



ACADEMIA ENGELBERG

## **Stop the deforestation!**

**At the end of 2005, the planet's largest area of rainforest is in crisis. Millions of fish are rotting in the dried-out ponds and branches of the Amazon. In the tributaries, the boats are stuck because the low water level is making river transport impossible. And the Brazilian army is supplying people with medicine and food by air. The Amazon region has not known such drought conditions for thirty years.**

For scientists, the reasons for this disaster are clear: forest clearance, climate change and the destruction of the environment are taking their toll. The fact that Latin America is being so hard hit is no coincidence. This continent has the greatest biodiversity in the world, so at the same time it has the greatest number of ecosystems faced with destruction. According to the FAO, South America every year loses an area as large as Costa Rica to the ravages of deforestation.



*In the Amazon delta the rivers are degenerating into narrow rivulets.*

### **Project from the 2004 conference is being implemented**

At the Third Dialogue on Science of the Academia Engelberg at the end of September 2004, 18 young scientists elaborated concrete scenarios for action to combat climate change as part of a project week. The 18 YES scientists (Youth Encounter on Sustainability) from 15 nations identified and researched three key themes. The scenarios contained proposals as to how awareness of the need for action can be raised in the international student community. To implement the three projects "Reduce energy consumption", "Change mobility behaviour" and "Stop deforestation", Academia Engelberg made intense efforts in 2005 to find funding solutions. On 15 December 2005 the Foundation of the Academia Engelberg decided to launch Project No. 3 "Stop deforestation" in 2006.

**Vision and objectives**

The idea is to halt the rapid deforestation in South America by mobilizing this continent's university elite. To this end, the students in their countries are exerting influence on state policy. They are elaborating alternatives for sustainable preservation of the rainforest. With these alternatives it is intended to persuade politicians of the need for climate protection and persuade them to fashion more climate-friendly forestry policies.



*At the invitation of the Academia Engelberg Foundation, 18 YES scientists from 15 nations worked out an action plan in the struggle against climate change at the Third Dialogue on Science conference in Engelberg.*

**Step 1 – Development of alternatives**

University students are the future elite of their country. In 2006, the students of Latin America are to be recruited to engage in a programme for sustainable use of the natural resources of the forest in their region. For this purpose, members of the ISIACC (International Student Initiative for Action on Climate Change) Forestry Policies Focus Group, the YES alumni students and representatives of important local institutions are forming scientific advisory committees (STAP). These committees in Mexico, Central America, South America (excluding Brazil) and Brazil are developing specific proposals for the political decision makers: the revised Engelberg Charter.

**Step 2 – Persuasion**

The advisory committees are running local information campaigns and symposia, during which the elaborated proposals and measures for a sustainable forestry policy will be presented.

Thanks to intense networking by students and scientists of all faculties, it is possible to tap into the huge potential of elite disseminators.

**Step 3 – Sustainable forestry management policy**

Thanks to the intensive discussion and propagation of alternatives for sustainable forestry policy, the political decision makers and authorities will be persuaded to re-think their ideas. The aim is to get the decision-making bodies to commit to the Engelberg Charter. With this sensitization campaign, the people responsible are seeking to exert influence on forestry management policy in these countries and to help shape future forestry management policy.



### The partners in this project

Thanks to the crucial support of Prime Forestry Switzerland AG ([www.primeforestry.com](http://www.primeforestry.com)) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zürich as well as the Academia Engelberg Foundation, it will be possible to launch this project in January 2006. Additional financial resources will enable other projects from the action plan of the YES students to be implemented (“Reduce energy consumption”, “Change mobility behaviour”). Anyone interested is urged to contact Dominik Galliker, Vice-President of the Academia Engelberg Foundation, at [info@academia-engelberg.ch](mailto:info@academia-engelberg.ch).

### The project team



The local project manager is Fabio Segura from Columbia.

The contact person in Switzerland is Kathrin Dellantonio from ETHsustainability, while project coordination lies in the hands of Michelle Grant from the Alliance for Global Sustainability at the ETH Zürich. The project team, with the collaboration of Dominik Galliker, Vice-President of Academia Engelberg, will work closely with the following institutions from Costa Rica: CATIE (Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center), RMFN-LAC (Regional Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean).



*Project coordinator Michelle Grant (right) from the Alliance for Global Sustainability and Kathrin Dellantonio (left) from ETHsustainability at the presentation of the project at the end of September 2004 in Engelberg.*