

Farmer & Rancher Autonomy & Property Rights

OUR POSITION

Farmers and ranchers deserve the freedom to decide how their land is used, including whether to host renewable energy projects. Land-use decisions should be guided by clear, objective standards—not personal preferences or subjective concerns—and should respect the long tradition of private property rights in rural America.

WHY IT MATTERS

For generations, farmers and ranchers have been trusted stewards of their land. Renewable energy is simply another option they may choose to support their operation, strengthen the farm's financial resilience, and preserve the land for the next generation. [These rights are foundational to American law](#) and economic life, protecting landowners from bearing unfair burdens imposed by others.

Local concerns about renewable energy development are real and deserve respect. [But research and case law](#) show that subjective aesthetic preferences are not a reliable basis for regulating another person's land use. When communities rely on objective, measurable criteria—such as setbacks, noise limits, safety rules, or construction standards—they protect community interests while also respecting landowner autonomy.

WHAT WE SUPPORT

REFA supports policies that recognize farmers and ranchers as the primary decision-makers over their land. We believe farmers are best positioned to weigh the risks and opportunities of hosting a renewable energy project. Their lived experience—economic, agronomic, and generational—should guide these decisions. REFA supports local ordinances grounded in objective, measurable standards. Reasonable setback distances, safety requirements, road access standards, and decommissioning rules help address local concerns without compromising property rights.

REFA advocates for farmers' ability to use renewable energy as an agricultural commodity that strengthens the operation. Renewable energy leases can complement and stabilize farm income, much like other forms of diversified revenue. Protecting a farmer's right to evaluate these opportunities helps keep farmland in family hands.

REFA supports constructive local engagement that respects both community input and landowner autonomy. Farmers and ranchers live in the same communities where renewable projects are proposed. Effective policy creates space for honest conversation, addresses concerns with facts, and ensures farmers retain the ability to make informed decisions about their land.

About REFA

The [Renewable Energy Farmers of America](#) is a 501(c)(6) membership trade association that empowers farmer and rancher landowners with expert guidance, education, peer-to-peer networking and advocacy for renewable energy decisions while protecting property rights.