

&GREEN JURISDICTIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA ASSESSMENT FOR GABON (COUNTRY-LEVEL)

VERSION 3.0

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Acronymes

ADAG	Agency for agriculture development
ADB	African Development Bank
AEAFFB	Executing agency for the activities of the forest sector
AFD	French Development Agency
AGEOS	Gabonese Agency for Studies and Spatial Observation
ANAPA	National Agency of Fishery and Aquaculture
ANPN	National Agency of National Parks
BUR	Biennial Update Report
CAF	Forest Management Control
CAFI	Central African Forest Initiative
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FPIC	Free, Prior Informed Consent
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GMES	Global Monitoring for Environment and Security
GRAINE	Gabonese Agricultural Achievements and Initiatives of Committed Citizens
HCS	High Carbon Stock
HCSA	High Carbon Stock Approach
HCV	High Conservation Value
HDI	Human Development Index
HFCC	High Forest Cover Landscape
HFCL	High Forest Cover Country
HFLD	High Forest cover with Low Deforestation
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRN	Natural Resources Inventory
JEC	Jurisdictional Eligibility Criteria
JECA	Jurisdictional Eligibility Criteria Assessment
LoI	Letter of Intent
LULUCF	Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry
MISPID	Ministry of the Interior, Public Security, Immigration and Decentralization
MRV	Monitoring, reporting and verification
NCC	National Climate Council
NDA	National Designated Authority
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDJSG	No Deforestation Joint Steering Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLIUP	National Land Use Plan
NNRFOS	National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System
NSDC	National Sustainable Development Council

OSFACO	Spatial observation of forests in Central and West Africa
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRODIAG	Farm Development and Investment Program
PSGE	Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan
RGPL	General Census of Population and Housing
R-PP	Readiness Preparation Proposal
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SDA	Sustainable Development Authority
SN3DL	National Strategy for Decentralization and Deconcentration for Local Development
SOTRADER	Agricultural Transformation and Rural Development Company
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VPA-FLEGT	Voluntary Partnership Agreement on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
WB	World Bank
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1. INTRODUCTION

&Green invests in commercial projects in agricultural production value chains in order to protect and restore tropical forests and peatlands and make agriculture more inclusive and sustainable.

It aims to prove that financing inclusive, sustainable and deforestation-free commodity production can be commercially viable and replicable. The goal of &Green is to protect and restore tropical forests and peatlands, improve smallholder livelihoods, and increase production in tropical forest countries, where current expansion-led agricultural production could result in ever increasing rates of deforestation, forest loss and greenhouse gas emissions, thus, significantly contributing to climate change.

&Green promotes a landscape approach to conservation of the related forest or peat lands. The investments support the investee company in developing and implementing a plan to protect the wider landscape around the area of production, under the inclusion of other stakeholders in the landscape.

&Green intends to catalyze investment into jurisdictions where local authorities are also committed to the reduction in deforestation and are actively taking steps to work with the private sector, communities and civil society to protect forest and peatlands. To do so, as per the fund guidelines, the country/region/province where the investment will be located needs to meet the Jurisdictional Eligibility Criteria (“JECs”) of the &Green Fund: Scope, Ambition & Strategy, Progress, MRV and Social & Environmental Safeguards.

This document summarizes the findings of the initial Jurisdictional Eligibility Criteria Assessment (JECA) for Gabon. It includes a high-level summary in Section 2. Section 3 summarizes findings on the relevant scope of what constitutes an &Green jurisdiction. The last section (Section 4) summarizes findings of Criteria 1 to 5 on Jurisdictional Eligibility at the national jurisdictional level.

The assessment is:

- Based on **factual analysis**, all recommendations and interpretations of the consultant are not included in the report,
- Provide **quantitative data** issued from most recent and reliable sources available (priority given to scientific and official sources; other types of sources are indicated as such);
- Is **transparent**: each reference used to conduct the assessment is clearly reported

2. HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY

JEC 1 – Scope

- ✓ Gabon houses approximately 13% of the Congo Basin’s moist evergreen forest (De Wasseige & al., 2012) with forests covering 23.59 million hectares corresponding to 88.97% of its territory in 2015 (PRG, 2015) and only 13% of Gabon’s area contains less than 75tC/ha¹ (Austin & al., 2017);
- ✓ Gabon is a high forest cover with low deforestation (HFLD) landscape which is home to a particularly rich biodiversity: 400 species of wood, 10,000 species of plants (of which nearly 15% are endemic), 705 bird species, 70 species of reptiles and nearly 190 species of mammals are listed. Gabon has the largest concentration of forest elephants on the African continent (PRG, 2015b);
- ✓ According to Austin & al. (2017), 19.20 million hectares of Gabon territory (corresponding to 72.41%) meets High Conservation Value (HCV) criteria 1 to 3 (including protected areas, threatened, rare & endemic species, intact forests and rare ecosystems).

JEC 2 - Ambition & Strategy

- ✓ Gabon’s forthcoming Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) will aim to reduce economy-wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from the 2005 baseline by 50% by 2025. As most of the emissions come from the land use and forest sector, this will entail reductions of more than 50 % of GHG emissions in the LULUCF sector (CAFI & Gabon, 2017);
- ✓ Since the historical annual net deforestation rate of 0.05% is low, the goal is deemed ambitious as the High Forest Cover Country (HFCC) aims at developing its agricultural sector to reach food self sufficiency by 2025 and to become a major exporter of palm oil, rubber and sugar in Africa (PRG, 2015a);
- ✓ To reach this goal, the country is developing an innovative top-down strategy through its National Land-Use planning program supported by the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) to protect its natural resources and direct agricultural development towards areas with the lowest conservation value. This includes (CAFI & Gabon, 2017):
 - Developing national guidelines adapted to the local context to identify all High Carbon Stock (HCS) and High Conservation Value (HCV) forests in line with best international practices;
 - Prevent conversion of HCS/HCV to other land-use and introduce a permanent cap on the area of non-HCS/HCV forests available for conversion to other land uses. In the meantime, Gabon has adopted a temporary cap of a maximum of 10,000 ha/year (based on an initial estimated need of 400,000 ha of long term accumulated conversion);
 - maintain residual conversion of non-HCS/HCV forests at very low levels while ensuring that such conversion is carbon-neutral (compensated by active restoration or carbon enhancement of other forests that will be monitored by the National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System);
- ✓ Furthermore, the strategy includes reducing substantially areas under logging concessions; and implementing measures against illegal logging and policies to promote sustainable forest management (CAFI & Gabon, 2017);

¹ Correspond to a threshold previously proposed by a High Carbon Stock Study (independent report from the technical committee) for defining HCS in 2015 (HCS+, 2015)

- ✓ According to Austin & al. (2017), Gabon's current oil palm production target of 280,000 to 1 million tons of Crude Palm Oil (CPO) per year can likely be met on suitable or moderately-suitable land without compromising HCS and HCV areas

JEC 3 – Progress

- ✓ Gabon is among the countries that have given priority to forests and the environment in their economic development and the improvement of the living conditions strategies and vision documents. This is clearly stated in the Emerging Gabon Strategic Document (aiming to turn Gabon into an emerging economy by 2025) and its sub plan 'Green Gabon', with a considerable focus on climate and environment (including a national climate plan and a program to develop a National Land-Use Plan - NLUP) submitted in 2012 (PRG, 2015a&b);
- ✓ Since then the country started revising its legal framework on sustainable development, environmental protection, forestry and land-use planning (adoption of a law on sustainable development and a revised law on environment in 2014, implementation of multi-sectoral national commission on land use planning in 2017 and submission of draft new forestry law in 2019 to the parliament);
- ✓ In 2017, Gabon signed a letter of intent (LoI) with the CAFI and started, in 2018, a 5 years program called “National land use planning and forest monitoring to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon” aiming at developing, adopting and implementing a National Land Use Plan (NLUP) and a National Observation System for Natural Resources and Forests (NNRFOS) that will contribute to the reduction of GHG emissions from Land-Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector in Gabon (CAFI & Gabon, 2017). Previously to the program, Gabon already developed a NLUP V0 that identified potential land-use conflicts that will be resolved through the program and conducted first identification of HCS and HCV 1 to 3 on its national territory (CAFI, 2018 and Austin & al., 2017);
- ✓ In 2018, Gabon submitted its final Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and is now discussing possibilities to qualify to REDD+ Results Based Payments with the CAFI and FCPF (République Gabonaise, 2018).

JEC 4 – Monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV)

- ✓ The National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System (NNRFOS) has been implemented and was used to assess forest cover change and GHG emissions on the period 2010-2015 (PRG, 2015);
- ✓ Further work is ongoing within the program “National land use planning and forest monitoring which is just starting to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon” supported by CAFI to improve estimations of anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions and removals with the objective of meeting Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Tier 3 method (CAFI, 2018);
- ✓ So far, Gabon has submitted 2 National Communications (2005 and 2011) and an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in 2015. As part of the LoI agreed between the government and CAFI (CAFI & Gabon, 2017), a Biennial Update Report (BUR) will be submitted in 2019 and an independent verification of the program progress will be conducted in 2020.

