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## Agroforestry landscapes in Togo: Exploring the diversity of traditional and modern practices

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### Abstract

Agroforestry systems in Togo reflect a deep entanglement between ecological diversity and cultural heritage. Spanning five agro-ecological zones—from the dry northern savannahs to the humid forests of the southern mountains and coastal plains—Togo hosts a variety of traditional and modern agroforestry systems, including home gardens, parklands, and multi-storey farms. These systems are not only ecologically adapted to local rainfall, altitude, and soil conditions, but are also shaped by diverse cultural values, land-use histories, and agricultural practices.

This study explores the biocultural diversity of agroforestry systems across Togo, with particular attention to the interplay between ecological conditions and socio-cultural preferences. Tree species selection and management practices are often informed by cultural identities, spiritual beliefs, and traditional medicinal knowledge. For instance, the Kabyé communities respectively prioritise *Elaeis guineensis* (oil palm) and *Parkia biglobosa* (African locust bean) in their agroforestry systems. Such practices result in landscape-level biodiversity patterns that reflect cultural values as much as ecological constraints.

From a geographical perspective, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore the factors driving the spatial variation of agroforestry systems in Togo. Vegetation surveys were carried out in four villages: one located in the Kabyé Mountains and another at the mountain's base—both representing traditional agroforestry systems—as well as two sites in the plains around Kpalimé, where agroforestry practices are more modern or mixed, and managed by farmers from different ethnic backgrounds. Sample plots within these systems provide data on tree species composition, vegetation structure, and tree-crop-combinations. To complement the ecological data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the farmers to assess the ecosystem services delivered by key tree species. Furthermore, a review of relevant literature and policy documents offers additional context on institutional frameworks and the promotion of agroforestry practices in the region.

By grounding the analysis in the concept of biocultural diversity, this research frames agroforestry systems in Togo as spatially embedded outcomes of human-environment interactions. These findings contribute to broader biogeographical debates on how cultural practices shape vegetation patterns and how adaptive land use systems can support ecological resilience and cultural continuity under conditions of vulnerability and environmental change.

**Keywords:** Agrobiodiversity, agroecology, biocultural diversity, ecosystem services

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