

European Protected Areas and farmers in partnership for the reduction and the elimination of pesticides: example in the Walloon's Nature Parks

Pesticide – Free sensitive areas: spreading pesticides to sensitive areas – consequences and protective measures
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Representing the Walloon Federation of Nature Parks and member of the EUROPARC Federation



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The largest network of European Protected Area's - 400 members – thousands of PAs – 36 countries

Europe's PAs = National and Regional Parks, Nature and Biosphere Reserves, Marine PA, Natura 2000 sites, ...



EUROPARC works on Nature protection and Agriculture, Marine, Sustainable Tourism, Health, Cross-border cooperation, Culture, Youth, Outdoor Sport, and more.

EUROPARC's key messages:

- Protected Areas and agriculture together create resilient rural area and living landscape
- Protected Areas are ready to collaborate with farmers and consumers
- Protected Areas contribute concretely to achieve EU targets and implement EU policies

- The Common Agricultural Policy and National Strategic Plans should reward sustainable farming in Protected Areas and Natura 2000
- Specific measures, programmes and funds for partnership between Protected Areas and farmers are needed
- The policy coherence with the EU Green Deal is necessary at European, national and local level

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Nature Parks in Wallonia :

- 12 Nature Parks – 9 near 3 borders (FR, GE, LU)
1 near Flanders
- Same missions (walloon Decree) but differentiated according to the challenges of the territories

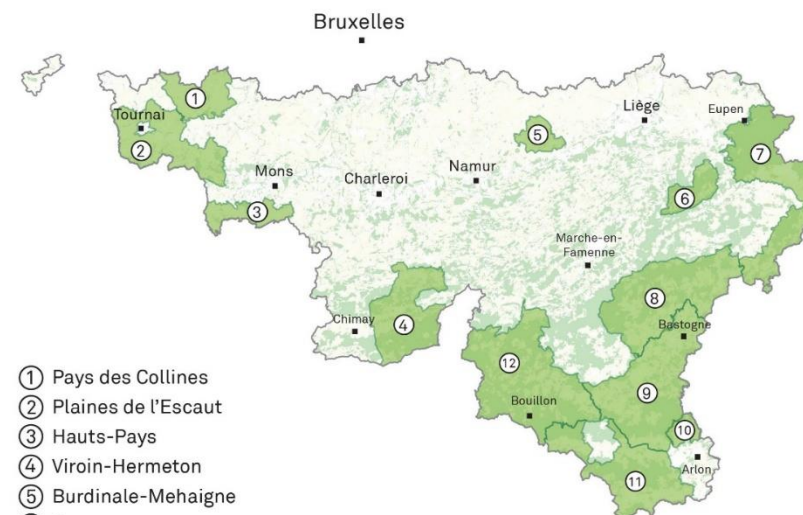
- ⇒ Natural resources and the environment
- ⇒ Rural and economic development
- ⇒ Landscape and territory development
- ⇒ Education
- ⇒ Innovation
- ⇒ Cooperations

= a living and preserved territory with economic activity and inhabitants. Not a territory under a bell. Not a Nature Reserve

= work with and for the inhabitants in order to preserve the territory together

- 1 Federation of the walloon Nature Parks

Les Parcs naturels de Wallonie



- ① Pays des Collines
- ② Plaines de l'Escaut
- ③ Hauts-Pays
- ④ Viroin-Hermeton
- ⑤ Burdinale-Mehaigne
- ⑥ Sources
- ⑦ Hautes Fagnes-Eifel
- ⑧ Deux Ourthes
- ⑨ Haute-Sûre Forêt d'Anlier
- ⑩ Vallée de l'Attert
- ⑪ Gaume
- ⑫ Ardenne méridionale



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How do Walloon's Nature Parks to reduce pesticides in agriculture ?

First step : building a trust relation => no trust, no change => trust is the basis of partnership

Using the same language

- *First step: use an agronomic language*
- *Second step: use a biological language after the implementation of a trust relation*

Following them in the transition

- *Be an administrative support, and give to them tools*
- *Offer them a service, advices and lend equipment*
- *Demonstrate that combining ecology and economy is possible*

Often organizing meetings and especially keeping in touch over the long term

- *Agricultural events*
- *Studies meeting about sustainable and profitable agriculture*

Knowing their work, understanding their difficulties and listening to them

- *Target the right times to contact and to visit them*
- *Have empathy and be able to identify quickly the obstacles to changes*
- *Be up to date on agriculture*
- *Be formed and informed*

Being an intermediary, a relationship facilitator about some problems

- *NP = place for exchanges and debates*
- *Global view to solve some problems (erosion, ...)*

Co-organizing events with the involvement and the support of public authorities

- *Organize farmer's markets with local food*
- *Festival with and for farmers => help of municipal workers and with a specific municipal budget*

Being a partner, an expert, to implement the municipal rural development strategy

- *Animate debates or working groups*

Organizing and promoting events which facilitate the meetings and the understanding between citizens and farmers

- *Inform (new) inhabitants that they live in a rural area and that an agricultural reality goes with it*
- *Support and promote open days, opening of a farm store*
- *Organize farmer's markets with local food*
- *Organize internships on farms with children*

