Central African Republic

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The Central African Republic (CAR) has a tropical climate and is a major producer of timber. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, CAR experienced civil war and varying conflicts that have had lasting impacts. Although CAR ratified a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union in 2012 to increase transparency and traceability within the forest sector, its implementation was paused from 2012 to 2016 due to persisting crises. Several reports have linked logging companies and timber sourced from CAR to fueling instability and funding **domestic** and **international** conflicts. In recent years, **organized crime** has exacerbated illegal logging and timber trafficking and contributed to increased deforestation throughout the country. In efforts to combat illegal logging, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), in which CAR is a member of, enacted a ban on raw timber exports in January 2022, yet Central African Republic **failed to implement the ban**. Political instability is among some of the major governance problems preventing CAR from effectively implementing its laws and eliminating illegal conduct within the forest sector.

Forest Management

Forest Governance

The CAR Government owns most of the country's forests. The commercial harvest of timber and forest products is permitted on forest concessions and in private forests.

The following agencies/ministries oversee regulation and management of forest lands and products in CAR:

- **Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries *(Ministère des Eaux, Forêts, Chasse et Pêche - MEFCP)***: Responsible for overseeing the implementation of forestry policy throughout the country. The MEFCP also regulates and promotes the conservation and sustainable management of forests (water, hunting and fishing) and contributes to socio-economic activities related to these natural resources. There are two General Directorates under MEFCP.
- **Sustainable Forest Resources Management Agency *(Agence de Gestion Durable des Ressources Forestières - AGDRF)***: An autonomous agency under MEFCP, the AGDRF is responsible for developing and overseeing forest management plans and forest concessions.

Transparency

For information regarding transparency and risk scores in Central African Republic, head to these links:

- **Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index**
- The World Bank's **Worldwide Governance Indicator Data**

Laws and Regulations

Forest Laws

- **Law No. 08.022 establishing the Forest Code of the Central African Republic (2008)**: Establishes rules on rights to use forest resources in CAR. The 2008 Forest Code outlines regulations for logging operations and forest management (see Title V: *Participatory Management* for details on participatory management of forest resources in CAR). The Forest Code establishes three types of permits/authorizations for forestry activities:
    - **Artisanal Logging Permit (*Permis d'exploitation artisanale*)**: Artisanal logging refers to any activity whose sole capital is the labor force of the artisan and his family, or the local community, reinforced small portable production equipment (where appropriate) mainly for the production of charcoal, firewood and sawn timber. Artisanal logging is only permitted in production forests (Articles 23 and 25). The permit is issued for a one-year period (renewable annually) and covers a maximum area of 10 hectares. Permit holders must also have an operator card issued by the Minister in charge of forests and permits are only granted to persons of Central African nationality and to local communities (Articles 25-26).
    - **Logging and Management Permit (*Permis d'exploitation et d'aménagement* - PEA):** Must be obtained to carry out industrial logging, or any forestry activities that require significant investments in capital, labor and equipment with the intent to transform and/or sell the products (Article 29 and 31). This permit is issued for companies with forest concessions within the State forest domain. For requirements on establishing a forestry company, see Article 30. The PEA is issued for a period equal to the lifespan of the company (Article 32). To obtain a PEA, companies must create and implement a management plan (Article 39). For information on the management plan, see Chapter III: *Of Forest Management*. Protection areas are established within the management plan that prohibits forest activities within those determined areas (Article 83).
    - **Permit to harvest or log forest products other than timber (*Permis d'exploitation ou de collecte des produits forestiers autre que le bois d'oeuvre*):** For the harvest and logging of forests located in the non-permanent forest domain, see Title III: *Of the Non-permanent forest domain*.
        - Community forests: Must establish a management agreement between the forestry administration and the community. The management agreement is accompanied by a simple management plan (Article 134).
        - Private forests: Must develop and operate under a simple management plan for the harvest of timber and other forest products (Articles 131-132).
        - Forestry domain of public authorities: Must receive authorization from the forestry administration to clear forests (Article 126).

