

# France builds world's biggest photovoltaic solar plant

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Solar panels. French energy giant EDF is building the world's biggest photovoltaic solar power plant at an abandoned NATO air base and plans to have it open by 2012, a spokesman said Tuesday.

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Jean-Marc Dall'Aglio, of EDF's [green energy](#) subsidiary EDF-EN, said the 415 hectare (1,025 acre) site in Toul-Rosieres, near the eastern city of Metz, would produce 143 megawatts, enough for a town of 62,000 people.

The current largest photovoltaic plant is at Olmedilla in Spain, producing 60 megawatts. Several much larger plants are under construction in the

United States and Australia and might beat the French contender.

Toul-Rosieres will quadruple nuclear-dependent France's photovoltaic power output, but still leave it far behind sunny Spain and Germany, which generate 1,671 MW and 1,505 MW respectively.

Dall'Aglio said it was difficult to find sites large enough for the huge arrays of [solar panels](#) needed to generate a viable amount of power, insisting that EDF was always looking for more.

Asked why the latest one was to be sited in cloudy Lorraine rather than the sunny south, he said that the state had decided to increase the tariff paid to [solar energy](#) producers in gloomy regions to encourage investment.

"We're hunting all the time, everywhere. In Toul-Rosieres the advantage is that the site is available straight away," he said, adding that EDF would pay the government rent of around a million euros (1.35 million dollars) a year.

Some 150 people will be involved in building the plant, including the work of removing asbestos from around 100 abandoned military structures, and once it is open it will employ 15 permanent staff, he added.

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