

Objective of the project

Contribute to the stabilization of the agricultural frontier by supporting agroecological intensification, sustainable forest management, and landscape restoration through a common territorial vision supported by the generation of knowledge, dialogue, effective governance, and innovative tools.



Background

The Comprehensive Rural Reform “*Reforma Rural Integral*” (RRI) included in the Peace Agreement was signed in 2016 between the Colombian Government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC). One of its main objectives is the definition and stabilization of the agricultural frontier and the protection of areas environmentally sensitive, to ensure prosperous and sustainable livelihoods for local communities. This stabilization process has not been achieved yet. Vast areas of natural tropical forest are still being transformed, due to different drivers such as land ownership concentration and speculation, often linked to illicit crops, extensive cattle grazing, and mining.

The stabilization of the agricultural frontier requires an acceleration of innovation in agriculture systems fostering agro-ecological intensification, forest management and restoration, and improvements in current territorial governance systems. Historically, in Colombia has been a clear gap between agricultural innovations and territorial planning, and this gap is even more important in post-conflict territories (PDET Zones). The agro-ecological intensification, forest management and restoration require an integrative landscape-level approach that is encompassed in this project with the aim of: (i) maximizing the positive benefits of ecological interactions between landscape components for the production of ecosystem services essential for agro-ecological intensification, (ii) enhancing socio-economic complementarities between agricultural innovation, forest management and restoration strategies.

The theory of change to achieve the objectives

The main impacts (long term vision) is to stop deforestation, adequate public policies related to agricultural frontier stabilization, and producers with sustainable practices and capacities of adaptation.

The main expected results is to incorporate recommendations, based on the participatory modeling of land use scenarios, built with the actors of the study areas, and the strategies, generated by DESIRA Project in at least four (4) instruments for policy making such as Government mission plans, or action plans of environmental authorities, territorial planning or strategic programs, related to the stabilization of the agricultural frontier.

The project also has some expected outcomes such as: (i) governance arrangements identified and implemented to strengthen synergies between stakeholders and institutions; (ii) consolidation of a shared vision of the territory for the closure and stabilization of the agricultural frontier; (iii) ecosystem services, and landscape transformation process characterized and incorporated in an integrated way by the different stakeholders in their practices; (iv) concerted territorial management scenarios and action plans aimed to the closure and stabilization of the agricultural frontier and the sustainable use of forests; (iv) public policy recommendations based in the characterized agricultural and forestry value chains and value networks.

To achieve those outcomes, the Project develops three components: governance strengthening, evaluation of performance of land uses and value chains at the landscape level, and design of sustainable territories. Each one of these components is associated to research questions that include the participation and consultation of the actors of the territory, as well as a systematic gathering of information in the field. A first diagnosis of actors and governance schemes will allow defining the best strategy to propose the mechanisms for participation in planning decisions (theory of change workshops, governance evaluation workshops, co-construction of land use scenarios, participatory assessment, and others).

Also, we will develop the Forland methodology in order to improve innovation for decision-making with this geographic platform that allows modeling use scenarios and defining one or more scenarios agreed with stakeholders. This will make it possible to characterize more optimal scenarios in terms of socioeconomic and ecological indicators at the landscape scale.

At the same time, pilots of governance and sustainable land use will be implemented, as exploratory examples of good practices. This will be part of the capacity building and training program for the communities involved in the Project. The two territories have ethnic and peasant communities and areas with strong challenges for the inclusion of women and youth. To respond to this challenge, a major participatory science strategy will be designed and implemented, including a gender, ethnic and age approach during DESIRA.

The IDEAS - DESIRA Project has a strong research component (masters and PhDs) in environmental sciences and governance, to make academic studies available to support challenges on a territorial scale.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the main challenge for identifying a strategy in order to advance process of stabilization and further closure of the agricultural frontier involves evaluating and analyzing the territory from a structural and participatory perspectives.. That is why the IDEAS-DESIRA Project has a differentiated approach based on the motivations of the stakeholders, with special emphasis on capacity building, participatory sciences, and collective dialogue with a prospective methodology.

Main activities

Project activities are defined for each component. In component 1 “strengthening the governance”, the main activities are focused on: structuring the participation of stakeholders and institutions in the project, consolidating regional committees based on territorial planning, developing local capacities related with territorial planning and management, developing pilots of participatory tools aimed (such as social mapping, serious games, interviews, etc), at strengthening the governance and the sustainable multiple use of the landscape, carrying out a practical exercise of participatory innovation and co-constructed landscape scenarios (“carte du territoire”), and impacting public policies related to the agricultural frontier stabilization.

