

1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo – also known as DRC, or Congo – Kinshasa, or former Zaire, to differentiate it from the other Congo – is one of the largest African countries, and is located in the center of the continent. Despite having immense natural resources (and perhaps because of that), its history has been marked by tragic events. After a brutal and dispossessing colonialism, a deviated independence, with civil war, a long dictatorship of oppression and backwardness (supported by the West) and, after its fall, two more civil wars in the East, due to neighboring conflicts.

In the heart of the African continent, the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, in terms of area, is one of the richest in valuable raw materials, but also one of the poorest, economically and socially. In 2018, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had, according to the World Bank, the third largest population of poor people in the world, with 73% of the Congolese population, equivalent to 60 million people, living on less than 1, \$90 a day (the international poverty rate). Most of the people are dedicated to agriculture. Among the main crops are cassava, sugar cane, bananas, maize, palm oil, peanuts and rice. The country also produces coffee, cotton and rubber. <https://pt.euronews.com/next/2021/08/04/rdc-o-pais-jovem-que-sonha-crescer>

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) finds itself in a sphere of globalization and interdependence, where the challenges of development are complex and multidimensional, it is necessary that sectoral public policies - namely agricultural, food and nutritional security policies - contribute to a effective transformation and towards more inclusive and sustainable development. This is the principle of Policy Coherence for Development, an important tool to ensure that the various sectoral policies do not collide with efforts to eradicate poverty and promote development, at global, national and local levels.

Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity are both causes and effects of poverty, compromising human development, the development prospects of societies and the economic potential of countries. Finding affordable foods that promote health and good nutrition for a growing world population remains a major international challenge. Promoting more sustainable, resilient, responsible, competitive, diverse and inclusive food systems is a development imperative that requires everyone's participation.

According to the Synthesis Report of SADAC (2021), food and nutrition security is a fundamental result of livelihoods, which comprise the capabilities, assets

(including material and social resources) and activities necessary for a livelihood. Access to and control of assets is influenced by the interplay of operational rules, laws, regulations, policies and processes, which determine potential livelihood strategies (e.g. crop cultivation, livestock, mining, trade, education and hand migration -work). Livelihoods play in a broader context of vulnerability defined by trends (eg population growth, climate change, seasons, economic growth, technological developments, etc.) and shocks (droughts, floods, cyclones, conflicts, disease) .

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1. Historical causes and reasons for food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

From 1885 to 1908, the Congo Independent State (EIC), also called the Congo Free State, consisted of the private colony of the King of Belgium, Leopold II. Faced with a territory eighty times larger than Belgium, Leopold II divided the region's lands into three categories: indigenous lands, vacant lands and lands granted to third parties. The capital of the Independent State of Congo was the city of Boma, on the banks of the Congo River, on the edge of the Atlantic.

In Boma, government offices were located and many European officials lived. The Capital had a certain structure to serve these Europeans, such as a church, a hospital, a post office, a military base, a two-story hotel and a tram that took employees to the hotel.

The colonial system was developed in three parts: the *corveia* (forced labor); free work with remuneration and the purchase of products (*l'achat des produits*). Exhaustive forced labor to extract the sap from the rubber was one of the main drivers of the inhumane treatment to which the Congolese were subjected. Based on a militarized system, they were controlled by Force Publique, the colonial police, and were subjected to physical violence and even death (Hoschild, 1999).

According to Hoschild:

When a village refused to collect rubber, it was customary for state soldiers or private companies, or sometimes their allies, to kill all the inhabitants so that the neighboring villages would quickly understand the message. But some European officers became suspicious and decided to take precautions. For every cartridge given to a soldier, they now demanded proof that the bullet had been used to kill someone and not wasted on hunting or, even worse, saved for a possible mutiny. And the most common proof was the right hand of a corpse.

Therefore, we check the example of Oil palm plantations now owned by large multinational corporations in West and Central Africa were carried out on land stolen from local communities during colonial occupations. This is the case in what is now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where the Anglo-Dutch multinational food company Unilever began building its palm oil empire. Today, these plantations are the scene of ongoing poverty, conflict and violence. There can be no solution to these problems until the lands are returned to the communities and justice is done for the damage suffered.

