

**No. 7**

# Forest Participation Series

## Forests, Farmers and the State

**Participatory Forest  
Management in the Ivory Coast**

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Eric Léonard**



**International  
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**Forestry and Land Use  
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# **Farmers, Forests and the State - Participatory Forest Management in the Ivory Coast: theory and practice**

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## **Note on authors**

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## Preface

### Negotiating roles for forest management: constraints and opportunities

An analysis of the evolution of approaches to forest management in Africa over recent decades shows that we have passed through two main phases and are now entering a third:

#### **The technocratic era: management for the forest and against the people**

Up to the early seventies, priority was given to the trees at the expense of the people who use them. It was thought that enhanced technical capacity in forest management would be sufficient to guarantee their renewal for the good of the nation. Programmes aimed at developing capacity primarily concerned technical matters and were intended for government staff.

However, over the years, significant failures of "top-down" initiatives, driven solely by technical considerations and from the top led to the realisation that bad forest management was not due to lack of technical skills alone.

#### **The participation era: forest management for and by the people**

The flaws of the technocratic approach have led to the pursuit of the concept and practice of *participation*, as a means to ensure that local people's interests and needs are taken into account in the decisions concerning the fate of forests. Participation gradually became a *sine qua non* condition for success of forestry initiatives in rural areas. It has been

politically incorrect to criticise the concept and it invariably constitutes a requirement for securing donor support.

However, in recent years, "participation" has proven difficult to implement when it means going beyond mere consultation and achieving active involvement of forest users in decision making. Reasons for this include:

- active participation implies a process of social transformation. As such, it requires commitment and flexibility over long periods and does not always fit target-oriented agendas; be they by governments alone or with the support of donors;
- participation is often seen as an increase of responsibility given to local people, but without a corresponding increase in their rights and access to benefits. As such, participation actually becomes a burden and is usually refused or passively accepted;
- somewhat paradoxically, the pressure for participation (from donors and NGOs) has led to attempts to applying it mechanistically, a little like blueprints. This contradicts one of the original aims of participation, i.e. that it should be adapted to local contexts;
- participation also requires logistical means for advisors (technicians, NGO staff) to be in close contact with rural

dwellers. Such means are often lacking in rural areas.

Even when successful participation is achieved, the sustainability of the new framework for decision-making is often doubtful, for several reasons:

- "success stories" often appear with donor-support but without the need for commitment on the part of government authorities;
- "participation" has tended to focus on the use of resources by people. It has more seldom dealt with institutional participation, i.e. collaboration between all the interest groups.

As a result, participation has been mostly accepted so long as it does not disturb existing power structures. Often this means its restriction to project frameworks; which have a limited lifespan; and where less powerful are called upon to share decision-making.

### **The emergence of political negotiation: forest management with the people and other actors**

It is increasingly apparent that participation is often limited in scope and faces extreme difficulties in scaling up beyond local level.

What has been missing in both the technocratic and the participatory "crises" is the recognition of the *highly political character* of forest management, even at local level. The need for a *social definition* of forest management has been proven by the experience with participation. But this requires negotiations between institutions which represent all existing interest groups,

and especially the weaker ones. Hence, the implementation of participatory forest management needs to be *politically negotiated*. Thus, participation should be accompanied by the development of mechanisms which allow for the negotiation of stakeholders' roles. This implies changes in existing power structures.

To achieve a constructive negotiation process, capacity needs are more institutional than technical. They can be divided into two categories:

- capacity for *negotiation* itself, such as empowerment of the weakest stakeholder(s), which may involve literacy, provision of information, and other activities related to the concept of training for transformation;
- at a later stage, capacities for *sustaining roles*, such as accountability and representativeness of local governance, leadership, and economic resilience.

The highly political nature of these issues explains why they have been poorly dealt with in the development arena, despite the fact that they often constitute the major constraints to sustainable forest management.

Another difficulty concerns the vagueness associated to the term "roles". One can try to overcome this weakness by defining stakeholders' roles via their respective *rights, responsibilities, returns from forest resources and relationships* (i.e. their "4Rs"). Stakeholders' "4Rs" are often unbalanced, a situation which often impairs adequate negotiation and leads to forest decline.

Papers 6,7,8,9 and 10 in this Forest Participation Series illustrate different constraints created by imbalances in stakeholders' roles; but also how these can evolve towards forms of collaboration which are conducive to more sustainable management of the forest.

**Samuel Egbe** (paper No. 6) provides an overview of the historical evolution of forest tenure and access to forest resources in **Cameroon**.

