

Field tour May 31

3. Experiences on a walnut-hazelnut farm and rediscovering farming in the wood

We will visit two farms. The first one is specialized in walnuts and seeks for diversification. On the second one you will meet three passionate farmers reinventing farming in forests.

Notengaard Bisschop



General: **Notengaard Bisschop** ('Nuts orchard Bishop') is a farm with five ha of walnut trees and hazelnut bushes. *Location:* Kallenkote, 140 km from Nijmegen.

Farmers: **Roderik and Paulien de Vries.**

The walnut trees are on average 15 years old and were planted by the parents of Paulien, who were running a biodynamic dairy farm. Now Paulien en Roderik have taken over; they are slowly starting to harvest the walnuts. They are also implementing some diversifications in the system like hazelnuts and laying hens.

Integration: Roderik himself acknowledges that he is on the edge between traditional farming and agroforestry. Before there were only walnuts, a monoculture with grass was underneath them. Roderik and Paulien decided to add some elements, like hazelnuts and chickens, mainly to diversify and elevate their income. The chickens also have a function in pest control in the orchard. There is a flower mix beneath the hazelnuts, aimed to support bees, although bees do not play a role in pollination for nut trees. Further diversification is considered, if the new element has ecological and/or financial benefits.

Benefits: At Notengaard Bisschop several varieties of walnuts and hazelnuts are inoculated, a very difficult process and rarely applied in the Netherlands. Also they are experimenting, pioneering, and learning from the outcomes. Much experience can be shared here about the successes and downfalls of the different varieties and the process of inoculation. Nuts and trees are sold, as are nut oil and walnuts and hazelnuts in honey.

Contribution: Walnut trees are producing nuts for several generations, which guarantees that the trees will be there for a long time. Roderik is now working as a gardener and garden designer, however he plans to have a complete income from the nuts and chickens within a

few years. These pioneers have a lot of knowledge to share and they will keep on in developing and pioneering.

Must see: Largest area of walnut production in the Netherlands. Also the most northern farm with nut trees, thus in difficult climate conditions. Roderik and Paulien will show us which solutions they came up with. They will also show a special tunnel system that protects the chickens from birds of prey and hunting mammals.

Stichting Boeren in het Bos



General: Stichting Boeren in het Bos ('Foundation Farming the woods') is a farm (nearby Kallenkote) with Tamworth pigs roaming around in forest areas and Angus and Scottish Highlander cows in natural areas. Also Boerbossen ('Farmer forests') are being developed, which are food forests with cows, pigs and chickens, nuts, fruits, mushrooms and herbs production. *Farmers:* **Richard van Pelt, Mariska Slot, Marcel Sneek.**

Integration: *Boeren in het Bos* combines meat production out of livestock farming with production of other food products for human consumption. This is done by developing a natural system that is overyielding. They will only harvest the surplus to be sure that they keep the ecosystem balanced so that no external inputs are needed. This system based on Mark Shepard's farm in Wisconsin. It is focussed on transforming existing wood production forests which are low in biodiversity into more diverse natural forests which also produce food products and can support an extensive way of livestock farming.

Benefits: The ambition of *Boeren in het Bos* is to transform over 500 ha of monocultural wood production into more natural forests where not only wood is produced, but also fruits, nuts, mushrooms, herbs, eggs and meat. They want to produce more biomass per hectare, to activate soil life, to increase biodiversity and to capture more water. In short they want to use the available land multifunctional.

Contribution: By trying to rediscover farming in forests *Boeren in het Bos* wants to bring back the natural habitats of the Netherlands. The pigs in the forest are on a daily basis daily visited by a lot of people, especially in the tourist season. *Boeren in het Bos* also aims to work with social organizations to familiarize people again with nature. It is always relaxing to be in a forest.

Must see: The free roaming pigs and a presentation of the method behind the farm forests. A must taste is the meat from the all-natural cows and pigs.