

# COLOMBIA

## CLIMATE CHANGE FACT SHEET

Colombia is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to its physical, geographical, and socioeconomic characteristics. Climate-related natural disasters impact the most vulnerable populations, like Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples, and droughts in the Andes impact the whole country's access to water reserves.

Moreover, changes to hydrological conditions threaten agricultural and hydroelectricity production, which generates two-thirds of the country's electricity. Although Colombia is not a major emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG)—it ranks 35th globally—the Colombian Government has set ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets. Currently, 55 percent of Colombia's GHG emissions result from agriculture, forestry, and other land use sectors, and 35 percent of emissions result from the energy sector, including transportation.

### GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA CLIMATE PRIORITIES

In November 2020, the Colombian Government announced ambitious emissions cuts and other commitments as part of Colombia's updated NDCs. These climate targets included:

- A ten-year strategy to invest USD \$200 million to reach zero net deforestation by 2030.
- An energy transition plan to include: 1) solar farms, wind projects, biomass, and small hydro projects; 2) the development of sustainable mobility solutions; 3) the launch of new technologies such as green hydrogen and geothermal; and 4) the adoption of a carbon-neutral policy for the sector.
- An enhanced Colombian carbon market and establishment of an Emissions Trading Scheme by the end of 2022. Since 2017, Colombia's carbon tax offset mechanism has traded 36 million tons of verified emissions reductions.
- The Colombian Government's priority economic sectors (transport, energy, agriculture, housing, health, commerce, tourism and industry) will include climate change considerations in their planning instruments, and will be implementing innovative adaptation actions.

In August 2022, a new Colombian administration, led by President Gustavo Petro, restated that climate change policy will continue to be among Colombia's top priorities. The main strategies presented by the government include:

- Fighting deforestation in the Amazon through a participatory approach that includes communities, and strategies to address illegal activities, strengthen the capacity of the justice sector and local institutions, and exercise territorial control.
- Creating a National Forest Service and an autonomous Climate Fund to consolidate funding sources and improve transparency and accountability.
- Improving carbon market regulation to ensure transparency, participation and just prices.
- Accelerating NDC implementation and elevating climate adaptation, particularly water management.
- Accelerating forest restoration while decreasing deforestation rates.
- Continuing with the national transition to renewable energy, with a focus on “democratization” of the energy sector, largely defined as universal and affordable access.
- Accelerating the transition to electric mobility as a major emissions reduction strategy.

## **USAID'S CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAM: OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS**

USAID supports Colombia's development and climate priorities through a series of programs and partnerships across its climate adaptation, renewable energy, and natural climate solutions activities. USAID promotes integrated approaches to reduce emissions and build resilience to climate change into our rural economic development programs, and will initiate new partnerships with the private sector and civil society to help Colombia achieve its ambitious GHG emission reduction targets.

## ADAPTATION

USAID supports improved environmental management of Colombia's most threatened ecosystems, including the Orinoquia flooded savannas, Caribbean dry forests, Andean paramos, and the Amazon and Pacific-coast tropical forests. USAID is improving Colombia's climate resilience through increased access to information to reduce climate-related risks, promotion of climate smart agricultural practices, and support for ecosystem conservation and restoration, and by expanding vegetative cover to protect soil and conserve water.

## RESULTS

- Strengthened resilience through nature-based solutions by improving the natural resource management of 4.7 million hectares across Colombia's four key ecosystems. A total of 23,082 people were trained on natural resource management, of whom 42 percent were women.
- Increased economic incentives for conservation, such as payment for ecosystem services on more than 22,000 hectares and commercial agreements for agricultural products. Provided 70,458 people with greater economic benefits and improved the conservation of key watersheds and other ecosystems.
- Protected water sources and biological corridors through the establishment of forage banks to prevent soil degradation and improve livestock nutrition in 140,000 hectares dedicated to dairy and beef production.

## KEY ADAPTATION PROGRAMS

**NATURAL WEALTH** works with the Government of Colombia to preserve biodiversity in the tropical dry forests of the Caribbean and the grasslands and freshwater ecosystems in the Orinoquia. It addresses deforestation and biodiversity loss through sustainable productive activities, expanding financial incentives, and strengthening environmental governance.

**LAND FOR PROSPERITY** implements Colombia's multipurpose cadaster and awards land-use rights in areas previously designated as forest reserves in the Amazon as an incentive to promote sustainable economic practices to reduce a key driver of deforestation.

