

CONGO BASIN COMMUNITY REPORT #7

MARCH 2021



Photo: Pixabay

LIBREVILLE ACTION POINTS

At the FSC Congo Basin Business Encounter 2018 held in Libreville Gabon 6 action points were identified to develop the market for sustainable tropical timber:

- Creating a Green Lane for FSC within EUTR.
- Developing LKTS.
- Reduce certification costs.
- Linking with Asian operators.
- Eco Services Payment action.
- Marketing tools to create awareness.

As a result of the Business Encounter and the action plan a working group is established called LKTS Congo Basin (LKTSCB). Members are from the leading European tropical timber markets and are coordinated by FSC Netherlands and FSC Denmark.

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Dear members of the FSC Congo Basin Community

On behalf of the FSC team that works with tropical timber and forestry, I will briefly present our seventh newsletter. An introduction that usually is done by our dear colleague Ben Romein, who unfortunately is on sick leave at the moment. We are happy to hear that he is doing better and we can't wait to get him back on the team.

The pieces are slowly beginning to fall into place for a stronger promotion of African timber. The basic framework in the form of National Forest Standards, the new ways of addressing the hot topic of Intact Forest Landscapes and most recently a more precise implementation of the ILO framework are all steps necessary to strengthen the credibility of FSC and tropical timber in general. FSC is committed to support the market development, and future promotion can only happen based on a platform of trust and where criticism can be met with strong answers and facts.

This leads me to the next important phase in our market development. This is mainly about getting specifiers convinced or re-convinced about the benefits of tropical timber and its good properties and also to regard it as a way of taking direct responsibility for the tropical forests. If we can get strong brands and high-volume sectors to buy into this idea and develop products on behalf of Africa together with the forest community in and around the Congo Basin - we are facing great synergies.



While waiting for COVID-19 to allow us to visit and do real networking activities, we work to get the word to the companies and encourage them to be curious about tropical timber and the diversity of timber species. A warm and special thanks to the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation for making it possible to also address the yachting sector in a new FSC project.

/ Kristian Jørgensen, FSC Denmark

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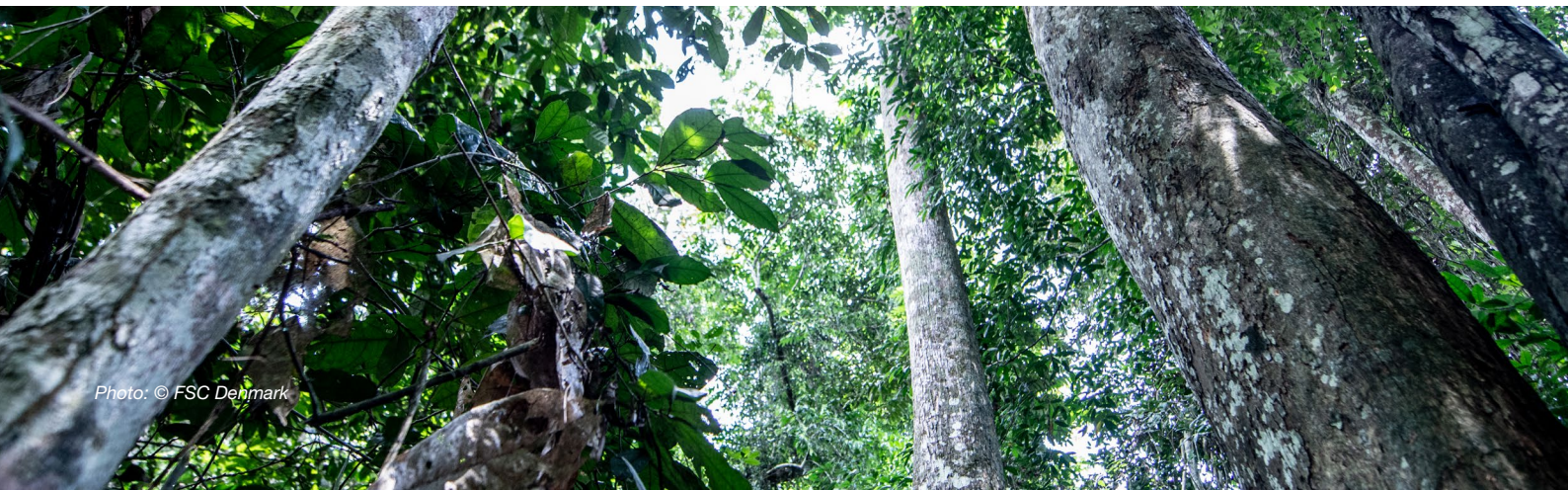


Photo: © FSC Denmark

PROGRESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FSC NATIONAL STANDARDS

2020 was a fruitful year for the development of FSC National Standards in the Congo Basin and we saw the official publication of the revised standards for forest certification in both Cameroon and Congo.

