

# Colombia

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Since the 1980s, various social and environmental movements have promoted new forms of production that offer more sustainability to the country. The current situation for organic agriculture is a result of such initiatives.

### *Main actors in organic agriculture*

In Colombia, non-governmental organizations, producer associations, and national certification agencies have promoted organic agriculture since its very beginning. In the past decade, governmental institutions, private companies and universities have taken on an increasingly prominent role in this regard.

Even though many organizations work in the field of organic agriculture, there is little coordination among them. The following stakeholders are active:

- Peasant organizations, Afro-Colombians and indigenous people with various economic, technical and socio-cultural interests, who see organic agriculture as a way of life and a way of obtaining an enhanced income.
- Small, medium and large companies involved in organic production, processing and marketing of organic products (food, seeds, inputs, cosmetics etc.) due to business opportunities.
- Private institutions focusing on facilitating various commercial or certification processes.
- Certification agencies that – besides other certification services - also offer organic certification.
- Non-profit organizations, such as foundations, corporations, research centers and universities, as well as for-profit organizations, such as companies and consultants, who support the production, processing and marketing of organic production. Many of these activities have been financed by international and national development agencies.
- Guilds and networks, especially NGOs and producer associations, who focus on promotion and raising awareness of organic production. Some of these organizations are also active at the international level.

In Colombia, some public and private institutions are cooperating in the 'National Inter-institutional Committee of Organic Agriculture,' whose work concentrates on the development of the 'National Program for Organic Agriculture.' Additionally, other environmental authorities manage a national organic marketing program that includes support to various marketing initiatives (including organic agriculture) and the implementation of the national organic market (green market) tracking study. Finally, a national committee on biodiversity

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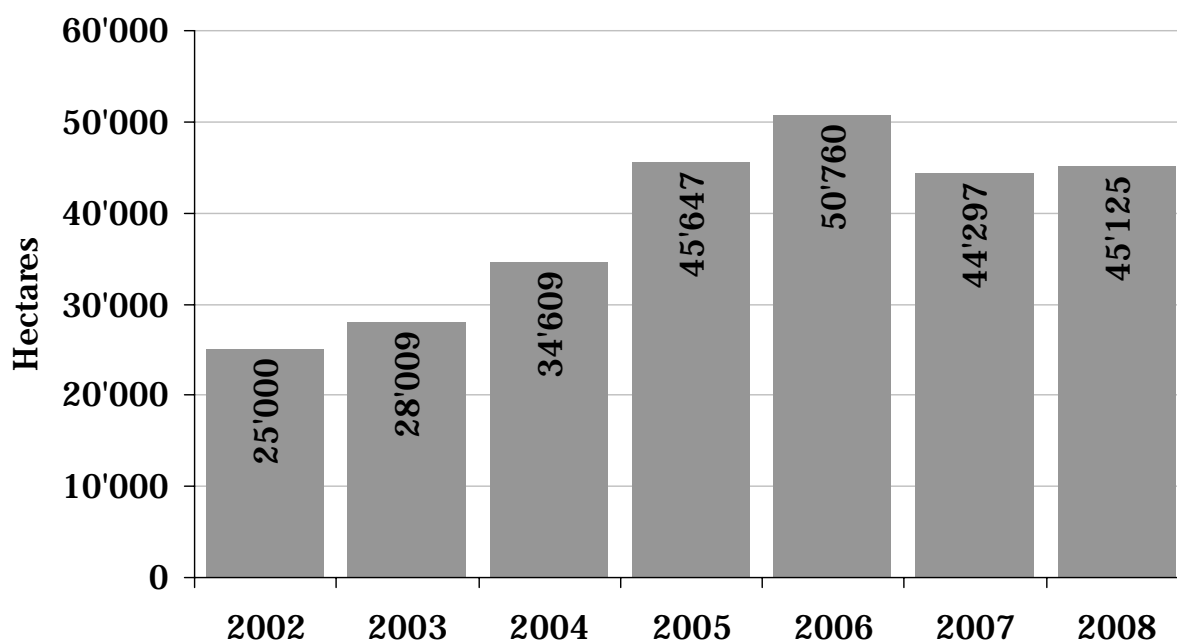
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and competitiveness was recently founded, promoted by the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. Its aim is to take actions regarding the use and development of the products of biodiversity, sustainable agricultural systems and green markets (include organic products).

