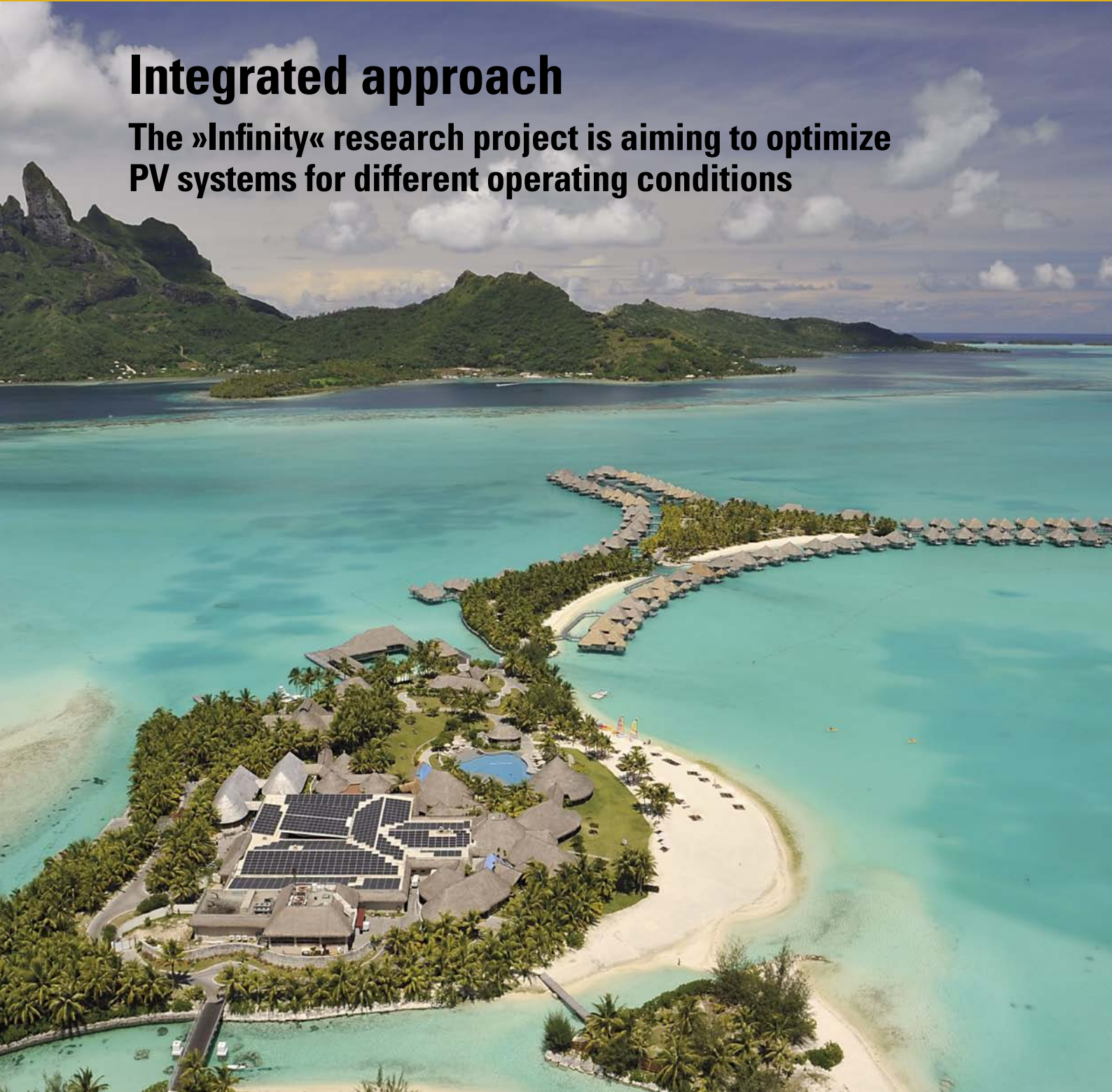


Integrated approach

The »Infinity« research project is aiming to optimize PV systems for different operating conditions



Italy in focus

Latest figures mark the descent into irrelevance for a once leading PV market

Cleaning water

10 percent of the global population lack access to safe drinking water – but solar could help

Off-grid systems

PV-powered infrastructure could offer greater market potential than anticipated

On the up – but not enough

Solar stocks noted a rise, but are still down 7 percent compared to the beginning of the year

Solar is for everyone

The US solar industry employs 174,000 Americans nationwide, but this number is so much more than a piece of data. This number represents the people who are directly behind an energy revolution, whose stories encapsulate the very essence of solar's character.

174,000 individuals are transforming America.

