

Mexico

Sonora State Adopts Landmark Green Growth Strategy

The economy of northern Mexican state Sonora currently relies on mining as an important sector, but the state's government has adopted a green growth strategy to introduce innovations that will reduce environmental impacts and transition the state to more sustainable, inclusive growth and prosperity.

Sonora is the largest Mexican producer of gold, copper, molybdenum, graphite, and wollastonite: nearly 6,000 mining concessions occupy 5.5 million hectares—29% of the state's territory. This natural resource extraction comes at a high environmental cost.

Power for mining—as well as high energy demand for heating and cooling in Sonora's dry climate—comes largely from 224 fossil fuel-based generation plants. The latest available data showed that the state released 23 million tons of CO₂

into the atmosphere, with energy (33%), transport (28%), agriculture and livestock (16%), and industry (10%) as the main sources of emissions.

To address these challenges, the Sonora State Green Growth Strategy was adopted in 2018. Developed by the Global Green Growth Institute at the Mexican government's request and with regular civil society participation, the Green Growth Strategy (GGS) is the first of its kind in Mexico.

The strategy aims to build an innovative, resilient, low-carbon economy by working across a range of strategic areas, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, water management, and sustainable rural and urban development.

"The strategy aims to develop new engines of development," said Luis Carlos Romo, executive commissioner of Sonora's Commission for Ecology and Sustainable Development.



GGGI in Mexico: Promoting green growth and developing an innovative, resilient, low-carbon economy



“The main thing is to improve the quality of life of the people of Sonora, to strengthen social inclusion, and reduce environmental impacts.”

An important component of the Sonora GGS has been governance mechanisms; to support implementation of the Green Growth Strategy, the state of Sonora created a Green Growth Cabinet, engaging the state ministers of agriculture, social development, economy and infrastructure, and urban development. Furthermore, the state launched a Building Efficiency Accelerator program, with the aim of introducing new technologies to build more efficiently and reduce energy waste.

In the energy sector, the Green Growth Strategy aims to transition to a 35% clean energy supply by 2024 and 43% by 2030. Still in the pipeline are a pre-feasibility study for the production of biogas from agro-industrial waste and another study of pathways to deep decarbonization by 2050.

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These new institutional structures and ongoing projects represent important achievements, but the implementation of the strategy still faces significant challenges.

“There are obstacles to obtaining financing from development banks or foreign governments. The private sector must be more involved in the strategy. More institutional coordination is also needed. We see a great opportunity for the strategy to be fulfilled; we don’t want a plan that remains on paper,” said Pablo Martinez, GGGI’s Mexico country representative.

If the state of Sonora can continue to successfully attract funding for its Green Growth Strategy, it is well on its way to fulfilling its pledge to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and drive economic, inclusive growth through the development of new, innovative green industries.