



OXFAM

A SNAPSHOT OF INEQUALITY

WHAT THE LATEST AGRICULTURAL CENSUS
REVEALS ABOUT LAND DISTRIBUTION IN COLOMBIA



A SNAPSHOT OF INEQUALITY

WHAT THE LATEST AGRICULTURAL
CENSUS REVEALS ABOUT
LAND DISTRIBUTION IN COLOMBIA



OXFAM

INDEX

INTRODUCTION 5

1. GROWING INEQUALITY 8

2. COLOMBIA, THE REGION'S MOST UNEQUAL COUNTRY 13

3. A BIPOLAR TENURE STRUCTURE 15

4. GENDER GAPS IN THE COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 19

5. CONFLICTS IN LAND USE 21

6. THE ALTILLANURA 26

CONCLUSIONS 29

BIBLIOGRAPHY 33

ENDNOTES 34

INTRODUCTION

Colombia is undergoing one of the most decisive moments in its recent history. The peace agreement¹ reached with the guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), in addition to the initiation of conversations with the National Liberation Army (ELN), represent solid steps toward putting an end to the longest armed conflict on the continent. Amongst other results, this violence spanning over half a century left a record number of displaced persons between 1985 and 2016: almost seven million people.²

Social and economic inequality is at the very root of the conflict, especially the extreme concentration of land, in terms of landholdings as well as land use. It is no accident that access to land was the first matter addressed in the negotiations with the FARC, or that the agreement dedicates its first chapter to comprehensive rural reform, or that this topic involves the most development of public policy foreseen in the text.³

Doubtless one of the greatest challenges will be to reestablish the rights of those dispossessed of their land, most of whom are indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians and small farmers. It is estimated that in the course of the conflict eight to ten million hectares of land were taken or abandoned,⁴ an area comparable to that currently dedicated to agriculture in the whole country. The main instrument for returning

these lands to their legitimate owners is the Victims and Land Restitution Act (Law 1448 of 2011) but it is advancing too slowly: since it was enacted the rulings to date cover cases involving only 213,076 hectares⁵

Beyond restitution, however, the peace agreement aspires to a more equitable distribution of land. To this end, it establishes four mechanisms: (1) creation of a Land Fund for the free distribution of land, with three million hectares that come from the State's recovery of illegally acquired or occupied lands (including unduly appropriated baldíos⁶), unused land that does not meet its social and ecological function, as well as lands donated or acquired by the State for this purpose; (2) massive formalization of seven million hectares of small and medium rural landholdings; (3) creation of a special agricultural jurisdiction in the judicial system that can offer effective justice in rural areas, and (4) creation and updating of a land registry in order to have precise, current information on land tenure. In total, land redistribution processes involving 10 million hectares are expected over the next 12 years.

Today more than ever, it is essential to have reliable information on land tenure and use in Colombia. As there is no complete, updated land registry and there are other gaps in information, analysis of the agricultural census helps to better understand the current situation with

regard to the distribution and use of land. Additionally, the census provides data on other, very significant aspects, such as access to infrastructure and services, characteristics of agricultural production, forest cover and the social situation in rural areas.

In spite of the fact that the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recommends updating agricultural censuses every ten years, the 2014 census was the first to be done in Colombia in 45 years⁷. At the end of 2016, the National Statistics Administration Department (DANE) made the database of this latest census public. Oxfam has prepared this brief examination of inequality through a statistical analysis of the census data, hoping to contribute in this way to the debate around the

urgent transformations needed in Colombia's agricultural sector.

This report first reviews how inequality in land distribution has gotten worse, reaching extreme levels. Then it analyzes the problem of concentration from different perspectives and indicators based on the census data, focusing on the major differences between the extremes. It also signals the weaknesses in gender statistics, the conflicts in land use, the predominance of extensive cattle farming and the core problem of land grabbing and its non-productive use. Lastly, it hones in on the Atillanura, which is the region in the spotlight as the new agricultural frontier and where controversial legislative reforms may further exacerbate the concentration of land.

HOW TO INTERPRET AGRICULTURAL CENSUS DATA TO ASSESS INEQUALITY

To understand what the censuses tell us –and what they don't– some definitions and methodological points should be taken into consideration when interpreting the data:

- **The “Unit of Agricultural Production” (UPA)⁸ or agricultural landholding⁹ is the basis for the census information collected:**

An agricultural unit may be made up of one or more smallholdings or rural properties, located in one or more territorial or administrative divisions, as long as all the holdings share the same means of production such as the labor power, machinery or draft animals used for farming the land.

- **The information is recorded by landholding and not by person:**

One person may own or manage more than one holding. Therefore, the tenure concentration of rural property is probably greater than what can be understood based on the agricultural census data.

- **The census does not quantify the landless peasant population:**

Rural households without land are not entered in agricultural censuses. If it were possible to do so, the inequality in land distribution revealed would be even more alarming.

- **The landholdings may be in forms of tenure other than ownership:**

Although most of the production units included in the census (close to 70 percent) are owned by the holder, there is a percentage of land that is rented, in usufruct or some other form of tenure. This is why the term 'landholdings', rather than 'property', is used when discussing land distribution.

- **The census results do not differentiate between public and private lands:**

As there is no census variable that identifies whether the landholding is public or private, it is not possible based on census data to know the amount of land that is in baldíos or lands belonging to the State, or where these are located.

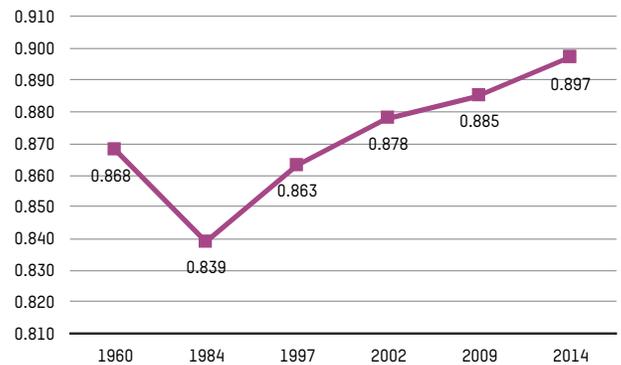
1

GROWING INEQUALITY

The concentration of rural property is not a new problem in Colombia, but it has become worse in recent decades. According to the Gini coefficient¹⁰— the most widely-used indicator for measuring inequality—land distribution improved between 1960 and 1984, but since then inequality has grown unchecked (see Graph 1).

GRAPH 1.

CHANGE IN GINI COEFFICIENT FOR RURAL PROPERTY DISTRIBUTION (1960 TO 2014)



Source: IGAC (2012)¹¹

There are two data sources that enable analysis of how rural property distribution has changed in Colombia: sector statistics (agricultural censuses and surveys or household surveys), which collect data on a national level in order to shed light on the current situation in the countryside and the agricultural sector; and the National Land Registry, which is an administrative record of land tenure that delimits real estate with regard to its geographical area and value. The problem is that the information in Colombia is extremely partial, fragmented and disperse, which has made it difficult to draw a picture of the country's agricultural structure.



In 2012 the Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute (IGAC) undertook a significant effort to collect and process the data available in order to produce a comparative synthesis of the national agricultural structure between 1960 and 2002.² Now that the new agricultural census data are available, it is possible to complete that picture to obtain a more updated, precise panorama with regard to the structure of landholdings and land use.

The new data confirm a worrying and accelerated trend toward the concentration of land in large holdings, which have been amassing a greater and greater percentage of the territory at the expense of small and medium-sized landholdings [see Table 1 and Graph 2].

TABLE 1.

CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF UPAS AND TOTAL LAND AREA, BY SIZE OF LANDHOLDING

	1960		1970		1984		1997		2002		2014	
	UPAs (thou.)	Area (thou. of ha)	UPAs (thou.)	Area (thou. of ha)	UPAs (thou.)	Area (thou. of ha)	UPAs (thou.)	Area (miles de ha)	UPAs (thou.)	Area (thou. of ha)	UPAs (thou.)	Area (thou. of ha)
< 5 ha	737.3	955.8	678.5	868.7	987.9	1,147.1	1,391.9	1,447.1	2,333.0	2,189.4	1,444.1	1,883.9
5 to 20 ha	225.4	1,885.9	219.3	1,835.3	336.8	2,558.5	444.5	3,232.8	651.3	4,480.2	368.0	3,694.0
20 to 50 ha	74.6	1,957.1	84.2	2,213.8	136.0	3,193.1	170.9	3,810.4	254.3	5,623.1	127.8	4,003.8
50 to 200 ha	52.3	3,815.5	60.2	4,363.2	96.6	6,430.3	117.3	6,758.9	170.2	10,360.5	81.9	7,616.3
200 to 500 ha	11.5	2,674.8	13.2	3,036.4	19.0	3,714.3	19.1	3,329.5	30.8	5,289.2	15.8	4,772.8
> 500 ha	4.8	4,606.4	5.4	5,054.7	6.7	5,189.7	5.7	6,408.6	13.9	24,254.1	9.5	47,201.7
TOTAL	1,105.9	15,895.5	1,060.8	17,372.1	1,583.0	22,233.0	2,149.4	24,987.3	3,453.5	52,196.5	2,047.2	69,172.4

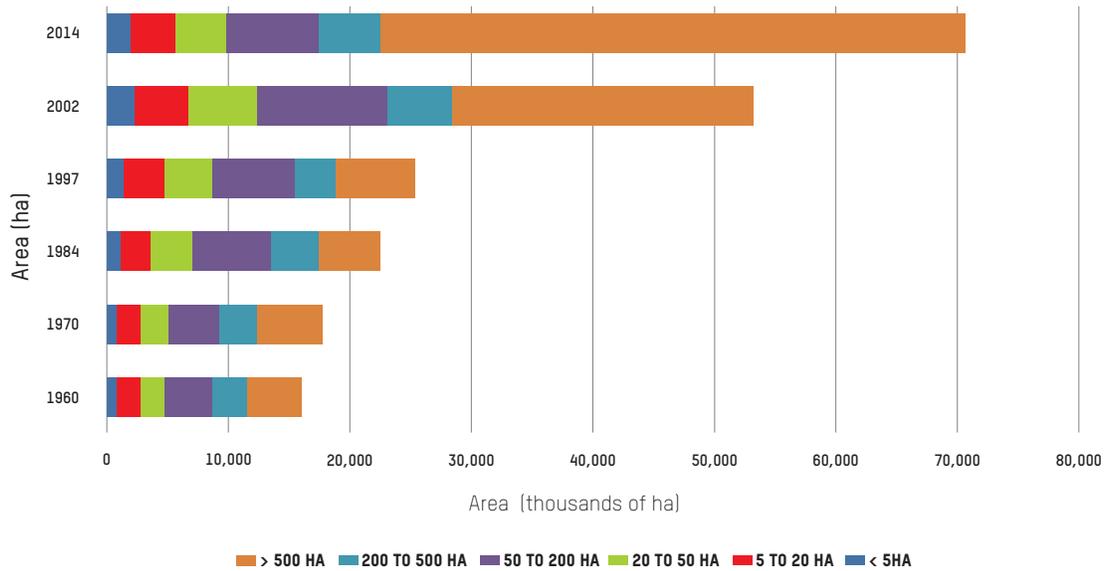
PERCENTAGES

	1960		1970		1984		1997		2002		2014	
	UPAs	Area										
< 5 ha	66.7%	6.0%	64.0%	5.0%	62.4%	5.2%	64.8%	5.8%	67.6%	4.2%	70.5%	2.7%
5 to 20 ha	20.4%	11.9%	20.7%	10.6%	21.3%	11.5%	20.7%	12.9%	18.9%	8.6%	18.0%	5.3%
20 to 50 ha	6.7%	12.3%	7.9%	12.7%	8.6%	14.4%	8.0%	15.2%	7.4%	10.8%	6.2%	5.8%
50 to 200 ha	4.7%	24.0%	5.7%	25.1%	6.1%	28.9%	5.5%	27.0%	4.9%	19.8%	4.0%	11.0%
200 to 500 ha	1.0%	16.8%	1.2%	17.5%	1.2%	16.7%	0.9%	13.3%	0.9%	10.1%	0.8%	6.9%
> 500 ha	0.4%	29.0%	0.5%	29.1%	0.4%	23.3%	0.3%	25.6%	0.4%	46.5%	0.5%	68.2%
TOTAL	100.0%											

Source: Author's compilation based on IGAC (2012) for the years 1960 to 2002 and DANE (2016b) for 2014. Territories of ethnic groups are not included.

GRAPH 2 .

CHANGE IN LAND AREA OCCUPIED, BY SIZE OF LANDHOLDING



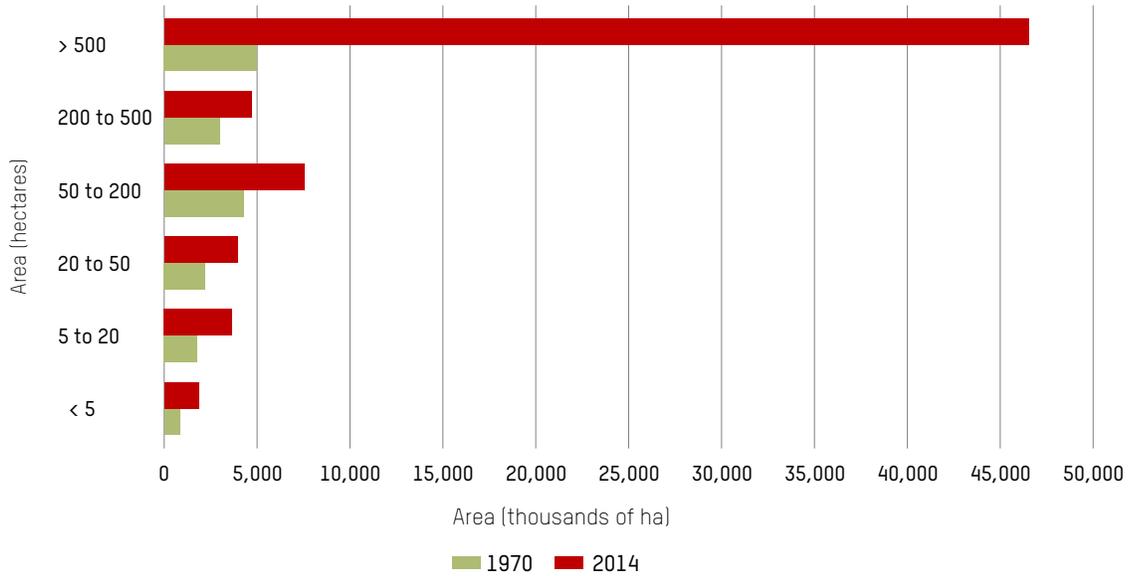
Source: Author's compilation based on IGAC (2012) for the years 1960 to 2002 and DANE (2016b) for 2014. Territories of ethnic groups are not included¹³

It is clear that in the past two decades, expansion of the productive land area has been concentrated in the largest UPAs. Holdings larger than 500 hectares continue to represent from 0.4 percent to 0.5 percent of the total. However, the land area they occupy has grown tremendously, going from 5 million hectares in 1970 (29 percent of the total area included in the census) to 47 million in 2014 (68 percent of the total) (see Graph

3 and Graph 4). Their average size has also increased significantly, going from less than 1,000 hectares in 1960 to close to 5,000 hectares in 2014 (see Graph 5).

GRAPH 3.

