



Wim de Hoop:

The Netherlands is a frontrunner of agriculture and yet we know so little about soil.

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Wim de Hoop, Knowledge Center for Green Growth

- Driebergen (center of the Netherlands)
- Advice and diagnosis in the field of sustainable soil management and fertilization for farmers, contractors and policy makers.

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Needs:

- fast and reliable way to measure soil
- immediately diagnose problems in the soil and make it clear to clients with a practical road-map

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Solution:

- Integrated method for measuring and advising on soil quality, using the results from AgroCares Scanner

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Results:

- enthusiastic customers
- customized advice
- more awareness among farmers on the importance of good soil quality

Wim de Hoop has been working as an independent consultant for more than 6 years with his company 'Knowledge Center for Green Growth' (KCGG), located in Driebergen, the Netherlands. His goal is to help his clients to grow economically and at the same time sustainably. His customers are located throughout the Netherlands and include farmers (both arable and dairy farmers), agribusiness and contractors. In recent years, especially since using the AgroCares Scanner, Wim is focusing on soil and fertilization. According to him, soil quality is the most determining factor for income differences and sustainability. With the help of the Scanner and other devices, Wim measures what is going on with the soil on a field. He uses this information to produce a practical roadmap for the farmer. He is able to provide his customer with a diagnosis and hands-on advice within a day. In the past, this used to be impossible. Now Wim can give such advice because he has tools like the AgroCares Scanner.

Looking for ways to measure soil quality

Wim had been searching for a long time for a way to gain a good insight into soil quality and soil differences within the field. His years of experience at Wageningen University thought him there are great opportunities when it comes to sustainable soil management. It is both value for money and good for the environment. When Wim heard Peter van Erp (head of R&D at AgroCares) talk about the AgroCares Scanner, he immediately asked if he could try it. This makes Wim one of the very first S Scanner users.

Mixed samples give insufficient insight

Wim explains: "Soil is difficult to understand for many farmers and contractors. If you compare it to what a dairy farmer knows about his cow, for example, the difference is huge. A dairy farmer knows exactly what is going on with each individual cow. Arable farmers on the other hand, only have a mixed soil sample analyzed. It is often the case that only one compulsory soil sample is taken from a field. This gives no useful insight into the actual condition of the soil and the within-field differences in soil quality."

Fast and complete advice possible with the help of the Scanner

Wim has changed his way of advising with the arrival of the Scanner. "It happens often that a contractor calls me in the morning because he sees a problem on a field but does not know what to do. I go there in the afternoon and take 4-5 soil samples and do some other measurements (for example, to test compaction). I then analyze these samples at home with the Scanner and integrate the results into a total report that includes also other important aspects of the soil. The next day I can provide the contractor and the farmer with information on what is really going on with the soil and offer a concrete step-by-step plan and fertilization advice. It is very important to be able to act immediately if you see a problem." The Scanner is also used in other projects, together with the use of additional expertise in soil quality and precision fertilization.

Awareness is more important than measuring very precisely

Wim was surprised to find out how little farmers know about their soil. "The Netherlands is a leader in agriculture and yet we know so little about soil."

According to Wim, it is especially important that farmers and contractors have a quick insight into soil's quality and get a concrete step-by-step plan for soil management.

"Being aware of the overall quality of your soil is more important and more useful than having a very accurate measurement without any practical application. Focusing too much on details might prevent you from doing something with the information you already have. With a good broad insight you can achieve much more." The Scanner quickly provides insight into several important factors, which can be easily combined with other information to produce a BodemScan, developed by KCGG.

Enthusiastic customers

Wim was pleasantly surprised to discover that farmers are really interested in soil quality. Reactions from customers are extremely positive. "People are interested, but not in theoretical information; they want to know what it can bring them and they want a practical step-by-step plan. It is also very important that farmers can see it for themselves on their own plot. It should not be the case that only the adviser knows the soil condition, the farmer should also be aware of what is going on with the soil. Good information at the right time and practical advice – this approach is possible because tools such as the Scanner are now available."



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