

## The Development of Puerto Rico's Chemical Industry

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**Abstract:** *Puerto Rico is the smallest and most easterly island in the Greater Antilles chain of big islands. Although nature made Puerto Rico a forested, semi-tropical, and beautiful green island, it did not provide it with enough raw materials to make it a wealthy country. About 45 years ago, its most important agricultural crop was sugar cane. Most of the residual molasses from the mills were either used as cattle feed or exported to the United States for use as raw material for the production of alcohol by fermentation. The sugar industry was at that time the largest single provider of employment throughout the island, a privileged position which it still retains in spite of surmounting economic difficulties. A look at the engineering professional of that time in Puerto Rico sees it logically tied to this main industrial activity. Mechanical and chemical engineers were employed in relatively large numbers at the sugar and at the few rum distilleries in operation. They held there important supervisory positions to guarantee proper plant performances. There has been several industry activities contributing the development of its chemical industry. This paper shed views on the future the island's chemical industry that will keep on growing in variety, in magnitude, and in complexity. These developments will require, as an additional raw material, the technical contribution of more and better prepared Puerto Rican engineer.*

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