTURE.

#### **IV. Mobilisation of International Stakeholders**

- Participation in international CITES meetings.
- Establishing and enhancing collaboration with countries in Africa, America, Asia and other CITES observer organisations.



*Presentation by Nicolas Bayol on the principles of forest management in Central Africa during the side-event at the 26th session of the CITES Plants Committee (Geneva, Switzerland).*

## | THE BAN ON LOG EXPORTS

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Generally speaking, the log export ban in the CEMAC zone will become a reality in the short to medium term. Originally scheduled for January 2022, the ban was already postponed to January 2023, then postponed once again, and is now likely to become a reality over the next few years. Each country is progressing at its

own pace in implementing this decision. Gabon took the lead, and in the Republic of Congo, this is now a reality. In Cameroon, a press release from the Council of Ministers on 23 February 2024 outlined the specific conditions applicable to the country, including the gradual ban on log exports (depending on the tree species).

More detailed information is available in the paragraphs relating to the country sectors.

Log exports should remain possible between CEMAC countries, in order to encourage industrialisation and economic exchanges within the sub-region.

Accompanying measures will be taken by each country. ATIBT is monitoring this issue very closely.

## | IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND LEGALITY IN FOREST ENVIRONMENTS

### OVERVIEW OF CURRENT TIMBER TRACEABILITY SYSTEMS IN THE CONGO BASIN COUNTRIES

Timber traceability systems are crucial in the Congo Basin for a number of reasons. They enable forest preservation by monitoring and controlling logging, they combat illegal logging by guaranteeing that timber comes from legal sources, they improve transparency and governance by strengthening oversight of timber-related activities, and they promote sustainable trade by identifying the legal origin of timber.

Through various projects, in particular the ASP Congo and Cameroon projects, ATIBT supports the development of national traceability systems. These are mandatory as part of the implementation of the FLEGT VPAs, but some countries, such as

Gabon, have chosen to develop their own systems as a lever for good governance in the forestry and timber sector.

In 2023, the TRAFFIC NGO published a study on the current state of timber traceability systems in the countries of the Congo Basin. Below is a summary.

In all of the Congo Basin countries, the law provides guidelines for traceability throughout the supply chain, from the forest to export, for both industrial and artisanal/community logging operations. Governments implement timber legality control, revenue collection, traceability and other functions via complex timber

and forest information management systems. Information and traceability management systems are both mandatory but are at different stages of development and deployment in these countries.



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In Cameroon, the government developed the first computerised forest information management system (SIGIF - *système informatisé de gestion de l'information forestière*) in 1998 to facilitate the management of logging permits, but without including the timber traceability system, which was done in parallel but paper-based at the time. However, as of November 2020, the government has been rolling out a mandatory traceability system integrated into the second-generation computerised forest information management system (SIGIF 2). They have been developing SIGIF 2 since 2011 as part of the Voluntary Partnership

Agreement on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade in Timber and Related Products (VPA-FLEGT), which was signed with the EU in 2010. The government aims to manage all transactions through the system to ensure that all timber is legally harvested and declared. The system is currently operational, but not fully deployed due to difficulties in equipping all traceability checkpoints, in seamlessly integrating all components of the comprehensive information management system, in ensuring regular access to electricity and the internet, and in building user capacity, among other things.

In Gabon, some NGOs and private sector organisations have developed a number of voluntary timber traceability systems that collect and publish data, that are mobile and that operate over the Internet. However, the government has not officially recognised these systems because they exclude government servers, are not aligned with government guidelines or regulations on legality control, and because they cannot guarantee accurate revenue collection and secure records on their open online access. In 2011, the Gabonese government launched the AEAFFB (*Agence d'Exécution des Activités de la Filière Forêt-Bois - Executing Agency for Forest-Wood Sector Activities*) to, among other things, better implement activities in the timber sector and on the traceability of forest products. Unlike most other countries in the Congo Basin, whose information management and timber traceability systems are being developed primarily to implement the VPA-FLEGT plans, the AEAFFB has set up a project to develop a computerised public timber traceability system (STMINEF) in order to overcome various challenges and to achieve their objectives for the forest and timber industry as part of the Emerging Gabon vision. The AEAFFB launched

the project in 2020 and, given the strong political will and genuine ownership by the government, they completed the development and pilot testing of the system in September 2021. The three main challenges that they still need to overcome if the system is to be fully operational throughout the country by 2022 are: acquiring and installing all the equipment, training the players and stakeholders, and overcoming the hesitation and resistance of timber operators regarding the additional costs they will bear with no perceived efficiency gains.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the government initiated numerous developments of a computerised timber traceability system since the start of the FLEGT-VPA negotiations with the EU in 2010. This led to the development, between 2013 and 2015, of a monitoring and traceability system for state-owned forests, known as the SIGEF (*système d'information de gestion forestière* - forest management information system), and a timber traceability and legality management platform (TRABOIS). Although these systems are mandatory, they have stalled due to incomplete coverage of the physical trade chain, the lack of procedural documents due to incomplete timber and lumber export regulations, and the private sector's resistance to bearing the direct cost of implementing the system. In addition, the FLEGT-VPA negotiations have also stalled due to the lack of an effective plan and system as well as insufficient human resources to control and monitor the forest resources.

Equatorial Guinea's government has adopted timber traceability as one of its strategic tools to ensure that the country's forest resources are harvested rationally to provide both sustainable tax revenues and socio-economic development opportunities while preventing resource degra-

ation. It has adopted a chain of custody approach from the forest inventory to the port of export or the point of sale of the furniture. However, monitoring is still entirely paper-based, with a standard monthly report and the inputting of data into an isolated central database. The system faces a number of problems that make it ineffective for controlling and monitoring the timber trade, from harvest to the end user within the country or for export. Given these difficulties, Equatorial Guinea's timber sector officials have identified a computerised timber tracking system - that will generate more viable information and make verifications more effective - as a relevant objective to pursue.



In the Republic of Congo, following the signing of the FLEGT-VPA with the EU in 2010, the government developed a computerised legality verification system (SIVL - *système informatisé de vérification de la légalité*) to combat illegal logging, which has been identified as one of the main problems affecting its forestry sector. The SIVL aims to verify both legality and traceability, and monitor revenue collection to ensure that the country's timber

exports to the international market, particularly European markets, come from verified legal sources. Officials at the Forest Legality and Traceability Unit state that the SIVL's 17 components, including the nine traceability ones, are fully developed and installed in the datacenters of the Ministry of Finance and Budget in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, as evidenced by a restricted website with access limited to the homepage. However, the system isn't yet operational, and other stakeholders express doubt as to whether the system will ever be fully functional.

In the Central African Republic, the government is also working to ensure that

the country's timber supply to the international market, particularly European markets, comes from verified sources, in compliance with the negotiations held under the FLEGT-VPA. The government designed a dedicated Legality Assurance System (LAS) that includes traceability data to track the flow of timber from the forest to transit and export, as well as compliance and computerisation, with real-time access and control. However, the LAS has yet to be developed and deployed. The authorities hope that an effective traceability system will help to reduce the risk of illegal timber sales and improve the ability of law enforcement agencies to control and monitor this trade.

## **DEPLOYMENT OF THE VPA CONGO'S LEGALITY VERIFICATION SYSTEM (LVS) - BOOSTING THE STAFFS OF FORESTRY COMPANIES**



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support "legality" and "traceability" and the development of the selected components, the next step was to roll them out to the forestry companies. Accordingly, two training workshops were successively organised from 3 to 6 April 2023 in Ouesso (northern Congo) and from 2 to 5 May 2023 in Pointe-Noire (southern Congo).

The aim of these training workshops was to build the timber legality and traceability capabilities of private sector forestry companies, with a view towards increasing their commitment to the implementation of the FLEGT VPA process in the Republic of Congo.

ATIBT, through its previous activities in the Republic of Congo and the "Support to the Private Sector" project (ASP-Congo) funded by the Delegation of the European Union (DUE) in Congo via the 11th European Development Fund, is involved in the implementation of the FLEGT VPA process. To achieve this, and following the process of establishing training plans to

During these workshops, in addition to gaining new knowledge, the reference officers of the computerised legality verification system (SIVL) of the forestry companies also exchanged information on the traceability practices of their companies. They were also briefed on the progress and prospects for the FLEGT VPA in the Republic of Congo.

## GLOBAL GATEWAY: GHANA AND THE EU - A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS



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Ghana will be the first country of Africa and the second in the world to provide the EU with export licences that attest to the legality of its timber products. Meeting in Brussels, the implementing body of the Ghana-EU Voluntary Partnership Agreement on FLEGT - which brings together the Ghanaian public authorities responsible for forest administration, the private sector, civil society and the European Commission - reached an agreement regarding the final stages of issuing FLEGT licences, marking a new chapter in the fight against the illegal timber trade.

