Białowieża
Europe’s primeval forest threatened by logging

Revitalising
Kenya’s Forests
Bringing the benefits of conservation to vulnerable communities in Madagascar

African farmers driving their own development

Planet friendly plant-based diet

ENTREPRENEURS OF THE SAHEL + TREE POWER AND MORE NEWS FROM THE UK
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As I was reading the articles published in this year’s journal I was struck by the diverse approaches communities and organisations are taking to protect and restore forests and to grow trees both to enhance the natural environment and improve livelihoods. Yet running through this diversity is a common thread: a passion and desire for people to work together to endeavour to find better ways for humans to live sustainably and in harmony with the natural world.

ITF has been working with and supporting local communities for more than 90 years to call for an end to the orgy of destruction which sees 15 billion trees cut down every year. Ultimately, this human activity will prove entirely self-defeating. The costs are already evident in many parts of the world in the form of land degradation and desertification, biodiversity and habitat loss, climate change and shocks, with ever more devastating storms and flooding. These trends in turn drive mass human migration.

Despite encouraging recent resolutions made by the governments of the world to halt deforestation by 2020, very little is actually being done to transform the economic system that we seem to be locked into; and which is responsible for driving the exploitation of natural resources to feed its insatiable appetite for ever growing consumption.

It always strikes me as incongruous that the private institutions that are creating this problem to serve their own interests - and yet bear none of the costs - are also those who are invited to take charge of solving it.

The growing human population could easily be fed without deforestation. In fact, we could couple this with reforestation and the increasing adoption of agroforestry and analog forestry. Industrial animal agriculture is the leading cause of deforestation globally, yet meat and dairy consumption is a very inefficient and often unhealthy way of feeding the human population. This is compounded by a terribly inefficient food distribution system which results in a third of all food produced being wasted; combined with two-thirds of the world’s human population either getting too much or too little to eat.

Agroecological approaches restore and sustain soil fertility and improve plant health by working with nature and eliminating the use of harmful pesticides. Yet these approaches are not promoted by the profit driven agribusiness sector for the obvious reason that they can be managed by farmers themselves using their own resources.

ITF’s long standing advocacy and support for community-led forestry and agroforestry, organic agriculture and a plant-based diet are all connected and are increasingly being recognised as part of a necessary holistic approach to healing and restoring a mutually beneficial relationship with our natural world. There is a blossoming of both civil society and ethically driven private sector businesses that are taking the lead and showing that this positive alternative is actually quite an easy – as well as necessary - choice to make.

The range of articles in this edition of Trees will I hope provide a source of both inspiration and stimulation for healthy debate.

Andy Egan
Chief Executive, International Tree Foundation

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This year, our Fruit-full Communities project reached the finals of the National Lottery Awards, which seek out Britain’s favourite Lottery funded projects.

Fruit-full Communities works with vulnerable young people in YMCA housing, supporting them to create their own orchards and learn valuable skills in horticulture, arboriculture and team work.

Reaching third place in the environment category was a great achievement!

Sue Pitt, ITF’s Fruit-full Communities Project Officer was delighted. “I have met some wonderful young people through this project – they are very aware of the need to take action on the environment and welcome the opportunity to do something really positive for themselves, their local communities and the planet”, says Sue. “It has also been great to see them connecting with young people on some of our projects in Kenya and Uganda and realising that they are part of a global movement for change.”

Fruit-full Communities is a project led by Learning through Landscapes, with ITF, The Orchard Project and participating YMCAs across the UK.

To find out more about Fruit-full Communities, visit our website.

Tree Power reaches over 150 children

ITF's Tree Power programme for schools proved a real success this year, with over 150 children taking part. This programme encourages young people to value and care for trees, through outdoor education and global learning.

In Hampshire, 90 Year 5 students visited the woods behind their school for the first time, where they made friends with a tree! Over the course of the year, teachers led classes from the Tree Power teaching resource. Students at Liphook school collaboratively wrote a poem about trees, discussed and voted on the main causes of deforestation and created tree spirits in the forest.

The year has left both students and teachers inspired – so much so that the school plan to develop the theme of trees in their curriculum next year, and include sessions on ‘Palm Oil Detectives’ from the Tree Power resource.

To find out more about Tree Power or to get your school involved, visit our website.

The fight for Kafuga continues

Nearly two years since launching the Save Kafuga Forest campaign, the fight continues. This small forest in Uganda was threatened by encroachers, and risked being turned into a tea plantation.

Much has been achieved thanks to generous donations. ITF partner PROBICOU has drafted a forest management plan and engaged with key stakeholders – from the surrounding communities to the district council and national Ugandan ministries.

PROBICOU has also supported farmers in planting passion fruit and mango trees on their land, and has set up savings and loans groups. Planting within the forest has been impossible so far, as an ongoing court case against encroachers limits access to the forest. But there are positive signs of an emerging consensus to save Kafuga Forest.
This year, ITF has been lucky to receive support from a wide variety of fundraisers. We want to give an extra special thank you to a few of the people who have gone above and beyond to support our work!

**Moving and giving as a community**

Last January, ITF were kindly selected by the parish council of Our Lady and St Edmund Church, Abingdon to be one of the recipients for its annual Lent fundraiser. Collections by Abingdon Church raised £3,750, while a further £800 was collected at a dance-athon held at their local school! The Church had an existing connection to the Bamenda highlands in Cameroon, where ITF works with partner Community Assistance in Development. The donation will fund a new project supporting women farmers to adopt agroforestry techniques, integrating trees and crops. This will improve nutrition and food security and enhance the sustainability of farms.

