



## Young farmers are key in EU sustainability

Dutch young farmers and  
growers on the European  
Green Deal



# European Green Deal



## Content

- 4 **Iris Bouwers**  
Coöperatieve Rabobank U.A.
- 6 **Auke Spijkerman**  
Coöperatieve Zuivelfabriek "Rouveen" U.A.
- 8 **Thomas Zijlmans and Jeroen Risseuw**  
Coöperatieve Zuidelijke Aan- en  
Verkoopvereniging U.A
- 10 **Tess Verkleij and Pieter Bogaards**  
Coöperatie ABZ De Samenwerking U.A.
- 12 **Gert Sterenborg**  
Coöperatie Koninklijke Avebe U.A.
- 14 **Jeffrey Prins**  
Coöperatie Koninklijke Cosun U.A.
- 16 **Geerke Sleurink**  
Coöperatie Koninklijke CRV U.A.
- 18 **Laurens Dekker**  
Drents Overijsselse Coöperatie Kaas U.A.
- 20 **Dennis Lievestro**  
Zuivelcoöperatie FrieslandCampina U.A.
- 22 **Rosanna Pater**  
Coöperative Royal Agrifirm U.A.
- 24 **Pieter Hendriks and Stan te Selle**  
Coöperatie Agrico U.A.
- 26 **Roy Meijer and Peter Meedendorp**  
Nederlands Agrarisch Jongeren Kontakt





Dear reader,  
Congratulations, you just opened  
an incredibly relevant document  
about the future of agriculture!  
Before you, you can find the shared  
booklet of Dutch young farmers on  
the future of Dutch agriculture in  
the European Union.

**A**s young entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector, we always work on and think about the future of farming: both government policy and our own entrepreneurship impact our possibilities and shape our future. That is why we show great interest in the European Green Deal. From the moment the European Commission published its Green Deal, with the Farm to Fork strategy that is quite relevant for the future of agriculture, we as young farmers have been making up our mind. How do we reflect on the plans, looking at our own future in farming? What are the challenges and opportunities we as young farmers extract from the current plans? And how will new EU legislation impact our cooperatives?

NAJK, the Dutch organization for young farmers and no less than 11 cooperatives and their youth council members have been working on answering those most relevant questions. To everyone, it is clear that the new legislation will impact their business. The main query remains: how can we handle this?

**“While new legislation announced exerts influence on young farmers especially, the problems in the food chain cannot and will not be solved by farmers alone.”**

Most current legislation on agriculture has its roots on the European level. This will only increase, considering the proposals in the Green Deal.

Unfortunately, the current challenges many farmers in the Netherlands face, are not easy to bear. This also means quite some farmers, out of necessity, solely focus on the challenges of today. Understandably, this affects the future of agriculture, and therefore the future of young farmers. But while the difficulties of today must be solved, we cannot permit ourselves not to work on those of tomorrow, as they are just as relevant to us, just starting our businesses.

New legislation announced exerts influence on our farms, but as clearly stated in the Farm to Fork strategy, the problems in the food chain cannot and will not be solved by farmers alone. Therefore, the strategy itself and this booklet focus on several chain partners. More important, it shows the attendance and representation of youth council members of our cooperatives! For all of us, the possibility to seize opportunities completely depends on the transposition of ideas in the EU strategies to new legislation.

As young farmers we see the European Green Deal as a rough diamond that needs shaping. New rules on water, soil, nature, environment, health, trade and climate will impact all EU food and farming. Let us, therefore, share with you: the stories from practice, the potential obstacles on the way and above all, our ideas for the future!

Enjoy! On behalf of the Dutch young farmers,  
**Peter Meedendorp**  
International representative NAJK





# Facts

**Farm**  
Landbouwbedrijf Bouwers

**Place of residence**  
Zuidwolde

**Sector**  
Abable farming and  
fattening pigs

**Cooperative and role**  
Supervisory board  
member of Rabobank  
Het Drentse Land

**Motto**  
Growing a better  
world together



# Iris Bouwers Rabobank

“In 30 years I still want  
to be a farmer, therefore  
I try my best to make our  
own farm future-proof!”

**M**y name is Iris Bouwers, I am 29 years old and with my parents I run a mixed farm with arable land and fattening pigs. Also, I am a member of the supervisory board of Rabobank Het Drentse Land.

In 30 years I still want to be a farmer, therefore I try my best to make our own farm future- proof! This means that, amongst other things, our farm is 'one-star certified' by the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals. Furthermore, we take steps to integrate more climate-friendly and biodiversity-enhancing practices into their farm. For example, we add extra field margins, practice no-till farming and invest heavily in soil quality. As a member of the Supervisory Board of local Rabobank 'Het Drentse Land', I am supervising the Management Board and safeguarding the interests of the bank.

## Rabobank

The Cooperative Rabobank was founded by Dutch farmers almost 125 years ago. Inventive farmers established credit cooperatives to be able to get credit to Modernise their farms. The cooperative farmer banks became a great success and later transformed into a bank for everyone. Currently, Rabobank is active in banking, capital management, leasing, insurance, and real estate, and is the biggest financier of the agrifood sector in The Netherlands.

Within three major global transitions: food, climate & energy, and the transition to a more inclusive society, Rabobank now focuses on five themes: banking for food, sustainable entrepreneurship, sustainable living, energy transition, and financially healthy living. Rabobank is still a cooperative and has two million members that can provide input on policy through local Member Councils. This input is collected by the Supervisory Board members, who bring it to the Managing Board. To Rabobank, the future is cooperative!

