InnoEnergy invests €2 million in NexWafe's solar breakthrough

NexWafe's solar wafer epitaxial growth technology increases efficiency of solar cell manufacture

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InnoEnergy, the innovation engine for sustainable energy across Europe, has committed a €2 million investment in NexWafe, a developer of highly efficient solar wafer production technology called EpiWafer. The companies have also joined forces to commercialise NexWafe's breakthrough technology.

EpiWafers can save up to 50 per cent in the costs of manufacturing PV wafers. By cutting out several energy intensive and costly development stages as well as saving on material, the technology enables NexWafe to go straight from raw material to wafer form.

The project – Epicomm – will support NexWafe in developing its German-based pilot line of solar wafers, characterising cells and modules built out of those wafers, and planning for mass-scale production.

"NexWafe's disruptive solution has huge potential to impact the cost reduction of energy from solar power. It's an extremely promising investment.", says Mikel Lasa, InnoEnergy Iberia CEO. "Besides the strong business case, this project is also key to strengthen the EU renewable energy leadership, one of the pillars of the Energy Union. This is also an excellent example of how R&D moves towards the market. We definitely want to see more of these in our coming investment rounds."

Stefan Reber, NexWafe CEO, says: "InnoEnergy is a well-respected force in sustainable energy and this recognition will springboard our future growth. By joining forces we accelerate the commercialisation of our disruptive EpiWafer technology."

Epicomm is being delivered in partnership with the renowned research organisations Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems ISE, ISC Konstanz, and industry partners Ecosolifer and Fill Factory.

Lasa adds: "The calibre of the Epicomm project partners shows the huge potential of this start-up. InnoEnergy is absolutely thrilled to be a part of this team, as we support this unique company on its way to commercialisation."

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InnoEnergy is supported by the EIT, a body of the European Union

About NexWafe

NexWafe GmbH, headquartered in Freiburg, Germany, will supply to the solar cell producers high quality, reliable monocrystalline wafers fully compatible with common cell and module fabrication processes at a considerable lower cost of conventionally produced silicon wafers.

In the EpiWafer technology, a thick crystalline silicon layer is epitaxially deposited and subsequently detached after growth to produce a freestanding wafer of standard thickness. The EpiWafer is a direct substitute for conventional n- or p-type mono-crystalline silicon wafers.

About InnoEnergy

InnoEnergy is the innovation engine for sustainable energy across Europe.

The challenge is big, but our goal is simple: to achieve a sustainable energy future for Europe. Innovation is the solution. New ideas, products and services that make a real difference, new businesses and new people to deliver them to market.

At InnoEnergy we support and invest in innovation at every stage of the journey – from classroom to end-customer. With our network of partners we build connections across Europe, bringing together inventors and industry, graduates and employers, researchers and entrepreneurs, businesses and markets.

We work in three essential areas of the innovation mix:

- Education to help create an informed and ambitious workforce that understands the demands of sustainability and the needs of industry.
- Innovation Projects to bring together ideas, inventors and industry to create commercially attractive technologies that deliver real results to customers.
- Business Creation Services to support entrepreneurs and start-ups who are expanding Europe's energy ecosystem with their innovative offerings.

Bringing these disciplines together maximises the impact of each, accelerates the development of market-ready solutions, and creates a fertile environment in which we can sell the innovative results of our work.