**Sharing joy – a wedding celebration with a difference**

When planning their wedding in Munich last summer, Ina and David Stewart wanted to give their guests a chance to share their happiness in a positive and sustainable way. Instead of physical gifts, they decided to hold a collection at the wedding, and to donate half of the sum to ITF. The donations raised enough to fund a one-year project with ITF partner Revival in Zambia. The project aims to introduce agroforestry to members of Katondo women’s group. The beneficiaries will receive support to plan for and plant agroforestry trees, receiving training that will allow them to pass on the knowledge to others in the farming community. “We love the idea that our wedding will have a longer-term positive impact,” said Ina.

**Thumbs up for 20 Million Trees!**

20 Million Trees for Kenya’s Forests received a boost this year thanks to a truly unique partnership with Belgian travel company Route du Soleil. The company runs events with a difference, and July saw them deliver the ‘Greatest Hitchhike Competition in the World’: Barcelona Express. Over 300 teams took part in a race to the Catalan city over 5 days, starting from Brussels, Paris and Amsterdam – and they were only permitted to travel by hitching lifts! All profits from ticket sales were donated to ITF, raising over £30,000, or 120,000 trees! Route du Soleil’s Director Charles Van Den Bossche said: “We believe we are doing the right thing by donating these profits to ITF and we hope this is just the beginning.”

**Join in the fun!**

From plant stalls to lemonade sales, we appreciate every fundraiser who puts their time and energy into supporting us through encouraging others to give. If you’ve been inspired by reading these stories or you have an idea of your own, please get in touch. You can contact our fundraising team on 01865 318832 or email info@internationaltreefoundation.org.

**For more fundraising ideas, see page 23**

www.internationaltreefoundation.org
Agroecology vs. the Corporate Take Over of African Agriculture

Since the 2008 food price crisis, we have been told over and over that Africa needs foreign investors in agriculture to ‘develop’ the continent; that Africa needs a ‘Green Revolution’, more synthetic fertilisers, and genetically modified crops in order to meet the challenges of hunger and poverty. Yet, millions of Africans have designed and are already using effective agricultural practices, which don’t rely on Monsanto, Syngenta or some other corporation who increasingly control our seeds and agriculture.

Ancestral knowledge of the Gamo indigenous communities

In Ethiopia’s Gamo Highlands, biodiversity forms the basis of the traditional enset-based agricultural systems. Like many others across the continent, Gamo indigenous communities manage their natural resources in sound and sustainable ways, rooted in ancestral knowledge and customs, which makes them resilient to floods or droughts. Although African indigenous systems are often perceived as backward by central governments, they have a lot of learning to offer to the rest of the world when contemplating the challenges of climate change and food insecurity.

Often building on such indigenous knowledge, farmers all over the continent have assembled a tremendous mass of successful experiences and innovations in agriculture. These efforts have steadily been developed over the past few decades following the droughts that impacted many countries in the 1970s and 1980s.

Adapting to drought

In Kenya, the system of biointensive agriculture has been designed to help smallholders grow the most food on the least land and with the least water. 200,000 farmers, feeding over one million people, have now switched to biointensive agriculture, which uses up to 90% less water than conventional agriculture and 50 to 100% fewer purchased fertilisers.

The Sahel region is renowned for its harsh environment. What is less known is the tremendous success of the actions undertaken to curb desert encroachment, restore lands, and farmers’ livelihoods. The Keita rural development project in Niger took some twenty years to restore ecological balance and drastically improve the agrarian economy of the area. 18 million trees were planted, the surface under woodlands increased by 300% and shrubby steppes and sand dunes decreased by 30%. In the meantime, agricultural land was expanded by about 80%.

Agroecology increases yields and restores the land

All over the Sahel region, agroecological solutions have been used to restore degraded land and spare scarce water resources while increasing food production, and improving farmers’ livelihoods and resilience. In Timbuktu, Mali, the System of Rice Intensification has reached impressive results, with yields of nine tons of rice per hectare, more than double that of conventional methods. In Burkina Faso, soil and water conservation techniques, including a modernised version of traditional planting pits - zai - have been highly successful to rehabilitate degraded soils and boost food production and incomes.
Southern African countries have been struggling with recurrent droughts resulting in major failures in corn crops, the main staple cereal in the area. Conventional production of corn is highly vulnerable to climate shocks, and very demanding in purchased inputs such as hybrid seeds and fertilisers. Over the years, farmers and governments have developed a wide variety of effective agroecological solutions to address these problems, prevent food crises and foster their resilience to climatic shocks. These include managing and harvesting rain water, expanding conservation and regenerative farming, promoting the production and consumption of tuber crops, diversifying production, and integrating crops with fertiliser trees and nitrogen fixing leguminous plants.

Farmers driving their own development

The enumeration could go on. The few examples cited above all come from a series of 33 case studies published by the Oakland Institute, which shed light on the tremendous success of agroecological agriculture across Africa.

These success stories are just a sample of what Africans are already doing to adapt to climate variations while preserving their natural resources, improving their livelihoods, and their food supply. One thing they share in common is that they have farmers, many of them women, in the driver’s seat of their own development. Farmers are the local innovators who experiment to find the best solutions in relation to water availability, soil characteristics, landscapes, cultures, food habits, and biodiversity.

