

Hello,

ATIBT, as part of its Fair & Precious programme to promote certified tropical timber, is initiating a series of 3 opinion pieces that will be released to the media in the coming weeks. These opinion pieces aim to demonstrate the practical value of the work being carried out by certified concessionaires in tropical forests around the world. The third of these op-eds is presented here.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to publish it as an exclusive.

Best,

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Fair&Precious forest concessions rely on the highest current environmental and social standards

By Benoît Jobbé-Duval

Article 5 of the Paris Agreements (see below) was the first recognition of the work carried out by certified forest concessions in terms of sustainable forest management. Nevertheless, current events show that this recognition is still insufficient to make them known and to help them promote forest certification. However, forestry companies have many assets to promote beyond the marketing of certified wood products.

To make their actions known, these companies created the Fair&Precious umbrella brand two years ago to demonstrate that they are now at the same level of environmental and social standards as NGO community projects. It is important to note that Fair&Precious forest managers rely on the highest environmental and social standards that currently exist!

The strategic value of Fair&Precious forest concessions attest to their ability to formulate a global offer. Indeed, these certified concession models are highly effective in protecting biodiversity, carbon sinks and water conservation.

Unfortunately, their wood supply still benefits from little attention compared to other sources of plantations: Eucalyptus, Hevea, Bamboo, etc. which are, at the very least, up for debate in terms of their impact on the environment and on local biodiversity. Conservation NGO projects offer good practices in terms of ecosystem maintenance. However, they are economically very fragile due to the scale of their activities, the lack of quality and consistency of the products they supply and the fact that they do not have stable markets. They therefore depend on limited funding.

The Fair&Precious brand aims to bring FSC and PEFC-PAFC certified forest concessions out of "isolation". The Fair&Precious companies took up their responsibilities more than ten years ago, despite economic constraints that were not always favourable to them.

Today, the Fair&Precious brand must enable its companies, given the impending climate crisis, to commit the portfolios of the main management funds to supporting their exceptional model. It is essential to make clear that certified companies are remarkable tools for engaging in a change in their models. However, by advocating a less aggressive economic model for more ambitious environmental and social objectives, Fair&Precious forest

concessions, through their concrete results, differ from existing models in terms of "ecosystem" and in particular "carbon sequestration" cost/performance ratios.

As Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon (see below) has stated, the best way to protect tropical forests is to consider environmental performance as a service to society, which is the best way to support the Fair&Precious companies' model.

Article 5 of the Paris Agreements

1. Parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases as referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1 (d), of the Convention, including forests.
2. Parties are encouraged to take action to implement and support, including through results-based payments, the existing framework as set out in related guidance and decisions already agreed under the Convention for: policy approaches and positive incentives for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries; and alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests, while reaffirming the importance of incentivizing, as appropriate, non-carbon benefits associated with such approaches.

On 26 September 2018, President Ali Bongo Ondimba made an important statement on the future of forest certification in Gabon. Gabon seeks high quality in its local production and, in terms of the timber industry, FSC is a key label that could offer a guarantee to Gabonese operators to access reference markets. FSC is the most demanding standard in terms of certification and offers many advantages. Certification will help increase the attractiveness of wood value chains to potential investors through sustainability and the highest guaranteed quality. The label will strengthen Gabon's sustainable development policy, which is already a reference in the sub-region and Africa. It was decided to set 2022 as the deadline for all concessions to be FSC certified in Gabon.



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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