



European Union  
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## MINUTES

### WLE Stakeholder meeting agriculture Boundary Park Kempen~Broek

Wednesday 02/02/2021  
Online Teams Meeting

*Attendants:* Hans Corsten (PIO), Heidi van Pol (Boeren van Weert), Jan Aarts (Herenboeren Weert), Ron Geurts (Herenboeren Weert), Peter Kuppens (gemeente Weert), Rob van Schijndel (Natuurmonumenten), Lauren Verheijen (BUAS), Bert Smit (BUAS), Wendy Duijf-van Rosmeulen (IKL), Raymond Tilmans, (Provincie Nederlands Limburg), Machteld Steensels (Boerenbond), Giedo Indenkleeft (LLTB), Erwin Christis (Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland), Kristel Neyens (Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland)

### Introduction

Everyone is welcomed.

The Wildlife Economy project is briefly introduced. The purpose of this meeting is to explain a study on sustainable business models and to collect ideas.

Bert Smit of Breda University of Applied Sciences explains the study with which they will develop a methodology for drawing up sustainable business models that entrepreneurs can use to draw up such business models (ways of creating value) for their own company. This can be for the entire business operation or for broadening the business operation with a side activity. The business model is how to convert that value as an entrepreneur into revenue. Specifically for the Wildlife Economy project we are looking for business models that are based on the use and experience of the landscape and that contribute to the landscape in a positive way. The latter does not always have to be financial but can also be in other ways.

The methodology will be developed with entrepreneurs during workshops. Subsequently, a number of people will receive training to apply this methodology and to share it with other entrepreneurs. All this from the perspective of tourism, recreation and agriculture. It is a completely non-committal process, everyone is free to deal with it in their own way.

With this meeting we want to give Bert and his colleagues input for the study and check whether there are any known entrepreneurs who would be interested in working together. We are interested in what knowledge, opportunities, problems and policy (eg agricultural vision Weert) are present in the area and that can be used as a starting point

The Wildlife Economy project and study also ties in with the current application process to be recognized by UNESCO as a Biosphere Area. The purpose of Biosphere Reserves is to enable people to interact with their own living environment in a sustainable way.

#### Expectations, ideas, ... of the participants

- Peter Kuppens: This initiative is in line with the agricultural vision of Weert. The increase in scale that we notice in the agricultural sector leads to bottlenecks and is also not seen as the desired path by all farmers. Some farmers indicate that they are used to producing food. Taking a different path or broadening their activities is not desirable for them. Others want to, but often do not know how. This project should be a helping hand to entrepreneurs who are looking for opportunities to broaden their activities.
- Peter also wants to know if BUAS has experiences with how we can facilitate this or how we can initiate the transition.
- Lauren Verheijen: It is not the intention to work out a blueprint, but a methodology that can be worked out per company. It is important that the approach leads to ownership among entrepreneurs. Communication is extremely important for this. With the study BUAS wants to find out what entrepreneurs want and where there is room for it. It is certainly not the intention to impose a methodology or broadening in general. Every entrepreneur remains free to organize his own business.
- Bert Smit: It is also important to look at each individual entrepreneur. Everyone has different perspectives and needs. We also have to take into account the investment horizon which differs per entrepreneur. The process has to fit the talent, vision and financial capabilities of that particular entrepreneur. Regulations must also be adhered to in this process. We will look at where we can create a win-win situation for the entrepreneur and the community as well as for the landscape.
- Giedo Indenkleeff has his reservations about how this can be applied to larger companies with a turnover of more or less 1 to 1.5 million euros. This might be more interesting for smaller companies with possible problems. Another problem could be the financial situation, some entrepreneurs might be open to it but have to take into account a loan that has to be paid off.
- There is no obligation at all. The aim is to inspire, provide examples and a methodology.
- Rabobank is also involved in the project and wants to help think about the financial aspect.
- Heidi van Pol: Switching or expanding is best done by first making use of the low-hanging fruit. This does not have to be at the expense of the main activity, but can exist and flourish alongside it. The process or methodology that is drawn up should certainly not be abstract but should be made as concrete as possible.
- Peter Kuppens: Does BUAS have experience with how long it takes for such a transition to start bearing fruit and how the transition can be handled at the regional level?
- Bert Smit: This is difficult to determine and depends on the players and how they relate to each other (also geographically), but you should count on 3 to 10 years.
- Hans Corsten: According to his experience, you should count on 5 to 8 years before you start making returns. It's also important to have a good story. You can't do it alone, you have to work together.

