

Urban Agriculture Guide

Urban Agriculture in the Netherlands Under the Magnifying Glass



multifunctional

Colophon



The Urban Agriculture Guide describes the experiences, learning moments, tips and tricks of those involved in the initiatives of urban agriculture and an indication is provided of what is required to develop urban agriculture further in the Netherlands. The brochure provides agrarian entrepreneurs, municipalities and physical planners with guidelines for the optimal use of this particular type of farming. The Urban Agriculture Guide is one of the initiatives prioritised by Waardewerken; an innovation network of 20 pioneers in the area of multifunctional farming. Together with Wageningen UR (Plant Science Group and the Animal Science Group) these pioneers focus on strengthening multifunctional farming. This guide is also produced in collaboration with the project 'Tomorrows Taste', an innovation project of arable farming in the Netherlands. The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality has commissioned this order. Also see www.waardewerken.nl and www.syscope.nl. Special thanks go to Neeke van Zwol (student at the Van Hall Institute in Leeuwarden) and the interviewees.



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Preface

Cities and agriculture are coming increasingly closer together, which is particularly apparent in the case of urban agriculture. There are initiatives in this field in various places in our country. In spite of great enthusiasm, in practice progress is stubborn; in some cases it has taken twenty years for an original idea to be realised. Views of urban agriculture in the Netherlands told by a policy officer, an agricultural entrepreneur, a physical planner and a citizen follow.

PHYSICAL PLANNING

Christian Zalm, Senior Landscape Architect in Almere:

"It is important that farming is not just a backdrop for cities to look at. Urban agriculture improves the liveability of cities. A city like Almere will be enriched with urban agriculture. It is interesting for me to consider types of farming that fit in with the requirements of city residents. Something that may also play a role is that farmers are trendy at the moment; consider TV programmes in the Netherlands involving farmers. Subsequently, property developers are becoming increasingly interested in farming and living in the countryside."



IN PRACTICE

Rutger van Mazijk, Manager of Caetshage City Farm:

"The Caetshage city farm in Culemborg is a meeting place for the inhabitants of the residential area of Eva-Lanxmeer nearby. There is an experimental garden, a tearoom and a farm for health. Importantly, all of these are located near the residential area. Local inhabitants are happy with this. Because it is near the city, health care clients do not have to use buses or cabs to get here, and it is easy for inhabitants to come to us. A place like this is often lacking in residential areas. Inhabitants from other parts of Culemborg also visit the Cityfarm."



POLICY

Ina Eleveld, Project Manager for the Municipality of Meppel:

"Urban agriculture is a type of farming where the relationship with inhabitants takes centre stage. Because it is so close, urban agriculture can be used to involve inhabitants. This is essential because of the limitations of urban agriculture. Urban agriculture companies can only be sustainable if inhabitants are involved in the company. Urban agriculture must therefore be visible in the residential area. For municipalities, urban agriculture is a cheap and special solution for green area management in the city. In order to develop urban agriculture, it is important for municipalities and entrepreneurs to come into contact with each other at an early stage."



CITIZEN

Simon van Schooten, involved with the Genneperhoeve Farm:

"There is enormous interest in the Genneperhoeve Farm in Eindhoven, which clearly fulfils a requirement for many people. I have been actively involved in keeping this a rural area since 1977. What you see here reflects the variation of the Brabant countryside. It is of great importance to maintain something like this on the outskirts of the city and to ensure that it is preserved. The preservation of a city farm is almost at right angles to the dynamics we are familiar with, certainly in Eindhoven. This sometimes makes it difficult to maintain things."



Introduction

The Position of Urban Agriculture

Many agrarian entrepreneurs do more than produce food: they provide opportunities for recreation, education, care, child care, product processing and home sales. The number of these multifunctional agricultural types is considerable; farmers keep thinking of new and often unexpected concepts. Having a special position in this, urban agriculture takes place at companies that are currently within or on the outskirts of the city, or companies that soon will be due to city expansion. Civilians want to become increasingly involved in nature and food production. In this way, farmers can obtain their place. Some municipalities pick up this signal and start working on the realisation of urban agriculture; places that function as a meeting place for civilians where they can actively experience how food is produced. This also provides opportunities for agrarian entrepreneurs and municipalities who may collaborate in business constructions that generate an added value for both the city and agriculture.

What is urban agriculture?

It is not easy to give a simple and clear description of urban agriculture, but it must meet a number of conditions:

- The demands of the city are central to city farm management.
- The city acknowledges and protects the city farm in word and deed.
- Fully functioning farms in and around the city are concerned.
 - The company provides a proper image of current agriculture.

- The company is economically independent.
- Other activities have a limited influence on management.
- Agrarian entrepreneurs are aware of the added value of their company to the city and wish to dedicate themselves to satisfy urban needs or even to reduce metropolitan problems by providing:
 - Education and recreation.
 - Care farming and child care.
 - Product processing and home sales.
 - Nature conservation and management of green space.

