# El Salvador

The Republic of El Salvador (República de El Salvador) with its capital San Salvador (610.700 inhabitants, 1995) comprise an area of 21.990 km² and have a population of 6,276 million inhabitants and an extremely high population density of 285 inhabitants per km². The urban population amounts of 46 percent (1998) and increasing.

Poverty, civil war, natural disasters and their consequent dislocations have left their mark on El Salvador's society, which is among the most violent and crime-ridden in Latin America. During the 1980s, El Salvador was ravaged by a civil war. This was the result of gross inequality between a small and wealthy elite, which dominated the government and the economy, and the overwhelming majority of the population which is living under extreme poor conditions. The war left around 70.000 people dead and caused enormous structural and social damage to the region. In 1992, a United Nations-brokered peace agreement ended the civil war, but before El Salvador begun to recover, it was hit by a series of natural disasters, mainly due to the seismic zone, which made more than a million people homeless.

The electricity consumption in 2000 turned out to be 3,68 million megawatt hours (MWh) and was provided by 45,7 percent of oil, 41 percent consumption was provided by hydropower and 13,3 percent by other renewable energy resources. Geothermal plants contributed about four fifths of this share, while solar energy and bioenergy was rarely utilised.[1]

Because El Salvador has no fossil fuel resources, it imports the required oil for consumption. The oil shocks of 1973 and 1979 prompted the government to develop alternative forms of energy, such as hydroelectric and geothermal power plants. Dependence on foreign oil has decreased during the last years. The total oil consumption was 13,68 million barrels in 2000.[2] The government owned a monopoly on imported crude oil and sold it at a high profit to domestic refineries. In turn, to keep bus fares low the government used these oil sales revenue to subsidise diesel bus fuel. This policy, ironicallly increased commercial and industrial gasoline prices on large scale.

The biomass potential of El Salvador comprises of agricultural residues from the coffee and sugar production. Furthermore, corn and sorghum as well as several forestry residues can be utilised for the generation of bioenergy. The potential of sugar cane bagasse was 1,9 million tonnes in 2000, while the used fuel wood amounted 5,0 million tonnes.[3] These potential resources could be used for the production of biofuels, which can substitute large amounts of imported oil products. Furthermore, the numerous farms of El Salvador can provide the manure of livestock and poultry for a considerable biogas production.

[1] WEC 2002.

[2] EIA 2000. and SIEE 2000.

[3] ISO 1999 and WEC 2002.