

## **Profile Alex Datema**

Alex Datema is 58 years old and is the Director of Food & Agricultural at Rabobank in the Netherlands. Additionally, he has been co-managing a dairy farm with 120 cows and 70 hectares of grassland in Groningen for 35 years. In his current role at the bank, he is committed to promoting a sustainable future for agriculture in the Netherlands. He collaborates with the 5 regions in the Netherlands within the Rabobank to shape and implement the bank's agricultural policy and regional approach, both within and outside the bank.

Previously, Datema worked for over seven years as the chairman of Farmer&Nature, an association dedicated to agricultural nature management and nature-inclusive farming. He is a member of the Scientific Council for Integral Sustainable Agriculture and Food and a co-initiator of the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery. At a young age, Datema served as vice-chairman of the Dutch Agricultural Youth Contact (NAJK) for two years, where he gained his first leadership experience.

Alex Datema always found it important to keep up with developments in agriculture. As a farmer, it is also your responsibility; you are closely connected to nature and must take good care of it. That is also the reason why Alex joined Rabobank, to make an impact on this issue.

Alex Datema lives with his family on a farm in Groningen.

## **What are the three biggest challenges facing the European agricultural sector?**

The three biggest challenges facing the European agricultural sector are:

The first 2 challenges are related to climate change.

### **1. Water Quality and - Quantity**

**Water Quality:** Many European countries face pollution of water sources due to agricultural emissions, industrial pollution, and urban runoff. This affects the availability of clean drinking water and the health of ecosystems.

**Water Quantity:** Europe also experiences problems with water quantity, such as droughts and overexploitation of water resources. Due to climate change, the frequency of extreme weather events is increasing.

### **2. Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Agriculture is a significant emitter of greenhouse gases. The sector needs to adopt practices that reduce emissions and enhance carbon sequestration in soils to combat climate change. At the same time, our world population and food demands keep growing. This asks for agricultural practices that enhance sustainable use of land and water and improve (soil) biodiversity, while boosting their food productivity.

### **3. EU Agricultural Policies**

Changes in EU policies can impact farming practices, crop plans, yields, and prices. These policies also affect the broader food and agriculture supply chain. New regulations or policy shifts can require farmers to adopt different methods, which may involve additional costs or changes in their operations. This can affect their efficiency and productivity.

**A sustainable agricultural practice is impossible without subsidies?**

The Rabobank believes that a sustainable agricultural practice is possible without subsidies.

But sustainability must be rewarded in economic transactions. To achieve this, we focus on "True Value". Our concept of "True Value" refers to an economic model where the costs and benefits related to the environment, climate, health, and animal welfare are factored into the price of food.

This approach aims to ensure that sustainability and economic activities go hand in hand, promoting a balance between food production and the preservation of nature and the environment.

Additionally, you still need a government that pays farmers for the ecosystem services they provide.

However, this is not a subsidy, it is payment for a service.