

From visitor to gold card member:

different competences for different connections

Paper prepared for the International Conference on Multifunctional Agriculture and Urban-Rural Relations

'Agriculture in an Urbanizing Society', 1st – 4th of April 2012, Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Esther Veen MSc., Applied Plant Research, part of Wageningen University and
Research Centre, Postbus 430, 8200AK, Lelystad, the Netherlands.

esther.veen@wur.nl

Daniël de Jong MSc., Applied Plant Research, part of Wageningen University and
Research Centre, Postbus 430, 8200AK, Lelystad, the Netherlands.

daniel.dejong@wur.nl

March 2012

Abstract

In an urbanizing society, farmers need to take society into account. They can do this by making connections with citizens. Connections come in various shapes and sizes. We present five types of connections and show which skills and competences are needed to develop them. We present an internet tool that helps farmers shed light on the connections they have.

Keywords: farmers, citizens, skills, competences, connections, internet tool

Introduction

The Dutch agricultural sector is in development and has been for a long time; scale enlargement is an important trend and many farms are operating in a global market. As a result, farmers and citizens have drifted apart. Most citizens live in cities, not many people work on farms anymore and people buy their food products in supermarkets. Food scares of the last decennia and news about environmental degradation and animal welfare problems did not improve the situation.

However, there is also a trend of farmers engaging citizens in their farms, offering them goods and services that attract them to the countryside. Also citizens are actively seeking a new relationship with the providers of their food. This trend creates new connections between farmers and citizens. This is not only an economic relationship, but also a process of becoming part of society; of socialisation, so to speak. But starting such connections with citizens is not always simple. It requires specific competences and skills, and the ability to understand citizens' needs and respond to these.

As applied scientists, we tried to better understand the specific skills and competences that farmers need to make these connections with citizens. We soon found out, however, that connections come in various shapes and sizes, that do not necessarily need the same sets of competences. In this paper we present five different types of connections, and make a first step towards recognising the necessary skills and competences for making connections. In order to make the concept of ‘types of connections’ more tangible for farmers, we developed a user-friendly internet tool, which gives farmers an overview of the types of connections they have and do not have.

In this paper, we first present the research methods. After that, we discuss the building blocks we used to distinguish the different types of connections between farmers and citizens, which are then presented. This is followed by the competences necessary for the five types of connections, and finally the internet tool. Our paper ends with the conclusions and what we can learn from these connections.

Methods

This paper is based on two distinct but related studies that we undertook on the theme of farmer-citizen connections; one more theoretical, one more practical. The results of both studies are combined into this paper. We discuss the methods used below.

We used several research methods to recognise various types of connections between farmer and citizen. First, we carried out desk research and internal discussions about ‘connections’ within the project group. This resulted in a first working document in

which we recognised five types of connections. We discussed these in face-to-face interviews with several experts in the field. These experts have different backgrounds and work either in academics or in applied sciences. In a final meeting with several researchers, we again discussed the result and used these discussions to improve the classification we made.

In the development of the internet tool we used the classification made in the previous study, combined with other desk research on related issues. The classifications we found were described from a citizen's point of view; we translated them so as to formulate them from a farmer's point of view. In order to make the classifications measurable, we constructed a questionnaire, working with other experts in the field. The quality of the questionnaire was checked by five farmers; their feedback was used to improve the questionnaire. We then developed an Excel document to create a visualisation of the results of the questionnaire. After a second meeting with farmers and researchers we improved the tool and developed an internet version.

Building blocks to define connections

In this paragraph we introduce the building block that we used to think about types of connections, and to distinguish various types of them. The building blocks helped us to see what potential differences there would be between the ways in which farmers and citizens can be connected.

Interaction

We define a connection as ‘*a relationship between an agricultural entrepreneur (farmer) and a citizen, involving interaction*’. The word interaction is important, because it demarcates the term connection. Indeed, there are connections conceivable in which there is no interaction, like people voting for the same political party or being a fan of the same football club. In such cases people may feel connected to others, without knowing them personally. In that same way Dutch citizens may feel connected to Dutch agriculture, without that connection leading to a specific interaction. By adding the word interaction in the definition, it is clear that we are talking about connections that are a step further than *feeling* some sort of a connection; the definition requires *doing* something with that feeling.

