

## WELLBEING

# ORGANIC GROWING

Many obstacles on the road to sustainability

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**The PuraNatura Foundation promotes horticultural innovations that lead to more sustainable large-scale greenhouse production in the Netherlands. The foundation also works on branding for flavourful products grown organically without chemical fertilisers and on a natural substrate.**

PuraNatura is an initiative of three Dutch growers (Agro Care, 4Evergreen and Royal Pride Holland), several marketing specialists and Koppert Biological Systems. Since 2006, the organisation has been working on a new cultivation method that is safe and fair while showing respect for product, people and planet. The USDA 100% Organic Certificate guarantees the high quality of the products, which are currently exported primarily to North America.

Introducing new sustainable concepts requires a novel strategy and communication. Koppert Biological Systems is developing various cultivation strategies, especially for fertilisation and for the major problem in sweet pepper cultivation, aphid control. PuraNatura has been working on the marketing of the tomatoes and sweet pepper produced according to the new philosophy.

### Storytelling

Products will be positioned in the market with a strong story. Information about sustainable production, combined with their taste and appearance, will stimulate the perception of consumers.

PuraNatura is a member of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and its products are approved as organic by USDA. European rules for organic cultivation, however, require a product to be soil-grown and PuraNatura uses a natural substrate.

PuraNatura aims to be a strong independent brand for its own organically grown products. The Dutch Minister for Agriculture and Foreign Trade, Henk Bleker, recently referred to the systems approach of PuraNatura as an important development and highly encouraging step. The Minister also announced a study into the lifecycle analyses of this concept.

### Cultivation practice

Major progress in fertilisation was explained by PuraNatura. In addition to supplying fertilisers, the growers have focused on creating an active system of microorganism growth in the substrate. The method of applying nitrogen to the substrate and its slow release were optimised to improve the availability of nutrients for the crop.

Not only the new way of fertilisation is getting attention. Pest management is also an item of concern. Aphid control in pepper cultivation is particularly difficult, requiring too many natural predators to be economically feasible and making chemical correction necessary.

PuraNatura is continuously working to improve its growing concept and the branding of its products on the European market. Special attention will therefore be given to ongoing developments in Brussels. High-quality and a strong background story will be important characteristics of vegetables produced and sold in Europe. The foundation expects the total acreage used for its products to remain stable at 8 ha in 2012, with the ultimate aim of growing to over 800 ha in the Netherlands in the years thereafter.

Partners in this seminar: Koppert Biological Systems, PuraNatura and Str3tch