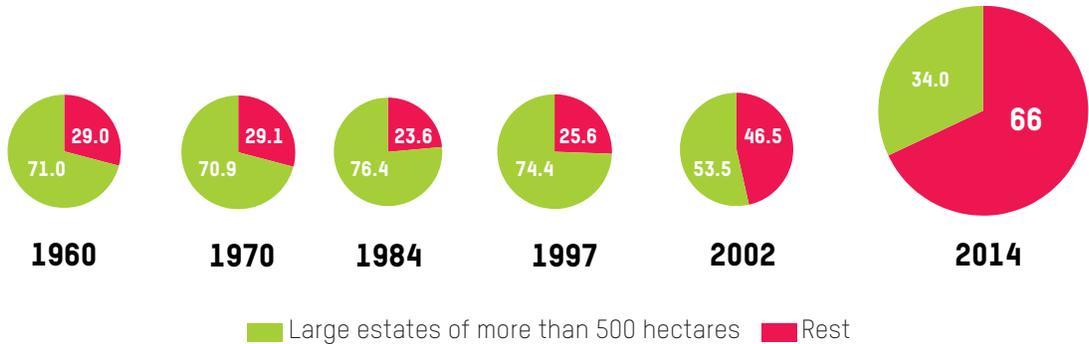
LAND AREA INCLUDED IN AGRICULTURAL CENSUS BY SIZE OF HOLDING, 1970 AND 2014



Source: DANE, 1970 and 2014 agricultural censuses. Territories of ethnic groups are not included.

GRAPH 4.

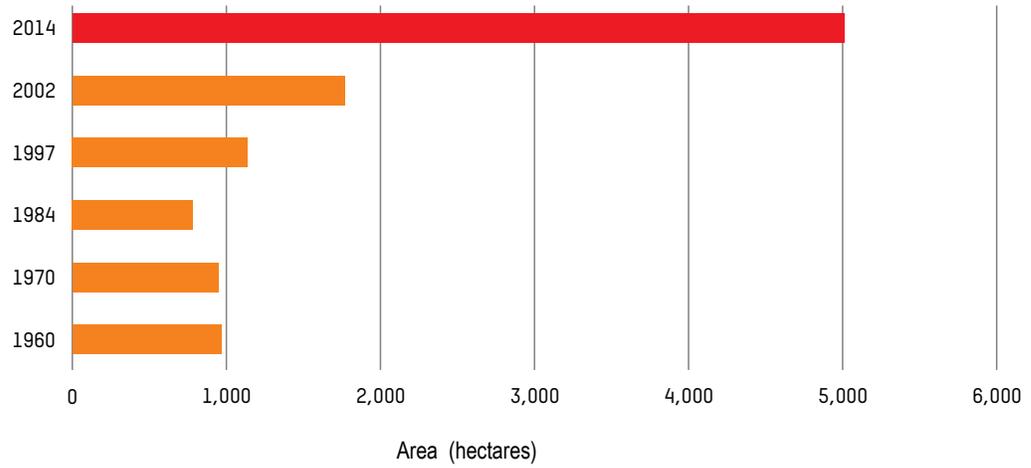
CHANGE IN LAND AREA OCCUPIED BY UPAS LARGER THAN 500 HECTARES (IN RED)



Source: Author's compilation based on IGAC (2012) for the years 1960 to 2002 and DANE (2016b) for 2014. Territories of ethnic groups are not included.

GRAPH 5.

CHANGE IN AVERAGE SIZE OF UPAS LARGER THAN 500 HECTARES



Source: Author's compilation based on IGAC (2012) for the years 1960 to 2002 and DANE (2016b) for 2014. Territories of ethnic groups are not included.

While the large agricultural production units have expanded, the small units, on the contrary, have become more fragmented and have lost territory, until becoming pushed to an ever-smaller proportion of productive land. In 1970 the smallholdings ("minifundios") of less than five

hectares represented 64 percent of total UPAs and occupied 5 percent of the area recorded in the census. Today they make up 70.5 percent of the total but barely represent 2.7 percent of productive land (see Table 1).

2.

COLOMBIA, THE REGION'S MOST UNEQUAL COUNTRY

The Gini coefficient is a useful indicator for measuring inequality, but when inequality is very high—as in the case of land, especially in Colombia—it is advisable to observe what happens at the extremes. Therefore, Oxfam has drawn attention to large landholdings to answer the following question: What proportion of the productive area is occupied by the top one percent of largest holdings?

The results of the most recent national agricultural censuses in 15 Latin American countries revealed a very alarming fact: in the region as a whole, the largest one percent of landholdings concentrates more land than the other 99 percent!¹⁴

According to this indicator, calculated by Oxfam and updated now with the new data from the 2014 Colombian census, Colombia ranks first with regard to inequality in land distribution, followed by Peru, Chile and Paraguay (see Graph 6). In Colombia, the top one percent of the largest holdings controls more than 80 percent of the land, while the remaining 99 percent account for less than 20 percent all together.¹⁵



GRAPH 6.

PERCENTAGE OF LAND CONTROLLED BY THE TOP 1% OF LARGEST HOLDINGS



Source: Oxfam (2016) and author's calculation for Colombia based on DANE (2016b)

If the territories of ethnic groups are excluded (ethnic group territories are also included in the census data in Peru, Chile and Paraguay) the concentration is slightly reduced, although it

continues to be very high, as one percent of the largest UPAs controls 73.78 percent of productive land.

3.

A BIPOLAR TENURE STRUCTURE

Analysis of the census data by size of landholding, excluding the territories of ethnic groups, draws a clear picture of inequality when looking only at the extremes (see Table 2 and Graph 7).

- On the one hand, the UPAs of less than 10 hectares represent 81 percent of total landholdings (1,658,450 units) and on average are barely 2 hectares in size. The area controlled by all of them together is less than 5 percent of the total area included in the census (3.4 million hectares, or 4.92 percent).
- At the other extreme, the UPAs larger than 2,000 hectares represent 0.1 percent of the total (2,362 holdings); on average they are 17,195 hectares in size and occupy almost 60 percent of the total area included in the census (40.6 million hectares, or 58.72 percent).

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EXTREMES

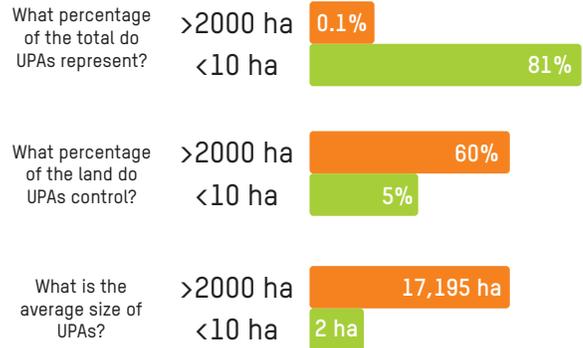


TABLE 2.

