

Why eat wild meat?

Understanding food preferences to inform effective alternatives to bushmeat consumption



In brief

Hunting wild animals for meat is widely practiced across sub-Saharan Africa and threatens the conservation of many species. Initiatives to reduce the consumption of wild meat often focus on creating alternative livelihoods for the hunters and alternative sources of meat for the consumers. While such initiatives are well intentioned, their effectiveness in terms of improving conservation and food security has been limited.

Our project focuses on the Dja Faunal Reserve in southeast Cameroon, where wild meat consumption is common. Research within villages adjacent to the Reserve will enable us to understand the rationale behind the choice of wild meat as a preferred food. We will use our findings to support improvements in the design of interventions to promote alternatives to wild meat in the forests of Cameroon and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa.

Why consider food preferences?

Since the late 1990s, conservation and development organisations have been concerned about the high and often unsustainable levels of hunting for wild meat in Africa, its implications for biodiversity conservation and, increasingly, food security. In many rural areas, wild meat is the key source of protein in peoples' diet. If its consumption is reduced, it is critical for the health of the population that additional protein supplies are available, acceptable and affordable.

Conservation organisations have long-supported initiatives that seek to provide alternatives to the hunting and consumption of wild meat – particularly when the meat comes from endangered species. Examples include initiatives that provide alternative income-earning opportunities for hunters that sell wild meat, and initiatives that provide alternative protein sources to those that consume wild meat (eg fish, livestock or captive-bred wild species). Often these initiatives have failed to achieve their conservation and food security

objectives because they fail to consider the underlying drivers behind the choice to eat wild meat. Such drivers include its availability and relatively low cost, as well as taste and cultural influences.

In this project we focus on the rural consumers of wild meat. While we recognise that most wild meat ends up being sold to urban consumers, local consumption remains a significant conservation threat in some rural locations – including in the Dja Faunal Reserve. Here people hunt and consume a wide range of wild animals including threatened species such as chimpanzees, gorillas, dwarf crocodiles and giant pangolins. By understanding why local people choose to eat wild meat, we can improve the design of interventions by ensuring that they take the underlying drivers into account. Our expectation is that better designed interventions will be more effective at reducing over-exploitation, will facilitate species survival, and improve long-term food security and nutrition.

Our plans

The 'Why eat wild meat? Developing effective alternatives to bushmeat consumption' project is funded by the UK Government's Darwin Initiative. It will improve the capacity of conservation and development actors to design and implement initiatives that aim to reduce the hunting of threatened species for wild meat; that are feasible, effective and – crucially – acceptable to local people.

The project includes the following four main components

1. Inventory of existing 'wild meat alternatives' projects

We will consult with local partners to compile an inventory of existing wild meat alternatives projects around the Dja Faunal Reserve.

2. Desk based evidence reviews

We will conduct desk-based reviews of 1) the factors affecting the success of wild meat alternatives projects in sub-Saharan Africa and 2) the drivers of wild meat as a food choice in sub-Saharan Africa.

3. Assessment of drivers of wild meat as a food choice

We will work with local communities in three contrasting sites around the Dja Faunal Reserve to understand their food choices and the role of wild meat, as well as to understand what people want from initiatives that develop alternatives.

4. Synthesis and decision support

We will develop recommendations for the Cameroonian government and implementing NGOs working close by the Dja Faunal Reserve and elsewhere. We will develop a decision support tool to ensure that new interventions are better aligned with the drivers of food choice, making them more effective at increasing food security, meeting people's needs and priorities, and conserving species threatened by unsustainable hunting.



Timeline

2020– 2021	Ongoing communication and dissemination	Final project report and the development of a decision support tool	Policy influence
		Presentations at international and regional meetings including a side event at CBD CoP	
2019– 2020	Presentations and discussion of research results	Local and national meetings with policy makers and conservation and development actors	Policy influence
	Fieldwork and data analysis	Surveys, focus group discussions, choice experiments	Field research
2018– 2019	Review existing understanding	Inventory and desk-based reviews	Evidence review
	Form research group and develop workplan	Inception and planning meetings	Planning
	MAIN ACTIVITIES	SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES	KEY STEPS

Who's who

IIED

IIED is a policy and action research organisation that promotes sustainable development to improve livelihoods and protect the environments on which these livelihoods are built. We specialise in linking local priorities to global challenges, and work with some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them – from village councils to international conventions. IIED will coordinate the project and lead on desk-based reviews and international outreach.

www.iied.org

ICCS, University of Oxford

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science (ICCS) is an academic research group based in the Department of Zoology and the University of Oxford. ICCS works at the interface of social and ecological systems, using a range of approaches to address key issues in current conservation. Our underlying philosophy is that in order to make progress we need to consider the incentives, pressures and challenges faced by individual decisionmakers. ICCS will lead the project field work.

www.iccs.org.uk

Living Earth

Living Earth Limited (LEL) is an international social enterprise specialising in working with people to resolve their environmental and social concerns. Since 1987 we have built a unique portfolio of projects and set new standards of working to combine environmental protection and sustainable development. LEL is at the heart of a growing network of independent Living Earth organisations around the world – including FCTV Cameroon – that work in a cooperative and supportive way to maximize their impact.

www.livingearth.ltd

FCTV, Cameroon

Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante (FCTV) is an independent NGO based in Cameroon which promotes sustainable development and community-driven solutions to environmental problems. Working in collaboration with Living Earth, FCTV is responsible for the field-based activities of many projects including community engagement, training and data collection. Living Earth and FCTV will lead on liaison with Dja Faunal Reserve projects, stakeholder engagement and national dissemination, to ensure findings are mainstreamed into government strategies.

www.fctvcameroon.org



Get involved

The 'Why eat wild meat?' project runs from July 2018 – March 2021.

- Tell us about any existing initiatives on bushmeat alternatives in the Dja Faunal Reserve, or further afield in sub-Saharan Africa, or
- Share with us key references for our evidence-based reviews (such as journal articles, project reports, book chapters, conference proceedings or dissertations).

Contact researcher Francesca Booker by email: francesca.booker@iied.org.

Website

Our project outputs will be posted here: www.iied.org/why-eat-wild-meat

Get in touch with project partners

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Project Materials

Biodiversity, Natural Resource Management

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Cameroon

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Page 3: Community interviews on bushmeat species distributions in Cameroon community forest
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Page 5: Crossing the Dja River
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