

Bushmeat alternatives in Equatorial Guinea

Working with local communities to develop alternative foods/livelihoods

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What's the problem?

- Rising urban demand for bushmeat
- Few alternative rural livelihoods to hunting
- Low capacity for wildlife management



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Evaluating and implementing alternative livelihoods and foods

Equatorial Guinea contains a wealth of threatened and endemic wildlife species, but they are under threat from an oil boom fuelling the demand for bushmeat (wild meat). ZSL, with its partners, has been conducting research into the causes and effects of bushmeat hunting and trade in continental Equatorial Guinea since 2002. Whilst neither bushmeat as a food nor hunting as a livelihood are preferred, in the absence of alternative sources of fresh animal protein for an increasingly wealthy urban population and income for poor rural hunters, bushmeat hunting for the commercial trade is becoming increasingly unsustainable. This risks detrimental effects on both wildlife populations and people's livelihood and food security. This project is working with local communities, the Equatoguinean government, academic institutions, NGOs and international experts to evaluate culturally acceptable and economically viable bushmeat alternatives, both in terms of food and income, to build national capacity to carry out socio-economic monitoring and research and to assist local communities in implementing feasible pilot projects.

Equatorial Guinea: unparalleled natural capital

The tiny central African country of Equatorial Guinea contains incredible but largely undocumented biodiversity and has the fourth highest primate species richness in Africa. With Bioko island a centre of endemism in the Gulf of Guinea/Cameroon rainforest region and the continental region of Río Muni in the Western Equatorial rainforest region, the country as a whole houses many globally important species. Equatorial Guinea is also rich in another type of natural resources.

The discovery of vast off-shore oil fields has resulted in a dramatic economic boom in recent years, transforming the country from extreme poverty into a key player in central Africa. This has brought undoubted socio-economic benefits, such as increasing incomes and a government programme of infrastructure improvement, and huge potential for further

development as outlined in its vision for 2020. However, this also presents challenges to ensure that such development is sustainable and does not have an adverse impact on the forest resources upon which many people are still highly dependent. In particular, the growing demand for bushmeat is causing increasingly unsustainable hunting of wildlife.



The Zoological Society of London (ZSL), founded in 1826, is a world-renowned centre of excellence for conservation science and applied conservation (registered charity in England and Wales). ZSL's Mission is to promote and achieve the worldwide conservation of animals and their habitats. This is realised by carrying out field conservation and research in over 50 countries across the globe, carrying out original scientific research at our Institute of Zoology, and through education and awareness at our two zoos, ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, inspiring people to take conservation action.

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Multidisciplinary research at multiple scales

ZSL, through its Institute of Zoology and in conjunction with Imperial College London, has been carrying out bushmeat-related research in Río Muni since early 2002, in collaboration with INDEFOR (the national forestry and protected areas institute), ANDEGE (a local NGO), ECOFAC (an EU project) and Conservation International. As bushmeat hunting is influenced and ultimately controlled by a multitude of biological, sociological and economic factors, we have collected data over more than four years from sites across Río Muni on all aspects of the system, including markets, consumers, households, hunters and wildlife populations. In the course of this research, we have trained INDEFOR staff in theoretical and field-based socio-economic research techniques and disseminated our research findings widely, to the academic community, the media and policy-makers.

This integrated approach has given us a good understanding of the complex factors that underlie the bushmeat trade, and thus the likely impacts of both conservation policies and economic development on its sustainability. We are now expanding on this baseline research to evaluate, test and support implementation of potential management options.



Aims of current project

This project is working with local communities to evaluate the cultural acceptability and economic feasibility of alternatives to bushmeat as a source of both income and protein, at both urban and rural levels across Río Muni, and then assist them in mobilising government and donor support to implement pilot projects to test the most feasible options. Research is being carried out on policies such as:

- Improved sourcing and marketing of frozen and non-animal protein bushmeat substitutes;
- Production of fresh fish and fresh livestock as bushmeat substitutes;
- Promotion of alternative livelihoods (e.g. non-timber forest product production and payments for ecosystem services such as carbon);
- Regulation of the bushmeat trade;
- Enforcement/management of protected areas;
- Community-managed forests.

We are working alongside national partners such as INDEFOR, UNGE (the national university) and ANDEGE, to help further build their capacity for data collection, analysis and reporting, and with the Equatoguinean government more broadly to support national development and conservation plans.



Collaborators and supporters



More information

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