

Full Length Research Paper

Appraisal of Outcomes of Anglophone Crisis on Agro Industrial Plantations along the Fako-Moungo Belt in Western Cameroon

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Countries of the south today are plagued by socio-political crisis with negative implications on agriculture and development. Cameroon in Sub-Saharan Africa is not an exception. Agro-industry along the Fako-Moungo belts in West Cameroon considered the second employer after the state have been victims of the socio-political crisis that have affected Anglophone Cameroon since 2016. This crisis has resulted to huge financial, material and human damage on the development of the corporations with negative outcomes on the population, grassroots communities and the Cameroon economy. Studies on anglophone crisis so far have focused on the causes, general manifestation and consequences, geopolitics of the crisis) without specific case studies of sectors affected (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997, Ekah, 2019). This paper examines the outcomes of the Anglophone crisis on the agro-industrial plantations in the matrix circumscribed. Quantitative and qualitative techniques have been exploited to collect data for analysis and interpretation. The results show that the anglophone crisis and its persistence is a serious challenge faced by agro-industrial enterprises in Fako and Moungo areas, following the effects it has had on their infrastructure improvement, plantation and crop production, labour force management and empowerment, community development, and nation building. Seeking for sustainable solutions to redress the crisis is urgent. This will help to revamp the activities of these agricultural plantations that are at a decline with negative outcomes on development, national integration, social cohesion.

Keywords: Anglophone crisis, Armed Conflicts Development outcomes, Agro-industry, plantation agriculture, Fako, Moungo

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector is the backbone of the economies of developing countries among which is Cameroon. This sector today contributes 15.18 percent (i.e. 354.60 billion FCFA) to the Gross Domestic Product of Cameroon (O'Neill 2020) and employs about 70 percent of its economically active population (N.I.S, 2021). Unfortunately, the sector has been plagued by socio-economic and political crisis making the country unable to meet her development goals of food self-sufficiency, unemployment combats, and rural livelihood

enhancement through poverty alleviation among others. The economic crisis of 1980s led to state monopoly withdrawal from management of the agricultural sector, opening the way for privatization and restructuring of the sector. With the introduction of these agricultural reforms in favour of the private sector many social benefits hitherto provided by the state to the population were lost. These innovations sparked up discontentment within the Anglophone communities bringing into question the role of agro-industries in community

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development (Konings, 1996). Rupture in expected benefits from the agricultural plantations now under the management of agro-industrial corporations adversely affected community development. A situation that was characterised by poor service delivery, abysmal living and working conditions for plantation workers and plummet in the standards of livings in plantation estates. Ambiance in the plantations henceforth was marked by inadequate housing and social amenities for workers (Ayuk et al., 2019) and dilapidated camps, low wages, poor health and educational services delivery to the population (Kimengsi et al., 2016). These negative outcomes tarnished the image of the Cameroon Development Corporation heitherto considered a development agent by the workers and local population (Mumah, 2018).

1.1. Research Problem

Fako and Mounjo Divisions are host to rubber, banana, palm and tea plantations established since the colonial period. These agro-industrial plantations have been affected by multidimensional crises in the last three decades making it difficult to archive the goal of their).

creation. This context has not yet opened for indepth scientific discussion. To fill the gap, this article examines the outcomes of the Anglophone crisis as one of the challenges these corporations have had to grapple with since 2016. Several questions are raised answers to which shall be redressed. These are: what are the causes of these armed conflicts and reasons for targeting agro-industrial plantations? what are the impacts of the crisis on the agro-industries with regards to plantation infrastructures, workers, farm produce and community development? what policy guideline can be implemented to redress the situation? All these questions have implications for influences of the armed conflicts in the Northwest and Southwest Regions on plantation agriculture along the Fako-Mounjo Belt. These are issues that constitute the focus of this paper.

1.2. Peculiarities of Fako and Mounjo Plantation Belt

Fako and Mounjo area are located along the Cameroon Coastal belt between longitudes 9°00' and 09°52' East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitudes 4° and 4°50' North of the Equator (Figure 1

