

Solar Energy: Flexcell to build a new production facility at Yverdon-les-Bains – 80 new jobs created.

The company Flexcell (VHF Technologies S.A.) makers of flexible solar panels, will build a new 25 Megawatt production facility (500'000 square meters of solar cells per year) at Yverdon-les-Bains. 80 new jobs will be created.

Founded in 2000 by three scientists enthusiastic about solar energy, Flexcell, the little Swiss start-up has joined the big league.

Things started to move in 2006 when Q-Cells, the German solar energy giant decided to invest in the Swiss technology which deposits thin layers of amorphous silicon on a plastic substrate.

Their plan was to increase the initial production capacity of the Yverdon pilot site by building a new factory at Thalheim in Germany on the same site as the Q-Cells factory.

But Flexcell management succeeded in convincing their majority shareholder to build the new factory in Yverdon.

The major arguments for keeping the factory at Yverdon were the availability of highly qualified personnel (University of Neuchâtel, EPFL, HES), tax incentives, a significant time saving by taking over existing factory buildings and, as the pilot production line is already at Yverdon, less risk involved in transferring the technology to the new factory site in Germany.

Agreement with Leclanché

Last month, the company VHF-Technologies S.A. based in Yverdon-les-Bains signed an agreement with Leclanché SA (manufacturer of batteries) for the purchase of land opposite its main site. Following the decontamination and renovation of this area, Flexcell will build a new 25MW factory which will employ approximately 120 people.

Creation of 80 new jobs in the next 12 months

Only a few months ago, Flexcell employed only 12 people compared to 40 today. The construction of this new factory will mean the employment of an additional 80 people within the coming year.

“It’s really great that we managed to convince Q-Cells to build the factory here in Switzerland at Yverdon” said Flexcell CEO Alexandre Closset. “The company founders and I are extremely happy that we are keeping our technology in Switzerland and creating so many jobs”.

Innovative products

The main work of Flexcell is the production of flexible solar modules using a technology originally developed at the Institute of Microtechnology at the University of Neuchâtel. This technology enables the deposition of amorphous silicon in very thin layers on lightweight plastic substrates and has led to the development of a range of consumer products such as a rollable solar charger. Next year a range of flexible solar cells will be available destined for roofing and industrial façade applications.

