Wind power in France – Q&A

1. At what stage is the development of wind power in France at the moment?

Onshore wind is developing strongly, with an increase in the production capacity of almost 28% in 2009. Significant development of offshore wind is planned between now and 2020.

- Wind power capability at end 2009
  - Europe - 74 800 MW; 2060 MW offshore
  - France – 4574 MW, of which 1036 MW were installed in 2009
- Distribution of wind farms in France
  - Currently the principal regions are Picardy, Lorraine, Brittany, Centre and Champagne-Ardenne, with more than 400 MW.
  - The second tier regions are Languedoc-Roussillon, Midi-Pyrenees, Nord-Pas de Calais, with between 300 and 400 MW.
- Development of wind power offshore
  - A project for 105 MW off the coast of Seine-Maritime, preferred bidder following a tender launched by the French government, received its construction permit in 2008.

2. What are the objectives in the wind sector?

- In Europe, the aim is for the capacity of wind power to increase by 4.5 times its 2008 level by 2030.
- In France, the aim is for an increase of 5 times the 2009 level by 2020. In order to achieve this, the French government will monitor the pace of installation between 2010 and 2013 (the "Grenelle 2" Law envisages a minimum rate of 500 "generating machines" per year in this time period).

3. What measures has the French government put in place to promote wind power?

The measures taken by the government aim to promote the installation of wind turbines and other "generating machines" whilst improving planning of wind power development and strengthening consultation.

- Incentives
  - A purchase obligation that allows the producer of energy from a wind farm situated in a designated development zone ("zone de développement de l'éolien" or "**ZDE**") to sell its electricity to the distributor
  - Preferential feed-in tariffs guaranteed for 15 years for onshore wind power and 20 years for offshore

- Financial incentives for small-scale wind power producers, in particular a tax credit of 50% on equipment costs

There may also be incentives and assistance available at a regional level.

- Improving the planning of wind power development

Onshore

- Regional plans for climate, air and energy seek to realise the potential for wind power in each region and identify zones which can be earmarked for the development of wind power.

- A regional plan for connecting renewable energy sources to the network will determine the connection capacity needed for electricity from renewable sources, particularly wind power, for the next 10 years.

Offshore

- A consultation and planning body, organising all interested parties, has been created for each stretch of coast in France. These bodies will fall under the auspices of the coastal prefect, the maritime prefect and the relevant departmental prefects and will identify the zones that are most favourable for the development of offshore wind farms.

- Specific measures relating to offshore wind

- Launch of a tender in 2005 by the minister for energy, resulting in the selection of a 105MW project off the coast of Veulettes-sur-Mer (Seine-Maritime)

- Launch of a tender for offshore wind energy by the end of 2010, relating to those zones identified as most favourable for its development

- Adaptation and simplification of procedures for obtaining permission to build offshore wind equipment and for benefiting from the purchase obligation. (The Grenelle 2 Law has removed the need to obtain a construction permit and allowed offshore wind energy producers to benefit from the purchase obligation without the creation of a ZDE.)

4. How are the installation and operation of wind farms regulated in France?

The government plans to develop wind power in a way that favours installation in the most appropriate areas and that limits the impact on the environment and the population.

- A clear regulatory framework

- At the moment a construction permit is required for all turbines more than 12 metres tall and a public enquiry must be held in relation to any turbines more than 50 metres tall.

- The proposer of any wind farm project must carry out a preliminary environmental study (looking at the impact on the surroundings, noise, etc.).

- By 12 July 2011 all turbines more than 50 metres tall will be subject to new environmental protection regulations relating to their location, installation and operation.

- A plan for structured development

  - Wind farms will be required to have at least 5 masts, unless they fall below thresholds for capacity and height.

  - Only wind farms within a ZDE will benefit from the purchase obligation at fixed tariffs.

  - Regional plans will identify potential ZDEs.

- Strict regulation of noise

  - The French regulations relating to noise, which apply to wind farms, are the strictest in Europe. Wind farms are subject to the general rules on "noisy neighbours", which set a limit of 25 decibels when measured from inside the main rooms of a dwelling.

- Safety monitoring

  - Wind farms must respect European rules of design and construction and, since October 2008, are subject to technical checks. Operators must also follow general principles of accident prevention at all times, including nominating a health and safety co-ordinator.

5. Are all applications for construction permits accepted?

Around 1 in 5 is refused. Refusals are generally for the protection of wildlife, in particular birds, or because of the presence of classified historical monuments, or because of disruption to radar equipment.