

Foreword

The successive shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine have had severe impacts on OECD rural regions. While rural regions make up approximately 80% of all territory in the OECD, accounting for almost all of the food, water, energy, minerals and other resources needed throughout the economy, they tend to be less diversified and more reliant on tradeable sectors than urban areas, which make them more vulnerable to disruptions in global value chains and increases in commodity prices. These shocks have come in the midst of ongoing structural transformations for rural communities including ageing and population decline as well as the green and digital transitions.

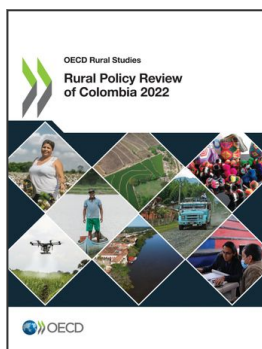
However, whilst these shifts and shocks present challenges they also provide distinct opportunities for rural regions to capitalise on their unique assets. Environmental assets, for example, can drive new growth opportunities, such as renewable energy and the bioeconomy, and also act as a magnet to attract new workers able to benefit from emerging shifts to remote or hybrid working.

Colombian rural regions (accounting for 88% of the territory) have significant untapped development opportunities. Colombia ranks as the second most biodiverse country in the world and the sixth in terms of water volume. Moreover, unlike many other OECD economies, Colombian rural regions are neither shrinking nor ageing. Rural regions also have significant ethnic and cultural diversity that could further drive growth opportunities. Yet, historic challenges have prevented the full potential of rural areas to be tapped, leading to persistent urban-rural inequalities across a number of well-being dimensions and undermining, in turn, social cohesion. These challenges include high informality of land tenure and land concentration, and low access to quality connectivity and services (education, health).

This report offers a framework of recommendations to mobilise rural assets and improve well-being of rural citizens in Colombia. It assesses trends, challenges and opportunities in rural Colombia and examines the country's rural development policy. The findings and recommendations are built on desk research and interviews over two study missions with a wide range of Colombian stakeholders, including national, regional and local authorities, representatives from civil society and the private sector, and academics. The report also benefits from input from peer-reviewers from Chile and Ireland.

The report highlights that addressing cross-cutting bottlenecks and mobilising the assets of rural Colombia requires a comprehensive national rural policy, co-ordinated by an inter-ministerial body to harmonise sectorial policies and prioritise rural needs in the national policy framework. The country has the building blocks in place for this new policy approach, including the Integral Rural Reform of the 2016 peace agreement.

This is the 13th Review of National Rural Policy conducted by the OECD and the first that applies both the OECD Principles of Rural Policy and the new OECD policy framework of *Rural Well-being: Geography of Opportunities*. The report was discussed at the 27th meeting of the Working Party on Rural Policy (WPRUR) in May 2022 and approved by the WPRUR [CFE/RDPC(2022)2/REV2] via written procedure in November 2022.



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