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Communal farming: An Alternative agri-food system?

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A RESEARCH REPORT

COMMUNAL FARMING: AN ALTERNATIVE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM?

CONDUCTED BY
GIGI REISNER, ROMY VAN DER LINGEN, OKKE VERHOOG,
NORA BONAS AND WERA HAAKE

Preface

This report is the product of a research project conducted as part of the Career Minor 2021/22 at the University of Groningen. Within the Career Minor of the Faculty of Arts, students are prepared for the labour market by virtue of improving both personal and professional skills. During a practical assignment, which is one of the options students can choose from in the second half of the minor, a group of students investigates a problem or phenomenon presented by an (external) organization or company. Our client for this project was Omrop Fryslân, a regional broadcaster in the province of Friesland, the Netherlands. Considering the challenges farmers cope with, Omrop Fryslân wanted us to look into possibilities of (re)connecting farmers and citizens through a farming project, how journalists can assume a more active role in connecting groups of society, and explore already existing initiatives of a similar kind.

Acknowledgements

The successful completion of this project would not have been possible without the support from our internal supervisor, Dr Sipke de Hoop, and our external supervisor, Jitske de Hoop. We would like to express our gratitude to Dr Sipke de Hoop for providing us with honest feedback and for giving us guidance both with regard to progress and teamwork. We also greatly appreciate the collaboration with Jitske de Hoop, who provided us with feedback, answers to any question we had and useful resources for our project during our weekly meetings. Furthermore, we would like to thank Hielke van Duuren, who works for Omrop Fryslân and has assisted us by reaching out to external parties whose input was valuable to this report. In addition, we would like to thank all other members of the Omrop Fryslân team who contributed to this report by virtue of giving us feedback and being open to our questions.





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I. Executive Summary

The present report offers the research foundation and inspiration for the setup of a communal farm. Ongoing climate change demands significant changes in agricultural practices. However, farmers experience little support from consumers and society, which aggravates polarization. Small-scale, communal farming with attention to the region-specific conditions could represent a solution.

The prospective farm we work towards shall engage and connect citizens to farmers in light of the ongoing polarization. Simultaneously, we explore how journalists can take an active mediating role between groups in society by evolving and diversifying their approaches in the different phases of coverage. When subsequently exploring civic agriculture, we amplify why small farms and businesses stimulate more civic engagement in the community generally. Following this theoretical inquiry into literature, we examine existing initiatives and uncover why the financial sustainability of the project and the complex structure need to be taken into account at the early stage of setting up a communal farm. Subsequently, we delve into a stakeholder - and partner analysis that details their possible interest in the Frisian-based project and why they would be valuable contact points along the course of the project.

In the end, our research boils down to two directions that can be explored in the search for a new angle in impending subsidy applications. The project can be reframed by a) focusing on the combination of journalistic practices, harboring great cognitive effects and putting the journalist in an active role; or b) focusing on the positive domino effect that small-scale agriculture has on the community.

II. Introduction

There is something romantic about the idea of farming one's own food. Not only is it healthy, sustainable, and generally cheap, but it is incredibly rewarding and pleasant to spend time outside in the fresh air as well. Yet it also requires hard work, knowledge, lots of time and patience, and some land to farm on. This is probably why most people rely on supermarkets or farmer's markets for their food. It is a more quick and easy way of getting food but also results in a distance between consumers and those who produce the food that they eat.

This research report explores the possibilities for a sustainable farm that includes local citizens more actively in the production and distribution of local food products. Such a farm falls under the category CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), where the goal is to bring farmers and citizens closer together and to provide a sustainable and local alternative for food production and consumption. As a community-based project, it would be easier for citizens to participate in food production, while at the same time having access to fresh, local, and sustainable food. The goal is also to report on the farm, which would educate the public about healthy food, sustainability, and farming while

simultaneously creating interest in sustainable forms of agriculture.

This project was initiated by Omrop Fryslân, who will also be the party reporting on the farming project. As Omrop Fryslân is a Frisian broadcaster, the project will be set in Friesland, but it will not only be relevant to this province. While the project could possibly incorporate Frisian aspects in the future (e.g., the Frisian language could play a role or the farm could produce some typical Frisian foods such as sugar bread) and address Frisian agricultural problems (e.g. bring solutions to Frisian soil problems created by agriculture), its goal can be relevant to a great number of places. The concept of encouraging citizens to get their food locally and sustainably while also having them play a part in its production process could be as relevant to the North of the Netherlands as to someone living in Austria or Spain.

The report is an investigation of several aspects of the project:

- An analysis of two forms of journalism that would be suitable to report on the project: participating journalism and constructive journalism
→ Question: *How could these forms of journalism be incorporated into the project?*

- An analysis of how to engage citizens
→ Question: *What would be the best ways to let citizens participate in this project? What does the research say about the best ways to get people to get engaged in a community project?*
- An exploration of existing initiatives that have a similar goal in mind
→ Question: *What initiatives already exist, and how can they be helpful to this project?*
- An inventory of possible stakeholders, partners, and valuable contacts
→ Question: *Who can benefit from this project? Who could be interested? Or Who can this project benefit from; who has the experience, knowledge, and/or resources to help with this project?*

We want to acknowledge that an exploration of possible funding for the project is a relevant subject to the farm: The amount of funding determines how big the project can become, and how well Omrop Fryslân can report on it. However, to acquire funding, it is first important

to have a specific idea of what the project looks like and what makes it special enough to be eligible for funding. Therefore, funding comes as a later step in the process and is not included in this report. However, this report does include an exploration of what makes the project stand out in the conclusion, which can be used later on to acquire funding.

A. Problem statement

Dutch agriculture is facing some very serious problems right now. At the center of these problems lies climate change, and there are three key actors involved in these problems: farmers, citizens, and the government.

With the Netherlands being one of the world's largest agricultural producers,¹ it is no surprise that Dutch agriculture is responsible for around 14% of the country's climate pollutant emissions.² A problem specific to the Netherlands is excessive nitrogen emissions. A harmful agricultural pollutant is ammonia, which originates from the nitrogen produced by animal manure and urine.³

¹ "Agriculture," Government of the Netherlands, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.government.nl/topics/agriculture>.

² "De Nederlandse Landbouw en het klimaat," Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland, accessed December 13, 2021,

https://www.rvo.nl/sites/default/files/2016/12/RVO_De%20Nederlandse%20landbouw%20en%20het%20klimaat_Broch_def.pdf.

³ "Stikstof in de lucht en bodem," Milieu Centraal, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.milieucentraal.nl/klimaat-en->

Ammonia is harmful because it affects biodiversity. For example, when using manure as a fertilizer for farmland to increase yield, ammonia will evaporate from the fertilizers. It ends up in the air and will eventually be taken up by the soil or plants – a process called nitrogen deposition. This process creates rich soil, which has a negative effect on plants who do well on poor soil, as well as the animals and insects who live from these plants.⁴ Since nitrogen deposition often happens within a few kilometers of the place where the ammonia initially evaporated, it does not only affect farmland; it can also end up in nature.⁵

Agricultural problems that have to do with Friesland specifically, revolve around the soil. Friesland has peat soil areas (e.g., in the “empty middle”), where the peat is a top layer of ground which is very wet, like a sponge. These peat soil areas have been a part of Friesland’s landscape for a long time and have also been a home to plants and animals. However, since the ground is so wet, it is not suitable for farming for a large part of the year. By dry milling the peat soil areas,

the water level lowers, and the top layer of peat soil dries up. This way, the land is easier to farm and suitable for farming for longer periods of time, which means production rates get higher.

However, dry milling peat soil areas also creates a lot of problems. When the peat is laid dry, it oxidizes and disappears, after which the soil sinks. This process leads to a release of carbon dioxide, which contributes to climate change. The dropping of soil changes the natural landscape as well. Additionally, the water level dropping does not only affect farmland; homeowners suffer from it as well. The soil underneath their houses drops, house foundations are laid dry, and rot. The houses “verzakken;” they sink and lose part of their solidity, which results in problems like cracked walls, and unsafe houses in the long run.⁶

Additionally, Friesland copes with a soil problem along the Frisian Wadden coast. Due to the sea level rising as a consequence of climate change and the dewatering of peat soil, salinization of the soil takes place along the coast. Crops are affected, as sometimes the sea

[aarde/milieuproblemen/stikstof-in-de-lucht-en-bodem/](https://www.milieucentraal.nl/klimaat-en-aarde/milieuproblemen/stikstof-in-de-lucht-en-bodem/).

⁴ “Stikstof,” Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu, accessed December 14, 2021, <https://www.rivm.nl/stikstof>.

⁵ “Stikstof in de lucht en bodem,” Milieu Centraal, accessed December 14, 2021,

<https://www.milieucentraal.nl/klimaat-en-aarde/milieuproblemen/stikstof-in-de-lucht-en-bodem/>.

⁶ *Fryslân DOK: Veen (2/2)*. Directed by unknown. NPO Start, March 16, 2019.

https://www.npostart.nl/fryslan-dok/16-03-2019/POW_04066655.

groundwater rises to crop roots and can damage them.⁷ This, like the dry milling of peat soil, proves a challenge and calls for new ways of agriculture to be able to retain the farmland along the Frisian Wadden coast in a sustainable way.

To cope with the nitrogen problem and other issues around agriculture, the Dutch government has been taking measures which generally are meant to make Dutch agriculture more sustainable (e.g., encouragement for farmers to shift to circular farming). An underlying message of these measurements is the indication that the bulk of Dutch farmers should change the way they do their job, or even quit farming. This intention of change is threatening the current way these farmers earn their livelihoods. Many farmers feel like it is unfair to be blamed for environmental problems and that their value to Dutch prosperity is being underappreciated. They find that farmers are important, as they provide the population with one of their most basic needs: food.⁸ Yet it is often difficult to earn

a good price for the food they produce; a price that would support needed investments in order to make a farm more sustainable.⁹

Consumers are not blameless in this matter. According to the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, consumers play a role in the implementation of circular agriculture, and it is important for them to know the effects of food production on our living environment. However, there is a distance between consumers and the way their food is produced. People do not really know anymore how their food is produced, yet consumers have increasingly high expectations of their living environment and the farmers who work there.¹⁰

However, the majority of consumers still choose the cheapest and easiest food options.¹¹ By choosing the cheapest food options over the more sustainable ones, ecological farming and the fair prices that belong to this kind of farming are not encouraged. By buying products that are not locally produced, local farmers are not supported, and extra transportation negatively

⁷ “Verzilting langs waddenkust,” Waddenfonds, accessed January 6, 2021,, <https://waddenfonds.nl/waddenfondstv/verzilting-langs-waddenkust/>.

⁸ “Waarom protesteren de boeren?” *Leeuwarder Courant*, October 1, 2019, <https://lc.nl/friesland/Waarom-protesteren-de-boeren-en-wat-willen-ze-bereiken-24878113.html>.

⁹ “Echte en eerlijke prijs voor duurzame producten,” WUR, accessed December 8, 2021,

<https://www.wur.nl/nl/project/echte-en-eerlijke-prijs-voor-duurzame-producten.htm>.

¹⁰ de Boer, Imke, email correspondence, December 9, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [University of Wageningen](#).

¹¹ “Visie Landbouw, Natuur en Voedsel: Waardevol en Verbonden,” Rijksoverheid, accessed December 8, 2021, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-landbouw-natuur-en-voedselkwaliteit/visie-lnv>.

contributes to climate pollutants. Consumers expect farmers to do better, but generally do not pay for it. This problem creates a social gap between farmers and citizens, as well as a knowledge gap as most citizens do not have an accurate idea of how their food is produced.

B. Importance of the project

We all know the severe effects of climate change on our planet, and the extreme importance of slowing it down. By now we have established that there are aspects of Dutch agriculture that contribute to climate change, as well as affect biodiversity, deplete soil, create social problems and widen the gap between citizens and farmers. But how could this project be a solution to these agricultural problems, while at the same time helping both farmers and citizens?

This project involves a small-scale, sustainable community farm. Sustainability can mean many things, such as not using packaging, efficient usage of non-renewable sources (e.g., fuel for farming machines), and also being careful with fertilizing. The latter is relevant for the nitrogen problem specifically. Because the

project is local and thus its produce is distributed locally, this saves carbon emissions from transportation as well.

Small-scale farming also means that there is room for area-specific farming. As of now, Frisian peat-soil is difficult to farm crops on and is generally used for cow grazing. However, wet farming (with e.g., rice as a crop) is possible on peat soil and reduces CO₂ emissions from peat; carbon from the atmosphere could even be taken up and stored by the peat.¹² It is a problem solution that would decrease agriculture's contribution to climate pollutants, while at the same time protecting Friesland's peat soil, as dry milling the land is not necessary for wet farming. In turn, saline agriculture could be used on the salinized soil along the Frisian Wadden coast. With alternative ways of fertilization, irrigation and water management in combination with the right crops, salinized soil can still be used to farm crops.¹³ Both wet farming and saline agriculture are examples of forms of agriculture that could be achieved with small-scale, area-specific farming. These methods do not require the soil to be changed, which is a more harmonious way of interacting with the land.

¹² "Water Works Project," Fens for the Future, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.fensforthefuture.org.uk/creating-the-future/wet-farming>.

¹³ "Saline agriculture - the practical solution," Saline Agriculture Worldwide, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.salineagricultureworldwide.com/saline-agriculture>.

There is also an educational aspect to this project. By making journalism a part of the project with Omrop Fryslân reporting on it, the public is educated about sustainable small-scale farming, as well as healthy eating and food production. More importantly, the public is not just told that this way of farming is beneficial; since the project is local and open to citizen involvement, the public also receives information on how they can contribute themselves to sustainable small-scale farming. Maybe it leads to the public wanting to make more sustainable choices into their own lives. Maybe it even moves citizens towards joining a similar project or starting one of their own.

A more social benefit of this project would be finding a way to bridge the social and knowledge gap between farmers and citizens. With citizens engaging in food production and Omrop Fryslân informing the general public about it, the knowledge gap can be made smaller. Citizens will hopefully become more aware of the importance of ecological farming, and perhaps be more willing to invest in ecological and local food, if they can afford it. With that, farmers would be better supported in ecological endeavors. More specifically to the project itself, it is likely that the community will work together with a farmer or several farmers. This way, these

specific farmers would be supported in their ecological, small-scale business. Generally, the project could create more understanding for what farmers do and support farmers in developing ecologically, instead of only demanding this from them. This could contribute to bridging the gap between farmers and citizens.

C. Methodology

The research for this report was conducted through several manners. The overall process of creating the research report consisted of the following procedure: We settled on the three aforementioned research directions that we found most relevant for this project.

Firstly, we looked into theories about forms of journalism that are relevant to the project. For this journalism section, research was conducted through academic articles found on google scholar or the RUG database smartcat and through more informal articles that include examples of the theory in practice. Since it is not common practice for a journalist to take an active role in bridging the gap between groups of society, we required insights into possible forms this could take, advantages and disadvantages, as well as examples in order to draw conclusions for what type of journalism would be most fitting

to apply to this project. In this phase we encountered some obstacles due to many similarities between different types of journalism and it took some research to discover and differentiate categories among them.