Other organizations are part of the Platform on Organic Agricultural Production (Mesa Sectorial de Producción Agropecuaria Ecológica) of the National Education Service (SENA). They have developed and evaluated norms for labor competencies (or minimal qualifications for workers) for the organic sector. SENA is also implementing agroecological centers in several cities, with the goal to promote technical training and education in organic agriculture.

### Organic farming statistics

Data on organic production show that the organic certified areas have doubled from 25'000 hectares in 2001 to 45'000 hectares in June 2008 (including wild collection; see Figure 40).



**Figure 40: Colombia: Development of the organic agricultural land and wild collection areas 2002-2008**

Source: Programa Nacional de Agricultura Limpia, Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural de Colombia, 2008

However, there are no exact figures on the areas that are managed according to organic principles but are not certified. The most common organic production systems in Colombia are:

- Agro-silvo-pastoral systems;
- Polyculture systems;
- Indigenous traditional systems, such as the 'Paez' and 'Naza' models;
- Vegetable gardens;
- Roof garden systems;

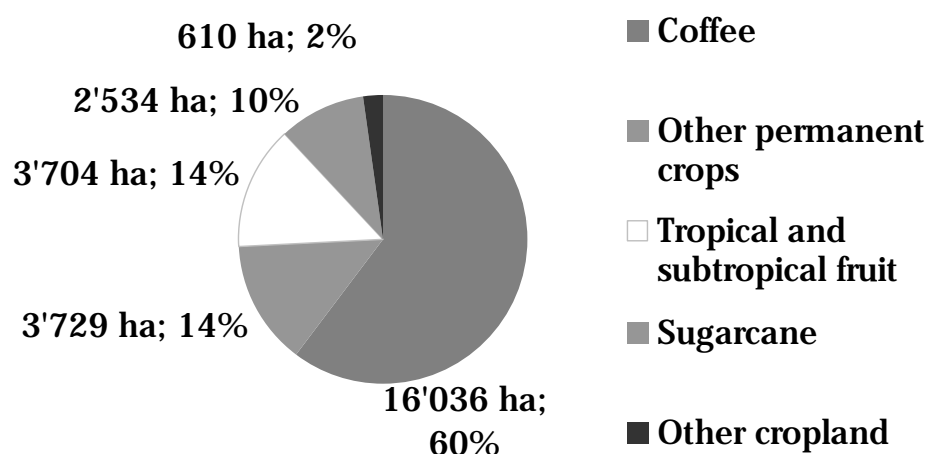
- Home garden systems;
- Commercial systems with a trend towards monoculture.

Furthermore, there is progress on the production and commercialization of inputs for organic agriculture, based on the national requirements of governmental institutions, such as the Colombian Institute of Agriculture (ICA).

### **Organic products from Colombia**

In Colombia, coffee comprises about one third of the country's organic area and more than half of the organic cropland. Tropical fruits, sugar, palm oil and its by-products, cacao, herbs, medicinal plants, vegetables and basic grains, eggs, milk, yoghurt and cheese account for the remaining two thirds.

Many of these products are sold on the international market, but also on the national market, with continued growth. However, organic products are also being cultivated for the self-sufficiency of peasant families and indigenous communities.



**Figure 41: Colombia: Use of fully converted organic and certified in-conversion cropland**

Source: Programa Nacional de Agricultura Limpia, Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural de Colombia, 2008

### **Certification and labeling**

There is no national policy on organic agriculture. A number of standards have, however, been developed in the years past, like the Resolution #187 of 2006 on national organic certification. The government of Colombia is also promoting a national organic label, which is used by organic projects certified under third party certification systems (see picture).



