RAINFOREST ALLIANCE GUIDANCE

AREAS AT HIGH RISK OF DEFORESTATION AND ENCROACHMENT INTO PROTECTED AREAS IN CAMEROON

Version 1

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

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For any question related to the precise meaning of the information contained in the translation, please refer to the English official version for clarification. Any discrepancies or differences in meaning due to translation are not binding and have no effect for auditing or certification purposes.

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This guidance document is non-binding. This means that this document provides important information to help readers understand, interpret and implement the requirements set out in the documents listed in the section "linked to" above. However, following the guidance in this document is not mandatory.

INTRODUCTION

1. CONTEXT

The Rainforest Alliance Policy for Farm and Supply Chain Certification in Cocoa, was promulgated in April 2020 and became binding on 1st June 2020. It complements the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard Farm Requirements V1.1 by outlining specific implementation requirements for Certificate Holders (CHs) at both the producer and supply chain actor levels to strengthen the quality assurance system process. The West Africa Cocoa Assurance Plan which started in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in 2019, was expanded to Nigeria and Cameroon in 2020, with the goal of eliminating deforestation in the Rainforest Alliance and UTZ Certified cocoa supply chains. A key component of the plan is to build the capacity of CHs and their members to reduce deforestation. The Cocoa Policy allows certification of groups with producers located in Protected Areas only where allowed by applicable law.

In an effort to protect its dense forests and protected areas, Cameroon has zoned its territory by specifying the areas and conditions in which forests may or may not be exploited for agricultural purposes. It is therefore important for the Rainforest Alliance and CHs operating in this context to have a good understanding of national regulatory requirements for the location of farms in order to comply with the Rainforest Alliance Cocoa Policy and Standard.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THIS GUIDE

The main objective of this guide is to help farmer groups and companies wishing to pursue Rainforest Alliance Certification in Cameroon, to reduce the risks of deforestation and biodiversity loss in their supply chains by analysing the Cameroonian regulatory framework for no-go areas and exception conditions.

3. USE OF THE GUIDE

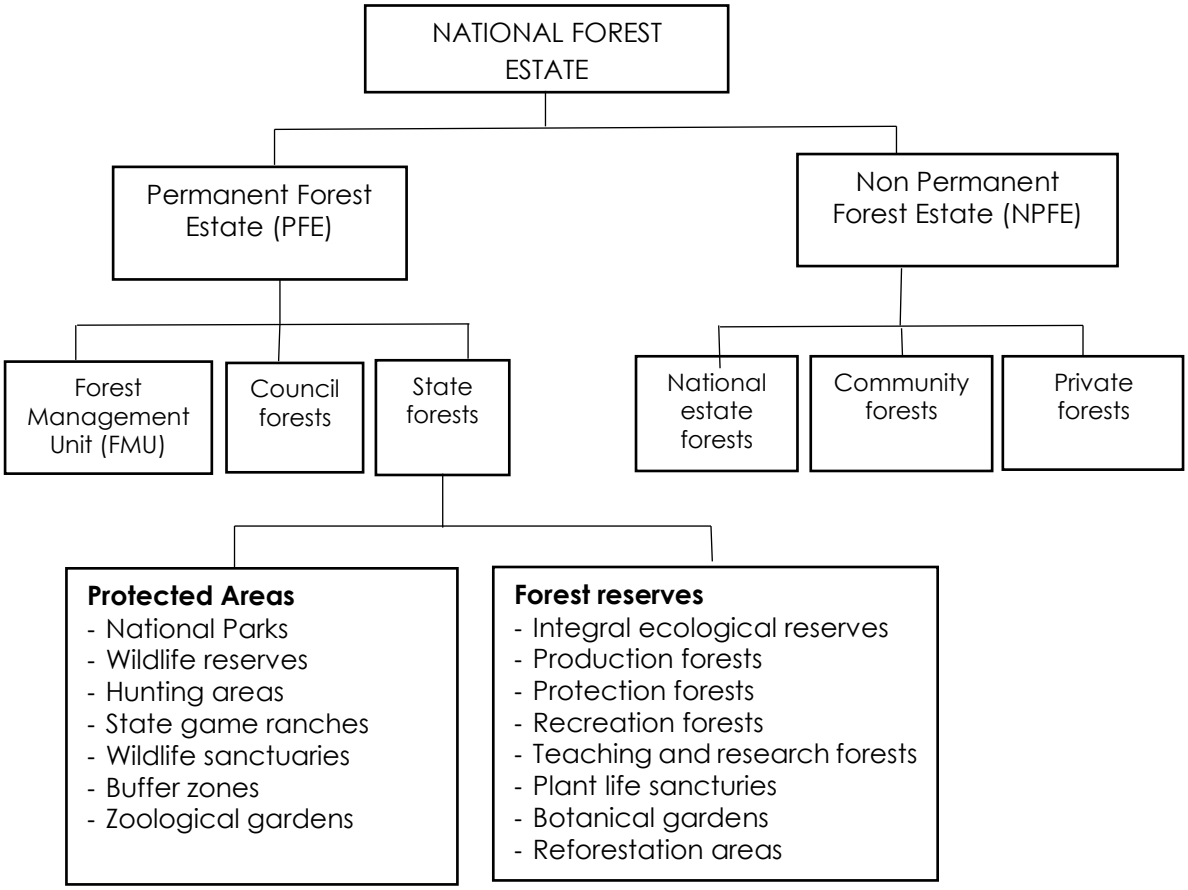
This guide is accompanied by two maps essential for its use. First, the map of Cameroon's (protected) forest zoning plan which is produced from the Interactive Forest Atlas of Cameroon regularly updated by the World Resources Institute (WRI) in partnership with the Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). Second, the Rainforest Alliance's Encroachment Risk Map, which provides information on the risk level of encroachment into protected areas for agricultural production (Annex 12 of the Rainforest Alliance's 2020 Standard for Sustainable Agriculture). For any farmer group, it is advisable to simultaneously use these three tools namely, this guide and the two aforementioned maps.

