

# CONGO BASIN COMMUNITY REPORT #5

MAY 2020



## LIBREVILLE ACTION POINTS

At the FSC Congo Basin Business Encounter 2018 held in Libreville Gabon 6 action points were identified to develop the market for sustainable tropical timber:

- Creating a Green Lane for FSC within EUTR.
- Developing LKTS.
- Reduce certification costs.
- Linking with Asian operators.
- Eco Services Payment action.
- Marketing tools to create awareness.

As a result of the Business Encounter and the action plan a working group is established called LKTS Congo Basin (LKTSCB). Members are from the leading European tropical timber markets and coordinated by FSC Netherlands.

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Dear members of the FSC Congo Basin Community

Welcome to our fifth report.

We are living in strange times. Health is the main issue and makes everything else secondary. Many of our already planned activities will be delayed.

We were in full swing preparing our Carrefour du Bois booth end of May in Nantes, with the introduction of 6 Lesser Used Species from the Congo Basin. We just finished our communications plan 2020.

The new date for the Carrefour is set at 3, 4 and 5 February 2021, very close to the Dutch fair Bouwbeurs in Utrecht, 8 – 12 February. We will be present at both fairs with our message to use sustainable, certified tropical timber and more diversity in species. As soon as it becomes clear when “normal” life can resume, we will reschedule our communications plan and share it with you.

In these troubled times we are very pleased with the announcement that 2.9 million hectares of forest are now FSC certified in the Republic of Congo. CIB-Olam located in Pokola in the Sangha region of northern Republic of Congo has just obtained an additional FSC certificate for its Mimbéli-Ibenga concession. Please read the article below for the details.

Wishing you all good health and the strength to get through this period so we can reach the point where further developing FSC certified tropical timber markets will be important again.

/ Ben Romein



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Photo: © Vincent Istace

## CIB-OLAM BOOST THE CERTIFIED AREA IN THE CONGO BASIN

By Nathalie Bouville, FSC Africa

Here is some good news in these difficult times!

FSC Congo Basin is pleased to announce that 2.9 million hectares of forest are now FSC certified in the Republic of Congo. CIB-Olam located in Pokola in the Sangha region of northern Republic of Congo has just obtained an additional FSC certificate for its Mimbéli-Ibenga concession.

Says Jan Willem Hunink, Vice President / Head of Europe Marketing Olam International Ltd.

*“To ensure that the forest continues to exist, we must give it value. We therefore consider it very important that our concessions comply with the FSC guidelines for responsible forest management. It is crucial that there is a demand for sustainable certified tropical wood and buyers are willing to pay a fair price for this sustainable certified tropical wood”.*

Says Jan Willem Hunink, Vice President / Head of Europe Marketing Olam International Ltd.

### Forest inventory and protection

During the initial inventory of this concession, 375,738 trees were counted from over 290 different species, and more than 33 species of mammals including elephants, chimpanzees and gorillas were identified. Like the thousands of wild animals and plants that inhabit tropical forests, these will be particularly protected under the FSC principles of wildlife conservation.

Of the 650,000 hectares in this concession, 119,934 ha have been fully protected inside a conservation zone, 78,023 ha have been made available to local people for their livelihoods, with the rest zoned for exploitation.

### MIMBELI-IBENGA IN NUMBERS

 **375,738**  
Trees inventoried.

 **119,939**  
Hectares dedicated for protection and conservation.

 **78,023**  
Hectares given to Indigenous Population for livelihood.

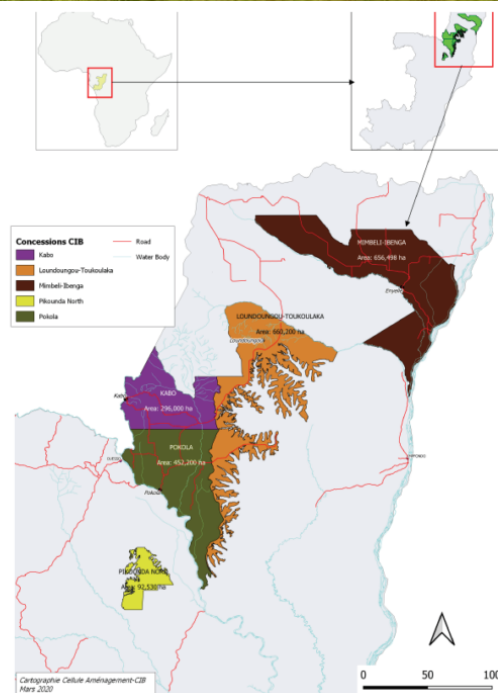
 **2,200**  
Kilometres of Transects build to inventory the trees and animals.

