

## BELGIUM

# Knowledge transfer

**Location**  
Flanders

**Programming period**  
2007-2013 & 2014 - 2020

**Funding (EUR)**  
n/a

**Duration**  
2013 – 2015 & on-going

**Implemented by**  
Flemish National Rural  
Network

**Contact**  
[Ariane.VanDenSteen@lv.vlaanderen.be](mailto:Ariane.VanDenSteen@lv.vlaanderen.be)

**Website**  
[www.vlaanderen.be/landbouw](http://www.vlaanderen.be/landbouw)

**Start-up courses designed specifically for new entrants to farming ensure a strong grounding in both agricultural and business principles in the Flanders region of Belgium.**

### The challenge

It is possible to start up as a farmer in Belgium without any agricultural education, but for those people who wish to receive start-up support from the VLIF (Flemish Agricultural Investment Fund), there is a need to prove that they have undertaken some form of agricultural education. Starter courses are provided by 4 accredited training centres.

The training courses are specifically designed for new farming entrants, with a range of activities designed to build the competence and abilities of the participants to meet the challenges of modern farming.

### Main steps and features

The training courses are specifically designed for new entrants to farming, so while this may be predominantly young farmers, there is no age limit for undertaking the course. Young farmers are most likely to participate as they receive a higher ranking in the VLIF.

In Flanders there are 4 training centres that organise the starter courses. The format consists of a general course lasting 100 hours, followed by a more specific 60 hours course. Here students can choose between different types of course, depending on the agricultural sector they are interested in. The course content includes management, business planning, investment support, agricultural topics. After these courses, the students need to undertake an internship of 20 days on a farm.

The final examination consists of a written and an oral test. For the written test the students need to answer multiple-choice questions. The oral test consists of a presentation: the students need to present the socio-economic situation of a farm to a panel of experts including representatives from the Managing Authority. This way they can prove that they have notion of business management.

These starter courses have existed since 1975, but there have been a number of changes to reflect changes in practice and the modernisation of agriculture. The current format courses have been in place since 2004, but were extended to incorporate a wider range of knowledge in 2013.

### Results

In 2014, 210 participants successfully passed their test.

### Challenges and lessons

The ability of new entrants to farming to access knowledge on agriculture is vital in modern agriculture to ensure competitiveness and the ability to meet business and market demands. An inclusive system which incorporates support from the major agricultural stakeholders and provides access to funding for farmers, ensures a strong take-up from potential participants.