Another common feature is that they depart from the reliance on external agricultural inputs such as commercial seeds, synthetic fertilisers, and chemical pesticides, which is based on the so-called conventional agriculture. The main inputs required for agroecology are people’s own energy and common sense, shared knowledge, and of course respect for and a sound use of natural resources.

Agroecological transition

The agroecology case studies debunk the myth that farmers in Africa need to buy ‘better’ seeds, GMOs, chemical pesticides and fertilisers to improve their production. Evidence is there, with irrefutable facts and figures, that millions of African farmers have already designed their own solutions, for their own benefits. Unfortunately, a majority of African governments, with encouragement from donor countries, focus their efforts and resources to subsidise and encourage a model of agriculture that is largely reliant on expensive commercial agricultural inputs, in particular synthetic fertilisers mainly sold by a handful of Western corporations.

The good news is that an agroecological transition is affordable. African governments spend billions of dollars every year to subsidise fertilisers and pesticides. In Malawi, the Government’s subsidies to agricultural inputs amount to close to 10% of the national budget. The growing body of evidence that exists on the benefits of agroecology should prompt governments to move to a sustainable and climate-friendly way to produce food for all.

Esnat Grem, woman agroforester from Malawi.

“I used to be one of the women who went to the estates looking for fuelwood, and many of my friends perished as they were forced to negotiate with their bodies... but now I get enough fuelwood from the trees we’ve planted.”

www.internationaltreefoundation.org

FREDERIC MOUSSEAU

Frederic Mousseau is Policy Director of the Oakland Institute, and coordinated the research for the Institute’s agroecology project. All 33 case studies can be found at https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/agroecology-case-studies
From Peas to Trees: bringing back the forest

On the northern slopes of Africa’s second highest mountain, Mount Kenya, huge areas of land are being restored to natural forest. Over 2,000 people from local communities will plant 800,000 trees – and care for small parcels of land until the canopy closes. In return, they can earn an income, by planting crops between the young trees.

Theresia is 28 years old and has been farming at Karuri, one of the sites on Mount Kenya being restored, for the past four years. She has been allocated one acre of land, where she has planted rows of indigenous trees.

Between the trees, Theresia practices crop rotation, alternating between green peas and potatoes each season, which is twice a year in Kenya. This practice has proven both profitable and good for the soil, helping the trees to grow.

Theresia’s story is similar to that of the 2,000 farmers who will help to reforest three sites on Mount Kenya as part of ITF’s Centenary Campaign: 20 Million Trees for Kenya’s Forests. The project is run by Mount Kenya Trust (MKT), in collaboration with the Kenya Forest Service. MKT and ITF began working together in early 2017. We aim to restore almost 900 hectares of indigenous forest and plant over 800,000 trees.

Officially known as the Tree Establishment Livelihood Improvement Scheme (TELIS), this system allows forest-adjacent communities to cultivate agricultural crops during the early stages of tree growth (4 to 5 years). As part of the contract, the TELIS farmers must protect and maintain the trees on their allocated plot of land – and are given another plot once the forest cover becomes too dense to farm.

Theresia’s life has changed since she started cultivating an acre of land at Karuri. Before this, she used to work on other people’s farms, and was poorly paid.

The profits from her plot have opened up new opportunities. Theresia has even been able to buy her own land, and has finished paying off the loan. She has invested in cows, which provide her with milk to sell at the local market. Theresia no longer worries about the costs of sending her two children to school.
MKT have had excellent results for forest restoration using the TELIS scheme, as the trees benefit from the constant care of farmers. Communities also feel the benefits from the very start, which is unusual with tree planting projects. From a one acre plot, an individual can expect to earn around 160,000 KSh per year (£1,280).

One of the most impressive landscapes in Africa

MKT works with local communities to protect and conserve the forest, water and wildlife around Mount Kenya. The mountain’s afromontane forests, vast bamboo stands and moorlands host an incredible biodiversity, including numerous species of IUCN concern. These include the African elephant and mountain bongo, as well as 81 endemic plant species.

The Mount Kenya Forest is one of the largest contiguous forests remaining in Kenya. The mountain is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, described in 1999 as ‘one of the most impressive landscapes of Eastern Africa, with its rugged glacier clad summits, Afro-Alpine Moorlands and diverse forests, which illustrate outstanding ecological processes.’

But these ecosystems have been degraded, and are still under threat. A detailed aerial survey, carried out in 1999 by the United Nations Environmental Programme and Kenya Wildlife Service, found extensive destruction of the mountain ecosystem (Gathaara, G., 1999). Seven threats to the forest were identified including encroachment, logging, charcoal production, clear felling, growing of marijuana, landslides, livestock grazing and fires. Today, the largest closed canopy areas are very different to what Mount Kenya boasted in the past.

Many of these threats remain a reality today. To protect the areas where new trees are being planted through the TELIS scheme, MKT has set up security teams, the ‘Mount Kenya Youth Frontiers’, made up of volunteers from the local community. This group plays an important role in guarding the forest from loggers and poachers and protecting the TELIS plots from being destroyed by wildlife. They also monitor the tree planting process, ensuring the trees are well planted and taken care of.

Restoring the Karuri, Kangaita and Imenti forests

MKT and ITF are working to restore forest cover on three sites to the North of Mount Kenya. These areas have been degraded in the past due to deforestation, causing gaps in the forest that once surrounded the entire mountain.

The tree species are chosen based on the natural forest in the area. They are raised to a suitable size for planting in tree nurseries run by women’s groups and self-help groups. The seeds are collected from the areas they are to be planted in, which ensures suitability for altitude and rainfall levels.