 **2,000+**  
Persons Involved in the making of the Management Plan and the creation of infrastructure.

 **500+**  
Pages of questionnaires filled while interviewing the local population.

 **290**  
Species of trees documented.

 **33**  
Species of mammals documented.



### CIB and FSC forest management

As a subsidiary of Olam International, CIB (Congolaise Industrielle des Bois) has been active in the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville since 1968.

The Mimbéli-Ibenga FMU is in addition to the existing CIB-Olam concessions of Pokola, Kabo and Loundoungou. CIB-Olam received its first FSC certificate in 2006 for the Kabo unit, which was then the first FSC certificate obtained in the Republic of Congo. CIB-Olam's commercial operations are now all 100% FSC certified.

There are now more than 5,392 million hectares of FSC-certified forests in the Congo Basin, distributed as follows: 341,708 in Cameroon, 2,061,190 in Gabon, 2,989,168 in the Republic of Congo, divided amongst 6 operators: CBG, CEB/Precious Woods, CIB-Olam, Interholco (IFO), Pallisco and Rougier.



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Photo: FSC Denmark

## CONGO BASIN: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FORESTRY SECTOR'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

By Nathalie Bouville, FSC Africa

In the current global health crisis, Africa is the least affected continent with the fewest number of COVID-19 positive cases. However, the pandemic is present in Africa, particularly in South Africa, Egypt and Morocco.

In the countries of the Congo Basin, at the end of April 2020, 200 cases had been registered in Congo including 8 deaths, 211 cases including 3 deaths in Gabon, and in Cameroon 1,430 cases including 56 deaths.

As early as March 2020, in order to reduce the spread of the virus, the governments of these countries reacted promptly with numerous restrictive measures. In addition to containment measures and other prevention methods to curb the epidemic, governments in the subregion have put in place accompanying measures to support disadvantaged populations and mitigate the sudden collapse of commercial activities. These include the creation of solidarity funds, the establishment of food banks, the suspension of rents, the subsidization of water and electricity and various support schemes for small and medium businesses.

Numerous private solidarity initiatives have also emerged. However, they are necessarily constrained by the limited financial resources of the region's governments.

### Effects on the forestry industry

The forestry sector plays a critically important economic role in these Central African countries, providing around 2 million jobs across the region, and is often cited as the second biggest economic sector after mining and fossil fuel extraction.

In Congo, Gabon and Cameroon the forestry sector has been able to maintain its activities. Crisis meetings were held between the administrations, logging companies and unions. All mobilized and organized using all possible communication channels (telephone, emails, WhatsApp groups) to quickly find solutions to ensure business continuity.

In all three countries, in primary and secondary wood processing, new orders are few and far between, and the number of contract postponements is increasing. The solidity of order books being strongly impacted, some companies are taking measures for technical unemployment. Others are encountering difficulties in implementing barrier measures. The timber sector in the countries of the Congo Basin is organizing itself as much as possible to deal with this crisis, the consequences of which directly impact an activity that is entirely dependent on international trade (Asia, European Union, USA).

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... continued

## Respons from the industry

The responsiveness and promptness of FSC-certified companies in implementing protocols to protect their workers must be acknowledged. The COVID-19 protocol of Rougier Gabon was the example shared by the Minister of Forest for all timber companies to follow as an example.

The FSC certified companies were among the first to provide masks and antibacterial gels to their workers and to order appropriate equipment to treat potential coronavirus victims in their health infrastructures. Interholco AG, in northern Congo has appealed for international generosity to raise funds for the purchase of ventilators and other medical equipment.