The solar workforce is diversifying our nation's power grid – through the rooftops of your homes, your community's solar gardens, churches and businesses, and through your utility's large-scale solar plants.

Their work updating America's electric grid with 21st century technologies, such as solar, is offering consumers more choices and diversifying our power sources.

But what 174,000 does not immediately highlight is the growing diversity of people behind the number and their different stories. According to The Solar Foundation's most recent Jobs Census, solar is for everyone.

When it comes to both ethnic and gender diversity, the solar industry surpasses the oil, gas and coal industries. For example, at 16.3 percent, the solar industry's employment rate for individuals of Latino or Hispanic origin is 3 percentage points higher than the entire US employment rate for that group. Women also account for 21.6 percent of the solar industry's total workforce.

With the ever-growing demand for solar energy now higher than ever, the workforce

is projected to grow by more than 36,000 by the end of the year alone. And the industry is ramping up its training and recruitment opportunities to ensure its workforce continues to be as diverse as its consumers.

In fact, the solar industry is committed to becoming the most diverse energy sector in the nation, as Americans from all walks of life take advantage of the benefits of solar and its tumbling price tag. Solar already employs a higher percentage rate of veterans than the total US workforce, but the industry upped the ante this spring by committing to having 50,000 US veterans working in solar by 2020.

Our industry cannot keep its commitment to provide well-paid jobs for more Americans if Congress makes the wrong decision on looming federal policy. The solar investment tax credit (ITC) provides a 30-percent tax credit to commercial and residential solar users, which has helped the solar industry crack 22 GW for the first time in history this summer.

Under the policy, total US solar capacity is expected to double over the next 2 years. But if the ITC is allowed to expire from its current levels on Dec. 31, 2016, 100,000 jobs could be lost nationwide.

There is more work to do and more Americans who are eager to help solar drive America to its new clean energy future. Americans are telling Congress that 174,000 simply isn't enough. ● rr



Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA)

▲ Rhone Resch, president of the US Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) writes a monthly column on PV in the US.

2017 and 2018. Including this agreement, Strata Solar has purchased PV modules with a combined capacity of 1 GW to date. The company will use the modules for its PV project pipeline in the US. The financial terms of the supply agreement were not disclosed.

Furthermore, First Solar has secured power purchase agreements (PPAs) for two PV projects with a combined capacity of 130 MW in the US.

The company has obtained a PPA for its 119 MW (AC) East Pecos Solar Project from Texas, US-based energy provider Austin Energy. The PV plant will be located in Pecos County, Texas, and will be completed in late 2016. First Solar will break ground on the project in early 2016.

Moreover, First Solar announced the formal execution of a PPA for a 10.8 MW solar project to be built on the site of the decommissioned Rancho Seco Nuclear Generating Station in Herald, California. Construction of the plant is expected to commence in the fourth quarter of 2015, with commercial operation beginning in mid-2016.

First Solar has not said how much it will invest in either of the projects.

Spanish solar company Energía Solar Aplicada SL (ESA) has announced that its US subsidiary has secured the contracts to develop three PV projects with a combined capacity of 116 MW in the US. According to Spanish newspaper Valencia Noticias, the three projects will require a total investment of \$200 million. The three projects will have a capacity of 50 MW, 38 MW and 28 MW, respectively. The article does not disclose where the projects will be located, nor does it say for which companies ESA will build the plants.

Arizona

Colorado, US-based engineering company Blymyer Engineers Inc. has announced its selection by US renewable energy project developer Swinerton Builders to provide engineering services for the construction of the 45 MW (AC) Sandstone solar project in Florence, Arizona.

US-based independent power producer sPower started construction on the solar park in July. The Sandstone solar plant will rely on over 182,000 solar modules provided by Chinese manufacturer Jinko Solar and will be

built by EPC contractor Swinerton Renewable Energy. The PV plant will sell its electricity output to the local grid under a 21-year PPA. The company expects to complete the project by the end of 2015.

California

US solar developer 8minutenergy Renewables LLC has secured a PPA for a 191 MW (DC) PV project it intends to build in Kern County, California, from local utility Southern California Public Power Authority (SCPPA), on behalf of its participating member, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). The Springbok 2 Solar Farm will be located 70 miles north of Los Angeles and is expected to be operational in the fourth quarter of 2016. 8minutenergy began developing the project in 2011.

In July, 8minutenergy broke ground on the Springbok 1 Solar Farm project. That project also has a PPA with SCPPA and will deliver power to LADWP.

The Springbok PV power plant will be built across 950 acres of low-productivity farmland and will use solar trackers. Power generated by the facility will help LADWP achieve its goal of