HACIENDA LOS AMORES

I care for nature, and nature cares for me

A story of conservation, production, and learning from the territory



Sunset over the flooded savanna of the Orinoquia. Our relationship with the territory has been shaped through years of work, learning, and partnerships.

Living in Vichada means learning from the territory

During the dry season, the savanna dries out, the risk of fire increases, and water becomes concentrated in rivers, streams, and lagoons. Then the rains arrive. The savanna floods again, roads change, wildlife adjusts its movements, and the landscape seems to become an entirely different place.

Anyone who spends years living in this territory eventually understands that **producing, conserving, and adapting are not separate matters**.

Hacienda Los Amores is part of that story.

Its relationship with conservation did not begin with nature tourism. It developed over time through agroforestry, nurseries, beekeeping, fire management, research, producer organization, conservation agreements, and collaboration with organizations working on biodiversity and sustainable development in the Orinoquia.

One activity led to another. Over time, a particular way of relating to the territory began to emerge.

AGAF: connecting production, territory, and conservation

The history of Hacienda Los Amores is closely linked to the **Asociación Gremial Agroforestal Vichadense — AGAF**, the Vichada Agroforestry Producers Association.

AGAF was established in 2013 and, from its earliest years, became a platform for bringing together producers, institutions, researchers, and organizations interested in the sustainable development of Vichada.



AGAF · Institutional partner of Hacienda Los Amores

The continuity between producer organization and field experience meant that issues such as nurseries, sustainable production, fire management, restoration, biodiversity, climate, and territorial planning informed decisions and projects developed at Hacienda Los Amores. In return, experience gained at the Hacienda contributed to AGAF's technical and organizational work.



Aleida Montañez and Fidel Cano Flórez. The continuity of AGAF's leadership has accompanied and strengthened the productive, environmental, and territorial development of Hacienda Los Amores.

AGAF also created spaces for dialogue. Between 2013 and 2015, it organized three consecutive editions of the **Orinoquia Forestry Forum**.



II National Cashew Congress, November 21, 2024. The program included a technical visit to the nursery and cashew crop at Hacienda Los Amores.

The third edition, held in 2015, brought together producers, institutions, researchers, and environmental organizations. Discussions went far beyond forestry production and included the health of the Orinoco River, the Bita River Alliance, non-timber forest products, green markets, carbon, bees, soils, and sustainable production.

The productive conversation was beginning to explicitly incorporate **biodiversity, water, climate, and sustainability**.

An early network of environmental organizations

During those years, AGAF was already participating in and coordinating activities with organizations approaching conservation from different perspectives and scales.

Institutional records refer to processes and working spaces involving **WWF, The Nature Conservancy — TNC, GEF, Parques Nacionales Naturales, and Fundación Horizonte Verde**.

Corporación Ambiental La Pedregoza and its Natural Reserve were also part of this network of relationships.

Technical exchanges included nurseries, environmental assessment, native species, sustainable production, and territorial management.

Rather than isolated relationships, a network of organizations and producers was beginning to emerge around shared challenges, knowledge, and responsibilities for the conservation of Vichada.

Learning to manage fire

In the savannas of Vichada, fire is not an abstract issue.

During the dry season, it can spread across large areas and simultaneously affect natural vegetation, plantations, wildlife, and infrastructure.

In 2015, **Proyecto Vida Silvestre, The Nature Conservancy, Yoluka, and Ecopetrol** organized a workshop in Puerto Carreño entitled *"Fire Management as a Management Tool for Ecosystems in the Colombian Orinoquia."*

AGAF encouraged landowners and producers to participate.

The experience helped change the way fire was understood: not simply as an emergency to be extinguished, but as a landscape variable that needed to be **understood, prevented, and managed**.

understand the risk → prevent → manage the landscape

Bees opened another door

While these processes were developing, another experience was taking shape around beekeeping.

Vichada's forest plantations offered flowering cycles and conditions that several producers began to use for establishing apiaries.

At Hacienda Los Amores, **Aleida Montañez** took an active role in this process. In 2016, she helped bring together producers interested in establishing, with support from **SENA and SENNOVA**, a Technology Services Center for Beekeeping.

The initiative sought to improve honey collection, analysis, homogenization, processing, and packaging while strengthening training, quality, and market access.

Work was also initiated with **ICTA at Universidad Nacional** to characterize honeys produced in the region.

Working with bees meant looking differently at flowering cycles, climate patterns, and the relationships between insects and plants.

When pollinators reached the cashew crop



Cashew flowering. The crops made it possible to study the relationship between biodiversity, pollination, and productivity.

Years later, beekeeping and cashew production came together.

In 2020, **GIZ's TONINA Project** began structuring a territorial initiative in Puerto Carreño to assess the value of pollination services in cashew crops.