Jutta Urpilainen, the European commissioner in charge of international partnerships, said: "Over the years, we have witnessed Ghana's remarkable commitment to sustainable forest management and the fight against illegal logging. The dedication of the government and the forestry sector, in cooperation with European partners, has brought the FLEGT licence within reach. This success highlights the power of international cooperation in the fight against key global obstacles such as deforestation and illegal logging".

Samuel A. Jinapor, Ghana's Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, said: "Ghana has seen significant improvements in forest governance with the deployment and implementation of the timber legality assurance system. The imminent issuance of FLEGT licences for the EU market and of licences for other international destinations will be guided by the same legality standards. This will be the next logical step in consolidating the gains made in sustainable forest management and forest governance as a whole. Ghana's commitment to the VPA, and to halting and reversing the loss of forest lands and soil degradation by 2030, remains absolute."

This cooperation is part of the European Union's "Global Gateway" strategy, which stands for sustainable and reliable links. The Global Gateway addresses the world's most pressing challenges, such as combating climate change and supporting the security of global supply chains.

## | SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION

### IFL/MOTION 23: PILOTS TO TEST THE PROPOSED PROCEDURE TO DEFINE IFL INDICATORS



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With the aim of resolving Motion 65 on IFLs, Motion 23 proposed by ATIBT and its members was accepted at FSC's General Assembly in October 2022 (thanks to support from the PPECF). This motion advocates a revision of the IFL management rules by adopting a landscape approach in collaboration with the national standards development groups (SDGs). Since the end of 2022, the FSC has been implementing this motion in collaboration with the FFAG group, where ATIBT holds a seat.

In March 2023, the FSC presented an action plan to develop IFL management measures at the local level. However, this process was unable to meet the deadline required by the motion. To remedy this, the FSC Board approved the use of a "pilot process". This process will enable IFL management indicators to be developed on the basis of previously established guides and procedures, while allowing

them to be used during the pilots planned for 2024. The aim is to ensure the continuity of certifications in accordance with the proposed new rules, pending their full integration into the FSC regulatory corpus, which is scheduled for 2025/2026.

#### **With the help of the FFAG, several documents were drawn up:**

- Four guides (landscape identification, landscape stakeholder identification, forest dialogue process, monitoring and knowledge management), validated by the FFAG in January 2024;
- An orientation guide, which summarises the 4 guides, identifying what needs to be addressed in the procedure, and defining FSC's approach to landscape considerations for certification within IFLs. This guide was validated in February 2024;
- A procedure on the "Development of forest management standard indicators for the protection of IFLs at the landscape level", which reflects Motion 23. This procedure's validation is currently in progress; once it has been validated, the pilot phase will be launched.

During the preparation of these documents, the FFAG raised the issue of defining minimum thresholds of protection at the FMU and landscape levels. ATIBT reiterated that this is contrary to the spirit and intent of Motion 23, and recommended that these discussions should take place after the pilot phases, based on their recommendations and conclusions.



The next steps in 2024 include the completion of the pilot phases, which will test the procedure with national SDGs over a 6-12 month period, mainly in the Congo Basin and other forest basins. This should lead to proposals for national indicators relating to the management and protection of IFLs. In addition, an extension of the advice note on an interim measure is planned, as well as the integration of the consolidated procedure within the normative framework.

Given the importance of monitoring these developments in order to ensure the proper implementation of Motion 23, ATIBT has requested an extension of the C232 contract so as to maintain its role within the FFAG and to participate with the companies during the pilot phase.

## PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES IN CONGO AND CAMEROON

### ASP Cameroun actions

In 2023, a few actions relating to the promotion of sustainable management certification were carried out as part of the ASP Cameroon project. These actions focused on:

- **Support for the sustainable management certification of companies not yet certified for it, and for CoC certification for timber processing companies;**

A trial audit was organised and co-funded by the project (with the PPECF) to assess the current situation with regard to PAFC certification requirements and to propose recommendations to enable SEEF to reduce any discrepancies before scheduling an initial PAFC certification audit, which should take place during the second half of 2024 at the latest. Discussions with Dino et Fils, which has expressed an interest in obtaining a PAFC trial audit, have led to the planning of an audit during the first half of 2024.

- **Promotion and recognition of legal and/or sustainable forest management certification on the European markets**

The ASP-PV project has now taken over support for the Fair&Precious programme for the portion linked to Cameroon, and an action plan to be implemented in 2024 has been initiated.

- **Lobbying the EU for certified timber imports on the European markets and improved recognition of certification for the EUTR – EUDR**

Along with other European trade associations, ATIBT has conducted several lobbying campaigns to ensure, among other things, that sustainable forest management is properly recognised in legislation in relation to the topic of forest degradation.

In July 2023, the French project team met Mr. Pascal Canfin, chairman of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, to plead for recognition of the certified sustainable management of tropical forests. It also met with the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment in October 2023 to present the certified sustainable management practices that are implemented in the Congo Basin in response to the EUDR requirements.

ATIBT has also been asked to take part in events to present the EUDR and to promote the certified forestry sector's high level of progress and preparation (PBN workshop in Berlin in June 2023).

## Actions in Congo

As part of the implementation of the Programme for the Promotion of Certified Logging (PPECF - *Programme de Promotion de l'Exploitation Certifiée des Forêts*), which aims to increase the surface area of certified forests, ATIBT Congo has carried out two important actions:

**i)** OLB EF COC certification coaching for the Thanry Congo (STC) company: An action plan was drawn up following the assessment carried out at the end of 2022, and a system to monitor and evaluate the implementation of this action plan was put into place. Unfortunately, monitoring was carried out remotely, as no field missions were performed.

**ii)** FSC FM certification coaching for the Rougier Mokabi company: A mission to assess the compliance of the company's practices with the requirements of the FSC FM certification standard was carried out in October 2023. Following this mission, a budgeted action plan was drawn up to support the company in the FSC certification process for its Mokabi-Dzanga forest concession.

In addition to these actions, ATIBT Congo's representative continued to promote the various private certification schemes to forestry companies, in order to improve their practices.



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# "PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT" PROJECTS

## | THE ASP CONGO PROJECT



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Starting in August 2021, ATIBT Congo has been implementing the Private Sector Support project in the Republic of Congo (ASP-Congo), with funding from the Brazzaville Delegation of the European Union. The aim of this project is to foster greater involvement by the forestry sector companies through their professional representation. The private sector must be in a position to contribute to the main developments in the sector linked to the implementation of regulatory changes and, more generally, to the FLEGT process.

Project activities in 2023 focused on implementing the forest legality and traceability training plan, which was validated in consultation with forestry companies in 2022. Two training sessions were organised from 4 to 6 April 2023 in Ouessou for companies in the northern sector and from 3 to 4 May in Pointe-Noire for companies in southern Congo. "Coaching" activities (FLEGT assessment missions) on timber legality and traceability (upstream of the SIVL) were then carried out at five companies in northern Congo, including Industrie Forestière in Ouessou (IFO), Thanry Congo (STC), Bois

et Placage in Lopola (BPL) from 10 to 20 July 2023 and Likouala Timber (LKT) and Mokabi S.A. from 4 to 10 August 2023. The communication strategy documents for the forestry and timber sector and the standard communication plan for forestry companies drawn up in 2022 were disseminated to the main players, in order to ensure greater ownership. As part of the advocacy efforts that were conducted in relation to the key reforms outlined in law 33-2020 of the Forestry Code (8 July 2020), in particular the ban on log exports and the draft law on the application of the log production sharing scheme, several consultation meetings were held with the entire private sector. These meetings resulted in proposals and recommendations to facilitate the implementation of these regulations, taking into account their socio-economic impact. In order to contribute to the structuring of the private sector, the ATIBT team continued to accompany the UNIBOIS union throughout the change process, in particular by organising an extraordinary general meeting during which a new board was established, along with a roadmap.

## | THE ASP-GREEN PACT CAMEROON PROJECT



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On Friday 24 February 2023, a workshop was held in Yaoundé to launch the Support for the Private Forestry Sector and the Timber Sector in Cameroon project for the Green Pact (ASP CAM PVASP Green Pact - Cameroon).

The overall aim of the ASP project is to contribute to the development of a green economy, which is a source of local employment and resilient to climate change. This multi-faceted support targets companies in the entire timber sector, professional associations in the timber sector, as well as specific support mechanisms for certified companies, with the aim of promoting and encouraging both sustainable management and forest certification. This support is also directed towards the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF) as part of its actions on the Domestic Timber Market (MIB - *Marché Intérieur du Bois*) and some of its efforts relating to logging, forest management and the implementation of CITES decisions.

The project is part of the Forest Governance Improvement Programme (PAMFOR - *programme d'amélioration de*

*la gouvernance forestière*) which is funded by the European Development Fund (FED - *Fonds européen de développement*). MINEPAT and MINFOF are the operational bodies of PAMFOR. This current project is being implemented by ATIBT, JMN Consultant and CJPN International.