For its part, the Programme for the Promotion of the Certified Exploitation of Forests (PPECF) has proposed an exceptional aid package of 250,000 euros to support the populations of villages dependent on the resources of the forests of the Congo Basin.

The fallout from the COVID-19 crisis will be severe for the economic health of companies and will have negative consequences on employment. The Economic Commission for Africa forecasts that growth is expected to increase from 3.2% to 1.8% as a result of the halt in trade with the affected economies of the European Union, China and the United States. Similarly, the fall in oil prices is contributing to the fragility of producer countries in the Congo Basin. These declines in oil revenues and forest product exports will reduce revenues and drastically impact the budgets of these states.

No one can predict the future to date and the demand for wood will depend on how the pandemic develops and is controlled globally. Hope can be seen in the gradual recovery of demand from China.

## Gabon

In Gabon, for example, the forestry sector accounts for 60% of GDP after excluding hydrocarbons and is one of the historical pillars of the Gabonese economy. The sector has therefore been the subject of special attention from the very beginning of the pandemic.



In the Gabonese forestry industry, specific measures have been taken. Forest operators are the only ones allowed to continue their activities during the current critical period for timber harvesting and processing. They must, however, prove that they have the capacity to implement certain appropriate measures, including a written procedure describing the company's COVID-19 emergency plan and the specific protection of workers according to the different types of activity sites.

Gabon's Minister of the Environment and Water and Forests has also proposed certain financial incentives, including premiums on FSC wood for parastatal purchases.

## Cameroon

The wood industry in Cameroon continues to work despite the difficulties. Thus, in order to deal with the economic impact of COVID 19 on companies, proposals from GICAM (Groupement Inter-patronal du Cameroun), employers' organizations and trade unions, including the G.F.B.C. for the timber sector, have been presented to the Ministry of Finance and the Tax Department. These are requests for support measures for companies in the fiscal, social, customs and monetary fields. The private timber sector plead the public authorities for a reduction in specific taxes (Annual Forest Royalty - Felling taxes - Export duties).



## FSC ATTENDS THE FAIR INTERNATIONALE BOUWBEURS 8. - 12. FEBRUARY 2021 - UTRECHT - NL

### THE NUMBERS

## Facts and figures

647 Attendees    75 k Visitors    28 k Net surface (m2)    92 % Returns

- 82% of the exhibitors think the number of visitors is (very) good
- 76% of the exhibitors think the quality of the visitors is (very) good
- Exhibitors rate the fair with a 7.6



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## LKTS: IF EVERYONE COULD BE JUST LIKE JOHN

Scandinavia's largest producer of wooden bridges, Wood-ways.com, honored by FSC Denmark with a 100% FSC diploma that was handed over to the owner John Paaskesen in February.



John Paaskesen (right), owner of Wood-ways.com awarded for his approach to sustainable tropical timber.

By Kristian Jørgensen, FSC Denmark

John Paaskesen and Wood-ways.com have in recent years been successful in applying lesser-known timber species to bridges and walkways. When selecting timber species, they concentrate on the properties of the wood rather than a standard selection of species. John Paaskesen says:

*“Our focus on using lesser-known tree species has proven to produce good results - both in terms of product quality and bottom line. By focusing on the strength and durability of the material, we get a myriad of options and we can go for the best prices instead of the best known.”*

With this approach, the company is unofficial Danish champion in good approaches to the use of tropical timber species. The exciting part in a visit at Wood-ways.com is that you never know what species you find in the saw.

Wood-ways.com has been building wooden bridges since 2005, and in 2010 the company became FSC certified and a member of FSC Denmark. For Wood-ways.com, their 100% FSC policy means that they can guarantee customers that all materials come from responsible forestry, as well as meet state and local government requirements for certified products.

