



# Land use competition in Central Africa and bioeconomy development

---

**Jean BAKOUMA**

Deputy Director Sustainable  
Production & consumption, Head forest  
programme

WWF-France

FAO-10-11 December 2019

# Plan

---

1. Land use competition: a priority issue to address for sustainable bioeconomy.
2. Development strategies and allocation of crops and forest lands in Africa
3. A look at land use data in Africa
4. Constraints to the emergence of the wood-products bio-economy in Africa.
5. The way Forward

# 1. Land use competition: a priority issue to address for sustainable bioeconomy.

---

- ▶ The land use competition issue is inevitable to address in securing sustainable resources exploitation.
- The land-use issue is specific in developing countries and is increasingly recognized as an important governance issue .
- Land is an ultimate resource strongly connected to people's feeling, identity, and culture
- The poor land governance is a cause for many tenure-related conflicts and social problems.
- The poor land governance frustrates countries in their integration into sustainable forest value chains.

## Cont..

- For example, in South-East Asia countries, natural rubber crops compete with palm oil on forest land, to the detriment of small farmers and lead deforestation.
- In Central Africa, the great dependence of the economies of the exploitation of the natural resources, reveals the weaknesses of the economic diversification strategies.
- Actually the economic diversification strategies claimed by policy makers are simply the diversification of rent capture by the States.
- The diversification of rent capture strategies by States, led to land uses overlapping and so to social conflicts and ecosystems vulnerability

## Cont..

- This is a problem of legal safety about land tenure and land use.
- This situation precarious weak users as small producers, and threatens the conservation of ecosystems as well as the production of bio-based products stemming from the exploitation of those ecosystems.
- It raises a set of questions relating to the conditions of emergence of the bio-economy, and the development of local sustainable wood value chains.
- In this presentation I am going to focus in Central Africa .

## 2. Development strategies and allocation of crops and forest lands in Africa

- Strictly speaking, land-use refers to the choice of land use for a specific purpose that results from a participatory planning process.
- According to the AFDB, Africa is home to 60% of the world's unused but potentially available agricultural land.
- In 30 years, about half of the world's agricultural land will come from Africa.
- The way Africa manages its land is therefore crucial for its future social, economic and environmental well-being

- Most states have undertaken forest and land policy reforms, recognizing rights of use for communities and indigenous people.
- Gabon: the Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan sets priorities and land use objectives.
- Cameroon: The 1994 forestry law, adopted a law on land use planning and sustainable development.
- Congo-Brazzaville: Created of Tenure affairs ministry to ensure interministerial coordination of land use and use of natural resources.
- The DRC, one of the world's largest providers of agricultural land to multinationals, has also put in place sectoral legislation, land, mining and agricultural codes.

- In the end, there is in each country a legislative device aimed at regulating land use despite the heterogeneity of legal frameworks.

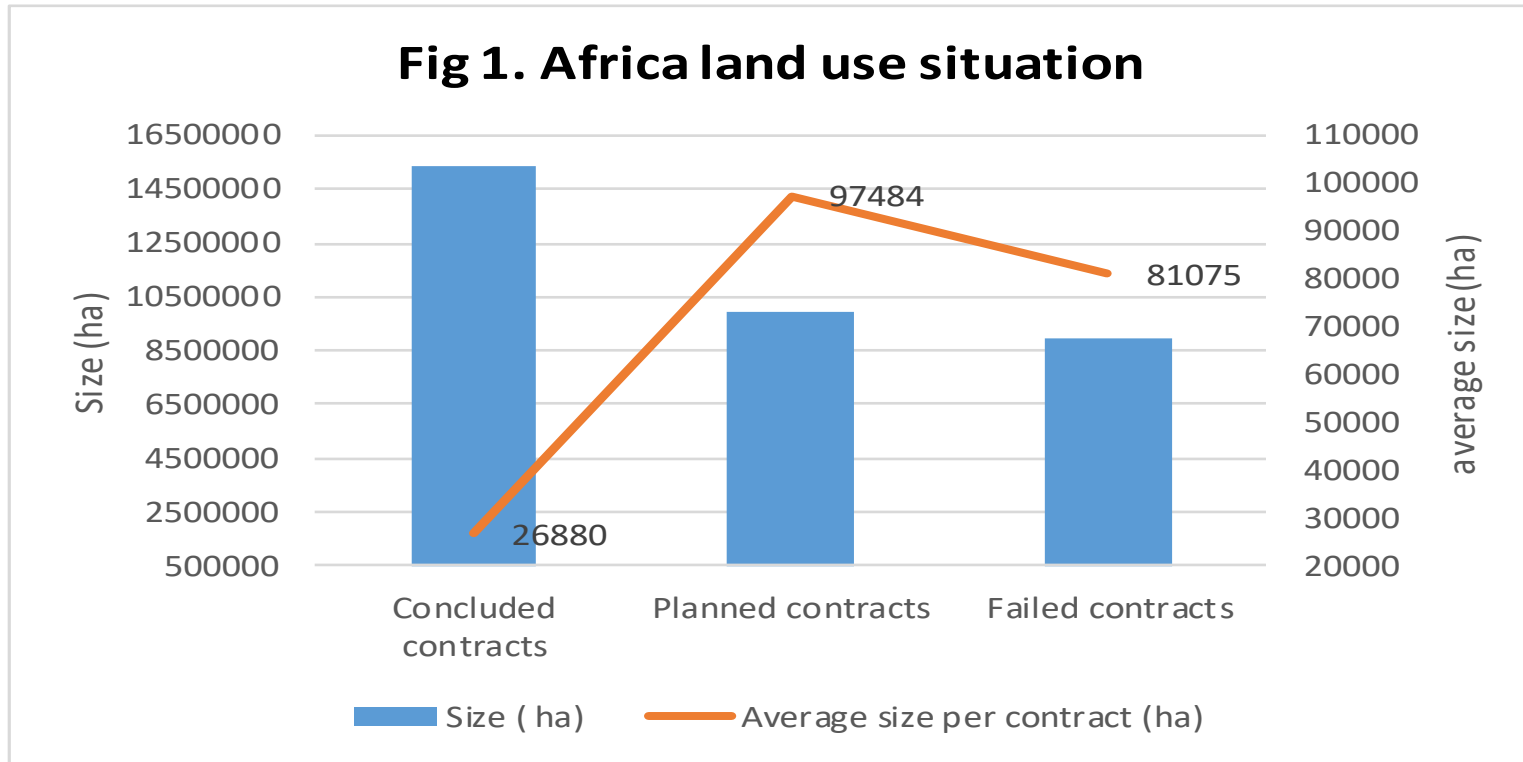
## **So what is the matter?**

- In practice, the issue of land use competition is not frankly addressed in terms of tenure security or carbon storage, but through commitments to well manage the natural resources.
- This has been the case with the involvement of some countries in VPAs with the EU to fight illegal logging.
- And one of the reasons for the slow implementation of these agreements is related to conflicts over land tenure and land use rights.



### 3. A look at land use data in Africa

According to data from the Land Matrix, there are considerable differences in terms of scale, intent and investors in land use.



More than 15 million ha are allocated to agriculture.

The average size of the planned contracts will be 3.5 times higher in the coming years than the current concluded contracts.

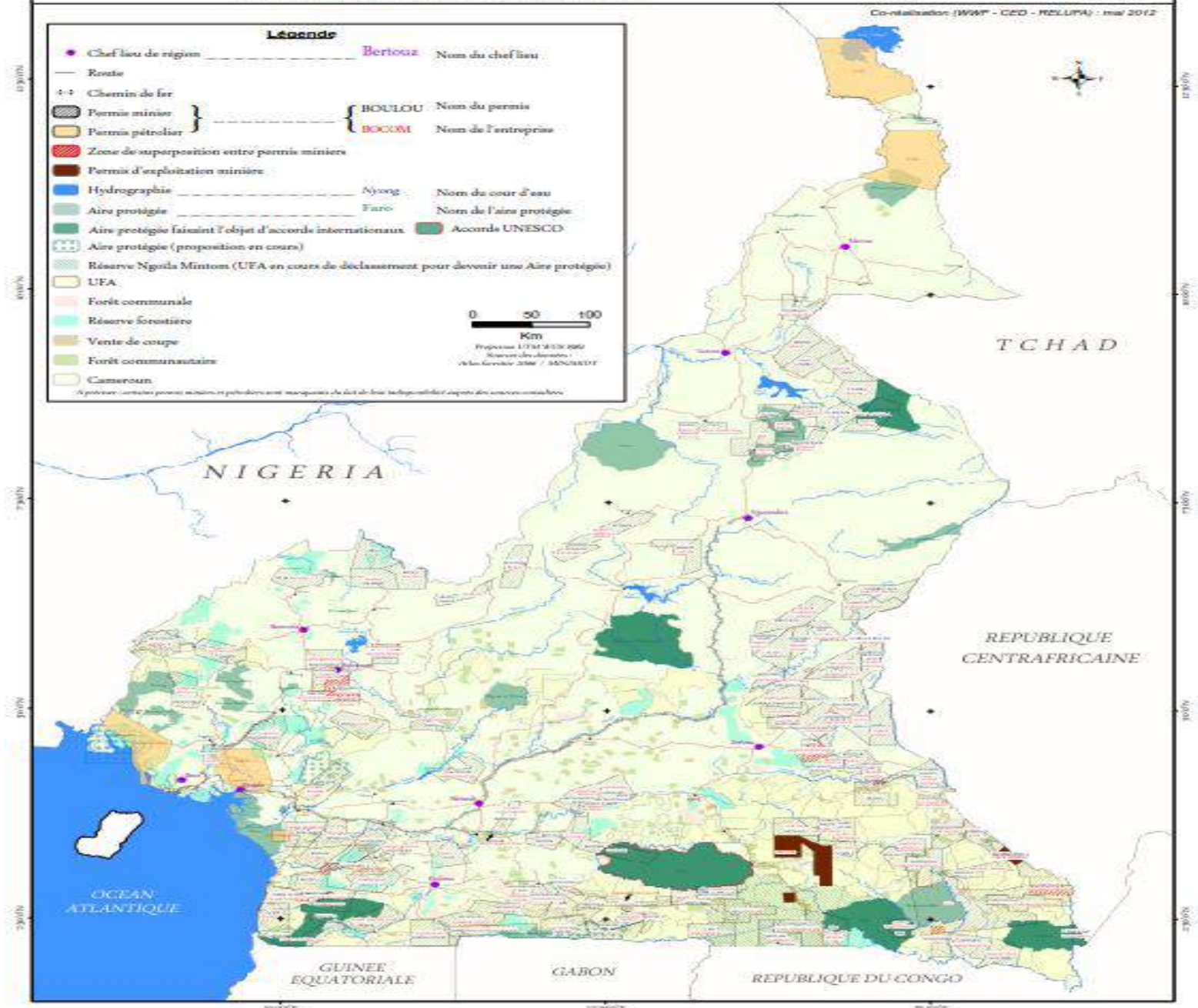
- Multinational investors have acquired 459 individual projects that cover more than 10 million hectares of agricultural land in Africa since the year 2000.
- The action of multinational investors responds to the strategy of states of attraction of FDI
- National investors (middle class and political elites) also contribute to the growing demand for land covering an area of 2.3 million hectares
- Most of the land targeted by investors is fertile land or old cropland or forest (Decommissioned Forest Concessions due to degradation).
- This implies strong competition between commercial interests, local livelihoods and the preservation of ecosystem services.

# Situation géographique des permis miniers et pétroliers Etat des lieux au Cameroun en mai 2012

Mise en relation avec le découpage forestier



Co-réalisation : (WWF - CED - RELUFA) - mai 2012



## 4. Constraints to the emergence of the wood-products bio-economy in Africa.

- Tensions in land use and the risks of vulnerability implied to ecosystems are warning signs of the constraints to the development of the Bio-economy in Africa.
- For the time being, the Bioeconomy started with the leadership of sub-regional partnerships and the support of international donors institutions.
- Each country in Eastern and Western Africa has its own strategic focus : bioenergy, biotechnology etc.
- However, in the COMIFAC countries, the strategies for economic diversification does not refer explicitly to the bio-based products.

- Thus, land allocations are not clearly indexed to the development of bio-economy.
- The absence of an enabling environment often undermines the sustainable land uses and investments and productionsthe
- Because a huge part of population consider decision-makers without any legitimacy.
- This leads to a latent crisis of populations that at best do not perform or clumsily perform the tasks entrusted to them, and at worst do not involve in the government project.
- Because of the widening wealth inequalities between political leaders, and the rest of the population, political action is seen as a business and not an action in the service of the general interest.

- The lack of a clearly « Bio-economy » oriented strategy .
- The central african countries are still struggling for further processing of wood. The bio-economy is not well known.
- Countries are going to need subregional institutions to really launch their bioeconomy strategy and share costs and risks.
- But they hardly pay their fees to sub-regional institutions and in return do prefer their own national strategy..
- The most of funds being invested by multinationals, so FDI will structure the dynamics of the bioeconomy.

## 5. The way Forward.

- Clarify the concept of bioeconomy
- Help governments to develop their Bioeconomy strategy in the perspective that it will endorse the existing strategies in better way than current action plan
- The most of funds being invested by multinationals, so FDI will structure the dynamics of the bioeconomy as well.
- The the kind of value chain will effect the bioeconomy sustsianbility. The demand driven value chain may have different effects from the producer driven value chain
- Partnership and multistakeholder platform should be set up to takle land use issue and to move forward.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the increased demand for agricultural land rather than being satisfied by the abundance of land resources, it increases competition between local land uses, conservation of ecosystems services and commercial interests.

Despite some zoning achievements, land use in many developing countries may be considered in some respects a somewhat opaque process with social and usage conflicts.

In this context, it is unclear how this land use model can serve as a foundation for the development sustainable production of the bio-based products.



- But the sustainable bioeconomy will need to act upstream by addressing the issue of land use, and downstream with traceability and ecological footprint of bio-based products under control.
- The key priority is food and biomass security while preserving sustainable ecosystem functionality.
- WWF supports the development of biomaterials that are produced in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, as these materials have the potential to realize significant environmental advantages over their fossil based counterparts.

**THANK YOU**