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Opinion: What 1 million solar strong looks like

June 10, 2016 [Steven Bushong](#) : [0 Comments](#)



By Andrew Savage, chief strategy officer at [AllEarth Renewables](#)

America has reached the milestone of 1 million solar systems nationwide.

But what is even more remarkable is what that looks like in communities across the country and what comes next.

It took us 40 years to get to 1 million solar systems around the country, but it will take us only two years to get the next 1 million systems. Just two years. That's the prowess of American ingenuity and the creativity of entrepreneurs at work. And it's the appetite Americans have for taking control of their energy future with clean and local renewable sources.



Those 1 million installations today generate enough electricity to power more than 5.5 million American homes. With continued growth in solar, America will generate enough electricity to power 20 million homes by 2020.

Right now a solar system is installed by American workers, every 2.5 minutes. And with more than 200,000 solar

workers out in the field today, in jobs that can't be exported overseas, that pace is only going to increase in the coming years. As the American economy has faltered and sputtered back to life, solar jobs keep growing far outpacing the economy at large.

As impressive as getting to 2 million systems in the next two years are the individual solar stories at the community level from rooftop to background to industrial park happening all around the country.

Take for example just a few solar powered customers from our relatively small manufacturing and development company:

These customers could now make a full solar powered breakfast with fresh solar-raised eggs from Jericho Settlers Farm, a side of ham or portion of bacon from Vermont Smoke and Cure, cider and side of apples from Champlain Orchards, and some Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks-produced solar powered maple syrup over your soon-to-be solar powered Red Hen Bakery-baked French toast.

Sounds pretty good, right? And on top of that, each of those customers is saving money, making their businesses more financially stable and marketable to the public, and running their businesses by their environmental values.

But why stop at breakfast? A full breakfast is the perfect fuel to hit the gym and hop on a Concept II rowing machine, a solar powered world leader in manufacturing exercise equipment. You could then grab some books over at the solar powered libraries of Middlebury or Sterling Colleges followed by a stop by Gardener's Supply for some lawn care supplies offered nationwide with the power of the sun.

After your yard work is complete, you'd certainly owe yourself a drink by grabbing a world renowned Heady Topper from the Alchemist Brewery or some tasty Woodchuck Hard Cider from their local cidery – both solar powered bevs.

If you're thinking of dinner out and need some cash, you could stop at the solar powered branch of the Merchants Bank before you head to Bistro Henry's for some fine dining to round out your day.

This is the future of a solar powered America.

And this is just one company and just 13 systems of 1 million in a nationwide industry of entrepreneurs, manufacturers, and installers, and everything in between. Just think what 2 million will look like. And then 4.

Andrew Savage is the chief strategy officer of AllEarth Renewables and an elected member of the board of the Solar Energy Industry Association.

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