



WWF

FACTSHEET

2015



FOREST AND CLIMATE PROGRAMME

© Camilo Ortega / WWF-Colombia

COLOMBIA

Maintaining Colombia's forests for people and the planet

COLOMBIA, A UNIQUE LANDSCAPE

Colombia holds close to 14 percent¹ of the world's biodiversity within its borders. The South American nation encompasses lofty Andean highlands, Amazonian rainforests, and more than 3,000 kilometers² of coastline along both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Over half³ of Colombia's more than 1 million square kilometers² is forested, with the most heavily forested areas in the Choco-Darien, along Colombia's Pacific coast, and the Amazon region.

Colombia's cultural diversity matches the diversity of the landscape. It is home to millions of indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasant farming individuals who live and depend on the land, but who have historically been marginalized and given little opportunity to assert their customary rights. Nearly 50 percent⁴ of Colombia's forests are found in the territories of these ethnic communities.



© WWF-Colombia / Joana Toro

¹ UN-REDD Programme: <http://www.un-redd.org/Colombia/tabid/130314/Default.aspx>

² CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/co.html>

³ http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/footprint/forest_climate/forest_climate_news/?244292/Interview-with-Susana-Velez-Haller-Forest-and-Climate-Change-Policy-Specialist-WWF-Colombia

⁴ http://www.wwf.org.co/sala_redaccion/noticias/2231931/Estrategia-REDD

FORESTS UNDER PRESSURE

Despite their biological and cultural importance, Colombia's forests face significant threats. About 120,000 hectares were deforested in Colombia in 2013, and pressures on the landscape are mounting. More than half - 57 percent - of that deforestation occurred in the Amazon region alone.⁵

Mining, illicit crop cultivation, illegal logging, expansion of artificial prairies linked to extensive livestock systems, the expansion of agro-industrial cultivation (for palm oil, among other products), and the construction of roads and ports all drive deforestation and forest degradation. Political turmoil, lack of strong environmental governance, mismanagement of resources and possibilities for cooperation, and internal conflict ongoing since the 1950s limit opportunities and incentives for conservation. Unless alternatives that support local livelihoods while protecting the land and community rights can be developed, deforestation will continue and Colombia's most vital landscapes may be lost.

REDD+ - A PROMISING SOLUTION

If we can find a way to halt forest loss in the region, not only will a vital part of Colombia's rainforests be conserved, along with the cultural and ethnic diversity associated with them, but the carbon held in the plants and soil of these forests will remain sequestered – which is key to fighting climate change. Efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and to conserve, sustainably manage and enhance forest carbon stocks (together referred to as REDD+) are underway in Colombia.

WWF is working in Colombia to build from the bottom up an inclusive, participatory model for low carbon development that integrates sustainable agriculture, adaptation to climate change, and early activities for REDD+ implementation while safeguarding the rights and resources of the indigenous, Afro-Colombian and other communities that depend on the country's forests. WWF aims to translate the successes and lessons learned from this process into policies and strategies that help realize a national-level vision for green growth.

OUR WORK IN COLOMBIA

WWF's efforts in Colombia focus on the Amazon and Choco-Darien regions—culturally and ecologically rich areas with high rates of deforestation and poverty. Here, WWF works with communities, government agencies, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations to address the drivers of deforestation while empowering community members and enhancing livelihoods.

WWF has built trust with local and indigenous communities, which often regard REDD+ with suspicion

because they have had negative experiences with “carbon cowboys” who failed to follow through with funding for carbon projects. Through a series of workshops, trainings and forums, WWF and its partners help communities develop the knowledge and capacities needed to participate in REDD+ decision making and to develop their own vision for REDD+.

In Choco-Darien, WWF and its partners facilitated a participatory process through which local Afro-Colombian community leaders drafted their own social and environmental safeguards to protect their collective territories and rights when REDD+ is implemented. These safeguards serve as a tool to empower the region's Afro-descendent peoples and give them a more powerful voice in regional, national and international REDD+ and non-REDD+ dialogues.

In the Amazonian department of Putumayo, WWF and its partners are working with seven municipalities, the regional environmental authority, the department-level government, private sector actors, and local communities to reduce their emissions and develop low carbon development and sustainable land use planning strategies. The work in Putumayo serves as a model that will inform work at scales at which the government of Colombia is committed to implement REDD+ (like the Amazon biome) as well as at the national scale. The lessons learned from this endeavor are already being incorporated by Colombia's national government and shared through south-south exchanges, including one that took place between Colombia and Peru.

WWF's work in Colombia supports the national government in meeting the requirements laid out in the Amazon Vision 2020 (AV2020), a project to achieve net zero deforestation in Colombia's Amazon region by 2020. The Amazon Vision has attracted financial commitments of support from the governments of UK, Norway and Germany.

MAKING REDD+ WORK FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

If we get it right, REDD+ could reduce greenhouse gas emissions while protecting biodiversity, supporting sustainable development, and strengthening rights and livelihoods that benefit forest-dwelling communities. WWF is initiating REDD+ activities in the world's key forest landscapes, including the Amazon, Borneo and the Congo Basin, by working at scale with communities and governments to test approaches for getting REDD+ right.

We are working to ensure that REDD+ delivers on its promise of maintaining forests for the benefit of people and nature.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

WWF Forest and Climate Programme
forestclimate@wwf.panda.org
www.panda.org/forestclimate

	<p>Why we are here To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.</p> <p>panda.org/forestclimate</p>
---	--