

**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.



*The Atrato River basin, where is located Vigía del Fuerte*

**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 there 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 sustainable management of forests and the stabilization of the agricultural frontier require an integrated approach at the landscape level that is included in this project with the objective of: (i) Promote multi-stakeholder dialogues and collective construction for common action (ii) strengthening initiatives for agroecological intensification, forest management and restoration of degraded areas of environmental interest, (iii) generate knowledge about resilient value chains, ecosystem services and applied sustainable practices.

**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 modelling of land use scenarios, built with the actors of the study areas, and the strategies, generated by the 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 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; (v) 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 is needed to allow defining the best strategy to propose the mechanisms for participation in planning decisions (theory of change workshops, co-construction of land use scenarios, participatory assessment, and others).

Also, the project develops the Forland methodology in order to improve innovation for decision-making with this geographic platform<sup>1</sup> that allows modelling use scenarios and defining one or more scenarios agreed with stakeholders. This makes 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 are implemented, as exploratory examples of good practices. This is 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 has been designed and implemented, including a gender, ethnic and age approach during DESIRA.

The IDEAS - DeSIRA Project<sup>2</sup> 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.



*MScs and PhD students during their investigation in Vigía del Fuerte*

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 (such as social mapping, interviews, etc), aimed at strengthening the governance and the sustainable multiple use of

<sup>1</sup> <https://forland.io/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://ideas.onfandina.com/>

the landscape, carrying out a practical exercise of participatory innovation and co-constructed landscape scenarios, 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.

## **Results obtained (December 2022)**

### ***Component 1. Strengthening of governance***

In Guaviare

- ✓ Member of the Agricultural Frontier Table: articulation between the Ministry of the Environment and the department of Guaviare;
- ✓ Comguaviare pilot "Sustainable Amazonian farm model": 25 families in actions of i) ecological restoration with local species, ii) agroforestry systems with local species, iii) Amazonian orchards with a group of 20 women;
- ✓ Contributions to the strategy to combat deforestation in Guaviare in "Unidad Ambiental para la Paz y los Servicios Sociales" (UAPSS) Capricho (capacity strengthening plan);
- ✓ Policy note on value chains.

### ***Component 2. Generation of knowledge***

In Guaviare

- ✓ PhD: Identification and selection of value chains for study: Non Timber Forest Products, Wood, Chontaduro;
- ✓ MsC: Study on ecosystem services related to value chains;
- ✓ Comguaviare Pilot with Biodigesters: practical exercise applied innovation;

In Vigía del Fuerte

- ✓ Academic internship: Study of forest dynamics: structure and composition in 3 scenarios of forest use.

### ***Component 3. Forland design scenarios***

In Guaviare

- ✓ Workshop 1 on prospective scenarios (CIRAD methodology);
- ✓ Accompaniment mapping of actors and projects in FORLAND with the Government;
- ✓ Forland: CDA environmental authority, Government, continuity of appropriation

In Vigía del Fuerte

- ✓ Contratación de profesional FORLAND, capacitación y diagnóstico de información SIG

## **Organization**

The Project is organized in three levels:

- ✓ The general level: this level is dedicated to the monitoring and orientation of the project under the control of the Steering Committee (COPIL);
- ✓ The thematic level: it relates to three (3) different components. The coordinator of each component is responsible for presenting the technical progress, its contribution to the deliverables

of the Action, the annual reports, and the synthesis report. These contributions are then compiled and structured by the General Coordinator of the Action;

- ✓ Regional committee: The Regional Committee fulfills the function of being a periodic meeting space to socialize and discuss the progress of the Action Plan, the progress of the activities, preliminary results, and feedback towards the generation of generic conclusions. There are the different actors (institutional, community, NGO, private, academy), recognizing and exchanging knowledge, discussing and contributing around the challenges of the project themes. These spaces respond to the need to democratize knowledge in the territories studied, which involves the inclusion and training of actors for public decision-making; likewise, co-construct new answers to challenges once the knowledge has been apprehended.

### Implementing organizations

The Project is implemented by the Consortium between ONF (Office National des Forêts) 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, departmental governments, regional research entities (Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico or IIAP, the Amazonian Scientific Research Institute SINCHI), regional environmental authorities (Corporation for the Sustainable Development of Urabá or CORPOURABA, Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Amazonian North and East or CDA) and the Municipality of Vigía del Fuerte (Antioquia) and San José del Guaviare (Guaviare).

### 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.

### Location

The project is developed in Colombia in two territories: (i) Department of Guaviare: municipality of San José del Guaviare; (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 December 2020 to June 2025.

### Website

<http://ideas.onfandina.com/>

Updated on 29/06/2023