The added value of urban agriculture

Urban agriculture is not only attractive to entrepreneurs from an economic point of view. From a social point of view, urban agriculture is a satisfying type of entrepreneurship; citizens are (again) involved in agriculture, farmers know who they are producing for, and it offers variety and job satisfaction. Urban agriculture also benefits the municipality. The quality of the living

environment is becoming increasingly important; for many inhabitants, greenery in particular is a prerequisite to feeling comfortable. Urban agriculture provides a unique (and often inexpensive) solution to managing green areas. In addition, urban agriculture provides green areas with an extra dimension by providing food, care, education or recreation, allowing for a lively and versatile city landscape to develop. Urban agriculture is also economically beneficial to the municipality and civilians. A report by the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research has proven that living in a green area has a positive influence on house prices.

Recreation nearby

Urban agriculture involves civilians more in city green areas. A recent study by the Social and Cultural Planning Board has proven that people prefer recreation in their immediate vicinity, where they can see what blossoms and flourishes, experience the changes of seasons and discover where their food comes from. Civilians thus feel responsible for their own environment. ■



Urban Agriculture Under the Magnifying Glass

Almere: Urban Agriculture as Groundkeeper

The Almere city farm finds itself in an unparalleled situation: the farm operates in an expanding and new city for which it manages grounds that are eventually to be made available for urban planning. In addition, it is located in an urban country estate established for Almere inhabitants for recreation and education regarding agriculture, nature and the environment.

Culemborg: Urban Agriculture in an Ecological Residential Area

Caetshage city farm originated with the realisation of an ecological residential area. This residential area, EVA-Lanxmeer, was designed as an area where far-reaching environmental measures were taken regarding water, energy, waste processing and sustainable building materials. In addition, a considerable part of the land is commonly used and managed by the residents. Caetshage city farm is still under construction.

Eindhoven: Urban Agriculture as City Gates

The city of Eindhoven is developing three new gates that will serve as a connection between the city and outlying areas. These gates have several objectives; citizens can buy produce and experience the production process and are encouraged to venture further and more frequently into the rural area. Two of the three city gates are to arise out of the Philips Fruittuin Wielewaal fruit garden and De Gennep Hoeve city farms.

Meppel: Urban Agriculture as a Unique Selling Point

The urban farms in the Nieuwveense Landen were originally intended as an instrument to create an unparalleled residential area, making living in Meppel even more attractive. Instead of adapting the original parcelisation pattern to the design of the residential area, the design of the residential area has been adapted to this parcelisation. Urban agriculture is a logical consequence of the fact that agriculture is expressly present in the residential area.



Senior Landscape Architect Christian Zalm:

"In the 1980's, Almere was in the unique position of having new land made available for urban design. The municipality of Almere used farms for managing this new land. In addition, Almere was designed as a suburban city where arable farming would fulfil a logical function. The idea came many years later: a city farm which, in addition to managing green areas, was to contribute to the city's liveability."



Hans Warrink, Managing Director of the Eksternest Nature Centre and Estate Manager of the Landgoed De Kemphaan country estate:

"The 1990's initiative to set up the Landgoed de Kemphaan country estate has integrated urban agriculture in Almere. Stichting Kemphaan (Kemphaan foundation) played an important role in the municipality to obtain land for a city farm. The Almere City Farm satisfies the residents' recreational and educational needs as well as managing and dressing up the city. Outdoor lessons and sale of meat bring inhabitants closer to agriculture."



1970

1980

1990

1993

1995

When Almere citizens took the initiative to establish an urban country estate in 1993, they felt that it should also include a city farm. Agrarian entrepreneurs Tom Saat and Tineke van den Berg seized the opportunity to establish a farm "facing the city".



In addition to food production, the Almere City Farm was established with three objectives:

- managing the green areas between the urban districts of Almere by means of organic agriculture;
- providing education and recreation to Almere residents;
- carrying out agrarian nature management.

The organic farm comprises 100 ha of farming and 500 ha of nature conservation where suckler cows graze. Fields are scattered in and around Almere and are owned by the municipality of Almere, the Dutch Forestry Commission and the Flevoland-schap, a nature conservation organisation. Only the property and buildings are owned. Meat is sold at the farm as well as at the agricultural market in Almere. In collaboration with the

Entrepreneur Tineke van den Berg: "The development of a city farm in Almere provided us with the opportunity to run a farm in the Netherlands. The fact that the company can target city inhabitants appealed greatly to us. Due to this public function, we are receiving more and more appreciation from the municipality for the added value we are bringing to the city. During the first eight years, we were preoccupied with the uncertainty concerning land, but we've now come to think in terms of "we're still here, so everything will be okay".