Promoting the projects of farmers

- *Use our communication supports (website, Facebook page, leaflets, flyers), or other communication supports (television report, video capsule, radio,...)*
- *Installation of banners on the fields with messages. For example: "here, the farmer has planted hedges or produces local food", or "here the farmer has restored a meadow with high biological value"*

Implementation of social agriculture in the farms, with the farmers and for people with social stall or for a public with a mental handicap

- *multifunctional roles of agriculture*
- *more links with public and not just produce food*

Including the farmers in the decision-making process and in the projects of the Nature Parks

- *In the board of directors or general assembly*
- *In working groups*

Second step : building the partnership => to change, the partnership has to be over a long term

Partnership to reduce the pesticides : practice case

- *In the team of the Nature Park: need to have agronomist (and not only naturalist.... => speaking the same language)*
 - *We give an independent opinion*
 - *Contacting farmers to explain the goals and organizing the territorial animation => it's essential because the farmers have always "their head in the handlebar" and have no time to take this in their hands and organizing meetings. They have got another job !*
 - *Accompagn the group of farmers to fix with them some objectives (pesticides less 30%, for example)*
 - *With the group of farmers, we think all together "How can we do "*
- ⇒ *Organizing meetings about impacts of pesticides on soils, biodiversity, ... : laboratory, research center, ... to have more informations.*
- ⇒ *Establishment of a system of large-scale test plots with monitoring every week by the Nature Park (testing, monitoring, analysing, ...)*
- ⇒ *Thinking about "Why are the plants sick?" => disease is a part of life but if the plants are always sick, you need to ask yourself questions....*
- ⇒ *Thinking about "What can I change in my practices ?"*

There are reasons why are the plants sick => Can the farmers play a role about the reasons ?

- *Climat => not possible for the farmers to play a role in the short term*
- *Variety => possible for the farmers to choose resistant varieties*
- *Agricultural practices => possible for the farmers to do more crop rotations, less intensive tillage, avoid soil compaction*
- *The way you feed plants : mineral food <> organic food*
- *The way you manage the acid base state of the soil : too acid = problem, too basic = problem*

*=> Those two last points play a major role in the plants sensitivity about diseases => It's the key for a sustainable soil management
=> It's not yet well enough known to farmers !*

A/ *Mineral food => unbalanced sap (proteolysis) => more parasitic attacks (insects, mushrooms, ...) => more pesticides !!
Organic - carbon food (compost, manure, shredded hardwood, ...) => balanced sap (protein synthesis) => less parasitic attacks*

=> MORE CARBON in the soils => more soil biology activity => more pest control through biological activity => less pesticides !!

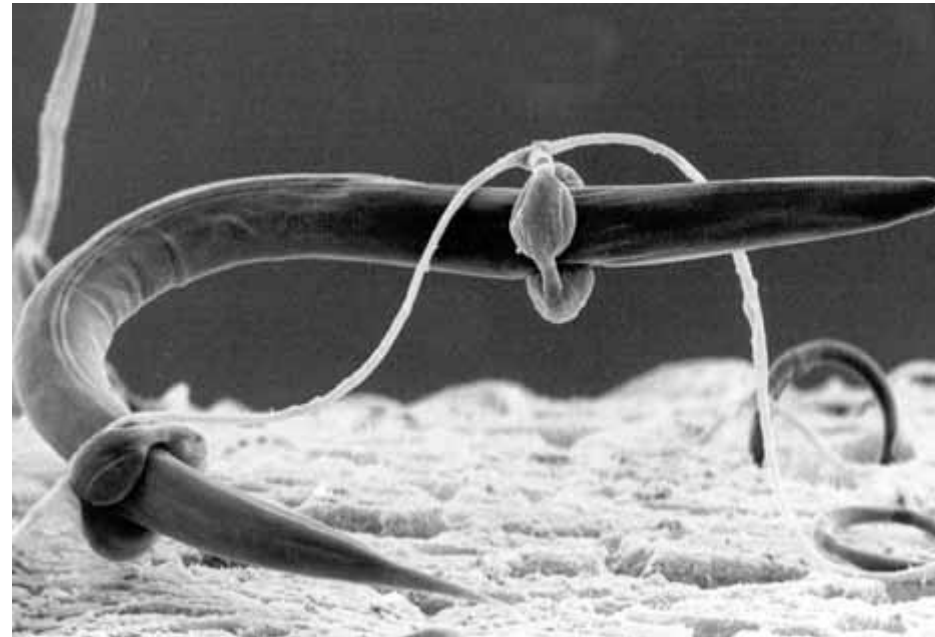
B/ *If the acid base state is balanced => the plants have a balanced food => balanced sap => less parasitic attacks => less pesticides !!*

CONCLUSIONS

- *Farmers lack independent advices => Independent support and a trust relation allows the change and a reduction in pesticides => day-to-day and long term approach*
- *An agronomic technical approach is necessary to be well received by farmers*
- *The Nature Parks are a good place to build the transition with the farmers and to manage a group of engaged farmers*
- *Positive group effect*

PROPOSALS:

- *Create, in the Protected Areas, an independent agronomy advisory services => Hire staff trained in applied soil biology*
- *Invest massively in research on pathogen control mechanisms by soil biology*



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Thank you for your attention



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