

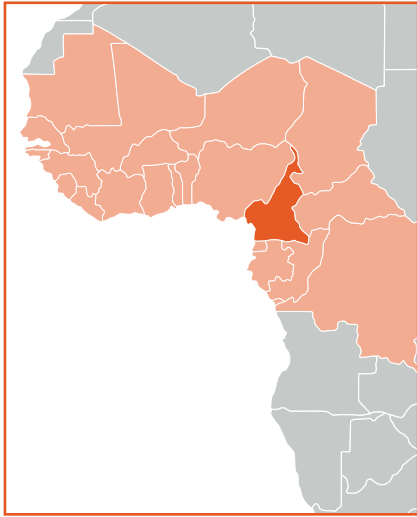


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Investing in rural people in **Cameroon**

Cameroon's economy is mainly agriculture-based, with almost three quarters of the economically active population in rural areas employed in agricultural pursuits. Food availability per capita is declining, as is the level of food security, which has fallen from 96 per cent in 1980 to around 80 per cent currently. In rural areas, half the population lives in poverty. Rural youth, faced with a lack of opportunities, skills and resources, are one of the population groups most vulnerable to poverty.

Strategic studies of the Cameroonian economy indicate that the country will continue to rely on agriculture in its efforts to reduce poverty, especially in rural areas, because of the numerous opportunities that it offers for wealth creation. However, an assessment of the agricultural sector by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development reveals a decline in per capita output as a result of scant increases in the cultivated area and stagnation in crop yields. This poor performance can be explained in part by the ageing of farmers and the migration of young people to cities, where they face unemployment, underemployment, crime and disease. The future of subsistence farming, the linchpin of food security and poverty reduction, is jeopardized by this lack of opportunity for young people in rural areas.



Youth employment in general and in the agricultural sector in particular is thus a major challenge for poverty reduction and for the maintenance of social cohesion and peace in Cameroon. There is enormous potential for the development of rural businesses, provided the country can address major challenges with regard to access to technology, markets and financing, and occupational preparation and training.

Eradicating rural poverty in Cameroon

Economic growth slowed in Cameroon in 2016 to 4.4 per cent and dipped to 3.7 per cent by the end of 2017. This slowdown was the result of a deteriorating trade balance, gloom in the international economic climate and worsening national budgetary constraints resulting from the combined effects of the global economic and financial crisis, the food crisis and the fuel deficit. Under its long-term development plan – Vision 2035 – Cameroon has set for itself the objective of becoming an emerging, industrialized and democratic country by 2035.

This vision is set within the framework of four overall goals:

- reduce poverty to a socially acceptable level
- make the transition to a middle-income country
- achieve newly industrialized country status
- strengthen national unity and consolidate the democratic process.

Youth employment is a major challenge for **poverty reduction** and for the maintenance of **social cohesion** and **peace** in Cameroon

To tap the country's major development potential, the Government of Cameroon drew up a second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper in 2009 – the growth and employment strategy paper (DSCE) – which covers the period 2010 to 2020.

With its significant contribution to growth and potential for poverty reduction and improved food security, the rural sector is assigned a central role in the DSCE strategy. The government plans to modernize the production apparatus to (i) provide access to the factors of production, specifically land, water and agricultural inputs; (ii) promote access to technological innovation by strengthening the link between research and training; and (iii) increase the competitiveness of production chains. The government will focus on developing large-scale farming in various regions to achieve economies of scale and a substantial growth in production. It will also promote access to production areas to enable the full potential of estates and smallholder operations to be realized.

IFAD's strategy in Cameroon

Since 1981, IFAD has financed ten rural development interventions in Cameroon directly benefiting 578,400 households at a total cost of US\$399 million. The Fund's strategy in Cameroon for 2015-2019 aims at sustainably increasing the income and the food and nutrition security of poor rural people, particularly women and young people, by focusing on two main strategic objectives:

- smallholder farms and small rural enterprises use high-performance production systems that are resilient to climate change
- small-scale rural producers and agropastoral entrepreneurs have better access to efficient financial and non-financial services and remunerative markets.

The country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) mid-term review in 2010 confirmed the continued relevance of focusing on building the capacity of farmers' organizations, modernizing family farming in line with the DSCE and targeting women. Creating opportunities for young people in agriculture remained a major issue. The new IFAD strategy in Cameroon for 2015-2019 and the country strategy note defined for the performance-based allocation system (PBAS) cycle 2016-2018 are already taking into account these considerations.

Ongoing and approved operations



Youth Agropastoral Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme

This programme is designed to promote a policy, organizational and institutional framework that assists people in creating and developing successful agropastoral businesses. It has three components:

- development of viable agropastoral businesses
- access to financial services
- improvements of the organizational, policy, institutional and legal framework.

The programme area is concentrated in four regions – Centre, South, Littoral and Northwest – which account for about 40 per cent of the youth population living in rural areas. Activities, which are expected to benefit 50,400 households, target young people in rural communities where there is the greatest potential to create a structured value chain for agropastoral production and related occupations.