Natural resource tenure and access policies in Cameroon have, since the colonial period, generally ignored the existence of local populations, done little to strengthen the ability of peasants and their institutions to cope with the blunt nationalisation of the resources upon which their lives are inextricably linked. This unilateral usurpation and top-down approach not only undermined traditional institutions, but demotivated many rural people whose energies could have been mobilised in the management effort.

The author argues that state control and ownership of natural resources has not ensured rational management nor brought about rapid social and economic development. Lack of social legitimacy of forest regulations and policies is considered to be a main reason for such failures.

The thrust of this paper is therefore to examine past experience, and identify constraints and opportunities, in an attempt to engender a more indigenous resource tenure system in Cameroon.

The paper by **Jonas Ibo** and **Eric Léonard** (No. 7) presents a historical

analysis of developments in policy and social practice relating to forest management and conservation, against the economic and social transformations undergone by the **Ivory Coast** since the beginning of the century. In particular, it seeks to assess the most recent experiments aimed at involving small farmers in the implementation of rehabilitation programmes, based on two examples. This a rare example in sub-Saharan Africa, where the state officially tackles the issue of encroachment of the forest by farmers, in contrast to the usual "*laissez-faire*" attitude in other African countries. Yet, it does so by means of a strategy aimed at actually excluding farmers from commercial use of the forest resources; however in a "participatory" manner. The last part of the paper discusses possible means to improve this strategy.

In paper No 8, **Alain Pénelon** discusses a study carried out in two forest communities in **Eastern-Cameroon**. The study had two-fold objectives: to analyse how roles in land and forest resource allocation are defined at village level, and to what extent the provisions on community forestry of the 1994 Forestry Law are applicable at local level.

The author describes nine steps used in the completion of the study. It concerns land differentiation in terms of use and access according to the distance from the village and major problems in the implementation of the New Forestry Law concerning community forestry, i.e. costs, tedious character of the procedure, etc.

The paper finishes with some proposals to improve the existing Law and other

regulations which affect local communities' involvement in forest management.

Liz Wily's paper (No. 9) illustrates how a facilitating role by government has allowed interesting community-based initiatives to take place in the miombo forest of Tanzania. It describes how, in a situation of severe degradation of the forest cover, two communities have met the challenge of achieving sustained, effective control of the use of the forest resource in a very cost-effective way. This was made possible because they were given appropriate rights and access to benefits to effectively assume their responsibilities as forest managers. In her discussion, the author points to some very interesting generic lessons that may be drawn out from these examples.

Finally, Olivier Dubois' paper (No. 10) attempts to provide a synthesis of recent literature - both Anglophone and Francophone - about rights to land and forests in sub-Saharan Africa. These are at the heart of the debate on sustainable land use in this Region, because the dualistic situation where formal and customary rules co-exist creates often confusion and tensions, which result in quasi open access to forest resources.

Policies aimed at improving tenure security have generally failed and reinforced existing power structures, as they only look at the spatial dimension of security, contrasting with the more social aspects of rights built into customary rules. Initiatives such as formal titling of land on the one hand; and codification and formalisation of customary rules on the other hand, have so far not lived up to their expectations. The author discusses more recent experiments and proposals aimed at bridging the gap between customary and formal rules. These concern adaptive legislation, enabling institutional frameworks and ways to convey information to stakeholders. Such actions are just in their infancy and are likely to be difficult to implement, as they threaten to destabilise power structures. Hence the need to allow for experimentation, continuous learning, and building confidence for these attempts to materialise in efficient policies.

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## Introduction

Sustainable management of forest resources and localised protection of these resources have long been the practice of the forest dwellers in the Ivory Coast; the existence of many sacred sites, which have been protected right up to the present day, as well as cropping systems using coppicing as a primary way of restoring soil fertility, bears eloquent witness to this. The management and conservation of wooded areas also attracted the attention of the public authorities at a very early stage: a forestry administration was set up in 1912 and the first national park was created in 1926, long before any such measures were taken in metropolitan France<sup>1</sup>; the establishment of an administrative department responsible for reforestation, SODEFOR (Société pour le développement des plantations forestières - Forestry Development Authority), dates back to 1966.

This very early concern to protect the forest wealth of the nation does, however, seem to conflict with the type of economic development pursued since the colonial era, in which civil society and the political system were structured around the economics of the coffee and cocoa plantations and, to a lesser degree, exports of tropical timber (Chauveau and Dozon, 1985; Leonard and Ibo, 1994). The Ivory Coast is now the leading world producer of cocoa, accounting for more than one third of the market, and was the third most

important coffee exporter until the early 1990s. These two sectors accounted for up to 55% of the country's exports and up to 25% of its GDP; in 1988, they involved about 700,000 growers, or 4.8 million rural people (about 40% of the total population) and more than 2.5 million hectares (Losch, 1994). The economic boom in the Ivory Coast was thus based on the development of a large-scale pioneer logging operation, which slashed through the entire forest area from east to west between 1950 and 1990, leading to the almost total destruction of the country's forests: these covered 15 million hectares at the beginning of the century and 12 million at independence, but the area was reduced to no more than 6 million hectares by 1975 and about 2.5 million by 1990.