Interaction is often accompanied by, or exists of, a conversation. ‘Conversations are of vital importance’, according to Aarts and van Woerkum (2008). People create relationships and identities through conversations and that way they give them existence. With conversations people create a shared truth. No one can say everything there is to say about something. This means that people can talk about reality in several ways - people have to choose *what specifically* it is they say. As a result, people construct a description based on a selection from many possibilities. With what they say, when they say that, how they say it, and to whom, people try to convey a certain message. As a result, conversations are not only used to *say* something about reality, but also to *do* something in that reality (Aarts and van Woerkum, 2008).

In conversations, people are inclined to emphasize their conformity (Aarts and van Woerkum, 2008). They often filter information that fits with what they had in mind (Ford, 1999). This is why conversation and interaction is so important in shaping

connections between farmers and citizens. Pepper (1994) explains this, using the Symbolic Convergence Theory: people create a shared truth within a group, about others outside of that group. By sharing their interpretations of the world they discover pieces of the their environment that they did not know before. Sharing these experiences can lead to a shared vision of reality (Pepper, 1994). The result of the interaction then, is that people understand each other better and agree with each other.

Characteristics, or practical connections

Farmers can establish connections with citizens in various practical ways. Goddijn et al (2008) recognise three so-called ‘connecting activities’: products, services and experience. All three categories will lead to connections, because in general they invite citizens to the farm. Examples are recreation at the farm or school classes that visit the farm. Some of these activities also lead to a dialogue – interaction – between farmer and citizen. In most cases there is a connection between farmer and citizen at least to a certain extent.

Table 1: Connecting activities for farmers (Goddijn et al, 2008)	
Connecting Activities	Examples
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Branding (organic, fair trade) - Regional product - Specific information on the package
Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farm shop - Selling through the internet - Vegetable boxes - Farmers’ market
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreation at the farm - Children’s day care - Care farm - Educational activities - Involved in decision making at the farm - Volunteering

Although we have some doubts about the usefulness of this distinction into categories for our research – some products lack interaction, the distinction between services and experiences is unclear and there seems to be a lack of attention for non-multifunctional farms – the table is useful as it makes clear that there are various ways to establish connections, which require different degrees of development of the farm.

In order to look beyond the multifunctional farm, we add to this table the work of de Winter et al (2007). They recognise seven ways in which farmers can give citizens insights in the farm. They call these ‘forms of transparency’. These forms of transparency increase in intensity: a website, an open day, company visits, education, recreation, citizen advise and citizen decision-making. Transparency leads to connections because there is usually interaction (although that does not apply in the case of a website) and dialogue, which will lead to a structurally stronger link between farmer and citizen (van Wijk-Jansen et al, 2007).

Connections can also take shape when citizens are involved in the farm itself. Citizens may work along as volunteers, think along about the business strategy or be involved in financing the farm. All of these forms may be more or less structural.

To conclude, we use three different views to find actual types of connections: a division in products, services and experiences, a division in different types of transparency, and the acknowledgement that citizens can be involved in the farm itself. Although there is substantial overlap, the value of these views is that they give

us different ways of looking at what could be possible types of connections or possible ways for farmers to make connections with citizens.

Involvement and control

We can look at connections between farmers and citizens in the light of the involvement of the citizen in the farm. we do that by examining the extent to which citizens participate. Participation of citizens can be shaped in various ways: people can get involved as volunteers at the farm, they can be a customer of the services offered at the farm, or they can be involved in thinking about the development of the farm. It is clear that the extent to which the citizen is involved in the farm differs in the examples given. We use the participation ladder to illustrate this further. The participation ladder is often used to determine the extent to which citizens are involved in (local) politics (see for a Dutch example www.publiek-politiek.nl). The ladder was originally designed by Arnstein (1969), also in view of citizen engagement in politics. The ladder which Arnstein presents includes eight sports - manipulation, therapy, informing, consulting, spawn, partnership, delegated power and citizens in charge. The participation ladder as often used in Dutch politics has five sports. These are presented below (based on www.publiek-politiek.nl), but in each case we translated the political situation to the situation at a farm.

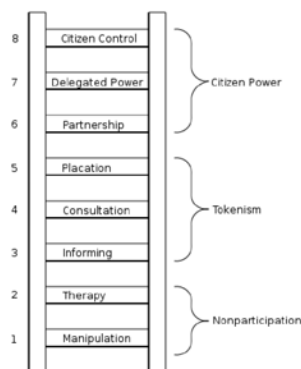


Figure 1: The participation ladder (Arnstein, 1969)

Information: The citizen is informed about the farm, but is not asked for his opinion or involvement. This is for example the case when he reads a website or information leaflet. There is no involvement, and no interaction: it is unidirectional.