# European Green Deal

## The opportunities and challenges

### The Green Deal

With the Green Deal, Dutch environmental policy and European agricultural policy will be an extension of each other. Agricultural entrepreneurs will notice that their performance with regard to the environment, climate, nature, and water management determines whether they are eligible for income support from Brussels. The biggest challenge Rabobank sees is that sustainability must continue to go hand in hand with maintaining an appropriate revenue model. We see that the food value chain is slow to absorb additional costs for sustainability. The new CAP can help with this, but we think that it is also important to involve the entire society in the desired system change.

Hopefully, the EU will strongly support sustainable agriculture practices. As long as consumers don't pay for the big investments that are needed, an intervention to support the desired practices makes sense. With the right support, young farmers can make their businesses future-proof, focusing on economical, ecological, and social development.

### A broad focus

The fact the Green Deal will not only focus on farmers, or the food chain as such is very positive. Everyone is needed to transform the EU economy, so hopefully, the future demand will match better with the sustainable supply. Being able to discover and invest in, for example, precision farming or carbon farming for young entrepreneurs is key.

The new legislation for farmers, announced in strategies from the Green Deal, will not only impact Dutch young farmers but everyone active in agriculture in the EU. This is important because a level playing field can be maintained this way.

### Take away

If there is one thing that I would like the European Commission to take away it is that the Dutch agricultural sector, in all its diversity and with its many family farms cannot change in the blink of an eye. With excessive field prices, high biodiversity, and climate goals, Dutch young farmers face major challenges in the coming years. Rabobank chooses to stand with young farmers and is willing to support them, when possible, in the transition towards a more sustainable food system, and I hope the European Commission will too.



## Facts

**Farm**  
Maatschap  
Duiven - Spijkerman

**Place of residence**  
Wapserveen

**Sector**  
Dairy farming

**Cooperative and role**  
Rouveen Kaasspecialiteiten

**Motto**  
We have a high quality  
range cheese specialties  
and pay a fair milk price  
to our member-farmers.



**“I do hope the European Commission has a good eye for the sustainability programs of cooperatives.”**

## Auke Spijkerman Rouveen Kaasspecialiteiten

**M**y name is Auke Spijkerman and I am 32 years old. With my parents and girlfriend, I run an organic dairy farm with around 100 milking cows and about 40 calves and heifers. Our farm is situated in Wapserveen, in the northeast of the Netherlands and our milk is processed by Rouveen Kaasspecialiteiten. Seven years ago, I joined the partnership with my parents and in 2019 we won the grassland farmer of the year award. On our farm, we produce high quality milk from fresh grass. We focus on sustainability, improving biodiversity and lowering emissions.

### Rouveen Kaasspecialiteiten

Rouveen Kaasspecialiteiten is a cooperative with 240 members. The cooperative produces a wide range of cheese specialties and sells more than 450 different types of cheese, both organic and conventional. The cheeses are exported to over 160 countries.

**“It will be difficult for us to compete with cheap imports from non-EU countries that do not have high environmental standards.”**

## European Green Deal

*The opportunities and challenges*

### The Green Deal

It is utmost important to have a good revenue model for agricultural entrepreneurs. Especially because of the focus in announced policies towards a more extensive agriculture. The price of products will most probably increase, because of the higher production costs. Will consumers be able to pay the price needed or will products become too expensive? When we discuss prices, we should be fair and compare production standards of EU and not-EU products. It will be difficult for us to compete with cheap imports from non-EU countries that do not have high environmental standards. Thus, a level playing field is needed.

### Take away

I do hope the European Commission has a good eye for the sustainability programs of cooperatives. Farmers and their cooperatives are already working closely together on this. The European Commission should support

these programs, such as the sustainability program of Rouveen Kaasspecialiteiten. The program has much to offer for the transition towards an even more sustainable agriculture. Cooperatives give an excellent opportunity for the Commission to be used as platform to have a better connection with the farmers in the field and get ambitions realized.

Furthermore, it is also an important issue to keep in mind that the processes and sustainability standards are translated by cooperatives from a market perspective. This makes it possible to have higher revenues for products produced with higher standards. I strongly believe that market driven sustainability will lead to better programs than those solely driven by policy. As a farmer, I am proud to be part of a cooperative that gives me access to a market demand driven by sustainability goals. This helps me to be ready for the future.



## Facts

### Farm

Akkerbouw Zijlmans V.O.F.  
and Akkerbouwbedrijf  
Risseeuw

### Place of residence

Standdaarbuiten and  
IJzendijke

### Sector

Arable farming

### Cooperative and role

CZAV, member and chair  
of the youth council

### Motto

By and on behalf of  
farmers, cooperative  
entrepreneurship stands  
for working together



## Thomas Zijlmans

CZAV

**M**y name is Thomas Zijlmans and I am 32 years old. Together with my parents I run an arable farm and besides that we take care of 90 young cows. Our arable farm is in transition to become organic. Our farm is located in the southwest of the Netherlands. We grow our crops on light till, heavy clay soils. Usually we grow many crops, such as potatoes, onions, winter wheat, sugar beets, fresh bean, grass/clover and chicory. Next to the farm I have a part time job as an agronomist for a French fries factory located in the south of the Netherlands and Belgium.

### Our cooperative - CZAV

The name CZAV stands for southern cooperative for purchases and sales. The cooperative focuses on the best interests of around 3000 members, the farmers. The collective activities of our cooperative are very important for our farms. It is all about the purchase of fertilizers, crop protection, sale harvested products and giving advice to farmers with in-depth knowledge of farming practices.

