



FACTSHEET

FOREST LIVELIHOODS: CAUGHT BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND ADAPTATION?

In Africa, over 270 million people depend on forests, woodlands and savannas for all or part of their livelihoods. The collection, use and sale of timber and other forest products provide a vital source of livelihood capital for many poor households. But when these resources are over-exploited, it can become a driver of forest degradation and deforestation, contributing to global carbon emissions.

Key messages

- ▶ In many African countries, the value of forests and trees to local livelihoods is not captured in national development plans.
- ▶ Achieving sustainable ways of using forests which adapt to climate change, while also enhancing livelihoods and preventing further degradation, demands a cross-sectoral approach to governance.
- ▶ Existing initiatives to mitigate climate change such as REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) must ensure that compensation for avoiding deforestation covers the cost of enhanced alternative livelihoods.
- ▶ A greater focus is needed on increasing the equitable distribution of benefits from trade in timber and non-timber forest products.

Livelihoods and climate change

Climate change threatens all forest-based livelihood activities, influencing the productivity and diversity of forest products, and increasing the existing rate of forest ecosystem degradation. But many livelihood activities also contribute to climate change.

Concerns about climate change mitigation have led to calls to reduce land degradation and deforestation caused by the harvesting of forest products. On the other hand, concerns about climate change adaptation have led to calls for increasing the efficiency, productivity and the equity of existing practices in the exploitation of forest products.

Why are forest products important for livelihoods?

Forest products support the diverse livelihood activities of many different kinds of people across Africa. **Timber** extraction and trading takes place at large and small scale and in the formal, informal and illegal economies. It directly and indirectly provides many people with employment. **Non-timber forest products** (NTFPs) contribute to livelihoods as sources of nutrition, shelter and income. Their collection, marketing and sale are often important during slack periods of the agricultural cycle. **Wildlife conservation and tourism** may not always directly contribute to local peoples' livelihoods, but provide the majority of foreign currency earning in some African economies.

In order to achieve equity and poverty alleviation objectives, effective forest conservation policies should be informed [...] by the distribution of costs and benefits [...] among stakeholders at different spatial scales¹.



Climate change, forest products and livelihoods: facts and figures

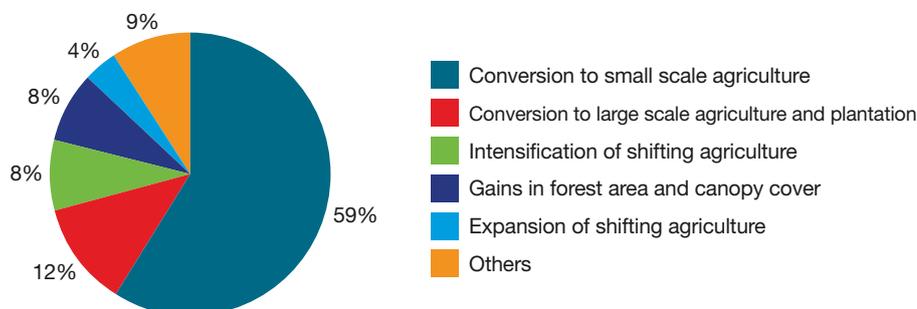
- ▶ Tropical forests contain around 25 per cent of the carbon in the terrestrial biosphere and forest clearance and land degradation account for about 17 per cent of annual CO₂ emissions worldwide. Forests therefore have a crucial role in climate change mitigation.
- ▶ The total area of African forests is in steady decline, with an annual average deforestation rate of 3.4 million hectares per year (2000–2010).

	Rate of change of forest area as a percentage of total remaining forest		
	1990–2000	2000–05	2005–10
Eastern and Southern Africa	-0.62	-0.65	-0.67
West and Central Africa	-0.46	-0.45	-0.46

Source: FAO, State of the World's Forests, 2012.

- ▶ 71 per cent of forest cover change in Africa is due to conversion to permanent agriculture and forest plantations (FAO 2010).

Figure 1. Attribution of forest cover change to different land uses



- ▶ In many rural sub-Saharan Africa communities, NTFPs may supply over 50 per cent of a smallholder farmer's cash income.

Forest products especially important for the poorest

Source: Schaafsma et al. 2011

The Eastern Arc mountains of Tanzania are home to 2.3 million people. The dominant natural land cover in this world biodiversity hotspot is miombo woodland. A study of 2000 households in 60 villages found that annual household income was far below a poverty line of USD 1.89 per day. The main source of income was forest-related for 13 per cent of households. Income from NTFPs accounted for an average of 20 per cent of household income, but contributed most to poor households. The value of charcoal, firewood, poles and thatch produced in the region was estimated as TSH 59 billion (USD 42 million) per year, and their production is considered to be a driver of forest degradation and deforestation in Tanzania.

Source

Osman-Elasha, B., Chidumayo, E., Donfack, P., 2011. Socio-economic and gender-related aspects of climate change in Africa. In Chidumayo, E., Okali, D., Kowero, G., Larwanou, M., eds. *Climate Change and African Forest and Wildlife Resources*. Nairobi: African Forest Forum, p. 176–191.

References

FAO, 2010. *Forest Resources Assessment 2010*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
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 Schaafsma, M. et al., 2011. The importance of local forest benefits: valuation of non-timber forest products in the Eastern Arc Mountains in Tanzania, *CSERGE Working Paper 2011–05*, Norwich: University of East Anglia, Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment.

Endnote

1 Schaafsma et al. 2011: 6

- ▶ The export of timber, nuts, fruit, gum and other forest products has generated as much as 6 per cent of the economic product of African countries.
- ▶ The forest sector is a significant employer. In Cameroon the small-scale and informal NTFP sector employed an estimated 100,000 men and women. This compared with the 135,000 jobs provided by the formal forestry sector in nine West and Central African countries combined.
- ▶ Bushmeat from forest wildlife provides both food and income. In the Congo Basin in 2002 the value of the unregulated and often illegal trade in game was valued at USD 1–2 million.

Priorities for balancing livelihoods, adaptation and mitigation

- ▶ Supporting the adaptation of commercial forestry towards poverty reduction, for example through encouraging compliance with livelihood and labour related criteria for sustainable forestry certification.
- ▶ Supporting small and medium enterprises that use timber and NTFPs to strengthen the livelihoods of the poor whilst also offering economic incentives for conservation.
- ▶ Supporting community-based initiatives for wildlife conservation which focus increasing equitable distribution of the benefits of eco-tourism.

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