

**What role can the farmer's partner play in their business and the agricultural sector, in times of high societal pressure and a rapidly changing world?**

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Geert and Betty Marissen

## Personal foreword

In front of you, you can find my report of my Nuffieldscholarship which I received in October 2018. A report of a 2-year search for an answer to my research question.

It all started with the application for my scholarship, at home we had a discussion at kitchen table whether or not I could apply for this scholarship. The impact on our family would be huge, so you make that decision together with your partner. My husband gave me 100% support to go for this opportunity. In fact, he encouraged me, my biggest support!

In 2007, I exchanged my job outside of our farm, for a position within. I learned about dairy farming through self-study. I saw a number of tasks coming our way, where I did not understand why the sector did not pay more attention to these themes. In particular, the themes of sustainability, climate, the position of the farmer in the chain, communication and corporate social responsibility.

In May 2017, we opened the “Melktapperij”, where we: sell fresh milk on the do-it-yourself tap, offer guided tours and lectures at our farm and me as a farmer's wife on the road to go outside the agricultural bubble with our story. I am often out and about creating impact and making surprising connections for the agricultural sector. One of those things was that I was in the theatre with 3 fellow farmers' wives with an 'Ode to the Cow'. A full evening's programme about the role of the cow on our farm. In a totally different setting, we were able to connect people to the sector and vice versa by sharing our opportunities, space, vulnerabilities, difficulties, family life and “noaberschap” (neighborship) with the people in the audience.

My interest was aroused in the role of women on the farm. With the three fellow entrepreneurs as great inspirators for my research question. They are all power women who, in their own way, have added enormous value to their often quite traditional dairy farms. By implementing their knowledge and skills, gained outside the sector, into the sector they have shaped their businesses to become successful, creative, strongly connected, valuable and sustainable businesses in their own environment.

The current status of the agricultural sector is one of fear with an end of an era feeling where not much is possible. We are facing the limits of our system. Major changes are in the pipeline and no one knows what they will look like. Changes that call for trust, support, rest, time, innovation, solidarity, creativity, and these are all factors that are facing difficulties due to the pressure on the system.

Planning my trips for my research has been influenced by what Nuffield offered, budget and agricultural impact. I started with a trip to China January 2019, together with 2 other scholars. Then the opening week of Nuffield International in Iowa, USA where I added a few days for more research. In September 2019, I got to speak at a trade show in Rennes, France. In October, I travelled to Limburg (Netherlands), France, Switzerland, Southern Germany and ended up in Italy, Rome, where I visited the CFS-46 (Committee of World Food Security) together with many fellow scholars. In December, I was allowed to speak at the embassy in Paris, France. On March second 2020, I left for 4 ½ weeks in New Zealand and Australia. I had to cut the trip short (2 weeks) because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I would like to thank a few people in particular;

Irene, Andra and Simone, thank you for being my source of inspiration!

Suzanne, my sweetheart. With whom I can always spar, even from a distance.

Hanna, this one is for you!

Our family, especially my parents who supported us during the time I was away from home. My sister Bettine Marissen, who helped me finish my report.

My family, especially Rogier, who encouraged me to embark on this journey. Choosing the easy way is easy, looking and investing for the long term takes you further, it was not easy.

My fellow Nuffield scholars all over the world. Through the network, the visits have gained extra value. Doors have been opened that would otherwise remain closed.

And thank you very much to the sponsors for giving me the chance to bring this Nuffield Experience back to the industry. I'll take you on my train that has left.

Have fun reading!

Heleen

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## The main conclusions

My major findings are the following:

**1. The current situation requires change**

The challenges facing the agricultural sector are enormous. Loss of biodiversity, income under pressure, nitrogen emissions, ageing of the sector, short supply chains, energy transition - just a few of the challenges. I am convinced that as a sector, we cannot solve the challenges alone; we need society to do so. I see a heavily polarised agricultural debate and it seems as if the gap between farmer and society is only widening. This does not work well when, as mentioned above, we need society to work together on all the tasks at hand.

**2. The farmer's partner can play a role in this**

Especially in times of great change, the role of the partner of the farmer is extremely valuable. Because the partner is often educated outside the sector, he or she can look outside the agricultural bubble. The farmer's wife often has a job outside the home, is often the one who gets the groceries, and (still) takes care of the children the most. She has gained skills outside the agricultural sector that are very welcome in the agricultural sector. The woman is the key person in the agricultural sector, she is the one we need so badly to connect the agricultural sector to that society.

**3. A lot of potential and (wo)manpower in the partner**

There is a lot of potential in the aforementioned qualities and skills of women. Especially in the dialogue that we need to have with society, it is good to use women for that purpose; just going out with the tractor to block society does not create much goodwill. We will really have to work it out together. This social innovation has long been a neglected child in the agricultural sector. We have not been very good at telling our story, but we cannot do without it. Because we do not know how to capitalise the potential of the farmer's wife, there is still 50% potential that we can use for the sector. The farmer's wife is not known for her skills within the agricultural sector.

**4. This potential still needs to be brought out**

There should be more investment in this untapped potential; it will not only bring more diversity and creativity, but also more business. It makes (dairy) cattle farming more inclusive. The rapidly changing world and the challenges we are facing call for a new kind of entrepreneurship. The more diverse the system, the better the solutions and the more resilient the system. Too often, you see that the agricultural sector is still a huge man's ball. It is a shame not to use the potential that the farmer's wife has in the farmyard for the agricultural sector.

**5. To do this, we need programmes specifically for the farmer's partner.**

The farmer's partner is not recognised as a 'newcomer' to the sector. And therefore, not seen as a specific target group. By recognising this target group, you can also make targeted programmes for them. One of the most inspiring examples I have seen during my travels is the Escalator programme in New Zealand. Every year, 10 to 15 women are admitted to this programme, where the ladies follow a year-long programme. They work on increasing their individual potential, leadership, policy, strategy and finance, communication, media training and career guidance. It is an inspiring example that we can use immediately.

## 1. Research “ForFarmers Ladies Day”

I have started to quantify the hypothesis I had about my topic by doing a random survey of female farmers. One of my sponsors is For Farmers and they are actually the only institution to get a large group of female farmers (800) together on a single day and to organise something specially for them. Their main focus is on entertainment and customer loyalty, but they also try to tap into an underlying theme with inspiring speakers at an entertaining location. A perfect event for me to test my research question.

ForFarmers gave me the opportunity to fill in a small part of the programme with my research. A good moment to see, if my suspicion is correct that there is much potential that remains unfulfilled, because women are not optimally involved in the agricultural sector. I was allowed to hand out a questionnaire to the women and give a small interview on stage. Of the 800 women, I received 355 responses. They could fill in the questionnaire after the physical meeting and hand it in on the day itself. I was also able to interview many of the women on the day itself and was able to get a lot of input from them.

In the run-up to the day, I received the cooperation of two students from Aeres Hogeschool in Dronten. They helped me with the questions and during the day they helped me with conducting interviews and conversations. It was a nice cooperation because in a conversation before the event, I talked to both ladies in Dronten about the theme. I was curious about their opinion and reaction.

What shocked me enormously was the emotional reaction of one of the students who was in the agricultural section. She told me that she and one other student were in a class with only boys. Every day the teachers opened the day; Good morning gentlemen! Oh and of course our 2 ladies. In the beginning she felt she was in a special position, but after 3 years it started to irritate her a lot that every beginning of the lesson she was immediately put in a special position as if you are not appropriate. She underlined that her position in the class was really different from the boys, especially in terms of communication and cooperation.

