

Forest & Wildlife Policy (1995)

FOREWORD

The need for specific government guidance and control of forestry activities in Ghana has become necessary due to changes that have occurred in the nature of Ghana's forests since the adoption of the 1948 Forest Policy. This need also underpins our sensitivity to the serious reduction in the forest land area and the increasing local and international outcry over environmental issues relating to the forest. Besides, forestry plays a major role in the growth and development of the Ghanaian economy and the maintenance of environmental quality.

Between 1948, when a forest policy was adopted and the early 1980s, Ghana's stance has remarkably consistent. The 1948 forest policy provided for the creation and management of permanent forest estates, research in all branches of scientific forestry, maximum utilization of areas not dedicated to permanent forestry, provision of technical advice and cooperation in schemes for the prevention of soil erosion and in land use plans. However, with increasing demand for forest land for agricultural purposes due to population pressure, advances in science and technology, growing ecological importance of the forest in terms of genetic biodiversity and wildlife, institutional changes, and the increasing need for popular participation in resource management, the underlying justification for the earlier policy no longer appeared applicable. It became obvious that most of the provisions in the old policy could not adequately deal with the totality of the emerging issues. Consequently the government introduced remedial measures to strengthen forestry sector institutions and to reform policies. Though these measures have, in part, reduced the scale and frequency of environmental losses, there is still the need for a new forest policy that provides a new forest of policy that provides a new set of principles for sustainable forest management and establishes key priorities for its future development.

The new forest policy therefore, provides an additional basis to develop a national forest estate and a timber industry that provides the full range of benefits required by society in a manner that is ecologically sustainable and that conserves our environmental and cultural heritage. The new policy promotes public participation in the share of benefits and responsibilities in forest management and encourages integrated coordinated research in forest-related issues. It also provides for conservation of all valuable wildlife habitats and communities.

In contrast to the past, the new forest and wildlife policy reflects the current thinking of all relevant stakeholder groups in the forestry sector who were proactively involved in all the stages in the policy formulation. I am grateful to all such groups, especially the Forestry Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the forest industry organizations for their active participation in the formulation of this forward-looking policy.

Forest and wildlife have together provided a wide range of socioeconomic and environmental benefits to Ghanaians since time immemorial and will continue to do so if we are able to manage the resources sustainability. In this regard, it is duty of a; Ghanaians to strive towards attaining the objectives of this policy.

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1.0 PREAMBLE

1.1 Ghana has been richly endowed with natural resources which are vital for the country's development and future prosperity. Timber from the tropical high forests has traditionally ranked third as a foreign exchange earner, while fuel wood, bush meat, medicinal plants and other natural products have continued to contribute significantly to the welfare of most Ghanaians. Unfortunately, previous exploitation of these resources to satisfy Socio-economic needs has resulted in deforestation and destruction of wildlife habits, as well as resource depletion and degradation. This has been due to the ever-increasing pressure from rapid population growth, leading to clearing of forests for farming, illicit logging and surface mining, uncontrolled bush fires, collection of fuel wood and excessive hunting and poaching of wild animals.

1.2 The country recognizes the interdependency of forests and wildlife and the need to take appropriate measures to optimize resource utilization, to ensure future supplies of wood and non-wood products and to manage national forest and wildlife resources so as to maintain the ecological balance and the diversity of the natural environment. Therefore, as a major step towards balancing these competing demands on the limited natural resources, this Forest and Wildlife Policy has been developed to outline the principles, aims and objectives which will guide the sustainable development of both sectors. It includes a review of past and present policies in the light of new perceptions and sets out a comprehensive list of immediate strategies to be employed towards optional achievement of the stated policy objectives.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The history of forestry in Ghana dates back to 1906 when legislation was enacted to control the felling of commercial tree species, felled by creation of the Forestry Department in 1908. The demarcation and reservation of the forest estate was largely completed by 1939 and a Forest Policy was adopted in 1948. The policy provided for creation of a permanent forest estate for the welfare of people, protection of water supplies, maintenance of favorable conditions for agricultural crops, as well as public education and research. However, it mainly emphasized the sustained supply of timber for the wood industry and promoted the exploitation and eventual demise of unreserved forests.

