

Honduras

The Republic of Honduras (República de Honduras) with its capital city Tegucigalpa (813.900 inhabitants, 1995) cover 112.088 km² and has a population of 6,458 million inhabitants and a population density of 57 inhabitants per km². The urban population is currently 46 percent and increasing.

The rugged topography and lack of natural resources explain much of the history and present-day underdevelopment of Honduras. Extensive mountain ranges kept Honduras from being considered as a site for a route of commerce in the nineteenth century. Although Honduras is the second largest country in Central America, it has little land available for cultivation. Rainfall is abundant in the Caribbean lowlands and on some of the north-facing mountain slopes, but most of the arable valleys are fairly dry. This however brought the unexpected advantage of isolating the country from much of the international influence that often brought repression and exploitation to newly explored countries. Due to the lack of large areas, convenient for plantations, Honduras never established a powerful landholding oligarchy that controlled the economies and politics like in many of the countries of Central America.

Nevertheless, during the first half of the twentieth century, the Honduran economy was strongly dominated by the export of bananas and foreign banana companies often exercised as much power as the national government. Increased nationalism and economic diversification have strengthened national institutions in recent decades, but Honduras remains a nation highly sensitive to and dependent on external forces.

The country has neither gas nor oil resources and therefore is dependent on oil imports. Honduras consumed an total amount of 10,22 million barrels in 2000. The country's coal resources are limited and therefore there was no utilisation in the energy mix.¹

Honduran electric supply is low and uneven relative to other countries in Latin America. A mammoth hydroelectric plant, the 292-MW project at El Cajón, began producing electricity in 1985 to help address the country's energy needs. The plant, however, soon became heavily indebted because of the government's electricity pricing policy Surplus El Cajón also develops costly structural problems requiring extensive maintenance and repairs. The overall electricity consumption in 2000 amounted 3,22 million MWh and was covered by a 55,3 percent hydropower share and 44,7 percent contribution of fossil fuels.²

Potential biomass resources are agricultural residues from the sugar and coffee industry as well as bananas, grains and residues from food processing industries Furthermore, livestock breeding is providing potentials for biogas generation. In 1999 the country's sugar cane production produced 619 thousand tons of bagasse.³

¹ EIA SIEE 2000.

² EIA Country Energy Data Report 2000.

³ ISO 1999.