

From the Alps to the Himalayas: Cleantech exports

Will Switzerland become synonymous with environmental technologies, just as it is with quality, chocolate, precision mechanics, cheese and watches?

“It is well positioned to do so”, says Barbara Möckli-Schneider, Secretary General and Member of the Executive Board of the Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce, Managing Director of SwissCham and Secretary General of the SwissCham Southern Africa.

Cleantech

Written by Cyril Demaria

●●● “Switzerland consistently ranks as one of the world’s most energy-efficient economies thanks largely to advances in renewable energy, green buildings, waste management and sustainable transportation”, reminds Möckli-Schneider.

“Switzerland is doing well but our international competitors are doing better”, says the minister for environment Doris Leuthard. “We need to adapt our way of life and look towards sustainability.”

Leuthard announced a “cleantech masterplan” in October, jointly with the outgoing minister for environment Moritz Leuenberger, with the aim to reduce the use of resources to environmentally sustainable levels. The plan envisages Switzerland becoming top in clean technology research and production within ten years. This includes renewable energy, information technology and eco-friendly transport.

The swiss-cleantech association’s new cleantech strategy switzerland sets up

binding climate targets and conditions for the economy. These are concrete measures to demonstrate, how Switzerland can profit from the fast growing global cleantech market and profile itself as a leading cleantech nation.

“Ambitious and future-oriented visions are important”, says Nick Beglinger, Chairman of swisscleantech, and mentions the NEAT break-through deep in the Gotthard massive as an example. “The tracks for the future have to be laid today!”

Asia on the rise

Performing well at home, however, might not prove to be sufficient by itself. Global warming is affecting the Swiss glaciers and the polar ice caps even if both regions emit very low levels of carbon dioxide.

“In that respect, Switzerland’s high-tech solutions in the fields of biotechnology, microtechnology and nanotechnology are an ideal complement to our country’s traditional strengths in the fields of precision, mechanical and electrical engineering”, explains Ms. Möckli-Schneider.

And just as Switzerland is a major



Barbara Möckli-Schneider

exporter of the latter technologies, it is becoming a leading exporter of the former ones, which could help to save the Himalayan glaciers too. Unexpectedly, the swift and relatively sudden rise of Asia is clearly evident.

“There will be great opportunities and immense growth in India, China, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam”, states Ms. Möckli-Schneider.

Switzerland has developed an expertise based on a home market for cleantech estimated at USD 30 billion in 2009. It is expected that by 2020, cleantech will represent 5.5 to 6% of the economic activities worldwide.

So far, it is estimated that cleantech employs 160,000 people in Switzerland – that is to say 4.5 percent of the total workforce.

“Switzerland has seen notable successes in the global cleantech arena through multinational manufacturing giants such as ABB and Oerlikon Solar. Other standout companies include Geberit, Schulthess Group, Ernst Schweizer, Meyer Burger, Hoval Herzog, Landis+Gyr, TRITEC International and Renggli”, says Ms. Möckli-Schneider.

To provide a framework for these developments in Asia, and to protect intellectual property rights, the Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce has signed various agreements with local Chambers of Commerce in all the ASEAN countries, South Korea and Pakistan.

“This is also strong support for Swiss SMEs”, explains Ms. Möckli-Schneider. “Sustainable technologies can only be developed and brought to market when suitable general conditions are in place.”



Nick Beglinger

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