Win-win partnership emerging between agro-industry and palm oil smallholder cooperatives

Agro-industries such as the Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC) imbued with experience and technical know-how in oil palm plantation management are critical in the re-valorization of the palm oil value chain in Cameroon.

Unfortunately, these agro-industries with industrial mills having relatively high extraction rates, operate below their full capacity.

To remedy this situation, smallholders become a critical player in the palm oil supply chain with the possibility of providing agro-industries with the much needed supply of fresh fruit bunches. Such supply will enable their mills to operate at full capacity.
However, the capacity of the smallholders to effectively fulfil this critical role is undermined by their lack of adequate technical capacity for proper farm management and the proliferation of artisanal mills with poor extraction rates.

In order to ensure high production and increased income, most of the oil palm farmers tend to expand their farms.

With funding from WWF Sweden and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), WWF Cameroon, supported the Environmental Governance Institute (EGI), to facilitate the creation of six smallholder oil palm cooperatives in the Southwest region of Cameroon.

This was in a bid to better organize them so they can increase fresh fruit bunches supply to CDC, without necessarily increasing their farmlands which entails the clearing of primary forests thereby increasing the deforestation rate.

After conducting an assessment, EGI strengthened the institutional capacity of the cooperatives through training in governance, business planning... with WWF Cameroon’s support.

WWF is providing support to EGI to facilitate a win-win partnership between CDC and some of the smallholder cooperatives in the South West Region of Cameroon.

The rationale for the partnership is two folds – to ensure that CDC mills receive a larger volume of fresh fruit bunches (FFBs) from smallholder farms and to increase the cooperatives’ incomes with the objective of de-incentivizing further expansions.

Through the partnership, smallholder schemes can also benefit from technical support from CDC in the form of best farming practices and acquisition of improved farm inputs

\[ "\text{Mr. Takang}\]

Such a partnership will not only benefit CDC and the smallholder farmer but the environment as well because intensification on existing farms will permit smallholders to increase income while reducing pressure on forests,”

John Takang, Founder and Executive Director of EGI
WWF is thus working with EGI to collect baseline data on farmland sizes of smallholder cooperative members.

“This database would facilitate the monitoring of the farms of smallholder cooperative members over the years, within the framework of the win-win partnership,” Takang adds.

In addition to the counterpart support EGI received from Birdlife International in 2018 through the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) Small Grant, EGI has trained smallholder farmers in tools and techniques of mapping farm parcels of cooperative members and none members in order to demarcate their farms from the forests and other key natural resources like water for the benefit of communities.

This mapping will help to situate smallholder oil palm farms within the landscape, and as such permit their impacts on the target key biodiversity areas (KBA) to be more easily assessed.

WWF and EGI are capitalizing on the readiness of these smallholder palm oil producers’ cooperative to adhere to a win-win partnership with CDC, to also link up smallholder farmers in the South West Region with SOCAPALM in the Littoral Region for increased market space.

This initiative contributes to reducing the environmental footprint of the palm oil sector, in line with WWF Cameroon’s food practice objective aimed at ensuring that by 2022, at least two WWF supported landscapes adopt food production systems that balance agricultural development and ecosystem integrity and functions.

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Steps taken so far to produce more from our current farms, will avoid cutting down new forests”

Mr Mundenge Mukoko
Simon, Board Chair Tiko Area Oil Palm Farmers’ Cooperative (TAOPF-COOP).
Engaging communities in management of protected areas

The successful management of protected areas is wholly predicated on the full involvement and ownership of communities living around them.

Communities are socially and culturally entwined with the forests as they mostly rely on it for their livelihoods.

It is in recognition of this reality that WWF and the Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources South West Region (PSMNR-SWR) have supported the establishment and signing of the first ever Cluster Conservation Development Agreement (CCDA) with communities living around Korup National Park and its peripheral zones in South West Cameroon.

The CCDA was signed with Cluster B, one of five clusters created in the Korup National Park that comprises four communities - Ekogati/Bakut, Basu, Bajo and Baro.

Sixteen elected community members, four from each of the four community’s village forest management committee, constitutes a cluster with a five-year mandate.

The Agreement provides a framework that guides collaborative management interventions in protected areas and its periphery.

