

“We produce to order”

Just a few weeks ago, the Austrian manufacturer Sun Master Energiesysteme GmbH put its second laser welding system into operation. In an interview with SUN & WIND ENERGY, the General Manager Ulrich Bartmann explained why the company has invested in laser welding technology.



A system from DTEC in action: laser welding of a collector frame

Photo: DTEC



S&WE: Mr. Bartmann, at the beginning of this year you set up a new collector production line. For absorber production, you opted for a laser welding machine from the Austrian supplier DTEC GmbH. Why?

Ulrich Bartmann: Because we have had positive experiences with this company with regard to quality and know-how. What convinced us was the high degree of flexibility and the favourable price-performance ratio offered by DTEC. For us, it is important to be near to our suppliers. This guarantees fast maintenance and a swift service.

S&WE: Laser welding is nothing new for Sun Master. For quite some time now, you have already been using a machine from one of the pioneers of laser welding technology for aluminium absorbers. What can the new machine do better than the old one?

Bartmann: It provides a potential for higher quality. The investment was a necessary and logical step to enable us to cope with the increasing demand for laser-welded absorbers and collectors. Another aspect is the higher flexibility that the new machine offers. Altogether, the two laser units provide us with a production capacity of about 500,000 m² per year.

S&WE: Did process quality have priority in the choice of the machine or rather the aspect of cheap production?

Bartmann: The emphasis was on quality, with production becoming cheaper at the same time.

S&WE: Your collector production is structured according to the Toyota production system. How does the laser welding unit fit into this?

Bartmann: It offers us a high degree of flexibility and thus ensures short set-up times when changing over to another product, which allows us to produce in step with our customers. As a pure OEM manufacturer, Sun Master produces only to order, which means that our customers determine the production programme regarding the type and the amount. This requires high flexibility in the production process as well as in material procurement and transport.

S&WE: DTEC assembles entire collector production lines. Are general contractors for manufacturing lines the key to further automation in collector assembly?

Bartmann: The combination of time-tested systems adds up to an excellent complete package at DTEC. The company not only offers laser systems, but also other production machines for collector manufacturing. For us, however, it was important that DTEC had the expertise to give us optimal advice on the integration of existing facilities. Thus, we were able to ensure the functioning of the machinery with no trouble of any kind.

S&WE: Which further steps towards optimal production processes do you want to take?

Bartmann: We have taken the first measures for company-wide development by putting the laser welding unit to use in production. The next steps will concern the design and improvement of the overall processes as well as encouraging our members of staff to take on personal responsibility. Consequent avoidance of wastage and continuous development will make our company fit for the challenges of the future.



Ulrich Bartmann

Photo: Sun Master

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