2000

2006

2010

Eksternest municipal Nature Centre, farm lessons are provided to primary schools.

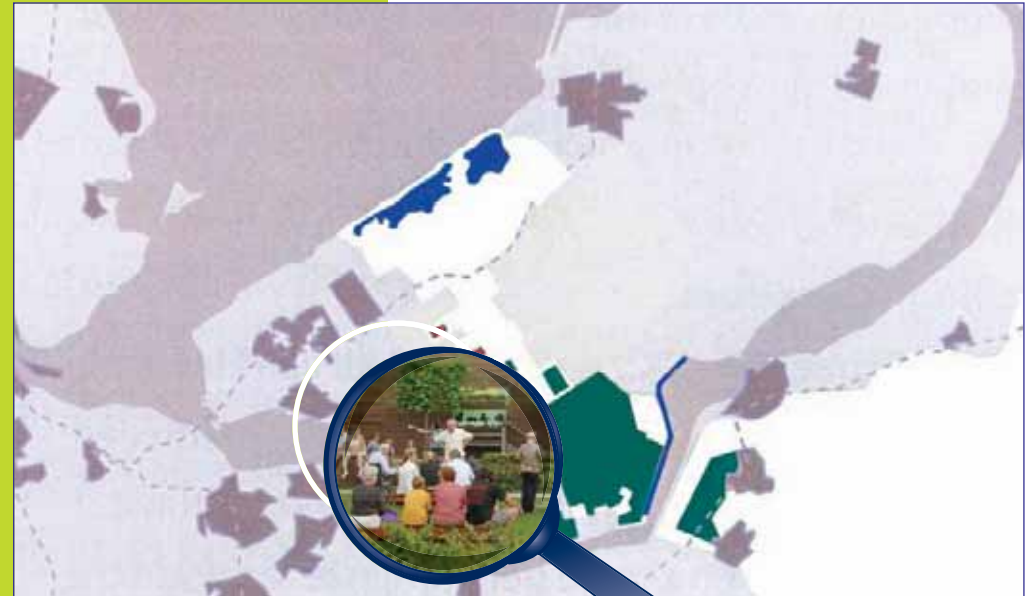
Added value

It has taken considerable time for all the parties and people involved to appreciate the added value of urban agriculture. Acquiring sufficient agricultural land, for example, is thus slow and cumbersome. The city farm has earned its right to exist by managing its affairs well and building up a public function. After ten years there is still uncertainty about the dimensions of the arable land because of city expansion and modifications of designated use, but a lot of work is going into finding a solution together with the municipality. In the future, both entrepreneurs are expecting to be able to manage their businesses with even

greater sustainability as a result of increased certainty about the land and further development of the public function.

