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China, Kenya jointly develop solar products for Africa

A joint research project between China and Kenya will help utilize solar energy in Africa, scientists said Wednesday.

An Xingcai, deputy head of the Natural Energy Resource Research Institute based in Gansu Province, northwest China, said researchers would study how to adapt Chinese solar panels and heaters to the Kenyan climate.

The demonstration project will run until 2012. The Kenyan partner is an electronic technology company.

China's Ministry of Science and Technology approved the project in April and allocated 2.64 million yuan (386,000 U.S. dollars) for the work.

The institute would dispatch researchers to Kenya and set up an office there, according to An, also deputy director of the International Center for Promotion and Transfer of Solar Energy Technology under the United Nations Industry Development Organization.

Kenya has rich solar resources, but its electricity comes mainly from hydropower and imported oil. Its rural population relies heavily on wood and charcoal for heating and cooking.

The Natural Energy Research Institute was founded in 1978. Between 1991 and 2008, the institute trained more than 500 people in practical solar technology for Africa, including 12 for Kenya.

China is the world's largest producer of solar heaters and the third largest maker of photovoltaic cells, National Development and Reform Commission statistics show.

Source: Xinhua