- He refers to a successful process of 'kitchen table talks' that has been conducted with pig farmers in Weerterland over the past few years. In this process, an independent coach is sent to the farmer to sit around the kitchen table in complete transparency and safety and help him think about the future and draw up an action plan. Of the 70 farmers approached, 64 have now drawn up an action plan and started the procedure. Initially we worked with pig farms but the plan is to roll this out to dairy farms and poultry farms.
- Bert Smit: It is certainly not the intention to compete with such an initiative. The methodology to be developed can co-exist and reinforce each other. We can develop a method that is then brought to the 'kitchen table'. The method must be made comprehensible and fit the demand.
- Peter Kuppens: Can such a process be started from the implementation program agricultural vision Weert to create connection?
- Giedo Indekleef: This could help. It is important during such talks to sometimes listen between the lines if direct questioning does not succeed.
- Machteld Steensels: In Belgium there are already initiatives that are working on these themes ('Steunpunt korte keten', 'Innovatiesteunpunt', 'Boerenatuur', ...). Is this additional initiative still necessary?
- We will of course make use of the knowledge that already exists in both countries and cooperate with existing initiatives.
- We want to develop a methodology with which entrepreneurs can get to work tailored to their business. We also want to work across borders - not only geographically but also between sectors - which is a basic attitude in the Kempen~Broek is part of the European WLE project.
- Heidi van der Pol: The agricultural vision of the municipality of Weert has not gone down very well with all the entrepreneurs. The vision says too much about how things should be done better or differently, while it's better to work from motivation, looking for a drive that moves people, creates connection.
- Wendy Duijf-van Rosmeulen: There are already a lot of ideas on this topic, we should certainly learn from them and not try to reinvent everything. Many people are already working on short chains, for example. Brightlands Campus in Venlo and the LLTB North.
- IKL can support entrepreneurs who want to work with food forests. A colleague Mark Venner from Baexem is working on creating a food forest and has a lot of knowledge about this.
- She proposes to make an inspiration tour along entrepreneurs who are already working on transition, e.g. the food forest of her colleague.
- Bert Smit: Some food forests are very productive. People are more and more inclined to stop and buy something from farmers who invest in biodiversity and have their own store.
- Heidi van Pol: The idea of food forests is very nice but the average farmer is bound by financial burdens and loans and is not free to just change course. Here it is perhaps easier to adapt small things (e.g. wood edge management - see below) and grow in this.
- Erwin Christis: You don't have to convert your entire farm into a food forest right away (if you want to), but you can indeed start small and grow, whether or not in combination with other activities such as wood edge management (see further) or agroforestry. People are also increasingly interested in shorter chains, in close contact with their food producer. Inspiration trips are also a good idea because farmers are practical people who do not want theory but want to see how things are done elsewhere.

