

COMPROMISO  
**GRAN  
CHACO**  
ARGENTINO 2030

DECLARATION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CHACO REGION  
2019





## THE GRAN CHACO: A **STRATEGIC REGION** FOR SOCIETY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY

The Gran Chaco is the **largest forested ecoregion in South America after the Amazon, occupying 11 of the 23 Argentine provinces**. It is made up of a wide **diversity of habitats and cultures**, making it a **living support of a biological, social and productive network** with its own identity rooted to **the territory**. Also, thanks to the **ecosystem services** it provides, this ecoregion contributes to mitigating and adapting to **climate change and regulating water, while supporting the life of local communities, food security and economic development**. That is why it constitutes a strategic heritage both for its inhabitants and for the country and the region.

The Chaco ecoregion has a **positive productive capacity** for the inhabitants of the **territory** and the country. Its importance is due to the **opportunities** that the sum of its characteristics offers for sustainable and inclusive development. However, the **common goods and the associated ecosystem services** it provides **are finite** and require a planned and agreed use, different to the current one.

Despite its great value, the Gran Chaco is **one of the most threatened forested regions** on the planet, mainly due to the **change in land use for agricultural and forestry production and real estate, causing deforestation, degradation of its natural environments**<sup>1,2</sup>, **displacement and impoverishment of indigenous communities and loss of cultural heritage**. In Argentina we have already lost more than 30% of the Chaco forests<sup>3</sup>. Between 2007 and 2017, despite having the Native Forest Law, we lost about 3 million hectares in the ecoregion, equivalent to the surface of Misiones province or 34 soccer fields per hour<sup>4</sup>. With only 5.23% of the Argentine Chaco region under legal protection<sup>5</sup> (of which few areas are effectively protected), the rest of the natural areas are highly threatened<sup>6</sup>. Its **marginal place in the public agenda and that of the productive sector does not correspond to the scale of the critical situation that the ecoregion**<sup>7</sup>, and therefore the country, is undergoing.

1 Baumann, M., Gasparri, I., Piquer-Rodríguez, M., Gavier Pizarro, G., Griffiths, P., Hostert, P., & Kuemmerle, T. (2017). Carbon emissions from agricultural expansion and intensification in the Chaco. *Global change biology*, 23(5), 1902-1916.

2 Hansen, M. C., Potapov, P. V., Moore, R., Hancher, M., Turubanova, S. A. A., Tyukavina, A., ... & Kommareddy, A. (2013). High-resolution global maps of 21st-century forest cover change. *science*, 342(6160), 850-853.

3 Vallejos, M., Volante, J. N., Mosciaro, M. J., Vale, L. M., Bustamante, M. L., & Paruelo, J. M. (2015). Transformation dynamics of the natural cover in the Dry Chaco ecoregion: a plot level geo-database from 1976 to 2012. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 123, 3-11.

4 UMSEF MADyDS (2018). Monitoreo de Superficie de Bosque Nativo de la República Argentina. Regiones Forestales Parque Chaqueño, Selva Misionera y Selva Tucumano Boliviana. Año 2017. Buenos Aires, Argentina.



## THE CHANGE IN LAND USE IN THE ECOREGION AFFECTS LOCAL COMMUNITIES, THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD

**Illegal deforestation, the degradation and uncontrolled land use change** jointly impact the Chaco, the country and the region in different dimensions.

The transformation and degradation of natural areas has implications of high environmental complexity. On the one hand, **the loss of flora and fauna and their connectivity increase the risk of extinction of species** such as the jaguar, of which only 20 individuals remain in the Argentine Gran Chaco<sup>8,9</sup>. **Likewise, the decrease in ecosystem services**, given, for example, by the rise of groundwater and the salinization of soils<sup>10,11</sup>, negatively affects agricultural productivity in the region and the local economy. **The loss of carbon reserves** endangers the resilience of agricultural systems in the Argentine Gran Chaco, making them more vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Agriculture, livestock, forestry and other land uses represent the second sector with respect to greenhouse gas emissions in the national inventory (with a 39% share). In particular, the conversion of forest land into crops and pastures nationwide contributes 14%<sup>12</sup>.

