



Tropentag, October 9-11, 2007, Witzenhausen

“Utilisation of diversity in land use systems:
Sustainable and organic approaches to meet human needs”

Biodiversity and Development in Strategic Colombian Eco-Regions - The Colombian Orinoco Region

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Abstract

As a response to the imminent degradation of biological resources in the Colombian Orinoco region, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute of Biological Research (IAvH) with the support of the German Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and other international, national and regional agencies started the Orinoco project in 1997. The projects objective is to foster knowledge, sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity in the Orinoco region, through the design and execution of a Regional Plan of Action in Biodiversity.

The study area of the Orinoco Region Project encompasses the Orinoco River watershed on the Colombian side, that comprehends approximately 347.000 km² comprising a diversity of landscapes, ecosystems, species and human groups. This region hosts 600 species of birds, about 200 mammals, and a large water reservoir, considering that about 30 % of the Colombian water springs and runs in the Orinoco region.

In this initiative, governmental and non-governmental institutions participated in the table, such as the regional environmental authorities (Corporinoquia and Cormacarena), the University of the Llanos (Unillanos), The American Tropics International Foundation (Unitrpico), Javeriana University, the Omacha Foundation, the Green Horizon Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund-Colombia, GTZ. The coordination was bestowed by Humboldt Institute.

During the five years of the projects execution, significant advances were achieved. The main accomplishment was the formulation of a Regional Plan of Action on Biodiversity for the Colombian Orinoco region watershed for 2005-2015, as a navigation map for the management of biodiversity in the region. Additionally, the project renders an important breakthrough in magnifying, systematizing, and diffusing knowledge about the Orinoco region through the design and implementation of information tools, biological and production systems characterisations, the use of biodiversity by local communities, the increase and strengthening of biological collections including the sounds and tissues bank and the implementation of a regional information system on biodiversity. Commercialisation activities for the promotion of biodiversity goods and services were performed with local communities and the analysis of policies and biodiversity valuation took place.

Finally, around the regional project and the strengthening of institutions and local population in the acknowledgment of biological resources, concrete contributions to human well being are in place.

Keywords: Biodiversity, biological collections, local communities, Orinoco

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