

# Ag groups: Indo-Pacific framework must reduce trade barriers

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press

U.S. agricultural groups are calling the new Indo-Pacific Economic Framework a good first step but say it has a long way to go to benefit farmers and ranchers.

The IPEF includes 13 countries: the U.S., Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

A joint statement from those countries said they share a commitment to a free, open, fair, inclusive, interconnected, resilient and prosperous Indo-Pacific region with the potential to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Agricultural groups welcome the initiative, saying it holds a lot of potential, but there's a lot riding on its ability to reduce tariff and non-tariff trade barriers.

Farmers for Free Trade said U.S. farmers have long looked to the Indo-Pacific as



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

**The Port of Portland's Terminal 6. A new trade framework promises to open the door to more trade with many nations around the Pacific Rim.**



**Zippy Duvall**



**Krysta Harden**



**Jim Mulhern**



**Brian Kuehl**

an essential market for growing food and ag exports.

As the populations in the region grow in number and prosperity, they look to U.S. farmers for protein, high-quality produce and other food and ag products,

said Brian Kuehl, FFT executive director.

"To take advantage of this generational opportunity, we need to knock down barriers to trade and position ourselves as a viable alternative to Chinese dominance in the

region," he said.

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is a laudable first step to re-engaging in the region, he said.

"However, it will be essential that the administration articulate how an agreement that does not currently include tariff reduction will provide new market access and economic opportunities for farmers," he said.

"Opening engagement in the Indo-Pacific region is a positive sign, closing out an agreement that gives Amer-

ican farmers expanded market access must be the goal," he said.

The U.S. Dairy Export Council and National Milk Producers Federation said the Indo-Pacific framework offers an opportunity to strengthen ties with key trading partners across the Asia-Pacific region, an important destination for U.S. dairy exports.

"IPEF offers a chance for the United States to have a positive impact on the trading environment in a vital area of the world," said Krysta Harden, president and CEO of USDEC.

"If IPEF is crafted to include meaningful market access improvements and address non-tariff barriers, then these regional trends will help drive economic benefits for American farmers, dairy manufacturers and industry workers for decades to come," she said.

The framework is an essential first step on what will surely be a complex journey, said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of NMPP.

"But to successfully compete in the Asia-Pacific region and meet their demand for dairy, we ultimately need a level playing field," he said.

That means tackling both tariff and nontariff barriers that weigh down the ability of U.S. dairy exporters to keep pace with EU and Oceania competitors that have successfully negotiated agreements across the region, he said.

He urged the Biden administration to set specific time frames for IPEF negotiations so it can deliver meaningful results for U.S. dairy farmers.

"We cannot afford another Trans-Pacific Partnership-type outcome in which we negotiate for six years only to walk away from the final result, leaving our exporters no further down the road than where we started," he said.

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said the framework will help reduce barriers, improve the adoption of science-based standards and grow American agricultural exports to the region.

## Company wants to override county law

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A Canadian company has asked the state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council to overrule a Central Washington county and allow a 470-megawatt solar-power plant on farmland.

Quebec-based Innergex Renewable Energy proposes to build the Wautoma Solar Energy Project in Benton County on pastureland and cropland, including 756 acres that are irrigated.

An ordinance passed unanimously in December by county commissioners bars wind and solar developments on land zoned for agriculture.

Commissioners said the county risked being overrun with renewable-energy projects and that a moratorium would give local planners time to develop a siting policy.

The ordinance was passed too late to apply to the Horse Heaven, a wind and solar project that would include 244 windmills and be visible from the Tri-Cities.

Commission Chairwoman Shon Small said May 19 that renewable-energy projects should be judged individually. He criticized Horse Heaven, but said he supports Innergex's proposal to place solar panes in a remote part of the county.

"I've been talking with them for about six months," Small said. "I think they've been very classy. I'd actually like to see the project go forward."

Washington's renewable-energy law has fueled solar projects in sun-baked Central Washington. Companies have tried to avoid native plants and wildlife by leasing land historically

used for agriculture.

Property owners, including farmers and ranchers, have said the leases will provide steady income that makes farming less risky. Farmland conversion, however, conflicts with state and local goals to preserve farmland.

Innergex filed an application with the state site council on May 6. EFSEC made the application public May 18 after initially withholding it until the company deposited \$50,000 for the review.

According to the application, the project would cover 4,573 acres, including roads, maintenance buildings, battery storage and a substation.

The land to be fenced off includes pastures, wheat fields and irrigated alfalfa fields. The solar array would be about 12 miles northeast of Sunnyside in Yakima County.

Innergex opposed the Benton County ordinance. Since it passed, the state council should pre-empt the local law, according to the company.

Innergex said it has lined up leases with landowners and that the solar panels will not interfere with surrounding farms and ranches.

The state site council offers renewable-energy companies a way to bypass counties. The council, made up of state government officials, makes recommendations to Gov. Jay Insee.

In a procedural step, the council has found the Horse Heaven wind and solar project was allowed under Benton County's land-use laws as they were when Scout Clean Energy applied to build it.

Innergex has 80 renewable energy projects in Canada, France, Chile and the U.S. A company spokeswoman said Innergex was attracted to Washington by the state law requiring all electricity to be renewable by 2045.

## Canadian solar company eyes 3,000 acres in Central Washington

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A Canadian company has applied to build a solar-power plant on about 3,000 acres in south-central Washington, the most expansive solar-only project yet submitted for state approval since Washington passed its renewable-energy law.

Quebec-based Innergex Renewable Energy submitted details May 6 to the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council on its plans for the 470-megawatt Wautoma Solar Energy Project in Benton County.

