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Subject: U.S. trade commission surveys solar sector in Suniva investigation

By Esther Whieldon

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The U.S. International Trade Commission is surveying domestic and foreign solar energy companies to determine whether the influx of cheap solar cells and modules from Asian countries is harming the U.S. manufacturing market.

The commission launched an investigation on Tuesday into Suniva's request that the agency recommend President Donald Trump impose trade restrictions for four years on imported solar cells and modules, which Suniva said are putting it out of business. The ITC today posted a series of questionnaires online that it sent to importers, purchasers and foreign and domestic manufacturers.

The commission asked whether the pattern of imports, sales, and production of solar panels and modules have changed following anti-dumping and countervailing duty orders on imports from China and Taiwan. It wants to know whether companies can use non-solar renewables or alternative solar energy products to substitute for the crystalline silicon photovoltaic cell technology. And the commission also asked whether state and federal incentives — or natural gas or coal electricity prices — have affected demand for solar equipment or the cost of solar electricity.

WHAT'S NEXT: The commission asked the companies to respond by June 29 and promised to keep any commercial and financial data in the responses confidential. It expects to determine the extent to which the cheaper solar panels are causing injury by Sept. 22 and to send its recommendations to Trump by Nov. 13.

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