Evaluation overview

Public-private partnership to sustainably manage the Central African Forests (P3FAC)

Countries: **Multiple countries**	Topic: **Sustainable management of forest regions**

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Key FFEM support data

Project name: Public-private partnership to sustainably manage the Central African Forests (P3FAC)
Project number: CZZ2101
Amount financed by the FFEM: €2m
Project grant date: 12 May 2016
Duration: 5 years (2017-2022)

Context

The countries involved in the P3FAC Project (Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, CAR, DRC) are shaded by around 160 million hectares of dense rainforests, home to 10% of known global terrestrial biodiversity. Yet over half of these forests are also used in the wood production industry, and more than 1/3 of concessions are to be developed over the course of the next 10 years. This constant encroachment by forestry development makes it necessary to strike a balance between forest harvesting and preservation. Such sustainable management is taking shape through new forestry development schemes which ensure management planning over the long-term. The quality of these development schemes and their sustainability nevertheless depend to a great extent on the quality of data collected. The challenge for P3FAC was therefore to develop forest management through continual monitoring of the arrangements set up by DynAfFor (a Project to garner scientific data on the forestry dynamic) while broadening the topics addressed: forestry techniques, regeneration, fauna and non-wood forestry products, with a view to including local populations and mobilising forestry administrations. This work has provided reliable information on carbon fixation.

Participants and operating methods

The overall project manager was the International Tropical Timber Technical Association in partnership with COMIFAC. Their role primarily comprised the capitalisation and transfer of research results to public and private operators along with organising discussions with stakeholders in the Amazon and South-East Asia forest basins.

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Delegated project management for each activity was assigned to Nature+, leader of the Nature+/GxABT-ULg/CIRAD consortium. CIRAD and GxABT-ULg led the research activities within the Project. A number of research partner bodies in each country were also involved in Project activities.

Aims

The primary aim of the P3FAC Project was to improve the sustainability of forest development plans by mobilising public and private actors around valorisation of the consolidated results of research in forest dynamics.

Specific objectives:

SO1. To evaluate the response of forest ranges and their flora and fauna to harvesting.
SO2. To ensure results are taken on board by political decision-makers and national administrations.
SO3. Capitalisation of data at both regional and international level.

Performance appraisal

Relevance
The Project enabled the valorisation and extension of work initiated during the first phase (DynAfFor) which was characterised by of lack of scientific data for formulating sustainable forestry management plans (FMP). Complementary research work would have global relevance, allowing States to look ahead long-term in the sustainable management of their (unprotected) forest heritage. Institutional and operational structuring is also relevant on paper although implementation posed difficulties, notably in dialogue with forest administrations to brief them on the regulatory changes proposed by the DYNAFAC collective.

Coherence
The Project enables adoption of the research results by forest management users (forest concession holders and administrations). However, priority has been largely given to research components, to the detriment of capitalisation and result accessibility. While FMP may appear to be "archaic" tools, conducting research projects on the sustainable management of production forests is in line with the low carbon development ambitions of Central African countries.

Effectiveness
A real plus was benefiting from a full-time coordinator (Nature+) dedicated to the P3FAC Project for 4 years. The work was partitioned geographically to good effect (CIRAD in 3 countries, GxABT-Ulg in 2 others), despite some (non-blocking) difficulties at senior levels in data utilisation and article publication. The Steering Committee COPIL seems to have been largely ineffective, as evidenced by the lack of impact when it did not meet during COVID. This demonstrates poor adoption of the Project by the partners in Central Africa.

Efficiency
Nature+ coordination with support from CIRAD in the Congo was effective overall. A number of difficulties were overcome and the Project as a whole was well-managed, taking into account the number of actors, the context and the COVID pandemic. The arrangements for forest dynamics research were relatively costly to implement and monitor. The cost rationalisation work set out in the methodology guide (TOSSO et al., 2020) should be consolidated and made more accessible in order to attract additional private companies.

Impact
The Project enabled the development and dissemination of numerous tools for improving FMP sustainability online via the DYNAFAC website. Research mechanisms are available that allow the development of new research topics. Additionally, 2 networks were constructed during the DynAfFor and P3FAC Projects: DYNAFAC and R2FAC.

Viability/sustainability
Sustainability of the data collection routes set up on private concessions can be variable depending on the situation and actors. Support from other projects will undoubtedly be required to ensure the future of as many research plot arrangements as possible, which are quite demanding and, without external support, are more difficult to keep going than the route-type arrangements. While sustainability of the scientific achievement is assured, that of the data's use beyond the Project operators is not.

FFEM support - added value
The P3FAC enabled the DynAfFor Project to achieve all its results, which had not previously been possible over 5 years. Nonetheless, further P3FAC additionality for DynAfFor could have been found by adding an economic research component to ensure that the recommendations from these projects are feasible and realistic from the point of view of forestry companies' profitability and contribution to state revenues.

Recommendations & learnings

For COMIFAC, forestry and research administrations, and Central African governments:

- Organise discussions on the recommendations in the briefing to decision-makers produced by the DYNAFAC collective. These conversations would enable Central Africa's decision-makers and their technical departments to better understand the data behind these recommendations. This adoption process is a prerequisite to the translation of these recommendations into national regulatory frameworks.

- Mobilise external financing to continue research work on plot-type arrangements. In terms of duration and scientific scope, the expected outcomes from these arrangements exceed the commitments that private companies are able to make.

For researchers and all those within the DYNAFAC collective

- Perpetuate, expand and bolster the DYNAFAC collective and the R2FAC network.

- Promote the tools produced by DYNAFAC more actively: DafSim software, technical guides etc. Organise targeted training for potential users.

- Expand the discussion to a greater number of forestry companies, including non-European and non-accredited. Adapt the approaches, talks and engagement strategies.

For private companies: forest concession holders and partner consultants

- Integrate recommendations from the DYNAFAC collective during FMP drafting or review The various tools produced (DafSim, technical guides etc.) can facilitate this exercise. Discussions with the DYNAFAC collective should be organised in addition to the existing documents if necessary.

For technical and financial partners

- Provide finance for economic modelling of the impacts of recommendations from the DYNAFAC collective in the briefing to decision-makers. Impact studies could be conducted on pilot concessions. Capitalisation documents/tools could be widely distributed.