We decided to include a second theoretical research direction at a later stage in the process: Civic engagement. Civic engagement concerns the theory about the motivating factors of getting people engaged in community-based projects and civic agriculture explicitly, as well as the effects of such projects on the community. Some subjects required more practical investigation while others needed scholarly research.

Thirdly, we did some more practical research into what is already out there; how similar are the existing initiatives to the project idea and what we can learn from them? And finally, we looked for possible partners who could act as a support system for the project and other stakeholders. To find them, we asked ourselves who could have an interest in the project (positive or negative), how they could participate, and why it would be interesting for them. Most information on these topics was gathered online via websites, blogs, or reports sharing knowledge and best practices. However, we were also able to visit three farms in Friesland and conduct interviews with the farmers (Heerlijkheid de Hare, BoerBart,

Boerderij Recreatie). Here, we inquired about their views on farmer-citizen relationships in the Netherlands, how they run their farms, farming techniques, and citizen engagement. Raw material of these interviews will be shared in the appendix below.

During the writing process, we communicated frequently, discussed, and exchanged feedback to make sure we were working towards the same goal. This proved to be vital to our team's progress as these conversations helped us to clear misunderstandings.

III. Findings

A. Theory

Journalism

Engaged, or "public" journalism is a term referring to a journalistic practice that brings the people and journalists closer together by inviting personal experiences and opinions. Elements of engaged journalism are the common denominator of participating and constructive journalism: In participating journalism, the journalist engages as a participating observer, whereas, in constructive journalism, they immerse themselves in the news production process by means of co-creation with the people. The engaging element is believed to "increase trust in journalism, create new revenue streams, and foster community-building."¹⁴ Before going

into specific forms of engaged journalism, we will delineate some common pro - and con-arguments of the two methods based on their common origin in engaged journalism.

The greatest advantage of getting citizens involved in the news process lies in the effect it has on the relationship between the people and the media: By giving credit and attention to the stories, wants and needs of the community, the trust in reliable news reporting is slowly being fostered.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this does not dilute the dilemma of objectivity. It is a rather common belief that engaging citizens in this manner would inevitably lead to accusations of journalistic bias, but this comes down to the conceptualization of journalistic objectivity.¹⁶

If we consider it being detachment from personal stories as a form of professional credibility, this would likely be the case.¹⁷ Yet

¹⁴ [1] "Pathways to Engagement." Democracy Fund. April 25, 2017, <https://democracyfund.org/idea/pathways-to-engagement/>.

[2] Green-Barber, Lindsey, and Eric Garcia McKinley, Engaged Journalism: Practices for Building Trust, Generating Revenue, and Fostering Civic Engagement (Impact Architects: 2019), <https://medium.com/the-impact-architects/connecting-the-dots-engaged-journalism-trust-revenue-and-civic-engagement-b5b469676543>.

[3] Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy, Crisis in Democracy: Renewing Trust in America (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, February 2019).

¹⁵ Green-Barber, Lindsey, and Eric Garcia McKinley, Engaged Journalism: Practices for Building Trust, Generating Revenue, and Fostering Civic Engagement (Impact Architects, 2019), <https://medium.com/the-impact-architects/connecting-the-dots-engaged-journalism-trust-revenue-and-civic-engagement-b5b469676543>.

¹⁶ Haas, Tanni, and Linda Steiner, "Public Journalism: A Reply to Critics," *Journalism* 7, no. 2 (May 2006): 242, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884906062607>.

¹⁷ Schudson, Michael. "The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism," *Journalism* 2, no. 2 (August 2001): 166, <https://doi.org/10.1177/146488490100200201>.

news reporting is for the people and relies on their trust and interest, which means that journalistic practices should respond to the needs and wants of the communities in which they are embedded. Considering how citizens were found to be disappointed that their personal experiences were overlooked in mainstream media practices, engaged forms of journalism are a response.¹⁸

The overall objectivity aside, journalists can still be vulnerable to bias and critique by the way they select the participants. If they would let their own bias inform the selection, only people from certain socioeconomic environments would take part in the process, which can result in a very one-sided account of an issue and a (partial) loss of trust.¹⁹ In the following, we shall take both participating - and constructive journalism into account by virtue of examples that lay out their differences, successes and respective dilemmas.

Participating Journalism

Participating journalism grants the active role to the reporter. They get involved to gather hands-on insights on the matter of investigation, meaning they immerse themselves in the community. Two prominent examples of journalists employing this technique are Dutch journalist Stella Braam and German reporter Günter Wallraff.

Stella Braam once made a point of living with the homeless in a bid to portray the reality of living on the streets in light of societal othering. Society and reporting often maintain oppositions between 'those' homeless people and 'us', the housed public," which puts this investigation in a similar light as the ongoing polarization of farmers and citizens which inspires Omrop Fryslân's project today.²⁰ Her work is guided by three features. Stella Braam considers the purpose of her work to be the showcasing of development. In the conduct of her work, she rejects the use of hidden cameras, saying "the journalist should be the camera," and she intentionally invests a great amount of time into

¹⁸ Lee, Seow Ting, "Public Journalism and Non-Elite Actors and Sources," *Newspaper Research Journal* 22, no. 3 (June 2001): 93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/073953290102200309>.

¹⁹ Ferrucci, Patrick, Jacob L. Nelson, and Miles P. Davis, "From 'Public Journalism' to 'Engaged Journalism': Imagined Audiences and

Denigrating Discourse," *International Journal of Communication* 14 (January 2020):1600.

²⁰ Radley, A., Hodgetts, D. and Cullen, A., "Visualizing homelessness: a study in photography and estrangement." *J. Community. Appl. Soc. Psychol.*, 15 (2005): 274-75, <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.825>.

each case in pursuit of becoming well integrated into the community.²¹

Günter Wallraff is engaged in uncovering wrongdoings in more corporate environments, for which he disguises himself to not endanger his investigation and frequently records his conversations, in part for his own protection from backlash. Before entering the undercover phase, Günter Wallraff's journalistic routine involves thorough research into every written document relevant to the topic. This is followed by interviews with informants - preferably former employees as they have proven to be more cooperative and helpful than current employees. The extensive material collected up to this point, whether written or vocal, serves as a checks and balances system to validate that the things he experiences firsthand in the later phase are not isolated incidents. Wallraff sees the purpose of his work in raising his audience's consciousness by pointing out failures and weaknesses; "the abnormal that is perceived as the normal."²² He advances this goal with a first-person narration, as well as repetition and personal comments in

his documentation, which facilitates the audience's identification with him and the comprehension of the problem at hand.

While, like in Braam's case, the entire process of his research takes a long time, his active involvement as a participating observer is considerably shorter than that of Braam. In part, this may be due to the undercover nature of his work, yet on the other hand, his short involvement means more freedom to criticize conditions as he finds them, and more clarity as he had not become insensitive to the situation.²³ Whether Braam's or Wallraff's approach, participating journalism bears certain benefits over mainstream reporting. A participating journalist is able to cover the ups and downs more precisely because he is not accustomed to the conditions and this allows access to insider information that is otherwise unobtainable. Participating journalists encounter three dilemmas in their work. First, there is the dilemma with objectivity related to engaged journalism more generally (see above). Second, the question of whether to disguise themselves

²¹ "Hoe Werkt de Participerende Journalistiek? (Interview Met Stella Braam)," *Indipendenza*, accessed December 18, 2021, <https://indipendenza.nl/de-samenleving-is-mijn-universiteit-interview-met-stella-braam/>.

²² Camigliano, Albert J. "Günter Wallraff: B(e)Aring the Facts," *Monatshefte* 75, no. 4

(1983): 409, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30165615>.

²³ Camigliano, Albert J. "Günter Wallraff: B(e)Aring the Facts," *Monatshefte* 75, no. 4 (1983): 409–10, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30165615>.

and record interviews for the purpose of reference and legal protection. Based on the two previous examples, this depends (partly) on the environment that is being investigated and the popularity of the journalist. And lastly, the lack of solutions. Participating journalism is ideal to portray a problem from within and set a societal agenda but it does not go beyond, which gives it a gloomy, negative tone.

Constructive Journalism

Constructive journalism grants active participation in the news process to the sources, the people. It is meant to reduce the gloominess of the news by drawing on insights of positive psychology. News reporting should be aimed at nurturing positive emotions, e.g, hope and optimism (as opposed to fear and anger), which is achieved through solution - and future orientation and co-creation with the public.²⁴ Aside from the individual benefits, scholars have found that this approach is well suited when the trust in mainstream media is declining, society is

growing more and more polarized, and it is a good response to the increasingly interconnected world, as it draws from a multitude of perspectives in the research process.²⁵

Constructive journalism has six distinctive characteristics: It is solution-oriented, explores opportunities for the future, explores multiple perspectives in news reporting to counter polarization in society, gives people space to understand their point of view, covers contexts instead of incidents and involves the co-creation of content together with citizens (engage & empower).²⁶ Journalists have the responsibility to actively approach people to encourage their contribution to the news process, a great example of which is a refugee project by De Correspondent. Readers were asked to function as buddies for refugees during their first year in the Netherlands. Throughout this process, both refugees and volunteers shared their stories and views, allowing for a great diversity of perspectives in the reporting.²⁷

²⁴ Hermans, L., & Gyldensted, C. (2019). Elements of constructive journalism: characteristics, practical application and audience valuation. *Journalism*, 20(4), 544, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918770537>.

²⁵ Mast, J., Coesemans, R., & Temmerman, M. (2019). Constructive journalism: Concepts, practices, and discourses. *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, 20(4), 498-500, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918770885>.

²⁶ Hermans, L., & Gyldensted, C. (2019). Elements of constructive journalism: characteristics, practical application and audience valuation. *Journalism*, 20(4), 536, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918770537>.

²⁷ Hermans, L., & Gyldensted, C. (2019). Elements of constructive journalism: characteristics, practical application and audience valuation. *Journalism*, 20(4), 536, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918770537>.

By giving ordinary people the opportunity to share their views throughout the process of a project, the journalist allows readers to see (at times) a process of change: In this case, perhaps the transformation from a scepticism towards refugees to the understanding of their needs and of common humanity.

Positive reporting has also been proven to have beneficial cognitive effects on children's emotions when watching the news. Incorporating constructive elements makes news emotionally more appropriate for children and promotes an active engagement as they grow up.²⁸ The challenge in this is then to not deter the attention from the basic information about the event.

Evaluation

The journalistic coverage of the prospective project by Omrop Fryslân could comprise a two-stage process, involving both participating and constructive methods. Constructive journalism makes a valuable contribution to participating journalism in that the journalistic bias is controlled with an investigative basis functioning as checks and balances. Combining the two also

aids the tone of the coverage: Participating journalism is criticized for a lack of solutions but offers great insights into circumstances from a fresh perspective. Constructive journalism misses this focus but offers solutions, thus filling the gap and making the report cognitively more beneficial for the audience.

In practice, this combination could entail one journalist from Omrop Fryslân getting involved in the farm, for instance by assisting with the farm work and getting acquainted with people that come and support the venture; a process which could be documented as a written - or video diary. The involvement would, of course, benefit from research into the environment of the farm, relevant concepts (e.g., circular economy), reaching out to scientific experts, etc. Once a certain time has passed within this stage, the journalist can transcend into the constructive stage. That will entail reaching out and gathering a diversity of perspectives (from experts in economics/ business regarding consumer behaviour and in agriculture, as well as lawmakers). Additionally, this stage includes a search, depending on the outcome of the first research phase, for:

²⁸ Kleemans, M., Dohmen, R., Schlindwein, L. F., Tamboer, S. L., de, L. R. N. H., & Buijzen, M. (2019). Children's cognitive responses to constructive television news. *Journalism*, 20(4),

569-70,
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918770540>.

A. Arguments that this project is a realistic solution to bridge the divide between citizens and farmers.

- If the polarization is understood to be rooted in government communication placing the climate pollution problem on the farmers (alone): Test the significance of farmer vs consumer action.

B. A solution as to how this concept can be made more accessible and suitable for a larger scale.

C. A solution to the problem that consumers do not know where their food comes from (or are indifferent to it): Ways parents can educate their children about food and farming.

- In pursuit of this solution, attention should be paid to the side of the consumer, including a display of how they discover the value of local produce and the food they consume by participating in this project.

Ultimately, joining these methods in the project would allow Omrop Fryslân to tell a comprehensive story from the reality and dilemma in the relationship between farmers, the food (production) and citizens [participating

journalism] to an outlook into the future with well-researched solutions to this societal issue [constructive journalism]. In an attempt to bridge the gap between farmers and citizens, the journalist could make use of certain narratives that are known to have positive effects on the audience:

❖ The hero narrative to display the societal importance and value of local farmers. This narrative, as the term suggests, revolves around the journalist highlighting a 'hero'.²⁹ In this project that could be the farmer. Considering the polarization, the coverage could intentionally depict farmers through a hero-narrative, showcasing the work they do for the community and the value of having local farmers. But it is also possible to show the efforts farmers make to connect citizens with the farming community.

❖ The meaningful story narrative to show the value and progress of CSA farming, both in terms of awareness over the food consumed and for the ecosystem of Friesland specifically. This narrative revolves around telling a story

²⁹ Gyldensted, Cathrine, 2011, "Innovating News Journalism through Positive Psychology,"

https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=mapp_capstone.

where there is a form of positive progress.³⁰ In this project, the progress of CSA farming. The farmer starts with setting up CSA farming and it might not all run smoothly from the start, but the further the project develops, the better it will go. The value and progress will be displayed which could work out well since it is more entertaining to follow a project that is evolving continuously. It can make people curious about the end result.

³⁰ Gyldensted, Cathrine, 2011, "Innovating News Journalism through Positive Psychology,"

https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1024&context=mapp_capstone.

Civic Engagement

Research on civic engagement has garnered significant interest since the Second World War as a result of large corporate farms sucking out the livelihoods and sense of community from rural towns and villages. This loss of independence and community led to large-scale emigration of rural populations. A pair of studies conducted in the 1940s concluded that citizens have a greater sense of communal engagement and initiative when there are a larger number of smaller businesses as opposed to monopolizing corporations.

This also applied to agricultural businesses, where the way in which the products are produced and sold, and how this process is communicated, created stronger social bonds. This to an extent combats large-scale outward migration. The two articles argue that the predominance of smaller businesses fosters initiative and civic engagement as a result of the larger share of the population that are economically independent.³¹

The formation of bonds and communal ties could thus also apply to the Dutch example to decrease the gap between farmers and citizens. When farmers and citizens are both in constant negotiation and cooperation for their community, their differences are less important. It is easy, after all, to forget that farmers are citizens too. How do you convince the consumers, however, to essentially downsize their source of food, which will inevitably -at least temporarily - drive food prices up?

