

Dutch environmental co-operatives: are they examples of boundary organisations for nested markets?



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Presentation Outline

- Introduction to Environmental Co-operatives (EC)
- Context from which they emerged and role in the creation of new markets in agri-environment services.
- Theoretical context to Boundary Organisations – what BO theory says and how they are structured and how they work.
- Potential/Obstacles of EC/BO to develop further nested markets.

- **Collective management of the agricultural environment – a Dutch solution**
- Environmental Co-operatives are
 - local organisations of mostly farmers, but often also including non-farmers,
 - who work in close collaboration with each other and with various local and national agencies
 - to integrate nature management into farming practices,
 - by adopting a pro-active approach based on a local and regional perspective.



Membership of EC

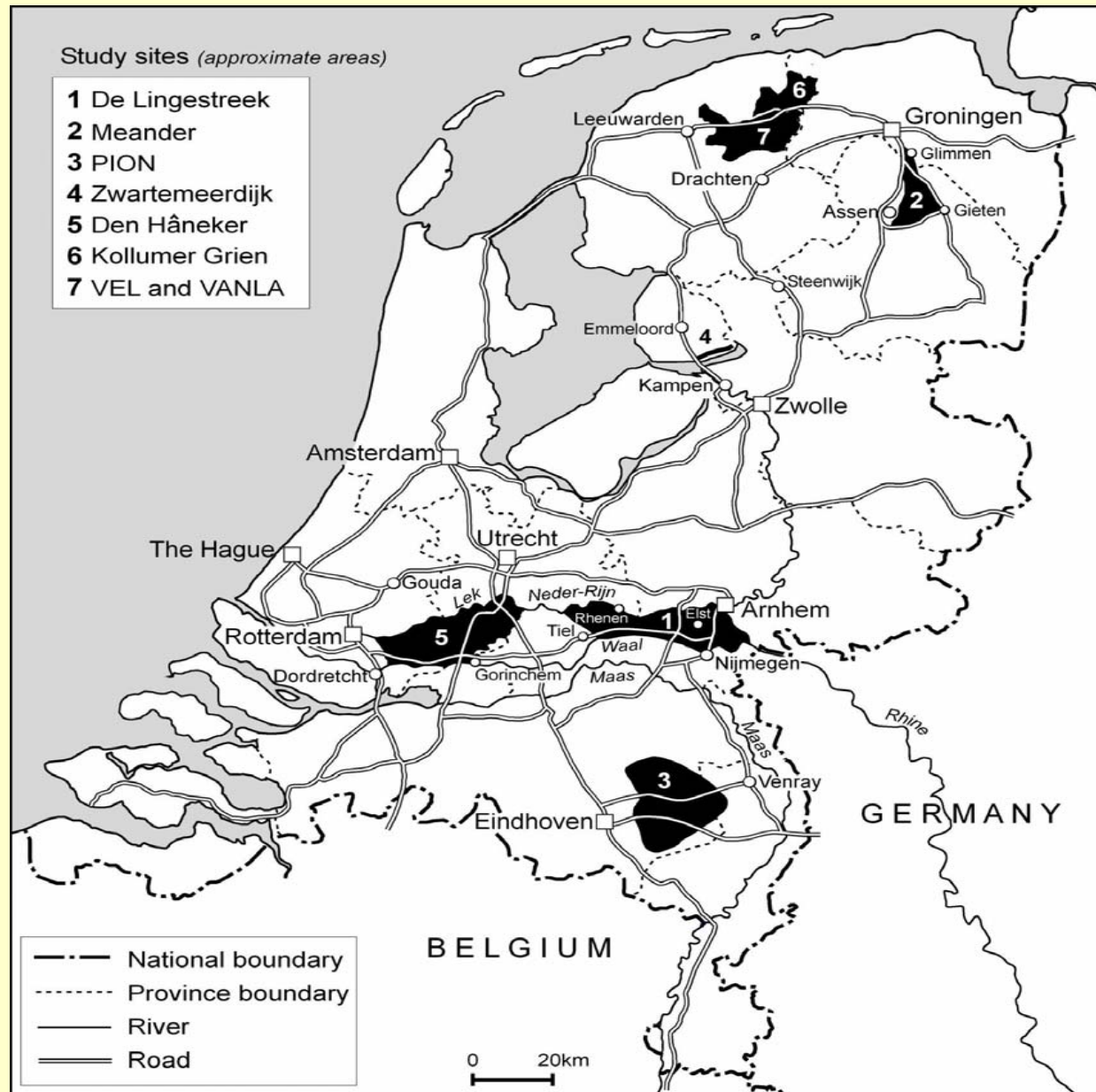


- >120 EC established
 - About 10% of Dutch farmers
 - 10,000 members*
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- 60% of EC allow non-farmer members.
 - 2,500 non-farmer members.

