

Development of a Central African Bushmeat Monitoring System: **SYVBAC***



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Support the development of bushmeat policies and strategies

* *SY*stème de suivi de la filière *Vi*ande de *B*rousse en *A*frique *C*entrale

Background

The hunting of wildlife for human consumption is a current topic of concern among conservationists. Assessments of bushmeat consumption across the Congo Basin range from 1 million tonnes (Wilkie and Carpenter, 1999) to 2 million tonnes (Fa *et al.*, 2003). In Central Africa, there have been many studies documenting the scale of the trade in bushmeat and the effects of hunting on wildlife, often dating back many years. The results warned of the unsustainability of hunting practices and the risk of extinction, and the term bushmeat has become synonymous with overexploitation (Cowlshaw *et al.*, 2005).



Photo 1: Smoked bushmeat sold in Mamfe, Cameroon – March 2009

Increased attention is being paid to the bushmeat issue by the scientific, conservation and development community. Research and development initiatives for tackling the problem have been announced by several NGOs, development agencies and governments. The recommendations from the Bushmeat Liaison group of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD, 2009) recognize the need to broaden the picture from an ecological perspective to a socio-economic, cultural and ecological perspective. Indeed, the depletion of wildlife is intimately linked to the food security and livelihoods of numerous tropical forest-region inhabitants as hunting provides meat for urban and rural families, and is a common component of household economies.

Bushmeat is also an important reservoir of zoonotic pathogens, but relatively little is still known about the transfer dynamics of such infections.

Despite the increasing attention to the bushmeat issue, the available information on bushmeat harvest and trade is still fragmented and the lessons learnt are therefore difficult to capitalize. Field studies are usually site- or country-specific without follow-up or co-ordination among sites and many are unpublished reports or not easily accessible. As a result, governments and other stakeholders do not have objective data generated at national and regional levels to support their management decisions. Wildlife and bushmeat issues are currently not explicitly included in the Observatory for the Forests of Central Africa (OFAC), which aims at pooling the knowledge and available data necessary to monitor the ecological, environmental, and social aspects of Central Africa's forests. OFAC is an initiative of multiple members of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) to respond to one of the ten axes from the Central Africa Forest Commission's (COMIFAC) 'Plan de Convergence': "resource knowledge".

The development of SYVBAC: a multi-stakeholder participatory process coordinated by TRAFFIC

Since 2008, TRAFFIC has been supporting a participatory process with selected key stakeholders for the development of a Central African Bushmeat Monitoring System that will gather all available survey information and provide a regular overview of the trends in bushmeat harvest and trade at the regional level through proxy indicators. TRAFFIC organized two technical workshops in Douala, Cameroon, in December 2008, and February 2010 respectively (TRAFFIC, 2008; TRAFFIC 2010a).

In addition, a three day technical expert workshop was held in Libreville, Gabon in June 2010 to facilitate the involvement of the private sector in the development and functioning of SYVBAC (TRAFFIC, 2010b).



Photo 2: Participants at the workshop organized by TRAFFIC in Libreville, 8-10 June 2010

Stakeholders involved in the development of SYVBAC represent the working expertise from six central African countries in the region including representatives of the COMIFAC, Ministries of Forest and/or Wildlife Conservation (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Republic of Congo), technical and scientific institutes (IRET, CIRAD, CIFOR, University of Reading), NGOs (FOREP, LAGA, RAPAC, TRAFFIC, WCS, WWF, ZSL and ZSSD/CRES), intergovernmental organizations (FAO, COMIFAC), development agencies (GTZ), representatives of the private forest sector (ALPICAM, PALLISCO, CIB, CBG, OLAM, SYLVAFRICA, TERA, PAPPGF) and other specialists (FORAF, FSC, MIKE, BCTF).

Objectives of SYVBAC

The general objective of SYVBAC is to **generate the information needed to support the development of policies and strategies that aim at bringing the bushmeat trade to sustainable levels**

The specific objectives are to monitor:

- The levels and the evolution of bushmeat use and trade in the region;
- The factors that influence bushmeat use and trade;
- The impacts of bushmeat trade on endemic/rare/protected species;
- The importance of bushmeat trade in national economies, poverty reduction, nutrition and health of human populations.



Photo 3: Kids selling smoked bushmeat along the road from Lubutu to Kisangani, DRC, May 2009

SYVBAC will also respond to various requests for inputs to the international fora and conventions such as *inter alia* Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), regional bodies (e.g., COMIFAC) and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). In particular, at least two guiding governing frameworks, e.g. the CBD and its report of the Liaison Group on Bushmeat (2009), and the operational document relating to the Central African Forest Commission's (COMIFAC) Convergence Plan (2009) stand as examples of such demands from decision-makers.

How will SYVBAC work?

SYVBAC will centralize all available information on Bushmeat Harvest and trade in six of the COMIFAC countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic of Congo).

To ensure the sustainability of SYVBAC over the long term, the monitoring system will function under OFAC, with the technical support from TRAFFIC for the development phase. At the national level, SYVBAC will build partnerships with national bushmeat focal points that will be in charge of collecting data at the national level. At the site level, SYVBAC will build partnerships with NGOs, the private sector, local wildlife committees and universities or other scientific and technical institutes to collect data at the site level (villages, community hunting zones, sports hunting areas, logging /mining concessions, protected areas and buffer zones).