FSC National Standards revision processes were initiated in 2015 in the Congo Basin, in the Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Gabon. These processes began with the establishment of Standards Development Groups (SDG) in each of the countries involved. The revised national forest management standards of Cameroon, Gabon and Republic of Congo apply to all types and scales of forests (FMUs, Communal Forests, Community Forests) including forest plantations. These standards do not apply to non-timber forest products.

The revision process has mainly consisted in adapting the FSC Principles and Criteria version 5 and including important indicators related to Intact Forest Landscapes, timber monitoring, ILO fundamental conventions, promotion of gender equality, as well as strengthening indicators related to workers' rights, rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, among others.

It is important to note that these new national standards have also been simplified and better adapted to the specific context of each country to facilitate not only their use by forest concession managers but also understanding by auditors. These standards have also been aligned with the legality requirements of the VPA-FLEGT agreements for the countries where these agreements have been signed (Cameroon and the Republic of Congo).

FSC welcomes the completion of its standards and encourages forest concessions to comply with them for the valuation of their forest products on the national and international markets. FSC would particularly like to thank its various partners involved in promoting responsible forest management in the Congo Basin and more specifically the members and experts of the FSC Standards Development Groups in the countries concerned for their availability during the long period of revision of national FSC standards.

STATUS OVERVIEW



Cameroon.

The national standard was approved and published on September 28, 2020. It came into force on December 29, 2020.

Chair of the FSC standard development group:
Professor Roger Ngoufo
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Republic of Congo

The national standard was approved and published on October 6, 2020 and it came into force on January 6, 2021.

Chair of the FSC standard development group:
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Gabon

The standard was launched within the framework of the policy of generalizing the certification of responsible forest management and published on December 15, 2020 and its entry into force is scheduled for March 15, 2021.

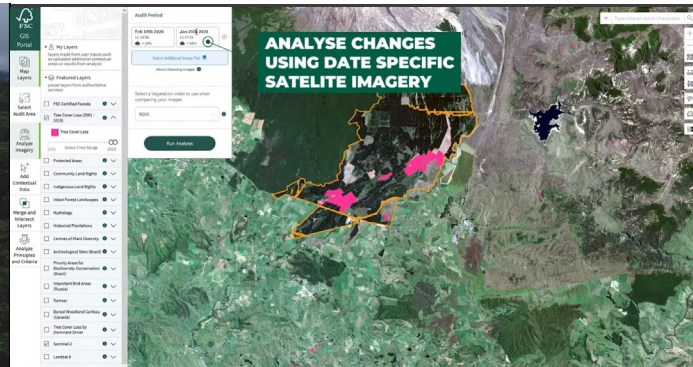
Chairman of the FSC standard development group:
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USING GIS MAPS AND SATELLITE IMAGES



FSC GIS PORTAL IS LAUNCHED USING EARTH OBSERVATION TO IMPROVE IMPACT

A central part of FSCs strategy for continued service delivery and ensuring credibility is the use of technologies. A cornerstone in this digitalization process is to increase FSC's use of earth observation as part of its monitoring and transparency initiatives.

February 2021: FSC has just launched a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) portal that will enable forest management auditors to access forest-relevant geospatial information to combine it with up-to-date satellite derived data. This new platform is for now a voluntary tool and will allow forest management auditors to prepare more easily for audits and enable an objective selection of areas for inspection during an onsite audit.

Having a GIS-based analysis of certified forest areas is a further step towards implementation of risk-based auditing, where auditors could perform part of their evaluation remotely, and be informed in near real-time about whether logging or other activities are happening.

The FSC GIS Portal will be linked to an FSC Digital audit reporting tool in the near future. Analytics and data insights derived from the combination of these tools will ensure better quality of forest management evaluations, and enable FSC to aggregate and anonymize data across certificates and make it available for standard developers, researchers and decision makers to evaluate and further develop the FSC system.

Similarly, it is the intention that GIS based tools should be developed to help smallholders and community forest areas prepare for FSC certification and audits in a cost-effective and user-friendly way. For many smallholders around the world, preparing for an FSC certification is expensive and obtaining a forest inventory in itself can be a challenge. Part of FSC's long-term vision is to explore the potential of GIS and Earth Observation to address these challenges. The aim is to use GIS technology - as much as possible - to increase accessibility to FSC certification for many more forest owners worldwide.

