

'Besides engineers, we also need philosophers, sociologists and economists'



Joris Relaes
Denkersprogramma Koninklijke Academie voor
Wetenschappen
Brussels, 5 March 2024



Farmers' Demonstrations





Bavo Verwimp

Organic farmer and ag economist

‘If we were to understand farmers better, the solution to many agriculture-related environmental problems would naturally come closer’

‘But we still miss the view from the human sciences on that complex farm story. To save our environment, we mostly employ environmentalists. **But if we really want to find solutions for our food production, we also need sociologists, psychologists and economists’.**

Writer Paul Baeten in Knack Focus January 2023



Knack FOCUS



A plea to stop leaving policy and the administration of justice solely to data and numbers and to get back more mindful of the humanity in our policy processes.

- ‘Soon we will know everything except what to do with it’
- ‘Everything must be businesslike; there is no room for emotions anymore’
- ‘We need to put more humanity into our processes and less processes into our people’.
- ‘You can no longer see people in stores, banks or governments. You can no longer call people who might actually help you: they just read to you from the system.’
- **‘The very technocratic way in which things are handled clashes with ‘farmer’s common sense,’ creating misunderstanding and frustration’**
Joris Relaes VILT-nieuws

Post scandal (UK) – Child Benefits Scandal (NL)



TOESLAGENAFFAIRE

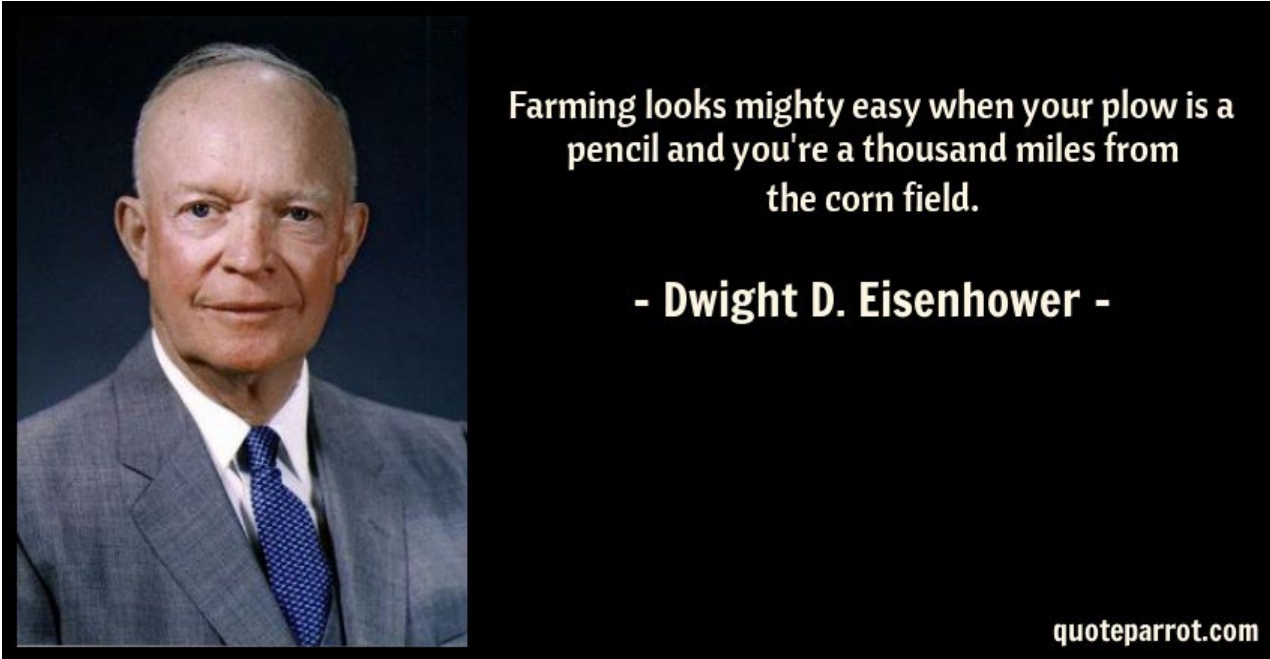
Do you have any questions about the Belastingdienst and the toeslagenaffaire (child benefits scandal)?

Eindhoven Municipality and WJ Eindhoven would like to get in touch with you. We can look at how we can help with problems surrounding health, accommodation, family, growing up, school, money matters or work.

Send an email to toeslagenaffaire@eindhoven.nl or go to www.eindhoven.nl/toeslagenaffaire



Theory ⇔ Practice



Farming is an outsider

Agriculture is not a normal economic sector

1) very risky business

- ⇒ production of living plants and animals
- ⇒ usually very capital intensive
- ⇒ often perishable products



2) farms are micro-enterprises with insufficient market power

⇒ e.g. very difficult to pass on environmental costs to consumers

Oligopsony

(\Leftrightarrow oligopoly)

Oligopsony In A Nutshell

An oligopsony is a market form characterized by the presence of only a small number of buyers. These buyers have market power and can lower the price of a good or service because of a lack of competition. In other words, the seller loses its bargaining power because it is unable to find a buyer outside of the oligopsony that is willing to pay a better price.



