

BEHIND THE FSC™* LABEL OF WIJMA CAMEROUN S.A.

Quarterly newsletter N° 2 : July 2011

The consequences of the implementation of FSC™ certificate in the Congo Basin: Sharing experience with Wijma Cameroon S.A.

Who are we ?

Editorial

“The implementation of FSC™ certification has led the company to apply new management methods which will allow the company to comply with the FSC™ requirements. The company is nowadays a more reliable and more dynamic organisation to get over the challenges. Yes, the certification has made us stronger.”

Jacky Rivière,
*General Director Wijma
Cameroun S.A.*

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Created in 1968 and daughter company of the Wijma group in the Netherlands, Wijma Cameroun S.A. is the first FSC™ certified forest company in the Congo Basin. With more than 350 workers, 4 FMUs and 2 sawmills, Wijma Cameroun primarily provides FSC™ certified hydraulic wood (Azobé, okan, tali), from second and third processing mainly for the Dutch market.

Pioneer in the emergence of this new trade of FSC™ certified foresters in the Congo Basin, Wijma Cameroun indeed was re-questioned by certain stakeholders during this period of training and learning new practices. Today Wijma Cameroun succeeded in certifying 100% of its forest management and transformation activities, as well as those of its partners and aims to maintain this level of performance.

The challenges for the implementation and follow-up of this responsible forest management policy are palpable on the ground every day. Therefore, we would like to share with you through this newsletter, the challenges, realities and progress of our profession seen by Wijma Cameroun.

Thematic: The consequences of the implementation of FSC™ certificate in the Congo Basin: Sharing experience with Wijma Cameroon S.A.

The FSC label represents long, difficult and expensive efforts to reach and maintain certification's objectives.

Once should understand that without a regional or national standard, to apply strictly the FSC Principal and Criteria required the managers, sociologues and environmentalists of certified companies to search and develop new solutions to bring the local company to satisfy international concepts.

How have we got there? We had to sound differently:

The employees: The understanding and the implementation of the FSC™ procedure require qualified and well-trained employees. The engineer and higher technician level must be the rule in the recruitment for the forestry teams.



The policy of Cameroon in the field of education and training has enabled Wijma to find in Cameroon engineers and technicians who are capable of meeting the requirements of the FSC™ certification.

Nevertheless, the company must reconcile the aspirations of this new generation of highly qualified employees with the context of an insulated life in the field. Reconciling these two is an aspect which must be resolved in order to keep the certification and to have employees who stay with the company.

Testimony

"Our work at Wijma Cameroon includes preparing the company for the external audits in relation to the FSC^M requirements and on identifying possibilities for improvement and innovation. During 5 years of collaboration, it became clear that:

- All the positive and negative cases, the good and bad interpretations that we observed during audits mean a very constructive support for the management team in charge of observing FSC^M regulations,*
- These field missions show the importance of a team work, based on exchange of ideas that aim at a high-quality level,*
- FSC^M is a demanding standard, requiring important (not only financial but also human and technical) investments. Once the company accepts to re-question its management practices, it turns into a great progress driving force both for social and technical aspects, allowing an even more efficient and respectful management of resources".*

**Stéphane Rivain, Consultant
Oréade-Brèche**

And in the rest of the world?

Let's have a closer look at the distribution of FSCTM certificates in the world by focalising on the difference between northern and southern hemispheres. From certified area point of view, tropical zones represent 12,4% of the total ecosystem, from a number of forest management certificates point of view 24,3 % of the certificates are delivered in tropical area. Can we then conclude from these observations that FSCTM is more difficult to apply in the south? That many obstacles for its application still exists such as the absence of national standards, land tenure issues or the costs of forest certification? However, we can observe that the evolution of FSCTM certified areas in the tropics has continuously increased for the last few years, which is an encouraging result that demonstrate a real motivation from companies and a better permeability of national contexts in the application of FSCTM

The forestry regulations: some aspects of the Forestry Act allows for the existence of grey areas which are subjected to different interpretations. We are sometimes obliged to stretch the text of the act with a practical translation in the process of the most realistic interpretation in order to meet the requirements of the FSCTM certification. Adjusting the Act in order to make it more accurate is also an action induced by the certification.

The new technologies: the installation and use of computer equipment and of communication means (Internet) at the isolated sites in the field contribute to the supply of accurate and reliable databases in the area of forestry development, traceability and cartography. Unfortunately they conflict with the meteorological conditions of the rainy season under the equatorial climate and with the problems of remote maintenance, which constitute an obstacle for their permanent use.

A reliable and powerful investment is another effect induced by the certification.

