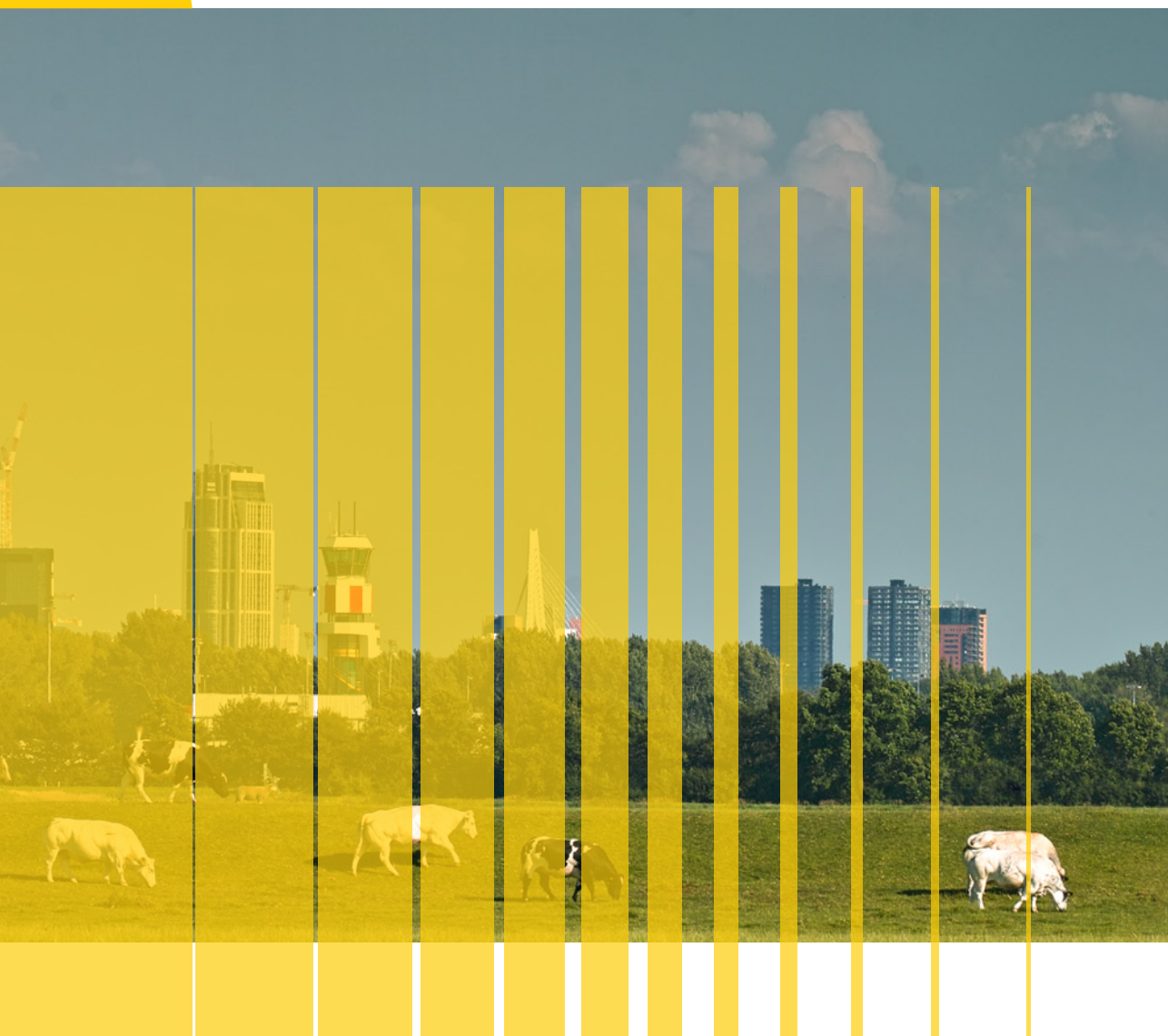


Nature Balance 2009

Summary



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In cooperation with:

Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR)



Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

Nature Balance 2009

Summary

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Foreword

The Nature Balance is the annual report by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) on the trends in the quality of nature and the landscape in the light of the policies pursued. The Nature Balance is published in September for the presentation of the national budget by the Government. This is the when the Government can translate the ambitions it has set out in the coalition agreement into policy priorities. It is also when the House of Representatives has an opportunity to respond to these policy proposals. The Environmental Balance 2009 is published at the same time as the Nature Balance. In presenting these balances the PBL seeks to support the Government and the House of Representatives in their task of formulating policy. For the first time this Nature Balance provides pointers for resolving or minimising the identified problems.

One of the conclusions of the Nature Balance is that current policies are delivering benefits for Dutch nature. The area devoted to nature conservation is increasing and the environmental and spatial conditions are improving. Nevertheless, the trends are not strong enough to achieve the stated conservation objectives within the desired period. Policy could focus more on the unique natural values which have their origin in the specific conditions found in the Dutch delta. Another promising option is to expand and link together the nature conservation areas, in combination with the further improvement of environmental conditions. An additional possibility is to make better progress in implementing the agreements under the Rural Areas Investment Budget.

Continuity and planning protection are important ingredients for making the landscape policies more successful. The accessibility and attractiveness of agricultural areas will benefit from a more forceful policy for strengthening the green and blue landscape elements.

Important contributions to this Nature Balance have been made by Alterra and the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI), both part of Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR). In addition, much of the data used in the analyses were made available by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and private data management organisations. The information on which this Nature Balance is based can be found on the website (www.pbl.nl/nl/natuurbalans) in the Environmental Data Compendium (www.milieuennatuurcompendium.nl), which is jointly managed by the PBL, CBS and WUR.

Professor M.A. Hajer
Director

Nature Balance 2009

Summary

The Government's nature and landscape policies in the Netherlands aim at:

- Decline of the current biodiversity must be stopped in 2010.
- In 2020 the sustainable conditions should be in place, needed to support the continued presence of all the species and populations that were found in the Netherlands in 1982.
- Conservation, recovery, development and sustainable use of nature areas: the National Ecological Network must become a coherent network of protected conservation areas.
- Reducing the biodiversity loss in the Dutch footprint abroad, by making product chains more sustainable.
- Raising public appreciation of the landscape. The Central government also aims at the prevention of 'cluttering' of the landscape.

The main conclusions of the Nature Balance 2009 are the following.

- **Clear and workable agreements between central and provincial government needed for better decentralisation of tasks**

The decentralisation agreements between central government and the provinces for the delivery of the Rural Areas Investment Budget are a step forward for nature and landscape policies. Decentralisation can make these policies more effective because it facilitates 'custom work' in area-based planning processes and because the involvement of diverse parties ensures support for the results of the negotiation process. However, this has not yet materialised in practice. Achieving the targets for nature and the landscape in specific areas requires clear and workable frameworks that not only secure central government objectives but also allow room for local objectives within these areas. The leeway for negotiation on nature policy objectives in area-based planning processes is constrained by detailed agreements and preconditions set by central government and the provinces, which leaves little room for local objectives. For landscape matters, the government's policy framework is not clear enough.

- **Local improvements in ecosystem quality; further expanding nature conservation areas a promising option**

The consistent nature conservation and restoration policy pursued by central government over the years has led to improvements in local ecosystem quality. This can be seen, for example, in the return of rare species in habitat creation and restoration projects. The total area devoted to nature conservation has increased and the pressure on the environment has fallen. However, in recent years both the rate of expansion of the nature conservation area and the decline in deposition of nitrogen have stalled. The species with the greatest demands on their environment are increasingly threatened, elongating and 'reddening' the national Red Lists. The effectiveness and efficiency of nature policy

can be improved by increasing the size of nature conservation areas and linking them together, and by improving environmental conditions.

- **Landscape benefits from continuity and planning protection**

The policy for the National Buffer Zones has been successful through a combination of continuity, clear planning safeguards and investments in greenspace. National Buffer Zones protect rural zones between the cities of the Randstad, to keep a green zone around these cities and conserve the landscape. This success can only be continued if the central government does not alter the boundaries of the National Buffer Zones in order to permit building development within these zones, as it did recently via the draft Spatial Planning Order. Continuity and planning protection also helps towards meeting the targets for National Landscapes and National Motorway Panoramas, for example by clarifying the frameworks via the second package of measures in the Spatial Planning Order in combination with long-term arrangements for landscape management and development.

- **Farmland is not automatically attractive and accessible for recreation**

The nature and landscape values of agricultural areas are continuing to decline. Concentrating efforts on enhancing green and blue landscape elements will not only permit agriculture to remain competitive, but will also conserve nature and landscape values. This may also provide a boost for recreation. However, because central government funding is allocated to the National Spatial Structure, few resources are available for the maintenance of landscape elements in agricultural areas.