According to the Superintendent of Industry and Commerce, a governmental authority in charge of national accreditation, six companies are authorized and accredited for the certification of organic products for the national market in Colombia.

However, there are further organic certifiers that also offer international certification, mainly under co-certification schemes. In the past, and especially in 2008, environmental authorities and NGOs promoted participatory organic certification in the peasant and indigenous sector in order to support local market development. Colombia is a partner in a project working on the development of the participatory guarantee system in the Andes region.

Apart from organic certification, other forms of certification based on international standards are prevalent. Bananas and coffee are certified Fairtrade by the Fairtrade Labeling Organization (FLO) and also under the certification system of the Rainforest Alliance. Other various systems of social or environmental certifications schemes operated in the country include UTZ CERTIFIED<sup>1</sup> for coffee, C.A.F.E. (Coffee and Farmer Equity) practices<sup>2</sup> and GlobalGAP<sup>3</sup> for bananas and uchuva/Cape Gooseberry. These schemes are used by many farmers focused on export. So far, there little experience in the field of organic animal production.

### ***The organic market***

The organic export volume was approximately 20 million US Dollars in 2006. Data that is more recent is not available, but the trend indicates an increase in sales volumes. The national market is still small. Specialized stores (Bioplaza, Colyflor, Clorofila, Biodiversa, Balu, Los Champiñones, Tierra Viva) and local markets (those organized by the Autonomous Corporation of the Cauca Valley CVC and Recab markets) are the most common marketing channels. In the supermarkets (like Exito, Carrefour, Carulla, Comfandi, la 14, Pomona), the marketing of organic products is in its initial stages. Imported and national organic products can be found in the cities of Bogota, Cali and Medellin, but also in medium-sized municipalities in which a high number of organic community projects are carried out. Since 2000, different governmental institutions, environmental authorities, training centers and NGOs have promoted the development of organic fairs within the big and traditional agricultural trade fairs such as the Bioexpo, Ecovida and Agroexpo.

### ***Government support***

In Colombia, there is no specific financial support program for organic agriculture. However, there are some government funds<sup>4</sup> that support the marketing of organic products and animal-friendly production. In addition, international cooperation agencies like GTZ, Swissaid, the Dutch Embassy and the Spanish Development Cooperation Agency (AECID) have

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<sup>1</sup> UTZ CERTIFIED <http://consumer.utzcertified.org/index.php?pageID=202>

<sup>2</sup> C.A.F.E. (Coffee and Farmer Equity) Practices, <http://www.scscertified.com/csr/starbucks.html>

<sup>3</sup> GLOBALGAP [http://www.globalgap.org/cms/front\\_content.php?idart=3&idcat=9&lang=1](http://www.globalgap.org/cms/front_content.php?idart=3&idcat=9&lang=1)

<sup>4</sup> For example, the Programa Agro Ingreso Seguro (AIS), Programa Alianzas Productivas, Fondo Biocomercio Colombia, Fondo para la Acción Ambiental y la Niñez, Fondo Emprender, Agencia Presidencial para la Acción Social y la Cooperación Internacional, Programa Desarrollo de Oportunidades de Inversión y Capitalización de los Activos de las Microempresas Rurales (Oportunidades Rurales) and the Programa Mas Inversión para el Desarrollo Alternativo Sostenible (MIDAS)

financed organic projects in Colombia like the Colombia Verde Network, the Ecosierra Network and others organic projects.

Capacity building and training in organic agriculture has been carried out mainly by NGOs, but also by farmers' associations, education centers and agroecological schools. Colombian universities (like the National University of Colombia and the University of Antioquia) have, together with the University of Berkeley, developed the first PhD course in agroecology in Latin America. However, the professionals and advisors trained in organic agriculture are still very scarce.

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