

Solar Energy Facts: Correcting Old Myths

MYTH #1:

There are no jobs created by the solar industry

FACT:

Today, the solar industry employs more than 100,000 Americans, double the amount of solar workers in 2009. They work at more than 5,000 companies, the vast majority being small businesses, in all 50 states. The industry grew by 69 percent in the past year, making it one of the fastest growing sectors in the U.S. economy.

MYTH #2:

Solar only works in states like California.

FACT:

Solar energy works in all 50 states. Germany has more installed solar capacity than any other country and it receives roughly the same amount of sunshine as Alaska. Less than one-third of the photovoltaic (PV) capacity installed in the U.S. in the second quarter of 2011 was installed in California. In fact, more PV was installed on commercial buildings in New Jersey than in California during that quarter.

MYTH #3:

The market for solar energy is very small.

FACT:

The U.S. solar energy market is big and growing fast. In 2010 alone, \$6 billion worth of finished solar energy systems were installed in the U.S. The U.S. solar energy market grew 69 percent in the second quarter of 2011, helping aid our economic recovery. In fact, many analysts project that the U.S. will become the largest solar market in the world in the next few years.

MYTH #4:

Solar energy is too expensive for widespread usage.

FACT:

Solar energy is already cost effective in many locations across America. The price of solar modules has dropped 30 percent since the beginning of 2010 as the industry scales up and companies innovate with new products and manufacturing techniques. Also, new financing options allow homeowners and businesses to start saving money on their utility bills as soon as they turn on their solar systems.

MYTH #5:

If solar power really worked, it wouldn't need government support.

FACT:

The U.S. decided long ago to support energy sources since energy drives our economy. Every major energy source and technology has benefited from federal government R&D support and incentives of various types. This is true of the oil, natural gas, hydroelectric, nuclear and biofuels industries—all of which continue to receive government support today.

MYTH #6:

Solar products are all made in China.

FACT:

The U.S. was a significant net exporter of solar products in 2010, including to China. Total U.S. exports of solar energy products was \$5.6 billion, with net exports totaling \$2 billion. Of the \$6 billion in direct value created by U.S. solar installations in 2010, more than \$4.4 billion, or 75 percent of the value, accrued to the United States.

MYTH #7:

Solar devices require more energy to manufacture than they produce in their lifetime.

FACT:

Studies have conclusively demonstrated that energy payback for photovoltaic (PV) energy is now less than three years. Given that PV module warranties are generally in excess of 20 years, a PV system will produce far more energy over its lifetime than was consumed to manufacture it. Technological progress is reducing the energy consumption of PV manufacturing further. Energy output and input ratios for concentrating solar power (CSP) and solar water heating equipment are also favorable.

MYTH #8:

Solar energy needs a technological revolution to go mainstream.

FACT:

Solar technologies available today already provide enough electricity to power 630,000 American homes. Solar panel prices have fallen 30 percent in the past year and a half. No scientific breakthroughs are required for solar energy to power America. Solar is ready and available today; it only needs smart and consistent policy to thrive.