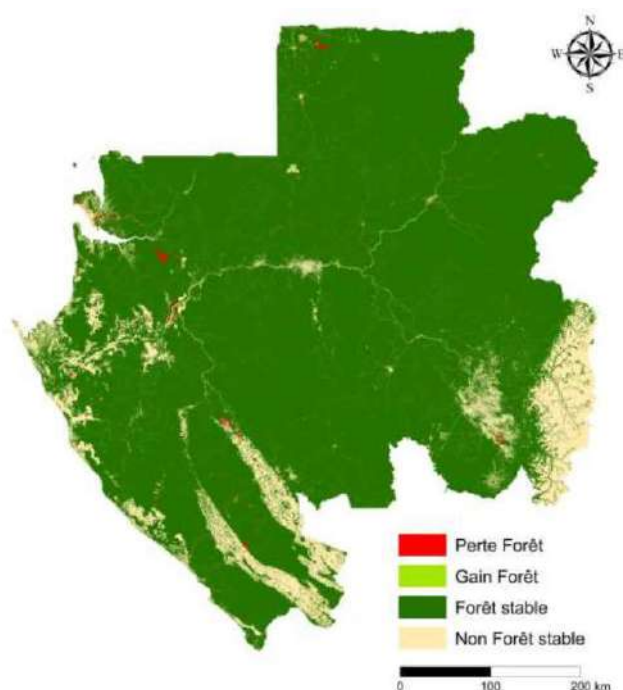
JEC 5 – Social & Environmental Safeguards

- ✓ As part of the LoI, a safeguards information system consistent with relevant United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Decisions will be implemented in 2019 and the first summary of information will be included into the national report to the UNFCCC.

A proposal for the initial design and a workplan, including early ideas on capability for an integrated monitoring system that includes addressing other multiple benefits, impacts, governance and safeguards has been integrated to the final R-PP submitted to the FCPF in 2018 (République Gabonaise, 2018). This activity will also be subjected to the independent verification planned in 2020 (CAFI, 2017).

3. JURISDICTIONAL SCOPE

The Republic of Gabon extends over an area of 268,000 km². Gabon houses approximately 13% of the Congo Basin’s moist evergreen forest (De Wasseige & al., 2012) – with forests covering 23.59 million hectares corresponding to 88.97% of its territory in 2015 against 23.66 million hectares in 2010 (PRG, 2015). With an annual deforestation rate of 0.05% (59,406 ha deforested on the period 2010-2015), Gabon is a country with a high forest cover with low deforestation (HFLD) and one of the smallest and least populous, and the most highly forested countries of Central Africa.



Legend: red: forest loss – light green: forest gain – dark green: stable forest – light-yellow: non-forest

Figure 1: Forest cover change between 2012-2015 (République Gabonaise, 2017)²

Table 1 : Deforestation drivers and carbon sequestration estimation between 2010-2015 in Gabon (CAFI, 2018)

Location	Loss		Gain	
	ha	%	ha	%
Logging concessions	32 500	33.8	12 067	34.8
Agro-industrial concessions*	19 896	20.7	709	2.1
Mining concessions	163	0.2	70	0.2
Grand Poubara (hydroelectric dam)	4 289	4.5	-	-
Other	39 383	40.9	23 977	62.9
Total	96 230	100	36 823	100

* Agro-industrial concessions include rubber and palm oil plantations. In the case of OLAM Palm Gabon, the country’s largest palm oil producer, which hold 143,412 ha of concessions and are committed to have 100% of its

² The forest definition used in this map : minimum 1 ha, 30% crown cover and 5m height at maturity – tree plantations are excluded (source: <http://www.gofcgold.wur.nl/documents/Sciencemeeting2016/CARL/CSannier1.pdf>)

production certified Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), plantations mostly occurred in Savannah and degraded forests (Mouila and Awala) and ancient palm grove (Makouké). Indeed, to identify its plantation area (59,275 ha), OLAM Palm Gabon completed four environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA) including the identification of HCV and forest carbon stock (using LiDAR+) located in its permit area and Free, Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) processes with local stakeholders impacted by the project. This approach leads to the conservation of 84,000 ha of HCV (60% of the total concession area) and, through this approach, the group is estimating a positive carbon impact of 4.8 MtCO₂ sequestered over a 25 years period³. In addition, OLAM Palm Gabon is supporting the ESIA, HCV and FPIC processes for the 58,000 ha managed by SOTRADER (Public-Private Partnership with the Government) through the GRAINE project (cf. Box 1).

3.1 Background: key economic data and maps

The general population and housing census (RGPH 2013) estimated the Gabonese population at 1,811,049 inhabitants in 2013, with 87 % living in urban area⁴. It was estimated at 2.03 million inhabitants at the end of 2017 with an annual population growth rate of 2.3%, according to the predictions of the World Bank⁵. With 9 provinces, the Republic of Gabon is a strongly urbanized but sparsely populated country: its rural space is one of the least dense in Africa, with 7.9 inhabitants per km² (WB Databank, 2017).

Gabon is an upper-middle-income country with important natural resources. Its economy has remained on a trajectory of strong growth for almost a decade strongly dependent on oil which accounted for 45% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 60% of state revenue and 80% of exports⁶, and is now seeing a decline linked to the fall of oil prices. The GDP growth rate which was estimated at around 7.1% in 2010 has declined to 0.5% in 2017 (WB Databank, 2017). Moreover, the business climate has remained disadvantageous for the development of the private sector: The Republic of Gabon ranks 169th out of 190 countries in the 2018 World Bank Doing Business table against 156th in 2014⁷.

Other key sectors are wood and manganese. Agriculture contributes to less than 5% of GDP and includes food crops, rubber, and palm oil and Gabon relies heavily on food imports, which account for the majority of domestic food consumption (Umunay, 2017). The Gabonese economy thus has all the characteristics of a rent-seeking economy, which is a poor source of jobs, focuses on the export of raw materials and is highly dependent on its oil revenues (PRG, 2015a).

Gabon faces a socio-economic paradox; because of its high GDP per capita, it belongs to the group of Intermediate Income Countries while its social indicators are similar to those of the Group of Least Developed Countries. About a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line and the social conditions of the most vulnerable groups are of particular concern (PRG, 2015a).

Within its Emerging Gabon Strategic Plan (PGSE) presented in 2012, the Republic of Gabon has made a commitment to diversify its economy. This is expected to result in increased resource exploitation by extractive industries and the rapid expansion of agricultural intensification. One of the central

³ https://theforestdialogue.org/sites/default/files/tfd_udf_gabon_olampalm_presentation_2017.pdf

⁴ <http://www.gouvernement.ga/5-conseil-des-ministres/1795-annee-2016/2674-communique-final-du-conseil-des-ministres-du-jeudi-2-juin-2016/>

⁵ https://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=GAB

⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gabon/overview>

⁷ http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf

objectives of the plan is to make Gabon self-sufficient in terms of food production and a major exporter of cash crops. Indeed, the country identified 5.2 million hectares of potential arable lands deemed suitable for its agricultural development (PRG, 2015a).

As part of its industrialization strategy, Gabon aims to become Africa's second largest producer of dry rubber (128,000 tons), Africa's third largest producer of crude palm oil (425,000 tons) and a competitive sugar exporter in the Central African sub-region by 2025. To this end, Gabon will develop about 55,250 hectares of oil palm plantation, 56,900 hectares of rubber plantations and 15,000 hectares of sugarcane, for a total of 127,150 hectares. In 2014, the three major agribusiness operators in the country, OLAM, SIAT and SUCAF already managed a total surface area of 68,650 hectares (PRG, 2015b).

In addition to the industrial agriculture, Gabon launched the Gabonese Agricultural Achievements and Initiatives of Committed Citizens program (GRAINE PHASE 1 2017-2023) aiming to expand domestic agricultural production supported by government-provided technical trainings and land grants (BAD, 2017) and will soon launch the Farm Development and Investment Program (PRODIAG) phase 2 which targets food crop production, market gardening, small livestock and agro-processing sectors⁸.

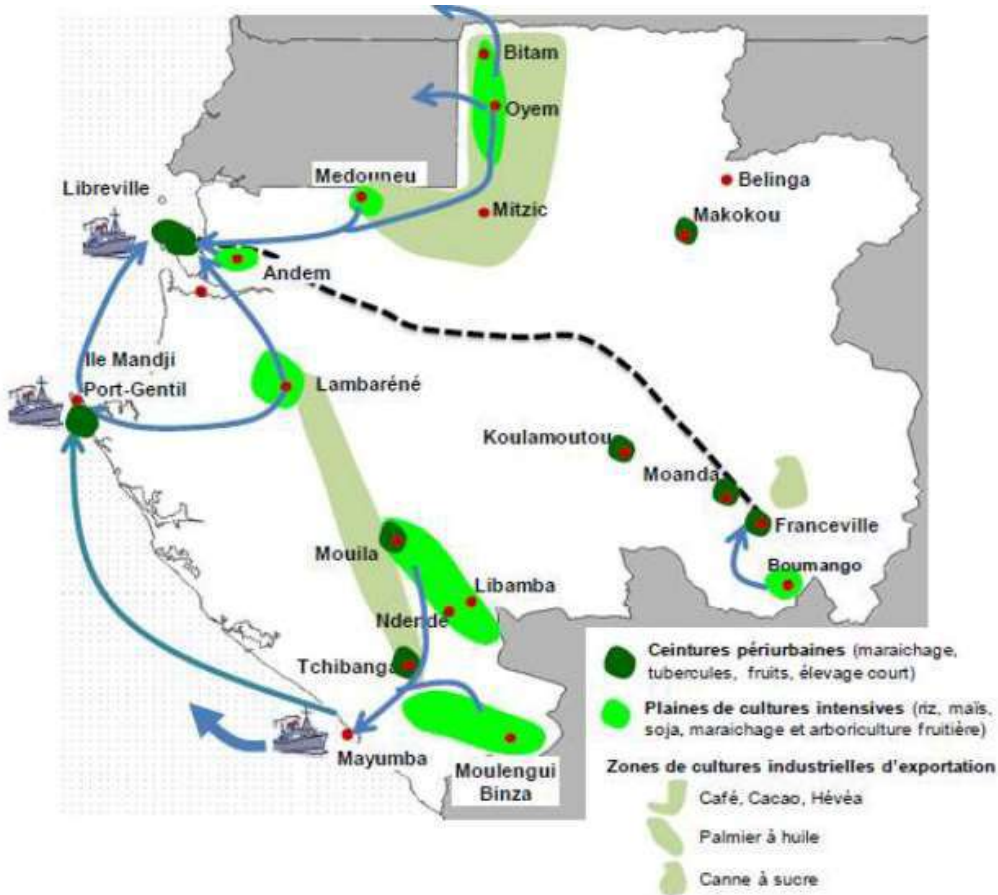


Figure 2: Targeted areas for agricultural development by 2025 (PRG, 2015a)

⁸ <http://news.alibreville.com/h/86185.html>

Box 1: The Gabonese Agricultural Achievements and Initiatives of Committed Citizens (GRAINE) program (source: BAD, 2017)

The GRAINE program is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) operation which aims to enhance the role of local smallholder farmers in the development of the oil palm and food crops sectors to reduce poverty, ensure food security, and fight against youth unemployment. In this context, a joint venture called the Agricultural Transformation and Rural Development Company (SOTRADER) was created by the Government (51%) and its partner OLAM (49%). SOTRADER will manage agricultural lands, plantations and the construction of three palm oil processing plants. In addition, the Government will contribute in piloting the necessary socio-economic investments (drinking water, rural electrification, schools and health centers, etc.), agricultural infrastructure (rural roads, plant material distribution centers, multiservice platforms, markets, etc.), as well as organization and professionalization.

