



## **Letter of November 2014 from the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and the Minister for Agriculture to the President of the House of Representatives on the Netherlands' contribution to global food security**

The Netherlands can make a significant contribution to global food security, thanks to its extensive knowledge of farming, innovative business sector and excellent international reputation. Moreover, there is great enthusiasm in Dutch society for this challenge. Companies, NGOs and knowledge institutions can and want to play a role in bringing about sustainable farming and food security worldwide.

This letter outlines the work currently being done in this area by the Dutch government and its partners, and indicates where new initiatives will be developed in the coming years. It also fulfils the commitments made in the parliamentary committee meeting of 27 March 2014 on the Multi-Annual Strategic Plans.

### **Introduction**

The world will have to feed at least 9 billion people by 2050. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, over 805 million people currently go hungry every day, mainly in low- and middle-income countries. Two billion people suffer from hidden hunger in the form of nutrient deficiency caused by an unbalanced diet. Achieving universal food security now and in the future is thus a crucial challenge for humanity.

The global food challenge is not an isolated problem. It is closely associated with poverty, climate change and worldwide depletion of natural capital. Essentially, the issue of food insecurity will only be resolved if growth, distribution and sustainability are tackled in unison. Food security therefore requires a multifaceted and inclusive policy, and an approach based on national and international cooperation between governments, the private sector, NGOs and knowledge institutions.

The Netherlands has extensive knowledge on and enthusiasm for farming and food security. We therefore consulted widely with stakeholders in the sector before writing this letter. Their opinions and contributions are vital building blocks for our policy. Rather than setting out a blueprint, this letter offers a broad indication of how the Dutch contribution to global food security could develop into a distinctive, visible, cohesive strategy.



Through this letter, the government seeks to call on all relevant parties in the Netherlands to use our inherent strengths to eradicate global hunger within a single generation, and to lay solid foundations for sustainably feeding 9 billion people by 2050. We are committed to supporting people at risk of malnutrition, improving economic prospects for farmers and rural entrepreneurs and making food systems more sustainable. This letter further develops the policy outlined in the following letters and policy documents: the food security policy letter (Parliamentary Papers 32605, no. 54), 'A World to Gain' (Parliamentary Papers 33625, no. 1), 'Business for Development' (Parliamentary Papers 33625, no. 38), the letter on international agricultural policy (Parliamentary Papers 31 512, no. 132), the Natural Capital Implementation Agenda (Parliamentary Papers 26 407, no. 85) and the policy letter on sustainable food production (Parliamentary Papers 31 532, no. 118).

### **International context**

Global food production and consumption patterns have changed markedly in recent decades. Production has become increasingly intensive and marketing chains increasingly international. Despite this, most food produced in developing countries is still sold locally. In emerging economies, urbanisation and growing prosperity are changing eating patterns, increasing demand for fresh produce, processed foods and animal protein. Many people have been lifted out of extreme poverty and fewer are suffering from hunger. Nevertheless, hunger and undernourishment are still widespread.

In order to feed 9 billion people by 2050, food production will need to increase by approximately 50-70% and local, regional and international trade flows must be expanded, in the knowledge that current food systems are increasingly approaching their limits. Pressure on finite natural resources such as land and water is intensifying due to growing demand for food, animal feed and biofuels. Armed conflicts and other crises encroach on land that is used for food production. Biodiversity is declining, and the effects of climate change are already evident.

Global food security thus faces two challenges:

- The need to eradicate hunger and undernourishment within the space of a single generation by ensuring that people gain access to sufficient food, and through it, essential nutrients.
- The need to sustainably feed 9 billion people by 2050 by substantially increasing food production within stable and efficient food systems.



These challenges are now being taken up worldwide, primarily in the countries directly affected. Low- and middle-income countries are now giving higher priority to food security and sustainable farming, for example through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). The UN is devoting special attention to food security and sustainable farming as part of the Zero Hunger Challenge initiated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in which the Netherlands plays a leading role. Food security and sustainable farming are also a generally accepted part of the process to formulate a post-2015 global development agenda, fully in line with the Netherlands' own approach.