This mining of forest resources through the plantation economy - but also the clientelist political edifice built around the centralised management of export revenue - bore within it the seeds of a major crisis in the national economy. The depletion of the last areas of forest during the 1980s led to a net loss of export revenue (as the volumes of timber marketed shrank) and a reduction in the competitiveness of national coffee and cocoa production, which was affected by the disappearance of the natural gains in fertility associated with forestry. These developments are largely responsible for the crisis which the Ivory Coast has

<sup>1</sup> The first national park in France, the Vanoise national park, was not set up until 1963.



been experiencing since the mid-1980s. Together with the renewed interest from donors in conserving tropical rain forests, they have led to the establishment of a vast plan to restore national forest potential, the main feature of which is the declared intention to involve rural people in rehabilitating and managing the forests concerned, breaking completely with previous administrative practice.

The purpose of this article is to analyse, from a historical perspective, developments in policy and social

practice relating to forest management and conservation, against the background of the economic and macro-social transformations undergone by the Ivory Coast since the beginning of the century. We shall, in particular, seek to assess the scope of the most recent experiments aimed at involving small farmers in implementing rehabilitation programmes. Two examples will be considered to illustrate the point: the forests of Niégré and Monogaga, in the south-western region, which were gazetted by the administration in 1937 and 1973 respectively.

## Forest management: the colonial inheritance

### The administrative framework

The desire to control and supervise the exploitation of forest resources, which were seen as extremely rich and varied<sup>2</sup>, justified the early intervention of the colonial authorities, who first established a legal and institutional framework (1900-1926)<sup>3</sup> and then restricted access to many forests between 1927 and 1958.

These measures were amply sufficient to meet the Ivory Coast Territory's obligation to cover the expense of setting up and maintaining administrative services (post and telegraphy, customs, public works, courts, police, agriculture and so on) in accordance with the principle of self-financing for the colonies imposed by the 1900 finance law, as well as to contribute to the civil and military expenditure of the metropolis. Rather than expressing a French tradition in the matter of forest management and protection, which had begun in the 17th century (with the famous 1669 Water and Forestry Order), the establishment of a framework governing access to forest resources related above all to the

desire to "rationalise" and guarantee the sustainability of systematic exploitation of those resources, the "indigenous" sector being considered incapable of meeting this dual objective. The establishment of a forestry service, in 1912, organised along the lines of its metropolitan counterpart, was the historical act which preceded the gazetting of the forests of the Ivory Coast. Although reference was made to it at the beginning of the century<sup>4</sup>, it was not until 1925 that the plan to set up "gazetted forests under state administration" was actually implemented. The overall process of gazetting during the colonial era was split into two main phases. The first, from 1925 to 1945, was characterised by its intensity: by 1934, there were 66 forest reserves covering an area of 1,725,600 hectares; there were 189 gazetted forests in 1946 and 213 in 1951, totalling 2,767,964 hectares, or a quarter of the entire forest area.

The official line is to present this gazetting policy as the culmination of a series of measures with ecological consequences. This can be seen in particular in the way forestry policy was formulated; Governor Reste defined its

<sup>2</sup> "This impenetrable country is an inexhaustible source of wealth; the forest is made up solely of valuable species; oil palms, cashew, guma trees, kola nut trees and, above all, rubber trees and creepers, stretching back from the sea" (Captain d'Ollone, 1901).

<sup>3</sup> Decree dated 20th July 1900, organizing the forestry system in the Ivory Coast; decree dated 18th June 1912 on the forestry regime; order dated 12th March 1912 creating a forestry department in the Ivory Coast.

<sup>4</sup> Article 32 of the decree dated 15th October 1900 provides that "the governor may decide to set aside such parts of the forest as are already being exploited whose preservation he may deem useful, until further notice".

principal components in 1935: 1) conserving the country's forest wealth in its entirety; 2) increasing it by enriching and developing the forests; 3) dividing the territory into areas intended for agriculture and wooded areas, so as to encourage climatic stability (Ivory Coast Territory, 1935 Budget).