Implementation is based on four main areas: (1) improving the performance, yields and diversification of tree species; (2) supporting the structuring of the domestic timber market; (3) supporting advocacy efforts, and those pertaining to legislation and taxation; and (4) supporting the promotion of timber, the market and communication. These areas of intervention and their related activities are carried out through studies and situational assessments, through the mobilisation of technical expertise, through awareness-raising, through facilitated access to information, through organisation and/or support for the organisation of workshops/conferences, through investment funding as part of support for the domestic timber market, through various consultation/planning meetings, etc.

# VOCATIONAL TRAINING

## | THE ADEFAC PROJECT

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The Support for the Development of Continuing Vocational Training in the Forestry and Timber Sector in Central Africa (ADEFAC - *Appui au Développement de la Formation en Afrique Centrale*) project, funded by the French Development Agency, saw the light in 2023, a key year for the continuation and completion of the project, in particular with the conduct of a mid-term evaluation of its implementation.

This mid-term evaluation, carried out by an external consultancy (ACK International), met with the satisfaction of the project team, the project owner and the delegated project supervisor. Its results point to a number of observations, areas for improvement and areas for progress, many of which will be applied in the further implementation of the project.

In 2023, the project continued to strengthen the training function within large companies, SMEs and their organisations.

In the case of large companies, those that received GPEEC (*Gestion Prévisionnelle des Effectifs, Emplois et Compétences* - Anticipatory Management of Staffing, Jobs, and Skills) training in 2022 were coached by the expert trainer. Since the start of

the project, 79 people (HR, HRD, etc.) in the sector have received this GPEEC training, and 21 companies have benefited from coaching between 2022 and 2023 to implement GPEEC tools in their specific business environments.

On the SME side of things, workshops led by FECAPROBOIS (a professional organisation for SMEs in Cameroon and a project partner) have been organised in 3 of the 4 project countries for other professional organisations of SMEs and craftsmen, to support them in terms of structuring and organisational enhancement. A final workshop will be held in the DRC in 2024.

Representatives of Gabon's Chambers of Trades and Crafts, the National Crafts Agency and the Brazza-Timber Cluster participated in the "Made in Cameroon" Furniture Fair in Yaoundé in June 2023. This annual event is organised by the *Artisan au Féminin* association, a partner of the project, and backed by FECAPROBOIS and other national organisations. The event provided an opportunity for fruitful discussions on the various initiatives to support the timber industry and national markets.

Another priority among 2023's activities was support for the introduction of continuing vocational training.

Four new train-the-trainer sessions were held, one in each of the project countries, enabling 86 new trainers to be trained (including 16 women), bringing the number of trainers trained by the ADEFAC to 179. These trainers were boosted in terms of training engineering and pedagogical engineering. They are now specialised

in priority areas such as forest management, RIL practices, forest certification, timber drying, conflict management and external mediation, health and safety, carpentry and cabinet making, entrepreneurship and in small-scale logging.

These trainers are then accompanied in their construction of continuing vocational training courses by thematic and pedagogical experts during training-action sessions. In May, a group of trainers specialised in 'social' issues received specific support, and at the end of 2023, the ENEF in Mbalmayo, Cameroon, launched a call for applications for a "negotiation of social clauses" training course to be held in January 2024.

Eight training centres/institutions benefited from an organisational assessment. The aim of these assessments is to enable these centres/institutions to review the structuring and organisation of continuing vocational training within their entities in order to identify areas for improvement, actions to be taken, as well as any specific training or support needs necessary to

enable them to fully carry out continuing vocational training activities.

The Thematic Working Groups (GTT - *Groupes de Travail Thématique*) continued their work, in particular on the co-management of continuing vocational training and the recognition of training quality. This work will lead to the testing of a regional quality recognition scheme (or quality label) in 2024 for the courses produced by accompanied trainers.

The project published 24 articles on the RIFFEAC website and 8 in the ATIBT newsletter. 6 video clips highlighting 6 of the sector's professions were broadcast via ATIBT's website ([here](#)).

The project was also present at the inauguration of the Construction and Public Works-Timber vocational training centre in Nkok, Gabon in April, at the Furniture Fair in Yaoundé in June, at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the COMIFAC Gender Committee in June, and at the Three Basins Summit in Brazzaville in October.

## FORESTRY-TIMBER SECTOR JOBS: NOT WELL KNOWN, BUT THERE ARE MANY JOB OPPORTUNITIES



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Those involved in the forestry and timber industry now have six video clips presenting the careers in sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin.

The forestry and timber industry doesn't typically attract many candidates in the Congo Basin region. However, there is a genuine need for skills at all levels of qualification in order to meet the growing demand for quality finished timber products, as well as the will of countries to further develop local timber processing.



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However, the number of jobs in the sector is very high (at least 100,000 to 200,000 people are directly involved in the sub-region), making it one of the leading job sectors.

Six video clips were produced as part of the ADEFAC project to promote these forestry and timber industry jobs and to encourage people to take interest in them. The diversity of jobs and profiles, as well as the involvement of women, clearly show that young boys and girls can easily enter this professional sector after completing technical studies at the certificate, vocational diploma, or high school diploma level, or following higher education at the bachelor's, master's, or doctoral level.

Professionals in the milling, electromechanical and social programme management trades were interviewed in Gabon. Interviews with carpenters, woodworkers and finishers were conducted at various sites in Cameroon.

This communication via video clips showing the genuine opportunities offered by the forestry and timber sector - in terms of jobs and professions - will change the negative paradigms that convey a devaluing image of these professions, which are open to all without gender discrimination. The clips are on ATIBT's YouTube channel ([here](#))

# THE UFA REFOREST PROJECT – MAINTAINING THE BALANCE OF FOREST SPECIES WITHIN FMUS



The UFA-REFOREST (UFA – Unité Forestière d'Aménagement - Forest Management Unit) project, implemented by ATIBT, is funded by the European Union. It also benefits from technical support from Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, Nature+ and the ENSET (University of Douala). Four forestry companies benefit from this support: AlpiCAM-GrumCAM, PALLISCO, SEEF and SEFAC. In general, the project helps to improve natural resource management in the forest environment via participatory and inclusive enrichment. Specifically, it aims to: (1) enrich 21,500 felling holes and 100 ha of open plantations in the Forest Management Units (FMUs) with local species; (2) set up a monitoring system capitalising on the previous results of plantations carried out in Cameroon and monitor the performance of the

enrichments carried out; (3) involve the forestry administration responsible for silvicultural aspects in the project's activities and inform it of its implementation and results; (4) involve both the private forestry sector and local communities in the project's activities; and (5) capitalise on and disseminate the project's results with a view towards replication.

Now that the project is halfway through, and the nurseries have been extended, their total capacity is estimated at 169,800 plants. Over 145,000 seedlings of 37 local species were produced in these nurseries since the project began back in 2022. During the project's first two years, a total of 9,471 felling gaps and parks were enriched and 43.57 hectares of full plantations were created in degraded forests. During the enrichment of



the felling gaps, over 2,000 seedlings from natural regeneration were preserved in the holes and are being monitored the same way the planted trees are. Over 109,900 trees were planted during this period in all of the FMUs of the companies involved in the project. In all, over 517 hectares of forest were restored. At mid-term, the project's planting objectives reached an average achievement rate of 44.4%.



To carry out these reforestation activities, 27 communities living near forest concessions took part in the field work. The communities were involved in harvesting seeds, nursery work and planting. The recruitment of these communities took particular care regarding women and indigenous peoples. The local communities benefited from 120 trees of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and 32 lumber seedlings. The aim of this initiative is to support them in setting up village forest plantations. They also benefited from the project's technical support in planting the trees.

With a view towards standardising the monitoring of plantations, the enrichment monitoring system set up within the companies is frequently revised and the databases are regularly updated and archived. A PhD student from Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech who is funded by the project is working on assessing the plantations' demographic performance. A significant preliminary literature review is currently being finalised. The project's research component has also been strengthened

by two complementary projects, funded by the RESSAC programme and the ARM+ project. Study trips have been organised, initially involving students from the ENEF in Mbalmayo and the ISA in Bertoua, and, subsequently, students from the ERAIFT, Gembloux Agro-BioTech and the ENSET as part of the Tropical Forestry Course.

The project works in close collaboration with the forestry administration. Meetings and discussions on technical and administrative aspects are held on a regular basis. Field visits are also organised as part of the project. Discussions on the implementation of incentive measures to support reforestation efforts at the national level are ongoing at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). The private forestry sector is also heavily involved in the project's activities. Three exchange trips and two field visits were organised among private forestry sector stakeholders in Cameroon. In addition to the four companies supported by the project, other companies and organisations based in Cameroon (Dino et Fils, Fipcam, Global Conservation, CAFEN, ACFCAM, CADD, etc.) and internationally (Interholco, Keflico, AEH) have shown interest in the reforestation and enrichment activities.

Despite all of these achievements, the project has nevertheless encountered a number of difficulties. These include the supply of seeds to the nurseries, the lack of plants of the size required for planting, the unavailability of machinery for preparing the plots, the need to prepare the plots by hand, the lack of logistical resources to transport teams to the field and plants for planting, and the shortage of diesel.