- **Making trade chains more sustainable requires international agreements**

The Dutch ecological footprint abroad – the area of land needed for the production of our domestic consumption – remains a point of concern. Progress in reducing the biodiversity loss in the national footprint abroad by making product chains more sustainable is slow. The Netherlands is a small and densely populated country and is highly dependent on imports for its domestic consumption. The ability of the Dutch Government to influence foreign suppliers of raw materials to produce in a more sustainable way is limited due to competing international forces. This makes it important to raise the issue of sustainable production more forcefully in European circles and in the World Trade Organization, an example being the current case of biofuels in the European Union.

Structure of this report

The five main conclusions are explained below. First, we address the degree to which the government is realising its most important objectives for nature and the landscape and examine the effectiveness of the decentralisation of nature and landscape policies. The following topics are explored in more detail: trends in nature conservation areas; the likelihood that central government will achieve its objectives for the landscape; the trends in ‘biodiversity and the countryside’; and an evaluation of the policy for making the Dutch ecological footprint abroad more sustainable. The theme ‘biodiversity and the countryside’ is explored in this Nature Balance at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. Attention is also given to the Beautiful Netherlands policy programme. Each of the topics discussed is listed in Table 1 (see pages 36 and 37), which states whether the targets will be achieved and what the government can do to resolve or minimise the identified problems.



The tree frog is one of the species to profit from the expansion and restoration of its habitat.

I Local improvements in ecosystem quality; landscape policy less successful

Central government policy has favourable consequences for Dutch nature. The area of the National Ecological Network is expanding and the environmental conditions are improving. Moreover, plant and animal species that do not have very exacting habitat requirements increase their populations in the nature conservation areas. The inland sand drifts, coastal dunes, forests and marshes now contain relatively large areas with a good ecosystem quality. This is not the case in semi-natural grasslands, salt waters, lakes and farmland. Neither are the vulnerable species on the Red List doing well: they are declining and some may even disappear entirely from the Netherlands.

Setting implementation priorities desirable

What can the Government do to ensure that it does achieve its stated objectives? A national picture is now emerging of both current and desired ecosystem quality and the environmental and spatial conditions required to support that quality. This paves the way for setting national priorities and for more effective deployment of policy instruments for improving and sustaining ecosystem quality.

Within its nature policy the government could give priority to the ecosystems and habitats typical for the Netherlands, due to its location in a river delta. Key ecosystem types are the coastal dunes, wet heaths, lakes, marshes, fenland waters, nutrient-poor wet grasslands, brooks, weakly buffered fens, heath and shallow



The Netherlands has a major responsibility within Europe for the conservation, restoration and development of Natura 2000 habitats in dunes, heaths, salt meadows and several water types.

marine habitats. The importance of these habitats is recognized by the Habitats Directive. Under the Birds Directive and Habitats Directive, the Netherlands is also responsible for several plant and animal species that depend on these types of habitat, such as coastal breeding birds, migratory birds, seals, porpoise and migratory fish. In addition, nature policies can be made more effective and efficient by continuing on the present course of expanding and linking nature conservation areas and improving the environmental conditions within them.

Clear and workable frameworks needed to safeguard central and provincial government targets

The introduction of the Rural Areas Investment Budget (*Investeringsbudget Landelijk Gebied – ILG*) in 2007 changed the relation between central and provincial government. Since then the provinces have greater responsibility for achieving central government targets for nature and the landscape. Central government has largely withdrawn from the implementation of policy and has given provincial government greater decision-making powers. The provinces organise the implementation of policy, partly via the ‘area-based planning processes’ in which the parties work together on the development and implementation of the plans for their area.

This new division of responsibilities gives rise to certain dilemmas and raises questions: Who is responsible for coordinating what? Who keeps an eye on the country’s European obligations? What guarantee is there that the provinces will pursue the central government’s objectives? Can the provinces properly interpret and comply with the legislation and other frameworks formulated by central government? As yet, not all these questions have been adequately answered, which leads to ten-

sions between central government, the provinces and other parties in the areas concerned.

For good cooperation between central government and the provinces it is important that central government defines clear and workable frameworks that safeguard central government targets while leaving room for achieving local objectives. A better balance can be struck between the two. Despite the decentralisation of responsibilities, central government still has a direct influence on the implementation of nature and landscape policies via sectoral policies and via legislative provisions and other frameworks. The decision by central and provincial government to elaborate on the ILG agreements and to earmark funds for specific objectives is also important. Sometimes there are discrepancies between the various central government sectoral policy frameworks, but those involved in area-based processes must be able to operate within workable frameworks if they are to implement central government policy.

Nature and landscape policies are a joint undertaking

Area parties such as local authorities, water boards and civil society organisations play an important part in area-based negotiation processes. These organisations were not formal parties to the administrative agreements on the ILG, but they often have the competences or hold positions of power – such as ownership of land – which are needed to achieve the policy objectives. Because nature and landscape policies are nonmandatory and depend on local support, the success of these policies depends on the cooperation of these area parties. But if area-based planning processes concentrate on stringent national and European sectoral goals, conflicts of interest will arise. Uncertainty and misunderstandings about the room for negotiation on the objectives for Natura 2000 areas causes frustration and gives nature a bad image, which can inhibit the realisation of conservation objectives.

To prevent opposition in area-based planning processes it is important to develop a common vision and build in room for negotiation. In that sense, implementing nature and landscape policies is a joint undertaking for central government, the provinces and the area parties. Further attention should be given to central government's role in assisting the provinces and the area-based processes in finding ways to achieve national objectives.

Greater urgency needed to achieve current government policy targets

In mid 2007 the present Government presented its policy statement 'Working together, living together' (*Samen werken samen leven*), which sets out the government's plans for the next four years, identifies where its priorities lie, and the points on which it can be held accountable. 'Working together, living together' contains several policy principles for nature and the landscape, including the Beautiful Netherlands policy programme. At the moment the Government is not preparing any actions that offer prospects for achieving its overall goals within the stated periods (see Table 1, pages 36 and 37). Nevertheless, substantial progress has been made with the protection of nature conservation areas (draft Spatial Planning Order in Council and the designation of Natura 2000 areas) and the management plans for a number of Natura 2000 areas. The Government has also brought its landscape

policy into sharper focus, although that seems to have contributed little to the tasks at hand.

It is hard to measure the success of some processes in generating support because the objectives of these processes are formulated in terms like 'move forward into implementation' and 'make a contribution to'. Realising central government policy also sometimes depends on external factors and collaboration with partners. In those cases it is unclear how far the Government's influence extends and what it can be held accountable for. The conclusion, therefore, is that not all the Government's actions for nature and the landscape are on course (see appendix, pages 33 and 34). The 'delivery instrument', a Government review method, came to a similar conclusion.

II Nature conservation area expanding and environmental quality improving

The following sections discuss progress with expanding the total area of wildlife habitat, the ecosystem quality in these areas and the status of the individual plants and animal species.

The species and habitats that depend on smaller areas are doing well and they are already benefiting from the new nature in the National Ecological Network. The species present in areas where the environmental conditions have improved, such as the dunes and forests, are also doing well. This is not the case, though, for species and habitats vulnerable to fragmentation and environmental pressures, such as those from heath and raised bogs (see Table 1 'Ecosystem quality in nature conservation areas', pages 30 and 31). The Red Lists of endangered species have become longer and 'redder'. More species have come under threat and the species on the lists are still declining in numbers; some species are on the point of disappearing from the Netherlands altogether (see Figure 1). Central government aims to reduce or stabilise the numbers of species on the Red Lists between now and 2020: the number of endangered species and the seriousness of the threats they face must not be greater than in the period 1994–2007. However, for various reasons, this goal is unlikely to be met (see Table 1 'Numbers of plant and animal species, pages 30 and 31).

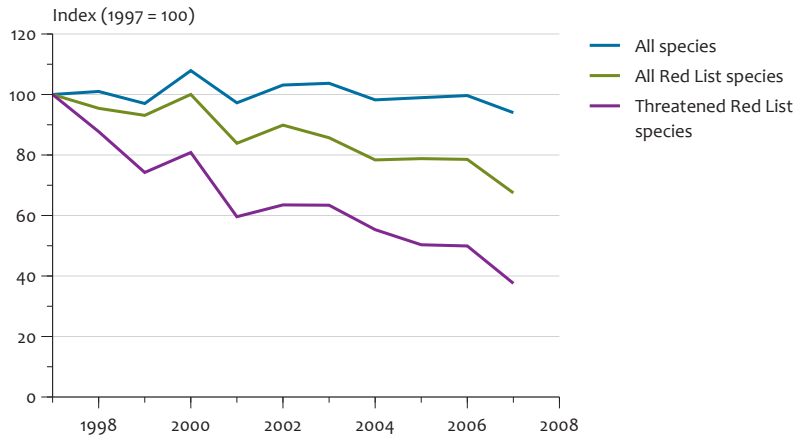
Environmental and spatial conditions are still constraint the sustainable conservation of species

To begin with, conditions in the whole National Ecological Network are not yet good enough to support ecosystems and habitats (see Figure 2), especially water-dependent habitats. Conditions are only slowly improving (See Table 1 'Moisture content', pages 30 and 31). By doing more to reverse water table drawdown in certain areas we may hope that progress can be made with improving this situation in the coming years.

