

A photovoltaic partner for agriculture

STEAG SENS implements particularly nature-friendly solar parks with 244 MW in Apulia

Würzburg/Eszen/Foggia. STEAG Solar Energy Solutions, a subsidiary of the Essen-based energy company STEAG, is realising another photovoltaic cluster in Italy. Three solar parks with a total of 244 megawatts (MWp) will be built by the Würzburg-based solar experts in the Italian region of Apulia on behalf of a renowned investor from the end of 2021. SENS is responsible for the project development as EPC and O&M service provider.

Surrounded by mountains, rivers and the Adriatic Sea, the province of Foggia is located in Apulia, one of Italy's flattest regions. Among the defining features of Foggia are its extensive cultivated areas. Here they grow almonds, figs and tomatoes in addition to the province's main crop, olives. Thanks to the Italian government, the cultivated areas will soon see the addition of photovoltaic systems. The sun will contribute not only to the growth of the fruit in the region but also to sustainable energy-generation.

Installations in Italy continue to increase

"For us as a PV-service provider Italy is one of the core markets in Europe for us. With this project we take another step closer to our target of 1 GW installed capacity," says Managing Director André Kremer. These three sub-projects in Apulia total 244 MWp and all lie within 20 km of one another in Foggia. They each differ in area and total capacity but are all agricultural PV projects fully integrated into intensive olive-growing countryside. The excavators are due to roll onto site at the end of 2021. In addition to development and construction, SENS will also be responsible for the cost-effective operation of the park under the terms of an O&M contract.

Committed local team

Italian subsidiary SENS Italia, based in Milan and Lecce, Apulia, is handling the project. "After showing great commitment during the development phase, our team is looking forward to the installation and on-going management of this project," says Sarah Herresthal, Managing Director of SENS Italia. "This project has involved us working across disciplines and international borders." SENS (formerly GILDEMEISTER energy solutions) has been active on the Italian market since 2009 and handles round about 400 MW O&M portfolio in the country.

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Dual use of cultivated areas

The current Puglia project has a double positive effect. By erecting the solar parks in the middle of olive groves, the dual use of the land counteracts the shortage of land in the region. But not only that: due to the partial overshadowing of the trees by the solar modules, there is another benefit. Evaporation and thus water consumption can be reduced. This makes efficient use of the twelve hours of sunshine in the summer months instead of exacerbating the drought in the region.

More political backing for PV projects in Italy

The Italian government would like to provide more support for this type of photovoltaics project in the future. A technical commission is to be set up to accelerate the implementation of Italy's integrated national plan for energy and climate, the Plan nacional integrado de energía y clima 2021-2030, (P.N.I.E.C.).

For practice, the implementation of the commission means that the time period until receiving a decision on approval for an agricultural PV plant will be drastically shortened. Accordingly, projects can start more quickly in the future. Accordingly, the Italian Plan for Energy and Climate anticipates an annual increase in photovoltaics of 4 GWp. Thus, 40 GWp of PV capacity is expected to be created in the next ten years until 2030. "We at SENS are proud to be able to actively support Italy in this goal," says Sarah Herresthal.

About STEAG

For more than 80 years STEAG has represented efficient and reliable power generation, both in Germany and internationally. As experienced partners we provide our customers with comprehensive support on all aspects of energy supplies. We plan, develop, implement, operate and market highly efficient energy solutions – from decentralised and regenerative generation facilities to large power stations and their associated products. In addition to custom-made solutions for the supply of electricity and heating, we offer a wide range of energy services based to an ever-increasing extent on renewable energies. With success: From 1990 to 2020, STEAG permanently reduced its own CO₂ emissions by almost 80 percent.

About STEAG Solar Energy Solutions

STEAG Solar Energy Solutions GmbH (SENS) is a service provider based in Würzburg with worldwide operations in the field of renewable energies. Its range of services includes the development and construction of turnkey solar parks, the maintenance and operational management of PV systems and the implementation of energy solutions for commerce and industry such as rooftop PV systems, e-charging stations and energy storage systems. SENS has been part of the STEAG Group since July 2019 and employs approx. 270 people at nine locations in Germany and abroad. In the UK SENS is operating through its affiliate STEAG Solar Energy Solutions (UK) Ltd, seated in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.