

COLOMBIA DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION

General Comments (for further details please consult the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Drought of the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development at www.minambiente.gov.co (See footnote for specific URL)

The Republic of Colombia has a continental extension of 1'141.782 km², located entirely within the area of inter-tropical confluence zone (ITCZ), and is subject to the fluctuation of trade winds from the Northeast and Southeast, with an approximate population of 43'834.115 inhabitants, nearly 70% of which are located in the Andean region (mountains and plains). Colombia is characterized by a variety of climates brought about by different temperatures, due primarily to the altitudinal gradient and variation of the rain regime amongst regions, ranging from 150 to 200 mm of annual rainfall in the *Guajira* peninsula in the Caribbean, to over 10.000 mm a year in some places of the Pacific region. Humid provinces, encompassing sub-humid to excessively arid zones and humid to super-humid areas, exist under such conditions. Due to the topographical conditions (mountainous chains and alternate valleys) and to non-sustainable activities, the processes of land degradation continue on the increase pronouncing itself on the different types of erosion, compaction, salinization and contamination that accelerate the process of desertification.

The previous factors have contributed to the fact that 16,95% of the national territory present processes of desertification in different levels. The departments that are affected the most are the Atlantico and the Guajira regions that include 75% of their extension, followed by Magdalena, Sucre, Cesar and Córdoba with percentage that oscillate between 50 and 75%. With moderate percentage of desertification (25 to 50%) are the departments of Bolívar, Meta, Tolima, Huila and Cundinamarca. In addition to a national level the departments of Meta and Vichada present the vastest extensions of areas affected by desertification. With the purpose of contributing to the reduction of the processes of land degradation, desertification and drought and their effect on the social, economic and environmental areas of the country, the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development present, within the framework of the UNCCD, the "National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Drought - NAP", which provides the framework of activities oriented to the prevention, mitigation, correction, compensation and/or treatment of the factors that cause degradation processes, together in an articulate way with other national and international initiatives based upon the ecosystem approach so as to guarantee the proper management of the soil, water, living resources and their ecosystems, taking into account ecological, economic, cultural and social variables within the national territory. It is intended that the guidelines set forth in the NAP of Colombia are accepted at a national, regional and local level, being developed within the framework of the Environmental Policy "Basis for the Sustainable Development 2002-2006", which is established as one of the strategic areas of the "Knowledge and conservation of natural resources, ecosystems and biological diversity". The two major strategies are focused on ecosystem management and conservation. Also, the NAP is integrated within the framework of the "National Development Plan for 2002-2010, aiming towards a Communitarian State", which consider among other aspects:

- .. Conservation, management, use and restoration of forests ecosystem and other environments.
- .. Integral water management;
- .. Restoration of river basins.
- .. Scientific and technological development
- .. Elimination of regional economic and social imbalance, including the flood, land slides, earthquakes and drought associated risks.
- .. Formulation of a territorial development policy.