



Interview Jan and Josse Peeters, farmers and owners of the Bayer ForwardFarm Hof ten Bosch
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"IT'S ALL ABOUT PARTNERSHIP"

Farmers really do a great job. They ensure food safety and food security – seven days a week, 365 days a year. Thereby they have to master a lot of challenges: from climate changes to soil erosion. That's why exchanging information with other farmers and experts is becoming more and more important – not least when it comes to sustainable agriculture practices. Bayer ForwardFarming helps farmers stepping forward. Just like the farmer brothers Jan and Josse Peeters from Belgium whose farm is located in Huldenberg, in the countryside near Brussels. In this interview they explain why sustainable agriculture is easier to manage than many people may first think and what advantages it brings for them managing a Bayer ForwardFarm.

Hof ten Bosch is the first official Bayer ForwardFarm. Could you please tell us something about this farm?

Jan Peeters: "Well Hof ten Bosch, not more than 15 kilometers from the European capital Brussels, has been farmed by our family since 1890 and owned by my brother Josse and me since the 1980s. If you take a look at our farmland, you'll see that we grow all different kinds of crops and fruits here. Or more specifically, we grow 130 to 150 hectares of potatoes, wheat, sugar beet, and corn, and also apples and pears."

That means you have a lot of experience in growing crops and fruits. And on top of that your farm has also been a Bayer ForwardFarm since 2011. What does this mean exactly?

Josse Peeters: "The answer is very simple. Here at Hof ten Bosch we are testing and implementing Bayer CropScience's newest products and technologies that foster sustainable agriculture. So if somebody wants to know what agriculture will look like in the future they should visit us and learn more about sustainable farming practices. They will then recognize that sustainability is more than using the newest technology. In fact what we are doing here is following a holistic approach."

Jan Peeters: "As a Bayer ForwardFarm we show how farming business can easily be combined with responsibility for the environment and the biodiversity of a farm. One reason why we and Bayer are such a good fit is our shared belief in balance – raising productivity while protecting or improving biodiversity and maintaining our responsibility to the community."

How do you think a farm like Hof ten Bosch can benefit from being a Bayer ForwardFarm?

Josse Peeters: "It's all about partnership. Being part of Bayer ForwardFarming and being the partner of choice for Bayer allows us to share our experiences about farming practices with them. So we can tell them what is possible and what is not, what helps us in implementing sustainable agriculture practices and what doesn't help us. But what is most important is that they react to our feedback and develop solutions that provide us with sustainable and high yields."



Jan Peeters: "Working together with Bayer is a great journey for both of us. Since adopting the Bayer ForwardFarming concept we have benefited from a broad range of innovative solutions, such as optimized crop protection treatments combined with valuable services that enable us to manage the challenges of sustainable farming. And our farm is a place where we want to enter into an open dialog on our contribution to sustainable and productive agriculture. This allows us to present our thoughts, positions, and solutions to different stakeholders."

Could you please give as an example of how new solutions have helped you to become more sustainable?

Jan Peeters: "For example, in 2011 we started collaborating with the Walloon Agricultural Research Centre through Bayer CropScience to develop methods to mitigate erosion in potato fields. As a result we achieved a 7 percent yield increase in 2011, based on the typical 40 to 45 tons per hectare yields for crisping potatoes."

Josse Peeters: "To add another example, in collaboration with the Flemish authorities we installed seven hectares of grass buffer strips as plot borders. These help us prevent any runoff of soil, nutrients, and crop protection products not contained by other means. And we also increased biodiversity, e.g., by planting mixed hedges that now act as a windshield for fruit crops, gives shelter to beneficial insects and helps to prevent spray drift to the outside of the field. Furthermore, we improved our wastewater management by using Bayer's Phytobac technology. But of course, these are only some examples of how Bayer ForwardFarming continues to help us become more sustainable."

How difficult is it to manage sustainable agriculture in daily farm business?

Jan Peeters: "Well it is not difficult, it is much easier to manage than many people may expect it to be. For us, sustainable agriculture and the partnership with Bayer ForwardFarming really is a giant step into the future of farming."

For more information please visit: www.forwardfarming.com