

National Report

Netherlands

Deliverable: IO1.A1

SnailVille

15.02.2021

ATERMON

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Project Number: **2020-1-UK01-KA204-079017**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Author	Description	Action	Pages
1.0	15/02/2021	ATERMON	Creation	C	9

(*) Action: C = Creation, I = Insert, U = Update, R = Replace, D = Delete

REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title
1	2020-1-UK01-KA204-079017	SnailVille Proposal
2		

APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title
1		
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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Context

Despite being among the most prolific consumers of snails in the world, European countries that consume snail meat do not produce sufficient quantities domestically and must instead rely on import to cover demand. Given this, in addition to its apparent profitability, rapid return on investment, and low capital required for an initial investment snail farming (Heliculture) could be a good fit for those who may be low-skilled, unemployed, farmers without substantial capital, or other who aspire to augment their income.

1.2 Project Objectives

The Snailville project aims to develop a heliculture training game for low-skilled marginalised adults that can help them set up cooperatives in rural areas. This training game will function as a single information point guiding a potential snail farmer on how to start a profitable business depending on their situation (financial capability, business skills, geographical location, etc.) by minimising the risks associated with traditional snail farming (snail diseases, egg hatching, formulation of the best feed, mortality rate). The project also hopes to contribute to the preservation of the snail population in the wild by promoting heliculture.

1.3 Project Target Group

There are a few main target groups – most centrally low-skilled adults from rural areas that can support heliculture, heliculture enthusiasts, and of course snail farmers themselves. More broadly, assorted persons and organisations in the field of agriculture will be targeted, including for example university or college agriculture departments, government ministries or agencies relating to agriculture, or rural development organisations.

Aside from this, game developers may also be targeted for the more technical aspects of the project relating to development of the game.

2. National Report

2.1 Objectives of the Report

The national report concerns the identification of the current state of play in the heliculture sector in each partner country, and in particular the identification of barriers that heliculturists face in each country. These national reports will form the basis of the Snailville training game, influencing its structure and content, that will guide users and target groups to gain the skills necessary for and surmount the barriers to success in snail farming.

Therefore, the National report will examine the current situation in partner countries with reference to snail farming and the barriers to successfully undertaking it (the "AS-IS" situation). The next step comprises the identification of the actions, skills, and context required for the ideal situation in which to practice heliciculture (the "TO-BE" situation).

2.1 The methodology

Partners will conduct desk research on the current situation around heliciculture and the barriers to it in their own country. They will identify qualitative and quantitative data to describe their national "AS-IS" situations and may present good practices in the field that will be used as examples to provide motivation and ideas to the project participants.

Good practices from countries outside of the partnership will also be identified, setting out the TO-BE situation, with particular support from the domain experts on the project at UTH.

Lastly, a comparative report will be put together based on the findings of the National reports to identify the needs, challenges, and opportunities of the partner countries.

2.2 The results

2.2.1 Briefly outline the size, importance, and general context of snail farming in your country

In the Netherlands, it is widely used the slime of snails in the cosmetology field but also snails are consumed as a very delicate food. Even though the consumption of snails it is widely popular, snail farming is not as widely known as we could expect. (Dr. M.A.W. Ruis, 2016)

In the Netherlands, there are only five snail farms which are breeding snails for consumption. The two of them which are more popular and can be easily found on google maps are the following:

- The "Slow Escargots"
- The "Slaque Escargotskwekerij"

Dutch snail farmers mainly supply restaurants, bistros, wholesalers and other individuals interested to buy the products. For example, the "Slow Escargots" farm annually sells around 100,000 snails. (Dr. M.A.W. Ruis, 2016)

Apart from the snail breeders, there are also food companies who are importing snails from other European or non-European countries. Since 1995 the country is a significant importer of snails for consumption. According to the statistics of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the biggest producer and exporter of snails is Morocco. The Netherlands is ranked 30th in the list of exports of snails and 21st in the list of imports worldwide according to the trading statistics for the snails' Harmonization code 030760. The countries in which the Netherlands exports snails are Sweden, Belgium, Italy, Germany, France, Finland, Austria, Portugal and Poland. The imports of snails in the Netherlands are from France, Denmark, Vietnam, Belgium, Taiwan, Germany, Singapore, Canada and Indonesia. (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, n.d.) (TRIDGE, n.d.)

