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# CHALLENGES, ECONOMIC VALUE, AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BAFUT –NGEMBA FOREST RESERVE

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# INTRODUCTION

- **Forest cover of Cameroon's national territory amounting to 21,245,000 hectares, represents about 45.6% of the surface area of the Country (FAO, 2005).**
- **Most of the country's forests forms part of the Congo basin forest which is the second largest area of dense tropical forest in the world after the Amazon basin (CARPE, 2006).**
- **Cameroon is ranked second in terms of forest cover in Africa after Democratic Republic of Congo.** The World Bank Group (2022). (Journey into the Congo Basin) describes the Congo basin as '*The Lungs of Africa and Beating Heart of the World.*'
- **This Basin which includes the Bafut -Ngemba forest, is the largest carbon sink in the world and is capable of absorbing more carbon than the Amazon. with average emissions at around 500 million tons and average absorption of 1.1 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.( The World Bank Group (2022).**
- Divided into permanent and non-permanent forests estates, **the permanent forests is protected area and are classified as areas belonging to the state of Cameroon where unauthorised human activities are prohibited.** These protected areas which are further divided into wildlife protected areas and forest reserves proper (MINEF, 1994) are estimated to cover 11% of the total forest reserves of Cameroon
- **The Bafut -Ngemba Forest Reserve falls among these protected areas of the state of Cameroon**



## **.ADMINISTRATIVE ACT AND LIMITS OF THE BAFUT NGEMBA FOREST RESERVE**

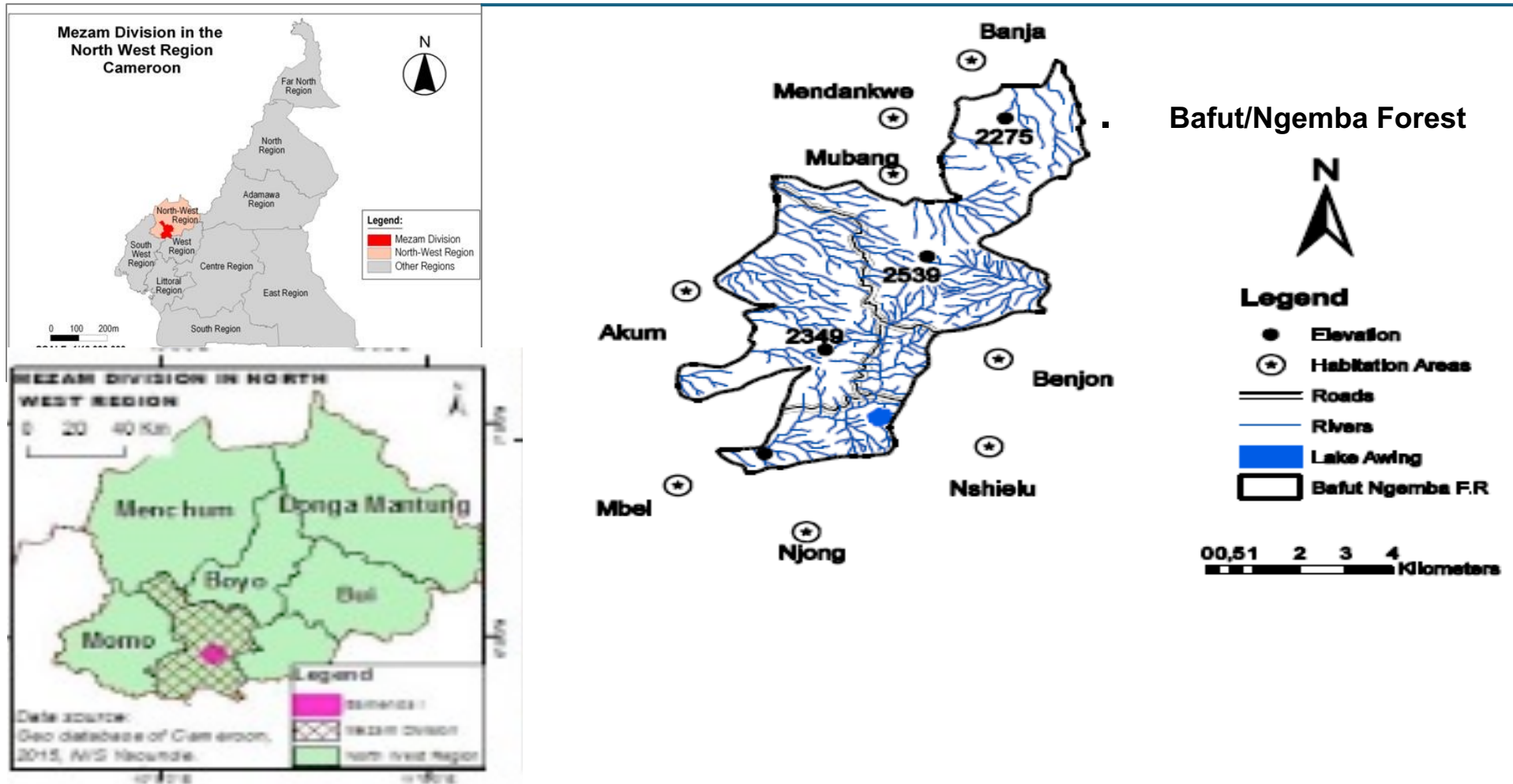
Classified by the **Bafut-Ngemba Native Authority Forest Reserve Order in 1953** and **registered as the Eastern Region Public Notice No. 140 of 1953** as a **production forest reserve**, it covers an area of **4,218 hectares** with its span extending into the following council areas of Mezam Division :