The 2 students, Heleen Bruintjes and Lotte Merks have had many conversations with the women farmers during the day. The main results of their conversations with the farmers are:

- The man, the farmer, doesn't get much further than the yard, and if they get off the yard, it's often business-related. The woman can offer extra value here if extra attention is paid to it.
- The role of the woman in the farmyard behind closed doors, invisible to the outside world, is very important, decisive perhaps, but when the doors are closed this role is no longer discussed/discussed. Her position is not fully exploited.
- The women often take their role for granted; they often see themselves more as part of a side issue.
- There is still a task for the woman herself to make the man on the farm understand the importance of the woman, learn how to show that they are really very important as the linchpin of the family business.
- Communication to the outside world by women can be positive because men often have not learned this and do not have time for it. Men are impulsive, have less empathy and kick things up a notch, and perhaps farmers are even worse and ruder.
- Agricultural meetings are cockfights.
- Rabobank is the most difficult to have a conversation with as a woman.
- You are on your own now, there is no cooperative that sees the value of you as a farmer's wife.

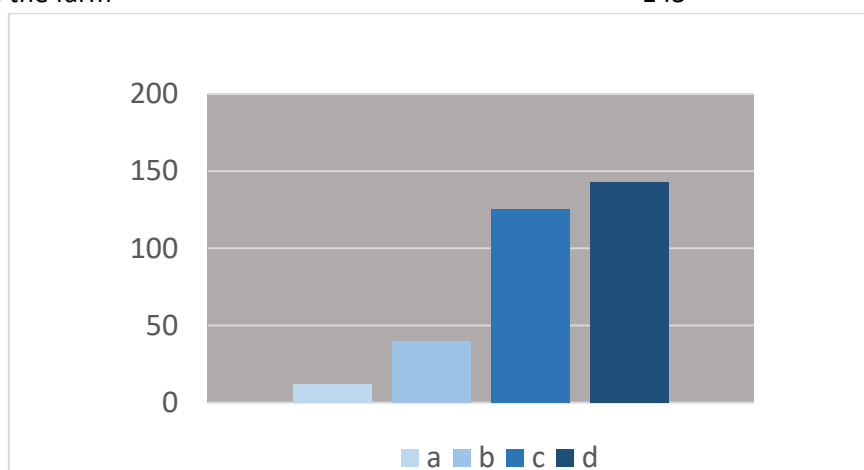
- Many women would like to see regional meetings of women farmers, not too big groups so that you are really heard.
- The Farmer's wife is at the centre of society and a farmer is not, this is a huge opportunity.

## 2.1. Questionnaire Results

I received 325 reactions from the women who attended the Ladies day of ForFarmers (09-2019). Below are the results of my questionnaire that I handed out to the women present at the ForFarmers event:

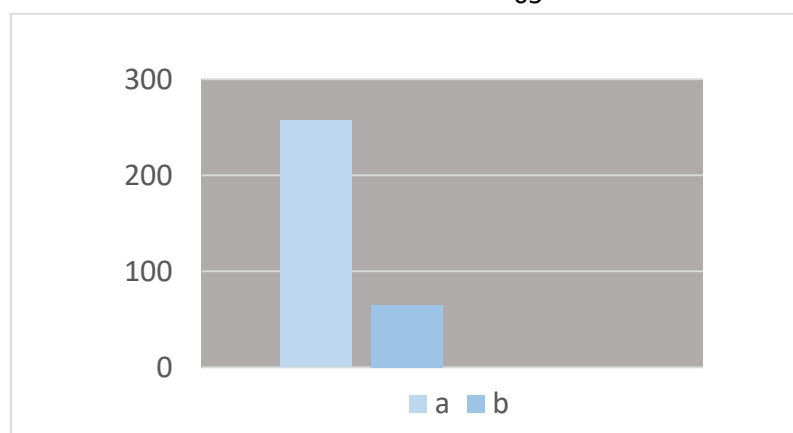
### 1. What is your role on the farm?

a. Does not cooperate	12
b. Works partly without a job outside the home	40
c. Works partly with job outside the home	125
d. Works on the farm	143



### 2. Do you own the farm?

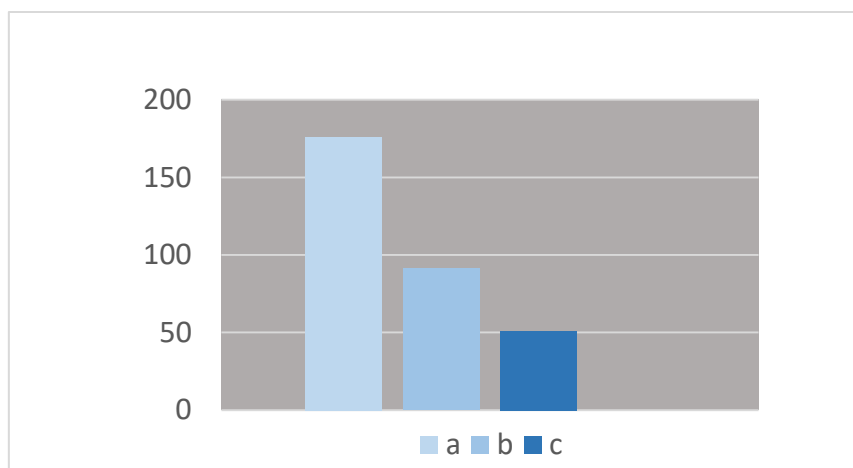
a. Yes	257
b. No	65





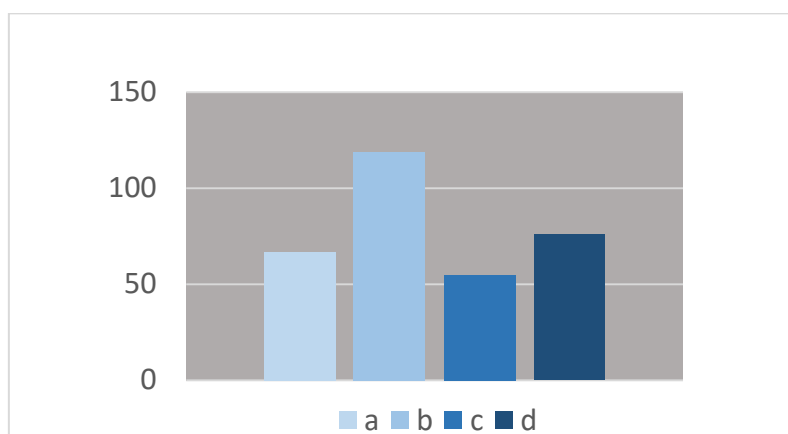
3. How many times a year do you attend agricultural meetings?

a. 0-3	176
b. 4-7	91
c. 7 or more often	51



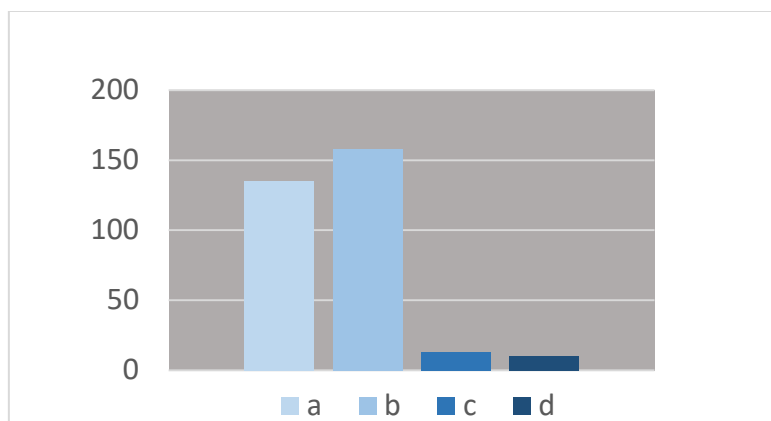
4. How often does a farm advisor come to the farm especially for you?

a. never	67
b. Rare	119
c. Often	55
d. only for tasks I am responsible for	76



### 5. 'I always influence decisions on the farm'.

a. strongly agree	135
b. partly agree	158
c. partly disagree	13
d. disagree	10



I am very happy with the high response rate I have received. It gives insights into this target group of women that I have approached.

