



THE GOVERNMENT OF CAMEROON AND TAYLOR GUITARS

A Public-Private Partnership

Inspired by the same vision of protecting Cameroon's rich forest resources for future generations, the Government of Cameroon and Taylor Guitars are taking the first steps in a public-private partnership. Working together with The Congo Basin Institute (CBI) and Taylor's partner Madinter, the partnership will assess the feasibility of expanding the existing Taylor-funded CBI Ebony Project model of community engagement, tree propagation, and planting into Cameroon's subnational REDD+ program. This project provides trees, including native fruit and medicinal trees, to support local communities. Following an initial assessment of the feasibility of this model for the REDD+ program area, the partners will work together to support local communities in the sustainable management of forest resources. This includes the planting of ebony and other key tree species to promote responsible and sustainable business models in the forestry industry of Cameroon; to support scientific research on reforestation and agroforestry models; and to integrate these efforts into the REDD+ program. The partnership aims to ensure that Cameroon's forests, including key species such as ebony, will be protected; that forest communities can earn a sustainable income by responsibly managing this resource; and that the music coming from Cameroon's forests will continue to inspire the world for generations to come.



Preserving the

Music
of the *Forest*

Located on the western coast of Africa, Cameroon is a nation of unparalleled beauty and biological diversity. Mount Cameroon, in the west, is one of Africa's largest volcanoes, reaching 13,255 feet; to the north of the country, savanna and semi-desert extend to Lake Chad; to the south, lush tropical rainforests form the northwestern boundary of the Congo Basin forests that store 40 billion tons of carbon, second only to the Amazon Basin. Cameroon is also a country on the front lines of the fight against poverty, and its people and resources are vulnerable to a changing climate. Its rainforests alone cover approximately 46% of the national territory and account for 11% of Congo Basin forests. It is home to some of the richest biodiversity in the world. This includes 9,000 plant species, 910 bird species, and 320 mammal species. Cameroon's people represent an incredibly diverse culture, vibrant and resilient, and connected to the land through agriculture and forest ecosystem services.



While Cameroon's rate of forest loss is low compared to countries experiencing large-scale deforestation, the rate of deforestation and forest degradation is steadily increasing. By 2030, if Cameroon continues on its current trajectory, greenhouse gas emissions from its forests will double.

To protect its wealth of natural resources in its forest ecosystems, the government of Cameroon has been a key contributor to the design of REDD+ at the international level, and is in the advanced stages of design of its own first subnational REDD+ program, with the financial and technical support of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the German Development Bank (KfW), among other partners. The program will focus on the southern region of the country, which includes the Dja Reserve—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—national parks and a gorilla reserve, and forests high in biodiversity, including threatened species such as chimpanzees, gorillas, and forest elephants. The Program Area also includes over a million residents, including smallholder farmers who grow cocoa, coffee and palm oil to supply global markets and indigenous peoples who depend on the resources provided by forests and their ecosystem services. This region faces increasing threats from fuelwood demand for urban centers, unsustainable expansion of smallholder and industrial-scale agriculture, and informal logging and mining.

Musical Instruments and Cameroonian Ebony

Taylor Guitars is one of the world's leading manufacturers of premium acoustic guitars. The Spanish tonewood supplier Madinter specializes in selling sustainable, ethically-sourced woods to makers of musical instruments. A key feature of function and beauty on a guitar is ebony, a traditionally-used resource that is highly valued by musical instrument makers worldwide. All ebony used by Taylor comes from the forests of Cameroon.

In November of 2011, Taylor and Madinter purchased the Crelicam ebony mill based in Yaoundé, Cameroon. As industry leaders in sustainability, Taylor and Madinter have committed to transparent and sustainable sourcing, and Crelicam emphasizes as much in-country processing as possible, exporting legal and socially responsible parts for musical instruments. Today, the exact location of each tree cut for Crelicam is recorded with GPS technology (satellite positioning), and an ID code follows each piece of wood from the tree through the manufacturing process.



In Cameroon, there is no private forestry, as all forests are communal. The government determines the areas and quotas of extraction. Recent research conducted by the Congo Basin Institute in Yaoundé estimates that there are some 190,000 ebony trees (*Diospyros crassiflora* Hiern) across Western Africa that are above 60 cm, the minimal harvest diameter in Cameroon, compared to an estimated 30 million trees across this same range between 10 - 59 cm.

Since the transition to new ownership in 2011, Crelicam has been totally refurbished, allowing for modernized production, greater efficiencies, and better working conditions. Taylor and Madinter have also broken centuries of tradition by promoting marble-colored ebony. Jet-black ebony has long been the accepted standard in the music industry. Yet not all ebony found in nature is uniformly black, and there is no definitive way of knowing a tree's color before cutting it. As a result, for many years felled trees that were not completely black were abandoned on the forest floor because of their lesser market value. Under Crelicam's new ownership this practice was halted, as the difference is purely cosmetic and has no impact on the acoustic performance of the instruments. Today, many of Taylor Guitars' most expensive models prominently feature colored ebony.

The Ebony Project

In 2016, in order to understand the ecology and planting potential of African ebony, Taylor and Madinter embarked on The Ebony Project in partnership with The Congo Basin Institute (CBI), a multi-institutional organization made up of universities and NGOs collectively focused on finding solutions to the region's most pressing challenges. The project seeks to better understand the ecology of African ebony (*Diospyros crassiflora* Hiern) and to enhance stocks through community-driven planting efforts while collecting crucial ecological data to (1) identify key threats to the long-term sustainability of the species in its natural setting and (2) refine techniques for sustainable production and management of the species in Central Africa. The project also provides native fruit and medicinal trees to support local communities. From its inception, The Ebony Project has been designed as a pilot for larger-scale rainforest restoration efforts for the Congo Basin. To date, the initiative has been 100% financed by Taylor Guitars.