According to sociologist Thomas A. Lyson, an expert on modern agrifood systems, civic agriculture is the “emergence and growth of community-based agriculture and food production activities that not only meet consumer demands for fresh, safe, and locally produced food, but create jobs, encourage entrepreneurship, and strengthen community identity.”³² It is also described as a social movement that fights the predominant profit-oriented agri-food industry by also considering societal and environmental motives.³³ Civic agriculture thus offers something that traditional

³¹ Wynne, Wright D, “Civic Engagement Through Civic Agriculture: Using Food to Link Classroom and Community,” *Teaching Sociology* 34, no. 3 (July 2006): 233, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0092055X0603400302>.

³² Lyson, Thomas A, *Civic Agriculture : Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community*.

(Massachusetts: Tufts University Press, 2004), 2.

³³ Lyson, Thomas A. *Civic Agriculture : Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community*. (Massachusetts: Tufts University Press, 2004), 3.

agriculture can't, which is a focus on the social and environmental aspects of farming, that gives the citizens, or the members of a community, greater agency. A source of food that doesn't only care about maximizing production but considers the wants and needs of the local community it is providing for. This shared sense of community would be one factor that engages consumers, but of course their individual motivations should be considered as well.

The literature indicated that consumers will mostly be interested by CA (civic agriculture) for two primary reasons:

- **Quality:** By knowing where their food comes from, and how its produced, they will know how trustworthy and fresh the produce is.
- **Consciousness:** Consumers that care about the environment and want to contribute to more sustainable modes of production.³⁴

Evaluation

With this in mind, the way that consumers or potential customers are involved in the project is important to gaining and keeping their interest in it. Depending on the chosen revenue model, they will subsequently become a different type of

stakeholder, and their wishes need to be taken into account. Whether or not the consumers get what they want will partially determine the survivability of the project. This is why a large number of Dutch CSAs involve the citizens in their decision-making, as they generally contribute proportionally much more to a CSA than a regular consumer contributes to traditional farms. When a recurring customer pays larger sums for a product, you want to keep them happy. The best way to do that is to communicate and negotiate with them directly. While democratization was not necessarily a focal point for consumers directly, it plays into their ability to determine for themselves the type and quality of product they get.

An important consideration is the different types of consumers you might try to attract. Martien Spitzen from Heerlijkheid de Hare told us that his farm's customers are mostly older neighbors, who have more time on their hands than young families with jobs and children to take care of.³⁵ This time investment issue is important, because if a family cannot find the time to make the trip, contribute to decision-

³⁴ Marsden, Terry, Jon Murdoch, and Kevin Morgan. "Sustainable Agriculture, Food Supply Chains and Regional Development: Editorial Introduction." *International Planning Studies* 4,

no. 3 (1999): 297.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13563479908721743>.

³⁵ Spitzen, Martien. Personal interview, December 3, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Heerlijkheid de Hare](#).

making, or pick their own food, it will affect the farm's success with various demographics in the long run. Furthermore, economic issues are undoubtedly a limiting factor. Families with lower income will be less likely to engage in civic agriculture, as the price is significantly higher, and the luxury of organic food is less tangible.

Finally, a question that still remains unanswered is that of scale, to what scale can civic agriculture be viable? Should every inhabitant of any city be involved or should this be limited specifically to small towns. In the Frisian case the question becomes whether Omrop Fryslân's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm is supposed to be sufficient, since the experiences and lessons learned will be broadcasted, or if the CSA is meant to inspire other farmers to commit to similar transitions. Therefore, it is our advice that any future project proposals or problem statements for the project should draw from the literature and terminology surrounding civic engagement generally and civic agriculture in particular. Furthermore, this theoretical framework of civic engagement will make it easier to ground the practical problem in scholarship. The terminology, practices and results will be useful as a comparison for

planned practices and techniques to be used on your CSA.

B. Practical

Existing Initiatives

In this section, the most important and useful existing initiatives that we found whose ideas, approaches and ideals were comparable to the vision that Omrop Fryslân had for this community farm project will be explored. Within these comparisons, we focus on what we can learn from them - what is going well, what do we have to look out for, what are their experiences?

CSA as a Concept

As a first step, it is important to give a name and definition to the communal farmer-citizen format that Omrop Fryslân initially imagined for this farm. Internationally, the concept of involving citizens in farming and having direct relations with them is known as CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and it is spread all over the globe. In 2015, there were already 6292 CSAs operating in Europe, altogether feeding around half a million to a million people.³⁶

³⁶ Sarka Krcilkova et al, "Solid Base - Supporting booklet for training on financial sustainability for solidarity-based food systems," 2019, https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/fileadmin/media/solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/Das-Netzwerk/Projekte/solidbase/solidbase_WEB_pages.pdf.

*In its most basic form, "CSA is a **direct partnership** between a group of **consumers** and **producer(s)** whereby the risks, responsibilities and rewards of farming activities are shared through long-term agreements."*³⁷

A common understanding is also that the food is produced organically and sustainably. This signifies an alternative food system based on solidarity and a new farmer-consumer relation that bypasses supermarket chains and supports a circular food economy.

This way, citizens can get fresh, healthy food, and learn where their food comes from and what the realities of farming are. On the other hand, farmers can get fairer pay, job security, and connect to the people they feed directly. However, there is no one-way guide on how to build a CSA farm, and each one can be organized differently in ways that work for the community and the farmers under their specific circumstances. This is why it is important to look at how others have organized their CSA initiatives to possibly draw inspiration from them.

³⁷ Róisín Nic Cóil et al., "Overview of Community Supported Agriculture in Europe," 2016, <https://www.accesstoland.eu/IMG/pdf/overview-of-community-supported-agriculture-in-europe-f.pdf>.

Local (CSA) Initiatives

In Friesland, we conducted a field visit to one CSA farm (Heerlijkheid de Hare) and did online research into others like Yn'e Sinne, Hoeve Hoogland (who we also asked questions via email), or Ús-Hôf. We also visited two non-CSA dairy farms (Boer Bart and Boerderij Recreatie) that had some interesting elements of citizen involvement.

We wanted to get a full picture on how farmers in Friesland - both traditional and non-traditional - see issues that inspired this project, such as sustainability or farmer-citizen relationships. On the basis of interviews with the three farmers as well as online research into other local initiatives, this section will summarize what to take away and learn from these Frisian (CSA) farms regarding ecological farming as well as the more sociological topics mentioned above.

Firstly, the people we interviewed all had very different opinions about the widening gap between farmers and citizens in the Netherlands, which has, amongst other things, inspired the idea for Omrop Fryslân's project proposal. However, Geeske and Minne Holtrop from

Boerderijrecreatie, a cow farm with some recreational elements to attract visitors, surprisingly stated that in their experience, there is no big divide between farmers and citizens. On the contrary, in his many years as a farmer, Minne has never received a negative comment or insult about his profession, and he has found most people that came to his farm to be eager to learn about farming.³⁸

On the other hand, Martien Spitzen from Heerlijkheid de Hare states that the biggest problem between farmers and citizens is caused by a lack of proper education: "Everyone learns the wrong things."³⁹ Citizens do not learn about eating ecologically and the importance of sustainable farming and knowing where their food comes from, and farmers often learn and stick to the traditional models of farming instead of breaking out of that cycle and trying to change and innovate the current food system. So, in his view, both farmers and citizens should reassess how they treat their food and its production.

Yet in another view, BoerBart sees the problem in the pride of the farmers. He proposes that farmers, especially dairy farmers, are often not proud of their profession anymore because

³⁸ Holtrop, Geeske and Minne. Personal interview, December 3, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Boerderij Recreatie](#).

³⁹ Spitzen, Martien. Personal interview, December 3, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Heerlijkheid de Hare](#).

of current trends against the dairy industry, which causes problems in how they portray themselves.⁴⁰ All of these are, of course, only subjective assessments of the problem at hand and should not be taken as factual statements. However, it is interesting to see how actual farmers experience a problem that has been highly relevant in the Netherlands these past years, and that is one of the starting points for Omrop Fryslân's project as well.

As far as it is visible in the media, the discontent of many traditional farmers lies more with the government and its regulations than with regular citizens. However, even though there might not be an open conflict, as Minne remarked, it is true that many citizens do not know or care where their food comes from.⁴¹ They do not know the issues that farmers face or the methods they use, and farmers do not know who they are providing for. This is where the inherent distance between farmers and citizens becomes visible, and where a CSA farm could become a solution for a mindset change. This change could impact both farmers, increasing

their awareness of the environmental impact of their work as well as citizens, encouraging more consumer awareness.

Another key takeaway from both the interviews as well as online research is the practical knowledge that these farms can and could provide us with. Martien Spitzen, for example, talked extensively about his method of not using any fertilizer but having the plants grow naturally and balance each other out by planting certain types next to others to create a healthy soil balance.⁴²

Additionally, the Yn'e Sinne farm shares some of their nature-inclusive farming methods on their website, naming examples like planting seeds closer together to avoid pressure from weeds or mimicking nature in their little garden zones by planting fruit crops on the edges and using plants that contribute to a good ecosystem.⁴³ Moreover, the Ús-Hôf even offers training programs, internships, practical days, or assistance in planning a permaculture garden.⁴⁴ Thus, most farms seem very eager to share their knowledge and spread their practices.

⁴⁰ Holtrop, Bartele. Personal interview, December 3, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Boer Bart](#).

⁴¹ Holtrop, Geeske and Minne. Personal interview, December 3, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Boerderij Recreatie](#).

⁴² Spitzen, Martien. Personal interview, December 3, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Heerlijkheid de Hare](#).

⁴³ Y'ne Sinne Farm, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://ynesinnefarm.nl>.

⁴⁴ "Leren bij Ús Hôf," Ushof.nl, accessed December 9, 2021, <https://www.ushof.nl/informatie/leren-bij-us-hof/>.

However, not only farming techniques can be learned from these farmers. For instance, Boer Bart has stressed the importance of connections to other farmers and the value of their knowledge, stating that he communicates with his network on a weekly basis and exchanges ups and downs, new methods, etc with them. He was also very open to sharing the best practices and tips he has learned over the course of his farming journey.⁴⁵

Regarding customers, Martien told us that in his experience, retired people or people without children tend to make up most of his subscriptions because young families often do not have the time to pick up and cook the fresh vegetables, and children also lose interest in coming to the farm after two or three visits. If the aim of the Omrop Fryslân project is also to attract children and make it a learning space for them, this is something that is important to keep in mind and possibly mitigate.

Furthermore, Boer Bart and Boerderijrecreatie offer some creative examples of how they create citizen interest in their farms and also make some extra money. In the Boerderij Recreatie, they offer things like ‘cow-

hugging’, where people can come and hug their cows. Additionally, they offer their farm as a place for things like bachelor parties, which seems to be a quite well-received offer. On the other hand, Boer Bart has a playgarden for kids and a café where parents can relax while their children play. Additionally, he occasionally organizes some events like dinners with music, and during the pandemic he even organized field drive-throughs with information over the car radio.

Moreover, the Stadsboerderij de Sibbe offers some great educational opportunities for children, teaching elementary school classes about where their food comes from and letting them take care of the animals to make it a fun and educational experience at the same time.⁴⁶ This shows that there are a multitude of ways to engage citizens in a farm, to create interest, and cater to various audiences at the same time (families, children, adults, friend groups, etc.).

Lastly, financing is an important subject for any farmer, and especially those that follow the CSA concept as it does not follow traditional buyer/seller models. The idea of paying directly to the farmer in the CSA model is supposed to

⁴⁵ Holtrop, Bartele. Personal interview, December 3, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Boer Bart](#).

⁴⁶ “Boerderijeducatie.” n.d. Stadsboerderijdesibbe.nl. Accessed December

6, 2021, <https://stadsboerderijdesibbe.nl/boerderijeducatie>.

guarantee a fairer pay for farmers through bypassing price pressures from supermarket chains. However, both Hoeve Hoogland and Heerlijkheid de Hare explicitly stated that they do not earn enough money to make a living just off of the subscriptions to their CSA farms. Martien is retired and just does the farm out of passion, and the owners of Hoeve Hoogland get their main income from the care/education branch because they take care of homebound young people.

To make a living off their farms, both said they would either have to increase subscription prices, or they would have to significantly increase the amount of subscriptions they have and increase production a lot, which is not always possible using ecological farming methods.⁴⁷ However, there are obviously also many examples of CSA farms that can finance themselves - most of the time, they either have higher subscription fees (mostly something like 80 Euros per month) or they diversify their income, for example using the farm as an event place (like Boerderij Recreatie or Boer Bart) or selling at farmers markets as well.⁴⁸ Something that has to be kept in mind here is that in order

to demand higher subscription fees, even though they might be realistic, there need to be people committed and fortunate enough to be able to pay this. Additionally, this would exclude lower-income people from accessing healthy, organic food, which is also not ideal for a communal farm. Thus, figuring out not just the sustainability of the agricultural methods but also financial sustainability for the farmer is a crucial aspect of setting up a CSA farm.

Conclusively, it is visible that we can gather a lot from local (CSA) farms. Most people seem very happy and eager to share their knowledge and help out, which can be useful in various stages of the project. Their knowledge about networking and consumer engagement can be useful in the more early stages of the project to build a good community base, and their experience and knowledge in sustainable, circular farming techniques will be helpful once the farm has actually been set up. Contacts and information like this will be crucial for a successful project, especially because of the local, Friesland-specific context of their networks and advice.

⁴⁷ Boven, Erik and Annegreet, email correspondence, January 10, 2022. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [Hoeve Hoogland](#).

⁴⁸ As an example, look at Solawi Freudenthal: <https://solawi-freudenthal.de/mitglied-werden/>.

Herenboeren

Although there are other individual CSA farms in the Netherlands, the most well-known example of a large CSA initiative is Herenboeren. It is a movement based on the principles listed above, but with a twist - a group of citizens not only pays in advance to the farmer and gets their crops from them directly, but they also share ownership of the farm and take part in decision-making processes about crops.⁴⁹ Several things were useful to learn about when looking into this initiative.

Firstly, their reasoning and vision behind this initiative were very extensive and inspired. They released a document called 'Our Theory of Change' in which they describe their vision of the Netherlands in 2060: A country with a completely sustainable and nature-inclusive food system, where 700,000 hectares of land are being supported by communities, farmed ecologically and socially inclusive. This would mean that there would be 35,000 farms and every person in the Netherlands would be part of a Herenboeren farm.

They imagine people reconnected, a soil that has recovered and is bursting with biodiversity, a connected economy and space for education and research. To achieve this, they believe that knowledge-sharing and research based on actions are very important, which is why they also want to set up their own knowledge center. In this center, they want to create their own garden where experiments can be conducted in order to find out which methods work and which don't, and it should be a place for future ecological farmers to learn.

Above all, they highlight three principles that all farming communities should follow:

They should be **nature-driven, socially connected** and **economically supported**, based on the goals they want to achieve: Regenerative area development, multiple value creation, and community development.⁵⁰

Furthermore, an interesting resource they provide on their website is advice about the practicalities that need to be looked out for when

⁴⁹ "De Beweging," Herenboeren, accessed December 16, 2021, <https://www.herenboeren.nl/de-beweging/>.