83% of these women work on the farm, or partly work.

80% of these women are (co-)owners of the farm

55% of these women visit an agricultural meeting 0-3 per year

59% of these women rarely if ever get someone special to them in the yard

93% of these women are almost always involved in decisions on the farm

## 2.2. Confirmation of untapped potential

A confirmation for me, of my sense of untapped potential. There are only a few agriculturally related companies and cooperatives that have contact with the farmer's wife.

The last question I asked the women farmers was an open question. It is valuable to mention the top three quotes that came out of the survey as an answer to the open question, how do you see your role in 10 years' time? Does it look different?

The 3 most frequent answers

- Then we stopped our farming business, due to regulations and age
- Connector between new and old generation
- Setting up a side branch

On the day itself, I spoke to quite a few farmers' wives. Very often, when I went somewhere and talked about my Nuffield topic, I got the question from others: but do the women themselves want more attention? Do they want to be the one turned to?

On this day, too, there were for example many women who said they want to share their story and use more social media, but currently did not do this because they were afraid of negative reactions.

Also, the question of what is interesting to post and what is not was on their minds. This is potential that remains. If there is an organisation that pays attention to these women and their stories and sees the value of it, this could make a huge change. It seems to me that it is quite easy to organise courses and meetings to train this skill. The women farmers were very enthusiastic about this. It contributes enormously to the image of the sector.

There are already several great initiatives, for example, there is an active club of farmers' wives in Hardenberg. They all have different businesses and meet monthly to share their knowledge and expertise. This club of farmers is also always present at the annual summer market to talk about their profession. By offering products from the farm, they enter into conversation with the visitors of the summer market. Entirely on their own initiative, a very good example.

Especially the fact that they do it together, get together, can share worries, can do things that fit their role, talent and skill makes them enthusiastic. I see the ladies glowing during our conversations. I am also trying to find out if female farmers are interested in a leadership programme here in the Netherlands. I already have my first registrations! (Now I need a programme and a budget)

This day has given me a lot of insights. With these figures, I am particularly showing the current periphery that there is still a lot of room in reaching out to the farmer's wife. If you look around at agricultural meetings nowadays, they are very often male-dominated. A more diverse audience at e.g., cooperative meetings creates a different atmosphere, ambience and dialogue. It makes you more resilient as a cooperative. I believe that this is exactly what we need in these exciting times of rapid change.

## **2. Current situation of the agricultural sector in the Netherlands**

There are different changing tendencies and forces in society and the environment that have an effect on the agricultural sector in the Netherlands. In the chapter I will look at the most significant ones.

### **3.1. High societal pressure**

The current social pressure is high, the demands of society towards the environment and farmers are getting higher and higher. Regulations are forcing us to farm differently. The nitrogen problem in the Netherlands is a prime example. The balance is lost and farmers lack a clear common direction. Incomes are under pressure and farmers are disappearing at a rapid pace.

The call for more sustainable production is getting bigger. It is difficult to make the consumer responsible for the challenges in agriculture because the citizen becomes the consumer in the supermarket and their wallet has a major influence on people's buying behaviour. In the Netherlands we have an open economy where we export a lot but we also import. We consume much more than we can cultivate ourselves. The importance of our export position weighs heavily on the social debate. The agricultural sector has great difficulty in taking up a position in the social debate other than to defence when attacked.

### **3.2. Many opinions about farmers**

There are many opinions on the way farmers work. The current system is creaking. A change is taking place from cheap and fast to a more sustainable form of agriculture more in balance with environmental and social constraints. This discussion is in full swing. Farmers have expressed their displeasure many times over in the past year in the form of flattening society with their tractors blocking the highway. This is not a very constructive way of communicating. As farmers, we find it difficult to enter into dialogue with our surroundings. This is also understandable because the way we used to do things is no longer sufficient. There is fear and uncertainty about what the future will look like. Many farmers feel that nobody understands how complicated it is to produce in the Netherlands. "The media is left-wing", is what farmers often say.

### **3.3. Changing world and changing production costs**

The Netherlands exports many products for the world market. We have a high cost-price to produce our products. We live in a densely populated country; I often say that we farm in the city's backyard. The public takes a critical view of what we do.

Land prices are very high in the Netherlands, so every piece has to be used as efficiently as possible. And labour is very expensive in the Netherlands. The growing world population demands more food, but where should that food be produced and how? Other countries can also produce a lot of food cheaply and it is becoming safer, so we are losing our competitive position. The cost-price of supplying products to the Netherlands is getting higher and higher and competition is increasing, especially in the lower-wage countries. We must look for a new form of agriculture that is much more in balance with the three Ps: People, Planet and Profit.

### 3.4. Climate change

What we have experienced here at home in the past three years is extreme climate change. We had to deal with extreme drought for the past three years. Even as a land-based company, we could not grow our own food for our cows. So, slowly you see that programmes are being put in place to adapt to the changing climate. We are facing ever greater weather extremes.

As agriculture, we also contribute to climate change and will have to work to reduce our impact on the planet. We must make our systems more resistant to extremes. Our system must become more resilient. We have found that our farm is very vulnerable to drought. In recent years, we have made many adjustments to make ourselves more resistant. Increased soil fertility, water retention in our ditches and streams, herb-rich grass mixtures that are more drought-resistant. But we also try to become more financially resilient, so that we are not only dependent on the income that we get of our milk production.

Climate adaptation is something I see at my colleagues worldwide. In March 2019, during the post CSC, we were guests in Iowa and Nebraska where the Missouri River burst its banks. In New Zealand, dairy farmers had to deal with extreme drought for the <sup>2nd</sup> year in a row. The colleagues in Australia had to deal with extremely high temperatures and forest fires. All are manifestations of climate change. Many farmers I spoke to feel a shared responsibility to reduce the impact on the climate through their business operations. On the other hand, I also often saw that the measures had a negative impact on their financial situation. These are big tasks that we are facing and that requires strong leadership in order to take joint action.

We also have to start farming with less input, preferably with constant production. Our soil management must change so that we can also contribute to solving the climate problem. We are partly responsible for the current problems, but we can also contribute to the solution. Not every sector can do the latter, but the agricultural sector can.

### **3. Current situation of female farmer in the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands it is often seen, that young female partners of the farmer keep their job outside of the farm. Their career has already been mapped out in the area they are trained in. Often these women keep their jobs, even after they have children. I speak to many of these women who do not (dare to) call themselves farmers because they do not want to be associated with the title of farmer. And they think they don't deserve the title because they don't milk cows or feed calves.

Yet you often see that these women do join the company. This creates co-responsibility, at least in the financial field. Usually, she is involved at the kitchen table when big decisions are made within the company. Often, I also speak to women who do not know what their role on the farm could be, because they do not want to become a surrogate for the work done by their husband or parents-in-law. I recognise myself in this situation. I like running the farm together and doing business together with my husband, but I don't feel happy standing between the cows every day.

Especially at the start of their farmer status, there is not really a clear role for the woman in which she can acquire a place within the company with her talents and skills.

#### **4.1. Rural and farmer associations**

I have, of course, looked at the women's networks that already exist such as the “Vrouwen van Nu” and rural women's associations. But, with all due respect, these are networks where the women have an average of 60 years of age or older. In the past, these were very powerful networks that flourished in rural areas. They created a lot of support and connection for women in rural areas. And still put great themes on the agenda, but it is not a network characterised by a young and dynamic audience. The generation gap is too wide. Could such networks be revived? I do not think so, because they are structured and organised in an old, fixed way, which makes it impossible to connect with the new target group. This is a reflection of how society in general is moving; in other networks too, they have trouble getting the young generation on board. Just look at sports councils, church administrations, voluntary work, trade unions, etc. There is no longer the solidarity and connection that we used to see.

