

**A view of  
Latin  
America  
through  
green  
perspectives**

aNumak  
& Company

Sowjanya Shankar  
Content Writer



### **Defining the ‘green’ before technology**

Green technology is the form of applying practises which help in the conservation of the environment and its depleting natural resources. It emphasizes the use of sustainable forms of energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and dependency on fossil fuels. The current interest in the green technology market is a very ‘natural’ response to increasing levels of pollution, rapid depletion of natural resources and the irreversible effects of climate change. Some common examples are alterations in the production process to reduce wastage and soot, usage of renewable energy, recycling, etc. Most companies have begun to incorporate this as a mission in their environmental, sustainability, and governance (ESG) statement.

### **Stripping the green screen – Understanding the current environment and how it came to be**

South America is known for its cacao and coffee industries, rosewood, mahogany and other crops. Rich in iron ores, copper, tin and gold, it is unsurprisingly a victim of extensive mining and drilling. Valuable grassland and forest area are often exploited and the waste and silt from processing pollutes the river and harms the river ecosystems. Rapid deforestation has led to decline in biodiversity and further soil degradation. Inadequate waste management technologies and over exploitation of marine resources are a few other concerns of significance.



## Green lights ahead?

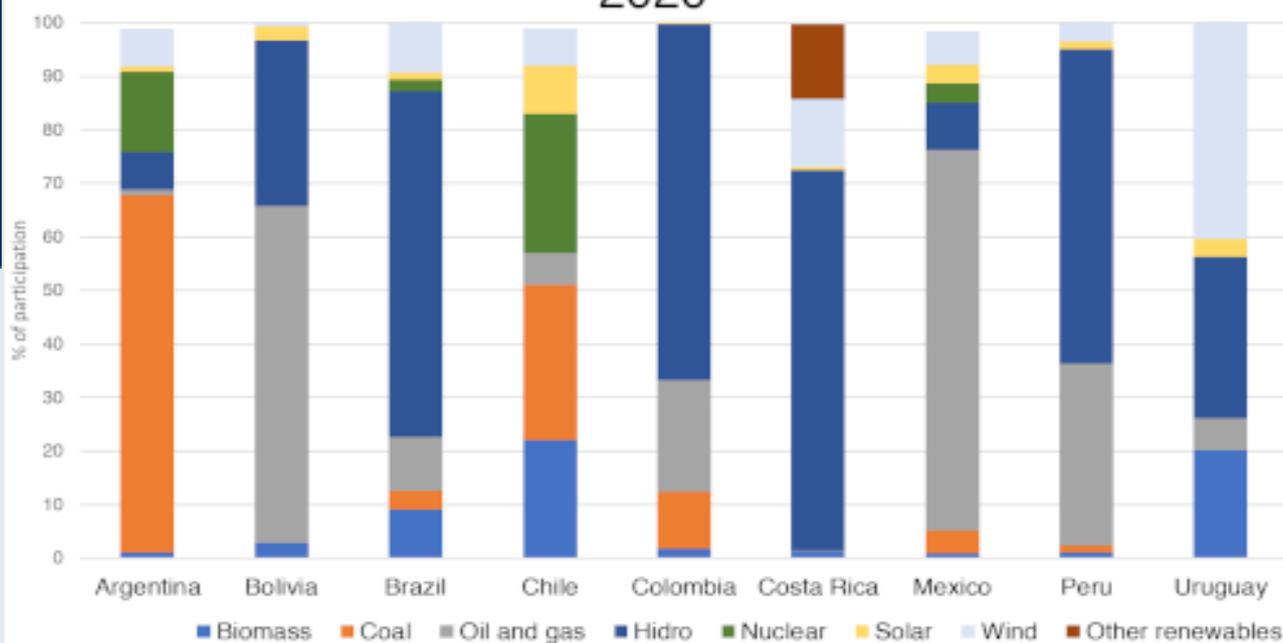
In response to the rapidly growing environmental crisis, Latin America has long since begun implementing policies and changes to invert this fate. Latin America's familiar partner China aims eradicate greenhouse gas emissions by completely switching to renewable energy in the form of biomass, solar, hydro or wind energy. Battery operated transportation systems and lithium batteries are at the forefront of the country's transition into green power.