- **Order No. 09-021 establishing the terms of application of the Forest Code (2009)**: Provides regulations for the implementation of the 2008 Forest Code. This order establishes additional policies for issuing logging permits and outlines the rules and permissions for logging forests based on the area of harvest. Conditions for artisanal logging, deforestation activities, industrial logging, forest activities within the State forest domain, community forests, and other management structures are detailed in the order.

- **Decree No. 09-118 establishing the procedures for issuing Logging and Management Permits (2009)**: Provides additional regulations for obtaining a Logging and Management permit (*Permis d'exploitation et d'aménagement* - PEA).
- **Order No. 004/MEFCPE/DIRCAB/DGEFCP/DIEF/SEF (2009)**: Provides additional regulations on artisanal logging.
- **Decree No. 15463 (2015)**: Establishes rules regarding community forest management and punishable offenses for violations against community forests.

Processing/Manufacturing Laws

- **Law No. 08.022 establishing the Forest Code of the Central African Republic (2008)**: Provides that the Ministries in charge of forests, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Trade, are responsible for defining the implementation conditions and technical standards for processing timber and forest products (Article 173). The Code requires forestry companies to hold Logging and Management permits (PEA) and to carry out the transformation of timber and forest products locally (Article 39). The production of logs must meet the demand of local processing units, and permit holders are required to process at least 70% of the total "category 1 species" (defined in the PEA plan) harvested (Article 44). Selling logs under a Logging and Management permit to any processing unit within CAR is subject to validation under a traceability system (Article 45). The relocation of processing units must be authorized by the Ministries in charge of forests and industry.

Transport Laws

- **Law No. 08.022 establishing the Forest Code of the Central African Republic (2008)**: Logs harvested from the State Forest domain and private forest operations must have the imprint of the hammer with the triangular mark of the operator in order to be transported (Article 93; 132). The operator's mark must be documented in the Registry of the High Court, the Court of Commerce or the local forestry administration (Article 93; 132). Regulations on transporting forest products other than timber are determined in the transport legislation currently enforced (Article 74).
- **Order No. 09-021 establishing the terms of application of the Forest Code (2009)**: Logs harvested from private forests must be accompanied by a waybill (*feuille de route*) (Article 77). For details on the information that must be provided in the waybill, see Article 82. The logging of private forests requires prior authorization from the Ministry in charge of forests upon request from the forest owner (Article 78-79).

Tax Laws

- **Law No. 08.022 establishing the Forest Code of the Central African Republic (2008)**: Mandates that all forestry companies are subject to forestry taxes and royalties and must provide a copy of their tax declaration to the Ministry in charge of forests (Article 177; Article 186). Financial incentives may be available for forestry companies to implement sustainable management practices, as outlined in the Investment Charter (Article 184). Applicable taxes include:
    - **Rent (area tax – *le loyer*)**: Annual tax collected per hectare of useful surface area under the Logging and Management permit (Article 180). The rent rate is determined in the Finance Law. Rent is due on January 1st of each fiscal year or before any

logging activities begin (in cases where activities begin during the year). Additionally, all applications for a Logging and Management permit (PEA) must include a commitment to pay an amount equivalent to three years' rent (Article 189).

- **Felling tax (*taxe d'abattage*):** Determined on the volume of the timber felled (Article 181). The felling tax rate is established in the Finance Law. The felling tax is due every month. Companies that export logs must provide a "wood movements" form to the General Directorate of Forests by the 20th of each month for the previous month (Article 190).
- **Reforestation tax (*taxe de reboisement*):** Determined by the volume of timber species exported (Article 182). The reforestation tax rate is set by the Finance Law. The reforestation tax is due every month based on a summary statement from the General Directorate of Forests (Article 191).
- **Deforestation tax (*redevance de déboisement*):** If granted a deforestation authorization for any activity other than logging, the authorization holder is subject to the deforestation tax. The rate is established by the Finance Law (Article 185).
- **Pre-reconnaissance tax (*redevance de pré reconnaissance*)**

- **2024 Finance Law**: Determines the tax rates for the taxes mentioned above and establishes export duties.
  - The **2005 Finance Law** establishes an additional forestry tax, known as the ecotax. The ecotax is applicable to forest permits without a management plan for which the payments are due annually. The tax rate is 500 CFA francs/ha on the entire usable surface area which the permit covers (Articles 44-48).

