The Skylark Foundation aims to help the arable sector to become more sustainable. The Skylark approach is based on knowledge exchange between groups of farmers and with the supply chain. Participating farmers are required to draft and implement individual farm sustainability plans.

**ACTORS**
The Skylark Foundation (in total 388 arable farmers) of which 9 arable farmers from the Midden Brabant group, supply chain companies, advisers, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and other bodies such as the De Dommel Water board.

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS**
- Achieving (or maintaining) good ecological status of surface water and good chemical status of groundwater
- Achieving (or maintaining) good biological and geochemical condition of soils

**IN BRIEF**
The Skylark Foundation aims to help the arable sector to become more sustainable. The Skylark approach is based on knowledge exchange between groups of farmers and with the supply chain. Participating farmers are required to draft and implement individual farm sustainability plans.
In the Netherlands, high land prices drive arable farmers to intensify which overtime has led to serious water quality issues in some places. The trend towards growing a limited number of specialist crops, and, linked to this, widespread short term leasing of land are two obstacles to the adoption of more sustainable practices on a large scale.

Skylark shows that conventional arable farmers can be willing to move towards more sustainable systems. Skylark takes the approach that influencing the behaviours of conventional and intensive farmers has a lot of potential in delivering beneficial environmental outcomes. Knowledge exchange and understanding farmers’ motivations are critical to ensure a sustained delivery of public goods and ecosystem services. Peer-to-peer learning in a self-organised farmer network has proven to be effective in raising awareness and willingness of farmers to adopt more sustainable practices.

The principles of knowledge exchange, involving actors along the supply chain, and monitoring improvement through individual sustainability plans can be transferred to other types of initiatives including in other countries, but they need to be tailored to the local needs and culture.

**WHAT ARE THE MAIN DRIVERS?**
- CAP Pillar 1
- CAP Pillar 2, notably agri-environment schemes
- Nitrates Directive
- Water Framework Directive
- Manure act (based on the Nitrates Directive)
- National implementation of agri-environment schemes
- Plant disease regulations
- Management of main river discharge i.e. climate adaptation
- Sustainability requirements of food businesses
- Requirements of drinking water companies and water agencies
- Crop specialisation and land prices, driving intensive practices

**WHAT SUPPORT IS RECEIVED?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE SKYLARK FOUNDATION IN FIGURES</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of arable farmers participating</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arable land covered by Skylark farms</td>
<td>&gt;45,000 ha = 8.7% of arable land in the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of regional groups</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of partnering firms and stakeholders</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skylark advisers</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of knowledge exchange meetings</td>
<td>38 (&gt;600 participants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of regional groups meetings</td>
<td>300 (6 per week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Skylark sustainability indicators</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sustainable management options available to Skylark farmers</td>
<td>&gt;200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sustainability operations programmed in Skylark farmers' sustainability plans</td>
<td>2,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership fee paid by participants</td>
<td>€150 per year + €2 per ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Selected AEMs eligible for organic farming; LSU: Livestock Units

**BARRIERS TO OVERCOME**

**TRANSFERABILITY / KEY SUCCESS FACTORS**

1. **THE DEMAND FROM ACTORS OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT DRIVER FOR FARMERS TO TAKE ACTION.**

2. Knowledge exchange and understanding farmers' motivations are critical to ensure a sustained delivery of public goods and ecosystem services. Peer-to-peer learning in a self-organised farmer network has proven to be effective in raising awareness and willingness of farmers to adopt more sustainable practices.

3. The demand from actors of the supply chain for more sustainable products is also an important driver for farmers to take action.

4. The principles of knowledge exchange, involving actors along the supply chain, and monitoring improvement through individual sustainability plans can be transferred to other types of initiatives including in other countries, but they need to be tailored to the local needs and culture.

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http://pegasus.ieep.eu/case-studies/list-of-case-studies