

Small is Unsustainable?

Alternative Food Movement in the Low Countries, 1969-1990

PETER VAN DAM AND AMBER STRIEKWOLD

137

This article analyses how the alternative food movement in the Low Countries successfully promoted the ideal of small-scale production and consumption since the 1970s. This history highlights an interpretation of sustainability which addressed global problems by a return to the local. Operating on a small scale enabled the alternative food movement to bridge the gap between social and environmental concerns. Although alternative food remained marginal within the quickly expanding agricultural sector of both Belgium and the Netherlands, the movement enlarged its reach through eco-labels and cooperation with large retail chains. As a result, small-scale practices could not be maintained. In the Netherlands, the alternative food movement subsequently emphasised the environment, whereas the social dimension was more pronounced in Belgium. Small-scale production and consumption became firmly entrenched as ideals, but, in practice, the balance between social, environmental, and economic concerns that activists had hoped for, moved out of reach.

Dit artikel analyseert hoe de alternatieve voedselbeweging in de Lage Landen succesvol het ideaal van kleinschalige productie en consumptie op de kaart zette sinds de jaren zeventig van de vorige eeuw. Het artikel gaat dieper in op een variant van duurzaamheid waarin mondiale problemen werden geadresseerd door een terugkeer naar het lokale. Kleinschaligheid bood de alternatieve voedselbeweging een kans om ecologische en sociale bekommernissen te verbinden. Hoewel alternatieve voeding marginaal bleef in de snel intensiverende landbouwsector in België en Nederland, vergrootte de alternatieve voedselbeweging haar bereik door middel van eco-keurmerken en samenwerkingen met grote winkelketens. Hierdoor kwam kleinschaligheid echter onder druk te staan. Terwijl de beweging in Nederland het milieu vooropstelde, lag in België meer nadruk op het sociale belang van lokale productie. Hoewel kleinschaligheid als ideaal stevig verankerd bleef, raakte de verhoopde balans tussen aandacht voor het milieu, sociale verhoudingen en economische belangen in de praktijk buiten bereik.

Introduction¹

‘Support small winegrowers!’ Surprisingly, this slogan from 2021 was not coined by an alternative retailer. It was part of a marketing campaign launched by a Dutch chain that specialises in wines. Buying wine from small wineries was supposedly advantageous for consumers: ‘we are convinced that small winegrowers devote more attention, passion and love to making wine’.² This paradoxical support for small businesses by a retail chain has become characteristic for contemporary consumer societies: whereas small-scale production is entrenched as an ideal, everyday life is dominated by mass production and consumption. Moreover, what small-scale production actually signifies is often unclear. The wine sellers connected it with craftsmanship and authenticity. But does it also imply environment-friendly production? And do employees of small businesses have a bigger say in their organisations? These questions have been elemental to the emergence of the ideals and practices of small-scale production and consumption.

In search of sustainable ways of living, small-scale food production attracted widespread attention in the course of the 1970s. Economic inequality, industrialisation, mass production, and mass consumption had become global problems. In particular, the Low Countries saw a push towards scaling up in agricultural production and the more anonymous self-service stores since the 1950s.³ Intellectual critics of ‘consumer society’, survivalists calling for simple living and a return to nature, and environmental activists all presented living on a small scale as a solution for these problems. ‘Small is beautiful’ became a staple of their attempts to achieve a more sustainable society.⁴ In their slipstream, a movement which proposed a small-scale

1 Both authors have contributed equally to this article. They would like to thank the participants of the symposium ‘Beyond missed opportunities: The history of sustainability’ (4 February 2022), the editors of *BMGN – LCHR*, and anonymous peer reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

2 ‘Support kleine wijnboeren’, <https://www.grapedistrict.nl/support-kleine-wijnboeren.html> (accessed 29 October 2021). This particular marketing campaign has been concluded, but similar claims continue to be made by the company, see: <https://www.grapedistrict.nl/Over-ons/Grapedistrict/Onze-kleine-wijnboeren/> (accessed 24 October 2022).

3 Yves Segers, Jan Bieleman and Erik Buyst (eds.), *Exploring the food chain: Food production and food*

processing in Western Europe, 1850-1990 (Brepols Publishers 2009); Johan Schot et al. (eds.), *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. 3. Landbouw en voeding* (Stichting Historie der Techniek 2000); Nelleke Teughels, “Mag het iets meer zijn?” *Kleine kruidenierswinkels worden big business, Delhaize Frères & Cie (1867-1940)* (Leuven UP 2014); Gerard Rutte and Josee Koning, *Zelfbediening in Nederland: geschiedenis van de supermarktoekomst* (De Prom 1998).

4 Jeremy L. Caradonna, *Sustainability: A History* (Oxford University Press 2014) 16-17; Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, *Small is beautiful: economics as if people mattered* (Harper & Row 1973). Cf. Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (University of Massachusetts Press 2004).

alternative to large-scale food production, gained momentum.⁵ By the mid-1980s, however, alternative food would become attractive to such a variety of consumers and retailers, that this initial interpretation of sustainability proved unsustainable.

We conceptualise the alternative food movement as a heterogeneous network of groups and organisations of producers, consumers, retailers, activists, and distributors who proposed an alternative to the post-war food system. These groups recognised each other as sharing a similar goal and co-operated in practice. Nonetheless, their approaches and philosophies on what the alternative should look like varied significantly.⁶ The heterogeneity of the alternative food movement is most visible in the different terms used to designate their positions and products. ‘Organic’ (*‘biologisch’*) is the most encompassing term, used to designate food produced in accordance with nature and thus without using chemical pesticides and artificial fertilisers. More limited, biodynamic agriculture advocates an holistic approach to agriculture and nutrition rooted in the anthroposophical movement. It is based on the work of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner, whose lectures in 1924 aimed to create a new way of farming that combined an esoteric understanding of nature with principles of agricultural science. Macrobiotic food is part of a lifestyle promoted by George Oshawa who popularised a diet, balanced along Buddhist principles, in Europe since the 1950s. This approach also favours ‘natural’ foods, which have been produced without applying chemicals. ‘Ecological’ (*‘ekologies’*), finally, came to denote a specific group of alternative food activists in the late 1970s. The ‘ecologists’ foregrounded scientific and technological innovation ‘on a human scale’ and were sceptical of practices solely based on spiritual traditions.⁷

Despite the differences, there was consensus in the alternative food movement in the 1970s and 1980s that small-scale production and consumption could reconcile environmental and social concerns. The definition of the ‘small scale’ itself, however, was constantly contested. Proponents of small-scale food production and consumption agreed on positioning their initiatives in opposition to maximising production and turnover. Based on this view, small-scale production and consumption

5 Matthew Reed, *Rebels for the Soil. The Rise of the Global Organic Food and Farming Movement* (Routledge 2010) 71.

6 Dirk-Jan Verdonk, *Het dierloze gerecht: Een vegetarische geschiedenis van Nederland* (Boom 2009) 243-246. Cf. Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (University Press of Kansas 2007).

