

Circular agriculture and sustainable soil management

Jan Peter Lesschen

Wageningen Environmental Research



Challenges in European agriculture

- Reduce emissions to air and water
- Contribute to climate change mitigation
- Reduce use of primary resources (circular economy)

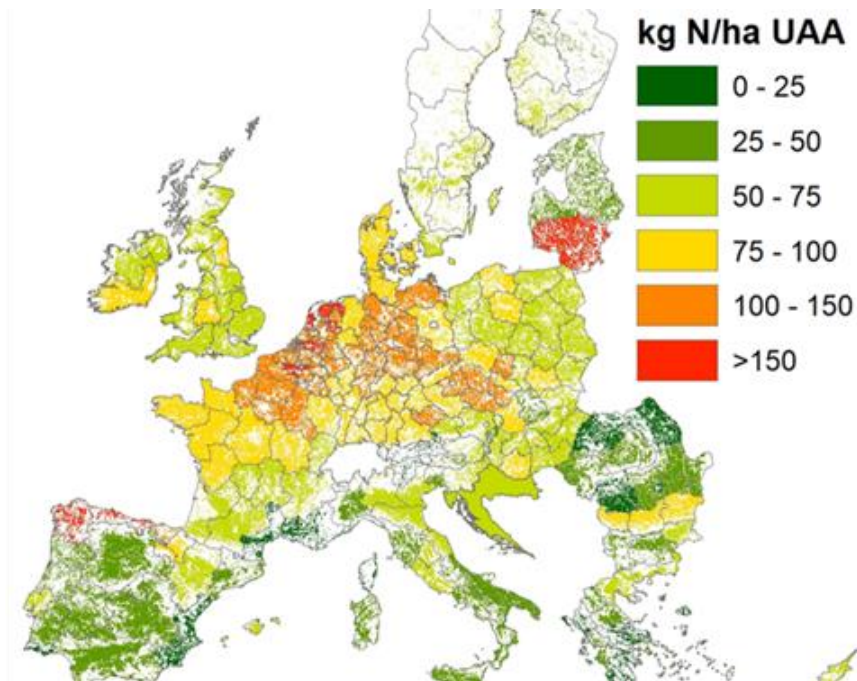
→ Sustainable soil management is key:

- Soil fertility and nutrient cycling
- Carbon sequestration in soils
- Water infiltration and retention