With a total budget of EUR 116 million for the first period of implementation (2017-2023) (85% in the form of loans from the African Development Bank and 15% from the Government), it will operate in six provinces of Gabon (Woleu-Ntem, Ogooue-Lolo, Ogooue-Ivindo, Haut-Ogooue, Ngounié and Nyanga) with a first objective of deploying 10,000 ha of food crops and 10,500 ha of oil palm plantations in the Ndendé. It will benefit 140 active agricultural and food industry cooperatives that are engaged with SOTRADER. The total population impacted by the project and social infrastructures is estimated at 630,000 people including 45% of women.

Indicator	Value & date	Source
Country size	26.8 million ha	
Forest cover in 2015	23.59 million ha – 88.97 % of national territory	PRG, 2015
Potential arable land (ha)	5.2 million ha – 19.4% of national territory	PRG, 2015a
Agroindustry concessions area (palm oil, rubber, sugar) in 2015	68,650 ha	PRG, 2016
Annual deforestation rate (2010-2015)	0.05%	PRG, 2015
GDP (2017)	USD 15.01 billion	WB Databank, 2017
Population (2013)	1,811,049	RGPL 2013 Census
GNI per capita, PPP (2017)	USD 16,940	WB Databank, 2017
Part of the population living in urban area	87%	RGPL 2013 Census
Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population) (2017)	33.4%	Data WB
Unemployment rate	19.63%	WB Databank, 2017
Oil (% GDP) in 2015	45%	www.worldbank.org/en/country/gabon/overview
Oil (% export) in 2015	80%	www.worldbank.org/en/country/gabon/overview
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP) in 2017	5%	WB Databank, 2017
Main agricultural products (2012)	Plantain banana (218,000 tons), sugar (26,850 t), fruits (24,000 t), peanuts (14,812 t), garden market products (6,700 t)	PRG, 2016
Doing Business Rank (2018)	169	World Bank <i>Doing Business</i> table ⁹
Projection		
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP) in 2017	22%	PRG, 2015b
Main agro-industrial products in 2025	Palm oil (425,000 t CPO), rubber (128,000 t), sugar	PRG, 2015b
Agroindustry concessions area (palm oil, rubber, sugar) in 2025	127,150 ha	PRG, 2015b

⁹ http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf

3.2 Territorial order

Gabon is a unitary state divided into nine provinces (Estuaire, Upper Ogooué, Middle Ogooué, Ngounie, Ngyanga, Ogooue-Ivindo, Ogooue-Lolo, Ogooue-Maritime, Woleu Netem). The administrative composition of Gabon today is 52 Communes, 49 Departments, 27 Districts, 162 Cantons, 736 Groupings of villages and 2423 Villages¹⁰.

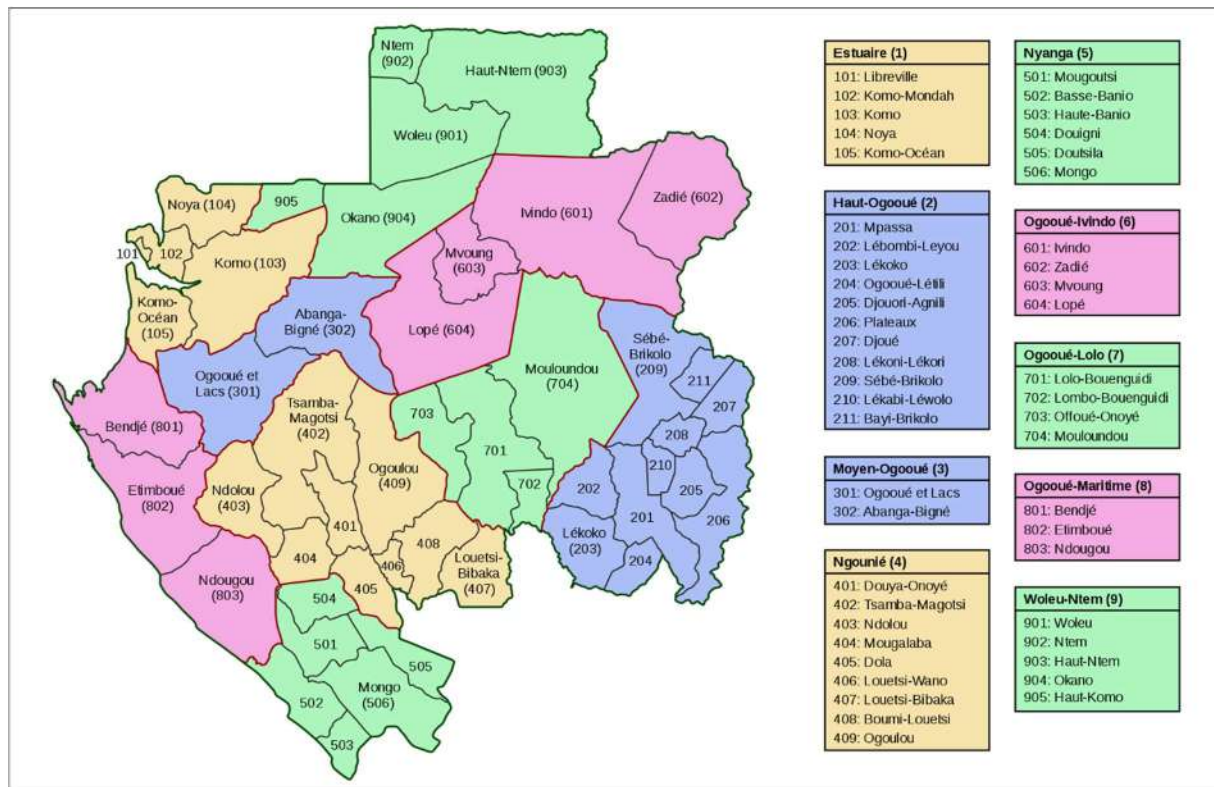


Figure 3 : Administrative map of Gabon (provinces & departments)¹¹

At the territorial level, the administrative map remains complex with overlapping administrative units and a plurality of entities that are, according to the Ministry of the Interior, Public Security, Immigration and Decentralization (MISPID), generally not very viable (MISPID, 2013).

The decentralization process, whose legal bases were laid in 1996, was initiated in the Gabonese Republic in 2002 through the first local elections of the Democratic Renewal era. But, conceived as a way out of a political crisis, it was triggered on the basis of a law whose orientations have not been subjected to a broad consensus among the population, and which has been little popularized and not very well implemented (MISPID, 2013).

Hence, the transfer of state powers to local authorities has not become effective. Planning development at the local level is just starting to take shape: ongoing initiatives are gradually providing municipalities and departments with development objectives and plans. But these initiatives are not yet coordinated, and approaches and contents of the plans have not yet been harmonized (MISPID, 2013).

¹⁰ <https://gaboninfoslive.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/politique-la-decentralisation-et-la-deconcentration-pour-un-developpement-local-du-gabon/>

¹¹ source: By Chrl - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=56323324>

However, decentralization is still displayed in many strategic documents as a strong political ambition¹². In 2013, with the support of United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the government developed and validated a National Strategy for Decentralization and Deconcentration for Local Development (SN3DL) with the objective: "By 2018, the emerging Gabon has implemented local authorities enjoying an effective autonomy, maintaining an active cooperation between them and with deconcentrated authorities of the State, civil society, private sector and foreign partners to promote an integrated, harmonious, sustainable and participatory local development through good governance" (MISPID, 2013).

Although this objective has not yet been achieved, continuing efforts have been made through the "Support for Territorial Networks for Local Governance and Development in Gabon" program (Art-GOLD, financed by the United Nations Development Program and the Government launched in 2012), the adoption of the new Organic Law n ° 001/2014 of 15 June 2015 on decentralization¹³ and the launch, on 31 December 2017, of the Departmental Initiatives Fund aiming to finance community projects in each department of Gabon with a budget allocation of one billion FCFA per department¹⁴.

Despite those achievements, Public-Private Partnerships remains almost non-existent at the local level. In the framework of the national Land Use planning program, local authorities mainly have a role in collecting and relaying information between the local and the national level through the information and consultation centers set up at departmental level and the recurring consultations workshops held at the provincial and departmental levels (CAFI, 2018).