7 Magnus Boström and Mikael Klintman, *Eco-Standards, Product Labelling and Green Consumerism* (Palgrave Macmillan 2008) 28-32, 46-50, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230584006>; Cf. ‘Voor Nederlanders en voor Belgen ...’, *Alternatieve Konsumentengids* 1:2 (1982) 3; special issue on ‘Stromingen in de alternatieve voedselbeweging’, *Vruchtbare Aarde* 4 (1980) [October].

were attested wherever people acted mindful of relations to the social and ecological world around them.⁸

Researching the turn towards the small scale is an important counterpoint to the post-war histories of environmentalism and sustainability, in which the awareness of worldwide interdependence has received most attention. During the ‘age of interdependence’ from the 1940s onwards, as discussed in the introduction to this special issue, ‘the environment’ became widely regarded as a globally interconnected system.⁹ Environmentalists had depended on international organisations even before this period.¹⁰ New organisations like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth reinforced this trend, setting up global alliances from their outset.¹¹ ‘Short’ histories of sustainability have similarly highlighted the relation of sustainability to international conservation strategies and the global politics of development.¹²

Small-scale initiatives provide a different genealogy of sustainability, rooted in local practices which gained new meaning during the 1970s and 1980s. Their histories help explain how ‘sustainable development’ could quickly become a buzzword in the 1980s. Sustainability was not just popularised by global international organisations. Grassroots organisations and parochial initiatives practised it as well at least since the 1960s.¹³

- 8 Klaas van der Ven, *Kleinschaligheid, kan dat?*. Zodoende (Stichting MEMO 1982) 15-16; Ernst Friedrich Schumacher, *Hou het klein: een economische studie waarbij de mens weer meetelt* (Amboboeken 1973) 34.
- 9 Sabine Höhler, *Spaceship Earth in the Environmental Age, 1960-1990* (Routledge 2015). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315653921>; Paul Warde, Libby Robin, and Sverker Sörlin, *The Environment: A History of the Idea* (Johns Hopkins University Press 2018); Peter van Dam, ‘The Age of Interdependence. Varieties of Sustainability in the Low Countries during the Twentieth Century’, *BMGN – LCHR* 137:4 (2022). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.11687>.
- 10 Raf De Bont, ‘Dieren zonder grenzen – Over wetenschap en internationale natuurbescherming, 1890-1940’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 125:4 (2012) 520-535. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGESCH2012.4.BONT>; Raf De Bont, Simone Schleper, and Hans Schouwenburg, ‘Conservation Conferences and Expert Networks in the Short Twentieth Century’, *Environment and History* 23:4 (2017) 569-600. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3197/096734017X15046905071889>.
- 11 Frank Zelko, ‘The Politics of Nature’, in: Andrew C. Isenberg (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* (Oxford University Press 2014) 716-742. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195324907.013.0025>.
- 12 For ‘short’ and ‘long’ histories, see the introduction of this issue: Van Dam, ‘The Age of Interdependence’; Stephen J. Macekura, *Of Limits and Growth: The Rise of Global Sustainable Development in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press 2015); Hans Schouwenburg, ‘De geboorte van het concept duurzaamheid: Een pleidooi voor duurzaamheidsgeschiedenis’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 132:3 (2019) 467-483. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGESCH2019.3.007.SCHO>.
- 13 Elke Seefried, ‘Developing Europe: The Formation of Sustainability Concepts and Activities’, in: Anna-Katharina Wöbse and Patrick Kupper (eds.), *Greening Europe: Environmental Protection in the Long Twentieth Century – A Handbook* (De Gruyter 2021) 389-418. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110669213-016>.

However, food activists did not disregard global interconnections, since they developed their ideas against the background of global concerns and were part of transnational networks. Based on an awareness of the global scale of environmental, social, and economic imbalances, they focused on the small scale in their attempts to change the food system.¹⁴

This article draws on the publications and archives of a large number of initiatives, such as *De Kleine Aarde* (DKA, The Small Earth), World People's Service, *Vereniging voor Ecologische Land- en Tuinbouw* (VELT), *De Alternatieve Konsumentenbond* and Stichting MEMO, which promoted alternative food in the Low Countries during the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵ It analyses how the alternative food movement advocated a version of sustainability that revolved around reconciling environmental and social concerns through downscaling. It assesses the ways in which food activists organised, promoted, and distributed alternative food from running local farms to setting up eco-labels. Our analysis charts how the alternative food movement in Belgium and the Netherlands successfully established itself in the 1970s and 1980s, but, as a result of its success, gradually gave up on the ideal of balancing environmental, social, and economic concerns by means of producing and consuming on a small scale.

Going small (1969-1977)

Initiatives in the Low Countries had proclaimed that small was beautiful, even before Ernst Friedrich Schumacher announced so in 1973. Attempts to achieve self-sufficiency and live in bounded communities had a long history. The ideal of minimalistic and small-scale living gained new popularity as a way to counter unprecedented levels of mass consumption and agricultural

14 Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization, Globalization and Migration: The Case of Scottish Football Supporters in North America', *International Sociology* 21:2 (2006) 171-198. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580906061374>; Andrea Franc has noted how the Swiss fair trade movement turned away from reforming the structures of global trade towards stressing limits to growth and supporting small-scale farmers during the 1970s: Andrea Franc, *Von der Makroökonomie zum Kleinbauern: Die Wandlung der Idee eines gerechten Nord-Süd-Handels in der schweizerischen Dritte-Welt-Bewegung (1964-1984)* (De Gruyter 2020). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110667516>.