Consultation: Involved citizens are seen as conversational partners. The results of the conversations (or consultations) are inputs, but the farmer does not commit himself to the results before knowing what came out of the conversations. An example is a farmer who organises a tasting panel to decide what type of apples he will grow.

Advising: The farmer decides what should be discussed, but the partners – people or civil society – can come up with problems or formulate solutions. The farmer does not commit to the advice. An example is a farmer who expects to generate more traffic due to new activities on his farm and decides to discuss with his neighbours where the ramp should be or how he should deal with this traffic in the best way.

Coproduction: Farmer and involved citizens decide together what is to be discussed and together they look for solutions. The farmer may take another direction than was discussed, but he needs to be able to explain that well; his level of commitment is higher than on the previous sports. An example is a farmer who has started a foundation around his company which is involved in decisions on the development of the farm.

Co-decision: Decision making is delegated to the citizens involved and the farmer is committed to these decisions. An example is Community Supported Agriculture

where the participants decide what is grown that year and what the salary of the farmer will be.

Translating the participation ladder to situations on a farm, show that there are different levels of citizen involvement on a farm possible. However, the participation ladder that we introduced here is clearly focused on ‘thinking’ and decision making: the higher on the ladder, the more decision making power citizens have. But we can also think of participation ladders based on practical involvement (working / volunteering at the farm) and financial involvement (investing in the farm) (De Nooy-van Tol and Verschuur, 2010). We will not go into these types of ladders further here, but what is important is that in all cases - whether involvement is in actual work, in finances or in decision-making - the involvement of the citizen is higher at higher sports of the ladder. Hence, the higher on the ladder, the more initiative is granted to citizens and the more responsibility they have, and the more the farm is a product of both the farmer and the citizen. It is to be expected that a greater degree of practical involvement also leads to a greater degree of emotional involvement in the farm. This also applies to the farmer: the more citizens are involved, the greater the importance for the farmer. This may mean that the higher on the participation ladder, the more sustainable the connection between farmer and citizen will be.

Results: five types of connections

In this paragraph we present the five types of connections that we recognised. First of all, however, we want to make clear that – although presented in a specific order – this order should not be seen as an order of desirability; one type of connection is not better than the other, it is just different. All types can be valuable, even if some types

can indeed be seen as ‘stronger’ connections than others. All farmers face different situations and contexts, in which different types of connections may be useful and possible. Table 2 gives an overview of the connections, some examples and specificities with regards to the building blocks.

The citizen as a visitor

This type of connection is a one-off visit, which is usually relatively short. An example is a citizen visiting an open day at a farm, or a visitor in the farm shop buying local apples. There is interaction between farmer and citizen, but no follow-up is given. The farmer gets to tell his story, the citizen gets a look around, and then they part. They are not developing a personal relationship. As farmers often have these types of relationships with many visitors, this is a ‘one with many’ relationship. The connection is light, but equal.

There are various reasons for a farmer to pursue this type of relationship: he may want to sell products and services in a less anonymous way, or may want to promote his business. He may like to have a regular flow of people on his farm.

The citizen as a neighbour

This type of connection involves an agreement on a specific issue between the farmer and the citizen. For example, the farmer wants to develop his company and wants to talk this through with his neighbours, in order to get their consent. In such a case it is often *necessary* for the farmer to agree with many stakeholders before he can continue. In other words, this type of connection may be somewhat forced and the strategy may be defensive. For the citizen, this type of connection may be very serious

also, because it is his living environment that may change, and so for him there may also be something at stake. In this type of connection, we are again seeing a 'one with many' type of relationship, as it is the farmer who is making connections with the various stakeholders involved. The connection is important for all players, but as the future developments of the farm are dependent on it, it is not equal.

