

FOREST FRIENDS IRELAND-GHANA

Editorial by John Haughton

First of all congratulations to the Ghana branch of Forest Friends/Cáirde na Coille for the production of this fine newsletter which we are using to launch our joint 'NEART' initiative which seeks to protect the remaining rainforest of Ghana and at the same time implores the Irish Government to stop the importation of tropical wood from West Africa and other areas, and to reverse its destructive forestry policy by planting native hardwoods.

Although Ghana has one of the stronger economies in sub-Saharan Africa because of its natural resources, the lack of environmental awareness and the willingness to have these resources exploited in an unsustainable manner, has resulted, by reliable estimates, in the loss of between 90% and 95% of primary rainforest. Economic development has come at the cost of Ghana's life supporting rainforest and environmental degradation. Logging, legal and illegal, gold mining, saw milling, cabinet making, the building industry, the demands of the Cocoa industry, road construction, the use of wood for cooking and fire wood, has led to a serious deterioration of soil quality and is now threatening Ghana with a famine similar to those suffered by Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia. The soils when deprived of their natural protection, increase in salt content and are worn away by air and water erosion. The consequence of this loss of primary rainforest has led to a serious intensification of droughts and bushfires. It has led to desert encroachment. In changing the habitats of disease-carrying insects, deforestation is creating conditions that may help to spread malaria, river blindness and other serious illnesses.

The herbal medicine tradition, which is central to the health system, is under threat. More than 250 trees and plants are used in traditional medicine and are threatened due to deforestation.

The American Forest and Paper Association estimates that in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana and Liberia, 30% of timber production is 'suspicious'; other estimates put it as high as 50% in Ghana and Cameroon and up to 100% in Liberia.

Ireland is now the largest per capita importers of tropical wood in the European Union. Most of our tropical wood, especially iroko (teak), comes from West Africa, especially the Ivory Coast. That is why Forest Friends urges the Irish Government to reverse its present policy of planting non-native exotic species of softwoods and instead plant our native hardwoods, which have a varied lifespan from planting to maturity, thus allowing for selective felling as opposed to clear fell and the fostering of continuous canopy forestry. This would also prevent soil erosion and obviate the necessity to use pesticides, as trees would be planted on principles based on good Sylva culture practices.

Some Positive Factors:

1. Kakum National Park, one of the last isolated fragments of rainforest that once extended across West Africa is protected as well as about 15% of the land area, which has some form of protection.
2. Forest protection could earn tens of millions for Ghana under carbon-trading initiatives.

John Haughton
Chairman
Forest Friends Ireland/Cáirde na Coille
Forest Friends Ghana

**Press Launch: ENFO: Dublin
Irish National Biodiversity Week
Wednesday 23rd. May 2007**

FOREST FRIENDS IRELAND-GHANA

***TOPIC:* GREENING AND PROMOTION OF BIODIVERSITY
IN GHANA**



**BY: JOSEPH OWUSU SARPONG
&
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INTRODUCTION: Ghana is an Anglophone country within sub-Saharan Africa with a population of about 20million of about 65% - 70% of the people in agricultural occupation.

Ghana in African Context: it is located in sub-Saharan Africa and once a British colony, which is among the first few countries to have their independence.

Ghana in Regional Context: it is located in the western part of Africa bordering the North Atlantic Ocean in the south and between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo in the west and east respectively. The northern part is bothered by Burkina Faso. It has land boundaries of 548km with Burkina Faso, 668km with Cote d'Ivoire and 877km with Togo, totaling 2,093km. Regarding the coastline it has a distance of 539km. The country is also demarcated into ten regions namely; Greater Accra (the capital city), Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Eastern, Central, Western, Northern, Volta, upper East and Upper West region.

Ghana, located on Western African Gulf of Guinea only a few degrees north of the Equator Half of the country lies less than 152 meters (500 ft) above sea level, and the highest part is 883 meters (2,900ft). The 537-kilometers (334-metre) coastline is mostly a low, sandy shore lacked by plains and scrub and intersected by several rivers and streams, most of which are navigable only by canoe.

A tropical main forest belt, broken by heavily forested hills and streams and rivers, extends northwards from the shore near the Cote d'Ivorce frontier. This area, known as the "Ashanti" produces most of the country's cocoa, minerals and timber. North of this belt, the country varies from 91 to 396 meters (300-1,300ft) above sea level and is covered by low bush, park like savanna and greasy plains,

The climate is tropical. The western coastal belt is warm and comparatively dry, the northwest corner, hot and humid, and the north, hot and dry. There are two district rain seasons in the south, May-June and August-September, in the north; the main seasons tend to merge. A dry, northeasterly wind, the Harmattan, blows in January and February. Annual rainfall in the coastal Zone averages 83 centimeters (33 in).

