

South Africa joins utility-scale solar's first division as more REIPPP plants come online

South Africa has now connected more than half a gigawatt of utility-scale solar and climbed into the world top ten, according to figures released today by utility solar authority Wiki-Solar.org.^[1]

Four large scale solar plants have come online in the last month. These include two 66MW_{AC} plants at Lesedi and Letatsi, developed by SolarReserve and Intikon, and connected in late May. They were joined in early June by the Herbert and Greefspan projects built by California-based Sunpower Corporation.

All four projects were part of Round 1 of the South African Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme (REIPPP).

The installed capacity of utility-scale^[2] power plants in the leading countries in early June was:

Country	No. of Plants	Capacity MW _{AC}
United States	349	6,498.1
China	217	4,607.8
Germany	275	3,428.9
India	172	1,897.2
Spain	171	1,680.0
United Kingdom	205	1,523.7
Italy	82	875.8
Canada	56	714.3
France	51	677.3
South Africa	15	503.0

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First Division: The top ten world markets for utility-scale solar

The REIPPP seemed to get off to a slow start while connections were negotiated with the national power company Eskom, and contractors geared up for the first time in a new continent. There are still several other Round 1 plants under construction, and Rounds 2 and 3 have subsequently been awarded, so South Africa should be climbing further up the table in the coming months.

In fact Wiki-Solar's Philip Wolfe believes that, "France and Italy's position in the top ten may now be under threat. Substantial pipelines of projects, not only in South Africa, but also in Japan and Chile, suggest that they too will soon be contenders for solar power's First Division."

T E X T E N D S

Notes for editors:

[1] This release on the UK utility-scale solar market is available here:

http://wiki-solar.org/library/public/140625_South_Africa_tops_500_MW.pdf

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- [2] Following an open consultation, Wiki-Solar defines ‘utility-scale solar’ as 4 MW_{AC} and above; see:
<http://wiki-solar.org/data/glossary/utility-scale.html>
- [3] A capacity rating of 4MW_{AC} equates roughly to the consumption of 1,500 households in Europe.
- [4] “Solar Photovoltaic Projects in the mainstream power market” was published in 2012.
- [5] Wiki-Solar’s database covers over 2,500 utility-scale solar projects, of which about two-thirds are operational, and the remainder are under construction or development.

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