Nitrogen inputs to nature conservation areas are also still too high, despite the considerable reduction in nitrogen deposition in recent decades, and the character of these areas is being lost as a result. European plans to further reduce deposition

Figure 1

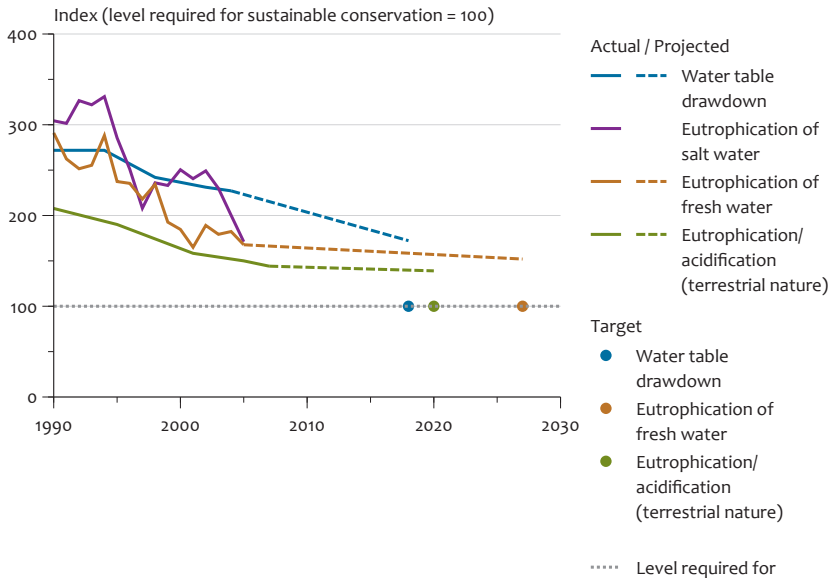
Animal species



The number of threatened plant and animal species is rising. To reduce the number of species on the Red List it is essential to increase the total area devoted to nature conservation and improve the spatial connectivity and environmental conditions of these areas..

can only result in a few per cent reduction in current deposition rates. The required sustainable conditions for nature are therefore not coming within reach (see Table 1 ‘Acidity/nutrient status’, pages 30 and 31). Under the Rural Areas Investment Budget the provinces and central government are working to solve these problems in about ten per cent of the area. The subsidy scheme for curative measures to reduce local environmental pressures has been decentralised to the provinces as part of the ‘Management Programme’, but the financial arrangements have not yet been made. From the point of view of the visibility of nature policy this is regrettable because this scheme can deliver quick results at the local level for relatively little money. In the areas where the scheme has been applied a number of Red List species have returned.

The area of land devoted to nature conservation and the spatial connections between nature areas are at the moment too small to support the target quality (see Table 1 ‘Spatial connectivity’, pages 30 and 31). Many species are in difficulties as a result. Moreover, the fragmentation of habitats is aggravating the impacts of environmental pressures because in small areas the core area of habitat is close to the edge of the patch. Although the nature conservation area is growing, the last 40 per cent of the National Ecological Network is hard to assemble: the ‘low-hanging fruit’ has been plucked and it is now more difficult to acquire suitable land (see Table 1 ‘Area of new National Ecological Network’, pages 30 and 31). To obtain land to extend nature areas, clarity is needed on precisely which areas lie within the designated boundaries of the National Ecological Network and on the financial compensation available for the acquisition of land. Another problem is that in many areas within the National Ecological Network landscape works are required



The environmental pressures on nature in the Netherlands are declining. Nevertheless, water table drawdown and eutrophication/acidification are still major stumbling blocks for the sustainable conservation of plants and animals.

to create the right conditions for the intended conservation objectives; this work is way behind schedule.

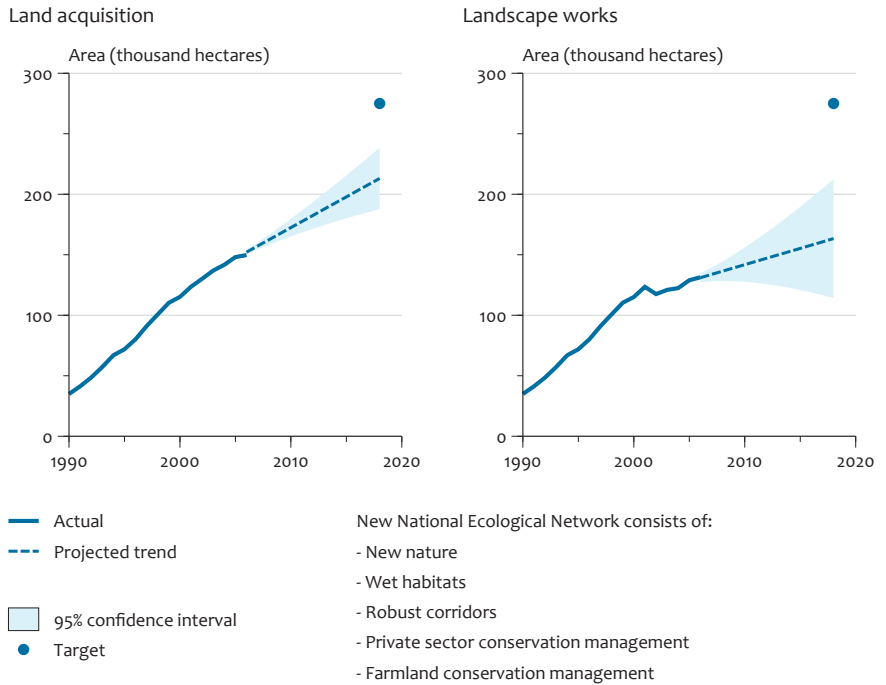
Finally, interest in private nature conservation management and agri-environmental schemes is lagging behind expectations. To change this situation central government will have to pursue more targeted policies, for example by offering higher payments to interested parties and simplifying procedures. At the current rate of land acquisition, landscape layout and management, the National Ecological Network will not be completed by 2018 (see Figure 3).

Incorporate vulnerable habitats within robust areas

If central government maintains the targets stated in its nature policy, it would be advisable to increase the size of the nature conservation areas and to improve the links between these areas. This is the only way to reduce the effects of fragmentation and the environmental pressures on nature. It will also make nature more climate-proof. Moreover, it will make measures to reduce pressures on the environment more effective. An example of such a measure is increasing the distance between vulnerable habitats and the sources of environmental pressures, including farming activities. This can be achieved by increasing the size of conservation areas that contain vulnerable habitats and/or creating buffer zones around these areas within which farming practices are adapted accordingly.

Figure 3

New National Ecological Network



The chances of achieving the targets for land acquisition and landscape works within the new National Ecological Network are less than five per cent.

One option for raising ecosystem quality is to amend the spatial configuration of nature conservation areas and other land uses. This is developed further in the Netherlands in the Future outlook study. The current configuration of the National Ecological Network already increases the size of nature conservation areas, but not enough to fully accommodate the spatial requirements of species and habitats.

Quantum jump in sustainable agriculture needed

Two thirds of the territory of the Netherlands is agricultural land. Agriculture therefore has a significant impact on the green character of the country and on environmental conditions, and thus on ecosystem quality. In the years to come agriculture faces the major challenge of operating competitively on the world market while new income support provisions under the Common Agricultural Policy are being prepared. This global liberalisation of agriculture makes the transition to sustainable agriculture more difficult. Under further liberalisation a balance will have to be found between environmental and animal welfare standards on the one hand and the production methods and competitiveness of European agriculture on the other hand.

The transition to sustainable agriculture is also progressing slowly because necessary innovations are not taking place; efforts are primarily geared towards making existing agricultural systems more sustainable. There is, however, no consistent vision of what sustainable agriculture is. The picture is clearer for livestock farming: recycling loops have been largely closed, the system is open to the environment and the public, and high-grade technology is being employed to help make production more sustainable. In addition, livestock farming should be economically healthy and competitive.

If central government wants to ensure further protection for nature, additional reductions will be required in nitrogen emissions in the Netherlands and abroad – both in the form of ammonia and nitrogen oxides. Making further reductions in ammonia emissions will depend on several developments in agriculture, such as a more rapid transition to low-emission housing. This can be achieved by installing air scrubbers in pig and poultry housing, and also in dairy cow sheds if the use of low protein feed does not result in sufficient reductions by 2010. Measures will be needed in dairy farming if the national dairy herd expands as a result of the increase in milk quota for the period to 2015 and the subsequent abandonment of quota altogether. If ammonia emissions from the Dutch livestock sector do not fall far enough, reducing livestock densities may be an option, although this will have severe economic consequences for the sector. Stricter land use zoning could also be a solution: in this case more stringent emission standards would apply to livestock farms around nature conservation areas than elsewhere in the country.

