

## Public sector to bid for solar farms



Applications for solar farm licences will be open to the public sector early next year, says Twarath Sutabutr, the newly appointed director-general of the Energy Policy and Planning Office.

The office expects to grant licences totalling 800 megawatts of solar power nationwide with a focus on state agencies, state enterprises, universities and agricultural cooperatives. Applicants each have a quota of 5 MW.

"Based on our assessment, the investment requirement for 800 MW will be about 50 billion baht only for solar modules excluding electrical equipment and facilities," Mr Twarath said at a public participation session for the second round of solar power licences.

Licence holders will be able to sell power to the state-owned Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, which will provide incentives through a feed-in tariff rate of 5.66 baht per kilowatt hour spanning the 25-year contract.

Mr Twarath warned that some state agencies should have studied the rules of their agencies about whether they are allowed to sell power for commercial purposes.

"If any agency finds itself being blocked from selling power commercially, it must be their job to amend the law or find their own solutions before applying," he said.

It is hoped commercial operations will start from 2017-18.

The private sector will also benefit from the projects as contractors, suppliers, developers and operators.

Public participation is due to finish this month before the National Energy Policy Council considers the issue next month.

The Energy Regulatory Commission will have to screen the proposals.

Thanongsak Kulchusak, head of Chaiyaphum-based Ban Kwaw Agricultural Cooperative, said policymakers should reserve 400 MW under the scheme for cooperatives that could generate electricity directly to the public.

Mr Twarath expects additional capacity of around 1,200 MW will come online by the end of this year, resulting in combined capacity of 2,700 MW.

Thailand is due to have solar power totalling 6,000 MW in 2036.

