

Unveiling the social effects of oil palm monoculture in Montes de María in Colombia

A Case Study

"This case study is dedicated to the brave indigenous people, that safeguard 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity and forests. But they cannot keep doing it alone; It is our responsibility to help and protect them."

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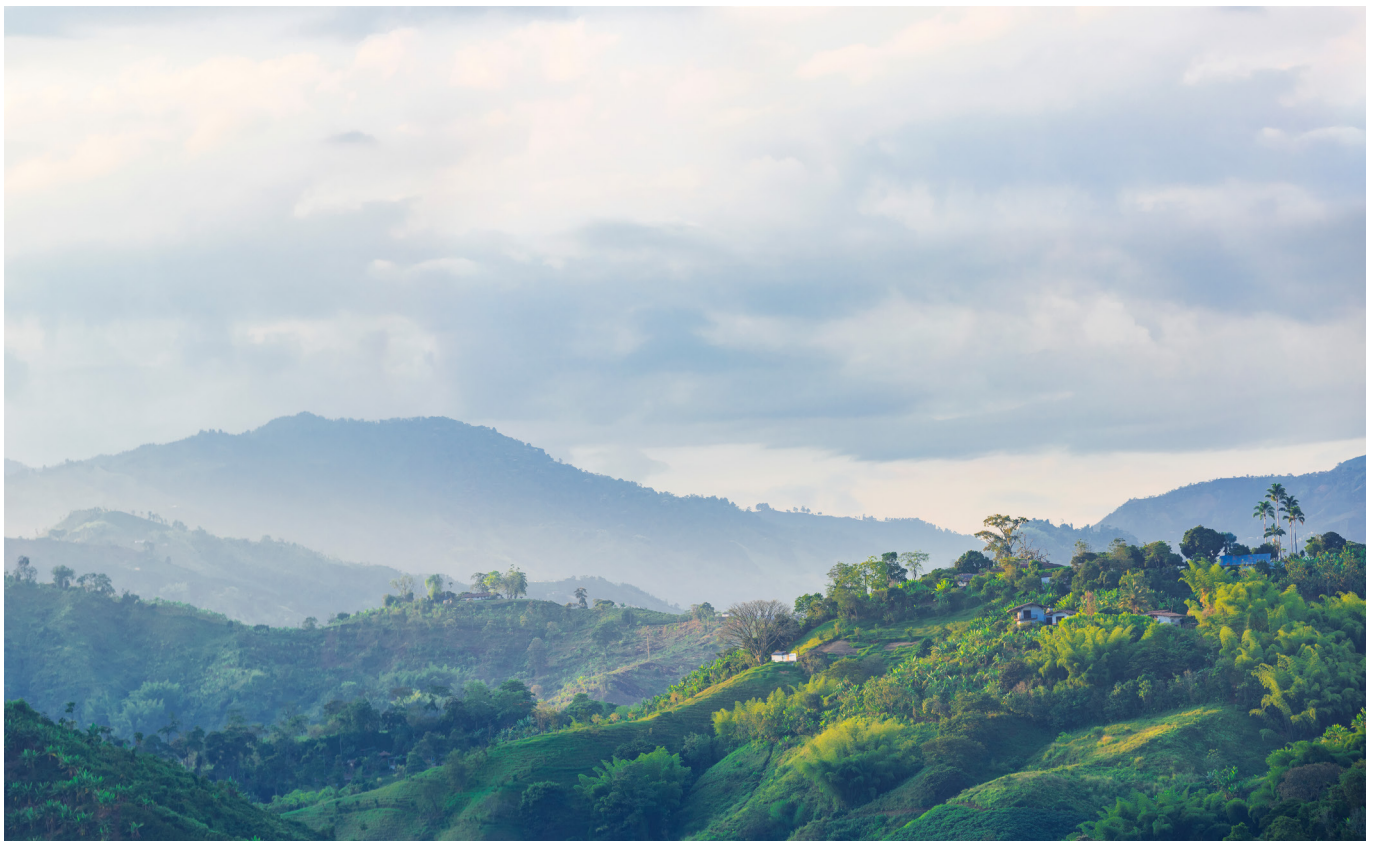
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ABSTRACT

Colombia is the largest oil palm producer in Latin America and the fourth largest in the world. This crop has been promoted as a development factor since the end of the last century. It is currently the most widespread agricultural sector in the country, and that which has experienced the biggest growth in the last decade. In the case of the Montes de María region, the recent expansion of the oil palm agribusiness model was due to a combination of pressure and violence during the armed conflict, public policies aimed at stimulating growth in agribusiness and the implementation of public-private partnership models. The expansion of agribusiness is associated with massive land sales processes and the dispossession and displacement of peasant communities. Oil palm cultivation changed land use, thereby weakening traditional production practices, as it requires large quantities of water and vast expanses of agricultural land. The

climate necessary for this crop is associated with greatly diverse biomes; it requires deforestation of the area, resulting in loss of plant and animal species, which alters the balance of local ecosystems. As with other extractive projects, palmiculture has given rise to strong local resistance, which, however, has not been sufficiently heeded by governments and decision makers in countries that purchase its by-products.

