

Limburg (NL)

The Region

The CIL Limburg is situated in the very south of the Netherlands, in the Zouwdal area. This is a region where agriculture has been practiced for a very long time, and now it's experiencing a lot of pressure from the adjacent city Maastricht. The area has a mix of small-scale arable and cattle farming. One can encounter larger open spaces, but also smaller plots of land surrounded by lots of landscape elements. The typical wild native species of the region is the hamster. The area is also a popular destination for tourists.



Figure 1: Artist's rendition of the 2040 vision for Zouwdal

Objective – Our Vision for the area

Our mid-term vision (2040) for the Zouwdal area: The region is characterized by 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 the CAP as well as suitable 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. 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.

Contact CIL Limburg

- Boerennatuur

Carleen Weebers ✉ cweebers@boerennatuur.nl



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Potential Contract Solution (“Dream Contract”)

Objective

The objective of the dream contract is mainly to improve the existing agreements 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. In the future climate regulation will be also an important focus.

Measures

There is a whole catalogue of measures available for the region. The concrete measure offered to the respective farmer is subject to the landscape management plan drawn up by the collective and agreed with the authorities. The measures are targeting biodiversity-related issues but also water and soil protection.

Contract Type

- PES / Agri-environment- & climate measures



Contract Features

- Collective implementation
- Action-based Payments (with a results-based component)

Targeted Public Goods

Biodiversity

Water

Landscape & Scenery



Figure 2: View of Zouwdal with biodiversity measures in the front.

Actors & Structure

In the Netherlands there are in total 40 agricultural collectives, that act as intermediaries between authorities and individual farmers. The collective draws up a landscape management plan and prepares a claim to the authority. If the bid/claim was accepted the overall budget gets agreed upon and the collectives makes individual contracts with the respective farmers, which plots are in the “funding corridors”. The collectives also provide advisory services and knowledge transfer. They check the implemented measures on field and coordinate the payments to the individual farmers. There is a third party involved to certify the collectives for being fit to manage their tasks accordingly.

Contract Duration

Currently: 6 years (related to the CAP)

Ideal contract period as voiced by farmers: Minimum of 12 years (with a cancellation period of 2 years) or longer depending on the land use.

Payments

Currently: action based. In the dream contract 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.

Controls & Checks

There is a desire to move towards more monitoring of results and the quality of the landscape as a whole, instead of using species as indicators. Monitoring protocols have already been developed to achieve this.

Expected Benefits

Social/Ecological Advantages

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.

Advantages 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.