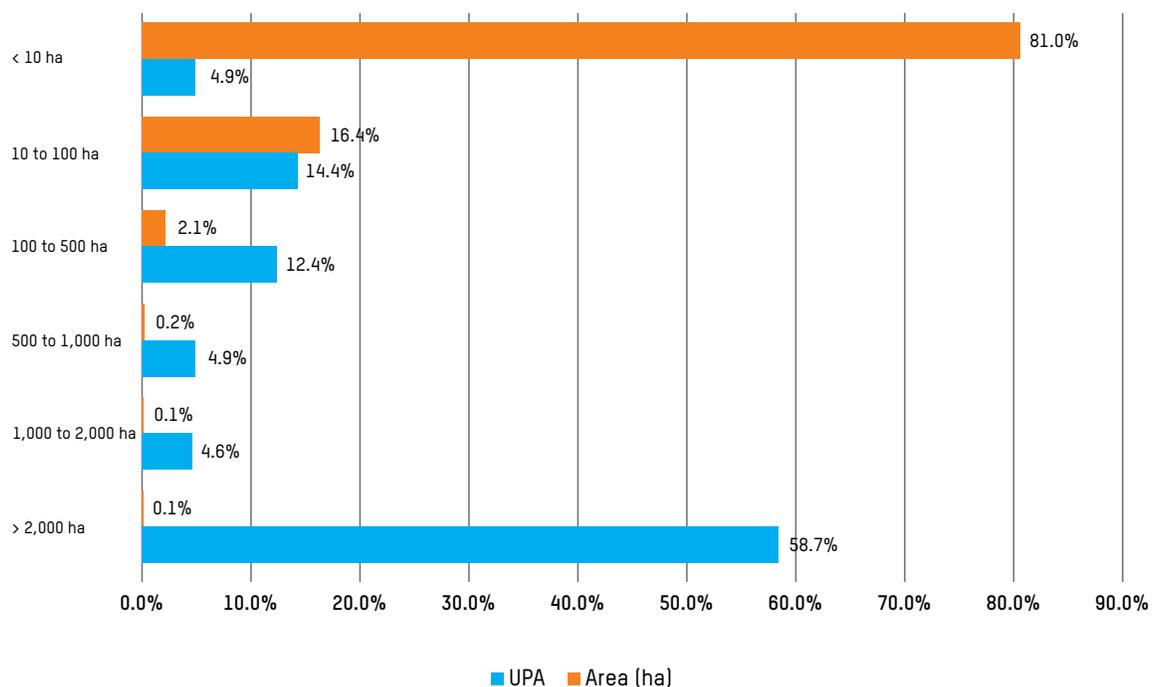
NUMBER OF UPAS AND LAND AREA OCCUPIED, BY SIZE

Total	Number		Percentage		Average size (ha)
	UPAs	Area (ha)	UPAs	Area (ha)	
< 10 ha	1,658,450	3,406,623	81.0%	4.9%	2
10 to 100 ha	335,775	9,970,451	16.4%	14.4%	30
100 to 500 ha	43,468	8,593,620	2.1%	12.4%	198
500 to 1,000 ha	4,852	3,374,907	0.2%	4.9%	696
1,000 to 2,000 ha	2,333	3,211,557	0.1%	4.6%	1,377
> 2,000 ha	2,362	40,615,258	0.1%	58.7%	17,195
Total	2,047,240	69,172,416	100.0%	100.0%	34

Source: Author's calculation based on DANE 2014 agricultural census microdata. Territories of ethnic groups are not included.

GRAPH 7.

NUMBER OF UPAS AND LAND AREA OCCUPIED, BY SIZE



Source: Author's calculation based on DANE 2014 agricultural census microdata. Territories of ethnic groups are not included.

Another way of showing the extreme inequality in land distribution is to divide the territory into two halves and ask how many holdings make up each half. The result is compelling: 704 landholdings (0.33 percent of the total) with close to 50,000 hectares on average (equivalent to a square of 22 kilometers per side) control half the land, while the other half is occupied by more than two million holdings (2,046,536, or 99.97 percent), with an average size of about 17 hectares.

With regard to tenure, most of the UPAs included in the census (68.8 percent) were registered as owned, far more than those rented (9.6 percent), held under share-cropping arrangements (1.5 percent) or other modalities. This does not necessarily indicate a high level of formal ownership, but simply reflects the answers chosen by census respondents from among the different options offered by the survey.¹⁶ In fact, informality in land tenure is one of the most

widespread problems, as barely 2 percent of the country's municipalities have a majority (between 75 and 100 percent) of properties formally registered.¹⁷

It is quite remarkable that 42.7 percent of the UPAs larger than 2,000 hectares declared their tenure situation to be "unknown" (see Graph 8). Considering that all holdings over 2,000 hectares occupy 40.6 million hectares (without including territories of ethnic groups), there is uncertainty about the tenure situation for a very significant amount of land. This under-reporting of large properties may be related to two problems: on the one hand, to possible irregularities in the form of land acquisition; and on the other to tax evasion, as property taxes would not be collected for these lands (which reduces public resources available for investment in the sector).

704 HOLDINGS
(49,135 ha on average)
control half the land

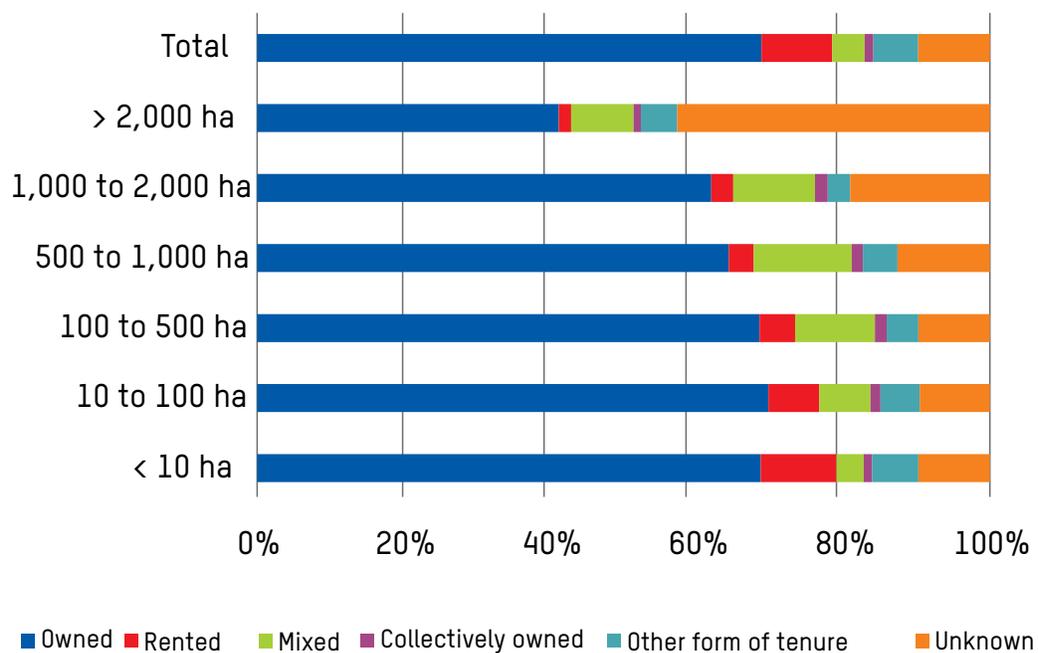
2,046,536 HOLDINGS
(17 ha on average)
share the other half

Also outstanding is the fact that two thirds of the productive surface area is controlled by legal entities, most of which are domiciled outside the

rural area. This is the case for 46 million hectares, or 66.6 percent of the area included in the census, excluding territories of ethnic groups.¹⁸

GRAPH 8.

SHARE (%) OF TENURE TYPE BY SIZE OF UPAS



Source: Author's calculation based on DANE 2014 agricultural census microdata. Territories of ethnic groups are not included.

4.

GENDER GAPS IN THE COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURAL CENSUS

Rural women make an essential contribution to the agricultural sector in spite of having less access to productive resources and services, especially land, credit and technical assistance. However, their contribution receives little recognition, and gender blindness in the statistics contributes to keeping them invisible as economic actors and subjects of public policy.

An agricultural census offers the opportunity to produce gender statistics that are extremely valuable for decision-making and the design of policies that help close the gaps. Colombia's DANE made an effort to integrate the gender perspective in the questionnaire design, including questions that were disaggregated by sex about decision-making in the productive unit, agricultural work, and access to machinery, credit and technical assistance. Following the FAO's recommendations,¹⁹ the latest census reported all people who participate in the productive decision-making process in the household. This represents progress, as until now a single farmer was reported per holding, with the assumption that it was the man, which hid women's productive role.

