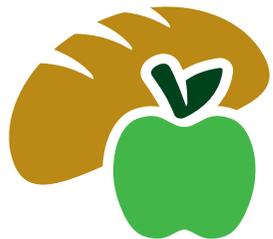




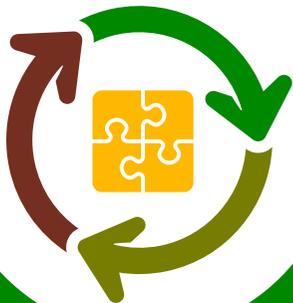
Plan of action

The Dutch government's plan to support the transition to circular agriculture



Plan of action **New perspective for agriculture, nature and food quality**

The Dutch government's Vision on Circular Agriculture sets out the ambition of the Netherlands to be a global leader in circular agriculture in 2030. The vision entails a paradigm shift from growth in production volumes and cost price reductions towards optimisation in resource use and food production in harmony with nature. The government has now published its plan of action to turn this vision into reality.



BRINGING CIRCULAR AGRICULTURE IN PRACTICE

- Improving soils and water quality
- Reducing emissions and pollutants
- Closing nutrient cycles
- Collaboration at regional level
- Collaboration along the agriculture and food supply chain



POLICY EFFORTS TO SUPPORT CIRCULAR AGRICULTURE

- Promote precision agriculture and farm innovations
- Creating more possibilities for experimentation
- Focus Common Agricultural Policy on vision targets
- Utilise public land
- Promote re-usage of food nutrients, a.o. by adapting regulations
- Reward sustainable farming practices
- Support short supply chains



Netherlands as global leader in circular agriculture in 2030

WHAT IS NEEDED?

- A solid economic base for producers;
- A commitment to knowledge and innovation;
- Reciprocity between agriculture and nature;
- A strong international market position and capacity to innovate;
- Food and food producers are more valued;
- Favourable legislation and regulation.

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A guide to collaboration

The Dutch government's vision for future agriculture responds to the need of an adequate supply of affordable and responsibly produced food at the national and global level with the least possible impact on nature, environment, and climate. The government will work together with all stakeholders in the farm and food industry to create the necessary conditions for the transition to circular agriculture and create room for experimentation and learning. The government aims to create the conditions that provide a rationale for cycling energy and nutrients on the smallest scale possible, with minimal avoidable losses. The government's vision is not meant to be taken as a blueprint, but as a guide for collaboration to find new sustainable ways of producing food.

An open and broad transition

The vision builds on the transition to circular agriculture. It entails a paradigm shift from growth in production volumes and cost price reductions towards optimisation in resource use and food production in harmony with nature. The transition to circular agriculture will stimulate new economic activities and types of businesses. It is an inclusive vision: circular agriculture needs to offer new prospects not only for frontrunners but for all types of agricultural activities and for all farmers and growers, including family businesses.

The vision aims to build on the high degree of innovation and orientation on international markets in the Dutch farm and food industry. The Netherlands will remain a food exporting country, but based on higher value-added production.

Ownership and responsibility

To benefit from the economic and social opportunities of circular agriculture there is a need for the transition to happen at scale. To turn the vision into reality, agriculture minister Carola Schouten calls on all stakeholders, including farmers, growers, fishermen/women, research organisations, investors, traders, retailers, non-governmental organisations and landowners, to take responsibility and show leadership. The transition to circular agriculture is a process in which every stakeholder takes responsibility and uses their own judgement based on their own circumstances. It also requires that producers are decently rewarded and food is valued more.



The role of the government

The government will seek to agree various types of contracts and business- and transparency deals with stakeholders in the farm and food sector, to share responsibilities and broaden the ownership of the transition process. The government will introduce policies that support frontrunners and incentivize entrepreneurs to do more. It will evaluate how to maintain a level playing field against foreign imports into the EU. It will seek to reward new initiatives, end counterproductive policies, and invest in knowledge and innovation. The government will monitor and keep track of progress, make room for diversity, and offer support for collaboration at the regional level and along supply chains. To achieve greater consistency in government policy, the Ministry of Agriculture will collaborate with other government departments and the provincial and municipal authorities and water boards.

Conditions for circular agriculture

- The government will work with the farm and food industry to create the necessary conditions for this transition:
 - a solid economic base: producers can earn a decent income from circular farming, innovate, and develop new business models;
 - food and food producers are more valued;
 - a commitment to knowledge and innovation;
 - reciprocity between agriculture and nature;
 - a strong international market position and capacity to innovate;
 - favourable legislation and regulation.

EU context

Because of the consequences that circular agriculture can have for international relations, the policy context of the European Union is crucial. We will therefore co-operate with Member States in order to get financial, legislative and technological incentives that promote circular agriculture in place. The Netherlands therefore calls for a Common Agricultural Policy that is supportive of the transition to circular farming, in particular sustainable soil management, and provides room nature-friendly cropping trials.

The Netherlands is also committed to creating more flexibility in the EU TSE regulation and in the EU fertiliser regulation to allow the use of recovered struvite and ashes from the incineration of sewage sludge and poultry manure, in fertiliser. The Netherlands will also push for an update of the EU biotechnology directive to not preclude the use of new breeding techniques.



Circular agriculture in practice

Improving soils and water quality

The transition to circular agriculture is mutually dependent on improving soil quality and agricultural biodiversity. As part of the government's Soil Strategy published in 2018, government has launched the National Programme Agricultural Soils, which includes a nationwide measurement of the status of all agricultural soils in 2020. Its goal is that all agricultural soils are sustainably managed in 2030. Government will also introduce a new agricultural tenancy law to promote more investment in soil quality as well as providing more opportunities for new entrants.

