

Plenary room

# OECD Local Development Forum 2025

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Barranquilla, Colombia

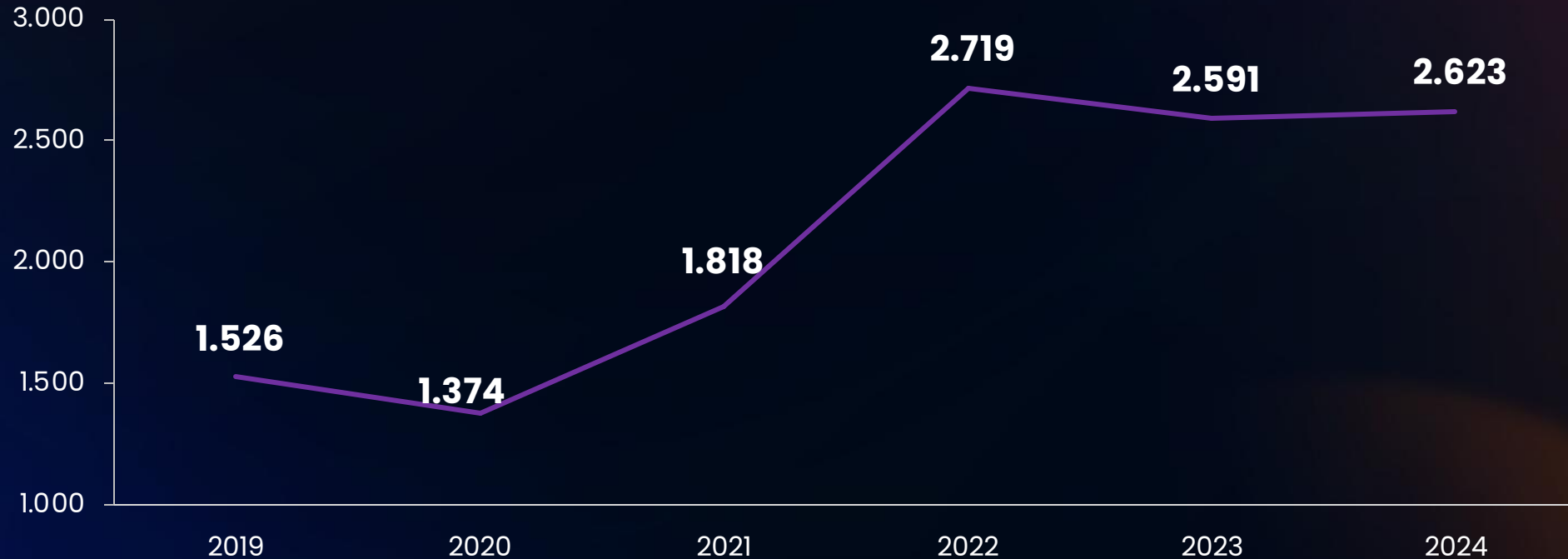
July 9th, 2025

**Manuel Fernández Ariza**

CEO

# Trends in Atlántico's Exports

(USD million; Includes free trade zones exports)

