

Agriculture talks collapse — what now?

Hopes for an Agriculture Agreement were dashed last week when the Dutch Agricultural and Horticultural Association LTO withdrew from negotiations. A recent Wageningen essay on agriculture offers suggestions for a way forward.

Wageningen agricultural expert Roel Jongeneel was closely involved in the efforts to bring about the Agriculture Agreement. He is a member of the so-called Reflection Group, who provided scientific input and reflection on the agreement. The group also

investigated the economic prospects of various possible solutions in the Agriculture Agreement on a number of occasions. In addition, Jongeneel was involved in the assessment WUR was asked to give of the draft agreement, estimating the effectiveness of the arrangements (see WUR.nl for more on

‘The parties have managed to move beyond the polarization’

this topic). Jongeneel thinks it is a pity the negotiations collapsed. ‘Although it

was clear beforehand this was a virtually impossible task,’ he says. According to him, it is so difficult partly because of the huge interests at stake, especially in the agricultural sector. He also suspects administrative ambiguities played a role. Although there is no sign of the hoped for Agriculture Agreement, Jongeneel is still positive about the process during the past few months. ‘The parties involved have managed to move beyond the polarization. That has brought big benefits, including a better feeling on both sides for the bottlenecks and possible solutions.’

It is not clear to Jongeneel either what will happen next. Perhaps the next stage will include the area-specific and farm-specific solutions set out in a recent essay he wrote together with Wim de Vries, Martin van Ittersum and Gerard Ros, sketching a new future for Dutch agriculture. ‘Both the farming organizations and the minister told us they have read the essay and they see interesting leads,’ says Jongeneel. ME



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