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Contactpersoon

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Subject Policy Agenda for Sustainable Food Systems

Onze referentie
VD 09.991/JDL

Dear Chairman,

This Dutch Government advocates sustainable development. The Government-wide approach to sustainable development (*Kabinetsbrede Aanpak Duurzame Ontwikkeling* or KADO) is structured around six themes. One of these is "Biodiversity, Food and Meat". This document describes the policy agenda that has been approved for this area, in accordance with the KADO progress report. This agenda is also presented to you on behalf of Ministers Cramer and Koenders, from the Ministries of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and Development Cooperation respectively, and with whom I share responsibility for the implementation of this policy area. This agenda also describes our response to the findings contained in the report of Blonk and DRIFT which I sent to you on 30 October 2008.
(TK 30 196, no 42).

The positioning of the agenda

In the Policy Document on Sustainable Food I describe the challenges of making our food sustainable and the policy I will follow to achieve this aim. This policy agenda is a specific component of that food policy. The agenda is intended to formulate an optimal contribution from the Netherlands towards a sustainable global food system, with the focus on sustainable protein sources as one of the central challenges. In view of its urgency and complexity, this issue has been set as a Government priority with its own policy agenda.

The agenda should be considered as part of a broader programme of activities undertaken by the government in the area of sustainable food production and consumption. Policy Document on Sustainable Food (*nota Duurzaam Voedsel*) should therefore be considered in the context of the Vision for the Future of Livestock (*Toekomstvisie Veehouderij*), and the accompanying policy agenda for sustainable livestock (*uitvoeringsagenda Duurzame Veehouderij*), the Framework

Leven
van het land,
geven
om natuur.

Vision for Sustainable Vegetable Production (*kadervisie Duurzame Plantaardig Productie*) which I am currently preparing, the Market Development Agreement for Sustainable Animal Products (*Marktontwikkeling Verduurzaming Dierlijke Producten*), the implementation agenda for the Animal Welfare Policy Document (*nota Dierenwelzijn*), the National Agenda for Animal Health (*Nationale Agenda Diergezondheid*), the agreements made within the framework of the 'Clean and Efficient' (*Schoon en Zuinig*) agreement for the Agrisector, the Biodiversity policy programme and the policy letter on agriculture, rural activities and food security (*nota Landbouw, Rurale bedrijvigheid en Voedselzekerheid*) which I prepared jointly with Minister Koenders of Development Cooperation.

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The challenge

In the Policy Document for Sustainable Food I describe the key trends and developments surrounding the global food production system. One of the most important trends is changing consumption patterns due to a combination of increasing urbanisation and growth in population and prosperity. Particularly in emerging economies such as China and India there is a shift in consumption patterns away from vegetable protein towards meat, dairy and fish. This is a positive development in one way, as it reduces the problem of malnutrition (protein deficiency). However, the problem is that animal products require a greater input of agricultural raw materials, energy and space¹. If policy remains unchanged and consumption in developed and emerging economies continues at the same rate, it could endanger food security and the ecosystem carrying capacity. The food security of the most underprivileged groups in the poorest countries is at greatest risk and therefore requires special attention. We only have one planet, and its inhabitants will have to feed themselves with an array of all possible products from food chains that comprise one sustainable global food system. The question is how we in the Netherlands can make an optimal contribution to a sustainable global food system that will have to support some 9 billion people around 2050. This challenge is the focus of the Government's 'Biodiversity, Food and Meat' sustainability programme, and therefore of this agenda. Particular emphasis is placed on the issue of protein, which has now been set as a Government priority in view of the surrounding urgency.

The ambition

The Government's long-term objective is to establish a system of production and consumption of food that contributes to global prosperity and food security and which remains within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem and the planet. This ambition not only requires a more sustainable form of production, but also a shift in consumption away from animal protein towards more sustainably produced animal proteins and towards vegetable proteins.

¹ This is nonetheless a very simple description of a highly complex and subtle problem. For a more detailed description please refer to the Policy Document on Sustainable Food.

This issue is very subtle and is so deeply interwoven with the current world food system that the only appropriate solutions are those which can be regarded in the wider context of a more sustainable food system. The urgency of this issue demands both a more *in-depth* consideration of the global food system as well as direct, specific and visible *action* focused on increasing the sustainability of protein production and consumption on a national and international level.