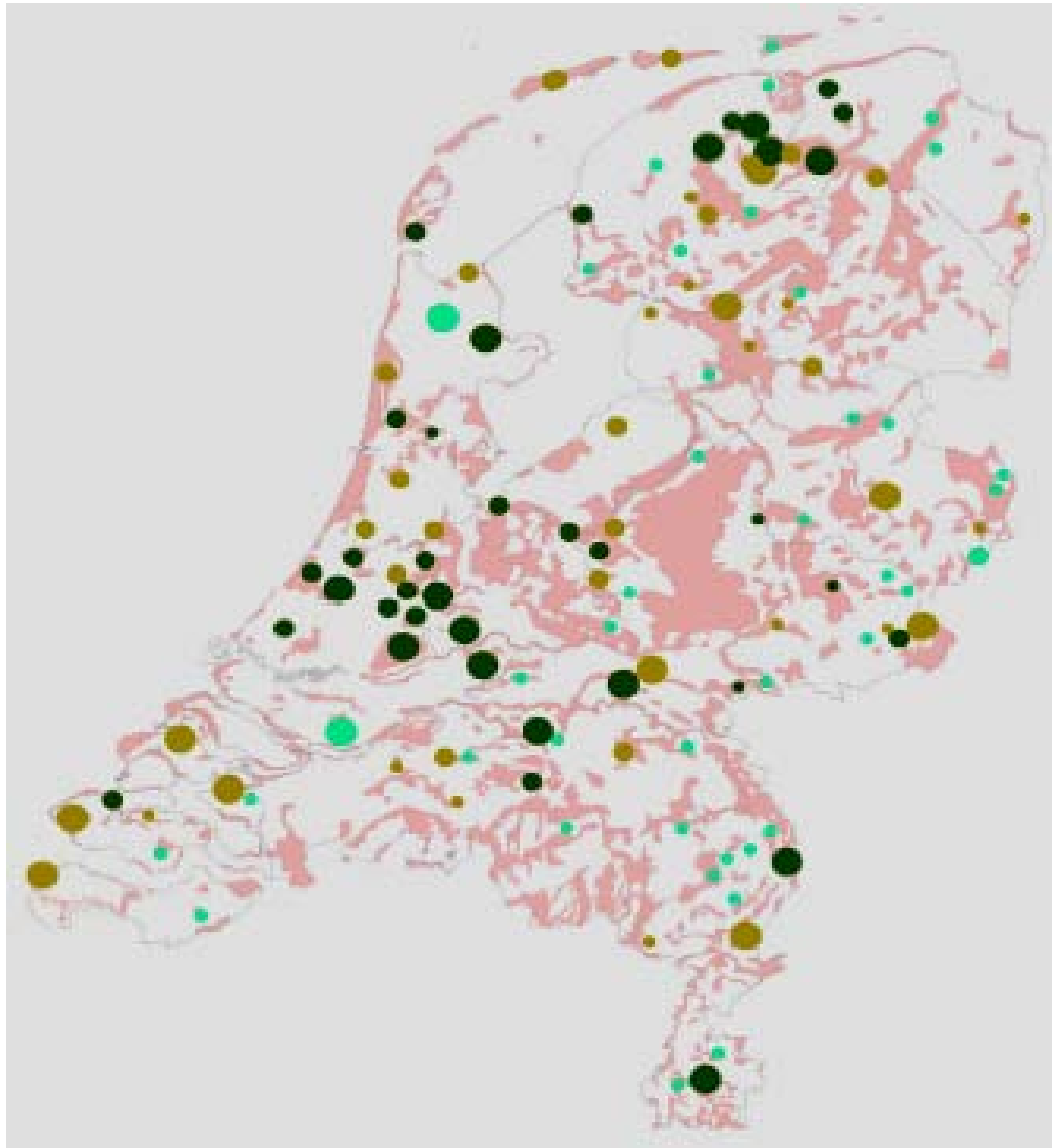
Survey Sample

- Seven case studies of EC
- Supplemented with additional interviews (Ministry, Natuurlijk Platteland Nederland, Conservation organisations).
- Selected on basis of age – well established to recent.

