



**Trees for the Future**  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Trees for the Future Agroforestry Initiatives Benefit Endangered Cross River Gorillas in Cameroon**

*NGO helps protect near-extinct animals by preserving forests through sustainable agriculture*

**Silver Spring, Md.** -- Trees for the Future, a leading nonprofit organization providing economic opportunity and improving livelihoods worldwide through seed distribution and agroforestry training, says its work in Southwest Cameroon is not only helping communities develop more sustainable agricultural practices, but it's also helping protect Africa's most critically endangered ape, the Cross River Gorilla.

"As far as we know, there are only about 300 of these types of gorillas left in the wild," says Ethan Budiansky, head of Africa and Caribbean programs for Trees for the Future.

"Unsustainable farming practices and deforestation for basic needs like food and housing exploit the natural habitats of a gorilla on the verge of extinction."

Trees for the Future concentrates its efforts in the Western Highlands of Cameroon where it works with rural farmers to develop sustainable land-use practices which not only improve the lives of people, but help protect the Cross River Gorilla and other endangered animals including the Cameroon-Nigeria chimpanzee. As of 2010, Trees for the Future is collaborating with 171 farming associations and working with over 3,000 farmers in 15 districts to plant over 2.2 million more trees by the end of this year.

Deforestation is a critical problem in Cameroon due to agricultural expansion and the ever-growing need for construction material and fuel wood. By improving soil fertility and decreasing erosion through agroforestry extension, farmers increase their crop yields while also providing income-generating activities such as raising livestock and honey, snail, and fruit production. Trees for the Future continually works with farmers to develop sustainable agriculture methods that also provide alternative sources for construction material and fuel wood in the Lebialem Highlands, home to both the Cross River Gorilla and the Cameroon-Nigeria chimpanzee.

More than 50 percent of Cameroon's 18 million people reside in rural areas and nearly 50 percent of the rural population is living in poverty. The majority of the people live in or around the country's 22 million hectares of forest and are dependent on the forest's resources for their livelihoods and to meet local energy needs.

“Through working with local farmers on more sustainable practices we are protecting forests by creating a buffer zone between the gorillas and local communities,” adds Budiansky. “Improving soil fertility to increase crop yields is the primary aspect of our work in Cameroon, but it has a broader impact on neighboring forests and the endangered animals that inhabit them.”

*Trees for the Future also works with Peace Corps Cameroon helping to support programs and train volunteers in agroforestry.*

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### **About Trees for the Future**

Headquartered in Silver Spring, Md. and founded in 1989, Trees for the Future is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization helping communities around the world plant trees. Through seed distribution, sustainable management and agroforestry training, and in-country technical assistance, it empowers rural groups worldwide to restore tree cover to their lands, protect the environment and help to preserve traditional livelihoods and cultures for generations. To learn more, visit: <http://www.plant-trees.org>.