

WEH plans major investment for capacity boost

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Thailand's biggest wind power generator, Wind Energy Holdings (WEH), plans to invest in other sources of electricity including solar, hydro and biomass to back up its capacity, its chief executive told Reuters in an interview.

Thailand has emerged as Southeast Asia's leading developer of renewable

electricity, with providers obliged to guarantee minimum levels of supply.

"The problem with wind in this region is it tends to be night-time wind, so we do need something to balance that mix," said chief executive Emma Collins.

She said five onshore wind farms with a capacity of 90 megawatts each would be operational this year, boosting WEH's total capacity in Thailand to 720MW. The firm secured a \$1.14-billion loan last year

from Siam Commercial Bank to finance the development.

WEH is aiming for a total capacity of 3,000MW by 2025.

Thailand has "good wind and great infrastructure", Ms Collins said.

The country is targeting 3,000MW of wind energy by 2036, up from 615MW in 2017.

It is already Southeast Asia's leader in solar power use, having broken into the top

15 globally in 2016, with a capacity of more than 3,000MW, reported the International Renewable Energy Agency.

But last year, a court ruling halted energy developments on agricultural land, which affected some of WEH's projects. Ms Collins said greater clarity was needed on rules regarding land usage by energy firms.

WEH targets 1,000MW of wind capacity in Australia, requiring investment of around \$1.5 billion. The company is also studying

opportunities in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

WEH said it is still planning an initial public offering, but did not provide a schedule for a listing, on hold since 2014 when founder and former shareholder Nopporn Suppipat left Thailand after being accused of violating the country's strict lese majeste law. Mr Nopporn maintains his innocence and lives in Paris where he has political asylum. REUTERS