



YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

10 October 2018

EEMLANDHOEVE, BUNSCHOTEN-SPAKENBURG

The Youth Leadership Academy is an intensive, interactive one-day training, developed for an international and diverse group of young (to be) leaders within the agrifood system.

Agriterra, the Dutch Young Farmers Association (NAJK) and the National Cooperative Council (NCR) want to give a voice to young people in the Netherlands and abroad so that their vision and challenges are heard in order to contribute to a sustainable environment and a productive agri-food sector. They do this by creating awareness in regarding to the position of young people in cooperatives and the role they can take up, with the objective to invest in the future by creating space for youth.

To develop personal leadership skills and to unite in cooperatives is essential in this rapidly changing world of food and agriculture. At the roots of the agricultural sector lies the farming business. A large group of youngsters can be found either working on the farm or working with farmers on behalf of an agricultural cooperative.



THIS DAY WAS PART OF...

The 'Small Farmers, Big Deal' initiative connects Dutch entrepreneurs to professional farmer cooperatives in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Agriterra makes doing business easy by connecting you to ambitious cooperatives with sought-after commodities. Within the programme, Agriterra offers peer-to-peer advice from the top sector of Dutch agri & food industry and guarantees a safe and stable business climate.



The Youth Leadership Academy is a one-day training session for young talent from the Netherlands. The goal of the programme is to strengthen and develop personal leadership skills of the current and future leaders within the agri-food system. This year's theme of the Youth Leadership Academy is farm succession, emphasising on the social and emotional aspects you may encounter as a successor. On the basis of practical case studies and workshops, participants are trained in leadership and communication skills that come in handy during a succession process within families. In addition, participants will get inspired by keynote speakers, experts and young entrepreneurial leaders from different countries.

The day started with an introduction of chairperson Hilke Jansen. She invited the participants to show personal leadership skills during the training, by participating actively and taking the opportunity to learn more about themselves. "Think about what you already know about yourself and about the things that you do not yet know. Today, try to find out more about what you do not know yet".

“Leadership is about being connected to your surroundings”

This introduction was followed by the keynote presentation of Cees van Rij, manager agri-advice at Agriterra. He kicked-off with a personal anecdote, taking the participants along his own journey of becoming the leader he is today. From growing up on a dairy farm and thinking about his future; whether this future might be on the farm or not. He emphasised the importance of leadership when making important decisions in your life.

The keyword in his speech was connection; in everything you do, connect with who you are and



with the person you want to become. "Leadership is about being connected to your surroundings" said Cees van Rij. Whether it is your direct neighbor or the sector you are working in. Moreover, think carefully about the following questions: "Who are you and what are your talents? Because you are obliged to make use of these talents".

Finally, Cees van Rij linked his story to the agricultural sector by stating that "farmer's organisations and cooperatives are an important tool for farmers to let their voice be heard. They are mechanisms to pull resources, knowledge and experiences." He added that "farming is about having and taking the opportunity, about passion and about making a business out of farming. But knowing your talents is where it all starts".



In line with this statement, Jan Peter van Keep of Keep Company Coaching started with a first interactive session of the day, illustrated by some examples of well-known world leaders and the way they communicate. Jan Peter van Keep made a distinction between three dimensions of communication; knowledge, skills and respect. "Your success is highly determined by the way you are perceived by others and how you behave." Jan Peter encouraged the participants to put this statement into practice by asking each of them to use a few words to describe one person whom they liked to work with and to do the same for a person they did not like working with. Subsequently, the answers were categorised into *judgemental or subjective* on one hand and *descriptive or objective* on the other hand. This was done to show how people perceive others and how they interpret the way they communicate.

All participants got to fill in an online assessment to learn more about their own communication styles; this was not just to use for today but for all of them to use in the future, reflecting on their communication style and using this in the right way. As Jan Peter van Keep concluded: "successful communication is key in any situation".

The keywords leadership and communication came back throughout the day. Workshops were given by the Dutch centre of expertise for family businesses of Hogeschool Windesheim, focusing on norms, values and interests in the process of farm succession. Communication

between generations was spearheaded by Wilbert van den Bosch and Karlijn van der Velden of Dutch cooperative council NCR, whereas Andre Arfman en Sietse Draaijer gave a workshop on behalf of Dutch Young Farmers Association NAJK, talking about practicalities needed to keep in mind in the process of farm succession.

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The Youth Leadership Academy ended with a recap of the day and a take away message, which in this case was as follows: **developing personal leadership skills should be an ongoing process by gaining knowledge and experience on other perspectives.**

In this specific case, the participants became more aware of the importance of communication on different levels; between generations, as a professional and related to the very specific case of farm succession. This is another topic that attendants of the academy learned a lot about; especially when it comes to differences between succession processes and common practices across the globe. In that sense, leadership is about learning, gaining new insights and using these to build a better world. Or as Cees van Rij states, a better world starts with knowing who you are and becoming the best version of yourself.



Aung Kyaw Moe (29), Myanmar

"I want to encourage all the youth from my country to involve in the agricultural sector and to not leave the farm. Normally young people in my country go to Thailand. That is a big issue. I just want to encourage that they love the farm and involve in the farm. We have a lot of potential in Myanmar to become a more exporting country. I believe that I will be the one who will start as a young leader in my country. When I go back, I will share my knowledge about Agriterra, about the Netherlands, about my trip and also about the life of the farmers here to all the youth in Myanmar."



Alice Abigitije (27), Rwanda

"Being a young woman, I can help many other young people from my country to be successful in their life and help the women in our country on how to gain self confidence. This week was the best week I ever had in my life. It was fruitful, I learned a lot about how to be a good farmer and how to be a good leader. I shared some knowledge with other young farmers from here."

