



# Follow up conference

**Territorial cooperation for  
the provision of public goods  
in the context of the reformed CAP**

**23 – 25 April 2014  
De Klinze, Aldtsjerk, Netherlands**

# Report

*In collaboration with and financial support from:*



**Thursday April 24**

**Plenary session:**

Opening by Mr. Arie van den Brand, president of the Groupe de Bruges.

Mr. Van den Brand welcomes all present at this second European conference on the topic of territorial cooperation for the provision of public goods in the context of the new CAP. A special warm welcome to Miss Monique Remmers, senior policy officer of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, who is here to replace the Minister of Agriculture, Miss Dijkstra, who's presence today was required at the World Ocean's Summit in The Hague and to our other key note speaker, Mr. David Baldock, Director of the Institute of European Environmental Policy.

Mr. Van den Brand remarks that the [first conference](#), which was held last December in France has made clear that farmers working together for the management of biodiversity and sustainability are part of a new European movement.

Already in 2008 the Groupe de Bruges pleaded for these types of territorial cooperation approaches in its publication '[The dilemmas of globalisation. Towards a re-valuation of agriculture](#)': *"The current system is based on compensating and rewarding farmers on an individual basis. As most resources, such as bio diversity, landscape, carbon sequestration and water management, are not confined to the boundaries of a single farm, a territorial approach should also be reflected in the system of agreements and payments. We feel, and studies and practical experiences in various countries back up this position, that an aggregate system in which an agreement is made collectively with a group of farmers in a given area will give far better results and a better guarantee for long term management. In such an approach, other land users could also and should be included. An aggregate system would also allow a more integrated approach and room for experimentation to create more synergy between the different functions and should also give more room to public-private investment partnerships"*.

We see these meetings as a first step to come to a platform at EU level for farmers groups, not only to learn from each other, but also to be able to articulate their ideas from practice towards policy makers. A long time will be needed before the ideas and results of these farmers groups will have spread throughout Europe, but a start has been made. The document, which will be discussed tomorrow, will mark the next step in this process. The aim is to present this in the Autumn to the (new) European institutions.

Mr. Van den Brand concludes his introductory remarks by thanking the Nordlike Fryske Wâlden for hosting this meeting and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, the French Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests, the four CAP pilots, Bloeiend Bedrijf en Veelzijdig Boerenland for their financial support.

Welcome by Douwe Hoogland - chairman of the Nordlike Fryske Wâlden.

Mr. Hoogland welcomes everybody here at De Klinze, a former estate. The old nobility has long gone; we here are the new nobility. We are here in the province of Friesland, which like to call the 29<sup>th</sup> Member State. We have our own language and culture and the area is famous for its cows, horses and cooperative dairy production. Within the province the Nordlike Fryske Wâlden is a kind of enclave. People here do not like to be told what to do. They have a history of rebellion

against government. Self-regulation is built in our culture. Collectives for biodiversity management fit well with this attitude and are set up to create added value, both for nature and for farmers. Over the last 3 years our organisation together with three others were engaged in CAP pilots for collective management of biodiversity. The assessment of the results ended last March. Preliminary results show that a collective approach offers better ecological results and is more cost effective as well. The collaboration with the Ministry of Economic Affairs was close and constructive and led to mutual trust. Also between the four pilots, although they had slightly different approaches, worked closely together to exchange their experiences and to bring the whole to the next level. We believe that we now have a solid foundation for the future. We are also want to apply the collective approach to EFA's, but this will require more research. The results of the pilots will be handed officially to the Minister of Agriculture in June, but an English summary [[insert hyperlink](#)] is already available, which I would like to present to Miss Remmers.



Key note address – Monique Remmers, senior policy officer of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The greening measures in the new CAP are an important step, but this does not mean that we are there yet. More efforts are needed to make agriculture both more competitive and more sustainable. My Ministry firmly believes that bottom up cooperation will be key to achieve this. The four CAP pilots Mr Hoogland was referring to, have shown that there are different needs and possibilities at local level. At the same time we have to acknowledge that we have an obligation to achieve international objectives, such as the Birds and Habitat Directives and that there is a need to reduce the implementation cost. Local cooperation can help to achieve both. A precondition however is, that local stakeholders need to be involved. This is far from easy and requires a lot of discussion. Based on the results of the CAP pilots my Ministry has decided that, starting from 2016, we will implement the agri-environmental schemes concerning biodiversity through these collectives. Later on we aim to also include water management schemes. In our view it is the only option given the relative small scale of the farms here in The Netherlands.

