

**Mapping Congo  
Basin forest types  
from 300 m and 1 km  
multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

# Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time series for carbon stocks and forest areas estimation

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Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

## Abstract

This study aimed to contribute to the understanding of the Congo Basin forests by delivering a detailed forest types map with an improved spatial discrimination and coherence for the whole Congo Basin region. A total of 20 land cover classes were described with the standardized Land Cover Classification System (LCCS) developed by the FAO. Based on a semi-automatic processing chain, the forest types map was produced by combining 19 months of observations from the ENVISAT MERIS full resolution products (300 m) and 8 yr of daily SPOT VEGETATION (VGT) reflectances (1 km). Four zones (north, south and two central) were delineated and processed separately according to their seasonal and cloud cover specificities. The discrimination between different vegetation types (e.g. forest and savannas) was significantly improved thanks to the MERIS sharp spatial resolution. This work achieved a better discrimination in cloudy areas by taking advantage of the temporal consistency of the SPOT VGT observations. This resulted in a precise delineation of the spatial extent of the rural complex in the countries situated along the Atlantic coast. Based on this new map, more accurate estimates of the surface areas of forest types were produced for each country of the Congo Basin. The impact of two forest definitions was then assessed in the framework of the reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) initiative and carbon stocks were evaluated. Furthermore, the phenology of the different vegetation types was illustrated systematically with EVI temporal profiles. This Congo Basin forest types map reached a satisfactory overall accuracy of 71.5 % and even 78.9 % when the two savanna classes are aggregated.

## 1 Introduction

Central Africa contains the second largest and the least degraded area of contiguous moist tropical forest of the world (de Wasseige et al., 2009). It provides huge ecosystem services from the local scale to the global one, in various economic, social and

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



ecological domains (Mayaux et al., 2009). Reliable, consistent and updated land cover information in the humid tropics is therefore essential in studies concerning development policies, habitat and biodiversity monitoring, forest resources management, carbon (C) accounting, human livelihoods, biogeochemical cycles and climatic modeling (Hansen et al., 2008; Loveland et al., 2000; Mayaux et al., 2004; Sellers et al., 1996; Townshend et al., 1992).

In recent years, improving regional and national capabilities to monitor forest extent has been an important concern in tropical areas. In Central Africa, several initiatives to monitor and protect forests have emerged. Specifically, the Observatory for Forests of Central Africa (OFAC), an initiative of multiple stakeholders of the Congo Basin Forests Partnership (CBFP), aims at pooling the knowledge and available data necessary to monitor the different aspects of forests of Central Africa (Mayaux et al., 2009).

This study aims to contribute to the delivery of a detailed forest types map with an improved spatial discrimination and spatially coherent for the whole Congo Basin region. The research will take advantage of the fine spatial resolution of MERIS Full Resolution (FRS) and of the temporal consistency of 8 yr of daily SPOT VEGETATION (VGT) observations to achieve a better discrimination in very cloudy areas. The spatial patterns of the different vegetation types will be better delineated in support to biodiversity habitat characterization and deforestation monitoring. Furthermore, the phenology of the different vegetation types will be quantified systematically to support dynamic vegetation modeling. Based on this new map, a specific objective is to produce improved estimates of the forest types areas in Congo Basin countries. These enable comparing the consequences of two different scenarios of forest definitions in the framework of the REDD initiative and the evaluation of the carbon stock of the Basin.

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



## 2 Background

### 2.1 Land-cover maps of Central Africa

In the last 20 yr, most vegetation maps of Central Africa have been derived from satellite images (Laporte et al., 1998; Mayaux et al., 1999, 2004). Satellite images are a powerful source to map the vegetation cover in remote areas and overcome the limitations due to the large spatial extent and the difficult accessibility of the territory (Hansen et al., 2008; Vancutsem et al., 2009). However, with optical satellite data, an important issue for humid tropical forest monitoring is persistent cloud cover. As land cover maps provide a static depiction of land surface (Achard et al., 2007) and because of the technological improvement and constant increase of spatial resolution for large areas, the products need to be often updated.

Before the generalization of remote sensing for land cover mapping, continental cartographic syntheses of Africa were based on the compilation of national and local maps enriched by the consultation of many experts (Sayer et al., 1992; White, 1983). Early nineties, the first global land cover maps were derived from satellite observations using Advanced Very High Resolution Radiometer (AVHRR) NDVI data (DeFries et al., 1998; DeFries and Townshend, 1994; Hansen et al., 2000; Loveland et al., 1999). Regional land cover maps over Central Africa were derived from AVHRR as well (Laporte et al., 1998; Mayaux et al., 1999). Then, more dedicated sensors appeared with enhanced spatial and spectral characteristics, such as the SPOT VGT and the MODerate resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) leading to the production of the first MODIS Land Cover map (Friedl et al., 2002) and the Global Land Cover 2000 project (GLC 2000) using data from the VGT sensor for the year 2000 (Bartholome et al., 2002). The GLC 2000 for Africa capitalized on local expert knowledge (Mayaux et al., 2004). More recently, the GLOBCOVER initiative has produced a global land cover map based on an automatic method using the 300 m resolution mode from the MERIS sensor on-board the ENVISAT satellite (Defourny et al., 2009). The MODIS Global Land Cover

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

map has been quite improved recently, generated at 500-m spatial resolution over the Modis Collection 5 (Friedl et al., 2010).

At a regional scale, Hansen et al. (2008) developed a multi-resolution (MODIS and Landsat) methodology for a binary forest/non forest mapping at 250 m of the Congo Basin. Vancutsem et al. (2009) presented a 1 km resolution map of the vegetation types of the Democratic Republic of Congo produced with a semi-automatic method applied on one year of SPOT VGT data. Concerning DRC, the FACET atlas (Mane et al., 2010) has been released in 2011, mapping vegetation cover and forest loss from 2000 to 2010 with Landsat imagery.

That is, a wide variety of land cover maps products exists over Central Africa (Table 1). The maps derived from global land cover products presents the disadvantage of not being specific to the region studied. The GLC 2000 of Africa is more specific in the thematic description but the 1 km spatial resolution is smoothing some finer limits between land cover classes. The product of Hansen et al. (2008) presents the advantage of a fine spatial resolution but with a limited land cover legend. The map of Vancutsem et al. (2009) is very well adapted to the Central African vegetation but does not cover the whole region and is at a 1 km spatial resolution. Given the high landscape fragmentation, many stakeholders in Central Africa would much benefit from a land cover map derived from a fine spatial resolution with a high number of vegetation classes.

## 2.2 Carbon stocks of Central African forests

Assessing the carbon stocks in tropical forest is of considerable concern nowadays. Tropical forests are an important carbon sink (Lewis et al., 2009) and tropical deforestation contributes about 12 % to total anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to the atmosphere (van der Werf et al., 2009). The important role in the global carbon cycle provided by the Congo Basin forests appear prominently through the REDD (Reducing Emissions by Deforestation and Forest Degradation) initiative of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Despite this, the African tropical forest is

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

the least known in terms of carbon stocks and rates of forest conversion (Djomo et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2009).

Developing countries are requested to produce robust estimates of forest carbon stocks to implement REDD mechanisms (Saatchi et al., 2011). The existing biomass estimates are derived from local forest inventories that provide precise and accurate estimates at the plot or concession levels, but much less accurate information over broader spatial scales (Baccini et al., 2008). Refining these estimates requires improved knowledge of the density and spatial distribution of forests above and below ground biomass. Because of the lack of data over large areas in the region, SAR and Lidar remote sensing are expected to be used more and more to capture the biomass variability over the Congo Basin or even globally. Alternatively, regional estimates have been extrapolated by applying local field measurements to forest cover types classes (Gibbs et al., 2007). However, this approach misses information on the variability of the density of forest biomass within land cover types classes. Combining remote sensing and field data, Baccini et al. (2008) and Saatchi (2011) recently delivered maps of respectively biomass and carbon stock in African and world tropical forest.

### 2.3 Study area

The study area covers 8 countries in Central Africa, i.e. Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. The Congo Basin covers an area of nearly 2 million km<sup>2</sup>, stretching from the coast of the Gulf of Guinea to the mountains of the Albertine Rift and covering about seven degrees of latitude on either side of the equator (CBFP, 2006). The forests are known as the Lower Guineo–Congolian forests as defined by White (1983). They consist predominately of humid evergreen mixed species broadleaf forests with seasonality increasing with latitude.

Seasons and cloud cover are influenced by the movement of the intertropical convergence zone (ITCZ). The nebulous state of the sky is relatively permanent in the area and influence directly the insolation. Cloudiness is even more important and more

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



---

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

---

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



enduring than the activity of the meteorological equator is intense and stable. This justifies a low value for insolation that does not exceed 2000 h (Mpounza and Samba-Kimbata, 1990). Some coastal parts of the western Basin are presenting even lower value of insolation as well as a permanent cloud cover due to the warming and rising of moisture-laden air as it moves from the Gulf of Guinea onto the Central African land mass (Camberlin et al., 2001, Hansen et al., 2008).

Precipitation is a main factor driving vegetation distribution in tropical environments. The most important precipitations are linked with the ITCZ. Central Africa presents large variations in annual average precipitation; some areas largely confined to a narrow coastal region of Cameroun adjacent to the Gulf of Biafra are receiving between up to 10 000 mm while for instance Loudima in the Bouenza region (Congo) is receiving about 1000 mm (Mpounza and Samba-Kimbata, 1990; White, 1983). Over all the major part of the region, precipitation varies between 1600 and 2000 mm a year on average. This is lower than other tropical regions (CBFP, 2006).

