

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59173

Title: Between Policy Texts and Field Practices: Public Policies, Institutional Arrangements and Stakeholder Practices in the Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in Benin.

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		●		
Techn. Quality		●		
Clarity		●		
Significance		●		

Reviewer's ID: JPR- 162

Detailed Reviewer's Report

The manuscript treats a timely and relevant topic on how public policies, institutional arrangements, stakeholder involvement and sustainable forest management are related, in the context of Benin. The paper is typically well organised and well written and draws on an appropriate range of literature. Its emphasis on the implementation gap between formal policy provisions and practices in forest governance is very valuable, particularly for the 2023-2032 Forest Policy.

The method used is documentary which is suitable for the stated goals and the limitations of the method were recognized in the manuscript, such as the method could not establish the cause-effect between variables, as well as the method is not able to directly observe the practices of stakeholders. The authors also explicitly acknowledge that their sources primarily capture prescribed arrangements and reported outcomes rather than directly observed practices.

The manuscript is ready for publication with some minor revisions. The revisions should focus essentially on clarifying the methodology, consistency of use of terms, presentation of the documentary evidence, and the accuracy of how the hypotheses are interpreted. These issues can be solved without changing the research design or empirical analysis of the study.

Key revisions requested

1. Explain how documents are selected. Describe briefly the principle used to choose the laws, policies, reports, technical documents and studies used in the analysis. The current Methods section describes the types of documents and states that were selected based on relevance, but a bit more detail would make it more transparent.
2. Provide additional information on the content-analysis procedure. The manuscript identifies eleven analytical entries used in the documentary analysis. A brief explanation of how documents were classified or interpreted according to these entries would improve methodological clarity.

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3. Clarify the meaning of stakeholder practices. Because stakeholder practices are not directly observed, the authors should make clear where necessary that the analysis concerns practices reported or documented in the reviewed sources.
4. Strengthen the connection between findings and recommendations. The conclusion appropriately identifies coordination, institutional capacity, monitoring, enforcement, and effective community participation as priorities. Where possible, the authors should make these recommendations slightly more specific regarding the institutional actors responsible for implementation.
5. Proofread the manuscript carefully. Minor grammatical, typographical, spacing, formatting, and terminology inconsistencies should be corrected throughout the manuscript.