

# REINTEGRATING AGRICULTURE INTO THE URBAN FABRIC OF NOORD BRABANT

Urban Farming as a Future Proof Strategy for Spatial, Social, and Ecological Resilience



## FOOD RESILIENCE

Local production for a secure food future



## SOCIAL WELL-BEING

Stronger communities, health, and education



## ECOLOGICAL QUALITY

Biodiversity, climate adaptation, and green infrastructure



## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Green jobs, innovation, and local entrepreneurship

COMPACT SPACES. SMART AGRICULTURE. RESILIENT FUTURE.



## USE OUR SPACE EFFICIENTLY

Reclaim underused rooftops, city edges, industrial zones, and open spaces.



## MULTIFUNCTIONAL FARMING

Link food production with recreation, care, education, and landscape value.



## THINK CIRCULAR, ACT TERRITORIAL

Close resource loops and build a circular local food system.



## PEOPLE, NATURE AND FOOD CONNECTED

Rebuild trust between citizens and agriculture for a healthier and more cohesive society.



## INVEST TODAY, THRIVE TOMORROW

A strategic path for Noord Brabant's resilient and livable future.

# Policy Brief

## Reintegrating Agriculture into the Urban Fabric of Noord Brabant

*Urban Farming as a Future-Proof Strategy for Spatial, Social, and Ecological Resilience*

M. Kabbara 2018

### Key insights

The Netherlands, and specifically Noord Brabant, faces a strategic, long-term policy challenge: how to maintain food resilience, ecological quality, and spatial balance in a highly urbanised region with finite land and agricultural systems increasingly detached from society. The paper argues that conventional large-scale agricultural models are no longer sufficient on their own, as they intensify land pressure, weaken social ties between farming and society, and contribute to environmental and spatial fragmentation.

The central recommendation is to promote urban and multifunctional farming as a future-proof policy model. This entails reallocating agricultural activity to underused and unconventional urban and peri-urban spaces, including rooftops, city edges, industrial zones, open spaces, canals, and green corridors. Such a strategy would not only support food production but also improve biodiversity, climate adaptation, local identity, public well-being, and social cohesion. In short, urban farming should be understood not as a niche environmental idea but as a territorial development strategy for Noord Brabant.

### Policy problem or background

The paper identifies a structural tension in Dutch agriculture. Over time, policy and economic change have moved the Netherlands towards larger-scale, high-output, **mono-functional agricultural systems**. While this has improved efficiency and production, it has also contributed to a decline in rural labour, a loss of social connection between agriculture and communities, reduced trust in the

agricultural sector, and increased pressure on the natural landscape. At the same time, urbanisation, climate change, ecological degradation, and land scarcity have created new pressures that the older agricultural model does not fully address.

In Noord-Brabant, these pressures are particularly acute. The province is economically strong and agriculturally important, yet it is also highly connected to urban growth, infrastructure expansion, ecological pressures, and competing land uses. Farming, urbanisation, and nature conservation increasingly compete for space. This makes it difficult to sustain traditional agricultural expansion. The policy issue is therefore not simply agricultural productivity but the need to redesign land use so that food production, ecology, and urban development can coexist more effectively.

The paper frames this challenge in terms of self-sufficiency, spatial quality, and future resilience. It asks whether alternative agricultural systems can help Noord-Brabant respond to finite land resources, rising future food demand, ecological risks, and the growing separation between people and food production. Urban farming and multifunctional farming are presented as possible answers because they reconnect agriculture to daily life, diversify land use, and create a more holistic territorial logic.

### Recommendations

The policy recommendation is to adopt a multifunctional urban agriculture strategy for Noord Brabant, focusing on spatial integration, territorial efficiency, and social value.

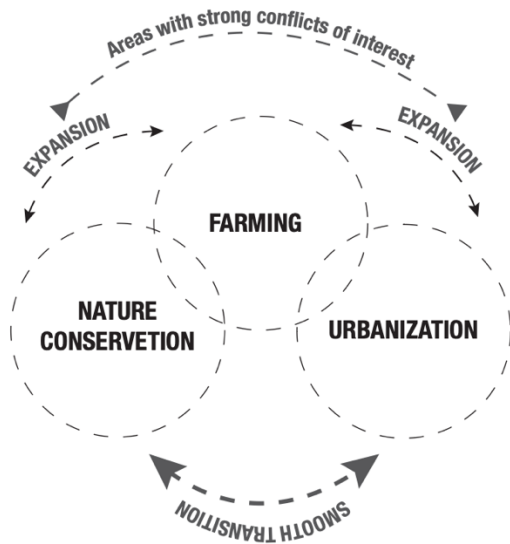
**First, recognise urban farming as a regional planning instrument.**

Urban agriculture should be embedded in spatial and regional policy, not treated solely as a local or community initiative. It should be integrated into planning for housing areas, city edges, industrial zones, ecological corridors, and future urban growth.

reintroduced without relying solely on conventional rural expansion.

