

Greek company pips green list



A SMALL, family-run Greek company has picked up a European prize for excellence in environmental management.

Kalamata-based V&E Kottaridi SA was one of seven winners of the 2009 European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), announced at a ceremony in Sweden on November 19. It took the award in the small-organisation category.

The company was founded in 1968 by Klimis Klimentidis, "a very intelligent and creative man with innovative ideas", according to his granddaughter Klimientia Kottaridi (photo).

His original concept was the production of lime using locally sourced olive pips to fuel the firing process. A byproduct of the procedure was a powder which was commonly used as a fuel in stoves. After other means of heating were invented, in 1992 Klimentidis began to press this dust to produce briquettes.

Patented

In its report, the jury noted the company's innovation in extracting energy from olive pip. "We hold a patent for this idea and we are the only company producing briquettes from olive pip wood," Kottaridi said.

The briquettes, considered a renewable energy source, release 30 percent less carbon dioxide than conventional wood charcoal. The company produces two types: one for heating, the other for use in barbeques.

The company, which employs six family members and an additional 10 workers, continues to produce agricultural lime powder, a natural, non-toxic fertiliser that may be used in organic farming.

The company began its embrace of green ways in 1992, intensifying its efforts over the past seven years. In March, it was registered with EMAS.

In order to reduce its impact on the local environment, Kottaridi said, the company has made considerable investments, including an extractor for the control and reduction of dust as well as measures to reduce noise.

Job training

"We also needed to educate our employees on how to implement environmental policy," she added.

She said that the most of the financial return on this green investment has been in foreign markets - the company exports its briquettes to Holland, Sweden and Japan - where consumers are more aware and keen to buy environmentally friendly products.

The European award was particularly welcome given the lack of support the company has received from the Greek government, she said.

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Damian Mac Con Uladh

Obama boosts climate summit

US president will commit to reducing carbon emissions by 80 percent by mid-century

WASHINGTON

BARACK Obama will commit the United States to substantial cuts in greenhouse gas pollution over the next decade - despite resistance in Congress over higher costs - when he travels to Copenhagen for the crucial United Nations climate change summit.

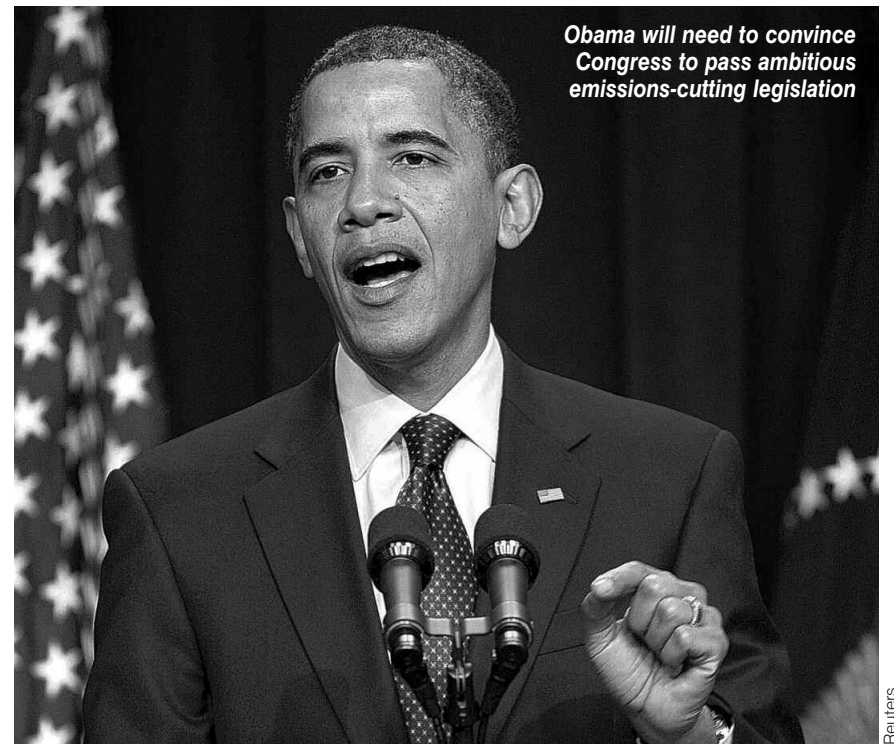
The US president will attend the conference on December 9 before heading to Oslo to accept the Nobel Peace Prize. He will "put on the table" a US commitment to cut emissions by 17 percent over the next decade, on the way to reducing heat-trapping pollution by 80 percent by mid-century, the White House said.