In 1911 King Leopold of Belgium gave British industrialist Lord Leverhulme concessions over huge areas in what is now the DRC. Twice the area of Belgium, these forest lands are full of oil palm trees, which the locals have tended and developed over generations, converting what was once a savannah into one of the most important rainforests in the world. The concessions did not give Leverhulme's company, the Huileries du Congo Belge (HCB), rights over the territories of the local communities living in these areas, and there should have been a process for demarcating land within the concessions. But Leverhulme was impatient and pressured the Belgian authorities to give him a monopoly on buying oil palm in the area – within the infamous “tripartite agreements” between Leverhulme, the Belgian colonial authority and the local communities that, in reality, had no say in the matter. . From then on, local residents were treated like thieves if they dared to supply the product harvested from their own oil palms to anyone other than Leverhulme's company – although the market price was usually three to four times higher than the market price. paid for her.

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Leverhulme and the Belgian settlers justified this scandalous monopoly on the grounds that his company was making major investments in the area by building palm oil factories and providing jobs, schools, health services and churches to the residents. They also invented, without any scientific basis, an argument that the oil palms were “natural” and not, as was widely known among residents and outsiders who spent time in the region, that they were the result of generations of care and work on the part of the communities. locations. If the oil palms were “natural”, the state (ie the Belgian colonial authority) could claim ownership rights over them and more easily justify handing over control to Leverhulme's company.

Neither argument had any basis. The schools the company set up were of poor quality and largely unattended by local children who were otherwise busy working for the company. Medical services were also unavailable to local residents and, as one colonial administrator admitted:

“Even under the most favorable circumstances, it is still debatable whether the benefits of medicine outweigh all the harm that the exploitation of oil palms causes to the population (...) compulsory work is usually too heavy (...) The time dedicated to the collection and carrying the fruits is often excessive, and the contribution of women and children generally requires efforts greater than their physical strength. □ □

Belgian agronomist and missionary Hyacinthe Vanderyst, who spent years studying Congo oil palms, published an article in the Belgian magazine Congo in 1925, in which he wrote:

“All the observations, research and studies that I myself have carried out confirm in the most certain and absolute way the argument defended by the natives (...) On the other hand, until now, no one has openly tried to prove that oil palms are natural formations. This is nothing more than an assertion, totally devoid of arguments to support it (...) The natives claim to be the owners of the oil palms and, perhaps, of the secondary forests, and this for several reasons: because they were the original occupants of the country in terms of stable settlements, hunting, fishing and gathering of natural products, for being farmers who opened and exploited the savannas, transformed into forests and then into oil palms, for being creators of oil palms thanks to their direct action and their deliberate intervention, which involved the introduction oil palm in the country □ □

The “Pende rebellion” of 1931, in reference to the Pende people who lived in the southwest of what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, was one of the biggest revolts that took place during the Belgian colonial occupation. It started in the district of Kwango, predominantly in the territories of Kikwit and Kandale, areas dominated by the palm oil plantations of HCB and another company called Compagnie de Kasai. One of the main reasons for the rebellion, if not the main one, was the brutal policy of the colonial administration in the area, which, due to a lack of manpower for oil palm activities, sent soldiers to the villages to recruit workers using violence. Mortality was extremely high: out of every 20 workers recruited to collect oil palm in and around Lusanga – the center of HCB's plantations in the region – hardly ten returned to their villages.

2.1 From colonial occupation to financial capitalism

Leverhulme's company, which would later become the Anglo-Dutch multinational food giant Unilever, ended up converting large parts of its concessions into industrial oil palm plantations and stopped buying fruit from the local oil palms that still existed. Over hundreds of thousands of hectares in various parts of the Congo, the HCB implemented a racist and violent occupation of community lands, in accordance with the plan outlined by its director general in 1928. For the affected communities, little has changed in terms of working conditions, access to land and forests, or the quality of medical, educational and infrastructure services that the company should provide in exchange for this imposed occupation of the communities' lands.

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Unfortunately, Unilever's plantations and concessions survived the end of Belgian colonial rule over the Congo in the 1960s. The empty promises of "development" under colonial occupation were followed by the same empty promises under Mobutu's dictatorship in the late 1960s (when the new DRC government took a minority stake in the company and renamed it Plantations et Huileries du Congo-PHC).

