

Bushmeat in central Africa

A structured supply chain and a resilient resource

In sub-Saharan Africa, hunting provides a major share of the food consumed by rural populations. However, population growth and urbanization mean ever-growing demand. Assessing and regulating hunting pressure is thus a major challenge that CIRAD's expertise could help to meet. For some 20 years now, CIRAD has been studying African wildlife, from management of protected areas to the different types of hunting and wildlife uses. It has come up with a set of biological and economic indicators for use by projects aimed at ensuring sustainable management of hunting.



Dried bushmeat for sale at the market in Bria, Central African Republic. © CIRAD



Bushmeat market in Galafondo, Central African Republic. © CIRAD

Bushmeat, a vital source of animal protein

In forest and humid grassland regions, bushmeat provides a vital share of the protein consumed by villagers. Livestock farming is largely unproductive, due to sanitary issues and social traditions, and fish stocks are often limited. Farmers set traps around their fields to protect their crops against pests and provide their family with protein.

When urban markets are accessible, commercial hunting may become the main

activity for some young rural inhabitants. CIRAD has monitored markets in both large cities and smaller towns and observed that fresh bushmeat prices are generally comparable to those of farmed meat or fresh fish. However, smoke-dried bushmeat is often the cheapest sources of protein, allowing for the weight loss caused by drying.

Died bushmeat is thus a staple, very widely consumed product. Indeed, in urban areas, it is often the protein of the poor.

Contact

Christian Fargeot

CIRAD, UR BSEF
Tropical Forest Goods and
Ecosystem Services
34398 Montpellier Cedex 5
France

christian.fargeot@cirad.frr



Commercial hunting, a structured supply chain

As a result of inappropriate legislation, bushmeat supplies to urban markets are often pushed into the informal sector, and the activity is even sometimes considered illegal.

However, it serves to create jobs and circulate wealth from urban centres to the countryside.

Contrary to popular belief, wildlife is not a freely accessible resource. Each village controls a hunting area, the extent of which is more or less fixed depending on population density.

The supply chain is structured, beginning with village hunters within the hunting area covered by their village. They sell to collectors who transport the meat to central markets on the edges of towns, at the terminus of road or rail links. Retailers come to buy supplies and subsequently sell to consumers and restaurants.

While hunting is an entirely masculine activity, the rest of the chain, from village to end consumer, is largely dominated by women.

Sustainable use of common wildlife

Studies of both hunting areas and urban markets have shown that the chain primarily concerns small to medium-sized species (rodents, small ruminants, pigs, etc). These animals reproduce quickly, have limited ecological requirements, and can thus withstand increasing human occupation of their environment and pressure from hunting. This common wildlife can be classed as "ordinary biodiversity". Current observations in countries with very different human population densities, and historical data, confirm that the resource is highly resilient.

Wildlife management policies unfortunately give precedence to emblematic species classed as remarkable biodiversity. They concentrate scientific and financial resources on these species and on a small number of protected areas, and marginalize commercial hunting. Such policies have resulted in a social and ecological stalemate, and it is thus important to think about new wildlife management strategies that really take account of local people, their hunting practices and their material needs.

To help its partners draft and implement such policies, CIRAD has expertise that could be used to:

- conduct the biological studies that are vital for common wildlife management;
- analyse bushmeat production chains;
- introduce territory management tools and identify resource sustainability indicators;
- pinpoint the institutional reforms required for participatory management of wildlife and animal biodiversity.



Roadside bushmeat stall. © CIRAD

Partners

• **CIFOR**,
Center for International Forestry Research, Indonesia

• **CRDPI**,
Centre de recherche sur la durabilité des plantations industrielles, Congo

• **FFEM**,
Fonds français pour l'environnement mondial, France

• **IGF**,
Fondation internationale pour la gestion de la faune, France

• **MEEF**,
Ministry of the Environment, Rivers and Forests, Central African Republic