4. FOREST LAND USE

To protect its dense forests and ecological valued areas, Cameroon has zoned its territory by specifying the areas and conditions in which forests may or may not be exploited for agricultural purposes. A forest land use plan for southern Cameroon has been validated by

Decree 95-678-PM as a planning and guidance tool (see figure 1). This forest land use plan has made it possible to assign a specific purpose to each delimited area to grant it a particular status and specific protection measure (Table 1). According to Law 94/01, Article 2, land with a vegetation cover in which trees, shrubs and other species are likely to provide products other than agricultural ones predominate, is considered as forest. More specifically, depending on the vegetation cover and density, any land occupying an area of more than 0.5 hectares with trees reaching a height of more than 5 meters and a tree cover of more than 10 percent, or with trees capable of reaching these thresholds in situ, is considered a forest. Cameroon's forests can be divided into two broad groups: The Permanent Forest Estate and the Non-Permanent Forest Estate

Figure 1: An architecture of the Cameroonian forest land use plan



Permanent Forest Estate (PFE)

The permanent forest estate includes all forest land permanently dedicated to remaining forest and/or wildlife habitat. The forests of the PFE are supposed to have a management plan that includes: the management objectives and measures to implement them, the internal mapping of the forests including areas subject to different use types (protection, production, research, recreation etc.), the buffer zone (in the limit of the forest or the surrounding), conditions for the use of the forest by neighbouring local communities. The definite classification of a forest in the PFE is marked by its classification act signed by the authorised government authorities. The activities carried out in the forests included in the PFE or their buffer zones should be in conformity with the prescriptions of their management plans. One would expect that these lands would not be available for non-forest uses, but the law does allow for other types of uses following a declassification process "where the public interest so requires".

Non-Permanent Forest Estate (NPFE)

According to Article 20, paragraph 3 of the Forestry Law, "the non-permanent forest estate is made up of forest land that can be allocated to uses other than forestry". All forests included in the NPFE can therefore be converted in other type pf land uses including but not limited to agriculture, mining, animal rearing or construction of infrastructure.

The notion of buffer zone

The regulations in force in Cameroon consider buffer zones to be an integral part of protected areas for wildlife, i.e., section 24 (1) of Law 94/01. The legislation does not indicate anything on the width of buffer zones, which is determined by the planner in charge of preparing the management plan. Article 47 of Decree 95/535 provides the following details:

1. In order to ensure the protection and conservation of certain state forests, they may be protected by a zone known as a "buffer zone".
2. In a buffer zone, the activities of the populations, in particular agriculture, livestock rearing, hunting, firewood harvesting and, in general, any authorized right of use, are carried out in accordance with a land management plan drawn up with the assistance of the administrations responsible for rural development and land use planning.

There are protected areas where the buffer zones clearly appear on the official map. A precautionary measure should be respected by the user in the cases where the buffer zones are not automatically included in the map of the protected area (absent or unclear). Thus, requirement 6.1.2 of the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard 2020 should apply beyond this official limit.

Specific case of forest reserves

Article 17 of Law 94/01 of 20 January 1994 on the regime of forests, wildlife and fisheries specifies in its paragraph (1) that forest reserves are lands that may be set aside under conditions fixed by decree, when the creation or maintenance of a forest cover is recognized as necessary for soil conservation, the protection of watersheds, the regulation of the hydrographic network or the conservation of biological diversity.

