

# Do farmers use nature conservation to improve their public image?

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# Do farmers use nature conservation to improve their public image?

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## Abstract

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Farmers engaged in nature conservation practices have the ability to enhance the quality of the environment and biodiversity of a significant part of The Netherlands. In order to understand the determinants of farmers' behavior regarding nature conservation and the role of the image of the sector, this research was conducted. Also, the role of farmers' collectives was investigated. In order to be able to do so, the Theory of Planned Behavior, to which the concepts self- and social identity were added, and Impression Management Theory were used as a theoretical framework. 14 Farmers were interviewed, of which 11 dairy farmers, 2 arable farmers and 1 beef cattle farmer. The results show that in general, farmers care a great deal about their public image; yet they do not use nature conservation as a strategic tool to improve the image of the sector. Financial rewards and personal interest appeared to be the most important determinants, although they vary in relative importance among the farmers. The discrepancies in motivations are quite possibly the result of the extent to which nature conservation is part of the farmers' self-concept. Evidence is presented that there might not be one specific social identity among farmers' collectives: various types of farmers join a collective for various reasons. Also, the members were not influenced by a possible social identity among the members of the collective; the self-identity remained the most important influence on the intentions regarding nature conservation practices.

## Acknowledgements

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This research was done in order to gain a better understanding about the role of the image regarding the motivations of farmers to be engaged in nature conservation. Next to this, the role played by farmers' collectives was investigated. Part of the research existed out of doing semi-structured interviews. I have interviewed a total of 14 farmers in order to explore what the implications of the image are regarding nature conservation. Without these farmers, I would not have been able to include this practical aspect in the research, which would make this research less valuable in the field. Therefore, here, I would like to thank these farmers for their cooperation and their willingness to participate. Despite the busy times they found themselves in, due to the harvest of grass and corn, they were all willing to reserve some time for the interview. I am delighted with the frankness and honesty of the farmers, they did not hesitate to give honest answers.

Next to the farmers, I would like to thank my supervisor, A.M. Lokhorst. She helped me with finding a suitable research topic and was willing to supervise me intensively during the whole process. With all the clear comments and questions she helped me delivering this thesis. I want to thank her for her patience and support.

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# 1. Introduction

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Farmers have developed and created the cultivated landscape as we know it nowadays. For a long time, nature and agriculture were jointly part of a balanced ecosystem. However, after the Second World War, this balanced ecosystem disappeared as a result of the increasing intensification and modernization of the agrarian production (Bignal & McCracken 2000; Korevaar, van den Ham, Postma & Rutte 2003). This modernization initially occurred primarily in northwest Europe fuelled by the European Union (EU) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and then continued to increase in southern, central and Eastern Europe as well. Production systems were not coherent with the existing flora and fauna, and the landscape was merely used to maximize the agrarian food production, and as a result, the original characteristics of the landscape disappeared. But despite the fact that the farmers were more or less uniform directed towards intensification, specialization and scaling-up, there was still a sense of ecological awareness; many farmers were motivated themselves to conserve nature and landscape elements which did not disturb or intervene in the management (Korevaar *et al.* 2003). The dominating development of the sector led to big environmental problems (Wilson 2001) and the EU started to take measures in order to control the existing problems. Meanwhile, farmers started to organize themselves in environmental cooperations to work jointly on occurring problems such as manure surplus and land tenure. Despite the intensification, farmers appeared to have some ecological awareness regarding nature and landscape conservation. Farmers started to look for possibilities to broaden their enterprise, often with the use of the local environment and landscape for various activities such as tourism and as a direct source of income via compensation through agrarian nature conservation subsidy regulations. Often the farmers are supported by agrarian farmers' collectives and environment cooperations. These collectives cooperate in all kinds of agri-environmental schemes (AES): species management (specific birds and other animals), brim management (fields, fauna, flowers, and ditches), plot management (botanic management, postponed mowing dates, fallow plots) and landscape elements (estate plantation, pools, and hedges) (Oerlemans, van Well & Guldemond 2004). The AES have a common basis, farmers are paid to adapt (parts of) their management on their farms to benefit biodiversity, landscape or environment. The payment is to compensate the farmers for the loss of income they experience due to implementation of a scheme (Kleijn & Sutherland 2003). These financial incentives are sometimes necessary to encourage participation in such schemes (Michel-Guillou & Moser 2006). Farmers participate on a voluntary basis, but once they adopt an AES they are obliged to adhere to a set of management prescriptions which are specified by the particular scheme (Kleijn, Berendse, Smit & Gilissen 2001).

## 1.1 Objective of this study

Nature conservation is important in order to reduce the loss of biodiversity and conserve the environment and landscape. Of the total surface of The Netherlands, approximately 54% is used for agriculture (Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap 2005). Thus nature conservation done by farmers has the potential to conserve a substantial part of the environment and biodiversity in The Netherlands.



Farmers' behaviors have a direct impact on nature and environment. Therefore, it is important to understand the determinants of farmers' conservation behavior and decision-making processes when we want to maintain the countryside and nature (Beedell 2000, Burton 2004).

Several authors have investigated farmers' motivations for nature conservation (Lokhorst, Van Dijk, Staats, Van Dijk & de Snoo 2010; Fielding, Terry, Masser & Hogg 2008a; Wilson & Hart 2000, 2001; Morris & Potter 1995; Schenk, Hunziker & Kienast 2007). Known is that in general financial rewards and the self-perception of being a conservationist are important motives to be engaged in nature conservation. Nevertheless, the relation between nature conservation and the positive effect on farmers' image has never been addressed as a focal issue so far. Expected is that a higher ecological level results in a higher appreciation by the consumer (van den Ham & van der Schans 1999). When the image of the sector is important to the farmers, this expectation then might motivate farmers to engage in nature conservation, trying to improve the image of the sector. Therefore, in this research, it will be investigated whether improving the image can be a motive for farmers to be involved in nature conservation, and the importance of their image to them. Also, the perceived potential of nature conservation as a tool to improve the image according to farmers will be investigated. When the term 'image' is used throughout the rapport, image to the whole of the Dutch society is meant. Thus the questions which are asked during the interviews regarding the image of the sector aimed at the whole Dutch society.

Next to this, the role of the membership of a farmers' collective regarding the motivation of farmers to participate in nature conservation will be researched. Research done by Fielding, McDonald & Louis 2008; Terry & Hogg 1996 and Terry, Hogg & White 1999 show that when a certain group is important to a person, his intentions will be more influenced by the ruling ideas of this group compared to his own. Investigated will be whether this pattern is also occurring regarding the membership of a farmers' collective and nature conservation.

The main theories that will be used as a framework for this research are the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1999) and Impression Management (Leary & Kowalski 1990).

## **1.2 Background**

In this paragraph, relevant researches are presented in order to provide information which will be discussed in the report. The topics discussed are the motives of farmers, farmers' collectives and the perception of the consumer.

### ***1.2.1 Motives of farmers***

Much research has been done in the past years about the motivations of farmers who engage in nature conservation. Now some of these researches and the findings will be discussed in order to provide an overview of the various motivations of farmers to engage in nature conservation.

Adoption of conservation practices by farmers is principally influenced by the characteristics and circumstances of the farmer and the practice, especially the relative advantage over existing practices (Greiner, Patterson & Miller 2009). Greiner *et al.* argue that farmers adopt an innovation if they expect that the practice will help them achieve their economic, social and environmental goals. In the study done by Greiner *et al.*, (2009) being appreciated by society and colleagues was rated as being moderate important, whereas aspects such as 'pass on the land in good condition' and 'produce high quality food' were rated as being extremely important. Farmers with high 'conservation and lifestyle motivations', which means these farmers are driven by a stewardship and

custodianship ethic combined with enjoyment of their work and lifestyle, appeared to have higher adoption rates of conservation practices compared to farmers who hold strong economic and social motivations. Strong conservation and lifestyle motivation translates into intrinsic motivation for adoption of conservation practices. For socially motivated farmers, recognition by peers and the community of conservation efforts are important and powerful incentives. For strongly financially motivated farmers, option values prevent the adoption in the absence of external incentives. This research shows that there are various types of farmers and that they have various motivations to be engaged in nature conservation; some because of intrinsic motivations, others because of external incentives. These various motivations might also occur in the current research.

Often, farmers use terms as 'stewards' and 'guardians' to describe themselves and their fellow farmers when they are questioned about nature conservation; this implies a group identity is felt amongst farmers, to look after their land for the future generations (Beedell & Rehman 2000). Together these farmers feel responsible for the environment and the landscape.

Beedell & Rehman (2000) compared the underlying determinants of behavior and farmers' attitudes regarding nature conservation of farmers with a greater environmental awareness (members of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)), non-member farmers and a conservationist group. They found that next to personal and economic motives, farmers often include societal wishes too. However, in terms of social influence, conservationists groups tend to have only little influence on farmers who are not a member of a farmers' collective, but the FWAG members felt greater social pressure from these groups. Also the FWAG members appeared to be more influenced by important referents and they felt a greater moral obligation to plant trees and hedges on their farms than the farmers. The social pressure the non-member farmers felt came from within farming such as family, neighbors, farmers unions and farming press (Beedell & Rehman 2000). Very few referents appeared important to the farmers even though they stated that they felt moral obligation to carry out the behaviors studied. According to Beedell & Rehman this suggests that rather than perceiving a social pressure the farmers felt a self-generated internal obligation to carry out nature conservation. This research done by Beedell & Rehman suggests that members of a farmers' collective perceive a greater social pressure from important referents compared to non-members; and that both members and non-members feel a self-generated internal obligation towards carrying out nature conservation. The discrepancy between members and non-members in terms of perceived social pressure might also occur in this research. The self-generated internal obligation to carry out nature conservation found by Beedell & Rehman was also found by Lokhorst *et al.* (2010), for those who are engaged in non-subsidized nature conservation practices. Nature conservation is thus a part of who they are. In the current research, this internal moral obligation felt to engage in nature conservation might influence farmers' motivations.

### ***1.2.2 Farmers' collectives***

Farmers' collectives are involved in all sorts of AES and in the implementation of policies regarding program administration. In the current research, it is possible that farmers join a collective because of these practical considerations. But, next to this, farmers might also join because of other reasons such as learning and the enjoyment of belonging to a group. The membership of a collective might influence a farmer in his decision-making and ideas regarding nature conservation. Therefore, it is important to include the aspect of group-membership and the role of farmers' collectives in the current research. Now some general information about farmers' collectives will be discussed.

In 2008, there were 130 farmer collectives active, with a total of approximately 14.000 farmer members, which is over 20% of the farmer community in The Netherlands (Slangen *et al.* 2008). Farmers' collectives can have agreements regarding AES with the government which then are collective contracts. There are two types of contracts: a fixed contract between the collective and the government where the latter decides on the conditions, and a covenant which is more flexible. This second type of contract is based on voluntariness and consultation where both parties can share their ideas and come to a joint agreement, which might lead to a higher degree of participation. The most important differences between both types of contracts are the flexibility, the degree of participation and legitimacy (Slangen *et al.* 2008). The various farmers' collectives might be involved in different AES and different contracts with the government, which in turn might determine the degree of commitment of farmers to the collective; when a farmer can identify with the activities and ideas of the collective he is likely to be more committed to the collective. This commitment might influence his ideas and intentions in nature conservation.

### ***1.2.3 Perception of consumer***

In the current research, it will be investigated whether the farmers expect a higher appreciation by society due to nature conservation and whether this is important to them. Therefore, it is interesting to know what other research has been done about the image of the sector and nature conservation.