Location of case studies



Location of Dutch EC



- Up to 10 members or unknown
- 10-100 members
- 100 members or more
- Ecological Network Designated Areas
- Location of EC based on members postcodes (colour circle)

The context from which EC emerged

- Concern in relation to externalities of agriculture.
- Environmental policy positions:
 - Relation Paper (1975)
 - Nutrient management restrictions ('80s-'90s)
 - National Policy Plan & National Ecological Network (1990)
- Farmers excluded from nature management
1990 National Co-operative Society suggested farmer led associations

Reasons for establishment of Environmental Co-operatives

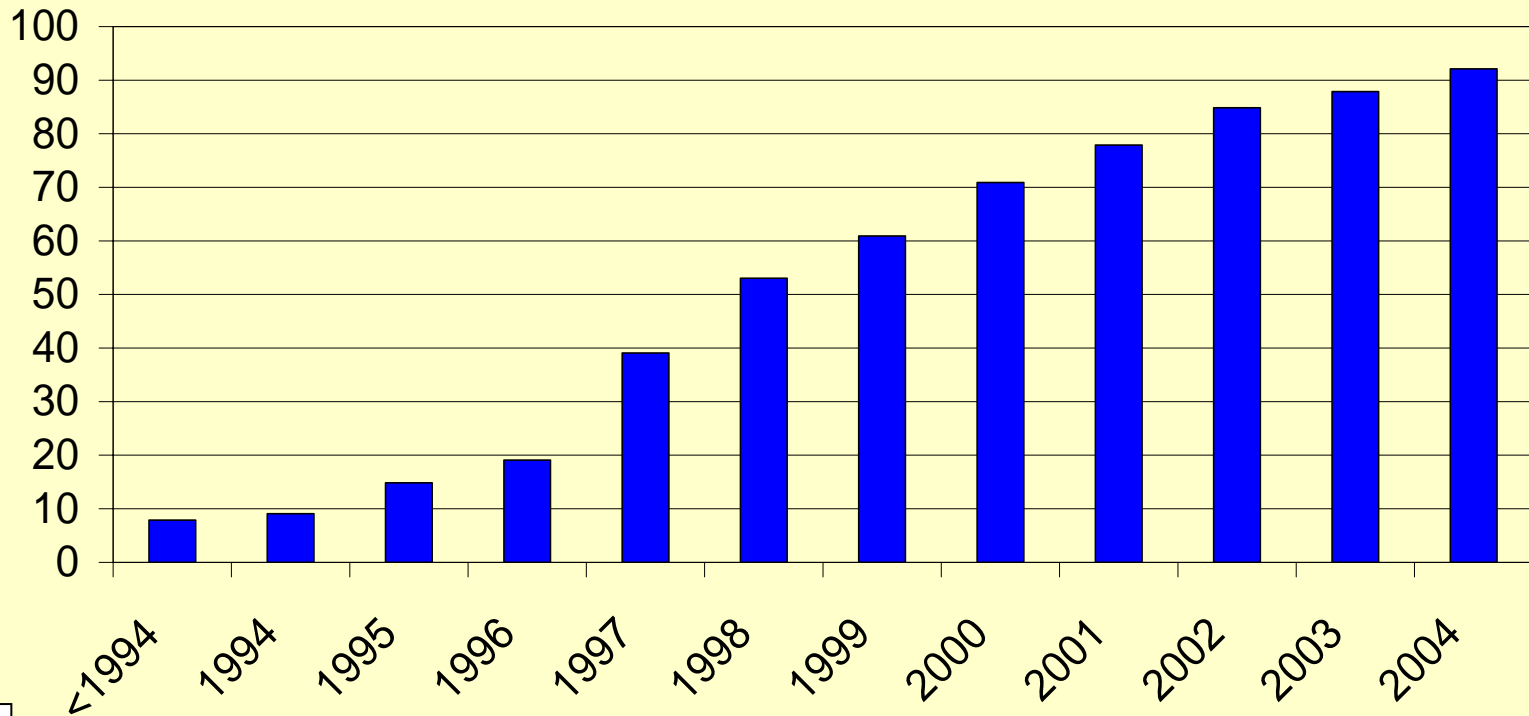
- To empower stakeholders
- To integrate agriculture and nature management
- To learn from each other – farmer knowledge, science and society.
- To develop applied contextualised solutions
- Access to agri-environment market

