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A.J.M. Janssen,  
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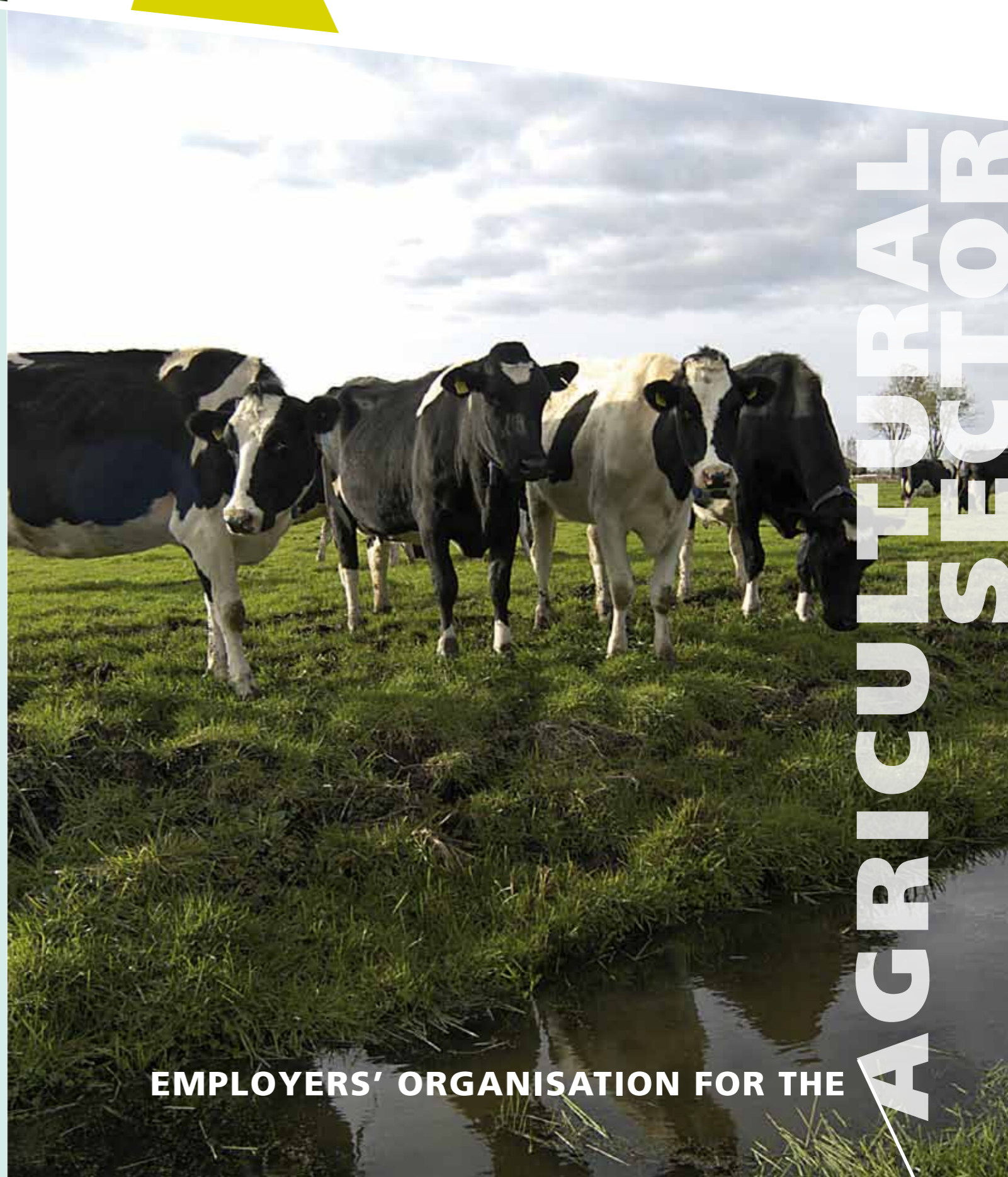
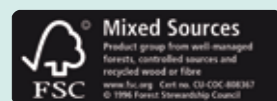
H. Huijbers,  
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S.J. Schenk,  
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AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATION FOR THE



## THE ADDED VALUE OF AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE

LTO Nederland (Dutch Federation of Agricultural and Horticultural Organisations) is an entrepreneurs' and employers' organisation with added value for a sector with added value. LTO Nederland's three regional divisions, LTO Noord, ZLTO and LLTB, represent and support the economic and social interests of almost 50,000 farmers and growers. LTO Nederland successfully carries out its mission - the vast contribution that farmers and growers make to the national economy, employment, rural development and the environment has made the added value of Dutch agriculture and horticulture indisputable.

Dutch agriculture and horticulture are extraordinarily diverse and agricultural businesses cover a wide range of livestock and plant-cultivation sectors that include, for example, arable and dairy farming, bulb-growing, cultivation under glass, tree-growing and pig farming. LTO Nederland represents the majority of Dutch farmers and growers via its regional divisions, LTO Noord, ZLTO and LLTB. The fact that most Dutch farmers and growers are members emphasises the added value of the organisation and shows that LTO Nederland effectively represents their interests on a local, regional, national and international level.

