

# Summary

## Study on multifunctional agriculture: Investigating the impact

Esther Veen

Jan-Hendrik Kamstra

Herman Schoorlemmer

Aïde Roest

PPO publication 393

LEI report 2010-065

September 2010

Project code PPO 3250171810

Project code LEI 2275000085

Praktijkonderzoek Plant & Omgeving, part of Wageningen UR,  
Lelystad



**WAGENINGEN UR**

*For quality of life*

# Summary

---

## Study on multifunctional agriculture: Investigating the impact

### *Motivation*

In order to stimulate multifunctional agriculture, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) set up the Multifunctional Agriculture Taskforce, known simply as the Taskforce. The Taskforce focuses on the following six sectors: care farming, childcare, farm sales, agricultural nature management, recreation and tourism, and education. One of the goals of the Taskforce is to double the economic value of multifunctional agriculture over the four-year period 2008-2011. In addition to this goal relating to turnover, policymakers, researchers, and farmers are coming to realise that multifunctional agriculture also has an influence and an impact on other levels. This impact extends further than the individual farm. However, it is difficult to determine the impact, and a good definition is needed.

### *Delineation, definitions and methods*

For the purposes of this study, impact is defined as: 'The contribution which multifunctional agriculture makes to the physical surroundings, work relationships, the regional economy, and the quality of life in Dutch rural areas.' The impact has been examined at different levels: the farm, the region, nationwide, and the farmer himself or herself. The emphasis was placed on the regional level. In terms of the economic impact, only the regional level was examined. The effects on direct users of multifunctional agriculture, such as care or recreation consumers, are not examined in this report. In order to gain a clear picture of the impact, a literature study was carried out and a survey was held under multifunctional farmers.

### *Results*

The landscape is an important source of help for the multifunctional farmer. For this reason, many multifunctional farmers are also involved in nature management and find it self-evident that they should do so. The visible impact of multifunctional agriculture on the landscape is limited, but the multifunctional landscape has a much higher value in terms of how it is experienced by the

general public. In addition, multifunctional farms often make use of existing buildings. The effects of direct sales on transport kilometres are as yet unclear.

Nearly all multifunctional farmers experience greater job satisfaction than before starting multifunctional activities, as a result of the more varied tasks and the appreciation from visitors. Multifunctional agriculture also offers opportunities for women, in that they are often involved in both starting and running the multifunctional activity, and they are more often fully responsible for it than men are. Respondents also indicated that the multifunctional farm is more attractive to successors.

The effects of multifunctional agriculture on work opportunities are unclear. There is also a lack of generic figures, necessary in order to draw conclusions about the multiplier effect of multifunctional agriculture. The social returns of care farms appear to be highly promising for society at large. In addition, hardly any respondents indicated that they made no local purchases of products and services, and large-scale multifunctional activities in a particular area can draw more visitors.

Many multifunctional farms are regularly visited by the general public, which can lead to connections between farmers and the public and the sector's integration into the society. Multifunctional farms also often cooperate with other regional parties and draw actively on volunteers. Because the development of multifunctional agriculture results in an increase in the number and quality of local services and a strengthening of the regional economy, multifunctional agriculture contributes to the vitality of the countryside. Many respondents are of the opinion that they are offering unique products and services to their region. Noteworthy is the fact that the respondents receive almost no complaints from their surrounding area.

It can be concluded that multifunctional agriculture makes a positive contribution to regional development. The impact of multifunctional agriculture is therefore greater than merely the extra turnover generated by the individual farms.