The cultivation or import of snails in the country differs according to the species protected by regulations and laws, preventing their extinction. The most common varieties for consumption are the *Helix Pomatia* (cultivated), the *Helix Aspersa* and the *Helix Lucorum*. (Dr. M.A.W. Ruis, 2016)

The *Helix Pomatia* is protected in the Netherlands by the Flora and Fauna Act and may not be allowed to collect within Europe, this vineyard snail falls under the European Habitats Directive. From France

can be imported the *Helix Aspersa* and the *Helix Lucorum* snails, but especially African giant snails, which end up in wholesalers and supermarkets. There are times in which producers may put African giant snails in the shells of vineyard snails, to gain more money selling them at high prices, which is prohibited and can be regarded as fraud. The snails of *Helix Lucorum* are mainly imported from Turkey and the Balkan countries either as chilled, deep-frozen, boiled, or canned and they end up to wholesalers and supermarkets. The *Helix aspersa* snails are cultivated in 5 farms in the Netherlands and mainly find their way alive to restaurants. (Dr. M.A.W. Ruis, 2016)

2.2.2 What laws or standards do heliciculturists follow in your country (local, regional, national, or EU level)?

The Netherlands follows a rather complex system of food legislation based on The Food and Commodities Act (1935, as amended) is the principal framework legislation that governs food control and food safety. This act covers a variety of issues such as labelling, packaging, import/export etc. Responsible for the administration and implementation of the act is the VWA, which is an independent agency in the Ministry of LNV but also acts as a delivery agency for the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (Ministerie voor Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport or VWS). The Authority is responsible for the inspection and supervision of all food, non-food, animal health and animal welfare.

The legal framework related to snail's production, packaging, import, export and consumption is defined in the Decree relative to fisheries products, snails and frog legs (1995, as amended) (Warenwetregeling visserijproducten, tweekleppige weekdieren, slakken en kikkerbillen). This legislation implements a number of EU Directives including, Council Regulation (EC) 104/2000 on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products, and Commission Regulation (EC) 2065/2001 laying down the conditions for informing consumers about fishery and aquaculture products. (Overheid NL-Law Bench, 2016)

The Netherlands participates in the EU Common Agricultural Policy as a member state of the European Union and implements the respective legislative rules. The future of CAP and of the member states in the agriculture field is based on 9 objectives for better quality of food and a European farming model:

- Fair income to farmers.
- Increase competitiveness.
- Power in the food chain.
- Climate change actions.
- Environmental care.
- To preserve landscapes and biodiversity.
- To support generational renewal.
- Vibrant rural areas.
- To protect food and health quality. (Jan Holthuis, 2020)

The European Union provides farmers with financial support to achieve a safe farming community with high profit, but also to guarantee that within the European Union it is cultivated safe, healthy and affordable food. The amount of income support provided to each farmer is defined according to the hectares of the farm. There are obligatory payments that the EU countries have to make such as payment for sustainable farming methods (greening) and payment for young farmers. Farmers who do not comply with EU rules can see their payments reduced or stopped entirely. (Jan Holthuis, 2020)

The Netherlands is also a party to the world Trade Organisation since 1995, to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations since 1945, to the International Plant Protection Convention since 1951 and World Animal Health Organization since 1924. (Jan Holthuis, 2020)

Being part of the European Union, the country should also apply the EC Food Hygiene Regulations which are:

- Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 – on the hygiene of foodstuffs. This regulation introduces rules regarding the structural, cleaning, maintenance, and training requirements of food businesses to protect consumers. These procedures together with permanent procedures based on the hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) principle should together form the operator's 'Food safety management system'.
- Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 - laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin. This regulation defines the requirements of the procedures for preparing the snails for human consumption.
- Regulation (EC) No. 854/2004 - laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption. This regulation applies to all activities and persons to which Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 applies. (European Commission, n.d.)