After the war, yields and productivity have increased dramatically; regarding production it can be considered a success. However, it is widely accepted that this increased agricultural productivity has associated costs in economic and environmental terms, and the consumer perception of agriculture. Consumers question the benefits of intensive agriculture; although concerns may not always be rational, but based on emotions, there is clear public mistrust and distaste for some aspects of modern agriculture nowadays (Kleijn & Sutherland 2003). Harrison, Burgess & Clark (1998) found that civilians in East Sussex were reluctant to trust farmers and civil servants for conservation due to the discourse 'who to trust for conservation'. Despite the existing difference between consumer and civilian, it is to be expected that a higher ecological level will result in a higher appreciation by the consumer (van den Ham & van der Schans 1999). A higher appreciation is expected to lead to a high potential for agro-tourism and recreation. For nature conservation itself, farmers expect that nature in itself is difficult to sell, and therefore it is likely that they will keep on relying on support of the government. This suggests that farmers do not think they can realize a higher appreciation by society in terms of consumer behavior through nature conservation, and thus they have to continue relying on the government for their income out of nature conservation.

## **1.3 Theoretical framework**

In order to be able to carry out a good systematic research whether nature conservation is used as a tool by farmers to improve the image, a theoretical framework will be used to explain the underlying reasons of certain actions/motivations. First the Theory of Planned Behavior will be discussed and secondly the theory of Impression Management.

### ***1.3.1 Theory of Planned Behavior***

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is an extension of the earlier developed Theory of Reasoned Action, due to the limitations of this earlier model. The theory is designed to predict and explain

human behavior in specific contexts (Ajzen 1999). This theory will be used in this research because it will look into the practices and behavior of farmers regarding nature conservation. The theory deals with the specific contexts farmers deal with such as possibilities and constraints, which can influence or determine the nature conservation practices.

A central factor in the theory is the *intention* of individuals to perform a given behavior. The stronger the intention, the more likely should be its performance. There are 3 determinants of intention, or, related constructs: the attitude towards the behavior, the subjective norm and the perceived behavioral control. According to the theory, behavior is a function of salient beliefs which are relevant to the behavior. The attitude towards the behavior refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question. The attitude towards a behavior is assumed to be influenced by behavioral beliefs. In this research, when a farmer believes nature conservation can be used as a tool to improve the image of the sector, his attitude towards the behavior is positive. This could result in the usage of nature conservation as a strategic tool in order to improve the image of the sector. The subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior. The normative beliefs about the expectations of others and the motivation to comply with these expectations are assumed to be the underlying determinants of subjective norms (Ajzen 2002). When the subjective norm influences a farmer, this means that he perceives social pressure to perform the behavior. When social pressures are felt to carry out nature conservation, the farmer is aware that nature conservation enhances the appreciation by society (van den Ham & van der Schans 1999); so the farmer believes nature conservation is a normative expectation of society. When this results in the motivation to comply with these expectations, nature conservation could be used as a strategic tool in to improve the image. The perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior and it reflects on past experience as well as anticipated impediments. Control beliefs are the basis for perceptions of behavioral control. When a farmer perceives improving the image of the sector through nature conservation as easy, this means that in the past he noticed positive results. That is, he does perceive nature conservation as visible for society because of his positive experiences in the past. The positive result is then an improved image of the sector, and therefore he is likely to continue using nature conservation as a strategic tool to improve the image. Fielding *et al.* (2008a) found that landholders with more positive attitudes and a greater sense of control had stronger intentions to manage their riparian zones. These two constructs are key predictors intentions but also in an agricultural decision-making process.

Not only motivational factors play a role in the behavior, to some degree also non-motivational factors such as availability of requisite opportunities and resources (time, money, skills, cooperation of others). For a farmer, being engaged in an AES, means he is dependent on several parties and environmental circumstances. Not all farmers have similar possibilities in choosing and/or continuing an AES because of these reasons. The motivation of an individual and the ability together represent the actual control over the behavior. Yet not only the actual behavioral control is important, also the perceived behavioral control.

There is much evidence for the inclusion of self- and social- identity in the TPB (e.g. Terry, Hogg & White 1999, Conner & Armitage 1998, Burton 2004). Although there is a broad support for TPB, for some behavior and contexts, the inclusion of other variables may increase the predictive utility of the TPB model (Fielding *et al.* 2008). Self-identity describes the self as a collection of identities derived

from various social roles one occupies (Stryker 1968). Self-identity may be defined as the salient part of a person's self which relates to a particular behavior and is an important predictor of behavioral intentions (Conner & Armitage 1998, Armitage & Connor 1999, Mannetti, Pierro & Livi 2004). The influence of these self-identities depends on the relative salience of the identities; the most salient identity will have the strongest influence. Having a sense of the self as a particular identity is strongly associated with intentions. Research done by Mannetti *et al.* (2004) has shown that perceived self-similarity to the typical recyclers, predicted recycling intentions. The logic for this relation between self-identity and behavior stems from identity theory (Stryker 1968). The identity motivates action, and when one would not engage in role-appropriate behavior this may create a state of internal tension because of the conflict between identity and actions. Also, engaging in role-appropriate behavior validates an individual's role, and therefore their self-identity. Moreover, the more salient an identity is, the greater the probability of role-consistent action (Fielding *et al.* 2008). Thus, when being a nature conservationist is a salient identity, this is strongly associated with the intentions to engage in conservation practices. Nature conservation is then an important part of the self and so it is likely to be acted upon since it is role-consistent. Self-identity is often an important motive for farmers to engage in nature conservation practices; especially for those farmers who do not receive subsidies for nature conservation. For these farmers, nature conservation is a salient identity; apparently, they feel that they are '*the kind of people who do these things*' (Lokhorst *et al.* 2010). For this research, when nature conservation is a salient self-identity of the farmer, this might have influence on the position which nature conservation has on the farm; it is merely seen as a tool to improve the image or are there other motivations to be engaged?

Social identity theory is a general theory of group processes and intergroup relations that distinguishes group phenomena from interpersonal phenomena (Terry & Hogg 1996). According to social identity theory, there is a continuum between personal and social identity. Shifts along this continuum determine the extent to which group-related or personal characteristics influence a person's feelings and actions (Terry *et al.* 1999). A basic prediction is that when social identity is salient, a persons' intentions will be more influenced by a group-related, social variable than personal-level variables (Fielding *et al.* 2008). Fielding *et al.* (2008) investigated the intentions to engage in environmental activism. This was done by measuring the TPB constructs, group membership and self-identity. Where constructs have been measured with multiple items, scales were created by averaging the items used to measure each of the constructs. It was found that social identity, operationalized as group membership, and a stronger sense of the self as an environmental activist were positive predictors of intentions. Also, there was evidence that self-identity was a stronger predictor of intentions for those with low rather than high group membership. These findings are of relevance for the current research because the same constructs are used in order to investigate whether nature conservation is used as a tool to improve the image.

From a social-identity perspective, when the salient basis for self-conception is a specific social identity, a persons' behavior will become group-based and guided by the norms of that social group. When this group-identity is not an important component of their self-concept, the perceived norm of this group is not related to the intentions a person (Terry *et al.* 1999). Earlier, evidence was found that attitude and the perceived behavioral control have significant main effects on intention, whereas group norm had not (Terry & Hogg, 1996). If a social-identity of a the members of a farmers' collective is an important basis for self-conception, he will be influenced in his ideas and nature conservation behavior by the norms of the farmers' collective. Self-identity and social identity vary in relative importance to a person's self-concept. Terry *et al.* (1999) found in their study that the effects

of self-identity are constant, irrespective of levels of group identification. Also, Fielding *et al.* (2008) found evidence that self-identity is an independent predictor of intentions. This suggests that a self-identity is not a personal identity but rather a distinct form of social identity that can simultaneously influence, along with group-level constructs, intentions. Not only social pressures, but also personal feelings of moral obligation or responsibility to perform have influence (Azjen 1999). Azjen found that personal considerations tend to overshadow the influence of perceived social pressure in predicting intentions for a specific behavior. The role of image in relation to nature conservation is not genuine apparent in this explanation of the social identity. However, the social identity construct will help to interpret the findings regarding membership of a farmers' collective.

Following the logic of TPB, the role of image in relation to nature conservation is specifically found in the attitude, the subjective norm and the perceived behavioral control. When these 3 determinants of intentions are positive towards using nature conservation as a tool to improve the image, this increases the intentions to perform the behavior in question. The non-motivational factors, the self- and social identity are useful to interpret the findings regarding the engagement in nature conservation and farmers' collectives.

### ***1.3.2 Impression Management***

The Theory of Impression Management (IM) is about the process by which people try to control the impressions others form of them (Leary & Kowalski 1990). This theory deals with current and desired images, the motivations to create impressions and the importance of image. Therefore, it is assumed to be highly appropriate for this research because it will deal with image in relation to the motives to engage in nature conservation.

The impression which people make on others influences on how others perceive, evaluate and treat them, as well as for their views about themselves. Therefore, people sometimes behave in certain ways which will create a particular impression in others' eyes. There are two processes to be distinguished in IM, namely impression motivation and impression construction. *Impression motivation* is about the fact that people regularly monitor their impact on others and try to gauge the impressions other people form of them. Often, this is done without any attempt to create a particular impression, however under certain circumstances; people become motivated to control how others see them. *Impression construction* refers to when people are motivated to create certain impressions; people may alter their behaviors to affect others' impression of them. IM may be used to increase one's subjective well-being in 3 ways: by maximizing one's reward-cost ratio in social relations, by enhancing one's self-esteem and by facilitating the development of desired identities. In this research, the perceived current image of the sector by the farmers and whether nature conservation is used to improve the image are investigated. When the farmers are motivated to improve the image of the sector through nature conservation, they then are aware of the current image. When nature conservation is used as a tool, farmers actively try to create a certain impression to enhance their self-esteem or reach the desired identity.

According to Leary & Kowalski (1990) there are 5 variables that influence the manner in which people manage their impressions which are: the self-concept, desired and undesired identity images, role constraints, target values and the current or potential social image. The self-concept is a primary determinant of the impressions people try to project of who they think they are, which is affected by

3 processes: people want to ensure that people accurately perceive them, so people try to put their best parts into the public view; people will only present those images of themselves which they can successfully fulfill; and most people have an ethic against lying, which deters most people from making inconsistent claims about themselves. From this explanation of the self-concept, it follows that in this research for those farmers for whom nature conservation is salient to the self, will display themselves as being a nature conservationist. That is, these farmers want to be perceived as being a conservationist because it is a salient identity. When nature conservation is not a salient identity, the image of being a conservationist is not displayed because this would mean making an inconsistent claim about oneself. The desired and undesired identity images is about how someone would like to be and thinks he or she really can be at his or her best. When a desired identity image of a farmer would be being a nature conservationist, nature conservation could be perceived by the farmer as a tool to improve the image. Since through nature conservation, the farmer can show what he really can be at his best: a nature conservationist. Role constraints is about the fact that social roles carry expectations regarding how individuals who occupy those roles should behave. Egoz, Bowring & Perkins (2001) found that failing to observe the image of the productivist role, can have a significant impact on a farmers' social position. This is in correspondence with recent research done (Burton & Wilson 2006, Potter 1998, Burton 2004a, Wilson 2001) which all came to the conclusion that despite much talk about a new conservationist identity amongst farmers, the productivist identity appears to be the most salient. These findings indicate that due to role constraints, the conservationist identity is not regarded as ideal. Therefore, role constraints could be a limiting factor for farmers to use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image; it is not in line with the productivist identity. The concept target values captures the process when people tailor their public images to the perceived values and preferences of significant others. If a farmer regards the Dutch society as being significant others, and he does believe that nature conservation improves the image of the sector, this might be a motivation to engage in nature conservation. Yet, colleague farmers could also be seen as significant others, and their perceived preferences might be different to those of society. The current or potential social image is about impressions which are affected both by how people think they are currently regarded by others and by how they think others may perceive them in the future. The current image of the sector as perceived by a farmer, could influence the motivation to be engaged in nature conservation. If he thinks the image is negative, he might try to improve it, using nature conservation as a tool.

