

Scaling out Sustainable Land Use Systems in Colombia: Some Insights and Implications from Two Regional Case Studies

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Abstract : Nowadays, most agricultural practices can reduce the ability of ecosystems to provide goods and services. To enhance environmentally friendly food production and to maximize social and economic benefits, sustainable land use systems (SLUS) are one of the most critical strategies increasingly/strongly promoted by donors organizations, international agencies, and policymakers. This process involves the question of how SLUS can be scaled out also large-scale landscapes and not merely isolated experiments. As SLUS are context-specific strategies, diffusion and replication of successful SLUS in Colombia required the identification of main factors that facilitate this scaling out process. We applied a case study approach to investigate the scaling out process of SLUS in cocoa and livestock sector within peacebuilding territories in Colombia, specifically, in Cesar and Caqueta region. These two regions are contrasting, but both have a current trend of increasing land degradation. Presently in Colombia, Caqueta is one of the most deforested departments, and Cesar has some most degraded soils. Following a qualitative research approach, 19 semi-structured interviews and 2 focus groups were conducted with agroforestry experts in both regions to analyze (1) what does it mean a sustainable land use system in Cocoa/Livestock, specifically in Caqueta or Cesar and (2) to identify the key elements at the level of the following dimensions: biophysical, economic and profitability, market, social, policy and institutions that can explain how and why SLUS are replicated and spread among more producers. The Interviews were coded and analyzed using MAXQDA to identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) within data. As the results show, key themes, among which: premium market, solid regional markets and price stability, water availability and management, generational renewal, land use knowledge and diversification, producer organization and certifications are crucial to understand how the SLUS can have an impact across large-scale landscapes and how the scaling out process can be set up best in order to be successful across different contexts. The analysis further reveals which key factors might affect SLUS efficiency.

Keywords : agroforestry, cocoa sector, Colombia, livestock sector, sustainable land use system

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