

## Dream contract factsheet 2: Oost-Groningen (The Netherlands)

### Dream farming-landscape

#### Objective

The east of Groningen (Oost-Groningen) in 2040 is a heterogeneous landscape. The differences between the three distinct regions Oldambt, Westerwolde and Veenkoloniën have been preserved and magnified since 2020. In Oldambt, the focus has remained on arable agriculture. In Veenkoloniën there is food production and more space for natural elements. In Westerwolde the landscape is truly mixed because of the success of agricultural nature conservation in that area. In Westerwolde, dairy farmers and arable farmers are working together to close nutrient cycles. Primary production remains viable in the landscape because the farmers have realised a business model for more varied crop rotations. They now deliver food products for human consumption by producing plant-based proteins (peas, beans etc.), which have become a bigger component in the Dutch diet. This business model also pays them for delivering ecosystem services, on top of compensation that they get out of the Common Agricultural Policy. The provincial authorities of Groningen contribute to solving climate issues by planting woody landscape elements in Veenkoloniën and Oldambt. These woody elements create a landscape that is perfect habitat for (arable) farmland birds. The elements also help populations of wild bees, butterflies and moths (pollinators). The differences in the regions have become more pronounced because the wide open landscape structure of the Oldambt has been guaranteed by building only small, low thickets next to the ancient dyke structures. In Veenkoloniën the habitat created by the typical landscape structure of the little canals and waterways are enhanced by similar thickets. Westerwolde had become a true 'mosaic' landscape. The agricultural nature elements that typify this area are flower strips.

#### Enablers

- Practice and policy partners are used to work with each other and manifesto's or policy documents underwriting this vision already exist.
- The agricultural history of the area is extensive.
- Important players in the value chain are starting to focus on local production (instead of world market bulk production).
- Value chain partners are starting to move toward rewarding farmers for environmental quality.

#### Inhibitors

- Different expectations among actors, many different ideas for the same region (for example, plans to solar panel parks to further the energy transition by non-agricultural policy makers and market initiatives).
- A lack of central "top-down" leadership.
- A market for biodiversity-friendly products does not yet exist.
- Lack of flexibility in existing policies.
- Contradictory policies (e.g., for trade imports).

## Actors involved in defining the dream landscape

- Farmers, employees from the collective, landscape/nature conservation organisations

## 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 Oost-Groningen.

## Dream contract

### Objective

The objective of the dream contract is mainly to create habitats for protected species, to protect and enhance the landscape, maintain and develop functional agro-biodiversity, and to remunerate farmers for lost income. 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: Positive image, enjoyment of their work, stable income, maintenance of natural capital (soil), knowledge of ecology and agronomic practices, networks and cooperation
- Other beneficiaries: The different levels of government (they come closer to reaching their environmental goals), businesses that are involved in activities related to agro-nature management, such as seed companies, the tourism sector through improved landscape quality.

## Application domain

- Farm types: arable, dairy

## Contract duration

There is no general consensus for a contract duration. Generally longer than 6 years as long as there is evaluation and the opportunity to change the contract in between. Some farmers want contracts over 20 years, others are more in favour of shorter periods that allow more flexibility.

## 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

Farmers favour action based payments.

## Monitoring

It will be done based on practices but also on results. Monitoring protocols have already been developed to achieve this and will be followed up by the collective. The collective is assessed by an independent third party to be accredited.