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Community forest management and conservation of biodiversity in Cameroon
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Executive Summary

Law 94/01 of 20/01/1994 and Decree 95/531/PM of 23 August 1995 are the main legal instruments for the implementation of Cameroon's forestry policy. The community management of forest resources is an essential part of this policy, since the aim is to **"improve the participation of citizens in the conservation and management of forest resources so that the latter can help to improve their standard of living"**.

The putting in place of community forests in favour of forest populations reflects this political commitment. These community forests are established in the non-permanent forest domain of Cameroon and are covered by a management agreement between a village community and the government department with responsibility for the management of forests. The management of the forests is entrusted to the community concerned, with the support and technical assistance of the authorities and support organisations. The surface area does not exceed 5,000 ha. Community forests are allocated in accordance with a participatory approach which aims to enhance the responsibility of the beneficiary populations with regard to the sustainable management of the area allocated to them by the authorities under a 25- year renewable agreement.

The revenues generated by the exploitation of community forests are considered as public funds. As such they are used to implement community projects and are part of the resources available for the implementation of the development plan of the beneficiary community. Moreover, these revenues are completely exempt from tax.

Community forests in Cameroon are also a tool which contributes to the conservation of biodiversity in the **non-permanent forest domain of Cameroon** where the means of exploitation and land use are not subject to sustainability requirements. The forest communities are exploited pursuant to a management plan validated by the authorities; the recommended exploitation techniques are the so-called "low impact" techniques. This system represents an alternative proposed to communities faced with the pressure on faunal resources for their survival.

Moving forward, the sustainable management tools will have to be improved via environmental impact studies and support for the populations concerned as regards the certification of crop yields and the fight against forest and wildlife crime.