

A report presenting best practise

“Regional organisation in a cooperative structure”

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Cooperatives of East-Flanders

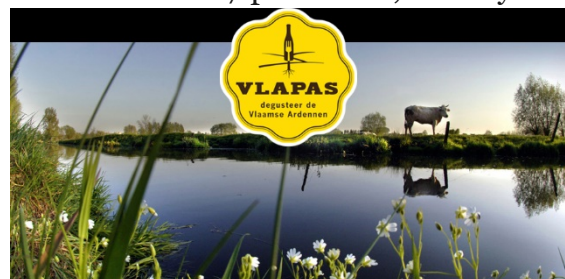
In the East of Flanders (Belgium), already three cooperatives are established: Mmm...eetjesland, Smaak van Waas and Vlapas, in which producers unite in a cooperative collaboration. Within these local initiatives between regional producers experiences are exchanged and their products are bundled, making local products more accessible to the consumer.

In the region ‘Meetjesland’, ‘Waasland’ and the Flemish Ardennes, producers of farm and food products work together on short-chain supply in the cooperatives Mmm...eetjesland, Vlapas and Smaak van Waas. Driving force behind these initiatives is ‘Plattelandscentrum Meetjesland’, together with other Flemish partners such as Steunpunt Hoeveproducten, EROV, PCG vzw, Vormingplus Waas-en-Dender, and others.

The cooperation **MMM...EETJESLAND** was started at the beginning of 2007 with assistance of Plattelandscentrum Meetjesland. It is a cooperative with 17 producers of farm and regional products. Currently, the cooperative counts 33 producers, of which about half are farms - including dairy farmers, butchers, a sheep farmer and producers of strawberries, asparagus and herbs. As local products you will find fruit juice, wine, sweets, bread spreads and coffee. The producers inspire and encourage each other to always deliver the best quality. 9 farm shops of the cooperatives ensure the sale of their products (<https://mmm-eetjesland.be/>).



The experience that was gained in starting the cooperative Mmm...eetjesland, was used by Plattelandscentrum to start up a new association of 17 producers, namely the cooperative **VLAPAS**, located in the Flemish Ardennes. Vlapas stands for tasteful, fresh, honest and traditional farm and regional products from the Flemish Ardennes. These products represent the entire region (<http://www.vlapas.be/>).



The cooperative '**TASTE OF WAAS**' was founded in 2016 as part of the project 'Farm and regional products of 'Waasland', a sustainable collaboration'. It is a collaboration of 13 producers and focuses on the taste and tradition of food. By starting up this cooperative, products can be sold at multiple sales points, bringing the supply of regional farm and regional products closer to the consumer (<http://smaakvanwaas.be/>).



Next steps

With these three East Flemish cooperatives of farm and regional products it is shown that you can strengthen your position as a producer in short-chain supply by working together on sales and marketing. Currently, the cooperatives are developing a web shop to assemble the products from the three regions. They are mainly targeting Business -2-Business, such as local shops, B&Bs, restaurants, ... who will be able to consult products, producers and order products using the web shop.

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