

The Amsterdam Produce Show

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Thank you very much for the invitation.

I'm happy that I can share some thoughts with you on the benefits of increasing fruit & vegetable consumption.

I would like to tell you something about the environmental benefits of eating more fruit & vegetables. In the Netherlands this is becoming a major issue nowadays.

And I would like to share some thoughts with you about the way the retail sector and industry could try to entice the public to eat more fruits and vegetables.

I will talk about it from the perspective of my previous job and my previous experience. I was policy director for food and agro at Natuur&Milieu for the past seven years. Natuur&Milieu is the Dutch association for the protection of nature and the environment.

But now, to make it clear to you, and as already mentioned, I have started my own consultancy company.

So, if you think, he knows what he is talking about, I'm happy to give you my business card after the meeting.

Let's get back to the two main topics.

First I would like to share some thoughts on the environmental benefits of eating more fruit and vegetables. It's not only good for our own health to eat more fruit and vegetables. It's also good for the health of mother earth.

To understand the environmental benefits of fruits and vegetables it is important to know that a majority of the Dutch people are not eating enough fruit and vegetables according to the health standards of the the Netherlands Nutrition Centre (Voedingscentrum).

And - on the other hand - most Dutch eat almost twice as much meat (and dairy) products than is sound for them.

So: in the Netherlands we have to change our diet. We should eat much more fruit and vegetables. And we should eat fewer meat and dairy products.

And there are the environmental benefits at stake. Producing fruit and vegetables is less harmful for nature than producing fodder for livestock for the meat and dairy industries. I would like to give you some figures to illustrate this point.

- 1) **Livestock** alone are responsible for **20 – 25 percent** of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions. For fruit and vegetables it is just a tenth of that.
- 2) And that is still going down. To give you an example. The greenhouse industry is the only sector In the Netherlands that has achieved the CO2 gas reduction targets.
- 3) To produce meat farmers and factories use an enormous amount of water. They need **15,000 litres of water** to produce a kilo of beef. Instead of just 800 litres to produce a kilo of apples or broccoli.
- 4) And, to produce meat and dairy, farmers need a lot of land. 70% of our arable land is used to produce fodder to feed cattle. To produce a kilo of **beef you need 2000 square metres** of land. For a kilo of fruit and vegetables it is less than 5 m2 per kilo.

Overall it is five to ten times more efficient or sustainable to eat fruit and vegetables – and also beans and peas – than to eat meat (and dairy products).

So there is a great necessity to eat more fruit and vegetables. And to eat less meat. Especially because of the rapidly growing world population.

Part 2

And that brings me to the **second important topic** I would like to discuss with you. How to increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables? In brief - I would like to share some experiences with you on the flexitarian campaign of Natuur & Milieu.

To keep in mind, a flexitarian is someone who eats no meat at least one day a week. On that day he or she replaces the meat with vegetables or vegetarian burgers, for instance.

Our goal at Natuur&Milieu - five years ago - was to decrease the meat and dairy consumption and to increase the consumption of plant -based nutrients. Because that's better for the environment, as I explained to you earlier.

Five years ago we decided not to try to **lecture** the Dutch public about the need to eat more vegetables and less meat. Not to tell them – in a typical traditional NGO way - that meat consumption is not good. And that the public should stop eating it.

No, in a quite innovative way at that time for an NGO, we decided to **entice** the people to eat more fruit and vegetables. I started a campaign in which we told our followers that there was already a large group of people that ate no meat for one day a week. We suggested that they already belonged to that group of people. We gave them free products to try. New recipes with no meat in it.

And we suggested that a major part of the group was changing from being vegetarian for one day a week to being vegetarian for two days a week.

So, when you are campaigning to try to change consumer behaviour, it is important that you don't tell the public that a lot of people are not following the right rules. Or not doing the good thing. In this case: many people do not eat enough vegetables. If you do so, they think: "Nobody does the good thing. Nobody does eat enough vegetables. And if nobody does, why should I do so?"

Instead of that you have to make the new rule you wish to establish a common rule by involving a large group of people. You should not tell the public that it's special to eat more vegetables and less meat. No, you have to tell them that it is normal to do so. You have to show them a large group of people is already exhibiting the good behaviour. People act like herd animals.

In my opinion the flexitarian campaign was quite successful. To give you some figures:

Nowadays:

- **67% of all Dutch are flexitarian. Five years ago it was only 15 percent;**
- **Almost half of the Dutch (45%) think that eating meat every day is not appropriate for these times;**
- **41% have halved their meat consumption in the last five years.**

Of course these are only figures for meat consumption.

I think it's time to start a campaign that says that eating fruits and vegetables at any moment of eating should be the rule for a growing number of people. Most people like to eat fruits and vegetables at each meal. Whether it is breakfast, lunch and dinner. They even like to have vegetables with an early-evening drink.