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AMAZONIA CONNECT

The Amazon rainforest is the largest remaining tropical rainforest in the world. By absorbing a significant portion of global carbon dioxide emissions, it helps mitigate global climate change's worst effects. However, deforestation driven by unsustainable land use change for agriculture threatens to turn the region into a net carbon emitter. The Amazonia Connect seeks to reduce commodity-driven deforestation, and the associated greenhouse gas emissions, from high biodiversity regions that supply agricultural products to international and domestic companies.

Amazonia Connect works across the entire supply chains to promote Low Carbon Agriculture (LCA) and Deforestation-Free Production approaches to production in select landscapes of Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. As farmers avoid deforestation and implement LCA practices, they contribute to addressing the interlinked challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. LCA also supports sustainable increases in agricultural production, helping to improve livelihoods.

HOW DOES THE ACTIVITY WORK?

The project focuses on landscapes that are globally significant for their biodiversity, but also at risk of deforestation from commodity production. Producers of livestock and crops, especially smallholders, lack access to the knowledge, finance, tools, and incentives to switch to low-carbon and deforestation-

free systems. While there are several initiatives to tackle commodity-driven deforestation and promote biodiversity conservation in the Amazon, they have largely been implemented in isolation. The activity connects these “innovative dots” and unites supply (producers) and demand (buyers) efforts. The project provides technical assistance, and monitoring and traceability tools to guarantee the production and verification of low-carbon and deforestation-free products. In some cases, these verified products are then purchased by private sector companies that have specifically identified LCA as a pathway to fulfill their international deforestation-free commitments. While banks usually perceive investments in smallholder agriculture as high-risk, and having low returns, the private sector’s participation unlocks sustainable finance opportunities and enables access to inputs, services, and credit. The project also turns novel research on low-carbon and deforestation-free production into actionable recommendations and best practices for policymakers, regional authorities, financial institutions, and private companies.

RESULTS ACHIEVED TO DATE

- Supported farmers to implement LCA practices on over 32,550 ha and provided technical assistance to over 1,300 producers (20% women).
- Engaged with 5 large private sector enterprises in the agricultural sector to utilize improved monitoring tools to identify and monitor deforestation and biodiversity risks.
- Provided technical assistance to mobilize and channel \$3.4 million dollars in public funds through two public investment programs (combining a mix of technical assistance, grants, and other incentives) in San Martín and Ucayali in Peru to help scale LCA and deforestation-free production.
- Made improvements to the monitoring of forests within major commodity supply sheds using digital tools and technology, enabling more robust monitoring of 8.2 million ha of forests and ecosystems.
- Turned research into actionable knowledge for supply chain stakeholders through policy briefs, scientific papers, and/or presentations that reach policymakers, companies, and multi-stakeholder platforms. Major publications include the journal article “Protected areas still used to produce Brazil’s cattle”, and a report on “Conservation value and biodiversity indicators for properties and supply chains in Colombia”.

PROJECT INFORMATION

IMPLEMENTER: Solidaridad North America

PARTNERS: Earth Innovation Institute, National Wildlife Federation, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison

DURATION: March 17, 2022 – March 16, 2027

USAID FUNDING: \$16.3 million

LOCATION: Brazil (Para and Mato Grosso), Colombia (Caqueta and Meta), and Peru (San Martín and Ucayali)

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