

Peer learning session

Advancing carbon farming in the Netherlands

SESSION CONTEXT

Peer learning session held in **Eikenhorst Farm (Wijchen, Holland) on the 14th of June 2025**.

The session convened carbon farming projects, advisors, and project managers with the goal of fostering collaborative solutions for sustainable agriculture and climate action. The information presented here draws from recent presentations and the practical experiences of the [ZLTO GoToPositive](#) carbon farming project in the Nijmegen region, highlighting the point of view of the different stakeholders of the project.

THE ZLTO GOTOPOSITIVE CARBON FARMING PROJECT: AN OVERVIEW

VISION & OBJECTIVES

The project, led by ZLTO, is driven by an overarching goal for the region: to **achieve climate neutrality by 2030 and circularity by 2050**.

A fundamental principle is to take responsibility for environmental impact by first measuring, then reducing, and finally compensating any unavoidable emissions.

PROJECT STRUCTURE

Projects are designed for a minimum duration of **five years**, emphasizing long-term commitment to carbon sequestration.

Currently, the program encompasses **40 farmers**, 13 of these farms are actively connected with buyers, resulting in almost **8,000 certifications**.

METHODOLOGY

The project quantifies carbon sequestration and loss using a model developed by **Wageningen University**.

It promotes specific carbon farming measures, including:



1 Use of stubble



2 Increased diversity in crop rotation



3 Reduced tillage



4 Application of organic manure



5 Establishment and maintenance of permanent grassland

FINANCIAL MODEL



€140

Total value per ton of CO₂

Carbon credit value based on 104€ per ton of CO₂



70%

Annual activity-based payment

Paid every year to farmers based on implementation of specific farming measures.



30%

Results-verified final payment

Disbursed after 5-7 years contingent on verified carbon sequestration results.



5 year

Minimum period required to ensure meaningful carbon sequestration results.

IMPACT & CHALLENGES

Local compensation: Complete emission reduction is not feasible, necessitating local compensation.

Financial feasibility: A key challenge for buyers is the financial feasibility of compensating all their CO₂ emissions, often relying on creative solutions involving multiple stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement: Difficulty in engaging other businesses in Nijmegen in these collaborations, as they may not feel as connected to the surrounding rural farming areas.

FARMER SPOTLIGHT: KEY INSIGHTS & HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EIKENHORST FARM



Motivations beyond financial gain:

- Create a "wonderful and resilient nest" (land)
- Demonstrate their contribution to addressing climate problems
- The appreciation and recognition for their efforts



Successful carbon farming practices implemented:

- Enhancing soil health & organic matter : utilize green manure/cover crops such as rye grass, integrate compost and other organic matter
- Efficient nutrient management : include growing legumes like field beans, which fix nitrogen from the air
- Waste valorization & reduced footprint : use of mineral concentrate derived from animal waste as a fertilizer
- Optimized grazing : employ intensive grazing to improve pasture health and carbon capture



Tangible benefits for farmers:

- Improved yields & growth : implementing these practices often leads to noticeable increases
- Enhanced soil resilience : strengthens soil structure, making the land more resilient to extreme weather events
- Operational efficiencies : reduced reliance on external inputs can lead to cost savings for farmers



Challenges and collaborative solutions:

- Defining the baseline: establishing a fair carbon baseline, especially for farmers who have already adopted sustainable practices
- Measuring impact: farmers want to verify changes in their fields over time through continued monitoring
- Buyer commitment: difficulty in getting all buyers to fully cover the compensation costs



Innovation & community connection:

- Farm diversification: opening of a tea house/horeca business on the premises in 2014 with 35,000 visitors annually
- Bridging urban-rural divide : visitors gain a direct understanding of where their food comes from and the environmental efforts involved, fostering greater public support for agriculture
- Visibility & narrative: banners along walking routes and giving away local products at events

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR OTHER CARBON FARMING PROJECTS & ADVISORS



Prioritize local & tangible impact

Focus on collaborations between local farmers and local businesses to create a strong, tangible story that resonates with stakeholders and the public.



Highlight holistic benefits

Emphasize the co-benefits beyond carbon sequestration, such as improved soil health, increased biodiversity, and enhanced water conservation. These "extra benefits" are powerful motivators for farmers and offer broader value propositions for buyers.



Adopt flexible methodologies

While adhering to scientific rigor, adapt measurement methodologies to accommodate the diverse realities of agricultural practices. This flexibility is crucial for encouraging widespread farmer participation and long-term project success.



Invest in strategic communication

Actively communicate farmers' positive contributions and their role as climate solution providers. Shift the public narrative to position farmers as essential partners. Consider creative communication channels like video and direct engagement.



Innovative financial models

Explore diverse and creative approaches to cost-sharing and compensation (e.g., involving entrepreneurs, visitors, and other stakeholders) to make full carbon compensation financially viable for buyers, particularly large event organizers.



Foster urban-rural connection

Develop initiatives that bridge the understanding gap between urban and rural communities. Direct exposure to farming practices can significantly increase public appreciation and support for sustainable agriculture.



CONTRIBUTORS

Multitel
INNOVATION CENTRE

ver de terre
PRODUCTION

Teagasc
AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

@tgo AG
THE GOOD ONES

GR!
Green
Restoration
IRELAND

constellr

ZLTO

Kompetenzzentrum
Niedersachsen - Netzwerk
Nachwachsende Rohstoffe
und Bioökonomie e.V. **3N**

oost.nl

ILVO
Flanders Research Institute for
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

**BOEREN
BOND**

Together with:
bax

CONTACT US:



<https://smartcarbonfarming.nweurope.eu/>



Cottin Alexandre
alexandre.cottin@verdeterreprod.fr



Duval Matthieu
duval@multitel.be

MORE INFO:

<https://www.go2positive.com/over-ons>

<https://www.eikenhorstwijchen.nl/>



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