

Masdar plans wind turbine project, new solar plant

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Masdar expects to award contracts for the energy projects by the end of the year

Masdar, the Abu Dhabi government-backed renewable energy company, plans this year to start building a 20-to-30-megawatt wind turbine facility.

“We are evaluating bids from international companies who want to help us build the plant,” Frank Wouters, director of Masdar Power, said at an industry briefing in Abu Dhabi today.

Wind speeds in the UAE are “moderate but still sufficient” for such turbines, he said.

Abu Dhabi, which holds almost all of the UAE’s oil reserves, is expanding its use of solar and wind power in a effort to become a regional hub for renewable energy. The emirate is building Masdar City, a business and residential complex designed to emit minimal carbon emissions, and serves as headquarters for the International Renewable Energy Agency.

Masdar also plans to build a 100MW photovoltaic plant called Noor and wants to award construction contracts for the venture by the end of the year, Wouters said. Photovoltaic plants use solar panels, which convert sunlight directly to electricity. Masdar already operates a 10MW facility of this type in Abu Dhabi.

Wouters said in October that Masdar's Shams 1 solar plant, a \$600m, 100-MW concentrated solar thermal plant to be completed in 2012, will receive less energy than planned because dust particles in the area will block sunlight. Concentrated solar plants reflect sunlight, usually with mirrors, to heat liquids and create steam to turn turbines and generate power.

The Noor plant will cost less than Shams 1 because of improving efficiency and "the normal learning curve for the industry," Wouters said.

Shams 1 is a venture between Masdar, Abengoa SA and Total SA.