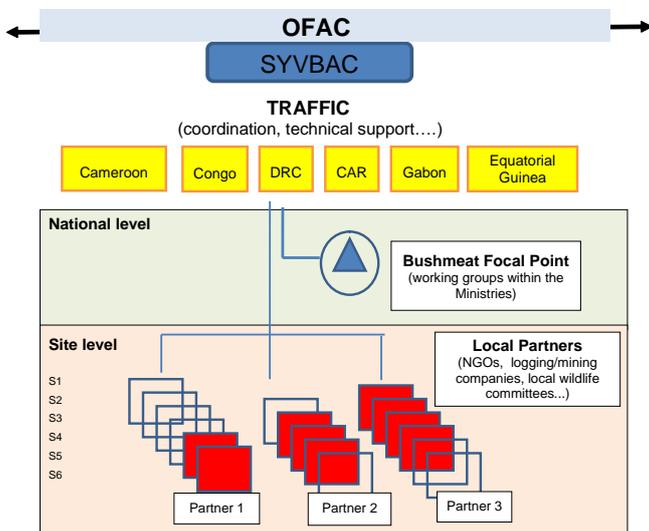


Fig. 1: Structure of SYVBAC

What type of data will SYVBAC collect ?

SYVBAC will collect data in pre-selected sites with a predefined list of indicators. However, SYVBAC will be an “adaptive system”, which will allow the incorporation of new sites or indicators every three years.

Indicators will cover all levels of the commodity chain from the hunters to the final consumers (**pressure and state indicators**), but will also include indicators of the economic, social, ecological and governance context (**driver indicators**), as well as indicators of the management actions or policy changes undertaken to promote a sustainable use of wildlife for food (**response indicators**).

SYVBAC will collect the information on an opportunistic basis, meaning that all sites will not necessarily inform exactly the same indicators. Information reported on SYVBAC will maintain its original source citation and/or metadata.

Validation of reported data will occur on a regular schedule, through designated national validation committees set up by OFAC in each of the participating countries.

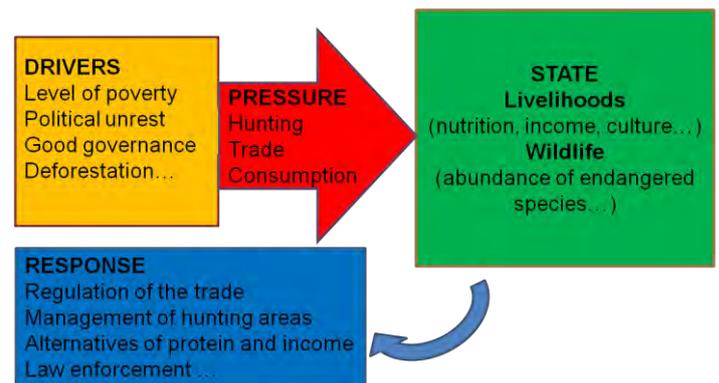


Fig. 2: Bushmeat trade will be monitored at all levels of the markets chain. The monitoring system will include indicators of pressure, drivers, state and response.

What kind of results can be expected from SYVBAC?

SYVBAC will provide policy makers and managers with an overarching vision at national and regional levels on the status and trends of bushmeat harvest and trade. SYVBAC will contribute to the objectives of OFAC by increasing and sharing the available knowledge on the use and management of natural resources in the Congo Basin. The data collected will be synthesized and regularly included in the “State of the Forests for Central Africa” published by OFAC. The monitoring system will be able to raise the alarm when rapid changes that need immediate attention are occurring, and generate results and lessons learnt from the different efforts put in place to tackle the unsustainable harvest and trade of bushmeat. Throughout the development phase of SYVBAC, capacity building support at different levels will be given by TRAFFIC and OFAC to collect and analyse data on bushmeat harvest and trade.

List of Acronyms

BCTF : Bushmeat Crisis Task Force

CAR : Central African Republic

CBG : Compagnie des Bois du Gabon
(Gabonese Timber Company)

CBFP : Congo Basin Forest Partnership

CIB: Congolaise Industrielle du Bois
(Congolese Timber Company)

CIFOR : Centre International de Recherche sur
les forêts (Center for International Forestry
Research)

CIRAD : Centre International de Recherche
Agronomique pour le Développement (French
Agricultural Research Center for International
Development)

CITES Convention on International Trade in
Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

COMIFAC : Commission des forêts d'Afrique
Centrale (Central African Forests Commission)

CRES : Conservation and Research of
Endangered Species

DRC : Democratic Republic of Congo

IRET : Institut de recherches en Ecologie
tropicale (Research Institute in Tropical
Ecology)

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations

FOREP : Forest Resources and People

GTZ : Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische
Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for
Technical Cooperation)

ITTO: International Tropical Timber
Organization

LAGA : Last Great Ape Organisation

MIKE : Monitoring the illegal killing of
elephants – a programme under CITES

OFAC : Observatoire des Forêts d'Afrique
Centrale (Observatory for the Forests of
Central Africa)

PAPPFG : Projet d'Aménagement des Petits
Permis Forestiers Gabonais (Project for the
Management of Small-scale Logging
Concessions)

RAPAC : Réseau des Aires protégées
d'Afrique Centrale (Central African Network of
Protected Areas)

SYVBAC : Système de suivi de la filière viande
de brousse en Afrique Centrale (Central
African Bushmeat Monitoring System)

WCS : Wildlife Conservation Society

ZSL : Zoological Society of London

ZSSD : Zoological Society of San Diego



*Photo 4 : Blue Duiker Cephalophus monticola -
species most commonly found in bushmeat
trade*



*Photo 5: Primate meat on offer at
Simombondo, at Gabon – Congo border*

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For further information contact :

The Executive Director
TRAFFIC International
219a Huntingdon Road
Cambridge CB3 0DL
UK

Telephone: (44) (0) 1223 277427

Fax: (44) (0) 1223 277237

Email: traffic@traffic.org

Website : www.traffic.org