

News Release

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Axpo, Aargau and FiBL start work on latest agri-PV research facility

Axpo, the canton of Aargau and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) have started construction of an agri-PV research facility in Suhr, Switzerland, it was announced today. Combining solar energy and agricultural production on the same site, the facility will comprise a 600-kilowatt-peak (kWp) photovoltaic plant located on arable land. Part of the cantonal AgriSolar Research programme, all electricity generated by the plant will be purchased by Swiss dairy processor Emmi and consumed directly at its local site.

In brief:

- Axpo, Aargau canton and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) have started building the second of three planned agri-PV installations in Aargau as part of the AgriSolar Research programme.
- The 600 kWp plant combines arable farming with renewable electricity generation. FiBL is investigating how dual use of the land affects agricultural production and other environmental and social factors.
- All electricity generated by the plant will be purchased and consumed by Swiss dairy processor Emmi's local production site.

An official ground-breaking ceremony in Suhr marked the launch of a joint research project by Axpo, the canton of Aargau and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) into the further development of agri-photovoltaics (agri-PV). The research facility will combine agricultural use and solar power generation on the same site.

The project is part of a multi-stage research programme into agri-PV in Aargau. Built on arable land, it follows completion of a first facility which is located above an orchard at the FiBL farm in Frick.

Robust, practical and relevant research

The Suhr facility is designed to be operated and studied under real-world agricultural conditions. Research will focus on the compatibility of energy production and agriculture, water management, biodiversity, adaptation to climate change and the social acceptance of agri-PV.

The trial area covers 279 acres. The agri-PV system is being installed on around 120 acres, while the remainder of the plot will serve as a reference area. Comparison between the agri-PV and reference areas will show how different forms of land management affect yield, biodiversity and other factors under investigation.

The PV module racks will be installed at a height of around three metres and can be adjusted by a tracker system depending on seasonal and research requirements. During construction, care is being taken to minimise disruption to the agricultural land and avoid soil compaction. The system will be supported by steel sections which can be removed completely at the end of their operational life, leaving no residual material.

Creating local value

Axpo is project developer and operator of the facility, while the canton of Aargau and FiBL contribute their agricultural, research and project development expertise. The farmer who owns the plot is the project's agricultural partner and will continue to farm the land. All electricity generated by the plant will be supplied directly to dairy processor Emmi's local plant. The Suhr project will thus link local electricity generation, agricultural production and applied research.

Contributing to energy transition and agricultural research

Agri-PV makes it possible to utilise agricultural land for the production of food and renewable energy at the same time. It also opens up new opportunities for research into, for example, the ability of different crops like cereals and maize to cope with drought, changing rainfall patterns and increasing weather extremes, as well as issues such as biodiversity and yield.

In addition, the Suhr project will further investigate the potential of agri-PV under specifically Swiss conditions. Axpo, through its subsidiary Urbasolar, has already gained considerable agri-PV experience through installations in France and Italy, particularly solar power greenhouses.

About Axpo

Axpo is driven by a single purpose – to enable a sustainable future through innovative energy solutions. Axpo is Switzerland's largest energy producer and an international leader in energy trading and the marketing of solar and wind power. Axpo combines the experience and expertise of about 7,500 employees who are driven by a passion for innovation, collaboration and impactful change. Using cutting-edge technologies, Axpo innovates to meet the evolving needs of its customers in more than 30 countries across Europe, North America and Asia.

Additional information

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