3.3 Environmental governance

In Gabon, the Ministry of Forestry and Environment is in charge of the environment and the National Climate Plan implementation and the Ministry of Economy, Forecasting and Development Programming is in charge of Sustainable Development¹⁵. To ensure development and implementation of key intersectoral reforms for protection and sustainable management of natural resources, the government of Gabon established the following inter-ministerial committees:

- The National Climate Council (NCC), created in 2010 and chaired by President of the Republic, is in charge of policy development and strategic direction on climate change mitigation and adaptation through an integrated approach (decree 0122/PR/MRPICIRNDH of April 23, 2010¹⁶). Since its creation, the NCC piloted the elaboration of the National Climate Plan (published in 2012, it became the reference document for integrating climate change considerations in relevant sectors: forest, agriculture, oil & gas, energy, mines, land-tenure, etc.), the development of the NLUP V.0 (which identify existing land-use conflicts). The NCC is presently responsible for supporting the implementation of the NLUP process which will be thereafter take over by the Sustainable Development Authority (SDA) as soon as it become operational (CAFI, 2018).
The NCC is also the National Designated Authority (NDA) for the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- Created with the adoption of the Law 002/2014 of Sustainable Development: The National Sustainable Development Council (NSDC) in charge policy development and strategic direction on sustainable development and the SDA designated as the managing organization. In May

¹² <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/553836/politique/gabon-libreville-lance-un-fonds-public-pour-la-decentralisation/>

¹³ <http://www.primature.gouv.ga/473-cge/881-texte-officiels/849-lois/891-loi-organique-n-001-2014-du-15-juin-relative-a-la-decentralisation/>

¹⁴ <http://www.primature.gouv.ga/2-actualites/1215-primature-fonds-dinitiative-departemental-fid-/>

¹⁵ <https://www.agenceecofin.com/politique/1301-63167-gabon-composition-du-nouveau-gouvernement>

¹⁶ <http://lcweb5.loc.gov/glin/jurisdictions/Gabon/pdfs/233819-264542.pdf>

2017, the government adopted Decree 00151 / PR / MEPPDD on the attributions, organization and functioning of NSDC and Decree 00152 / PR / MEPPDD on the denomination and organization of the SDA.

The SDA is an independent administrative authority with legal personality and administrative and financial autonomy. Its main mission is to assist the Government in the implementation of sustainable development projects and programs. It will ensure consistency of the NLUP with the country commitments on sustainable development. The SDA is not operational yet and lacks statutes (CAFI, 2018).

- The National Land Use Commission, created in 2017 and chaired by the Minister in charge of Sustainable Development, has been implemented with the main mission of elaborating the Gabon NLUP (decree 00212/MEPPDD of July 21, 2017¹⁷) which is today operational.

Main operational agencies in charge of natural resources knowledge, protection and sustainable management are:

- The Gabonese Agency for Studies and Spatial Observation (AGEOS), which has been in place since 2010 and has already carried out important work in mapping LULUCF;
- The National Agency of National Parks (ANPN), created in 2007 by the Law 003/2007 of 27 August 2007 on National Parks, is a public institution of scientific and environmental nature, benefiting from an administrative and financial autonomy. It is placed under the administrative supervision of the Presidency of the Republic and under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Forest¹⁸. The ANPN initiated the establishment of a Natural Resources Inventory (IRN) and conducted studies and analysis related to HCV and HCS. In 2017, the Government of Gabon initiated a process to separate the functions of issuing forest permits (under the responsibility of the Ministry in charge of forests) and monitoring the implementation of management plan. Even though these changes are not yet official, the Government's wish is to entrust the control and forest policing responsibilities to the ANPN, which would see its name, status and functions evolve (National Agency for Nature Conservation) (CAFI, 2018).
- The Executing agency for the activities of the forest sector (AEAFFB), created in 2011 under the Ministry of forests. Its mission is to contribute to the promotion of forest sector activities by providing technical support on forest inventory, management, certification, traceability, economic, political and strategic monitoring¹⁹.
- The Agency for agriculture development (ADAG), created in 2018 under the ministry of agriculture. Its mission is to support implementation of the agricultural development policy and to develop strategies for the promotion of the agricultural sector, ensuring mobilization and sustainable management of agricultural lands as well as conducting information and promotion actions for the National Office on agricultural investment²⁰.
- The National Agency of Fishery and Aquaculture (ANAPA), created in 2016 under the Ministry of Fishery and aquaculture, in charge of developing and implementing policies related to fishery and aquaculture²¹.

¹⁷ <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/Gab173222.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.ecolex.org/fr/details/legislation/decret-n-000019prmeffppn-fixant-les-statuts-de-lagence-nationale-des-parcs-nationaux-lex-faoc080527/>

¹⁹ <http://www.agenceforetbois.com/mission-strategie-aeaffb-gabon.php>

²⁰ <https://www.gabonreview.com/blog/onader-suppression-enterinee/>

²¹ <http://www.agriculture.gouv.ga/8-ministere/2-autres-contenus-ministere/16-etablisements-sous-tutelles/471-anpa/472-agence-nationale-des-peches-et-laquaculture/>

3.4 Data collection, reference levels and MRV

Gabon has initiated a national forest monitoring system that combines remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches to estimate anthropogenic forest-related GHG emissions and removals that can be monitored and validated at the UNFCCC level called the National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System (NNRFOS).

The AGEOS, implemented since 2010, has already done important work in mapping LULUCF. Various cartographic work has assessed the state and changes in forest cover in 1990, 2000 and 2010. More recently, AGEOS finalized forest cover mapping in 2015 which established that 20% of the country GHG emissions were due to deforestation and land degradation between 2010 and 2015 (PRG, 2015). Meanwhile, the ANPN produced both a palm oil suitability map and an HCS map using aerial LiDAR and biomass assessment, while HCV assessments were conducted by independent consultants (cf. Austin & al., 2017).

The NNRFOS will track the evolution of the national forest cover in near real time and detect deforestation events. Specifically, the deforestation alert system that will be developed by the NNRFOS will inform law enforcement agencies in real time of any unplanned occurrence of deforestation, enabling them to respond. More generally, satellite surveillance of Gabon's forests will serve as a deterrent to illegal activities, thereby promoting the implementation of best practices by forestry operators. The NNRFOS will also include maps of the territorial footprint of villages in Gabon using satellite imagery and drones, which will contribute to the monitoring of the LULUCF sector related to the activities of rural populations (CAFI, 2018).

The NNRFOS project is supported by the CAFI and the following milestones have been agreed by the Government (CAFI & Gabon, 2017):

December 2021 Milestone

NNRFOS fully operational and reporting to the UNFCCC with sufficient funding to continue its activities after the current CAFI funding. Information generated by the NNRFOS, as well as technical background documents, are available to the public on a web platform.

Intermediate Milestones June 2018²²

- a. National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System (NNRFOS) design completed.
- b. Development of a methodology to monitor the carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest.

Intermediate Milestones June 2019

- a. Submission of Biennial Update Report with results based on the analysis provided by NNRFOS and coherent with IPCC guidance including (i) IPCC compliant methodology of at least Tier 2 levels for key forest carbon pools for determining estimates of gross forest-based emissions and removals in Gabon; and (ii) a description of relevant institutional responsibilities for MRV.
- c. Draft report on the monitoring of economic activities on forests.
- d. Report on law enforcement action based on alerts provided by the NNRFOS to line ministry or enforcement agency.
- e. NNRFOS ongoing.
- f. 750 villages mapped (corresponding to 29% of all villages).

²² The program document for the "National land use planning and forest monitoring to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon" was signed in July 2018 and only started in September 2018 while the LoI was signed in June 2017 which explains that some milestones haven't been reached yet despite a deadline set in 2018. However, today the NNRFOS is operational and further work is on-going to improve it including on the methodology to monitor carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HVC forest.

3.5 REDD+, land-use and climate policies

Gabon is among the countries that have given priority to forests and the environment in their economic development and the improvement of the living conditions strategies and vision documents. It is clearly stated in the Emerging Gabon Strategic Document that all actions will be undertaken in a framework of respect for the environment and protection of the forest.

The major progress Gabon has made since the Rio Conference in 1992 to develop a sustainable development policy (source: CAFI & Gabon, 2017-updated by the consultant):

- 1993: Adoption of the Law on the Environment;
- 2000: Adoption of the national environmental action plan;
- 2001: Adoption of a Forest Code, requiring logging companies to develop sustainable management plans for forest concessions; (*Nb: The forest Code is currently being revised and a first draft has been submitted to the Parliament*)
- 2007: Establishment of 13 national parks covering 11% of the land area (including Lopé National Park which features on UNESCO's World Heritage List), expanding the protected areas network to 21% of Gabon's terrestrial ecosystems;
- 2008: Adoption of the law 023/2008 on the sustainable agricultural development strategy;
- 2010: Establishment of the National Climate Council under the President's authority and ratification of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (VPA-FLEGT)
- 2011: Establishment of the Gabonese Space Agency;
- 2012: Publication of the Strategic Plan on Emerging Gabon (aiming to turn Gabon into an emerging economy by 2025) and its sub plan 'Green Gabon', with a considerable focus on climate and environment (including a national climate plan and a program to develop a NLUP);
- 2014: Adoption of the General Law on Sustainable Development and of a revised Law of Environment Protection;
- 2015: Finalization of the NLUP V0 which identify current land-use and potential land-use conflicts;
- 2017: Establishment of the National Land Use Commission with the main mission of elaborating the Gabon NLUP;
- 2018: Establishment of the Agency for agriculture development (ADAG), created in 2018 under the ministry of agriculture, its mission is to support implementation of the agricultural development policy and developing strategies for the promotion of the agricultural sector, ensuring mobilization and sustainable management of agricultural lands as well as conducting information and promotion actions for the National Office on agricultural investment.