The seasonal distribution of precipitation is bimodal in areas close to the equator but becomes unimodal further north or south (CBFP, 2006). Bimodal rainfall regimes are the vast majority. They are characterized by two equinoctial maxima and two minima corresponding to the solstices. In the major part of the dense moist forest, rainy seasonal contrasts are little so that in most cases it is a regime constantly humid. On the coast of Congo and DRC, the minima are more pronounced. During the principal minimum, up to 3 consecutive months completely dry can be observed (Mpounza and Samba-Kimbata, 1990). The unimodal rainfall regime is characterized by a single maximum rainfall centered on the summer and a minimum centered on the winter. The length of the dry season increases with latitude: it lasts one to two months on the equator but as much as three to four months at the northern and southern edges of the forest block (CBFP, 2006).

### 3 Data and methods

#### 3.1 Data selection

In order to discriminate the forest types, this study is based on the spatial, temporal and spectral information of two major dataset. The first one consists of 19 months, i.e. December 2004 to June 2006, of ENVISAT MERIS FRS at a 300 m spatial resolution composited in 15 days. The second one consists of 8 yr of daily (S1 products) SPOT VGT data, 2000 to 2007, at a spatial resolution of 1 km. Unlike many other classification approaches based on vegetation indices, the spatially consistent surface reflectances delivered here by the data pre-processing have allowed using directly spectral signatures to separate the different vegetation types. Data were geo-referenced in Plate Carrée projection using the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84) system.

MERIS is a push-broom imaging spectrometer that measures the solar radiation reflected by the Earth surface in 15 spectral bands from the visible to the near infrared wavelengths. The MERIS swath is 1150 km and a global coverage is obtained in 3 days. The ESA Globcover initiative demonstrated the advantage of the MERIS FRS capabilities for global land cover mapping (Defourny et al., 2009). The 19 months of data were available for this study as pre-processed according to the Globcover processing chain. These data are providing high geolocation accuracy (Bicheron et al., 2011).

The spatial resolution of the VGT instrument, onboard the SPOT-4 satellite, is almost consistent across the whole swath. The four spectral bands of the sensor allow characterizing the main features of plant canopy: (i) the red band centred on the absorption peak of chlorophyll (0.61–0.68  $\mu\text{m}$ ); (ii) the near-infrared (NIR) band (0.78–0.89  $\mu\text{m}$ ) corresponding to maximum vegetation spectral reflectance; and (iii) the shortwave infrared (SWIR) band centred around 1.65  $\mu\text{m}$  for reflectance related to the water content of canopy components and to its structure. An additional band in the blue region (0.4 and 0.50  $\mu\text{m}$ ) is used for the cloud screening and the atmospheric correction. More details are available in the VGT Users Guide (1999).

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



data (Vancutsem et al., 2009) and on the ESA-Globcover global automatic land cover mapping.

## Data compositing

In equatorial areas the persistent cloud cover is a main challenge for land cover mapping. Compositing methods are therefore used to produce cloud-free and spatially consistent images, called temporal syntheses or composites (Vancutsem et al., 2009). The methodology selected is the mean compositing (MC) which improves the radiometric quality of temporal syntheses by reducing atmospheric and directional variations. The MC method involves averaging for each pixel and in each spectral band all the valid reflectance values acquired during the period chosen (Vancutsem et al., 2007). For the centre of the study area, an annual composite is the most relevant duration, as the tropical forest variation is very low during the year. For the north and the south, the clearer information is available during the period going from one month after the last rainfall to the beginning of the savannas fires. Dry season image selection provides a good contrast between forest and other more seasonal land-cover types. Three syntheses were generated for each SPOT VGT and MERIS FRS sensor from all available time series: (i) a seasonal composite for December–January corresponding to the dry season in the northern part; (ii) an annual composite; and (iii) a seasonal composite for May–June corresponding to the dry season in the southern part. To ensure the coherence of the product, the SPOT VGT 1 km pixels were resampled to 300 m.

To characterize the seasonality of the vegetation types, 10 days composites were also produced from the SPOT VGT daily dataset acquired over the 8 yr. Two vegetation indices, the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) and the Enhanced Vegetation Index (EVI) were computed on the basis of these 10 days reflectance averages. The NDVI is well recognized for the characterization of the chlorophyll activity of vegetation cover over time (Tucker, 1979). The EVI was developed to optimize the vegetation signal with improved sensitivity in high biomass regions and improved vegetation monitoring through a de-coupling of the canopy background signal and a reduction in

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



atmosphere influences (Huete et al., 2002). The respective equations are as follows,

$$\text{NDVI} = \frac{\rho\text{NIR} - \rho\text{R}}{\rho\text{NIR} + \rho\text{R}} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{EVI} = G * \frac{\rho\text{NIR} - \rho\text{R}}{\rho\text{NIR} + \text{C1}\rho\text{R} - \text{C2}\rho\text{B} + \text{L}} \quad (2)$$

5 Where  $\rho\text{NIR}$ ,  $R$ ,  $B$  are surface reflectances in the near-infrared (NIR), red (R) and blue (B) bands, respectively. L is the canopy background adjustment factor, C1 and C2 are the coefficient of the aerosol resistance term, which uses the blue band to correct for aerosol influences in the red band. The coefficients adopted in the EVI equation are, C1 = 6, C2 = 7.5, L = 1 and G (gain factor) = 2.5 (Huete et al., 2002).

## 10 Spatial stratification

Central Africa experiences an inversion of seasonality between the northern and southern part across the equator (White, 1983), the same land cover types in the north and south of the region will therefore present different phenological stages at the same time. This makes the classification step more complex as it is difficult to classify the whole region in a single zone. To consider this particularity of the study area, the region has been stratified in 4 zones (Fig. 1). First, the area has been stratified in three seasonal zones as it was done in (Vancutsem et al., 2009). This stratification was based on vegetation limits identified by thresholding the NDVI values of the SPOT VGT time series. The first zone (N) corresponds to the dry forest and savannas of the north, the second zone (C) to the dense tropical forests of the centre and the third (S) to the open dry forests and savannas of the south. The composites processed at the previous step are attributed according to the specificity of the seasonality of each zone; seasonal composites are therefore used for the north and the south zones. The central stratum, where an annual composite is used, is further divided in two parts in order to deal with high cloud coverage (CW and CE, hatched zone in Fig. 1). The 8 yr of SPOT VGT data were required to map the western central seasonal zone (CW) in Gabon, Cameroon

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



and Equatorial Guinea. Indeed, 19 months of MERIS data were not enough to build consistent temporal syntheses for some area near the Atlantic coast, where the cloud coverage is the most important. Figure 2 presents the consistent image obtained by combining the specific composites for each zone. Each stratum is spatially extended by 3 km in order to provide strata overlap and avoid sharp limits when mosaicking the four classifications. If different labels are obtained for a given location, the more coherent one will be chosen according to the location and the label of the neighbouring pixels.

## Clustering

An unsupervised classification based on the K-means algorithm is performed for each of the four zones. For each stratum showing seasonality (zone N and S), the dry season MERIS temporal synthesis of Red and NIR bands is used in addition to the annual MERIS composite as input to the unsupervised classification. MERIS is preferentially used for its spatial discrimination. But the MIR reflectance band of SPOT VGT re-sampled to 300 m is added for its great spectral contribution for the vegetation types discrimination. For the sub-strata of the Atlantic coast (zone CW), only SPOT VGT composites are used (Red, NIR, MIR).

## Labelling

The clusters produced by the classification are labelled thanks to already existing maps (Defourny et al., 2009). The legends of these maps are aggregated to correspond to the legend of our vegetation map. The clusters are superimposed to the reference maps and a label is automatically allocated to the cluster according to the class majority (in term of area) corresponding to the reference maps. A minimum threshold is set to 50 % to inherit a label.

Unlabelled clusters are then manually labelled by visual interpretation of the different composites with the help of expert knowledge, NDVI seasonal profiles and Landsat

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Geocover 2000 ETM+ data set. The annual NDVI composite was found very useful to discriminate some classes, e.g. the rural complex from the non forest. Indeed the NDVI value for non forest is expected to be lower than for rural complex, dominated by vegetation regrowth and croplands.

5 Mangroves are superimposed with light adaptations to the 300 m resolution from the GLC 2000 map and the Cameroon map (WRI). An interactive editing for land cover labels such as urban areas, aquatic grassland and swamp forests is required due to their low occurrence.

### 3.2.2 Temporal profiles

10 The 8 yr of EVI temporal profiles are used to describe the seasonal behaviour of the vegetation classes. The land cover classes are eroded by 300 m in order to guarantee pixel purity and resampled to a 1 km resolution to match the SPOT VGT resolution. The so selected pixels are aggregated spatially and temporally by taking the median value  
15 the seasonal pattern over the years and the class level. The seasonal behaviour of the vegetation presenting an inversion across the equator, this aggregation is done separately for the north and the south part of the study area.

### 3.2.3 Confidence building and validation

20 Two assessments are considered to qualify the quality of the output. The first evaluation proceeds by cross-comparison with already existing landcover maps to look for macroscopic errors and consistency. A second evaluation consists in the validation of the map based on expert interpretation of randomly dispersed points. The validation exercise took place in September 2009 during a FRA-FAO-OFAC workshop held in Kinshasa. A hundred random points were validated by national remote sensing  
25 experts from 6 countries. It was asked to the experts to determine to which land cover class the point was belonging to, thanks to Landsat 30 m resolution images and an

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

annual NDVI profile related to each point. The Landsat images used are acquired at a date the closest possible to the one of the MERIS composite. This dataset is completed by 51 validated points in Central Africa obtained through the GLOBCOVER validation database (Defourny et al., 2009). Only points where the expert reported one single class and this with a high degree of certitude were selected. The final validation dataset is then composed of 151 points. Datasets can be combined easily after the conversion of the LCCS legend of the GLOBCOVER points into the legend of our map.

