

An investigation by the Albanian Supreme State Audit (KLSH) has found that hydropower plants are stripping communities of water to irrigate their land and several permits should be reviewed.

The audit looked at the situation in the Municipality of Mat, in reference to HPP Traja 1 in the Zall river and HPP Madhesh in the Lunre river. It was noted that several permits were approved for hydropower in the region as long as the supply of drinking water, necessary ecological reserves, and agricultural needs are not interrupted.

However, the terms of the permit have not been stuck to and the report found that both Madhesh and Traja were draining water essential for the local community.

“From the verification of the documentation, it resulted that the project designed for HPP Madhesh and HPP Traja did not provide irrigation for the area, but only ecological reserves.”

It continued that the company operating the HPPs, Dekliada-Alb did not allow water to be kept for irrigation needs. This could give way to the possibility to challenge the issuance of the permit, or call for a review.

The report also expressed reservations about the transparency around the project and related hearings. Furthermore, it called for an investigation and potential disciplinary proceedings against those involved, Monitor.al reported.

The issue of hydropower plants has long been highlighted by ecological and environmental organisations, and local people. Multiple HPP plants across the country have resulted in protests from local people. Most recently, citizens protested against the Skavica dam that will be constructed in the north of the country as it will submerge 32 villages and 13,000 hectares, forcibly displacing more than 12,000 people.

The WWF is currently advocating for no more hydropower plants in Europe due to the way it destroys rivers and biodiversity. In the case of Albania, they noted that it was also massacring communities and destroying cultures, livelihoods and ways of life, Exit writes.