

## Why protect the Forests of Santander, Colombia

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### ABSTRACT

This article will describe the importance of the care and maintenance of forests in the Region and the legal measures to be implemented for their protection and prevention of deforestation, greenhouse effect and extinction of native species in flora and fauna.

**Keywords:** Santander forests, Biodiversity, Deforestation.

### INTRODUCTION

The forests of Santander, due to their geographical location, climate and humidity, enjoy an environment favorable to the appropriate development of the biodiversity of local fauna and flora. But what is so well known about the forest areas in Colombia, where we visualize that, despite the protective legal regulations, the foolishness of man, with his anthropocentric thinking, collides with the well-being of the ecosystem. Our forests, in addition to being decimated by forest fires, indiscriminate logging, cattle ranching, where the armed conflict has also made it the protagonist of its excesses and environmental atrocities, where deforestation does not matter to plant illicit crops, the State is added with forced eradication, irrigation with glyphosate or other chemicals, which are destroying day by day not only the original forest areas in the region but also biodiversity of flora and fauna that enriches Santander.

### METHODOLOGY

Initially, it is important to understand that a Natural Forest, and for the purposes of state regulations and policies, is called a natural forest is the ecosystem composed of trees and shrubs with a predominance of native species, in a given space and generated, spontaneously, by natural succession.

### PROBLEMATIC ANALYSIS OF FORESTS IN THE REGION

The remaining forests in the region store a wide range of very important biodiversity, specifically with respect to fauna in terms of bird species, according to research by the Humboldt Institute, these forests are areas of great importance because they become a corridor, connecting it with other areas of the country; giving them the possibility of surviving and expanding to the native birds.

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It is necessary to become aware of the importance of the natural resources provided by the forests that still exist in the region, from which water, food, pure air, wood, raw materials are obtained, they are home to most of the wild flora and fauna that exists not only in the region but in the world. Carrying out an analysis of the vital environment of the human being since its primitive existence, it has depended on the benefits of natural resources, fauna that provides food, flora that provides medicine, decoration, purification of the air necessary for our subsistence, vital water for man, but what does it offer to these forests? Protection? or simply devours, deforests, burns and exhausts the benefits they offer. In addition, resources such as oil and precious metals are obtained, from non-renewable sources, which after their extraction destroy and pollute large forest areas.

The forest resources that must be protected and developed in sustainable forest areas, the trees that are planted after burning and/or deforestation, although they do not significantly reduce the environmental damage that has been caused (greenhouse effect) manage to restore to nature an opportunity for renewal and raise awareness among man about the immediate need to conserve them for our own survival.

The department of Santander is among the six regions that lose the most natural forests, with the existing studies on the matter being discouraging according to the reports of Ideam on the monitoring of deforestation that every second that passes, 1,600 meters (a plot) cease to exist; and while the hands of the clock register one minute, 10 hectares (the same number of blocks in a city) vanish from the territories. Especially because of the illegal exploitation of timber (native species – mahogany cedar, abarco, snail and guayacanes). In addition to the planting of illicit crops, extensive cattle ranching practices, development of road infrastructure, illegal extraction of minerals and timber extraction, are factors that aggravate and affect the Santander region, within the reduction of the areas

forests and deforestation. Within the necessary planning for the covering and compensation of trees in the face of the 1,606 trees that have been cut down within the constructions of the Mega works (The construction of the Provincial Viaduct of La Novena, of the Third Lane<sup>o</sup>, and of the interchanges of Avenida Quebrada seca with 15 and Mesón de Los búcaros). The municipality of Bucaramanga, Santander, still lacks 130,654 trees to date, the city for the maintenance of a healthy and conducive environment and to create barriers against pollution, according to the World Health Organization, the city should have planted one tree for every three inhabitants, currently in the city there is one tree for every nine people. The greater the number of plant species, the greater the barriers against pollution. To reach the recommended international standard, the capital of Santander has 130,654 tree species to plant.

Another clear example is that of the municipality of Barrancabermeja, Santander, every year an average of 200 hectares of forests are cut down, deforestation in the region has caused native species to disappear. "They are forests that existed, whether primary, secondary or tertiary, that had already been recovered, but that people intervened again. " There is a lot of African palm cultivation, the oil industry,



and extensive cattle ranching have greatly influenced deforestation in Barrancabermeja. However, it is the palm tree that has the most influence on deforestation, because in addition to introducing a monoculture in the agricultural sector, where that did not exist, it has to use chemicals for its maintenance, and the chemical has a great influence on not allowing the other species to grow, in addition to the impairment of the fauna in the forests of the Region we find the trafficking of animals such as the guagua, the armadillo, the ñeque, the marmoset monkey, the cotudo monkey, in danger of extinction, species that humans adopt as pets by taking them out of their natural habitat, without taking into account that in addition to environmental damage these are transmitters of diseases," Juan Epifanio Mendoza Caicedo, environmental engineer and operational technician of the Ministry of the Environment of the Barrancabermeja Oil Port.

