



## Forest certification: A virtuous circle in which employment and conservation coincide

Tropical forests cover only 7% of the planet, yet contain 50% of the world's biodiversity. Their ecosystems regulate global water flows as well as the climate. They directly support the livelihoods of over one billion people.

The impact of global economic development on biodiversity and the difficulties in curbing climate change are nowadays two indisputable facts. The resulting confusion felt among some, as well as the awareness of tropical forests' fundamental role within major institutions (FAO, European Union, One Planet Summit), highlights the importance of forest managers who initiated, many years ago, an in-depth reflection on the future of the Congo Basin's forests, for example.

The French, and soon European, initiative of the National Strategy to Combat Imported Deforestation (Stratégie Nationale de Lutte Contre la Déforestation Importée – "SNDI"; see below), is an original and urgent approach to be implemented to prevent the disappearance of forests, clearing the way for soya or palm oil plantations. While it is common to hear talk about concrete initiatives to reforest degraded areas, it is much rarer today to present solutions to combat this deforestation.

However, we now know that the deforestation of tropical environments releases an average of 300t of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare with an immediate effect (not to mention the resulting loss of biodiversity). In comparison, the effects of "reforestation" in terms of carbon sequestration will only be felt in 10 to 15, or even 20 years, at a rate of 100t of CO<sub>2</sub>/ha. It should be recalled that, according to a United Nations study, the estimated cost to society of one ton of carbon is 100 dollars.

In light of this, it is clear that saving tropical forests is the most effective and by far the most profitable way to reduce our carbon emissions.

Unfairly criticised for too long, the forestry sector in Central Africa is the second largest employer after the State, and this in places where State services are often absent. With forest certification, a virtuous circle of employment and conservation has emerged. The social and economic benefits of the services that certified forest companies provide are estimated at several hundred billion dollars.

These companies are undoubtedly the best ambassadors for the spirit of responsibility for which Europe wants to be the leader. It is vital that the forestry sector be better understood by civil society and by the public or private entities that can help them. There is now an urgent need to shift the tropical forest sector towards certification on a larger scale.

The One Planet Summit is a platform resulting from COP 21 Paris, commitments and projects at the service of the international community which aims to accelerate the global transition to

a low-carbon economy. Employment, innovation and the creation of economic opportunities are at the heart of the One Planet Summit coalition's concerns. To achieve this paradigm shift, major sovereign wealth funds, institutional investors or development banks are already taking action to change investment models. Large companies are thereby asserting their responsibility in the face of climate change and are taking steps to consider climate, social and environmental risks in their business model.

The SNDI has since 2008 been implementing actions aimed at stopping the importation of unsustainable forest or agricultural products which contribute to deforestation by 2030. The aim is to reduce deforestation, forest degradation, ecosystem conversion and the change of indirect land use abroad. These endeavours are in line with the European Union's objective, to which France subscribed in 2008, to "reduce gross tropical deforestation by half compared to current levels by 2020" and to "halt the decline in global forest cover by 2030".



Benoît Jobbé-Duval is the Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Technical Association (ATIBT), an association founded in 1951 and whose mission is to serve the tropical timber industry, from the forest to the final consumer. For more information:

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