FourWeekMBA

Oligopsony



A market with few buyers and many sellers

Not only economically but also ecologically, agriculture is not a normal sector

- Large need for **space**
- **Diffuse pollution** by very many microenterprises
 - => increases the chance of 'free-rider' behavior
- Involves **biological processes**
 - Difficult to capture biological processes in strict **resource legislation** (bv. 170 kg N/ha)
 - Putting more effort into **target legislation** => promotes innovation
 - Avoid **'calendar farmers'**

Watch out! Integrated policies necessary but not easy

- An **integrated...**
environmental/climate/food safety/odor/animal welfare policy
- **Legal certainty** on a sufficiently long term (investments over the generational term)
- Attention for the **specificity of farming** (economic as well as ecological)
- Theoretical situation (model) \Leftrightarrow real situation (important for **societal support**) Don't ignore farmer's common sense.

Goals of the agricultural policy

- Acceptable prices for the consumer
- Decent incomes for the farmers
- Food security

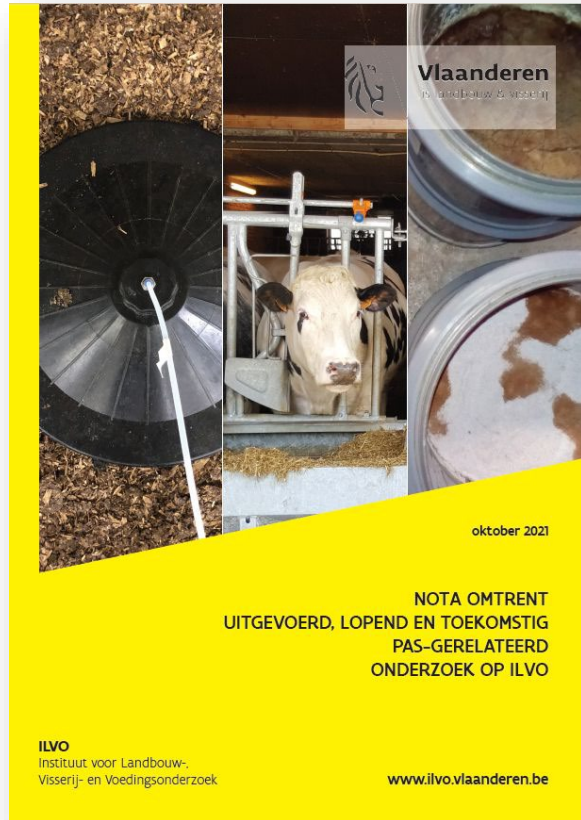
- A sector that operates within its ecological limits
- Operating within an open free market in a globalized world

The unanswered question: With how many farmers?

What does ILVO do?



Nitrogen (“PAS”) related research at ILVO



1. Reduction measures and techniques



2. Measuring and monitoring of emissions



3. Spatial research



WETENSCHAPPELIJK COMITÉ
LUCHTEMISSIES VEETEELT

<https://www.wecomv.be/nl>

WECOMV

What conditions must be met for a measure to qualify as a PAS measure?

- ✓ The operating principle is clear!

How does it work? And does it always work?

- ✓ It is possible to estimate the reduction potential

Using emission measurements, scientific publications

- ✓ The measure can be guaranteed!



Flemish government agreement with agricultural organizations (15 February 2023)

- 'The Flemish government will immediately start work on investigating a switch from a deposition to an emissions model.'

Jan Verheeke/Joris Relaes

From deposition to emissions policy

Proposal on how to deal with KDW in legislation, licensing and policy

June 2023

- **Authors**

- **Jan Willem Erisman**, Professor of Environment and Sustainability, Center for Environmental Sciences, Leiden University
- **Chris Backes**, Professor of Environmental Law, Utrecht Centre for Water, Oceans and Sustainability Law, Utrecht University
- **Wim de Vries**, Professor of Environmental Systems Analysis, Environmental Systems Analysis Chair Group, Wageningen University



From deposition to emissions policy

'Emphasizing that the KDW is only an objective addressed to the government'

'If the long-term goals for sectors and individual farms are bindingly established and attainment of targets is properly monitored and enforced, there is no longer a need to calculate the deposition of a new activity on an overburdened area'



Thank you!



Instituut voor Landbouw-
en Visserij- en Voedingsonderzoek
Burg. Van Gansberghelaan 92
9820 Merelbeke – België
T + 32 (0)9 272 25 00

ilvo@ilvo.vlaanderen.be
www.ilvo.vlaanderen.be