

Japanese Ministry estimates 55 times output in solar

The Japanese Ministry of the Environment estimates that solar power production in Japan could rise to 55 times the current output by 2030, according to ministry officials. This, in combination with the spread of other renewable energy sources, would see carbon dioxide emissions drop eight per cent from 1990 levels. The estimate is based on METI's assumption of a wide adoption of "feed-in tariffs". Under current measures, those who have purchased renewable energy equipment can expect to recover their investment after 30 years. However, the Ministry envisions power companies buying electricity at high rates, resulting in investment recovery in around 10 years. By the Ministry's calculations, this could spur total solar energy output to around 37,000 MW by 2020, and 79,000 MW by 2030, 55 times current levels. With the wide-scale adoption of the feed-in tariff system, the Ministry also predicts that monthly electric bills will rise by an average of ¥258 (A\$4.25) per household, and a maximum of ¥341 per household over the 2011-30 period from the current level, if power companies passed on the cost of buying up renewable energy to consumers. According to the METI report *Outlook for Long-Term Energy Supply and Demand* released in March 2008, the Ministry of the Environment's estimations may be somewhat over-optimistic. The report predicts that, should the most cutting-edge technology be adopted on the highest conceivable scale, solar energy production would reach 14,000 MW in 2020 and 53,000 MW in 2030.

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