The programme's total cost is US\$72 million, including an IFAD loan of US\$50.5 million. It runs from 2015 to 2021.

Commodity Value Chain Development Support Project (PADFA)

The project was developed to reduce rural poverty and increase food security through the sustainable development and competitiveness of the rice (lowland, rainfed) and onion value chains, which have major economic potential, nationally and internationally. It specifically aims to increase production and improve the conservation, processing and marketing of these products, while developing the technical and organizational capabilities of rice and onion producers. PADFA adopts a value chain approach to strengthen the link between agricultural production and demand for food, and between producers and consumers.

The project's total cost is US\$24.3 million, including an IFAD loan of US\$19.2 million. It runs from 2010 to 2018.

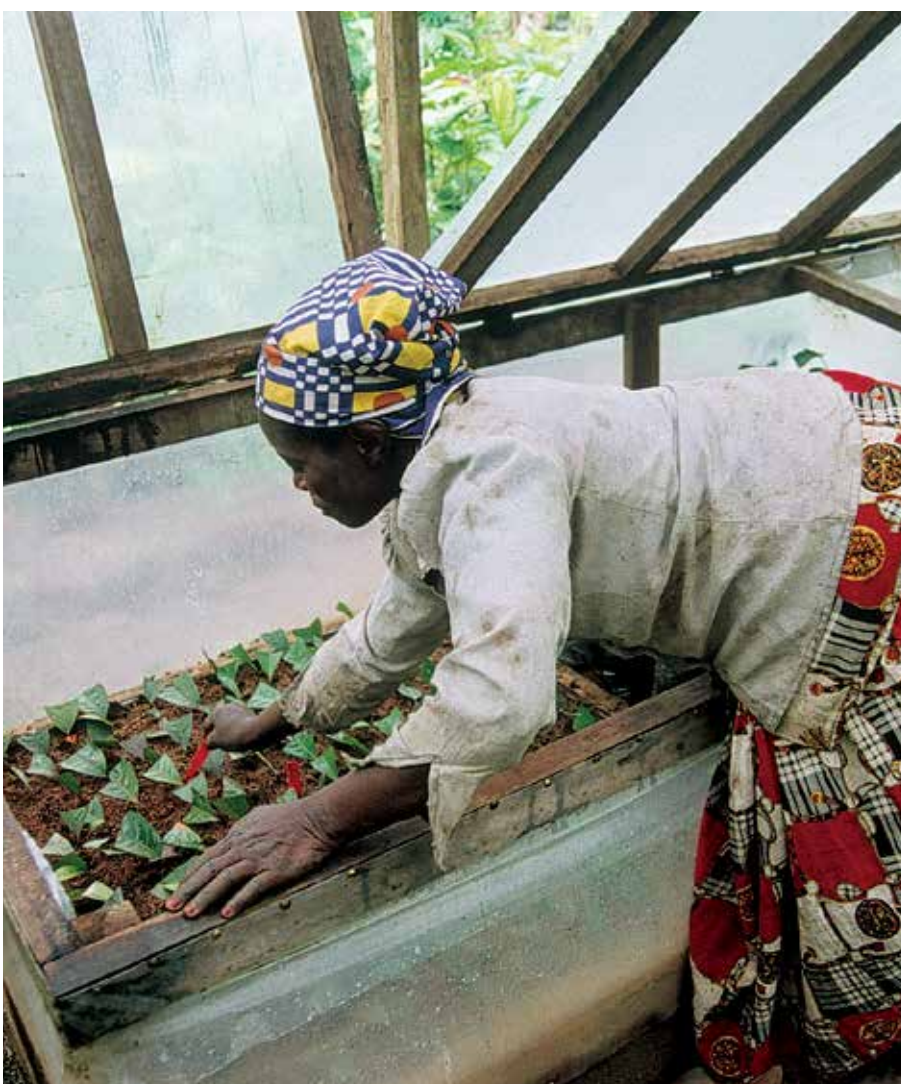
Half of the rural population in Cameroon lives in poverty

Aquaculture Entrepreneurship Promotion Project (PPEA)

This project is designed to contribute to the sustainable improvement of living conditions and income of aquaculture farmers in Cameroon. Its overall objective is to promote economically profitable and job-creating aquaculture enterprises by improving access to training and support services, and putting in place a strategic and organizational framework favourable to aquaculture development.

The project targets three aquaculture centres in the implementation area. The target groups are aspiring or practising small producers, with a priority focus on young operators of aquaculture microprojects, whether individually or grouped within producer organizations. The project expects to promote 300 enterprises, with 30 per cent managed by women.

The project's total cost is about US\$3.3 million, including an IFAD grant of US\$1 million. It runs from 2016 to 2019.



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IFAD has invested in rural people for 40 years, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, we have provided US\$19.7 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached about 474 million people. IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency based in Rome – the UN's food and agriculture hub.

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January 2018