

Regional platforms for green care farming in the Netherlands

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Abstract: *According to the Farm Structure Survey (annual farm data collection) the number of green care farms in the Netherlands grew rapidly from 372 in 2003 to 638 in 2008. From 1998 till 2008 the so-called ‘national support centre for green care farming’ was active as a platform for the development of the sector. At the same time, in many regions green care farmers organized themselves in regional platforms. Such regional platforms for green care farms can have a wide array of roles varying from coordination of client allocation to farms, support in finding finances for care activities, to facilitation of study groups among green care farmers. We hypothesized that roles and structure of regional green care platforms, which differ widely between regions, affect the development of green care farming in the region. The mere existence of a platform makes it easier for farmers to start with care farming, and the role and structure of a platform affect, directly or indirectly, the inclusion or exclusion of care farms in the platform. In order to check our hypothesis we studied the relationship between regional platforms and the development of green care farms for three regions in the Netherlands. We found that regional platforms play an important role in the participation of green care farmers in networks and social activities and therefore in the professionalization of green care farms. In addition, regional platforms influence routes of financial compensation of farm care and ways of client allocation. However, we could not observe a significant effect on client occupation rates nor on income levels.*

Keywords: *farm/client coordination, client occupancy, financial resources, farmers participation.*

Introduction

Green care farming has been defined in several ways (e.g. Dekker, 1999; Hassink et al., 1999; Hassink and Trip, 2000; National Support Centre Agriculture and Care, 2001). In the present study we follow the definition given by Van Schaik (1997, p. 20) who explicitly stated: “*On a care farm there is a money flow from agricultural production as well as from care activities. When both money flows are present and there is a connection between both activities we speak of a care farm*”. Agricultural activities are crop or animal farming or horticulture, while care activities can be day care, weekend care, living on the farm or socio-professional reintegration. In this paper people who receive care on a care farm are called clients.

In the Netherlands green care farming has gone through a fast development in the last decade. Between 1998 and 2008 green care farming as a sector had its own governmental subsidized national support centre to support and promote green care farming in the Netherlands and to professionalize the sector. However, to support the development and societal embedding of green care farming at a more regional level green care farmers’ platforms developed at a regional level as well. With the term ‘regional’ we refer to the level of Dutch provinces or parts of provinces. In some cases such regional platforms arose from farmers’ platforms around multifunctional farming (Meerburg et al., 2009), in other cases platforms were initiated by formerly unorganised green care farmers. These regional platforms had other goals than the national support centre.

In 2009 the national support centre for green care farming had to end its activities because its financial support was terminated. The ministries that subsidized the national support centre stopped the subsidy and wanted the sector itself to pay for the activities of the support centre. Some of these

activities, like taking care of the care farm-database, were taken over by other organizations. At the moment a number of active organizations in the field of green care farming, such as the national farmers' union and some regional platforms of green care, are trying to set up a new national platform, but this appears to be a slow and difficult process. Hence, looking at the landscape of green care farming in the Netherlands one sees a still very weak central organisation while the decentralized, regional platforms have grown strong and play important roles in their parts of the country. Regional platforms can play a role in client allocation, financial sourcing and/or organising farmers' study groups, depending on the needs of green care farms in the region.

Earlier studies about green care farming and the process to start and exploit a green care farm were published by a.o. Hassink and Trip (2000) and Van der Ploeg et al. (2002). In these studies there was no focus on the influence of regional platforms. The present paper describes the interaction between platforms and green care farmers in some regions of the Netherlands. We start with describing the national situation in three regions of care farming. Then results of a study among green care farms from three different regions – with different structures and functions of the relevant regional platforms – are presented.

Material and methods

Data were collected in 2007. Three regions with different types of care farming platforms were selected: the provinces Gelderland, North-Holland and South-Holland. These regions were chosen because the client to farm coordination and as a result of that the financial compensation for the farms differed. The national support centre counted in 2006 76 care farms in North Holland, 75 care farms in South Holland and 145 care farms in Gelderland. Within each region 15 green care farms that participated in the regional platform were selected for inclusion in the study to have a representative group of farms. A total of twenty farms appeared to be willing to participate: six in Gelderland, seven in North-Holland and seven in South-Holland. The twenty participating care farms were consulted by means of a questionnaire, focussing on farm characteristics, process to start the care farm, human resources, clients and finance of the care on the farm, economic situation, effects of the care farms and influence of nature and landscape management.