The crisis brought about by climate change and global environmental deterioration requires urgent multilateral action to contain the damage caused by the agroindustry and extractive models in general.



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The following case study is carried out in the framework of the [Global Just Transition campaign](#), which calls on the EU to promote a socially and environmentally just transition not only in the European Union but also worldwide.

While environmental and climate action and social justice are two sides of the same coin, if policies for them are not planned and implemented in a coherent and inclusive manner, the European green transition can lead to environmentally and socially harmful impacts in the Global South. For example, Global South countries will need to adapt to new European standards developed in the framework of the European Green Deal and cope with negative spillover effects of the European production and consumption patterns. This is why since 2022, SOLIDAR has been working with its members and partners to collect views and approaches of just transition from Global South's civil society organisations, including trade unions, indigenous rights defenders, and feminist collectives. The Global Just Transition campaign is a joint action of [Solidar Suisse](#), [Movimiento por la Paz \(MPDL\)](#), [Olof Palmes International Center \(OPIC\)](#), [FOS](#), and [SOLIDAR](#), together with their partners from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Through their different testimonies, we will show the incoherences and negative consequences that this lack of focus on the external dimension has on partner countries.

We call on the EU to adopt a Global Just Transition approach in its relations with Global South countries and to turn the current EGD and its successor into a Global Green Deal to ensure policy coherence, accelerate the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and of the Paris Agreement's objectives, and guaranteeing a fair distribution of the costs and benefits of the European green transition between Europe and partner countries.

1 INTRODUCTION

Colombia is a country with fertile soil and a tropical climate, home to a large and complex biodiversity. These characteristics are favourable to a diversity of agricultural crops, which have allowed the creation of settlements of ethnically diverse human communities, which, until recently, coexisted in relative harmony with these delicate ecosystems. However, as is the case in other Latin American countries, in Colombia the second half of the 20th century was characterised by a series of conflicts linked to the Cold War and an expansion in the production and trade in narcotics, which are consumed illegally, mainly in the North American market¹.

These elements were added to the historical inequality and social exclusion suffered by many populations, mainly indigenous peoples and those of African descent, that led to a situation of confrontation and extreme violence and resulted in the most prolonged civil war in the region. This conflict resulted in the death of many people and



Credits: MPDL Colombia

1 UNDP (2013): "[Regional Human Development Report 2013-2014](#)"



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the displacement of entire agricultural communities, which, in many cases, were forced to abandon their livelihoods and endure a substantial reduction of their well-being.

Decades before the signing of the peace agreement in 2016, the global economic changes established by the neoliberal model favoured the expansion of extractive industries and certain monocultures in the region.

This document presents a synthesis of the case of oil palm monoculture in Montes de María, located in the Caribbean region in the north of Colombia. As will be seen, the expansion of this crop has left a significant mark on the life of communities and of fragile ecosystems, breaking down social structures, facilitating the violation of human rights, the loss of biodiversity, and the contamination of water sources.

This study was carried out through the Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Liberty (MPDL), which has been a constant and active presence in Colombia (as well as in other countries in the region) since 1994. Since then, MPDL has worked hard to promote the development of civil peacebuilding initiatives, considering it as both an objective and a process. For that reason, signing the agreements has been a significant achievement in terms of bringing about peace for Colombia, where MPDL's work has been influential.

Documentary sources were used for the preparation of this study, some provided by the MPDL work team. In addition, a total of 9 people were interviewed, including community leaders from Montes de María, ex-combatants, and representatives of accompanying organisations, to whom we are grateful for the time and reflections they have dedicated to this study².

