

Keynote speaker: **Bart Jan Krouwel, Managing Director, Sustainability and Social Innovation, Rabobank**

Rabobank is a leader in so-called “green lending”, which funds alternative energy, organic farming etc. The bank has taken strong ownership of this niche by focusing on innovative structures, which allow depositors and investors to make a healthy return while supporting environmentally friendly initiatives. Robeco, part of Rabobank, has recently launched a fund of SRI funds.

In some cases, the bank has been supported by the Dutch Government, which has, for example, allowed a tax incentive to be structured into low interest “green bonds” to boost the overall return to investors, while the proceeds of the bonds make a pool which is lent to green projects. Krouwel questions why governments in other countries do not seem to be supporting the same sorts of initiatives.

Rabobank also on occasion acts as a principle to bring fragmented players together in commercial transactions. For example, the bank encouraged farmers in Holland who owned wind turbines to form a co-operative and sell their power. Similarly, Rabobank Foundation, which provides microfinance, helped Indonesian farmers to form a co-operative to sell soya beans to Unilever.

Internally, Rabobank views ethical, environmental and social factors as possible reputation risk issues. All decisions of its ethics committee are published on its website.