

Supplementary Method Field measurements and processing procedure

 The procedure was written to ensure reproducibility of results and thus includes many processing details. Both Amazonia and West African aridity gradients show increasing seasonality toward dry sites. Since this paper focuses on the spatial variation of the carbon budget, not seasonal variation nor long-term spatial variation, here we average monthly measurements to an annual mean for both study gradients. Thus, the data processing procedure here may not be suitable for those focusing on seasonal variation.

 Leaf area index (LAI) was estimated from hemispherical images taken with a Nikon 5100 camera and Nikon Fisheye Converter FC-E8 0.21x JAPAN near the center of each of the 25 subplots in each plot in each site, at a standard height of 1 m, and during overcast conditions. 22,000 photos were collected in total, every month during 2016-2017(ANK), 2012-2017 58 (BOB&KOG). Photos were processed using machine learning-based software 'ilastik' for 59 pixel classification and CANEYE² for leaf area index calculations. The exposure procedure 60 followed and GEM manual 4 (http://gem.tropicalforests.ox.ac.uk). The following parameters were supplied to CANEYE.

- 62 (1) P1 = angle of view of the fish eye divided by the amount of pixels from the centroid of the fish eye circle to where the horizon is on the image.
- 64 (2) angle of view $= 90$ degree, in which case, the edge of the photo is the horizon and the centroid of the image is zenith.

66 (3) COI = 80, consideration of field is 80 degrees, we don't want the edge of the photo because it is not clear and sometime obscure by tall grasses or saplings.

- 68 (4) Sub sample factor $=1$
- 69 (5) Fcover $= 20$ degree, this is to calculate the percentage of black pixels within the central 20-degree ring. We used this to understand the relative openness of canopy for the given image. It is not relevant to LAI
- 72 (6) PAIsat = 10, When a pixel is completely black, mathematically, the leaf area index (LAI) is infinite. As we provide CANEYE 25 subplot images for each estimation of LAI, this means all 25 subplot images show black at a given pixel. To address this 'infinite'issue, we use a value of 10 for LAI in such cases. This value is based on the guess that, the densest point in a tropical forest should have an LAI of 10.
- (7) Latitude 0 and Day of Year a random number (not relevant for tropical site LAI)
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 Then, we extract output from CANEYE using software R. We chose the latest method of LAI calculation offered by CANEYE, 'CE V6.1 True PAI'. CANEYE reported one LAI value per method (4 methods) per plot per site per month, as a synthesis across 25 subplots images. As systematic error is dominating in LAI calculation, we take the standard deviation of LAI across four methods as the uncertainty for LAI.

84 Canopy respiration (R_leaf) is calculated as plot-mean LAI multiplied by plot-mean leaf dark respiration (Rdark), a leaf gas exchange measurement. To obtain the leaves, branches for both sun leaves and shade leaves were detached and immediately re-cut under water to restore hydraulic connectivity for subsequent gas exchange measurement. The leaves were fully darkened for 30 min prior to measuring Rdark. Rdark was measured using an open flow gas exchange system (LI-6400XT, Li-Cor Inc., Lincoln, NE, USA) and block temperature was kept constant throughout the sampling period at 30º C. The uncertainty of Rdark was calculated 91 as the standard error of raw measurements . We convert measurements of Rdark from 30 92 degree to mean annual air temperature following $⁶$. Rdark was measured for sun and shade</sup> leaves and from wet to dry seasons. We calculate a basal area community weighted mean for 94 Rdark_sun and Rdark_shade. Then, we calculate canopy respiration per plot using: R_leaf = 95 Rdark_sun * F_sunlit + Rdark_shade* $(1 - F_{\text{Sunlit}})$, where F_sunlit is the sunlit leaf area. It 96 is calculated as Fsunlit = $(1 - \exp(-K*LAI))/K$ where K is the light extinction coefficient⁷. 97 The final canopy total respiration was calculated as R leaf $*$ 0.67 to account for daytime light 98 inhibition of leaf dark respiration .

 Above-ground live wood respiration (R_stem), was quantified at monthly intervals by measuring rates of CO2 accumulation to chambers attached to the tree trunk, and scaling using 102 stem surface area allometries, using a previously-developed equation⁹. Bole respiration per unit surface area was measured using wood respiration closed dynamic chamber method, from at least 50 trees covering dominating species distributed evenly throughout each plot at 1.3 m height with an IRGA (EGM-4) and soil respiration chamber (SRC-1) connected to a permanent collar. The uncertainty of bole respiration per unit surface area was calculated as the standard error of raw measurements. To recognise the large uncertainty of total stem surface area, mostly due to the simple allometric equation, we assigned an uncertainty of 30%.