[Key note address – David Baldock, director of the Institute for European Environmental Policy](#)

Mr Baldock starts by reminding that already in the 1980's The Netherlands introduced the first system to pay farmers for biodiversity management.

I think that these innovative collaborative approaches can be helpful to achieve better delivery. We have to keep in mind however that there is a difference between a territorial and a collective approach. A territorial approach refers to a certain area with a specific status, while collectives represent a form of institutionalised management. I regard therefore collective approaches as being complementary to rather than an alternative for current practices.

Durability of schemes is key to keep the trust of farmers. Also, a sense of ownership of the measures among farmers and other land owners is crucial. For this more flexibility is needed.

We have also keep in mind that it is not only about conservation, but that we also need to foster and support agro-ecological innovation, for example regarding climate change measures. At the moment, concerning the new CAP and in particular the new RDP's I'm worried that the MS will be reluctant to take on board climate change measures. Concerning the greening measures in the Direct Payment System my biggest fear is that there will be no gain whatsoever for the environment.

Another worry is the fact that currently there are firm budget costs at national and regional level to reduce the number of administrators in the name of simplification of the CAP, while at the same time the ambition level of policy objectives are being increased. Cooperation approaches can be part of the answer.

There is however a serious risk of disallowances (fines) by paying agencies as a result of auditing when the collective approach is being applied, especially concerning Pillar 1, as the system will be rules driven and not outcome driven.

### Discussion

#### *Nat Page:*

we seem to be speaking of two kinds of collectives, one on information sharing (knowledge 'cooperatives) and one that's involved in joint payments. Concerning the latter my main concern is, how to build trust among farmers and to have internal control mechanism if one of the farmers does keep his side of the agreement.

#### *Monique Remmers:*

In our CAP pilots we have two mechanisms, one is a form of social control ('peer policing') within the group of farmers and the other is a monitoring and control system which is part of the formal agreement between collective and government.

#### *Douwe Hoogland:*

In our organisation we have a control group which is a mix of farmers-members and other stakeholders, for example the local green NGO. When they see something wrong at a farm, they first give advice on how to correct this. After three wrongs a sanction is applied. I would also like to keep in mind that we had the same issue when the dairy cooperatives were created over one hundred years ago: an internal control system was established to check, control and sanction the quality of milk on the farms of the members.

#### *Silviu Totelecan:*

I'm from Romania and I see that in Eastern European countries there is a completely different attitude towards cooperation. Here in The Netherlands and other Western European countries it is common sense to work together, in our parts it is common sense not to work together. What approach is needed to overcome this?

#### *David Baldock:*

I absolutely agree that for the Eastern European countries we need a different approach incorporated in advice and support services. The cross compliance and greening of the First Pillar is a first step to move forward in the whole of the EU. This is now the EU baseline. At MS level a tailored approach is necessary to make further steps.

*Arie van den Brand:*

As Sicco Mansholt always stressed, it is key to encourage young farmers to work on farms in other parts of Europe as a kind of traineeship, not only to see and experience other practices first hand, but also to develop leadership.

*Henk Kieft:*

The LEADER programme can offer tools for as it has funds for transnational cooperation.

*Dilyana Slavova:*

I'm member of the European Economic and Social Committee and I come from Bulgaria. I would like to invite you as experts to Bulgaria to explain to our farmers how to apply these new approaches. In Bulgaria, as in some of the other new MS, we have a dual agricultural system: on the one hand very large farms and on the other a big number of very small farms. For both categories we first of all need to change the mentalities before we can set something up.

*René Wouters:*

David Baldock was referring to the fact that the system is rules driven. In this system error rates are driving the control and sanctioning system. How can we come to a more goals driven system that is built on trust?

*David Baldock:*

I agree that the error rates approach is very rigid. The same error rates as for the direct payments is now also being applied to the greening measures, measures which by definition are less predictable than say growing cereals. If you have for example a pond that over the year will increase and decrease in size, you can quickly run into problems with the paying agency. I consider this a major flaw in the CAP reform and could lead to risk aversion by MS as they will also be sanctioned to the same extent that the farmers in question will be sanctioned. So, MS will have to show courage and will need support from civil society and NGO's to change this.

*Ingrid van Huizen:*

During the field visit this afternoon we will see an example where a farmer received a disallowance while at the same time the environmental benefits are very clear.

So, for us the question is if MS can create more space for collective approaches, that apply a different system of controls, that can to the same extent justify public spending while at the same time avoiding risk aversion by MS and farmers? We need also to engage the controllers in this debate. When you do this, you have to be very clear up front with what you exactly mean when you say you want more flexibility.