2.2 Since the adoption of the forest policy, the wood industry grew steadily up to the 1970s, but like other sectors of the economy, it declined drastically until the introduction of the Economic Recovery Programme in 1983. About that time, the country suffered from the severe effects of a prolonged drought, followed by devastating wild fires, which forcibly awakened the entire population to the environmental consequences of deforestation. During the past decade, the government attempted to stimulate wood processing and exports through a range of initiatives which, hindered by inadequate institutional capability, yielded varied results.

Wildlife Conservation

2.3 Game and wildlife conservation also commenced in the early years of this century, the Department of Game and wildlife being formed in 1965. Wildlife reserves and conservation Policy was published in 1974. Rooted in the general culture and traditions of the country, this policy recognized the economic importance of wildlife resources to the livelihood of people, the role of protected areas in meeting the demand for bush meat and the importance of engaging local communities in protected areas development. However, certain shortcomings have become evident in particular, the need to obtain the acceptance of local communities directly affected by conservation measures and to modify the emphasis placed on preservation of useful animals. Unfortunately, services in the sub-sector also declined along with the worsened conditions of the national economy.

2.4 Strongly concerned about the need to protect valuable resources against further depletion and environmental degradation, the government initiated a series of donor-assisted projects, culminating in the Forest Resource Management Project and the Forestry Planning Project. These projects have adopted a comprehensive approach towards sectorial development through the strengthen of forest management and relevant institutions, policy reforms, forest inventory, a rural forestry programme and preparation of plans for management of National Parks and protected areas.

International Concern about the Global Environment

2.5 The past decade has witnessed increased attention of the world community to issue of conservation and wise of natural resources, culminating in the 1992 Earth Summit organized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In an effort to halt the deleterious effects of deforestation, global warming and climatic change, certain European countries have unilaterally moved to restrict importation of tropical timbers. In response, the International Tropical Timber Organization, of which Ghana is an active member, has launched its Target 200, aimed at ensuring that trade in tropical timber will be sourced from sustainably managed forests by the year 2000.

2.6 In the wildlife sector, there has been a shift from the traditions preservation approach in protected area management to the more flexible concept of conservation through sustainable use. The World Conservation Strategy together with the reports of the World Commission on Environment and Development, particularly the Convention on Biological conservation and development are not separate challenges but are inexorably linked and need to be addressed as a complex system of cause and effect. Also, there has been increasing recognition that individual protected area are rarely self-sustaining biological islands but integral components of the bio-physical and social landscape and, if protected area are to be developed sustainably, they should help to meet the basic needs of local people in an equitable way.

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 The guiding principles for this policy are based on both national convictions and international guidelines and conventions. From the national standpoint, such principles are embodied in the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, the Environment policies of the new parliament government, the Environmental Action Plan, as well as agreements emanating

from existing projects, particularly the Forest Resource Management Project and its various studies. Ghana has also endorsed certain international principles including those contained in the Guidelines for Tropical Forest Management published by the International Tropical Timber Organization, the Rio Declaration and Forest Principles, the African Convention on Wildlife Conservation, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and others.

3.2 In enunciation this policy concerning the country's forest and wildlife resources, the Government of Ghana recognizes and confirms:

3.2.1 the rights of people to have access to natural resources for maintaining a basic standard of living and their concomitant responsibility to ensure the suitable use of such resources;

3.2.2 the nation's viability is dependent on the wise use of the forest and wildlife resources as part of an integrated land use policy, because of their contribution to the economy in maintaining vital ecology and life-sustaining processes and conserving pools of genetic material that scientific, cultural and educational advancement;

3.2.3 the success of sustainable resource management is directly related to continued political support at the highest levels, as well as provision of strong incentives to encourage responsible use, e.g. long-term concessions, equitable access, appropriate fees;

3.2.4 the need for economic and development incentives to stimulate private enterprise and encourage respect for regulations, thus offsetting real and perceived costs imposed by loss of access or restriction on use;