Regarding the **social dimension**, the **displacement of the communities** that inhabit the forest negatively impacts their way of life and their **income, since they are subject to** losing their sources of work and facing the costs of relocations. For example, local communities are unable to produce goods from the Native Forest, such as handicrafts, honey, fruits of the forest, natural tinctures, wood, charcoal and natural fibers, among others. Due to the aforementioned impacts, the **cultural identity and forms of social reproduction** of the communities is weakened given the **fragmentation** of its members and rurality. In this way, the income generated by the production on deforested sites results in an **unequal distribution** of said income<sup>13</sup>. An example of this is the floods caused by the rains of January and April of this year, where in the province of Chaco, more than 2,400 people were evacuated<sup>14</sup>. Along these lines, the **human rights** of the communities and the inhabitants of the country are violated, including among others, the rights of access to **health and a healthy environment**.

5 Áreas protegidas provinciales y nacionales comprendidas dentro de las subregiones Chaco Seco, Chaco Húmedo y Esteros del Iberá, según "The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)", descargadas en agosto 2019.

6 Piquer-Rodríguez, M., Torella, S., Gavier-Pizarro, G., Volante, J., Somma, D., Ginzburg, R., & Kuemmerle, T. (2015). Effects of past and future land conversions on forest connectivity in the Argentine Chaco. *Landscape Ecology*, 30(5), 817-833.

7 Kuemmerle, T., Altrichter, M., Baldi, G., Cabido, M., Camino, M., Cuellar, E.,... & Gavier-Pizarro, G. (2017). Forest conservation: remember gran chaco. *Science*, 355(6324), 465-465.



In **economic terms, agriculture contributes to the Gross Domestic Product, to the generation of employment and public resources**, but at the same time, the productive model also generates negative effects since the opportunity cost to conserve is very high, encouraging unsustainable production. **Floods and droughts involve costs for both avoided production and damage to people and materials and the effects are felt both locally and nationally.** In 2017/18, a severe drought affected central and northern Argentina, causing losses of more than 35% in soybean harvest. As a consequence, losses in terms of foreign exchange income from exports were estimated at US \$ 8,000 million, while the global fall in Argentine economic activity was estimated at US \$ 5,900 million (0.9% of GDP)<sup>15</sup>. In January 2019, a loss of US \$ 2,200 million was estimated due to flooding in the province of Chaco<sup>16</sup>.

In this way, making the protection of the ecosystems of the Argentine Gran Chaco compatible with the country's development strategies is necessary to guarantee the long-term viability of the agricultural sector in this region.

## **CHANGING THE EXPLOITATION MODEL REQUIRES THE ACTION OF GOVERNMENTS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND ORGANIZED CIVIL SOCIETY.**

Stopping the conversion of environments in the Gran Chaco will allow Argentina to attain sustainable and inclusive development. For its achievement, we need the commitment of the whole society. That is why we urge **the State, at all levels, the private sector and civil society to act urgently.**

**Argentina has a powerful instrument in the Native Forest Law (26.331), but its effective implementation requires adjustments. For this, the State must guarantee:**

- An improvement in the **control and fiscalization of the Law.**

8 APN. 2017. Plan Emergencia para la conservación del yaguararé en el Gran Chaco Argentino. IF-2017-08547919-APN-DNC#APNAC. Aprobado por resolución RES. HD N° 234-2017.

9 Romero-Muñoz, A., Torres, R., Noss, A. J., Giordano, A. J., Quiroga, V., Thompson, J. J., ... & Arispe, R. (2019). Habitat loss and overhunting synergistically drive the extirpation of jaguars from the Gran Chaco. *Diversity and Distributions*, 25(2), 176-190.

10 Jayawickreme, D.H., C.S. Santoni, J.H. Kim, E.G. Jobbágy, R.B. Jackson. 2011. Changes in hydrology and salinity accompanying a century of agricultural conversion in Argentina. *Ecological Applications*, 21 (7), 2367-2379.

11 Jobbágy, E.G., M.D. Nosoetto, C.S. Santoni, G. Baldi. 2008. El desafío ec hidrológico de las transiciones entre sistemas leñosos y herbáceos en la llanura Chaco-Pampeana. *Ecol. Austral*, 18(3), 305-322.

12 MAyDS -2017- Inventario Nacional de Gases de Efecto Invernadero.

13 Lateralra, P., Nahuelhual, L., Vallejos, M., Berrouet, L., Pérez, E. A., Enrico, L., ... & Salas, D. (2019). Linking inequalities and ecosystem services in Latin America. *Ecosystem services*, 36, 100875.



- **Economic resources at the height of the challenges and according to the legal mandate.** In 2019, only 4.5% of the budget established by the Law was allocated<sup>17</sup>.

