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FEATURED Q&A

Is Waste-to-Energy a Good Option for Latin America?



There is a strong framework in Europe for waste-to-gas efforts, while there is virtually no backing for Brazilian biogas efforts, Pavel Molchanov writes below. A waste-to-gas plant in Dublin is pictured above. // File Photo: O'Dea via Creative Commons.

Q **Paraná state in Brazil last year opened its first waste-to-energy facility, which will use a process called “biodigestion” to turn organic waste such as food scraps and sewage into fuel. The facility will take in 1,000 cubic meters of sewage and 300 tons of organic waste each day, and will generate 2.8 megawatts of electricity daily—enough to supply electricity to 2,000 households, according to reports. Does waste-to-energy technology have a positive outlook in Latin America and the Caribbean? How should legal and regulatory frameworks change in order to make waste-to-energy a more scalable and widespread renewable resource? What obstacles have faced investors who have tried to bring waste-to-energy technology and practices to the region?**

A **Pavel Molchanov, senior vice president and equity research analyst at Raymond James & Associates:** “Brazil is well-known as a world leader in producing ethanol and generating electric power from sugar cane. However, Brazil is a brand-new market when it comes to biogas. Biogas is derived from anaerobic digestion of municipal solid waste. Once the biogas is collected, it can be used just like conventional (fossil fuel) natural gas: for heating, electric generation or as a transportation fuel. The concept is appealing, and the technology is widely accessible, but the economics tend to be expensive, especially in markets such as Brazil that have traditionally low natural gas prices. In other words, biogas has a higher cost structure than conventional gas. To address this economic hurdle, it is important

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TOP NEWS

OIL & GAS

U.S. Allowing Eni, Repsol to Ship Venezuelan Oil

The Biden administration is allowing Eni and Repsol to resume shipments of Venezuelan oil to Europe as soon as next month, to cut the continent's dependence on Russian crude.

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RENEWABLES

Canadian Solar Selling Stake in Brazilian Plants

Canadian Solar announced Monday that it is selling a 70 percent interest in two Brazil-based solar plants to SPIC Brasil, a subsidiary of State Power Investment Corporation of China.

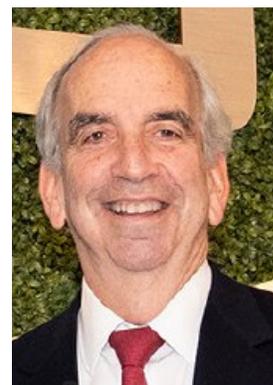
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OIL & GAS

Billions More Barrels of Oil in Guyana: Hess CEO

New deep-sea oil discoveries in Guyana's seabed have the potential to add billions of barrels of oil to the world's largest oil discovery in two decades, John Hess, the CEO of Hess Corp., said June 2.

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Hess // Photo: @HessCorporation via Twitter

OIL & GAS NEWS

U.S. Will Allow Eni, Repsol to Ship Venezuelan Oil

The U.S. State Department is allowing Italian-owned Eni and Spain's Repsol, two oil companies with joint ventures with Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA, to resume their shipments of Venezuelan oil to Europe as soon as next month, according to five unnamed individuals familiar with the matter, Reuters reported Monday. The Biden administration's objective for the decision is to aid Europe in cutting its dependence on Russian crude, as well as redirecting some Venezuelan cargo away from

“The narco-regime has exploited the use of negotiations to maintain its illegitimate grip of power...”

— Marco Rubio

China. Eni and Repsol will be able to count the crude cargoes toward late dividends and unpaid debts, and a key U.S. condition is that the oil received “has to go to Europe. It cannot be resold elsewhere,” according to one of Reuters' sources. Last month, the Biden administration renewed oil major Chevron's license to operate in Venezuela through the end of November under the same terms that the company has had there since 2020. The license allows the company to conduct “transactions and activities necessary for safety or the preservation of assets in Venezuela,” the wire service reported. In a Q&A published May 27, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), told the Dialogue's daily Latin America Advisor that the Biden administration should not relax sanctions on Venezuela. “Time after time, the narco-regime has exploited the use of negotiations to maintain its illegitimate grip on power as well as to divide and further damage the opposition—all while perpetuating the Venezuelan people's agony and without

providing any guarantees to hold free and fair elections,” said Rubio.

