

INTERVIEW WITH LAURENT DE MORELOS

Eine grüne und nachhaltige Revolution für Afrika

A Green and Sustainable Revolution for Africa



Only recently was Federal President Steinmeier in Botswana, a country that stands as a showpiece for a sustainable and reform-oriented politics and economics in Africa. However, in a sustainable sense, only a few are among the 55 African nations. A revolutionary turnaround, however, could give these countries social, ecological and economic prosperity in the years to come, and that on their own. Laurent de Morelos explained how this can be done in an exclusive interview with Ecowoman publisher Ulrike Stöckle.

Laurent de Morelos is a pioneer in the production of green energy from biomass and managing director of Equilibre Bioenergy based in Mauritius. After more than ten years of intensive research and development work, in collaboration with various partner companies, institutions and the University of Mauritius, he has bred an energy crop that has almost magical properties.

ArundoK12, an intersection of Arundo Donax, also called pile, giant reed or Spanish pipe, can grow anywhere, needs virtually no water, releases its own nutrients into the soil, has a long life, does not emit any CO2 when burned and, most importantly, it has energy levels well above average compared to other energy crops. Dried and pelleted, ArundoK12 can be used to fire industrial furnaces and power generation, e.g. already be used for the combustion of waste products in the production of sugar cane.



Arundo Seedling

In Mauritius, which lived mainly from the cultivation of cane sugar in the past, this has already been successfully tested. Now coal will be successively replaced by ArundoK12. An economic and ecological blessing for the country, it does not itself have its own fossil fuels and must serve its entire coal demand for domestic power generation by import. An expensive and above all very environmentally harmful endeavor. Coal-burning is one of the most damaging practices, with environmental and human health damage to the environment as it is known that not only high levels of CO2 are released into the atmosphere during combustion, but also unhealthy particulate matter is deposited on the soil.

Description

The use of ArundoK12 in energy production opens up unimagined economic and ecological development potential for Mauritius, with far-reaching effects on the entire value chain and economy. In addition, Mauritius could be one of the first countries to achieve the ambitious goals of the Paris Climate Agreement through a new focus on green and clean energy. However, the green energy revolution of Laurent de Morelos could have far wider implications for the entire African continent and in many ways develop into a sustainable and economic blessing for developing countries. However, European industrialized countries could also benefit from this and give them a chance to reach the EU interim targets with a binding emission reduction of 20 percent by 2020 and at least 40 percent by 2030.



Ecowoman Publisher, Ulrike Stöckle, in Interview with Laurent de Morelos, CEO, Equilibre Bioenergy

Ulrike Stöckle (Ecowoman): Mr. de Morelos, how did you come up with the idea of researching an energy plant in order to revolutionize the green energy market in Mauritius?

Laurent de Morelos (Equilibre Bioenergy): In 2008, so while the financial crisis was raging, I asked myself the meaningful question of how I would like to position myself economically in the future and at the same time make a contribution to the preservation of our planet. After 15 years of experience in marketing and sales in the United Arab Emirates and Dubai I wanted to go a completely new way. Very quickly, the analysis of promising sectors of the energy industry showed that the production of green energy can be very lucrative on the one hand, but the solutions offered here such as solar energy or wind power have many disadvantages. By chance, and after studies from various scientific surveys, I then came to Arundo Donax and found in Spain a partner who has devoted himself for generations to growing the plant as a crop for different purposes. Only now, however, was the extremely high energy density for energy production from Arundo Donax fully explored.

In Mauritius, I found an ideal business-friendly investment climate and corruption is lower than in any other African country. The institutions are stable - and that is crucial. The bureaucracy for imports and exports has been significantly reduced and the country is also seeking new infrastructures in the manufacturing and service sectors. The country is the benchmark for economic development, prosperity and political and social stability in Africa. That also means exemplary fiscal policy, education and health care. The state finances numerous foreign scholarships, primarily to South Africa. With eight percent of GDP, education spending is among the highest in the world. Working closely with FAREI (formerly AREU) and the University of Mauritius, we have worked hard to import and cultivate ArundoK12 to adapt it to a culture of economic value.



Ulrike Stöckle (Ecowoman): How is ArundoK12 used for green energy?

Laurent de Morelos (Equilibre Bioenergy): The ArundoK12 solution to the energy crisis in Mauritius has been successfully tested in many countries, including the United States, Madagascar and the European continent, especially in Italy, where Chemtex produces 75 million liters of ethanol per year and mainly from Arundo. In Mauritius, there are more than 16,000 hectares of land abandoned by former sugar cane farmers as the price of sugar on the exchanges continues to fall and cultivation is no longer lucrative enough. These soils are now being restored for the cultivation of Arundo, compensating farmers for the economic loss resulting from the lack of sugarcane cultivation. In the long term, the land requirement should not exceed 10,000 hectares. This would achieve the 35% of renewable energy needed in the country, or the government's long-established 2025 climate target. Our project has already received great international recognition and is among other things also to be soon funded by the Commonwealth.

In Mauritius, we are receiving a great deal of support from the government and ministries who want to promote an energy transition.



Arundo Pellets

The customers targeted by Equilibre Bioenergy are private companies that want to implement bioenergy production projects, as well as the governments of the Indian Ocean and Africa. The company also offers its services to small local growers by allowing them to import Arundo as pellets or to grow and use them for the production of green and clean electricity. There is a strong demand for autonomous power generation in African countries, and this project has the greatest potential for development in this direction - socially for smallholders to become ecologically and economically prosperous in every sense. It is a real opportunity for any African country, of its own accord and the opportunities and climatic conditions to become economically and energetically independent and to produce its own electricity from Arundo. An active development aid or help for self-reliance, which we have already identified adapted for example in Madagascar. For the future we have many more projects that we are developing in parallel. Therefore, it remains very exciting!

Ulrike Stöckle (Ecowoman): One third of Germany's electricity currently comes from coal-fired power plants. That should change in the future. By 2038 at the latest, all coal-fired power plants should be off the grid. The affected regions are to receive around 40 billion euros over the next 20 years to finance the structural change. That would be from today still 20 years, an unimaginably long period in our fast-moving time.

Laurent de Morelos (Equilibre Bioenergy): Unfortunately, to stop climate change, we do not have much time left and need to actively engage in and implement alternative clean energy methods as soon as possible. At the moment, we do not know what the effects of climate change will be in twenty years' time, as the effects are obviously already massive. Much earlier, as predicted by environmental activists and scientists, and with extreme weather capers and catastrophes. When the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining, wind and solar energy hardly help us. A genuine and fast solution represents the energy production based on Arundo K12 and at the same time helps to enable a structural change of its own power. In developing countries, this can be done very quickly and with the greatest possible return on investment. The future of many African countries could depend on the level of acceptance and support in the country itself. Here we have a lot of positive discussions and negotiations. We are confident that it will find fertile ground within the next two years and that we will be instrumental in the positive environmental and economic transformation of these countries, to achieve what would be a sustainable and green revolution door opener for Africa.



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