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5s4b: : Waste reduction and novel resources for sustainable production of safe food or feed

TRANSITION TO AN AGROECOLOGICAL COMMUNITY ORIENTED, CIRCULAR FOOD SYSTEM IN THE NETHERLANDS

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The Netherlands is well known for its intensive, efficient and import/export-oriented agriculture and food system. Since climate change impact and ecological challenges became prominent issues, achieving circularity and nature inclusiveness have become important objectives. Industrial ecology is the dominant paradigm for the desired transition focusing on resource use efficiency and a prominent role for agribusiness. An emerging paradigm is agroecology combining a holistic worldview with social innovation of the food system. This paradigm focusses on place based, community oriented initiatives leading to alternative food networks.

This paper focusses on the ambitions, challenges, strategies, and perspectives of agroecological initiatives for a fair, circular and nature inclusive food system in the Netherlands. We interviewed key stakeholders participating in the Dutch transformation to agroecology using transition theory and the multi-level-perspective as a conceptual framework.

At niche level we make a distinction between national, regional and local level. At national level several networks - like the CSA network, future farmers and organic farmers initiated the Federation of Agroecological farmers. Their ambition is to strengthen the position of agroecological farmers by influencing policies, stimulating exchange of knowledge between farmers and between farmers and scientists and improve access to land for new farmers.

At regional level farmers, citizens, NGO's, companies, and local governments have joined forces to stimulate the regional food transition based on agroecological principles. The

ambitions and challenges of the Amsterdam and Frisian Food Movements are exemplary for the Dutch context.

At local level a diversity of community initiatives connecting citizens and farmers have been established. They vary in type of organisation, involvement of citizens and farming practice. We describe examples initiated by farmers and examples of citizen led initiatives.

The initiatives are part of a broader regional orientated food system paradigm that has gained more momentum since the Corona crisis. This paradigm is about creating a bypass for the dominant food chain. The number of local and regional food communities is growing, and an increasing number of farmers is participating in short food chains.

Although these initiatives are in line with the vision for a transition to nature inclusive circular farming systems, they face a lack of regime support. In order to provide sustainable livelihoods to agroecological farmer communities, regime actors should focus on establishing sound operational conditions for the whole of the food system, including access to land, payments for ecosystem services and disincentives for environmental pollutions.

Keywords: agroecology, food system, transition, community