In Cameroon, the evolution of the status of forest reserves over the past 60 years remains problematic. The spaces have been occupied by populations (construction of infrastructures, housing, agriculture...). The consequence is a nebulous archiving and approximate monitoring of these reserves, especially when the local forestry administration does not have the information to guarantee their integrity (classification decree, materialization of boundaries, management plans, etc.). Between 2004-2011, for example, the number of forest reserves fell from 86 to 75 while their combined area fell by more than a third (32%)[1]. The reason for this decrease is the conversion of forest reserves into other types of land use (protected areas, FMUs, reforestation areas, etc.), while the newly classified reserves tend to be smaller than the converted areas[1]. Only 6 of the 58 forest reserves in the 2020 Cameroon Forest Atlas have a management plan. Hence the complexity of the status of the reserves, which are areas that are off-limits to farming unless provided for in the management plan.

In 2012, the decision N°2002/D/MINFOF of 26 August 2012 sets a list of 43 forest reserves that could be transferred to the territorially competent municipalities. In total, 25 of the 43 forest reserves on this list were created by orders or decrees dating from the colonial period, i.e.

[1] Benoît Mertens, Gideon Neba Shu, Matthew Steil, et Bertrand Tessa. ATLAS FORESTIER INTERACTIF DU CAMEROUN Version 3.0 | Document de Synthèse. 2012. (a)

before 1960. There are cases where forest reserves are included in the Forestry Atlas while on there is not field presence of forests, but agricultural plantations or settlements. It is therefore requested to reach to the Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF), the National Forest Agency (ANAFOR) or the municipality responsible for management to obtain more information on the status of the reserve. The decision to integrate certification process and implement the risk management measures will be possible only if the user presents an official document authorising him to carry out agricultural activities within the reserve.

5. PROCESS FOR ENCROACHMENT RISK MONITORING

There are many examples of agro-industrial projects in difficulty of implementation or abandoned in Cameroon because of their location in or near permanent forest estates. It is therefore necessary, before integrating a farm into the scope of the certificate, to verify its location vis-à-vis of the permanent forest estate. The user will have to check the conformity of his operation by following steps as shown in Figure 2. Table 1 will be used to identify the conformity with the Cameroonian law on the location of agricultural exploitation.

Table 1: Process for Encroachment risk monitoring in Cameroon

Action	Description of the action	Tool or document of reference	Result
1. Geolocate the farms (Core requirements 1.2.12 & 1.2.13)	Collect the GPS coordinates of the farms	Use the Rainforest Alliance geolocation guidance	Farms 'map
2. Project the farm's map on the Cameroon forest atlas base map and analyse the map by comparing the location of farms with the forest types	Overlay the farms map with the base map of the Cameroon forest atlas base map. Identify the risk level of farms giving their overlapping or proximity with the forest types described at the legend of the Forestry Atlas	GIS Data base (shapefiles) of the Cameroon's forest. + geolocation guidance and additional RA guidance documents.	Overlaying map of farms with the Cameroon forest atlas
3. Check the conditions related to agricultural activities described in Table 1 below and exclude the farms definitively found in the No-Go Areas. (Requirement 6.1.2)	Carry out a documentary research on management decisions for Production forests. For each forest type produce the list of existing documents that can enable a No-Go Area to become a Go-Area and identify	Decisions, management plans or additional documents signed by the Ministry of forestry and wildlife constitute a reliable proof of the allowability of farming within the forest type	Risks maps