The collected data from the survey were used for generating specific information concerning the relation between regional care farming and the type of regional platform. General data on the farms were derived from the Farm Structure Survey (FSS). The Farm Structure Survey includes all agricultural enterprises with a size of at least three ESU (European Size Units) which is a measure of the economic size of a farm business based on the gross margin imputed from standard coefficients for each commodity on the farm.

Dutch situation

In 1998 75 care farms and in 2008 638 care farms were registered in the Farm Structure Survey (Berkhout and van Bruchem, 2009). Care is mostly provided on dairy farms and on farms with sheep, goats or beef cattle (see Table 1). Only on farms with horticulture there is an increase in number between 2005 and 2007. It is not clear why there is an increase in number and what kind of farms stopped.

Table 1. Agricultural production (> 3 ESU) on care farms between 2003 - 2007.

Production	2003	2005	2007
Crop farms	26	29	37
Dairy farms	111	193	196
Sheep, goat and beef farms	105	135	185
Poultry or pig farms	21	31	36
Horticulture	58	73	65
Other agriculture production	51	81	86

Source: Roest et al., 2009

The care that is provided on care farms in the Netherlands can be financed in three ways:

Firstly, finances to the green care farm can come directly from the national health care reimbursement system via a so-called ‘care in kind’ construction within the framework of the General Act for Exceptional Medical Expenses (Algemene Wet Bijzondere Ziektekosten; AWBZ), which deals with the financing of long-term and chronic care. For this purpose, green care farms need to meet certain requirements and receive an official AWBZ-acknowledgement or ‘accreditation’. This can be achieved by the green care farm itself but also in a collective way by a regional platform. When a client get care in kind the client gets directly care and never sees any money.

Secondly, finances can come from the clients themselves, who pay the green care farmers directly from their Personal Budgets. Clients can get these Personal Budgets as another kind of reimbursement in the framework of the abovementioned AWBZ, and thus as an alternative for ‘care in kind’. A Personal Budget allows clients to purchase their own care, without any specific requirements.

Thirdly, finances can come from care institutions, green care farms have an agreement with. Many green care farms make agreements with care institutions to offer a specific type of (day) care to their clients. Financial compensation for this service is negotiated between farmer and care institution.

Typology of regional platforms

Regional care farming platforms have developed in different ways in the Netherlands. Some regional platforms have been established with the purpose to facilitate the financing of, and client allocation on, care farms for clients who chose for the ‘care in kind’-construction (such platforms may have a collective AWBZ-accreditation for their members). Other platforms aim to formulate study groups and provide information to green care farmers. In some provinces the development of regional platforms for green care farmers has been stimulated by a provincial subsidy, for example via a so-called Regional Development Program (RDP), or by an European subsidy in order to achieve a stronger representation of green care farming on a regional level (Heymann et al., 1999; Ketelaars et al., 2002; Oomen, 2002).

The present study focused on the role of regional platforms with regard to client allocation on care farms, financial compensation and network activities, like participation in study groups, among care farms in the regions. The regional platforms: BEZIG in Gelderland, Landzijde in North-Holland, and Den Hâneker/Buitenkans in South-Holland were studied. In South Holland there are two different regional platforms but they work within the same region and with sometimes the same farms. Den Hâneker has its origins in nature conservation and Buitenkans is an advisory organisation for farmers and entrepreneurs in the country side.

To characterize the platforms we distinguish the influence of the regional platform and the influence of individual green care farms on client allocation and financial flows. The regional platform can have a minor (expressed by r) or major (expressed by R) role in client allocation and financial flows (see Fig. 1). A platform with an R has an AWBZ accreditation which implies that money flows from the health care system to care farms are regulated by the regional platform. This means that the regional platform receives the money for ‘care in kind’ and gives this to the farms for the provided care. With an r the regional platform only brings clients in contact with farms. Then money flows go to the farm via other routes (Personal Budgets, an own AWBZ-accreditation, or a financial agreement with a care institution) without involvement of the regional platform.

Care farms themselves can have a minor (expressed by c) or major (expressed by C) role in financial flows and client allocation as well. It is also possible that both the regional platform and the green care farm have an important role in the client allocation and financial flow. In this situation the farm receives clients from the regional platform and besides that has its own contacts with clients or care institutions.

