

Saskia Visser: connecting soil scientists, farmers, policymakers, and financiers into one shared ecosystem for the green transition

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Dr. Saskia Visser is Strategic Partnerships & Opportunity Development Lead at Climate-KIC, where she connects capabilities across the organisation and translates them into cross-cutting propositions for cities, regions, funders and strategic partners. With over 25 years of experience in sustainable land use, agriculture and climate innovation, Saskia works at the interface of partnerships, research and business development to shape opportunities that embed agricultural value chains in regional contexts and accelerate systemic transformation of food and land systems. She is the lead initiator of the Soil Innovation Partnership, building on the legacy and network of EJP SOIL, and continues to develop initiatives such as the Green Horizons Farmers Network, supporting farmer-led innovation, validation and scaling of climate-smart and soil-healthy agricultural practices across Europe and beyond.



Dr Saskia Visser

Strategic Partnerships &
Opportunity Development Lead at Climate-KIC

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

A myth I want to challenge is the idea that farmers resist change, despite the strikes we have also seen. The farmers I meet through my work are courageous innovators. They face climate risk in their fields every single day, and they experiment because they have to. What slows transformation is not their mindset, but fragmented systems that fail to connect them with science, finance, and each other.

I would also challenge the idea that women must adapt to the old structures of agriculture. The future of food production requires collaboration over competition, and long-term stewardship over short-term gain.

That is not about gender; it is about having the courage to redesign systems. And many women are brave enough to step forward and do exactly that.

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

My work today is about building bridges that should have existed long ago. Through the Soil Innovation Partnership and the Green Horizons Farmers Network, we are creating spaces for radical collaboration across countries, connecting soil scientists, farmers, policymakers, and financiers within one shared ecosystem. I recently stepped down from the management team in my organisation because I truly believe this needs to happen and want to dedicate my time to it.

We organise Soilathons across Europe to turn research into real-world trials. We support farmer-led validation initiatives across different pedoclimatic zones. We create peer networks in which a practice tested in Ireland can inspire a farmer in Spain, and insights from the Netherlands can strengthen resilience in Greece. It is also my dream to go beyond Europe and expand into a truly global network. Farmers in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas face different realities, but their wisdom is deeply interconnected. We have so much to learn from one another if we build the structures that allow that learning to travel. For me, this is not just innovation. It is solidarity across borders.

The farmers I meet are courageous innovators. What slows transformation is not their mindset – it is fragmented systems that fail to connect them to science, finance, and each other.

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

The most powerful innovation is farmer-led validation embedded in international peer networks. When farmers test practices together across regions and countries, supported by science and connected through structured learning platforms, something shifts: trust grows, confidence grows, and momentum builds. Innovation stops being a project and becomes a shared movement. In both SIP and Green Horizons, we see farmers not as recipients of solutions, but as co-designers of the future. That shift changes the pace and depth of transformation.

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

What keeps me awake is how we move from fragmented sustainability pilots to courageous, cross-border collaboration at global scale – because soil health and climate resilience are shared responsibilities, and our solutions must be shared as broad as possible.



Photo credit: Saskia Visser