⁵⁰ "Farming communities – our theory of change," Farmingcommunities.org, accessed

December 16, 2021, <https://farmingcommunities.org>.

wanting to start a Herenboeren farm, like the amount of people living within a 15km radius, the soil quality, the groundwater, the amount of hectares of land available, citizen interest in ecological food, etc.⁵¹ These are very important things to look out for for this project as well in order to stay realistic and increase chances of it being a success.

However, it is also important to remember that their requirements are specific to the Herenboeren shareholder concept, which is not necessarily how every CSA farm has to be structured. While precisely following the Herenboeren concept's conditions is not required for independent CSAs, their conditions hint at important considerations that need to be taken into account when starting a similar initiative. The condition of 50,000 citizens in proximity is to ensure there is demand for such an initiative. The premise of a CSA is that the citizens know where and how their food is grown, and there is a general preference for locally grown food. This does not necessarily mean that you need 50,000 citizens in the surrounding 15 kilometers, but that you should be sure that there is enough demand from the start. In the end, it is

important to both look out for certain practicalities as well as to remain flexible in our goals and the structure of the desired CSA farm.

CSA in Germany

A second initiative that is very helpful and similar in goals and principles is the solawi movement in Germany. Solawi (Solidarische Landwirtschaft) means solidarity farming and is like the German version of CSA. However, it is not only a movement/concept, but also a huge network at the same time. Unlike Herenboeren, which is still quite small-scale in comparison, the German SoLawi network includes 381 initiatives so far.⁵²

However, it has to be said that Herenboeren is more of a closed initiative with the same criteria for every farm, whereas solawi is a much more open concept that is not run by the same organization. It is more of a movement rather than a singular initiative, since basically anyone that has solidarity farming as a base for their farm can join the network, even though there may be very different iterations of how they are organized internally. What is striking here is the power and reach of them as a network together, something that cannot be found in such an

⁵¹ Herenboeren, August 14, 2017, <https://www.herenboeren.nl>.

⁵² Netzwerk Solidarisch Landwirtschaft, "Solawis: Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft,"

Solidarische-landwirtschaft.org, December 13, 2021, <https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/solawis-finden/auflistung/solawis>.

effective way in the Netherlands. Even though there is also a CSA network in the Netherlands, it has nowhere near as much influence and resources as the German solawi movement.

On their website, the Solawi Network claims that solidarity farming will “become a key figure in the socio-ecological transformation process.”⁵³ They also lay down some ground principles for solidarity farming, such as appreciation and recognition, direct relations and consumer involvement, transparency about annual budget and farming methods, sustainable farming methods, and much more. This is useful to keep in mind for the values and principles that Omrop Fryslân and their potential partners might hold for this project as well.

Furthermore, the way they create interest in their movement is a useful example for how to create interest for any CSA project in general. On their website, the German solawi network lays out advantages for every single party that could partake in a communal farm: the consumers, the producer, the farm, and the

region in which the solawi is located.⁵⁴ Such a list could be a useful tool to appeal to partners for this project as well.

Another useful resource they offer is a tutorial with the steps needed to start and run a solawi.⁵⁵ They offer many useful tips on how to create interest for citizens, how to communicate, how to decide what to grow, how to distribute the yields, and much more - essentially very concrete, useful things to think of for newcomers. Additionally, they offer to connect you to a contact person who can give more precise advice. This sort of advice is crucial for start-up projects like the one Omrop Fryslân is planning, and this list can offer inspiration for questions newcomers might not even have thought about themselves. However, it exists only in German so far.

Lastly, another interesting aspect is that the network is and has been involved in different European projects in collaboration with many other universities, research institutes and farmers associations from different countries.⁵⁶

⁵³ Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, “Vision und Grundprinzipien,” December 13, 2021, <https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/das-konzept/vision-und-grundprinzipien>.

⁵⁴ Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, “Was ist Solawi?t,” December 13, 2021, <https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/das-konzept/was-ist-solawi>.

⁵⁵ Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, “Aufbau einer Solawi,” December 13, 2021, <https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/solawis-aufbauen/aufbau-einer-solawi>.

⁵⁶ Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, “Laufende Projekte ,” December 13, 2021, <https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/das-netzwerk/projekte/vergangene-projekte-1>.

These projects have yielded useful results, like the SolidBase project sponsored by Erasmus+ which delivered, among other things, a handbook on financial sustainability of CSAs that contains detailed advice about more complicated organizational things to look out for when starting a CSA farm. This will also be provided in the resource list in the appendix.

Apart from the practical information, their collaborative work with European countries can also serve as an inspiration for this project - it shows that such projects can be brought to a European scale and disseminate knowledge and resources far beyond Friesland. Although that is probably far in the future, it is something to keep in mind for inspiration as well as possible European funding options.

Volunteer Initiatives

Operating in Germany but having started in Austria and spread to a number of other Central European countries is Maschinenring.⁵⁷ Maschinenring is a similar network to solawi, aiming towards solidarity, but focusing on equipment and knowledge sharing between farmers. They involve a very specific demographic of citizens, namely young

volunteers in their “social years”, or gap years, often taken between school and higher education.

There are also a number of international volunteer organisations, such as WWOOF and the European Solidarity Corps, which for the duration of the volunteer’s stay give them the opportunity to learn about local food sourcing. However, this still limits the full integration between consumers and producers, as eventually the volunteers will leave, meaning long-term relationships between the farmer and citizen are not created. On the other hand, it does allow for the spread and propagation of such experiences internationally, and may make the final project more feasible for international investment.

CSA: International Best Practices

In this section, some best practices of CSA farms all over Europe will be provided. The information synthesized below is taken from the solid-base financial sustainability for CSA farms booklet, which is a collaborative effort between many CSA farmers across Europe that share best

⁵⁷ “Das Maschinenring-Portal: Maschinenring Deutschland,” MaschinenringDE, accessed

December 8, 2021,
<https://www.maschinenring.de>.

practices to help the international CSA community.⁵⁸

One aspect that is crucial for a CSA farm is the communication with its members. For this, many farms use free software instead of just email lists so that members can actively engage in the communication and feel more included. The Solawi Weinheim in Germany, for example, uses a software called 'discourse' for communication, which allows to take minutes of meetings, do polls, have discussion boards and much more. Generally, there is a wide variety of software to use for different purposes like accounting, managing subscriptions, coordination, etc. It is strongly advised to make use of these free offers to better organize a CSA farm and to save the farmer much work.

In line with this, there seems to be a consensus amongst CSA farmers that a farm cannot work without the support and long-term engagement of a community, which is why **communication and community building are very important for aspiring farmers.**

Often, a committed core group of volunteers/community members can help the farmer take on some responsibilities that cannot be handled by one person alone. In the CSA CooLand in the Czech Republic, committed members help with coordination, event organization, payments, budgeting, etc. This is very important help for the farmer, but basing all these tasks on volunteer work can also be a risk because it really depends on the motivation and continuing commitment of the members.

Another example of the importance of community engagement comes from a CSA in Hungary. The farm was running a deficit and the farmer could not gain any income from it because of high production costs, so some members stepped up by analyzing the budget, voluntarily increasing membership fees because it was needed, and helping to diversify income for the farmer by offering workshops on the farm and making it available as an event venue. This really showcases the solidarity that has developed between the producer and their community.

However, to build such a community, it is first necessary to engage consumers and get them

⁵⁸ Sarka Krcilkova et al, "Solid Base - Supporting booklet for training on financial sustainability for solidarity-based food systems," 2019, [https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/fileadmin/media/solidarische-](https://www.solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/fileadmin/media/solidarische-landwirtschaft.org/Das-Netzwerk/Projekte/solidbase/solidbase_WEB_pages.pdf)

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interested in the farm. From experience, some farmers say that to attract people, it is necessary to get a clear message across of what the farm and its wider objectives are about. For this, a clear mission and angle need to be formulated, for example healthy and nutritional food for families or helping the environment, and then spread at organized local dinners, on social media, or elsewhere.

Lastly, a practice that seems to have paid off, and that we also have found a lot in Frisian networks, is the sharing of knowledge and experiences. This often happens in the form of farmer-to-farmer talks where informal exchanges can happen, or through comprehensive workshops that are designed to help aspiring CSA farmers learn the most important things to get started.

Evaluation

All in all, it can be said that the first step to figuring out how this project could go necessitates a closer look at what is already out there, and what we can learn from that. Making use of the resources of knowledge, experiences, advice and inspiration that are already out there, publicly accessible for free on the internet or through conversations with experienced

farmers, is an important step to take before anything concrete can happen.

Through these resources, the initial idea can already be developed more clearly and necessary considerations before starting a farm can be addressed more adequately. The useful tips and tricks that these initiatives offer are exemplary for how important it is to share knowledge, resources and contacts in order to accelerate the transition of our food system and create a healthier consumer-producer relationship as well as to inspire others and facilitate the creation of upcoming initiatives. This area is where Omrop Fryslân could play an important role as well - as a source for inspiration, interest creation, and sharing of experiences.

Partner and Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Analysis

For our research on potential partners for this initiative, we first conducted a stakeholder analysis, meaning that we looked at who could potentially have an interest in this project, and what their stakes may be. We have found a wide variety of stakeholders, such as:

Governments

- **Dutch Government (in line with Green Deal goals)** - The Dutch government has to provide assistance to eco-projects in line with the goals of the Green Deal. However, sustainable modes of agricultural production especially with CSAs will almost inevitably decrease supply in the short run and feed fewer people.
- **Frisian local government (interest in circular agriculture, support for Frisian initiatives)** - The Frisian Government would primarily be useful as a publicity, legal and financial partner. All of these to a limited extent. Though in general they are supportive of initiatives that aim to innovate agriculture towards circular agriculture and that mobilise Frisian identity.
- **The EU (in line with the Green Deal; not a government but still grouped with these)** - The EU emphasizes sustainability and innovation in grants associated with agricultural

practices. Especially with the increase in climate-related natural disasters, the EU has raised climate action as a priority. This means that projects targeting organic and sustainable agriculture have a better chance of getting EU grants, especially if they are truly innovative. This delegates the EUs possible involvement as a financial sponsor.

Knowledge/Research institutes

- **Universities and Knowledge institutions** - Knowledge institutions have a lot to learn from these experimental forms of agriculture. They will likely be interested in the results, as it provides ample opportunity for researchers as well. Certain agricultural universities may be interested in conducting experiments on CSAs or creating their own CSAs.

Citizens

- **Those wanting to get local, sustainable food.** - As described in the citizens engagement section, citizens would be interested in this project because it gives them more agency in regards to ensuring the quality and sustainability of their food as well as engaging with their communities. One limitation to this is that the lower productivity of CSAs means citizens will not be able to afford the same amount of food for the same price, meaning participation may be unrealistic in certain income ranges.

- **Those wanting to learn more about ecological farming/ experience it/ volunteer or those wanting to start an ecological farm themselves.** People who are interested in ecological agricultural practices would be interested in this project, as they would receive information from the broadcasting and publication of the program by Omrop Fryslân, as well as the networks we provide in the annex.

Farmers

- **Already organic farmers that want to support other initiatives or are looking for collaborations.** Pre-existing sustainable initiatives are not as profitable as traditional farms, as they work with a smaller customer base. This often means the organic farmer is to an extent more driven by his goals and values than by profit or stability. This means that farmers will often be enthusiastic to engage with newcomers to the scene, to have a new agent in the field experimenting with ecological techniques to learn from.

- **‘Traditional’ farmers that might want to transition to more sustainable methods** Certain traditional farmers are confident in their own expertise and production capacity, and are thus unwilling to give up decision-making powers to consumers, as this might lead to a sub-optimal allocation of resources. However, we want to

provide all the necessary information in our guide, to make starting such a project easier by providing the tools and background information necessary to avoid preventable pitfalls.

Partner Analysis

During our research into these different areas, we have found that some of them are too abstract to be partners in the beginning of such a project. For example the governments can be looked at later for subsidies once there is a concrete plan, and NGOs could also not offer any concrete contributions at this point. Overall, we have found three main **categories** of partners based on what can best be learned from them at this (early) stage of the project:

Practical Assistance

Theoretical Knowledge

Network

After conducting the stakeholder analysis, we looked into which stakeholders can be useful to work with. For each potential partner we found, we analyzed what sort of partner they could be, how they could benefit the project, and how they could benefit from the project. Of

course, not every partner can fit perfectly into one of these categories and they sometimes overlap, but these three categories were the most useful in a broad sense. Our findings for each category will be presented below.

Practical Assistance

A new farmer might struggle with overcoming the initial barrier of a lack of experience or knowledge in agriculture. When starting a community farm, this difficulty is exacerbated. For this reason we have compiled a list of farms that practice Community Supported Agriculture and could provide their practical experiences in developing such a project. More specifically, they could provide us with knowledge on topics such as:

- Sustainable agricultural methods (e.g. soil balance)
- Balance between economic feasibility and sustainability
- Engaging citizens/ Maintaining consumer relationships
- Farm management and maintenance
- How to start?
- Different CSA practices (pricing, extent

of citizen involvement, crop choices,..)

- Inspiration/motivation
- Possible drawbacks

This is not an all-encompassing list and more topics and tips might come up. However, more specific tips and advice can only be discovered during conversations with such farmers and once the needs of the concrete future partner have been voiced.

Our own interviews and research suggests that the predominant trend among CSAs seems to be that it is difficult to keep the products at competitive prices while also producing sustainably and locally. One CSA just outside Friesland described how the membership model of agriculture does not generate sufficient revenue to account for a farmer's minimum wage.⁵⁹ This was primarily due to the organic practice of denying the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, which inevitably led to lower yields. The lower yield means a smaller number of members can subscribe to the CSA and still receive a fair share of the harvest. Granted, this CSA was only cultivating half a hectare. Yet it is an important consideration that these two CSA

⁵⁹ Heerlijkheid de Hare and Hoeve Hoogland.

farms both require additional sources of revenue to stay afloat.

A number of larger CSA's in Friesland, however, seem to be doing better. With a slightly higher price per person, a number of organic farms offer nearby citizens the opportunity to become shareholders in a season's yield, in which they get fruit and vegetables proportional to their investment.⁶⁰ Alternative consumer-farmer relationships are subscription-based, where payments are determined by family size and are subsequently allowed to pick up weekly vegetable harvests on site, or with delivery for an extra charge.⁶¹

All of these CSA's work in accordance with two goals: keeping consumers informed about the source of their food, and ecologically preserving Dutch soil by avoiding harmful chemicals. To manage such goals the Frisian farmers have to work towards creative solutions by closing the "kringloop" or the circular economy, as much as possible.⁶²

These more successful CSAs can thus impart essential information to future generations of Community farmers. This

includes general tips and tricks, crop decisions, legal advice, financial advice and many other benefits. The established CSA farmers could suggest ways to improve yields by optimising seed resilience or overcoming pests without the use of pesticides. Perhaps these farmers could later even trade or sell the adapted seeds amongst one another, as traditional large-scale farms sometimes do with international buyers.⁶³

Eventually, when the new farmer has become established in their own right, they can then contribute to this network themselves, providing their insights to the others. This way innovation is shared and biological and ecological farms will hopefully grow in productivity and, subsequently, importance. The primary reason, however, that these CSAs are more practically useful is that they also reside in or close to Friesland.

