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Protection of Timber Resources by the Introduction of Income Generating Measures - An Approach in Ghana

JÖRN ACKERMANN¹, MARTINA APPUHN², REINHOLD GLAUNER³, JOBST-MICHAEL SCHROEDER³

¹University of Hannover, World Forestry, Germany

²Centre for International Migration (CIM), Germany

³Federal Research Centre for Forestry and Forest Products, Institute for World Forestry, Germany

Abstract

The project area is located in the Ashanti Region in Ghana / West Africa. The Ghanaian wood processing company Dupaul Wood Treatment is establishing forest plantations in the transition zone of forest and savannah areas in the northern parts of the Ashanti Region. Since a fire blast in 1983 destroyed the forest and the high income benefiting cocoa plantations in the area, the main land use system changed to “slash and burn” agriculture. Food crops like Yam, Cassava, and Maize are the main products. Fire outbreaks, caused by the „slash and burn“ technique and the hunting of bush meat, destroyed parts of the forest plantations in the last years. To minimise the risk of fire outbreak in the forest plantations and to increase the income of the rural population in the project area, Dupaul Wood Treatment supports farmers in the establishment of farms with perennial crops and further income generating measures. These activities include the establishment of orange, mango, oilpalm or cashew farms using improved varieties and the support of farmers in establishing forest stands using agroforestry techniques for the production of fuelwood, poles and saw timber. The farms are partly organised as a “belt” around the forest plantations, other farms are scattered in the surrounding area. The farmers gain a higher income compared to the “slash and burn” technique and, furthermore, develop their own interest in avoiding the occurrence of bush fires in the area. The introduction of grasscutter rearing is a further income generating measure which shall lead to a decrease of fire outbreaks in the area. The meat of grasscutter (*Thryonomis swinderianus*) is a delicacy in West Africa and fire is frequently used for the hunting of the animals. The domestication of grasscutters shall partly replace the hunting of wild animals and, therefore, reduce the risk of fire outbreaks. This project could develop as a model for a close cooperation of a private afforestation project and its neighbouring farmers, benefiting in substantial gains for all parties involved.

Keywords: Agroforestry, bushfire, forest plantation, Ghana, grasscutter rearing, income generating measures