- Bamenda City Council which comprises of Bamenda I, II and III sub Divisional councils
- Bafut Council
- Santa Council
- Tubah Council

For issues of administration of this forest areas, the overall policy administration is handled at the level of the Senior Divisional Officer for Mezam who is the supervisory authority over local Government councils (2019 Code on Decentralisation). Forest management has been left loose as it ought to have been done with joint inputs from these council areas.



# BAFUT-NGEMBA FOREST RESERVE IN THE COUNTRY AND REGIONAL SETTING



Source: B. M. Takem-Mbi (2013)



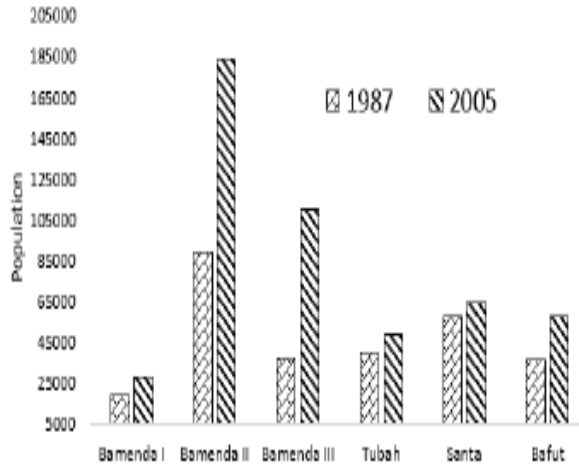


## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOREST

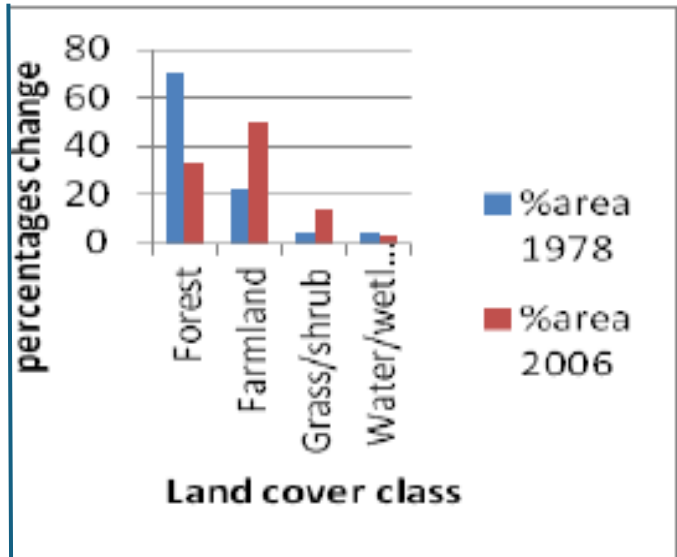
- As one of the 8 reserves of North West Region, it falls amongst the 34 global hotspots (Conservation International, 2004)
- It falls among the 218 Endemic Bird Areas of the world. (Bird Life International, 1998).
- It harboured monkeys, chimpanzees, and antelopes amongst other species (Nsoh et al., 2006) in the early days. But today, encroachments into the forest and poachers have eliminated most of these animals and the area is no longer a natural habitat for the surviving ones.
- The reserve is equally host to the Bannerman's Turaco (*Tauraco bannermani*) and the Banded Wattle Eye (*Platysteira laticincta*) which are species of birds found only in the montane highlands of the North West region of Cameroon and therefore warrants some amount of protection
- . The financial value of Forest products here in general, and NTFPs that are collected and sold or self-consumed calls for concerted and sustainable management of the Reserve. ;
- The contribution of the Forest products and NTFPs poverty alleviation here especially as NTFPs are often collected by the poor (Schreckenber *et al.* 2006); is a social indicator of the business case for this forest.
- Contribution to livelihoods specifically to food security (consumption) and to employment



