

Morocco launches first solar power plant

February 4 2016



Moroccan King Mohammed VI (C) waves the Moroccan flag as he inaugurates the Noor 1 Concentrated Solar Power plant, some 20 kilometres (12.5 miles) outside the central Moroccan town of Ouarzazate on February 4, 2016

King Mohammed VI on Thursday inaugurated Morocco's first solar power plant, a massive project that the country sees as part of its goal of boosting its clean energy output.

French Environment Minister Segolene Royal was among foreign and

local officials who attended the opening on the edge of the Sahara desert, around 20 kilometres (12 miles) outside Ouarzazate.

"The solar plant underlines the country's determination to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, use more renewable energy, and move towards low carbon development," its developers said in a statement.

With an electricity production capacity of 160 megawatts, Noor 1 is supposed to allow Morocco to significantly reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

The project's next phases—Noor 2 and Noor 3—are to follow this year and next, and a call for tenders is open for Noor 4.

Once all phases are complete, it is to be "the largest concentrated [solar power plant](#) in the world" and produce 500 megawatts of electricity, providing power to more than one million Moroccans by 2018, its developers said.

It is to reduce Morocco's carbon emissions by 760,000 tonnes per year, they added.

That would be equivalent to around one percent of Morocco's CO₂ emissions of around 56.5 million tonnes in 2011, according to World Bank figures.

Morocco launched construction of Noor 1 in 2013, at a cost of 600 million euros (\$660 million) and involving roughly 1,000 workers.

Spread over an area equivalent to more than 600 football pitches, the plant's half a million metal mirrors follow the sun as it moves across the sky.

They store thermal energy from its rays and use it to activate steam turbines that produce electricity.

Morocco has scarce oil and gas reserves, and is the biggest importer of [energy](#) in the Middle East and North Africa.

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