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SOLAR FARMS TOPIC OF NOVEMBER 5 INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Local landowners are invited to attend an informational meeting on November 5, 2012 to learn more about solar farms and the issues involving leasing land for solar farms. The meeting will be held at the Agricultural Resources Center at 6:30 PM and is being sponsored by Catawba County Farm Bureau and the Agricultural Advisory Board. All landowners are invited to attend and pre-registration is not required.

Many landowners are receiving offers in the mail from companies interested in leasing land for the development of solar farms. Sometimes this correspondence begins as an option to develop a solar farm for up to 24 months from the date of signing. Landowners are encouraged to seek legal advice from their personal attorney as to what may be in their best interest or to identify any areas of concern from a property owners perspective.

Some questions that will be addressed on November 5 include "Can land in solar farms remain in the present use tax program?" "Can these farms remain in present use during the 24 month option period?" "Are solar companies required to be bonded or retain escrow funds?" "Who is liable if someone gets hurt during any phase of the project?" "If a solar farm declares bankruptcy who is responsible for removing the solar structures from the property?" "In the case of bankruptcy does the property owner become responsible for the property taxes on the solar equipment?"

Many of these questions are quite complex in nature and several experts have been asked to attend the meeting and help landowners understand the issues. Representatives from the North Carolina Farm Bureau, State Utilities Commission, Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources, Catawba County Tax Office and Catawba County Planning and Parks Department are expected to participate.

The Agricultural Resources Center is located at 1175 South Brady Avenue in Newton. For more information, you may contact Jeff Carpenter, Catawba County Extension Director at 828-465-8240 or jeffc@catawbacountync.gov.