Figure 1; gives the Ghana map for observation and guidance.



The Climate in Ghana and Natural Resources, Agriculture land use – topography: the climate of Ghana is tropical, but temperatures vary with season and elevation. Except in the North where two rainy seasons occur from April to July and from September to November. Annual rainfall ranges from about 43 inches in the North and about 83 inches in the southeast. The harmattan, a dry desert wind blows from northeast from December to March, lowering the humidity and creating hot day and cool night in the north. In the south, the effects of harmattan are felt in January with the highest temperatures in most areas occurring March, the lowest in August.

The average annual temperature is about 26 (about 79 of) and the annual rainfall: 736 mm / 29”.

Apart from providing the bulk of national income agriculture, forestry and fishing employ more than half of the population. The annual output of cocoa, which is cultivated on more than one half of Ghana’s arable land –

provides between three-fifths and three-quarters of the total revenue from exports. Topographically, land use for agricultural purposes is mostly suitable for vegetable crops.

Ghana in regards to flora and fauna is being critically looked at by kind courtesy of some organizations such as Parks and Gardens, Crops Research, Forest Research Institute and Botanical and Zoology departments in some countries universities continuous promotion of Flora is attracting native birds, butterflies and other fauna to our gardens.

Concerning Rainforest: Forest covers about one – third of Ghana’s total area, with commercial forestry concentrated in the Southern part of the country. This sector accounts for about 3.5% GDP in the country. The sector however faced several problems including severe deforestation; Ghana’s tropical hardwood, which extended from about the middle of country southward to the sea a century ago. Nearly half the country was covered with forest, which included 680 species of trees but most wood has been cut, which is a threat.

Areas under threat are Tarkwa in the Western Region of Ghana, which is facing a problem of surface mining. Surface mining represents a serious threat to the last vestiges of Ghana’s forest resources and threatens the rich biodiversity of the country’s tropical rainforest. A research conducted in the Tarkwa area carried out lies in the prime timber-producing region with a good overlay of forest reserves. The areas is said to cover 44% of the country’s closed forest. In primary forest areas, trees reach height of up to 45 meters but these are at the summit of hills wherever mining has not yet reached. Ironically, it has the highest concentration of surface mines and exploration companies. Eight (8) of the country’s 14 large scale mines are located in the area.

Figure 2;



figure 3;



The removal of the forest cover is rapidly drying up rivers and streams, leading to extinction of river hosted animals and plant species. At the community level, the threat to ecological biodiversity has economic implication. It has also led to reduction if not extinction of certain flora and fauna species that communities depend on. Many communities complain

that snails, mushrooms, medical plants and others are no longer available in the area due partly to mining activities at villages in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

Figure 4;



figure 5;



Figures 2 to 5 give pictorial evidence of the deplorable state of the mined areas.

Areas under protection: The Ministry of Lands, Forestry and Mines is undertaking studies in the towns such as Yakaso (35.7 ha) and Tontokrom (115 ha) in the Ashanti Region and Adjakaa – Manso (134 ha) and Ataasi (29ha) in the Western to reclaim land degraded through illegal mining activities. The areas will be planted with economic and citrus trees and handed over to the communities.

The rationale for such reclamation exercise is to demonstrate to communities that mined out areas can be reclaimed for economic use.

Mangrove forest or swamps can be found on low, muddy tropical coastal areas. Mangroves are woody plants that form the dominant vegetation of mangrove forests. They are characterized by their prop roots, their ability to tolerate regular inundation by salt water.

Mangrove forests form along the banks of estuarine rivers. They form dense thickets of prop roots and aerial stems, which in turn trap sediments and move the shallow mud flats and delta, areas seaward. The mud stems and roots make excursions into mangroves difficult.

Mangroves are highly productive areas contributing to the food chains of coastal oceanic areas. Seabirds using mangroves as rookeries and by depositing their guano, they return valuable nitrogen from the ocean to the mangrove forest. Many oceanic organisms rely on mangroves for part of their life cycle, so mangroves are nurseries for oceanic fisheries. The thick mangrove forest also protects low coastal areas in storms. Humans however, have tended to look upon mangrove swamps as useless vegetation blocking their access to the coast, so mangroves have been destroyed in

many areas by human development. A typical example of mangrove forest in Ghana is found in the Central and Western regions of Ghana. Also, along the banks of some streams in Ghana are mangroves.