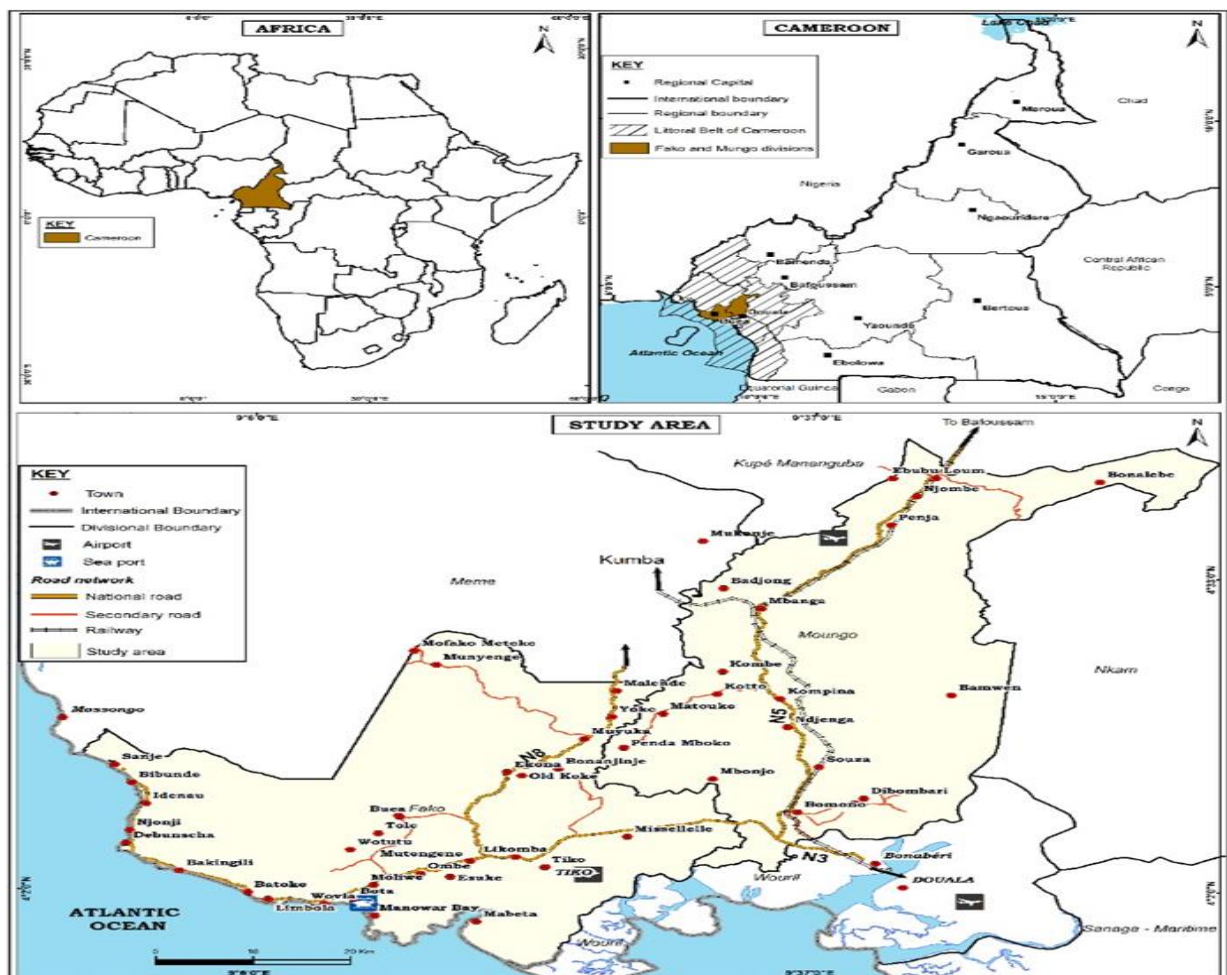


Figure 1: Location of Fako-Mounjo Divisions along the Cameroon Coast

Source: Adapted from Cameroon Atlas, 2011/NIC, modified by authors

The belt is divided by Mount Fako with an elevation of 4100 meters above sea level and an extensive plain of 150km from the Ocean having altitudinal variations of 0 to 610 meters above sea level. The rugged relief from Mt Cameroon is a physical limitation for plantation agriculture. Tea cultivation takes place at Tole ie the Cameroon Tea Estate (CTE) due to its favourable climate for the plant. Palms cultivation by the CDC is done at the Tiko plains extending to Penda Mboko, Mbonjo, Kompina, Maleke, Mbanga and Njombe-Penja, from where the low-lying relief with knolls favours extensive cultivation of palms and other crops such as rubber and banana. Rainfall varies from 2500 to 4000mm, with Dibundscha along the west coast having about 10,000mm. Also, the temperature ranges from 25-32°C. The Fako Zone is dominated by the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), extending to Mounjo East where the Penda Mboko, Matouke, Matouke Rubber Development Project and Kompina estates are located. These agro-industrial enterprises cultivate four tropical crops namely rubber, bananas, oil palm and tea. The CDC created in 1946 has 9 rubber estates, oil palm estates, 2 palm oil mills and 5 rubber factories on plantations covering 41000 hectares.

These agro-industrial enterprises have been highly affected by the Anglophone crisis. In the Mounjo area where the Cameroon Palm Oil Industry (SOCAPALM), Plantations-du-Haut-Penja (PHP) and Boh Plantation Limited (BPL) and Soci t  des Plantations de Mbanga (SPM) are found, attacks from secessionist are also very common.

The Fako and Mounjo belts located on the Cameroon volcanic line have very fertile soils and a conducive climate that have favoured the cultivation of bananas, rubber, palm oil and tea at an industrial scale. These plantations laid by the Germans, later by the British and French colonial administrators and Cameroon government after independence in 1960 were privatized from the 1990s and are now under the ownership of corporations such as CDC, SOCAPALM, PHP, BPL.

2. METHODOLOGY

Data used for production of this paper has been collected from field surveys involving direct field observations, interviews and administration of questionnaires in agro-industrial plantation of Fako and Mounjo. Field investigation enabled the authors to identify the plantation areas affected by armed conflicts, crop plantation abandoned, infrastructures damaged, condition of some former workers victimized, the activities of security agents combating separatist, life in conflict villages and reasons for attacks on industrial plantations. Both quantitative and qualitative data were generated from these tools for treatment and analysis. A total 175 questionnaires were administered to workers,

officials of the plantations and population of host communities of plantations for information on the impacts of sociopolitical crisis on their activities. This data was treated using the statistical software (SPSS), excel spreadsheet and mapping programmes (ArcGIS and adobe illustrator) for data spatialization and display. Secondary source data helped to provide information on approaches so far used in understanding the Anglophone crisis and data not obtain on the field. The data was sourced from journals, articles, internet documents, government official reports, archives of the plantations understudy. Satellite images from Global Land Cover Facility and administrative map sheets covering Fako and Mounjo area were exploited to map out the agro-plantations, other land uses and areas of armed conflicts. Quantitative techniques have been used in analysis of the findings. Photographs also taken for visual interpretation, analysis and illustrations.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 The Anglophone Crisis

The Anglophone crisis is one of the problems affecting plantation agriculture and development in Cameroon. This crisis variously referred to as armed conflicts, separatist movements, Anglophone crisis or secessionist movements have caused untold damages to the corporations operating agriculture in the region, following its persistence and mismanagement by the administration. The genesis of the crisis stemmed from cultural, economic, social and political marginalisation of the Anglophones by the dominant Francophone group in Cameroon. Considering that the region is endowed with many natural resources, a vibrant dynamic population and strategic geographical position at the border with West Africa and the Atlantic Ocean, protagonist of this conflict have stood firm in contestation for an independent republic referred to as Ambazonia. Because the plantations are in the conflict area, workers of the corporation faced with cumulated unpaid arrears for many years, poor working conditions and low salaries after extra hours of work have not been able to support their families. Consequently, the children of these workers have joined separatists' groups to attack the agro-industries considered to be the source of their frustration (Figure. 2).

Figure 2 presents some of the causes of the Anglophone crisis and reasons for targeting agro-industrial plantations and its workers in the South west, North west and Littoral belts of Cameroon. The population sampled in the anglophone region revealed that French language domination and abusive use of vernacular languages by francophones in public services (3 percent), feeling of domination of anglophone population through assimilation of their institutions (1 percent), exploitation of natural resources without

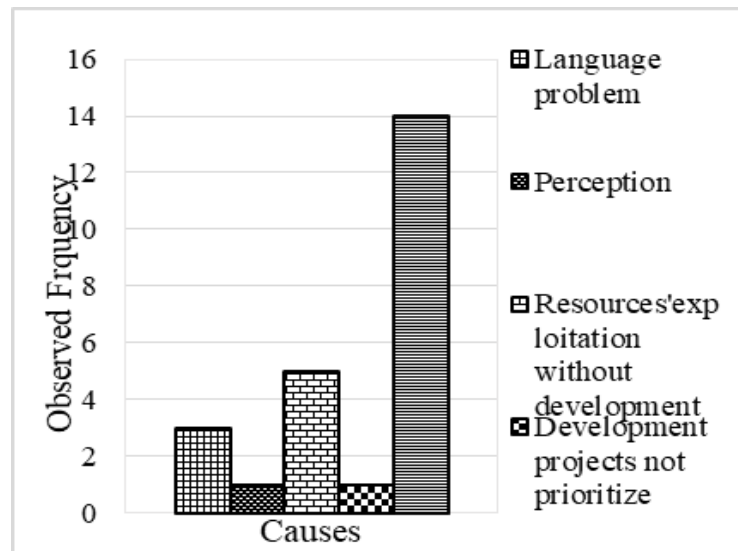


Figure 2: Causes of Anglophone crisis

Source: Field surveys 2021

community development in return (5 percent), development projects conceived in the regions neglected or not given a priority in the national budget (1 percent) and marginalization of the anglophones (14 percent) were the main reasons for their discontent. Another 22 percent of the population surveyed perceived that all these factors highlighted as the cause of the Anglophone crisis.