Soil quality is one of the most important aspects for organic Frisian farmers, as Frisian land in particular is not very fertile for most crops. This specific problem, among other environmental factors are known to the established local farmers, meaning they can

⁶⁰ Hoeve Hoogland and Land van Ons.

⁶¹ Yn'e Sinne Farm and Us Hof.

⁶² "Visie En Missie," CSA Network, accessed December 15, 2021, <https://csanetwerk.nl/over-csa-netwerk/>.

⁶³ Ministry of Economic Affairs, *The Netherlands, no. 1 in seed for food and nutrition security*, PDF file (February 2017), <https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/documenten/publicaties/2018/02/09/no.-1-in-seed-for-food-and-nutrition>.

more easily advise, or directly provide aid in overcoming such obstacles. This makes them the best practical partners, as they speak from relevant experience.

Theoretical Knowledge

The largest and most relevant partner that we found for theoretical knowledge is the University of Wageningen. They offer a wide range of relevant research directions such as biodiversity, climate change, circular & biobased economy, etc., and they are collaborating with a variety of actors on different research projects regarding circular agriculture and economy.

We have asked professor Imke de Boer from the University of Wageningen a few questions regarding the project, and she has provided some helpful opinions already. In her answers, she explained about the distance between consumers and their food, the importance of drawing people to farms in different ways and involving children, and gave some ideas of how to make local food more attractive for consumers.⁶⁴

Experts like Imke de Boer could offer a starting organic farmer advice on how to best

prepare the land and cultivate it to maximise sustainability and productivity, but also provide input on how to draw consumers in. Furthermore, in a later phase of the project, the university could conduct research and experiments on the farm, benefitting both the project as well as the university if there is an interest for this from their side.

For the farm, it would be good to have some measurements of the work that the farmer is doing - is it contributing to a more circular agriculture? Is it increasing soil quality? Are they producing healthy food? Measuring such things would not only be good for the farmer's motivation but it would also increase the farm's credibility.

For the university, it is always good to have practical sites where their students can put their theoretical knowledge to practice and maybe even experiment with new technologies. One pitfall, however, with relying solely on the university's theoretical expertise is that the university is less directly concerned with profitability, which for any other farmer is an immediate concern.

There is, however, a Frisian university which also looks into circular agriculture. Van Hall

⁶⁴ de Boer, Imke, email correspondence, December 9, 2021. The transcript can be found in the appendix under [University of Wageningen](#).

Larenstein is a relatively smaller university of applied sciences, which investigates Frisian agriculture specifically in regard to dairy, Environmental impact and agro-food chains, and locally oriented transitions to a circular economy among its applied research groups. They are investigating questions regarding sustainability, efficiency and profitability of circular agriculture to reduce raw material and biomass waste. Setting up a direct line of communication with this university can provide theoretical knowledge that aims to address the precise problems CSAs often struggle with.

Additionally, the University of Groningen and Wageningen University and Research are currently collaborating with various stakeholders on a project that is supposed to showcase that circular agriculture is a concept that is feasible and applicable in the northern Netherlands. It is called 'CAN-DO-IT project (Circular Agriculture in North-Netherlands: Daring scenarios and Interlinked Transformation)' and the ideal outcome, according to Imke de Boer, would be the northern Netherlands as an exemplary

demonstrative region for circular agriculture.⁶⁵ Experts from various fields, such as plant and animal production, administration, business administration and economics, will come together to test and develop 'action perspectives' that help contribute to the vision of a sustainable agricultural future - a holistic vision that takes into account both the environment and also socio-economic consequences like employment.

These action perspectives will build on existing small initiatives in the region that have developed a different, circular approach to the current food system. This is based on the so-called 'small wins approach' which proposes that innovative projects on the local level have a significant effect on larger systemic change.⁶⁶

An analysis of such initiatives is supposed to lead to knowledge that can accelerate the transition to a circular agriculture.⁶⁷ More specifically, they intend to create a living lab in the northern Netherlands and conduct these six interlinked research steps: "analyse biophysical and socio-economic aspects of the current agricultural system; interactively develop future

⁶⁵ "Samen Op Weg Naar Kringlooplandbouw in Noord-Nederland," WUR, September 3, 2020, <https://www.wur.nl/nl/Onderzoek-Resultaten/Onderzoeksprojecten-LNV/Nieuws/Show/Samen-op-weg-naar-kringlooplandbouw-in-Noord-Nederland.htm>.

⁶⁶ "Circular Agriculture in North-Netherlands: Daring Scenarios and Interlinked Transformation

(CAN-DO-IT)." WUR. November 24, 2020. <https://www.wur.nl/en/project/CAN-DO-IT.htm>.

⁶⁷ "Samen Op Weg Naar Kringlooplandbouw in Noord-Nederland." WUR. September 3, 2020. <https://www.wur.nl/nl/Onderzoek-Resultaten/Onderzoeksprojecten-LNV/Nieuws/Show/Samen-op-weg-naar-kringlooplandbouw-in-Noord-Nederland.htm>.

dreams (scenarios); assess environmental and socio-economic consequences of scenarios; identify and evaluate small wins; identify interventions for spreading, broadening and deepening small wins; co-create transformative pathways.”⁶⁸

Whether or not this project can become one of those ‘small wins’ and maybe even participate in the RUG x WUR project cannot be known yet, although it is an interesting possibility to think of. However, the knowledge that will hopefully be gained and the transformative pathways that will be created through the planned research are worth keeping an eye on anyways as they are highly relevant for this project. The aims of both projects align with the vision of a more circular and sustainable agriculture in the northern Netherlands, which means that a collaboration or knowledge exchange could be beneficial for both.

Finally, agricultural universities experiment with seed varieties. Wageningen, for example, has been plant-breeding since 1912.⁶⁹ CSA

farmers could heavily benefit from seed varieties, especially if direct communication encourages the theoretical knowledge institutions to experiment with seed-breeds that are adapted to the CSA farmer’s circumstances.

Network

One of the most relevant things we have learned during our research is the importance of networking for the start of any project idea. Almost every (CSA) initiative we’ve found was part of a larger network - whether that is in Friesland,⁷⁰ the Netherlands,⁷¹ or even internationally.⁷² Those network organizations typically provide several things:

- 1. Events where members can meet and exchange ideas;⁷³ network informally; develop skills through workshops.⁷⁴**
- 2. Visibility (linking members on their websites, creating maps with different initiatives on them, etc.)⁷⁵**
- 3. Sharing of knowledge/experience and resources - both through in-person events or**

⁶⁸ “Circular Agriculture in North-Netherlands: Daring Scenarios and Interlinked Transformation (CAN-DO-IT).” WUR. November 24, 2020. <https://www.wur.nl/en/project/CAN-DO-IT.htm>.

⁶⁹ Ministry of Economic Affairs, *The Netherlands, no. 1 in seed for food and nutrition security*, PDF file (February 2017), <https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/docume>

<nten/publicaties/2018/02/09/no.-1-in-seed-for-food-and-nutrition>.

⁷⁰ Friese Voedselbeweging

⁷¹ Toekomstboeren

⁷² Urgenci

⁷³ BoerenVuren

⁷⁴ Workshop: Yn’e Sinne

⁷⁵ Land van Ons, CSA Netwerk

through FAQs, blogs, links to books/tutorials on their websites.⁷⁶

4. Advocacy. They give more visibility to the movement as a whole and can represent their members to policymakers etc.

5. Organization of joint projects.

These are all extremely useful offers for a new farmer that does not know where to start, just to get some inspiration and help from others that have been in the same situation. Generally, members of such sustainable farming networks seem to be very open to sharing their knowledge and we have found that there is little competition among them. However, some network organisations might be more useful than others depending on the situation.

For example, in the beginning, it might be good to join a Frisian network like the 'Friese Voedselbeweging' because it is more feasible both distance and time-wise to join their events or visit people from the network. Furthermore, the CSA Netwerk is a Netherlands wide network for Community Supported Agricultural initiatives. Connecting the new Frisian farmer to such a network would be immensely beneficial for the knowledge, resources, assistance and publicity they can provide.

⁷⁶ E.g. Urgenci book, Solawi tutorial

IV. Conclusion

This research report has explored different forms of journalism, civic engagement, existing (CSA) initiatives, as well as various possible partners and stakeholders in relation to one goal: setting up and reporting on a community supported farm in Friesland that provides an alternative to our current profit-oriented food system. This farm shall explore sustainable ways of farming, bring farmers and citizens closer together and grant a more active role to journalists as mediators in a polarized society.

Modern farming practices can have a negative impact on biodiversity, change the natural landscape, deplete the soil and advance climate change. Small-scale, communal and ecologically sustainable farming could be the solution. Region-specific farming could make currently unusable farmland suitable for crop farming, such as wet farming on Friesian peat soil or saline cultivation along the coast of Friesland. However, a change in agricultural practices would mean that non-ecological farmers have to change their livelihoods, which requires them to break with farming (or even family-) traditions, along with investments of capital that they do not have. Frequently, government communication about the transition

towards climate-friendly farming puts pressure on the farmers while consumers (citizens) continue to opt for the cheapest food options rather than ecological produce. The gap that is created by consequence, is what inspired the study of the setup of a small-scale, communal farm and its potential to bridge the gap with help from actively engaged journalists.

Our research has shown that engaged methods of reporting enhance trust in the media and thus are well placed in polarized societies. Both participating and constructive journalism grant personal experiences of the people involved, the sources of the reporter, more room. While both methods bear certain advantages over mainstream reporting methods, each of the two methods on their own lack something: In participating journalism, it is the positive tone; in constructive journalism, it is the focus on the issue at hand. Joining these two methods in a two-stage process would bring both focus and positivity into the coverage: Omrop Fryslân could tell a story, starting from a thorough picture of the dilemma in the relationship between farmers and the citizens and ending with an outlook into the future by looking at possible solutions.

Furthermore, we found that CSAs fit the scheme of civic agriculture as described by US scholarship: In these projects, profit is no longer

the primary motive, but communal and broader societal concerns are. Consumers are believed to be interested because through their involvement, they can guarantee quality and hold producers accountable for the societal and environmental impact they have. By giving consumers (limited) power in choosing what is produced, as we have seen in existing initiatives, their food source becomes more democratized. This can encourage citizens to become more active in other parts of the community. Civic projects require a lot of interaction and cooperation, which is why it facilitates rapprochement between farmers and citizens through increased cooperation and face-to-face time. Research has shown that environments with smaller businesses and farms foster this effect more so than those with bigger businesses, hence to get the maximum community-building effect, this farm should be small-scale rather than big and commercial.

Having looked into various existing initiatives, we learned four lessons. For one, we discovered that many CSA farmers cannot live purely off the CSA model. If that was the aim, the subscriptions would have to be significantly higher or they would have to produce much more, which is really not attainable when farming in an organic way as the climate has a great

impact on the quantity of crop produced. As a consequence, the financial sustainability of the project for the farming partner is an indispensable point of concern when figuring out how to start a CSA farm. Gathering from the experience of these existing initiatives, the economic vulnerability can be compensated e.g. through volunteers on the farm or additional income streams, for instance hosting events at the farm and/or selling produce at farmers markets.

Secondly, we learned that due to the complex structure of CSA farms, the farmer would struggle to complete the work alone and require support from volunteers and coworkers. Tasks go beyond attending to the crops: From managing budget, over making estimations, planning crops, managing subscriptions, keeping up communication with partners and stakeholders (including the subscribers), as well as hosting events in order to keep up the community morale.

A third discovery is that there are certain practicalities that need to be kept in mind and without which the farm is unlikely to become a success, including: The number of citizens living in proximity to the farm, a vague idea of citizen interest in ecological food, the soil quality, the groundwater, and the number of hectares and

how many people that could realistically feed. This list will grow bigger when gathering experiences from more local CSA farmers.

A fourth lesson learnt from the analysis of existing initiatives is that what most CSA initiatives have in common is the vision of contributing to a better ecosystem, and a better and more sustainable future for our food system in general. Driven by their underlying values, people in the CSA community are eager to share their insights into ecological and community-based farming; insights that would benefit this project, especially in the starting phase as they have been through the same struggle of setting up the project. Additionally, some farming networks (e.g. Urgenci and SoLawi) have collaborated with farms across Europe to create handbooks containing knowledge on best practices on management, community building, financial sustainability., etc., that are freely accessible on the internet which serve as guidance for ecological farming.

In the stakeholder analysis, we took governments, research institutes, citizens and farmers into consideration as they all have an interest in this project. We found that ultimately, these various stakeholders have an interest in the vision behind this project but would rather be concerned with practicalities. For instance, the

European Union will want to know whether and how small-scale farming initiatives can feed populations in line with the European Green Deal that focuses on the transition towards more sustainable living. Citizens, on the other hand, will be concerned about the affordability of the participation.

In terms of potential partners, we differentiated between those who can provide practical - and theoretical assistance and network organizations whose strength are their contacts. As for the practical assistance, we found that certain associates - specifically larger CSAs such as US hof and Y'ne Sinne - can benefit the project with input based on their experience. Theoretical assistance on topics like circular farming and the ecosystem could be provided by the University of Wageningen and Van Hall Larenstein who has collaborated on research projects into the matter before. Alternatively, there are independent research organizations, such as Living Lab, experimenting with crop farming under poor soil conditions. On the basis of their research, these potential partners could point to novel methods in organic farming. Similar to practical and academic partners, networks flourish from the knowledge exchange happening within them. What is more, network organizations assist in the

attention the farm attracts in form of subscriptions and interest by virtue of linking a partaking farm on their website and creating a virtual map of all farms in the network. Additionally, networks are great mediating partners: They can present partaking farms to policymakers or organize joint projects across the network.

Inspiration for a new angle

Acknowledging that a new angle is crucial for the funding of this project, we have composed two possible approaches on the basis of our study of existing initiatives.

A. Presenting the combination of participating and constructive reporting as a novel procedure that positions the journalist as a social activist and mediator in a societal dispute. Not only does this approach stimulate citizen's trust in the media, but it is also designed in such a way that the coverage has positive cognitive effects on the audience and is thus suitable for children too (which is ideal when there is intent to educate in the process of reporting). While some of the existing initiatives have community blogs and/or small clips to document their work and progress, none of them show a comprehensive coverage that displays a bigger societal issue and explores solutions to such a problem.

B. Small scale, civic agriculture fosters engagement in local communities, for instance in the form of political interest. Existing initiatives have shown that giving people decision-making power in a CSA farming project, has inspired engagement in other sectors. The argument could be that increased engagement in farming leads people to desire more influence on the shaping of their community, often by virtue of local politics. At the same time, increased engagement means more frequent interaction with different groups of people in the community, which serves the objective of wanting to bridge a gap between groups of society - in this case, farmers and citizens.

