

COSTA RICA "GREEN COUNTRY"

**CHALLENGES IN THE
DEGRADATION OF
ECOSYSTEMS AND PUBLIC
POLICY**

Presented by Jimena Araya



ABOUT DÌWÖ AMBIENTAL

We are an environmental, non-profit, non-governmental organization led by young professionals, focused on promoting transformation towards a regenerative development that allows the adaptation and mitigation of climate change and the improvement of people's quality of life.

OUR VISION

Enable vulnerable communities in Costa Rica and Latin America to mitigate and adapt to climate change while generating regenerative development.

OUR MISSION

Generate nature-based solutions to improve people's quality of life and environmental well-being in rural and urban landscapes.

WHAT DO WE DO?

We focus on promoting attention to socio-environmental problems by providing nature-based solutions to urban and rural landscapes in partnership with communities, governments, organizations and businesses, through our four programs: Forest Landscape Restoration, Volunteering, Green Employability and Sustainable Construction.

OUR WORK IS FRAMED WITHIN



DECENIO DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS SOBRE LA
**RESTAURACION DE
LOS ECOSISTEMAS**
2021-2030



DEFORESTATION AND ECOSYSTEM DEGRADATION IN COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is a country recognized internationally for its green brand, influenced by the international agenda, but above all it is the result of local efforts by the Costa Rican population, which has sought other means of development more in harmony with nature and has always been at the vanguard in environmental matters.

Article 50 of the Political Constitution: Every person has the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment. For this reason, it is entitled to denounce acts that infringe that right and to claim reparation for the damage caused. The State will guarantee, defend and preserve that right.

70's, 80's and 90's decades: Initially, deforestation occurs due to the growth of livestock activities and monocultures of crops such as bananas, activities that would later be reduced in the 90's, where a change in land use to more and new monocultures, such as oil palm and pineapple happened. These activities have caused the country to use between four and eight times more pesticides per hectare than the other countries in America that make up the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This has generated other problems at a local level, mainly to people's health and water quality for human consumption.

Although there is interest in ensuring the well-being of its ecosystems and the legal support to make it effective, the country has focused its economy on unsustainable activities that put pressure on and degrade marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Specifically when we talk about forest cover, the dynamics in the country have been complex.

THE COSTA RICAN FOREST OVER TIME

During the 1980's, the first study of the forest cover of Costa Rica was carried out. This study erroneously concluded that Costa Rica's forest cover was less than 30% in the territory, when it never really dropped below 40%, according to the second study carried out.

Two periods can be recognized that describe the behavior of forest cover in Costa Rica:

The first period occurs between 1960 and 1986, it is recognized as "frontal deforestation" because the forest cover decreased from 59.5% to 40%, which is equivalent to a loss of 956,675 hectares. The second period is from 1986 to 2010 and is called "forest recovery", in which there was an increase from 40.8% to 50.4% (Sánchez, 2015).

In 2022, the country has a forest cover close to 60%, managing to reverse deforestation throughout the country and obtaining the first disbursement of Payment for Results (PR), for the amount of USD 16.4 million from the World Bank. However, Costa Rica is a country of contrasts, for the year 2021, satellite data detected pineapple crops in 1659 hectares of four protected areas in the country. The government granted permits in only two of them, and it did so only for 358.5 hectares. That is 74% of the pineapple within protected areas would not be endorsed by the institution in charge. An example that shows that, although the country is doing many things well, it still does not have the capacities to ensure the well-being, quality and sustainability of its forests, therefore of the respective ecosystem services.

SOLUTIONS, PUBLIC POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FOREST DEGRADATION AND DEFORESTATION IN COSTA RICA

PAYMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAM

In 2013, forest cover reached 52.4%, making Costa Rica the first tropical country to reverse deforestation. The Payment for Environmental Services (PSA) program is the largest contributor to this change, which through the National Fund for Forest Financing (FONAFIFO) recognizes and financially promotes land owners, especially farms, who perform an environmental service. This service can be recognized for its impact on the reduction of greenhouse gases, the protection of water resources, maintenance of flora and fauna, as well as scenic beauty. All these services are generated through the plantations and are managed through three modalities: protection, reforestation and agroforestry systems (ONF, 2020) This program makes it possible to avoid deforestation of forested lands in the hands of private persons, since conservation is paid for.



