



Crops thrive on solar farms

Solar farms and agriculture can go together well on the same plot of land. That is the message of a position paper published by WUR and Renergize Consultancy last week.

In fact, yields from 'agri-PV' (PV = photovoltaics, the industry term for solar cells) are higher in theory than when separate plots are used for crop cultivation and energy generation.

Efficient use of space is a hot topic in the energy transition. That is why Dutch government policy is to no longer allow mono-functional solar farms, even if that restriction is not yet being applied rigorously in practice. Agriculture is one of the functions suited to a combination with the large-scale production of solar energy. However, saving space does not necessarily mean an attractive business case, stress the researchers.

More expensive

They see a future for agricultural solar farms, but note potential problems too. To maximize yields, the solar panels may need to be adapted to suit the crop cultivation, for example by becoming more translucent. Cultivation practices may need to change too. The researchers expect to be able to develop this knowledge in the years to come. They also advise changing the grant rules for electricity production: an agri-PV setup is more expensive than a standard solar farm and the extra costs need to be recouped somehow. In addition, they point to the legal context. As a prerequisite for the large-scale roll-out, the law needs to specify which guidelines a solar farm should comply with in order to serve as an agricultural solar farm. Furthermore, they emphasize that all the current rights and duties associated with farmland should remain in force, for example the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and manure rights.

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