

11.12.2009

Clean energy could become Germany's economic weapon, says expert

With increasing global pressure to fight climate change and make better use of raw resources, Germany could cash in on its position as producer of quality sustainable-energy and energy-efficiency technology.

The global clean energy technology sector will grow into a 1.6 trillion euro (\$2.4 trillion) industry by 2020 and will become the third-largest industrial sector after automobiles and electronics, environmental organization WWF announced Friday.

The clean energy industry - which includes wind energy infrastructure, insulation, solar panels and bio-ethanol treatment production - generated 630 billion euros in global revenues in 2007, the organization said.

Germany, the United States and Japan currently lead clean energy sales, according to 2008 data cited by WWF.

In the face of increasing global awareness about the need for more eco-friendly measures, various speculative studies have been carried out showing how Germany - with its strong international position as a producer of high-quality technology - could benefit from the trend.

A chance for Germany

According to a study by the Berlin-based DIW economic institute, one million more jobs could be created in Germany by 2020 if companies know how to seize the opportunity. Most of these new jobs will stem from increasing exports of clean technology, especially to the USA and China, according to DIW's energy expert Claudia Kemfert.

"Germany is already a world leader in the production of technology related to energy-efficiency, sustainable energy and smart metering," she told Deutsche Welle. "There are huge business opportunities there. Growth aspects are really high for the German economy."

DIW's definition of clean energy technologies includes renewable energy technologies and energy-efficiency measures in mechanical processes and in heating, as well as technology related to recycling measures and smart metering.

Aside from energy-production, energy-efficiency is a huge growth sector in this area, Kemfert said.

"Energy-efficiency improvement is often the cheapest initial measure for a country to implement," she said. "It will play a dominant role in countries like the USA, China and Russia in the future."

"In Germany, many medium-size companies are already branching out into so-called 'green technology' - companies like car-part manufacturers," Kemfert added.

Hopes pinned on Copenhagen

The optimistic speculations made by WWF and DIW are partly based on the assumption that a global agreement will be reached at the Copenhagen climate summit.

"Imagine what is possible with a successful Copenhagen climate deal and the national mechanisms to deliver its outcomes," Kim Carstensen, leader of WWF's global climate initiative, said in a statement. "Clean energy is where the money is going to be and this is where energy security is going to be."

Kemfert said she believes the WWF's optimistic scenario for economic growth is realistic, as long as a solid treaty is ratified in Copenhagen - a step she said is likely.

"I think it's wrong to assume that there will be no global treaty or global effort for climate protection," said Kemfert. "I think there will be. Especially in China and the USA there will be a huge change in the approach to energy use and energy-efficiency, and this will have a huge impact on the global market. And if German companies continue what they have started, they can substantially benefit from this development."

Author: Eva Wutke

Editor: Sean Sinico

| www.dw-world.de | © Deutsche Welle.