



RURALIZATION

BELGIUM & NETHERLANDS



Farming

- Both Dutch and Belgian agriculture are relatively large-scale, productive and efficient, although differences within these countries exist. On a NUTS-II level, the average economic farm size is above the European average in all of their regions. In both countries, more than 90% of agricultural employment, including that of farm owners, is founded on farms with a standard output above 25.000 euros.
- On a European scale, the average prices for arable land per hectare are also relatively high in both countries. The Netherlands (€68,197) have substantially higher prices than Belgium (€44,974). Farmers are seen as agricultural entrepreneurs running family businesses. 92% of Dutch farms are owned by these last.



New entrants

- The farmland mobility in both the Netherlands and Belgium is relatively low, which makes it hard to access land.
- Especially smaller farmers and new entrants face the barrier to access required land to create a sustainable business, because land is even transferred beneath the actual market value to family members or to farmers who can afford higher prizes, due to advantages through marginal costs and benefits of enlargement or funds for novel artificial land uses. This may also stimulate the aging of the farming population and makes it less attractive for young people to enter farming or to succeed parents on the family farm.



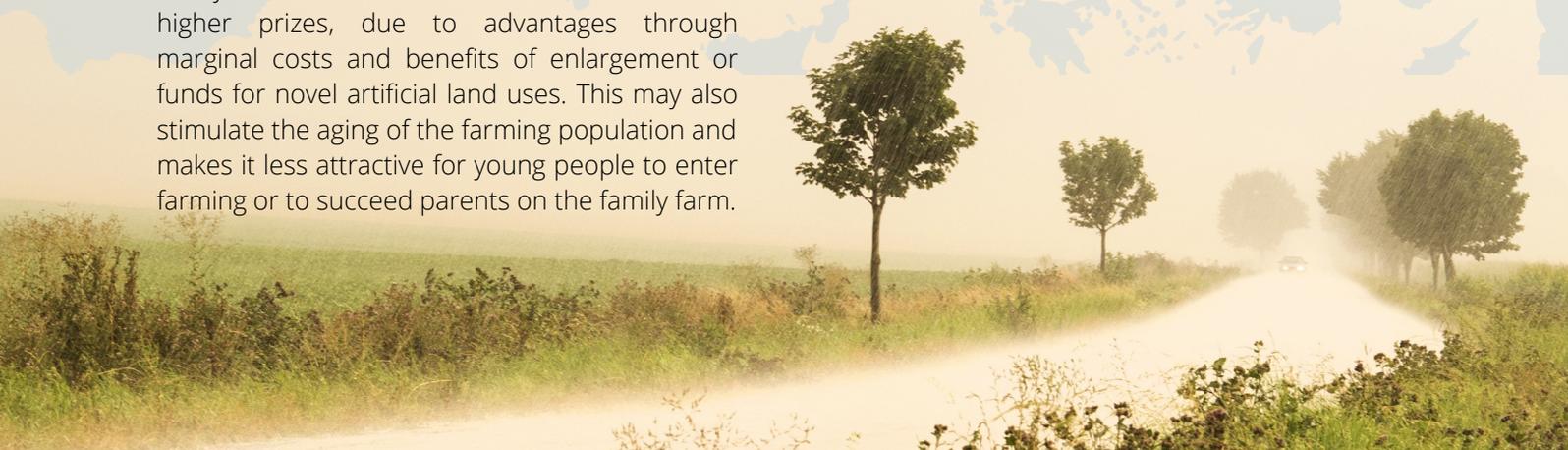
Demographics

- Both the Netherlands and Belgium deal with depopulation in many of their predominantly rural and intermediate regions.
- The population in both countries is generally younger in predominantly urban than in predominantly rural regions. In Belgium, the median age of population seems to a lesser extent related to the urban/rural typology than in the Netherlands. For example, the population in rural Wallonia stays very young, which is an interesting exception in Europe.
- In both Belgium and the Netherlands, research shows that highly-educated young people relatively often leave rural regions and move to cities. This process leads eventually to an overrepresentation of older and lower-educated people among the population of rural regions and therewith a lack of human capital, which makes the regions less attractive for businesses.

Policy



- The Dutch and the Walloon government are developing plans for a transition towards circularity to make agriculture reflect climate and nature protection goals.



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