

Netherlands National Program Rural Areas

Netherlands, national scale – status: ongoing

Abstract: As an implementation of the national environment vision the program ensures the investment of € 24 billion for the next 10 years to tackle the “nitrogen crisis” in Dutch agriculture. The biodiversity decline caused by excessive nitrogen deposition shall be reverted by making agriculture more sustainable. Innovative policy instruments, such as a “multiple policy goal ladder” have to be developed. Farmers in specific areas, nature conservationists, regional policy makers, civilians etc. shall discuss and implement nature-inclusive development.

Keywords:

Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Nature Restoration, Nature-based Solutions, Transformative change, sustainable agriculture



Case study country (Map created with mapchart.net)

Objectives of measure and challenges addressed

The objective is based on the principles of the National Environment vision. The aim is to provide a framework in which multiple policy challenges are tackled in a coherent way and consistent with European directives for environment, such as the Bird-Habitat Directive, Clean Air Directive and the climate goals. On the national level the Law Nitrogen Nature Restoration provide additional goals on the critical nitrogen deposition. Sustainable agriculture plays a key role in reaching these goals. The program also takes into account other policy targets for housing and sustainability including circular economy but run through separate programs.

Challenges are:

- upscaling these initiatives and to include retailers and agricultural industries.
- how to avoid complex time-consuming processes with land-owners
- how to make multiple policy goals accountable

how to define improvement of biodiversity for “areas”, which are undefined and located outside Natura 2000.



Transformative Change for Nature

Illustrative Examples from the ENCA Network

Description of measure

The program is the largest executional policy program of the national environment vision with a total budget of 24 billion euros for the next ten years. It is the umbrella program for several sector-oriented programs, such as the National Program on Rural Areas. The regional governments - provinces must execute regional area specific plans in 2023.

Regional governments take the lead in executing existing nature conservation programs and a nexus approach with stakeholder participation as to include other policy goals.

How does this measure contribute to transformative change for nature?

Concrete examples of contributions are given in different stages of implementing the policy programs for specific initiatives. Examples can be given for two implementation stages: the dialogue stage and executive stage.

On the dialogue stage initiatives have been set out to link the Nature Future Framework with integral development of the National Park the Dutch Dunes: Full article: [Exploring desirable nature futures for Nationaal Park Hollandse Duinen \(tandfonline.com\)](https://www.tandfonline.com)



Transformative Change for Nature

Illustrative Examples from the ENCA Network

On the executional level: there are two examples (unfortunately only available in Dutch), one where in specific areas farmers, nature conservationists, regional policy makers, civilians etc discussing nature inclusive development:

<https://www.bij12.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Programma-Natuur-Inspiratiepaper-overgangsgebieden.pdf>

and one how to apply a “multiple policy goal ladder”

<https://provdrenthe.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=b3a9ac90fb19426f9fcd96183d4de998>

Organisations involved

Netherlands Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food security

Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

Stakeholder involvement and community engagement

The Dutch Cabinet develops a national program rural areas to tackle multiple policy goals. The trigger is the “nitrogen crisis” where agriculture consistently exceeds critical deposition values. Successful lawsuits were based on the evidence that nitrogen deposition is one of the dominant causes for biodiversity decline. Therefore the council of state issued a rule that any construction project must prove no further decline in biodiversity and no additional nitrogen deposition. This is causing a ban on many housing and infrastructure constructions and agriculture investments, which is the main reason for developing this extensive program.

Outcomes to date

Successes can be found on local scales in with corporative agricultural networks have a healthy business case with nature inclusive agriculture and water management and initiatives that apply a “multiple policy goal ladder”. Example see above (in Dutch).

On-going or future monitoring

The program consists of several monitoring projects:

- spatial monitoring
- environmental monitoring process for EU directives (air, water, nature)
- specific nitrogen monitoring

A learning evaluation of the program will be developed based on first-order (goals on systemic level) and second-order (organisational learning) evaluation.

An outlook project will provide a spatial translation of the transformational change principles for different sectors depending on four different future societal outlooks. The consequences for nature including the N2000 areas and a larger area representing the Nature Network Netherlands (NNN) are taken into account. This work is in progress.



Transformative Change for Nature

Illustrative Examples from the ENCA Network

Conflict potentials / trade-offs

Costs and resource needs

The program is the largest executional policy program of the national environment vision with a total budget of 24 billion euros for the next ten years.

Financing sources, mechanisms and instruments

On-going or future maintenance and management

Lesson learnt and recommendations

Not applicable yet.

Transferability of solutions, results and experiences

Lead contact(s)

Netherlands Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food security

Publications and weblinks

Authors and acknowledgements

This factsheet was prepared in April 2023 by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency in collaboration with the ENCA Secretariat as an illustrative example for transformative change for nature, to be distributed through the ENCA network.

Imprint: This factsheet was published in 2023 by the European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA Network) as an illustrative example for transformative change for nature.

Transformative change is defined as "a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values", in accordance with the Global Biodiversity Assessment by IPBES (2019).

For more information, see: <https://www.encanetwork.eu/interestgroups>