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Renewable Energy Report

Swiss renewables system wins kudos from industry, government

The hybrid system emerging in Switzerland for supporting clean power will enable the nation to get back into the renewable energy game, Swiss corporate and government officials said at the 5th European Green Power Marketing Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland on September 13.

Beginning in January 2008, Switzerland will implement a technology-specific feed-in tariff, with costs capped at SFr cents 0.6/kWh, said Hans Schweickhardt, CEO of power generator EOS. This should create a ceiling of about SFr320 million/year (\$270 million) for renewable energy.

At the same time, "utilities can continue to promote renewable energy and trade green certificates separately. Switzerland is trying to come up with a hybrid solution," he said. Schweickhardt highlighted the need for a mix of renewable energy and conventional fuels. "We think we have a good solution. It's a good way to keep our industry churning," he said.

Walter Steinmann, director of the Swiss Federal Energy Office, agreed. He said the country adopted a feed-in tariff because other renewable energy policies were not working.

Switzerland's main industrial companies have been exporting their renewables know-how, he said – knowledge that an industrial power like Switzerland needs to compete. The country must have a feed-in tariff until 2015 or so to boost its renewables industry, he said.

"The federal government welcomes the dual strategy and supports the marketing of green power," Steinmann said. He noted that the government also has combined an energy efficiency bonus with green power promotion in an effort to "shift away from punishing heavy consumers to rewarding efficient energy users." Government bonuses to businesses for energy efficiency, in turn, "are often reinvested in the purchase of green power," Steinman said.

Switzerland has set a target of generating from renewable resources by 2030 10% of the country's energy consumption in 2000.