The 2014 census generates some indicators that confirm the gender gaps in the agricultural sector. According to the results published by the DANE, 26 percent of the landholdings controlled by natural persons are run by women, 61.4 percent are run by men and the remaining 12.6 percent are managed jointly.²⁰ But the landholdings run by women are smaller—those under 5 hectares predominate—and register less access to machinery, credit and technical assistance.



In spite of the improvement in data collection tools, some important questions are still unanswered, such as those regarding control of the land and income. And the data on who manages different types of crops or livestock is not disaggregated by sex, in spite of that being

part of the FAO's recommendations for improving gender statistics. This would help to pinpoint the different production roles assumed by women and men in agricultural activities and thus to design policies that better respond to their specific needs.

5.

CONFLICTS IN LAND USE

One million small farmer households have less land than each cow

Of the 111.5 million hectares covered in the census, 43 million (38.6 percent) are used for agriculture while 63.2 million (56.7 percent) are maintained with natural forest cover. The remainder consists of areas used for non-agricultural purposes such as housing, agro-industrial processing infrastructure, livestock support, mining, and power generation and transmission.

By the end of December 2012, 9,400 mining rights had been granted in the country as a whole, covering an area of 5.6 million hectares. Of these, 3,760 were in operation in 2013 and covered close to 2.1 million hectares, an area close to 1.8 percent of the national territory.²¹

The territories belonging to ethnic groups cover 35.7 percent of the total area included in the census (39.9 million hectares).²² Of these, 84.2 percent correspond to territories of indigenous peoples, 15.7 percent to Afro-Colombian communities and 0.01 percent to ancestral Raizal territory.²³ This does not, however, necessarily mean that these areas are effectively protected, as they are frequently the object of forest, agro-industrial and mining exploitation, contrary to what is permitted under the law.²⁴



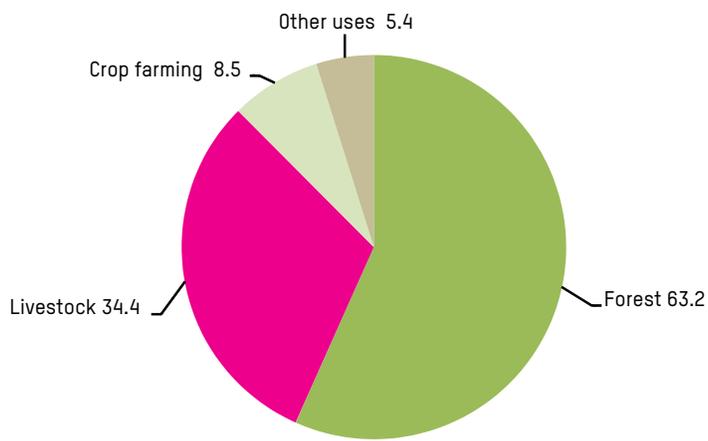
Of the 43 million hectares in agricultural use, 34.4 million (80 percent) are dedicated to livestock and 8.5 million (20 percent) are used for crop production (see Graph 9). This territorial occupation does not correspond to what is suitable for use of the land. It is estimated that there are 15 million hectares suitable for livestock in the whole country, yet more than twice that amount is used for this purpose: 34.4 million hectares. On the other hand, the area that could potentially be used to grow crops is underutilized, as only 8.5 million hectares are used for this purpose, less than 40 percent of the 22 million suitable for crop farming (see Table 3).

The difference between the land area dedicated to livestock today (34.4 million hectares) and that

considered suitable for raising livestock (15 million) means that 19.4 million hectares are being occupied by livestock farming but would be more suitable for other uses. Of this, it is estimated that 13.5 million hectares could be dedicated to crop farming (which would complete the 22 million hectares suitable for this use), while the rest (close to 6 million hectares) would have a purpose related to conservation. In light of the peace agreement's objective to create a land bank, part of the land currently dedicated to livestock farming could be considered as failing to fulfill the ecological and social function established in the National Constitution, and thus that land could contribute to the land bank, for the purpose of land redistribution.

GRAPH 9.

LAND USE (MILLIONS OF HECTARES)



Total area included in the census: 111.5 million ha

Source: DANE 2014 agricultural census

TABLE 3.**SUITABLE USE AND CURRENT USE OF LAND (HECTARES)**

	SUITABLE USE	CURRENT USE	% in use compared to suitable area
Livestock	15 million	34.4 million	229%
Crop farming	22 million	8.5 million	38.6%

Sources: UPRA (2013) and DANE (2016b)

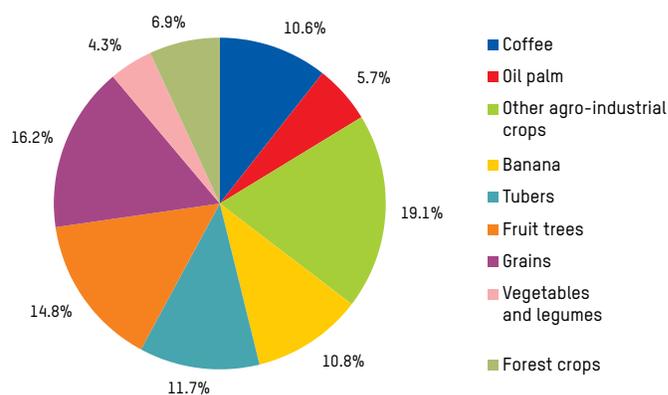
If territories of ethnic groups are excluded, a total of 32.9 million hectares are dedicated to cattle raising. If the cattle population according to the latest census consists of 20.4 million heads of cattle, on average each cow has the use of 1.6 hectares of land.

Almost half of the UPAs outside of indigenous territories (48.4 percent, approximately one million landholdings) have less than 1.6 hectares and occupy barely 0.8 percent of the total area included in the census (550,520 hectares). Put

another way, **close to one million smallholdings have less land than that available** on average to a cow in Colombia.²⁵

More land for agro-industrial crops and less for food crops

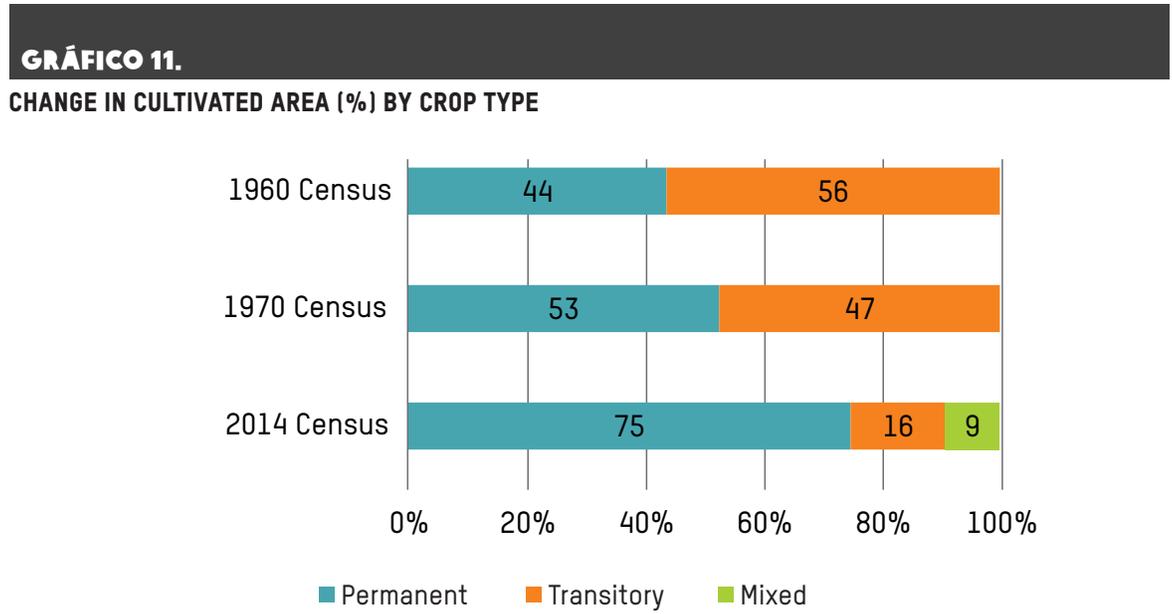
With regard to the area used for crop farming, of the 8.5 million hectares planted in the entire country, 35.4 percent (three million hectares) are dedicated to the production of agro-industrial crops, mainly coffee, oil palm and sugarcane (see Graph 10).

