



James Bean
BASF Strategic
Accounts Manager

Solar farm managers increase efficiency and reduce costs

The growth of solar farms has exploded over the last 5 years. With this rapid increase in acreage, solar farm managers are being challenged to increase their efficiency and reduce vegetation management costs.

Why Manage Vegetation?

Nature is in a constant state of change. Land disturbance leads to an explosion of weeds that frequently grow taller than 16 inches, the maximum size of vegetation allowed on a solar farm. Often, the weeds that infest a farm are invasive weeds that must be controlled by law, such as kochia, Russian thistle, pigweed, marehail and many others. Establishing a dense grass cover will help reduce weed competition, but it is difficult and time consuming. Even when grass is established, it is still under threat of invasive grasses and broadleaf weed invasion.

Management Options

In the eastern U.S. where managers try to establish and maintain grass in the solar farm, mowing is an effective short-term option. However, with the need for specialized equipment, movement of equipment and requirements to mow up to eight times a year, it is very expensive. Selective herbicide applications in conjunction with mowing can reduce maintenance costs by 50% or more.

Selective Herbicides

Many of today's herbicides reduce enzymes that are only found in plants, so they are practically non-toxic to humans, other mammals, birds, fish and other wildlife. Many are labelled for use in range and pasture. Others can be applied directly to water to manage invasive plants. Herbicides are an integral component in rescuing and restoring many threatened and endangered species and habitats.

Selective herbicides such as Plateau® herbicide and Detail® herbicide have been effectively used by roadside managers, invasive weed control organizations and ranchers. Plateau herbicide is commonly used in the establishment and maintenance of native grass plantings in the U.S. Plateau herbicide offers a unique ability to selectively regulate grass growth to greatly extend the interval between mowing's, it also removes unwanted grasses from desirable grasses and can release or control broadleaf weeds based on use rate. This makes Plateau

herbicide the first choice for solar farm managers. Detail herbicide provides selective control of many difficult-to-control broadleaf weeds like pigweed and marehail in the east and kochia and Russian thistle in the western U.S.

Application Examples

Herbicide rates and tank-mixes vary depending on the species of grass you want to maintain. First applications should be made as soon as snow is no longer a possibility and sites can be accessed. In the north, applications can begin in April while in the south applications can begin in January or February. In the northern U.S. where fescue and bluegrass predominate, 3 oz. Plateau herbicide + 1 oz. Detail herbicide + 0.5 oz. Escort® XP have provided up to 10 weeks of grass growth regulation and broadleaf weed control. If a follow-up application is required, mow again in July and retreat. This generally cuts the number of mowings from 6 to 2. In the southern U.S. where Bermudagrass dominates, 6 oz. Plateau herbicide + 1 oz. Detail herbicide + 0.5 oz. Escort XP have provided up to 14 weeks of grass growth regulation and broadleaf weed control. If a follow-up application is required, mow again in June and retreat. The number of mowings can be reduced from 8 to 2.

Solar farm managers have these effective tools to support their efforts. For more information about Professional Vegetation Management from BASF, visit bettervm.basf.us

Product timing is a suggestion only; optimize application for local weather and field conditions. Confirm active status of product registration in your state before using; not all products are registered in all states.

Always read and follow label directions.

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