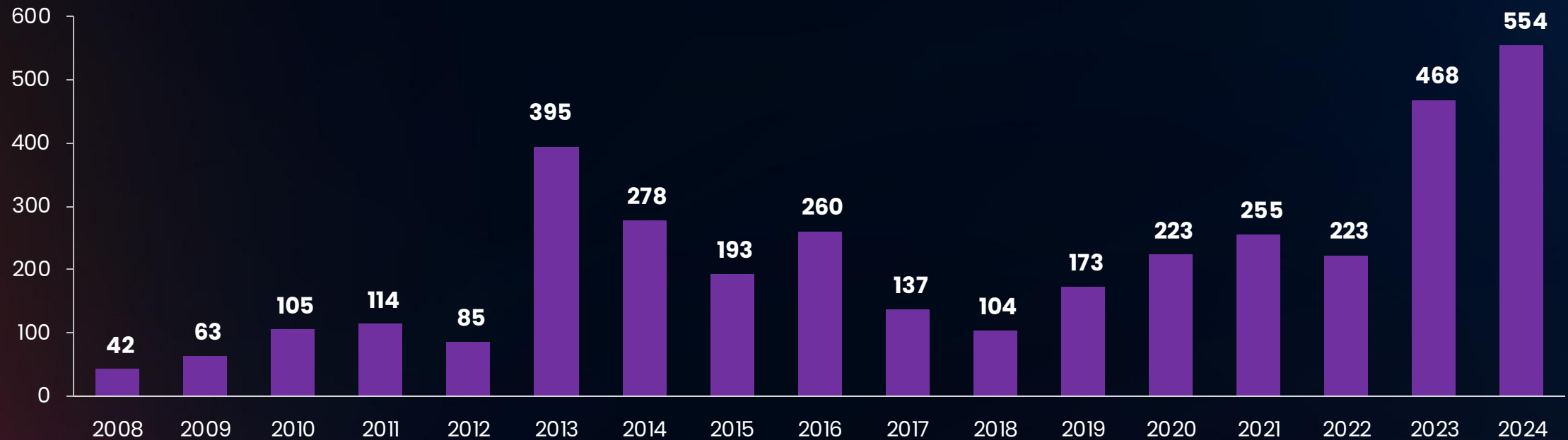


Local exports have nearly doubled over the past five years, driven by Free Trade Zones, which recorded an impressive 182% growth.

Source: Cámara de Comercio de Barranquilla based on SICEX

# Direct Investment in Barranquilla

(USD million)



In 2024, Barranquilla was recognized by the prestigious international publication FDI Intelligence as one of the world's 100 fastest-growing cities for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), ranking 27th globally and 3rd in Latin America and the Caribbean.

# Economic Growth

Real GDP growth (2019-2024)

Departament	Cumulative growth (%)	Anual average growth (%)
Atlántico	16,7	3,1
<b>Bogotá D.C.</b>	<b>16,5</b>	<b>3,1</b>
Córdoba	15,3	2,9
Magdalena	13,9	2,6
Bolívar	12,5	2,4
Sucre	10,3	2,0
<b>La Guajira</b>	<b>-8,2</b>	<b>-1,7</b>
<b>Cesar</b>	<b>-8,7</b>	<b>-1,8</b>

# GDP per capita (USD)



In 2024, average per capita output in the Caribbean region ranged from 50% to 75% below Bogotá's average.


# GDP per capita convergence time

(Estimated time – in years – to convergence assuming the department grows at double the rate achieved by each reference city)

Benchmark city	Atlántico	La Guajira
Bogotá	17	30
Santiago Metro Área	42	69
Miami MSA	103	123



The time required to converge to the GDP per capita of regional benchmark cities remains long, even if the department grows at twice their rate. **A different approach is needed.**



How can we **accelerate economic growth and job creation in coastal cities** while ensuring that lagging capital cities are not left behind?

# Our proposal

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Development of three **technology hubs**.

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The integration of two or more neighboring departments that cluster companies, facilitate knowledge sharing and pursue common productive goals.

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Public funding (at all levels) should focus on research and development investments to stimulate enterprise growth.

# Case Study

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program is the largest federally funded R&D initiative in the U.S. focused on fostering innovation within the productive sector.

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## Research and Development (R&D):

**1**

Research to discover new products and services.

**2**

Development to support companies in successfully bringing these products and services to market, overcoming the "valley of death."

