

Agrivoltaics and local food - Printed with heading “A bright, shining opportunity”

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The fast-growing solar farm development around Taranaki is encouraging for anyone who supports the transition to renewable energy. Agrivoltaics has the added benefits of offering multiple uses from a piece of land – agriculture and solar power generation. Replacing cattle with sheep to graze on the 180ha solar farm proposed on Kina Road in South Taranaki would reduce some methane emissions and nitrate pollution from dairy cows. Greater benefits can be achieved by designating parts of the farm to grow food for local communities. These will provide many more jobs. Building local food resilience is critical as the world slides into volatile geo-politics, trade and climate crises.

It is wise for the South Taranaki District Council to request stricter conditions from the EPA to be imposed on solar farm applications. At a minimum, the existing wetlands and native vegetation must be protected. Perhaps large-scaled commercial solar farms should contribute to a fund that finance community renewable projects which ensures affordability and facilitates efficient power sharing.

Scaling down our energy and material consumption is essential if we are to regain our place as responsible stewards of the land, water and atmosphere. Re-opening oil and gas exploration and engaging in fuel-intensive military offensive overseas to ‘protect shipping’ over Palestinian human rights is irresponsible and foolish. We desperately need to restore wellbeing and peace in Aotearoa and globally.