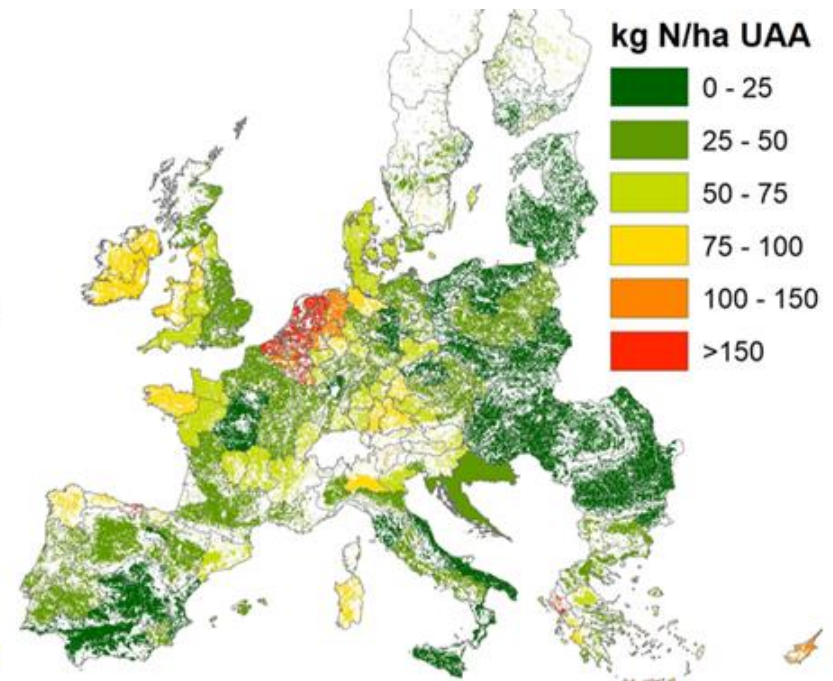


Nitrogen input to the soil

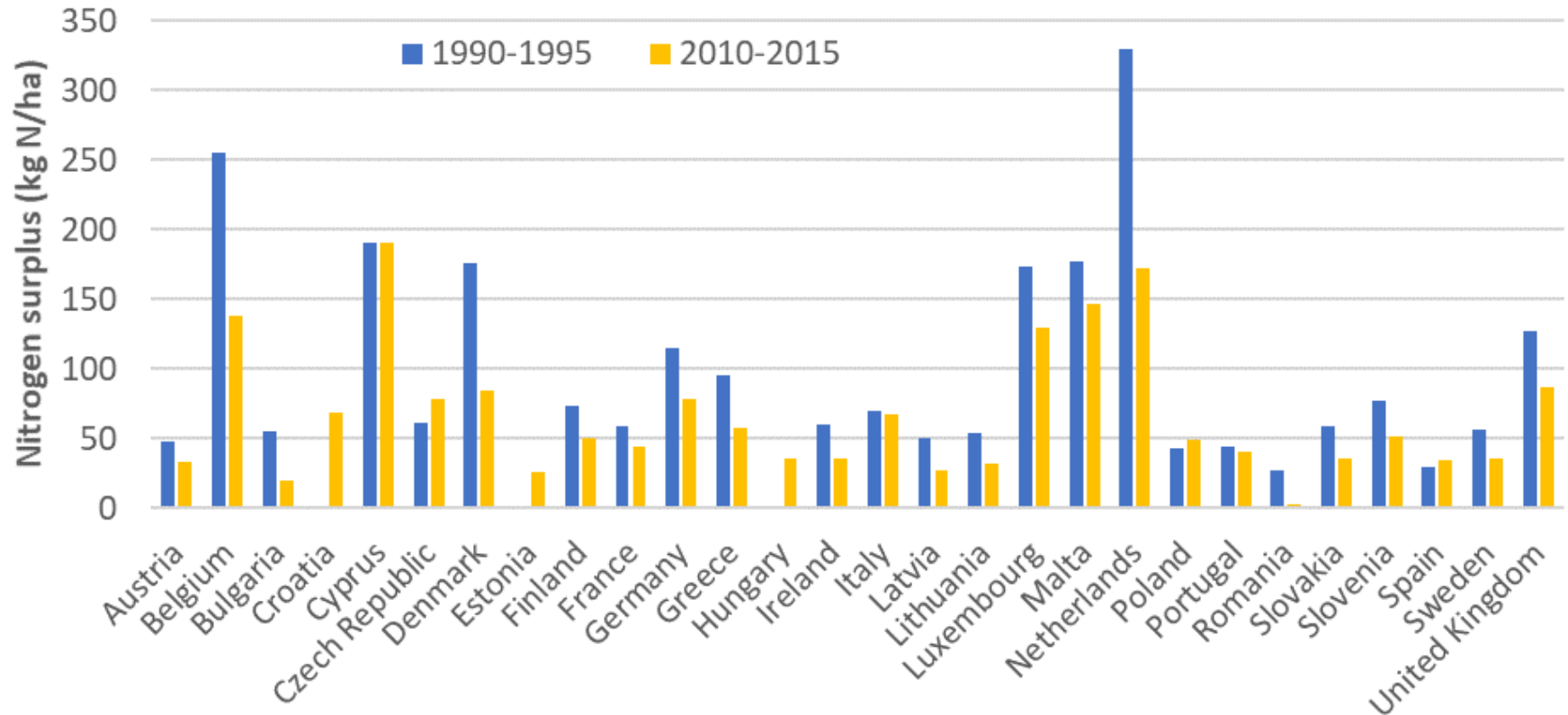
Mineral fertilizers



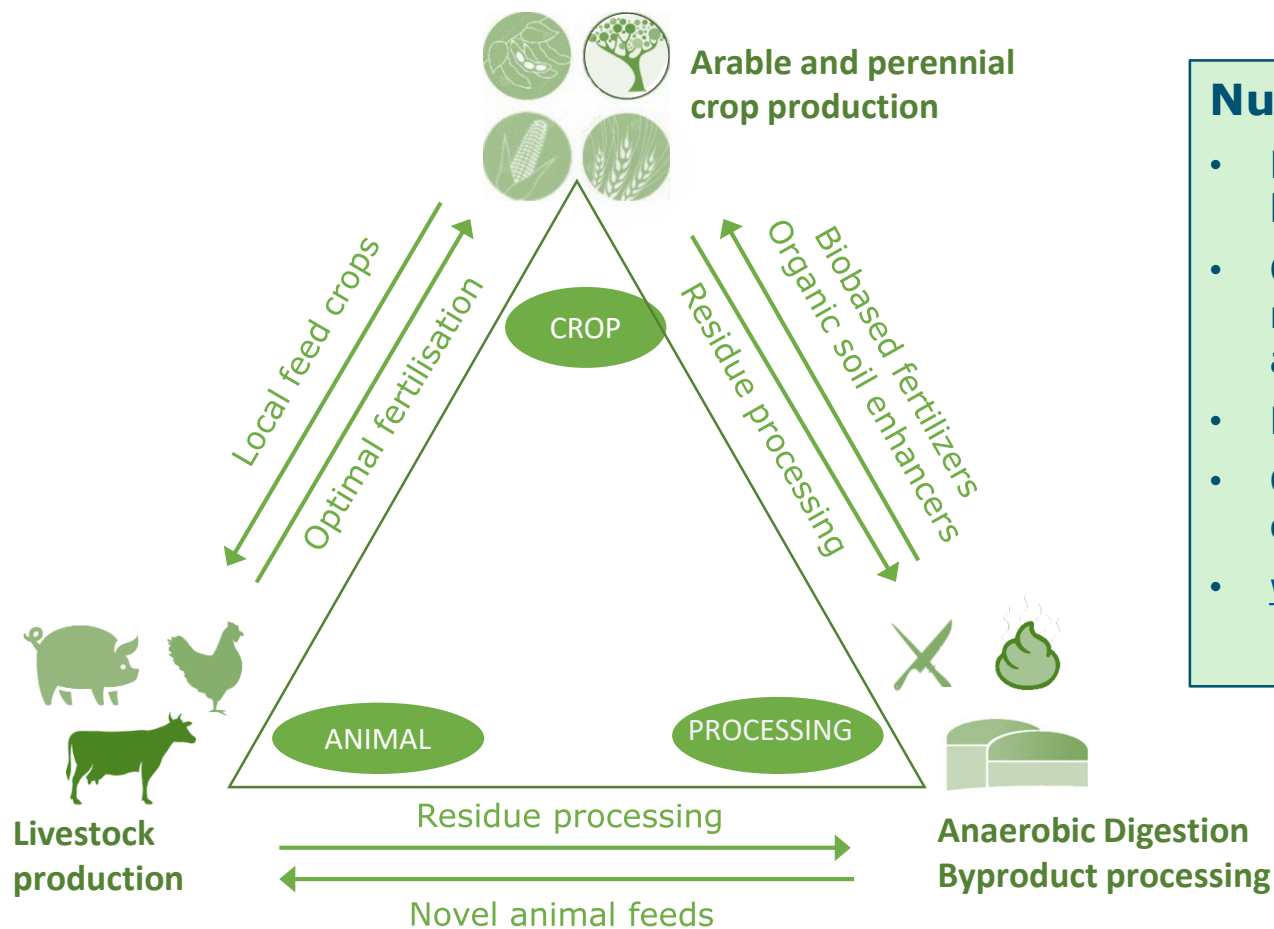