- Machteld Steensels: In Belgium the Innovation Support Centre also organizes inspiration trips, e.g. to organic farms, short chain farms, ...
- Erwin Christis: In addition to focusing on tourism- and food-related broadening, we also want to use the project to look for opportunities to broaden the scope of landscape care. In Bocholt, farmers manage the municipal wood hedges and the shredded wood is used locally to heat buildings. You could also use these chips to improve the soil structure of fields and store CO<sup>2</sup> in the soil. You could extend this to biomass coming from the management of nature reserves, or roadside clippings. The landscape is managed and becomes more attractive, which brings benefits for recreation entrepreneurs or the 'recreation leg' of a broadened farm. In this way, farmers can also tap into an additional source of income and provide multiple social services. We could also roll this out in the other Kempen~Broek municipalities.
- Peter Kuppens is willing to investigate such a project in Weert. We can create a win-win situation for government and entrepreneurs.
- Wendy Duijf-van Rosmeulen refers to biomeilers that extract heat from compost: <https://biomeiler.nl>
- Rob van Schijndel: Bokashi pilots are already running in Weert. He points out that biomass from nature and landscape is almost never a business model. Entrepreneurs can of course play a role in the management (there is also money for that).
- Erwin Christis: The Provincial Agricultural Training Centre (Biotechnicum) in Bocholt is also doing a project on wood edge management. Maybe we can work together with them.
- Machteld Steensels: Also in other municipalities there are agro-management groups (in start-up) for wood edge management (though not with such a boiler as in Bocholt). There are also farmers who go out in the evening during the winter period to throw salt.
- Wendy Duijf-van Rosmeulen: We see that farmers are often already doing good things: showing their business to the public, selling certain products, creating flowery fields, bringing agriculture and nature closer together.
- Ron Geurts: Herenboeren is a cooperative initiative of citizens and is a circular form of agriculture. There are 9 operational and by the end of 2021 there will probably be 20. The emphasis is on short chain, knowing where your food comes from. It's about the connection between the people of the cooperative. They also pay attention to side activities such as biodiversity, education, etc.
- A farmer from Roermond asked whether such an initiative was possible on his farm. He is now going to lease his land and stables and a Herenboerderij will be rolled out.
- Gentlemen farmers can also provide training
- Bert Smit: There are now several initiatives by farmers with subscriptions: you can harvest vegetables on the farm for a certain amount per year.
- Wendy Duijf-van Rosmeulen: example of this: <https://www.peoplesfarm.nl/over-ons>, <https://www.gastendonk.nl/>
- Erwin Christis: In the Groene Woud people are experimenting with farmers who rent out parts of their plots on the edge of towns to people who want to have their own vegetable garden. This could also be a revenue model for farmers who want to stop or scale down.
- Bert Smit: Initiatives for broadening the market become even more interesting if the scale is sufficiently large (at regional level) that the hospitality and retail sectors will support such initiatives.

- Erwin Christis refers to the example of Knepp Castle in Great Britain. This estate opted for a transition from a traditional agricultural company to a holistic approach with room for food production through the sale of meat from old cattle breeds, (re)wilding, tourism, etc. One of their most successful activities is safaris that people can book. A guide leads them through the domain and tells them about all kinds of aspects (landscape, food production, rewilding, ...). Perhaps elements of this can also be taken over.
- Peter Kuppens: In Altweerderheide there are already similar initiatives about stories about the area. Possible problem for a similar approach is the surface. Knepp is a vast domain of several hundred hectares. Due to high land prices, such an approach is difficult to roll out in Kempen~Broek.
- Erwin Christis: This is true, but this could be an approach for which several farmers (and other partners) work together.
- Regarding the cost of agricultural land: Stichting Aardpeer purchases land and invests at low returns. <https://www.aardpeer.nl/>
- Wendy Duijf-van Rosmeulen: A link can also be made with care, health, welfare and recreation. There are various examples in the region, for example Susanne Görtz with her fruit farm and vacation homes, guided tours of the farm, promotion of the Limburg Morel (cherry variety) as a regional product.
- Example of a care farm: <https://www.facebook.com/Zorgtuinderij-Kaate-498638913481169/>.
- Machteld Steensels: Broadening with care is mainly a social commitment, not really a business model (at least in Belgium).
- Erwin Christis: There is also an increasing demand for alternative accommodation (e.g. tents, tree houses, hammocks in nature, etc.). Perhaps farmers can also play a role in this?
- Machteld Steensels: Camper stays on the farm are apparently also very popular.