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MEMBER

Dutch National Agroecology Network

Living Lab AGROEKOLOGIE NETWORK | Netherlands

Agro — ecologie Netwerk



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verbindt mens, grond en natuur

The number of AE farmers in the Netherlands increased rapidly in the last decade. They started organising themselves since 2016 in different organisations like the CSA network and Future farmers. In 2019, the Federation of AE farmers was established in the Netherlands, the umbrella organisation for AE farmers. The AE Network, established in 2021, is an extension of the Federation of AE farmers, connecting AE farmers with researchers, NGO's and activists. Its main objective is to support the AE transition in the Netherlands. The agroecological principles as described in the Nyéléni declaration are key for the network.

Aim

The main objectives are strengthening the agroecological movement and supporting the transition to an agroecological food system in the Netherlands. Specific actions to reach these objectives are establishing and strengthening connections between practitioners, researchers, NGOs and activists and developing a strategy to deal with the main challenges agroecological farmers and the agroecological movement in the Netherlands are facing.

Background information

Starting situation

The Agroecology Network was initiated in 2021. It builds on the ambitions of and the work done by the Federation of Agroecological Farmers. The living lab meetings are organised by representatives of the Federation, researchers from WUR, TNI and representatives from NGOs. It stimulates participation of farmers, researchers, citizens, NGOs, students, educators and others interested in a stronger and more influential agroecology movement in the Netherlands. It operates at a national scale. Key principles on which all members agree: agroecology is a science, a movement and a set of practices that design, develop and transform the Dutch agricultural and food system based on agroecological principles as described in the Nyéléni declaration.

The starting situation concerning agroecology in the Netherlands can be described as follows:

1. Limited connection between the pioneering AE farmers and more “conventional farmers” and with research, policy makers, NGOs.
2. Limited visibility of the agroecology movement in the Netherlands.
3. Different perceptions on Agroecology. The ministry of Agriculture and many researchers are not familiar with the Federation of Agroecological farmers and their vision.
4. Increase sense of urgency for transforming the Dutch agricultural and food system due to negative impact of current practices, polarization between farmers’ organizations and policy makers due to increased political pressure on farmers to speed up the transformation.

Funding structure

The Network receives limited funding from some private funds. A coordinator is appointed for 4 hours per week.

Activities

1. **Core group** that meets on a monthly basis
2. **3 working groups**: each working group has its own activities
3. **4 meetings a year** for the AE Network organized by one of the working groups and the core group
4. **Active Signal group** and **website**

Methods, stakeholder engagements and tools

- **Three working groups** are active:
 1. Knowledge for agroecology. Exchanges on knowledge agenda, farmers’ and researchers’ knowledge.
 2. Mycelium of Hope. Connecting AE farmers and activists. Working days on AE farms.
 3. Access to Land: exchange of insights and actions to improve land access and security.
- **Four network meetings/year** on AE farms; often combination of working on the farm, exchange and social interaction
- Communication **activities to reach broader audience**: news items, website, meetings

- **Active Signal group** for exchange
- Visibility in **demonstrations** for a more just and sustainable future and preventing green washing



Source: Agro-ecology Network



Source: Agro-ecology Network

Achievements

- The visibility of agroecology has increased considerably.
- Agroecological farmers and their organizations have become partners in research projects.
- The network is growing.
- AE farmers feel supported by researchers and activists.

Further information

Meetings of the AE Network.





One of the first meetings at the university of Utrecht. Source: Agro-ecology Netwerk



Meeting organised by Mycelium of Hope, 2024. Source: Agro-ecology Netwerk

Contact



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