

Oral presentation

Session III

Boosting traditional management of Sahelian *Faidherbia* parks

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Abstract

Traits and functions of Apple-ring acacia (*Faidherbia albida* (Del.) Chev.), iconic species of sahelian agroforesters, are well known of agro-pastoralists farmers and scientists. Traits include its deep taproot system reaching the water table on alluvial soils, its inverted phenology, and the leaves being present in the dry season and absent during the rainy season, and its ability to vegetative propagation (root suckers, coppices of stumps and branches). For functions, its general positive impact on associated crop, production of forage (leaves and fruit) and firewood are also widely recognized.

However, the area extension of *Faidherbia* agroforestry systems (parklands) is still far below what it could be, despite the isolated actions of many extension services and NGOs. The example of northern Cameroon shows that research on crop productivity under *Faidherbia* helped changing the perception of this tree by services and operators of agricultural development, in the 1990s. Then it was possible to "boost" the restoration of these parklands on a large scale, mobilizing public funding, associations and farmer organizations and subsidizing (even at a low level) Assisted Natural Regeneration.

The results of socio-economic surveys and pruning trials, conducted in 2012, confirm, at least, the interest of farmers for pruning the trees and fire-wood sustainable productivity of this method. Demand of farmers, on the right of pruning trees and freely use the wood harvested has been taken into account in the draft amendment to the Law on the forest regime, introduced in 2012, to the Cameroon parliament.

These studies on *Faidherbia albida* have helped Cameroonian farmers to keep more than one million young trees, but also have helped to change the law in the sense of increasing the rights of peasants on the tree. This concern planted trees, often exotic, but also natural species kept and maintained by farmers, such as shea-butter tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) and many other multipurpose species.