

MENA's biggest solar plant to go live in March

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The Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region's largest solar power plant will be connected to the UAE national grid in March, according to developer Masdar.

The 10MW plant has been designed to support ongoing construction of Masdar City.

SOLAR ENERGY: The region's largest solar power plant will be connected to the UAE's power grid

Abu Dhabi firm Enviromena was selected as the contractor for the design and installation work and has managed all engineering, procurement and construction.

The plant costs US \$50.4 million (185 million dirhams) to construct. Building began in September and is currently 70 percent complete, according to *Construction Week*.

"The plant will offset 15,000 tonnes of CO2 per year," said Enviromena vice president of technical operations Sander Trestain at the site of the plant.

"This is equivalent to the emissions produced by 11,000 flights from Abu Dhabi to London."

Half of the solar panels for the plant are being supplied by China-based Suntech Power Holdings, with US-based First Solar supplying the remaining half.

Suntech Power Holdings has supplied crystalline silicon solar cells while First Solar supplied thin-film modules, which are a cheaper alternative to crystalline silicon and take up more space, but require large amounts of semi-conductor materials.

Masdar is also running tests on 41 solar panel technologies provided by 33 international firms.

"The test is being conducted to help Masdar determine which technology it should use to provide the 230MW of energy (80 percent of the power) for Masdar City - a contract potentially worth billions of dirhams," Masdar said in a statement.

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