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Solar-cell power conversion requirements keep growing

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Despite continuing high solar cell average selling prices (ASPs), customers are not willing to sacrifice quantity at the expense of quality. The power conversion efficiency requirements for different kinds of solar cells, even broken ones, have continued to climb, according to industry players.

Solar cell spot pricing has maintained at US\$3.50-3.70/W, versus US\$2.90-3.40/W for long-term contracts, the industry players observed. For many leading solar cell makers, "spot" transactions may also include sales to existing customers at a higher price, the industry players noted e.g. when customers need additional solar cells over their previously agreed volume, the additional cells are quoted at spot prices.

Most mono-crystalline and multi-crystalline solar cells under the aforementioned pricing have to deliver a power conversion rate of >15% and >15.8-16%, respectively, the industry players detailed. Mono-crystalline cells offering a power conversion efficiency above 17% are able to attract a per watt ASP of more than US\$3.85, they highlighted.

The strict requirements for power conversion efficiency are also applied to broken solar cells, the industry players noted. Most customers still accepted broken solar cells with a rate of 12% in the first quarter, but they now only accept cells that deliver a rate of 13%, they stated.

Despite that solar cells delivering a lower power conversion rate are unable to meet current price targets, an upward price trend is also being observed, implying demand for solar cells is consistently growing. The industry players indicated that mono-crystalline and multi-crystalline solar cells that deliver a respective power conversion rate of <15% and <15.8% are priced at US \$2.50-3.00, an increase from US\$2.00 as recorded from the first quarter of 2008.

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