

Solar Siting Guidelines for Farmland

American Farmland Trust's mission is to save the land that sustains us by protecting farmland, promoting sound farming practices, and keeping farmers on the land. AFT supports accelerated solar development and believes that, with proper planning and siting, our agricultural lands can also play a meaningful role in hosting solar energy while maintaining active and productive agriculture.

Prioritize agriculture - protect farmland for the future

1. Prioritize solar development on state preferred siting (brownfields, rooftops, building mounted, solar canopies, etc...).
2. Avoid siting solar projects on farmland in a location or in such a way that it displaces agriculture from the land.
3. Incentivize agricultural dual-use arrays and follow smart solar siting guidelines when dual-use* is not an option.

Prioritize production - site on previously disturbed or marginal farmland

1. Other farmland and marginal farmland – these are preferred locations for on-farm siting if pursuing a standard ground-mounted solar array; consider dual-use if possible.
2. Actively farmed, unique, or farmland of statewide importance - incentivize dual-use to support continued agricultural activity.
3. Prime farmland - protection of prime soils and prime farmland should be prioritized. If solar projects are proposed on prime soils, they should be agricultural dual-use projects and undergo careful review to ensure continued production is prioritized.

Prioritize farmers - ensure they're part of project development and dual-use design

1. Solar projects on farmland should be farmer-led and developed with the farmer as partner.
2. Primary agricultural activity must be prioritized. Farmers are the experts on their land. Projects should be designed to allow necessary equipment full access and usability around panel structures.
3. Require reporting from dual-use projects (not reliant upon yield standards or targets) to ensure continued land use as agriculture.
4. Allow flexibility of dual-use construction standards that support differing agricultural activities to continue as the primary site activity.

Project size considerations

1. Agricultural dual-use projects maintain productive farmland and should not be limited in size.
2. Consider size limitations on non-dual use projects to protect farmland for production and continued use in natural climate solutions.
3. Require project design to minimize other land use impacts, such as access roads and equipment siting.

*Dual-use, also known as agrivoltaics, is the practice of co-locating solar photovoltaic panels on farmland in such a manner that primary agricultural activities including animal grazing, crop or vegetable production can continue simultaneously on that farmland.

American Farmland Trust believes that all solar projects should meet minimum conservation requirements including but not limited to soil conservation practices during and after construction, soil health building ground cover, pollinator-friendly plantings, water infiltration management, and erosion control. However, these **conservation practices are not a substitute for protecting farmland** through smart solar siting principles and agricultural dual-use considerations.