15 Amber Striekwold analysed the Dutch alternative food groups in her master's thesis. Information and statements on *De Kleine Aarde* and *Stichting Nieuwe Lelie* in this article are based on this thesis: Amber Striekwold, *Prophets and Pioneers: The Political Ideas of the Alternative Food Movement in the Netherlands (1968-1984)* (Master's thesis, Utrecht University 2020); the analysis of MEMO's establishment in this article is based on Teije ten Den's bachelor's thesis *De opkomst en ondergang van de stichting Mens- en Milieuvriendelijk Ondernemen (MEMO)* (2021), researched at the University of Amsterdam under the supervision of Peter van Dam.



Members of the self-sufficient Dutch commune Tidorp meditating. This photo taken by Toon Michiels was published in the book *De Aarde je Leven* (*The Earth your Life*) edited by Kees Meijer in 1979, in which the alternative food group *De Kleine Aarde* documented its activities. © Stichting De Kleine Aarde. Meijer (ed.), *De Aarde je Leven* (Boxtel 1979) 51.

intensification during the 1960s. Around 1970, various initiatives practising and propagating small-scale production and consumption were established in the Low Countries such as *De Kleine Aarde*, *Stichting Nieuwe Lelie* (Foundation New Lely) and *Hobbitstee* (The Hobbit's Farm) in the Netherlands, and *Alternatuur* and *World People's Service* in Belgium.

Historiography has generally presented the alternative food movement as a legacy of '1968'. This framework is particularly strong in scholarship on alternative food groups in the United States, which frames these groups as part of the countercultural movement.¹⁶ The historiography on alternative food in the Netherlands has followed a similar frame. Here, the 'Kabouters' ('gnomes') in Amsterdam took centre stage. The *Kabouters* were a continuation of the Amsterdam countercultural movement *Provo* (1965-1967).¹⁷ In 1969, a *Kabouter* store opened its doors, being the first in the Netherlands to sell pesticide-free vegetables from small-scale farms. However, this emphasis on the legacy of 1968, with its focus on *Provo's* and *Kabouters*, neglects the regional and ideological diversity within the alternative food movement in the Netherlands. By 1983, there were about 190 Dutch alternative food stores and influential working and residential communities were established throughout the country.

The focus on the countercultural elements also omits notable continuities and synergies with earlier initiatives. The alternative food movement of the 1970s reiterated objections to urbanisation, industrialisation, and alienation due to an increase in the scale of production which had been voiced at the turn of the twentieth century. For example, soil erosion and the poor health and diets of urban dwellers were recurrent concerns. These forerunners of the 1970s alternative food movement had proposed solutions such as eating 'natural' food, creating healthy garden cities, or establishing communes outside the city. Furthermore, the early-twentieth-century life reform movement and biodynamic agriculture were

16 Benjamin Möckel, 'Consuming Anti-Consumerism: The German Fairtrade Movement and the Ambivalent Legacy of '1968'', *Contemporary European History* 28:4 (2019) 550-565. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777319000262>; Maria McGrath, *Food for Dissent: Natural Foods and the Consumer Counterculture since the 1960s* (University of Massachusetts Press 2019); Joshua Clark Davis, *From Head Shops to Whole Foods. The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs* (Columbia University Press 2017); Warren J. Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took On the Food*

Industry (Cornell University Press 2007, second edition).

17 Anneke van Otterloo, 'Healthy, Safe and Sustainable: Consumers and the Public Debate on Food in Europe and the Netherlands Since 1945', in: Gert Spaargaren, Peter Oosterveer, and Anne Loeber (eds.), *Food Practices in Transition: Changing Food Consumption, Retail and Production in the Age of Reflexive Modernity* (Routledge 2011) 60-85. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203135921>; Verdonk, *Het dierloze gerecht*; Coen Tasman, *Louter Kabouter: Kroniek van een beweging, 1969-1974* (Babylon-De Geus 1996).

important sources of inspiration for the alternative food movement of the 1970s.¹⁸ In the early 1970s, the only alternative kind of agricultural production at that time was biodynamic and the only ‘alternative’ stores were ‘*reformhuizen*’ (reform stores). The newly established alternative food groups built upon this existing infrastructure of biodynamic production and distribution. Biodynamic farmers supplied the first *Kabouter*-stores, and the first self-sufficient communes such as *Hobbitstee* in the Dutch province of Drenthe adhered to this philosophy and agricultural practice.¹⁹

During the 1970s, three interpretations of small-scale production and consumption emerged in the Low Countries. The first strand gave priority to social relations by focusing on the local cuisine and regional products.²⁰ This interpretation of small scale was particularly prevalent in Belgium. As Peter Scholliers and Anneke Geyzen point out, a regional turn can be detected in Belgian cookbooks and women’s magazines from the 1970s onwards. This (re)appreciation of local food was a response to the post-war internationalisation of Belgian cuisine. It was part of a broader trend that can be found throughout Europe in that period, such as the Slow Food Movement in Italy and *Le Terroir* in France.²¹ Employed in this sense, the small scale did not necessarily include an environmental dimension.

Small-scale initiatives in the Netherlands usually acknowledged environmental concerns. A second strand of small-scale initiatives prioritised environmental concerns when choosing small-scale production and consumption, as was the case with many biodynamic producers and consumers. A third strand of alternative food activists during the 1970s and 1980s attempted to reconcile social and environmental perspectives by ‘going small’. They aimed to change the food system into a more seasonal, organic, and local system based on solidarity and democratic principles. Dutch pioneers set up self-sufficient communes, alternative food stores and consumer circles to experiment with small-scale living and also enable others to partake in this alternative lifestyle, or to make similar conscious consumer choices. Initially, alternative stores, farms, and other enterprises were small in scale by necessity. Small-scale food production countered environmental exploitation due to agricultural intensification. Socially, as the magazine *De Kleine Aarde* stated, small-scale production provided an alternative to the capitalist system of specialisation, and mechanisation of work and an

18 Verdonk, *Het dierloze gerecht*, 204.

19 *Ibidem*, 225-226.

20 Yves Segers, ‘Food recommendations, tradition and change in a Flemish cookbook: *Ons Kookboek*, 1920-2000’, *Appetite* 45:1 (2005) 6-7.

21 Peter Scholliers and Anneke Geyzen, ‘Upgrading the Local: Belgian Cuisine in Global Waves’,

Gastronomica 10:2 (2010) 53. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2010.10.2.49>.