## Parallel workshops:

### **Workshop 1 Information sharing and capacity building**

Participants of this workshop discussed and elaborated the possibilities to come to an infrastructure for information sharing and capacity building, that could include:

- The development of common concepts and vocabulary
- Setting up an infrastructure (online and offline) for the collection and sharing of information, experiences and examples
- Setting up a series of exchange visits.
- Organisation of follow up meetings (workshops, seminars)
- Development of research proposals
- Development of a strategy for the implementation.

#### Presentations:

- Merijn Bos, Louis Bolk Institute
- Roel Jongeneel, Wageningen UR, Agricultural Economic Institute (LEI)
- Gerard Breeman, Wageningen UR , Public Administration and Policy Group
- Emilio Chiodo, Teramo University, Department of Food Sciences
- Henk Oostindie, Wageningen UR, Department of Rural Sociology
- Fabio Cossu, European network for Rural Development

#### Results:

Three areas for debate were identified:

#### 1. Information sharing

- First be clear about objectives of sharing
- Instead of good (and bad) practices: relevant examples
- Need for validation and peer reviewing
- Beware of resources needed (now not available in AES)
- Include also communication strategy for external use and public opinion (be good and tell/sell it)

#### 2. Capacity building

- Organisational development
- Leadership development
- Basic ecological skills development (flora and fauna recognition)
- Long term perspective needed
- Resources needed for professional facilitation (now lacking in AES)
- Idea: twinning between areas (multi-stakeholder) with one area acting as mentor for the other

### 3. Research

Points of departure:

- Multi-disciplinary approach: economists, sociologists, agronomists, ecologists, etc.
- Multi-stakeholder approach: demand driven and/or as process of co-creation ('researchers inspire farmers and vice versa')
- Bottom up practices should form the core

Broadly 3 areas:

- Implementation CAP
  - Monitoring of effectiveness (indicators, bench marking, scaling, styles and systems of farming)
  - Monitoring of efficiency (real transaction cost)
  - Accountability and sanctioning (+ certification)
  - Rules driven vs output driven (room for further field experiments)
- Social innovation
  - Social capital  assessment criteria?
  - New institutional arrangements
  - New networks (between actors + urban – rural)
  - New business models
  - New RD evaluation methodology and indicators
- Public goods & competitiveness
  - Public goods delivery to create added value in food supply chain (workshop 3)
  - Public goods management to increase territorial competitiveness

Next steps:

Information sharing:

- Define objectives
- Define different target groups
- Identify appropriate tools
- Identify funding possibilities

Capacity building:

- Further assessment of needs
- Identification and assessment of existing tools and approaches
- Assessment of funding options (e.g. LEADER, LIFE)
- Elaborate idea of twinning/mentorship

Research:

- Prioritize
- Further identification of potential research areas and questions
- (Further) identification and commitment of partners to develop research proposals
- Focus: H2020, February 2015?

## Workshop 2

### Connecting with society; towards a multi-stakeholder approach.

Participants of this workshop discussed which NGO's and other stakeholders are active in the field of the CAP, biodiversity, environment and sustainability at the European level; assess which of these would be possible partners for cooperation and develop an agenda and strategy.

#### Presentations:

- Trees Robijns, Birdlife Europe
- Ingrid van Huizen, Nordlike Fryske Wâlden (tbc)
- Bernd Müller, Institute for Agricultural Policy and Market Research, Justus Liebig University

#### Results:

First Trees Robijns presented her case from Birdlife Europe. Birdlife is represented in 48 countries, owns or manages more than 5 800 sites totalling 320 000 hectares in Europe and Central Asia. Work on EU Policy is mainly related to environment and biodiversity. Due to a crisis



among farmland birds and farmland biodiversity, working with CAP enables Birdlife to set out a vision on the new CAP. Territorial cooperation within this case seems perfect - biodiversity is not limited to one farm, there is room for a more holistic approach (in comparison to Skylark that is just one bird to specific area). This approach brings cooperation between farmers and other actors in the rural areas as well as targeting of measures and actions. Territorial cooperation also seems what RDPs are already supposed to achieve on a larger scale - not something that happens in isolation and it can also be an "idea factory"— something

that happens on the ground. The conclusion was that in general, territorial cooperation is much more a rules driven system than an objectives driven system for cooperatives.