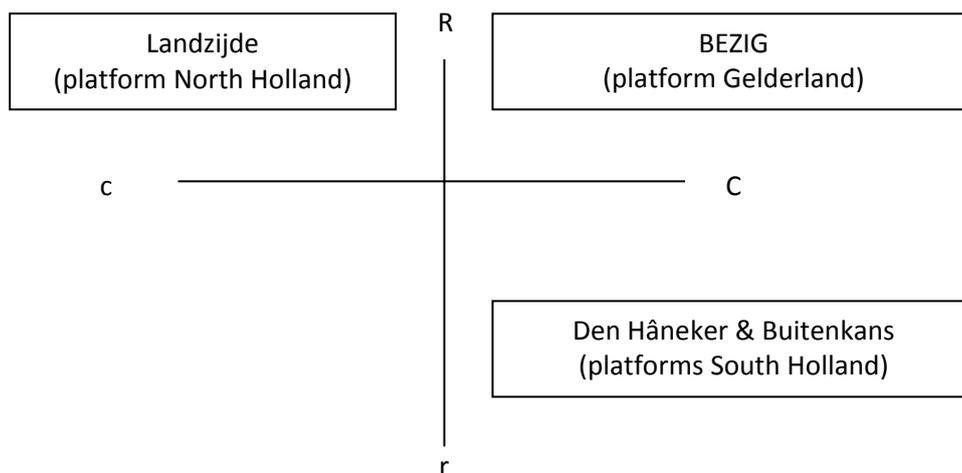


Figure 1. Typology regional platforms, R/r = regional platform, C/c = care farm (y-axis importance of the role of regional platforms in financial flows and client allocation, x-axis importance of the role of green care farms in financial flows and client allocation. Capital = important role, small = minor role).

Type Rc, Landzijde

In the province of North-Holland the regional platform Landzijde (foundation) is active. In 2007 around 70 green care farms were connected to Landzijde. Landzijde is a strong central actor in client allocation and financial flows within green care farming in North Holland. It has a collective AWBZ accreditation, attracts clients with an indication for ‘care in kind’ and is in close contact with care institutions as well. Landzijde has a central office with a care coordinator who facilitates the placement of clients with an indication for ‘care in kind’ on participating green care farms. Also financial compensation is received via Landzijde (see Fig. 2). The client never sees any money, because the care is provided in kind. Green care farms connected to Landzijde with a contract are hardly active in attracting clients with personal budgets or from care institutions themselves. As the farms see Landzijde as a care institution they filled in the survey that they receive clients from a care institution.

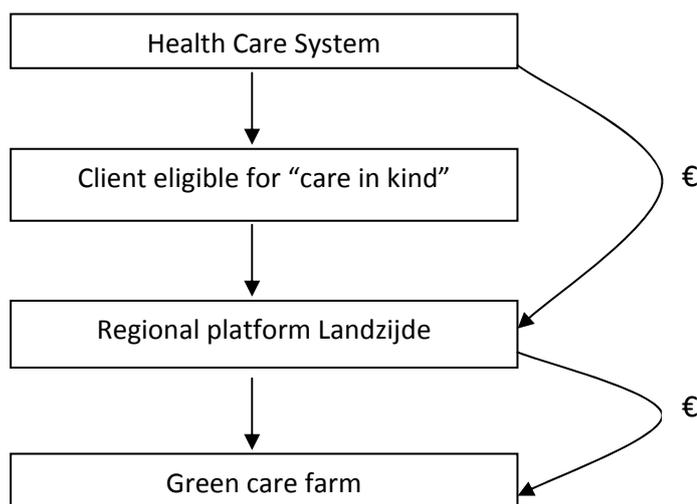


Figure 2. Client allocation and financial flows for the platform Landzijde in North-Holland.

Type rC, Den Hâneker & Buitenkans

In the province South-Holland the regional platforms Den Hâneker and Buitenkans are active. Den Hâneker has its origins in agriculture landscape management. At the time of the survey neither of the platforms did have an AWBZ-accreditation. Buitenkans is an expertise centre where care farms can get advice. Both platforms have as main role the support and coordination of contacts between clients

and care institutions at the one side and green care farms at the other side (see Fig. 3). The green care farms themselves are responsible to attract clients and to organize financial compensation. In addition, Den Hâneker and Buitenkans offer the possibility to support green care farms with advice with clients who have a personal budget.