The council has not made the application public. Council spokeswoman Emilie Brown said Tuesday the council won't release the application until Innergex deposits a \$50,000 fee. There is no deadline to pay

the fee, she said.

The council's staff has started working on the application and scheduling meetings, siting and compliance manager Ami Hafkemeyer told the council at a meeting Tuesday.

Innergex senior coordinator for environment Laura O'Neill made a brief presentation, telling the council the project responds to Washington's law requiring electricity to be free of fossil fuels by 2045.

The solar panels would be 12 miles northeast of Sunnyside.

Washington's renewable-energy law has drawn international companies to south-central Washington. With Innergex's proposal, the state site council is reviewing four applications from large

energy developers.

The council established in the 1970s to evaluate locations for nuclear power plants and transmission lines, provides companies with an alternative to seeking approval from local governments.

The council is part of the Inslee administration. Lawmakers this year, at the request of Gov. Jay Inslee, expanded the council's powers. The council will be able to review and recommend that Inslee approve industrial developments related to renewable energy.

Innergex has an interest in 80 hydro, wind and solar power projects in Canada, Chile, France and the U.S., according to the company's website.

The Horse Heaven wind and solar project proposed by Scout Clean Energy would

"permanently impact" more than 6,800 acres in Benton County. Quinbrook Infrastructure Partners, a private investment firm with operations in the United Kingdom, Australia and U.S., owns Scout.

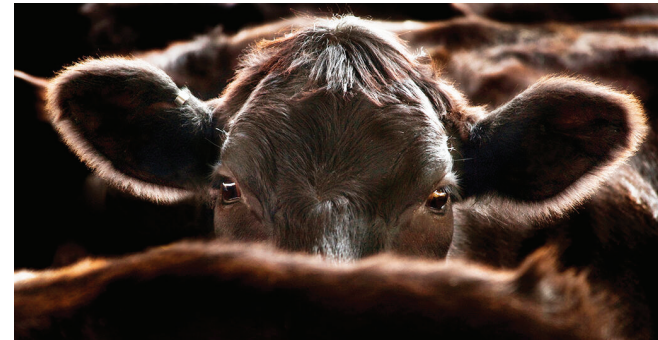
Avangrid Renewables, owned by Spanish energy developer Iberdola Group, has proposed the Badger Mountain solar project on 2,390 acres in Yakima County.

California company Cypress Creek Renewables proposes to build side-by-side High Top and Ostrea solar projects on 1,800 acres in Yakima County.

Toronto-based Brookfield Renewable Partners recently acquired the rights to build the Goose Prairie solar project on 625 acres in Yakima County. Inslee approved the project in December.

## PSA enforcement bill faces industry opposition

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS  
Capital Press



Getty Images

A bill to create a special investigator at USDA to examine and prosecute alleged violations of the Packers and Stockyards Act is meeting with opposition from the cattle and meat industries.

H.R. 7606, the Meat and Poultry Special Investigator Act, which passed the House Agriculture Committee, creates a separate office for enforcement — although that function already exists at USDA, said Tanner Beymer, senior director of government affairs for National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

"The bill's duplicative," he said.

Obviously, NCBA supports robust enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act, he said. But creating a second office to do what the Packers and Stockyards Division already does "is just a waste of time and money."

Most cases under the

enforcement arm would blur the jurisdictional line between USDA and the Department of Justice, NCBA said in a letter to House Agriculture Committee leaders.

In addition, the bill is unfunded and includes no authorization for appropriations. A new office would compete with the Packers and Stockyards Division for resources. A better way to enforce competition laws is to increase funding for additional

The bill would give USDA unilateral prosecutorial authority to handle all lawsuits, which is atypical among federal agencies, he said.

Establishing a new office separate from the century-old Packers and Stockyards

staff, Beymer said. The North American Meat Institute also opposes the bill.

"USDA and the Department of Justice already have the authorities this bill would grant, making this expansion of government bureaucracy with its required staff and offices duplicative and wasteful," said Julie Anna Potts, Meat Institute president and CEO.

Processors are also concerned about the creation of a special investigator empowered to enforce new changes to Packers and Stockyards regulations, soon to be announced.

"The special investigator (and staff) would feel emboldened and obligated to bring as many cases as possible, warranted or not, to test and expand the legal limits of the new rules," she said.

"The resulting legal uncertainty and market chaos will accelerate unpredictable changes in livestock and poultry marketing that will add costs to both producers and consumers at a time of high inflation," she said.

The National Farmers Union, however, said the bill would increase enforcement and boost USDA's resources to investigate abusive market practices.

"Laws intended to protect markets from monopolies and anti-competitive practices in agriculture are not being adequately enforced," said Rob Lawre, NFU president.

### LEGAL

**PUBLIC NOTICE OREGON HOP COMMISSION BUDGET HEARING JUNE 16, 2022 12:00 PM Ratchet Brewery 990 N. 1st Street Silverton, OR 97381**

As required by ORS 576.416, the Oregon Hop Commission will hold a public hearing for the purpose of receiving public comments on its proposed budget for the fiscal year 2022-23.

The public budget hearing will be held at the above date, time, and location.

Copies of the proposed budget are available at the Commission office, 3467 Third Street, Hubbard Oregon 97032 and online at [www.oregonhops.org](http://www.oregonhops.org)

The meeting location is accessible to persons with disabilities.

For accommodations for persons with disabilities, make a request at least 48 hours (Monday-Friday) before the meeting by contacting the Commission at 503-982-7600 or [info@oregonhops.org](mailto:info@oregonhops.org)

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