 Wood-ways.com



Product Type	Trade Name	Species
W5 Solid wood (sawn, chipped, peeled)	Wooden bridges and plank walks	.Other - please specify; Andira spp.; Aspidosperma spp.; Astronium spp.; Autranella congolensis; Bagassa guianensis Aubl.; B. liliaefolia R. Ben.; Chlorophora excelsa; Couratari spp.; Cylicodiscus gabunensis (Taub.) Harms; Dinizia excelsa; Dipterix odorata; Distemonanthus benthamianus Baillon; Enterolobium spp.; Frisima uncinatum Warm.; Frythrophileum spp.; Eucalyptus spp.; Goupia glabra; Hymenaea spp.; Iryanthera spp.; Lecythis lurida (Miers) Muri; Lophira alata; Mezilaurus ituba (Meissn.) Taub. ex Mez; Morus mesozygia; Nauclea diderrichii; Peltogyne spp.*; Picea spp.; Piptadeniastrum africanum; Protium heptaphyllum (Aubl.) Marchall; Pterocarpus spp.*; Qualea albiflora.; Robinia pseudoacacia L.; Sacoglottis guianensis; Sextonia rubra; Tachigalia spp.; Terminalia spp.; Vatairea spp.



Strength and durability requirements only - and multiple species use becomes good for business.

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## YOUR AFRICAN CASES NEEDS TO BE SHOWN

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ABOUT LKTS CASES SPECIES SMALLHOLDERS PARTNERS LANGUAGES

ALFRISTON SCHOOL WITH FRAKE CLADDING

← GO BACK

### Alfriston School with Frake cladding

Duggan Morris Architects designed this lovely swimming pool building as part of an upgrade of the sports facilities at the Alfriston School, Buckinghamshire (UK). The suitable panelling including the roof is made with thermotreated wood of the species 'Frake' - also known as Limba.

Frake is a West African hardwood that is beautiful, but often used mainly plywood due to its lower stability and durability. However, when treated with our Thermotreated process, it acquires a golden colour as well as enhanced stability and durability, making this FSC-certified timber perfect for cladding projects.

Thermo Modified wood has been enjoying a boom in the UK for uses like cladding and decking projects. The supplier to this project is EcoChoice and they offer a wide range of recent species. With a chemical-free process, thermotreated timbers gain increased stability and is therefore an alternative to the typical impregnated timbers.

It is intended to clean up the geometry of the roof pitches of the rest of the school, with the same gradient of pitch and simplicity repeated. This was important to ensure it had a strong relationship with its site, but also because of the very real presence of the surrounding conservation area" were architect Duggan Morris.

The project used for 18x140mm FRAKE boards which were pre-assembled as panels off-site. For safety reasons, they were also fire-treated. Due to its increased porosity, Frake takes up the fire-retardant treatment really well.

[www.ecochoice.co.uk](http://www.ecochoice.co.uk)

CASE OR MAIL	
Country:	United Kingdom (UK)
Name of construction/production:	Buckinghamshire
Year:	2014
Constructed/produced by:	Falham Construction
Designed by:	Duggan Morris Architects and E&M Wood
Project owner by:	Alfriston School
Timber supplied by:	EcoChoice (FSC-COC/1916)

SPECIES / TYPE OF USE

Limba

Alfriston School with Modified limba cladding (Case by EcoChoice)  
- your cases could be the next on: [www.lesserknowntimberspecies.com](http://www.lesserknowntimberspecies.com)

**SUBMIT:** We are collecting examples of the use of lesser-known tropical timber species from a broad range of wood users, such as designers, architects, producers, businesses and project owners.

This database is your opportunity to promote your cases (products or projects?) with FSC certified LKTS species!

Provide us with a description and other details of the product/project such as:

- An overall description (50 - 150 words)
- Place of construction/ production
- Year of construction/production
- Constructor/producer
- Designer
- Project owner
- Timber supplier
- Species used and their use in the project/ product

**Remember** to provide us with a variety of high-resolution images of your case.

Submit cases by contacting the website editor:

Kristian Jørgensen, Project coordinator, FSC Denmark

Mail: [kristian@fsc.dk](mailto:kristian@fsc.dk)



Promoting sustainable tropical timber

Listed group

## SEE YOU ON LINKEDIN

The LinkedIn group "Promoting sustainable tropical timber" is a platform for inspiration in the use of tropical timber.

Join the [LinkedIn group](#)



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