Tenaris to Pay \$78 Mn in Fines to U.S. Over Brazil Allegations

Luxembourg-based steel pipe manufacturer Tenaris said June 2 that will pay \$78.1 million in fines to the United States to resolve a case over its alleged payment of bribes to secure business from Brazilian state oil company Petrobras, Reuters reported. The company, which is settling the case without admitting or denying wrongdoing, will pay a civil fine of \$25 million and \$53.1 million in disgorgement and interest, the wire service reported. The U.S. Department of Justice has also closed a related investigation without taking any action, Tenaris said. In the case that Tenaris is settling, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission accused the company of violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, an anti-bribery law, through an alleged scheme involving employees of Confab Industrial, its unit in Brazil, Reuters reported. The Securities and Exchange Commission alleged that Confab secured more than \$1 billion worth of contracts from Petrobras between 2008 and 2013 at the same time that \$10.4 million in bribes were paid to a Brazilian government official on the company's behalf. The Brazilian official purportedly spent some of the money on artwork and real estate, according to the SEC. The SEC also alleged that the government official recruited an associate in an effort to conceal the bribes, The Wall Street Journal reported. The associate allegedly deposited bribe money in a bank account in Uruguay and also established a shell company there, the newspaper reported. In the case, Tenaris lacked adequate controls to prevent bribery despite “known corruption risks” in Brazil, the SEC said, Reuters reported. As part of its agreement with the SEC, Tenaris must periodically report on its anti-corruption efforts to the agency. Tenaris said in a statement that it notified authorities in the United States about the case in 2016 and has fully cooperated with investigators.

NEWS BRIEFS

Guyana May Hold Billions More Barrels of Oil & Gas: Hess Corp. CEO

New deep-sea oil discoveries in Guyana's seabed have the potential to add billions of barrels of oil to the world's largest oil discovery in two decades, John Hess, the CEO of Hess Corp., said on June 2, Reuters reported. Hess Corp. has a 30 percent stake in a consortium led by ExxonMobil that has discovered 11 billion barrels of oil and gas in Guyana. In addition to the oil and gas that has been found so far, there are “multi-billion barrels remaining,” said Hess, who added that his company is “starting to find other attractive deep prospects.”

Brazil's Eletrobras Could Raise \$6 Billion in Share Offering

Brazilian state electricity company Eletrobras could raise some \$6 billion in a share offering on Thursday, Reuters reported. The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and Singaporean sovereign wealth fund GIC are among the bidders, the wire service reported, citing two people with knowledge of the matter. The share offering will result in the privatization of Eletrobras, Latin America's largest utility provider, as the government's stake in the company will be reduced to 45 percent.

Mytilineos Signs 10-Year Deal to Supply Solar Power to Enel in Chile

Greece-based Mytilineos on Tuesday announced a 10-year power purchase agreement in Chile, committing to supplying as much as 1.1 terawatt-hours (TWh) of solar power through its renewables and storage development unit to Enel Generación Chile, the country's largest utility company, Renewables Now reported. The Greek industrial group is backing the agreement by building 588 megawatts peak (MWp) of solar farms in Chile.

Colombian Court Rules Fracking Projects Can Proceed

A Santander province court in Colombia on June 2 reversed a lower court's decision to bar two investigative fracking pilot projects, Reuters reported. While Colombia does not allow for commercial development of nonconventional energy deposits, the court ruled that the two pilot projects can carry on with their operations while it continues to consider the issue. Ecopetrol, the Andean country's state oil company, is acting as the projects' operator, and United States-based ExxonMobil is also involved in the projects. In the decision that was overturned, Judge Blanca Martínez had ruled that the projects did not properly consult local communities, Reuters reported in April. On June 2, however, the higher Administrative Court of Santander said in a statement that the April 21 ruling "is hereby revoked and the request for legal protection is ruled inadmissible," the wire service reported. In a statement released via Twitter by the Colombia Free from Fracking Alliance, the group called on presidential candidates Gustavo Petro and Rodolfo Hernández, who will be facing off in a runoff election on June 19, to make a commitment to "suspend fracking pilots as one of their first demonstrations of their commitment with water in Santander and Colombia, the environment and future generations in the current context of the climate crisis."

RENEWABLES NEWS

Canadian Solar Selling Stake in Two Brazilian Solar Plants

Canadian Solar announced Monday that it is selling a 70 percent interest in two Brazil-based solar plants to SPIC Brasil, a subsidiary of State Power Investment Corporation of China.

