



WAGENINGENUR

For quality of life

wetenschapswinkel



Van boerderij naar zorgboerderij

Van bedrijfsaanpassing tot systeeminnovatie

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Abstract

One of the routes of agricultural entrepreneurs when dealing with the increasing demands of sustainability is broadening of agriculture with additional functions. Care farming is one of the varieties of multifunctional agriculture that beside positive effects on economy mainly contributes to the social sustainability of agriculture. A care farm is a farm that combines its agricultural production function with offering day care to care clients. The transformation of a traditional farm into a care farm requires different business strategies, resulting in both technical and management adaptations. At the same time, the involvement in networks and chains both within and outside the agricultural sector is changing.

Knowledge about adaptations and changes can be very useful for people who plan to start a care farm, people, who intend to optimize their care branch, and for people who want to support starting care farmers. In order to provide this knowledge, this study aims to explore on the adaptations at farm level and changes at the network level.

This research includes two sub studies. In the first sub study we investigate the technical and management changes, as applied for three different client groups: children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), mentally disabled clients, and people who visit the farms for reintegration processes. These target groups have been chosen because of their different ages as well as their different needs in terms of care and activities. Children with ASD often visit care farms in order to offer them day care while relieving the home front. Mentally disabled clients visit care farms in order to find suitable and nice day activities. For the third group of clients, people that need social re-integration, the main purpose of visiting a care farm is to learn social and work-related skills.

In the second sub study we investigated the regional differences in (changes of) participation in networks and chains. The selected region's were: the 'Achterhoek' (in the province Gelderland), the 'Westerkwartier' (in the province Groningen), and 'West-Friesland' (in the province Noord-Holland). These three regions represent three levels of development of provincial care farming policy. The province Gelderland is among the 'frontrunners', the province Groningen is among the 'followers', while province Noord-Holland could be considered part of the 'peloton' (Elings et al., 2003)

In order to investigate all adaptations, we started with an Internet survey. The questionnaire was disseminated among all 925 known care farmers in the Netherlands. Based on the results of this survey we selected thirty care farmers for an additional, semi-structured interview, 15 farmers for either of the two sub studies.

From the survey and the interviews it appeared that clients who visit a care farm for re-integration demand much less adaptations than children with ASD or mentally disabled clients. Technical adaptations for all three client groups included adaptations of the property in order to be able to offer the necessary facilities and to increase the safety and accessibility of the property for clients. In addition, for children with ASD and mentally disabled clients the farm equipment often needs to be made more safe and manageable. Also pictograms and colour codes are used in order to assist the clients with their activities. Another 'technical' adaptation concerns the choice of animals and the animal housing. Care farms for children with ASD more often purchased small hobby animals while the care farms for mentally disabled people happened to have bigger animals. For re-integration clients, animals are used to activate the clients. Adaptations to animal housing usually aimed to increase the safety of both clients and animals.

Management-related adaptations mainly concerned changes in day schedules, in order to create more structure and regularity, adaptations of day activities regarding the interests and capabilities of the clients, and changes in distribution of work among farmer and farm employees. In addition, for all the client groups, many care farmers worked with learning goals, in order to guide activities and learning processes.

There were hardly any regional differences in adaptations at care farms. Neither changes in participation in networks differed substantially in the different regions. Care farms participate in agricultural networks, care networks (or chains) and care farming networks. In all regions (although above all in the West-Friesland) participation in agricultural networks decreased a little bit. Participation in care chains and care farming networks increased. Small differences between the farms in the different regions concerned their collaboration with care institutions and care professionals, although it is questionable whether these differences are significant. The Achterhoek was the only region under study in which farmers stated to take part in study clubs, which exist in addition to the regional society of care farms. Contacts with governmental parties did not differ in the different regions.