Tree nursery groups sell their seedlings, and benefit collaboratively from the income, some groups providing micro-finance lending. Members have been able to improve the lives of their families through group savings. One group has helped individuals to set up a shop, buy a pedigree cow and purchase a chaff cutter.

Tree planting remains close to Theresia’s heart - she believes the rehabilitation of the forest is a worthy project, and is happy to plant and take care of the trees, whilst making a profit. Over the five year period, the project will provide employment to over 2,000 farmers, along with more than five women tree nursery groups. This will generate over £14 million income for the community, and restore over 900 hectares of forest.

To learn more about our Centenary Campaign, visit our website.
20 Million Trees

In images

In Embu Country, bordering the south-east of Mount Kenya, tree planting continues on degraded forest land and on farms. To date, our partner Mount Kenya Environmental Conservation have planted 68,000 trees in the forest, 36,928 trees with farmers and 3,000 trees with children.

This aerial shot shows the edge of the forest in Embu County, where the tea zone begins. 20 Million Trees is working with small-scale farmers living in proximity to the forest, supporting them to plant more trees on their farms.

This family have embraced agroforestry, and grow a variety of trees and crops on their small but very productive piece of land. Their son has come home to work with them – earning more than he used to at a local hotel.

Members of a tree nursery group prepare the seedlings they have raised for planting in the degraded forest area of Magaca.

Double Your Donation: Make a Note!
Cut out this banner and keep it on your fridge or in your diary as a reminder.

Big Give Christmas Challenge
From 28th November to 5th December 2017, you can double your donation to 20 Million Trees for free by visiting https://secure.thebiggive.org.uk/project/20MillionTrees. That’s £2 to ITF for every £1 you donate! There are only 7 days to make the most of this opportunity and maximise your donation, making more stories like the ones above possible. Thank you!
Entrepreneurs of the Sahel

Two years ago, we reported on how women were increasing their income in the Sahel through processing forest products. As the Trees 4 Livelihoods programme draws to an end, we hear from the women whose lives have been changed since they realised the true value of their trees.

In the communes of Konna and Borondougou, women collect and sell ‘non-timber forest products’ (NTFPs) from a range of remarkable dryland trees – but had limited capacity to process them back in 2013. Trees 4 Livelihoods (T4L) has supported 487 women from 29 villages to add value to NTFPs by turning them into juices, soaps and jams – increasing women’s income.

Poolng resources

Having mastered these skills, women are now finding ways to improve their access to markets.

In June, 80 women from 20 groups came together to create the ‘Konna and Borondougou Women’s Processing Network’. Mrs Aissata Dia, the President, explains its significance: “Networking allows the groups to be more credible and facilitates many other things too.”

By joining hands, the groups can reach larger markets, gain credibility and share the costs of investment in premises and materials.

Mrs Anta Bouaré from Koko village is one of the women transforming NTFPs. “We women are the first beneficiaries of resources such as fruits, firewood and forage”, says Anta. “This is why we are now actively involved in the management and protection of natural resources.”

A wider aim of the T4L programme has been to restore degraded land and increase vegetation cover. This has been achieved through water conservation techniques and assisted natural regeneration (ANR) – the conservation and encouragement of tree growth on farmland.

Green business

T4L is leading the way in ‘regreening the Sahel’ – proving the benefits of these sustainable dryland techniques to communities, who have seen a 62% increase in crop yields when applied in unison. Ultimately, caring for the land and the indigenous trees has increased the resilience of dryland communities – men and women alike.

Mrs Kalifa Timbo from Bogo village says “since we started processing NTFPs, we place a high priority on the protection of natural resources. I personally practice ANR, and many other women do too. Men, like us women, are committed to preserving our environment. We plan to plant trees to supply our raw material business in the future.”

Trees 4 Livelihoods is a partnership between Sahel Eco and ITF, with funding from the Big Lottery Fund.
Europe’s Last Primeval Forest threatened by logging

Logging in Europe’s oldest remaining forest and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Białowieża, continues. Despite protests and the intervention of the European Commission, who ordered Poland to immediately stop felling or face legal action and massive fines, the country remains defiant. As the saga continues, we look into the story so far.

It is possibly one of the biggest failures of the EU’s environmental protection system and an outrageous example of the lack of respect for European regulations by the Polish government. Hugely destructive heavy machinery harvesters and chainsaws are being employed to log tree stands, some of them hundreds of years old. This is destroying habitats occupied by rare species, many of them endemic to the forest. And to add insult to injury, loggers are working through the breeding season.

Białowieża Forest is one of the last primeval lowland temperate forests formed after the retreat of the glaciers around 10,000 years ago. Located on the border between Poland and Belarus, the 150,000 hectare forest is regarded as an advanced bio-indicator. It provides information on Poland’s, as well as Europe’s, environmental health, due to its remarkable biodiversity and complex ecosystems.

Białowieża National Park was first inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1979. Extensions to the protection zone were applied in 1992 and 2014. The Polish side of the forest is divided into three districts, and six different forms of protection regimes are applied in different parts of the forest. Only 16% of the forest is under strict protection.

