

Dream contract factsheet 9: Agora Natura (Germany)



Dream farming-landscape

Objective

We want an agricultural landscape in which diverse land use predominates. In some areas, it should be possible that agricultural production is not the main focus, but that biodiversity and ecosystem services are also taken into account or even clearly focussed on. Since the loss of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes is particularly severe, they also hold great potential for restoring what has been lost. Many farmers and landowners across Germany want to use their land and expertise to create valuable habitats and manage these areas in ways that facilitate the provision of vital ecosystem services. However, the current economic framework makes this very unattractive. Government support instruments are sometimes bureaucratic, poorly targeted and unattractive for farmers. At the same time, there is a growing awareness and demand for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services among the population at large. Businesses, philanthropists and citizens can promote flexible regional measures to support the provision of public goods, complementing governmental federal instruments. They can thus have a direct influence on the landscape they want to live in. We therefore envision a landscape in which actors have digital solutions to engage collaboratively and effectively in conservation in their region. This is where the farmer meets the committed entrepreneur and the landscape conservationist meets the bee lover. Together they ensure more biodiversity and nature services in the landscape: some through their commitment in the field - sowing, tending or careful retreat. The others through their financial support. Together they create additional nature conservation areas with measurable added value.

Enablers

- Increased media attention (on biodiversity loss as well as how to support farmers)
- Increased consumer demand
- Increased employee demand
- Potential political incentives, i.e. making biodiversity investments tax-free
- Impact of biodiversity loss on supply chains becoming more noticeable

Inhibitors

- Changing priorities for potential financiers (e.g., COVID-19 and its disruptive impact, including economic impact)
- Increased economic pressure for intensification
- Lack of public trust in certificates
- Climate change causing businesses to exclusively focus on CO2 offsetting/carbon credits while neglecting biodiversity

Actors involved in defining the dream landscape

- Farmers
- Landscaping associations
- Agri-environmental experts from the Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research
- Environmental NGO

Method used

- Five year co-design project, with a broad variety of workshops and discussions and interactions between stakeholders and researchers.

Dream contract: Online market-place for biodiversity and ecosystem service credits

Objective

A new marketplace to enable engaged societal actors to fund conservation projects on agricultural land. A results-based approach that encourages suppliers of conservation projects (i.e., farmers and landowners) to define specific steps they will take to enhance a site's biodiversity value provided they receive the necessary funding. Investors (businesses and private citizens alike) will be able to choose from a range of projects on a map and thereby help support the provision of ecosystem services in their region.

Measures

All measures and practices that benefit biodiversity will be considered. Pilot projects include: flower strips and meadows, orchards, pond care for amphibians, or mowing regimes to support bird populations.

Benefits envisaged

- Societal/environmental benefits:
 - The projects offered through this marketplace would all be designed with the goal of enhancing biodiversity. The specific ecosystem services provided would be explicitly labelled. This would include climate regulation.
 - Given that functioning ecosystems and the ecosystem services they provide are inextricably linked to public health and to economic prosperity, all of society ultimately benefits from this new approach to securing funding. More specifically, however, businesses whose value chains rely on specific ecosystem services benefit from investing in them, and local residents benefit from being able to visit these sites for recreation.
- Benefits for farmers:
 - Contribute to conservation goals. Many farmers wish to use their land and their expertise to be a part of the solution in the effort to restore biodiversity and secure the provision of ecosystem services. To this end, parts of their land need to be taken out of agricultural production where this is ecologically viable.

- Saving time. The contracts on which our newly developed marketplace is built will enable farmers to do so without having to invest time in overly bureaucratic and time consuming application processes.

Application domain

- Farm types: not applicable
- Land use: not applicable
- Land tenure conditions: not applicable

Contract duration

Securing enough investments to run the projects over five years or more would be ideal.

Actors

- Farmers and landowners - including land management associations
- Investors (companies or individuals)

Access to land

Private land ownership

Payments

- Private funding: Companies or individuals wishing to go beyond their legal requirements for environmental protection (**Figure 1**).
- The payments will be based on actions taken to get specific conservation outcomes. Results are not contractually guaranteed, however.



Figure 1. Companies or citizens pay farmers for the delivery of ecosystem services in the Agora Natura dream contract.

Monitoring

A combination of practices and results will be monitored. Guidance for monitoring is provided by the [NaturPlus standard certification scheme](#).