Goal relevance is an important aspect in the theory; if one's impressions have few, or no, implications for one's outcomes, self-esteem or identity, the motive for impression management will be low. When farmers think that their impressions through nature conservation have only few or no implications for the image of the sector, the goal relevance to use nature conservation will be low. This goal relevance is also dependent on to what extent nature conservation is a salient self-identity; the more salient, the higher the goal relevance to improve the image. People are normally motivated to have a high self-esteem and think well of themselves. Therefore, they are motivated to regard themselves as possessing high levels of all abilities (Darley & Goethals 1980). However, when they feel they perform poorly at a set of ability-linked tasks, their initial search is to find explanations for their failure while maintaining the perception of possessing a high level of the underlying ability, because a poor performance is potentially threatening to the self-esteem of the performer. A central determinant of the relevance of the goals is publicity, as well as one's dependency on the goal (Leary & Kowalski 1990). Public impressions reflect interplay between the self-concept and desired-

undesired identity images. Publicity is a function of both the probability that one's behavior will be observed by others and the number of others who might see or learn about it. In general, the more public one's behavior, the more likely it is that one is concerned with how it appears to others, and the more motivated one will be to impression-manage. Thus, the more farmers perceive nature conservation as observable by others, the more they will be motivated to use it as a tool to improve the image. Also, the value of the desired goals is relevant, impression motivation increases with the value of the goal. When improving the image through nature conservation is a goal of high value for a farmer, his efforts to manage the impressions will be high. The value of the desired goal, which is to improve the image through nature conservation, depends on the relative salience of nature conservation in a farmers' self-identity. The discrepancy between the current and the desired image is also important. It is important whether one has the idea that others have a positive or negative image of oneself; when one thinks it is negative, one can try to repair the image, or the person might get reluctant and is convinced that he or she can never change the image into a positive one. A farmer who believes he can improve the image through nature conservation, is likely to use it as a tool. When a farmer is not convinced that he can change the image of the sector through nature conservation, it is not likely that nature conservation is used to improve the image.

Jones & Pittman (1982), however, used other variables than the above mentioned: ingratiation, self-promotion, intimidation and exemplification. The first 3 are in correspondence with the variables mentioned by Leary and Kowalski, *but intimidation and exemplification* are different. For this research, intimidation will not be relevant since there is no need for farmers to signal their potential of punishment in nature conservation, but exemplification might be because of possible social identities of farmers. Inclusion of this variable next to those mentioned by Leary and Kowalski is useful, because exemplification is at stake when individuals try to be viewed as dedicated by going above and beyond their call of duty. This might occur when the image of the sector is very important to a farmer and when he uses nature conservation as a tool to improve the image.

The role of the image in relation to nature conservation can be found all the constructs of the theory. When the conservationist self-identity is salient, and the goal relevance of improving the image through nature conservation is high, then it follows according to the theory that image is used as a tool to improve the image. The goal relevance is among other things affected by the publicity, thus the farmer perceives nature conservation as visible for society and thus it has positive implications for his self-identity. The reason of the theory's great expected applicability in explaining the relation between image and nature conservation stems from the fact that the theory is designed to explain the processes by which people try to control the impressions others form of them.

The constructs self-identity and self-concept have been used above. Self-identity is added to the TPB on order to increase its predictive utility, and the self-concept is a construct of IM. The difference is that the self-concept, in part, is composed of identities (Shamir, House & Arthur 1993). According to Stryker (1980), identities are organized in the self-concept according to the hierarchy of salience. Because identities are organized according to their salience, the construct self-identity will be used in this research. That is, with using the construct of self-identity, it is possible to investigate the salience of the nature conservation identities amongst farmers.



### ***1.3.3 Integrating the theories***

For this research, it is valuable to integrate the TPB and the related constructs with IM. Since the research is about the relation between image, nature conservation and group-membership, integrating TPB and IM enhances the exploratory power of the research because these theories together with the added constructs are expected to cover the relations between them.

When nature conservation is a salient self-identity, farmers see themselves as conservationists. They then are motivated to perform nature conservation practices, for which the self-identity is a significant predictor of their intentions to perform (Fielding *et al.* 2008); no external incentives are needed. Also, these farmers want to be perceived accurately; as being a conservationist. This resembles what Greiner *et al.* label as conservation and lifestyle motivation (2009). These farmers are intrinsically motivated to carry out nature conservation.

The attitude towards the behavior of using nature conservation as a tool to improve the image is assumed to be an important predictor and is affected by publicity and the perceived behavioral control. When nature conservation is perceived as visible for society by the farmers, it is assumed that this positively influences the attitude a farmer has towards using nature conservation as a tool to improve the image. When a farmer wants to be perceived accurately as a conservationist, and his attitude is positive towards the behavior, this could result in higher intentions compared to those who are not a conservationist and not positive towards the behavior. If a farmer uses this tool to improve the image, impression construction is at stake. Greiner *et al.* (2009) found that conservation and lifestyle motivated farmers have higher adoption rates for nature conservation practices because of intrinsic motives, and thus they have a higher intention than farmers who act out of social motivations.

Socially motivated farmers, according to Greiner *et al.* (2009) are farmers who display a strong desire to be appreciated and acknowledged by society and their peers. These farmers require external incentives as opposed to lifestyle motivated farmers, but these incentives do not always have to be financial incentives; recognition, by peers and the community of conservation efforts serves as a powerful incentive. For the farmers for whom nature conservation is a salient self-identity, the motivation to carry out nature conservation comes from within and thus they want to be perceived accurately; whereas socially motivated farmers are motivated by external factors. Since identity motivates action (Stryker 1968), not carrying out this behavior would create internal tension, farmers for whom nature conservation is salient, are more likely to use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image. The subjective norm is an external factor which might influence farmers too. The subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior. Socially motivated farmers might experience social pressure from peers or society to carry out nature conservation because of their need for recognition. In this research, this need for recognition might be translated in the desire to have a positive image. In line with the subjective norm, the concept target values might be of influence. When a farmer perceives a matter of significant others, which could be Dutch society, he might tailor his public image to their perceived values and preferences. Since nature conservation is expected to increase the appreciation by society (van den Ham & van der Schans 1999), his intention to improve the image through nature conservation might increase.

Membership of a farmers' collective might influence farmers' motivations and perceptions about nature conservation. The social identity among the members of a certain group can influence the ideas and intentions of the members, especially when social identity is a salient basis for the self-

conception of the members. When farmers can identify with the norms of a farmers' collective and social identity is salient, their intentions become more influenced by a social variable than personal variables (Fielding *et al.* 2008). The social identity among the members of a farmers' collective, which could be either of a conservationist nature or others such as financially motives, is then a predictor of the intentions to carry out nature conservation of the individual farmer. Thus, when social identity is salient, the membership of a collective influences the motivations of a farmer to engage in nature conservation.

## **1.4 Research questions & hypotheses**

In order to be able to investigate those aspects which are important for this research, hypotheses and research questions need to be formulated.

Of importance is whether farmers find the image of the sector important and if nature conservation is used as a tool to improve the image of the sector. Also, identifying which type of farmers are the most concerned with the image and use nature conservation as a tool will be researched. The role of the membership of a farmers' collective will be investigated too; whether there are differences to be found between members and non-members, and which type of farmers join a collective. In the research, the following hypotheses will be tested:

The first hypothesis concerns farmers who for whom nature conservation is a salient self-identity. When a farmer is a conservationist, this means that being a conservationist is a salient part of his personal self which relates to conservation practices carried out by the farmer, then the image of the sector is important to him; since people want that others accurately perceive them. A negative image will be a threat to his self-esteem, and thus nature conservation has a high goal relevance to him because he believes his impressions to the public will show his accurate identity (conservationist) and it will increase his self-esteem. When conservation is salient, the farmer has a positive attitude towards using nature conservation as a strategic tool to improve the image. Therefore it is expected that especially farmers who regard themselves as a conservationist use nature conservation to improve the image of the sector (hypothesis 1).

A second hypothesis concerns farmers for whom nature conservation is not a salient self-identity. These farmers are motivated by external factors which can be recognition and appreciation by others, or financial rewards. When a farmer is motivated because of the importance of appreciation and recognition by others, subjective norms play an important role. These farmers will also find the image of the sector important, since these farmers require recognition by peers and community as incentive to carry out nature conservation. Recognition will increase his self-esteem. However, compared to the conservationist farmers, intentions of socially motivated farmers will be lower because nature conservation is not a salient self-identity. The latter group requires external incentives and thus do not act according to internalized values as the first. Therefore it is expected that socially motivated farmers will not use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image of the sector. The image is important to these farmers, but they are not motivated to improve it through nature conservation (hypothesis 2).

A third hypothesis concerns the role played by farmers' collectives. It is to be expected that the social identities of farmers' collectives are of a conservationist nature. Therefore, those farmers for whom nature conservation is a salient self-identity, will join a collective because they can identify with that social identity. Because the farmer can identify with the social identity which exists among the members of the collective, social identity becomes a salient basis for a farmers' self-conception, and he will be guided by the norms of that social group. Also, it is expected that a reason to join is that farmers like to share experiences and the feeling of belonging to a group is important to them. Thus it is expected that farmers for whom nature conservation is a salient self-identity are member of a collective, and farmers who are motivated by external incentives are not because the latter cannot identify with the conservationist social-identity of the collective (hypothesis 3).

## 2. Methodology

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For this research, semi-structured interviews were used to ask farmers about their motives to carry out nature conservation and their views about image and its relevance. Some questions were developed ahead, but since it were semi-structured interviews, many questions developed during the conversation in order to get to know more about the discussed topics. Next to open questions, some items which the farmers could rank were added; with this, it was tried to get a more clear idea about the type of farmers in the sample. The interviews were focused on the motivations of farmers to engage in nature conservation, the importance of image, the relation between image and nature conservation, and the reasons and implications of membership of a farmers' collective. Because the questions were open, some answers had to be interpreted in order to be able to work with the same terminology in the thesis. For example, answers to questions about the motivation for nature conservation such as "I like it", "it makes me happy" or "it is in my blood" were interpreted as being motivated by personal interest.

Next to the semi-structured interviews, reading general information and researches was necessary in order to gain more knowledge about nature conservation and image. Along the way, relevant researches were found which were done with the TPB or IM as theoretical frameworks, which lead to the decision to use these 2 theories as a framework for this research. With the help of the found literature, the hypotheses were developed. The literature study continued during the whole research, in order to be able to interpret the results of the interviews which increases the relevance of the research.

### 2.1 Finding the participants

Finding farmers which were willing to participate was quite easy because of past work experiences on a farm, and thus quite some farmers are known in the area. Also, by attending a meeting of a study group of farmers, farmers were asked whether they were involved in nature conservation or not. Then, once the interviews started with 3 farmers, it was easy to get into contact with other farmers; it worked like a snowball-effect: all farmers had some names which could be interviewed. An advantage was that some farmers were already familiar, which made the interview less formal. Another advantage was the work experience of about ten years on a farm, and thus 'language of farmers' was familiar, which helps a lot to have open conversations. The first idea was to only interview dairy farmers, but due to time constraints this was not achievable. Therefore, 3 arable farmers who were involved with nature conservation and 1 farmer who has beef cattle and is involved with cattle trade, were interviewed as well.

### 2.2 General information farmers

A total of 14 farmers was interviewed, of which 9 are members of various farmers' collectives, and 5 are not a member of a collective. Of these farmers, 11 are dairy farmers, and 3 are arable farmers. Most of the time males were interviewed, but in 2 cases females. The average age of the farmers is 45 (ages range from 23 to 63 years) and have been a farmer for 22 years (farming experience ranges

from 2 to 38 years). 7 of them have (possibly) a successor. For dairy farmers, the average herd size is 112 (herd size ranges from 80 to 200 cows) , and the average land size is 80 hectares (land size ranges from 46 to 165 hectares) . The beef cattle farmer has 200 heads of cattle and 102 hectares. The average land size of the arable farmers is 143 hectares (land size ranges from 90 to 240 hectares). The most grown crops amongst dairy farmers are corn and grass, and for the arable farmers these are potatoes, wheat and sugar beet.

As can be seen in table 1, the farmers participate in various AES, and all have some other own initiatives next to it. When asked about their forms of nature conservation, they always only mentioned the AES at first. When asking about own initiatives, they came up with a few more, but sometimes during the interview more and more own initiatives were mentioned.

