

Field tour May 29

3. Food forests nearby and in Nijmegen



Ooijpolder

We start with a brief tour across De Ooijpolder, the river plane near Nijmegen, with nowadays its diverse structure of hedges, trees, other natural elements and foot paths, covering 5% of the agricultural area. This natural and recreational structure has been developed since the year 2000 to connect natural reserves and caused a huge increase in biodiversity on farmland. Remarkable and unique: farmers get paid for the landscape elements and hiking trails. The payments are equal to the revenues they earn with their commercial agricultural products; and contracts are long lasting, i.e. 30 years.

In De Ooijpolder is a great potential for agroforestry. Some farmers are thinking about a transition in that direction, but first steps still turn out to be difficult.

Ketelbroek

Food forest [Ketelbroek](#), seven years old, 2.4 ha, De Horst, 20 km from Nijmegen.

Farmers: Wouter van Eck and Pieter Jansen.

General: The oldest and most developed food forest of the Netherlands.

Integration: Wouter has consciously designed his food forest with more than 200 edible plant species on 1.6 ha (plus 0.8 ha nature). He collected the plants all over the world in regions in the same climatic zones as in the Netherlands. The forest is developing much faster than expected and since two years it is yielding leaves, berries and shoots.

Benefits: The food forest is still an experiment and is yielding at the moment mainly information about plant development and how plants interact with each other and with the soil. The biodiversity (birds, insects, butterflies, mammals) is booming even compared to a neighbouring nature area. The economic yield is starting: every Monday a chef is collecting specialties for his top-restaurant.

Contribution: The Ketelbroek food forest is showing how diverse, fast and exuberant nature can develop. The site is an ‘arc de diversite’, it inspires everybody who wants to start natural food farming or agroforestry. The management is completely the opposite of conventional farming; that makes it for traditional farmers sometimes difficult to understand.

Must see: The huge diversity of food plants on such a small space is wonderful. The interrelations between plants and the soil is fascinating, the rate of natural development is worth to experience.

We use our lunch near Ketelbroek, of course enjoying some of the specialties of the Food forest.

Agroforestry in Nijmegen

In the afternoon we will have a look at some agroforestry projects within the city of Nijmegen. Our last stop is Neerbosch (also in Nijmegen) where will visit an ecological vegetable garden and a starting food forest. In this area a water storage system will be developed, in combination with woody elements and food production.