



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

“Filling gaps and removing traps  
for sustainable resource management”

## Cocoa, Forests and Peace – The Role of Cocoa in Conservation and Peace Building in Colombia

ANDRÉS CHARRY, FABIO CASTRO, AUGUSTO CASTRO-NUNEZ

*International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Colombia*

### Abstract

Since the beginning of the peace negotiations between the Colombian government and FARC, the country has been experiencing changes in multiple dimensions, bringing along new environmental, social and political challenges. Deforestation patterns have shown different trends across the country, with some areas decreasing total forest loss while others showing rapid increases in deforestation. Similarly, conflict, with its many actors and expressions has changed both geographically and in intensity. Experts believe that both the causes and effects of conflict and deforestation are highly interrelated, with common factors such as land tenure and rights, economic opportunities, state presence, rule of law, among others. Aware of the commonalities, government officials and stakeholders have promoted sustainable agricultural value chains as approaches to tackle both phenomena simultaneously, assuming that increasing incomes, market access, productivity and welfare may help in reconstructing the social tissue and, with the right mechanisms, reducing pressure on forests. In that sense, the cocoa value chain has been proposed as one of the main alternatives by the international cooperation, private investors and the public sector.

In this research, we provide evidence on the potential of the cocoa value chain to contribute in both dimensions. For this, we conducted a spatial analysis to understand the current relationship of cocoa production, deforestation and conflict in Colombia. Additionally, we analysed the narratives and perspectives of 30 key stakeholders on what they consider the role of the cocoa value chain as a tool to for peacebuilding and forest conservation. We found that there is no significant spatial relationship between cocoa production and deforestation, nor between cocoa production and conflict. We also found that the majority of stakeholders interviewed believe that cocoa is not a driver of deforestation, but instead can become a reforestation tool through agroforestry systems, and a conservation tool as an economic safeguard in buffer zones for high conservation values. Similarly, they believe that it has a role in peacebuilding as a means for cooperativism, increasing rural incomes and providing licit economic opportunities, nevertheless, there is a broad agreement that this can only be achieved if the productive activity becomes a “profitable business”.

**Keywords:** Deforestation-free value chains, environmental peacebuilding, spatial correlation, sustainable agriculture