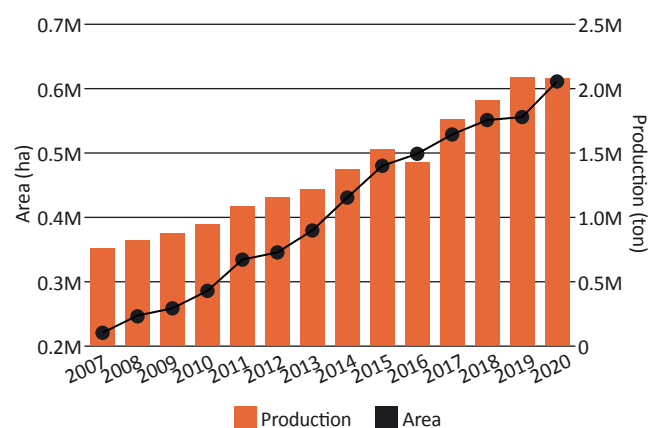
² The references at the end of the document include the profiles of the people consulted.

2. BACKGROUND: DISPOSSESSION AND PALMICULTURE IN MONTES DE MARÍA

In the 1980s, civil war was raging throughout Colombia. “Montes de María was the scene of several of the worst massacres committed during a war, where acts of brutality on an unimaginable scale were committed. According to data from the Colombian Government, nearly a third of the population fled the region between 1998 and 2008, leaving their villages at the mercy of the ghosts of war. Following the demobilisation of the paramilitaries and the retreat of the guerrillas, fighting, attacks, and kidnappings stopped, and the displaced population started to return to Montes de María. However, the region had been permanently changed. Communities had been fragmented, land now had new owners, and the traditional yam, cassava and banana crops had been replaced by a new coloniser: oil palm”³.

The cultivation of oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) has been promoted as a development factor since the days of Andrés Pastrana’s government (1998-2002), intended both for domestic demand and exports. While Álvaro Uribe was in government (2002-2010), a new policy promoting the production of biofuels was established, owing to the high conversion yields they give⁴. It is currently the largest crop in Colombia, covering almost 600,000 hectares. This is the agricultural sector that has experienced the biggest growth in the country in the last decade⁵. Colombia is Latin America’s largest oil palm producer and the fourth largest in the world⁶. The country has four large palm areas

Colombia: Harvested area and palm oil production



Source: Agronet, Ministerio de Agricultura, Colombia

covering an area spanning 16 departments and more than 100 municipalities.

Montes de María is a region that is included in the Territorial Approach to Development Programmes (PDET in Spanish), created in 2017 as part of the Peace Accords. PDETs are a management and planning instrument of the Colombian government; their aim is to promote economic, social, and environmental development in the areas of the country worst affected by the internal armed conflict.

The recent expansion of the oil palm agribusiness model in the Montes de María region⁷ was owing to a combination of pressure and violence amid the armed conflict in Colombia, public policies aimed at

3 Rodero P, Peñuela S. (2017). *A este tigre no le gusta el aceite de palma*.

4 Estupiñán J. (2023). *Palmicultura en los Montes de María: ¿obstáculo u oportunidad para la transición energética?*

5 Colombia, life power (2023). *La palma de aceite colombiana en cifras*

6 Ministry of Agriculture (2023).

7 The Montes de María region is made up of 15 municipalities: 7 from the Department of Bolívar (Córdoba, Carmen de Bolívar, El Guamo, María La Baja, San Jacinto, San Juan Nepomuceno and Zambrano), and 8 from the Department of Sucre (Chalán, Colosó, Los Palmitos, Morroa, Ovejas, San Onofre, San Antonio de Palmito and Tolú Viejo) according to the Land Renewal Agency. The municipalities of Corozal and Sincelejo are also considered to be areas of regional influence, according to the Ideas de Paz Foundation.

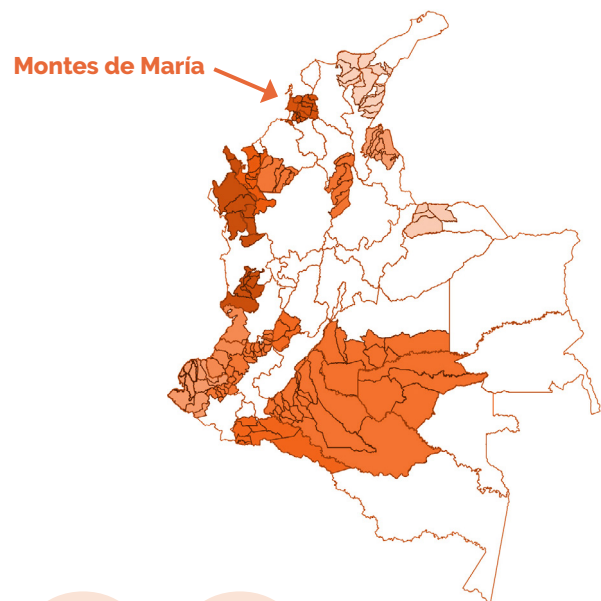
stimulating agroindustry growth and public-private partnership models in which corporations play a fundamental role. The expansion of agribusiness is associated with massive land purchases and selective plundering of peasant communities.

