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Wageningen University & Research: Fewer Greenhouse Gases Through Sustainable Agriculture And Forestry

By **Iednewsdesk** On **Feb 16, 2023**

Sustainable agriculture and forestry play an important role in solving climate change. Gert-Jan Nabuurs, a professor of European forest resources, writes about this in the latest IPCC report. 'We contribute to global talks on climate, but it is also important to look at what we can do in the Netherlands.'

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recent report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Take action faster

This was already the sixth time that he co-authored an IPCC report, but this time as the lead author of the chapter on Land Use and Agriculture. 'The main message is: emissions continue to rise, so we need to take action even faster.' The IPCC report concludes that almost one third of the solutions can be found in a broad-based set of measures in agriculture and forestry. We also test and implement this locally within the EU, says Nabuurs. The Vegetation, Forest and Landscape Ecology Team, of which he is a member, collaborates in a European context. For example, the European Forest Institute has an EU-sponsored project, SUPERB, which restores thousands of hectares of forest in Europe and plants more varied species, but above all, it also learns from the particularly difficult processes to achieve this.

Climate-smart forests

Nabuurs considers it essential to see what we can do nearby. For example, Wageningen University & Research was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality to work on another project about Climate-Smart Forestry and Nature Management. In pilot studies, researchers examine how best to adapt our forests to climate change. Some tree species like the Norway spruce, for example, have been found to suffer a great deal from climate change and others less so, for example the maple. These and other deciduous tree species are now being planted more often. Forestry can also play a role in the supply of construction materials, Nabuurs emphasizes. 'The use of timber as a construction material ensures the prolonged capture of carbon dioxide.'

Firmly on the up

The Netherlands must also reduce the energy consumption of greenhouses, for example, by using LED lighting. Agriculture, which of course featured prominently in the news recently, has been tasked to reduce the amount of methane – particularly the volume emitted by livestock – for example, by way of a different feed or other livestock breeds.

Nabuurs knows that it is not so easy to change things in the agricultural sector around the world. 'There are millions of landowners with all kinds of conflicting preferences. What's more, the world's population is growing and food production must therefore increase.' Before the 2015 Climate Conference in Paris, his team consisted of only five staff, nowadays there are twenty. 'At that time we launched the idea of climate-smart forests and we have since been firmly on the up and have noticed that this also has an impact in common practice. Meanwhile, companies and major financial institutions are forced to go green and plant more forests. These trends will continue and, together with public funds and implementing organisations, this will lead to the much-needed additional capture of carbon dioxide.'

Wageningen University & Research