

Agrivoltaics in France : Regulation, territorialization and contestation

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Introduction

- The Multiannual Energy Program (PPE) currently deployed in France provides for an acceleration of the development of Renewable Energies by 2040 (objectives 40%), neutrality in 2050
- Promotion of agrivoltaic projects to achieve this goal, including a near-fourfold increase in photovoltaic capacity by 2028 (without precise figure for agrivoltaics, discussed in the PPE3 in 2025)

Concretely, at the level of territories, lots of questions on agrivoltaics:

- Origins: Development of PV in the 2000s and concern for farmland protection grew in the late 2000s: farmland became a resource for energy developers seeking to expand projects.
- In the 2010's: proliferation of so-called "innovative" projects combining energy and agricultural production with varying degrees of sincerity (until 2023: no legislation, only tenders)
- 2023: the Law on the acceleration of renewable energy (APER)
to define and regulate the agrivoltaics projects

Question: Which regulation, territorialization and conflictuality for agrivoltaic projects in France (project Agrivolter)?

1 – Regulating Agrivoltaics: National regulation remains vague, while territorial regulation is plural

- Regulation of agrivoltaics was and is still mainly in the hands of energy actors (CRE) : Regulation via CRE tenders and guaranteed feed-in tariffs placed institutional and financial support in the hands of energy actors to serve national energy objectives.
- Although ADEME officially prioritizes PV on urbanized or degraded land or parking areas until 2021, in practice agrivoltaic projects have surged largely due to developer pressure which need some farmland. Agrivoltaics appeared to energy developers as a means to gain access to farmland.
- In 2023, APER Law define agrivoltaics in defining 4 services which should be providing by agrivoltaics for agricultural production (at list one) : The improvement of agronomic potential and impact, Adaptation to climate change, Protection against hazards, Improving animal welfare.
- Promotion By ademe and Agricultural trade unions and trade union for RE: 2 types of agrivoltaics projects; one vertuous agrivoltaics, and some others 'less interested in agriculture) « photovoltaïque agricompatible »
- Concretely, the regulation of each project is passed on the local governments (Evrard & Pasquier 2018; Evrard & Wokuri 2022) with **CDEPENAF** (local body with local NGO, local collectivity, local farmers trade unions...)
- Wind power acts as a repoussoir, motivating local authorities to retain stronger control.
- Important variability from a territory to another (Aveyron against all project, PO very open).

2. Some agrivoltaic projects contested

At the national level, since 2023 (APER), number of agrivoltaics projects is increasing significantly, and their contestation too.

-Problem of **acceptability** of agrivoltaic projects in a context of :

- dynamics of concentration of developers (Total , Eiffage...), and aggressive and financial strategy,
- farmers who are in position of subcontracting to legitimate lots of projects

Focus on Occitanie (South of France) : Among the 74 projects in Occitania, 22 are contested, with six different registers of justification : landscape conflicts, governance conflicts, type of agriculture promoted (agriculture not a priority, agriculture as an alibi –cash crop farming), type of transition projects promoted (techno-solutionist) and place of renewable energy, **risks of speculation on agricultural land, biodiversity conflicts**

Blurring of traditional divisions:

More and more environmental NGOs are positioning against agrivoltaic projects in the name of environmental issues (biodiversity, water...)

Left agricultural unions are radically opposed, due to the risk of green grabbing, as agricultural land is a means of gaining access to land.

The most important farmers unions, in a period of agricultural crisis, have resolved to do so because it is a means of obtaining additional income

Associations linked to the territory and identity are opposed...

A moratorium, supported by the right and the far right, against renewable energy sources

Agrivoltaics: controversial issue



Conclusion

Firstly, the regulation is organized at the national level with a national law and the CRE tenders, and is mainly in the hands of energy sector, but the concrete regulation is at the level of territories, in the hands of local actors.

Secondly, the territorialization of agrivoltaic project is diverse , lots of are contested