

HET ZOETE LAND

General description of the SME

In 2013, Jessica Zwartjes and Marijtje Mulder took the initiative to start Het Zoete Land in the Leiden area in the Netherlands. Partly as a way to restore nature (indirectly through educating people about eating/ growing organic food), partly as a way to start working towards a food policy.

It is a CSA and is an activity of not-for-profit association Stichting Leiden Oogst which is a legal foundation. There is one assigned gardener as of March 1st 2015 and about 50 volunteers, mainly people who live in a circle of 10 minutes by bike from the site.

The garden has a multifunctional purpose including activities like social care, education, subsistence production, leisure and environmental benefits. Het Zoete Land aims to become an attractive place where people enjoy coming on foot, by bike or by boat. The place will offer a pick-your-own garden, a tearoom, natural play area for kids and walking routes.

Description of productive activities

The production area is 3200 m² in the open air and they are planning for a 75m² greenhouse.

They grow a variety of products organically. They grow more than 25 different vegetables, herbs and flowers ranging from coloured carrots, haricots verts, sweetcorn, coriander, chervil and edible flowers like nasturtium and cornflowers. They also grow a variety of small fruits like red currants, blueberries, white and black berries, gooseberries and raspberries.

People can donate to the foundation in order to fully participate in the garden and are informed on a weekly basis about what can be picked from the garden.

Besides production activities, they organise a variety of activities including educational services, community activities, social care services and recreation. The social care services are still informal and unpaid, for two young adults to get some working experience. About once a month, during the growing season, they organise public activities. For example at the opening of the growing season they had cake and tea, made scarecrows with children and gave tours around the garden.

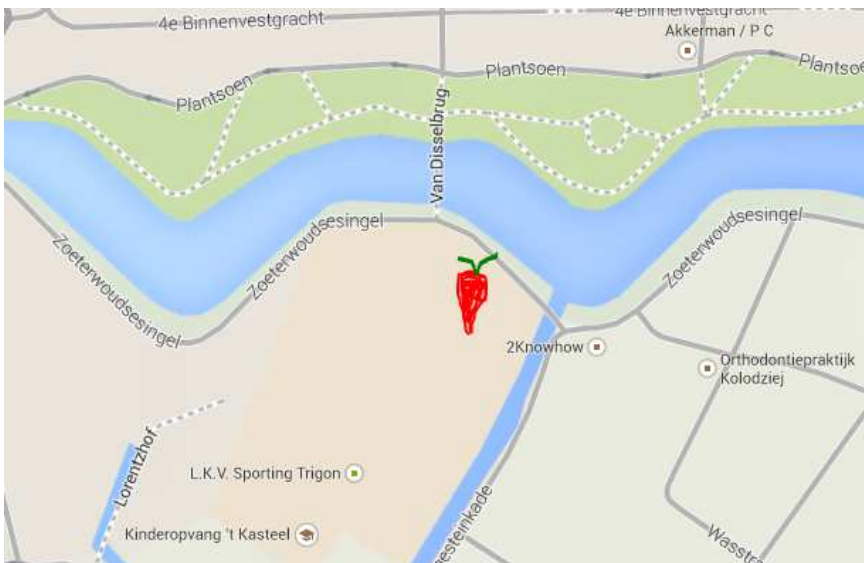
End May they participated in the 'Fete de la nature' with a picnic with music and a mobile crepe-baker.

Location and environmental factors

The garden is located in the historic city of Leiden, as part of a public park and is situated next to a sports club. The clubs' building is a 100 m. away and hosts a day-care centre where they can make use of a shed. On one side, the terrain faces the backyards of about 10 private houses. The garden is accessible by car, bike, and boat and on foot. The park is more than 100 years old, as are some of the houses. The neighbourhood has the most expensive houses of the city. Most clients are middle class and academically educated.

The soil and water from the canal are clean, there is some biodiversity in the park and gardens, and there is some windbreak against the cold eastern winds. The location has never been built up and in the direct surroundings the people from Leiden have grown their own food until the 19th century.

After intense consultation with the Municipality, they got a land use agreement. They can use the land, which is owned by the city, for free for 1 year but they are not allowed to sell any of the produce. The area is designated as public park.



The location of Het Zoete Land. Source: Het Zoete Land. Copyright © 2014



The location used to be grassland where homeless and youth would hang around. Source: Het Zoete Land. Copyright © 2014



The concept design plan. Source: Het Zoete Land. Copyright © 2014

Markets and marketing

Key participants Dairy farmer for compost	Key activities Production of vegetables, herbs and edible flowers Education services Recreational services	Value proposition Holistic and inclusive approach Combining participation, education and leisure with fun	Customer relations Volunteers Donation Self-pick	Market segments Local market and specifically local residents being young families and elderly
Cost categories Gardener/coordinator	Key resources Land, greenhouse space, permits and volunteers	Marketing channels Social media, website, newsletter	Revenue sources Yield shares, subsidies, donations	

Business Model Canvas

Key participants:

Het Zoete Land buys compost from a dairy farmer. They aim to close nutrient cycles but since they do not have any animals on site, they collaborate with an organic dairy farmer to partly realise a closed loop at local level. Furthermore, they try to get mulch from a regional nature reserve, as they have to take nutrient-rich material away from the site to get more biodiversity.

Value proposition:

Combining natural, personal, social and economic health.

Market segment:

Het Zoete Land is aimed at local residents of Leiden and specifically young families and elderly living in the surrounding area of the garden. These groups are above average represented in this area.

Revenue sources:

They use a kind of crowdfunding model called yield shares (oogstdeelnemers). The garden offers space for 100 yield shares. On a weekly basis, people are informed about the harvest and the amount per yield share. People can then come and pick their own harvest. For a donation of 180 euro you receive one yield share, this is sufficient to feed a one or two people household. For families they recommend to buy two yield shares.

They do not have any revenue from sales yet since they do not have a permit for selling. Possibilities to get subsidies include the public character of the park, as well as the possibility for people with special needs and their caretakers to come and work with them. Another initiative they like to develop is to engage elderly people from a care home nearby. They have also used subsidies on purchasing seeds, seedlings, compost and garden tools.



Conclusion

They believe their own personal involvement and knowledge are crucial for the success of the garden.

The biggest limitation is the lack of policy/ vision of the city council regarding urban farming and this piece of land in particular. The support of the city council would make a big difference in the development of the initiative.

Financially the garden is mainly supported by the yield-sharers. As of October 2015 already a 100 people participate, that will be enough to make sure the gardenerer/farmer can keep doing this work. If the council should stop the permit, they think they have enough participants, experience and credibility to start a business elsewhere, with a selling permit.

Future developments are likely to focus on extending to a site with a selling permit and having more interns.

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