Based on this historical context, we understand how colonialism influenced and has negatively influenced the economic growth of the DRC, since the values that dominated in colonialism are still glaring even today when we continue to witness local conflicts that derive from the habits and customs of the colonial regime. . Leading the DRC to a situation of food insecurity with very rich land for the practice of agricultural activity.

2. Economic Growth Analysis

The health crisis linked to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had a significant negative impact on the economic situation, both internationally and nationally, had adverse effects on economic activity in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Over the course of 2020, real GDP grew by just 1.7% compared to 4.4% and 5.8% respectively in 2019 and 2018, marking weak growth for nearly two decades. This weak growth, although higher than the average for sub-Saharan Africa for the corresponding period, hides the recession experienced by the rest of the national economy, excluding mining. Indeed, despite the acceleration of growth seen in telecoms in 2020, real GDP excluding mining fell by 1.3% against an increase of 5.8% in the previous year.

Table 01 Contribution of different sectors to economic growth (in growth points)

fields of activity	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (p)	2020 (and)
primary sector	5.5	2.9	3.2	5.5	2.0	0.4	2.2	4.7	0.8	3.1
Agriculture, forestry, livestock, hunting and fishing	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4
Agriculture	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5
food culture	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4
annuity	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Forestry	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1
Breeding, fishing and hunting	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Extraction	4.8	2.3	2.4	4.7	1.3	-0.2	2.0	4.40	0.28	2.7
secondary sector	0.8	1.2	1.7	1.2	1.2	0.4	1.2	0.7	1.5	-0.8
manufacturing industries	0.2	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.0	0.3	-0.1	0.7	-0.8
Food, beverage and tobacco industries	-0.2	0.8	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.9	0.1	-0.2	0.6	-0.6
Other manufacturing industries	0.4	-0.3	-0.1	-0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	-0.2
Construction and public works	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.0	-0.3	-0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.0
Electricity, gas, steam and water	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
tertiary sector	0.4	2.7	3.2	2.6	3.5	1.7	1.2	0.5	2.1	0.1
Exchange	0.1	1.6	1.2	0.7	1.5	0.9	0.7	0.3	0.6	-0.5
Transport and telecommunications	0.1	0.7	1.2	0.8	1.2	0.4	0.3	-0.2	0.5	1.2
Other services outside admin. public	0.2	0.4	0.6	1.0	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.8	-0.4
Public administration services	0.1	-0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	-0.2
FISIM	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	0.0
GDP at factor cost	6.7	6.8	8.1	9.3	6.7	2.5	4.6	5.8	4.4	2.3
product taxes	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	-0.1	-0.9	0.0	-0.1	-0.6
GDP at constant prices	6.9	7.1	8.5	9.5	6.9	2.4	3.7	5.8	4.4	1.7

Source: Central Bank of Congo, according to CESC work results

According to the table above, we can see that the supply-side approach found that economic growth was mainly driven by the primary sector and, to a lesser extent, by the tertiary sector, with respective contributions of 3.1 points and 0.1 points of growth. On the other hand, the secondary sector had a negative contribution of 0.8 points of growth.

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Food production: The added value of subsistence agriculture increased by 3.1% in 2020, thus contributing 0.4 points to real GDP growth. This evolution is mainly due to the slight improvements observed in the production of peppers, palm nuts, vandzou, wheat and barley, as well as sweet potatoes, for the respective rates of 10.2%, 8.7%, 6.4 %, 6.3% and 5.5% compared to the previous year.

Business culture: Commercial crop value-added growth slowed to 3.8% in 2020. Furthermore, this sub-subsidiary's contribution to growth remained practically nil. This situation is linked to the lack of investment in all crops. However, some crops registered improvements in their production levels. These include cocoa, meal, cotton and palm oil, with respective growth rates of 19.4%, 6.6% and 6.3%.

Forest: In 2020, the added value of the forestry sub-branch decreased by 9.2%, after a growth of 3.5% in 2019. This contraction is mainly explained by the Government's policy of environmental protection and supervision of indigenous populations in terms of forest exploitation .

Therefore, it becomes important to understand the dynamics of agricultural activity today and how this activity can be promoted in order to overcome the different constraints that this activity has faced today, which comes from the colonial period, as we present in the aforementioned text.

