

Japan commercial solar

Japan's feed-in tariffs (FITs) for this year will range from JPY 9.5 (\$0.06)/kWh to JPY 16/kWh, depending on system size. The Japanese government also says it will hold four more auctions for solar projects above 250 kW this year.

In addition, the Japanese government said that it will hold four auctions for solar projects exceeding 250 kW in size in 2024. The ceiling prices for the four procurement exercises have been set at JPY 9.2/kWh, JPY 9.13/kWh, JPY 9.05/kWh, and JPY 8.98/kWh.

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PV Expo Tokyo 2024, Japan's main solar industry event, has concluded with record numbers, innovative products, and new trends. Storage auctions and new rules for power purchase agreements (PPAs) are driving the market to new spaces, as project developers scramble for land to build on, while lightweight plastic modules continue to gain prominence.

Making the best of limited spaces was the overarching theme at this year's Smart Energy Week, held this week at Tokyo Big Sight. The event attracted around 70,000 visitors and exhibitors across six individual exhibition spaces in five halls. The organizers noticed a 30% increase in exhibitors over last year's show.

That said, the Japanese market does have unique characteristics. For example, a lack of available land means that the market has traditionally mainly been driven by the rooftop sector. Japanese residential rooftops are small and fragmented, meaning that smaller modules must be pieced together to use available space, making them more popular than larger modules with higher efficiency rates.

Japanese manufacturers such as Sharp and Panasonic, as well as long-established suppliers from overseas, meet this demand with their offerings for the country. Trina Solar, for example, offers modules with the exact width for standardized corrugated metal roofs in Japan.

For larger commercial and industrial (C&I) rooftops, weight plays a critical role. Roofs made from corrugated metal were not designed to bear the weight of PV arrays. Therefore, many new module manufacturers entering

the Japanese market this year are offering lightweight plastic modules to overcome this challenge. They range in weight from 6 kg to 11 kg for 450 W to 550 W modules, with installers adhering them directly onto metal rooftops. Such panels are rare in other parts of the world, but at the Tokyo event, more than half of the module manufacturers displayed them at their booths.

Another (possibly Japan-specific) module trend is the lack of a lower edge on modules for better water drainage. Longi, DAH Solar, and many other manufacturers displayed modules sprinkled with water, showing that panels with lower edges accumulate pools of moisture at the bottom. Preventing this helps to minimize soiling, according to the manufacturers.

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