### **The Netherlands' role**

The Netherlands is internationally recognised as an expert and innovative partner in agricultural development and food security. Our strategy is in line with the relevant EU policy framework and we play a visible and distinctive role in the UN through our approach to aid, trade and investment. Knowledge, capacity and enterprise are our main priorities, which we pursue chiefly through top sectors policy on agri-food, horticulture & propagation materials and water. We prefer inclusive and transparent partnerships which link public, private and civil society strengths, interests and concerns as efficiently and effectively as possible. We base the implementation of our policies as much as possible on locally sustained policy frameworks and institutions.

The Netherlands is thus visibly helping to fulfil the international agreements on sustainable farming and food security, for which specific targets are set out in the policy documents mentioned above. In general, the Netherlands focuses on all dimensions of food security (people, planet, profit), and on the following areas in particular:

#### *1. Eradicating existing hunger and malnutrition*

Efforts centre on vulnerable people who are experiencing hunger due to poverty, natural disasters, armed conflicts and other crises. As well as giving food aid where required, we must provide permanent access to adequate sources of nutritious food.

#### *2. Promoting inclusive and sustainable growth in the agricultural sector*

Efforts focus on small and medium-sized farms and other agricultural enterprises that are potentially capable of responding to market demand. Increasing their earnings capacity is an effective way to combat hunger and poverty and stimulate economic growth.

#### *3. Creating ecologically sustainable food systems*

Efforts concentrate on the sustainable management of environmental global public goods such as water, soil, energy and biodiversity. The effects of climate change on food systems and vice versa will be taken into account in all our activities.



These three goals make a cohesive contribution to the UN framework for tackling the global challenges to food security (the Zero Hunger Challenge and the post-2015 development goals):

Global challenge				
805 million people suffering from hunger Two billion people undernourished		Feed 9 billion people by 2050		
International framework				
Eradicate undernourishment, especially stunting in young children	Ensure universal access to nutritious food, year-round	Double the productivity and income of small farmers	Make food systems sustainable	Eliminate food waste; maintain agri-biodiversity
Dutch goals				
Eradicate existing hunger and malnutrition	Promote inclusive and sustainable growth in the agricultural sector		Create ecologically sustainable food systems	

The basic principle underlying all our investments and interventions is that they should make the maximum contribution to the goals mentioned above. Policy coherence is inherent to the Dutch approach, both within the sphere of food security and in relation to policy areas that have a substantial influence on food security, such as trade, water, energy, security and the status of women. Opportunities for, and obstacles to, gender equality are addressed and tackled wherever possible.

### Action aimed at achieving Dutch goals for global food security

Action aimed at achieving the food security goals build on our existing strategy while utilising scope for innovation in themes and activities which were previously neglected or which have since gained in importance.

#### *Goal 1: Eradicate existing hunger and malnutrition*

Everyone has a right to adequate, good-quality food so that they can lead healthy and active lives. Hunger and malnourishment prevent individuals and communities from reaching their full potential. This applies to food insecurity resulting both from humanitarian crises and from poverty and social marginalisation. The effects of malnutrition are especially serious in young children, since underdevelopment in infancy is irreversible and continues to affect capacity for learning and productivity later in life. Such disadvantage is often a direct result of the difficulties faced by mothers, who are often young, and poor maternal health at the stages of conception, pregnancy and birth. In order to permanently eradicate this problem within a generation, we must focus on



interventions that will combat malnutrition in the short term, especially in mothers and infants.

Long-term solutions will ultimately need to be found for the underlying causes of malnutrition, such as armed conflicts and socio-cultural marginalisation. Although many of these problems lie outside the immediate scope of food security interventions, such measures can nevertheless strengthen activities in other, relevant policy areas, such as land rights, water, basic sanitation, reproductive health, peace and security and equality.

The Netherlands contributes to food programmes run by the World Food Programme and UNICEF, and to international initiatives such as the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition and the Scaling Up Nutrition movement. We also work with Dutch companies, knowledge institutions and NGOs to provide better nutrition for vulnerable communities as part of the Amsterdam Initiative against Malnutrition. In some of our partner countries, we support productive safety nets in which people are given money or food in exchange for work, and we contribute to the establishment of local food programmes. Where possible, we integrate nutrition issues into activities relating to agriculture, health, water and sanitation, and education.

In this way the Netherlands is contributing to international efforts to eradicate global malnutrition, leading to fewer children under five who are malnourished (wasting and/or stunting), fewer men and women suffering chronic hunger and/or nutrient deficiency, and fewer people men and women dependent on food aid following a crisis.