# CHALLENGES



Population growth around forest

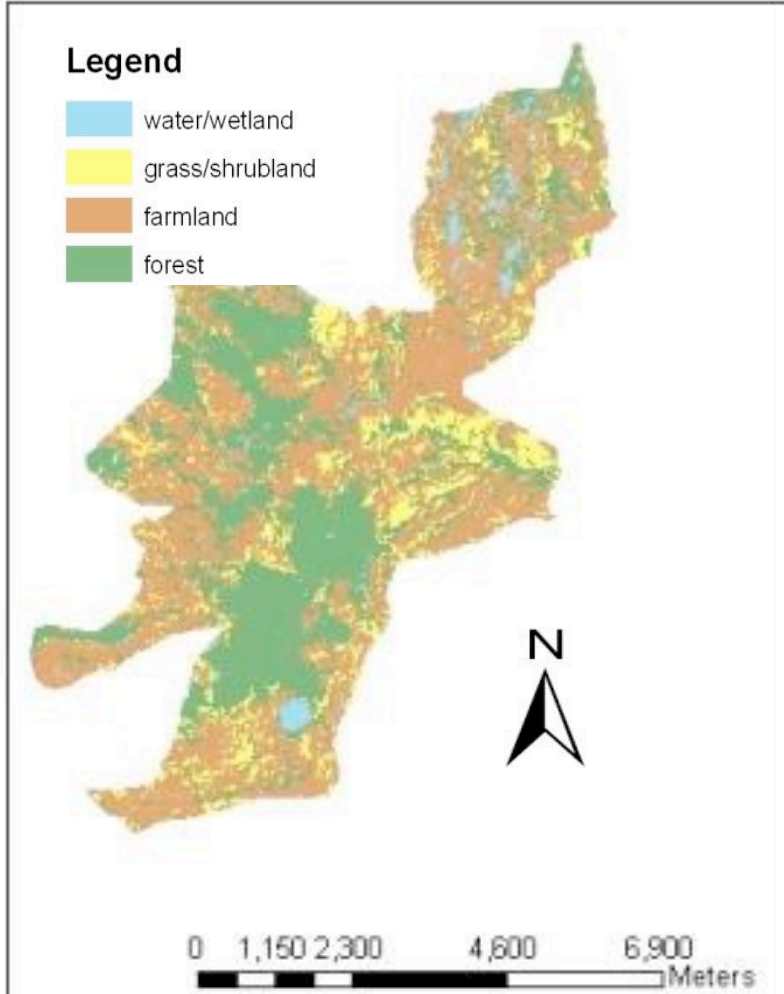
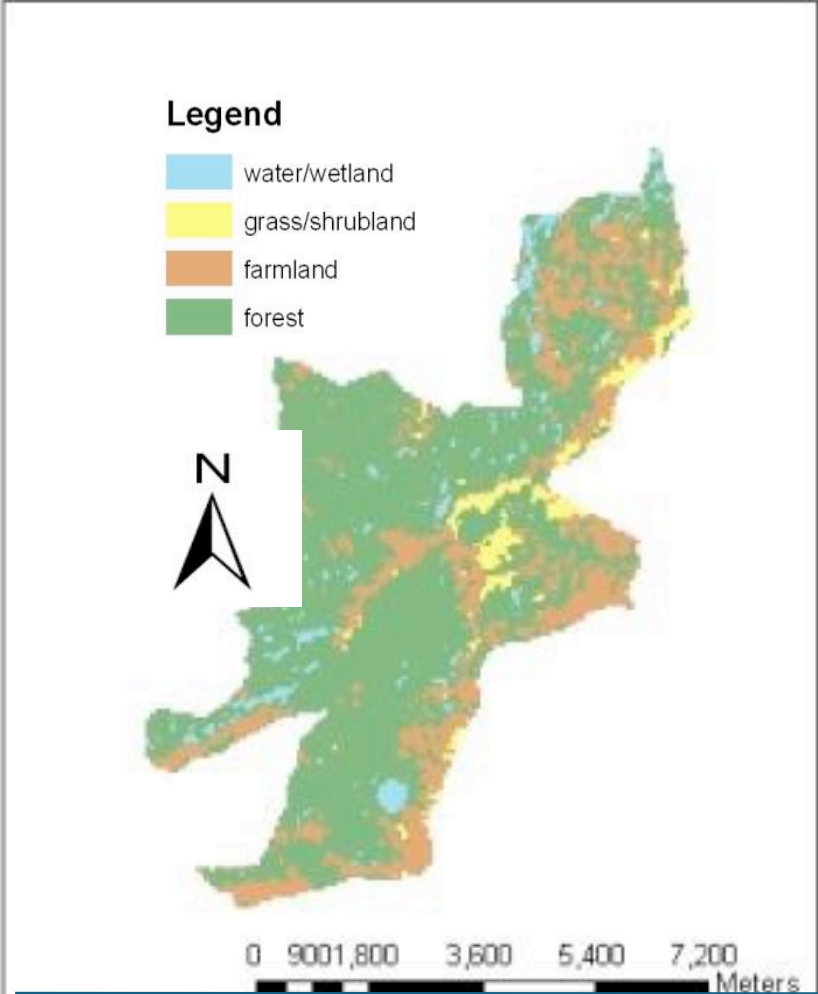


