



Meeting WG Agriculture

Drachten/Gaastmeer, Fryslân, NL, 2 April 2008

FINAL DRAFT REPORT

1. Opening

The meeting was opened by Mr. Hilbrand Sinnema, president of LTO Groningen and chairman of the LTO Wadden Sea Group. He welcomed the participants to the LTO Noord office in Drachten and presented some key data on the organisation, which has some 36,000 members. He then invited to a round of introduction.

Jurjen Kingma. Secretary LTO Noord.

Kristen Fromsejer. Crop farmer. Represents Danish farmers in southwest Jutland. Member WSF.

Susanne Werner. Bauernverband Schleswig-Holstein. Successor of Maïke Newe.

Melf Melfsen. Dairy farmer at Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea coast. Replaces Mr. Witt.

Kresten Skrumsager. Danish Ministry of Agriculture, based in Tønder.

Helene de Jong. Province of Fryslân. Coordinating meadow bird policies.

Gerard van Drooge. LTO Noord. Works with meadow bird protection programmes.

Meinte Engelmoer. Province Fryslân. Meadow bird protection policies. Farmers 4 Nature project.

Erich Hinrichs. Board member Landwirtschaftskammer Niedersachsen. WSF member.

Folkert de Jong. Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, Wilhelmshaven. Secretary WSF.

Sinnema then introduced the programme for the day. The programme is attached as Annex 1.

2. Presentation Drachten

Gerard van Drooge presented basic information about the Friesian black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa*) protection programme (ppt Presentation attached). The godwit is symbolic for the Friesian meadow birds. Despite several measures taken in the past decade, numbers all still decreasing. This is caused by a combination of factors, i.e. farming methods, decreasing wintering areas in Senegal, decreasing rice fields in Portugal and hunting in France. In Fryslân new management schemes have been developed, focusing on a combination of modern dairy farming and protection. These schemes include compensation for reduced production, caused by, amongst others, applying less manure and a later first cut. Cooperation between farmers is very important for the success of the programme. Also other meadow birds, such as the lapwing, profit from the programme. About one third of the 2200 farmers who are member of the 33 farmers' unions in Fryslân participate.

3. Programme Gaastmeer

After the presentation by Gerard van Drooge, the meeting was continued in the community centre of the village of Gaastmeer in the southwestern part of Fryslân.

Here, four additional participants joined the meeting, namely

Jelle Zijlstra en Klaas Oevering, farmers in Gaastmeer and members of the Skryze-krite Sytze Terpstra. Volunteer Skryze-krite Sjef van der Lubbe. Province of Fryslân.

MEADOW BIRDS

Meinte Engelmoer presented a historic overview of developments in meadow bird protection, as well as the main results of the Interreg Programme "Farmers 4 Nature" (ppt presentation attached).

He concluded that nest protection only had proven not to be sufficient for maintaining the population. What was needed was increasing the acceptance, effectivity and efficiency of programmes. To this end an area approach, more effective cooperation between farmers and more flexibility in agri-environment schemes were needed.

The Interreg "Farmers 4 Nature project" had delivered important material for better schemes. A working plan had been developed for the province of Fryslân for the period 2007-2013, consisting of only nest protection (75.000 ha), agri-environment schemes and co-operatives (50.000 ha) and nature protection reserves (10.000 ha).

Sytze Terpstra informed the participants about the activities of the "Skryze-krite", a cooperation of 40 farmers and 40-50 volunteers on an area of 1675 ha.

The cooperation is currently involved in a pilot project, called "Boerennatuur" (farmers' nature). This project works with 1-year contracts, which is contrary to the normal praxis of 6-year contracts which cannot be changed. The 1-year contract option is part of a 10-15 years planning, which has been made possible through a 2 million Euro national subsidy.

Possible measures contributing to meadow bird protection are

1. Mowing delay. Mowing on 1, 8 or 15 June (instead of beginning of May). Compensation: 220 – 500 € per ha.
2. Safety area. Keeping apart an area of about 1 ha. Relevant for chick protection and more effective than nest protection. Compensation: 400 €
3. Applying straw manure. This stimulates the soil fauna and thus delivers extra food for the birds. Compensation: 77 € for 10 tons/ha.
4. Nest protection. Keeping apart a 10x10 m area around a nest. Compensation: 56 €/nest.
5. Creation of local wetlands (5 – 20 cm water level) at the beginning of March. Important as habitat when birds arrive.
6. Creating a 3-6 m wide unused stripe around fields. This measure must be maintained for a 6-10 year period. It provides a refuge for chicks (long grass) and is also positive for food supply.

The meeting then discussed predation. About 25% of the chicks are lost through predation, especially by the marsh harrier, but also buzzard. There is furthermore egg predation by crows, fox, weasle, cat, dog and stoat.

An arrangement for hunting has been made with local hunters, bird watchers and nature organisations. There is agreement that the best option is to make the area less attractive for predators by keeping it open and clean. But, generally, the first thing to do is to make the habitat optimal and then to regulate predation.

