

Romanian – Dutch partnership in the agri-education sector

joint learning from rural challenges and opportunities

Introduction

Both in Romania and in parts of the Netherlands the rural area is aging and young people are moving away due to a lack of (economic) perspective, the population is declining. Furthermore, food production in both countries is part of the national discussion, although in different perspectives (economic versus environmental).

Currently a large share of the food in Romania is produced in a traditional way, knowledge is carried over from generation to generation according to the old traditions, mostly without the influence of modern techniques and knowledge. Although the system is based on a circular and sustainable production, it is economically not sustainable and therefore also not attractive for entrepreneurs and for young ambitious people. Moreover, the educational offer is limited.

The way of food production in the Netherlands and worldwide is part of the Dutch national debate. There is an urge from the Dutch government to start a transition in which food production in the Netherlands must be more future proof with more attention to climate and environment. With a focus on amongst others a reduction of food waste and food losses and a more circular food production.

Romanian and Dutch Governmental policy

The Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Education both recognized that something must be done to tackle the development of declining population in the Romanian rural area. It needs to be more attractive again to youngsters and also to the agriculture private sector to live and work in the countryside with perspectives for a career in combination with the maintaining of the old traditions. In which circular agriculture should play an important role. The Romanian Government decided to invest in the reformation of the agricultural educational system in order to make rural areas more attractive and economically viable for these and other groups. Last December Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 was presented. Goal 2 and goal 12 give opportunities for a Romanian – Dutch partnership in the agri-education sector.

Last year the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality presented a vision on circular agriculture with the aim to switch to a 100% circular agricultural sector in 2030 with an improvement of the economic position of farmers. The Netherlands is looking to examples and cooperation worldwide and wants to achieve their goal together with relevant international partners like Romania.

Romanian and the Netherlands, Partners in International Agrobusiness

The Borderless Network is a Dutch network of knowledge institutes in the agricultural sector with a focus on international collaboration. In October 2017 the *Borderless Network* country group Romania was established. Major Dutch educational institutes at academic, applied science, VET and practical college levels joined hands and have been looking into options for sharing their expertise and experiences with Romanian stakeholders. They have years of partnerships with Romanian counterparts through educational exchanges, field visits, internships and common (research) programs and projects. Collaboration with Romanian and Dutch agri-enterprises has been important over these years. The country group Romania is ready to contribute in a comprehensive manner to finding sustainable solutions to the challenges that the Romania agri-education sector is facing. The historic strong cooperation between Dutch agri-education, agri-industries, government and civil society organisations has created an agri-educational system that is state-of-the-art and resilient to

changes in the rural sector. Romania and The Netherlands can learn from each other, together we are stronger.

Mission to The Netherlands

Together with representatives of Romanian educational institutes, a delegation from the Romanian government will visit the Netherlands between 3 - 6 September 2019 to become acquainted with the Dutch agricultural education system. The aim of the mission is to introduce the successful way in which agricultural education in the Netherlands contributes to the professionalism of the Dutch agro and food sector. In particular the combination of agro education with the other stakeholders like the Dutch agri business community and the government.

Joint ambition

Various strategies can contribute make the rural area attractive to young people and agri-enterprises. Romania has keen interest in developing strategies which strengthen the Romanian agri-educational sector. Dutch experiences have shown so far that the involvement of the private sector is instrumental to sustain these strategies. The Romanian and the Dutch governments, the Romanian and Dutch education institutes (represented by the Country Group Romania of the Dutch Borderless Network) and the Dutch and Romanian private sector, are open to discuss the various options to make this partnership happen and to work on concrete results.

To contribute to the renewal of the Romanian agricultural education system a common Dutch-Romanian action plan with concrete steps is necessary. During the mission a joint action plan for concrete Dutch Romanian cooperation will therefore be discussed.

Examples of Dutch Romanian Partnerships in several fields	
Partners in International Business (Fruit)	Recently the PIB Fruit program has come to an end. The strong collaboration between the Dutch Fruit sector and the Romanian counterparts resulted in the establishment of a Center of Excellence in Fruit. A demonstration farm in which experts can train the Romanian farmers. (Maracineni)
Partners in International Business (Dairy)	Last year the PIB on Dairy program has come to an end. The strong collaboration between the Dutch Dairy sector and the Romanian counterparts resulted in the establishment of the Dutch Dairy House in Romania. RO farms that have cooperated in this programme can be used to train other RO farmers.
Partners in International Business (Horticulture)	Recently the PIB Horticulture program has come to an end. The strong collaboration between the Dutch Horticultural sector and the Romanian counterparts resulted in the establishment of the Holland House of Horticulture in Romania. RO farms that have cooperated in this program which can be used to train other RO farmers. As a result of this program, the World Horti Centre in Naaldwijk started a research project in which the effect of the Romanian climate in greenhouses has been examined.
Partners in International Business (Green Cities)	Recently the PIB on Green cities was started. This Dutch Romanian Partnership will contribute to the ambition of greening the cities in Romania. Knowledge exchange and demo projects are an important part of this program.