“It is the first Agreement to be signed in a protected area in Cameroon,” says Tabi Derrick Tabe, Conservator, Korup National Park.
The Agreement recognizes community members as key actors in their local development, and gives them greater responsibilities in the management of the Park.

It contains priorities on access zones and user rights, cluster specific management issues such as poaching, river poisoning uncontrolled non timber forests products collection and trade and conservation commitments for the duration of the CCDA within specific intervention periods,” Tabi explains.

It also includes detailed roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders on site-specific interventions such as boundary opening, inter-village trial opening, prioritized village development measures, - which includes potable water supply, cocoa farmers field school and business school, provision of cassava multiplication variety and processing units and non-Timber Forests products domestication, among others.

The creation of clusters was based on socio-cultural, geographical, administrative and proximity to the park.

The CCDA seeks to encourage and ensure the accountability of stakeholders towards locally negotiated conservation and development objectives for a duration of five years.

It runs within the lifespan of the Korup National Park management plan. The clusters function on the basis of management guidelines and work plan agreed between the Korup National Park Services and the communities.

The two concerned local councils – Nguti and Eyumojock, also form an integral part of the process.

Their involvement does not only ensure some institutionalization of the structure, but shows a commitment in their drive to integrate the planned interventions of the agreement into their communal development plans for sustainability.

This encourages councils to upscale Villages Development Measures (VDMs) and budget for the maintenance of infrastructures and planned activities within the Cluster Conservation Development Agreement.

PSMNR-SWR and partner WWF, are supporting these initiatives with the objective of contributing to the preservation of high-value ecosystems, and the sustainable management of natural resources in the South West Region of Cameroon.

“We are delighted to have the Cluster Conservation Development Agreement that will strengthen the conservation of the park and development of our communities. We will give it our utmost support to ensure the park is preserved for posterity,” says Chief Tabi Napoleon of Baro village.

The CCDA will also contribute to the sustainable development of the surrounding communities while empowering and building a stronger and deeper alliance with local communities.
Thirteen female members of the Western Bakossi Livestock and Environmental Preservation Cooperative (WEBALEPCO) in the Southwest Region of Cameroon, are using pig dungs from the cooperative’s demonstration farm as organic manure to boost maize production and increase household income.

The women are recycling waste from the pig sty. Firstly, the dung is used as manure to fertilize the maize farms which results to high yields. Secondly, while some of the maize is shared and auto-consumed in their respective households, a lot is bought by WEBALEPCO to use in compounding pig feed, which in return increase the income level of the women.

This effort came after a training the women received from WEBALEPCO, a community-based eco-cooperative that promotes pig farming among 12 villages and beyond.

These villages make up the South West cluster of the Bakossi National Park.

Eighty percent of the maize was sold to WEBALEPCO at XAF 250,000. WEBALEPCO subsequently used the maize to locally compound feed for the pigs in their demonstration farm and also sold some to their members.

The remaining 20% was shared for consumption to the women who cater for different households with a total of 91 people. “We have agreed that, the XAF 250,000 raised from the sales will be shared by us, with the assistance of WEBALEPCO,” says Mme Abwe Chantal, WEBALEPCO Board member. We will use the money to assist our husbands in our children’s education,” she adds.

WWF plans to support CAD to upscale such environmental best practices within the piggery value chain.

WEBALEPCO has a membership of over 16 common initiative groups with over 112 direct members who are household heads, catering for about 850 household members.

This includes about 130 individual members who are not part of the 16 common initiative groups.

Apart from training and giving advice on pig farming techniques to their members and prospective members, WEBALEPCO also provides a market for the sale of pigs and pig-related products to their members.

“The skills we gained from the training on feed compounding supported by WWF through the Community Action for Development (CAD) helps us to reduce our production cost and also make an additional income to our business,” Julius Belle Ebagge, Manager of WEBALEPCO
WWF Cameroon Coastal Forests Programme has trained her partner CSOs on financial policies and procedure, human resources management, technical reporting and communications. The refresher training took place from August 25 to 30 2019 in Douala.

WWF CFP facilitated a workshop to train Parent Teachers Association (PTAs) members in financial reporting, terms of reference and activity budget development was held in Nkongsamba, Mungo Division of the Littoral Region on September 2 to 4 2019. The 6 PTA members trained, manage ESD schools and youth activities.