

Solar Manufacturer Using China As Low-Cost Stepping Stone

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — A Toledo solar panel manufacturer opened an assembly plant in China to provide low-cost assembly while it works to automate and expand its local operations, the company's president said Thursday.

Xunlight Corp., which has received nearly \$50 million in federal and state assistance to develop research and production in Toledo, just started talking publicly this week about the Chinese facility, which opened earlier this year, The Blade newspaper reported Thursday.

Xunlight, which manufactures thin-film solar panels, invested about \$2 million in private venture capital to open the Chinese plant, company president Xunming Deng said. No government funding was used for the Chinese plant, which laminates the thin stainless steel solar cells produced in Toledo, Deng said.

"Prior to completing the automation process here in Toledo, we had to take steps to manufacture cost-effectively to compete in an international market," Deng said Thursday.

Once the company is globally competitive, then it can expand its operation and create more jobs in Toledo, Deng said.

The Chinese operations weren't publicized because more than 90 percent of the company's payroll and capital expenditures, including all of its research and development, are based in Toledo, Deng said.

The plant, in Kunshan, is about 60 miles west of Shanghai and has about 100 employees.

State officials were aware of Xunlight's Chinese plant and are confident that state funding has been used only for local operations, Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland's energy adviser Mark Shanahan told the newspaper.

"We have clauses in all our agreements with Xunlight that require them to invest all of our funding in the Toledo facility," Shanahan said.

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