

# Taiwan RFID Technology, Applications Showcased at International Exhibit

The TAITRA exhibit draws 60,000 potential buyers of RFID technology and includes 50 vendors sharing RFID technology developments.

By Claire Swedberg

Oct. 8, 2008—The second annual Taiwan International RFID Applications Show, with a theme of "smart living"—that is, enhancing peoples' living standards—launched this Tuesday at the Nangang Exhibition Hall in Taipei, Taiwan. The exhibit, slated to run until Oct. 11, is part of the Taipei International Electronics Show (TAITRONICS), which includes Taiwanese manufacturers of broadband and consumer electronic components and devices. TAITRONICS is hosted by the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) and the Taiwan Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association (TEEMA), and is sponsored by the country's Ministry of Economic Affairs's Bureau of Foreign Trade.

In the exhibit's opening ceremony, held Tuesday morning, an audience of approximately 400 gathered to hear from Ma Ying-jeou, president of the Republic of China, as well as other Taiwanese government officials. John Chen-chung Deng, deputy minister of Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs, described a "lair-like" clustering effect of RFID and electronics technology underway in that nation. "We are currently one of the [largest] electronic information and communication technology forts in the world," he said, with other Asian markets geographically surrounding the island of Taiwan.

In 2007 Taiwan's RFID industry was valued at NT\$2 billion (US\$68 million) in sales of RFID hardware, software and services, a 62 percent increase from the year prior. According to TAITRA, that number is expected to reach NT\$12 billion (US\$400 million) in 2010. Sales of tags account for 38 percent of that share, and are expected to grow to 45 percent in 2010.

At present, Deng told the exhibit's standing-room only audience in a room at the newly constructed Taipei exhibition center, the Executive Yuan (Taiwan's executive branch) is investing more than NT\$3 billion (US\$100 million) toward developing the RFID industry in that country. "By next year," Deng predicted, "our people will be able to sense the technological service brought about by the RFID technology in all aspects of life, such as health care, finance, trading, logistics and agriculture." In 2009, Deng said he expects manufacturers will produce NT\$10 billion (US\$308 million) worth of RFID hardware.

Products at the show are focused on environmental friendliness, said TEEMA's chairman, Yu-cheng Chiao, with green and energy-saving devices being showcased by manufacturers using RFID as well as broadband technologies. One example of a "green technology," Chiao noted, includes battery-free remote controls for televisions being developed by Favite, a company based in Taiwan's Hsinchu County.

President Ma deemed the combination of the RFID, broadband and photovoltaics exhibits into a single TAITRA program an indication of the diversity of innovation that would steer Taiwan through the current global economic downturn. "This integration... provides a good example for creating conditions for better

environmental protections through cutting energy costs and pooling technological expertise," he stated. "Even in the face of a sluggish global economy, we can still create growth through the use of new approaches and combinations."

Ma cited a three-year-old deployment of RFID in Taipei public schools that began with a pilot at Taipei's Nan Hu Elementary School, where RFID interrogators deployed at the school ground's gates track the arrival of students carrying active RFID tags. With the system, which utilizes IBM WebSphere software, parents can receive a message on their cell phone indicating when their child arrived at school. This, Ma said, was one example of how Taiwan was deploying RFID technology in innovative ways.

This year, the RFID conference attracted 60,000 potential buyers of RFID technology—more than twice the 25,000 who attended the 2007 event. In both years, the greatest buyer turnout has come from the United States, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia. At the 2008 event, exhibitors include RFID vendors Texas Instruments Taiwan and J-Link technology, as well as Taiwan's Identification and Security Technology Center (ISTC).

Vendors are primarily exhibiting RFID tags, readers and printers, as well as system solutions, sensors and other RFID hardware. The exhibit floor is divided among the broadband, photovoltaic and RFID vendors, with sufficient international attendees to make the common language a combination of English, Mandarin Chinese and multiple European and Asian languages.

Exhibit attendees originated from Asia, as well as Europe and North America, many migrating to the RFID show after initially attending presentations for broadband or consumer electronics offerings. Chris Gloger, digital multi-meter (DMM) product manager for Fluke Corp., a manufacturer of electronic test tools, says his initial reason for attending the Taipei International Electronics Show was to view the wireless technology. However, he says he was also curious to see what manufacturers provided in terms of RFID technology, which could then appear "downstream" among wireless solutions.

RELATED\_ARTICLES Frank Downes, chief executive officer of Grabba International, an Australian provider of RFID-enabled applications that work in conjunction with PDAs and smart phones, says attending the RFID Applications Show has enabled him to contact manufacturers capable of supplying technology his company could use for its athletics tracking systems. "I did find some things of interest," he says.

In addition to tags for schoolchildren, Taiwan's recent RFID pilots have also included a three-month NFC mobile phone contactless payment pilot conducted in the first quarter of 2008 by Chunghwa Telecom, in which users inserted SIM cards into NFC-enabled phones supplied by Taiwan-based handset maker BenQ. Participants tapped the phones to pay for fares on Taipei's metro and buses. Taipei Smart Card Corp. (now known as EasyCard Corp.) provided the EasyCard SIM technology for the trial.

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