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First Solar, Inc. and the Al Watania Agriculture Company, one of the largest agricultural enterprises in the Middle East, today announced the completion of a pilot project to evaluate the use of solar electricity to sustainably power irrigation at a large farm in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The 684 kilowatt (kW) AC photovoltaic (PV) plant powers groundwater extraction and distribution operations at a 25,688-square meter site on the not-for-profit Al Watania Organic farm, which is located in Saudi Arabia's Al Jouf region. The farm, which covers a total of 319.21 square kilometers, is the Kingdom's largest producer of organic products and currently uses conventional fuel to pump water from 150 bore wells.

The pilot project is jointly funded by First Solar Saudi Arabia and the Al Watania Agriculture Company; is powered by First Solar's advanced thin film PV modules. The facility produces 1,476 MWh of electricity per year, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 1,100 tons per year based on national averages, which is equivalent to planting 28,000 trees per year. The solar power plant replaces a diesel generator, which would ordinarily consume 628,000 liters of diesel per year, if run continuously.

"We are proud to partner with First Solar on this exciting new project, which will not only help reduce our carbon footprint, but will also allow us to explore the potential for solar to reliably support our energy needs," said Eng. Ibrahim Aboabat, Al-Watania Agriculture CEO.

"Al Watania Organic was born from, our founder, Sheikh Sulaiman Abdulaziz Al Rajhi's vision of agricultural products being sustainably farmed right here in Saudi Arabia. Implementing the use of solar electricity will help further that vision and will allow us to move towards our goal of becoming the region's first truly sustainable large-scale agricultural operation."

The advanced thin film modules deployed at the site are ideally suited to local environmental conditions, offering a combination of a superior temperature coefficient and spectral performance, allowing for optimum performance in weather like that of Saudi Arabia. The installed PV generator will pump over 3.1 million cubic meters of water per year, unaided by conventional generators.

"This project is an excellent example of the scalability and flexibility that solar PV offers. Easy-to-deploy and able to address very specific needs, innovative solar-powered solutions can address a wide range of energy challenges, as this pilot facility demonstrates," said Dr. Raed Bkayrat, Vice President of Business for First Solar in the Middle East.

"Sunlight is the region's most abundant energy resource and the Al Watania Agriculture Company should be applauded for having the vision to sustainably harness affordable and reliable solar electricity to address its energy needs."



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With over 10,000MW installed worldwide, First Solar is a global leader in providing comprehensive PV solar systems powered by its advanced thin film modules. In the Middle East, the company is the leading PV solutions provider, with a projected installed capacity of at least 270MW across the region by 2017.

First Solar built the 13MW first phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai and is currently constructing the 52.5MW Shams Ma'an solar plant in Jordan. Additionally, First Solar modules have been selected to power the 200MWAC second phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai. The company established a commercial presence in Saudi Arabia, First Solar Saudi Arabia, in 2015.

First Solar proudly established the guiding principles of Responsible Solar - how it treats its employees, manages its environmental impact, and operates its business. Together, these pillars produce a responsible solar technology that reduces risk and maximizes returns with respect for people and the planet.

Derived from decades of leading-edge research and development, capital investment, trial and error, and defining moments, First Solar's Cadmium Telluride (CdTe) thin film technology is a product of dedication. The company stands alone in the industry with its differentiated semiconductor and streamlined manufacturing process, which yield unparalleled quality and reliability.

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