The Ministry of Lands, Forestry and Mines is the sector Ministry entrusted with the management of Ghana's land, forest, wildlife and mineral resources. With its vision and Mission as well as aims and objectives to protect areas under threat has the following in place:

VISION AND MISSION

To ensure the sustainable management and utilization of Ghana's land, forests, wildlife and mineral resources for socio-economic growth and development. This is achieved through:

- efficient formulation, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes of sector agencies;
- efficient and equitable land delivery;
- promotion of sustainable forest, wildlife and mineral resource management and utilization;
- promotion of effective inter-agency and cross-sectoral linkages;
- creation of an enabling environment for effective private sector participation; and
- promotion of effective community participation in multiple use of land, forest wildlife and mineral resources.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Ministry's activities and implementation of the current reforms are in pursuance of its set aims and objectives. These are:

- Develop and manage sustainable lands, forest, wildlife and mineral resources;
- Promote public awareness and local communities participation in sustainable forest, wildlife and land use management and utilization;
- To review, update, harmonise and consolidate existing legislation and policies affecting land, forest and mineral resources;

- To promote and facilitate effective private sector participation in land service delivery, forest, wildlife and mineral resource management and utilization;
- Develop and maintain effective institutional capacity and capability at the national, regional, district and community levels for land, forest, wildlife and mineral service delivery;
- Develop and research into problems of forest, wildlife, mineral resources and land use;

CAUSES OF DAMAGE:

- Over exploitation by concessionaires
- Extraction of fire wood
- Uncontrolled bushfires
- Population explosion
- Infrastructure development
- Poverty (About 40% of the population in Ghana are below the poverty line; 30% are classified as extremely poor.

GOVERNANCE

Ghana is a democratic state under the fourth Republican constitution (1992 Constitution). However, governance was decentralized in 1988 to the local levels. This saw the establishment of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, which have been further reconstituted into 138 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies.

The 1992 constitution and Local Government Act 462 of 1993 affirmed the process. A District Assembly's Common Fund (DACF) was established to which not less than 5% of national revenues to fund the operations of the Assemblies Revenue generation at the local level is also vital in this direction.

Each Assembly is headed by a District Chief Executive (DCE) appointed by the President of the Republic in consultation with organized bodies in the district. There should be core staff that includes a Coordinating Director and a minimum of 10 decentralized departments. 10% of the district

assembly total revenue is given to the district environmental committee for resources management and sanitation control.

PROTECTED AREAS IN GHANA

The mandate for wildlife conservation and protected areas management lies with the Department of Games and Wildlife, Ministry of forestry, lands, Mines and Natural Resources.

There are 317 Forest reserves, which include:

- National Parks (Bia, Bui, Digha, Kakum, Mole, etc)
- Game Production Reserves (Ankasa, Bia, Shai Hills, Kalakpa, etc)
- Strict Nature Reserves (Kogyae)
- Wildlife sanctuaries (Owabi, Bomfobiri, Boabeng-Fiema, etc)
- Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar) and Wetlands form about 10% OF Ghana's total land surface and based on the Ramsar convention criteria, three main types of wetlands are identifiable in Ghana. These are:
 - Marine/ coastal Wetlands. This comprises of;
 - a. Rocky Marine shores (Senya Bereku, Cape Three points)
 - b. Estuarine water (Mouths of Volta, Pra, Butre, Ankobra rivers)
 - c. Mangrove/ Tidal forest (lower reaches of Volta, Oyibi, Kakum, Ankobra)
 - d. Brackish/ Saline lagoons (open Korl, Amisa, Closed Songhor, Mini, Keta lagoon)
 - Inland wetland.
 - a. Permanent river/stream (Densu, Afram, Oti and Ankobra)
 - b. Permanent freshwater lake (Bosomtwi)
 - c. Fresh water swamp forest (Amansuri)
 - d. Freshwater marshes (Banks around Black, Red, and White Volta)
 - Man-made Wetlands:
 - a. Irrigated land (Tano, Veve, Dawhenya, Anum Valley)
 - b. Salt pans (Elmina, Saltpan, Songhor, Densu)
 - c. Reservoirs (Volta lake, Kpong Head Pond, Brimsu reservoirs)
 - d. Urban / industrial (Tema sewerage treatment plant)

Agro – Ecological Zones of Ghana (Tropical Zone Country)

There are five main agro-ecological zones in Ghana, defined on the basis of climate and reflected in the soil types, natural vegetation pattern and distribution.