22 Anton Scheffers, ‘Werken in een eigen kleinschalige bedrijf blijkt goed te bevalen’, *De Kleine Aarde* 27:4 (1978) 47.

alternative to businesses that perpetuate the feeling of ‘alienation in this world of cold relations’.²² Instead of perceiving social sustainability as a conservative preservation of traditional local communities, as was often the case in Belgium, these alternative food activists imagined the local in an utopian way. To them, ‘going small’ was a way to transform social relations.

Within this third strand of food activists, those who aimed to reform social and environmental relations all at once, two stances can be detected: a pragmatic approach regarding small-scale as a means to an end, and a principled one presenting it as a goal in and of itself. For example, with regard to the role of science and technology, pragmatic activists experimented with so-called soft technology. In 1972, Sietz Leeflang of DKA developed a set of criteria for soft technology: it aimed to save natural resources and energy, should be based on circular systems, and had to enable humans to live in harmony with the natural world.²³ In a later publication, *De Kleine Aarde* presented small-scale production and consumption as a means towards a more humane and environmentally friendly society.²⁴ Principled activists, on the other hand, were sceptical of Western rational science, and the knowledge and technology it had produced. They opted for a more holistic approach and wanted to create a spiritual connection with the earth through small-scale living.

Pragmatic and principled stances also come to the fore around the social dimension. Principled activists, such as the members of *Hobbitstee*, argued that developing a new way of living together implied that participants had to evolve spiritually. They kept their communities relatively small to make sure that few rules and structures were necessary. Their goal was to create a new culture that could expand through ‘islands all over the world in which people can live self-sufficiently on land and in peace and harmony with nature.’²⁵ ‘Pragmatists’ shared this ideal of a decentralised society, but above all wanted to establish the smallest scale possible in individual instances. Urban dwellers who wanted to consume alternative food should be able to do so without living in a commune and harvest their own food. DKA, for example, operated on a larger scale compared to other initiatives and focused on the distribution of local produce on a regional level through their distribution centre *Boldercentrum*. Even though DKA, like *Hobbitstee*, was an alternative village located in the countryside, more specifically in Boxtel in the Dutch province of Noord-Brabant, its members did not regard their ecovillage as a model for alternative living, which could be reproduced. Rather, they perceived it as a research station for practical experiments of which the results could be disseminated throughout society.

23 Sietz Leeflang, ‘Soft Technology, misschien een harde noodzaak’, *De Kleine Aarde* 1:2 (1972) 2-3.

24 Kees Meijer (ed.), *De Aarde je Leven* (Haasbeek 1978) 9.

25 *Waterman*, [no title], 1 (1973) 6.

The pragmatists and the principled activists shared the aim of closing the gap between producers and consumers, and thus creating a form of solidarity between the different actors in the food system. Alternative consumers, at their turn, did not always buy food from alternative, small-scale producers out of solidarity. Personal health was often cited as a reason, motivated by the idea that ‘natural’ food – free from pesticides and artificial additives – was better for body and soul.²⁶ These tensions between alternative food movements were initially of little import. Alternative consumers contributed to efforts to promote alternative food and initiatives started on a small scale from sheer necessity. As alternative modes of production and consumption gained popularity during the second half of the 1970s, these tensions surfaced.

Growing while keeping it small? (1977-1985)

The growing popularity of alternative food soon caused a paradoxical situation. As the number of producers and consumers increased, operating on a small scale became difficult. No other organisation in the Low Countries exemplifies this development more than MEMO (*Mens- en Milieuvriendelijk Ondernemen*; Human- and Environment-friendly Enterprise).²⁷ This Dutch foundation was established in 1976 to promote and support small-scale business initiatives as part of a broader turn towards ‘a decentralised economy, politics, and culture’.²⁸ Its founders Otto Munters and Maria Blokzijl had been members of the *Hobbitstee* community. Companies and individuals interested in the idea of small-scale entrepreneurship could join their foundation, which was to function as a platform for sharing information and supporting new initiatives.²⁹ To this end, MEMO hosted a small convention in Amsterdam in 1976, choosing as its venue one of the hotbeds of the alternative food movement, the ‘spiritual centre’ *De Kosmos*. The event drew about 3,000 visitors who had access to lectures, music and movies about small-scale enterprises. They could also meet representatives of several small businesses and buy their products.³⁰

Although the convention was a financial loss for the foundation, MEMO realised that a second edition could be profitable thanks to the experience gained

26 W.T. Schildhuis, ‘Stromingen in de alternatieve voedingsbeweging’, *Vruchtbare aarde* 5 (1980) 1-3.

27 The account of the establishment of MEMO and its first conventions in this article are based on Ten Den, *Opkomst en ondergang*.

28 International Institute for Social History [IISH], Archief Stichting MEMO [MEMO], Box 17, MEMO informatiefolder.

29 Sietz Leeflang, ‘Memo komt van de grond’, *De Kleine Aarde* 6:20 (1977) 49.

30 ‘MEMO: Beurs, vereniging en sekretariaat’, *De Kleine Aarde* 6:23 (1977) 29.

and the opportunity for more public exposure. A larger and less ‘alternative’ venue was booked in the Dutch town of Hilversum. Potential attendants were promised a reduced train fare, varied information stands, movies, music, a program for children, demonstrations of the latest technologies, and an opportunity to see and acquire organic and hand-made products.³¹ The interest of the Dutch public was overwhelming, as the improvised secretariat could hardly handle the number of inquiries. The convention itself drew around 15,000 visitors in two days.³² However, not everyone involved was overjoyed by this result. A member of the organisation complained: ‘The attention was focused on the audience and the media to such an extent, that there was very little time for conversations between workers from different businesses’. As a consequence of the attempts to promote small-scale enterprises to ‘the outside’, ‘commercial tendencies’ snuck into MEMO’s activities. A federation of seven small-scale initiatives in the Rotterdam area warned that these tendencies infringed upon the ideas of operating on a small scale.³³