3.1 Evolution and use of land occupation

The evolution of land use has improved in relation to the colonial period, given that at this time they needed authorization from the colonial administration to own a piece of land. But according to a study done by CFSVA (2011-2012), we see that land use levels are still low given that seventy-two percent (62%) of households surveyed in the CFSVA survey (2011-2012) reported having cultivated the land during the agricultural season prior to the survey. Fifty-two percent (52%) used less than 2 hectares and 19% cultivated more than 2 hectares. The average size of farmland per household is estimated at 2.5 hectares, while the country has 25 million hectares of arable land (FAO, 2013) and 66% of the population is rural (WDI, 2012). In Bandundu, Equateur, Katanga and Kasai Oriental provinces, more than 80% of all households cultivated land on less than 2 hectares. The proportion of households cultivating more than 2 hectares of land is highest in the eastern province at 54%, followed by Maniema (40%) and eastern Kasai (34%).

The same study states that how people access land can influence how they use it. Among the rural households interviewed who reported having farmed during the agricultural season prior to the survey, 86% reported owning their own land, 11% had leased land, and the remainder had access to land through partnership. Land leasing was most common in the Lower Congo, Orientale Province and North Kivu. Interestingly, land ownership does not appear to be restricted to the wealthiest provinces such as Katanga and North Kivu. It is clear that widespread and persistent conflict and violence in the highly productive areas of eastern Congo has caused massive population displacements that have deprived many families of access to land.

As we can see the limited access to land, it is paradoxical to note that 20% of families in a country with a large potential for arable land reported having difficulty accessing land. For example, the strong demographic pressure in certain parts of the Oriental Province (in particular in Ituri) is responsible for the continuous fragmentation of the cultivated surface and for strong ethnic polarizations that hardly favor the expansion of still available but unexplored spaces (WFP, 2012). The disorganization of the land system can also be one of the reasons for this demand. Both official and customary systems for resolving land disputes in the DRC face significant challenges in terms of effectiveness, in particular in protecting the rights of the people living there today.

The working groups identified the need to implement national policies that promote the livelihood of forest-dependent communities, help secure their rights to land and resources,

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develop mechanisms for community participation through a participatory approach, map community forest resources, and develop forest management plans (USAID 2010).

We can also verify other limitations to the agrarian production system in the DRC, which are causes for food insecurity, such as:

- **Soil quality:** was another limitation reported by 28% of families. Mineral fertilization is rarely used, although it is recommended depending on the nature of the soil. The issue of chemical fertilizers was studied for over a decade in the 1980s by the Programa Nacional de Fertilizantes (PNE) supported by FAO and SENAFIC. For most crops, a good response to fertilizer application was found. However, the cost of chemical fertilizers continues to be a constraint for their importation into the country and also for their delivery to users, as they are very expensive. On the other hand, the private sector has little or no interest in this activity due to the very small and unstable market (MINAGRI, 2009).
- **Lack of rain and irrigation:** 24% of households reported experiencing insufficient irrigation and rainwater on their crops. The estimated irrigation potential ranges from 4 to 7 million hectares, including small water areas. Despite this very significant potential, the irrigated perimeters do not exceed 13,500 hectares. The DRC is perfectly suited for rice cultivation, whether rainfed (Maniema), irrigated (Ruzizi valley) or aquatic (all provinces). Small-scale irrigation systems with large participation of producers have proven to be very effective (MINAGRI, 2009). In addition, irrigated horticulture and rice cultivation have a strong productive and income-generating potential.
- **Limited access to agricultural inputs:** At national level, 51% of the surveyed households raised the issue of lack of access to improved seed species as one of the main constraints in agriculture, 45% even deplored the difficulty of accessing even traditional seeds. There is a huge demand for improved seeds and plants that is not being met. The seed market is unstructured and remains largely informal. Farmers involved in a project or who live in areas targeted by NGOs or INERA posts close to their homes are more likely to have access to modern agricultural practices. Seed producers focus their program only on the demand for seeds in the emergency program of FAO, UNHCR, ICRC and CARITAS (MINAGRI, 2009).
- **Lack of modernization:** The lack of modern equipment. Production instruments remain rudimentary: traditional agricultural instruments, such as hoes and machetes, as well as plowing with oxen, are still very common throughout the country. Mechanized agriculture is still rare and mostly operational on large-scale plantations. The Congolese government created the National Agricultural Mechanization Service (SNMA), the National Agricultural Motorization Service "SENAMA", the National Animal Traction Service "SENATRA" and the National Service of Appropriate Technology (SENATEC) to increase agricultural production. Despite the government's efforts to support mechanization through the acquisition of agricultural equipment, such as tractors, its coverage barely reaches 5% of the total 8,000,000 hectares cultivated per year. Furthermore, equipment maintenance remains an issue. Pests and diseases: 44% of households referred to pests as one of the constraints they face. Research and reports from the country's veterinary services show that many enzootics, epizootics and panzootics considered a priority by the International Organization of Epizootics (OIE) are prevalent in the DRC. The organoleptic qualities of goats in Kasai are recognized, which can be an added value in the development of this subsistence sector. However, the progress of this type of cultivation can be hampered by the threat of pest. Small ruminants (PPR); therefore, it is important that veterinary surveillance is implemented to support its development. The last time rinderpest was reported in the DRC was in 1952. However,