The initiative sought to measure the contribution of pollinators to yield and quality, identify other pollinating species, and explore honey production associated with cashew flowering.

Participants included actors involved in agricultural and apicultural research, among them **AGROSAVIA and Universidad Nacional**.

Hacienda Los Amores became part of this field-learning process.

Two experiences that had developed along separate paths were now coming together: beekeeping and the development of the nursery and cashew crops.

Biodiversity also participates in production.

Nurseries: producing, observing, and conserving plant material



Nursery and plant-material production. The Hacienda gradually expanded its role as a space for observation and knowledge transfer.

The nursery experience also broadened Hacienda Los Amores' relationship with the territory.

Between 2016 and 2018, a cashew clonal garden was established and **Vivero Los Amores** was developed and registered with ICA.

The nursery made it possible to produce plants, but also to conserve identified materials, compare their performance, and transfer plant material to new projects.

Later, the possibility arose of reactivating material from non-timber forest species and locating part of it at Hacienda Los Amores within collaborative schemes involving research institutions.

The Hacienda was therefore beginning to play another role:

not only producing, but also maintaining living materials available for observation, evaluation, and learning.

From farm management to territorial planning

The relationship with conservation also began to move beyond property boundaries.

In 2016, Parques Nacionales Naturales requested information on production systems located in areas associated with the buffer and protection zone of the Biosphere Reserve linked to El Tuparro National Natural Park.

AGAF coordinated the response from the producers involved.

Records later show participation in regional processes related to mitigation measures for the Orinoquia NDC, the **Vichada Environmental and Productive Roundtable**, and the **Vichada Departmental Climate Change Roundtable**.

The discussion was no longer only about how to manage a farm.

It was beginning to include land-use planning, buffer zones, climate change, green businesses, and regional commitments.

from managing a property → to participating in decisions about the territory

The Bita River: from a protected river to watershed governance



The Bita River and its associated forests are part of the everyday landscape of Hacienda Los Amores.

Hacienda Los Amores has an especially close relationship with the **Bita River**.

Its riparian forests, lagoons, wildlife, and flood dynamics are part of the Hacienda's everyday landscape.

But the conservation history of the Bita began long before the river received international recognition.

In 2014, the initiative **"Río Bita, río protegido" — "Bita River, a Protected River"** began to consolidate, promoted by the Alexander von Humboldt Institute, the Government of Vichada, and an alliance involving the Colombian Navy, environmental organizations, public institutions, and landowners connected to the river.

The initiative sought to build a conservation model for the river system based on knowledge, agreements, and territorial participation.

That process generated research, watershed characterization, and new forms of coordination.

Ramsar recognition

In **2018**, the **Bita River Basin Wetland Complex** was designated a **Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention**.

For Hacienda Los Amores, located within this landscape, the Ramsar designation reinforced a relationship that had already been developing at both local and territorial scales.

From international recognition to watershed participation

Protecting a river does not end with international recognition.

A watershed also requires spaces where the people and organizations that live, produce, conduct research, conserve, and manage the territory can participate in decisions about its future.

On **March 26, 2019**, the **Consejo de Cuenca — Watershed Council** was formally established in Puerto Carreño through a process led by Corporinoquia.

Among the participating organizations was the **Asociación Gremial Agroforestal Vichadense — AGAF**, represented by **Fidel Cano Flórez**.



Formation of the Watershed Council. Puerto Carreño, March 26, 2019. The Asociación Gremial Agroforestal Vichadense participated as an organization representing the territory. Source: Corporinoquia.

This participation marked an important step in the trajectory that had been developing over the previous years.

Experience related to agroforestry production, territorial management, conservation, and producer organization was no longer confined to individual properties or specific projects. It had entered a formal space for watershed governance.

Other organizations involved in the same Council included **Fundación Omacha** and **Corporación Ambiental La Pedregoza**, organizations that also appear at different stages of the environmental history of Vichada.

The photograph provides a tangible record of that moment: environmental, productive, and social organizations gathered around a territory that cannot be managed by any one of them in isolation.

A river is not conserved property by property; it is conserved as a watershed.

From territorial governance to commitments on the property

Institutional documentation subsequently records **Hacienda Los Amores as a signatory to the Species Conservation Agreement for the Bita River Basin Ramsar Site**.

This progression helps explain the broader sequence:

BITA RIVER, A PROTECTED RIVER → RESEARCH → RAMSAR WETLAND → WATERSHED COUNCIL → TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE → CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

living beside the river → knowing it → participating → making commitments

Conservation was no longer only about what happened within Hacienda Los Amores.

It had also become participation in decisions concerning the wider territory of which the Hacienda is a part.

Wildlife also needed networks



Hacienda Los Amores identified as a Predio Amigo de los Armadillos (Armadillo-Friendly Property). The commitment is expressed through conserving habitat and avoiding hunting.

Wildlife conservation presents a similar challenge to water management:

animals do not recognize fences.