**PARAMOS AND FORESTS** works with rural and indigenous communities to protect and restore native tropical forests, watersheds, paramos, and high-mountain ecosystems, reducing the vulnerability of downstream communities to the impacts of climate change, while conserving the soils and peatland carbon sinks.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

USAID promotes the transition to low-cost, renewable energy in the Colombian market through planning, integration, and operational support. This work is especially focused in rural and conflict-affected areas, and with the goal of increasing productivity and incomes. USAID fosters new economic opportunities through: a capacity building program for young leaders; a renewable energy job training program for indigenous communities; the transfer of U.S. expertise to deploy environmentally favorable solar and wind resources; and improved access to reliable and affordable energy.

### RESULTS

- Helped the Colombian Government implement its renewable energy auction program, resulting in the award of 15-year power purchase agreements to 22 new solar and wind projects. These projects will increase renewable energy generation by 2,100 megawatts, leverage USD \$2 billion in private sector investment by 2023, and create approximately 44,000 new jobs.
- Assisted Colombia's new competitive renewable energy procurement process leading to historically low average energy prices of USD \$28 per megawatt hour (MWh).
- Provided strategic renewable energy training to 65 young energy sector professionals, 68 percent of whom were women, to further Colombia's ability to manage its growing renewable energy supply into the national grid.
- Providing strategic renewable energy training to 37 young leaders from Wayuu indigenous communities in La Guajira. This training helps these young leaders to effectively participate in the growing renewable energy job market, develop viable project proposals to support their development needs, and represent their communities in community consultations related to new renewable energy projects targeted for their territories.

### KEY RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAMS

**ENERGY FOR PEACE** supports the planning, building, and operation of mini solar energy grids to support the growth of productivity clusters in priority conflict-affected communities with no energy access. The energy grids will enable communities to access affordable, clean energy needed to increase productivity, improve well-being, and foster social stability.

**THE U.S. NATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY LABORATORIES (NREL) PARTNERSHIP** is an alliance with NREL to advance Colombia's renewable energy systems. It provides policy, planning, modeling, and deployment support to national energy entities within the Colombian Government to deliver clean, reliable, and affordable power.

**THE U.S. ENERGY ASSOCIATION PARTNERSHIP (USEA)** provides U.S. energy industry expertise to assist Colombian Government institutions and utility companies improve the electricity system's reliability and growth. USEA also strengthens energy utility employees' capacities to manage power systems, develop renewable energy resources and design off-grid power sources.

**THE SCALING UP RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM (SURE)** focuses its technical assistance to support the Colombian Government's ambitious program to transition to renewable energy, mitigate energy sector emissions and position indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities to better participate in the burgeoning renewable energy economy.

## NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

USAID promotes reducing deforestation and forest degradation through sustainable forestry and agricultural, and community land management in order to address the causes of land use change, promote sustainable livelihoods, and increase the effectiveness of environmental policies. Protecting forests and other key ecosystems sustains livelihoods, mitigates climate change risks, and maintains environmental services like biodiversity preservation, carbon capture, and water purification.

### RESULTS

- Worked with 18 Afro-Colombian communities and one indigenous community to develop and implement eight reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) projects protecting 500,000 hectares of Pacific forests.
- Generated and sold 6.1 million Verified Carbon Units in the carbon market valued at USD \$26.5 million to date.
- Studied the pre-feasibility of five REDD+ Projects in conflict-affected areas with the potential of generating five million annual carbon credits, protecting 1,080,000 hectares.
- Developed the first protocol and supporting tools to monitor GHG in paramos ecosystems and include paramo GHG accountability in Colombia's GHG Report and NDC.
- Used the public-private business model to establish 1,500 hectares of acacia plantations on lands deforested and degraded by illegal gold mining; forest and plantations conservation incentives are linked to more than 11,500 beehives for honey production in five municipalities. Used community-led initiatives with traditional Afro-Colombian peoples for assisted and passive forest rehabilitation of 16,500 hectares of lands degraded by illegal gold mining. Also, more than 660 hectares of idle lands became croplands to produce the natural food colorant bixin from annatto seeds as alternative to gold mining.

### KEY NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS PROGRAMS

**PARAMOS AND FORESTS** helps the Colombian Government meet its landscape-based climate change mitigation goals and strengthens local economic development. It does this through reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), and improved local actors' capacities to measure, report, and verify emissions.

**COLOMBIA FORESTS AND WETLANDS** promotes the transfer of forest and natural resources management expertise from the U.S. Forest Service to local governments and communities, including technical assistance to increase public forest governance, wildfire management, and carbon monitoring to conserve biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions.

**SILVACARBON** strengthens the capacities of Colombian institutions, such as the Ministry of Environment and the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies, to monitor land use change through training, research, study tours, and technical assistance to create forested land and forest carbon capture inventories.