The pattern of economic development in the Ivory Coast at that time does, however, contrast sharply with the official line. As of 1925, the number of logging sites multiplied (from 516 in 1928 to 632 in 1929), as did the area planted with coffee and cocoa: from 11,800 hectares in 1925, the coffee-growing area rose to 20,100 hectares in 1930, 72,000 hectares in 1939 and 135,000 in 1948, while the area under coffee amounted to 130,000 hectares by 1936 (Avice, 1951). Small indigenous planters played a vital role in the development of these cash crops: as of the end of the 1930s, they owned 90 per cent of the area under coffee and cocoa. They did, however, have to cope with a discriminatory and extremely punitive policy: on the one hand, workers were requisitioned for the sole benefit of the administration (in particular to construct and maintain the network of tracks), logging companies and European planters, depriving the indigenous sector of a not inconsiderable proportion of its living strength (as much because of the drift

from the land that this brought about, towards the Abidjan region or the neighbouring Gold Coast, as because of what was actually taken). On the other hand, the frenzy of gazetting led to the exclusion of Africans from a whole slice of the national territory (and a goodly number of their ancestral lands) to the benefit of certain logging companies or colonists, for whom legislation proved to be far less restricting<sup>5</sup>. The case of the Niégré forest provides a good illustration of this policy.

## **Forests as sanctuaries: the Niégré Forest**

In 1935, as a result of the "scale of deforestation in the Bas-Sassandra circle", a draft order was submitted by the Water and Forestry Department to the Governor of the colony, with the aim of provisionally forbidding all clearance in certain parts of the sub-division. The Niégré forest, an area of 91,793 hectares, was gazetted in October 1937. The relevant order explicitly indicated the location of the former village of Baléko that the Godié people were obliged to evacuate. It shows that, contrary to the foresters' insistence that the place was really "devoid of human life", the gazetting did not relate to a no man's land and that the administration was quite aware of the fact.

The primary function of the gazetting commission set up by the colonial

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<sup>5</sup> When the forests of Beya, Djaniadou and Niégré, in Sassandra circle, were surveyed with a view to gazetting by the deputy inspector of the Water and Forestry Department, Mr. Vallette, in 1935 and after some indigenous villages had been expelled, the latter observed that "they cannot be gazetted presently as they are wholly or partly encompassed within the Girard logging concession. For the moment, the only statutory way of protecting these forests, which will be the subject of a request for gazetting if the Girard concession should be withdrawn, is to apply Article 17 of the decree dated 14th July 1935 to these forests; this article gives Lieutenant Governors the right, in the public interest, to set aside certain areas of protected land".

authority, in which the chiefs of the indigenous villages concerned were supposed to take part, was to endorse the decisions of the managers in the forestry department. The nature of the relationship between, on the one hand, the colonial authorities and the African population, and on the other, the inability of the latter to read the notices of intent displayed in the offices of the commander of the circle (where the local people only set foot in order to be reprimanded or punished) implied *de facto* exclusion of the local people from forest management. The oral tradition of the Godié villages next to the Niégré forest does, moreover, record the violent repression (imprisonment, beatings, etc.) meted out to farmers who dared to affirm their right over their ancestral lands by establishing a rice field.

This policy of forest "sanctuaries" was, however, called into question by the dynamics of economic growth in the Ivory Coast colony as of 1950. At national level, the setting aside of new forests or the extension of the existing areas was amply offset by partial and then total removal of gazetted status from others. This development was directly related to the crisis into which the French colonial system was plunged after World War II, with the emergence of an indigenous political party, the

PDCI-RDA, which issued from the union of African planters and whose first achievement was to be the abolition of compulsory labour and the native administration system (the 1946 Houphouët-Boigny law). This "freeing" of labour was a decisive factor in the boom which began in the plantation economy of the Ivory Coast at that time, largely due to migrants setting out to colonise the forests of the west for agricultural purposes.<sup>6</sup>

In this way, throughout the colonial era, forestry policy helped to construct a new relationship between farming societies and the forest, by depriving them of control of the latter and then excluding them from its use. Even before independence, the contradictions between this mode of management and the type of economic development pursued made themselves felt with a vengeance and the first signs of collapse appeared. Over the following decades, the State was to lack between its desire to confirm the exclusion of the farming sector from the timber industry and the legitimacy it had acquired during the emancipation process as a representative of the farming communities. The result was to be a process of massive agricultural colonisation and rapid destruction of the forest wealth of the nation.

<sup>6</sup> Coffee and cocoa production rose from about 95,000 and 70,000 tons respectively in 1955 to 155,000 and 90,000 tons in 1960 and 230,000 and 130,000 tons in 1965.