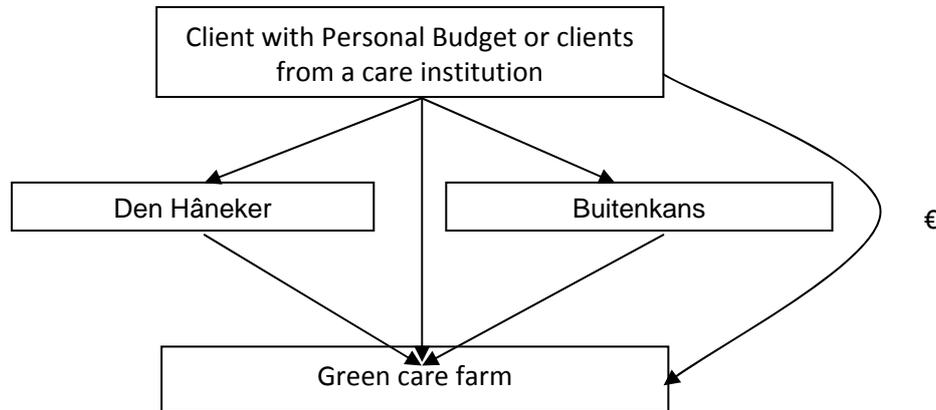


Figure 3. Client allocation and financial flows for the platforms Den Hâneker/Buitenkans in South-Holland.

Type RC, BEZIG

In the province Gelderland the platform BEZIG is active. In 2007 around 40 green care farms were connected to BEZIG. BEZIG has a union with its own AWBZ-accreditation (hence R). It thus offers participating care farms the possibility to provide “care in kind”, meaning that clients with an indication for “care in kind” can receive care on a care farm which is paid by BEZIG (see Fig. 4). However, green care farms connected with BEZIG are responsible for their own client allocation (hence C); the platform BEZIG only provides some administrative support. So when a client with an indication for “care in kind” goes to a care farm, the care farm has to go to BEZIG to get the financial compensation for the client. As a result care farms joining BEZIG also have clients with a personal budget or clients from a care institution besides the “care in kind” clients. On an average, the ratio of the clients with “care in kind”, clients with a personal budget and clients from a care institution is respectively 10%, 30 – 40% and 50 – 60% on the farms of BEZIG.

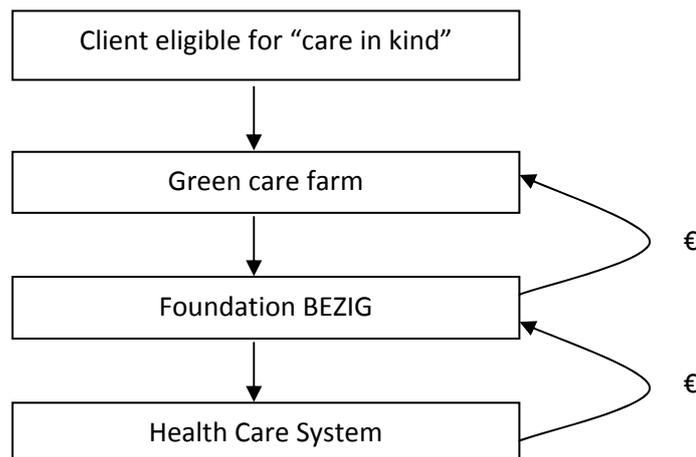


Figure 4. Client allocation and financial flows for the platform BEZIG in Gelderland.

Agriculture on care farms

The green care farms of Landzijde (Rc) have the largest farm size, with a range from 33.6 to 155.4 ESU/farm and a total area between 27.0 and 53.0 hectares. Those of BEZIG (RC) are the smallest (see Table 2). Of all farms studied, 12 produce in a conventional way and eight organically; four out of

seven are conventional in North-Holland, five out of seven are conventional in South-Holland and three out of six are conventional in Gelderland.

All farms involved use agricultural farm activities to provide day care. On three of the farms part of daily agricultural farm activities are done by subcontractors. This can be a result of providing care on the farm and there is not enough time left to do the agricultural activities.

Table 2. Range of farm characteristics of green care farms in the study (between brackets mean).

Parameter	Rc (Landzijde, North- Holland, n = 7)	rC (Den Hâneker/ Buitenkans, South- Holland, n=7)	RC (BEZIG, Gelderland, n=6)
ESU/farm	33.6 – 155.4 (79.3)	32.1 – 139.6 (65.1)	5.1 – 107.1 (54.5)
Total hectares/farm	27.0 – 53.0 (38.0)	0.3 – 69.0 (33.3)	0.8 – 36.0 (15.4)
FTE ¹ agricultural farm activities/farm	0.9 – 4.8 (1.0)	1.7 – 3.0 (1.2)	1.1 – 3.5 (1.1) ²

¹ FTE means fulltime-equivalent. ² n = 5, data of one farm is not available.

