



Laurent Nsenga, Luki Protected Area Advisor, World Wildlife Foundation (WWF)-DRC

Forest plantations in the DRC. The case of the Limba in Mayombe: sustainable agro-forestry system to be valued as a carbon sink

In the face of global warming, many ways are currently being thought up to improve natural processes and develop new techniques for carbon capture and sequestration. Through photosynthesis, the growth of vegetation constitutes one of the prime natural sequestration mechanisms. In this regard, the restoration of old forest areas can contribute to the global strategy to stop climate change.

The Mayombe forest region, in Lower Congo Province (DRC), has been subject to intensive industrial timber exploitation between the 1920s and the 1960s, well beyond the capacity of the massives. In order to restore the timber stock and stop deterioration of the ecosystem, trial agro-forestry plantations based on the limba (*Terminalia superba*) were launched there starting in the 1940s.

The areas involved cover almost 30,000 ha, half of which is located in the Luki forest reserve. This reserve still contains numerous plots that combine silvicultural limba plantations with bananas, coffee and cacao. Some are still valued by local communities, because they consider them an interesting development that supports their own interests.

With the support of the Belgian cooperation, the WWF has been overseeing the revival of the most interesting silvo-agricultural plots, in partnership with local NGOs and to the benefit of local farming populations since 2005. The revival of agro-forestry centred around the limba in and around the Luki reserve could simultaneously:

- Bring better development prospects for the farming populations;
- Reinforce the physical integrity of the reserve, and
- Improve its value in terms of carbon sequestration.