

Dream contract factsheet 1: Limburg (The Netherlands)

Dream farming-landscape

Objective

The Zouwdal area in 2040 is a multifunctional and varied landscape. Food production is in the shape of small-scale animal husbandry and arable agriculture. The future of the farms is guaranteed by long-term (generational) contracts with the municipality. The agricultural destination of the land has been safeguarded by a range of contracts. The agricultural land use shows combinations of 'intensive' and 'extensive' agriculture. Small scale farms are thriving economically because the farmers are rewarded for delivering ecosystem services, by CAP and market structures. Safeguarding ecosystem services is a central component of the agricultural business. The financial compensation from the market comes from selling regional products that the consumer knows contribute to a varied and biodiversity-rich landscape. For example, the farmer harvests only the ear of the grain he grows, and leaves the rest in the field. This creates shelter for many different kinds of animals. The farmers have been able to market their products because they have been allowed funds for external project management. They also received funds to learn more about the ecology of their area, and about how they can embed this in their businesses. The landscape in Zouwdal has many typical historical landscape elements. First and foremost there are the various types of land use, as well as hedgerows, thickets, big trees and hollow roads. Since 2020 there are also edible components in the landscape such as walnut trees. In this small-scale landscape you find many different types of birds. Local citizens feel connected to the area not only as consumers of the products but also as volunteers helping to maintain the landscape.

Enablers

- Rich, long history of agriculture in the area.
- Diversity within and between farms (spreading risks).
- Farmers with a strong intrinsic motivation to produce food and ecosystem services.
- Close to a large town.
- Farmers with motivation to learn more about ecology and about marketing sustainable products.

Inhibitors

- Lacking long-term vision on part of the government.
- Policy is made top-down that is not in tune with the people living and working in the area.
- Economic pressure towards scale increase.
- Reduction of land available for farmers because other claims are made on it such as solar farms or housing.
- The farmers don't yet know enough about ecology and marketing.

Actors involved in defining the dream landscape

Farmers, employees from the collective, landscape/nature conservation organisations, a representative of the Maastricht municipality.

Method used

Several small online workshops and a visual artist translated the dream landscape vision into a picture (Figure 1) to support further discussion and interactions.



Figure 1. Visualisation of the dream farming-landscape in CIL Limburg.

Dream contract

Objective

The objective of the dream contract is mainly to maintain and enhance ecosystem service delivery, improve the natural quality of the landscape and its biodiversity. An important side objective is also to improve the marketing of the local area for tourism.

Measures

A large number of measures are considered to help achieve these objectives. An overview can be found here.

Benefits envisaged

- Benefits for farmers: Farmers receive a financial incentive for their contribution, but also pride and social recognition from their surroundings, increased social cohesion and the certainty that they can continue farming in the future
- Other beneficiaries: Society benefits because there's a beautiful and robust ecosystem that people can enjoy for their leisure but that also provides them with the necessary services they need to live a healthy life

Application domain

- Farm types: Arable, cattle (for meat)

Contract duration

Minimum of 12 years with a minimum cancellation period of 2 years, or longer depending on the land use.

Actors

The farmer collective will be involved as an intermediary party that advises, monitors and manages payments.

Access to land

Not relevant for this case.

Payments

A combination of result and action based payments. There will be a basic remuneration for implementing a measure plus a bonus if high results are achieved through measurable extra efforts.

Monitoring

We want to move towards more monitoring of results and the quality of the landscape as a whole. Monitoring protocols have already been developed to achieve this