One paradigmatic case is that of the municipality of María La Baja. Between 2006 and 2015, the area growing oil palm in that territory increased from 3,400 to 11,022 hectares⁸. In recent years, this municipality has been producing an average of 190,000 tons of oil palm fruit per year, which are transformed into more than 33,000 tons of oil, of which 23% is turned into biofuels⁹. Although there is no agreement regarding their sustainability, their defenders consider biofuels to be less environmentally harmful than fossil fuels.

The palm received fiscal and credit incentives, which was not the case for other crops¹⁰. Communities associate the installation of the crop with a strategy of land expropriation, as the people frantically sold their land in an attempt to gain any meagre income they could and flee the violence.

“It came at an unexpected time, with no planning. It came at a time when we wanted to leave, to go to the city to get away from the violence. So, we had to sell our land out of necessity. There was plundering and invasion. There was exploitation of the buffer zones. Even now, there are massive land purchases being made”¹¹.

Given that they lacked the supplies and credit that would have allowed them to continue growing their traditional crops, other farmers joined ranks with palm companies. Oil palm cultivation in Colombia changed land use, thus weakening traditional production practices.



“The palm arrived in María de la Baja in the late 90s, most particularly in 1998. In the past, previous governments installed agricultural equipment for rice or other monocultures. The land was allocated to municipalities. There was an agrarian reform. It is an area with rich soil, where water is plentiful. The irrigation district was created. It is perhaps the largest in the department, and was later privatised, no longer serving the peasant population but instead benefitting the palm oil companies”¹².

The National Federation of Oil Palm Growers (FEDEPALMA), which is an association of palm producers founded in 1962, sought to convince undecided producers “by completing the deficiencies of a non-existent State in the region through the construction of schools and basic infrastructure”¹³.

According to some interviewed residents, they resorted to acts of violence when they failed to convince some owners, as a community leader was murdered and the family decided it was preferable to sell the land.

8 Fedepalma. <https://fedepalma.org/>

9 Biodiesel and bioethanol.

10 Interview C.

11 Interview D.

12 Interview A.

13 Rodero and Peñuela (n3).

3 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

Palm cultivation requires a large amount of water and vast extensions of agricultural land. The optimal climate for this crop is usually associated with widely diverse ecosystems, and its establishment requires deforestation of the areas, consequently resulting in loss of plant and animal species.

"In order to be able to appropriate the necessary land, palm companies pressured the population, sometimes resorting to threats, and by this means managing to buy land at low prices and often capitalising on their poverty and the context of violence suffered during the internal armed conflict. Another critical factor for the dispossession was the debt many peasants were in. Later the State transferred the credit portfolio to private entities."¹⁴

The palm has tended to replace the population's traditional crops, which are no longer "competitive". People are obliged to buy food from elsewhere and, because of the levels of contamination, they even have to buy bottled water. *"The agrochemicals used pollute the water and the air, and there are very few controls"*¹⁵. There are numerous reports of people, including children, being poisoned, from drinking from water sources close to palm crops. *"The government didn't conduct any follow-up research of the negative impacts"*¹⁶.

The water sources of the hamlet called La Suprema, with about 200 inhabitants, in the region of María

La Baja, have become a danger to the lives of its residents, who are mostly survivors of the armed conflict, and subsist in this region against a backdrop of intense extractive activity. The settlement was founded more than 25 years ago by peasants fleeing the war. It now comprises 69 families and has numerous freshwater springs that are suitable for consumption after filtering¹⁷.

As an invasive crop, palm has altered the balance of local ecosystems, with significant phytosanitary effects. As one interviewed resident commented, *"They brought plagues that we had never come across previously and had no idea how to deal with"*.

Despite being a growing business, palm cultivation is not a great source of employment since, **for every hundred hectares, only 27 workers are employed**¹⁸. According to one of the people interviewed,

"In many cases contracts are temporary and the work is underpaid. The subcontracting system has made the sector competitive for entrepreneurs, but working conditions are far from ideal. These distortions in the labour market are increasing because there are no alternatives, farmers have lost their productive assets and schools only offer training related to palm cultivation"¹⁹.

In this context, many women from landless families or who rent land to cultivate basic grains, have been forced to enter the informal labour market and take

14 Interview A.

15 Interview D.

16 Interview A.

17 Estupiñán (n4).

18 Estupiñán (n4).

19 Interview A.

on multiple jobs in order to support their households. According to a report conducted by ActionAid, women who work on plantations, in particular in nursery activities, are discriminated against and receive less pay than men for carrying out the same agricultural activities²⁰.

