



STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Commissioner



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Solar Energy Project Considerations

Section 16-50k(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that for a solar photovoltaic facility with a capacity of two or more megawatts, to be located on prime farmland, “excluding any such facility that was selected by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection in any solicitation issued prior to July 1, 2017, pursuant to section 16a-3f, 16a-3g or 16a-3j”, the Department of Agriculture must represent, in writing, to the Connecticut Siting Council (CSC) that such project will not materially affect the status of such land as prime farmland. The CSC has provided a memorandum clarifying this requirement on its website, dated November 1, 2017, located at the following web address:

<https://www.ct.gov/csc/lib/csc/guides/2017guides/20171101-solarmemo.pdf>

At a minimum, project developers should provide the following information to the Department of Agriculture for consideration of whether projects have a material effect on prime farmland.

1) Farm/ Property Information

Provide a description of the farm property, including but not limited to the following (include appropriate maps and surveys to allow evaluation):

- a. Farm owner(s), farm name and location;
- b. Total acreage, identification of prime, statewide and/or locally important farmland soils & acreage; and
- c. Current production agriculture on the farm and the approximate location of crops, farm buildings, etc. used to support the farming operation.

2) Energy Project Information

- a. Describe the energy project, including but not limited to, the size of the project in megawatts (MW), the footprint being proposed as it relates to prime farmland on the property, # of panels (if known), and a description of infrastructure needed to support the project;
- b. Describe what the energy will be used for and how it will benefit the farming operation; and
- c. Are there future plans to increase energy capacity beyond what is proposed? If so, please describe these future plans, and any impacts the increase may have on prime farmland or the overall farming operation.

3) Agricultural Resource Impacts

- a. Describe any production agriculture currently being conducted within the footprint of the solar project;
- b. Describe overall how the project will impact production agriculture currently being conducted on the farm; and

- c. Provide a description of any plans by the farm owner(s) to foster production agriculture within or as a result of the development (e.g., grazing animals in and around the solar project, providing pollinator habitat).

4) Alternatives to Locating the Energy Project on Prime Farmland

- a. Provide a description of any alternatives considered by the farm owner(s) to developing the project on prime farmland soils (e.g., the option of selling agricultural development rights for the farm instead of developing for solar, or as a mitigation measure to reduce the size of the solar development);
- b. Describe any alternatives examined which might enable placement of some or all of the solar panels in locations other than on prime farmland (e.g., elsewhere on the property or on farm buildings); and
- c. Provide a description of any other form of mitigation considered by the farm owner(s) (e.g., farmland restoration, or a future commitment to preserve the farm).

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