

From Sand to Riches: the Sahara

by Álvaro Gómez

The 20th century saw the birth of renewable energies, and the struggle to make them a viable option to fuel society and replace more primitive sources of power. Now, in the 21st century, this will be true. Thanks to growing investments in renewable sources, this type of energy, and the technology needed, have become cheaper and cheaper, up to the point that a new herculean project has been given the green light: the Sahara solar panel farm.

The Sahara solar panel farm is an ongoing project located in the desert of the same name. It has the approval of the British Premier Gordon Brown and French President Nicholas Sarkozy. The goal is to build a solar panel farm the size of Wales.

The climate of the Sahara desert, unlike other European locations with renewable power sources installed, is incredibly uniform throughout the year. This particular characteristic, along with the lack of important fauna and flora and the hellish ever-present sunrays, makes it an ideal place to install solar panels.

According to Arnulf Jaeger-Walden of the European Commission's Institute for Energy, if the panels were to capture only 0.3% of the sunlight falling in areas like the Sahara and Middle East deserts, all of Europe's power needs would be fulfilled. It is estimated that by 2050, the Sahara solar farm alone would produce 100 GW (as of 2010, wind related energy production worldwide is of 198 GW), and there are already plans to expand the size of the project and researches going on in several continents to upgrade current technologies and adapt them to the climate.

If everything goes according to plan, in less than fifty years the Sahara plant will be the leading clean solar source of energy worldwide, an ever-growing project completely green thanks to the technologies being developed. From sand to riches, where it was thought there was nothing, a shining ecologic future awaits.

References

Darren Quick (2010) *Sahara Solar Breeder Project aims to provide 50 percent of the world's electricity by 2050*, at Gizmag.

<http://www.gizmag.com/sahara-solar-breeder-project/17054/>

Caroline Grant (2008) *Sahara Solar Panel Farm "the size of Wales" will power European cities*, at Daily Mail online.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1037435/Sahara-solar-panel-farm-size-Wales-power-European-cities.html#ixzz1dihKbLI>