Another effect produced by cultivation is the removal of long-standing local roads for the purpose of installing palm plantations. This results in alterations in the daily practices of the population.

“It has affected our traditions and our way of life. There are no more freshwater springs to supply us”²¹.

Palm cultivation has violated the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the population of African descent. According to people interviewed from the region, such as ethnic communities, they have been severely affected. Collective land has been lost, and it has become more difficult to acquire it. In María La Baja, indigenous populations have been displaced, and their livelihoods have been violated, affecting habitability and their dignity. Furthermore, processing plants generate highly unpleasant odours throughout large expanses of land²².

As with other extractive projects, there has been fierce local resistance to palm cultivation, which governments have ignored and are even trying to quash. In this domain it is women’s leadership that stands out.

“The situation has led to many more women defending the territory; women have lost their traditional jobs in handicrafts, medicinal plants, and food farming. In addition, sexual harassment of women by palm workers has increased. Many women have had to go to the city to do precarious domestic work”²³.

We need to mention that the people consulted regard small palm plantations, as peasant initiatives, in a positive light, it is the mega-crops that have the most negative impacts. On the other hand, although the expansion of palm cultivation has been pervasive, in the south of Montes de María there are examples of resistance to these models, such as in La Esperanza, where one of the few Zenú indigenous communities still existing in the area has opted for community-managed tourism that respects the environment as an alternative to agroindustry. *“We have been offered teak and palm projects and we have rejected them because we preserve our culture and our right to the environment, our livelihoods depend on nature”*, explains one of its leaders. The Ecolosó ecotourism park, which has a waterfall in the middle of a jungle area, was approved in 2017 despite the initial reluctance of indigenous people to receive tourists in their region.

“It is a natural source, which, if overused, will be damaged, but now we realise that, if we know how to manage it, we can improve the inhabitants’ quality of life, and that visitors who come will take away a positive image of the community”²⁴.

20 Estupiñán (n4).

21 Interview D.

22 Interview D.

23 Interview D.

24 Rodero and Peñuela (n3).

4. OIL PALM, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND JUST TRANSITION

Climate change and environmental degradation pose existential risks to the planet as a whole. While efforts have been made to achieve binding international environmental and climate pacts, there still remain many gaps owing to asymmetries in the rule of law in regions and countries worldwide. This makes the application of globally accepted principles challenging. Countries with more stable democracies, particularly those of the European Union, have made efforts to include in their international trade policies a series of requirements to ensure that the production and marketing of the products they import meet environmental and climate protection standards. This is a process under development and under permanent construction, but time is running out for the planet, which is why

there are changes that must be considered urgent, and the most developed countries are in a position to be able to take a leading role in the process.

The European Union is one of the largest markets in the world, with more than 700 million consumers²⁵, and much of what happens in the EU dictates how raw materials are obtained, processed, and traded on a global scale.

The proposed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive²⁶ (CSDDD), which is currently being discussed at EU level at the time of the drafting of this study, establishes rules on the obligations incumbent on large companies concerning the actual and potential adverse effects on human rights and the environment of their own operations, the operations of their subsidiaries, and the operations carried out by their business partners. It also establishes rules on sanctions and civil liability in the event of non-compliance with these obligations. Finally, it establishes obligations for companies to adopt a plan that ensures that their business model and strategy comply with climate agreements²⁷.

In transitioning to a low-carbon economy, the proposed CSDDD aims at achieving corporate accountability, responsible business conduct and access to justice for indigenous peoples²⁸. It is important to remember that indigenous peoples guard and protect at least 80% of the planet's remaining biodiversity, which makes their participation in the transition so crucial that this fact is recognised by the European Parliament: "*The General European Environment Action Programme*



Credits: MPDL Colombia

²⁵ World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

²⁶ European Commission, Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/corporate-sustainability-due-diligence_en?prefLang=es

²⁷ European Council, European Green Deal. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/green-deal/fit-for-55-the-eu-plan-for-a-green-transition/>

²⁸ Krenak E, Angarova G. (2023) "[The European Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive: Why do Indigenous Peoples matter?](#)"

to 2030, the Union's framework for action in the environment and climate, aims to protect, restore and improve the state of the environment, among other things, by halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity. Given that indigenous peoples' rights and biodiversity conservation are inextricably linked, we stress the importance of respecting both at the same time"²⁹.

