

Abstract:

Sustainable agriculture is an important issue in the Netherlands. A balance between People, Planet and Profit is necessary to create a sustainable agriculture. Entrepreneurial qualities are important for farmers to find this balance for his particular situation. Therefore, three research institutes of Wageningen UR have started a joint project to analyse and develop entrepreneurship in agriculture, being started in 2002 and ending in 2005. This project is linked to several existing farmers networks, in which farmers are facilitated through research to develop organic or integrated agriculture. Entrepreneurship of co-operating farmers was analysed through a questionnaire, resulting in an overview of strengths and weaknesses. Through this, topics were identified for improvement of specific entrepreneurial qualities through participatory work. The results showed a generally low score on farm management and strategic planning, relationship with personnel and personnel management, information seeking and finding, learning and networking, and personal characteristics. In 2003 five participatory projects were started. Farmers were invited to participate in these projects. The projects existed in two or three meetings and farmers had to do some homework in between. Various analysis and simulation tools were used. Farmers received a report, in which individual results were compared with the group average. In 2004, all projects will get a second round and a new project about 'employership' will be set up. Monitoring and evaluation is an important issue in this project, to improve both the content and the process of the participatory projects. The lessons learned can also be translated into a training for advisors or into an educational course. The questionnaire is a useful tool for analysis of entrepreneurship and will be transformed to an internet tool for farmers. The participatory approach seems to be a fruitful method to improve entrepreneurial qualities of farmers.