

Sabina Vandeweyer: from the field to the political institutions



Sabina Vandeweyer is a dairy farmer from Wuustwezel, Flanders, where she runs a family farm with her husband and three daughters. Alongside her farming work, she is deeply engaged in agricultural representation and advocacy: she serves as regional and provincial chair of Ferm voor Agravrouwen, acts as spokesperson for Landelijke Toekomst, sits as an effective member of Flanders' Strategic Advisory Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (SALV), and is politically active within CD&V. She is a strong voice for legal certainty, protection of productive farmland, and a viable future for young farmers.



Sabina Vandeweyer

Farmer & member of the Agriculture Council

What is one misconception you would like to challenge, about your work or about women's place in the agri food sector?

I am convinced that today's female farmers in Flanders are powerful women, each with a clear vision for the future of our agricultural sector. They are full-fledged partners in their businesses and a strong force in their own right. They successfully balance extensive administrative responsibilities, physical work on the farm, and caring for their families. I believe that, over the past 50 years, we have already made significant progress.

What is a key challenge you are tackling right now, and what are you doing concretely to move the needle?

Currently, I closely follow regional policy dossiers concerning the growing pressure on our agricultural land, including water projects, pipeline corridors, and nature management plans. I also place great importance on expanding my network, both among policymakers and fellow farmers. To achieve this, I attend as many meetings and receptions as possible, and I have seen my network grow steadily. Inviting policymakers to our farm and showing them around also creates opportunities for fresh inspiration and new insights.

Share one practice, tool or approach you have tested that delivers real results. Why would you recommend it?

Recently, at a reception, I wanted to get in touch with an important person who had just been appointed by our minister to mediate between nature and agriculture in our region. When I noticed that this person was speaking with a colleague of mine, I went over to greet him. He then introduced me, which gave me the opportunity to speak for half an hour with someone I had not known before and exchange contact details.

A person, failure or pivotal moment that changed your path or perspective. What did it teach you?

In 2023, around eight women farmers from our region, together with other farmers and future farmers, took action to prevent a Natura 2000 area in our region from being designated as a National Park. Together, we distributed flyers and apples in many places to inform citizens about the consequences that a National Park label could have for our sector. The fact that we succeeded has given us both the courage and the recognition to continue standing up for our rights and concerns.

I am committed to securing legal certainty for the agricultural sector, particularly through robust permits, and especially for the young farmers of the future.

What very concrete issue in agriculture is most on your mind at the moment, and why?

For me, it was always clear that I would become a farmer. And that is exactly what happened. Today, many young people are equally eager to enter the sector, but uncertainty around permits, ever-changing regulations, administrative burdens, labour, and finances presents a major barrier to starting out in agriculture. Sometimes, they do not dare take that step and choose a job outside the sector instead. I would like to help change this.



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