Animal manure



Nitrogen surplus EU countries



Nutri2Cycle project



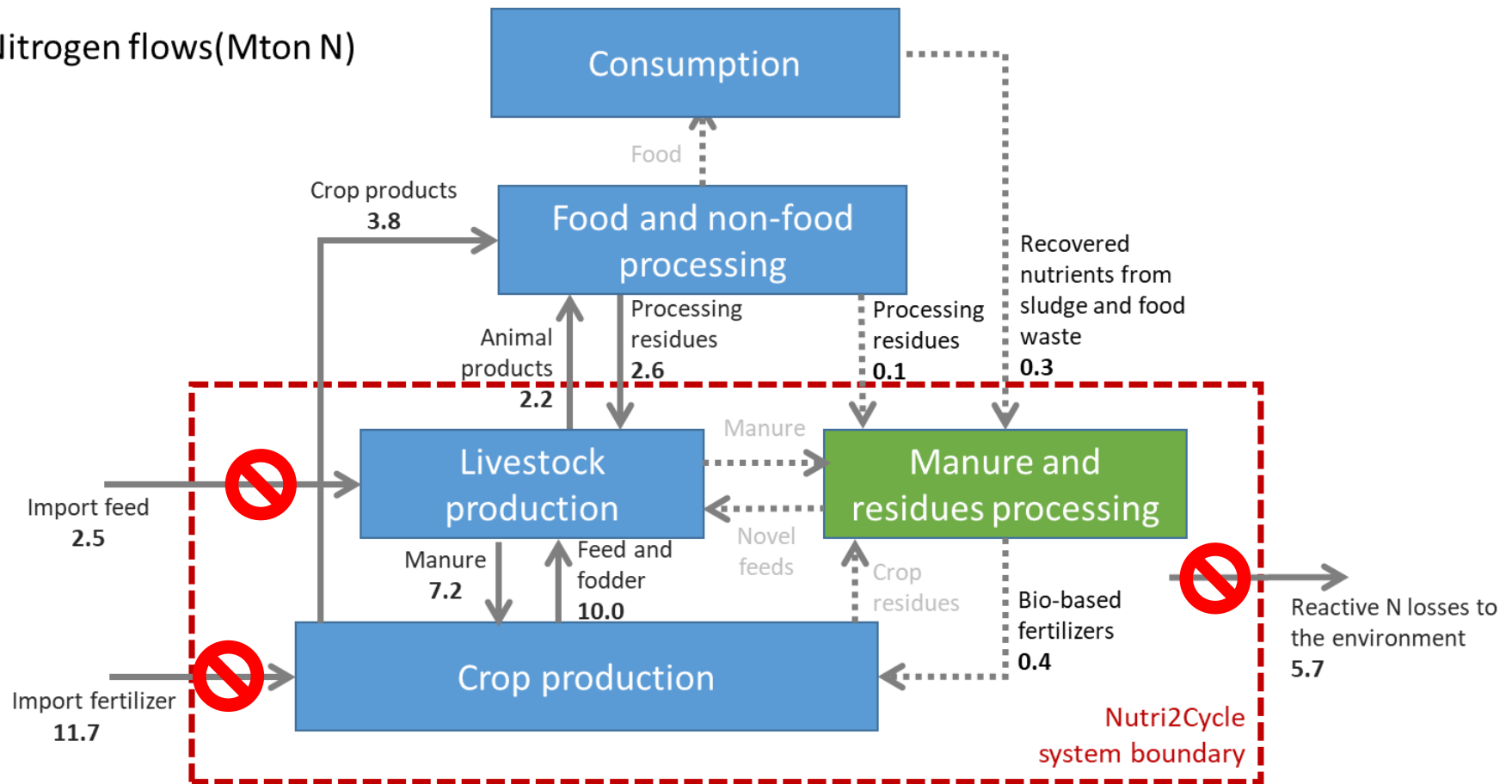
Nutri2Cycle

- H2020 project financed by European Commission
- Objective: Improve nutrient cycling in EU agriculture
- Period: 2018-2022
- Coordinated by University of Ghent
- www.nutri2cycle.eu

