

Changing Attitudes: The Key to Promoting the Adoption of Silvopastoral Systems in Quindío, Colombia

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In Latin America, conventional livestock production is one of the most prevalent and detrimental land uses, often resulting in rapid degradation and further deforestation. The adoption of silvopastoral systems (SPS) could transform these landscapes into providers of important environmental services, reducing the pressure to clear more forests. But despite their benefits, adoption of SPS remains low due mainly to investment and information barriers. With this in mind, the Global Environmental Facility funded a pilot project to promote SPS in degraded regions of Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Within a five-year period, a substantial transformation that included increased forest cover and improved land management practices was achieved.

This study focuses on the Quindío region, in Colombia's central Andes, where impressive results sparked the interest among ranchers and institutions to scale the project to the national level. Using data from semi-structured interviews and field visits, this study explains the factors that led to the permanent adoption of SPS, describing the motivations, feedbacks and difficulties that influenced the decisions from the farmers' perspective.

The results highlight the instrumental role played by technical assistance, informed by the project's scientific research component, in helping farmers understand the implications of their land use decisions. Attitude change was identified as the key to creating sustainable relationships between landowners and their lands, and factors triggering this change were pinpointed. This information will help design strategies to promote the adoption of sustainable ranching practices at a larger scale, contributing to break the cycle of environmental degradation and tropical deforestation.

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