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to have political and regulatory support. This is why biogas development has such a long history in Europe: the European Union's climate policies provide a very supportive framework. There are approximately 14,000 biogas plants in Europe. As it stands, there is essentially no backing for such projects in Brazil, at least at the federal level. This needs to change before biogas can become a meaningful energy source. Whether it will change depends in large part on the outcome of Brazil's presidential election this October, in which former President Lula is challenging incumbent President Bolsonaro. A victory by Lula, which polling indicates is likely, would create a stronger regulatory push for sustainable energy development, including biogas. Without that, biogas would remain a niche in Brazil."

A **Mark S. Langevin, senior fellow and adjunct professor in the Schar School of Policy and Government and the Center for Energy Science and Policy at George Mason University:** "Biogas projects are increasingly popular in Brazil, encouraged by rising energy costs. The escalating costs of fertilizers, agricultural inputs and irrigated cropping have encouraged farmers to embrace biogas technology to produce their own electricity. Presently, most of the bio-digestion plants in Brazil are small and agriculture-based but produce only 11 percent of national biogas production. Larger municipal waste-to-gas plants produce 79 percent of the total biogas. In 2020, Brazil's production grew at 23 percent annually and reached a total of

1.8 billion cubic meters. Brazil's experience shows that municipalities and agricultural regions throughout the Americas can efficiently turn waste into electricity. However, Latin American and Caribbean nations do not have established regulatory frameworks for biogas production and co-generation, although several—including Brazil—have rushed to promote and regulate biomethane, green hydrogen and ammonia. Governments need to resolve the regulatory issues for urban and rural production while also leveraging

“Brazil and the rest of the Americas can make significant progress in biogas.”

— Mark S. Langevin

public finance to roll out large-scale biogas projects at the municipal level to counter the higher costs of gas-fueled power generation. Governments can also provide credit and extension packages to farmers, easing access to affordable small-scale biogas production for co-generation, especially for those producing in arid regions that require irrigation. Working together, public sector agencies, research centers, business associations and civil society should share the tasks of mapping waste, spurring technological innovation and developing strategic plans for the biogas value chain. Brazil and the rest of the Americas can make significant progress in biogas. Still, the endeavor needs a well-organized constituency of farmers, investors and

Continued on page 6

The Marangatu project site is 446 megawatts peak (MWp) in size, while the Panati-Sitiá project is 292 MWp. Both projects, which are based in northeastern states of Brazil and take up an area of more than 2,000 hectares, are set to begin construction later this year and will launch commercial operations late next year, Canadian Solar said in a statement. The sale follows Canadian Solar's 2021 closure of a \$100 million

financing facility in order to develop a solar portfolio in Brazil, PV Tech reported. The 738 MWp of solar projects are set to be two of the largest power plants in Brazil and are expected to generate clean electricity that will power the equivalent of 900,000 Brazilian households annually. Canadian Solar's chief executive officer, Shawn Qu, called the company "a leader in the Brazilian market."

POLITICAL NEWS

Leaders at Summit Eye Declaration on Migration

Western Hemisphere leaders gathered this week at the Summit of the Americas, which is taking place in Los Angeles, are planning to issue a declaration on migration, the Associated Press reported Wednesday. Participants hope the “Los Angeles Declaration” will help guide countries that receive migrants who leave their countries in search of economic stability and who are fleeing violence and persecution at home. Since 2017, the United States has been the most popular destination for asylum-seekers, and several countries in Latin America have hosted large numbers of migrants. Colombia and other nearby countries have been the destination for millions of people who have fled Venezuela. Last year, Mexico received more than 130,000 asylum applications, many of them from Haitians, triple the amount from 2020, the AP reported. Additionally, many Nicaraguans have fled to Costa Rica. “Countries are already having to do this, so rather than each country trying to sort this out and figure it out for themselves, what we’re doing is saying, ‘Let’s come together in a coherent way and construct a framework so we can all work together to make this situation more humane and more manageable,’” said Brian Nichols, the assistant U.S. secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, the wire service reported. As the Summit of the Americas began on Monday, several thousand migrants set off from southern Mexico, headed toward the United States. The caravan is this year’s largest, and Mexican authorities showed no sign of attempting to halt it, the AP reported. Questions have arisen about how much can be accomplished on migration at the Summit of the Americas, the first the United States has hosted since 1994, given that Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is skipping it in protest of the Biden administration’s decision not to invite Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela to the gathering. Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard is attending the gathering, however, and López

ADVISOR Q&A

How Well Is the USMCA Protecting Workers’ Rights?

