

Discussing the development of Groeningen

How to deal with agricultural developments in the coming years in the Groeningen low moorland area? That was the central theme at the Groeningen network meeting on July 5 at the farm Cazemier Boerderij Tolbert. About 70 representatives from governments, nature organizations, education and agriculture gathered to talk about the transition of agriculture in Groeningen. There were three plenary presentations and two workshops, including one on Buffer +.

Dealing differently with land and water

Hetty Mathijssen of the province of Groningen (lead partner of Buffer +) explained the problems and challenges in Groeningen: peat oxidation and the CO₂ emissions it brings, subsidence and problems with water management. In order to be able to live, work and recreate in this lowland peat belt area with space for agriculture, we must deal with the land and water differently in the future. Hetty gave examples of research close to home and in Germany. In Groningen, research is being done on biodiversity with the help of bees. In the hives, a kind of brush is attached. Bees flying in leave pollen on those brushes. In this way, the quality of biodiversity can be studied. In Germany, experience is being gained with making peat-free potting soil based on reed and 'marine flotsam', plant residues that wash ashore from the sea. This eliminates the need to excavate peat for commercial use. Hetty also showed how BUFFER+ is working on earning models in (wetland) peatlands.

Learning from each other

Nanouk Wiersema of the Municipality of Westerkwartier talked about the innovation workshop, where residents, entrepreneurs, businesses, civil servants, teachers and students discuss the actual challenges in society. It is all about learning with and from each other. The goal of the innovation workshop is to strengthen the innovation capacity of the region.

How do we reach each other?

After two short introductions it was time to have a discussion. Central questions were: how do we reach people and how do we get people involved in the development of Groeningen? 'Appreciate what is already present in the area,' one workshop participant stated. 'Make use of positive examples of local ambassadors' suggested another. It is important to build the trust of the inhabitants. For this, it is necessary to offer information in an accessible way. Also, it is good to give each other an inside view in your organization to get a better understanding of each other.

Involving people widely

Hetty Mathijssen summarized the workshop by calling for more knowledge to be shared in the near future. In doing so, the inhabitants must be broadly involved.