



Republic of Congo

FSC-certified forest management Keeping the forest and bettering lives

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Timber from the north of the Republic of Congo on its way to the harbour at the Atlantic Ocean.

The rainforest concession of timber producer IFO in the north of the Republic of Congo is the largest FSC-certified single forest concession in Africa.

Being part of the Congo Basin rainforest, IFO's concession has an area of 1.2 million hectares, more than one quarter of the size of Switzerland. IFO employs almost 1,100 workers. Most of them live in the village of Ngombé, next to the IFO premises and sawmills on the banks of the wide river Sangha. IFO belongs to the Swiss based timber company Interholco and stands for Industrie Forestière de Ouesso, the main city nearby.

Logging according to standards of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) means this takes place with respect for the forest and the rights of the people living in the concession. What does that mean? In January 2016 I set out to visit the IFO concession. I wanted to see with my own eyes what FSC-certified forest management is like and how the local population (16,000) benefits from the presence of IFO in the region. I wanted to see how huge tropical trees are felled and what the forest looks like after harvest.

Going there meant that I would meet the people at the very basis of FSC-certified products from the African tropics: wooden tables, chairs, garden furniture, garden walls, doors, window frames, floors, wooden coverings, lock gates in harbours and more.

Aerial view: © Interholco

Photo insect on wood: © U. Binhack / Interholco

Photos wildlife: Thomas Britvec