Windfang: A women’s cooperative that projects, builds and runs wind turbines

Description of the project: We are the first (and only) women run and operated energy cooperative in Germany. In 1991, a group of women studying engineering and natural sciences decided they wanted to contribute more to the energy transition than just protesting and discussions. They decided to build their own wind turbine on a family property in stormy Dithmarschen. And, they wanted to do it themselves, without men. Twenty-four years later, Windfang owns eleven wind turbines and three solar plants. In 2014, Windfang’s first 2.5 MW turbine was installed, increasing Windfang’s renewable electricity generation to more than 11 000 MW hours/year and, as a result enabled our cooperative to pay more than a 4% return on investment to our associates.

Climate Impact: The goal of our cooperative is the production of environmentally friendly, sustainable energy. Every woman who buys a share therefore supports an ecologically just project. Altogether, our decentralized power stations supply approximately 3,140 households with renewable energy, thereby avoiding 8,280 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. Due to our local contacts and our lean organization, we work highly efficiently with a low input of resources. When starting a new project, environmental integrity is ensured - e.g. by avifaunistical (bird and mammal) impact assessment studies and by ecological compensatory measures. Additionally, a renewable energy plant can be fully dismantled at the end of its life cycle, in contrast to coal fired or nuclear power plants.

Gender Impact: Our cooperative enables women to participate in technical and strategic fields which are - even in the alternative sector - usually led by men. All bodies of our cooperative are occupied by women who are responsible for the technical management, the commercial management and the finances of our power plants. In our general assembly, all 300 associates decide on the further development of the cooperative and the usage of the profit democratically. With a return on our investment, the work does not add additional burden to our board members’ workload, since they are no longer working voluntarily. Being associates, women use the opportunity to make their own investments; and through them they influence the energy market. We find our own women-specific solutions to climate change and bring in our creativity and multi-dimensional skills.

Financial Support: Since our renewable power stations are financed by the shares and direct loans of our members as well as bank credits there is no need for additional funding.