

S.Africa unveils wind atlas in renewable energy push

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A wind turbine spins outside Africa's first bank branch partially powered by wind, in Du Noon, about 20 kms from the centre of Cape Town in 2011. South Africa on Tuesday launched its first verified wind atlas which maps out potential hotspots as a tool for wind farm developers as the coal-hungry country pushes toward renewable energy.

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The atlas models the [wind](#) climate in three coastal provinces, which is backed up by measured data from 10 masts which can be used for further studies to investigate if a location is viable for turbines.

"This is an opportunity for investors -- this is an opportunity for them to

invest in our green economy," said deputy energy minister Barbara Thompson.

South Africa wants [renewable energy](#) to make up 42 percent of all new power projects as it aims to cut its overwhelming coal reliance, from 90 percent to 65 percent of the power supply by 2030, with major investments expected in nuclear and renewables.

Wind energy is vastly undeveloped in South Africa and the wind atlas project cost 22 million rands (\$2.9 million, 2.3 million euros), funded by the UN Development Programme and the Danish embassy.

"There's a good potential in vast areas of South Africa. It is totally untapped," Jens Carsten Hansen, wind expert from the Technical University of Denmark, told AFP.

The data, which is available online at no cost, had reflected an average 5.6 percent difference between projections and verified measurements.

"We are really happy with that. It's definitely state of the art, it's world class," Hansen told the launch.

"If we can successfully exploit the [wind energy](#) potential these provinces offer, we can provide impoverished communities in these provinces the opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty," Thompson said.

Last week, the government opened a second round of bidding for private wind producers, whom it wants to add to the [electricity grid](#) powered by the state utility Eskom which struggled under a wave of blackouts in 2008.

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