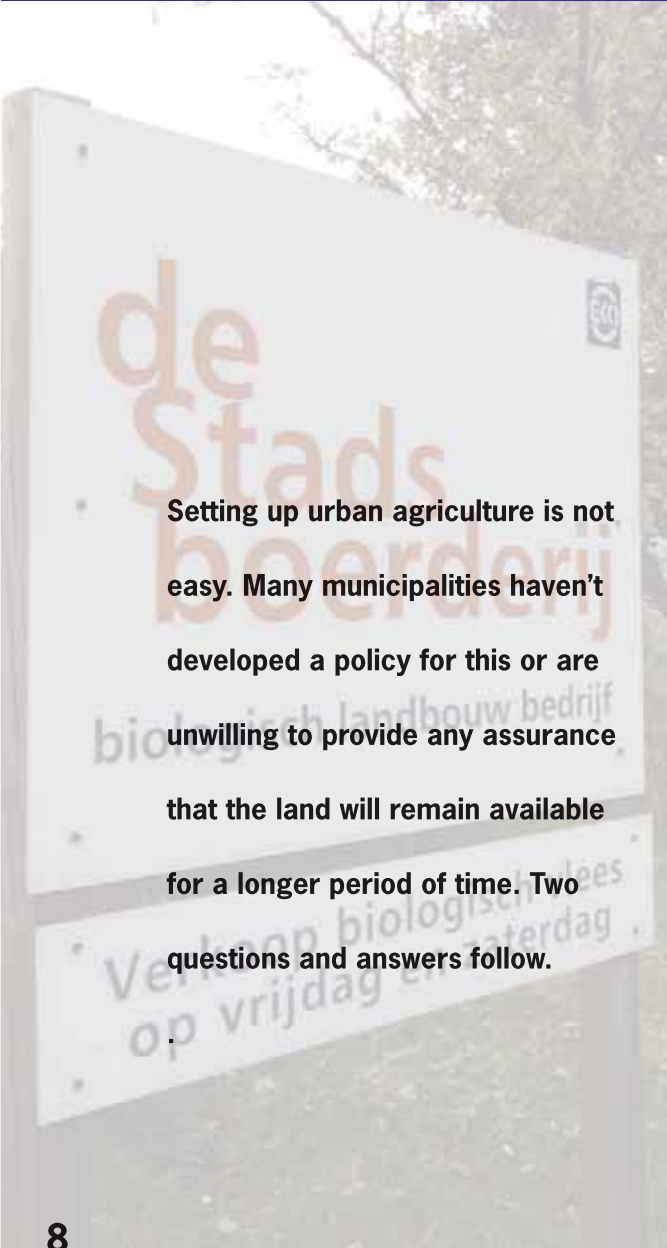
Preservation of Green Areas

The Almere City Farm is located at a reasonable distance from the urban hub of Almere. In future years, the city will expand to the east. The Almere city farm located on the Landgoed de Kemphaan country estate ensures that the green area, which will eventually be situated within the city, remains green. In addition, it ensures the maintenance of green areas in the city itself by allowing suckler cows to graze there or by growing crops. Urban agriculture provides security for the maintenance of green areas in the city.



"The right to exist is earned by giving shape to the public function and by showing that you are a good farmer."

Tineke van den Berg



Setting up urban agriculture is not easy. Many municipalities haven't developed a policy for this or are unwilling to provide any assurance that the land will remain available for a longer period of time. Two questions and answers follow.

The Almere Approach

How does a city farm obtain land?

The Almere company is new and has no accompanying land; it is greatly dependant on the municipality to obtain land. The Almere City Farm manages land owned by the municipality as well as the Dutch Forestry Commission and Stichting Flevolandschap. In addition, they let land from other farmers, but this land is often located far from home.

Is there a land use agreement that provides certainty for the city farm and preserves flexibility for the municipality?

The situation in Almere may seem unique but there are in fact other cities in which the municipality owns land for future use. In order to prevent agrarian entrepreneurs from making a claim on this land, it is made available only with considerable reservations. A new type of agreement between the municipality and agrarian entrepreneurs might bring relief. An agreement is concerned in which the municipality still has flexible control over its land and the city farm is provided with assurances regarding a certain area. This is a different kind of agreement to a lease or hire agreement; consider an agreement where the municipality guarantees a certain area in return for a public function on the farm; according to Tineke van den Berg this is a challenge to the future of city farming. ■

"Farmers are trendy as is proven by certain television programmes in the Netherlands where farmers take centre stage. Therefore property developers are increasingly interested in agriculture and living in the countryside."

Christian Zalm

"Space for urban agriculture does not have to be a problem; it is just that too much land is currently being used for other purposes."

Hans Warrink



Culemborg

Caetshage Culemborg City Farm

Martin Bonouvrié, Spatial Planning Policy Officer for the Municipality of Culemborg: "In 1998, the municipality came into contact with Stichting EVA for the construction of an ecological residential area with various sustainable functions and a city farm. The municipality expressed interest in this city farm provided civilians were allowed to participate in the production of food, the terrain would be open to the public and that education and care would be offered. The local authority was convinced about the considerable added value offered to the residential area and the rest of Culemborg by the city farm and purchased land for this purpose in 2000."

Rutger van Mazijk of Stichting Caetshage: "When I discovered just how beneficial it is to work with plants and food, I started looking for a place to put this into practice. Caetshage became the location. In 2000, the gardener and I were ready to start. Unfortunately, the ground had not been purchased yet and archaeological excavations took place on the site. This took too long for the gardener, so I started off alone with the permaculture experimental garden. Inhabitants of the residential area and the rest of Culemborg can harvest their own vegetables here. We are currently building a shed, greenhouses and a tearoom."



1990

1998

2000

2010

The idea to develop a city farm was included when the ecological residential area of Eva-Lanxmeer in Culemborg was designed. Its establishment has been started but the city farm has not yet been completed.



The Stichting Caetshage has taken on the responsibility of setting up the Caetshage City Farm; a farm with 2.4 ha of horticultural and agricultural land and 2.8 ha comprising an ecological park, a permaculture experimental garden, greenhouses and a yard with tearoom. Since approving the plans, the municipality of Culemborg has purchased 5.2 ha of land on the outskirts of the residential area. Starting in 2002, Rutger van Mazijk has begun to lay out a 0.25-ha permaculture experimental garden and pick-your-own garden from the Stichting Caetshage. His vision of urban agriculture is to provide services to the city and to establish a central meeting place for everyone in the residential area. Currently, one health care client is active at the city farm and thirty five children from a private school attend lessons. ►

Culemborg



“On our city farm, we intend to utilise green areas as effectively as possible: it provides food for inhabitants, education to neighbourhood children and care for people from Culemborg.”

Rutger van Mazijk

“Due to its various functions and connection with the municipality and the residential area, Caets-hage city farm is much more distinct in comparison with multi-functional enterprises around the city.”