Further Research

The subsequent research should review the following two subjects to start with: First, the financial sustainability in the Frisian context, especially with an aim at lower-income families: To make sure that lower-income families can afford the participation in the project, the subscription fee would have to be significantly lower, if not abandoned. A financial plan is necessary to evaluate the needs for funds: If this project was tailored for lower-income families, this could be an important argument in the subsidy application, since the project then

focuses on a marginalized group in society. The dilemma here is that CSA farming, even with the subscription fees in the calculation, is often not economically sustainable without other streams of income. A question that then needs to be asked is how this project can be economically sustainable for the farming partner. Once there is a clearer concept, the next focal point should be the soil at the prospective farm. Friesland is known for its distinctive soil, which is partly the reason why the majority of farmers in the area are dairy farmers - only particular crops can grow under these conditions. Based on the CSA research mentioned above, this analysis of the soil is a prerequisite for reviving/balancing the ecosystem in Friesian soil. Less time sensitive,

but still important is an exploration of the civic engagement literature. When exploring what sort of farm to create and how to formulate a problem statement, civic engagement and civic agriculture provide a lot of precedent to draw inspiration and essential information from. The terminology and previous successes and failures will provide useful metrics to draw on.

Another subject for further research are non-governmental organizations, such as Circulair Friesland and Rabobank's "FoodBytes!". They could be relevant networks and initiatives to take part in but were not part of this research as they cannot contribute much at the very early stage of the project.

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VI. Appendix

Potential Partners

Practical Assistance

[Heerlijkheid de Hare](#)

1. Description

Heerlijkheid de Hare is a small-scale farm, which produces ecological vegetables throughout most of the year. Civilians can get a subscription on this, for about €180 a year per person. They can come to Heerlijkheid de Hare to get their weekly or daily vegetables. Currently there are 60 people subscribed, and there is a small waiting list.

2. Category

- Knowledge exchange partner

3. Benefits

- They could provide knowledge and experiences they made themselves, e.g. on:
 - What are some problems/difficulties in running a CSA?
 - Who takes part in the farm and why?
- They could maybe provide contacts to other potential partners

4. Contact

- m.mspitzen@hetnet.nl / 06-27453641

Heerlijkheid de Hare: Interview Notes

Heerlijkheid de Hare is a small-scale farm, which produces ecological vegetables throughout most of the year. Civilians can get a subscription on this, for about €180 a year per person. They can come to Heerlijkheid de Hare to get their weekly or daily vegetables. Currently there are 60

people subscribed, and there is a small waiting list.

We got to speak to the owner of the farm: Martien Spitzen, who set up his farm as a result of similar problems that many other Frisian dairy farmers face now. The industry itself is tough to survive in, but he also did not have a successor. Mr Spitzen wanted to find something else, so he started Heerlijkheid de Hare. He sold most of his land - which was already ecological, as only cows had ever been there, - and the vegetables for the subscriptions and his own family are now grown on about half a hectare. He is also working on a "voedselbos," a food forest. Mr Spitzen does not earn a lot of money with his farm. He does not need to as he is retired, but if he wanted to make a living out of it, he would have to double production and the amount of people that have a subscription, and also increase the price significantly.

His opinion on modern agriculture is that it is often not sustainable. It uses up too much energy and creates too much nitrogen, which ruins biodiversity. Fertilizer is created with high levels of nitrogen, which takes up lots of energy to make. This ends up in the ground and kills life in the soil. Too much nitrogen is put into plants that way as well, which makes those plants more susceptible to diseases and less nutritional. Mr Spitzen does not use fertilizer or any manure at all, and his plants grow naturally - which is much slower than plants that are grown with fertilizer.

If he wanted to, he could double his production if he used manure, but he does not want to.

→ The biggest problem between farmers and citizens: everyone learns the wrong things. Citizens do not learn about eating ecologically. Farmers learn traditional techniques and ways of farming and keep to that, while it is important to innovate and change business models. His idea: people

think we want less farmers, but the contrary is true. We want more farmers, smaller-scale and more responsible.

→ Who comes to the farm, who are the subscribers?

Mostly retired persons or people whose children have already left the house. If a young family subscribes, they often quit after a year, since it takes up time to go and get the vegetables and prepare them. With small children, parents often want to make a quick meal. They subscribe with the idea of making healthy food for their children and taking the children to the farm for their wellbeing - however, it often turns out they don't have time and the children lose interest after a few visits.

→ Why do people subscribe?

We got to interview Hennie, a retired lady who is subscribed. She thinks this way of getting vegetables is a good solution for a lot of problems. First and foremost, the products are very tasty. She also does not create waste this way, as there is no plastic involved. And of course, it is sustainable, as you eat local and seasonal vegetables that are produced in a responsible manner.

[Boer Bart](#)

1. Description

Boer Bart is an Ecological farmer with cows and chickens in Friesland. His vision is to create a farm that will last a 1000 years, working together with nature. His farm is not just a farm, but a versatile business which also includes the public. There is a playgarden for children, and several kinds of events are hosted to get people acquainted with the farm and their products.

Personally, he thinks that farmers should be proud of their profession and the products they produce.

2. Category

- Knowledge exchange partner
- Possible media collaboration partner

3. Benefits

- Could be a part of a theme week; is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about marketing
- Has very creative ideas about involving the public in a farm; could be a source of knowledge and inspiration
- He could benefit by getting publicity. Boer Bart is really focused on reaching an audience and spreading the brand, so he would probably like the publicity from Omrop Fryslân.

4. Contact

- bart@boerbart.nl / +31(0)654602041

Boer Bart: Interview Notes

Kringloop on his farm: Cows = milk (with nutrients) = manure; Manure + chickens = eggs

Perfect product + cheap box = low price

Boerenpad over the farm so that people can collect their own eggs and/or milk - Smell, connection with the farm when going there

The Tuesday (Boert bewust) prior, there was a congress on the farm; on how farmers can reduce the gap between farmers and citizens [<https://www.boertbewust.nl/>]

Why is it that dairy farmers nowadays tend to lack this confidence?

Veganism movement (etc) feels like an attack on milk farming; attack on the system; "how they are"

Challenge of a growing population; veganism makes sense: less space needed to feed a vegan person; (bypassing the upcycle of nutrients through cows)

Pride for the sacrifice that they [farmers] make for the animals and for the consumers to ensure a good quality product

Value of connections to other farmers; incredibly important to benefit from their knowledge →

Communication on weekly basis; exchange about methods; ups and downs

Bart is happy if someone wants to "copy" what he does; encourages others to get what is suitable for their farm

Would it be a good thing if all farms were eventually ecological? - People who mastered something can teach others (really good profit and big produce without chemicals); other ways to improve the quality of the soil - but there are also economical challenges (pay bills; risk taking)

Financing will help farmers take more risks; but subsidies motivates less than pure passion to succeed in this experimentation

Challenges boost growth; comfort does not

You will work harder with challenges; innovativeness; resilience

Stepping out of the comfort zone

[Yn'e Sinne](#)

1. Description

Yn'e Sinne is a community supported farm which works based on memberships, in which you can pay a membership fee and receive weekly fresh food in return. They take family sizes into account during the member registration process. In terms of values, they find it important that unused land is cultivated to bring more food to the market, for example by making large pieces of land into multiple smaller ones that can be cultivated more easily and be profitable at the same time. These small pieces of land are called market gardens, where costs are low, yields are effective, and supply and demand are perfectly matched to each other so that no food will be wasted. In these little gardens, they try to mimic nature as much as possible through various techniques. They grow season-appropriate, sustainable food and even give you free recipes to use them.

2. Category

- Direct agricultural/farmer partner
- Network/advice

3. Benefits

- They have a very complex and interesting way of farming in a nature-inclusive manner that is described a little on the website. They could probably give good advice on different sustainable farming techniques (that seem to work specifically in Friesland as well).
- They could probably advise about how to make a CSA farm financially sustainable for the farmer as well

4. Contact

- info@ynesinnefarm.nl / 06-21447770

[Hoeve Hoogland](#) and [Land van Ons](#)

1. Description

[Hoeve Hoogland](#) is another CSA that works based on shareholding members of the *Land van Ons food network*. Hoeve Hoogland itself also works with a shareholder system. The shareholders can pay sums proportional to what they receive, this is tracked through their website. The shareholder system is in place so that the members feel more in tune with what goes on in the farm. They hope that this form of responsibility will bring a change in consumer behavior. They're working without any chemical pesticides or fertilizers. This is to protect the land and keep it sustainable for a longer time, for which they also help manage forests with the [stadsbosbeheer](#). However, they emphasize that they use Dexter cows along with goats, despite the fact that Frisian cows are well-known for their efficiency in milk production. Next to the farm, they also earn money from the care/education branch by working with young homebound people, because they say that they would not get enough money to live off just through the food branch.

2. How can they work with us?

- If it's legal, Omrop Fryslân could invest in a few m², thus becoming a shareholder, and write a report on what its own share yields, while also interviewing the other shareholders at times.
- This is kind of what Bart described, as it follows his understanding of the Herenboeren concept, but how it might work with constructive journalism is a bit difficult to see. This is a participatory farm in the sense that the members can take part in the decision-making, and there are volunteering

opportunities, but to actually benefit from the farm you have to become a member, which we imagine is limited to a certain maximum number of members and by distance.

3. How can we help them?

- Omrop Fryslân can look into/ is looking into EU funding for similar projects, so they could provide investment to expand their land or equipment.
- They can provide coverage and create bottom up demand for more similar initiatives and farms to be set-up with pre-existing client lists

4. Contact

- info@hoevehoogland.nl / 06 - 51 73 53 28

5. Interview with them (via email)

-How did the source of funding and funding quantity change throughout the project?

“We (Erik en Annegreet Boven) zijn in 2016 begonnen met Hoeve Hoogland. Eerst als project naast onze betaalde banen. Nu helemaal als ondernemers aan de slag. We zagen meteen wel dat we niet volledig in ons levensonderhoud zouden kunnen voorzien als we alleen de voedseltak zouden hebben. Dus naast het voedselnetwerk zijn we ook een project voor thuiszittende jongeren en krijgen financieen vanuit de zorg/onderwijs.

-How did you find people (citizens) interested in participating in this farm?

“We zijn begonnen met mensen in ons netwerk. het idee was dat mensen producten zouden afnemen en zouden participeren in de werkzaamheden. Dit laatste is niet heel erg van de grond gekomen. Een aantal mensen helpt mee. we hebben wel 80 leden die vooraf investeren in ons project en aan wij de investering terug betalen door voedsel te leveren.

De kleine groep met bekenden is uitgegroeid door mond op mondreclame, adverteren en door veel acties te organiseren. wij hebben op markten gestaan, meegedaan aan culinaire fietstochten ect. ons motto hierin was, je moet je verhaal vertellen dan gaat er pas wat beweging komen.

Dus veel ons verhaal verteld.

-Do you see a way of making a farm like this (ecological, engaging, ..) profitable to the owning farmer?

“Er zijn natuurlijk voorbeelden bekend waar dit soort projecten rendabel zijn. (denk aan Herenboeren) Wij zijn winstgevend door vooral ook een belangrijke andere tak te hebben. Wij zouden qua aantal leden van ons voedselnetwerk behoorlijk moeten groeien wil het rendabel zijn om daar alleen van te leven. dus schaalvergroting. Dat vergt dat je in Friesland (de fryske walden) bewuste consumenten moet hebben die afzien van het gemak van een supermarkt, of naast de supermarkt ook deel willen nemen aan een project zoals die van ons. Ook hier geldt dat het verhaal verteld moet worden. het verhaal van anders boeren, de ecologische winst, gezondheidswinst door goede voeding te eten. Ik zie Hoeve Hoogland ook wel als educatie. Laten zien dat het anders kan.

-Kun je iets vertellen over je verdienmodel?

“Ons verdienmodel is dat de voedseltak quit speelt en dat we inkomen halen uit de zorg/onderwijstak. Wij vinden beiden geweldig dus voor ons hebben wij een ideale combi. dat zal niet voor alle 'nieuwe' boeren gelden.

-Are you limited in the variety of crops you can grow (due to the quality of the soil in Friesland)?

“Wij zitten in wouden, voor ons hebben we geen beperkingen. (we verbouwen ook niet alleen groenten, maar hebben ook vleeskoeien, en melken geiten) Wij hebben wel behoorlijk geïnvesteerd in de kwaliteit van de grond.

- Did you experience problems with the quality of the soil in the early stages? (Kringloop; ecosystem; revitalization; nutrient balance)

“Toen wij begonnen was het dorre droge grond, weinig voedselwaarde. we hebben eerst er varkens op gehouden om de grond los te maken en vrij te maken van onkruid. Omdat wij een gemengd bedrijfje zijn hebben wij qua mest en compost een gesloten kringloop systeem. de afgelopen jaren hebben we de grond bedekt gehouden (permacultuur principe) en bemest met mest van onze dieren.

-Extensieve landbouw heeft in het algemeen meer grond nodig om tot dezelfde productie te komen als intensieve landbouw. Aan de ene kant is er vanuit de maatschappij behoefte aan meer natuur (en minder landbouwgrond), maar aan de andere is er behoefte aan biologisch, extensief geteelde producten. Hoe kunnen deze twee maatschappelijke wensen met elkaar verenigd worden?

“Als we kijken naar veeteelt kunnen we veel doen mbt rassen. wij maken gebruik van staatbosbeheergrond en grond van cooperatie Land van Ons. Dit laten wij begrazen door een kruising dexter/schotse hooglanders. Meer werken met dubbeldoel koe op grond met natuurwaarden.

een ander item is natuurlijk best groot. Kun je minder exporteren en meer extensieve producten afzetten in Nederland. (meer zelfvoorzienend en lokaal)

Dat heeft uiteraard een prijskaartje.

- Hoe groot kan de biologische landbouw worden? Hoe zie je die toekomst voor je?

“Utopisch gezien heeft elke streek zijn eigen producenten die cooperatief een verscheidenheid aan producten leveren.

*Hoe groot dit kan worden weet ik niet. Ben ooit bij een bijeenkomst geweest waar een professor zei;”
Jullie zijn de pioniers van de transitie, straks zal dit worden overgenomen door de grotere jongens en dat weet ik dat jullie zijn begonnen”*

Dus het kan zijn dat wij als kleinere initiatieven iets in gang zetten wat door gangbare boeren wordt overgenomen. (ook door wetgeving en landbouwbeleid)

[Frisian Local Government](#)

1. Description

The Frisian local government’s agricultural policy focuses on three main points: qualitative growth, eliminating the antagonism between farmers and citizens, and the importance of agriculture for Friesland. They state that there are 20 million Euros available for “pioneering work in nature-based agriculture.” This presents a good opportunity for funding, especially for a project that focuses both on farmer-citizen relationships as well as nature-inclusive agriculture. However, more research needs to be done on the specific requirements for funds in the province.