The component 2 "evaluation of the performance of land uses and value chains at the landscape level" focuses on the following activities: characterization of the dynamics of the forest and the criteria for restoration and sustainable forest management, and characterization of promising and innovative value chains for the stabilization of agricultural frontiers. This component is based on research methodologies and ecological, economic, and social data collection in the pilot sites (interviews, meetings, workshops, data collection in plots).

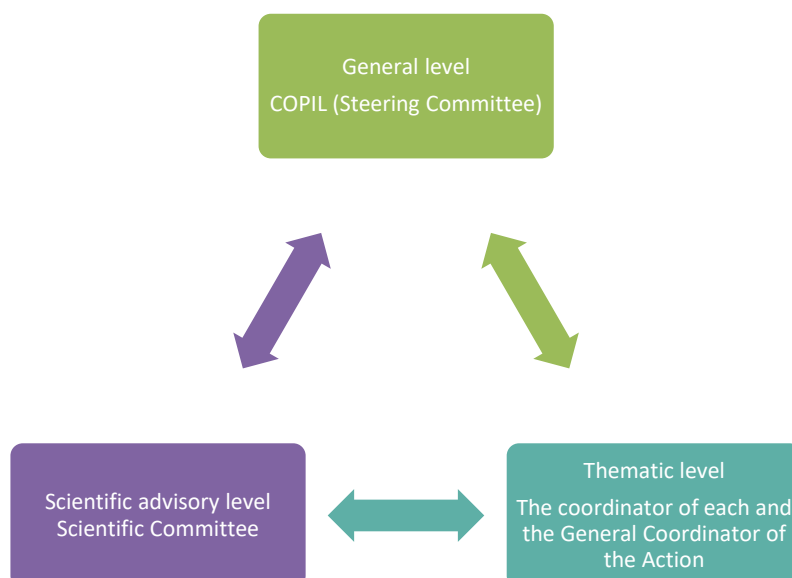
The component 3 "Designing sustainable territories" focuses on the following activities: developing an online operational geographic platform (Forland) per pilot site to visualise several possible future scenarios, identifying suitable indicators for the scenarios evaluation, analysing the stakeholders' preferences and defining an action plan based on the consensual scenario. This component works essentially with the information from components 1 and 2, modelling different scenarios and evaluating impacts with the stakeholders through discussion workshops.

Organization

The Project will be organized in three levels:

- ✓ The general level: this level is dedicated to the monitoring and orientation of the project under the control of the COPIL (Steering Committee);
- ✓ The thematic level: it relates to three (3) different components. The coordinator of each component will be responsible for presenting the technical progress, its contribution to the deliverables of the Action, the annual reports, and the synthesis report. These contributions will then be compiled and structured by the General Coordinator of the Action; and
- ✓ the scientific advisory level: this instance relates to the Scientific Committee. This committee aims at providing advices to the research approach and agenda within the framework of the Desira research questions, and the interaction between academia and society organized through local innovation platforms.

Scheme 1. Organization - governance of the Desira project



Implementing organizations

The Project is implemented by the Consortium between ONF International through its branch in Colombia ONF Andina as a Coordinator, the Center for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD), the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (PUJ), and Wageningen

University and Research (WUR).

Partners of the project

The Action seeks to work together with the Ministry of Environment and Rural Development, the National Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), and with regional research entities and Universities (UTCh, Universidad de Antioquia, UNAL Medellin, IIAP, Sinchi), regional environmental authorities (CORPOURABA, CDA) and the Municipality of Vigía del Fuerte (Antioquia).

Other main stakeholders

The Action involves the active participation of small farmers and ethnic base organizations currently developing their actions in the Guaviare and Antioquia departments.

Region

The project will be developed in Colombia in two territories: (i) Department of Guaviare: in one of the 3 following municipalities; (II) Department of Antioquia: municipality of Vigía del Fuerte.

Funding and co-funding

EU	€ 2,000,000
Implementing organization and partners	€ 700,000
Total budget	€ 2,700,000

Duration

Four (4) years and 6 months, FROM 2020, December, to 2025, June.