3.2 Manifestation of the Crisis

Armed conflicts in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon have dealt a blow on plantation agriculture in Cameroon. Faced with frustration from the Cameroon government due to neglect and inequality, marginalisation and social exclusion, the feeling of unity and living together with the Francophone dominated administration emerged in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon. Many people in the anglophone region began questioning the relevance of national integration and unity with the Republic of Cameroon. Secession movements for independence emerged with peaceful demonstrations and strikes in the education and judiciary sector and spread gradually into all sectors of life. This degenerated into violent conflicts when the state declared war on the demonstrators. In the agricultural sector, agro-industrial plantations, workers camps and social infrastructures and factories became targets of attacks by separatists of anglophone background calling for liberation of their plantation by Francophone Cameroon. Civil disobedience marked by ghost town operations, invasion and occupation of workers' camps and transformation into training grounds by separatist emerged. Shutdown of plantation activities, attacks on estate-workers loyal to the Cameroon government, arson on populations who refused to obey

the orders of 'pro-independence fighters' emerged and multiplied. Workers not willing to cooperate were either assassinated, tortured or kidnapped for ransom. Also, the burning down of factories, houses, infrastructures and plantations belonging to Agro-industry multiplied, leading to violent crackdown by the Cameroon government through the military. These strategies used by separatists variously referred to as Ambazonians, Ambas, Terrorist, pro-independence fighters were aimed at obstructing the Cameroon administration from influencing the activities of the agricultural corporations. The separatist also used the strategy for generation of income to acquire war ammunitions to pursue their course.

Military forces were heavily deployed and camped in the plantations, villages and roadways to neutralize the separatists. Several plantation workers in despaired abandoned work and involuntarily migrated into Francophone regions leading to large scale exodus of the countryside. The plantations, villages, community farmlands and bushes hosting workers were occupied by separatist leading to confrontations with the military and burning down of villages and houses that have persisted till today. Many parts of the industrial plantations have been abandoned, grounded and crops stolen.

3.2.1 Causes of the Anglophone Crisis linked to Agro-industries

There are many causes of the arm conflicts in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon associated with agro-industries. These are privatization of the corporations, land legislation, social discrimination and influences of the Cameroon government on agro-industries.

3.2.2 Privatization of Agro-industries and Anglophone Protest

The transfer of state ownership of CDC to the private sector through sales of its assets to private individuals sparked up discontent amongst the Anglophones. Prior to privatization, the agro-industries in the Southwest played a vital role in rural industrialization and development for the rural population. The economic crisis of 1980s marked a turning point in plantation-oriented development discourse. This crisis that led to a fall in the prices of cash crops made the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank) to mount pressure on the Cameroon government to privatized development corporations managed by the state. Consequently, 21

development corporations were privatized between 1989 and 1990 including the Cameroon Banana Corporation (OCB), SOCAPALM in 2000 with its plantations in the Mounjo zone (UNIDO, 2002) and later the tea estates of CDC in 2002 (MBUNWE, 2008), (Figure.3). Privatization meant the agricultural production and transformation of the products had to be handled by the private sector henceforth. This change in management created fear as workers and grassroot populations that enjoyed many social benefits when management was under the government became disgruntled. The privatization of the CDC sparked up protest amongst the Anglophone communities leading to the laying out of many workers (Konings, 1996, 1999).

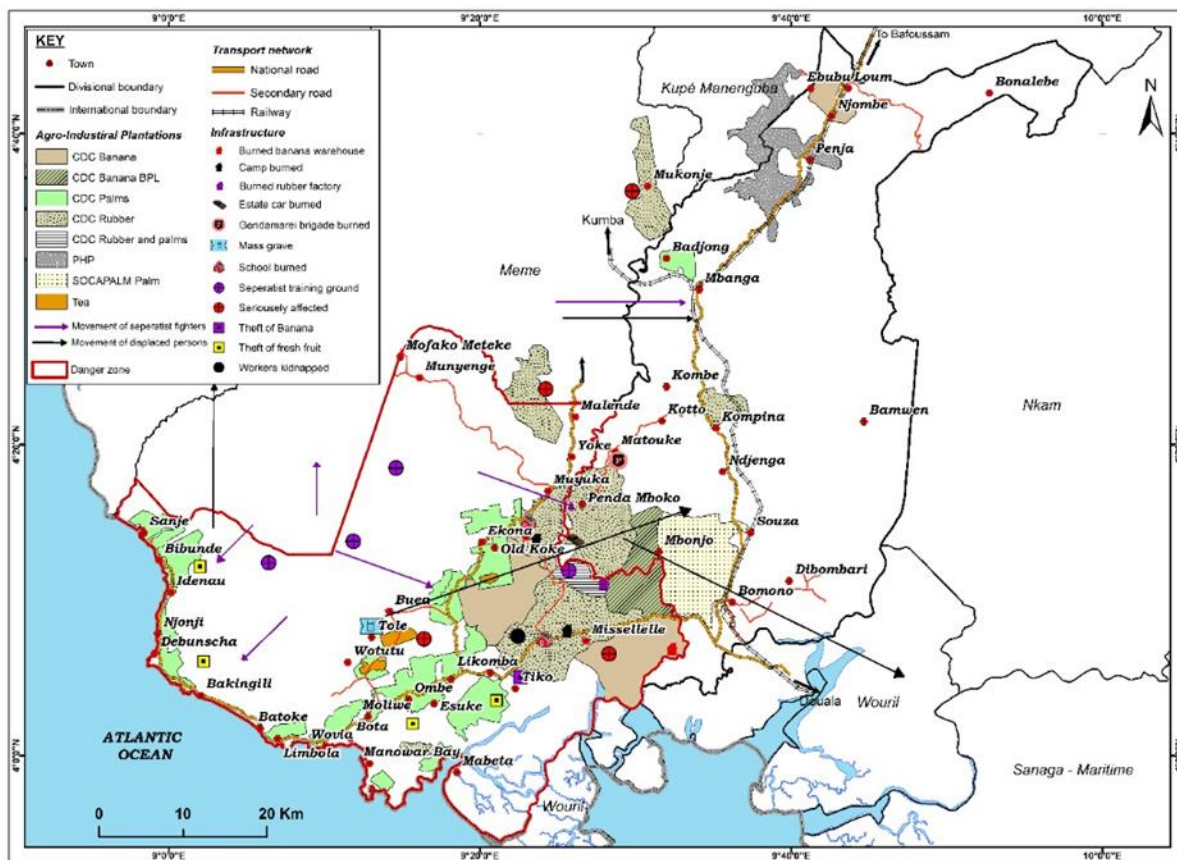


Figure 3: Layout of Agro-industrial Plantations along the Fako-Mounjo Corridor

Source: Global Land Cover Facility, administrative map sheet of Fako-Mounjo Area (NIC) and Fieldwork, 2020

With privatization, many reforms introduced for profit gains led to retrenchment of many workers in agro-industrial plantations, neglect of community development, poor working conditions for workers, abandonment of fringe benefits for workers like housing, health services etc. The employment contract of many

small holders was also cancelled, and land grab intensified leading to further conflicts and tension in plantation host-communities. The Anglophone crisis that began in 2016 became a problem for plantation agriculture and development in Fako and Mounjo including other parts of west Cameroon. This crisis has

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greatly damaged the activities of agro-industrial plantations.

The Bakweri land claim movements show the severity of the impact of privatisation of CDC in Fako Division. In this Anglophone protests led by the Bakweri indigenous communities, claims of expropriation of 104000hectares of indigenous land for plantation development were made. With the creation of the Bakweri Land Claimed Committee (BLCC), discontentment against their plights gained internal and external supports (Tande, 1999; Konings, 1999; Kofele-Kale, 2007).

3.2.3 Exasperating State Role in the Management of Land and Plantations

The influence of the Cameroon government on activities of the some agro-industrial Corporations in Fako has been a problem. The socio-economic benefits generated by agro-industry such as the CDC have since the past attracted the state to have full grip over its management affairs. Numerous “exasperating strategies” have been used by the state to grab the benefits generated by agro-plantations under the CDC at the detriment of plantation host-communities. These “exasperating strategies” include the 1973 decree that changed the Cameroons Bank (CamBank) into BICIC to influence the activities of the corporation. Under the Federal Government, the CDC generated huge income and kept in CamBank to tackle unforeseen risks or shocks, which might hinder the full operation of the agro-industry. The government of late president of Cameroon Ahmadou Ahidjo was keen to gripped CDC financial reserves in CamBank. In this light, he enacted the 1973 decree, which transferred Cambank to Yaounde and changed its name to BICIC. With this innovation, huge CDC financial reserves were looted by state officials. After the late president, a 1983 decree obliged the CDC financial report to the Ministry of Finance in Yaounde. Also, out of fourteen members of CDC board of directors appointed, thirteen were from Beti clan alone and only one of Anglophone origin.

3.2.4 Legal Framework and Social discrimination in the estates

Laws governing land tenure, social inequality and deprivation has been a contributing factor for attacks on agro-industrial estates in the South West Region and Moungo area. Ordinances No. 74/1&2 of 6 July 1974 on land legislations pose a problem to the rural population. This law bypassed customary laws opening up for the monetization of rural agricultural production system. The rights of communities of Fako and Moungo to national land not registered as private property was lost. This deprivation of populations to land, made many of them vulnerable to land dispossession and conversion of food crops farms by entrepreneurs into estate plantations.

This resulted to food insecurity and subsequent conflicts over land resources. Also, Decrees No 2016/31 and 2016/32 on the restructuration of CDC also led to centralization of management making it difficult for the corporation to promote community development. Consequently, corporate managers found it difficult to maintain and repair run down assets of the plantation estates, payment of pension and leave dues of its workers, delays in the payment of workers' wages leading to tension and strike actions. Wide gap in remuneration of workers in agro-industries also pose a problem leading to tension and conflicts. For instance, the members of board of directors earn about 2.5million FCFA, managers about 1.5 million FCFA and field assistants between 250, 000 to 800, 000 FCFA. Also, field workers lived in dilapidated camps that have gone for long without refurbishment, very insecurity, very exposed without the privacy of its occupants respected, largely over crowded as large families are lodged in one-bedroom houses. In contrast the senior staff live in highly improved conditions marked by improved houses, very safe and secured, well maintained and equipped with services (water, electricity, etc). This contrast in living condition marked by discrimination and injustice has been a prime factor of discontent, anger and attacks on the infrastructure and personnel of the CDC plantation by anglophone separatists. This in combination with the exasperating role of the state in the management of the CDC has been a contributing factor to the Anglophone crisis and armed conflicts in plantation host-communities.

3.3. Reasons for Targeting Agro-plantations and Nature of Attacks

Many reasons have been given why industrial plantations were targets of attacks during the Anglophone movements. These reasons include failure of indigenes to reap enough benefits from the plantations established on their lands, discrimination in recruitment and poor treatment of indigenous workers operating in the plantations, unpaid arrears due the workers, low wages not commensurate to workload in the estates, high levels of unemployment and poverty in plantations host communities, expropriation of indigenous food crop land for plantation agriculture by the enterprises through conspiracy with local authorities, and violent crackdown of protesters by the Cameroon government for expressing their rights. These reasons made the population to perceive the plantations as the source of their problems. When the armed conflicts arose in the South West Region, the children of former workers of the estates not employed and dropped out from schools joined separatists movements and attacked the investments of agro-industries in different ways. Field investigations revealed that various strategies were devised and used as justification for their attacks on plantations (Figure 4).

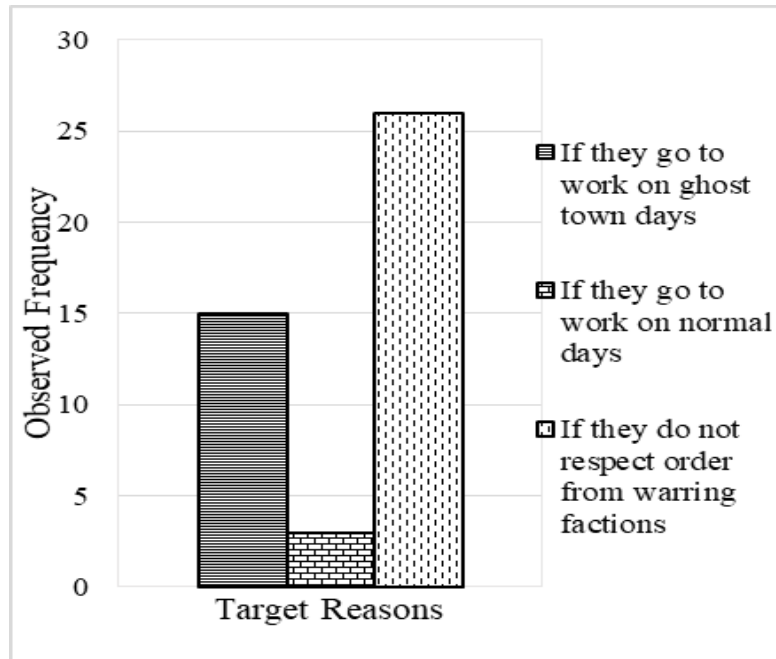


Figure 4: Claims use as justification for attacks on Agro-plantations and Workers

Source: Fieldwork, 2020

Figure 4 presents some of the reasons for targeting the agro-industrial plantations under investigation in the South West and Littoral belts of Cameroon. 15 percent of attacks on workers of the CDC were due to non-respect of days forbidden for work by separatist referred to as ghost town days and 3 percent for people who work on normal days. 26 percent of workers of the plantations were harassed for non-respect of instruction for civil disobedience given by separatist.

The nature of these attacks on agro-industries also excites attention. They were marked by destruction of infrastructure and equipment of the plantations, vandalism of the factory, theft of farm products such as rubber, bananas and palm oil. Arrest and maiming of workers. Kidnapping for ransom and assassination of plantation personnel.

3.4. Outcomes of Anglophone Crisis on Plantation Agriculture

The impact of the Anglophone crisis on Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), Cameroon Palm Oil Industry (SOCAPALM), Plantations-du-Haut-Penja (PHP) and Boh Plantation Limited (BPL) has been devastating. This is seen in Community development, human casualties, infrastructure of the estate, farm labour and produce.

3.4.1 Community Development

Many development opportunities offered by the plantations have been lost such as employment, healthcare, education, recreational services, commerce and subsistence agriculture. The few water, electricity, road and workers camp established by the agro-industries have been destroyed. The nonpayment of some workers' dues, problem of insecurity and unprecedented attacks on plantation estates and host communities looms. Little effort by the state to bring a genuine dialogue and determination of separatist to win the war remain a challenge for the plantations and management.