The protection of animal life: the procedures aimed at controlling poaching in the forestry development on the side of the employees are known and easy to implement. On the other hand, on the side of the neighbouring populations this control is the responsibility of the State that is weak because of a lack of human and logistic resources. The enterprise involves itself in the surveillance operations and in fact it becomes responsible in the eyes of the stakeholders. When villagers are caught with protected species, the company is often accused of not respecting the rights of use of the populations, and is accused of letting poaching go on. In this context the compromise between respect for hunting for livelihood and the fight against poaching continues to be a cause of headaches for the company. Nevertheless, this effort deserves to be sustained and maintained as it still contributes to a genuine change of mentality as far as the preservation of animal life in the forestry concessions is concerned.

The uncertainties of the living conditions of the populations living on the edge of the forestry concessions: the neighbouring populations of the forestry concessions with very often insufficient and unstable revenues consider that the forestry enterprise is responsible for the economical development of the region and should achieve the regal tasks. The social pressure on the enterprise increases all the time and constantly puts at risk the good neighbourhood relations. The installation of consultation platforms through what the company tries to install a regular dialogue with the population allows conflicts to be understood or resolved, allows to understand the needs of the populations in the field, or allow to integrate them into the realisation and application of the development plan. Modernising, organising and adjusting the communication with the neighbouring populations are other consequences of the certification.

Co-operation with the local partners: the relations between the enterprise and the local actors are established within the principles of transparency and in accordance with the FSCTM requirements. In an isolated region the difficulty for the enterprise is to find local partners (NGOs, subcontractors, consultants) who have the knowledge required to run support projects for the certification. In order to develop this expertise, the certified company contributes to these structures its competences in the file of administrative management, establishment of statutes and financial strength to make these structures progress. Assisting with the establishment of expert partners in the professions around the forestry development is another consequence of the forestry certification.

At least four instructions have issued from the experiences mentioned above:

1. In the numerous fields of expertise, the certified company moves as an educator and vector of changes of mentality. And education is development;
2. The often distant and isolated work context in our forestry concessions obliges the company to deploy many more efforts than a similar operator sat in other latitudes in order to progress towards the FSCTM requirement;
3. The lack of means of the State to achieve its role of facilitator of the economic operator for its responsible forest management activities, continues to be a brake for the enterprise in comparison with other parties in the world where the State assures its regal role;
4. The evolution towards a new international FSCTM reference and its adjustment to the regional principles and criteria are an opportunity which makes us happy and which we follow with great interest.

Finally, the FSCTM certification in the Congo Basin also has an impact on the human development because of the necessity for the enterprise to have actors inside as well as outside the enterprise who are capable of maintaining the level required by the FSCTM. And the result of this work is translated into real technical, social and environmental progress.

On the basis of these findings the FSCTM certifications for the Congo Basin are to be encouraged and congratulated because they are a vector of the economical development.

News Wijma Cameroun

▪ **May 2011** : *Visit of Global Witness and CED at Bidou's sawmill.*

A délégation of 27 persons representing Global Witness International together with CED members came to Bidou's sawmill to understand the challenges of timber industry in Cameroon.



▪ **April 2011** : *Membership of Wijma Cameroon to the Congo Basin Forests Partnership - CBFP.*

Wijma Cameroon join the Congo Basin Forests Partnership. The objective of this membership is to develop our network of partners and to exchange information regarding sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin.

▪ **March 2011** : *Visite of the facilitator of the Congo Basin Forests Partnership facilitateur in Wijma Cameroun concessions.*

The CBFP facilitation and the Canadian Cooperation came to visit Wijma Cameroon forest concessions to be able to understand the realities of sustainable forest exploitation.



▪ **March 2011** : *Visit of the Minister of « Forêts et de la Faune » at Bidou and Nguti's sawmills.*

Employees of Bidou and Nguti's sawmills were honours to welcome Mr. Ngolle Ngolle and his delegation to be able to appreciate the challenges of wood processing in Cameroon.

▪ **March 2011** : *Inauguration of social activities around FMU 11 005.*

Several social activities (electrification, well, mills...) for Neighbourhood villages to FMU 11005 were inaugurated with local authorities and with the director of CAFECO.



▪ **February 2011** : *New Internet website of Wijma Cameroon available.*

Find it at www.wijmadouala.com a refreshed version of the Internet website of Wijma Cameroon.

International events

▪ Year 2011 decreed to be International Year of Forests by the United Nation Forum
United Nation Environment Program: 26th board direction session – Environmental Ministers Forum

▪ **07 to 10th of June 2011, Nairobi, Kenya**

Joined meeting between Biological Diversity Convention and the Working Group CITES Central Africa on international trade of threatened exotic species.

▪ **09 and 10th of June 2011 Libreville, Gabon**

Capacity Development Process in writing and applying forest policies, FAO.

▪ **12 to 15th of September. Yaoundé, Cameroun**

16th international meeting on environmental evaluation thematic Forest, Secretariat International Francophone pour l'Evaluation Environnementale (SIFEE).

▪ **29 to 30th of September 2011, Pointe Noire, Republic of Congo**

4th edition of RACEWOOD, Interafrican Forest Industry Association (IFIA)

