

Congolaise Industrielle des Bois

FSC Certification expedited through Helveta's CI Earth™ Technology

a helveta customer success story

“Progress is so rapid that soon the entire team will be able to devote its energies to developing institutional structures in camps and villages. If progress continues in this manner, I feel confident that the social criteria for FSC Certification will have been largely addressed in the Pokola concession.”

- Dr Jerome Lewis
University College, London

About the Organisation

Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) began activities in 1969 and is part of the DLH Group. CIB is involved in the production, processing and export of a wide range of African wood species. At the industrial sites of Pokola and Kabo, the company operates four sawmills, a kiln and a modern moulding facility. By many organisations, CIB is considered a pilot company in the Congo Basin in view of its commitment with respect to forest management, fauna control and various social project for the well-being of the local indigenous population.



Business Challenge

CIB achieved FSC Certification in its Kabo concession in May 2006, becoming the first FSC Certified forest in the Republic of Congo. However, several areas of improvement were highlighted in the process, including the need to involve local communities in decision making procedures. CIB needed a sophisticated and effective solution so they enlisted the help of Helveta.

Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CB), the largest logging company active in the Republic of Congo and one of Central Africa's major forestry and wood processing operations, has had a long term commitment to certifying its concessions to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard. Following great efforts over a period of years by CIB, its partners and the Tropical Forest Trust (TFT), CIB achieved FSC certification of its Kabo concession in May 2006. The assessment process highlighted areas for improvement such as the need to more efficiently and effectively include local communities in decision making procedures. The initial technology system CIB used was sufficient to achieve certification at Kabo but proved to be inadequate for its needs moving forward.

Principles 2 and 3 of the FSC certification standards demand that indigenous peoples resident on the land are involved with the management and decision making processes concerning the forest and its resources. To meet the required FSC standard, CIB had to obtain free, prior and informed consent from local indigenous peoples for their forest management and logging activities. To help address outstanding corrective action request from the Kabo assessment, CIB needed to map the traditional territories of the local communities to ascertain and formally recognise their tenure and land-use rights.

Solution

Helveta's CI Earth technology provides for the sophisticated requirements of data capture that can be carried out by non-literate people and the subsequent sharing of the same maps to a variety of stakeholders in a way that is meaningful and effective for each party.

It enabled CIB to empower the Mbendjele people to map the forest and record traditional and sensitive resources formerly recognising the tenure and use rights of all parties

Results

- The Mbendjele community members are able to create maps of boundaries, forest assets and access routes using icon driven hand-held computers
- The Mbendjele community can share its maps with all interested stakeholders using a secure on-line environment provided by Helveta
- CIB are able to demonstrate adherence to Principles 2 and 3 of FSC Certification standards relating to the rights and direct involvement of local indigenous people
- CIB are able secure progression to widespread FSC certification

Industry

- Forest Management
- Timber

System Configuration

- TDS Recon hand-held data capture unit
- Holux compact flash GPS receiver
- CI Mobile™ data capture application
- GPS Utility data conversion application
- CI Earth Visualisation Server

CIB rapidly needed a solution that could help address its mapping requirement. Standard mapping technologies were not found to be up to the task. A key problem was that while CIB and its auditors had sophisticated requirements for the mapping data, the hunter-gathering Mbendjele people residing at Pokola are non-literate and yet needed to be directly involved in the process of capturing and managing the same data. CIB worked with its partners TFT, the Forest Peoples Programme, the London School of Economics and technology provider Helveta to deliver a flexible, scaleable solution useful to all parties in the certification process. In 2005, TFT and CIB won a World Bank "Development Marketplace for Sustainable Livelihoods" grant for its ambitious community radio and mapping project. The grant was used to part-fund the Helveta mapping initiative.



Technology for Non-Literate Users

Helveta's mapping application CI Earth was in its primary stages of development when initially deployed at CIB. LSE anthropologist Jerome Lewis and FPP Policy Advisor John Nelson worked with Helveta to adapt points throughout the supply chain and the verification of block maps, waybills and timber entering and exiting sawmills.

Dr Lewis has lived and worked with semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers in the Republic of Congo since 1994 and has studied the impact of logging and conservation initiatives on the hunter-gatherer societies of Central Africa. Since 2001, Nelson has been using traditional GIS technologies to support hunter-gatherers in Cameroon to document their forest use in and around five national parks. Combining their knowledge and expertise with the technology of Helveta and the management resources of TFT and CIB, an innovative solution was developed for use by the indigenous communities. The aim was for them to create maps to show CIB where their most valuable resources are located, helping CIB to understand which areas may need to be excluded from logging plans. CIB could then enter into a dialogue to obtain the communities' consent to harvest timber from the remaining areas, should CIB engage to respect the communities' rights in areas that were agreed upon for needing protection. To make this possible, it was essential that the indigenous people could use Helveta's advanced systems under their own direction.

In light of this, Lewis worked with the Mbendjele Pygmies of Ibama to devise a set of pictograms that represent Mbendjele activities and resources most vulnerable to damage from logging. This was developed, by Helveta, into a 100% icon-driven application as an interface of the existing CI Earth system. Nelson also trialled the system with hunter-gatherer communities and local NGO partners in other projects in Cameroon and the Central African Republic.



Each Activity or resource was classified into groups through the use of a “decision tree”, the first stage illustrating hunting, fishing, gathering, agricultural and cultural-religious resources. The local community was fully supportive of the project once they became involved in the key sites of concern for themselves. Lewis found the Mbendjele were excited that a European Company was “making a machine” specifically for them. After initial trials it emerged that a few alterations were needed to be made to the decision tree. Helveta’s technology allows for an easy process of upgrading the software remotely via the internet.

In general, the Mbendjele reacted very positively, delighted by the fact that CIB was showing genuine concern with protecting their resources and that they were given an opportunity to demonstrate their traditional rights to the forest. The encouraging outcome of these trials provided an example for other local communities to follow.

Progress to Widespread Certification

CIB’s Kabo concession was the first FSC certified forest in the Republic of Congo and is the largest area of FSC certified natural forest anywhere in the Congo Basin. CIB’s Pokola concession is scheduled for FSC audit in June 2007. Dr. Lewis revisited Pokola in October 2006 to assess the process of mapping these areas and was astonished by the speed and efficiency of the Helveta system. CIB are committed to continue an on-going program that will see the remaining 1 million hectares of forest to be undergo an FSC audit by the end of 2008.

About CI Earth

CI Earth™ is used to create maps of forest inventory in an online environment accessible by all registered users. Data is captured using CI Mobile™ and GPS reader technology. The CI Mobile interface is configured to record the data types that are relevant to the particular region or management initiative. Users range from logging operations, through government and NGO’s to local communities. CI Earth data is synchronized with CI World through any locally available means of internet connection ranging from satellite through to dial up modem. GPS referenced data is then made available within CI World in chart form and through GIS applications such as ESRI’s ArcView and GeoWeb solutions such as Google™Earth.

About CI World

Helveta’s CI World™ solution is a combination of modular components providing a complete system that enables the tracking of assets through extended supply chains and significantly enhances traditional chain of custody solutions.

CI World is a configurable platform available as an installable server based product or as a hosted solution managed on Helveta’s secure servers. The CI World suite comprises a series of modules that provide application specific delivery of particular sets of functionality. Each module is made up of a number of utilities that drive the system functionality. At the core of CI World is CI Server™ which processes all data acquired by the system. CI Server enables the output of acquired data in a variety of different media according to client specification. All data processed by CI Server is analysed for compliance with rules specified within the system and at the same time is used to generate all required user reports and data analysis plus the export of datasets to third party systems.