### 3.2.4 REDD forest definition

This map is also a key asset for the definition of reference forest area in international convention. In the context of REDD mechanisms, UNFCCC requires that parties select a single value for the minimum forest area (0.05 to 1 ha), potential to reach a minimum height at maturity in situ (2 to 5 m) and minimum tree crown cover (10 to 30 %). As the map is based on 300 m image satellites, the minimum forest area has to be higher than 1 ha. Height at maturity does not seem determinative in this region as 5 m is probably reached in every vegetation type, except in some specific areas of shrubland. The main question is the minimum tree cover (10 to 30 %). The 10 % and 30 % scenarios have been compared in term of area covered by forest. The accounting of a land cover class area into one scenario was determined according to the canopy cover mentioned in the definition of the forest types classes.

### 3.2.5 Carbon content

The REDD mechanisms require to know how much C is stored in different standing vegetation types (especially forests) and soils and released through agriculture, forestry and other land use activities (Nasi et al., 2009). An indirect methodology of “stratifying and multiplying” is used here for assessing C stock in the Congo Basin. With this methodology, assuming an average C stock by forest type, a land cover map allows determining the existing C stocks. Nasi et al. (2009) established C stocks estimates

for the Congo Basin derived from plots in-situ measurements, inventory or GIS modelling techniques. Estimates of the aboveground (trees, lianas, understory vegetation, litter and dead wood) and belowground (roots and soil carbon) C pools are regrouped. The Congo Basin forest types map, which is more detailed than existing maps, is used to stratify the different forests types. Then, the C stock values are attributed to each category of vegetation.

## 4 Results and analysis

### 4.1 Description and area of forest types

The Congo Basin forest types map is presented in Fig. 3 in a Plate carrée projection with a WGS-84 Ellipsoid. The legend of 20 land cover classes (Table 2) is described by the composition of each vegetation type using the standardized Land Cover Classification System (LCCS) developed by the FAO (Di Gregorio & Jansen, 2000). These 20 classes may not be representative of all the vegetation types present in Central Africa but they are a good trade-off between the reality in the field and what can be delineated by remote sensing. For instance, even if dense moist forest and riparian forests are different in their floristic composition, the boundary between the two is often unclear and they are therefore regrouped in one single class (class 1 – dense moist forest).

Table 3 contains the area estimates for the entire region and by country of the different land cover classes in hectares as well as their relative proportion. Class 1 – dense moist forest is the most represented vegetation type in the region covering 41.2 % of the territory with 1 690 000 km<sup>2</sup>. More than three quarter of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea territory is covered by dense moist forest, respectively 84.6 % and 75.9 %. Class 1 is also the dominant land cover class in Cameroon (40 %), Congo (49.8 %) and DRC (43.7 %). In CAR, the dominant class is class 9 – savanna woodland-tree savanna representing 55.5 % of the land while class 1 covers only 11.2. Besides these countries mainly covered by large patterns of forest or savanna, Burundi and Rwanda present

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



a more fragmented landscape with 46% of the land covered by class 15 – mosaic of cultivated areas and vegetation (herbaceous or shrubs). In the whole region, class 18 – bare areas, class 14 – sparse vegetation and class 19 – artificial surfaces, are very poorly represented.

Class 1 – dense moist forest is mainly situated in the central stratum. Some small patches of dense moist forest are also present in North CAR. Class 2 and 3 – submontane and mountain forest, covering a total of 1.2% of the region are mostly present in the mountain chain of Eastern Congo and for some small areas in coastal Central Africa (Mont Cameroon). The class 4 – edaphic forest, covering 3% of the whole region, is following the dense hydrographic network of the Congo river. Edaphic forest is also found in the West of Congo. The Congolian Swamp forest contains the largest areas (126 800 km<sup>2</sup>) of swamp forest on the planet. Class 5 – mangrove are forest formations associated with marine alluvium, partially steeped in salt water (Mayaux et al., 2003). It is present on the Atlantic coast mainly in Gabon and Cameroon. Mangrove is a scarce (4404 km<sup>2</sup>, 0.1% of the whole region) and fragile ecosystem. Class 6 – forest savanna mosaic is a formation including both forest and savanna elements. It is found at the edges of the dense moist forest (5.2% or 213 800 km<sup>2</sup>) and represents an important transition zone in the north of the Congo basin, the higher amount of class 6 are indeed found in CAR (111 900 km<sup>2</sup>) and in DRC (69 560 km<sup>2</sup>). Class 7 – rural complex is formed by a mosaic of secondary regrowth, fallow, home gardens, agricultural areas and village plantations in the forest domain (Vandenput, 1981 in: Mayaux et al., 1997). In dense moist forest, mapping the 322 600 km<sup>2</sup> of rural complex highlights the road network as well as the population footprint in the forest. In spite of cloudiness, the network of rural complex patches near the Atlantic coast is very clear thanks to the compositing of 8 yr of daily data. In North Congo, because of their similar spectral reflectance, the rural complex class wrongly includes a specific forest class: open forest with *Marantaceae*. These forests have a more open canopy than the dense forests, and their floor is covered with grasses from the *Marantaceae* family (Hecketsweiler et al., 1991). Class 8 – closed to open deciduous woodland includes the dense dry forests

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## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

---

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



of the Central African Republic and the open dry forests (Miombo woodland) of the southern part of Congo-Kinshasa for a total area of 290 100 km<sup>2</sup> or 7 % of the territory. Only some relics of dense dry forests are present in south DRC (Muhulu). Class 9 – savanna woodland and tree savanna is widely represented as covering 21.3 % of the area with important representation in DRC (370 700 km<sup>2</sup>), CAR (344 700 km<sup>2</sup>) and Cameroon (119 500 km<sup>2</sup>). Class 9 is gathering savanna woodland and tree savanna of the north and the south. Tree and woodland savanna could be presented as two separated ecosystems but are difficult to discriminate as the delimitation between the two would be better described through a gradient of tree cover density than with a strict border. Class 10 – shrubland is present over 4 % or 164 110 km<sup>2</sup> of the whole area, where the tree layer disappears progressively due to a lack of rainfall, mainly in the north of CAR and Cameroon as well as in the south of DRC. Class 11 – grassland, 1.6 % or 65 310 km<sup>2</sup>, is found in the Bateke plateau on sand soils and in dry regions of South DRC. Class 12 – aquatic grassland is present in 0.1 % of the region, where flooding persists and drainage conditions are unfavorable. It is mainly distributed along the Congo and Ubangui Rivers, at the periphery of the edaphic forest and between the Congo and Ubangui Rivers (Vancutsem et al., 2009). It is also found in the north of CAR. Class 13 – swamp grassland is a scarce landcover class as well (0.2 %) and is present in the south of DRC and in the north of Cameroon, in the region of Lake Chad. It is more dependent on soil than aquatic grassland (Schmitz, 1977 in: Vancutsem et al., 2009). Class 15 – mosaic cultivated areas/shrub or herbaceous vegetation is covering 221 100 km<sup>2</sup> or 5.4 % and is found in the south of DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, south of Cameroon and RCA. Class 16 – agriculture is a class that is difficult to map due to the small size of the fields in the Congo Basin region. Agriculture patches are identified in the north of Cameroon but agriculture is mainly represented here in mosaic classes mixed with forest or shrub and herbaceous vegetation. Irrigated agriculture is only taking into account the fields near Lake Chad in Cameroon.

## 4.2 Temporal profiles

Vegetation types can be characterized by their temporal EVI profile. The vegetation types have a different phenological pattern, corresponding to the foliage cycle as depicted by the vegetation index and characterized by a vegetation season length, a maximum and minimum value ... The inversion of seasonality across the equator is clearly illustrated by very similar but inverse temporal profiles for class 10 – shrubland in Fig. 4. This is observed for all vegetation classes showing a seasonal signal.

Dense forests (dense moist, submontane, mountain, edaphic forests and mangrove) present similar profiles of EVI that show low seasonal variation (less than 0.1 amplitude). Mangrove presents a profile with lower EVI values. The rural complex presents a seasonal profile with a similar pattern but with higher value of EVI. The presence of pioneer species, strictly light-demanding, shows indeed a rapid height growth in the clearings and a permanent high photosynthetic activity (high near-infrared reflectance) (Mayaux et al., 1999). In Fig. 5, smooth profiles obtained by the spatial aggregation over the whole forest type and years present two decreases in EVI values, one in July and a second in December. In order to better visualize the cycle over these reference profiles, part of the year is reproduced at the beginning and at the end of the year (delimited by vertical lines). These EVI variations can be related to the variations of rainfall currently observed for an equatorial bimodal rainfall regime and the cloudiness associated. Indeed in this kind of regime, found in the immediate neighbourhood of the equator between about 4° N and 3°5' S with the exception of the coast of Gabon, two rainfall maxima take place, one in April or May and the second in October or November while minima take place one in January or February and the other in June or July (Mpounza and Samba-Kimbata, 1990). Wide clearings are associated with heavy rainfall while July and August are known as being the most nebulous months of the year. It would be of great interest to analyse these patterns highlighted by recent studies in the Amazon Basin. These have shown that the photosynthetic behavior of the tropical forest varies during the season. Studies suggests that canopy plants of the Amazon rainforest flush

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



their new leaves to maximize photosynthetic assimilation when the cloud cover is minimal and the photoperiod is maximal, that is, during the dry season (Hueté et al., 2006; Pennec et al., 2011; Xiao et al., 2006). In the same way, EVI seems here to reach its highest values when the cloudiness is minimum. However, in Central Africa the cloud cover seem less important during the wet and not the dry season. Figures 6 and 7 show the difference in seasonality between the dense moist forest and the savanna classes for the northern and southern zones. The temporal profiles are directly linked with the composition of the vegetation layers. Formations with a dominant grass layer, such as grassland, have EVI values close to the bare soil signature in the dry season while formations where a shrub or a tree layer remains, have higher EVI values during the dry season. The growing season starts earlier for vegetation type with an important tree layer (deciduous woodland) than with a continuous shrub layer with sparse trees (Mayaux et al., 2004; Vancutsem et al., 2009).

