Norwegian wafer maker and US mounting system supplier join the solar gold rush

It is not just the big beasts of Chinese solar that are investing in aggressive expansion as high-efficiency wafer maker NorSun and tracker supplier GameChange Solar make big announcements. The New York company, however, may fall foul of President Trump's America First trade mantra by opening production lines in the Far East.

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Investors lined up to back plans to expand NorSun's high-efficiency wafer operations.

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With China's solar manufacturers going all out to expand production capacities as rapidly as possible, evidence is mounting that the emergence of PV as a mainstream technology worldwide is also starting to fire businesses outside the world's biggest solar marketplace.

Norwegian monocrystalline wafer maker NorSun yesterday announced plans to more than double the production capacity of its n-type high efficiency operation at Årdal and New York-based mounting system producer GameChange Solar is also on the expansion trail.

Oslo-based NorSun announced the results of a NOK515 million ($59 million) fundraising round which included NOK230 million of investment and NOK285 million of public loans and grants. The money will be used to raise annual wafer production capacity at Årdal from its current 450 MW to 1 GW as well as financing new production technology at the site.

NorSun attracted major new investors in the form of Norway's sovereign climate investment company Nysnø and the €200 million ($225 million) Energy Transition Fund private equity vehicle managed by Dutch lender ABN AMRO, with the new shareholders coughing up NOK160 million. A further NOK70 million was offered by NorSun's existing shareholders, which include Norwegian project developer Scatec Solar and compatriot hydropower company Arendals Fossekompani.

New production lines in China

The Enova clean energy investment vehicle managed by Norway's Ministry of Climate and Environment and fellow state-owned entity Innovation Norway contributed a further NOK285 million for the project, the former through a loan and the business investment organization through an unspecified mix of grants and loans.

Across the Atlantic, GameChange Solar yesterday announced it had brought online 6.4 GW of new tracker and fixed-tilt mounting system annual manufacturing capacity in China.

In a press release that was light on detail, the New York-based tracker system manufacturer said the new additions took its global production capacity to 15 GW. **pv magazine** has contacted the company for further details of the development.

The twin announcements illustrate two trends: that high efficiency mono wafer modules – often mounted on trackers – are fast becoming the industry standard, and that the race is well and truly on for global market share as the world embraces solar.

The former point was further emphasized today by the news Chinese giant Trina Solar has brought to market an n-type i-TOPCon double-glass bifacial module it claims can hit up to 425 Wp with 144 half-cut cells.

MAX HALL

Max worked for **pv magazine** between 2012 and 2015 on a part-time basis and returned to the fold full-time in July 2018. An old-school print journalist, he has also worked in environmental consultancy, education, local government, infrastructure, aerospace, forensic science and sport.

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