#### **4.2. Partner no special attention**

If you marry your partner who is a farmer, you will not be labelled as a newcomer in the industry. You do not have to do an entrance exam to become a farmer. Though there is a course in economic education for new farmers in which you will learn about agricultural entrepreneurship. This is to give you financial insight in how an agricultural company operates. Very valuable to be able to give your financial position within your company a good shape. But for the rest, you have to figure out by yourself what your role is or will be within the company, often with family of the farmer already there, which does not often make it easier to claim your role. Especially in the beginning, you do not know anyone who has the same experience as you, who marries a farmer? That is a dying breed.

## 4. Success stories from female farmers all over the world

The current situation requires change, can the farmer's partner play a role in this? I thought I should look for these kinds of inspiring women on my travels who have successful stories from their farms. How did they do it? What helped them? What inspired them? How did they get to where they are?

### 5.1. Farmer's wives on the farm

#### China - Shi Yan

Shi Yan is a farmer with the first CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm in China. Her farm runs organically with paying members who pay for their harvest, but also have an input into the farm's development plan. Shi Yan is a young and driven woman who single-handedly runs the 2 CSA farms around Beijing. She manages 150 persons of staff. A game changer in China. Where she had to struggle the first few years to get the farm up and running, she is now seen as the hero of organic farming and the Chinese government loves her too. We got this appointment organised through cooperation with the Dutch embassy. She is a very internationally renowned farmer who is much in demand for international presentations.

What inspired me was her perseverance to start farming organically in good cooperation with her environment. Her first employees were all men from the conventional sector. Shi had to tell all these men that she did not want to use artificial fertiliser and that gave her a lot of discussions. She is also named "the new farmer". She sees the function of CSA farmers not only in providing healthier soil but also in reconnecting people to food and a vital countryside.

It is a beautiful farm with beautiful crops. There was a lot of staff around, but that seemed to be the case everywhere we went in China. The farmers we visited in China all had a lot of staff. There are inspirational sayings everywhere on the wall at her farm. We were allowed to join in the meal during the break at the farm. The staff's break had just ended when we arrived, but the sound the Chinese make when eating was still hearable. We had a delicious meal with many fresh vegetables from the farm, of course.

When you talk to Shi Yan, you can feel her sense of purpose and passion for her farm. She is very self-confident and she comes across as very calm. The sense of purpose also allows her to challenge the 'mainstream' and her successes help in her persuasiveness. During the meeting, I asked her about the role of women in China in general, which she felt was emancipated. There had just been a landing on the moon of a Chinese unmanned mission led by a woman. She said you have equal opportunities in China as a woman. But in the agricultural sector, it is a male stronghold, she immediately emphasised. That is why she suspected it took a long time before the Chinese government started working with her. She was also very interested in our stories and our farms. It was not often that four female farmers came to visit her.

#### Southern Germany - Miriam Sichler

Miriam, a young farmer I met in southern Germany on the Sichler family's dairy farm. She has no background in agriculture, but is a qualified microbiologist. A perfect example for my research and hypothesis. Miriam was educated and grew up outside the agricultural sector, because she married her husband, she became a farmer. After giving birth to her first child, Miriam decided to work full-time on the farm. She is very fond of the animals, but her daily work takes place more at the summer houses that they also run on the farm. Miriam is not a member of any women's movement, her mother-in-law is, but because of her age and subjects she does not feel at home in these networks. She also hardly ever goes to agricultural meetings, which are male-dominated and she does not feel at home there.

She supervised many young students from the University of Munich on their farms, especially the microbiology students. She could tell me very enthusiastically about the micro-organisms they used in their business. They were currently investigating in a specific substance in the milk. The striking thing was, that it was not present in their milk before and they were now investigating whether this was due to the use of micro-organisms in their business operations. Together with a group of students, she is investigating what this means for the cows and the milk on their farm. Working with the students gives her a lot of energy and satisfaction. It really is her expertise on the farm, her role.

Legendary quote from her father-in-law 'Unbehandelte Gulle is Scheisse' ("untreated dung is shit")

When I explained my research question to her, she thought it was a very interesting subject. She immediately emphasised that she's not a feminist, but that she definitely missed female communication in the agricultural sector. We had a very animated, energetic conversation with each other. Because we both became farmers, there were so many similar situations that made for a lot of recognition. At the moment, she is using her potential by cooperating with the University of Munich. She does this on her own initiative. It is difficult for her to get the knowledge that she gathered public, because she does not have a platform or stage.

### **New Zealand - Jana Hocken**

Another perfect example in my eyes is Jana in New Zealand, Jana is a LEAN consultant (LEAN = Systematically developing people and continuously improving processes to bring value and prosperity with the least possible use of resources). She has worked for many years' at large companies in Australia, including for example, Toyota. In the end, she and her husband decided to take over the farm from her parents-in-law. It took some time for Jana to find her own interpretation and role. But she saw a lot of processes on the farm that she thought could be better, more efficient and more organised.

She started using her knowledge gained outside of the agricultural sector on their farm. She has implemented LEAN management in dairy farming and has written a book about it. She guides many study groups, nationally and internationally. For example, she also coached a group of Bel Leerdammer here in the Netherlands and speaks at many international conferences. Moreover, she does everything in connection with their own business. Together with her husband Matt she runs the company Grassmere Dairy, which has a lot of prestige in New Zealand. Her husband won Rabobank's Emerging Leader award in 2019, a prestigious award in New Zealand. She practices what she preaches, on her own farm.

When I was there, she had just designed a new way of dry-housing that resulted in 25% fewer udder infections on their farm. Less chance of wrong doses and mistakes in cleaning, more hygienic work, less loss of wrong injectors, less strain on personnel and better results. I read on Twitter from two of my NZ scholars that they also tried this new procedure in fall 2020 (spring with us), with good results.

This is the value I see that partners of a farmer can have. Adding knowledge from outside the agricultural sector into the agricultural sector. She stands her ground in the sector, she is a strong woman, with a good story!

## **5.2. Farmers' wives in networks**

### **New Zealand - Tracy Brown**

With Tracy, I see so much of my own experiences. Tracy runs a dairy farm with her husband in central New Zealand, next to the area where Lord of the Rings was filmed. Early on, they developed into a



nature-inclusive business that cares for their environment. This change made them stand out and Tracy was often able to tell her story to other farmers and networks. More and more often Tracy was out facilitating leadership programmes, advice and presentations. She joined the Dairy Women Network, a safe place where she could put her learned skills to good use.

I saw her at work during a presentation at insemination company LIC. With flair, elegance, enthusiasm and positivity, she brought her story to the audience. The reactions of her listeners were enthusiastic. I spent a night with her on their dairy farm. I recognized so much of my own life in the daily things she did. She and her husband have won many awards with their dairy farm and the sustainable steps they take there. What gives her value is the combination of her story and the implementation in practice. She does what she says and shows it.

Her latest big step was being elected to the board of DairyNZ. DairyNZ is the trade association representing all New Zealand dairy farmers. They invest in practical tools, research, resources, support and advocacy on the farm. They work with a financial contribution from the dairy farmers. This now also gives her financial compensation for all the work she does.

### **New Zealand - Lindy Nelson**

I was also supposed to meet Lindy in New Zealand but I never was able to do, due the Covid Pandemic. In all my conversations with different people and networks in New Zealand, her name came up. So, after I came back from New Zealand, I contacted her. We had a very inspiring ZOOM call.