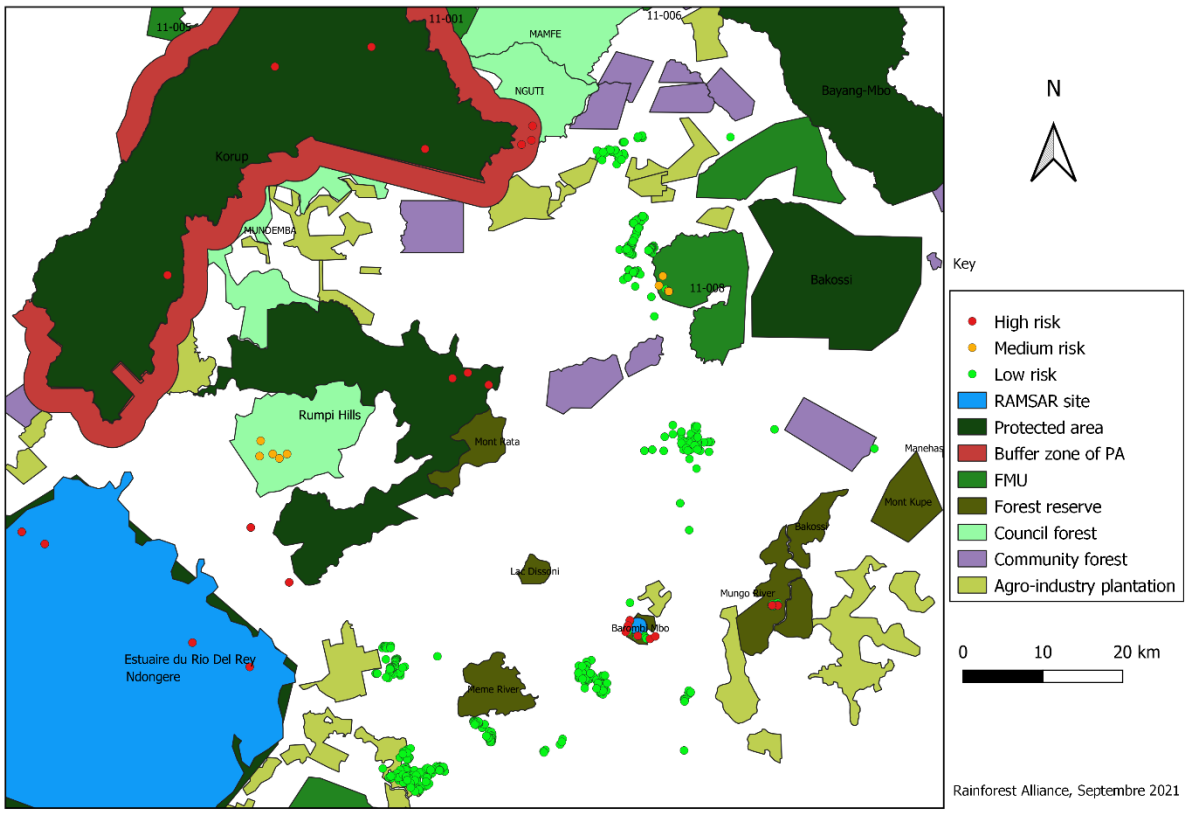
	farms that are definitely No Go		
4. Select eligible farms and monitor their deforestation risks (Requirement 6.1.1)	Collect GPS points of the limits of selected farms and produce their polygons	Annex 12 of the Rainforest Alliance 2020 standard on sustainable agriculture	Group members' registry and farms' polygons

Table 2: Cameroonian law on the location of agricultural exploitation and encroachment risk level

Protected forest types	Agriculture allowed or not	Protected area encroachment Risk level (req. 6.1.2)
Forest reserves		
Teaching and research forest	No	High
Protection forest	No	High
Recreation forest	No	High
Reforestation area	No	High
Integral forest reserve	No	High
Buffer zones of protected areas		
Enclave	Yes	Low
Central core	No	High
Limited access area	No	High
Ecologically fragile area	No	High
Agro-pastoral zone	Yes	Low
Community zone	Yes	Low
General zone	Yes	Low
Peripheral zone	Yes	Low
Wildlife protected areas		
National park	No	High
Wildlife reserve	No	High
Wildlife sanctuary	No	High
Hunting areas		
Biological interest zone	No	High
Hunting areas	No	High
Co-managed hunting areas	No	High
Community hunting areas	No	High
Production forests		
Council forest	Depend on the management plan	Medium
Forest Management Units (FMU)	Depend on the management	Medium
Community forests		
Community forests	Yes	Low
RAMSAR site (international conventions)		
Site Ramsar	No	High

6. SIMULATION OF AN ENCROACHMENT RISK ASSESSMENT BASED ON GEOLOCATION IN THE SOUTH-WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

Step 1: GPS point of the farms are collected using the RA geolocation guidance and overlay the farms map with the Cameroon forest atlas



Step 2: After checking the allowability for agricultural exploitation according to the forest types (table1) use different colors for farms according to their location:

- the red for
    - all farms located in Ramsar site, protected areas, buffer zones of (No-go) protected areas and forest reserves
    - all farms located less than 5 km from Ramsar site and less than 2 Km from protected areas without a determined buffer zone
- The yellow for all farms located in production forests: Forest Management Units (FMU) and council forests
- The green for any other farm location and keep them in the scope of the certificate as law risk.

Step 3: Check the management plan and all documentation for all FMU and council forest holding yellow farms:

a. If no management plan, classify those farms as high risky farms and exclude them farms from the scope of the certificate
b. If management plan, only keep farms in enclaves identified for agriculture and classify them as medium-risk farms

Step 4: Produce Group members' registry and farms' polygons.