Martin Bonouvrié

In the future, this care and educational function is to be expanded to twelve health care clients and the provision of outdoor lessons to various schools in the neighbourhood. In addition, produce will be sold on the farm. In 2005, the foundation started with the construction of a shed, greenhouses and a tearoom, and several harvest festivals have been held at the city farm. However, due to the delay in the construction of the farm, finding a gardener has proven unsuccessful as of yet. It is important for the company to be well presented. The shed was to be built in a durable way and to fit in with the ecological residential area. Because the architect involved had to take into

account the wishes of the various parties (Stichting Caets-hage, the municipality and the design team of the EVA-Lanxmeer residential area) the shed turned out to be more expensive than expected.

Location

The Caets-hage City Farm is at walking distance from the Eva-Lanxmeer ecological residential area. The farm is thus not located in the centre of the new district, but it does provide citizens within walking or cycling distance an opportunity for recreation, education or buying fresh (farm) produce.



*The Caets-hage
Experimental
Garden.*

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The Culemborg Approach

How important is a fixed point of contact, in particular at the municipality?

Urban agriculture is a new concept and as a result existing initiatives were also confronted with issues arising from the unfamiliarity with urban agriculture. This also applied to the Caetshage City Farm where so many parties were involved that it became unclear who was responsible for what. After a number of miscommunications, the Stichting Caetshage pleaded for a fixed point of contact: someone who could resolve mistakes and misunderstandings. The municipality appointed a policy official as an internal project manager to provide a proper point of contact for the farmer and the foundation.

How can unpleasant surprises in the execution of activities be prevented?

Rutger van Mazijk of the Caetshage City Farm felt that the excavation contractor showed a lack of experience in using heavy machines in the fields. In retrospect, Van Mazijk would have preferred an agricultural contractor for this because of a greater experience with farming land. Support from experts in the development of urban agriculture would certainly have been an advantage. ■



“If the municipality is interested in urban agriculture, it will have to look for an agrarian entrepreneur and take on a facilitating role.”

Martin Bonouvrié

Carlos Faes of the Philips Fruit Garden: "In the early 1990's, it became clear that due to high costs and limited returns, the company was forced to embark on a new course. In those days, 40% of fruit was delivered to Philips NV employees. This gave us the idea to start a home sales enterprise. We had also hoped to set up a catering facility and social centre, but the municipality was not enthusiastic about this. This changed in 2001, when the municipality issued plans to develop city gates. Since 2005, we have been serious discussion partners to turn our company into a city gate. The experience and catering function will be included in these plans."



Has van Helvoort, Boven Dommel Regional Manager: "In 2005, Carlos Faes contacted me concerning the municipality of Eindhoven's plans for the city gates. Together we linked his plans for catering and experiencing to a possible city gate function. We initiated negotiations with the municipality about this and both parties recognised opportunities in each other's plans. As a result, Philips Fruittuin Wielewaal has been appointed as one of the city gates that are to connect Eindhoven with the outlying area (Het Groene Woud)."



In Eindhoven, urban agriculture has been so successful that two farms have been established: the Philips Fruittuin Wielewaal and the De Gennep Hoeve. Both enterprises are to function as the new Eindhoven city gates.

Philips Fruittuin Wielewaal originated as a Philips NV fruit company aimed at supplying fruit to employees. In the 1990's, the current entrepreneurs Carlos and Anneke Faes were given the opportunity to rent the company and they decided to transform it into a city farm. The company is located between Eindhoven and Het Groene Woud. In addition to the cultivation of apples, pears and plums on an area of over 10 hectares, the company has a farm shop and offers courses and workshops as well as an opportunity to get a glimpse behind the scenes at the orchard. Annually, these activities draw 40,000 visitors. Carlos Faes considers the company as an assembly point for experiences, nature, agricultural produce and escaping the city. This is why Faes intends to expand the company with a social centre and a catering facility.

The company is also to function as a gateway between the city of Eindhoven and Het Groene Woud. The location of urban agriculture provides an opportunity for interaction with citizens. Green areas are within easy reach by foot or bicycle and ensure easy access to the outlying area.

Combining functions

Philips Fruittuin Wielewaal is currently working to expand the space available for agrarian business operations, as well as to expand its public function. Carlos Faes discovered that by combining various functions in one single building, facilities and space can be employed efficiently (a storage depot with a cold store and bathroom, for instance). The advantages are: once-only costs for design purchase.

Farmer Age Opdam: “When it became apparent that a farm was to be established in Gennep, many people were afraid that they would no longer be able to enjoy the area and that their campaign to keep Gennep rural would be unsuccessful. But because the farm is operating at the interface between agriculture, nature and human beings, support among civilians has increased tremendously. The most vigorous protestors of the plans are now regular customers.”