The citizen as gold card member

In this type of connection, the direct relationship between citizen and farmer is part of the farmers' business model. This refers mainly to multifunctional farming activities for which people regularly visit the farm. The difference with 'the citizen as visitor' is that it concerns long(er) term connections. An example would be a care farm, or direct sales in the form of vegetable boxes which people pick up weekly. In both cases, citizens visit the same farm on a regular basis, and therefore they will most probably develop relationships with the farmer. As a certain number of customers is necessary to make these activities work, and the farmer may have to develop certain skills or build new spaces, this type of connection will be an essential part of the business model. The relationship is reciprocal: the citizen is dependent on the farm (e.g. he needs to receive his care and going to another farm will cost time and new emotional commitments) and the farmer has also made investments. There is thus interdependence, making the connection stronger and more durable. However, the connection is not so strong that real problems will arise when the connection falls apart. Also the farmer does not depend on the individual citizens. There is therefore a 'one with many' type of relationship.

There are several reasons for farmers to pursue this type of connection. An important reason is that it is a way to bind people to the enterprise, and in that way establish a steady customer base. For some farmers, this type of connection is also a way to add value to the product or service, and thus to deliver a distinctive product. For many farmers, having this type of relationships with customers may also be very rewarding. Moreover, citizens may also be very inspiring for farmers; by asking ‘obvious’ or out of the box questions they may stimulate the farmer to look at his farm differently.

The citizen as partner

In this type of connection, it is about situations in which the farmer cooperates with citizens, who may (or may not) be represented in civil society organisations. The parties are working towards a common goal and have a common interest. An example is an initiative in which citizens are involved in development plans for the local landscape, as they are residents and/or users of that landscape. The farmers are involved as creators of that landscape. The main difference with the connection ‘citizen as neighbour’ is that in that case it involves a farmer who is more or less forced to cooperate, while in the case of the ‘citizen as partner’ it concerns a voluntary project that is started from the idea to develop something beautiful together. Another example is an initiative in which citizens and farmers work together to organise activities that give a boost to a local area. Public-private partnerships also fit here, like farmers that are working with schools in educational programmes.

This connection is often more about social organisations and less about the individual citizen. Nevertheless, the outcome of this type of connection may still be individual relationships between people in the area. The connection is a ‘more with more’ type

of connection as there are often several farmers and several citizens involved. The parties have intensive contact with each other as equal partners and they will both invest time and possibly money. They are therefore dependent on each other.

Therefore, the connection is strong in both directions.

An important reason for this type of connection is that there is a common goal that all stakeholders are interested in reaching. Individually, the parties have fewer possibilities to reach that goal.

The citizen as (co)responsible

This type of connection involves the citizen as someone with responsibility and decision-making power in the farm. Citizens have an impact on the operations as they decide, together with the farmer, what happens – e.g. what vegetables are being grown. Citizens also share the risks, for example when there is a bad harvest, or by investing money in the farm. Examples are Community Supported Agriculture, or a company in which citizens have shares – they invested money- which they get refunded in bottles of wine. This type of connection is often ‘one with many’ and there are several people connected to one company. However, there is a maximum amount of citizens that can be involved, as the relations take time and attention. The connection is equal, as the farmer and the citizen are dependent on each other; they have both invested.

Farmers that start this type of connection often do so because they want to position their farm in the middle of society and to design the farm in collaboration with citizens. The farmer is employed by the citizens, so to speak. Citizens that are

involved in these types of farms are often interested in being involved in food and the countryside. They are looking for alternatives to the regular, anonymous relationships between producer and consumer, and find personal contacts and trust important.

Competences

The five different types of connections require different skills and competences from farmers. We present some of them here.

The citizen as visitor

This type of connection mainly needs communication skills. The farmer fully decides on his business and his strategy, but he needs to be prepared to talk about this and to explain his choices. Moreover, he needs to give visitors the feeling that they are welcome at his farm.

The citizen as neighbour

A farmer that is looking for this type of connection needs good social orientation skills. He needs to be able to look at his farm from different perspectives, and to think about what his farm has to offer for his environment. The farmer may be able to use some of the tools from stakeholder management, as the farmer may have to fulfil several roles; stakeholder, facilitator and manager of the stakeholders. This requires specific competences.

The citizen as gold card member

Farmers that are aiming for this type of connection need to be able to develop a vision on why citizens are important for their farms, what the farm has to offer for the wider

environment and how the farm can use these connections. The farmer needs very good listening skills, also in order to deliver a product or service that meets citizens' needs. Only that way will he establish a loyal customer base. This also makes it important that the farmer develops a story, a vision and ideas on business development, and that he knows how to sell.

