



FINAL DRAFT: ENERGY FOR ALL, 10.10.2011

Contact: John Alejandro, Communications Director
(202) 234-7265
john@self.org

BOB FRELING OF SOLAR ELECTRIC LIGHT FUND TO PRESENT SOLAR ENERGY SOLUTIONS FOR AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY AND ENERGY POVERTY

Solar Market Garden Drip Irrigation Model to be Showcased

Washington, DC – October 10 – The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF), a Washington, D.C. based nonprofit working to eliminate energy poverty through the use of solar power, today announced that its executive director, Robert Freling, will be at the “Energy for all: Financing access for the poor” conference to present the success of SELF’s Solar Market Gardens™ (SMG) in providing food security to the communities of Bessassi and Dunkassa in Benin, West Africa. The conference, held October 9-12 in Oslo, Norway, was convened by the Norwegian government and the International Energy Agency (IEA) to explore financing mechanisms and supporting policies to increase energy access for the poor. Accompanying Mr. Freling will be Madame Ganigui Guera, President of the Dunkassa Women’s Farming Collective in Benin. Traveling out of her homeland for the first time, she will also provide personal testimony at the conference about the transformative power the Solar Market Gardens have had on her life.

During the session, “The Role of Civil Society in Increasing Access to Energy,” Mr. Freling will focus on SELF’s innovative solar powered drip-irrigation system as part of its “Whole Village” development model, an integrated approach to using solar energy systems to empower rural communities in developing countries to improve their health, education, economic development, and food and water security. The results of a 2010 study conducted by Stanford University’s Program on Food Security and the Environment and published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* found that SELF’s three Solar Market Gardens resulted in 1.9 metric tons of produce grown per garden, per month; helped to increase household income and nutritional intake; and, when compared to similar technologies, are cost-effective.

“Solutions such as solar-powered drip irrigation offer great hope for parts of the world that are particularly vulnerable to periods of drought,” states Bob Freling. “It’s our hope is that this model will be replicated and used throughout the developing world to help provide food security and alleviate poverty.”

In advance of the conference, Madame Ganigui stated, “The garden saved me. I wish to convey the ongoing impact it has had on the lives of my family and neighbors.” “Now, I’m always in the garden. We didn’t know that the sun could do all of this. Now we sell, we eat...we eat a lot here!”

SELF plans to install eight more Solar Market Gardens and additional solar energy systems to power health clinics, schools, and community centers throughout Benin.

About SELF

The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit working to eliminate energy poverty and combat climate change by bringing solar power and wireless Internet access to remote rural villages in the developing world. SELF has pioneered innovative applications of solar power for drip irrigation in Benin, telemedicine in the Amazon rainforest, vaccine refrigeration in Rwanda, online learning in South Africa, and microenterprise development in Nigeria. These successful pilot projects culminated in SELF's whole-village approach, or Solar Integrated Development model. Since 1990, SELF has completed projects in 20 countries, making it a leader among non-governmental organizations in realizing practical and cost-effective alternative energy solutions for rural villagers. For more information, please visit www.self.org.

###