

NATURE ASSISTED HEALTH FOUNDATION



BACKGROUND

Green environments can play an important role in enhancing the health of human beings. Although a positive correlation between nature and good health has been demonstrated (Vitamine G, Jolanda Maas, amongst others), it is not yet known how green environments can best be used for specific healing objectives. Sufficient research in this realm has not yet been performed because of the lack of appropriate applications to provide a solid base of evidence, and the concomitant lack of finance to support it. In order to create a breakthrough we need a professionally-recognized organisation to stimulate the development of knowledge in this realm, thus assuring the quality of the effort.

Both national and provincial governments are looking for solutions that offer more resilient economy, care, living environment and nature. Entrepreneurs are looking for new ways to get out of the current crisis. As a society we need to find new possibilities to keep people healthy and at the same time reduce the costs of healthcare. Consideration of the health effects of nature seems to answer a number of questions and cooperation is needed to profit from the opportunities that appear.

NATURE ASSISTED HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Nature Assisted Health Foundation (NAHF) is a non-profit organisation that aims to make optimum use of the opportunities that nature/green environments offer us to enhance the quality of our lives, and thus to offer an answer to quality of life issues that we are confronted with. The foundation achieves this aim by stimulating research (for instance in the form of 'living labs', practical situations), setting up quality systems, and promoting entrepreneurship and cooperation between all required parties. NAHF was founded by UPP (four innovative horticultural entrepreneurs in different regions of Holland), SHFT (concept and business development) and NAHC, a spin off company of SLU (Swedish university of agricultural sciences). A broadly oriented board was composed in order to guarantee that this foundation can play a permanent role

internationally and to guarantee a long-lasting connection with the triple helix (entrepreneurs, governments, education and research). In addition, an advisory board (Reference Board) has been appointed, to advise on the content of the research programme and to check its quality and practical applicability.

The foundation will set up continuing alliances to develop new knowledge and to promote the development of new activity in the fields of health, leisure, economy and nature/green environments. These can also embrace temporary alliances, concentrating on specific applications. We strive for an open and inclusive approach, welcoming anyone who can contribute. Furthermore, the foundation is internationally oriented.

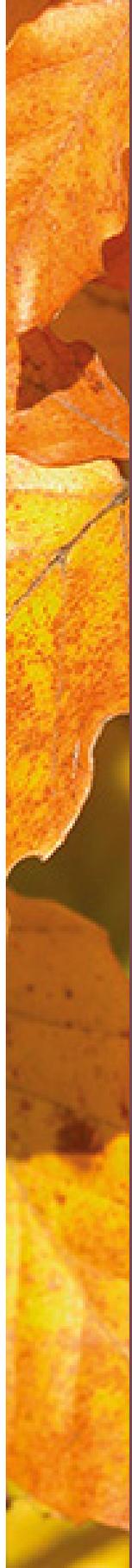
OBJECTIVES

NAHF aims to realise the following objectives in the next five years:

- The development of a network, consisting of enterprises, knowledge institutes, educational institutes and governments.
- The linking of entrepreneurship and research at an European level. Partners are located in at least five countries.
- The development of at least five applications with social and economic value.

The ambition in the long term (ten years) is:

- Improvement of the quality of life of millions of Europeans. This can be achieved within the sectors of healthcare and leisure. Also recreation can contribute to long-lasting labour participation, vitality and healthy ageing.
- Stimulation of the emergence of a new industry in the field of nature/green environments and health. The turnover of the joint start-ups, products and services is at least fifty million euros.



Parties involved

The founders of the foundation – UPP, SHFT and NAHC – come from the business world as well as from the world of science. The founders also reflect the international character that the foundation aims for.

UPP

UPP is a think tank of four entrepreneurs with a concern for nature and sustainable growth. UPP develops concepts for the future and ideas that are directly applicable in cooperation with organisations, the business world and governments.

UPP was established in 2005 to strengthen innovation within and outside of the horticultural sector. The four entrepreneurs all come from this sector:

André Hoek Hoek Hoveniers
[landscape gardening]

Thod Binder Binder Groenprojecten
[green projects]

Peter van de Haar Van de Haar Groep
[green projects]

Bert van Helvoirt Van Helvoirt Groenprojecten [green projects]

SHFT

SHFT develops new business activity and stimulates dynamic processes between entrepreneurs, governments and science so that hidden opportunities will be exposed. Bert van Helvoirt is the owner of SHFT.

NAHC

NAHC is a Swedish limited company, owned by researchers from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and SLU Holding, the innovation and venture company from SLU. This company commercialises the knowledge developed and results yielded by SLU researchers.

Other parties involved

The following parties are involved in projects with or have shown interest in NAHF:

Governments/NGOs:

Midpoint Brabant
Municipality of Tilburg, NL
Dutch province of Noord-Brabant
Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation
SER Brabant, social economic board, province of Brabant, NL
Provincial Health Council
Streekhuis Het Groene Woud, promotion of areas of outstanding beauty
European Centre of Nature Conservation (ECNC)
International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)

Care organisations

Vitura, vitality centre for people with stress-related illnesses
Prisma foundation, care institute for mentally disabled people
Thebe, health care provider
De Wever, health care provider
Elisabeth Hospital
Various independent care providers

Universities and knowledge institutes

University of Tilburg
VU University Medical Center Amsterdam
University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

Insurance companies

Achmea, income and health care insurance company
Menzis, health care insurance company

Professional organisations

Vereniging van Hoveniers en Groenvoorzieners (VHG), association of landscaping companies

Productschap Tuinbouw, governmental agency for agriculture

The parties involved can become Associates of the foundation. This will be further developed and formalised. More than 90% of the above parties have indicated that they want to spend time on the development of the foundation, to contribute to fund-raising and/or participate in the Board or the Reference Board. The Dutch province of Noord-Brabant, Midpoint Brabant, the Chamber of Commerce, Productschap Tuinbouw and Rabobank also support this initiative financially.

