

Q & A Expert Centre for Speciality Crops

Why an Expert Centre for Speciality Crops?

Netherlands' agriculture and horticulture are strong in high-value, specialised crops. The Netherlands also has a wide range of research facilities and knowledge organisations, together with a well organised industry to support these speciality crops. In addition, various government bodies are providing facilities and the Netherlands is taking up a leading position in Europe as regards cultivation techniques and sustainability.

Internationalisation is increasing. This is illustrated by the new European regulations around the authorisation of plant protection products. The reputation of the Dutch knowledge complex should therefore be promoted at the international level. The Netherlands must remain attractive, also for international companies, for research and for advice about new products and techniques, and for the application of product authorisations.

Who are participating in the Expert Centre?

Several organisations and bodies have joined forces in the initiative to set up the Expert Centre. These are LTO Nederland, Plantum, Nefyto, Agrodiss, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Wageningen UR and Ctgb.

The Expert Centre does not entail the establishment of a new legal entity or body. Each organisation participating in Expert Centre keeps operating from its own responsibility and organisation.

The Expert Centre, however, is an open, virtual knowledge centre, in which other interested businesses and institutions may participate as well.

How does the Expert Centre work?

The initiators are providing more insight into the various procedures via the digital portal of the Expert Centre. This should also make it easier to identify experts on specific sub-areas.

The initiators will also be working towards a better coherence of the "behind the screen" procedures. This will enable a faster and easier coordination between research, advice, financing and authorisations so that innovations that are based on Dutch expertise are (more) rapidly reaching the market.

How about international cooperation?

Other countries in Europe also have speciality crops, some of which are not grown in the Netherlands. This is a good reason to seek collaboration with a number of other Member States in the European Union.

Europe recognises the necessity of investing in speciality crops to ensure the continued availability of the broad range of crops and agricultural products. In November 2009 a European workshop, organised by 8 European federations from agriculture and food production, was held in Brussels. And it has been included in the new European Plant Protection Directive that a proposal for a European Fund for minor uses of plant protection products should be forthcoming. The Netherlands has already for years been playing a prominent role in the discussions about minor uses and wishes to continue to do so in the future. The Expert Centre therefore has the ambition to play a prominent role in the forthcoming European Fund for Minor Uses.