

INVITED SYMPOSIUM

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DIRECT PAYMENT STRATEGIES ON DUTCH FARMLAND

Nature on Dutch farmland is under threat from intensive farming practices. The conventional strategy for nature conservation by farmers is to restrict farming intensity and compensate farmers for production losses. An alternative is to pay farmers for nature on their land, as a reward for the nature 'product'. Results of experiments on modern, intensive dairy farms with this scheme are encouraging. Breeding success of meadow birds is significantly higher where farmers are paid for clutches than where they are not (breeding success Lapwing [*Vanellus vanellus*]: 64.7% on paid farms, 48.2% on non-paid farms; Black-tailed Godwit [*Limosa limosa*]: 63.1% paid, 39.3% non-paid). The system proves to be less expensive than conservation based on compensating for income losses (paying for clutches costs 40 Euro per clutch, compensating for income losses costs 100-400 Euro per clutch). Farmers are enthusiastic and the system builds cooperation between farmers and conservationists, because they share targets. However, effects on meadow bird populations could not yet be detected. A recent study suggested also low effectiveness of conventional agricultural nature conservation on populations, leading to a debate in Dutch papers. This debate is recapitulated and conclusions for direct payment strategies are drawn.

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Direct Payments as an Alternative Approach to Conservation Investment