Other EU regulations related to food consumption are:

- The Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 referring to the general principles and requirements of food for human consumption law.
- The Regulation (EC) No. 2073/2005 (as amended) referring to the microbiological criteria for foodstuffs, food safety criteria and process hygiene criteria for food of animal origin – both raw and ready-to-eat foods. (European Commission, n.d.)

The import of snails in the Netherlands must comply with the respective EU regulations. Snails must come from authorised countries according to Decision 2003/812 / EC and must be provided with a health certificate according to Regulation (EC) 2074/2005. There are several suppliers in Europe who supply the Netherlands. (Dr. M.A.W. Ruis, 2016)

2.2.3 What are the main barriers preventing people from starting snail farming, in particular as a business?

As already mentioned, the legislation which includes the related information for snail farming in the Netherlands is rather complicated. A unique source where all this information is gathered for the public could not be found during the desk research. This may be one of the reasons for which the heliciculture sector is not widely known.

The Netherlands is a country involved in the production of dairy products, trading of meat and horticulture. The exploitable land by the agricultural sector may not meet the requirements needed for the breeding of snails such as clean soil without pesticides and non-contaminated water.

Since there is no information related to the barriers that people meet in snail farming, we cannot support the aforementioned statements as trustworthy information based on research and official statistics.

2.2.4 What are the main barriers preventing snail farmers from growing their business, earning money from their snail farming, or otherwise becoming more successful?

This sector is not well known to the farmers in the Netherlands and the import of snails from other countries may also affect their engagement in it. Though since there are no official data from researchers, we cannot support this statement and measure the barriers affecting the snail farmers to grow their businesses.

2.2.5 What are the particular strengths of the way snail farming is done in your country?

There is no reference on the way that snail farming is operating in the Netherlands. In this way we cannot evaluate the strengths and weaknesses

2.2.6 Is there any heliciculture-focused training offered in your country?

Locally and nationally, there are no official training opportunities for the farmers to dive into the Heliculture sector. People who are using the web can meet opportunities in international forums with tips on how to start snail breeding. Additionally, Ghanaian organisations and universities are offering information and courses on the snail breeding. Furthermore, Irish and Italian organisations seem to provide opportunities for training on the topic of snail farming.

2.3 Conclusions

In the Netherlands, the snails and snail products are used either for consumption or in cosmetic products. The Heliculture sector is not widely known and not so developed in the country since there are a few farms that provide snails for consumption to restaurants and other wholesalers. The Netherlands imports snails for various uses either from European or non-European countries. The most common cultivated species of snails in the country is the *Helix Aspersa* and is delivered alive to restaurants. The *Helix Pomatia* belong to the protected species and may not be collected. The *Helix Aspersa* and *Helix Lucorum* is imported from France, Turkey and Balkan countries and are ending in wholesalers and supermarkets.

The legislation in the Netherlands is not very clear on the snail farming sector. There are actions and provisions linked to laws existing many years now, but the EU regulations are also a significant part of this type of agricultural exercise in the country. The production, packaging, distribution of snail products it is coordinated by EU directives which apply in all EU countries to assure the implementation of safety rules in the food industry. The allowance of import and export of snails in the Netherlands it is performed according to EU directives and regulations. An advantage of being an EU state for the Netherlands it is the fact that provides farmers with opportunities to funding from the European Union financial regulations for support to the practitioners in the agricultural sector, which probably is not widely known. Unfortunately, no official data are emerging from the desk research to define which are the barriers related to the enhancement of the activity of the snail breeding in the country but also to permit us to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the already applied practices in this sector. The fact that the training opportunities are very little in this sector it is also a related disadvantage for the existing situation.

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