

New round of applications for Solar Harvest opens to support solar energy development

The "Solar Harvest – Solar Energy Support Scheme for Schools and Welfare Non-Governmental Organisations" (Solar Harvest) opened for a new round of applications today (January 15).

Solar Harvest aims to promote the development of local renewable energy (RE). It provides non-government and non-profit-making schools, as well as welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs) receiving recurrent subvention from the Social Welfare Department, with a one-stop service to install solar energy generation systems at their premises free of charge. Solar Harvest also assists participating schools and organisations in joining the Feed-in Tariff (FiT) Scheme of the two power companies. As well, the schools can integrate the solar energy generation system into teaching to enhance students' environmental awareness and their interest in science.

A Government spokesman said that Solar Harvest has received an enthusiastic response since its launch in 2019. As at December 2020, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) had received more than 350 applications, with more than 90 per cent from schools. The EMSD has also installed solar energy generation systems at more than 110 schools and welfare NGOs. It is estimated that this batch of systems can generate more than 880 000 kilowatt-hours of electricity each year, equivalent to the monthly electricity consumption of about 3 200 families.

"The Chief Executive had announced in the 2020 Policy Address that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would strive to achieve carbon neutrality before 2050. To mitigate climate change, the Government is committed to promoting the development of local RE. Apart from introducing the FiT Scheme and Solar Harvest, a series of measures has also been implemented to support the development of RE by the public, including relaxing restrictions on the installation of solar energy generation systems on the rooftops of New Territories Exempted Houses (also known as 'village houses'), introducing legislative amendments so that individuals who have installed RE systems on their residential premises need not apply for business registrations or file profits tax returns for the FiT payments they receive, revamping the 'HK RE Net' to provide information on RE and installation of RE systems, etc," the spokesman said.

The deadline for the new round of applications for Solar Harvest is July 30, 2021. Applications submitted on or before April 30, 2021, will be given priority, such that works may commence in July 2021 at the earliest. Applicants can download the application form from the EMSD's website (re.emsd.gov.hk) and call the EMSD at 3155 3977 for enquiries.