SOLUTIONS, PUBLIC POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FOREST DEGRADATION AND DEFORESTATION IN COSTA RICA

PAYMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAM

There are several criticisms of this program directed mainly at the low prices that reduce the profitability of conservation. Despite the criticism, the PESP is a current and outstanding program, which is why the abandonment of the Executive Branch, which has proposed cuts for the Republic's budget for next year that compromises the actions and existence of the Program, is unfortunate.



PUBLIC POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FOREST DEGRADATION AND DEFORESTATION IN COSTA RICA

7575 LAW: FOREST LAW

The main element of the legal framework is the Forest Law, No. 7575. The purpose of this law is to establish the essential and priority function of the State to ensure the conservation, protection and administration of natural forests and the production, use and industrialization of forest resources. This state function is part of the principles of adequate and sustainable use of natural resources, so it also aims to generate employment around forestry activities.



PUBLIC POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FOREST DEGRADATION AND DEFORESTATION IN COSTA RICA

7575 LAW: FOREST LAW

The PSA and the Forest Law (N°7575), article 19, which prohibits the change of land use from forest to non-forest, have given satisfactory results, such as the preservation of biodiversity and CO2 fixation (Hernández et al, 2016). For this reason, the National Forest Development Plan 2011-2020 (PNDF) was carried out, which recognizes the importance of forests through the union of various development sectors such as the provision of drinking water, clean water production, tourism and other land uses (MINAET, 2011). In this way, 12 policies were created that allow the economic reactivation of sustainable forest products and generate profits for the inhabitants of rural areas (Canet, 2015).



PUBLIC POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON FOREST DEGRADATION AND DEFORESTATION IN COSTA RICA

In addition, rural, peasant, indigenous and coastal communities have sought to develop business models that allow them to coexist with the ecosystems that surround them, claiming their right to access land and making sustainable use of it with the support of entities like Diwo Ambiental.



OUR INPUT: LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROGRAM

We work with institutions, companies and communities in the urban and rural areas of Costa Rica that seek to enrich and restore urban and rural ecosystem services for the benefit of the communities and families involved.

We develop forest landscape restoration processes that generate positive impacts on the three axes of sustainable development: economy, society and environment, with the necessary technical-scientific support for this. make efficient use of the resources invested and manage to promote a solution to the problems of vulnerable communities, mainly families recovering indigenous or peasant lands.

Through training processes, advice and access to tools and inputs, the strengthening of capacities is sought to promote food security, biological connectivity and the diversification of sustainable production chains.

TRIPLE IMPACT MODEL

PROBLEM

Land Degradation
Biodiversity Loss
ClimateCchange
Hunger
Unemployment
Poverty



FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

BENEFITS

Soil Conservation
Increase in Biodiversity
CO2 Capture
Food Safety
New Business Models



The key to restoration:
Participation and proactive
involvement



Symbiosis: Communities,
capacity building and the
rewarding effect of the effort
must coexist



OUR IMPACT

2100 Trees planted in urban areas

500 Volunteers involved in urban restorations

75 Indigenous and rural families involved in rural restorations

20.000 Trees planted in the Boruca Indigenous Territory

3000 Trees monitored in the Boruca Indigenous Territory

500 Volunteers involved in rural restorations

30.000 Capacity of seedlings that can house the community nurseries in Boruca

25 Children involved in restoration processes in the indigenous community of Boruca

60 Enterprises led by women involved in landscape governance

CHALLENGES IN RESTORATION

Environmental quality



Site condition



Underestimated costs = Low impact benefits = Ineffective investment

Associated maintenance costs (investment) are usually perceived as high, without contemplating the benefits in the medium and long term

Unawareness of the value-impact relationship

Decision makers and proactive and aware users

"In the current context of loss of diversity and ecosystems, this strategy could be essential for the formation of new communities that can then become new ecosystems, where key species can persist for their dynamics and at the same time, recover their function, structure and resilience"

(Gómez & Lindig, 2017)



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