Cutting US carbon dioxide emissions by one-sixth in just a decade would increase the cost of energy as electric utilities pay for capturing carbon dioxide at coal-burning power plants or switch to more expensive alternatives. The price of gasoline probably would increase, and more fuel-efficient automobiles - or hybrids that run on gasoline and electricity - probably would be more expensive.

Obama's promise of greenhouse emissions cuts will require Congress to pass complex climate legislation that the administration says will include an array of measures to ease the price impact. The bills before Congress, for example, would have the government provide polluters free emissions allowances in the early years of the transition from fossil fuels, as well as direct payments to many consumers facing high costs.

Carol Browner, Obama's assistant for energy and climate change, on November 25 cited a Congressional Budget Office study that said there would be \$173-a-year estimated cost to the average household by 2020 if greenhouse gases were cut by 17 percent from 2005 levels. But the CBO analysis also said that if cost-blunting measures in the legislation were not taken into account, the cost to households could jump to \$890 per household.

Other studies conducted by pro-industry



Obama will need to convince Congress to pass ambitious emissions-cutting legislation

groups have put the average household costs between \$900 to more than \$3,000 a year, although many of those studies do not take into account new energy conservation efforts and assume a more pessimistic view of new technology development that could bring actual consumer costs down.

Tarnished image

However, Obama's stopover on the conference's second day - instead of later, when negotiations will be most intense and when most other national leaders will take part - disappointed some European and UN climate officials, as well as some environmentalists.

Others said Obama's personal appeal will resonate with the delegates from more than 75 countries and help reset the US image on the climate issue after eight years in which the Bush

administration staunchly opposed mandatory reductions in greenhouse gases.

Yvo de Boer, the United Nations climate chief, said it is important for the United States to establish emissions reduction targets and a financial commitment to helping developing countries address climate change.

"If he comes in the first week to announce that, it would be a major boost to the conference," de Boer said.

The White House said Obama is expecting "robust mitigation contributions" from China and other emerging nations as part of any final agreement. He pressed for cooperation on climate change in meetings with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing last week, and with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during a visit at the White House on November 24. (AP)

Countdown to Copenhagen

10 days to go

Financing is key to climate talks for developing countries

LONDON

THE KEY to successful climate talks in Copenhagen will be making sure rich countries fund greener technologies in the developing world, Norway's prime minister said on November 20. Politicians have talked down expectations for the talks which are supposed to find a successor to the Kyoto treaty that expires in 2012, and Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said it now seemed clear a full legal deal could not be reached. But Copenhagen will be at least partly successful if a funding mechanism is established - an element of the talks which is even more important than setting new greenhouse gas emissions targets for 2020, Stoltenberg said. "I believe that the most important issue is the issue of financing," he said after addressing students at the London School of Economics. "Norway has

proposed a system of financing where we auction part of the global emission allowances and earmark those to developing countries. Also Mexico has launched a financing mechanism called the Green Fund and now we are working closely with Mexico to make those two proposals compatible." On November 19, the head of the UN Climate Change Secretariat called on rich nations at Copenhagen to pledge \$10 billion a year for three years. Yvo de Boer said that was one of his three goals for the summit, along with emission targets for 2020 by rich countries and planned actions by developing countries. Stoltenberg declined to say if Copenhagen could be judged a success if it achieved a funding deal but failed to set 2020 targets for developed nations to cut their greenhouse gas emissions. "I don't know if I am able to answer that now," he said. "But I believe we should mobilise whatever we have now to get a strong agreement in Copenhagen and then we should evaluate it afterwards. Norway, one of the richest nations in the



A question of finance

world as the number 5 oil exporter, has promised about \$530 million a year to protect tropical forests.

65 world leaders to attend UN conference

DENMARK said last week that 65

world leaders had agreed to attend in the summit in Copenhagen. Facing splits in the climate talks, Denmark 10 days ago formally invited the heads of state and government of 191 UN member states to come for the final two days of the December 7-18 conference to push for a deal at the meeting, originally meant for environment ministers.

Danish officials declined to provide a full list of those who had agreed to come to the Copenhagen conference, but noted some leaders, such as those from Britain, Germany, France, Japan, Indonesia and Brazil, had announced their intention to attend. A government spokesman said Denmark would let world leaders make their own announcements. The United Nations said this month about 40 leaders had indicated plans to attend, mostly from developing nations as well as from Germany and Britain, even before the official invitation. (Reuters)