

Agrivoltaics and land sharing

Farming under and around solar — what the evidence shows and what farmers should ask

The key idea: energy and agriculture aren't always rivals

The sharpest objection to solar farms is losing productive land. **Agrivoltaics** is the direct response: designing projects so agriculture continues among the panels. It's not a slogan; it's a set of design choices (panel height, row spacing, fencing, water points) that determine whether a paddock keeps working. Done well, land hosts energy *and* food. Done as an afterthought, it's a press release.

What actually works today

Grazing is the proven model: sheep run successfully under Australian solar farms now, with panels providing shade and shelter and operators saving on slashing. Trials report comparable or better lamb and wool outcomes on well-designed sites. **Cropping between rows** is harder (machinery access, shading) and remains mostly experimental here. **Horticulture under panels** shows promise overseas for shade-tolerant crops. The honest summary: sheep yes, wheat not yet, watch this space.

The design choices that decide it

Whether land keeps farming is settled at design, not operation: panel edge height (sheep need clearance), row spacing, gate and trough placement, soil protection during construction and a lease that actually obliges agricultural continuation rather than merely permitting it. A proponent serious about agrivoltaics can show these choices on the plans; one using the word decoratively cannot.

For landholders weighing an offer

Lease payments typically beat marginal grazing returns comfortably, which is exactly why the details deserve care: who manages the stock, who maintains fences and water, what happens to the farming operation during construction and what condition the land returns in (sheet 12). Independent legal and agronomic advice before signing is the norm among well-advised landholders; ask the proponent to fund it.

What good practice looks like

- Agricultural continuation designed in (heights, spacing, water) and written into lease and approval.
- Soil managed and monitored from construction through operation.
- Grazing or cropping plans made with the farmer, not delivered to them.
- Claims about "agrisolar" matched by drawings, not adjectives.

Questions to ask

What agriculture will actually continue and where is that on the plans? Who runs the grazing operation and who carries which costs? What does the lease oblige, not just allow? What state is the soil returned in?

Want to know more? State agriculture departments and the Clean Energy Council publish agrisolar guidance; farming bodies share landholder experience from operating sites. This sheet is general information, not legal or planning advice; a specific proposal is confirmed by qualified assessment.