Trade Laws

- **Law No. 08.022 establishing the Forest Code of the Central African Republic (2008)**: The export of new species in log form may be authorized under certain conditions (Article 173). Companies that export logs must provide a "movement of timber" form to the General Directorate of Forests by the 20th of each month for the previous month, relating to the felling tax (Article 190). Forest taxes must be paid prior to exporting any timber or forest products (Article 193). Logging and management permit (PEA) holders are subject to paying duties and taxes on the export of raw, sawn, peeled, plywood and sliced timber (Article 198). These custom duties and taxes are known as exit duties and are calculated from the FOT (free on truck) value. Different exit duty rates apply to raw timber and processed products, as set out in the Finance Law. To export forest products or timber, the intended export product must have been legally harvested under a Logging and Management (PEA) permit. For non-timber products, the permit holder must also obtain an operator or collector card for PFABO (forest products other than timber)/NTFP (non-timber forest-products), issued annually by the Ministry in charge of forests (Article 68).
- **Order No. 09-021 establishing the terms of application of the Forest Code (2009)**: To export forest products and timber, all export documents must be accompanied by a waybill (*feuille de route*) (Article 82).
- **Order No. 33/MEFCP/DIR.CAB (2020)**: Establishes the mission of MEFCP and SGS SA (*Société Générale de Surveillance*) for the implementation of the forest export verification program (*Programme de Vérification des Exportations (PVE) des Produits Bois*).
  - As part of the Central African Wood Products Exports Monitoring Program (*Programme de Suivi de la Vérification des Exportations des produits bois* – PSEPB-

RCA) and the PVE, SGS SA uses **SGS LegalTrace RCA** to ensure the verification and traceability of forest products, taxation of the forest sector, on-site and document verification, the controlled management of transport and export authorizations and the security of rights and taxes in the forest sector.

Criminal Laws

- **Order No. 042/MEFCP/DIRCAB/PFCCPAC relating to the creation and operation of the platform for consultation on forest, wildlife and environmental crime (2018):** Establishes a consultation platform to combat crimes related to forestry, wildlife and environmental crimes. The platform is responsible for analyzing reports raised by civil society, supporting legal proceeds related to these crimes, publishing public data on the fight against environmental crimes, and contributing to other monitoring and administrative activities.
- **Law No. 08.022 establishing the Forest Code of the Central African Republic (2008):** Chapter II *Offenses and Penalties* establishes activities in violation of this Code and existing forestry regulations that are subject to fines, imprisonment, bans on logging, revoking licensing, and more.
- **Order No. 19 setting the terms of operation for the register of forest offenses (2020):** Establishes a public database, the Register of Forest Offenses, that records information on forest offenses.

Non-regulatory policy instruments

- **National Sustainable Development Strategy (2021-2025)**: Integrates strategies across various sectors, such as the forest policy, to advance sustainable development objectives in the Central African Republic.
- **Commission of the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC) Convergence Plan (2015-2025):** The reference framework and coordination of all interventions in the conservation and sustainable management of Central Africa's forest ecosystems.

Bilateral Agreements

- **Central African Republic - European Union (EU) Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA)**: Aims to ensure timber exported to the EU has been produced according to CAR's laws and regulations. The VPA is a legally binding, bilateral agreement that promotes improved forest governance, traceability and transparency within timber supply chains to ensure legality. In 2011, CAR signed the VPA, and the Agreement entered into force in 2012. The implementation of the VPA was paused between 2012 to 2016 due to political and military crises.
    - **Efforts towards developing a Legality Assurance System (LAS) are underway**, but the LAS has yet to be fully developed or deployed. Under the VPA, a **Database Management System matrix** has been designed and the Legality Verification System (SVL) has adopted a new approach to be developed with the support of the FAO EU FLEGT Program.

CITES

The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** is an international agreement among governments whose purpose is to ensure that the international trade of wild animals and plant species does not threaten the survival of these species. It is up to each country to draft their own domestic legislation to comply with its CITES obligations. CAR signed onto the Convention in 1980.

