



Kingdom of the Netherlands



**Scaling up Regenerative Outcomes:
Tackling the challenges to mobilise change
Seminar and Reception held by The UK Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and LEAF
3 May 2023, Farmers & Fletchers Hall, London**

The UK and Netherlands have a long history of co-operation and the seminar was aimed at building on that relationship as each country's farmers seek ways of producing high quality and good value food in a way that protects the environment and addresses climate change.

Farming view

The farms of Djûke Smith van der Maat and Jake Freestone are in different countries, are different sizes and produce different crops but they have plenty in common. Farming in a way that is more regenerative, and which enhances biodiversity adds value to Djûke's fruit farm near Utrecht and also strengthens its links with the public who visit her farmshop and the local restaurants she supplies, including on public open days. Jake's adoption of regenerative practices over the last decade has reduced fuel and fertiliser costs dramatically and improved soil richness and made farming more rewarding, something he shares with other farmers as a LEAF Demonstration Farm.



Policy

Farming regeneratively is one of the goals of new British and Dutch agricultural policies. EU member countries have more scope in interpreting the latest version of the Common Agricultural Policy through the development of country specific outcome focused plans. Dutch policy is focusing, through the eco-scheme, on improving air, soil, water, landscape, and biodiversity, according to Arie van der Graft of the Dutch ministry of agriculture, nature and food quality, who is the co-ordinator of the CAP national strategic plan. He said that the policy is very much in its infancy and that the government's approach is to implement the plan in way that works for farmers, the environment, and consumers.

Information sharing

While the principles of enhancing soil and plant roots, growing a greater diversity of crops, and bringing animals back into rotations are key to regenerative farming approaches, the reasons for adopting such systems and putting them into practice are unique to every farm, said advisor Charlie Curtis, owner of Progressive Agricultural Services. But a sharing of what has and what has not worked between farmers through on farm demonstration,

of which LEAF Demonstration Farms play an important part, allows everyone to improve their regenerative systems.

“A whole chain approach from input supplier to customers via farmers, processors and retailers is needed if farming is to shift to an approach that aims to increase volumes with maximum efficiency and reduce negative impacts to one that aims for value growth, optimum efficiency and has a net positive impact.” That was the view of Wouter-Jan Schouten, the Director of Sustainable Food Systems at the Dutch Top Institute of Food and Nutrition. He is a leader in a project that is developing regenerative farming knowledge supported by a consortium of Dutch universities, farmer owned food processors, banks, and institutes.



Consumer awareness

Regenerative farming practices have a major role in delivering M&S's aim of being net carbon zero by 2040, believed Lucinda Langton, Head of Sustainability at retailer M&S. It is working with LEAF and other environmental organisations to support its farmer suppliers in their aims of farming more regeneratively. That is important to consumers, but they respond to terms that are much more specific such as soil or bee-friendly.

Co-operation across the North Sea

Both Dutch Agricultural Counsellor Philip de Jong and LEAF Chairman Philip Wynn agreed that while the UK and Netherlands may be embarking on different policy paths, they both wish to be leaders in more sustainable ways of producing foods and that the continued sharing of information, expertise and knowledge is more important than ever.