Timeline of Białowieża National Park

- **1921**: Białowieża National Park "Rezerwat" was first established as protected royal land.
- **1979**: Białowieża National Park inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- **1992**: Extension of the protection of the Białowieża National Park to areas located in Belarus.
- **2014**: Further extension and addition of the buffer zone covering total of 141,885 ha.
- **2016**: EU Commission requests Poland to refrain from large scale logging.
- **27 APRIL**: EU Commission launches infringement procedure and refers Poland to the EU Court of Justice due to increased logging.
- **15 SEPTEMBER**: EU Commission makes formal request for financial penalties for illegal logging in Białowieża Forest.
‘Minister for Logging’ blames bark beetle

The Polish Minister for the Environment Jan Szyszko is better known by some today as the ‘Minister for Logging’. This is due to recent legislation giving more freedom to cut down trees on private property across the country, which has caused outrage in Poland and across Europe.

In March 2016, Szyszko introduced a ‘New Management Plan’ which permits a three-fold increase in logging, from 64,000 to 188,000 m³, as well as active forest management in areas until now excluded from any intervention.

This drastic increase is defended by Szyszko as a necessary measure to combat three threats to the forest. Firstly, the infestation of the ‘bark beetle’, which is threatening to kill spruce trees. Secondly, as a safety measure relating to fallen trees which could cause danger to human lives and increase the possibility of wildfires. And thirdly, due to the supposed lack of forest management by previous governments.

Contradicting evidence

But these controversial measures, presented as a method of conserving Białowieża Forest, are not accepted by all. Scientific studies show that the periodical increase of bark beetles in the forest is a natural process. Moreover, they go on to add that removal of the affected trees infringes on the forest’s ability to regenerate naturally.

Furthermore, scientific modelling shows that in order to eradicate the beetle, approximately 80% of affected trees would need to be removed. An impossible task in Białowieża, as 30% of the Polish area is under some form of protection and 40% of the Belarussian area is subject to strict protection, which would prohibit any intervention.

In stark contrast to Poland, Belarus has not only decided to leave the forest to recover naturally, but has also increased the protected area.

A fairytale forest

Białowieża Forest’s unique flora includes ancient trees rising to 40 metres and fallen trunks decomposing on the forest floor. Wood left to decay uninterrupted by human intervention serves an important biological function, providing habitats for numerous species and contributing to outstanding biodiversity.

Tree trunks are often covered by moss, fungi and flowers, giving an impression of some ancient magic present in the area. Alan Weisman describes the forest in his book *The World without Us* as “the misty, brooding forest that loomed behind your eyelids when, as a child, someone read you the Grimm Brothers’ fairytales.”

Białowieża is home to approximately 20,000 species of fauna, including Europe’s biggest mammal, the European bison, rescued from the brink of extinction. Carnivores such as lynx and wolves are found, as
Białowieża

well as otters and beavers; 150 species of birds (for instance the white-backed woodpecker and black storks) and many rare insects and invertebrates, endemic to the forest.

Białowieża serves as a living laboratory, an irreplaceable model and point of reference when comparing environments transformed by humans. The forest is therefore used widely within the scientific community.

The march of the Ents

Since Szyszko’s announcement to relax logging regulations, there has been widespread public outrage. Various environmental organisations have held demonstrations, voicing their concerns for the future of Białowieża, and petitions and letters have been signed.

Hundreds of protesters in Poland joined “The March of Ents”, making reference to J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings. They argue that the danger is not the bark beetle, but human intervention. Some protests have been violent, with arrests leading to law suits on both sides.

Major environmental and scientific organisations such as Friends of the Earth, Client Earth, Wild Poland and Greenpeace have also condemned the actions of the Polish government, and appealed for a halt to the logging.

The Polish government have assured opponents that no logging will take place in UNESCO protected sites. But campaigners have revealed harvester presence in these areas, and it is thought that commercial incentives are behind the increased logging allowance.

Warsaw vs Brussels

Following a letter of complaint from Polish and International organisations, the European Commission asked Poland to stop large scale logging in the forest. This was followed by a formal letter of notice in June 2016 and a final warning in April 2017. However, logging in Białowieża Forest continued.

This set in motion a formal infringement procedure at the EU High Court of Justice, and in July this year, an emergency ban on logging was imposed in Białowieża. Once again, these interim measures were ignored by the Polish government – and evidence of this was produced by the Commission’s lawyer in the form of satellite images.

During the hearing in Luxemburg, Szyszko stated that logging activities were being carried out as a safety measure to protect forest users (berry and mushroom pickers) from being hurt by the weakened trees – an exception to the logging ban.

The European Commission has called to impose financial penalties on Warsaw. As Katarzyna Kościesza, from environmental law charity Client Earth notes, “The financial penalties which the Commission has now requested are a strong but proper reaction to this unprecedented situation. We hope for the sake of Białowieża that our Polish authorities will respond by finally obeying the law and stop decimating this precious and ancient forest. Many Poles think the environment minister is wrong to continue this illegal and unacceptable action and yet will end up paying if financial penalties are imposed.”

The dilemma

A mixture of ignorance on the part of the Polish government and the sluggish, bureaucratic system of the European Commission, have led to a conflict that evokes ethical questions regarding the protection of natural resources, and the procedures in place to guard important natural World Heritage sites for future generations.

Are the current legal measures and policies sufficient to protect ecologically and scientifically important sites from the influence of the political system in a given country? This question is even more worrying and relevant today, as climate change deniers, often with a lack of regard for the environment and guided by economic incentives, take on prominent roles within governing systems at a global level.

TERESA MIKOLAJUK

Teresa is ITF’s Communications and Programmes Volunteer. She is a recent Life Sciences graduate, passionate about tackling climate change and environment related challenges.
Patrick Kuyokwa reports on the community-driven programme that is integrating trees into 111 villages in northern Malawi.

