

# WUR WORKING ON NEW-STYLE SOLAR PARK

**Solar parks should include room for nature and agriculture. WUR wants to design such new-style solar parks.**

That is the essence of the Solar Research Programme, which started this week. The programme, which was initiated by ESG, aims to generate collaboration across WUR to achieve this. 'The idea is to have tried and tested new concepts for solar parks within five to ten years that are integrated into crop production environments and nature landscapes,' says spokesperson Jeroen Sluijsmans. At present, solar parks all over the


world look the same. Sometimes the park has a border of greenery to improve the look.

'But no one thinks these parks look attractive,' says Sluijsmans. 'I believe we should be able to show that you can combine energy production, biodiversity and agriculture in ways that fit in with the surroundings and are supported by the general public.' Sluijsmans has in mind solar parks with room for agriculture and nature along-side the generation of sustainable energy. 'Combinations of sustainable energy and crop production could well lead to new business models.' Sluijsmans says neighbouring

countries are already experimenting with this. 'For example, growing potatoes under solar panels. In fact, yields are higher than normal because the microclimate in the shadow of those panels on hot summer days is better than in the full sun.' He points to technological developments too, such as double-sided panels that stand upright rather than horizontal,

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and semi-transparent solar panels.

The first field trials will be on WUR's own land. The Nergena solar park, which will be erected in the Binnenveld area, will focus on increasing biodiversity. 'The space between the panels will be sown with indigenous wild plants; we will be working with seed companies involved in the Living Archive project for that. That park will then function as a seed bank for preserving genetic material.' What is more, part of the solar park will become a testing ground for new technologies such as vertical panels and panels that rotate with the sun.  RK