GRAPH 10.**SHARE (%) OF CULTIVATED AREA, BY CROP TYPE**

Source: DANE (2016b)

According to the results published by the DANE, in recent decades permanent crops²⁶—mainly destined for agricultural export— have expanded to occupy 75 percent of the total area under cultivation and have progressively displaced

transitory crops such as grains, vegetables and legumes, which today occupy barely 16 percent of the total cropland area (see Graph 11).²⁷



Source: DANE (2016b)

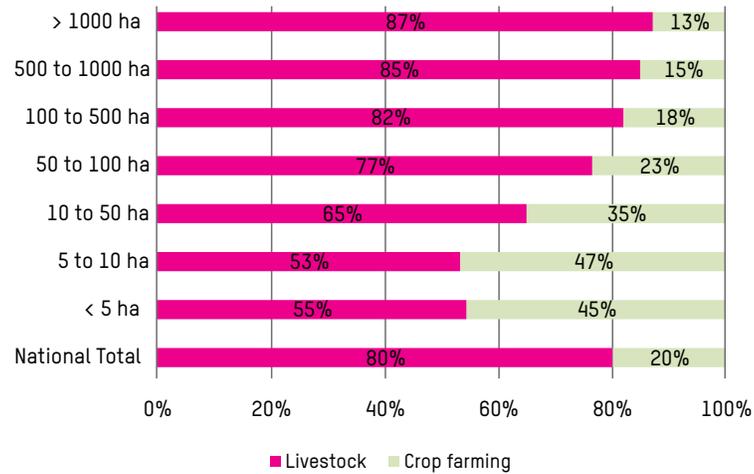
The number of municipalities with more than 80,000 hectares of transitory crops (mainly food crops) **dropped from 12 in 1960 to 11 in 1970 and to only one in 2014.**²⁸

This helps explain why Colombia has to import a significant volume of food each year to satisfy domestic demand. Such loss of food sovereignty has been a common trend in Latin America. In the case of Colombia, however, this process has been aggravated by the internal armed conflict and the violent displacement of small farmer populations.²⁹

The census also shows how land use varies considerably depending on the size of the holding. Small farms are the ones that dedicate the greatest area to agricultural production, more than 60 percent in the case of UPAs of less than 10 hectares, which is mostly for self-consumption. Large estates, on the other hand, use most of their land for raising livestock, which can occupy up to 87 percent of estates with more than 1,000 hectares (see Graph 12). This confirms the importance of small farmer production for household food security and national food sovereignty.

GRAPH 12.

SHARE (%) OF LAND AREA USED FOR LIVESTOCK AND CROP FARMING, BY UPA SIZE



Source: DANE (2016b)

Forest cover is dominant in territories of ethnic groups, as it occupies 90.8 percent of the land (36.2 million hectares) compared to 6.9 percent (2.8 million hectares) under agricultural use (see Graph 13).

These data thus corroborate the leading role of ethnic communities in forest protection and the mitigation of climate change.

GRAPH 13.

LAND USE BY SIZE OF UPAS, IN TERRITORIES OF ETHNIC GROUPS AND NON-ETHNIC GROUPS



Source: DANE (2016b)

6.



THE ALTILLANURA

The Altillanura region is made up of the department of Vichada (municipalities of La Primavera, Cumaribo, Puerto Carreño and Santa Rosalía) and part of the Meta department (municipalities of Puerto López, Puerto Gaitán and Mapiripán) in the eastern part of the country. It covers an area of 13.5 million hectares, equivalent to more than 10 percent of the national territory, although its population barely represents 0.3 percent (133,000 inhabitants).³⁰

This peripheral and often-ignored region is home to important natural resources that have attracted all kinds of mining, agricultural and forestry activities that have been imposed on the territory in a disorganized fashion. Livestock farming accounts for the predominant use of land, above the national average (see Graph 14).

With regard to crop land, oil palm dominates in the department of Meta, occupying 30 percent of the planted area. In Vichada, however, it is forest crops that predominate (see Graph 15).

In recent years the Altillanura region has been identified as the area to expand intensive large-scale monoculture.³¹ The department of Vichada in particular has been identified by the Colombian government as the country's "final agricultural frontier"³² for the development of massive agro-industrial production, with a clear focus on the export market.

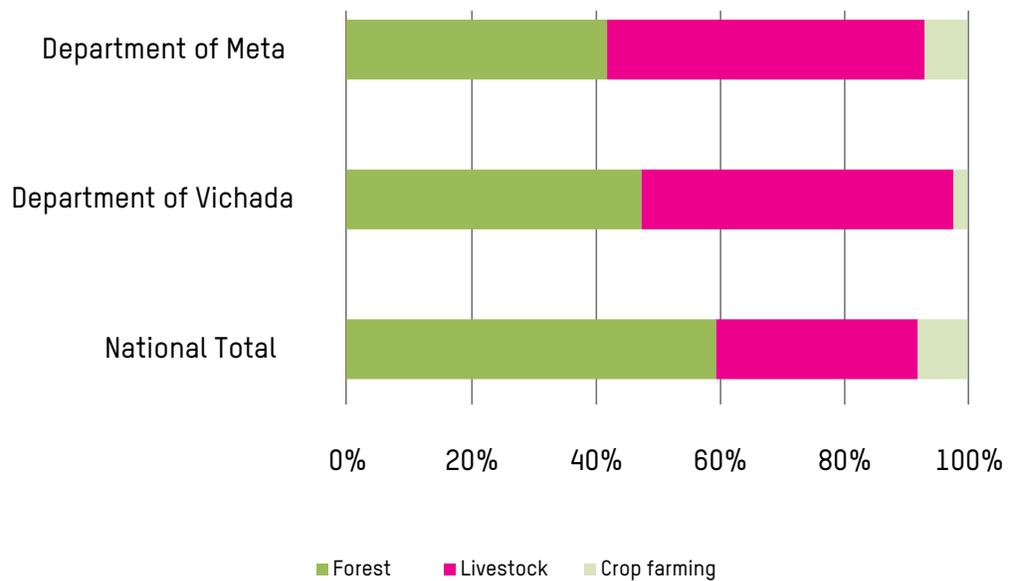


This vision for the Altillanura clashes with the restrictions imposed on land accumulation by the agrarian reform law, which prohibits any person or company from appropriating an area greater than the family agricultural unit (UAF) in areas reserved by the State for people who are beneficiaries of the agrarian reform.³³ However, the recently approved law on Zones of Interest for Economic and Social Development in Rural Areas (known as the ZIDRES Law) will make it possible to get around this restriction by means of association between companies and small farmer sectors.

