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According to the FAO, forest cover in Cameroon is around 20 million hectares but independent studies put the forest cover at around 22.5 million ha, or 48% of the national territory (de Wasseige et al. 2009). The forest is made up of two major types: dense forests and other forests. Dense forests make up the majority of Cameroon’s forests and are estimated to cover 17 million ha. According to the FAO, the annual average deforestation rate in Cameroon for the 1980–1995 period was 0.6% or a loss of close to 2 million ha (WRI, UNEP, UNDP and World Bank 1998). The rate reportedly rose to 0.9% for the 1990–2000 period and reached 1% between 2000 and 2005 (FAO 2006). Today, it is estimated that between 1990 and 2010, Cameroon lost 4,400,00 ha (18.1%) of forest cover at an average rate of 220,000 ha (0.90%) annually. Forest carbon inventories have been carried out in Cameroon (see p. 88 of the R-PP), however the methodologies and scope differ and results are scattered. Numerous ongoing projects are working to improve the knowledge regarding forest carbon stocks and fluxes.
These figures suggest that Cameroon has the second highest deforestation rate of Congo Basin countries, after the Democratic Republic of Congo (0.2% net deforestation). Protected areas in Cameroon are home to around 90% of the country’s animal species, 95% of plant species, close to 65% of habitats and 80% of the country’s ecosystems (MINOF 2008). Cameroon’s rich biodiversity has made it one of the world’s biodiversity hotspots; it ranks fifth in Africa for biodiversity (MINEF and UNDP 1999) and the country is home to nearly 8,000 species of plants, 250 mammals, 542 fish, 848 birds, 330 reptiles, and 200 amphibians many of which are endemic (Fomete et al. 1998). Most of the country’s biodiversity is located in forested areas and the lower Guinean forest, which is renowned for its high number of endemic plant and animal species, is one of the country’s key biodiversity hotspots (Devers & VandeWeghe 2007).

Cameroon’s population is estimated at 21.70 million in 2012. With one of the world’s lowest life expectancy rates, the majority of its population practices subsistence farming in rural areas (CIA World Factbook).

References


FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (2005 & 2010) Forest Cover, Forest types, Breakdown of forest types, Change in Forest Cover, Primary forests, Forest designation, Disturbances affecting forest land, Value of forests, Production, trade and consumption of forest products


