

## Farming with Future

**Aalbers, P.<sup>1</sup>, Heijne, B.<sup>2</sup>, Helsen, H.<sup>2</sup>, Jong, P.F. de<sup>2</sup>, Kievit, G.<sup>1</sup>, Ravesloot, M.<sup>2</sup>, Vermeulen, R.<sup>1</sup>, Wenneker, M.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> DLV Plant, P.O. 7001, 6700 CA Wageningen, The Netherlands

<sup>2</sup> Applied Plant Research (WUR-PPO-fruit), P.O. Box 200, 6670 AE Zetten, The Netherlands; e-mail: marc.ravesloot@wur.nl

In 2003 the Dutch Government chose a new approach for the implementation of sustainable crop protection by taking the initiative to a National Agreement on Crop Protection. This agreement between stakeholders from agribusiness, governmental and non-governmental organisations set goals for the reduction of environmental effects of pesticides as a shared responsibility of the stakeholders.

The project Farming with Future started in 2004 to work on the implementation of sustainable crop protection at the regional level. Farming with Future uses a network approach. Networks in the project consist of different stakeholders from the agricultural sector (farmers, research, advisory services, suppliers, water board, etc.). Thanks to the National Agreement, there is a common interest and responsibility for sustainability of crop protection, which makes cooperation in the network possible. Within the network new technologies and strategies from research are tested on participating farms and evaluated on effectiveness and feasibility. The technologies and strategies that are supported by stakeholders in the network are disseminated to the agricultural sector in cooperation with these stakeholders. Constraints that are faced by the network of stakeholders are selected as new topics for the research agenda and communicated with policy makers. The network approach has realised a change from *one way knowledge transfer* to *knowledge circulation* by active participation of stakeholders in the process of development and dissemination of sustainable crop protection. The network approach also enables the formation of new coalitions of stakeholders that work together on specific bottlenecks in the sustainability of crop protection.

The challenge for research institutes and policy makers is to use this approach to reach a higher level of implementation of new developed strategies and technologies for sustainable development and to solve problems that can only be solved by cooperation of different stakeholders.