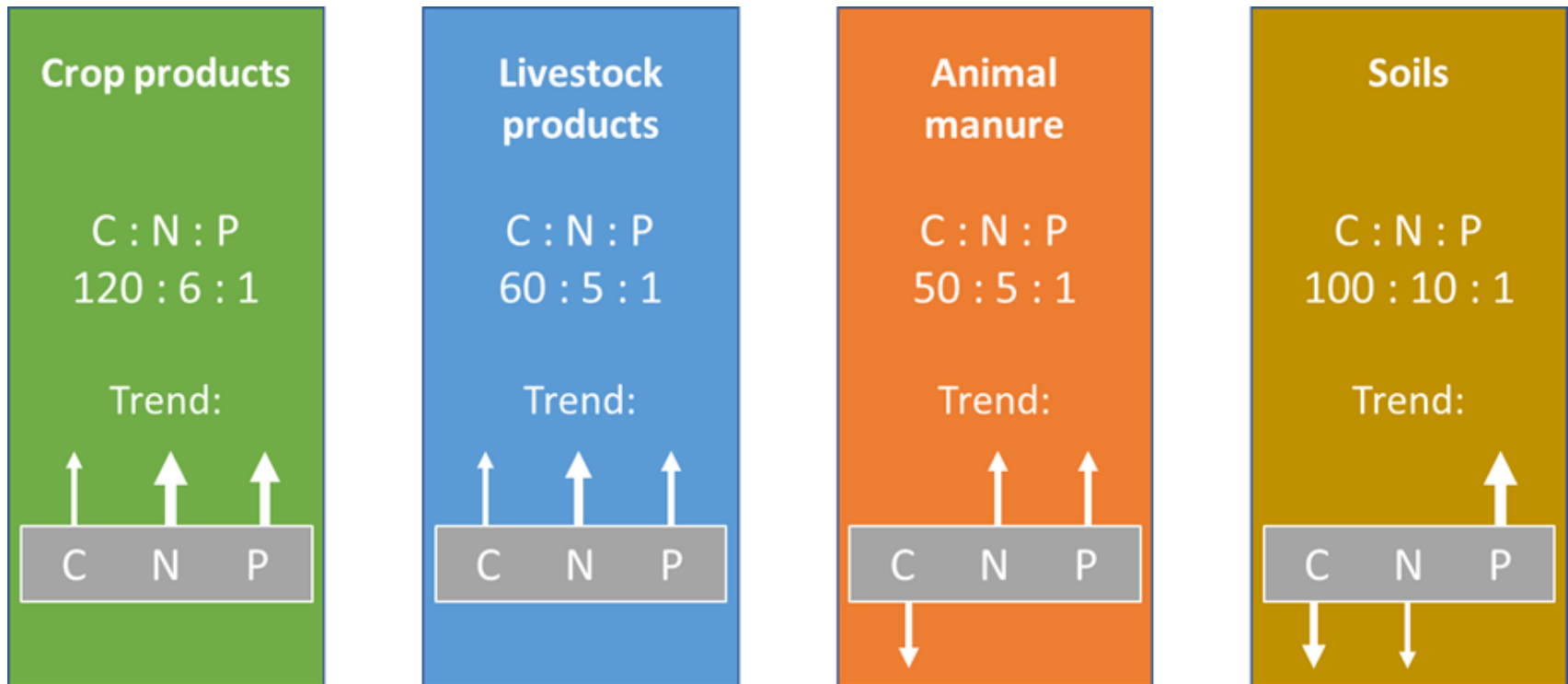


Nutrient flows in the EU food system

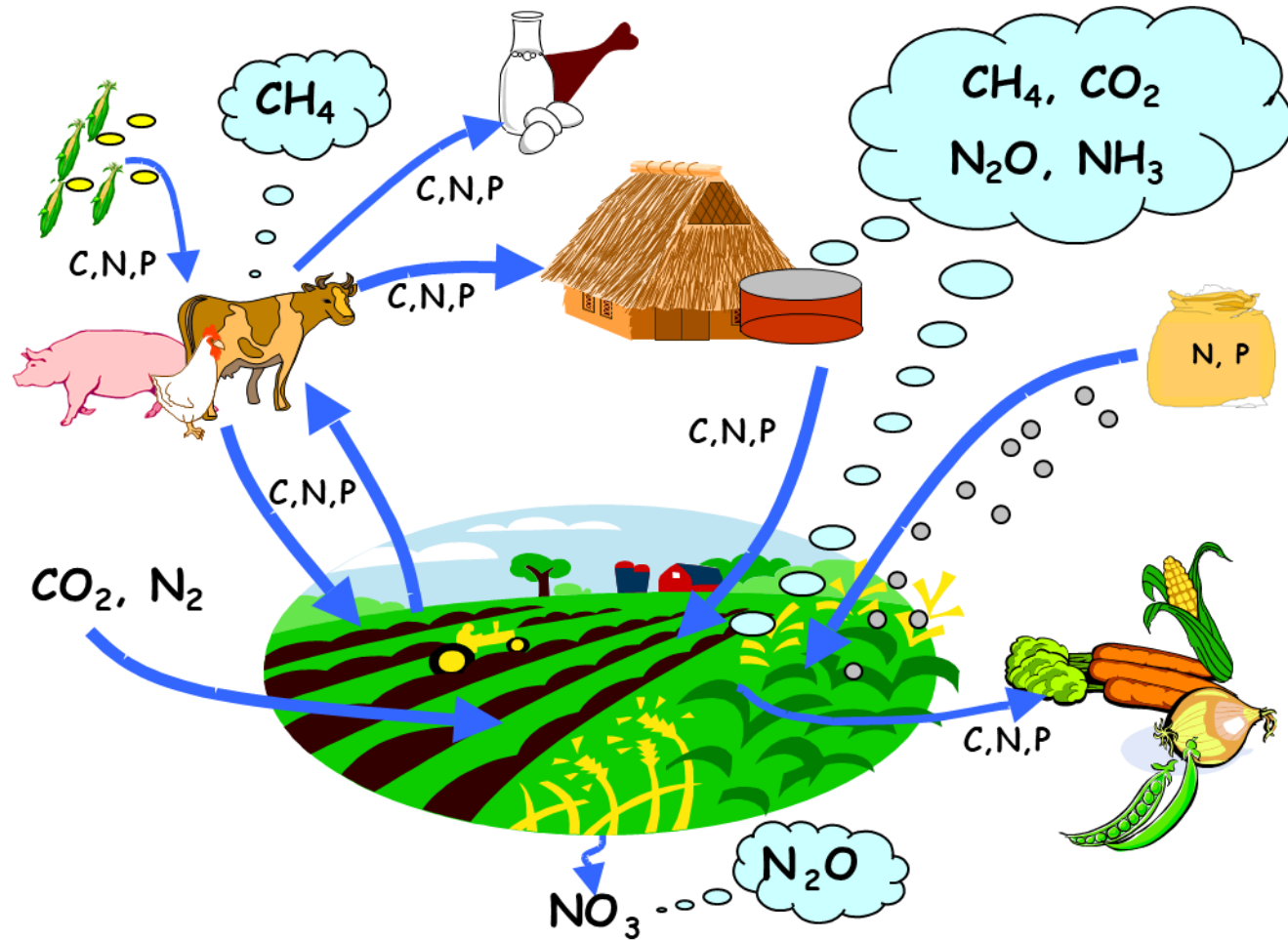
Nitrogen flows(Mton N)



