

Can floating solar panels produce energy at the North Sea?

For the first time, two energy researchers at Utrecht University have studied the energy yields of solar panels at the North Sea. To do so, they created a computer model for floating solar panels that simulated the effects of wind, waves and temperature.

Can solar panels be installed at sea?

Installing solar panels at sea preserves the landscape and frees up valuable land for agriculture. But how much energy will they generate? For the first time, two energy researchers at Utrecht University have studied the energy yields of solar panels at the North Sea.

Are solar panels more efficient at sea than on land?

According to her PhD research, solar panels are more efficient at sea than on land, wind has an unexpectedly positive effect on that efficiency, wind farms and off-shore solar panels can be combined, and shade sometimes has a positive effect on the electricity that is generated. We give you an overview of her most important results.

How will Ocean Sun solar panels work?

The solar panels will sit on platforms raised several metres above the ocean surface. The plant, due to be operational in 2026, will use the existing cabling for the wind farm to send electricity back to the shore. Meanwhile, Ocean Sun has developed a floating rig, where the solar panels rest on a base which flexes as the waves pass underneath.

Can a solar park be built at sea?

Unfortunately, the construction of large-scale solar parks is limited by the amount of land available and the possible harmful effects on nature. In theory, we could cover every roof with solar panels, but not every roof is suitable for that. None of these disadvantages apply at sea, where panels also cannot be covered by shade or dust.

How can wind and solar energy be used in the North Sea?

Additionally, in periods when wind energy cannot be maximally produced, the energy generated by solar panels can be transported via the wind farm cable. This concept is called cable pooling. Golroodbari's research showed that such a hybrid form of wind and solar energy in the North Sea results in higher yields in most cases.

In places with lots of sea salt, solar panels face big challenges. Saltwater and air mix to form sea spray. This sea spray can quickly rust metal parts, which might ruin the whole panel. But don't worry--some solar panels are tested to IEC 61701 standards. These tests look at how well panels handle salty, wet conditions.

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The systems at sea, however, are innovative in that they are designed in such a way that the solar panels are placed directly on a membrane, which is buoyed and protected by high-density pipes ...

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