The Gennep Hoeve started in 2002. The plan to develop an organic farm in the Eindhoven Gennep Parken first came into being in the 1970's, but it took another twenty years for it to be realised. The company consists of twenty dairy cows that graze on 20 ha of pastureland and 20 ha of countryside, a cheese dairy, 300 chickens, 12 pigs and 10 ha of horticulture and arable farming. Cheese and meat are sold in the farm shop; care and education are provided in collaboration with the environmental/educational centre located in the Gennep Parken.

Meeting Place

Agrarian entrepreneur Age Opdam considers city farms to be of great value as meeting places for agriculture, nature and people from the urban environment. In order to develop this meeting place further he intends to expand the health care branch and farm shop. The company will also be part of the three city gates that are currently being designed in Eindhoven. The company is still part of a foundation, but Opdam is hoping to be able to manage the company, which welcomes 25,000 visitors annually, as a self-employed person.



“Urban agriculture is agriculture at an illogical location in or on the outskirts of a city. It defines the experience of agricultural produce, the production process, education and recreation.”

Has van Helvoort



Setting up urban agriculture is not easy. Many municipalities haven't developed a policy for this or are unwilling to provide any assurance that the land will remain available for a longer period of time. Two questions and answers follow.

"By investigating what civilians really want, I found that there is a demand for urban agriculture. I have antennas that pick up what is going on in society."

Carlos Faes

The Eindhoven Approach

How can agrarian entrepreneurs and the municipality collaborate best when developing the plans?

In Eindhoven, the municipality has elaborated the plan for the Genneper Hoeve in detail. However, in reality certain points of this plan were found to be impracticable. It was also difficult to have the ideas of agrarian entrepreneurs Age and Mirjam Opdam incorporated into the plan. It took considerable lobbying to convince the municipality that adjustments in management strategy was needed, without rejecting their entire plan. Opportunities to develop De Genneper Hoeve farm further are now considered jointly. This example shows that setting up urban agriculture is more successful when a joint approach is taken by farmers and municipalities than when both parties make plans independently. When applying for a permit, Carlos Faes of Philips Fruittuin in Eindhoven discovered that the municipality's policy and vision was not the same as that of the province. The municipality opposed his plans, while the province was open to them. In order to avoid situations like these, the municipality and province should match one another



in the area of policy, vision, urban developments, etc. in order to avoid unnecessary delay in the process.

How can one establish an enterprise large enough to operate with economic independence?

Municipalities often think that urban agriculture can only be realised using subsidies! This was also the case for the municipality of Eindhoven when the De Genneper Hoeve farm was set up. After having worked for the foundation for four years, agrarian entrepreneurs Age and Mirjam Opdam would now like to continue as an independent company. The company is large enough, the city farm will be much cheaper for the municipality and entrepreneurs are provided with more space for entrepreneurship. ■



"A city farm is a good meeting place for agriculture, nature and consumers/ civilians, all integrated in an urban area and policy."

Age Opdam

Project Manager Ina Eleveld about the Nieuwveense Landen:

"When setting up a green residential area in 2001, I immediately considered agriculture that could ensure management of green areas as well as a singular living experience in the residential area. I thus started using the term 'urban agriculture' when making plans. We had to find farmers who were willing to make contact with the city inhabitants through farm activities. I also immediately considered organic companies because I think the use of pesticides is unsuitable in the city. We have found two farmers and the idea is for them to manage their companies independently and without subsidy."



Physical Planner Helmer Wieringa:

"Ina Eleveld asked me to participate in the project to help specify the zoning plan and to find organic farmers. Together we formulated and described the criteria that city farms should comply with in a special zoning plan for this area. In addition, we started looking for farmers. It certainly is a pity that the farmers selected are forced to wait to get started."



In 2001, the municipality of Meppel was appointed the centre of growth for the province of Drenthe. Since 2002, the agrarian area north of the city, the Nieuwveense Landen, has been developed as a residential area eventually comprising 5,300 houses.



The current parcelisation of the area adopted by the Nieuwveense Landen area in Meppel serves as a basis for the design of the residential area. In order to create unparalleled living conditions and to manage the extensive green areas, Project Manager Ina Eleveld came up with the concept of urban agriculture; organic farms that offer residents recreation, education and a place to buy produce, resulting in a pleasant living environment and a gradual transition from city to countryside. Since 2004, agrarian entrepreneurs have been able to apply to become farmers in the Nieuwveense Landen. Although two enthusiastic young entrepreneurs have been selected, they are not able to start yet because further decisions concerning the residential area first need to be made. At this moment the growth of Meppel has been reduced so there is less need for building new houses. ►

Meppel



Farmer Niels Schoonen: "In 2004, my business associate informed me about the Nieuwveense Landen. This was an opportunity for us to set up our own enterprise so we started working out ideas: we plan to breed bulls, grow vegetables and provide care for youngsters with minor social problems and people with an intellectual disability. We would also like to provide some child care and education. It is a shame we cannot start yet, and it is also a pity that we cannot make any agreements with future purchasers. In order to keep things moving, we requested personal contact with the alderman in 2006. We are determined to continue!"

