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Improving the Livelihood of the Rural Population in the Ashanti Region in Ghana through the Production of Grasscutter (*Thryonomys swinderianus*) Meat

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Abstract

Ghana's transition forests, neighbouring savannahs and timber plantations in the Ashanti region face a constant degradation due to the increased occurrence of fires. In most cases the fires are deliberately set by rural people for hunting purposes. Main target is the grasscutter (*Thryonomys swinderianus*) whose bushmeat is highly esteemed throughout the country. The animal is a wild herbivorous rodent of sub-humid areas in Africa south of the Sahara. The grasscutter meat is an important source of animal protein. In Ghana its demand is very high and cannot be met.

The Institute for World-Forestry of the Federal Research Centre for Forestry and Forest Products, Hamburg is cooperating with a Ghanaian timber plantation company and the German Foundation for Forest Conservation in Africa with the purpose to improve the livelihood of the rural population in the surroundings of the forest plantation sites and simultaneously to safeguard and improve the timber plantations. As fire for hunting purposes of grasscutters was identified as the major risk factor for the timber plantations (mainly Teak, *Tectona grandis*) solutions had to be sought for the avoidance of fire.

The production of grasscutter meat carried out by local farmers in the plantation surroundings appeared to be a promising approach. For that reason farmers interested in grasscutter captive breeding were identified and trained in collaboration with a German Aid Project for Rural Development. After the successful completion of training courses the farmers received a few selected animals for breeding purposes. Project staff is regularly supervising the living conditions appropriate to the species. As basic market structures for bushmeat are existing in Ghana further emphasis will be put on the improvement of market access of the grasscutter producers.

Further investigations will evaluate the effects of the grasscutter rearing in the project region. Success of caging, reproduction rate and meat quality will be assessed as well as the reduction of fire and the improvement of rural livelihoods through income generated by the grasscutter production.

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