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U.S. Loan for Huge Brazilian Landfill Gas Project Pays Dividends

31 May 2012

A \$48.6 million [loan](#) by the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank) supporting exports of equipment and services for the development of the Novo Gramacho biogas project in Brazil has generated 165 new jobs.

The transaction is Ex-Im Bank's first financing for biogas reclamation and development.

Among the beneficiaries is Newport Beach, California based renewable [energy](#) specialist, FirmGreen, which estimated that the project directly generated 165 new jobs at its facilities and at other companies in seven states.

According to FirmGreen Ex-Im's 12-year loan was vital because long-term financing for renewable-energy projects is limited in Brazil.

The company also said that it faced competition from European companies backed by their governments' export-credit agencies.

The loan recipient, Gas Verde S.A., is the project owner and will operate the Novo Gramacho biogas plant located at the 140-hectare Jardim Gramacho landfill near Rio de Janeiro.

One of the world's largest solid-waste [landfills](#), Jardim Gramacho was the subject of 'Waste Land,' an internationally acclaimed documentary that was nominated for an Academy Award in 2011.

The company said that the biogas plant will convert the site's 'dirty' methane gas into clean, usable biomethane.

FirmGreen and its subcontracted companies supplied proprietary biogas-cleaning equipment run by FirmGreen's VerdeControls operating software and other related services.

The biogas plant is expected to capture and treat 20,000 normal cubic meters per hour (nM3/hr) of raw landfill gas to produce 9000 nM3/hr of fuel-grade biomethane gas.

The biomethane sold under FirmGreen's trademark will be transmitted by pipeline to a nearby refinery owned and operated by Petroleo Brasileiro S.A. (Petrobras) - Brazil's national oil-and-gas company.



Multiple benefits

According to FirmGreen environmental benefits of the Novo Gramacho project are substantial. Reclamation of the biogas at the site will significantly reduce passive landfill emissions to the atmosphere.

Moreover, the company said that biogas from the Novo Gramacho plant will directly replace approximately 10% of the natural gas derived from fossil-fuel sources that is consumed at the Petrobras refinery.

Total greenhouse-gas reductions associated with this project are estimated to be approximately 1.4 million tonnes annually.

"This project has multiple benefits both in the United States and in Brazil. It generated new jobs for highly skilled workers in seven states across the country," explained Ex-Im Bank chairman and president, Fred P. Hochberg.

"It also enables the Brazilian project owner, Gas Verde, to convert an environmental hazard into a green-energy source that will reduce local emissions of greenhouse gases as well," he added.

FirmGreen added that Dublin, Ohio based engineering firm, Guild Associates served as a major subcontractor, fabricating the specialised gas-cleaning equipment and is also assisting during the start-up of the biogas plant.

FirmGreen CEO, Steve Wilburn commented: "The loan from Ex-Im Bank is instrumental to positioning our green technology competitively worldwide. Ex-Im's financing supports jobs for skilled workers at FirmGreen and at numerous small businesses across America related to the supply chain for this project."

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