GEESE

The meeting discussed geese grazing and the problem of increasing numbers and longer stays, leading to higher damages for farmers. Compensation is based upon a food index, based upon an average of the previous two years. With rapidly rising prices this may cause problems.

Unfortunately the EU does not allow 1-year contracts.

Erich Hinrichs informed about the WSF letter that had been sent to the Committee of the Regions, expressing the wish for compensation of actual damage and for more flexibility. The

Committee had requested additional information and a memo had been made by the Chamber of Agriculture Lower Saxony. Copies were handed out to the participants.

It was **agreed** that the memo, together with the original letter to the Committee, would be circulated to agricultural representatives in Denmark, Netherlands and Schleswig-Holstein with the request to check and to add relevant information. Deadline end of April.

Melff Melffsen informed the meeting about chasing away geese in Schleswig-Holstein and the fact that people start complaining about the noise. There is also a new environmental law, according to which municipalities can now make rules for noise.

Meinte Engelmoer explained that chasing away geese may be effective if the geese have to opportunity to learn. This is possible with fixed protected areas to which the geese can fly when chased away from non-protected areas. However, it is problematic to establish sufficient fixed protected areas, because compensation payments are too low. It is also necessary to stop payments outside protected areas.

Finally, the problem of disturbance of meadow birds by geese was discussed. Generally, this was not yet a big problem. Problems with domestic geese in summer were expected to increase.

VISIT TO THE FIELDS OF KLAAS OEVERING

The participants made a visit to the fields of Klaas Oevering, who showed the various measures applied, among which spreading of straw manure, safety area, safety stripe and wetland creation.

4. Closing

Hilbrand Sinnema closed the meetng. He thanked all for their participation, in particular Jelle Zijlstra, Sytze Terpstra, Klaas Oevering, Gerard van Drooge and Meindert Engelmoer.

Erich Hinrichs thanked Hilbrand Sinnema and Jurjen Kingma for an excellently organised and interesting day.

It was **agreed** to discuss theme and date for a next meeting at the WSF-12 meeting (5-6 June) in Husum.

ANNEX 1.

**Program for the meeting of the WSF Working Group Agriculture
April 2, 2008 in the province of Fryslân**

**Subject: exchange of information about organised protection of
meadow birds**

**09.30 Meeting in the office of the Dutch agricultural organisation LTO
Noord**

Lavendelheide 9, 9202 PD Drachten (tel. 088 - 888 66 66)

Coffee and welcome

by president Hilbrand Sinnema with a short introduction about the LTO Noord organisation

**How do Frisian farmers work on the meadow bird protection
(especially programmes for the Black-tailed Godwit)**

by Gerard van Drooge, project leader of LTO Noord Projecten BV

10.15 Departure by car for the village Gaastmeer

11.00 Arrival at the community-centre of Gaastmeer

Munkedyk 15, 6811 JP Gaastmeer (tel. 0515 - 46 97 79)

**Introduction of the farmers Klaas Oevering, Jelle Zeilstra and
Sytse Terpstra of the Skrieze-krite (special protected farm land
for the Black-tailed Godwit) in the surroundings of the village of
Idzega** www.anvsudwesthoeke.nl/skriezekrite idzegea

Policy and instruments of the government

by Helene de Jong, Albert Visser, Sjef vd Lubbe en Meinte Engelmoer
of the province of Fryslân

11.30 Exchange of information and discussion

12.30 Lunch in d'Ald Herberch

Munkedyk 46, 8611 JR Gaastmeer (T 0515 - 46 96 56)

13.30 Visit to the fields of the Skrieze-krite
(depending on the weather, rubber boots are recommended)

Information from Oevering, De Vries en Van Drooge and discussion.

15.30 Closing in d'Ald Herberch

Participants from Germany and Danmark

- Ehrich Hinrichs, member of the board of the Landwirtschaftskammer Niedersachsen
- Susanne Werner, Bauernverband Schleswig-Holstein
- Melf Melfsen, Bauernverband Schleswig-Holstein
- Kresten Skrumsager, member WSF Danmark
- Kristen Fromsejer, member WSF Danmark
- Folkert de Jong, secretary Wadden Sea Forum, Wilhelmshafen

Participants from The Netherlands

- Hilbrand Sinnema, president of the landbouwWaddenwerkgroep of LTO Noord
- Gerard van Drooge, project leader of LTO Noord Projecten BV
- Jelle Zeilstra, farmer and committee member of the Skrieze-krite Idzegea
- Klaas Oevering, farmer and committee member of the Skrieze-krite Idzegea
- Sytse Terpstra, mosaic director of the Skrieze-krite Idzegea
- Sjef van der Lubbe, province of Fryslân
- Helene de Jong, province of Fryslân
- Albert Visser, province of Fryslân
- Meinte Engelmoer, province of Fryslân
- Jurjen Kingma, secretary LTO Noord Fryslân

c.c. Geart Kooistra, president of LTO Noord Fryslân