The citizen as partner

Farmers in this type of connection need to be able to consult others, coordinate interests, negotiate, collaborate and communicate. As good consultation with all partners is important, the farmer needs to be able to deal with different types of people and be aware of the fact that people have different needs and interest in the process. He also needs to be able to work with and stimulate volunteers. He needs to be able to establish a vision, and to reflect on his own behaviour.

The citizen as (co)responsible

Farmers looking for this type of connection need to be able to build commitment. They are passionate about their farms, but need to be able to make others enthusiastic as well. They need to be able to build networks, and they need to give others responsibilities so that they can live up to their ambitions. The farmer needs to manage the group and take up different roles in the team, depending on the composition of the team and the extent to which citizens are actively involved.

Table 2 gives an overview of the connections presented. It is based on the building blocks and the competences that were presented. We also added a column to show what potential tools are to establish these kinds of connections.

Table 2: Summary of the five types of connections and their characteristics, based on the building blocks and competences presented

Connection: the citizen as...	What is it	Involvement and control	Competences needed	Tools
Visitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short farm visit - Non-comitted multifunctional activities like recreation - Local markets 	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicative competences - Openness, telling the story - Making people feel welcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website - Open days - Local markets
Neighbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local area processes - License to produce 	Dependent on situation	Last + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social orientation skills - Taking in local environment - Tools of stakeholder management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sponsoring activities - Showing importance for the region - Creating a common problem - Citizen panel, 'kitchen conversations'
Gold card member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multifunctional activities as care and vegetables boxes 	Advising and consulting	Last + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing vision on the importance of citizens - Analysing people's needs, listening to citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizen panel - Satisfaction study - Patients council / parents council - Newsletter
Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local area processes - Public-private partnerships - Schools 	Coproducing	Last + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation, communication - Consulting, coordinating interests - Team roles, volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common strategy and business plan - Working groups - Involvement of

				volunteers
(Co)responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Supported Agriculture - Citizen takes risk - Large financial involvement of citizens 	Decision making	Last + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building commitment - Bringing vision - Building network - Organising and delegating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision making council - Clarifying rights and obligations - Meeting of shareholders

The ‘connection measurement tool’

The above framework containing five types of connections is rather descriptive. We wanted to make the results of this study more practical, so that farmers would be able to use it. In order to give farmers better insight in the connections they already have we developed an internet tool; the so called ‘connection measurement tool’. The tool makes connections more tangible because it shows what activities farmers do may lead to connections.

The seven themes

We started from the work we presented above but looked at the connections from a farmer’s point of view rather than from the perspective of the citizen. Based on this, we developed a questionnaire divided in seven themes. The questionnaire contains questions that can be answered with ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Some questions ask for a ranking, if answered with ‘yes’. For example the question ‘*Do you have a farm shop*’ is followed by the multiple choice question ‘*How many hours is the farm shop open weekly*’.

The seven themes are: information, the accessible farm, food, fun, continued contacts, working together and regional contribution. The questions in the themes relate to ‘connection activities’ (activities that aim towards or result in a connection) a farmer can undertake. We now shortly introduce each of the seven themes and present example questions. The five types of connections that we presented earlier are still visible, but they have been somewhat reshuffled and the environment around the farm has been added.

Information: Within this theme questions concern whether a farmer informs citizens about his farm. Does the farmer have a website about his farm and is the website updated regularly?

The accessible farm: This theme is about receiving interested citizens on the farm. This can be done by organising an open day or a farmer can receive a class from the local primary school. Are there facilities (f.e. toilets) for the guests, can they make a walk over the farm(lands)?

Food: All connections that are made through food are in this theme. Questions that refer to direct (on-farm, farmers market) selling of food like: *'Do you have a farm shop?'* are posted. Other questions focus on products that are sold via regular retail but where the farmer is traceable via the information on the product.

Fun: Day recreation and residential recreation connections are in this theme. This leads to questions like *'Can people rent a room for a meeting, workshop or a party?'* and *'Does the farm have a campsite?'*

Continued contacts: Connections where there are long lasting contacts are in this theme. Activities like green care and childcare are in this theme. Long lasting connections can also be made through food, for instance when a farmer offers the opportunity to subscribe for food packages.

Working together: In this theme there are long lasting connections between farmer and citizen and there is a level of shared responsibility. Topics that are covered in the questions are voluntary work and investments in the farm by citizens.

Regional contribution: In this theme a good relationship with citizens in the region is covered. For example ‘*Is there a building available for contributing to regional traditions, for example a carnival wagon?*’ and ‘*How many direct employment does your farm deliver?*’

Weighing and corrections

Farmers can fill out the questions online. They can score 0 up to 100 per cent on every theme. The questions are weighed: questions that refer to more, more intensive and better connections have a higher weight. The weight of a question is visible when filling out the questions. See figure 2 for an example of a question list.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a questionnaire titled "Verbindingsmaatlat voor de landbouw" (Connection scale for agriculture). The page is from the "PRAKTIJKONDERZOEK PLANT & OMGEVING WAGENINGEN UR" website. The theme is "Informatie" (Information). The background text states: "Achtergrond: Een ondernemer informeert geïnteresseerden over zijn bedrijf." (Background: An entrepreneur informs interested parties about his company).

The questionnaire consists of several sections:

- Informatiebord** (Information board):
 - Question: "Is er bij de toegang een duidelijk naambord aanwezig met daarop de hoofdactiviteit van het bedrijf?" (Is there a clear name sign at the entrance with the main activity of the company?). Weight: 4.
 - Question: "Zijn er informatieborden op uw bedrijf en/of bij uw landerijen waarop informatie staat over het natuurbeheer wat uitgevoerd wordt?" (Are there information boards on your farm and/or in your fields with information about nature management that is carried out?). Weight: 4.
- Website** (Website):
 - Question: "Heeft uw bedrijf een eigen website?" (Does your company have its own website?). Weight: 4.
 - Question: "Houdt u de website up-to-date? (minimaal 4 maal per jaar inhoud aangepast en/of nieuwsberichten plaatsen, etc)" (Do you keep the website up-to-date? (at least 4 times a year content adapted and/or news articles posted, etc)). Weight: 2.
 - Question: "Weet u hoeveel unieke bezoekers uw site heeft per maand?" (Do you know how many unique visitors your site has per month?). Weight: 2.
 - Question: "Verschijnt er minimaal twee maal per jaar een (digitale) nieuwsbrief over het bedrijf waar mensen zich op kunnen abonneren?" (Does there appear at least twice a year a (digital) newsletter about the company where people can subscribe?). Weight: 4.

At the bottom right, there is a "Score 16" indicator and a "volgend thema >" (next theme >) button.

Figure 2: Online questions list for one of the connection themes. Every question can be answered with yes or no and the weight of a specific question is visible.

The connection measurement tool generates thematic results and presents this in an info graphic. See figure 3 for an example.

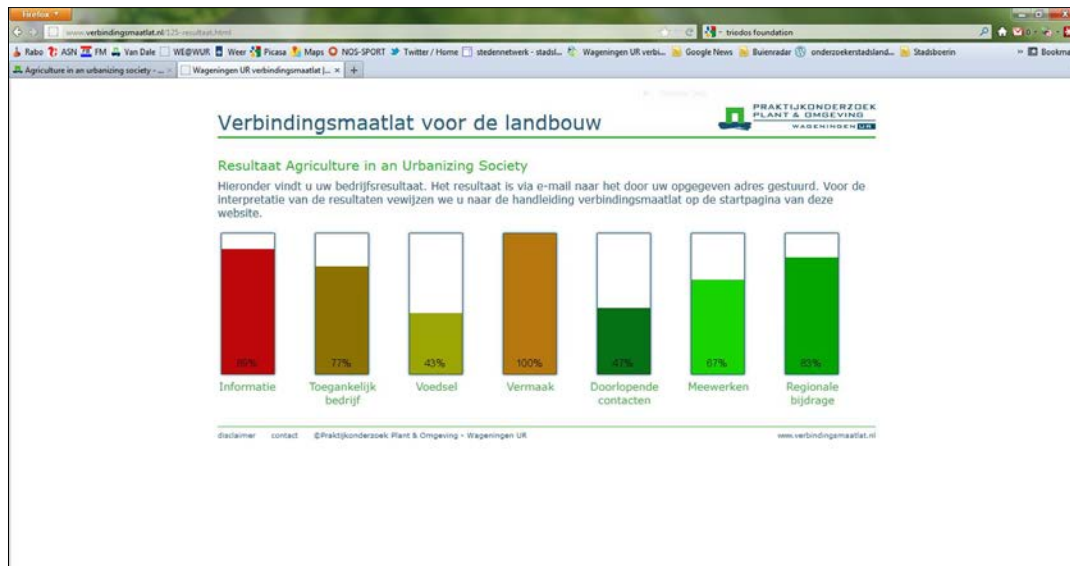


Figure 3: Example of the result of a filled out connection measurement tool. On every theme there is a visual score of 0 per cent up to 100 per cent.