Ingrid van Huizen, from Nordlike Fryske Wâlden (NFW) works for one of the first agricultural nature associations in the Netherlands. 10 years of cooperation resulted in practical experiences and with pilot projects. Working with theme groups through a bottom up approach is creating the same fuel for change, while also solving together conflicts and therefore building trust. Collective nature management is unburdening members, because they can milk, while NFW will take care of the administration. They have also developed a field guide, courses and a landscape plan. The project has intensive relationship with organisations in the area. It is an umbrella association, that as a partner in the area brings big perspective in the area (=our holistic approach). It has been difficult to implement biodiversity plans in other areas, as there are specific goals for each of them. You have people willing to do them, but the government has a different idea of "ecologically best places" where to do it. To think as cooperatives, to create with the government a more and stable partnership in the region requires cooperation from both sides.

Bernd Müller from the Institute for Agricultural Policy and Market Research, Justus Liebig University is doing PhD research on Stakeholder Participation approach in Nature Conservation in Germany. There is an enormous decline in quality and quantity of species and habitats since 2007. 13 habitats actually deteriorated, six of which are habitats that are dependent on sustainable use of grassland or habitat management (eg hay meadows, inland dunes, heaths). From 2003 to 2012, the absolute loss of permanent grassland in Germany amounted to about 250,000 acres, equivalent to a decline in permanent grassland proportion by about 5 %. Due to structural changes – there is a decline in farm numbers of 25% in the last 5 years. Farmers that are left in Germany are growing in size but use intensification. For example in poultry production, 60% of German poultry production is located in 2 regions. New stables are planned in a small district – to increase the production massively. There is however a very high pollution of groundwater with nitrate (40%). Agricultural production is a major cause for some monitored misbalances in the environment. Agro-environmental schemes at the landscape level are needed and solutions are landscape providing units (LCPU) to implement land management concepts. The task of LCPU is for long term planning horizon, maintaining ecological structure, sustainable land use and environmental education.

This workshop allowed to provide practical examples of working initiatives and green NGO. It became clear that to reach a change – a multi-stakeholder approach should be used. One should differentiate between association vs multi-stakeholder approach (one has a different perception of these terms). The field of organisations is very broad and there is a need to address the differences in interest; we need to look at the competition, the budget, consumer's interest, producers, resources for farmers. A multi-stakeholder approach is not only on the level of that of a person, but after 20 years of the example Nordlike Fryske Wâlden, we can also build it in institutional way – another level in the regional society.

Throughout the discussion, following challenges were identified:

- How to you keep/provide the ownership? Long term perspective is needed
- There is an existing critical approach from environmental organisations – but the organisations should also be supportive
- The system should be driven by goals, not by regulations and institutions
- Two big players – farmers & consumers. The consumer should be included – their shopping bag is paying for biodiversity “long term”
- The scale of dissemination is an issue – many good things are happening across Europe, but they are not happening in enough places
- Collectives need the space & funds to make it a success. Availability of seed (start-up) money for the first 2 years is necessary
- Challenge in the second pillar for collective approaches is big enough – farmers can co-create “the phase” what they will do in that area
- Farmers need to go against the political status quo in their own farmers unions – otherwise it will continue to be the same atmosphere and it will remain difficult
- Important first step – start on local/regional level to make new alliances by inviting people to have them on your board and be part of the decision making process
- Local vs. Glocal – make shortlist what are our priorities on local (regional) level

Next steps:

- Define priorities – Observe from close what works best for your cooperative
- If there is governmental support, there should be a very clear subsidiarity – give money to the region, the region will spend them based on their priorities and objectives (established by citizens, farmers, green NGO's, etc.)
- Build on success stories & diffuse the best stories. Encourage more people to do “the right thing”. Playing the game of villain farms versus beautiful farms will not do.
- Present yourself as a new model, an alternative to the policy and one that will deliver.
- In the dialogue between green NGO's and nature cooperatives try to be clear in expectations and redefine the results. Don't be afraid of conflicts – friction creates energy (trust).

### **Workshop 3**

#### **Connecting with the market; business cases for biodiversity management and agro-ecology.**

Participants of this workshop will exchange and discuss examples (business cases) of projects and initiatives that are aimed at achieving remuneration of biodiversity and agro-ecological management from private sources (as opposed to public funding from European, national and/or regional governments). What kind of business cases can be identified? What are critical factors for success?

#### Presentations:

- Frank Verhoeven, Boerenverstand Consultancy
- Adrie Vermeulen, arable farmer and participant of the Skylark project
- Nat Page, Fundatia Adept

#### Results:

The workshop had one overarching question: can business replace agricultural policies?