**Table 1: Types of schemes**

<b>Scheme Farmer</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Field margins</b>	<b>Plot</b>	<b>Landscape elements</b>	<b>Own initiatives</b>
A				Postponed mowing date	Used to, no birds anymore
B	Birds	Fauna margin in future	Chemical free plots (organic regulations)		Ditch management, owl nesting box, nest management
C	Birds		Postponed mowing date	Estate plantation	Ditch management
D		Fauna margin			Ditch management when possible, hunter
E		Fauna margin	Postponed mowing date		Nesting box, nest management
F		Fauna margin			Nest management
G	Geese tolerance		Postponed mowing date, nature fallow		Nesting box, ditch management, landscape management
H	Possibly birds in the future	Hedge, frog pool			450 m fruit trees
I	Birds	Fauna margin			Volunteers for nest search, nest management, owl nesting box
J	Geese tolerance	Fauna margin			Hedge, nesting box, nest management
K		Fauna margin			Nest management, hunter
L		Fauna margin			Ditch management (partly financial reasons), nest management, hare management
M					Bird and nest management, ditch management, dovecote
N	Birds				Ditch management, water level management, fauna margins

## 3. Results

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In this chapter, the results of this research will be presented and the hypotheses will be tested. The chapter is subdivided into 4 paragraphs. The first question we can ask ourselves is why farmers are involved in nature conservation, what are their motives? Yet, also non-motivational factors will be discussed because these factors can determine a farmers' conservation practices.

### 3.1 Motives of farmers to engage in nature conservation

This paragraph will zoom in on the motivations of farmers to be engaged in nature conservation, and the importance for a farmer to be engaged in nature conservation practices. Also, the role of nature conservation on the farm and the degree of integration will become clear.

There are various reasons for farmers to engage in nature conservation. The most often mentioned reason to start with nature conservation is the subsidies which are connected to AES. For 8 farmers, the financial reward was the one and only reason to start with nature conservation. Yet, along the way 3 of these farmers became more engaged and interested in nature itself because they became more involved with nature and saw positive results. For 6 farmers the personal interest is equally important as financial reasons. The personal interest of these farmers captures taking care of nature and enjoying it; these farmers refer to themselves as being a nature lover. Farmer G: *"If we can do something for nature, we will do it"*. Farmer H: *"I have something with nature, I grew up with protecting it and searching for birds"*. Farmer N is to such an extent motivated to stimulate biodiversity on his farm and to create awareness amongst colleagues, civilians and politicians that he even loses money with his conservation practices. He is aware of this loss of money, and he is not happy about it, but nature and biodiversity are so important to him that he continues his practices. Other farmers who are motivated equally by personal interest and financial reasons are also motivated to be active in conservation, although they mentioned that extra costs in the form of time and energy are not a problem, but it should not cost extra money.

3 Farmers who are mainly involved because of the financial rewards, would quit immediately when they would not receive any subsidies anymore. These farmers need incentives in the form of money to continue their practices. Farmer J: *"I would be crazy if I would continue nature conservation without receiving subsidies"*. And, farmer K: *"One wants to have nature, then one has to pay for it"*. Nonetheless, all farmers feel responsible for the landscape and surrounding nature. This feeling of responsibility is for 5 farmers, next to the above mentioned motivations, one of the reasons to carry out nature conservation. Often, the farmers who are equally motivated because of personal interest and financial reasons, see being a farmer broader than just their production units; the surrounding environment is seen as a part of their farm. Farmer M: *"When a bird has a nest on my land, I feel responsible to take care"*. Farmer H: *"Being a farmer means working with nature, so for me there is no difference between the one type of nature and the other"*. However, this sense of responsibility which is felt by all farmers, is for 9 farmers not a motivation to engage in nature conservation. These 9 do feel responsible, but this is not a reason to be involved in nature conservation.

Next to these considerations, some farmers argue that nature conservation increases their enjoyment of being a farmer. With these AES, they can actively protect species and in some instances beautify the landscape. Farmer C: *"At first I did not have many birds, but since I started with the*

*scheme, I can see positive results which is very motivating and increases the enjoyment of being a farmer".* Yet, although some farmers are only involved in AES because of the subsidies, all the farmers carry out own initiatives such as ditch and nest management. Thus, despite the fact that some farmers purely mentioned financial reasons to be involved in nature conservation, all are motivated to carry out some forms of nature conservation without financial compensation. However, there are differences in to what extent the farmers adapt their management to nature conservation. The farmers who have a great personal interest in nature conservation, carry out practices which are integrated in the management of the farm; nature conservation is seen as a part of their farm. Examples are extended spray-free zones, postponed mowing dates or ditch management. Some of these farmers will even continue with the conservation practices they carry out now when the financial rewards would disappear; although in a less intensive way. Other farmers, who are less involved because of personal interest but because of financial rewards carry out smaller initiatives such as a nesting box on the farmyard.

For 7 of the farmers, their satisfaction of being a farmer increased because of nature conservation; it increases their enjoyment. Farmer B: *"Nature conservation increases my feeling of satisfaction because I am a nature lover"*. Especially the positive results cause an increase of enjoyment, because the farmers who have many problems with predation are not enthusiastic about nature conservation anymore. Farmer A mentioned that he used to be very motivated but this motivation disappeared because of problems with weeds and ever decreasing birds due to predation. Also Farmer I experiences the problem of predation, almost all birds have disappeared the last few years due to foxes, crows and buzzards. Despite his efforts to protect the nests in the least visible way, he does not place a picket next to the nest but 2 on the end of the plots, the predators still find them. For 3 farmers their satisfaction grew over the years because of clear results and realization of hopes and plans. Farmer B mentioned that it not directly increases the satisfaction because he already was an organic farmer; which already includes many of the regulations of AES. 5 farmers did not experience increased satisfaction when they started with the schemes; without nature conservation they would also be satisfied as a farmer. Positive results seem to be very determinative for the satisfaction of being engaged in nature conservation. The farmers who are motivated because of personal interest and financial reasons, all experience a greater satisfaction due to nature conservation. Those who are more or purely motivated because of the financial reward experience less this increase of satisfaction through nature conservation.

Improving the image of the agrarian sector was mentioned by 2 farmers, farmers H and F, as one of their motivations to carry out nature conservation, other farmers never mentioned image as a motive. These 2 farmers both mentioned that image does play a role, but that it is certainly not the main or only motivation to carry out nature conservation because without support from the government and society, they would not do it. The other 12 did not mention image as a motive at all, which means that overall the image is not a motivation to be engaged in nature conservation.

Looking at the findings, it is obvious that all farmers in this sample need external incentives to continue nature conservation in the form of an AES. However, there are differences to be found between the farmers. For 6 farmers their personal interest in nature conservation is as important as the financial rewards; for the others the financial rewards are more important, or the only, motivations to be engaged in AES. One of the research questions was whether the image is a motive for farmers to be engaged in nature conservation or not. The results show that 2 farmers did

mention image, yet not as a main motivation. None of the farmers is mainly involved in nature conservation because of the image of the sector; personal interest and financial rewards appear to be the most important motives.

### ***3.1.1 Non-motivational factors***

Now we know which motivational factors have influence on the nature conservation practices of the farmers, we will examine whether non-motivational factors also play a role. The (non) applicability and possibilities or constraints are important factors in the decision-making regarding nature conservation.

For some farmers, it is very interesting to be engaged in an AES, because they already have to deal with certain regulations. Farmer B: *“ We live in an area with many birds and the fauna margins are very applicable for us since we are an organic farm and thus already deal with some of these regulations”*. Farmer D argues that since spray-free zones of one and a half meter are already compulsory, it is very interesting to join an AES; now he can avoid these spray-free zones, which is very practical and now he receives a financial reward, too. Farmer E, I, G and farmer K gave comparable motivations regarding the applicability of their AES. These non-motivational factors have a positive influence on the adoption and ease of performance of the AES.

However, there are also non-motivational factors which hinder the possibility to be engaged in an AES. At the moment, farmer M is not involved in AES because 2 years ago her area was not pointed out as appropriate for an AES. She does carry out own initiatives with which she will continue. 2 Years ago, she was enrolled in an AES aimed at bird protection and she used to be very active. Nowadays she is still active in nest management but to a lesser extend compared to 2 years ago. Similarly, farmer L and H are not able to continue their fauna margin scheme as well, because of the same reason.

A greater applicability of the schemes for dairy farmers was mentioned by the arable farmers. Dairy farmers can use plots with for example postponed mowing dates for grazing and as hay for their cattle. Also, the conservation areas managed by Staatsbosbeheer, are ideal for farmers to graze their cattle. These are examples mentioned by the arable farmers to illustrate that dairy farmers in general have more possibilities in choosing various schemes.

### ***3.1.2 The future and continuation***

Next to the motivational and non-motivational factors, the perception of a farmer about the future and the continuation of their AES, provides us with insights about the perceived control over conservation practices, and the intentions to continue.

When talking about the future, subsidies were always mentioned immediately. 8 Farmers are negative towards the future of nature conservation; they fear it will get less due to decreasing subsidies. This negative scenario is fed by the expectation of the farmers that the budget for nature conservation will decrease because of a spending cut by the government. Also, some areas are not appointed by the government anymore as a nature conservation area; these farmers do not have a say whether they want to continue or not. In this research farmers L and M deal with this, they have to quit with the AES. If they would be able to continue, they would like to. Farmer I will also quit with the scheme because he finds it too complicated to continue; the regulations are demanding and he suffers heavy predation thus the results are only decreasing instead of increasing. He has the



opportunity to continue, but he is not motivated enough anymore to deal with all the bureaucracy which comes with it. Some of the farmers who are negative towards the future, mention many external factors such as the government and the consumers. They feel dependent on society because of the subsidies. Most of these farmers think that other farmers will not carry out nature conservation because of personal interest, or continue with the schemes without subsidies. Farmer K: *“Without subsidies I will plough the fauna margins directly”*. Yet, all of the farmers will continue with own initiatives without subsidies, but some will put more effort in it than others. Some will only continue nest management but without much effort, others such as farmer D said that he might partly continue with the fauna margins but in a less intensive way. Farmers F and A are looking for other possibilities to continue nature conservation, such as green services in order to receive financial rewards. These farmers try to continue in another form, whereas some farmers see no other possibilities when subsidies will get less or even stop. Farmer E: *“I do not think farmers have many possibilities to continue conservation practices, we have to earn a living and when the consumer is not willing to pay for it, it will get difficult”*. However, not all farmers are negative towards the future, 6 of the farmers expect that the subsidies will continue or even increase the coming years. These farmers, too, mention that they are dependent on external factors; the government and society. In contradiction to the farmers who are negative, these farmers expect that subsidies will increase because the government wants to stimulate nature instead of expanding farms. Also, they expect that society will act more responsible. Farmer G expects that through subsidies, farmers will start to think different; that nature will be an important component of their management too. On the contrary, others such as farmer B think that subsidies will continue to be the most important motivation for farmers to carry out nature conservation. Farmer N is of the opinion that when one wants to continue nature conservation carried out by farmers, radical changes are needed: *“Politicians, civilians and farmers have to work together, there is no other way. The way things are going now means the end of conservation practices for many farmers because of the poor results”*. He also emphasizes the external factors; farmers cannot take care of nature alone, there has to be support from other parties too. Farmer H is positive towards the future because nature conservation is a ‘hot’ topic at the moment; society asks for it. Also, the expected pro nature conservation policy in favor of the farmers instead of robust conservation areas by the government increases possibilities for the sector.

Looking at the expectations of the farmers regarding the future, external factors are a central theme; external factors were mentioned by all farmers. All farmers feel dependent on external factors, especially on the government because they determine whether areas are appointed for AES or not. Farmers experience they have hardly control over being able to engage in an AES, especially those who are negative towards the future.

### **3.2 Image of the agrarian sector**

In this section we will zoom in on image as a motive to carry out nature conservation. Image is for one farmer more important than the other, also the role which nature conservation can play in constructing a positive image of the sector varies amongst the farmers.

