



information

Paris, 5 January 2006

Press Release

Air Liquide's Threefold Achievement in Germany's Solar Industry

As a result of sharp increases in fossil fuel prices and the increasing concern concerning the global warming, interest in alternative energy sources is growing. In addition to hydrogen fuel cells, **solar energy is sparking increasing interest** ; the world market for solar energy is expanding by over 30% per year.

In Europe, the demand for solar energy is especially high, particularly in Germany, which has decided to develop renewable energy sources with the aim of exceeding the European Union's requirement to obtain 20% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020. In the coming years, **MicroTechpark in Thalheim**, north of Leipzig, is expected to become **the main European centre for solar cell production**. In 2006, 500 new jobs will be created, and eventually the region is expected to provide approximately 5,000 jobs.

With this in mind, **Air Liquide has recently become the supplier for the profit of all solar cell manufacturers at the Thalheim site** for technical and specialty gases necessary in large volumes for the production of solar cells and modules, **with a total investment of almost 2.5 million euros**. **Customers include Q-Cells AG**, one of the five solar industry leaders in the world, which has been producing high performance multi and mono crystalline solar cells* in Thalheim since 2001, the **CSG Solar AG** corporation, an Australian origin German company standing out for their innovative and patented technology named Crystalline Silicon on Glass (CSG), and **EverQ GmbH**, a joint venture between Q-Cells AG and Evergreen Solar Inc., a US solar cell manufacturer with which Air Liquide recently signed **a global contract**. In Thalheim, **CSG Solar AG** produces solar modules of 1.4 m² and **EverQ GmbH** solar wafers, cells and panels being distributed worldwide.

The global contract with **EverQ GmbH** marks a new phase in Air Liquide's commitment to the solar cell industry. For the next 10 years, Air Liquide will supply argon, nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen and specialty gases, and fulfill a service agreement. With its global resources and integrated logistical services, Air Liquide will provide the client with its **expertise and proficiency in managing the entire gas supply chain** by handling all services and activities related to delivering gas directly to the customer and installing the necessary equipment.

François Darchis, Air Liquide Executive Committee member, said about this success: **"We have met the challenge of complying with the very specific demands of our solar industry clients and have created partnerships within a fast-growing industry. Furthermore, we are very pleased to contribute, by way of our Sustainable Development project, to the boom in solar energy, currently considered an new energy source, clean and inexhaustible."**

* Solar cells or "photovoltaics" transform sunlight into electricity; several cells make up a solar panel; several assembled panels make up a power plant. The base of a cell is usually a silicon wafer. To transform photons from the sun's rays into electricity, the composition of this silicon wafer is modified or "doped" by introducing elements such as phosphorus or boron. This treatment to the wafer requires **specialty gases, nitrogen, and argon**.

Present in more than 70 countries, **Air Liquide** provides industrial and medical gases and related services. The Group offers **innovative solutions** based on constantly enhanced **technologies**. These solutions, which are consistent with Air Liquide's commitment to **sustainable development**, help to protect life and enable our customers to manufacture many indispensable everyday products. Founded in 1902, Air Liquide has more than 36,000 employees. The Group has successfully developed a long-term relationship with its shareholders built on **trust and transparency** and guided by the principles of **corporate governance**. Since the publication of its first consolidated financial statements in 1971, Air Liquide has posted **strong and steady earnings growth**. Sales in 2004 totalled 9,428 million euros, with sales outside France accounting for almost 80%. Air Liquide is listed on the Paris stock exchange and is a component of the CAC 40 and Eurostoxx 50 indices (ISIN code FR 0000120073).

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