Bringing large-scale wind power
to Cape Verde

The small island state of Cape Verde is using wind power to boost its energy supply and establish wind as a reliable source of non-polluting renewable energy. The project was awarded the 'Best Renewable Project in Africa' prize at the Africa Energy Awards 2011 in Johannesburg.

28 megawatts

Four onshore wind farms on four islands in the Cape Verde archipelago will add over 28 megawatts of electricity to the local energy supply.

"Enabling small island states to use renewable energy is part of our climate action efforts", said EIB Vice-President Plutarchos Sakellaris, who is responsible for operations in the region. "Close cooperation between the EIB and the African Development Bank shows how long-term public finance can make a difference to such projects in difficult economic times."

Partnering on climate investments

The EIB, as lead financier together with the African Development Bank, has invested EUR 45m in four onshore wind farms on four islands in the Cape Verde archipelago (Santiago, São Vicente, Sal and Boa Vista). The 32 turbines benefit from the favourable conditions created by the prevailing trade winds coming from the Atlantic. Fully operational by the end of the year, they will add over 28 megawatts (MV) of electricity to the local energy supply and ease Cape Verde's reliance on imported fossil fuels. While reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the project will also help to establish wind as a reliable energy source on the islands. In a strategic shift towards renewable sources, Cape Verde's Government wants to raise the share of wind energy production to 25% by 2012 and eventually to 50% by 2020.

"The Cape Verde Wind Power project is truly groundbreaking," says Fabio Borba, Vice-President of InfraCo, which is managing the development of the wind farm. "Its novel public-private partnership structure will set an example for the whole region."

A wind energy project on this scale is a first for Cape Verde, as is the public-private partnership set-up for this project. Earlier this year, the wind farm won the title of 'Best Renewable Project in Africa' at the Africa Energy Awards in Johannesburg.

Boosting clean energy

Traditionally, Cape Verde has relied on imported diesel fuel to meet its power supply requirements. However, in recent times the island's 450 000 inhabitants have been suffering more and more from electricity shortages. In order to meet rising energy demand, the national authorities have launched an ambitious plan to boost electricity production. The aim is to increase energy supplies by 40% by 2012 and to double the share of wind energy production by 2020 from 25% to 50%.

"With wind farms installed on four islands of the archipelago, the project will assist Cape Verde in achieving its electricity supply targets with the least environmental harm. The EIB is covering nearly half of the project financing. Without its support, commitment and foresight the project would have not come to fruition," Borba adds.

At the same time the wind farms will help to bring down greenhouse gas emissions on the archipelago, which is a biodiversity hotspot (its coral reef is considered to be one of the world's ten most important). Moreover, the installations have been designed to preserve the natural rural landscape. ■