### **3.2.1 The importance of image**

The importance of the image might have an influence on the motivations to be involved in nature conservation. When the image does play a major role in the decision-making, image could be used as a strategic tool to improve the image of the sector.

Farmers A, I, E, K and J find the image of the agrarian sector very important for various reasons. Farmer A thinks there is a relation between sales and the image of the sector; when the image is negative, consumers will buy less dairy- and beef products. The other 4 farmers mentioned explicitly the importance of being perceived accurately; they feel very much attacked when outsiders have a picture of the sector which are based on false facts. Of these 5 farmers, 2 are motivated because of financial reasons, the other 3 are motivated by personal interest and financial reasons. 9 Farmers find the image just important, some because of 'right to produce' and having influence on their sales, but most of them because of the importance to be perceived accurately. Farmer G: *"When the image is negative, it can be used against us"*. And, farmer H: *"I try to do my work correctly, and I hope this has a correct image as result"*. For them, it is important that people see what is really going on, the amount of restrictions they have to deal with and all the hard work; the old famous image of the farmer with the dirty slurry tank has to disappear according to them. However, the farmers feel that creating a correct image of the sector is difficult to fulfill. Farmer G: *"It should be our goal, but we should not have the illusion that we can reach everybody"*. The only farmer who does not find image very important is farmer D, he is not so much concerned with the picture society has of the sector. 7 Farmers are actively, or are looking for possibilities, involved in changing the image positively. 5 Of them are involved in primary school education programs, where children get the opportunity to have a look on a farm, and/or have open farm days to inform civilians. 2 Of the farmers are looking for opportunities, Farmer G wants to invite a primary school class when his daughter is old enough, farmer F is very much interested in public footpaths and information boards but will not undertake this without financial support from other parties. Farmer F: *"Every farmer can do small things to increase the image of the sector"*.

The importance of the image might have influence on the intentions of the farmers to carry out nature conservation in a positive way. Most farmers find it important to be viewed accurately, and some perceive nature conservation as a part of farming and of the image of the sector. This would imply that those farmers who regard nature conservation as a part of farming and the image, regard nature conservation as an effective tool to improve the image of the sector. Yet, as described earlier, nature conservation is by none of the farmers used as a tool to improve the image.

### **3.2.2 The perceived current image**

It is important to know what the farmers perceive is the current image of the sector. When it is negative, or not correct according to them, they might have strategies in order to improve the image.

None of the farmers think that the image which society has of the agrarian sector is negative; 9 think it is slightly positive, and 5 think the image is good. All the farmers see knowledge as the most important factor determining one's view about the sector. According to most farmers, people who live on the country side have in general more knowledge about the sector compared to people urban areas because their sources are often biased. They argue that people do not always have a realistic view of the agrarian sector, but that it is very difficult to change this. Farmer A: *"We try to do our best, and when people do not see this or have a wrong image I do feel a little bit attacked. But it is*

*difficult to reach the people, it sometimes feels as no one listens*". For the arable farmers, they often get negative attention regarding the spraying of crops. Farmer F, D and K: *"People only see the amount of times we spray the crops, but not the dose. They have do not know that the dose per time is very, very low. People still have the image of the past, when farmers used much more poison"*. Some farmers feel very much attacked when people have wrong and negative views about the sector. Especially the farmers who find the image very important, except for Farmer A, feel very much attacked and angry by this. The farmers who feel very much attacked are frustrated by the wrong imputation; they cannot identify themselves with the view of those people. Farmer I: *"I can be very angry and frustrated when I hear false information about the sector, it really pulls down the whole sector"*. 5 of the farmers feel only little or no attacked by false images because they think the cause is a lack of knowledge, and they do not talk about the real situations on farms. The farmers are open towards society; if one wants to know more about the sector they should go to the farmers.

Some farmers think that negative perceptions of the sector are the result of a lack of knowledge. This is the reason why some farmers are actively involved in education civilians, to provide them with knowledge. Some include nature conservation too, because it is seen as a part of farming, and in order to create more awareness. This finding shows that those farmers who are actively involved in educating society, amongst their core business of farming, provide them with knowledge about nature conservation. With this, they hope to improve the image of the sector. Yet, this is not an explicit reason to be engaged in nature conservation, it is perceived as a positive side-effect.

### ***3.2.3 Nature conservation and image***

Knowing what the motivations to be engaged in nature conservation are, and the farmers' perception of the view of society about the sector, now the relation between the two will be discussed.

Some farmers believe nature conservation is a good and effective tool to create a positive image of the agrarian sector, others doubt the effectiveness and visibility for civilians. The farmers, however, did not come with this themselves, they gave this answer when I asked specifically about it. 9 Of the farmers mentioned education and information as important tools to create a positive image. An often mentioned problem was the visibility of nature conservation; they feel that civilians do not see their efforts. Despite that 5 farmers (A, I, E, J and K) find the image of the sector very important, only farmer I and farmer K are actively involved in providing civilians with information about the sector. Farmer I is involved in organizing open days on the farm and having volunteers who search for nests. With these days, he shows the reports of the bird management results. With this, he tries to make the civilians more aware of nature conservation, but overall his information is mainly directed towards dairy farming. The other 4 farmers thus mentioned the image as being very important, but they do not try to change the image themselves with nature conservation. When asked whether they would –for instance- be willing to place information boards down the road they were not motivated to do this, because it means extra costs and no clear results. 1 Of these 5 is a member of a village association because he finds it important that he can provide the villagers with correct information when one is talking about the agrarian sector.

The farmers who find the image just important, are more active with nature conservation and initiatives to change the image with the help of nature conservation. 4 Of these 9 farmers are

involved in open days and/or education programs. The information and education of these 4 farmers all captures more than just the dairy sector, they also pay much attention to the surrounding nature and what they do to conserve it. Farmer N is a good example of this, he gives lectures about biodiversity and guides groups on his farm who are interested in birds. Farmer C hosts primary school classes on his farm to educate them about dairy farming, and nowadays more and more about the surrounding environment too. He started with this because it was possible to receive subsidies for educating primary school classes. First, he went to a course to learn how to educate on a farm. Farmer C: *"The information about dairy farming might be not so interesting for them, for me, the rural experience is more important nowadays"*. Farmer M also mentioned that when one wants to be perceived accurately and provide society with complete information, nature conservation should be addressed too, because it is part of what farmers do.

Farmer G tries to create a positive image with nature conservation in a different way, examples are planting trees, or sowing flowers and grass on the manure basin which is close to the public road. People who pass by, compliment him because they enjoy the nice scenery. Therefore he feels that this is also an effective way of improving the image. The other farmers are open to civilians too, but are not active at the moment. Some would when they receive a financial compensation be more interested because it otherwise only costs money. One of them is farmer F, who is very much interested in new forms of subsidies and nature conservation which includes involving society more. As examples he mentioned information boards, or making his plots and especially the fauna margins accessible for civilians. Farmer M would be interested in a construction which combines education and sales of their products. She prefers this combination because otherwise she feels that the returns are not high enough since only a small part of society is reached.

There is only 1 farmer who is not so much interested in the image of the sector. He carries out nature conservation because he is a nature lover. However, he does think that nature conservation can contribute to a positive image. With fauna margins, he experienced that only the first year the fauna margins blossomed, and the years after it did not. Therefore, every year he seeds some new flowers in the fauna margin. Due to this he receives some compliments from civilians. These compliments do result in a higher satisfaction, but he is not motivated to actively create a positive image; his motivation for the blossoming fauna margins is that he himself enjoys it.

One of the hypotheses was that farmers for whom nature conservation is a salient self-identity, are concerned with the image of the sector, and they would use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image. Looking at the given answers, none of the farmers mentioned that nature conservation is explicitly used as a tool to improve the image. Nonetheless, there are farmers who are involved in educating the society and, some of these educate, next to their core businesses, about nature conservation on their farm. These results suggest that nature conservation is not specifically used as a tool by those who are actively involved in educating society, but that it seen as a positive side-effect.

### 3.3 Types of farmers and the image

Now we know which motivational and non-motivational factors have an influence on a farmers' decisions, and the implications of the image, we will investigate the relation between the two. 2 Of the formulated hypotheses state that there are differences to be found between those farmers who are engaged in nature conservation because of personal interest and those who are motivated because of social reasons. In order to test these hypotheses, items were used in the questionnaire which the farmers could rank. The items were the following:

1. Nature conservation is part of who I am
2. With nature conservation, I am able to convey my point of view about farming
3. Nature conservation is typically something for me
4. Nature conservation results in a higher appreciation by colleagues
5. Nature conservation results in a higher appreciation by society
6. It is important that consumers have a positive image through nature conservation

They had 5 rating possibilities:

1 = Strongly disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Agree a little    4 = Agree    5 = Strongly agree

The self-identity was measured with item 1 and 3 (Lokhorst *et al.* 2010). These are validated items on a scale. A low score on this scale means that nature conservation is not a salient identity, a high score that it is salient. With item 2, it was possible to see to what extent nature conservation is part of their vision of being a farmer. The items 4, 5 and 6 are social motivation and image related. Agreeing with the items 4 and 5 would imply that a farmer believes that nature conservation results in a positive image, and thus there is a positive attitude towards nature conservation. Agreement with item 6 means that farmers find it important that consumers perceive the sector more positively due to nature conservation. This suggests that nature conservation is a salient self-identity and so they want to be perceived accurately as being a conservationist. In table 2, the results of the rating done by the farmers are displayed.

**Table 2 Rating of items by farmers**

<b>Items</b>  <b>Farmers</b>	<b>1</b>  Nature conservation is part of who I am	<b>2</b>  I am able to spread my vision with nature conservation	<b>3</b>  Nature conservation is typically something for me	<b>4</b>  Nature conservation results in a higher appreciation by colleagues	<b>5</b>  Nature conservation results in a higher appreciation by society	<b>6</b>  It is important that consumers have a positive image through nature conservation
Farmer A	4	3	3	2	3	3
Farmer B	4	3	4	3	4	4
Farmer C	4	3	3	2	4	4
Farmer D	3	3	3	2	4	4
Farmer E	3	3	2	3	4	4
Farmer F	3	3	2	3	4	4
Farmer G	4	3	3	4	5	3
Farmer H	4	4	3	2	4	4
Farmer I	3	4	3	2	4	4
Farmer J	3	4	3	4	4	4
Farmer K	3	3	3	3	4	3
Farmer L	4	3	3	2	4	4
Farmer M	4	3	4	2	3	4
Farmer N	4	3	4	1	3	4
<b>Average</b>	<b>3,57</b>	<b>3,14</b>	<b>3,07</b>	<b>2,57</b>	<b>3,86</b>	<b>3,79</b>

Because self-identity is measured with items 1 and 3, we can take these two together in order to compare self-identity items with the social/image related items. Overall, we can see in table 2 that the items 5 and 6 are rated the highest. All farmers believe that nature conservation results in a higher appreciation by society; 1 farmer strongly agrees, 3 farmers only agree a little and the rest agrees. The same goes for item 6: 3 farmers only agree a little and the rest agrees. One would expect, seeing these results, that item 4 would be rated similarly. But with item 4, only 2 farmers agree, 7 farmers disagree and one farmer strongly disagrees. Comparing items 4 and 5, farmers do believe that nature conservation results in a higher appreciation by society but not by colleagues. The farmers do not think that nature conservation results in a higher appreciation among colleagues, so it is likely that amongst farmers other practices than nature conservation result in a higher appreciation. Nevertheless, nature conservation is perceived to have a positive influence on the image of the sector towards society.