Source: B. M. Takem-Mbi (2013)

- Deforestation in Cameroon rose from 0.94% for the 1990–2000 periods to 1.04% for the following decade right up to 2021. Cameroon took seventh place on the list of the world’s top deforesters in 2018(World Resource Institute)
- Threat to the survival of various natural ecosystems and the preservation of natural environment. ([2024 Cameroon Economic Update](#)). **This forest suffers greatly from ecosystem loss and reduction in biodiversity**
- Forest loss within the reserve which is also increasingly driven by climate change through increased exposure to droughts, fires, storms, and pest outbreaks. It is estimated that the rate of forest change in Cameroon between 2000 and 2005 was -1% to -1.5% per year as against -0.9% for the period 1990-2000 (FAO, 2005).
- Urbanisation and landuse change which has also reduced the forest cover of the Reserve.
- Expansion of commercial agriculture, augmented by clearing for small-scale agriculture, extractive activities, and roads and, with complex linkages among them, , food crops, fuelwood, and transhumance
- Illegal and unsustainable logging



# LANDUSE CHANGE BETWEEN 1978 AND 2006 IN THE RESERVE



	Category	1978		2006		% change
		Area Ha	%	Area Ha	%	
1	Forest	2952.6	70	1392	33	-52
2	Farmlands	928	22	2109	50	127
3	Water/wetlands	168.7	4	590.5	14	250
4	Grass/shrubs	168.7	4	126.5	3	-25
		4218	100	4218	100	

Source: B. M. Takem-Mbi (2013)





# ACTORS OF CHANGE IN THE BAFUT-NGEMBA FOREST RESERVE

- **The inhabitants of Mendankwe** who entered into the reserve to cultivate mainly **cocoa yam, cut fuelwood both for household consumption and for sale as well as burning of charcoal**. Fuelwood and charcoal constitute one of the main sources of income of the average Mendankwe rural household.
- **Commercial Agriculture In the eastern part of the reserve**, where the inhabitants of Mile 12, Santa, Akum and some who come as far as Bamenda have transformed this part of the reserve for the practiced of this market gardening. The products have a short production cycle and a ready market both internally and externally to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.
- **Closure in 1985 of the Santa Coffee estate which served as a major source of employment** to the population of Mile 12, Santa, Awing, Akum, Piyin and Mendankwe that surround the reserve with most of them turning to this market gardening after the closure.
- **Transhumance within the reserve** where cattle herd owners burn forest in dry season to get fresh grass for pasture needed for their animals.
- **Illegal wood exploitation for commercial purposes** by dealers in plank business and firewood. Mile 12 Akum leads in this wood business where illegal exploitation of the reserve is source of their raw materials for the wood business. The Indigenous and vulnerable forest populations here depend on these forests and their livelihoods and integrity are equally threatened by the forest loss.



# ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE FOREST SECTOR

- Contributions of 4 % to the overall GDP of Cameroon
- Contribution to livelihoods specifically to food systems and security (consumption) and to employment.
- Provides 450,000 formal jobs in Cameroon, (14% in the formal sector and 86% in the informal sector) besides the 8 million rural population that depend on traditional staples from the forest which include food, medicines, fuel, Electricity poles and construction materials.
- Generating rainfall, regulating surface water flows which are factors in agricultural production, hydro electricity generation, and municipal power supplies
- contributed 49% of taxes and levies in Cameroon in 2010
- Contributions of 768.33 billion CFA/year to turnover, (CIFOR in 2012)
- Contributions 496 billion Francs/year to value added, (CIFOR in 2012)
- Contributions of 4.3% to GDP and 4.63% of non –oil GDP.



## **BAFUT -NGEMBA FOREST COVER AND VALUE**

The main wood specie of the Bafut Ngemba forest after initial natural forest depletion is **Eucalyptus** which is secondary generated forest. This specie constitutes 60% of forest, absorbs more water from this forest than the natural forest trees and is the main wood used for roofing materials in the City and all council areas around this forest and beyond. **The tree equally serves as electricity transmission poles with treatment centres found within the City and Bafousam.** It is estimated that 2% of the wood used as roofing components in the city of Bamenda comes from this forest; most of it illegally exploited with no sustainability plans. **The fuelwood sold in the city has over 60% of it sourced from this forest.** The Charcoal business is 90% sustained by this forest.. Besides serving as the Carbon sink and water shed for the councils that surround this depleting forest, there are opportunities for economic development of the forest as **it has potentials that can be exploited if climate financing is sourced and sustainable exploitation is balanced with concerted regeneration efforts.** This regeneration part of the business case goes beyond the budgets of the councils to handle and hence calls for external climate financing.



## CONCRETE ACTIONS NEEDED

Cameroon is committed to restoring 12,062,768 hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes by 2030, pursuant to the commitment made in February 2017 by the Forestry and Environment Ministries. Apart from these upper rung commitments, the councils' business case for this forest can be strengthened by the following:

- **Creating plantations that from 2045 will provide the bulk of the 2.5 million m<sup>3</sup> of wood to be marketed by the country with the bafut ngemba forest being in the programme.**
- **Facilitating the planning, Regeneration and development of the forest.**
- **Development of value chains and the creation of a sustainable Bafit –Ngemba forestry economy which generates jobs and growth.**
- **Empower local communities, and prioritise women, considering that they are the stakeholders most affected by the decisions we make to regenerate this forest. They are the ones who carry out most of the farming in this invaded forest.**
- **The government, local and native authorities should participate in designing sustainable action plan for the reserve so that every stakeholder appreciates its responsibility and stakes to sustainable management plans for this forest.**



## CONCRETE ACTIONS NEEDED

- The councils should promote and regulate secondary and tertiary wood processing and better exploitation of non-timber forest products. **The first issue hers is to ensure the improvements in statistical outputs.**
- The government should ensure transparency in the process for granting forestry concessions, especially sales of standing volume and small permits, and for farming and mining concessions. **These authorisations should have visa of the local authorities before being granted so that exploiters respect quotas for such exploitations and pay appropriate royalties to these local authorities.** This will curb illegal artisanal logging,
- New policies should lead to a clear separation between NTFPs from the wild and those planted (agroforests products) to avoid confusion on taxations.
- Promoting the wood-energy sector by **establishing a formal wood sector market** in the area. This will reduce illegal exploitation as certifications can be obtained before access to this wood market.
- Re-enacting **a joint Municipal Decision to protect the entire Forest**, including the areas already encroached on, and put forward action plans to protect the areas and develop ecotourism which can assist the paying for environmental services.





# CONCLUSION

When one appreciates the economic value of the forest, its contributions to the urban economy and jobs created within the City by produce from this forest, it can be concluded that the Bafut Ngemba forest offers Economic benefits for these council areas if sustainably managed. The FAO Country Director for Cameroon , Cheick F. Kanté, caps it all by propounding that:

*“Promoting better governance in the forestry sector by encouraging forest certification, climate-smart fiscal policies, increasing value addition in the wood industry, and engaging local communities will secure high public revenues, help preserve forests, and lay a foundation for attracting more climate finance,”*

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Thank You.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AWONO et al (2016) Vegetal non-timber forest products in Cameroon, contribution to the national economy ( *International Forestry Review Vol. 18(S1), 2016*)

Zephania N. Fogwe et al (2019) Eucalyptus tree colonization of the Bafut-Ngemba forest reserve, North west region, Cameroon ( *environment & ecosystem science*)

The Councils of Bamenda City. Bafut, Santa and Tubah

The Palaces of Mankon, Medankwe, Ndzah and Ndzong