3.2.5 the importance of national accounting for the costs of resource depletion and impact on the environment;

3.2.6 the need to incorporate traditional methods of resource management in national strategies where appropriate;

3.2.7 the need for support by appropriate legislation in harmony with laws concerning related sectors and for policy revision in the light of changing circumstances and updated information;

3.2.8 a share of financial benefits from resource utilization should be retained to fund the maintenance of resource production capacity and the benefit of local communities;

3.2.9 forest and wildlife fees and taxes are considered as incentives to encourage more rational and less wasteful utilization and should be revised according to market forces, and particularly to increase production of value-added wood products for export;

3.2.10 the timber industry should be transformed from a high volume, low value business to a low volume, high value trade based on sustainable forest management;

3.2.11 the maintenance of economic reforms which recognize the private sector as the engine of growth;

3.2.12 the need to improve the state of the environment;

3.2.13 the importance of appropriate and efficient land use and security of land tenure for sustainable development of forest and wildlife resources;

3.2.14 the need to encourage competitive industries based on local raw materials and to pay close attention to international trade;

3.2.15 the need to develop a decentralized participatory democracy by involving local people in matters concerned with their welfare;

3.2.16 the urgent need for addressing unemployment and supporting the role of women in development.

3.3 In view of the importance of local people in pursuing these principles, the Government proposes to place particular emphasis on the concept of participatory management and protection of forest and wildlife resources and will seek to develop appropriate strategies, modalities and programmes in consultation with relevant agencies, rural communities and individuals.

4.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Aims

4.1 The Forest and Wildlife Policy of Ghana aims at conservation and sustainable development of the nation's forest and wildlife resources for maintenance of environmental quality and perpetual flow of optimum benefits to all segments of society.

Objectives

4.2 Specially, the objectives of this policy are to:

3.2.1 Manage and enhance Ghana's permanent estate of forest and wildlife resource for preservation of vital soil and water resources, conservation of biological diversity and the environment and sustainable production of domestic and commercial produce;

3.2.1 Promote the development of viable and efficient forest-based industries, particularly in secondary and tertiary processing, so as fully utilize timber and other products from forests and wildlife resources and satisfy domestic and international demand for competitively-priced quality products;

3.2.1 Promote public awareness and involvement of rural people in forestry and wildlife conservation so as to maintain life-sustaining systems, preserve scenic areas enhance the potential of recreation, tourism and income-generating opportunities;

3.2.1 Promote research-based and technology-led forestry and wildlife management, utilization and development to ensure resource sustainability, Socio-economic growth and environmental stability;

3.2.1 Develop effective capability at national, regional and district levels for sustainable management of forest and wildlife resources.

5.0 STRATEGIES

5.1 In pursuing each stated policy objective, the government will focus on priority issues by employing the strategies outlined in the following paragraphs. Particular emphasis will be placed on the use of market mechanisms to determine realistic product prices and to stimulate specialization and efficiency in resource utilization. These strategies will be further expanded within the corporate statements and operational plans of respective institutions and ultimately, will be incorporated in a national plan to be prepared with the involvement of all concerned agencies. During implementation, all strategies will be closely monitored to ensure that the desired results are being achieved.

Permanent Forest and Wildlife Estate

5.2 Existing legislation has established 282 forest reserves and 15 wildlife protected areas which occupy more than 38,000 km or about 16 percent of the country's land area. Outside the gazetted areas, an estimated 4000 km of forests still exist, from which the bulk of timber is now being extracted without adequate control while uncontrolled hunting persists in other unprotected areas. Within forest reserves, some 60,000 hectares of plantations have been established, while private interests and communities are planting trees on an increasing scale around the country. Emphasis will be placed on reforestation initiatives towards restoring a significant proportion of the country's original forest cover.