A very open woman who is a bit older than me, but did the same thing 10 years ago in New Zealand. At that time, she also did a study on the role of women in agriculture. She pointed out to me that it is important to make it crystal clear that we are not using 50% of the agricultural potential. Because we do not know how to find women, we are leaving 50% of the potential for the agricultural sector unused. The agricultural sector in New Zealand is also a male-dominated one. She started a talent training programme 10 years ago. Her greatest achievement is that she has caused a change in behaviour. The agricultural woman in New Zealand have taken a valuable position in the sector. Men talk equally about the role and value that women add to the business. What struck me was that all 5 male scholars from New Zealand talked about my topic with such respect and seriousness.

**The fact that she took the time for me and also offered me help several times during the interview, to prevent me from reinventing the wheel in the Netherlands again shows enormous leadership and mentorship.** What a strong woman. I was also pleased to hear that almost all of her talents play a complementary role within the sector by, for example, joining cooperative boards. But also, through their own interpretation of the company and the extra business they generate.

It was also nice to hear that she was often asked for advice for large agricultural companies on the question: How to reach women? She then sits down at the table to give advice. I have already watched her recording three times and each time I hear new things and accents. I will definitely make use of Lindy's offer.

### 5.3. Women active in agricultural institutions

#### Netherlands - Carin van Huet

I spoke with Carin van Huet, Director of Agro and Food Rabobank Netherlands and farmer's daughter from a large agricultural family. I met her for the first time at the ForFarmers lady's event. There I made an appointment with her at their head office in Utrecht. We had an hour where we had a fantastic conversation about how agriculture is changing. A conversation in which private and business matters were criss-crossed. Carin's personal lifestyle is also translated into her business approach at her job at Rabobank. I immediately felt that we have a connection. Together with her, I organised the event 'Women and food, valuable and connected' in March 2020, which will be followed up in 2021.

I find it valuable that in her role of leader, Carin shows guts and is daring. She also shares things she is uncertain about or unsure of. But she also shares points about which she is clear. Rabobank's new vision also shows that they are going for a new course with a number of daring routes in which they share a clear vision of the role of the agricultural sector in society. I think that bears witness to courage and leadership. Rabobank's video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7USWw4ISSc> 'The road to change' made a big impression, also in the international network. Banks taking part in the social debate were very impressive. I have also seen the video in social media of a few Nuffield scholars in order to challenge their own bank. The power of the Nuffield network.

#### Switzerland - Gerda Verburg

I was a bit tense for this meeting. What a place to have an appointment in the building of the United Nations in Geneva. With a woman with an enormous resume of high functions, in the Netherlands but even more internationally. I just sent her an email asking if I could meet her around my question about the role of women in times of change. And I 'just' got an email back saying that I just had to schedule an appointment with her secretariat.

What a special conversation that was. Perhaps the most normal conversation of all the people I have spoken to about my Nuffield topic. **A real conversation with all openness and transparency.** She told me that in her job, the woman was the most important person to reach. She is the director of the SUN movement which is trying to suppress malnutrition worldwide. Worldwide women are often the person who takes care of the food and the family. Often also the one who grows the food and takes care of it, so for her job the most important target group to reach out to. Through the men's layer of bureaucracy, they are looking for the women who put it into practice.

Early on in the conversation, she also said that if she asked too many questions, I had to correct her, as I had come to collect information from her. She was very interested in the current situation in the Netherlands. An interesting detail, I visited Gerda just after the strikes of 1 October 2019, so there was something going on. Because of my answers, she started asking me about my skills and my future in the agricultural sector. She told me to **set myself a goal to work towards.** Chairman of LTO Netherlands seemed a suitable job for me, she thought. I received a lot of input on how to develop a strategy for yourself, with examples of how she came to this position. **You have to remain yourself, when you go to bed you have to dare to look at yourself in the mirror.** Of course, there are bad days and better days, as long as you can look yourself straight in the eye.

What also struck me was the way she dealt with her team of staff. Very free, enthusiastic, amicable and approachable. Very pleasant to see and feel. Later, I met her again in Rome, where she immediately introduced me to a number of people. **She also told me not to be too modest but to show guts is good to get further, be proud of the good things you do.** It was a good conversation with a lot of good recommendations for me personally.

## 5.4. Other examples

### Germany - Christoph Fischer

Christoph is the owner of the company EM-Chiemgau, from which we also buy our micro-organisms and carbon at home. I had a beautiful tour through his company, which he runs together with his wife and 2 children. I heard his story about the history of the start of the company and how they have slowly grown into a medium-sized company. He told me about his philosophy on farming, but later also more about how we should live together with our natural surroundings. His vision is that we should pass on the place we live in, to our children in a better and healthier way than how we received it. It is also nice to see how the children, each with their own expertise, have been given a role in the company.

What I like about his philosophy is that it's not just about your business, but about a way of life. I feel that at home too. Since 2006, when we started moving in a different direction, more towards a circular, sustainable, recycling company, it not only had an impact on our company but also on how we live. I started to look critically at our own cycle here in our family, this is how far the impact of sustainability should reach. What comes into our house and what goes out, can we limit the flow in and out? For example, we have shampoo bars instead of bottles, soda streams to replace soft drinks bottles and different laundry and cleaning products. Christoph can implement this whole idea in his company. He not only offers agricultural products, but he also produces a large line of cleaning, gardening and personal care products.

**A remarkable highlight of his story was that from the 1,200 farmers with whom he works in his region, 80% came in contact with him, through the farmers' partner.** Because the women bought their products from Christoph for cleaning the house or products for the vegetable garden, so these women were connected to EM-Chiemgau. And then the women took the men to Christoph's company.

A great story was the 'Gemeinwohl Ökonomie' he set up in their region. The companies that work together in his region all take a certain care for the environment. That also means, taking good care of your staff. For example, he provides a healthy hot meal at break time for his staff, with plenty of fruit and vegetables from the region, and the packaging made from recyclable material. It is part of the whole business. He expects the same from his suppliers, and Christoph's suppliers can expect the same from him. One of the pillars is that what is produced nearby you also get from nearby. That way, the money stays in the region and a region grows from that.

### Amsterdam December 2019 WFA summit Women in Food and Agri

Rabobank gave me an admission ticket to the WFA Summit (Women in Food and Agri), which was held for the first time in Amsterdam. A two-day summit completely dedicated to women in Food and Agri sector. An event that fits with one of my conclusions: bring women together.

I made some nice international contacts from this event and if there is a sequel I would like to go again. This year it was supposed to be in London, but it took place online because of the Covid pandemic. A great programme with very good speakers. A few that I would like to highlight because I think they were inspiring and/or thought-provoking: Baroness Rosie Boycott, Food activist, founder of Spare Rib and international journalist who told a story from a consumer perspective. Mark Lyons, president of ALLTECK has done research on what diversity brings to a company. Jack A. Bobo, on what the future of business will look like from a consumer perspective. Lone Anderson, Danish dairy farmer who has written a plan for the government together with nature organisations. Tina Hunt Elanco, what an enthusiastic woman who has her private life and business life intertwined.

The 3 themes for joining the community of WFA are, Inspirational & Leadership, Meaningful Connections, Empowering Content.

A valuable conclusion for me is that talented women inspire other women. Also, one of the themes was, how to survive in a higher position as a woman with the highly recommended advice; mentoring. **Find a colleague you feel comfortable with, someone who may have held senior positions for some time, and ask her to be your mentor.** Conversely, it also means that you should be open to mentoring someone.

What characterises all of these women is that they have added tremendous value to the agricultural sector because they were able to look at possibilities and solutions beyond the agricultural bubble. A broader view of what the environment requires. To take the step to change the business together with their partner (business, family, husband). They used their role as leaders in the agricultural sector, with their own knowledge and skills.

All these women knew how to connect the right people in a natural way and, through trial and error, they conduct their business in harmony with the environment around them. They create enormous value for the agricultural sector, the environment, the region and most of all for their own future and development. They have done it all themselves, through their own knowledge and skills. These women are the key to changes that contribute to solutions for the transition of the agricultural sector.

