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EDITORIAL NOTE

A Millenium Ecosystem Assessment for Brazil: are we ready for it?

The Millemium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) was a four year international effort designed to provide decision makers with basic scientific information on the links between ecosystem change, ecosystem functioning and human well-being. (MEA 2003).

The MEA focussed on how ecosystem services are affected by human activities and will affect human well-being in the future. Such an approach is fundamental in a country with the highest biodiversity on Planet Earth, like Brazil. Brazil is endowed with a high diversity of terrestrial and aquatic biota which provide a wide range of services to its human population.

Knowledge of this diversity is increasing rapidly due to the efforts of the scientific community that is represented by the large-scale capacity building programs and the increasing number of scientific publications of high quality. The Brazilian Journal of Biology, for example, published approximately 1,000 papers on the neotropical biota in the last 8 years. These peer-reviewed papers, as well as other scientific publications from Brazilian scientists published in other international journals, are an important asset for a future MEA.

A Millenium Ecosystem Assessment for Brazil will provide an important scientific basis for the future of the country's biodiversity as well

as being a tool for environmental planning with enormous economic and social importance. As stated by Wilson (1998) "biological diversity must be treated more seriously as a global resource to be indexed, used, and above all preserved". The biodiversity component is an important part of a MEA. Other components include soil, water, resources, air, primary production, food production, fiber and fuel production. All the links between these components and impacts upon them are relatively well known in Brazil and the launch of this initiative could mobilize the scientific community, the public and private sector, and decision makers in order to provide a basis for up-to-date knowledge of ecosystems functioning mechanisms, drivers of change, main trends and scenarios.

The information exists and although gaps still prevail in certain areas, this initiative will provide an invaluable tool for the future, helping scientists, planners, managers and governments to work for conservation, and for the recovery of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in Brazil.

The Editorial Board

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