

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2016 Nuffield NL scholar Suzanne Ruesink

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How to bridge the gap between farmer and citizen

The agriculture in the Netherlands is been set as one of the best in the world. A tiny country that produces a lot of products on a very small scale of land. Very intensive farming. This is what made our economy big. We are second largest exporter agricultural products in the world. To become so we invented farming systems where products can grow all year around. Travelling around the world made me realize how other countries look up to our way of farming. But the downside is that barns got closed, and agriculture got more industrialized. Because of the increase of scale and less and less people want to farm there is a bigger and bigger disconnect between farmers and citizens.

Citizens see landscape changed and new buildings in the countryside, but don't know what is happening in there. They do know the stories of the grandparents about farming 50 years ago. A lot of different animals, just a few of everything. So everybody in the family had something to eat. While the farmers were growing their businesses and starting to export they forgot to take the citizens with them on their journey.

So my study is about what different ways are there to bridge the gap between farmers and citizens and who has to take which role?

So where do we go from here. On one hand we have large scale production to feed the world on the other hand we have to deal with people who are more critical about large scale agriculture. I believe it has to do everything with understanding and with getting people involved. In Ireland we have seen that brands were made very personal. The product gets a face, and you can image the family behind it. If you look at Ireland and the way they promote their products abroad it is really clever. By working together Origin Green was set up. The Irish use this quality system for branding their products.

Another way to connect farmers and citizens are Agricultural shows. They can be a platform where citizens meet the farmer without knowing on for hand. They come for a nice day out and in the end they learned about farming.

Farm parks will attract people who are already a bit interested in farming. But the way a farm park will focus on educate or entertain people is very different. What is good about farm parks is that it shows small scale farming but also large scale farming. And it can explain by interactive games the challenges farming has.

Media is a very plays a very important role in connect farmers and citizens because you'll can reach a lot of people. Media is also a scary one because it can make you and break you in one second. It is up to the industry to educate farmers and leaders how to tell their story. Media training in the agricultural industry is a must. An opportunity is to make a fund and make set up an agricultural program directed with a farmer to make sure farmers can tell the real story. And most important is Youtube. So make sure there are young enthusiastic

people who want to video blog. This especially to connect with the teenagers.

The last way to connect farmers and citizens is connect with other industries. We as farming industry can tell how good we are but it works much better if others tell it for us. The healthcare industry relies on good farmers but also think about IT, for smart farming. Last but not least there is a great role for the government. Education about farming and food is a must. If people don't know what they eat they will not appreciate it that much. So if you want to have a sustainable country with good animal welfare, good water and air quality you will need to make citizens aware of the impact it has which products they are buying and consuming.

During my travels I realized that there are many ways to make people part of your farm and that a connection is easy made. But the key to success of it all are people, it's about people. Why does one farmer know to make the connection with the people around him and the other does not. Why does one farmer know how to move a whole crowd of people and not the other?

It has to do with guts, being vulnerable, looking around and empathizing with the other person. Reach out to others, and check what their needs are. When you concluded the needs, start to look for a connection within the needs. Does the needs has to be for filled with a product, an experience, care, food, IT, knowledge. The key for success in the future of agriculture is to share our great sector with the people who we think of now stand the furthest away. But keep in mind, there can be always a connection made.

Please note: Nuffield NL scholars all make an English summary that will be published in the Nuffield International database. Their findings can be presented in many different ways and can be in Dutch or English. Please contact the individual scholar if you want to get to know more about his/her study.

Title: How can we bridge the gap between farmers and citizens

- Through products; personalize products, give products a face so people start to see a person behind the products.
- Through experience; farm parks and events, learning the unexpected.
- Through education; open days and curriculum, teach children how food is produced, get them involved.
- Through media; videos and social media, positive framing of farming and food.
- Most important through **PEOPLE**. Make a connection to fill someone's needs. It all comes together at agriculture.