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Joost Smits
Project Leader Shell



Shell follows developments in solar energy

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Twice a year, Shell and ECN organise the Joint Solar Panel, a seminar focusing on current developments in the field of solar energy. The goal? To closely monitor new markets and promising renewable energy technologies. Project Leader Joost Smits from Shell explains the years of fruitful cooperation with ECN.

“The cooperation with ECN began when Shell Solar was part of the Shell Group. Although this department no longer exists, we continue to follow the development of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, biofuels, hydrogen and geothermal. This is only logical, given that, as an energy company in which oil and gas are dominant, we must also be on the look out for new, emerging sustainable technologies. This is partly to make our own assets – often in hot, dry desert regions – more sustainable, and partly to explore new business opportunities.”

Where to from here?

“Developments in the field of solar energy are moving very fast. Throughout the

years, ECN has been an objective source of information for us in terms of technology breakthroughs, material availability, environmental requirements and market developments. In the Joint Solar Panel, we ask ECN to conduct targeted studies, for example, into thin-film solar cells: What types are available, what are the differences, how quickly can the cost development go? This enables us to keep our knowledge up-to-date.”

Assessing the value

“ECN’s expertise covers the full spectrum from the square millimeter at cell level, to modules, up to the entire production chain. This is valuable knowledge and something we don’t have to this extent at Shell in-house. Our many years of cooperation mean that often a single telephone call is all that’s needed to assess the value of a publication on solar research, such as a report claiming record efficiency of particular solar cells. There’s a good reason why we work together with ECN. Their solar energy knowledge ranks among the highest in the world, if not the highest.”