



## The Future of Farming

A combined computer and role-playing game about the future of farming, the environment, rural life and agri-politics.

*"Through playing the game, the students will learn not only about Danish agriculture per se, but also get an insight into global issues such as food security and knowledge about European regulation of the agricultural sector" - The Danish Ecological Council*



## **T**he Future of Farming - a combined computer and role-playing game

The Future of Farming combines in a unique way a visual computer-based and data-driven game with the qualities of a role-play. The game is developed by The Danish Ecological Council in cooperation with the scientists of Copenhagen and Aarhus University, the game developer Sune Palsgaard, Postwork, and educational consultant Henrik Tuxen, Rungsted Gymnasium, Denmark. The students use their laptops or tablets and play in groups of four, and soon they find themselves caught in deep conversations about the future of farming, the environment, rural life and agricultural policy – topics which they would probably not otherwise offer much of an interest.



## **T**arget group

The target group is students in high schools and agricultural schools. Through playing Future of Farming they get the opportunity to learn about agriculture and the environment and discuss agricultural policy. Students and teachers have so far been excited about the game. Teachers at agricultural schools have welcomed it as an engaging supplement to classes on sustainable farming and social science, which many students find quite dull. Also, in high schools, teachers consider the game to be a useful tool to engage students in agriculture-related topics both in natural and social science. The game can also be played by others - such as farmers, university students and NGOs.

## **H**ow to play the game

The game is played in groups of four. There is a farmer, an environmentalist, a local politician and a managing director from the agribusiness in each group. Each student assumes a role and is expected to take on the responsibility for acting out this role and identify with it during the play. Before the first game session they all get a brief tutorial describing the characters' background, opinions and interests in regard to agripolitics, environment, rural development, politics and economy.

## The four characters

Michael/Marian Farmer (farmer)  
Sophie/Janus Yarrow (environmentalist)  
Alex/Anna Futuro (managing director from the agro-industry)  
Petra/Peter Middletown (mayor of the local municipality)

When the play starts, each group is informed that they have now been appointed an advisory commission to the Danish government and the EU. They have to agree on recommendations for future legislation on five key issues ("instruments").

## The political instruments

The use of fertilisers  
The use of pesticides  
The extent of energy crop area  
The extent of nature area  
The ratio of free-range farm animals



The groups now have to negotiate and agree on the recommendations by distributing 100 points - plus or minus - between the five instruments. They get half an hour to reach an agreement. When the points have been distributed, a report is generated showing the impacts of their decisions on five parameters. A landscape shown on their screens with five icons - each of them illustrating a parameter - will change accordingly.

## The parameters

Biodiversity  
Climate  
Aquatic environment  
Food production  
Economy



## The aim of the game

The aim of the game is to teach the students about the role of agriculture in society, the impacts of farming practices on nature, environment, food production and economy, and make them discuss Danish and European agricultural policy. As there are two rounds of the play – the first ends in 2030, the second in 2050 – there is an opportunity for the students to reflect on and discuss the consequences of their decisions after each round.

When playing the game the students will learn about democratic processes by experience, come to understand how politics shape our future and environment and also how different groups of interest influence the political decision-making. As they have to identify with characters with whom they do not necessarily agree, the students will furthermore be more likely to understand and respect opponents in the real world who hold opinions different from their own. Thereby, the game can contribute to democratic education.

While being part of the global market and a member state in the EU, Danish agriculture is much dependent on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and in "Future of Farming" the role-players therefore need to address and discuss policy issues connected with the CAP. Through playing the game, the students will learn not only about Danish agriculture per se, but also get an insight into global issues such as food security and knowledge about European regulation of the agricultural sector.

Future of Farming is developed by The Danish Ecological Council in cooperation with scientist from Aarhus University and Copenhagen University and financed by the Velux Foundation

Website (in Danish) for - The Future of Agriculture at [www.fremtidenslandbrug.dk](http://www.fremtidenslandbrug.dk)



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