### LTO NEDERLAND SAFEGUARDS THE BUSINESS INTERESTS OF FARMERS AND GROWERS

Agriculture is extremely important in the Netherlands. Overall, the agricultural sector makes up approximately 10 percent of the Dutch economy and provides work and income for more than 660,000 people. The sector has a strong international focus and accounts for almost twenty percent of the Netherlands' total export value (260 billion euros). This makes the Netherlands the third largest agricultural producer in the world after the United States and France.

The fact that Dutch agricultural products are in such high demand all over the world is not only due to the mild

climate, flat & fertile soil and favourable geographical location. Expertise, infrastructure, the food processing industry, commerce and logistics are all on an extremely high level in the Netherlands. For decades, Dutch agriculture has succeeded in maintaining its lead over international competitors by continually investing in the renewal of agricultural production chains.

Farmers and growers are full partners in the chain; their primary task is to produce food, flowers and plants with an optimum price/quality ratio using innovative, socially responsible and sustainable methods. They manage to do this exceptionally well, even in the light of increasing international competition. Despite tight profit margins, agricultural businesses have invested substantially in environmental protection and implemented improvements in animal welfare. The dynamic and market-driven approach of agricultural entrepreneurs is shown by the continual development of new products and production methods. Because approximately seventy percent of the surface area of the Netherlands is utilised or managed by farmers and growers, they are in a unique position to generate additional income by providing 'green services'; well-known examples in this respect are 'farm campsites' and the sale of fresh agricultural products from home. More and more agricultural entrepreneurs also manage to create added value for their businesses by providing recreation & care facilities and countryside preservation and water storage services.

### AGRICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS FORM THE FOUNDATION OF THE DUTCH AGRO-COMPLEX

The added value generated from the secondary activities of farmers and growers benefits the sustainability and profitability of the entire agro-complex. However, because the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, the amount of space available for agricultural activities must be continually watched over. A strong entrepreneurial and employers' organisation such as LTO Nederland is indispensable in this respect.

The pro-active and effective representation of interests that LTO Nederland strives to achieve has no boundaries. Administrators and policy specialists do everything in their power to influence municipal zoning plans, provincial/regional plans and central government policy in such a way to safeguard the future of agricultural entrepreneurs.

Because it is the agricultural sector's central employers' organisation, LTO Nederland is also represented in the Social and Economic Council (SER), the government's most important advisory body. The SER reviews government policy on national insurance contributions and tax issues (for example, the self-employed persons' allowance) and corporate income tax, innovation and the (administrative) easing of the tax and premium burden. The SER also gives advice on the financing of the EU agricultural policy and the future of rural areas. As an employers' organisation, LTO Nederland concludes collective bargaining agreements with trade unions for various groups within the agricultural sector.

### THE PROMOTION OF INTERESTS AND PROVISION OF SERVICES GO HAND IN HAND

In the socio-political arena in which LTO Nederland operates, optimum results are nearly always achieved by finding allies, forming coalitions and reaching compromises. Because national government policy is increasingly based on decisions made within a European framework, this not only applies to The Hague, but Brussels as well. Supported by specialists in areas such as spatial planning, labour, the environment, animal welfare and international trade, LTO Nederland's representatives promote Dutch agricultural interests on the Brussels lobbying circuit, the corridors of the European Parliament and in negotiations conducted within the framework of the WTO.

LTO Nederland supports the interests of agricultural entrepreneurs and provides a large number of additional

services for its members ranging from advice and commerce to real estate and insurance.

LTO Nederland has its own consultants and specialists who provide tailored advice for individual farmers and growers and help them make important decisions. Initiatives that benefit groups of entrepreneurs can be implemented on a project basis.

LTO Nederland frequently gives advice on, for example, business succession, changing to different products & production methods, expansion, specialisation, choosing & exploiting new business opportunities and business discontinuation. LTO Nederland also functions as a buyers' cooperative and helps save farmers and growers hundreds of euros each year.

In addition, LTO Nederland's informative website, its weekly magazine 'Nieuwe Oogst' (New Harvest) and trade journals 'Veehouderij' (Livestock Farming), 'Gewas en Tuinbouw' (Crops and Horticulture) are important sources of information for the members of LTO Noord, ZLTO and LLTB.

#### LTO: more than the sum of its parts

As an umbrella organisation comprising LTO Noord, ZLTO and LLTB, LTO Nederland is more than the sum of its parts. Thanks to its efficient network of administrators and policy specialists, LTO Nederland is able to tackle issues that transcend agricultural or regional interests on a national or international level.

- LTO Noord operates in the 9 provinces north of the major rivers of the Netherlands and has branches in Deventer (head office), Drachten and Haarlem.
- ZLTO covers Noord-Brabant, Zeeland and the southern part of Gelderland and has offices in Tilburg and Goes.
- LLTB covers Limburg and is based in Roermond.