

# Data for evidence-based decision making: challenges and opportunities

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# Evidence-based decision making: the demand

Decision-making based on fact and scientific evidence (proofs?)

Demand arises from the need to:

- Support a stand during negotiations (governments)
- Support or request for policy reforms (Government, other stakeholders)
- Advocate for political action (NGOs; ...)
- Guidance to make decision (managers)
- Etc.



## Examples of data needs to support decision-making in forest management

- Verifiers in forest management audits for forest certification
- Policy decisions in situation of crisis (e.g. to deal with the impacts of the financial crisis of 2008 on the forestry sector, COMIFAC)
- Valuation of global ecosystem services (e.g. those produced by the forest ecosystems of the Congo Basin),
- Financial flows to support conservation and sustainable forest management in central Africa
- The impacts of illegal/informal practices on the forestry sector of central Africa
- Forthcoming negotiations (e.g. carbon finance)



# Data challenges for evidence-based decision making

- Insufficient data
  - Some sectors (e.g. SMEs on timber and charcoal) are not systematically recorded; others only partially recorded (e.g. community forests)
- Reliability data
  - Cross-checks among Ministries and various sources are not harmonised not coordinated not streamlined (e.g. Min of For vs. Min of Finance)
- Data Format
  - Across Ministries but also across countries
- Governance of Data
  - Who owns, who publish, who share?



## Insufficient data

- Insufficient long term research results from African research institutions as well as from supporting partners
- No systematic recording of information from government agencies, inadequate archiving procedures
- Problems of transparency from government as well as private sector organizations
- Not much is known about the private sector in African forestry
- Local community practices not documented



## Problems of data reliability

- Discrepancy between research and data needs for decision making
- Systematic reviews on identified key issues are still scarce
- The methods of data production are not transparent nor replicable
- Lack of consensus on data
- Poor collaboration between data producers



## Data format

- Unpublished grey literature
- Scientific articles non digestible by decision makers
- Imbalances between quantitative and qualitative information
- Lack of familiarity with maps and infographics



# Governance of data

- Data ownership
- Most data labelled as « sensitive » without much evident reasons
- Poor accountability of decision makers
- Unclear rules of access
- Unclear rules of publication and dissemination



# Opportunities

- Renewed interest in tropical forests and their services at the international level in relation to climate change and biodiversity losses
- Economic interest of national governments and international trade of tropical commodities
- Improved access to online tools to support data analyses
- Better qualified human resources
- Integration of 'data from the ground' with ever-improving remote sources of data (e.g. satellite)



# Thank you