## Jeroen Risseeuw

CZAV

**M**y name is Jeroen Risseeuw. I am a 30 year old arable farmer in IJzendijke, which is situated in the very southwest of the Netherlands. The soil on our farm can be characterized as marine clay with 25-65 percent of elutriable particles. We grow crops such as sugar beets, wheat, grass seed, consumption potatoes, unions, flax and kidney beans. Next to my work on the farm, I work as an electrotechnical engineer in the tech industry.

## European Green Deal

*The opportunities and challenges*

### The Green Deal

In the European Green Deal, we identify several challenges. We are worried about the loss of soil fertility, being a result of too strict manure application standards for our region. These rules result in a situation in which it is not possible to get enough organic matter on the fields. This decreases soil quality and fertility. Also, we worry about the fact less people are able to go into farming. Due to several reasons, such as uncertain government policy and the loss of farmland, also the cooperative might lose power. This may worsen our position in the chain. Furthermore, we hope the European Green Deal will improve the level playing field in the European Union. Currently, also within the EU, rules differ. Fiscal instruments and excise duties are examples of this.

### Long term perspective needed

In order for our cooperative to invest in sustainable solutions and support our farmers, a more levelled playing field in the EU is needed. The Green Deal should be improved to deliver a true long-term vision on agriculture in the EU. This will give farmers more certainty about the future and makes it possible to make long-term investments. Concerning the protein transition, we intend to create a new market for protein crops produced in the Netherlands. Therefore we have to set up and scale up new supply chains.

Furthermore, regarding organic markets, the EU could develop a 'pull strategy' rather than a 'push strategy' for the purpose of strengthening market demand. In our opinion, organic products are not too expensive, but regular produce is too cheap. Finally, CZAV remarks that while the amount of farmland is decreasing, the world population continues to grow. Also in future, we need farmland to feed the world.

### Take away

A lack of trust and over-regulation, hamper entrepreneurship. Please leave farming and the choice what crop to grow to farmers, and do not make us more dependent on subsidies. Market demand should be the premier driver. The Commission, together with national and regional governments, should try to implement a more consistent agricultural policy. Currently, they are rather inconsistent. It is hard for us as youngsters to invest in our farms under these circumstances: what seems to be a good thing to invest in today, might be impossible tomorrow.

We as young farmers, are willing to invest in a more sustainable agriculture, but we absolutely need the Commission and other governments to stop ad hoc policies.





## Facts

### Farm

Dairy farm Aurora & Dairy farm Bogaards

### Place of residence

Hazerswoude dorp & Gelderswoude

### Sector

Dairy farming

### Cooperative and role

Youth council of ABZ de Samenwerking

### Motto

The best closeby



Tess  
Verkleij

ABZ de Samenwerking

**I** am Tess, 21 years old, and I am studying Animal husbandry at the HAS university of applied sciences in Den Bosch. I am currently in my last year and I'm interested in taking over our family farm. Presently, my parents and uncle run the dairy farm with 230 cows. We own 65 hectares of land and the farm is located in Hazerswoude dorp in South-Holland. I am also a member of the youth council of 'ABZ de Samenwerking'.

### Our cooperative

We represent our cooperative 'ABZ de Samenwerking', which translates to 'ABZ the collaboration'. We are both members of the youth council of this cooperative. The cooperative provides animal nutrition for three sectors: poultry, pigs and ruminants. A total of six modern factories, spread over the whole country, produce 750,000 tons of animal feed a year. This way they ensure an optimal technical, and financial result for their members.

"The biggest challenge for the farmers, in regard to the Green Deal goals, will be the reduction of the production volume of the crops in the EU."

Pieter  
Bogaards

ABZ de Samenwerking

**I** am Pieter, 23 years old and I run a dairy farm together with my uncle. He takes care of the cows and fieldworks together with his wife. I work for a builder and take care of the farm when it is needed. We have about 70 cows and own 50 hectares of land, 40 hectares of grass and 10 hectares of maize. The farm is located in Gelderswoude, near the city of Leiden. Besides this, I am also a member of the youth council of 'ABZ de Samenwerking'.



## European Green Deal

The opportunities and challenges

### Production volumes

The biggest challenge for the farmers, in regard to the Green Deal goals, will be the reduction of the production volume of the crops in the EU. Following the goals in the deal, we have to find ways to produce crops with less pesticides and fertiliser, which will be hard. Not producing the same amount will result in the market prices going up. It will also be more and more difficult to compete with countries outside of de EU.

At this moment, it is hard for us to see the possible opportunities that the Green Deal will bring. We think that, as long as de EU market is not protected, we cannot compete with de cheaper products outside of the EU. Only a handful of entrepreneurs can make a business model out of it and it's not doable for everyone.

### Take away

We find it strange that the requirements to produce crops and food can be so different from country to country within one Europe. We would like the European Commission to always keep in mind that food is a necessity for life, and is already starting to become scarce. So please, when setting goals for the Green Deal, make sure that production quantities are safeguarded and do not decline.

"When setting goals for the Green Deal, make sure that production quantities are safeguarded and do not decline."



**“As young farmers, we see that agriculture must become more sustainable and we are committed to that, but we cannot do it alone.”**

# Facts

**Farm**  
Maatschap Sterenberg

**Place of residence**  
Onstwedde

**Sector**  
Arable farming and poultry

**Cooperative and role**  
Royal Avebe, member of the youth council of Royal Avebe

**Motto**  
Innovation by nature since 1919



**Gert Sterenberg**  
Royal Avebe

**M**y parents and I have a mixed farm on sandy soil in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands. I am 31 years old. The main crop on our fields is starch potatoes for Royal Avebe. We also grow sugar beets, winter wheat, malting barley, onions, and field beans. Most of our crops are delivered to Dutch cooperatives. The field beans and most of our wheat are used for feeding our thirty thousand broilers. We embrace every technological development, so we can work more efficiently, have higher yields, and lower the environmental impact. For example, we invested a spot-sprayer to detect and spray weeds, which will bring down our herbicide use by more than 50 percent. I am the 12th generation farmer on our family farm and we, together with Avebe, continuously make our farm more financially and environmentally sustainable for the generations to come.

