

Sustainable development in arable farming with Skylark

Skylark is based on the belief that in order to achieve sustainability, the whole crop rotation, in fact the whole farm management, should be taken into consideration.

The foundation has 400 participating farmers and 60 knowledge and supply chain partners all working towards a more sustainable arable agriculture in the Netherlands. The area covered by Skylark farmers cover more than 45 000ha which equals almost 9% of arable land in the Netherlands. The participants share knowledge based on 10 sustainability indicators, and can use the knowledge to improve their farm management.



The Skylark approach

The Skylark approach is founded on three main principles:

Principle 1: sharing of knowledge

Active and motivated farmers manage the sustainability of their farm with a sustainability plan and peer to peer review of their behaviour to change in regional groups. The regional group, consisting of 10-12 farmers is the heart of the Skylark approach.



Principle 2: continuous (measured) improvement

The Skylark Foundation promotes the use of several tools to engage farmers to measure and monitor on farm level the sustainability of the farm.

Principle 3: sustainable supply chains

Active and motivated buyers and processors collaborate with the farmers in the supply chain via projects, incentives when purchasing arable crops and facilitating the sustainable development of the farms in their specific geographic areas.

The farmers, knowledge and supply chain partners all share knowledge based on 10 sustainability indicators, including: soil fertility, soil loss, product value, nutrients, crop protection, water, energy, biodiversity, local economy and human capital. All the aspects involved in the Skylark approach are registered online and externally certified.

Every participant defines their own targets for each indicator in a sustainability plan. Exchanges with colleagues and professional support mean that every year, the farmers can use the shared data to elaborate new measures to improve their farm management.



Sustainability plan

The starting point for a sustainable farm management is the sustainability plan. In the sustainability plan, the vision of the farm in 5-10 years is described as well as an annual plan. In order to work towards professional and concrete sustainability plans, accredited farm advisors support the farmers.

A sustainability assessment allows the farmer to communicate about the measures he/she decides to take on his/her farm and how they improve throughout the years. It consists of a list of 200

Skylark sustainable measures. It is up to the farmer to decide which ones to adopt. With this approach farmers can initiate from any starting point the sustainable development of his/her farm.

Celebrating 15 years of Skylark

The first farmers from 2002 are still active within their initial regional group. The results of 15 years of implementing the Skylark approach will be shared via the celebration conference that will be held on 15 June on the farms. Please feel welcome and inspire yourself with the stories of the farmers and the partners!

www.veldleuwerik.nl

Facts and figures

Source: annual report 2015

- Annually, Skylark farmers take in total 2 800 measures in order to improve farm management.
- 18% of the measures relates to soil fertility, which makes this indicator the most important one for the farmers.
- Soil nutrients (15.3%), product value (14.3%) and measures for a better use of crop protection (14.3%) are the then following most popular indicators for the farmers.
- 26% of the farmers receives school classes on the farm
- 27% use site specific fertilisation
- 60% use organic manure
- 24% use field margins
- 44% has solar panels to produce green energy
- 92% of the farmers has cover crops integrated in the wider crop rotation
- Annually, over 320 regional group meetings are organised to share knowledge



Contacts

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