In Nkhata Bay North, past mismanagement of natural resources by local communities, land degradation and erratic climatic conditions have affected crop production leading to food insecurity and vulnerability.

The Nkhata Bay Natural Way (NBNW), aims to develop district wide sustainable natural resource management and improved livelihoods for the most disadvantaged households. NBNW is working in 111 villages in four traditional authorities. Strengthening local governance structures will ensure sustainability through local monitoring and review.

**Village Natural Resource Management Committees**

NBNW enhances both forest conservation and afforestation. These activities are spearheaded by community forest governance structures, known as Village Natural Resource Management Committees or VNRMCs, and traditional leaders. VNRMCs organise and support communities in tree cultivation, reforestation and awareness campaigns.

Tovwirane VNRMC has raised 5,600 seedlings and planted about 2,600 trees in their communal woodlot. The Village Chief, VH Selemani, and the Committee believe it is their responsibility to conserve and plant trees. “Unless we replant trees and conserve the existing forests, food insecurity will continue”, says Selemani.

NBNW works with 34 VNRMCs. Most of the 113,000 seedlings raised this year have been planted in the communal woodlots of catchment areas, and about 26,000 seedlings have been distributed to plant on farms.

**Sustainable agriculture**

To address soil degradation in the area, NBNW is introducing the integration of trees in agricultural systems through agroforestry. Farmers are also encouraged to diversify crops and make their own compost to improve soil quality. About 60% of farmers have reported increases in maize yields, the staple food in the region, thanks to these techniques.

Weston Mbizi is 68, and believes that agroforestry is the solution to food insecurity. His trees simultaneously help with pest management, nutrient fixing and environmental management.

Weston’s yields have increased from 560 kg to 700 kg since last year. “I didn’t expect to harvest this much because most of my fields had been attacked by army worms. Surprisingly, I was safe because of the tephrosia trees I planted”, says Weston.

**PATRICK KUYOKWA**

Patrick Kuyokwa is Temwa’s Projects Coordinator. He holds a degree in Agricultural Economics and envisions the empowerment of smallholder farmers.
Since 2002, Ny Tanintsika, a Madagascan community-based organisation, has worked with isolated rural communities living in proximity to the natural resources of the Fianarantsoa Province. Nathalie Raharilaza, Ny Tanintsika’s Programme Manager, explains.

At Ny Tanintsika, we believe in adopting an integrated approach to conservation. We speak about population health and environment as one, so that the community becomes aware of the important link between the natural environment and their wellbeing. We know that to succeed in conserving the forest, we must support the surrounding communities to improve their living standards through diverse initiatives – education, local economy, health, food security …

Behind the saying was the presumption that this was an inconceivable notion: the forest could never be exhausted! The forest was vast, and they were self-sufficient in wood for heating and construction.

But with time, population growth increased, and so did the need for resources. As a consequence, the eastern forest strip continued to decrease. As the ecosystem declined, so did the health of the population.

Aware of this alarming situation, local and international conservation stakeholders, public and private, have not given up hope, striving to save Madagascar’s unique biodiversity.

**When will the Eastern Forest run out?**

Generally, when we think about the environment in Madagascar, reforestation is the first thing that springs to mind. At the time of the ancestors in Madagascar, there was a saying that went like this: “When will the Eastern Forest run out?” The ancestors were referring to the humid, dense forest on the eastern part of the island.

Ny Tanintsika works with local communities, who are the primary group concerned by the degradation of natural resources because they depend on them for their livelihoods. Our experience is that most of the time, the most vulnerable small-scale farmers neither participate nor benefit from the varied conservation and development activities and events that are organised in Madagascar.

From this realisation was born the idea of identifying and targeting the most vulnerable people when promoting and disseminating agroforestry techniques. Through practicing agroforestry, these households who farm small parcels of land can improve their crop yields and so improve their wellbeing (both through income generation and improved nutrition).
At first, planting trees on your land was considered a very strange idea. But once communities adopted the techniques, they started to see the advantages for themselves, especially in tackling soil erosion.

At Ny Tanintsika we put reforestation and forest restoration at the centre of all our projects, be they at school, household, village or community association level.

Environmental education is carried out at different levels, and is practically implemented on the ground. Tree nurseries are set up everywhere, in schools and in villages. The ten primary schools targeted by our project ‘Schools Planting the Seeds of Change’ have produced 2,400 seedlings over two school years. During classroom activities and through collaborations with the community forest management associations, the children gain simple forestry knowledge and skills, which they in turn pass on to their home villages.

Each community we work with designates two people who are responsible for forest monitoring. Their job is to observe the life of each tree, and collect indigenous seeds at the same time. This is done in an ecologically sustainable manner, collecting seeds that are ripe or have fallen on the ground. The seeds are then taken to the villages, where they are planted in tree nurseries. Village communities then take care of them until they mature, and transport them to restoration sites with much enthusiasm at the idea of greening their environment.

“I cannot remain silent faced by the impacts of global warming. Agricultural production is diminishing. Everywhere, we hear the cries of humanity, of animals and of plants. Together, let’s fight for future generations, plant trees in the forest and on our land.”
Vincent de Paul Razafimanantsoa, Ny Tanintsika Field Officer.

“Exotic vs endemic trees”

Local people are very keen to plant exotic trees because of their rapid growth rates, which respond to their need for firewood and timber for construction. By providing these species we help meet these needs and encourage people in their efforts. But we also promote the growing of indigenous species.

