

On Sunday June 28, 2009 Parade Magazine featured the a windmill tax credit that was the Rural Wind Energy Development Act, sponsored by Congressman Earl Blumenauer in the 110th Congress. It allows homeowners to receive a tax credit for installing a windmill to help power their homes. The legislation was eventually passed as part of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act in October 2008.

The market for small wind turbines that can generate enough juice to power a home, farm, or small business grew by 78% in 2008, according to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA). A new 30% tax credit in the federal economic-stimulus bill, combined with state and local incentives, is likely to further expand the already booming market.

Americans installed about 10,500 small turbines last year—about half the world’s total—at a cost of \$77 million, and the AWEA expects a 30-fold increase in the next five years. A typical home windmill is used in conjunction with electricity from local utilities. When wind is light, electricity comes from the utility company; when high winds blow, excess power may be sent back to the grid.

Ron Stimmel of the AWEA estimates that about 13 million U.S. homes could sustain small windmills, which range in size from 30 to 140 feet. If you’re thinking of setting up your own, you’ll need a big down payment and some patience—the systems cost about \$40,000 to install and take five to 15 years to pay for themselves. Zoning restrictions and objections from neighbors also pose obstacles. Says Stimmel: “There’s a lot of outreach going on to help cultivate public acceptance of having an unusual thing like a turbine in your backyard.”