

Solar panels to light up the life of coffee-farming families



Project duration: 2 years

Communities living off small-scale coffee production in the Nicaraguan area of Jinotega are benefiting from new household solar systems. These provide them with access to reliable and safe electricity.

Text and picture:
Green Empowerment

More than 1.3 million people in Nicaragua still lack access to electricity, primarily those living in rural communities. This energy poverty adversely affects livelihoods, productivity, quality of life, and above all, health.

Financed by the EKOenergie Climate Fund, Green Empowerment partnered with local coffee cooperative El Gorrión to undertake a bottom-up rural electrification effort, using renewable energy to transform the lives of families in need.

El Gorrión is a collective of small-scale coffee producers that supports over 600 members in the municipality of Yali, Jinotega. Established in 1998, this organization provides its members with technical assistance, financing, post-harvest processing and commercialization and exportation services.

Together, Green Empowerment and El Gorrión established a revolving loan fund to provide 150 coffee-farming families affordable, low-interest microcredit to purchase 100-watt solar systems over the next three years. To establish the fund EKOenergie provided a 20,000 € grant

that was matched by financing from El Gorrión.

The systems provide enough energy to power six LED lights, or enough to illuminate an entire home in most rural communities. The beneficiary families are all members of the cooperative so repayment installments are easily deducted from cooperative earnings.

The innovative twist of this fund, as opposed to a more traditional micro credit model, is that it "revolves": as families pay back their loans, incoming funds are used to supply other families with microcredit loans to purchase their own systems. The objective is for this fund to become self-sustaining while helping more and more households gain access to clean renewable electricity.

Beyond the transformative impact of clean, reliable, high quality lighting; local technicians from beneficiary communities participate in the installation of the solar panel systems with training and direction from Nicaraguan solar business Suni Solar. This creates local employment opportunities in the solar industry.

Climate Fund Projects



Focus on energy poverty and multiple Sustainable Development Goals



New projects annually in developing countries



Run and monitored by trusted NGOs



Selected by an independent jury



In 2017, the Fund granted 190,000 € to nine new projects



All EKOenergie users contribute 0.10 €/MWh to the Climate Fund

EKOenergy - the international ecolabel for renewable energy

EKOenergy is [the international ecolabel](#) for energy. We are a non-profit organisation working to fight climate change, protect biodiversity and realise the Sustainable Development Goals.

Energy sold with the EKOenergy-ecolabel fulfils strict [sustainability criteria](#). Through our ecolabel we also raise money for our Climate Fund, which is used to finance new renewable energy projects in developing countries.

EKOenergy-labelled energy is sold by licensed energy companies and is [available in over 40 countries worldwide](#). Many of the consumers of EKOenergy-labelled energy choose to use our ecolabel on their website or products to demonstrate their commitment to a 100% renewable and sustainable world.

EKOenergy users include large international businesses such as SAP, Tetra Pak, VMware, Workday and Genelec, as well as cities, public organisations and individual households.



Sustainability criteria: additional value for our planet

	EKOenergy	Other renewable	Grid mix
New renewable energy production via our Climate Fund	✓	?	-
Only the most climate-friendly bioenergy	✓	?	-
Wind power outside bird and nature areas	✓	?	-
Hydropower takes into account migratory fish. River restoration projects via our Environmental Fund .	✓	?	-
Renewable energy tracked by EACs, such as GOs and I-RECs. (in line with Greenhouse Gas Protocol Scope 2 Guidance)	✓	✓	-
Wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, bioenergy	✓	✓	?
Fossil fuels, nuclear, possibly renewables	-	-	✓

Endorsed by other standards

EKOenergy is recommended by many international environmental standards such as CDP, the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, Greenkey for hotels and LEED-certification for buildings.

"A growing number of hotels in Europe have already switched to EKOenergy and include the EKOenergy logo in their communication with their guests. Follow their lead and [go the extra mile](#)."

"Ecolabels are a way for companies to do more with their purchases. EKOenergy, mentioned by the GHG protocol Scope 2 guidance, is such an option: it is [a mark of quality](#) which comes on top of tracking certificates."

"EKOenergy represents the [best available option](#) for the sustainable and additional consumption of renewable electricity within Europe."