Use of area-based planning processes

If it is the government's intention to increase the size of nature conservation areas and improve the connections between them, it will be necessary to work with area-based planning processes to achieve these goals. The conservation objectives for the Natura 2000 areas are precisely formulated and legally binding and leave little room for other ambitions, for example for agriculture or recreation. If central government does not create room for negotiation this may lead, in the worst case scenario, to landowners not being willing to sell their land, resulting in little gain for either nature or agriculture. If central government still takes no action, agricultural enterprises will not be able to expand. It is possible that in time farmers may wish to sell their land anyway, but by then progress with nature policy will already have been delayed and public resistance may have increased, eroding support for government policy.

If there really is no room within area-based planning processes for discussion on conservation objectives and how to achieve them, it will be important to provide attractive financial compensation as well as compulsory purchase arrangements, clear communication and a willingness to listen to ensure that measures that benefit nature do not unnecessarily frustrate other local ambitions. Discussion may also be useful for building up knowledge or for working together to find solutions. This can create room for regionally distinctive habitats and landscapes that are compatible with other local ambitions, thus helping to garner real support for the plans. Central and provincial government can support this approach, for example by providing information on conservation objectives and planning frameworks,



The National Buffer Zone Midden Delfland is the second oldest National Buffer Zone. It is 50 years old and has developed into a diversified recreational area.

making funds available, ensuring political and administrative support, and providing methodological and steering expertise.

III Landscape benefits from continuity and planning protection

In the following sections we evaluate the extent to which central government is achieving its main policy objectives for the landscape.

In its 'Working together living together' policy statement the Balkenende IV Government describes its ambition for the Dutch landscape as follows: in 2011 the Dutch population should be more satisfied with the landscape. This policy statement reflects the importance placed by the Government on an attractive landscape and indicates what it wants to achieve through the various policy measures for the landscape. However, it is unlikely that central government will fulfil its ambitions; the policies currently being pursued are simply too limited in relation to the ambitions. Moreover, it is questionable whether the way in which the policy objective for 'satisfaction with the landscape' has been formulated – in the form of a rating, or 'marks out of ten' – is adequate (see Table 1 'Landscape valuation', pages 30 and 31). In particular, there is no policy concept that relates this rating to the action strategy for landscape policy. Moreover, a single average mark for the whole 'Dutch landscape' cannot adequately reflect the effects of landscape policy. Spatial differentiation in policy objectives and additional information on recreational use and public engagement with the landscape can improve insights into the effectiveness of policy.

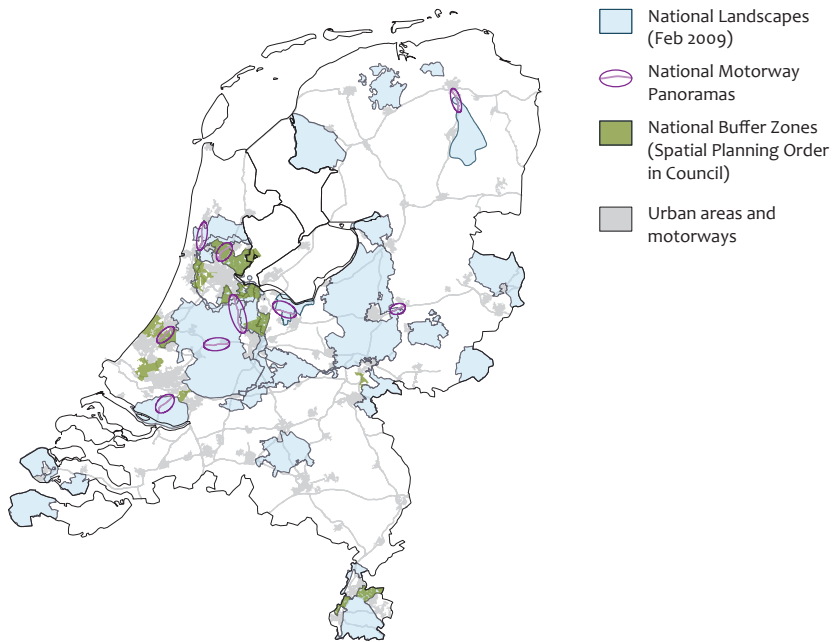
The Government must therefore revise its policy if it still wants to achieve its goals, either in full or in part. In essence, the current policy effort boils down to central government asking the provinces to refine and roll out its policy. In addition, central government has designated areas of national and international importance where the landscape and/or recreation are the decisive factors in determining future spatial development: the National Landscapes, the National Buffer Zones and the National Motorway Panoramas.

Landscape qualities often come off worst in regional decision making. Examples include the cultural and natural heritage values of the landscape that are under threat from urbanisation, infrastructure development, the increasing scale of agricultural production, and habitat creation and restoration projects (see Table 1, 'Core natural and cultural qualities', pages 30 and 31). National policy could help to ensure a better balance of interests by formulating clear ground rules for the long term. The fact that a combination of clarity and continuity can be successful is demonstrated by the more than fifty-year-old policy for the National Buffer Zones, which were established to prevent cities coalescing while at the same time creating space for recreational uses around the cities (see Table 1 'Building in National Buffer Zones', pages 30 and 31). Central government can provide clarity by formulating clear ground rules for decentralised government via the second package of measures in the Spatial Planning Order in Council and by establishing structural financial arrangements for landscape management. The draft Spatial Planning Order in Council sets no parameters for defining the natural and cultural core qualities.

Beautiful Netherlands can limit, but not eliminate, landscape clutter

Research has shown that large industrial buildings and infrastructure have a negative impact on landscape amenity. Clutter and visual intrusion in the landscape is a live topic in both the political community and society at large. Central government is responding to this in its Beautiful Netherlands programme for combating the cluttering of the landscape. The Landscape Agenda (*Agenda Landschap*) also addresses this problem. The Beautiful Netherlands programme consists of a combination of binding and nonmandatory measures. The toughest measures contained in the programme are the 'SER-ladder' for business parks (to minimise vacancy rates) and the designation of the boundaries of the National Buffer Zones in the Spatial Planning Order in Council. In addition, both the Beautiful Netherlands programme and the Landscape Agenda seek to improve spatial quality through incentive schemes.

The SER-ladder follows three steps that only permit the construction of a new business estate if the need for it can be demonstrated, the restructuring of existing sites is not possible and the new build is clustered with existing development as much as possible. Although the SER-ladder is included in the Spatial Planning Order in Council, the details have only been partially worked out. Because of this there is a danger that it may not have the desired effect in practice. According to the draft Order in Council local authorities must apply the SER-ladder when deciding on planning permission for new business estates and state how this has influenced their decision making in the explanatory notes to the land use plan. But because no standards for this have been set, central government will have to retrospectively review whether the reasoning behind such decisions are sufficiently justified.



Central government has the final responsibility for landscapes of national importance. These are the National Landscapes, the National Buffer Zones, the National Motorway Panoramas and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites (not shown on the map).

It is still too soon to ascertain how big a contribution the Beautiful Netherlands programme and the Landscape Agenda will make to controlling landscape clutter. What is clear is that they can make a positive contribution by promoting clustered urban development and highlighting the importance of good design for new urban elements in the landscape. This cannot entirely prevent visual intrusion, partly because central government measures are limited to incentive schemes. Neither is it likely that the existing level of perceived visual clutter will be substantially reduced in future. This means that central government will probably not achieve its target (see Table 1 ‘Visual impacts on landscape amenity’, pages 30 and 31).

Central government can raise the effectiveness of the Beautiful Netherlands programme in preventing visual intrusion by imposing requirements on the design of building projects and by giving design quality teams a more formal position in the planning process.

National Landscapes: lack of concrete guidelines

In the National Spatial Strategy central government has designated twenty National Landscapes that are unique in the world or characteristic of the Netherlands (see Figure 4). For each National Landscape it has designated three core qualities and

has asked the provincial councils to define these in more detail. Examples of these core qualities are: openness, green character, characteristic parcelisation or field pattern, earth heritage features and small-scale character. Building is only permitted in National Landscapes under the ‘yes, provided that’ principle; in other words, if the core qualities are conserved or further developed. It is questionable whether this actually happens on the ground. An analysis of development plans has revealed that plans in many National Landscapes are for locations that exhibit the core qualities.

Central government’s request to the provinces to elaborate on the core qualities is expressed in the Spatial Planning Order in Council by the term ‘make objectifiable’ (*objectiveverbaar maken*). It is therefore not clear whether the provincial councils have to indicate the core qualities on maps and so it will be up to the provinces to decide whether they describe the core qualities in such a way that the local authorities can incorporate them into their local land use plans. This uncertainty, on top of the threats to the core qualities from development plans, the increasing scale of agricultural production and the lack of a structural financing system for management, casts doubt on the possibility, under current policies, of central government achieving its objective of conserving and developing the core qualities (see Table 1 ‘Core qualities of National Landscapes’, pages 30 and 31). Central government could assist the provinces by first formulating the parameters for defining the core qualities more clearly than is currently stated in the Spatial Planning Order in Council. At the moment the ability of local authorities to include the core qualities in their land use plans depends on how each province decides to elaborate these core qualities.