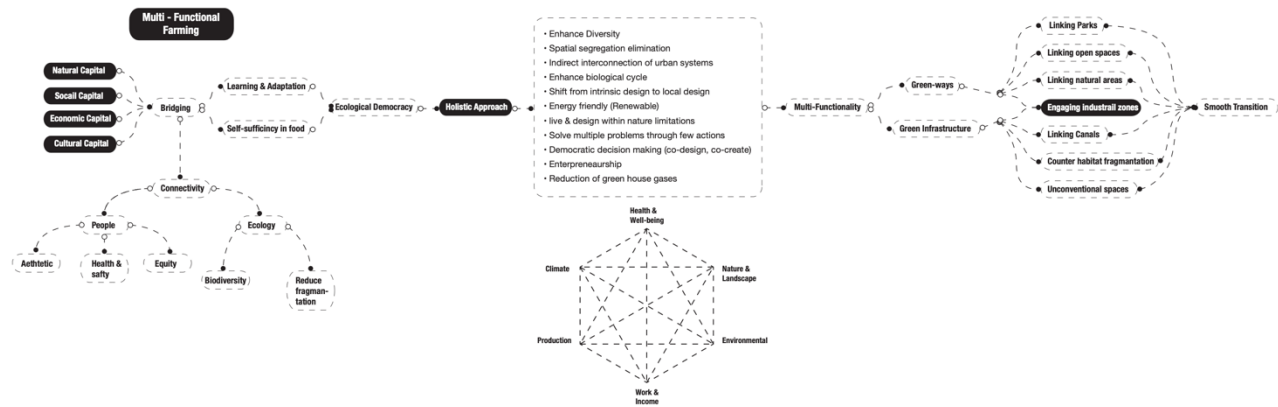
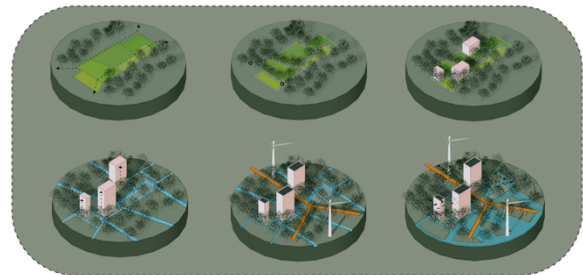
**Fourth, stimulate practical implementation through innovation and incentives.**

Local authorities should support pilot projects, research partnerships, and design-based experimentation across areas including rooftop agriculture, vertical farming, greenhouse integration, water-based systems, and productive green infrastructure. Incentives should also support farmers and entrepreneurs seeking to transition to multifunctional models.



**Second, prioritise multifunctional farming over purely mono-functional expansion.**

The paper shows that multifunctional farming creates broader public value by linking food production with recreation, care, education, landscape management, entrepreneurship, and ecological restoration. This helps agriculture regain societal relevance while improving farmers' economic resilience.



**Third, map and categorise potential spaces for agricultural reallocation.**

A key policy step is to map suitable areas for implementation across the territory, including rooftops, urban margins, open spaces, ecological structures, and underused land. This spatial approach enables agriculture to be

**Fifth, use urban agriculture to address the three Es: economy, ecology, and equity.**

The policy should be justified not only in environmental terms, but also as a strategy for employment, healthier communities, stronger local identity, food awareness, biodiversity, and reduced spatial segregation.

Figure 11. Possibilities for urban agriculture in Noord-Brabant in 2025

	Area (ha)	Factor	Used area	Production method	Yield t/ha	Products grown (t)
<b>Rooftops</b>	6449	0.05	322	Hydroponics	190	61263
<b>Parks and gardens</b>	3880	0.2	776	Intensive urban agriculture	60	46560
<b>Allotment gardens</b>	329	1	329	Conventional urban agriculture	12	3948
<b>Building sites</b>	5370	0.2	1074	Conventional urban agriculture	12	12888
<b>Total</b>						<b>124659</b>

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