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With this in mind, the Dutch Government wants to initiate specific innovations in the protein chain and a robust long-term strategy towards sustainable protein consumption, which have an international dimension. The Government wants to implement the agenda, specific initiatives and long-term plans in an international context. In this light, the policy agenda will be implemented along the following three tracks:

- 1. Analysis, vision and strategy (thinking);**
- 2. Dialogue (talking) and**
- 3. Action to improve sustainability (doing)**

The Government wants to take full advantage of the scope offered by the CAP to realise sustainability ambitions and innovations. Reform of CAP and EU fisheries policy must offer scope for innovative and sustainable business practices. The Netherlands must become a front-runner in minimising the ecological footprint of production and safeguarding the interests of poor countries.

The policy agenda will be implemented via the Sustainable Food Systems interdepartmental programme, prepared by the Ministries of Development Cooperation; Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, and Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Due to the complexity and the fundamental and global character of the challenge, this programme will run from 2009 – 2013. The programme will consider both the overall system and specific areas for action.

Context and current status

While preparing the policy agenda I have taken into account the interim results from the dialogue with parties in the chain and civil society organisations, in addition to research results, national and international trends and activities currently underway or in development.

Dialogue with stakeholders commenced in 2008 and several meetings have since been held.

The parties involved in these meetings have put forward a more in-depth analysis of the issue. The parties will seek a common vision and possible solutions. At the same time, these parties are engaged in exploring shared solutions and cooperative approaches in implementing these solutions.

The policy agenda sets out short and long-term activities. It is a robust, open and flexible agenda. This is necessary, as the increasing national and international dynamic behind this issue will undoubtedly lead to modifications and refinement of the agenda. Over the coming years cooperation with parties in the chain and

civil society organisations will also influence the content and implementation of the policy agenda.

The Government reports annually on progress in implementing the agenda and on any modifications and refinements. This is in connection with the yearly progress reports on the Government's sustainable development policy and interim reports from related processes.

The agenda 2009-2011

To prepare the conditions for a transition with a clear international profile and to build a broad international coalition, for the remainder of its term to 2011, the Government will elaborate the following agenda.

Track 1. Analysis, vision and strategy

This track focuses on increasing the sustainability of the global food system, with emphasis on the protein issue. This track will also provide a means for establishing a vision, synergy and strategy for Dutch policy in this respect. As far as is possible, I will cooperate with stakeholders in the Netherlands and abroad (civil society organisations, parties in the chain, international organisations, leading countries in the field). The following steps will be taken:

- Analysis of the global food system. This will primarily involve looking at the protein issue, the relationship with biodiversity and the Dutch role and position in this respect. In that framework scenarios will also be developed and discussed with stakeholders. This process will involve making use of reports and activities of foreign governments, international organisations such as the FAO, IFPRI, OECD, World Bank, European Commission and G8.
- The development of a broadly followed, long-term vision and strategy in terms of the Netherlands' contribution (central government and other stakeholders) to a sustainable global food system, with the focus on the protein issue and the relationship with biodiversity. In this context I will look with interest at the initiatives and results from the Biodiversity Task Force and the Sustainable Trade Initiative.
- In cooperation with stakeholders, an analysis will also be made of the strengths of the protein chain that the Netherlands would like to maintain and develop within a sustainable global food system based on a competitive market. The position of developing countries will also be considered.
- Furthermore, socio-cultural aspects surrounding the consumption of meat will also be analysed with a view to possible points of departure for dialogue and activities geared towards the behaviours of consumers and food providers.
- The stimulation and streamlining of national and international initiatives oriented towards closing cycles on various levels with the help of concepts and mechanisms that are sustainable, economically attractive, acceptable to trade policy and practicable.
- This involves the implementing and supporting of research, backing pilots, deployment of Dutch knowledge of water, agriculture and food production to

strengthen initiatives in developing countries, establishing connections with the Sustainable Trade Initiative and taking advantage of the Netherlands' prominent position in international organisations such as the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the World Bank and the EU to stimulate and put forward worthy initiatives on agendas elsewhere.

