



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2023, hybrid conference
“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:
Trade-offs and synergies”

Aiming for sustainability? An analysis of global commodity chains of gold mining and cattle ranching in Colombia

BARBARA SCHRÖTER¹, PAULA ANDREA SANCHEZ-GARCIA¹, TORSTEN KRAUSE², LASSE LOFT¹

¹*Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Germany*

²*Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS), Sweden*

Abstract

The extraction of resources such as minerals, oil and agricultural products has serious social and environmental impacts. These include land grabbing, the displacement of small farmers and indigenous communities, deforestation, forest destruction and biodiversity loss. In recent years, consumers, governments and private companies have sought on responses to reduce the negative impacts associated with the production of mineral and agricultural commodities. Although rules and regulations on global commodity chains directly affect the actors involved in the chains these remain pretty abstract and unknown.

Therefore, in this article, we examine the gold and cattle commodity chains in Colombia. The aim is to identify the involved actors at different levels of governance (local, national, international) that have power and resources to shift to sustainable production. Based on Net-Map interviews, we map the value chain process together with the actors and discuss opportunities and barriers to improve the chains.

We show that the commodity chains of one and the same product are very different and extremely complex. In Colombia, there are different forms of mining and cattle ranching. In some of them, the shift towards sustainability is more advanced than in others, depending on the level of land use conflicts and the variety of actors involved. These different combinations of actors and conflicts lead to different social problems and levels of violence. Opportunities to improve commodity chains necessarily have to improve people's livelihoods and peacebuilding issues. We discuss these findings and their implications and limits for new regulations, for instance the new EU deforestation regulation.

Keywords: Actor mapping, cattle, global value chains, gold, informal institutions, Putumayo