# Supercity

Specialized in exports and attracting nearshoring

Distance

**221 km**

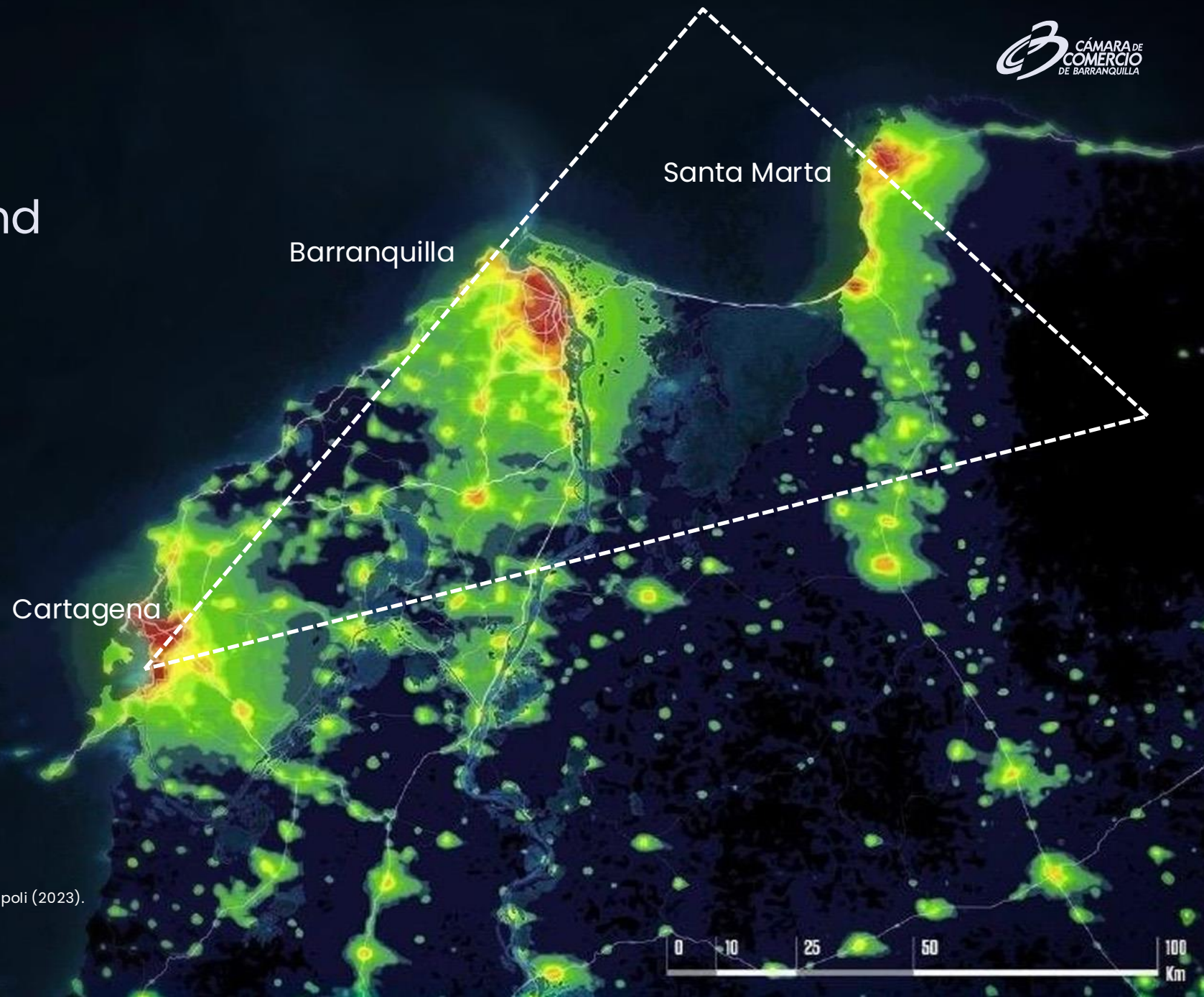
Cartagena  
Barranquilla  
Santa Marta

Travel time

**4 hours**

Inhabitants (3 Departments):

**6,6 million**



# AI is threatening to enlarge economic and social gaps

## Los Angeles Times

BUSINESS

Companies keep slashing jobs. How worried should workers be about AI replacing them?