#### *Focus of attention in the coming years*

Over the coming years, Dutch efforts will be further extended in order to tackle the underlying causes of malnutrition. The Netherlands will, for example, more specifically link the right of infants and mothers to adequate nutrition with the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women, especially adolescent girls. The health of actual and prospective mothers and women's right to make their own decisions concerning motherhood are crucial for the health and nutrition of newborns and infants.

We will also take measures to strengthen the capacity of individuals and local communities to cope with, and recover from, external shocks such as drought and extreme price fluctuations. We will concentrate on interventions to promote stability, such as risk management, insurance, social safety nets, strengthening local markets, disaster prevention and climate adaptation. This requires close cooperation with humanitarian aid programmes.



## *Goal 2: Promote inclusive and sustainable growth in the agricultural sector*

Investment in small-scale farming in emerging economies has proved to be an effective way to promote inclusive growth in and beyond the agricultural sector. More investment by local and international SMEs, knowledge transfer, capacity building and trade promotion in the agricultural sector are now needed to speed up this growth and make it sustainable. Developing the supply chain as a whole rather than concentrating only on primary production will generate employment, income and added value in rural areas. With an eye to the future, it is essential to make the agricultural sector attractive to young people, including women. Strong farmers' associations and cooperatives can play a key role in this. A focus on good nutrition continues to be important given the persistently high prevalence of stunting and malnutrition, even in places where food is generally available and accessible.

The Netherlands will concentrate on providing access to means of production, knowledge, financial services and markets for small and medium-sized farms and enterprises, especially those run by women. Dutch stakeholders are working together closely to create better access to, and control over, land through the application of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Land Tenure. We are also helping to improve access to good propagation and source materials by strengthening local seed systems and encouraging the application of breeder's rights. We encourage inclusive economic growth, private sector development and access to markets by facilitating cooperation throughout the supply chain, strengthening farmers' organisations and building capacity. We are also contributing to bilateral and multilateral efforts to boost regional and global trade promotion and facilitation, infrastructure development, improved legislation and increased efficiency throughout the agri-food chain.

One of the ways we encourage more private investment is by challenging the private sector to devise smart solutions and inclusive business models to raise agri-food chains to a higher level. In the Netherlands, these efforts focus mainly on the agri-food and horticulture & propagation materials sectors. Thanks to their know-how, technology and access to markets, companies can make a major contribution to inclusive growth. We facilitate this through, for instance, the Sustainable Enterprise and Food Security Facility (FDOV) and other private sector instruments. The Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF) and the World Bank's Global Agriculture and Food Security Program also give a substantial boost to investments in agriculture in low- and middle-income countries. Dutch agri-businesses make extensive use of government instruments and it is likely they will also make frequent use of the DGGF. Participating companies will naturally be expected to exercise social responsibility. We will therefore also be taking steps to boost the development of frameworks for international corporate social responsibility underpinned by, for



instance, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the Committee on World Food Security's Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems.

In order to promote new knowledge, we are investing in demand-led international agricultural research through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and European research partnerships, with a view to increasing Dutch participation in international research programmes. The Netherlands is pursuing a strategic partnership to this end with CGIAR. We are also working to create more synergy and cohesion in our national knowledge programmes through the Food & Business Knowledge Platform and the internationalisation of agricultural education.

The Netherlands is contributing in this way to international efforts to bring about inclusive and sustainable agricultural development worldwide, with in specific result areas an increase in food production and labour productivity, more jobs and higher incomes in farming, a growth in the number of female rural entrepreneurs and a greater role for women in agri-food chains and farmers' organisations.

#### *Focus of attention in the coming years*

Measures to boost food production will only be meaningful if food is not wasted further down the chain is not wasted and serves a market. It is vital to reduce food waste and maintain the quality and nutritional value of food. The Netherlands has considerable knowledge on minimising food waste and processing and enriching food products. This can generate more added value, boost incomes and widen access to nutritious food. Over the coming years, the Netherlands will therefore redouble its efforts to organise and improve cooperation in the agri-food chain in order to identify efficient, commercially viable solutions for food processing and logistics in low- and middle-income countries, and to develop local, urban and above all regional markets.