Currently, with support from ITF’s Sustainable Community Forestry Programme, we are supporting our target communities to identify endemic species that could be useful for the daily needs of the community. These indigenous seedlings are raised in tree nurseries and distributed to households. The trees are then integrated into their agroforestry fields. The idea is to find out how these indigenous trees react when they are planted outside of the forest, so that we can substitute the exotic species in the future.

The challenge we face both with the communities we work with and the environmental conservation of our island is to secure enough income to remain continuously active on the ground. We would like to thank ITF, who has supported us to do this. We are happy to announce that our 22 target communities have produced 28,762 indigenous tree seedlings of diverse species during the first quarter of 2017.

NATHALIE RAHARILAZA

Nathalie is Programme Manager at Ny Tanintsika. Ny Tanintsika means ‘Our Land’, and is supported through ITF’s Sustainable Community Forestry programme.
Love trees, love vegan? To some this may seem like a strange pairing: what links trees with what’s on your plate, other than the fruits that may grow on them? Well, put simply, a vegan diet is kinder to the natural environment and is the least likely to result in the destruction of trees.

You may be surprised to read that the livestock sector is the major cause of deforestation and is responsible for up to 91% of Amazon destruction. Trees and forests are destroyed to graze animals and to grow crops to feed them. And to those of you concerned about soy, in fact very little of the world’s soy crop is used to produce meat substitutes for vegans. By far the majority ends up in feed for poultry, pork, cattle and even farmed fish.

This deforestation is a contributing factor to climate change, removing the valuable CO2 absorption and storage service that trees provide. But deforestation isn’t the only way that the livestock sector contributes to climate change.

The global livestock industry generates as much greenhouse gas as all transport combined

All those car, ship and air miles are outweighed by the preponderance of meat on our plates. This is exacerbated by the fact that animal agriculture is the world’s biggest producer of methane, a far more powerful greenhouse gas than the much maligned CO2.

And the problem goes beyond emissions and deforestation. Meat eating is a very inefficient food source and form of nutrition. We find ourselves in the bizarre situation where for every 100 calories we feed to animals, we only receive 12 calories back from meat and dairy. By feeding ourselves with those crops directly, we could feed billions more people around the globe.

More and more respected bodies are advocating a move toward a plant-based diet for these very reasons. The recent Global Land Outlook report from the UN Convention to Combat Desertification states that “…a new generation of plant-based products that do not sacrifice taste or nutrition could transform large parts of the food system in just a few decades. When combined with lower price points for local, organic, and fair trade products as well as the lower levels of food waste/loss, there is potential to significantly reduce the demand for land resources.”

When we consider the damage that a meat and dairy diet inflicts on our planet, veganism starts to look less like a whimsical lifestyle choice, and more like a moral imperative.

260% surge in veganism

Many people in the UK have already made the link between diet and environmental impact. There are now half a million vegans in the UK, up 260% over the past ten years. And we want many more people – particularly those already committed to being more environmentally aware in other aspects of their life – to join us.

That’s why we’ve recently launched the biggest campaign in The Vegan Society’s history. “Plate Up for the Planet” challenges people across the UK to try a
vegan diet for seven days. We’re sending them recipe ideas, motivation and tips, as well as a greenhouse gas comparison for the different dietary options to show just what a positive effect they are having on their own carbon footprint. At the end of the seven days we know that many people have continued to eat a delicious, low carbon, vegan diet. We’re delighted to have had support from environmental luminaries such as Caroline Lucas MP, star of TV’s “Tribe” Bruce Parry, and Eden Project founder Sir Tim Smit. The response so far has been phenomenal, and at the time of writing we have over 10,000 people taking the week long challenge, together saving the same amount of CO2 as flying to the moon and back. When it comes to environmental behaviour change, many people can’t see the wood for the trees. We hope that you will rise to the challenge – taste the future, go vegan!

Find out more about plant based diets by visiting the “Plate up for the Planet” website.

LOUISE DAVIES
Louise is Head of Campaigns and Policy at The Vegan Society.
Analog forestry aims to turn degraded land into productive forest, comprised of native and exotic species of the farmer’s choice. This technique diversifies crops, extends harvest periods and brings benefits to people and biodiversity. However, opponents criticise the use of exotic and domesticated species in natural forests. Wirsiy Eric Fondzenyuy tells the story of the development of analog forestry in Cameroon, arguing that forest restoration and protection work best when people’s needs are met.

In simple terms, analog forestry is a procedure used to turn degraded land into a productive, forested area from which people and biodiversity benefit. Using this method, farmers can restore degraded land by creating a new forest, similar in structure and function to the forest which was once there.

**Benefitting people and biodiversity**

The ultimate aim is to reach a climax forest, but the farmer’s as well as the environment’s needs will dictate how far this forest is allowed to develop. A tea farmer for instance may adopt a different forest ‘stage’ to that of a maize farmer, although both use analog forestry.

We started to implement analog forestry in northwest Cameroon in 2009 to solve the problems of water and farm land shortages.

**Water shortages**

As a result of forest loss, water tables had dropped drastically. This led to periods of severe water shortages, and as animals and humans competed for water sources, waterborne diseases rose. So, with support of the Netherlands Committee of the
International Union for the Conservation of Nature, we launched the first analog forestry project in Cameroon. The watershed protection project was in the dry montane forest areas of the Bamenda Highlands, where the effects of forest degradation were very pronounced.

Monoculture plantations of eucalyptus had been planted in many watershed areas. This economic tree is planted for fuel wood and timber. But later, eucalyptus dealt a heavy blow, especially to women, who lost farmland due to the competitive nature of the species. Since water was the most important resource, we aimed at attaining a climax forest in the watershed areas. This would ensure adequate shade, which would contribute in raising water tables during dry periods of the year.