Opening up of Agri-environment market

- From low farmer participation
- Governance experiment with farmers ('95-'98)
- Encouragement of farmer access to schemes (Programma Beheer 2000, Nature for People, People for Nature, 2002)
- Some funding for EC organisations & national representative/support body.
- Development of measures to support collective provision of agri-environment services.

Growth of EC

Growth of registered Environmental Co-operatives in the Netherlands (Oerlemans *et al.* 2004)



Activities undertaken by EC

- Provide critical mass (lobbying, access grants)
- Co-ordinate joint application to AE schemes
- Provide training to land managers
- Help members apply for grants
- Co-ordinate landscape scale improvements
 - Planting trees, clearing ditches
- Construct footpaths, bike routes
- Facilitate social exchange
- Provide research facilities

References

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- **Wiskerke, J. S. C., Bock, B. B., Stuiver, M. and Renting, H.** (2003) Environmental co-operatives as a new mode of rural governance. *NJAS Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences* **51** (1-2): p. 9-25.
- **Oerlemans, N. J. and Assouline, G.** (2004) Enhancing farmers networking strategies for sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production* **12**: p. 469-478
- OECD (1998) *Co-operative approaches to sustainable development*. OECD, Paris.
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What are boundary organisations?

- Organisations that work mediating between different social worlds and communities to bring people on either side of a boundary together to increase mutual understanding of one another's perspectives, capacities and needs
- While
- individuals within the organization remain within their respective professional boundaries and maintain their responsibility to their different constituencies
- (Guston 1999; O'Mahony and Bechky 2008; Star and Griesemer 1989; Emad and Roth 2009)

A key contribution of BOs

- Is their ability to link science and non-scientific interests across different levels, scales and organizations (Cash 2001).

How do BOs work

- Successful BOs “allow the boundary of the issue itself [to be] negotiated” (Cash 2001: p 450) and whilst doing this develop means whereby the “internal instability of the actual boundary” is maintained (Guston 2001: p. 401)

Boundary objects

- BOs are able to establish a “stable but flexible sets of rules” (Moore 1996: p1598) for engaging in **boundary objects**.
- boundary objects *deliberately blur boundaries between two or more distinct social worlds to allow all sides of the boundary to present their discussions in a way most favourable to their own perspectives and constituencies whilst leading to more productive policy making* (Guston 1999).
- **Boundary objects** are entities that are “plastic enough to adapt to the local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identify across boundaries”.

Standardized packages

- Standardized packages are the outcome of BO negotiations around boundary objects
- Standardised packages are more robust than boundary objects; they are more adept than the former at stabilizing facts (Fujimura 1992: p 168) and emphasise the collaboration between actors “to ‘get work done’” (Guston 1999: p 90).
- *They are more concrete outputs are sufficiently specific to allow change to practices on all sides of the boundary.*

Working practices

- four characteristic roles of successful BOs identified by Tribbia and Moser (2008: p. 317):
 - Convening
 - Translation
 - Collaboration
 - and (for some) mediation

Working practices

- The ***convening*** function brings together stakeholders for face-to-face contact and discussions, exchanges of information and perspectives, and fosters trust-building.
- The ***translation*** function makes information comprehensible and ensures resources are available.
- **Collaboration** is the ability to management frank and transparent dialogue to allow the co-production of relevant and scientifically credible, applied knowledge and to agree practical measures for its delivery (standardized packages).
- **Mediation**, only played by some BOs, helps assure the various interests of stakeholders, information producers and users are fairly represented.

