



Scientific farmers make their own solar power

Can solar power a farm?

Whereas oil and gas wells require a minimum of 5-10 acres of land, solar can be deployed to whatever scale a farm owner desires or is able to accommodate (MineralWise, n.d.). This means that solar can be developed on land that is already unused or unirrigated by farmers, minimizing disruptions to existing farm production.

Should farmers decide what they want before building a solar farm?

One thing is clear, Calderwood says: Farmers must decide what they want before they start building. "Do they want to put in [a solar] array and farm beneath it?"

Are solar farms marginalizing agriculture?

In the French countryside, energy companies are rushing to set up solar farms, with the risk of marginalizing agriculture. Researchers are finding solutions. A farmer drives a combine harvester under hanging solar panels on an agrivoltaic site in Amance, France. Credit: PATRICK HERTZOG/AFP via Getty

Should agrivoltaic planners put solar over a farm?

Or farm first, and put solar over it?" If farming is the main priority, she says, then the solar panels may need to be spaced farther apart and possibly be raised higher. Such changes could potentially limit how much electricity those farm fields generate. And agrivoltaic planners may need to treat the soil, Macknick says.

Should farmers invest in solar power?

While a farmer's opportunity to capitalize on mineral rights is entirely dependent on whether or not there is an accessible oil or gas basin, photovoltaics are an economically viable investment for landowners across the country, and solar power is at its most productive (Adeh et al. 2019, 11442) when installed on croplands (McDonnell 2020).

Can a farm support solar panels?

Jordan Macknick, an environmental researcher at NREL, plants crops near solar panels at an experimental agrivoltaic farm in Colorado. Joe DelNero/NREL Not every farm can support panels, Macknick points out. It's often not economically feasible. The trick, he says, is to identify those that can.

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