Alternative food was the most vibrant branch among the ranks of MEMO’s members. In 1983, MEMO published an address guide with an overview of businesses that shared the intent of being ‘human- and environment-friendly’. The first and largest section was devoted to ‘agricultural food production’. It included a host of businesses ranging from farms to food stores, and from distribution centres to small, independent bakeries.³⁴ Within this section the distribution centres for ‘ecological’ (*ekologische*) food products demanded a whole page. By then this ecological strain of the alternative food movement distinguished itself from other groups, by claiming a separate EKO-label. Their self-presentation highlighted the scope of their network in terms of products and organisations, which ranged from producer- to consumer-oriented outlets.³⁵

The emergence of this specific EKO-label in the 1980s was a result from the alternative food movement’s growing popularity in the Netherlands. During the 1970s, the number of ecological producers and consumers had gradually expanded, bringing about specialisation, professionalisation, and competition. At the same time, ecologists who disregarded biodynamic practices had found themselves in a disadvantageous position, as biodynamic producers had already two labels (‘Demeter’ and ‘Biodyn’) at their disposal, which the association of biodynamic producers administered.³⁶ Apart from these labels, there were no official guidelines for alternative producers

31 ‘MEMO-beurs in Expohal Hilversum’, *De Kleine Aarde* 7:24 (1978) 25.

32 ‘Wel en wee van MEMO in 1978’, *De Twaalf Ambachten* 6 (1979) 14.

33 Hans Kamerbeek, ‘Zomaarwatuitanderebladen’, *De Kleine Aarde* 7:27 (1978) 46.

34 Stichting MEMO, *De groene klapper* (Stichting MEMO 1983) 52-98.

35 *Ibidem*, 77.

36 Nederlandse Vereniging tot Bevordering der Biologisch-Dynamische Landbouwmethode, *Overeenkomst regelende het gebruik van de merken Biodyn en Demeter* (Driebergen 1977).

who wanted to sell their products. Any company that wanted to market its products as ‘organic’ or ‘ecological’ could do so without restrictions. As the demand for this type of produce increased, activists voiced their concern. Arie van Genderen, who sold alternative food in the Amsterdam area, was particularly vocal in demanding guidelines for organic products.³⁷

The guidelines that were finally implemented to achieve the regulation of ecological products via the EKO-label were inspired by the consumer movement. In the course of the twentieth century, civic organisations in the Netherlands and Belgium had campaigned to establish mandatory and voluntary standards for various products, like food and electronic equipment.³⁸ During the 1960s, product testing became a standard procedure of the consumer movement, spearheaded in the Low Countries by the Belgian *Test-Achats* and the Dutch *Consumentenbond*.³⁹ As Van Genderen initiated the establishment of a federation of distribution centres for organic food in 1978, he also set up the *Stichting Alternatief Warenonderzoek* (SAW, Foundation for Alternative Product Research) to develop regulations for certified organic food production.⁴⁰ This foundation introduced the aforementioned EKO-label in 1980 and coordinated a set of accompanying guidelines: organic agriculture should adhere to environmentally responsible cultivation methods, the business should function democratically, the packaging should be environment-friendly, and the production had to be inspected by the SAW.⁴¹

Van Genderen’s efforts to define guidelines for organic production, which were distinct from the biodynamic approach, were remarkable in international perspective. Biodynamic federations from several European countries had set up the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements in the 1970s. It aimed to devise international guidelines for food production rooted in the biodynamic tradition.⁴² The establishment

- 37 IISH, Goede Waar & Co, Box 1: folder 1982-1985, Jaarverslag van de Alternatieve Konsumentenbond [1985]; Ibid., Notulen algemene ledenvergadering, 22 November 1984 (28 February 1985).
- 38 Harry Lintsen and Johan Schot, *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Deel 7: Techniek en modernisering, balans van de twintigste eeuw* (Walburg Pers 2003) 134.
- 39 Giselle Nath, ‘Giving Consumers a Political Voice: Organized Consumerism and the Belgian Welfare State, 1957-1981’, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132:3 (2017) 70-93. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10399>; Peter van Dam,

‘The Entangled Consumer: Rethinking the Rise of the Consumer After 1945’, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing* 33:2 (2021) 212-238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2020.1865240>.

- 40 IISH, bro 2181/6, ‘De regionale Verdeelcentra van Ecologische/Biologische producten’ [1978].
- 41 IISH, Goede Waar & Co, Box 20, SAW-nieuwsbrief 5, januari 1980; IISH, Goede Waar & Co, Box 1: folder 1982-1985, ‘Konsept agenda algemene ledenvergadering 16 april te Utrecht’ [1983?].
- 42 Dick Hollander, ‘Tegen beter weten in’: *De geschiedenis van de biologische landbouw en voeding in Nederland (1880-2001)* (Universiteit Utrecht 2012) 168-172.

't seizoentje



de bron van informatie
voor
alternatieve produkten

U bent geïnteresseerd in eerlijke en
gezonde voeding, anders kwam u hier
niet over de vloer. Gewone groenten en
fruit zijn maar al te vaak behandeld met
een cocktail van pesticiden.



VELT's magazin 't Seizoentje (*The Season*) advised the readership of organic consumption and production and spread information about the eco-labels in Belgium. © 't Seizoentje (1987), VELT vzw.

of the Dutch EKO-label was meant to expand the alternative food movement beyond this tradition. Dutch members of the biodynamic association were sceptical towards this new ecological movement and its attempts to establish a common brand for organic products. Around 1980, biodynamic farmers and their supporters showed their discontent because they felt that their way of working was significantly different and that it was rooted in a distinct community with its own distribution and shops. Although acknowledging overlapping motivations and practices, they claimed they had little to gain from establishing a common eco-label.⁴³

In Belgium however, various alternative food organisations recognised the merit of a common label early on. The Flemish *Vereniging voor Ecologische Land- en Tuinbouw* (VELT), founded in 1974 and representing 25 organic producers by 1976, pioneered its development. VELT's members subscribed to the VELT-guidelines for organic agriculture, which were distinct from the guidelines of the Belgian biodynamic movement.⁴⁴ Based on these specifications, a VELT-label was founded and a laboratory was set up to analyse organic produce in 1976. Unlike in the Netherlands, there was little discord about the merits of a common label among Belgian biodynamic and ecological producers.⁴⁵ In the 1980s, VELT joined hands with its Walloon counterparts *Nature et Progrès* and *Association sans but lucratif des Agrobiologistes Belges* (ASBLAB) which resulted in a Belgian national organisation UNAB-NUBILA in 1984 and the introduction of the common label 'Biogarantie' in 1987. In both countries, Demeter remained as an additional separate label for biodynamic products.