## State management of forest after independence: 30 years of laissez-faire, negotiation and violence

### Managing forests: the political and administrative framework

As of 1960, the almost virgin forest areas in western Ivory Coast were at the root of the "economic miracle" experienced by the country. Despite the establishment in 1966 of a body responsible for ensuring the sustainability of forest resources (the SODEFOR), environmental action was characterised by unimaginative continuity and was reactionary in nature. The trends noted during the last period of colonial management were confirmed and led to the uncontrolled exploitation of timber resources, through a succession of logging booms, the opening up of major pioneer fronts and the occupation of gazetted forests. The State focused on setting up a legal framework and infrastructure which would, on the one hand, enable still virgin areas to be exploited rapidly and, on the other, allow it to manage the revenue that these were to generate in its best interests.

The removal of gazetted status from large sections of state-administered forests and the assignment of these to government officials and powerful local personalities were a response to the same demands. After independence, centralised management of forest revenue was thus a decisive factor in

funding the state budget and the state's client group. However, between 1960 and the mid-1980s, the costs of integrating new generations and the extension of these networks required the mobilisation of ever more substantial resources. The convergence of political and economic interest thus led to an increasingly rapid and large-scale exploitation of forest wealth. This reached its peak when pioneer operations were set up in the centre-west and south-west regions of the country. Apart from regularly - and spectacularly as of 1970 - increasing its revenue, this dynamic process provided the State with a vital political base in regions on whose support it could not, *a priori*, count, but where the absence of legislation governing landholdings allowed it to find a captive electorate in the form of the migrants.

Farmer groups played a central role in the process of agricultural colonisation and rapid destruction of forest wealth. Excluded from the timber industry and the most lucrative places in the coffee and cocoa industries (guaranteed farm-gate prices accounted for between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of the FOB export price over the period 1960-1988), small farmers did not have access to the forest environment as a source of revenue except through its biomass and its agronomic potential, i.e. by clearing and burning the forest in order to plant

cocoa trees. Agricultural colonisation initially involved forests which had not been gazetted, but quickly spread to the state-administered "permanent forest estate". In fact, immigrants saw the politically motivated removal of gazetted status from whole slices of these forests as an incentive to occupy and clear them. The indigenous people also took part in this process by selling plots of these gazetted forests to the new arrivals, which for them was the only way of recovering a fraction of the revenue accruing from their ancestral lands, from which national legislation excluded them. Whether according to plan or through simple endorsement of land occupations, 975,000 hectares of state-administered property lost their gazetted status between 1960 and 1986, while during that period the rate of occupation of the residual estate reached 30 per cent (SODEFOR, 1992).

As of the middle of the 1980s, it became increasingly obvious that the Ivory Coast's economic model was running out of steam: while the national debt reached record levels, the depletion of the last remaining forests foretold an unavoidable erosion of export revenue; the underlying decrease in the volume of timber exported, which was already marked, was combined with the fall in competitiveness of the coffee/cocoa sector, which was affected by the loss of the fertility gains associated with the pioneer phase and by the ageing of the plantations which was already resulting

in dwindling coffee harvests.<sup>7</sup> The collapse in the world price of coffee and cocoa between 1986 and 1994 was to precipitate the financial crisis of the State. This development led to a calling into question, at the instigation of donors, of the forestry policy followed since independence.

In political terms, this turnaround resulted in two notable events. On the one hand, 1988 was declared the "year of the forest" in Ivory Coast, with the intention of raising the awareness of small farmers in relation to the problem of occupation of gazetted forests and uncontrolled clearance. It found concrete expression in violent actions, known as "iron fist operations", conducted by the Water and Forest Department against the clandestine occupants of gazetted forests, whose plantations and camps were burned. On the other hand, the old Forestry Development Agency (SODEFOR), which had been vegetating since its creation in 1966<sup>8</sup>, was reactivated and became the main tool in implementing forest policy. After it was entrusted, in 1986, with managing gazetted forests as a whole, SODEFOR received a mandate from the Forest Master Plan agreed for the period 1988-2015 to reform the operation of the timber industry, especially the system of allocating forest resources, according to the principle that "the forest should finance the forest". It was planned, in particular, that the former system of granting logging

<sup>7</sup> Timber exports fell from 2.8 millions tons in 1975 to 2.4 millions tons in 1980, 1.5 million in 1985 and 86,000 tons in 1990. Coffee production, after holding at around 270,000 tons, the third highest in the world, between 1975 and 1980, slipped to 230,000 tons in 1985 and 220,000 in 1990, before collapsing to 150,000 tons in 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Having initially been directed to handle the reforestation of 300,000 hectares, at a rate of 10,000 hectares per year, SODEFOR had only replanted 80,000 hectares by the end of the 1980s.

permits would be replaced by the sale of standing timber, on a fixed price basis or at auction, on a given area of state-administered property or of the rural estate. This reform is designed to promote the country's forest potential once again, starting with the gazetted forests, some 30 per cent of which have been taken over for agriculture.

