

# PRACTISE DESCRIPTION



## Access to land by being a mobile farm

### Question

How do we separate land use from land ownership?

### Problem

For many start up farmers, finding land is very challenging. Purchasing land is often beyond the financial capabilities of a young farmer. Consequently, lease or rental is much more common. This is often in the form of a one year contract that gives little security and makes it difficult for farmers to plan for the future.

Els Hegger and Stefan Hanstede are new entrants who have faced this challenge. They wanted to start a farm but had no land and didn't have the money to buy land.



**Els Hegger from 'The Mobile Farm' uses land which is mainly offered by citizens living in the countryside (photo credits 'De Mobiele Gaard').**

### Solution

The solution Els and Stefan came up with is '[The Mobile Garden](#)' (in Dutch: 'De Mobiele Gaard'). The model is to work on several plots of loaned land. The patches of land are often from citizens who live on a former farm, but do not know what to do with the remaining land. In exchange of the land use, the owners receive a portion (10%) of the harvest in-kind. Because the farmed plots

are not fixed the farmers can in theory work on different plots every season, making their farm mobile.



**Stefan Hanstede working on loaned land; the land owners receive a portion (10%) of the harvest in-kind (photo credits 'De Mobiele Gaard').**

Besides the land of private owners the farmers also use the land of a hotel. The chefs from the hotel use the products in their kitchen allowing guests to see where their food comes from. The same applies for schools where food production can be used as a learning environment.

They have been offered land at many locations and from many different owners. Now they even have a waiting list. That allows them to make choices. Els: "In the beginning we came up with a whole design for a food landscape, but we stopped that. Now we are going to talk first and start on a small scale, so that we can remove our materials quickly if necessary. The click with the landowner is decisive." For example, there are landowners who take care of the farmers pigs on their property and enjoy this experience.

### Practical recommendations

- An extended network
- Good social skills
- Good at publicity
- Only use land where you want it
- Invest in the relationship with the owner
- Do not make big plans for the land or make big investments the first time you can use it. If the



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relationship with the owner doesn't work it is a waste of time and money.

### Read more

For more information about this farm, which is also a Newbie prize winner, see also the following [article](#). At the time of writing there is one successful case in The Netherlands. Further projects to learn and disseminate the lessons of this form of access to land are in development.

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### NEWBIE Dynamic Learning Agenda

This practise description is developed to answer one of the questions from the NEWBIE dynamic learning agenda.

Theme: Access to land - What are innovative solutions for new entrants to gain access to land?

Question: How do we separate land use from land ownership?

Find more practise descriptions and the dynamic learning agenda on [www.newbie-academy.eu/publications](http://www.newbie-academy.eu/publications)