## 5. Examples of used potential of the farmer's partner

There are many values in general that women add to an organisation. An organisation becomes more productive, more innovative, more creative and makes more money. This alone is enough value to invest in women on the farm. There are also some very interesting studies looking at the role of women in rural areas and in crises:

[Women in farming and the agriculture sector: research report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

[Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment | UN Women - Headquarters](#)

[Research: Women Are Better Leaders During a Crisis \(ampproject.org\)](http://ampproject.org)

I even dare to put it more sharply for the agricultural sector. Cooperatives use only 50% of the potential on the farm. That is how much scope I see for cooperatives to invest in women. All this is related to how women function on the farm, that they leave the farm more often, that they communicate differently and look at problems and challenges differently.

Another very important value that cannot be expressed in money is behavioural change. In my conversations around the world, the question of what is the value of women was one of my recurring questions. But I was almost ashamed of the question, because the fact that I had to ask this question said enough. The answer was always simple; only half of the potential is used.

### 6.1. More Business Potential

If you see that the farmer's wife starts doing business in connection with the farm, you see that there is a better financial return. Prominent examples are farmers' wives who start a Bed and Breakfast, a day nursery or a farm shop on the farm. In Switzerland, for example, I stayed at a farmer's wife who was trained as a hotel manager. For a long time, when she moved in with her husband, she worked in a hotel nearby. In the end, she created 16 different types of accommodation on her own farm. As more people came to the farm, the direct sale of farm products also received a boost. They sell meat and fresh milk and cheeses. Especially the sale of meat has grown so much that only 20% is sold through the middlemen.

Mat and Jana Hocken's farm in New Zealand is another good example of how the farm has also started to run better by introducing LEAN management, the expertise that Jana gained outside the agricultural sector and implemented on the farm. The farm is running better, there are fewer drop-outs, better technical figures, staff can be retained for a long time and new staff is quickly available because many people want to work there. The company has become much more efficient.

If I take myself as an example, you will also see that my network has become much larger because of my outward appearance, which means that we can better connect the right people to our company at home. We can innovate better and more because we have better sparring partners. As a result, our company has become more efficient and runs better; we can achieve a better return with less input. And because I am also earning an income, our company has also become less financially vulnerable.

## 6.2. More Sustainability

What I see in the Netherlands and abroad is that on farms where more is done with the environment, for example through the connecting enterprise of the farmer's wife, a more sustainable form of agriculture is created. Take Simone Koggel, for example, who takes tourists and day trippers through her herd on her Koesafari. She can proudly say that the meat from her cows is on the menu in the local restaurants. People see and feel with their own eyes that Simone's cows have all the space they need to display natural behaviour on her farm. This story cannot be as successful if the cows are inside the barn, then your story becomes much more complicated and unbelievable.

And the example of the young farmer Shi Yan in China, who through education was able to fully embrace organic farming, but who also directly involves her consumers in this. Because the consumer appreciates this, you can also take steps to try to do business in a more sustainable way for an even larger group of consumers. And in her case, she is also seen as an inspiring example for many colleagues.

The example of Irene Bruins and Andra Westerhof, who with their own producer are also involved in the healthy eating pattern of people. If you are going to get involved in this playing field, you also have to be critical of your own operational management to ensure that it is healthy. The whole chain has to be right. And here you see that ecological business management is possible because the products with a good story are bought ecologically by consumers.

I see that when activities are carried out in the environment in connection with the farm, the business operations also change because of the contact with the environment. I see the same thing here at home: you learn to see through the eyes of the citizen/consumer. That gives you insights to rethink and change your processes or to tell your story better.

## 6.3. More Education

In recent years, there has been an enormous growth in farm education in the Netherlands. Everywhere in the Netherlands, you see networks arise in regions that offer the farm education course to farmers. It is striking to see how large the participation is of female farmers in this development. This is a direction that suits a large part of the women farmers.

This is a successful example of making good use of the farmer's potential. You can also see that the government is well on top of this by making a budget available for food education so that schools also get budget to buy this knowledge. [Subsidie Jong Leren Eten | Jong Leren Eten](#)

One of my Australian Nuffield colleagues, Clare Peltzer, had a topic on how to introduce young people to the agricultural sector at an early age and found this to be the most inspiring example for her topic. She hadn't seen this so well introduced anywhere else in the world.

## 6.4. Better marketing

Social media is being used more and more in the primary sector. You see more and more a company page on Facebook. Less often you see a company website, but that is also increasing. It is still often a love-hate relationship. I think this is one of the natural developments that you see where there is a clear role for the farmer's wife. You often see her managing the account and posting messages on social media. I often hear that there is quite a struggle when a message is posted. It is difficult to find

the right language and to stay away from jargon and what do you do with critical messages. It can work in your favour, but if you don't do it right, you can also get into a lot of trouble.

An inspiring example is “Wakker boerin” in the Salland region, a group of female farmers who manage a social media account together and post joint messages about farm life. It helps these women to do this together in order to post the message in the best possible way. If a discussion arises among the messages, they feel supported by each other in the dialogue that ensues. You can see that they also dare to broach difficult subjects, such as the use of crop protection products and the calf by the cow story. A good example of how it works when you train women and bring them together. Very valuable, storytelling for the image of the sector.

Social media training and storytelling is a hot topic worldwide and you can see that farms are investing more and more in it, especially the farm women.

## **6. How can we capitalise the farmer's partner potential?**

We have seen that there is a huge potential for the farm and the whole agricultural sector, if the partner of the farmer gets more involved. But how can we turn this potential into something real and maybe even capitalise it?

### **7.1. Bringing the partners of the farmers together**

What I look back on with great enthusiasm is the 'eigenwijze Vrouwen' event organised by Simone Piel of the Rabobank, who was still working in NW Twente at the time. It was then that I was first touched by the meaningfulness of bringing the partners of the farmers together, which I experienced at first hand. The event was especially made for female entrepreneurs in Twente. The programme included a very nice mix of inspiring women with a good story to tell. With a large part reserved for networking and meeting other women. These women are still my largest group of followers on LinkedIn and ladies who keep responding on my posts. So not only farmers, but also female entrepreneurs outside the agricultural sector. It is valuable to bring women together, to create a place where women can find each other, strengthen each other and challenge each other.

Because I am often approached by the media, I am also in a women's network of the media platform "Vaker in de Media" by Janneke van der Heugten. In 2019, I received the 'You Go Girl' award for up-and-coming talent in media with my media appearances in that year. I enjoy being in this network, I learn a lot from it and have a great diverse network because of it. I notice that the women strengthen each other very much by encouraging each other and exchanging tips. For me, this is a very important network because it contains a large group of critical followers of the agricultural sector. It is challenging to be in this network as a farmer's wife. But I am doing well, I have many enthusiastic followers and women with other types of networks. I sometimes get invitations to give a presentation in those networks. And the other way round also happens, I use them in my agricultural network.

I also see the examples of the farmer's wives group in Hardenberg and "Wakker boerin" in the Salland region that it is good to bring farmer's wives together around certain themes. They feel safe and can spar with each other and have support from each other.

### **7.2. Set-up of special programs**

I see that there are currently no leadership programmes offered that match the skills and talents of young female farmers. They are not recognised as newcomers in the sector and therefore they have to find out for themselves what their role is and will be on the farm. Nobody helps them with that. They can gain knowledge, for example, on business developments at LTO Women and Business, but the infrastructure to implement their own talents, knowledge and skills on their own farm is lacking. You see that courses are offered on certain themes, such as farm education and corporate social responsibility, which are mainly attended by female farmers. This happens on a small scale and does not match the personal talents and skills of a farmer's wife.

