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Q&A: Lisa Jacobson, President of the Business Council for Sustainable Energy, Discusses Factbook

Lisa Jacobson, president of the Business Council for Sustainable Energy, talks about the key findings in the 2014 edition of the “Sustainable Energy in America Factbook,” which the Council produced in collaboration with Bloomberg New Energy Finance, a subsidiary of Bloomberg BNA's parent company, Bloomberg LP. The Factbook, which was released earlier this year, is intended to “arm policymakers, journalists and industry professionals with up-to-date, accurate market information.”

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BBNA: How have these trends helped the U.S. meet President Barack Obama's goal of a 17 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, relative to 2005 levels?

Jacobson: When we looked at the data for 2013, we saw that the U.S. is more than halfway to meeting the 17 percent reduction goal. This was something that many thought was not possible when the commitment was made in Copenhagen in 2009. The country is on the right track, due both to market dynamics and a suite of policy frameworks that focus on the environmental attributes of a range of energy applications in transportation, power generation and the industrial sectors. As I mentioned earlier, the cost of clean energy technologies is coming down, making them more cost-competitive, and the public is becoming more aware of what is possible. Investors share this perspective too—over the last several years investment figures have been in the range of hundreds of billions of dollars, signaling that this is a vibrant and growing industry. For example, in 2013, BNEF's NEX index, a global index of publicly traded companies active in renewables and low-carbon energy, grew 53.9 percent, far outpacing the gains of roughly 30 percent in the S&P [Standard & Poor's] and 26.5 percent for Dow Jones.

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