

Promising bioelectric plant to be linked to Cuban sugar mill

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Bioelectric plants are decisive in this country with a long sugar tradition. Photo taken from Granma newspaper.

By Roberto Morejón

As part of the ambitious, necessary and useful program for the promotion of renewable energy sources, Cubans are watching with great attention the news coming from a bioelectric power plant, in the testing phase, in the province of Ciego de Avila.

The Biopower joint venture, built next to the 'Ciro Redondo' sugar mill in the central Cuban province, is important for the national electro-energy system.

The interconnection between the sugar mill, as they are called in Cuba, and the electricity generating emporium took place recently, after a long period of preparation and some difficulties.

Experts consider bioelectric plants to be decisive in a country with a long sugar tradition, since the factories would provide bagasse to the adjacent generating unit, a biomass that is always available.

In the case of the bioelectric plant neighboring the Ciro Redondo sugar mill, it also works with marabú, an undesirable weed that is widespread in Cuba and harmful to the planting plans of various crops.

Thus, the Ciego de Avila enclave is nourished by bagasse and marabú, a perfect combination to produce energy from native raw materials, which is essential for the country, since it works without reserves.

As is well known, the energy matrix of the largest Antillean island is 95 percent based on fossil fuels, and the remaining five percent is covered by the very promising renewable sources.

Especially with the construction of photovoltaic fields and domestic solar panel systems, as well as the use of solar thermal, wind and biomass energy.

From this last supplier, Cuba hopes to build several additional bioelectric plants, associated with the sugar mills, although the economic crisis derived from the U.S. blockade and the impact of Covid-19 hinders such indispensable projects.

But Cubans insist that with renewable sources it would be possible to replace 2.3 million tons of fossil fuels per year in electricity generation.

The Caribbean nation, persevering in sustaining its sugar industry despite the obsolescence of many of its factories, could lower the cost of sugar if it were equipped with new bioelectric plants.

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