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NC Solar Development Occupies Minimal Agricultural Land, Report Shows

NC Solar Land Use and Agriculture report shows only 0.28% of agricultural land occupied by solar statewide.

RALEIGH, N.C. – Today, the NC Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) released the ‘North Carolina Solar Land Use and Agriculture’ report, which aggregates and quantifies the amount of agricultural land consumed by redevelopment activities across multiple industries, including clean energy. Since 2009, NCSEA has been tracking solar development data in the state, along with land use classifications as part of ongoing collaborative efforts with the NC Department of Agriculture, local officials, and state elected representatives. The updated 2022 edition of the report cross-references data collected on all solar installations in the state via NCSEA’s Renewable Energy Database with land use data found in the National Land Cover Dataset. These datasets are used in conjunction to determine the total amount of agricultural land occupied by solar development in the state. According to the report’s findings, solar development occupies approximately 0.12% of the total land area of the state and just 0.28% of agricultural land. Compared to other redevelopment activities, solar ranks relatively low in total amount of agricultural land utilized in the state. As an example, single-family housing, golf courses, and parks comprise 7.18% of redeveloped agricultural land in the state.

Both the agricultural and clean energy industries provide significant economic advantages to North Carolina. To note, agriculture employs almost 780,000 individuals, and the [clean energy industry touts close to 100,000 workers](#). Further, NCSEA’s data shows that [property tax revenues increased by over 450%](#), on average, in counties due to solar development. NC serves as a nationwide leader within these sectors, given that the state ranks fourth in total solar capacity and first in production of sweet potatoes, tobacco, and poultry.

Additionally, the NC Solar Land Use and Agriculture report concluded that:

- Solar PV only occupies 0.12% of the total land area of the state and 0.28% of agricultural land;
- Solar PV systems occupy 31,125 acres of a total 10,999,656 acres of agriculture land;
- Other land uses, especially low-density residential development comprise the lion’s share of agriculture redevelopment with 78% of the total area loss.

“The results of this study re-emphasize the relatively minor impact that solar development has on other revenue producing activities in rural parts of the state. Considering this, on top of the lasting benefits that solar brings to both rural and urban communities from increased tax revenues and jobs, solar is a net winner for North Carolina,” according to Jerry Carey, Market Intelligence Specialist with the NC Sustainable Energy Association. “In the past, we have heard concerns that solar development activities pose a threat to the sustainability of the farming industry in North Carolina. The data collected by NCSEA in this report reflects the minimal impact of solar on agricultural land. In fact, these industries complement each other well in driving economic opportunities for rural communities across our state.”

The full North Carolina Solar Land Use and Agriculture report can be found on NCSEA’s website here: <https://bit.ly/2022SolarAg>.

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About North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association

NC Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) is the leading 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that drives public policy and market development for clean energy. Our work enables clean energy jobs, economic opportunities, and affordable energy options for North Carolinians. Learn more about NCSEA, our mission, and vision at www.energync.org.