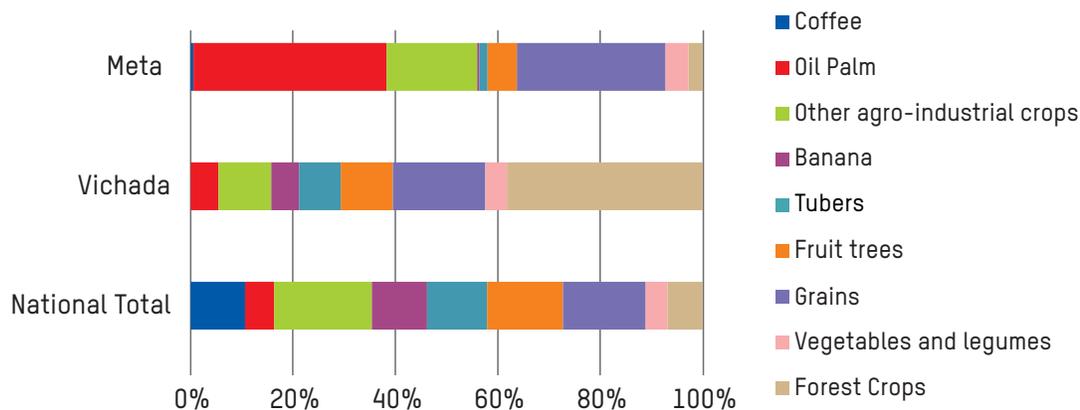
In practice, this law could serve to legalize the acquisition of baldíos that judicial and administrative agencies have already ruled to be 'irregular'.³⁴ Moreover, some municipalities in the Altillanura, such as Mapiripán (Meta), are among those that suffered the most displacement and violent land dispossession during the armed conflict. In the region's seven municipalities, a total of 2,770 claims have been filed with the Land Restitution Unit to recover landholdings lost during the conflict.³⁵

GRAPH 14.

LAND USE, IN THE ALTILLANURA AND NATIONALLY



Source: DANE (2016b)

GRAPH 15.**LAND AREA UNDER CULTIVATION BY CROP, IN THE ALTILLANURA AND NATIONALLY**

Source: DANE (2016b)

VICHADA

The department of Vichada is a vast, sparsely populated territory. Although it contains 9 percent of the national land area, it is home to barely 0.018 percent of the total population (88,575 people), mostly indigenous persons. Close to 40 percent of the land in this department belongs to ethnic groups, although the indigenous populations claim that their territories cover a much greater area than that which is formally recognized.

Of a total area covering close to 10 million hectares, approximately half (4.9 million hectares) is dedicated to livestock. The forest cover is also very extensive, accounting for 4.7 million hectares. Within the cultivated area (about 220,000 hectares) forest production occupies more than 65,000 hectares, more than any other crop.

Land concentration in Vichada is very high, as one percent of the largest UPAs concentrates 74.2 percent of the rural area included in the census (without including territories of ethnic groups). The average size of landholdings in this department is 3,343 hectares (excluding ethnic territories), far above the national average of 34 hectares. In spite of having a vast area under agricultural and forestry use, in the department there are fewer than 9,000 farmers registered as residing locally.³⁶

Close to 90 percent of the area included in the census in Vichada (without including territories belonging to ethnic groups) is in holdings of more than 2,000 hectares (compared to less than 60 percent at the national level). The municipality of Puerto Carreño is where the largest properties are found, with 94.5 percent of the area included in the census pertaining to UPAs of more than 2,000 hectares.

CONCLUSIONS

The snapshot of inequality revealed by the latest agricultural census in Colombia leaves no room for doubt. Any way you measure it, the concentration of land is much higher today than it was in the 1960s, when it was understood that more equitable land distribution was not only a fundamental question of justice but also one of productive efficiency.

The timid attempts at agrarian reform undertaken in the past have clearly been insufficient. Not only did they fail in the attempt to distribute land more fairly, but land concentration has not stopped growing. Today one percent of the largest landholdings control more than 80 percent of rural land. By this indicator, Colombia is the country with the worst distribution of land in the entire Latin American region.

In the 45 years since the previous agricultural census, the productive land area has increased significantly but it is more concentrated in the largest holdings. Large estates today are much bigger and control much more land than decades ago. Landholdings of more than 2,000 hectares, in spite of representing barely 0.1 percent of the total number of holdings, control close to 60 percent of the area included in the census. Meanwhile, small farms have become even more fragmented and have lost more and more territory: today 80 percent of landholdings have less than 10 hectares and do not occupy even 5 percent of the total area included in the census.

Oxfam's statistical analysis based on census data (without including the territories of ethnic groups) reveals alarming results: the 704 largest landholdings concentrate half of the land (34.6 million hectares).

The census data confirm a marked duality in land use, depending on the holding size. In general, although there may be differences among departments, small farms use a significant area for planting crops and, in particular, for the production of food for family consumption. This highlights the fundamental role of family farm production in food security. The large estates, on the other hand, contain vast areas that are non-productive or are occupied by extensive cattle farms, with a relatively small area dedicated to cultivating crops that are almost always destined for agro-export.

The absence of land-use planning and the weak land governance have given rise to a disorderly occupation of land. As a result, in the country today there are approximately one million smallholder production units that have less land than that occupied on average by just one cow. These intolerable levels of concentration are the result of decades of violence and biased public policies that have favored speculative and rent-seeking estates.

On the other hand, the new census shows some progress in the production of gender statistics, as it captured sex-disaggregated information on production decision-making, agricultural work and access to means of production. But it is still necessary to improve questionnaire design as well as processing and analysis of results, in order to obtain disaggregated data on land tenure, the distribution of the different types of production, and control over income. Only by adequately incorporating the gender perspective in production of statistics will it be possible to have the information needed to design more inclusive policies.

The new data contributed by the latest agricultural census are essential for assessing Colombia's agricultural problems and drawing attention to the urgent need for structural transformations. However, there are still information gaps: one example is the fact that in 43 percent of the productive units larger than 2,000 hectares, the form of tenure is unknown. This means that not even with a census that covered the entire national territory for the first time is it possible to answer the question of who controls Colombia's agricultural land. The census statistics need to be complemented by a complete, updated land registry. And it will be important to ensure that the land registry recognizes and helps protect the collective rights of the smallholder, indigenous and Afro-descendent communities over their lands and territories.

The search for a more efficient use of territory is a necessary objective, but it cannot mean ignoring the land's social and environmental functions and neglecting its redistribution, as these are important for social stability. Experience shows how agricultural growth based on agro-industrial monoculture, much of it destined for export, leads to more inequality. Conversely, investing in basic services, education and rural infrastructure and guaranteeing more equitable access to land and other means of production would be much more effective for advancing toward comprehensive rural development.

The current problem of non-productive land accumulation must not be replaced by productive accumulation. The only way to fulfill the terms of the peace agreement is to put the objectives of land restitution and land redistribution at the heart of any agrarian and rural development policy, with measures that are much stronger, more effective and comprehensive than those adopted in the past.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica** (2013) ¡Basta ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad.
- **Controller General of the Republic** (2014) 'Actuación especial sobre la acumulación irregular de predios baldíos en la Altiplanura colombiana', Special Action Report, Bogotá, February 2014.
- **DANE - National Statistics Administration Department** (2016a) Metodología General, Tercer Censo Nacional Agropecuario, May 2016.
- **DANE - National Statistics Administration Department** (2016b) Results of the Third National Agricultural Census, Volume 2.
- **DANE - National Statistics Administration Department** (2016c) National Agricultural Census 2014, "Mujeres en el área rural dispersa colombiana", seventh delivery of results.
- **FAO** (2016) World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020, FAO collection: Statistical Development 15, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 2016.
- **Garay, L.J.** (2013) Minería en Colombia. Fundamentos para superar el modelo extractivista, Office of the Controller General of the Republic, Bogotá.
- **González Posso** (2013) "La verdad en el abandono forzado y el despojo de tierras", Diálogo de la Memoria panel: Territorio y Despojos.
- **Ibáñez, A.M. and J.C. Muñoz** (2011) "La persistencia de la concentración de la tierra en Colombia: ¿Qué pasó entre 2000 y 2010?", Policy Notes Number 9 of the Center for Studies on Economic Development (CEDE), Universidad de los Andes, August 2011.
- **IGAC - Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute** (2012) Atlas de la distribución de la propiedad rural en Colombia. IGAC: Bogotá.
- **National Lands Agency** (2017) Formulación planes de ordenamiento social de la propiedad rural.
- **National Planning Department** (2011) Caracterización de las condiciones de desarrollo territorial de la Altiplanura, Dirección de Desarrollo Territorial Sostenible. September 2011.
- **National Planning Department** (2016) "Gobierno prepara paquete de obras para desarrollar la Orinoquía", communiqué of September 20, 2016.
- **OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** (2016) Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, Bogotá, November 2016.
- **Oxfam** (2016) Unearthed: land, power and inequality in Latin America, Oxfam International Report, November 2016.
- **UNDP - United Nations Development Program** (2011) Rural Colombia: Reasons for Hope, National Human Development Report 2011.
- **UPRA - Rural Agricultural Planning Unit** (2013) Informe de Gestión 2013: Uso eficiente.

ENDNOTES

- [1] The Final Agreement for Ending Conflict and Building a Stable and Long Lasting Peace was signed on November 24, 2016, and went into effect on December 1st after having been approved by Colombia's congress.
- [2] OCHA (2016).
- [3] The peace agreement poses the need for measures to promote suitable use of the land in accordance with its aptitude and to stimulate the formalization, restitution and fair distribution of said land, ensuring the progressive access to farm ownership of those who live there, and especially rural women and the most vulnerable population, regularizing and democratizing ownership and promoting the deconcentration of land, in compliance with its social function. See the first chapter of the final agreement, titled "Toward a New Colombian Countryside: Comprehensive Rural Reform".
- [4] There are still discrepancies with regard to the total amount of land dispossessed. As a reference, see Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2013) and González Posso (2013).
- [5] Number of hectares with a restitution ruling as of May 2017, according to Land Restitution Unit data.
- [6] Translator's note: The term baldíos in Colombia refers to State land that can be awarded to beneficiaries of agrarian reform. Such properties retain their characteristic as baldíos even after having been awarded and titled to small farmers.
- [7] The first agricultural census was carried out in 1960 and covered 24 percent of the national territory, mainly the productive areas in the center of the country. The Second National Agricultural Census was carried out between 1970 and 1971 in 901 municipalities, covering an area of 31 million hectares (28 percent of the total) and more than a million landholdings. In the decades of 1980 and 1990, agricultural surveys were done instead of agricultural censuses (based on a sample and not on the whole population). The Rural Households Survey of 1997 also collected information on land tenure and use. According to the DANE, the agricultural census carried out in 2014 covers all of the country's municipalities for the first time, including the

indigenous reserves and the lands of Afro-descendent communities.

- [8] The agricultural census also includes non-agricultural production units (UPNA) which make up 2.2 percent of the territory (2.5 million hectares), but the analysis in this report focuses on the UPAs. The UPNA are those used normally for living quarters (condominiums), recreation centers, or are used for agro-industrial purposes. See definitions in the National Statistics Administration Department, DANE (2016a).
- [9] Throughout this document both terms are used interchangeably, in accordance with the methodology of the latest National Agricultural Census of Colombia. See DANE (2016a).
- [10] The Gini coefficient is the standard way to measure inequality in the distribution of goods or resources, in this case land, where 0 represents a perfectly equal distribution (where everyone has the same amount) and 1 represents maximum inequality (one person has everything).
- [11] The data for 2014 is cited in El Tiempo of November 26, 2016 in the article "El 64% de hogares rurales no cuentan con acceso a la tierra".
- [12] Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute, IGAC (2012).
- [13] The methods used to collect information in the different years may vary, which should be taken into account when interpreting this graph.
- [14] In some countries the national statistics institutes published data tables that enabled an approximation of the top one percent of landholdings, but in others it was necessary to consult with the respective statistics institutes or undertake a direct calculation based on census microdata. Honduras and Panama were not included because it was not possible to obtain access to their databases, and thus the calculation could not be done. For more information, see Oxfam (2016).
- [15] Author's calculations based on the microdata of Colombia's 2014 census, including territories of ethnic groups.
- [16] The census survey offered the following options in answer to the tenure situation question: "owned", "rented", "share-cropping / tenant farming", "usufruct", "loaned for use", "de facto occupation", "collective property", "recipient of land or comunero", "other form of tenure", "mixed", and "unknown". See DANE (2016a).
- [17] National Lands Agency (2017).
- [18] According to published data, 99.9 percent of the agricultural producers residing in remote rural areas included in the census are natural persons, while barely 0.1 percent are legal entities or mixed. DANE (2016b).
- [19] The FAO has carried out research aimed at improving data collection and the production of gender statistics and comparable indicators, within its World

- Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020. See FAO (2016).
- [20] Because of the way the variables that make up the publicly accessible database were formulated (SNH, SNM and SN9, referring to the number of natural persons who are men, women and of undetermined sex who make decisions regarding the activities carried out on the UPA) it was not possible to do independent statistical analyses to verify or complement the results published by the DANE. See DANE (2016c).
- [21] Garay (2013).
- [22] DANE (2016b).
- [23] Located in the San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina archipelago.
- [24] UNDP (2011).
- [25] Data obtained from the author's analysis of the microdata from the 2014 agricultural census.
- [26] Tree crops, bush crops and flowers are included in this category.
- [27] DANE (2016b).
- [28] DANE (2016b).
- [29] Ibañez and Muñoz (2011).
- [30] National Planning Department (2011).
- [31] In 2016, the administration of Juan Manuel Santos launched its Master Plan for the Orinoquía region. See National Planning Department (2016).
- [32] National Planning Department (2011).
- [33] The UAF is defined in Law 135 of 1961 (or the Agrarian Reform Act) as “the basic agriculture, livestock, aquaculture, and forestry business, whose expanse, according to agro-ecological conditions of the area and using appropriate technology, allows the family to remunerate its work and obtain surplus capital that contributes to the formation of its assets”. Article 72 of Law 160 of 1994 applies this limit to the purchase of land that had been previously awarded by the State in agrarian reform processes, in order to avoid its concentration and preserve its social function.
- [34] Such cases include those of the U.S. investment fund Black River Asset Management (previously a subsidiary of Cargill), Brazilian Mónica Semillas, or the Manuelita and Riopaila mills. See Controller General of the Republic (2014).
- [35] Statistics on land restitution requests by municipality, available on the Colombia Open Data portal (Datos Abiertos Colombia) [consulted on March 28, 2017].
- [36] DANE (2016b).

© Oxfam International May 2017

This paper is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email lvgomez@oxfamintermon.org

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 20 organizations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty. Please write to any of the agencies for further information, or visit www.oxfam.org

Oxfam Alemania (www.oxfam.de)

Oxfam América (www.oxfamamerica.org)

Oxfam Australia (www.oxfam.org.au)

Oxfam-en-Bélgica (www.oxfamsol.be)

Oxfam Canadá (www.oxfam.ca)

Oxfam Francia (www.oxfamfrance.org)

Oxfam GB (www.oxfam.org.uk)

Oxfam Hong Kqng (www.oxfam.org.hk)

Oxfam IBIS (Dinamarca) (<http://oxfamibis.dk/>)

Oxfam India (www.oxfamindia.org)

Oxfam Intermón (España) (www.oxfamintermon.org)

Oxfam Irlanda (www.oxfamireland.org)

Oxfam Italia (www.oxfamitalia.org)

Oxfam Japón (www.oxfam.jp)

Oxfam México (www.oxfamMexico.org)

Oxfam New Zealand (www.oxfam.org.nz)

Oxfam Novib (Países Bajos) (www.oxfamnovib.nl)

Oxfam Quebec (www.oxfam.qc.ca)

Oxfam Sudáfrica (<http://www.oxfam.org.za/>)

Oxfam Brasil (www.oxfam.org.br)