CNP stoichiometry in EU agriculture



CNP flows at farm level

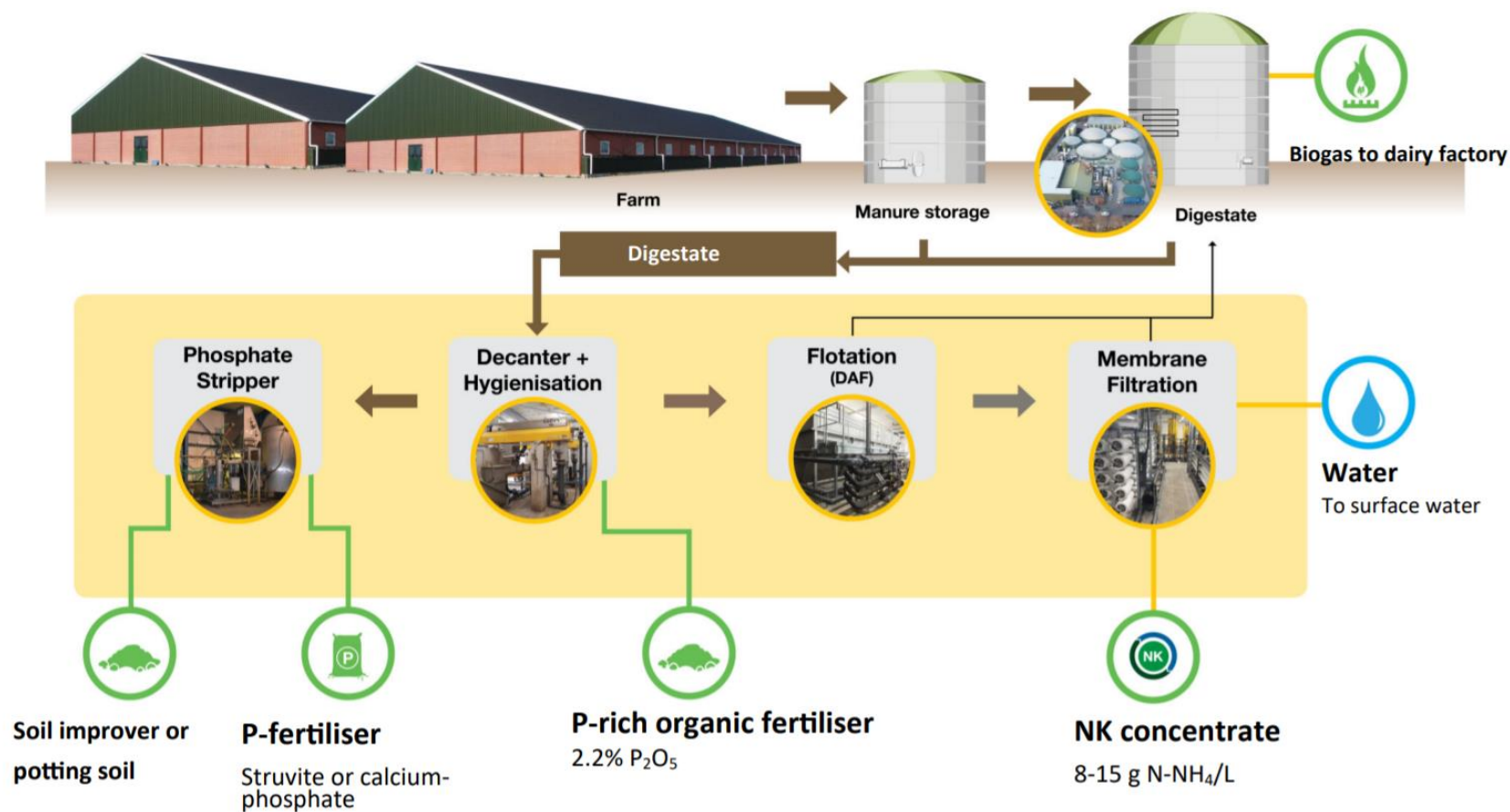


Measure to improve circularity for farmers

- Nutrient recovery from manure
 - Reduce export of manure
 - Improved use of nutrients
- Precision fertilisation
 - Improved crop yield
 - Improved nutrient use efficiency