This is clearly illustrated in the north. A gradient is observed between the forest and savanna types according to the tree cover. Minimum EVI values are found in December-January, concurring with the minimum of rainfall. A maximum of EVI is found for each vegetation types in July, the period with the maximum rainfall. Closed to open deciduous woodland EVI varies between 0.25 and 0.45. The length of the season of vegetation is 10 months. Savanna woodland-tree savanna, which presents a more open tree cover, has lower values of EVI, varying between 0.15 and 0.41. The length of the season of vegetation is 9 months. Then surprisingly, grassland has a longer season of vegetation than shrubland, grassland growing season starting earlier. This is explained by the spatial location of shrubland, much norther than grassland and therefore undergoing a longer dry season of 7 to 8 months.

In the south, the difference between the savannas types is less evident. Minimum values are found in July, the period of smallest rainfall and maximum EVI during the wet season (November to April). Closed to open deciduous woodland and savanna woodland/tree savanna are very similar in their phenological behavior. A major part of closed to open deciduous woodland is present as Miombo in the south of DRC, where

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## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

---

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

the length of the dry season is about 7–8 months whether savanna woodland/tree savanna is undergoing a shorter dry season more north. Grassland is, in the south, as expected, the formation with the lower values of EVI in June-July and the shorter season of vegetation.

5 Both north and south, the following behavior is observed. There is a maximum value of EVI (0.40–0.45) reached by every temporal profile except for the class 12 – aquatic grassland and class 5 – mangrove where water is present throughout the whole year. This maximum represents probably a maximum photosynthetic capacity reached when  
10 the conditions are favorable. As already mentioned, class 7 – rural complex reaches a value a little higher than all the other profiles.

### 4.3 Confidence-building and validation

Large regional maps pose problems of validation. Indeed, the scale and the extent of such documents preclude any classical ground-thruthing at an acceptable cost (Mayaux et al., 2004). This gives extra value to the points validated with experts in  
15 Kinshasa allowing evaluating the map with another method than inter-comparison with previous maps.

#### 4.3.1 Visual comparison

Visual comparison confirms that the spatial resolution of MERIS (300 m) (Fig. 8a, c) better discriminates details in forest/savanna zones or rural complex than GLC 2000 (Fig. 8b), and is comparable to what is mapped in the FACET atlas with a Landsat  
20 resolution (Fig. 8d). In the forest domain near the Atlantic (Fig. 9), where the 8 years of SPOT VEGETATION data were used, the spatial resolution is lower but the consistency of the signal improves the discrimination of the spatial extent of rural complex, whereas Globcover presents patches that reflect the noise of the data instead of the land cover state and GLC 2000 show some inconsistencies. In dense moist forest of DRC, the deforestation patterns (Fig. 10) are similar to the patterns observed on the DRC map of

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Vancutsem et al. (2009), for example around Kisangani. The Miombo is slightly better identified in the DRC map, while our map presents some confusion between “deciduous woodland” and “savanna woodland”. The deforestation spots identified in the forest domain near the Atlantic coast are consistent and confirmed by the presence of road networks (Fig. 11).

### 4.3.2 Validation by experts

According to the recommendations of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), the user’s accuracy values are weighted by the proportions of area of the various land cover classes. The weighting factor corresponding to the proportion of area of the given class is derived from the map that is projected in an equal area projection. This allows correcting a possible overrepresentation in the sampling set of classes covering only small surfaces and an underrepresentation of classes that cover large surfaces (Bicheron et al., 2008). The weighted numbers are presented in Table 5. The global accuracy weighted by area reached 71.5 % and appears quite satisfactory for Central Africa. The result of the validation is greatly improved if class 9 and 10 are aggregated for the validation. The overall accuracy is then reaching 78.9 %. These savanna classes, even if thematically different, present similarities in their reflectance and are difficult to discriminate. Moreover, sharp limits are not easy to find between savanna classes. Looking at the user accuracy for each class separately, dense moist forest is the class that performs best. This is not surprising as this class is homogeneous, unambiguous and recognizable. High values are also reached for deciduous forests, rural complex and mangrove. Class 9 and 10 also reach high values of user accuracy when considered as a similar class for validation.

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



## 4.4 REDD forest definition

Two minimum tree cover definitions (10% or 30%) are illustrated spatially thanks to the use of LCCS classifiers. The variation of the forest area according to the selected definition is also reported in Table 6.

Six vegetation types are considered as forest for both definitions: class 1 – dense moist forest, class 2 – submontane forest, class 3 – mountain forest, class 4 – edaphic forest, class 5 – mangrove, class 8 – closed to open deciduous woodland. Class 6 – forest/savanna mosaic contains vegetation formations including forest and must therefore be considered in the forest classes, or at least a part of the area of this class. Half of the area of the class is here included in the total.

Class 9 – savanna woodland-tree savanna and class 10 – shrubland classes were considered as forest classes for the 10% threshold for the canopy cover. When the threshold is set to 10%, 3 306 100 km<sup>2</sup> are therefore considered as forests, representing the majority (81%) of the region. For the 30% threshold, only class 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and half 6 are considered as forests. With 30%, 2 266 000 km<sup>2</sup> are considered as forest, representing 55% of the territory. Figure 12 illustrates well that a threshold of 30% results in a more realistic forest cover representation in Central Africa than the 10% threshold. The choice of the threshold is found therefore crucial as the forest area varies largely from one definition to another.

## 4.5 Carbon stocks in the Congo Basin forests

The C stocks computed with the Congo Basin forest types map are indicated in the Table 7 for forest and savanna vegetation types. There is no estimation for Mangroves, as the surface area of this forest type is quite small. A total C stock of the Basin of 49 360 million metric tons is obtained. The most important stock is contained in the dense moist forest class (65.7%). Figure 13 presents the spatial distribution of C in the forest types. It highlights the role of dense moist forest as it presents a high value of C stock and an important spatial extent (41.2%). On the contrary, the savannah

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



woodland- tree savannah covers 21.4 % of the spatial extent of the Basin but only represents 11.7 % of the carbon stock, underlying the importance of an accurate discrimination of vegetation types.

Some limitations are inherent to this approach, such as that a same vegetation type presents actually variability for the biomass. Saatchi et al. (2011) and Baccini et al. (2008) have recently released maps presenting spatial variability. The C stocks computed here were compared with the results of these two studies and found consistent. The map of Saatchi et al. (2011) was based on in situ inventory plots, satellite, lidar imagery and allometric equations to determine the C contained in world tropical forests. Table 5 illustrates the C stock estimated by Saatchi et al. (2011) for a canopy cover of 30 % for the countries that contain the highest pool of carbon in the Congo Basin. The same estimation is presented for the Congo Basin forest types map by aggregating for the countries the C stock of the forest types classes that present a 30 % canopy cover according to the previous section. Forest areas vary between the two studies but the total C in Gt is very similar for DRC (23.9 for the Congo basin forest types map versus 22 Gt for Saatchi et al., 2011), Cameroon (3.9 versus 4 Gt), Republic of Congo (3.9 versus 4 Gt) and Gabon (4.3 versus 4 Gt). The map of Baccini et al. (2008) delivered above-ground biomass estimation for Africa. Estimating C stock or biomass is equivalent. C stocked in woody plants ( $C_w$ ) is linked to the biomass ( $B_w$ ) expressed in dry matter by unit of area by a simple relation:  $C_w = k B_w$  with  $k \approx 0.47$  (Nasi et al., 2009). A visual comparison of the spatial structure of the biomass versus the spatial structure of the carbon stocks was made. The limits of the dense forest domain in Baccini et al. (2008) are similar to the ones of the Congo Basin forest types map. The highest values of biomass are also reached in this dense forest domain. However, the West Atlantic coast seems affected by the cloud cover in Baccini et al. (2008), presenting low values of biomass in zones where dense moist forest is expected. In the non forest area, the dry forest patches are identified in both maps with a higher biomass or carbon content than the vegetation around. For DRC, Baccini et al. (2008) obtained a value of

## BGD

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

23 Gt C when accounting for above and below ground carbon, this is very close to the estimation of Table 7 of 23.8 Gt C.

The similarities with the two previous published maps gives confidence in the estimation made here even if the spatial variability of the biomass is not taken into account inside each specific land cover class.

## 5 Discussion

From the visual comparison it appears that, thanks to the 300 m spatial resolution of the MERIS data and by the choice of 8 years of SPOT VGT data for mapping cloudy areas, the map is spatially consistent and that details such as forest gallery and deforestation patterns on the Atlantic coast are better identified than ever before. The accuracy of the map is supported by the validation result.

Dense tropical forests, including dense moist forest, edaphic forest, submontane and mountain forest occupy the major area of the Congo Basin region and are important among other functions in term of C stock, habitat and biodiversity. The comparison between the areas of dense tropical forest derived from the Congo Basin forest types map shows good correspondence with GLC 2000 and Globcover 2009 (Table 9). These dense forests classes also present high accuracy in the validation.