- Seeking opportunities to modify or eliminate rules that obstruct more efficient use of food. This also includes consideration of safe use of all meat- and bone meal.
- Assessing whether more directive measures are possible and desirable that are effective in boosting sustainability and can foster a transition in protein production and consumption.
- Actively participate in an international knowledge network and an international knowledge agenda for a sustainable global food system, and particularly the role of protein in this respect. The Government has already commissioned the following studies in preparation:
 - *Which raw materials, technologies and agrichains offer the best opportunities for the production of meat replacement products and quality protein in the Netherlands? In addition to vegetable proteins, attention will be devoted to new sources of protein such as algae, insects and in vitro meat.*
 - *Which strategies for marketing alternatives or new protein products offer the greatest potential and what are the bottlenecks or obstacles are there?*
 - *What would be a system that is practical for consumers and parties in the chain look like in terms of sustainability indicators for a sustainable protein food chain? Can existing initiatives in this area be used, and if so, can they be bundled? How can the interests of poor countries be safeguarded?*
 - *Which transition methods are best to effect a change towards sustainable production and consumption of protein?*
 - *What is the potential for bio-based products and protein products derived from energy production for human and animal consumption?*

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Track 2. Dialogue

The focus of the dialogue is an optimal Dutch contribution to a sustainable global food system, with particular attention to the protein issue and the core challenges it involves. The dialogue will take place at various levels and in various forms and has the following objectives: Raising awareness, forming opinions, acquiring new ideas and input for further treatment on agendas. The dialogue will be held between citizens, parties in the chain and civil society organisations in the Netherlands, but also with international partners. Specifically, it will cover the following activities:

- The dialogue with parties in the chain and civil society organisations that began in 2008, will be continued. The interim results of this dialogue have been used in the preparation of this agenda. The dialogue parties will in the coming period address separate areas. That will result in common

implementation in areas, meaning that the dialogue will act as a catalyst for new ideas and will drive the process forward. The Government facilitates this dialogue and monitors progress and output. Where opportune, ideas and activities resulting from the dialogue will be coupled with ongoing processes, for example, in the area of biodiversity and sustainable livestock farming and fisheries. A specific area of this dialogue relates to a round table discussion on sustainable chains and diversification of protein products.

- An open dialogue with the public will also take place in parallel. This dialogue must strengthen public insight into the process of creating a sustainable global food system and the perspectives for trade involved. This also presents dilemmas, such as the following:
 - Animal welfare versus land use, emissions and environment;
 - food security versus sustainability, and
 - individual freedom versus collective interest.
- Dialogue activities will also take place at international level. Possibilities are currently being reviewed to organise conferences with international partners, including sponsorship and active participation. The embassy network with its agricultural, food, environmental and development experts will also be deployed for this purpose.

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Track 3. Sustainability actions

The activities in this track are intended to address making animal protein chains sustainable, expanding the range of products on offer, stimulating greater consumer awareness and influencing the international agenda. In this respect, the Government wishes to support pioneers and offer space to niche market players. Specifically, it will involve the following activities:

Production chains

- Researching and effectively responding to critical consumer and market factors which partly determine successful expansion of supply and demand.
- Analysis, stimulation and facilitation of feasible concepts to market sustainable protein products and removal of any legal barriers.
- Stimulating parties in the chain and civil society organisations to undertake common initiatives geared towards cooperation, and throughout the whole chain, a fair distribution of costs and benefits in the chain and the development of methods for internalising social costs to, for example, the environment and nature.
- The stimulation of production and consumption of meat replacements and sustainable animal and plant products. This also applies for algae and insect products. Quantifiable agreements that build on the Market Development Agreement for Sustainable Animal Products of 19 May 2009.
- Within the framework of the Protein Chains Innovations Programme (EUR 6 million), research and stimulation of development and marketing of new protein products. This will also involve opening a protein knowledge centre. The programme comprises the following three pillars:
 1. scientific knowledge development and applied research;

2. stimulation of innovations in product development and marketing, including through the SBIR project and
 3. chain knowledge and organisation.
- Making agreements with parties in the chain on using sustainable proteins in sustainable catering. The canteen of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality will be used as a pilot site.
 - The introduction in mid-2009 of an SBIR arrangement for protein amounting to 2 million Euros.
 - Making agreements with parties in the chain (producers, retail, and catering establishments) on reducing loss and wastage in the protein chain and eliminating legal barriers that can lead to wastage.
 - Optimal exploitation of the platform for sustainability in food that will be set up together with pioneers in the chain to expand the range of sustainable market-oriented protein products.
 - Promoting innovations and cooperation in the fish chain to increase sustainability. To this end, the chain can make use of aid from the European Fisheries Fund.
 - Development of specific projects together with businesses and other parties that must result in a 20% environmental benefit in the planning period of the second National Waste Management Plan (within five years). Organic waste is one of the seven priority streams. The emphasis here is on reducing food wastage, particularly in meat and dairy products.