For all themes (except 'information' and 'the accessible farm'), we decided to correct the score on the question list for presentation in the info graphic. In the info graphic the score is corrected with 1/3. In other words: if one scores 75 per cent of the points in the questionnaire in these themes, the info graphic displays a 100 per cent score on that theme. (Or: only a 75 per cent of the points is needed for a 100 per cent score.) The correction is made because in some themes the quality of the connections will suffer if every question would be answered with yes. The experts judged that the quality of connections is correlated with the number of connections. One doesn't need to have all possible connections within a certain scheme in order to be very good in

that theme, but moreover, having all these connections would probably mean that these connections would not be of high quality.

Use value

The connection measurement tool is working from the assumption that the questions and the themes cover the connection activities a farmer can do. However, it is a simplification of reality. There are many connection opportunities for farmers which are not regular activities on a farm. For example a farmer who speaks about his farm on birthday parties. Therefore we present the connection measurement tool as a tool that gives an overview of choices a farmer has made. The outcome of the tool reflects on the choices made, the question list can give inspiration on the long list of possibilities to connect with citizens.

The tool can be used to visualize the connections a farm has, and the farmer can use this in the social paragraph of his business plan. Especially for farmers with many connection activities it can be hard to explain in what ways they connect to citizens. This info graphic result is an easy to read summary of these activities.

Conclusions

An urbanizing society may be threatening to farmers, because they have to respond to (new) societal demands. But an urbanizing society also offers possibilities for finding new markets and placing the farm back into society. One of the ways of doing this, is to make connections with citizens. Such connections come in various shapes and sizes. In this article we presented five types (the citizen as visitor, as neighbour, as

gold card member, as partner and as (co)responsible), but that is just one way of distinguishing all the various connections that are present.

The different types of connections require different sets of skills and competences. As the development of the business may depend on direct contacts with citizens and consumers these connections are important for the viability of the farm. In this respect, the competences needed to make connections are more important for multifunctional farmers than for conventional farmers.

To make connections more tangible for farmers we developed an internet tool. The tool helps farmers score the activities they have that lead to connections with citizens or consumers. When filling out the tool farmers get an overview of the types of activities that may lead to certain connections. They can also use the tool to show others what they are already doing.

Bibliography

Aarts, N. and C. van Woerkum (2008). 'Strategische communicatie, principes en toepassingen'. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Arnstein, S.R. (1969). 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation'. JAIP Vol. 35, No. 4., July 1969, pp. 216-224.

Ford, J.D. (1999). 'Organizational change as shifting conversations'. Journal of Organizational Change Management Vol. 12, No.6, pp. 480-500.

Goddijn, S., Marc Klieverink, Arjan Dekking and Wijnand Sukkel (2008).

Communiceerbare argumenten biologische landbouw ten aanzien van het sociale duurzaamheidsthema: verbindingen tussen producent en consument/burger. Den Haag, LEI: 31.

Nooy-van Tol, J. de and G. Verschuur (2010). 'Verkenning Boer-Buur-bedrijven 2009-2010. Ontwikkelingsvisie. Maatschappelijke impact.' Downloaded at

www.multifunctionelelandbouw.nl/over-de-multifunctionele-landbouw/onderzoeken-en-publicaties/.

Pepper, G. (1994). 'Communicating in Organizations. A Cultural Approach'.

McGraw-Hill College.

Wijk-Jansen, E. van, M. de Winter, S. van der Kroon and S.F. Spoelstra (2007).

'Transparantie? Over de effecten en potentie van transparantie-initiatieven op landbouwbedrijven'. Beleidsnotitie.

Winter, M. de, E. van Wijk-Jansen, D. Prins, S. van der Kroon en S. Spoelstra (2007).

'Kom Kijken! Ervaringen van ondernemers en burgers met transparantie in de land- en tuinbouw.' Wageningen UR.

www.publiek-politiek.nl.