

GEOTHERMAL POWER IN KAZAKHSTAN

Overview

District heating sector contributes to 51% of the national Co2 emissions in the entire primary energy balance. In addition to that, the residential and public buildings account for the largest energy consumption in Kazakhstan-47%. This is why renewable energy should receive major attention from environmental and energy sector policy makers¹.

Kazakhstan possesses significant resources of geothermal water with medium and low temperatures, mainly in some of its fifteen deep sedimentary basins. This is confirmed by wells drilled, mainly as petroleum exploration wells, which have intersecting permeable structures yielding hot water².

Geothermal resources may be suitable for district heating purposes. As of today, the Kaplanbek geothermal field (near the city of Chimkent), with a water temperature of 80°C, is used to supply heat to residential buildings. Near the city of Almaty, a geothermal source with a temperature of 80-120 ° C is used for heating greenhouses in winter and air conditioning in summer³.

Despite such a great potential currently Kazakhstan is not producing power from geothermal resources, although it has the opportunities for much more widespread use and can make a significant contribution to the renewable energy targets established.

Regulatory Information

The only law that mentions geothermal resources in Kazakhstan is the Law on Renewable Energy Sources. It merely lists geothermal power as one of the renewable energy sources.

So far, there is currently no other specific legal framework in Kazakhstan on geothermal energy. The targets for renewable energy sources development approved in Kazakhstan indicated the goals for such types of facilities as wind, solar, hydroelectric power stations and biogas plants. These targets do not contain data for geothermal facilities. As well as, no new objectives by the types of facilities are announced in Kazakhstan.

However, taking into consideration a capacity in low-temperature geothermal resources, within the last few years the Ministry of Energy is exploring how geothermal resources could be used to “green” district heating or promote SMEs, including, via attracting the investments to the sector. As an example, in October of 2018 the MoE and the KAZENERGY Association held the meeting of the Scientific and Technical Council on the theme “Prospects for the development of geothermal energy in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, as the result of which a draft Road map for conducting research in the field of geothermal energy sources for 2018-2019 were adopted.

¹<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ReviewoftheKazakhstantransitiontotheGreenEconomyscenario-HeatPumptechnologiesEnglish.pdf>

² “Preliminary Review of Geothermal Resources in Kazakhstan”.

³ <http://old.kazee.kz/energoeffektivnye-texnologii/geotermalnaya-energetika/>

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Therefore, Kazakhstan is still studying the feasibilities for geothermal power and the legal framework has not been developed yet.

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Although the geothermal resources are specifically determined as the renewable sources,, (1) the laws do not require the Financial Settlement Center to buy the heat produced from such resource; (2) the law does not establish the separate tariff; (3) the law specifically mentions that the costs of heat energy produced by the facility for the use of renewable energy sources are included in the tariff of the energy supplying organization in the manner prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on natural monopolies.

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