Example of ECs as BOs for nature management

- *ECs trigger adaptation around key organizing domains (governance, membership, ownership and control of production)*
- *ECs de-lineate boundaries between divergent and convergent interests*
- *ECs provide a stable and durable structure to reinforce mutual adaptation*

Example of ECs as BOs for nature management

- **CONVERGENCE**
- “At this time, for farmers to speak with environmental groups was not done, it was like ‘cursing in church’. We had a lot of problems ... As [a group of] young farmers, we said this is not the way to do it; it is not useful to go to court and fight with each other. It is better to create a dialogue, to get on speaking terms”, (Farmer non-member– founder member of de Peel (3e)).

Example of ECs as BOs for nature management

- **TRANSLATION**
- Plenty examples of ECs working with government (national and local) to generate resources

Example of ECs as BOs for nature management

- **COLLABORATION**
- is the cornerstone of their work.
- ECs are involved in a wide range of diverse organisations (Oerlemans and Wiskerke 2000; Polman 2002).

Example of ECs as BOs for nature management

- **MEDIATION**

- Much of the work of ECs involves addressing demarcation disputes.
- Carr and Wilkinson (2005: p 261) believe this is bound to be the case because “**the kinds of conversations that occur within a BO necessitate going out on a limb**”.

The boundary players

- Pioneers:
 - farmers,
 - non-farmers,
 - scientists and
 - others linked institutions/authorities (could list these from table...?)

Co-operative partners

- Regional LTO
- Provinces
- Municipalities
- Natuurlijk Platteland (Natural Countryside Netherlands)
- Landschappbeheer (Landscape Management)
- Waterschappen (District water boards)
- Provinciale Landschappen (Provincial Landscapes)
- Staatsbobeheer
- Natuurmonumenten
- Milieufederatie (Environmental Federation)

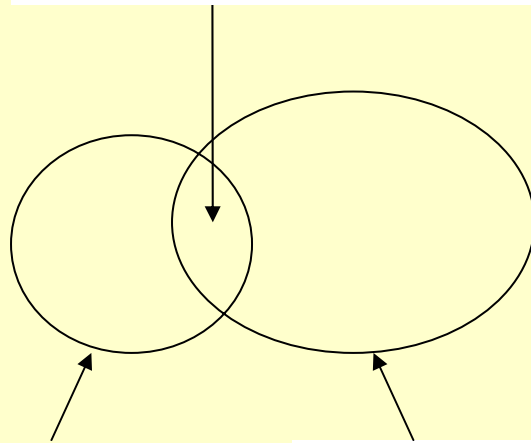
(Source: Oerlemans *et al.* 2004: p. 18: Table 2.7.)

Stakeholder Benefits

- Benefits to farmers
- Benefits to rural economy and society
- Benefits to government
- Benefits to environment

Examples of ECs as BOs for developing nested markets (e.g. locally produced and branded food)

•Overlapping market for cheese

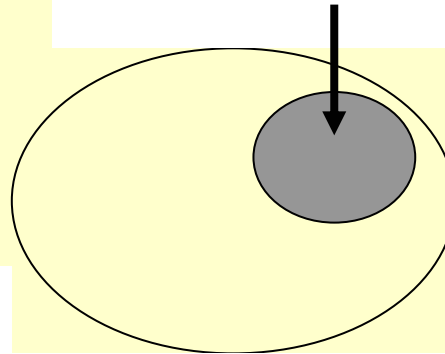


•A complete menu

•A healthy diet

•Nested market for cheese

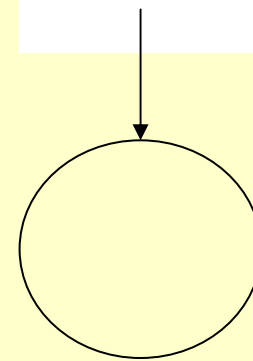
•*Locally branded cheese within a broader market*



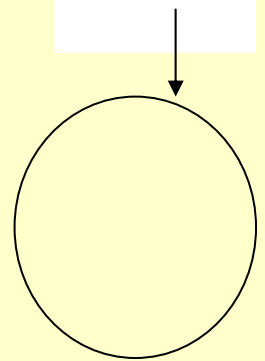
•Broader market for cheese
(may include several nested markets)

•Segregated market

•cheese



•boots



Examples of ECs as BOs for developing nested markets (e.g. locally produced and branded food)

- **De Lingestreek** had no collective marketing programme among their activities.
 - “No, [in this area milk produced sold to local large cooperatives] We hope in about 5 years but not at the moment.....**It is something for the future.**” (Farmer member: De Lingestreek).