Items 1 and 3 measure the self-identity of the farmers. These together measure the relative salience of the nature conservation self-identity. Taking these items together, we can see that there was less agreement with these items compared to items 5 and 6. For example, farmer F disagrees and agrees only a little with items 1 and 3, while he does agree with items 5 and 6. Despite the fact that nature conservation is not a salient self-identity, he does believe there is a link between nature conservation and a improved image; and that it is important that an improved image is caused by nature conservation. This implies that this farmer is motivated by external factors, in this case the subjective norm, to carry out nature conservation, because recognition by others is important to him. This farmer also mentioned image as being one of the motives to be engaged in nature conservation

and is of the opinion that nature conservation should be more visible for society. Thus, for him the image is an important incentive to be engaged in nature conservation, but not the most important. However, 12 out of 14 farmers did not mention the image as a motivation to engage in nature conservation. The 6 farmers who mentioned that one of their motivations to be engaged in nature conservation is personal interest agreed or only agreed a little with items 1 and 3; compared to the ranking of the rest of the farmers there is no difference. Also, the ranking of items 5 and 6 done by these 6 farmers shows no differences compared to the other farmers.

### 3.3.1 Motivations along the continuum

In order to be able to gain insight in what farmers we are dealing with and what the role of image is, classification is useful. However, classifying the farmers by their motivations into distinct types would suggest that motivations exclude each other while behavioral models assume that motivations are continua which are not by definition incompatible with each other. Participants can score relatively low or high in this continua (Lokhorst *et al.* 2010). Based on the given answers and the ranking, it is possible to see on which place along the continuum they fit. With interpretation of the answers to the open questions, it is possible to compare the given answers. Next to this, the ranking done by the farmers and their relative scores are used to be able to discover where a farmer would fit along the continuum. On the one side, there are the farmers for whom personal interest and financial reasons are important motivations to be engaged. These are the farmers who perceive nature conservation as belonging to the farm management, and who try to carry out as much conservation practices as possible. On the other side are the farmers who are mainly involved because of financial or social motives; they need external incentives to engage in nature conservation. In between these two, we can find those who are more motivated because of financial considerations than personal interest. This continuum can be seen below in figure 1.

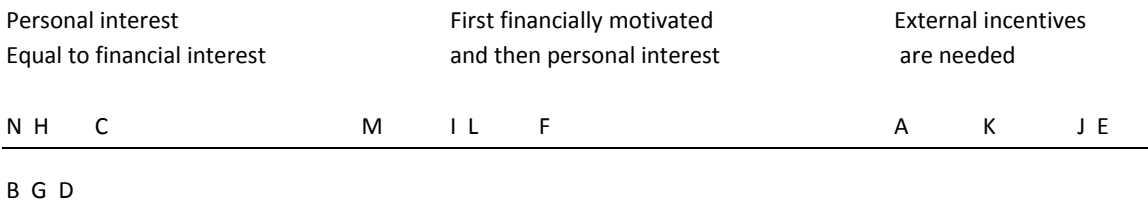


Figure 1: The motivations of farmers

As mentioned earlier in paragraph 3.1, farmers B, C, D, G, H and N mainly involved because of personal interest and financial rewards in nature conservation, they feel responsible and enjoy taking care of the surrounding environment. Also in the ranking, we can see that these farmers overall ranked items 1 and 3 the highest. Going down the line of the continuum, we can see that farmer M is more motivated because of personal interest compared to farmer F, although for the 4 farmers in the middle, financial rewards are as important as personal interest. This also became clear with the ranking; where farmers on the left side of the continuum mostly agreed with items 1 and 3, overall the farmers in the middle only agree a little with these items. Looking at the answers given by the farmers on the far right, and seeing their ranking, these farmers are mainly motivated by external incentives.

Next to the importance of gaining insight in the types of farmers we are dealing with, it is necessary to compare this with the importance of image. By doing so, it is possible to see whether there is a relationship to discover between the motivation to be engaged in nature conservation, and the image of the sector. Looking at the answers given, farmers A, I, J and K find the image of the sector very important, this is illustrated in figure 2. Comparing this with the results in figure 1, it suggests that those who find the image of the sector very important, need external incentives to carry out nature conservation, because 3 of these farmers are mainly motivated to engage because of external incentives.

Image very Important		Just important			Not very Important	
I	A J K	C	B E G F		D	
			H L M N			

Figure 2: The importance of image according to the farmers

However, when we take a look at the *ranking* done by all farmers for items 5 and 6, there are no clear differences to be found between all the farmers. Notable is that some farmers' answers to the questions were not in line with the ranking. Some of these discrepancies have no clear reason. Farmer A for example, agrees with items 1 and 3 which indicate that nature conservation is a salient self-identity. Nonetheless, when asked about his motivations for nature conservation, he said that: *'Being involved is purely because of financial rewards and for no other reason, but I am not negative towards nature conservation'*. Yet, other discrepancies might be explained by the fact that not all farmers feel there is a link between the image and nature conservation. As described earlier, the farmers who find the image very important were A,I,E, J and K. But in table 2 it can be seen that there are 3 farmers who only agree a little with item 6, and 2 of these are farmers who mentioned earlier that the image is very important to them. This finding suggests that, although some farmers find the image of the sector very important, do not find it important that the image improves explicitly by nature conservation.

One of the hypotheses was that those farmers for whom nature conservation is a salient self-identity, find the image of the sector important and use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image of the sector. Looking at the results, it seems that almost all farmers for whom nature conservation is salient find the image important, but not as important compared to those who are motivated by external incentives. However, none of the personally motivated farmers perceives nature conservation as a tool to improve the image; it is just something what they do out of personal interest, and some include it in their education. As mentioned before, when education improves the image of the sector, this is perceived as a positive side-effect; nature conservation is not explicitly used as a to improve the image. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is not confirmed by the findings

A second hypothesis was that socially motivated farmers would not use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image because for them, nature conservation is not a salient identity. The results show that the ranking is virtually similar compared to those who are motivated by personal interest and financial rewards, yet with the open questions, these farmers considered the image very important. Farmer I is partly motivated because of personal interest and finds the image very important. Therefore, he organizes open days en here he includes information about nature



conservation. Yet, farmers A, J and K are not active with improving the image through nature conservation, although they find the image very important. These findings imply that farmers who are motivated because of external incentives do not use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image. Thus, hypothesis 2 is not confirmed by the findings.

The findings show that both hypotheses are not confirmed. Nature conservation is not used as a strategic tool to improve the image by any of the farmers, and

### 3.4 Farmers' collectives

It is possible that not only personal motivations to engage in nature conservation determine the decision-making of a farmer, but there might also be a social influence due to the membership of a farmers' collective.

9 Of the interviewed farmers are a member of a farmers' collective, 5 are not. The farmers who are a member of a farmers' collective are: Farmers B, C, I, H, F, G, J, E and N. There were various reasons mentioned to join a collective. The most common reason to join is because of practical considerations; for some AES farmers need to apply collectively such as the geese tolerance scheme in which farmer J and G take part. Another practical reason to join are to have a say and stand strong together towards other parties such as Staatsbosbeheer and the province. Also, filling in all the forms needed for the AES are mentioned as a great advance of being a member. For farmer J and E the reason to join is purely practical. However, farmer E is also a shareholder in a collective for a herd of Herefords; this she really enjoys, but the extra income it generates is important too. Farmer C, I, G, H and F started with the same motivation, but they became more interested and now it is interesting and fun too. Farmer H: *"I am also involved in the collective for the management of a herd of Herefords, I really enjoy it. Once a year we have a day together with all the involved farmers and it is so nice to do this altogether"*. Also farmer I and Farmer E are involved in this collective and they enjoy it too. Farmer I: *"It is pleasant to work with people with the same idea, I became more involved and interested. You have to work together with each other and not see each other as rivals"*. Farmer F has just recently joined a collective, to have a say in policies and he likes it to talk with farmers with similar ideas. Farmer J is a member of the collective called Meervogel and he is a board member of the geese department. For him, the arrangement of contracts, filling in the forms etcetera is the only reason to be a member of Meervogel. He used to be a member of Natuurvereniging Duurswold too, here they worked with volunteers who search for the nests. He mentioned that for most members of this department, the main motivation is practical. Yet, farmer C is also a member of Meervogel but in another department. For him, the membership is not only practical but he also enjoys it. The difference stems from the fact that the geese tolerance scheme is purely focused at reducing the financial damage done by foraging geese, whereas other AES are focused on protection. Farmer H is one of the founders of a collective (Agrarisch Natuur en Landschap Slochteren, ANLS) which has much contacts with Staatsbosbeheer. They founded the collective because Staatsbosbeheer and the province wanted to buy 2000 hectares of farmers for the realization of a nature reserve. Due to this collective, the results were a lot more favorable for the farmers. Also farmer I started a collective himself in order to be able to start with the AES for bird management. The reasons were purely practical; due to this new collective they were qualified to join the scheme. Now this collective has merged with ANLS. Other farmers who also started their own farmers' collective are farmers B and N. Farmer B because there was no collective yet, and he felt that something needed to be organized in

the area; it was mainly because of his personal interest that he started this. And still he tries to make farmers enthusiastic to join and to start with nature conservation. Farmer N however, was a member of a farmers' collective, but he could not identify with the ideas of the collective. Despite the management of birds the members had only decreasing results. Farmer N: *"Despite their efforts to manage the birds and nests, they had only decreasing results. I saw things were going wrong, therefore I quit the collective"*. Therefore, he founded his own collective because of personal interest. Another reason for Farmer N to start with a collective was the fact that Farmer N has a famous reputation in the agrarian sector for being very active and innovative regarding nature conservation. This came with a lot of publicity; he does for example lectures all over the country and excursions on his farm. With the collective, he was able to hire some extra people and find some sponsoring. All farmers became more motivated and conscious of nature and the possibilities of conservation since their membership due to the information they receive, and the fact that they spend time thinking and talking about nature conservation during the meetings.

All the farmers who are a member of a collective can identify with the ruling ideas of the collective, although some more than others. Farmer N could not identify with the ideas of the collective where he was a member before he founded his own. Most farmers mention that there are many different ideas and that all farmers are different too. Some will be more involved because of financial matters, others because of personal interest. But overall, the ruling ideas comply with their own.

However, there are 5 farmers who are not a member of a farmers' collective. These are farmers D, A, K, L and M. 4 farmers had the same motivation: they had no specific reason to not join a collective. 'It simply never happened' was the explanation of these farmers. Next to this, the fact that there are no collectives close by and not interested were also motivations. When asking whether they want to join, most of them were not very enthusiastic. Farmer D has been approached by another arable farmer, but he does not see the added value of being a member. Only farmer K said he will give it a thought. The reason that farmer M does not join a collective is the fact that they are not engaged with an AES anymore, and her father used to be a member so there is not really a need for her to join.

### ***3.4.1 Importance of membership***

Part of the research is about whether the membership of a collective has an influence on the intentions to engage in AES. Now, we will look whether the membership of a collective is important to the farmers, in order to determine whether farmers can identify with the group norms and become influenced by them.

Most farmers who are a member of a collective, find the membership important. Not the membership itself is important, but the positive outcomes which it entails such as the bond with others. Farmer G: *"The membership itself is not important to me, but the bond with the other farmers, together we can make things work"*. Farmer C mentioned that it is pleasant to belong to a certain group regarding nature conservation because it are all farmers who are engaged in nature conservation. Farmer F: *"Ideas can make each other stronger, which is motivating"*. Also practical reasons are mentioned often, through the collective they stand stronger and they are able to join collective AES. Farmer J: *"Meervogel is founded because bird protection and geese tolerance schemes need to be collective"*. The importance of the outcomes of the membership are thus important to most members. This, in combination with the fact that all farmers can identify with the ruling ideas of

the collective, would suggest that the farmers can identify with the ruling ideas of the collectives and so might be influenced in their intentions regarding nature conservation.

### ***3.4.2 The image and membership***

Now it is known why farmers are a member of a collective or not, it is useful to investigate whether there are clear differences between members and non-members regarding their motivations to be engaged in nature conservation and the importance of the image. With this, it is possible to see whether there are specific motivated farmers who join a collective.

