

## Romande Energie and Granit SA join in supporting the development of the Environmental Technology Center in Orbe

**Romande Energie, acting through its subsidiary Romande Energie Renouvelable SA, and Granit SA have decided to strengthen their partnership by jointly building Western Switzerland's first gasified biomass cogeneration plant. It will be located at the Environmental Technology Center in Orbe and will produce energy from local resources in order to meet local needs. The pilot facility, which could be commissioned as early as 2010, will produce 3 GWh/year of heat and 2.5 GWh/year of electricity. This project embodies the firm commitment of both Romande Energie and Granit SA to promote environmental energies while supporting regional development and contributing to economic growth and job creation.**

Morges and Lausanne, 18 December 2008 – The Environmental Technology Center in Orbe draws its support in large part from the Vaud Canton Department of Economy and the Northern Vaud Development Association (ADNV). The Center, unique in Western Switzerland, is a showcase of environmental expertise and a demonstration site for the principal technological solutions under development or ready to be marketed. Its primary goals include promoting innovation in the area of renewable energy production and supporting company and job creation in the Northern Vaud region.

Romande Energie aims to play a major role in the development of this competence centre. Acting through its Environment business unit, it will carry out projects in Orbe related to energy efficiency and provide technological monitoring there in the area of new renewable energies.

It will also work closely with Granit SA to build a power plant at the Environmental Technology Center to produce heat and electricity through biomass gasification. This pilot unit represents the third of its kind in Switzerland and the first in the western part of the country.

In technical terms, the plant will transform dry organic matter (primarily wood) into gas through a process of preheating and partial oxidation, and this gas will power an electricity-generating motor. The plant will operate year-round and is expected to have a high energy yield (25%). It will produce a large quantity (3 GWh/year) of 60°C heat to be used, for example, in agricultural drying (fruits, vegetables and grasses). Nearly 2.5 GWh/year of electrical energy will be generated, which is equivalent to the energy consumption of 600 households (an average of 4,000 kWh/year per household).

At the Environmental Technology Center, the heat produced by this facility will be channelled to heat users, mainly for drying agricultural products and by-products: natural insulation, using grass from Biomass Process Solutions AG; agricultural and forestry waste, which will be dried and converted into fuel; and food components, as part of an initiative currently being negotiated with a farm cooperative in the region.

Romande Energie will finance the entire project for approximately CHF 4.5 million, while Granit SA will be responsible for the technical design of the facility. Construction of the plant will be launched in 2009, with operations slated to begin in 2010.

This pilot unit gives Romande Energie Renouvelable SA the opportunity to develop local energy production, acquire expertise in heat distribution and expand its own production. The project will also create jobs and respond to a real need of the agricultural community, which is suffering from the high cost of its energy supply, particularly for heat production.

For Romande Energie, the many projects carried out in Orbe represent an opportunity to deepen its collaboration with the School of Business and Engineering Vaud (HEIG-VD), thereby fulfilling the company's intention to play a part in ambitious R&D programmes in the area of renewable energy production. The projects also signal the company's determined and active participation in the expansion of the Environmental Technology Center in Orbe.

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