

A New Approach: Participatory Land Consolidation

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SUMMARY

Introduction Fragmentation of agricultural land continues with the ongoing enlargement of farms. Land consolidation aims at an improved allocation of land that is better adapted to its agricultural use. Therewith it strengthens the agriculture sector and consequently aids food security. In addition, land consolidation may contribute to better water management, environmental management or the realisation of new nature conservation areas. Land consolidation thus contributes to a sustainable rural development. A new approach In the Netherlands a new approach towards land consolidation has been introduced. It allows farmers and other stakeholders to actively participate in land consolidation projects, especially with regard to the re-allotment plan. Public participation may take place in various ways, depending on the local context and followed procedure. The new methodology matches with a recent trend in the Netherlands of politicians invoking citizens to take responsibility for their own environment and neighbourhood instead of expecting the government to take care. This coincides with the trend of a diminishing welfare state due to severe budget cuts. Voluntary re-allotment Land consolidation is to a large extent based on data about land administration as the ownership of land is exchanged. Participation takes place by different means. In a voluntary re-allotment farmers and other land owners are invited to discuss the new allocation together. Since it is on a voluntary basis not all land owners are involved, which sometimes limited the possibilities to exchange land. Nevertheless, the first results have shown that the improvement on allocation of land is equal or better than expected based on average results in previous re-allotment projects using the regular method. Rural land consolidation In a formal land consolidation project participation is among others supported with an e-government service to exchange geo-information. All landowners in this type of project are involved as it has a mandatory character. Public participation is therewith more formalised. The developed e-government service is tailored to public participation within this framework, allowing title holders to register land lease contracts, wishes regarding the new allotment, view the re-allotment plan, and at last submit an objection. People are satisfied with the possibility for e-participation and it also enhances an efficient process. Urban land consolidation Traditionally, land consolidation in the Netherlands only takes place in rural areas. However, the negative effects of the worldwide crises are visible in urban development. The government is currently investigating the possibilities of urban land consolidation as an instrument to mitigate these negative effects, drawing on the experience in the application of land consolidation in rural areas.