

REFORESTATION FOR CONSERVATION **FUNDACIÓN BIODIVERSA COLOMBIA**

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ABSTRACT

Fundación BioDiversa Colombia (FBC) is a non-profit organization which mission is the conservation of Colombia's natural patrimony through participative scientific research and through productive sustainable projects that aim towards conservation, social development and self-sufficiency of the local communities. Our vision of the future is being a self-sufficient organization that executes projects and makes research in several areas in the country and which social and environmental impacts are positive, increase in time and have a long-term viability.

Since its creation in April 2005, FBC has gathered a team of professionals in complementary disciplines with high academic background who do important research always with a significant social involvement and has built a strong network of national and international allies. Nevertheless, the administrative self-sustainability of FBC and the continuity of its projects depend solely on external resources from the research projects.

In order to perform our mission, we propose a productive self-sustained profitable project in the long-term, that seeks the conservation of the low wet tropical forest of the Middle Magdalena Valley, and at the same time creates sustainable alternatives and improvement of the social conditions of the local community. The project is designed to be self-sustainable, expandable and to create immediate and always growing social and environmental impacts in order to guarantee the operation of a natural reserve in the area and of FBC in time.

The project will be in Antioquia's Middle Magdalena Valley, in the small village of Barbacoas in Yondó county (see implementation site). This area has wet tropical forest of invaluable richness and is critically endangered because of the growing expansion of cattle ranching, the social abandonment and the lack of sustainable productive alternatives for the community. The basics of the project is to reforest the grasses and bushes near a protected native forest reserve area, with native precious wood species, which will be harvested in 25 years and will provide the main revenue to the project. After the harvest, the reforested areas would have become a secondary forest with an important increase in biodiversity and the largest part will be included as a part of the protected area. A percentage of the reforested area will continue as a production/protection area that will provide permanent income in the long-term after 25 years. In order to achieve these goals we will plant a mixed forest in the grassland and bushes located in proximity of a patch of native forest in relatively low densities. We will plant several native species of fine-wood, two fast-growing wood species and rubber trees, simulating the ecological features of native forests and managing the area in order to allow the

regeneration of the native forest with an increase of biodiversity in the reforested areas. The rubber will start production after five years, the fast-growing woods have 12 years' cycles and the fine woods 25 years' cycles. After the fine woods are harvested, the area of protected forest will include most of these reforested areas, while another part will be a production/protection area that will continue generating income in the long-term. The nearby native forest is very important, since it provides biological control against plagues for the cultivated species.

We will destine 10% of the total hectares for production in order to assure maintenance and protection of the trees throughout their development, and provide, with sustainable economic alternatives and food safety, to the peasant families that will be in charge of taking care of the cultivated forest. Each family will have nine reforested hectares and one productive hectare in their care. The project will provide materials and training to the family for the establishment of an agro ecological farm in the productive hectare along with some rubber trees and fast-growing wood trees as well as some teak trees in the borders. These agro-systems will have two cows, two pigs, poultry, vegetables, fruit trees and an earthworm culture; these will guarantee food safety to the family and some surplus that the families can sell to the rest of the community or in the larger nearby towns through a farmer's association created for this purpose. This will generate revenue for the families and the project from the first year.

All of this will give the project sustainability while we harvest the fine wood species.

From the beginning, the project will create important and ever-growing social impacts that aim to improve the living conditions of the beneficiaries, through the creation of productive sustainable alternatives, the creation of fair temporal and permanent jobs and food safety. At the same time the project will promote the improvement of the scholar, health and sanitary services for all the people in the village. The project will also create a huge environmental impact, conserving biodiversity, soil and watersheds. The project will also mitigate Climate Change, and deforestation of native tropical forests.

The first phase of the project includes buying the grassland and bushes nearby the protected forest for a total of 101 hectares: 90 reforested hectares, 10 productive hectares and one hectare for operation. Our inquiries in the area show that the land we want to buy belongs to wealthy landowners and are mostly free of cattle at the moment and under-exploited, probably because of the large distance and lack of roads to transport the cattle. The informal price goes from 500 to 800 dollars per hectare, the soil is relatively productive and fit to forestry, since the high annual precipitation (between 2500 and 3000

mm/year) reduces the risk of fire and building complicated irrigation systems. For the first phase we will work with 10 families and we will need around 25 temporal employees for the establishment of the trees, the wood harvest, the rubber processing and the care of the nursery. All the workers in the project will be hired under fair labor conditions and with a fair income.

Fine tropical wood cultures is one of the more profitable alternatives for their conservation, due to the high extraction rates and the growing deforestation; this assures the international market for the product and high selling prices in the future, specially if the forests are internationally certified for a good social and environmental management. On the other hand, natural rubber has a promissory market, due to the high local and international demand.

The resources to the first 101 hectares and the operation of the project until the fifth year will come from donations of organizations that provide or canalize funds for these type of projects. This should not be too difficult, because of the social and environmental long-term impact of the project, its relevance and perfect timing in the problems it tackles, and because it is presented by an NPO, that strives for the social and environmental benefit, above its own. The amount needed for the establishment is around 900.000 dollars. After the sixth year the project is self-sustainable. For further expansion of the project, we will look for donations form companies that seek to promote social and environmental corporate responsibility, and from regular individuals and organizations. We will also offer a green-social investment product, with a competitive actual interest yield guaranteed by the sell of the precious woods. These type of responsible investments are becoming more important every day also in Colombia. The modular structure of this project will easy the constant expansion depending on the resources at hand.

The location of the project is perfect for the distribution of the agricultural products, the rubber and later, the wood, due to the easy fluvial transport and the proximity to important harbors such as Puerto Berrío and Barrancabermeja on the Magdalena River and large urban areas such as Barranquilla, Medellín and Bucaramanga.

The management team are four professionals with masters degrees in biology, conservation, forestry, and environmental economics. To complement our skills, we will hire professional help for legal and tributary issues and we count with the knowledge in agroecology, and other skills that the rest of the members of FBC have.

In conclusion, we are presenting a productive reforestation model with fine tropical woods, self-sustainable and profitable in the long-term, with social and environmental benefits that are tangible, meaningful and long lasting, for a region that needs this urgently.

FAMILY IN BARBACOAS



IMPLEMENTATION SITE

