

SA's solar energy market finally heating up, according to experts

By [Edwin Koot](#)

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Solar energy, one of our most abundant locally sourced energy resources, plays a critical role in South Africa today. Experts are, therefore, welcoming the growing interest by developers and investors.

The full potential of solar and its competition position as an alternative energy source still requires extensive exploration. Local companies need to determine how they can tap into solar without depending on government tenders and subsidies.

In the forthcoming February 2013 conference entitled The Solar Future, we will also pay attention to how solar, as an alternative energy source, can be best marketed - a key element in its successful development.

Ambition, commitment and involvement

Having organised over 40 of these conferences around the world, last year's first SA conference was a tremendous success. We were impressed by South Africa's ambition, commitment and involvement, and it bodes well for the future of solar in the country. A return conference for 2013 was, therefore, a no-brainer.

Solarplaza is determined to make the second edition of The Solar Future South Africa, which will take place in Cape Town this time, bigger and better. Last year's event drew over 100 high-profile business leaders, global energy experts, and representatives from government.

Some of the parties that have confirmed their attendance for February's event include representatives from the Department of Energy and Eskom, international solar PV guru and entrepreneur Jigar Shah, and Dick Berlijn.

A platform for constructive discussions

Berlijn, MD of Pretoria-based solar electricity development firm Subsolar Energy and a returning speaker, said: "The 2012 conference was a balanced event that provided a platform for constructive discussions on solar lessons learned in other countries and the opportunities that lie in South Africa."

Berlijn is most looking forward to the sessions that deal with solar beyond the subsidised programmes. "As an industry we have to prove our sustainability and we need to ensure that we create new business cases, and reach new off-takers so we are no longer dependent on government programmes," he said, noting that conferences like The Solar Future are necessary in South Africa where plans for large-scale solar projects are yet to be put into practice.

We received a collective 8 on the scale of 10 from the participants at the January 2012 event. It was one of our most successful solar conferences to date. We're coming back to do even better.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edwin Koot is the CEO of Solarplaza.

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