

# Morocco wind farm, Africa's biggest, starts generating power

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Wind turbines are seen at the Tarfaya wind farm in southwestern Morocco on May 14, 2013

Africa's largest wind farm, at Tarfaya in southwestern Morocco, has started generating electricity and will be capable of meeting the electricity needs of several hundred thousand people, officials say.

Installed on 10,000 hectares (24,700 acres) along the wind-blown southern Atlantic coast, the 80-metre (260 feet) high turbines, 131 in all, will be fully operational in October and produce up to 300 megawatts of

electricity.

The North African kingdom has no hydrocarbon reserves of its own and hopes to cover 42 percent of its energy needs with [renewable sources](#) by 2020. It has launched a plan to produce 4,000 MW from wind and [solar power](#).

Last year, Morocco officially launched the construction of a 160-megawatt solar power plant near the desert city of Ouarzazate, which is slated for completion next year.

Work started in Tarfaya at the beginning of 2013, and 88 of the 131 turbines have now been erected, according to Mohammed Sebti. Moroccan firm Nareva Holding is carrying out the project in partnership with France's GDF Suez.

Forty-four turbines have been connected to the grid, with the first kilowatts delivered earlier this month, Sebti told an AFP journalist at the site.

Production will continue to rise, with its "full commissioning to be completed in October as planned," he added.

Costing around 500 million euros (\$690 million), the wind farm will be the continent's biggest, surpassing Ethiopia's Ashegoda project, with its 84 turbines and 120-megawatt capacity.

It will save 900,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year, according to GDF.

Around 50 employees, of the 700 people involved in the construction phase, will continue working at the site once it is fully operational.

The southwest is the focus of Morocco's wind plans, with the smaller

Akhfennir plant, around 100 kilometres to the east of Tarfaya, already producing 100 MW from 60 turbines.

The Tarfaya region lies on the edge of Western Sahara, a disputed territory larger than the United Kingdom, most of which is under Moroccan control, but with the Algeria-based Polisario Front campaigning for independence since 1973.

A 50 MW wind farm already exists at Foug el Oued, near Western Sahara's main city of Laayoune, and other projects are planned, according to Morocco's Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

But attracting foreign firms to participate in the kingdom's wind plans for the territory will be harder than in Morocco itself.

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