

RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Solar energy projects put food security at risk

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Solar photovoltaic deployment is essential to promote renewable energy transition, phase down coal-fired power plants, and achieve the Paris Agreement temperature goals. However, large-scale solar photovoltaic deployment requires a vast amount of land, and a substantial number of solar photovoltaic projects have been built on farmland, threatening food security. In 2017 alone, China deployed photovoltaic panels on about 100 km² of farmlands in the North China Plain, one of China's most important agricultural regions. Local authorities provide inadequate enforcement, allowing development to proceed at the expense of agriculture. Given the ambitious climate pledges of signatory countries to the Paris Agreement, the area of land required to deploy global solar photovoltaics in the coming decades is expected to rise. Governments must act now to mitigate the fierce competition for land between solar energy and crops. Mitigating solar energy's land competition will require technological innovation and more sustainable deployment strategies.

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Zhongbin B. Li is a Professor at the School of Remote Sensing and Information Engineering, Wuhan University, China. He got his PhD from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2016. He was a 3-year Postdoctoral Fellow at the Geospatial Sciences Center of Excellence, South Dakota State University, USA, and was a 2-year Fixed-term Assistant Professor at the Center for Global Change and Earth Observations, Michigan State University, USA. He is now conducting research for Scientific Discoveries and Sustainable Development using big Satellite Data. His research was published in Science and Remote Sensing of Environment.



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