3. Conclusion

According to the two UN agencies, the number of people affected by high acute food insecurity in the DRC is estimated at 27.3 million, or one in three people, including nearly seven million people struggling with emergency levels of hunger. acute. This situation makes the DRC the country with the largest number of people in urgent need of food security assistance in the world. For the first time, we were able to analyze the vast majority of the population, which helped us get a closer look at the real picture of the staggering scale of food insecurity in the DRC, said Peter Musoko, representative of thePAMin the DRC. This country must be able to feed its people and export a surplus. We cannot let children go to bed hungry and families skip meals for an entire day.

Conflict remains one of the main causes of famine in the DRC. Large areas of the country's eastern provinces (Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika) as well as the central region of Kasai - the scene of a recent conflict - have been hit hard by the violence. The economic recession and the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 are the other key factors that are aggravating this hunger crisis in the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa. Recurring conflicts in eastern DRC and the suffering they cause remain a major concern. Social and political stability is essential to strengthen food security and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations. According to Aristide Ongone Obama (2021), FAO representative in the DRC. "We must urgently focus on producing food where it is needed most.

Behind these alarming hunger figures are the stories of parents deprived of access to their land or forced to flee for their lives as they watch their children fall ill from lack of food. The WFP team encountered families who had returned to their villages to find their homes burned and their crops looted. Some survived by eating only taro, a root that grows wild, or just cassava leaves boiled in water.

The most affected populations are mainly displaced people, refugees, returnees, host families and people affected by natural disasters (floods, landslides, fires), as well as female-headed households. Added to this are the poorest populations in urban and peri-urban areas and those living in landlocked areas with low purchasing power and access to food through markets.

According to new data, the food crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo does not seem to be abating any time soon and could even, without increasing assistance, get worse in the coming months, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Food Program World (WFP). According to its new report, which shows that even parts of the capital Kinshasa and neighboring areas are being hard hit, the alarming hunger figures will remain at the same level throughout the first half of 2022. In fact, the nutritional situation could get even worse in some regions and for some vulnerable groups, including young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women.

For many people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the food situation remains desperate as the mass of obstacles to overcome (insecurity, disease, destruction and lack of infrastructure, limited access to quality resources and finance, to name a few) undermine any chance of being able to feed themselves and their families adequately. The only way to break this vicious circle and change these trends is to help them become more resilient and productive," said Aristide Ongone, FAO Representative in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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Recommendations

Based on these assumptions, it becomes relevant to think and rethink an agricultural system that can respond to the concrete problems of the agrarian sector in the DRC, which is a unifying sector and has been suffering since the colonial era. Therefore, we suggest for this proposal a project in the area of agriculture with a view to improving agricultural production and productivity, which involves improving production techniques as well as creating policies that allow better access to land.

Therefore, we would like your support in information to provide the following information, as well as other elements you deem necessary:

- 1. Which provinces can we advance with an agricultural project;**
- 2. Which cultures believe to be relevant;**
- 3. And how long the project must work to have satisfactory results.**
- 4. What could be the functional budget for this proposal to be able to move forward.**