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Consumer and society

I intend to implement an active policy to raise awareness and expand knowledge in this area. I will of course respect the choices consumers make and will not prescribe what people must eat. I do however want to ensure that consumers are in a position to make conscious choices, and to attract them to products in cooperation with parties in the chain and civil society organisations. Inspiring public initiatives in this regard are welcomed. The following activities will be carried out:

- The continuation of the *Kies Bewust* (Conscious Choice) campaign of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre with particular attention to sustainability aspects of the production and consumption of animal proteins. The campaign will involve actions that target specific groups. One example in this respect is recognition of sustainable seafood.
- Making it clear to the Dutch public how they can contribute to a more sustainable food system via the consumption of sustainable protein products. Transparency of sustainability aspects of protein products is key in this respect. The aim is to ensure consumers can access complete and objective information about sustainability and food. These activities will be connected with ongoing initiatives in this area, such as the 'Climate Yardstick' of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre. In this context, a food database will be created and efforts will be stepped up to provide information to target groups (through the websites of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre and the Environmental Centre, school programmes). Communication channels will be

set up to reduce food wastage by consumers with the help of government campaigns and school programmes focused on food.

- Stimulating and supporting public initiatives for the promotion of a more sustainable food system and the role of proteins in this system.
- Initiating and supporting programmes that actively and creatively assist the consumer in varying tasty, healthy and sustainable food, with particular attention for proteins.
- The Value Pass will be introduced in 2009. This pass should make it easy for consumers to take responsible choices when purchasing products.

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International

Where possible, I will act together with a broad coalition of civil society organisations and parties in the chain to table specific initiatives at European and international level. These initiatives should contribute to a sustainable global food system with special attention to the role of protein in this system. Coalitions will also be created with leading countries in sustainability. The main focus is on ensuring that a sustainable global food system is a top priority at various international organisations and in various countries, but primarily through different angles of approach (protein, climate, energy, biodiversity, food security, etc.). This diversity of views and interests must be smartly addressed. The following activities will be carried out:

- Making use of my position as chair of CSD-17 to table and stimulate international initiatives for a more sustainable global food system.
- Together with the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN) study possibilities to embed sustainable protein production and consumption more firmly in international policy development, and to implement specific projects and activities such as international meetings. The follow-up to the report 'Livestock's Long Shadow' will also be used. The sustainability tracks, replacement and closing of cycles are key in this respect.
- Together with companies and civil society organisation, strengthen and expand support for the Round Table for Responsible Soy (RTRS). The RTRS is a multi-stakeholder process of international civil society organisations and businesses geared towards making the global mainstream market for soya products sustainable, facilitated in part by funding and research by/from the Netherlands and supported by policy. Together with the participants in the stakeholder dialogue (companies and civil society organisations) we will look into how participation in RTRS can be expanded via bilateral contacts. Particular efforts will be made to increase involvement of parties from Asia and South America.
- Supporting the RTRS process by carrying out research, setting up model projects, programmes for small farmers, development and implementation of a certification system and design of a mechanism to protect Conservation Value Areas (HCVA's) in the soya cultivation areas.
- Additional efforts to develop knowledge that contributes to improving the sustainability and efficiency of production in those areas of the world where there is a strong increase in demand. This will tie in with the implementation

agenda of the policy letter on agriculture, rural activities and food security and the sustainable trade initiative that focuses on making production chains sustainable. Efforts will also be made to spur innovations that lead to improving the sustainability and efficiency of food production, particular proteins, but also for example in the area of water and minerals.

- Studying possibilities for cooperation with pioneering countries (including our partners in North West Europe) and other interested partners. Within the framework of the stakeholder dialogue, the central government, parties in the chain and civil society organisations will in their own capacity contribute to the formation of this coalition. A national coalition to raise the international profile of the Netherlands in this area that is as broad as possible. This will allow the issue to be more effectively placed on international agenda and will allow specific initiatives to be undertaken from as many fronts as possible.
- Placing sustainable consumption on the EU agenda. This will focus on the following:
 - European information and public awareness campaigns and EU budget to support these campaigns if necessary.
 - Further elaboration of the EU Sustainable Consumption and Production action plan and the Sustainable Industry Policy (COM (2008) 397) in the area of food (e.g. the development of EU criteria for sustainable food and, if possible and desirable, modifying certain regulations/directives in this area).

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Yours sincerely,

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Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

Bert Koenders
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