Swaziland energy independence

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Developing Swaziland’s vast renewable energy resources would provide substantial socio-economic benefits for its population, according to a new IRENA report. The Swaziland Renewables Readiness Assessment estimates that bagasse, a by-product of the local sugar industry, could meet half of all domestic electricity demand while solar power could contribute substantially to the remaining demand.

More than 76 per cent of Swaziland’s current electricity supply comes from imports, predominantly from South Africa. Electricity import tariffs in Swaziland doubled between 2009 and 2012 and are expected to continue this upward trend. This, combined with the falling cost of renewable energy technologies, makes renewable energy more cost competitive in Swaziland than ever before.

“Renewable energy is no longer just the best choice socially and environmentally, it is also the best choice economically for many countries in many parts of the world. It has never been cheaper for Swaziland to reduce its electricity costs, increase its energy independence and improve energy access through the rapid deployment of renewable energy.” - IRENA Director-General Adnan Z. Amin.

Roughly 45 per cent of Swaziland’s population does not currently have access to electricity. The report estimates that the country’s solar resources, combined with the falling cost of solar PV, could bring electricity to more people through the deployment of decentralized solar PV systems.

Swaziland forms a key link in the Africa Clean Energy Corridor, IRENA’s initiative to meet Eastern and Southern Africa’s growing power needs sustainably and with a high share of renewables. As Swaziland is interconnected with Mozambique and South Africa, it could potentially use this existing infrastructure to develop more renewable energy than is needed for the country and sell its surplus power, moving it from an electricity importer to an electricity exporter.

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