Furthermore, the country submitted:

- In 2015, its INDC to UNFCCC. According to the Letter of Intent signed with CAFI (see below), Gabon will review his commitment in the forthcoming NDC with an aim to reduce economy-wide emissions from the 2005 baseline by 50% by 2025 (CAFI, 2017). As most of the emissions come from the LULUCF sector, this will entail reductions in deforestation and forest degradation.
- In 2017, its National Investment Framework to CAFI with two main components:
 - o A land use planning process by which the Government establishes and disseminates its policy orientation in terms of rational use of state land and resources. The role of the NLUP is to assign a land use category to each area of the territory that corresponds

to one or several activities, with the objectives of optimizing the resources of the territory, of minimizing conflicts related to incompatible uses, and of optimizing opportunities with regard to multiple and compatible uses. This planning process, which will lead towards a NLUP adopted by the Parliament, will enable Gabon to direct agricultural development towards areas with the lowest carbon stock and conservation value.

- The establishment of a robust national forest and natural resources monitoring system to ensure monitoring of the implementation of the national land use plan and achievement of emission reductions.

The validation of the National Investment Framework for CAFI led to the signature of a Letter of Intent (cf. Box 2) between CAFI and the Gabonese Government in 2017 (available on CAFI website: www.cafi.org);

- In 2018, its revised final R-PP to the FCPF (available on the FCPF website: www.forestcarbonpartnership.org).

Box 2: The Letter of Intent to establish the partnership between the Government of the Gabonese Republic and the CAFI (source: CAFI & Gabon, 2017)

In 2017, the government of Gabon and the CAFI agreed on the establishment of a cooperative partnership for the implementation of Gabon's National Investment Framework concretized through a Letter of Intent (LoI) signed by both parties.

In this LoI, the government committed to achieve its INDC emissions reduction target in the LULUCF sector (implying emissions reduction of more than 50% in the LULUCF sector) through:

- The preservation of all HCS and HCV forests²³ in accordance with emerging international consensus and best practice on the definition of low emission development;
- Introducing a permanent cap on the area of non-HCS/HCV forests available for conversion to other land uses. In the meantime, as the country is developing guidelines for identifying HCS/HCV within its NLUP elaboration program, it has been agreed that no more than 10 000 ha/year of non-HCS/HCV forests will be converted to other land-use (based on an initial estimated need of 400 000 ha of long term accumulated conversion);
- Maintaining residual conversion of non-HCS/HCV forests at very low levels while ensuring that such conversion is carbon-neutral (compensated by active restoration or carbon enhancement of other forests);
- Reducing substantially areas under logging concessions; and
- Implementing measures against illegal logging and policies to promote sustainable forest management.

In exchange, CAFI has committed to mobilize and secure funding to support Gabon in implementing its National Investment Framework.

The letter of Intent also includes a set 26 milestones for the period 2017-2021 that will be used to assess progress toward the National Investment Framework implementation (cf. JEC 3.1 in the table under 4.3).

²³ On an exceptional basis, carbon-neutral HCS/HCV conversion may occur in case of infrastructure development and extractive industries outside the forest and agriculture sectors that are deemed of vital interest to the national economy. This exceptional conversion of HCS/HCV forest will be covered by the cap allowed for conversion of non HCS/HVC forest

In addition, the country is currently conducting consultations with relevant stakeholders to get ready to sign the declaration of Marrakech on Sustainable Palm Oil Production in the framework of the African Palm Oil Initiative. The goal of the Initiative is to develop and support the implementation of national and regional principles for responsible oil palm development that take account of the ambitious development plans of countries in Africa, while addressing environmental targets for reduced deforestation, land use and greenhouse gases, and social indicators on issues such as land tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples²⁴.

To support those achievements, the following programs are currently being implemented:

- The National land use planning and forest monitoring to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon program (2018-2022) supported by the CAFI and under the responsibility of the NCC. This five year program of USD 18.4 million will support the development of the 2 components of the National Investment Framework: the NLUP and the NNRFOS as described above (CAFI, 2018).
- The program to reduce emissions from the forestry sector (2019-2020) of USD 1.9 million supported by the FCPF and implemented by the NCC (République Gabonaise, 2018). In addition to CAFI supported program, the FCPF will support (i) improving baseline emissions calculation from the forestry sector and (ii) define and implement a national emissions reduction strategy for the forestry sector (including reforestation of highly degraded areas and the implementation of a “green Gabon” label for forestry concessions);
- The Forest Management Control (CAF) program (2014-2019) of EUR 12 million supported by the French Development Agency (AFD) and under the responsibility of ministry in charge of forests. The project aims to support the administration in its mission to control forestry activities through strengthening (i) means to carry out control of forest management plans implementation (ii) capacities of the ministry and its deconcentrated services (iii) transparency with the implementation of an independent audit of controls²⁵.
- Other programs and platforms that support the AGEOS in mapping land-use and land-use change including:
 - o the Spatial observation of forests in Central and West Africa (OSFACO) of the AFD which is a regional project that support improvement of knowledge of past and present dynamics of land use and land-use change using remote sensing in 8 African countries²⁶;
 - o the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Africa program of the European Union²⁷.

Box 3: The HCS/HCV approach in Gabon: setting a precedent for HFCL countries

The RSPO Principles and Criteria 2018, adopted at the 15th annual General Assembly on 15 November 2018, incorporated the HCS Approach as a new requirement to halt deforestation (Criterion 7.12). One major challenge in the effort to stop deforestation is how to achieve this in highly forested countries/landscapes. This has been a contentious topic for decades due to the tension between the global need to conserve the world’s remaining forests and local economic and rural development needs in what are some of the world’s poorest countries or areas²⁸.

²⁴ <https://www.tfa2020.org/en/activities/african-palm-oil-initiative/>

²⁵ http://caf gabon.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=31&Itemid=240

²⁶ <http://www.theia-land.art-geodev.fr/projets/projet-osfaco/>

²⁷ <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181123/1er-forum-du-programme-d%E2%80%99appui-%C3%A0-la-surveillance-mondiale-pour-l>

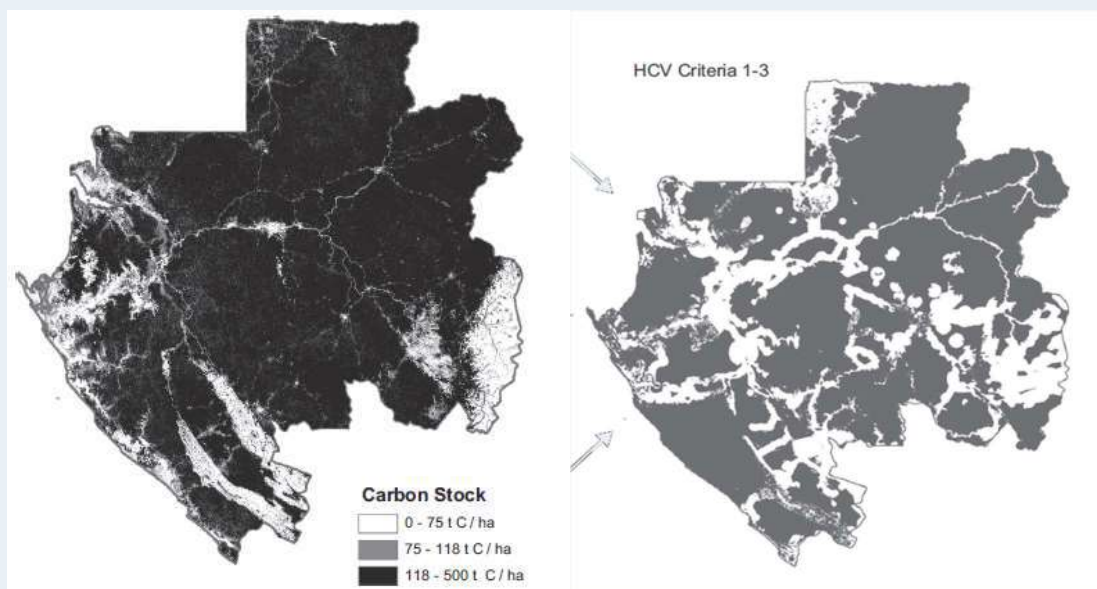
²⁸ <https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review/rspo-high-forest-cover-countries-consultancy-report>

The RSPO P&C 2018 recognize the need for “High Forest Cover Countries (HFCCs) to urgently develop economic opportunities that enable communities to choose their own development path, while providing socio-economic benefits and safeguards”. Hence, the RSPO Board of Governors endorsed the establishment of a ‘No Deforestation Joint Steering Group’ (NDJSG) on 16 November 2018, a joint collaboration between RSPO and HCSA to oversee the development of procedures, methodologies and guidance for the implementation of Criterion 7.12 around HFCC and HFCL.

With forests covering 88.97% of its territory in 2015, Gabon is categorized as HFC country. This implies that a zero gross-deforestation or deforestation-free²⁹ policy, in relation with its current definition of forest³⁰, may directly threat country economic diversification strategy and food production self-sufficiency objectives.

Following efforts to reach voluntary certification of new palm plantations initiated in 2011 by government agencies (ANPN), conservation Non-Governmental Organizations (WWF, WCS and local NGOs), Olam and civil society (Umunay, 2017) and to pursue its agenda in terms of green development and emergence in 2025, the country has developed an innovative top-down approach to protect its natural resources and direct agricultural development towards areas with the lowest conservation value that is not only driven by the identification of a carbon threshold but also involve large inclusive consultation process and HVC protection that can be found outside of forested area. The National Land Use Program, recently started with the support of CAFI, will be used to (i) identify and resolve existing land use conflicts (ii) direct industrial and agricultural land allocation in area that are free of potential conflicts and have low conservation value.

Several studies have been conducted to identify HCS/HCV at the local and national level in line with best international practices and the country is now developing national guidelines to identify HCS/HCV areas where no conversion to other land use will be allowed. This work in progress entails continuing collecting data to refine national maps that will be used for permit allocation and identifying which further analysis and commitments will be required from permits holders.