Firstly, Frank Verhoeven shared his expertise in developing indicators for dairy farms in The Netherlands. He presented an evaluation model in form of a cycle compass which allows to assess the environmental performance of farms. The cycle compass includes five indicators: air quality, food print, biodiversity, soil quality, water quality. The aim is to improve craftsmanship, which is encouraged by rewarding the best-performing farmers. The same evaluation scheme has also been applied to a cow cycle. Since the market is demanding quality labels, companies are also demanding instruments to evaluate the performance of their producers on biodiversity and thus, they are ready to pool to pay for independent certifications. Markets provide more and more a carrot to improve positive agro-environmental behaviors but to really keep making steps forward, a stick is still needed and this stick must still be provided by governments. In other words, markets are an incentive, and probably the main incentive, but governments have to follow the impulse coming from it and provide the adequate tools to follow and accompany markets' evolutions.

Secondly, Nat Page made an explicit comparison between pasture-based farming and conventional/intensive one, applied to the example of dairy farmers. The conclusion was very clear: a lower productivity is more profitable. This is possible thanks to a precise pasture management and to the use of crossbred cows, thus leading to a reduction of costs for both the farmer and the environment. In addition, the pasture-based system has social positive impacts: farmers can hire more employees and have themselves less working hours, which is probably the best incentive for farmers to convert. However, if this solution brings a lot of advantages to the farmers who apply, it could not be applied by all dairy farmers in Europe. Indeed, the management partly rests upon spring calving, which would be problematic on a broader scale. To conclude, this comparison contradicts two rules of our market-oriented economy: on the one hand, the idea that a rise in productivity generates an increase of profit and on the other hand, the trend towards a universalization of the means of production.

Thirdly, Adrie Vermeulen presented the successful example of Skylark, a foundation within which farmers, buyers and processors cooperate. Its underlying principle is that farmers have to be connected with the market and its objectives are to promote a sustainable production of agricultural products, to facilitate the establishment of sustainable supply chains as well as to restore the social link between farmers and consumers. The result is better farms, better farming and better products. From ten regional partners in 2003, the association now gathers more than 65 on a national scale. The success of Skylark relies on its bottom-up approach: when farmers and industry cooperate, the key role must be played by the firsts, whereas the second has a function of support. On the one hand, farmers members are obliged to regularly evaluate their compliance with the objectives fixed in the sustainability plan. This is made through self-assessments, group assessments and certifications. On the other hand, farmers are encouraged to constantly improve their methods and their sustainability. Skylark wants to avoid fixing norms, because once there are reached, there is no incentive anymore to keep getting better. As a result, the Skylark project illustrates the fact that drawing connections and establishing cooperation between farmers and the rest of the market, i.e. industries and consumers, benefits to each category of actors involved and accelerates the move towards a more sustainable production of agricultural products.

Finally, an eloquent example of cooperation between farmers and the market from Wales was presented. In order not to exceed water pollution thresholds in a special area of conservation, a cheese factory initiated a cooperation with farmers, who began a joint nitrous management planning. Because farmers managed to reduce their pollution, the factory was able to increase its production. This success encouraged non-food-producing industries such as oil and gas factories to join the cooperation. They now also pay farmers to reduce their nitrous and phosphate rejections. It is the first time that all kinds of neighboring factories and farmers speak to each other. Interestingly, the same model of cooperation between farmers and factories was also proposed in the Netherlands, but the project did not succeed because farmers' possible positive effect on water quality was not highlighted enough. Thus, some keys of success for cooperation between farmers and the market are a clear dialogue, a mutual understanding and the acknowledgement of mutual interests.

Lessons learned:

- Markets provide a carrot to improve positive agro-environmental behaviors. A stick provided by governments is still needed.
- Recipe one-size-fit-all should not be applied.
- Small number of cows and more employees can be profitable. This is against the current dogma
- Farmers must be in the driver's seat when making agreements with industries/processors and buyers/consumers.
- Overall, this workshop allowed to bring evidence that consumers are ready to pay more for certified products. It also proved that industry may understand farmers' requirements and as a consequence that industry can conclude contracts with groups of farmers. But industry will never discuss with individual farmers: cooperation among farmers is a prerequisite for establishing a connection with the market.

## **Workshop 4**

### **Connecting with the new CAP; what are our messages for policy makers and how do we get these across?**

Participants of this workshop will analyse and discuss the new CAP (both Pillar 1 and 2) in relationship to the practices of territorial cooperation for public goods. Based on this general analysis participants will list a number of issues and questions to be addressed to policy makers at European level.

