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The River Ebro Case

At the current rate of erosion, half the Ebro Delta could be under the sea in the next fifty years.

The Ebro Delta, the deltaic region of the River Ebro in Tarragona (southern Catalonia), is one of the largest wetlands in the western Mediterranean. Like all deltas in the world, the progressive accumulation of mineral and organic sediments at the mouth of the River Ebro during centuries has created this unique territory. However, the area is highly affected by erosion phenomena.

Matilde Font, spokesperson for the Platform in Defence of the River Ebro (PDE), a citizen movement raising the voice of local population, points out that sediments arriving at the delta has reduced by between 95% and 99% compared to the levels recorded at the beginning of the 20th century. She remarks that there are one hundred and ninety reservoirs along the Ebro basin that retain the sediments that the river transports.

"It is a continuous struggle between the three basic elements that generate the delta: the wind, the sea and the sediments transported by the river flow. But as soon as the sediments stop coming down, the wind and the sea gain ground and erode the deltaic coast more and more every day", she says.

The erosion of the Ebro Delta may be a rapid process by the standards of geology, a discipline used to calculate in millions of years rather than in decades, and analyses changes practically imperceptible to the human eye. Now, at specific moments, the degradation of the delta becomes visible to the naked eye. For example, during a big storm in the year 2020 the sea entered more than three kilometres inland, flooding more than 3,000 hectares of the deltaic territory and causing the death of many individuals from dozens of species in a wetland known for its exceptional biodiversity. Climate change has had a doubly negative effect on the health of the delta: not only has it raised sea levels, but it has also reduced the volume of water (and sediment) arriving from the river.

The PDE claims a “Protection Plan for the Ebro Delta” is put into place, allowing to combine measures to reduce erosion locally, like strategic beach nourishment operations, with a series of upstream measures, such as installing bypass systems for sediments in dams and ensuring river flows are not ulteriorly depleted by inconsiderate expansion of agro-industrial projects and hydropower production mismanagement. Matilde Font stresses that “the defence of the delta does not begin at the mouth of the River Ebro but upstream. Local sand movements are temporary solutions to reduce the impacts of a storm, but the only way to save the delta and its people is by ensuring more sediments and more water flow downstream.”

Read more on Ebro case here: <https://www.ebre.net/bloc/2023/02/ja-fem-tard-lebre-es-rebella-contra-la-desaparicio-del-delta/>

*Watch the music video “LA FORÇA DE L'EBRE”:
[A FORÇA DE L'EBRE' de Pepet i Marieta amb Pegatina Ebris G.Humet Diluvi J.Rovira Sirgadors Carrau - YouTube](#)*



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