43 'Waar zijn dan eigenlijk die EKO-bedrijven in Nederland?', *Alternatieve Konsumentengids* 1:6 (1982) 7-9; *Vruchtbare aarde* 5 (1982) 1-10; *Vruchtbare aarde* 6 (1982) 1-6.

44 Maarten Savels, 'Van rank kiempje naar knoestige eik', *Brood en Rozen* 19:3 (2014) 64-72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21825/br.v19i3.3569>; *Alternatieve Konsumentengids*, 1 (1982). Next to VELT, the biodynamic movement was also

active in Belgium. Because of their fragmented representation, the total number of organic producers in Belgium is difficult to estimate.

45 Dries De Wilde, *Een geschiedenis van de biologische landbouw in Vlaanderen aan de hand van de absolute pionier: de Vereniging voor Ecologisch Leven en Tuinieren van 1973 tot 1995* (Master's thesis in history; Ghent University 2016) 69.

Table 1: Estimated cultivated area of biodynamic and ecological producers in the Netherlands (hectares) in relation to the total area cultivated for agricultural production.

	1972	1980	1982	1993
Biodynamic	522	1090	1470	9100 (total)
Ecological	110	720	1000	
Total cultivated area	2.114.000	2.020.000	2.005.000	1.988.000

Source: Nieuwendijk, *Groeien tegen de stroom in*, 21-22; CBS Statline; H. Bor, *Koers op biologisch* (Den Haag 2001) 15.

Table 2: Number of biodynamic agricultural businesses and total number of agricultural businesses in the Netherlands, 1972-1982.

	1972	1975	1980	1982
Biodynamic	30	57	136	147
Total	173.000	163.000	145.000	140.000

Source: Nieuwendijk, *Groeien tegen de stroom in*, 21; CBS Statline.

Table 3: Number of organic agricultural businesses and total number of agricultural businesses in the Netherlands, 1991-2000.

	1991	1996	2000
Organic	439	554	906
Total	123.000	111.000	97.483

Source: CBS Statline.

Table 4: Number of organic agricultural businesses in Belgium and estimated organically cultivated area in Belgium (hectares), 1994-2003.

	1987	1994	2001
Organic business	109	168	694
Hectares	1.000	2683	22.410

Source: G. Van Huylenbroeck et al., *Biologisch landbouw. Mens, markt en mogelijkheden* (Lannoo Campus 2005) 65; 'Biologische landbouw in België, 1987, 2005-2020', <https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/themas/landbouw-visserij/biologische-landbouw#panel-13> (accessed 24 February 2022).

The relevance of these labels shifted as the production of alternative food grew faster than the corresponding demand during the 1980s, particularly in the Netherlands. In the 1970s, supply and demand had developed evenly. By the early 1980s, around 400 Dutch shops were selling alternative food.⁴⁶ Producers taking up organic production could thus count on a market for their product, and consumers could find an extensive range of products on the shelves of alternative food stores. Around 1980, however, consumer demand for alternative food stagnated, whilst the number of producers continued to grow (see Tables 1 and 2). Despite the marginal position of alternative producers within the Dutch agricultural landscape, this resulted in surplus production, forcing producers to sell their products outside of the alternative milieu, and disparaging others from switching to alternative production.⁴⁷ A 1983 report on the state of the organic food chain in the Netherlands painted a damning picture of the circuit. Producers had little knowledge of consumer demand, distribution centres were understaffed and inefficient, many shops could not store fresh produce, and their personnel lacked expertise.⁴⁸

To cope with these problems, activists within different organisations first tried to raise awareness. Research among Dutch consumers in particular seemed to suggest that this was a viable strategy. Such research found that, although there was considerable sympathy towards alternative food among consumers, the actual group buying these products was relatively small and homogenous, combining low income with high levels of education and a leftist political orientation.⁴⁹ In 1982, Dutch and Belgian activists founded the *Vereniging voor Gebruikers van Ekologische Producten* (VEP, Association for Consumers of Ecological Products) to reach out to the many people who ‘consciously and sometimes unconsciously make bigger and smaller changes to their lifestyle’ without belonging to a clearly defined group or movement.⁵⁰ The VEP was rebranded *Alternatieve Konsumentenbond* (AKB, Alternative Consumer’s Association) in 1984. Aiming to publicise alternative products, it mirrored the consumers unions across the world by issuing a consumer guide, which included product tests, interviews with people from the movement, reports about producers and specific product groups.

The VEP also attempted to set standards for organic products. It explained the different strands within the alternative food movement to the

46 B. Nieuwendijk, *Groeien tegen de stroom in: Afzetstructuur ekologies geteelde groente en fruit* (Vereniging voor Gebruikers van Ekologische Producten 1983) 39.

47 IISH: MEMO, Box 11, ‘Verslag van de oprichtingsvergadering Nederlandse vereniging voor de ekologische landbouw, d.d. 19 november 1983 te Utrecht’; Hollander, *Tegen beter weten in*, 166.

48 Nieuwendijk, *Groeien tegen de stroom in*, 14-15.

49 IISH: Goede Waar & Co, Box 28, Verslag ‘Wat is beter? Een onderzoek naar konsumptiepatronen, verandering van voedingsgewoonten en informatiebehoefte bij de konsument’ [1982].

50 ‘Voor Nederlanders en voor Belgen...’, *Alternatieve Konsumentengids* 1:2 (1982) 3.



