



BOERENNATUUR

Agriculture turns The Netherlands green



BoerenNatuur works with farmers who use agriculture to enhance landscape cooperatively with nature. Flowering field margins buzzing with life, herb-rich grasslands where the lapwing calls and farmers who are proud of it: That's how we protect and increase biodiversity, promote water quality, healthy soil and a diverse landscape.

Farmers turn The Netherlands green

The collective approach

With a joint and area-oriented approach farmers turn The Netherlands green! To realize this, forty farmer collectives have been active since January 2016. Their members, over 9000 farmers and other landowners, jointly carry out the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This bottom-up collective approach is unique in the world, and it works!

The forty farmer collectives have joined forces in the Dutch organisation BoerenNatuur (Farmers&Nature). By cooperating, they have more impact and more knowledge. BoerenNatuur is a logical partner for governments and other parties.

In The Netherlands, there are ample opportunities for greening, for example through sustainable market concepts or improvement of soil quality. Farmers cannot do that on their own. That's why we seek intensive cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the provinces, the water authorities, the dairy chain, nature organisations and market parties.

What we realize as BoerenNatuur?

That farmers, together with other farmers, NGOs and governments, work on more biodiversity.'

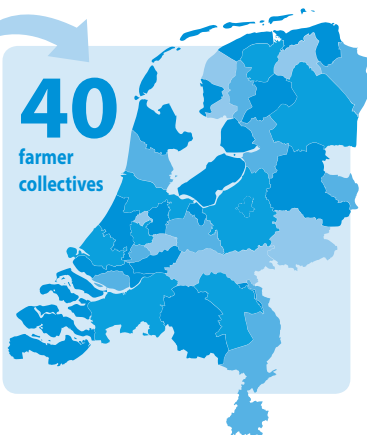
Alex Datema, president of BoerenNatuur



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40

farmer
collectives



>9.000

farmers/landowners



>78.000

ha agri-environment scheme



PARTRIDGE, FOR PARTRIDGES AND OTHER FARMLAND BIRDS



The partridge turns out to be an excellent indicator for biodiversity. That's why, in the international PARTRIDGE-project farmers and researchers from England, Scotland, German, Belgium and The Netherlands work together on a future for the endangered partridge and other farmland birds. Meeuwis Millenaar, area coordinator of the farmer collective ANB West-Brabant, is enthusiastic about the project: "At every pilot location we try out different measures in consultation with our farmers. As international partners we visit each other twice a year to exchange our

findings. For example, in England they implemented beetle banks – higher, dryer and rougher spots on a field – and these prove to be very beneficial to biodiversity. And the successful flower blocks the Germans experimented with, we have now also sown in other pilot locations." All parties are involved in the project, not only farmers and nature organisations, but also wildlife managers. "The project is not completed yet, but the results are promising. The intention is that effective measures will be included in the system for nature and landscape management. To make a



long story short: if it's up to us, we can still save the partridge!"

The PARTRIDGE-project is made possible by a European Interreg-subsidy, the Province of Noord-Brabant, Vogelbescherming Nederland and a private foundation.



Farmer's collective: regional partner

The Netherlands has a long tradition of agri-environment cooperatives. This means that the social structure for the new collectives was already present. From the 160 cooperatives, 40 farmer collectives have emanated. Together the collectives cover the entire country, with each collective managed by farmers themselves. This way, collectives have become a trusted partner for farmers as well as the province and other regional parties.

Farmer collectives serve as final beneficiaries for the subsidy of the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme: on the one hand they have a collective contract with the government and on the other hand an individual contract with the farmer. To date, The Netherlands is the only country in Europe where farmers, through collectives, carry out the Agri-Environment Scheme in the context of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Being flexible at the kitchen table

The collectives have an extensive network of coordinators, volunteers and field workers, who often have known the farmers and their farms for years. That makes collectives especially capable of regional customization.

Within the collective, neighbouring farmers discuss measures at their kitchen table. Where does which type of nature management have the largest chance of success? This way measures are applied where they are ecologically most effective. That makes a collective more flexible than an individual farmer. By meeting regularly and continuing to look critically at measures, they can be adapted to the demands of nature.



A GOOD LOOK AT SOIL STRUCTURE

A healthy, living soil is the basis for biodiversity, and also for every healthy farm. That means that the soil is at least as important for greening as agri-environment management. "Farmers indicated that they wanted to learn more about their soil, and the provincial Action Plan Soil & Water has taken this up together with our collective", says Albert Jan Olijve of the Flevoland Farmer Collective.

In the project 'Zicht op de Bodemstructuur' ('A Good Look at Soil Structure') farmers learn to look at their soils closely and improve them. According to project coordinator Olijve the project proceeds very well: up till now already a hundred farmers in their province participate.

In the first phase the farmers learn to judge their soils. Together with a neighbouring farmer they dig a pit in their field and observe it closely. "With the group we wrap up this phase with a 'pit talk' at every participant, together with a soil expert", says Olijve. In the next phase, farmers get started on improving their soil structure, for example by growing a different green manure or a different method of soil tillage.

■ Olijve: "It is great to see how enthusiastically farmers get started on their soil, together with their neighbour. Also nice to see is that both younger and older farmers, organic and conventional participate. The soil is the basis for everybody!"

'Zicht op de bodemstructuur' is a project in the context of the provincial Action Plan Soil & Water, a joint initiative of the Farmers' Union, the regional Water Authority and the Province of Flevoland.

Execution of Agri-Environment Scheme

The farmer collectives are certified to execute the Agri-Environment Scheme (AES) at a landscape scale. They choose the most promising locations, divide the management tasks and check the quality of the management performed. The co-ordinated cross-farm approach is more effective than measures on the scale of individual farms. With the execution of the AES the collectives see to the protection of 68 international target species and often also provincial target species. Within the collectives, farmers implement blooming field margins, enough winter feed for farmland birds, delayed mowing for young grassland birds, the management of wood girths, and all possible other measures that help to maintain the habitat of a species. In wet areas other targets can be included such as water storage and buffer zones.

SCAN-ICT visualizes management and its results

BoerenNatuur has its own ICT-system for agri-environment management: SCAN-ICT. In this system every collective registers all the measures as agreed with the farmers. Through a personal account on a portal the farmer can always check all which measures have been agreed and where.

Special about SCAN-ICT is that it is directly linked with the ICT-system of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency of the national government. This allows the collective to directly communicate with the government about changes in management activities, accountability and payments.



BoerenNatuur supports, inspires and represents collectives

Representation

BoerenNatuur connects and inspires farmer collectives and represents their interests. We propagate the collective approach within The Netherlands and the European Union, because we are convinced that this approach contributes to an agriculture that enhances soil, climate, water, nature and landscape in the region. To this end, BoerenNatuur maintains contact with governments and NGOs.

Cooperation

BoerenNatuur cooperates closely with the national government, the twelve provinces, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the farmers union, local governments, research institutes, water authorities and other parties. BoerenNatuur is involved in, among others, the 'Delta Programme Biodiversity Restoration' and the 'Green Deal Nature-inclusive Agriculture in Green Education'.

Knowledge

BoerenNatuur secures direct access of its members to relevant knowledge, allows them to share knowledge and makes sure they are closely involved in the development of education and research. We also develop knowledge, for example in the pilots 'agriculture with nature'. Through trainings and other meetings we encourage mutual contact and knowledge exchange between the collectives.

Agrarian nature and landscape management



On behalf of the collectives, BoerenNatuur strives to improve agri-environment management: plain and easily operable.

Contact

Would you like to know more about the collective approach? Please contact us.

Contact

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