2. Contact

- Customer Contact Centre 058 - 292 59 25 or Province@fryslan.frl and ask for Griet Vonk

Ús-Hôf

1. Description

Ús-Hôf is a CSA farm in Friesland that is based on the permaculture principles and supplies up to 250 people. It works on a subscription basis, so you can pay in advance quarterly or for a whole season. The people subscribed can choose whether they want to harvest their own vegetables every week, or subscribe to a veggie box and get them packed and ready in a box on certain days. Additionally, they also sell their vegetables to restaurants or institutions that want local, organic produce. Furthermore, they also started the first food cooperation in Friesland, 'Ús Iten', where consumers can order all types of organic products from different producers like meat, honey, bread, dairy, etc. through a webshop and pick it all up on Saturdays at the same place. Excess vegetables that exceeded subscriber demand are also sold here. They claim that the products are around 20 % cheaper than in supermarkets because the cooperative orders together and do all the work themselves. On top of that, they also organize various activities, for example cooking workshops with vegetables from their garden or taste evenings where members can present their creative recipes with produce from the farm. In addition to those activities, they also want to share their knowledge and experience, which is why they offer various learning activities on their farm - you can work there for a fixed part of the week, do an internship based on what you want to learn, participate in trainings/practice days, or even ask them to assist you in planning if you want to start a garden based on the permaculture principle.

2. Category

- Knowledge exchange partner
- Practical training partner

3. Benefits

- They lay a focus on the sharing of knowledge and helping more CSA farms develop in Friesland; they could probably be a huge help in the beginning to figure out how to even start such a farm (and

also later on for farming techniques etc)

- Their model of organising seems very promising (self-harvest, box, selling to restaurants)
- Their food cooperative is a very innovative and useful initiative; could be something to participate in

4. Contact

- michel@ushof.nl; 06 - 463 321 82
- bregje@ushof.nl; 06 - 290 467 23

[Boerderijrecreatie](#)

1. Description

Boerderijrecreatie is a dairy farm run by Geeske and Minne Holtrop. Aside from farming, they also offer a wide and creative variety of activities to do on their farm, like cow hugging, an escape room, Boerenlimpic, voetgolf, and so on. The farm has been in their family for 9 generations and they are proud of their Frisian heritage.

2. Category

- Knowledge exchange partner

3. Benefits

- Their creative ideas of how to involve people on their farm and diversify income could offer inspiration

4. Contact

- Boerderijrecreatie@gmail.com / 06-16160843

Stadsboerderij de Sibbe

1. Description

Johannes Lankester and his wife Herma Lenten own an ecological vegetable garden (and campsite) where they want to combine food cultivation with education, participation, and recreation (especially for kids). They are not a CSA, but they sell their food at their own farm shop. Their aim is to create an entertaining experience around healthy and sustainable food. For example, they regularly invite primary school classes to look after the animals, see how crops are planted, and just have them experience where their food comes from (also the meat) so that they can later make informed consumer choices. Johannes is also the coordinator of [Netwerk Duurzame Dorpen](#). Generally, they state that they are open for contact anytime for questions or ideas.

2. Category

- Knowledge exchange partner

3. Benefits

- Their experience/insights might be especially interesting regarding the recreational and educational elements of a farm, because that seems to be their expertise

4. Contact

- info@stadsboerderijdesibbe.nl
- 06-83603656 (Herma)

Martha Kootstra

1. Description

Martha is a young woman with the ambition to start a small farm. Her husband is a dairy farmer, but she herself has recently bought a building from her neighbour and can rent 5 hectares of land from him. Her goal is to build up a small farm (crops and animals) that is sustainable, circular, nature-inclusive etc. She would also like to involve citizens and governments, for example with a farmshop, making it a learning space for kids, etc. She is very open for ideas, care, and recreation. She lives close to Drachten and the A7, which is a good location because there are many citizens

around. Her struggles/questions at this point are where to even start; how to make the farm both sustainable and profitable, how to include citizens, what is healthy/sustainable food?

2. Category

- Possible main partner as the initiator of the farm

3. Benefits

- Martha shares many of the same values as Omrop Fryslân about this project (including citizens, sustainable,...)
- She is at the very starting point of creating a farm, which means the process will be more work and difficult sometimes. At the same time, it would be very interesting for Omrop Fryslân to follow this whole process of figuring things out, going through the ups and downs, etc - to portray a realistic picture of what it means to start a farm, to do it as a complete newcomer, and to do it sustainably and socially inclusive.

4. Contact

- +31 6 24743809

Foodbytes! (Rabobank)

1. Description

Foodbytes is an initiative formed by Rabobank which acts as a platform for discovery and networking related to food and agriculture. They attempt to connect innovative and unique start-up agricultural businesses which disrupt the status quo industry leaders and investors. Their primary values are to address the world's growing demand for food, changing consumer preferences, and the necessity of sustainable production. They are, however, more focused on technological innovation that leads to higher quantities of food with roughly the same input while also being more sustainable.

2. Category

- Possible sponsor and networking partner

3. Benefits

- They provide investors and knowledge systems of other agri-food innovators which are two great assets for a starting farm.
- We fulfill two of their values and are definitely producing in a way that goes against traditional agricultural practices. Such a new perspective is something they said they were looking for.

4. Contact

<https://www.foodbytesworld.com/contact/>

Theoretical Assistance

[University of Wageningen](#)

1. Description

The University of Wageningen and the Wageningen Research foundation together form the collaboration 'Wageningen University & Research'. They combine the expertise of specialized research units and the university to do thorough scientific research that can be put into practice as quickly as possible. Their main research area is food and the living environment and their mission is „to explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life.”⁷⁷

They put a lot of emphasis on the importance of collaboration for knowledge development and for facing the complex and urgent societal challenges that we have to deal with - for example sustainability of agriculture. Even though their part in such collaborations is developing scientific/theoretical knowledge, they are actively looking to partner with non-scientific partners as well such as governments, NGOs, businesses, or civic organisations because they underline that their knowledge is only valuable when applied in real life. Additionally, they have a strict rule framework for collaborations with private businesses and for their own research standards. In short,

⁷⁷ <https://www.wur.nl/en/About-WUR/Mission-Domain.htm>

they are experts in scientific research and also in collaborating with others to bring that research into practice - and they are also very interested in all different types of collaborations.

2. Category

- Scientific (research) partner

3. Benefits

- They have expertise, technology, facilities, ideas; could advise about sustainable agricultural methods
- They could use it as a site to conduct research, train students, carry out experiments etc.
- However, they probably know the specific role they could play best as they have a lot of experience in collaborations - so it would be best to contact them when a project plan is worked out and see how they could fit in

4. Contact

- Imke de Boer (imke.deboer@wur.nl)
- Evelien de Olde (evelien.deolde@wur.nl)

For this project, we have already asked professor Imke de Boer some questions. Here is the complete interaction (in Dutch):

Vragen onderzoeksproject Omrop Fryslân

- Op het moment is er best veel onbegrip tussen boeren en burgers, wat denkt u dat het belangrijkste probleem is in deze afstand tussen boeren en burgers? En hoe zouden we deze afstand kunnen overbruggen - realistisch gezien?

Antwoord: *Ik weet niet of er veel onbegrip is, maar er is wel veel afstand. Mensen weten niet meer echt hoe hun voedsel geproduceerd wordt. Vroeger had iedereen wel iemand in de familie die boer was of een boer goed kende, nu niet meer. Ik denk dat het belangrijk is de verbinding weer te herstellen, zodat mensen ook meer waarde toekennen aan hun voedsel. Dit kan door kinderen al jong kennis te laten maken met boeren, en mensen op andere manieren naar de boerderij te laten komen. Via open dagen, door activiteiten op de boerderij te organiseren (Foodcamps), door aan huis te gaan verkopen, door campings etc op de boerderij, maar ook door het aanbieden van streekproducten in de supermarkt met een duidelijk verhaal. Ik denk echt dat deze activiteiten allemaal erg belangrijk zijn.*

- Hoe veel verantwoordelijkheid denkt u dat de consument heeft in de productie van verantwoord en duurzaam voedsel?

Antwoord: *iedereen is onderdeel van het voedselsysteem, dus iedereen is ook onderdeel van de oplossing. De consument dus ook. Maar het blijkt moeilijk voor consumenten om de juiste keuze te maken, en daarom is het ook belangrijk dat de plantaardige, lokale keuze uit het seizoen aantrekkelijk is, lekker is, en de makkelijke keuze. Deze producten moeten makkelijk vindbaar zijn in een supermarkt, op stations en in kantines.*

- Denkt u dat het deelnemen van burgers in lokale duurzame boerderijen de toekomst kan zijn van landbouw (dus bijvoorbeeld een eerlijk bedrag betalen en/of meehelpen op de boerderij, waarvoor zij hun voedsel direct van deze boerderij kunnen halen)?

Antwoord: *ik denk dat het betrekken van burgers bij het produceren van hun voedsel via gemeenschapslandbouw inderdaad heel goed is. Deze burgers eten automatisch gezonder, uit het seizoen, meer plantaardig en gooien minder weg, en dat is goed voor henzelf en de planeet. Echter, niet iedereen zal op deze manier (toch iets intensiever) met zijn voedsel bezig willen zijn, dus het is m.i. niet een antwoord voor iedereen.*

- In Friesland is veel moeilijk bebouwbare grond; op dit moment wordt deze grond vaak voor vee gebruikt. Zijn er naar uw mening betere manieren om dit grondgebied duurzaam te gebruiken?

Antwoord: *je doelt hier denk ik op de veenweidegebieden, die minder geschikt zijn voor de akkerbouw. Het laten grazen van melkvee op deze gronden is niet gratis (leidt tot broeikasgasemissies), dus mogelijk wil je ook een deel van deze gronden teruggeven aan de natuur (grondwater zo sterk verhogen dat er geen vee meer kan grazen), om zo koolstof op te slaan.*

- Wat voor rol zou Omrop Fryslân kunnen hebben in het rapporteren van een project over duurzame landbouw en de deelname van burgers daarin? Wat zou een publieke omroep kunnen betekenen in het informeren van het publiek, hoe kunnen zij een educatieve rol spelen en een verschil maken in duurzame voedselproductie?

Antwoord: *ik denk dat het erg interessant zou zijn om regelmatig rapportages te maken over de mogelijkheid die de burger heeft om te kiezen met zijn of haar vork. Oftewel, niet alleen*

aangeven wat er allemaal niet goed is, maar burgers in de omgeving aan te geven wat ze wel kunnen doen. Hoe ze wel actief kunnen bijdragen aan een meer duurzame toekomst. Lijkt me erg leuk om aan mee te werken!

[Van hall Larenstein: University of Applied Sciences](#)

1. Description

Frisian university which has [“Circulaire Landbouw” as a research direction](#). The aim is to research closed systems of circular agriculture which create the most gain and provide the most opportunities for farmers as business people and engaged civilians as well.

2. Category:

- Research partner

Network partner

3. Benefits:

- Could help in giving advice on starting circular agriculture on a farm. The Frisian university can gain knowledge about how their research would work out in an actual running project.

4. Contact

- Rik Eweg (sent by Jtiske, no further contact details added)
- For general questions: [+31 \(0\) 58 284 61 00](tel:+3120582846100) for the reception; E: info@vhluniversity.com

[RUG x WUR: CAN-DO-IT project \(Circular Agriculture in North-Netherlands: Daring scenarios and Interlinked Transformation\)](#)

1. Description

Scientists and researchers of the University of Groningen, Wageningen University and Research, and stakeholders in the northern Netherlands will be working together for the next four years to put the concept of circular agriculture into concrete action in the northern Netherlands. The aim of the project is to demonstrate that the concept and principle of circular agriculture are feasible and effective to apply in the Netherlands. Experts from various fields will join forces to test and develop ‘action perspectives’ that will build on existing small initiatives in the local area. This is based on the so-called

'small wins approach' which claims that innovative projects on the local level affect larger systemic change.⁷⁸ Analysing such initiatives is supposed to generate knowledge that can accelerate the transition to a circular agriculture.⁷⁹ More specifically, they intend to create a living lab in the northern Netherlands and conduct these six interlinked research steps:

- analyse biophysical and socio-economic aspects of the current agricultural system;
- interactively develop future dreams (scenarios);
- assess environmental and socio-economic consequences of scenarios;
- identify and evaluate small wins;
- identify interventions for spreading, broadening and deepening small wins;
- co-create transformative pathways.⁸⁰

2. Category

- Research partner
- Knowledge exchange partner

3. Benefits

- If feasible, this project could be one of the small wins analyzed in the RUG x WUR project and receive support in bettering its practices
- The knowledge gained from the RUG x WUR project on circular agriculture and the importance of local initiatives could be useful for this project and its development

4. Contact

- Evelien de Olde (evelien.deolde@wur.nl)

Network

⁷⁸ <https://www.wur.nl/en/project/CAN-DO-IT.htm>

⁷⁹ <https://www.wur.nl/nl/Onderzoek-Resultaten/Onderzoeksprojecten-LNV/Nieuws/Show/Samen-op-weg-naar-kringlooplandbouw-in-Noord-Nederland.htm>

⁸⁰ <https://www.wur.nl/en/project/CAN-DO-IT.htm>

Urgenci

1. **Description**

URGENCI is the most well-known international network of CSA initiatives. Its main aim is to bring together citizens, producers, consumers and researchers through a transnational network that is now represented in more than 40 countries. Their main activity is education: sharing knowledge, experiences, and educational materials. This should help local initiatives in bettering their practices and learning from each other to eventually build a global CSA community. Apart from this experience sharing and movement building, they also increase visibility not only of certain local initiatives but also of the whole CSA movement in general through advocating practices.

2. **Category**

- Knowledge exchange partner
- Networking partner

3. **Benefits**

- They provide free, accessible knowledge resources
- Possible connections to other initiatives/introduction into a transnational network of CSAs (however, a membership fee is required)
- May be useful for European subsidies because of the possibility to find european partners
- They get to broaden their network

CSA Network

1. **Description**

This is a network of CSAs in the Netherlands. Their aim is have a 25% CSA market share by 2030 and their main function is to advocate and spread the word about alternative, ecological ways of farming in the news, to policymakers, etc. They also help consumers to find a CSA near them to join, or if you are a farmer that wants to start a CSA they have [this contact form](#) to possibly help you start. Furthermore, they want to organize theme meetings on relevant topics so that members can learn from each other and meet.

2. Category

- Networking partner

3. Benefits

- Joining their network gives the farm more visibility and generally supports the growth of a CSA community in the Netherlands

[The Friese Voedselbeweging](#)

1. Description

The Friese Voedselbeweging (Frisian Food Movement) is a network of initiatives that want to make food production more sustainable and circular in Friesland.

They have an ambitious vision of having 80% of food consumption in Friesland be from local sources by 2030. The movement connects organisations of farmers/producers, citizens, villages, restaurants, education and research, social organisations and governments. Through this connection, they hope to coordinate efforts to make the transition to a circular, transparent, fair, and climate-neutral food system more feasible and sustainable for all sides.