▲
The staff of the biodynamic Gimselwinkel in Amersfoort self-consciously presented their store as a more professional store for organic food in 1986, aiming to reach a broader public. Photo taken by Chris Pennarts for the journal *Vruchtbare Aarde* of the Dutch biodynamic association © Chris Pennarts. Published in: *Vruchtbare aarde* 4 (1986) 16.

broader public and offered a forum for discussion. VEP promoted the EKO-label to inform consumers about the origins of the products they were buying. The very first issue of its own consumer guide reported on the presentation of the EKO-guidelines and came with a corresponding poster, which explained the main principles of the movement. The guidelines emphasised that the movement looked beyond agricultural production, stating that it aimed to promote a social and environment-friendly economy, consumer education, and a politics that moved beyond traditional oppositions in focusing on ‘a green line’.⁵¹

Advocates of alternative food in Belgium and the Netherlands felt compelled to install robust guidelines and guarantees as a reaction to the expansion and diversification within their ranks. This development also challenged the interpretation of small-scale production. Alternative food was commonly related to local agriculture, but local farmers could not supply consumers in the Low Countries with all of the foods that were part of their common palette. The new ecological distribution centres and food stores soon recognised the considerable demand for products from outside the Low Countries. A brochure, in which the organic food businesses at the MEMO exhibition of 1978 were presented, referred to this problem: ‘Whole-grain rice, nuts and tropical fruits, soybeans, lentils and several other products not even the conscious consumer wants to do without’. These products had to be imported. Preferably, foreign trading partners also had to adhere to the principles applied within the Low Countries: ‘quality (organic), small businesses, social relations’.⁵²

A new field (1985-1990)

Consumers gained new relevance for the alternative food movement around the mid-1980s. In Belgium, VELT had started out as an organisation uniting producers. By merging with the *Verbruikers van Ekologische Producten* in 1987, it firmly integrated consumer representation, establishing a consumer steering group among its ranks.⁵³ In the Netherlands, growing number of alternative food businesses had been on full display in MEMO-exhibitions and published in its address guides from 1978 to 1983. This meant more opportunities for alternative food distribution, but also increasingly caused strife. Distribution centres expanded their number of suppliers, but the consumer base barely increased, despite the aforementioned attempts to raise awareness about organic food. The ideal of a ‘closed circuit’ of alternative producers, distribution

51 *Alternatieve Konsumentengids* 1:1 (1982) 12-13.

52 *De regionale Verdeelcentra van Ecologische/ Biologische producten*, Locust bv, Stichting

Alternatief Warenonderzoek (Amsterdam 1978) 15.

53 De Wilde, *Een geschiedenis*, 70.

channels, and consumers grew ever even further out of reach. When the distribution centres decided to only sell products with the EKO-label in 1985, most of them were on the verge of collapse.⁵⁴ Three years prior, discussions about a common standard had started between the ecological and biodynamic currents in the Netherlands. These talks were meant to take the initiative before ‘politics’ would, and to present consumers and potential collaborators a recognisable identity.⁵⁵ Consumer activists had initiated the EKO-label to address their concerns about the organic qualities of products. In the light of surplus production and the crisis within the ecological movement, the label was now regarded as a means to gain access to sales channels such as supermarkets.

Remarkably, many activists, who had pioneered the small-scale initiatives, had themselves become sceptical. In the 1986 edition of MEMO’s address guide, the publisher Frans Wildenborg presented a harsh analysis: ‘Numbers wise, the small-scale movement is flourishing’, he acknowledged, but the movement had lost sight of its ideals. ‘Originality has been replaced by conservatism. Imagination has been sacrificed to trivial survival instinct. Inspiration has degenerated into restoration.’ In his view, MEMO’s members were turning into the very businesses they used to criticise. ‘The zest of the early days has been stowed away in a trendy attaché case, the symbol of the young, dynamic, ambitious alternative businessman and -woman.’⁵⁶

Yet, even this scathing critic of the alternative movement believed that a more professional approach was a welcome change from the ‘muddling through’ which had typified the movement before. This shift towards a more professional approach was evident among many activists who had pioneered several kinds of ‘activist businesses’ across the world during the 1970s.⁵⁷ From 1980 onwards, the Dutch biodynamic association for example offered its members courses on running their businesses. A bank, the Triodos Bank, was founded to fund alternative projects the very same year.⁵⁸ And MEMO set up its own fund with similar intentions, acting as a guarantor to enable new initiatives to obtain bank loans.⁵⁹ In fact, by 1987, MEMO’s board believed that promoting small-scale businesses was no longer needed because corporate responsibility in relation to the environment had become widely accepted.⁶⁰

Another Dutch pioneer, the aforementioned Arie van Genderen, was critical of the evolution of the alternative food movement as well. In 1985, he saw no other option than to relinquish the ideal of the small scale. Although

54 Hollander, *Tegen beter weten in*, 169.

55 R. Boeringa, ‘Waarom een rijkswaarborgmerk voor alternatief geteelde producten?’, *Vruchtbare aarde* 40:5 (1982) 9-10.

56 Stichting MEMO, *De groene klapper* (Stichting MEMO 1986) 90-91.

57 Davis, *From Head Shops to Whole Foods*; Peter van Dam, *Wereldverbetersaars: een geschiedenis van fair trade* (Amsterdam University Press 2018) 143-192.

58 *Vruchtbare aarde* 40:2 (1982) 15-17.

59 IISH: MEMO, Box 17, ‘MEMO Munt en wel hierom!’.

60 ‘Verslag van het bestuur van de vereniging MEMO-Munt’, *Munt-info* 2 (1988) 9.

at odds with the original ideals of the ecological movement, Van Genderen deemed this inevitable. If a government-backed eco-label could be established, producers could possibly attain a tenfold increase in their turnover. More environment-friendly crops would reach consumers and other farmers could also switch to organic agriculture. 'Too much attention for small producers raises product costs and lessens competitiveness', Van Genderen stated. The ideal of the small scale had become impractical: 'Breaking out of the self-limitations of the circuit will entail working on a larger scale. (...) There is very little cohesion in the alternative movement and too few clear choices to defy economic laws like scaling up and mechanisation together.'⁶¹

The EKO-label, which Van Genderen had championed, paved the way for the introduction of alternative food in supermarkets. In the second half of the 1980s, large retail chains in the Netherlands at the time, Torro and Albert Heijn, showed interest in selling products with an EKO-, Demeter- or Biodyn-label.⁶² In the following years, the position of the EKO-label vis-à-vis the biodynamic brands would be transformed as a result of the agricultural policies of the European Economic Community (EEC). Every member state was to set one national standard for organic products. After extensive talks, EKO was introduced as the uniform standard in the Netherlands in 1992. Biodynamic products could display the Demeter-label in addition to the EKO-label to signal their distinct origins.⁶³

