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"Global food security and food safety:
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Addressing Conservation-linked Food Insecurity in Mountainous Environments of Cameroon

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Abstract

Food insecurity concerns have been widely discussed in relation to the socio-economic, institutional and environmental trigger mechanisms. From an environmental perspective, mountainous environments are considered susceptible to climatic and geological hazards accounting for an inverse relationship with food security through a reduction in agricultural output. These discussions have hardly laid emphasis on how conservation, especially in montane environments have been the driving factor of increasing food insecurity. More specifically, the exploration of ways to address conservation-linked food insecurity in montane environments is an important issue of scientific and policy interest in sub-Saharan Africa, including Cameroon. Cameroon accounts for over 30 protected areas which have been carved out for state and community conservation purposes. One of such, the Kilum-Ijim with the second highest peak in West Africa (3011), is of interest. Its declaration as a forest reserve in 1987 limited agricultural activities. Consequently, food insecurity (availability, accessibility and stability) were an issue of scientific concern. Increasing food insecurity was further manifested by inter-tribal conflicts and consistent claims over the dwindling land resources in the area. While literature has significantly belaboured on the attendant effects of the creation of the conservation area, very little has been done to explore ways of addressing (i) conservation-linked food insecurity, and (ii) peace-building measures for communities around the area. In this paper, we review best-practice cases of improving food security in montane environments. To generate data on current and projected food insecurity manifestations, we systematically sample 75 household heads drawn from 5 communities around the reserve. This was further complemented by focus group discussions with community-based group representatives. Our empirical analysis shows that the high dependence on hollow frontiers and frontier markets only addressed short term food security concerns. Furthermore, increasing community conflicts are largely connected to the need to have stable food supply in future. Based on these, we propose a framework which captures short, medium and long term measures to address conservation-linked food insecurity, and community-driven peace building measures in the Kilum-Ijim montane forest environment.

Keywords: Cameroon , conservation, food insecurity, mountain, peace-building

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