



# Erasmus travel report



Wilma Harmoinen, board member  
Marjatta Pikkarainen, executive director  
Rural Women's Advisory Centre,  
ProAgria Eastern Finland  
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<https://www.maajakotitalousnaiset.fi/en/it%C3%A4-suomen-maa--ja-kotitalousnaiset>

# Host organisation LTO Noord Vrouw & Bedrijf:

- LTO Noord is the biggest part organisation - with 23 000 members – of the nation-wide LTO, the Farmers' Union in the Netherlands
- LTO is not just for lobbying but for training and knowledge transformation, too, between the government and farmers – no pure advisory services provided at LTO any more
- In LTO Noord area there is a strong women's department (network)  
<https://www.ltonoord.nl/vrouw-en-bedrijf>
- The women's network consists of a chair woman and 9 board members
  - aiming at increasing equality, fair incomes, ownership and decision making at farms
  - launched recently a training programme with 5 steps and personal development plans to empower young women farmers; it has been a success and the Ministry of Agriculture is interested to finance the training further on
- LTO activities are based on member fees, organisation representing all kinds of farms
- Activities and visibility are heavily dependent on the activity of the members (rare employees, mainly for the lobby).



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## Agriculture and agricultural policies in the Netherlands



- Nitrogen is a big challenge due to climate change. To prevent emissions the government wants 3 000 farms to finish production till year 2030. Heavy protests with upside down flags take part along the roads. The flag protest, however, is not supported by LTO as being seen too disrespectful for war veterans.
- The situation is quite controversial and there is a strong feeling of injustice among the famers. Opinions differ on the root causes and on the solutions, on the other hand (if giving up the cattle is the right one).
- There are also strong regulations concerning the timing of harvesting, suitable plants etc. which are against farmers' common sense and very stressful and unprofitable to farmers. Cost pressure issues on farms are heavy and the level seems quite similar to Finland (raising prizes as to feeding, fertilizing, fuel etc.). This all costs most pressure to Eastern parts of the nation where already is an increasing amount of suicides among farmers.
- Self-sufficiency is not very highly appreciated among the decision-makers and consumers (its is about at 50 % level) but on the other hand some statistic on food export are not the whole truth because of the status of a transit country (Rotterdam harbour)
- There is a big struggle on land – of which there is a lack - between farming and building/traffic. A prize for a hectare is about 125 000 euros.
- Energy issues are current (solar energy covering even fields not only roofs) and also farm level windmill investmens get support nowadays.
- There was a regional level election during our stay, and the party standing for the farmers won everywhere in the nation.



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Some nice ideas and details from the farms we visited: signs and boards and picture books, an insect hotel, mini pedal tractors for visitors, a beldevere for farm visitors to see the pigs and the video show made of farm activities.





## Diversification on farms, examples:

- b&b accommodation at farms
- re-use of buildings: piggery turned to a day-care home
- combination of a dairy and a child nursery / day-care home / after school club unit, where all this takes place at the farm surroundings and a group of children daily visit the farm buildings and activities in their wagons

At diversified farms, in 80 per cent of the cases, there are women behind the diversified activities.



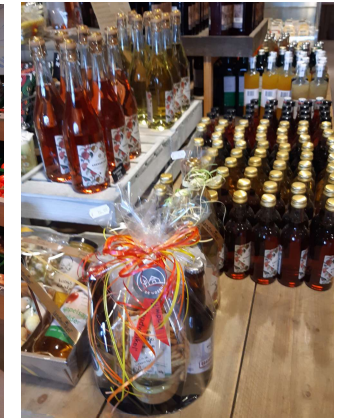
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# Food processing and short supply chains, examples:

Cheesemaking and a cheese shop at a dairy farm.



Processing of apples and pears, a pioneer farm shop of a popular franchising chain of shops and a camping area with happenings, meeting services, restaurant at a fruit farm.



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# Farms & consumers:



## **Facts behind the success of the farm shops:**

- Location near big cities
- Employees really like working at farms/at farms shops -> customers notice this and like the personnel being aware how the food was produced and processed
- Brand is important, and the entrepreneur himself / entrepreneur family has to represent the business with his own face in the social media etc.
- Online store cost-efficient only in B2B trade
- Two different values of the buying consumers:
  - 1) local production
  - 2) high quality
- Typically the customers are either families or elderly people, typically also with high income

## **BurenBoeren campaign:**

To reach more consumers than people who visit the open house days at farms (often the same ones from year to year) LTO Noord has launched a Farms and Neighbours –model to Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. Their stories in social media are posted not by the farmers themselves but by other people.

## **HörenBoeren model:**

Consumers/investors pay to the association a fee (families for example 2 000 euros and individual persons 1 000 euros) and with this money a piece of field is bought or rented. These share-holding people - with a supervision of an agricultural professional - make the farming work together, as a voluntary work. When harvesting time comes, with some extra payments these share-holders can buy the harvest grown by themselves (vegetables most typically).

# Rural women networking



A networking day for LTO Noord women with some 80 participants took place during our stay.. One common theme was about interaction between farmers and consumers: how to get your message understood on an emotional level, not only by facts (because that is most efficient). There were several workshops, and among them also Finland theme where we could share our experiments on rural women issues

The panel discussion presented different farmers with different business ideas beside their primary production (milk processing, consumer happenings etc.) The main message was that the basic production must be on a solid basis and economically profitable, and only then it is successful to create some new brands to farm entrepreneurship.



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# Rural women networking

Thanks to the trip and to the networking day we had an opportunity to get to know also:

- an organisation that creates social support activities at farms to youngsters in challenging life situations (green care aspect)
- other women entrepreneurs with travel business or food processing and farm shop and online store experiences
- a researcher from University of Wageningen
- an organisation Vrouwen van Nu <https://vrouwenvannu.nl/> that also is for rural women and like LTO Noord Vrouw & Bedrijf has also lots of resemblancies with our RWAO in Finland. It is about 90 years old and publishes a magazine and has about 25 000 members all around the Netherlands. It has good co-operation with LTO Noord.



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## Food culture

Delicious food, valuing the traditions of the Netherlands followed us throughout our trip.

# Board members as our hostesses

Thank you Helma, Ceciel, Eline, Edith  
and Karolien so much for making for us  
such a good and instructive  
programme!  
Hoping to see you soon in Eastern  
Finland!



Photos: Karolien Hupkes,  
Wilma Harmoinen, Marjatta  
Pikkarainen



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