To determine the relative salience of nature conservation to the farmers, the continuum of figure 1 is used. Despite the fact that this is not a validated scale, which the items 1 and 3 in table 2 are, it is assumed that this continuum provides us a more reliable view. That is, the ranking done by the farmers was not always in agreement with their answers to the open questions. In the continuum, the answers are combined with the ranking and thus is a more complete overview. When we look at figure 1, we can see that farmers B, G, H, C and N are placed on the left side of the continuum and thus they are equally motivated by personal interest and financial motivation. As mentioned before, farmers B, C, I, G, H, J, E, F and N join a farmers' collective. Farmers I and F can be found in the middle, and E and J on the right side. The farmers who are a member of a collective all started mainly because of practical considerations, but over time most farmers got more motivated and enjoy it too. The farmers who are members of a collective can be found on all places along the continuum of figure 1, yet relatively most farmers who are equally motivated by personal and financial motivations are a member. Of the 5 farmers who not join a collective, only one farmer is motivated by personal interest to be engaged in nature conservation.

One of the hypotheses was that most farmers for whom the nature conservation is salient, would join a collective. In this research, we can see that most farmers who join a collective are farmers who are as much motivated by personal interest as financial rewards: 5 out of 9 farmers. Of the 5 non-members, only 1 farmer is motivated equally by personal interest and financial motivations, for the rest the financial rewards are the main motivations. Thus it seems that for those for whom nature conservation is salient, join a collective. However, as mentioned before by the farmers, there are many different motivated members of a collective. Also farmers who are mainly motivated because of the financial rewards are members; this thus suggests that there are no clear discrepancies to be found between members and non-members regarding the motivations to engage in nature conservation.

## **3.5 Summary of results**

Overall, the farmers find the image of the sector important and some are in various ways active to improve the image. However, the image of the sector is not a main motivation for farmers to engage in nature conservation; the most often mentioned motives were financial reasons and personal interest. Some farmers educate about farming and include nature conservation, which results in an improved image. But, nature conservation is never specifically used as a tool to improve the image of the sector, the improved image through education about nature conservation is perceived as a positive side-effect. Expected was that those farmers who are engaged because of personal interest would nature conservation as a tool but this appeared to be not the case.

There was no clear relation between motives for carrying out nature conservation and the importance of the image; both farmers who are involved because of personal interest and those who are involved because of other reasons find the image important. Some farmers for whom nature conservation is a less salient self-identity compared to others felt even more attacked by false and negative views than those who act out of personal motives. The expectation was that those who act out of personal interest, would feel more attacked compared to financially motivated farmers. This is in contradiction with the findings.

The farmers who join a collective are as well farmers who are personally interested as farmers who are involved purely because of financial reasons. All the farmers can identify with the ruling ideas of the collectives, both personally interested and financial motivated farmers. Thus it seems that there is not one specific social identity among the members of a collective. Also, membership of a collective does not have an influence on the farmers and their views about nature conservation. Expected was that those farmers who are mainly personally motivated would be a member of a collective, and those who are mainly involved because of financial matters would not. However, the findings suggest that there is not a clear difference between the types of farmers and the membership of a collective.

## 4. Discussion

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This research was conducted in order to gain a better understanding about the motives of farmers to engage in nature conservation. Specifically it was interesting to investigate whether image is one of them. Next to this, the role played by farmers' collectives was investigated.

In this research, an important finding regarding the motives of farmers to engage in nature conservation is that personal interest and financial motives are the most important determinants (see also Leneman & Graveland 2004, Schenk *et al.* 2007). Nature conservation is not used as a strategic tool among farmers to improve the image of the sector, despite that farmers do find the image important when asked about it. The lacking visibility towards society was mentioned as a main reason why nature conservation is not used as a tool. The farmers feel that their efforts in nature conservation are not noticed by society, and thus have no implications regarding the image of the sector. The explanation for this finding can be found in the used framework, specifically in Impression Management theory. The goal-relevance of using nature conservation as a tool to improve the image is low due to little publicity. The farmers believe that their nature conservation efforts have little, or no, implications for an improved image, and so the goal relevance is low. The determining factor of the visibility of the behavior is in correspondence with the research of Korevaar *et al.* (2003), who found that many farmers are willing to participate in nature conservation but that the cost-reward ratio is low, among other things, in terms of income and visibility towards society.

The subjective norm did not influence the intention to engage in nature conservation; farmers did not perceive social pressure to carry out nature conservation (see also e.g. Armitage & Conner 1999, 2001; Blue 1995; Fielding *et al.* 2008). Despite the fact that farmers do believe that nature conservation improves the image, they are not motivated to carry out nature conservation because of this, other motivations (financial rewards, personal interest) are more important. In a study done by Greiner *et al.* (2009) it is shown that the items 'being appreciated by society', and 'being appreciated by colleagues' are ranked as being moderate important when farmers were asked about the importance of goals of being a grazier. These findings are in correspondence with the current research; recognition and appreciation appeared not to be important motives for farmers to engage in nature conservation. Next to this, the perceived control over the behavior is low. Farmers refer to the government because they decide about the AES in terms of suitable areas and implementation regulations. Enhancing the visibility of an AES is perceived as a task for the government. Farmers do think nature conservation has the ability to improve the image, yet due to the perceived low visibility towards society, farmers are negative towards the behavior using nature conservation specifically as a tool to improve the image. Fielding *et al.* (2008a) found that a positive attitude and a sense of control are important determinants of intentions, which in this research too explains the lack of intentions amongst the farmers. Also Mannetti *et al.* (2004) found that the most important predictor of intentions is the perceived behavioral control and the weakest is the subjective norms.

The above mentioned findings are partly contradicting with the research done by Wilson & Hart (2000), who found a new argument for conservation-oriented participation motivations. They

argue that environmental issues are increasingly seen by farmers as issues that need to be addressed because of the demands of a wider society, farmers acknowledge that a farm that is well run in environmental terms is also appreciated more by the public. Furthermore, Michel-Guillou & Moser (2006) found that for voluntary pro-environmental actions, income did not appear to be a powerful determiner because farmers, regardless of their practices, deem that these steps have little impact. Instead, improving their public image did seem to be a strong determiner of commitments, ahead of even the environmental considerations of the action. These findings are in line with another research which showed that actions completed in the defense of their identity, profession or social cohesion, can have a greater impact on farmers than actions that invoked environmental degradations (Weiss, Moser & Germann 2006). Thus, in those researches, image is increasingly becoming a motive for nature conservation, but in this research there is evidence that it is not a motivation to be engaged in nature conservation. In this research, farmers put more emphasis on education about the sector to improve the image, sometimes in combination with nature conservation instead of nature conservation practices only, because the farmers sense their efforts have little or no implications for the image.

The engagement in nature conservation is also affected by non-motivational factors: the results and applicability of the scheme. The farmers who experience negative results or where the bureaucracy becomes too much a problem, are more negative towards nature conservation – at least in the form of an AES. Next to this, some farmers are not able to continue with the current AES because the area is not appointed by the government for an AES. Therefore, not only motivational factors are important determinants of being involved in nature conservation, also the results one has achieved in the past and anticipated impediments in the future.

The findings show no clear relation between the motivation to carry out nature conservation and the importance of the image. All farmers want to be perceived accurately and show society what they do (see also Balk-Theuws 2004, van den Ham & van der Schans 1999), and for some this is more important than for others. Farmers who are involved mainly because of financial reasons also find the image very important and feel threatened in their self-esteem by false imputations. Yet, there is a difference in the role which the image plays amongst those who are equally personally interested as financially, and those who are mainly involved because of financial rewards. For the first, being perceived accurately is important because they want to show what they do; that nature conservation is a salient self-identity. For the latter, being perceived accurately is mainly focused on the core businesses of farming. This is shown by the results that those for whom nature conservation is a salient identity, perceive nature conservation as being a part of their farm management, while others who find the image very important, are mainly involved because of financial rewards which shows that nature conservation is not integrated because of lacking personal interest. Expected was that those who act both out of personal interest and financial reasons, would feel more attacked compared to socially motivated farmers because of a higher threat to the self-esteem of a personally motivated farmer. Though, in this research, it appeared not possible to discern personally and socially motivated farmers, as clear as done by Greiner *et al.* (2009). There are differences in the motivations to engage in nature conservation, but none of the farmers is mainly motivated because recognition by others is important to them. Some farmers are more motivated because of personal interest than others, but none of them will continue in the current degree when subsidies would disappear. Yet, some farmers will try to continue in a less intensive way if possible, while others will quit immediately. The difference between the continuation possibly lies in the different

characteristics, circumstances and goals farmers gave (Pannell *et al.* 2006). Various goals can be economic, social and environmental. Those farmers who will quit immediately when subsidies will disappear, are likely to have high priority economic goals, whereas those who will continue conservation practices as much as possible have more social and/or environmental goals. Next to this, the relative advantage of the practice over existing practices plays a role. For example, the farmers who deal with spray-free zones already have to spare one and a half meter from the ditches, and broadening this zone is practical regarding harvesting. Nonetheless, all interviewed farmers carry out own initiatives, although some more intensive than others. In a previous study (Wilson & Hart 2000), it was found that, in contrary to other studies, economic and pragmatic considerations to participate in AES are not necessarily incompatible with environmental reasons. This finding might explain in this research the own initiatives done by all farmers and the continuation by some farmers without subsidies. To what degree the own initiatives are integrated in farm management lies in the self-identity of farmers. The most salient identity has the strongest influence on the farmers' practices (Fielding *et al.* 2008). For some farmers, the conservation identity is more salient compared to others which results in different degrees of conservation practices integrated in farm management. Also, some farmers feel a moral obligation due to internalized values to carry out nature conservation, which is in line with the research done by Lokhorst *et al.* (2010). These farmers grew up with nature conservation because their fathers were already involved. Especially those farmers who have many own initiatives experience moral concerns regarding nature. The study of Greiner *et al.* (2009) provided quantitative evidence that farmers with high conservation and lifestyle motivations have higher adoption rates of conservation practices compared to those farmers who are motivated by financial or social motives, the research suggests that farmers who are motivated because of lifestyle and conservation goals are intrinsically motivated because doing so aligns with their values and attitudes. Because, when not engaging in role-appropriate behavior this may create a state of internal tension (Stryker 1968). However, Burton & Wilson (2006) argued that despite much talk about the changing attitudes of farmers from productivist towards conservationist, 78% of the farmers in research had a salient productivist identity, and only 8% a salient conservationist identity. Also Potter (1998) and Burton (2004a) found that there is little supporting evidence that farmers become more conservation minded. Wilson (2001) therefore suggested that production remains to be the centre of farmers' systems instead of conservation. Egoz *et al.* (2001) found that when a landscape appears uncontrolled due to various conservation practices, this can be seen by colleagues as laziness. Failing to observe the productivist ideal can have a significant and direct impact on the social position of the farmer within an agricultural community. This in turn has an effect on the ability to perceive themselves as good farmers and this results in a lowered sense of well-being and a threat to their self-esteem. Also in this research, it was found that production and earning a living continue to be the main focus of farmers, since no farmer would continue in the same way without subsidies. The concept of role-constraints is also part of the used framework. Role constraints could be a limiting factor for farmers to use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image; the practices are not in line with the productivist identity.

All farmers who join a farmers' collective can identify with the ruling ideas; both farmers who are personally interested as much as financially motivated, and the mainly financial motivated farmers. This finding can be explained by the concept of social identity. The finding tells us that there is not a specific type of farmer who joins a collective, but all various types of farmers. This thus is evidence that among farmers' collectives, there is not one specific social identity. All can identify with the

ideas of the collective, because there are differences between the ideas of various collectives and between departments; some purely exist because of financial reasons whilst others are aimed at the protection of nature. Some of the farmers only joined because of practical reasons whereas others also join because they like to interact with farmers with similar ideas. However, some could identify more with the ruling ideas than others. Assumed is that when a social identity is salient, a persons' intentions will be more influenced by group-related, social variables than personal-level variables (Fielding *et al.* 2008). Yet, in this research, for none of the farmers the social identity among the members of a farmers' collective is an important basis for the self-conception; no one mentioned that their view has changed due to their membership of a collective. The self-identity of the farmers remains the most important predictor of intentions, the farmers argued that the collective is not of influence on their views and practices. The expectation was that those farmers who are personally interested in nature conservation, would join a collective because they can identify with the expected conservationist social identity of the members of a farmers' collective. Evidence shows that the relative salience of the conservationist self-identity of a farmer is not of influence regarding being a member of a collective or not. Some for whom nature conservation is a salient identity, are not a member whereas some for whom nature conservation is not salient, are a member. This then suggests that there is not a matter of a conservationist social identity among the members of a farmers' collective, in contrary to the expectations. Next to this, hypothesized was that farmers join a collective because this might help them in the decision-making regarding nature conservation and the belonging to a group is important. The results show that all farmers who are a member, find their membership important because of the positive results, which is in correspondence with the expectations. These positive results mean for some practical considerations, for others this means the belonging to a group with similar ideas.

