

Josse Haarhuis

Location: Netherlands

<https://www.buitengewonevarkens.nl/>

Main Challenges



Enterprise support



Background

In just two years, Netherlands based Josse, has built his unique and successful business, PigMe. He produces high quality, high welfare meat; reared locally and fed on local restaurant waste by teams of volunteers.

Josse studied agriculture at university, but otherwise has no previous farming experience. Yet his entrepreneurial spirit and 'disrupter' attitude has enabled him to spot opportunities where others see barriers.

Josse keeps 175 pigs at a time across 12 locations around Eindhoven. He owns no land himself. Instead, he has rallied a group of willing landowners to host his pigs on their land, and a team of volunteers from the local communities to care for his pigs daily.

Josse is a problem solver looking to join dots and close gaps. He has demonstrated how the natural behaviours of his pigs can be a benefit to land management and pest control, for example through eating goose eggs where the overpopulation of geese cause problems for farmers and the public. He has also successfully tapped into the social need of people to be connected to the land and animals.

"Often pig sties can cause problems and smell. They are not always embraced by the communities - so I asked myself – 'how can our pigs be good for the environment, good for the area and the people who live there?' So, I just ask the people who live there to take care of my animals!"

Through his unique business model, he is igniting a sense of pride in his customers who have a vested interest and a deeper appreciation for the meat rearing process. Simultaneously, he is adding value to his product.

Rural Youth Project Involvement

Josse hosted Rural Youth Project delegates at the 2019 Learning Journey to the Netherlands and was a speaker at the 2019 Ideas Festival.



“I asked myself – ‘how can our pigs be good for the environment, good for the area and the people who live there?’”

- Josse HARRHUIS

Background

Josse has managed to take a holistic view of local food systems, the social needs of his community and the environmental needs the planet; as well as his own needs to create a financially viable business. Having recognised the current intensive farming model in the Netherlands leaves many casualties - not least in the broken connection between producer and consumer. Jose has taken a different approach; marrying the ancient with the modern through his innovative approach to traditional small-scale farming.

Josse’s model employs a simple route to market. He tells his story in person and through Instagram forging strong personal connections. Most of his sales are direct to restaurants and he works closely with chefs, to gain a clear understanding of their needs. Several chefs have even hosted Josse’s pigs on their land. It is a unique selling point for a restaurant to be so closely involved with every stage of the farm to fork process. Moreover, this model demonstrates how having a lower environmental impact can achieve higher social rewards.

“People are buying my product because they know I will do the best for the environment.”

Josse also sells direct to the local communities who help care for the animals. He sees this as playing an important social role in educating communities about their food.

“Change starts with the consumers – you have to convince them, otherwise or you won’t see the change.”

Several of his sites are also kindergarten schools. This has created a real buzz; the children love the piglets but are also learning about meat production. For Josse, this is important to share his view that it is “better to eat less meat but good meat where the animals have been happy” With partnerships and community as the driving forces, Josse intends to grow his business to 500 pigs around the city.

“Then we will stop and have a look back at what we’ve done; but always working together.”

Solutions

1. **Go direct!** Cut out the middlemen and involve the consumer in the process. In Josse’s case, he involves his customers at every stage of production. This way, he can stay in tune with the needs of his consumers, engage their interest and personal support, whilst ensuring he is not undercut by a middleman.

2. **Work together:** Leverage social capital to create a community around the business – collaborate with the local community (schools, landowners, other businesses). Find common goals which will mutually benefit. This way you can make the most of on your joint reach.

3. **Lead by example – cultural change begins with you!** Don’t tell people: demonstrate it can be done. Josse believes in the importance of ‘living what you preach’ both personally and professionally; recognising that when you are working on a small scale, people are investing in you. For him this is about making a commitment himself to only eating locally and seasonally.

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