### **SODEFOR and its "participatory management" model**

SODEFOR plans to involve rural people in managing these forests through a consultative body in which the administration, the local people and economic operators (loggers and industrialists) will take part, the CPF (*Commission paysans-forêt* - Farmer/Forest Commission), whose first task is to reach an amicable settlement in respect of illegal occupations. The Forest Management Charter defines the CPF as a "forum for dialogue, reconciliation and recommendation, responsible for achieving targets in respect of the rehabilitation and development of gazetted forests, from the perspective of involving local people in forest management" (SODEFOR, 1992). One may, however, wonder whether the practice of gazetting vast areas of forest and the rationale of socio-economic development driven and maintained by the State in rural areas are compatible with farmer participation in the official environmental protection policy. Although SODEFOR has declared its desire to break with the practices inherited from the colonial era, it has

not called into question the original "national park" concept; at the most, it is trying to sprinkle a few social elements inspired by the specific features of local situations over the traditional, centralising, statist and universalist approach.

This desire to maintain state control over gazetted forests and to continue restricting access to them can easily be explained in the light of the objectives of the Forestry Master Plan adopted for the period 1988-2015. In fact, the latter tends to confirm the centralised management pattern for forestry revenue and the principle of excluding small farmers from the timber industry, at least insofar as the appropriation and marketing of timber resources are concerned. Apart from the official line which puts forward the notion of "participatory management", the priority objective of SODEFOR is to restore the largest possible proportion of the timber potential of areas illegally occupied by farmers, although it does intend to limit the social cost of such restoration. The composition and operation of the Farmer/Forest Commissions reflect this ranking of objectives. At national level, the CPF is made up of 21 members representing the different partners in the forestry sector (the administration, which is in the majority, loggers, industrialists and farmers), of whom only three (15%) represent rural communities and only one the "clandestine" farmers (SODEFOR, 1992). Incidentally, the CPFs, at both local and national level, only have an advisory function and no decision-making power, this being held by the Ministry of Agriculture.

It is true that SODEFOR's proposals are based on a deliberately non-prescriptive approach and seek to stick closely to the realities of the situation in the field: socio-economic surveys are supposed to provide a sound understanding of local dynamics and are to be used to guide the planned regrouping of lands in each forest. The Farmer/Forest Commissions are intended, in the final analysis, to get farmer representatives to endorse the forest resource use plans drawn up by SODEFOR's technicians. These plans are based on delimiting "blocks" to which specific functions must be assigned: agriculture, timber production, reforestation, conservation *in situ* (see appendix for definitions).

Agricultural activity is confined to areas where forest cover has virtually disappeared. The criteria for creating an agricultural block relate to the concepts of "village territories" and "communities" as defined by SODEFOR: a social group constitutes a community to the extent that it has been organised in such a way as to establish structures like markets, schools, places of worship and so on; the accepted meaning of the term "terroir" (village territory) is an area used by a group of at least ten farms, where the cultivated area (excluding fallow land and regenerated forest) accounts for more than 50 percent of the total. When these two criteria are taken into account, long-standing settlements do, *a priori*, have a degree of legitimacy. The responsibility of the State in selling or displacing farmers (e.g. when their land is required for public purposes) is also considered to be a

factor in justifying the designation of an agricultural block.

The principle of removing gazetted status having been excluded right away, it is expected that the farms can remain within the agricultural block provided that they do not undertake further clearance. On this basis, leases are arranged with farmers in order to provide them with a degree of security of tenure. The principle of passing on the land being worked to one's heirs is thus accepted, but the basic statutes do not make any reference to what will happen to such land once the coffee or cocoa plantations are established. In order to encourage more stable production systems, it is planned to provide the farmers with facilities in terms of organisation, infrastructure, monitoring and development of innovations and training.

The agricultural blocks are also designed to take in some of the farmers expelled from the "reconstitution" blocks. It is here that the tensions between the administration and clandestine farmers are most acute. In outlying areas or those falling within an agricultural block, SODEFOR is committed to negotiating allocation of land or to relocating the farmers concerned. The "resettlement contracts" designed for this purpose are supposed to enable them to have the use of their plantations in the forest, until new plots are allocated. When reforestation reaches these plantations, it is also planned that planting will be spaced out so that cocoa can be harvested until the trees have reached the optimum age for producing timber. Finally, the farmers



concerned have priority in employment for the forestry work organised by SODEFOR. However, these measures are not sufficient to overcome the resistance of farmers who find themselves dispossessed of the capital (plantation) that they have sometimes taken more than a decade to accumulate and whose main failing, in the final analysis, has been not to extend clearance at the same rate and with the same degree of intensity as their neighbours in the agricultural blocks.