**Our cooperative – Royal Avebe**  
Royal Avebe (since 1919) is a cooperative of starch potato growers with 2,300 Dutch and German members. They grow the potatoes from which Avebe produces starch and potato protein. Avebe products provide essential, functional, nutritional, and sustainable solutions in various markets. You can find them in food, industrial products, and animal feed. Avebe's potato protein plays a significant role in the transition to more plant-based proteins. You can find Avebe potato protein in, for example, meat substitutes and dairy-free products. Twenty years ago, Avebe took the step to focus on adding more value to their products, specifically on potato protein. Avebe's strategy is to generate added value from the current volume of starch potatoes. By continuing to invest and innovate, Avebe can add value to their products. This strategy is paying off; Avebe's earning capacity has improved and starch potato cultivation is increasingly profitable. Innovation is in our nature!



# European Green Deal

*The opportunities and challenges*

**The Green Deal – Challenges**  
The goals of the Green Deal are very ambitious. We are concerned about the short time frame in relation to the earning capacity of Avebe members. A lot is demanded of farmers, but the (social) reward for this is lagging behind. We also see crop protection challenges. We are making great strides in this with Avebe's breeding program. With these new varieties, Avebe is able to make a substantial contribution to making agriculture more sustainable. However, we desperately need access to New Breeding Techniques and time to further adapt our already modern plant growing systems. Certain crop protection products are still needed, otherwise the toolbox will become too empty, with crop failures as a major risk and loss of income and food waste as a result.

**The Green Deal - Opportunities**  
Avebe provides products that contribute to the transition to more home-grown plant protein. That's where our ambitions meet! As young farmers, we see that agriculture must become more sustainable and we are committed to that, but we cannot do it alone. Until now, there has been no good revenue model for financially valuing the additional costs of sustainability. The EU can help with that even more than it does today. Other topics include investing in and supporting precision agriculture, which contributes to future-proof and sustainable agriculture. Enabling New Genomic Techniques such as CRISPR-Cas can also contribute to accelerating the sustainability of agriculture.

**Take away**  
The Netherlands has an excellent climate for highly productive agriculture, has well-organized chains with a lot of related activities and knowledge institutions with a worldwide reputation. But Dutch (young) farmers face a gigantic challenge. There is a need for further sustainability in all kinds of areas and at a very high pace. Give us the time to take the right steps, give us the tools to do this and support us where the market and society fail when it comes to financially valuing this sustainability drive. Give us the right perspective, so we can be ready to take on this challenge!





## Facts

**Farm**  
Maatschap Prins

**Place of residence**  
Wijster

**Sector**  
Arable farming  
and contract work

**Cooperative and role**  
Royal Cosun, Chair  
youth council

**Motto**  
The Plant Positive Way



# Jeffrey Prins

## Royal Cosun

**M**y name is Jeffrey Prins. I am 27 years old and I am an arable farmer in the north of the Netherlands. I run the farm together with my father and uncle. We grow starch potatoes, sugar beets and onions on 200 hectares of farmland. Together with livestock farmers we also grow grass, maize, and wheat in a crop rotation scheme.

The soil is our most important production factor, so we take care of it in the best way that we can. Besides my daily farm work, I am also the chair of the youth council of our cooperative Royal Cosun.

### Royal Cosun

Founded 125 years ago, Royal Cosun has developed into a leading international agricultural cooperative with more than 8,400 sugar beet growers. Our mission is to unlock

the full potential of plants in a transparent and circular way, and to convert them into valuable, sustainable solutions. Our vision 'The Plant Positive Way' is based on the foundation of almost 125 years of Cosun's history in the successful valorisation of arable crops. With our products and ingredients, we respond to societal challenges and transitions. These relate to climate change, the replacement of fossil raw materials, the protein transition and the growing demand for food and healthier food ingredients. We believe that plants can be the solution to these challenges. In our strategy we describe how we want to achieve our ambitions.

“The plant is our hero!  
We are trying to unlock  
the full potential of it.”

# European Green Deal

*The opportunities  
and challenges*

### The Green Deal - challenges

The Farm to Fork Strategy is at the heart of the Green Deal. Several goals in this strategy will have a strong impact on our business. Such as goals on crop protection and fertilizer reduction. I am worried farmers will not get enough time and instruments to achieve these goals on time.

Another challenge for achieving the goals of the F2F Strategy lies with the ever reducing amount of financial support offered by the Common Agricultural Policy. Resulting in less earning power for farmers. The fact that European and national policies are sometimes counterproductive for the transition towards circular agriculture, forms another challenge. For us farmers, cooperation between arable and livestock farmers is getting more difficult, mainly because of strict rules on manure application. I am also worried about the goals set in the Green Deal for organic farming. It is important to consider whether there is enough market demand for these products.

### The Green Deal – Opportunities

We believe that our cooperative, which is focused on the potential of plants, is part of the solution. The plant is our hero! We are trying to unlock the full potential of it, and work in a circular way by getting as many valuable ingredients and materials from our crops as possible. We can produce plant-based proteins, are able to produce bio-based plastics, and create a plant-based solution to replace microplastics in personal care products, and oil

by biogas. In this way, we try to achieve a better income for our members, the arable farmers. Farmers and our cooperative try to grow crops in the most sustainable and profitable way possible. These past years we achieved a lot. It has resulted in better water quality and a reduction in the conventional crop protection products used.

