

# Cameroon

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What's happening

47%

Population below international poverty line

€55

per month

National minimum wage

€159

per month

Rural living wage

€237

per month

Rural living income

43%

Agricultural workforce

15%

Agriculture share of GDP

4

high

Risk to workers' rights

## Context

Cameroon has a population of approximately 25.9 million people.<sup>[1]</sup> The country is relatively equally populated in its urban and rural regions, which account for 57%<sup>[2]</sup> and 43%<sup>[3]</sup> of the population respectively. Agriculture is a significant source of employment for the country as it assumes 43% of the workforce.<sup>[4]</sup> The sector represents 15% of the national GDP.<sup>[5]</sup>

Cameroon's agricultural sector is key for its economy as it employs almost half of the national workforce. Smallholder farmers dominate the sector and there are roughly 2 million small family farms in the country. Nevertheless, these farms are highly dependent on manual labor with minimal or even no other inputs whatsoever. In general, rural areas face significant issues of poverty, especially in the northern regions of the country. However, although Cameroon is fully capable of meeting its food demand and address its rural development issues, the poor quality of commercial farming has the country depended on food imports instead.<sup>[6]</sup>

The top produced commodities in Cameroon are cassava, plantains, maize, palm oil fruit and taro (cocoyam).<sup>[7]</sup> Cameroon's top export commodities in terms of quantity are cocoa beans, bananas, cotton lint, natural rubber and green coffee.<sup>[8]</sup>

# Wages

## Minimum wage

The minimum wage in Cameroon is set by law at 36,270 Central African francs (55 EUR) per month.<sup>[9]</sup> However, employers tend to bargain with workers for lower salaries, taking advantage of the country's high unemployment rate. Therefore, salaries below the minimum wage are a common issue in Cameroon. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in sectors where unskilled labor is needed, such as the public works and the domestic sector. In addition, the government's health and safety regulations do not include the informal sector, while health and medical coverage for employees, which is mandatory by law, is not enforced.<sup>[10]</sup>

The **Global Living Wage Coalition** has developed 2 Reference Value studies for rural Cameroon based on the Anker methodology, one for [living wage](#) and one for [living income](#).

## Living wage

The Anker Living Wage Reference Value in rural Cameroon is estimated at 104,623 Central African francs (159 EUR) per month. This is the wage required for workers in a typical rural area of Cameroon to afford a basic but decent standard of living. The living wage estimate is almost 3 times higher than the national minimum wage, 74% higher when compared to the average rural wage and 40% higher than the national poverty line wage.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Living income

The Anker Living Income Reference Value is estimated at 155,746 Central African francs (237 EUR). This value represents the amount a typical family in rural Cameroon needs to cover the monthly cost of a basic but decent standard of living. The estimate is 2.5 times higher than the income of a family which earns the national minimum wage. When it is compared to the income of a family whose members earn the average agricultural wage, however, the estimate is only 16% higher. This is due to the average rural wage in Cameroon being partly based on skilled and highly-paid workers. Therefore, in reality, the actual rural wages are significantly lower than the average rural wage, making the real gap to the living income estimate much larger.<sup>[12]</sup>

## What's happening

### RESOURCE

#### [Living Wage Reference Value, Rural Cameroon](#)

Living wage estimate for workers to be able to afford a basic but decent living standard in a typical rural area of Cameroon.

### RESOURCE

#### [Living Income Reference Value, Rural Cameroon](#)

Living income estimate for a typical family in rural Cameroon to cover the monthly cost of a basic but decent standard of living.

### RESOURCE

#### [Workers' Health and Labour Income in Cameroon](#)

This report by IZA explores the relationship between health and income by studying self-employed and wage-earning workers in Cameroon.

### RESOURCE

#### [Land Tenure Security in Cameroon](#)

This report by AERC deals with the tenure insecurity issues Cameroonian farmers face and its effects on agricultural productivity.

## RESOURCE

### Cameroon's Cocoa Value Chain

#### Analysis [↗](#)

An EU study which presents an overview of Cameroon's cocoa value chain, aiming to create useful knowledge for policy discussion and business operations.

## Footnotes

1. World Bank (2019). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CM>
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6. [6] IFAD. Country Profiles: Cameroon.  
<https://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/country/id/cameroon>
7. FAOSTAT (2019). [http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#rankings/commodities\\_by\\_country](http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#rankings/commodities_by_country)
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10. U.S. Department of State. 2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon.  
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cameroon/>
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<https://globallivingwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Rural-Cameroon-LW-Reference-value.pdf>
12. Global Living Wage Coalition (2020). Anker Living Income Reference Value: Rural Cameroon 2020. <https://globallivingwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Rural-Cameroon-LI-Reference-Value.pdf>