In 2025, **Fundación Omacha** invited landowners and producers connected to AGAF to participate in the **Predios Amigos de los Armadillos Network**.

Through the Association, information was circulated and interested properties were identified.

The process later advanced to the inclusion of **Hacienda Los Amores**.

Its identification as an **Armadillo-Friendly Property — Predio Amigo de los Armadillos** reflects a concrete commitment: protecting armadillos, conserving their habitat, and preventing hunting.

Once again, conservation was no longer only an intention.

It became a visible responsibility within the property and part of a broader regional network.

property → commitment → network → territory

Climate also became part of productive decision-making

Over time, the environmental conversation incorporated climate change more directly.

In 2024, **Agreement 029 with Fondo Acción** was signed in connection with the **Territorios Verdes Climáticamente Inteligentes** project, implemented by Fondo Acción with European Union resources and follow-up from the French Development Agency.

Within the project, information was gathered on the production system and greenhouse-gas mitigation scenarios were analyzed.

In 2025, a technical document specifically addressing the cashew system was delivered as a management tool to support production decisions.

The progression became visible once again.

First came observation of fire, water, vegetation, and pollinators.

Now emissions and mitigation opportunities were also being measured.

territory → production → climate → decisions

When experience becomes knowledge

Several of these experiences also began to move beyond the Hacienda and become shared knowledge.

In 2022, AGROSAVIA published **“Marañón: un acercamiento al contexto productivo, social, ambiental y agroindustrial en la altillanura de Vichada,”** with **Fidel Cano** participating as a co-author.

Later projects in science, technology, and innovation broadened the perspective toward the use of by-products, new materials, and circular-economy opportunities.

Part of the accumulated experience also began to be structured for training and knowledge transfer.

The sequence repeats itself:

learn → experiment → document → transfer → train

And then tourism arrived



Flooded savanna and Orinoquia landscape. Tourism came after years of production, learning, and territorial participation.

By the time Hacienda Los Amores and Orinoquia Tours & Expediciones began structuring their nature-tourism offering, many of these stories had already taken place.

Nurseries, beekeeping, fire management, research, producer organization, relationships with environmental organizations, territorial participation, and conservation agreements were already part of the story.

Tourism then emerged as **a new way of sharing the territory**:

navigating the Bita River, observing wildlife and flora, crossing seasonally flooded savannas, visiting nurseries and crops, and understanding some of the processes that have gradually shaped Hacienda Los Amores.

Tourist fishing is managed under catch-and-release criteria, but **it is not the center of this environmental story**.

The main argument lies in the trajectory that came before it.

A relationship built over time

No single one of these processes explains the environmental history of Hacienda Los Amores.

What matters is their continuity.

Agroforestry, producer organization, environmental collaboration, fire management, beekeeping, pollination, nurseries, territorial participation, watershed governance, conservation agreements, wildlife networks, climate action, research, and tourism emerged at different moments.

They are not completely independent chapters.

They have continually informed one another.

PRODUCTION → ASSOCIATION → CONSERVATION → RESEARCH → TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE → NATURE TOURISM

Together, they explain a conviction built through years of living and working in Vichada:

Conservation does not mean separating people from the territory.

It means learning to live, produce, and make decisions within it without losing what gives it value.



Sunset in the Orinoquia. The landscape is part of the heritage that Hacienda Los Amores seeks to understand, conserve, and share.

I care for nature, and nature cares for me.

It did not begin as a slogan.

Over time, it became a simple way of expressing something learned by living in this territory.

Partners and institutions connected to this trajectory

The presence of these institutions reflects different types of relationships developed at different moments: projects, research, cooperation, training, territorial participation, conservation, and institutional coordination.

AGAF — Principal institutional partner

Conservation, biodiversity, and territorial management

Instituto Humboldt · Fundación Omacha · WWF · Parques Nacionales Naturales · WCS / Proyecto Vida Silvestre · The Nature Conservancy · Fundación Horizonte Verde · Corporación Ambiental La Pedregoza · Corporinoquia

Research, cooperation, and training

AGROSAVIA · Universidad Nacional – ICTA · Universidad de los Andes · SENA / SENNOVA · GTZ / GIZ · Proyecto TONINA · Proyecto JURUI · ICA · Ministerio de Agricultura

Climate action, territory, and public-sector coordination

Gobernación del Vichada · Armada Nacional · Fondo Acción · Territorios Verdes Climáticamente Inteligentes · Unión Europea · Agencia Francesa de Desarrollo – AFD · Mesa Departamental de Cambio Climático · Mesa Ambiental y Productiva de Vichada · Ecopetrol

Reading note: the inclusion of an institution indicates that it appears in the documentation of one or more of the processes described above. Not all relationships have the same scope, nor do they necessarily imply a permanent or currently active partnership.

Leer en español