

## **Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (March 2022)**

Title: Commodities Trade and the Environment

### Abstract

Agenda 21 recognizes the great imbalances in global patterns of consumption and production. Commodities trade, whether legal or illegal, is a key part of economic growth and a threat to our environment, especially in sub Saharan African countries. Opinions on how to address this threat and make economic growth sustainable are deeply divided across the conservation community.

Many unsustainable patterns are rooted in cultural habits which could cause dramatic decline in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, even though many citizens are now ready to re-examine their lifestyles. Consequently, action to develop infrastructures and cultural norms that enable rather than constrain sustainable consumption choices will have to take place gradually, with the full participation of all stakeholders.

Political reality between countries of the North and African countries may be different, but addressing the issue of balancing the positives of ever-expanding trade with its costs is essential to addressing sustainability issues. Underlying the current debate on sustainable commodities trade is a growing awareness that reforms in national economic policies are required to ensure that goods and services reflect environmental costs and stimulate more sustainable production and consumption patterns. Also, it is important for the countries in the North in terms of negotiating sustainable trade deals that also meet other environmental and social development commitments.

### Justification

As part of the UKRI GCRF Trade, Development and the Environment Hub (a partnership of 15 organizations and more than 100 researchers across the world), our research focuses on various commodities (from wild life to agriculture) to understand the drivers and impacts of trade, and propose the necessary steps to make trade more sustainable, and to ensure that our natural environment is protected while continually reducing environmental damage and risks to human health. In order for these objectives to be achieved, we need to engage all stakeholders and bring together a number of key issues which are necessary for the improvements in environmental quality through the substitution of more efficient patterns of commodities trade. This side event strives to engage all actors/stakeholders, share experiences, and discuss the impacts on natural systems, threats to biodiversity species globally, thus contributing to quality education, gender equality, and life on land.

### Panelists and Speakers:

Dr Kevin Njabo (Organizer)  
Africa Director, Congo Basin Institute,  
Yaounde, Cameroon

Dr Benis Egoh  
Assistant Professor, University of California  
Irvine, California, USA

Dr Jonas Nguhoun-Poufoun  
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Dr Juliet Wright  
Bushmeat Research Coordinator  
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