#### Presentations:

- Christiane Canenbley, DG AGRI
- Karine Belna, French Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests
- Faustine Defossez, European Environmental Bureau
- Wouter Rozendaal, Aequator / Noardlike Fryske Wâlden

#### Results:

The benefits of the collective approaches are accepted by all. Considering that the most debated by the implementers/associations are the methods of control of rules and goals. For example, they should be flexible enough to permit nature to take its course, when the goals are related to nature. The emphasis is to have more policing inside the groups ('peer-policing') as opposed to the policing by the control, paying and auditing agencies. "Self-assessment, self-control, self-policing" were key words used by the participants who wanted to see self-certification of goals. Christiane Canenbley from DG Agri highlighted that that approach may be not acceptable because it is public money and the required legal obligations, procedures and controls should be followed. Examples might be collected to create showcases to demonstrate to other groups, collectives, regions, or countries what is successful, but considering those mechanisms which exist to allow that, as with the Leader approach.

Building trust is one of the basic conditions to make collective approaches work. Get together and discuss in full transparency between farmers and environmentalists, farmers and authorities help to build trust and understand each other positions.

Not all collective approaches work in the same way and are effective in the same manner in all the EU countries, especially in the ex-socialist ones. An alternative is to spread to other actions or measures, example, LAGs, etc. However, it takes a long time to build and to have good results. Incentives and sanctions are important to keep the system functional.

#### Other conclusions and remarks:

- Flexibility in the regulation of the collective approach, tolerable lack of precision on measurements of the goals
- The meeting required more self-certification of achievement of goals also to reduce the burden of inspections
- Creating publicity and information for the cooperative schemes and their availability to enable them to be adopted by all the members, old and new, north and south.
- Allow for contracts giving projects duration longer than the actual programming perspective may permit
- Trial projects/exercises with greater flexibility to test the viability in the field considering the huge diversity between countries and regions

- The participants required more trust and working together to find ways to build trust with the collectives themselves and between the collectives and the agencies
- Explore further opportunities for collective approaches like Erasmus +, Innovation partnerships, Leader, etc.
- To consider the time frame for the collective proposals, the new period and the mid term revision of the CAP.

## Field visits:

Participants visited three biodiversity projects in the area of the Nordlike Fryske Wâlden.

### **1. Meadow birds management**

The area of the Noardlike Fryske Wâlden has 7500 ha of meadow bird protection area. We will visit a farm where they the so-called mosaic management system. This mosaic system will be explained in terms of measures taken during the breeding and rearing season of the chicks, the way adaptations of the system are being discussed with the farmers by the mosaic manager as well as the control. We hope to show that a self-regulatory approach works. The farm is also engaged in multifunctional activities such as agri-tourism. The end April is in the midst of the meadow bird breeding season, so we expect plenty of birds to be spotted.



### **2. Hegde row management.**

The Frisian forests consist of a closed network of hedgerows and rows of alder trees for a total of 3,800 km. This landscape is mainly (80 %) on the land of farmers and is also managed by them. We want to show the biodiversity in this area and how we try to maintain and monitor this. We have had carried out a very extensive research. On April 23, just before the conference, we will present the results on a conference.

### **3. Large scale farming and landscape management**

The farm is owned by the Zeinstra brothers. There is a successor present. It is a merged company, the company of one brother was bought up by the province due to the construction of a road . The brothers have long considered to move the farm to another area outside that of the NFW. The bond they have with the area eventually prevailed. They took the limitations of the landscape for granted . The company has approximately 170 acres available and after the lifting of milk quotas they will have 300 dairy cows. The farm has to support three families. The successor currently has a full-time job at Rabobank . The company takes care of about 20 km of Alder Slings and recently planted five miles more as compensation. The Association NFW is pleased that the farm, despite the scale of the operation, is being continued. The family is very much attached to the countryside and spent a lot of care in maintaining it. The big concern is that if farmers leave the land is being bought by farmers who come from other parts of the country, that have no affinity with the area and will treat it only as an intensive production area by growing maize.

**Friday April 25**

**Plenary session:**

Evaluation of the field visits

- The examples have shown quick and good results
- The end of the milk quota system could mean a further intensification of production in the area and could mean that extensive systems could disappear
- The hedge row project shows that also in intensive farming area these can be maintained. There is however no link made concerning enhancing biodiversity with the meadows next to them. An idea could be to use a mixture of different grasses. The hedgerows also seem to be too clean. They would benefit from more undergrowth.
- The visits have shown the importance of local farmers' knowledge as a key to success.