²⁹ Defined by the Accountability Framework Initiative (AFI) as “Commodity production, sourcing, or financial investments that do not cause or contribute to deforestation of natural forests” (<https://accountability-framework.org/framework/contents/>)

³⁰ According to the article 4 of the 2001 Forestry Law, forests are defined as “all areas with a vegetative cover capable of supplying wood or non-agricultural plant products, sheltering wildlife and having a direct or indirect effect on the soil, climate or water regime”.

Figure 4: Map of forest Carbon Stocks at thresholds 75 and 118 tC/ha (on the left) & Map of HCV 1 to 3 (on the right) (source: Austin & al., 2017)

In addition, as per the country commitments, there will be permanent cap on the area of non-HCS/HCV forests available for conversion to other land uses and each conversion will be compensated by active restoration or carbon enhancement of other forests thus making the approach carbon neutral or zero net deforestation³¹.

Among relevant studies that have been conducted in Gabon in order to identify HCS/HVC, we can cite:

Burton M., Poulsen J., Lee M.E, Medjibe V., Stewart C., Venkataraman A., White L., 2017. *Reducing carbon emissions from forest conversion for Oil Palm agriculture in Gabon.* CONSERVATION LETTERS, 10: 297-307. doi:10.1111/conl.12265. Available at : <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/conl.12265>

Austin K.G., Lee M.E, Clark C., Forester B.R., Urban D.L, White L., Kasibhatla P.S. and Poulsen J.R, 2017. *An assessment of high carbon stock and high conservation value approaches to sustainable oil palm cultivation in Gabon.* Environ. Res. Lett. 12 (2017) 014005. doi:10.1088/1748-9326/aa5437. Available at : <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aa5437/meta>

3.6 Summary and Recommendation: Scope

Despite various efforts to decentralize administrative powers, the administrative map remains extremely complex with overlapping administrative units and a plurality of entities generally not very viable. Subnational jurisdictions have neither the authority nor the technical, operational, and financial capabilities to decide on and implement forest and agricultural investment programs and public-Private Partnerships remains almost non-existent at the local level.

Sustainable development, environment protection and climate change strategies development and implementation remain within the prerogative of the national government. Targets in terms of forest protection and emissions reductions are set at the national level and there is no break down for sub-national jurisdictions.

In the framework of the national Land Use planning program, local authorities mainly have a role in collecting and relaying information between the local and the national level through the information and consultation centers set up at departmental level and the recurring consultations workshops held at the provincial and departmental levels.

Furthermore, the NNRFOS and the elaboration of guidelines for identifying and protecting HCS/HCV area are managed at the national level.

In conclusion, the national level is considered as the most appropriate jurisdictional level for &Green's engagement in Gabon.

³¹ Defined by the AFI as "No net loss in forest area between two points in time, taking into account both losses from deforestation and gains from forest regeneration and restoration. Zero net deforestation would typically be assessed with reference to a given geographic area (e.g., a district, state, nation, or globe) and a given timeframe (<https://accountability-framework.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Accountability-Framework-Definitions-DRAFT-2018-12.pdf>)

4. JEC ASSESSMENT: CRITERIA 1 TO 5

4.1 Checklist JEC 1: Scope

				Gabon (Country-level)	
Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References	
1.1	Amount of forest/peatland in the jurisdiction	<p>Gabon has significant tropical forest coverage (88,97% of its territory in 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gabon houses approximately 13% of the Congo Basin’s moist evergreen forest in 2010 ▪ Forests cover 23.59 million hectares corresponding to 88.97% of its territory in 2015 ▪ Mature forest covers an area of 19 661 254 hectares (73% of the national territory), secondary forest 1 921 726 hectares (7%), mangrove 141,068 hectares (1%) and savannah 1,640,050 hectares (6%) 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ De Wasseige & al., 2012 (p.46) ▪ PRG, 2015 ▪ Results of national forest resource inventory project communicated in 2018³² 	
1.2	Quality of forest/peatland in the jurisdiction	<p>Gabon’s forest is of high ecological value and is home to rich biodiversity. In 2013, it has been estimated that Intact forests cover approximately 46% of the total forest area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gabon is a HFLD country which is home to a particularly rich biodiversity: 400 species of wood, 10,000 species of plants (of which nearly 15% are endemic), 705 bird species, 70 species of reptiles and nearly 190 species of mammals are listed. Gabon has the largest concentration of forest elephants on the African continent; ▪ Protected areas cover 3.85 Mha (14.4% of the national territory) including 2.5 Mha of National Parks, 0.5 Mha of faunal reserves and 0.85 Mha of hunting domains and faunal reserves (HCV 1a) ▪ HCV 1.b (Threatened species), HCV 1.c (Rare Species) and HCV 1.d (endemic species) cover, respectively, 15.41 Mha, 1 Mha and 0.84 Mha. ▪ Rare Ecosystems (HCV 3 defined as those occurring in <1% of Gabon, which includes hyper-humid flooded forest, hyper-humid rugged forest, mangrove forests, flat well-drained grasslands of the central coastal plateau, well-drained grasslands of the coastal basin, and humid calcareous grasslands.) cover 1.15 Mha ▪ Only 13% percent of Gabon’s land area, or 3.3 Mha, contains less than 75 tC/ ha in above ground biomass, and only 20% of the country, or 5.2 Mha, contains less than 118 tC/ha in above ground biomass. ▪ In 2013, Intact forests cover approximately 10.85 million hectares corresponding to 46% of the total forest area. 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PRG, 2015b ▪ Austin & al., 2017 & CAFI, 2018 ▪ Austin & al., 2017 ▪ Austin & al., 2017 ▪ Austin & al., 2017 ▪ Intact Forest Landscapes Mapping Team 2013 	

³² <https://www.gabonreview.com/blog/gestion-durable-ressources-forestieres-pays-se-dote-dun-systeme-dinventaire/>

4.2 Checklist JEC 2: Ambition and Strategy

Gabon (Country-level)				
Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
2.1	Quantitative target against historic rates of gross deforestation	<p><i>Gabon is a country with a high forest cover with low deforestation (HFLD) aiming at reducing more than 50 % of its GHG emissions in the LULUCF sector</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the period 2010-2015, the annual net deforestation rate of Gabon is 0.05% (11,880 ha/yr) and gross deforestation rate is 0.08% (19,246 ha/yr) [forest definition used for this estimation: minimum 1 ha, 30% crown cover and 5m height at maturity-tree plantations are excluded]. ▪ From 2010 to 2015, total gross deforestation is almost at the same level as the estimated 1990-2000 total gross deforestation (ie. in just 5 years) due to economic development (including development of hydropower dams, a special economic zone and agri-business). ▪ Gabon's forthcoming NDC will aim to reduce economy-wide emissions from the 2005 baseline by 50% by 2025. As most of the emissions come from the land use and forest sector, this will entail reductions of more than 50 % of GHG emissions in the LULUCF sector. ▪ Gross GHG emissions from the LULUCF sector are estimated to 80.3 MtCO₂eq in 2005 including 1.4 MtCO₂eq from deforestation and 78.9 MtCo₂eq from forest degradation. In 2015, gross emissions have been reduced to 29.9 MtCO₂eq including 12.2 MtCO₂eq from deforestation and 14.5 MtCO₂eq from deforestation. This means that the country already reached its goal of GHG emissions reduction in the LULUCF sector compare to the 2005 baseline (62%) by reducing significantly GHG emissions issued from forest degradation. ▪ To reach the goal set in the Lol, that will be re-establish in the forthcoming NDC, the country will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preserve all High Carbon Stock (HCS) and High Conservation Value (HCV) forests³³ in accordance with emerging international consensus and best practice on the definition of low emission development; - introduce a permanent cap on the area of non-HCS/HCV forests available for conversion to other land uses. In the meantime, as the country is developing guidelines for identifying HCS/HCV within its NLUP elaboration program, it has been agreed that no more than 10,000 ha/year of non-HCS/HCV forests will be converted to other land-use; - maintain residual conversion of non-HCS/HCV forests at very low levels while ensuring that such conversion is carbon-neutral (compensated by active restoration or carbon enhancement of other forests); - reduce substantially areas under logging concessions (from 17 Mha to 13 Mha); 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PRG, 2015 & Sannier, 2016 ▪ Sannier, 2016 ▪ CAFI & Gabon, 2017 ▪ CAFI, 2018 (interpretation of the figure 1 page 10) ▪ CAFI & Gabon, 2017 ▪ CAFI, 2018 (description of the approach to define HCS and non-HCS forests adopted by the country) ▪ Pers. Communication Berta Pesti (CAFI Secretariat)

³³ On an exceptional basis, carbon-neutral HCS/HCV conversion may occur in case of infrastructure development and extractive industries outside the forest and agriculture sectors that are deemed of vital interest to the national economy. This exceptional conversion of HCS/HCV forest will be covered by the cap allowed for conversion of non HCS/HVC forest

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implement measures against illegal logging and policies to promote sustainable forest management. ▪ Since the HCSA does not presently allow deforestation of young regenerating forest³⁴, the country is currently working on providing a national distinction between HCS forests and non-HCS forests that will support the implementation of this approach in line with the national context of this HFCC and that could also be endorsed by the RSPO. Indeed, according to the HCSA, the definition of HCS is not only limited to a carbon threshold and communities' understanding of what forests are, play a key role in forest definition. Gabon's current attempt to define its national interpretation is based on the historic understanding by local people of forest complementing more modern attempts to define forests through carbon thresholds. 		
2.2	Ambition	<p><i>Despite a low historical annual net deforestation, the goal is deemed ambitious as the country aims at developing significantly its agricultural sector</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With a low historical annual net deforestation rate of 0.05% and an ambition of reducing by more than 50% LULUCF GHG emissions from the 2005 baseline by 2025 (including deforestation & degradation), the goal is deemed ambitious as the HFCC also aims at developing its agricultural sector to reach food self-sufficiency by 2025 and to become a major exporter of palm oil, rubber and sugar in Africa. 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PRG, 2015 (deforestation rate), CAFI & Gabon, 2017 (emissions reduction ambition) & PRG, 2015b (agricultural development ambition)
2.3	... equaling or exceeding national targets	<i>Not applicable</i>	N/A	
2.4	Feasible Strategy	<p><i>Gabon has several policies and programs in place that seek to curb deforestation and forest degradation, most notably the National land use planning and forest monitoring to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon program supported by CAFI. Generally, the achievement of the national target is considered feasible.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In 2012, Gabon approved and published the Strategic Plan on Emerging Gabon (aiming to turn Gabon into an emerging economy by 2025) and its sub plan 'Green Gabon', with a considerable focus on climate and environment (including a national climate plan and a program to develop a NLUP). 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PRG, 2015a & 2015b ▪ CAFI & Gabon, 2017 ▪ CAFI, 2018 ▪ CAFI, 2018 (pages 25 to 55) ▪ CAFI, 2018 ▪ République Gabonaise,