A competitive and efficient agricultural sector demands effective policy. In order to boost the agricultural sector as a whole, the Netherlands will, in the coming years, step up its investments in programmes that help to strengthen national agriculture and trade policies, with a focus on nutrition and ecological sustainability. In parallel with these efforts, we will take measures to deepen the policy dialogue with a number of partner countries and emerging economies. This policy dialogue can lead to openings for deploying Dutch aid and technical assistance, help to promote the transition from aid to economic cooperation and create opportunities for the private sector. We will also study the effects of trade agreements on local agricultural development and food security.



### *Goal 3: Create ecologically sustainable food systems*

Agriculture worldwide faces three interrelated trends with an agri-ecological impact: climate change, degradation of ecosystems with the loss of functional biodiversity, and depletion of freshwater sources. The agricultural sector plays a pivotal role in these processes. We therefore often refer to the nexus between food security and the complex of global public goods: soil-water-energy-climate-biodiversity. This nexus is at work in the entire process, from micro to macro level. It involves public goods which are managed at local/national level and for which the international community bears a shared responsibility.

All three trends are simultaneously addressed through measures to sustainably intensify food production through efficient, careful and climate-smart farming practices. The Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture will play a key role in this process at world level. Our basic aim is to encourage high output farming which takes adequate account of social and ecological dimensions. Local context, diversity and customisation will be the watchwords. Governments must set parameters in order to protect public social, economic and ecological interests. Within these constraints, local farmers will be responsible for choosing the most suitable agricultural practices and farming systems. After all, if we want to feed the world sustainably by 2050, we cannot afford to restrict the range of possible options and development paths that may be available to us. Measures to promote sustainable farming must be matched by complementary efforts to make consumption patterns more sustainable. Reducing protein-rich diets and combating food waste in developed countries are two ways in which we can significantly alleviate pressure on natural resources worldwide.

The Netherlands has a great deal to offer the international community in terms of sustainable intensification of agriculture. We are a pioneer in climate-smart agriculture, which links high productivity with climate resilience and lower greenhouse gas emissions. In our partner countries, we are investing in land-use planning, land development, adaptation to climate change in small-scale food farming, eco-efficient production and area-based management, including river basin management. The Netherlands is committed to putting the need for good soil fertility on the international agenda. We are contributing to the development of policy on seed systems in Africa, and this, together with our support for multilateral biodiversity programmes, is helping to protect agri-biodiversity. The Netherlands is also working to bring about more sustainable consumption patterns and reduce levels of food waste.

The Netherlands is thus contributing to international efforts to bring about sustainable food



systems, resulting in a higher yield per unit of input, a higher acreage of sustainably managed land and more resilient food systems.

#### *Focus of attention in the coming years*

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the 'landscape approach', aimed at an area-based, participatory development of agriculture, nature and the rural economy. The Netherlands is developing pilot projects along these lines in the cacao industry, where economic production and nature conservation are viewed in conjunction not only at individual business level but also at landscape level, in partnership with local stakeholders. The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) recently launched a new programme centring on the sustainable consumption and management of soil, land and water in areas where key agricultural commodities are grown. The companies involved are engaged in production which can be sustained over the longer term without degrading the soil, water sources or biodiversity, and without worsening social conditions. The Netherlands has devised a programme with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature aimed at making economic growth corridors in Africa more sustainable, again with an area-based approach.

One crucial area that will feature more and more prominently on the international agenda in the years ahead is the sustainable development of livestock farming. The rise in global prosperity will lead to growing demand for animal protein, causing a sharp rise in livestock farming, with its attendant heavy demands on natural resources. The Netherlands has been playing an important international role in raising this issue in recent years. Our aim is to make a substantial contribution to the sustainable development of livestock farming against a background of limited natural resources, climate change and risks to human and animal health. We will step up these efforts in the years to come.

#### **Funding**

Although the ODA budget for food security is the core source of funding for the policy outlined in this letter, other budgets, including non-ODA, will also be used. The government will seek to strike the right balance between the three food security goals by trying to match available resources with goals as closely as possible when planning activities.

The government is confident that the efforts made by the Netherlands will help to eradicate global hunger and malnutrition and promote international food security, while at the same time consolidating our country's leading international position in sustainable food and agricultural production.