



Arava Power gets deals for 15 mid-size solar fields

9:06am EST

TEL AVIV (Reuters) - Israeli solar energy developer Arava Power said on Sunday it signed long-term contracts with 15 agricultural cooperatives to build mid-size solar fields at an investment of 2 billion shekels (\$533 million).

The fields will produce a total of 100 megawatts of solar energy using photovoltaics, for an average of 6.5 megawatts per field.

Arava said it is advancing rooftop solar installations on cowsheds and factories in the signatory cooperatives.

Last year German conglomerate Siemens invested \$15 million in Arava Power to build 10 five-megawatt solar fields.

In December the Public Utilities Authority decided to allow mid-size solar fields at a nationwide capacity of 300 megawatts but many in the industry believe this cap will be filled quickly.

"The goal to produce 300 solar megawatts is an important step toward implementing the government's decision to produce 5 percent of Israel's energy consumption from renewable sources by 2014, but it's not enough," Arava Power Chief Executive Jon Cohen said.

"In order to achieve this goal, at least 1,000 megawatts are needed, and the market indicates that ... mid-size solar fields can fill the gap faster than any other source."

Arava Power President Yosef Abramowitz said that in each of the 15 mid-size field locations the company plans to build a large-size field, adding another 500 megawatts to its pipeline.

"Together with our partners from Siemens, we are weighing additional proposals from investors," he said, without providing further details.

Siemens also acquired Israel's Solel Solar Systems in October for \$418 million.

(Reporting by Tova Cohen)

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