

ENRD Networking - 23rd NRN Meeting

Field trips summary

21 September 2022

Friesland, the Netherlands

1. Royal A-ware

During the visit to Royal A-ware, Oscar Meuffels, Director of Public Affairs and Klaas de Jong, CEO, welcomed the group and explained how the family business operates in the dairy market. The principle of Royal A-ware is that they think from the customer's point of view and thus go back to the farmer. They produce what the market demands. Participants were surprised how much is arranged with technical equipment - there was hardly any staff because everything is automated. Furthermore, the company is incredibly large, and they are getting a stronger position in the market with all their different locations and products.

Oscar also mentioned that in the evening they had another meeting at A-ware, together with farmers and Albert Heijn. On evenings like this, one of the issues is price fixing. A-ware focuses on a fair market for all parties.

The carbon footprint of the producers is also important for A-ware - the better the farmers' footprint, the better it is for A-ware as well. Farmers can focus on, for example, solar panels and other technical adjustments on their farms but a good carbon footprint is equally important because this translates to the business. Therefore A-ware puts lot of time and energy into exchanges on this with the farmers.

The afternoon ended with delicious dairy from the farm. Earlier in the day Klaas de Jong taught everyone how to taste cheese.



2. Noardlike Fryske Wâlden

During the field visit to the Noardlike Fryske Wâlden, participants visited the dairy farm of Menno and Conny Bloemhoff in Surhuisterveen. A presentation was given on how they are working to integrate nature as much as possible into their operations. They also focus on youth education and promotion of the beautiful landscape.



In the field, participants were able to see how the landscape is maintained and how new elements are created. With the tree walls and herb-rich grassland, the cattle are kept healthy. The cows themselves know what they need.

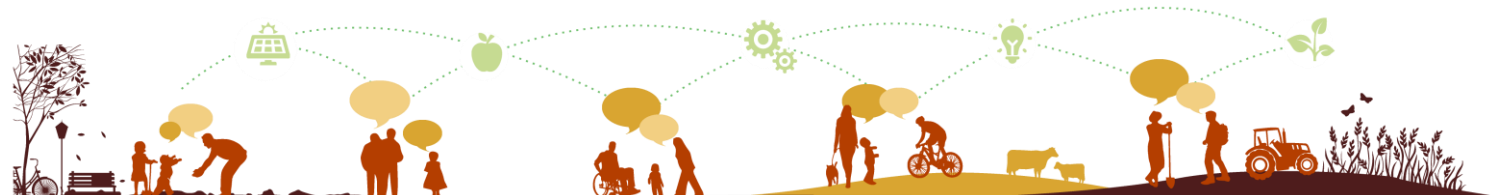
The field visit concluded with a presentation by Albert van der Ploeg, the chairman of the Noardlike Fryske Wâlden association. He talked about the association's activities

linked to green agriculture, while at the same time generating sufficient income for farmers. They are already trying to integrate the eco-schemes of the new CAP.

3. Collective Southeast Friesland

The Southeast Friesland Collective is one of the agricultural collectives that efficiently and effectively carry out agricultural landscape and nature management in the Southeast Friesland. Participants visited the farm of the family Van Spengen in Nijeholtpade. The farm visit provided a picture of how agricultural nature management is implemented in the Netherlands and what measures are taken to improve biodiversity and restore the landscape.

Van Spengen are livestock farmers with heart for the business, life in the countryside and passion for the nature around them. Immediate impressions from visiting their farms are: 'When you then consciously see your first buffer strip with their story attached, also business wise. And when you then hear about their planet proof milk, while tasting it. And when you see the comfort of the cows in the barn supported by the manure robot. Then you return to the office substantially different, and you never work with the farmers in the same way again.'



4. Maatschappij van Weldadigheid



The fieldtrip consisted of a visit to a LEADER project in Southwest Drenthe—a Museum devoted to the pilot colony of Frederiksoord. At the museum, the group was shown around and were told about the ideas of Johannes van den Bosch, the founder of the Maatschappij van Weldadigheid. He founded a pilot colony in Frederiksoord in the 19th century where very poor families from all over the Netherlands could move into a house that they could eventually buy through hard work. This was how they escaped poverty.

The movie theater in the museum was co-financed by a LEADER grant. Participants watched there a film of the first five families that moved to Frederiksoord in the early 19th century. The houses where these families lived are still in Frederiksoord and are a defining feature of the Drenthe landscape. The area is even on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The museum, hiking trails and a tram ride through the landscape of the colony attract more visitors to Southwest Drenthe.

5. Farm of the Future

During the visit of the project 'The Farm of the Future' in Lelystad, it was illustrated how researchers are working with farmers to find feasible solutions to the challenges of arable farming. At first, there was a presentation on cooperation between arable and livestock farmers, robotization and circular agriculture. After the presentation, participants went to the field and explanations were given about strip farming and crop rotation in the field. Afterwards a game of the future was played. Full of enthusiasm, the participants started playing the game. Several questions were asked about agriculture and finally a small debate was held.

