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Paper: “Régénération et reconstitution de cinq essences commerciales de l’UFA Ipendja, nord du Congo”

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Eric-Olivier Tiennebo

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Reviewer 3: Blinded

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Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear, and it is adequate for the content of the article.	4
The title is clear, concise and broadly adequate. It identifies the object of the study, namely regeneration and reconstitution of five commercial tree species in the UFA Ipendja. However, it would be stronger if it specified the post-logging context and used a more standard scientific formulation, for example: "Post-logging regeneration and reconstitution of five commercial timber species in the Ipendja Forest Management Unit, northern Congo."	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	4

The abstract presents the objective, sampling design, target species, main indicators and key results. It is informative and gives quantitative information such as the number of plots, diameter range and chi-square result. It should nevertheless be revised to distinguish clearly between regeneration and reconstitution, report the most important numerical values of the reconstitution rates, harmonize the French and English abstracts, and avoid overgeneralized statements not directly supported by the results.	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	2
The manuscript contains numerous grammatical, typographical, formatting and terminology problems in both French and English. Examples include inconsistent spelling of scientific names and families, incorrect plural/singular agreement, incomplete formulae, awkward sentence construction, duplicated section titles, inconsistent figure numbering, and several unclear phrases. Professional language editing is required after the scientific revision.	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	3
The general sampling approach is understandable: 76 plots of 100 x 25 m were installed in three exploited parcels, giving a total sampled area of 19 ha. The manuscript also lists the main ecological indices and statistical tests. However, the methods are not yet sufficiently reproducible. Several formulae are missing numerators and denominators; variable definitions are incomplete; the distinction between exploited and non-exploited areas is unclear; the rationale for calculating reconstitution only for Sapelli and Padouk must be justified; and the statistical workflow should be reorganized with clear hypotheses, response variables, assumptions and post hoc decisions.	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	2
The results contain useful field information, but they are not presented with sufficient clarity and contain several apparent inconsistencies. Some tables and figures are poorly formatted or difficult to read; figure numbering is inconsistent; several interpretations go beyond what the statistics support; some non-significant results are discussed as if they were biologically conclusive; and the faunal/anti-poaching results appear outside the stated scope of the manuscript unless they are explicitly linked to regeneration pressure. The authors should verify all numerical values, p-values, degrees of freedom, percentages, table labels and figure captions.	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	3
The conclusion is generally aligned with the stated objective and recognizes reduced density/diversity after exploitation, better long-term reconstitution of Padouk and stronger diameter growth of Sapelli. However, it should be more cautious because several results are non-significant and some projections rely on assumptions that are not fully justified. The conclusion should be shortened, tied to the strongest results, and include concrete silvicultural recommendations such as retention of seed trees, assisted regeneration, protection of small diameter classes and species-specific harvesting thresholds.	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	3
The reference list is extensive and includes relevant literature on Congo Basin forests, forest management, regeneration, diversity indices and reconstitution. However, it needs substantial standardization. The manuscript mixes citation styles, contains incomplete or questionable bibliographic details, inconsistent author names, broken DOI and URL formatting, excessive access-date information, and some references that appear weakly connected to the argument. All in-text citations should be checked against the reference list, and the list should be formatted according to the journal style.	

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

Overall recommendation: Return for major revision and resubmission.

The manuscript addresses a relevant issue for sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin: the post-logging regeneration and reconstitution of important commercial timber species in the UFA Ipendja. The

field inventory effort is valuable, and the focus on species such as Sapelli, Sipo, Padouk, Acajou and Doussié is scientifically and operationally pertinent. However, the manuscript requires major revision before it can be considered technically robust and publishable.

Major points for improvement:

1. Clarify the scientific framing. The introduction should be shortened and reorganized around the research problem, knowledge gap, objective, hypotheses and expected management implications. Some broad background information on national forest cover and governance can be condensed.
2. Rebuild the Methods section for reproducibility. Specify the sampling design, status and location of exploited versus non-exploited sites, number of plots per parcel, inclusion criteria, diameter measurement protocol, taxonomic identification method, and the exact formulae used for regeneration, density, dominance, Shannon index, Pielou evenness and reconstitution rate. Several formulae are currently incomplete or visually missing.
3. Improve the statistical analysis. For each test, state the response variable, grouping factor, null hypothesis, assumptions, sample size, software version, significance threshold and interpretation rule. Avoid using several tests without explaining why each is appropriate. “SPSS version 0.2” should be verified because it appears incorrect.
4. Reorganize the Results section. Present results in a logical sequence: floristic composition, regeneration by diameter class, density/diversity indices, exploited versus non-exploited comparison, and reconstitution projections. Remove or justify the faunal/anti-poaching section, which currently appears outside the article’s stated objective.
5. Verify all tables and figures. Tables should be self-explanatory, consistently numbered and correctly titled. Figures must be redrawn at publication quality with readable axes, clear legends, units and accurate numbering. The manuscript currently has inconsistencies such as Figure IV being labelled as Figure VII in the text and captions.
6. Moderate the interpretation. When p-values are non-significant, the discussion should not imply confirmed differences. Distinguish statistical non-significance from ecological tendencies. Also separate observed six-year results from 30-, 60- and 90-year projections and state the assumptions behind those projections.
7. Strengthen the Discussion. Reduce repetition of results, compare findings more critically with previous studies, explain species-specific regeneration patterns, and translate results into practical silvicultural recommendations.
8. Correct scientific names and terminology. Genus and species names should be consistently italicised and correctly capitalised: *Entandrophragma cylindricum*, *Entandrophragma utile*, *Khaya anthotheca*, *Pterocarpus soyauxii* and *Azela bipindensis*. Family names should also be checked, for example *Meliaceae* rather than “*Melliaceae*”.
9. Edit the language thoroughly. The paper needs substantial linguistic revision in French and in the English abstract. Syntax, agreement, punctuation, spacing, abbreviations and units should be standardized throughout.
10. Standardize references. Check every in-text citation against the reference list, correct incomplete references, remove weakly relevant citations and apply the journal’s required bibliographic style consistently.

A revised manuscript should include a cleaner IMRAD structure, complete equations, corrected figures/tables, a more rigorous statistical explanation, and a focused discussion that clearly supports the final management recommendations.

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only: