

POLICY BRIEF | JULY 2021

KEY FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE LAND USE SYSTEMS TO REDUCE DEFORESTATION AND ENHANCE PEACEBUILDING IN COLOMBIA



PHOTO BY NEIL PALMER/ALIANZA BIODIVERSITY-CIAT.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sustainable Land use Systems (SLUS) provide **crucial support to climate change mitigation and peacebuilding** in Colombia.
- SLUS contributes to improving sustainable livelihood **opportunities for smallholder farmers and local communities**.
- Promoting SLUS enables the creation of diverse and inclusive livelihoods which align the interest of farmers in **earning income with the global demands for stopping deforestation** and protecting ecosystems such as the ones in the Amazon biome.
- **SLUS strengthens agricultural value chains in a sustainable way** that helps build stronger climate-resilient farms and communities.
- SLUS examples for Colombia are **Cocoa agroforestry systems and Silvopastoral systems in the regions of Cesar and Caquetá**.

Sustainable Land use Systems (SLUS) can enhance climate change mitigation and peacebuilding in Colombia. These systems promote the production of clean air and food. They can mitigate climate change and the risks of natural hazards, offer cultural values to our society, support key ecological functions such as nutrient and water cycling, filtering and buffering, and are central to economic vitality and survival of farmers.

For this reason, the implementation of SLUS has to be comprehensive and integrated at multiple scales. It is key to design, develop, and implement policy instruments and programs that foster SLUS in rural Colombia. The success of such policies in Colombia might allow for out-scaling and up scaling SLUS in other regions.



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This Policy Brief provides scientifically sound guidance for decision makers to help integrate SLUS strategies into **policy instruments, in order to promote synergies and address trade-offs between multiple objectives related to climate change mitigation, sustainable agriculture and peacebuilding**. With it, policy makers can create an enabling environment to overcome possible barriers of effective implementation between SLUS practices, local needs, interests and realities.

WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE LAND USE SYSTEMS (SLUS)?



SLUS is a productive strategy that meets livelihood aspirations in ways that are sustainable and that maintain environmental integrity.

SLUS are connected to markets and integrate soils, water, animals and plants, for the production of goods, while simultaneously ensuring the long-term productive potential of these resources and the maintenance of their environmental functions.

The concept of **SLUS** is applicable to any ecosystem and land-use type and is particularly relevant to address climate change adaptation and mitigation, reducing deforestation and increasing peacebuilding in Colombia.

SLUS represents a wide range of technologies, practices and activities in the natural/agricultural interface based on

the key principles of maintaining and enhancing the productivity and protection of natural resources, while being economically viable and socially acceptable. SLUS also integrates local knowledge and farmer's participation as a central element.

How to select SLUS?

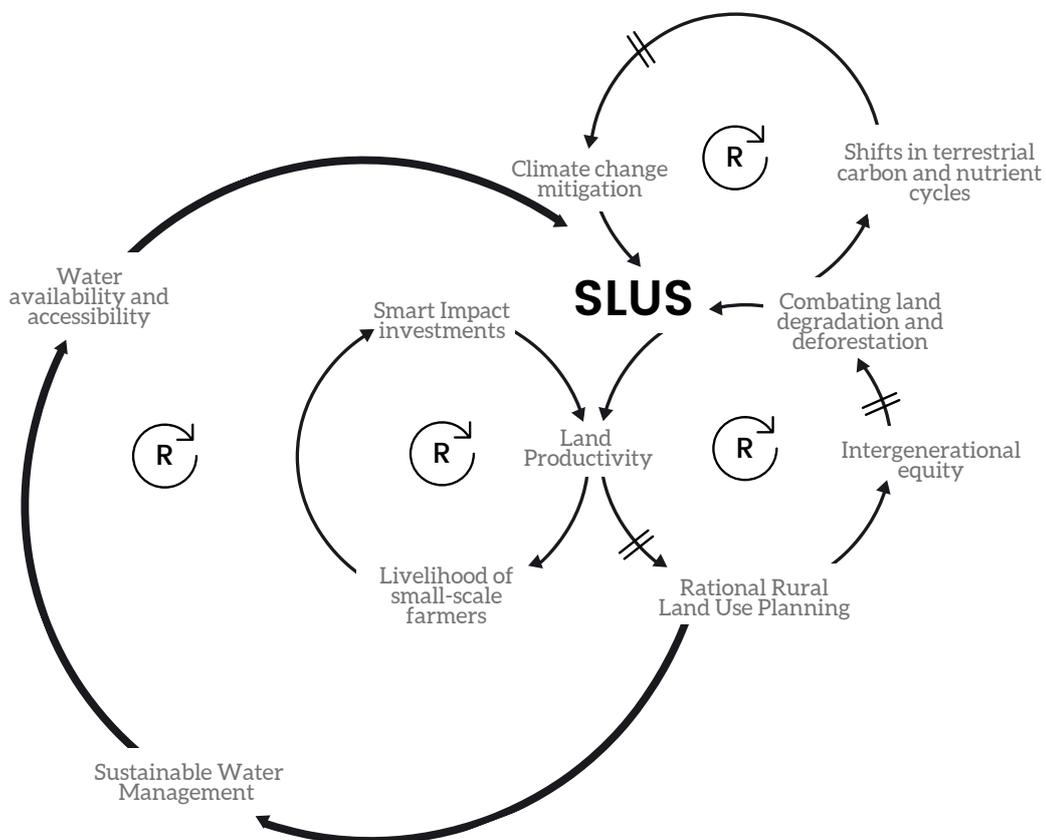
SLUS may come in different forms depending on the context and location. Examples for Colombia are **Cocoa agroforestry systems** and **Silvopastoral systems in Cesar and Caquetá**. The potential benefits provided by these SLUS are accepted and documented within the scientific community based on site-specific research (see further read).



SUSTAINABLE LAND USE SYSTEMS (SLUS) ACT SYSTEMICALLY

SLUS aims to act systemically in the vicious cycles that leads to unsustainable agriculture. The dynamics of land use change, environmental degradation, and rural poverty are interconnected. As one can see in the figure below, intervening in one of the points that reinforce this problematic can turn the cycles and create new realities (changing from unsustainable loops to more sustainable loops).

SLUS can be a solution (e.g., nature-based solution) for helping developing countries to achieve their commitments under Rio convention (mitigate climate change, tackle desertification, preserve biodiversity), while contributing to peace. For this to happen SLUS needs to be connected to both business inclusive value chains and business models that creates an enabling environment for their adoption.



THE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE LAND USE SYSTEMS (SLUS) FOR SUSTAINING PEACE:

Implementation of SLUS has potential impacts on peacebuilding because they affect socio-economic inclusion (e.g. livelihoods and participation).

Promoting SLUS enables the **creation of diverse and inclusive livelihoods**, which align the interest of farmers in earning income with the global demands for stopping deforestation and protecting biodiversity hotspots and ecosystems such as the ones in the Amazon biome.

Concerning economic inclusion, when vulnerable farmers are connected to sustainable value chains, their resilience against illegal economies increases because they have better livelihoods. In the social sphere, vulnerable populations may gain entrance to governance spaces where discussions about land access and use, as well as, fairness and stability in prices and access to better markets along a value chain take place.

This is important because the populations affected the most by the armed conflict have been also historically excluded from the market and decision-making scenarios;



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however, they should and are willing to play a crucial role to protect the environment within their territories.

For granting stable food production without augmenting deforestation and at the same time contributing to peace consolidation, **it is fundamental to coordinate policies and programmes between The Ministry of The Environment, The Unity for Land Restitution, The National Agency of Land, The Agency for Renewal of the Territory, The Agency of Rural Development and the Ministry of Agriculture.**

Promoting SLUS at the policy level, for example, after land restitution or relocation of displaced persons programs, helps the government to foster tangible set of practices that can be coordinated among multiple mandates. Agricultural extension activities associated to SLUS that promote collective action and cooperation at the farm level, for example, knowledge ex-change and co-creation of public goods (e.g. youth rural schools, community infrastructure facilities) ***promote a sense of belonging into a new community of practice building trust among peers and social cohesion.***

DRIVER AND HINDER FACTORS FOR SLUS SCALING-UP

The overriding principle to make SLUS accessible for cattle ranchers and cacao farmers is that the dissemination strategy suits the target audience and fit the context. SLUS are context-specific strategies. In other words, increasing the number of people or communities impacted by this kind of strategies involves complex dynamics and interactions between biophysical, social, economic, and institutional factors that explain how and why SLUS are replicated and spread among more producers. Therefore successful SLUS scaling out requires the identification of main driver and hinder factors for spreading them from the local to the landscape level and anticipate the side effects. In this sense, effects and impacts of SLUS should to be identified based on rigorous monitoring and impact assessments.

Scaling out sustainable strategies requires the setting up of participatory process among producer associations.

Associations can promote and empower farmers to intensify sustainable production. Furthermore, when the associations are supported by extension services a knowledge network is created. A lack of attention to social organization and knowledge of the farmers can lead to programs that do not meet the needs or possibilities of the target audience.

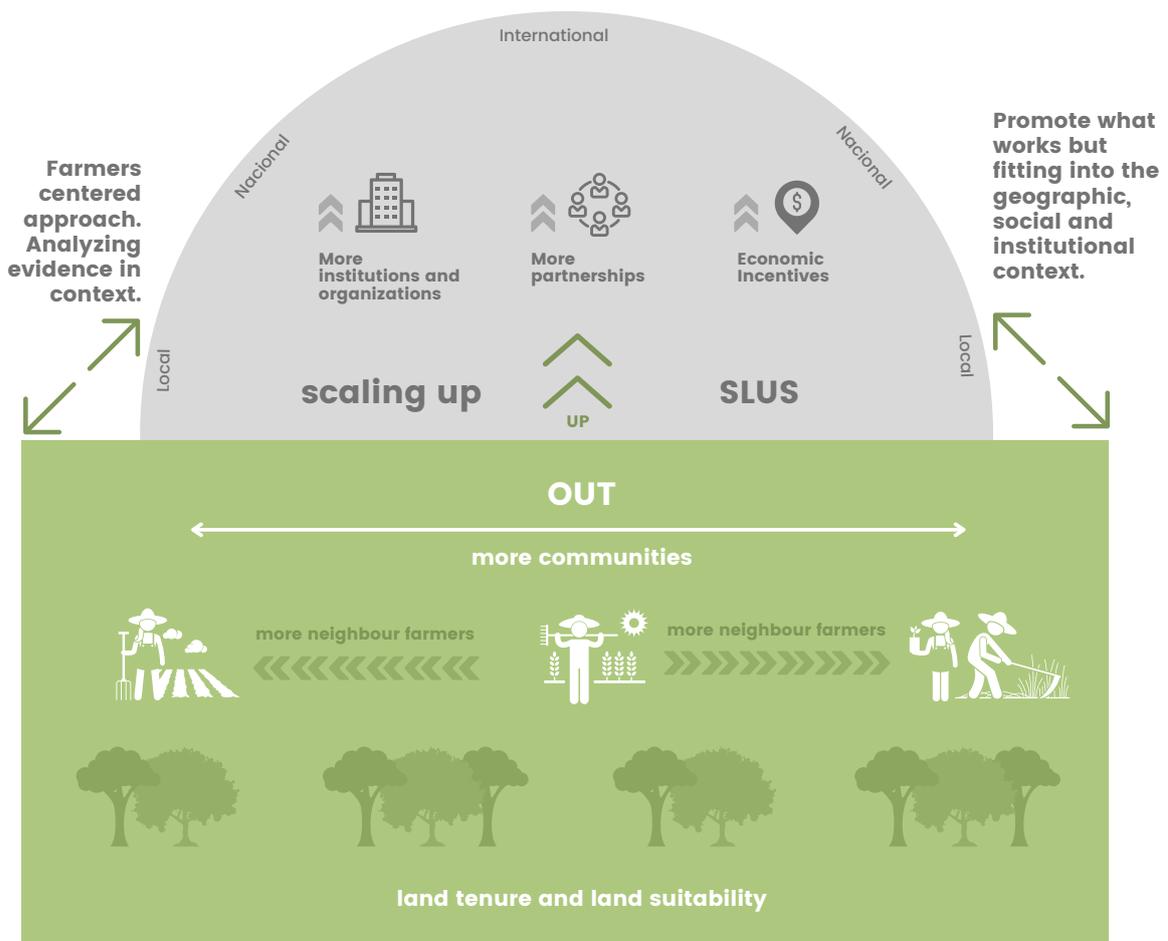
The support for farmers to adopt sustainable land use strategies is key to achieve meaningful spread.

Farmers and the rest of actors along the value chain need to join forces in effective alliances where SLUS are promoted and supported.

Hence the importance of premium markets, solid regional markets, certification schemes and price stability for promoting SLUS.

Additionally, given that SLUS are context-specific strategies, diffusion and replication of these agricultural innovations require the identification of main factors for scaling out at local level. For example, water management is contrasting for Agroforestry system strategies. While in Cesar it is necessary to manage the dry season with an irrigation plan, in Caquetá it is necessary to manage the high humidity and flood risk.

Finally, to ensure a systemic impact, SLUS depends on the characteristics of the production system to be scaled. It is clear that there is still chance to promote more hectares for cacao crop and therefore it is possible to increase both area and yield.



KEY ELEMENTS TO DISSEMINATE SLUS AND STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION



Strategic Partnerships

SLUS interventions should promote the establishment of strategic partnerships between implementing organizations, private companies, local governments, and farmer-based organizations in order to complement their resources, knowledge, experience, and skills, as well as to strengthen the local institutions that could support SLUS in the long term.



Supporting Farmers

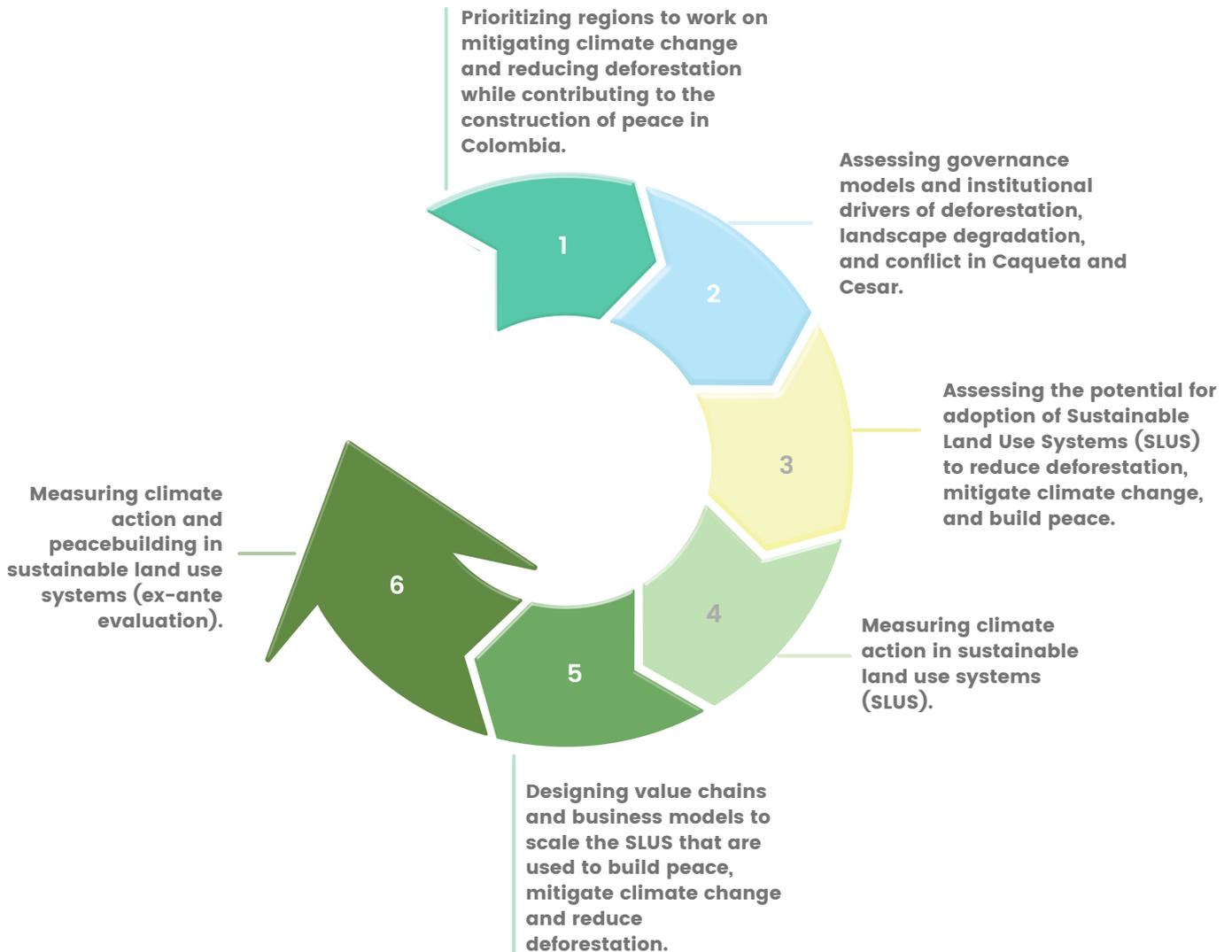
SLUS interventions should consider supporting farmers with their implementation while promoting low-cost SLUS arrangements based on local farmer-centred research as a way to find compatible and synergetic relationships between the different elements of these systems (e.g. crops, livestock, trees, biodiversity). Extension services where farmers are actively involved and integrated with extension workers and agricultural researchers are key when scaling up SLUS.



