

Jamaica to get largest Caribbean solar farm

The Toronto, Canada-based Solamon Energy Corp says it plans to build the largest solar power plant in the Caribbean.

The solar company said the programme, to be built in Jamaica, will cost in the region of CDN\$450 million (US\$444.2 million).

When completed, the farm will "enhance and improve the nation's energy infrastructure, as well as serve as a beacon to attract additional investment in the ICT (Information Communications Technology) and greentech sectors".

Solamon's senior vice-president, Ainsley Brown, said the farm would represent one of the region's first strategic private-public partnerships.

"In order to implement a solution of this magnitude, several parishes are being considered as future homes of one of three 50-acre plots that, when conjoined, will provide the Jamaican people with 60MW of clean electricity," he said.

"This programme represents a comprehensive approach to renewable energy development, energy diversification, job creation and training for the 21st century," Brown said.

He added: "Its success will necessitate a level-headed and like-minded approach at the table, as we are offering to tackle and deal with all elements of risk co-operatively and openly examine the implications of carbon credits, fuel or foreign exchange savings, in order to share the greater benefits of solar with our partners and the communities they serve over the lifetime of this deal."

Brown said the mega-project would create many new jobs for Jamaicans, and with the completion of a requisite light manufacturing plant, will establish the island as a "bona fide greentech hub."

Employee training

In addition to generating solar electricity and, thereby, reducing for future generations of Jamaicans an "imposing reliance" on fossil fuels, he said the new revenue from the sale of carbon credits will be directed towards establishing employee training and certification programmes, "required to build this and many other similar facilities across the Caribbean".

"I believe the utility should not be the only one to benefit from the nation going green," Brown said.

"JPS, as it currently stands, benefits from green initiatives, from not having to produce that energy, as well as the fuel-saving and foreign exchange saving, without passing anything on to the green investor or the customer at large," he said.

The company said it is "excited" to deliver turnkey power plants using renewable solar energy as a resource to Caribbean and Central American countries, and develop mutually beneficial and long-term relationships around the world.