Colombia is the European Union's first trading partner within the Andean Community and the fifth in Latin America. The European Union, on the other hand, is Colombia's third trading partner and the country's second Foreign Direct Investment source³⁰. The Trade Agreement between Colombia and the European Union (in force since 2013) goes beyond trade and tariff measures, covering services, intellectual property, public procurement and human rights.

In 2022, Colombian exports to the European Union totalled 9,316 million €. 29% of exports were agricultural products, some of the most prominent being fresh bananas and coffee³¹. Nevertheless, global demand for palm oil has been increasing in recent years due to its wide range of uses, from processed foods to cosmetics and biofuels. 26% of the production is destined for the international market, of which approximately half goes to the European market³², which is the largest consumer of palm oil in the world, accounting for 45% of global consumption, according to a report commissioned by the RSPO³³.

As mentioned previously, biofuels derived from oil palm have been proposed as an alternative to fossil fuels, as they are more environmentally friendly. However, this does not take into account the impact of the deforestation that results from its cultivation, nor the consequent loss of biodiversity.

Although initially European Union guidelines aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions stated that a mixture of biofuels, of which palm was a raw material, was one method of reducing the intensity of greenhouse gases in the fossil fuels provided, it is currently acknowledged that mass production of this type of biofuel can cause significant damage to the environment.

Consumption in the European Union is a critical factor in deforestation and environmental degradation around the world [...]. Without adequate regulatory intervention, the consumption and production in the [European] Union, alone, of six raw materials (cattle, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, soybeans, and wood) would increase deforestation by approximately 248,000 hectares per year from now until 2030³⁴.

Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament acknowledges the severe impact of deforestation resulting from the production of certain raw materials, including oil palm³⁵. It establishes rules aimed at minimising the EU's contribution to deforestation and environmental degradation worldwide. Article 3 of the Regulation mentioned above prohibits the introduction into the European market of products that are not deforestation-free, that have not been produced within the framework of local legislation, or that are not protected by a declaration of due diligence. However, for this to be fully implemented, there needs to be more European Union controls.

Furthermore, it is essential to mention that this Regulation emphasises the principle of coherence with development policies and states that it is

29 Ibid.

30 Delegation of the EU in Colombia. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/colombia/la-union-europea-y-colombia_es?s=160

31 Ibid.

32 Fedepalma.

33 EPOA, IDH, RSPO (2022), *Sustainable Palm Oil: Europe's Business*

34 Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain raw materials and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and for which Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 is repealed. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023R1115&qid=1709049772206>

35 Ibid.

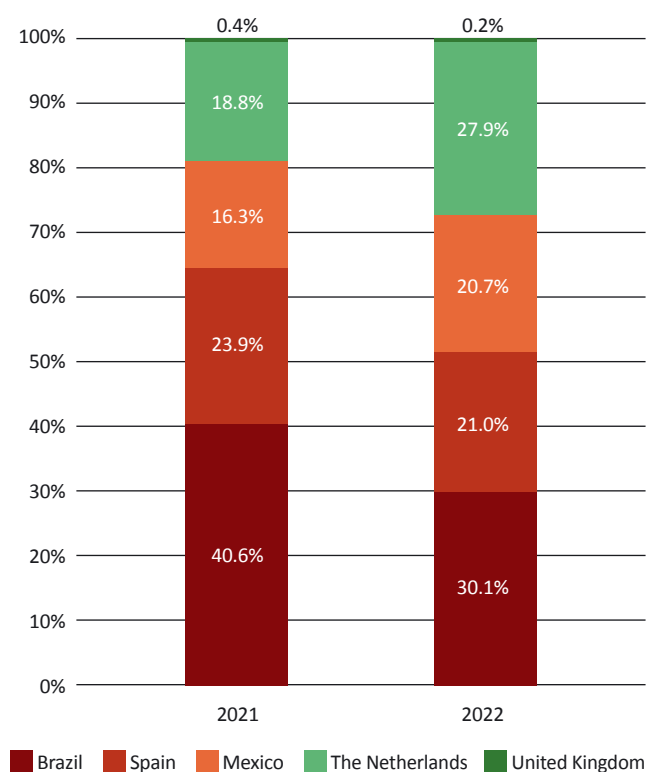
necessary to promote cooperation with developing countries. The Regulation states that Member States and the European Commission must continue to work in partnership with producing countries and cooperate with organisations, international bodies and interested parties acting on the ground, through multilateral dialogues. To this effect, the intention is for the Commission to strengthen its support and incentives with regard to the protection and strengthening of the rights of local communities, using indicators based on scientific evidence, agriculture, and climate change, among others.