National Buffer Zones: an example of successful landscape policy

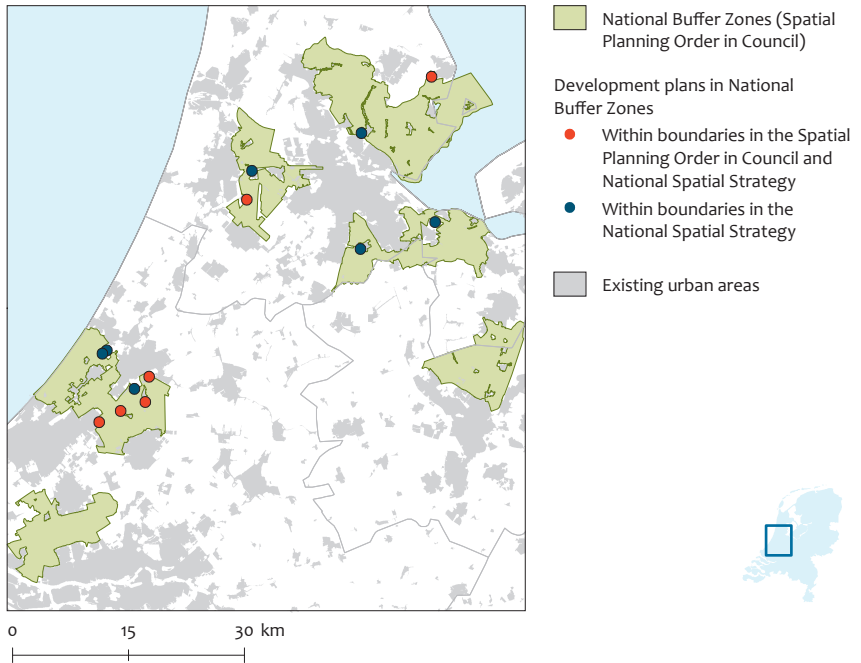
The National Buffer Zones were introduced to prevent cities coalescing. Central government also wants to use the National Buffer Zones to increase the recreational capacity of the areas around the cities. The government has continued to pursue these goals during the last fifty years through a restrictive building policy in combination with land acquisition for recreational uses. Building is only permitted under the ‘No, unless’ principle; in other words, only if it contributes to the recreational value of the zone. The National Buffer Zone can therefore be called a success because of the continuity of policy, the successful combination of protection and development, and the strong planning safeguards. Nevertheless, in recent years plans for new development in these buffer zones have often been approved by central government (see Figure 5).

Their location between the cities puts the National Buffer Zones under constant development pressure. For a long time it was unclear how central government would respond to plans for new development in the National Buffer Zones. The Beautiful Netherlands policy programme was intended to end this uncertainty through the designation of new boundaries in the Spatial Planning Order in Council. But despite these new boundaries several new development plans are going ahead within the National Buffer Zones (see Table 1 ‘Building in National Buffer Zones’, pages 30 and 31).

The clarity afforded by the new boundaries will only have a positive effect if central government upholds the new boundaries by refusing permission for existing and

Figure 5

Major development plans in National Buffer Zones



By amending the boundaries of the National Buffer Zones in the Spatial Planning Order in Council, central government has opened the way for several major developments.

new plans within these zones and by not making any alterations to these boundaries in future. In addition, the draft Spatial Planning Order in Council provides the option of permitting new development in exchange for investments in recreational facilities. This ‘red for green’ scheme can open the back door to major new developments in the National Buffer Zones. Central government can control such development by enforcing the rules in the Spatial Planning Order in Council. It is also important to ensure that the quality of design for new developments is up to scratch.

National Motorway Panoramas: views under threat

Throughout the Netherlands open views from the motorway are under threat from development plans. In response, central government has designated nine National Motorway Panoramas: views from motorways of landscapes with major cultural and/or natural core qualities. The Government aims to preserve these panoramas and promote the clustering and proper integration in the landscape of developments within view of the motorway. Because these panoramas were only selected a short time ago, little can be said about the extent to which this aim is being achieved. The open character of the nine national panoramas does appear to be under some threat from development plans, but less so than in the open areas in the country as a whole. Over the coming decades, however, the panoramas could be degraded by the building of large livestock sheds, greenhouses and very tall



The Passeway nature development area near Tiel. The area contains an oxbow lake, amphibian pools and dynamic marsh habitat in the floodplain foreland. The wetland may be inundated as the river level rises following heavy rainfall.

objects such as wind turbines, telecommunication masts, towers and electricity transmission pylons (see Table 1 ‘Open views from motorways’, pages 36 and 37). The current motorway panoramas are in open areas of the National Landscapes. Enforcing this policy is essential for maintaining the open character of the National Motorway Panoramas.

Importance of continuity and clarity

Central government ambitions for the landscape are only achievable through a combination of spatial planning rules, long-term compensation for landscape management and greater attention to the quality of design. If central government decides to do this, all arrangements should be guaranteed for the long term. This means that in the National Landscapes, the National Buffer Zones and the National Motorway Panoramas all spatial developments will have to be compatible with the objectives for these areas, which may involve restrictions on greenhouse horticulture or the increasing scale of farming operations. For this reason it is important that businesses know where they stand and whether they are making the right long-term investments in the right area.

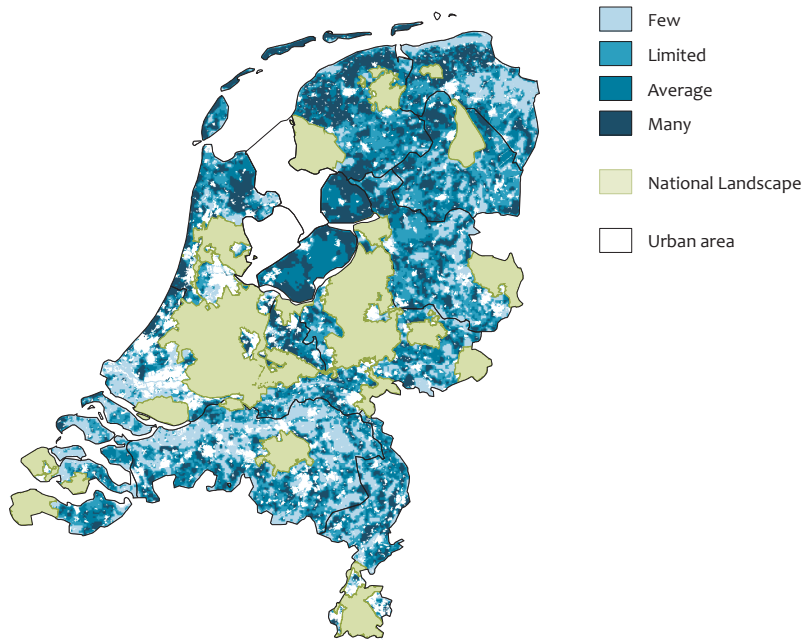
IV Farmland is not automatically attractive and accessible

At the Government’s request this Nature Balance elaborates the theme ‘biodiversity and the countryside’. The following sections summarise the main conclusions.

The rural areas take up most of the territory of the Netherlands and contain nature conservation areas, water bodies and farmland. The nature conservation areas and the landscapes of national importance have been discussed earlier in this summary. The agricultural parts of the rural areas cover more than two thirds of the Nether-

Figure 6

Core landscape qualities outside National Landscapes, 2008



Many agricultural areas outside the National Landscapes contain valuable landscapes with a unique regional identity.

lands. They therefore determine to a large extent the living environment of the Dutch population.

Agriculture, nature and housing compete for land

There are many different claims on the use of land in the agricultural areas: for agriculture, recreation and tourism, residential uses and for nature conservation. The agricultural sector demands a landscape that is efficiently laid out for production and, as the dominant land user, its demands are uppermost. With the liberalisation of agricultural policy the global market increasingly determines the prices of agricultural produce. Moreover, under the changes to the Common Agricultural Policy, funds are being shifted from income support to rural development while price support mechanisms, such as the milk quotas, are disappearing. These trends make cost efficiency an important driver of change in the layout of agricultural landscapes. Moreover, the increasing scale of production is giving agricultural enterprises more opportunities to lay out and work their land efficiently.

Attention to landscapes with characteristic cultural and historic elements

Residents, recreationists and tourists want an attractive and accessible countryside. The rural population is changing as growing numbers of rural residents have no

relation to the agricultural production function of the countryside. The presence and appreciation of characteristic landscapes and their associated biodiversity reflect the regional identity of the various Dutch landscapes. Such landscapes with high cultural and natural values are found throughout the country (see Figure 6). If people attach importance to having an attractive landscape throughout the country, then those landscapes outside the National Landscapes also deserve attention. The Beautiful Netherlands programme and the Landscape Agenda address this policy challenge: they seek to create a better balance between red and green, as mentioned earlier in this summary.

