

NORTH SEA FARMERS: from experiment to movement

It all started with a single experiment at open sea, with no clue what to expect. Seven years later, North Sea Farmers have the ambition of building a sustainable seaweed sector together with 100 like-minded organisations.

THE EARLY DAYS

With the objective to set up a test site at open sea to experiment with seaweed, Ecofys, Hortimare and Stichting ATO started Stichting Noordzeeboerderij in 2012. However, due to declining subsidies and lacking results from the first project, no concrete activities ever arose from the foundation.

In January 2014 Job Schipper of Hortimare and Eef Brouwers of Ecofys asked Marcel Schuttelaar to discuss the challenges and opportunities of seaweed in the Netherlands once again. At that moment in time, there were no structural developments in the field, apart from a number of small pioneers such as Hortimare and Zeewaar. But all three of them felt momentum for seaweed. And to make sure not to miss any opportunities for the Netherlands, Job, Eef and Marcel decided to revive Noordzeeboerderij.

REVIVING NOORDZEEBOERDERIJ

Since Eef and Job had been involved in the establishment of the dormant Stichting Noordzeeboerderij in 2012, it was decided to revive the collaboration under that name. This consultation in January 2014 at the office of Schuttelaar & Partners is referred to as the founding of the Stichting Noordzeeboerderij in its current form with its founders: Marcel Schuttelaar, Eef Brouwers and Job Schipper.

In order for the initiative to get a jump start, the office of Schuttelaar & Partners facilitated Noordzeeboerderij in its first year with accommodation and support from its employees Koen van Swam and Marlies Draisma.

THE 'NEW' NOORDZEEBOERDERIJ

By 2020, six years into the Noordzeeboerderij adventure, it was time to critically reflect on the foundation and its brand. Noordzeeboerderij had become mostly internationally oriented and English was now the language of communication. Project partners and members are no longer mainly Dutch,

but come from all over Europe. The Noordzeeboerderij brand did not reflect its values, motives and inclusive character enough. Something needed to change. This is when Stichting Noordzeeboerderij transformed into North Sea Farmers. This new brand reflects a state of urgency. The ultimate ambition is to, with combined efforts, expertise and enthusiasm of the community and of all stakeholders, work towards climate action with seaweed.

GOAL AND CORNER STONES

The aim of the founders was to capitalize on the opportunities of seaweed in the Netherlands. Over the years, this goal has evolved into the current mission: As a community of businesses with a passion for seaweed, North Sea Farmers work towards positive climate impact. By growing a strong and sustainable seaweed sector, we aim to improve biodiversity, reduce carbon emissions and be part of the circular economy.

This goal includes a number of implicit **assumptions and characteristics** which form the basis of the way in which North Sea Farmers will achieve it. These assumptions and characteristics are explicitly spelled out below:

- A **strong** seaweed sector means:
 - that there are **sufficient opportunities for all players** in the value chain. To develop new activities in the field of seaweed and to be able to earn a decent income / realize turnover with their (intended) activities in the chain, and
 - the pursuit of an **innovative sector** where technological innovations and smart solutions are used to develop a sustainable seaweed

production system that is among the best in the world in terms of efficiency and product quality.

- A **sustainable** seaweed sector is pursued in the Netherlands and in Europe. For example by making existing chains more sustainable in terms of footprint (CO₂, land use, etc.), creating new sustainable chains to replace inherently unsustainable chains and enabling local circular production chains. In addition, these production systems must be able to function at least in balance with and, where possible, strengthen the relevant ecosystems.
- North Sea Farmers is and remains a **not-for-profit organization**. In essence, it is and will remain an organization that serves the purpose of developing a strong and healthy seaweed sector and thus contributing to the development of a sustainable and fair world. Commercial activities can be part of this, but the following points should never be forgotten:
 - The **activity directly supports the mission** of North Sea Farmers
 - The **activity competes as little as possible** with current activities of commercial parties in the seaweed sector and can never have this as a goal
 - **Any profits that arise from these activities will be used for the continuity** of the organization and / or to support (developments) in the seaweed sector. In line with the SBF Good Governance code, this will never be used for disproportionate remuneration of employees, advisors, Board, Supervisory Board members or Advisory Board members.