### **Participatory management or only "close to forest users" management?**

The flexibility of the institutional framework adopted through the Farmer/Forest Commissions, the permanent presence of SODEFOR agents in the field and the many contacts established with the local people have enabled the redevelopment plans to progress and the operating principles of the CPF to be adjusted when they seem to be preventing the achievement of the administration's objectives.

This flexibility in methods - but not in objectives - is particularly evident in the case of the Niégré forest. The distrust which lay behind the farmers' initial attitude towards an institution which they saw as essentially repressive had been confirmed by the operation of the CPF following the good old principles of "democratic centralism" (where the civil and political authorities, especially the prefect, played a dominant role) and by the fact that sessions were held in the

chief town of the department, which made it impossible for the farmers concerned to attend. These failings were accentuated by the way in which farmer society was represented: its delegates were mainly recruited amongst the leading personalities in the villages, often the traditional chiefs who, through their role in politics (as agents of the official party, the PDCI-RDA) and the administration, could not come openly into conflict with the political authorities. The diversity of the various socio-cultural groups was no better represented. Is it any wonder, in the circumstances, that the message worked out at the top by SODEFOR should have come through badly and incompletely to the farming community?

The dysfunction of the CPF was aggravated by the day-to-day practice of SODEFOR's grassroots workers. Recruited from within the Water and Forestry service, the latter had long given pride of place to intimidation and repression, even racketeering, rather than to the slogans of motivation and consultation which SODEFOR had made its watch-word: resistance to the move from a "predatory" rationale to one of partnership has long been the major obstacle to the establishment of a climate of confidence between farmers and the forestry administration.

Since 1993, however, there has been a clear shift in these trends. Information and consultation meetings are held more and more frequently, within the CPF framework, in the major encampments in the forest. Representatives of foreign communities

are invited and they have, to a large extent, been brought into the management committees of the agricultural blocks which have been set up in the Monogaga forest. Finally, training courses for SODEFOR's grassroots workers are increasing in number, with financial support from the World Bank. These developments have enabled a genuine dialogue to be set up at local level between the forestry administration and the farmers.

Does that mean that "participatory management" exists, as SODEFOR's managers say? The consultation fora set up at the level of the gazetted forests (CPI, agricultural block management committees) are exclusively concerned with the manner of resettlement of farmers expelled from the reforestation areas and with how land is to be used for agriculture with both spatial and time restrictions. The local Farmer/Forest Commissions, incidentally, have only a consultative function and the National Commission (whose low level of representation of the farming community we have already seen) may or may not take its advice into account, the final decision being a matter for the Ministry of Agriculture in any case. Far from involving local people in forest management, SODEFOR's approach still pushes them back, by suggesting palliative solutions which ensure the implementation of policy imposed without the knowledge (and sometimes

even against the interests) of the people who are supposed to be involved in such management. If there is any farmer participation, it is participation in marginalising themselves from the field of forest resource use.

SODEFOR is certainly distinguishing itself from the practices developed by the forestry administration since the colonial era<sup>4</sup> and is adopting an approach which is concerned with the social consequences of forest rehabilitation. The essence of its policy is still, nonetheless, to perpetuate the State's control over timber resources and the monopoly revenue that the latter gains from them. Under the cloak of "participatory management", it is more a matter of "close to forest users management" enabling SODEFOR's officials to be in permanent contact with the farmers, to make them accept principles which exclude them from sharing in that revenue. Reforestation operations have even been conducted on the site of some villages, with the aim of demonstrating the omnipresence and strength of the forestry administration (as in the case of the village of Koboa-Méagui, in the agricultural block of Monogaga forest).

Such control over the farming environment implies the deployment of substantial financial and technical resources: no less than 29 members of staff, including four forestry engineers and three animal and plant production

<sup>4</sup> Which practices are still current amongst certain sections of the Water and Forestry departments, as was shown in 1994 and 1995, in the pre-electoral period, by the exactions to which foreigners settled in the gazetted forests around the Tai national park were subjected (confiscation of residence permits, pillaging and burning of camps, etc), when more conciliatory methods were employed against illegal occupants who were nationals of the Ivory Coast.

technicians, are permanently deployed to monitor the 92,500 hectares of Niégré forest; they have seven four-wheel drive vehicles, a private car and three motor-cycles at their disposal. With two million hectares under the responsibility of SODEFOR, one can easily imagine the cost involved in maintaining state control in this way and, above all, the

rate at which forest resources must be used in order to make such a system pay, since the accepted principle is that "the forest must finance the forest". Would it not be possible to envisage a less costly form of organisation which would provide the same safeguards as to the preservation of the forest environment?

