

Abstract:

Society including markets and policies rapidly changes. Farmers or agricultural entrepreneurs need to become more flexible and develop strategies to pro-actively adapt their farm, product portfolio, networks, partnerships, knowledge systems, personal skills and competences to the changing external conditions. Entrepreneurship is an important research theme of the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI) in the Netherlands. Some of the aspects studied are:

- analysis and evaluation of the conditions in which agricultural entrepreneurs have to do their work;

- monitoring and evaluation of the results of entrepreneurship;

- analysis of the behaviour of groups of entrepreneurs itself to find explanations for past reactions or to predict future reactions of farmers on market or policy developments;

- improvement of the level of entrepreneurship through training in different aspects of this topic; ISP (Interactive Strategic Planning) can play a role in such learning processes.

In agriculture, passive, moderately active and very active entrepreneurs can be discerned. In general, more active entrepreneurs have a stronger vision and strategy toward integrated crop protection and lower levels of pesticide use and environmental burden than passive colleagues. In general, there is a strong need to improve the level of entrepreneurship in agriculture, and the ISP-process and toolbox are helpful instruments to facilitate such improvements. The entrepreneur is in the centre of this process. He is facilitated to define his own goals, strategy and plans, and to adapt them when external conditions (are foreseen to) change. Therefore, the major decision maker and performer in agriculture, the entrepreneur himself, is equipped not only to survive but to develop a strategic approach that makes him an interesting partner to work with in the eyes of many stakeholders in his network.