Within months of its release, more than 40 per cent of FSC certified areas were added to the map.

LEARN MORE

The web app provides access to geo spatial datasets such as:

- tree cover loss
- intact forest landscapes
- protected areas
- Indigenous and community lands
- water courses
- boundary data of certified forest areas

These data sets can be combined with satellite imagery.

Currently the use of the FSC GIS Portal is restricted to certification bodies. However, it is envisioned that the use of the portal and its functionalities will be broadened as it develops.

One of the ambitions of the FSC digitalization process is to have as complete a GIS map of all certified forest areas around the globe as possible. FSC certificate holders can voluntarily provide FSC with a file showing the boundaries of their FSC certified forest area. All forest owners that have shape files available, should share them with FSC to become represented on the map and more easily enable their auditors to use our other GIS tools on the FSC GIS Portal.

To contribute [read more here](#) or contact FSC on: dael@fsc.org

FOREST FOR THE FUTURE

How innovation in FSC can help save our forests

Hear more about the GIS portal in recent podcast Forest For The Future in an interview with Andres Ramirez, FSC GIS officer

[Listen to the FSC podcast Forest For The Future here](#)

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Photo: Pixabay

MAKING CHANGES IN THE YACHTING INDUSTRY

A few days before Christmas FSC Denmark received the approval of a new project supported by Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation titled: “Ensuring more sustainable timber in the yachting industry”.

By Kristian Jørgensen, FSC Denmark

The aim of the project is to investigate the current market situation in the Yachting industry in terms of procurement policies and efficient strategies to limit negative impacts on forests - mainly in the tropics. The project is part of a wider range of activities initiated by FSC to promote species diversity and document new uses for species regarded as lesser used or lesser known as all part of a strategy to improve the product range and the business case in the tropical forestries. Known as an industry keen on using a limited selection of precious wood species we wish to urge the industry to change this practice primarily through the demonstration of good examples – showing the alternatives and proving their equal usefulness. This should build on a general awareness campaign to inform about forest sustainability and tools to develop procurement policies.

We see the sector holds the potential to be front runner when it comes to communication and innovation on tropical timber. In the same way Formula1 cars and space travel have innovated new solutions and materials afterward picked up by the broader car and aviation industries, the yacht industry is the marine pendant to these drivers of innovation. Boat owners across the world are a very broad target group but many - no matter size or prize range of their boat – often tend to take pride in maintaining their ship and gear. They often turn to boat magazines as a platform of inspiration and here architects in the yachting industry and the ships they design are well noted. These trends are often picked up by other types of ships and their connected industries. Our hope is that proven solutions may also become accessible in large commercial vessels, in marine sports and in land-based environments around maritime activities.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

One of the key project activities will explore successful and relevant use of lesser known timber species within the industry through case-based trials and productions. The project will include activities in the yachting industry and in the timber sector that supports that:

- Promote sustainable tropical timber and species diversification
- Support development of procurement policies
- Map pathways of timber, the species used and their applications
- Select alternative species and get shipbuilders testimony on their performance
- Conduct a study on forest impacts in connection to timber species diversification strategies

Would you like to get involved or to learn more then feel free to contact FSC Denmark.

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FSC WELCOMES TWO NEW STAFF MEMBERS TO THE CONGO BASIN TEAM

January meant a welcome to a couple of new faces to the FSC team to take on the challenges and exciting program for the Congo Basin. Given the stated policy of the Government of Gabon to achieve forest certification by the end of 2022 the need for boosting the capacity to implement and realize that policy objectives is very much needed.

Welcome to new Sub Regional Coordinator, George Akwah Neba and Certification Advisor for FSC Congo Basin, Esteban Toja.



George has over 20 years of experience in driving natural resources management and forestry, biodiversity conservation, climate change and sustainable development processes in Central Africa, West Africa, Eastern Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, and at the global policy level. George's experience has been dominantly with leading international organizations such as IUCN, WWF, CIFOR, and IITA. He will join the team and settle in Libreville Gabon and will oversee all Congo Basin activities.

George Akwah Neba

Sub Regional Coordinator for FSC Congo Basin

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Esteban holds Masters Degrees in Forestry and International Commerce and has extensive experience in the Congo Basin; having worked with certification in Gabon and the DR Congo for large forestry companies including the Danzer Group and Rougier. He has a strong understanding of forestry companies and has developed relationships with key players within them. He will mainly work with the Government of Gabon, forest concessions and other partners in Gabon to draw up and co-implement a support programmes for certification.