"In my work I have seen how good the combination of arable farming and care is. It really makes a difference to people."

Niels Schoonen

"In urban agriculture the municipality has found an inexpensive and special solution to green area management in the city."

Ina Eleveld

Progress

As regards policy, urban agriculture is a (reasonably) new concept. Due to unfamiliarity, it takes a fair amount of time to develop an initiative further. The municipality involved (aldermen and civil servants) is to be informed and convinced of the initiative. In the case of Nieuwveense Landen in Meppel, the process was halted after the 2006 municipal elections. The new policymakers have to study the documents and the process of 'informing and convincing' has to be run through again. Furthermore there is less growth of the population in Meppel.



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The Meppel Approach

How can one avail of experienced parties and experience gained elsewhere?

Ina Eleveld of the Municipality of Meppel found it difficult to describe the designated use of urban agriculture. The appointed lawyers were unable to provide her with a clear description of the criteria Meppel farmers have to comply with. She finally succeeded with help from Helmer Wieringa of Land & Co. His knowledge of organic farming, physical planning and municipal regulations brought a solution. The designated use of the first city farm in Meppel is now a fact in the city zoning plan.

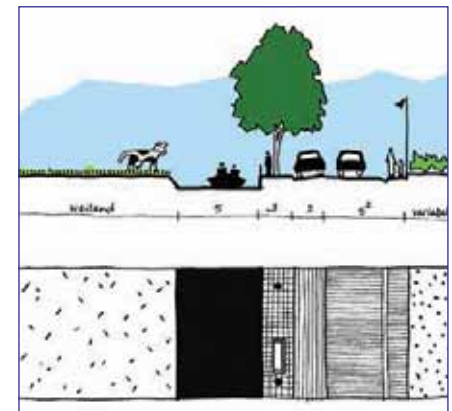
How can one involve all the parties in the plan at the earliest possible moment?

Ina Eleveld, Project Manager of the Nieuwveense Landen residential area in Meppel formulated a number of preconditions for the selected farmers: they were required to be organic entrepreneurs who were able to run an independent, economically sustainable company and who were prepared to interact with future residents of the residential area. In order to ensure involvement from an organic entrepreneur, she started looking for candidates from the biodynamic foundation Demeter. In order to develop urban agriculture, it is important for the municipality and the entrepreneurs to contact one another at an early stage. The municipality needs to be shown what the plans are so that both parties know where they stand and can anticipate each other's requirements. ■



“For urban agriculture to be successful, civilians need to connect to the location of the city farm. Proper communication with civilians is required. This is the only way for urban agriculture to become a natural part of the city.”

Helmer Wieringa



Step-by-Step Plan for Farmers

Step-By-Step Plan for the Design of a City Farm

Farmers who intend to start urban agriculture in the Netherlands must persevere; making contacts, lobbying among municipal officials and a clear-cut plan form the basis. Then the 'real' work as farmer begins.

- 1 Be sure that this is where your energy is. The kansenscanner (opportunity scanner; see www.waardewerken.nl, only available in Dutch) is an ideal tool for this. Important question include:
 - Is working in urban agriculture really your thing?
 - Do you avail of the proper skills and are you prepared to learn new skills? Perseverance, tact and social skills are of particular importance.
 - Does urban agriculture suit the company and surroundings?

- 2 Verify future plans for the area. Information concerning this can be found in the Provincial

Development Plan and the municipality's zoning plan.

- 3 Formulate your ideas as clearly and unambiguously as possible.

- Try to assess the consequences for the surroundings; consider negative consequences (tranquillity and traffic) and be sure to highlight positive effects (employment, consumer expenditure, opportunities for the surroundings).
- Visualise your ideas using draft sketches or images.

- 4 Discuss these ideas with others; this will generate considerable information and foster a sound basis. People to contact include:

- Fellow entrepreneurs in the direct vicinity.
- Fellow city farmers in other municipalities.
- Neighbouring citizens; your plans will affect their privacy, tranquillity, etc.
- Others who think with you, such as city residents as well as other 'unexpected' parties that include property developers, nature and ecology groups, political parties, etc.

- 5 Draw up an initial draft plan.

- State your intentions and set clear boundaries.

- Describe your ideas in the context of urban requirements and represent the role of the city farm in this. Key words are experience and education.
- Market research should be included at this stage. Make a list of requirements by future users and try to obtain quantitative data that show and indicate these requirements.
- Produce an analysis of the economic feasibility. The company has to be as economically independent as possible.
- Calculate the economic advantages to the city (cheap management of green areas, higher municipal property tax, etc) and how you can further serve (urban) requirements economically.

