Flanders Region (BE)



The Region

Flanders is a very urbanized region due to a high population density. Farming comprises 45% of the land area. Of this area, fodder crops (pastures, maize) and cereals account for the largest share. Agriculture and horticulture traditionally have a "family business" character, but are increasingly characterized by scaling up, specialization, innovation and expansion.



Objective

We strive for a balanced sustainable development of the natural, landscape, heritage and agricultural values of the region, aimed at preserving and improving the quality of life, supporting a vibrant agricultural sector, conservation of heritage and nature, restoration of ecological water quality, reducing the risk of flood damage and the well-considered touristic/recreational shared use of the landscape. We aim for a farming sector that contributes to halting climate change and is more adapted to its effects by implementing carbon sequestration measures that contribute as well to soil and water conservation, landscape and biodiversity restoration and a better economic resilience of the farms.

Methods

The vision for Gulpdal (Voeren) was developed by both governmental administrations responsible for agriculture, nature, environment & heritage together with landscape, farming and hunting organisations. These partners developed a charter for this region in 2017, including this vision. The dream contract ideas are developed within the local CILs with input from the land users (farmers and private landowners) via stakeholder workshops, individual contacts and a survey.

Contact CIL Flanders Region

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Contract Innovation Lab - Profile No.3

Flanders Region (BE)

Potential Contract Solution #1 ("Dream Contract")

Gulpdal (Voeren)

Objective

The dream contract is not fully developed yet but will continue to develop over the duration of the project. The dream contract aims at:

- preservation of aesthetic landscape values,
- biodiversity conservation;
- mitigation and adaptation of climate change by improving carbon storage and reducing the impact of extreme weather effects (drought, flooding, erosion).

Measures

- Grassland management
- Management of landscape elements (trees, hedges, hedgerows, etc.) (see Figure 1)



Contract Type

• PES / Agri-environmentand climate measures



Contract Features

- Action-based Payments
- Results-based Payments
- Collective approach

Targeted Public Goods

Climate regulation

Biodiversity

Landscape & Scenery



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Flanders Region (BE)



Actors & Structure

The contracts are currently planned to be with individual farmers (with a potential group bonus). Cooperation between farmers will be encouraged to share knowledge and experience, coordinate actions and improve results.

Intermediate parties will be involved in facilitating the exchange between farmers and organisation of training events, monitoring and managing payments. The general coordination and payments will be led by the regional landscape organisation, facilitating exchange between farmers by Boerennatuur Vlaanderen. Precise roles of different actors are not decided yet.

Contract Duration

Ideal contract period: 5-10 years

Payments

The funding will come from public sources combining funds from different policy domains:

- The payment will most likely consist of a basic payment with a bonus based on results
- Bilateral payments with a potential group bonus

Controls & Checks

A combination of practices and results are intended to be monitored, with an emphasis on results. Indicators under consideration are both positive indicators: ecological grassland quality (species diversity, cover, vegetation structure), landscape quality (presence of landscape elements, natural flooding areas, grazing intensity) and negative indicators: use of herbicides, reseeding of grassland. Monitoring is intended to be carried out by an independent body, together with a farmer.

Expected Benefits

Social/Ecological Advantages

- preservation of aesthetic landscape values
- biodiversity conservation
- mitigation of and adaptation to climate change by improving carbon storage and reducing the impact of extreme weather effects (drought, flooding, erosion).

Advantages for Farmers

- More climate robust farming (soil health, resilience to extreme weather etc.)
- financial support

Flanders Region (BE)

Potential Contract Solution #2 ("Dream Contract") Koolstofboeren

Objective

The aim of this contract to improve climate change mitigation and adaptation by incentivizing carbon sequestrating measures on farms, while enhancing other ecosystem services such as food production, soil and water conservation, biodiversity and landscape quality.

Measures

- Incorporation of organic matter in the soil (plant residues, wood chips, stable manure, compost).
- Extending crop rotation.
- Sowing of cover crops, alfalfa, etc.
- Grass-herb strips.
- Planting of wood trees, hedges.

Actors & Structure

The contracts are currently planned to be with individual farmers. Cooperation between farmers will be facilitated to share knowledge and experience, coordinate actions and improve results. This will be led by Boerennatuur. Intermediaries will be involved in advisory services and monitoring. Intermediate parties will also manage the payments or issue potential carbon certificates. This is intended to be coordinated through a platform (to be developed).

Contract Duration

10-20 years

Payments

- Private funding: combining payments of companies/citizens trough carbon markets or crowdfunding initiatives.
- The payments will be based on the (forecasted) results: the more carbon is stored, the more a farmer will be paid.
 The impact of the measures will be estimated and the farmer will be paid accordingly. Adjustments in actual payments may occur based on field monitoring. (64% of the farmers prefer to know in advance the exact payments, while 36% prefer a basic payment with an extra top-up based on results).
- No higher price for agricultural products. It is an additional short chain selling of an ecosystem service
- Bilateral payments



Contract Type

 PES / Agri-environmentand climate measures



Contract Features

- Results-based Payments
- (Partly) Action-based Payments

Targeted Public Goods



Contract Innovation Lab - Profile No.3

Flanders Region (BE)



Controls & Checks

A combination of practices and results will be monitored, with an emphasis on results. The major result indicator is carbon storage in the soil, although other ecosystem services will be monitored as well, depending on the type of measure. Farm advisors will monitor the practices and results (soil samples by soil science institute), with the help of farmers, who will be asked to collect data/observations in a field diary. Depending on the certification scheme that will be used, extra third-party control might be necessary. Every year a more general evaluation will be made, combined with a more indepth monitoring every 3 years.

Expected Benefits

Social/Ecological Advantages

- climate change mitigation and adaptation,
- soil and water conservation,
- improve biodiversity, and
- landscape restoration.

Advantages for Farmers

- improved soil and water conservation: better soil quality (structure, water retention, health)
- higher yields on the long term
- higher income
- positive image/ appreciation of farmers