



The Path to FSC - a total Team Effort

DANZERGROUP

Forest Concession IFO in the Republic of Congo obtains FSC Certificate

Danzer Group can now supply logs, lumber and veneers from major African species as FSC-pure

IFO's forest constitutes the largest FSC certified timber concession in the tropics. The FSC certified natural forest area in the Congo Basin has now reached 4 million ha (10 million acres), more than the area of natural forest certified in Brazil's Amazon area.

The FSC certification has been obtained after an extensive audit by SGS in September 2008 and a 2nd verification by ASI (Accreditation Services International) in February 2009. During the second audit, WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and ATIBT (Tropical Timber Association) participated as observers. The FSC certification represents a long term investment of the Danzer Group and involved, besides financial resources, a clear commitment for sustainable forest management of our staff underlined by hard work over a long period

We want to thank the IFO team, as well as our partners, the WWF's GFTN initiative (Global Forest and Trade Network) and WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society) in Congo for their substantial support.

The certification ensures a high level of environmental and social standards:

Outstanding for forest operations in Central Africa.

It encompasses:

- forest management planning to assure sustainability
- reduced impact logging
- protection of endangered wildlife, e.g. Gorillas and Elephants
- protection of socially important trees and sacred sites
- ongoing dialogue with the local population and indigenous people, in particular with the Pygmies
- western health & safety standards for the workers
- hospitals, schools, roads and food support for the workers' families and the villages in the concession

The audit team checked the forest management plan and associated documents, procedures and training records, but most of the time was spent in the field, observing whether forest operations were compliant with the standards. The team also performed an in-depth stakeholder consultation: interviews and meetings with the workers, local communities, NGOs etc.



Photos: Worker interview and meet-

ing with local communities



As a first principle, it was checked whether Forest management respects the **local legislation**: timber volume and species should be harvested according to the logging permits. In addition, the forest should be controlled to prevent illegal activities such as poaching.



Photo: checking the limit of the logging area

The **social aspects** of certification in Africa, where poverty is widespread and the state is ineffective in remote areas, requested a large effort.

The auditors checked whether IFO is

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conforming to legal and international obligations with respect to **workers’ rights, hygiene and safety, medical care and housing.**



At IFO’s industrial site Ngombé, a large **hospital** provides services to workers and the local population, houses of a high standard have been built, the town’s **drainage and water supply system** has been upgraded and the town’s waste is regularly cleaned by IFO

An important request is that the **rights of local communities and indigenous people** are actively taken into account. IFO is actively reaching out to the local population and indigenous people.

The local communities are consulted and participate in forest management decisions, based on the principle of “Free and informed Consent”. In 2008, about 300 meetings with 70 local communities have been held.

In order to take into account illiteracy, special “participatory rural appraisal” techniques are used: large pictures, participatory mapping using daily live products, ...



In addition, meetings with a “Consultation platform” are being held, including about 50 representatives of the communities, the local administration and IFO.

IFO has created a “development fund”, proportional with the volume produced, to fund projects. Timber that cannot be used for export is available for the local population.

Before harvesting, all sites with a particular importance for the local population, for example sacred areas, fishing pounds, camps, specific fruit trees, etc., are mapped by GPS and protected.



Photos: Pygmy woman collecting

non-timber forest products (Koko and Marantaceae leaves), Pygmies searching for honey in a felled tree along the road.



Forest harvesting operations have to respect so called “Reduced Impact Logging” (RIL) techniques.

Logging of trees must be effected with precision, in order to assure safety of the workers and prevent spoiling the natural resource, wood.



Planning of harvesting is carefully done due to a precise forest inventory, whereby each individual tree is mapped by inventory sheets and GPS.

The network of roads and extraction skid trails (trails to haul the logs from the forest) is digitally optimized by a GIS (Geographic Information System) and marked in

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the field by paint.



Detailed **monitoring** assures that Reduced Impact Logging procedures are followed. The monitoring part is often seen as an additional cost by forest companies. At IFO, constant monitoring has assured that improved logging techniques are maintained (improving the recovery rate of timber) and skid trails are shorter and with the least possible impact: an important win-win situation of improved efficiency and reduced environmental impact obtained by the certification requirements.

Annually, an area of 1/30 of the productive forest or 2,3% of the total forest area is designated for harvest. In this area, on average only 0,6 tree per ha, or 1 tree in the area of 4 soccer fields, is being harvested. 7% of the area is affected due to roads, skid trails and gaps of felled trees. After harvest, the forest is left to recover for 30 years.

Buffer zones are being protected around sensible areas like rivers, lakes and in particular around clearings in the forest important for wildlife. Young trees and seed trees of commercial species are protected.

Photo: a lake in the forest, so called “yanga”, is protected by a buffer zone



The study of the **forest dynamics, biodiversity, tree growth and regeneration** is done in permanent sample plots. This is essential to assess the future generation of harvestable trees and the forest change.



It has also been evaluated whether particular forests, so called “**High Conservation Value Forests**”, are well managed or protected.

IFO’s forest area is particular due to the presence of rare and protected animal species like Elephant, Leopard, Buffalo, Chimpanzee and Gorilla and by the presence of the CITES listed tree species *Afromosia* (*Pericopsis elata*).

Nearly 30% of the forest area has been protected and will not be logged as it consists of **ecologically sensible areas** like large wetland forests and river borders or **conservation areas**. In addition, a buffer zone has been proposed along the National Park “Odzala-Kokoua”.

FSC demands good wildlife management. For this purpose a project has been started between the Ministry of Forests, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society) and IFO to establish “eco-guards” in order to prevent poaching. Seen the size of the concession and the public road, also bordering the Odzala Park, that the auditors requested that the control by the eco-guards be more efficient. This is a challenge to the three partners of the wildlife management project.

IFO provides different alternatives to bush meat to diminish the hunting pressure: cattle is imported, a butcher shop and grocery store were established, a cold room was built, frozen fish and meat is imported and fish is being transported from a fisher village.



Finally, a “**Chain of Custody**” system, based on a computer database

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and GIS (Geographic Information System) assures that each log and timber product can be followed from the stump in the forest, including its geographical coordinates, up to the final client in Europe.



Tom Van Loon
Environmental Coordinator Africa
DanzerGroup
www.danzer.com



The mark of responsible forestry

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