### Take away

It seems to me Brussels is monitoring the Dutch agrifood sector very closely, while having too much emphasis on the amount of input used. Monitoring is focussed on how much fertilizer and crop protection products we use. However, we as Dutch farmers have a very efficient way of production, which also means that yields are high and emissions and carbon footprints are low. Our Dutch climate, soil and socio-economic circumstances enable us to produce this efficiently. I ask the European Commission to mention the efficiency and high quality of the Dutch agrifood sector more often. Like in the past, we will be able to invest in new, innovative methods to produce even more sustainably. Yes, the Dutch agrifood sector can!



# Geerke Sleurink

CRV

## Facts

### Farm

Dairy farm Sleurink

### Place of residence

Steenwijkerwold

### Sector

Dairy farming

### Cooperative and role

Cooperative Royal CRV U.A., member of the youth Council

### Motto

Better Cows > Better Life



"Animal manure is a high-quality product, and we should use it as efficient as possible. Circular mineral fertilisers made from animal manure are part of the solution to a sustainable agriculture."

**M**y name is Geerke Sleurink, I am 21 years old and live with my parents on a dairy farm in Steenwijkerwold. Since I was little, I have been walking around the barn in my overalls and boots. However, my older brother is the intended successor of the business, so I am looking for opportunities outside the family farm. Last summer, I completed my studies in animal husbandry at the agricultural college in Dronten. Since July 1st, I work as a livestock business advisor at a dairy factory in Rouveen. To stay close to practice, I still work a few hours a week at other dairy farms. That is ultimately where my greatest passion lies! I also get to work as a youth council member at CRV. I think it is important to be actively involved at different levels in the agricultural sector.

### Cooperative Royal CRV

I represent the Cooperative Royal CRV U.A., a cattle improvement cooperative with about 22,000 members from the Netherlands and Flanders. CRV handles herdbook registration of cattle, breeding value estimation of cows and bulls. It manages data collection from individual animals on milk production, milk composition, cow conformation, health data, feed intake data and more. It then processes this into insights for farmers on the performance of the whole farm, the whole herd and individual animals. This enables the farmer to make good management choices to improve his or her herd. CRV also selects the best cows and bulls based on breeding values to breed the next generation of cows and bulls. The framework for this is the breeding goal set by the members. CRV is unique because it is a Dutch/Flemish cooperative and has branches worldwide.

# European Green Deal

## The opportunities and challenges

### Manure

One of the goals of the Green Deal is to reduce fertiliser use by 20 percent. A logical step towards sustainable agriculture. Last summer, however, it was announced that the derogation in the Netherlands will end in 2026. How will we in the Netherlands continue to produce high-quality food efficiently if we need to use less animal manure and more chemical fertiliser? Isn't it much more sustainable to use our animal manure as efficiently as possible and supplement it with chemical fertilisers only where necessary? We should see manure as a high-quality product. I therefore see it as an opportunity to make mineral fertiliser substitutes from our own manure. That way, less manure needs to be removed and less chemical fertiliser needs to be purchased. Good for the climate and the wallet of farmers.

### Contributing to goals

CRV contributes to the objectives of the Green Deal in a lot of ways. Much has been invested in state-of-the-art models to select and offer the best cows and bulls to members. This accomplishes clear improvements in animal welfare and reduces premature losses of cows. As a result, the age of cows goes up and CO<sub>2</sub> eq emissions per kg of milk are significantly reduced. In addition, feed intake data is collected and used to breed animals that can produce the same amount of milk with less feed. This reduces CO<sub>2</sub> eq emissions per kg of milk, lowers nitrogen emissions per kg of milk and makes it possible to produce the same amount of milk with less imported feed and contributes to closing food cycles. Finally, CRV is conducting targeted breeding research on methane emissions in individual animals. The expectation is that farmers will be able to breed cows with low methane emissions within a few years. With this, CRV contributes to the objectives of the Green Deal.

### Take away

I would like to remind the European Commission of the importance of safe and affordable food. In the Netherlands, we are capable of efficiently producing high-quality food with the right raw materials, knowledge and technology. In contrast, sustainable production to the standards set out in Green Deal, such as 25% organic farmland, will lead to extensification, lower production and food scarcity, resulting in sharply rising prices. Low and middle incomes will no longer be willing to pay extra for sustainable food. This segment will then be served by cheaper food from other countries. How far do we want a food crisis to go?



## Facts

### Farm

Dairy farm Dekker

### Place of residence

Gasselternijveenschemond

### Sector

Dairy farming

### Cooperative and role

DOC Kaas U.A.,  
Youth council member

### Motto

Taste the future



## Laurens Dekker

DOC Kaas

**M**y name is Laurens Dekker. I am 32 years old and live in Gasselternijveenschemond in the northeast of the Netherlands.

I have a dairy farm together with my parents. We have about 250 dairy cows that, in summer, go to the pastures for grazing. Also, we offer work to several employees and want to become a training farm for students who want to become dairy farmers. We strive to become self-sufficient for feed, labour and machines. This way we become more resilient and bring circular agriculture in practice.

### DOC Kaas

I represent DOC Kaas. This cooperative is situated in the city of Hoogeveen and is co-owner of dairy processor DMK Group. This company produces a wide variety of dairy products, being sold all over the world. DOC Kaas was founded in 1895 and some members have been supplying milk for many generations. All members take part in the program Milkmaster. This program rewards effort and performance on sustainability goals. Efforts on animal health and -welfare, energy, climate, biodiversity, environment and social awareness are rewarded. This way our cooperative actively stimulates more sustainable farming. The basis of our cooperative is to stand stronger together and to continuously improve sales and income for farmers.

