

NETHERLANDS

Innovation & cooperation

Location
Flevoland

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P1 – Knowledge transfer & innovation

Measure
M1 – Knowledge transfer & information actions

Funding
Total budget 53 996 (EUR)
EAFRD 19 796 (EUR)
National/Regional 20 204 (EUR)
Private / own 13 996 (EUR)

Project duration
2017 to 2019

Project promoter
CLM Onderzoek en Advies B.V.

Email
y.gooijer@clm.nl

Website
<https://projecten.netwerkplatteland.nl/nl/project/schoon-erf-schone-sloot-zo-doe-je-dat>

A CAP-funded knowledge-sharing project to help farmers reduce agricultural pollution and improve water quality.

Summary

This CAP-funded knowledge-sharing and behavioural change project aimed to improve water quality by reducing agricultural pollution from bulb and flower production farms by 80 % within two years. Participating farmers and entrepreneurs attended a series of meetings and field trips to learn about pollution-reducing



© Yvonne Gooijer (CLM advies)

management practices. They each then elaborated an action plan for improving the water quality on their farms and supported the process of gathering data over a two-year period. It is hoped that this project will bring about lasting behavioural change amongst the project participants as well as greater uptake of sustainable farming practices generally as more people hear about the project.

Project Results

All the activities were implemented as planned and resulted in an improvement in water quality due to reduced runoff from the participating farms.

Lessons & Recommendations

- It is felt that the cap on hourly working rates, the burden of overly detailed project reporting, as well as the pre-financing requirement of RDP-funding disincenitise project initiators from launching projects.

Context

The area in the Netherlands where flower bulbs are grown (Flevoland) tends to be contaminated by high levels of pesticides. Two-thirds of these pollutants come from activities such as cleaning, storing, and transporting the bulbs and the use of agricultural machinery.

The project “Clean yard, clean ditch” was set up by the water board and the bulb growers association (a farmers’ organisation), working together with advisors and pesticide dealers. Normally, the water board acts as an enforcer: issuing fines for any illegal water-polluting events. However, during this project the water board acted as a partner and advisor, supporting the farmers who took part in the project and building a cooperative relationship focused on problem solving, as opposed to one based on suspicion and fear (of being fined).

Objectives

The aim of this knowledge transfer project was to increase water quality by reducing pesticide runoff from farms growing bulbs. It aimed to work with 20 farmers over two years and help them to dramatically reduce (by 80%) their losses of water contaminating substances.

Activities

Together with the consortium partners, the farmers exchanged ideas about runoff-reducing farming methods and prepared a collective plan for their involvement in the project: a two-year vision for the types of changes they felt they could commit to on their farms.

Thirteen group meetings, five internal newsletters and two field visits provided opportunities for the group to connect regularly and share experiences as the project progressed. Surface water samples were taken from each participating farm throughout the project cycle to measure the difference in water quality and gauge the impact of the changed management practices.

The project was presented at two major farm events to raise awareness more broadly within the sector. In addition to this, articles about the project were published in farmers journals and the local media, and three factsheets were prepared to provide practical knowledge for farmers wishing to adopt similar changes to their management practices (see kavb.nl).

Main results

In total, a cohort of 28 bulb growers and crop farmers took part in the project and succeeded in reducing pesticide losses by 75 %, with a reduction in incidents of breached water quality standards.

The participants now feel that they have a better understanding of the sources of runoff on their farms and a clear plan for how to keep them under control.

Key lessons

The participants felt that the hourly working rates for RDP-funded projects are capped to low and do not align with market prices. From an organisational perspective, unless driven by a specific request from members or stakeholders, there is very little incentive to proactively propose actions and projects.

The level of accountability and reporting required for RDP-funded projects creates a heavy administrative burden that slows down implementation.

Pre-financing expenses of up to 50 000 euros - when it is still uncertain that all requested funds will be paid in full - requires project initiators to assume an unfair level of risk.

Additional sources of information

www.clm.nl/

www.nieuweoogst.nl/nieuws/2018/04/06/erfafspoeling-uit-bollenteelt-kan-flink-omlaag

<https://bodemenwaterflevoland.nl/projecten/schoon-erf-schone-sloot/#:~:text=Doel%20van%20het%20project%20'Schoon,grond%2D%20en%20oppervlaktewater%20te%20verbeteren>

www.kavb.nl/themas/thema/?thema=68