The electromobility venture has significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions and begun a promising sustainable venture where Argentina and Uruguay are currently the top candidates. Did you know that Uruguay powers 40% of its needs with Wind energy? Currently Chile has the highest number of electric powered vehicles on the move, the second largest number only preceded by China. It is closely followed by Brazil and Mexico. The latter are also hubs for the vehicle's assembly.

Similar to wind and hydro energy, solar power is also a significant energy market in Latin America. With hydro power becoming less reliable over the years due to unpredictable weather patterns, Latin America aims to shift and divide this dependency with solar power whose complete potential is still untapped. Although Argentina still heavily depends on fossil fuels and coal, it has also shown active investment ventures in its solar energy market too. Solar power has increased threefold due to European investments in construction of solar parks with technical support from China.

Although not all countries in Latin America have been able to have a smooth transition into clean energy, we must acknowledge that progress is progress albeit slow. With incentives, subsidies and tax reductions given to innovations that can help avert this environmental crisis, It is evident that the government is a willing supporter of any new venture or scheme that can guide and propel them towards a better and sustainable future.

## Electricity generation by type of energy 2020



### Trouble in the horizon

Although opportunities are in plenty, there lie issues within. Most of the Lithium and rare earth elements sourced in Latin America are sent to China for refining. Lithium is one of the main components for rechargeable batteries and rare earth elements are essential in the construction of electric powered vehicles. This dependency on China gives them an opportunity to control production costs as well as the processing timeline and supply. An increase in cost at this stage would mean an increase in cost for the consumer who would inevitably choose to switch to a cheaper energy form defeating the purpose of the entire project. Additionally, socio-political concerns prevail.



## **Celebrating small wins together**

Battling years of ‘power-hungry’ mentality is no small feat. Conservation is as important as management and growth. While renewable energy is growing, here are a few celebrations worthy moments where the people rose up to the occasion to protect their country and its resources.

- A group of scientists, NGOs and activists stepped forward to protect the Cabo Pulmo National Park from the Cabo Cortés mega tourism and coastal development project. This protected area previously a victim of exploitation and overfishing is one of the most robust marine reserves on the planet today.
- The plan to construct 5 mega dams over Patagonia’s major rivers was dropped after meeting severe protests from activists. Patagonia in Chile is heavily susceptible to exploitation due its rich natural resources and a frequent target of the growing industrial scene.
- Banning oil exploration in Belize which houses the world’s second largest coral reef network.
- The Santurbán Páramo which holds most of the nation's potable water and a hub of the freshwater ecosystem scene was delimited by boundaries to ensure that more than 75% was protected from the ravages of mining.



## **2021 – A year of green initiatives**

- 1.The Escazú Agreement, which provides public access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters is set to come into force.
- 2.State Power Investment Corp, one of China’s energy leaders bought Zuma Energia a renewable energy firm and promises to lead Mexico into a cleaner future.
- 3.A Chinese company, Gangeng Lithium aims to construct a battery recycling plant in Sonora to curb pollution levels and enhance circularity.
- 4.The Coalition on Circular Economy launched early this year aims to provide technical assistance and support to enterprises in their journey towards circular economy. An economy system where components and products lose as little value as possible and the environment is protected.
- 5.The Bridgetown declaration also aims to
  - 1.Control air and water pollution and progressively eradicate hazardous final waste disposal methods.
  - 2.Promote schemes to conserve, restore and promote sustainable use of biodiversity.
  - 3.Introduce an integrated environmental information system for better monitoring and implementation of conservation and protection agenda.

Latin America is indeed moving forward towards a better future with newer innovations and ventures. These ventures aim to protect and sustain its land whilst conserving their rich biodiversity and natural resources which sets them apart from the rest of the world. The global scenario is rapidly changing with Latin America ranking higher than Asia in terms of the environmental conservation and protection practises measures in a scale called the Environmental Performance Index. In fact, more than half of its countries ranked higher than the world average in the 2018 report. In conclusion, owing to the focus shifting towards sustainability and circular economy practices, soon the grass has the potential to be greener on this side of the world.

### Environmental Performance