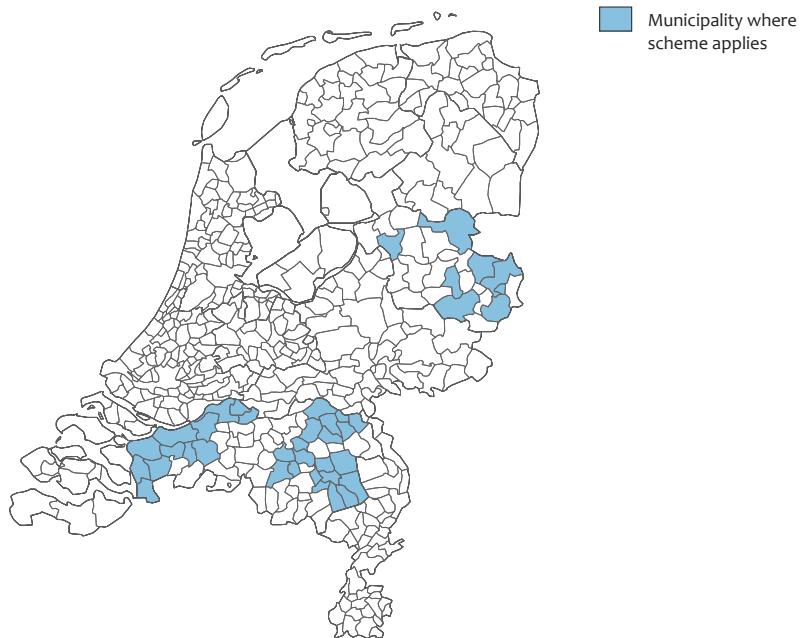
Green and blue networks can support climate adaptation

Adapting to climate change necessitates new landscape structures. The capacity to provide buffers against peak precipitation and periods of drought in the agricultural areas is limited, but this will increasingly be needed in future. Policies have already been drawn up to prevent flooding resulting from peak precipitation events and it is anticipated that about 35,000 hectares of land will be needed to increase water storage capacity in rural areas. The costs of this are estimated to be about two billion euros. Depending on how this is achieved on the ground, the creation of water storage areas can make a major contribution to the green and blue networks in the rural areas. The provision of fresh water during periods of drought has not been properly investigated. The draft National Water Plan states that a further study will be carried out in the next few years that will not only look into the supply of water from the main water system but also the possibilities for reducing the demand for water in the regional water systems.

Little implementation of nature and landscape policy in agricultural areas

The landscape layouts demanded by farmers, recreationists, residents and nature conservation interests are not automatically compatible. Central government has laid down clear goals for nature and landscape in the countryside in the National Spatial Strategy and the Agenda for a Living Countryside. However, policies are ambivalent because implementation is geared primarily to the National Spatial Structure, which covers just a small part of the rural area, primarily the nature conservation areas and the National Landscapes. The agricultural parts of the countryside fall outside these priority areas and therefore the natural and landscape qualities of these areas receive little attention or funding. The ILG agreements with the provinces also do little to change this situation. Outside the National Spatial Structure the provinces are the main instigators of policy, but have made little money available for these areas.

Central government sees the green and blue networks in the landscape as a means to satisfy diverse demands within society, such as landscape restoration and development, the Building with Nature and Adapting Spatial Planning to Climate Change programmes and the development of green business parks. The Catalogue of Green/Blue Services was approved by the European Union in February 2007 and provides opportunities for financing green and blue networks in agricultural areas. However, the Catalogue has been introduced only on a very limited scale. In 2008 just a few provinces offered the possibility of using the Catalogue, and then not even in all their municipalities (see Figure 7).



In 2008 provincial schemes for green/blue services were available in just a few small areas of the Netherlands.

The conservation and development of nature and landscape are directly related to enabling a viable future for agriculture. Habitat development almost always goes hand in hand with other plans for the area, such as agricultural improvement, infrastructure, making space for water, house building, etc. In area-based planning processes the parties involved frequently run up against problems and rely on central government intervention to resolve them. For example, they often have to comply with new legislation for which the legal precedents are still evolving. It is hardly efficient if each area has to resolve these issues on its own. Central government could play a valuable role in clearing such obstacles.

Structural financing needed

The resources required for the layout and maintenance of green and blue networks in the rural areas are far greater than those currently available. The day-to-day maintenance of existing landscape elements outside the National Landscapes costs about 46 to 75 million euros per year. The Catalogue of Green/Blue Services contains provisions for both the maintenance and installation of landscape elements, but so far only two provinces have been willing to make a budget available for this. The Catalogue provides little scope for financing landscape management by private parties.



Arable field margins are components of more sustainable farmland management. They help to suppress pests and add to the natural and landscape values of agricultural areas.

Nature and landscape are components of an attractive environment, which makes them of economic value for private parties, but that does not mean that private parties are also prepared to invest in them. The new Land Development Act expands the possibilities for ‘red for green’ arrangements, but in practice investments in new developments contain few or no arrangements for greenspace and recreation areas. Research in the Biesbosch and the Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Parks shows that businesses can attribute in the order of 15–20% of their turnover and local employment to nature-based recreation. In the Netherlands there are also various trusts for landscape maintenance in specific regions that draw on private funds, and landscape auctions are held in some areas. These auctions, however, focus on the landscapes that are already attractive. Moreover, landscape trusts and auctions can only provide very limited funding.

If central government places importance on the long-term funding of landscape elements, a legal obligation for the ‘red for green’ scheme could be an answer, according to Rinnoy Kan’s Taskforce on Financing the Dutch Landscape (*Taskforce Financiering Landschap Nederland*). The collective character of the landscape means that no-one should be excluded from freely enjoying attractive landscapes. Now that the market is failing in this respect, it is up to the government to take action to provide funds for public services. The Taskforce identifies three ways in which the government can take action without having to pay the full costs itself:

1. use the planning system to place conditions on spatial developments;
2. provide dedicated financing, for example by acquiring land for the creation of new recreation areas or the management of landscape elements;

3. use tax relief schemes, such as the Estates Act (*Natuurschoonwet*), and making the Green Projects Regulation (*Regeling Groenprojecten*) available for investments in the landscape. .

Agrobiodiversity and sustainable soil use still in their infancy

One of the aims of central government is to make agriculture more sustainable through more sustainable use of the soil, but also by making use of agrobiodiversity to reduce the environmental pressures of conventional agriculture. In arable areas agrobiodiversity supports agricultural production by helping to suppress pests or to enhance pollination, thus reducing the need for plant protection products. It also helps to maintain natural and landscape values in fields and field margins by providing habitats for species and raising the quality of the landscape. Agrobiodiversity and sustainable soil use in fields and field margins are therefore important measures for making farmland management more sustainable.

However, green and blue elements take up agricultural land and require maintenance. By and large, the advantages of having to use fewer pesticides as a result of these schemes do not balance out the costs of the loss of productive land and maintaining landscape elements. Inadequate compensation for maintaining landscape elements can therefore be a threat to the further development of agrobiodiversity.

Central government is continuing its agrobiodiversity policy in the Agrobiodiversity and Sustainable Soil Use Incentive Programme (*Stimuleringsprogramma Agrobiodiversiteit en Duurzaam Bodemgebruik*) and in the Biodiversity policy programme, but the use of these schemes has so far been limited to demonstration projects. A structural policy is needed to ensure that agrobiodiversity can play a significant part in making farmland management more sustainable. Existing policy does not include any benchmarks, which leaves in doubt how agrobiodiversity can find widespread application in agricultural areas. Accommodating agrobiodiversity on farmland requires further knowledge and must be tailored to specific local conditions. The effectiveness of agrobiodiversity therefore depends on using measures designed for different spatial scales. Moreover, the parameters for laying out green and blue networks differ according to the objectives: is the intention only to suppress pests, or is the conservation of biodiversity also an objective?

The policy for sustainable soil use is set out in the Soil Policy Letter (*Beleidsbrief Bodem*) and in the EU Soil Thematic Strategy. One of the goals of sustainable soil use is to reduce the surpluses of nitrogen and phosphate. Although these surpluses have been considerably reduced in recent years, they have not fallen any further since 2005. The environmental risks of contamination by veterinary drugs and plant protection products and the use of heavy metals remain a concern. Leaching of these contaminants to surface waters should be reduced.

Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy opens up opportunities

The European Union is taking a range of measures as part of its interim reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. For example, part of the income support budget for land-based agriculture will be dedicated to a wider range of activities that support nature and the landscape. Moreover, until 2013 additional resources will be made available for rural development. The main outlines of how these funds will be

spent have already been decided. Of the additional funds in the rural development programme for 2010–2013, 30 million euros will be available for arable field margin management and 40 million euros for reducing environmental losses from agriculture, on the condition that the Dutch government provides cofinancing. It is still not known how much EU money will be available for the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013.

Ecosystem quality declining and agri-environment schemes reasonably effective

The quality of nature and landscape in agricultural areas is declining (see Table 1 ‘Ecosystem quality in agricultural areas’, pages 30 and 31). This can be seen, for example, in the rapid decline in numbers of meadow birds and the fall in the average number of species of birds, plants and butterflies in agricultural areas (see Figure 8). This trend is opposite to that in the nature conservation areas, where the numbers of bird and plant species are rising. Central government is seeking to conserve biodiversity in agricultural areas through agri-environment schemes and getting farmers more involved in conservation management.