“It is a pity the Green Deal does not offer special attention to opportunities for young farmers.”

## European Green Deal

The opportunities and challenges

### The Green Deal

The biggest challenge for our cooperative is to get enough members and milk supply to stay viable. A serious threat related to the Green Deal is the reduction in the number of (young) farmers, because of all the uncertainty and lack of perspective. It will also become more difficult for our cooperative to pay out a good price for milk, that covers the rising costs for farmers. The big question is whether consumers are willing to accept higher prices for milk. An indicator for this seems to be the current surplus for organic milk. This also results in a situation where prices for organic milk are similar to those for conventional milk.

The amount of farmland in the Netherlands is very limited and it is in high demand, by several sectors. Our cooperative is stimulating biodiversity at farm level, but high reduction targets, as communicated in the Farm to Fork strategy, might not be achieved in the Netherlands. We simply do not have enough farmland. The Green Deal might result in too many rules, that will hamper innovation, while it is exactly that, what made our country famous. It is unclear for me what the Green Deal wants to achieve in the field of regional production. Our cooperative wants to sell dairy products in Northwest Europe, a region that is relatively small when compared to the size of some countries. But would local production and consumption still be possible in the future?

### Lack of focus on young farmers

It is a pity the Green Deal does not offer special attention to opportunities for young farmers. The concrete effects of parts of the plans are still ambiguous. It is expected that the Green Deal leads to lower yields all over the EU. Also, the use of mineral fertilizer produced on our own farm would make it possible to create a more circular agriculture. However, manure application rules become tighter and tighter. Possibly, caused by the uncertainty and tighter rules, Europe might become more dependent on food produced in regions outside the EU, where food is produced with a higher footprint. This cannot be explained to consumers, as it puts more pressure on local food production and its sustainability.

### Take away

Right now, it is 2022 and the goals of the Green Deal are set for 2030. We think it is best to review and redesign the goals for 2030, because farm reality and effects become more and more clear. Processes on our farms and in nature cannot be captured by deadlines. Reforms are needed to achieve a Green Deal that actually helps our sector and myself in the transition towards even more sustainability.





# European Green Deal

The opportunities and challenges

## Green Deal - challenges

We see two main challenges. First, we recognize that a one size fits all approach will not work regarding sustainability. Dairy farming in the Netherlands simply differ from dairy farming in e.g. Spain. We feel that sustainability truly can be reached when the knowledge of local farmers is also incorporated in policy making. Secondly, we see policymakers make too little use of knowledge and initiatives already being taken in the different sectors. When it comes, for example, to the Common Agricultural Policy, a combination could be made with quality and sustainability schemes of dairy companies. Sustainability schemes and policies should have the same goals. Farmers themselves could play a key role in this, to prevent contradictory legislation.

## Green deal - opportunities

Incorporating sustainability is one of the most pressing issues of our time. When this is done on European level, it ensures that the European Union enforces its position in international markets as a frontrunner on sustainable production. This provides us security for the future, since there will be a continuous demand for sustainable produced dairy in the world.

“Farmers deserve to know what the future holds, at least from the government perspective.”

## Take away

Our members are being confronted with a lot of challenges. They need to deliver on several societal challenges at the same time. What I consider most important is that new legislation that contradicts current laws, is not approved. Farmers deserve to know what the future holds, at least from the government perspective. In this regard, the European Commission could work more closely with private parties such as FrieslandCampina. There are many practical examples and experiences that we can share. This way, the steps we take towards more sustainability can truly be realised.

## Facts

**Farm**  
Lievestro Agro

**Place of residence**  
Ruurlo

**Sector**  
Dairy farming

**Cooperative and role**  
Royal FrieslandCampina,  
vice president youth council

**Motto**  
Nourishing by Nature



Dennis  
Lievestro  
FrieslandCampina

“Farmers need to deliver on several societal challenges at the same time.”

**M**y name is Dennis Lievestro. I am 30 years old and the 5th generation at our family farm. After a few years of working in the feed industry, I decided to follow my dream and step into the family business. We have 200 milking cows with young livestock. Our focus is on producing high quality milk with less inputs. To achieve that, our focus is on roughage production and soil fertility.

## FrieslandCampina

The story of FrieslandCampina and their relationship with farmers and milk began in 1871. This was the year

farmers decided to join forces in the predecessor of today's cooperative. By doing so, they could strengthen their market position and ensure sales of their milk. Today, FrieslandCampina is one of the world's largest dairy companies and the largest dairy cooperative of the Netherlands. Every day, we provide millions of consumers all over the world with valuable nutrition from milk. Not only in the form of milk itself, but with all kinds of dairy products we make from milk. On a yearly basis, FrieslandCampina processes around 10 billion kilograms of milk from over 12,000 members.



## Facts

**Farm**  
Pater Bloembollen BV

**Place of residence**  
Spierdijk

**Sector**  
Flower bulbs

**Cooperative and role**  
Cooperative Royal Agrifirm, president of the youth council

**Motto**  
Better together



**Rosanna  
Pater**  
Cooperative Royal  
Agrifirm U.A.

**M**y name is Rosanna Pater and I am 26 years old. I grew up on our family farm in Spierdijk, in the northwest of the Netherlands. I studied agriculture at the HAS Green Academy. During and after my studies I gained experience worldwide with culture and work in agriculture. I have been working on our farm for four years, where we grow tulip and lily bulbs. The family farm is run by my father and uncle. The next generation is coming up. We operate internationally, and our flower bulbs are sold worldwide. To me, cooperation is key in business. That is why I am an active member of Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A., where I am president of the youth council.

### Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A.

Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A. is a cooperative for farmers and growers, entirely focused on the agricultural sector. A responsible food chain for the future generation is what drives the entire cooperative. Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A. supplies high-quality animal feeds, premixes, concentrates, mineral mixtures and additives for the animal feed industry, products for crop and cultivation improvement, animal and crop-specific digital solutions and professional advice. The goal of the cooperative is to contribute to social acceptance and the development of more knowledge and vision regarding the agricultural business. Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A. offers sustainable products and solutions, while the earning power of farmers is the cooperative's top priority.

“Future cooperation  
between governments  
and young farmers is key  
for success.”

## European Green Deal

*The opportunities and challenges*

### The Green Deal - Challenges

We want to improve the earning capacity of farmers and growers. We think that the transition of agriculture cannot occur without intervention in the market. If intervention does not happen, this transition will lead to a disproportionate increase of costs, putting more pressure on farmers and leading to further intensification and economies of scale.

Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A. supports the transition to green, circular fertilizers. The use of fertilizers is very important for a vital resilient system, and Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A. is concerned about the one-sided focus on reduction of the use of chemical fertilizer. Instead of indicating what is not desirable, we think it is important to focus on where we want to go. Which is, towards a future with a circular agriculture including more green, circular fertilizers.

Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A. strives to implement integral advice to farmers and growers. Integral means we take soil health, resilience of the soil and crops, natural pest control measures and the use of green circular fertilizers into account. It is essential we help farmers and growers to make decisions with concrete goals in mind, like for example lowering the environmental impact.

Furthermore, Cooperative Royal Agrifirm U.A. aims to trade in sustainable feed products. These products should not be in competition with food. To achieve sustainable feed products, it is essential to use key performance indicators.

### The Green Deal – Opportunities

As young farmers and growers, we are full of energy and we are the ones to shape the future of agriculture.

We are willing to change, but it is very important for us to keep earning capacity. This also means we are open for transition, but we cannot do it alone. We need support to develop and implement innovations. These innovations will lead to lower emissions and less environmental impact. To be able to invest in sustainability, we need the European Union to tackle some risks. Young farmers and growers are and will be necessary for the future of Europe.

### Take away

We would like the European Commission to focus more on achieving goals rather than on developing new rules for farmers and growers. Especially with regard to crop protection. The European Commission should present clear parameters for environmental impact and biodiversity.

Please focus on the transition towards green, circular fertilizers. Develop a framework for the development of sustainable feed products with Fit4feed as example. When necessary, dare to intervene in the market! This should result in extra income for farmers, so they can afford the transition towards a more sustainable agricultural sector.

The European Commission should work together with (young) farmers, because we are necessary for achieving the goals set. I, as a young farmer, need a future with a good and fair earning model. A transition without young farmers is just not possible. Future cooperation between governments and young farmers is key for success.





## Facts

**Farm**  
Hendriks Hernen and  
Te Selle akkerbouw VOF

**Place of residence**  
Hernen and Ens

**Sector**  
Arable farming

**Cooperative and role**  
Agrico, president and  
member of the youth council

**Motto**  
Good Growth



## Pieter Hendriks

Agrico

**I** am Pieter Hendriks, 24 years old, and with my parents I run a farm in the east of the Netherlands. I always have been interested in growing crops and working together with nature. Our farm is arable and we focus on growing seed potatoes. I combine my farm work with a job at Wilmar, Asia's leading agribusiness group and the presidency of the youth council of our cooperative Agrico.

### The cooperative Agrico

Agrico is a cooperative that sells the seed potatoes grown by their members all over the world. The more than 1,200 members of Agrico grow first-rate potato varieties. This makes Agrico the global market leader in certified high-quality seed potatoes. Besides this, Agrico is closely involved in cultivating and developing new potato varieties for the future. We are proud to be part of a cooperative that is globally recognized for developing the best potato varieties in the world.

**"We are proud to be part of a cooperative that is globally recognized for developing the best potato varieties in the world."**

## Stan te Selle

Agrico

**M**y name is Stan te Selle and I am 26 years old. I am a seed potato farmer in de Noordoostpolder, located in the middle of the Netherlands. We also grow onions, chicory, sugar beets, wheat and barley, but our main business is the growth of high-quality seed potatoes. We farm on about 130 hectares of land and I run the farm together with my father and two to three employees. We deliver our seed potatoes to our cooperative Agrico, where I am a member of the youth council.



## European Green Deal

The opportunities and challenges

### Challenges

When looking at the Green Deal, I think one of the biggest challenges for Agrico and their members will be the reduction of plant protection products. The reduction can cause less efficient production of crops, since many alternatives are not available yet. A fast reduction without these much needed substitutes, threatens the future growth of high quality seed potatoes. Agrico's mission is to contribute to food security for a growing global population, but a radical decrease in possibilities to protect potatoes well, could even cause shortages in future.

Also, it is difficult for the cooperative and the farmers to keep innovating when we do not know which way the government will go. Investments and plans for our farms and the cooperative are made in the long term. The disruptive changes that young farmers are currently facing are challenging. This causes the chance of a mismatch in the vision of the cooperation and farms, and the legislation made by the different governments.

### Opportunities

The potato produces more food faster, on less land and using less water and therefore is a truly sustainable choice for the future. Also today the potato already is the third most important food crop in the world. Agrico and its members are and always have been future-oriented

and it is expected the potato will play an increasing important role in food security. The need for sustainable potato cultivation is therefore increasing. The European Green Deal can support this and prepare us for the future. The goals that are being set can be an incentive to work and think about possibilities to do things differently. EU businesses can model for the rest of the world, but this should not be at the expense of our leading position.