Video message by Dacian Cioloș, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural

Development

The video message can be downloaded [HERE](#)

Discussion of the common document

One written amendment was received from FNCUMA. In France, the FNCUMA has supported the new policy tool of the GIEE (Groupement d'intérêt économique et environnemental), as an interesting means to encourage collective action of farmers to achieve sustainability. Currently, the Federation also leads a program of research-action, called CapVert, with others French farmers organizations and research teams to get a better view and understanding of the new patterns of cooperation created by farmers to develop agro-ecological practices. The program will also allow to identify the necessary conditions and supports to facilitate their development.

The FNCUMA suggests some proposals to enrich the common document that provides a basis for the creation of this network, especially regarding the third action field « Research »:

The FNCUMA completely agree with the proposal regarding the Agri-EIP. People of the FNCUMA may be involved to advocate and to support the creation of an European focus group about territorial cooperation for the provision of public goods and agro-ecological practices, as well as the creation of operational group(s) in France about this issue.

According to the FNCUMA an important point has to be included in the research plans, and also has an advocacy point for CAP policies, that deals with the way to fund groups facilitation. A new trend currently emerges among policy-makers who tend to think that the facilitation work has to be paid by the groups themselves. This trend does not take into account that all the rural contexts are not equal regarding the potential emergence of farmers collective. In brief, there is an unequal ability among territories to stimulate and accelerate the assumption of management by local cooperation. To face this challenge, research works may assess the interest of special policy tools, as position of local development agents for instance, as integrated and territorial approach based on community mobilization. This kind of research works may facilitate the advocacy for special CAP funding to subsidy such facilitation services in the rural areas.

Another point has to be included in the research plans, and also has an advocacy point for CAP policies, that deals with the rules of public procurements.

Several groups among the FNCUMA seek to find market outlets for wood coming from hedgerows, especially for woodchips boiler. Facing the competition with forest wood, they seek to build partnerships with their municipalities to develop wood-energy local supply chains for boilers set in public buildings (swimming-pool, seniors house, etc.). Some municipalities are interested in supporting this local resource through their public procurement. But current market regulations and European rules prevent public institutions from buying with a major price local productions organized in such a way that they provide public goods. Research works may provide insights to link public procurements with specific rules (for school meals, for energy sources, etc.), to a strengthening of local collectives who are engaged in providing public goods through their practices.

The following other remarks were made during the plenary session:

- A distinction should be made between the overall objective of our ambition and the operational objectives
- We should be more clear about which public goods we mean and what type of collective actions are included, only those with a legal territorial contract or also more informal ones. A clearer distinction is needed between the 'Dutch' model and other models. Based on this we can develop some kind of matrix
- The ambition of the document should be stressed more in the introduction. One of these would be that the current network represents the front runners of a new approach and even movement which can offer building blocks for new initiatives that want to start with territorial cooperation.
- Plead for funding to support setting up these initiatives, for example under article 35, Cooperation, but also that we need a real reform of the CAP
- This also implies that the document should not only be targeted at the European level but also at the officials in MS that are responsible for the implementation of the RD programmes
- The opportunities that the EIP concept offers should be included. It is remarked however that the EIP implementation through operational groups should be part of the RD programmes of MS at either national or regional level. Also, there is no possibility for transnational operational groups. Another option would be to lobby for an EIP focus group on this issue
- A link should be made to (local and sustainable) public procurement concerning spin off products from biodiversity management and agro-ecological practices
- The social aspect of sustainability should be stressed in particular when we speak about collectives, but also concerning cultural differences in approaches and institutional arrangements. There is no size fits all solution
- The importance of soil fertility for biodiversity should be mentioned as well as the need to keep genetic diversity in agricultural production (agro-biodiversity)
- Also the global dimension is lacking: how will this relate to for example trade agreements such as WTO and TTIP?
- Based on the conference we can offer more concrete recommendations to policy, especially concerning the control system. The current system is not developed to suit collective approaches. This will lead to a clash between general policy objectives and rigid control systems. The results of the experiments should be used to prove to controllers that an alternative control system is possible and with better environmental results. In this context we can also refer to the term subsidiarity.

- Acknowledge those networks that already exist and that can act as a platform for exchange such as the ENRD

How to advance with the document?

Some have suggested to take the August 1<sup>st</sup> as a first point of reference as this is the deadline by which MS have to report the way they will implement the CAP to the Commission. Others argue that practically speaking we would be too late for this anyway as most MS already have submitted their RDP to the Commission. Our time horizon is the Mid-Term review of the MFF in 2016/2017

The document can be considered as an overarching documents. It could be summarised here and there. Specific elements can be taken out for different target groups, such as EIP in MS, Horizon2020, lobby, internal network. A first step would be to break the document up into two separate ones, one for the network of existing collective initiatives and one for the multi-stakeholder network. A second step would be to come to a common (= multi stakeholder, multi-disciplinary) research proposal, which will address not only the technical aspects, but also the social innovation aspects.

#### Feed-back on reports from the workshops

##### *Workshop 1: information sharing and capacity building*

*Gilles Allaire:* Current research on biodiversity indicators has shown little results so far. The INRA is preparing a new proposal on this topic, but it is difficult. We have to distinguish between different levels, that of the farm, the territory and at national and supra-national level. The first two level can be done, but the problem is with the higher levels. Gilles will share his information with the group

It is remarked that we should avoid creating too many indicators. We also have to consider that different research use different methodologies which often are not compatible.

*Sven Defrijn:* What is lacking in research are cost benefit analysis of different forms of public goods management themselves. Cost benefits in terms of ecological output, but also in terms of economic costs and benefits for farmers, as for example the Functional Agro Biodiversity project is showing.

##### *Workshop 2: connecting with society: towards a multistakeholder approach*

We have to distinguish the building of multi stakeholder relations at different levels, from the personal, local ones to the institutional and European ones.

##### *Workshop 3: connection with the market; business cases for biodiversity management and agro-ecology*

During the workshop Ann Humble presented an example of local emission trading between agriculture and non-food industries. It was not an ideal solution, but a pragmatic approach to come to improvements of the local environment. It could offer an example that can also be applied to a collective approach to improve water quality ('blue' service) through water credits.

From the Skylark project the system of participative certification was regarded as an important innovation. This approach could also be included in the common document.

Concerning this example discussion arises on the market potential. Within the Skylark project participants fear that the number will grow so big so fast that internal competition could start. Also, there are now some many examples that incorporate sustainable practices in their added value strategy that they also start competing among each other. Within the organic world there is fear that they will lose market share to initiatives that are somewhere between conventional and organic. Certification could help to create more clarity and could also offer a way to meet the greening obligations in the new CAP.

Finally, it is remarked that the study groups of farmers, both organic and non-organic, form an important aspect of the Skylark project.

*Workshop 4: connecting with policy: what are our messages for policy makers and how do we get these across?*

The following remarks were made:

- As said when discussing the common document, we should be more specific when we ask for more flexibility.
- There should be more publicity for cooperation schemes available for all MS
- The time duration of the (collective) contracts in the AES should be longer
- There should be room for more trial projects, also to explore the opportunities to expand the collaborative approach to other topics such as climate change or energy
- How can trust be built between farmers (groups) and the control bodies, paying agencies and auditors? We have to distinguish between two types of trust: the moral (internalised) one and the strategic (externalised) one. The first type is lacking in Eastern European countries, but there are opportunities for the second type.

Arie van den Brand sums up the discussion by defining cooperation as common self-interest. History shows that cooperation starts in times of crisis as it coincides with a withdrawal of public interventions. The crises of the 1880's and 1930's were the start of a large cooperative movement, not only in marketing, but also in for example mutual insurance systems. We can now witness a third wave of cooperatives.

#### The next steps

After the elections on May 22 there will be a new European Parliament. Subsequently new Committees will be formed and in the Autumn a new Commission as well. This would offer a good momentum to present the network and the document to the European institutions and NGO's. The Groupe de Bruges has offered to facilitate and prepare this third meeting. Parallel we should think about creating a Steering Group formed by participants and from different MS, regions and (territorial) organisations that will obtain the mandate after the third meeting to prepare the follow up activities. This will be the first concrete step in the process to come to a European network. It is strongly suggested to have the first meeting of this more formal network in one of the Eastern European countries, either Romania or Bulgaria. At the beginning of June the Groupe de Bruges will meet with Ciolos to report the results of both conferences and also to discuss with staff from DG AGRI and DG ENVI the timing of the next steps.

*Jan Gerrit Deelen*, on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs concludes by stating that in his opinion the conference was inspiring and offered an excellent opportunity to discuss this important topic. He also expresses his gratitude towards Douwe Hoogland and his organisation who have excellently hosted this meeting. He will also inform the Minister about the results of the conference and is curious about the further evolution of the network.