Given the actions that were undertaken and the results obtained during the project's first two years, and if conditions remain favourable, the objectives should eventually be achieved.

# SUPPORTING THE MARKET FOR CERTIFIED TROPICAL TIMBER

## | LIFE CYCLE ANALYSES AND RESULTS

On 5 October 2023, ATIBT's forestry and importer members met at the association's headquarters in Nogent-sur-Marne, in person and via videoconference, to discuss the results of the life cycle assessments of certified tropical timber species. As announced at the end of 2022, ATIBT has carried out 12 Life Cycle Impact Assessments (LCIA) - from harvesting to departure from Africa - for the main certified timber products from the Congo Basin manufactured by its Fair&Precious members who manage certified forests. The results of these 12 LCIA's can now also be downloaded in English from ATIBT's website. These results were obtained with funding from COMIFAC's PPECF programme, along with support from the Fair&Precious companies.



### These LCIA's are intended to be distributed to:

- the clients of certified managers who are ATIBT members, so that they can make their own individual EPDs,
- the timber trade federations so that they can make collective EPDs.

### Who are the "rights holders" of these LCIA's?

All ATIBT member companies that produce Congo Basin timber products from sustainably managed forests (certified timber). Clients of ATIBT members will be able to use these LCIA's to draw up their environmental declarations (EPD/FDES (*Fiche de Déclaration Environnementale et Sanitaire* - Environmental and Health Declaration Sheet) or other LCAs).

It should be noted that these sheets may also be used by companies managing forests certified as sustainably managed (FSC/PAFC) that are not ATIBT members. A written request for authorisation must be sent to the ATIBT ([info@atibt.org](mailto:info@atibt.org)).

The second stage involved producing 3 Environmental and Health Declaration Sheets (FDES). The ATIBT has produced 3 FDES sheets for decking, cladding and tiles made using Congo Basin timber from sustainably managed forests. These collective FDESs will provide construction professionals (builders, architects, design offices, etc.) with reliable, verified environmental information to help them develop projects that comply with the French requirements of the [RE 2020](#).

[DOWNLOAD THE 3 FDES SHEETS](#)

Available for free from the INIES database (ATIBT's reporting body), the three collective FDES sheets are:

- **FDES: Decking made from strips of timber from the Congo Basin, all tropical species, all configurations (v.1.1)**
- **FDES: Cladding made from strips of timber from the Congo Basin, all tropical species, all configurations**
- **FDES: Glued-laminated timber beams from the Congo Basin, all tropical species, all configurations (excluding installation accessories) (v.1.1)**

The FDES sheets show that the quantity of biogenic carbon stored, expressed as the Stock C indicator calculated in the RE2020, is 8.3 kg of carbon per m<sup>2</sup> for decking and 6.1 kg of carbon per m<sup>2</sup> for cladding. As with all sources of biomass, timber products contain carbon. Thanks to the photosynthesis process, timber captures and stores CO<sub>2</sub>. When you use timber, you're using a material that contains carbon (49.4% of the dry mass of timber) and keeps it out of the atmosphere. This carbon storage, coupled with low fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, contributes to a low Carbon Impact component indicator, making it possible to reduce a building's overall carbon footprint: 2 kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per square meter of decking and 0 kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per square meter of cladding. Lastly, the resource depletion indicator is also a strong argument to use certified tropical timber decking and cladding, as timber and bio-based products are renewable materials.

## THEMIS



The Themis project was led by Holland's PROBOS institute and funded by the PPECF (Programme de Promotion de l'Exploitation Certifiée des Forêts - Programme for the Promotion of Certified Logging) and the "IDH the Sustainable Trade Initiative" foundation. The project involved developing a tool that collects data on the timber purchases of member companies of the European federations. This tool takes the form of an online portal, where companies are asked to submit their data once a year.

Three federations are involved in the project: Fedustria in Belgium, LCB in France and ATIBT at the European level. Other European federations have also expressed interest in the platform. As of 2021, member companies of European federations have been invited (on a voluntary basis) to enter their data on the Themis portal.

ATIBT is closely monitoring trends in the use of the portal by LCB, which is now using it as a tool as part of its new environmental charter.

**The survey asks companies to provide the following information:**

- Their chain of custody certification
- The product groups purchased/imported
- Total volumes purchased/imported
- The categories of timber purchased/imported (non-tropical, tropical)
- The certified volumes purchased/imported, and with which certificate(s)
- The countries of origin (production and processing)

The portal takes into account the following certification and regulatory systems:

- CoC certification: FSC, PEFC, LegalSource, OLB, LegalTrace, LegalHarvest Verification, TLV, STIP and Keurhout (with the option of reporting another scheme)
- Timber certification: FSC, PEFC, FLEGT licences, SourceUp, CITES permits, FSC CW, LegalHarvest, LegalSource, TLV, LegalTrace, OLB, and PEFC Controlled Sources.

In 2023, 12 ATIBT member companies responded to the survey (out of around 30 relevant members), based in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy and Switzerland. Two others started to submit their data without completing the survey, citing the same obstacles as in previous years (lack of time, particularly when companies buy a large number of product groups).

Like every year, a webinar was jointly organised with LCB at the beginning of 2023 to launch the data collection, and a workshop to present the results brought together volunteer members from both ATIBT and LCB at the end of September.

| **SPOKESPEOPLE FOR FAIR&PRECIOUS**



*Edwige Eyang-Effa*



*Norbert Gami*

In 2023, Fair&Precious spokespeople Edwige Eyang-Effa and Norbert Gami continued to support the brand. By promoting the 10 Fair&Precious commitments in the Congo Basin, they enabled ATIBT to interact more effectively with civil society and promote the FSC and PEFC-PAFC certification schemes.

# INNOVATIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS



## | BIODIVERSITY CERTIFICATES: WORK HAS BEGUN!

Launched in October 2022, the [Organization for Biodiversity Certificates \(OBC\)](#), a member of the Biodiversity Credit Alliance, brings together companies, NGOs and scientific experts to achieve a common goal: to create an operational tool for assessing positive local impacts on biodiversity. OBC was co-founded by aDryada and *Le Printemps des Terres*, in collaboration with Carbone 4 and the National Natural History Museum.

OBC's mission is to define the market mechanisms that will enable the emergence of a complete value chain and quality biodiversity certificate transactions, according to Fabiola Flex. Here too, work has begun and a publication is planned within a year's time. The next step will be to develop and enrich the methodology so that it can be used to create standards and be deployed in as many ecosystems around the world as possible.

On 28 November 2023, the National Natural History Museum, the Foundation for Biodiversity Research and Carbone 4 launched a research programme on biodiversity certificates. Over 200 people attended the event in Paris, including ATIBT as a member of the Organisation for Biodiversity Certificates (OBC). The aim of this programme is to develop a methodology to assess the biodiversity benefits of actions undertaken or funded by companies. It will start with agriculture and forests in temperate zones, and then focus on tropical forests. The challenge lies in measuring biodiversity and the effectiveness of actions that promote it, as well as in certifying efforts, while distinguishing between impact reductions and positive

contributions. Sylvie Goulard, co-chair of the International Advisory Panel on Biodiversity Credits, stressed the importance of corporate commitment and the inclusion of developing countries in these initiatives. Romain Julliard, an ecology professor at the National Natural History Museum described the impact assessment approach as innovative, as it breaks away from traditional methods based on counting species, thereby offering a better response to reporting requirements in terms of biodiversity.

ATIBT, through its Carbon and Biodiversity Commission, joined the OBC in 2023 and is now a member of the association's Board and the "Market Group", which defines the initiative's strategy. There is a real benefit in bringing the voice of the tropical forestry and timber sector to the OBC, so that this sector is not sidelined, even though it has exceptional potential to preserve biodiversity. Discussions with the OBC must continue, and the Carbon and Biodiversity Commission must be able to present proposals to develop a methodology, studies and pilot projects.

**ATIBT will participate in the design and development of this approach** and, in particular, in the development and testing phases of the methodology for tropical forests and their subsets along with the entities developing the OBC (National Natural History Museum) and in the introduction of the biodiversity certificate market. ATIBT will provide ongoing support to the OBC and its partners to develop biodiversity certificates and to identify opportunities for forest managers and the associated territories.

# ATIBT'S MAJOR MEETINGS

## | ATIBT PRESENT AT THE ONE FOREST SUMMIT 2023



*Jacqueline Lardit van de Pol and Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commission, discussing the need to improve infrastructures*

**The One Forest Summit was held in Libreville on 1 and 2 March. ATIBT was there to support its members, who are committed to sustainable forest management.**

ATIBT led a round table discussion on sustainable forest management in relation to the markets. This discussion addressed the domestic timber markets of Central African countries, an increasingly important issue in the forestry economy. The round table concluded that the forestry and timber sector committed to sustainably managed production needs the markets, all markets that fully understand the approach taken by both governments

and forestry companies throughout the sub-region who implement responsible and certified forest management. Domestic markets are also essential to ensure the future of sustainable forestry, but this will not be easy. We need a fiscal approach that makes it easier for consumers in our countries to access sustainable timber. A concrete example is the reduction of VAT on timber intended for the domestic market, such as is done with another basic material: cement.