Q U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai in May asked Mexican counterparts to probe whether workers at a Panasonic auto parts factory in Reynosa were treated unfairly and denied labor rights. Panasonic denies any wrongdoing. Tai’s letter is the third labor complaint sent to Mexico under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA. Why has the United States decided to defend the rights of Mexican workers now? How well are labor protection mechanisms under the USMCA, which was negotiated under the previous administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, working out? Has the USMCA created fairer labor terms and conditions for workers in the three signatory countries than existed under the previous NAFTA agreement?

A Lucinda Vargas, research fellow at the Center for Border Economic Development at New Mexico State University:

“While the stated aim of agreements like the USMCA and NAFTA is trade and investment liberalization, they both still address labor rights. NAFTA did it through a side agreement on labor cooperation. By contrast, the USMCA has a specific labor chapter within the agreement, with an annex on ‘Worker Representation in Collective Bargaining in Mexico.’ This provision, absent from the NAFTA labor side agreement, binds Mexico

to ensure that companies in Mexico engaged in trade follow the same labor principles on freedom of association and collective bargaining followed by U.S. and Canadian companies. Moreover, a layer of enforcement is added via the Rapid Response Labor Mechanism (RRLM), but the test is in its application. USTR Tai has demonstrated the RRLM works as successfully applied in two cases. Rather than face sanctions of fees and potential export restrictions, the companies succumbed and took action to ensure their workers’ rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining. The Panasonic case may be headed for the same result. These are victories for the Mexican worker employed by companies that export to the United States and Canada, as well as for U.S. labor unions wanting a tougher stance on U.S.-trade-related companies in Mexico. What about Mexican workers outside trade-related businesses? While Mexico’s 2019 labor reform aims to guarantee the same rights to all workers in the country, absent international oversight, and no direct RRLM-equivalent measure to secure enforcement of such rights, it is to be seen if Mexican labor authorities will follow the example of USTR Tai.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: More commentary on this topic appears in the Q&A of Monday’s issue of the Latin America Advisor.

Obrador plans to meet with U.S. President Joe Biden at the White House in July. On Tuesday, Ebrard accused the United States of having a double standard by not inviting those three countries at the same time that it engages with nondemocratic governments in Southeast Asia, Reuters reported. “The so-called

democratic clause is not applied equally in all cases, but only in some, when it is convenient,” Ebrard wrote in a column published in Mexican newspaper *Excelsior*. Also on Tuesday, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris said the Biden administration’s efforts to attract investments to Central American countries have generated

NEWS BRIEFS

Brazil's Army Launches Search for Missing British Journalist, Researcher

Brazil's army has launched a search in the Amazon rainforest for Dom Phillips, a British journalist and contributor to the Financial Times and The Guardian, and Bruno Pereira, a Brazilian expert on Indigenous peoples, the Financial Times reported Tuesday. The men disappeared in the Javari valley Sunday. In recent weeks, Pereira, who had formerly worked in the Brazilian government's Indigenous affairs agency, received threats from illicit gold miners and land grabbers in the Amazon.

Accused Killer of DR Environment Minister Had Permits Denied

Fausto Miguel de Jesús Cruz de la Mota, the man accused of fatally shooting the Dominican Republic's minister of environment and natural resources, Orlando Jorge Mera, allegedly did so because his environmental permits on behalf of several companies were denied, according to judicial documents acquired Wednesday by the Associated Press. Authorities have characterized Cruz, a childhood friend of Mera's, as a "cold and calculating murderer" and are requesting one year of preventive prison for him as they continue the investigation.

General Motors to Start Production of Chevrolet Tracker SUV in Argentina

General Motors and the Argentine government announced Wednesday that the U.S.-based automaker will start production of its Chevrolet Tracker sport-utility vehicle in the South American country next month, Reuters reported. GM plans to export the vehicle to other countries in Latin America, "mainly to Brazil and Colombia, where 80 percent of the production will be destined," the Argentine government said, the wire service reported.

\$3.2 billion in private sector commitments, the AP reported. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the May 10 issue of the daily Latin America Advisor.]