- Increasing soil carbon
 - Dutch climate target for soil carbon sequestration
 - Soil carbon is key for other soil functions

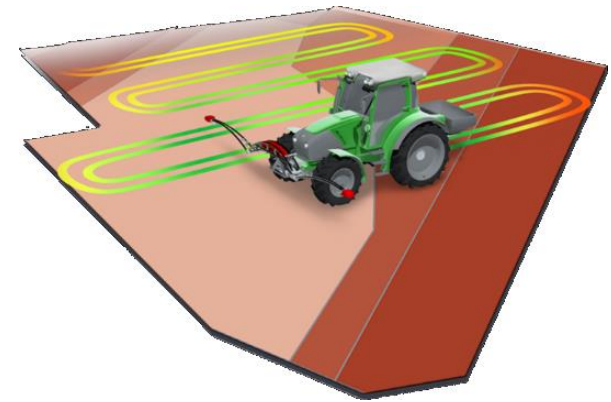
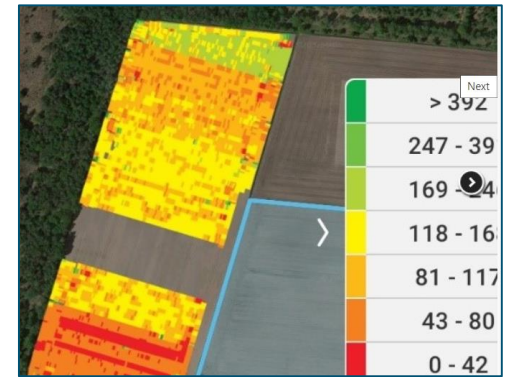


Nutrient recovery system



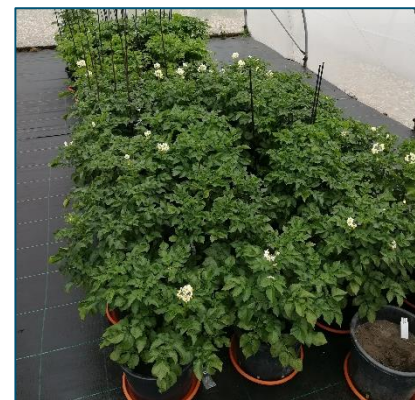
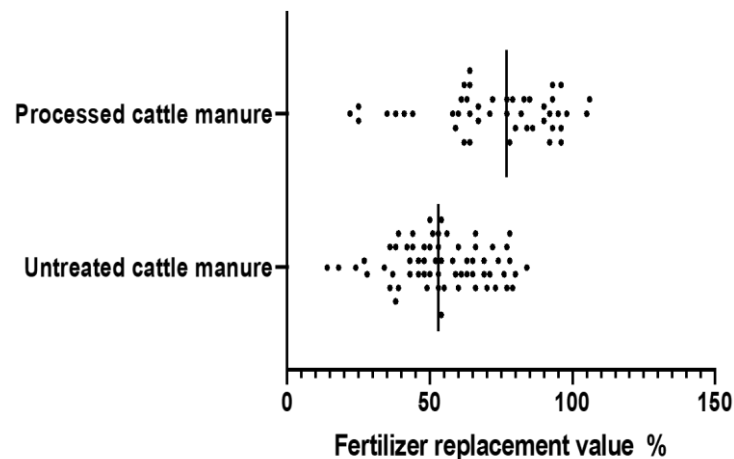
Precision fertilization