## Conclusion: some thoughts about the conditions for genuine participatory management

In view of the questions SODEFOR is asking itself about ways of stabilising agricultural production systems and its desire to become involved in intensification programmes, it is a potential partner for farmers in an agricultural development project. With the announcement that social infrastructure is to be put in place and that long-term leases are to be prepared which can be handed down through the family and provide farmers with secure access to land, as well as the expected involvement of the ANADER (Agence nationale de développement rural - National Rural Development Agency) and IDEFOR (Institut de recherche pour le développement de la zone forestière - Forest Development Research Institute) in rural development projects relating to state-administered forests, the perception farmers have of the forestry administration should improve. Because of the current heavy pressure on land within the gazetted forests, the latter do in fact provide a most propitious framework for experiments in applied research relating to the establishment of intensive, sustainable production systems. By lifting the constraints which the exhaustion of forest lands places on the replication of these systems, such projects would represent the best guarantee of protection for the residual forests.

Will such support be enough to win rural societies over to the policy of

setting aside forest areas? If it follows through with the partnership logic it is putting forward, SODEFOR should be induced to involve the farmers in the distribution of the value created by rehabilitating forestry potential. It is illusory to expect local people to take part in reforestation operations so long as they are excluded from the exploitation of forest resources. Farmers could become guardians of the forest, provided that the latter is not considered as a source of income for the exclusive benefit of loggers and the state, but also as a reservoir of food and medicinal plants and game, which is accessible under certain conditions. It is certainly planned to give farmers work in felling, replanting and guarding the forest. Why not extend that participation to the replanting of certain areas which would be leased to the farmers, renewal of the lease being dependent on proper maintenance of the plantations? Preparation for cutting and the sale of standing timber to loggers would be handled at the level of the Farmer/Forest Commission and subject to the joint agreement of the farmer and SODEFOR. The proceeds of the sale would go to the producer after deduction of a tax designed to finance the supervisory structure. Replanting carried out within reconstitution blocks, especially in the middle of the cocoa plantations, could provide a frame to try out this idea.

Establishing agro-forestry as a profession would probably provide the most effective barrier against illegal infiltration and irrational exploitation of forest resources. It would also make it possible to limit the costs incurred by the state in conserving forest areas and would contribute towards stimulating reforestation efforts in the rural estate, which has considerable potential for

timber production. However, it has the major disadvantage of setting up a countervailing power at the level of each CPF, which could negotiate the distribution of forest revenue, on a permanent basis, between the state, the timber industry and farmers. Can such democratisation be reconciled with the objectives of the administration and the state in the Ivory Coast?

## Appendix

**Gazetted forest:** a given area of forest, set aside for ecological and economic purposes in accordance with Article 32 of the decree dated 15th October 1900 which, for the first time, organised the forestry regime in the Ivory Coast. In 1951, there were already 213 gazetted forests covering a total area of 2,767,964 hectares.

**Permanent Forest Estate:** in view of the deterioration of forest cover, the state decided, in 1978, to set up a permanent forest estate in the Ivory Coast, in which no human activity would be allowed. This estate is made up of gazetted forests, national parks and similar reserves. The Ivory Coast has 8 national parks, 3 similar reserves and 17 botanical reserves covering a total area of 2 million hectares, or 6.7% of the national territory.

**Rural estate:** in the Ivory Coast, the state is the sole owner of land and alone entitled to cede land on a permanent or provisional basis for a particular activity. All forests which have not been gazetted by decree or Government order, but which are used for

agricultural or forestry purposes under the overall authority of the state, make up the protected rural estate. This officially makes up almost 80% of the national territory.

**Agricultural block:** Seriously degraded area under intense farming pressure. The aim here is to stabilise and intensify agriculture, in order to prevent farmers moving into gazetted forests. It is also a resettlement area for farmers from forest blocks.

**Reconstitution block:** Part of the gazetted forest made up of cleared areas, crops and islands of forest. The aim here is to reconstitute forest cover.

**Production block:** This is a part of the forest which has been logged. It is designed to improve existing natural stands of trees with a view to long-term production of high quality timber.

**Protected block:** Falling within production blocks, protected blocks are basically designed to safeguard animal species taking refuge in these sections of gazetted forests.

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## **Forests, Farmers and the State: Participatory Forest Management in the Ivory Coast**

The paper presents a historical analysis of developments in policy and social practice relating to forest management and conservation, against the economic and social transformations undergone by the Ivory Coast since the beginning of the century. In particular, it seeks to assess the most recent experiments aimed at involving small farmers in the implementation of rehabilitation programmes, based on two examples.

The last part of the paper discusses possible means to improve the strategy currently in place.

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