

# Roadmap for a New Food and Land Use Economy for Colombia

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by the Food and Land Use Coalition, Colombia

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Coalición para la  
**Alimentación  
y Uso del Suelo**

**Colombia is at a unique moment in its history, one which requires bringing rural and urban Colombians together in a shared vision of well-being and prosperity.** The country has been growing steadily, is increasingly considered a “good place to do business” and to visit, and has entered a stabilization phase. To fulfil its potential, Colombia needs continuing economic growth and stability, greater competitiveness and increased access to local and global markets. It also needs to reduce stark levels of inequality between urban and rural areas, to strengthen its value chains and to create more and better enterprises and jobs. This ‘Roadmap for a New Food and Land Use Economy’ – developed in partnership with over 100 government, private sector, and civil society representatives – sets out a series of strategies and actions to enable this sustainable growth to happen and thereby for Colombia to capitalize on its full food and land use potential.

**Colombia’s policies aimed at accelerating the transition to a ‘new food and land use economy’ could reshape its food and land use system into a powerful engine of sustainable growth, boosting income generation, employment and business opportunities.** Because of higher economic activity, a new food and land use economy can significantly increase employment relative to business-as-usual and reduce poverty rates. Better food and land use policies also have the power to prevent further losses associated with climate change (BID-CEPAL-DNP, 2014). Productivity rates for farm and forestry workers are the lowest among all industries in the country, and rates of informality in these sectors the highest (Green Growth Mission, DNP, 2018): a new food and land use economy would reverse this.

**Restoring and conserving Colombia’s unique ecosystems will ensure vital ecosystem services to support more productive agricultural landscapes, that in turn could produce the goods and services that people need to support healthy livelihoods, particularly food.** The protection of Colombia’s ecosystems will guarantee the ecosystem services which support the food system. Feeding Colombians with nutritious and healthy diets will result in lower healthcare costs from malnutrition, obesity and diabetes – and a more productive workforce. Reducing food loss and waste will result in a more efficient, cost-competitive food sector. The Roadmap for a New Food and Land Use Economy presents a strong economic case for action that could increase Colombian prosperity as never before. In line with this vision, the Roadmap presents four priority strategies complemented by three cross-cutting ones.

**The first priority is to deliver sustainable and productive territories.** A new food and land use economy must ultimately take root in Colombia’s diverse subnational regions, where

the challenge is to simultaneously enhance agricultural productivity, conserve valuable forests and other ecosystems, restore degraded lands, and reduce inefficiencies in the food system (e.g. food loss and waste). Sustainable agricultural intensification, boosting yields, and ensuring more productive crop and livestock systems are critical strategies here. So too are smallholder agriculture inclusion, tourism, commercial forestry to meet growing Colombian demand, new restoration business models, and investment in rural development. Together, these strategies would deliver sustained rural economic growth, increased market access for sustainably sourced commodities, and better and more dignified jobs for people in isolated rural areas.

**Second, there is a need to ensure nutritious and healthy food for all Colombians, without food loss and waste.** Approximately one-third of all food intended for human consumption is lost or wasted between the farm and the fork each year in Colombia, leading to an estimated US\$5.4 billion US in economic losses per year (WRI calculation drawing on DNP, April 2016). This level of food loss and waste has significant economic, social, and environmental impacts for Colombia and its citizens. When food is lost near the farm, all the investment in labour, fertilizers, water, and feed made by farmers to grow the crops or raise the livestock does not earn a financial return. When food is lost or wasted in manufacturing and retail companies, it is an expense for which the company does not earn a return—thereby hurting the corporate bottom line. And when food is wasted in the home, households are essentially throwing away money and nutrition. In fact, current levels of food loss and waste could feed 8 million Colombians currently experiencing food insecurity (DNP, 2016). The fact that so much good food is not eaten is a travesty when more than 50 percent of Colombian households experienced food insecurity in 2015 (Ensin, 2015). Moreover, overweight and obesity cause at least US\$1.5 billion in economic losses per year to the Colombian state (Ministry of Health, 2015). Launching a national public-private partnership to address food loss and waste—increasing the number of jobs in the food, land use and nutrition sectors—and launching a national awareness-raising campaign on the importance of sustainable and healthy diets are all critical strategies needed to deliver on this agenda.

**Third, Colombia's food and agricultural markets need to become more fair, efficient, and inclusive.** Rural producers deserve to fetch much better prices for the crops they produce, as well as to be able to deliver them more easily from the countryside to urban markets. There is a major economic opportunity in establishing efficient and competitive markets based on reliable infrastructure which benefits vulnerable communities—in particular smallholder farmers—as well as agro-industry. These markets would provide nutritious food at a low price to consumers while reducing food loss and waste. More inclusive and sustainable value chains would deliver more jobs both in the city and the countryside, as well as better local, national, and global markets for Colombian products.

**Fourth, innovation will be a major engine of economic growth in the food and land use sector.** There is a pressing need to “innovate, inspire, and inform” to turn Colombia into a sustainable agricultural powerhouse. Greater investment in technological innovation,

biotechnology, extension services, public education, and awareness-raising campaigns are important strategies here. This will require new partnerships between academic institutions, businesses, and communities committed to innovation. It will also need effective communication and information to mainstream the importance of healthier and nutritious diets associated with healthier people and ecosystems across Colombian society.

**Better governance will be critical to delivering a new food and land use economy in Colombia.** Local institutions have a vital role in delivering a new food and land use economy, as do dynamic public-private partnerships. Better integration and harmonization of different land-use planning and management instruments, including clarification of land tenure, as well as an alignment of economic and fiscal incentives in support of better agricultural and nutrition policy, are all required. Long-term spatial planning is also critical, as is civil society action and oversight.

**More and better-directed flows of public, private, domestic, and international finance will also be needed.** In-country resources including subsidy regimes and fiscal incentives could be better aligned. Financing schemes for rural development need to be promoted through the national banking and micro-lending system, associated with the provision of technical schemes. Green bonds and social development bonds have an important role to play, as well. The use of royalties from natural resource and mineral extraction could be redirected to better food and land use outcomes. Existing funds involving resources from the international community and economic instruments such as the Colombian carbon tax could address individual new food and land use economy action areas. Better and more targeted deployment of public resources combined with blended finance in support of a new food and land use economy would generate substantial flows of private investment.

**Science-based targets and pathways, along with enhanced monitoring and evaluation systems, have an important role to play.** The Roadmap sets out how to monitor and evaluate progress being made, including through the creation of an internet-based information system to monitor national progress towards meeting the roadmap goals. As one of the lead countries of the FABLE Network, Colombia is also producing long-term science-based targets and pathways for the country to meet its SDG, Paris, and Biodiversity targets.

**In summary, a new Colombia is possible: the following Roadmap shows how.** The Food and Land Use Coalition has prepared the Roadmap's action agenda, as part of a global initiative that also includes Indonesia, Ethiopia, China, India, the UK, the Nordic countries and Australia. The Coalition offers the ideas and recommendations in this Roadmap to the Colombian government, the private sector, academia, and civil society for consideration and stands ready to work together to support their implementation.

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<sup>11</sup> Food, Agriculture, Biodiversity, Land, and Energy.