- **Participatory processes in the Territorial Planning of Native Forests, based on reliable and timely public information,** focusing on the dissemination of the objectives of the Law.

- **Legal support for access and ownership of community lands.**

- Creation of **environmental prosecutors** that include citizen participation through **social control** mechanisms in all provinces of the Chaco region.

- Application of **penalties** for non-compliance and **tax fines** with sums that are effective for those who break the Law.

- **End with harmful incentives, in accordance with international commitments made by the country (Aichi Target 3),** for example: Provincial Law 10467/17 that created the “Agroforestry Plan” in Córdoba which promotes reforestation with exotic species, thought to favor industrial reforestation, without strongly promoting native species and without planning with a goal of ecosystem restoration or economic incentives in this regard.

- **Complement the Forest Law with other missing laws: territorial emergency, Minimum Protection Standards for the agrochemicals, Minimum Protection Standards for the wetlands, family agriculture, traceability of agricultural production, Minimum Protection Standards for the Protected Areas, Environmental Planning of the Territory, land tenure and rural rooting.**

- **Increase the share of protected areas, by at least 17%** of the total area of the Gran Chaco, in line with Aichi Target 11, or the percentage to be determined shortly in the global framework for biodiversity after 2020, and with a focus on their effective management.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Russo. 25/04/19. <https://www.tvpublica.com.ar/post/inundaciones-en-la-provincia-de-chaco>. Ministerio de Seguridad de la Provincia de Chaco.

<sup>15</sup> Bergero, P.; Calzada, J.; & Terré, E. 2018. Los productores agropecuarios se quedaron sin 30 Mt de granos para vender, un duro golpe para ellos y para la economía argentina. Informativo Semanal, AÑO XXXVI - N° EDICIÓN 1859. [https://www.bcr.com.ar/Pages/Publicaciones/informativosemanal\\_noticias.aspx?pldNoticia=1092](https://www.bcr.com.ar/Pages/Publicaciones/informativosemanal_noticias.aspx?pldNoticia=1092)

<sup>16</sup> El campo estima pérdidas por US\$ 2200 M tras inundaciones (17/9/2019). Bolsa de Comercio de Chaco. <http://www.bcch.org.ar/app.php/2285/DescripcionNoticias>

<sup>17</sup> FARN, 2019. Presupuesto 2019: La historia de los recortes continúa. <https://farn.org.ar/archives/26392>



- **Restoration of degraded environments and reforestation with native species and control of exotic species.**
- **Implementation of interprovincial corridors.**
- **Development of production alternatives oriented towards an agroecological transition, adapted locally,** according to the aptitude of the ecosystems reached, and taking into account the particular needs of native cultures and small producers.
- **Strengthening formal and informal environmental education, with a focus on productive transitions.**
- Inclusion and promotion of **tourism managed by local communities** as a productive activity.
- **Compliance with the international agreements and commitments assumed (Convention on Biological Diversity, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Escazú Agreement on the Right to Access Information, Citizen Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, among others).**

**For its part, the private sector (companies, banks, retailers, supermarkets, among others) has an important role to play in the protection of forests and ecosystems in the Argentine Gran Chaco. In that sense, we call upon them to:**

- Strictly comply with current regulations, especially the **Forest Law** and require compliance of the actors in their value chain.
- **Avoid deforestation and ecosystem conversion,** prioritizing the best use of already transformed areas (within the legal framework), incorporating process technologies that reduce socio-environmental negative impacts.



- Ensure the traceability of products throughout their value chain.

**We consider that as civil society organizations we should:**

- Build a common agenda of political strategy at national level.
- Participate in the monitoring and control of public policies.
- Expand our connections to ally with new movements and organizations with common causes to ours (such as youth groups), in order to agree on a common political agenda.
- Increase presence in mass media.
- Provide information to public and private sectors about innovation for biodiversity conservation.
- Adhere, disseminate and use for change the “Compromiso Gran Chaco Argentino 2030” as part of a broad political advocacy strategy.

**Finally, we ask citizens in general:**

- Adhere to the “Compromiso Gran Chaco Argentino 2030”.
- Improve consumption practices based on reliable information.



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## ADHERED ORGANIZATIONS





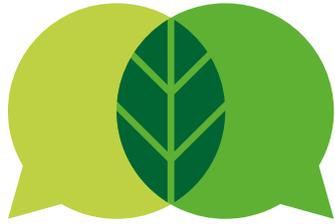
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