

# Study recommends solution to end unsustainable agricultural practices

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Cattle ranch in Puerto Wilches. Credit: Valeria Boron

A University of Kent study has suggested that rural areas can provide for both people and wildlife in biodiversity-rich tropical countries such as Colombia if agriculture is administered in the right way.

Published in the journal *Land Use Policy*, Valeria Boron, of the University's Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE), analysed expert and stakeholder opinion as well as policy documents to understand how to achieve [wildlife conservation](#) and overall sustainability in [rural areas](#) in Colombia.

Currently agricultural sectors such as cattle ranching and [oil palm](#) cultivation are not improving social inequality issues and food security, but are rather creating unstable employment and threatening biodiversity, natural resources, and cultural heritage. Consequently, Colombia, now the world's fourth largest oil palm producer, is following other oil palm producing countries like Indonesia and Malaysia in experiencing a loss in wildlife.

The study recommended that, in order to reconcile [biodiversity conservation](#) and sustainable development, a policy mix that combines both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches is needed.

This includes the design and adoption of strategic land use planning to make agricultural subsidies conditional to social and environmental standards, strengthening local institutions, and designing incentives to foster the implementation of best agricultural practices. At the international level, creating a demand for sustainable agricultural commodities is also crucial.

Valeria Boron, who is a PhD student studying conservation of medium-large mammals across agroecosystems in the neo-tropics, suggested that by using this approach, biodiversity conservation can be combined with agricultural development to create healthy resilient landscapes for both animals and people. The study proves that the future should not hold desolated landscapes cleared of people and/or animals. Finally, it also reveals that history should not be ignored when thinking about sustainability and that addressing the legacies of decades of armed conflict is a key step for a sustainable future in Colombia.



Oil palm plantation in Puerto Wilches. Credit: Valeria Boron

**More information:** Achieving sustainable development in rural areas in Colombia: Future scenarios for biodiversity conservation under land use change, [DOI: 10.1016/j.landusepol.2016.08.017](#)

Provided by University of Kent

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