

## Workshop: Regional bioeconomy as a key driver to build up resilient economies - Lessons learned from Latin America and the Caribbean

### Chairs:

#### Hugo Chavarría

Manager of The Bioeconomy and Productive Development Program, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, (IICA).

#### Eduardo Trigo

Adviser of The Bioeconomy and Productive Development Program, IICA.

#### Marcelo Regunaga

Member of The Group of Producing Countries from the Southern Cone (GPS).

- The workshop evolved around a series of presentations highlighting the state of development of LAC bioeconomy, both in terms of what is going on in major sectors of the bioeconomy, as well from the institutional point of view.
- In this sense, in terms of sectors those of the bioenergies, ag. biotechnology, and the development of carbon neutral agricultural production strategies were emphasized. Discussions in this part of the workshop organized around presentations highlighting experiences with sugarcane-based ethanol in Brazil, rural development experiences linked to biodiesel from oil palm production in Colombia, and sustainable agricultural production in Argentina
- At the institutional level, discussion centered on the critical role that international cooperation has played in the inception within the region of the concept of the bioeconomy – this mainly through a series of EU Framework Programs, which involved more than 20 countries from both sides of the Atlantic. Then the workshop moved to take a closer look into recent experiences involving national strategy development, where the recent experiences from Costa Rica, Colombia and Uruguay were presented for discussion.
- This segment of the workshop was rounded up with a questions segment organized on the basis of the audience answers to the question of “what would be possible to achieve in the region through the bioeconomy”. The three highlighted words were **SUSTAINABILITY**, **DEVELOPMENT**, and **HEALTH**, with a clear emphasis on the first, with the two later concepts more or less at the same level; competitiveness, economy and policy, were also recognized as words representing the bioeconomy.

## Workshop Conclusions

- The Bioeconomy is becoming an emerging field of action of development strategies in Latin-American and the Caribbean Region, striving for increasing value creation and rural development and local job creation based on their abundant bio-based resources. LATAM is very well positioned to develop a bioeconomy strategy based on its endowment of natural resources and its mega diverse environments.
- Despite the lack of formal and structured bioeconomy strategies and policies, in some countries of the Region there have been interesting developments in some bioeconomy areas, such as sustainable agricultural production, biofuels and bioenergies, green chemistry, use of waste and residues to produce bio-inputs and energy (circular strategies in rural areas and cities), and health (human, animal, and plant). Many of them have been associated with economic and regulatory incentives implemented by governments, including enabling access to the respective products and services markets.
- Such developments provide an interesting background to contribute to improving sustainability in most of the countries of the Region, to preserve and rebuild natural resources, and to mitigate the impact of greenhouse gas emissions through alternative production systems (crops, livestock production, forestation).
- Many countries of the Region lack enough economic resources to support the need for additional innovations to add value and promote the local bioeconomy alternatives. There is a need for international cooperation to support such initiatives.
- The current economic and health crisis in the Region creates a bottle neck in relation to the need for financing associated with most of the bioeconomy developments that require high investments. The lack of other market incentives, such as carbon market payments, also limits the sustainable strategies implementation in the Region.
- It is interesting to highlight that countries of the Region that had progress in government interagency bioeconomy initiatives are having positive results, by implementing regulatory and governance policies, including market development of bioproducts and services.
- Similar comments could be highlighted in relation to the success of public-private initiatives to develop bioeconomy solutions in different fields, such as biotechnology and other high techs, biorefineries developments, etc. Such partnerships are very limited in the Region and should be promoted to provide financing and S&D developments.