We also need to be able to implement innovative solutions in areas such as taxation, sponsorships, carbon finance and biodiversity, because the timber markets, along with their difficulties and uncertainties, will not be able to support a sustainably managed timber sector on its own.

ATIBT also attended a workshop on traceability, a crucial issue that will reduce unfair competition from illegal timber on the markets and combat forest degradation. Rosalie Matondo, the Republic of Congo's Minister for the Forest Economy, concluded the discussions by stressing the need for mutual trust between producing and importing countries, in light of the new European regulation on imported deforestation: "The first word that is important is trust, trust between producing countries and the countries that buy our products from our countries. (...) What I take away from this fine panel (...) is this desire for European markets to open up to African products, and so we are going to travel this road together to ensure that transparency is the norm and that our international operation moves forward."

At the same time, discussions on innovative finance were held, beginning with the presentation of the report by the Global Environment Facility (FEM - *Fonds pour l'Environnement Mondial*) entitled "Opportunities and challenges for biodiversity-impact carbon credits and nature certificates" (the full report is in English). This report presents an overview, an assessment and recommendations to unlock new financial resources for the preservation, sustainable use and restoration of biodiversity in a socially inclusive manner, focusing on two emerging instruments: biodiversity-impact carbon credits and nature certificates. It was prepared by a high-level working group following the COP27 meeting.

The commitment of the private sector to play a role in netzero was praised, as companies increasingly understand their dependence on nature. Regulations and changes in accounting standards are also pushing them in this direction.

Throughout the summit, we emphasised the development of the forest economy, the need for affordable prices for the domestic market, as well as the need for improved infrastructures to reduce logistics costs.

**Following the One Forest Summit, an agreement was signed between the forestry countries and the international community: the Libreville Plan.** This agreement is based on five cornerstones:

- 1. A political commitment to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030.**
- 2. A principle of cohabitation between Mankind and Nature:** it should be noted that this pillar explicitly mentions sustainable management as one of the tools needed to protect tropical forests: "*A protected forest is a forest that is managed sustainably, for the bene-*

*fit of local populations.*" This is a step forward in recognising the benefits of sustainable management in both environmental and socio-economic terms.

- 3. An environmental ambition that benefits the local populations.**
- 4. Protecting that which is vital.**
- 5. Remunerating forest countries for the services that they provide to the rest of the world.**

It's a shame that the action plan makes no mention of concrete ways of remunerating "services rendered to the rest of the world by the forest countries". Alain Karsenty brings up this issue in an [article in the Le Monde newspaper](#): "The rhetoric of 'payment for services rendered by nature' is totally inappropriate, as it detracts from the key question of how we can make progress in the fight against deforestation: What policies need to be implemented to bring about profound changes in agricultural practices, clarify land rights, give people access to energy sources other than charcoal, speed up the demographic transition in Africa by giving young women economic and social autonomy, manage the lands, move towards a rule of law... And this rhetoric also glosses over the changes that need to be made in industrial countries in terms of consumption patterns (meat, agrofuels, etc.) in order to reduce demand for products that contribute to deforestation. The two approaches differ sharply: In one, rent is paid. In the other, we're encouraged to change or maintain virtuous practices."

**Another outcome of the One Forest Summit: a budget of 100 million euros (50 million from France, 20 million from the Walton Foundation and 30 million from Conservation International) has been allocated to a "Positive Conservation Partnerships" (PCP) initiative.** The

aim of this initiative, which focuses on protecting carbon stocks and biodiversity in forest countries, is to set up short-term contracts for volunteer countries, which will be able to present their results as early as the COP28 in Dubai at the end of 2023. Once again, there are no concrete proposals. Mechanisms for biodiversity certificates were mentioned, and this is an issue that ATIBT is following closely (see our [article](#) on this topic). Several biodiversity certification methodology projects are currently under development and are at varying stages of progress. The OBC (the [Organization for Biodiversity Certificates](#)), which we joined at the end of 2022, is working on developing a methodology that should make biodiversity certificates operative by 2025.

- Forest management based on sustainable development plans was presented as a model that helps preserve the forests and their ecosystem services.
- Western countries recognised that the current carbon credit system only benefits countries that have destroyed their forests, and that funding mechanisms must be identified before the COP28 meeting in order to reward countries that have maintained their forest cover and to help them continue to protect their forests.
- New funding mechanisms need to be found to reward players who protect the other values of forests, such as biodiversity, since forests cannot be simply considered to be a means of carbon storage.

**The key messages from the summit:**

## | FFEM ROUND TABLE "INNOVATE – EXPERIMENT – SHARE"



© FFEM

ATIBT took part in a round table organised on 13 June in Paris, where the FFEM revealed its new projects highlighting two key subjects: nature in the city in Latin America and the sustainable management of Central African forests. The results of the work carried out by the FFEM and its

partners were shared at this event, which brought together approximately 100 participants both on site and remotely. This platform for discussion helped to expand knowledge, highlight sustainable solutions and inspire new initiatives.



By combining expertise, analysis, assessments and the capitalisation of knowledge, the FFEM aims to stimulate innovation and guide both policies and actions in favour of the environment. As part of its strategy, the FFEM is adopting a diversified approach to capitalisation, implementing several formats such as cross-capitalisation between several projects or programmes, ongoing capitalisation carried out as projects are implemented and ex post capitalisation carried out after their completion. These new approaches will make it possible to learn valuable lessons from the projects undertaken and ensure that they are disseminated on a large scale.

Aurélie Ahmim-Richard, Head of Sustainable Forests and Agriculture at the FFEM, highlighted the FFEM's commitment to sustainable forest management in Central Africa. She emphasised that sustainable forestry represents the best balance between preserving forests, meeting the needs of populations and economic development. "For many years, the FFEM, in collaboration with the FDA and other donors, has been backing

sustainable forest management policies in Central African countries. However, logging standards were established at a time when knowledge on the ecological workings of these forests was limited. In order to manage these forests more effectively, it has become increasingly necessary to understand how they function," says Ahmim-Richard.

For the FFEM, innovating in the methods of passing on knowledge is also a strong indicator of capitalisation. Project leaders are directly involved in the process, which allows for a participatory approach and greater ownership of the results. This approach aims to maximise the impact of projects and encourage their replication in other contexts.

Moderated by journalist and film-maker Anna N'Diaye, the round table brought together experts, researchers, representatives from the public and private sectors, as well as grassroots players involved in two "nature in the city" projects in Latin America and sustainable forest management projects in Central Africa.

## | A REVIEW OF THE THREE BASINS SUMMIT IN BRAZZAVILLE

The second Summit of the world's three tropical forest basins was held from 26 to 28 October 2023 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. It brought together leaders from the Amazon, Congo and the Borneo-Mekong-South-East Asia region in order to form a global coalition. As part of the United Nations Decade for the restoration of ecosystems, its aim was to establish the first global coalition for the restoration

of 350 million hectares of land and marine ecosystems.

On this occasion, ATIBT's Managing Director travelled to the Republic of Congo to attend various meetings which the association had been invited to, along with the ATIBT-Congo team, which Alain Tiotsop leads, and Hortense Batindek, who is in charge of monitoring and evaluating the ADEFAC project.

## A JOINT DECLARATION

**First and foremost, the summit produced a joint declaration, which is available [here](#).**

This declaration includes 7 important commitments:

1. To recognise the benefit of enhanced cooperation between the three basins;
2. To recognise the sovereign management of biodiversity, of the forests and of related resources by the countries that make up the three basins, without prejudice to their openness to receive external cooperation on priority issues that they define in this capacity or by common agreement at the regional and/or three basin level;
3. To jointly develop adhoc institutional, diplomatic, legal, scientific, technical and technological solutions that are in line with the specific challenges of each State and each basin;
4. To pool and capitalise on existing knowledge, experience, resources and achievements in each of the basins;
5. To involve, in an inclusive manner, all of the States and national authorities, including indigenous peoples, young people, women, civil society, NGOs, the academic and research communities, local authorities and the private sector;
6. To encourage the mobilisation of funds and the development of traditional and innovative funding mechanisms;
7. To establish a sustainable system of remuneration for the ecosystem services provided by the three basins.

COMIFAC made a noteworthy presentation entitled "The State of the Congo Basin's Forests", given by Mr. Chouaibou Nchoutpouen, Deputy Executive Secretary and Technical Coordinator at COMIFAC.

## A NEW CO-FACILITATION FOR THE CBFP

**On Thursday 26 October, ATIBT took part in the launch of the new Franco-Gabonese CBFP facilitation**, an event co-organised by the CEEAC (*Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale* - Economic Community of Central African States) and COMIFAC (*Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale* - Central African Forest Commission).

The launch was followed by a roadmap meeting of CBFP partners on Saturday 28 October.

