

Puerto Rico: Renewable energy could cause ecological damage



As a projection, the country expects to obtain 40% of its electricity supply from renewable sources by 2025 and 60% by 2040. Aug. 15, 2023. | Photo: Twitter/@NoticiasSurPR

San Juan, August 23 (RHC)-- The government of Puerto Rico could install renewable energy projects on lands with high agricultural and ecological value in violation of related laws and the Local Land Use Plan. This was denounced by six organizations in a lawsuit they filed with the Puerto Rican government.

The government's intention is to implement dozens of renewable energy projects to reduce the island's energy problems. The lawsuits are following up with the tax authorities on alternative locations that allow the impact of renewable energy projects to integrate an environmentally and natural resource friendly dimension. They recommended other surfaces such as rooftops, parking lots, disused landfills and soils that have been contaminated.

"The loss of prime agricultural land to install solar projects of an industrial magnitude is a serious attack on Puerto Rico's already precarious food security," said David Sotomayor, professor of soil fertility at the University of Puerto Rico.

The institutions that would see their energy generation infrastructures relocated if this lawsuit is successful would be: the Energy Bureau, the Planning Board, the Permits Management Office and the Department of Economic Development and Commerce.

One of the institutions that has approved the most land with agricultural potential has been the Electric Power Authority (AEE), with more than 2,000 hectares that, according to the lawsuit, are classified as special agricultural reserve and rustic land with special protections.

On the other hand, the Department of Justice of Puerto Rico, one of the defendant institutions, stated that it was unaware of such legal recourse, since no copy thereof had arrived at its headquarters. Among the institutions that filed the lawsuit are the Boricua Eco-Organic Agriculture Organization, the United Front for the Defense of the Lajas Valley, the Environmental Dialogue Committee, and the League of Cities of Puerto Rico, among others.

Currently, the government of Puerto Rico has expressed a deep interest in significantly incorporating a renewable energy generation infrastructure that will allow the country to gradually free itself from its strong dependence on fossil fuels for electricity production.

Crude oil accounts for almost 60% of the island's energy use, followed by natural gas with 28%, coal with about 12% and just 2% from renewables, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). As a result, electricity bills in Puerto Rico are some of the highest in the United States.

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