Despite these increasingly specific regulations, predatory practices and violations of human rights continue to occur in the Montes de María region. According to a statement by one of the interviewees, some credit rating companies lend themselves to certifying products produced by these companies as sustainable, without considering the supply chain as a whole, nor the cumulative damage caused by a crop such as palm, which is medium and long-term.

In this era of financial globalisation, it is relatively easy for companies to transfer both fiscal and certification responsibilities to their subsidiaries based in countries with more “relaxed” regulations, or to conceal their participation. It is difficult to deduct these responsibilities if they are considered individually. Consequently, trade agreements should generally include a condition of compliance with minimum human rights standards in countries receiving investments, particularly in countries with a significant indigenous population and high and complex biodiversity³⁶. In addition to monitoring corporate compliance of due diligence, it is necessary to understand the strategies used in the supply chain of the different companies involved for masking practices that are contrary to just transition.

For the people interviewed, palm cultivation is a far cry from just transition. There has been deforestation of soils and serious degradation of the ecosystem.

Destination of palm oil exports (% of FOB value)



Source: Agronet, Ministerio de Agricultura, Colombia

Although, according to the academics consulted, the origin of capital or the ownership of local companies is unknown, it is necessary to consider the issue of cultivation in the country holistically and seek more sustainable alternatives. Previous studies show that María La Baja’s palm oil exports were destined for Rotterdam, but this information has not been updated recently³⁷.

Although the Palm Growers’ Federation attempts to ensure that partner companies comply with international standards,

“Complying with phytosanitary or product quality certifications will not erase what they have done in the past, nor its environmental impact. If they violated rights upon arrival, they’re not going to stop now”³⁸.

³⁶ It is important to mention that between 2010 and 2020, 176 lawsuits were filed against palm producers in Colombia due to malpractices such as violation of environmental regulations, deforestation and diversion and grabbing of water. IEA (2022).

³⁷ Interviews A, B, C, and D.

³⁸ Interview D.

5. CONCLUSION

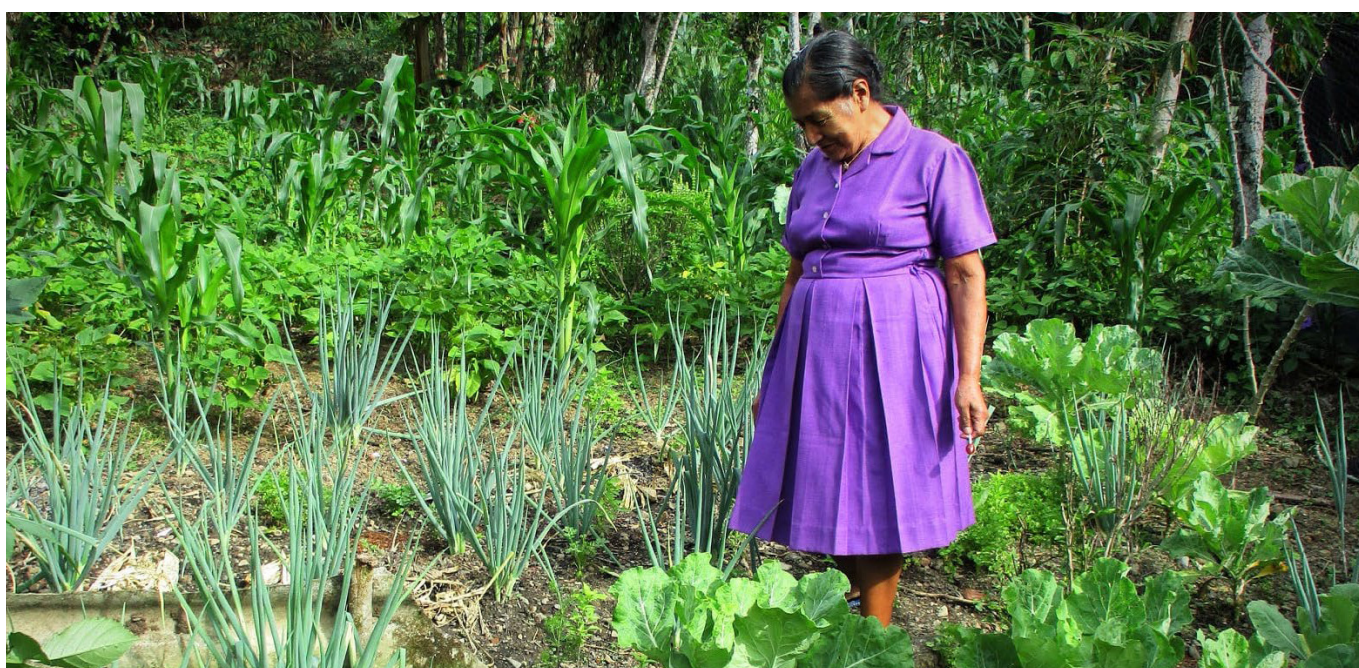
The expansion of oil palm monoculture in the Montes de María region of Colombia has left a trail of negative environmental and social impacts in its wake. Loss of forested areas and biodiversity, contamination of water sources, dispossession of land from peasant communities, the breakdown of social fabrics and the alteration of fundamental elements of life and livelihoods are some of the most visible impacts.

