

Regional Forum

“International Experiences in Developing Regional Quality Assurance Schemes for Solar Water Heating in Latin America and the Caribbean”

SUMMARY REPORT

14.07.2015

BACKGROUND

The forum “International Experiences in Developing Regional Quality Assurance Schemes for Solar Water Heating in Latin America and the Caribbean” was held in San Jose, Costa Rica, from 29 to 30 June 2015. The Regional Forum was jointly organised by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the project “Quality Infrastructure for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)” coordinated by the German Metrology Institute (PTB), the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE), the Electricity Institute of Costa Rica (ICE) and the National Standardization Body of Costa Rica (INTECO).

This event is part of IRENA’s support to member countries in developing and implementing quality assurance frameworks for renewable energy technologies, corresponding to the activities defined in the IRENA Work Programme 2014-2015, under its thematic area -enabling investment and growth-, and the component -quality assurance and standardization-.

The two-day event brought together international experts and representatives from national standardization, testing, certification and regulatory bodies from countries in the region, to define strategies for the implementation of quality assurance frameworks for solar water heaters (SWH) in LAC.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM

The goal of this Forum was to support the countries in the LAC region with the development and implementation of quality assurance frameworks for solar thermal technologies in the residential sector in line with national sustainable energy targets. Specific objectives were:

- Provide an opportunity for a regional exchange of experiences on quality infrastructure (QI) for solar water heating technologies (SWH).
- Facilitate a discussion between QI experts in LAC for SWH, and open the discussion to international experts who may support the region, on concrete challenges and opportunities for developing sound QA frameworks in LAC for SWH.
- Facilitate regional and international cooperation through fostering existing networks and, possibly in future, working groups on specific issues concerning regional QA frameworks for the LAC region.
- Match responsible governmental institutions for regulating SWH markets with the technical QI institutions and producers of SWH in the LAC region.

SUMMARY OF THE EVENT

Participation

More than 50 participants, representing around 14 countries actively attended this Forum. Participants came from Ministries and Regulatory bodies, as well as Standardization, Testing and Certification bodies from the region.

Opening

The Vice-Minister of energy of Costa Rica, Ms. Irene Cañas, opened the Forum. She highlighted that solar thermal technologies are now a feasible option for the residential sector in Costa Rica as this technologies have proven to be mature, based on:

- Cost competitiveness against conventional energy technologies; and
- Meeting the expectations of customers thanks to assured quality.

Technical sessions

International and regional experts presented during the first day the latest developments concerning the different components of the quality infrastructure for solar water heating systems. Including international ISO standards for solar thermal in residential applications, testing methods for solar collectors, certification systems implemented in USA and Europe for SWH and the use of quality infrastructure in national incentive policies for SWH markets. All presentations are available in IRENA's Events Archive web page.

Working groups

On the second day participants were divided in three groups to discuss challenges, opportunities and next steps for: i) developing testing infrastructure for SWH, ii) implementing standards and certification for SWH in the region, and iii) how policies and use QI to foster SWH markets. Each group came with clear follow up actions discussed in the next section of this report.

Visit to SWH laboratory in San Jose

On the third day interested participants had the opportunity to visit the new facilities for testing SWH in Costa Rica. This laboratory has state-of-the-art equipment for testing SWH equipment.

ACTION POINTS

Two clear action points were requested and agreed by the participants in the Forum:

1. Prepare a regional document which consolidates the regional experiences and lessons learnt in using QI to support SWH markets. This document will have great value for all countries in the region as it will be source to learn from others.
2. Establish a technical committee to run an inter-laboratories proficiency test for solar water heaters.

CONCLUSION

The Forum meet all the proposed objectives:

- Inform participants on the latest developments concerning standards, testing, certification and policies for SWH markets;
- Served to exchange experiences between countries in the field of QI for SWH;

- Achieve agreement between countries to document and share lessons learnt with others through IRENA and partners;
- Establish a working group on testing methods for SWH which will be running proficiency tests in the next three years.