Reducing emissions and pollutants

There is an urgent need to reduce emissions that are damaging to the climate and soil, water and air quality. In the National Climate Agreement relevant stakeholders agree to reduce methane-emissions in the dairy and pig sector, greenhouse gas emissions in glasshouse horticulture, and emissions from land use. The government supports further research into the optimal composition of animal feed to reduce emissions. The government will introduce measures to reduce emissions from crop protection products.

The 6th National Nitrates Action Programme already includes trials for the optimal use of manure. Government will this year hold two national 'measurement days' to encourage arable farmers and open field vegetable growers to take measurement of nitrate levels with personal advice from experts. The National Trial Precision Agriculture encourages and helps farmers and growers to adopt precision agriculture techniques. The Delta Plan Agricultural Water Management will begin new demonstration projects to promote green manure and catch crops and improve awareness of pollution from run-off from farmyards.

Closing nutrient cycles

In a more closed nutrient cycle residual products of the food production chain are a resource for feed. Synthetic fertiliser use can be reduced through more efficiency in the food chain and precision fertilising with processed manure. Government will seek to work with industry and science to promote more use of residual flows from food production and consumption, both in feed and as a fertiliser, and support entrepreneurs, with a role for the national Circular Economy Accelerator. The National Plant Protein Strategy seeks to promote the production of plant proteins and use of proteins from residual flows and other sources.



Collaboration at regional level

The government believes efforts to strengthen the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment and the community should be focused at the regional level. Provinces, municipalities and water boards are crucial partners. Collaboration at the regional scale is already embedded in various regional 'Deals' between governments and various stakeholders, and an Inter-administrative Programme for the countryside. The government will provide room, through derogations from acts and statutory instruments, for local initiatives to experiment with the application of circular agriculture principles.

Regional circular agriculture pilots

Five regional sustainable farm programmes have committed to collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture to investigate legislative and administrative barriers to experimenting with circular agriculture. These are:

- Agro-Innovatieregio Achterhoek (closing nutrient cycles, improving soil quality, innovation)
- Agro-Proeftuin de Peel (manure, cropping techniques, climate);
- Noord-Nederland (nature-inclusive agriculture, landscape, nutrient cycles, reducing emissions, rural vitality/regional economy);
- CAP-pilot Akkerbouw Flevoland (precision agriculture, soil quality);
- Mineral Valley Twente Twickel (farm self-sufficiency, manure, soil- and water quality, regional food chain, value added biomass).



Fair Prices and True cost accounting

The Dutch government encourages supply chain initiatives that seek to ensure margins are distributed fairly and farmers receive a decent income. Following the recent extension of the EU derogation from competition rules to all agricultural sectors in the Omnibus Regulation (Article 172a), the Dutch government is introducing a new bill that would allow farmers to cooperate in order to challenge demands for higher than legal standards when they do not lead to higher farm gate prices. Second, the Dutch government has established a new Taskforce to investigate the conditions and accountability needed in the food chain in order for farmers to afford and recoup the investments necessary to move towards circular farming and earn a decent income. Third, the Dutch Authority for Consumers & Markets (ACM) will start to monitor the distribution of the risks, costs and revenue in the food chain with the aim to improve transparency and dialogue in the food chain. Fourth, the Dutch government is establishing a new arbitration commission with legally binding powers, in addition to the existing enforcement powers of the ACM, to enforce the statutory ban on unfair trading practices.

Separately, the Dutch government has launched the True Cost Accounting in Agri & Food Programme in which stakeholders can learn and experiment in a community of practice and establish how true cost accounting can increase investments to reduce cost externalisation and determine the best approach to reduce cost externalisation. The programme will seek to build on existing initiatives in the Netherlands that seek to determine the true cost of food. One such initiative is the Sustainable Food Consortium, that supports businesses with knowledge and data to encourage sustainable business decisions.

Collaboration along the agriculture and food supply chain

To turn the government's vision into reality, all stakeholders in the agriculture and food supply chains need to demonstrate responsibility and collective leadership. Already some retailers, processors and agricultural suppliers have committed to support the transition to circular agriculture. The government calls on parties in the supply chains to reward sustainable farming, for example by way of higher prices, but also through multiannual contracts that provide more security for suppliers. The government calls on retailers and processors to reward farmers and growers when they are asked to produce to standards above legal requirements. To turn the government's vision into reality, producers need to be decently rewarded and food needs to be valued more, also in price.

Policy efforts to enhance prospects for business

The transition to circular agriculture must offer economic prospects for businesses. The Ministry of Agriculture will seek to reach agreement with the different industries about overall sector goals and sectoral action plans. In the livestock sector, the government will promote sustainable and low-emission housing through subsidies for innovation projects and trials and investments by frontrunners. In the arable and horticulture sector, the government will push for a CAP that promotes cropping plans that allows room for good crop rotations. The government will also seek to remove barriers to combining cropping, streamline mandatory catch crops and grassland, and support strip trials. The government will support the development of new viable business models based on agroforestry. As part of the National Horticulture Agreement, government will support regional collaboration in the protected horticulture sector. The government seeks to sign a new covenant with the sector to reduce CO₂-emissions and supports the development of new applications for residual flows from protected horticulture.



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