Title: Paying for biodiversity? Benchmarking for improving farmers biodiversity performances

Introduction of the workshop:
Speaker: Professor Dr. Geert Desnoo, (Professor at Leiden University in the field of Conservation Biology, member of the Dutch Board for Authorisation of Plant Protection Products and Biocides (CTGB)).

Content:
Within the Framework of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU the main approach to counteract the decrease of biodiversity and landscape quality in the countryside are the so-called Agri-Environment Schemes. However, although we spent billions of euros, the ecological benefits of the schemes are limited. So, we need to improve current approaches and develop new instruments. Farmers are the key players when it comes to the enhancement of farmland biodiversity. Therefore, we developed and tested a benchmark system for Dutch arable farmers that focus on improving farmers’ conservation performances. A large scale experiment was carried out in which farmers in different social settings receive feed back about their own biodiversity performances compared to other farmers in the area. The results show that tailored information about the individual farmer biodiversity performance, combined with public commitment making, resulted in a positive effect. These farmers show a stronger desire to engage in conservation, show increase in time spent on conservation and on the farms an increase in surface area of non-subsidized natural habitat could be measured. The feedback given to the farmers especially affected the non-subsidized conservation. In the case of Agri-Environment Schemes, where farmers get subsidized, only the desire to engage in conservation change. We think that benchmarking instruments for farmers using targeted information in combination with public commitment is a challenging tool to enhance biodiversity and landscape quality in the countryside.

Moderator: Marian Gerard (province Limburg)
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