The Anglophone crisis has prevented Agro-industrial Corporations in Fako and some parts of Mounjo from carrying out development projects. Figure 4 shows that plantation works have been halted and estates abandoned, resulting to decline in production of crops (66%), fall in the revenue of the estates (33%), reduced wages (30%) burning down of banana packing units and rubber factories (2%) and some workers of the plantations either amputated or killed (1%). About 22% of the population sampled are of the opinion that exodus of these plantation by workers result from irregular payment of wages, poor living and working conditions, fear of being attacked and amputated by separatist fighters, poor working environment marked by frequent illness without medical attention, poverty and hunger due

to accrued dues not paid and idleness and fear of unforeseen circumstances (figure 5).

The impact of these sociopolitical crisis on agro-plantations and communities are corroborated by Ojuku (2016), who pointed out that insecurity and crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon

affects rural population and are factors of rural poverty. This is because of the human casualties recorded, destruction of properties experienced, infrastructures and valuable resources damaged resulting from armed conflicts and other forms of insecurity in the countryside

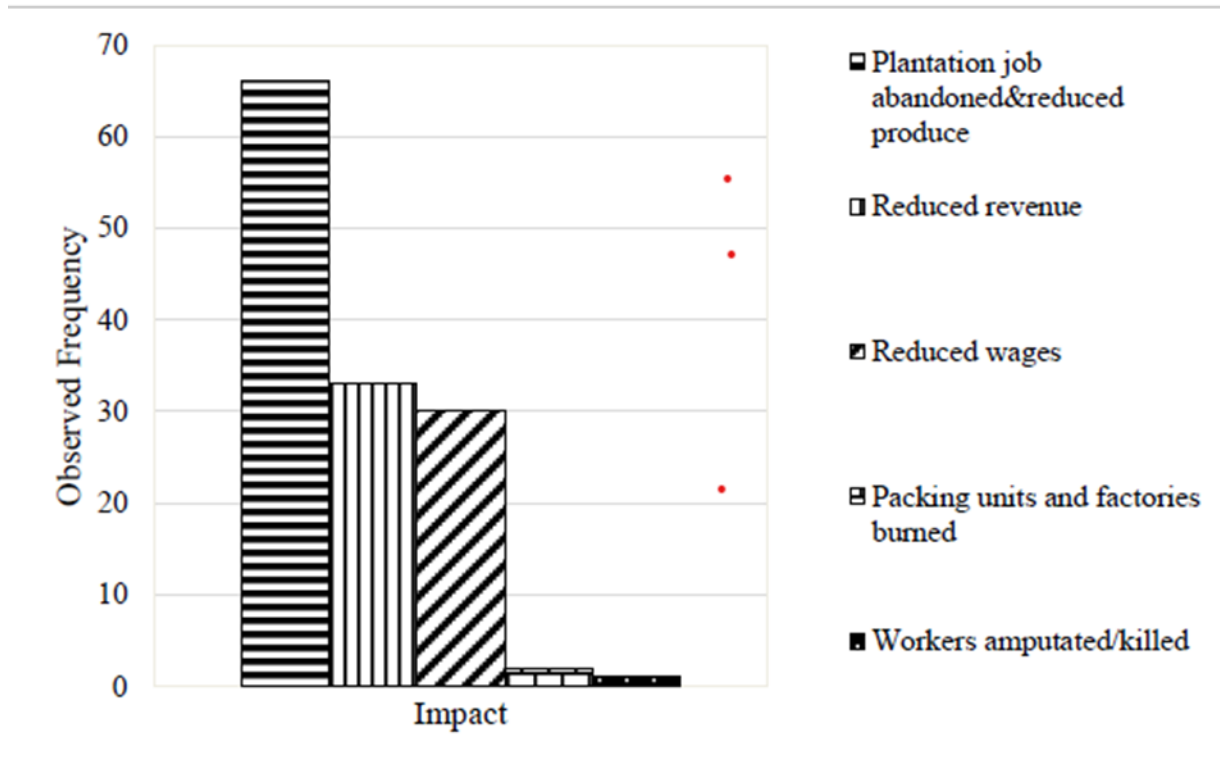


Figure 5: Impact of Anglophone crisis on Agro-plantations and Workers

Source: Constructed from table 1, Fieldwork, 2020

3.4.2 Human Casualties

The casualties inflicted on workers operation in the agro-industrial corporations considered for this paper have been enormous. Plantation workers of the estate have been repeatedly tortured through assassination, amputation of their bodies and maiming, kidnappings for ransom and burning down of their camps to force them abandon the estate, ground the farms and factory activities. Several workers of the estates have been obliged to flee from the plantation due to insecurity and occupation of their camps by separatist fighters.

3.4.3 Plantation Infrastructure

The infrastructure of industrial plantations has been attacked with the CDC experiencing the highest damage from separatist movements. The armed fighters have ensured the permanent closure of the corporation to weaken their economic resource base as a strategy to force the Cameroon government to yield to their

demands. This attack led to losses estimated at 269 billion FCFA. Many rubber factories, banana parking stations, and other valuable assets have been burnt down by separatist. As a result of insecurity, the Boa, Illoani mill, Illoani Estate, Mbonge, Mukonje, Malende, Misselele, Tiko, Mondoni, Meanja and Tombe plantations are not operational at full capacity. Some of

the collateral damage inflicted on the plantation infrastructures is seen on plate 1

Plate 1: Burned Banana Packing Unit and Rubber Factories in Tiko and Malende

In Photo 1, one observes CDC workers 'A' in the packing unit, and makossa banana 'B' damaged. The commotion caused by armed conflicts led to desertion of the estates by labour migrants. Field investigations reveal that the banana warehouse was full of card-

Plate 1: Burned Banana Packing Unit and Rubber Factories in Tiko and Malende**Photo 1: Mafanja I-Tiko
Banana Warehouse Burned****Photo 2: A Burned Rubber
Factory in Mafanja-Tiko**
Source: Authors, August 2020**Photo 3: A Burned Rubber
Factory in Malende****Source:** Authors, August 2020

boxes, used for packaging the 'Makossa banana', before the night of August 2018 when pro-independence fighters burnt down the packing unit. Since then, there has been no banana shipment from Mafanja I. 3,715 hectares of CDC's banana plantations have been hard-hit. Photo 2 shows a roof 'A' burned down and wooded boxes 'B' damaged by separatist fighters on July 18th, 2019 for non-respect of injunction by estate workers. This factory is no longer operational, hindering the

plantation estate from functioning to full capacity. Finally, Photo 3, depicts a roof set ablaze 'A' and rubber packed in bale boxes 'B' also damaged. This factory unit is no longer operational. Workers have fled for their safety as the burned and dilapidated plantation infrastructures remain abandoned.

Plate 2: Infrastructures burned by separatists and deserted by workers of Penda Mboko and Mudeka Estates

Plate 2: Infrastructures burned by separatists and deserted by workers of Penda Mboko and Mudeka Estates**Photo 4: Gendarmerie Brigade
Burned in Penda Mboko Rubber
Estate****Photo 5: School Burned in Mudeka
Plantation Estates****Photo 6: Workers' Camp Burned in
Mudeka Plantation Estate****Source:** Authors, August 2020.