## ENTITIES COMMITTED TO THE PROTECTION OF FORESTS IN THE REGION

Among the studies carried out, there are entities committed to the objective of reducing deforestation and forest degradation in our Region, who promote conservation and sustainable management, one of them is the Santander Forest Governance - Santander Forest Table (MBS), which is a voluntary space for dialogue, construction, articulation and agreements, with the Public Institutionality, Private Sector and Civil Society of the department of Santander (NGOs, the German Cooperation Agency GIZ, CDMB and the Government of Santander, universities such as the UIS and the Technological Units of Santander, Norandino Node of Climate Change, National Natural Parks, Agrosavia, Fececacao, Fedegasan, Fedecafe, Chamber of Commerce of Bucaramanga, Regional Competitiveness Commission, Society of Agricultural Engineers of Santander, Metropolitan Aqueduct of Bucaramanga, Aguas de Barrancabermeja and municipality of Piedecuesta, Non-Governmental Organizations such as Agrosolidaria, Fundación Natura, Ceta Cooperador, Corporación Futurex, Fundación Guaya canal, Corporación Paz del Magdalena Medio, Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Carare Opon, among others.)

ecosystem services and the promotion of the forestry sector as an axis of regional development. This socio-governmental group is working on the consolidation of the Santander Forests Mission project, which aims to reach the year 2030 with sustainable comprehensive rural development, based on the proper management of forests. The Santander Forests Mission project has set the goal of operating an Environmental Fund by 2024 that integrates and manages technical and financial resources from institutional actors, civil society and the private sector for the sustainable development of the department, in such a way that by 2030 deforestation is reduced to zero with positive impacts on the conservation and provision of ecosystem services. It is also proposed to consolidate a forestry development nucleus with more than 2,000 hectares of commercial forest plantations for the sustainable provision of wood at the



regional and national levels.

## COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY FOR DEFORESTATION CONTROL AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

In the Department of Santander, in the last 4 years, with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Forest Protection and Climate Program/REDD+ of the German cooperation through GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GmbH), it seeks to strengthen capacities in the framework of information on deforestation, political advocacy in environmental programs and regional development plans (Departmental Plan for Mitigation and Adaptation to Change Climate), creation and support for governance spaces such as the Santander Forest Board and the Inter-institutional Committee on Flora and Fauna of Santander (CIFFSAN), training in aspects of climate change, forests and deforestation, the implementation of a community forest monitoring project and the formulation of profiles of change projects aimed at addressing this problem.

To position itself as a space for the participation of local, regional and national actors for the strengthening of regional forest governance, the promotion of technical and financial cooperation, the implementation of policies, programs and projects related to sustainable forest management and capacity building. On the other hand, to contribute to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan for the Management of Territorial Climate Change of Santander (PIGCCTS), the National Strategy Forests Territories of Life, the reactivation of the Forest Chain in Santander and the construction of a culture of knowledge management for the conservation and sustainable management of forests and its impact on planning and decision-making for regional development.

## MANAGEMENT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF FORESTRY WITHIN FOREST PROTECTION

According to the different laws and National Policies, these will be developed regionally according to the particularities and environmental needs of each region. The management of the conservation and sustainable management of natural forests must be decentralized and participatory, without prejudice to the clause of institutional subjection to the National Forest Regime. In any case, the State shall promote the use of natural forests with clear social, cultural, economic and ecological objectives.

The legislators have created decrees, regulations and laws aimed at establishing the National, Regional and Local Forest Regime, where they hold governmental, civic and social entities responsible, in order to promote the sustainable development of the Colombian forestry sector within the framework of the National Forestry Development Plan. Supposedly, there are the necessary, sufficient and capable regulations to obtain the necessary results in terms of prevention, protection and renewable sustainability,



where it is established by the necessary administrative organization of the State, regulates activities related to natural forests and forest plantations.

