

Mauritius energy storage for demand response

If you take a cursory glance at the government's plans, you'd think our country was steadily embracing the green energy revolution. The government aims to generate 60% of the island's power from renewable sources by 2030. As of 2021, renewable energy accounted for approximately 21% of the island's electricity production; of this, just over half was produced by bagasse, a form of biomass. Solar power was the second largest source of renewable energy, accounting for 5.1%.

Sugar conglomerates had stressed that the Framework's contents should urgently be communicated to them. They own the three biggest coal-bagasse cogeneration plants in Mauritius: Omnicane's La Baraque produces 90 MW; Terragen produces 71.20 MW, and Alteo Energy has a production capacity of about 36.70-41 MW.[1] These three plants are the biggest Independent Power Producers (IPP) on the island.

The Framework, published in June 2023, suggests that biomass will comprise 22.8% of energy production in Mauritius by 2030. All very well, if the measures to produce such growth weren't so troubling - and infuriating.

In order to analyse the ludicrous government paper, one must first understand the consequences and potential dangers of biomass production - which, naturally, aren't examined at all in the "Framework".[2]

The only viable sources of biofuel, in the Framework, are treated afterwards: plant "waste", such as the pruning of trees; the collection of dead trees; the use of contractually-removed invasive species as biomass; the potential of refuse-derived fuel, and the burning of industrial wood waste (such as damaged wooden pallets, wooden poles used in construction sites and so forth). The Framework says we can expect about 85 GWh/year of energy produced by 2030 - certainly not as significant as the government's biomass plans for our forests and sugarcane land, amounting to 688 GWh/year.

An important aside before this section begins: none of the Central Electricity Board's Annual Reports from 2016-2017 are available to download online. It has been taxing to find information on the development of government projects: reports are either missing, or are of unacceptable quality, or cannot be read due to formatting issues.

The Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities has placed great hopes in solar power, if their "Roadmap 2030" document is to be believed. Hydro-electricity (56.4 MW), solar power (94.78 MW) and biomass (131.5 MW) are the three biggest renewable energy sources of the country, with hydro-power considered to be fully-tapped.

Which brings us to an important point: in order to trust that the (viable!) plans for renewable energy will be carried out, we need to be able to trust the government and its institutions. Trust in their goodwill, their



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efficiency, their transparency. We're incapable of doing so at the moment, given the shambolic state of energy governance in this country.

It is difficult, knowing this information, to believe that Mauritius will be able to meet its renewable energy aims, in a climate that has become all too urgent, in a world where drastic, cutting-edge actions are required to ensure that our world is tolerable in the next ten years. And we won't get this change unless the island's public sector is revolutionised in the way that its employees and citizens deserve.

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