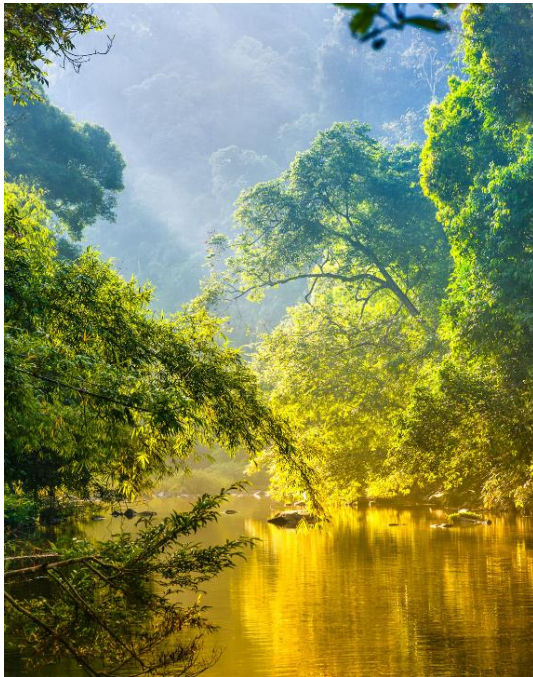




## How megabiodiversity in the Congo Basin can be preserved by sustainable forest management and wood certification

*As the world's second largest rainforest after the Amazon, with more than 220 million hectares of tropical rainforest, the Congo Basin in Central Africa is home to millions of different endemic species. According to Fair&Precious, the ATIBT's protection collective, sustainable forest management is our best shot at preventing extinction of local wildlife.*



### Megabiodiversity in the Congo Basin

Megabiodiversity refers to the number and variety of animal species native to an area. The Congo Basin, specifically, is home to 11,000 species of tropical plants, over 1200 species of birds, 450 mammal species, 700 species of fish, and about 280 reptile species.\* While still relatively intact, the Congo Basin forests, like many others, face increasingly important threats: illegal, unsustainable logging, the conversion of forests to industrial plantations, pressure on wood resources to meet energy needs, unsustainable infrastructure development, rapid population growth and widespread poverty.

***“The Congo Basin forests are still relatively intact. But for how long? These are forests that can be largely preserved when countries in Central Africa and companies from outside, which operate in Central Africa, take their responsibility.”***

Meindert Brouwer, author of *Central African Forests Forever*, adapted

## No planet for the apes?

The endangered Western lowland gorilla, for instance, is a good example of a species native to the Congo Basin and also a large seed-dispersing mammal, as well as a pollinator. Pollinator animals play a key role in the rainforest – they move plant pollen and seeds, bringing about plant fertilisation and thus insuring the longevity of the forest. Gorillas specifically need the hot, moist, stable environment of the rainforest to thrive, but its species is seriously threatened. In fact, large apes are often the victims of illegal commercial hunting, which results in their slaughter, packaging and shipping around the world as bushmeat and hunting trophies.



©WWF Congo Basin



## Are animals better off in managed forests than National Parks?

But why is forest management so important for the protection of local wildlife? Because of a gap in funding in the Congo Basin's National Parks, it turns out that animals are better protected in managed forests thanks to the money generated by FSC (Forests Stewardship Council) certification. At the Republic of the Congo FSC-certified concessioner IFO, there are 70,000 gorillas and 4,000 elephants, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society. These figures are no match for those of the neighbouring Odzala-Kokoua National Park, a reserve of similar size.

Each year, IFO takes a very selective approach to harvesting its tropical trees in part of its concessions, before returning 25 years later. Thus, most of the concession serves as a nest and food reserve for endangered species.

## Fair&Precious, the umbrella brand of tropical forest certifications

An umbrella brand created at the initiative of the ATIBT, Fair&Precious aims to promote forest certification in tropical regions. Thus, by highlighting the virtues of FSC and PEFC-PAFC certifications, ATIBT aims to educate and inform both local communities and key market players.

"It is indeed fundamental that everyone is aware of the virtues of these certifications, particularly in terms of regulating poaching and harvesting trees. Today, if approximately 5 million hectares of forests are certified as sustainable management in the Congo Basin, we are convinced that this area can be significantly increased thanks to the Fair&Precious brand and the enhancement of FSC and PAFC-PEFC certifications," says Benoit Jobbé Duval, Executive Director of ATIBT.



\*Source: Brouwer, M. (2017), *Central African Forests Forever*, Meindert Brower Partner, the Netherlands.

### About ATIBT

The ATIBT (International Tropical Timber Technical Association) was founded in 1951 at the request of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). At the service of the "tropical timber" sector, from the forest to the final consumer, the association plays a leading role in the implementation of international projects dedicated to the sustainable and responsible management of tropical forests. It is also one of the best technical and scientific references on tropical timber resources. In 2016, ATIBT experienced a nearly 50% increase in the number of members, bringing its membership to over 140. Alongside European actors in the "African tropical timber" sector, the ATIBT brings together states (Republic of Congo, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Central African Republic), NGOs (such as WWF and the Prince Albert II Foundation) and large companies. [www.fair-and-precious.org](http://www.fair-and-precious.org)

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