

SOLAR AND AGRICULTURAL LAND USE

Wisconsin farmers have played a crucial role in providing food and energy to our communities for decades. Farmers now have a new opportunity to provide clean, renewable energy to the people of Wisconsin today and well into the future. Trends in conventional crop production have fostered ripe conditions for farmers to implement new ways to generate revenue. Thanks to rising crop yields, we are growing far more crops on less land, and commodity prices are low due to market conditions largely beyond farmers' control.

Solar farms offer energy independence and pump millions of dollars into rural communities. Solar-hosting farmers have reliable sources of revenue for years to come.



According to a recent report, in the most cost-effective economy-wide decarbonization scenario, solar would occupy under 200,000 acres in Wisconsin by 2050, which is about equal to land currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.



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According to the report *Achieving 100% Clean Energy in Wisconsin* by Evolved Energy Research, 28.3 GW of utility-scale solar would be needed to achieve decarbonization economy-wide by 2050. Assuming 1 GW of solar uses 7,000 acres, the total land area needed for utility-scale solar under this scenario is 198,000 acres, or 1.39% of Wisconsin's actively cultivated farmland. The land required for these solar farms is about equal to that enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

**LAND AREA NEEDED FOR
198,000 ACRES / 28.3 GW OF SOLAR RELATIVE
TO TOTAL ACTIVELY CULTIVATED FARMLAND**



**TOTAL WI ACTIVELY
CULTIVATED FARMLAND**
14,200,000 ACRES
1.39% SOLAR

I am a participating landowner [in High Noon Solar] and 4th generation farmer on a century-family farm. Since our family started farming in the 1800s, there have been a lot of changes to agriculture and ways to be profitable. This solar project is an opportunity for us to diversify our farm income. In my opinion, this is just another way to farm the sun, just as we have done to grow crops over the years. Our farmland in this project does not disappear. This is a temporary use of our land. There are many financial benefits from this project in all aspects, but the most important one is that this is good for our environment. We are doing our part to fight climate change for future generations.

-Larry Nelson

CROP PRODUCTION IN WISCONSIN

We are growing more crops today than we were 35 years ago and doing so on fewer harvested acres of land. Crop yields are expected to continue increasing, exacerbating an already oversaturated marketplace. Some crop producers are looking far and wide for new ways to generate revenue. Solar farms can offer a revenue solution.

FINANCING LAND CONSERVATION

Federal taxpayers are paying to take cropland out of production through the U.S. Conservation Reserve Program. Today in Wisconsin, nearly 200,000 acres are not in active cultivation to improve soil health, reduce the volume of crops produced, and manage oversupply. Utility-scale solar projects provide similar land conservation and restoration services but do not require taxpayer dollars. Solar farms inject money into local communities through host lease payments, Wisconsin's shared revenue formula, which provides funds to the host local governments, and increases local spending.

ENERGY PRODUCTION AND FARMLAND

Many farmers today are already in the energy production business. About 37% of the corn already grown in Wisconsin is used for ethanol, a common biofuel. Incorporating solar generation on farms is simply another form of Wisconsin-made energy that farmers can provide our state. Even if all the utility-scale solar PV needed by 2050 were placed on existing ethanol production land, solar farms would only use about 18% of that land. In addition, plantings under the solar arrays can be designed to advance sustainable agricultural practices such as increasing pollinators like bees and butterflies and rebuilding the soil to be more fertile when replanted.



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