**Ambassador Christophe Guilhou acted as co-moderator on the French side.**

During these two parallel events, the CBFP co-facilitation provided detailed information on its 2023-2025 roadmap and the operational breakdown of its activities. The idea was also to prepare for forthcoming international and regional events. A round table entitled "How to strengthen collaboration between CBFP members to promote sustainable value chains and limit imported deforestation" was held.

**ATIBT's suggestions were first and foremost of a general nature:**

- Greater cross-functionality between the activities of the panels, given that cooperation is key if we are to meet the major challenges facing our sector;
- Greater diversity among members from the private sector, with the participation of mining companies, if possible;
- If possible, the organisation of meetings (by video or otherwise) between two major CBFP meetings, to bring together the leaders of the panels with the members of the panels who are able to attend.

**At the level of the private sector panel, which ATIBT is in charge of, the following was requested:**

- Institutional advocacy to obtain clear and comprehensible regulatory frameworks. Without a clear regulatory framework, there is a risk that the sector could slip into an informal system.
- Dialogue ahead of political decisions, and more time for the sector time to organise itself.
- Ensuring that the industry's direction is based on a scientific foundation. This is particularly necessary for decisions taken by the CITES.
- Support for the development of lesser-known species, an increasingly important issue for the future.

**The RIFFEAC, of which ATIBT is a partner in the ADEFAC project, attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> round table on 28 October.**

- The RIFFEAC, like ATIBT, outlined the priorities it wanted to be taken into account in the CBFP roadmap.



**A HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSION ORGANISED BY THE CBFP IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH COMIFAC, GERMANY, CAFI AND ATIBT**

This exchange was held on 27 October, in the presence of H.E. Minister Rosalie Matondo, the Executive Director of the ITTO, and representatives from Cameroon's MINFOF. As a reminder, ATIBT is co-leader of the CBFP's private sector panel, a position held by Jacqueline Lardit Van de Pol, who was unable to attend, and was represented by her colleagues Benoit Jobbé-Duval and Alain Tiotsop. The meeting provided an opportunity for political decision-makers from COMIFAC forest countries exporting timber to China and representatives of the CBFP's private sector panel to prepare Central Africa's participation in the 2023 World Forum on Legal and Sustainable Timber, which was to be held on 21 and 22 November 2023 in Macao (China).

## MACAO: 2023 GLOBAL LEGAL AND SUSTAINABLE TIMBER FORUM, WITH THE THEME “CONNECT, COOPERATE AND SHARE TO PROMOTE MARKET RECOVERY”

At the end of November, the first session of the Global Legal and Sustainable Timber Forum was held in Macao, China. ATIBT was represented by its President, Françoise van de Ven, and its Innovation & Strategy Director, Caroline Duhesme. Various ATIBT members took part in the

event, including the CIRAD, Interholco, Precious Woods, FIB, UFIGA, SYNEFOR, Bonus Harvest, and our partners CBFP and FDA. The Republic of Congo's Minister of Forest Economy and her team were also present.



ATIBT co-organised a sub-forum on "Sustainable timber resources, markets and trade" with the China Timber & Wood Products Distribution Association (CTWPDA). This sub-forum highlighted the inextricable link between the sustainable management of timber resources and efforts to combat climate change. Discussions focused on responsible

forest management, the world's timber resources, and an analysis of the international timber trade from the point of view of legality and sustainability. Topics such as the plantation economy were also addressed. A panel discussion closed the sub-forum, providing an opportunity to review the current situations in China, Central Africa, Brazil and Europe.



Following the two days of extremely interesting presentations and discussions, the participants reached a consensus on key strategies to promote the development of the global timber industry in a legal and sustainable manner, and to accelerate its recovery. They include the following nine key actions:

- 1) **Robust networks and partnerships:** in order to support legal and sustainable forest management and timber supply chains, there is an urgent need to build networks and partnerships that are based on mutual respect and trust.
- 2) **Nature-based solutions:** it must be recognised that establishing and improving legal and sustainable timber supply chains entail nature-based solutions that will meet both local and global challenges.
- 3) **Promoting trade:** trade in legal and sustainable timber products should be promoted with a view towards creating a stable, fair, transparent and predictable environment conducive to the recovery and growth of the global timber sector.
- 4) **A global forum on legal and sustainable timber:** This Forum provides a key platform to enhance cooperation and the exchange of information between the public and private sectors. It should be held on an annual basis.
- 5) **Global Timber Index:** this initiative, which was implemented on a pilot basis for about a year and was officially launched at the Forum, helps to improve the quality and regularity of information on the timber market, encourage more frequent exchanges of information within the private sector and improve efficiency in policy formulations. It should therefore be continued and expanded.
- 6) **Advanced technologies and traceability:** the use of innovative technologies, tools and methodologies should be encouraged to help ensure the legitimacy and sustainability of timber resources, in particular digital traceability when implementing sustainable forest and timber management.
- 7) **Financial mechanisms:** Innovative financial mechanisms, such as payments for ecosystem services, should be further developed and used to increase investments supporting sustainable forest management and associated supply chains.
- 8) **Timber industry parks:** legal and sustainable timber industry parks should be created to host model companies for the wider value chain, accelerating the adoption of best practice and cutting-edge technologies.
- 9) **Support:** forest-based industries worldwide need more support to adopt cutting-edge technologies to accelerate their sustainable development.

In conclusion, the Forum urged participants to continue to work together by connecting with each other, by cooperating and by sharing knowledge. This inaugural GLSTF, which will become an annual event, was seen as the foundation for the establishment of a global network.

## | A DISAPPOINTING COP 28 FOR CARBON AND FORESTS

The COP28 meeting held in Dubai, in December 2023, produced mixed results. Although some progress was made, including an agreement on the transition away from fossil fuels and the creation of a fund for damage caused by climate change, discussions on Article 6 - which governs the carbon markets - were inconclusive. The areas of disagreement related to the transparency of the carbon markets and the integrity of the mechanisms. For the forestry sector, the question of including carbon absorption projects, such as tree plantations, led to debate, as did that of "enhanced preservation" projects. Some countries argued for an approach based on reducing emissions and absorption. There were some announcements related to the forestry-timber sector, such as the commitment by 17 countries to increase the use of timber in construction by 2030. However, the forestry sector, in particular that of the Congo Basin's tropical forests, was poorly represented at the COP28. The need for lobbying to promote the sustainable management of tropical forests as a means of combating deforestation, preserving biodiversity and fostering development was highlighted, with special emphasis placed on the crucial role of the Congo Basin as the planet's last great terrestrial lung and reservoir of biodiversity.



On Monday 4 December, ATIBT and its members organised an event at the COP 28's COMIFAC/PFBC Pavilion, on the theme of "The sustainable management of tropical forests through the prism of carbon and green finance: towards a new paradigm", moderated by Pierre Schueller. Speakers included Benoît Demarquez (TEREA), who spoke about the evolution of forestry practices following the incentives offered to Congo Basin loggers since the 1990s, Pierre Schueller, who gave an over-

view of the forest carbon markets in Central Africa, highlighting the limits and opportunities that now exist in both the region and the sector, José Canchaya (Maderacre), who described the development of Maderacre's REDD+ project in Peru, laying down a blueprint for the Congo Basin, and Fabiola Flex (aDryada, President of the [OBC](#)), who presented OBC's initiative, which aims to promote the positive impact of biodiversity projects and thus the development of a new market for biodiversity certificates, a new opportunity for tropical forests in particular. Prosper Dodiko, Burundi's Minister for the Environment, Agriculture and Livestock and current Chairman of the COMIFAC Council of Ministers, and Dr. Aurélie Flore Koumba Pambo, the new CBFP co-facilitator for Gabon, attended the side-event and exchanged views with the speakers on the carbon and biodiversity strategies that should be adopted by the Central African countries.



Jacqueline Lardit (ATIBT) also took part in the [CBFP Multi-stakeholder dialogue](#) on the theme of "The Role of Forests in Combating Climate Change", via videoconference in the COMIFAC/PFBC pavilion. Under the chairmanship of COMIFAC's current President, the Co-Facilitator from the Gabonese Republic for the CBFP, and His Excellency Mr. Christophe Guilhou, Co-Facilitator from the French republic for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, CBFP stakeholders discussed ways to support the protection and sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests and to enable stakeholders to adopt the strategic directions of the CBFP 2023-2025 roadmap in a simplified format. In response to the question "What are you doing to protect the Congo Basin's forests?", Jacqueline reminded those present that ATIBT promotes sustainable forest management and forest certification, requiring certification for its members and a chain of traceability for timber importers. And in response to the question of how payments for ecosystem services can help protect forests, Jacqueline argued in favour of win-win solutions,

involving remuneration for forest owners (states) and forest users, in order to accelerate payments for environmental and social services, a key issue in funding the sustainable management of tropical forests. Jacqueline Lardit also spoke of ATIBT's participation in the Macao forum, co-organising a session on certification. Jacqueline welcomed ITTO's initiative for sustainable supply chains and highlighted Chinese companies' growing commitment to transparent timber traceability.