By Queenie Wong  
Staff Writer |

## FORTUNE

87% of business leaders think AI agents will replace human employees if companies don't make big moves to upskill their workforce



BY BRIT MORSE  
LEADERSHIP REPORTER



## AI is replacing human tasks faster than you think

More than half of large firms surveyed say they plan to use AI in the next year to do the work previously done by humans. Maria Korneeva/Moment RF/Getty Images



By Matt Egan, CNN

🕒 5 minute read · Updated 2:02 PM EDT, Thu June 20, 2024

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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### CEOs Start Saying the Quiet Part Out Loud: AI Will Wipe Out Jobs

Ford chief predicts AI will replace 'literally half of all white-collar workers'

By [Chip Cutter](#) [Follow](#) and [Haley Zimmerman](#) [Follow](#)

July 2, 2025 9:00 pm ET

We need an agile and large-scale technical and technological program to **train our economically active population** in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) skills.

# Colombian Caribbean HUBs or Supercities



Research hub for organic and environmentally friendly agro-industrial products



Research hub for renewable and non-renewable energy

# Supercity

HUB specialized in exports and attracting nearshoring

Distance

**221 km**

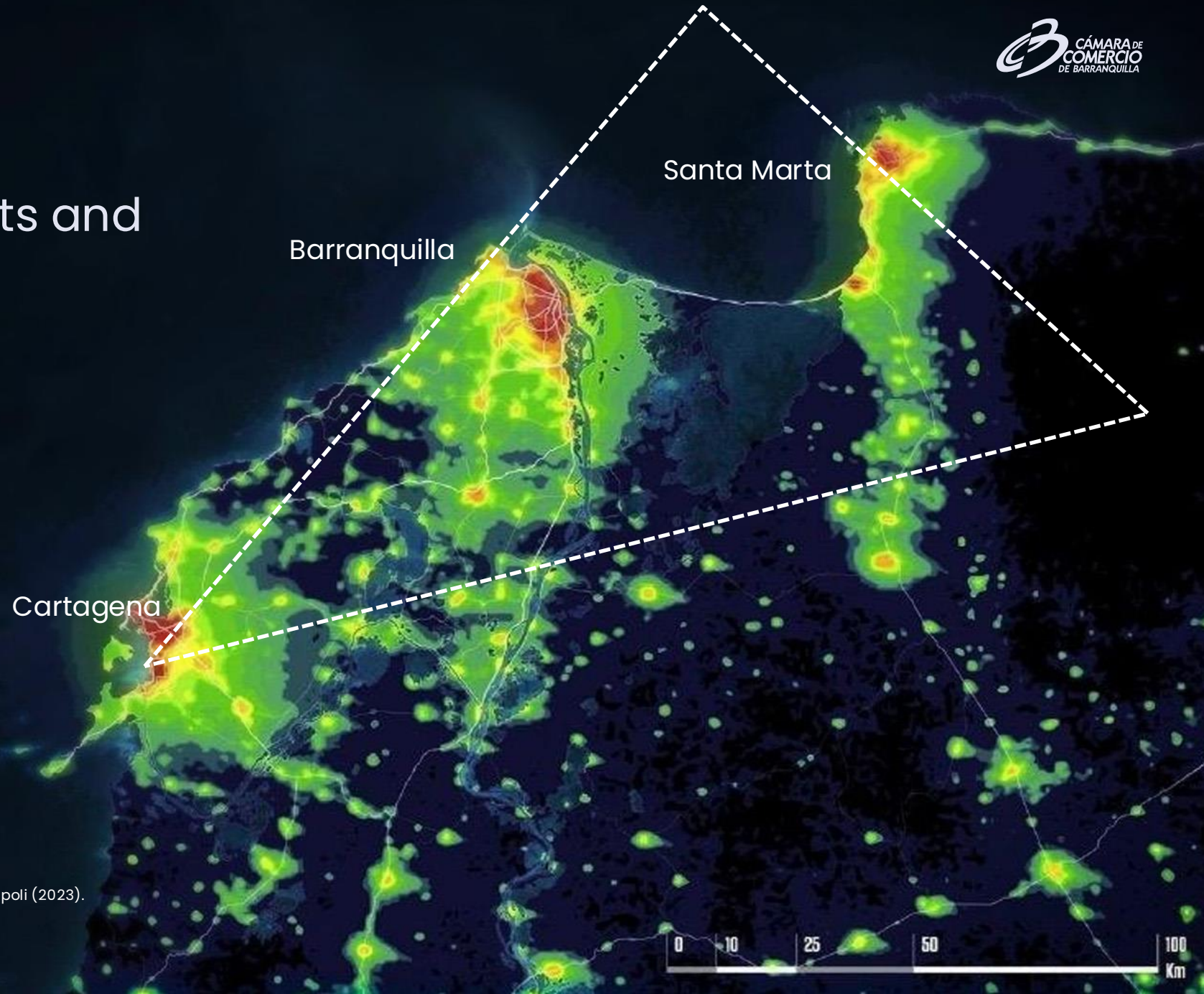
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## Land Area

