

GCRI INTERVIEW

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Do you think that wind energy will play a significant role in ensuring global energy supply? How do you envision Germany's role in this development?

Wind Energy is one of the world's most important renewable energy resources. Earlier this year we published a study with the Fraunhofer Institute, which clearly demonstrated that if we used two percent of Germany's land mass for wind energy turbines, we could cover up to 65 percent of Germany's current electricity demand with onshore wind energy. This shows the tremendous potential for wind energy. I assume that this potential exists not only in Germany, but also in other parts of the world. Wind energy is the backbone of the global transition to renewable energy.

Which areas of the German wind industry have the greatest potential in terms of export and job creation?

The German wind industry is multifaceted. At the moment, there are around 100,000 people working in the different sectors of the industry in Germany. Most of the jobs exist in the following areas: turbine production, operation, and service as well as component supply. At the moment, about 70 percent of wind turbines produced in Germany are exported. Most of these turbines are shipped to Europe, North America and South America.

Where do you see the greatest innovation potential in wind energy technology?

In the past few years one of the greatest innovations we have experienced has been the increased capacity of wind-powered turbines. In 1990, installed capacities starting at 500 kilowatts were the norm. Current wind energy turbines have installed capacities of 3 megawatts or more. The most powerful wind turbine, which is equipped with an installed capacity of 7,5 megawatts, is made by Enercon, a German company. In the future we will see a further increase of the installed capacity.

Wind energy is often affected by weather changes. Nevertheless, it is considered Germany's most important source of clean energy – why?

As I already mentioned, wind energy in Germany has great potential. Moreover, onshore wind energy is the least expensive of all renewable energy resources. One of the most important developments for the future of renewables in Germany is the extension of the grid, which is needed to transmit electricity from wind turbines in Northern and Southern

Germany, as well as from turbines in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. Another important issue is the development new accumulator technologies.

In your opinion, what is necessary to counteract the “not in my backyard” phenomenon when it comes to the acceptance of new wind farms?

Acceptance by the public is a central ingredient for the success of the transition to renewable energy in Germany. This is why we have focused so much attention to this issue. On the one hand, we are developing new technologies, e.g. navigation lights to minimize the impact of wind energy on local citizens. On the other hand, there are a number of strategies that we have developed to enable people to build positive relationships with wind energy, for example through the “Bürgerwindpark” model. This model makes it possible for people who live near a wind farm to be partial owners of the farms. There are studies demonstrating that acceptance is higher in areas where there are already wind turbines than in areas where there are none.