This has prompted me to explore whether I can set up a leadership programme. An enormous amount of work, but fortunately I have already found a fine partner in this. Bettina Bock put me in touch with Liza Simons who also had the idea in her head, to develop a leadership programme for young talented women who enter the sector because they marry a farmer.



### **7.3. Share best practice examples**

What Liza and me want to try is to create a platform where female farmers can find each other. Where they can exchange knowledge, share plans and find inspiring examples. And in this way, they can find a role of value within the agricultural sector in connection with their own business. So that they get the guts to take that role and give it substance.

We hope that the women we are going to educate and train will stay in this network and thus remain connected to the movement we want to create.

We also want to be able to give advice to agricultural businesses/cooperatives on how to better involve the farmer's wife in the developments they want to share with their members. I also see that many cooperatives struggle with reaching their female members. This requires specific approaches to this target group.

I myself have met and seen many inspiring examples from which I have learned a great deal in the past two years. A good example is there to follow, it is valuable for the new female generation to have role models to connect with the agricultural sector.

## 7. Personal reflection

What an extraordinary experience I have had in the past two years. Actually, it is impossible to describe, but I am going to try anyway.

### 8.1. Most impressive moments

#### China

The trip to China had an enormous impact on me. What an incredible journey and a controversial country. I was therefore very happy that I made this trip together with Suzanne Reusink, Bertie Steur and Yvon Jaspers. I would never have gone there on my own. It also helped a lot that we called in the Dutch embassy beforehand to prepare for the trip. The Chinese government's enormous focus on the food issue can be felt in every link of the chain. We visited the young farmers' federation, which is unique in China as groups of people are not really allowed to unite, but they made an exception to involve the young generation in the agricultural sector.

We visited AntzFinance, the parent company of Alipay. It is very impressive how far the use of digital means has progressed in China; digitalisation is going fast there. We saw an app where you can close a financing of 400.000 euros in 4 minutes. They use algorithms to determine whether you are creditworthy. What also surprised me was that, as a young farmer, you can make use of 4 months of care if you give birth to your child. You can stay in specially equipped care centres for you and your baby for four months, all this to make life in the countryside more attractive.

What also stayed with me was the enormous hunger for knowledge outside of China. The people in China have limited access to the world outside China and therefore they want to know everything about you. Unfortunately, I didn't have much knowledge of greenhouses; that's what we Dutch people are known for in China. But of course, you take all insights with some caution, because what exactly do they show you? That is always at the back of your mind in all conversations.

#### The CSC March 2019 Iowa, USA

It was very special, to meet fellow farmers from all over the world. Together, an enormous amount of knowledge was targeted on us at high speed. It was nice to meet colleagues and talk about the content of the day and their land and sector. It gives a special dynamic when you all feel privileged to have received a Nuffield scholarship and everyone wants to make the most of it. There was a high level of social interaction, you wanted to know everyone's story in a very short period of time.

Without knowing each other, you felt the enormous closeness of each other.

We were all shocked when our Nuffield colleague Sam Martin had a serious car accident just after the CSC. A truck hit him head-on on the highway in America. That is how vulnerable you are when you travel the world alone. After a tough recovery, partly in America, he eventually recovered in the UK. The accident left a lasting mark.

#### The timing of my trip through Europe

Personally, the journey through Europe was very tough for me. It was just after the first farmers' strike of October 2019, and there was considerable unrest in the farming sector in the Netherlands. It was the first time that the tractors and farmers interrupted society. The emotion was high among the colleagues. The farmers were in the news often and a lot, often not in a constructive way but from real distress. I found that very difficult to follow. I travelled alone in the car a lot and my thoughts were running wild. I felt the emotion and urgency of my colleagues, I was just convinced that this was not the way to reach solutions and connections.

The day I drove through Switzerland, there was the news that farmers there had earned 10% more income last year but were still below average income. And the next day I drove through southern Germany where I saw several green crosses in the meadows, a sign to indicate that things were not going well for the farmers in Germany and that if things continued like this, there would be no farmers left. The mental pressure of the colleagues was visibly and tangibly high. It was a personal challenge to be able to process all those messages and thoughts.

### **My individual trip to New Zealand**

I am really proud of myself for travelling alone to New Zealand. All the way on the other side of the world, driving alone in a rented car on the left side of the road from appointment to appointment. Eating alone in restaurants, sleeping alone in a hotel. Sleeping with NZ Nuffielders I have never met before. Every day I began to lose some of my tension and enjoyed it more and more. I also consciously made more time for playing the tourist on this trip because I had forgotten to do that on my other trips. You feel very obligated to get the most out of your trip because you are sponsored and because you are saddling your home front with a huge burden. I am glad that I had a bit more free time in New Zealand.

### **The Covid-19 Pandemic**

A moment I will never forget is when I was crying at the airport in Nelson, New Zealand. That morning I had decided to return to the Netherlands at an earlier stage of my journey, because of the rapid spread of the Corona virus in Europe and the speed at which airspaces were being closed. I knew this was the end of my Nuffield adventure, it made me melancholic. Also, because I had set aside 4 ½ weeks for this trip, a 'once in a lifetime experience' for now. After exactly 14 days, I was back in the Netherlands. I knew that this was the end of a special era for me.

I was very happy to spend the night with a fellow Nuffielder of mine, Corrigan Sowman and his wife and two children. At the Sowman family there was another Nuffielder from Canada from our year, Mark Brock and his wife. It was very nice, not to make this decision all by myself and it was nice to feel like we were making the decision together. I came back from New Zealand on one of the last regular flights. I will never forget the deserted Schiphol Airport and the train station below Schiphol on a weekday morning at 8.30am. From the moment I landed, I was in the place where I wanted to be and needed to be; home.

### **My fellow Nuffielders**

What an incredible network the Nuffield network is. I have had so many wonderful, personal conversations with all sorts of different people. So open and transparent and sometimes accompanied by emotion. It touched me that, as agricultural entrepreneurs, we see so many common tasks coming our way. But also, the enormous responsibility and drive there was to want to take on this as a sector. Each in his or her own way, with his or her own company and knowledge and expertise, from his or her own perspective. I still have weekly contact with colleagues. Just to check whether the news is correct, what the impact is, how they are doing. It is great to be able to add to such a large international network. And I've known it for a long time, the past two years I've travelled a lot but I never stop travelling to visit my colleagues. It is a global living, learning lab.

## **8.2. What I learned**

### **Listen**

I have learned to listen carefully to the stories that people tell. Not to judge or condemn too quickly, but to really listen. If you really listen well, you hear much more and can also ask better questions. This is a skill that I have continued to apply. Before, I would quickly stop listening because I didn't

think judging or not listening was appropriate for our situation. But by staying away from judgement, you are open to much more information.

### **Perspective**

My perspective has broadened so much. Because I have seen so many different places in the world, each with the specific challenges of the country, climate, political environment and so on. I am well aware that everywhere you go, the perspective is slightly different. By learning to look at things from a different perspective, you can also look at your own role, your own company, sector and country with different eyes. It has given me a lot of extra baggage.

### **Global common tasks**

From the different perspectives, however, there are a number of recurring themes that can be seen around the world.

- Climate adaptation, in every country I have been to, the farmer is adapting his or her farm to the weather conditions that are becoming more and more extreme.
- Sustainability, I stick here the quest of every farmer to produce more product or an equivalent quantity with less input.
- Farmer's income is under pressure.
- Ageing of the sector. Globally, you see the average age creeping up and the lack of the entering young generation.
- Lack of a global strategy on the food distribution issue.
- The mental pressure, on average, is higher in the agricultural sector than on other sectors. Suicide rates are also higher on average in the agricultural sector. Certainly, the group of Nuffielders feels privileged because we are given such a great opportunity, but they also feel responsible for contributing to the solution of this problem.
- Political instability has a huge impact on farming.