But there are so many and so disjointed, that in the face of the problem of deforestation and loss of forests in our region they are insufficient, since one entity passes the responsibility to another and subsequently, shielding the ineffectiveness of the results in lack of resources, means and necessary personnel, in such a way that although we have the legal tools, they are not applied with the spirit with which they were carried out by the legislator. because despite the fact that the conservation and sustainable management of its natural forests and the establishment of forest plantations on soils with a forestry vocation have been declared a national priority and strategic importance for the development of the country, without discounting the treaties and agreements with which it works together in harmony with the relevant instruments of International Law to which the Republic of Colombia is a signatory.

We find among the requirements of the legislators, that as a clause of institutional subjection to the Forestry Regime of the Nation, the uniform submission of all the public institutions of the country that participate in the development of the forestry sector, to the national norms, strategies and policies of said Regime, in the perspective of guaranteeing the organicity and coherence required as an essential condition to promote sustained and growing investment in the sector providing economic agents and forestry actors in general, with a clear and universal framework of legal certainty. This clause operates without prejudice to the autonomy and powers granted by law to the environmental and territorial authorities, as well as to the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities (art.2 LAW 1021 OF 2006).

It is necessary that the Region promote the protection, conservation and sustainable management of forest areas and vindication ecosystems where the development of the forestry sector is timely and responsible, recognizing the benefits it brings to it within the economic, social and environmental area, resulting in the improvement of living conditions of rural and urban populations where, in addition to generating employment, an awareness of environmental civic responsibility is created. being a priority mission within the achievement of citizen coexistence and a stable and lasting peace.

## EFFECTIVE REGULATIONS

Definitively, we find that Articles 8 and 80 of the Political Constitution of Colombia establish as an obligation of the State and of the people, that of protecting the cultural and natural wealth of the Nation and orders that the State must plan the management and use of natural resources, to guarantee their sustainable development, conservation, conservation, restoration or replacement. In addition, it must prevent and control environmental deterioration factors, impose legal sanctions and demand reparation for the damage caused.



That Article 1 of Law 99 of 1993 provides that Colombian environmental policy shall follow, among others, the following general principles: 2. The country's biodiversity, as it is a national heritage and of interest to humanity, must be protected as a priority and used in a sustainable manner. 10. Action for the country's environmental protection and recovery is a joint and coordinated task between the State, the community, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

That Article 5 of the aforementioned law establishes among the functions of the current Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, among others, those of regulating the general conditions for the sanitation of the environment, and the use, management, exploitation, conservation, restoration, and recovery of natural resources, in order to prevent, repress, eliminate, or mitigate the impact of polluting activities, deteriorating or destructive of the environment or natural heritage.

That Article 12 of Decree 672 of 2017 establishes the functions of the Office of the High Presidential Adviser for the Post-Conflict, which include, among others, those of verifying compliance with the programs related to the post-conflict and their alignment with the government plan and advising the President of the Republic in the formulation, structuring and development of public policy and programs related to comprehensive attention to the fight against drugs. 16. (Added to Article 25 of Decree 1649 of 2014). To carry out the functions assigned to it by the President of the Republic and the Director of the Administrative Department of the Presidency of the Republic.

That the Joint Declaration of Interest, signed between Colombia and the governments of Norway, Germany, and the United Kingdom, has two scopes at the national level; the first corresponds to the design and implementation of policies and structures that allow the reduction of emissions from deforestation through the promotion of a low-carbon economy, and the second, to a payment for results scheme (Decree 1257 of 2017 /July 25)

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Study, scientific research, technical assistance, technology transfer, phytosanitary protection within protective forestry, as well as the rescue, conservation and protection of ancestral and traditional ethnic knowledge (indigenous-Afro-Colombian communities) and its dissemination should be encouraged, as fundamental elements for the sustainable management of natural forests and the development of forest plantations. Ecotourism on forests should be encouraged as a fundamental strategy for their conservation and the maintenance of biodiversity and environmental services.

In addition, within the framework of the implementation of the peace agreements, inter-institutional coordination is required between the public entities of the State, in order to effectively control the causes and agents of deforestation, which in addition to affecting forest resources, has an impact on other natural resources such as water, soil, etc. fauna and air, especially if it is taken into account that



point 1.1.10 of the Final Agreement, calls the attention of the National Government to close the agricultural frontier, protect forest reserve areas and other areas of special ecological importance.

In view of the above, it is urgent that there be a real commitment from the State, civil society, and the productive sector to jointly and coordinately adopt and execute the necessary actions to stop deforestation and illegal logging of forests, as well as to promote the sustainable development of the forestry, timber and non-timber sectors, and biological biodiversity (native flora and fauna). We would be able to save and renew our forests, obtaining additional equitable access to the natural resources of flora and fauna and their integral use, within the framework of the basic requirements for the conservation of ecosystems and their biological diversity.



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