Plate 2: shows the impacts of the Anglophone crisis on infrastructures in plantation host-communities. In photo 4, one observes part of the security brigade 'A' 'burned down at the Matouke rubber plantation' 'B'. In photo 5, one finds a school 'A' also burned down and a plantation in photo 6 'A', deserted by workers in the Mudeka rubber estate camp

3.5 Impact on Farm Labour

The Anglophone crisis has also led to a reduction in Farm labour. Employment has halted and labour turn out reduced. Reduction in labour employment and turn out for work is a major challenge to grappled with by agro-industries. This has a wider outcome on the welfare of plantations' host-

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communities. Insecurity has paralyzed the plantation sector leading to low crop output in estates such as Illoani and the partial functioning of estates such as Mondoni. Following the negative impact of these crisis on the plantation sector, the General Manager of the estates Franklin Njie Ngoni in 2018 underscore the need for corporate social responsibility vis-à-vis its workers. Worried about this crisis which set a gloomy future for the plantation sector, he suggested to the Cameroon government that:

“From June 2018, workers from these estates should be paid 50 percent of their salaries. If the crisis persists, it will drop to 40 percent in July, 35 percent in August, 30 percent in September and after six months, the workers will be laid off” Journal du Cameroun, (13th June, 2018)

This suggestion has been detrimental to the welfare of workers as more than 22000 plantation jobs have been endangered for workers envisaged to be retrenched. This corporate decision certainly is a ‘misplaced strategy for plantation agricultural development’ for many reasons. Firstly, the crisis has

forced many plantation workers to desert several estates and a halt on employment (Table 1) due to continuous threats from separatist fighters. Loss of livelihood assets of plantation workers has reduced their welfare. These assets comprise: the non-payment of their wages and leave allowances; loss of their plantation jobs, health care benefits, and educational, agricultural and social activities that facilitate their integration in the society. Some patients who work occasionally to sustain their lives, are often found in front of the offices of corporate managers protesting and demanding for their wages owed. Secondly, plantation agriculture is not fully mechanised, thus, the plantation workers victimized are ‘engines of production’. These challenges make plantation labourers vulnerable to poverty related diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid fever and HIV/AIDS (Makoge et al., 2107). Health problems from plantation activities such as body rashes, eye problems, irritation (Obale, 2020) and amputation caused by rubber granulation machines have exacerbated poverty in the estates, as labourers relied on these informal health services for treatment. (Table 1)

Table 1: Evolution of Employment in Rubber Estates in Fako and Mounjo Divisions 2005-2019

CDC Rubber Estates	Annual Plantation Labour Employed														
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Meanja	18	0	34	67	25	18	120	41	49	36	56	20	28	0	0
Malende	36	18	74	19	36	89	140	29	38	18	32	0	21	0	0
Mbonge	67	29	84	37	55	100	68	0	66	9	3	8	10	0	0
Mukonje	58	49	41	81	0	73	72	70	0	14	115	0	1	0	0
Penda Mboko	59	70	72	74	71	96	119	51	45	26	80	47	71	41	0
Kompina	42	0	51	35	34	52	142	16	44	63	41	0	45	0	0
Matouke	65	72	29	112	55	54	123	96	53	64	25	40	38	8	0
Matouke Project	0	0	0	68	245	249	1	96	49	101	56	82	26	1	0
Missellele	30	15	74	60	15	102	95	59	87	73	65	41	15	0	0
Sonne/Likomba	159	15	127	152	19	92	74	38	135	119	52	94	23	0	0
Tombel	1	43	47	24	0	159	84	0	0	0	139	0	47	0	0
Total	535	311	633	729	555	1084	1038	496	566	523	664	332	325	50	0

Source: Compiled from CDC Human Resource Office, Tiko Group Rubber, 2020

As seen on table 1, the situation of employment has evolved based on circumstances. Generally, employment was relatively high between 2005 and 2016. From 2016 when the Anglophone crisis began, it declined in all CDC rubber estates. This was also the situation with the banana sector and other estates. The Anglophone crisis negatively affect the various plantation as can be seen in the drastic fall in employment at the CDC on Table 1, Figure 6..

In an interview granted to field workers at the Penda Mboko, Kompina and Tiko estates it was revealed that because of the non-payment of wages and leave allowance of many workers for over seven months

from 2019 to 2020’ many of the people got disgruntled and abandoned the estates giving room for contractors contacted for new management. In the banana sector, at first the four banana plantations (Société des Plantations de Njombe-Penja (SPNP), Société de Bananaraie de la Mbome (SPM) in Tiko, Ekona Banana Plantation and Tiko Banana Project (Budi, 1999) belonging to the CDC in Fako and Mounjo Divisions employed about 10,000 direct and 50,000 indirect workers, generating about 43billion FCFA annually (Budi, 1999). With the birth of the crisis labour force reduced to less than 5000 employees. This was due to the 2018 attacked on the Mafanja I banana-packing warehouse.

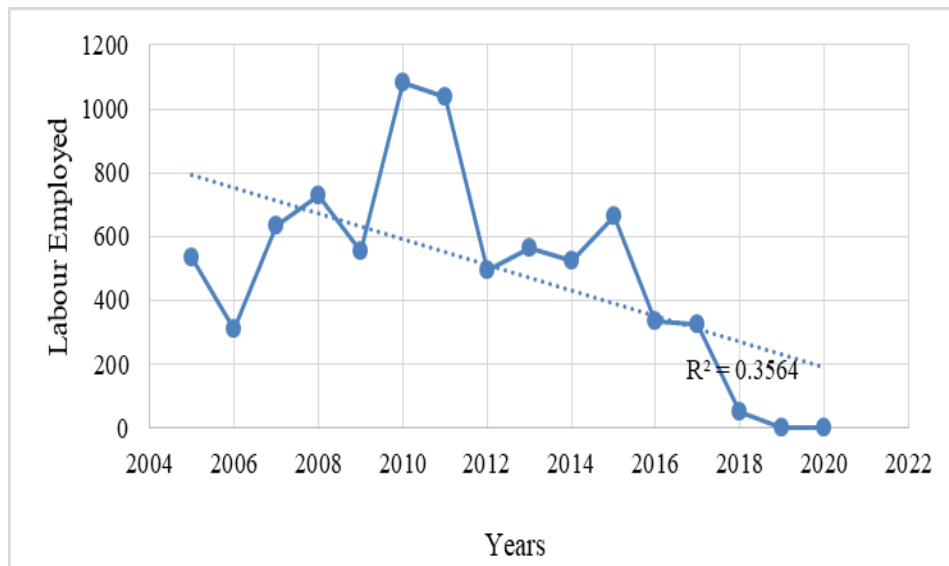


Figure 6: Situation of Labour Employment in CDC Plantations Sampled

Source: Constructed

3.6 Impact on Farm Produce

Another impact of the Anglophone crisis on agro-industries is reduction in plantation crop output. Falling employment and low labour turn out perhaps have a negative impact on plantation produce. Prior to the Anglophone crisis, a significant quantity of banana was produced. From 2007 to 2016, banana production increased by 64,165tons (296,492 to 232,327 tons).

However, the outbreak of the socio-political crisis in 2016 induced adverse impact on agro-plantations with Fako highly affected than those in the Moungo Division. This has led to a drastic reduction of 108,608tons (296492–187884) in banana production from 2016 to 2020 (Figure 7).

