

About Sicco Mansholt,

Sicco Leendert Mansholt was born on 13 September 1908 in Ulrum, Groningen, Netherlands.

His family adhered to socialist political views. They were farmers in the Dutch province of Groningen. Both his father and grandfather were socialists. Father, Lambertus H. Mansholt, was a delegate for the socialist SDAP party in the Groningen provincial chamber. His mother, Wabien Andreae, was the daughter of a judge in Heerenveen. She was one of the first women to have studied Political Science in the Netherlands and organized political meetings for other women, usually in their own homes.

Originally Mansholt studied to become a tobacco farmer Deventer. He did this at the School of Tropical Agriculture in Deventer. Later he moved to Java in the Dutch East Indies, present day Indonesia, and started work on a tea plantation only to return to the Netherlands in 1936, since he was fundamentally unhappy with the colonial system. But he still wanted to become a farmer. So instead of pursuing a life on a plantation he moved to the Wieringermeer. This was a polder reclaimed in 1937. There he started his own farm.

In 1938 he married Henny J. Postel and they had two sons and two daughters.

During WWII he was an active member of the Resistance. He helped people who were in acute danger to hide in the Wieringermeerpolder and he organized clandestine food distributions for the western provinces. Taking a political stance was a strong characteristic he was rapidly developing.

Mansholt became a member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) in 1937 but grew in political stature and eventually became active at higher levels of political activity. Immediately after the war, in June 1945, socialist PvdA Prime Minister Schermerhorn asked him to take a seat in his cabinet as minister of Agriculture, Fishery and Food Distribution. He was the youngest member of a cabinet, aged only 36.

Mansholt took a seat in 6 parliaments. As Minister of Agriculture during this time, he was one of the key architects of the EC's Common Agricultural Policy. The task of the young Dutch Minister of Agriculture just after the World War II was to make sure that food shortages would be eradicated. Although he preferred to remain in farming, his career took off. He succeeded in enhancing agricultural production and enabling farmers to make a better living. ,

In 1958, he became one of the Commissioners of the new European Commission. He was Commissioner for Agriculture and vice-president of the institution. He modernized European agriculture. He became President of the European Commission on 22 March 1972 (Mansholt Commission) and continued in that position until 5 January 1973. His perspective on life was radically changing. Mansholt began to doubt the path he had chosen. He slowly realized that he set something in motion which was not easily halted. He discovered that the negative consequences of his policies demanded a different approach. Mansholt became a passionate environmental activist and he was even ridiculed and scorned by former allies. Inspired by the report '*The limits to growth*' (1972) of the Club of Rome and a young intern, independent thinker and mistress Petra Kelly (who later became a founder of the German Green Party) he feverishly fought against policies he himself had put in place. The dramatic choices he made throughout his life attested to his professional and personal passion. But these also tormented him. In 1973 he reconciled with his wife, breaking ties with his mistress and withdrew to his farm near the town of Wapserveen. This is where he died in 1995.