ECONOMIC NEWS

Peru Urges New Talks With Protesters at Las Bambas Mine

Peruvian President Pedro Castillo's administration on Tuesday called for a new effort at dialogue with Indigenous communities that have been protesting copper mining at the Las Bambas mine and have forced the mine to halt production for more than a month, Reuters reported. The protesters, coming from six communities surrounding MMG's Las Bambas mine, argue that the copper mine has not honored commitments made to Indigenous communities. The mine, in the Apurimac region, is one of the world's largest copper mines and is important to Peru's copper industry. "We are working currently to see when is the best moment [for a police intervention]," Roger Pérez, an Apurimac police general, told RPP radio Tuesday. "We are in the countdown [stage], it will take place soon," he added, Reuters reported. Mercedes Aráoz, a former vice president of Peru, told the Dialogue's daily Latin America Advisor in a Jan. 10 [Q&A](#) that there are alternative solutions to the standoff at Las Bambas. "Regardless of the ideology, community claims must be considered, but violence cannot be accepted as a mechanism for coercion," she said.

Jamaica's Central Bank to Issue Digital Currency

Jamaica's central bank is planning to issue its first digital currency, following legislators' approval of the currency, the Associated Press reported Tuesday. In 2021, Jamaica launched an eight-month pilot program for the digital

currency on a smaller scale, and the results partially led to lawmakers' approval. The Jamaican government has said that the new tender will help those in the country without bank accounts. The Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) will go under the name Jam-Dex, Caribbean National Weekly reported. Kamina Johnson Smith, Jamaica's minister of foreign affairs and leader of government business in Jamaica's Senate, said that the new currency will address several challenges for unbanked Jamaicans, as a bank account will not be required for the digital currency. "What you now will have is a wallet. So, you will get a CBDC wallet issued by banks or authorized payment service providers ... It is also anticipated that the CBDC will lower the cost associated with providing a national means of payment and provide an alternative to the issuance of bank notes," she said.

Mexico Sees 17% Rise in Remittances for Year Through April

Mexico received \$17.2 billion in remittances from citizens abroad in the first four-month period of 2022, a 17.57 percent increase as compared to the same period in 2021, the Mexican central bank, or Banxico, announced on Wednesday, EFE reported. The central bank also said the average individual remittance transfer was \$383, which was \$22 higher than the average in the January-to-April period in 2021. The steady increase in remittances for Mexico is in line with a trend that began in March 2020, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, EFE reported. The upward trend of remittances is attributable to the employment and work of Mexican migrants, most of whom work in the United States and send money back to their families, El País reported. Iván Arias, the director of economic research at Citibanamex, told the Dialogue's biweekly Financial Services Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published last August that remittances "will continue to be an important and rising complement to Mexican households' income." He added that "it would be desirable for Mexico to rely more on sustainable domestic sources of wealth."

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environmental protection advocates to press governments to promote and regulate its production amid the entrenched interests of hydrocarbon producers.”

A **Paola Carvajal, project manager at Roland Berger LP:** “The waste-to-energy plan is definitely a step in the right direction to continue leveraging energy sources in the Latin American and Caribbean region. This technology to produce energy from waste is widely used in developed countries that leverage biogas to produce electricity, capture waste heat and, in some cases, produce renewable natural gas. As an example, 65

“**Further regulation that facilitates the trade of environmental attributes is a necessity...**”

— Paola Carvajal

waste-to-energy plants in the United States generated about 13.5 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity in 2020. Latin America has multiple projects in the pipeline to implement these technologies leveraging large landfills and wastewater plants close to large urban centers. However, there are numerous regulatory and economic hurdles to overcome. One of the key drivers of investments in waste-to-energy projects is the possibility of capturing the value of carbon emission

reduction by selling renewable energy certificates or carbon offsets. Further regulation that facilitates the trade of environmental attributes is a necessity and will support current country commitments to carbon mitigation. Latin American countries could take advantage of the growing carbon voluntary markets that grew from \$320 million in 2019 to more than \$1 billion in 2021.”

A **Edmar de Almeida, professor at the Institute of Energy at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro:** “Latin America and, particularly, Brazil have a huge potential to increase the production of power and biomethane from waste. Brazil recently introduced new regulations and incentives to promote waste-to-energy projects. Although we see an increasing interest in waste-to-energy projects, it is important to accelerate the pace of investment in sewage and garbage collection in Brazil. More than 50 percent of Brazilians lack access to sewage networks. Public investment and incentivized credit lines to private sewage companies is necessary to increase the sewage coverage in lower-income neighborhoods. High quality sewage networks and garbage collection and management are a necessary condition to the promotion of waste-to-energy projects.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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