

44. Wood or resin?

Opportunities and threats in Okoume resin sector development in Gabon

Doumenge C. ¹, Mvou Bihogo T. ², Person S. ³, & Louppe D. ⁴.

Okoume (*Aucoumea klaineana*, Burseraceae) is the most exploited timber tree species in Gabon (Central Africa), because of its great qualities for the production of veneer plywood. This tree is also known from a long time by Gabonese for making torches and as a substitute for incense. With the opening of international trade, the exploitation of okoume resin provides new and sustainable opportunities for the valuation of this species. This resin is sold in the markets of the Gabonese capital, Libreville, but also in Senegal and Europe. However, the European circuit, potentially the most profitable, is diverted to private interests and does not participate in the socio-economic development of the country, especially of that of rural people who often live in poverty. If this constraint can be lifted, the development of the sector will imply new management strategies and silvicultural recommendations according to resin vs timber production. The tappers' current silvicultural practices should be adapted to ensure higher production of better quality resin. Training and organization will be key for the development of this economic sector.

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Orator : Doumenge Charles

Complete Authors addresses including Institution :

1)C. Doumenge, CIRAD, Campus International de Baillaguet, TA-C-105/D, F-34398 Montpellier cedex 5, France, charles.doumenge@cirad.fr

2)T. Mvou Biyogo, Ministère des Eaux et Forêts, BP 5583 Libreville, Gabon, mvou.thomas@yahoo.fr

S. Person, Silva, Montpellier, France, stephaneperson2000@yahoo.fr

4)Louppe, CIRAD, Campus International de Baillaguet, TA-C-105/D, F-34398 Montpellier cedex 5, France, dominique.louppe@cirad.fr