Client occupation on care farms

The provided care on the green care farms studied varies from just one or two clients one day a week to groups of 10 clients who come five days a week to the farm. Green care farms of Den Hâneker/Buitenkans have the highest number of clients coming to the farms, with a dispersion of 6 to 18 clients per week (see Table 3). The care farms of BEZIG have the lowest occupancy rate with 18.8 to 81.3%.

Table 3. Range of farm characteristics of green care farms in the study (between brackets mean).

Parameter	Rc (Landzijde, North Holland, n = 7)	rC (Den Hâneker & Buitenkans, South Holland, n=7)	RC (BEZIG, Gelderland, n=6)
Number of week-days with clients per farm	1.0 – 6.0 (3.3)	1.0 – 5.0 (2.9)	2.0 – 5.0 (3.7)
Total number of clients per farm per week	1 – 14 (7.0)	6 – 18 (9.8) ¹	1 – 7 (4.0)
Available client places per farm per week	1 – 30 (14.4)	6 – 54 (24.7)	5 – 50 (25.4)
Occupied client places per farm per week	1 – 30 (12.0)	5 – 33 (16.1)	2 – 32 (13.6)
Occupancy rate (%)	63.6 – 100.0 (86.4)	50.0 – 100.0 (72.4)	18.8 – 81.3 (46.9)

¹ n = 6.

Finance of care activities

Financial sources, budget and/or funding, for the green care farms are given in Table 4. Care farms used the financial compensation to provide food and drinks for the clients. In addition 15 care farms regarded the financial compensation to pay for the family labour and use of the location.

Table 4. Number of clients and revenues per source of financial compensation and annual income from care activities (between brackets mean).

Financial source	Rc (Landzijde, North Holland, n = 7)		rC (Den Hâneker & Buitenkans, South Holland, n=7)		RC (BEZIG, Gelderland, n=6)	
	N	Income	N	Income	N	Income
Personal Budget (€/client day)	2	25.0 (25.0)	6	22.5 – 50.0 (38.4)	5	25.0 – 112.0 (45.3)
From care institution (€/client day)	5	25.0 (25.0)	5	20.0 – 32.5 (23.9)	4	7.5 – 30.0 (21.1)
Care in kind (€/client day)	1	25.0 (-)	0	-	1	43.0 (-)
Total annual income from care k€/year/farm	7	2.5 – 48.8 (30.0)	7	13.5 – 113.9 (51.2)	6	1.5 – 131.9 (49.7)

In North-Holland five care farms only receive clients from Landzijde, one receives also clients with a personal budget and one only receives clients with a personal budget. In South-Holland none of the care farms receive clients with “care in kind”, one only receives clients with a personal budget and four farms have clients with a personal budget as well as clients from a care institution. Data from one farm in South Holland regard the clients is missing. In Gelderland one farm receives clients from all the ways, so with personal budgets, care institution and “care in kind”. Two farms only receive clients with a personal budget, one only receives clients from a care institution and two farms receive clients with a personal budget and from a care institution. One possibility that care farms from BEZIG did not used the construction of “care in kind” could be that this was just a small amount of care for 2007 that BEZIG could provide.

Influence of a regional platform on the development of care farms

Major problems during start and exploitation of care farms experienced by care farmers are given in Table 5. Problems with transportation of clients tended to differ between regional platforms; care farms of BEZIG do not report any problems with client transportation. Within Landzijde (Rc) lack of clients and transportation of clients are mentioned by most farmers as a problem, within Den Hâneker & Buitenkans (rC) lack of cooperation of professional care and of policy makers are most mentioned and within BEZIG (RC) no cooperation with care institutions is the most mentioned problem. These problems can have a negative outcome for the exploitation of the care activities on the farms.

Table 5. Problems mentioned during start and exploitation of the care farm in number of farms, 2007.

Problems	Rc (Landzijde, North Holland, n = 7)	rC (Den Hâneker & Buitenkans, South Holland, n=7)	RC (BEZIG, Gelderland, n=6)
Lack of cooperation of professional care	2	5	3
Lack of cooperation of policy makers	2	5	2
No cooperation with care institutions	2	3	5
Lack of clients	4	3	2
Transportation of clients	2	4	0
No problems faced	3	0	1

In order to professionalize green care, one of the tasks at the regional level is to enlarge the expertise of care farmers (Kattenbroek and Hassink, 2003; Ferwerda-van Zonneveld et al., 2008). This can be established by offering courses and by sharing experiences among care farmers in study groups. Participation of care farmers in networks and social activities is given in Table 6.

