

The Menchum Valley, North West Province, Cameroon.



The Menchum river and tributaries drain much of the north west and north central area of the North West Province of Cameroon.

The Menchum River passes into Nigeria, joining the Benue and then the Niger rivers to enter the Gulf of Guinea (Atlantic Ocean) through the Niger Delta.



The Menchum Valley is low lying, and one of the most northern sites where equatorial forest trees are found in Cameroon. However, much of the forest was felled to extract the timber, leaving only small remnants of forest cover, as illustrated above. On some of the hills the now open land is used for grazing, a very little is farmed, erosion is a problem, and much land remains both unused and degrading. Many local people are concerned about this, invited us, and are now working with us to protect and restore their area.

Few indigenous trees are cultivated in Cameroon¹. Accessing seed and knowing how to germinate most species is a constraint even to foresters. Many of the species that we have succeeded in growing in the CVP nursery are native to the Menchum Valley. We have already transferred some of these, as seedlings, to Ngoh, near Befang, in the Menchum valley, where they will be nursed prior to planting after the first rains arrive in April or May. Three local sites will nurse and then distribute trees to farmers, each in their respective vicinities. This year, planting will be by individuals, on their own land, with emphasis on a few selected species that have socio-economic value to the population: timber, spices, fruit, and several multi-purpose species that include soil improving, erosion control and one with natural insecticidal/pesticide value that the women have requested to help them reduce currently significant post-harvest food losses to weevils. In the longer term planting on the open

¹ if they are 'cultivated' it tends to be a case of farmers transplanting or encouraging seedlings that germinate naturally from trees growing on their land. Some people exchange, mostly individual trees with friends or relatives in other places, a very few buy, on a small scale.

hillsides will commence – this involves more management, in terms of firebreaks, protection from grazing animals, and land tenure.

As well as reintroducing species we have brought two that originate further north, in the natural grassland/savannah zone : advantages of these are resistance to fire and exposed dry soils, which now both occur on the hills.

The first tree nursery site at Ngoh , receiving trees.



adjacent water supply

Ngoh people
returning from their
new 'nursery' site