### Take away

We believe some of the goals set, such as the one to have 25 percent organic production in 2030, is too ambitious. Currently the market demand is not there. If a healthy market situation the demand for organic food grows, so will the production. If it is forced, the market will be flooded and farmers pay the price.

Also, the Netherlands has the most advanced agricultural sector in the world. The sector is vital and many families and businesses depend on it. It would be a shame to throw this leading position away. As farms are a fundamental part of the agri sector, they are the driver of this leading position. While it took Dutch farmers a long time to build up to the current point, it can easily be dismantled. This should be prevented by working closely together with the sector itself, to truly support the transition into more sustainable practices.



## Facts

### Farm

Landbouw- loonbedrijf  
Meedendorp and Melkvee  
en educatiebedrijf Meijer

### Place of residence

Onstwedde and Witteveen

### Sector

Arable and dairy farming

### Organisation

NAJK, board member  
and president

### Motto

For young farmers with  
vision and guts!



**Roy  
Meijer**  
NAJK

**M**y name is Roy Meijer and I am 29 years old. In the north-eastern part of the Netherlands my parents and I run a dairy farm with around 250 cows and 150 hectares of land. On farm level, we focus on both animal and soil health. Also, we transfer knowledge on farming to primary school classes that visit our farm to learn about agriculture. Next to running the farm, I am president of NAJK. In that position I represent young farmers on national level, usually at the parliament and at the ministry of Agriculture. A fantastic combination, in which I can combine hands-on farm experience with making an impact for the future of our sector!

### Our organisation - NAJK

NAJK stands for the agricultural entrepreneurs of the future. Ambitious, enthusiastic young people who are ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow. Concerning policy input, we focus on two themes: earning capacity now and in future, and generational renewal in agriculture. NAJK's 8,000 members see the need for a more sustainable food system. NAJK represents the interests of agricultural youth on all levels, from local municipalities to the EU. In addition to this, NAJK contributes to the development and skills of young farmers. For example, NAJK offers courses to make the farm takeover process run more smoothly. NAJK also develops activities for the development of agricultural entrepreneurs and organizes study trips.

**Peter  
Meedendorp**  
NAJK

**M**y name is Peter Meedendorp and I am a 22-year-old farmer from the north of the Netherlands. With my parents and brother, I run an arable farm where we grow starch potatoes, sugar beets, malting barley, hemp, maize and onions. Also, we take on specific tasks on dairy farms as a contractor. I combine the farm work with my studies at Wageningen and a board membership of NAJK. In this last role I represent Dutch young farmers at the European institutions in Brussels. A challenging, but very interesting role!

## European Green Deal

*The opportunities and challenges*

### Find a balance

The European Commission proposed a wide set of high ambitions in its Green Deal. In general, the goals steer towards both the decrease of inputs and to sustainable production. What needs to be kept in mind, is that while there already is much specific legislation in place, new and even more strict rules, may impact our international trade position. Currently we see in the Netherlands the cost price of many quality products already is quite high. Simply limiting the amount of available inputs, without suitable alternatives, does not help farmers to produce more sustainable. It complicates finding a balance between the three main pillars of sustainability. While the Green Deal focuses on (quite important and relevant) environmental factors, economic and social factors also play a key role: if young people do not see the possibilities to go into farming anymore, we are all losing.

### Support and innovate

The Farm to Fork strategy presents a needed comprehensive vision for the future of agriculture and food. The strategy presents an idea of transformation of the full chain, a system reform, instead of just putting more pressure on farmers. Without support from the food

chain, farmers will not survive. NAJK recognizes a great opportunity in harmonization of food labelling: this way the market is more structured.

Furthermore, NAJK stresses the importance of preventing carbon leakage. Also, all agricultural products on the EU market should comply with basic EU standards. Lower production standards should lead to a levy. This stimulates sustainable production abroad and benefits production in the internal market.

When it comes to innovation, NAJK sees the need to allow renure, a sustainable nitrogen substance derived from livestock manure and as well new breeding techniques such as CRISPR/Cas. These techniques support young farmers in reaching the Green Deal goals.

### Take away

To make agriculture more sustainable, the food value chain has to transform. Farmers are key, but often find themselves being dealt heavy blows. True improvement is made when farmers are involved and listened to, but more is needed. In the end, the consumer chooses what way to go, so they need to be involved as well.



## Colophon

### Commissioned by

Het Nederlands Agrarisch Jongeren Kontakt (NAJK)  
Bemuurde Weerd oz 12  
3514 AN Utrecht, the Netherlands

info@najak.nl  
www.najak.nl  
+31 30 276 98 69

### Copy and Design

Schuttelaar & Partners

### Photography

#### Marloes Verweij, Laloës Fotografie

(photo's: Tess Verkleij, Pieter Bogaards en Pieter Hendriks)

#### Lillo Mendola

(photo: Peter Meedendorp)

#### Luca van Broeckhuijsen

(photo: Thomas Zijlmans)

#### Joost Kools

(photo: Jeroen Risseeuw)

#### Robin Britstra

(photo: Dennis Lievestro)

#### Paula van der Post

(photo: Rosanna Pater)

#### Rob ter Bekke

(photo: Roy Meijer)

#### Schuttelaar & Partners

(photo's: Iris Bouwers, Auke Spijkerman, Gert Sterenborg,  
Jeffrey Prins, Geerke Sleurink, Laurens Dekker, Stan te Selle  
and Peter Meedendorp)

### Print

Zwaan Print Media