### **If you want change, you have to move!**

One of the most important lessons I have learned is that if you want change, you have to create it yourself. Don't go waiting for sounds you hear or what might be coming. Create your own opportunities. Actively go out and approach people if you want to speak to them. Show courage and daring. When you see the wings, Nuffield has given me in this respect, it is enormous.

Are you worried about certain developments? Make sure you are at the table, invite someone for a cup of coffee and a chat. An inspiring statement; If you're not on the table, you're on the menu.

Also ask yourself what makes you happy. Do the things that suit you and do not let yourself be influenced by what your neighbour does. What are you good at and what suits you? We also apply this philosophy at home. For example, we have made a good plan for new earning models in circular agriculture. Everyone talks about it but nobody does it, but we do it.

Be wise about the advice you get and whether someone has an interest, and assess the level of commitment you want from a partner and what the partner expects from his or her level of commitment. Speak this out to each other too if it doesn't match.

### **Storytelling**

I have mastered this part quite well, but the importance is underlined time and again. This is such an incredibly important part of the agricultural sector. I have heard it so often during my travels and interviews. This is what we as an agricultural sector really need to get better at. If you share your own story from your own farm, you will get a lot of reactions. Don't let it hold you back, step out as an agricultural entrepreneur. Share your story, share your daily activities. But also share your

vulnerabilities. What do you find difficult and what are your biggest challenges? It is precisely by sharing these things that you become more connected with the people around you. Don't forget to listen to the stories of your listeners. What can you do with this? What could you do together? Wherever in the world you are, being in touch with the world outside the agricultural sector provides you with enormous energy, surprising innovative power and often more business. This is what we need in today's rapidly changing world. People can look at your company with different eyes, which can help you enormously in the development of your company. Always try to communicate in a binding way, without judgement. That seems easy but is a big challenge. That way you create sustainable connections.

### **Take your chances!**

Is there an opportunity? Grab it with both hands. For example, we joined a trip of the province of Overijssel in 2016, which greatly broadened our horizons. If I hadn't responded, someone else would have gone. I am glad that I did this together with my husband.

The opportunity I got with my Nuffield scholarship is phenomenal. I can call and travel all over the world and a network will open up for me. The same goes for the scholars who visit the Netherlands. They are welcome in our house and my network is open to them.

Compelling advice for my colleagues when you are weighing things up; it never fits! But if the opportunity arises, grab it with both hands. It is so incredible what you get to experience. This has had such an impact on my personal development and view of the sector. And not only for me, also at home. We welcomed 27 students so that Rogier could also benefit and enjoy a bit. I never realised that it also had a huge impact on the children. They managed at home without a mother and together they kept everything running. Not only am I very proud of that, but so are they.

And the communication at the kitchen table with the scholars we had in our house. The importance of the English language and the differences of life in the different countries. We had scholars visiting us at home from the UK, Ireland, Canada, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand.

## **8.3. Final remarks, what I am going to do:**

### **Leadership programme for women in the primary sector**

The last conversations I had, before finalising my research were with Han Wiskerke and Bettina Bock, of Wageningen Research of Rural Sociology. Both of them underlined my findings. Han Wiskerke already mentioned it in a study he did 20 years ago in Zeeland. We have agreed that it will not be in the reports again in 20 years' time. We keep in touch and know how to find each other. Bettina put me in touch with Liza Simons, a surprising meeting at the end of my Nuffield report.

My very last conversation was with Liza Simons, married to a farmer who now uses her knowledge gained outside the agricultural sector in the agricultural sector, as a coach, advisor and innovation manager. With her I will explore the road to see what we can do for each other to strengthen our common goal, the farmer's wife as a key player in the transition. Then my female leadership programme, which I would like to roll out in the Netherlands, comes closer. The money and interest are there, now we have to write the plan and see if we can find each other to undertake together.

### **New earning models for circular agriculture**

At home, we are also working on other earning models for our dairy farm. Not waiting for something to come along that suits us, but taking the initiative ourselves. We have a good plan ready so that we can implement the social tasks in our business operations and thereby add more value to our company. An exciting step, but it gives us a lot of energy to continue. We think the time is ripe for it.

### **Food and Women**

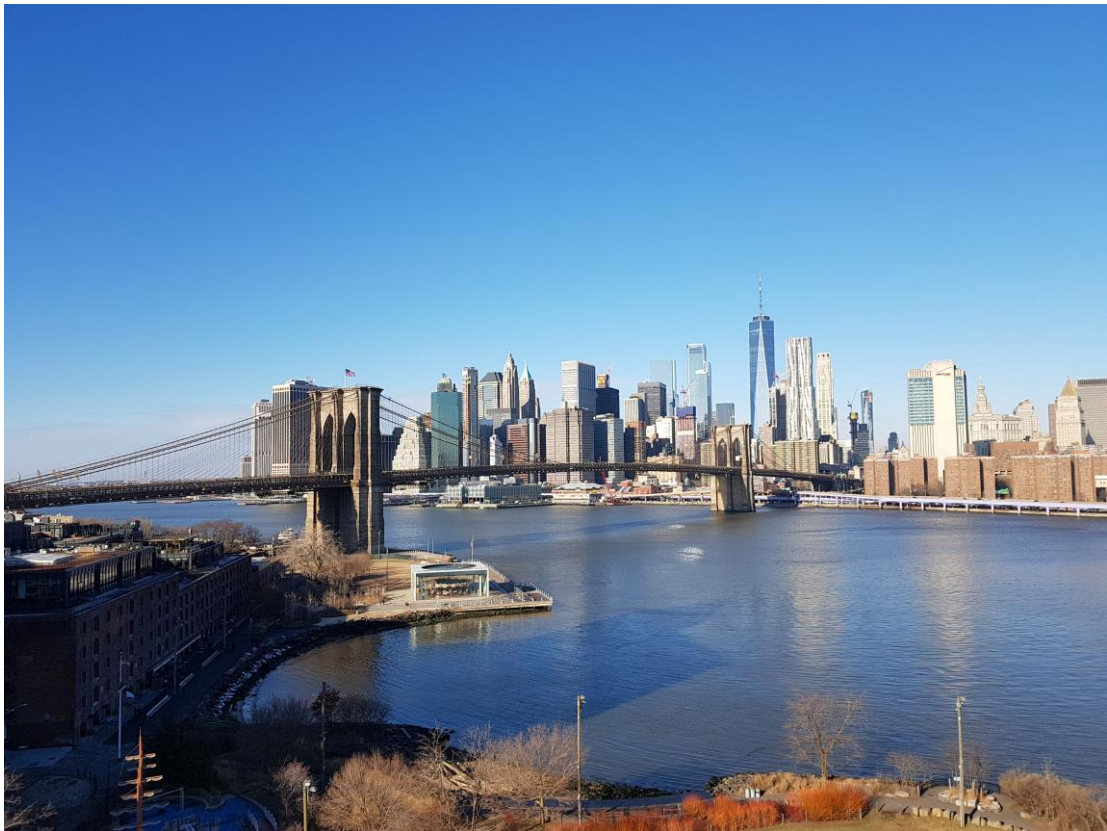
In March 2021 the sequel to; Food and Women on World Women's Day. This year's theme is Courage and Leadership in times of crisis. An inspiration and network meeting for women in the food chain.

Just do it!

Bring those women together, train and educate them and make an impact in the sector. Women are the key in the agricultural transition!



*Beijing, China, Shi Yan*



*New York, USA, January 2019*





*Genève, Switzerland, Gerda Verburg, October 2019*



*The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Rome, Italy, October 2019*





*New Zealand, Jana Krizova Hocken, March 2020*



*Des Moines, USA, World Food Price Hall, Nuffield 2019*