³⁴ Young Regenerating Forest (YRF) is defined as a highly disturbed forest or forest areas regenerating to their original structure. Diameter distribution dominated by trees 10-30 cm and with higher frequency of pioneer species compared to Low Density Forest. This land cover class may contain small areas of smallholder agriculture. Note: abandoned plantations with less than 50% of basal area consisting of planted trees could fall in this category or above. Concentrations >50% of basal area would not be considered HCS forest but rather plantations and should be classified separately. (<http://highcarbonstock.org/hcsa-steering-group-statement-on-high-forest-cover-landscapes/#f2>)

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In 2017, Gabon signed a letter of intent (LoI) with the CAFI with time-bound milestones (cf. JEC 3.1 below) to support reaching its targets in terms of deforestation and forest degradation reduction as described above. ▪ In September 2018, Gabon with the support of CAFI started a 5 years program of USD 18.4 million called “National land use planning and forest monitoring to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon” aiming at developing, adopting and implementing a NLUP and the NNRFOS that will contribute to the reduction of GHG emissions from LULUCF sector in Gabon. ▪ The program that will be implemented between 2018 and 2023 includes the following components and activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Component 1: Development and adoption of the NLUP</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operational support to the national land-use commission and its sub-commissions 2. Identification and resolution of existing land-use conflicts 3. Establishment of a spatial data management Unit within the AGEOS 4. Multi-stakeholder’s communication & consultation process at the national, provincial and departmental levels 5. Participatory mapping of land-use practices and rights with rural populations 6. Study and mapping of agricultural, mining, forestry sectors development potential 7. Climate change impact modelling and establishment of a network of meteorological and hydrographic stations 8. Development of national definitions and guidelines for HCS/HVC forests 9. Conception of land-use planning decision tools and of the NLUP 10. Social and Environmental Strategic Assessment of the NLUP 11. Adoption and implementation of the NLUP <u>Component 2: Development and implementation of the NNRFOS</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of guidelines to analyze spatial data, produce maps and statistics of forest cover changes 2. Spatial monitoring of villages expansion 3. Spatial monitoring of industrial activities, small-scale agriculture and urbanization 4. Improvement of the national resources inventory 5. Biomass carbon stocks and flux mapping 		<p>2018, CAF³⁵, OSFACO³⁶, GMES and Africa program³⁷.</p>

³⁵ http://cagabon.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=31&Itemid=240

³⁶ <http://www.theia-land.art-geodev.fr/projets/projet-osfaco/>

³⁷ <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181123/1er-forum-du-programme-d%E2%80%99appui-%C3%A0-la-surveillance-mondiale-pour-l>

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
		<p>6. AGEOS capacity building in terms of LULUCF monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previously to this program supported by CAFI, Gabon already developed a NLUP V0 that identified potential land-use conflicts that will be resolved through the program and conducted first identification of HCS and HCV 1 to 3 on its national territory ▪ Furthermore, other programs are currently being implemented including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program to reduce emissions from the forestry sector (2019-2020) of USD 1.9 million supported by the FCPF and implemented by the NCC. The FCPF will support (i) improving baseline emissions calculation from the forestry sector and (ii) define and implement a national emissions reduction strategy for the forestry sector (including reforestation of highly degraded area and the implementation of a “green Gabon” label for forestry concessions”); - The Forest Management Control (CAF) program (2014-2019) of EUR 12 million supported by the AFD which aims to support the administration in its mission to control forestry activities through strengthening (i) means to carry out control of forest management plans implementation (ii) capacities of the ministry and its deconcentrated services (iii) transparency with the implementation of an independent audit of controls. - Other programs and platforms that support the AGEOS in mapping land-use and land-use change including (i) OSFACO of the AFD which is a regional project that support improvement of knowledge of past and present dynamics of land use and land-use change using remote sensing in 8 African countries; (ii) the GMES and Africa program of the European Union. ▪ In addition, the country is currently conducting consultations with relevant stakeholders to get ready to sign the declaration of Marrakech on Sustainable Palm Oil Production in the framework of the African Palm Oil Initiative. 		

4.3 Checklist JEC 3: Progress

Gabon (Country-level)				
Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
3.1	Timely progress towards milestones of the strategy...	<p><i>In the Letter of Intent signed with CAFI, Gabon has defined milestones that will ensure measuring timely progress towards implementing its strategy and achieving its ambition in a transparent manner.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Below is listed a summary of the relevant milestones and their timelines agreed in the framework of the Lol to assess progress toward the strategy implementation ³⁸ <p><u>“Strategic” milestones</u></p> <p>December 2021 Milestone: Land use plan adopted and being implemented</p> <p>Intermediate Milestones December 2017</p> <p>a. Signature of the <i>TFA 2020 Marrakech Declaration for the Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa</i>, under the African Palm Oil Initiative, APOI.</p> <p>Intermediate Milestones June 2018</p> <p>b. Finalization and adoption of the National Action Plan of the TFA 2020 Marrakech Declaration for the Sustainable Oil Palm Sector in Africa.</p> <p>c. Development and adoption of national guidelines and definitions to ensure that forests with HCS and HCV will not be converted to other land uses, in accordance with emerging international consensus and best practice</p> <p>d. A policy on a carbon-neutral approach to the conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest to other land uses is developed, adopted and implemented</p> <p>e. Establishment of a methodology and roadmap to ensure participation and FPIC in land use planning decisions that involve forest-dwelling people and traditional communities.</p> <p>Intermediate Milestones June 2019</p> <p>f. Preliminary setting of a long-term cap on carbon-neutral conversion of non-HCS/HCV forests of no more than 10 000 ha converted on an annual basis. The long-term cap will be confirmed by June 2020.</p> <p>Intermediate Milestones June 2019</p> <p>c. An ambitious plan to fight illegal logging is elaborated, validated in a participatory way and progressively implemented, notably based on concrete progress in the negotiation process of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the Gabon and FLEGT.</p> <p>e. Revision of the forest code and its regulatory decrees to lay down how and at what pace the area under logging concessions will be reduced from its current level of 17 million ha to maximum 13 million ha as early as possible and no later than by 2025, as stipulated by the Strategic Plan on Emerging Gabon.</p>	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAFI & Gabon, 2017

³⁸ The program document for the “National land use planning and forest monitoring to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon” was signed in July 2018 and only started in September 2018 while the Lol was signed in June 2017 which explains that some milestones haven’t been reached yet despite a deadline set in 2018.

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
		<p>f. Establish a target on reduced per hectare emissions and total emissions from forest degradation from remaining logging concessions and develop and adopt an action plan to achieve this target, including improvements in logging criteria to reduce climate and biodiversity impact per hectare.</p> <p><u>“Monitoring & reporting” milestones</u></p> <p>1. Land Use Intermediate Milestones June 2019</p> <p>g. Report on compliance with commitment of non-conversion of HCS/HCV forests.</p> <p>h. Report on the progress made in participatory and inclusive land use planning including (i) The composition, terms of reference and activities of the NLUP Commission; (ii) Summary of the consultation processes and how the concerns have been addressed; (iii) Summary on the activities conducted under the Grievance Mechanism of the NLUP Commission.</p> <p>i. Report on progress made on mapping land use suitability for agriculture, mining, conservation, climate vulnerability and sustainable natural resource exploitation.</p> <p>2. NNRFOS December 2021 Milestone : NNRFOS fully operational and reporting to the UNFCCC with sufficient funding to continue its activities after the current CAFI funding. Information generated by the NNRFOS, as well as technical background documents, are available to the public on a web platform.</p> <p>Intermediate Milestones June 2018</p> <p>a. National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System (NNRFOS) design completed.</p> <p>b. Development of a methodology to monitor the carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest</p> <p>Intermediate Milestones June 2019</p> <p>c. Submission of Biennial Update Report with results based on the analysis provided by NNRFOS and coherent with IPCC guidance including (i) IPCC compliant methodology of at least Tier 2 levels for key forest carbon pools for determining estimates of gross forest based emissions and removals in Gabon; and (ii) a description of relevant institutional responsibilities for MRV.</p> <p>d. Draft report on the monitoring of economic activities on forests.</p> <p>e. Report on law enforcement action based on alerts provided by the NNRFOS to line ministry or enforcement agency.</p> <p>f. NNRFOS ongoing.</p> <p>g. 750 villages mapped (corresponding to 29% of all villages).</p> <p>3. Governance Intermediate Milestone June 2018</p> <p>b. Establishment of a joint M&E framework for relevant international development assistance to align funding flows and technical assistance.</p>		