These are:

- Rain Forest
- Deciduous Forest
- Transitional Zone
- Coastal Savanna
- Northern Savanna (Guinea and Sudan Savanna)

The intensity of agriculture and the types of crops grown in each of the agro-ecological zone are influenced by the rainfall pattern and distribution, which in turn dictate the growing periods of crops.

The Rain forest, deciduous forest, Transitional and coastal savanna Zones give two growing seasons (Major and Minor seasons).

Guinea Savanna and Sudan Savanna have a single growing season (major season).

Climate has adverse effect on food crop production especially the northern portion of the country where cropping done once a year against the backdrop of rapidly growing population.

	Hectares	Percentage
Total Land Area	23,853,900	100
Agric Land Area	13,628,179	57,1
Percentage of Available farmland cultivated	Unestimated	Approximately 32%
Others		39%

LAND OWNERSHIP

The kingship in the country has various forms of inheritance, depending on the culture. Whiles some stools are inherited by the nephews especially the Akans, others are inherited by first sons. The chiefs in Ghana, especially those in the southern and the middle sector of the country are the custodians of the land. Chiefs have sub-chiefs in charge of small towns and accountable to paramount chiefs.

- The process of Systematic land titling on Pilot basis has commenced in two sections of District 03 in Accra (Cantonments, Ring way Estates and Labone) and in Kumasi. It is estimated that about 2,700 Parcels will be issued with title certificates. The benefits to be derived include improved security of tenure, cheap, fast and safe handling of land transactions.
- Customary boundary demarcation has commenced in Wasa Amenfi in the Western Region and Ejisu in the Ashanti Region. Stakeholder sensitization and consultations have been held with Paramountcies that share boundaries with these traditional areas to inform, educate and seek their cooperation for take off of the fieldwork. The exercise will improve on security of tenure and certainty of land rights/holding and also serve as an incentive for attracting investment.
- Extensive collaboration and participatory meetings have been held across the country with the judiciary and the various Houses of Chiefs (Regional and National), key stakeholders and civil society on the reform processes to create awareness, provide a platform for participation and to solicit views.
- The project has also undertaken a scoping study on gender and land and the key recommendation is that the land sector should have a gender strategy, which is being worked on.

Under their specific mandates the various land sector departments and agencies have also undertaken some important activities. Some of these include:

- Mapping of 512 Kilometers of coastline of Ghana for tourism development, development of salt industry, checking of coastal erosion and the extension of Ghana's continental shelf beyond the 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zone to facilitate oil exploration.
- Preparation of large scale maps for planning and developmental purposes and rating valuation. Some of the towns covered include

Savelugu, Mampong, Yendi, Nkoranza, Nsawam, Aflao, Obuasi and Medina.

In Ghana, the National Environmental Policy acknowledges that certain traditional agricultural practices e.g. bush fallow and agro forestry offer good prospects for soil fertility regeneration and control of noxious weeds, pests and disease. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture has been implementing integrated Crop and Pest Management (ICPM) Programmes (Table 7). The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) support much of the ICPM programme. About 90% of biocontrol technology programmes in Ghana is adapted from external international research centers such as the IITA, which provides similar support to other countries of the West African sub-region. The ICPM follows a Participatory Technology Development (PTD) approach in providing extension to farmers. The Pesticide Control and Management Act 1996 (Act 538) embodies Ghana's policy safeguards and other general regulations relating to pesticides. There is provision for a pesticide Control Board and a Pesticide Technical Committee. However Government subsidies on agrochemicals have been removed.

Conclusion: It is envisaged that intensive and continuous mass education of the populace, especially the youth with regards to afforestation, forest conservation, promotion of biodiversity and all forms of land reclamation, will enable Ghana regain its forest strength.

Long Live Ghana. Long live Ireland!

Thank you.

BY:

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17th January 2007

The Co-coordinator
Forest Friends
Ireland

Dear Sir,

GREENING AND PROMOTION OF BIODIVERSITY IN GHANA

Attached is a report dubbed “Greening and Promotion of Biodiversity in Ghana” from Forest Friends Ireland-Ghana.

It is anticipated that based on the information gathered so far, the group would champion the course of forestation and re-forestation. This could be achieved when massive education is undertaken to sensitise the youth in our communities about the need to green the country.

After a successful completion of the exercise, the next topic would be “Global Warming and its implications”, which is likely to take effect by the year 2008.

It is however our hope that some of our active members would be invited to do some presentations regarding our achievements of the above topic.

We hope to be getting updates about how Forest Friends Ireland is also faring.

Until we hear from you, we wish you happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Benjamin B. Owusu
(Programmes Co-coordinator)