The certification of organic food benefited small-scale producers, distributors, and stores by opening up new markets and guaranteeing core organic qualities of the products. At the same time, it opened up the distribution chain to newcomers. Around 1990, the wider public held organic food in higher regard, while it lost its alternative connotation.⁶⁴ By 1993, one percent of the Dutch consumers bought all its products in alternative food stores, 3 to 4 percent bought some organic products in these stores, whilst 39 percent had incidentally bought an organic product in a supermarket or alternative store. Yet, 56 percent of the population was not aware of the existence of organic products. Those who did buy organic products cited health and the environment as their main reasons. The overall sales of organic products in Belgium and the Netherlands remained remarkably low compared to the European average.⁶⁵

61 R. Schilphout, 'EKO is EKO niet meer', *De Kleine Aarde* 53 (1985) 1-3.

62 Hollander, *Tegen beter weten in*, 168-169.

63 E. van Bleyerveld, 'Eko-merk wordt hèt garantiemer', *De Kleine Aarde* 80 (1992) 37; Hollander, *Tegen beter weten in*, 170; Boström and Klintman, *Eco-Standards, Product Labelling and Green Consumerism*, 46-47.

64 Hollander, *Tegen beter weten in*, 221.

65 Simone C. van der Ham, *Tussen wens en werkelijkheid: een geschiedenis van de biologische landbouw en voedingsmiddelen in Nederland* (Doctoraalscriptie Nieuwste Geschiedenis, VU Amsterdam 2007) 27, 97-99.

Instead of attempting to reconcile environmental and social concerns, environmental aspects took precedence in the Netherlands with the introduction of organic labelling. The certification guidelines promoted the notion that the environmental impact and organic qualities were the decisive issues. Since farming continued to be regarded as a local practice, this shift towards an environmental emphasis did not prevent producers and consumers from retaining the ideal of the small scale.

Conclusion

The trajectory of the ideal and practices of small-scale production and consumption during the 1970s and 1980s sheds new light on the genealogy of sustainability. Groups of concerned citizens set their sights on practical ways to counter economic globalisation, environmental degradation, and the growing separation between humans and their natural environment. Alternative food activists thus redefined the concept of sustainability. Growing and eating food from small farms was regarded as a way to live more naturally and reduce one's environmental impact. It also alleviated concerns about the social dimension of economic life because small-scale consumption and production could account for the needs of inhabitants of the Global South by requiring less of the earth's resources. Furthermore, a smaller firm size facilitated equal relations among staff members of an enterprise. Thus, small-scale production held the promise of balancing environmental, social, and economic concerns.

The ideal of reconciling these dimensions often failed to materialise in practice. Such failures brought the different interpretations of small scale within the alternative food movement to the fore. Pioneers of organic agriculture had often opted for small-scale farming in relation to the acreage, turnover, and number of employees, combining environmental and social concerns. Biodynamic producers traditionally focused on environmental issues and reinstating the spiritual connection between humans and nature. In Belgium, especially, small-scale farming was often associated with preserving local communities.

As a new wave of alternative food activism took off in the 1970s, different views could often pragmatically be combined, because new initiatives necessarily started out small. Differences became more pronounced as alternative food became popular. In the Netherlands, many producers turned to upscaling. Yet farmers continued to be regarded as local producers, regardless of the size of their businesses. Moreover, environment-friendly production was less ambiguous, whilst most producers gave priority to the environment over social issues. Their customers also emphasised environmental impact but also personal health. This resulted in a focus on the organic qualities of the products in the Netherlands. In Belgium,

the result was more mixed. Small family farms and regional ties remained important markers of alternative food. At the same time, organisations promoting biodynamic and ecological agriculture were keen to work together, thus claiming a distinct niche for their products rather than a mainstream presence.

Compared to 'regular' production and consumption, the production and consumption of alternative food remained a marginal phenomenon in the Low Countries (see Tables 3 and 4). The food activists' principled insistence on small-scale activities in the 1970s, the vast expansion of production in the regular agricultural sector, and the growing importance of transnational markets for food distribution severely limited the impact of alternative food. Nonetheless, its growing popularity allowed the establishment of new agricultural enterprises as well as the transformation of some existing firms particularly to produce organic food. Expanding beyond a small group of trusted suppliers increased the need to develop reliable standards. Activists first championed a label for organic products in the late 1970s, in order to protect consumers from products falsely claiming to adhere to their ideals. This eventually resulted in the establishment of eco-labels which provided consumers certainty about the standards of production.

By the mid-1980s, the development of reliable standards of production and distribution was no longer driven by concerns of protecting alternative consumers. The continuing expansion of organic production could no longer be absorbed by the alternative retail circuit. The alternative food movement consequently explored ways to reach new groups of consumers in regular stores and supermarkets. Whereas pioneers had had a considerable say in formulating organic standards, they could no longer control the subsequent expansion of the field, which became accessible to anyone who was willing to grow (a part of) their crops according to the guidelines.

As a result, the attractiveness of alternative food among producers and consumers once again paradoxically caused considerable distance between them. Intricate chains of distribution had to be set up for eco-labelled food to eventually find its way into supermarkets. As small-scale production and consumption became firmly entrenched as ideals, the once expected balance between social, environmental, and economic concerns moved further out of reach. The ideal of small scale could live on due to its vagueness, signalling an attachment to environmental-friendly production, a commitment to social equality, or a predilection for local rootedness of farmers and their produce.

Peter van Dam is a Senior Lecturer in Dutch History at the University of Amsterdam and coordinates the research group 'Environment & Society: Contestation & Governance'. His current research focuses on the impact of civil society on the development of consumer society and sustainable consumption. Key publications include *Wereldverbeteraars: een geschiedenis van fair trade* (Amsterdam University Press 2018) and *Staat van verzuiling: over een Nederlandse mythe* (Wereldbibliotheek 2012).
E-mail: p.h.vandam@uva.nl.

Amber Striekwold currently works as a PhD-student at Utrecht University on the project 'Food as a Tool for Social Change: How Ideas and Practices on Natural Food and Farming Entered the Mainstream in the Netherlands (1970-2020)'. This project brings together her main research interests: environmental, food, and agricultural history through the lens of practices. From 2020 until 2022, she was a teaching assistant at the research group Modernity and Society at KU Leuven. In 2020, Amber graduated cum laude from the RMA History at Utrecht University. She wrote her RMA-thesis on the political ideas of the Dutch alternative food movement of the 1970s.
E-mail: a.striekwold@uu.nl.