



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS

# CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION OF COLOMBIA: A CASE STUDY

## NATIONAL POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Colombia is fully committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and was among the first countries to envision a framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals. Seven months prior to the official adoption of the 2030 Agenda by UN Member States, Colombia had already created a national High-Level Inter-Institutional Commission for the Preparation and Effective Implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the SDGs. The Commission brings together a number of ministries and departments, with the aim of mainstreaming the SDGs in national action plans and frameworks, such as the Pact for Sustainability of the National Development Plan for Colombia 2018-2022 and the country's Green Growth Policy, which strive to deliver sustainable production and economic growth. The Strategy for the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Colombia, detailing national 2030 Agenda targets and strategies for achieving them, was adopted in March 2018.

## NATURAL RESOURCES UNDER THREAT

Colombia ranks among the 17 most biodiverse countries in the world, hosting approximately 15 percent of the endemic species of the planet. The natural resources of the Caribbean region of Colombia have been heavily exploited since pre-colonial times. While this exploitation has driven economic growth, it has also caused considerable environmental degradation and fragmentation of strategic ecosystems and protected areas.

Over time, the use of unsustainable practices has increasingly posed a threat to the region's rich biodiversity, diminished rural communities' resilience to climate change, and weakened their food security. In order to address the issues in the region, a new approach was required.

## SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 2016, Colombia's Government and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) selected FAO to implement the BioCaribe Connectivity Strategy (Conexión BioCaribe), which was developed to reduce the degradation and fragmentation of the region's strategic ecosystems. The scope of the project was vast, and aimed to have long-term positive impacts on the Caribbean region of Colombia, which covers 10 percent of the country's overall territory, and is home to almost one-fourth of its population: approximately 9.7 million people.

The project's goal was to foster socio-ecosystem connectivity (SEC), including inter-institutional articulation, territorial planning, social participation, and the promotion of sustainable production models.

Working alongside Colombia's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, National Natural Parks, regional governments, the GEF, and other partners, FAO has sought to translate BioCaribe Connectivity Strategy's vision into reality through three key action areas:

- Strengthening institutional coordination and mainstreaming the socio-ecosystem approach in land-use planning;



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- Creating new protected areas and improving the management of existing protected areas in the region;
- Adopting alternative models of sustainable production and strategies to ensure the supply of local ecosystem services.

Efforts were made to facilitate comprehensive conservation, restoration and sustainable use practices at landscape level, while promoting dialogue among communities in the region and valuing the insights from traditional local knowledge and practices. A number of mestizo, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, as well as NGOs, schools, universities, and private sector organisations contributed to the implementation of the BioCaribe Connectivity Strategy.

## OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

The project is having a positive impact on both marine and terrestrial ecosystems in the Caribbean region of Colombia, with a significant number of hectares of connectivity corridors created, a rise in protected areas, and increased adoption of sustainable production and conservation plans across the region.

The socio-ecosystem approach is helping to strengthen ties between the rich diversity of regional identities and the environment they inhabit, promoting dialogues and exchanges between technical, ancestral and traditional forms of knowledge. The expressions, values and socio-cultural traditions of ethnic communities are being championed and respected. Local communities, families and farmers have learnt about, and adopted, the SEC approach through farmers' field schools.

### Assessing progress - BioCaribe Connectivity Strategy

- 1 451 622 hectares of connectivity corridors designed with the socio-ecosystem approach;
- 159 140 hectares of coastal marine connectivity;
- 13 531 hectares of new protected areas, and an additional 116 347 under way;
- Approximately 5 000 hectares of land farmed under alternative models of sustainable production;
- More than 1 500 families participating in Farmer Field Schools;
- Two indigenous and three Afro-descendant communities incorporating the SEC approach in their collective territorial plans;
- 1 300 hectares of buffer zones under sustainable production plans incorporating the SEC approach;
- 367 593 hectares of mosaics for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

## FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT

The project has also opened new paths of engagement and interaction, especially among the youth in the region. Young members of the communities covered by the project have started using social and digital media to share the achievements, challenges, events and success stories emerging from the BioCaribe Connectivity Strategy.

These communication collectives, promoted and supported by Conexión BioCaribe, are driving increased participation and mobilization among communities, providing a culturally appropriate instrument that empowers all participants. Through this thriving digital network, young women and men are embracing the concept of conservation and connectivity, expanding its reach, and making it their own.

### THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF SFA

1. Increase productivity, employment and value addition in food systems
2. Protect and enhance natural resources
3. Improve livelihoods and foster inclusive economic growth
4. Enhance the resilience of people, communities and ecosystems
5. Adapt governance to new challenges

### FAO'S VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

A world where **food is nutritious and accessible for everyone**, in which natural resources are managed in a way that maintains ecosystem functions to support **current and future human needs**.

In this vision, **farmers, pastoralists, fisher-folk, foresters and other rural dwellers** actively participate in, and benefit from, economic development, have decent employment conditions and work in a **fair price environment**.

**Women, men and communities live in food security**, and have **control over their livelihoods** and **equitable access to resources** which they use in an efficient way.

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