The species under the protection of CITES are listed in three Appendices based on how threatened they are by international trade. The species listed in Appendix I are the most endangered and international trade in these species is prohibited unless the purpose of import is noncommercial. The species listed in Appendix II are tightly controlled in international trade and may be authorized with an export permit or re-export certificate. Appendix III lists species at the request of a Party that needs other countries' cooperation to regulate the trade in the species. International trade in Appendix III is allowed with appropriate permits or certificates.

If you don't know if the species you are interested in sourcing from this country is CITES listed, please check this **link**. If it is, please use this **database** to identify the National CITES Authority. In CAR, the CITES managing authority is the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries (MEFCP).

Forest Resources

Resources Overview

In 2010, Central African Republic had 47.2 Mha of tree cover, extending over 76% of its land area.

According to the 2008 Forest Code, CAR divides its national forest estate into two categories:

- **Permanent forest estate**: Intended for logs, goods and services production, and biodiversity and water resource protection. The following forest areas are included in the permanent forest estate:
    - Southwest forest massif for production purposes under sustainable development and management policy;
    - Southeast forest massif with multiple purposes, including conservation;
    - Savannahs.

- Within the permanent forest estate, there are two additional subcategories:
    - **State forest domain**: Consists of forests with fragile ecology, production forests, recreational forests, scientific forests, botanical gardens, state zoological gardens, national parks, protection perimeters, reforestation areas, wildlife reserves, ecological or biosphere reserves, integral nature reserves, special reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, flora sanctuaries, hunting areas and buffer zones or pre-parks.
        - Residing in national parks, sanctuaries, reserves and recreational forests (protected areas) is prohibited. Deforestation activities are prohibited in integral nature reserves, national parks and sanctuaries.

    - **Public domain forests**: Any forests or forest land outside of the State forest domain or other categorized forests that do not include orchards, agricultural plantations or reforestation areas, or belonging to an agricultural or mining operation. Former

fallows and agro-pastoral lands without title deeds are considered within the public domain forests. Products from the public domain forests are property of the State. Non-permanent forest estate: All forests and forest lands that can be allocated for uses aside from forestry. The non-permanent forest estate consists of the forestry domain of public authorities, private forests and community forests

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Contacts

Below are incomplete lists of government ministries, industry associations, civil society groups, and research institutes involved with forestry, trade, and efforts to combat illegal logging and associated trade.

Industry Associations

- Groupement Interprofessionnel de Centrafrique (GICA)

Civil Society Organizations

- **Rainforest Foundation UK – Central African Republic**
- Centre d'Appui pour le Développement Durable (CADD)
- **Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI)**
- **Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)**
- **Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)**
- **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – West and Central Africa**
- **Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) – Central African Republic**
- **International Tropical Timber Technical Association (ATIBT)**
- **DYNAFAC**
- **Well Grounded**
- Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable (CIEDD)
- Observatoire de la Gestion des Ressources Naturelles et de l'Environnement (OGRNE)
- Forêts et Développement Durable (FDD)

Government Ministries and Agencies

- **Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries (MEFCP)**
- **Sustainable Forest Resources Management Agency (*Agence de Gestion Durable des Ressources Forestières* - AGDRF)**

- **Ministry of Finance and Budget**
- **Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD)**
- Département de l'inventaire forestier et de l'utilisation des terres (DIAF)

Research Institutes

- **University of Bangui**
- Central African Agricultural Research Institute (ICRA)
- **Center for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD) - Central Africa**

References and Resources

For more information regarding forest legality in CAR, head to these links from our partners:

- **Preferred by Nature - Timber Sourcing Hub: Central African Republic**
- **Timber Trade Portal: Central African Republic**
- **WRI Forest Atlases**
- **Open Timber Portal (OTP)**
- **Global Forest Watch (GFW) Country Profiles**
- **Forest Trends Illegal Deforestation and Associated Trade (IDAT) Risk: Central African Republic**
- **WWF Wood Risk Tool: Central African Republic**
- **CIFOR-ICRAF (2021) *State of the forest-timber sector in the Central African Republic 2021* (in French)**