

NETHERLANDS

Innovation & cooperation

Location

Alblasserwaard-
Vijfheerenlanden region

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P1 – Knowledge transfer &
innovation

Measure

M01 - Knowledge transfer &
information actions

Funding

Total budget 250 048 (EUR)
EAFRD 125 024 (EUR)
National/Regional 12 024
(EUR)

Project duration

2019 to 2022

Project promoter

LTO Noord

Email

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Website

n/a

A knowledge transfer project to raise dairy farmers' awareness about reducing nutrient leaching and run-off in order to improve water quality.

Summary

The grass-roots knowledge transfer project 'DAW Alblasserwaard-Vijfheerenlanden' aims to raise awareness about nutrient leaching and run-off on dairy farms. With a focus on the better use of minerals and on how to make farming more climate resilient, dairy farmers share their knowledge, experience and concerns with experts on topics such as: optimising nutrient cycles, reducing yard leaching and underwater drainage.



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Project Results

The project has reached approximately 220 dairy farmers, with a broad age range. Recommended actions and information about water management has been successfully disseminated.

Far-reaching communications and dissemination have meant that farmers in a wide area have also had an opportunity to learn about water management and the need to reduce nutrient leaching and run-off.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Each modification to the project plan has necessitated in time-consuming consultations with the local government. It would be helpful if authorities could simplify and improve their capacity to process project applications. This would accelerate projects and stimulate more local actions.
- ❑ It should be recognised that farmer based knowledge sharing projects take time to realise their benefits.

Context

The Alblasserwaard-Vijfheerenlanden region is a water-rich area, but the water quality does not yet meet all minimum standards of the EU Water Framework Directive. Dairy farmers can play a crucial role in protecting water bodies and can actively contribute to improving water quality. Sharing knowledge cultivates farmers' understanding of water management, which is essential if they are to support the implementation of water protection actions.

This project was set up by LTO Noord (an NGO representing farmers at national level) on behalf of local dairy farmers and with the support of a consultancy company, the 'Agro Advies' Public-Private Partnership and the local water board.

Objectives

The aim of the project is to raise dairy farmers' awareness of the relationship between farming practices and water quality. It is anticipated that the knowledge transferred will improve farming practices in the area and thereby improve water quality in the long term.

Activities

The project is structured around three themes: optimising nutrient cycles; reducing yard leaching and; underwater drainage). Each of the themes had its own activities.

1. Optimising nutrient cycles:
 - i. Organisation of two study groups for 16-20 participants.
 - ii. Organisation of 24 study group meetings.
2. Reducing yard leaching:
 - i. Organisation of two information/demonstration meetings.
 - ii. Conduct of 100 farmers' yards scans and production of 100 advice reports.

- iii. Conduct of a survey to check what farmers actually implemented on their farms and production of a summary report.

3. Underwater drainage:

- i. Organisation of two information/demonstration meetings.

4. A final meeting to: gather feedback from participant farmers and other stakeholders; inform the public about the project's conclusions and; share advice concerning the three themes.

Main results

The project has reached approximately 220 dairy farmers of all ages - which was more than planned – and the various communication activities ensured that other farmers in the wider area would also have an opportunity to learn about the findings of the project.

Overall, the dairy farmer participants reacted to the project information with great enthusiasm. Recommended actions and information about water management has been successfully disseminated, especially concerning the need to reduce nutrient leaching and run-off.

Key lessons

In response to constructive feedback from participants and partners, the project has evolved since its inception in 2017 and it continues to be extended. However, each modification to the project plan has necessitated in time-consuming consultations with the local government. It would be helpful if authorities could simplify and improve their capacity to process project applications. This would accelerate projects and stimulate more local actions.

It was difficult to reach a consensus regarding the appropriate (market-compliant) rates of financial compensation for hired farm labour. Time needs to be taken to discuss such issues in a transparent manner.

Additional sources of information

<https://projecten.netwerkplatteland.nl/nl/project/kennisoverdracht-daw-alblasserwaard-vijfheerenlanden>

www.ltonoord.nl/belangenbehartiging/water-en-bodem-in-balans/deltaplan-agrarisch-waterbeheer/actueel/bijeenkomsten-waterkwaliteit-in-alblasserwaard-en-vijfheerenlanden-goed-bezocht