Germain Yéné, Head of the ASP GREEN PACT project, also spoke on Sunday 10 December at an event organised by the CIRAD-CIFOR-EFI-CBFP on the theme of "Combating deforestation: what are the implications of the EU's regulation on imported deforestation for the Congo Basin countries?". The aim was to improve stakeholders' understanding of the EU regulation on imported deforestation, in particular that of the Congo Basin countries' governments, and to enable an exchange of viewpoints regarding the opportunities and challenges of the regulation for the sub-region.

# SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

## | ACTIONS BY THE DYNAFAC COLLECTIVE



# DYNAFAC

IMPROVING FOREST MANAGEMENT  
IN CENTRAL AFRICA

For the record, one of the major challenges facing our sector is a guarantee of the continuity of research into the sustainability of forest species, as well as the proper use of the results obtained from the various research projects. DYNAFAC is a platform for research activities focusing on sustainable management. It brings together a number of organisations, including ATIBT, who are involved in monitoring forest dynamics via a network of sites and permanent devices installed in the Central Africa's forests. The DYNAFAC collective's various projects aim to develop activities that will ultimately help to improve management plans and ensure better management of Central Africa's production forests. During the 2023 financial year, several projects were launched within this framework:

- The ARM+ project "*Préservation des ARbres Monumentaux et multiplication des arbres+*" (Preservation of Monumental Trees and multiplication of trees +), funded by the PPECF and implemented by Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech (Liège University), Nature+ in Cameroon, aims to maintain and increase the forestry potential of certified Central Africa's concessions by creating seed orchards and developing a methodology to develop monumental trees as an alternative to logging. The objective is to guarantee the preservation of monumental trees and to lay the foundations for an improvement programme that will put an end to the genetic skimming that results from the harvesting of tall, high-quality trees.
- The projects on "Growth Dynamics and the Ecology of Seedlings of Major Commercial Species in Cameroon's Production Forests" and "Estimation of the Carbon Balance of Silvicultural Enrichment in Cameroon's Production Forests", funded by the CIFOR-ICRAF's RESSAC programme, are being implemented by a consortium consisting of Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech (University of Liège), the ENSET (University of Douala), and Pallisco. The aim of the first project is to study key aspects of the ecology of lumber-producing tree species in order to control their silvicultural itineraries. It will contribute to the development of reforestation and forest management strategies that ensure that the potential of production forests is maintained, both in terms of quality and quantity. Specifically, the project addresses three areas: i) a study of seed storage and germination methods, ii) a study of seedlings' light requirements and iii) a study of growth dynamics and tree mortality



within plantations. The second project aims to document the behaviour of local timber-producing species within plantations. It focuses on three areas: i) analysing the growth performance of species planted in different environments, ii) estimating the carbon footprint of plantations and iii) analysing the plantations' economic profitability.

- The North Congo Forest Landscape Project (PPFNC - *Projet Paysage Forestier Nord Congo*) is funded by the FDA and the FFEM and implemented by the Ministry of Forest Economy in partnership with a consortium consisting of the TERE and AGRECO consultancies and the CIRAD. The aim of the project is to maintain ecological continuums and preserve biological diver-

sity in the Northern Congo's territories (the Likouala and Sangha departments and the northern part of Cuvette Ouest, covering a total intervention area of around 8.5 million ha), while supporting the socio-economic development of indigenous populations and local communities, as well as integrated land-use planning. Component 3 - "Improving scientific knowledge of the dynamics of natural forests following logging operations and the effects of fires" - aims to strengthen the network of plots and trails established in Sangha and Likouala by the DynAfFor and P3FAC projects, which are used to monitor forest dynamics, in order to better predict the evolution of the forests in these departments after harvesting.

## PROJECT TO STUDY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL TIMBER SECTOR IN CENTRAL AFRICA



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Central Africa's industrial timber sector is one of the region's vital economic drivers, making a significant contribution to GDP and job creation in both the formal and informal sectors. However, its develop-

ment is closely tied to international market demands, particularly in terms of the sustainability and legality of its products. The membership of Central African countries to CITES, which regulates trade in endangered species, adds a further layer of regulations that loggers must comply with.

The research project aims to assess the economic and social impacts of these regulatory measures on Central Africa's industrial timber sector. It will include an in-depth analysis of the impact on employment, local people's incomes, investments in rural infrastructures and efforts to combat poverty. It will also examine the consequences for forestry administrations, forestry companies and local communities.



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The methodology will include a review of publications, field surveys and interviews with the sector's key players. The gathered data will be analysed using statistical models and qualitative approaches to assess the economic and social impacts. The aim is to provide valuable information to policy-makers and to sector stakeholders in order to help shape future policies and strategies.

The expected results include a complete inventory of the industrial timber sector in relation to the convention, a detailed analysis of its economic and social impact, and

country-specific documentation outlining the consequences of CITES measures. These results will be disseminated via scientific publications, press articles, outreach activities and presentations at both symposia and conferences, in order to ensure widespread awareness and easy access to information for all stakeholders.

The project is funded for two years by the CIFOR-ICRAF's RESSAC programme and is being implemented by a consortium that consists of Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, the University of Dschang, the Rougier Group and ATIBT.



5

# 2024, OTHER VERY REAL CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

# DEVELOPMENTS IN SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE MANAGER

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Gabon - Concession Fair & Precious



The year 2024 will be marked by heightened awareness, new developments and changing perspectives in terms of sustainable management. Beyond being a terrestrial ecosystem, the Congo Basin's tropical forest also includes a complex network of stakeholders with diverse interests. In addition to current challenges such as pressure on forest resources, damage to the trees and conversion to agricultural lands, there are future obstacles linked to both legal and climate change. If the forests

are to be productive, they must be managed sustainably. This implies both ecological and economic sustainability, while promoting local development. As a planning tool, management plans must therefore be examined, assessed and strengthened in order to guarantee this sustainability. Furthermore, it is important that the changes that are made aren't limited to existing sustainable management tools or practices. Forest managers must keep up with the times to meet both current and future challenges. A diversification of their role is therefore key to strengthen this sustainable system. What's more, their activities must extend beyond the boundaries of their concessions. Lastly, innovative, inclusive and integrated strategies involving all tropical forest stakeholders will be proposed via the projects backed by the FFEM and CAFI (in particular), in order to enhance sustainable management within the Congo Basin.

## CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

**2024 will be an important year as the project is approaching completion. The main areas of action will be:**

- The organisation of a final regional session to train the last trainers specifically identified to tackle priority themes and who were unable to take part in the previous sessions.
- The organisation of a major regional workshop of national training management groups so as to share and discuss, in particular, the recognition of quality

in training and the prospects for the long-term co-management of training. This workshop will be followed by an in-person project steering committee following four remote meetings.

- The mobilisation of the entire team, of trainers, of partners and of associated experts to develop, test and promote a range of continuing vocational training courses, taught by trainers from the regional pool, in response to the needs of professionals.

# ONE YEAR BEFORE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUDR


Pourquoi un tel règlement ?

L'UE est un grand consommateur de matières premières associées à la déforestation et à la dégradation des forêts qui sont des moteurs importants du changement climatique (11 % des émissions de Gaz à effet de serre) et de la perte de biodiversité.

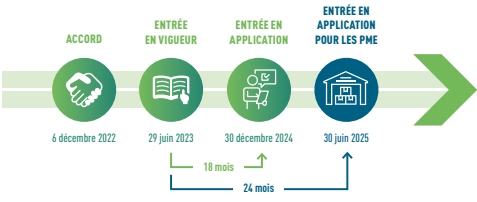
Suite à une consultation citoyenne, la Commission Européenne a fait une proposition de règlement en novembre 2021 qui a été discutée et reprise par le Conseil de l'UE et le

Parlement européen. Le 6 décembre 2022, l'UE est parvenue à un accord sur cette nouvelle réglementation.

L'Union Européenne, par ce texte historique, veut réduire sa contribution à la déforestation et ainsi garantir aux citoyens que les produits qu'ils achètent n'impactent pas les forêts dans le monde. Elle souhaite se positionner comme cheffe de file au niveau mondial dans la lutte contre la déforestation.



Quand sera-t-il applicable ?



RBUE, RDUE, un vous en dit plus !

The EUDR will apply to all EU Member States starting on 30 December 2024. The year 2024 will be crucial in preparing for the implementation of this new regulation, both for the European Commission, which must develop the implementation procedures, and for European companies and their suppliers, who must prepare themselves.

## The main actions that the European Commission must implement in 2024 are as follows:

- Coordinating the multi-stakeholder platform for the protection and restoration of the world's forests, a permanent forum for dialogue between the

EU Member States, certain interested parties (mainly professional associations and NGOs), third-party countries and the European Commission. The platform meets frequently to present and discuss the main areas of work and to identify best practices.

- Regular updates of the FAQ, which explains the main concepts of the regulation.
- The development of an information system, which will enable loggers to submit their due diligence declarations. A full-scale test of the first version of the information system was conducted in December 2023. ATIBT will closely monitor the development of this tool to ensure that it is easy to use and doesn't entail an excessive administrative burden.
- Country risk assessments: the Commission will classify countries, or certain regions, into three different risk categories (high, standard and low) depending on the level of risk of deforestation or forest degradation. Companies procuring raw materials from areas classified as low risk will be able to implement simplified due diligence. This activity has been delayed, as the Commission has not yet contracted the service provider.
- The development of guidelines, which will be non-binding: these guidelines will cover all areas of the regulation, in particular the role of certification in terms of risk analysis and reduction, and will offer interpretations of the regulation's requirements.

- Publication of the European observatory on deforestation and forest damage, providing access to information on the monitoring of the forest cover and trade flows of products covered by the regulation. This tool is not mandatory.

The certified tropical timber sector is well positioned to meet this challenge. Timber has been subject to the EUTR since 2013, and both loggers and importers have been applying due diligence procedures for over a decade. In addition, FSC® and PEFC/PAFC certifications have rigorous criteria that go beyond forestry aspects alone, including respect for local communities,

workers' rights and safety, environmental preservation and the protection of biodiversity.

ATIBT is aware of certain problems linked to specific provisions within the regulation and shortcomings in its implementation, and remains determined to monitor the progress made during this preparatory phase. The association will remain fully involved, keeping abreast of and providing guidance on developments in the tools developed by the EC. It will also continue to communicate on the benefits of this regulation for the certified tropical forest-timber industry.

## IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CITES



For 2024, the ongoing efforts will continue in order to strengthen our actions in the four key areas of our action.

### **On the scientific and technical front, this will involve:**

- Submitting the 12 Vulnerability project sheets to the IUCN.
- Implementing the "Capacity building for the application of Non-Detriment Findings (NDF) in Central Africa" project, funded by the PPECF.

- Coordinating and implementing the RESSAC project entitled "The industrial timber sector in Central Africa: what are the economic and social impacts of regulated international trade in harvested species", funded by CIFOR via the RESSAC programme.

- Preparing a management plan for the ayous, okoumé and ayous species.

### **In terms of capacity building, we will ensure that we:**

- Monitor the development of NDFs in Gabon, the Republic of Congo, the CAR, and the DRC.
- Oversee the establishment of the scientific authority in the Republic of Congo.
- Track quotas and issue CITES export/import permits.

### **For the communication activities and the monitoring of CITES, we will continue to:**

- Interact with the EU's Scientific Review Group, management bodies and scientific authorities.
- Monitor classifications, analyse documents and exchange information.

### **Lastly, and in order to rally stakeholders at the international level, we will have to:**

- Call on EU administrators to obtain administrative and technical items for the issuance of import permits and

support Central African administrations against unjustified refusals by the EU.

- Prepare stakeholders ahead of action to remove padauk from Annex II of the Convention in the run-up to the 2025 COP26 meeting.
- Participate in the Plants Committee (8-14 July 2024) and the Standing Committee (3-9 February 2025).
- Respond to members' questions/reactions.
- Communicate on forest management methods in Central Africa.

## **SOUTIEN AU MARCHÉ INTÉRIEUR DE BOIS DURABLE**

Supporting the development of the **Congo Basin's** domestic timber market is extremely important for a number of reasons:

**1. It adds value to local resources:** The Congo Basin is home to one of the world's largest tropical forests. By favouring local timber processing, the region's countries can maximise the added value of their forest resources. Rather than simply exporting logs, local processing creates jobs, stimulates the economy and generates additional income.

**2. It creates jobs:** The timber processing industry offers employment opportunities at various levels, from timber cutting to the manufacture of finished products such as furniture, flooring and handicrafts. By developing this sector, Congo Basin countries can reduce unemployment and improve the living conditions of their citizens.

**3. It reduces deforestation:** Local timber processing reduces pressure on forests by preventing the export of unprocessed logs. By encouraging the production of finished products locally, countries can better manage their forest resources and help to preserve the environment.

**4. It fosters economic diversification:** The forestry sector offers an alternative to economic dependence on other industries such as oil. By investing in timber processing, Congo Basin countries can diversify their economies and reduce their vulnerability to commodity price fluctuations.

In short, supporting the development of the Congo Basin's domestic timber market is key to promote sustainability, economic growth and the well-being of the local populations.

# COMBATING THE TRADE OF ILLEGAL TIMBER

ATIBT will continue to explore solutions to more effectively help combat the trade in illegal timber:

- 1. With the port of La Rochelle:** the introduction of measures to promote the import of products that do not contribute to deforestation or illegal logging, in accordance with the EUDR's requirements.
- 2. Promotion of certification and traceability:** ATIBT supports the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) certification systems. These certifications ensure that timber comes from sustainably and legally managed sources. In addition, the organisation helps companies and countries set up robust traceability systems that enable timber to be tracked from its source to the end user, especially in Congo, where ATIBT's teams are heavily involved in the FLEGT VPA process.
- 3. Training and awareness raising:** For its members, ATIBT will organise webinars on best practices in sustainable forest management and the opportunities offered by sustainable forest management in order to comply with international legislation, in particular the EU's Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). It will continue to raise awareness regarding the importance of compliance with these laws, which are key to reducing illegal trade.

- 4. Advocacy and lobbying:** ATIBT plays an active role in lobbying for stricter laws against the illegal timber trade and will continue to be involved in preparing for the implementation of the EUDR, a genuine tool favouring sustainable forest management. The association will continue to participate in international events that promote sustainable forest management as a remedy against deforestation and illegal logging.
- 5. International partnerships:** By working with international partners, ATIBT strives to standardise efforts to combat the illegal trade of timber and promote a global approach that transcends national borders.



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# OUR MAJOR EVENTS IN 2024

## | THINK TANK



The 6<sup>th</sup> ATIBT think-tank was held on Monday 25 and Tuesday 26 March 2024 at the *Jardin d'Agromomie Tropicale* in Nogent-sur-Marne. The discussions focused on two crucial issues for the forestry and timber industry: lobbying for sustainable forest management (day 1) and innovative finance (day 2).

## | CIB



The latest Carrefour International du Bois was held in Nantes on 28, 29 and 30 May.

In 2024, ATIBT was once again present in Nantes. We designed the layout of our 54 m<sup>2</sup> stand, which was located in the "XXL Hall", alongside several of our members. For the first time, the CIB organisation tested a partitioning of its exhibitors by activity sector.

This year, Cameroon was our guest of honour. The ASP Green Pact Cameroon project was indeed the focal point of discussions: a delegation of representa-

tives from the Cameroonian forest and timber sector was present, and roundtables and workshops on forestry practices and timber products from Cameroon were planned at the booth, with a focus on LKTS.

With 6 months left until the implementation of the EUDR, events were also planned on this subject: the various tools developed by our members were presented on the stand, and **ATIBT co-organised a conference with the [American Hardwood Export Council \(AHEC\)](#) on Wednesday 29 May from 17:00 to 19:00.**

## | WORLD OF WOOD 2024 IN SAN DIEGO



Organised by the International Wood Products Association (IWPA), the 67<sup>th</sup> annual World of Wood trade show was

held from 10 to 12 April 2024 at the Hard Rock Hotel in San Diego, California. The convention brought together over 300 participants from over 25 countries.

Several ATIBT members are regulars at this show and never fail to attend. Since 2023, ATIBT has also had a strong presence at the show. This year, Caroline Duhesme was one of the panellists, and our ambassador to the United States - Nathalie Bouville - was also on hand to promote our association.

## | FORUM IN ANTWERP



ATIBT's next "Innovation and Sustainability in the Tropical Forest Sector" Forum will take place in Antwerp on 3 and 4 October 2024.

This Forum is intended for ATIBT's members, its partners as well as specialists and non-member organisations interested in issues related to the sustainable management of tropical forests.

Following the success of the previous forum held in Nantes in 2022, this event promises to be an exceptional opportunity to once again bring together key players from the tropical timber industry and tropical forest managers from around the world. With a focus on both innovation and sustainability in the tropical forestry sector, particularly via the implementation of the EU Regulation against Imported Deforestation and measures taken at the CITES level, this forum will provide us with a unique platform to discuss current challenges and emerging opportunities in the management and preservation of tropical forest resources.

Join us in Antwerp for rewarding exchanges, inspiring presentations and fruitful partnerships at this key event for the tropical timber industry and the sustainable management of forest basins.

# REMERCIEMENTS

In addition to the above-mentioned donors, ATIBT would also like to thank the various African and European authorities with whom we had frequent exchanges throughout 2023 during the implementation of the various projects and actions carried out in Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, or at the Congo Basin level, in particular with the ADEFAC project.

As such, we would like to thank the **MINFOF** (Cameroon's Ministry of Forests and Wildlife), the **MEF** (the Republic of Congo's Ministry of Forest Economy), the **COMIFAC** (the Central African Forests Commission), the **MTES** (the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion), the **MEAE** (the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs) and the many others who have helped ATIBT proceed with its efforts.



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