Examples of ECs as BOs for developing nested markets (e.g. locally produced and branded food)

- VEL/VANLA also had no local food production and branding programme, though it had been discussed.
 - “I think it is the PMOV that will take that up. It is also very difficult for farmers, when you see the stress of **‘you must be bigger’ to survive. It costs a lot of energy to get new products and so on..... Who has the time, who has the interest, who pays for it.....?** (Farmer member of VANLA. PMOV is an umbrella organisation to which VANLA is a member).

Question

- **Given the potential for ECs to act as BOs in developing local food, why did our survey of 7 EC not report any activity in this area?**
- Sample too small – needs dedicated survey?
- Dutch farmers have investment in food processing – so not in their interests?
- Efficient Dutch food system exists – that quickly identifies (help create) and supplies nested markets?
- The Netherlands is a small country, so less regional diversity to exploit?



The End





← This
from
this
(EC Zwaartemeerdijk)



Examples of ECs as BOs for developing nested markets (e.g. locally produced and branded food)

- PION (largest EC by membership of farmers in our survey - no projects but previous experience developing such a programme had led to nothing
 - “In association with Innovation Network Platform we tried to create a brand for the food products in the De Peel area. **PION tried to construct the initial idea and we found we were unable to do that.** The conclusion was that we cannot and should not do those things. The biggest lesson was that we should not go into areas that are beyond our scope.” (Board of Management, non-farmer. PION).



Examples of ECs as BOs for developing nested markets (e.g. locally produced and branded food)

- De Lingestreek areas has a historical reputation for producing marmalade and jam from regionally familiar and increasingly outdated varieties of fruit trees.
 - **Could their EC help develop that?**
 - “There is a company that brands a local organic fruit drink. But says that it is difficult, that there is no market structure.”
 - **Could the EC be the co-ordinator?**
 - “Maybe, maybe it is coming for the future, **although I think the region is too small, need a large region. The EC has thought about it but it does not seem a feasible option at the moment**” (Non farmer member, officer on Board of Management. De Lingestreek.)

Examples of ECs as BOs for developing nested markets

(e.g. locally produced and branded food)

- Some local farmers (from within the Meander ECs recruitment area) had organised a food produce production and marketing chain, but Meander EC had not developed such a programme.
- For example, one farmers sold,
 - “Organic beef farm branded from his own farm and sold in Groningen. That farmer has a lot of land rented from Staatsbosbeheer and Natuurmonumenten, so restricted in practice anyway so became organic. **Has a local food chain direct to consumer in Groningen**”. (Farmer member; Meander.)

Examples of ECs as BOs for rural development (e.g. developing agri-tourist network)

- ***PION's involvement in a Tourist Network Programme (*Agro-Toeristisch Netwerk*).***
- Programme designed to generate a full range of tourist experiences within the area,
 - includes businesses selling locally produced ice cream, a business with a horse drawn carriage, camping site on a farm, bed and breakfast accommodation, etc.

Examples of ECs as BOs for rural development (e.g. developing agri-tourist network)

- We were told other ECs had similar programmes
 - “Yes. There are small local networks. Den Hâneker has a network.” (Non-farmer member – restaurant business. PION).

Examples of ECs as BOs for rural development (e.g. developing agri-tourist network)

- One programme participant a - restaurateur & member of PION EC – recognised the importance that arrangement are good,
 - “for instance if I arrange a visit, the whole trip will be associated with my restaurant. **If they have a bad experience they will associate it with my restaurant and not come back and that is a bad advertisement.**” (Non-farmer member – restaurant business. PION).
- And as a restaurateur were concerned that food hygiene for local products met required standards

Over to you

- Comments, views and above all discussion



Some quotes to consider

- Wiskerke *et al.* (2003)
 - “within the domain of agriculture and rural development, self-organization and self-regulation emerge as a new mode of rural governance” (p. 9).
- Glasbergen (2000)
 - the future of ECs lay with “mobilising other stakeholders and create well-aligned social networks at local and regional level” (p. 22).

EC: Zwaartemeerdijk