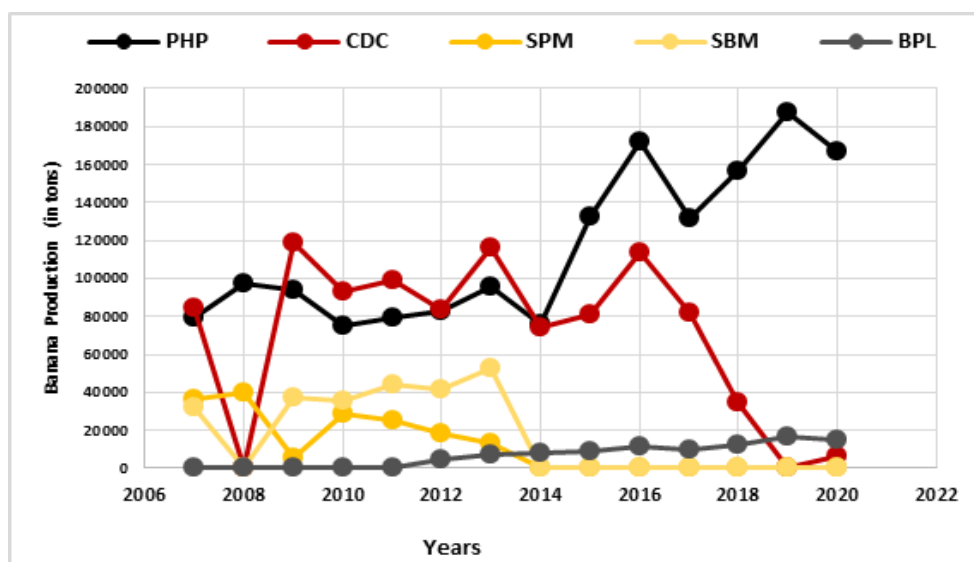


Figure 7: Variability in Banana Production in some sampled Estates in Fako and Moungo Divisions from 2007-2020

Source: Fieldwork, 2020

At the beginning of 2019, the CDC produced only 878 tons of rubber (figure 6) out of the targeted 4000 tons. This output represented 23 percent of production targeted. When the armed conflicts occurred, many of the separatists rebels occupied the CDC rubber plantations forcing the corporation to abandon these estates now used as their training grounds. This reduced crop output as the farms were not exploited. Today only seven out of the eleven rubber plantations are operational in Mounjo Division. The Penda Mboko and Tiko rubber processing units operates at a capacity of 10 to 20 percent due to insecurity. The oil palm sector has also declined in crop production (figure 8). Statistics for 2019 show that the CDC produced only 2100 tons out of the 17400tons targeted due to fighting between the Cameroon armed forces and separatists. Today only three out of the seven oil palm plantations are operational as many workers have deserted the plantation. The remaining three estates in the area are operating but not at their full capacity. This situation has

obliged the company to move the processing of its palm oil to the production unit of SOCAPALM at Dibombari.

Fieldwork revealed that in the rubber and oil palm sector, ageing plantations, poor corporate governance in the management of human resources (labour), impact of climate change and plantation conflicts have a negative effect on plantation produce and the livelihoods of the population.

Figure 8 shows variation in banana, rubber and oil palm outputs in the CDC from 2005 to 2019. Before the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis, production outputs for the crops fluctuated but have drastically reduced since 2016. This is because of the attack on the Mafanja I banana-parking station in August 2018, which resulted to only 1488 tons of banana exported. Insecurity has also contributed to labour exodus and a complete shutdown of the banana sector. Other plantations have

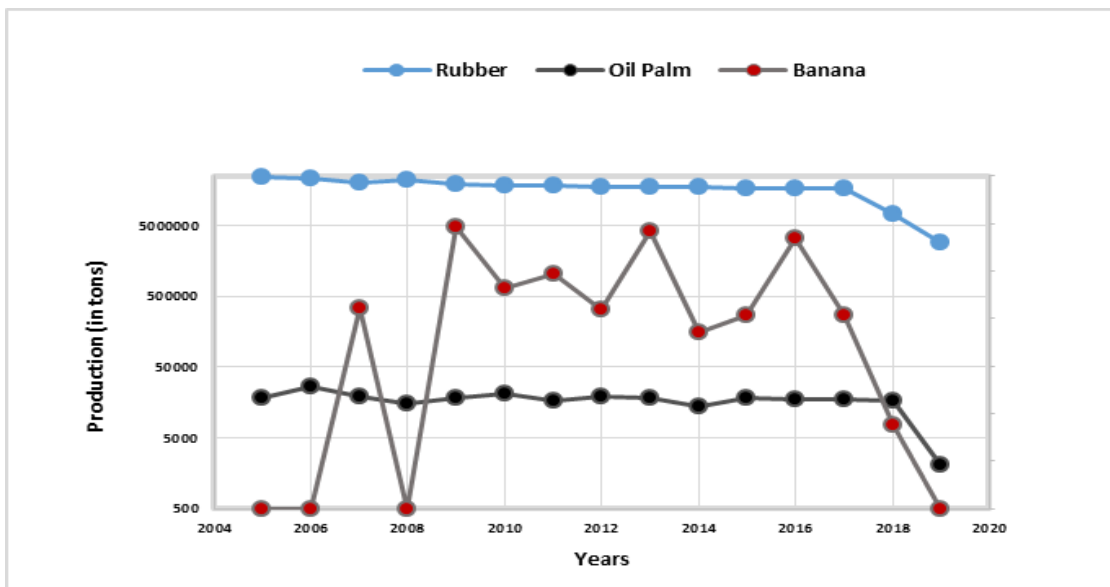


Figure 8: Situation of Cash Crops Production in CDC

Source: Fieldwork, 2020

suffered a similar faith with drastic reductions in output. As of 2019, only 878 tons of rubber and 2100 tons of oil palm were produced. The banana sector has been the most vulnerable to attacks by separatists rebels because of the foreign income it generates, its advantage as a staple for the population and the location of most of its plantations in Fako Division where activist activities are high. The banana estates of SBM, SPM, PHP and BPL located in the Mounjo Division (Figure 3) are less affected by the crisis, but production outputs are plummeting (figure 9). According to the determination coefficient for variation in production outputs ($R^2 = 0.0035\%/year$) banana production has been falling by 0.0035%/year between 2007-2020, (Figure 9).

Figure 9 shows variability in banana production by five stakeholders operating in Fako and Mounjo belt from 2007-2020. PHP is leading while the CDC, a previous giant agro-industry in cash crop production has recorded a drastic fall in banana produce from 2016-2020 due to arm conflicts. Small scale producers such as SPM and SBM experienced a fall in outputs below 40,000tons as a result of the effects of the anglophone crisis coupled with non-possession of export licenses and the quality standard requirements imposed by the European Union. Even though BPL that emerged in 2009 recorded significant progress in banana production outputs, the general production outputs has been plummeting since 2016 when the anglophone crisis began.

