Lessons learnt from (dairy) farming in the Netherlands

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Only 60 years ago…
Since 1960’s: scale enlargement and intensification
Conducive policies in agriculture 1950-1960’s

- Market protection - fixed prices
- Easy access to credit for farmers
- Support to education-extension-research
- Rigorous disease control programs
- Subsidies for chemicals
Artificial insemination & breeding policies
Gaining land by making more ‘polders’ & enlarging existing plots for mechanization
EU subsidies to NL

GLB income Netherlands – rural development excluded – x € million. (nominal amounts, not corrected for inflation) Source: LEI
Resulting in:

impressive increase in milk and labour productivity

+ loss of nearly 90% of family dairy farms

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy farms (x1000)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<td>Dairy cows (x1000)</td>
<td>1.628</td>
<td>2.218</td>
<td>2.367</td>
<td>1.708</td>
<td>1.504</td>
<td>1.433</td>
<td>1.413</td>
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<td># of dairy cows per farm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milkproduction/farm (x1000)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>112.5</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>522</td>
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<td>Milkproduction (kg/cow/year)</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>4.650</td>
<td>5.300</td>
<td>6.610</td>
<td>7.420</td>
<td>7.550</td>
<td>7.880</td>
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<td>Labor productivity (kg milk/hour)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>141</td>
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As well as: reduced manure quality and soil fertility
In turn resulting in: reduced farm efficiency ....
EU farm policy still harms poor countries – it’s high time for change
Overall picture Dutch dairy:

- Social problems – over 90% has stopped since 1960’s
- Low income due to low profit rate per kg of milk and high debts
- Income prospects difficult – also due to abolishing milk quota in 2015
- Young people moving out of farming
- Criticism of general public – especially on animal wellbeing and climate change
Way out #1
Stop farming
Way out #2
Start farming abroad