 Coarse root respiration (R_coarse_root) was not measured, by estimated by R_stem 111 multiplied by 0.21 ± 0.10 , following 10^{-12} .

 Total soil CO2 efflux (R_soil), called R_soil_no_coarseroot_with_litter in the raw data sheet, was measured every month at the same point in each of the 25 sub-plots on each plot. It was measured using a closed dynamic chamber method with an infra-red gas analyser and soil respiration chamber (EGM-4 IRGA and SRC-1 chamber, PP Systems, Hitchin, UK) sealed to a permanent collar in the soil. Coarse root respiration was assumed missed by the above method 118 ¹². The uncertainty of R_soil_no_coarseroot_with_litter was calculated as the standard error of 119 raw measurements.

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121 Therefore, the R_soil_no_coarseroot_with_litter is composed of R_rhizosphere 122 (including fine roots, mycorrhizal and exudates) respiration, soil organic matter derived 123 respiration (R soil heterotrophic), and soil surface fine litter respiration (R fine litter). The 124 percentage of each component was determined by using a partitioning experiment similar to 125 that described in $13,14$.

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127 Root exudates NPP was not directly measured while mycorrhizal respiration was 128 incorporated in R_rhizosphere in R_a, bringing uncertainty to GPP and CUE. Following ¹⁴, We 129 estimated the root exudation rate from literature as (i) 6% of total NPP 15 (ii) 59% of root NPP 130 $\frac{16}{10}$, (iii) 37% of root respiration (calculated from data in $\frac{17}{10}$)

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132 Coarse woody debris respiration and dead wood respiration was not directly measured, 133 which affect the estimates of carbon sink (net ecosystem exchange) but is irrelevant to GPP 134 nor CUE. A study of Amazonia lowland intact forest found CWD respiration as 76% of CWD 135 input, where a steady state (D_cwd = D_cwd_to_soil + R_cwd) was assumed ¹⁸. However, the 136 proportion of CWD respired could be rather variable 19 ; A recent study at the Borneo lowland 137 forests reported a 90% ²⁰. In this study, we estimated R_cwd as $(0.9+0.76)/2 = 0.83$ of D_cwd, 138 with ± 0.1 uncertainty.

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140 This study sources stem biomass (or called above-ground coarse woody biomass, 141 estimated from tree height and girth) and some NPP components from 2^1 . However, it is worth 142 noting that the study is limited in that some minor components (in terms of magnitude) of the carbon cycle were not covered by this study. For instance, Volatile organic compound NPP 144 was found to be a very minor component of the carbon cycle of an Amazonian Forest ⁸. Ground flora was neglected in ANK and BOB due to their relatively low abundance, and was included in KOG, a forest to savanna transition zone. Epiphytes and liana were also not counted albeit their wide existence in the field, especially in BOB01.

148 When combining or multiplying different components of the carbon cycle, uncertainties 149 were propagated following .

Supplementary 2: Correlation between NPP and GPP

 Here we presented the correlation between Gross primary productivity (GPP), net primary productivity (NPP) and carbon use efficiency (CUE). Please note that GPP and NPP in this study are calculated as the sum of various components (see Supplementary Data 1). CUE is calculated as NPP/GPP. The regression shows for example how well the spatial variation of GPP captured the spatial variation of NPP.

 Figure S 1. Linear regression between gross primary productivity (GPP) and net primary productivity (NPP) both in unit (Mg C ha-1 yr-1). The figure shows results for West African plots, Amazonian plots and all plots together.

163 **Supplementary 3 Plots information**

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165 *Table S 1 Study plots information. All are one-hectare plots. The table is also available on online* 166 *source data deposit.*

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Note: (1) Leaf dark respiration and relative humidity are from ^{5,12,22–27} (2) At site CAX, leaf dark respiration is from ²⁸, information on sun/shade leaves were not provided. (3) For CAX, leaf dark respiration is standardized to 25 degrees. For ANK, BOB and KOG, leaf dark respiration is standardized to mean annual air temperature. Information on temperature standardization is not provided in the cited publications for remaining sites. (4) Volumetric water content (vwc) at site ANK, BOB and KOG are measurements of topsoil (12 cm) only, but vwc at site ALP, TAM, KEN, CAX, and TAN are measurements of top 30 cm. This data is provided for reference only and are not suggested for any quantitative analysis. (5) RH = relative humidity; Rdark = leaf dark respiration for shade or sun leaves; vwc=

volumetric water content, indicating surface soil moisture; MCWD = maximum climatological water deficit; MAT= mean annual air temperature; MAP = mean annual air precipitation; Lat = latitude; Lon = longitude. Plots are ranked by MCWD.