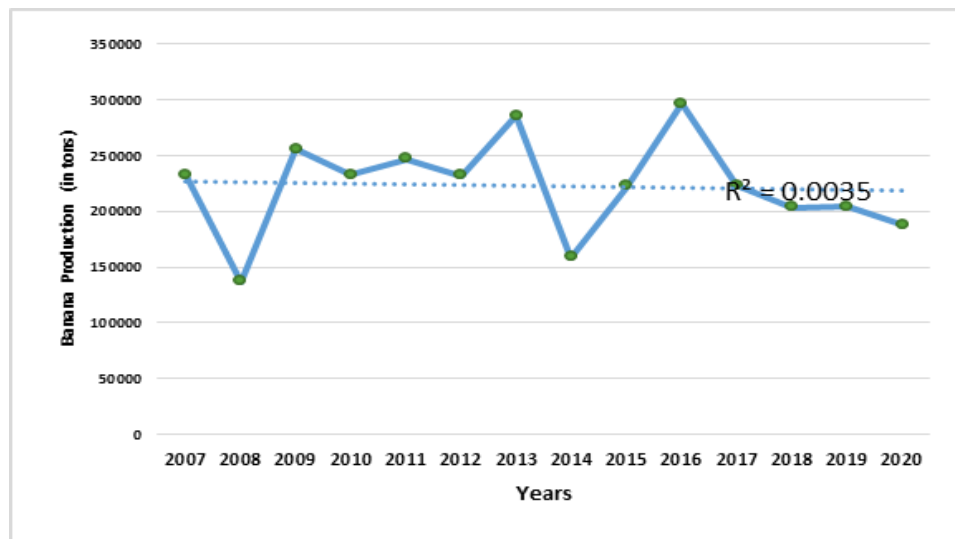


Figure 9: Banana production for Estates sampled in Fako and Moungo Divisions from 2007-2020

Source: Realised from field data compiled

4. DISCUSSION

Prior to the restructuring of industrial plantations and birth of crisis in Fako and Moungo Divisions, these enterprises for several decades were considered as 'drivers of development'. This is because of the social and economic benefits in the form of employment, income generation, housing, health service delivery and social integration they created in communities hosting the plantations. These benefits were further enriched by the multiplier effects such as reinvestment of revenue earned from participation in plantation activities on other livelihoods activities such as petit trading, transportation services, creation of chop farms in the Estates and establishment of small holder schemes in their communities. This brought prosperity, reduced the gap between the poor and rich rural population, promoted community development and stability in the areas of plantation agriculture.

Unfortunately, the birth of the economic crisis with its negative outcomes on Agro-industry in the Fako and Moungo belt led to redynamisation of the corporations with pressure on plantation agriculture in Fako and Moungo Divisions from the Bretton Woods institutions. This pressure led to introduction of reforms, that failed to restore stability in the region with outcomes being the Anglophone crisis and attacks on investments of these plantations. The negative outcomes on development induced by this crisis have destabilized communities, strained the relation between Agro-industry in the Fako-Moungo belt and its grassroots communities, promoted social, economic and environmental injustice and underdevelopment which has been the subject of some studies (Pigeaud, 2009&2011; Barthlo, 2011; Didier, 2014; Awang, 2016, Bamenjo, 2017; WRM, 2010&2018; RELUFA, 2018).

As highlighted on this paper, the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis in 2016 and the arm conflicts that followed have done much harm on agro-industrial plantations hitherto considered 'drivers of development'. These damages range from destruction of plantation investments (crops, health, education infrastructures, factories, workers camps, service buildings and logistics), to kidnapping of plantation workers for ransom and occupation of plantation estates by separatist which have set a gloomy future for agro-plantations, population empowerment and community development. According to Chung (2020), the Anglophone crisis has led to loss of human capital and equipment, drop in financial benefits and cash crop produce such as rubber, oil palm and banana. This context has incapacitated the corporations from carrying out their regalia mission of crop production, support to its workers in the form of health service delivery, employment of workers, consistent payment of wages, maintenance of its run-down assets and workers camps.

Arm conflict is a serious challenge to plantation agriculture and community development. However, engaging policy to overcome this upheaval can only be possible if there is a rapprochement between the warring factions in Anglophone Cameroon which may induce a promising future for plantation agriculture and development of host-communities. This conciliatory, holistic and inclusive approach might give way on how to tackle the crisis. In addition, demilitarization and demobilization of the Anglophone regions; material and financial support to populations and communities affected by the crisis will also help. This aid in the form of reconstruction of houses and infrastructures destroyed in these communities, and

Resettlement of the populations displaced might help to bring back life in the areas hosting plantations. This effort should be accompanied by a broad-based reform such as the empowerment of these communities through effective decentralization, or federation to help the people take their destiny into their hands in management of their affairs. It should be noted that this was a prime cause of the armed conflicts that have devastated the agro-industries and their host communities. Within this ambit of conciliatory strategy, stakeholder must build trust on each other.

Political infiltration into the affairs of agro-industrial plantations and reduction of exasperating state control over resources in the region without concern of workers operating in these corporations and grassroots communities must be reconsidered. Social inclusion and participation in decision making that affects the livelihoods of the population that interact on daily basis with the plantation estates is indispensable and legitimate. This could be a panacea for the sociopolitical crisis, which has destroyed the existing plantation in the study area. According to the *Le Messenger Newspaper* (November 24th 2021) citing the minister delegate at the Ministry of Economy and Regional Planning of Cameroon during a presentation of the conflict report to the national Assembly of Cameroon, the armed conflicts have cost the government 4213 billion FCFA losses in four years.

Building a cohesive society and having plantation labourers on the field requires innovative strategies for youth's engagement in industrial agriculture. This strategy will stop rural exodus, enhance youths' engagement in plantation agriculture and other rural economic activities that create labour instability in the plantations under study. These solutions are threefold. First, we have the Rural Environmental Friendly dimension that improve land governance, facilitates access to natural and productive resources (land, forest, water, inputs, ICT) and promote the strict control of Multinational companies' agribusiness activities that always induces conflict of access to land among rural youths. Secondly, we have Rural Youth Appealing Strategies-RYAS" in which agrarian policies should be tailored to the provision of incentives for agribusiness; encouragement of youth entrepreneurship skills building via organized free workshops, youth-agribusiness establishment that are tax-free, improve corporate governance and corporate social responsibilities of the CDC, SOCAPALM and PHP. Thirdly, "Draw Rural Youth Strategies-DRYS", which focuses on rural disenclavement through electrification and pipe borne water supply; provision and equipment of health units with trained workers, valorization of touristic potentials and the tarring of rural feeder roads linking major towns, to de-enclave rural areas and curb youths exodus. This strategy can permit youths to develop the habit to live in rural areas and have outdoor lifestyles.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have examined the Anglophone crisis, its manifestations, causes and reasons for targeting agro-industrial plantations, its consequences in the Fako-Moungo Belt and some policy guidelines. It was realized the plantation agriculture has suffered many setbacks dating back to their management by the Cameroon government, restructuring and privatization to Nongovernmental Organizations and individual. This transition in management gave birth to many crises the most recent being the armed conflicts affecting the Anglophone regions of Cameroon since 2016 with negative outcomes on the corporations. Despite the negative influence exerted by these crises on these agricultural plantations, they continue to survive considering that they are the second employer after the state in Cameroon and contribute significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product. The Anglophone crisis which has serious implications on plantation Agriculture and populations in the Fako-Moungo belt must be redressed by warring factions through inclusive dialogue. This is because crisis in these plantations have led to loss of many lives and destruction of property. Also, the crisis is a threat to world food security considering the countries that depend on the produces for food. Finally, the crisis is an obstacle to development following the role these agro-industries play in community development, unemployment combat and livelihoods enhancement in Cameroon and the world.

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