The ecological effectiveness of agri-environment schemes is low. They can be made more effective by improving the linkages between sites. The continuity of agri-environment schemes will also have to be improved to avoid the complete loss of these investments when contracts come to an end. The intensity of the management effort could also be better: the ecological effectiveness of the more intensive management packages is higher than that of the ‘lighter’ packages, but there appears to be little willingness among farmers to sign up to the more intensive packages.

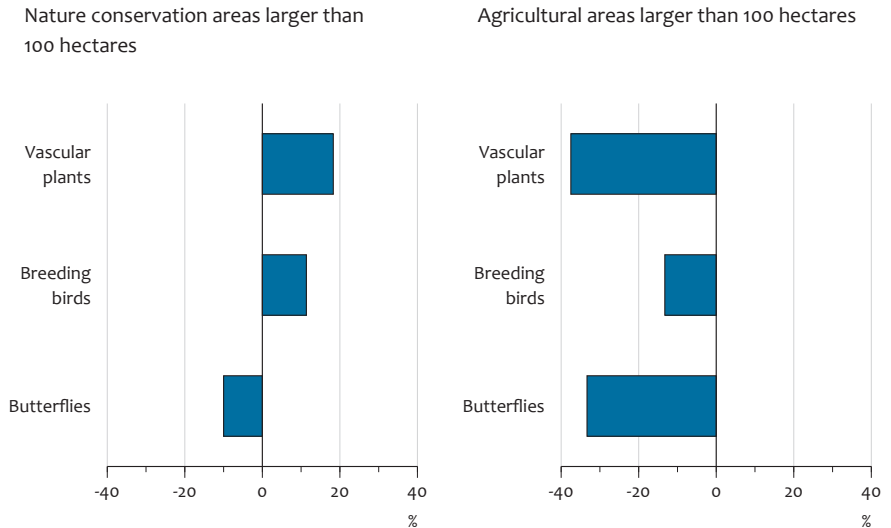
The habitat approach offers prospects for supporting natural values in agricultural areas. The scheme for habitat conservation is still relatively young and far measures have so far been geared mainly to improving the habitat of Montague’s harrier or hamsters, for example by leaving arable fields fallow and establishing fauna margins. If the government wants to reverse the negative trend in the populations of species of agricultural landscapes, it would be advisable to increase the resources available. By the end of 2009 at the latest the provinces will have drawn up detailed plans for the implementation of the habitats policy.

A joint and innovative approach to agricultural areas is desirable

How can the use of agricultural areas be optimised in future? The challenge is to combine land uses in such a way that agriculture can continue to operate competitively while other functions – such as nature and recreation – can be maintained or expanded. In the end, farmers will have to include the maintenance of an attractive landscape in their farm management strategies. Agricultural nature conservation societies have played an important part in this since the 1990s. If truly innovative solutions have to be found for specific areas, a good starting point will be cooperation between government authorities, farmers and other rural enterprises, civil society organisations and research institutes and knowledge centres. It is important that those involved are willing to listen to each other and establish a common position. Government authorities can support this by participating in such processes and providing opportunities for these innovations to go ahead.

Figure 8

Changes in target species numbers between 1975 - 1990 and 1990 - 2005



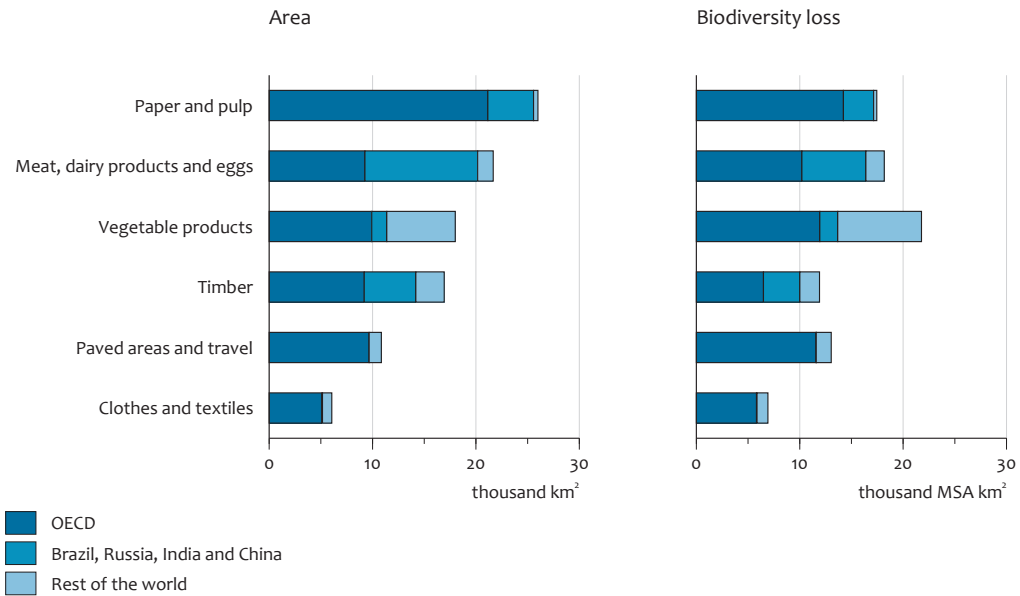
The average number of target species of plants, breeding birds and butterflies in agricultural areas declined between 1975–1990 and 1990–2005. In contrast, some improvements can be seen in nature conservation areas

V The Netherlands is taking responsibility for its ecological footprint abroad

The Netherlands is a densely populated and prosperous country. Agricultural production is relatively expensive, partly because of the high land prices and high labour costs, and because liberalisation of the global market means that production takes place where it is cheapest, import volumes are growing. The land required for production to meet Dutch consumption – the ecological footprint – is three times the size of the land surface of the Netherlands. The biodiversity in this production area is declining, primarily due to intensive production methods in agriculture, but also for the production of timber and paper (see Figure 9). One of the ways in which the government wants to make the Dutch footprint abroad more sustainable is through the certification of production chains. Dutch Biodiversity policy sets out a strategy for making timber, fish, soy, palm oil and biomass production more sustainable. For most trade chains the policy programme contains only general guidance and sets strategic goals. This policy is being worked out in more detail with the government’s social partners, in line with the government’s choice for indirect steering.

Good progress with certification of softwoods; more attention needed for hardwoods

The proportion of sustainably produced wood on the Dutch market has risen sharply in recent years as a result of the joint efforts of the social partners. The target for 2011, a market share of 50% sustainably produced wood, seems achievable if this positive trend can be maintained. However, the reliability of certification



An area three times the size of the Netherlands is needed to meet consumption by the Dutch population. A large area is needed for the production of paper. Biodiversity is particularly affected by the production of food. The effects of greenhouse gas emissions are not included.

labels in guaranteeing that production is sustainable remains an important issue (see Table 1 ‘More sustainable wood chain’, pages 30 and 31). The certification of softwoods from Europe in particular is progressing well and there are good opportunities for introducing further certification efforts, for example in the paper industry. However, the production of softwood timber in Europe does not pose the greatest threats to forest biodiversity and curbing global deforestation. Progress with the certification of hardwoods from both the tropics and temperate zone is lagging behind. The government target for 2011, though, makes no distinction between hardwoods and softwoods, although this would be helpful in setting priorities and increasing the efficacy of current biodiversity policies. Tropical hardwoods deserve special attention because certification of this timber can have a major positive effect on the biodiversity in these regions.

Certification of fish growing, but still limited

The level of fish consumption in the Netherlands is relatively low, but the Netherlands is a relatively major player in the international fishing industry and particularly the trade in fish. The share of certified fish catch is growing, but is still small compared to total consumption levels. To make fisheries more sustainable, thus allowing viable fish populations and minimise the damaging effects on ecosystems, fisheries will have to be based on the principle of maximum sustainable yield. It is

advisable to switch to different fishing techniques and establish and manage protected areas. The rising global demand for fish cannot be met from wild fish catches alone. A promising option to meet the gap in supply is to produce more certified fish from aquaculture (see Table 1 'More sustainable fish trade chain', pages 30 and 31). Relevant sustainability criteria for aquaculture are currently being developed.

Promote sustainable soy production within an international framework

The Dutch eat a lot of animal protein, including milk products and eggs. Soy is a major component of the feed used in livestock farming in the Netherlands. International criteria have been agreed 'on a trial basis' for the certification of soy production (RTRS) Nevertheless, these criteria are still subject to much discussion, which is delaying the certification process (see Table 1 'More sustainable soy trade chain', pages 36 and 37). At the same time the area of land that is used worldwide for the production of soy is expanding rapidly, driven by the growth in the world population and the changing diets of the emerging economies. Besides more sustainable production of this agricultural resource, wide-ranging attention to the whole consumption pattern of proteins is advisable. Central government could create more support for this type of policy by informing consumers of the health benefits of a different consumption pattern.

