

## **Towards legal, sustainable, and healthy wild meat value chains in Central Africa: progress insights from the SWM Programme.**

*Side event organized by the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme on the 04/06 from 8h30 to 9h30 am.*

United Nations member states are committed to reducing hunger, improving health, and conserving natural resources through the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework aims to conserve 30% of terrestrial and marine areas by 2030, promoting sustainable wildlife management and equitable benefits. However, in Central Africa, the unsustainable wild meat trade threatens food security and biodiversity, making these goals challenging to achieve.

The Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme, funded by the European Union and co-financed by the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) and the French Development Agency (AFD), addresses this issue with innovative approaches tailored to Central Africa's diverse socio-ecological contexts. These approaches involve participatory wildlife management frameworks with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, emphasizing the legal and sustainable use of wildlife for livelihoods.

Key insights from the SWM Programme and partner initiatives in Gabon, Republic of Congo, and Democratic Republic of Congo since 2017 include:

- **Empowering communities:** Reinforcing existing local governance structures, legitimized by customary law, empowers communities in wildlife management, strengthens local authority, and facilitates the adoption of sustainable hunting practices. Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), in addition to being a social safeguard, can be effective in supporting community empowerment efforts in resource management and alternative livelihoods development.
- **Sustainable and legal wild meat value chain:** Initiatives to create a sustainable and legal wild meat value chain show the benefits of integrated traceability and health monitoring, supporting both wildlife conservation and public health. Multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral involvement is crucial for guiding necessary reforms with appropriate technical expertise given the multiple disciplines involved.
- **Reducing urban wild meat consumption:** Strategies to reduce urban wild meat consumption need local adaptation, cross-sectoral collaboration, continuous monitoring and evaluation, and long-term commitment.
- **Alternative income-generating activities:** Providing alternative income-generating activities as substitutes for hunting and selling wild meat is essential.
- **Scaling-up:** To scale these models nationally, it is vital to strengthen the capacity of public service actors, including government agencies and national and international partners. This is particularly important in community engagement and social safeguards, which are relatively new to the biodiversity conservation work. Given funding constraints, prioritising sites for scaling up is necessary, but it should not discourage such reforms, as more practical experience and learning that combines these different approaches are urgently needed.