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170 *Table S1 continued*

Note: Plots are ranked by MCWD; Empty cells are due to the lack of data. Elev, elevation; MAP, mean annual precipitation; PPFD, photosynthetic photon flux density, calculated from shortwave radiation *0.45; Trees, total number of trees larger than 10cm diameter at breast height, as this number changes from year to year, the first year is picked if a plot has multiple years censuses; Soil nutrients (P, phosphorus; N, nitrogen; C, carbon; Ca, calcium; Mg, magnesium), and soil percentage of sand (Sand) and of clay (Clay). Parts of the data are from 5,21,27,29

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172 *Table S1 continued*

Note: Asat is light-saturated net photosynthesis measured under 400 ppm atmospheric CO2, Amax is light-saturated net photosynthesis measured under 2000 ppm atmospheric CO2. Measurements source from previous studies^{5,30}. Leaf lifespan sources from these^{21,31}. Seasonality Index is calculated as the sum of the absolute distance between monthly rainfall and mean rainfall, following³², using ERA5-Land monthly precipitation ³³.

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175 *Table S 2 Mean and Standard error (SE) of gross primary production (GPP) and its components* 176 *across study plots for Amazonia and West African forests. Please note that the standard error is* 177 *associated with the mean across plots. The standard error thus represents spatial variation, different*

- 178 *to the standard error in Figure 2 which sources from error propagation and represents measurement*
- 179 *uncertainty. Welch two sample t-test was used to examine the difference between Amazonian and*
- 180 *West African forests. Soil moisture is soil volumetric water content (%) measured from 12cm depth.*
- 181 *See Supplementary Data 1 for full names and definitions of carbon budget components. All units are* 182 MgC ha⁻¹ year¹

 Table S 3 Mean and Standard error (SE) of percentage allocation of net primary production (NPP) and autotrophic respiration (R) across study plots for Amazonia and West African forests. Paired t-test was used to examine the difference between Amazonia and West African forests (24 one-hectare plots, 189 so df=23). All values are unitless. Measurements source from previous studies^{5,30}. 'Overall' is an

190 *average across Amazonia and West Africa.*

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 Table S 4 light-saturated net photosynthesis measured under 400 ppm atmospheric CO2 (Asat), and light-saturated net photosynthesis measured under 2000 ppm atmospheric CO2 (Amax) of common species at study the study sites. Unit is (µmol m–² s –¹ 197 *). Basal Area is the total basal area of a given species (unit mm²); Count is the number of individuals of a given species. Please note that only some common species are provided. For light saturated assimilation rate at 400 ppm, Asat (umol CO² m-2 s-1) and at 2000ppm, Amax (umol CO2 m-2 s-1), The branch that had been cut was promptly placed in water and recut. To measure leaf gas exchange traits, an open flow gas exchange system (LI-6400XT, Li-Cor Inc., Lincoln, NE, USA) was used. Three leaves were selected from each tree and analyzed for Asat and Amax. The photosynthetic photon flux density was set at 2000 µmol m-2 s-1. The block temperature was kept constant at 30º C throughout the sampling period, which was similar to the ambient air temperature.*

207 **Supplementary 4 Carbon budget quantification for West**

208 **African carbon fluxes**

 Figure S2. Components of the carbon budgets. Panel (a) shows autotrophic respiration (R_autotrophic). Panel (b) shows components of net primary production (NPP). Panel (c) shows gross primary production (NPP).

 Figure S3. Full carbon budgets visualised on a tree diagram. The diagrams show the magnitude and pattern of key carbon fluxes for ANK (mean of 3 plots) BOB (mean of 6 plots) and KOG (mean of 5 p *lots*)

Supplementary 5 Photographs of the site

Ankasa

- 236 There is a stream running through ANK03 which largely floods the plot in the wet season.
237 Ankasa ANK01
- Ankasa ANK01

ANK01 and ANK02 are located on well-drained local hilltops.

Bobiri - BOB01

Bobiri - BOB02

Photo Credit: all photos above were taken by Huanyuan Zhang-Zheng in January 2022.

 Photo Credit: the photo was shared by Akwasi Duah-Gyamfi. The photo was taken on 16 July 2013,

Kogaye - KOG02

Kogaye - KOG04

- This is at the forest-savanna transition. Photo Credit: taken by Huanyuan Zhang-Zheng in
- January 2022.

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- This plot rarely burns (as told by locals), but it looks like this when it does burn. Photo
- Credit: the photo was shared by Akwasi Duah-Gyamfi. The photo was taken on 03 February 2014,
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Kogaye - KOG05

Photo Credit: taken by Huanyuan Zhang-Zheng in January 2022.

 This plot frequently burns. Photo Credit: the photo was shared by Akwasi Duah-Gyamfi. The photo was taken on 06 February 2014,

Supplementary References

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