

Agrivoltaics: With farm land scarce, solar panels can work in tandem with agriculture

[Farmers installing solar panels](#) on their land traditionally have kept their paneled acres separate from those containing their crops. But this is becoming less appealing as land for farming becomes scarcer and its [value soars](#). [Farmland](#) in the U.S. has contracted nearly 25% since the 1950s, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and it is selling for record prices.

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The concept of agrivoltaics is simple: Solar panels elevated anywhere from 6 to 18 feet off the ground create a microclimate for the crops grown below them. The shade helps the land retain more moisture than a traditional field and protects crops from the worst of the summer sun. It isn't an ideal setup for every crop, but some thrive in it.

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Producing significant revenue streams from crops is the next challenge for the technology. Researchers are now studying whether agrivoltaics can be scaled up to support commercial production of row crops, primarily corn and soybeans. Purdue University researchers, for example, are testing various agrivoltaic configurations in hopes of coming up with the optimal setup for each row crop. The university has tested agrivoltaic models on four growing seasons of corn so far, and two growing seasons of soybeans.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here](#)