Caribbean HUB compared to benchmark territories

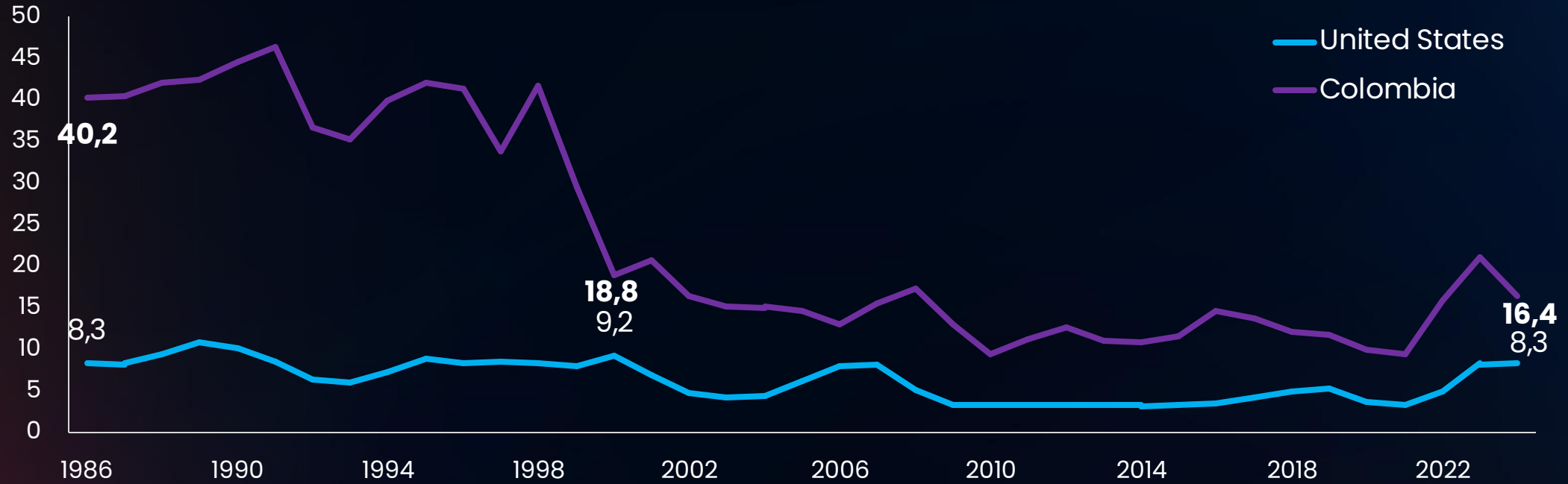
Costa Rica  
**51.100 km<sup>2</sup>**

Atlántico,  
Magdalena  
y Bolívar  
**52.554 km<sup>2</sup>**

Ireland  
**70.273 km<sup>2</sup>**

Panama  
**75.517 km<sup>2</sup>**

# Lending interest rates (%)



Lending rates in Colombia continue to be almost double those in the United States. Green financing offers a valuable opportunity for companies to reduce their cost of capital.

Lagging cities worldwide are at a turning point.  
By investing in innovation, integration, and talent,  
we can close historical gaps and unlock shared prosperity.  
Let us build the next generation of supercities—together.

Thank you



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