

Switzerland's largest alpine solar plant produces its first electricity

The pioneering AlpinSolar project marked a major milestone today with generation of the first electricity from the solar plant, situated 2,500 metres above sea level on the Mutsee dam. Senior representatives of Axpo, IWB and Denner were joined by Energy Minister Simonetta Sommaruga at an event to celebrate the occasion. The need for more such plants to power a successful energy transition in Switzerland, and the considerable challenges they still face, were highlighted during a later panel discussion.

With construction already well advanced, the AlpinSolar project produced its first power today. Partners Axpo and IWB were joined by Denner, the supermarket chain buying the electricity, at a reception held to celebrate the landmark achievement. Welcoming more than 70 guests to the event in the village of Linthal in Glarus canton, Axpo Chairman Tom Sieber said: "With AlpinSolar, we have succeeded in implementing a pioneering project. It was a tough nut to crack, but today we are celebrating a milestone."

Praising the project, Energy Minister Simonetta Sommaruga said: "The new alpine solar plant is a forward-looking project, because production here is primarily for the winter, when we increasingly need domestic electricity. The plant is proof of the will to invest in the expansion of renewable energies in Switzerland - and thus to strengthen our security of supply."

During a subsequent panel discussion with Ms Sommaruga, Axpo CEO Christoph Brand, IWB CEO Claus Schmidt and Denner CEO Mario Irminger, the urgent need for projects like AlpinSolar was made clear. If Switzerland wants to achieve the energy transition, additional renewable production capacities are needed, especially in winter. However, similar projects face considerable challenges. Investors need a simpler and faster approval process as well as incentives that make the construction of large-scale plants economically viable.

Plenty of solar power - even in winter

Located on the Mutsee dam wall of the Limmern pumped storage power plant, 2,500 metres above sea level, the 2.2-megawatt solar plant will produce about 3.3 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year. Around 5,000 solar modules are being installed on the dam wall, which is optimally oriented towards the south. Thanks to its alpine location, the plant will deliver about 50 per cent of its production during the winter half-year. Construction should have been completed this autumn, but bad weather and delays in global supply chains slowed progress. The plant will be fully operational in August 2022. Partner energy companies Axpo and IWB are building the plant and Denner, Switzerland's largest supermarket discounter, will purchase its AlpinSolar power for 20 years through a power purchase agreement (PPA).

AlpinSolar



Images and video footage of the construction can be found at www.alpinsolar.ch.

About Denner: Denner is Switzerland's leading discount supermarket with a presence as a local supplier in every rural and urban region of the country – everywhere that customers live and work. Denner offers a comprehensive range of products for everyday requirements at over 820 locations. In 2020, the discounter employed a staff of over 5,500. To ensure that this growth did not come at the expense of the environment, Denner set ambitious goals in its sustainability strategy, investing in innovative projects to drive responsible action both internally and externally.

About Axpo: Axpo is Switzerland's largest producer of renewable energy, as well as an international leader in energy trading and the marketing of solar and wind power. Its 5,000 employees combine experience and expertise with a passion for innovation. Axpo uses state-of-the-art technology to develop innovative energy solutions for its customers in 30 countries in Europe, North America and Asia.

About IWB: IWB is the company for energy, water, mobility and telecommunications. It is a committed, competent and reliable supplier to its customers in the Basel region and beyond. IWB is a leading service provider for renewable energies and energy efficiency. The company strives for a 100% renewable power supply that enables the climate-friendly, efficient and economical handling of energy. In its own plants, IWB already produces more renewable electricity than is required by its customers in Basel. IWB makes targeted investments in infrastructure and develops new business models.

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