

## Battling Climate Change: Developing Methods to Use or Re-use Degraded Farmland

**From 10 – 12 October representatives from 7 European countries will meet in Lund in Sweden to discuss how they are tackling this challenge. The point of departure for the meeting is a project called SalFar, which is supported by the Interreg North Sea Region programme.**

One of the reasons for degradation of farmland is an increased level of salt in the soil, also called salinization. The increased level of salt in farmland is a consequence of climate change, more specifically the continuous rise in sea level.

If no action is taken, salinization can cause severe consequences for the rural coastal economy of the North Sea Region as the capability of food production will be lost over time. To prevent this from happening, there is a need for the development of innovative methods of farming, which is exactly what the SalFar project has set out to do.

This is done by setting up field labs in the partnering countries, which are Norway, Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom respectively. In the open field labs scientific research is conducted on the salt tolerance of various crops, in order to determine which crops will be able to thrive in saline soils. Based on the data gathered in the field labs, the aim is to develop innovative methods of saline farming as well as to create new business strategies and opportunities for farmers, food producers and entrepreneurs.

### **A multidisciplinary team of experts**

Behind the research conducted in the field labs is a multidisciplinary team consisting of climate experts, researchers, educators, farmers, entrepreneurs and policy makers.

In the project, the focus is on testing different varieties of several conventional crops like potato, cabbage, carrot, onion, and halophytes like Salicornia and ice plant as these conventional crops are most suitable for moderate saline conditions and the halophytes are even suitable for cultivation up to seawater salinity.

In mid-May, as soon as the weather conditions looked promising, the first field trials were initiated on the fields on the island of Texel. Nearly 20.000 seeds were set out by hand with the purpose of determining how salt tolerant wheat, oat and sugar beets are.

Apart from generating scientific knowledge on the salt tolerance of different crops in the field labs, the objective of SalFar is to develop new and eco-innovative saline products, as crops grown under saline conditions develop unique characteristics in taste. Based on this, the objective is also to design a brand for saline products from the North Sea Region.

**For further information please contact**

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**Facts about SalFar:**

- SalFar is co-funded by the North Sea Region Programme 2014 - 2020.
- The project has a total budget of 6.147.375 €
- 14 partners from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom respectively.
- SalFar is an acronym of 'Saline Farming'.



Photo: The project partners of SalFar