What they want to do: to help each other out, learn from one another, help to stay up to date with the developments of local, sustainable food production in Friesland

How: Connect producers and consumers and organisations through newsletters and events; they've had events such as a knowledge cafe about soil and health and they have drawn up the Frisian Cooperation Agenda on Nutrition and Health with 97 food initiatives.

Anyone that has anything to do with the food (transition) industry in Friesland can join the network.

2. Category

- Networking partner

3. Benefits

- could be an important source of networking in Friesland; however, you need to already have an initiative to join (but not for events)

- Especially relevant because it is local to Friesland → there might be more of a feeling of community and solidarity amongst Frisian farmers; it's more feasible for a starting farmer from Friesland to go to their events / network with other local initiatives
- They get the chance to broaden their network

[Stichting Boerengroep](#)

1. **Description**

Stichting Boerengroep is an initiative that aims to connect the university (research, students etc.) with farmers and farming realities to realistically portray farmers' needs and struggles. Through this connection, research can focus on what farmers really need, which then could lead to better agricultural practices. Additionally, they aim to better the position of farmers in society, inform about issues in agriculture, and realize an overall fair and vital agriculture. They work together with multiple partners, such as the Wageningen University, Toekomstboeren, international research institutes, farmers unions and many more.

In order to achieve their aims, they offer a variety of activities and events, such as:

- Internships
- Field trips to farms
- Lectures on agricultural topics
- Mediation between farmers and students - farmers can pose research questions they have and students can work on it during an internship or thesis (could be relevant for the Omrop Fryslân project as well!)
- Interviews with farmers

Additionally, through their Farmers' Tales events they offer space to meet other students, farmers, researchers etc. It functions as an informal place to share ideas and questions, gain knowledge, team up with people and organize

2. **Category**

- Network partner
- Research partner
- Knowledge exchange partner

3. Benefits

- They could work as a connection between the farm and students (e.g. have research conducted on the farm by students regarding relevant questions that the farmer has)
- They offer a platform for knowledge exchange and networking with other farmers, students, researchers, etc (Farmers Tales) → especially relevant because this could be used even before the farm exists to get people on board with this idea
- They have an extensive [list](#) of their network of (inter)national organizations that are relevant for solidarity farming
- They could find space for students to work/experience farm life

Toekomstboeren

1. Description

Toekomstboeren is a coalition of new as well as established farmers who want to explore new ways of farming. They call themselves Pioneers in new models and methods, such as community supported agriculture, and they aim to work in harmony with people and nature to practice sustainable agriculture and transition to a food system that benefits both farmers and citizens. Concretely, they organize different things to make this happen:

- They organise landmarkets that aim to facilitate land acquisition for new farmers by motivating landowners to share their space. The demand and access to land is shared on the website.
- They offer space for knowledge exchange, for example through so-called “BoerenVuren,” where future oriented farmers can meet each other and connect informally to get active, share ideas, etc.
- They disseminate inspiration and best practices by sharing stories from other farmers’ experiences in talks, on their website, or in special themed magazine editions.

2. Category

- Networking partner
- Knowledge exchange partner

3. Benefits

- They offer platforms for informal networking and knowledge exchange; to make connections, get advice, find potential partners
- [Platform](#) to find/offer land or helpers

[Kening fan de Greide \(King of the meadows\)](#)

1. Description

Kening fan de Greide is a network organization that wants to stimulate new forms of sustainable and healthy agriculture in order to protect the landscape.

They want to (re)build a rich and flourishing ecosystem in Friesland through sharing and connecting knowledge/experience/best practices that they encounter during their work. They focus on themes relevant to rural areas and they have a large network of farmers, citizens, scientists, policy makers as well as artists and musicians. They want to restore the cultural as well as the natural landscape in the Netherlands and internationally, thus they have a more artistic and cultural approach towards creating interest and advocating for sustainable practices based on historical ones. They do this through a number of creative cultural events,⁸¹ or by reporting on historic agricultural activities taking place⁸².

2. Category

Networking partner

3. Benefits

- They have an extensive network of people from various different fields, so they could be useful to maybe reach people that are otherwise out of reach of Omrop Fryslân's own network

⁸¹ <https://www.kingofthemeadows.eu/doe-mee-aan-ons-1e-keningshof-kamp-van-23-t-m-28-juli/> Camping event at *KeningsHof*

⁸² <https://www.kingofthemeadows.eu/fruithoven-voor-de-spotvogel/> - Planting orchards with historic trees.

4. Contact

- Marcia de Graaff; phone number: 06 12391229
- More generally: info@kening.frl

[Living Lab Fryslan](#)

1. Description

Living Lab Fryslan's goal is to ensure the biodiversity of the soil in Friesland, while taking the farmer's revenue streams into account. Thus pursuing sustainability through soil quality while maintaining farmer's livelihoods. The most common projects are knowledge-sharing ones, granting tools and providing soil analysis services. It suggests that agriculture should be done in a way that works with nature. Generally, they describe their role as a supportive one that can accompany farmers or other entrepreneurs in the path to achieving nature-inclusive agriculture.

2. Category

- Knowledge exchange partner
- Project partner

3. Benefits

- They say that they support project development from idea to realisation. If this project is something that is eligible for their support, they could be a great help with advice/resources
- They also provide an overview of ongoing projects they are supporting in Friesland that support the transition to a circular agriculture. These might be interesting to look at for inspiration or potential collaboration

[Aardpeer](#)

1. Description

Aardpeer is an initiative of Stichting BD Grondbeheer, Stichting Herenboeren NL, Stichting Wij.land and Triodos Regenerative Money Centre. Together, they want to encourage the transition to a

sustainable and nature-inclusive agriculture and food production system, starting with the basis of farming (and, as they say, the basis of our existence): the soil.

They try to help by bypassing land speculation, a process where speculators buy up agricultural land to later sell it with a high profit margin, which is driving up land prices to a large extent in the Netherlands, making it very hard for new aspiring farmers to buy land and start. In order to combat this phenomenon, aardpeer buys agricultural land through BD Grondbeheer and leases it at realistic prices to sustainable farmers.

2. Category

- Land access partner

3. Benefits

- In case we find a farming partner that is willing to partake in this project but does not have any land to farm on yet, this could be a useful initiative to find that land

[Circular Friesland](#)

1. Description

Circular Friesland is a Frisian NGO network connecting multiple sectors of the economy for quick communication and circular production in the region. Their goal is to be the most circular region of Europe by 2025. This means if there are parts of agriculture that can't be plugged back into the agricultural cycle in particular, they could get in contact with Circular Friesland and see if there is any way to contribute to the circular economy in that way.

2. Category

- Networking partner

3. Benefits

- They are open to collaboration with initiatives that contribute to a circular economy
- They have resources on their website such as masterclasses and workshops on different topics like the power of regional approaches or subsidies and financing.

4. Contact

- info@circulairfriesland.frl

→ Hanze Hogeschool Groningen was involved in this project as was Campus Fryslan. Perhaps involving agriculture in the cycle could be a project for these institutions to take part in?

<https://circulairfriesland.frl/case/week-van-de-circulaire-economie-2021-een-glansrol-voor-friese-circulaire-doeners/>. Several other Frisian sustainability NGOs can be found on this site, too.

Comparable Initiatives

[Herenboeren](#)

1. Description

Herenboeren Nederland supports citizens in the development of nature-driven cooperative Herenboerderijen. This is a concept where multiple households share ownership of their own farm. As a household you invest once in your membership. They employ a farmer on the field and take part in decision making, for example about crops or investments. They farm ecologically and citizens can participate if they want to. Furthermore, the 'Herenboeren' share all the costs that are necessary to run their business. How much exactly, they decide together, but 10 Euros per person per week is a typical guideline.

2. What we can learn from them

- Conditions necessary to efficiently start and maintain a Communal farm with the shareholder concept
- Shared experience
- How they promote knowledge dissemination
 - Knowledge center: Herenboeren is working with different partners on the development of an online and offline knowledge and experience centre. Besides participating in research with others, it will also create its own testing ground. It aims to become a learning place for future farmers and those involved in other forms of Farming Communities. Herenboeren is already active in the following knowledge coalitions:

- WINK

- Farming Communities development and expertise programme
- Green Deal Natuurinclusief Grondgebruik Herenboeren
 - Their vision/inspiration; detailed document of their history, vision etc: <https://farmingcommunities.org> (sort of their manifesto; “our theory of change”)

Solawi in Germany

1. Description

Solawi is a concept/movement in Germany called “Solidarische Landwirtschaft” (solidarity farming), which aims to create a community-based, local, diverse, fair-pay and ecological agricultural landscape, in which citizens take responsibility for their local supply. Food at these farms is produced for the needs of the people involved under transparent and fair conditions. Mechanisms such as **cost-covering financing** of agricultural production and **binding purchase** of the products by a community ensure a sharing of responsibility and risk and increase the security of supply. More concretely, this means that based on the estimated annual costs of agricultural production, a group of households commits to pay a fixed amount to the Solawi farm annually in advance. This enables the producer to engage in good agricultural practices, to keep the soil fertile and to farm according to needs, independent of market pressures, and it facilitates **a crisis-proof** and economically viable production of **healthy food**. Not only does this concept have economic and health benefits, but it also enables more trustful, respectful and sustainable **relationships between farmers and citizens**. Everyone shares the associated responsibility, risk, cost and harvest, leading to a feeling of community and trust. On their website, the German Solawi Network calls solidarity farming a “**driver for social change**” and says that it will “become a key figure in the socio-ecological transformation process”.

2. What we can learn from them

- How they create interest/sell this idea on the website - they have a [list](#) of advantages for every party that takes part in a solawi: the consumers, the producer, the farm, and the region in which the solawi is located

- A precise [guide](#) on how to build up and run/organize a solawi
- [Contacts](#) to ask about their expertise in running a solawi (although probably only in german/Germany)
- The importance of international cooperation and networking to get funding

3. Example of this in practice: <https://solawi-freudenthal.de/wie-funktioniert/>

- What to learn:
 - Practicalities about running community supported agriculture and the benefits/drawbacks → pricing, community involvement, self-reporting, collaboration with universities and other farms

[Maschinenring](#)

1. Description

A farmers union existing with coverage both in Austria, Germany and a few central European countries, started with the intention of creating a community of entrepreneurial farmers to exchange information, but more importantly to share expensive machinery. The services offered by the Maschinenring have expanded, and now also post volunteering opportunities to young students during their social year, as well as first hand accounts.

2. What we can learn from them

- This union is primarily as a comparison example/ advice contact, as they engage in farmer cooperation and youth participation, as well as participatory reflection.
- Share values with Omrop Fryslan about civic participation, and increased cooperation and knowledge exchange.
- Could teach us about the benefits of getting young volunteers involved, as well as how to foster cooperation and knowledge sharing between farmers.

[European Solidarity Corps](#)

International initiative funded by the EU for European volunteers of ages 18-around 24 wishing to gain some experience across Europe. There is a large selection of communal agriculture projects. A local Frisian farmer could start a similar venture and involve European citizens. Omrop Fryslân could take on the reporting side of this, where they interview some of the volunteers that took part in this project. One downside of this idea is that we're not really addressing the gap between farmers and citizens as the volunteers are from all over Europe instead of Friesland. The EU provides the funding for the volunteer pocket money, as well as some additional participation reimbursements/financing. Guide to apply is [here](#).

[WWOOF](#)

WWOOF is an international organization that facilitates agricultural volunteering around the farm. The volunteers get an experience to learn about organic farming while staying with a farming family. It provides tools and assistance to both the WWOOFers (volunteers) and the farms. There are two of these farms in Friesland. They are, however, exclusively cattle farms, which is the norm in Friesland. WWOOF, similar to the European Solidarity Corps, can be a tool to engage international volunteers and share Frisian agricultural practices, culture and history. If a farm is set up WWOOF can be a source of free labor, participatory journalism through first-hand accounts, and information propagation.

Resource List

[CSA Farmer to Farmer booklet by Urgenci](#)

- Written as a collaborative effort by various CSA farmers around Europe in 2019 as part of the CSAct! project sponsored by the European Union under the Erasmus+ programme.
- It shares best practices and insights from experienced CSA farmers as well as economic, technical, logistical, agricultural and social knowledge in order to help new farmers interested in CSA to orient themselves and get started.

- It treats topics such as
 - Farming challenges (soil quality, biodiversity, crop planning)
 - Economic sustainability of CSAs (fair pricing)
 - Marketing, logistics, distribution (how to diversify income strategies, where to sell, collaboration)
 - Community building (how to generate support in members)
- Includes essential tips, practicalities, tools, as well as case studies from exemplary farms in different countries
- Useful once the project has progressed so far that the next step is to actually set up the farm because of the very practical nature of the knowledge provided here

[SOLID BASE - Supporting booklet for training on financial sustainability for solidarity-based food systems](#)

- Aims to help CSA farmers to break out of the continuous financial instability they often face
- Booklet is based on research and analysis of needs of farmers as well as consumers involved in CSAs across Europe
- Overview of experiences, tips, case studies, and learning tools provided by CSA farmers across Europe regarding financial management of CSAs
- Consists of **4 learning areas**:
 - Management (legal structure, decision-making processes, roles and organisational structure, task and time management, volunteer involvement)
 - Financial Planning (making a business plan, annual budget, price-setting)
 - Digital Tools
 - Participatory inclusion techniques (facilitated meeting, dealing with conflict, decision-making)
- Provides links to other useful resources as well
- Difficult concepts/mechanisms are made to be more easily understandable through examples, illustrations, essential tips, and a user-friendly layout

- Very useful to look at once the goal is to actually set up the farm because there are very concrete, useful hints in there as to what to consider.
- Figuring this out could already be something that Omrop Fryslân films/reports on as the process of building up such a farm.

[Guide on how to build a CSA farm on Solawi website](#)

- Guide on how a CSA farm could be built and organized (in German)
- Includes points such as
 - Creating consumer interest
 - Finding farmers/land
 - communication /Community
 - Supply (crop quantity, harvest etc)
 - Distribution (quantity, time, place)
 - (solidary) financing / subscriptions
 - Activities on a CSA
- These steps are not super precise yet, but they function well as starting points and a good overview of what to consider when starting a farm. Thus, they provide a starting point as to what to ask other CSA farmers about as well when gathering information about experiences/knowledge.

[EU CAP Project: List of Potential Agricultural Practices that Eco-schemes could support](#)

In the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy, the European Commission has released a document listing a number of possible ecological agricultural practices which target various goals towards sustainable agriculture such as climate change mitigation, prevention of soil degradation, protection of biodiversity among others. Each listed practice has a letter indicating which of these

goals it helps achieve. These are recommendations by the European Commission of agricultural projects which may fall into the scope of various Eco-schemes, or investments into projects that intend to directly benefit the climate and environment. Meaning it serves as both a source of inspiration for practices to start, while simultaneously making you more eligible in applying for Eco-scheme grants.