Board

The Board consists of:
Bert van Helvoirt SHFT, owner of Van Helvoirt Groenprojecten BV
Chris Gerritse University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht
Jasperina Venema Vitura BV and Van Helvoirt Groenprojecten
Johannes Dyring
CEO, SLU Holding
Patrik Grahn Professor, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
The managing director of the foundation is
Joop van Hezik Ecotopia.

Reference Board

The Reference Board consists of:
J.A. Roukema surgeon at Elisabeth Hospital, University of Tilburg
G. van Lomwel Achmea
Catharine Ward Thompson professor, OPENspace, University of Edinburgh
Åke Nygren professor, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden

FIELDS OF APPLICATION

Over the next three years, NAHF will concentrate on five applications. The foundation has already made a choice for three applications: stress-related illnesses, oncology and dementia. The reason for this is the social impact of these illnesses and the concrete opportunities that are seen in the market by its network/associates.

STRESS-RELATED ILLNESSES

For stress related illnesses, NAHF started with the knowledge developed and the research carried out by SLU. A treatment protocol for the Dutch situation is now being developed on the basis of international standards. This will be the basis for international research and it also contributes to the professionalization of green care applications in the Netherlands.

The following parties are involved in the development of this project at the moment: Vitura BV, SLU, NAHC AB. This group may be extended.

ONCOLOGY

For oncology, NAHF focuses on people who are recovering from surgery and medication related to breast cancer. This type of cancer is increasingly curable. Nevertheless, more than 50% of the people with breast cancer who used to be full employed, do not return to work afterwards, even though this should be possible, from a medical point of view. By working on mental recovery and vitality in a rehabilitation garden with professional guidance, return to work could possibly be achieved more frequently. Another hypothesis is, that the quality of life and/or the chance of survival will increase as well.

The following parties are already involved in the development of this project at the moment: Vitura BV, University of Tilburg, Elisabeth Hospital, University of Humanistic Studies. This group may be extended.

DEMENTIA

Within the next decades, the number of people in the Netherlands suffering from dementia will be more than doubled. This prognosis has led to the recent launching of a master plan for dementia by the Dutch national government. A specifically designed green environment can improve the quality of life of people suffering from dementia and their (informal) carers, and it may reduce the costs of care. The research that NAHF wants to conduct focuses mainly on these two groups. One in eight people provides informal care and this percentage will rise because of the increase in the number of people with dementia and because people will stay at home longer into the progression of the disease. On average, around every person with dementia, there are three people giving informal care. We think that the green environment is not only good for elderly people, but also for informal and professional care providers. A hypothesis of NAHF is that nature-assisted therapy will reduce behaviours that are demanding of carers' time and attention. That will bring down healthcare costs and will have significant social impact.

The following parties are already involved in this project at the moment: UKON, HAS, Thebe, De Wever, Alzheimer Nederland afdeling Midden-Brabant, Fontys Hogeschool, Van Helvoirt Groenprojecten, province of Noord-Brabant, Rabobank. This group may be extended.

LIVING LABS

The foundation operates through living labs – practical situations linked to research.

- Vitura Vitality Centre (located at Landpark Assisië in Biezenmortel) is the living lab for stress-related illnesses.
- As far as oncology is concerned, a network of oncologists, ex-patients and professionals has been brought together. Together they will form a project group that will develop a specific method of nature-assisted therapy and will set up scientific research. Also for oncology, Vitura Vitality Centre will be the living lab.
- As far as dementia is concerned, the foundation is working on the more detailed definition of a research question.





Funding is already available. Different institutions with a dementia garden have been brought together to study the use and effects of their gardens. Knowledge can be collected and used immediately. Thus, three living labs are available (via existing care institutions).

COOPERATION

NAHF offers new opportunities for breakthroughs in the field of green care internationally. Thanks to the foundation, existing knowledge and experience can be bundled. The foundation forms the platform where science and entrepreneurs meet. This leads to more knowledge exchange and further applications. The foundation is open to scale up to Europe.

The foundation is looking for enthusiastic people and organisations that can and want to contribute to the improvement of people's quality of life by using nature and green environments. NAHF is looking for a wide diversity, in which everyone can contribute from his/her uniqueness to a long-lasting development in which knowledge is built up and practically applied.

Contact information:

Nature Assisted Health Foundation

Bert van Helvoirt, M.Sc.

bert@shft.nl +31 6 52 39 60 00

Johannes Dyring, PhD,

johannes.dyring@slu.se +46 18 67 25 45

Joop van Hezik, MA,

vanhezik@xs4all.nl +31 6 20 15 70 85



Provincie Noord-Brabant

