With California committed to achieving 33 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2020, some solar and wind developers are rushing to propose large-scale installations on California farmland. These sites can be attractive because they are close to existing transmission lines and substations and have good sun exposure. However, proposed projects on farmland tend to spur opposition from agricultural interests worried about the loss of productive farmland in the state, as well as from endangered species advocates concerned about the destruction of farms that provide critical habitat for endangered and threatened species. Lawsuits have been filed, agencies have devoted countless hours of study, and projects both good and bad have faced delays or collapse.

To address the problem, UC Berkeley and UCLA Schools of Law gathered some of the key stakeholders on this issue, from renewable energy companies to environmentalists to farm representatives, to discuss the key challenges and solutions. Based on that discussion, the law schools are today releasing Harvesting Clean Energy, the ninth in our series of white papers on climate change topics. The report summarizes some of the most promising solutions to ensure that deployment of large-scale facilities on agricultural lands occurs only in the most appropriate areas, close to existing transmission infrastructure and with minimal impacts on endangered species and good farmland.

I'll also be testifying today at 1pm before the California State Assembly Select Committee on the Renewable Energy Economy in Rural California on the report's key findings. Assemblymember V. Manuel Perez, one of the state legislative leaders on this issue, has called the hearing in Fresno and invited many of the stakeholders who gathered at our UC convening to provide testimony.

Harvesting Clean Energy finds that large-scale renewable energy development on marginal agricultural lands has been stymied in part by the Williamson Act (a state law the provides property tax relief to farmers who agree to keep their land agricultural), the Endangered Species Act (which in some cases has perversely encouraged developers to propose projects on federal land due to the faster review compared to projects on private lands), lack of coordinated state and local land use planning for renewables, and transmission planning that does not take into account the most suitable agricultural sites for renewables.

To overcome these challenges, *Harvesting Clean Energy* recommends that stakeholders agree to a common set of criteria that defines suitable agricultural land, such as poor soil conditions and drainage, lack of access to water, proximity to transmission lines, and lack of biological value, among other factors. Once the criteria have been developed, state policy makers should develop permit incentives to encourage developers to propose projects on these lands. These incentives could include expedited environmental review with

coordinated state and local land use plans, faster Endangered Species Act permitting, and separate processes for terminating or suspending Williamson Act contracts (SB 618 [Wolk], just signed by the Governor, takes a significant step in this direction).

Ultimately, to meet the 2020 energy goals, the state may need approximately 100,000 acres of land for large-scale facilities, according to recent estimates provided by the governor's office. With 30 million acres in California devoted to agriculture, the state's farms do not need to bear the brunt of the deployment. Policy makers should therefore ensure that any renewable energy development that happens on farmland results in the fewest impacts possible on our critical agricultural and biological resources, while keeping us on the path to meeting our greenhouse gas reduction and energy goals.