Economic Conditions

SLUS promotion should consider economic conditions at the local, regional and national levels to generate more favourable market conditions, either by guarantying more favourable prices for SLUS products in the national markets or by strengthening local value chains that add value to them.

SIX STEPS FOR SLUS DEVELOPMENT



GOVERNANCE AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Local and environmental governance is crucial for contending with the complex problems of land use systems and socio-ecological conflicts that bedevil progress toward sustainable development. To increase inclusive and effective decision-making processes, instruments to improve local and environmental governance in Colombia suggest promoting constant inter-sectorial dialogues and synergies between formal (e.g. government at all scales) and informal institutions (e.g. civil society, private sectors, indigenous communities etc.) that are built upon existing reliable community-based platforms (e.g. Local Municipal Rural Development Councils (CMDR) and the Community Action Boards (CAB).

Acceptance and trust on SLUS can create a dialogue space where local and environmental governance helps preventing and resolving socio-ecological conflicts through integrated approaches of political (law enforcement), economic (practices for sustainable land-use systems) and social perspectives (role of rural extension and farmers education programs).

Finally, to generate an inclusive and effective decision-making process, it is important also, to embrace capacity building in conflict transformation and negotiation skills within project activities to actively promote peacebuilding in the implementation of SLUS.



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WHAT POLICY MAKERS CAN DO NOW TO SUPPORT SLUS?

AT REGIONAL LEVEL

- Embrace development models based on sustainability and play the role of mediator between large private firms and vulnerable populations in access to natural resources such as land and water, as well as market coordination with social inclusion.
- Coordinate governmental and non-governmental efforts for joint SLUS implementation and institutional learning.
- Creation or strengthening of regional platforms where environmental, forestry and agricultural actors are connected to support SLUS synergies.
- Foster producers organizations and engagement to leverage projects adapted to the context.

AT NATIONAL LEVEL

- Coordinate policies and programmes between The Ministry of The Environment, The Unity for Land Restitution, The Agency for Renewal of the Territory and the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Coordinate national policies with local bottom up initiatives. For example, the dialogue spaces around land access and conservation with sustainable production activities instead of having solely a militarized approach.
- Increase coordination between main governmental institutions that influence environmental, forestry and agricultural performance to avoid a responsibility gap for SLUS implementation.
- Financial, social and political support for the creation of income streams through more sustainable land-use strategies.
- Foster effective markets for the sustainability efforts of farmers.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- Facilitate coordination and dialogue between different, governmental agencies, civil society, private sector and vulnerable populations.
- Generate a committee from local actors that does accountability and facilitates coordination.
- Leverage broader and more context-specific international cooperation to promote sustainable systems for smallholder farmers.
- Promote the alignment of interests and priorities regarding sustainability beyond the national stakeholders.

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SLUS Project