Compared to those who are a member of a collective, the non-members carried out similar nature conservation practices. There was no difference found between the ideas of members and non-members regarding the practices. This too shows that there is not a specific type of farmer who joins a collective. However, some schemes are only accessible through a collective, which are thus not carried out by the non-members.

The used framework which existed out of the Theory of Planned Behavior, with the concepts of self- and social identity included, and Impression Management, appeared to be very useful for the interpretation and explanation of the findings. Especially the integration of the two resulted in a good understanding of the findings of the research. Because the motivations of farmers to engage in nature conservation were investigated, in relation to the image of the sector, both theories were highly applicable. Some results were explained by one TPB, some by IM and some by a combination of both. However, the added variable which is used by Jones & Pittman (1982) did not seem to be of relevance for this research. Expected was that exemplification could play a role in this research, but there were no clear results which could be explained by the variable exemplification; there was no evidence found that farmers wanted to be viewed as dedicated and therefore went beyond their duties regarding nature conservation.

## 4.1 Implications for further research

This study shows that image is not an important motivation for farmers to engage in nature conservation. Yet, more research needs to be done to gain more knowledge about the image of the



sector and its implications for nature conservation practices. Research about what farmers think is the current image among society, would result in a better understanding of how farmers perceive their position in present-day society. Also, interesting would be to investigate how farmers think they can improve the image of the sector; with what tools and whose cooperation is needed in order to obtain this. Research about how farmers perceive nature conservation, their experiences and suggestions for improvement could lead to a better understanding of those who feel they are responsible for the landscape and environment in The Netherlands, and could have implications for policies aimed at nature conservation. Next to individual farmers, interesting would be to gain a better understanding about farmers' collectives. For example, the reasons for existence of the collective, the ruling ideas, the proportion of civilian members compared to farmers and the implications hereof. With this knowledge, it becomes clear how nature conservation and especially AES are perceived by the collectives, and whether there lies a task for the government to increase the commitment and effectiveness of AES. Important is that the researches are representative for all the farmers in The Netherlands who engage in nature conservation, since the current research is only considered to be exploratory. Together, these researches could lead to improvements in nature conservation practices regarding the adoption, execution and implementation by farmers and the policies regarding conservation schemes.

## **4.2 Implications for practice**

This research has shown that the image of the sector is important to farmers, but that nature conservation is not used as a strategic tool to improve the image. Most do believe there is a relation between nature conservation and an improved image, but they doubt the visibility of their conservation efforts. Nature conservation is regarded as not being visible for society. Besides this, improvement of the image is not a main motivation to be engaged in nature conservation, the most important motivations are financial rewards and personal interest. Being a productivist is a more salient self-identity of farmers compared to nature conservation. However, some farmers are involved in educating society about farming and nature conservation, yet this is not a motivation to be involved in nature conservation but regarded as a positive side-effect.

When policies will remain the same regarding nature conservation, expected is that no farmer will use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image. But, when the AES will be not only aimed at nature conservation, but also at educating society this is likely to have positive results regarding the image of the agrarian sector. Nature conservation should become more visible in order to reach society. This could be done for example through information boards and increasing the accessibility of conservation areas. There are two parties who are expected to have a favorable position to enhance the visibility of nature conservation: farmers' collectives and the government. Farmers' collective because often, next to farmers, there are also civilians member of these collectives. Therefore, collectives are an appropriate party to increase the awareness of society regarding nature conservation. They could, for example, through the members reach more people in their region by providing information in several ways such as open days or advertising brochures. The government is the only party which can change the policies regarding AES; they have the ability to make nature conservation more visible among the whole Dutch society. As a result, this is likely to have positive effects on the number of farmers who want to be engaged in an AES, since many farmers feel threatened in their self-esteem because of wrong imputations by society.

Increasing the visibility for society and effectiveness of AES could also be done by giving farmers more freedom and responsibilities in the implementation of an AES. This would mean that the government takes care of the general regulations and the compliance, and that farmers themselves are able to implement an AES in a for them effective and suitable manner. In the current research, several farmers mentioned that they felt they were more capable of taking care of nature compared to other parties and that some regulations are not appropriate in their situation but that they have to comply with them because of a fixed contract. In order to make such a system work, the government could work with a basic allowance for minimal efforts, and extra payments for extra efforts which are of a demonstrable enhanced result. In this way, farmers themselves can decide themselves whether they use nature conservation as a tool to improve the image of the sector in accordance with their efforts. It is likely that especially farmers who are concerned with nature and/or the image of the sector will become more enthusiastic and dedicated towards nature conservation because of this increased responsibility.

Changing the policies and giving farmers more responsibility regarding AES to enhance the visibility are likely to motivate farmers to be engaged in AES and improve the image of the sector.

### **4.3 Limitations**

At this point it is important to address the current study's limitations. First, due to time-constraints, I was only able to interview 14 farmers which is not representative for all the farmers in The Netherlands. Second, as I mentioned earlier, I was not able to interview only dairy cattle farmers, so I interviewed arable farmers and one beef cattle farmer too. Since the group of farmers is not representative, I am not able to measure whether there are significance differences between the farmers. Next to this, sometimes interpretation of the data was needed since not all farmers gave answers using the same wording. The answers might be interpreted wrongly which leads to an incorrect picture of the actual situation. Because of these limitations, the research is considered to be exploratory.

### **4.4 Conclusion**

It was found that nature conservation is not used as a strategic tool to improve the image of the sector. Farmers do find the image important, but nature conservation is not used as a strategic tool to improve it. An important reason is that farmers feel their efforts have no implications for their public image; nature conservation is not perceived as being visible for society. It appeared that there is no clear relation between the motivations to carry out nature conservation and the importance of the image. Motivations which do determine to engagement in nature conservation are personal interest in nature conservation and the financial rewards which are attached to the AES. The difference between farmers who are motivated equally by personal interest as financial rewards and those who are mainly motivated by financial rewards stems from the relative salience of the nature conservationist self-identity of a farmer. When the nature conservationist self-identity is salient, the farmer is intrinsically motivated to carry out nature conservation. Yet, the results show that despite that nature conservation can be a salient self-identity, the productivist identity remains the most salient regarding the AES, since all farmers need external incentives to carry out AES intensively. Nevertheless, own initiatives in nature conservation are carried out by all farmers. Some practices are more integrated in the farm-management compared to others. The discrepancy lies in

the importance of the conservationist self-identity; the more important, the more own initiatives are integrated in the farm-management. However, not only motivational factors play a role, also non-motivational factors. It was found that the results and the applicability of the scheme are important determinants of the engagement in an AES. Negative experiences result in a more negative attitude towards engaging in an AES.

The results show that there is not a specific type of farmer who joins a collective, but all various motivated types of farmers. This is caused by the discrepancies between the various collectives and departments within collectives. Most farmers did become more motivated due to their membership, but it did not change their view about nature conservation. This suggest that for all farmers, self-identity is more salient compared to social-identity.

To conclude, farmers are not engaged in nature conservation because of concerns about their public image; and farmers are not guided by the group norms of a farmers' collective.

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# Appendix

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*Antwoorden van de individuele boeren kunnen worden verstrekt op aanvraag*

## Interviewvragen agrarisch natuurbeheer<sup>1</sup>

Naam:

Leeftijd:

Boer sinds:

Locatie:

Bedrijfsomvang:

Dieren:

Hectare:

Soorten gewassen:

Opvolger:

1 Wat voor soorten beheer doet u?

Soort	Deelname
<b>Soortenbeheer</b> (weidevogels, uilen, ganzen, stern, hamster e.d.)	
<b>Randenbeheer</b> ( akker, fauna, bloemen, slootranden, bermen)	
<b>Perceelsbeheer</b> (uitgestelde maaidatum, plasdras voor weidevogels, botanisch beheer, natuurbraak)	
<b>Landschapselementen</b> (erfbepanting, houtwallen, poelen, geriefhoutbosjes, knotbomen, hagen etc.)	
<b>Eigen initiatieven</b> (dus niet geregistreerd, bv. Vogelkast, takkenbos, paaltjes bij nest...)	

## Motivaties

2 Waarom deze soorten van beheer?

Financiële redenen (subsidie)	Persoonlijke voorkeur
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<sup>1</sup> NB: Alle antwoorden zijn mogelijk, de mogelijke antwoord categorieën maakt het makkelijker om antwoorden te kunnen classificeren.

Makkelijk toepasbaar	Anders
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3 Wat zijn voor u de belangrijkste motivaties om aan agrarisch natuurbeheer te doen?

Subsidies	Imago van de sector verbeteren
Persoonlijke overtuiging	Anders
Sociale redenen (andere boeren etc.)	

4 Geeft het meer voldoening om te boeren sinds u aan Agrarisch Natuurbeheer doet?

5 Voelt u zich verantwoordelijk voor de natuur en het landschap in Nederland?

### **Imago**

6 Is een positief imago van de sector belangrijk voor u, en waarom?



7 Wat denkt u wat het imago is van de sector?

8 Vindt u een correct imago belangrijk?

9 Denkt u het imago met agrarisch natuurbeheer positief te kunnen veranderen?

10 Is Agrarisch Natuurbeheer een goede/effectieve manier om het imago van de sector te verbeteren, of zijn er betere alternatieven?

**Agrarische Natuurvereniging**

11 Bent u aangesloten bij een Agrarische Natuurvereniging?

Zo **ja**, waarom?

Ideeën uitwisselen	Fijn om met mensen met dezelfde ideeën te werken
Leerzaam	Werd geadviseerd door....
Anders	

11a Deed u voor uw lidmaatschap al aan Agrarisch Natuurbeheer?

11b Bent u sinds uw lidmaatschap meer bezig met Agrarisch Natuurbeheer dan voorheen?

11c Is het lidmaatschap van de ANV belangrijk voor u?

11d In hoeverre kunt u zich identificeren met de ideeën en gedachten van de ANV?

11e Wat denkt u wat de heersende gedachte is binnen de vereniging; wordt natuurbeheer puur gezien als iets wat financieel iets oplevert, of zijn er ook boeren die het meer vanuit eigen overtuiging doen?

Zo **nee**, waarom niet?

Teveel gedoe/tijd	Is er nog niet van gekomen
Ideeën komen niet overeen	Anders

12 Hoe ziet u de toekomst tegemoet qua Agrarisch Natuurbeheer?

Agrarisch Natuurbeheer zal een standaard worden voor elke agrariër, uit eigen motivatie	Het zal minder worden door het afbouwen van subsidies
Steeds meer zullen het doen omdat de consument het wil	Anders

13 Wat is uw mening over de volgende stellingen:

	Natuurbeheer hoort bij wie ik ben
	Met Natuurbeheer kan ik mijn visie uitdragen
	Natuurbeheer is iets wat typisch iets voor mij is
	Natuurbeheer zorgt voor extra waardering van collega's
	Natuurbeheer zorgt voor waardering van de maatschappij
	Het is belangrijk dat de consument d.m.v. natuurbeheer een positief beeld krijgt van de sector

1 = Heel erg oneens  
eens

2 = Oneens

3 = Een beetje eens

4 = Eens

5 = Heel erg