

## **Natural resources and environmental sustainability in the LAC region.**

It goes without a doubt that the LAC region is one very high in biodiversity and natural resources. But the region suffers also from non-sustainable exploitation of some of its natural resources. Collaboration between the EU and the LAC region in this domain is thus very important and covers a wide angle of projects that could be presented during this workshop.

Our world is evolving towards a bio-based economy that is developing more efficient and more sustainable approaches for producing food, feed, energy as well as industrial products derived from renewable resources. Natural resources as part of the rich biodiversity of the LAC region can in this context be seen as a source for (local) economic development but need to go together with for example water and soil conservation strategies. Innovative research tools need to be used to better understand ecosystem functions of the unique natural environments of the LAC region.

In this context we also need tools to assess the sustainability of systems (e.g. industries, cities, river basins, and countries), products and services. Now our methods are often based on rather superficial and particular criteria. A (food) product is for instance often claimed to be more sustainable if the impact on the ecosystem is reduced during production or use, or if part of the energy, water and elements can be recycled, or if it can be produced in a more efficient manner e.g. by using less energy, water or other environmental resources. Moreover, we may even know how to assess the sustainability of products, services and systems, bringing these insights to the market and influence both producers and consumers remain a very challenging goal for policy developers.

Suggested Keynote speakers:

Koen Verbist (UNESCO Water Programme in LAC)(contact office in Santiago, Chile)

Somebody from the Itaipu water power installation in Brazil