AfDB board approves $21.783m grant for solar-powered irrigation in Sudan

The African Development Bank has approved a $21.783m grant to accelerate the adoption of solar-powered irrigation pumps in Sudan's West Kordofan and North Kordofan states.

Image source: Gallo/Getty

The project will enable farmers' adoption of renewable energy technology through the installation of 1,170 photovoltaic (PV) irrigation pumps, the establishment of maintenance and repair workshops for the pumps, and the supply of equipment for a pump testing laboratory to provide certification and training.

Agriculture is an important economic sector in Sudan. In 2016, nearly 40% of the country's GDP came from farming. For the sector, and for the wider economy, the project offers significant and numerous knock-on benefits. As a result of the expected phasing out of diesel-fueled pumps, participating farmers will realise cost savings from no longer needing to purchase diesel, which is scarce in rural areas. Productivity also would increase: diesel generators require time-consuming maintenance and repair. Pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, the country's largest contributor, would fall.

Overcoming clean energy adoption hurdles

Paul Baldeh, AfDB director for power systems development, noted that, "By extending farmers a grant covering 75% of installation costs, the government, with bank support, will overcome the most significant hurdle of adopting clean PV technology: high upfront costs."

The remaining 25% will be payable in installments over three years. He added that the project will conduct a groundwater survey and sustainability assessment that will inform the development of subsequent projects in Sudan.

The project meets the Sudanese government's renewable energy and poverty reduction objectives as well as the Bank's High Five and Energy Sector Policy. Moreover, the project has strong potential to be replicated and scaled up in other parts of the country.