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Costa Rica: Report Indicates Deficiencies With Government Oversight Of Environmental Protection

by Deborah Tyroler

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The July 19 edition of daily newspaper La Republica reproduced a report by the comptroller's office (Direccion General de Auditoria de la Contraloria) which indicated extensive problems regarding national environmental and sanitary norms and procedures, despite the existence of 30 government entities whose mandate covers such matters. The report concluded that the excessive number of environmental protection laws and decrees, together with the lack of coordination on environmental matters which stems from the absence of a single oversight body, have combined to produce "duplication of efforts and an inefficient use of public funds." Non-governmental groups involved in environmental protection efforts have harshly criticized the lack of clear public policies regarding problems such as solid waste disposal, excessive use of pesticides, and pollution of the country's rivers. According to the report, only 18% of the 941 firms in the country which work with agrochemicals are duly registered with the government office in charge of overseeing the sector. Similar oversight deficiencies exist regarding wastewater treatment and disposal provisions at industrial sites. The country reportedly has a total of 66 solid waste dumps, but the Health Ministry has only provided authorization for 38 of these. (Source: Agence France-Presse, 07/19/92)

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