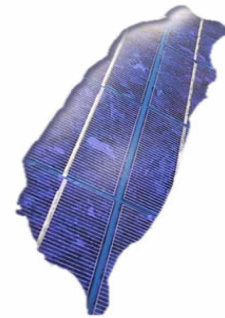


Taiwan gets on the solar train

Rotterdam, 7 December 2007 -- The latest developments in Taiwan signal the beginning of a new solar industry boom. The government recently published its vision for the renewable future, highlighting solar energy as a top priority. Industry is also moving into solar, with new manufacturing initiatives cropping up every week. SolarPlaza, in cooperation with Taiwanese Photovoltaic Industry Association, is organising a PV trade mission to explore new business opportunities in Taiwan.



Government

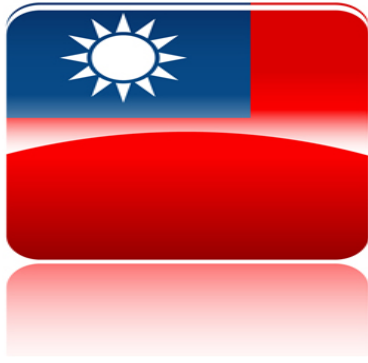
The government has prioritised the solar industry by designating solar energy a strategic industry, the trade council said in a press release last week. The document sets out a strategy which focuses on the whole supply chain. Helping the solar industry develop to become a vertical integrated industry, where silicon production and wafer, cell and module manufacturing are all available in Taiwan, is one of the goals. At present, according to the Taiwanese Photovoltaic Industry Association, 98% of wafers are still imported from overseas and over 97% of solar cells are exported.

Companies/Industry growth

Taiwan has over 76 companies operating in the solar energy industry, with 16 or more producing crystalline silicon modules, more than 10 producing thin-film modules and 6 running silicon wafer lines. These companies are growing at a rate that rivals neighbouring China. The smaller module manufacturers like Top green Energy and Big Sun started producing a year or two ago. They had a production capacity of 30 MW in 2007 and predict that next year this will triple to around 100 MW. Cell manufacturer Motech is producing over 100 MW this year and expanding to 420 MW in 2008. Companies like Motech and E-ton are not new players in the solar industry. They have been around for some years now and form the backbone of the solar industry in Taiwan.

Thin-film technology

Even more interesting are the numerous thin-film initiatives in Taiwan. With a background in semiconductors, Taiwan is equipped with the knowledge and resources to start thin-film production without much difficulty. Some companies have already started production, and more than 10 are planning and building their factories as you read this. Production facilities will be online within two years. SolarPlaza expects demand for the low cost thin-film module to outpace supply in the near future.



Solar hub in northern Taiwan

According to digitimes (the online IT news source) Yilan, which has been a mainly agricultural county in north-eastern Taiwan, is attempting to turn itself into a hub for the island's photovoltaic (PV) industry. Seven companies in the PV industry are already planning to invest in building plants in the county's Letzer Industrial Park. Digitimes said that the companies include a Taiwan Semiconductor Corporation (TSC) affiliate that produces silicon, and a Unitech Printed Circuit Board plant that makes solar cells.

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