5.3 In addition to the normal responsibilities and programmes of the resource management institutions, the government will employ the following strategies in pursuit of the stated policy objective:

Reserve Expansion

5.3.1 development of an integrated national land aimed at the suitable use of all natural resources, including particularly the dedication of various land categories with potential for nature protection and production of timber and other products;

Management and Utilization

5.3.2 inclusion of unreserved forests under Forestry Department's management system for regulation of uncontrolled harvesting, expeditious collection of relevant fees and ultimate conformity with criteria for sustainable resource development;

5.3.3 revision of resource management standards and techniques for preparation of detailed prescriptions and plans to guide the sustainable management of forest reserves and wildlife protected areas, as well as unreserved forests;

5.3.4 enforcement of specifications prescribed in resource management plans, utilization contracts and logging manuals to ensure compliance of authorizes users with approved harvesting practices and controls;

5.3.5 award of timber rights on the basis of competitive bidding and periodic audit of forest utilization operations to ensure compliance with forest management specifications and environmental protection standards;

5.3.6 regular review of forest and wildlife fees to reflect the economic value of the resource and to recover optimum revenues for supporting the cost of sustainable resource management and development;

5.3.7 establishment and management of a network of National Parks and protected area categories in order to conserve representative samples of the country's biotic communities;

Rehabilitation and Development

5.3.8 promotion of resource development programmes aimed at reforesting suitable harvested sites, rehabilitating degraded mining areas, afforesting denuded lands, regenerating desired wildlife species and habitats and sustainably developing wildlife potential;

Protection

5.3.9 regulation of utilization and trade in highly valued and endangered species in order to eliminate the threat of extinction, encourage regeneration and ensure future supplies;

5.3.10 encouragement of local community initiative to protect natural resources for traditional, domestic and economic purposes, and support with the reservation of such lands to enable their legal protection, management and sustainable development;

5.3.11 initiation of integrated planning by relevant agencies for joint action prevent and suppress wildfires in fire prone areas, illegal farming and encroachment in protected areas, chemical and solid waste pollution by industrial and domestic activities;

5.3.12 introduction of environmental impact assessment as a prerequisite for resource development and utilization projects, in compliance with approved standards.

Viable Wildlife and Forest-based Industries

5.4 The government will seek to create a climate of confidence among entrepreneurs to foster industrial modernization and innovations necessary for rejuvenation of the trade and to stimulate development of wildlife-based industries. Therefore, the following strategies will be pursued within the framework of a free market economy while maintaining a balance between industrial capacity and sustainability of the resource:

Enabling Environment

5.4.1 deregulation and streamlining of bureaucratic controls on wood export marketing to enable private sector initiatives for maintaining competitive advantages;

5.4.2 enhancement of private sector dialogue to stimulate entrepreneurship, particularly in the timber trade and tourism, and to overcome constraints affecting industrial and commercial development in the sector;

5.4.3 introduction of a competitive procedure for allocation of forest utilization contracts (timber and wildlife concessions) to eliminate unnecessary speculators and to ensure that capable and properly equipped processors and entrepreneurs have access to adequate and sustainable resources;

Incentives and Assistance

5.4.4 Encouragement of value-added process in timber, kiln-drying of lumber, optimum utilization of mill residues and eventual phasing out of exports of unseasoned, rough sawn lumber to maximize income and related benefits;

5.4.5 development of the marketability and utilization of abundant lesser-used timber species to obtain maximum benefit from the sustainably allowable cut;

5.4.6 promotion of investment in feasible projects for commercial wild animal production and forest plantations to ensure sustainable supplies of marketable products;

5.4.7 encouragement of improved milling efficiency and adoption of grading rules to increase productivity and maximize Ghana's competitive advantage;

5.4.8 initiation of specialized training and apprenticeship schemes for wood processing operators and produce graders to improve productivity and quality;

Development of Domestic Markets

5.4.9 promotion and development of a well-structured local market as an essential component of the timber industry in order to satisfy domestic needs and to maximize utilization of harvested timber.

