

# To be CONTINUED

Business continuity in  
organic farming



## A PLACE FOR **STARTERS** BRINGS **LIVELINESS**

Large tractors drive back and forth as the harvest is collected at organic farm 'Ekoboerderij de Lingehof'. In this arable farm the yard is clean and empty, but the canteen is not. Not only is arable farmer André Jurrius and his staff eating the birthday cake, but the entrepreneurs of Tuinderij de Stroom are also, joining for coffee and tea. In this way, offering space to starters gives experienced farmers pleasure, extra products and liveliness from having contact with farmers and customers.

TEXT MARIA VAN BOXTEL | PHOTOS EKOBOERDERIJ DE LINGEHOF

**T**he Lingehof is a biodynamic arable farm, where André Jurrius grows more than eleven crops on approximately 100 hectares. A special part of the crop rotation is Tuinderij De Stroom, also called 'the vegetable girls'. The three entrepreneurs of De Stroom lease three hectares of land. Every year they move the market garden to a new piece of land. Angelien, Welmoet and Linde arrange the sales of their products

via weekly fruit and vegetable packages and on Friday afternoon at the farm via 'de Groentestek'. Why do you incorporate a market garden in your arable crop rotation? André has arable products for the wholesale trade, but through the market garden he also has a share of local sales. "My local sales are actually arranged entirely through the market garden. For example, they pack red cabbage, onions and potatoes from the shed, I do not have

to worry about it. I still have an outlet in the neighborhood." The most important reason for working together is social contact and joint development. "In the beginning it was pretty lonely here as an organic producer, I was searching for some support. The girls were looking for a piece of land and we had enough land available. Then you just do it. Collaboration. In my opinion, we are strengthened by this." Do these collaborations also have disadvan-



A new branch or a second company offers opportunities to young people.

tages? “Yes, sometimes. You can also get in each other’s way. The market garden often gets more weeds than we get from the arable farming, so there is always a bit of ‘heritage’ that appears. But that’s worth it. Working together ensures that your business runs more easily. If there is something they need, I am there for them, and vice versa. And when you are having a coffee, you have a room full of people. That brings liveliness and positivity.”

**Tuinderij De Stroom** is now set to stay on the Lingehof. Elsewhere, other farmers offer a temporary place to gain experience and learn how to run a business. Like Elze-Lia Visser at her company Fruitweelde. A starter in agriculture herself, over the past six years she turned a bare field into a lush orchard, where insects zoom and birds chirp. Her fruit company

is now flourishing, and it turned out that she had some vacant ground between the rows of fruit and around the edges. “I came up with the idea to share this land during a conversation with a young farmer who was looking for a place.” A young grower started at Elze-Lia’s farm.



“The cultivation of these self-harvest vegetables and the people visiting, bring liveliness to my fruit growing business,” says Elze-Lia. It fitted perfectly, so when the first young farmer decided to leave the Netherlands with her family after three years, together they sought and found two new enthusiasts to take her place. “I like it so much that I want to continue offering it as a place to learn to do business. It works well.”

**Farmers offer a place to starters** in different ways. For example, the scale is often manageable for a younger farmer and you can practice entrepreneurship and cooperation. Experienced entrepreneurs can, besides creating a second

branch to their own company, also set up a new place with enthusiastic starters. For example, in 2015 dairy farmer Henk Pelleboer bought the StadsZicht farm on the outskirts of the city of Zwolle, with the intention of introducing people to farm life. “Boerderij StadsZicht is located on the edge of the Stadshagen district in Zwolle. With a view of the Zwartewater and the meadows beyond, it is a beautiful location to bring nature closer to the city,” says Henk. He consciously bought the second location on the outskirts of the city. “Here young grower Madeleen van Gruting started her Warmoezerij on leased land, so the farm shop is already filled with vegetables.” Henk expanded the product

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range with meat from his oxen herd and ‘Red de Rijke Weidekaas’ (Save the Rich Pasture Cheese), which is made from the milk from his family farm PolderZicht in the more rural village of Mastenbroek. “Within the marshland areas the farm, PolderZicht is set up with significant attention especially for meadow birds. We are also focussed on welcoming visitors. We have a meadow bird safari bus. And all sorts of activities: a trip with the barge, paddling with a canoe or a tour of the milking robots, cows and calves.” With the StadsZicht farm as a stepping stone for customers, the Pelleboer family connects their successful dairy farm in Mastenbroek directly with the city. “This relationship works well.” It is precisely in this cooperation that opportunities for development are present, both for the starter and the experienced entrepreneur. This sparks new ideas. André Jurrius: “Sometimes other growers tell me ‘I would like that too, but how do I find someone? And how does this collaboration work in practice for you?’ I see opportunities for other farmers to also offer a temporary or long-term place to starters.”

Maria van Boxtel is partner in Land & Co.

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