- 6 Discuss the draft plan and try to find support from the municipality.

- You will have a stronger position when you collaborate with the people stated in step 2, and an even stronger one when you allow them to make the initial contact.
- Provide a vision of the future that will allow you to explore the boundaries within which you can operate.
- Make people aware of the added value; added value for the city is of particular importance (education, more attractive living environment, etc.).

- 7 Find support from key municipal figures.

- This is usually a combination of policy/politics (aldermen) and implementation (civil servants). Only one of these is insufficient.
- Try to get these people to visit your company.

- 8 Formulate a definitive plan.

- This way, you produce a joint plan that is supported by everyone.
- Incorporate enough freedom into the plan to prevent you having to confer about every minor adjustment.

- 9 Make clear agreements (who, what, when) about collaboration and room for experimentation and make sure you have these agreements in writing.

- 10 Show that you are a good city farmer, both agriculturally and communicatively. Set up an activity (open day, harvest festival, or fair) to impress people.

Step-by-Step Plan for Municipalities

Step-By-Step Plan for Establishing City Farming

Municipalities that are planning to start with urban agriculture must ensure that their zoning plans provide proper anchorage. It is also important that urban agriculture becomes more than a petting farm; it should be a fully functional farm.

1 Familiarise yourself with city farming by visiting one of the initiatives and by contacting the entrepreneurs and institutions involved.

2 Ensure that urban agriculture is properly incorporated in municipal policy

- Find out how other municipalities have approached this
- Include urban agriculture as one of the designated uses in the zoning plan.
- Ensure a proper legal basis
- Ensure a fixed point of contact for every

aspect of urban agriculture (spatial function, arable function, public function, etc.)

3 Ensure that there is sufficient land of suitable quality. It must be able to become a real business and not just a petting farm.

4 Ensure that the land can be used by urban agriculture for an extended period of time.

5 Combine everything that has to do with urban agriculture in one single portfolio and make one single person responsible. Consider the following:

- Permits
- Spatial planning
- Education
- etc.

6 Provide room for experimentation. Create an opportunity in the zoning plan (for outlying areas as well as inner areas) to achieve various things without long and complicated procedures being required.

7 Find a suitable entrepreneur or group of entrepreneurs and start working with them.

Start with step 1 for the farmer.

The Future of Urban Agriculture in the Netherlands

In view of the social demand and successful examples, urban agriculture should earn a valuable place in or near the city in the future. As regards existing initiatives, plans for urban agriculture are implemented after a considerable amount of time and with great idealism by pioneers within the municipality and among the entrepreneurs in particular. Collaboration and understanding between policy, entrepreneur and civilians are essential (see the Step-by-step plan on pages 18 and 19).

For urban agriculture to have a chance, it must be visible in the planning process at an early stage. The spirit of the age seems to be more open to it than ever. There is a growing realisation that the design of the scarce open space in the Netherlands can (and must) be different. Setting up urban agriculture is one thing, but guaranteeing urban agriculture in a dynamic surrounding such as the city is another. The availability of sufficient land must be secured for an extended period of time.

Without affordable land, there will be no space for urban agriculture. The municipality and entrepreneur must make clear agreements concerning land, including price and availability as well as issues such as easement. Concepts where built-up areas subsidise green areas must be elaborated. Entrepreneurs can play a role in the management of green areas in the city. He/she can do this much cheaper than existing institutions.

Regulations remain restrictive as long as things cannot be settled locally. Zoning plans for urban environments are often obstructive. Fortunately, an increasing number of municipalities are able to find ways to fit in more flexibility and tailor-made

work into the spatial planning policy (also see the brochure *Ruimte voor Regels*, WUR/PSG Lelystad, December 2006, only in Dutch available).

Farmers must always be conscious of the position they take in the city. The agricultural branch will remain the basis of the company. Awareness of the surroundings is required to keep abreast of residents' requirements as well as the needs of the municipality and social institutions. These requirements must be given shape using creativity and entrepreneurship. A proper network is indispensable.

In addition to the production of food and social functions, urban agriculture can play many other roles. Farming can function as an energy supplier, water buffer and processor of city waste. Housing with a strong link between agriculture and city opens up new horizons. Meppel and Culemborg are trying to take the first step in this direction, which requires agriculture to take on a new image. Entrepreneurs are more than just (local) producers of food, raw materials and related services.

Farmers (also) contribute to the shape of the living environment and play a role in its management, aura and liveability. Modern and sustainable living in the periphery of the city is a challenge that urban agriculture can contribute to.

The Netherlands provide various potential opportunities for the intertwining of agrarian and other sustainable functions with urban living. Modern people do not mind when living, working and recreation cross one another. Recreation is preferred close to home, and living in a green area within the urban periphery has many advantages for modern citizens.

