

ARTsolar has recently completed production of the final consignment of locally produced photovoltaic (PV) modules in the Government's Round 3 of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme (REIPPP).

“These PV modules were manufactured at the ARTsolar plant in KwaZulu-Natal, for the Mulilo Sonnedix Prieska PV solar plant project. This plant, which supplies the electricity it produces to the Eskom Kromos Substation in the Northern Cape, is the first 75 MW AC size REIPPP project to have PV modules produced by a South African owned company,” says Derek Lawrance, director, ARTsolar. “After winning this Q1 2015 bid, ARTsolar implemented an expansion programme to meet production requirements of this project.

“The company made a substantial investment in new machinery and increased the total floor space of the New Germany plant from 3 500 m² to 10 000 m². The single day shift operation was increased to a 24 hour/six day schedule and we expanded our team to 200 staff.

“We are proud to be the first locally owned solar PV module manufacturer to have been awarded manufacture for the REIPPP programme. Although ARTsolar's operation has grown significantly through this project, challenges remain for local PV manufacturers outside of the REIPPP programme.

“Local industry is struggling to adapt to the ‘stop-start’ nature of REIPPP projects, which present extended inactive manufacturing periods between contracts. This situation requires assistance from the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Unlike solar water heaters, the local PV module manufacturing sector is not protected by locally designated modules outside of the REIPPP.”

Based on this, ARTsolar is currently restructuring its operations in preparation for REIPPP Round 4 in Q4 of 2016.

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The company expects to operate at its pre-expansion capacity, whilst escalating its penetration of the local and sub-Saharan market, in anticipation of once more participating in the REIPPP later in the year.

Suggested Captions

ARTsolar pic 1

ARTsolar has recently completed production of the final consignment of locally produced photovoltaic (PV) modules in the Government's Round 3 of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme (REIPPP).

Each PV module begins by laying up strings of soldered cells onto a glass sheet. At this station the team inspects and secures the cell strings into position.

Later these layups receive further soldered electrical connections and then undergo a lamination process before being framed.

ARTsolar pic 2

ARTsolar is the first locally owned solar PV module manufacturer to have been awarded manufacture for the REIPPP programme.

ARTsolar pic 3

These PV modules were manufactured at the ARTsolar plant in New Germany, KwaZulu-Natal, for the Mulilo Sonnedix Prieska PV solar plant project. Liam McIntosh is responsible here for framed PV modules, which are rotated into a vertical orientation for earth leakage and sun simulation testing.

For further information

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