The discrimination of rural complex pattern in the Atlantic coast has a repercussion on the statistics of the dense moist forest and rural complex classes for Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon (Table 10). For Cameroon, nearly half less rural complex is detected in GLC 2000 than in the Congo Basin forest types map. More rural complex is detected by Globcover in Cameroon and Gabon but a visual comparison suggests that this is not representative of the reality (no spatial pattern characteristic of the rural complex which is often following roads networks).

The MERIS dataset is the same as the one used in the GLOBCOVER processing chain but the results are better for this specific region than from a global automatic map thanks to (i) a seasonal stratification of Central Africa that follows more precisely the

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion





could be used to map the edaphic forests. Some land cover classes show room for improvement, such as the savanna woodland-tree savanna class that could be split in two categories, savanna woodland and tree savanna. This could be achieved with an increased use of the temporal information of the vegetation indices in these areas, by directly using it in classification and not only for labelling.

## 6 Conclusion and perspectives

A new forest types map of Central Africa with times series of 300 m and 1 km has been completed. The product and the legend are available through the OFAC website (<http://www.observatoire-comifac.net/>).

By taking into account the seasonal and cloud coverage specificity of the region for the choice of the period of the compositing or the sensor used, an improvement from global automatic maps is observed. The full advantages of the 300 m spatial resolution of MERIS and the temporal archive of SPOT VGT have been used. The manual editing is time consuming but makes the difference compared to an automatic land cover mapping method. Although this vegetation map wanted to be as exhaustive as possible, there is still a limitation due to the extractible information from optical remote sensing. SAR data could be used to map the edaphic forests. Use of time series in the classification step could also increase the discrimination between savanna classes. The perspective of a longer dataset of MERIS data will allow in the future achieving the mapping of the Atlantic coast at a 300 m spatial resolution.

A validation of the product provides a satisfactory overall accuracy of 71.5% and even 78.9% when the two savanna classes are aggregated. This product is not only providing a precise mapping of vegetation types in Central Africa but could moreover be used to compute statistics of the vegetation types, useful for the monitoring of these ecosystems. REDD scenarios for different tree cover threshold had been illustrated based on the forest types map showing that a 30% threshold is more realistic in the context of Central Africa.

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Combination of the map with C estimates by land cover classes allows us to compute a carbon stocks estimation of 49 390 million metrics tons for the Congo Basin. This estimation is found consistent with recent literature.

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**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

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## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[⏪](#)[⏩](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

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## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

---

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

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## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



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## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

**Table 1.** Land cover maps with a specific focus on Africa and recent global land cover maps.

Author (year)	Title (data)	Spatial focus
Consultation of experts and compilation of local information		
White (1983)	Vegetation of Africa	Africa
Sayer et al. (1992)	Conservation atlas of tropical forests	Africa
Olson et al. (2001)	Terrestrial ecosystems WWF	Global
Satellite-based analysis		
Laporte et al. (1998)	A new land cover map of Central Africa (AVHRR)	Central Africa
Mayaux et al. (1999)	A vegetation map of Central Africa derived from satellite imagery (AVHRR 1 and 5 km)	Central Africa
Mayaux et al. (2004)	GLC 2000 for Africa (1 km SPOT VGT 2000)	Africa
Hansen et al. (2008)	Regional forest non-forest cover map (MODIS 250 m)	Central Africa
Defourny et al. (2009)	Globcover (300 m MERIS 2004–2006)	Global
Vancutsem et al. (2009)	The Democratic Republic of Congo vegetation types map (1 km SPOT VGT)	DRC
Friedl et al. (2010)	Modis Land cover map (Modis collection 5500 m)	Global
Mane et al. (2010)	FACET atlas (Landsat 2000 to 2010)	DRC

**Table 2.** User label and LCCS legends for the forest types map of Central Africa. A more detailed description of the classes is available on the OFAC website.

No.	User's label	LCCS label
1	Dense moist forest	Broadleaved evergreen high trees with closed high shrubs/ broadleaved semi-deciduous high trees with closed high shrubs
2	Submontane forest	Closed (> 65 %) broadleaved semi-deciduous (> 14 m) forest, altitude: 1100–1750 m
3	Mountain forest	Closed (> 65 %) broadleaved semi-deciduous (> 14 m) forest, altitude > 1750
4	Edaphic forest	Semi-deciduous high trees on permanently flooded land water quality: fresh water/semi-deciduous high trees on temporarily flooded land water quality: fresh water
5	Mangrove	Closed to open (100–40) % semi-deciduous high trees on permanently flooded land water quality: saline water
6	Forest/savanna mosaic	Mosaic closed (> 65 %) semi-deciduous high (> 14 m) forest – closed grassland with sparse trees
7	Rural complex (forest area)	Cultivated and managed terrestrial area(s)/broadleaved semi-deci- duous woodland with closed shrubs and closed herbaceous layer
8	Closed to open deciduous woodland	Broadleaved deciduous high trees
9	Savanna woodland- tree savanna	Broadleaved deciduous woodland with closed medium to tall herbaceous layer
10	Shrubland	Broadleaved deciduous (40–(20–10) %) high shrubland with closed herbaceous
11	Grassland	Closed tall herbaceous vegetation with medium sparse trees
12	Aquatic grassland	Closed tall herbaceous vegetation on permanently flooded land// closed tall herbaceous vegetation on temporarily flooded land
13	Swamp grassland	Closed tall herbaceous vegetation on waterlogged soil
14	Sparse (< 15 %) vegetation	Sparse trees//sparse shrubs//herbaceous sparse vegetation
15	Mosaic cultivated areas/vegetation (herbaceous or shrubs)	Cultivated and managed terrestrial area(s)// closed to open shrubland (thicket)// herbaceous closed to open vegetation
16	Agriculture (> 70 %)	Rainfed herbaceous crop(s)
17	Irrigated agriculture (> 70 %)	Irrigated herbaceous crop(s)
18	Bare areas	Bare area(s)
19	Artificial surfaces and associated areas (urban areas > 50 %)	Artificial surfaces and associated area(s)
20	Waterbodies	Natural waterbodies//artificial waterbodies

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



**Table 3.** Area estimates (in hectares) and proportion (%) of the vegetation types for 8 countries as derived from the Central Africa vegetation map.

Class	Cameroon		Congo		CAR		DRC		Gabon	
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
Dense moist forest	18 660 000	40	17 140 000	49.8	6 981 000*	11.3	101 800 000	43.7	22 280 000	84.6
Submontane forest	195 800	0.4	0	0	7557	0.01	3 274 000	1.4	0	0
Mountain forest	28 450	0.1	9	0	0	0	929 200	0.4	46	0
Edaphic forest	0	0	4 157 000	12.1	223	0	8 506 000	3.7	15 800	0.1
Mangrove	236 500	0.5	11 860	0.03	0	0	37	0	164 400	0.6
<b>Total dense forests</b>	<b>19 120 000</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>21 310 000</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>7780</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>114 500 000</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>22 460 000</b>	<b>85</b>
Forest/savanna mosaic	2 546 000	5.5	516 200	1.5	11 190 000	18	6 956 000	3	50 900	0.2
Rural complex (forest domain)	3 929 000	8.4	3 671 000	10.7	717 100	1.2	21 440 000	9.2	1 390 000	5.3
Closed to open deciduous woodland	1 300 000	2.8	296 500	0.9	3 426 000	5.5	23 920 000	10.3	31 130	0.1
Savanna woodland- tree savanna	11 950 000	25.6	2 695 000	7.8	34 470 000	55.5	37 070 000	15.9	749 200	2.9
Shrubland	2 610 000	5.6	2 169 000	6.3	4 023 653	6.5	6 727 000	2.9	545 500	2.1
Grassland	178 000	0.4	1 193 000	3.5	62 277	0.1	4 405 000	1.9	335 700	1.3
Aquatic grassland	20 230	0.04	327 200	1	99 079	0.2	74 200	0.03	19 090	0.1
Swamp grassland	148 000	0.3	0	0	0	0	700 900	0.3	0	0
Sparse vegetation	0	0	56	0	0	0	2191	0	0	0
Mosaic cultivated areas/vegetation (herbaceous or shrubs)	3 678 000	7.9	1 797 000	5.2	970 476	1.6	12 950 000	5.6	297 600	1.1
Agriculture	766 700	1.6	60 180	0.2	8523	0.01	0	0	19 780	0.1
<i>Irrigated agriculture</i>	<i>61 270</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>26 831</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
Bare areas	0	0	0	0	0	0	42 210	0.02	0	0
Artificial surfaces and associated areas	38 790	0.1	2952	0.01	7288	0.01	42 430	0.02	18 530	0.1
Waterbodies	281 400	0.6	362 200	1.1	72 960	0.12	4 032 000	1.7	412 700	1.6

\* For RCA, 3 994 399 ha of the dense moist forest belongs to the Congo-Guinean domain as defined by Boulvert (1986), the rest belonging mainly to the edaphic domain.

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract Introduction

Conclusions References

Tables Figures

◀ ▶

◀ ▶

Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Table 3. Continued.

