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## Ameresco puts energy into 'one-stop shop' philosophy

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Many energy services companies prefer to specialize in one area of the market, such as efficiency, solar or wind.

Framingham-based **Ameresco Inc.** does plenty of all three. But in a recent interview, Ameresco founder and CEO George Sakellaris said the company has done just about everything else, too — geothermal, hydro, biogas, biomass cogeneration and landfill waste-to-energy projects.

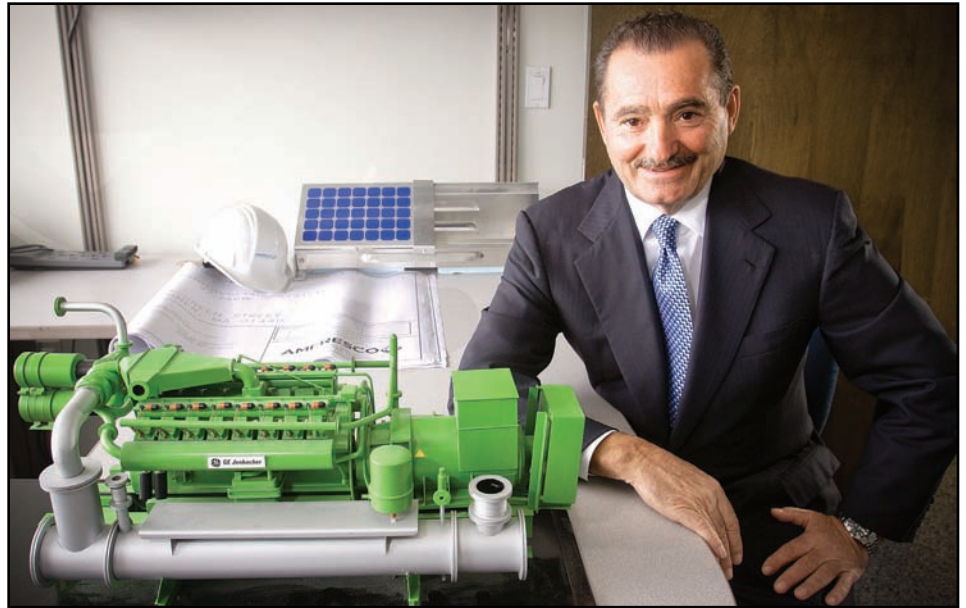
Ameresco (NYSE: AMRC) even has a few customers in demand response, which pays customers to cut their power during peak usage times. Sakellaris said the company strives to be a “one-stop shop” because “many customers don’t just want energy efficiency,” Ameresco’s main business.

Few, if any, energy service companies are as diversified as Ameresco, said Dale Pfau, an analyst at Cantor Fitzgerald. But even more important is the company’s independence, especially when it comes to efficiency retrofits, he said. Ameresco competes with energy services units of better-known companies including Johnson Controls, Honeywell and Siemens.

“At Johnson Controls, the objective is to sell more Johnson Controls’ parts. But Ameresco can choose whatever the best of breed is,” Pfau said. “They can also move in the direction their customers want to move without being hindered by a bureaucratic organization.”

Energy efficiency alone is a \$2.9 trillion market, according to estimates from Pfau. Most of Ameresco’s business comes from institutional customers such as federal, state and local governments, along with hospitals and colleges. Sakellaris hopes to expand the customer base to include more commercial and industrial companies.

The company’s July initial public offer-



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**Ameresco founder and CEO George Sakellaris said the market opportunity for energy efficiency is almost limitless.**

ing brought in \$87 million and is likely to be the only IPO for the state’s cleantech sector this year. Ameresco expects up to \$595 million in revenue this year, nearly 40 percent above its 2009 revenue, with \$27 million in profit.

A native of Greece who came to the United States for college, Sakellaris ran the energy services arm of New England Electric (now part of National Grid) from 1979 through the 1980s. When new management arrived in 1990, he assembled investors who bought the unit and incorporated it as Noresco. He would expand the company to 28 U.S. offices before selling it in 1997.

Three years later, Sakellaris said, he was ready to “do it all over again.” He founded Ameresco in 2000 using mostly his own money, and since then has expanded its reach far beyond even that of Noresco. (The Westborough-based company didn’t return a message.)

Ameresco, which has been profitable since 2002, has made 11 acquisitions and lists 44 offices in the United States, with another 10 in Canada. The company reports 715 employees — 90 in Massachusetts — up from 640 at the start of the year. Ameresco expects to add another 100 next year.

Sakellaris, 64, said he expects to stay at the helm for at least five more years, and signaled that the pace will only pick up in that time. The company hopes to expand deeper into some parts of the United States, such as the southeast, through new acquisitions.

For Sakellaris, the market opportunity for efficiency is almost limitless.

“People don’t realize that over 20 percent of the energy we use is wasted,” he said. “People think that with energy efficiency you have to do with less. No — energy efficiency means you get the energy to do more work for you.”