Esteban Toja

Certification Advisor for FSC Congo Basin

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BVRio PUBLISHED NEW GUIDE ON TIMBER FROM GHANA

INSPIRATION: Recently, BVRio published a guide on properties of twenty timber species from Ghana, based on a technical report researched by FORIG. The guide includes the appearance, structural properties, performance properties, working qualities and end-uses of the twenty species. In collaboration with Ghana Forestry Commission's Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD), Forest Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG), Ghana Timber Millers Organization (GTMO) and the Ghana Timber Association (GTA), BVRio has been leading an initiative to promote Lesser-Known (LKS) and Lesser-Used (LUS) timber species from Ghana to international markets.

BVRio is a non-profit organisation founded in 2011 with the objective to create and promote the use of market mechanisms to facilitate environmental objectives. Originally created in Brazil, BVRio now operates internationally.



www.BVRIO.com



Go to BVRio website to learn more or [download the guide here](#)

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EUROPE'S LONGEST BICYCLE BRIDGE FROM GABON TO THE NETHERLANDS

Between the towns of Winschoten and Blauwestad in the province of Groningen a new record setting bridge opened in the beginning of February 2021. The construction of the "Pieter Smitbrug" or "De Blauwe Loper" as the bridge is also called started early 2020 and since prefabricated elements of the wooden deck have been installed on wooden cross-supports supported by steel rods secured in concrete abutments to what now is a combined Bicycle and Pedestrian Bridges. Over larger spans like river crossings and road crossings the bridge takes form in a truss styled design made of triangular units. With its 800 meters this is the longest bicycle bridge in Europe.

The timber used is the very durable species Azobé sourced from FSC certified forests in the country of Gabon. Expected lifespan of the bridge is estimated to 80 years.



Photo: Wiki Commons

Pieter Smitbrug (De Blauwe Loper)

Country: The Netherlands
Place: Linking the town of Winschoten with Blauwestad
Size: 800 meters long and 3.5 meters wide
Client: The municipality of Oldambt
Design: Nol Molenaar in Glimmen
Build by: Strukton Civiel and Oosterhof Holman
Supplier: Wijma Kampen - Compagnie des Bois du Gabon (CBG)
Timber: ~ 375 m3 of Azobé (100% FSC certified)

Azobé

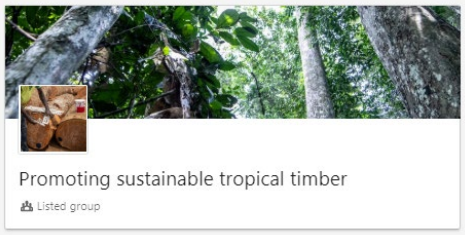
Lophira alata

- Bongossi
 - Ekki
 翼红铁木

SEE YOU ON LINKEDIN

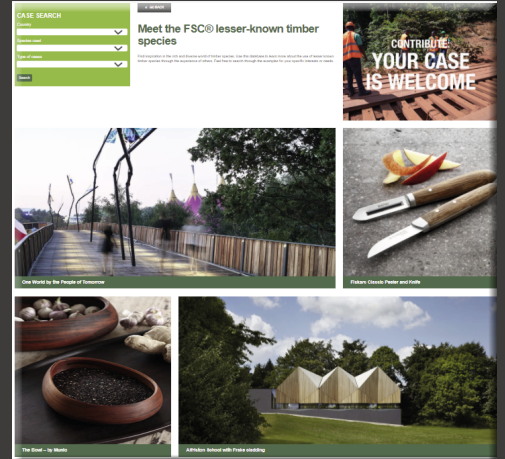
The LinkedIn group: "Promoting sustainable tropical timber" is a platform for inspiration in the use of tropical timber.

Join the [LinkedIn group](#)



YOUR CASES NEEDS TO BE SHOWN

WWW.LESSERKNOWNTIMBERSPECIES.COM



SUBMIT: We are collecting examples of the use of lesser-known tropical timber species from a broad range of wood users, such as designers, architects, producers, businesses and project owners.

This database is your opportunity to promote your products or projects made with FSC certified LKTS species!

Provide us with a description and other details of the product/project such as:

- An overall description (50 - 150 words)
- Location of construction/production
- Year of construction/production
- Constructor/producer
- Designer/architect
- Project owner
- Timber supplier
- Species used and their use in the project/product

Remember to provide us with a variety of high-resolution images of your project/product.

Submit cases by contacting the website editor:

Kristian Jørgensen, Project coordinator, FSC Denmark

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