Class	Eq. Guinea		Burundi		Rwanda		Total Congo Basin	
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
Dense moist forest	2 097 000	75.9	8 792	0.3	176	0.01	169 000 000	41.2
Submontane forest	24 400	0.9	36 070	1.3	39 120	1.6	3 577 000	0.9
Mountain forest	6 684	0.2	58 110	2.2	183 400	7.3	1 206 000	0.3
Edaphic forest	0	0	0	0	0	0	12 680 000	3.1
Mangrove	27 550	1	0	0	0	0	440 400	0.1
<b>Total dense forests</b>	<b>2 156 000</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>103 000</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>222 700</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>186 900 000</b>	<b>46</b>
Forest/savanna mosaic	9	0	70 530	2.6	54 820	2.2	21 380 000	5.2
Rural complex (forest domain)	512 800	18.6	300 200	11.2	308 900	12.3	32 260 000	7.9
Closed to open deciduous woodland	306	0.01	35 390	1.3	4 373	0.2	29 010 000	7.1
Savanna woodland-tree savanna	5 292	0.19	297 300	11.1	355 500	14.1	87 590 000	21.4
Shrubland	1 328	0.05	224 900	8.4	109 000	4.3	16 410 000	4
Grassland	186	0.01	203 900	7.6	153 300	6.1	6 531 000	1.6
Aquatic grassland	10 777	0.04	0	0	0	0	540 900	0.1
Swamp grassland	0	0	0	0	0	0	848 900	0.2
Sparse vegetation	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 247	0
Mosaic cultivated areas/vegetation (herbaceous or shrubs)	1 198	0.04	1 256 000	46.7	1 161 000	46.1	22 110 000	5.4
Agriculture	167	0.01	0	0	0	0	855 400	0.2
<i>Irrigated agriculture</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	88 210	0.02
Bare areas	0	0	0	0	325	0.01	42 530	0.01
Artificial surfaces and associated areas	622	0.02	0	0	28	0	110 600	0.03
Waterbodies	83 130	3	200 800	7.5	148 600	5.9	5 594 000	1.4



Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

**Table 4.** Contingency matrix that consider the product and the validation dataset. Italic cells are cells that show agreement between classification and validation (1). Bold cells show cells that have been considered to show agreement (2).

		Map derived from image classification																				Total	Producer accuracy (1)	Producer accuracy (2)	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20				
Reference data/"ground truth" data	1	<b>52</b>				1										1						54	1.00	96.3	
	2		<i>1</i>																			1	1.00		
	3			<i>0</i>																		0			
	4	1			<i>0</i>																	1	0.0	0.0	
	5					<i>4</i>																4	1.0	100.0	
	6						<i>9</i>															9	1.0	100.0	
	7							<i>4</i>														4	1.0	100.0	
	8		1						<i>11</i>	<i>5</i>												17	0.7	64.7	
	9									<i>16</i>	<i>3</i>											19	0.8	84.2	
	10							1	1	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	1										23	0.2	21.7	
	11									<i>5</i>		<i>1</i>										6	0.2	16.7	
	12	1											<i>0</i>									1	0.0	0.0	
	13					1								<i>0</i>								1	0.0	0.0	
	14										1				<i>0</i>							1	0.0	0.0	
	15															<i>2</i>						2			
	16									2	1							<i>0</i>				3	0.0		
	17																		<i>0</i>			0			
	18																			<i>0</i>		0			
	19																				<i>0</i>	0			
	20																					2	5	0.2	20.0
total	56	1	0	1	6	9	5	12	42	9	2			6							2	151			
User accuracy (1)	92.7	100.0	0.0	66.7	100.0	80.0	91.7	38.1	55.6	50.0				33.3							100				
User accuracy (2)	92.7	100.0	0.0	66.7	100.0	80.0	91.7	66.7	88.9	50.0				33.3							100				

Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper

Title Page

Abstract Introduction

Conclusions References

Tables Figures

◀ ▶

◀ ▶

Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

**Table 5.** Accuracy of the Congo Basin forest types map based on surface area figures per class and the user's accuracy.

		Overall accuracy
1	151 points	71.5 %
2	151 points (assembling classes 9–10)	78.9 %

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[⏪](#)[⏩](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)**Table 6.** Forest areas for 10 % or 30 % tree crown cover.

	Area (ha)
Total forest 10 %	330 600 000 (81 %)
Total forest 30 %	226 610 000 (55 %)

**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[⏪](#)[⏩](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)**Table 7.** Carbon stock in the Congo Basin calculated with the C stocks estimation of Nasi et al. (2009) and the Congo Basin forest types map.

Class	Total C (million metric tons)	% of the stock
Dense moist forest	32 450	65.7
Submontane forest	436	0.9
Mountain forest	147	0.3
Edaphic forest	1813	3.7
Forest/savanna mosaic	1240	2.5
Rural complex (forest area)	3452	7
Closed to open deciduous woodland	2669	5.4
Savanna woodland-tree savanna	5781	11.7
Shrubland and shrubland with sparse trees	1083	2.2
Grassland	294	0.6
<b>Total Congo Basin</b>	<b>49 360</b>	<b>100</b>
30 % Tree cover REDD threshold	42 200	85

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

**Table 8. (a)** Estimates of forest carbon stocks in the 4 largest national pool in Central Africa (Saatchi, 2011) and **(b)** estimates of forest carbon stocks from Congo Basin forest types map for a 30 % canopy cover threshold.

Country	<b>(a)</b> Saatchi et al. 2011			<b>(b)</b> Congo Basin forest types map		
	Area (Mha)	Total C (Gt C)	C density (Mg C ha <sup>-1</sup> )	Area (Mha)	Total C (Gt C)	C density (Mg C ha <sup>-1</sup> )
Democratic Republic of Congo	164	22	134	145.4	23.9	164.3
Cameroon	27	4	151	22.7	3.9	170.6
Republic of Congo	23	4	162	22.1	3.9	178.3
Gabon	21	4	165	22.38	4.29	191.52

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



**BGD**

9, 7499–7553, 2012

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

**Table 10.** Dense moist forest and rural complex areas from the forest types map, GLC 2000 and Globcover 2009.

	Cameroon (10 <sup>6</sup> ha)	Equatorial Guinea (10 <sup>6</sup> ha)	Gabon (10 <sup>6</sup> ha)
Dense moist forest forest types map	18.66	2.10	22.28
GLC 2000	18.14	2.03	22.69
Globcover 2009	19.73	2.03	20.42
Rural complex forest types map	3.93	5.13	1.39
GLC 2000	2.15	4.25	1.39
Globcover 2009	4.70	3.02	2.32

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

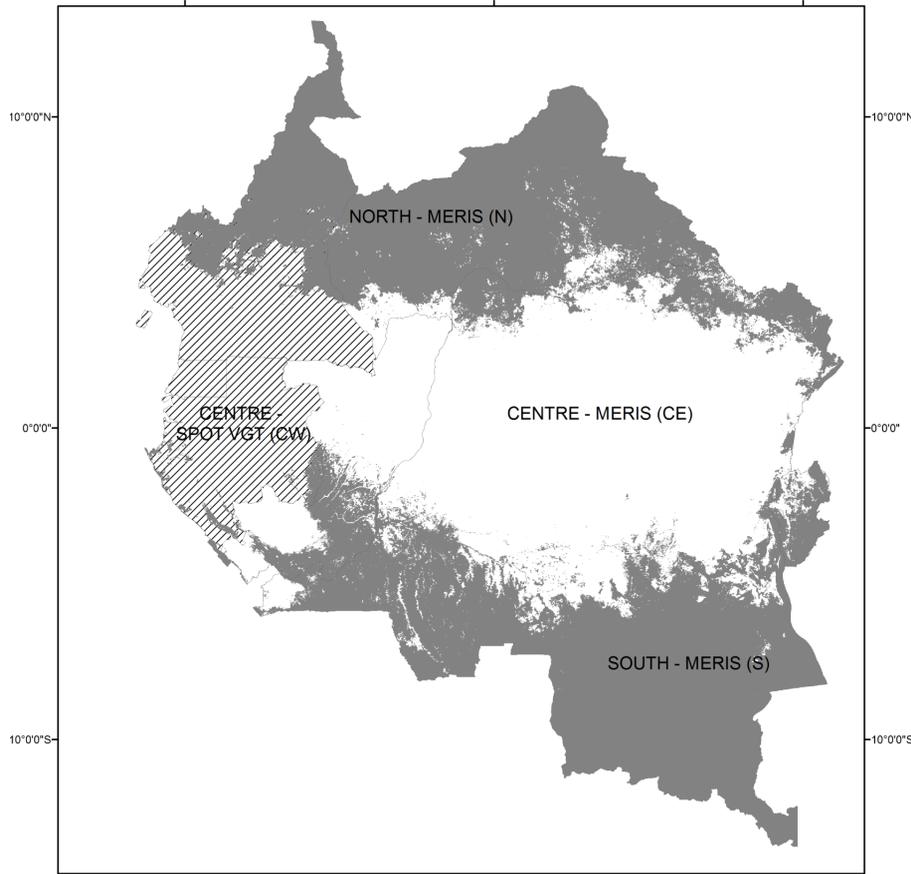
Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



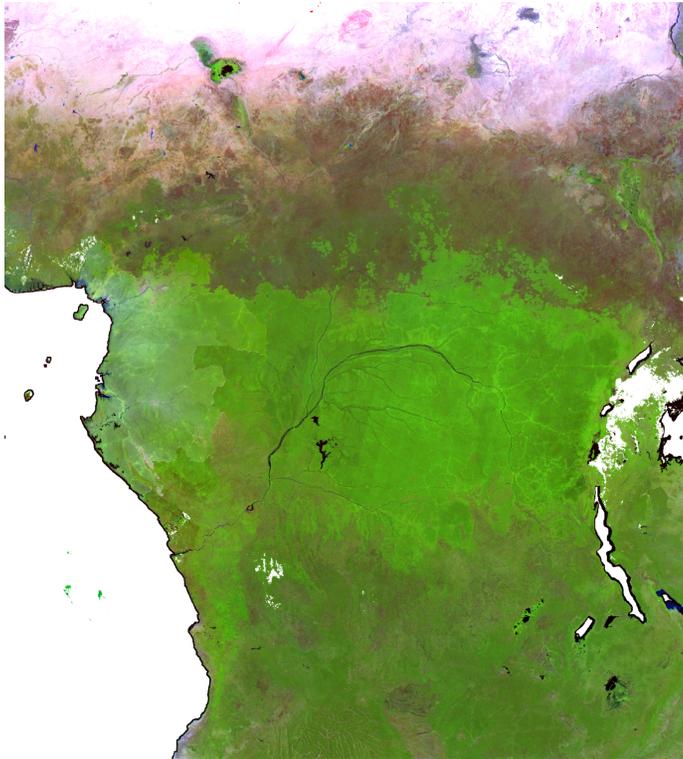
**Fig. 1.** Stratification of the study area in four zones: north (N), south (S), western centre (CW) and eastern centre (CE). SPOT VGT is used for hatched countries while MERIS is used for the rest.