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
		<p>Intermediate Milestones June 2019</p> <p>d. Report on the progress made on (i) Completion and enforcement of the legal and regulatory framework, adopted through inclusive discussion among national stakeholders, for forest management, timber exploitation and timber trade; and</p> <p>(ii) Roll-out of the management plans demonstrating an increase in surface area under sustainable management, as a percentage of total concession area, compared to June 2017; (iii) Increased monitoring and enforcement capacity of the forestry administration including information systems and officials trained</p> <p>h. Implementation of a safeguards information system consistent with relevant UNFCCC Decisions and inclusion into the national report to the UNFCCC the first summary of information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All milestones and progress achieved will be monitored annually and reported on the website <i>www.pnatgabon.ga</i> to be available to public. Moreover, both parties of the LoI agreed that the independent verification comprising a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the level of achievement of the intermediate milestones will be conducted in 2020. 		
3.2	... measurably on a trajectory towards the targets for reduced deforestation	<p>The national forest monitoring system (NNRFOS) will monitor progress towards target for reduced deforestation as well as carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest. Results will be available to the public on a web platform and verifiable through UNFCCC reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gross GHG emissions from the LULUCF sector are estimated to 80.3 MtCO₂eq in 2005 including 1.4 MtCO₂eq from deforestation and 78.9 MtCO₂eq from forest degradation. In 2015, gross emissions have been reduced to 29.9 MtCO₂eq including 12.2 MtCO₂eq from deforestation. This means that the country already reached its goal of GHG emissions reduction in the LULUCF sector compare to the 2005 baseline (-62%) by reducing significantly GHG emissions issued from forest degradation. - The NNRFOS, which combines remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches, will measure progress in terms of reduced deforestation and reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. It will also integrate specific methodologies to (i) provide near real alerts to trigger actions from law enforcement agencies and (ii) monitor the carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest. ▪ According to the LoI, emissions assessment will be in line with UNFCCC requirements and best international practices. Information generated by the NNRFOS, as well as technical background documents, will be available to the public on a web platform. 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CFI, 2018 (interpretation of the figure 1 page 10) ▪ CFI & Gabon, 2017

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
3.3	Verifiable improvement of the enabling environment	<p><i>Since the Rio Conference, the country has made important progress to consider environmental issues into its economic development. Progress are still ongoing through its national programs to ensure the establishment of proper policies and legal framework for its Land-Use strategy implementation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Major progress Gabon has made since the Rio Conference in 1992 to develop a sustainable development policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1993: Adoption of the Law on the Environment; - 2000: Adoption of the national environmental action plan; - 2001: Adoption of a Forest Code, requiring sustainable management plans for forest concessions; - 2007: Establishment of 13 national parks covering 11% of the land area, expanding the protected areas network to 21% of Gabon's terrestrial ecosystems; - 2008: Adoption of the law 023/2008 on the sustainable agricultural development strategy; - 2010: Establishment of the National Climate Council under the President's authority; - 2011: Establishment of the Gabonese Space Agency; - 2012: Publication of the Strategic Plan on Emerging Gabon (aiming to turn Gabon into an emerging economy by 2025) and its sub plan 'Green Gabon', with a considerable focus on climate and environment (including a national climate plan and a program to develop a NLUP); - 2014: Adoption of the General Law on Sustainable Development and of a Law of Environment Protection; - 2015: Finalization of the NLUP V0 which identify current land-use and potential land-use conflicts; - 2017: Establishment of the National Land Use Commission with the main mission of elaborating the NLUP; - 2018: Establishment of the Agency for agriculture development (ADAG) to support implementation of the agricultural development policy and developing strategies for the promotion of the agricultural sector. ▪ Other activities to improve the enabling environment are currently being implemented or planned, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The revision of the forestry code and its regulatory decree (first draft has been submitted to the Parliament). According to the LoI, it will lay down how and at what pace the area under logging concessions will be reduced from its current level of 17 million ha to maximum 13 million ha by 2025. - Ongoing operational support to the national land-use commission and its sub-commissions (through CAFI support). This will include a legal sub-commission which will oversee recognition and consistency of the national land use planning process and decisions with sectoral legal and regulatory frameworks. - The development of Land-Use planning law to support the NLUP implementation and its regulatory decree (activity 1.10 of the LUP program) - The development of a deforestation and forest degradation near real alerts system to trigger actions from law enforcement agencies. 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAFI & Gabon, 2017- updated by the consultant ▪ CAFI & Gabon, 2017 ; CAFI, 2018 and Pers. Communication Berta Pesti (CAFI Secretariat)

4.4 Checklist JEC 4: Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV)

Gabon (Country-level)

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
4.1	Transparent system operational	<p><i>The NNRFOS will monitor progress towards target for reduced deforestation as well as carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest. Results will be available to the public on a web platform and verifiable through UNFCCC reporting. The NNFROS is operational but further work is still ongoing to improve the system.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gabon has initiated a national forest monitoring system that combines remote sensing and ground-based forest carbon inventory approaches to estimate anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions and removals. The National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System (NNRFOS) has been implemented and was used to assess forest cover change and GHG emissions on the period 2010-2015 which established that 20% of the country GHG emissions were due to deforestation and land degradation between 2010 and 2015. ▪ Further work is ongoing within the program “National land use planning and forest monitoring to promote sustainable development strategies for Gabon” supported by CAFI to improve estimations of anthropogenic forest-related greenhouse gas emissions and removals with the objective of meeting IPCC Tier 3 method that will also be supported by the FCPF readiness fund (for the degradation monitoring component). ▪ The NNRFOS will track the evolution of the national forest cover in near real time and detect deforestation events. Specifically, the deforestation alert system that will be developed by the NNRFOS will inform law enforcement agencies in real time of any unplanned occurrence of deforestation, enabling them to respond. It will also integrate a system to monitor the preservation of HCS/HCV and the carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest (ambition stated under JEC 2). ▪ As part of the Lol agreed between the government and CAFI, a Biennial Update Report (BUR) will be submitted in 2019 and an independent verification of the program progress will be conducted in 2020. Also, the country will provide regularly updated information on milestones monitoring (including ongoing progress on the NNRFOS) and data will be made available to the public on the website www.pnatgabon.ga (at least every year). In addition, information generated by the NNRFOS, as well as technical background documents, will be made available to the public on a web platform (by 2021) 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PRG, 2015 ▪ CAFI, 2018 and République Gabonaise, 2018 (p. 89) ▪ CAFI, 2018 ▪ CAFI & Gabon, 2017 ▪ CAFI & Gabon 2017

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
4.2	Progress towards implementation of the MRV system	<p><i>In the Letter of Intent signed with CAFI, Gabon has defined milestones that will ensure measuring timely progress towards the development of its NNRFOS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In terms of future progress, the following milestones have been set by the government and CAFI in the framework of the LoI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2021 Milestone NNRFOS fully operational and reporting to the UNFCCC with sufficient funding to continue its activities after the current CAFI funding. Information generated by the NNRFOS, as well as technical background documents, are available to the public on a web platform. Intermediate Milestones June 2018 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. National Natural Resources and Forestry Observation System (NNRFOS) design completed. h. Development of a methodology to monitor the carbon-neutrality of conversion of non-HCS/HCV forest. Intermediate Milestones June 2019 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Submission of Biennial Update Report with results based on the analysis provided by NNRFOS and coherent with IPCC guidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Including IPCC compliant methodology of at least Tier 2 levels for key forest carbon pools for determining estimates of gross forest-based emissions and removals in Gabon; and ii. Including a description of relevant institutional responsibilities for MRV. j. Draft report on the monitoring of economic activities on forests. k. Report on law enforcement action based on alerts provided by the NNRFOS to line ministry or enforcement agency. 	OK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAFI & Gabon 2017

4.5 Checklist JEC 5: Social and environmental safeguards

Gabon (Country-level)

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
5.1	Safeguards against social and environmental risks associated with the strategy in place	<p><i>The country is currently working on the design of the REDD+ SIS but has not yet finalized it. In the meantime, specific measures have been designed and integrated in its National Investment Framework to ensure respect of Cancun Safeguards.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The country is currently working on the design of the REDD+ SIS but has not yet finalized it. It has submitted a first analysis of Social and Environmental Standards and regulatory framework in place that are in compliance with Cancun Safeguards. Among the policies that have been adopted, we can cite: the forestry law (adopted in 2001 and currently under revision), the law on the sustainable agricultural development strategy (2008) the General Law on Sustainable Development and the revised Law of Environment Protection (adopted in 2014). ▪ Moreover, the National Investment Framework, the NLUP & NNRFOS project and the Lol integrate specific measures to respect the 7 Cancun Safeguards such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The optimization of land use planning through a multisectoral, inclusive and transparent process. The aim of the program is to bring the country's national and sectoral strategies and policies as well as relevant international agreements into coherence and to make compatible the geographical superposition of human activities and necessary infrastructures in their strategic, economic, social and environmental dimensions (compliance with safeguards a & b) - The identification and protection of HCS/HCV (compliance with safeguards e &c) - The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders including indigenous people – cf. milestone 1.e “Establishment of a methodology and roadmap to ensure participation and free prior and informed consent in land use planning decisions that involve forest-dwelling people and traditional communities” (compliance with safeguards d & c) - At the national level, the implementation of a deforestation alert system and the establishment of a network of mixed meteorological and hydrographic stations to model climate change impact and address risks of reversal and displacement of emissions (compliance with safeguards f & g) 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ République Gabonaise, 2018 (p. 81-116) ▪ CAFI, 2018 & Pers. Communication Berta Pesti (CAFI Secretariat)

Item	Criteria	Analysis	Check	References
5.2	Progress	<p><i>The safeguards information system will be designed by June 2019 and Summary of Information (Sol) will be included in the next NDC.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ According to the Lol signed with CAFI, a safeguards information system consistent with relevant UNFCCC Decisions and inclusion into the national report to the UNFCCC the first summary of information (Sol) on how relevant safeguards are being addressed and respected according to UNFCCC Decisions will be designed by June 2019 (milestone 3g). ▪ The SIS is actually being designed and will be included in the next national communication/NDC. 	Ok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAFI, 2018 ▪ Pers. Communication Berta Pesti (CAFI Secretariat)

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