
The National Research Program on Energy in Taiwan

Maw-Kuen Wu

The vibrancy of Taiwan's economy has resulted in a continuous increase in energy demand over the past two decades. The growing use of energy in Taiwan reflects continuing economic growth and rising living standards, but as a result, securing energy resources has become more difficult when the government is trying to reduce emissions and promote more environmentally friendly energy policies.

Currently, Taiwan's energy comes mainly from four sources--coal, natural gas, oil, and nuclear, while small contribution from hydropower. Among the major sources, oil accounts for about 50% of the total energy consumption, coal comes next with about 30%, followed by nuclear energy with 10%, and natural gas with 8%. The limited hydropower, coal and natural gas resources in Taiwan are far from sufficient to meet the growing demand. Relying heavily on imports, Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s focused primarily on securing a steady supply of energy resources and accumulating reserves to weather global price fluctuations and energy crises. Since the 1990s, environmental factors have featured more prominently in energy policy.

After 2000, the government made explicit its interest in establishing a clean, efficient and liberalized energy supply and demand system. To meet the demand, the government has recently decided to launch a national research program on energy. In this presentation I shall give an overview of the current planning of this important and ambitious initiative.