Press release **22 August 2019**

Saline Farming: An innovative method of farming to cope with climate change and create new possibilities!

Climate change and sea level rise cause saltwater to intrude in farmlands. Experts are looking for solutions that prevent the loss of food production capability where saline farming could very well be the solution.

Farming on saline soils is often associated with a reduced yield and crop failure, however according to a group of experts behind the EU-funded project called SalFar, the potential of growing food on saline soils is vast and so far underrated.

The SalFar project taps into questions such as: how should we deal with rising sea levels? Can we afford to continuously upgrade our dykes to protect the low areas of our countries? What are we going to do about increasing groundwater salinization? How can we protect the roots of our crops and plants? Are there any crops that can resist or have a higher tolerance against saltwater?

Within the project, a multidisciplinary team of climate experts, micro-biologists, economists, educators, farmers, entrepreneurs and policy makers is conducting hands on research in field labs that have been set up in the partnering countries around the North Sea Region.

> *"In the field labs we are generating knowledge on the salt tolerance of different crops by testing different varieties of several conventional crops like potato, cabbage, carrot, onion, and halophytes like Salicornia and ice plant as these conventional crops are most suitable for moderate saline conditions and the halophytes are even suitable for cultivation up to seawater salinity",* says Angelica Kaus, Project Manager of SalFar.

New business opportunities

SalFar is not only about exploiting degraded farmland for food production, it is also about creating new business opportunities for farmers, food producers and entrepreneurs by creating new exciting products. Crops grown under saline conditions develop unique characteristics in taste and this opens up the possibility to develop new unique and eco-innovative saline products. In fact, one of the objectives in SalFar is to design a brand for saline products from the North Sea Region.

Ensuring food security

In the bigger picture saline farming is also about being able to produce enough food for the world's growing population. Around the world there are millions of hectares of degraded soils which could potentially be used to grow salt-tolerant crops and thereby help ensure food security. This is a pressing issue as the world must feed 9 billion people by 2050 which means that the demand for food will increase by 60% compared to 2016 (the World Economic Forum). SalFar has taken the initiative to organise an international conference, Saline Futures Conference, to demonstrate and discuss the potential of farming on saline soils.

It will take place from 10-13 September 2019 in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. The conference puts the potential of saline farming on the agenda in the light of climate change and food security. It brings

together more than 200 experts from all over the world to share experiences and to talk about solutions for the increasing salinization of the countries around the Wadden Sea and the North Sea.

During the conference the first results from the SalFar field labs will also be presented where the salt-tolerance of crops has been tested.

More information: https://www.waddenacademie.nl/salinefutures

For further information please contact
Angelica Kaus, SalFar Project Manager
a.m.kaus@rug.nl, +31 (0) 50 3164188 or

Douwe van Noordenburg, SalFar Project Manager,
+31 (0) 62 2372417,
d.van.noordenburg@provinciegroningen.nl

Website: https://northsearegion.eu/salfar/

Facts about SalFar:

- SalFar is co-funded by the North Sea Region Programme 2014 - 2020.
- The project has a total budget of 6.147.375 €
- 14 partners from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom respectively.
- SalFar is an acronym of 'Saline Farming'.

Photo: Living lab on the Island of Texel where the salt-tolerance of different crops are being tested