Public Education and Participation

5.5 The government wishes to increase public awareness and people's involvement in conservation of forest and wildlife resources, particularly where they directly affect the livelihood of communities and the stability of the environment. Emphasis will be placed on integrated efforts to reduce the incidence of uncontrolled wildfires and to rationalize the demand and supply of fuelwood to ease the pressure on existing forests. Accordingly, relevant strategies will include:

Public Education

5.5.1 promotion and implementation of public education programmes to increase awareness and understanding of the role of trees, forest and wildlife and the importance of conservation;

5.5.2 promotion of agroforestry among farmer and cultivators to enhance food and raw material production and environmental protection;

5.5.3 dissemination of research information to update the public on current knowledge regarding resolution of technical problems in growing, management and utilization of timber and wildlife products;

5.5.4 participation in industrial fairs, seminars and trade promotion activities to stimulate added investment and growth in marketing of timber and wildlife products and services;

Public Participation

5.5.5 development of consultative and participatory mechanisms enhance land and tree tenure rights of farmers and ensure access of local people to traditional use of natural products;

5.5.6 promotion of national tree planting programmes as positive community-building actions which generate raw materials and income while improving the quality of the local environment;

5.5.7 initiation and maintenance of dialogue with all interests through a national advisory forum (i.e. the Forestry Commission) and related district conservation committees to ensure active public participation in forestry and wildlife matters;

5.5.8 initiation of continued contract and liaison with the local authorities and communities to pursue integrated development activities related to sustainable resource management.

Relevant Research

5.6 There is a critical need to keep abreast of advances in scientific knowledge and to adapt and disseminate such advances, where appropriate, to improve the nation's ecological management and technological development. Faced with limited resources, greater emphasis will be placed on research activities that can be of immediate benefit to users and clients. Therefore, the following strategies will be pursued in the medium-term:

Ecological

5.6.1 promotion of user-oriented instigations into the growth and success of important tree species and forest types, wildlife species and habitats, and the development of appropriate systems for their sustainable management under a wide variety of conditions:

5.6.2 encouragement of studies by institutions of higher learning to increase knowledge of the biological diversity of the country and its potential for future applications in socio-economic development:

Economic Applications

5.6.3 Promotion of client-oriented research into problems and prospects affecting viable processing and marketing of major timber species capable of being managed sustainably:

5.6.4 Promotion of commissioned studies likely to enhance economic returns and sustainability, including aspects such as downstream processing of preferred timber species, utilization of suitable sites and habitats for tourism, hunting and bushmeat production, etc.

Extension

5.6.5 promotion of the development of research database on relevant forestry and wildlife knowledge for effective dissemination to a wide spectrum of users, particularly in industry and rural communities.

Effective Capability

5.7 Government has been investing considerably in the strengthening of sectoral institutions with the assistance of international donors. Already, there are positive signs of improved planning and better coordination within the sector. These capacities building activities will be continued in conjunction with the following strategies:

Institutional Strengthening

5.7.1 reorganization of Forestry and Wildlife Departments, as autonomous or semi-autonomous agencies, to focus on upgrading of staff performance and improved monitoring, coordination and accountability;

5.7.2 initiation of inter-ministerial cooperation and maintenance of an interagency coordinating committee to coordinate plans and programmes and review how policy goals can effectively accomplished, and in particular to develop a long-term master plan to guide implementation of this policy and strategies;

5.7.3 cooperation with international entities, trade associations, private interest groups and non-governmental organizations concerned with sustainable management of forest and wildlife resources in order to benefit from technological advances, technical assistance and action-oriented initiatives;

5.7.4 review of legislative instruments and administrative arrangements to ensure effective resource management and administration towards sustainable development, and in particular to prevent any farming, logging sand-winning or galamsey activities from taking place along the banks of streams, rivers and lakes;

5.7.5 development of adequate funding arrangements to ensure continuity of resource management services;

5.7.6 development of mechanisms for review and adjustment of this policy as deemed appropriate, from time to time;

Capacity Building

5.7.7 improvement of capacity for accurate accounting and timely, collection of resource utilization revenues in order to augment the operational and support finances of respective institutions;

5.7.8 implementation of human resource development programmes aimed at improved planning and management capability in sector institutions, industrial and community enterprises to ensure satisfactory performance and achievement of objectives and targets;

5.7.9 establishment of suitable database systems and information linkages to facilitate decision-making and policy analysis.

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