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page	
Abstract	Introduction
Conclusions	References
Tables	Figures
◀	▶
◀	▶
Back	Close
Full Screen / Esc	
Printer-friendly Version	
Interactive Discussion	





**Fig. 2.** The consistent image obtained by combining different composites for each zone; in the north a seasonal composite for December–January corresponding to the dry season in the northern part (MIR SPOT VGT, NIR and Red from Meris), in the south a seasonal composite for May–June corresponding to the dry season in the southern part (MIR SPOT VGT, NIR and Red from Meris), for the centre (DRC, Congo and RCA) an annual composite (MIR SPOT VGT, NIR and Red from Meris) and an exclusively SPOT VGT composite for the centre (Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and Gabon).

## BGD

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

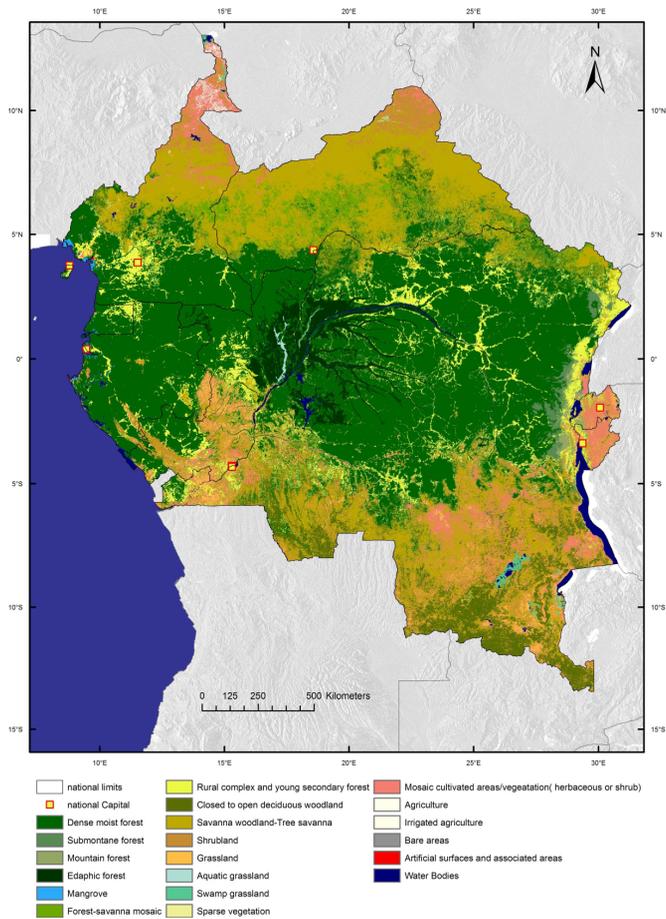
Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion





**Fig. 3.** The Congo Basin forest types map.

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract Introduction

Conclusions References

Tables Figures

⏪ ⏩

◀ ▶

Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

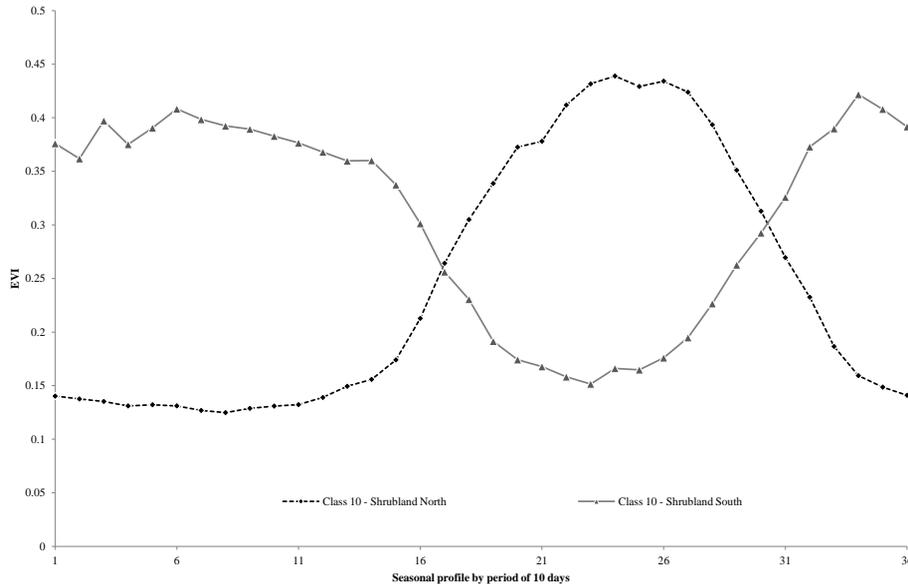
Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

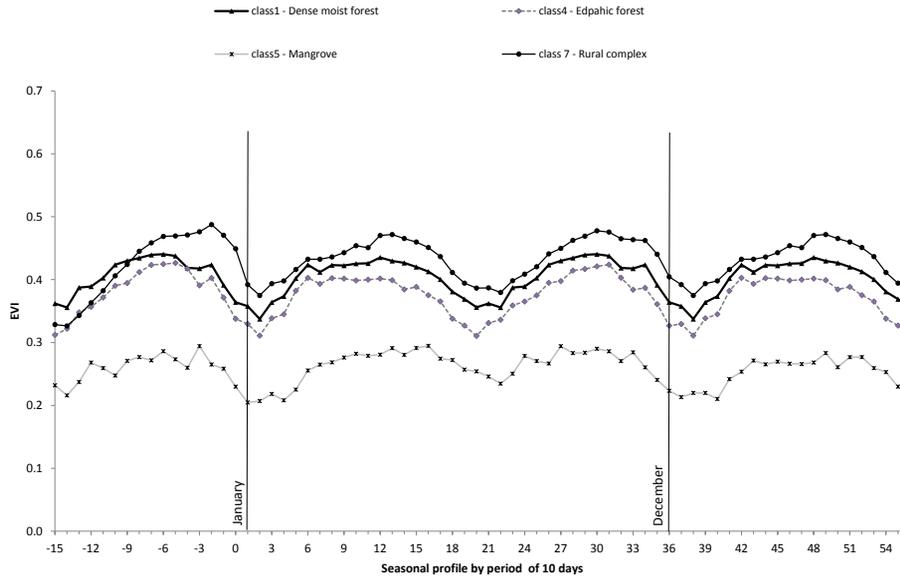
Interactive Discussion



**Fig. 4.** January to December EVI temporal profile for class 10 – shrubland in the north and the south. This illustrates the inversion of seasonality between the north and the south.

## Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.



**Fig. 5.** EVI Seasonal profile by period of 10 days (January to December between the vertical lines) for classes (1, 4, 5 and 7) situated in the central forest zone.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion

Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

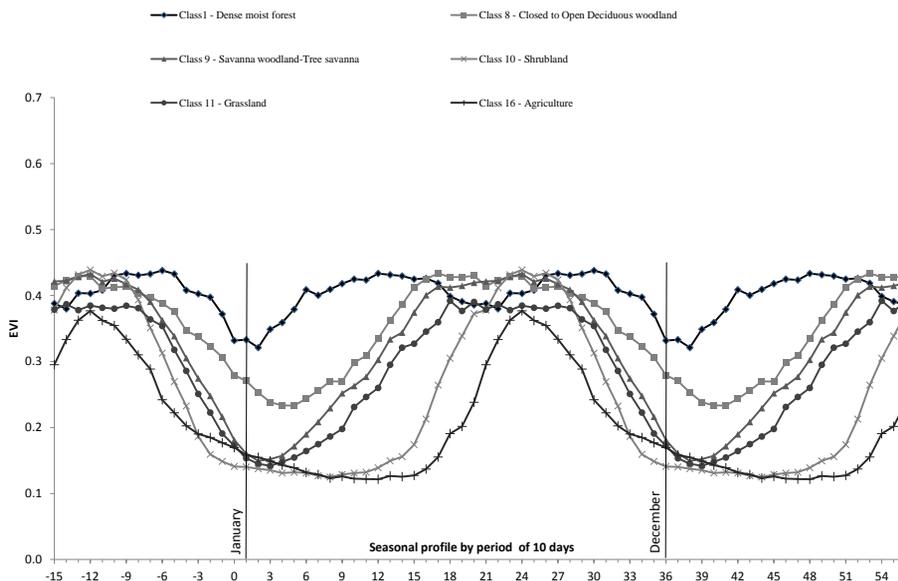


Fig. 6. EVI Seasonal profile by period of 10 days (January to December between the vertical lines) for classes (1, 8, 9, 10 11 and 16) situated in the northern zone.

Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper

Title Page

Abstract Introduction

Conclusions References

Tables Figures

⏪ ⏩

◀ ▶

Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

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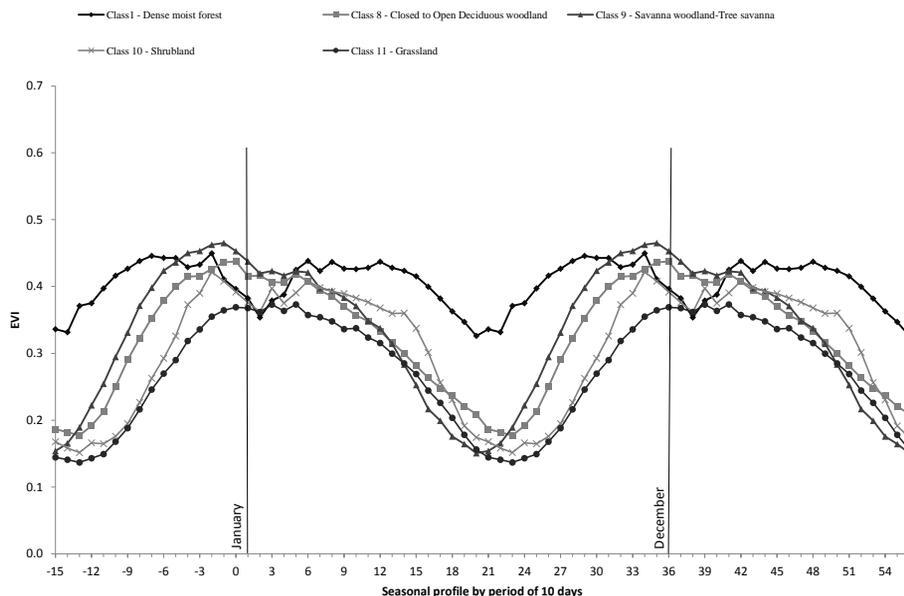


Fig. 7. EVI Seasonal profile by period of 10 days (January to December between the vertical lines) for classes (1, 8, 9, 10 11) situated in the southern zone.

Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper | Discussion Paper

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



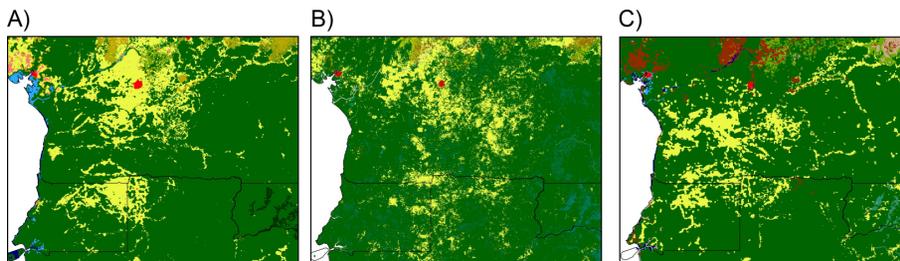


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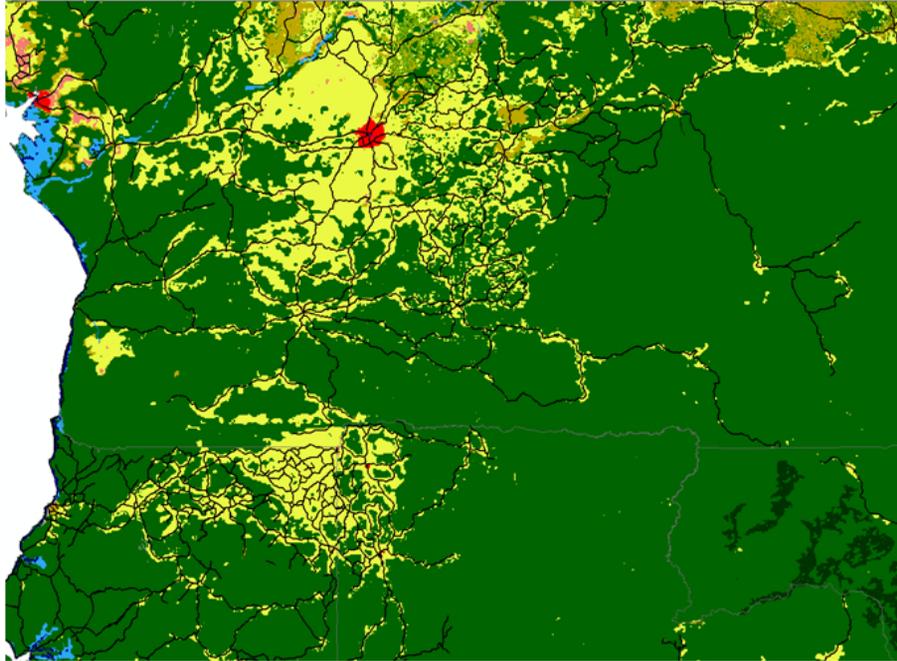
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**Fig. 9.** Example of the improved discrimination of vegetation classes using the 8-yr SPOT VGT time-series analysis depicting networks of deforested areas usually not detected due to the persistent cloud coverage. **(A)** Congo Basin forest types map, **(B)** Globcover (300 m resolution), **(C)** GLC 2000 (1 km resolution).

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[⏪](#)[⏩](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)





**Fig. 11.** Road network (OFAC database) is consistent with the spatial distribution of the rural complex class near the Atlantic coast.

## BGD

9, 7499–7553, 2012

### Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

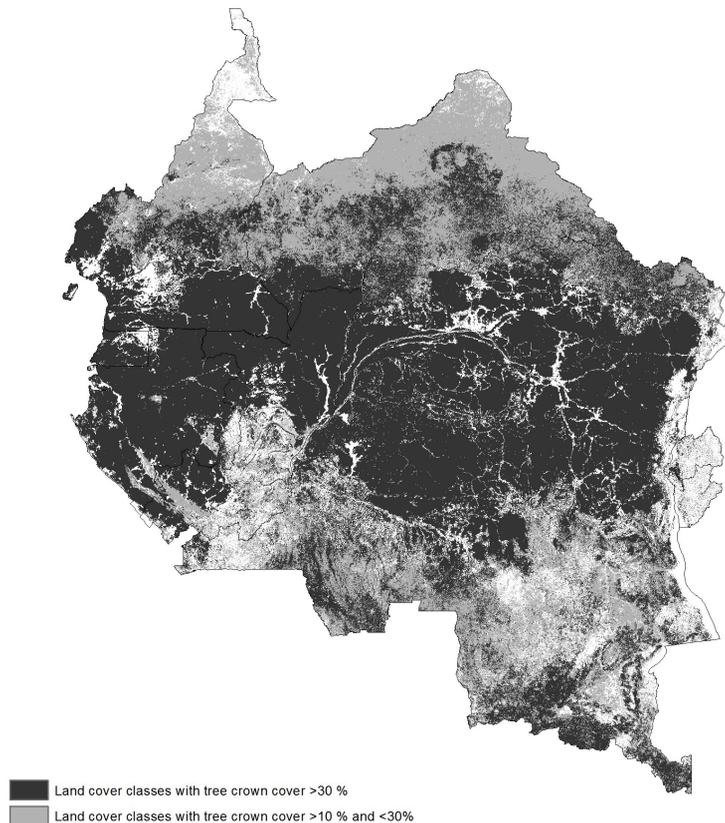
Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion





**Fig. 12.** Spatial representation of the area of the region considered as forest according to the 10% (light and dark grey) or 30% (dark gray) tree crown cover threshold forest definition in the framework of the REDD. Land cover classes with a tree crown cover >30% is class 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. Land cover classes with a tree crown cover >10% is class 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10.

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract	Introduction
Conclusions	References
Tables	Figures

⏪
⏩

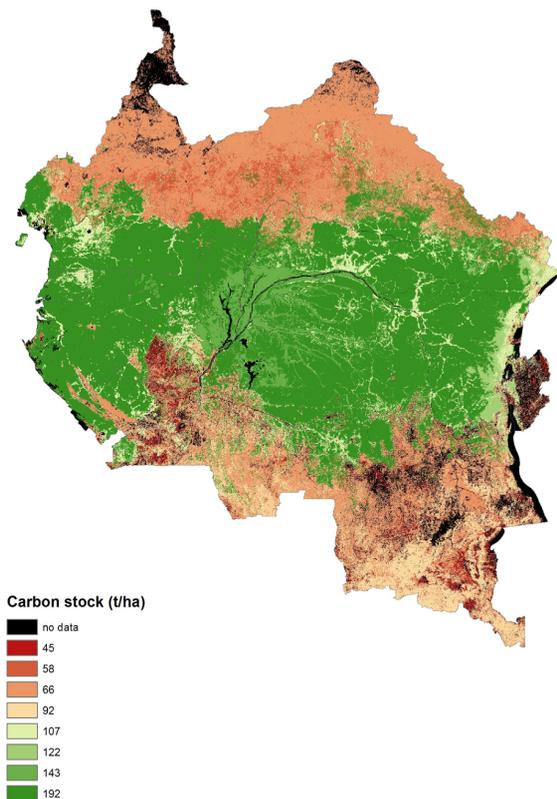
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▶

Back	Close
------	-------

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



**Fig. 13.** Spatial representation of the carbon stock in  $\text{t/ha}^{-1}$  by vegetation types, the region is stratified with the Congo Basin forest types map and the C stocks values are coming from Nasi et al. (2009).

**Mapping Congo Basin forest types from 300 m and 1 km multi-sensor time**

A. Verhegghen et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

⏪

⏩

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion