

Oost-Groningen (NL)

The Region

This CIL in the north of the Netherlands focuses on the region of Oost-Groningen, which has three distinct landscapes. Oldambt is dominated by arable agriculture. The landscape is characterized by wide open spaces. Westerwolde and Veenkoloniën are more mixed use. Historically these landscapes are a habitat for ground breeding/meadow birds.

Objective – Our Vision for the Area

Our mid-term vision (2040) for Oost-Groningen:

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 enlarged since 2020. In Oldambt, the focus has remained on arable agriculture. In Veenkoloniën there is food production but also more space for natural elements. In Westerwolde the landscape is mixed because of the success of agricultural nature conservation in that area. Here 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, next to the CAP payments. 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.



Figure 1: Artist's impression of the vision for 2040 for Oost-Groningen

Contact CIL Oost-Groningen

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Potential Contract Solution (“Dream Contract”)

Objective

The objective of the dream contract is mainly to improve the existing agreements to create habitats for protected species, to protect and enhance the landscape, maintain and develop functional agro-biodiversity, and to remunerate farmers for maintaining the landscape. An important side objective is also to improve the marketing of the local area for tourism.

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.

Contract Type

- PES / Agri-environment- & climate measures



Contract Features

- Collective implementation
- Action-based Payments

Targeted Public Goods

Biodiversity
Water
Landscape & Scenery



Figure 2: View of Oldambt © anderbeeld.nl

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. In the dream contract process, there is no general consensus amongst farmers for a desired 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.

Payments

Farmers favour action-based payments, the way that they are handled now.

Controls & Checks

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.

Expected Benefits

Social/Ecological Advantages

The authorities can reach their goals more efficiently through the collective system. Businesses that are involved in activities related to agro-nature management have a contact point for potential collaboration with farmers/collectives (e.g. Seed companies). The tourism sector benefits through improved landscape quality.

Advantages for Farmers

- Positive image & enjoyment of their work
- stable income
- maintenance of natural capital (soil),
- knowledge of ecology and agronomic practices
- networking and cooperation.