Table 6. Participation in network and social activities in number of farms, 2007.

Network and social activities of care farmers	Rc (Landzijde, North Holland, n = 7)	rC (Den Hâneker & Buitenkans, South Holland, n=7)	RC (BEZIG, Gelderland, n=6)
Receiving interested visitors at the farm	4	5	4
Providing information about green care farming to interested people ¹	6	5	1
Meetings and activities with other care farmers ²	4	4	1
Participation in educational programmes provide by the regional platform or other organization ³	3	0	0

The provision of information about care farms differs significantly between platforms. The care farms connected with BEZIG (RC) hardly spread any information. There is also a difference between platforms with regard to organizing meetings among care farmers. Landzijde (Rc) and Den Hâneker & Buitenkans (rC) offer the possibility to participate in study groups. In the platforms different forms of

education are offered. Landzijde (Rc) offers care farmers the possibility to join a course developed by Groenhorst College Dronten.

The financial sources of the care farms are listed in Table 7. Care farms may have more than one financial source. Farms in Landzijde (Rc) predominantly have “care in kind” as a financial source, while farmers in the other platforms receive their revenues from personal budgets or via care institutions. The total number of clients does not match with the number of clients in Table 3 because some clients come more days per week on the farms. So both Tables need to be seen separate from each other.

Table 7. Financial source per region.

	Rc (Landzijde, North Holland, n = 7)	rC (Den Hâneker & Buitenkans, South Holland, n=7)	RC (BEZIG, Gelderland, n=6)
Number of clients per week on all the farms in the region			
Personal budget	9	25	12
Care institution	30	31	11
Care in kind	8	0	3
No compensation	0	3	0
Total number of clients	47	59	26

Discussion

Networks play an important role in the professionalization of care farming. Earlier studies concluded that networks are needed to have a better client allocation and imbedding of green care farms in the care sector (Elings et al., 2004; Ferwerda-van Zonneveld et al., 2008 Kattenbroek and Hassink, 2003; Ketelaars et al., 2002; Oomen, 2002). We found that participation of care farms in networks can be stimulated by regional platforms. Platforms can arrange contacts with the health care sector of which the platforms members can have their benefits. Our results showed that green care farms of Landzijde (Rc) were the most active in networks and social activities. This may be because Landzijde has an AWBZ-accreditation and needs a certain level of professionalism of the care that is provided by care farms, which in turn requires a minimal level of education, networking, and knowledge exchange.

One of the problems faced in the daily practice of care farms is that of limited possibilities of transport of clients to the farm and back. In earlier research this problem also was mentioned (Ketelaars et al., 2002; Roest, 2005). When it is difficult to get the clients on the farm this also has an effect on the client occupation. Striking is that care farms in urban regions, such as the green care farms of Landzijde, also experience problems with transportation.

The type of financial compensation that green care farms receive is influenced by the regional platforms. Green care farms of Landzijde (Rc) received predominantly financial compensation via the “care in kind” route. To receive this compensation, the green care farm has to follow the rules and regulations set by Landzijde based on its AWBZ accreditation. For some green care farms this relative lack of freedom can be a threshold to join a platform like Landzijde. Within the platform of BEZIG (RC), which also has an AWBZ accreditation, there was however a limited money flow via “care in kind”. Maybe this is caused by the fact that BEZIG does not mediate in client allocation; green care farm who are members of BEZIG themselves are responsible to have enough clients on their farms. The green care farm members of Den Hâneker & Buitenkans could not receive clients with “care in kind”, at the moment of the survey, because these platforms did not have an AWBZ-accreditation. The type of regional platform thus influences both the financial compensation routes of green care farms and the ways of client allocation. This partly influences the occupancy rate and the income of green care farms although other factors, such as the success of personal efforts of care farmers, influence this rate as well. It is remarkable that green care farm members of Landzijde with a high client occupancy (85% and on four farms even 100%) stated they experienced a lack of clients. Apparently, farmers’ personal experiences do not always correspond with objective observation.

It is the combination of both the collective actions of regional platforms and the efforts of individual care farmers that creates a professionalized and economically successful care farm sector.

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