Creating economic opportunities to counter deforestation

In the lowland coastal forest areas, the problems were slightly different. Massive deforestation was underway for the cultivation of economic crops like palm oil and cocoa. Despite the importance of the forest for local communities’ livelihoods, farmers were not inclined to plant trees but rather desperate to fell the existing forest for farm expansion.

It was urgent to find common ground where farmers would meet their needs in food, medicine and income without jeopardising the environment. Our entry point to counter deforestation was domestication of a highly exploited and marketed non-timber forest product, the forest liana ‘eru’ (Gnetum spp). By teaching farmers to create the conditions under which eru grows (a forest), we were indirectly promoting analog forestry.

To show how this worked in practice, we have analysed a small urban analog farm for you. On this farm, we counted 22 different plants on a surface area of about 200 m². 73% of the trees were used for food, 18% mainly for conservation, and 9% to improve the environment. 36% of the trees planted are exotic while 64% are native. This combination was guided by the farmer’s desire to grow chemical free food that can be harvested throughout the year.

Results

The methodology has been a welcome relief for women, most of whom had lost valuable farmland close to their homesteads to plantations of eucalyptus. Some had moved into the communal forest lands, and were subsequently chased out, to allow the forest to regenerate naturally.

Using analog forestry, women can now cultivate in watershed areas. To begin with, they plant sun loving
we have organised ourselves into a network known as the Cameroon Analog Forestry Network, CAFON, whose main objective is to spread methodology to farmers across the country.

Opposition to the analog forestry approach

It has not been easy to convince the government forestry service that agriculture can serve as a catalyst for forest regeneration. Traditionally, the policy has been no agriculture in watershed areas and no domesticated trees in the forest.

Analog forestry seeks to address human as well as environmental needs, and therefore allows domesticated trees to be planted in the forest. Opponents to analog forestry feel that this will encourage human activity in the restored forests. But if we consider that the forest is for people as well as wildlife, then this should not be an issue. When farmers see a tangible direct benefit to restoring their forests in the not too distant future, they are more inclined to participate in its conservation.

The people of Kitiwum go to their forest to practice beekeeping and harvest fruits from the trees they planted. The trees shade their watershed ensuring abundant water for surrounding communities.

We consider that analog forestry is suitable for the restoration and protection of degraded forest reserves and national parks in Cameroon. When the local people find their interest in the forest, they will participate in protecting it. Most importantly, starting an analog forest is easy. Your first tree seedlings could come from the seeds of the fruit you bought from the market to eat. At CENDEP we are excited to help individuals or communities who want to create their own analog forests.

Return of the wildlife

In the North West Region of Cameroon, some 200-300,000 people now have access to regular water flow due to the forest that has been created. In terms of biodiversity conservation, wildlife has started appearing, such as the Bannerman’s Turaco, sighted at the Kitiwum analog forest.

In the coastal forest area, notably around the Mount Cameroon National Park, our focus has been on food production. In the pioneer analog forest farm at Ekonjo village, farmers can harvest a variety of crops and medicinal plants throughout the year. With the support of our friends and partners we are in an advanced stage in linking our farmers to a niche market for organically produced food and tea in the North West of Cameroon. This will ensure that they get a good price – a compensation for their efforts to protect biodiversity while growing their crops.

Our story is not complete without mention of our friends and partners in the North who have ensured consistent support over the years. Back in Cameroon and leguminous trees that will help improve soil fertility, together with different types of tree species which they carefully select. The women continue to grow their crops while taking care of the young trees until tree cover thickens and their sun loving crops will no longer give an economic yield. They leave the area, but can come back to harvest the fruits and nuts they planted.

WIRSEY ERIC FONDZENYUY

Wirsey graduated from the Dschang University Centre, Cameroon, with a Bsc in agriculture. He worked with the Ministry of Agriculture as a specialist in vegetable and food crops and later joined Limbe Botanic Garden (LBG) as Agricultural Extension Officer. He currently volunteers part time as Knowledge Management Officer for CENDEP.
You Can Help

Our work is made possible because of you!

Here are some easy ways you can help us continue our work across Africa and here in the UK.

Give regularly to support us in the long run

Giving little and often is easy and can make a huge difference to our work. £10 a month will allow our African partners to plant 25 trees. Over a year, that’s 300 trees! You can make a regular direct debit donation on our website, or over the phone.

We’re the perfect gift

Know someone who has everything? Offer them ITF membership! Apart from supporting us to plant more trees in the UK and abroad, they’ll also receive a copy of this journal, our Impact Report, a voice at our AGM and a Welcome Pack with your personal message. Subscriptions start from £15 for concessions and £25 for adults.

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Leaving a legacy to ITF is a gift to future generations. It will help us to support communities to plant trees, secure livelihoods, meet nutritional needs and protect the planet for generations to inherit and enjoy.

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We’re always looking for volunteers to help with communications, fundraising and administration. We don’t expect you to commit forever! A couple of hours a week could improve your CV and contribute to our work. Volunteering is rewarding and we’ll find something to make the best of your skills and help you learn along the way.

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It costs just £4,500 to run a one year project through ITF’s Sustainable Community Forestry Programme. Our projects improve the livelihoods of hundreds of people and restore biodiversity and wildlife habitats.

Help us to reach more communities, like the inspiring groups in this year’s Trees Journal.

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