

Wood

GOOD PROTECTION AND BETTER EXPLOITATION

With 15% of production from locally processed wood, the production is still at a traditional stage. And the sector only weighs for 0.22% in the gross domestic product (GDP).

Before being supplanted by oil, the wood sector once used to be the main resource of the country. But the rising power of oil over the years pushed the wood sector down to the third rank as export income, behind oil and methanol. It only represents 0.22% of the GDP: its production fell from 760,000 m³ of logs in 1999 to 439,000 m³ ten years later.

Forest cover now stretches over almost 80% of the country, i.e. 22 million hectares. The cutting of wood is banned, and to circumvent erosion risks, the authorities allowed the exploitation of the forest on the mainland (Rio Muni), while preserving protected areas, which represent about one quarter of the forest area.

The Government has promulgated several laws aiming at the sustainable management of the forest area

The Equatoguinean forest contains about sixty tree species, of which a large part is able to be sold. In addition to the okoume, which is the main tree species exploited, there is the ilomba, dabema, obéché, azobé and padouk. With support from donors, the government is trying to regulate this sector which has long been the victim of many excesses, particularly in the 90's, because the law was not repressive. This was a period when Equatorial Guinea lost more than 0.5% of its forest area.

In order to protect its forest resources, the Government has promulgated several laws aiming at the sustainable management of the



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forest area and it has signed the agreement on tropical wood at the Kyoto Convention on Climate Change. Equatorial Guinea also got involved in regional initiatives by joining, in 2005, the convergence plan of the Central African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC): one of its missions is to define a community policy for the identification and management of

forest resources.

As early as 1997, a law restricted the exploitation of tree species to ensure their preservation. Legal procedures were set up to regulate the granting of a concession or operating license. Perimeters and the number of firms operating in the sector were reduced. While in 1994 there were fifty two companies for 1.2 million hectares under exploitation, today they are no more than fifteen companies (Equatoguinean, Spanish, Chinese, Malaysian, Korean or Lebanese) who share 400,000 hectares. Four of these companies have the capacity to process logs into planks and plywood. This quartet includes the Chinese company Shimmer, which holds 60% of the market...

THE CHALLENGE OF PROCESSING

Since September 2007, the Equatoguinean government requires all companies in the sector to process all of their production in the country. An explicit way to simultaneously promote the employment of nationals in this sector, reduce the export of raw wood and create added value locally. But it's just 15% of the production which is processed locally through sawing and veneering. The domestic market uses between 5 and 10% of the production. The rest is exported, particularly as logs. Please note that: most of the sawing and veneer production are located to the south of the city of Bata, in the harbor area of Rio Ekuku.

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