

Press Release

Thin-Film Industry Forum in Berlin - The industry's top international meeting place

Berlin, 26.04.10: The Thin-Film Industry Forum in Berlin confirmed its role as the leading international gathering for the industry last Friday.

In the spotlight of this two-day conference lay the market development of the photovoltaic industry and the role that thin-film technology can play in it. Experts and decision makers from industry, politics and finance were in agreement: in order to win through against competition from crystalline silicon, thin-film technology needs to achieve higher efficiencies and greater productivity.

Here, thin-film manufacturers are evidently catching up: to date First Solar, with its cadmium telluride modules has been the only market-significant manufacturer. Owing to lower production costs modules based on copper, indium and sulphur/selenium (CIS) are being taken ever more as a serious alternative.

A new world record was announced within the "International Workshop on CIGS Solar Cell Technology": an efficiency of 20.1 percent has been achieved for CIGS cells (CIGS also contains gallium in addition to copper, indium and selenium).

Dr. Georg Schütte, State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research, opened the conference with a speech "Research for next-generation technology" Schuette noted the very good prospects that he saw for the thin-film technology in Germany. The technological lead could only be ensured in the future when the federal government and especially the industry share the responsibility of investing in research and development.

Concerning the current political situation, Karl-Heinz Remmers, CEO of Solarpraxis AG said: "We must keep a watchful eye on the international competition! In China credit worth billions is being made available by the government, whereas in Germany politicians are complaining about high costs and reducing the feed-in remuneration. The current cuts in the renewable energy legislation (EEG) will have a massive adverse effect on the German market. The German photovoltaic industry must be careful that it does not lose the lead - and thin film is a great opportunity here."

"Dr. Rutger Schlatmann, Director of the Berlin Centre of Excellence for Nanotechnology and Thin Film Photovoltaics (PVcomB), summarized the situation as follows: "Of course in today's market with its enormous pressure on prices there is uncertainty about the best direction among investors. For Germany, as a centre of innovation, it must be emphasized that staff costs only contribute in a very limited way to the cost of production. In the medium term transport costs will more than offset personnel costs, and solar modules will be produced on systems of German origin worldwide. "

Hartmut Gross, sales manager of Centrotherm photovoltaics AG, described thin-film photovoltaics as a "driving force for the photovoltaic industry." However, the challenge of increasing efficiency and reducing costs is evident to him too. Moreover, he argued, the industry must be clear about what thin film's target groups are. Centrotherm is building world's first complete turnkey production line for modules based on copper, indium, gallium and selenium (CIGS) in Asia, is in the process of "ramping-up" and is guaranteeing performance parameters such as yield, output and module efficiency.

Consistently positive feedback from participants and sponsors:

"A very good conference, which brings together the perspectives of manufacturers, suppliers, policy makers and the financial world", concluded Dr.-Ing. Marc Hüske, Vice President and Product Manager at LPKF SolarQuipment GmbH

"Once again this year, this high-profile forum has portrayed the enormous dynamic of thin-film technology, and at the same time demonstrated both the challenges and approaches to solutions on the path to photovoltaic competitiveness" said David Wortmann, Vice President of First Solar GmbH

Dr. Rainer Gegenwart, CEO of Masdar PV GmbH also assessed the Thin-Film Industry Forum as "an important conference to be able to keep in touch with the technical status quo". He also praised it as a good opportunity to network with other representatives from the industry.

The Thin-Film Industry Forum was held on 22 to 23 April 2010 in Berlin-Adlershof. This second meeting was again organized as part of the "Photovoltaics Thin-Film Week" event. With 370 participants, this is the world's largest event exclusively dedicated to thin film. The organizers are Solarpraxis AG and the Berlin Centre of Excellence for Nanotechnology and Thin Film Photovoltaics (PVcomB).

It is already clear that Solarpraxis and PVcomB will be taking up the "Photovoltaics Thin-Film Week" success story once again in 2011.

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