The expansion of this crop boomed during the 1990s, as a result of neoliberal policies, which, in an effort to increase profit, sought to optimise soil performance, without considering the socio-environmental impacts. Although there have been a series of “adjustments” to the policies in an attempt to adapt to new global environmental agendas and the energy transition, the impacts described in this study are irreversible in the short and medium term. Although palm cultivation has attempted to make its processes “sustainable”, if we consider the supply chain as a whole and the cultivation and use of by-products, it will be a challenge for palm cultivation to meet the

environmental and human rights standards required by international regulations.

For these reasons, regarding the case of oil palm in Colombia, the European Union should:

- ✔ Ensure that its policies and those of its Member States incorporate a transitional justice approach, promoting and respecting the measures of the Peace Agreements, taking care of the affected communities and the environment;
- ✔ Contribute, as a general policy, beyond free trade agreements, to the transition to a non-extractivist economy in Latin American countries, with respect for the rights of indigenous peoples;
- ✔ Reduce the import and consumption of palm oil and support with social measures those communities affected, for the recovery and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity, in line with the pillar of the European Green Deal.



Credits: MPDL Colombia

6 TOWARDS A GLOBAL JUST TRANSITION

Despite its efforts, the EU is lagging behind on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals³⁹ while some of its strategies and policies, like the European Green Deal, risk putting at stake partner countries' capacity to achieve the SDGs.

While environmental and climate action and social justice are two sides of the same coin, if not planned and implemented in a coherent and inclusive manner, the European green transition can lead to environmentally and socially harmful impacts in the Global South.

Therefore, the [Global Just Transition Campaign](#) calls upon the European Union's institutions, including the future members of the European Parliament and the new European Commission to ensure the next European Green Deal is equipped with a strong external dimension.

In this framework, the EU and its representatives shall

- ✔ Lead on the implementation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a comprehensive EU sustainable development strategy and ensure Policy Coherence to tackle the potentially negative impacts of the EU policies, programs, and actions on partner countries. They should conduct in-depth sustainability impact assessments (ex-ante and ex post) of its policies, programs, and actions to assess and address the external economic, social, environmental and political impacts of EU policies, especially on the most marginalized communities.
- ✔ Revise its trade policy and economic relations to incorporate sanctions on labour and environmental standards. Ensure that all EU business enterprises respect human rights, do not infringe them; addresses adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved, and ensures access to effective remedy in case violations occur.
- ✔ Increase incentives, such as technical and financial support, as well as grants-based funding for loss and damage, mitigation and adaptation for partner countries to undertake their own Just Transition processes and mechanisms.
- ✔ Promote, protect, and enable civic space and counter shrinking space for civil society. Ensuring meaningful, inclusive and safe consultations and dialogues with CSO, during the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its policies. At the same time, the EU should promote an open civic space and protect human rights defenders, such as environmental, women', indigenous people', workers' rights defenders, as well as the right to defend rights.
- ✔ Strengthen social justice during the green transition by promoting and facilitating the mobilisation of domestic and when needed international resources to set up and scale up Universal Social Protection Floors and systems, including income support schemes, re-skilling and up-skilling programs, and quality public services such as health care.

39 EEB Press Release (2023), "[SDGs: EU Voluntary Review does not support rhetoric of transformative and participatory change](#)"

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16. People Consulted: A total of 9 people were consulted. The interviews took place in August 2023. For security reasons, their names are not included. In the text, they are cited under the following references, depending on their profile:
 - A. Sociologist and researcher of palm implementation processes in the region. Human rights activist.
 - B. Academic and human rights activist. Researcher in agrarian matters. Has studied the issue of palm trees in the northern region of Colombia.
 - C. Activist, academic and former combatant in the region. Has studied the processes of resistance and implantation of palm cultivation in the region.
 - D. Focus group with community members and activists (3 men and 3 women) who have experienced or been party to the impacts of the palm tree in Montes de María.



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