- 4R Nutrient strategy: applying the right type, in the right rate, at the right time, and at the right place
- Main measures:
 - Controlled traffic
 - Variable Rate Technology
- Pilot at Van den Borne Potato combining precision fertilisation and processed manure products



Pilot with processed manure products

- Test fertilizer replacement value in pot and field experiment
- 3 products from pig manure:
 - Liquid fraction
 - K concentrate
 - Scrubbing salt (high N)
- First results: no significant difference between chemical and bio-based fertilizers for plant height



Soil carbon measures

- Less soil disturbance (reduced tillage, maintain permanent grassland)
- More plant residues (cover crop, green manure, incorporate straw, improved crop rotation)
- Addition of external organic matter (animal manure, compost, other organic soil improvers)
- Perennial crops and agroforestry
- Increase waterlevel in peat soils (submerged drainage, paludiculture)

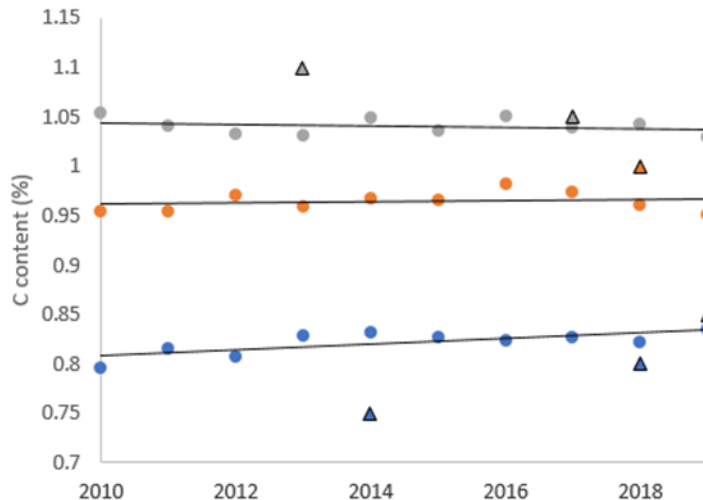


Soil Heroes initiative

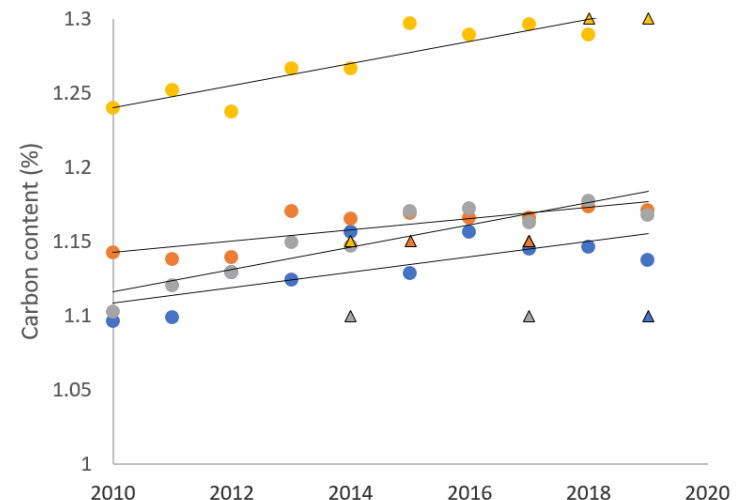


- Platform for promoting **regenerative agriculture** by providing farmers with financial incentive and offering buyers a reliable way to become planet positive.

Conventional



Regenerative since 2010



Final remarks

- No single solution, region and farm specific measures are required
- Importance of soils now more widely recognised by farmers and in policy initiatives. Next step is how to come to individual advice. Monitoring will become much more important.
- What are the incentives for farmers?
 - Post 2020 Common Agricultural Policy will include new options: Climate measures, eco-schemes, ...
 - Value chain initiatives, labelling, (carbon) credit systems
 - Consumers willing to pay higher prices?



Questions?



janpeter.lesschen@wur.nl