CITES & LIVELIHOODS CASE STUDY 2022

Harvest and trade of *Prunus africana* bark in Cameroon

CAMEROON

AFRICAN CHERRY
(Prunus africana)

APPENDIX II

VULNERABLE

SPECIES, USE AND TRADE

Prunus africana, the African cherry, has a wide distribution in Africa, occurring in the montane regions of central and southern Africa as well as the outlying islands including Madagascar. It is a large tree that can grow to more than 40m in height and 1m in diameter. The bark has medicinal properties and is widely used in traditional medicines as well as being exported both for the pharmaceutical industry and for timber. It is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List with over-exploitation as the biggest threat.

In Cameroon, the species was initially harvested and traded by one private company – PLANTECAM. The Forestry Law of 1994 however devolved rights of use and access to local people through the establishment of community forests, resulting in an increase in harvesting. Poor harvesting techniques and a lack of regulation led to concerns about the sustainability of the trade. *Prunus africana* was listed on CITES Appendix II in 1995 but with no evidence of improvements the EU suspended imports between 2007-2011.

Cameroon has received support from various CITES and International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) initiatives to enhance sustainable management including the training of forestry officers and customs officers on the control of CITES products, quota setting (including imposition of a zero quota in 2009-10), production of simple management plans and development of traceability procedures based on genetic markers.

Bark harvesting now occurs under three different systems: 1) by private companies in Prunus Allocation Units (PSUs); 2) by local communities in community forests; and 3) through a state-private-community partnership in protected areas. In each case harvesting is guided by a management plan which specifies the area that can be harvested, the minimum exploitability diameter, and the total volume of wood or bark that can be harvested.

The bark is generally exported in chipped or powdered form to markets in Europe and the US. Cameroon is the biggest exporter of *Prunus africana* bark which is harvested from the wild.

Prunus harvesting area in l'Adamaoua, Cameroun. **Photo:** Rayan Pouam.

LIVELIHOOD BENEFITS

In the private PSUs the management plan is expected to articulate how local people are involved. Local people are expected to be able to continue to harvest non-timber forest products such as wild fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants as well as to fish and hunt on a small scale. In addition, the concessionaire must contribute to development projects for the benefit of the community such as construction of schools and clinics. Monitoring of these operations has shown, however, that the companies often do *not* finance the development projects at the local level, and the local communities are not involved in the management of *P. africana*.

In the community forests simple management plans have been developed for 18 sites in Mount Oku, North West Region. These cover a total area of about 15,000 ha for an annual exploitation quota of 100t of dry bark or 200,000 kg of wet bark per year, generating approx 60,000,000 CFA (c.US$90,000) per year for the communities involved. This money has been allocated to community projects such as schools, wells and so on.

In protected areas – specifically Mount Cameroon National Park - a revenue sharing mechanism has been developed whereby 16% is allocated to a Village Development Fund. Income from *Prunus* harvesting is used for housing, schooling, healthcare and so on.

Measuring the circumference of a *Prunus africana* tree. **Photo:** Rayan Pouam.

CONSERVATION IMPACTS

Various initiatives to monitor the implementation of the *Prunus* management plans clearly show the degree of effective conservation of the species varies according to the degree of involvement of local communities. Failure to comply with harvest standards is more accentuated in areas where local involvement is low. Problems are particularly prevalent in the private PSUs where often the operators do not respect the limits and the operating standards (debarking techniques and minimum cutting diameter).

LESSONS LEARNT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A key lesson learned is that management of CITES species must be carried out in such a way that local communities are involved in the development and implementation of simple management plans. Management plans must address the priorities and concerns of local communities. Where they do not, communities are likely to continue to cut and burn *Prunus* forests in order to gain grazing land for livestock.

The management plans also need to clearly specify the rights and responsibilities of different actors – state, private and community.

Capacity development – including training in harvesting techniques – and institutional development or community organisations as management entities is also critical for success.

Case study prepared by Jean Lagarde Betti. **Edited by** Dilys Roe.

IN COLLABORATION WITH:

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