

IGFA Workshop on Agriculture & Deforestation

(30 June 2020)

Argentina is very diverse geographically, with ecosystems ranging from sub-tropical to sub-antarctic.

Forests tend to be concentrated in the North and the southern Andes, grasslands in the center and rangelands in the west and south.

Being agriculture a driver of ecosystem change, deforestation is one of the challenges that attracts most of the attention, for which the Argentine Government is actively engaged through the delivery of specific policy responses.

Deforestation rates reached a peak of 1,6% in 2008, just as the **native forests law** was passed. This law mandates zoning into 3 categories: conservation (20%), sustainable use (60%) and land use change (20%). Since 2008, rates have steadily fallen, and have been stable for the last 4 years at 0,35%, with a small spike in 2018 due to unusually large forest fires – it should be noted that if we exclude natural fires, the rate for the Chaco region declined that same year (2018).

All our native forests have been legally categorized, and Argentina has established a “forest fund” in 2009.

The vast majority of soybean production in Argentina takes place in areas that mostly were never forests or forests converted a long time ago, what we call the “central region” or the Pampas, which is the most competitive region and with the highest technology adoption.

Even when forest loss has been happening mostly in the Chaco region (northern part of the country), there was a very low loss of conservation forests, and a positive trend in later years.

The general trend is positive, but we are not satisfied. Reducing deforestation is one of the main environmental goals of Argentina. There is a more dynamic phenomenon, which depends on a combination of different factors, such as technological innovation, climate variability, market prices and conservation regulations.

The reduction of deforestation, as a result of a better enforcement of the **native forest law** is a combined effort from both provincial and national authorities, in compliance with the related regulations, and the commitment from the private sector.

Some of the policies we are implementing are:

- We are strengthening significantly our monitoring capacity;

- We are steadily advancing on a land-sharing livestock production strategy (Forest Management with Integrated Livestock), i.e. systems that combine cattle ranching with forest and biodiversity conservation.
- We have launched a national forest restoration plan that in its first stage aims at recovering 64.000 has through 2023.
- We now have a strategic forestry plan that integrates native and plantation forests, coordinated among the ministries of Agriculture and Environment, the private sector and civil society.
- Forest conservation has been included in the estimate of Argentina's National Determined Contributions (NCD) to the Paris Agreement.

Finally, and very important: Agricultural planning has a sustainable intensification approach, through the adoption of cutting-edge technologies, with planned increases in production de-linked from agricultural surface expansion. We are not envisioning significant land conversion to achieve our production goals.

All of these institutional developments complement a growing sustainability awareness and practice among our farmers. Argentine farmers constitute a largely dynamic sector, very given to innovation and to adopting more efficient and sustainable technologies.

So, to sum up, we are well aware of the challenges we face regarding agriculture and deforestation, we have in place the institutions to deal with them, and the human and social capital necessary to succeed in our endeavor. We believe that the world has in the Argentine agricultural sector an ally to find effective, truly sustainable responses to these challenges.