Making trade chains more sustainable requires international agreements

To stimulate sustainable product chains, both production and consumption ends of trade chains should be considered. The Biodiversity policy programme 2008-2011 focuses on certification at the production end of trade chains and less on the consumption end. Certification is a good initiative, with several potential advantages for biodiversity on a global scale. However, as the certification of most products is based on voluntary codes, just a small proportion of the market will be affected. Initiatives by the retail sector – as in the case of fish – can provide an important stimulus for sales.

Certified products are more expensive and consumers who buy sustainable products pay twice for them: via the costs of certification and via government costs for achieving sustainable production. Conversely, international trade regulations make it difficult to impose taxes on products with a higher environmental impact. Nevertheless, the tax system can be used to make sustainable or certified products cheaper by sharing the costs.

Government itself can influence the sales of certified goods through its own procurement policy and through public information campaigns promoting more environmentally-conscious purchasing behaviour. Such campaigns tend to reach the more conscious consumers, but never the whole population. Broader support can be generated for promoting sustainable production and consumption via organisations such as the World Trade Organization or the European Union. For instance, the European Commission has set firm targets, criteria and conditions to make renewable fuels and biofuels more sustainable.









Most policy targets for nature and the landscape can only be achieved within the desired period if policies are strengthened and pursued more forcefully.

Action needed to achieve targets for nature and the landscape

Table 1






Description	Current policy ¹	Action strategies	Section reference
Nature			Ch. 2 & 7
Biodiversity			
Area of new NEN		Geared to apportioning ecosystem quality in exchange areas and to land acquisition; expedite implementation	2.1.1
Ecosystem quality in nature conservation areas		Focus on improving quality via land acquisition and environmental improvement	2.1.2
Ecosystem quality in agricultural areas		Create space for nature in agricultural areas	7.1.1
Numbers of plant and animal species		Exploit the power of the NEN and habitat approach; formulate concrete policy for areas outside nature conservation areas	2.1.3
Conditions for nature²			
Acidity/nutrient status		Draw up national and provincial action plans, plus flexible local application	2.2.1
Moisture content		Implement Rural Investment Budget agreements and monitor progress	2.2.2
Water quality		Implement more stringent WFD measures	2.2.3
Spatial connectivity		Optimise spatial connectivity within and between areas	2.2.4
Conservation management		Exploit dynamic conservation management and concentrate efforts on PSAN	2.2.5
Landscape			Ch. 3
General landscape quality			
Landscape amenity		Target realisation unlikely	3.1.1
Visual impacts on landscape amenity		Clustering of land uses and greater emphasis on design	3.1.2
Clustering of housing, employment and agricultural uses		Special consideration to clustering of arboriculture and bulb cultivation	3.1.4
Core natural and cultural qualities		Make targets SMART	3.1.5
National Landscapes			
Core qualities of National Landscapes		Improve planning protection in draft Order in Council	3.2.1
Migratiesaldo nul?		Adjust to steer house building	3.2.2
Building in National Buffer Zones		Continuation of policy and address issue of enforcement	3.2.3
Open views from motorways		Attention to development plans and enforcement	3.2.4

Table 1 continued Action needed to achieve targets for nature and the landscape

Description	Current policy ¹	Action strategies	Section reference
Nature for people			Ch. 4
Recreation			
Recreational utility around cities		Target realisation unlikely	4.1.1
Value of green areas around cities		Target realisation unlikely	4.1.2
Realisation of recreational facilities around cities		Increase rate of land acquisition and layout	4.1.3
Public support			
Participation in management of the NEN		Address declining interest	4.2.1
Number of members of nature conservation organisations		No specific central government action strategy	4.2.2
Dutch ecological footprint abroad			Ch. 5
More sustainable timber trade chain		Greater focus on tropical and other hardwoods and demonstrable sustainable forest management	5.3
More sustainable fish trade chain		Set limits on wild catch; stimulate sustainability criteria for aquaculture	5.4
More sustainable soy trade chain		Test and implement RTRS criteria and supervision systems; address consumption of animal proteins	5.5

- 1 Current policy: policies for which the instruments, funding and powers are in place, and for which the necessary decision-making process has been completed.
- 2 The conditions have been reviewed against the policy goal for 2010 of realising sustainable conditions for the maintenance of all species and populations present in 1982.

Legend

-  Implementation of policy will probably lead to target achievement.
-  Projected trend is close to the target. Policy could be made more robust to absorb setbacks.
-  Projected trend will probably not lead to target achievement. The target can be achieved through more forceful application of policy.
-  Projected trend will probably not lead to target achievement. Requires a fundamental revision of policy.
-  Indeterminate at the moment.

Appendix 1

Policy programme ‘Working together living together’: urgency needed to achieve current targets

In mid 2007 the present Government presented its policy programme ‘*Working together, living together*’ (Samen werken, samen leven), which sets out the government’s plans for the next four years, where its priorities lie, and the points on which it can be held accountable. The policy programme contains 74 objectives and ten projects. This appendix summarises the progress being made towards the nature and landscape policy objectives.

In preparing their budgets for 2009 the ministries have taken the opportunity to firm up the policy proposals in more detail. The targets have been formulated in more specific and measurable terms and translated into actions, and some have been further specified as intended effects and results. This elaboration of policy clarifies the relations between the already existing operational targets and the goals and actions taken by the present Government. Although the package is coherent, it is not clear what the acceleration of policy measures will contribute towards achieving the operational goals. In addition, the effects of some of the Government’s policy objectives will be hard to measure because they are formulated in broad terms such as ‘move forward into implementation’ and ‘make a contribution to’. Furthermore, Central government policy also depends on external factors and collaboration with partners. In those cases it is the question to what extent central government will be able to steer events and what the Government can be held accountable for. This does not alter the fact that action is being taken on virtually all the objectives for nature and the landscape that were set out in ‘*Working together, living together*’.

At the moment the actions of the Government do not offer prospects for achieving its overall goals within the stated periods. Nevertheless, substantial progress has been made with the protection regimes for nature conservation areas (Spatial Planning Order in Council and the designation of Natura 2000 sites) and the management plans for Natura 2000 sites. The government has brought the policies for the landscape into sharper relief, but so far these seem to be making a limited contribution towards meeting the existing policy challenges. Current expectations regarding the degree to which the targets will be met suggest that progress is insufficient to enable the main policy goals to be met within the desired periods. The Government’s ‘delivery instrument’ came to a similar conclusion.

Nature and landscape policy in 'Working together living together'

Nr	Government objective	Actions	Action taken?	Effect of action	Comments on implementation strategy
16	Fewer regulations, fewer instruments, fewer delivery points	Quality safeguard	underway	+	Attention to private conservation management and agri-environment schemes
		Licensing of activities involving ammonia emissions	underway	+/-	Greater administrative burden due to harmonisation/coordination
21	Sustainability as criterion for government procurement in 2010	Criteria for 80 product groups from the start of 2009	underway (?)	+	Stimulates availability of sustainable products: 51 of the 80 groups completed
22	Stimulate sustainable production and consumption	In 2010 at least 30% of fish and fish products will be certified.	limited	+	
		Financial incentives for sustainable production	started	+	Under discussion for timber; subsidy for certification of fish
23	Economical use of space	Pilot projects for restructuring business parks	underway	+/-	Contribution limited in relation to scale of the task
24a	Investment in nature conservation areas	Designate nature conservation areas	underway	+	
		Complete the NEN, land acquisition and landscape works	behind schedule	+	Delays to landscape works in particular; additional cutbacks over the next two years will exacerbate delays
		Management plans	underway	+	
		Protection regimes	underway	+	Utilise Spatial Planning Order in Council
24b	Contribution to conservation of species	Within nature conservation areas (see 24a)			
		Protection regimes outside nature conservation areas	completed	+	
		Habitat approach in/outside nature conservation areas	started	?	Effects unclear
24c	Increase satisfaction with landscape quality	Implementation of the Landscape Agenda	underway	+/-	Contribution limited in relation to scale of the task
		Implementation of Beautiful Netherlands programme	underway	+/-	Contribution limited in relation to scale of the task
		Implement recommendations of Taskforce on Financing the Dutch Landscape (Rinnoy Kan)			
		Elaboration of core qualities by provincial councils	underway	+/-	Outcome uncertain
24d	More and better accessible greenspace around the cities	Acquisition and layout of greenspace under Recreation around the Cities programme (RodS)	underway	+/-	Delays to acquisition and landscape works; additional cutbacks in RodS over the next two years will exacerbate delays
		Develop and enhance network of recreational routes	underway	+/-	Insufficient to resolve problems in good time
		Innovation agenda and programme	underway	?	No information available
26	Conditions for nature	Climate	started	+	
		Monitoring of effects (ILG mid-term, ...)	limited	+	Unclear whether policy measures and financing will deliver ecological benefits (particularly for hydrological restoration)

The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency analyses spatial and social developments in (inter)national context, which are important to the human, plant and animal environment. It conducts scientific assessment and policy evaluations, relevant to strategic government policy. These assessments and evaluations are produced both on request and at the agency's own initiative.

