



“Biodiversity matters for the functioning of forests today and as insurance for the future”

Marielos Peña-Claris, Wageningen University

EU decision-makers and stakeholders gathered in the European Parliament to discuss the ROBIN project, which highlights the pivotal role of tropical forests and the carbon and non-carbon benefits they provide. ROBIN has demonstrated that biodiversity is part of the solution towards mitigating climate change, and is an exemplary project highlighting the links between mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity and the maintenance of sustainable tropical forest landscapes.

Catherine Bearder MEP gathered Parliamentarians and stakeholders on 21 October to present the outcomes of the ROBIN¹ Project, which is an EU funded, four-year interdisciplinary project covering European and Latin America partners. The conference highlighted the role of forest landscapes and the key role they play for biodiversity and climate change mitigation.

Tropical forest offer 25% of mitigation potential, and biodiversity increases the resilience of forest and ensures that they are able to adapt to new climatic situations. In order to enhance the sink of the forest it was stated by Martin Herold, Wageningen University that *“biodiversity is not a co-benefit, it is not a safeguard, it is a requirement”*.

It was further stated by Terry Parr, ROBIN Project Coordinator, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, that the project has demonstrated that *“biodiversity is not just a co-benefit provided by climate change mitigation but part of the solution”*. The project adopted a systemic approach, which looked at the whole system from drivers, effects, functions, to impacts, and how these factors feed back to policies and management options.

It was explained by Marielos Peña-Claris, Wageningen University that the project has examined the central question whether: more diversity and more carbon stocks lead to higher productivity? It was highlighted that *“biodiversity has a positive effect on carbon stocks and carbon sequestration in mature tropical forests”*. It was further underlined that *“forest regrowth promotes the carbon sink and that high levels of tree diversity should be used in reforestation activities”*.

Miguel Equihua, INECOL outlined the concept of ecosystem integrity, which *“links the state of ecosystems with the possible uses and value to society”*. Ecosystem integrity provides a measurement that can be linked to public policy and attempts to align the three pillars of sustainability.

It was highlighted that the project entails a tremendous amount of data and data products that can be used beyond ROBIN. Local participation was also stressed and the need to provide the local level with a system that enables them to optimise the tools for decision-making.

Representatives from the European Commission praised the project as it is both timely ahead of COP21 and exemplary demonstrating the importance of research and innovation. It was stated by

¹ The Role of Biodiversity in Climate Change Mitigation



Stefan Leiner, Director “*Natural Capital*”, DG Environment that projects like ROBIN are imperative in underpinning policies and making the case that “*nature-based solutions are the most cost-effective way to mitigate and adapt to climate change*”.

The meeting highlighted the importance of REDD+ and that biodiversity should be considered an integral component of policies and practices that will reduce the impact of climate change. Another element that was raised is the need for a common baseline for sustainable supply chains. It was emphasised that ahead of COP21 and with the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals this year has the highest level of international engagement on forests and climate change.

The meeting also mentioned the mid-term review of the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy and that lessons can be learned from Latin America. With regards to target 6 it was called upon the EU to reduce indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and mobilise additional resources for global biodiversity conservation.

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